THE LOVE AFFAIRS OF THE VATICAN

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OR

THE FAVOURITES OF THE POPES

BY

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"A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach. . . . One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity."

ST. PAUL, *Epistles to Timothy*, I. iii. 2, 4.

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TO THE READER

THIS book has not been written out of malice or love of scandal. It has been conceived in a spirit of impartiality, animated by the wish to draw attention to the discrepancy existing between the noble and sublime teaching of Christ and the practice of His disciples. I have endeavoured also to show the important part played by the favourites of the Popes —those Popes who preached abstinence and contempt for women—upon the history of the Vatican and Christianity. Whilst exposing the intrigues of the Papal Court, I have not hesitated to do justice to the Popes who were worthy Vicars of Christ. In the result I hope that readers animated by a sense of justice will find no cause of offence in my book—for I have meant none.

As for the principal sources upon which this study has been based, I have enumerated them in the appended bibliographical list.

A. S. R.

ROME, THE ETERNAL CITY,
January 1912.

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THE LOVE AFFAIRS OF THE VATICAN

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY: THE SPIRITUAL PAPACY

ONE day twelve travellers, of the lowliest sort, departed, staff in hand, for a despised country. They lacked daily bread; but they were setting out on the conquest of the world, and the world submitted to them. At their word the altars of false gods were broken, temples crumbled away, impure religions disappeared, and the colossus of the Roman Empire was thrown down. Their successors reinstated it, encircled it with the bonds of the new faith, transformed it, and breathed a soul into a society that had hitherto been merely force, intellect, sensuality, which had never known charity, love, or what Scripture calls so forcibly " the circumcision of the heart."

In the breast of their victory were found the germs of division; heresies sprang forth. To Popes who were apostles and martyrs succeeded Popes who were theologians. They fought against opposing doctrines; they established the unity of dogma, and at the same time the unity of the hierarchy. They mounted to

the throne of the Catholic world, and from thence surveyed, directed, and controlled all the movements of that soul which they had given it.

But another world appeared, menacing, terrible: an inundation of peoples. The Roman legions recoiled in fear. *They*, however, went to meet the barbarians, and if they did not cause their arms to fall from their hands, they softened their savage natures; they showed them a rule, a law, a duty above orgies and violence. Pope Anastasius sustained Clovis and the Franks in their new faith. Gregory the Great converted England, part of Germany, and the Lombards of Italy; Pelagius II the Visigoths and Spain. The conquest of Frisia, Saxony, and the countries of the North, was the persevering work of twenty Pontiffs.

Finally Catholicism was established. From Rome flowed the living waters that gradually regenerated this troubled and impure world. The Popes struggled to teach gentleness to a violent age; they opposed to the feudal hierarchy the idea of the equality of all men; to turbulence, discipline; to servitude, liberty; to force, right. They protected the slave against the proud master, and preached the rights of women, children, and the family, to men accustomed to polygamy and divorce.

Offices of State had all become hereditary; the Popes showed a different principle by the free election of abbots, bishops, the Pontiff himself; and serfs sat in the chair of St. Peter, above kings.

The barbarians destroyed ancient civilisation; the

Pontiffs gathered up the relics, and treasured them in monasteries. They were the masters of religion, and also of thought, art, and science. The great scholars, who taught the world to think again, the masters who have given to Christianity its most notable monuments, belong to the Church. The spiritual power desired nothing worldly, and lo! it had all. It governed souls and also kingdoms and states.

Islam menaced; the Church made it draw back, and seized from it Jerusalem. Urban II threw a million crusaders upon Asia. Local churches languished in torpor; the manners of feudal society had corrupted them. Gregory VII violently shook the tree, which only gave bitter fruits, and caused abuses and vices to fall from it.

The German Emperor revived the pretensions of the Roman Emperors; he put the spiritual independence of the Church in peril, at the same time that he endangered that of the world. Had he been successful, it would have been the end of all liberty a soldier would have crushed it in his iron gauntlet; Frederick II even thought of making himself Pope, Gregory VII, Alexander III, and Innocent IV strove and triumphed.

What was their force for this great combat? Where were their citadels, their provinces, the soldiers, and the treasure necessary? They did not even possess those few acres of land of which so many holy men have spoken with a supreme disdain; they did not know where to lay their heads, and yet they

exiled those who called themselves masters of the world, and named the kings of Europe their vassals.

These kings, freed from feudal service, considered themselves above all law, because they were above all resistance. Innocent III made the thunders of the Church rumble over their heads; he excommunicated a usurping king in Norway, a king of Aragon who coined false money, the perjured and traitorous John of England, and Philip Augustus of France, who had repudiated his wife the day after their marriage, and married again.

When force alone ruled, the Popes constituted themselves the guardians of the moral law; and if princes offended, they raised their realms in insurrection, absolving their subjects from their oath of fealty. The Papacy thus lent its support to popular rights.

Such is the Papacy that the world admired and venerated. But there is another, the secular Papacy, the one that chose to assume the crown and bare the sword—Papacy which indulged in a life of licentiousness and debauchery, and which trod under foot the noble teachings of Christ. And it is of the discrepancy existing between the sublime teachings of the Master and the practice of many of His vicars that I treat in the following pages, where I especially show the important part played by the favourites and mistresses of the Popes in the history of the Vatican and Christianity.

Many are the ladies of easy virtue, who, modest and passive, are content to traffic in their charms,

that they may rule over and hold under their sway some obscure private individual—their name is legion, and their psychology is studied by the sociologist, the philanthropist, and the social reformer. The historian, however, has to deal with the splendid sinners who have made history, and who, by their charm and intelligence, have ruled over the rulers of the world.

Woman's influence has often been paramount. Not only has she seduced and captivated sovereigns and kings, earth's temporal rulers, and through them exercised her influence over nations and kingdoms; but even the Catholic Church, its spiritual hierarchy, which owed its great power and its rapid spread to woman, has been dominated by her. It is the subtle revenge of woman that she, whom man—unjustly—has striven to subjugate and to dominate, is constantly dominating him.

Seduced and captured by the Catholic Church, woman, with all the irregularity of her nature—with the ardour of her passions and the impulsiveness of her enthusiasm—threw herself in adoration before the Church. But woman is constant in her inconstancy, and she soon took her revenge. In her turn, she, for whom the Church had expressed an utter contempt, looking down upon her as upon a source of evil and sin, yet not disdaining to use her as an instrument of propaganda, ruled where she was supposed to worship and to obey. Man's weakness and passions—woman's charm and subtlety—*voilà tout le secret* since the days of Eden down to those of Trafalgar Square. Woman introduced Eros within

the sacred walls of the Church; and she, whose greatest virtue, according to St. Paul, is silence, has often ruled the Church and Papacy, convened councils, influenced conclaves, and decreed laws according to caprices and pleasures. More than one Pontiff owed his election to the influence of women. They were the princesses of the Church, and, ambitious, scheming, and plotting, availed themselves of their charms, their beauty, their seductive power to turn the Vatican into a *Capharnaum*, and Papacy into a plaything of their whims and ambitions. It is not my intention to write the history of the Papacy, but simply to show to what an extent feminine influence has exercised its power within the Catholic Church, and indicate the disastrous results which the enforced laws of celibacy produced among the Roman clergy.

In a moment of supreme pride, the wearers of the tiara declared themselves infallible, beyond and above human nature—reaching with their heads into celestial regions. History, however, implacable and just, shows us how all the while the Pontiffs were standing with their feet in the sands. Gregory VII, the Pope-dictator, thundered against the debaucheries of the clergy, and instituted celibacy, and thus he not only placed the Church outside the purifying atmosphere of the family, but also outside progress and humanity; and what is more, he plunged it into the furnace of illicit passions, into the mire of corruption and hypocrisy.

I pursue a double aim in this work, namely, on the

one hand to point out the influence of women upon the government of the Catholic Church, and, on the other, to show the immorality of the Catholic clergy, which is the direct and necessary result of the law of enforced celibacy. Voluntary celibacy in itself has often been praised. It is a celestial flower, whose beauty and fragrance stamp it as one of the most precious growths in the garden of ethical religion. It is blossoming in the hearts of many men and women, of ancient and modern philosophers, of priests and nuns, of heroes and scientists, and its magic freshness often brings joy to God and man alike. This wonderful flower, exhaling such a beautiful perfume, which has inspired many martyrs and heroes, grows in many noble hearts, but it is quite different from the enforced celibacy of the Catholic clergy. I do not say that I consider the type of monk or nun as the ideal of humanity or of womanhood.

Many of those who pass their lives in their cells in fruitless meditation are non-values, from a social point of view. Theirs is an ascetic form of selfishness, as was the mode of life of the anchorites of early Christianity, and of the beggar-philosophers of pagan antiquity. But there are some among them who, whilst turning their backs on human love, on carnal pleasures, become servants of the poor. They quit a life of joy and laughter and fashion, in order to devote their existence to a labour of charity and pity. There are some for whom the common joys and pleasures of life are not made. There are some

men—and women, too—who are too good for these pleasures and joys; they have, as Nietzsche once said, "something more urgent and more important to do than to marry. Heavens, that is how it happened with me." And that is how it happened and still happens with many thinkers and dreamers who remain single. But all these individuals chose celibacy voluntarily.

The author of the "Génie du Christianisme" has woven a veil of poetry over sacerdotal celibacy, and mystic philosophers have sung its praises in glowing terms. But the Catholic Church has failed, not in honouring the priest who forsakes father and mother, family life, love, and affection, to follow the Lord, but in submitting a multitude to an iron rule, and forcing ordinary men to adopt the life and conduct which only a select few are capable of, thus only compelling them to become hypocritical and immoral. None of the religions of antiquity had introduced such institutions: Greece had only two priestesses who had to make the vow of celibacy, and Rome counted not more than six or seven vestals. But in Hellas, as well as in Rome, it was a voluntary celibacy. Among the Jews, too, one occasionally finds a Ben Asai and a Ben Zoma, men who never married because they were betrothed to the law, and had made its study the occupation of their lives, just as one will find among the great thinkers, philosophers, and poets of all ages, a Nietzsche or a Spinoza here, and a Kant there, men who, like the soothsayers' birds of antiquity, fly singly.

But between a voluntary celibacy of the individual and the enforced law to which a number of clergymen have to submit—what a vast difference! The individuals are not wasted; they cannot be considered non-values from a social point of view: they are creators in many other ways.

Although the Bishops of Rome were all married during the first four or five centuries, there were many love affairs in the Vatican even in those days, and the gallant intrigues of the priests were numerous. Thus, in the fourth century Bishop Damasus is accused by his deacons of adultery. The proofs were against him, but the Emperor Gratianus, afraid of scandal, suppressed the whole affair. Gradually, however, public opinion was in favour of the celibacy of the priests; and in the fifth century the majority of the higher clergy remained unmarried, and it is at that period that the love affairs of the Vatican really begin. The more the people were convinced that the unmarried priests were nobler and holier than those burdened with wives and children, the greater the excesses and the unbridled licence of the higher clergy. Indeed, the favourites of the Popes soon began to rule Christendom, and there are periods in the history of the Papacy to which one may apply the words: "And women rule over us."

What was to happen in several Courts of Europe a few centuries later: the rule of women, of favourites, and of mistresses, had already taken place at the Court of the Vicars of Christ in the tenth and eleventh centuries.

No doubt, there may have been some among the Pontiffs, archbishops, bishops, and lower clergy, who were great and quite capable of such a sacrifice, and who, for the sake of the love of God, could scorn the love of woman! They could say, with Matthew,[1] "For there are some eunuchs, which were so born from their mother's womb; and there are some eunuchs, which were made eunuchs of men: and there be eunuchs, which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake."

There were, and I shall even go as far as to say that there still are, members of the Catholic clergy who take the vow of celibacy perfectly seriously, who lead pure and abstinent lives; and whatever one's private views are, one cannot help feeling respect, coupled with admiration, for those who, for the sake of an ideal, of the love of God, show so much heroism and nobility in renouncing for ever youth, life, and love. The spiritualised man and woman, even if we ourselves feel incapable of attaining to their heights, command our respect! Heroism is never wasted, martyrdom, even in a cause which may be incomprehensible to us, must meet with the admiration of every tolerant and noble-minded man; and whilst fanaticism is abominable, self-sacrifice will always find an applauding audience and reap the respect of posterity. Had celibacy been a spontaneous vow made by every priest and member of the Church of Rome, we should, metaphorically speaking, doff our hats to them, but, alas! it was a measure dictated

[1] Matthew xix. 12.

by the policy of Papacy—a measure which was bound to result in hypocrisy and deception. For how many, even of the higher clergy, were there who had really renounced physical love ? And it cannot be doubted that the immoral lives of the unmarried Vicars of Christ exercised a most pernicious and injurious influence upon Christendom in general, and upon the lower clergy in particular. Again I must hasten to add that some shining examples of virtue and piety have occupied the throne of St. Peter, but they have been outnumbered by the debauchees and monsters who fill the annals of the history of Papacy.

For centuries the history of the Roman Pontiffs reminds one of the most depraved times of Athens and pagan Rome, rather than of Bethlehem and Jerusalem.

Courtesans, famous for their talent and their beauty, their intrigues, and their gallant love affairs, ruled the Church and disposed of the tiara. They raised and deposed the Pontiffs, imprisoned and assassinated them. They were in possession of the keys of the castle of St. Angelo; they exercised their sway over the aristocracy through their relations, over the people through their mild administration, and over the Popes—through their vices. Their beds became the pedestals from which their lovers ascended the Pontifical throne. Through the *boudoirs* of these women the Vicars of Christ entered the palaces of the Vatican and the Lateran. All these Popes were imitating the mode of life of the Saracens, to whom they were paying tribute, and, like Oriental rulers, true heroes of a seraglio, these chiefs of Christendom

died either by poison or strangulation. They committed follies worthy of Oriental despots, and vied in their debaucheries with the Emperors of pagan Rome. John XXII ordained priests in a stable and swore by Bacchus and Venus.

"Alas!" exclaims Cardinal Beronius, "how ugly was the aspect of the Holy Roman Church! Those infamous prostitutes ruled Rome, and their creatures and lovers sat on the throne of St. Peter; and only for the sake of chronology one must mention these vile beings as Popes."

And Bernard de Morlaix, monk of Cluny, and contemporary of St. Bernhard, writes in the twelfth century: "The age of gold has passed away, the pure souls are no more. We live in times of fraud, impurity, rapine, schisms, quarrels, wars, treachery, incest, and murders, which desolate and ruin the Church. Rome is the impure city of the hunter Nimrod, piety and religion have fled its walls. Alas! the Pontiff, or rather the king of this odious city of Babylon, treads under foot the sanctity of the Gospel and the morality of Christ, and allows himself to be worshipped like a god."

And Honorius, priest of Antrim, expresses himself even more energetically: "Look," exclaims this author, "at the prelates and the cardinals of Rome, those worthy ministers surrounding the throne of the *Beast*. They are continually occupied in committing new iniquities and crimes. In all the churches of Rome the holy service is being abandoned, for priests soil their holy office by their impurity, and

are deceiving the people by their hypocrisy. They deny the Creator by their works, and have become the scandal of nations. They are the blind who throw themselves into the precipice, obliging the simple folk to follow them.

"Look at these monks! They hide hypocrisy and iniquity beneath their cowls. Look at these cardinals, whose robes hide all the cardinal sins. Look at the convents of the nuns, places of debauchery. These abominable women have not chosen the Virgin, but Phryne and Messalina as their models! They prostrate themselves before the idol of Priapus, instead of the image of Christ. The reign of God is over and that of the anti-Christ has begun! There is neither morality, nor dogma, nor cult, and the last days announced by the Apocalypse have come."

Another historian, Matthew Paris, who wrote the history of the thirteenth century, expresses himself as follows: "The last spark of faith which existed under the Popes of last century has been extinguished in the present century—faith is destroyed, the greatest sins seem to be permissible. Evangelical charity has fled to heaven, ecclesiastical freedom has disappeared, religion is dead, and the holy city has become a place of infamy, whose lewdness surpasses even that of Sodom and Gomorrha!"

Matthew Paris continues to relate the odious tyranny of the Pontiffs, their rapacity and their sins, their pomp and wealth, by which the Court of Rome was surrounded, and in a paroxysm of despair, pious Benedictine that he was, he exclaims: "Must we

not deplore such a scandal, and say that in the agony of our soul we would rather die than witness such a spectacle of abomination and of horror ! "

The reputation of the immoral lives of the Popes had become such that governments did not hesitate publicly to declare their indignation at their conduct. Such was the case when Pope Innocent IV was fleeing from the Emperor Frederick II, and intending to seek refuge at the Court of King Henry III of England. The House of Commons refused to offer hospitality to the Holy Father. " The purity of England," the Commons said, " has already been soiled by the usury and predatory commerce introduced by the Papal Legates ; and now the Pope himself wishes to come into our midst and spend the wealth of the State and of the Church ? This we shall not allow, for the Papal Court spreads such an abominable odour that it should not be admitted into England." And instead of going to England, His Holiness, Innocent IV, went to Lyons.

Luitprand and Infessura call the Papal residence at Rome, the Lateran, a *prostibulum meretricum.* And Infessura says that the courtesans in Christian Rome were even more numerous than they had been in Athens or in the pagan Alexandria of the Greeks.

In 1490 there were not less than 6,800 prostitutes in Rome. They enjoyed the protection of the Holy Church, and were known under the designation of *Cortegiane.* " It meant," says Johannes Burchard,[1] " an honest courtesan " (*meretrix honesta*).

[1] " Diarium," vol. ii. p. 442-4.

It is almost amusing, to use a mild expression, to find how the very apostles of celibacy among the Catholic clergy, the Popes and Cardinals who fought for it, were Don Juans themselves. One is quite accustomed to the jokes made at the expense of temperance preachers appearing on the public platform in a state of inebriety; but is it not equally ludicrous and disgusting to read of Popes and Cardinals who, whilst preaching of the superiority of abstinence and celibacy, were carrying on love affairs and intrigues. The following episode is characteristic. It is related, among others, by Theiner.

In 1125 Pope Honorius II sent the Cardinal Johann of Crema as nuncio to England, where His Eminence was endeavouring to introduce celibacy among the priests. In Westminster Abbey a council had taken place, and here the Papal Legate very sharply and severely criticised the ecclesiastics who would not renounce the love of woman! He was great in his noble denunciation, producing a very deep impression upon his hearers. A few days after this eloquent sermon, Cardinal Johann was found in the company of an English courtesan. But such was his impudence, that he did not even for a moment consider himself unworthy of continuing his campaign. From London the noble prelate went to Durham, where he exhorted the Bishop Ranulf, reproaching the latter for his immoral life. This successor of the Apostles was in the habit of being served at table by scantily dressed young maidens, whose allurements few of the guests at the episcopal board

could withstand. The Cardinal severely reprimanded the Bishop for his mode of living. But Ranulf was neither a hypocrite nor a fool, and he decided to teach the Cardinal a lesson. He arranged a most opulent and luxurious banquet, to which the Cardinal was invited as the guest of honour. Ranulf's niece, a beautiful woman, not at all shy or savage, received the uncle's instructions to play the Delilah to the Cardinal. She found an only too yielding Samson, for the apostle of celibacy allowed her to accompany him to his private apartments. He was in her arms, when the door was suddenly thrust open, and Bishop Ranulf, accompanied by his subordinates, carrying tapers in their hands, appeared. They surrounded the bed, chanting "benedicite, benedicite." The Bishop drank the health of His Eminence, to which the latter—who was a man of the world and not a savage anchorite—graciously replied. Although *nudatus ad iguen*, Rome's legate did not at all feel embarrassed. And a few days after this event the noble Cardinal held a synod at Roxburgh, as if nothing had happened.

Pope Æneas Sylvius Piccolomini, known as Pope Pius II, who had professed very broad views, and openly advocated the legal marriage of ecclesiastics and the abolition of the law of celibacy, had had many love affairs before ascending the throne of St. Peter. His correspondence sheds a curious light upon his principles and practice. "Whoever," writes Pope Pius II, "has never felt the fire of love is either a stone or a beast. Whoever, at the age of thirty, has

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not committed a crime for the sake of love! I am speaking from experience, for love has brought me into a thousand-and-one dangers. Many women have I courted and loved, and as soon as I had possessed them, I was filled with loathing for them."

Pius II had an illegitimate son—the issue of a love intrigue he had had at Strassburg with an Englishwoman—and this Papal boy he recommended to his father. "Does this cause you pain," continues the Pope, "because the boy is a child of sin? But surely, father, you do not imagine that you have brought into the world a son made of stone or of iron, considering that you yourself are flesh and blood. You know what a lover you have been yourself; and I am neither a eunuch nor even of a cold temperament. Besides, I am not a hypocrite who wishes to appear better than he is in reality. I freely confess my transgressions, for I am no better than King David and his son Solomon. Love is an old-established transgression, and none is free from it. The malady, if malady it is, is very much spread, and none can escape it."

But this state of affairs reached its summit during the great schism, when three Popes were claiming the succession of St. Peter. They were John XXIII, Gregory XII, and Benedict XIII. "The clergy in those days," says a contemporary, "was plunged in beastly sensuality and sensual bestiality (*bestialis sensualitas et sensualis bestialitas*)."

We shall have occasion to speak of the licentious life of John XXIII who kept a whole harem at Bologna, and, *à la Louis XV*, had his *Parc aux*

cerfs, where married women and virgins were brought to him.

But not only the Popes, the Cardinals and the members of the lower clergy have also been great Don Juans, and carried on love affairs; they have sacrificed upon the altars of Venus, and Bacchus, in spite of Christian dogma and doctrine.

Porphyrius, the Bishop of Antiochia, who lived in the fifth century, had many love affairs. He was accused of the lowest and most pagan debauches, and is supposed to have sought his pleasure in the company of circus-riders, dancers, and other folks of the same stamp. His contemporary, Daniel, Bishop of Carres, in Mesopotamia, carried on a love intrigue with a married woman. Her name was Challoa; and so great was the prelate's love for her, that he did not hesitate to squander the wealth of the Church to satisfy the caprices of his favourite. Historians maintain that the lady had cost the Bishop not less than several hundreds of thousands of golden crowns. She left her husband, and openly lived with His Eminence, and it was an open secret that the Bishop had appointed Challoa sole heiress of all his estate. He also made her a present of the revenues of several estates belonging to the Church. His expenses being great, all means were welcome to him to make money, in order to enrich his many mistresses. He ordained deacons and priests, and gave absolution for the most heinous of crimes, as long as he was well paid for his work. Another of his contemporaries was Dioscorus II, patriarch of Alexandria, whose life was far

from being one of patriarchal simplicity. This venerable father was such a *vert gallant*, that his conduct became a byword and a common scandal. Married women, virgins, and common prostitutes, were in the habit of paying frequent visits to the patriarchal residence, and were granted admittance to the inner apartments of the Patriarch at all times and at all hours. The accusation which was raised against Dioscorus before the Council of Calcedon states that even when His Eminence was in his bath the ladies had free access to him![1] He pretended, or at least his friends and later historians, endeavouring to whitewash the prelates of the early centuries of Christianity, maintain that Bishop Dioscorus was a saintly man; and that if he was familiar with all those ladies, his sole and noble endeavour was to save their souls from perdition! *Se non è vero è ben trovato!* But the whole town of Alexandria was aware that the famous courtesan Pansophia, surnamed "The Mountaineer," was the principal mistress of the Patriarch.

In the sixth century, Isaiah, Bishop of Rhodes, and Alexander, Bishop of Diospolis in Thracia, both led such a life of debauchery and carried on such impudent and revolting love affairs with married women, that they were accused before an ecclesiastical court and severely punished, in virtue of a law of Emperor Justinian.

Another prelate living in the same century was Contumeliasus, Bishop of *Riez*. He confessed his

[1] Cf. Fleury, "Ecclesiastical History," vol. xxvii., 21.

sins and repented of the many temptations to which his weak flesh had yielded.

From the letters of Pope Polagius I we further learn that Bishop Euphrasius led a scandalous life, having been accused of adultery and even incest.[1] In the same century there also lived two ecclesiastics, two brothers, named Eagittain and Eglomius, who had become Bishops of Gap and Embrun respectively, and who were accused before the Council of Lyons of an impure and licentious life. Their conduct was so scandalous that they were deposed and deprived of their respective bishoprics. They made a show of public repentance, mended their ways, and were reinstated in their posts. For some time they ostentatiously led most exemplary and pious lives in accordance with the precepts of the Church. They gave alms, fasted, prayed day and night, and continually recited the Psalms. But this life of devotion was only of short duration. Soon they fell back upon their former mode of living, passing the nights in revelries and orgies ; and when the priests were singing the morning hymns in the adjoining church, the prelates were still at table, the walls of their residence were re-echoing with the songs of love and were witnessing scenes of debauchery and orgiastic revelry.

From a letter addressed by Pope Zacharias to Bonifacius of Mayence, we learn that the bishops of Germany also led scandalous lives, carrying on love affairs and gallant intrigues with the married women of their diocese.

[1] Cf. " Letters of Pelagius," No. 7.

In the ninth century, during the reign of Emperor Theophilus, John Leconomante was Patriarch of Constantinople. He had been a great favourite with Emperor Michael the Stammerer, who had appointed him preceptor to his son Theophilus; the latter, on his accession to the throne, raised his teacher to the dignity of Patriarch. John was a great friend of the ladies; but, unlike some of his predecessors, who cared little whether their mistresses were handsome or ugly, this Greek ecclesiastic had a great sense of beauty, and picked out only the most beautiful women of Constantinople, whom he honoured with his love. His brother Anselm possessed a country residence not far from the town. This he kindly placed at the disposal of the Patriarch, and there the creatures and servants of His Eminence brought the most beautiful women of the town into a subterranean apartment, the entrance to which was hidden from the public eye. The prelate having inspected them, like that ancient Persian king in the book of Esther, retained only those who found favour in his eyes. The historian Fleury says, "il faisait amener même des religieuses dont il abusait."

Let me now briefly sketch the love affairs and intrigues of the lower Catholic clergy, as far as I have been able to gather some information scattered in history. The councils of Mayence and of Nantes, held in the ninth century, accused the lower clergy of incest, whilst one can get a glimpse of the life led by the Catholic priests in the tenth century from a pastoral letter written by the Bishop of Verceil to

his subordinates: "Many among you," writes this prelate, "are slaves to the vice of incontinence to such an extent that they are keeping concubines, with whom they eat together (*sic*) and live publicly. Those concubines rule your houses, and after your death they inherit the wealth which you have amassed in the service of the Church and from the alms of the faithful. . . . Their poverty," he continues, "makes many ecclesiastics pretend at first that they are pure and are leading a moral life, but once they have obtained a post, they keep and entertain their concubines at the expense of the poor. In order to satisfy the caprices of their mistresses and to support their bastards, the priests become avaricious, interested, usurers, liars, robbers, and thieves. . . . Avoid, therefore," he concludes, "not only crime, but everything that leads to crime; pay no attention to the beauty of woman, to their appearance and their sweet conversation; in a word, have nothing whatever to do with them."

In the same century the ecclesiastics of England are said to have led lives of debauchery. They passed their time in orgies with loose women, in whose company they used to spend the money squeezed from the naïve, poor, faithful believers. The convents and the habitations of the priests were houses of ill-fame—dancing, singing, and revelry being carried on continually. The disorder was such that King Edgar saw himself obliged to issue special laws and put a stop to the irregular life of the clergy.

"What shall I say of the clergy?" said the King of

England in those days. "The pious souls weep over their crimes, whilst the impious are laughing. We find nothing among them but debauchery, excesses, orgies, and unchastity. Their abodes are propitious for solitude, and yet they dwell there not for pious meditations, but in order to lead lives of debauchery; night and day they drink and play and make merry. Thus they are squandering the money left to them from the legacies of kings and the alms given to them by princes." [1]

In the eleventh century, however, this mode of life was still continued, as may be gathered from the Canons of the Council of Enham in 1010. The Italian prelates of the tenth century were noted and famous for their love affairs and lives of debauchery.

Pope Benedict VIII openly complained at the Council of Pavia of the life led by the Italian clergy. "It is a shame, throwing dishonour upon the Church," he said, "to see how the ecclesiastics are squandering the gifts they have received from generous and liberal princes—employing these riches to keep their mistresses."

In Germany it was not better, as we learn from Peter Damian, who complained of this state of affairs to Pope Leo IX. This same Damian also addressed a letter to Pope Nicholas II, in which he spoke of the debauchery and love intrigues of the clergy.

"Every one," wrote Damian, "knows the very names and the places of habitation of all the mistresses of the priests, gossip being busy in giving details of

[1] Cf. "Antiromanus," p. 430.

the presents and gifts presented to those ladies by their ecclesiastical lovers." Cardinal Baronius relates that the clergy of Lombardy opposed the election of Alexander II as Pope only on account of the fact that he was a man of severe morals. "We require a man," they said, "who is not disinclined to carry on a love affair or two himself—and who will consequently show some indulgence towards others. Alexander is not that sort of man."

In spite of the orders of that vigorous Pontiff, Gregory VII, who introduced the celibacy of the Catholic clergy, this state of affairs continued. And indeed it could scarcely have been expected of the priests to take the decree seriously, when it was a notorious fact that the Pope himself carried on love intrigues in his palace at Rome, and that his mistress, the famous Countess Mathilda of Tuscany, was all-powerful in Christendom.

Gregory VII, anxious to increase the power of Papacy, had conceived the idea of introducing the law of celibacy. The measure was dictated, not by a high moral sentiment, but by ambition and thirst for wealth and power. And it is worthy of note that at the very moment when the Pontiff had decided to enjoin upon his priests the law of celibacy, a Turkish despot was introducing a similar law among his mamelukes. Two armies of bachelors had thus been formed, one in the Orient and the other in the Occident—one to defend the turban and the other the tiara. The mamelukes have disappeared, but the army of the tiara is still in existence.

Great was the indignation among the clergy at the Papal decree. Even those who by temperament and ideas were inclined to a life of celibacy disapproved of it. Such decisions, they thought, should be left to every individual to take for himself. Gregory naturally gave moral reasons, explaining his really political designs. "Woman, woman," exclaimed the lover of Countess Mathilda, "is the source of evil, the cause of perdition. She is leading to damnation. Woman is imperfection, and the priest should avoid every imperfection. Woman seduced man in the Garden of Eden, tempting him to partake of the apple from the tree of knowledge. Woman, therefore, is the cause of the original sin; woman is the source of evil. The priests and servants of the Lord must therefore avoid woman, the sons of Adam flee from the daughters of Eve."

Gregory's aim was to isolate the priests from society, to turn them into a prætorian guard of the Pope. The Pontiff was to be a king, an emperor; he was to be above the sovereigns of the world, and as such he, too, must have his armies and his guards.

But he had a will of iron, this Vicegerent of the humble teacher of Nazareth, and he triumphed after all. What cared he for the corruption of the Church, which he foresaw would be the inevitable result of his decree, as long as his political plans were realised? His arguments in favour of his decree were neither sincere nor moral. Ecclesiastical celibacy was only an *instrumentum regni* in his hands, a means by which

he hoped to dominate more easily the clergy and to fashion the priests according to his wishes.

But if Gregory was severe against others, he was not so against himself; and the mask of authority and austerity which he had put on was made a means to hide his own irregular life. His own love affairs and intrigues were well known to his contemporaries, and bold bishops did not hesitate to reproach the Holy Father for his iniquities.

"You are an heretic, Holy Father," wrote the French Bishops, "for you are teaching a morality which is insensate and contrary to the words of Christ." "You, oh sacrilegious Pontiff, whose debaucheries are well known, you wish to lead the members of the Church upon a *path* of perdition, by separating them from their legitimate wives." Thus it will be seen that this Pope—who caused so much trouble by his decrees of abstinence—was far from being a saint himself. He had three mistresses, and was, besides, carrying on many other minor intrigues and love affairs. History mentions as some of his favourites Agnes, the mother of the Emperor of Germany, her aunt Beatrice, and above all the famous Countess Mathilda, the Sultana of the Holy Father. She was constantly in his company—and had been surnamed the "daughter of St. Peter." By this beautiful title the Holy Father had sanctified the object of his passion!

It is abundantly clear that the results of the law of celibacy showed themselves in grave disorders and a very licentious life among the clergy. This is not

only attested by opponents and critics of the Catholic Church, by Protestants, and reformers, but even by pious and staunch defenders of Rome, to whom the dignity of the faith was dear.

Thus, Peter Damian, in his famous work "Gomorrha," gives a most revolting description of the love affairs of the clergy, with a minuteness which only testifies to his extreme frivolity or extraordinary *naïveté*. His words remind one much more of the Italian author, the divine Aretinus, than of a father of the Church.

St. Bernard, too, with a little more decency, relates similar details of the amours of clergy and prelates, which led to such debaucheries that the honour of women was not safe. How far-reaching the consequences of the amours of the priests were, the following fact will testify. A century had scarcely elapsed since the law of celibacy had been passed, when the Scandinavians revolted against Waldemar I, king of Denmark (1179). One of their principal griefs was his refusal to abolish the law of celibacy of the priests. It must not, however, be imagined that the Scandinavians were fighting the battle of their priests. Theirs was a more selfish motive. One of the consequences of the law of ecclesiastical celibacy was the state of general immorality and the corruption of the purity of the women; it was for the honour of their wives and daughters that the Scandinavians were fighting; and it was in order to safeguard the purity and chastity of their women that France and Switzerland passed bylaws by which the priests were allowed to keep mistresses. A passage from the famous work

of Nicholas Clemangis, who severely criticised the corruption, not only of the priests, but also of the nuns, will give some idea of the state of affairs and of the relationship of the monks and nuns in his time.

"The monasteries," he writes, "are no longer sanctuaries devoted to the divinity, but places of abomination and debauchery—*rendezvous* of young libertines who are only anxious to gratify their libidinous desires. Indeed, to make a girl take the veil is equivalent with forcing her to prostitution." [1]

Rathier, Bishop of Verona, relates that in his days many of his colleagues were living with concubines. The best proof of the amorous lives of the Italian clergy, in the ninth and tenth centuries, may be found in the eloquent defence of those who thought such a mode of life permissible. We find, on the other hand, that the pious Bishop of Verona waged a war against such abuses, continually attacking and severely criticising the *mulierositas*, as he called it, of his colleagues.

The following episode is exceedingly interesting, for it sheds a glaring light upon the trend of thought and the morality of the century. Bishop Tedald of Arezzo was declining in health, and some people had recommended to him, "on account of a certain weakness," the biblical remedy of the Shunamite. The ecclesiastic summoned a lady of easy virtue, but, at the same time, he put a burning torch near his couch, and when the flames reached it, he exclaimed under tears, "Alas! if I cannot stand this little flame, how

[1] Cf. "De Corrupt. Eccles. Statu," chap. xv.

shall I be able to suffer the flames of hell?" And the Shunamite was sent away.

Quite different, however, was the behaviour of Anselm of Bisate. He had nightly love adventures and rendezvous during the days of Lent. The Bishop of Verona admits that if he were to depose all the ecclesiastics who were carrying on love affairs only children would remain in the service of the Church.

The prelates of the Church, like modern clubmen or Oriental potentates, considered it a matter of ambition to boast of the charms of a beautiful concubine; and it used to be a matter of great pride for an ecclesiastic to possess a mistress more beautiful than those of his colleagues.

The love affairs and intrigues of the Italian clergy had become such a matter of course that whenever a bishop or a prelate formed an exception the Romans looked upon him as an angel. In Lombardy, in Milan, Turin, and in other parts of Italy, the same state of affairs prevailed. Bishop Regimbald of Fiesole was notorious for his licentious life, whilst the monks of Farfa secretly kept women. The archbishops, who were anxious to eradicate such abuses, were absolutely powerless, and their endeavours proved futile—if not fraught with danger for themselves. Thus, when Nicholas II, Bishop of Brescia, issued severe laws against the amorous sins of the priests and ecclesiastics, the latter nearly killed him. Priests openly mocked the commands of their superiors; and a priest of the chapter of St. Cæcilia in Rome refused to obey the command of Pope Stephen IX to abandon

his mistress, declaring all the resolutions in this respect futile and stupid. Moreover, the sons and relatives of the priests formed a power in Rome and Milan and had to be counted with. It must also be pointed out that the majority of these priests, bishops, prelates, and other dignitaries of the Church were not living with one woman in a marital state, but had many mistresses. They were, to use an expression of the period, *multinubi*.

The tenth century in Italy was a century of woman, even to a much greater extent than was the eighteenth century of Louis XV in France and in Europe. The Papal mistresses, Theodora and Marozia, were members of a family of courtesans who looked upon their courtesanship as upon an hereditary privilege. The women of that house were the mistresses of most of the rulers of Italy and extended their sway over Christendom and Papacy. King Hugo, who dishonoured the bride of his own son, surrounded himself with a regular harem; but among his favourites there were three whom he especially preferred. The number of their illegitimate children was legion, but as these ladies were not exactly models of fidelity, and—apart from their royal lovers—had also their *amants de cœur*, one could never be quite sure as to who the fathers of these children were. It was natural that such a state of affairs exercised its influence upon the Church and upon the clergy of Italy. A critic of the life of the clergy says that Dionysius, Bishop of Piacenza, and Gregory of Vercelli, were much more capable of judging female beauty and charm than

of expressing an opinion and showing some insight at a Papal election. And Bishop Regimbald of Fiesole had surrounded himself with a whole harem of ladies of an amiable nature and easy virtue, whilst Bishop Alberich of Marsika had only one mistress. Fearing the punishment at the hands of Emperor Otho III, the latter had sent his favourite to the convent, and made her a nun—temporarily, during the visit of the Emperor; but as soon as Otho had left the Italian soil, the episcopal favourite threw off the coarse garb of the nun, and returned to the life of "the flesh and the devil," and to the arms of her ecclesiastical lover! In Florence the prelates led a life of debauchery, spending and squandering, in company of their mistresses, the wealth of the Church. And the ladies of easy virtue—or, to speak bluntly, the courtesans of Italy of the tenth century—were not different as regards lucre and venality from the courtesans of modern Europe. They despised the priests as long as they were poor, but as soon as the latter had accumulated some wealth, they threw themselves into their arms, pretending that they could no longer resist them. The result was that for the sake of the love of woman, priests unhesitatingly robbed the Church, squeezing money from stupid and confiding pious Catholics, which they afterwards spent upon shameless women, trafficking in their charms. *Tout comme chez nous!*

The French Bishops were naturally not better than their Italian *confrères*. Frenchmen as a rule imagine that they are privileged by nature to occupy

the first place and play first fiddle in the concert of *Eros*. Hughes, Archbishop of Rouen, who lived in the tenth century, was a great sinner and a lovelace. He had a number of favourites and many children. The historian Fleury relates that another archbishop of Rouen, Robert, the son of Duke Richard I, was leading the life of a worldly prince and not that of a prelate, a life of debauchery and of pleasure, his many mistresses openly living in his palace. He afterwards married one of these favourites, a certain Haleva, who bore him several children!

Bishop Ivo of Chartres, known as the Holy One, gives an interesting description of his contemporaries, and especially of Stephen of Beauvais, and Gerard of Angoulême—who were both gamblers, adulterers, and lovelaces. The author also speaks of the immoral life led by the nuns in several of their convents. That of Evreux he designates as a house of ill-fame, inhabited by devilish women. The immoral life of the bishops and clergy of England is described in a witty poem by Walter Map, chaplain of King Henry II.

Robert Grosseteste, Bishop of Lincoln, a man of severe morals, and leading a pure life, accused the nuns of immoral conduct. One cannot help quoting the words uttered by the famous Dominican monk, Cardinal Hugo de Sancto Caro, at the Council of Lyons. The Council had taken place in 1245, and the Cardinal was delivering the farewell speech. "Friends," he exclaimed, "we have been able to bestow a great benefit upon this town. When we,

the fathers of the Council, arrived here, Lyons had three houses of ill-fame, but now at our departure we leave only one. But this one reaches from one end of the town to the other." And another Dominican monk, Robert Holcot, professor of Theology at Oxford, compares the ecclesiastics of his day to fauns and satyrs. And if one considers the state of ignorance of mediævalism, it will be comprehensible that these ecclesiastic Don Juans found only too willing ears among the ladies and the *belles* of their day. Priests preached and taught doctrines suitable for themselves. Thus, the Don Juans persuaded innocent and ignorant women of the fourteenth century that during the absence of the husband it was permissible to love an ecclesiastic, who could easily absolve them, not only of this, but also of other sins. And the ignorant women accepted the alluring doctrine of loving without sinning.

Priests also often eloped with nuns. A priest, named Aspulus, carried off in the middle of the night a beautiful nun, Gumperga by name, from the convent of St. Peter at Lucchesi. He " put her on horseback, kissed her, gave her two soldi, and carried her off," says the mediæval chronicler. The monks of Farfa led a life full of orgies, and especially when Campo became their abbot, the walls of the monastery witnessed scenes of debauchery equalling only those of Capri in the days of Tiberius. The concubines and prostitutes were mistresses of the wealth of the monasteries and convents.

Such a life was also led by the monks in the cloister

of St. Sylvester at Urbino. It is interesting to learn that the aged Bishop Leo of Fococle had taken an oath in 1035, in which he promised his archbishop, Gebhard of Ravenna, that he would henceforth lead a pure life and never touch a woman. In Modena some priests made a similar promise to their bishop. Anselm of Bisate speaks of the life of the priests, maintaining that the churches and chapels served as places of rendezvous for the love affairs of the priests and the bishops. The nuns, he says, were not more abstinent than the monks. Widows took the veil in order to be free! and not be bound to one man. "Instead of being the wife of one man," says a contemporary author, "the nun could be the mistress of several men." This scandalous life of the nuns became so notorious that special laws had to be issued by the Carlovingians as well as by the Church. At the Justina convent near Lucca, three nuns, Justa, Bonella, and Eufemia, accused their abbess, Erittha, of carrying on a love intrigue with some ecclesiastic.

As a result of such a life led by the clergy, the ecclesiastical power became hereditary in certain families, for the sons of the clergy considered it as their privilege to occupy the posts of their fathers; and in Verona, Arezzo, and Fiesole, priestly dynasties were practically ruling. The family of the Bishop Regimbald left the church to his nephew and to the latter's descendants. "It would only be in punishment for his sins," he said, "if ever his race died out." On the other hand, the wealth of the Church was being squandered, for the clerical concubines were

very exacting and extravagant. And whilst the women of the Old Testament had brought their ear-rings and their trinkets and ornaments to Aaron the priest, so that he might melt them and mould a god for them to worship, the monks of Farfa were forced to turn the holy vessels of gold and silver and the altar-covers into ornaments for their favourites! Verily, woman varies with the centuries. Clergymen were bound to develop a sense of rapacity and to accumulate wealth so as to satisfy the caprices of their ladies. One often reads nowadays—especially in France—of some crime committed, of a forgery, or of a daring theft and robbery perpetrated by an otherwise honest man, led down the slippery path of crime by an extravagant and exacting mistress! Many are the poor deluded Adams who are not only losing their Edens, but who are also being sent to penal servitude because they cannot resist the tempting smile of serpentine Eve—indulging in luxurious tastes! If the lover has money he squanders it; and if he has not he often steals and robs. It is an old story, as old as the hills. Eternally the biblical episode is repeated throughout the centuries. Eve tempting Adam, weak and yielding; the sweet fruit is tasted; the dessert is partaken of; Eden is lost; man is sent to till the ground or to work in quarries and mines, whilst woman remains behind to tempt other men and to make them commit new crimes! The priests of mediævalism stole, stole and robbed the Church to satisfy the caprices of their favourites and their concubines!

Manger, another archbishop of Rouen, living in the eleventh century, squandered the wealth of the Church upon his favourites, one of whom bore him a son named Michael. His conduct at last led to his deposition. But his nephew, Duke William of Normandy, made him a present of some small island. Here the ex-archbishop continued to lead a life of debauchery until he was accidentally drowned in the sea.

Before the Council of Reims several archbishops and bishops were accused of entertaining gallant intrigues with married women, and of abducting all those who found favour in their eyes.

Cardinal Baronius relates the following episode, in which Guy, the Archbishop of Milan, figures as the guilty one. This prelate had many favourites, among others his own niece. But not all the members of his clergy were as corrupt as their superior. Arialde, a deacon of Guy's church, did not hesitate to reproach the Archbishop with his ignominious life. Tired at last of the remonstrances of his inferior, the Archbishop accused him of treason and had him arrested. His niece—who hated the preaching priest—wrought a terrible vengeance upon the poor deacon. With the assistance of two clergymen, she mutilated the body of the chaste preacher in a manner worthy of a Messalina! For this lady, living in the episcopal palace, was not only the mistress *en titre* of her uncle, but she carried on *liaisons* with all the young prelates coming under the supervision of her uncle.

Arnoul, Patriarch of Jerusalem, and Heraclius,

were both gallant lovers, whilst of Henry, Bishop of Verdun, his contemporaries used to say that "his heart was as empty of the love of God as it was full of love for women." And the love affairs of the bishops of the twelfth century were so many that Richard I, king of England, could rightly exclaim: "They say that I have a bad daughter, impurity—and I am advised to marry her off. Well then, I shall marry her, and give her unto the prelates of the Church, the bishops!"

In a Bull addressed to the bishops by Pope Alexander IV, this Pontiff exhorts them to lead an exemplary life, and to abandon their mistresses. And the Bishop of Liège, Henry de Gueldres, was such a lovelace that Pope Gregory V was obliged to address to him a severe letter of reprimand. "We know," wrote the Pontiff, "that you have carried on several love intrigues before and after your promotion to the episcopate. You have taken an abbess of the Holy Order of St. Benedict as your mistress and have lived with her publicly. Nay, you have carried your impudence so far as to boast during a banquet that you have had fourteen children in twenty-two months! It is known that you are keeping a nun and several other women in one of the houses belonging to you—a property known as 'Le Parc,' and whenever you frequent this house you leave your followers behind, entering the place alone. The abbess of a monastery in your diocese having died, you have promoted the daughter of a certain Count to this high and saintly office; and this young

abbess is your mistress! She has even born a child unto you!"

Hildebrand, afterwards Gregory VII, who, as we have already seen, introduced the law of celibacy among the Catholic priests, was, while actuated by other motives, anxious to eradicate from the minds of European Christendom the remembrance of the immoral lives led by the Popes of the tenth century, and the shame of the Messalina government, of the vices of the Theodoras and of Marozia, but also of the scandalous fact that a predecessor of Gregory VII, Benedict IX, had dared to declare that he would marry his own niece without, however, abdicating the Papal throne!

He adhered to his decision; and although many bishops, like Otho of Constance, Henry of Toul, and the Bishop of Bremen, opposed this measure, whilst those who submitted were threatened by their subordinates, the measure was carried through. Papacy triumphed and marched on towards victory; but, as we have already noted, it was a victory based upon hypocrisy and sin.

Giovanni Villani, in his famous "Chronicle," relates the following episode. A wit of the fourteenth century, well acquainted with the love affairs of the clergy of his age, circulated an anonymous letter purported to have been written by the devil and dated from the Inferno in presence of many demons. In this sarcastic epistle his Satanic Majesty expresses his satisfaction with the conduct of the prelates, complimenting them upon the numerous love affairs

they are carrying on, for Impurity is triumphing, thanks to their efforts. Jacques de Croix, Bishop of Cambrai, openly left several legacies in his testament for his bastards, whilst Cardinal Hippolyte de Medicis had an illegitimate son, Asdrubal de Medicis.

Poggio Bracciolini relates many stories of ecclesiastical love intrigues and the manner in which these Don Juans triumphed over the virtues of the faithful Christian women. A curate in Brescia informed his lady parishioners that it was their sacred duty to pay him the tithe not only of their worldly possessions, but also of their conjugal duties.

