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CONCLAVE OF CLEMENT X
(1670)

By His Excellency Baron de Bildt
Swedish and Norwegian Minister

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THE CONCLAVE OF CLEMENT X (1670)

BY HIS EXCELLENCY BARON DE BILDT

SWEDISH AND NORWEGIAN MINISTER

Delivered June 26, 1903.

THE Conclave of Clement X is not a great historical event in itself. It has had no important political consequences, nor has it brought to the front any great characters or remarkable personages. If, nevertheless, I have thought the subject worthy of your attention, it is because its history lays bare—more perhaps than that of any other Conclave—the network of personal and diplomatic intrigues which in those days surrounded the election of the Pope. Perhaps it will not be without a sense of gratification that we shall perceive that a good deal of what took place two centuries ago could not be repeated now.

The materials for our study are singularly complete, and I doubt whether it would be possible to collect for any other Conclave a set of documents of greater authority than those a fortunate combination of events has preserved in the case of Clement X. For we have not only the official acts of the Conclave itself, and the reports of the various ambassadors, but also a private correspondence of the highest value. This consists of the letters exchanged between Cardinal Decio Azzolino (the younger), head and leader of the independent party of the Holy College, and his intimate friend, Queen Christina of Sweden. In a volume which I published in 1899 I have tried to give the outlines of the character of this celebrated daughter of Gustavus Adolphus. With all her faults and eccentricities, the outcome of hereditary disposition and of irrational education, with all her errors, shortcomings, and failures, there is one great redeeming feature in her career. She was capable of one strong affection in her life, and of one only. From the moment when, at the age of twenty-nine, she met Azzolino on her first coming to Rome, she felt herself a woman more than a queen, and the affection which she laid at his feet never varied for a moment until the day when, thirty-four years later, she died with her eyes still resting on his.



Do not let us sneer at this affection, friendship, or love, call it by whatever name you like, between a queen who had already her youth behind her, and a man who was not only in holy orders, but was also a prince of the Church. It may have been what the world is pleased to call a forbidden attachment, but it remains, nevertheless, the one feature in the life of these two personages which makes them anything else than ordinary self-seekers, and endows them with that touch of human nature which calls forth sympathy even after the lapse of centuries.

No stronger proof of the all-absorbing devotion of Christina to Azzolino can be found than the notes which she daily sends him during the four months of the Conclave. She seems to live for no other purpose than to second his interests and further his aims. She informs him of everything that takes place outside, she solicits his instructions and obeys his orders, gives hints and advice, often most usefully, and neglects not the smallest detail which she thinks may be of use to him. She has frequent interviews with the French Ambassador, the Duke de Chaulnes, and with Mgr. Zetina, the confidential agent of the Spanish Ambassador, the Marquess d'Astorga. She has numerous spies around Rome, intent on picking up every particle of news to be had in any quarter, particularly in what we would now call the *salon* of the famous Contestabilessa Colonna, the beautiful Maria Mancini, up till now her friend, but during the Conclave the representative of the influence opposed to Azzolino's, that of the Chigi party. On all these matters, exact and minute information is written down, ciphered, and at least once a day, often twice or thrice, forwarded through trusted messengers to the secluded cell of the Cardinal. And, in order to carry on this correspondence more safely, she transfers her head quarters from her palace in the Lungara to the palace inhabited by Azzolino himself in the Borgo Nuovo, now Palazzo Torlonia-Giraud, then the property of Don Lorenzo Colonna, but still generally known under the name of Palazzo d'Inghilterra. This house was situated within the quarter over which the Marshal of the Conclave established his sway, and messengers could therefore be sent from there without being obliged to show the medal-countersign required from those who approached the sacred precincts from the outside.

Then we have the notes sent from Azzolino to the queen, and the correspondence exchanged between Azzolino and his candidate for the tiara, Cardinal Vidoni, as well as the letters exchanged between him and the aforementioned Mgr. Zetina. These documents amount altogether to more than three hundred. Still, they are not complete. Had

all been preserved, the number would have been more than doubled. The Conclave lasted four months and ten days, and it was a pretty considerable amount of writing Cardinal Azzolino and his *conclavista* had to do in their cold and narrow little cells.

To complete this correspondence, we have the dispatches exchanged between the French Ambassador and his Court, the weekly reports of the Venetian Ambassador, Antonio Grimani, and a number of Spanish and Austrian documents.

Speaking before an audience like this, I need not go into any details about the general state of European politics at the time. Be it enough to remember that Louis XIV was then at the most successful period of his duel for supremacy with the House of Austria, which was to be the lifelong struggle of his reign. He had just concluded peace with Spain after the fortunate campaign in the Flanders, and was now seeking to undermine his great rival in Italy. We shall find that he misses no opportunity to try to convert the smaller Italian States of Savoy-Piedmont, Mantua, Parma, and Modena into as many French outposts, destined to counteract and combat the Austro-Spanish power in Milan and Naples, and its paramount influence in Tuscany. To this end he would also like to be able to look upon the sovereign of the Pontifical State as an ally, but above all he wants the moral victory of showing to the world that the making of the Pope lies with him, and that the coming successor of St. Peter must be content to receive the holy keys from his hand, as Sylvester did from Constantine and Adrian from Charlemagne. The authority of the Papacy over the French Church is an everlastingly pricking thorn in the sensitive flesh of the despotic monarch. He is the State, but within the State there is the Church—a Church which dares to acknowledge another power besides him, sometimes above him. What sweeter vengeance can there be than to lay it bare to every one that after all it is from him that power is derived! A Pope that will not prop up the already shaken power of the House of Austria, that will allow Parma and Modena to become valuable allies of the French King, should it even be at the expense of Peter's patrimony, a Pope that will dispense bulls and privileges and confer bishoprics and red hats at the King's behest—such is the dream of Louis XIV.

Far more modest and reasonable are the wishes of the House of Hapsburg, now represented by the infant King of Spain, Charles II, and by his mother, the Regent Queen Maria Anne of Austria. Spain holds the Hapsburg possessions in Italy, and tradition ordains that the Emperor should content himself with supporting Spain in its

relations with the Holy See, especially in regard to the Papal Election. True to this unwritten family compact the Emperor Leopold only demands a Pope strong and active enough to assist him in the ever threatening struggle with the young and aggressive Ottoman power. A strong Pope is also what Spain prays for. It is seventeenth-century Spain, the Spain of which the intuition of genius allowed Victor Hugo to roughly sketch the outlines in 'Ruy Blas,' Spain tired after the superhuman exertion of its heroic age, struggling under the crushing weight of its own conquests, Spain hungry in the midst of treasure, poor in all her wealth, needing rest and peace and quiet, and looking to the Pope to resume once more his old position of the world's peacemaker and mediator. Spain does not pretend to make the Pope, nor does the Emperor, but they want a friendly Pope, and above all one that is not a puppet in the hands of France. Show is of less account to Spain than substance. Let Louis XIV have the glory, as he calls it, of making the Pope, it is enough for Spain that the Pope, once made, should be as friendly to the Catholic King as to the most Christian monarch.

Venice follows the lead of Spain, and also prays for a Pope able to unite Christianity against the Turks, who have just taken Candia and are already threatening the last remaining bulwarks of Venetian dominion in the East. The other Catholic Powers hardly have any interests in the pontifical election beyond that of seeing a good, just, and wise man in the chair of St. Peter. Portugal, intent on regularizing the position of King Pedro, follows in the wake of France, which took the initiative in bringing about his marriage. Poland is just recovering from the troubles of the election of Michael Koribut Wicnowiecki, and Tuscany is in fact nothing but a feudal province of the Holy Roman Empire.

