

UNIVERSITY OF N.C. AT CHAPEL HILL



10003090824

RP	AC	AE	AV	See over
UNC	No. Copies:			
LCV	XX			
IP	Soul			
Title:				
Place, Publisher, D:				
Series:				
Dealer: Austin				
Fund: WELLS				
For Library: St. Marks				
Date Received: 11/10/97				

THE LIBRARY OF THE
UNIVERSITY OF
NORTH CAROLINA



ENDOWED BY THE
DIALECTIC AND PHILANTHROPIC
SOCIETIES

DA925
.L6

❖ The Soul of Ireland ❖

The *JH* DA925
LL6

SOUL *of* IRELAND

By W. J. LOCKINGTON, S.J.

With an Introduction by
G. K. CHESTERTON



HARDING & MORE, LTD
The Ambrosden Press, 119 High Holborn
London, W.C.1
1919

Library
RETREAT OF
ST. PAUL OF THE CROSS

828.9934
L

10522

❀ D e d i c a t i o n ❀

MARY
MYDEN DHEELISH
Mother of
the Mothers of Ireland

10522

Library
RETREAT OF
ST. PAUL OF THE ... 1876

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2013

♣ CONTENTS ♣

AND SOMETHING IN THE NATURE OF A PRELUDE

INTRODUCTION BY G. K. CHESTERTON XI

¶ *The resurrection of Ireland, of which Father Lockington writes here with so much spirit and eloquence, is really a historical event that has the appearance of a miracle. . . . Many Englishmen do not see the point; simply because many Englishmen are in this matter quite ignorant. . . . They do not happen to know how utterly Ireland was crushed; with what finality and fundamental oblivion the nation was once numbered with the dead.*

AUTHOR'S PREFACE XV

¶ *Once let the heart of the people of England be touched by the truth regarding Ireland, their sense of justice will ensure that Ireland will take her proper place, as sister with sister, and no longer be the Cinderella of the Empire.*

CHAPTER I

IRELAND'S SECRET I

¶ *The divine gift of faith, that Saint Patrick threw like a white mantle over the whole land, covers it to-day as pure and untarnished as when he walked the earth. . . . All through the land Christ sits enthroned amid the ceaseless prayers of His loved and loving people.*

CHAPTER II

LIFE IN THE CITY 7

¶ *I saw them in their poor homes, and wondered at the vivid faith that gilded and ennobled their poverty and trials.*



CHAPTER III

LIFE IN THE COUNTRY 19

¶ *They are a reserved people, reticent with strangers. . . . They have a quiet, gentle dignity that is all their own, and a native refinement that is remarkable.*

CHAPTER IV

THE EXODUS. 30

¶ *Pestilence and Famine lay like a pall over Ireland and from beneath the blackness her poor children fled in terror. This exodus was the scattering broadcast of a crucified nation.*

CHAPTER V

THE MASS ROCK 40

¶ *There are many glorious monuments to-day in Ireland that speak eloquently of her sufferings in those dark days . . . to me by far the most touching is the granite block, a broad table of grey stone, with the sacred name of JESUS carved deep ; that silent table . . . the Mass Rock.*

CHAPTER VI

CHRISTMAS IN IRELAND 50

¶ *On Christmas Eve a multitude of new stars blazes from coast to coast in Ireland . . . the great Christmas candle shining in the window of every home lighting the land for the angels to guide the Christ Child thither.*

CHAPTER VII

MONTH OF MARY 59

¶ *This wealth of spiritual love, that wells up and overflows in Irish hearts, keeps all earthly love pure and good. Woman's spiritual work is understood, Mary stands over by her side, and she is held in deep reverence. This high ideal of womanhood has kept the nation faithful and strong.*



CHAPTER VIII

CORPUS CHRISTI IN IRELAND . . . 68

¶ *I stole a glance at my Saxon friend as we were passing that cabin door . . . openly and unashamed he was weeping. "I have never seen anything like it," he said to me afterwards. "Faith, it's not Faith, but actual vision that God has blessed these people with."*

CHAPTER IX

THE NUNS OF IRELAND . . . 78

¶ *These joyous-hearted women have sweetened and made endurable by their presence that former monument of ineptitude, the poor-house. . . . But not in Ireland alone do they labour, they carry the torch of faith to every land. . . . The whole world is their home, and all mankind their brother.*

CHAPTER X

SOGGARTH AROON . . . 89

¶ *The high sea-cliff saw them bound back to back, and pushed to death on the black rocks below; trapped in the Mass Cave, they died in a reek of smoke; sold to the slave trader and transported, they worked till death under the lash of their owner; from end to end of the land their bodies swung in the shadow of the "Priest's tree." Every gallows in the country shook as priest after priest climbed the ladders at the bidding of their would-be exterminators.*

CHAPTER XI

MOTHERS OF IRELAND . . . 101

¶ *Besides those mothers who have given their children for God's work, other mothers there are, parted from their children by the accidents of life, who sit at home wearily waiting for the sound of a step that never falls . . . when darkness instead of light is sent to them across the sea. . . .*



CHAPTER XII

MARTYRDOM OF IRELAND 112

¶ *Through all this horror of bloodshed and oppression, one main end was aimed at—the extirpation of the Catholic Faith.*

CHAPTER XIII

IRISH IDEALS 125

¶ *Those who try to measure the progress of this people by earthly standards find qualities as immeasurable as the fourth dimension, and actions that nullify ordinary human wisdom, for they square only with the infinite.*

CHAPTER XIV

IRISH JOYOUSNESS 139

¶ *Religion properly understood and practised is a spring of unending joyousness. . . . Ireland is the only country that has a musical instrument as the national emblem.*

CHAPTER XV

TRIUMPH OF IRELAND 153

¶ *The Catholic Faith, as potent in the twentieth as in the third century, is the secret of Ireland's triumph, and it will be the secret of her final glory. This has not made her less loyal to worldly authority, but on the contrary has made her loyal with a selfless loyalty so rare that it can be understood only by those who know the Catholic heart of Ireland.*

❖ INTRODUCTION ❖

BY G. K. CHESTERTON



IT would be difficult to murder a man in a fit of absence of mind; still more difficult to bury him in the garden in the same abstracted and automatic mood. And if the dead man got up out of the grave and walked into the house a week afterwards, the absent-minded murderer might well feel constrained to collect some of his wandering thoughts, and take some notice of the event. But communal action, though real and responsible enough, is never quite so vivid as personal action. And very many respectable English people are quite unconscious that this has been the exact history of their own relations with the Irish people. The Englishman has never realised the enormity and simplicity of his own story and its sequel. It was like something done in a dream; because when he did it he was thinking of something else, or trying to think of something else. That the slayer should try to forget the body he has buried may appear natural; that he should fail to know it again, when it came walking down the street, will appear more singular. A cynic might say that England need not be concerned about having killed Ireland; but might well feel some concern about having failed to kill her. But cynics are seldom subtle enough to be realists; and the truer way of stating it is that the whole atmosphere of modern Europe, and especially of modern England, has been unfavourable to the telling of a plain tale. Euphemisms and excuses are so elaborate that it is hard for a man to find out what has really



happened, even what has happened to him. It is hard for him to say in plain words what has been done, even when he has done it himself.

The resurrection of Ireland, of which Father Lockington writes here with so much spirit and eloquence, is really a historical event that has the appearance of a miracle. That is, it is one of a class of undisputed facts, not actually in form supernatural, but so unique as almost to force anyone, however rationalistic, to an explanation at least transcendental. If the Christian faith is not meant in some fashion to revive and be reunited in Europe, I for one can make no mortal sense of what has happened in Ireland. If the Catholic creeds are not to survive, I cannot imagine why Ireland has survived. Many Englishmen do not see the point; simply because many Englishmen are in this matter quite ignorant; especially well-educated Englishmen. They do not happen to know how utterly Ireland was crushed; with what finality and fundamental oblivion the nation was once numbered with the dead. A man in the middle of the Age of Reason, the enlightened and humanitarian eighteenth century, would have been more astounded by the present prosperity of the Catholic peasantry than by a revival of the commerce of Carthage. It would have been to him, I will not say like the return of King James, but like the return of King Arthur. It would have been incredible. He would as soon have expected to hear that Atlantis was really re-arisen from the sea, trading and making treaties with America, as to hear that this other island in the Atlantic was increasing in agricultural wealth while retaining its



ancient superstitions. The transfiguration happens to have been spread over two or three generations, so that the shock of it is broken; the individuals who saw the death are not those who see the rising from the dead. But to anyone who has learned just enough of history to know that it consists of human beings, to anyone with enough imaginative patience to follow a story clearly from start to finish, the story has been as simple and astonishing as the plain parable of the corpse in the garden with which I began this brief note. A working way of putting it is to say that sixty years ago English newspapers talked hopefully of there being *no* Irish Catholics in a few years; and there are now more than six millions in the United States alone. In a word, the one real crime that England ever attempted has most fortunately failed; and not only England but also Europe has now to deal with a certain recognisable religious civilisation, which men may like or dislike, fear or favour, but which is as solid a fact as France. Even those who cannot share Father Lockington's natural enthusiasm for the theological survival will be wise to note all the facts he can adduce about the social success. Judged from a wholly detached and rationalised standpoint, the reality remains: that the one people in Western Europe which has taken the old form of the Christian religion quite seriously, enduring persecution from without and asceticism from within, has before our very eyes turned a sudden corner and stepped into a place in the sun. We can make what we will of this fact; but it is there.

There are but a few of these historical events which while natural in mode seem to be almost



supernatural in meaning. One of them is the mysterious international position of the Jews. Another was the historical mission of Joan of Arc. And there goes with that great name a certain hint of hope and consolation even in the case still at issue: the long and tragic entanglement of England and Ireland. The English were the enemies of Joan of Arc; but it is quite inadequate to say they are no longer her enemies; they are all her quite enthusiastic admirers. They, are if possible, even more enthusiastic than the French. I do not despair of the day when the other senseless misunderstanding shall pass in the same fashion; and a patriotic Englishman shall no more be expected to feel a prejudice in the one case than in the other. I hope to see the day when he will no more dream of denying that anybody is oppressed in Ireland than that anybody was burned at Rouen. He will not treat the former torture as more trivial because it lasted longer; or as more obscure because it affected many more people. He will do what he does with the tragedy of the fifteenth century: he will prefer to prove that he is now generous rather than that he was always just. Horrible as is the history, I know my own people are capable of such generosity; and I should be ashamed to write anywhere on this subject without seeking to arouse it.

G. K. CHESTERTON.

❁ Author's Preface ❁



THE splendid spiritual course that Ireland has held down the centuries and through the nations is in great part unseen or uncomprehended by multitudes. To those who know not the strength of her Faith she is almost an unknown land, and the meaning of her history is almost completely misapprehended by them.

An attempt is made in the following pages to show, be it ever so inadequately, the true inwardness of the wonderful progress of Ireland.

I have written of things as I saw them during a residence of many years in Ireland and during a life of close contact with her children abroad.

To those who would say that I have spoken mainly of the bright side of Irish life and have left untouched its failings, I answer that to say that the Irish have faults is only to say that they are human, and that whatever faults may be theirs have been dilated upon by writers innumerable, and magnified beyond all truth and justice. Ireland has suffered much at the hands of these writers, who can claim kinship with the sharp-billed vulture, that with far-seeing eyes circles over league upon league of Nature's fairest glories, seeking the wavering thread of vapour that tells of decay, and settling there to rend.

It is hoped that this modest contribution to a knowledge of the true Ireland will help to remove some of the false views so often promulgated in regard to Irish history and Irish character, views



AUTHOR'S PREFACE

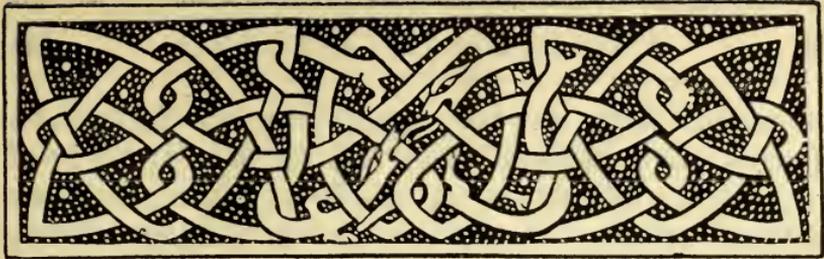


which tend to perpetuate the age-long misunderstanding between Ireland and her sister England.

Certainly a sympathetic understanding between these two peoples is of the highest importance for the welfare and happiness of the Empire.

It has been well said that the heart sees farther than the eye. Once let the heart of the people of England be touched by the truth regarding Ireland, their sense of justice will ensure that Ireland will take her proper place, as sister with sister, and no longer be the Cinderella of the Empire.

W. J. LOCKINGTON, S.J.



THE SOUL OF IRELAND

CHAPTER I

IRELAND'S SECRET



IRELAND. What a history of fearless fighting for God and country that name records! It tells of patient suffering strengthened by glorious faith, of days of triumph unrivalled, and of days of darkness when to love her and to love God was death.

Yet ever and always that name tells of a nation loved by God, and steadfastly loving in return, making this deep love of Him the dominant characteristic of its national life.

Placed on the edge of the Old World, Ireland is the outpost of Western Europe. Insignificant in area, her power is world-wide—for she is the mother of a civilisation that has encircled and uplifted the earth. Clad in beauty, she sits ever listening to the voices of her exiled children that come to her across the thunder of the seas.

She is a land of green plain and blue mountain and purple bogland; of deep valleys carpeted with luscious grass, where the lazy kine stand knee-deep;



of grassed hills, cut into squares by the dark thorn hedges that blossom with white may spray; of cool pine clumps, in the shade of which the cosy cottages nestle. Across her bosom, running silently between hawthorn and willow hedges, the slender boreens, leafy avenues vibrant with bird-life, go slipping past white-walled, brown-roofed cottages, set in lakes of yellow corn. On they wind over low-banked streamlets, that net the land with silver threads, and run and join and flow to where the green of her fields is kissed by the white lips of the sea. She is a land that to know is to love—for he that knows Ireland always loses his heart to her.

One clear morning in early spring I stood on the summit of one of the highest of her mountains—Galteemore, the cloud-piercing giant of the Galtees. I looked upon a scene of exquisite beauty. Before me lay the golden vale of Limerick, stretching for leagues across to where the mountains of Clare stand, keeping guard on Ireland's western seaboard. Below them the sun glistened on the grey waves of the Atlantic; beyond them to the north, Lough Derg lay sleeping in their shadow, and by their feet, dividing plain from mountain, and uniting lake and ocean, swept the rolling flood of the silver Shannon.

To the south the mighty mountains of Kerry fling high in the air peaks whose broad bases are fringed by the foam of the restless sea. Turning to the east, lit by the rays of the rising sun, I saw the fertile plain of Munster, dotted with villages and towns, stretch out to where, on the horizon, sea and sky and plain meet. There on the water's edge, from Cork to Carnsore, lay Ireland's southern boundary.



Northward, towered bluff Keeper Hill, the sentinel of central Ireland, looking down on the great plain that goes sweeping to the north, past Cashel of the kings, past Kilkenny of the martyrs, on to where, lost in the dim blue of the bending sky, the Slieve Blooms spring up to keep guard over the central plateau of Erin.

It is a scene almost unequalled on earth. Poets have stood entranced and writers been lost in admiration of the beauty that shines forth on every side. Let us though be on our guard and not be blinded by this surface glory of Ireland. For he who sees only this natural beauty, striking though it be, is as one who thinks he gains a knowledge of the soul of his friend by a careful study of the texture of his garments.

Men come to Ireland seeking the secret of the power that she possesses of ever holding the love of her children. They climb her mountains, and gaze upon her lakes and valleys and hills. They look upon the rare beauty of the bay of her capital city; they rush to where Derry goes creeping over the swelling banks of the Foyle; they walk beneath the towering pines of Torc mountain, and their voices break the hallowed calm of Killarney. You will find them climbing Ballaghbeama, and sketching the massive mountains of Kerry. Along her rivers they move from the Corrib to the Slaney and from the Blackwater to the Bann. They are looking at Ireland, speaking of Ireland, judging Ireland, and they do not know her nor understand her.

The heart of Ireland is beating strongly, the pulse of Ireland is throbbing vigorously, but they hear it not. Engrossed in her material beauty, her gar-



ment woven by God, they cannot see the beauty of the soul of Ireland, the beauty that is the root of the strength of Ireland, and the tie that binds unbreakably to her the hearts of her sons.

Come with me, dear reader, and in imagination stand on that mountain peak I spoke of, and let us together seek this wonderful beauty of the soul of Ireland.

Turn to the west. "What," I ask you, "is it that stands gleaming white against the dark Clare hills?" You know it not! Aye, neither do those hurrying aliens. It is the spire of the cathedral of Limerick, flung aloft by loving Irish hearts, to hold on high the cross of Christ. Look at the plain between us and that cross! Heed not the mere natural beauty. What is it that you see, crowning every hill, and springing from every hollow, the centre of every town and village? The same cross of Calvary, lifted high by fervent faith.

