

THE POPES IN THE DIVINA
COMMEDIA OF DANTE

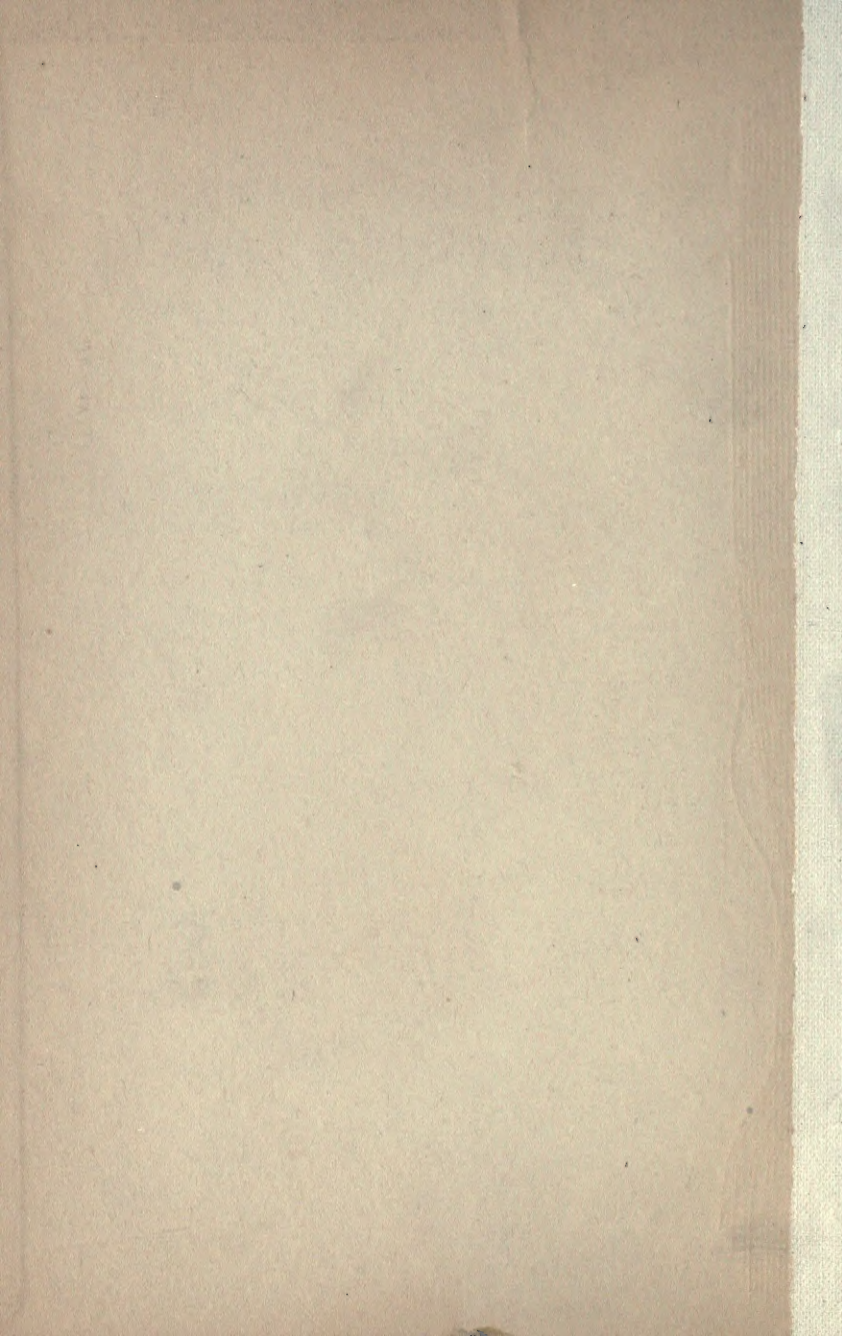


L. C. CASARTELLI

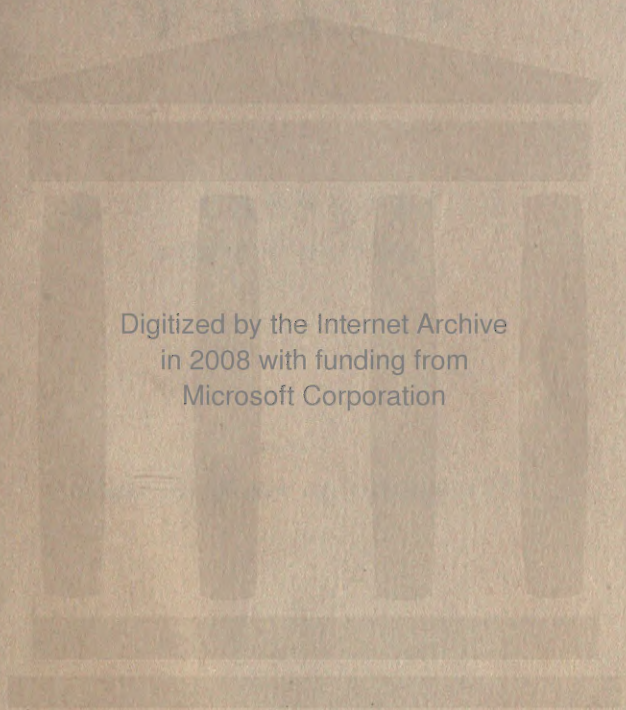


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THE POPES IN THE DIVINA COMMEDIA OF DANTE

BY

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BISHOP OF SALFORD

"Aligherius Noster est."—BENEDICT XV.

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TO MY FRIEND

AZEGLIO VALGIMIGLI

SECRETARY OF THE MANCHESTER DANTE SOCIETY

FOREWORD.

THE following pages are a very modest contribution to the celebration of the sixth centenary of the great Christian poet, Dante Alighieri, who died six hundred years ago to-day. I have endeavoured to give a brief popular account of the various popes mentioned in his mighty epic, the *Divina Commedia*. In so doing I have, among other sources, made good use of the handy and generally impartial and friendly book of an Anglican writer, Rev. A. E. McKilliam, M.A., *A Chronicle of the Popes*, by permission of G. Bell & Son, Ltd.

The English translations of passages quoted in the Italian are taken, with a few modifications, from the late Hon. William Warren-Vernon's masterly work, *Readings on Dante* (2nd and 3rd editions, six volumes, London, Methuen, 1906-1909), by kind permission of the Hon. Mrs. Warren-Vernon.

14th September 1921

CHAPTER I.

THE POPES BEFORE DANTE'S ERA.

AT the moment of Dante's death two hundred successors of St. Peter had occupied his throne. Of these twenty-one are either mentioned by name or unmistakably alluded to in the poem ; some are dismissed with a mere allusion, others occupy much space, or even recur frequently.

A few other popes are spoken of by Dante in his other works, such as the *De Monarchia*, or the Epistles. But these it has been found necessary to pass over entirely for want of space.

It has been a difficulty to decide in what order to treat the various pontiffs. One might either follow the order of the poem itself and, running through the successive cantos of each of its three parts, treat of the popes referred to as they occur. Or else, the pontificates can be taken in their historical sequence and the various passages concerning each, when more

than one, collected together and combined into one notice. The former method would demand far too much time and involve both repetition and disorder, so that the second method has been preferred in these pages.

A considerable difficulty of yet another order is often experienced by those studying Dante's treatment of the Roman Pontiffs. On the one hand, his great poem has ever been regarded as a monumental work of undoubted orthodoxy, the work of a devout and even enthusiastic son of the Catholic Church, the theology of which is distinctly based on the great synthesis of St. Thomas Aquinas in his *Summa*. On the other hand, the poet's denunciation of the personal characters and public acts of so many of the popes of his own epoch are so exceedingly severe and unsparing, so ruthless in language, so sweeping in scope, that writers ill-disposed to the papacy have claimed Dante as a convinced anti-papalist, an enemy of the whole papal system.

To understand the paradox we must, I think, bear in mind the principle, which no intellect ever saw more clearly than Dante's, of the distinction to be drawn between *office* and the *individual* occupant of the office. For the

former it is possible to cherish the deepest respect and veneration; the latter may quite logically be the subject of the keenest criticism and scathing denunciation. What is more, the higher the estimation of the exalted and sacred character of the office, the more passionate will be the denunciation of an incumbent, who is judged, whether rightly or wrongly, unworthy, by his life and conduct, of the office he holds. This was Dante's case. A most striking illustration is his treatment of Boniface VIII., the principal victim of his hatred, scorn and invective. No denunciation, as we shall see in passages quoted later on, is too terrible for this "Principe dei nuovi farisei," this usurper of St. Peter's place, this man guilty (at least according to the poet) of avarice, simony, nepotism, unmeasured ambition, political double-dealing, (though Dante is just enough not even to hint at any personal immorality); this man for whom a terrible place of punishment is reserved in the *Inferno*. Yet, when the French king, by his unscrupulous agents, lays violent hands upon the unfortunate pontiff at Anagni, subjecting him to physical outrage and imprisonment, Dante's indignation, as we shall see later on, flames out in righteous denuncia-

4 *Popes in the Divina Commedia of Dante*

tion of this outrage upon him whom he calls "The Vicar of Christ."

We shall also see later that Dante had a clear view as to the fact that all office and honour in this life, ecclesiastical as well as civil, cease with death, and in the next world the soul goes to meet its doom and punishment or reward in its naked human individuality. The Emperor Justinian, when met by Dante and asked his name, replies :

"Cesare fui, e son Giustiniano" (Par. vi. 10) —that is, "In life I was emperor, now I am but the man Justinian."

Similarly, as will be quoted later, when the poet, finding in a sufferer in Purgatorio the shade of him who had been Adrian V., by a natural impulse of reverence for his office, kneels to him who lies prone on the ground, the ex-pontiff bids him rise, for they are now both fellow-servants, like all the rest, of the one great Power.