Of the rules of the Conclave it may be enough to remind you that its organic disposition had been settled by the Bull, *Aeterni Patris*, of Gregory XV (of November 15, 1621), and the ceremonial part by the Bull of the same Pope, *Decet Romanum Pontificem* (of March 12, 1622), both confirmed January 25, 1625, by Urban VIII's Bull, *Ad Romani Pontificis*. Two-thirds majority is required for the election, in which all cardinals duly nominated have the right to vote, even if they have not been formally installed by the ceremony known as *apertio oris*. There are no less than eight cardinals appointed only ten days before the death of Clement IX, and still wearing the insignia of their former lower rank. One of them, Emilio Altieri, is never to wear the red robes at all. It is he who is destined to receive the fisher's ring and confer the coveted hat on his colleagues.

At the election of Clement IX each party had got what it wanted, —show as well as substance. Clement—Giulio Rospigliosi as the world had called him—had in fact been the favourite candidate of Spain and France at one and the same time. Before the Conclave, Azzolino, alluding to his election, had assured the Spanish Ambassador that ‘this time the Holy Ghost would wear the *golilla*¹’; and after the election the French Ambassador felt justified in writing to his sovereign—‘Your Majesty makes the Pope in Rome as easily as the Provost of the merchants in Paris.’ Clement desired in fact nothing better than to act with perfect justice towards both Spain and France, and he had a large part in establishing the peace between them. His great aim was to gather, like Pius II, all the forces of Christianity against the Turks. The relief of Candia and the stopping of the Moslem power on its westward march, these were the ideals he fought and lived for. And we may well say which he died for, as it was the news of the fall of Candia which gave the final blow to his already broken health. He died, after two and a half years’ reign, on December 9, 1669, leaving the memory of one of the best Popes that ever adorned the Chair of St. Peter, of a good and just sovereign, of a far-seeing statesman, of a highly-cultured poet, musician, and scholar, and, above all, of a kind and unselfish man, whose life had amply realized his motto :—

‘Alteris, non sibi, Clemens.’

The Conclave opened on December 20, after the completion of the *novendiali*, or nine days’ funeral ceremonies, prescribed by the etiquette of the Roman Church. It had been foreseen for some time that it would be a long and difficult one, owing to the division between the chiefs of the parties or ‘factions,’ and to the want of great personalities amongst the candidates. Still, no one would have believed that the Conclave was going to last over four months.

To understand how this came about, a short review of the factions and of the candidates is necessary. The factions or batches of cardinals created by the same Pope were four. An unwritten law demanded that in the Conclave each faction should blindly and unconditionally follow the lead of the cardinal-nephew of the Pope who had created them, he becoming for the time their absolute ruler. Thus Cardinal Francesco Barberino was at the head of eight cardinals created by Urban VIII, Cardinal Flavio Chigi disposed of the votes of no less than twenty-four ‘creatures’ of Alexander VII, while Cardinal Giacomo Rospigliosi headed eight nominees of the late Pope Clement IX. The Cardinals appointed by Innocent X

¹ The characteristic Spanish collar.

enjoyed greater liberty, this Pope not having left any cardinal-nephew, but they had found it in their interest to form a union, which was generally known as the Flying Squadron, because they followed the tactics of transferring their forces now to one, now to another side, as the interest of the Church—or their own—seemed to demand. The leader of this Squadron was Cardinal Azzolino, but he did not exercise the same despotic sway over his followers as did Barberino, Chigi, or Rospigliosi, and he was in fact only the executor of the decisions taken in the common council-room of the Squadronists. Besides, out of the twelve ‘creatures’ of Innocent X, only six¹ had bound themselves strictly to the organization of the Squadron. Of the remaining six, Ludovisi was a very lazy man, who objected so strongly to the physical discomforts of the Conclave, that it was only possible to get him into the Vatican for a few days. Cibo and Odescalchi (the future Innocent XI) were duty-loving, hard-working men, but of a rather independent turn of mind, and disposed to set religion before politics. The same was the case with Santa Croce and Spada, whose failing health also contributed to hold them aloof from the daily drudgery of the Conclave. As for Albizzi, the most eccentric and plain-spoken of the Holy College, he was in reality nothing but a pensioned informant of the French Court. The forces of the Squadron consisted thus of a minimum of six votes, which might sometimes attain to twelve.

Besides these so-called Papal factions, there were the French and the Spanish groups composed of the cardinals whom birth or interest had attached permanently to either Crown. The French, of which d’Este was the nominal chief, numbered eight members; the Spanish, led by Cardinal Leopoldo de’ Medici, ten. Of the French only five, and of the Spaniards seven, resided in Italy.

As soon as the news of the death of Clement IX reached the French Court—it took seven days—the King ordered his Ambassador, the Duke de Chaulnes, who had recently returned from Rome, to go back to his embassy. Chaulnes had already been there during the Conclave of Clement IX, and knew his business better than any man in Europe. The three cardinals residing in France received orders to join him. Cardinal Grimaldi, Archbishop of Aix, asked to be excused on account of his great age and the exceptional severity of the winter, but the two others promptly joined the Duke de Chaulnes. One was the already famous Cardinal de Retz, the other, Bouillon, a young man of twenty-five, as yet only known as the nephew of the great Turenne.

¹ Azzolino, Ottoboni, Imperiali, Gualtieri, Homodei, and Borromeo.

The tidings reached Madrid ten days later than Versailles, but there the Regency took things much easier. None of the three cardinals in Madrid, Aragona, Moncada or Porto Carrero decided to move. No new instructions even were dispatched to the Marquess d'Astorga in Rome, simply an order to abide by the instructions given him for the previous Conclave in 1667.

These instructions were at first sight very simple. Spain professed no decided leanings against or for any particular candidate. Spain, in the language of the time, neither 'included' nor 'excluded.'

Some explanation of these terms may be necessary. To 'include' a candidate meant to vote for him and try to get him votes enough to reach the necessary majority of two-thirds—in short, to try to make him Pope.

To 'exclude' meant to refuse to vote for a candidate, and to work against him generally so as to render it impossible for him to get his two-thirds.

But besides this way of excluding, which is generally called the 'secret exclusion,' because it is not openly proclaimed, there is the 'formal exclusion.' This is a privilege claimed by the three great Catholic Powers, the Emperor, Spain, and France, to notify to the Holy College by means of their Ambassadors that the election of a particular candidate would not be agreeable. It is not a right recognized by any law of the Church, and a Pope elected against the veto of the Powers would still be canonically elected, but it is a privilege based on the brute fact of force. It is a warning given to the Holy College that the cardinals who persist in voting for a candidate who is objected to by any one of the above-named Powers would thereby incur the displeasure of a powerful monarch, and must be prepared to bear the consequences. This meant a good deal in former days: how much it would mean now I will leave you to judge.

To this general rule, neither to include nor to exclude, there were, however, exceptions. Spain could not accept any too decidedly French candidate, nor any one excluded by Spain during former Conclaves, and from whom therefore reprisals might be feared. This latter rule was pointed against Cardinal Brancaccio, one of the worthiest members of the Holy College, but who in his young days, when Bishop of Capaccio, had had trouble with the Viceroy of Naples, and therefore been excluded in the Conclaves of 1655 and 1667. It was, besides, a general rule of Spanish policy not to further the election of any cardinal belonging to the great families of its Italian dominions, in order not to have too powerful vassals to contend with in the person of the Pope's relations. This rule excluded the

Archbishop of Milan, Litta, and the Archbishop of Palermo, Visconti. So much for the exclusion. As to the inclusion, Cardinal d'Elci, who came of a family long devoted to Spanish interests, and Cardinal Vidoni, a personal friend of Cardinal d'Aragona, were especially agreeable to the Spanish Court.

The French instructions were more explicit. France maintained the exclusion which she had already in the preceding Conclaves applied to Cardinal Barberino and Cardinal d'Elci, because they were considered too Spanish in their sympathies. These instructions mentioned three candidates as acceptable to France: Albizzi, Bonvisi, and Vidoni. Albizzi's name, however, only stood on the list for show. Mazarin, who had been his friend, had written his name there in 1655, and there it was left, although Louis XIV and his Ambassador well knew that Albizzi had not the slightest chance. In reality, it was not even intended to test his chances at the urns. Bonvisi and Vidoni were the real candidates. As second favourites Louis XIV mentioned Brancaccio, the very man objected to by Spain, and Cardinals Celsi, Carpegna, and Litta. Finally, the King ordered his Ambassador, as a proof of his veneration for the memory of the late Pope, to take care that the choice of the new Pontiff should be one agreeable to the nephew of Clement IX, Cardinal Rospigliosi.