Here at your feet, across the glen of Aherlow, towers the spire of Tipperary town, far-famed, fighting Tipperary. Beyond it, from the bosom of the plain, springs the slender shaft of God's home in Nenagh. Look at the Rock of Cashel! Cashel of the kings! Cashel, hallowed by the presence of St. Patrick, baptizing her king. Cast your eyes southward. That smoke, rising by the banks of the winding Blackwater, comes from the chimneys of the monastery of Mount Melleray, the home of unceasing prayer. Beyond, on the edge of the ocean, are the cities of southern Munster, clustering around their churches.

Wherever we turn, to the north and south and east and west of this glorious panorama, stand the



tabernacles of God. "Behold the tabernacles of God with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself with them shall be their God." On every square mile of that plain God has a dwelling.

And so it is through the length and breadth of the land. Journey to the Slieve Blooms that you see on the northern horizon, cross to Connemara, climb the lofty mountains of Donegal, walk through the valleys of Armagh—everywhere you will see the cross-crowned spire, telling of Ireland's King, enthroned below. From His altar He rules, watching and guarding, while the whole country is filled with the sound of His praises, a mighty pæan, sung by a people that never has denied Him and never has forgotten Him.

Nor is this condition of to-day only. See that mighty pillar, springing from the centre of Lough Derg. It is the round tower of Iniscaltra, deserted and silent on the little island that fourteen hundred years ago rang with the voices of those who came from afar to sit at the feet of Columba and Caimin.

Follow the curving bank of the Shannon as it runs westward, and the eye falls upon another great column. It stands on one of the reaches of the Shannon, on Scatterry island. Around it lie the ruins of six of the churches of St. Senan.

Turn to the south, and there a third stands high on the hill of Ardmore, a monument to St. Declan, a contemporary of St. Patrick. Three of the round towers of Ireland, telling of the servants of God who gathered at their bases in days far in the bygone centuries. They heard the Mass-bell of St. Patrick and St. Munchin and St. Declan, and to-day



they still stand, silent testimonies of an undying faith.

This is the secret of the power that ties the hearts of her children to her. There you have the reason why Ireland is Ireland. We sometimes hear the phrase, "A nation once again." I marvel that an Irish pencil wrote it. Why, Ireland has always been a nation, and a nation that has come thundering down the centuries, unswervingly following the footsteps of God.

Ireland is Ireland in her Catholicity and her Catholic history. The divine gift of faith, that St. Patrick threw like a white mantle over the whole land, covers it to-day as pure and untarnished as when he walked on earth. Wicked men strove to rend and sully it; they did but beautify it with the glorious red of the martyr's blood. All through the land Christ sits enthroned amid the ceaseless prayers of His loved and loving people.

This is the secret of her undying vitality. This vivid fervent love of God, gilding and ennobling her poverty, strengthening her in danger, comforting her in sorrow, uniting her to the tabernacle of the Crucified One, is the heart-beat of Ireland. God bless her!

CHAPTER II

LIFE IN THE CITY



IRELAND, as we have said, is Ireland because of her Catholicity. Therefore, he who would understand life in Ireland must take full cognisance of this fact, for it is this that is the leading characteristic of the nation. The comprehending eye of faith alone can see the force that has kept her national life pulsing strong through days when death seemed inevitable; the only force that will nourish life when the dangerous tide of prosperity flows strong across her hallowed plains.

Ireland has always been governed by the Ten Commandments. These—the only guide to manhood and nationhood—have been the buoy that upheld her in the ebb-tide of adversity, and will be the anchor to steady her in the flood-tide of prosperity.

The stranger who enters her gates finds himself startled and delighted beyond measure at the wonderful atmosphere of faith that hangs over the whole land. The gift of St. Patrick moves and vivifies all.

One autumn morning in the late nineties, between dusk and dawn, I stood, looking from the deck of



our rushing vessel for my first glimpse of Erin. Somewhere, over the sea rim, hidden in the shadow, lay the land whence came our faith. By my side stood a returning exile "a finibus terrae," who, after thirty-five years of absence, had come back to the love of his heart. His white hair blown back by the breeze that had kissed the holy hills of Ireland, he stood with parted lips, eagerly gazing into the fast-vanishing shadow. Soon I heard his cry—"There she is: God be blessed," and before us, still hidden in the half light, loomed the eastern mountain masses of the land of St. Patrick.

The moments pass, and, as our vessel speeds forward, gloom gives place to grey, and grey to gold, as the sun springs from the sea behind us, and the dark shadows flee before his level rays, that bathe all the sleeping land in golden fire. The sea runs in between two promontories laughing down at it as it goes narrowing to a silver strip, that hides itself and slips sparkling through the heart of a city, nestling at the foot of the mountains. It is Dublin Bay and Dublin city.

"Th' ana'm an Dhia. But there it is—
The dawn on the hills of Ireland!
God's angels lifting the night's black veil
From the fair, sweet face of my sireland!
O Ireland, isn't it grand you look—
Like a bride in her rich adornin' ?
And with all the pent-up love of my heart
I bid you the top o' the mornin' !"

I looked at my exile, and saw his knuckles whiten as he gripped the rail of the vessel.

We pass under the dark brown hill of Howth, that



stands sentinel at the harbour mouth, marking, now as in the days of St. Lawrence, the tide of life that flows and ebbs upon the bay. To the south and west the mountains of Dublin and Wicklow go rolling away, range on range—past the Golden Spears, those shapely twin shafts that guard the beautiful Vale of Shanganagh, “sweetest and greenest of vales,”—on to Lugnaquilla, the giant guardian of Erin’s eastern boundary.

The blackness of the early morning has gone from them and given place to numberless shades of brown and green and grey. Past them we glide, past Clontarf there on the right, past the Tolka, until our vessel goes stealing in among the houses, and comes to rest in the very centre of the city.

My white-haired friend, exiled now no longer, whose years seem to have fallen from him as he touches once again the earth of his motherland, cries to me—“Come, and I’ll show you something worth getting up early to see.”

Along the quays, and down Dublin’s main artery—O’Connell Street—he drags me. He stops not to look at the splendid monument to the Liberator that adorns the centre of the street, but walks rapidly on, climbs the winding steps of the Pillar, and steps out upon the lofty platform. With a gesture that embraces every point of the compass, he exclaims, “Look there: isn’t she splendid?” Truly “she” is. Dublin—Ireland’s queen city—seated on green plain, and flanked by sea and mountain, sits serenely by the banks of the placid Liffey, that comes curving in from the west, and moves beneath her bridges, on to meet the bay. My friend makes sure that I shall see all. From Killiney



Hill to Tallaght, and round by the Phœnix Park, to Ireland's Eye, nothing escapes him.

It is a city of churches. From the pro-cathedral at our feet, to Dalkey, nearly a dozen miles away to the south, and to the equidistant Howth in the east, the spires and domes spring from almost every street. To the west is the closely crowded tenement district, behind the Four Courts—a maze of lanes and alleys. Here in all directions God finds a home among His Irish poor. St. Michan's, the Ann Street church, sits amid its densely crowded lanes, and by its side the George's Hill convent, doing marvellous work among the poor. Scarce a stone's throw away the saintly sons of St. Dominic labour, side by side with the untiringly devoted apostles of St. Francis. Following the monitory hand of my friend, I see, closer to the Liffey, the massive shapes of "Arran Quay" and "Adam and Eve's."

Truly, God is not neglected here. Every church door is open, and every door swings perpetually at the touch of the hands of an endless stream of worshippers. Every man that passes by raises his hat, and every woman bows or curtsseys to their King within.

We find ourselves at 11 a.m. outside the door of the pro-cathedral,—“We must hear Mass,” my friend declares. It is an ordinary week-day morning. We could barely push open the swing-door. Judge of my astonishment when I saw the cause of the obstruction. Mass was being celebrated at the high altar at the far end of the great building, and before me, from the very door to the altar rail, stretched a sea of heads bent in reverent adoration. The contrast from the busy rush of life in the streets



outside was astounding. The unrest of the world ceased and yielded place to the silent peace of God. All was still, save where, with fervent ejaculations, glowing souls poured forth their love of Christ.

Oh, what prayer and what intense fervour were theirs! Christ, the loved God-Man, was on the altar, in the hands of their priest, and it was as if the surging love in their hearts leaped all barriers of sense as they knelt before Him and greeted Him.

Round the door and for some distance into the crowded cathedral the congregation consisted of fish-women, flower-girls, and vendors of street wares. At the sound of the bell, warning of His coming, I knelt as best I could among these. All were oblivious of everything save Christ.

By my side knelt an old lady—a brown shawl drawn modestly over her head and shoulders. A white pleated cap, beneath which her grey hair was smoothed, peeped from the encircling shawl that framed the oval of her face. It was a face of dulled ivory, meshed and seamed by lines cut by the chisel of time, yet a face beautiful with a beauty not of earth. Eternal calmness and resignation sat upon her brow, and the clear light of purity shone through those eyes that were gazing at her God enthroned on the altar. Mass for her was a colloquy of intense and reverent joy, and she made it with lips moving in passionate prayer, utterly unmindful of those around her.

One could only kneel by her side and in all humility pray God for an understanding of Him such as she possessed.

Talk with these dear old souls as they come out, slipping the well-worn rosaries into their pockets,



or may be standing for a moment to finish a "dicket" before taking up their baskets. Dare to hint that it must be difficult to find time to get to Mass, and you had better be prepared to beat a hasty retreat, for many of them have developed a remarkable degree of proficiency in rapid manipulation of the unruly member.

"Yerra," said one to me, with a look of comical anger; "d'ye take me for a haythin, that I'd begrege a half-hour to God Almighty, whin I can see Him so aisy? God sind ye sinse," and she moved off with a pitying nod of tolerance.

"Thim say-rovers, what have they in their heads at all, at all?" I heard her remark to a familiar who joined her at the foot of the steps.

Experience showed that the crowd that thronged the cathedral had its counterpart in the other churches of the city. For instance, turn to the left as you leave the cathedral steps, climb the hill, and before you are the massive pillars of the church of St. Francis Xavier. Here, daily, Masses begin at 6 a.m., and end at 11.30. An eminent Roman ecclesiastic, on a visit to Dublin, was asked to give Communion during his Mass in this church. He did so, but when a quarter of an hour had elapsed and the people were still surging forward, he became alarmed and sent the altar boy for a priest to help him.

"I never saw anything like it in my life," he declared, "and so many men!" In that church alone full 400,000 Communions are given yearly. Small wonder that the people of Ireland smile under their crosses when Christ thus shares them with them.



To return for a moment to our street vendors of the cathedral. To the passer-by they may seem, as they trudge along, bent beneath their baskets, negligible units in the life of the city, but God and his angels mark the pearls of His praise that drop from their lips as they thread those winding streets.

Such splendid souls, hidden beneath an unassuming exterior!

Years afterwards, when privileged to go amongst them as a missionary, I saw them in their poor homes, and wondered at the vivid faith that gilded and ennobled their poverty and trials. The grace of God was fairly blazing among them. I saw them crowding to the communion-rail every morning, and filling the church every evening. I saw them in their homes—so often only a room with the boards of the floor for a bed. Yet none so poor but boasted a statue or picture of the Man of Sorrows and Love, or of His Blessed Mother, their Myden Dheelish.

It was inexpressibly touching to see their undying love for the Mother of God. In every home is a little shrine to her, decked by loving hands and poverty's big heart. A tiny lamp glows before it, and often this is the only light in the room.

It tore one's very heartstrings to enter those poor rooms, and, by the flickering light of the shrine lamp, see our Lady of Perpetual Succour looking across the room at a worn and gasping saint lying paralysed and pain-twisted; or to see our Lady of Lourdes trying to comfort a poor widow as she kneels at the desolate hearth, endeavouring to heat water at a fire made with the only fuel she can get—a handful of coal garnered from a passing waggon—



to feed the three little children that cling round her crying with cold and hunger. And impossible as it may seem, our Blessed Lady does accomplish her task—for everywhere one meets with an almost incredible resignation which finds expression in “Welcome be the most holy will of God.” Their awful poverty but purifies and refines their souls, and gives them a clearer vision of the infinite.

It was in a Dublin parish that I met an old lady who had attended a proselytising medicine mission. Those who go are forced to hear a sermon and hymns before the distribution of the coveted medicine, and, of course, these places are a source of strong temptation to penniless people with children or relatives dangerously ill.

“What, in the name of God, woman, were you doing in such a place, and you a Catholic?” I asked her.

“Ah, father, but I haven’t a penny—and poor Molly, so the doctor told me, would die if I didn’t get her medicine!”

“And so you went and sat there and joined that crowd?”

“Wisha, father, don’t be vexin’ yerself,” she expostulated, with a triumphant air of finality, “wasn’t I prayin’ agin him the whole time wid me rosary!”

God bless them, ’tis hard to blame them.

As a priest moves through the streets, it is “God bless you, father!” on all sides. Each one of the numberless children, who positively swarm through the streets, their only playground, deems it his or her bounden duty to “raise the cap” or “curchey” to the soggarth.



“Come on, Maggie, here’s the priest”; and babies are snatched up and wee brothers hauled along with impetuous haste by little maidens, who live their lives in his path, and with a “God bless y’, father!” curtsy before him.

Passing one day through an alley in the Coombe, I saw two boys playing in the roadway. They were evidently brothers, one about seven years of age, and the other about five. Their raiment was simple; each wore a multi-coloured pair of knickerbockers, held in position over an openwork shirt, by a single length of string passed over one shoulder. The elder boy wore a cap, the younger had none, the want being supplied by a fine shock of hair.

On seeing me, the elder exclaimed, “Hey, Michael, come on, here’s the priest,” and both ran to the side of the road to meet me.

When I came up, “God bless yer, father!” came from the boy in command, as he raised his tattered cap.

The smaller boy, meantime, stood bashfully by, evidently embarrassed, and gently stroking one ankle with the toes of the other foot, while, with bent head, he gave a troubled glance at me.

The bigger boy, wondering at the absence of greeting from No. 2, looked sharply round, and on the instant showed that he was master of the situation.

He realised at once the quandary of his companion—he had no cap to lift in salutation.

Discovery and command were almost in the same instant; without a moment’s hesitation he jumped at him and yelled, “Why don’t ye rise yer hair to the priest, Michael?”



Michael's embarrassment fell from him at once, the caressing toes were planted firmly on the ground, the bent head lifted, and, eagerly grasping his thick forelock, that tumbled almost to his eyes, he "riz" with a belated but fervent "God bless ye, father!"

This is a people whose church is their home. They are carried into it at baptism, and their feet ever turn to it until they are carried in death to rest for the night before the God whom they loved.

I have dwelt thus far only upon Dublin, because its state is typical of all Irish cities. From Derry to Cork and from Wicklow to Galway is the same manifestation of fervent faith. Stand at the door of St. Eugene's cathedral, towering high over Derry city, and see the crowds that go pouring into that splendid pile. They are people of curt, straight speech, with hearts of gold, fire tried. Below you is another crowd passing in to the Long Tower church. Cross the Foyle to the Waterside, and again you find a multitude hurrying to the altar throne of their God.

Would you know the Catholic spirit of Galway? Come with me through the winding streets of that quaint old town, with its Spanish mansions, down by the rushing Corrib, past the black wharves that, alas! stretch hungrily out to sea, waiting, waiting, waiting. Let us go beyond the Dominican church, stand at the turn of the Claddagh village, and look upon the wide expanse of Galway Bay. Before us the bluff hills of Clare go shouldering out into the ocean as if striving to reach those glorious Connemara hills that tower in the heavens to the north-west. Out on the harbour moves a fleet of boats towards the open sea. These are the fishing smacks



by which our hardy toilers of the sea win their livelihood. Note well him who stands on the prow of the foremost boat. It is a vested priest, with book and cross. To-day is the opening of the fishing season, and these men will not lower a net or line until their priest has called down solemnly the blessing of God on their boats and on the sea.

Do you wish to see more of life in old Ireland's cities? Let us turn inland, and go speeding down the long valley at the back of the Clare mountains, past Ardrahan and Gort and Ennis, south to where, as we slip over the shoulder of the Cratloe Hills, we see Limerick seated by the Shannon's rolling flood. Heed not the Treaty Stone lying in the shadow of St. Munchin's, nor the winding lanes of famed Garryowen, wreathing round St. John's cathedral; but come with me on any Monday night of the year, and watch the crowd of men that comes pouring down the main street, filling it from side to side, as though some mighty meeting had just dissolved. Aye, a mighty meeting has just ended. Walk with me to the corner of the hill beyond, round which this splendid tide of human life comes flowing, and see the meeting-place. It is the church of St. Alphonsus, of the Redemptorist Fathers, "the holy fathers," as they are affectionately called throughout the city. There has been a meeting of their men's sodality, or rather, of one-half of their sodality. On Tuesday night the other half will come together. No wonder that the stately church cannot hold all at one meeting—for that sodality numbers 6,000 men.

