

THE ITALIAN RENAISSANCE AND THE POPES OF AVIGNON

THERE is probably no other period in the history of the world in which the attitude of the Papacy toward art and letters has been so misrepresented by certain writers as that of the Italian Renaissance. If one takes up the works of such well-known historians of this period as Pastor, Burckhardt and Symonds, the conflict of opinion is so great that one almost despairs of getting at the real truth.

The charm of style in the work of Symonds is so seductive that for the moment misrepresentation and contradiction pass unheeded and one is swept along a current of rhetoric, dazzled now by the coloring of thought, now by the very atmosphere which rests upon the art headlands and uplands of this transition period.

The Italian Renaissance flowered during the fifteenth century, but it drew its nutrition from the soil of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. The spirit of free inquiry and delight in beauty which are especially credited as belonging to the Italian Renaissance had a