



For the Torch of Reason.

"Let Us Have Peace."—A Secular Canticle.

BY JOHN PRESCOTT GUILD.

(Dedicated to President McKinley)

NEAR nineteen hundred years ago,
'Tis said, a wond'rous child was born,
Who came to rid the world of woe,
Upon the primal Christmas morn;
That angels at his advent sang:
"Glory to God for mercy's plan,"
Whilst heaven's starry arches rang
With "Peace on earth, good will to man."

In person, practice and precept,
'Tis taught, this godkin was divine,
If men his gruesome mandates kept,
They should like lamps in glory shine;
Yet, that belief in cunning creeds
Is needed by who may aspire,
However grand might be their deeds,
The doubters' were a vain desire.

I know not of that storied birth,
A legend false, to me it seems;
Those angel songs of peace on earth
Must have been heard in lunar dreams.
The saints crown Jesus "Lord of all,"
And loud his choral gamut swell,
Then load their guns with bomb and ball
To blow each other into hell.

I'd rather give that tale the lie,
And think men equal in their birth,
Than sign assent to monarchy,
Howe'er exalted, o'er the earth.
We're brothers all. On nature's breast,
In faithful friendship then unite;
Among opinions his is best
Which onward moves him to'rd the right.

Power of Christianity.

BY SALADIN.

WHAT progress your movement does make!" remarked an opponent to me the other day, in what he intended for effective irony. "What influential names you have on your side, how boundless is the opulence of your bequests, how striking the architectural grandeur of your temples!"

I suggested to this servant of the Lord that, at no distant date, we might vault as suddenly to imperial sway as Christianity had done. I reminded him that his creed was three hundred years old before it was more influential and opulent than aggressive anti-Christianity is at this hour. But there was one striking difference between the early Christians and the aggressive Infidels of the present day: with the latter the marshal's baton is, as a rule, in the hands of earnest, honest and educated men; with the former a number of wrangling, incompetent and unscrupulous schismatics, such as Marcion, Basilides, Saturninus, Blastus, Tatian, Montanus, Manichæus, etc., etc., led an exceptionally ignorant and criminally guilty rabble.

If Constantine had not had a bitter feud against Licinius, there

would have been no more worship in any Christian temple today than there is among the Standing Stones of Stennes. By declaring for Christianity Constantine flung into the wavering balance the brute force of a ferocious, fanatical and truculent mob, and thus turned the scale against his rival, Licinius, who, in 324, was defeated and dethroned, and afterwards basely murdered for the greater glory of God and of his Christ. That Christianity exists today is not owing to any crucifixion on Calvary, but to the bloody and victorious swords of the Milvian Bridge, which won the purple of the Cæsars for the despicable Constantine.

Give us an emperor on our side, exultant in the flush of military conquest, and our minority would, in the twinkling of an eye, be transformed, as if by an enchanter's wand, into an overwhelming majority. The mere brute numbers that go to the support of any creed really count for nothing. Over the, to them, intellectually barren wilderness of the world the uneducated millions have ever drifted in the direction of throne and mitre and exchequer. I care nothing for mere numbers. The illiterate herd is accounted by the church as Christians; but why does the church not go to the Cheviot Hills, and throw its baptismal slush upon the heads or tails of 500,000 sheep, and claim them as Christians every one?

And, O Lord, since you are omniscient, you know full well that an intelligent and educated pagan—take a Hindoo, for instance—is nearly as rare an animal as is a pig with horns. It costs about his own weight in gold to Christianize a respectable Jew. Your incredible Son-and-Ghost story is received only by those who have been skillfully prejudiced in its favor before reason has been trained to inspect the bigotries of prejudice. When your priests and priest-ridden mothers get hold of sucking infants, children lisping their A B C, and boys and girls learning the Rule of Three, they can be made Christians; but Omnipotence itself can not make Christians out of sane adults.