And now let us take a look at the Papables, as those cardinals were called whose election was considered possible. What qualities did the cardinals desire to find in the new Pope? First of all, every one wished that the successful man should stand under some obligation to him, for which a reward might be claimed. Everybody wanted a share in what was called 'the glory of having made the Pope.' The ideal Pope for each head of a party was the man he individually could claim to have forced to the front. Should the same man be easily accepted by the other members of the Holy College, or even carried through by these, he became less desirable, as the glory and the profit of electing him would be divided. Next to a candidate of one's own make, if I may so call it, it was desirable to have an old man whose reign would not be long, or one of a weak and easily influenced disposition.

There were at present no such conspicuous figures in the Holy College as to limit the choice to a few only. It was in fact everybody's race, and any cardinal might aspire who was old enough—that is to say, at least sixty, though seventy was considered better still—and who had not received grave offences at the hands of any of his colleagues, for nothing could excite more fear and dread than the election of a candidate suspected of having personal offences to revenge.

To have offended others was not so very dangerous. That might be forgiven. But to have been offended—that was quite another matter. Those Cardinals who were willing to forget and forgive could not trust anybody else to do the same.

The pamphlets of the time name no less than twenty Papables. In the Barberino faction all the eight cardinals considered themselves on the list. They were on an average the oldest in years, and, with the exception of Francesco Barberino himself, whom France objected to ever since the days of Mazarin, who had had cause to dislike him, and of Braccaccio, whom Spain would not have, there was nothing special against any of them. On the other hand, there was nothing special to recommend them. The candidates of this party who had to be seriously under consideration were Barberino's trusted friend Facchinetti, Carpegna, and Ginetti—the last one simply because he was over eighty, a fact which gave hopes of a short reign.

Of the Flying Squadron only one could be regarded as a candidate in full earnest—Odescalchi. He was a most pious, upright, true, and good man, but his austerity frightened many—and then, he was only fifty-eight. The other creatures of Innocent X were perhaps the ablest and brightest men of the Holy College, but just on that account they excited a good deal of envy, an eminently clerical passion, and having held office early in life they had had time to make strong enemies as well as strong friends. Azzolino himself was only forty-seven, and he was also the outgoing Secretary of State of the late Pope. One of these two qualities was already quite enough to exclude him.

The Chigi party with its twenty-four votes was the most powerful party, and its candidates in consequence the strongest. It was around them the great battles had to be fought. Its Papable candidates were four: d'Elci, Celsi, Bonvisi, and Vidoni.

D'Elci, of a noble Siennese family, was related to the Chigi's, and particularly agreeable to Cardinal Flavio. He was also agreeable to Cardinal de' Medici, being a subject of the Grand Duke, whom his family had loyally served. He was seventy, and weak in health—two good points more in his favour.

Celsi was the best legal head in the College, but there had been a good deal to say about his morals, and there still was, in spite of his seventy years.

Bonvisi was one of the best loved men in the Church, somewhat younger than the other two, a very strong candidate, against whom it could, however, be urged that he had a nephew, Mgr. Francesco, who excited much distrust.

Cardinal Pietro Vidoni had perhaps the broadest experience and

capacity of all, having held high dignities, both abroad and at home. He was a man of high ambition and strong will, sixty years old. There was a good deal of talk about his morals, and he was unpopular with the Romans on account of his avarice and coarse language, but the chief objection against him was the antipathy of Cardinal de' Medici.

In the Rospigliosi faction Bona, Nerli, and Altieri were considered eligible. Bona, however, was a monk, whose life had mostly been spent in the cloister, and monks have never been very popular with the Holy College. Nerli was a poor invalid, who had but few days left to live. Altieri was eighty, very deaf, and of rapidly failing memory. And yet he was to be the winner.

The cardinals of the French and Spanish factions, the factions of the rival Crowns, were by common consent excluded from the election.

Summing up the chances, it would appear that Vidoni, who was the only Cardinal who was at the same time put up by the strongest faction, the Chigi one, and accepted by both France and Spain, would have the best chance, and that the next best would be for Celsi or for Bonvisi, who were also put up by the same faction, favoured by France, and at least not opposed by Spain. But in the case of all three the old proverb about the Conclave was once more to come out true: 'Any one who enters it as Pope, goes out of it as cardinal.'

And now I must trouble you with some figures. Out of seventy cardinals sixty-five were present in Rome, but six were on an average absent on account of illness. The real voting strength of the Holy College could thus be put down at fifty-nine, requiring forty votes for inclusion and twenty for exclusion.

The Chigi party, which could command twenty-three votes, disposed completely of the *exclusion*, and no Pope could be elected against its solid vote. But to *include*, it needed an addition of seventeen votes.

The three other Papal factions could only muster: Barberino, seven; Innocent's nominees, ten; and Rospigliosi, eight; representing a total of twenty-five, if united. They also disposed of the exclusion, but to include they needed fifteen additional votes.

Now the factions of the two Crowns—France with five, Spain with six, in all, eleven—could not furnish to either side all the votes required. Supposing the two Crowns agreed to go with the Chigi party, this would still be short of six votes. If they went with the other three united, this would still lack four votes. To win the battle the Chigi party must have both Spain and France on its side, and besides win over six men from the other factions.

The three other factions must first unite themselves into one, then

win France and Spain, and finally get four men over from the Chigi faction—quite a difficult and puzzling task for the leader; in fact it did prove a hard nut to crack.

Cardinal Flavio Chigi was a pleasure-loving man, fond of society, of horses and dogs, sometimes even of books, but not much inclined to business. But in time of a Conclave his interest was forcibly aroused, and he exercised fully his privileges as hereditary chief of a powerful faction. He wanted a Pope out of his own set, the creatures of his uncle, Alexander VII, a Pope who would be obliged to him for the tiara, and one under whose reign he might safely enjoy the possession of his enormous wealth, and the sweetness of *dolce far niente*. His relative, old d'Elci, would suit him perfectly; Celsi, whom he regarded as a personal friend, also. They were his favourites, but he felt his followers would not be satisfied should he only present two out of twenty-three as Papables. He had therefore added two names more to his list: Bonvisi and Vidoni, the two generally acknowledged as the ablest men of his following. First, however, he meant to try d'Elci, and set out to secure for him the support of the two Crowns. He well knew that d'Elci had been opposed by France in the last Conclave as being too Spanish in his sympathies, but that did not discourage Chigi. To Paris he wrote, strongly urging Louis XIV and Lionne to drop their objections to d'Elci, and begging for the votes of the French cardinals and the assistance of the Ambassador. The negotiations with Spain were conducted verbally. He met Cardinal de' Medici, the chief of the Spanish faction, in Florence, and proposed an alliance, which Medici made no difficulty in accepting. To him the election of d'Elci, a Siennese, a born subject of the Grand Duke, could not but be agreeable. He shared Chigi's hopes that France would accept him, in which case there ought to be no difficulty in gaining over the few missing votes, and, in his eagerness to play a leading part in a Conclave, particularly tempting to him as a cardinal of very recent date, he accepted Chigi's whole list. He did not like Vidoni's name on it, but after all, Vidoni was only fourth choice, and he thought he held in his hands sufficient power, if necessary, to eliminate him from the contest.

The alliance established at Florence between Chigi and Medici was ratified in Rome by the Spanish Ambassador, Astorga, influenced by the head of the Spanish section of the Roman aristocracy, Don Lorenzo Colonna. Between the houses of Colonna and Chigi strong friendship subsisted—the ladies had much to do with it—and the centre of elegance formed around their beautiful princesses strongly

sympathized with good, kind d'Elci, or indulgent, jolly, old Celsi, both supposed to be more likely than anybody else to let Rome have a good time.

