

and the Church, what was more natural for him than to have recourse to the ever-blessed Mother of Him who is Head over all the children of God? The world was full of heresy and irreligious hate, and it was just the critical time when the woman foretold to Eve in Paradise as pre-destined to crush the serpent's head must prove her power and her love for humanity. Pius IX., on Feb. 2nd, 1849, published an Encyclical to the universal hierarchy declaring his purpose of defining the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception. He established a commission of cardinals and eminent theologians whose duty it was "to examine the subject in its every aspect, and with the most extreme care, and to report their matured judgment thereon." He called upon the Archbishops and Bishops throughout the world to have public prayers offered up by their people regarding the proposed decree. The Italian, Spanish and Portuguese bishops, to the number of four hundred, were unanimous in their desire for the definition; the American, English and Irish bishops were generally in favor of it; the only opposition, not very pronounced, was made by a few French, German and Swiss prelates. In every Catholic household it was felt that the honor of God's Incarnate Son was to be supremely vindicated in the stainless honor of His Mother. Great was the happiness of the Sovereign Pontiff, when on December 8th, 1854, he pronounced in

tones clear, full and impressive, the decree of Mary's Immaculate Conception; his eyes filled with tears, but he recovered himself when he read the following definition: "We declare, affirm and define, that the doctrine which says that the Blessed Virgin Mary was preserved and exempted from all stain of original sin from the first instant of her conception, in view of the merits of Jesus Christ, the Saviour of all mankind, is a doctrine revealed of God, and which, for this reason, all Christians are bound to believe firmly and with confidence."

Of this important event Bishop Dupanloup wrote: "The celebration of December the 8th thus crowns the expectation of past centuries, sheds a blessing on the present one, claims the gratitude of generations unborn, and shall leave behind an imperishable remembrance."

For five hundred years this doctrine ran its stormy course; for five hundred years it had been attacked and had been defended. Genius had threatened it and genius made it victorious. It was called heresy in days gone by by the rash theologian; in the nineteenth century it is declared an article of faith. The ways of God are mysterious. The long series of combats finishes in the glory of solemn triumph, and the voice of the Catholic world is heard in devout prayer: "Queen conceived without original sin, *Pray for us!*"

Pure Blossom of the earth, white Star on high,
Behold the narrow round wherein we move!
Console us, feeling every tear that starts,
And show us our Redemption drawing nigh!

CAROLINE D. SWAN.