Another story—characteristic of the impudence of the clergy in those days and of the superstitious ignorance of mediævalism—is related by the same author. A Franciscan monk was the successful lover of a married lady. One day, when he was busily engaged—so he afterwards pretended—in listening to the confession of the lady, the husband suddenly arrived. The devotions were disturbed. Don Juan in the Franciscan garb escaped through a window, but was obliged, in his hurry, to leave his trousers behind. The infuriated husband—Italians were jealous even in the Middle Ages—rushed to the monastery, and, brandishing the clerical undergarment, complained to the Prior. The latter, however, shaking his head, mildly rebuked the offended husband. "My son," he said unctuously, "may Heaven forgive you for the sin you are committing." The poor man looked nonplussed. "I am committing a sin!" he stammered, "but Father, methought I have been sinned

against, rather than sinning." "Yes, my son, you are sinning, for you are calumniating a holy man, the pious brother who has just left your house, where he has been praying for the recovery of your dear spouse, who is not well." The husband looked sheepish. He glanced from the Prior to the trousers and from the trousers to the Prior, and at last ventured to query: "And these, my Father?" "These," replied the unperturbed ecclesiastic, "are the garments of the holy St. Francis of Assisi; it is a precious relic, by means of which the pious brother intended to cure your wife's illness." And casting a glance of mild reproach at the ungrateful husband, he continued: "In solemn procession the costly relic will be carried through the town."

Coming down to modern times, the episodes of the intrigues of the Catholic clergy become historical and precise. Thus, in that century of gallantry, of love, and debauchery, the century of women, I mean the seventeenth century, the Vicar of St. Eustache in Paris was carrying on a criminal love intrigue with a married woman, the wife of the Comte d'Olonne. One day the Comte fell dangerously ill, and as a good Catholic he expressed the wish to confess his sins. His wife called in her lover, the Vicar, to listen to the confession of her husband. The latter, who had evidently been *au courant* of the *liaison* of his wife, but had considered it *bon ton* to feign ignorance, lost his temper in the last moment. "What!" he exclaimed, "will my honour not be safe even on my deathbed?"

POPE JOHN X.

Later on the son of the Thuringian peasant declared war to the Vicar of Christ; he introduced the great reform of the Church of Rome. In order to re-establish the purity of morals of the priests, Luther allowed them legitimate marriage. The Protestant ecclesiastics now openly married, following the example of their leader. But those who remained faithful to Rome, considering Luther's permission of marriage an abomination, did nevertheless persist in their lives of debauchery and licentiousness; through centuries they continued to carry on love affairs with married women and virgins. Many Catholic clergymen were honest enough to abandon the Catholic faith of Rome rather than continue lives of hypocrisy. Thus, with the rise of Protestantism an atmosphere of purity was wafted through Europe.

The love of several bishops of the sixteenth century for their mistresses made them abjure Catholicism and embrace Protestantism. Such were Nicholas de Lorraine, Bishop of Mayence, who loved Marguerite d'Egmont,[1] Jean-Antoine Caraccioli, Bishop of Troyes in Champagne, and Odet de Coligny, Cardinal and Bishop of Beauvais. It was the latter's love for the beautiful Elizabeth de Hauteville de Lore which made him turn Protestant.

Another example of the influence which the power of love exercised in religious belief is the story of Jacques Spifame, Bishop of Nevers. He loved his mistress too well, and sooner than separate from her became a Protestant. The name of the lady was

[1] Sleiden, "Hist. Liv.," p. 21.

Catherine de Gasperne. She was the wife of Etienne de Cresle, a *procureur* at the Châtelet in Paris. But the prelate possessed more attraction for the beautiful lady than her lawyer husband—and—she bore two children which could claim the Cardinal as their father. In 1539, the husband having died, the widow and her lover lived openly together. But the Parlement of Paris was informed of the prelate's irregular conduct, and ordered his arrest. Spifame escaped—and in company of his mistresses left France for Geneva. Here he turned Protestant and married Catherine with the permission of the Consistory.[1]

But the list of Catholic prelates who turned Protestants for the sake of a woman and her love is not yet exhausted. Thus, Gebhard Truchsess, Archbishop of Cologne in the sixteenth century, fell in love with a beautiful nun, Agnes de Mansfeld. The Archbishop, who had every facility to see and speak to the *religieuse*, availed himself of his opportunity to disclose his love to the woman who had left the world. He conjured her to return to the life of love, and she readily consented. For some time the Archbishop kept his mistress in the episcopal palace of Broel, beyond the Rhine, near Cologne, and afterwards in the castle of Koisuverd. At last, however, the prelate grew tired of the continual secrecy he was compelled to observe. He turned Protestant and openly married his mistress.[2]

It was also in the sixteenth century that Emperor Ferdinand had sent André Dudidth, Bishop of Tina

[1] Cf. Spon, "Hist. de Genève." [2] Fleury, *l. cit.*

in Hungary, as Ambassador to the Court of Sigismundus Augustus, king of Poland. Here the prelate saw a beautiful girl, Sophia Genesilla, with whom he fell passionately in love. In Trent, where he went to the famous Council, André eloquently advocated the abolition of celibacy of the Catholic clergy. His efforts, however, remained futile. His love was evidently being returned by the girl; for when he had failed to convince his colleagues, André Dudidth broke all the obstacles standing between him and happiness, abdicated his bishopric, turned Protestant, and married Sophia.

Less noble was the conduct of Montluc, Bishop of Valence, a Dominican monk who had gained the favour of the Queen of Navarre, sister of François I, who brought him to Court. François I and Henri II entrusted the Dominican with many delicate political missions, which the priest accomplished to the entire satisfaction of his sovereigns. In Ireland, Poland, Italy, England, Scotland, Germany, and even Constantinople, he had represented the interests of France, and he was appointed Bishop of Valence for his many services. Jean de Montluc fell in love with a young girl, who returned his passion. Being, however, a good Catholic, she was seized from time to time with a feeling of repentance, fearing the punishment of Heaven for her cardinal sins. In order to appease the scruples of his mistress, Montluc married her secretly. The Bishop does not seem, however, to have remained faithful to his wife. Indeed, his love intrigues were many. He carried

them on wherever he went as ambassador of the Court of France. In Ireland he is said to have seduced the daughter of a noble lord, in whose house he was staying as an honoured guest, whilst in England he kept a courtesan whom he was in the habit of visiting.[1] His love intrigues as well as his clandestine marriage at last became an open secret, and in order to escape the thunder of Rome, the Bishop of Valence threw off his mask and turned Protestant.

François de Harlay, Archbishop of Paris, in the seventeenth century, was another prelate following the fashion of the sovereigns and of the aristocracy of his time. Mlle. de la Varenne, Mme. de Breton-villiers, and Mme. la Duchesse de Lesdiguières, were some of his favourites. La Bruyère relates[2] "that the Archbishop's last mistress was the daughter of a Paris merchant, and that it was practically in the arms of this lady that the prelate was suddenly seized with a fit of apoplexy, which caused his death in 1696.

[1] Bossuet, "Hist. des Variat.," liv. 7, No. 7.
[2] "Clefs de ses Caractères," vol. i. p. 337.

CHAPTER II

THE RULE OF WOMEN: THE PONTIFFS OF THE TENTH AND ELEVENTH CENTURIES

BUT it is especially the tenth century which is rich in gallant intrigues of the Bishops of Rome and of the clergy. Without exaggeration, one may say that the government of the Popes in those days was in the hands of lascivious and ambitious women. Like the prætorian guards once in the time of the pagan Emperors of Rome, these ladies held the Papal power in their hands, offering the Pontifical crown to the dearest and cleverest of their many lovers, or placing it on the head of one of their many illegitimate children. The most disrespectable and corrupt adventurers imposed themselves as bridegrooms of the Church. There was scarcely a crime or an abomination which was not committed at the Court of Rome; and whilst the city was a prey to anarchy, the palace of the Popes was being changed into a very house of ill-fame. During the first half of the tenth century not less than thirteen Popes successively occupied the throne of St. Peter. And what do the historians relate of these men? Scarcely any deed worth mentioning, except their lives of debauchery. And like the pagan Emperors, and some modern sovereigns the representatives of Christ were in constant fear

of the assassin lurking in a corner of their residence. Palace revolutions were the order of the day. If a Pope was in the way, his mistress soon found a willing priest to dispatch His Holiness, and in remuneration for his foul deed she bestowed upon the murderer the tiara, and—*her love!*

Many were the Popes who died an unnatural, violent death. They were throttled or assassinated; and the way to the throne of St. Peter was covered with blood and strewn with victims. So great were the abominations of the Pontiffs in those days that even the defenders of Papacy and the impartial historians of the Church cannot stem the wave of moral indignation which the facts must arouse in our minds. "In those days," writes Baronius, "one could witness the devastation of the temple of God and the sanctuary of the Lord, and upon the throne of St. Peter there sat impious men, not Popes, but monsters."

How ugly was the aspect of the Church when courtesans, shameless and dissolute women, reigned in Rome, placing their lovers upon the Papal throne! The clergy were never asked their opinion as to the election of the Chief of Christendom. Papal decrees were destroyed, and canonic law trodden under foot; the ancient apostolic traditions were laughed at, and the sacred customs and old ceremonies, employed at the election and coronation of the Pontiffs, absolutely ignored. "But although the Church was without a Pope she was not without a head, a spiritual one, for Christ never abandoned her."

"Theodora, an impudent courtesan," writes Luitprand, "dominated and ruled over Rome with a masculine and monarchic authority." This woman and her two daughters, Marozia and Theodora II, who equalled and even surpassed their mother in corruption and debauchery, were the real sovereigns of the Church. These women ruled over Rome—as other favourites will rule centuries later over European kingdoms and vast empires. The peculiar state of Italy in those days perhaps even facilitated for those ambitious women the task of becoming mistresses of Italy, of Rome, and of Christendom. Rome was an oligarchic and theocratic Republic, constituted somewhat similarly to the Republics of Venice and Amalfi.

Nominally the sovereignty was vested in the people, but in reality it had passed into the hands of a few nobles, who, having appropriated all the power, disposed of the dignity of Pope and of that of Duke in the other cities. And as the majority of those powerful nobles occupied ecclesiastical positions, they formed irregular, instead of legitimate alliances; and thus the way into the Church was opened to that class of women who are particularly fond of, and apt for, a *liaison*. And like the ancient Aspasias, the Roman ladies of the tenth century triumphed by means of feminine beauty and *finesse* over masculine barbarism and grossness. It must not be forgotten that it was the iron age of feudalism, when brutal force and murderous fury were the only divinities whom the barbarian conqueror was compelled to respect. But

ironclad men, steeped in ignorance and in superstition, were enchained by the frail bonds of love. Lombards and Huns, Franks and Ostrogoths, the new conquerors of Italy, the savage giants issuing from the deep Teutonic forests and invading the classic soil of Rome, became so many Herculeses, sitting at the feet of Omphale. For the Roman ladies, the daughters of the Latin race—with their intelligence, their *esprit* and their vigorous passions, easily made themselves mistresses of, and triumphed over, the barbarian invader. Their plastic, sensual, and voluptuous beauty appealed to the rude conquerors of Italy. And when the charming and seductive goddesses came down from their Olympus, offering their caresses to the conquering princes, nobles, military chiefs, bishops, and prelates, they easily made them their prey.

And rarely has the domination of woman, fascinating man's senses, been so great as in the ninth and tenth centuries. The secret of her charm lay in her physical attractions, her gleaming flesh, and her dazzling opulence; for the men of a rude age had no understanding for Platonic beauty, or for the spiritual qualities of woman, and had not yet learned to appreciate the civilising and ennobling influence of woman's delicacy and refinement. Unlike those famous *hetairas* of Greece, the Italian courtesans charmed their numerous lovers neither by dance nor by music, whilst poetry and eloquence were as yet unknown. Modern coquetry, which enables woman of our own age to exercise the art of promising a great deal while granting nothing, had not yet made its appear-

POPE JOHN XII.

ance. But nature had endowed those great courtesans of early mediæval Italy with that beauty which appealed to the age; and love-struck, the rude conquerors forgot in their caresses the country of their origin, acclimatising themselves on Italian soil; Goths and Lombards became Latins. Thus it must be said, in justice to the courtesans of mediæval Italy, that in the midst of their passions and crimes they never seem to have lost view of their patriotism!

They have been called—and not without some good reason—the "heroines of political love," for by offering their love to the foreign conquerors they had succeeded in subduing them—Delilah-like, lulling Samson to sleep. They dominated and absorbed the invaders, giving birth to a new race of Italians, who soon put a stop to the foreign despotism by constituting and raising on its ruins the Italian city and the republics of later mediævalism. And whilst empires are crumbling down, and all the elements of social life are being dissolved; whilst the roaring and rushing waves of invading immigration are drowning the structure raised by the Cæsars, savage conquerors, ironclad from head to foot, obey the magic wand raised by the fair hands of the Roman courtesans. But just as the man of early mediævalism was subjugated, hypnotised by the dazzling Italian beauties, who captivated his senses, so two centuries later the incendiaries, murderers, iconoclasts of to-day will undergo the civilising influence of the Platonic beauty of woman. In an age of *troubadours* and of knight-errants—they will kneel down before the weaker sex

of creation, willingly acknowledge its ascendancy, worship and adore where they were supposed to rule and command.

Italy in those days was in the throes of a complete anarchy. The successors of Charlemagne were unable either to wield his heavy sword or to guard his many conquests; and the despotism of the new conqueror was broken just as the despotism of the Roman Emperors had been broken a few centuries before by the barbarians. It was for the second time that Italy saw the system of Imperialism fail; the endeavour to yoke different peoples under one will and unite them by a fictitious unity proved futile. Cæsar and Charlemagne had both failed; their dreams were never destined to be realised, and subsequent events showed their policy to be impossible. But the nations—kept under the iron yoke for a considerable time—were utterly lost when left to themselves, like prisoners after a long detention, to whom the air of liberty is intoxicating and stupefying. There were no social bonds, no laws, no rights, and no political direction and guidance in those days. Religious influence and discipline were in their very infancy. The Papal authority was of a feudal character, and did not extend beyond Rome. One may say that everybody had his own creed, his own law, his own morality, justice and rule of conduct. Everything belonged to the strongest. City and castle, *abbacy*, episcopal seat, and the throne of St. Peter were in the possession of the stronger. There were as many sovereigns and princes as there were bishops. Italy was like a vast

forest, where men, like savage wild beasts, were murdering and devouring each other. Those whom the sword had spared died of hunger—and butchers publicly sold human flesh; dead bodies being dug out and devoured by the living. Justice was restricted only to the privileged territories, called *immune*, of churches and monasteries, to the jurisdiction of bishops and nobles. The right of murdering and violating could be bought. Force sanctioned right, and the weaker were constantly being crushed between the two mediæval powers, the nobles and the clergy. Their very lives had become a curse and a real *Inferno*. War was being waged in the East and in the West, between nations and classes—whose varied interests were continually clashing; various tribes and hordes were constantly threatening and invading Italy, and were only with difficulty repulsed by the disunited chiefs, at war among themselves, each proclaiming himself a descendant of Charlemagne. Threatened and menaced from all sides, Italy was the arena of internal wars between the dukes of Friuli and Spoleto, who reigned concurrently, each assuming the title of King of the Peninsula.

But in the midst of those factions and invasions, which were crushing the country, a few cities retained their relative independence, their autonomy, their magistrates and liberty of the citizen. They were soon turned into republics, such as Amalfi, Naples, Venice, and Rome. Rome especially had become a sort of free city in the midst of Italy enslaved, except

Venice and the Greek republics in Campania. The Eternal City had retained the republican government with the dignities and offices of Consul and Senate and the turbulent oligarchy of nobles and priests. The head of Christendom was nominally being elected by universal suffrage; but in reality the Bishop of Rome was appointed by the faction of nobility and clergy in power. Clergy and nobility, two mighty orders, two powerful parties, ecclesiastical and military, were usually at variance about the election of a Pope—their constant aim being to elect or to depose a Pontiff. On the one hand the Roman nobility—and especially the Counts of Tusculum—represented the national party, always endeavouring to have a Roman Pope, who would be inaccessible to the influence of a king of France, an emperor of Germany, or even a king of Italy. On the other hand, the clergy were striving to make the Roman nobility subservient to the bishops and the foreign sovereigns. And each party wanted its own Pope. The election of a Pontiff was an important matter, for the successor of St. Peter united in his person the functions of head of Christendom, of political chief, and of feudal ruler of Rome. And here I shall make a short digression, relating, as briefly as possible, the history of the origin of the temporal power of the Popes.

It is well known how the Pontiffs had first recourse to Charles Martel, then to Pepin, giving the latter the titles of patrician and consul of Rome, which gave him vague rights of suzerainty over the Eternal City, and receiving in return from the king of the

Franks, " for the Church and the Roman Republic," the Exarchate and the Pentapolis (the Romagna and the Marches), two provinces of which the real owner was the Emperor of Constantinople.

Both, therefore, disposed of that which did not belong to them. But they belonged to those who do not inherit a right, but create it. Two years later, Pepin, consulting the Pope about the Merovingian kings, received this reply from Zacharias: " It is right that he who has the power should also have the title." And the last of the sons of Merovius had been, with the legitimacy of that period, shut up in a cloister, the first dynasty dispossessed, and a great revolution accomplished, by the sanction of the Pontiff.

The events that followed gave character to the donation of Pepin. Charlemagne confirmed and extended it. But as he was King of Italy and Emperor of the West, and Rome was his capital, the new patrimony of St. Peter was really only the widest of the " immunities " of the Empire.

After the fall of the Roman Empire, the barbarian kings, incapable of preserving the order of civil society and keeping in working-order the thousand wheels of the great administrative machine that the Emperors had established, gave to the Church, and to laymen, lands and public rights. In virtue of these concessions, called *immunitates*, the grantees had the right of levying on their lands not only the payments due to the owner, but the revenue due to the State. Moreover, they could appoint judges, lead the soldiers required by the sovereign, form regiments. From

these "immunities" sprang the two feudal systems, the lay and the ecclesiastical.

The Papal state was not, and could not be, anything else at first. If the Pope had a useful domain and a share of the administration, he was forced to allow the *Missi dominici* to make the Imperial suzerainty penetrate everywhere, and the officers of the prince take the oath of the people and even that of the Pontiff, whose election was only valid after its confirmation by the Emperor. Coin was struck in his image; the Counts of the palace executed justice in his name, at Rome itself, and Royal governors were sent to the cities of the Romagna which Pepin had ceded. Finally, the capitularies, drawn up by the banks of the Meuse or of the Rhine, had the force of law by the Tiber; and, in the will of the great Emperor, Rome was cited as only one of the twenty-one metropolises of his Empire, with Bourges, Embrun, Mayence, etc., to which he made an equal bequest.

It has been alleged that the donation of Charlemagne was anterior to the establishment of Germanic Europe, that the rights of the Popes to the lands ceded to the Roman Church are earlier than those of the German Emperors. But Charlemagne was patrician and consul of Rome before becoming emperor; moreover, he could not have had at that date the idea of a grant of absolute sovereignty to the Church; finally, it was the fullness of Imperial authority that Charlemagne reassumed in 800 and that all legal authorities recognised in his successors. With the activity and resolution that marked him in

everything, immediately after his consecration, he took in hand the government of Rome and of the temporal affairs of its Church.

The German Emperors followed in his steps when they could: history, until 1250, entirely confirms this. In 1197 there still existed at Rome an Imperial prefect, who received from the Emperor the sword as sign of his rank, and did him fealty and homage.

After Charlemagne the Papacy rises, the Empire descends, and so quickly that the Popes passed in half a century from a state of subjection to independence, and from independence to supremacy. Formerly it was Cæsar who made the Pope; now the Pope claimed to make Cæsar. In crowning Charlemagne, Leo III had fulfilled a function like that of St. Remi in consecrating Clovis; his successors turned it into a right. He who seemed to wear the fairest of all crowns could well dispose of others, and the tiara naturally rose above all. The revolution was accomplished during the reigns of the grandsons of Charlemagne. John VIII gave to Charles the Bald, "by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost," his Imperial crown, and Nicholas I nearly broke the kingly crown on the head of Lothaire.

But if the Papacy at this epoch established rights, it lost its domains. Italy also adopted the new social organisation. Feudalism filtered in and grew there; and just as the Pope became his own suzerain and lord of the property attributed to him by certain acts, doubtful or forged, but all held as authentic, there rose all round him baronial keeps and city walls.

Every summit of the Apennines bore a castle and every hill at Rome a fortress.

Moreover, since the Holy See had ceased to be merely a spiritual power, that is to say had large revenues, vassals, and serfs, the barons had envied its power and the gold now to be found near the tomb of St. Peter. Soon they began to fight for the tiara. It was like a subfee of the county of Tusculum. Loose women trafficked in it: Theodora and Marozia gave it to their sons, to their lovers. Eight Popes were named by them. What Popes!

Among the many barons and nobles the Counts of Tusculum were the mightiest in Rome, and it was through their help that Theodora and her daughters gained their influence over the Eternal City and the Popes.

Theodora was distinguished not only by her extraordinary beauty, but also by a remarkable intelligence, coupled with a boundless ambition and a never-to-be-daunted courage. She was of the race of women who come into the world to rule—of the race of a Semiramis, a Catherine II, an Elizabeth, or a Pompadour. Never in the history of the Courts of Europe and in the annals of the powerful favourites who have ruled over sovereigns and nations—favourites who were Prime Ministers in petticoats—did any woman attain to higher power and greater influence than this Roman courtesan and her two daughters. For she was a courtesan, this Theodora; and her licentiousness was as great as were her courage and her ambition. And yet—she was not a common woman,

risen from the gutter. She was a noble lady, the wife of a Consul and a Senator, Theophylactus by name, for she called herself *Senatrix*. Her father's name was Glycerius, but little else is known about him. The authority and influence wielded by Theodora and her family must have been immense, to judge from contemporary chronicles.

The Counts of Tusculum and their relatives, the Counts of Tuscany and the Dukes of Spoleto, had acquired great power over Italy. Theodora the elder, and her daughters, Marozia and Theodora the younger—thanks to their beauty, their keen wits and their unscrupulousness, stimulated also by their boundless ambition, had gained sway over the Counts of Tusculum and Tuscany, and thus also over the Papal throne.

"Thus," writes Baronius, "this woman could rule Rome. Prostituting her daughters to Pontiffs and nobles, she disposed of the Papal throne, raising upon the holy seat criminals and pseudo Popes."

These women distributed their favours among barons and bishops, abandoned their bodies to the mighty potentates, who in their turn became pliable in the hands of the astute enchantresses; for, charming slaves of an hour of abandonment, they soon rose as commanding queens from the voluptuous couch; in remuneration for their caresses they obtained a castle, or the disposal of an army, an election or a treaty. Marozia had been the wife of Alberic, Count of Tusculum, and after his death had married Guido, margrave of Tuscia. This woman was the mistress

of Pope Sergius III, who was a son of Count Benedict of Tusculum. Marozia was only fourteen when Sergius became her lover. Through the influence of the mother of his mistress over the Counts of Tuscany, Sergius was elevated to the Papal throne, as Pope Sergius III.

In St. Angelo the Pope was leading a life of debauchery and excess, whilst his mistress and her mother ruled Rome and Christendom. The walls of St. Angelo resounded from the wild orgies which remind one of the times of pagan Emperors, rather than of the Pontiffs of Rome. The lover of Marozia reigned only seven years, for he was suddenly carried off by a premature death in 918. Marozia—another Messalina—received the news of the demise of the Holy Father with relative calm. The number of handsome priests was not yet exhausted, and the ingenious woman employed the practice which was followed several centuries later by an Empress on the throne of Holy Russia. I refer to Catherine II.

In a luxurious apartment in the Lateran, which Sergius III had had reconstructed, Marozia was giving an audience to the young priests, among whom she had decided to choose a lover. Arrangements were being made for the funeral of the Holy Father, and the mighty favourite consulted the high dignitaries of the Church, discussing the details of the procession. In reality, however, she was listening absent-mindedly—for her practised eye was examining the appearance and scrutinising the traits of the priests before her. Already she had dismissed several,

who had evidently not had the good fortune of kindling any passion in the breast of the licentious lady, when a young and handsome priest was introduced into her presence. She threw a passionate glance at him; her whole being vibrated, her heart was aflame.

"Who are you? What is your name? Which is the rank you occupy in the Holy Church?" she hastily inquired.

"Madam," he timidly replied, "my name is Anastasius, and I am but a simple priest who served His Holiness Sergius, the Bishop of Rome, and the Count of Tuscany. His Holiness was very kind unto me, and his death is a punishment by which Heaven has visited us, his faithful servants."

"Let the dead alone," she replied, "and let us think of the living, we who are alive. And so your name is Anastasius! There have been Popes of the name of Anastasius," she added significantly—casting the handsome ecclesiastic a glance which he could not mistake. A thrill of joy swelled the heart of the ambitious priest and a wave of passion swept through his frame. He saw, as in a dream, power and love in his grasp—if he only dared to grasp them—and he *did* dare. Throwing himself at the feet of the powerful woman, who at that moment ruled Rome, he avowed his passionate love for her. From far he had been worshipping her, not daring to lift his eyes to the mistress of his superior, of His Holiness; but now she was free, he could restrain himself no longer—and if she could not return his love he would sooner

exile himself from the Eternal City and retire to Palestine to lead a life of an anchorite than bear the agony of seeing her daily.

The mighty Marozia, who in her heart had already given the place occupied by Sergius to the young and ardent priest, listened to his passionate declaration with a feeling of rapture. She spoke gentle words of hope and encouragement; and her promises must have been very pleasant, for Anastasius left her apartment, joy expressed on his countenance. Like Catherine II, eight centuries later, Marozia would not love a man of low rank; she was vain in her love. Anastasius should be Pope, and worthy of the love of one of the most beautiful women of Italy. Historians relate that Marozia shared the love of the handsome priest with her sister Theodora the younger. For three years the Holy Father Anastasius II, the lover of the two amiable sisters, Marozia and Theodora, sat on the Papal throne. When he died, Laudo of Sabium, a favourite of Theodora the elder, the mother of the two charming daughters, was appointed successor and Pontiff of Rome. His whole merit consisted in the fact of his being a lover of Theodora. But he who builds upon woman's constancy and favour builds upon quicksand. The mistress had only to cast her eyes upon some one else, and her lover was dismissed, losing not only his lady's love, but also the Papal throne. Thus it happened that in those days Peter, the Archbishop of Ravenna, used to send his *diaconus*, a certain John, to Rome on ecclesiastical business. When Laudo was elected Pope, Deacon

John came to congratulate His Holiness in the name of the Archbishop.

He was a handsome man, this deacon, and had the good fortune of arousing the passion of Theodora the elder. She preferred him to Laudo. And as this Messalina was not a woman to be thwarted in her desires, John became her lover. The Archbishop of Ravenna having suddenly died, the Pope had to appoint the favoured deacon to fill his vacancy—and thus to Ravenna, which he had left as simple deacon, John returned as archbishop.

But Theodora did not relish the separation from her new lover. Nor did she care to leave Rome for Ravenna. The simplest way out of her dilemma was therefore to raise the lucky Archbishop upon the throne of St. Peter. Six months and ten days Laudo had worn the tiara, when the all-powerful courtesan found that His Holiness stood in the way of her passions—and His Holiness had to disappear from the stage. Laudo dead, it was easy for Theodora the elder to use her influence in favour of John, who actually ascended the Papal throne under the name of John X.

The truth compels one to admit that Theodora's taste deserves some admiration in this instance. Pope John X, if not quite fit for the tiara, was a powerful personality and would have made a fine ruler in those days of trouble and party strifes. He held the keys of St. Peter, but under his clerical garb there dwelt the heart of a soldier; and few adventurous knights of his day could so well wield the

sword against the enemy as he whose mission it was to preach the Gospel of Love! He proved his martial valour on more than one occasion. The Saracens, who since 876 had been occupying a fortress on the Garigliano, not far from Rome, were making frequent invasions into the Roman territory preventing the pious pilgrims from visiting the graves of the Apostles. And as Pope John X was more fit to command an army than to read the Holy Mass, His Holiness decided to deliver the Eternal City from this constantly threatening danger. Aided by the Duke Beringar of Friuli, one of the mightiest princes in Italy, His Holiness, at the head of an army, stormed the fortress of the Saracens. The Greeks and the troops of Beringar, whom the Pope had crowned Emperor, were led into the field under the command of the Holy Father. The Saracens resisted, but their provisions had been consumed and their fortress set on fire—thus destroying the wealth which they had been accumulating there for years. They then fought their way through the lines of the Christian army, but were overwhelmed by the superior numbers and taken prisoners. Many perished, and the Pope himself killed a number with his own hands. History relates that after the battle of Carpentras Henry IV had carried the banners captured on the battlefield and laid them down at the feet of his mistress Corisande. It was a gallant feat on the part of the *roi vert-galant*, but he was not the first in history who could boast of such an act of gallantry. The Pope-soldier, John X, after the victory on the

Garigliano, returned in triumph to Rome; and here, laying the trophies of victory at the feet of his mistress, he threw himself into her arms.

Fourteen years John X remained in undisturbed possession of the keys of St. Peter, sharing his power with the woman who had raised him to the Papal dignity. But his hour of doom was approaching. In the dark corners of the Lateran the assassin was already lurking, waiting to strike the deadly blow. Theodora's daughter Marozia had her own lovers and cared little for those of her mother. It was a rivalry between mother and daughter, both actuated by the strongest passions let loose in the human heart. But Marozia was evidently not quite devoid of filial affection and respect; as long as her mother was alive she dared not cross her wish, and John X remained on the Papal throne. But things changed when the elder Theodora died. Marozia, whilst being the mistress of Pope Sergius III, had also at the same time carried on a *liaison* with the Margrave Count Adalbert of Tuscany. This fact, however, did not prevent Guido, an elder son of Adalbert, who was anxious to strengthen his influence in the city of Rome, from marrying Marozia. And as soon as Theodora the elder was dead and Marozia saw that Pope John X had no confidence in her, she and her consort resolved to remove His Holiness from his post and to dispose of the apostolic throne in their own interests. In the silence of the night Guido gathered his retainers and followers, penetrated into St. Angelo, killed all those who offered resistance

among them the brother of the Pope, and made the latter himself prisoner, in spite of his brave defence. John X was thrown into a dungeon, where priests, who did the bidding of the Messalina of Christian Rome, suffocated the warrior Pope with pillows.

Again the throne of St. Peter was vacant, and again Marozia appointed her lovers to be the Vicars of Christ. And so powerful was her influence that Rome and Christianity obeyed her orders, accepting the creatures of her choice. As long as those priests were favoured by the capricious dame they remained in possession of the keys of heaven, but woe unto those lovers of whom Marozia grew tired. And thus Leo VI, and after him Etienne VII, were for a short time the lovers of Marozia and the tools in her hands. She quickly grew tired of them, and sent them from the apostolic throne to early graves.

Growing older and wiser, Marozia felt a sudden maternal affection well up in her breast. She remembered the lover of her youth, Pope Sergius III, and the child she had borne unto him. The boy was now twenty, and the ambitious mother, suddenly remembering the son, made up her mind to invest him with the Pontifical dignity. And whilst the son, under the name of John XI, sat on the Papal throne, the mother ruled in his name, allowing the Pope-boy to indulge in all kinds of pleasures and dissipations.

But still Marozia's amorous caprices and ambition knew no bounds. She conceived the plan of ruling the entire peninsula from Rome, to become Queen

POPE JOAN, THE FEMALE POPE.

or Empress of Italy. Her husband Guido had fallen into disfavour with her. Like Hamlet's mother, Marozia had fallen in love with the brother of her spouse. Hugo, King of Lombardy, either really enamoured of the mistress of Rome, or thinking that Rome was well worth a love declaration—returned her love, and persuaded the object of his passion to remove the obstacle standing in the way of their happiness. A *fratricide* was only a trifling matter in those days of mediævalism. Brother and wife hesitated but little to mix a drop of poison in the cup of wine which Marozia smilingly handed to her unsuspecting spouse. It was a loving-cup which sent poor Guido to his early grave, leaving vacant the place by the side of his wife. Hugo knew that the dowry was the possession of Rome. He appeared with his army before the gate of Rome in 932 and entered the city, accompanied by a small and select suite. Guido once removed, Hugo married Marozia, the mother of His Holiness, and began to rule Rome after the manner of an Oriental despot. Marozia styled herself *Senatrix* and *Patricia*.

In St. Angelo, where three years before a Pope had been throttled, and where many of his successors were to live in happiness and misfortune, the marriage of the mistress of Rome, the mother of His Holiness, was solemnised with Hugo, king of Italy. The latter now also hoped to obtain the Imperial Crown. And so sure was he of his success that he treated the Romans as his vassals. But the Tarpeian Rock is near the Capitol. A palace revolution was at hand.

Marozia, during her *liaison* with Pope Sergius III, had also had in her early youth a love affair with Count Adalbert of Tuscany, and a son Alberic was the fruit of this union. Unwillingly did this scion of the ancient house submit to the rule of the foreigner. The air was impregnated with discontent, which soon spread amongst the families of the aristocracy. It required but a small incident to let the glimmering spark of rebellion break out into flames. During a meal the stepson clumsily upset a basin of water over the hands of the stepfather, and a box on the ears was King Hugo's prompt punishment. Such an insult Alberic would not forgive. His resentment was worked upon by his aunt, Theodora the younger, a daughter of Theodora the elder and of Pope John XI —and a sister of Marozia. Aunt and nephew were living in close intimacy, and Theodora, jealous of the power and influence of her sister, availed herself of the incident to excite her lover against his mother and stepfather.

Count Alberic, partly following his own desire for revenge, and partly anxious to please his dear aunt, resolved upon action, and having joined the malcontents in the city, promptly raised the standard of rebellion. His mother and her spouse should be expelled from Rome. From all parts of the city the discontented citizens gathered round his banner, and before King Hugo had had time to summon his troops, St. Angelo was stormed; and Hugo only just found time to escape. But his wife and her son, Pope John XI, were taken prisoners. The mother

was thrown into a dungeon and scarcely given any time wherein to reflect upon her stormy life—for she soon died of poison. Thus perished that remarkable woman, mistress of one Pope, mother of another, wife of a king ; her vast ambition had led her to a violent death in a narrow prison cell. Nature had endowed her with powerful faculties and political subtlety, and she had made subservient unto her popes, and kings, and nobles. But the day when she conceived the idea of uniting her fate to that of a king of foreign extraction, in order to subjugate the Roman people, she had signed her own death-warrant.

His Holiness Pope John XI was kept under strict supervision in the Lateran. Alberic, appointed consul and senator, was anxious to make the Papal power hereditary in his family. In St. Peter's Church he made the leaders of his party promise to raise his youthful son, Octavianus, the son of his mistress, Theodora the younger, upon the apostolic throne. And thus in 955 the eighteen-year-old boy actually became Pope—under the name of John XII. The blood of two generations of licentious women, very Messalinas, was running in the veins of the new Pontiff. The grandson of Theodora the elder, the son of Theodora the younger, and the nephew of Marozia was worthy of his relations. He was a slave of passion, and his love affairs were even more numerous than those of Sergius III. John XII was the first Pope to change his name, a custom which was followed by his successors. But this boy of unbridled passions was not satisfied with the power he had obtained—

he wished to extend it over the southern provinces of Italy. Placing himself at the head of his own troops and the auxiliaries of Spoleto, he therefore set out against the dukes of Capua and Salerno ; but having suffered a defeat, he called Otho I, king of Germany, to his assistance. Unaware of the life His Holiness was leading, the German Emperor appeared with his army in Italy. He besieged Count Beringar II of *Ivrea* and Friuli, and triumphantly marched against Rome, where John XII set the Imperial Crown upon his head. The Pope thus recognised the superiority of the Emperor, and the Romans made a solemn promise never to elect a Pope without the permission of the Emperor. Scarcely, however, had Otho left the Roman territory, when the Holy Father, breaking his oath, went over to the side of Beringar.

The Emperor was astonished, and secretly sent faithful messengers to Rome to inquire into the state of affairs, and into the cause of the Pope's faithlessness. And great was the astonishment of the envoys when they learned what life Pope John XII was leading.

" Sire," said the leader of the deputation, when they had returned to the Emperor, " we have learned most distressing news—and Roman citizens are complaining bitterly against the conduct of His Holiness."

" But why does he hate me ? " asked Otho.

" He hates you, sire, for no other reason than that which makes the devil hate the Creator," replied the courtier, inclined to flattery. " Your Majesty is anxious to do what is right and just and to protect with your glorious arms all that is good in temporal

or clerical power, which Your Majesty adorns by his conduct and ameliorates by his laws. Not so the Pope : Pope John XII is an enemy of all that is good."

Silently and with sinister mien the Emperor sat on his throne, listening to the report which his faithful servants had brought from Rome.

"And could you specify the crimes of the Holy Father ? " asked Otho.

"Yes ; the citizens of Rome relate that ever since this Pontiff has ascended the throne of St. Peter, honest women are afraid to visit either the graves of the Apostles or other holy places, which they were in the habit of frequenting for prayers. For worse than the danger of the Saracens is that which threatens their honour from Pope John. Only a few days ago virgins, widows, and married women have been dragged into the Palace of the Pope.[1]

"But those who willingly run into this papal *lupanar*," continued the messenger, "are numerous. The courtesans of Papal Rome are as many as those which promenaded in the *Via Sacra* in the days of the pagan Emperors Heliogabulus and Caligula. The streets of Rome have become the rendezvous and meeting-places of debauchery and *prurience*.

"A whole army of courtesans has now invaded Rome, the Holy City, and numerous are the victims they are making, more numerous than those made by the infidels ; for they are slaying body and soul. And the Roman matrons, the descendants and bearers of great Roman names, mothers of families, before

[1] Cf. "Luitprand."

whom the law bends down with veneration, are copying the modes and manners of the courtesans, and are being incited to sin by the Holy Father himself.

"At table, this Pontiff, the head of Christendom, drinks the health of the devil, and often invokes the help of Jupiter, of Venus, and of other demons."

John XII was deposed, and Pope Leo VIII appointed as his successor.

The Emperor had left Italy, being convinced that peace and calm had now been re-established. But Otho had counted without the intriguing Pope. John XII was the darling of the ladies of the Eternal City; and in those days of mediæval and Christian Rome, the noble ladies of aristocracy wielded unlimited power. So many of them were favourites and paramours of His Holiness, that they decided to reinstate their idol upon the throne of St. Peter. Discontent was stirred up among the Romans, and aided and abetted by their friends and relations, the women stormed the Lateran and brought back their protégé John to the Papal chair. Thus the love of the Roman ladies for the Pontiff regained for him the tiara.

Pope Leo VIII escaped, seeking refuge in the camp of the Emperor. At Camerino Otho received the first information of the revolt, and at once marched against Rome. But in the meantime further news reached him of the sudden death of Pope John XII.

In a secret apartment of the Lateran the Pontiff was reposing from his fatigues and troubles. He was not alone—for with him was the wife of a noble

Roman, a lady whom the Holy Father had abducted and made his mistress. She had secretly disappeared from the house of her husband and thought herself safe from pursuit under the protection of her holy lover. And yet, every noise, every step outside the Papal inner apartments made the fair lady tremble and bury her head in the breast of her lover.

"Why are you trembling, dearest?" asked John.

"Oh, my husband," she replied. "You don't know how furious he will be when he discovers my absence: he will not leave a stone in Rome unturned, and Heaven be merciful unto us if he discovers us!"

"He will not dare to come here," replied His Holiness. "You are safe with me."

But His Holiness was mistaken. He had evidently not counted upon the jealousy of woman. They were all mad on him, were those noble ladies of Rome, and his preference for his mistress of the moment, for this little *ingénue*, made more than one of them swear revenge, and the hiding-place of the guilty wife was indicated to the outraged husband.

Hark—a clash of steel, a scuffle, the janissaries of the Pope object, but they are killed by the infuriated husband; and in the presence of His Holiness and the adulteress stands that terror of all Lovelaces and Don Juans—a jealous husband, murder in his eyes! In his hand the Pope sees the sword ready to strike, and the trembling woman is kneeling and clinging to the garment of the Vicar of Christ.

The Vicar of Christ! John remembered it at this

supreme moment. Was he not the Pontiff, in whose hands lay the power to bind and to loosen? Were not the keys to Heaven in his possession? Could he not release the damned souls suffering in Inferno, and by the magic of his word transfer them into the company of the blessed? In that moment, as if in a vision, John saw the great power of Papal Rome: he saw kings and emperors kneel in the dust and kiss the feet of the Pontiff; he saw one inheritor of Charlemagne lead the horse of the Holy Father, and he perceived another, a gaunt figure, standing bareheaded and barefooted in the bitter cold, awaiting the decision of the Pope. And for a moment the Pontiff's courage revived.

"Stop!" he cried, "down with that murderous sword. Do you dare to question, to doubt, to accuse me, your spiritual father, me, the Vicar of Christ! Tremble for your eternal welfare—kneel down and implore my forgiveness—lest I should—in my righteous indignation—send thee down to perdition for all eternity."

But too late; all the wild passions which the flesh is heir to were let loose in the heart of the maddened husband! What did he care at that moment for the excommunication of the Pope and for his own eternal salvation? He saw before him the man who had seduced his wife; he found the faithless woman in the arms of his rival! It was enough to make the blood of twenty generations of paganism run hot, hammer and beat at his forehead, sweep away and obliterate any feeling of Christianity and forgiveness.

Besides, was not the man before him, was not his conduct, sufficient to destroy all the jealous husband's reverence for the Holy Church ?

"Tremble before your excommunication," he roared. "You are the very Antichrist—for whose benediction or curse I care little. Heaven will not listen to your requests—and the curse will sooner fall on your own head than on mine. Too many are the sinning Magdalenes whom you have taken to your bosom."

And down came the murderous sword upon the head that wore the Holy Crown. Pope John XII's life had come to a premature end—for he was only twenty-five. The outraged husband sent him down to his grave without even so much as giving him time for a prayer. And yet—so great is the strength of habit and inveterate belief, that scarcely did the avenger behold the inanimate, bleeding body of the Pontiff before him, than, without heeding the fainting woman, without a thought for, or fear of, the justice of man, he trembled as he realised his sacrilegious deed. He had assassinated the anointed of the Lord. Madly he rushed from the Lateran and threw himself into the Tiber. Thus ended Pope John XII, the darling of the frail and fair ladies of Rome.

The successors of John XII on the Papal throne were not less addicted to the love of women than the Popes whose love affairs have just been related. At the age of twelve Benedict IX had ascended the throne of St. Peter. "And this precocious child," says the monk Glaber, "had numerous love intrigues

with married women and with virgins, ready to listen to the amorous declarations of the Vicar of Christ."

The Romans, and especially the offended husbands, fathers, and brothers, revolted at last and drove the Don Juan on the Papal throne from Rome. But the mighty Counts of Tusculum had taken up his defence—and soon again Benedict returned to the Vatican. His short exile had not taught him anything; and far from having become wiser, he continued his life of debauchery. And so strong were his passions that there was no room in his heart even for ambition. Feeling that the Romans would not suffer him as their spiritual leader for any length of time, he preferred to abandon the throne rather than change his mode of life. He would live in obscure privacy and indulge in love intrigues rather than rule Christendom, and be compelled to observe, to some extent at least, the laws of decency and of moderation. For a sum of about £200 in English money, Benedict IX ceded his pontificate to a more ambitious prelate, whilst he himself retired upon his estate in the vicinity of Rome, where he freely addicted himself to the interesting game of love. Surrounded by a regular harem, this ex-Pontiff passed his days in *dulce jubilo*. Benedict IX, like other great sinners, loved a great deal, and when he could love no more he repented—and made his peace with Heaven.

His conscience suddenly awoke. He called to him Bartholomæus, the abbot of *Grota-Ferrata*, confessed his sins, and asked for absolution. The Father Confessor told the ex-Pontiff that he was unworthy of

forgiveness, but a life of repentance and pious deeds would nevertheless gain for him the grace of Heaven. And thus the repentant Don Juan passed the last days of his life in the Convent of Grota-Ferrata, praying, fasting, and mortifying the flesh which he had so much indulged in the days of his youth!

CHAPTER III

THE STORY OF POPE JOAN, THE FEMALE POPE WHO SAT ON THE THRONE OF ST. PETER.

It is not altogether rare in history, ancient or modern, pagan or Christian, to see examples of women who, denying their sex, have adopted man's garb so as to be able to take a more active part in either the government of a State or in science and art, the free participation in which centuries of man-made laws have denied them. Women have also ruled empires and commanded armies, have distinguished themselves on various fields of human activity, while disguised in man's attire. But the story of the woman who attained to the headship of the Church is unique in the annals of history.

Catholic historians have done their best to prove the absurdity and impossibility of the story of Pope Joan. But without wearying the reader with a long discussion of the pros and cons, I shall relate it according to the evidence transmitted by trustworthy authorities.

It happened at the beginning of the ninth century. The Saxons, subjugated by Charlemagne, had been forced to embrace the faith of Christianity; and to teach and instruct the new converts, who were still

clinging to their pagan habits, customs, and superstitions, the Frankish ruler had brought over many learned monks from England, whose mission it was to preach and teach the Gospel to the newly converted unbelievers.

Thus, towards the beginning of the ninth century, when the zeal of proselytising had spread over the vast Frankish Empire, there arrived at Mayence a learned English priest, accompanied by a fair and lovely woman, his travelling companion. He had brought her with him from Brittany, but she was supposed to have been a native of Ireland and to have been abducted in her early childhood by some *cenobite*. Her name was Hildegrande, and she was of noble parentage. In Mayence she gave birth to a child, who was baptised, as some say, under the name of Joan.[1] This child of love had inherited from her parents both grace of body and subtlety of mind. As she grew up it was evident that she would one day be not only a woman of rare beauty, but would also develop an intelligence superior to that of many men. Her father, noticing the rare gifts which nature had laid into the cradle of his illegitimate daughter, decided to instruct her in all the arts and sciences, abstruse and complicated, which formed the treasures of learning of the period. The girl made wonderful progress and was a match for the most learned and eminent scholars of the universities. She had not

[1] Historians are uncertain with regard to the name of the child. Some say she was called Agnes, whilst others pretend that her name was Gerberte, but it is admitted by most to have been Joan!

yet attained her thirteenth summer when she publicly discussed and argued on the most difficult philosophical problems, and fluently conversed in German, English, and Italian. She knew Latin, and was well versed, thanks to the instruction given to her by her ecclesiastical parent, in Church History and Theology. In short, she was an infant prodigy. But her culture of mind was coupled with a rare and wonderful beauty, which brought many admirers to her feet, anxious not only to listen to the words of wisdom falling from her lips but also to kiss them. Joan's heart was not insensible to the flattery and protestations of her admirers. She favoured, however, a young monk of Fulda, who pleased her both by his personal appearance and his vast learning. They were both handsome and cultured, and their love was based upon an affection deep and lasting. Theirs was a union both of body and soul. For a girl like Joan conventions and *bourgeois* virtues did not exist, and any obstacles standing in the way of her happiness she would soon find means to obviate. She conceived the daring idea of assuming masculine garb and of joining the monastery of Fulda, so as to be near her lover. And thus Joan became John the Englishman, a monk at Fulda, destined one day to occupy the throne of St. Peter. After a sojourn of two months within the convent walls, fearing detection, the lovers escaped in the silence of the night and travelled through Europe until they at last reached Athens, where they remained for many years. They studied the treasured lore of ancient Hellas and accumulated

vast and wonderful knowledge. Athens was still a seat of learning, and the lovers were able to increase their erudition in the ancient city. Joan studied literature, *belles-lettres*, history, science, and above all theology, and for her knowledge and natural gift she was admired by scholars and men of letters. The names of the pair became famous, and their reputation for learning spread far and wide. But one day—was it a sudden desire for change, or some other cause?—by mutual consent they decided to separate. They left Athens; and whilst the monk of Fulda turned his face to the East, where he hoped to investigate the secrets of the mystic and mysterious Orient, Joan turned towards the West.

The monk of Fulda went as far as Egypt, visited Alexandria, the ancient seat of learning, and the banks of the Nile. He searched the ruins of Thebes and stood at the foot of the Pyramids, asking the Sphinx to solve him the riddle of the universe. He travelled to ancient Phœnicia, visited the Holy Land and traversed the Euphrates. His peregrinations led him as far as Bagdad, where the successors of Mohammed, the Khalifahs, had raised the banner of Islam and established the residence of the brilliant Mohammedan rule and a seat and centre of the glorious Arabian civilisation. Bagdad at that time was what Athens had been in the days of Pericles. "Wisdom raised her voice in the thoroughfares," schools of learning and academies flourished everywhere, and in the streets, still re-echoing with the memory of Haroun al-Raschid and the tales of the Thousand and One

Nights, the monk of Fulda had time to forget for a while his cultured mistress, and to plunge his yearning soul, thirsting for knowledge, into the ocean of Eastern learning. The lore of mystic Chaldea, the teaching of Zoroaster and Brahma were forced to yield their secrets unto him.

