

CHAPTER XXV.

ITALIAN ANARCHY.

FROM A. D. 1266 TO A. D. 1400.

THE GUELPHS AND Ghibellines.—TRAGIC FATE OF BONIFAZIO AND IMALDA.—EXTENT OF THE PAPAL STATES.—THE SICILIAN VESPERS.—CONFLICT BETWEEN GENOA AND PISA.—RUIN OF PISA.—STATE OF FLORENCE.—OF SICILY.—THE PAPAL COURT REMOVED TO AVIGNON.—THE ROMANCE OF ANDREW AND JOANNA.—CONFLICT FOR THE THRONE OF NAPLES.—GENERAL VIEW OF ITALY.—VENICE AND GENOA.—THE ANTAGONISTIC POPES.—THEIR WARS.—ACCESSION OF LADISLAUS TO THE THRONE OF NAPLES.—CRUEL FATE OF CONSTANCE.

THE triumph of the Guelph, or church party, in Florence, banished the Ghibellines, and confiscated their property. It was in fact a triumph of the popular party over the aristocracy, who were generally imperialists.

The record of the wealth and power to which the Venetian republic attained, remains to the present hour one of the marvels of history. Her fleet conquered Constantinople, and that city was retained by Venice for fifty-seven years. At the time of its greatest power, Venice held nominal sway over three eighths of the old Roman empire. For half a century Genoa and Venice were engaged in one incessant battle: fighting over the spoils of the eastern empire. Venice called Pisa to her aid. Genoa entered into alliance with the Greeks, and thus the demon of war rioted over the wreck of human happiness.

The cruel death of Conradin terminated for many years the German imperial sway in Italy. The emperors, entirely engrossed by troubles at home, had no forces to spare for the reconquest of these southern realms. From the middle of the thirteenth century for two hundred years, Italy presents a

tumultuous scene of domestic tragedies, implacable factions, and unceasing wars. Charles of Anjou, whose escutcheon can never be cleansed from the blot of the foul execution of Conradin, pursued with merciless massacre all who were suspected of adherence to the Ghibelline party. The native Sicilians hated venomously their French conquerors. Charles, as energetic as he was cruel, rapidly consolidated and strengthened his power. Even Florence bestowed on him nominal seigniorship, and the pope invested him with the high powers of vicar-general of Tuscany. Nearly all the cities of Lombardy, ever exposed to outrage from the neighboring cities, chose Charles for their seignior; while others sought for the most intimate alliance with him, offensive and defensive.

These successes fed the flame of his ambition; and, as he could rely upon the military arm of his powerful brother Louis IX., king of France, he began to turn a wistful eye toward the fragments of the eastern empire. Pope Gregory X., the friend and almost the creature of Charles, endeavored in vain to compose the deep seated animosities which agitated Italy. An event which occurred at Bologna at this time, may be mentioned in illustration of the melancholy condition of humanity.

There were two rival noble houses, equally proud, haughty, and powerful. One belonged to the Ghibelline, the other, to the Guelph faction. They had long been arrayed against each other, in deadly enmity. But love, in youthful hearts, triumphed over domestic feuds. Bonifazio, of the one family, loved the beautiful Imalda of the other; and his love was warmly requited. In one of their stolen interviews, in the palace of the maiden, her brothers, watching, rushed upon Bonifazio, and, as their sister fled in terror, dispatched him with their poisoned daggers, and dragged his body to a deserted court. The unhappy girl, returning, followed the traces of the blood, and found the yet warm and palpitating corpse of her lover. Frenzied with agony, with the hope of reviving

him she endeavored to suck the poison from his wounds. She, however, only imbibed the venom herself; and the two were found lifeless together.

The two houses were goaded to desperation. Their respective factions espoused their cause. For forty days the battle raged almost incessantly in the streets and among the palaces of Bologna. The Guelphs triumphed. The Ghibellines, who had assassinated young Bonifazio, were driven from the city, with their associates. Their palaces were torn down, and ten thousand citizens were involved in their ruin. These exiles rallied in a distant town; summoned all the neighboring Ghibellines to their aid, and marched upon Bologna, defeating the Guelphs in two battles without the walls. The Guelphs, alarmed, appealed to Charles of Naples. He sent them a governor and a garrison, and Bologna became a fief of Charles of Anjou.

