

mans disregarded the papal orders and threats, while the Lombard soldiers, considered at that time among the best in Europe, were anxious to be led directly into Italy, to avenge on the pope himself the insult offered their master. Another pontiff was named, under the name of Clement III., as a preliminary step, and Henry prepared himself in grim earnest to crush his implacable enemy. Not knowing what to do, feeling that his adversary was every day gaining strength and confidence, while his friends were becoming more and more weakened and disheartened, Gregory VII. hit as a last resort upon a most dangerous expedient—he resolved to prophecy. It was a desperate course, which one would hardly have expected to see so able a man as Hildebrand adopt. Prophesying, unless the accomplishment be placed at some safely distant date (and then it loses most of its force), is always a very dangerous experiment, as William Miller and Dr. Cumming have ascertained in our day. Seeing, however, how precarious his situation was, Gregory resolved to renew the courage of Rodolph's followers by predicting their success within a short space of time. In the dark ages, more even than now, though unscrupulous use is still made of the same powerful weapon, the Roman pontiffs were in the habit, by ceremony and ostentation, of imposing upon the credulity and striking the attention of their ignorant hearers. The more imposing the display, the greater was found to be its effect. The more vividly, therefore, to impress upon the minds of the witnesses, the solemnity of the occasion and the importance of the utterance, full pontifical robes were called into requisition, and to pronounce with all due pomp and majesty the prophecy which a few months was to prove false, Gregory VII. mounted the pulpit in full canonicals. The opening words of his address as given by olden writers, and repeated by Bayle, were certainly

such as to arrest attention :—" Call me no longer pope, but cast me from the altar, if before the feast of St. Peter this prophecy hath not been accomplished." The prophecy was neither more nor less than the death of Henry, and some historians do not scruple to declare that the assassins hired to make true the prediction failed in their efforts, otherwise there would have been another and a more glorious wonder to add to the long list of miracles which, later on, were to result in the canonization of St. Hildebrand. The first victim of this deception was the unfortunate tool the pope had used to cross and embarrass Henry. Full of confidence in a prediction which he believed could not fail, Rodolph forced an engagement, and fell mortally wounded in the first onslaught.

It now became necessary to explain this miracle of miracles, and satisfy the people how it was that the word of an infallible pope, since canonized as a saint, with the gift of extraordinary powers in the smallest vestige left of the smallest joint of his smallest toe, could have been found so disastrously erroneous. Henry was alive and successful, Rodolph had been vanquished and killed; of those two facts there could be no doubt, and yet the feast of St. Peter had come and gone. The question seemed a difficult one to solve; but where has clerical astuteness proved unequal to dealing with the doubt of the ignorant, or the misgivings of the credulous? His holiness soon found an explanation of the difficulty and gave a solution of the mystery, which doubtless proved satisfactory to those who heard it. It seems almost too laughable to be transcribed at this day, but it comes to us as well established as most facts in remote history, and, as such, we accept it as true, though scarcely able to realize to ourselves a state of society in which such an occurrence could take place. The pope simply explained that, from the date of