And whilst he was conversing and arguing with the wise men of the East, Joan, or John the Englishman, wended her way to Rome. The Eternal City, the residence of the Pontiffs, the pride and glory of Christendom, attracted her attention. Here, she knew, was a vast field where her marvellous talents would find ample scope and where she could satisfy her ambitions. She continued to keep her disguise and to don masculine garb, and as it was customary in those days in Italy to shave, no suspicion could possibly be raised with regard to her sex. When Joan reached Rome, Sergius II was seated on the throne of St. Peter. With curious presentiments, Joan rode through the gates of Rome. Did she foresee that one day she would rule Christendom from the banks of the Tiber? The Eternal City at that time was a hotbed of factions and intestine wars; but although her ancient splendour had suffered greatly, Rome was still the centre where all that was brilliant converged. The talents, the grace, and sweetness of Joan made a sensation in Roman circles. The young *savant* was courted, and hopes entered his, or rather her bosom! Here she displayed so much learning, and such brilliancy that Joan, or John the Englishman, was looked upon as one of the most learned men of the

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century. Dignitaries of State, priests, and scholars were not ashamed to sit at her feet—and be her disciples.

But not only the erudition of the young professor, but his modesty and simple life, his purity of manners and moral conduct were considered worthy of the highest praise. Joan had disguised, not only her sex, but also her entire *mode* of life—and Christendom soon became her dupe. She was an adventuress, but an adventuress who compels, to some extent, the admiration of posterity. She had become so popular and such a favourite of the people and the clergy, of cardinals and bishops that she began to aspire to the Sacred Crown.

The atmosphere of the city on the Tiber, the atmosphere which had nourished and fostered the ambitions of a Marius and a Sulla, of a Cæsar and an Augustus, of a Nero and an Odoaker *et tutti quanti*, put the flame of ambition into the heart of Joan, alias John the Englishman. Knowledge was power in those days of mediævalism, and in an age of darkness he who could hold the torch of learning was sure of success. Joan decided to avail herself of her learning and attain to high honours. Hitherto she had studied and accumulated erudition for the sole pleasure of knowing, but now it was power she was striving after. The Church appeared to her the best field where she could reap the harvest of her labour. She decided now to hide for ever the secret of her sex, and to become a member of that powerful organisation which was extending its sway over the European world.

Outside the walls of the Eternal City there existed at that time a monastery consecrated to St. Martin, where theology and *belles-lettres* were being taught in Greek and in Latin. St. Augustus is supposed to have once been a teacher at this famous college. Joan entered this abode of learning, was ordained a priest, and from the professorial chair astonished her hearers and disciples with the profundity of her knowledge and the vastness of her erudition. The fame of the young professor spread beyond the confines of Rome. The monks, ignorant that she was a woman, called her John the Englishman, the defender of the law, and a treatise which this young professor had written against the Iconoclasts, whose doctrine the Emperors of Rome were favouring, created a stir in the Christian learned world.

Pope Sergius died in the meantime, and at his death the Church passed through a critical moment —for whilst the intestine quarrels were still continuing, the Saracens were threatening Italy with an invasion. A wise and learned priest became Pope Leo IV. The new Pontiff had known Joan at the College of St. Martin, and he continued to honour her with his esteem and friendship.

On more than one occasion the new Pope had entrusted John the Englishman with a delicate mission, which he had accomplished to the entire satisfaction of His Holiness. Joan proved of great assistance to Rome, the Pope, and the Church. She even fought against the infidels at the head of the Roman soldiers, driving the enemy from Italian soil.

Joan knew how to capture the favour of all the cardinals, and divining with womanly instinct the weak points of each prelate, she managed to capture the confidence of each in turn. During the pontificate of Sergius she had already become especially friendly with Cardinal Leo, Secretary of State, and delivered him of all his cares and worries in offering to do his work for him. And now when, after the death of Sergius, Leo ascended the Pontifical throne as Leo IV, His Holiness at once signed a decree by which he nominated Joan as his Secretary of State. She soon became Cardinal. In the first year of Leo's reign a fierce struggle between two contesting parties arose in the Roman Church. Anastasius, who had already been raised to the dignity of cardinal during the reign of Sergius, was an implacable enemy of the present Pope. Instead of dissimulating his anger at his rival's accession, he, on the contrary, availed himself of every possible opportunity to cause the Pope annoyance. In vain Leo punished the rebel with deposition and excommunication. Anastasius left Rome for Aquileja. The Pontiff ordered him to return to Rome; Anastasius refused. To the thundering missive of the Pope—Anastasius replied with mockery and rebellious words.

The patience of Leo had been exhausted, and a synod, consisting of 45 cardinals, 143 bishops, and 587 abbots and priests, was convened to judge the rebellious priest. Joan, in her capacity of Secretary of State, had to read the accusation; and she displayed such eloquence and ingenuity that the assembly was

struck with admiration. Anastasius was unanimously deprived of his rank, and at the recommendation of Pope Leo his Secretary of State was raised to the dignity of Cardinal. Modestly the clever woman accepted the new honours, declaring herself an unworthy servant of the Church, and the most unworthy of the Cardinals. Such humility pleased the prelates.

Leo IV died, and the Papal Conclave proceeded to elect a new Pope. Many candidates there were, anxious to obtain the keys of St. Peter, and neither gold nor blood was spared to assure victory. By means of intrigues and cabals, the rivals vied with each other for the supreme honour, each endeavouring to conquer the throne of St. Peter. At last—to pacify all parties—the choice fell upon an outsider, whose learning and wisdom entitled him to the high dignity, and whose choice was sure of becoming popular in Rome. The conclave elected John the Englishman to the honour of wearing the Papal Crown. And thus Joan, the maid of Mayence, became Vicar of Christ under the name of John VIII.

In selecting Joan to the throne of St. Peter, the Cardinals yielded to popular pressure, for John was a great favourite with the populace of Rome. More than once they had expressed the wish to see the amiable Secretary-Pontiff in the place of the morose Leo. And as soon as Leo was dead—and the news had scarcely spread through the city—the people at once flocked in their thousands to the Vatican, shouting: "Long live Pope John VIII." Flowers were strewn

in her way, and when Joan appeared in the funeral procession of the last Pope, noble Romans, like so many Walter Raleighs, spread their coats and costly tapestries in the street for the future Pope to walk upon. The enthusiastic youth of Rome carried their favourite on their shoulders through the streets of the city of the Cæsars. And now, even if some among the Cardinals had looked askance at the election of the popular Cardinal to the Pontifical dignity, they felt it wise to yield to the *vox populi*. The mobs of the ninth century were of different mettle than crowds in our own days. They stood no jokes when their ire was roused. And woe unto the adversaries of Joan, had they dared to contradict popular choice.

Women have reigned before and since Joan over vast empires and controlled the destinies of nations. From Semiramis to Catherine II, from Zenobia to Queen Elizabeth, many women have worn a crown and wielded a sceptre—many have and will continue to wield it in some realm or kingdom, political, social, or intellectual; but Joan was the only woman who was ever head of that powerful organisation, the Church—the keeper of the keys of heaven, the ruler of earth and hell. Indeed, it is an example so unique in history that it has been styled a fable even by Protestants and opponents of the Catholic Church, although trustworthy authorities vouchsafe for the veracity and authenticity of the facts. Gibbon goes so far as to declare the story of Popess Joan as false, but not as utterly incredible. And a learned scholar and traveller—Maximilian Misson, who visited the

Church of St. John of the Lateran in 1743, in describing the famous *chaise percée*, says : " About seventy or eighty learned and erudite men, none of whom can be considered suspect in his testimony, as they were all members of the Church of Rome, have positively declared that a woman sat on the throne of St. Peter.

And why should the Church of Rome take so much trouble to prove this story a fable when Cardinal Baronius does not hesitate to declare " that many monsters have occupied the Papal throne." And indeed, in a century when Theodoras and Marozias —the mighty mistresses—elected and deposed Pontiffs, why should not one of them have disguised her sex, and seated herself on the throne of St. Peter, instead of raising her lover to the dignity ?

John the Englishman had become Pope. The populace of Rome applauded the election and expressed great joy in seeing once more a wise and intelligent ruler on the Pontifical throne.

Pope Joan ruled with wisdom and benevolence, and Christendom, content with the new Holy Father, witnessed many proofs of his sagacity. Many abuses were done away with, a system of economy introduced, and the Papal coffers, which had been emptied during the invasion of the Saracens, were refilled. The Iconoclasts were excommunicated, and mighty sovereigns came from far to prostrate themselves before the Vicar of Christ, and to kiss the *shoe* of the Prince of the Apostles. The King of England is supposed to have come to Rome, accompanied by his son

Alfred, afterwards known as the Great. Did none of the many sovereigns, prelates, and magnates, who came to prostrate themselves before and kiss the foot of His Holiness perceive or at least doubt the identity of the Pope? Who can tell? But now that Joan had attained the height of earthly power, now that her craving for ambition had been satisfied beyond her expectations, and that her wildest dreams had been realised, she suddenly felt, like the author of Ecclesiasticus, that all was vain. Ambition, however, although at moments stronger in woman than in man, is not of very long duration in the feminine heart. Victor Hugo, in his famous play *Hernani*, relates how Charles V, elected Emperor, suddenly sees himself upon the dizzy pyramid, kings, princes, counts, nobles and the masses far beneath; his heart is swelled with ambition and there is scarcely any room for love within it. Such is never, or at least rarely, the case with woman, unless she is very masculine or perverse—and then she is no longer a real woman!

Joan took a dislike to public affairs, to the government of the Church; the woman in her began to assert herself. She had had enough of being worshipped and adored and obeyed; she wanted to be loved. She almost regretted those days of her youth when, poor, unknown, without any prospects for the future, she had tramped, by the side of her companion, through many lands, free and happy, loving and beloved. And now on the summit of that pyramid to which she ought never to have dared to lift her eyes, sur-

rounded by wealth and greatness and splendour, she felt alone.

During her first years in Rome, whilst living in poverty, Joan had led an exemplary life, cared for nothing but her studies, and was anxious to increase her knowledge. And during the first months of her pontificate, she also seems to have followed in the footsteps of the good Popes. She knew that she was committing a sacrilege; that Christianity had too low an estimate of her sex to allow a woman to ascend the Papal throne. She availed herself of all the prerogatives appertaining to her holy office. And whilst conferring holy orders, appointing priests and ordaining bishops, singing masses, consecrating temples and altars, administering the sacraments, and offering her feet to be kissed by the faithful, she also continued her studies.

Soon, however, she fell into temptations. She was surrounded by men whom she could choose as lovers. But her case was different from those of a Semiramis and a Catherine, of an Elizabeth, or an Anne, and other queens and empresses. She had to be assured of the absolute devotion and discretion of her favourite. And many a time and often Joan thought of her lover, the handsome monk of Fulda. She remembered the happy hours they had passed together on the classic soil of Athens—where she had tasted the pleasures of mind and of matter alike. She was free and happy then, whilst now, in the midst of all the pomp, she was only a slave, a slave of conventions, obliged to lead a life which was incompatible with her ardent nature

and temperament. And who knows, perhaps a feeling of remorse had entered her heart? She was a woman —and the idea of the equality of the sexes, destined to make such rapid strides a thousand years later, was something monstrous to the minds of the people living in the ninth century. Joan felt that she was usurping the Papal crown, and that constant danger was hovering over her head. She felt the necessity of finding a *confidant* and a lover among the young prelates who surrounded her, in whose embraces she could find consolation for the many torments which were troubling her mind and her body.

Among the chamberlains attached to the service of the Pontiffs, was one of the name of Baldello; a youth who had the good fortune to attract the attention of the female Pope. Baldello, a Florentine by birth, bore a striking resemblance to the monk of Fulda, and Joan distinguished him by her marked preference and favour. He was appointed private chamberlain of Joan, and initiated into the secret and mystery which shrouded the personality of the Pontiff. Did Joan declare her love to her favourite, like so many libertine empresses and queens who reigned in their own rights? Or did the lover discover her identity and avail himself of the advantages he had thus acquired?

Young Baldello became the lover of the Pope whom people adored under the name of John VIII. Legend relates that on that night a statue of the Virgin suddenly fell to the ground and was broken into a thousand pieces; that an image of St. Peter turned black, and

that the moon was eclipsed, covering as it were its brilliance with a veil—in sign of shame. Henceforth Joan lived mostly in her apartments, and rarely appeared in public. And whilst the people imagined that the Pope was practising devotions and working for the honour and the glory of the Church, Joan was tasting the delights of love in the arms of Baldello.

Important affairs of State and Church were being left to the ministers, who reigned in the name of the Pope. Nature, however, took her revenge. Pope Joan was on the point of giving birth to a child; and great was the distress of her lover, who foresaw the fate awaiting them. Joan, however, was of good cheer. She relied upon the superstition of the Catholic world in the ninth century. To work a wonder and make Christendom believe in a miracle would be easy for an inventive brain like hers.

A thought even crossed her mind of making Papacy hereditary. Was not the temporal power a hereditary privilege? Was not the Khalif of Bagdad the head of the Moslem religion, and did not his son reign after him? A woman? And why should not woman be equal to man? she exclaimed; and a wave of revolt swept through her delicate frame! Have I not been endowed with capacities superior to those of the prelates around me? Have I not governed the Church to the satisfaction of Christendom? Have I not shown to the world that a woman can rule as well as a man, that a woman can occupy the throne of St. Peter with as much, nay, more dignity, than a man? Such thoughts on the equality of the sexes,

commonplace in our age, but which could not but sound monstrous to the men of the ninth century, agitated the brain of the clever adventuress on the Papal throne. She had courage enough for anything, but, alas! she felt that she was alone—and detection meant sure and ignominious death; only a miracle, real or worked by herself, could save her and her lover. She knew that by introducing the will of Heaven one could obtain almost everything in an age of superstition, and that all the founders of religion, when addressing themselves to primitive nations, never spoke in their own names, but in that of a divinity whose messengers they were. Daring thoughts traversed Joan's mind—she thought of the many miracles which a credulous humanity had accepted, of the holy legends and metamorphoses upon which the religions of the East and of the West had been based. Did not Greece believe the quick-changes of the Olympians, did not Jupiter assume so many garbs, changing himself into animals of all kinds and into a golden rain, when he decided to penetrate into the tower of the royal maid Danæ? The mythological fables constituting the religious creeds of European and Asiatic humanity were so many, and had found so easy acceptance, that one more could easily be added to the number. And what contemplative sons of the mystic and mysterious Orient have believed, what philosophic Hellas once accepted unquestioningly in its childish simplicity, should not mediæval Christendom believe as truth and cry *urbi et orbi:* a wonder, a miracle has happened,

the Pope has been changed into a Popess! Historians have since endeavoured to prove that Joan never existed; that her story is a fable, a malicious fable invented by detractors of Papism. It may be so; but it is nevertheless strange to see them employ their learning to prove the absurdity of one fable, whilst they never question the truth of many others. Some acquaintance, however, with early mediævalism, with the period when the event of Pope Joan is supposed to have occurred, will make it clear to the student that such an event was within the bounds of possibility in those days. The Popes who preceded and immediately followed Pope Joan had contrived to usurp the Papal dignity, not by means of their personal merit, but through all sorts of intrigues. Baronius calls them criminals and execrable monsters. "They have filled the Church," he says, "with such infamy that the very thought of it makes one blush and tremble. And the persecution which the Church has suffered from its most cruel persecutors is only child's play in comparison to the harm and injury done to it in consequence of the abominations of the Popes of the ninth century." Women ruled in Rome in those days, and it was not at all a rare thing to see women hiding their sex, and entering the Church in men's garb. There have been several women who entered monasteries disguised as men. Eugenia, daughter of Philip, governor of Alexandria, entered the monastery and became superior, and never would her secret have been divulged had she not herself recognised the necessity of acknowledging her identity.

Theodora of Alexandria was another woman who entered a convent as a monk, where she passed her life.

But strange to say Joan, that clever woman who had managed to hoodwink and almost bewitch all men, failed in hiding her pregnancy. It is this fact which many authors have brought forward as an argument, proving the improbability of the story of Pope Joan. But why not quote—a thing which Catholic authors ought to have done—the Biblical passage, "And He makes wise men stupid"? Why not say that Heaven would no longer endure the blasphemy of a woman reigning as Pope, and decreed her punishment?

There is a story related by some historians that one day, whilst Pope Joan was presiding over an ecclesiastical council, a man possessed by a demon was brought before her to be exorcised. Joan asked the demon who had chosen the body of the poor tortured victim as his abode, when he would give that man freedom. "I shall leave this body," replied the demon, "when you, who are Pope and Father of Fathers, will show me a child born of a Popess!"

"Papa Pater Patrum, Papissae pandito patrum:
Et tibi tunc eedam, de corpore quando recedam."

The lines are not in the best Latin style of the age of Cicero, but are not bad for a demon, who, as is well known, is usually fond of speaking in rhymes. One author is of opinion, that if Joan was unable to hide her pregnancy it was due to her ignorance in matters of obstetrics. She had for so many years

been only among men, and paraded as a man. Other historians, however, maintain that Joan would have carried out her designs, and in any case escaped detection and her fatal doom, had not jealousy played her an unpleasant turn and made her plans futile, until it was too late and events necessarily had to take their course.

Twelve years had elapsed since Joan had parted at Athens from her former lover, the monk of Fulda. She thought him dead or a slave of some slave-trafficking, infidel Turks. But as chance would have it, at that moment the monk of Fulda turned up in Rome. For twelve long years he had wandered under the Eastern skies, had gleaned knowledge and learning everywhere, and unravelled many riddles of the universe; he had forced nature to yield to him many of her secrets, and acquired wisdom and stores of learning. And now, like another Faust, he suddenly craved for human joys. He remembered his companion of Fulda and of Athens and wondered whether she was still alive. A yearning seized his heart, and he decided to proceed to Rome, where he hoped to learn of her whereabouts. Arrived in the Holy City, he took up his lodgings with a native of Piedmont and discreetly inquired from his host whether he had heard of a certain John the Englishman. The host looked surprised at the stranger, who seemed to be ignorant of the fact that John the Englishman was Pontiff of Rome and seated on St. Peter's throne. News did not travel so fast in those days, but surely Christian Europe knew the name of the Pope! The

stranger had evidently arrived from the Far East, and the host kindly informed him of the past history of John the Englishman, as it was known to the people of Rome. Arrived in Rome twelve years ago, he had gained popularity and had been elected Pope after the death of Leo IV. "For some years," so the chatty host continued, "the people had nothing but praise for the wise and benevolent Pontifical ruler, but times have changed, and now His Holiness scarcely shows his face to the people. Everything is done by one of his chamberlains, who is in great favour with him, and whom many suspect to be the nephew or the son of John. Strange rumours are afloat and are being whispered concerning the origin of the present Vicar of Christ. Some say that his origin is very obscure, whilst others give him an illustrious parentage. They make him a younger brother of the King of Britain, or a cousin of the Emperor of Byzantium." Thus the host of the travelling monk. The latter could scarcely trust the tale which the other was unfolding. The former lover of Joan decided to seek an audience of the Pope and to find out the truth for himself. Could the companion of his youth have dared to practise such an imposture? Could she, a woman, although clever, intelligent, and erudite as she was, have baffled cardinals and prelates, and escaped detection? He passed a sleepless night, tormented as he was by doubts which thronged his reeling brain. Early next morning he sought an audience of the Holy Father. "An Englishman," he said, "has urgent business with His Holiness." Joan

had a weakness for Englishmen, and the monk was speedily admitted into the august presence of the ruler of Christendom. In spite of the years which had passed, and the surroundings so different from those of Athens, where the lovers had separated twelve years ago, the monk quickly recognised Joan in the disguise of Pope. After the first surprise at the unexpected meeting, Joan proceeded to explain to her friend how she had contrived to become Pope. She expressed the hope that he would now remain in Rome, where, assured of the benevolence of His Holiness, he would rise to high dignities, and end his days in peace. But was it jealousy or was it the sense of right which suddenly filled the breast of the monk? He indignantly repulsed the woman-Pope and threw his curse into her face: "You are a monster of iniquity," he cried, "in daring to mock the wrath of Heaven. Truly, it is you to whom the book of the Apocalypse is referring when it describes the great adulteress. You have profaned the temple of God and the sanctuary of the Lord, and you dare to accept the worship and the adoration of the Christian world! It is of you that the Apocalypse says: 'And there came one of the seven angels which had the seven vials, and talked with me, saying unto me, Come hither; I will shew unto thee the judgment of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters: with whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication. So he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness:

COUNTESS MATHILDA OF TUSCANY.

and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet-coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns. And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication: And upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH. And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus: and when I saw her, I wondered with great admiration.' Verily, it is to you that these words apply. You are a disgrace to the holy faith, and you are the abomination of the clergy. I predict for you the punishment indicated in Holy Writ: '*And dogs will devour your flesh and tear you in pieces, even as they did with the carcass of impious Jezebel.*' "

And whilst her former lover, hurriedly and agitated by his moral indignation, was leaving the holy precincts, Joan was left to ruminate over his words. Her usual courageous presence of mind abandoned her, and she was a prey to most sinister thoughts and misgivings. Thus Baldello found her, and in vain did he endeavour to rouse the spirit of his mistress. She seemed to have resigned herself to her doom, and awaited the hand of Heaven to come down upon her. She lacked the courage to abandon the apostolic seat and to escape in the silence of the night from Rome in the company of her lover to some obscure corner. Wealth and power had, after all, too strong a hold

upon her. She brooded over the means, thinking how she could avoid detection; in those moments of extreme mental exhaustion and nervous breakdown, she had hallucinations; thus various legends arose with regard to visions she is supposed to have had. Some historians record a legend, which found current belief in the days of the Reformation, and runs as follows: In her moments of dire distress, when this adventuress on St. Peter's throne was taking council with herself, wavering as to the course she should adopt—an angel suddenly appeared unto her. "Choose," he said to the poor woman, "choose between my right hand and my left. The one contains the eternal fire, whilst the other is full of the shame and disgrace which will be meted out to you on earth." Joan is supposed to have preferred the contempt of mankind and their punishment rather than the wrath of Heaven. Another legend related that at that time strange happenings occurred and that the minds of men were troubled by wonderful phenomena, clearly announcing the wrath of Heaven to the superstitious crowds of early mediævalism. The Tiber overflowed its banks, inundated the country, carried away churches and houses, and drowned men and beasts. The locust devastated the harvest and ruined the vine. The people, maddened by such calamities, clamoured for the intervention of the Pope. Cannot the Holy Father, who commands the celestial powers, can he not excommunicate the evil forces? One word and he can deliver us from our distress. But the Holy Father remained inactive. Alas! he was weak in the

presence of the laws of nature! Joan could circumvent human minds, but blind natural forces mocked at her intelligence. The infuriated mob assembled at the gates of the Vatican. One could almost hear the voice of revolt which Luther, the son of the Thuringian peasant, was to raise six centuries later, resound in the distance. The hydrahead of revolution stared the Pope in the face. The rabble of Rome were convinced that a gesture of the Pontiff would suffice to deliver the city from the various sufferings. And they angrily asked why the Vicar of Christ held his hands in his pockets, when, like Moses, he needed only to extend it over the sea for the water to dry up, or to work similar miracles. The hostile and ambitious cardinals fermented the uproar. Working in obscurity, they at last contrived that the *canaille* appeared threatening before the gates of the Vatican. Pale and trembling, Baldello appeared: "Your Holiness," he exclaimed; "we are lost—the city is in a state of uproar, and the people are clamouring for a miracle." At last Joan, persuaded by her lover, appeared on the balcony to appease the popular excitement. Her pale face and her sadness had a magic effect upon the mob. She stretched out her hand as if in benediction, announcing to the assembled masses that to-morrow she would, in a holy procession, anathematise the locusts and deliver Rome from that scourge. In the meantime, however, she would hurl her curse against all those who would not instantly return to their homes. The promise and the threat had their effect—and immediately the crowd dis-

persed. Papal excommunication was a powerful weapon in the ninth century in the hands of the chiefs of Christendom. The next day Rome was astir, the good people of Rome loved those splendid processions of the Church. The ceremony of the Rogations was still a relic of the pagan past. For at that period the ancient Romans used to sacrifice to their Olympian deities, imploring their protection for the fertility of the fields, dancing and banqueting round the altars of Ceres and of Bacchus, the gods of bread and wine. The Church had adopted the ceremonies so dear to the popular mind, often utilising them for the glory of Christianity. The altars of Ceres and Bacchus were erected in honour of the Madonna and the Christian saints. The church bells of Rome sounded the glad tidings, and confidently everybody awaited the miracle. Bishops, priests, and monks assembled at the Vatican; in their thousands the people had come to witness the wonder wrought by the Holy Father. In the last moment her lover implored her not to appear in public, but Joan could scarcely cancel her promise, although she had gloomy presentiments. The air was impregnated with holy incense, the church bells were ringing and announcing her doom to Joan. Slowly the successor of St. Peter advanced at the head of the holy procession, acclaimed by the masses. From a thousand throats the sounds of holy hymns mounted heavenwards, and the shout "*Ora pro nobis*," was re-echoed from Rome's seven hills.

Bearers of crosses, standards, and holy images

marched in front, followed by monks and holy friars, bending low their heads, covered with ashes in sign of repentance. Nuns and deaconesses, virgins and married women, all in the attitude of sinners, walked behind; and at last came the motley crowd of Romans interspersed with Eastern converts, Greek monks, English theologians, and other foreigners. But the private physician of His Holiness noticed a sudden faintness in Joan, and quickly advised some refreshment. Then the Pope blessed the fields and the harvests, making crosses into all directions. And now the procession was over, and Joan, remounting the mule, returned to the Vatican. But, alas, she was not destined to reach it. The heat of the day, the fatigue, the mental worry and remorse, had been too much for her. Nature demanded her rights. Suddenly the Holy Cross had fallen from Joan's hands—the Pope had fainted. Was the head of Christendom possessed by some evil demon? The Bishop of Porto, the greatest authority on exorcism, approached and conjured the evil spirit; breathlessly the crowd standing round looked at the Pontiff, waiting for the demon to escape. But suddenly a strange thing had happened. The Pope Joan had given birth to a child, prematurely born. Great was the tumult and the consternation. The furious populace and the enemies of the Pope made a rush for the mother and the child, ready to throw them into the Tiber, whilst Baldello and his friends endeavoured to pacify the mob by proclaiming a miracle. But the people were thirsting for blood; the spirit of their ancestors, who

had gloated in the Roman arenas over the gladiators, fighting and bleeding in the dust, over prisoners devoured by wild beasts and tortured for the pleasure of the *plebs Romanum*, was suddenly awakened in the Christians of Rome of the ninth century. The people were not in a mood to believe in miracles. The unhappy woman opened her dying eyes, and, casting a glance around her, lifted them to Heaven, reciting the words of the Prophet: "I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting." [1] In the tumult which ensued Joan was strangled; her body, however, was buried on the very spot where her death had occurred. It was perhaps the result of the remainder of esteem still lingering in the breasts of the authorities.

Historians of the eleventh century pretended that on that spot where the death of Pope Joan had taken place a chapel had been erected, the traces of which remained until the fifteenth century, whilst some maintain that a marble statue, representing Joan and her child, had been placed there to conserve the memory of the incident for later generations, but when the Reformation had begun to raise its voice against Papacy, the statue had been speedily destroyed. A law had also been passed that henceforth the Popes should never proceed through the street where the event dishonouring the Church had happened, and that the Pontiffs, going in procession from the Church of St. Peter to that of St. John, should wend their

[1] Isaiah iv. 6; l. 6.

way through side-streets. It was also after the death of Joan that the ceremony of the *chaise percée* had been introduced—a ceremony which remained in existence until the accession of Pope Leo X. One of these *chaises percées* was seen by one author in 1590, whilst another gave a minute description of it in 1685.

CHAPTER IV

GREGORY VII AND HIS FAVOURITE COUNTESS MATHILDA OF TUSCANY

We have seen Roman courtesans redeeming to some extent their conduct by a great attachment to their native land; for they were animated by the thought of national emancipation. And whilst lavishing their caresses upon the wearers of the tiara, the Theodoras and Marozias were anxious to subordinate Papacy to the autonomy and independence of Italy. We now come to a Papal favourite of a quite different type. Fascinated by the genius of a great Pope, who had in him the soul of a dictator, instead of that of the humble fisherman on the banks of Genezareth, she devoted herself to the temporal interests of the Church. I am speaking of Mathilda, countess of Tuscany. It was greatly due to her efforts that Papacy acquired that political power over Italy for which the previous Pontiffs had long been fighting. She had been called "La grande Italienne"; but I venture to think that she scarcely deserves that title. Great? Yes; in many ways she was great, but it was not the greatness of Italy she had at heart, but that of the Church and of Papacy. For both she and her friend, Pope Hildebrand, had one dream—the

supremacy of Papacy over all the nations and the princes of the world. The altar above the throne, the sword of the princes beneath the keys of St. Peter, the forehead of the kings touching the feet of the Pope—such were the ambitious aims animating Pope Gregory VII and Mathilda of Tuscany. Without the authority and consent of the Pontiff of Rome no government should be possible. And any authority which strove to exist independently of the Pope should be shattered like some fragile vase hurled against a mighty rock! "The world," said Gregory, "derives its light from two sources, the sun and the moon, the former symbolising Papacy, the latter the Empire." He has been compared to Napoleon I, "for both," says an Italian historian, "were suffering from the delirium of universal monarchy." "And both," he adds, "were broken in coming into contact with the power of England. Both died in exile, two Titans of tragedy whom a God had broken." "Ambitious and inflexible, there was no room for any tender thought in Gregory's heart," so say the upholders of the theory that the originator of the law of celibacy himself had led a life of chastity. His friendship for Mathilda was only of a platonic and mystic nature! That Gregory VII did not truly love Mathilda one might easily admit; but to the Napoleon of the Church all means which could further his plans were permissible, and the love of a woman was an important and mighty factor in the Italy of his day. Mazarin did not love Anna of Austria, neither did Potemkin love Catherine. They feigned

love where love could be of use, and made the woman subservient to their plans. "Gregory VII duped the Countess; he availed himself of her zeal as a devoted partizan of Papacy—but never cherished the woman. Like Napoleon, Hildebrand, too, was a pastmaster in the art of theatrical pose." Some historians, however, have proved, on the strength of contemporary documents, that the relationship of Hildebrand and Mathilda had not been wholly mystic, platonic, and political. I shall relate some episodes of their lives as I have gathered them from ancient chronicles.

Mathilda, countess of Tuscany, was the daughter of the Marquess Bonifacius and of Beatrice, a daughter of the Emperor Conrad. Nature had endowed her with qualities which scarcely suited her sex. She was beautiful, but her beauty, more of a dazzling than a gentle nature, appealed to the grosser senses, and never captivated the heart of the admirer. Her appearance was majestic, but it was the majesty and imposing stature of the soldier. And her soul was in perfect harmony with her body. For she was ambitious as she was intrepid, and would be hindered by no obstacles standing in the way of her passions, amorous or otherwise. Hard-hearted and selfish, like every woman conscious of her beauty who does not also couple spiritual culture with physical charm, the countess of Tuscany was destined to play a prominent part in the history of Italy and of Papal Rome. It was her good fortune to meet a kindred spirit, who helped her to realise her dreams of ambition and to satisfy her unbridled passions. Mathilda

was still very young when her parents married her, much against her will, to Goffreddo il Gobbo, the hunchback; but neither the marriage bond in general nor the husband chosen for her in particular pleased the tastes of the impulsive Countess. Rome, with her life of vice and libertinage, with her splendour and luxury, attracted her, and she soon thought of some pretext upon which to annul her marriage. It is characteristic of the woman and of her hypocrisy and cynicism that she was pleading the very pretext which was in direct contradiction with her nature. Like Christine of Sweden, another noble hypocrite, Countess Mathilda pretended that Heaven and nature did not intend her for matrimonial life. Hers was the temperament of a holy vestal, of a noble nun, desiring no other love but that of the Church, and no other bridegroom than Christ! The ardent kisses and love demonstrations of a mere man were appalling to her! And the society of Europe of the twelfth century believed her. Deaf to the entreaties of her husband, and unmoved by the remonstrances of her family, she left Goffreddo and went to Rome, where she soon became one of the greatest ladies at the Papal Court. Her husband, who was of a chivalrous but impulsive nature, henceforth had a deep hatred for Papacy and Rome. He retired to the Court of Lorraine and afterwards embraced the cause of Henry IV in his struggle against Pope Gregory. Mathilda now devoted herself body and soul to the interests of Papacy. She was exceedingly rich, and with her prodigalities and splendour could eclipse

all the Roman ladies, her rivals. Such a personality could scarcely fail to attract the attention of that astute and ambitious statesman who at that time sat on the throne of St. Peter, and before whom emperors and kings trembled and humiliated themselves. Hildebrand, known by the name of Gregory VII, was ruling the Church, Christendom, and Europe. He, too, was a native of Tuscany; and by numerous intrigues, unscrupulousness, and firmness he had succeeded in ascending the Papal throne and seizing the keys of heaven. People used to say at that time that the Pope was an adept of the black art, and that magic was one of his favourite occupations. Gregory's trusted servant was a certain Brazut, whose knowledge of subtle poisons had proved very useful to the Pope, enabling him to get rid of several of his rivals. For the Pontiff's ambition knew no bounds, his domineering nature brooked no contradiction; he strove to command—expecting every one to obey him. Gregory was a tyrant on the throne of the poor fisherman, and in the name of Him whose luminous figure impersonates to us gentleness and forgiveness, sublimity, and a noble character, he ruled harshly and severely. Gregory was claiming absolute dominion over Christian Europe. He had formed his janissaries, the celibatary clergy, and now was intent upon organising his theocracy—the supremacy of the tiara over the crown, of the spiritual power over the temporal, and in making the kingdoms of Europe vassals of the Court of Rome. The Pope was infallible, and the Infallible is the ruler of the

world; like Napoleon, Gregory constituted himself the centre of the world, the pivot round which the universe should revolve. But the Infallible was clear-sighted enough to perceive that he required co-workers. A woman like the rich and mighty Countess of Tuscany was an invaluable acquisition to his cause, a precious instrument in his hands. But once more the woman duped the man—she proved stronger—and Mathilda, like many of her sex, was an artist in ruling; she ruled, pretending all the time to be ruled. The Infallible, the tyrant, became submissive, the ruler a subject of the imperious woman. He who was supposed to possess the power of unlocking the gates of Heaven, and of unchaining all bonds, became enchained himself by the shackles of love. The Pope was in love! Mathilda of Tuscany, with her dazzling appearance, her gleaming flesh, her glorious, opulent beauty, had captivated the heart of Hildebrand. The proud monk who was wont to command sovereigns and mighty warriors was only too happy to obey the woman he loved. The master of Christendom became the slave of the Tuscan Countess. They had a great deal in common, these two ambitious souls, who were great in many ways, and who in a measure compel our admiration. Their physical attraction was strengthened by a bond of deep sympathy, making their union almost indissoluble. The ambitious Mathilda thought herself mistress not only of the Pope but of Europe. The idea of a rival never entered her mind—and her sense of safety was perhaps the cause of her undoing. Public

opinion in Italy was indignant at the conduct of Mathilda, and it was especially the family of her husband who vented their wrath very loudly. In order to silence her relations, she invited a niece of her husband, a girl of the name of Theodorine, to come to Rome, promising to marry her advantageously.

Theodorine's mother, a very ambitious woman, was delighted to send her daughter to the Eternal City, where the protection of such a powerful relative as her aunt Mathilda would soon help her to make a brilliant match. In her native Tuscany the family had given Theodorine a description of her aunt far from flattering; and she was therefore astonished and agreeably surprised at the kindness and treatment she met on her arrival in Rome. Theodorine was only eighteen, and her appearance was as unlike that of her aunt as her entire nature and temperament were different from those of Mathilda. She possessed more grace and fascination than majestic beauty. And what was more, she added culture and perfection of mind to her delicate physical appearance. All those who came within the magic circle of her personal charm fell under its influence. Theodorine's heart had already been won by one of the handsomest princes in Italy, Hippolyte, Marquess of Arimini—and his advances had been accepted not only by the loving girl, but also by her ambitious mother. The young prince soon joined his fiancée in Rome.

But the Pope saw Theodorine and forgot the charms of the elder and more mature woman. The

grace and unpretentious beauty of the niece had captivated the heart of the Sovereign-Pontiff; he began to think of means how to keep her near him without raising the suspicion of the passionate aunt. Gregory gave brilliant receptions and festivities in his Palace of the Lateran, and Theodorine was the centre of the many pleasures and amusements. But alas! whilst the heart of Hildebrand was being more and more enflamed, the more frequently he came into contact with the fresh beauty of the Tuscan girl, the latter only felt contempt for the Pope. She found the licentiousness and voluptuousness reigning at the Court of Rome scandalous, and the attitude of the Pontiff hardly in accordance with his dignity. The girl loved the Prince of Arimini, and her judgment of the Pope was not warped by any affection for him. To her he was an elderly man, disgracing his holy office and making a fool of himself for the love of a woman. And such was Theodorine's indignation and contempt that she did not hesitate to express her views to her aunt in undisguised and forcible language.

"His Holiness," she said, "would be more in his place in the whirl of worldly pleasures, anywhere, indeed, but on the throne of St. Peter, which ought to be the seat of wisdom, benevolence, and modesty. I am more than scandalised at his conduct; and the head of Christianity is scarcely superior to any mean and low charlatan who is trading on the stupidity and folly of the ignorant masses in the open squares and market-places."

"Child," replied the aunt, "you use daring lan-

guage with regard to him who is all-powerful. You are too young to criticise the actions of His Holiness, whom all Christendom is serving and worshipping, and who has the power to open the gates of Heaven to the most inveterate sinners."

"It is true, madam," replied the girl. "I am very young, but if I have openly expressed my opinion to you, it is based upon my firm conviction that you, too, in your heart of hearts, have only a poor respect for His Holiness, whose attitude in private is so unholy as to shock and surprise a right-minded Christian and a decent-thinking woman.

"The respect I had for the Pope—whom I supposed to be conscientiously fulfilling the duties of his holy office—is now gone," added the girl with a flash of indignation.

"I have brought you to Rome," coldly replied Countess Mathilda, "in order to teach you, mould and fashion your young mind; but it seems to me that you know far more than His Holiness and myself. We shall do best to take lessons from you," she concluded with an ironic smile.

"I wonder, my dear, where you learned all your wisdom and who it is who is speaking through your mouth. Is it by chance the Prince of Arimini who is endeavouring to enlighten you?"

"I am only guided by my common sense and am only trusting my own judgment," was the proud rejoinder.

"Then you have well employed your eighteen summers—and for one so young you reason admirably.

THE PAPAL PALACE AT AVIGNON.

But go to bed, child, and for the future remember that the Pontiffs of Rome are above criticism, above everything and everybody; and woe unto those who dare to find fault with their actions and blame their conduct. The Pope can do no wrong."

"I may be compelled to silence," said Theodorine, "but no one can take away from me the liberty of thinking as I choose."

The Countess was not prepared to find such independence of thought in her niece. She had expected a child, whose character and mind she would easily mould and shape, and whose actions and conduct she would make subservient to her own will. But instead of a wax doll, who would have proved a useful instrument in her hands, she suddenly found herself confronted with a personality who was quite a match for herself, and whose criticisms, being only too just, were not without some danger. She could send her back to Tuscany; but before doing so she decided to speak to His Holiness confidentially and to advise him to be on his guard in the presence of her niece. She hinted that in future they both must hide the intimacy of their relationship.

The girl had already discovered that the friendship existing between the Pope and her aunt was not of a purely platonic or spiritual nature. Theodorine refused to accompany her aunt to a Mass celebrated by His Holiness, expressing her doubt as to whether the prayers of such a celebrant really found their way to Heaven. Her lover, the Marquess of Arimini, shared her opinion; but, possessing more discretion

than his impulsive fiancée, he kept his views to himself. By such an attitude he gained the favour of the Pontiff. The latter—at the advice of his *âme damnée* Brazut—decided to hasten the marriage of the couple, so as to further his own amorous designs. Without avowing to Mathilda the real reasons prompting his actions, Hildebrand informed her of his decision, namely to establish her niece in order to oblige the family of her husband. Hippolyte had the approbation of the girl's mother; and he, the Pope, being all-powerful in Italy, would raise the young man to high dignities, making him one of the richest and mightiest princes in the country.

Well did the Papal Pompadour gauge the intention of her lover, whose plan was to gain the favour of the wife by means of services rendered to the husband. Mathilda trembled at the thought of being supplanted by the damsel whom she herself, in her folly, had brought to Rome, but she had tact enough to pretend that she believed her lover, and agreed to the marriage. The Pope was very careful in showing any marked preference for Theodorine, for he knew his Mathilda, and feared the wrath and revenge of his favourite. That she was jealous he was well aware, and it was to her jealousy, too, that he attributed her accusations of Theodorine and her reported criticism.

The one who in the meantime benefited by the love of the Pope and the jealousy of Mathilda was the Marquess of Arimini. Well might he have been astonished at the honours and dignities suddenly heaped upon him. Both he and Theodorine were

surprised to find that they owed these liberalities to the mighty influence of the Countess; and whilst the girl became more submissive to her powerful benefactress, the young Prince showed the Countess such marked respect and assiduous attentions, that Mathilda suddenly conceived a great liking for the lover of her niece, a liking which soon changed into an ardent love. And whilst His Holiness was watching for his opportunities to declare his unholy love to the girl, his powerful favourite, Mathilda, employed all her charms and astuteness to attract the handsome Prince. She invited him to all her parties, and so contrived that he was always at her side.

Rome in the pagan days of Augustus had not been more magnificent and gallant than under the Christian rule of Hildebrand. Voluptuousness was the goddess reigning supreme in the Eternal City; favourites and courtiers crowded the Papal palace, flattering the vanity of the Pontiff and pandering to his weakness and to his passions. Love-songs were as often to be heard within the precincts of His Holiness's residence as sacred hymns. All the pleasures of pagan antiquity, and upon which the early Christian had looked as abominations, were indulged in by prelates and princes of the Church. Forgotten were the teachings of the Apostles, forgotten the noble life of the Founder of Christianity, forgotten the sublimity of the teaching of Christ. Gregory VII, who had ordained the celibacy of the priests, was burning with an unholy fire for Theodorine. And whilst he gave splendid festivals and receptions, Countess Mathilda put on Imperial

raiment and appeared in all her dazzling beauty and tempting nudity to attract the reluctant Hippolyte. But the prince's heart belonged to his fiancée, and he pretended not to notice the advances made by the amorous aunt.

Whilst these intrigues were going on within the walls of the Lateran, a fierce fight was raging outside Italy. The war between Henry, the German Emperor, and the Pope was being waged. Papacy and Empire had entered into that long struggle for supremacy which was to last for centuries. The successors of Charlemagne and the inheritors of St. Peter were each claiming the rule of the world. For some time the Pope had spit torrents of venom against the rebellious Henry IV, and at last the head of Christendom hurled his *anathema*, ex-communicating the disobedient sovereign. The former monk ordered the German Emperor to appear before the papal throne in Rome, and when the inheritor of the succession of Charlemagne disobeyed, he was excommunicated, deprived of his Imperial dignities, and his crown bestowed upon the Duke of Swabia. Henry was ultimately obliged to travel to Canossa, there to do penance and to humiliate himself before the proud ruler on the throne of St. Peter.

Accompanied by a small retinue of his faithful friends, the Emperor came to Canossa, where the Pontiff was passing his time with Countess Mathilda. For three days the wearer of the crown of Charlemagne, clad in the long shirt of a sinner, bare-headed and bare-footed, remained exposed to the rigours

of a severe winter before the gates of the castle, without being admitted into the presence of the Son of the Carpenter. His apostolic serenity was not moved, in spite of the tears and prayers of all present at the castle.

Gregory VII was firm in his decision; he knew that he was laying the foundation of the greatness of the Church. He was a ruler anxious for the welfare of his dynasty, and therefore remained implacable in his endeavour to crush the enemy. And whilst on the cold winter night of December the Emperor was outside, the Vicar of Christ, in company of his mistress, was enjoying the aspect of his humiliated opponent. At last, when he had sufficiently humbled his Imperial enemy, the Pontiff pretended to give way to the prayers of Countess Mathilda. Gregory VII was satisfied. Had he not humiliated to the dust the Imperial power and emancipated the Holy See from its ancient obedience and submission to the Carlovingian and Frankish Cæsars? The reign of the theocracy had been inaugurated, the supremacy of the Church centred in Papacy had been established.

Great festivities were given at the Papal palace at Rome to solemnise this great event—the triumph of the Church. For was not Gregory VII the king of kings, and did not emperors tremble before him and quake before his wrath? The beautiful ladies of Italy graced the banquet and the ball, and some stranger, unacquainted with the life at the Court of Rome, would have fancied himself at one of the ban-

quets in the days of the pagan Emperors rather than in the abode of the head of Christendom. Licentious songs resounded, and the air was impregnated with revelry and voluptuousness. The pure and innocent mind and the honest nature of Theodorine revolted against all that she saw and heard. Her neighbour at table was a Roman girl named Flavia, with whom she had struck up a friendship, and to whom she did not hesitate to communicate her thoughts.

"I blush," said Theodorine, "in listening to all that is being uttered within these sacred walls. Surely this is not the language of either the *seraphim* or the *cherubim* and is not fitted for such a place. Could one imagine more licentious conduct in any house of debauchery? And it requires a great deal of imagination to feel oneself in the house of the Vicar of God."

Flavia, born and bred in the Eternal City, and to whom the scandalous life led by the clergy and the Pontiffs of Rome was nothing new, smiled at the innocence of her friend.

"You are very young and inexperienced," she replied, "and you seem to know very little about Pontifical Rome. I am rather surprised that the daughter of St. Peter did not teach you better."

"The daughter of St. Peter, and, pray, who is she?" asked the bewildered girl.

"Don't you know that His Holiness has adopted the Countess Mathilda?"

"Then the daughter of St. Peter," replied Theodorine, "ought to endeavour to lead Hildebrand in

the footsteps of the Apostles and the path trodden by the Saviour. I am ashamed and indignant."

"Your indignation," answered Flavia, "will find plenty of reasons to rise, but, as a friend, I advise you to get used to this life, lest they crush you as they have tried to crush the Emperor Henry at the Church of St. Mark. The Emperor was good and noble; he was animated by a spirit of moral indignation. A beam had been so placed in the Church of St. Mark that it would have killed him whilst at his devotions; but luckily the plot was discovered and his life saved."

"You frighten me," exclaimed Theodorine. "If crowned heads are not safe in Rome, who is?"

"You have only to look favourably upon His Holiness," replied Flavia, not without a touch of malice, "to show yourself amiable to him and to flatter Brazut—and all will be well with you. You have nothing to fear. I could not say the same of your aunt—I am afraid her reign is nearing its end. But we must take care, for we are already being observed, and our long conversation is arousing suspicion."

Theodorine remained pensive. Her friend's words had produced a great trouble in her mind. The idea of flattering Brazut, whom she hated with all the fierceness her pure heart was capable of, was appalling to her, and as for Hildebrand, she could no longer look upon His Holiness with the eyes of a pious Christian, anxious to obtain remission of her sins from the Vicar of Christ.

Whilst the two girls had been conversing, the Pope had eyes only for Theodorine, whom he was devouring with ardent glances, whilst Countess Mathilda was trying the influence of her charms on Hippolyte, prince of Arimini. At the close of the banquet, when the guests had left their seats, His Holiness seized the first opportunity to place himself near Theodorine, so that he could talk to her undisturbed. The girl was compelled to remain and to listen to his words, but her gaze often wandered away, as if looking for some help or for some one to rescue her from her pursuer.

"Am I frightening you, madam," asked Hildebrand, "that you avoid looking me into the face? If it is a vow you have made, I, who am all-powerful, have the power to break it, for, as you know, mine is the prerogative to 'bind and to loosen.'"

"As your Holiness ought only to be thinking of Heaven," replied the girl with some spirit, "my gaze is quite unimportant to you."

"My Holiness requires the lustre of your eyes more than you can imagine, and I am in no way depriving Heaven of its due in contemplating and admiring your heavenly beauty."

