

alone, prevented by the orders of Czar Nicholas, were not in attendance. This is somewhat surprising since the Greek church, the national church of Russia, vies with the Catholic church in paying honor to the Blessed Mother of God. These bishops who surrounded the Pope did not constitute a formal council; but they may be said, however, to have represented the universal church. Among those present were to be found such men as Cardinals Wiseman, and Patrizzi; Archbishops Franson of Turin, Reisbach, of Michigan and Hughes of New York together with Bishop DeMazenod of Marseilles the founder of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, Dupanloup of Orleans, and Bouvier of Mans.

Never had such a number of learned men assembled in Rome since the Oecumenical Council of 1215. Meanwhile the whole Catholic world prayed according to the counsel of the Sovereign Pontiff, that the Holy Ghost might assist the assembled prelates and the church, and keep them free from error in the decision about to be pronounced on the Immaculate Conception. All the church militant was at the feet of the Lord imploring him to guide Peter in the task of feeding the lambs and sheep, and not to allow the "gates of hell" to prevail. A strange occurrence took place when the question was brought up whether the bishops should act in conjunction with the Holy Father as judges in defining the dogma, or whether Pius IX should act alone. It was at the hour of the Angelus, and as the Bishops rose from their knees they, with one voice exclaimed as though moved by divine inspiration "Petre, doce nos, confirma fratres tuos"—"Peter teach us, confirm thy brethren." By this action their absolute faith in the Papal Infallibility which was itself afterwards pronounced a dogma of our creed by the same Pope, was made manifest to the world.

The 8th of December 1854 was a triumphal day for the city of Rome and for the world—a day which according to Bishop Dupanloup, "crowned the expectations of past ages, blessed the present time, claimed the gratitude of the centuries to come, and left an imperishable memory—the day on which was pronounced the first definition of an article of Faith,

which no dissentient voice preceded, and which no heresy followed." The approaches to the vast Basilica of St. Peter were thronged by people of all tongues; thousands remained outside as there was no room within the immense building for all who presented themselves. Slowly and solemnly the procession of bishops in order of seniority, followed by the cardinals, began to advance; the Pope surrounded by a brilliant train of attendants, brought up the rear. The Litany of the Saints was intoned and the Church Triumphant was implored to come and join the church Militant in honoring the Queen of all Saints.

What a solemn occasion was this! What great acts were to take place at this meeting! The mighty sacrifice of the Mass was to be celebrated, and during it were to be pronounced the words which the world was called upon to accept as true, being the infallible teaching of the Vicar of Him who cannot err. Everything was done to make the ceremony as imposing and solemn as possible. The great church, of which Byron wrote:—

"But thou of temples old, or altars new,
Standest alone, with nothing like to thee:
Worthiest of God, the holy and the true,
Since Sion's desolation, when that He
Forsook his former city, what could be
Of earthly structures, in his honor piled,
Of a sublimer aspect? Majesty,
Power, Glory, Strength, and Beauty, are all
aisled

In this eternal ark of worship undefiled."

This great church was decorated to suit the occasion. Myriads of lights were burning, each one a token of him who said: "I am the light of the world:" hundreds of acolytes in their white surplices were there to serve at the divine sacrifice; the high altar was all ablaze in honor of the veiled victim: the bishops, His apostles: the Pope, His Vicar, all attested to the wonderful act which was about to be performed by Christ's representative, who could command the world, yet, who was a prisoner in his own city.

Pius IX. ascended his throne, and having received the obedience of the cardinals and bishops, Mass was begun. When the Gospel had been read in Greek and Latin, Cardinal Machi, Dean of the Sacred College, accompanied by the deans of the