

THE CHRISTMAS TRIUMPH.

Rome has suffered many changes. It is no longer the Rome of Aurelian, no longer the temple-place of heathen gods.

But the Bethlehem Star still shines.

More than three hundred years have now passed away since its mysterious ray led the Magi to the Redeemer's cradle. Constantine, Rome's emperor now, has seen the failure of the gods of Rome and Athens. He has been forced to ponder, forced to believe that the faith of the persecuted Christians in a God, one and invisible, and in his Crucified Son, may be the true faith of the world.

In this year, 312, he had seen the Vision which was to change the state of the world. That ancient historian who received the narrative from Constantine's own declaration, thus describes this most wonderful event of Christian History:

The army arriving near Rome, the emperor was employed in devout ejaculations. It was the twenty seventh of October, about three o'clock in the afternoon, the sun was declining, when there suddenly appeared a pillar of light in the heavens in the form of a cross, with this plain inscription:

IN HOC SIGNO VINCES [In this sign thou shalt conquer.]

The emperor was amazed. The cross and sign blazed before the eyes of the whole army.

Early the next morning, Constantine informed his officers that Christ had appeared to him in the night, with the cross in his hand, and commanded him to make the cross the royal standard. The officers were ordered to construct a cross, and a standard. The standard was made thus:

A long spear, plated with gold, with a transverse piece at the top, in the form of a cross, to which was fastened a four-square purple banner, embroidered with gold, and beset with precious stones which reflected the highest lustre; above the cross was a crown overlaid with gold and jewels, within which was placed the sacred symbol, the two first letters of the name of Christ in Greek.

Under this standard, October 29, 312, Constantine defeated the Roman Emperor, Maxentius, on the banks of the Tiber. He entered Rome in triumph, bearing aloft the cross. The Christians hailed it with acclamations, and a joyful public Christmas followed.

The Saturnalia became the Festival of the Nativity.

The ancient pagan shrines vanished, or they glowed with the holy lights of the new and triumphant faith—the beautiful Bethlehem Star shining over all.—*Wide Awake*.

CHRISTMAS AND ST. PATRICK

New temples have arisen in Rome. They uplift the cross. The golden season of the Saturnalia comes and goes, but the Festival of Christ is celebrated instead. Rome is filled with holy rejoicing, the Roman children sing of the Star of Bethlehem, masses are chanted—the heathen festival has become Christmas.

The Church, mighty in its faith, is praying for the conversion of the world. Missionaries go forth into all the provinces of the vast Roman Empire.

About the year 432, St. Patrick made a holy journey. He came to Ireland. He found the people idolaters, worshipping under the oaks, their birds and poets ignorant of the true God; and as St. Patrick was a

singing prophet and teacher, the simple folks of Ireland, ever deeply stirred by song and eloquence, listened to him. They were moved by the beautiful story of Christ, and the hope of an eternal life. Thousands were baptized into the new faith. Churches sprung up over the green land as if by magic. St. Patrick preached in Ireland for some thirty years, and we cannot wonder that the Irish people still recall his mission with love, and speak of him with reverence.

The scene of his greatest triumph was Tara. There he instituted the wonderful Christmas festivals of Rome. There his grand missionary anthems were inspired. According to tradition, he first sang his memorable hymn, *Christ be with me*, on one of the religious Christmases in the royal halls of Tara. It is a rapture of devotion and consecration:

To Tara to day may the strength of God pilot me;

May the power of God preserve me;

May the wisdom of God instruct me;

May the eye of God view me;

May the ear of God hear me;

May the word of God make me eloquent;

May the hand of God protect me;

May the way of God direct me;

May the shield of God defend me;

Christ be with me,

Christ on my right hand,

Christ on my left hand,

Christ in the heart of all to whom I speak,

Christ in the mouth of all who speak to me,

Christ in the eye of all who see me,

Christ in the ear of all who hear me.—*Wide Awake*

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