

Sole Emperor of the West.

It was on the night before this famous battle that as he himself told the historian, Eusebius, he saw the vision of a Cross with the motto 'In hoc signo vinces.' At the battle his soldiers carried the Labarum bearing the monogram and Cross of Christ. He attributed his victory to Christ and to Christianity.

You are too familiar with the history of this first Christian Emperor—who so justly deserves the title of great, for me to speak of him. He was a soldier of fearless courage, a general of extraordinary ability, and a statesman of the highest order. He was providentially called to bring the Church from the Catacombs to remove the fetters from the limbs of the Christians by granting them, not toleration merely, but for the first time in their existence, liberty and equality before the law.

In 313 Constantine and Lucullus, the Emperors of the East and West, the one a Christian and the other a pagan, met at Milan and issued the famous proclamation known as the Edict of Milan. By this edict was established the fullest toleration of all religions and freedom of worship, without hindrance from the State, and without preference by the State of one religion before another. Its terms are most broad and explicit. It gives 'both to the Christians and all others free power of following whatever religion each man may have preferred—the absolute power is to be denied to no one to give himself either to the worship of the Christian or to that religion which he thinks must be suited to himself—that each may have the free liberty of the worship which he prefers, for we desire that no religion may have its honor diminished by us.'

HOLLAND'S CENTENARY AND CATHOLIC PROGRESS

A hundred years is altogether too broad a span for measuring Catholic religious activity and Church progress within the limits of the present Kingdom of The Netherlands (says a writer in *America*). Up to within sixty years ago the Church, as regards her public life, had existed in a semi-comatose condition, the result of an inborn fear naturally begotten of a Protestant Absolutism during upwards of two centuries. Active persecution and forcible seizure of Church property as a general policy had ceased by the middle of the seventeenth century, for the simple reason that Catholics had then been stripped of about everything tangible. At the same period also the mind of the Dutch rulers and of the leading burghers was becoming more and more engrossed with the commercial possibilities of the East India trade and the enormous profits resulting therefrom. With public thought thus more or less diverted, Catholicism got to be tolerated on the score of its having seemingly fallen into 'innocuous desuetude,' and as long as its adherents did not openly assert themselves they were disdainfully let alone, at least by the civil magistrate. There was a momentary rift in the clouds during the French administration under King Louis Napoleon, the first decade of the nineteenth century, but the spell was too short for effecting any substantial or lasting betterment in existing conditions. The only noteworthy event in connection with Catholic Church matters that marked this temporary change in the ruling power was the re-transfer of their ancient Cathedral to the Catholics of 'sHertogenbosch for a heavy money consideration. However, under the same French rule the Catholics of a small rural community in the Leyden district had a portion of their former church building restored to themselves. This latter instance is quite

Unique in the Annals of the Country; most probably it could not be paralleled anywhere else and, therefore, well merits being chronicled. This particular community at the time referred to numbered some five hundred souls, only a score or so of whom were Protestants. Nevertheless, to the latter had been granted the exclusive ownership of the local pre-

Reformation Church. Thus the Catholic residents of the neighborhood perforce were obliged as best they could to attend to religious worship in other more or less distant localities of the district. This galling condition of affairs still obtained at the advent of the French King, when the more daring among them applied to the Government for a redress of this crying injustice. The result was that part of the church building under consideration reverted to the Catholics. A heavy dividing wall was constructed at the intersection of the chancel; the Catholics, as being the more numerous by far, were given the ownership of the nave and main entrance, while the intruders were left in possession of the former sanctuary.

For nigh three-quarters of a century the local Catholic body continued to worship in this wall-divided church building, where the sound of Catholic chant and Protestant psalmody could often be heard strangely intermingled. Having nearly trebled in numbers and prospered under subsequently improved conditions, the Catholic residents, in 1882, tore down their portion of the old church and erected on the spot a noble and imposing structure, whose Gothic spire and pinnacles may now be seen hopefully pointing on high. To the rear of the new building, a few feet only apart, is left standing an isolated curio, the truncated chancel of the old church that still keeps on telling the tale of times now happily gone by. Thus for upwards of two hundred years,

The Church in Holland

had been forced to live, as it were, a hidden life; Catholics during all this time were practically disfranchised and treated in every way as Samaritans by the dominant Protestant majority. Such was the status generally of Catholicism at the founding of the present kingdom a hundred years ago. Then gradually and at intervals faint glimpses of life became noticeable, until, in the early forties, a decided move forward was being made by the appearance of the first Catholic newspaper. But the Church's formal revival did not occur till 1853, when by a public Act of Pope Pius IX., the Dutch hierarchy was re-established, and incumbents were appointed to the sees left vacant since the latter part of the sixteenth century.

These sees are five in number—viz., Utrecht (archdiocese) founded by St. Willibrod, and up to the beginning of the sixteenth century the only bishopric in Holland; Haarlem, the most central see, embracing Holland proper, with its great cities Amsterdam, The Hague, Rotterdam, Leyden, Haarlem, etc.; Breda and 'sHertogenbosch, both in North Brabant, one of the two Catholic provinces of the Kingdom, and Ruhrmund, covering the entire Dutch portion of the Catholic Province Limburg. To the yeoman's work of the first occupants of the restored bishoprics the Church in Holland owes an enduring debt of gratitude.

All of them were men of great administrative ability and of saintly lives. Through their personal exertions and tactful management seminaries and separate theological colleges were opened at once in each of the five dioceses. These institutions have been enlarged in the course of time, and are supplying the home parishes with a numerous, well-trained clergy, to whose indefatigable labors and generous self-sacrifice under God is to be chiefly credited the remarkable transformation within the past sixty years of a typically Protestant land into a 'garden spot' of Holy Church.

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