What a splendid testimony to the faith of Limerick!



Not is this all. Come to the church on any Wednesday evening you choose, and you will find another army, lively and noisy, as it pours out in a rushing stream—the sodality of Limerick boys, who fill the church to overflowing.

And so it ever is—in every Irish city. Every true Irish heart is chained by the chain of love to the tabernacle door, and if at times, man-like, they err, like penitent children to a parent, they come back. Worn and weary, maybe, they pass in their hundred thousands under the shadow of the church door, and, touched by the cleansing hands of Christ, come forth purified and strengthened, to take up life's burden.

Blessed are the guardian angels of the children of such cities.

CHAPTER III

LIFE IN THE COUNTRY



LEAVING the towns, we are now in the open spaces of Holy Ireland, and as we move along the roads we see further proof of the fact that we are among a people whose lives are lived in the presence of God.

The magic green of Ireland that colours the plains goes creeping to the bog edge and up the mountain-side, to where the brown of the heather meets it. The country-side is dotted with cosy cabins, comfortable farmhouses, and solid stone mansions, among which the people move at their daily toil. Across the fields they go, tending their crops and cattle, and on the mountain-side they guard their sheep; they are delving in the brown bog and working at the edge of reed-ringed lakes—turquoise gems, dropped by the hand of our Creator upon the green bosom of Erin.

They are a reserved people, reticent with strangers; but those who gain their hearts find hidden behind this reticence, as by a barrier, a mine of rare qualities. They have a quiet, gentle dignity that is all their own, and a native refinement that is remarkable. This is a source of wonder to many, but the observant Catholic soon learns whence these gifts come.



They come from a close and continued living with Christ and His Blessed Mother—the Virgin and the Virgin's Son. To this main cause another may be added, namely, the history of their land and Faith, as shown forth by the ruins and relics among which they pass their lives. These lie before them like the leaves of an unrolled script, every fold illuminated and plain to read—telling of the glorious martyrdom of those heroes and saints for God and country—their ancestors.

As we look at these men the mind instinctively goes back to the lives of the patriarchs, whose simple pastoral story is figured in the pages of the Old Testament, tending their flocks and herds, while their women weave and spin and care for their household duties, their sole test of manhood being obedience to the commands of God. So in Ireland, the lives of her sons are truly patriarchal. They are men who understand the dignity of labour, and are self-respecting and self-contained. In their eyes labour is sanctified by the touch of the hand of Christ at the Nazareth bench, and all is done in union with Him.

Take any one of these men that you see toiling in the fields. He has knelt and said his prayers this morning, as on every morning of his life, and offered, as is his daily custom, all the work of the day to God. He goes through the day conscious that God's paternal glance is towards him. This elevation of thought finds frequent external expression as he moves among his neighbours. Here is a friend coming down the lane that skirts the field in which one of them is working—listen to the greeting. The voice of the passer-by rings out, as soon as he sees



his friend, "God bless the work." Our toiler in the field straightens himself, and quite naturally and simply sends back another blessing, hidden under the words "and you too."

Let us follow the traveller. He approaches the hospitable half-door of a roadside cottage—the half-door, that is an ever-present invitation of welcome to enter and share the comfort that it half-reveals, half-conceals. "God save all here," he cries. "God save you kindly," comes in quick response from the inmates.

Such is the greeting and such the welcome that sound throughout the country. In mountain-shielded Wexford, amid the placid fields of Meath, by the rushing streams of King's County, and softly undulating hills of Munster, God's presence is always felt. This is a people that realises so vividly the fundamental principle of success in life, namely, that man is on earth to praise, reverence and serve God and save his soul, that all their actions are measured and thoughts and words are coloured by it.

The suppliant by the roadside asks alms in the name of God and His Blessed Mother, and at the smallest gift returns thanks to God and the giver. Even though nothing be received, a blessing will be called down, "May God and His Blessed Mother protect you, and may you never know want." Because he is poor a man does not become a pariah. Take the wanderer, looking for work. As he moves from village to village, he is certain of a welcome, a seat by the cosy turf fire, and a "bit an' a sup" from the hospitable hands of "herself." And if he show any shame-faced reluctance, "Sure, wasn't Christ Himself poor and lonesome?" she cries, as she goes



to him with good warm food and a warmer welcome, "an' in helpin' you we're helpin' Him."

This is their daily habit, but when Sunday comes they whole-heartedly and joyously keep the command, "Remember thou keep holy the Sabbath Day." Their first duty as a nation is to visit the God of Nations. We see them gathering in battalions, and marching to the church as a centre. Across the fields and callows, through the meadows by paths centuries old, they come thronging into the roads leading to the church.

Let us stand on Sunday morning at any country church in Ireland, be it the little white chapel on Coomakista close to the house of the Liberator, or the homes of God in the Clare or Donegal glens, and we see the same reverent adoration that we beheld in the city churches. And as often as not, though the church be crowded from altar to door, there are almost as many more worshippers kneeling beneath the open sky on the gravel outside, and attentively following the Mass. Ireland's churches are not numerous enough to contain all the loyal hearts that flock to them, despite the fact that they have multiplied their churches and chapels incredibly, and in many of them several Masses are said on each Sunday morning. The burning faith that makes them long to keep their God as near to their homes as possible has lit throughout the length and breadth of the land the tiny red lamp, telling of the Majestic Presence within—watching and waiting, guarding and guiding, and He who says, 'Come to Me all ye who labour and are burdened, and I will refresh you,' must be more than pleased at the national answer to His call.



And after the Mass comes the gathering of the cronies in friendly groups to discuss current topics ; the leisurely unhooking of the horses ; the oft-interrupted yoking to the car. Here are the infants, resplendent in white robes, each the centre of an admiring circle, as it awaits admission to the numbers of the faithful by the reception of baptism ; there are a crowd of lively children for catechism, and beyond are the mourners praying at the graves of their dead. Inside the church the benches are dotted with worshippers finishing their thanksgiving after Communion, or making the Stations, or talking in love to Christ, whose spirit and grace flow out over all.

Sunday afternoon is spent in innocent amusement. The elders, seated under the hawthorn, or strolling quietly by road or river, or grouped on the canal bridge, pass the hours in pleasant converse. Sometimes their steps turn to where, in the neighbouring field, the shouts of the younger generation tell of joyous strife on the hurling or football field.

The sun dips to the western hills, and the mellow tones of the vesper bell fill the gloaming with music. They began their day with God, so now they end it in the same way. Every Sunday evening finds the Irish nation kneeling in fervent prayer before our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament, who, uplifted by His priest, gives His blessing and peace to all.

Another universal act of faith is the saying of the Angelus. At morn, at noon, and at evening, when the bell that announces the mystery of the Incarnation rings out its double peal, all minds turn to God. The ploughman in the field, the maiden at the spinning-wheel, the herdsman with his flocks,



the boy at his game, all stand motionless, and raise their hearts in prayer, giving thanks for the Redemption.

Once, when walking along a quiet boreen, on a day when the summer sun set all things shimmering, I saw in a small field a young man and his wife, industriously working—saving their little crop of hay. A little distance away, beneath the sheltering shadow of a beech tree, sat the baby, chuckling and playing with a frolicsome dog.

Suddenly the Angelus bell rang out across the miles from a neighbouring monastery. At once the mother ran to the little child, caught it in her arms, and placed it kneeling on the grass. Then she knelt beside, holding its little hands aloft, caught in both her own, as she looked up to heaven. The husband, who had followed, knelt beside the two, and in answer to the message of the bell, across the soft silence came, “The angel of the Lord declared unto Mary,” from the reverent lips of the kneeling wife, and with bent head the husband, answering, gave audible testimony of his faith. It was a delightful scene.

Everyone is familiar with Jean-François Millet’s famous picture, “The Angelus.” In it is depicted a cornfield, and in the foreground two figures, husband and wife, are together in prayer, standing. Far, far, do I prefer the picture of these children of Mary, kneeling in prayer, on the bosom of Ireland, their hearts close joined, and held by the clinging touch of baby fingers.

But all are not so independent in a worldly way as those whom we have been watching. Some there are who, through no fault of their own, pass their



lives in distressing poverty. Their resignation and their dignified carrying of their cross are wonderful to see. Well do they realise the meaning of those words of Sacred Scripture, "For a man's life doth not consist in the number of things that he possesses." The Israelites sat by the banks of the river and wept, in the land of the Egyptians. Here the Egyptians entered the country and drove the people with blood and burning to the shaking bog and the arid mountain-side beyond the river, where they wept and worked and lived. In the face of the bitterest persecution they clung to that for which they suffered—their faith—and found strength there when deprived of all that goes to make life bearable. By almost incredible labours, they gained a pittance, cultivating the boulder-strewn mountain-side, and working waist-deep in the black bog water, draining and fertilising. This they did, though they knew full well that every improvement meant an added burden in the form of an increased rent.

Though the nation, with the advent of kindlier, juster times, has spread once again over its ancestral plains, yet to-day there are many still crippled owing to the iniquitous treatment of their forefathers. Criticism has sometimes condemned them because they and their habitations are stained with the brown bog mould. It were as rational and just to cast a man into a fire and then reproach him for being burnt and helpless. Another charge that has been levelled at these helpless ones is that of thriftlessness. It is an unjust charge, for they have shown that when so placed that they can work towards independence, they are one of the thriftiest nations on earth.



Listen to what the eminent John Morley has to say on this point :

“ I, for one, have long had a high appreciation of the great qualities of the Irish people. They have done the greatest part of the hard work of the world. Generations of Irish peasants have reclaimed the land—the hard thankless land of the bog and the mountain-side, knowing that the fruit of their labour would be confiscated in the shape of rent. And the Irish have piety, they have reverence, and they have had, and they had only too much, docility. They know how to follow leaders, and I am persuaded that there is in Ireland all the material out of which, with time, freedom, and responsibility, you may build a solid nation, worthy to take its place among the other nations that have the British flag waving over them.”

“ You paint a people without faults ! ” cries someone. No, they have their faults, for God, when He peopled the earth, did so with men, and not with angels. Their faults are generally the excess of their virtues, and are always followed by sorrow.

Walking one day on a Connemara road, I met an old woman, who asked me if I had seen her husband. I told her that I had not.

“ Ah, then,” she cried, “ he has the drink taken.”

“ How do you know ? ” I expostulated. “ Do not blame the man before you are sure.”

“ I’m quite certain of it,” she replied sadly, “ for he has taken the long road.”

By the “ long road ” she meant a road that branches from the main road a short distance behind



us, circles inland, and then joins it again about five miles from where we stood. It meant a round of about ten Irish miles, while the distance between the points of its departure from and return to the main road is only about three miles. On this three-mile stretch stands a little church.

“Why are you so certain,” I asked her, “that he has gone by that long road, when the straight road home lies before him? No man would do such a thing after working hard all day!”

How little did I dream of the reasons that prompted that tired traveller to take the “long road.” Intense faith and heart-felt sorrow!

The answer of the poor woman to my question positively startled me.

“We always go in in passin’,” she said, “to the church by the road, to say a prayer to Christ, who watches us as we go. He couldn’t go past without speakin’ to Him, and he wouldn’t go near Him with the sign of drink on him.”

Was it not magnificent? Faults! Aye, they have faults, and God forgives them. That poor old man, tired out with a heavy day’s work, done most probably with insufficient food, yet, because he felt that he had taken too much drink, added seven long Irish miles to his homeward journey, for “he couldn’t go past without speakin’ to Him.”

And, oh, how they love and remember the dead! A steady stream of Masses ascends to the Most High, pleading for the release of their loved ones from the cleansing pains of purgatory. On All Souls’ Day they fairly besiege heaven.

Watch a congregation after Mass, and note the numbers that cross to God’s Acre. Here a young



widow, her feet still on the threshold of life, strains her infant to her heart, as with bent head and streaming eyes, kneeling at the newly-made grave of her dead husband, she passionately pleads to God for him whom He has called home. There a daughter kneels, rosary in hand, praying for her parents and sister, whose names are carved on the stone before her. At another grave stands an old woman, bent with age, and leaning on a staff, as she tells her beads. The inscription on the stone before her is indecipherable with age. I learnt her history. Fifty years before her husband had been buried there, and some years afterwards two of her sisters, and for half a century she had come weekly to pray at that grave. Her loved ones—whom she soon must join, for she was over eighty years of age—found that time had no power over her affection. Truly, hers was a love stronger than death.

Nor is their charity confined to the family circle. It is almost universal in its scope. Prayers are said and Masses offered for “those who died to-day,” “the soul that’s deepest in,” “the soul that wants it most,” “those that are forgotten,” “those that did me harm,” and many other intentions, showing tangibly the mighty power of Christian charity.

There is a grave in the corner of a Munster churchyard with the grass at its foot worn with constant kneeling. After Mass and after a funeral numbers go, when they have prayed at the graves of their relations, and kneel at this grave. I asked who was buried there. It was a poor stranger, who, passing through the town, was taken ill suddenly, died, and was buried.

“None of his own know of him,” said one; “and



he has no one to pray for him but us." This explained the grass-worn grave.

It is no wonder that when such souls come to die they go home willingly, like children to a loved parent. One grand old patriarch whom I attended was an exception to this rule. Though perfectly ready to die, he was very anxious to get better. On pressing him for his reason, he had one, and only one.

"Father," said he, "I'd like, if God would let me get better, just long enough to go and see Christ once again at Mass."

On another occasion an aged woman, dying, was awaiting the coming of the Viaticum. As soon as she heard the hand on the latch she knelt upright, although at the point of death, and repeated incessantly with burning fervour, "Cead mille failthe, Ahirna!"—"A hundred thousand welcomes, Lord, a hundred thousand welcomes, Lord!" until the welcomed One lay in her heart. Priest, room, attendants, all vanished from her mind, and naught existed for her but Christ, her Saviour, who had come to visit her.

Whether kneeling, soul-cleansed by the absolution of their priest, on the sloping deck of the *Titanic*, or quietly waiting at home within sound of the church-bells for the coming of their last moment on earth; whether that moment comes in the first flush of youth, or when the spark of life but flickers feebly, matters not. Death for them is but the lifting of the curtain dropped by Adam between them and their God, and with a cry of love on their lips to Jesus and Mary they pass beyond it.

CHAPTER IV

THE EXODUS



IRELAND lay sleeping, wrapped in beauty, when suddenly the waves of her eastern sea whitened beneath the rhythmic falling of the oars of a mighty host. It was the coming of the Celts. Out of the east they had marched, and Europe knelt before them in their invincible course. Onward they pressed over nation after nation, their armies ringed by the silver flash of the battle axe. Daring and indomitable, with victory following the thunder of their squadrons, these gigantic warriors, impelled by destiny, halted not till their feet pressed the green bosom of Erin. The magic charm of that fair land held them in thrall.

Here they rested and built for themselves a mighty kingdom, in which they reigned supreme. Through the centuries, the spirit of conquest sent their legions out across the scenes of their former triumphs. The fighting Irish were known as dreaded warriors right across Europe to the Alps. The disciplined Roman soldiers in their British fortresses recoiled in dismay before their irresistible rush. Squadrons of Irish horse went thundering down the river valleys of Central Europe, the Irish war cry rang through Alpine passes, and the gleam



of Irish spears shone through the dark forests of Germany, striking terror to the hearts of all.

Suddenly, in the full tide of military success, they were drawn home by a mysterious power, and nations breathed freely again. Years passed, and Ireland was forgotten—until the latter part of the fifth century.

Then, another army of fearless fighters poured from that forgotten island in the west, and traversed Europe, conquering, as did the Irish of old, all that stood in their path; conquering, but not with the sword, for these warriors fought under the banner of Christ, and their sole weapon was His cross.

How came this marvellous change? What was the mysterious power that had drawn those conquerors home, had tamed those fiery hearts, and filled them with enthusiastic love of Christ, the World Conqueror?

From Rome, Christ's Vicar had sent his ambassador, Patrick, back to this nation that had once enslaved him. A humble pilgrim, the Apostle of Ireland travelled through the land, and by his graciousness drew all to him. He had an intensely affectionate heart, which bound to him a people that could be gained only by love. He passed through the ranks of these stern warriors, telling the story of our crucified Christ, and His message to men. He spoke of a new warfare, a truer test of valour and manhood than that which till now had held them; of a field of conquest more noble than aught else on earth; of a Leader who, Leader of Leaders, promised certain victory to all who followed Him. With hearts burning with the intensity of their desire to follow that Leader of Calvary, they



pressed forward in their might, to receive the waters of baptism, and be enrolled in the ranks of His soldiers. Monasteries arose everywhere, and the whole land turned to God.

He found the Irish a nation of fearless warriors dominating all nations near them, and following with flashing sword their famous standard of the flaming sun-burst.

