

dominions, adding insult to outrage, had taken up their residence in the palace of the Quirinal and were extending their diabolical policy of confiscation, robbery, disfranchisement and anti-Christian conspiracy throughout the whole of Italy. In Germany the advocates of Cæsarism, radicalism and rationalism had combined their forces and were engaging in a death-struggle with Rome, while the government of the land was carrying into effect the tyrannical code of Falk Laws and enacting other proscriptive measures against the Catholics of the kingdom. Russia was at open variance with the Holy See. France deluged with the waves of Voltairean scepticism and at the mercy of revolutionists was busily engaged in preparing her anti-clerical decrees. Spain, Portugal and Austria although well disposed towards Catholicism were unable to render any assistance. Truly, gentlemen, it seemed as if the last ray of hope were gone and as if the moment so long looked for by the enemies of the Faith were now close at hand and the powers of hell were to prevail.

Such was the sad state of the world at the close of the reign of Pius IX. But amidst this ever-thickening gloom there appeared a bright light in the heavens which was destined to dispel and outlive the storm and to diffuse its beams over every portion of the globe. Joachim Vincent Pecci had been selected to fill the vacant Chair of Peter. In such a crucial period of her existence the Church required a man of indomitable courage and high intellectual attainments, and such a chieftain she found in Leo. We have seen the numerous difficulties and the many obstacles that opposed him from the outset in the fulfilment of his mission. To their solution and removal Leo brought a bright intellect, an unshaken purpose, an extraordinary knowledge of statesmanship consummate tact and prudence, and an unbounded confidence in Divine Providence. On his elevation to the papal throne he was confronted with a new age. But his ever active mind soon gauged the aspirations of the modern spirit, and in estimating the character of our Holy Father what strikes us most forcibly is the marvellous correspondence between the qualities of the pontiff and the needs of his times and his eminent comprehension of the sublime mission of religion. The tumultuous and chaotic state of society which threatened the Church at the beginning of his pontificate