

are full of plain speaking against ugly sins; yet none are more wonderfully persuasive. She did in very truth become the spiritual "dearest sister" of each correspondent, and the "Slave of the servants of Jesus Crucified;" and no one better understood how many different ways of holiness could lead to the one Heaven, adapted to every variety of character: "in my Father's house are many mansions" is her favourite refrain. The world had need of her in that lax age of sundering strife, which is only too well described in the chronicle of Neri di Donato for 1373:—" . . . the Brothers of St. Austin killed their Provincial at Sant' Antonio, and in Siena was much fighting. At Assisi, the Brothers Minor fought, and killed fourteen with the knife. The Brothers of the Rose fought and drove six away. . . . So all Religious everywhere seemed to have strife and dissension among themselves. And every Religious, of whatever rule, was oppressed and insulted by the world. . . . It seems there are divisions over all the world. In Siena loyalty was not observed; gentlemen did not show it among themselves nor outside; nor did the Nine among themselves, nor with people outside, nor did the Twelve. The people did not agree with their leader, nor exactly with any one else."

The youngest of the twenty-five children of a common dyer of Siena, St. Catherine was only sixteen when she had already lived down the opposition excited by her precocious ecstasies, her visions, her vows and her ascetic practices. Devoted followers began to gather round her; and she threw herself into the work of rescuing errant souls from this mad flux of evil with all the effectiveness of the practical mystic. It was characteristic of her that when she started on a pilgrimage, at the age of eight, she took bread and water with her, lest the angels might forget her on the way. Her success in personal persuasion was the wonder of her own age, as it has been of all succeeding. The consummation of her visions came on the last day of the carnival of 1367, when she was divinely espoused to her Redeemer. Henceforth she knew herself "bought with a price." She had previously become a Dominican tertiary, one of those devout women who live at home under religious rule. She never sought the cloisters; but, on the contrary, became more active in domestic and social life as time went on. She quickly got into touch with people of all classes, all occupations, all opinions. There never was a wider correspondence: with two Popes, several cardinals and many humbler "religious" of both sexes; with the King of France and the concupiscent Giovanna, Queen of Naples; with the reclaimed Brother William of England, and with that redoubtable free-lance, Sir John Hawkwood; with the members of her own humble family, and with others as various as they were many. Yet it was only in 1377, when she was thirty, that