

An old man succeeds him on the throne which is never empty, an heir to that dynasty that never dies, a link is added to that uninterrupted chain which unites to St. Peter the Pontiff who to-day governs the Church of Jesus Christ. When Leo XIII is called to the awful dignity of Vicar of Christ, his health is already exhausted by labor and age. But the breath of the Holy Spirit animates and strengthens him. The trials of the Church, the humiliations which are showered upon the heavenly spouse, find in him a champion armed for her defence.

Every thing revives and waxes more perfect under the influence of his heaven-inspired genius. The higher studies meet in him with a patron and a model; foreign missions extend, thanks to his encouragement, the field of their beneficence; devotion towards the Mother of God and the Seraphic Francis owe to him an increase of fervor and splendor; and the errors of the day are unmasked, denounced and condemned by his unerring voice.

Of this aged prisoner, nations separate from the Fold, ask the arbitrage of difficult questions. The most formidable empire of the world, to avoid the horrors of war, has recourse to this "Prince of Peace." Never did prince seem so reduced to weakness, and still never did man exert a deeper and more efficacious influence over the politics of his age. One might think realized the wish of the great philosopher Leibnitz, who should have been a Catholic; one is tempted to believe that the golden days of the Middle Ages have come back again, when the monarchs of Europe had the same faith, when the common Father of the faithful, be they kings or subjects, interposed his paternal voice to quell discord and turn aside the plague of war.

Leo XIII is advanced in years, his figure is bent, his face pale as alabaster. Were it not for the trembling of his venerable hands, you might sometimes take