"The expressions your Holiness deigns to employ sound somewhat strange to my ears; I am sure they are not those used in the college of St. Peter. I fancy the Holy Father only wants to try me and is therefore showing himself in a light and in an attitude so opposed and contradictory to his dignity and to his holy office."

"I am deadly in earnest," replied Gregory, "and I, Hildebrand, Pontiff of Rome, who command the universe, and before whom the successor of Charlemagne, the mighty Emperor Henry IV trembles, I, who am the ruler of Christendom, I am your slave and your admirer. The rights and the powers of the Church are great, but those of your beauty are vaster still, and you have only to make use of them. Command and I will obey."

Many a woman would have seized the opportunity offered to her to become the favourite of the mightiest tyrant of Europe of the time; many an ambitious beauty would have silenced the voice of her conscience, but Theodorine was in love, and what is more, she was of a loyal and noble disposition, and her whole soul revolted against the amorous propositions of Gregory VII.

"I only wish," was her contemptuous reply, "that the Countess of Tuscany could hear you and be aware of the manner in which you are treating a young and innocent girl, confided to her protecting care."

"The Countess of Tuscany," replied the Pope, "is neither a prude nor over-scrupulous; moreover, she is a wise woman and knows how to accommodate herself to circumstances and make the best of them. When she hears of my love for you I assure you she will neither exhibit surprise nor manifest annoyance. Once more, I beg of you to be more kindly disposed towards one to whom your beauty has proved so fatal, and whose love for you is immense."

"Love! Does your Holiness know any other but divine love?"

Gregory was silenced.

"Does not the Prince of Arimini," he replied lamely, "love you, too?"

"Oh, but he wants to marry me, and his intentions are honourable!"

The Pontiff smiled.

"Madam," he observed, "we ought to be above the moral conceptions of the vulgar herd. We have the power to drown the sins of others in a sea of indulgence and we can do no wrong ourselves. Do not be afraid of sin; let me love you, at least do not hate me, and let your aunt be happy with her Hippolyte, for she has only eyes for him."

This mischievous shaft went straight to the heart of the poor girl; her jealousy was aroused. She had been wounded in a sensible spot. It was the Pope's revenge for her obstinate refusal to accept his unpontifical homage. And whilst the Pontiff was thus endeavouring to gain the ear and the heart of the cruel belle, and laid his love at her feet, her lover, Prince Hippolyte, had to fence valiantly and defend himself against the assaults which the Countess Mathilda was desperately making at his heart. Jealousy did its worst, and a coldness had suddenly sprung up between the two young people, which the Pope and his favourite eagerly seized upon to increase. Both hoped to widen the breach and to bring about a separation of the lovers so as to further their own desires. As yet, however, the Pontiff dared not

speak frankly to his former mistress. And as he could not very well himself approach Theodorine, who was living with her aunt, he commissioned his faithful servant Brazut to carry messages and presents to her whose beauty made him forget even his endless ambitions.

He could trust Brazut, who possessed all the qualities necessary for the carrying out of such commissions. He was subtle and ingenious of spirit, his patience was inexhaustible, and his impertinence, if necessary, extreme. This vile messenger promised his master to corrupt the virtue of the innocent maid and to make her subservient to the wishes of His Holiness. He promptly appeared at the house of the Countess, and having gained access to the unhappy girl, who at that moment was a prey to conflicting emotions, very eloquently pleaded the cause of his master. In her languor and sadness the girl appeared more fascinating than ever, and Brazut himself was so struck with her beauty that he could not help admiring her. His compliments, however, far from pleasing her, only excited her wrath; and when the messenger of love laid at her feet the rich presents, jewels, and silks sent by Gregory, her indignation knew no bounds.

"I should have preferred a thousand times," she exclaimed with flashing eyes, "had you handed me one of those poisoned cups which many of your victims have been made to drink."

In vain did the imperturbable Brazut point out to the indignant girl that he was offering her power and

wealth, the love of the head of the Church, the master of Christendom, the autocrat of Europe, the King of kings, whose favour was a priceless treasure. Would she, a poor, helpless girl, scorn such gifts, for which many women would envy her ? How different did her aunt, the Countess Mathilda, behave when he visited her on similar occasions, bringing presents and love-messages from his master. If she could not love the Pope himself, if she felt no gratitude for his tenderness and generosity, no friendship for his person, she would not forget that the majesty of the tiara and the Papal crown deserved some consideration. But neither compliments and promises nor veiled threats had any effect upon Theodorine.

"Go," she replied, "go to places of debauchery and search for some libertine, anxious to accept the presents and the love of the Pontiff, who is evidently imitating the example of the worst Emperors of pagan Rome. Go, and leave me in peace."

Brazut retired to record to his master the failure of his endeavour, and even exaggerated the excessive wrath of Theodorine and the stormy reception he had met at her hands, painting in glowing colours the impregnable virtue of the girl. But Gregory VII was accustomed to be obeyed. Kings and princes had bent their knees before him, and should he abandon the hope of breaking the will of a frail woman ? He could scarcely have thought it possible that the girl's virtue was so strong as to mock the disfavour and anger of him who was all-powerful, and before whose gaze hardy warriors and mighty potentates

quaked. She seemed to have been impressed by neither his pompous grandeur nor power, looking upon the successor of St. Peter as upon an impious sinner: the infallibility of the Pope was nothing but a cruel mockery to her. She even cursed her beauty, which had kindled such an unholy flame in the heart of the Vicar of Christ.

"Consult your duty and your saintly office," she said to the Pope on one occasion, "and you will cease to speak a language worthy of the libertines of the age of a Caligula or a Tiberius in their revels at Capri, but not fit for the walls of the Christian Lateran."

"I consult nothing but your eyes," replied Gregory. "They are my sole guides, my oracles, and my judges."

"But your Holiness," pleaded the girl, "I prefer to look upon you as upon the sacred head of Christendom, as the shepherd and the guide of humanity."

Gregory began to feel that the virtue of Theodorine was impregnable, and he decided to bide his time. Again he sought council from his trusted servant Brazut. The latter advised him to send away Hippolyte from Rome. His absence would perhaps make Theodorine's heart grow colder—and so induce her to lend a more willing ear to the protestations of so powerful and rich a lover as the Pope. And yet—Hildebrand was afraid to follow the advice. Hippolyte away, Mathilda would not only have more leisure to look after her niece, but she would never forgive His Holiness for depriving her of the presence of the Prince and, in a spirit of revenge, would be likely to put

obstacles in his way, and so retard the consummation of his desires. The Pope knew his former mistress well: he was aware of the fact that once the anger of the proud Tuscan Countess was aroused, she would stop at nothing. Brazut hinted at the easy means by which the Countess could be put out of the way and made harmless, but somehow Gregory, to whom human life was naught when his passions were at stake, hesitated before giving consent to his counsellor's suggestion.

And whilst these love-scenes were being witnessed within the walls of the Papal palace Europe was astir with great events. Henry IV, the Emperor of the Holy German Empire, whom the proud Pontiff had excommunicated and humbled to the dust, had sworn revenge. He was now gathering a great force to lead against Rome. If the Pope had deprived him of the Imperial crown, giving it to Duke Rudolph, Henry in his turn declared Gregory an Antichrist and appointed Guilbert, Bishop of Ravenna, head of Christendom, under the name of Clement III.

The armies of Henry and of the Duke of Swabia met on the banks of the Elster in Saxony. Rudolph fell on the battlefield, and the victorious Imperial troops, under the command of Henry's son, invaded Italy, defeating the soldiers of Countess Mathilda at Volta near Mantua.

In his distress the Pontiff turned to Mathilda, who had not only been his favourite but his trusted adviser on former occasions. For a moment he had forgotten the sweet beauty of the obstinate girl, and sought

the company of the mature woman, whose intelligence was a match and even superior to his own, and he was not disappointed, for he found his former friend ready for the emergency. She would yet humble the faithless Henry. She herself would lead the Roman armies against the enemy. One condition, however, she stipulated—Prince Hippolyte should accompany her in her martial expedition. She would stimulate the zeal of the Papal soldiers, and by her presence urge them to victory.

"You will guard Rome and—Theodorine," she observed, "whilst I will court the dangers of the battlefield and endeavour to earn the title of Heroine, if I have lost the honour of your Holiness's favour."

Gregory stood rebuked, but he eagerly consented to her plan. With feverish haste the preparations for war were carried out, and the Countess was looked upon by the Church as a guardian angel, come down to protect Rome, the Pope, and the Holy Church in a moment of sore distress. Prince Hippolyte received an honourable position, and was burning with a noble zeal to render service to the holy cause and to make his name famous, for Theodorine's sake as well as for his own. His *fiancée* made the parting a little heavy.

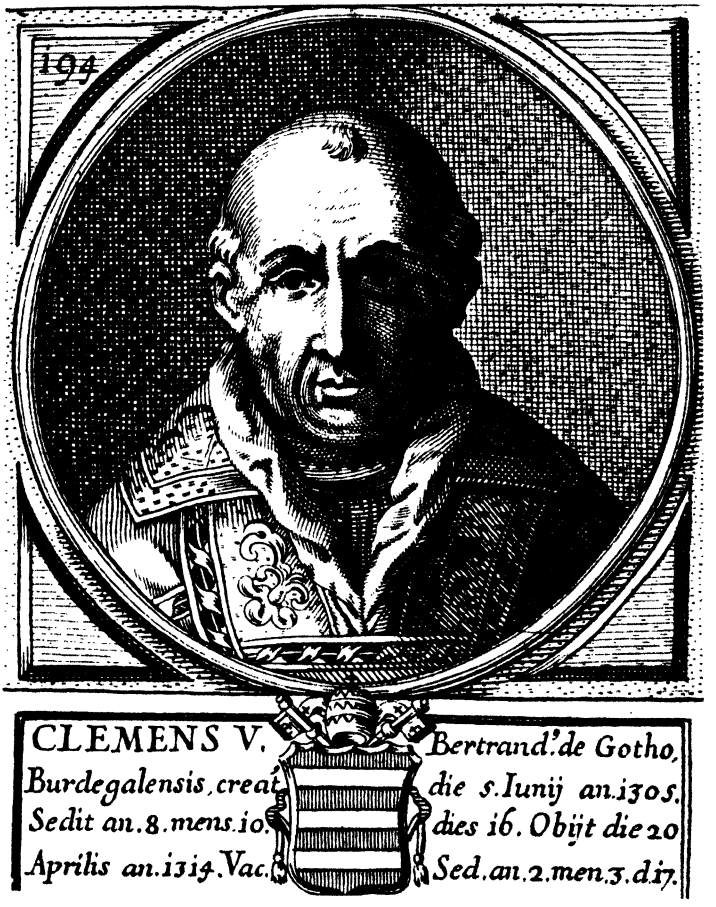
"You are running to court danger," she said, "but you will find it more difficult and fraught with greater risks to subdue the Imperial forces and conquer the Empire than you have had in conquering my heart. And is it only the desire for glory and brilliant feats

of arms that is animating your martial zeal, or the pleasure of obeying Mathilda ? "

" Would you like to see me a coward and refuse to face danger when the voice of duty is calling ? No ; you will admit that such an attitude and conduct would not be worthy of your lover. If I have any hesitation to part it is my conviction that the cause of the Emperor is a more just one than that of Hildebrand, and I would sooner join the armies of the former than protect the latter."

" Would you have the necessary courage," the girl maliciously inquired, " to wage war against the Countess and meet her in mortal combat ? No, no," she added quickly, " I require no answer ; I know that your heart belongs to me, but it would be dishonourable for you now to abandon the Pope. Heaven only knows he does not deserve any consideration, but he has done you no harm and you have pledged your word. Go, my friend, with the Roman army, and remember that when the Countess—who has done her best to win your heart, becomes indifferent to you, I shall remain faithful to my love. The Papal crown and the wrath of the ambitious priest will never tear your image from my heart. And as for the beauty of Mathilda, it is too artificial, and owes too much to the help of Brazut and his cosmetics to rouse my fear."

And thus Mathilda and Hippolyte left Rome, whilst Pope Gregory and Theodorine remained behind. But as the Countess was responsible for her niece to the girl's mother, she entrusted her to the



POPE CLEMENT V.

care of Felicia, the mother of Flavia, a worthy matron, well reputed in Rome, and who acted only too well the part of a dragon against Gregory, the Pontiff of Rome. In the meantime, whilst the Emperor, who had proclaimed Guilbert Pope under the name of Clement III, was preparing his revenge and burning with a desire to depose his enemy and expel Hildebrand from Italy, his own blood rose against him. Henry V, the son of Henry IV, took up arms against his father. Europe was torn by strife, and witnessed many harrowing scenes, the result of a devastating war. Passions were let loose in the hearts of men, brother fought against brother, and son against father. In the midst of the scenery of war and devastation, bloodshed and destruction, Countess Mathilda in camp did not forget her love. In vain, however, did she storm the heart of the Prince. And when at last he emphatically scorned her love, it changed into mortal hatred, and she planned his death. Several times she gave orders to destroy him, but always cancelled them. Her husband having died in the meantime, Mathilda was free, and offered her hand and her immense wealth to Hippolyte, but he refused her offer.

Theodorine, too, had a hard struggle in evading the assiduities of her saintly lover, who, Mathilda and Hippolyte being out of the way, now hoped to succeed. But the poor girl had found a staunch friend and protectress in the person of Lady Felicia, who shielded her against Papal intrigues; and while the god of love failed to smile upon the ruler on the throne

of St. Peter, the god of war showed no greater favour to him who was the head of the religion of peace. The Papal armies were beaten. Henry had achieved an important victory, and was marching his soldiers into Rome. Gregory, the son of the Carpenter, who had ruled like an Eastern potentate, was compelled to flee from the city on the banks of the Tiber, and to seek refuge in Salerno. In vain did he ask Heaven why the god of battles, the God of Moses and of Joshua, had not procured victory to the head of Christendom, to the anointed of the Lord. The Pope died in obscurity, an exile, full of rage and remorse, baffled in love and ambition alike.

Hippolyte, Prince of Arimini, returned to his beloved and soon married her, whilst the Countess, who had carried off several splendid victories, wept over her laurels. She outlived Gregory by many years, and although mortified at her failure to gain the heart of the Prince of Arimini, she continued to play a prominent part in Italian politics and the affairs of the Church. She was responsible for the election of the Popes Victor III and Urban II. And when Victor III the pious abbot of Monte-Cassino, had fled from Rome, Mathilda, like a Jeanne d'Arc at the head of her armies, brought him back to the Eternal City. On her death-bed—she died in 1115 at the age of sixty-nine—she bequeathed unto the Holy See the immense wealth she had accumulated by robbing the Church during her days of power. She was a good Catholic after all, and made restitution.

CHAPTER V

PAPACY AT AVIGNON; POPE CLEMENT VI AND JOANNA OF NAPLES

Pope Gregory X seems to have led a more decent life than his predecessors, for it is related of him that he deprived the Bishop of Liège of his post, because this prelate kept several concubines, some of them also nuns, and squandered the wealth of the Church upon his little family, consisting of sixty-three children! This Bishop was soon afterwards assassinated by a Flemish knight, who thus avenged the honour of his daughters whom the prelate had abducted. The Pope found the offended father's wrath justified, and did not even excommunicate the assassin. On the contrary, however, Pope Nicholas III had a numerous family, whom he appointed to the most lucrative posts in the Church. Two of his sons—whom he called his nephews—he intended to raise to the dignity of princes, one as the Duke of Tuscany and the other as King of Lombardy. Death, however, prevented him from carrying out his designs. Pope Clement IV had two daughters; one of them entered the monastery, whilst the other married.

The period, however, which is as rich in Papal intrigues and love affairs as was the tenth century, is that which is known as the Babylonian captivity

of the Popes, when the Holy See was transferred from the Eternal City to Avignon.

Avignon in those days resembled the Versailles of the Pompadours and the Dubarrys—and many were such Pompadours and Dubarrys who ruled at the Court of the Pontiffs.

Among the many reasons which had induced Bertrand de Goth, as Pope Clement V, to transfer the Papal residence to Avignon was his love for the beautiful Comtesse de Périgord, daughter of the Comte de Foix. Contemporary authors, like Baluzius and Mézeray, and especially the poet Petrarch and Nicholas Clamengis, give minute descriptions of the lives of the Popes and of the Court of Avignon.

"With the entry of the Papal Court in France," writes Clamengis, "corruption, immorality, and debauchery entered the country. The Holy See taught the French people all sorts of crimes, of excesses, and luxury, not to forget the art of poison. Such is the blessing which the holy fathers are bringing, a blessing which is best of all noticeable in holy Rome itself." Petrarch called Avignon the modern Babylon on the banks of the Rhône. "All that people say of the ancient city of Babylon is nought compared to Avignon, for here one sees the personification of that debauchery and immorality related in ancient myths and legends of the gods of pagan antiquity.

As soon as the Popes had established their court at Avignon they introduced an absolutely regal train. For a short time only they resided in the Dominican

cloister, but already Clement V laid the foundations of the vast Papal palace which has remained until the present day a monument of the so-called Babylonian captivity of Papacy. If stones could speak, what tales these gigantic walls could unfold, these numerous suites of apartments, with towers, and fortresses, and subterranean corridors! The aspect of this labyrinth of rooms involuntarily recalls to our mind the life of the mediæval Princes, with their crimes and their passions, and our imagination peoples these Papal apartments with warriors and court ladies à la Versailles. One may almost hear the stealthy tread of a noble lady hurrying along the silent corridors and disappearing—through a secret passage leading to a hidden door straight into the bedchamber of the ruler on the throne of St. Peter, the poor fisherman of Gennesareth!

It was in this gigantic princely palace that the Popes of Avignon dwelt. They were not gloomy scholars, pondering over bulky volumes of ancient lore, priests, full of contempt for the frivolities and pleasures of earthly life, or anchorites, torturing their bodies, mercilessly preparing themselves for the kingdom of Heaven. They were princes of the world, clinging to life and its pleasures, who lived and loved and passed their lives in a court of luxury and pomp, surrounded by courtiers and beautiful women!

Numerous were the intrigues and love affairs at this Papal court of Avignon. Let us hear the descriptions of Petrarch and others. Clement VI had

raised Avignon to an intellectual centre, and this Babylon on the banks of the Rhône became the seat of Provençal poetry. Artists were summoned from Italy to decorate the palace of the Popes. But hand in hand with this brilliance, intellectual and artistic, went the debauchery, the excesses, the gay licence of Provence and the corruptions of the priests—the wickedness of the inhabitants and the perfidy of the rulers. Clement had gathered in his palace poets and artists, the flower of erudition and of learning, but above all, the flowers of beauty and of grace—the handsomest women of gay Provence and of the south of France.

Gallant dames and love-sick nuns, cardinals, knights, and joyous priests formed a motley crowd, surging in the spacious halls of His Holiness, who adored the feasts and court banquets. And those splendid banquets —which Clement VI often gave in his palace—had become so famous that they were known under the name of the Clementine. They could rival in luxury and splendour those of bacchanalian Rome. The Queen of these feasts was the beautiful Comtesse de Turenne, who for many years was the all-powerful favourite of His Holiness, and kept the head of Christendom in the net of her charms. The Pontifical Court had become the temple where the goddess once issued from the foam-crested waves ruled supreme. Christian piety and modesty covered their faces and retired in confusion! One day when Pope Clement was presiding at a council of cardinals a letter was handed to His Holiness. It was addressed by "the

devil to his brother Clement." The doings of every-one of the Cardinals and of the Pope himself were enumerated, and all were invited to become worthy of the favour of Lucifer by continuing in the path they had chosen.

In his *lettres inconnues* Petrarch gives the following description of the Court of Avignon: "You find there the terrible Nimrod, Semiramis, armed; the inexorable Minos, Rhadamantë, Cerberus, Pasiphahus the beloved of the bull, the Minotaur—the scandalous monument of the most infamous amours. Confusion, darkness and horror, vice and crime dwell within these precincts. I am only describing unto you what I have seen with my own eyes. I know from experience that you can find here neither piety nor charity, neither faith nor respect or fear of God; nothing sacred and nothing human. Friendship, decency, candour are absolutely unknown here.

"The hope for a future life is looked upon as a vain illusion—what is being related about hell as a mere fable. The resurrection of the flesh, the end of the world in Jesus Christ, supreme and absolute judge, is counted among puerile inventions. Love of truth is considered madness, chastity boorishness, decency a shameful stupidity. Licentiousness, on the contrary, is considered greatness of soul, whilst prostitution here leads to fame and celebrity. The more vice one accumulates the greater the glory. A good reputation is looked upon as something very contemptible. What I am telling you here is known to everybody. I am passing in silence simony, avarice,

cruelty, respecting no human sentiment, for I hasten to arrive to a point still more odious but not lacking in ridicule. Who would not laugh in his indignation at the aspect of those degenerate children (cardinals and prelates) who with their hair hide under their ample priestly robes an immodesty and a lewdness which one can scarcely describe. Those holy debauched and libidinous saintly old men, forgetting their age and their position and rank, fearing neither blame nor dishonour, spend in banquets and orgies their days, which they ought to have employed in regulating their life after that of Christ. Excesses follow upon excesses and lewdness and libertinage are great.

"Thus the unworthy prelates think to stop time, which is running fast. Satan, with an air of satisfaction, presides at their festivals, regulates their pleasure, and constantly finds his seat between the depraved old men and the young virgins, the objects of their nauseous amours. He is surprised to find that their sins by far exceed his temptations. I shall not speak of violation, rape, adultery, and incest. They are trifles at the Pontifical Court. I shall not relate that the husbands whose wives have been abducted are forced to silence in exile, far away from their domestic hearths and their native land. I shall not dwell upon that cruel insult by which the offended husbands are being compelled to receive in their houses their wives who had been prostituted, especially when they carry under their breasts the fruit of the criminal love. Immediately after child-birth the wife is taken back by the lover. The insult only

takes an end with the disgust of the lover for the mistress.

"The people are quite aware of everything I know myself—and they make no secret of their knowledge, for their sufferings by far surpass their fear, and the threats of libertinage can no longer suppress the popular indignation."

Thus writes Petrarch, the sincere Christian, the lover of Laura de Noves, whose sense of religion and decency revolted against the unholy life led at the court of Avignon. His letters are not dated, but in his fifteenth epistle he admits that the two Clements (VI and VII) had done more harm to the Church than the seven first Georges.

Jerome Squarciafico, the biographer of Petrarch, relates the following episode: Benedict XII, son and successor of Pope John XXII, was seated on the Papal throne at Avignon. He had cast his eyes upon the sister of the poet, the noble Selvaggia, famed for her extraordinary beauty. Used as the clerics were to find no resistance among the beauties of the Court, only too willing to listen to the amorous declarations of the Holy Father, Benedict felt sure of success. Cynically the Vicar of Christ sent for the poet, asking him to name the price of the favours of his sister The Holy Father was a born prince and ready to pay generously; and had not the previous Pope amassed immense wealth in the service of the Church, which the head of Christendom could now dispose of as he pleased? But if gold did not stimulate the obedience of the poet, the Holy Father offered him

the cardinal's hat as reward for his services. "*Cardinalem se facturum promittit, dummodo illa suo concede retur arbitrio.*" With indignation Petrarch refused to accept the ignoble bargain, telling the Pope that never would he don the purple on such conditions, but would consider it as an abomination! Such audacity could not go unpunished. The offended Pontiff denounced Petrarch as an heretic to the sacred office of the Inquisition. Had he not dared to contradict the Holy Father and to thwart him in his desires? Crime enough to be judged by the tribunal of the Inquisition, who knew only one sentence—death. Petrarch escaped from Avignon, and thus saved his life. But before leaving he recommended his brother to watch over their sister Selvaggia, and her honour. The poet's younger brother, however, who seems to have been less scrupulous, allowed himself to be tempted by the wealth offered to him by the Holy Father for the favours of the beautiful maiden. One night, therefore, the girl, who was only sixteen, was suddenly seized in her sleep and carried to the palace of Avignon and into the apartments of the Pope, like some Circassian slave into the harem of the Turkish Sultan. When Selvaggia realised the danger that threatened her, she fell on her knees imploring the pity of the Pope. Her despair and her tears only increased the passion of Benedict, and when his persuasions proved of no avail—and even his threats of eternal damnation futile with the obstinate child—he had recourse to force. "*Mich reizt deine schöne Gestalt und bist du nicht willig, so brauch' ich Gewalt.*"

The brother afterwards regretted his treacherous action, and having succeeded in marrying his sister to some indulgent husband, promising to overlook the sin of the Pope, he retired into a monastery to repent of his transgressions. John XXIII was accused of many crimes by the Council of Constance in 1415. Theodore de Niem, a contemporary bishop, enumerates seventy crimes of which this Pontiff was accused, and one of them was the following: John had appointed a certain bishop as visitor of the convents of the nuns, but in reality this holy officer was only a purveyor of His Holiness. And the nuns who had the good fortune of being sanctified by the love of the Pontiff were afterwards sure of a reward. Many ladies who have charmed a monarch or a prince have been raised to the ranks of aristocracy, and numerous are the countesses and baronesses whose only claim to nobility is their good fortune to have excited the passion of some king. It was therefore befitting that a Sovereign-Pontiff should nominate his favourites abbesses and mothers superior!

The following story is characteristic of the state of Papacy in Avignon. It is related by Boccaccio.

A rich Jew of Marseilles had many friends among the Christians of the town. These were anxious to convert the son of Israel to Christianity. Many a time the Christians discussed with the Jew the superiority of their religion; they were anxious to make him embrace Christianity, but all their efforts proved futile. "I shall live and die in the faith of my ancestors," the Jew constantly replied. Once, however, he fell ill,

and at once his Christian friends, who had been visiting him assiduously, pointed out to him the advisability of his conversion. "What a pity it would be," they said, "were you not to meet your friends in the next world, for as a Jew you would of course not be admitted into Paradise by St. Peter, but would have to go to some other place." Pressed by his well-meaning friends, the Jew at last promised to give the matter his mature consideration, and as soon as he got well to come to a decision. When he became convalescent he indeed remembered the promise he had given his friends and announced his intention to go to Avignon, the seat of the Pope. "There," he said, "in the immediate proximity of the Holy Father, the representative of Christendom, the Vicar of Christ, the successor of St. Peter, I shall study Christianity and convince myself of its truth." Hearing such words of the Jew, his Christian friends lost heart, for they felt sure that his conversion would never take place. Well they knew what life the Pope and prelates were leading at Avignon, and the example they set would scarcely be such as to convince that unbeliever of the purity of Christianity and of the superiority of the doctrines taught by the Roman Church. They did their best to dissuade the Jew from his intended visit, but it was all in vain. "Are there not learned men in Marseilles," they argued, "quite capable of instructing you in the mysteries of Christian teaching, to answer all your questions and to set your doubts at rest?" But the Jew remained firm. He had made up his mind to go to Avignon, and to Avig-

non he went. His Christian friends now despaired of the conversion of the Jew; and great was their grief, as they had given up all hopes of ever meeting their friend in the next world. They shuddered at the thought of the debaucheries and abominations which the Jew would witness at the seat of the Pontiffs. With heavy hearts they awaited his return. After an absence of a few months the Jew returned to Marseilles, and, to the great astonishment of his friends, he declared unto them that he was now ready to embrace Christianity and to undergo baptism. In amazement his friends listened to his words, hardly daring to inquire after the real motives which prompted his decision. A few days had elapsed and their curiosity got the better of them. "How is it," they asked, "that in spite of your visit to Avignon, which ought to have filled you with loathing for the Roman Church, you have nevertheless decided to become a Christian?" "My dear friends," replied the Jew, "you do not understand the psychology which prompts the convert to abandon one religion and embrace another. It is true, in Avignon I saw nought but abomination, all the vices and excesses of the world. The nuns are courtesans, and the monks *coureurs*; the Pope and the Cardinals are Don Juans and are leading lives of debauchery.—The Papal palace appeared to me to be a temple dedicated to the pagan goddesses of antiquity, to Venus and Astarte, and not to the Prophet of Nazareth. With loathing and disgust I turned from all that I witnessed. But suddenly a thought occurred to me! How sublime, after

all, must be the doctrine taught by Christ, how noble and full of strength His teaching and morality if, in spite of the evil life led by the chief priests, in spite of the iniquity into which they are sunk—the doctrine nevertheless continues to spread. The priests and prelates are children of hell rather than of heaven—they are wallowing in sin; but the sublime teaching of the Master remains in its purity, still shining in the mire of Papacy. Thus I thought, and I decided to embrace the religion of Him who preached the Sermon on the Mount, and which His priests and preachers are not following."

Eleven days after the death of Benedict (May 7, 1342) the Sacred College unanimously elected Cardinal Roger, who took the name of Clement VI. This election was perhaps prompt, because it had been pre-arranged. The Cardinals hoped to have a government more to their taste. The new Pope was of noble family. He loved luxury and grand processions. His coronation was celebrated with great pomp, a pomp which had not been seen since the time of Clement V. In the Progress, following the ceremony, he dazzled all eyes by the grandeur of his tiara, which was crowned by an enormous diamond resembling a flame. John, the eldest son of the King of France, the Duke of Bourbon, the Duke of Burgundy, and Dauphin Humbert took part in the procession. The Court of Avignon took on a new aspect, luxury and magnificence replacing the simplicity of Benedict. The Pontiff gave feasts to which ladies were admitted, long before they shone at the

Court of France. Avignon owes to him the beginning of her fine ramparts, and the collection of pictures in the Pontifical palace. The scion of an old and illustrious race, affable and generous, Clement VI was indeed a *grand seigneur*. "No sovereign," writes his biographer, "exceeded him in expenditure, nor bestowed his gifts and favours with more generosity." His furniture was sumptuous, his table covered with dainty dishes, and his stud consisted of the finest horses that could be procured. His predilection for the society of ladies was great, and his Pontifical residence was open to the fair sex *at all sorts of hours*. And indeed at Avignon, where the beautiful eyes of Laura, the beloved of Petrarch, had lit that famous fire in the heart of the poet on Good Friday, many a knight, prince, or prelate, lost his heart to one of the beauties who thronged the Court. They flocked there to take part in the fêtes and the pleasures, to seek adventures of all sorts, or to restore their fortunes by love intrigues or by alliances—for which at such a brilliant Court there were many opportunities.

But if the ladies of quality were admitted at all times into the apartments of the Pope—like the *belles dames* at the Court of Louis XV, Cicely de Comminges, Comtesse de Turenne, kept the Pontiff for a long time under her sway. Clement was one of the most gentle sovereigns of his century, and it was easy for an imperious beauty like Cicely de Comminges to exercise absolute sway over him. The Pontiff, says Giovanni Villani, never decided any important matter without previously asking her advice. She was to

him what La Maintenon was to Louis XIV, what the Pompadour was to Louis XV, and what Donna Olimpia was to Innocent X. Ecclesiastical writers and white-washers of the Popes maintain that Clement VI and the Comtesse de Turenne have been grossly maligned, and that their relationship was somewhat similar to that of St. Francis de Salles and Madame Chantal. All historians, however, admit that this Papal favourite amassed great wealth under the pontificate of her protector, that her greed and her avidity knew no bounds, and that she availed herself of her power to receive money from all those who solicited favours or offices from the Holy Father. She became the channel of Papal favours, and loaded her friends and relations with wealth and honours. Clement VI was a child of his age, of an age of chivalry, gallantry, and poesy. And in spite of stirring events, of heresies and schisms, of feudal, civil, and foreign wars, the spirit of this chivalry spread its wings and followed its course. Society ladies and noble dames, married and unmarried, had adopted the fashion of a *Cicisbeo* as a legitimate accessory of their high rank. For a noble lady to lack a knight attached to her service was equivalent to lacking in *bon ton*. Troubadours and minstrels visited the castles of the nobles, sang in ballads the charms of their ladies, and the latter accorded to them every privilege which a woman can grant to her lover. The debauchery of the age had above all found a centre in Avignon, where the gold of the world poured on every side, where seductive courtesans exercised the power of their charms upon

PETRARCH.

unmarried cardinals and prelates, where nuns, behind mysterious cloister walls, beguiled their time not with fasting and prayer!

The Pontifical government of the Avignon period was not a cruel régime. Intellectual culture and humanism prevailed in the palace of the Popes—the walls of which testify to this very day of the terrible and crushing power of Papacy in the fourteenth century. Nearly all the Popes who resided at Avignon were men of erudition and learning, scholars, men of the world—and who encouraged the *gay Saber*, the poetry of the troubadours, and the art of the dawning Renaissance. Petrarch and Giotto found noble patrons in the Sovereign-Pontiffs on the banks of the windy Rhône. These rulers on the throne of St. Peter were also politicians, whose fanaticism was exercised against Philip le Bel and Louis of Bavaria rather than against heretics. No doubt heresy formed part and parcel of the policy of those days—just as socialism, nihilism, anarchism, constitute so many items in the political programme of the twentieth century, and to suppress which it is deemed the duty of the reigning powers. Every authority rules and asserts its powers, by availing itself of the means it has at hand. In those centuries of barbarism, in that night of mediævalism, lit only by the glaring flames of the burning stakes, it may have been a kindness on the part of the Pontiffs to hide from public view the human sacrifices and holocausts—a policy to which they thought themselves condemned by a law of terror. Everything took place in the interior of the palace, where heretics

were tortured and burned; but the people knew little or nothing of what was happening, guessing perhaps that an execution had taken place from the thick smoke coming out from a chimney of one of the towers. Later on in Spain the Inquisition changed its tactics. It turned the executions into public festivals, and invited the populace to witness the burning of heretics—which in Avignon took place only behind closed doors. The Popes were scholars and gentlemen; and is it so difficult to imagine these sovereigns living peacefully in their palace—talking theology with the cardinals, *gay Saber* with troubadours and fair dames, whilst beneath—within the walls of the very palace—in a miserable casemate some one is agonising, is being tortured to death, because he had dared to think? The modern student and the Christian of Western Europe of the twentieth century unhesitatingly make the sweeping remark: They were cruel tyrants, those powerful Pontiffs—barbarians and savages. But would it not be easy to draw a parallel between the dungeons of the fourteenth century on the banks of the Rhône and those of the twentieth on the banks of the Neva? Whilst the Tsar of All the Russias is graciously smiling and honouring with his august presence some brilliant ball at the Winter Palace—not far away, in the miserable casemates of the fortress of St. Peter and St. Paul, some delicate girl is being slowly tortured to death, because *she* has dared to think! How many of us, however, feel indignant at the mere assertion that the ruler of Russia is a savage. In culture and artistic appreciation

the Sovereign-Pontiffs, contemporaries of Boccaccio and Petrarch, of Giotto and Cimabué, residing at Avignon, would certainly outshine many a sovereign of Europe who has graced the annals of history. And sovereigns they were, those Vicars of Christ, living in the fourteenth century—sovereigns of a powerful empire, sovereigns with all their faults and all their virtues. They were Frenchmen, they were—for the most part—scions of noble, aristocratic, and princely families, and they lived in the fourteenth century—in the midst of poetic Provence—in an age of chivalry, knight-errants, and love. For the fourteenth century was an age of love *par excellence*. The very atmosphere of Avignon seems to have been fraught with love. In the church of St. Clare at Avignon—was it on a Good Friday or on an Easter Monday ?—a young man and a young woman met. They exchanged a glance; and this glance gave birth to a flame which was destined to be deified and sung through centuries. The young man was Petrarch, the young maid Laura de Noves.

Their story, like that of Romeo and Juliet, began with a mutual and instantaneous vibration which fused into one, and for eternity, two hearts, strangers until that moment. That famous love affair, which may now appear only affectation and imagination, nevertheless reflects faithfully the truth of the period, the romantic idea of the age, the conception of love. And the spirit of the age, the spirit of Provence—where the march of civilisation had not been interrupted ever since the days of the Romans and the

Greeks—had penetrated into the palace of the Popes. The residence of the successors of St. Peter had become a large *caravanserail*, where profane pleasure entered freely. From Gascony and Languedoc the nobility hastened to the fêtes offered by the Papacy; and a motley crowd of merchants and mad virgins, of Italian refugees and adventurers of all sorts and conditions, filled the narrow streets. And Avignon, in brilliancy and laxity of morals, began to resemble Babylon of old—lacking nothing, not even the daughters of Israel. But the latter neither wept nor sighed when they sat by the waters of the Rhône. The Church offered so many advantages in those days; she was the infallible means, the direct road leading to power, honour, and—pleasure; to wealth and consideration. And hence the Church—and especially the Papal Court—was full of men and women whose mode of life, whose tendencies and aspirations were far from holy.

Clement VI was, so to speak, the forerunner of those Popes of the fifteenth century who prepared the way for the Renaissance. Clement liked to recall memories of pagan times, and frequently repeated the words of a Roman Emperor, "No one must withdraw displeased from the presence of the Prince."

Loving magnificence and pleasures to this degree, Clement VI would not be desirous of leaving Avignon to go to face the factions in Italy. The question of the return to Rome had been mentioned at the beginning of his pontificate, as also at that of Benedict. When the election of Clement was known, the Romans sent

an Embassy to offer him senatorial dignity—" not to the Pope, but to the Lord Roger." This Embassy was composed of eighteen deputies, drawn from high rank, from citizens and the people, among whom was Petrarch, who had recently received the title of Roman citizen. He declaimed some Latin verses, in which he used the same inducement to beg the Pope to go to Rome as he had previously used in his letter to Benedict. Clement did not answer for two months. He accepted the senatorial dignity with certain reservations, but declared that although it was his intention to transfer his residence to Rome, the moment did not seem opportune. He reduced the period of the Jubilee of Pope Boniface VIII from one hundred years to fifty. The reason given was that only few men attaining a hundred years could enjoy the privilege of the indulgences attached to the Jubilee. Really the Romans wished to restore to their city the riches and splendour of which they had been deprived by the residence of the Popes in Avignon. Clement VI fixed 1350 as the date for the next Jubilee, and decided that in the future the ceremony should take place every fifty years.

Nothing remained of the timid reforms attempted by Benedict XII. Far from following the policy of the last Pope in trying to bring discipline to the Monastic Orders, he tried " to spread on this severity the oil of his merciful gentleness." Benedict had refused bishoprics to his relations, but Clement VI distributed money and favours and raised many to the dignity of the Cardinalate, although they had

neither the age nor the manners necessary to occupy such an exalted position. By culpable negligence of Church interests, as by the effect of his natural generosity, he was prodigal of his favours without discernment or choice.

One of his first acts was to publish a Bull promising livings to all those poor clergy who, in the space of two months, should present themselves at the Court of Avignon. And such a multitude came that a hundred thousand were counted. To suffice for this liberality the Pontiff reserved a number of bishoprics and abbeys—paying no attention to the elections made by the Chapters, and when it was brought to his notice that his predecessors had not done this to the same extent, "That is," he answered, "because they did not know how to be Popes."

These inconsiderate actions did not fail to raise protestations. In the beginning of the year 1343, the Cardinals on whom he had conferred benefices in England sent procurators to take possession; and these procurators were seized by the order of Edward III, and driven from the kingdom. The Pope's letter asking for reparation was answered by the King, who complained that the ecclesiastics to whom the livings had been given were absentees, and therefore mercenaries—"and so the riches of our States pass away to foreigners, not to say, our enemies; and our Parliament has prayed us to remedy this." He finished by demanding that the Pope should abstain in the future from interfering with the rights and liberties of the elections of the Chapters.

These complaints were not listened to, and the following year, as the King repeated them concerning the nomination to the Bishopric of Norwich, of which Clement VI had withheld the disposal, "You seem to say," the Pope wrote, "that your Parliament can restrain the power of the Holy See. Your advisers are not ignorant of the penalties to which they expose themselves by violating ecclesiastical liberty. We have learnt that edicts and letters offending our Apostolic authority have been issued in your kingdom. We exhort you to revoke these measures. Consider that God Himself gave the Roman Church the supremacy over all the Churches of the world, with the dignities attached to them, and that since then the Pope has the right to dispense bishoprics and benefices throughout Christendom."

Clement VI was not successful in restoring to the Apostolic chair the ascendancy it had lost. In spite of the agreements made by the lords of Upper Italy with Benedict, they carried on their wars. Availing himself of his prerogative as head of the Church, and also of his claim to govern the Empire, Clement sent two cardinals, one to Lombardy, the other to Tuscany, to put an end to these perpetual struggles. They could only acknowledge their impotence to carry out the work entrusted to them. That, it is true, was not the most important part of their mission. Following the example of John XXII, Clement VI had formed the design of establishing the political influence of the Holy See in the peninsula, by lowering the Ghibellines, and he feared that Louis of Bavaria,

master of the Tyrol by the marriage of his son with the Duchess of Carinthia, would invade Italy. In accordance with the Pope's instructions, the Legates, appearing to prepare the way for peace, succeeded in uniting the Lords of Lombardy and Tuscany, Guelphs and Ghibellines in a league against the Emperor, and so placed a hindrance in the way of an undertaking that Clement dreaded. But this league profited the Pontifical Court less than the petty tyrants who ruled over those provinces and who sought to free themselves from the Church and from the Empire at the same time.

During the reign of Clement VI extraordinary changes were being accomplished in Rome. Torn by factions more and more, the capital of the Christian world had become the prey of certain nobles who quarrelled over the possession of its ruins. The senators, nominated by the Papal Court, far from repressing these excesses, were more often than not accomplices. But a man was found who resolved to deliver Rome from oppression and to give her back the greatness of her past. He was Nicolas Rienzi, a man of low extraction. With learning beyond his position, his imagination full of old-time memories, with a fine face, bold, passionate, and eloquent, he had all the gifts to fascinate a crowd. In 1343, already known by his fellow citizens, he went in the name of some Roman notables to Avignon to beg Clement to restore the Papacy to Italy once more. He painted the unhappy condition of the city and the tyranny which weighed upon the people. His zeal and elo-

quence at least interested Clement, who, by a letter, recommended him to the protection of the magistrate of the city. Returning to Italy, Rienzi himself prepared to undertake a work in which the Pope refused to concur. Addressing himself to the citizens and merchants, explaining to them his projects, recalling to their memories, sometimes by his speech, sometimes by means of allegorical pictures, all the ancient glories of Rome, he succeeded in creating numerous partisans, when in May 1347, at a public meeting in the capital, he was elected to the government of the city. When the nobles attempted to oppose his election the people took arms to defend their chief, and Rienzi saw himself the master of Rome. He established his power under the disused title of *Tribune*, which brought him near to the people. He added to this "clement," "severe," and "liberator," and at first his deeds justified these qualifications. Rienzi seized the taxes, and reorganised the army, to make his authority certain; he executed rigorous justice and took proceedings against all crime, no matter who were the instigators of it, compelling to obedience the nobles as well as the simple citizens.

When the Lord of Viterbo, Giovanni de Vico, tried to resist the new laws, Rienzi forced him to swear entire submission in the presence of the people, and for the first time security reigned in and round Rome. Such a quick and happy change spread the name of Rienzi throughout the peninsula and across the Alps. Lucchino Visconti of Milan, and after him Genoa, Venice, Florence, and Sienna sent ambassadors to the

Tribune. The cities of the Church States also sent deputies and begged his support. Petrarch wrote verses about him, comparing him with Brutus and Camillus. Clement VI himself encouraged him in his efforts and confirmed his self-conferred title of Tribune.

Up to this time Roman insurrections had kept within the city walls. Rienzi resolved to extend his work to the whole of Italy. Proscribing the words Guelph and Ghibelline, which recalled hatred and murder, he would unite the states and cities in a confederation, of which Rome should be the capital and the centre, and for this purpose he called together a Congress from all the cities of Italy. By this idea he tried to do what no one had yet done, endeavouring to offer to Italy a unity which the Guelphs had sought in vain with the Popes, and the Ghibellines with the Emperors.

The Empire and the Papacy were in a very weak state at this time, and had Rienzi united his views as reformer to some political prudence, he might have been able to keep the prestige which his name inspired; he might have brought his undertaking to a happy end. But the Tribune was carried away by his enthusiasm. With his mind full of the memories of the Roman Republic, he claimed for Rome her old supremacy, annulled by an Edict all the gifts of law granted by the Emperors to the Papacy, alleging that they were detrimental to the rights of the Roman people, from whom only such gifts could emanate. This resulted in alienating the sympathies of Cle-

ment VI, and in reviving the question of Temporal Power. Rienzi also added extravagant pride to his political imprudences, and the Congress he had called together degenerated into vain theatricals, in which he was made a knight. He proclaimed all the cities of Italy free, and cited to his tribunal Louis of Bavaria and Charles of Luxemburg, and all the Electors, by virtue of the exclusive right of the Roman people to govern the Empire. The titles he had given himself were not enough to satisfy his vanity, and he therefore added to them "*August* Tribune," "Lover of Italy," and "Friend of the World."

Money was coined with his image, and he fondly dreamed of establishing an Italian Empire, nominating himself Emperor. Going beyond all bounds, after having been a stickler for justice, he fell into arbitrary despotism and by his acts succeeded in alienating his most zealous partisans. Clement VI, whose Pontifical rights had been ignored, became alarmed, and decided to strike the Tribune with ecclesiastical thunderbolts, and to put the Romans under interdict if they did not drive Rienzi from the city. The nobles, encouraged by this, rose against the Tribune, and after eight months—forsaken even by the people—Rienzi had to leave Rome as a fugitive.

By a singular coincidence, while Clement VI saw himself threatened with the loss of his authority in Rome, events in Naples gained for him the sovereignty of Avignon. It was sold to the Holy See by that beautiful Queen, Joanna of Naples, whom historians have often compared to Mary Queen of Scots. Joanna

of Naples plays an important part in the history of Papacy, for not only did she lay the foundation of the Papal suzerainty in Provence, but she became a favourite of two Sovereign-Pontiffs.

Contemporary historians say that, like the wife of Claudius, this Princess sought the love and caresses of her meanest servants. The indifference which she at first experienced for her husband had been changed into antipathy, and soon into deep hatred, stirred and stimulated by political factions and jealousy. Naples was in a state of fermentation, and tragical events were threatening. Soon the Prince Andrew was to fall by the hand of the assassin. Petrarch, who had visited Naples at that period, exclaims: "O God! How Naples is to be pitied! One almost fails to recognise this city. Religion, faith, and truth seem to have fled her walls: one would imagine oneself to be at Memphis, Babylon, or Mecca! In the place of King Robert, so good, so pious, so just, there rules a little monk, barefooted, with shorn crown, clean-shaven, covered in a dirty cloak, bent by hypocrisy rather than by years, steeped in debauchery, proud of his poverty, more even than of the wealth he has accumulated. It is he—the little Friar Robert—who is holding the reins of government.—His cruelty and his debaucheries surpass those of Denis, Agathocles, and Phalaris.

"This monster, which one can hardly contemplate without a feeling of horror, oppresses the weak and despises the mighty ones; he treads under foot justice and treats the two Queens with the utmost insolence.

Court and town tremble before him, and a sad silence prevails in all assemblies at Naples. In the interior of the houses people are talking in whispers, the slightest gesture being punished like a crime—one scarcely dares to think."

And whilst the hatred of the Queen for her husband increased, whilst her love intrigue with her cousin, Louis de Taranto, became an open secret at the Court, the friends of her lover decided to turn to the latter's benefit the Queen's inclination for a gallant life. It was decided to spare no means so as to get rid of Prince Andrew and of Friar Robert, and rush the Queen into a marriage with her cousin and lover. An assassination—in the interests of court policy—was only a trifling matter in the days of the Italian Renaissance. Prince Andrew had to go, the only question being how he was to meet his doom. A Neapolitan chronicler relates that one evening the whole Court being assembled, Queen Joanna, whether to avoid the glances of her courtiers, or simply to seek distraction, took out of her workbasket some threads of gold and silver and started plaiting a beautiful belt. Her consort approached and inquired whether this was intended for a girdle or a sword-belt. Joanna was silent for a while—then, looking her spouse straight in the face, she replied with a mocking laugh: "This belt is to strangle you, sire!" and indeed September 18, 1345, witnessed a terrible catastrophe. The Court was at Aversa, Naples being intolerable during the hot summer months. The royal suite was occupying apartments in the Celestine convent

of San Pietro a Majèlla. The town of Aversa is situated between Capua and the capital, in the district known as the " happy campania." There was nothing unusual for the Court to go to this delightful summer resort, for the monarchs were in the habit of annually leaving their capital and seeking relaxation in one of their summer residences, where woods and forests, parks and chases offered them delightful diversions. Here they spent a few weeks far from the turmoil of the Court. On the fatal night the Court had already retired, the guards of the Prince were sunk in sleep, and the black-robed monks enjoying a short repose before starting their matins. It was past midnight when one of the Queen's maids, Mabrice di Pace, quietly entered the royal bedchamber and informed Andrew that a courier from Friar Robert had just arrived, and wished to speak to him on matters of importance which brooked no delay. Unsuspectingly the Prince quickly rose and proceeded to the place where the supposed courier was waiting. Scarcely had he left the chamber when the door was quickly bolted, the Prince seized, gagged with a glove, and strangled.