He left them still a nation of fearless warriors—but warriors anxious only to fight in the ranks that march behind the banner of Jesus Christ. Warriors still anxious to meet other nations; but only because they wished to share with them the glorious gift that St. Patrick had given to them—the gift of our holy Faith.

At that time, the Church seemed to be in a perilous plight—her kingly protectors were failing in power and strength. From east and north and south she was surrounded by enemies. Goth and Hun came sweeping in fierce flood across Europe, and dashed resistlessly against the walls of Rome itself. Pagan Rome, with all its might and power, sank beneath the torrent, but Catholic Rome, the citadel of Christ, stood strong and firm above the flood that surged across the world.

Into the forefront of the battle, quick to help her, from the changed isle in the west, came the second army of the fighting Irish.

They came out like a mighty river, and wherever the conflict was fiercest, whether against pagan or heretic, there they were to be found, fearless in their enthusiastic love of Christ.

Who could have imagined that those dark forests, whose leaves had shivered uneasily as the fierce



Irish squadrons went rushing by with irresistible might, would resound to the tramp of another army of Irish—equally fearless and potent? At the call of Christ, they left their loved homes, bravely mingled with those onrushing hordes, subdued their fierceness, and brought them into the fold of Christ. They helped to soften the savage heart of Goth and Hun, and to lay the foundations of the civilisation of Christ, that, like a leaven, was to penetrate and uplift the whole earth.

They rallied round Rome and St. Peter, for fidelity to the Holy See has always been a characteristic of Irish faith. No heresy has ever taken root in Irish soil. The nation has ever been loyal to him who is the representative of Christ on earth, to him who sits on the throne of St. Peter. Ireland has always been mindful of those words of St. Patrick—"If you wish to be of Christ you must be of Rome."

Venerable Bede testifies that numbers were coming daily into Britain, preaching the Word of God with great devotion, and Eric of Auxerre writes from France—"What shall I say of Ireland, which, despising the dangers of the deep, is migrating with her whole train of philosophers to our coasts?"

St. Bernard writes—"From Ireland, as from an overflowing stream, crowds of holy men descended on foreign nations." This stream flowed as far east as Egypt, and as far west as Greenland and Labrador.

Such was the first exodus of the Irish. Centuries passed, and God permitted the scourge of persecution to fall upon the nation, and the second exodus began, an exodus that sent the Irish fleeing for refuge to every part of the world.



The cause of the second exodus is to be found in the enmity that they incurred because of their undying love and fidelity to the Leader in whose ranks they had enrolled themselves, and of their unswerving allegiance to His Church. The blood of Erin's children stained her bosom, and they were torn from her heart, because they clung to their faith, their heritage from St. Patrick, and never for one instant would they allow that precious jewel to be wrested from them. Out of the sea on every side came death to them—death swift, fearful and appalling, threatening them if they gave not up their treasure. They looked to their God and laughed in the face of that death. Fire and sword ravaged the land, and their blood ran like water, but through it all the Mass bell ever tinkled in the lonely mountain valley, and the catechism was learned beneath the shadow of the hedge.

Pestilence and famine lay like a pall over Ireland, and from beneath the blackness her poor children fled in terror.

This exodus was the scattering broadcast of a crucified nation.

When the ships, shadowed by pestilence, crept across the Atlantic, and threw them dead and dying on the shores of the New World, great-hearted Canada, worthy daughter of France, took them to her heart. And when, despite all her care, the parents died by thousands, she guarded as a second mother the orphan children. It was only one of many touching instances of charity that was seen one Sunday morning before Mass in the chapel of a Canadian town. The French priest came on to the sanctuary, carrying a baby in his arms, and



followed by twenty-four little children, who stood bewildered before the altar.

“ My people,” he cried in his native tongue, “ see these poor children, the orphans of our Irish Catholics! Who, in the name of God, will guard them ? ” Scarce had he ceased, than the congregation rose *en masse*, rushed to the altar, and the little ones were enfolded by strong arms and held against loving hearts that took them for their own.

Many of the leaders in American life are Irish, who as orphans were reared in the sanctuary of Canada’s Catholic homes. And they have ever gloried in their origin, and never forgotten their debt to Canada. It is but a few years since that they met and erected a monument to commemorate both.

To-day the traveller up the St. Lawrence sees that monument before him on Grossé Isle. It is an immense Celtic cross with a great carved figure of Christ, that looks down in sorrow to where at its feet 12,000 poor Irish exiles lie buried. It is a fitting memorial, because they suffered for the cross, and they triumphed through the cross. For, whether the Irish exiles sleep under the Canadian maple or African palm, or at the world’s end under the golden wattle of Australia or the crimson rata of New Zealand, over them all swings the Mass bell, ringing above the altars that they have built to the God of Freedom and Justice.

Near to home, or far from home, matters not—the spirit of the cross always animated them.

This was the spirit that burned in the breast of the Irish woman who, fleeing from the famine, was shipwrecked on the south coast of England.



She found employment as washerwoman to the family of a squire of the neighbourhood. It was noticed that once a month she left her little room on Saturday evening, and did not return until the small hours of Monday morning. Questioned, she said that she had walked to Mass at the nearest church, nearly thirty miles away. The two sisters of the squire were insistent that the Papist should be dismissed.

“No,” he answered bluffly, “you are educated women, and she is only an ignorant Irish woman; go and convert her.”

Then began a campaign with tracts and appeals as ammunition. It waged long and vigorously; but the good Irish woman met argument by argument, and false ideas with facts, threw all the tracts unread on the top of a tall cupboard, and prayed earnestly that her well-meaning employers would be given the grace to see the light. In the end both became Catholics. The squire was so struck at the pluck of the hardworked woman walking nearly sixty miles for Mass, that he studied the religion that produced such self-sacrifice, and he, too, became a Catholic, and all his family. His eldest son became a famous Jesuit metaphysician; and to-day, from the lawn of the family residence, the spires of three Catholic churches are to be seen where formerly not one existed.

And distance is powerless to dim the flame of this spirit. The wife of the first Catholic settler in New Zealand was a Wexford woman. When her first child was born, over a thousand miles of one of the stormiest seas in the world rolled between her and the nearest church. Undaunted, she



embarked in a small vessel, and carried her baby from Auckland to Sydney for baptism.

But ah! Who dare try to tell of the grief that this exodus caused to Ireland!

“Won’t you dip your pen in your heart, when you write of Holy Ireland?” came a message to me yesterday; but no heart save the Sacred Heart of our Christ can realise the weight of Ireland’s centuries of sorrow. We see individual manifestations of it, but they are as wavelets on an ocean, telling of dark depths unseen.

I was waiting one morning at a railway station in the west of Ireland. The American boat train was just due. One group on the platform attracted my attention. By the side of her luggage stood a tall young girl of about twenty years of age, evidently leaving her homeland. Around her were her father and mother and two brothers. They waited with heavy hearts for the coming of the train that was to bear their loved one from them. She bore up bravely, and talked earnestly now with one, now with another of the group.

Suddenly the sharp whistle of the approaching train was heard. The poor girl’s courage gave way, and with a long-drawn sob she threw herself into her mother’s arms, who clasped her to her heart. The two sons, having placed the luggage on board, came running back, and with kindly strength forced the mother’s arms apart, and from that refuge the daughter, with tears streaming, was forced into a carriage. The mother, in a frenzy of grief, threw herself on a seat close by, bowing her head on her hands.

But the most pathetic figure of all was the poor



father. He had stood bravely by as she said farewell to her brothers. He had managed to smile as she threw her arms round his neck, and unfalteringly gave her a hearty—"God and Mary go with you wherever you be," but as he saw the train move off, with his daughter, her face convulsed with grief, calling her farewell, the deep sorrow that had been eating at his heart burst forth. He made as though to run after the moving train, but stopped suddenly, and fell on his knees. Raising his arms aloft, he cried aloud to God, heedless of the many eyes bent on him in pity. My last glimpse of that station is burned on my memory—the quivering form of the inconsolable mother huddled on the bench where she had cast herself, the two sons standing near the mother, and, kneeling on the gravel, with hands raised in grief, the poor father crying unrestrainedly.

Multiply that scene ten thousand fold, and you will have but a slight conception of the shadow that clouds the door of so many of God's faithful Irish.

Some years afterwards I crossed on one of the great liners that ply between Ireland and America. There were nearly eight hundred of the sons and daughters of Erin on board. As we went racing westward, Mass was celebrated each morning, and before the voyage was ended, almost without exception everyone partook of the comfort of the afflicted—the Sacred Body of Christ. The exile has his God with him as he kneels above the mighty engine that is whirling below, every throb of which finds an echoing throb of sorrow in his heart, for it means that he is farther from Ireland. But his pain is soothed, and strength flows in upon his



stricken soul, as he clasps his hands in reverent adoration and places all his grief upon the altar of his God.

When we were threading our way through the maze of shipping that makes the harbour of New York the busiest in the world, I saw one of my friends sitting crying on the little trunk that contained all her earthly possessions. She was afraid of the mighty city that roared before her, and shrank from it in dismay.

Two days afterwards I entered a church in that city, and saw kneeling at the rails my frightened friend of the ship. I asked her if she were more reconciled now. "Yes, Father," she replied, pointing as she did so to the tabernacle, "Our Lord is here, and I can talk to Him, so I'm not lonely now."

No sea is too wide for Celtic love, and with it they have bridged the world, setting it in harmony to the soft beating of the sanctuary bell.

CHAPTER V

THE MASS ROCK



ANY of the children of Ireland as the centuries passed were enrolled in the glorious army of the church triumphant. Yet, strange to tell, during the twelve hundred years that elapsed after the death of St. Patrick there was one part of the army of the saints that had no member from Ireland. Apostles, bishops, confessors, and virgins innumerable were hers; but among the host that gathered round St. Patrick in heaven through all those years there stood not one Irish martyr.

The reason is not far to seek. Ireland had taken to her kindly heart the gift of St. Patrick and guarded it in loving charity through the ages. With the almost magic power that she possesses of drawing to herself elements the most diverse, she cast the seeds of faith into the hearts of all who came to dwell within her walls. "The Irish Celts," says Froude, "possess on their own soil a power greater than any known family of mankind of assimilating those who venture among them to their own image. Light-hearted, humorous, imaginative, susceptible through the whole range of feeling, from the profoundest feeling to the most playful jest, passionate



in their patriotism, passionate in their religion, passionately courageous, passionately loyal and affectionate.”

This people eagerly seized the gift of God, and gave to the world such an example of its divine effects, that all to whom they offered it grasped it eagerly and lovingly. Thus it came that the ages rolled by and in this kindly soil the church grew in peace until God in His inscrutable providence permitted persecution to come.

None of her children, with the exception of Odran, St. Patrick's charioteer, had stood in the red-robed army of martyrs; now she was to stand before God, a nation offered in holocaust. The Church whose foundations had been laid in peace, and which had grown in charity to glorious strength, was now to have the scattered stones of her altars reddened with the blood of her martyred children.

A persecution of awful fury burst upon her, and well did she prove that the triumph of truth is secured by the death of the martyr. Heresy smote where paganism spared. Torn by the scourge, she grew, as did the Church of the Catacombs, to enduring maturity. As the oak, lashed by the screaming wind, does but strike its roots deeper and bind itself more closely to mother earth, its source of strength, so Ireland, torn by scourge of hate, but clung the closer to God, the fount of consolation. And as the tree, under the stress of storm and chill, with branches broken and leaves all whirled about, shrivels to seeming death, till the advent of another spring finds it standing more sturdily and more richly clad than before; so Ireland, standing stark beneath



the darkness of the winter of death, but took on a new strength with the passing of the storm, and rose to a fuller, stronger life, vivified by the blood of her martyrs.

The storm raged long and furiously, but the courage of her martyrs triumphed over all, and in the end gained peace and toleration. Her super-human steadiness of purpose brought shame to the cheek of the sister who smote her so cruelly, and the flame of fanaticism sank and died.

To-day the light of truth is burning so brightly that the misunderstandings begot of ignorance are fast vanishing, and the path is being made clear to a union of hearts. England is perceiving the great qualities of her sister, her goodness—her strength of faith, her grasp of the supernatural. England has an innate reverence for God and for the principles of morality and for religion, and of her nature must, as she recognises them, admire the ideals of Ireland. Marvelling at the tenacity with which the latter followed the beckoning hand of Christ until she stood triumphant beside Him, England is to-day turning in love to her long-despised sister, as if she feels that the fulfilment of her destiny, namely, the regaining of her lost title of “Mary’s Dowry,” will be made through the assistance and prayers of Ireland.

And it is Ireland’s steadfast valour that has won this admiration. Laws were enacted that aimed at the systematic degradation of the nation: Christ’s loved ones were denied the right to live, and dying, their children were to be entrusted to those of an alien faith; priest and schoolmaster were felons outlawed and hunted—yet ever and always the



nation stood steadfast for the honour of God and the honour of Ireland.

Wicked men boasted that they would not leave one priest alive in Ireland and that not a Catholic would be seen. In pursuance of this policy they ravaged the whole land, harrying, burning, enslaving, and killing. Banished to the mountains and morasses of Connaught, from the farther bank of the silent Shannon, the outcasts looked back on a smoking land, trembling beneath the tramp of the destroyer. Ireland—"the little black rose"—is black in reality now—black with the moan of the orphan and the falling tear of the widow.

God permitted this, that Ireland might pass through the darkness to the light of fuller fruition. To reach Easter Sunday and Olivet she had to face Good Friday and Calvary.

And bravely she shouldered her cross!

Did the shepherds sentenced to banishment or death desert their stricken flocks and leave them to face death alone? An answer to that question is written on every league of Erin's soil, telling the reader how the good shepherd gave his life for his sheep.

Why does the traveller, at that sharp turn of the road in leafy King's County, raise his hat as he passes the withered tree that overhangs the path? Ask him, and he will tell you that it is known for miles around as "the priest's tree," because from its branches, in the dark days, a priest hung—dead. One of that noble band, good shepherds all, he had laid down his life for his sheep.

Everywhere these heroes were working. Glendalough in the east echoed to their prayers at the



shrine of St. Kevin, and in the west every valley in Kerry—"wild, mountainous, purely popish Kerry"—guarded a priest. To picturesque Youghal, sitting on high by the Blackwater, belongs the honour of giving the first Irish martyr, Fr. O'Quilian, a Franciscan. He was not long alone, for soon scores climbed by the scaffold ladder to stand with him in heaven.

Go eastward from Youghal, and look where the green plain of Waterford slopes up to the rocky crest of the heights that tower above the grey beach of Tramore. High on the sloping cliff, in the centre of a field, yawns a pit, sinking down into darkness. To the ear of the listener, from the blackness below, comes the sound of dashing water, for a tortuous cave joins the chasm to the sea. In those days, when it was death to acknowledge Christ, the bishop of the diocese often came stealing along the sea edge in a small boat, and entered the cave. On a rocky ledge at the foot of the pit he said Mass for his flock, who knelt on the grass in the sunlight above, guarded by sentinels and guided by the soft sound of the bell that told of the progress of the Holy Sacrifice.

Kneel reverently in that other secret cave in the mountains of Monaghan, and look on those cold, silent walls of grey rock. Picture to yourself the tragedy enacted there, on the day when the priest stood before that shelf of rock, beginning Mass for the faithful who knelt around. See the start of terror when dense volumes of black smoke come pouring in, choking and stifling. Hear the last absolution of the priest, the gasping moans of the dying. Mark the inrush of the persecutors—the



massacre of the fifteen still surviving and their vested priest. Kneel in that silent shrouded cave, people it with the forms of those dead heroes, and thank God for the honour that is yours in visiting this antechamber of heaven.

Leave the mountains of the north and travel eastward. Climb to where, on the hill in Drogheda, Christ has a home in the Dominican convent. Enter the holy house, where the white-robed daughters of St. Dominic spend their lives in prayer and work. Kneel once again as the silver shrine swings open, for the face, tranquil in death, upon which you look is the hallowed one of the martyred primate, the Venerable Oliver Plunkett.

Southward, and you tread the mountains and valleys of Dublin, Wicklow, and Wexford, whose recesses sheltered the proscribed priests. Think of the sufferings of that brave soggarth, who, hunted through these mountains, at last took refuge in the centre of a shaking bog. He built there a little shelter of branches of trees plastered with mud. His only furniture was a handful of straw that was always wet, either from the rain above or the water below. This warrior was eighty years of age and from this refuge he guided and fed his flock.

In these mountains, too, once lurked a fighter for Christ whose story is recorded thus : " Timothy Sullivan kept a school in Dublin . . . and committed the crime of converting two students of Trinity College to Popery . . . was transported, but returned, and is now teaching school in a little town in Limerick." This great-souled Sullivan had many compeers, and oh, how they clung to oppressed Ireland, giving their lives freely for her.



