



J. LAURENS PINX.

GRAVURE COUPIL & C^{ie}

THE BODY OF POPE FORMOSUS EXHUMED FOR TRIAL BY ORDER OF POPE STEPHEN VII.

EXPOSITION UNIVERSELLE DE 1876.

GERRIK & HARRIS

Pope Formosus

891 to 896

(The pope who was resurrected.)

Before becoming pope, Formosus was excommunicated for siding with a faction against John VIII, 872 to 882, and was compelled to take an oath never to return to Rome, and never again to assume priestly functions. However when John VIII died and was succeeded by Marinus I, 882 to 884, Formosus was restored to his former status and allowed to return to Rome. After Marinus I, came Adrian III, 884 to 885, and then Stephen VI, 885 to 891. Upon the death of Stephen VI, Formosus was made pope -- 891 to 896.

The Papal career of Formosus was involved in political controversies beyond his power to control, and as these controversies continued after his death, there was an attempt to nullify certain of his official acts by declaring, on very flimsy grounds, that he could not have been a legitimate pope. Due to this ongoing controversy poor Formosus's body was disinterred in 897, by order of Stephen VII, and the body, if not Formosus himself, was brought to trial on the charge that Formosus was an usurper of the papal throne! Formosus was duly convicted on this charge, in spite of the fact that there is no record that he ever uttered a single word in his own defense, and a mob cast his body into the Tiber.

However all was not lost. In 897 Theodore II, restored a triumphant Formosus to Christian burial, as one of Theodore II's few official acts during his 20 day reign as pope. And later yet, Dear Formosus was declared a legitimate pope after all, and all his acts confirmed as being official, by a council presided over by John IX -- 898 to 900.

The rapid succession of popes during these times can be explained by the fact that this was a time when poison was in vogue. The Roman Catholic pope is elected for as long as he lives, but there is no assurance that he will live long -- and in those times he usually did not. There are several fine and scholarly old histories of the popes; and they are all fun reading. Bank of Wisdom will republish these grand Histories when time allows.