

The Italian Renaissance and Popes of Avignon

study of Roman law. Italy was heir to the mid-day splendor of Roman literature, with its Virgils, its Horaces, its Ciceros, its Quintilians. Not only this, but as Carducci says, "By the fall of Constantinople Italy became sole heir and guardian of the ancient civilization of Greece."

But it is a mistake to consider that it was the discovery of some manuscripts by Petrarch at Verona, or the appointment of Manuel Chrysoloras to the chair of Greek at the Florence University in 1396, that set aglow the skies of the Italian Renaissance.

A writer tells us that the growth of civilization is as gradual and imperceptible as that of an oak tree. It does not suddenly pass from night to day, not even from night to twilight. So was the Renaissance in Italy ushered in slowly, and the factors which contributed to this great intellectual awakening were indeed many.

Now, not the least of these factors was the Papal Court, whether its influence went out from Rome or Avignon. It seems to us strange—nay, absurd—that historians of the Italian Renaissance eagerly gather up every vagrant straw that may contribute to their theory as to the cause of the great intellectual awakening of Italy in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, but absolutely ignore the