In vain the spoilers tore down the altar and trampled under foot the sacred emblem of our Redemption. They but made the land a vast God's Acre, whence through the centuries the dead have ever prayed in the spirit of their leader, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

Well might the great French bishop, Dupanloup, speaking of them, say, "Surely the nations of Europe and humanity itself have reason to be proud of the Irish race. I know no people around whom their patriotism, their pure morals, their courageous faith, their unconquerable fidelity, their bravery . . . and all these noble qualities, though ever persecuted, never cast down, exalted and crowned by misfortune, have thrown a halo more captivating and more sorrowful."

There are many glorious monuments to-day in Ireland that speak eloquently of her sufferings in those dark days—days when Christ's enemies tore the sacred altar asunder, scattered the protecting walls and washed them in the blood of priests and people, knowing not in their blindness that they were fighting against Him, "Cujus regni non erit finis." But of these monuments, telling of the superhuman steadiness with which the brave dead followed Christ, to me by far the most touching is the granite block, a broad table of grey stone, with the sacred name of Jesus carved deep upon it; that silent table, clasped firmly by the green turf and held close, as a treasure, to her bosom,—Ireland's priceless Mass Rock.

When they fled to the hills—priests and people—they carried God with them. No tabernacle now



has He save His own blue canopy—no altar but the Corrig an Affrin—the Mass Rock.

No tabernacle, did I say? Oh! I am wrong. Watch the mountain Mass and see. The priest bends and speaks the miraculous words of Christ, and He is in their midst. The priest turns, and, holding God aloft, cries to the kneeling multitude—“Behold the Lamb of God, behold Him who taketh away the sins of the world,” and then cries to Christ Himself—“Lord, I am not worthy that Thou shouldst enter under my roof, say but the word and my soul shall be healed.”

Poor Soggarth, he has no roof to bring Christ beneath, no resting-place for Him but his own heart of gold; and how willingly Christ entered that none but God knows.

The words go out on the morning air and find an echo in every poor outcast heart—outcast of men, but not of God—and all come surging forward to the feet of their Soggarth aroon, and Christ finds a tabernacle once again—a tabernacle in each loyal Irish heart that there braves death itself through its overmastering love for Him.

Corrig an Affrin! the Mass Rock!

Where can earth show a monument like it?

What a history of love and sorrow is evoked by that word! What a wealth of hallowed memories clings round that loved title! What a tragic tale it tells of ruined altars, and ruined homes! God homeless and His people homeless, yet God at home and His people at home as they gathered in the dark and the cold round the Rock of the Mass!

Ah, Rock of the Mass! thou hast seen this land



red with the ruin of war and black with the cloud of pestilence!

Rock of the Mass! thou hast seen the gaunt spectre of famine stalk across the plain, and the dark pall of death lying low upon the land, but ever and always, O Rock of the Mass, didst thou feel the touch of the lips of the brave Soggarth and hear the murmured prayers of the stricken ones as all bent before their God enthroned on thy broad bosom!

From cave to cave on the hill-side, along the hollows of the mountains, through the tree clusters on the plain, went the word, with the swiftness and silence of light, "Corrig an Affrin at dawn tomorrow"; and from the caves, and from the hollows, and from the trees came a silent multitude, creeping and stumbling through the darkness to where by thy side awaited them the only two friends they had on earth—their priest and their God.

Round thee, O Rock of the Mass, no cloud of incense floats, no pealing organ sounds, no blaze of holy light; no incense but the mountain mist—no sound but the whisper of the passing breeze, sighing in the bracken; no light but that of God's own stars, looking down on stricken Ireland.

But little recked they who were gathered round thee, O Rock of the Mass! They heard the soft beating of myriad angel wings that hovered above the Creator, and they felt the warm glow of divine love that burned for them in the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

How our hearts thrill with pride and our pulses quicken as we gaze at this monument of triumph and death—a monument telling of generations of indomitable martyrs!



Gaze at that dark stain on the grey stone. Oh, how it speaks to us of the lonely mountain in the silent dawn, the shadowy forms gathering and crouching on the grass, the priest holding God aloft, the loud cry of alarm sounding through the gloom, from the posted sentries; the low moan of misery from the broken-hearted kneelers, the flash of the musket, the priest lying across the stone, dyeing it with his life-blood—still clasping the chalice to his breast—dead.

There thou liest, O Rock of the Mass, most splendid of Ireland's treasures; an imperishable monument, telling of Ireland's sorrow and of Ireland's glory! For thou, O holy Rock of the Mass, art the Calvary of Ireland!

CHAPTER VI

CHRISTMAS IN IRELAND



CHRISTMAS in Ireland means that the whole land thrills with the delight of giving a glorious welcome to the Lord of the Land. Christ, the Friend of everybody, is coming, and His must be a royal welcome. None so lowly but may join, and a wave of peace and goodwill sweeps across the country. The cold of winter grips the earth, but it is unheeded by the warm hearts of those whose thoughts all turn in joyful anticipation to the coming of the Christ Child, while hands are busy preparing for the feast day.

On Christmas Eve a multitude of new stars blazes from coast to coast of Ireland. They shine on the wind-swept hills of Iar Connacht; they twinkle above the surges of Donegal and in the soft shadows of Wicklow woods; they line the banks of the broad Shannon from sea to source and mark the course of the Blackwater. Single stars cast radiance upon every winding path on mountain and hill, clusters of them light every crossroads and village, constellations blaze in every town and city. On every sea cape, by every stream and lake, amid the mountains and on the plains, they gleam through the



dusk—the Irish stars of Christmas, the great Christmas candle shining in the window of every home, lighting the land for the angels to guide the Christ Child thither.

The candle, beneath a bower of holly, is placed in the window to light in charity the path of the wayfarer. Tradition relates, too, that Christ and His Mother are wandering abroad to-night, homeless and weary, and every door is thrown wide open to tell the Wanderers of the welcome and warmth and love that await them if they will but cross the threshold. The whole nation thus makes loving reparation for the insult of the closed doors of Bethlehem. But there is a reparation of good works made also, for all wayfarers receive a welcome and a double alms at Christmas time.

Almsgiving is always an act of love in Ireland, and it is especially so now. A special feature of the season is the effort that is made to bring comfort and brightness into the lives of the poor—Christ's poor, as they are called. It is a common custom for a family to give a dinner and good clothing to a man, a woman, and a child who are in need, in honour of the Holy Family. The little school-children, led by the gentle nuns, take their part in this national almsgiving; and recreation hours, for weeks before, are willingly devoted to the making of clothes for the poorer brethren.

Let us look into an Irish home at nightfall on Christmas Eve. When the Christmas candle is lit and placed in its green bower in the window recess, the head of the house sprinkles holy water, first upon the candle, and then upon the members of the family. All then kneel before it to recite the



rosary. The whole land is filled with the sound of prayer—a fitting greeting for our Lord and our Lady. All who could have come back to the old home. From distant parts of Ireland, from England, from Scotland, multitudes come hurrying to spend Christmas at home. Leaving behind the glare of the city, they hasten to where the old folk await them with a blessing and a welcome that none other can give, under the roof of the old home whose place in the heart can never be usurped.

But there are, alas! many vacant places, for many exiles have wandered far afield—too far to return and join in the Christmas rosary. But the absent ones are present in the minds of all, and as the mother, caressing each bead, lovingly calls them by name and commends them to God, the chorus of prayer swells with added fervour, for hearts are moved, and eyes glisten with emotion.

Those vacant chairs in the rosary circle of an Irish home! What a tale is theirs! They tell of the wild grief of parting, the brave venturing into the unknown, the sad heart ever turning home—aye, and the sad heart in that home ever grieving for the absent ones.

On Arctic icefields, from Nome to the Yukon, on the Pampas of Argentina, beneath the warm sun of Australasia, those wanderers move, but on Christmas Eve their thoughts go back across the years, and memory touches with brush of gold the rosary group of Christmas Eve in the old home.

How the recollection stirs their hearts! Distance is annihilated, time is turned back in its course, as they set off for Ireland. From all lands and over all seas they come, these unseen visitants. Borne



on the wings of love, guided by memory, in thought they come to the land of their boyhood. Up the mountain-sides, down the valleys, by stream and callow, boreen and canal, they glide across the land. No glen so remote, no shieling so hidden, no mountain path so faint but that they find their way with ease. Old or young, rich or poor, matters not for those who march in the numberless legions of the absent Irish on Christmas Eve—for all are young, and all are rich—young with renewed youth, and rich in the possession of God and country.

How each hurries to cross once more the sacred threshold! There is the old familiar road running ahead, as if it existed for no other purpose than to reach the branching boreen that leads home. There is the fence, behind which are the apple trees of cross-tempered, big-hearted old Shawn—a fence, alas! that often proved not high enough to prevent nimble feet and fingers, in the golden quiet of past autumn evenings, scaling to reach the forbidden fruit that dangled too temptingly.

The road runs on, past the gap in the hedge, through which the call of the nesting-birds in the trees beyond so often silenced the call of the books from the little schoolhouse that, white in the starlight, still sits patiently on the road-edge beneath the tree clump.

Past all these, with never a stop, in thought our exile goes racing. On at lightning speed over the humpbacked bridge that, steep as the cantle of a Western saddle, spans the sleeping canal; on between grey hedges lining silent fields; into the gloom of a fir plantation, round by the stone wall,



till—steady now, only one more turn and “I’ll be there.” No haste now, every step means a pleasure not lightly to be passed. Memory, slowed by the pulse of love, lingers long on that last road-stretch of purest joy. Slowly the turn is rounded, with eyes alight and quickened heart-beat, and yes—there it is, just as of old, the centre of the exile’s world—the home where he was born. The thatched roof gleams deep-gold above the dark green of the hawthorn ring in which it is set. The Christmas candle lights his steps as in fancy our exile goes stealing down the well-remembered path. A murmur of voices from within fills the air, and he halts at the window to drink in those well-remembered tones, that have never ceased making music in his heart. They are saying the rosary, and unbidden tears cloud his eyes as he hears his own name mentioned and his doings recalled. Then, joy of all joys, he revels in the burst of delight that fills the room as he lifts the latch with a “God save all here” and kneels in his vacant place before the Christmas candle.

They are all there—just as he left them. No use to tell him that time has lined the once smooth brow of mother, that Mary is a holy nun for many years, that little James is a stalwart giant amassing a fortune in the shadow of the Rockies. Memory resolutely refuses to change them. There they were and there they are, and there they will always be. Time is powerless to alter the dream pictures of memory—home to the exile is always home as he left it, home unchanged, home untouched by time. May time be powerless, too, to dim the faith that sets those Irish Stars of Bethlehem blazing, and ties



the hearts of the exiles to the old land with chains of love!

Those stars burn through the hours of the night until they pale with the coming of the dawn—the dawn of Christmas Day. All the land is wrapped in wonderful silence, hushed as if in motionless expectation of the coming of the King. Silver frost, like a veil of fairy lace, transforms and beautifies the sombre browns of winter; crystal jewels hang on tree and heather, and gleam in lowly valley and on towering mountain.

The Mass bells break the silence and fill the land with music. In answer to their call, through the fields, along the canals, by road and boreen and meadow path, multitudes, with hearts aflame, hasten, as the shepherds hastened through Judean fields on the first Christmas, to kneel before their Saviour.

From altar rail to door, they fill the church, that stands a blaze of light for the whole country-side to see and rejoice at. “Venite exultemus!”—the song of God’s angels, that filled with joy the hearts of the Judean shepherds, rings out and fills the hearts of these Irish shepherds of Christ with joy as they kneel before His altar. And the whole-souled, unrestrained appreciation of the tremendous honour that God is conferring upon them! One feels far away from earth and on the borderland of heaven. Great waves of prayer go rolling through the church and break in ecstasy around the altar, while the air is filled with low exclamations of love, that speak of a faith full of understanding and devotion.

What mysteries does life or death hold for that



good soul who, kneeling with clasped hands at the altar rail, sees nothing but the tabernacle, is conscious of nothing but the Sacred Presence there, and who prefaces her prayers in the soft Gaelic tongue with "A hundred thousand welcomes, Lord Jesus Christ, my darling, my most trusted and loyal Friend" ? Every line of her face, her intense eagerness, her passionate devotion, tell of full knowledge of the Dweller in the tabernacle.

And how they follow the Mass ! It is a crescendo chorus of open-hearted adoration, that reaches its climax when the priest of the Sacrifice speaks the words of consecration, and God comes down from heaven and is enthroned upon the altar. Their adoration is deeply touching in its primitive simplicity and fervour. The air is vibrant with emotion and quivers as if with a mighty outburst of applause, felt rather than heard, suppressed because of reverence for the sanctity of God's House.

There is a custom in some parts of Ireland at the consecration that is indescribably affecting. When the warning bell rings, vocal prayer ceases, all heads bend low, and a solemn silence reigns over all. The bell again rings, telling of the accomplishment of the miracle, and that God is in their midst. Then an astonishing act takes place. Like the steady rush of a deep torrent, whose quiet flow hides irresistible strength, in the presence of their divine King, the pent-up love of those adorers, bursting all barriers, breaks out. The whole congregation, as one man, with swift uplifting of bowed heads, looks towards the altar, and, moved by one impulse, cries in low tones that are startling in their dramatic intensity, "Cead mille failthe, Ahirna, cead mille



failthe, Ahirna." No heart that has not felt it can imagine the touching beauty of the tribute. It is as if every soul present, breaking from its earthly body, leaps in love to the altar to kiss the sacred feet of the Crucified.

Thence onward their Mass is an unbroken colloquy with Emmanuel, God in their midst, and a reverent preparation for His reception at Communion. At the sound of the bell the whole congregation surges forward to the communion rail, and Christ finds sanctuary in the hearts of these ardent adorers, for on Christmas Day the whole nation goes to Communion. All earth fades, and each soul kneels in a solitude, alone with Christ.

How they follow the sermon upon Christ's birth and sufferings, and expressively show their sympathy! Well can they understand, for outside on the holy hills of Ireland the Mass Rock lies, grey against the green, telling of bygone Christmas days of sacrifice and suffering, days when Christ came to an Ireland more drear and desolate than the wind-swept cave of the first Christmas.

After Mass there are the joyous reunions and good wishes and simple joys of Christmas-time, but the Friend in the tabernacle is ever in their thoughts. All through the day in steady stream they come to kneel with Mary and Joseph, on guard by the side of the manger. The listening angels must rejoice at the scenes enacted there. Here kneels a group of little children, gazing in open-eyed wonderment at "their first crib," while mother points and explains and prays, and introduces her baby to Mary and her Babe—the Divine Child at whose bidding the whole universe swings. Beside them, oblivious,



kneels a bent old saintly soul, whose "first crib" is hidden in the mists of ages almost forgotten, and who, utterly unmindful of the moving crowd, spends hour after hour kneeling, enraptured, holding unending colloquies with the Holy Family.

No chapel so small or poor but has its crib and its crowd. Be the crib one whose artistic beauty makes it a centre of pilgrimage from afar, or one rivalling in poverty the first crib of Bethlehem—it matters not: faith reads to the full the lessons of the cave, and love, like a magnet, draws all hearts to the Infant King of Christmas.

May it ever be so! May the hallowed light of the Christmas candle ever glow in Ireland, and may Ireland always be a sanctuary where a nation gives royal welcome to its Divine King.

CHAPTER VII

MONTH OF MARY



AY in Ireland is the Month of Mary. Devotion to Our Lady has always been a characteristic of Irish faith, and the nation during this month honours, in a special manner, the Mother of God. She is truly the Mother of the Nation, and this is the natural sequence of their strong love of God, for devotion to Mary is most attractive where faith is strongest. Faith loves, heresy hates Mary.

Irish devotion to Mary is full of light-hearted, joyous exultation, telling of confidence and love between a mother and her children. May is truly the merrie month in Ireland, for nature and grace co-operate to make it so. The whole land rejoices, brightened by the smile of Mary. Nature puts on her richest raiment to do her honour. Through the month of April the sun, mounting daily higher, sent deepening tides of green across the land. Wave on wave, they went rippling over brown hill and valley, till the country was filled with the music of rustling leaves, whose shadows danced upon the grass as they felt the caress of the breath of laughing spring. Sleeping nature awoke, and, clad in beauty at the touch of spring's magic fingers, awaited the



coming of May, to display still greater fullness of her treasures.

May morning dawns, and nature in welcome scatters her flowers with lavish hand upon the green. The snow-white wave of May bloom sweeps from sea to sea: the golden gorse flames on the hill-side: gentle winds, laden with the scent of meadow and hedge and tree, move softly over the plains: the songs of blackbird and thrush and skylark fill grove and sky, for Ireland in May-time is a paradise of birds. May is the month of the full glory of flower and field and wood, and is fittingly chosen as the month of her who is the full glory of the human race, Mary, the Queen of Earth and Heaven.

Into this land of song and beauty, as into a temple of honour, comes Mary, and hers is a wonderfully warm welcome.

The mantle of faith that covers the land is embroidered with a thousand beauties woven by love in her honour. Mary to this people is the mirror that gives them a glimpse of God.

