

The most able of the three was, in all probability, Gregory VII., known in the Romish calendar as St. Hildebrand, since he led the way which the others followed. He mounted the papal throne in 1073, at the age of sixty, and reigned twelve years, during five of which his authority was contested by anti-pope Clement III. Though he was comparatively an old man when he finally accepted the tiara, no pope ever came to the office more thoroughly prepared for the course he intended to pursue, and so thoroughly experienced in all matters relating to the papacy. His three immediate predecessors may be said to have been appointed by him: Stephen IX., Nicholas II. and Alexander II., whom he succeeded. Over Victor II., who preceded Stephen, and who is known as a reformer, he is also said to have exercised considerable power. In truth, at the death of Leo IX., known as St. Leo, and respected for his efforts to control simony and the incontinency of the clergy, the influence of Hildebrand had become so great that the Romans empowered him, singly, to choose a successor, and he selected Victor II., whom he may be said to have imposed upon the Emperor Henry III. Victor's successors were mere tools in the arrogant prelate's hands. It may therefore be said that for twenty-five years before he ascended the papal throne as Gregory VII., Hildebrand in truth was pope of Rome. Guizot, in speaking of him, calls him with great happiness of expression, "the Czar Peter of the Roman Catholic Church."

Though Gregory VII. came to the throne at an advanced age, and his reign was not long, he certainly managed to make it a stirring one. Besides his great quarrels with the Emperor Henry IV. of Germany, he was at various times involved in difficulties with no less than four other potentates,--over some of whom he triumphed; from others he received but sorry satisfac-

tion; almost all he ruthlessly excommunicated, some repeatedly. The most noteworthy of these refractory sons of the Church were our William the Conqueror. Boleslas the Bold of Poland, Nicephorus Bryennius, the would-be Byzantine potentate, and Robert Guiscard, the Norman filibuster, afterwards his greatest ally and dearest friend.

To begin with William the Conqueror, of all his adversaries probably the one from whom the proud pontiff got the least satisfaction, the See of Rome doubtless had reason to complain of his want of faith. When William had first thought of invading England, he applied to Alexander II., Hildebrand's predecessor, to decide between his imaginary claim and that of Harold. As he was the only applicant for a papal decision, and moreover was extremely generous in his promises of what he would do when he became King of England, the pope without much hesitation decided in his favor, excommunicated Harold and his adherents, and moreover sent the Norman a blessed banner and a ring containing a hair of St. Peter's. When Hildebrand mounted the papal throne, William had been seven years King of England, and had so far shown no inclination to redeem any of his promises. The pontiff therefore summoned him to pay tribute, and acknowledge allegiance, as he had engaged himself to do. The tribute so arrogantly claimed was neither more nor less than Peter's pence, first begged for as charity, generously given, and afterwards by Romish duplicity converted into a badge of bondage and subjection. William, the robber, was scarcely the man to submit to pillage from others, however ready to help himself without enquiring too nicely into his title to do so. An answer, therefore, was sent to Rome to the effect that Peter's pence would be paid as it hitherto had been; that as to doing homage, he had not the slightest intention of submitting to any-