

from the wilds of Sarmatia, from the steppes of Central Asia, countless hordes rush in upon the Roman Empire; cities are overturned, churches are destroyed, the clergy are massacred. Everywhere the course of the barbarian is marked by ruin and desolation. But, is the Church overcome? Oh, no; the Church again triumphs. And even the infidel historian declares that one of the brightest pages of history is this triumph of the Church over the barbarian hordes. The barbarians conquered imperial Rome, but in their turn were conquered by the religion of Rome. When Attila entered Italy, vowing the destruction of the imperial city, the venerable pontiff St. Leo, accompanied by a few deacons, went forth to meet him. Strange to say, the haughty conqueror, who styled himself the scourge of God, bowed down before the majesty of religion, and to the attendant officers he afterwards declared that while the Pontiff spoke, the Princes of the Apostles appeared to him in the heavens with drawn swords, menacing death unless he revered the Pontiff's words. This scene depicts for us the Church's triumph over the barbarians. But the Church is not satisfied with conquering them. She takes these rough warriors by the hand, and sanctifying them with the grace of Divine Truth, she ennobles them and leads them in the paths of heaven, and forms them into the great Christian nations of the modern world. Thus, again, the Church's victory was complete. But the conflict does not cease. New enemies enter the field, and Satan endeavours by the spirit of pride and passion and by the corruption of the human heart to lessen the fruitfulness if he cannot destroy the sanctity of God's Holy Church. But, thanks to the mercy of God, it was in those ages when corruption was darkest and most rife throughout the world that innumerable saints shed lustre around the sanctuary, and showed forth in their lives the heroism of Christian sanctity. By their example they preached prayer and penance, self-denial and sacrifice, and their virtues shone as beacon lights marking out the way that leads to Paradise. It was precisely in that age that witnessed the birth of the Reformation that the Church was adorned by such chosen souls as St. Teresa, St. Catherine of Genoa, St. Cajetan, St. Ignatius of Loyola, St. Francis Xavier, St. Philip Neri, St. Charles Borromeo, St. Camillus, St. John of God, St. Peter of Alcantara, St. Francis de Sales, and St. Vincent de Paul. At no period perhaps was the Church more fiercely assailed than in the 16th century, and yet it would be difficult to find any other period that was so prolific of great saints. In later times, statesmen would plot against the Church; they would forge golden fetters to check the liberty of her beneficent action and to make her the handmaid or the slave of their political intrigues. But may she not repeat with the Psalmist, "Why have the nations raged, and the people devised vain things: the kings of the earth stood up, and the princes have met together against the Lord and against His Christ. Let us break their bonds asunder, and cast away their yoke from us. He that dwelleth in heaven shall laugh at them: the Lord shall deride them." In those ever-varying political schemes of the powers of this world are fulfilled the inspired words, "They shall perish, but thou remainest; they shall grow old as a garment; as a vesture thou shalt change them, and they shall be changed, but thou art always the same, and thy years shall not fail; the children of thy servants shall continue; they shall be directed for ever and ever." But shall not time, at least, overcome the Church of God? Time consumes and destroys all the works of man, but time cannot prevail against the Church. Time has written no wrinkles on her heavenly brow. One by one the enemies that assailed the Church have passed away: she has survived them all: she still remains, not in the decay of strength or the decrepitude of old age, but in the full vigor of youth, in the full bloom of her heavenly comeliness. Everything else changes here below. Empires vanish, new nations are formed, new languages come into existence, but the Church remains unchanged. In the schools of Alexandria, as on the banks of the Danube, the Church rests not on human wisdom, but on the cross of Christ, for her support. In the courts of princes or the deserts of Syria the Church is still the same; the same words of truth are on her lips, and to all alike she proclaims the Divine maxim and whoever wishes to walk in the paths of Paradise, be he rich or poor, prince or peasant, he must take up the cross, and following in the footsteps of our blessed Lord, bear perseveringly the sweet yoke of God's holy law. "Who is there that will deny that the Catholic Church in this fair continent has had its periods of winter and spring-time of trials and sorrows? But the council which we have just celebrated is the authentic proof that the Church has not been overcome. As late as 100 years ago the light of civilisation had not as yet arisen over this Southern land. The savage natives roamed unchecked over its vast plains, and the whole continent was sunk in the depths of barbarism and idolatry. Even when the light of civilisation dawned on these shores the Catholic Church continued for a half a century to be persecuted and proscribed. When, about the year 1787, two priests petitioned to be permitted to sail for Australia, that they might bring religious consolation to their brethren in the faith, their petition was ignominiously flung aside. But in a few years Providence itself provided, in an unforeseen way, that the blessings of religion might reach those suffering children of the Church. We have seen, in our day, some zealous and devoted priests led forth and manacled and fettered from the prisons of Poland, and sent into the recesses of Siberia, under the pretext that they were rebels against the Russian despotism that enslaved their native land: but in the merciful ways of providence, they became the dispensers of the blessings of heaven to their suffering countrymen, exiles in those dreary regions whither no priest could penetrate. This was precisely the case of the first three priests who, in the beginning of the present century, were branded at home as rebels, but who were guided by a benign Providence to these southern shores to minister to the wants of the afflicted Catholics of Australia. As late as the year 1817 the first priest who was permitted by Government to come as a missionary to these shores no sooner landed here than he was cast into prison, through the bigotry of the uncontrolled local authorities, and compelled to quit the country in the first ship that set sail. It is but 50 years since, on the memorable feast of the Exaltation of the Holy-Cross in 1835, the first Vicar Apostolic landed at Port Lincoln. He found two priests ministering to the faithful

