

THE ŒCUMENICAL COUNCIL OF ROME.

It will meet under strange and disheartening auspices. Amidst the shadowy grandeur of decaying Rome, yet not far from the Forum, the birth-place of modern and ancient progress, where freedom was once on every tongue; surrounded by a populace eager to revive the institutions of Cicero, the faith of St. Paul; hemmed in by the rising liberties of new-born Italy, and trembling before the open hostility of every Italian patriot, and of Italy's heroic son; saved only from his generous rage by a foreign legion, and perhaps by transatlantic alms; a waif from the faded wreck of medieval tradition and a dying past, the Pope will hold counsel with his bishops. It may be hoped that the place, the time, the genius of the scene will enter into their deliberations; that the Pontiff, weary of his temporal rule, may willingly bestow upon Rome that liberty of speech and thought which it enjoyed in the days of Cato and Fabricius; that the Roman church, humble and repentant, may lament the woes it once inflicted upon Huss and Jerome, the simple Vaudois, and the reformers of every land; that it may seek absolution for its guilt from Christianity and from civilization by an open condemnation of the doctrine of persecution; that Pope and priests may awake from their barbaric dream of infallibility and priestly pride, and rise to the practical elevation of benevolence, holy charity, and love. In this way only can they atone for the long and cruel tyranny of the temporal power, the fatal influence of the spiritual.

But should the Pope and his council still continue to defy the conscience of mankind, and refuse to repent of their errors in the past; should they still maintain their selfish policy of sacrificing the welfare of nations to the interests of the Holy See; still teach persecution, and struggle for political power; should they strive to control the politics of France and England, the elections of New York, or the revolutions of Mexico; should they to maintain the power and infallibility of their church, seek to sow anarchy in republics and tyranny in monarchies, to plunge Europe once more in bloodshed and America in civil war—then will History summon its œcumenical council from the distant ages to overwhelm the feeble malice of Rome; then will the mighty shades of Huss and Jerome rise from the blue waters of the Rhine; then the countless martyrs who seem to have sprung up from their ashes around the shores of the beautiful river, will join in the sacred assembly; then the tortured Vaudois, the children of the early church, will awaken on their mountains, headless, eyeless, scarred by the persecutor's fire; then Dante shall aim once more his undying anathema against Rome, or Milton cry aloud to Heaven for vengeance; then will Luther and Melancthon, linked by a common sentiment, rise side by side from the churchyard of Wittenberg, and judgment will be given against unrepentant Rome.