

HISTORY SECTION

THE ARMOR OF THE ANCIENT KNIGHTS

WHEN considering the terrible machines used in the World War II, one cannot help but notice the vast difference between ancient and modern European war mechanism.

In the remotest times hides were used as a protection in European warfare. Later ancient armor was used. It was made of metal, usually brass or bronze, though not infrequently wood or leather was used for particular purposes. The earliest armor consisted of only a shield to protect the wearer from blows given by a club, ax, spear, arrow, or sword—such as the shields of the ancient Egyptians, Assyrians, Greeks, and Romans. In former days many tribes in the Philippines used shields. Some of the non-Christian tribes of the islands still use them.

In the ancient civilized countries, especially those of Europe, when the need for greater protection was felt, the helmet was adopted for protecting the head. Then came

the breastplate. Next came sheaths of metal or other material for the legs. After a while the desire arose to protect the whole body, and so plates of metal or metal rings were used. As time went on, the rings were all interlinked or woven together. This was called "chain mail," and was used until the 14th century.

Bit by bit plates of iron or steel were used to protect various parts of the body—the breast and back, the shoulders, the arms and legs, and the like. For 200 years this gradual change went on. By the end of the Middle Ages we find in western Europe complete suits of plate armor of great beauty and perfection of workmanship.

Treasured specimens from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries represent the golden age of armor, when the most renowned artists were also the most famous makers of suits of steel. Artistic genius enabled them to fashion each piece of plate so that it not only covered but



Early Armor of the 15th Century

fitted its portion of the knight's body, giving freedom of natural movement as well as complete protection.

A complete suit of this armor cost so much that none but princes and great nobles could afford them. The suits of armor were very heavy, weighing 70 pounds or more, so that the wearer had to be lifted into the saddle. The horses of the knights were also protected by similar coverings of armor.

But when firearms came into use, the armored knight was at a disadvantage, so the use of full armor was discontinued, although some pieces of it were used. Even in the first World War steel helmets were used.

Ancient arms and armor are now eagerly sought by collectors, who will pay high prices for interesting pieces. Some of the great museums of Europe and America have fine collections of armor. One cannot help wondering what these museums will contain 500 years hence.

SOME QUESTIONS

1. What was used as a protection in European warfare in ancient times?

2. What was the earliest armor?

3. What was adopt-

ed after the shield came into use?

4. What came next?

5. What was "chain mail"?

6. Until when was "chain mail" used?

7. When do we find complete suits of armor in western Europe?

8. When was the "golden age" of armor?

9. By whom was armor made? (By famous artists)

10. What can you say of the cost of a suit of armor?

11. How much did a suit of armor weigh?

12. How were the horses of knights protected?

13. How did an armored knight get on his horse?

14. How did the use of fire arms affect the use of armor?

15. Was any part of the armor retained?

16. What part of the armor was used in the World War?

17. Do we have any specimens today of ancient armor?

18. Where are these specimens usually found? (In museums)

19. Have you ever seen a suit of ancient armor?

20. Can you name some of the things of modern warfare which make armor useless? (Read accounts of battles of World War II.)



Later Armor of the 16th Century