He was dragged forward to the balcony of the gallery, where they hanged him over the garden. Some of the conspirators are supposed to have pulled the feet of the quivering, dangling body from below, so as to hasten death. It seems that the nurse of Andrew, or, according to others, a Hungarian waiting-maid, who slept in one of the apartments under the balcony, was suddenly awakened by the noise, and

seeing and hearing what was happening raised the alarm. Her loud cries of murder rang through the palace, and the assassins, leaving the corpse, quickly dispersed. At the testimony of this Hungarian, Joanna was accused of the murder. Some contemporary writers, having depicted her as a woman governed by insatiable passions, passing from the arms of her *amant attitré* into those of numerous other courtiers, maintain that she herself was the instigator of the crime. Without endeavouring to enter fully into this question—the episode being a side-issue of our story—one may, however, remark *en passant* that if Joanna were guilty of connivance in the murder of her husband, she was not the only princess in history who got rid of her husband with the help of her devoted friends. And is it such an unique event in the history of criminology—a woman having her husband assassinated by her lover—as to declare Joanna's participation in the assassination of Andrew absolutely impossible ?

Some authors go so far as to maintain that Joanna herself, with the help of her devoted followers and lovers, had strangled the Prince with the belt she herself had made, and that the next morning it was announced in Naples that unknown assassins had committed the foul deed. No one dared to investigate the details of the catastrophe.

Muratori, the best authority on the history of Italy, says that it would be easier to make the face of a negro white than to whitewash Queen Joanna and to disculpate her of the murder of her husband.

And it seems almost improbable to imagine that the Italian Messalina was absolutely ignorant of the conspiracy which was planned on the threshold of her apartments—a conspiracy in which her friends and her lover were the principal actors. Had they dared to carry out their plans without being sure at least of the silent consent of the Queen? The Pontiff Clement VI seems to have been inclined—if not openly to accuse Joanna—at least to attribute some importance to the grave suspicions attached to her person. Her conduct after the murder of her husband increased the suspicions. Joanna protected the assassins, and seems to have manifested no signs of grief. At the death of Prince Andrew public opinion now openly accused the Queen of the murder.

Joanna dispatched messengers to the King of Hungary and to the Pope, conveying the sad news. In her letter to Louis of Hungary, brother of the murdered Prince, the Queen implored his protection for herself and her unborn child.

The Pope, who had assumed the government of Naples, during Joanna's minority, ordered at once Philip de Cabassole, who had been created Cardinal with the title of St. Mark, to hold an inquiry and to punish the murderers. Should the Queen be found guilty, ran the Papal command, the evidence should be kept secret. But, added the historians favourable to Joanna, the Cardinal was unable to arrive at any definite conclusion. In the meantime, however, the King of Hungary raised a cry for vengeance. He

LAURA DE NOVES.

addressed himself to the Court of Avignon, demanding from the Sovereign-Pontiff the punishment of the guilty widow. The Pope at last hurled the thunders of the Church against the murderers of Prince Andrew. Without daring to name them, His Holiness excommunicated the assassins. But Louis of Hungary's thirst for revenge and, above all, his ambitions, were not satisfied. He had cast his eyes upon the crown of Naples; he spared no sacrifice and he had bought and acquired many friends. A powerful party was working in his interests at Naples, and from day to day the position of the young Queen became more and more critical. In her despair Joanna felt that she required the protecting arm of a man; she therefore married one of her lovers, her cousin, Louis de Taranto. But in spite of his courage and talent, her new husband was incapable of shielding her from the threatening storm. At the head of an army, Louis of Hungary came from the depths of Germany, unfurling a black flag, upon which was seen the figure of the murdered Prince, and for forty years he never tired of hunting down his sister-in-law. His revenge was satisfied, and his thirst for blood only slaked when her head, blanched by years and suffering, had fallen with her crown, stained with the blood of her first husband. Louis of Hungary now appeared before the gates of Naples and invaded the territory of Queen Joanna. In her distress the Queen decided to betake herself to Avignon and to lay her cause at the feet of the Pontiff, whose partiality for beautiful women was so well known. She would convince the Holy Father of

her innocence, and soon he would proclaim it to Christendom.

And at the splendid Pontifical Court of Avignon—which outshone in magnificence all those of the sovereigns of Europe—Joanna appeared.

CHAPTER VI

JOANNA OF NAPLES, THE FAVOURITE OF TWO PONTIFFS

THE Queen was received by the Pontiff in a public consistory. The Pope himself was seated on a throne of crimson and gold, and attired in his white robes of silver tissue, the double crown on his head. Round him, in a semicircle, were seated the Cardinals in their scarlet robes, whilst the magnificent hall was filled with prelates, princes, nobles, and ambassadors from European powers.

Pale and beautiful, the Queen was led into the august assembly by two cardinals, followed by her friends and vassals. Slowly she approached the throne of the Holy Father, kneeling three times before approaching the Pontifical throne and kissing the golden cross embroidered on the Pontiff's linen shoe,[1] and then, by a special privilege of her rank, his hand.

Clement VI, it must not be forgotten, was one of the most refined princes of his time. He had certainly more of the chivalrous knight in him than of the austere and morose priest. He was a Don Juan on the Papal throne and always gallant towards ladies. Joanna was beautiful, and a queen, and the

[1] The Popes now wear red slippers.

gallant Pontiff rose to the occasion. He raised the noble lady—kneeling before him, and arraigned as a criminal, accused before the Courts of Europe and the solemn assembly—and kissed her on the lips, and after a few words of paternal protection, placed her on a vacant seat beside him.

She was not an ordinary woman, this Queen—who now stood up before her judges to plead her cause. She spoke in Latin; and her speech is declared by contemporary writers to have been a masterpiece of oratory. She defended her honour and her crown, and did not fail to omit any subtleties of the oratorical art which could move her hearers and dispose her judges in her favour. She was beautiful, young, eloquent—personal magnetism and charm emanated from her and intoxicated the minds and hearts of her audience. If her personality and manner, her grace and charm, had made cardinals and Pope—who allowed themselves to be guided rather by generosity than by justice—forget their rôles as judges, her speech assured her an absolute triumph. She appealed both to the minds and to the feelings of her judges. And even the suspicions which had been raised against her were silenced. It had been rumoured before that the Pope was prejudiced against her, that he had a personal dislike for the Queen, that he had been shocked when the news of the murder of Andrew had reached him. But whatever Clement VI had believed before he met the Queen of Naples, whatever his intentions had been, Joanna came, spoke, and conquered! Once more feminine beauty carried off

a victory, prejudicing judge and jury in its favour. One involuntarily wonders what would have been the result of that consistory had Joanna been an ugly woman, even if eloquent; or how she would have fared if, in her dazzling beauty, she had faced an assembly of judges of her own sex. We wonder! As it was—more than one of her audience fell in love with the beautiful speaker, and more than one cardinal who sat in judgment was fascinated by her charm. The result of her personal beauty, and of her gift of eloquence, secured her easy victory and absolute acquittal. "The beauty and eloquence of the Queen of Naples," writes one contemporary author, "would have seduced the Areopagus itself." Not only was she declared innocent, but her conduct was said to have been above suspicion. Clement VI publicly absolved her, and she rose from her knees, a sinner no longer. Her heart was full of gratitude for the chivalrous knight who sat on the throne of St. Peter.

And how could she, who, after all, was far from being a model of virtue and a pattern of morals, resist the gallant advances of so amiable a prince as Clement VI?

The Pope was prevented by etiquette from conducting the fair Queen farther than the distance of two chambers, but he was courtier enough to express by his cordiality of manner and his looks and gestures, his admiration for the fair exile. Joanna had expressed the wish to return to Naples, and to be reinstituted upon the throne of her ancestors, but the Pontiff

insisted upon her remaining for some time at the Court of Avignon. A banquet was offered in her honour the very same evening—one of those magnificent receptions which Clement VI was in the habit of giving, and which are known as *the Clementine*. Joanna and her consort, Prince Louis of Taranto, and the noble ladies of the Queen's suite were invited, and the Pope, aided by his favourite, the Comtesse de Turenne, received the guests with his wonted affability. Joanna stayed only a short time at the feast, as feast and song, she said, did not become her state. She was, however, persuaded by the Pontiff to remain a season in Avignon, during which he promised to arrange her affairs and to come to an adjustment with the King of Hungary.

Joanna yielded to the invitation of the gallant Pontiff, thanking him for his protection. She was too clever a woman not to understand what benefit she could derive from her position as favourite of the Pope. She had been declared free of guilt and even above suspicion, but she had not yet been reinstalled upon the throne of Naples, still in the possession of the invaders. And although she knew that both the nobility and the people, treated with insolence and oppressed by the Hungarian invader, were only too anxious to shake off the foreign yoke—imploring her to return—she preferred to avoid the effusion of blood and to regain her throne by an amicable arrangement. This was not so easy a matter, as Louis of Hungary would not listen to any accommodation, proving unwilling to give up what he held in

his possession. To gain the friendship of Clement VI, to make him a willing instrument in her hands, ready to gratify her wishes in every respect, was the aim and goal of the exiled Queen. And to do this she had only to encourage the enamoured Pontiff in his advances. But the Don Juan in Clement did not prevent the politician from keeping an eye upon the advantages accruing to his power. The Pontiff had openly espoused the cause of Joanna; he had dispatched the Cardinal Guy of Bologna to Naples to treat for peace with Louis of Hungary.

But Joanna was not reinstated in her domain until she had offered the city and country of Avignon to the Pope for a stipulated sum of 80,000 florins of gold. Then, and only then, did the Pope reinstate his new favourite upon the throne of Naples and allow her consort, Louis of Taranto, to assume the title of king. Triumphantly the Queen returned to Naples, to the indescribable joy of the inhabitants. Had not her cause been sanctified by the special favour of the Holy See? Was she not a favourite of the Holy Father? The superstitious age dared not criticise the actions of the Pope. No matter what mode of life he was leading, people would have thought themselves doomed to eternal perdition if they dared to doubt the infallibility of the Vicar of Christ.

At last Naples was free from the invaders. Louis of Hungary found himself compelled to resign his pretensions to the crown—and he withdrew his troops. A treaty of peace was signed between the two nations, and a day fixed for the coronation of the

royal pair. Clement VI dispatched the Bishop of *Braearenza* to perform the ceremony. Joy reigned supreme in the gay city of Naples, and the King and Queen threw themselves into the whirl of pleasures and dissipation; feasts and prodigalities replaced the days of gloom and anguish, and Joanna's court was only equalled in gay living by that of the Pontiff himself.

A few months after her coronation Joanna's friend and guardian, Clement VI, died. What the fate of the fugitive Queen would have been had an austere monk been seated on the throne of St. Peter instead of that amiable knight and ladies' man one need not speculate upon. The beautiful exile was fortunate in her adversity. She was lucky to have found a powerful protector in the person of the Pontiff, whom she had bewitched by her charms. The sentence of the Pontifical Court had proclaimed her cause to Europe at large—and in an age of chivalry this was sufficient to find many knights ready to follow her banner.

After a pontificate which had lasted eleven years, six months, and sixteen days, Clement died, at the age of sixty-one. Had this Roman Pontiff been a secular sovereign, a king of France, or of England, an emperor of Germany or of Russia, the majority of historians would have declared him a great prince. His pontificate was brilliant, and he had succeeded in many undertakings in which his predecessors had failed. He commanded and was obeyed by the sovereigns of Europe. It is said that his generosity was very great; and in this respect he was a real

aristocrat who found pleasure in giving and in bestowing gifts.

Clement VI especially showed his generosity and munificence in those dark days of public calamity, when the Black Death sent terror into the hearts of thousands. Genoese and Catalanian merchants, returning from Syria, had brought the Plague with them in their goods and landed it, when they disembarked, in Sicily. Sure, fatal, irresistible, the scourge marched along—slaying its victims by thousands and tens of thousands. The cholera follows along the banks of rivers—feeling, so to speak, its way, whilst the Plague is blind; it is saying to humanity: "Guide me," and humanity, agitating and agitated, moving about, leads on the terrible scourge—handing it from one to the other. In Avignon the Black Death sent terror into the hearts of the inhabitants. The thronged streets suddenly became empty—the gay crowds disappeared as if by enchantment. Monks and friars were only seen gliding along the deserted city, stealing into gloomy houses where agonising victims awaited death in their beds. Corpses were heaped in the public places, and the gravediggers were too few to bury all the dead. The living barricaded themselves in their houses to pray and to fast, and to shut out the threatening spectre of death —grimly, pitilessly claiming new and ever new victims—but prayers and fasting and flagellations were of no avail. On the contrary, they seemed only to increase the number of the victims, and then frightened Avignon changed its tactics. It threw

itself into the whirl of life—nay, of dissipations and of gay living; and lo! the spectre of death, as if frightened by the apparent abundance of life, reluctantly retired. Clement VI did his best to help the suffering inhabitants of his city of Avignon. His generosity expressed itself in his munificent gifts. He spent vast sums in paying doctors to attend the poor and to provide a burial-ground for them. He bought a vast field outside the city walls, known as Champfleury, and had the victims of the Plague transferred there. Then he retired into the inner apartments of his palace—where great fires were blazing day and night —allowing no one to penetrate into his presence. "Papa inclusus camerae," writes the ancient chronicler, "habenti ignes magnos, nulli dabat accessum."

But people had noticed that the only individuals whose doors the Black Death seemed to avoid were the Jews. The latter were eating clean food and abstaining from drinking the water from the wells and cisterns. Such a natural explanation of cause and effect could scarcely satisfy the ignorant masses of the fourteenth century. And the accusation was raised against the Jews of having poisoned all the wells. In Bâle and Bern, in Strassburg, in Savoy, and in Italy, wherever the Plague had struck down numerous victims, the populace vented its wrath upon the Jews. And when the spectre of destruction stalked through the gates of Avignon, the persecution of the Jews immediately followed in its wake. But Pope Clement VI was too enlightened to allow such an act of injustice. He took the Jews under his

protection; and in that century of superstition and mediæval barbarism issued two Bulls in their defence.

When the Plague was over the mendicant friars, who had attended the plague-stricken during the calamity, and to whom many out of gratitude had left their estates, aroused the jealousy of the secular clergy. Many prelates, cardinals, and bishops, with hypocritical piety asked the Pontiff to suppress the mendicant friars. One saintly prelate accused them in the consistory of having robbed the dying in the days of the Plague, of having entered the houses of the sick in order to pillage, and of having caused a general scandal by their shameful conduct with the prostitutes when the whole community was plunged into mourning. Clement VI, however, knew that the Cardinal was not stimulated by righteous indignation, but by other less holy motives, and as a benevolent prince he was bound to admit that even if the mendicant friars were guilty of little transgressions they had, after all, done good work by attending the dying, by exposing their lives, and by bringing assistance where others had failed. "No, my brother," said His Holiness, "the mendicant friars are not so contemptible as you pretend. They have received their vocation from God—through the mouth of the Pontiffs—so as to help us in governing the faithful. What would we do, we prelates and princes of the Church, without these poor preaching priests? Could we dare to speak of humility, we who surpass in sumptuousness the Satraps of ancient Persia and the Cæsars of pagan and Imperial Rome? Would

we dare to speak of poverty—we who are the possessors of immense wealth and incalculable riches? Would we dare to speak of chastity—we whose excesses only rival those of ancient Sodom and Gomorrha? Would we dare to blame sensuality—we whose banquets are as extravagant as those of Apicius and of Lucullus? Would we condemn frivolity and pleasure—we whose palaces are the very temples of buffoons, histrions, actors, dancers, and singers? No, my brother, let us not judge too severely these friars and monks, who at least preach what they show by their example to be practicable. And if they really have obtained a little money from those whom they have been tending, and to whom they have administered during the Plague—they have deserved it. Let them employ it to recuperate their exhausted strength and regain their health by a little rest and some substantial nourishment, after such a 'long abstinence.'

"I, who am infallible," added Clement, not without a ring of irony in his voice, "I declare them absolved of all the sins which they may have committed. And what is more, I authorise them to retain the nuns in their convents, so that they may increase the population which the terrible scourge has decimated."

And if Clement VI lavishly and profusely spent the wealth of the Church in pleasures and festivities he also gave vast sums for noble and charitable purposes. He dissipated the treasures of St. Peter; but he dissipated them very often for good purposes, not forgetting the poor, the widow, and the orphan.

His spirit of tolerance was witnessed in many instances in an age of superstition, and his clemency and forgiveness were such that even Petrarch, who was no admirer of the Popes of Avignon, admitted that "none better than he deserved the name of Clement, which was suited to his actions." "Clemens nomine, Clemens re." The Jews, to whom he proved a benevolent protector in those dark days when the Plague ravaged Europe, used to sing his praises in their hymns. Indeed, one can find nothing but praise for Clement the prince, the sovereign. Even his splendid Court, his chivalric style of living, the sumptuousness of his palace, and the pomp and festivities would only make him more interesting and imposing. And even his love affairs would be forgiven—especially if his favourites exercised an influence for good over the Pontiff. The incongruity, however, begins with the fact that Clement VI was not in his element, in his right atmosphere. He occupied the throne of St. Peter, he was the Vicar of Christ, he was the servant of the servants of God, he was a priest, a successor of the poor fisherman, and it becomes almost incomprehensible—reviewing the history of Papacy from a distance of six centuries—how mediæval Christendom, aware what a life the Pope was leading, still looked upon him as the Holy Father, holding the keys of Heaven, and in whose hands lay the power to bind and to loosen. It is idle to pretend that his friendship for the Comtesse de Turenne was a purely platonic one. Clement's taste for the society of women few historians have

disputed. He was no hypocrite in any case, like Gregory VII, for, according to the testimony of Villani, the contemporary historian, Clement VI did not make a secret of his love affairs. Women of quality had free access to the Pontiff and were as familiar in his private apartments as prelates. They attended him in his illnesses and beguiled his time in his leisure.

When Clement was dead some of the Cardinals, who ardently wished for the stability of the Papal power, felt the absolute necessity of a reform in the Church. They resolved to elect a man of severe and austere manners, one who would put a check to the licentiousness of the clergy. Some of them were inclined to raise to the chair of St. Peter a Carthusian monk, reputed for the sanctity of his life and the purity of his morals. Such a device, however, found opposition among many members of the Sacred College. A monk accustomed to rule over a set of anchorites would not be an accommodating Pontiff, and would compel them, after they had become accustomed to a life of luxury, to lead the simple life of the Apostles and hermits. They finally agreed to elect the Cardinal of Ostia, who took the name of Innocent VI. This Pontiff was succeeded by William de Grimoard, abbot of the Convent of St. Victoire at Marseilles, who took the name of Urban V.

The election of this monk, nurtured in the silence of the cloister, far away from the tumult of the Court and its intrigues, was considered an inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Petrarch, in a letter which he addressed

to the Pontiff immediately after his election, told him that it was the Holy Spirit who made the Cardinals pronounce his name—for they themselves had never intended to raise the simple abbot to such a high dignity. At the moment of his election the abbot of St. Victoire was at Naples. He had been sent there by Pope Innocent to convey His Holiness's sentiments of condolence to Queen Joanna on the death of her husband, Louis of Taranto. During the time of his residence at the Court of Naples, Urban had become very friendly, and even intimate, with the beautiful Queen, and a close friendship seems to have sprung up between Joanna and the future Pontiff. Urban V became an even greater friend of Joanna than Clement VI had been. Some whitewashers of Joanna and many Catholic historians of Papacy have pointed out that the friendship existing between the Pontiff and the Queen must have been a pure and holy one—considering that Urban had become a canonised saint of the Church. But there are, nevertheless, indications that the favours which Urban V showed to Joanna, and the honours he heaped upon her—honours which had never before or since been lavished upon any other woman—were marks of a more than platonic friendship. Joanna was not a woman to remain a widow for long. She seems to have been quite disposed to console herself for the loss of her husband, in the arms of a successor. And thus immediately after the death of Louis of Taranto the Queen—for political reasons it was said, and in order to be able to keep in check the Neapolitan princes—entered

into *pourparlers* for a third marriage. Her ministers advised her to marry as soon as the period of her widowhood had expired. The Pope was opposed to a third marriage of his friend. Thanks to clever machinations and intrigues, he had succeeded in alienating all the pretenders to the favour of the beautiful Queen. John, King of France, proposed his son Philip, Duke of Tours, as a suitor for the hand of the royal widow. But previous to entering into negotiations with the Court of Naples, the King of France went to Avignon to consult the Holy Father on this important matter. Urban disliked the idea of such a marriage, for it would have placed the Pontiff in a state of dependence upon the sovereign of France—a prospect which was greatly to the distaste of the former abbot of St. Victoire. In order to dissuade the King of France from the proposed union, His Holiness did not hesitate to represent the bride in an unfavourable light. He described her mode of life, her morals, or rather lack of morals, her excesses, debaucheries, and her many love affairs. He even went so far as to reveal to the King the correspondence which had passed between Clement VI and the Queen of Naples, and in which the causes of the murder of Andrew, her first husband, were explained. In these letters Joanna is supposed to have offered to the Pontiff to pay for her absolution with Neapolitan gold and the love of a beautiful and passionate queen. But Joanna herself did not seem to have been inclined to marry the Duke of Tours. He was a mere boy, ten or twelve years younger than herself; be-

QUEEN JOANNA OF NAPLES.

sides, she, too, was afraid of marrying a prince of so high a lineage supported by the ascendancy of the crown of France. She therefore took for consort, James, King of Majorca. He was one of the handsomest princes of his period, and having lost his kingdom to Pedro of Aragon, he fled to the gay court of Naples, where the hospitable and beautiful Queen received him with open arms—in the broadest sense of the word. James was a king without a kingdom, a poor exiled prince, but he had the good fortune of pleasing the passionate Queen, whose lover he soon became, and who in 1362 asked him to marry her. The Prince accepted all the conditions imposed upon him—and the marriage was solemnised with great pomp and magnificence.

To transfer the Papacy to Rome was the ardent desire of the new Pope. Before his election, and when the report of the death of Innocent was beginning to spread, he had said publicly in Florence that he would die satisfied if he heard that Innocent's successor would resolve to leave Avignon and sojourn in Rome. Six months after Urban's accession the Romans sent to ask him, as they had vainly asked his predecessors, to transfer the Holy See to their city, and the Pope answered that it was the dearest wish of his heart; and, God helping him, he would accomplish it. Such a resolution was not without courage. Urban knew of the disturbances in Italy. He was not ignorant of the insults to which the ministers of the Church had been exposed, and he himself had suffered from the violence of Bernabo Visconti, to whom

he had been sent on a mission by Pope Innocent. He also knew that companies of troops were overrunning Italy in the same manner as they were overrunning France, and had reached the very gates of Rome. He knew that Rome, where he wished to go, although appearing to have accepted authority of the Holy See, had recently been the scene of fresh insurrections, and as a result of these insurrections the nobles had been driven out, and the senatorial power all but abolished. These considerations, however, did not shake the Pope's resolution. He judged that the presence of the head of the Church was necessary to strengthen the rebellious people in their duty. But a higher thought also animated his courage. It seemed to him that Papacy had suffered a diminution in its spiritual character in leaving the tombs of the Apostles, and he thought that in returning it would recover its prestige.

"I shall go to Italy and to Rome—if only to revive the religion of the faithful," he said. But the old Pope was mistaken. The Papacy was too dreaded to be restored by the return of the Holy See to Rome. Urban also suffered another disillusion. In March 1363 the King of Cyprus, Pierre de Lusignan, arrived at Avignon with the hope of inspiring the Western Princes with a war against the Turks. The Pope embraced with fervour the design of the King of Cyprus, and preached a Crusade. Led away by his adventurous spirit, and without counting the fresh dangers into which he would throw his kingdom, King John of France took the cross and was made

leader of the expedition. A levy of a tenth was made on Church revenues, and the Bishops were enjoined to preach a Crusade in their dioceses. The Pope commanded the Archbishop of Rheims to strike with ecclesiastical penalties any who should try to turn the King from his purpose. At the same time he wrote to the Genoese and the Venetians, to the King of Hungary, to the King of England, and to the Emperor for the help upon which he counted, telling them that their example would excite the Princes. For his part the King of Cyprus went through France, England, Germany, Poland, and Hungary, exciting the people to take part in the Holy War. But neither princes nor sovereigns were disposed to second him: John himself failed in his resolution. His death put another obstacle in the way of the expedition, and the Pope had to renounce the enterprise.

Urban was equally jealous and unsuccessful in Church matters. He had set out to reform the disorders at the Pontifical Court. By rigorous measures he tried to prevent malpractices and shameful bargains of which the Apostolic officials were still guilty, driving from his presence those whose conduct singled them out for special reproof. The plurality of benefices offended his piety extremely, and with the view of remedying this he appealed to all bishops to furnish him with a list of the livings in their dioceses. He renewed the order given by Innocent to the Bishops who, without good reason, were living in Avignon, to return to their dioceses. "One cannot

praise too much," wrote Petrarch, "this sign of prudence. Is there not danger for the ship when all the sailors abandon oars and ropes and leave the steering to come on deck to surround the pilot and disturb him in his work?"

Clement VI and Innocent had taken for themselves the Bishopric of Avignon, which they served by another. Urban named his brother Anglic Grimoard to the Bishopric, to show by his example that he did not approve of plurality. The consideration of relationship had little to do with this appointment. This brother and a nephew of his, Bishop of Saint Papoul, were his only relatives raised by Urban to Church dignities.

"Is it not sad and hateful," said Petrarch to him in the same letter in which he praised his reforms, "that you, the most virtuous of men, and who, in deeds as well as in words, try to imitate the Lord, that you should be at the beck and call of such brigands and forced to buy your liberty with the price of gold? It is," he added, "because the city of Blessed Peter has been deserted that these humiliations have been inflicted on the head of the Church; and I believe that the greatest evils will be reserved for him if he continue to remain far from the dwelling which Christ gave his Bride."

These were not the only humiliations which the Holy See suffered. The vassals of the Roman Church, profiting by this weakness, began to break the chains which bound them to her. They omitted doing homage and left off paying the hundredth which was

obligatory. Innocent VI had excommunicated Joanna of Naples and had put her kingdom under an interdict to force her to fulfil her duties as vassal, Urban threatened the same severity—if she did not fulfil her obligations. He reminded Pedro, King of Aragon, who held Corsica and Sardinia as a fief of the Holy See, that he had not paid the hundredth for ten years, and that he was running the danger of excommunication and interdict, and that, failing payment in the year, Corsica and Sardinia would return to the Roman Church. Pedro recognised his debt and excused himself for not having paid anything, but paid nothing further. A greater kingdom, equally vassal to the Holy See, namely England—from which the Court of Rome had the right to collect, according to an agreement signed by John Lackland, an annual tribute of a thousand marks sterling—had contributed little to the Papal coffers for thirty years. Urban complained to Edward; he said that the Holy See had always been indulgent because of the wars which embarrassed his kingdom, but that now that he was rich and victorious there was no reason to delay the payment of his debt. Edward communicated the Pope's claim to his Parliament. Bishops and nobles declared that the agreement contracted by John Lackland had been without the consent of the nation and thus contrary to the tenor of the oath taken by the sovereign at his coronation, and that his successors were not bound by it.

The Commons joined in this resolution, and brought in a Bill declaring that if the Pope pressed

his claims by any means they would oppose him with all their power. Urban did not insist, and from that moment the vassalage of England ceased; in reality it had been only a nominal vassalage for some time. Released now from the obstacles which had put off his Italian journey towards the end of 1366, Urban publicly announced his departure, fixing the date at Easter of the following year. He also informed the Romans and sent cardinal Albornoz to prepare an establishment at Viterbo, where he proposed first stopping. This plan called forth a lively opposition.

The Italians eagerly and anxiously desired the change, whilst the French cardinals, composing the majority of the Sacred College, were most unwilling to give up their delightful and princely residences on the banks of the Rhône, their luxurious palaces of Avignon for the melancholy Court of Rome and the palaces on the banks of the Tiber. But not only the Cardinals, the Pope's relations, and his own mother strenuously opposed His Holiness's decision. Urban, however, remained firm, and neither entreaties nor political representations prevailed upon him. No intrigues were spared to make Urban change his mind and abandon his plan. The Cardinals reproached him with the little affection he seemed to have for his native land, pointing out to him how the Saviour had always remained in the land where His cradle had stood.

Charles V, finding it against the Royal interest that the Pope should leave France, tried to keep him back. He sent ambassadors, one of whom is thought

to have been Nicholas Oresme, a learned man enjoying a great reputation for eloquence, who had once been tutor to the King. In a speech in the presence of the Pope and the Cardinals he tried to prove that Urban ought to remain in France. He spoke of the King's piety and showed that France had always been helpful to the Holy See in hours of trial; that France had greater devotion to the Church than Italy had; that France offered a surer refuge, and that in going to Rome the Pontiff was exposing himself to cruel tribulation. Petrarch wrote for his part, strengthening Urban in his resolve. Quite recognising that the Pope, no matter where his residence, was the head of the Universal Church, he showed that sacred ties bound him to Rome, that in breaking these ties he betrayed his mission, and he finished by imploring Urban to listen to the voice of his conscience, and to fear the judgment of God. More serious was the opposition of the Sacred College.

For the most part, foreigners to Italy, and much attached to the rich dwellings that they had built for themselves either at Avignon or at Villeneuve, the Cardinals could not make up their minds to go to live with people unknown to them, to turbulent republics in a country ruined by civil war; and they beset the Pope with their complaints and their reproaches. Urban was unshaken, threatening to deprive the refractory Cardinals and to nominate Italians in their places. Only by these threats he obtained their obedience, if not their approval.

Urban's mother threw herself on the ground before

him in the moment when he was leaving the Papal palace, declaring that he would have to tread over her body before leaving Avignon. But the Pontiff appropriately quoted a scriptural passage, "And he shall tread on the asp and the basilisk," and passed on—without even attempting, in filial duty, to raise his mother from her kneeling posture. Petrarch, delighted at the prospect of seeing the Pontiff returning to Rome, bitterly satirised those Cardinals who opposed His Holiness's return. "They were being taken away," he wrote, "from their delightful life of *far niente* and led to a land they abhorred. They were crying like prisoners led to Memphis by their Saracen captors and not to Rome, the holy city, the apostolic seat, where they ought to be the kings and the princes."

When everybody was praising the Holy Father for his firmness, his austere character, his holy zeal and his endeavours to reform the licentiousness of the Papal court, Petrarch had remained silent. He was well acquainted with the secret plans of the Pontiff, for did not his friend, Francis Bruni, exercise the functions of apostolic secretary? Yet the lover of Laura de Noves hesitated to accord his goodwill and praise to a man who remained a stranger to Italy, who still continued to reside in the Papal palace at Avignon.

The presence of the head of the Church across the Alps was so unexpected, so extraordinary, and revealed Urban full of such courage and piety that the announcement only of his departure had moved all Italy. The

Romans sent deputies to assure the Pope of their loyalty. Learning that it was his intention to reach Italy by sea, Pisa, Genoa, Venice, Lucca, and Naples offered to furnish him with galleys and the means of travel. The Emperor proposed either to precede the Pope or to follow him to Italy to protect his person against the companies infesting the country at that time. Urban feared their violence. He had written the previous year to the lords and cities of Italy, exhorting them to unite, and in common interest to expel the brigands. He now renewed these exhortations by a Bull, in which he declared vile to the fourth generation those who joined these companies, calling upon them divine and human curses, whilst he promised plenary indulgences to those who should fight with arms against them. But animosity was so great in the different factions that, far from uniting for the common good, rival cities used these bands of adventurers one against the other at their rate of payment. And more, Urban had ordered the levying of a tenth in Germany to assist the Emperor when he should go to Italy to drive away the companies; but this injunction was resisted. Stephen, Duke of Bavaria, forbade the clergy to pay this tenth, saying that Bavaria was a free country, and that he would not suffer anybody to touch his independence.

Urban left Avignon for Marseilles on April 30, 1367, in spite of so much that might have made him hesitate. Three Cardinals remained in Avignon; fifteen followed the Pope; some were to set sail with him and some to go by land and rejoin him in Italy.

The Pontiff stopped a certain time at Marseilles, and here he had either to overcome the resistance or to suffer the recriminations of those who accompanied him. He touched at Corneto, June 7. A Roman deputation came to offer him the lordship of Rome, with the keys of St. Angelo. On the 9th he reached Viterbo and found the ambassadors whom the Emperor, the Queen of Naples, and the King of Hungary had sent to meet him. The Patriarch of Constantinople sent by John Paleologus also came to swell the numbers.

"Now," wrote Petrarch, "now you appear the Sovereign-Pontiff, successor of St. Peter and Vicar of Christ. Without doubt you were all this before, by your dignity and your office, but you are doubly so now by piety and sentiments. You have repaired the faults of five of your predecessors. Thanks to God and to you, I see the Church once more established on her throne. You have brought her back to her ancient dwelling, restored to her also her virtues, that she may become again worthy of the veneration of the world."

Urban's first visit to Italy began very happily, but was saddened by a double event. Cardinal Albornoz died in his presence, and Urban felt sadly the loss of a man whose skill and valour had been so useful to him in the difficulties he had had to encounter. Soon after, an incident, which he could not expect, proved to him that the fidelity of the Italian people, for whom he had left Avignon, was indeed a fragile thing. A riot spreading throughout

the city rose from a quarrel between the inhabitants and the servants of some of the Cardinals.

The armed populace besieged the Cardinals' residences, and the Cardinals themselves escaped the violence of the mob only by seeking refuge at the Papal palace. The people shouted "Death to the Church." Some spoke of killing the Pope. The riot did not last long, for soldiers hastened to establish order. Three hundred rioters were arrested: fifty of these were banished and seven condemned to the galleys. But although the insurrection was so short it made an ineffaceable impression on the mind of Urban. He thought it advisable to wait at Viterbo for the help he had asked from some of the rulers of Italy; and on October 16 he made his entry into the apostolic city with an escort of nearly three thousand armed men.

He was received with joy by the population. No Pope had visited Rome for sixty-three years; and Urban could see the evil caused by the civil wars. The basilicas of St. Paul were half-ruined, and St. John of the Lateran had been partly consumed by fire. Convents and churches were deserted—everywhere one could see signs of ruin. And with all that no real authority in the city but the authority of the people, always on the verge of revolution and only constant in its hatred of the nobles. Urban did his best to remedy these disorders. He ordered the restoration of the most threatened buildings and tried to reconstruct the government of the city.

Innocent, on the advice of Albornoz, had given the

senatorial functions to a single magistrate, a stranger to the city, but the people, in spite of the Pope's refusal, had associated with the senator seven other magistrates who, balancing or annulling his power, were in reality the heads of the Commune.

Urban carried on the measures of Innocent. Respecting the senator, but not desiring the domination of the people any more than the people desired the domination of the nobles, he replaced the seven by three, whose nomination he reserved to himself. He nominated men in the same way to all the important posts in the city, and in taking from the Romans their independence he thought to avoid their excesses. Equally careful in all that touched religion, he restored worship in the churches and reformed the local clergy—whose manners had reached such a degree of roughness that monks carried under their habits swords and cuirasses. But the Pope's active vigilance was not only exercised in Rome. Learning that bishops and monks were flocking to the Court of Naples, he ordered the bishops to their churches and the monks to their convents. With his views on order and discipline, he ordered the persecution of the Fraticelli who had spread throughout Italy; and in order to give an example of his severity, of which some historians have tried to disburden his memory, he ordered several to be condemned to death by fire.

Among the Princes of Italy who had come to greet the returning Pope and receive his benediction was also Joanna, his friend of former days. We have seen

that at the moment when the Cardinals decided to place Urban on the throne of St. Peter he was at Naples, where he had been sent to convey the condolences of his predecessor, but in reality to watch over the conduct of the Queen, to whom the austere and simple-minded Innocent was not favourably inclined. But if she had failed to gain the friendship of Innocent VI, Joanna had succeeded in absolutely bewitching his successor. So great was Urban's infatuation with this striking woman—some historians say the esteem he bore her—that he little cared for public opinion, and publicly demonstrated his regard for her. The Queen of Naples arrived in Rome in 1368, at the beginning of Lent. She was met by Pierre de Lusignan, king of Cyprus, who conducted her to the gate of the city, where she was received by cardinals, clergy, and nobility. On the steps of St. Peter's Church the former abbot of St. Victoire—whom the Queen had honoured with her friendship in the days when the dream of Pontifical dignity had scarcely appeared possible of realisation to him—awaited the arrival of Joanna. The head of Christendom, in honour of the majestic woman, descended a few steps to meet her. He then led her to the tombs of the Apostles Peter and Paul, there to pray at the holy shrine. These marks of honour were witnessed by numerous crowds who had come to watch the procession. Joanna was admitted into the intimacy of the Holy Father, who—to the annoyance and surprise of Lusignan, king of Cyprus—passed his days closeted with her in his apartments. Soon

Rome had another proof of the Pope's unbounded admiration for this beautiful woman.

In accordance with an ancient custom, the Pontiff used to receive a golden rose from the people of Rome on the fourth Sunday in Lent called Lætare. This rose—which the Pontiff wore in his breast whilst celebrating Holy Mass—he offered to some distinguished person as a mark of honour. It was a mark of distinction greatly coveted; and all present were almost sure that the rose would be offered to the King of Cyprus. But to the surprise of the Cardinals, and the disgust of the King, Urban, at the conclusion of the service, placed the blessed rose on the head of the Queen. No doubt, from an æsthetic point of view the ornament was well placed on that beautiful head; but the Cardinals nevertheless remonstrated with His Holiness for such a lack of tact. "Never," they said, "had a woman—even a queen—been deemed worthy of such an honour, especially when a king was present." To this the Pope haughtily replied: "Have you ever seen a simple abbot on the throne of St. Peter?"

The city of Rome witnessed the triumphs of Joanna. The crowned courtesan who, *à la Cleopatra*, had charmed two Sovereign-Pontiffs, traversed the Eternal City surrounded by a cortège of nobles and prelates. To silence his critics, Urban decided to bestow an even greater honour upon his favourite, and on Easter Sunday he publicly, in the presence of the Court and the foreign ambassadors, praised the Queen of Naples for her charitable disposition, her

gentle nature, and her courage, and presented her with the consecrated sword and hat. The Queen, however, is supposed to have offered the sword to the King of Cyprus, whose mortification had touched her heart, and to have kept the blessed pearl-embroidered hat. At the beginning of May, 1368, the Pope left Rome and retired to his delightful villa of Montefiascole, there to inhale the pure country air. He was accompanied by the Queen of Naples, who shared the Pontifical *villégiature*. Did she compensate in those rural and pastoral surroundings the friendship of the pastor of the Catholic Church, as she had compensated Clement VI for the interest he had shown her ?

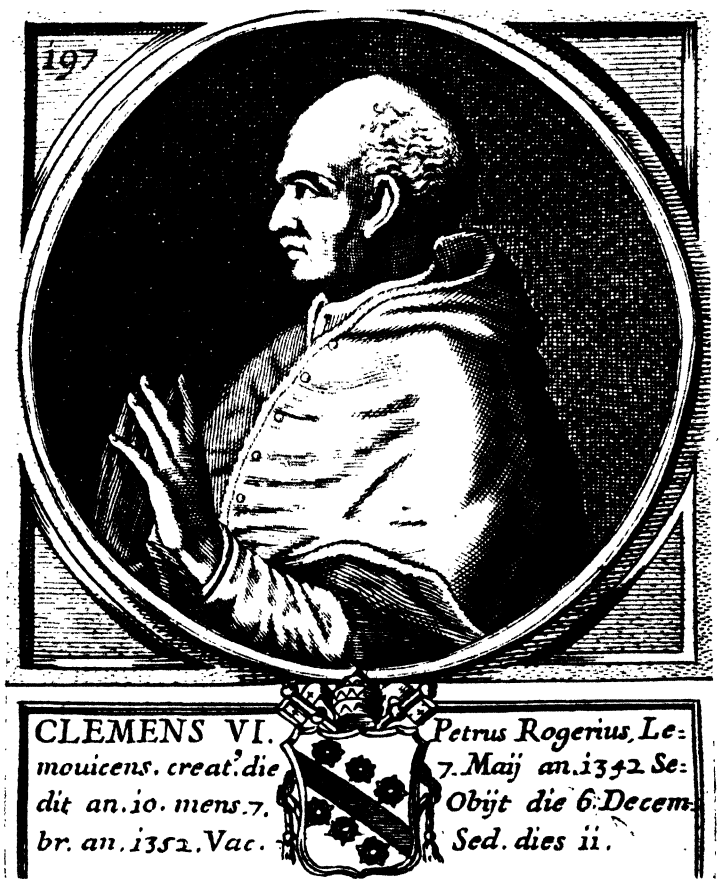
"If one considers," says an impartial historian, "the character of Joanna and the general morality prevalent at the Roman Court in those days, one can scarcely doubt these assertions."[1] If Petrarch has nothing but praise for Pope Urban V, not accusing him of an irregularity of conduct as he did his predecessors who resided at Avignon, it must be borne in mind that the poet of Vaucluse loved Italy above all, and his admiration for the Pontiff knew no bounds as soon as Urban had transferred the Holy See from the banks of the Rhône to those of the Tiber. Rome could cover many sins! And whilst Urban was enjoying the delights of country air and the agreeable company of the fascinating Queen, James, her husband, who had returned to Naples, had been informed of what was happening at the Court of Rome. He

[1] Joudou, J. B., "Histoire des Souverains Pontifes," etc. (Avignon, 1855), vol. i. p. 107.

immediately wrote to his wife, ordering her at once to return to Naples, threatening—in case of disobedience—to inform the sovereigns of Europe of her infamy. But Urban V was not a man to be thwarted in anything upon which he had set his mind. We have seen how neither the supplications of his mother nor the remonstrances of the Cardinals could deter him from his purpose to leave Avignon for Rome. Thus, when the Pontiff saw that he was to be deprived of his favourite, he annulled, under the pretext of relationship, the marriage of Joanna and James.[1]

The Holy Father published a Bull, by which he declared the Queen of Naples perfectly free to take another husband. Such Bulls were quite frequent in those days of mediævalism. It is worthy of note that the laws of the Catholic Church, during the period of mediæval darkness and errors, formed an inextricable chaos. Whilst on the one hand the Roman Pontiffs, in the name of the Gospel, were recommending the Christians to have only one wife—and even none at all—they often advised the princes and sovereigns of Europe, whenever it served their political purposes, to divorce their legitimate spouses and marry others. The Popes granted dissolution of marriages in many cases at the request of the sove-

[1] Three months after his marriage, James had left Naples to avenge the death of his father, who had been murdered by Peter the Cruel of Aragon. He was made a prisoner by Henry of Transtamare. He managed, however, to send intelligence of his plight to his wife, who procured his liberty by paying a very heavy ransom (cf. Froissart, "Chronicles"). He returned to Naples; but here he found that his wife was at the Court of the Pope.



POPE CLEMENT VI.

reigns, or annulled them whenever they pleased. Had they not the power to bind and to loosen ?

Urban V did not lack in precedents, and among his successors Alexander VI annulled the marriages of the Kings of Hungary and of Portugal, and Pope Clement VII that of Henri de Navarre, authorising him to marry Marie de Medicis. Clement IX was prevailed upon by the Cardinal de Vendôme to annul the marriage of the King of Portugal, Alphonso, and allow his wife to marry Don Pedro, her brother-in-law and lover. Whilst forbidding divorce, the Pope had also the power to annul any marriage which he disapproved of. Thus Urban availed himself of his prerogative of infallibility and annulled the marriage of Joanna and James of Majorca. But as the Italian princes had revolted against the Pope, and Bernabo Visconti again began to cover the towns and villages of unhappy Italy with blood and ruin, Joanna did not care to share the peril of her lover, and returned to Naples. In vain had the Pontiff made use of his ecclesiastical arms, such as excommunication, against the rebels ; and he invoked the help of the Emperor Charles. The latter came at the head of an army of 20,000 men, but the Pope had at last begun to realise that his safety was in jeopardy. The lovely seclusion of Montefiascole had lost its charm: his sojourn in Italy had proved fraught with anxiety; and the turbulence of the inhabitants, the democracy of the towns, ever ready to revolt against authority and power, had destroyed his peace and ruined his health. Urban regretted his peaceful city of Avignon, to

which his imagination now constantly reverted; he regretted the charming banks of the Rhône, where the river winds its course between meadows covered with olive-trees and hills crowned with vines; where an atmosphere of peace seemed to hover above the fairy scene upon which nature had lavished her luxury and her beauty. The homesick Cardinals—Frenchmen, who can never grow accustomed to a foreign land, however beautiful it is—did their best to induce His Holiness to return to Avignon. But Urban required a pretext to leave Italy. He found it in the threatened renewal of a disastrous war between France and England. To prevent the hostilities, to mediate between the Kings of England and France, the Pope decided to return at once to Provence and establish his Court at Avignon. But whilst the French Cardinals were happy at the prospects of a speedy return, the consternation of the Italian party was great. And as everything had been set on foot sometime before to prevent the Pontiff leaving Avignon, nothing was now left undone by the Italian party to keep him still in Rome.

Thus, in the month of May, 1370 Urban announced his intention of returning to Avignon. The motive he gave was that he wished to work from near by at the reconciliation of the Kings of France and England, between whom war had again been declared. Astonished at this unexpected news, the Romans sent to implore the Pontiff to renounce his determination. Urban answered that although his person would not be with them, his heart would always be. A friar,

belonging to the royal family of Aragon, fearing also the effects of the emotion which the announcement of the Pope's departure had caused in Rome, tried to turn away his resolution, telling him that his departure might cause a schism; a foresight of which later events proved the justice.

Petrarch addressed a letter to the Pope, in which he exclaimed: "Forgive him, O Lord, for he has been seduced by evil-minded advisers, so that he is not afraid of offending Jesus Christ and St. Peter; forgive him for his weakness and his fragility, forget the faults of his youth and the errors of his old age, for in his heart he is an honest man." Again a woman came forward to prevent the Pope from leaving the Vatican, as one had endeavoured to prevent his departure from Avignon. Once it had been his mother: now it was a saint, who had come from Sweden to Rome, a prophetess who knew the decrees of Providence. It was the holy St. Bridget, a descendant of one of the most noble families of Sweden. At the age of thirteen she had been married to a young noble; and after having given birth to eight children, she and her husband undertook a pilgrimage to the shrine of St. James of Compostella. On their return the pious travellers decided to embrace a religious life. The husband died before having fulfilled his vow, but the wife founded a double monastery for sixty nuns and twenty-five friars of the Order of St. Augustine. She gave them rules, which she maintained had been revealed unto her by Providence. And now, when she heard of the decision of Urban V to leave Rome

and return to Avignon, she became a very valuable instrument in the hands of the Italian party. St. Bridget obtained an audience of the Pontiff, and informed His Holiness that it had been revealed unto her by the Holy Virgin that if he dared to return to Avignon he would shortly die. The Pope was astute enough to see through the manœuvre and to understand that the Italian clergy were thus endeavouring to intimidate and force him to remain in Rome. But his mind was made up. Neither the poetic exhortations of Petrarch, nor the menaces of St. Bridget could prevail upon him. Again Urban asked his friend Joanna to furnish him with galleys which would carry him back to Provence. The Queen readily complied, and once more the Papacy was on the banks of the Rhône, and Urban held his entry into Avignon amid the joyous acclamations of the inhabitants.

The Pope's health, however, had been undermined. The sojourn in Italy had worn him out, his life was hastening to a close; and after a few months' residence in Avignon he died, on December 19, 1370. Thus again Queen Joanna had lost a powerful friend and protector. She had been the friend of two Popes—of the elegant and gentle Clement VI and of the severe and austere Urban V: a modern Cleopatra, who knew how to bewitch those who had the power to control her destinies. But henceforth the power of the Church was no longer to be exercised in her defence and no Bulls of excommunication were to be hurled against her enemies—the enemies of a Papal favourite.