No doubt has ever been held by the authorities of the Church as to the soundness of Dante's doctrine regarding the papacy itself. Indeed, the following items of his belief are clearly laid down in the *Commedia* :

Justice
or
dict.

(1) St. Peter is the first of the papal line, as of the Vicars of Christ :

“La primizia dei Vicari di Cristo.” (Par. xxiv. 14.)

(2) Rome is his See :

“lo loco santo
U' sede il successor del maggior Piero.” (Inf. ii. 23-24.)

[“the holy place
where sits the successor of Peter the supreme.”]

(3) In Rome he died and is buried. Peter himself refers to the city as his place of sepulture :

“Il cimiterio mio,” (Par. xxvii. 25.)
and elsewhere the poet himself mentions it as the burial place of Peter's successors :

“Vaticano e l'altre parti elette
Di Roma, che son state cimiterio
Alla milizia che Pietro seguette.”

(Par. ix. 139-141.)

[“The Vatican and other holy spots of Rome, which have been the burying-place of the army that followed Peter.”]

(4) Like Peter, his successors, even a Boniface VIII. are styled by the poet “Vicario di Cristo,” or “Vicario di Dio.” (Par. xx. 87.)

6 *Popes in the Divina Commedia of Dante*

The most advanced Ultramontane would scarcely use clearer or stronger language!

After these remarks, we now pass to the historical sequence of the popes in the *Divina Commedia*.

2. *Linus* (67-79?).

3. *Cletus* (78-81?).

In Par. xxvii., St. Peter, in his passionate denunciation of the corruption of Dante's time, especially with reference to the crime of simony, declares :

“ Non fù la sposa di Cristo allevata
Del sangue mio, di Lin, di quel di Cleto,
Per essere ad acquisto d'oro usata.”

[“ The Spouse of Christ was never fostered with my blood, with that of Linus, (or) with that of Cletus, for the purpose of being used for the gain of gold.”]

Linus, the immediate successor of St. Peter, is said to have been an Etruscan and a native of Volterra.* He is possibly identical with

* Visitors to Rome will remember the portrait of Linus in the long series of mosaics which adorn the interior of S. Paolo fuori le Mura, with *diamonds* in the eyes, given, I believe, by Queen Christina of Sweden.

the Linus mentioned by St. Paul (2 Timothy iv. 22). It was during his reign that the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus took place, and that the Arch of Titus was built by the labour of captive Jews. All the popes from Linus to Victor I. (203) appear to have been buried in the same hypogeum as St. Peter, but only fragments of their tombs remain, on one of which is found the word LINVS.

With regard to his successor, Cletus, a Roman, a curious difficulty arises owing to the *Liber Pontificalis* introducing after the latter's successor Clement, the name "Anacleus." Modern historians, however, following Irenæus and Eusebius, consider that this is an error, and that the two names represent but one person.

These two first successors of St. Peter, as well as the fourth one who follows, would naturally occur to Dante, as mentioned by the Apostle, since they are embodied in the extremely ancient Canon of the Mass, which was so familiar to the poet ("Lini, Cleti, Clementis, Xysti") though Dante strangely omits the great St. Clement, probably owing to the exigencies of metre.

8 *Popes in the Divina Commedia of Dante*

- 8. *Sixtus I.* (119-128?).
- 11. *Pius I.* (142-157?).
- 17. *Calixtus I.* (219-223?).
- 18. *Urban I.* (223-230?).

St. Peter continues:

“Ma per acquisto d'esto viver lieto
E Sisto e Pio e Calisto ed Urbano
Sparser lo sangue dopo molto fletto.”

[“But for gain of this blissful life did Sixtus and Pius and Calixtus and Urban shed their blood after much weeping.”]

The poet here alludes to the fact that during the centuries of persecution practically all the popes were not only saintly men, but martyrs, if not in a few cases by actual shedding of their blood, at least by having died in prison or in consequence of harsh treatment. Of the four, Sixtus was a Roman, and Pius a native of Aquileia, and according to some writers, a brother of Hermas, the supposed author of that curious mystic work known as *The Shepherd*.

After an interval of over fifty years comes Calixtus I. of Ravenna, who has suffered in history from the hostile and calumnious

accounts of his bitter enemies, Tertullian and Hippolytus. But the fantastic story of the latter writer has been shown by both Döllinger and De Rossi to be quite untrustworthy. Unlike the other popes of this epoch, Calixtus did not undergo martyrdom by a judicial process, but was murdered in a popular rising and his body thrown into a well, which is still shown in the Benedictine Church bearing his name in the Trastevere, adjoining the present residence of the English Cardinal Gasquet. To tourists, his name is familiar on account of the catacomb bearing his name on the Via Appia, which he is said to have restored.

His successor, the Roman Urban I., is perhaps best known as the pontiff in whose reign one of the most touching figures in the history of the early martyrs, the gentle Saint Cecilia, won her crown.

34. *Sylvester I.* (314-335).

“Ma come Constantìn chiese Silvestro
Dentro Siratti a guarir della lebbre,
Così mi chiese questi per maestro
A guarir della sua superba febbre.”

(*Inf.* xxvii. 94, 97.)

[“But as Constantine besought Sylvester within Soracte to cure him of the leprosy, so did he beseech me as a physician to cure him of the fever of his arrogance.”]

We have now arrived at the pontificate which saw the peace of the Church consequent upon the conversion to Christianity of the Emperor Constantine the Great and his famous Edict of Milan, of which we kept the sixteenth centenary in 1913. In the lines which the poet here puts in the mouth of Guido da Montefeltro, there is reference to the tradition that Constantine not only was baptised by the reigning Pope St. Sylvester,—and indeed visitors to Rome will no doubt remember the fine basalt font in the baptistry of St. John Lateran, in which Constantine himself is said to have received that sacrament, and in which it is almost certain that the Anglo-Saxon King Ceadwalla was actually baptised in 689,—but also that the Emperor was cured of leprosy at the moment of his baptism. The reference to the classic Soracte, so dear to Horace, is owing to the detail of the legend that Sylvester was in hiding at the time on that mountain in consequence of a recrudescence of paganism on the part of

the Roman population. The whole story, however, is now considered legendary.

52. *Anastasius II.* (496-498).

“ In sù l'estremità d'un' alta ripa
Che facevan gran pietre rotte in cerchio,
Venimmo sopra più crudele stipa :
E quivi, per l'orribile soperchio
Del puzzo, che il profondo abisso gitta
Ci raccostammo dietro ad un coperchio
D'un grande avello, ov'io vidi una scritta
Che diceva : ‘ Anastasio papa guardo,
Lo qual trasse Fotin della via dritta.’ ”

(*Inf. xi. 1-9.*)

[“ Upon the extreme edge of a lofty precipice, which huge shattered rocks formed into a circle, we came above a still more cruel prison. And here, by reason of the horrible excess of stench which the deep abyss throws up, we took refuge behind the lid of a great tomb, whereon I saw a writing which said : ‘ I hold Pope Anastasius, whom Photinus diverted from the right way.’ ”]

Dante and his guide Virgil, walking within the walls of the city of Dis, have now “ reached the edge of a small and concentric ring, which borders the circular abyss down which they

are about to descend into the seventh circle. Here the odour is so revolting that they are obliged to stop" (Vernon) and take refuge behind the lid of a great tomb. Here for the first time we are obliged to admit, with all respect to Mr. Vernon's opinion, that our poet, in spite of his immense learning, has fallen into an historical error, and consequent injustice, owing to a confusion of names. Anastasius II., who reigned from 496 to 498, was a contemporary of the Greek Emperor Anastasius, who reigned 491 to 518. As a matter of fact, this pope adopted a more conciliatory policy towards the Church of Constantinople than his immediate predecessors, and probably, had he lived longer, he might have succeeded in bringing to an end the unhappy schism. He sent to Constantinople two legates to the Emperor with conciliatory proposals, and the embassy was received with great respect; but on the envoys' return to Rome, they found the pontiff dead. Unfortunately Dante has confused pope and emperor, for it was the latter, and not his namesake, who was led by Photinus, the Deacon of Thessalonica, into the heresy of Acacius, Bishop of Constantinople, who had denied the

miraculous birth of Christ. It is not unlikely that the poet was partly betrayed into this error by the fact that the pope was willing to treat the memory of Acacius with a certain degree of leniency, proposing that the latter's name should be passed over in silence, rather than publicly erased from the diptychs. The memory of Pope Anastasius has been vindicated by such writers as Döllinger, Kraus, Grisar, Toynbee, and, recently, McKilliam. Grisar, particularly, has defended the memory of Anastasius against the various chroniclers of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, whose erroneous views Dante shared, and who consequently excogitated for the unfortunate pontiff a violent, but quite apocryphal, death.

59. *Agapitus I.* (535-536).

“Cesare fui e son Giustiniano . . .
E prima ch'io all'opera fossi attento,
Una natura in Cristo esser, non più,
Credeva e di tal fede era contento.
Ma il benedetto Agápito, che fue
Sommo pastore, alla fede sincera
Mi dirizzò con le parole sue.
Io gli credetti, e ciò che in sua fede era
Veggio ora chiaro.” (Par. vi. 10-20.)

["I was Cæsar, and now I am Justinian . . . and before the time that I became engaged upon that work, I believed that in Christ there was (but) one nature, not more, and with such faith I was contented. But the blessed Agapitus, who was the supreme pastor, by his words directed me to the pure faith. Him I believed, and what there was in his belief I now see clearly."]