When Christianity was introduced into England, we have it on Christianity's own authority that thousands of converts were baptized at Canterbury in a single day. There are tens of thousands in England now who, were the "consideration" satisfactory, could be un-

baptized in a single day and induced to spurn the Bible and burn it, and pin their destinies for life and death to the Secular Review. As it was it is and ever shall be, world without end. amen. The masses will ever be the masses, while the hills continue to be the hills. All the thinking they can afford to do is to think how to exist. With the man possessing no taste or opportunity for speculative and abstract thought, one god is as good as another; his business is not gods, but bread.

Am I cruel to speak thus of the masses? Bear witness everything I love and revere that the masses have no more sincere friend than I am; but, unlike the kings and priests, I will not flatter and betray. Unlike the priest, I will not prate to any man about the Trinity, when I know that, by the direst and most inexorable necessity, the man's spoon is the father, the fork the son, and the knife the holy ghost. Kings and priests between them have fixed these wide gulfs between man and man, have dug these unbridgeable chasms, and over the abyss, to their forlorn and trampled fellow men, they shout their heartless mockery. Lessen the hours of the poor helot's labor, give him bread to eat, and at least some of the conditions of social and moral decency, and then pester him if you dare, by the whining about your Jehovah and the snivelling about your Jesus.

Canterbury, in the days of Augustine, presented no spectacle of "revival" that unthinking mobs have not presented in all regions and in all times. After Constantine had firmly in his hand the sceptre of empire, the conversions to Christianity were multitudinous. "As the lower ranks of society," remarks Gibbon, "are governed by imitation, the conversion of those who possessed any emirance of birth or power or riches was soon followed by dependent multitudes. The salvation of the common people was purchased at an easy rate if it be true that, in one year, 12,000 men were baptized in Rome besides a proportionable number of women and children, and that a white garment, with twenty pieces of gold had been promised by the emperor to every convert."

I hereby promise to obtain an avowed anti-Christian for every white night-shirt and a sovereign that the Christian church will give me, if it take up my challenge. So much for the depth and fervency

of Christian zeal. I appeal to men's brain and heart, and the process of winning soldiers for anti-Christ is consequently slow. I could enlist plenty of soldiers for a shirt and a sovereign; but I would rather have one such adherent as I have at present than wave my arm in command at the head of as many brainless hirelings as could find standing room on Salisbury Plain. So much for Christianity's taunt that our overt adherents are few. Give me funds to found a college to train and salary an anti-Christian ministry, and I will dismantle Cambridge and shake Oxford to its foundations, in spite of all the orisons in Christendom and all the hosts of heaven. Under the banner of anti-Christian revolt by which I stand rank a band of heroes who have brought to the cause their brains, and, if need be, their lives; but no man has, as yet, brought a purse and thrown it into the scale, like the sword of Brennus, to turn the balance in our favor, but we patiently and heroically wait, and our children may live through the hour of triumph long after the grass is green upon the graves of those who now, obscure and unknown, toil and struggle and yearn in a thankless but glorious cause.—[God and His Book.

War is favorable to religion. I refer to religion as a form of emotion, which it is, primarily. The war spirit excited arouses the religious feelings. They both belong to the domain of emotion. They both exist in "primitive" man, in the savage, and are restrained by reason only as the mind becomes more reflective and enlightened. These emotions are also correlated with the sexual instinct, which is powerfully affected by them. War, religion and sensuality constitute a sort of trinity. They all have their basis in that part of man's nature, which, in the evolutionary process, preceded and made possible man's intellectual and moral nature. During the late war between the United States and Spain, the clergy of the country has been hysterical as well as belligerent; the daily press has had amusing spasms of piety; the people mingle devotion and revenge, the most zealous worshipper being ready to join in the cry, "Remember the Maine"; the war people being generally ready to join in any form of religious exercise and to repeat religious phrases in connection with sentiments of war and revenge.—[Underwood.