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HISTORICAL MEMOIR

OF

FRÀ DOLCINO AND HIS TIMES;

BEING AN ACCOUNT OF

A GENERAL STRUGGLE FOR ECCLESIASTICAL REFORM,

AND OF

AN ANTI-HERETICAL CRUSADE IN ITALY, IN THE EARLY PART  
OF THE FOURTEENTH CENTURY.

BY L. MARIOTTI,

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“ITALY, PAST AND PRESENT,” “ITALY IN 1848;”  
ETC.

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“Or di a Frà Dolcin dunque che s’ armi,  
Tu che forse vedrai lo sole in breve,  
S’ egli non vuol qui tosto seguitarmi,  
Si di vivanda che stretta di neve  
Non rechi la vittoria al Novarese  
Ch’ altrimenti acquistar non sarà breve.”

DANTE, *Inferno*, xxviii. 53—64.

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LONDON:

LONGMAN, BROWN, GREEN, AND LONGMANS.

1853.



41-426

LONDON:  
SPOTTISWOODES and SHAW,  
New-street-Square.

## PREFACE.

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THE lines of Dante which have been taken as an epigraph to the present work, first directed my attention to the subject.

The vague but unanimous statement of the poet's commentators that Dolcino's main error consisted of a "community of goods and community of wives," made me anxious to ascertain to what extent an identity might be established between the Italian heresiarch of the thirteenth century, and the St. Simonians, and other agitators of the nineteenth.

As it always happens in historical studies, the subject widened on a closer acquaintance, and its interest deepened. I was surprised to find so many of the great social and moral questions which have stirred up mankind for the last eighteen hundred years, involved in what I had at first too hastily looked upon as a partial and local movement. That dark and sad, but to all appearance merely episodal, page of Italian history, furnished a clue to the knowledge of a vast conspiracy against the Church of

Rome—a conspiracy spreading over all European lands as far as the Church itself extended—fraught with ruin to it, and, but for the interference of extraneous political causes, pointing to a thorough and violent reformation—full two hundred years ere Luther was born.

Nor were the historical documents bearing upon the subject totally disproportionate to its importance. Together with many other names otherwise doomed to oblivion, Dante had embalmed Dolcino's memory, and that was sure, sooner or later, to awaken the curiosity of after generations. It was little more than the name that endured, truly; and that was seldom uttered without that indefinable awe, that prestige of horror, which has power to fascinate imagination in proportion to our defect of positive knowledge. Dolcino's history was, for many ages and in many countries, a forbidden subject; and when Muratori, little more than one hundred years ago, brought into light two historical documents, purporting to be, one a history of Dolcino and of his two years' war on the Alps, and the other an exposition of his errors and heresies, and an examination of his writings—both by contemporaneous anonymous writers—he did so with many a profession of his heartfelt detestation of this and of all other heresies, and with all due submission, even against

his own good common sense, to the decrees by which Rome had proscribed the memory of Dolcino and of his sect to all eternity.\*

Some important particulars respecting both the heretic and his heresy were, however, previously to be gathered from some of the works on the Inquisition, particularly from the gloomy and bloody pages of Nicholas Eymeric, from Limborch's work, and the annexed Collection of Sentences pronounced by the Inquisitorial tribunal of Toulouse during the term of nineteen years.†

Some information could also be gleaned by the perusal of two out of the six lives of Pope Clement V., published by Baluze, in his biographical work on the Pontiffs of Avignon‡, and also in some passages

\* *Historia Dulcini, hæresiarchæ Novariensis, ab a. c. 1304 usque ad a. 1307; auctore anonymo synchrono; ex codice Bibliothecæ Ambrosianæ, edita cum nonnullis animadversionibus Joseph. Anton. Saxii in Muratori, L. A. Scriptor. Rer. Italicar. tom. ix p. 475. Mediol. 1726. fol.—Additamentum ad Historiam fratris Dulcini, hæretici, ab auctore coævo scriptum, ex MS. Codice Bibliothecæ Ambrosianæ. Muratori, Rer. Ital. Script., tom. ix. p. 443.*

† *Eymerici, Nichol. Directorium Inquisitorum cum commentariis Francisci Pagnæ. &c. Venet. 1595. fol.—Limborch, Philipp. A. Historia Inquisitionis, cui subjungitur liber sententiarum Inquisitionis Tholosanæ, ab a. m. ccc. vii. ad a. m. ccc. xxiii. Amstelod. 1692. fol.*

‡ *Baluzii, Steph. Vitæ Papparum Avenionensium, hoc est Historia Pontificum Romanorum qui in Gallia sederunt ab a. c.*