The independence of all Italy was now threatened by his assumptions. The pontiff was so much alarmed that he wished to raise a power antagonistic to that of Charles, and influenced the German electors to give an efficient head to the empire by the choice of Rodolph of Hapsburg, the illustrious founder of the present house of Austria. The pope could now, in the furtherance of his plans, appeal to either one of these monarchs against the other, he holding the balance of power between them.

Pope Gregory X. died in the year 1276, and, in the short space of twelve months, three succeeding popes closed their mortal career. Nicholas III. was then invested with the tiara, and he wielded the pontifical scepter with consummate energy and sagacity. He was very adroit in playing Rodolph and Charles against each other. He thus succeeded in attaching to the holy see the provinces, or marches, as they were then called, of Romagna and Ancona, formerly belonging to the Countess Matilda. By this act the papal states acquired the extent of territory which they retain to the present day

These states now contain about seventeen thousand square miles, being about equal to Massachusetts and New Hampshire united, and contain a population of about three millions. There were twenty provinces composing these states, some of them being provinces of considerable extent, and others merely cities, each independent of the rest, and governed by its duke, or lord, or assembly of citizens. The authority of the pope consisted merely in his taking the place of the emperor. He had no more control over their internal government than the president of the United States has over that of the individual states. The states of the church took the oath of supremacy to the pope; stamped his image upon their coin; paid him a certain amount of tribute, and sent their allotted quota of soldiers to his banners in case of war. Thus affairs stood for two centuries.

Italy was at this time essentially divided into three portions. All the provinces of southern Italy were combined into the kingdom of Naples, under Charles of Anjou. Central Italy was conglomerated into the papal states, under the sovereignty of the pope. The northern provinces acknowledged the feudal sovereignty, of Rodolph of Hapsburg, emperor of Germany.

Upon the death of Nicholas III., Charles of Naples, by bribery and threats, constrained the cardinals to place one of his own creatures, Martin IV., upon the papal throne. Aided by the pope, the ambitious tyrant was preparing an expedition for the conquest of Greece, when a terrible revolt broke out in his own realms. A man of amazing skill and sagacity, Procida, united all the bold barons of Sicily in a conspiracy to expel the French from Italy. Peter, king of Aragon, who, by marriage, was entitled to the throne of Naples, and the emperor Michael, at Constantinople, who was dreading the threatened invasion, joined eagerly to aid the insurgents. The conspiracy burst like a clap of thunder in a cloudless day, and

with terrors which, to the present hour, have echoed through the corridors of history.

On Easter Monday, in the year 1282, as the citizens of Palermo, in gorgeous procession, were celebrating the resurrection of our Saviour, a young maiden, of rank and beauty, was brutally insulted by a French soldier. The crowd avenged her by instantly piercing the wretch with his own sword. It was in the early evening, and the vesper bell was tolling. The hour of retribution had arrived. The stifled cry burst forth. Thousands, seizing their concealed weapons, rushed into the streets, and not a Frenchman in Palermo escaped. Four thousand perished that night. All over the island the work of death spread, and did not cease till eight thousand of the invaders perished in the horrible massacre of the SICILIAN VESPER.

All Sicily burst into a flame of insurrection. The French were utterly exterminated, and Peter, of Aragon, who was hovering near with a powerful fleet, was invited to assume and defend the kingdom. Charles, almost bursting with rage, instantly crossed the straits, and with an army which he had prepared for the Greek war, assailed Messina. But suddenly the formidable fleet of Peter appeared in the horizon, and Charles was compelled to a precipitate retreat—his whole fleet being seized and burned before his eyes. Peter of Aragon was now sovereign of Sicily.