With Agapitus I. we arrive at the last but one of the popes who lived before the epoch which may be called Dante's own. Agapitus, selected in 535, at a very advanced age, was a Roman and an archdeacon of the Roman Church. His short eleven months of reign were crowded with tragic incidents. The reigning Emperor, Justinian, had despatched an army into Italy under the leadership of the great Belisarius. At the request of the Gothic King, Theodatus, the aged pontiff undertook an embassy to Constantinople to negotiate with the Byzantine Emperor. It is said that so great was the poverty of the Roman See at this time that Agapitus was obliged to pawn the sacred vessels of the Church in order to raise money for his journey. On arrival at Constantinople he was received

with the highest honours, but does not seem to have been successful in his mission, for Belisarius took Rome during the same year. The reference to his conversion of the emperor from heresy is probably to be explained by the case of the Patriarch Anthimus, who was a Eutychian or Monophysite. The emperor is said to have ordered the pope to communicate with the heretical patriarch, threatening to drive him into exile if he continued to refuse. The aged pontiff remained firm, saying, "I came hither in my old age to see a religious and Christian emperor: I find a new Diocletian, but I fear not his menaces." His courage triumphed, and Anthimus was removed to make way for an orthodox prelate. The pope, however, was taken ill whilst in the Byzantine capital, where he died in the April, two months after his arrival. It is said that his obsequies were celebrated with such splendour that no such sight had ever before been witnessed in Constantinople. His remains were eventually conveyed to Rome and laid to rest, like so many of his predecessors, in St. Peter's. He is honoured as a saint by both the Latin and the Greek Churches. In view of Dante's bitter denunciation of the

greed for money on the part of the prelates of the Church, one circumstance of Agapitus's pontificate ought to have commended itself especially to the poet. Out of his five authentic letters which are extant, one, which is addressed to Cæsarius of Arles, explains that he is unable to send relief to the poor in Gaul, not through avarice, but on account of the poverty of the Roman Church, and this is quite in keeping with what has been above stated regarding the pontiff's journey to the East.

66. *St. Gregory the Great* (590-604).

The pontiff whose name next occurs must probably rank as one of the greatest, if not the very greatest figure in the history of the papacy, and certainly one of the most illustrious, as he was one of the holiest and most learned figures of the Transition Period, from the Classical to the Mediæval epoch. It is with him that Mgr. Horace Mann begins his great historical work, *The Lives of the Popes in the Middle Ages*. The saintly Benedictine monk who, attracted by the fair-haired Anglo-Saxon slave children in the market-place of Rome—"Non Angli sed Angeli"—first con-

ceived the idea of himself setting out to convert the pagan Saxons of this island, and who eventually accomplished the task as pope through his delegates, St. Augustine of Canterbury and his companions, is deservedly reckoned as the Apostle of the English. He is called the Apostle of the Lombards also, owing to his bringing them from Arianism to orthodox Christianity, through the influence of Queen Theodolinda. As a theologian and writer he ranks as one of the four great Doctors of the Western Church; and his name is identified with the organisation of the Latin Liturgy and ecclesiastical music. The reference to him, which occurs twice in the *Commedia*, is in connection with a curious legend concerning the Emperor Trajan. Among the sculptures in the first cornice of purgatory, illustrating the virtue of humility:

“Quivi era storiata l'alta gloria
Del Roman principato, il cui valore
Mosse Gregorio alla sua gran vittoria:
Io dico di Traiano Imperadore,
Ed una vedovella gli era al freno,
Di lagrime atteggiata e di dolore.”

(Purg. x. 73-78.)

[“Here was depicted the exalted glory of the Roman prince, whose worth moved Gregory to his great victory: I mean (the glory) of the Emperor Trajan; and a poor widow was at his bridle, represented all in tears and in grief.”]

The curious legend here referred to is again discussed at some length in Par. xx. 106 sqq. It narrates, of course, how the act of justice on the part of Trajan towards a poor suppliant widow, when learnt of by Pope St. Gregory, so moved the latter that he prayed earnestly for that emperor's conversion, and actually succeeded in obtaining from God that the soul should be brought back from hell and transferred to glory (“sua gran vittoria”). This entirely apocryphal, and of course unorthodox, legend seems to have been widely believed in the Middle Ages, and gave rise to curious speculations, which are referred to again by the poet (Par. xx. 106-117). Lastly:

“Ma Gregorio da lui poi si divide” (Par. xxviii. 133), records the fact that Gregory differed slightly from the work on the Celestial Hierarchy, formerly attributed to Dionysius the Areopagite, but that on his entry into heaven he found out his mistake:

“Onde sì tosto come l’occhio aperse
In questo ciel di se medesmo rise.”

(134-135.)

[“But Gregory later on dissented from him, for which reason, so soon as his eyes were opened in this heaven, he laughed at himself.”]

CHAPTER II.

THE POPES OF DANTE'S CENTURY.

WE now enter upon the beginning of that century which was pre-eminently Dante's own, and in which, therefore, as is only natural, there will be much more frequent and fuller references to the various pontiffs of that stirring epoch.

181. *Innocent III.* (1198-1216).

“Indi sen va quel padre e quel maestro
Con la sua donna e con quella famiglia
Che già legava l'umile capestro:
Nè gli gravò viltà di cor le ciglia
Per esser fi' di Pietro Bernardone,
Nè per parer dispetto a maraviglia.
Ma regalmente sua dura intenzione
Ad Innocenzio aperse, e da lui ebbe
Primo sigillo a sua religione.”

(Par. xi. 85-93.)

[“Thenceforth went his way that Father
and that Master with his Bride, and with that

family whom the humble cord already bound ; nor did any cowardice of heart weigh down his brow from being the son of Pietro Bernardone, nor from seeming marvellously scorned. But with the dignity of a king he unfolded to Innocent his stern resolve, and from him received the first seal upon his Order.”]

We have now arrived at the Pontificate of one of the greatest names in the history of the papacy. Cardinal Lotario Conti was elected at the early age of thirty-seven to occupy the supreme position in Christendom, and was destined to see the papal monarchy attain the culmination of its world-wide power, for which the way had been prepared by his illustrious predecessor, Gregory VII., so well-known in history as the great Hildebrand, whose death had occurred little more than a century before Innocent's election. Not only had the papacy been triumphant in its long and bitter struggle with the empire—to which success our English Pope, Nicholas Breakspere, otherwise Adrian IV., had largely contributed by the firmness of his strenuous pontificate—but a great reform had been effected in the discipline of the Church. “ During the thirteenth century the clergy of

the Church had become better educated and purer in morals, the wealth of the Church had increased, the monastic orders had flourished, and the Crusades had served to increase the prestige of the popes" (McKilliam). Lotario belonged to the famous family of the Counts of Segni (which eventually gave thirteen popes to the Church), had been educated at Rome, Paris and Bologna, and was one of the most distinguished jurists of his time. Created cardinal at the age of twenty-nine by his uncle, Clement III., he was still one of the youngest cardinals at the moment of his election. He had attracted public attention by his marked ability, his severely abstemious life, and as the author of an eloquent treatise on *The Contempt of the World* and other spiritual writings. One of his first acts was to reduce the expenditure of the papal household and to reform the municipal affairs of Rome. It is not my purpose here, nor have I the space, to rehearse the main events of Innocent's pontificate. To do so would necessitate a review of the whole history of Europe and the East during the eighteen years of his reign. Indeed there was no country in Christendom in whose affairs the

energetic pope did not take an active share, and the latest historian of the Papal See, Mgr. Horace Mann, has devoted two volumes of his *Lives of the Popes* (vols. xi., xii.) to this pontificate. It will suffice to quote the conclusion of Mr. M^cKilliam's estimate: "Innocent III. is the sole pope of whom it may be said that he maintained throughout his pontificate, not in theory only but actually, the position of Supreme Head both in Church and State." From what we know of his personal character and his official acts, we should be inclined to judge that he would have been a pope according to Dante's heart. As a matter of fact, however, it is in reference not to any of his political achievements that Dante here introduces this great pontiff, but to an act which certainly was destined to produce a profound impression on the life of the Church and even of that Christian culture of which Dante's work was to be the fine flower. The scene just quoted is that in which our poet is in the Fourth Heaven, the Heaven of the Sun, wherein, with exquisite courtesy, Dante puts the panegyric of St. Francis into the mouth of St. Thomas Aquinas, the great Doctor of the Dominican Order, as further

on he places the praises of St. Dominic on the lips of the Franciscan Doctor, St. Bonaventure. It was in the year 1209 or 1210 that Francis, with a small party of his first friars, arrived in Rome, and through the kind offices of his own bishop and the Cardinal of Sabina obtained an audience of Pope Innocent and solicited from him an approval of the new and austere mode of life which they had adopted. "Pray my son to Christ, that through thee He may show us His will," replied the pope. The saint obeyed—we are quoting the story in the words of Thomas of Celano—and confidently flew to Christ. The answer came in the form of a parable: "Thus shalt thou say to the pope: A poor but beautiful woman dwelt in a wilderness. A king loved her for her exceeding comeliness. He married her gladly and begat beauteous sons by her. When they were grown and were nobly brought up, their mother said to them: Be not ashamed, beloved, that ye are poor, for ye are all sons of that great king. Go, therefore, gladly to his court and ask him for all that ye need." Innocent was touched by what he heard and saw, and thereupon gave the first papal approval (*primo sigillo*),

as yet only oral, of what was to become the great Franciscan Order, though the formal sanction, in shape of a bull, was only granted by his immediate successor, Honorius III. From this legend of Thomas de Celano will be easily understood the meaning of the words "donna" and "quella famiglia" in the lines quoted above.

182. *Honorius III.* (1216-1227).

"Poichè la gente poverella crebbe
Dietro a costui, la cui mirabil vita
Meglio in gloria del ciel si canterebbe,
Di seconda corona redimita
Fù per Onorio dell'eterno spiro
La santa voglia d'esto archimandrita."

(Par. xi. 94-99.)

[“After that these poor folk multiplied, following him whose admirable life were best to be chanted in the glory of the heavens, the holy purpose of this Archimandrite was by the Eternal Spirit through Honorius crowned with a second diadem.”]