“ Love’s mirror doubles Love’s caress,
Love’s echo to Love’s voice is true.
Their Sire the children love not less,
Because they love a Mother too.”

And none but has perfect knowledge of Mary’s place in God’s creation.

“ He, He is King and He alone,
Who lifts that Infant-hand to bless,
Who makes His Mother’s knee His throne,
Yet rules the starry wilderness.”

They kneel at Mary’s knee because it is the throne



of God, and send all their prayers to Him through her, the Mother of the Judge and the Mother of the sinner. With them, the Mother is always with her Son, from Bethlehem to Calvary, and the intensity of their devotion is remarkable. Everything about her is sacred—even her very name. In English we have but the one name—Mary, and it is borne by saint and sinner alike. It is not so in the tongue of the Irish, a language saturated with religious sentiment. So great is their reverence, that a name is set apart and kept sacred to her for ever—the name Muire. All other women bearing the name of their Queen are called Maire. Of all the Irish Marys (and they are an uncountable host, for in every family one daughter, at least, is baptized Mary) none takes the sacred name of Muire.

This warm love of Mary is as old as the faith in Ireland. The Irish were the first Western nation to proclaim the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception, and over a thousand years ago a favourite Irish litany began thus: "O great Mary, Mary greatest of Marys, Most great of women, Queen of the angels, Mistress of heaven, Woman full of grace, Honour of the sky, Breast of infants, Ladder of heaven." At the dawn of each day through the year, the Angelus bell rings out, recalling to all the coming of Gabriel to announce the glad tidings to Mary. At noon, again it peals out, and at the sound, every soul turns from earth to heaven in reverent prayer to God. The children playing by the roadside fall on their knees and clasp their little hands; the labourer in the fields, kneeling with bared head, gives thanks for the coming of Christ to Mary; in the busy schoolroom and in the



crowded market, everywhere all minds are centred on heaven. Again, at the close of the day, when the same call to prayer rings out, this people turns to God and Mary. All work, all play, all speech ceases, and the message of the Angelus rings out thrice daily over a land stilled in reverent silence, as the nation bows in prayer of thanksgiving to God.

But in Mary's month their love of Our Lady blazes forth with more ardour than ever.

On the opening day of the month all rise early to finish daily work, and then they set off to "make the rounds" at holy well, or shrine of Our Lady. "To make the rounds" means a pilgrimage to a holy well, the recital of rosaries, the giving of alms. This goes on from sunrise to sunset of the first day, and is a fitting introduction to the month.

During the month, all who can, begin each day with Mass and Communion, and end it with Benediction of the Most Blessed Sacrament. On Sundays, in every village and town Mary's children, with banner or statue, walk in procession, singing hymns of praise to her.

May, too, is the time of missions, potent channels of God's graces. Spring work is finished, and the harvest is not yet begun; therefore, people are not so busy as usual. At these missions, instances of extraordinary faith are so frequent as to cease to be remarkable.

I have known good souls in Donegal to take their places at six o'clock in the evening, and remain all night, to be able to go to confession next morning and receive Holy Communion at Mass. They spent the hours in making the stations and reciting the rosary. Many walk great distances fasting,



and very often remain fasting till four o'clock in the afternoon, in order to receive the Blessed Eucharist—and all this with no thought of sacrifice—nothing but a holy joy at the thought of their union with God fills their hearts.

Every Irish home has its May altar. Joyous bands of children strip the fields and hedgerows of daisies and primroses and snow-white May blossom; the banks of rivers and brooks are despoiled of their violets; water-lilies are gathered from the ponds to adorn it. Each night the family rosary is said before it, and the whole family turns in faith to Mary Mother. The bent form of the grandparent, “with wrinkled hands, but youthful scul, counting her lip-worn rosaries,” kneels beside the little child, whose face shines with the wondrous light that tells of an untarnished soul, as with tiny hands close clasped she looks in innocence at the Mother of Innocence. There is no place in these hearts for fear when they look to their “Myden Dheelish,” their “Darling Virgin,” the “Guiding Wand of Maidens,” “the Banner of Peace to save the World.” Daughters of Erin crowd round their Mother, look up with love and confidence for protection and guidance, and they are not disappointed.

This wealth of spiritual love, that wells up and overflows in Irish hearts, love rooted in heaven, and nurtured in reverence, keeps all earthly love pure and good. Woman's spiritual worth is understood, Mary stands ever by her side, and she is held in deep reverence. This high ideal of womanhood has kept the nation faithful and strong. Listen to the testimony of Lecky in his “History of Rationalism in Europe”:



“The world is governed by its ideals, and seldom or never has there been one which has exercised a more profound and, on the whole, a more salutary influence than the mediæval conception of the Virgin. For the first time woman was elevated to her rightful position. . . . Into a harsh and ignorant and benighted age this ideal type infused a conception of gentleness and purity unknown to the proudest generations of the past. In the pages of living tenderness which many a monkish writer has left in honour of his celestial patron; in the millions who, in many lands and in many ages, have sought, with no barren desire, to mould their characters into her image; in those holy maidens who for the love of Mary have separated themselves from the glories and pleasures of the world, to seek in fastings and vigils and humble charity to render themselves worthy of her benediction; in the new sense of honour, in the chivalrous respect, in the softening of manners, in the refinement of tastes . . . and in many other ways, we detect its influence: all that was best in Europe clustered around it, and it is the origin of many of the purest elements of our civilisation.”

Ireland has always clung to Mary, and she in return has ever guarded Ireland, giving her a courageous strength of faith, almost without parallel. Religion colours every moment and every act of the lives of her people, and the spiritual vacuity of mind of the sceptic is beyond their comprehension. Looking on the world with eyes of faith, they see God in all His creatures. Nature's beauties for them are stepping stones to God: every tree a



living monument to Him; every flower a tongue singing the Creator's praises.

Such a faith is unshaken by earthly vicissitudes. Peace or war, calm or storm, in the midst of trials and tortures, in the face of awful death, the hand of God is always visible to them. See that poor girl, whom the priest found just at the point of death from famine and fever. All her people were dead, and she, deserted by all, too weak to move, lay motionless on the floor of a cabin, dying. The priest, moving through a land of death, found her lying just inside the open door. The poor creature, a skeleton, lit by two blazing eyes, was patiently waiting for death. Snow had fallen during the night, and the wind had blown it in upon the floor, where it lay, its whiteness matched by that of the forehead of the poor girl, against which it had drifted. The priest, moved to tears, fell on his knees beside her, to prepare her for her journey Home. Her white lips moved, and as he bent to catch her feeble whisper, he heard these words, coming from a heart filled with triumphant faith:

“Isn't God good, Father? I was lyin' here with nobody to look after me but Him and His Blessed Mother. I was burnin' with the fever and thirsty, and no one to give me a drink, and He sent the cool snow and it came in to my face and I drank it. Isn't He good?”

In such a glorious soul, faith melts into vision, and the Irish keep His vision clear by daily and hourly prayer.

“We're travellin' the long straight road, with God at the end of it, and sure we must remember



Him." And they travel that road with the rosary of Mary in their hands.

An Irish rosary! How Irish fingers cling to it and Irish lips caress it! A magic cirlet, Mary's girdle, they have always held it firmly, and she has always watched them.

As Mary, the "Mother of the Golden Heights," stands, Rosary-girdled, over Ireland, out of the fog and gloom of poverty, out of the blackness of pestilence and famine, out of the red flame of war, out of the chill desolation of prison cell, Irish hands stretch eagerly upwards to her. Hands of childhood, hands of age, hands worn with sickness, hands weak with torture, hands hardened with toil, hands twisted with pain, hands of saint and hands of sinner—all hands of beauty, quivering with love, reach upward from the shadows and turmoil of earth, and clasp her girdle. At its touch, resignation and consolation flow down upon the anguished soul, hope swells again in the broken heart, and shame and misery and despair are banished, for clasping that girdle means clasping the "Ladder of Heaven."

The rosary has always been the anchor of the Irish. Clinging to this girdle of Mary, and calling to her as Gabriel called, by its beads they read the book of the life of her Son. As a musician takes a simple air and enriches it with embellishments, clothing it with chords upon chords, evoking magnificent harmonies, now swelling with thunderous volume, now dying to the softest whisper, seemingly ever changing, yet ever keeping the simple air running like a golden thread through all, so Mary's suppliant clings to her girdle, and, using the simple theme of the "Hail Mary," looks back



with her upon the past. Guided by Mary, she sees before her the face of One whom she loves dearer than life—the face of Mary's Son. At the touch of the beads she sees that face smiling in all the grace and innocence of childhood, and its eyes look lovingly into her own: now it is the mystic face of the Teacher; again, the agonized face of the Crucified—and, one last glimpse, the glorified face of her God. In childlike faith, she kneels and watches, held fast by Mary's maternal hand. Can earth show a more beautiful picture, or an ideal as high?

Ireland in May is a vast cathedral filled with joyous worshippers of God: a land glowing in the radiance of the light that comes from Him who is the Light of the World, for Ireland's heart is a living chalice wherein rests the Saviour of the world, the Son of Mary.

CHAPTER VIII

CORPUS CHRISTI IN IRELAND



It has ever been the custom in Ireland to observe with special devotion all the festivals of the Church. Heedless of the criticism of a world that looks over her borders and smiles tolerantly at her acts, she has ever persisted in thus obeying the mandates of her Church, and in honouring her God with whole-hearted devotion. As a result, a growth of most beautiful customs has gathered round each feast day, giving it, so to speak, its individuality.

The intensity of the faith shown at these manifestations of love is striking. Some years ago I had the privilege of taking part in a procession on the feast of Corpus Christi in a country town in Ireland. The town stands, surrounded by trees, in the heart of the central plateau of Ireland, and near it three provinces meet. Over it tower the blue Slieve Bloom Mountains, from whose hollows a little river comes rushing, and after encircling the town, goes hurrying off to join the southward-moving Shannon.

A thousand years ago, a monastery was built where the town now stands. It was filled with learned, ardent worshippers—Catholic monks who sanctified the country-side by work and prayer and



Mass. To-day nothing remains of that once splendid pile but a mound of broken stones, eloquent yet of the undying faith that shaped them—faith that still lives and speaks; for this people have built another home for God by the side of these stones, and the boom of the great bell in its tower to-day goes ringing across the plain and against the mountain slopes, telling of the same Mass, the same Church, the same priesthood, the same Faith, as did the monastery bell in the long-dead ages.

Our road to the town lay across a stretch of soft brown bogland, on the farther side of which was a low swelling of rich pastureland. Over this the road went winding for several miles, flanked by thick hedges of dark-green hawthorn. The scent of their May blossom still hung upon the air, a fragrant memory, recalling the vanished beauty of the white wave that in May breaks upon the green bosom of Ireland.

Up hill and down dale we went, and one soon saw that on that day the town in question was the centre of the whole country-side. Every mile of the road was crowded with people. From a dozen miles round they were pouring into it. Every vehicle and every beast of burden had been requisitioned, from slow-moving Neddy, the patient one, to the fast-moving trotting horse.

I had promised to show a Saxon guest an example of what Irish faith means, and he, expectant, sat with me as we bowled merrily along a road crowded with pilgrims.

“Well,” he said, as we passed conveyance after conveyance, each filled with a merry, joking crowd, “the only thing that I know that would bring us



out in such numbers is a race meeting or a bank holiday. This is certainly astonishing to me!"

"Wait until you arrive at the town," I told him, "and you will be more than astonished, for every road leading thither is as crowded as this one."

And so the event proved. An involuntary exclamation of admiration burst from him as, at a turn of the road, we saw the little town below us.

To a lover of nature, it was a glorious view that stretched before us. The road fell from our feet to the plain below, went running over a hump-backed bridge that spanned a river, and was hidden from sight by the clustering brown-thatched cottages that marked where the town began. Flanked by their white walls, it ran curving into the town, reappeared on the farther side, and then went climbing—a white ribbon against the green—to the foothills of the Slieve Bloom Mountains that towered to the skyline.

But it was not the beauty of the natural setting of the picture that drew the exclamation of wonder from my friend. That was caused by the sight of the lavish decoration of the town. From the ruins of the old monastery on the right, across to the little cottages that we had already noticed standing by the roadway on the left of the town, all was one mass of colour. From the dark trees on the river edge came the gleam of many-coloured arches. Flags floated from buildings and other arches spanned the streets. Walls and windows were decorated with statues, pictures, and blazing candles. The streets were thronged with expectant thousands. The inscriptions upon the arches showed the nature of their expectancy. Across the entrance to the



main street was one bearing the words, "Venite, exultemus Domine." Lower down we passed under one that flung across the street, in salutation to Him who was soon to pass beneath it, the words "Benedictus qui venit in nomine Domini."

"Can they understand the meaning of the words on the arches?" asked my Saxon, as we passed down the street.

"Do you see that old lady over there?" I answered, "with the shawl, mantilla-like on her head, and the rosary beads in her hands?"

"Whom do you mean?" he replied; "they all have rosary beads in their hands."

I pointed out a stalwart dame who was telling her beads, looking with rapt devotion at a huge banner of Our Lady of Lourdes.

"Now," I said, "if you want an answer to your question, an answer that will be direct, prompt, and decisive, go over and ask her if she understands; but I warn you that you had better make sure that your life-insurance policy is in order, for she will deem your question an insult to her love of her God, and she will fill in some of the blank spaces that evidently have been left in your education."

He decided to wait for a time before inquiring, and the events of the day soon rendered inquiry superfluous.

We made our way to the church, which was to be the starting-point of the procession of the Blessed Sacrament.

Our Lord was taken by loving hands from His throne on the altar. Placed in the golden monstrance, He was carried to the door of the church,



and at the sight of Him, looking out over the multitude, His people dropped in adoration on their knees before Him, pouring out their love in fervent aspirations.

Carried by His priests, clad in the sacred vestments, He set out on His triumphal march through his loyal subjects. All were there. Before Him, scattering flower petals, ran His little children; behind, with their blue dresses and white veils, emblems of their consecration to their Mother and His Mother, "the darling Virgin," came the members of the sodality of the Children of Mary. Behind these marched the various sodalities of the town, every man and woman of them proud of the honour that was theirs that day.

But, splendid as was the procession, there was a feature of the celebration that was more striking than anything else, and that was the adorning of the houses in honour of Him who came and passed through their midst. It was not a case of the decoration of a house here and there, but of every house in every street. One stands out clearly in my memory. It was a little thatched cottage, with two tiny windows, and in the centre a door.

In the doorway stood a little altar to Our Lady. There in the centre, thrown into striking relief by a background of dark-green leaves and ferns, gleamed the blue and white and gold of a fine statue of the Mother of Him who was halting just outside that cabin door, while the swinging censers filled the street with the aromatic fragrance of the burning incense.

Bright as gleamed the gold on the statue, it was not brighter than the gold that gleamed in the



hearts of the old couple who knelt on the cobblestones, just outside the door of their cabin. Oblivious of all else, they bowed in adoration to the King of kings, who stood before them. The old wife was beside herself with emotion. At one moment, striking her breast, she would bow until her forehead almost touched the stones of the street, and the next would raise herself, with outflung arms and eyes that saw naught in that street but Him of the monstrance, as she cried aloud to Him in burning accents of love. Tears were streaming from her eyes, but they were tears of joy, for God's grace was making music in her heart.

For that holy soul there was no need to have lived in the days of the Apostles, and have heard the call: "Jesus of Nazareth is passing"; no need to have lived in Judea and marked the rush of those who wished to see the Word made flesh as He moved through the Holy Land. No need for her to ask, as did the blind man seated by the Jericho road: "Who is it?" and to be told "Jesus of Nazareth is passing by." No need for her to be brought before Him and to beg for sight through the touch of His holy hands. She knows, without asking, that He is passing, for her soul was touched at its creation by those holy hands, and has never been separated from Him since. No; Jesus of Nazareth was passing by that day in holy Ireland, and she saw Him as vividly and loved Him as intensely as ever Galilean did.

I stole a glance at my Saxon friend as we were passing that cabin door, and the rhapsodies of love from the kneeling woman filled the street. He is not prone to outward manifestation of emotion,



but his eyes were fixed on his God before him, and, openly and unashamed, he was weeping.

“I never saw anything like it,” he said to me afterwards. “Faith! It’s not faith, but actual vision that God has blessed these people with.”

On through the streets God went in triumphal procession, amid the loud acclaim of His loving and loved ones. In every window blazed the candles lighted in His honour, in every door stood the little altars with picture or statue. St. Joseph had his place, and the Sacred Heart and St. Brigid, and, of course, St. Patrick of the flowing beard and the mitre and the crozier and the wriggling snake.

We come to a white altar. Flowers are white, decorations are white, tabernacle is white. Here Our Lord rests for a moment, and listens to the thunder of the hymn that breaks from the lips of the kneeling thousands, and goes booming out across the silence of the mountain valleys. Farther on we pause and enthrone Him on an altar that glows red against the dark woods—red, that colour so befitting a land of His martyrs.

