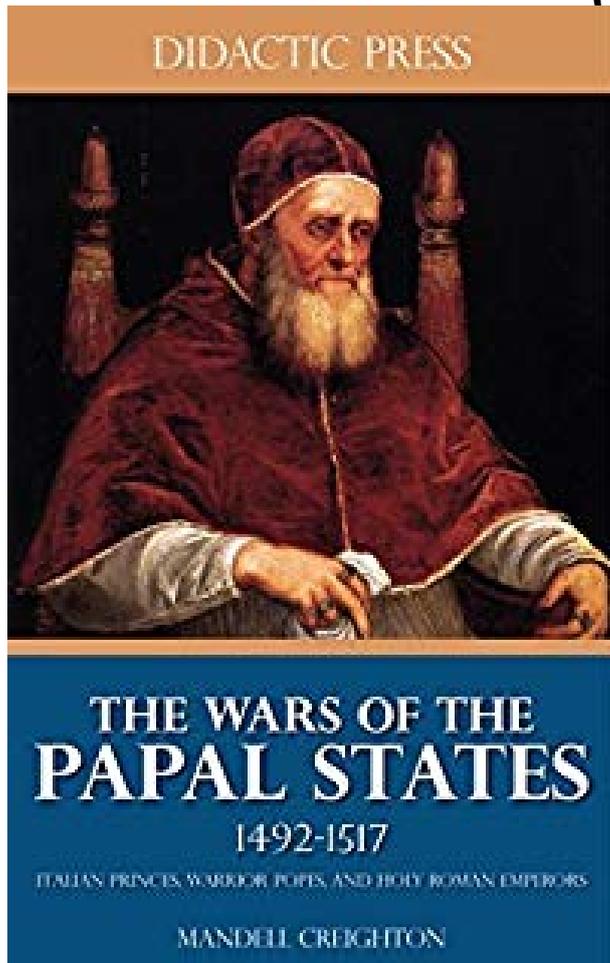


The Wars of the Papal States 1492-1517 - Italian Princes, Warrior Popes, and Holy Roman Emperors (Illustrated)



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On August 6, 1492, the twenty-three Cardinals in Rome entered the Conclave.

The death of Innocent VIII had been long foreseen, and the probabilities of the future election had been discussed. Innocent's nephew, Lorenzo Cibo, was anxious for the election of someone bound to his house by ties of gratitude. His candidate was the Genoese Cardinal Pallavicini; but Cardinal Cibo shared the incompetence of his family, and when he saw that his first proposal was unacceptable he had no one else to propose. Charles VIII of France was anxious to secure the election of Cardinal Rovere, and sent 200,000 ducats to a Roman bank as a means of furthering his desire.

A Pope in the French interest was dreaded by Milan; and Cardinal Ascanio Sforza was resolutely opposed to Rovere. Sforza did not judge it wise to put himself forward as a candidate; he rather wished to have a Pope who would owe everything to him, and he joined with Raffaele Riario in pressing the election of Cardinal

Borgia. There were many reasons why Borgia should be acceptable. As a Spaniard he would hold a neutral position towards political parties in Italy, and the recent successes of the Spanish monarchs had turned men's eyes to Spain as a power which was rising to importance in the affairs of Christendom.

Moreover Borgia was the richest Cardinal in Rome; his election would vacate many important offices, for which there were eager candidates. The former objections to his personal character disappeared in the low tone of morality which was now almost universal. The first days of the Conclave were spent in the futile proceeding of making regulations to bind the future Pope. Ascanio Sforza, seconded by Orsini, was working hard to secure the election of Borgia, who debased himself to make the most humble entreaties. Borgia's wealth was a useful argument to confirm the minds of waverers; Ascanio Sforza's zeal was increased by the promise of the office of Vice-Chancellor and Borgia's palace; Orsini, Colonna, Savelli, Sanseverino, Riario, Pallavicini, even the nonagenarian Gherardo of Venice, all received promises of benefices or gifts of money. So matters proceeded smoothly in the Conclave, and late in the evening of August 10 the election of Rodrigo Borgia was unanimously accomplished...