

THE EDICT OF CONSTANTINE

IMPRESSIVE CELEBRATIONS IN LONDON

Each successive public function in Westminster Cathedral (says the *Universe*) clothes it with new historical associations, fills it with an atmosphere all its own, and in an ever-new light its religious purpose and fitness are revealed. Perhaps no other scene in Christendom, not excepting Rome itself, could present such parallels and contrasts, such suggestions of the past woven with promise of the future, Imperial Rome of the Constantinian ages and Imperial London of the living day, as the metropolitan cathedral of Britain. St. Sophia of the Constantinian city is born again in Westminster, and what place better could be found wherein to commemorate in the land of his birth the first Christian Emperor, who proclaimed to the universal world the essential and fundamental Christian principle of religious liberty. From Rome the British Empire and all English-speaking peoples received their Christianity, and from Constantine and the Edict of Milan have come down to them the liberties, civil and religious, of which they boast, the spirit of toleration and unity which they have not always known how to practise, and which he received from the shining Cross. How many of those who wave their flags and wrap themselves in the Union Jack, who are ready to fight for it and die for it, realise that it is the cross of George, the Roman martyr, the cross of Patrick, the cross of Andrew, the self-same cross of Constantine, which he saw in the heavens, and which he emblazoned on the imperial banner, the famous Labarum, carried before him in battle against his pagan foes, 'In this conquer.' And as we commemorated the deed of Constantine, in the Cathedral below, high up in the sky, surmounting the campanile, was uplifted over London the relic of the true Cross, which British Helen, the mother of Constantine, found buried beneath Calvary. When peace to the Church was proclaimed by the Edict of Milan Pope Miltiades came out of the catacombs and installed in the princely palace of the Lateran. Rome was made the city of the Popes. Pius X. decreed the commemoration of

The Deliverance of the Cross

from bondage and persecution by a Briton—born sixteen hundred years ago, and what nation owes honor to Constantine and the Popes more than Britain? We have said that St. Sophia is reproduced in Westminster. No other cathedral in the world so nearly resembles the wonderful Basilica which was raised in the new city built by Constantine for himself when he established the Popes in freedom. Rome became the throne of the spiritual kingdom, Constantinople of civil empire, as London may be the centre of material power, while Rome remains the spiritual bond of unity and peace. And it was an inspiring sight to those who could stand

in the perspective of history to see the hierarchy of resuscitated England and the long train of priests moving in stately procession, after three centuries of repression repeating the triumph of the cross. Three centuries of persecution from Calvary to Constantine three centuries of persecution from the Great Apostasy to this day. Not so fierce was the latter-day persecution as the pagan terror from Nero to Diocletian, for, as the Bishop of Clifton reminded us in a sermon which made the occasion memorable, the world had been transformed by twelve centuries of Catholic civilisation, the departure from which was leading the world back inevitably to pagan ideals. The Bishop swiftly reviewed the events which were the immediate prelude to the celebrated Edict—the flight of Constantine across Europe to his dying father at York from the palace of the tyrant Galerius, where he had been held as a hostage; his return as Cæsar, his battles with his rivals, ending with victory over the tyrant Maxentius at the bridge Milvius on the Tiber two miles out of Rome, where the potent in the heavens appeared. The battle was fought in the Quintian fields, 40,000 led by Constantine against 180,000 under Maxentius. The victorious Constantine entered Rome with the new standard borne before him, the Cross of Christ and legend, 'In this sign thou shalt conquer.' October 27, 312 A.D., ended the line of pagan tyrants who had drenched the empire east and west with blood in their vain attempt to exterminate Christianity. The last Edict of 308, according to one historian, was the most fierce. It began, 'A perfect reign of terror, not to be concluded until two full years had elapsed. These two years were the most prolific of bloodshed of any in the whole history of Roman persecution.'

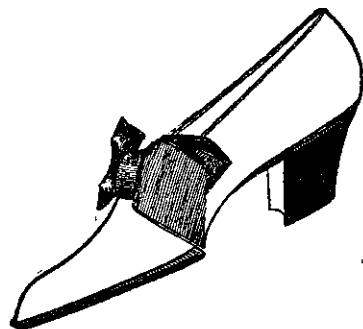
The Edict of Toleration

issued at Milan inaugurated the Peace of the Church. In October, 313, Pope Miltiades held the first Council in Rome under the Peace, Constantine presiding, but not interfering, in the palace of the Lateran, to which house soon after was added the Basilica, which became the Cathedral of Rome, the Mother of the Churches. A new Basilica is being erected in Rome by orders of the Holy Father to share with the Lateran the perpetual commemoration of those events, and every church in Christendom is celebrating simultaneously the 'annus mirabilis.' 313, with which four distinct historic events are linked—the vision of the Cross seen by Constantine and his legions, the Battle of the Milvian Bridge, the Edict of Toleration, and the Peace of the Church.

At an early hour on Sunday the Cathedral began to fill. By 10 o'clock all the seats were occupied. In the tribunes reserved over the transept were seen the nuns of various Orders, the venerable Bishop of Newport occupied a special place in a tribune, a large number of seats had been reserved and were filled, the nave and all the remaining spaces were free and filled to overflowing. Many distinguished persons were present, and not a few ministers of religion of other

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