

reaching conquest the Emperor suddenly died at the age of thirty-two, and was buried in the Cathedral of Palermo, where his marble sarcophagus can still be seen. Once more, when the imperial power seemed at its height, it was exposed to the dangers of a disputed succession and a minority. And in this period of weakness for the Empire the Papal chair was occupied by Innocent III., of whom it has been said, "If not the greatest, he was the most powerful of the Popes."¹

The death of Henry VI. was followed in Germany by a period of wild confusion. Germany was indeed, as it was said, "like a sea dashed by every wind." The

PHILIP
1197-1205
AND
OTTO IV.
1197-1212
RIVAL
CLAIM-
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nobles refused to elect Henry's three-year-old son Frederick as his successor, and while the friends of the Hohenstaufen chose the late Emperor's brother Philip, the Guelfic party put forward Otto, son of Henry the Proud, as his rival.

Only too gladly did the Pope accept the position of arbiter. His judgment was as follows: "We pronounce Philip unworthy of Empire and absolve all who have taken oaths of fealty to him as king. Inasmuch as our dearest Son in Christ, Otto, is industrious, provident, discreet, strong and constant, himself devoted to the Church and descended on each side from a devout stock, we by the authority of St Peter receive him as king and will in due course bestow upon him the imperial crown."² In return for the Pope's support, Otto had to promise to uphold the Church, and to acknowledge the Papal claims to Tuscany.

In Sicily, meanwhile, the authority of Frederick had been established. His mother, dying in 1198, had left him to the guardianship of the Pope, who preserved for

¹ Tout.

² Tout, page 321.