St. Thomas Aquinas here records the fact, just alluded to above, that Innocent's successor, Honorius III., was the one whose privilege it was to grant the formal written

approval to the Order of Friars Minor, by his bull in 1223. This Honorius was a scion of the illustrious family of Savelli, and had held many important offices in the Papal Court. His reign of eleven years was not without troublous incidents, and twice at least the pope was obliged to withdraw from Rome owing to disturbances in the city. Honorius has been called the Peacemaker in reference to his successful efforts of reconciliation between states which had been at variance.

If I pass over in silence three pontiffs, Innocent IV., Alexander IV., and Urban IV., whose names occur in Mr. Paget Toynbee's tables, it is because there is no certainty that they are really referred to by the poet in the *Commedia* (Inf. xix. 73-74). I therefore go on to:

188. *Clement IV.* (1265-1268).

This pontiff is of interest to us for more reasons than one. His election falls but a few months before the birth of Dante himself (May 1265), so that with him begins the list of those popes who were strictly Dante's contemporaries.

“Se il pastor di Cosenza che alla caccia
Di me fù messo per Clemente, allora

Avesse in Dio ben letta questa faccia,
L'ossa del corpo mio sarieno ancora
In co' del ponte presso a Benevento,
Sotto la guardia della grave mora.
Or le bagna la pioggia e move il vento."

(Purg. iii. 124-130.)

[“ If the Pastor of Cosenza, who was sent by Clement to hunt me down, had then rightly read in (the Word of) God this page (*i.e.*, of God's mercy), the bones of my body would still be resting at the bridge-head at Benevento, under the shelter of the heavy cairn. Now the rain drenches them and the wind scatters them.”]

We now meet with one of the series of French popes of whom much will be heard in the subsequent century. Gui Foulques Le Gros, a native of St. Gilles in the province of Narbonne, had had a varied career. His father, Foulques, had, after the death of his wife, become a Cistercian monk, and he himself had been a married man previous to taking orders. He had first embraced a military career, but afterwards devoted himself to the study of civil law, and became the trusted counsellor of St. Louis, King of France. Later

he entered the priesthood, and became in turn Archdeacon of Narbonne and Cardinal Deacon of Santa Sabina. As such, he was sent on a mission to England in support of King Henry III. against his barons. Unable to enter England, he was at Boulogne when the summons reached him to return to Perugia, where he found that he had been elected pope in succession to Urban IV.

To us in England his personality is of interest, because of his connection with the famous English friar, Roger Bacon, the seventh centenary of whose birth was celebrated at Oxford and elsewhere in 1914. The connection came about in this way. Whilst Guide St. Gilles was secretary to St. Louis, he learned from Raymond de Laon of the extraordinary genius and learning of the English Franciscan, whose fame had gone forth both in Oxford and in Paris, and he seems to have understood that Bacon had already compiled a great encyclopedic work on all the sciences. Raised to the papal dignity, he did not forget what he had heard of the wonderful friar of Oxford, and so the year after his election, on the 22nd June 1266, Clement IV., in a letter to his beloved son, Roger Bacon,

of the Order of Friars Minor, ordered him to forward immediately that work "which, when placed in a lower dignity, we had already asked you to communicate to our beloved son Raymond de Laon." At the same time the pope declared that he annulled, if necessary, all and any regulations to the contrary on the part of his rule or his superiors. More than that, he directed the friar to write to him privately his suggestions for the reform of certain abuses or deficiencies "in studies and education," concerning which Bacon apparently had already written to him. As a matter of fact, our friar had not yet compiled the great work which he had planned, but he at once set to work with great energy and labour, and the result was the *Opus Majus*, the *Opus Minus*, and the *Opus Tertium*, but unfortunately, by the time these famous works reached Rome, the enlightened pontiff was dead. Otherwise, it is tempting to speculate what might have been the profound influence upon the development of European learning and the intellectual life of the Church had the counsels and methods of the Oxford Friar—the father of the physical sciences—been adopted by the Holy See in the early years of Dante's life.

I have dwelt at some length upon the famous English Friar and his work for more than one reason. Firstly, the lives of himself and Dante to some extent overlap—Bacon living from 1214 to 1292, and Dante from 1265 to 1321, so that the poet was a young man of about twenty-seven at the friar's death, and so keen a student must, one would think, have heard much of the celebrated Franciscan and his world-famed learning. Moreover, Friar Bacon was frequently engaged in controversy with both St. Thomas Aquinas, the Dominican, and St. Bonaventure, the Franciscan Doctor, who both play so large a part in this very portion of the *Paradiso*. It seems strange, therefore, and I confess it puzzles me, that one can find no mention of Roger Bacon either in the *Commedia* or in the other writings of our poet.* Another point of interest is this—the striking similarities in the two men. Both Bacon and Dante were men of an amazing extent of learning; they had absorbed a knowledge of all the sciences, sacred and profane, of their times; their writings were of an encyclopedic nature, though Bacon never completed the *Opus Maximum*, which he probably planned,

* The fact may possibly supply a further argument against the belief in Dante's visit to Oxford.

and to which his other writings appear to be but the preludes. Add to this that both were men of unusually strong feelings, fearless in judgment and criticism, often rugged and pitiless in language of denunciation, and both enthusiastically working for reformation in Church and State, and filled with the loftiest ideals. I must apologise for this long digression ; the subject of a parallel between Dante and Bacon seems almost worthy of a separate study. But we must now return to Clement IV., Bacon's patron, and the pope whose reign began just before the poet's birth. It will be remembered that the words we have quoted above are put in the mouth of Manfred, with whom both the new pope and several of his predecessors had long been in conflict, and against whom Clement was supporting the claims of Charles of Anjou to the kingdom of Sicily. It was at the Battle of Benevento, in the February of 1266, that Manfred was finally defeated and slain, and his body buried by Charles's soldiers beneath a great cairn of stones—

“Sotto la guardia della grave mora.”

It was said, whether truly or not, that subsequently Manfred's body was, by Clement's

orders, disinterred by the Archbishop of Cosenza, and cast unburied upon the banks of the Verde, outside the kingdom of Naples. His spirit in this scene of the ante-purgatory is telling Dante how, in spite of his many crimes and excommunication, his sincere repentance at the moment of death had saved him from eternal punishment.

“Orribil furon li peccati miei,
Ma la Bontà infinita ha sì gran braccia,
Che prende ciò che si rivolge a lei.”

(Purg. iii. 121-123.)

[“Horrible were my sins, but the infinite goodness hath arms so wide that it takes (in their embrace) whatever turns to it.”]

Clement IV. died at Viterbo in 1268, and as there was a difficulty in the conclave between the partisans of a French or an Italian pope, it is said that the cardinals were put on a régime of bread and water to hasten their decision.

Passing over two pontificates not referred to by Dante, we come to one of the shortest pontificates in the history of the papacy, but strangely enough one to which Dante assigns a considerable amount of space:

191. *Adrian V.* (1276.)

On July 11, 1276, Ottoboni Fieschi, a native of Genoa, was elected pope and took the title of Adrian V. Not impossibly the title may have been partly meant as a compliment to the English pope of the preceding century, for Fieschi had twice been employed on missions to England as Papal Legate, and in 1266 had held a council at Northampton, at which the adherents of Simon de Montfort had been condemned.* At the time of his election, Fieschi had never been consecrated a bishop, nor even ordained priest; nor was he ever crowned pope, for after a reign of about five weeks he died at Viterbo. Yet during this short period he exercised more than one act of pontifical authority, among others confirming the treaty of peace between Charles of Anjou and the Genoese. It is in the mouth of this short-lived pontiff that Dante puts wellnigh one-half of the nineteenth canto of his *Purgatorio*. It is in the fifth *cornice*, where the avaricious and the prodigal both suffer, that the two poets come upon a "creature," lying like the rest, weeping and prone on the

* But also he was Cardinal of S. Adriano.

ground, and uttering the words of the psalm, "Adhaesit pavimento anima mea." In reply to Dante's question the spirit utters what Mr. Vernon calls "one of the fine passages of the *Purgatorio*." Know, he says, that I was the successor of Peter, and that for little more than one month I experienced how heavy weighs the "Great Mantle" on him who would keep it out of the mire :

"Un mese e poco più prova'io come
Pesa il gran manto a chi del fango il guarda,
Chè piuma sembran tutte l'altre some."

(*Purg. xix. 103-105.*)

[“For one month and a little more I experienced how heavy the Great Mantle weighs on him who keeps it out of the mire (*i.e.*, wears it with dignity), so that all other burdens seem but feathers.”]

He confesses that during his life he had been given to the sin of avarice, and now, like the others around him, is punished in the way the poets see. And now occurs the curious scene alluded to before. Dante, learning who he was, kneels down as an act of reverence. But the sufferer asks him why he thus bends down, and on learning the reason

bids the poet rise, for that now, after death, he was but a fellow servant, a man, no longer a pope, thus illustrating the truth that all human honours cease with death :

“ Io m'era inginocchiato e volea dire,
Ma com'io cominciai ed ei s'accorse,
Solo ascoltando, del mio riverire,
'Qual cagion,' disse, 'in giù così ti torse?'
Ed io a lui : ' Per vostra dignitate
Mia coscienza dritto mi rimosse.'
'Drizza le gambe, levati sù, frate,'
Rispose, ' Non errar, conservo sono
Teco e con gli altri ad una potestate.' ”

(Purg. xix. 126-135.)

[“ I had fallen on my knees and would have spoken, but as I began and, only by listening, he became aware of my act of reverence. 'What cause,' said he, 'hath thus bent thee downwards?' And I to him : 'Because of your dignity my conscience rebuked me (for standing) erect.' 'Straighten thy legs, rise up, brother,' he replied. 'Err not, I am a fellow-servant with thee and with the rest to One (Supreme) Power.’”]