It does not come within the province of this book to relate the life of Queen Joanna, but suffice it to say that her husband, James of Majorca, having died in Spain in 1375, she contracted a fourth marriage with Otho of Brunswick, when forty-six years of age, but still very beautiful, and many were the suitors to her hand, heart, and crown. Alas! trouble soon befell this remarkable Queen, who has often been compared to Mary Queen of Scots. Pope Urban VI proved an inveterate enemy of the favourite of two of his predecessors. Joanna had rejoiced at the election of Nicholas Prignano, Archbishop of Bari, a Neapolitan, who took the name of Urban VI. But alas! she had made a great mistake in the character of this Pontiff. No sooner was he seated on the throne of St. Peter than he forgot all the favours he had received from the Queen, and plotted her down-fall with the Duke of Andria. What had caused Urban's hatred of Joanna it is difficult to say. Was it his nepotism, his desire to aggrandise his nephew, Francisco Prignano, for whom he desired a greater part of the kingdom of Naples? And when Nicholas Spinelli reminded the Pontiff of Joanna's former favours, pointing out that she had advanced him to high honours from his obscure station, the vulgar and violent Pontiff exclaimed: "I tell you I shall soon send the Queen to spin in the monastery of St. Clare." He manifested his hostility against Joanna on more than one occasion, and his conduct towards her ambassadors was very insulting. The Queen had endeavoured to make peace between the Pope and

the Cardinals, whom he had been treating as some angry schoolmaster might have treated unruly boys. Tired and disgusted with his tyranny, the Cardinals had retired to Anagni, where they issued an encyclical declaring Urban's election null and void. In his fury the Pope wrote a most insulting letter to the Queen of Naples, reminding her of her crimes, of the murder of her first husband Andrew, of her debaucheries with his two predecessors, Clement VI and Urban V, and threatened to divulge her crimes and excommunicate her. An open breach between the Courts of Naples and Rome was the result. Joanna now joined the discontented Cardinals and offered them her protection and the town of Fondi, in the kingdom of Naples, where they held a conclave. Robert, Cardinal of Geneva, was elected Pope, under the name of Clement VII.

Two Popes were now occupying the throne of St. Peter, excommunicating and hurling anathemas against each other. Thus the great Western schism was inaugurated, and European Christendom was divided into Urbanists and Clementists.

As for Joanna, she became a staunch friend and partisan of Clement VII, and, when his safety at Fondi was being threatened, installed him at Castel del Ovo until he went to Avignon, which became the seat of the Antipopes! Urban VI denounced Joanna as a conspirator and an heretic, a modern Messalina, and hurled the thunderbolt of excommunication against her. Other forces were also at work to compass her ruin. Louis, the brother of her

first husband, was still thirsty for revenge; and as indications of adversity are always signals for the gathering of enemies, through the union of hostile influences she eventually lost her kingdom, and on being taken prisoner was strangled or smothered with pillows in the year 1382. Thus ends the story of a queen whom many have endeavoured to exonerate, but who, according to trustworthy authorities, was the favourite of two successive Pontiffs.

CHAPTER VII

ALEXANDER VI AND HIS FAVOURITES, VANOZZA AND JULIA FARNESE

Pope Innocent VIII was a worthy successor to Pope Sixtus. He had not less than sixteen illegitimate children, in whom he publicly showed pride. His favourite was Franceschetto; and in order to provide him with land and people, Jerome Riario, son of the late Pope, who possessed Forli and Imola, had to leave this earthly state quite suddenly, April 14, 1488. Innocent hoped to make himself easily master of the said cities after this murder, and to this end drove the people of Forli to revolt against their lawful rulers, supporting them with an army. But Jerome had left, besides his young son under age—a widow, the beautiful, clever, brave, and energetic Catherine Sforza, who put the Papal army to flight; she took six officers prisoners, whom she promptly executed, and then forced the people of Forli not only to do homage to her son, but also to accept her as Regent.

The attempt had failed miserably, but Innocent was not afraid, for still he hoped to obtain some principality for Franceschetto, and now attacked the brave Boccalino de Gozzoni, lord of the city and province of Osimo. Boccalino defended himself well,

and the Papal army was obliged—in spite of superiority of numbers, and in spite of being commanded by the renowned John James Trivulce of Milan—to lie twelve months before the city without being able to take it. The brave citizens of Osimo would not then have yielded had not Lorenzo de Medici interfered and induced the easy-going Boccalino to withdraw from the defence for the sum of 8,000 ducats. So the Pope, or rather Francheschetto, occupied the city and province of Osimo, and thereupon, in November of the same year, the already arranged marriage of the Papal bastard with Magdalen, daughter of Lorenzo de Medici, took place.

The Pope loved his daughter Theodorica next to Franceschetto, and he did not rest until he had provided her with a large dowry and married her to a Genoese noble. He showed himself just as generous to his other sons and daughters. Of his sons one became Archbishop of Benevento, another was created Cardinal, and a third was made Governor of the Castle Sant' Angelo. Of his daughters the least fortunate married a Roman baron. In short, the Holy Father showed that he was a true father; and if one blames him for the innumerable scandals and crimes he committed, it must also be acknowledged that he committed all for the sake of his children!

But I must now speak about a Pope who exceeded all his predecessors in infamy—one who will always go down to posterity—a Pontiff who, in spite of being a man of great mental attainments, was a monster of vice, unequalled in the history of the world. This

was Rodrigo, or Alexander VI, who succeeded Innocent in 1492. He belonged to an old noble family from Valencia in Spain, and known there by the name of Langolo. His father went to Venice, settled there, and changed, why it is not known, his surname Langolo to that of Borgia, a name afterwards made notorious by Alexander VI. Rodrigo had studied law, then entered the military profession, and lived the usual life of young officers of that time. He soon became known in Venice on account of his wild adventures and amours; he left the Army for the Church, because his uncle, the Bishop of Valencia, had promised him particular protection. The future Pontiff further saw that promotion came quicker in the Church than in the Army. It must also be understood that his manner of life was not changed. Only what he had done openly now he did in secret.

When Rodrigo Borgia was elected Pope he was already father of five children. Their mother was Vanozza Catanei; and although historians seem somewhat uncertain about her origin she evidently came of a noble family.

Vanozza was a rich widow when she enjoyed Rodrigo's intimate acquaintance, and he evidently knew how to win her through flattery, for she gave herself to him body, soul, honour, and fortune. She is represented as being very beautiful, but does not seem to have been very young, as she had two daughters nearly grown up when Rodrigo made her acquaintance. The charm of these girls even then made a deep impression on Rodrigo, at that time nineteen

years of age. He did not let the mother perceive his passion, but knew how to misrepresent himself, so that when Vanozza died she left him in the position of guardian to her daughters. Vanozza dead, he was able to declare himself. The elder girl hid her shame in a convent, but the younger became the mistress of her late mother's lover, although the fact was concealed from general knowledge.

While the young Borgia was leading this life in Venice, Alphonso Borgia, already mentioned as the Bishop of Valencia, was elected Pope on April 8, 1455, and took the name of Calixtus III. Rodrigo hurried to Rome to congratulate his uncle and to remind him of his promise of protection. The Pope received his nephew affectionately, handed over to him a benefice bringing in 12,000 florins annually, named him Bishop of Valencia, and soon raised him to the cardinalate, giving him a yearly income of 28,000 florins. All this happened in three years, for Calixtus III died in 1458.

Now that Rodrigo was Cardinal, he strove his utmost to reach the Papal chair, and in order to attain his ambition he hid his real nature, succeeding in it so well that the world believed in his virtue. For a time his mistress remained behind in Venice, but soon she followed him to Rome. He did not receive her in his palace, but employed a necessitous Spanish grandee to play the part of sham husband to the young Vanozza, and to take the false title of Count of Castile. All the real expenses of this household were defrayed by Cardinal Rodrigo. The Cardinal

excused his visits by spreading the report that the Count of Castile was a near relation of the Borgia family. By these means the real relations of the pious prince of the Church and Vanozza were hidden from the gaze of the world, and only a few people knew that the five children that Vanozza had borne were the children of his Eminence the Cardinal Rodrigo, who was vice-chancellor of the Roman Church under Sixtus IV. These five children received in baptism the names of Francis, Cæsar, Geoffrey, Louis, and Lucretia. One is forced to acknowledge that the Cardinal refused them nothing, and they were brought up in accordance with the position they were supposed to occupy.

Rome has always proved a favourable soil upon which irregular *ménages* seem to flourish. The house of Vanozza stood in the most fashionable quarter of the city, in the del Ponte, hard by the palace of Rodrigo Borgia in the piazza Pizzo di Merle. And here, surrounded by wealth in salons resplendent with the rich furniture of the period, in the midst of a luxurious installation of the first Renaissance, grew up those children of a cardinal who were soon to become the children of a Pontiff. They grew up in the immorality and promiscuity of nymphs and sylvan gods in the silence of some forest. They knew that that splendid woman Vanozza was their mother, but that her reputed husband was nothing to them. Their real father was that illustrious personage who, dwelling in a palace, was clad in purple and fine linen, and whose portrait occupied the place

of honour in their mother's house. From time to time this illustrious personage came to visit them and sat down at table in company of their mother and the most handsome, cultured, but also debauched gentlemen of Rome—Orsini, Barberini, and others. They did honour to the fiery wines of Spain and Sicily, and their conversation had little of the sanctity and the unctiousness of the Church. The illustrious personage also used to take them on his knees and dandle them, those children of love. For this Don Juan on the Pontifical throne was, if not a Holy Father of the Church and Christendom, a good and indulgent father to his children. One must do him this much justice. With rare solicitude, in the midst of his orgies and selfish pleasures, Rodrigo Borgia watched the growth and upbringing of his sons and daughters.

He was not only a man of pleasure and sensuality, an ardent voluptuary, eager for wealth and power, but also a clever, adroit roué; a kind of Louis XV on the Papal throne, fashioned after the manners of the fifteenth century. For him the Church absolutely disappeared in the State which he had founded. His sovereignty was not hereditary, and therefore he was anxious to assure the future of his children during his lifetime. And for these children, his Cæsar and Lucretia, nothing appeared too difficult—he stopped at no crime when it was a question of their advantage or happiness. The Pontiff was an excellent paterfamilias.

From a tender age, Borgia's three sons had stood

high in the favour of Pope Innocent VIII. Cæsar was made Archbishop of Pampluna, whilst Geoffrey, a boy of nine, was appointed Canon Archdeacon of Valencia. For his daughter, Lucretia, the Cardinal father was dreaming of a Spanish marriage; but ere the marriage had been celebrated, the Papal dignity had shed its lustre upon the family, and what had seemed good enough for the daughter of a Cardinal could no longer satisfy the ambition of a daughter of the Sovereign-Pontiff. For Rodrigo Borgia, the lover of Vanozza, had been placed upon the throne of St. Peter. With tremulous impatience Rome was waiting to hear the result of the Conclave; but what was it as compared to the fever of expectation that possessed the inmates of the house of Vanozza? Was not the lover—the father—going to become the first sovereign of Christendom? What a change in their fortunes, in their expectations, in their future! The election took place, and Rodrigo Borgia became Pope Alexander VI.

Vanozza Catanei, too, was anxious to hear the result of the election. But it was not the mistress in her who ardently desired the supreme honour for her lover, it was the mother wishing to see the father of her children ascend the Papal throne. Vanozza was fifty then—and she knew well the fickleness of her lover. She could not claim his love for ever. The Papal Don Juan had found new and fresh loves to satisfy his ardour. Henceforth she was content with a friendship, with the memories of the past, and the satisfaction of seeing her children rise to undreamt-of

honours. She was not an intrusive mistress, was this Vanozza. She had loved the handsome Cardinal in an unselfish manner—had loved him for himself, as many women had loved him before her, for, indeed, this Pontiff, who has been surnamed a monster of iniquity, was the darling of the ladies of Rome.—They loved him, not as the widows of Corinth and Syracuse had loved the Apostles—a love purely platonic and abstract, a love which filled the head and the heart, but with a love more concrete, and with a passion which stimulated the senses and quickened the pulsation of the southern blood in their veins.

And indeed Alexander VI was a very handsome man. For a long time Rome had not admired the spectacle of such a Pontiff as Alexander Borgia. Majesty and grace, charm, seduction, and authority were coupled in him. His noble stature, his imposing gestures, his aristocratic, shapely hands, and his magnetic voice all contributed to make him the idol of all the ladies of the Eternal City. People said that God had evidently created him for the purpose of ascending the throne, saying: "*Ecce sacerdos magnus.*"

Gaspard of Verona, a contemporary, writes of him: "He is handsome, seductive, of joyous aspect, and gentle in speech and manner. When he sees a beautiful woman his whole being begins to vibrate, and as quickly as the magnet draws the iron he is drawing her to him." "*Statura procerus, colore medio, nigris oculis, ore paululum pleno*" writes another contem-

porary. Of high stature, his countenance slightly coloured, his eye dark and flashing, his lips full and red, robust, able to withstand the fatigues of his office and of pleasure, eloquent, a man of the world, courteous and affable: such was the new Pontiff! What wonder that women loved him? Vanozza had been one of his first loves; and when her charms had begun to fade she modestly withdrew, leaving the Sovereign-Pontiff to seek other—fresher and newer loves. But her attachment to the father of her children was great, and she fervently prayed—whilst the Conclave was sitting—to a benevolent Providence to raise the handsome sinner upon the throne of St. Peter!

At the dawn messengers arrived from the Vatican to announce the glad tidings. And when on that happy morning Alexander was carried from the Conclave to the metropolis of St. Peter, there to receive the first homage of the adoring multitude, he looked round for his family, and in the midst of the vast crowd perceived his children and their mother—happy in his and their good fortune!

And thus Rodrigo Borgia became Pope Alexander VI. He had succeeded in spreading such a halo of piety around himself that public opinion pointed to him as the worthiest candidate for the Papal chair at the death of Innocent VIII. Rodrigo Borgia spared neither gold nor promises to bring the majority of the Cardinals to his side, giving out that his health was really undermined, and that he had not long to live. The result of all this was that in 1492, on

POPE ALEXANDER VI.

August 11, with twenty-two votes against five, he was elected Pope, and the Roman populace displayed the wildest joy. Truly, the five Cardinals against him knew him very well indeed, and whispered that now without doubt a reign of vice had begun, such as had never been seen in Rome before. The King of Naples was also gifted with prophecy when he wrote to his wife, "A man has been placed on the chair of St. Peter who will deliver Christendom to the devil." But Vanozza was not his only mistress rejoicing in Borgia's elevation. Sometime before, Julia Farnese, young, of dazzling beauty and charm, had captivated his aged heart. They called her *la bella Giulia*, the beautiful Julia, or the beautiful Farnese; and the sexagenarian fell violently in love with the sweet child—for she was only a child, barely fifteen, well developed, and matured by a southern climate. He saw her one day in the house of Adrienne Orsini, Julia being engaged to marry young Orsini, the son of Adrienne. The prelate's instincts were roused, and the fall of an angel was decided upon. The future mother-in-law shut her eyes, and even facilitated the fall of her prospective daughter-in-law.

A few days later the marriage of Ursinus Orsini and Giulia Farnese was celebrated in the palace of the Borgias, Alexander himself officiating and giving his benediction to the young couple.

A great house issued from this sacrilegious adultery of the priest and the beautiful child. Hitherto the house of Farnese had remained almost unknown. It had been vegetating in obscurity. But it owed its

future, its glory, and its rapid rise to the idolatrous love of the Papal lover for the beautiful Giulia. The brother of Giulia was made Cardinal; and his way was prepared to the throne of St. Peter, which he was afterwards to ascend under the name of Paul III.

This brother of the mistress of a Pope was far from being a model of purity and morals—he was a debauchee and a roué. Rome knew him by the name of "His Eminency Cotillon"; but what did the Pontiff care? And even if the Sacred College had expressed its indignation, the amorous Pope could refuse nothing to the caresses of his mistresses. And "bella Giulia" had strong family affections. Unlike many other courtesans and favourites of sovereigns and princes, she did not forget her relations. She was an instrument in the hands of her family for their aggrandisement. And her relations did not hesitate to exploit her shame, which they considered as a source of revenue to them. Historians have accused Giulia of selfishness. And indeed, if Vanozza seems to have loved Alexander for himself, it is scarcely likely that the brilliant young child should have felt any affection for her lover, however great his demoniacal attractions and his personal magnetism might have been in the past. Vanity and speculation made Julia remain the mistress of the Pope for many years. To see the head of Christendom, the spiritual and temporal monarch, before whom Rome and the universe humiliated themselves—to see him on his knees before her, a slave, ready to fulfil the slightest caprice of the spoilt child, what a temptation! And

even if Julia was too young to feel the great ambition, to dream the dream of omnipotence and of dominion—which have dwelt in the hearts of older courtesans—her family were sure to influence her and make her ambitious for their own benefit. In 1492 Julia Farnese gave birth to a daughter, who was named Laura. Officially the girl was supposed to have been the child of Orsini; but in reality could claim the Pope as her father, and bore a striking resemblance to him.

"*Adeo ut vere ex ejus semine orta dici possit,*" writes a contemporary. And the poor husband? His rôle was far from being a pleasant one; and however gilded the pill, he disliked swallowing it before the whole world. Like Amphitryon of old, he withdrew, leaving the divine Alcmene in the arms of the Papal Jupiter. There were plenty of castles where he could retire to hide his shame; for had not the Pontiff showered gifts and estates upon the wife of this unfortunate husband? Julia herself felt little shame; indeed, she seemed to be proud of being the favourite of the Pontiff; and so little did she care to hide her intimacy that she went to live in the palace of *Santa Maria in Portica*, together with Lucretia, the famous daughter of Pope Alexander. Lorenzo Pucci, the envoy of the Florentine Republic, describes the interior of this palace where the mistress and the daughter of the Pope lived in happy harmony. Stepdaughter and stepmother *de la main gauche* had much in common and seemed to have been greatly attached to one another.

"Last night I accompanied Monsignor Farnese to the vespers of the Pope," writes Lorenzo Pucci. "Waiting for the presence of His Holiness in the chapel, I entered for a moment or so the palace of Santa Maria, to pay my respects to Madonna Julia. She had just washed her hair and was sitting by the fire with Madonna Lucretia, the daughter of our master, and Madonna Adrienne. They received me with the utmost grace and affability, and Madonna Julia made me sit down by her side. After a while she went to fetch her child, which is already quite big; it is the very image of the Pope. And the mother herself—how beautiful she looks! She has put on flesh—has grown a little stouter; but I consider her a splendid creature! She took her hair down in my presence, and it reached her ankles. I wish you had been present here, to contemplate with your own eyes her radiant beauty. Madonna Lucretia left us for a while to change her dress, and soon reappeared in a costume of violet velvet. The vespers were now finished, the Cardinals had retired, and I left those ladies."

To say, however, that Alexander VI remained faithful to his youthful favourite would be misrepresenting this roué on the Papal throne. Many were the beauties who had captivated the heart of the aged Pontiff. They were passing caprices, however, caprices of an hour, exercising no lasting influence upon the lover. A Venetian ambassador relates the story of a Roman father who had sold his married daughter to the Pontiff. The husband one day cut

off the head of the obliging father-in-law, and sticking the head on a spear wrote underneath: "This is the head of my father-in-law. He had procured his daughter to the Pope." The same envoy also speaks of a beautiful Spanish girl, mistress of the Duke of Gandia, whom the dutiful son disinterestedly sent as a present to the Holy Father—like some officious Turkish *validé* offering a Circassian slave to the Sultan of the Faithful. To do the Borgias justice, one must admit that their morality—or rather immorality—was not different from that of the Courts of Louis XIV and Louis XV, but then Louis XIV and Louis XV had not the power to bind and to loosen in the name of Christ. They did not wear purple and tiara and did not touch divine things with their soiled hands. At the Court of Alexander Borgia vice paraded, impudently clad in sacerdotal garments, and the double-faced Moloch celebrated Holy Mass and officiated at the sacred mysteries of religion—after having participated in pagan orgies *derrière les coulisses*. But the Pontiff's life came to a sudden close.

Alexander VI died; succumbing to the poison of which he had so often availed himself in perpetrating his numerous crimes. The poison he had so often mixed for others, he drank himself. They say that his son Cæsar, desirous of possessing himself of the estates of several rich Cardinals, had invited them to one of his dainty suppers *à la Borgia* in the gardens of the Pope. The wines destined for the guests had been scrupulously prepared according to the formula. But the butler made a fatal mistake; and instead of

the guests, the Holy Father and his son quaffed the cups of Spanish and Sicilian wines into which the poison had been mixed.

The necessary invitations had been sent out; it was summer time, and the Pope was to meet his friends in a vineyard not far from the Vatican. All the arrangements for the little feast were entrusted to Cæsar, who also had to prepare the poisoned cups. In order that the poisoned wine should not be mistaken for the other wine, Cæsar sent a faithful servant of his to the vineyard with an order to place the poisoned wine in a particular place and to watch over it, that none should drink it except those whom he himself should point out. The servant did as he was ordered, but when the Papal cellarer asked why that particular wine was placed apart, he replied laughing that it was a wine of extraordinary strength, and therefore must only be handed to the most highly honoured guests. This answer the cellarer naturally found quite plausible. The Pope arrived rather earlier than the other guests, for he had to talk things over with Cæsar. It was the Pope's misfortune to have left a small amulet (a consecrated Host in a little gold case, which he always carried with him, because it had been foretold that he should not die as long as he was not parted from it) behind in his apartment in the Vatican, and he sent his son's faithful servant, the same who was watching the poisoned wine, to fetch it. Scarcely was the servant gone when the Pope, calling to his cellarer, asked if everything was in order. As the weather was so oppressively hot and he felt very thirsty, he

wished to drink a goblet of wine immediately. The cellarer, not daring to give the Pontiff inferior wine, and really believing what the servant had told him, that this wine was the best, filled a decanter and placed it on the bench on which Alexander was seated. Without suspicion, the Pontiff filled a goblet with the wine and drank it quickly. In the moment Cæsar arrived; and as he was thirsty, he, too, filled the goblet and emptied it as his father had done. A quarter of an hour later supper was served, but before he had taken a mouthful the Pope fell to the ground, writhing like a worm, suffering great bodily pains. Cæsar Borgia almost immediately showed the same symptoms, and the two noble sufferers were hastily carried to the palace. The doctors recognised signs of poison and prescribed antidotes. The drug was very strong. Cæsar, young and strong, escaped death, although he suffered seriously for ten months before he was reinstated in health, but the Pope died in a few days, on August 18, 1503.

It was a tragic death—as tragic as that of any of those emperors who had ruled in pagan Rome—a death full of infernal visions. Legend relates of seven demons who had come to visit the dying Pontiff in the supreme moment, demanding the fulfilment of a pact he had contracted with Satan in the moment of his election. For twelve years of his pontificate he had sold his soul to the Spirit of Darkness. But the inventors of this legend scarcely understand the psychology of Borgia. Alexander was no Faust and no Titan, declaring war to the Ruler of the Universe.

Familiar with all the most abominable vices, crimes, and debaucheries, he nevertheless naïvely imagined that he believed in God. His sins would be forgiven unto him, and, the tiara on his head, he would sit among the cherubim and seraphim in glorious Paradise, contemplating in the azure of Infinity the Mother of Christ—her face, perhaps, reminding him of Julia Farnese. He had no hallucinations and no visions, this Pontiff of the sixteenth century. Doubts and questionings about the invisible world only trouble the thinking brains of a self-torturing philosopher, not those of a Borgia.

Alexander Borgia was dead. But scarcely had his corpse been carried out of the Vatican when Julia Farnese entered it on the arm of Pope Julius II. What a priestess of vice and of corruption this woman was! Had she lived in the days of pagan Hellas she would have been deified—for Greece, worshipping beauty of form, raised altars to the priestesses of love, to Venus and her disciples. And this Phryne-Farnese of the Renaissance, was she not a worthy disciple of those *grandes amoureuses* of antiquity, who had become the friends and equals of philosophers and politicians?

Julia Farnese may well be placed by the side of all those favourites of sovereigns who, from the days of Augustus to those of Louis XVIII, have been the ruling cause and fatal origin of events in the government of peoples. The fame of Madame de Maintenon, the widow Scarron, and of Diane de Poitiers fade before that of Julia Farnese. Diane de Poitiers had

for lovers two kings; but was not Julia Farnese the favourite of two Popes? Diane ruled at Fontainebleau, whilst Julia reigned supreme at the Vatican. Jean Goujon was at the service of the mistress of the King of France; but the favourite of the Popes could boast of that of Michael Angelo! The proud Borgias and the Roveres were under her slipper! She trod on the tiara of two Popes; and the triumph of her immodesty, governing the Church, Christendom, and the world, eclipses the influence of Madame de Maintenon, which has been greatly exaggerated. Julia's daughter, the child of Alexander VI, married the nephew of Pope Julius II—a worthy Papal alliance!

CHAPTER VIII

DONNA OLIMPIA THE FAVOURITE OF POPE INNOCENT X

In one of the rooms of the Papal Palace sat the aged Pontiff, Innocent X. It was one of the most modest chambers in the Quirinal, and its contents showed none of the sumptuousness of the other apartments. Flanders tapestries covered the walls, and a long table, a few chairs, two fauteuils and a *prie-Dieu*, surmounted by a crucifix, completed the furniture. It was in the month of December: the clocks of Rome had just struck ten, when the silence was suddenly broken by the wheels of a carriage swiftly driving through the deserted streets. Silently the gates of the Quirinal opened, and shut as soon as the carriage had passed. The door of the carriage was quickly opened by one of the valets, and a woman slipped out. Although past middle-age, her movements were graceful and agile. In her hand she was carrying a packet of papers, which she handed over to one of the Pope's faithful private attendants, who had been in the service of His Holiness since the days when Innocent was Papal Nuncio in Spain.

The Spaniard approached the door of the private apartment of the Pontiff, knocked softly, and then opened the door, announcing the visitor: Her

Excellency Donna Olimpia. The lady entered quickly, and the door was shut, leaving Donna Olimpia alone in the presence of the Vicar of Christ. Innocent had made a movement as if to rise; but his great age—he was then seventy-five years—and the promptitude with which the lady put her hand on his, kept him in his seat.

"I know that you have been unwell these days, but I have heard this morning that you were better."

"I have not seen you for two days," answered the Pope. "Come a little nearer; sit down in this easy chair and give me your hand."

Olimpia obeyed, placing her hand in that of the Pontiff. He trembled a little, which was often the case whenever he was experiencing great emotions caused either by some feeling of pleasure or of anger. "I missed you," he continued; "do not stay away so long, my dear sister, without coming to see me and help me with your enlightened judgment. It is a very long time since I told you for the first time that I could not decide anything without your advice."

"Your Holiness exaggerates," modestly replied Donna Olimpia.

"Please, my dear sister, drop these court formulas," exclaimed the Pontiff; "we are alone here—call me brother!"

"Yes, yes, dear brother," said Olimpia again, placing her beautiful hands upon those of the Pontiff, those hands which were wont to shower benedictions upon millions of Christians, "do not excite yourself, and let us talk of matters which concern your interest."

Donna Olimpia was no longer young; but thanks to that privilege which nature has granted to southern beauties, she had been charming and beautiful in early youth, and kept her good looks, majestic beauty, coupled with graceful bearing, at an age when many European women have already abandoned all claims to physical charm.

"Well," said His Holiness, leaning back in his chair, "tell us what is happening in our good city of Rome, and what are the Romans doing?"

"The Romans," replied the lady, with a slight note of contempt in her voice, "do not spare either you or me."

"Indeed! And what are they saying about us?" asked the Pope, accompanying his words by a loud chuckle.

A shade of annoyance passed over the mobile features of Donna Olimpia.

"Oh, you know what calumnies they are spreading, and what gross pleasantries they are indulging in, but here is a joke in Latin, aimed at myself only." She took a slip of paper from the packet she had brought with her, and handed it to Innocent. "Please do not read it to me," she added. "Your Holiness is aware that my education has been neglected and that I have remained very ignorant, and know not a word of Latin. I shall benefit by my lack of knowledge to ignore the gross joke and play upon words which has evidently been made with my name."

"But you must understand it," said the Pope. "It says: '*Olim—pia nunc impia.*'"

"This joke seems to have made its fortune," added Donna Olimpia, "not only among the rabble of Rome, but also in the palaces of foreign ambassadors."

The Pontiff grew serious.

"But I do not care," Donna Olimpia continued. "Let them exhaust their satires upon me and make me the butt of the poisonous shafts of their gross and vulgar jokes. I shall consider it my greatest happiness to receive any insults in the service of the Holy Church. We must not forget, Holy Father, that you are the ruler of the first Empire of the world and that we must, above all, have in mind the interests of the Church."

Donna Olimpia then proceeded to entertain Innocent X of grave state matters, and at last submitted to him a list of names of prelates whom she wished His Holiness to recompense with the cardinal's hat.

Among her protégés were her nephew Maldaichini, a boy of sixteen, and the Archbishop of Aix, brother of Mazarin, the Prime Minister of France.

"What?" exclaimed the Pontiff, "make a brother of that monster a member of the Sacred College! And what will Rome, nay Europe, say to this? Will it not be said that we have simply *Mazarinised* the government of the Church? Of course, the Ambassador of France will be pleased and very grateful to you for this favour, but Spain will be offended. And your nephew! A lad of sixteen! Really, Olimpia, you will only have to take possession of the Church of St. John the Lateran, to exercise your power more completely over the Church and Christendom!"

"My dear brother," rejoined Donna Olimpia, "if you imagine for one moment that I am capable of plotting and scheming, and that I have anything but your interest at heart, please let us drop this subject. I should, however, like to point out to your Holiness that the greater and the more extravagant the phantasies in which a sovereign seems to indulge the stronger his power and his hold over the vulgar masses. It enhances the greatness of a sovereign in the eyes of the masses if he endeavour to do things which appear not only impossible but even absurd to his subjects. It is the prerogative of his function and of his power to act and to behave differently from the masses. A sovereign whose acts are only dictated by justice and reason will soon lose the prestige of his superiority with the majority of his subjects. To be guided by common sense appears a common quality to the senseless masses. Besides," continued Olimpia, "many of your predecessors have set you examples in raising boys of twelve and thirteen to the dignity of Cardinals."

Innocent shook his head. And the woman, afraid of meeting with an emphatic refusal to her request, took recourse to feminine weapons. She put on her cloak and prepared to go.

"It is late, Your Holiness," she said stiffly, "and I am going. May God grant your Holiness a good night." She was approaching the door.

"Olimpia," cried Innocent, "Olimpia, stay—I give in."

She relented, and taking off her cloak came to kiss

the hand of the Pontiff. Passion has a rejuvenating effect, and the countenance of Donna Olimpia shone with an incomparable beauty. The Pontiff felt an emotion which he could hardly dissimulate, and which, too, did not escape the watchful and quick eye of the lady. She smiled sweetly, a smile of hope and joy.

A few moments of silence followed, during which Donna Olimpia respectfully kissed the hand of Innocent. The woman had triumphed. The protégés whom she had proposed would be nominated Cardinals by His Holiness.

"Are you satisfied, madonna?" asked the Pontiff.

"My dear Pamphilius," replied Donna Olimpia affectionately, "whatever I do, whatever I insist upon your doing, I am guided solely by your interest and that of the Holy Church."

Who was this woman who was exercising such a preponderating influence over the Vicar of Christ, and was practically ruling the Holy See in his name?

Donna Olimpia was a Pompadour at the Court of Rome. Her influence over Innocent X was as great as, if not greater than, that of *Madame de Maintenon* over Louis XIV, and that of the Marquise de Pompadour over Louis XV. She was of the race of Prime Ministers in petticoats, and in whom ambition is the most prominent passion. She was the daughter of Sforza Maldaichini, a captain of the militia, and of Vittoria Gualtieril. Her father was a comparatively poor man, and Olimpia, who was very handsome, had

already in her early youth given proof of a prudence and a practical sense above her years.

Her parents had put her in a convent, but she escaped, seeking the protection of one of her aunts. Her confessor, an Augustine monk, was approached, and he, too, endeavoured to persuade her to take the veil. Tired of continual pressure, and to escape the sermons of her Father Confessor, Olimpia accused the monk of having solicited her during confession. By order of the Tribunal of the Inquisition, the poor monk was arrested, thrown in prison, and six months later exiled from Rome. Years afterwards, when Donna Olimpia was the mighty favourite of His Holiness, she made inquiries and, learning that her former confessor was vegetating in the vicinity of the Eternal City, commanded his presence.

"Are you still intent, she asked him, with a subtle smile, "upon making me pronounce the three vows ?

"Excellency," replied the poor monk, "my aim was to lead you upon the path of goodness, not of evil."

"Yes," she replied, "I know; but had I followed your advice, I would not be here to-day to ameliorate your position."

He was sent back to his convent, and a few days later was brought by the mighty lady to kiss the shoe of the Pope, who made the monk a bishop, to the amazement of the Court.

Olimpia had thus refused to enter a convent, and preferred to marry a rich man of Viterbo, who had the good grace to leave her a widow—with a little

fortune of forty thousand Roman dollars, about £10,000. The two sons she had borne to him having died, she went to Rome, where she hoped—as a young and attractive widow—to make an advantageous match. Olimpia had been brought up in a poor family, and her education had been neglected, but she made up for the shortcomings of her erudition by the vivacity of her perspicacious mind and her sound and discerning judgment. Shortly after her establishment in Rome, she made the acquaintance of the illustrious family of Pamphili, occupying a very high place among the Roman aristocracy. Olimpia's beauty and the grace of her mind produced a deep impression upon Camillo, the eldest son of Prince Pamphilio. The noble suitor for the hand of the charming widow was accepted, and the marriage took place. Three children were the issue of this union. Many a woman would have been content with her good fortune and the title of Princess. Not so Donna Olimpia. She looked upon her marriage as upon the first step to much higher power. And her dreams of ambition were destined to be realised even beyond her expectations, thanks to her brother-in-law, the second son of Prince Pamphilio.

John Baptist had entered the Church, had studied law, and risen to high credit. He became Papal Nuncio at Naples, and under the rule of Urban VIII was made cardinal. He was just, but of a somewhat weak character, and it was easy for a strong-minded woman like Olimpia to gain a preponderating ascendancy over him. The birth of her three children, and

six years of married life, had familiarised Donna Olimpia with her husband. She had been attracted by his good looks; but her passion had worn off, and now she began to notice the utter nonentity of Prince Pamphilio. He was a handsome Roman Prince, generous, affable, and courteous to his wife, but possessed none of the qualities which would enable him—thanks to his high position and his rank—to play an important rôle in the State. He was fond of beautiful pictures, was a passionate lover of music, and even played one or two instruments—qualities which his wife completely lacked. Intellectual intercourse became almost impossible between the two. It therefore resulted that her natural predilection for serious questions gradually drew Olimpia into the society of her ecclesiastical brother-in-law, whom his position at the Court of the Vatican had brought into prominence. She began to like his company, gladly conversed with him in order to instruct herself, and took great interest in all that concerned him.

There had sprung up between them one of those friendships which in spite of everything lasted a lifetime. Brother and sister-in-law were always together, and Donna Olimpia was more frequently in the cabinet of the Cardinal than in the chamber of her husband. Rome gossiped and pitied the poor Prince. Although accustomed to such liaisons and to *faux ménages*, Roman society was somewhat surprised to see the beautiful Olimpia forsake her handsome husband for the rather ugly Prince of the Church. But Roman society soon learned that Olimpia was in-

fluenced in her liaison by her passion to rule and her ambition; and who knows, perhaps annoyance and anger also threw her into the arms of her lover. The Prince Pamphilio, like the Italians of his day, and to a certain extent also of the present, treated his wife courteously, but never consulted her in matters of importance. His brother, on the contrary, never did anything without asking the advice of his sister-in-law. He showed an almost exaggerated respect for her; he was her devoted servant, while she became his friend and his protectress!

Some say that Prince Pamphilio at last noticed the intimacy existing between his wife and his brother, and that he watched them and soon learned the truth! So great was his despair that he fell ill, and soon died! Public opinion accused Donna Olimpia of having poisoned her husband, but the proofs were lacking, and the matter was allowed to drop after a while. Donna Olimpia's and her brother-in-law's friendship grew much stronger, and the ambitious woman made the latter's interests her own, carefully watching every event which could be utilised to his benefit. She was his friend and guide, advising him in everything, and became absolute mistress of all his actions. During his stay as Papal Nuncio at the Court of Madrid, John Baptist addressed a letter to Olimpia which clearly indicated to what an extent his friendship for her had grown:

"My dearest sister-in-law," wrote the future Pontiff, "my negotiations in Spain are far from

meeting with the same success as those I managed in Rome, for here I am deprived of your valuable council. Away from you, I am like a ship without the helm. I confess it quite frankly, stimulated as I am by my deep sense of gratitude for all that I owe unto you."

Naturally, when the contents of this letter became public, thanks to some unscrupulous servant, the enemies of Donna Olimpia did not fail to comment upon the friendship existing between the Papal Nuncio and herself. But this woman possessed the patient courage peculiar to those devoured by ambition. To counterbalance the popular insults and gross jokes, she augmented her gifts to the convents and the distribution of alms to the poor, and whilst the Cardinal Pamphilio was in Spain and in France Olimpia watched over his interests in Rome. She regularly kept him well-informed of all that could further their interests, and often she gave receptions in her sumptuous apartments, where the most influential prelates and secular grandees gathered. She thus accustomed the Roman nobility to frequent her palace, where they were soon to greet her as a sovereign, and her ambition filled out her breast, so that there remained scarcely room for any other sentiment. She showed little love for her daughters, for each of whom, however, she concluded an advantageous match. The eldest daughter, Camilla, married the Marquis *Justiniani*, whilst the younger, Constance, was wedded to Nicolas Luidovisi, prince of Piombino. Her son she seemed to dislike. He had inherited the

temperament of his father, was indolent and inactive. And instead of endeavouring to remedy his natural faults by a good education, the mother seemed to leave him purposely in ignorance. It was evident that she was jealous of her own son, and, foreseeing the day when her friend, or lover, Pamphilio, would become Pontiff, she studiously wished to incapacitate the boy from occupying an influential position at the Court of his uncle, and thus diminish her own power. In this respect our mind reverts to another mother in whose breast ambition had banished maternal love. I am referring to Catherine II of Russia.

Olimpia was anxious, even more than her brother-in-law himself, that he should be created cardinal. She had intrigued at the Court of Urban VIII, and at last succeeded in obtaining the cardinal's hat for him. Her joy on hearing the news was boundless, and, for days after, her imagination was so exalted that she repeatedly told Pamphilio that everything took the hue of purple in her eyes. The importance of his post and the immunity which Cardinals usually enjoy in Rome made the pair take less care of public opinion and conventions. Donna Olimpia now inhabited the Pamphili palace in company with her brother-in-law. They took their meals together, and the Cardinal always took the advice of Donna Olimpia in all matters submitted to his judgment. Her common sense and her just judgment were such that he could rely upon her, and he who, at moments at least, felt himself by temperament and inclination disposed to idleness and indolence, found it agreeable

to snatch a little rest, and leave the work to one in whose judgment he could place implicit confidence. And the more indolent the Cardinal grew, the more activity his sister-in-law displayed. Gradually His Eminence let the whole burden of his business and affairs rest on the shoulders of his sister-in-law. All requests, all demands were addressed directly to Donna Olimpia, and often, when people coming to solicit a favour had received a negative reply, they were heard to observe: "Perhaps the Cardinal has not yet spoken to Donna Olimpia."

Donna Olimpia continually endeavoured to impress her brother-in-law with the fact that if a Cardinal could be appointed on the strength of his personal merit, intrigues were absolutely necessary in the election of the Pope. And she always gave him as example Sixtus V, who had feigned imbecility, in order to be elected Pope by the Conclave. After a reign of twenty-two years, the last years of which had seemed centuries to the ambitious Donna Olimpia, Urban VIII died, and although in the course of the ten days which elapsed between the demise of the Pontiff and the entry of the Cardinals into Conclave, nothing had seemed to indicate that Cardinal Pamphilio would be elected, Donna Olimpia had a sure presentiment that her brother-in-law would be Pope. Passionate souls are often superstitious. This woman, who had been watching and expecting the end of Urban VIII, had one day consulted an astrologer concerning the future of her friend, the Cardinal. She received the reply that at the age of seventy he would reach the highest

dignity of the Church. As Innocent was only sixty-six, Donna Olimpia for four years had Masses read for the life of Urban. And as the death of the latter occurred just at the moment when her brother-in-law had reached his seventieth birthday, Donna Olimpia felt almost sure that he would be elected Pope.

After the death of Urban VIII Donna Olimpia employed all her power to influence the Conclave in favour of her brother-in-law. The night preceding the opening of the Conclave, Pamphilio had a long conference with Olimpia. In the morning, when he was leaving the palace, she said: "When I see you again you will perhaps be Pope."

"If I desire this honour," replied the Cardinal, "it is in order to share it with you." And let me hasten to add that Innocent X kept his word. He not only shared the Pontifical dignity with his sister-in-law, but the mighty favourite practically ruled in his stead, and it was she who was the Popess of Rome. The Conclave lasted for some time, and at last Pamphilio was elected Pope.

There is an old custom in Rome which allows the populace to pillage the palace of the Cardinal elected Pope; and as a reminiscence of the ancient Cæsarism the new Pontiff had to throw 15,000 golden crowns among the crowd. Gregory XIII had decided to distribute the money among the poor, and so sure was this woman of the elevation of Cardinal Pamphilio that she had transferred all the wealth accumulated in the palace of her brother-in-law to a place of safety.

Innocent's chances had at first been very small. He was not a favourite with the members of the Sacred College—he was not interested in arts, science, or literature. Moreover, the heretics and reformers were maliciously scrutinising and severely criticising the morals of the Catholic clergy, and the electors were afraid that Cardinal Pamphilio's intimate friendship with Donna Olimpia would—as soon as he was proclaimed Pontiff—become a European scandal. And yet Donna Olimpia did not despair. She surrounded herself with spies and informers, knew what was going on, spread false rumours and reports, adroitly managed to bring home to most of the members of the Sacred College their private life, which was far from being blameless—and especially to represent the danger for Rome if a Pope favourable to France were elected. And indeed, political reasons triumphed over moral considerations. Pamphilio was elected in 1644 under the name of Innocent X.

On receiving the news, Donna Olimpia felt an immense joy; but so great was her control over her emotions that she outwardly manifested no sign of elation. And when she heard the mob approaching the palace of the Cardinal to pillage its contents, she smiled at this first acknowledgment of her lover's dignity. She herself opened the doors, throwing silver coins among the masses, and with a smile of triumph on her countenance watched them taking possession and devastating the old and valueless furniture which she had not removed. Some malicious Romans had noticed, however, the trick she

had played upon them, and the precaution she had taken.

"If Donna Olimpia leaves the Vatican in a similar state," they exclaimed, "then woe unto the Church."

On the statue of Pasquine, upon which the wit of the period enjoyed the privilege of ridiculing everything and making biting jokes, details were given of the removal of the Cardinal and a description of the apartment which Donna Olimpia was to occupy in the Vatican.

On the first day of his elevation business transactions compelled the new Pontiff to receive only those people with whom he had to settle affairs of State. But scarcely had the result of the election been announced when the Roman nobility, the ambassadors of foreign powers, cardinals, prelates, and ladies of distinction hastened to present their congratulations to Donna Olimpia. She received them with the air of a sovereign graciously acknowledging the homage of her subjects. She excused herself for the disorder reigning in the palace and her inability to receive her guests more properly. Many a malicious question was put, and many a malicious remark exchanged by this distinguished company behind the back of the now powerful lady, but to her face only protestations of respect and congratulations were offered.

The busy and eventful day was at an end. It was ten o'clock, and Donna Olimpia slipped out from her palace and directed her steps towards the Vatican. Appearing in the presence of Innocent, she fell on her knees and kissed the feet of the Vicar of Christ,

weeping tears of joy. The Pope himself was so moved that he could not keep back his own tears. It was midnight when Donna Olimpia left the palace of the Pontiff; but before leaving she passed through the apartments and saw that everything was in order for the comfort of her friend. It had long been her habit to study his comforts and his wants, and she carefully administered to his requirements and looked after him with almost maternal care. Donna Olimpia was everything to the newly elected Pontiff. She was prime minister, adviser, friend, and housekeeper—all in one.

Once her power established, this Pompadour at the Court of Rome did her best to undermine the authority of those who could become dangerous to her in the future. Her ambitious jealousy extended even to her own son.

During the first years of the pontificate of his uncle Don Camillo Pamphilio, son of Donna Olimpia, constructed a magnificent villa on the outskirts of Rome. The mother had purposely accustomed the son to indolence and inactivity, and left him in ignorance. But two months after the accession of Innocent, Don Camillo was made Cardinal and Donna Olimpia thus hoped to avail herself of her son as of a kind of puppet whom she would use as an instrument in her hands. But at the very moment when his mother was making these plans, the young man frustrated all her efforts—thanks to an event which Donna Olimpia could not very well have foreseen. Donna Olimpia was jealous of the influence of the

Pope's trusted adviser and minister, Pancirolo. She thus hoped to substitute the Cardinal-Nephew in his stead, whom she would guide according to her wishes. Her son was busy constructing his villa, which soon became the talk of the town of Rome. And he was more often in conference with his architect, the young artist Algardi, than with ambassadors and ministers.

Camillo was a typical representative of the educated Italian nobility. He was intelligent rather than *spirituel*, and loved instinctively all beautiful things—art, music, and the recitation of verse—without, however, posing as an art connoisseur or critic. On the contrary, his ignorance added grace and originality to his inclinations. He was of a candid character and frank nature, which his education, or rather lack of education, had not spoiled. Accustomed to opulence from his early youth, he availed himself of his wealth to indulge in innocent pleasures. He was perfectly unaware of the fact that he was occupying—in name at least—the highest office at the Papal Court, and having allowed himself to be made cardinal, in obedience to his mother, he employed the revenues attached to his office to accelerate the construction of his villa. The fame of this villa had spread over Italy, and the number of visitors coming to inspect the beautiful building and the gardens was considerable. The Cardinal, rather than go to the Vatican, remained at his villa to receive the curious and the guests who came to admire.

It was at that period that Cornelia Aldo-Brandini,

Princess de Rossano, widow of Paul Borghese, came to Rome. She had heard everybody praising the newly constructed villa, and expressed the wish to visit the building and the gardens. The Cardinal was only too delighted to grant her the required permission, and was himself present to receive her and take her round the gardens. The Princess de Rossano was still very young and, moreover, considered one of the most beautiful women of her time. Her physical beauty was coupled with a cultured mind, a noble character, and irreproachable moral conduct, a rare quality in those days of the seventeenth century. The beauty of the charming widow produced a deep impression upon the heart and mind of the young prelate. His admiration for her was manifest, and the Princess in her turn did not dissimulate her liking for him. Cardinal Camillo was in love; and, what is more, he was—or at least was assured that he was—loved in return. He became the shadow of the beautiful lady, and Roman society enjoyed the spectacle of an ecclesiastical *soupirant* at the feet of a noble and charming widow.

The Pope and Donna Olimpia were furious. This Cardinal-Nephew in love like a school-boy was too ridiculous a spectacle, and had to be stopped. But the authority of uncle and mother had found a match in the obstinacy of the young lover and the cleverness of his lady-love. The Princess had informed her relation, the Prince of Parma, of her love-affair, and plainly hinted that it would be greatly to her advantage from every point of view, social and pecuniary, to

marry the nephew of the Pope. She gave Camillo many opportunities to meet her, advised him to be circumspect in dealing with the obstacles which his mother was putting in the way of their union. She encouraged and enflamed the already ardent lover to such an extent that the latter, hitherto so submissive to the Pontiff and to his mother, openly rebelled against their authority, and categorically declared that he would renounce his ecclesiastical dignities and wed the Princess. Indeed, he returned his cardinal's hat, and, in spite of the objections of his mother and of Innocent, married the lady of his love.

Donna Olimpia was a woman, and with a woman's instinct she felt that her daughter-in-law would become a dangerous rival. Innocent would sooner or later be touched by the beauty and the grace of his niece and forgive the couple their marriage. Moreover, the young princess would endeavour to gain an ascendancy over the Pontiff—and the Papal Pompadour trembled for her power.

