

Leo was not long on the throne before he understood the state of affairs. It was unnecessary for anyone to inform him of what was to be done, and with the prudence and foresight for which he has always been distinguished, the new pope took in the situation at a single glance. He began by stimulating and encouraging the efforts of those entrusted with the education of Catholic youth in his own Italy. But this was not enough ; being charged by Divine Providence to look after the interests of the whole Catholic world he soon made his voice resound in all quarters of the globe.

In 1879, two years after he ascended the Papal throne, he addressed to all Patriarchs, Archbishops and Bishops in communion with the Holy See, the immortal encyclical letter which begins with the words "Eterni Patris." Therein he insists on the necessity of maintaining high the standard of education in Catholic institutions, with regard to all the liberal arts and sciences, that all branches must be carefully attended to, and that no one science either sacred or profane is to be neglected. Nevertheless, he selects one from amongst the others and recommends it in a most exceptional way. It is the science of philosophy. Speaking to his venerable brethren in the episcopate of men who labour for the destruction and extirpation of the Christian name, he tells them of the great influence of depraved doctrines in human actions, of the manner in which false opinions having their seat in the intellect, exercise their pernicious effects in the will, and he goes on to say : We must meet these men on their own ground. They attack us with false principles, we must repel them with true ones. They try to show that the study of philosophy is averse to belief in God, we must prove that philosophy is a positive help and a way which leads to God. Then let the teaching of that science be seriously cared for in your seminaries and colleges ; let it occupy your special consideration.

Moreover he chose a guide and a

sure master of philosophical teaching, whose doctrines, he says, needs no recommendation, "a doctor of all others the prince and master, who imbued with the teachings of his predecessors, collected all their different works, arranged them in magnificent order, considerably augmented them with the productions of his own wonderful intellect, and reduced them down to one compact body. This man endowed with a swift and penetrating genius, with an easy and tenacious memory, leading a most upright and holy life, and possessed with a singular love of truth, is none other than Thomas Aquinas."

The Holy Father goes on to say. "There is no part of philosophy of which the great Dominican has not profoundly and most solidly treated ; the laws of reasoning, corporeal and incorporeal substances, human acts and their principles, etc., etc., and in the works of this great doctor, there is wanting neither variety of subjects, nor skilful arrangement of parts, nor perfect method, nor firmness of principle and force of argument, nor clearness and propriety of language." Besides, St. Thomas has left no philosophical errors unrefuted and he has handed down to posterity strong weapons against false systems ; he has made the necessary distinction and drawn the line between reason and faith, and while friendly joining both hand in hand, and reserving to the one and the other her dignity and rights, he has shown the former to be the handmaid of the latter. Reason serves faith. He has drawn the very pagan philosophers, notably Aristotle, into the christian camp and has made them fight his battles. He has taken their principles, examined and explained them, and has shown that far from being averse to Catholic teaching, they on the contrary serve as its foundation and basis."

No one can say that the choice made by the Holy Father was not an excellent one. In the words of Luther himself, St. Thomas is shown to be the