Whether Dante was justified in thus condemning Adrian as an example of the sin

of avarice, there seems good reason to doubt, but in any case the humility and penitence of the ex-pope are treated by the poet with a delicacy that is distinctly edifying. Very different is his treatment of the next pope but one. Meanwhile :

192. *John XXI.* (1276-1277.)

In the "Heaven of the Sun" St. Bonaventure points out among the Doctors of the Church

"Pietro Ispano

Lo qual giù luce in dodici libelli."

(Par. xii. 134, 135.)

["Peter, the Spaniard, who below (on earth) shineth in twelve books."] This Peter was not a Spaniard, but a Portuguese, a native of Lisbon. Son of a physician, he became himself a distinguished medical luminary, professor of medicine in the University of Paris, and physician-in-ordinary to Pope Gregory X. Later on he entered the priesthood and rose to be Archbishop of Braga and subsequently Cardinal. He accompanied Gregory X. to the Council of Lyons, in which he took an important part. After the ephemeral pontificate of Adrian V. he was elected to succeed him. During his very brief reign of about eight months, John

XXI., which name he assumed, he was able to play a not insignificant part in the affairs of Sicily and the empire, and to bring about peace between Philip III. of France and Alfonso of Castille. Always devoted to the study of the physical sciences, he is said to have constructed a chamber for his studies in the papal palace at Viterbo, where he might work undisturbed. Unfortunately on May 14, 1277, whilst alone in this apartment, the roof collapsed and buried the scholar-pope in its ruins. He was extricated, but died six days later. The "twelve books," on account of which Dante places him among the Doctors, was his famous work on logic, *Summæ Logicales*, which enjoyed great celebrity as a text-book during the Middle Ages.

193. *Nicholas III.* (1277-1280.)

In the nineteenth canto of the *Inferno* we have a grotesque scene depicted. In the third *bolgia* the two poets come across an extraordinary spectacle. A grey rock is full of circular holes, from each of which protrude the feet and half the legs of a sinner, whose soles are all on fire from heel to toe.

One of these sufferers is jerking his limbs in

more agonised convulsions than the rest. The poet's curiosity is aroused, and by Virgil's advice they now descend to the fourth rampart, and Dante, stooping down, as he says like a friar, to hear the confession of an assassin, asks the shade who he is. The sufferer at first supposes that it is his fifth successor (*i.e.*, Boniface VIII.) who has come down to share his place among the Simonists before his time. But the poet denies the fact, and the shade goes on to explain his identity :

“ Poi sospirando, e con voce di pianto,
 Mi disse : Dunque che a me richiede ?
 Se di saper chi io sia ti cal cotanto
 Che tu abbi però la ripa corsa,
 Sappi ch'io fui vestito del gran manto :
 E veramente fui figliuol dell' Orsa,
 Cupido sì per avanzar gli orsatti,
 Che sù l' avere, e quì me misi in borsa.
 Di sotto al capo mio son gli altri tratti
 Che precidetter me simoneggiando,
 Per le fessure della pietra piatti.
 Laggiù cascherò io altresì quando
 Verrà colui ch'io credea che tu fossi.”

(*Inf. xix. 65-77.*)

[“ Then sighing, and with a voice of lamenta-

tion, he said unto me : ' What then dost thou want with me? If thou carest so much to know who I am that for this thou hast descended the cliff, know that I was invested with the Great Mantle ; and, verily, I was a son of the she-bear (*i.e.*, of the Orsini family), so greedy to advance the bear-cubs that up aloft I put wealth, and down here (I put) myself into (this) hole. Beneath my head are dragged down the others who preceded me in simony, flattened through the fissures of the rock. Down these likewise shall I drop when that one shall come whom I thought thou wast.'"]

By these allusions the spirit indicates (*a*) that he was a pope, since the *Gran Manto* was the red cope with which, in the Middle Ages, the newly elected pope was invested at his coronation. In the well-known painting by the Portuguese master, Gran Vasco, of "St. Peter as Pope," the apostle is represented enthroned, wearing the tiara and the great red cope—a splendid piece of drapery. It will be remembered that Adrian V. had already referred to the weight of this "gran manto"; (*b*) that he belonged to the family of the Orsini, calling himself "son of the she-bear" (*Orsa*), and his relations, whom he is said so largely to have

endowed, "bear cubs." (c) He also states that b' [neath him are others of his predecessors, whom he does not mention, suffering likewise for the sin of simony. Commentators have speculated who these may be, and Mr. Toynbee, in his list of popes alluded to by Dante, gives the names of three or four, but as this is a matter of pure conjecture, I have not thought it worth while even to mention their names in this paper. Lastly, the spirit indicates the coming of two of his successors, who shall be still more guilty than himself, and of whom we shall presently have to speak. The rest of this bitterly-worded canto is occupied by the unmeasured violence of the poet's denunciation of the avarice and simony of some of the pontiffs of his time,* invectives so fierce that in some of the manuscript they have actually been omitted. Indeed, whatever justification there may have been for the poet's condemnation, I think we must admit that no small part of the violence of his invective must be traced to political rancour, and that bitterness which pre-

* Under these names the poet largely stigmatises what we should now style "nepotism," an evil unfortunately only too rife in those days.

ailed between Guelphs and Ghibellines, between Bianchi and Neri. This must also account for the rather unfair manner in which the poet passes over in silence the really good and even holy popes of his epoch. In the judicious words of Professor Rocca, appositely quoted by Mr. Vernon :

“Hence his unfriendly judgments on the popes of the Middle Ages, or rather his avowed aversion too openly manifested both in the contemptuous silence which he observes towards the greatest ones among them, and in the severity with which he pursues the faults and defects of others in order to include them in the *bolge* of hell or to torment them in the circles of Purgatory. Hence, too, the bitter attacks upon contemporary popes, especially against Boniface VIII., and the frequent invectives which resound in the highest heavens from the mouth of St. Peter himself; fierce invectives which at first appear in strident contrast with the profoundly religious sentiment of the poets. But they are the passionate cries of a believer, not the jeering insults of an enemy ; they are blows aimed at shattering the temporal diadem with which the popes had crowned the tiara, and not for the purpose of undermining the power of *le*

somme chiavi, before which the poet reverently bows his head just as before the divine authority of Holy Scripture."

194. *Martin IV.* (1281-1283.)

"quella faccia

Di là da lui, più che l'altre trapunta,
 Ebbe la santa Chiesa in su le braccia :
 Dal Torso fù, e purga per digiuno
 L'anguille di Bolsena e la vernaccia."

(Purg. xxiv. 20-24.)

[“And beyond him (he with) that face more emaciated than the others, once held the Holy Church in his embrace : from Tours was he, and by fasting he is expiating the eels of Bolsena and the Vernaccia (wine).”]

With the immediate successor of Nicholas III. we find ourselves back in *Purgatorio* and in its sixth circle where gluttony is punished. Without mentioning his name, the poet, in the intensely emaciated shade, introduces us to Martin IV., who was another Frenchman, a native of Tours (Torso), by name Simon de Brion, Canon of St. Martin at Tours, and afterwards cardinal priest of St. Cecilia. It was during his short reign that the terrible Sicilian Vespers occurred (Easter Tuesday, 1282), in

which all the French on the island were massacred. The pope for this excommunicated King Peter of Arragon, in whose interest the crime had been committed, and placed the island under an interdict. In 1285 Martin celebrated Easter in Perugia, and after dining with his cardinals on Easter Day was taken suddenly ill and died four days later. This is probably the reason why Dante ascribes his death to a surfeit of eels and to a sweet wine, "vernaccia," from near Genoa (which, curiously enough, is mentioned by Chaucer as "vernage*"). It is somewhat disappointing to find that the poet, with what degree of truth I know not, records this charge of gluttony against the French pope (recalling strangely the story of the death of an English king from a surfeit of lampreys), whilst he passes over in silence a eulogy, recorded by Villani, which one would think would have appealed most strongly to this bitter hater of avarice and nepotism. For it is said of Martin, much as of the late Pius X., that he ever refused to enrich any of his relations, and that when his brother came to see him as pope, he at once sent him back to France with only very small

* *Merchant's Tale*, 536; also by Gower, *Confessio Amantis*, iii. 8.

gifts and the expenses of his journey, saying that the goods he held were the Church's and not his own.

197. *St. Celestine V.* (1294.)

We have now come to a pope whose name is not mentioned by Dante, and of whom it is not even certain that he refers to him in the *Commedia*. It will be remembered that in the third canto of the *Inferno*, in that vestibule where are found the souls whose lives have been "neutral" and unworthy of praise or blame, mingled with those angels who were neither rebellious nor faithful (in the language of Scott, "ower bad for blessing and ower gude for banning"), Dante singles out one of whom he says :

"Poscia ch'io v'ebbi alcun riconosciuto,
Vidi e conobbi l'ombra di colui
Che fece per viltà lo gran rifiuto."

(*Inf.* iii. 58-60.)

["After that I had recognised some among them, I perceived and knew the shade of him who from cowardice made the great renouncement."]

Who is this personage that made "the great

renunciation"? Numerous are the names that have been proposed, but I suppose that the majority of commentators have agreed upon Celestine V., otherwise known as St. Peter Celestine. Personally, I am by no means sure that the identification is correct,* though it receives some confirmation in the twenty-seventh Canto, where his immediate successor, Boniface VIII., says, speaking of the power of the keys :

“son due le chiave

Che il mio antecessor non ebbe care.”

(Inf. xxvii. 104-105).

[“Two are the keys which my predecessor held not dear.”]