in Van Dieman's Land, and in the whole Australian continent there were but three other priests. One of these was the Rev. Joseph Therry, who may justly be styled the pioneer of the faith, and the true apostle of the Cross in all these southern lands. Another of these three priests was the present venerable Bishop of Birmingham, Dr. Ullthorne, whom we all revere as a living link of the present with the past, and who will rejoice more than any other to-day that the little seed that was sown in unparelled sorrows and humiliations, and over which he watched with such anxious care, has, through the blessing of Heaven, grown with stately growth, and stretched forth its branches throughout the length and breadth of this fair continent. Slow was the growth of the sacred tree, Holy Faith. Many perhaps who are listening to my words, remember well the time when there were fewer priests throughout all Australia than there are at present Bishops assembled within the sanctuary. Some of these illustrious prelates are themselves the first bishops who have laid deep the foundations, and nobly built up the Church in their respective sees. When the Very Rev. Dr. Fitzpatrick, the present Vicar-General of Melbourne, entered on his missionary duties there, he had to land from a little boat at Sandridge, and to walk three miles before he could meet with a human habitation. There was then only one small wooden church in all that district. What a contrast this presents to the grand cathedral that now adorns the great city of Melbourne—a noble monument of religion, erected mainly by the untiring exertions of the venerable ecclesiastic to whom I have referred. About 40 years ago some religious men were appointed to the spiritual charge of the Moreton Bay territory, which included the then village of Brisbane. But they could find no means of subsistence there, and were compelled to sail back along the coast in a little boat to Sydney. Even 25 years ago, the first bishop coming to his see, though standing on the spot now crowned by the magnificent cathedral, could ask, "Where is the town of Brisbane." It is but 20 years since the boundaries of the sees of Bathurst and Maitland were marked out, and yet they already have so grown as to yield to few missionary dioceses, as well in their organisation as in the number of their schools and churches, and various institutions of charity and religion. When, 15 years ago His Lordship of Dunedin took possession of that newly-erected see, there was hardly anything there. Its beautiful convents, flourishing schools, numerous presbyteries, and churches, and fine cathedral just completed, attest what progress has been made. And now the bishops of those sees who themselves have borne the burden of the heat and toil assemblé in Plenary Council, as spiritual watchmen on the towers of Israel, to guard the deposit of revealed truth, to perfect the work of the divine ministry, to strengthen the bulwarks of the faith, and to consolidate what has already been so nobly done. Some, forsooth, will tell us that we are at war against civilisation, and are the enemies of society. No. It is the Bishops of the Church that truly foster and develop and bring to highest perfection everything that may tend to strengthen the bonds of society and to promote the happiness of individuals and families. Were the world left to itself, it would very soon relapse into barbarism and paganism, but holy Church is ever on the alert to root out the evils that menace society, and to repel those enemies that would plunge us once more into the depths of degradation and misery. And, if you ask me: what has been the work of the Plenary Council, I will reply that it has been precisely to combat those evils that threaten to undermine the social fabric and to blight the hopes of civilisation at the present day. There is a spirit of infidelity and indifference abroad which wrecks innumerable souls. The work of the council has been to bind the faithful closer to our Lord Jesus Christ, that they may love Him with more intense love, and may cherish ever more and more the truths which he has revealed. Faith is the substance of things to be hoped for, the evidence of things that appear not' (Heb. xi. 1); and nothing is more necessary at the present day, for individuals and for nations, than the Divine strength which the true faith imparts, the strength which comes from God, the source of every blessing, of life, and peace, and truth. The tendency of the present time is to lower the standard of morality, and to bring man down to the very level of the brute creation. The council, by its enactments, endeavours to promote piety, to lift up man to a higher and holier life, and, amid the corruption of a sinful world, to guard in his soul the image and likeness of the Creator. Such are the thoughts that recur to the mind to-day, whilst under the Divine blessing we bring to a happy close the first Plenary Council of the bishops of the Australasian provinces. The school is the battlefield of every form of irreligion against the Church in our day. Throughout almost all the Australasian Provinces the systems of education adopted by the State are such as Catholics cannot, as a rule, conscientiously avail themselves of. It is sometimes said, indeed, that it was not the intention of the men who originated the present primary school system in New South Wales to wage war against religion, and it may be so. It is not mine to judge of the intentions of those men. Their actions, however, and the results must speak for themselves. It cannot be questioned that the present system in its practical working leads to religious indifference and deadens the influence of Christianity in the heart. The Catholic Church asks for no special favour at the hands of Governments, nor does she seek any monopoly in the matter of education. She contends that religious training is an essential element in true Christian culture, and that education cannot be complete and cannot attain its end unless it be quickened by religion. It is our endeavour to promote the religious instruction of the young, because religion enlightens the mind to Divine truth and moulds the heart to virtue, and because religion, and religion alone, can make us devoted, self-sacrificing citizens and earnest faithful Christians. We do not ask the State to pay one penny that our Catholic children may be instructed in religious truth; but we shall not cease to appeal to the common sense of the community and to proclaim to the civilised world that it is a hardship and an injustice for Catholic schools and Catholic teachers to be deprived of what is their due, when they have taught the branches of secular knowledge that the State requires, and when those branches have been taught in accordance with the standards which the State itself has laid down. We see every day the children from our Catholic primary schools bearing away the