And so they accompany Him around the town, begging His blessing for each and all. Over the bridge they go with Him, back to where the spire of His home towers above the houses that to-day cluster beneath its shadow, as of old they clustered below the spire of the Cistercian abbey, of which nothing now remains but the foundation.

Enthroned once again within His house, God looks down the crowded aisles and hears the loud-sounding praises that go up from the kneeling multitude, only a small part of which can find place in that large church. Suddenly the benediction bell rings,



and perfect stillness falls upon the crowd. Held on high by His priest, God gives His blessing to His children. The organ thunders forth, the people exultingly chant "Adoremus in aeternum sanctissimum sacramentum," "Let us adore for ever and for ever." Aye; "for ever and for ever." May such be the destiny of Ireland.

If the Heart of Our Lord thrilled at the sound of the hosannas that greeted Him as He walked in Judea—hosannas uttered by those who, when danger and contumely were His, stood by in silence and let Him climb Calvary alone—how His Sacred Heart must have rejoiced at the outburst of tested love that greeted Him in that Irish town! Love for Him fire-tried as gold in the furnace, and love purified and strengthened by the trial.

My Saxon friend sat silent as at the end of the day we drove through crowds of light-hearted folk who were making their way homeward. Judging from the snatches of conversation that fell upon our ears as we sped by, the one theme on every tongue was the great procession.

"Did you hear that?" he suddenly exclaimed, as he looked towards two groups that had just joined before us, on a hill that we were slowly climbing. The first group consisted of half a dozen motherly-looking old souls wrapped in what seemed an infinity of garments, that suited them admirably, despite their voluminousness, and whose white-frilled caps reminded one of their sister Celts of Catholic Brittany. The steady sedateness and deliberateness of their steps enabled the lighter-stepping members of the second group to overtake them. This latter group was made up of a father, mother, and four



children. The youngest, a child of about six years of age, was clad in white, and carried a small basket in her hands.

It was their word of greeting that aroused my Saxon from his deep meditation.

“Well, Moira, girleen,” said Matron Number One to the little basket-bearer, as they met, “’tis you that’s the lucky one, scatterin’ flowers for the Blessed Mother of God to walk upon!”

“Aye,” ejaculated Matron Number Two, in semi-soliloquy, “if we could only see her the same as we saw her Son!”

“Wisha, woman!” broke in Number One in good-humoured impatience, “sure, ’tis hard to plaze some o’ ye. Didn’t you see God Himself? And don’t you know the Blessed Mother was walking in front of Him? Where else ’ud she be? An’ yet ye’re not contint!”

All looked up as we passed them, and in quick response to our greeting came a shower of warm-hearted blessings, beginning with the shy “God bless you” of the little child, and ending in a flowing stream of liquid Gaelic from the eldest of the matrons. Her final wish and blessing to us, “Bannachth De Lath,”—“May the blessing of God go with you,”—came like an organ tone through the glorious harmony, whose echoes sounded in our hearts for many a mile.

We left them with God and His angels, and turned our faces to where in the track of the setting sun our home lay far out on the plain.

“Well,” musingly ejaculated my Saxon, “these people live in the presence of God, certainly. Did you notice the face of that little girl, with its re-



markable purity and beauty? She looked like an 'escaped angel!'"

"Yes," I answered, "and she was in good company."

"There's no doubt of that," he replied. "Faith and prayer such as I saw to-day is a revelation to me. I understand now, better than ever before, how 'perfect love casteth out fear.' God is truly a Father—well-beloved—to these people, who cling to Him in warm-hearted confidence. It seems to me as if I have been privileged to-day to enter a corner of heaven, and have been watching God walking about among His people. They are a marvellous race—God bless them!"

"Amen," said I.

CHAPTER IX

THE NUNS OF IRELAND



HE saintly heroism of our nuns is one of the most touching proofs of the holiness of the Church. In the words of Aubrey de Vere, an Irish poet who deserves to be more widely known :

“ O Mary, in thy daughters still
Thine image pure if pale we find,
The crystal of the flawless will,
The soul irradiating the mind.”

Sisters of the Queen of Heaven, these lowly handmaidens of God and humanity walk the path of perfection in their quiet cloisters, their lives lit by the soft glow of the tabernacle lamp. Leaving all that earth holds dear, they answer the call of Christ, and begin lives that are guided by the reins of faith and love, reins held fast in the sacred hands of Christ. Close followers of Him who is mighty in His meekness and powerful in His poverty, these daughters of Mary are living examples of the marvellous power of our Catholic faith.

No thought of self enters the hearts of these priceless labourers for God and man. They devote themselves to the service of humanity suffering and sorrowful and poor, and with whole-hearted de-



votion and sacrifice they bind themselves to this service without reservation, offering all their talents and time.

Trained in the retirement of Nazareth home, moulded after the example of Mary the Mother of God, they move through their days with their eyes on earth and their thoughts in heaven.

Taught in the school of sanctity, they strive daily so to train as to be worthy followers of Him who insists that "thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." Moved by this command, these spouses of Christ bind themselves to the service of God and man by the golden cord of charity, that golden cord of the triple strands—poverty, chastity, and obedience.

Their vow of poverty holds them ever close to the heart of the poor and needy.

Their vow of chastity holds them ever close to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and to the heart of their Mother, Mary.

Their vow of obedience holds them ever close to Almighty God.

In Ireland, from the days of St. Brigid, the Mary of Ireland, each generation has seen young maidens in multitudes come from the doors of Irish homes, as the call of Christ sounded clear in their hearts, to serve Him and live for Him under the hallowed roof of the convent. And the enrolment in God's service of this army of valiant women, who with noble action and high ideals have helped to lift Ireland to the stars, is but the logical sequence of Irish mothers and Irish homes, with their Catholic faith and Catholic atmosphere.

These saintly souls quietly work with deft fingers



and trained minds, and with hearts that are lamps whereby all may read God's message of love to man. Love is their talisman! "Love one another; love the good God, and all will go well" were the last words of a dying foundress to her spiritual daughters as she went to meet Him who "alone remaineth an invincible King for ever."

Lives lived as theirs are must influence all who meet them. For instance, what a wealth of practical charity there is in these few maxims of the holy foundress of a congregation of nuns :

"Speak softly; reverence age; take the lowest place and the worst of whatever is offered to you; never give an unmasked opinion; never judge anyone, even in thought; never contradict; never give a short answer; show special attention to those who are not agreeable to you; practise little mortifications each day at table."

Of one whose acts accord with such maxims the poet in truth may write :

" Her mind is a river of light,
Her heart is a well of love."

And of course she is always happy, as the joyous laughter testifies that bubbles over from the beautiful child-heart of the nun in every convent recreation room in the land. "Did you think that when we put on our habits we left our hearts and our smiles outside?" said one wise old foundress to an inquirer who pictured a nun's life as sombre.

The results of their work prove the truth of this.



These joyous-hearted women have sweetened and made endurable by their presence that former monument of ineptitude, the poorhouse. The sound of their voices banishes the dreary gloom of neglect, and fills the heart of the deserted one with fresh courage. Those cold halls take on an aspect of home as the sister moves across them. At the touch of her hand the world-weary eyes brighten, and they gaze in gratitude at her who lives side by side with them, serving them in divine charity until they close their tired eyes in death.

As teachers, they are models of refinement, gentleness, holiness, and sacrifice. For over a thousand years nuns have been training Irish womanhood, and it is no wonder that they keep the hearts of the women of Ireland filled with splendid ideals. They stand unrivalled as moulders of the minds of children. All creeds recognise this. A Protestant gentleman, when asked by the writer why he sought to place his only daughter at a nuns' school, replied: "I am an Englishman and the son of a parson. I was educated at one of the great public schools of England. My wife, an American, was educated at a famous girls' college in America. There is one thing that both of us are quite determined on, and that is, that we shall entrust the education of our child to no one but a Catholic nun."

When erring woman turns in penitence to God, the Church like a true mother sends her to the home where these purest of her daughters dwell, knowing that there she will receive the welcome of a mother and sister. For the nun knows that every soul is signed with the seal of brotherhood with Christ.



It is the vocation of a nun to save souls, and as soon as her training is ended she begins her life-work. This generally means humble self-effacement and retirement. But at times their work attracts notice, and the world focuses its limelight upon them, and is astonished, as is the way of this foolish old world of ours, at their rare qualities. The flash of that light, however, does not dazzle the nuns; they move quietly about their work, mindful only of the light of the Master, and listening always to His voice.

On all the battle-fronts to-day they are working in hospitals, succouring the wounded, and comforting the dying. The world rings with praises of their heroism, and has gazed wonderingly while many have been decorated for exceptional bravery.

But, despite the astonishment of the world, this is no new thing. Look at that act of a Tipperary nun in the Franco-Prussian War. While tending the wounded, she saw a large bomb fall where several were lying. She rushed across, placed the smoking bomb in her apron, and carried it to a safe distance. Then she threw it from her, and cast herself face down upon the ground. In a few seconds the bomb burst with terrific force, but she marvellously escaped injury. The whole army rang with praises of her bravery. The Commander-in-Chief ordered a parade, sent for the nun, and, after warmly eulogising her, pinned to her black habit the cross of the Legion of Honour. She stood with downcast eyes while the cheers of the saluting soldiers filled the air. Then she turned to the General, and in all simplicity and humility asked, "Are you done with me, now, General? for I must



go to nurse my poor wounded soldiers who are waiting for me." Always calm, with the calm that comes from the realised presence of Christ.

During the American Civil War, Irish nuns tended the wounded of both armies. One, a Limerick nun, is famous still as "The Ministering Angel of the Army of the Tennessee." A great hospital built in her honour stands in an American city to-day.

A shy Irish nun headed the band of sisters who nursed our soldiers at the Crimea. They shrank not from duty that meant death, and many were laid to rest in white-crossed graves on the hill-side of Balaclava. So nobly did all acquit themselves, that on the return of the troops to Southampton the Commanding Officer ordered them to march by his side at the head of the regiments, and share in the welcome given by the nation.

But such publicity is utterly distasteful to them, and they are not happy until they find themselves back in their loved convent homes, where they can labour unnoticed, and spend themselves helping the lowly and the weak.

During the great war now raging, the outside world gazes in astonishment at the wonderful bravery of our nuns, and the expert help given by them on the battlefield, and none dare now speak of their "wasted" lives. War has but revealed qualities that have always existed in the hearts of our nuns—heroic sacrifice and practical piety. But how many, even among Catholics, know of their splendid work through long years of peace? For example, take their work in the congested districts in the West of Ireland. Statesmen and Royal Commissions wrestled



unsuccessfully with the problem of relieving the acute distress there, and finally, in despair, said that nothing but emigration could cure the evil. A few black-robed nuns glided in quietly armed only with Catholic faith. Prophecies of failure met them on every hand. "It is God's work, and He *must* help His people" was the only answer of the heroic leader. God did help the work: a splendid woollen mill stands there now, giving work to all. Close by stands a co-operative creamery, also begun by the nuns. As a result, the whole countryside, formerly poor and desolate, now smiles in plenty.

That is ever the spirit of the nun. All our great sisterhoods sprang from one pair of hands and a giant heart, that fearlessly faced poverty, obloquy, and fierce opposition, and conquered all difficulties.

Youghal was languishing in poverty. God's nuns came in and started a lace factory, that in a short time was paying in wages £2,000 a year. When the factory was firmly established, they called the workers together, and gave them the factory, as co-operative workers.

They have acted similarly in several towns, for these daughters of Mary work not for money:

"In Him unseen, their wealth they hoard;
They sit in self-oblivion sweet,
The virgin spouses of their Lord,
Beside the Virgin Mother's feet."

The only thing on earth marked with their name in sign of ownership is the plain wooden cross that tells where they lie when their work on earth is ended. They ask nothing for themselves. The



first two hours of each day are spent in communion with God at meditation and Mass, and the rest of their waking hours are given to the people.

When Ireland with bleeding hands strove to bind the gaping wounds of penal days, and while famine and sickness held her children fast, these heroic daughters of Ireland sprang to help their mother. They succoured the famished, nursed the sick, closed the eyes of the dying, and buried the dead.

In sickness or in health, their one thought is the interests of Christ. To-day in Ireland, in the corner of a bare little cell, there lies one who after a long life spent in the service of God has been stricken with an incurable disease. Each year, outside her little window, an Irish rose blooms and taps upon the pane, moved by the fragrant summer breeze that comes sweeping lazily across orchard and meadow. But she sees it not. Her eyes have been eaten away, and she lies there, year after year, totally blind. Her body is a flame of excruciating pain, and she can sleep but in snatches of a few moments, and marks each hour of the day and night as the years pass slowly by. Yet, in spite of all, in spite of the corroding disease, in spite of the biting pain, in spite of the blindness, her heart is steady and full of confidence in God. No thought of murmuring against her affliction crosses her mind; not a syllable of complaint passes her lips. She sees in all the hand of Christ, pressing His cross upon her, a cross to be carried till death gives victory.

Such resignation is truly heroic; but this blind Irish daughter of Mary climbs to even greater heights of faith and sacrifice. Not only does she bear her affliction with resignation, but in joyful



charity she prizes it as a means of drawing souls to God. Through the years she lies in her silent cell, unceasingly offering her sufferings to God for forgetful sinners. Love triumphs over torture. Night and day she pleads to God in sublime self-forgetfulness—"Let my sufferings save a soul each second, O my Jesus, a soul each second." Truly a model of heroic resignation and faith. How fortunate are the children of Ireland in being trained by such heroic souls! They lift the nation and hold it close to God.

There is a little convent on an Irish plain, far from the noise of towns. Winding boreens go slipping by its white walls, and lose themselves in a maze of hedgerows. A quiet canal comes curving in between banks of green to look at it before bending away to join the rushing Shannon. That convent is a centre to which the whole country-side turns. Through the generations its nuns have held the hearts of the people. As little children, these people came running along those boreens to the school of the good nuns. School-days ended, they came as children of Mary to worship God in the quiet convent chapel. Later again, as wives and mothers, they cluster round the gentle nuns for guidance and consolation.

Behind its high wall the convent stands, looking down upon a little garden of flowers that goes creeping into the shade of a clump of tall pines. A narrow path slips between the flowers to where, in the shadow of the trees, little white crosses mark the flower-covered convent graves. But to-day there is one spot where the flowers have drawn back, and the brown earth curves in sorrow: it is the



grave of one whose soul, after sixty-three years of loyal service within the circle of that convent wall, has soared to heaven. Her sisters carried the worn body into the shadow of the trees, but there was no shadow on their hearts, for such a death is a triumph.

Such souls and such homes of God abound in every part of Ireland, and are one of the chief sources of her strength.

But not in Ireland alone do they labour. Impelled by love, these doves of the tabernacle in gentle flight have circled the earth in eager search for souls. True children of St. Patrick, they carry the torch of faith to every land, and strive to light the darkness of the nations. No difficulty daunts them. See that band of Irish nuns dragged in drays across the prairies for a fortnight, and from the wilds of the West writing back to Ireland—"We are quite happy, for we find here Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament, and souls to save for Him." A temperature of fifty degrees below freezing-point played harmlessly round the flame of love that burned in the hearts of those heroines.

Over the summits of the Andes, by the side of the frozen Yukon, our Irish nuns have gone. Under the shadow of the Himalayas, by the sluggish rivers and canals of China, through African forests, on Australian plains, by the rushing rivers of New Zealand, these heroines move and work, like their Master "doing good." Brides of Christ, they are strong with the strength of Christ, and face horrors that have daunted the hearts of brave men. Nor let us forget that these sublime heights are gained by these heroines, not through lack of human nature, but because of their control of human nature.



See the little nun in the bottom of the boat below the jutting wharf of Molokai. She had bravely come to spend her life for the lepers and die among them. But when the boat drew into the shadow of the wharf and she looked up and saw the awful row of fetid humanity that peered down at her—noseless, lipless, earless—fungus-covered remnants, the sudden horror of the sight was too much for her physically, and she fell in a passion of tears in the bottom of the boat. But soon the paroxysm, wrung from nature, passed, and with firm step she mounted to the wharf to the souls that awaited her, and she is bravely working there to-day.

In mercy and charity they have girdled the earth with homes where the outcast and poor and sick may rest. To their great hearts they gather the weak ones of the earth. They are mothers to the young, daughters to the aged, sisters to the erring. Here we find them guarding the orphan that stood shrinking in pitiful helplessness at the beginning of the road of life; there they smooth the pillow of the aged, who at the end of the road await the merging of time into eternity.

Ireland counts these her heroic daughters among her greatest glories. They are welcomed with affectionate reverence in every land. And rightly so, for the whole world is their home, and all mankind their brother.