The pride of Charles was humbled to the dust. At the moment when in the lordliness of power he was exulting in the prospective conquest of the eastern empire, he found his arm of strength paralyzed. Even his own son was the captive of Peter. Overwhelmed with agony he sickened, groaned, and died.

The maritime city of Pisa had become, as it were, a nation. Lucrative traffic had lined her streets with palaces, and filled those palaces with opulence. The city, imperial in power, had established colonies at Constantinople, at Jean d'Acre, in

Syria, and was in possession of Sardinia and Corsica. Her nobles, in the extent of their possessions, and the pomp of their retinues, often rivaled princes. The majestic cathedral she had reared, and the beautiful leaning tower, both erected in the eleventh and twelfth centuries still remain among the wonders of the world.

Wealth and power fostered pride and arrogance; and Pisa fell. She grossly insulted Genoa, and outraged her rights. War ensued. For two years the powerful republics struck each other terrific blows, and it was uncertain which would fall, crushed and dying on the arena. The envenomed battle could only terminate in the destruction of one or the other. A tempest, unfortunately or providentially, swept half the Pisan navy upon the rocks, and the bells in Genoa rang merrily. Twenty-four galleys laden with treasure, passing from Pisa to Sardinia, were captured by the Genoese; and still more merrily pealed her cathedral chimes, and still more pompously ascended the chaunt of her *Te Deums*. Pisa, in desperation, roused for a decisive effort.

The Pisans descended the Arno with three hundred galleys manned by twenty-five thousand troops. The Genoese met them, at the mouth of the river with one hundred and thirty galleys, crowded with thirty thousand troops. Providence aided the strong battalions, and the naval glories of Pisa in that dreadful day of tumult and carnage, perished forever. Eleven thousand were carried away into captivity. The remainder were sunk in the sea. Ten thousand of the prisoners perished in the dungeons of Genoa, during an imprisonment of eight years. The survivors, then but one thousand in number, emaciated and woe-stricken, were ransomed and returned to their friends.

With selfishness which should make human nature blush, the Guelph cities of Tuscany, all pounced together upon defenseless Pisa in this her hour of adversity. Through lingering scenes of desperation, agony, and crime, the republic

perished. Three short summers destroyed the growth of ages.

Florence, agitated by factions of citizens and nobles, was in a state of incessant tumult and blood-shed. In the vanquishment of one of these parties, called the White Guelphs, an illustrious man, whose name is now immortal—Dante—was driven into exile, where he lingered sorrowfully until he died. The genius of suffering inspired his immortal poem, *The Inferno*. The vision of hell, purgatory, and paradise, is by almost unanimous assent, pronounced to be one of the loftiest creations of human genius. The personages of his own day live in the awful scenes of his poem, and their lineaments are painted upon the canvas in colors which can never fade away.

Peter of Aragon did not long survive the conquest of Sicily. Upon his death he transferred the crown to James, his second son. The crown of Naples, divested of the beautiful island of Sicily, remained upon the brow of Charles II., son and heir of Charles of Anjou. Sicily contained ten thousand five hundred and eight square miles, being a little larger than the state of New Hampshire, and was inhabited by a mixed population of about two millions. It will be remembered that Charles, the son of the king of Naples, had been taken prisoner by Peter. He was subsequently released upon his relinquishing all claim to the island of Sicily.

But oaths in those days were made but to be broken. As soon as Charles II. was safely seated on his throne of Naples, the pope absolved him from his oath, and crowned him king of Naples and of Sicily, or, of the Two Sicilies, as the insular and continental kingdom was then called. France united with Charles II. Aragon combined with James of Sicily. The Ængs of war were again let loose. In the midst of these wars and intrigues the king of Aragon died, and James left Sicily to assume that richer crown. He passed the scepter of the island into the hands of his third brother Frederic.

In a spirit of infamy, which even all past atrocities do not

enable us to contemplate but with amazement, James of Aragon, then purchased the favor of the pope by marrying a daughter of Charles II of Naples, surrendered Sicily again to Charles, and pledged his armies to aid in its reconquest for Charles II., should his brother Frederic and the Sicilians make any opposition to the transfer. For this act of perfidy the holy father gave James his blessing, and gave him Sardinia and Corsica, of which he had robbed Genoa, and of which Genoa had robbed Pisa.

