

The Italian Renaissance and Popes of Avignon

to propose to Benedict XII. a reunion of the Greek and Latin Churches.

On his return from Rome in 1342, where he had received the laurel crown of poetry, Petrarch found Barlaam at Avignon and requested from him lessons in Greek. Another instructor of the poet Petrarch in Greek was Nicolas Sigeros, also a Byzantine envoy to the Court of Avignon. When the latter had terminated his negotiations with Clement VI. and had to return to Constantinople, Petrarch made him promise that he would search for manuscripts of Cicero which might be hidden in the libraries of the Bosphorus. Sigeros, however, found none, but to show his good-will he sent to his friend of Avignon a copy of the poems of Homer.

It was Petrarch's different visits to Rome that inspired in him a love for antiquity. His first visit to the Eternal City was on the invitation of his friend, the Bishop of Lombez, in 1337, and it is from this year that his Roman patriotism dates, which henceforth inspires all his works and in particular his Latin poem, "Africa," and which, too, made him the enthusiastic friend of Rienzi.

A study of the life of Petrarch reveals the fact that it was the good offices of the Papal Court of Avignon which placed him in touch with the eminent Greek and Latin scholars of