

PIUS IX AND THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION.



IN May 1792 John Mary Count Mastai Ferreti was born in the small town of Sinigaglia, and though little expecting it in his youth, he was destined by God to fill the highest office which can be bestowed upon man. He became Pope Pius IX.

At the age of twenty-two he came to Rome and, though anxious to serve the Holy Father, he did not aspire to the priesthood, but had resolved to become a member of the Noble Guard. The state of his health, however would not permit him to carry out his determination. In the difficulty of choosing a career he sought and obtained an audience with Pope Pius VII. The Holy Father probably seeing in the young man some signs of a glorious career, counselled him to adopt the ecclesiastical state. As though it were a mark of approval from on high, the disease with which young Ferreti had been afflicted soon left him, and he was enabled to pursue his course of studies in which he attained a most brilliant success. Indeed, so greatly did his achievements excel that of his fellow students that Canon Graniere, one of his professors, held him up to them as a pattern of excellence, saying that he possessed the heart of a Pope. Little did he dream that his young student would soon prove to the world that indeed his heart was fit to rule the destinies of the church of God.

The first seven years of his priesthood were spent in ministering to the wants of the children in the orphanage founded by John Bonghi where his only parishioners were the orphans whom Providence had consigned to his tender care. At the expiration of these years of service he was

sent to accompany Monsignor Mazi who had been appointed Vicar-Apostolic for Chili, Peru, and Mexico. He was afterwards recalled by Leo XII, successor of Pius VII, and appointed Archbishop of Spoleto, whence he was transferred later on to Imola. Spoleto, however, did not lose its archbishop without an effort to retain him; the people petitioned the Pope against his removal from their midst but in vain for Leo XII saw that the change was for the better, and persevered in his decision. Archbishop Ferreti was shortly afterwards, in 1840, raised to the dignity of Cardinal by Gregory XVI and six years later saw him appointed chief bishop of the Catholic Church and Prince of the Papal dominions.

This great Pope seemed to have been specially prepared by Divine Providence for the difficult mission he had to fill in this world. A ripe scholar from having spent years of study in Rome, and knowing the world from having travelled extensively, he was free from all local prejudices and enabled to solve the many weighty problems that presented themselves to him during his pontificate. The years spent as a young priest in South America had rendered him thoroughly familiar with the needs of the American church; and when during his career as Pope he had to deal with ecclesiastical matters in this continent he did so with an intimate personal knowledge and a just appreciation of the requirements under the circumstances.

To no Pope in latter days did providence allot such great tasks, and to none could they have been better assigned, for all the qualifications for carrying them through to successful issues were possessed by this chosen child of God. During his pontificate the Temporal Power was lost, but considering the hampered position in