DANTE'S EXILE

THE BLACKS AND THE WHITES.

Although the nobility of Florence were impotent to provoke a disturbance, there already existed in nearby Pistoia, a serious schism in the ruling Guelph Party. The rift originated among the followers and descendants of the two wives of a Guelph leader, Messer Cancelliere, whose first wife was named Bianca. At the same time the Florentines were divided by a feud between the Cerchi and the Donati families and it was greatly feared that the Pistoia feud might infect Florentine politics. And so it turned out.

The Blacks, or Neri, of Pistoia, combined with the Donati; the Whites, or Bianci, with the Cerchi. The Donati, through the bankers of Boniface VIII, sought Papal intervention. Immediately this was known, the Neri faction were in practice Guelphs, and the Bianci embraced in self-defence the Ghibelline cause. Boniface VIII sent his legate to Florence, ostensibly to mediate between the parties, but secretly to support the Blacks.

It was then that Dante Alighiere, of the *Priori*, made proposals to secure peace without *foreign* intervention. He advised the Signoria to place the leaders of the Neri under restraint at Pieve, and the Bianci, at Sarzana. Unfortunately, the city government did not adhere to Dante's wise proposals. In due course, the party leaders, once more at liberty, were summoning outside aid. The details of the next 18 months are too complex for intelligible summary, but in the finish some 600 members of the Bianci were exiled, among them Dante himself, against whom several serious charges were preferred.

It is to Dante's exile that the world owes his Divine Comedy. In it Dante has obtained a subtle and lasting revenge on those of his fellow citizens and political enemies who abused their temporary power to cause unnecessary humiliation to himself, and others.

The Florin. It was during the XIIIth Century (in 1252) that the famous fiorino d'oro was first coined. It was the forerunner of the florin.

XIV CENTURY RENAISSANCE.— Following the expulsion of the White faction, the Commune of Florence gradually followed the other Communes of Italy which, by degrees, developed a form of government by the wealthier and more privileged citizens. The Popolo became a *Signoria*, in which comparatively little power was accorded to the lesser orders. There were, of course, intervals of turbulent reaction, but by the end of the century, the way was open for the acceptance of personal rule by the Medici.

For five years, from 1312, Guelph Florence placed itself under Robert