Future events, indeed, showed that her fears had been only too well founded. For the present, however, Donna Olimpia was all-powerful and she prevailed upon the Pope to exile the rebellious lovers from the Eternal City. The astonishment of society at this rigorous punishment was great; but many had guessed the true cause of it.

CHAPTER IX

THE PRINCESS ROSSANO, FAVOURITE OF POPE INNOCENT X

TEN months had the couple passed in exile, when the young wife suddenly found that she had had enough of vegetating in the country. She knew, through her spies and friends, that it was only her mother-in-law who kept her in exile, and far away from Court and capital. She decided openly to defy the all-powerful minister in petticoats.

"Camillo," she said one day to her husband, "I have heard that the Pontiff is anxious to find an opportunity for calling us back, but that it is only your mother who is keeping us in exile. And as long as she will wield any power he is sure to abide by her decision. Your uncle will never master courage enough to contradict her—and we may remain where we are for an indefinite period. But I am tired of this life; and it is absurd to have married the nephew of the Pontiff to live away from the Court, in the country. I have therefore decided to return to Rome; and it is in the Eternal City where I wish to give birth to my son!"

"But, my dear Cornelia," rejoined the Prince, "we need only write to His Holiness, and I am sure that he will grant us your request."

"Not at all," replied his wife. "I have decided otherwise. We shall go to Rome without asking permission."

Her husband looked pained and surprised.

"You do not seem to approve of my plan?" queried the Princess.

"Your plan—say rather your folly," was the rejoinder of the Prince.

The Princess was piqued.

"There are follies," she at once retorted, "which are often preferable to acts of prudence, especially when the former are the result of a noble pride and the latter the outcome of indolence."

The Prince was too much in love with his wife to contradict her; but fear of his mother was still paramount in his breast. With tears in his eyes, he implored his wife, the Princess, to abandon her reckless plan.

"Imagine," he said, "the consequences of such a step, the wrath and anger of Donna Olimpia; she is all-powerful in Rome: one word from her and we are lost."

"Really," replied his wife, "to judge from the terror your mother seems to inspire you with, I begin to think that I shall never obtain anything from you unless I become as imperious as your mother. Henceforth I shall change my attitude, and I now emphatically inform you that I am going to Rome."

The Princess accordingly went to Rome, and held a triumphal entry. Cries of "Long live the Princess de Rossano" greeted her passage, and large crowds

had gathered to witness her carriage pass. Soon the vivats addressed to the Princess mingled with cries: "Down with Donna Olimpia!" The Pontiff and his sister-in-law had been informed of the event, and of all the details of the ovation accorded to the Princess. Innocent at first went into a violent rage and was on the point of giving orders to expel the young lady from Rome, but he was dissuaded from doing so by his treasurer, his old and trusted adviser, Pancirolo, who pointed out to him that such an act would lead to grave and even dangerous consequences.

"Your Holiness ought to be aware," argued this statesman, "that such an order carried out against a young and beautiful woman belonging to one of the best families, a lady who is your niece and, moreover, who is *enceinte*, will exasperate the people of Rome in the highest degree, and may lead to a riot, if not a revolution. And the relatives of the Princess, especially the Duke of Parma, will undoubtedly not let such an insult pass without taking his revenge."

The Pontiff's wrath abated. Besides, he was always indulgent towards the Princess whenever he grew tired of the ascendancy of Donna Olimpia. He gave in, adding, however:

"You will see, this little madcap will give us trouble."

And indeed he was right in his presentiment; for early the next morning Donna Olimpia appeared at the Vatican.

"Well, Your Holiness," she began, "you will now admit that the precautions I have often advised Your

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Holiness to take against this little princess were dictated by prudence. Your Holiness is now disobeyed, insulted in the Eternal City! I hope that strict measures have already been taken and orders given to punish severely such an act of disobedience on the part of my daughter-in-law. For such insolence against the Sovereign-Pontiff cannot be sufficiently punished."

"Measures have already been taken," replied Innocent, somewhat evasively, "to make the government of the Holy See respected."

"There is only one way of assuring respect," rejoined Donna Olimpia. "First of all, this woman must leave Rome at once."

"No," replied Innocent, in a firm tone. "Such orders will *not* be given, and if any one has *dared* to give them," he added meaningly, "they will *not* be executed."

Donna Olimpia was amazed! Was her reign at an end? Was Innocent, after so many years, desirous of shaking off her influence? Was that little minx going to supplant her? She changed her tone.

"My brother"—she addressed Innocent in her most affectionate accents—"do not forget that your authority has been ignored, that you have been insulted, and that you owe it to your high office to punish the Princess. Far be it from me to cause you pain, but I am anxious to see your Holy Person respected and your commands obeyed—and—believe me, your indulgence is misplaced; it will only be considered as weakness in this case, because a young and pretty woman is the culprit."

"Is not your severity," replied Innocent, not without irony in his voice, "is not your severity stimulated by your jealousy?"

Donna Olimpia lost her temper.

"If you are decided to forgive the Princess her behaviour I assure you that I am not going to stand her insolence, and I shall not remain in the same town with her."

"What do you expect me to do?"

"Order her to leave Rome."

The Pontiff pleaded with his tyrant for her own daughter-in-law. He pointed out how dangerous such a step would be, what the world would say if, for a simple offence like this, they were to expel from Rome the Princess, who was *enceinte*; and that Donna Olimpia was making a mountain out of a mole-hill.

But the woman would not be persuaded.

"One would almost imagine," at last exclaimed the Pontiff, "that you are very jealous of the success which the beauty of your daughter-in-law has achieved."

"And were it not for your age," promptly replied Donna Olimpia, "I should feel inclined to attribute your defence of the woman to a sentiment other than that of justice. Rome has lost its head over this scheming minx, and the Vatican is sharing the general excitement. The respect of the Vicar of Christ is too dear to me to see him the subject of popular criticism; and, Holy Father, for my devotion and sincerity I do not deserve to be humiliated."

Donna Olimpia was on the verge of tears.

"Humiliate you, Olimpia!" cried the aged Pontiff. "Come here and tell me what is really the matter."

"The matter! Nothing is the matter, except that this woman is hiding an ambitious soul under her pretty and childish ways; that she has just held a triumphant entry into Rome; that she has won the favour of the nobility, of the ladies of quality, and even of the foreign ambassadors; that she has been planning this for a long time, and that she is now going to turn your head too. Her ambition will stop at nothing until she is mistress of Rome and is ruling the Vatican.

"No," she continued, perceiving that the Pope was about to interrupt her, "No, this is not all. At the Farnese Palace she has held a reception, and the most influential persons of Rome have hastened to pay her homage. She has received them with the air of a sovereign. She must be banished," concluded Donna Olimpia.

But if Innocent was of a weak character and entirely under the influence of Donna Olimpia, he was not devoid of a sense of justice, and at moments he could be firm. Donna Olimpia had pleaded in vain, and the Pontiff at last cut short the conversation by categorically declaring that what she was asking for was impossible.

"It is unjust, and my decision remains unshakable."

He pronounced his last words with unwonted firmness and even vehemence; and for once the minister in petticoats understood that she had lost.

She was deeply humiliated and annoyed; but with her usual tact and prudence she suddenly grew calm, manifesting no outward signs of her inner emotions. She even pretended to agree with His Holiness, in whose judgment and discretion she had implicit faith. And with conflicting emotions, fear, envy, raging in her heart, she took leave of the Pontiff.

Scarcely had the favourite quitted the presence of Innocent, when the latter vehemently exclaimed with an anger utterly unpapal, "Curse those women and those who send them."

Poor Pope Innocent had to suffer the outbursts of feminine jealousy also from another quarter. Whilst Donna Olimpia was jealous of the pretty Princess, the Pontiff's elder sister felt a grudge against the favourite. The Pope loved his elder sister, Agatha, mother-superior of a convent; and the latter, although very humble and very submissive in the presence of her Holy Brother, could at times take a tone of authority—as elder sisters of great men are wont to; and she not unfrequently obtained special favours from His Holiness. She was loquacious and clever at begging, like all the women who had passed their lives in a convent. Donna Olimpia, who had her eye upon the movements and visits of Agatha, had given orders to the servants at the Vatican, most of whom were her creatures and devoted to her, to get rid as often as possible of the old woman, and not to admit her into the presence of the Pope.

But it was not always easy to send the old nun away! She would raise her voice and quarrel with

the servants, shouting at the top of her voice that she had a right to see her brother. Her screams would reach the ears of the Pontiff, and he could not very well refuse her admittance. Agatha would then reproach her young (!) brother with his injustice. The favours which by right belonged to her—his flesh and blood—were showered upon a stranger—upon this woman, who had accumulated such wealth, and whose palace contained so many treasures robbed from Holy Church; and for whose benefit did this woman employ her riches? Not for the house and for the family of Pamphilio—not even for her own son, no! she was working for the greatness and the glory of the house of Maldaichini. She was sending to Viterbo, to her relations, all the wealth which ought never to have been taken out of Rome. Thus in the Church of St. Agnes, in the Piazza Navona, the bones of *Sainte Françoise* of Rome had been exhumed, and a shoulder of the saint preserved as relic. A great and solemn ceremony had accompanied this event, and a splendid banquet offered at the Capitol to all that Rome counted of distinguished people. Now, both women, Donna Olimpia and Agatha, were anxious to possess this precious relic. The former intended to present it to the Church of San Martino, a small principality near Viterbo, in possession of her brother, Prince of San Martino, and whose title and states she hoped to inherit, while Agatha coveted the relic for her own convent. The possession of a relic greatly enhanced the celebrity of a church or of a convent, often became the source

of considerable revenue, and greatly hastened the rise of the establishment. Strange as it may sound, when the Pope had made a gift of the holy relic to his favourite, his sister was more annoyed at this triumph of her rival than at many more important favours bestowed upon Donna Olimpia.

And on this particular morning Agatha forced the door of her brother. After prostrating herself and devoutly kissing the slipper of His Holiness, the devout Catholic and pious nun gave way to the elder sister in her, and it was her younger brother whom she now treated to a long lecture, reproaching him with his weakness for Donna Olimpia. She not only told him freely—in voluble and forcible language—what she herself thought of his conduct and of his scandalous attachment for the ambitious woman, but, with evident malice, she repeated all the scandalous rumours and insults circulating in Rome on the subject of the intimacy existing between the Vicar of Christ and his sister-in-law. Nun Agatha exhausted all that the enemies of the Church, all that the calumniators and satirists had spread about this friendship. She repeated everything; and, although greatly exaggerated, these accusations contained a great deal of truth in them. Innocent looked like a schoolboy, caught *in flagrante delicto* and preserved an embarrassed silence. The nun, perceiving her advantage, continued:

"Your conduct is making you the byword of Rome, of Italy, and of the whole of Europe. It is only the evil spirit who is prompting you to act thus, so as to further the designs of the heretics, the reformers,

and the enemies of Rome and the Holy Church. Are you aware of the epithet bestowed upon this woman? They apply to her the stigma used in the Apocalypse, and among the heretics she is described as the Harlot of Babylon. In their sermons the ecclesiastics of the Church of Satan are thundering against 'this great prostitute who dwells at Babylon, the city on the seven hills.' And indeed," she concluded, triumphantly, "are they not right, those preachers of Satan? For does not this woman in reality govern Rome and Christendom; and are you not heaping upon her all the favours imaginable?"

"My good sister," at last replied the Pontiff, "I shall take your good counsel to heart and act upon it as soon as I judge the occasion propitious."

"Thank you, my brother," exclaimed the old woman. "Send away Donna Olimpia, and the whole world will bless you."

Was he growing tired of the empire she was exercising over him? But the Pontiff was seriously thinking of getting rid of Donna Olimpia. He was only lacking the courage of coming to a decision. So great was the power of this woman over the head of Christianity that whatever his decisions, he dared not face her, nor break definitely with her. To complicate his embarrassment, the Pontiff fell ill. He was subject to such attacks, which—especially when he had experienced some anger and annoyance—assumed a serious and even dangerous character. During these attacks of the Pontiff, Rome was in a state of extreme excitement, and the passions dwelling

in the breasts of the ambitious, to whom a change on the throne of St. Peter meant so much, were let loose in those moments. Many hopes were attached to the election of a new Pontiff, many fortunes vanished with the demise of the old Pope, or were built on the accession of the new. But it would be unjust to affirm that Donna Olimpia was utterly and entirely governed by selfish motives; and if ambition was the prime motor of her actions, she had a certain attachment for the person of her august brother-in-law. No sooner had the rumour of the illness of Innocent spread in Rome and reached her ears than she was at his bedside. And it is to the credit of this woman, whose mind was always apparently bent upon grave matters of State, and who judged and decided the most complicated political affairs with a skill that would have done honour to the cleverest politician, that she became an affectionate domestic helpmate as soon as Innocent lay ill. Attentive, careful, and devoted, like a hospital nurse, she never left his sick-chamber—prepared his medicine, herself tending him with the greatest possible care, watching his movements, and eager to spare him the slightest pain; ready to perform every service his state of health necessitated. She only left his bedside for rare moments to give orders for Masses to be read in the churches or to consult with the physician of His Holiness.

Innocent seemed to be suffering more than usually, and his nurse, who from long experience knew exactly the nature of his illness, soon perceived that this

time grief had enhanced his pain. She increased her vigilance and her care. The Pontiff was not insensible to her attentions, for several times during his illness he shed tears, pressing the hand of his favourite. And yet when the acute pain had passed, Donna Olimpia noticed with a feeling of melancholy that His Holiness was not so exuberant in his gratitude as on previous occasions. He was evidently tormented by the promise he had given to his sister on the one hand and the constant remonstrances of his aged treasurer on the other. In reality he had allowed Donna Olimpia to take care of him, but he regretted this incident, which again made him dependent upon the woman.

Could he break with her now? could he *coldly* tell her not to return to the Vatican, and that henceforth he would do without her counsel? Olimpia evidently read what was going on in the mind of the Pontiff. She felt that her fall was only a question of months, weeks, or even days; and the nearer the Pope approached convalescence the sadder she grew, and the servants at the Vatican, and even the visitors who came to inquire after the health of the Vicar of Christ, were struck with the extreme pallor and melancholy of the favourite. She was regretting the power which she felt was slipping from her hands.

As yet, however, Innocent could not make up his mind to tell her plainly his decision, and when he was convalescent he thanked her for her devotion; and handing her a splendid ring set with precious stones, of a considerable value, he delicately pointed

out to her the necessity of returning to her own palace.

"Take this ring, Olimpia," he added, "as a slight souvenir of my gratitude for your service, and allow me to join to it another gift in recompense for your good and valuable counsel in the past. Have these boxes, containing about 20,000 Roman dollars (*c.* £5,000), carried to your carriage."

Donna Olimpia was not a woman to refuse such a gift, and she accepted it. But she could not help feeling that this delicate conduct on the part of Innocent was only a presage of her speedy misfortune. And when she left the Vatican she turned back to look at the walls of the historic building as if bidding farewell to the Palace where she was no longer to rule.

And yet Innocent was still under the sway of his favourite and, like all timid and weak-minded people, still afraid to come to a decision and take the entire responsibility on his own shoulders. One evening he confided his troubles to his faithful friend Pancirolo, his trusted treasurer. Pancirolo was on the point of retiring for the night when the Pontiff detained him.

"Stay a moment, my friend," said Innocent, "I want to talk to you. You have undoubtedly noticed that I have been greatly perturbed for some time past."

"Yes, Your Holiness," replied the old minister, "I have noticed it, and the fact has caused me considerable sorrow. Had I not feared to appear

indiscreet—I should have ventured to ask the Holy Father for the cause of the trouble. But now I implore Your Holiness to confide in me, your humble and faithful servant. What is worrying Your Holiness ? "

" These women are worrying me," exclaimed Innocent, " those three women, with their jealousies, ambitions, and intrigues ; there seems to be nothing but dissension among the members of my family. My sister-in-law, my sister, and my niece, all ambitious and rivals for influence over the Holy See. If you only knew, Pancirolo, how unhappy I am. Can you not save me from these shoals and eddies of feminine intrigues, and help me to steer my bark into the haven of rest ? "

Innocent evidently wished his minister to decide for him and to dictate to the Pontiff his duty. It is characteristic of all weak natures to wish for some one, in whom they have implicit confidence, either to approve their actions or take the responsibility upon themselves.

Pancirolo, however, was too astute a politician and too well acquainted with the character of the Pontiff to advise His Holiness in the matter. He knew that whatever happened, Innocent would soon regret his decision, and then he, Pancirolo, would be the scapegoat, and Donna Olimpia would vent her wrath on him. He waited for Innocent to pronounce the decisive words :

" What I really want to do, what I really ought to do, is almost impossible," exclaimed the unhappy

Pontiff. "I ought to keep away Donna Olimpia from affairs of State, nay, I ought to exile her; but I have not the strength to do it."

At these words a thrill of joy passed through the frame of the old diplomatist, who hated the favourite of the Pope with all the power his old heart was capable of.

"Your Holiness," he said, "it would be wrong to keep away Donna Olimpia, and certainly unwise to send her into exile. She is your near relative and is so devoutly attached to Your Holiness. Besides, her advice and her judgment have often proved useful to us in complicated matters and difficult affairs—one does not cut a friendship of such a long standing in a moment, and," he added, laying stress upon his words, "it is always unwise to take a decision one is almost sure not to keep."

Innocent was silent. In his heart of hearts he felt that his minister was right.

"On the other hand, however, we must admit," continued the wily diplomatist, "that the friendship of Your Holiness for your sister-in-law has been very injurious and caused a great deal of harm to the Holy See. I am not referring to the scandalous attacks made by the enemies of Rome upon the morality of the Pontiff and of the clergy," he added meaningly. "But the fact of a woman exercising such an enormous influence in important matters of State is always fraught with danger."

"And what is your advice—or, better, how would you act in my place?" asked the Pontiff.

"I would create your distant relative, Camillo Astalli, Cardinal-Nephew; he would be invested with the highest authority and would take the place of His Holiness in granting those interminable daily audiences, give evasive answers, if necessary, and attach his signature to various documents. A man," added the diplomatist, "who, by virtue of his sex, can occupy an office the duties of which are clearly determined, and who can be invested with a title, will exercise a more direct and regular action than a woman, and people will submit to him more willingly than they do to the decision, to the caprices of a woman whose power is, after all, only vague and indefinite, as her sex prevents her from occupying a fixed and definite post."

The words of Pancirolo had not been spoken in vain. Innocent had grown tired of the power of Donna Olimpia, and he was glad of the opportunity thus indirectly to break her influence. By raising young Astalli to the dignity of Cardinal-Nephew he had made it practically impossible for his sister-in-law to take an active part in the affairs of the Holy See.

But Donna Olimpia was not one of those women who calmly take their *congé*. And, to do her justice, one must admit that she was not an ordinary woman. Even in her misfortune she knew how to preserve her dignity and presence of mind. And so great was her influence that, although her enemies inwardly rejoiced, they did not dare to defy her openly. Even Pancirolo advised young Astalli to show himself

polite and full of respect to the favourite of the Pope.

"Be careful of this woman; do not offend her, for she will be as venomous as a serpent and as ferocious as a tigress—she will stop at nothing. Do not destroy her hope of returning to power."

And even ambassadors, anxious to lead difficult negotiations with the Vatican to a successful issue, as well as the officers of the Papal household, continued to pay their respects to Donna Olimpia in every possible way. She did not lose her hope of gaining absolute sway over the Pontiff, and of usurping the political power.

An occasion soon offered itself for Donna Olimpia to show her pertinacity of spirit.

The Pope had decided to convene a council of the Sacred College with a view to treating urgent matters of State. As a rule, Donna Olimpia, in the happy days of her favour, used to be present at those councils and take part in the deliberations of the Cardinals. Sometimes, however, she used to watch these meetings unseen, remaining hidden in a cabinet leading into the Papal chamber, and where she could hear everything, but not be seen. And when in the end the discussions took a turn which she did not appreciate she would suddenly make a dramatic entry among the Cardinals and take an active part in their debate. It was only on rare occasions that she contented herself with the rôle of invisible listener. As she had received no instruction whether to be present or not at this council, she at once decided to be in her place

of hiding, and watch the proceedings. "She would preside over the council," as one of the Cardinals once expressed himself, "like a saint from her corner."

After having treated several important affairs, Fabio Chigi, who had just returned from his post as Nuncio at Cologne, pointed out the advisability of punishing severely the disorders, transgressions, and crimes of the Roman Catholic clergy. "During my stay at Cologne and Munster," continued the prelate, "I have had occasion to listen to the criticisms and vile attacks made upon the Roman Catholic clergy by the Protestants. It is in the interest of all those who have remained faithful and attached to the Holy Roman Church to see the evil eradicated and thus enhance the dignity of Papacy. We ought to begin by thoroughly reforming the convents, which have become centres of immorality and of sin."

"Leave those poor monks alone," interrupted Cardinal Sforza, who had particular reasons for hating Donna Olimpia. "The root of the evil is not to be sought among the lower clergy. The reforms must come from above, and if *we* set a good example the others will soon imitate us."

All present knew what Cardinal Sforza was alluding to, and in embarrassed silence looked at the Pontiff.

"She is present, in here," some whispered into the ear of the bold speaker.

"I know," he replied, "and that is the reason why I am talking so loud: I want her to hear me."

"Your Holiness," continued Cardinal Sforza, "the Holy See has become the butt of bitter reproaches

and the subject of infamous satires. And not only have the authors of these satires not been punished, but their accusations and gross jokes are being repeated everywhere—not only in Rome, but all over Europe. Christendom is shocked at the state of the Roman Church, ruled by a woman. In London the Roman Pontiff has become the subject of derision and of popular ridicule. Only recently a comedy, entitled *The Marriage of the Pope*, has been played before Cromwell. The person of the Pontiff and the sacred Roman Church are travestied, a sacrilege committed in the Eternal City is already known all over Europe, and I must inform His Holiness of the fact," added the Cardinal, turning to the assembly, "if those whose duty it is to do so have kept it secret."

Sforza seemed to hesitate for a moment, as if afraid of offending the Pontiff by repeating the nature of the offence.

The Pope, who had remained silent during the speech of Sforza, his head leaning back on his chair and his gaze lost in the distance, suddenly looked up.

"Continue, Cardinal," he said in a husky voice. "What has happened?"

"On the portals of several churches of Rome the name of Your Holiness, the Sovereign-Pontiff Innocent, has been erased and that of Donna Olimpia inscribed in its stead; and it seems, Your Holiness, that this sacrilege has been committed with the knowledge of foreign Courts. Indeed, as far as I have been able to ascertain, several Catholic ambassadors have been aiding and abetting this scandal,

thus protesting and expressing their indignation at the state of affairs."

The features of the Pope were convulsed, whilst horror was depicted on the countenance of all present.

"But even the Emperor of Germany, Ferdinand," continued the Cardinal unabashed, "is not unaware of this scandal, and he even approves some of the attacks hurled against the Holy See. My friend Astalli, the Cardinal-Nephew, has received some other proofs corroborating my statements."

The Pontiff looked inquiringly at Astalli, and the latter, with a show of some reluctance, produced several medals, some in copper, others in silver, whilst two were rather large and in gold, having the value of at least twenty Roman crowns. With small variations all of them represented the same subject. On one side one could see the effigy of Olimpia with the Papal crown on her head and the keys of St. Peter in her hands, whilst on the other was the head of Innocent, his hair arranged in feminine fashion.

"These I received this morning. They have been distributed all over Rome, and among the foreign Courts; and to judge from the workmanship and the expense which the medals must have necessitated, there remains little doubt as to the source whence they emanate. I have not the slightest doubt but that they have been executed at the expense of His Majesty the Emperor Ferdinand."

The Pope looked as if thunderstruck; and he scarcely had strength enough to make a feeble motion with his hand, indicating that the meeting was at an end.

Donna Olimpia had heard enough, and scarcely had the Cardinals left the presence of His Holiness when she rushed out from her hiding-place, fell on her knees, kissing the feet of the Pontiff. It took some time before Innocent, as if awakening from a deep sleep, looked around, and perceiving the kneeling favourite, uttered in a tone of reproach and astonishment:

"What! You?"

"Holy Father," replied the ambitious woman, still hoping to escape the danger which was threatening her, "I am ready to obey your commands."

Innocent did not answer, but his silence clearly indicated to his sister-in-law that he wished her to go.

In spite of the secret vexation which Donna Olimpia felt at no longer enjoying open favour at Court, she was too clever not to hide it. She even pretended to be resigned, and hoped to gain advantages from her apparent resignation. Among those who since her half-disgrace seemed to have gained the confidence of the Pope, the young and beautiful Princess de Rossano gave her most uneasiness, and really her influence was very great. It was to her that one had to apply in order to get favours from the Pontiff, and she generally obtained what she asked. It is true, that for a person living at the time in which she did, and also taking part in court-life, the Princess had qualities and virtues which allowed her to use her power without raising suspicions among ambitious intriguers. Generally she took part in just and reasonable requests, and petitioners were recommended

by their talents and virtues, and this limited the number of her demands. Generous and rich without avarice, this young woman generally added a gift to the favour obtained, instead of using extortion for self-gain. In a society as corrupt as that of Rome of the seventeenth century, her conduct caused uneasiness, and the rapacious crowd of applicants having no claim of right, sought to buy her favours.

These child-like qualities of the Princess, as Donna Olimpia called them, allowed this woman, so well versed in intrigues, to take the measures of her young rival capable of brilliant rashness, but unskilled in knowledge of men and of things. If the Princess had been a man, Donna Olimpia would have despised her. But the niece of Innocent was young, beautiful, attractive, and full of conversational resources, and Donna Olimpia was not able always to hide her jealousy —more than once forgetting the consideration due to the wife of her son, she permitted herself to spread unlikely slanders. Strange rumours had been heard about the conjugal incapability of Don Camillo at the time of his marriage, and the several children his wife had borne unto him were reputed not to be his.

Since the sudden departure of the Princess de Rossano from Frascati to make her mad entry into Rome, Don Camillo had always been vexed with her for her disobedience. The heart of the young husband was embittered also by the talk of the town. He became less sensitive to the charms of his wife, formed liaisons which called forth her reproaches. The time of exile was over, and, brought again into the midst

of an intriguing Court, they tried all sorts of pre-occupations to fill the emptiness of their lives.

Don Camillo had returned to the favour of his uncle, and although his capability did not allow him to take the management of important business, the Pope gave him the honorary title of Generalissimo of the troops; he saw him with pleasure, used him as intermediary with the Ambassadors, always counting more on his politeness than on his diplomacy. He was a good court mannikin, inferior to Astalli, who also did not seem to be worth anything as long as Pancirolo had breath to dictate to him what he ought to do.

This favour Don Camillo owed no doubt to his wife, for whom Innocent had a decided liking. The old man, although Pontiff, had contracted the habit of being surrounded by women.

In his youth Cardinal Pamphilio had been a Don Juan, like many of his predecessors and successors on the Papal throne. He had also recognised the fact that the friendship of influential Court ladies is always exceedingly useful to an ambitious politician, statesman or even prelate. And when in Madrid he did his very best to become a favourite of the great ladies and even of *ces petites dames* who enjoyed the reputation of possessing mighty friends at Court. As Papal Nuncio at the Court of Spain, Innocent had also played a prominent part in a love affair of King Philip IV, and the Calderona. La Calderona was a famous actress, fascinating rather than beautiful, *troublante*, *spirituelle*, and possessed of a voice of gold. The King fell in love with the charming actress, *tout*

comme chez nous. And the Queen of the stage became his mistress. But alas! one day His Majesty found the unfaithful lady in the arms of the Duke de Medina de las Torres, and in a paroxysm of jealousy and rage he was on the point of killing the lover when la Calderona threw herself between her two lovers. Philip forgave her, sent the Duke into exile and the lady into a convent. Such was the custom of Spain, that the lady whom His Majesty has ceased to honour with his love must give up the life of love and joy and retire within the walls of a convent, there to reflect at leisure upon the inconstancy of Princes and their ingratitude.

Magdalen-Calderona took the veil from the hands of the Apostolic Nuncio who afterwards became Pope Innocent X. In his later years his infirmity, which began early, and which increased with age, made many little daily precautions indispensable for the Pope, and the constant attentions of Donna Olimpia for a good many years had become necessary, because Innocent felt he must be assisted, consoled, and even served by a woman. Since his sister-in-law had been obliged to retire from the Court, his young niece, the heiress, so to speak, of a part of her domestic duties, softened the frequent sufferings of her uncle by the charm of naturally brilliant conversation, which the many relations whom the young Princess entertained in Rome made either interesting or important. Since the retreat of Donna Olimpia the nephews and nieces of Innocent had been lodged in the Vatican. Don Camillo, the Princes of Piombino and Giustiniani,

with their wives, occupied different apartments in the Palace, so that the Pontiff enjoyed a repose sweeter, because new to him.

The Princess de Rossano had the gift of pleasing all who came near her. Her charms, her generosity, the care she took to maintain unity in her family attracted all hearts. As for her ambition, she only desired to enjoy the privileges of her rank and to use her power with the Pope to render service to those she esteemed, to help people of merit who found themselves without support, and to use her riches to benefit others. Quite a stranger to anything that resembled intrigue, in reality she was only a romantic woman, dreaming of good and not even thinking of evil. Although she enjoyed the Pope's good favour and acquired by this position a certain authority in Rome, Donna Olimpia did not fear her as a rival: long experience had taught Innocent's sister-in-law that by being just and by rewarding virtue and merit, one excites good-will and sometimes admiration; that these advantages are barren in everyday life, and that only the creatures that one has understood to make by monstrous favours are those on whom one can really count in moments of importance for energy and fidelity. So she attached but little importance to the passing influence that the Princess exercised just then in the political world; and although her woman's heart could not patiently endure the kind attentions with which the Pope daily surrounded her young and beautiful rival, however, always dominated by her insatiable love of power, alone in her palace,

and holding in check the impulse of her jealous passions, Donna Olimpia brought her mind to bear upon her heart with the idea of turning to her profit all that caused her such grief.

And thus while in the Vatican the Pope enjoyed all the sweetness of family life by the cares and attentions of the Princess de Rossano, Donna Olimpia, in her solitude, threw on this basis, weak in appearance, the foundation of the schemes by means of which she hoped to preserve and strengthen, if possible, the grandeur and importance of the House of Pamphili—of which she looked upon herself, quite rightly, as the strongest support. Disengaging herself with strength of character from personal affection, which might have caused her to turn aside from her object, she fed her mind on that which she most dreaded, namely the death of Innocent X. His demise was for her the whole question of her existence. An abyss opened between the death of her brother-in-law and the elevation of his successor, where she knew she would be engulfed if the means of getting across were not found, and these she meant to try to find.

For a long time Donna Olimpia had been worried by the dissensions which had separated all the members of her family, feeling herself quite unable to bring about the reconciliation of such different characters, the greater number possessing neither greatness nor niceness. And now, in spite of the jealousy she felt towards the Princess de Rossano, Donna Olimpia forgave her daughter-in-law for having usurped her place by the Pope, because of the happy result of her efforts

to bring unity and peace in the family, for unity was absolutely necessary if her schemes were to succeed.

The Pope lived; his health, although frequently disturbed by troublesome complaints, was still strong, but at length he reached his eighty-fourth year and Donna Olimpia did not rely upon illusions. First this "woman-sponge," as she has been styled, tried to increase as much as possible her enormous wealth during the remainder of her brother-in-law's life, and then to augment the number of her creatures in the Sacred College and among the nobles whose influence in the next Conclave would be favourable to her, by electing a new Pontiff interested to show himself indulgent towards her. Then she wished to ensure the future of the House of the Pamphili—by associating it to a rich illustrious family destined to see one of its members elevated to the Papal throne, or at least powerful enough to protect the heiress of Innocent X against the future Pontiff. This, then, was the problem which this Pontifical Minerva was trying to solve, and that the Princess de Rossano, without her knowledge, was beginning to unravel, in surrounding Innocent X with his nephews and nieces and with all the sweetness of family life.

In fact, the Prince de Piombino and the Prince de Giustiniani, without being precisely friends, no longer disliked meeting each other, since the place of meeting was the Palace of the Pope, where the Princess de Rossano attracted them by obtaining favours from their uncle.

The two young wives, the daughters of Donna

Olimpia, the Princesses Clementia and Constantia, had become much more amiable, and felt better disposed towards their mother, since they no longer lived with her in the Villa Pamphili—and enjoyed entire freedom at the Vatican in the daily society of the Pope, their uncle, or with their sister-in-law, the Princess de Rossano.

Publicly Innocent had forbidden his sister-in-law to appear at the Vatican, but he had given her permission to visit him in secret. Rome soon knew that every night Donna Olimpia mysteriously left her palace to go to the Vatican. Everybody was aware that Minerva-Olimpia would soon regain her former power, and indeed the Pontiff soon threw off the mask and recalled his favourite, whose praises he never tired of singing. Triumphantly Donna Olimpia again took up her position of *maîtresse en titre*.

CHAPTER X

THE TRIUMPH AND DEATH OF DONNA OLIMPIA

HAVING returned to the Pope, Donna Olimpia resumed her old customs, and divided her time between the attentions she paid to her brother-in-law and the pursuit of her own private and lucrative speculations. These were swollen by the distribution of Church appointments according to her own interest; so that during the two years which followed her return to the Court, she succeeded in amassing riches enough to enable her to look calmly at the future.

But the popular hatred against Donna Olimpia, lulled during her disgrace, awoke and became more active than ever, as soon as she was seen again entering the Vatican.

In spite of the pains she had taken to avoid recognition and betrayal by her enemies, who did not know the hour of her arrival, she became the centre of a menacing and infuriated mob. Dearth and dearness of food, constantly felt, were the pretext for the insulting vociferations with which she was assailed; and the Pope, as little spared as she, when he went through the city felt great mortification because of the reproaches that were levelled at him under the name of Donna Olimpia.

It required all the blindness in which Innocent X was enveloped to support the vexations which he was made to suffer during the last years of his reign. He hardly passed a month without receiving anonymous letters in which, while preserving respectful form, he was told the hardest truths, accompanied by dark warnings.

As long as Pancirolo and Astalli were near him they showed him these letters. But as soon as Donna Olimpia had regained her power, her first care was to intercept anything written, no matter of what nature, so that his mind should not be troubled. Taking advantage of the valetudinary condition of the Pope, and to occupy him agreeably, she entertained him in an almost voluptuous idleness, keeping him acquainted with passing events by her always amusing and bright conversation.

Among the distractions she sought to give him, Donna Olimpia drew his attention day by day to the embellishment of the Piazza Navona, and to the building of the Church of St. Agnes. The completion of this edifice was the idea with which she filled his mind. Every time she came from the Pamphili Palace she told him in detail how far the work had progressed. Curious to ascertain for himself the progress made, Innocent fixed a day to go to the Piazza Navona, and told his sister-in-law that he would go as far as her palace and take luncheon with her and all her family.

This little event, of which the report spread, caused the Roman population, always curious to see,

to go to those streets through which the Pope was expected to pass. The Pope left the Vatican in a "portantina," a kind of small litter, of which he made frequent use. Cardinal Antonio followed him in his carriage, and several prelates, among whom were Azzolini and Gualtieri, on mules. These completed the procession, surrounded by servants, some police spies, and a detachment of the Corsican Guards.

The people ran in crowds from all parts at the sound of the bells, which do not cease to ring while the Roman Pontiff is out, and almost instantly the streets were full. The aspect of the people was somewhat menacing, and although the Sacred Presence of the Spiritual Prince and the blessings he gave caused all knees to bend, and all heads to bow, soon the brows and the glances were raised with audacity to the temporal Sovereign, on whom the crowd showered coarse epithets under the name of his sister-in-law. "Most Holy Father! Bread, Bread," was the cry repeated on all sides, followed by other cries which are untranslatable.

The Pope took refuge in the Pamphili Palace, but the vociferations of the populace continued, and cruel and gross insults were hurled against Donna Olimpia. A few hours later his nieces informed the Pontiff of the anger of the people, to whom Donna Olimpia had been obliged to throw much money from the windows to appease them. "So your poor mother," said Innocent, "has to sustain a loss to keep these wretches quiet! Poor woman!" He repeated this exclamation on seeing his sister-in-law accompanied

by Azzolini, then continuing: "But of what do these monsters complain that they besiege your palace, dear sister? You so charitable, and so generous towards them! Ah! ingratitude; but I know you," and he laid stress on these words. "The unjust hatred which they have shown you will double your charity, and from to-morrow—yes, to-morrow, you will give your treasures to those who have treated you most cruelly!"

The Pope pronounced these words so that all present, as well as Donna Olimpia, should interpret them as an order. The poor Princess did not feel disposed to make fresh sacrifices for a crowd who would have torn her to pieces if it had been possible, and she had a grudge against the Pope, who was doing the honours of her purse, when she suddenly discovered that her jewels had been stolen.

Innocent appeared to pay no attention to the anger of Donna Olimpia at this moment; and, upsetting all the arrangements of a day which had already turned out so badly, he excused himself to his sister-in-law for not remaining to the luncheon as promised, giving the condition of the population of Rome as his reason, and pleading also the fatigues and the emotions which he had experienced, both of which made his return to the Vatican necessary.

The order of the return was quite different; warned by experience, Antonio Barbarini had ordered the Pope's carriage, and he placed himself in it with the Holy Father. A good number of men on horseback surrounded the carriage, and Azzolini, directing

the procession, gave a signal for a start at full trot, making the crowd give way.

During the night which followed this day, no one in the Pamphili Palace, from the mistress to the last of the servants, closed an eye. The staff of the house was occupied only in conjecturing about her dismissed servants, to find the guilty one: and on her side, Donna Olimpia, keenly affected by the sums she had lost, returning perpetually to her empty drawers, thought painfully of the order which the Pope had given her to incur fresh expenses for alms. It was broad daylight, and she was still a prey to these painful preoccupations when Monsignor Azzolini, sent by the Pope to speak to her, was announced.

A servant who followed the Bishop put down a small casket on entering. When the servant retired, Azzolini gave satisfactory news about the return journey and the health of the Pope.

"The city is calm now. Some of the people, more obstinate and insolent than the others, have been arrested by the police spies and taken to prison. The Piazza Navona and your palace are under special supervision, so you can rest. His Holiness was anxious to send you reassuring words about everything which causes you uneasiness, and he has charged me with this message."

"I know, Monsignor, all you did yesterday for His Holiness," answered Olimpia, "and the remembrance of it will be engraved in my memory eternally. Would to Heaven that the Pope reward you according to your deserts!"

"His goodness is already spread over me, Princess, since he has deigned to choose me as intermediary between you and him; for," added Azzolini, indicating the casket which the servant had put down, "I have fulfilled only one part of my commission."

"What is it?" asked Olimpia, smiling.

"We all know how good the Pope is, Madonna; but what one who has not the honour of closely serving him does not know, is to what point of delicacy his goodness is made manifest. I cannot tell you how much the Holy Father has been affected by the loss you have had of your jewels, also by the violence of the people round your palace. These events keep coming to his mind, and yesterday he spoke of it to all his servants. He opened out at length with me on this subject, and after a conversation, in which I did not speak about the anonymous letter, the Holy Father wished to consult me about what he proposed to do. I could only approve his decision, and he charged me to remit to you 30,000 crowns (150,000 francs) to replace your jewels, with an equal sum to appease the popular anger by distributing it to the poor of the parishes of Rome. You will find all in this coffer."

Rare event! Tears came into the eyes of Donna Olimpia. She took Azzolini's hands and almost embraced him, her heart so full of joy. She was lively, but for a short time only; for, after having followed the advice of the thief, in hiding the new treasure with more care, Donna Olimpia wished to go at once to thank the Pope. She went to the Vatican;

but scarcely had she entered when she saw preparations for departure, of which she knew nothing. The major-domo informed her of the sudden resolution which the Pontiff had made to go to reside in the Quirinal. Anxious, she went upstairs quickly, and found her brother-in-law surrounded by some servants, among whom was the faithful Pablo. All were occupied in supporting the Holy Father, shaking in his arm-chair, repeating "Is all ready? Let us go. Let us start. I will not stay here any longer!" Then seeing his sister-in-law, he added in the same voice, "Make these people hurry! Let us start for the Quirinal!"

Donna Olimpia recognised at once, by the manner and words, that her brother-in-law's health was running great risks. She ordered the Pope's room in the Quirinal to be got ready. The horses were harnessed to a closed carriage, and Donna Olimpia herself—accompanied by Azzolini and helped by Pablo—took the Pope to the Quirinal, on which his mind was fixed. During the journey from one palace to the other Innocent, swathed in his blankets, only spoke a few words without sequence, leaving one to suppose that he was scarcely conscious of his position. They put him to bed on arrival, and Donna Olimpia found herself again in that same room in which two years before she had so strongly asserted her power, and could not help feeling satisfaction in seeing herself again at the same spot.

However, all was changed. The Pope, after spending two days in a state of motionless stupor, regained the

D OLYMPIA MAIDALCHINI Princeſſe de S. Marthin, Veufue de D. Pamphilio Pamphili Frere du Pape Innocent X, et Mere de D Camillo Pamphili Prince de Roſſano; cy deuant Cardinal, et des Princeſſes de Baſſano et de Piombino. Eſtant paruenus a ces honneurs par les bienfaits de ce Pontife.

DONNA OLIMPIA.

use of his reason and his limbs, but with certain changes. They had to lift him to place him in his chair. He no longer walked, his memory was failing, and all sustained application was impossible. His last appearance in the streets of Rome had been fatal. The menaces of the mob addressed to him or to his sister-in-law had filled his soul with terror and grief. Returning to the Vatican, and upset by the dangers which Donna Olimpia had incurred, and the robbery which had been committed, he saw plainly that he would never be forgiven for again putting himself under the domination of a woman, from whom it was more than ever impossible to separate; finally, the fears with which the popular madness inspired him led him to an act which he had accomplished in spite of himself, since his reason did not resist his inclination, when he sent to his sister-in-law an enormous sum, raised from the very people whom he flattered himself he was pacifying. The character of the Pope made all these difficulties insurmountable, and these difficulties presented themselves to his mind under so sad an aspect that his head, overladen with years, succumbed beneath the new weight which came to oppress it. The doctors declared that the Pope must abstain from all mental work, so that in a few days Innocent did everything through his sister-in-law.

She governed the daily life of the Pope. She invented a sort of ceremonial to give access to those whom it was impossible to refuse. The warnings of Antonio Barberini, on the bad disposition of the

Spanish clergy, had been listened to more attentively, as Azzolini had been able to learn that two or three fanatic monks arrived recently from Barcelona at Rome, had boasted of having superior orders for ridding Christendom, at whatsoever price, of a Spiritual Head who favoured heresy by his scandalous conduct. Poisonings were very common then at Rome, and also in the whole of Europe; and to prevent them, Donna Olimpia visited the kitchens, examined the food prepared for the Holy Father, forbade the entrance to the kitchen to any but those who had charge of preparing the food; and often she took the precaution of making animals take a portion of the food. These cares were not useless for herself, as she took her meals nearly always with the Pope. Generally Pablo arranged a little table near the bed. In the beginning Donna Olimpia was content to wait upon the Pontiff, but soon Innocent himself ordered his sister-in-law to be seated and to partake of his meal. Little feminine attentions were in vogue, and this moment became for him the moment longed for all the morning and thought about agreeably at night. Innocent, pointing to his sister-in-law, used to say to his intimates, "Without her I should have been dead long ago." One day a chamberlain saw the Pontiff pressing Donna Olimpia to his breast, and saying, "My darling Olimpia, I love you more than anything, and I even prefer you to the Papal Crown."

These were the happy moments of the day, but during the time consecrated to business, the rôle of

Innocent was sad, the rôle of Olimpia more difficult and more important. Often the consistories were held in the Pope's room, and the Pope was supposed to preside from his bed. The questions addressed to him and the answers he had to make were transmitted by Donna Olimpia, who, modifying these and dictating those, disposed of the sovereign power at her pleasure. As soon as a serious discussion began, Donna Olimpia regretted that the Pope was worse, and commanded silence, when she was skilful enough to see that the thread of the discussion was not continued. As for those who came to besiege the palace daily for favours, they had to address themselves to her, and God only knows the immense sums which entered the Pontifical treasury during the last days of Innocent X.

She insisted on the relations of the Pope visiting him regularly, but she counted their words and often dictated to them what they should say. "Do not fatigue His Holiness," she often said. "Absolute rest is expressly commanded by the doctors." And then she would push them from the room, requesting them to walk on tiptoe to avoid making a noise.

The Princess de Rossano came more often than the others. Emboldened by the tender benevolence of the Pontiff, she was less timid in the presence of Donna Olimpia. She entered the room one day when her mother-in-law, bending over the bed, held the Pope's hand. Donna Olimpia frowned at seeing herself surprised, but the young Princess said jokingly: "Oh! uncle, I am jealous of my mother-in-law; you

keep all your tenderness for her; there is none left for me. I am displeased."

At these words the Pope looked vaguely at his niece, and perhaps he was suffering from absence of mind, or perhaps he was conscious of what he said, when he uttered the words: "The hand that has wounded me is the only hand that can heal me." And his head fell upon his pillow.

"That is very gallant, Holy Father," said the Princess, who made a sign to her mother-in-law that she thought Innocent at that moment was suffering from mental aberration.

The two ladies left the bedside to talk more at their ease, and Donna Olimpia laid stress on the weakness of brain from which Innocent suffered. At the same time she made up her mind to give very strict orders to the antechamber attendants to prevent the recurrence of such a scene. But Innocent was dying. Donna Olimpia did her best to keep everybody away from the dying Pontiff. In those days one could only see women in the corridors and in the apostolic apartments—some anxious to make the best of their power, and others to see what could be done for the future. For ten days Innocent lay unconscious, and during that short period his sister-in-law pocketed half a million in selling favours and ecclesiastical functions. When the Pope recovered his senses she brought into play all her usual resources to keep his attention. After some tender speeches, in which the tone of her voice did more than her words, she called for two servants, who helped the sick man to

sit up; then she gave him something to drink and entertained him with different subjects. Algardi's colossal statue, the fountains of the Piazza Navona, the ornamentation of the Pamphili Palace, and the beginning of the cupola of St. Agnes, led her to speak of the sums the building of this church cost, and the expense of finishing the same.

"This church is ruining me," said the Pope, "but I will finish it!"

"Of course, brother."

"Yes, I will finish it; my name must be connected with that fine building."

"Of course, brother, but we are all mortal. Have you taken means to ensure the completion of it, if anything should remain unfinished at your death?"

"Ah, that is what troubles me; I want to be sure that it will not be left unfinished."

"Must you not count upon your family for that?"

"If they were like you, dear sister, I should not be anxious, but Don Camillo, your son, is quite indifferent to this object, and Giustiniani has no brains. Ludovisi is not rich. Your two daughters would rather have fine carriages and grand furniture—and my poor church will remain unfinished."

"But since this is your desire, why do you not leave a settled sum for the completion of the church?'

"Well," said the Pope, smiling slyly, "I have."

"You have?" cried Donna Olimpia, not able to hide her feelings.

"Yes," said Innocent humbly; "but you think it right, dear sister?"

Calm entered again in Donna Olimpia's mind.

"You know," she said, "that I agree blindly with all that helps your fame, and to all that gives you satisfaction and rest. You are right—leave a sum for St. Agnes. What sum do you intend to leave?"

"What sum?" said Innocent, "a million: do you think that too much?"

"To complete the church? Oh no; I expect if your nephews had to finish your work it would cost them much more; and I will tell you that I have warned the family of this inevitable expense—they expect to have to do it."

"What noble foresight, dear sister!"

"I have only done my duty, brother; and if I could feel any regret at the step you have taken to leave a million for that purpose it would be caused by the grief we should all feel in seeing people who are quite indifferent left to finish a building you began and also by the fear that one million will not be sufficient to carry out all the ornament it requires; or again that this million might be used for something else."

Innocent showed a little satisfaction with himself. "I only act stupidly when I do not consult you, sister."

"Come, do not worry yourself. You will make yourself ill. The business is done; don't think about it."

"But I will think about it, if I could only put it right."

"Have you promised?"

"Yes, to Algardi and Borromini. Artists are terrible people to deal with. One told me about all the statues and the pictures he should like to have executed and the other described his cupola to me, and showed it to me finished. So I engaged them to push forward the work, and to encourage them I told them I should leave this million."