Chigi and Medici thought they had easy work before themselves. Together their factions numbered at least twenty-nine. They hoped for the French votes, which would bring them up to thirty-four. A couple more ought not to be difficult to get hold of. It was only necessary to await the arrival of the French Cardinals, which would be easy enough to obtain by a little dilatory practice, and in the meanwhile to look out for the necessary deserters. So sure did they feel of victory that they rather arrogantly proclaimed that they did not even want to consult the other chiefs of factions.

This statement of course gave bitter umbrage to the factions in question. It was gall and wormwood to Francesco Barberino, the venerable Dean of the Holy College, who hated Chigi as the man who three years before had thwarted his own election. And now this Chigi—a youngster of thirty-seven—simply wanted to ignore him! Rospigliosi also deeply resented the slight passed upon him, as, after all, he was the late Pope's nephew. At least his advice ought to have been asked. Azzolino and his Squadronists saw their opportunity. They assembled the malcontents, represented that isolated they could do nothing against Chigi and Medici—why not join forces? The advantage was obvious, and a league of their three factions was formed.

The conditions were the following. The three factions agreed to stand solid together against any Chigi or Medici candidate put up without their agreement. In Conclave language they united themselves to exclude. But as to the *inclusion*, that is voting for any candidate with a view of putting the tiara on his head, they each reserved their liberty. The league was a mutual insurance society against Chigi, Medici & Co.—nothing else.

Now Azzolino and his friends of the Squadron had already during the lifetime of Clement IX favoured Cardinal Pietro Vidoni. What agreement had been passed between them has not been quite ascertained, but it seems probable that Vidoni had promised to maintain in power the outgoing ministers of the late Pope—Azzolino as Secretary of State and Ottoboni as Datary—and not to appoint any cardinal nephew over their heads. Something had already leaked out about this. In fact some cardinals of the Squadron, who were paying a visit to the Princess of Rossano at Frascati in October, had presented Vidoni to her as the future Pope, much to the disgust of Azzolino who did not like to show his hand prematurely. His

motto was in fact *Arcanum taciturnitatis est anima Conclavis*, and he earnestly requested his friend the Queen never to mention Vidoni at all, or, if she did, at least to belittle his chances. This Christina conscientiously tried to do, and when on the day of the opening of the Conclave she visited the cells of the cardinals, she took good care to enter the cell destined for Vidoni and to say loudly, 'This one is not Papable.' For this Vidoni expressed his thanks, but the stratagem deceived but few.

When Azzolino learned that Vidoni had been proposed by Chigi, he determined to try to force through his election. It would be to him Vidoni would be obliged for the tiara much more than to Chigi, who had only given him fourth place on his list. To carry him through it would be necessary to ruin the chances of the three who preceded Vidoni on that list, and that he could do by using against them the twenty-five excluding votes of the Triple League. Afterwards he would have to persuade his colleagues of the League, Barberino and Rospigliosi, to vote for Vidoni. That would perhaps not be so easy, as they would prefer some of their own set. Therefore he wished them to lose every hope of seeing one of their own men victorious before he asked them to vote for Vidoni. His tactics were to use the Triple League to exclude all the Chigi candidates except Vidoni, and the Chigi party to exclude the candidates of his own confederates in the League. When the field had been cleared of them, he would bring forward Vidoni as the only remaining man and the saviour out of all trouble.

The effects of the conclusion of the Triple League showed themselves at once. Chigi and Medici having sent out their henchmen, Corsini and Pio, to sound the minds of their colleagues as to d'Elci and Celsi—that was called *fare la pratica*—they met with a decided refusal to accept them. They perceived that they risked to have the twenty-five votes of the Triple League against them, and they did not even try to bring their candidates to a vote for fear they would be left in a minority that would show them up as hopeless. In fact the lists of the *scrutini* showed a perfect mosaic of names. D'Elci once, but once only, received twelve votes, and Celsi never even reached two figures. Old Francesco Barberino generally headed the lists with fifteen to twenty votes, and once he reached twenty-five, but it was clear to every one that these votes did not mean to make him Pope, but were intended simply as a warning that no Pope could be made without his consent.

Chigi and Medici soon understood that against this Triple League their twenty-nine votes could do nothing, but they hoped and

declared that the advent of the French, which was daily expected, would change the situation. Not only would the French bring them five or six votes, but they might also, so Chigi hoped, use their influence to detach Cardinal Rospigliosi, who was under obligations to Louis XIV, and his followers from the Triple League. Then victory would be assured.

But now came a difficulty from an unexpected quarter. It dawned upon the Spanish Ambassador that these tactics were nothing but a public proclamation that the making of the Pope lay with France. Here was Medici, the head of the Spanish cardinals, openly allied to the strongest faction in the Conclave, the Chigi's, and yet compelled to await the arrival and the good will of the French. And why? Simply because they had put up two men, d'Elci and Celsi, in a manner offensive to the rest of the Holy College. Astorga now remembered that he had received valuable assistance from Azzolino and the Flying Squadron during the Conclave of 1667. If they would assist him again, they could unite with Chigi and Medici on some other suitable candidate. He did not care about d'Elci or Celsi. Let them take anybody else out of the Chigi candidates—Bonvisi or Vidoni for instance—and they could snap their fingers at the French. The glory of the election would be Spain's.

Astorga, for reasons of etiquette, did not like to visit Queen Christina, but he well knew that she was in constant communication with Azzolino, and, as he could not reach the latter, he sent the Spanish *Uditore di Ruota*, Mgr. Zetina, to the Queen to propose an alliance. This was in the first days of January, 1670, the 5th I think.

And here may I open a parenthesis? The weather had been very cold and damp. Many cardinals had suffered from influenza in their unheated cells, and Azzolino himself had been quite unwell for some days. But on the 5th he wrote to the Queen to say he was getting better. Quite a commonplace letter at first sight, but on the top stood the letters S.M. I confess that at first sight I did not pay much attention to these initials, which I supposed meant Sua Maestà, nor to the fact that they were missing on the preceding notes.

But hear what effect they had on the Queen. She answers:—

‘Je crois, sans m’efforcer beaucoup à vous exprimer ma joie, que vous serez persuadé de celle que j’ai ressentie en vous sentant guéri. Cette heureuse nouvelle m’a rendu la vie, mais pour la conserver il faut qu’elle continue de m’apprendre demain votre entier rétablissement.

‘Mais par quelle heureuse influence m’avez vous rendu les glorieuses marques de ma félicité passée? Est-ce que je me trompe et les lettres de “S.M.” ne signifient-elles plus ce qu’elles signifiaient autre-

fois? Si je pouvais vous faire imaginer la joie que leur vue m'a donnée, vous me jugeriez en quelque façon digne de ce titre, que je préfère à celui de Reine de l'Univers. Mais je dois en être indigne, puisque vous me l'avez ôté. Faites ce qu'il vous plaira; je suis d'une manière à vous que vous ne pourrez sans une injustice et une cruauté effroyable douter que le "S.M." me soit dû.'

And then she goes on to relate the proposal of alliance made by Zetina on Astorga's behalf. We may be tempted to smile at this display of sentiment. What were a couple of initials in comparison with the great questions at issue? And yet there has been, I dare say, for most of us a time when the magic charm of some mysterious A.B. or R.S. has been more to our hearts than all the thrones of the world. Let those who have never experienced this power be the only ones to blame Queen Christina.

Azzolino's answer is very cool. He simply scolds the Queen for having mixed up 'extraneous matter' in a business letter and made it impossible to show it to his friends. And he never more writes the precious initials on any note during the rest of the Conclave. I am happy to say they reappear afterwards, and in the last days of his and the Queen's life—he only survived her a few weeks—they seldom are missing.

