

believe that the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Mother of God, was immaculate in her conception. * * * There is no salvation to those who do not believe this dogma !”

And, with a loud voice, the Pope intoned the Te Deum ; the bells of the three hundred churches of Rome rang ; the cannons of the citadel were fired ; the last act of the most ridiculous and sacrilegious comedy the world has ever seen, was over ; the doors of heaven were, for ever, shut against those who would refuse to believe the anti-scriptural doctrine that there is a daughter of Eve who has not inherited the sinful nature of Adam, to whom the Lord said in his wrath : “Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return !” and of the children of whom the God of Truth has said : “There is none righteous ; no, not one ; they have all sinned !”

We look in vain to the first centuries of the Church to find any traces of that human aberration. The first dark clouds which Satan has brought to mar the gospel truth, on that subject, appeared only between the eighth and ninth centuries. But, in the beginning, that error made very slow progress ; those who propagated it, at first, were a few ignorant fanatics, whose names are lost in the night of the dark ages. It is only in the twelfth century that it began to be openly preached by some brainless monks. But, then, it was opposed by the most learned men of the time. We have a very remarkable letter of St. Bernard to refute some monks of Lyons who were preaching this new doctrine.

A little later, Peter Lombard adopted the views of the monks of Lyon, and wrote a book to support that opinion : but he was refuted by St. Thomas Aquinas, who is justly considered, by the Church of Rome, as the best theologian of that time.

After that, the celebrated order of the Franciscans used all their influence to persuade the world that “Mary was immaculate in her conception ;” but they were vigorously opposed and refuted by the not less celebrated order of the Dominicans. These two learned and powerful bodies, during more than a century, attacked each other without mercy on that subject, and filled the world with the noise of their angry disputes, both parties calling their adversaries heretics. They succeeded in driving the Roman Catholics of Europe into two camps of fierce enemies. The “Immaculate Conception” became the subject of burning discussion, not only between the learned universities, between the bishops and the priests and the nuns of those days ; but it divided the families into