Supposing, however, that this was really the shade in question, we must admit that there is no more pathetic figure in the long line of Roman pontiffs. The poor shepherd boy of Apulia, who had become a hermit living in his wild cell in the mountains of the Abruzzi, was suddenly, in 1293, after a vacancy of more than a year, elected Pope at the suggestion of the Cardinal of Ostia, as the cardinals, after such

* There is a striking article in *Blackfriars* (August 1921), by John Foster Makepeace, “Dante and St. Peter Celestine,” which makes out a strong case against the identification.

long deliberations, found it impossible to agree upon a candidate. "Three prelates were despatched by the cardinals to the hermit's retreat . . . They found an old man emaciated by fasting, with a long shaggy beard and sunken eyes, clothed in sackcloth and crouched in a cave; on being informed of his election to the pontifical throne he threw himself on his knees, and begged piteously to be excused from undertaking a burden for which he was wholly unfitted. It is said that he even attempted to escape in order to hide himself in the mountains, but was prevented by a crowd of people, who had assembled from all parts on hearing of his election" (McKilliam). It was all in vain; the unfortunate recluse, more like a prisoner than a monarch, was conducted in grand procession to Aquila, which he entered riding on an ass, whilst two kings, Charles of Naples and Charles of Hungary, held the bridle on either side. And so began his brief and unhappy pontificate of five months. Celestine, by which name Pietro Murrone was now known, was wiser than his electors. He knew only too well how utterly unqualified, whether by natural gifts, by tastes, character or experience, he was for the heavy charge of the "Gran Manto," and longed

only to retire again to his hermit's cell. No wonder that his administration was as unsuccessful as his life in a royal palace was unhappy. It was not long before he officially consulted the Sacred College on the question whether it be lawful for a pope to resign his office, and on receiving an affirmative decision, he at once drew up a Bull in which he declared: "I, Celestine, the fifth Pope of that name, being moved by lawful causes, by motives of humility, by the desire of leading a more perfect life, by my great age, my infirmities, my want of experience and ignorance of all worldly affairs, and wishing to enjoy the comforts and sweets that are found in retirement, do hereby freely and of my own accord renounce the Papacy, and with it all the dignity, the burden and the honour, giving from this instant full power to the Sacred College to elect according to the canons a pastor for the Universal Church." The resignation was accepted, and a few days later Cardinal Benedetto Gaetani was elected his successor, of whom more anon. The ex-pope never returned to his solitude, since by order of his successor he was kept a prisoner in the castle of Fumone, near Anagni, where he died a few months later at the age of ninety-one.

The chroniclers (followed in this by the English poet, Gower) have recorded all kinds of extravagant, and probably malignant stories, invented doubtless by the enemies of Benedict VIII., as to the wiles and puerile tricks by which he led or forced Celestine to resign the Papacy, and also as to the cruel treatment inflicted upon the unfortunate old man during his imprisonment in the mountain fortress. On the other hand, Dante has shown so little sympathy for this saintly and humble victim of circumstances, that (as is supposed) he has condemned him for cowardice and mean-spiritedness ("viltà") in his "great renunciation," and placed his unhappy shade as a sufferer in that apocryphal part of the *Inferno* imagined by the poet for neutral souls. As has been remarked, it is probably Dante's intense and almost unreasoning hatred of Boniface VIII. that inspired him with so much contempt and disgust for Celestine's abdication, inasmuch as this opened the way to Boniface's succession. The Church, however, has judged very differently to the poet. Boniface himself began the process of his predecessor's beatification, and Clement V., in 1313, during the very lifetime of Dante, drew up the Bull of his canonisation, though as a matter of

fact the same was not published till 1328, seven years after the poet's death. St. Peter Celestine, as he is now called, has his feast in the Church's Calendar on the 19th day of May. In English literature, I am happy to remark, the memory of Celestine has been rehabilitated and his life-story told in one of the most charming historical novels that have appeared during the last few years, I refer to the exquisite *San Celestino*, by John Ayscough.

I spoke a few moments ago of Dante's "apocryphal" part of the *Inferno*. By this I meant to suggest that his idea of a kind of vestibule region to the *Inferno*, in which are detained both angels and human souls, neither good nor bad, neither worthy of heaven nor deserving of hell, finds no place in the orthodox system of the Church. It seems to be based on a hypothesis of Clement of Alexandria, refuted by St. Thomas Aquinas in his *Summa*, and, curiously enough, referred to in the "Legend of St. Brendan." One of its nearest parallels is that of the "Hamestakān" of Ardā Virāf, the Persian Dante. Berthier thinks that Dante makes use of this idea simply as a poetical licence, and not from any theological conviction.

And now we come to the chief victim of Dante's terrible invective, concerning whom he has written in every one of the three parts of the *Commedia*, with a bitterness unsurpassed in his treatment of any other character. In order to chastise this his *bête-noir*, the poet had to employ extraordinary skill, for Boniface's reign occurred during the poet's own lifetime, and precisely during the period of his mature powers. But Dante had fixed the year of his visit to the realms of the other world in A.D. 1300, whereas Benedict did not die till 1303. It was thus impossible to represent his shade in the *Inferno*, which the poet believed him to have so well merited, and therefore he has recourse to the expedient of placing his many denunciations of the pontiff in the mouths of other characters.

198. Boniface VIII. (1294-1303.)

As mentioned above, the new pope was Benedetto Gaetani, a native of Anagni, and a nephew, on his mother's side, of Pope Alexander IV. He had studied at Paris, and was a doctor of both Canon and Civil Law, and had filled the office of legate in many countries. Whatever element of truth there may be in Dante's invective, no shadow seems to have

rested on his moral character, though he appears to have been of a naturally imperious temper, and his masterful disposition procured him the reputation of arrogance and haughtiness. He was a statesman of the school of Gregory VII. and Innocent III., and as an enemy of the great House of Colonna, he undoubtedly pursued the members of that family with undue severity. His pontificate was crowded with so many stirring events that it is impossible to do more than allude to one or two of them. Among other events he intervened in the quarrel between Edward I. of England and the Scotch, and later acted successfully as arbitrator between England and France. In 1300 he instituted the first great Jubilee, an event of the first importance in the history of the City of Rome, and which is notable in the history of art on account of the precious painting by Giotto, now preserved under glass in the right hand aisle of St. John Lateran, representing the pope between two cardinals promulgating the Jubilee. In Italy itself Boniface was involved in the bitter feud between the Orsini and Colonna families, which indirectly also involved him in the hostility of Dante, owing to the part which he played in

the expulsion from Florence of the Bianchi, Dante among them. In this sense the poet regarded him as the ultimate cause of his own lifelong banishment, which accounts for the extreme bitterness of his hatred. The end of his turbulent reign was indeed pitiful. After the council convoked at Lyons by Philip le Bel in order to proceed to the judgment of the pope, Guillaume de Nogaret and Sciarra Colonna stormed the palace at Anagni and seized the pope, and although released by a popular reaction and able to escape to the Vatican, he survived but a few months the outrage, and was found dead in bed on 11th October 1303. He was buried in the crypts of St. Peter.

No pope is referred to so often by Dante. I have noted at least ten passages in which he is pilloried. We have already narrated the ingenious device by which Nicholas III. foretells the coming of this, his successor, to the place of punishment of the Simoniacal. (Inf. xix. 52-57). Guido de Montefeltro inveighs against him as an evil counsellor, calling him "Lo principe dei nuovi farisei," and actually declares that Boniface had promised him absolution for sins beforehand,

which, in a poet so well versed in theology as Dante, can only be considered as a malicious calumny. (Inf. xxvii.) He is probably referred to in the strange figure of the giant and the harlot in Purg. xxxii. 148-160. Passing over other allusions, many of which seem fairly doubtful, we come to the terrible invective put on the lips of St. Peter in the xxviith canto of the *Paradiso*. Although this wonderful invective is addressed to all his degenerate successors, it is probable that the chief weight thereof is meant to fall upon Boniface. It will be remembered that in the sphere of the fixed stars a sudden silence reigns, and St. Peter, whose colour now becomes a glowing red, breaks the silence with the terrible words he addresses to the poet:

“ Se io mi trascoloro,
Non ti maravigliar ; chè, dicend'io
Vedrai trascolorar tutti costoro.
Quegli ch'usurpa in terra il loco mio,
Il loco mio, il loco mio, che vaca
Nella presenza del Figliuol di Dio,
Fatto ha del cimitero mio cloaca
Del sangue e della puzza, onde il perverso,
Che cadde di quassù, laggiù si placa.”

(Par. xxvii. 19-27.)

[“ If I change my colour, marvel thou not ; for, while I speak, thou shalt see all these change colour (also). He that on earth usurps my place, my place, my place, which is vacant in the sight of the Son of God, has of my sepulchre made a sewer of blood and foulness, whereat the Evil One, who fell from here, below there is appeased.”]

It has been noticed that one line of the above would seem to indicate a doubt on the part of the poet as to the legality of Boniface's election, since he speaks of the Papal See as “ vacant ” in the sight of God. This, however, is untenable in view of Dante's language in *Purg.* xx., speaking of the outrage of Philip le Bel, as we shall see immediately. St. Bonaventure again, in the xiith canto, in a brief line stigmatises Boniface, without naming him, as the guilty and negligent vinedresser who has become degenerate.

“ la vigna

Che tosto imbianca, se il vignaio è reo . . .

. . . non per lei,

Ma per colui che siede, che traligna.”

(*Par.* xii. 86-90.)

[“ That vineyard which soon grows white

(*i.e.*, withers away) if the vinedresser be guilty . . . not by any fault of its own, but by (that of) him who sitteth still and is degenerate.”]

It is to be noted how, in all the most scathing denunciations, the name of Boniface is never mentioned but once, and that by Nicholas III., in Par. xix., as above quoted. The unfortunate pre-eminence which this pontiff has attained as Dante's chief victim in the *Commedia*, is partly owing to the fact that the poet's mystic journey through the three kingdoms beyond the grave is supposed to fall within that pope's reign.

