

entrance, while armed retainers, by day and by night, patrolled the solid walls. In the interior there was constructed a still more impregnable tower, called the donjon, or keep, to which, in the last extremity, the lord could retreat with his followers. These old feudal castles were as gloomy as prisons, and imagination can hardly conceive of a more unattractive existence than that which must have been passed within their walls. The horrors of an assault must have been almost welcome, as a relief from the dreary monotony.

The death of the emperor Henry VI. left a minor, Frederic II., hereditary heir of the imperial throne. At the same time pope Innocent III., an exceedingly energetic and ambitious man of thirty-seven, was raised to the tiara. Under his administration the ecclesiastical pretensions of the papacy soared to a stupendous height. He devised the plan of seizing upon a state in the heart of Italy, that the spiritual prerogatives of the pope might be sustained by temporal power. With consummate ability he accomplished his plans, wielding such dominion over all the temporal powers of Europe, that every monarch trembled before him. He founded the two orders of Franciscan and Dominican friars, whose especial mission it was to extirpate heresy, and to repress all spirit of inquiry, and all activity of mind.

Innocent III. also organized the inquisition, intrusting its fearful powers to the Dominicans. He addressed his orders to the sovereigns of Europe with as much arrogance as if they had been merely his body servants. He formed a league of a large number of the Italian cities, called the Guelphic league, to favor the pretensions of the pontiff, in opposition to another league called the Ghibelline, in favor of the emperor. His intrigues were innumerable to place upon the throne of the German empire a prince who would be entirely submissive to his will. Innocent retained his scepter, ever gory with the blood of heretics, for eighteen years, when he passed to the tribunal of the King of kings—he the murderer of

thousands—he whose edicts have filled whole provinces with wailing and woe.

Pope Honorius III., who succeeded Innocent, refused to crown Frederic II., upon attaining his majority, until he took an oath that he would undertake the deliverance of Jerusalem from the Saracens. The kingdom of Naples was in a state of horrible anarchy, and Frederic led his armies to chastise the insurgents. He reared in Naples a magnificent palace, established a university, and greatly embellished the beautiful capital. Luxuriating in the pleasures of that delightful clime, the emperor forgot his vow to fight his way over the sands of Syria, for the rescue of the Holy City. Goaded by the reproaches of the pope, he made reluctant and inefficient preparations for the campaign, ever postponing energetic action, until Honorius died. Gregory IX., who succeeded, was so enraged by the dilatoriness of the emperor, that he thundered a bull of excommunication against him.

This act of energy accomplished its purpose. The emperor, imploring pardon, sailed for Palestine, and, landing at Jean d'Acre, commenced operations. But the pope, astounded and horror stricken, that a guilty wretch, who already by a bill of excommunication was handed over to the dominion of satan, should have the presumption to enter upon so holy an enterprise, reiterated his fulminations with renewed intensity. He even preached a crusade against Frederic, and sent an army to ravage his Italian kingdom of Naples. Frederic, perhaps, receiving a new impulse from these assaults, pressed forward, reconquered Jerusalem, and placed the crown upon his own brow. He then returned to Europe. The emperor and the pope, both fearing and detesting each other, concluded a hollow reconciliation.

Years rolled on, when Henry, son of Frederic II., instigated by the pope, revolted against his father. The energetic monarch crushed the rebellion, sent his son into imprisonment for life, ravaged the plains of Lombardy, which had sympa



thized in the treason of the prince, with fire and sword, and reëstablished his power. The pope again excommunicated Frederic, and directed a crusade against him as the enemy of the church. The emperor, in retaliation, put every one to death whom he found wearing the symbol of the cross. The pope summoned a council. The emperor sent a fleet to arrest the French bishops on their voyage. Genoa joined the pope; Pisa the emperor. The hostile squadrons met near the island of Melona. The imperial party were the victors. Immense treasure, in specie, fell into their hands; and the captive prelates were conveyed to Pisa, heavily loaded with chains forged from silver. The pontiff died of chagrin; but the rancor of his spirit lived in his successor, Innocent IV. Secretly he repaired to Genoa, thence to France, and summoned at Lyons a general council of bishops from France, Spain, and Italy. One hundred and forty met; and with all the pageantry and solemnities of ecclesiastical power, declared that the emperor had forfeited all his dignities, and that his subjects were absolved from their oaths of allegiance.

