

**THE BOOK OF THE POPES
(LIBER PONTIFICALIS). 1 -
TO THE PONTIFICATE OF
GREGORY I**

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The Book of the Popes (Liber Pontificalis). 1 - To the Pontificate of Gregory I by Louise Ropes Loomis

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LOUISE ROPES LOOMIS

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GREGORY I**

RECORDS OF CIVILIZATION
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THE BOOK OF THE POPES

(*LIBER PONTIFICALIS*)

I

TO THE PONTIFICATE OF GREGORY I

TRANSLATED WITH AN INTRODUCTION

BY

LOUISE ROPES LOOMIS, Ph.D.



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PREFACE

THE preparation of an English text of the *Liber Pontificalis*, of which the following pages furnish the first installment, is something more than the translation of a crabbed text, crowded with obscure references. Even of the great libraries in this country only about ten possess the original in the best working edition, if one may judge by library returns, and it is doubtful if many more copies of the complete text exist this side of the Atlantic. A document which long was viewed as of fundamental importance for the history of the Papacy has thus sunk so completely out of sight as to have become a rather rare curiosity to all but research students of medieval history. This is in part due to the character of the work, with its forbidding lists of items of local and temporary interest, in which only the trained archæologist can find his way, but it is also surely due to the fact that both texts and commentary have hitherto been in foreign languages and are to be found only in costly and rare volumes. The English version aims to overcome these difficulties. While the narrative portions of the text have been kept in full, lists of mere names and figures, especially in the case of ordinations, have been in part eliminated unless they were of distinct historical interest. The narrative, when no longer clogged with an undue amount of this material, will be found to run along with something of the swiftness of a medieval chronicle. The archæologist, who alone will miss the discarded portions, will turn to the original in any case. In the second place, sufficient apparatus has been given in the form of explanatory notes to make the narrative clear, while bibliographical references furnish a guide to the treatment of the more intricate problems. It is hoped, therefore, that in its new form — for the *Liber Pontificalis* has never before been translated into any other tongue — this quaint monument of curial historiography will be found to have retained enough of that charm of naïve simplicity, which the scholar appreciates in the original, to lure the general reader of history into a study of the important facts with which it deals.

It should be borne in mind, however, that this volume is not an attempt to present a history of the Papacy during the first six centuries. It is simply the presentation of an ancient text with enough commentary to make it intelligible. The text is that of the earliest history of the Papacy, but even were it provided with most exhaustive notes, it could never furnish by itself an adequate basis for a modern narrative. The historian of to-day has at his disposal other documents and archæological remains, which are often of greater importance for an understanding of these early pontificates than the meagre biography in the *Liber Pontificalis*. It was originally planned that a collection of such documents should form a part of the volume in which the *Liber Pontificalis* appears; but it now seems best to publish these documents in a separate and parallel volume, and so leave the way open to complete the *Liber Pontificalis*, or at least to carry it down to the heart of the Middle Ages.

A word should be said as to the point at which the text of the *Liber Pontificalis* is broken in this edition. When the translation was first undertaken it seemed unlikely that it would ever be continued further than in the present enterprise. Dr. Loomis, therefore, carried the text through the pontificate of Gregory I, as a point of general historical interest. Since there is now a possibility that the next section of the book may also be translated, the division has been put as near to the one originally planned as possible, including the pontificates immediately preceding Gregory.

Those who read this book will surely appreciate the arduous task which Dr. Loomis has here accomplished, and their appreciation will probably grow upon a closer acquaintance with the problems involved.

J. T. S.

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