After the terrible denunciations of the avarice, the simony and other evil qualities of which Dante, justly or unjustly, considered Boniface VIII. to have been guilty, it is all the more impressive to observe the language with which he refers to the outrage upon that pontiff's person committed by Guillaume de Nogaret and Sciarra Colonna. It is in the fifth cornice of the *Paradiso*, where Hugh Capet, himself detained among the avaricious, details the crimes of many of his degenerate successors in France, but of all these the chief is that of the future Philip le Bel :

“Veggio in Alagna entrar lo fiordaliso,
 E nel Vicario suo Cristo esser catto.
 Veggio un'altra volta esser deriso ;
 Veggio rinnovellar l'aceto e i fele ;
 E tra vivi ladroni esser anciso.”

(Purg. xx. 86-90.)

[“I see the Fleur-de-lys enter into Alagna (Anagni), and Christ Himself taken captive in the person of His Vicar. I see Him mocked a second time ; I see renewed the vinegar and the gall, and Himself slain between living thieves.”]

In these oft-quoted lines Boniface is not only spoken of as the Vicar of Christ, but his sufferings at the hands of his cruel enemies are assimilated, even in detail, to those of Christ Himself—a striking proof of that clear distinction which the poet ever had in mind, and to which I have already referred at the beginning of this paper.

200. *Clement V.* (1305-1314.)

Passing over the immediate successor of the unfortunate Boniface, once more, in 1304, a long vacancy of ten months occurred owing to the differences of the two parties who supported the choice respectively of an Italian

and a French pope. It was ended by a compromise, in virtue of which Bernard de Got, Archbishop of Bordeaux, who enjoyed the support of Philip of France, was elected in Perugia, where the late pope had died, and took the name of Clement V. He was the son of a knight of Aquitaine, and hence a subject of the King of England. His installation took place at Lyons, and this pope never visited Rome, since in 1309, to the dismay of the Roman Cardinals, Clement decided to fix the papal court at Avignon, so commencing those seventy years of the absence of the papacy from Rome, known in history as the "Babylonish Captivity." It will be remembered that in the *Inferno*, Nicholas III., after prophecying that he would be followed in his place of torture by Boniface, and afterwards by one who should be even more wicked, both by reason of his simony and by his subservience to the French king, exclaims :

“ Ma più è il tempo già che i piè mi cossi
E ch'io son stato così sottosopra,
Che non starà piantato coi piè rossi :
Che dopo lui [Bonifazio] verrà, di più laid'
opra
Di ver ponente un pastor senza legge,

Tal che convien che lui e me ricopra.
 Nuovo Jason sarà, di cui si legge
 Nei Maccabei : e come a quel fù molle
 Suo rè, così fia a lui chi Francia regge."

[Inf. xix. 79-87.]

[" But longer is the time already that I have been roasting my feet, and that I have thus remained upside-down, than he shall remain planted with his feet red : since after him will come from the Westward one of yet fouler deeds, a Pastor devoid of all law, one who will have to cover both him and me. He will be a new Jason, of whom we read in the Maccabees ; and as to that one his king was pliant, so to him will be he who rules France."]

The poet's dislike of yet another pope from the "ver ponente" (France), and of the French king's influence in his election and during his pontificate, are here skilfully alluded to in the reference to the High Priest Jason, and to his king, Antiochus Epiphanes. Lastly, in the *Paradiso*, we have two more references. In eulogising Can Grande, Cacciaguida predicts :

" Ma pria che il Guasco l'alto Enrico inganni,
 Paran faville della sua virtute."

(Par. xvii. 82-83.)

["But ere the Gascon cheats the noble Henry, some sparkles of his virtue shall appear."]

The "Gascon" here is, of course, the French pope, "the noble Henry," Henry VII. of Luxemburg, whom that pope at first invited to go to Rome for his coronation, but afterwards was said to have secretly opposed it. Lastly, this same pontiff is involved with the next pope in the denunciation by St. Peter of his successors :

"O difesa di Dio, perchè pur giaci ?

Del sangue nostro Caorsini e Guaschi

S'apparecchian di bere."

(Par. xxvii. 57-59.)

["O defending arm of God, why slumberest thou still? Of our blood they of Cahors and of Gascogne are making ready to drink."]

The "Guaschi" again conceal the Gascon pope, of whom it may be remarked that, though referred to in each part of the *Commedia*, his name is not once mentioned. By the "Caorsini" Dante alludes to the next and last of the popes who appear in the long gallery of his poem :

201. *John XXII.* (1316-1334.)

In 1316, after a vacancy of over two years, at last the cardinals succeeded in agreeing upon the election of Jacques d'Euse, the son of a shoemaker at Cahors in Guienne (hence the epithet Caorsini). He is said to have been of very small stature, which was proved to be true when in 1759 his tomb was opened in the Cathedral of Avignon, and his body, only five feet long, was found intact. He is also said to have been deformed, with a pale complexion and a shrill voice. In spite of these disadvantages of birth and person, he was a very learned man, had been chancellor to the King of Naples, afterwards Archbishop of Avignon, and finally Cardinal Bishop of Porto. His reign of eighteen years was a troubled one, between internal dissensions and the struggles concerning the imperial throne, which resulted in Louis of Bavaria being crowned in Rome in spite of the protest of the absent pope, and setting up an anti-pope—the first of quite a long series of imperial nominees—who took the name of Nicholas V. The very authority of the Papal See was, during his reign, attacked by the jurist Marsilius, the supporter of the pretensions of the imperial power. Later on, however, Louis abandoned Italy, and the anti-

pope, seeking out Pope John at Avignon, made his complete submission. It was during this pope's reign that Dante himself passed away, in the year 1321, at the age of fifty-six years. He had lived to see the transference of the papal residence to Avignon some twelve years before his death, though he could not foresee the long and deplorable absence of the papacy from Rome and Italy and its succession of popes of French nationality for nearly three quarters of a century. No wonder the poet was embittered in his outlook upon the Church and the Papal See, and that he was led to speak with acerbity of these French prelates and of the influence of the French King, specially galling to him with his exalted views of the imperial power, the temporal counterpart of that spiritual power which he esteemed and venerated so highly in the papacy, in spite of his conviction of the unworthiness of many of its occupants. This "Babylonian Captivity" seemed to shatter that ideal of Italian unity and glory which he had built up on the basis of this union and co-operation of Peter and Cæsar, of Papacy and Empire.

I have sufficiently indicated above that in my opinion, whatever abuses existed in the

Church in Dante's day, and however great the failings of many of the contemporary pontiffs, the poet cannot be acquitted of decided exaggeration and even injustice, in his treatment of some of them. No doubt he was largely sincere in his belief of the crimes for which he scourged them. The chronicles of that time, for instance those of Salimbeni di Adamo, the *Annals and Ecclesiastical History* of Tolomeo da Lucca, the *Chronica Minor* of Erfurt, and, above all, the *Chronicles* of Villani and Malespini, and the infamous libels published by the supporters of the Colonna family, "are such a mass and texture of falsehoods, calumnies, and accusations, especially against these three popes, that for many centuries the memory of these pontiffs has been handed down in dishonour to posterity. It is only in our times, in the light of documents hitherto unknown, that these popes have been restored to general esteem, vindicated by distinguished writers, who beneath the hammer of unimpassioned criticism have reduced to dust the calumnies and accusations of the old chroniclers, and relegated their stories to the land of fables. This being so, what wonder if Dante, in times when historical criticism was so little developed,

which were so full of rumours and partisan agitations, and being, as he was, a man of vivid and powerful fancy, a spirit quick to wrath, accepting as truths such accusations against these three popes, should thunder against them so terribly in the *bolge* of the *Inferno*? He was mistaken, no doubt, but his mistake is in great part to be excused by the circumstances of his time." (Bottagisio, *Cent. Dant.* vol. ii. 4.)

CHAPTER III.

THE POPES ON DANTE.

THE view above enunciated, it is pleasing to remark in conclusion, is that which has been held and professed by subsequent pontiffs, successors in a calmer and more critical age, of those so severely chastised in the indignant and burning verse of the great poet. To quote the three last.

Leo XIII. (who could recite by heart the entire *Divina Commedia*), on 29th March 1892, sending his warm approval of the proposed international monument to Dante at Ravenna, wrote: "Who is more worthy of the homage of a grateful posterity? . . . Personally, we are chiefly moved by the thought that he was an illustrious glory of Christendom. And although stung to wrath by the bitterness of exile, and frequently led by party feelings to swerve from equity in his judgment, yet did he never turn aside from the truth of Christian wisdom. Rather he derived from the depths of his

religion purer and loftier sentiments and fed the flame of his natural genius by the inspiration of divine faith." It is likewise recorded of this great pontiff that during his last hours on earth, his well-worn copy of the *Divina Commedia*, covered from beginning to end with the manuscript annotations of a lifetime, lay, side by side with the crucifix and the book of the Gospels beside his pillow.

Pius X., in 1904, acknowledging with commendations and thanks a superbly illustrated edition of the *Divina Commedia*, praises Italian art as being "the most noble companion and handmaid of the poems of Alighieri."

Lastly, Benedict XV. in 1914 addressed a long letter to the Archbishop of Ravenna eulogising the project of celebrating the poet's sixth centenary in that city, a letter far too long to quote here. He says that Dante is to be reckoned among "those illustrious men who, by the acumen of their intellect and the profundity of their studies, shed glory on their age," adding, "We know not whether any other among the poets of all time can be compared with him." But, he goes on to say, "there is an additional and particular reason why we maintain that we ought to celebrate his centenary with special

joy and the greatest solemnity: Dante is our very own (Aligherius Noster est)."