"It was a verbal and vague promise! Have you written anything down?"

"Strictly speaking, I have not written anything, but"—and Innocent stopped short, looking first at Olimpia and then at a small table some distance from the bed. "But," he repeated, without being able to speak openly, "look—look in that drawer."

Donna Olimpia took a packet of papers, which she turned over as she carried them. "Here," she said, "a legacy of 2,000 crowns to the son of Flaminia. Then the document in which, according to your order, I made my son Don Camillo the heir to my wealth."

"You do not regret this?"

"On the contrary, I thank you, brother. Here is a letter to Borromini, in which you give him the title of Cavaliere."

"Oh!" cried the Pope, "how sad it is to be ill. I am losing my memory. I promised this to Borromini the same day that I spoke to him about the million."

"Be calm, my brother. With your permission I will send it to-day to your architect. Here we have the legacy in question," said Donna Olimpia, looking

through the papers. "This one relates to St. Agnes. It is important. It is addressed to the Apostolic Chamber."

"Oh yes, I have a confused idea of that. It is a rough copy, is it not? without signature."

"No; your seal is not here."

"What is the sum?"

"Enormous, my brother—two millions!"

Naturally, involuntarily, or intentionally, the Princess pronounced these words in such severe tones of reproach, that the Pope turned away his head and lowered his eyes.

"Dare I ask you, Holy Father, to whom you made this other promise?"

"To Don Tomaso."

"Ah! to your confessor. I understand. A case of conscience—that has nothing to do with me."

"But, dear sister, do not think that it is my intention to rob my family. The idea came into my head in the course of a conversation in which Don Tomaso advised me to do something for the Holy See, and by so doing avoid the reproaches which were hurled at my predecessor—of favouring my relations."

"I repeat, brother, that you are the judge of this, and you know that for your glory there is no sacrifice we would not make."

The Pope's eyes filled with tears. "Tear up these drafts, my sister. I ask you, tear them up. I wish it. I promised Don Tomaso nothing."

"Then this paper can be destroyed. How about the other relating to St. Agnes?"

"Tear them up—destroy them both!"

For safety's sake, the prudent lady put them into the fire and did not take her eyes off them until they were consumed. Then she replaced the remaining papers, with the exception of the latter, raising Borromini to the nobility, in the drawer. This she kept, thinking by this means to obliterate from the mind of the artist the remembrance of the Pope's promise. As for Algardi, he was suffering from stone, and having only a few days to live, he was not to be feared.

The Pope and Donna Olimpia were both relieved by this conversation. But the mental emotions through which Innocent had passed had left decided traces. He was still weaker. Twenty-four hours elapsed and the indefatigable Donna Agatha, the Pontiff's sister, returned to the Quirinal. Just as she was going into the Pope's room, Donna Olimpia, who had heard her, opened the door to warn her.

"His Holiness is very feeble and cannot receive you to-day."

"And what becomes of the three millions?"

"Do not be anxious; you have heard false reports!"

"Our Prior make false reports? You do not know who told him the news! Don Tomaso, my dear Princess!"

"I am sorry if the care of the invalid does not allow me to converse longer with you. Tell Don Tomaso from me to be more careful what he says. Excuse me, I hear His Holiness calling. I go to him."

A short time after this event, Innocent, suffering less from gout and stone, had a term of better health, which changed all the hopes and calculations of those who had reckoned on his death. They waited with impatience for the promotion of Cardinals which had long been promised. Donna Olimpia and Cardinal Chigi were anxious to see the reinforcement at the Sacred College. Both flattered themselves that the newly elected Cardinals would attach themselves to their cause and interests.

In spite of the inconceivable weakness with which Innocent yielded to the wishes of his sister-in-law, the Pontifical dignity always reappeared in him when he was dealing in affairs relating to the Holy See. Although he did not like Cardinal Chigi personally, he questioned him, listened, and followed as much as possible his advice. Chigi had authority over his mind, and he was the only person at Court who made Donna Olimpia feel respectful, and sometimes afraid of him. The Pope called Chigi sometimes about the coming promotions, and Chigi, in spite of the presence of Donna Olimpia, expressed his opinions with the frankness of an upright and severe statesman. Audacity did not fail Olimpia, but she was forced to be prudent. Certainly Rasponi has not been forgotten: his talents for finance and diplomacy were remarkable. This Bishop, since the elevation of Cardinal Chigi to the position of Secretary of State, had made himself very useful to him and gained his confidence, devoting himself entirely to him; leaving suddenly Donna Olimpia, whose most secret business he had known for

a long time. Far from complaining, Donna Olimpia understood, and felt the importance to propitiate Rasponi, whose confidence to his new patron might prove fatal for her. She favoured the choice of certain Bishops made by the Cardinal, and did not neglect to put on the list those whom she counted as her friends or creatures. The three Cardinals Barberini helped her in this.

The last promotion of Cardinals under Innocent was held in March 1654. The family of Lawrence Imperiali of Genoa, without daring to trust in the real virtue and merits of this Bishop, loaded Donna Olimpia with presents in order to get her assistance.

The great-nephew of Charles Borromeo, called to receive the purple, owed this honour to his hereditary virtue and to the illustrious name he bore. Francis Albizzi had a passionate temper and a satirical disposition. Born at Cesena, he had left his native town on account of an adventure which had turned out badly. He went to Rome. Pancirolo helped him; he became a priest and then bishop. At the time when Innocent X launched his Bull against the propositions of Jansenius, Albizzi, who undertook everything with passion, fanned the hatred which the Pope and nearly all the Roman clergy felt for the doctrine of the Jansenists. This devotion pleased Innocent, who made up his mind to reward him. However, when the question arose of giving him the purple, he had many dangerous rivals; he would have been put on one side if Donna Olimpia and the Pope had not agreed to confer this dignity upon him. She had drawn all

the good-will and intelligence that remained at the last election of Cardinals to the Pope. This resource was now exhausted. Innocent was still living. The Pontiff still breathed; to his breath the sovereign power was still attached. Donna Olimpia was determined to keep him alive as long as possible. For her, it meant power and life. It was necessary to know how long he was likely to live.

Innocent did not like doctors; and during his reign it had been difficult for his sister-in-law to get his permission for their presence at his meals, according to the etiquette of the Court. J. J. Baldini had succeeded to a certain Carlo Gomez, a Spanish doctor. Baldini had been rewarded for having cured the Pope of dysentery, but was dismissed some time after for having quite rightly opposed a journey that Innocent wished to make to Viterbo to rejoin Olimpia, who had gone there for some days.

Matteo Parisio, a skilful, sensible man, who, knowing that it was as impossible to cure the diseases of the Pope's body as the whims of his brain, tried to calm the pains caused by age, which nothing could cure. He pleased the Pope because he did not worry about medicine, and he was in the good books of Donna Olimpia because he ordered that the invalid should be spared all emotion and preoccupation. His advice satisfied both the patient and the lady who took charge of him.

Donna Olimpia conceived the idea of asking the doctor how long the Pope would live.

"How do you find him?" she asked one day.

"Just the same!"

"Neither better nor worse?"

"Ah, Princess," said Parisio, who knew what she meant, "you want to know more than our art can tell you."

It is almost impossible to describe the strange and mysterious things that took place in the palace during the last days of Innocent. The Pope scarcely breathed, his reason was nearly gone, his speech was very weak; but with the mediation of Donna Olimpia, who answered for him, ministers, cardinals, and ambassadors were still introduced to his room—where consistories were also held. The most important business was transacted there; and every day the antechambers were besieged by people hastening to bring precious gifts and immense sums of money, in order to obtain from Donna Olimpia, abbeys, benefices, and favours of all sorts, before the Pope died. During these days she received enormous sums; but what most astonishes one is that she took such tremendous precautions to prevent any one else but herself from profiting by the last days of life of the dying man.

Generally at the time when she went to her palace in the Piazza Navona—for fear that the sleep of the Pope should not last all the time of her absence—she shut and locked the door of the sick room and took away the key! Her attention had become so necessary to the Pope, and she had so well accustomed him to be waited on by no one but herself, that Innocent himself, instead of being astonished at this extreme

precaution, ordered Donna Olimpia to take the key, "so that no strange hand shall hurt me."

But this state of affairs could not last. One morning the doctor Parisio declared to the Princess de San Martino that it was necessary to think of the salvation of the Pope's soul. This time it was Donna Olimpia who tried to prolong the number of days by throwing an amount of uncertainty on the diagnosis of the doctor. But Parisio was as firm in his decision now as he had been prudent and uncertain the first time he had been questioned. The doctor had fulfilled his promise to Olimpia in warning her of the first danger. But without losing an instant, he went to carry the news to the officers of Innocent, and told them that the life of the Pontiff was in danger. Parisio then returned to the sick-room, when he found Donna Olimpia pale and changed, holding the hand of her brother-in-law. Either she had told him of his condition, or the Pope had guessed it in seeing her sorrow, and he appeared to have regained calm and presence of mind.

"The time has come," he said, "the will of God be done!" Parisio kneeled at the bedside and told the Pope that it was now time for His Holiness to think of the duties of a Christian in passing to a better life.

Innocent tried to join his hands; he lowered his eyes and murmured a prayer—as long as it lasted Donna Olimpia and Parisio fixed their eyes upon him, uncertain how the news would affect the old man. Innocent was firm, resigned, and grand, now that he

felt himself near eternity. He thanked Donna Olimpia with dignity for her care of him. In the words he addressed to her, it was easy to see that his mind, already wending to the other world, judged quite differently of what passes in this. The veil of illusions had fallen suddenly, and he found that the severe judgments that had been spoken against him were just. "My sister," he said, "unite your prayers with those of others who pray to God for us, for we are great sinners."

In using the collective form he made a great impression on Donna Olimpia. She understood that for the first time he saw her now as he had never seen her before. All illusions had been destroyed.

On the following day the Cardinals were called by the Pope, who asked for extreme unction, and the report of the death of the Pontiff was spread throughout Rome. But by one of those sudden changes of health of which he had given so many examples, the Pope found himself much better. A wound on his leg opened, and he regained sufficient strength for a day to deceive every one except his doctor.

Cardinal Azzolini, always lying in wait to know what was happening at the Pope's palace, did not fail to inform Donna Olimpia of this unhoped-for event. Very naturally, Donna Olimpia made up her mind to go to see the Pope. She arrived at the Quirinal without being recognised. All the apartments were empty, no servant was at his post, and the antechambers, so often filled with courtiers and people begging favours, were deserted. This was towards

the end of December; but nothing had been done to warm the rooms; and in the room adjoining the Pontiff's apartment she found poor Pablo shivering with cold.

At the sight of the Princess, the old Spaniard, accustomed so long to obey her, rose, and was just going to open the door of the room for her. But suddenly he remembered his new duties, and he told her in reverential and humble terms that she could go no farther. Although the explanations which followed were held in whispers, they were heard in the death-chamber, and soon the door of the Pope's room opened, and Paul Oliva came out. With a noble but severe look, stretching out his hand towards the door by which she had entered, and in a manner gently pushing her, he said, when they had arrived at the second room, "Madonna, what brings you here?"

"The very natural desire, father," said Donna Olimpia, frightened perhaps for the first time in her life, "to see my relation."

"Your feelings mislead you, Princess," answered the Jesuit with cold politeness. "His Holiness no longer belongs to the world. He performed yesterday the last religious action which detaches him from the world for ever. I am charged to keep his soul clean from all worldly stain which might soil his purity."

Innocent's confessor did not allow Donna Olimpia to respond, but gently indicating the second and third doors through which she passed, he led her to the staircase, where, after having saluted her, telling

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her not to come again to the Quirinal, he followed her with his eye until she left the palace. Meanwhile the truth had spread in Rome—whatever changes had taken place in the Pope's health only a few days remained to him. During the last week no cardinal or bishop went to the Quirinal. The upper servants had abandoned him, and only the lower servants remained, who robbed him of everything they could appropriate. Pablo sought in vain for clean sheets to make his master's bed, and there were not enough coverings to keep out the cold. It was in this state of deprivation, forsaken by all the world, that the Head of the Roman Church died, one of the principal Sovereigns of Europe.

"It had pleased God Almighty," writes an ecclesiastical author, "to deliver the Church, to console the pious priests and suffering Christendom, by calling Innocent X before his Supreme Tribunal."

The Pontiff died on January 7, 1655. And quickly, in the silence of the night, his relatives transferred all treasures and valuables from the Pontifical apartments into their own residence. Donna Olimpia, too, left the Quirinal and retired to her palace.

After the ceremony of absolution, at which all the Sacred College assisted, it was only for the sake of a mere formality that the chancellor, accompanied by some Cardinals, repaired again to the Quirinal and took from the finger of the corpse the ring which served as seal. When this sign of authority was broken, the reign of Innocent X ended, and all the inhabitants of Rome occupied their thoughts only with

the future occupant of the chair of St. Peter. The news of the death of the Pontiff was received in Rome with evident satisfaction. It had become a habit of the Romans to celebrate the demise of a Pope as they celebrated his exaltation.

The funeral of the Pope was a miserable one: the relations, and even Donna Olimpia, refused to pay the expenses. And a poor canon, whom the favourite had once disgraced, had the magnanimity to take everything upon himself. As for Donna Olimpia, she was now tormented with one thought, the election of the successor of her brother-in-law. She trembled at the prospect of seeing one of her many enemies ascending the throne of St. Peter. Innocent's successor—unanimously elected—was Cardinal Chigi, who took the name of Alexander VII.

For Alexander VII, as for Donna Olimpia, the question was reduced to this: Would the sister-in-law of Innocent X be admitted to the new Court or not?

Alexander was a singular man, but his peculiarity had not been perceived up to this time. The day of his election, when he was carried to St. Peter's for the ceremony of *Adoration*, he was in tears, and they were unable to make him be seated, on the middle of the altar, so that, according to custom, they might kiss his feet. Timid and ashamed, he kept so much on one side that many times he nearly fell off. In a few words he swore to be just and not to surround himself with his family; and one of his first acts was to place his coffin beside his bed, so that he should never lose the thought of death.

By an extraordinary contradiction he showed at the same time his taste for luxury. His apartments were furnished with elegance. For his Pontifical vestments he chose the finest materials, and only employed the most skilful workers. This mixture of sumptuousness and austerity served him well with the Roman people, who flattered themselves that they had a Pope according to their taste, since he accorded them strict justice and gave them fine ceremonies. At the moment when Donna Olimpia entered the Quirinal Alexander was engaged in trying on a pair of red shoes, decorated with a golden cross, which Lazzaqua, the first shoemaker, had just brought.

"Lazzaqua," said the Pope to him, "these shoes are badly cut and badly sewn, and besides that, you have been too careful with the gold in embroidering the crosses."

"Holy Father, as to the gold crosses I observe humbly that I have embroidered them exactly as commanded by your predecessor: the gold is not pure."

"That is wrong, Lazzaqua," said the Pope, "all that touches the servant of the servants of God must be pure; and if custom were not contrary I would have these crosses in diamonds, because the diamond is purer than gold. Do you hear, Lazzaqua?"

"Yes, Holy Father."

Then Alexander placed his foot upon his coffin to show the faults in the shoe. "In the same way, he who works at the vestments of the successor of St. Peter must neglect nothing to make them perfect. See, the stitching is slack. The cut is not sufficiently

sloping, and the foot is not well-supported: you must begin again, Lazzaqua."

"As it pleases His Holiness, but——"

"Well, what?"

"The Holy Father will allow his chamberlain to arrange with me——"

"On the price, no doubt? How much do you get for these shoes?"

"Ten Roman crowns, Holy Father."

"You will get fifty if they are such as I wish."

This conversation finished when Cardinal Rospigliosi, Secretary of State since the accession of Alexander, came in with an anxious look and addressed some words in the ear of the Pope to warn him that Donna Olimpia was in the antechamber, proposing to offer gifts to His Holiness, and expecting the favour to make her reverence to him.

Without showing emotion, Alexander told Lazzaqua to put his shoes on, and begged Rospigliosi to send for the master of ceremonies.

"Let the officer who accompanies the Princess de San Martino come in," he said to him. And as Lazzaqua, out of respect, was leaving the room: "Stay," said the Pope, "I have still something to say to you."

The officer of Donna Olimpia was introduced, followed by two pages, each carrying a gold vase destined for His Holiness. The messenger carried out his commission in offering the gifts from his mistress, who asked permission to kiss the feet of His Holiness.

"Tell the Princess," said Alexander, in a firm voice, but very calmly, "that I do not accept her presents, that in my reign a woman shall not obtain audience except for the most important business. Go"; and as the officer and the pages hesitated, "Go out!" added he, with a slight movement of impatience.

Lazzaqua had the same feeling of hatred for Donna Olimpia that all the Romans had, so he felt extreme satisfaction, which he could scarcely contain, in hearing the new Pope refuse the proud Princess admittance. Joy and enthusiasm were painted on his face when Alexander called him to him.

"I wanted, dear Lazzaqua," said the Pope, who pretended that he had not seen the tears of admiration in the eyes of the workman, "I wanted to beg you to serve us promptly. The ceremonies of St. John Lateran take place in a few days, so I count on your diligence." Lazzaqua was silent: he had been so much astonished by what he had seen and heard. He threw himself on his knees, and without daring to touch Alexander's foot, he kissed the ground at some distance, received the Papal benediction and retired.

As no doubt the Pontiff had foreseen, the testimony of Lazzaqua, present at the refusal of Donna Olimpia, was not without fruit. Lazzaqua had nothing more important to do than to tell the details of it to his neighbours. And in less than an hour the whole city knew of the boldness of Donna Olimpia and of the severity the Pope had shown her.

"There is a Pope," said one; "who will get rid of this leech."

"He will not show favour to his own relations," said another.

"He swore that at his coronation," said a third. "He has done still better," said an abbot who listened, "he has not allowed them to come to Rome. His elder brother, Mario, came from Siena the day after his election, and was sent back by the express order of the new Pope. All his nephews—he has six—are also in Siena. Oh, this time we have a great Pope!"

At these reports the praise of Alexander went increasing; but what most astonished the people was the humility of the Pope, who only wished for a coffin for himself, and who proposed to make the public ceremonies so brilliant. Lazzaqua became an authority: everybody went to his shop, and in Rome one only talked about the coffin and the fine shoes, and the shameful retreat of Donna Olimpia.

Up to this moment the excitement caused by the virtues of the new Pope filled all minds, and the thoughts of vengeance against Donna Olimpia were lulled. But when the news of the Pope's refusal had been passed from mouth to mouth, with the usual exaggerations, a concert of voices rose, demanding justice for the crimes committed by her. Alexander himself, who had only wished to show signs of severity, was afraid at the violence of the accusations brought against her. He was divided by the wish to appear just to the people, and the desire to be propitious to the family of Donna Olimpia—a condition which had been imposed upon him in the Conclave

by the Barberini. He recognised the difficulty and felt that great prudence was necessary.

As for Donna Olimpia, astounded by the manner in which she had been forbidden the Pontifical palace, she kept her bed since the shock caused by the humiliation. The only member of her family from whom she would accept any attention was her son Don Camillo. Sometimes she tolerated the presence of her sons-in-law, but would not allow the Princess de Rossano to come near her. She attributed in her anger and spite the treatment she had received to the Princess, imagining to herself that the Princess had already usurped an ascendancy over the new Pope. Donna Olimpia was ready to die of jealousy.

"This woman will be the cause of my death!" she said to Antonio Barberini and Azzolini, the two persons with whom she was most communicative since her disgrace. "Help me to get rid of her; she only injures me; without her the Pope would have listened to me." And she wept and turned on her bed. In vain the two Cardinals remonstrated with her, and tried to show her the improbability of her suppositions.

"The severity which the Holy Father has shown you, Madonna, is in no manner peculiar to you. His Holiness declared," said Azzolini, "before you presented yourself at the Court, that he would receive no one of your sex."

"Why, then, does he receive the Princess de Rossano and her son?" said Donna Olimpia, sitting up angrily and falling back suffocating with fury.

Donna Olimpia left Rome for Viterbo. But the Roman populace was clamouring for justice, and a process was intended with a view to forcing the Princess to make restitution and return to the Church the wealth she had accumulated. But suddenly the plague broke out and sent a thrill of horror into the hearts of the Romans.

Public calamities and the plague are most powerful distractions in turning aside the ordinary course of human passions. In spite of the desperation with which the charges had been levelled against Donna Olimpia by her victims, these accusers were shocked by the terrible scourge which, coming from Sardinia through Naples, burst upon Rome. All hatred was forgotten. The tribunals were closed. This alone would have been enough to prevent the affairs of Donna Olimpia receiving consideration, but the dreadful plague, which every one feared so much, and the riots which made the danger so much greater, caused people to stifle revenge and to busy themselves with plans of saving their lives. But while human justice was dormant the justice of God was awake. From Rome the plague penetrated into Viterbo, and knocked at the door of the palace of Donna Olimpia. She asked the Pope's permission to flee to San Martino. Her request was granted, but her escape did not save her. The plague had marked her as a victim, and she died in her retreat. Her death gave rise to satirical verses, *pasquinades*, one of which satires described a scene at the gates of Purgatory. Innocent was in vain demanding admittance: he was refused,

as he was unable to pay his entrance-fee, having been deprived of all his possessions by his sister-in-law, whilst the latter triumphantly penetrated into Purgatorio.

Her son, helped by two confidential persons, accomplished the painful duty of transferring the corpse from San Martino to Rome, with prudence and courage. But at the moment when the body of Donna Olimpia was raised to be placed on the stretchers, her head, borne down by its own weight, fell to one side, and four large diamonds escaped from her mouth. She had probably placed them there to avoid being robbed of them by strangers after her death. The Prince, who knew the stones to be worth about one thousand dollars, placed them in a vessel. It was a strange sight these diamonds escaping from this shapeless body, and it really seemed as if Donna Olimpia, who had spent all her life in gathering together riches, gave up the ghost only at that moment. She died as she had lived, selfish and avaricious, hated by everybody. Unlike other courtesans of the Church, she only thought of herself, never of the independence of her country, or even of the prestige of Papacy. Don Camillo and the Princess de Rossano knew how to profit by her decease, with skill and prudence. The Prince had had the opportunity of showing his fine qualities during the plague, and he was no longer the same man.

Relying on his own strength, and knowing his own worth, his affection for his wife revived, and the Princess became proud of her husband, who had

regained his position. They lived together in the palace in the Piazza Navona and employed a great number of workmen to finish the Church of St. Agnes, and distributed alms in the different parishes of Rome. The young Don Giovanni was united with them in these brilliant and benevolent actions, and nearly every day the Princess and her son received the thanks and acclamations of the crowd. The Princess, by her most exquisite politeness and behaviour, attracted to her palace the highest Roman families and the cleverest men of the Court. Since the plague she did not ask to be received by the Pope in audience, knowing that all favours could be asked for her by her husband, who had become one of the Pope's regular advisers.

But the arrival at the Court of the Pontiff's brother and nephew is the important point. Alexander VII knew it would be ridiculous henceforth to follow up the lawsuit of Donna Olimpia, and the Pamphili and Barberini families, suddenly reassured by the weakness of the Pope for his own family, knew that they could peaceably enjoy the inheritance of their uncles Urban VII and Innocent X. At first one objected, then another talked, but the will of Donna Olimpia was accomplished. Her family remained in possession of enormous wealth unjustly acquired.

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Duckworth's Diamonds. E. EVERETT-GREEN

Author of "Clive Lorimer's Marriage," "The Lady of the Bungalow," etc.

Duckworth has entrusted a haul of diamonds to his friend, Dermot Fitzgerald, who brings them to England to await instructions. He is aware that he is shadowed by one, Pike, and gets Hilton, a friend of his, to come over to Ireland and advise him. Hilton advises him to bring the treasure and hide it in his own caves of Treversal. This they do, though not without adventure. In a little village, close to Treversal, stands a small cottage to which Barbara Quentin has retired on the death of her millionaire father, whose assets appear to be nil, and whose child is unprovided for. She lives in the cottage with a friend, making acquaintance with Hilton and Dermot. Later on, Phyllis Duckworth is drawn into the web of fate, and comes also to the cottage. Letters come ostensibly from Duckworth, demanding the surrender of the treasure to his sister; but Phyllis deems these forgeries, and Dermot holds on. In the end and in the nick of time, Duckworth himself turns up; there is a raid upon the caves of Treversal, but the villains are caught and arrested, and various pairs of lovers are made happy.

A Passion in Morocco.

CHARLOTTE CAMERON

Author of "A Woman's Winter in South America."

The story opens on board a P. & O. steamer when it is ploughing its way steadily towards the Moroccan coast. A beautiful English girl, duly chaperoned, makes the acquaintance of a handsome Moorish prince who is returning to his native land after passing through the curriculum at Oxford, with the varied problems of East and West seeking solution in his mind. The presence of the girl presses one of these questions irresistibly to the forefront of his consideration. At Mazagan the ladies are invited by an officers' guide to visit the harem of the Kaid, where the beautiful English girl, separated from the party, is trapped by the wily owner, from whose hands she is duly rescued, at the eleventh hour, by Mohammed el Yumar, the Moorish Prince. Many adventures follow—amid strange scenes are enacted against a background of vivid Oriental colour, and in the end East and West effect a union, finding that "love levels all."

The Lotus Lantern.

MARY IMLAY TAYLOR

Author of "The Reaping," "The Impersonator," "My Lady Clancarty," etc.

A love story of great charm and dramatic power, whose scene is laid in Japan of to-day. Lieut. John Holland, a military attaché of the British Embassy, and betrothed to the daughter of the British Ambassador, while witnessing the Buddhist festival of lanterns, symbolizing ships of the souls of the dead, meets Umé-San, who had been sold by her relatives and had become a Geisha girl in a Tokyo tea garden. A plot has been formed to place her in the power of an unscrupulous and cruel Japanese prince. Holland's sympathy is first enlisted, and finally he falls passionately in love with the little Japanese girl, pure, sweet, and devout, notwithstanding her surroundings. The story moves with dramatic force, is filled with interest from the opening chapter to the end, and Umé (flower of the plum) is one of the tenderest and dearest heroines of fiction.

Damosel Croft.

R. MURRAY GILCHRIST

Author of "The Courtesy Dame," "The Two Goodwins," "The Firstborn," etc.

The heroine of this book is the last of a wealthy yeoman family in the High Peak Country; the hero is a young man from Yorkshire, of equal social standing but comparatively insignificent means. Janey Maskrey is beloved by three; her choice falls at last upon the most fitting suitor, with whom, without being aware of the fact, she has been in love for some considerable time. An author of distinguished reputation—akin to the Maskreys—presents with his curious entourage a remarkable contrast. Several old-world country-scenes, notably the Carrying of the Garland at Castleton, are presented with a wealth of colour. The book is full of sunlight, of happiness and of country mirth.

The Doll: A Happy Story. VIOLET HUNT

Author of "White Rose of Weary Leaf," "The Wife of Altamonnt."

This is a story of a woman who, having been divorced once, and having lost control of her child, invents a stratagem by which, upon her re-marriage, she thinks she will be protected from a second loss of her child should she again be divorced. How the stratagem fails and how the first child that she had lost comes into her life again, and how in the end, though her stratagem has failed, she is successful all along the line owing to the employment of purely feminine weapons, it is the purpose of this novel to show.

A Prisoner in Paradise. H. L. VAHEY

The scenes of this story are enacted in the Malay Islands and Singapore. A British agent, after years of residence on the South Sea Islands, pines for civilization, and decides to quit. The appearance of a beautiful half-caste reconciles him to remaining. Complications with the natives arise, and flight becomes the only safety of the lovers. They fly by different routes, and the man arrives at Singapore, where the vessel carrying the woman is reported lost with all hands. The tie that bound him to the Malays thus broken, he seeks the solaces of civilisation by marrying a widow. Disillusioned, after two months he quarrels with the widow, and ships back to barbarism. Unexpectedly, he finds the Malay wife returned and awaiting him, and considers himself absolved from his recent unsuccessful marriage. The book is said to possess something of the glitter and colour of Conrad's tropical tales.

When Satan took Flesh. A. J. ANDERSON

Author of "The Romance of Fra Filippo Lippi," etc.

In this story Satan takes flesh that he may plot a second Fall. By means of Clairvoyance he bargains for possession of a young man's body, and discovers in the doctrine of the limitation of the family a new and powerful temptation by which to wreck the human race. Mr. Anderson writes with sincerity of purpose and has a thorough knowledge of his subject, and his story is worthy of the careful attention of every thoughtful mind.

The Children of Alsace. RENÉ BAZIN

Author of "The Nun," "Redemption," etc,

A story of Alsace full of this famous Author's penetrative charm. It is of Alsace conquered, of those who remain loyal to France and those who compromise with the victors. Obeile is the name of a prominent Alsatian family, the head of which goes over to the winning side. Love complications arise among the younger members of the family, such as occurred in English History in the time of the Cavaliers and Roundheads. The atmosphere of Alsace under the new government is skilfully reproduced, and the conflict of racial feeling engendered admirably portrayed. The story is full of interest and excitement, and has the added charm of historical accuracy.

Between Two Stools. RHODA BROUGHTON

Author of "Red as a Rose is She," "Cometh up as a Flower," etc.

This story deals with the situation of a man and woman—he single, she married, who have had a liaison of ten years' duration, while the woman's husband has been lying hopelessly crippled by an accident which happened before the opening of the narrative. The interest lies in the effect upon their characters, and in the emotions of hope, fear and remorse which agitate them. The situation is complicated by the apprehensions aroused by suspicion that the heroine's half-grown daughter divines something of the truth. The introduction of an unmarried girl to the hero entangles the knot still further—a knot which is untied only on the last page.

Camilla Forgetting Herself. H. L. VAHEY

Author of "A Prisoner in Paradise."

Novels which 'lift one out of oneself,' which are not gloomy or sordid, and are not concerned with matrimonial failures, 'problems,' and the seamy side of marital life, are none too common; so that the refreshing and stimulating story of 'the incurably romantic' Camilla and her lover-husband will be hailed with delight by those who have not come to look upon marriage as a 'doubtful adventure characterized by the total surrender of freedom.' It is a humorous, 'lovey' and wholesome story, without a 'sugary flavour.' From the first page to the last line—in which Camilla tells her husband 'a great secret'—there is a spirit of Joy and Happiness pervading the book. To those of us who are still sufficiently old-fashioned to have matrimonial ideals, and a genuine belief in the existence of enduring, all-conquering love, Camilla will make a strong appeal. Though written in a light, bantering vein, the story contains an idea—a great idea, it may be—which is nothing more or less than a plea for *real* marriages; made in Heaven or otherwise, but founded, not upon legal forms, conventions and sacrifices, but upon a union of hearts. To those who found the psychology of Mr. Vahey's last book, 'A Prisoner in Paradise' (Stanley Paul) too strong, the present volume will come as a pleasant surprise.

The Bride of Love. KATE HORN

Author of "Edward and I and Mrs. Honeybun," "Mulberries of Daphne," "The White Owl," "Lovelocks of Diana," "Ships of Desire," etc.

A love romance full of the charm which won for "Edward and I and Mrs. Honeybun" so many admirers. Psyche is a delightful heroine, whose face is her fortune. The story tells how Psyche and her little sister, Pomander, under trying circumstances battle their way to success, and will interest all who know what it is to cherish ideals which lie outside the sphere of their environment, and who ultimately win their own reward.

The Marriage of Lenore.

ALICE M. DIEHL

Author of "A Mysterious Lover," etc.

Lenore has married more than once, and thereby hang numerous complications. Her first husband is an elderly roue, and the second, who is present at her first marriage, restores to her the bouquet which she drops, and in this act and its recognition eyes and souls meet. There is a rumour that the first husband was a bigamist. Thereupon Lenore marries her second, only to find that her first husband's *mésalliance* was no marriage and that she herself has committed bigamy. The old husband dies, and so matters are set right. The story flows on through troubles and distractions, raptures and pains, to its happy ending.

God Disposes.

PELLEW HAWKER

A novel of quick changes, rapid movements, and striking dramatic situations, which opens with the description of a dead man sitting at his library table, his hand resting on his cheque book. The surreptitious visitor who makes the discovery secures the cheque book, forges the dead man's signature, and succeeds in cashing a cheque for a large amount. On the strength of the money he poses as a rich man, pushes himself into country society, and wins the heart of Lady Angela Dawson, who is affianced to Viscount Woolmer, the son and heir of Lord Bletchford, and the elder brother of the dead man. Later he claims to be the heir to the property, but in due course is discovered and exposed. The characterisation is good, the narrative interesting and the *dénouement* all that can be desired.

The Watch Night.

HENRY BETT

A story of adventure in the exciting years of 1741-1746. The hero, when a young man in London, comes under the influence of Whitefield and Wesley, and joins the Methodists. Later he becomes involved in Jacobite plots in Lincolnshire and Northumberland, and falls in love with a lady who is acting as one of the Pretender's agents in England. The Jacobites suspect that he is a spy upon them, and he is kidnapped and carried to Holland. There his life is attempted, and he learns that the English Government has offered a reward for his apprehension. Since he cannot return, he journeys to the borders of Bohemia to visit Herrhut, the headquarters of the Moravian Brethren. Here he finds himself in the midst of the second Silesian war. He sees Frederick the Great, and meets the heroine once more unexpectedly at Dresden. It would be unfair to unravel the complex plot with all its surprises, it will suffice to say that while this is a lively narrative of love, intrigue, and adventure which hurries the reader on from page to page, it is also a serious attempt, the first in English fiction, to give a faithful picture of the life of the Eighteenth Century Moravians and Methodists. There are vivid glimpses of many famous men, especially John Wesley.

A Woman with a Purpose. ANNA CHAPIN RAY

With coloured frontispiece by Frank Snapp.

In characterization, in dramatic force, and in artistic treatment this is the best story Miss Ray has yet written. It deals with the married life of a strong, successful, self-willed man of affairs to a girl who has tried to support herself by her pen, and in failing has retained her high ideals and her respect for her own opinions. The story is so full of the life of to-day that it stirs our emotions while it delights us with its absorbing plot. People of rare quality and reality are portrayed, vital problems are inspiringly handled, and a love story of power and originality is developed to its logical conclusion.

Love's Old Sweet Song. CLIFTON BINGHAM

Mr. Clifton Bingham, who, thirty years ago, wrote the words of the famous song bearing this title, which is known and sung all the world over, has in this new novel—the first he has written—woven his sympathetic verses into a most interesting and human story, both dramatic and pathetic. Though containing only five characters (excepting the dog) it touches lightly and tenderly the chords of human life in a manner that will appeal, as in Molloy's song, to every heart. It is a book that will be appreciated by everyone who has heard or sung "Just a Song at Twilight, when the Lights are Low," and should make an appropriate gift book to lovers of music.

The Activities of Lavie Jutt. MARGUERITE and ARMIGER BARCLAY. Author of "The Kingmakers," "The Worsleys," etc.

Lavie, the heiress of a millionaire, is taken into society—for a handsome consideration. She is resourceful as well as charming, and when she falls in love with the impecunious Lord Loamington, who keeps a hat shop, she is able to tender very valuable advice. But Lavie is not satisfied with talking; she is full of activity and inventiveness, and she "makes things hum." This story of her many activities is bright and out of the common.

Opal of October. JOY SHIRLEY

For those born in the month of October, the opal is said to be a lucky stone, and this novel is based upon the assumption that it is so. It is a story of the times of the soothsayers and the witches, when people were all more or less trying to discover the philosopher's stone which turns everything to gold. The witch in this case is a young girl of great beauty, who narrowly escapes the stake.

The Mystery of Red Marsh Farm. ARCHIBALD H. MARSHALL. Author of "The Squire's Daughter," "Exton Manor." etc.

This novel deals with the mysterious disappearance of a child, who is heir to a property consisting of an old Manor House and a large marshland farm, which has been in the family for generations. Many people are concerned in the mystery, and suspicion falls first on one, then on the other, but the police fail to clear it up. The mystery is solved by a young squire who is in love with the sister of the missing child, but not until he has travelled half round the world in search of the solution.

Two Worlds: A Romance. LIEUT.-COL. ANDREW C. P. HAGGARD. Author of "The France of Joan of Arc," etc.

Colonel Andrew Haggard, so well known for his clever and amusing histories of French Court Life, is no less known as a novelist of distinction. In this story he introduces the reader to life in Vancouver Island, the scene opening in that gem of the Pacific, the beautiful city of Victoria. The heroine is a lovely young unbeliever, whose naturally generous and ardent temperament has become warped by the perusal of atheistic literature. The hero is a manly young Englishman, himself an agnostic but a seeker after the truth. They have some weird adventures in the realm of the occult. Then the scene changes to Europe, where we meet with a generous-minded and somewhat eccentric peer given to Christian Science, who has a great effect upon the subsequent development of the plot, and the many exciting incidents by land, sea and aeroplane with which this unusual romance is filled.

The Three Anarchists. MAUD STEPNEY RAWSON Author of "A Lady of the Regency," "The Stairway of Honour," "The Enchanted Garden," "The Easy-Go-Luckies," etc.

The Three, who dominate alike the romance of the world and the plot of this new story from the pen of the author of "The Enchanted Garden," are Love, Death, and Birth, and the title is based on a phrase in Mr. C. F. G. Masterman's fine volume of essays, "The Peril of Change." The puissance of this triumvirate is unfolded in the story of a simple woman, born nameless, and of no position, whose life, at first uneventful, is suddenly engulfed by social eminence, sensation, temptation and a dangerous love. The Three come to her aid in each crisis, and each leaves her stronger and more competent to hold the heritage of peace and happiness which eventually becomes hers.

Maids in Many Moods. H. LOUISA BEDFORD Author of "His Will and her Way."

This novel shows the feminine temperament and the feminine temper in its various and discordant phases, but it is a novel of incident rather than of psychological analysis, and will appeal to all who like a genuine unsophisticated love story.

The Second Woman. NORMA LORIMER

Author of "Josiah's Wife," "Mirry-Ann," "On Etna," and "The Pagan Woman," etc.

Tells of a woman married to a man younger than herself (not so much in years as in temperament), haunted by the fear of his awakening one day to the fact that his love for her has never been what he thought it was, but has only been affection. The plot is worked out on original lines, and the book is full of novel situations, unexpected complications and pungent dialogue.

Veeni the Master. R. FIFIELD LAMPORT

Readers and admirers of Marie Corelli's romances of the supernatural will find congenial excitement in following the fortunes of "Veeni the Master" in Mr. Lamport's romance of two worlds—the world Earth and the world Zan. The story of the dissolution of the world Earth is full of human interest, and that of the reincarnation in the world Zan is fired with real imaginative power. The book is full of surprises, in which love interest and passion play a prominent part. It should cause somewhat of a sensation.

Their Wedded Wife. ALICE M. DIEHL

Author of "The Marriage of Lenore," "A Mysterious Lover," etc.

This is the story of a tragic misunderstanding and its consequences. Nora le Geyt is happily married to Paul Wentworth, who adores her with a jealous adoration. Believing a slander against her, he leaves her. Years pass; Nora, believing him dead, marries again; then she discovers that Wentworth is still alive; she loves him still. With the skill of a deft artist Mrs. Diehl brings the story to a close on a note of happiness that will please the large and growing circle of her admirers.

Swelling of Jordan. CORALIE STANTON AND HEATH HOSKEN. Author of "Plumage," "The Muzzled Ox," etc.

Canon Oriel, an earnest worker in the East End, loved and respected, had, years before the story commences, while climbing with his friend Digby Cavan in Switzerland, found in the pocket of his friend's coat, which he had accidentally put on instead of his own, evidence that his friend had robbed his, the canon's, brother and been the cause of his committing suicide. Oriel in a struggle which took place between the two men hurled his friend from the precipice. Now the glacier gives up Cavan's rucksack, and any day it may yield up his body. To reveal subsequent developments would spoil the reader's enjoyment of a thrilling plot.

The Red Fleur De Lys. MAY WYNNE

Author of "Henri of Navarre," "Honour's Fetters," etc.

A thrilling story of the French Revolution presenting a little-known phase of that great social upheaval. It telis of the nobles of the White Terror who rose to avenge the atrocities of the Reds, banding themselves together, and wearing as their badge a Red Fleur De Lys.

The City of Enticement.

DOROTHEA GERARD

Author of "The Grass Widow," "The Blood Tax," etc.

Mr. Spiteful visits Vienna with much the same results that follow the fly that visits a fly-paper—he sticks there till he dies. Two English sisters, his cousins, follow him in search of his fortune, and find the fly-paper just as attractive. An art-loving cousin despatched to fetch them home sticks fast also, as does a schoolboy who despatches himself, and others who follow with the same view. They are all held fast by the City of Enticement, which has a separate appeal for each of their foibles. An extremely entertaining novel.

Love in Armour.

PHILIP L. STEVENSON

Author of "The Rose of Dauphiny," "A Gallant of Gascony," etc.

Major Stevenson's new historical romance, long announced, and eagerly awaited by many readers who enjoyed "The Rose of Dauphiny," is at length in the printer's hands. It is a long novel, dealing with love, intrigue and adventure, and the abortive conspiracy of Mardi Gras, just before the death of Charles IX. of France.

Major Stevenson writes historical romances with a vigour, verve and enthusiasm which have led several critics to compare him with Dumas. *The Times* critic, writing of his last novel, "The Rose of Dauphiny," said: "Mr. Stevenson is winning an honourable place among the school of Mr. Stanley Weyman."

Madge Carrington and her Welsh Neighbours.

"DRAIG GLAS." Author of "The Perfidious Welshman." 9th Edit.

In this story of Welsh village life "Draig Glas" employs his gift of satire in depicting various types of Welsh character, and gives incisive portraits of Welsh men and women, and graphic pictures of Welsh scenery. No visitor to the principality should fail to procure a copy of this novel. Tourists especially will find much interest in endeavouring to trace the original of the Welsh village, and its vicinage, which "Draig Glas" delineates in his volume.

Our Guests.

ST. JOHN TREVOR

Author of "Angela."

The guests referred to are the paying guests of two impecunious young gentlemen who, finding themselves in possession of a dilapidated ancestral mansion, conceive the brilliant idea of running the place as a hydropathic establishment. The idiosyncracies of the guests, and the adventures of the two bachelor proprietors with love-lorn housekeepers, refractory charwomen, and a penniless nobleman, who is hired as a "decoy," provide Mr. Trevor with excellent material for a delightfully diverting story.

The Retrospect. ADA CAMBRIDGE

Author of "Thirty Years in Australia," "A Little Minx," etc.

The many admirers of Ada Cambridge—the old generation and the new—will appreciate this homely volume of reminiscences, which exhales a quiet charm. It is an intimate, confidential narrative, setting forth recollections, comparisons of past times with the present, accounts of homes and friends and relations. It takes one into the Seventies, and Sixties, and Fifties, and recreates the England of those times.

The Three Envelopes. HAMILTON DRUMMOND

Author of "Shoes of Gold," "The Justice of the King," etc.

In this story Mr. Hamilton Drummond breaks fresh ground—there is the thrill of the weird and supernatural. It tells of one, Corley, who, weary of a humdrum existence, makes the acquaintance of a strange society—"The Society for Promoting Queer Results." He is given three envelopes, each of which sends him forth on some lone, weird mission—in one instance he is sent to a small German town, Solzeim, where he has a remarkable experience connected with a very ancient house. This is but the beginning of adventures. How Corley goes to the Devil's Mill, where he is involved in a weird love tragedy, in which the old Mill plays a part, and how he meets Mary Courteleigh, whom he ultimately marries, we must leave the story to unfold.

The New Wood Nymph. DOROTHEA BUSSELL

In this work the author sets forth something of the dangers and problems which confront a girl whose senses and intellect are both keenly awake. To her the beauty of the forest speaks insistently, and with it she comes to identify her life. She meets with adventures and love interests, and goes to London, but the forest is always with her, and when the climax comes she finds the answer to perplexities therein.

A Modern Ahab. THEODORA WILSON WILSON

Author of "Bess of Hardendale," "Moll o' the Toll-Bar," etc.

Readers of Miss Wilson's former novels will need no urging to make their acquaintance of a new work from her pen. "A Modern Ahab" deals with modern life in a Westmorland dale, and is a tale of keen local dispute, love, passion, hate and humour.

A Star of the East: A Story of Delhi. CHARLES E. PEARCE. Author of "Love Besieged," "Red Revenge," etc.

"East is East and West is West, and never the twain shall meet." This is the theme of Mr. Pearce's new novel of life in India. The scene is laid in Delhi, the city of all others where for the past hundred years the traditions of ancient dynasties and the barbaric splendours of the past have been slowly retreating before the ever-advancing influence of the West. The conflict of passions between Nara, the dancing girl, in whose veins runs the blood of Shah Jehan, the most famous of the kings of Delhi, and Clare Stanhope, born and bred in English conventionality, never so pronounced as in the Fifties, is typical of the differences between the East and the West. The rivalry of love threads its way through a series of exciting incidents, culminating in the massacre and the memorable siege of Delhi. "Nara" completes the trilogy of Mr. Pearce's novels of the Indian Mutiny, of which "Love Besieged" and "Red Revenge" were the first and second.

The Celebrity's Daughter. VIOLET HUNT

Author of "The Doll," "White Rose of Weary Leaf," etc.

Life-like portraits, a tangled plot, only fully unravelled in the last chapter, go to the making of Miss Violet Hunt's stories. "The Celebrity's Daughter" has the humour, smart dialogue, the tingling life of this clever writer's earlier novels. It is the autobiography of the daughter of a celebrity who has fallen on evil days.

The Promoter's Pilgrimage. C. REGINALD

ENOCK, F.R.G.S. Author of "The Andes and the Amazon," "Peru," "Mexico," etc.

This is a thrilling tale of London and Mexico. A young prospector discovers a site rich in mineral wealth in South America, and obtains from the Government a concession with a time limit. He puts the matter before a syndicate in England, who, believing in the value of the speculation, delay coming to terms with the prospector in the hope that he may be unable to keep his engagements until the expiration of the time limit, and two of the directors ship for South America to be on the spot and secure the property when the prospector fails. The prospector hears of their departure and follows them by the next boat, and the story of his chase across the world is told with much spirit and vivacity. There are some brilliant passages of local colour, and the description of the cave of repentance is worthy of Edgar Allen Poe.

Red Revenge. CHARLES E. PEARCE

Author of "Love Besieged," "The Bungalow under the Lake," "The Amazing Duchess," "The Beloved Princess," etc.

Another of Mr. Pearce's absorbing Indian romances.

"The story is a stirring one, full of emotion, and the course of events it depicts, the various personages that figure in it, with their actions and their surroundings, are all vigorously drawn to the life by a master hand."—*Academy.*

"Mr. Pearce gives a vividness and reality to the whole story which makes it of breathless interest."—*Morning Post.*

"The most jaded fiction reader will find much in it to stir his blood and his imagination."—*Globe.*

The Free Marriage. J. KEIGHLEY SNOWDEN

Author of "The Plunder Pit," "Princess Joyce," "Hate of Evil," "The Life Class," "The Forbidden Theatre," etc.

"A story of which the least praise is that it does not contain a dull page. Mr. Snowden has made his figures live with a quite exceptional completeness, so that we not only see and hear them, but also follow the workings, often the very subtle workings—of their minds; and not those of the two protagonists only, but also those of the other figures in the little drama. Mr. Snowden has written, not only a very interesting story, but also a contribution of genuine value to the sociological discussions of the day. As a piece of literary art the book stands very high. In fine, Mr. Snowden is to be congratulated on a very notable piece of work."—*Pall Mall Gazette.*

Paul Burdon. SIR WILLIAM MAGNAY

Author of "A Prince of Lovers," "The Long Hand," etc.

This is a strong story full of exciting incidents. The hero is a farmer crippled for want of capital, which he finds quite unexpectedly. A thunderstorm and an irate husband cause a young banker to seek refuge at the farm, from which a loud knocking causes further retreat to a big family tomb, which becomes his own when the lightning brings some old ruins down and buries both. The banker's bag of gold falls into the hands of the farmer who profits by its use. Other characters play important parts, and love interest adds its softening charm.

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In Fear of a Throne. R. ANDOM

Author of "We Three and Troddles," etc., 50 illustrations.

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Author of "Bardelys the Magnificent," etc.

"A novel in Mr. Sabatini's best manner—and his best is very good. It is seldom we meet with a book so uniformly attractive, so well written, and so agreeable to read."—*Globe.*

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