But Frederic was not disposed to lose his crown; neither were the Sicilians ready to relinquish their independence. The war was long and fierce, but Frederic finally triumphed over his combined foes. The miserable pope Boniface VIII. eventually died of insanity and rage. His successor Benedict XI. was poisoned by two cardinals, hired to commit the deed by the king of France, called Philip the Fair. Philip then succeeded in placing the tiara upon the brow, and the keys in the hands, of one of his own archbishops, whom he had bribed into the most uncompromising obedience to his wishes.

Clement V. first very generously pardoned all the sins of the regal assassin; and decorated himself with those pontifical robes, beneath which the concealed king of France, directed all the movements of the automaton pontiff. For the accommodation of his royal master he abandoned Italy, and took up his residence in France.

Nearly sixty years had now elapsed since any German emperor had descended the Alps, to assert, through terror of his banners, imperial sway in Italy. In the year 1310, Henry VII., at the head of an imposing body of cavalry, came clattering down upon the plains of Lombardy. Nobles of all ranks, leaders of all factions, delegates from all cities crowded to his head-quarters, to secure their own triumph, by being received into alliance with him. Henry welcomed all with the same affability. By intrigue and a few battles he took possession of Lombardy, and plundered it mercilessly. But

no sooner had the vision of his banners disappeared, on the other side of the Alps, than all Italy was up in arms against him.

The thunders of the approaching strife were reverberating over all the hills of Italy, when death smote the monarch and he fell silent into the tomb. Louis of Bavaria, after a long and bloody war, had attained the imperial crown. He marched upon Italy to compel its homage. It was the summer of 1327. At Milan he received the iron crown of Lombardy. He then marched into Tuscany; captured enfeebled Pisa, after the short siege of a month; extorted heavy contributions; erected the state of Lucca into an imperial duchy, and then marched upon Rome. Here he wasted his time in the ceremony, then a mere frivolity, of being crowned emperor by the pope.

Troubles in Germany suddenly compelled him to recross the Alps, and he left behind him in Italy the exasperating remembrance of plunder and outrage. Again anarchy and contending factions reigned in northern Italy. The wars of rival dukes, the battles of democratic cities, the intrigues of petty factions, have, in the lapse of time, become too insignificant to be recorded, though in the day of their virulent activity they were the wide spread cause of woe.

Robert of Naples, during the most of a long reign, had protected his kingdom from internal strife and foreign invasion, though much of the time he had been engaged in foreign wars. When Frederic of Sicily died, after a military reign of forty years, he was succeeded by his son Peter II. This monarch had hardly taken his seat upon the throne, ere he died, leaving it to his infant son Louis. Robert of Naples, a melancholy old man, drawing near to death, with no male heirs, offered the crown to Andrew, son of his nephew, king of Hungary, on condition that the lad should repair to the court of Naples for his education, and, in due time, should

marry Joanna, the emperor's orphan granddaughter, then a child of seven years.

Andrew proved to be a low, brutal, semi-savage, weak in intellect, and barbarous in manners—entirely beyond the reach of refined culture. The beautiful Italian princess, reared in the most brilliant though most corrupt court in Europe, despised the princely boor, who was destined to be her husband. Robert, eighty years of age, convinced of the utter incapacity of Andrew to reign, left the throne to Joanna, excluding Andrew. He established a regency, providing that her administration should not commence until the completion of her twenty-fifth year.

Joanna was but sixteen when her grandfather died. She was beautiful, vivacious, inexperienced, of impassioned temperament, and was surrounded by princes of the blood, high-born gallants, dissolute men, and dissolute women, in a court which has seldom been rivaled in the splendor of its voluptuousness. The religion of the court was the religion of ecclesiasticism and ceremony, not the religion of political integrity and moral purity. The result was, as a matter of course. Joanna became a beautiful wanton.