This was the most pompous act of excommunication the church had ever issued. It paralyzed the arm of Frederic. For five years he struggled unavailingly against the adverse fortune, in which these anathemas involved him, till in the silence of the tomb he found refuge from the scenes of a tumultuous life, such as few mortals have experienced.

Innocent IV., sheltered at Lyons, welcomed, with indecent rejoicings, the tidings of the death of Frederic II. He returned to Rome, through Lombardy, visiting most of the Guelph cities, where he was received with great rejoicing. The Ghibelline cities, which had espoused the imperial cause, were in consternation, and breathlessly awaited their doom. But Conrad IV. the son and successor of Frederic II., hastened to Italy, to revive their drooping courage. The pope declared that the kingdom of Naples, by the deposition of Frederic II. had reverted to the papacy. War was of course

the result. Different cities espoused different sides. There were burnings, plundering, carnage, outrage in every form, misery of every aspect. The imperial army at length prevailed. Affairs were thus when Conrad IV. died in the year 1254, leaving an infant son.

The hopes of the pope revived. The holy father raised an army and marched into the Neapolitan provinces, and forced all the barons to take the oath of allegiance to the holy see. Just then death's arrow cleft the air and quivered in the heart of Innocent IV. There was a sable hearse, nodding plumes, waxen tapers, processions of ecclesiastics in all the imposing robes of the church, chants, and requiems,—and Innocent IV., in the darkness and silence of the tomb, was left to be forgotten, while the insane strife of pride and ambition raged in the sunlight, without any check.

Rome was but a den of robbers. The populace were ignorant, fanatical, and blood-thirsty; the aristocracy, both ecclesiastical and temporal, were haughty and licentious. The monuments of ancient grandeur were converted by the barons into fortified castles, from whence they emerged for war or plunder, often filling the streets of the city with feuds, rapine, and bloodshed. The pope had exerted a little restraint; but his removal to Lyons, where he resided for five years, left the city to excesses which became absolutely intolerable. The citizens, in their despair, sent for a Bolognese noble, the celebrated Brancaleone, and invested him with almost dictatorial power. Energetically and nobly he accomplished his mission. At the head of the citizens he attacked the fortresses of the infamous nobles, who had set at defiance all the authority of civil law. One hundred and forty of these citadels, within the walls, were battered down, the assailants having first hanged their occupants on their own walls. This salutary severity worked quite a reform in the Roman pandemonium.

In the Lombard republics, the conflict between the aristocracy and the people increased in intensity, until in a fierce civil



war the people triumphed, and placed one of their partisans at the head of the government, which now retained only the empty forms of a republic. It was still one of the principal objects of the papacy to wrest Naples from the emperor. Upon the death of Alexander IV. his successor, pope Urban IV. offered the crown of Naples to the powerful French count Charles, of Anjou and Provence, if he would take the oath of allegiance to the pope, and aid in the conquest of the kingdom. Charles accepted the terms with alacrity. Accompanied by a thousand cavaliers, with well tempered coats of mail, composed of a double net work of iron rings—with helmets, gorgets, cuirasses, brassets, and cuishes of solid steel, he sailed from Marseilles to Rome. His powerful army advanced by land, cutting its route through Lombardy.

While these movements were in progress Urban IV. died, and Clement IV. succeeded to the tiara. By him Charles, of Anjou, was solemnly crowned, in the church of the Lateran, in Rome, king of the Two Sicilies. He then advanced to conquer and take possession of his kingdom. An illustrious general, Manfred, was then in the supreme command of the imperial forces, and virtually king. The hostile forces met on the plains of Grandella. The battle was fierce. But Manfred was slain, his army dispersed, and the kingdom submitted to the victor. In accordance with the ferocity of the times, the principal adherents of Manfred were slain; his wife and children were sent to a prison, where they lingered through all the remaining years of their wretched lives; and the whole country in the vicinity of the battle was surrendered to the soldiers for pillage, and for the indulgence in any license passion might instigate.