But the crowning testimony of the Holy See to Dante is the long and splendid Encyclical of Pope Benedict XV., *In præclara summorum copia hominum* (30th April 1921), on the Centenary celebrations, the finest and most complete vindication of the great poet which has ever been penned, from which I select the following two passages:—

"Astonishing is the high opinion Alighieri held of the authority of the Catholic Church and the power of the Roman Pontiff as that on which is based every law and institution of the Church itself. Wherefore, this energetic admonition to Christians: 'You have the Old and the New Testament and the Pastor of the Church who guides you; this is sufficient for your salvation.' He felt the evils from which the Church suffered as if they were his own, and, deploring and execrating every rebellion against the supreme head, he thus wrote to the Italian Cardinals during the stay of the popes at Avignon:—

We, then, who confess the same Father and Son, the same God and Man, and the same Mother and Virgin; we, for whom and for whose salvation was

said to him who out of love was interrogated three times: 'Peter, feed the sheep of My holy fold.' We of Rome (of that Rome for which, after the pomp of so many triumphs, Christ in word and work confirmed the empire of the world, and which Peter, and Paul, the Apostle of the Gentiles, consecrated as the Apostolic See with their own blood), are constrained with Jeremiah, lamenting not for the future but for the present, to grieve for as widowed and deserted; we are oppressed by sorrow at seeing her thus suffering, and also at seeing the lamentable plague of heresy. (Epist. viii.)

"But it will be said that he attacked the Sovereign Pontiffs of his time so bitterly and contumeliously. Yes, but these were popes who disagreed with him in politics, and who, he believed, belonged to the party that had banished him from his country. But we must extend pardon to a man so tossed about by fortune's terrible waves, if with a mind full of irritation he sometimes bursts into invectives which seem without measure, all the more because, to inflame his anger, there were not wanting evil reports, propagated, as is customary, by political adversaries, always inclined to put a bad interpretation on everything. Moreover, such is the weakness of mortals that even religious hearts must become stained with the grime of the world's dust,

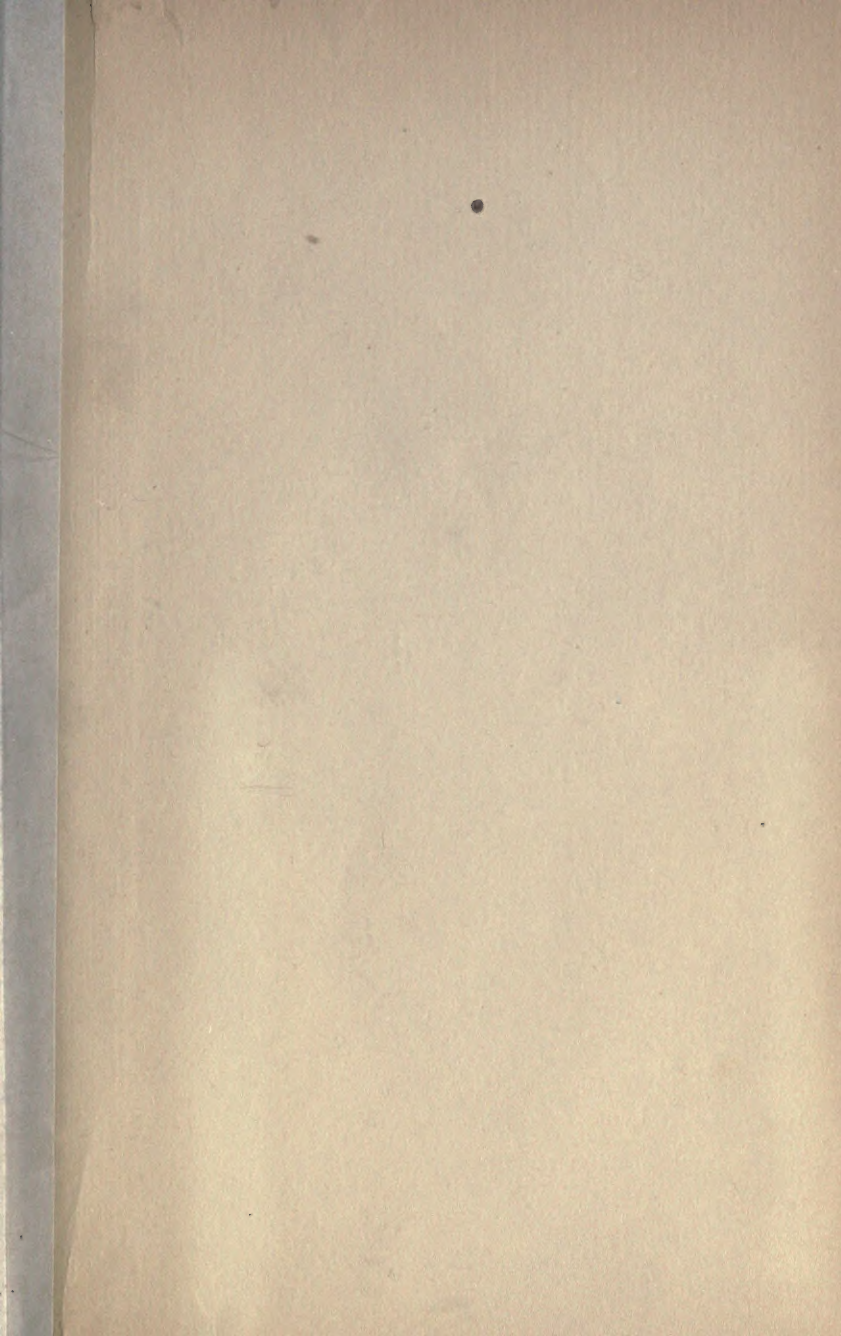
and who will deny that there were at that time among the clergy things to be reprov'd, at which a soul so devoted to the Church as that of Dante must have been quite disgust'd, and we know that men distinguish'd for eminent sanctity then emphatically reprov'd them. But however vehemently he rightly or rashly attacked ecclesiastical persons, not a whit less, however, was the respect which he felt due to the Church, and the reverence for the supreme keys; wherefore, in politics he knew how to defend his own opinion with 'that homage which a pious son should employ towards his own father—pious towards his mother, pious towards Christ, pious towards the Church, pious towards the pastor, pious towards all who profess the Christian religion for the protection of truth.' (*De Monarchia* iii. 16)."

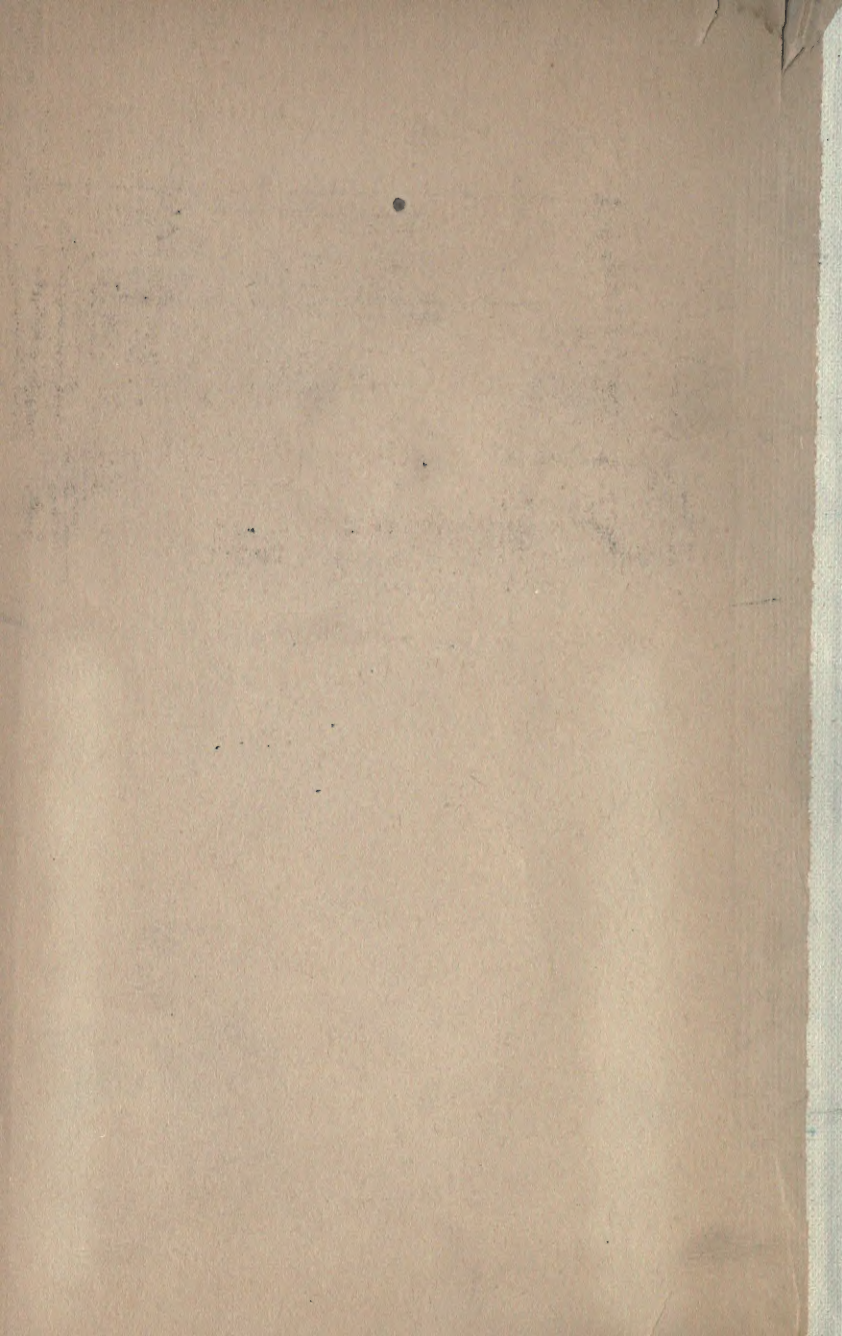
We have heard Dante at length on the popes; I am pleas'd to be able to conclude with these words of the popes on Dante.

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