On the whole Astorga's proposal was a godsend to him. It is true he had already offered his services to Louis XIV, and Christina had in the foregoing November made an agreement for him with Bourlemont, the French Chargé d'Affaires, that they would act in perfect harmony and have no secrets from each other. Bourlemont, in repeating this to his King, had prudently remarked that these were only fine words, but he had replied in the same way, and the Squadron and the French Court had pledged themselves to be close friends and allies.

This compact, however, did not prevent Azzolino from at once accepting Astorga's advance. 'France was the very plague of the Church,' he wrote, 'and Spain its only protection.' Why now wait for the French and give them the glory of showing to the world that they were making the Pope? Better strike at once. He accepted the candidature of Vidoni, which Astorga himself proposed, and bound himself to work for him. That Vidoni was his own choice he did not think necessary to mention.

It might now appear as if there ought to have been plain sailing for Vidoni's election. If Astorga could order the Spanish faction and their Chigi allies to vote for him, and Azzolino could bring his friends around to him, the matter would indeed have ended with a practi-

cally unanimous vote, even before the arrival of the French Ambassador who, besides, as we have seen, also had orders to favour Vidoni. But first, Astorga, though he professed to order about the Spanish cardinals at his wish, had but little power over them. They were an undisciplined lot. Astorga came day after day to give his so-called orders at the door of the Conclave, but Medici and his lieutenants Pio and Visconti acted and voted very much as they pleased. Medici did not like Vidoni, frankly said so, and went about telling everybody that the Court of Madrid did not care for him.

And then Azzolino was not satisfied with Astorga plainly and simply ordering his cardinals to vote for Vidoni. His own friend Barberino would perhaps object to such an order being given, as it would rob all the old cardinals of his own faction of every hope. No, the thing must be done in a more roundabout way. The *modus operandi* was first to put up every other possible candidate, work against them secretly and vote against them openly, and when the field had been cleared, then to bring forward Vidoni as the only remaining possibility.

Astorga might well be forgiven if he thought the scheme a little too complicated. And Medici of course was delighted to say it was impossible to execute. No wonder. Vidoni was to be helped along, Azzolino asked, not directly and openly, but by ruining all the others! It would have been a difficult task to accomplish for a friend. To do it for one who was not more liked by Medici than Vidoni—simply became an impossibility. Medici tried to suggest Bonvisi instead of Vidoni, but Azzolino at once sent word to Astorga that Bonvisi was France's first choice and had two nephews in the French service. His election could not be for the Spanish King's service. Thus balked, Medici and Chigi fell back once more on d'Elci and Celsi, and their hopes of French help.

The Duke de Chaulnes and the Cardinals de Retz and Bouillon arrived in Rome on January 16. Chaulnes found the situation a little different from what he had expected. Nothing was known in Paris about the union of Chigi with Spain and Medici, nor of the Triple League of defence erected against them by Barberino, Azzolino, and Rospigliosi. The latter cardinal was in high favour at Versailles as being the nephew of the good Clement IX, whom Louis XIV loved to call his Pope. Chaulnes had orders to act in concert with both Rospigliosi and Chigi, who had made strong offers of service, but especially to favour Rospigliosi. And now he found them in opposite camps. There was an end to his happy dream of returning to Paris in a few weeks with a Pope easily elected by the union of the Chigi

and Rospigliosi factions with France. He, moreover, found that Chigi still clung to the hopes of converting him to d'Elci, the man he had already refused to hear of three years before. Celsi he soon learnt would be rejected by the majority of the Holy College, on account of his past and fast reputation. Happily there were Bonvisi and Vidoni left to try. But ill luck would have it that Cardinal Rospigliosi and Bonvisi's nephew, Mgr. Francesco, had once had a quarrel over a trifle and were now enemies. Rospigliosi sent word to Chaulnes beseeching him not to assist Bonvisi. Besides, Barberino was violently opposed to Bonvisi, who, some twenty years before, had been one of the commissioners appointed by Innocent X to inquire into the management of public monies by the Barberino cardinals. Vidoni after all seemed to have the best chance, and Chaulnes made up his mind to try either him or Bonvisi, whichever might appear most feasible. Rospigliosi and Barberino might perhaps be made to drop their objections to the latter.

Thus the French and Spanish Ambassadors both favoured the election of Vidoni. Had they frankly said so, there might have been an end of the matter. Their two factions united with Chigi on one side and Azzolino on the other, would have had more than the forty votes necessary for the election. But Chaulnes and Astorga studiously avoided visiting each other at all, and plain speaking was out of the question in those days. Each one tried to conceal his intentions from the other—that was then the very *acme* of diplomacy—and so well did they succeed that they were not aware that their interests centred around the same man until it was too late. And thus days and weeks were lost in a game of hide and seek.

But first of all Chaulnes must eliminate d'Elci, and as Chigi, though he had repeatedly promised not to urge any candidate without the consent of Louis XIV, still tried to bring him forward, Chaulnes had nothing left but to formally declare that this choice was not agreeable. The message of formal exclusion was delivered on February 10 by Cardinal d'Este to Chigi, and by Retz to Medici. Chigi felt the blow, but said nothing. But Medici lost his temper.

'What!' he exclaimed, 'you exclude d'Elci? Very well, then we will exclude Vidoni, for I can tell you that the Queen of Spain would rather burn down the whole Conclave than see Vidoni elected.'

Retz shrugged his shoulders and replied that he did not care much about Vidoni. But he immediately told his friend Azzolino, who wrote to Queen Christina, who sent for Mgr. Zetina. And through him she demanded an explanation from Astorga of Medici's words. Had not Astorga himself proposed an alliance with Azzolino, and had

they not agreed that Vidoni was the man? How could then Medici pretend that Vidoni was excluded by Spain? Astorga went to the Conclave to reprove Medici for having compromised the Spanish Court and ordered him to retract. Medici found that he had gone too far, but this is the way in which he made the retraction. He went to Retz and said:—

‘Is it true that you have repeated that I said the Queen would rather see the Conclave burned than Vidoni elected?’

‘Certainly,’ replied Retz. ‘I have said so. When the head of the Spanish faction makes a declaration like this to me, a cardinal of the French faction, it is my duty and my right to repeat it to those I think ought to know it.’

‘You are a gentleman,’ replied Medici. ‘These priests would have beaten around the bush, and answered, “Yes,” “No,” “I have not said,” “I may have said,” and so on. But let me explain. I did not mean to say that the Queen of Spain would rather see the Conclave burnt than Vidoni elected, but that the Queen of Sweden would burn down the Conclave if Vidoni was not elected.’

This explanation of Medici did not convince Retz. Still, he made believe to take it for good, and the matter was allowed to drop. Alas, poor Cardinal Vidoni’s chances got dropped at the same time. Medici’s declaration against him, though unwarranted, had given the whole Conclave a strong impression that Vidoni would at any rate not be very agreeable to Spain, even if he was not formally excluded. And to Medici himself it now became a matter of the utmost importance to prevent the election of a man from whom revenge might well be feared. He had no difficulty in persuading Chigi to join him against Vidoni. Chigi’s friends, the Colonna family, had taken a great pleasure in having the epigrams from the famous Pasquino read aloud at evenings in their homes. There were a great many against Vidoni, and these had been particularly relished because Vidoni was considered the most dangerous rival of Bonvisi, whom the Colonnas favoured next after d’Elci. Don Lorenzo Colonna, fearing reprisals if Vidoni should be elected, besought Astorga and Chigi to put him aside. Nor was Chigi loath to be talked over. He had, it is true, given Vidoni fourth place on his list of candidates, but he had hardly expected that he ever would have to run him seriously for a winning race. Moreover, he had begun to suspect the relations of Vidoni with the Squadron, and that altered his position considerably. He desired Vidoni’s election as long as he thought that he alone would be his great elector. If he had to share that glory with Azzolino and his Squadron, Vidoni became less, nay not at all, desirable. He had

once sent his cousin Sigismondo to ask Vidoni if it was true he had allied himself to the Squadronists, whom Chigi considered his personal antagonists, and Sigismondo had received an explicit denial. At the same time Chigi had been informed that an exchange of notes took place every night between Vidoni and Azzolino. Naturally this increased his suspicion. Azzolino, who had his spies in the Chigi camp, soon got informed of this, and his fertile mind imagined a plot to bring Chigi round. He wrote a note to Queen Christina, saying that all his efforts for Vidoni were mere show, that he made believe to favour him simply to excite suspicions against him and ruin all his chances. In fact, Vidoni was his enemy and the last man he wanted. This note Azzolino managed, on February 25, to drop in the Loggia when a servant of Chigi was passing. It was picked up and carried to Chigi. But the ruse was too thin and deceived no one. Chigi now joined Medici in praying Astorga not to interfere any more in favour of Vidoni, and the Ambassador was soon brought round. He announced to the Spanish faction that, although Vidoni was not excluded, he wished, as his words were, that 'there should be no more talk about him.'

