

under the special auspices of the immaculate Virgin, who had crushed the serpent's head and was mighty to destroy alone all the heresies of the world.

The call was issued by an Encyclical, commencing *Æterni Patris Unigenitus Filius*, in the twenty-third year of his Pontificate, on the feast of St. Peter and Paul, June 29, 1868. It created at once a universal commotion in the Christian world, and called forth a multitude of books and pamphlets even before the Council convened. The highest expectations were suspended by the Pope and his sympathizers on the coming event. What the Council of Trent had effected against the Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century, the Council of the Vatican was to accomplish against the more radical and dangerous foes of modern liberalism and rationalism, which threatened to undermine Romanism itself in its own strongholds. It was to crush the power of infidelity, and to settle all that belongs to the doctrine, worship, and discipline of the Church, and the eternal salvation of souls. It was even hoped that the Council might become a general feast of reconciliation of divided Christendom; and hence the Greek schismatics, and the Protestant heretics and other non-Catholics, were invited by two special letters of the Pope (Sept. 8, and Sept. 13, 1868) to return on this auspicious occasion to "the only sheepfold of Christ," for the salvation of their souls.

But the Eastern Patriarchs spurned the invitation, as an insult to their time-honoured rights and traditions, from which they could not depart. The Protestant communions either ignored or respectfully declined it.

Thus the Vatican Council, like that of Trent, turned out to be simply a general Roman Council, and apparently put the prospect of a reunion of Christendom farther off than ever before.

While these sanguine expectations of Pius IX. were doomed to disappointment, the chief object of the Council was attained, in spite of the strong opposition of the minority of liberal Catholics. This object, which for reasons of propriety is omitted in the bull of convocation and other preliminary acts, but clearly stated by the organs of the Ultramontane or Jesuitical party, was nothing less than the proclamation of the personal *Infallibility of the Pope*, as a binding article of the Roman Catholic faith for all time to come. Herein lies the whole importance of the Council; all the rest dwindles into insignificance, and could never have justified its convocation.

After extensive and careful preparations, the first (and perhaps the last) Vatican Council was solemnly opened amid the sound of innumerable bells and the cannon of St. Angelo, but under frowning skies and a pouring rain, on the festival of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary, Dec. 8, 1869, in the Basilica of the Vatican. It reached its height at the fourth public session, July 18, 1870, when the decree of Papal Infallibility was proclaimed. After this it dragged on a sickly existence till October 20, 1870, when it was adjourned till Nov. 11, 1870, but indefinitely postponed on account of the extraordinary change in the political situation of Europe. For on the second of September the French Empire, which had been the main support of the temporal power of the Pope, collapsed with the surrender of Napoleon III., at the old Huguenot stronghold of Sedan, to the Protestant King William of Prussia, and on the twentieth of September the Italian troops, in the name of King Victor Emanuel, took possession of Rome, as the future capital of united Italy. Whether the Council will ever be convened again to complete its vast labors, like the twice interrupted Council of Trent, remains to be seen. But, in proclaiming the personal Infallibility of the Pope, it made all future œcumenical Councils unnecessary for the definition of dogmas and the regulation of discipline, so that hereafter they will be expensive luxuries and