Two years after this battle the emperor, Conradin, then but nineteen years of age, crossed the Alps from Germany, with an army, to recover his lost kingdom of Naples. Triumphant he traversed northern and central Italy, and entered the frontiers of the Neapolitan kingdom. The young warrior

was outgeneraled by the veteran chieftain; his troops were cut to pieces, and the young emperor, who had not yet attained his twentieth year, was taken captive and infamously executed. As he stood upon the scaffold and bowed his neck to the executioner, he exclaimed:

“O, my mother! dreadful will be the grief that awaits thee for my fate.”

Florence had attained the first rank among Italian cities. With sunny skies, a pure and salubrious clime, and surrounded with a graceful amphitheater of hills, covered with vineyards and olive grounds, then was no other spot in beautiful Italy which surpassed it in loveliness. Commerce and agriculture had filled the city with a vast population and immense wealth. The Florentine cloths for three hundred years remained unrivaled in Europe. There were two noble families in Florence of immense wealth and power. The chief of the one noble house, that of Buondelmonti, a young man of great elegance and corresponding vanity, was affianced to a daughter of the other house, that of Uberti. But at length he abandoned her for another beauty. The indignant friends of the forsaken one, in revenge, murdered the gallant at mid-day, as, in a gala dress, on a milk-white steed, he was riding through the streets. The city was divided, and all Florence was embroiled in the deadly quarrel. The Buondelmonti party were attached to the church, and all the Guelph party rallied around them. The Uberti family were partisans of the emperor, and were warmly sustained by the Ghibellines. For thirty-three years this deadly feud continued with incessant scenes of blood-shed. At length the Ghibelline nobles, aided by some German cavalry, drove the Guelphs from the city, and seizing the government threw themselves under imperial protection.

The people, crushed by aristocratic insolence, in less than two years rose in an insurrection, and revolutionized the government, and the influence of the pope again became dominant. It was at this time that the celebrated Florentine coin



called the florin, which attained such celebrity during the middle ages, was issued from the mint. The Ghibellines appealed to the Sicilies, then under the emperor, to aid them. The two armies met before the gates of Sienna, and the Florentine Guelphs, though arrayed in a force of thirty thousand infantry and three thousand cavalry, were routed with dreadful slaughter. The Guelph nobles fled, and Florence surrendered to the Ghibellines. The city was held in subjection by, a strong force of foreign lancers garrisoned within its walls.

The exiled Guelphs joined Charles of Anjou, as under the banners of the pope he marched to the conquest of Sicily. After the successful termination of this enterprise, aided by Charles, they marched upon Florence, drove out the Ghibellines, and reestablished themselves there. Such was the condition of all Italy, generation after generation. The rush of armies, the blaze of conflagration, and blood-stained fields of battle, every where meet the eye. Now one party is victorious and now the other; and both are equally worthless. The aristocrat tramples upon the democrat; and the democrat takes vengeance by trampling still more fiercely upon the weak, whom his strong arm can crush. Imperial Germany smites metropolitan Milan. And metropolitan Milan, springing up from the blow, smites poor little Lodi. Aristocracy has been the curse of our globe, and history proves that this vice has existed with just as much venom in the heart of the plebeian as in the heart of the patrician.

There is but one remedy for these evils. It is the democracy of the gospel of Christ—the recognition of the brotherhood of man. There is but one hope for the world, and that is in the extension of the pure religion of the gospel. Form of government are of but little avail so long as the men who wield those governments are selfish and depraved. When the hearts of men are changed by the influences of Christianity, so that man the lion becomes man the lamb, then, and not till then, will the sword be beaten into the plowshare. Govern-

ments become better only so fast as the men who organize and administer those governments become better. There may be republican empires, and there may be despotic republics. The voice of all history proclaims, that in the religion of Jesus is to be found, the only hope for this lost world.