This definitely shelved Vidoni. Still, Azzolino and Christina did not give up their hopes about him, and for two months more they continued to work faithfully for their friend, intriguing against all others in the hope that finally his turn would come again. Their fury against Astorga knew no bounds. Christina had used to call him a contemplative fool. Now he was an infamous traitor. Christina went so far as to accuse him of having received from Chigi a *pagaro* or cheque of 11,000 scudi (£2,200).

Azzolino took his best ink and wrote to the Nuntius in Madrid, Mgr. Borromeo, to complain of Astorga's manner of managing 'the service of God and of the King,' but he knew it would take five weeks before the new decisive orders he asked for could reach Rome, and he accordingly prepared to see the Conclave protracted into April. In the meanwhile the Court of Madrid had already been informed from other quarters of Astorga's hesitating behaviour, and had decided that Cardinal Porto Carrero should go to Rome to see that Spain's interests were not sacrificed to those of Chigi and Medici. Porto Carrero had set out on his voyage in the middle of February while the intrigues for and against Vidoni were being carried on in Rome.

Now came Bonvisi's turn to run the gauntlet. Azzolino was more afraid of him than of anybody else as a rival to Vidoni, and he was rather frightened at being informed by Christina of the frequent visits the French Ambassador paid in the Colonna house. The Queen

had written that the beautiful princess and her handsome sister, the famous Hortense, Duchess de Mazarin, of irresistible fame, laid themselves out to captivate his Grace. Hortense had shown herself to Chaulnes dressed as a slave, which evidently meant rather scanty attire! Was not that a scheme to win him for Bonvisi? Azzolino did not trust French Ambassadors in company with pretty duchesses dressed as slaves. Christina tried to tranquillize him. He ought to know that Frenchmen could not live without women's company. And poor Chaulnes was so bored in Rome that the two handsome sisters and their gay house was a godsend to him. But he knew perfectly well how to keep play and business apart, and when he wanted the latter he went to the Queen. As for Bonvisi, there was no question, she felt sure, of putting him forward. At least not just now.

The Queen was right. A stronger attempt than that of the seductive Hortense de Mazarin had been made on Chaulnes (in the last days of February) and failed. The Venetian Ambassador, Antonio Grimani, proposed, what at first sight seemed very reasonable, that Astorga, Chaulnes, and he should together select a candidate and then go together to the Conclave and beg the cardinals to elect him. He suggested Bonvisi. Astorga at once consented. He knew Chigi and Medici would be pleased, and he himself rather liked Mgr. Bonvisi, who would be cardinal-nephew if his uncle was elected. But Chaulnes refused to join forces. The plan had been first proposed to and accepted by the Spanish Ambassador before it came to him. This might give the plot an appearance of a Spanish success. Anyhow, the glory of having invented it would not be for him and France, and that was quite enough. Besides, he knew that Bonvisi's election would be a fearful blow to Cardinal Rospigliosi, for whom he had his King's orders to have special regard. Then he calculated that, even with the votes of Spain and France added to those of which Chigi and Medici disposed, Bonvisi would still be a few votes short of the forty required. And to risk a defeat, he was most unwilling. Notwithstanding Chaulnes' refusal, an attempt was made to force Bonvisi through, and on March 5 the rumour spread inside and outside the Conclave that he was to be elected. But Chaulnes persisted in not ordering the French cardinals to vote for him and Bonvisi fell under the joint blows of the Triple League. He only received a few votes at the urns. To accentuate his defeat and their own united power, Rospigliosi and his friends Azzolino and Barberino a few days later organized a *sparata* in collecting together thirty-three votes on the head of Rospigliosi, the highest number ever attained during the Conclave. The details of this

incident, however interesting they might be, I am afraid time would not now allow me to enter into.

All the four candidates originally proposed by Chigi were thus disposed of, and general uncertainty again prevailed. The problem seemed to be not so much, 'Whom shall we next elect?' but 'Whom shall we defeat?' It did not help much that Chigi and Medici got in some new supplies of excellent wine to which they treated their friends. Poor Vidoni, who sat abandoned in his cell, wrote indignantly to Azzolino asking what the Protestants, who always criticized everything in Rome, would say if they knew of these wine-bibblings in the cells of the Conclave.

Another candidate was ultimately found. It was good and pious Odescalchi, and it was Astorga who first had the idea to propose him. He suggested his name to the Squadronists, but Azzolino, still true to Vidoni, would not agree. Astorga had better luck with Chigi, who readily accepted the proposal. Odescalchi had taken part in no intrigues, he had no enemies, he was supposed to be equally acceptable to France and Spain, why not take him and get out of this Conclave which had now lasted two months and a half. In a few days the idea had gained ground amongst the cardinals, and the thing seemed nearly assured, when all of a sudden everything fell to the ground. The French cardinals had not yet been advised of what was going on; the *entente* with them had been put off to the last, as the other cardinals not unnaturally wished to show that for once they could help themselves. As it happened, this little detail had quite unforeseen results.

Retz had got wind of the business, and, meeting Odescalchi, addressed him in a congratulatory way. He had no reason to be dissatisfied with any attempt in favour of Odescalchi, even if he did not consider his chances very important, for Odescalchi had hitherto been rather in favour than otherwise with the French.

Azzolino's spies soon reported the matter to him. Odescalchi, it is true, belonged to the same faction as Azzolino, but the latter did not at all relish the idea that Odescalchi should be elected without he himself having done anything to earn the new Pope's gratitude. But better late than never, he thought. So he sat down on the evening of March 18, and wrote a note to Odescalchi, saying that he had been working for him secretly all the while, and that it was he who had persuaded Retz, the chief French cardinal, to congratulate him. He sent a messenger with it to Odescalchi's cell, which was at the other end of the Vatican, close to that of Bouillon. Odescalchi's *conclavista* received the note, which bore no address,

but hearing it was from Azzolino who had never before written to his master, nor been to visit him, he concluded there must be a mistake. So he went and handed it to Bouillon, with whom he knew Azzolino to be intimate.

Imagine Bouillon's surprise at reading that Azzolino, who professed to do nothing without consulting the French, had been trying to start a Pope behind their back. He showed it to Retz, who was more surprised still, as Azzolino had never said a word to him either. The note was at once sent to the French Ambassador. At the same time Chaulnes learnt that Astorga had just been to the Conclave to recommend Odescalchi, and that he had also paid a visit to Queen Christina to ask her to influence the Squadronists for him.

Here was a pretty mess. Azzolino and his friends, who had promised to act in harmony with the French, were starting a new candidate without even letting them know, and were lying about it too. If Odescalchi was elected in this way, it would all be Spain's doing, and Chaulnes and Louis XIV would have had no part but that of onlookers in the whole business. That would never do. Even an Archangel should not be made Pope unless by the grace of France. Chaulnes at once sent word to the French cardinals and the Squadronists that he felt himself offended by the efforts made for Odescalchi, and asked them to stop. That was enough. The Rospigliosi and Barberino factions went with the Squadronists, and Odescalchi's chances were over. Such were the ideas of the time about straightforward proceedings. Still, no one, I am bound to say, was very much shocked; though Chaulnes' interview with the Queen next day was not altogether pleasant.