Andrew and Joanna quarreled. Both claimed the crown. Two parties were formed. The friends of Joanna seized Andrew one night, in a remote castle to which he had been lured, on a hunting excursion, slipt a noose which had been carefully prepared over his neck, and threw him out of one of the windows. The foul murder created an insurrection. The Hungarian party gained the ascendancy. Joanna was compelled to surrender the assassins, and they were put to death with frightful tortures.

Louis, the elder brother of Andrew, was now king of Hungary. He gathered an army to avenge the fate of his brother, and, as his heir, to claim the throne of Naples. The queen, in the meantime, had married one of her lovers. The nobles and the people welcomed the army of invasion, and

Louis, almost without a struggle, took possession of the throne. He did not long retain it. Leaving garrisons in the strong places he returned to Hungary. The queen rallied her friends, having secured the coöperation of the pope, and after a warfare of three years, during which the most shocking atrocities were perpetrated on both sides, she regained her kingdom.

The popes still continued, under French sway, to reside in Avignon in France. Their supremacy in Italy was decidedly weakened by this foreign residence. Decayed and debauched nobles occupied the edifices in Rome, which remained majestic monuments of ancient grandeur. From these fortresses they sallied forth, with their retainers, in the prosecution of party feuds, of public robberies, and of nameless outrages of the darkest iniquity. The shadow of republican institutions was retained. It was, however, but the shadow. The citizens were reduced to the deepest misery, by the insolent excesses of the nobles, who garrisoned their castles with robber bands, setting all laws at defiance.

In the year 1342, a deputation from Rome visited the pope at Avignon, imploring him to reëstablish the holy see in its original seat. Clement VI., who was then the pope, declined, and the people of Rome, in despair, rose against the nobles. Rienzi, the leader of this reform, as soon as he felt the reins of power in his hands, intoxicated with success, plunged into voluptuous and capricious tyranny, which rivaled that of the nobles whom he had overthrown. Loaded with obloquy, Rienzi abdicated his power and fled from Rome, and the city relapsed into its former anarchy.

For the first half of the fourteenth century all Italy was the theater of incessant sanguinary wars, provoked by the selfishness and ambition of the rival states. It mattered but little what forms of government were adopted, the powerful were ever endeavoring to trample upon the weak, and the weak were combining to trample upon the powerful. In the

year 1346, a general famine desolated Italy. The famine was followed the next year by pestilence, which spread over all Europe. The history of the world affords no parallel to this great pestilence, which, it is estimated, swept away three-fifths of the human race. It was impossible to bury the dead. All restraints were forgotten, all the ties of humanity were unloosed in the general consternation.

It seemed as though the pestilence was doing the work of the flood—exterminating a race unfit to occupy the earth. But so soon as the ravages were stayed, the survivors grasped their arms and renewed their insane assaults upon each other.

Venice claimed to be queen of the Adriatic, and as such to be exclusively entitled to the navigation of that sea. A yearly ceremony was introduced by which the doge, in type of this sovereignty, wedded the Adriatic. Genoa resisted the claim, and sent one hundred and sixty galleys, with thirty thousand soldiers, to enforce her protest. Venice raised a similar force. Horrid scenes ensued of carnage on the sea, and slaughter and conflagration on the land.

In the progress of this war the government of Venice gradually passed into the hands of the aristocracy, and the famous Council of Ten was organized, which long ruled Venice with despotic sway, unhappily the only sway which could preserve from anarchy. The gloomy tranquillity of the prison-dungeon prevailed in the streets of Venice, while all other cities of Italy were in an incessant ferment. The innocent and the guilty were alike liable to be stricken down. Every act of the government was veiled in fearful obscurity. Spies were everywhere. Individuals of highest position disappeared, never to be heard of again. No one dared ask a question.

Let us contemplate for a moment the aspect of Italy in the middle of the fourteenth century. Rome was rapidly falling into decay. The seat of the popedom was removed to Avignon, beyond the Alps, and the pope was but little more than the tool of the sovereigns of France. Clement VI., the reign-