

she learnt to write. Before this she had been dependent on the secretaries who willingly came to her from every walk of life. She became an ambassador in bonds for the Pope. She went to Pisa and Lucca to persuade these towns not to join an anti-papal league. For the same purpose she went to Florence, where a Papal Legate was flayed alive, and where she just missed martyrdom herself in 1378, to a regret as poignant as Togo felt because Tsushima denied him a victorious death. She was sent as an Envoy Extraordinary to and from the Papal Court, on what were practically international affairs; and at Avignon in 1376 she certainly became a self-appointed Minister Plenipotentiary, and gained her ends by sheer moral suasion. This alone fixes her historical position firmly within mediæval times. It would almost be a modern parallel if the Tzar Alexander II. had sent Father John of Kronstadt to checkmate Lord Beaconsfield at the Congress of Berlin, and if Father John had nominated himself into the chair for the two Peace Conferences at Hague.

By the irony of fate she failed only in world-politics. She bent all her energies, she literally gave her very life, in a vain attempt to unite Italy and the rest of Christendom round the universal Church, centred in Rome and reformed from within. She did, indeed, do more than anyone else to bring back Gregory XI. from Avignon; and Urban VI. began with a fury of reform. But the one had the velvet glove without the gauntlet, and the other the gauntlet without the velvet glove. Besides, the times were hopelessly out of course for the nice re-adjustment of temporal and spiritual affairs from the obsolescent mediæval point of view. She was too late and too early for the work on which she had set her heart. She was too late, because the age of St. Francis was the last when any such scheme would have had a chance of acceptance throughout all Christendom. She would have made an excellent Franciscan in all departments of woman's aid, from the revivifying tours with the saint—which did, within the Church, what Methodists and Salvationists have since done outside it—to the royal interview between "Beatus Ægidius" and St. Louis, whom she would have found a far more kindred spirit than the other King of France to whom she wrote. She was too early, because no Luther had yet aroused Loyola and Theresa to lead a counter-reformation in that part of Christendom which was naturally Roman Catholic by temperament and circumstances. And, in her own generation, she could have little affinity with the intellectual Joachites, the followers of the holy Joachim da Fiore, who thought the Church had not always been the same, and that it should develop dynamically in adaptation to the needs of a changing world. The Joachites were, in fact, empirical evolutionists, and not favoured by the upholders