It has been said and repeated that the French ambassador pronounced a formal exclusion against Odescalchi on behalf of Louis XIV, but this is not exact. He did no more than has just been stated, and he writes himself about it in the following terms¹:—

'Je suis pourtant resté ainsi que j'en ai rendu compte à V.M., c'est-à-dire sans exclusion contre le dit Cardinal, son affaire s'étant facilement détruite d'elle-même, parce que hors trois ou quatre cardinaux personne ne le voulait.'

Precious time had been lost, but no one felt eager to take up the battle, as no one was sure of victory. Azzolino and Christina were glad of any delay, as they were counting on the arrival from Spain of Porto Carrero, who they hoped might turn the tables in favour of Vidoni. Besides Easter was approaching and by common consent a sort of armistice was established during Holy Week.

¹ Chaulnes to Louis XIV, 15 avril, 1670.

But the Governments of Europe and the people of Rome were not pleased with the delay. The Turks were again threatening, and the Emperor and Venice both wrote to their Ambassadors to urge the Holy College to come to a decision. The poor Romans could do nothing but grumble and give vent to their discontent in satirical verses and other jokes. The gardener of the Villa Medici named two new varieties of anemones, the fashionable flower of the time, *Sede Vacante* and *Conclave Arrabiato*.

Christina and Azzolino had always been much given to astrology. They now had the horoscopes of the leading cardinals calculated and consulted their male and female 'mathematicians' and astronomers about them. They had the pleasure to find that April would be favourable to their friend Vidoni. We are rather apt to make fun of the passion for astrology, then so strong even amongst the most highly cultured people. Let us remember that a hundred years had not yet elapsed since Giordano Bruno first affirmed the endlessness of space. The people of the seventeenth century still lived under the impression that this poor planet was the one important place in the universe, and that the stars existed for the benefit of the earth. And, in the constant struggle that popular fancy supposed was going on between the forces of God and those of the Devil, the stars were considered to be out of the reach of the latter, and therefore friendly to man. The contemplation of the celestial vault was to our forefathers a pleasure which we can hardly understand. The stars were set there by God for them, to assist them and enlighten them. Astrology was one of the great consolations of mankind—and of such there are not too many.

Another characteristic of the times may be gathered from the following extract from a letter the Queen wrote to Azzolino on April 15:—

'Au nom de Dieu ne mangez jamais rien de ce qu'on vous régale. J'ai su qu'Imperiali s'est trouvé mal pour avoir mangé quelque chose qui lui a été envoyé du Cardinal Delfino. Je crois que ce n'était rien de mauvais, mais profitez de l'avis que Dieu vous a donné et promettez-moi de ne manger ni boire jamais rien de ce qu'on vous envoie. Donnez-moi cette satisfaction pour mon repos, de me le promettre. La rage et l'envie qu'on a contre vous est fort grande, et il faut tout soupçonner de gens qui ne témoignent que trop d'être destitués et de l'honneur et de conscience. Pardonnez la faiblesse de ma crainte à une Amitié, que tous les accidents du monde ne peuvent ni changer, ni affaiblir ou diminuer.'

I must pass rather rapidly over what happened in the beginning of April. Brancaccio's name was brought forward, and Astorga

at first seemed to be quite willing to forget that he had ever been excluded by Spain. But this was mere coquetry, and when it began to look as if the cardinals were running him in dead earnest, he threw away the mask, and even went so far, if Chaulnes can be believed, to threaten that, if Brancaccio was not abandoned, a Spanish battalion from Naples would soon be seen at the gates of Rome. Let me add at once, however, that Chaulnes is not an altogether unexceptionable authority as to Astorga's sayings or doings. His own ideas about the connexion between truthfulness and diplomacy may be gathered from what he wrote to Christina on April 16, about a visit he had just paid his Spanish colleague.

‘Cette visite s’est passée, Madame, comme elles se passent ordinairement entre les ambassadeurs, c’est-à-dire à qui mentira le plus.’

The long expected Porto Carrero finally arrived in Rome on April 19, and he brought with him an explicit declaration from the court of Madrid that, not only had there never been any exclusion against Vidoni, but that he was, on the contrary, one of the candidates whose election would be especially agreeable to Spain. This Astorga was now ordered to communicate officially to the Conclave. Azzolino and Christina were of course delighted, but that very circumstance which seemed to make their hopes a reality crushed them for ever.

Chigi and Medici not unnaturally feared retaliation from a man against whom they had so long been intriguing. Any humiliation rather than that risk. They openly rebelled against Astorga, and declared they would be guided only by their conscience and by the service of God. No mention this time of the King of Spain. They went to their antagonists, Barberino and Rospigliosi, and made a complete surrender. They would take any one out of their creatures rather than run the risk of having to accept Vidoni. The French cardinals were at once consulted so as to avoid any repetition of the Odescalchi affair, and they requested that one of the Rospigliosi faction should be taken, as Louis XIV's orders were to favour that cardinal. Finally, Altieri was selected. The old man had never been considered very clever. He had been the Nuncio at Naples during the Masaniello affair, and, like so many other unsuccessful diplomatists, he had been transplanted into court life, and spent his last years as the Pope's *Maestro di Camera*, or Court Steward, far away from serious business. Under the circumstances these were as many points in his favour. A long pontificate was not to be dreaded, and everybody might hope to influence him in his direction.

The French and Rospigliosi considered it a victory to get as Pope one of the French king's favourite section; Barberino was glad to see a Pope who was older than himself; and Chigi rejoiced at thinking that Altieri's nephew, Cardinal Paluzzi, who would be the new Prime Minister, belonged to his faction, and would leave him in undisturbed possession of his wealth and influence.

Azzolino was not informed of what was going on. That was the revenge of the French for his double dealings in the Odescalchi affair. Spain was also kept outside. This was Medici's answer to the objectionable orders Porto Carrero had brought from Madrid.

The greatest resistance came from Altieri himself. When on April 28, the cardinals began to flock to his cell, and the heads of the factions informed him that they had agreed to elect him, he begged, cried and implored to be relieved from the burden. 'Why do you not take him?' he cried, pointing to Brancaccio, 'he is the worthiest.' But it was of no avail, and with mild violence he was carried to the Sistine Chapel where the solemn vote took place. On April 29, 1670, Altieri was elected by fifty-seven votes out of fifty-nine. It was generally believed that the two votes which were not given to him were those of Azzolino and Ottoboni. But of this there is, thus far, no evidence.

To Christina and Azzolino this result was of course a great disappointment. Altieri had certain obligations to both of them, but after all they had had no hand in his exaltation. Nevertheless, Christina was the very first to enter the Conclave as soon as the barriers were removed. Chaulnes was the first of the Ambassadors to arrive, and he was very glad to find that his rival Astorga did not get to know anything of what was going on until two hours after everything was over.

The Venetian Ambassador wrote home that the fact of a few hours having been sufficient to bring together so many discordant spirits compelled one to acknowledge the interference and assistance of the Holy Ghost. May be, for certainly this result does not do much credit to human wisdom.

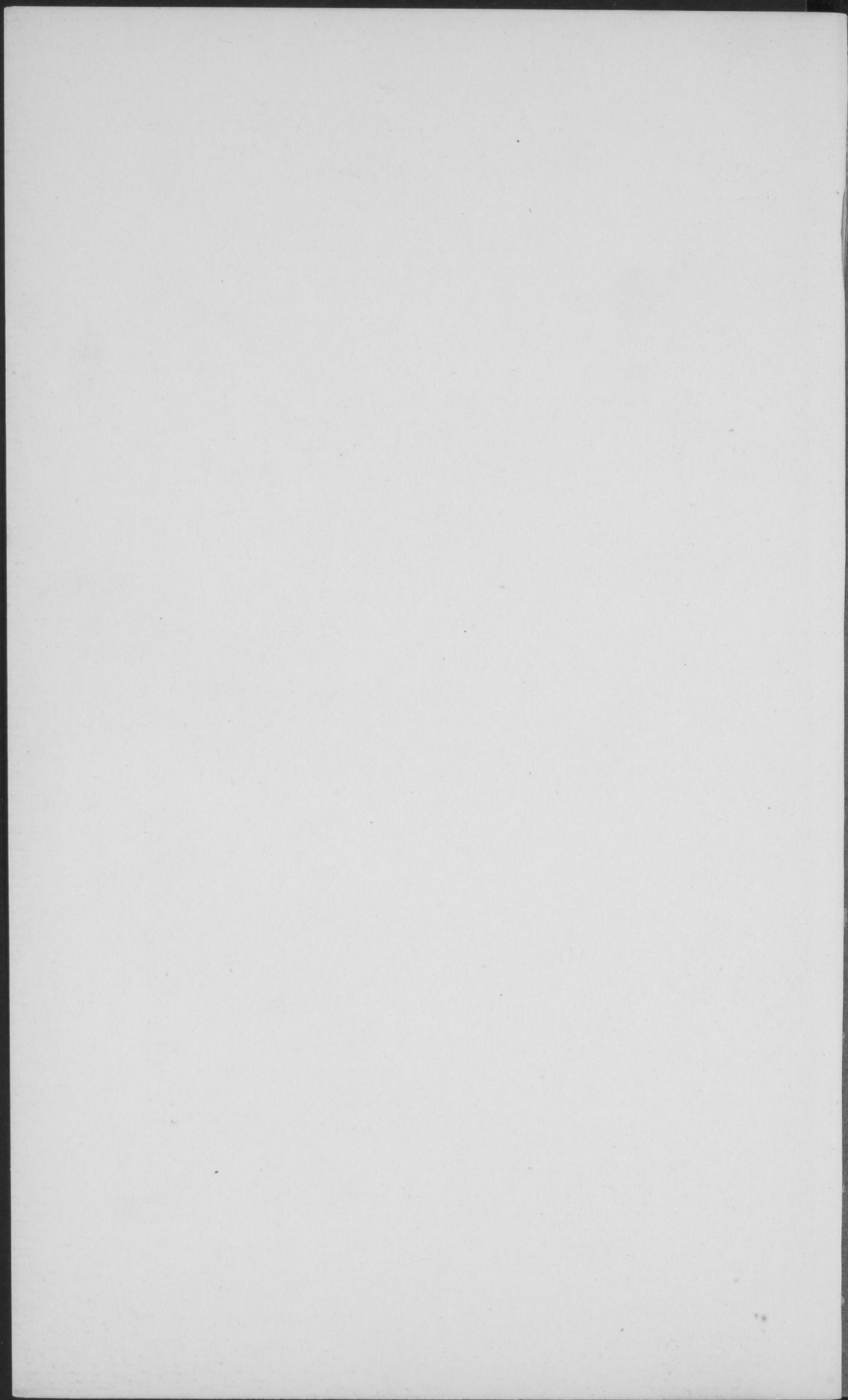
As it turned out, Spain got what it had feared most—a decrepit Pope. France, in spite of the triumph Chaulnes claimed to have won, soon found that under the new reign and the new Cardinal Patron the Holy See was more difficult to manage than ever. And yet there had been one man, Vidoni, whom the chief factions and the two Crowns had from the start considered a desirable subject, and who had been left in the lurch simply because none of the interested would divide with the others the 'glory' of making him

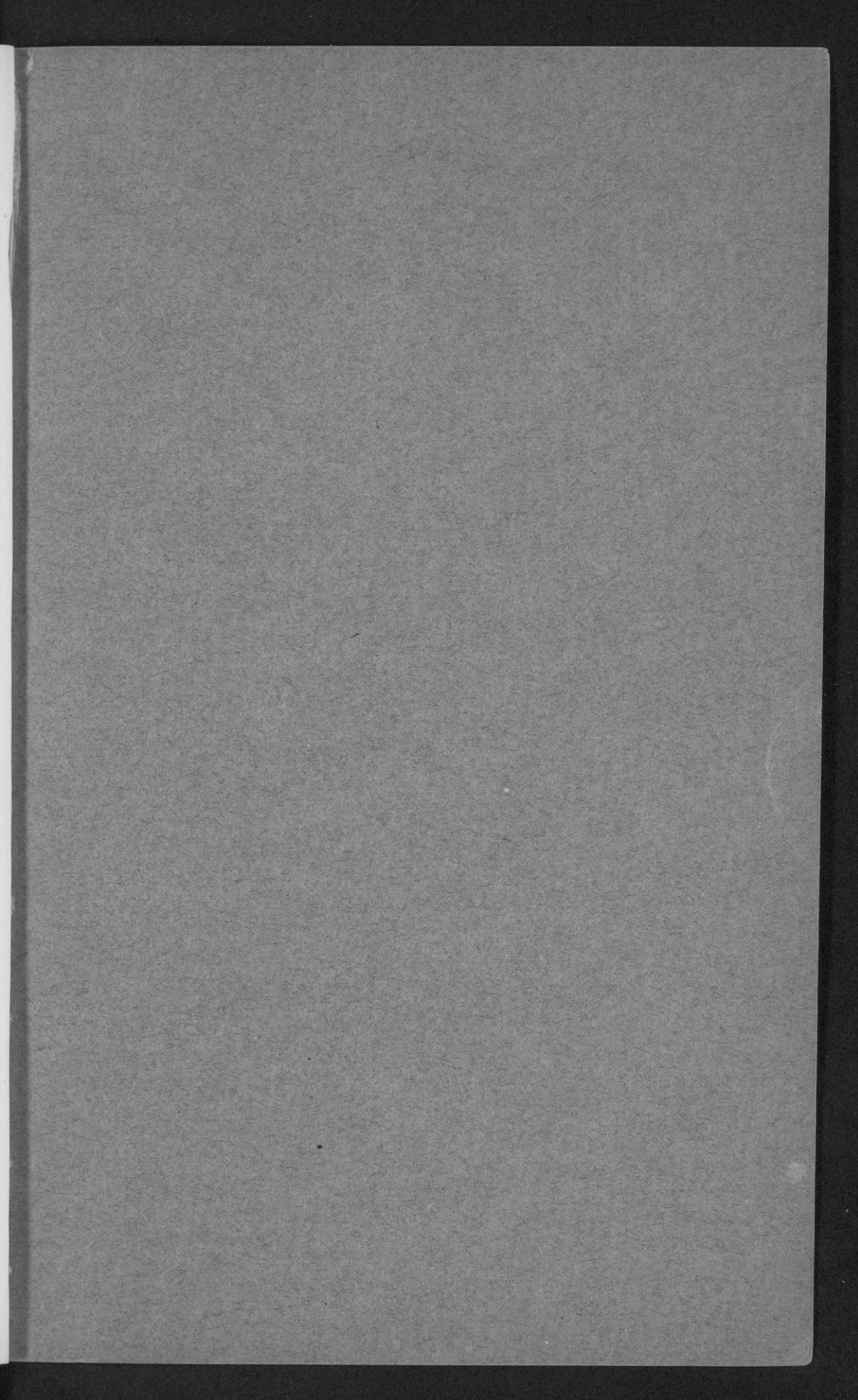
Pope, and because frank explanations were not supposed to be possible between opposing parties. In our days Astorga, Chaulnes, Chigi and Azzolino would have settled everything in a few conversations, as they all had his name on their lists, and we may well think diplomacy has made some progress since the time when the meetings of Ambassadors were a competition 'à qui mentira le plus.'

And as to Azzolino, his over-great shrewdness tells us a lesson, the same as that of the celebrated fable of the French poet, *The Fox and the Cat* :—

'Le trop d'expédients peut gêner une affaire,
On perd du temps au choix, on tente, on veut tout faire.
N'en ayons qu'un, mais qu'il soit bon.'







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