CHAPTER X

SOGGARTH AROON



HE priesthood of the Catholic Church, standing shoulder to shoulder in unbroken ranks, from the crucified St. Peter on the Vatican Hill to the prisoner Pope of the Vatican to-day, holds the divine force that vivifies and directs mankind.

A fearless army, it goes striding in undying vitality across the centuries, carrying through every land God's message to man. It has routed the forces of paganism and barbarism, rolled back the poison-gas of materialism, and sown the seeds of love and liberty and enlightenment.

He who would write of the doings of this army must needs write the history of the human race, for the march of that army is the history of mankind, history written by the finger of God, history that makes simple all the problems of creation. And the writer must be one with vision broad enough to enable him to measure the heights of heroism attained by Catholic priests, men who sacrifice friends, home, country, and life itself if need be, at the call of Christ.

The very nature of the mission of the priest supposes a soul cast in heroic mould. His is no light



call. It is a soldier call that means in tender years a severance from the strong ties of blood. "Follow Me" means the renunciation of much that is naturally dear to the human heart, and he who responds must be made of fine metal. As he steps into the ranks, the command of the Leader sounds in his ear—"deny thyself; take up thy cross." Year after year passes in the school of self-denial, purifying and strengthening the strong foundation of natural force of character that is his. His call is from God, and he realises this. His character, strong enough primarily to resist the call of the world, has by long and steady training all its faculties and powers fully and scientifically developed. He must first conquer himself, the most difficult of all conquests, for "he who conquers himself is greater than he who takes a city."

At the end of his training he is raised to an office that places him between God and man as an *alter Christus*. The priest spends his life, heedless of himself, in directing souls to the waiting Saviour of the world. He is the guardian of the life of the world. As the dispenser of the sacraments, he is the centre of God's work on earth. By the priest is continued the distribution of the Bread of Life that was first placed on the table of the Last Supper. As one of a regal priesthood, he receives the soul at birth, guards and directs it through life, and at death sends it with certainty and in safety on its journey back to the Master who created it.

"I have chosen you that you may bear fruit: go teach all nations," is their divine commission, and the history of the universal Church shows how magnificently her priesthood has responded. Caring



nothing for any notice or reward but the "well done" of Christ, they have ever been in the van of civilisation. On the Yukon, before the goldseekers, they laboured for years in icy Alaska of the awful silence; they were the pioneers of Canada and North America, the first whites to venture among the terrible Indians; we find them in the pathless forests of the Amazon, and on the rolling plains of South America, carrying their lives in their hands. Centuries before our modern explorers they penetrated the fastnesses of Africa. They crossed Asia from Syria to China, on to Japan, and down the Pacific Islands.

In the past, the priest has done his work unheeded by men; but to-day the red scourge of war, dissipating the darkness of materialism, has forced a careless world to acknowledge the grandeur of his ideals and his unique self-sacrifice. In times of great crisis, the innate nobility of the human heart shines out, conventions and prejudices shrivel and die, and man takes his stand firmly and unhesitatingly upon the rock of truth and honour. In such times, truth stands in the naked light of life, clear for all to see, and there is no place for those whose gospel, however disguised, means that the highest ideal of man cannot lift him above the mud.

To-day religion has come into her own again. No longer sneered at, it is recognised as the foundation of the highest form of bravery, enabling men to attain sublime heights of selfless heroism. On every side men have turned in reverence to God. All Christians have bowed before their Leader and King, Christ Jesus. Man, when he looks eye to eye with death, stands free from folly, and turns



instinctively to his Creator with a heartfelt cry for aid. This is especially true of the children of holy mother Church, the guardian of the whole truth of God and the dispenser of His miraculous sacramental gifts to mankind.

Thus it is that to-day the world, lost in admiration, recognises the heroism of Christ's cross-bearer—the Catholic priest. To realise the truth of this, look for a moment at our great ally, France.

The first breath of war scattered the deadly fumes of materialism, with which foolish men, forgetting that they are but clay vivified by the breath of God, were striving to enshroud her. Stirred to the depths, she has risen in splendid greatness, upheld by her Catholic traditions. Her priests are the men who, by their unrecognised valour, have in spite of banishment and imprisonment, of punishment and poverty, held aloft the flag of Christ in France in the past. To-day, thanks to their teaching, France in her trouble is turning as a nation whole-heartedly to God and His Church. This is the secret of the strength of France. Even those alien to us in faith are now acknowledging this, as may be seen by these words from the pen of a French Protestant :

“The psychological historian who shall undertake the task of analysing the deep causes of the unexpected strength of the resistance offered by France to the invader of 1914 will find himself compelled to note, amongst other new factors of the first importance, a strong revival of religious feeling. And one of the elements of this reawakening is the presence in such large numbers, and the



example so often heroic of the priests with the colours. And this is without reckoning the deaths of priests as priests, shot in the fulfilment of their sacred duties, and falling as martyrs in their blood-stained cassocks."

We Catholics require no "psychological historian" to find for us the cause of the strength of those lion-hearted soldiers and priests, our brothers and fathers in Christ. We know that it is because they possess the perfection of manhood promised by Christ to all who believe in Him and obey Him.

Again, the whole world to-day rings with the praises of the great priest, Cardinal Mercier, who in ardent patriotism and fervent piety stands by gallant King Albert and leads Belgium. How our hearts thrill as we look upon this splendid figure, towering, a veritable Colossus, above stricken Belgium, and rousing the world by his words of fire! Oh, the strength of the faith that makes utterance such as his possible! While his country still quivers beneath a hell-burst, a wilderness of smoking roof-trees, of hearths ensanguined by the blood of her murdered children, with the roar of battle in his ears, he stands, calm and confident, and looks for redress to Jesus and Mary.

Truly, there is no armour like the armour of a good conscience; no vision like the vision that sees clear through the blinding mists of earth to the welcoming hand of Christ. The priest possesses both these, and they enable him to weigh existing evils in the balance of eternity. The priests in the trenches are only doing what their brothers have been doing through the centuries, and have shown



that like them they are possessed of a valour and steadiness of purpose that not even death itself can daunt. Their only thought is for souls. Their orders from their Commander-in-Chief are "teach all nations," and wherever men need them, there they are to be found. They have always been animated by this spirit of sacrifice. Whether in the quiet of the seminary and the sacristy, or the riot and ruin of the battle-field, matters not,—heroes all, they press on, following the beckoning hand of Christ. Such heroes are to be found in every nation and in every generation, towering high above all other men, lifting souls to God, and gaining the undying love of all who know them. Persecution has but multiplied them, and death increased their strength, adding their names to the unending line of martyrs and confessors that is the glory of our Church.

Of no country is this more true than of Ireland; for while in other lands the torch of persecution burned fitfully, with her it burned in steady blaze through long centuries. Yet, with a fervour and bravery almost unrivalled, Ireland remained faithful to God and His priest; and out of awful suffering endured together, the priest has a place in the heart of Ireland that is unique upon earth.

Ireland is securely anchored to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and to Mary, and he to whom after God she is indebted for this is the foremost of her heroes, he whom in loving reverence her children have named "Soggarth Aroon."

Soggarth! name of reverence, recognising and realising fully the majesty of the divine power that he holds.



Aroon! name of love, telling of the outpouring of an affection without equal on earth.

Soggarth Aroon! He has ever been the faithful guardian of the people, the good shepherd ceaselessly watching in selfless devotion over the flock.

When Ireland had to chose between the torture and death of Calvary and the soft ease of earth, led by her priest sons she fearlessly set her feet upon the Way of the Cross. As we have seen when we looked at her martyrdom, her Soggarth was classed with the wolf, and legally could be killed at sight. "No priest to be left in Ireland" was the order. The high sea-cliff saw them bound back to back, and pushed to death on the black rocks below; trapped in the Mass cave, they died in a reek of smoke; sold to the slave trader and transported, they worked till death under the lash of their owner; from end to end of the land their bodies swung in the shadow of the "priest's tree." Every gallows in the country shook as priest after priest climbed the ladders at the bidding of their would-be exterminators. But transportation, prison, torture, death—all were of no avail. It was death for a priest to be found in Ireland, and death for a father to send his son out of Ireland to be trained as a priest. Yet, no sooner did one fall than another sprang to take his place. For in an unending stream boys from Irish homes stole to the Continent, and, with hearts aflame with love, followed an ideal that touches the highest point of heroism that man may reach—close imitation of the Hero of heroes—our Saviour Jesus Christ. Scarce was the oil of anointing dry upon their hands than they hurried back to their stricken brethren, ready—aye, willing—to die for God and Ireland.



Every glen and hill has its priest's cave, and too often, alas! its priest's tree, speaking eloquently of the long line of heroes who guarded Ireland's soul.

They lit the lamp of faith and kept it burning, and no matter what clouds rolled between Ireland and the sun of justice and mercy, the light of faith ever shone through the darkness and the nation stood steady against all assaults.

Though the Finn-foya, the sweet-toned Mass bell, lay silent and broken, the voice of the Soggarth rang like a clarion across the desolate land, and filled Irish hearts with faith and courage that rose triumphant over torture, starvation, and death. In a thousand disguises, he faced death daily as he succoured his helpless flock. To harbour him was death; but the cabin of the poorest was ever a sanctuary for him and Christ whom he carried, a sanctuary that neither menaces nor gold could violate.

They had no bread and were starving. He fed them with Living Bread from heaven.

They were friendless and outcast. He gave them home and Christ.

Shelterless in the rain and the storm they lay dying. He enwrapt them in his mighty love and comforted them.

Through the smoke of the burnings, past the hungry gallows, under the cloud of the pestilence, braving death at every move, the Soggarth crept to them.

"Ah! thank God, Soggarth, you have come," feebly whispered the piteously tremulous lips, with a sigh of content, and at his coming death lost its terror; the trembling soul, steadied, leaped with



confidence to the Sacred Heart of Christ, sure of a welcome. At the sound of his voice, the great mists of death were banished and changed into the golden glory of the home-coming. As the outcast looked again upon his loved form, agony left the dying eyes, and they were filled with the radiance of victory.

Weak hands were lifted for the holy anointing. The almost pulseless heart beat strong with love as in Viaticum the King of Love stole into it and rested. The Soggarth crept on to succour other sufferers, but Christ remained. What cared the soul then for biting wind that drove the chilling snow upon the wasted, dying body? What cared it for the pangs of hunger, for the ditch death-bed? Oblivious of all, it sang the praises of Jesus, content in the light and love of His divine Presence.

Over the lonely figure of the Soggarth creeping under dripping hedge and by rain-swept ditch-side, it saw the angels of heaven bending in lowly adoration and making his slow progress a triumphal procession as they followed the fearless carrier of the hidden Christ on his way to the dying.

It was in days like those, and from deeds like those, that the wondrous love that binds Ireland to her Soggarth sprang—a love tender with the tenderness of humanity, and strong with the strength of divine charity. No wonder that as dying eyes, at the whisper of the Soggarth, unclosed and looked up to his, and saw him busy with stole and pyx and sacred oil—no wonder that dying lips crooned gently and wove in glorious love the soft syllables “Aroon, aroon, Soggarth aroon,” around him who knelt there with Christ in his hands! It was thus that



the Soggarth crept into the innermost sanctuary of Ireland's heart, there to dwell for ever.

With such leaders, draconian severity and dire poverty were powerless to dim the faith and courage of Irish hearts. Men who as babes lay in the darkness of the secret cave, pressed close to the wildly beating breasts of their mothers, while the tread of the searching soldiery rustled in the bracken outside, soldiers whose quarry was Catholics, and whose sport—death, such men were not likely to value lightly the treasure that those mothers fought and died to keep. Men who in youth shared the danger of the Soggarth, and knelt bravely by him as he dried the tears of Ireland at the holy Mass Rock, realised the grandeur of his sacrifice and the nobility of his soul, and his spirit caught their young heart and filled it, nor left it till it fructified.

And how marvellous that fructification was is shown on every page of the history of Ireland's sons. Read the page that tells of the strong man kneeling by the roadside in County Tyrone, praying by the grey ruins of a little cabin. Floor and hearth are buried in a moss of green, and the walls—crumbling at the soft touch of time—have sunk quietly back, till Erin holds them hidden in her bosom. This is all that remains of the home where in grinding poverty the kneeling man was born. Tears are in his eyes as memory recalls loved forms and voices of past days. Under those hedges he crept to sit at the feet of the hedge schoolmaster. Above on the mountain-side is where the rough wall of turf stood, in the shelter of which Mass was celebrated. There is the field where as a child he toiled with his parents, a field so poor that a day came when a



sorrowful procession in helpless misery crossed the threshold before which he is kneeling. Down the mountain breen he can see it move as clearly as if it were but yesterday. Across sixty years of time he looks, and sees again his weeping mother trying to comfort the bewildered children, the face of his father, strong amidst all his anguish, the farewells of the kindly neighbours. Every detail of the journey is seared upon his mind—the steerage passage, the landing in a new country to seek the rights denied them in their own, the beginning of life anew amid strangers. In memory the kneeling man traverses the years, years of toil vivified and directed by Irish faith, and crowned with success, and he utters a heartfelt prayer to God as he recalls how, through all vicissitudes, he had kept alight in his heart the flame of desire kindled by the example and word of the Soggarth, that he too might be a priest. “Many a time,” so his history records, “many a time have I thrown down my rake in the meadow, and kneeling behind a hayrick, begged of God and the Blessed Virgin to let me become a priest.”

And how God heard his prayer, uttered from the depths of the deepest poverty, the whole world knows. The boy of the hayfield, strong in faith, conquered all obstacles, and attained his desire. And now, after half a century, he has come back to the field where he uttered that prayer in his helplessness, and kneels in thanksgiving before the mouldering threshold of the little mountain cabin—a mighty leader of men in the land of his adoption, John Hughes, archbishop of New York.

And this great archbishop has compeers un-



numbered, whose lives are vivified and purified by measureless sacrifice. That the faithful in Ireland to-day worship God in glorious cathedrals is because of the sacrifices of the rain-drenched, starving, homeless, heroic Soggarths who died that the Faith might live and Ireland hold her precious heritage.

The Soggarth of the Mass Rock has gone, but his spirit burns in the hearts of his successors, and the grand old Faith remains like a fragrance hallowing hill and dale, lifting the soul of Ireland heavenward, and giving her the marvellous certitude that the Catholic faith alone can give—a certitude that is divine.

Ireland is Ireland because of her priest. High above all her heroes in the grandeur of his office and in his unparalleled bravery, yet bending in love and humility beneath the lowliest of the lowly, the Soggarth stands, a glory to his Church and to Ireland, a splendid figure holding the key of eternity.

CHAPTER XI

MOTHERS OF IRELAND



WE have looked on the splendid valour of the Irish in the cause of Him whom they meet in "the sweet Mass," and with loving, familiar reverence speak of as "Jesus Christ, my dearest, my most loyal Friend."

We have marked their steadfastness through the centuries, and seen how the vigour and vitality of the heart of Ireland is as strong to-day as ever, studding the land with seminaries and monasteries and convents, homes of God, wherein His chosen ones are trained.

Mighty Maynooth, foremost among the schools of Ireland of all times, sheltering and training well-nigh a thousand Levites, and from whose broad gates yearly they pass in a steady stream, that flows out across the land and over the earth, stands in the centre. All Hallows, with its legion in training for the foreign mission, looks over the eastern sea.

Between St. Columb's at Derry and St. Colman's in Cork, everywhere are buildings filled with fervent souls, Christ's chosen ones, who kneel around Him, and whose one aim in life is the furtherance of the work of the Master.

Men wonder at Ireland's far-flung armies of



priests and nuns. They marvel at this world-moving energy, and, almost in bewilderment, seek for the force that gathers these armies and sends them across the world, filled with undying enthusiasm.

This astonishment is but natural, for the number of vocations that God has given to Ireland, the number of her children that He has honoured by choosing them to follow Him closely and spend life in His service, would astonish us also, did we not know the cause of the gift.

As we gaze at those roofs and turrets and spires we think of that far-flung army that has marched from beneath them. The mind in meditation looks beyond those towering battlements, beyond those valiant soldiers, and sees the real supports of those walls, the real trainers of that army. Behind the holy nun and brother in school and hospital, behind each priest at the altar, stand those who, after Christ, are the foundation and motive force of all—the low-voiced, sweet-faced, holy mothers of the Irish.

These mothers live quiet, simple lives, as did God's chosen people of old—tending their flocks and supplying their few wants by daily toil. Worldly pleasures are weighed by them in the balance of Christ, and rejected if found wanting. Among them is no holocaust of souls under the wheels of the juggernaut car of fashion; no loss of self-respect by joining the rushing legions of the votaries of pleasure. In silent prayer and work their days are passed. Calm with the calmness that comes from steadfastly gazing at eternity; clear in judgment, with the clearness of mind that belongs to those who flash the light of the lantern of death



upon the things of earth ; strong with the strength that grows from companionship with Christ ; gentle with the gentleness that fills the heart bound to the heart of the Mother of Christ ; living lives that are conformed to the will of Christ ; dying they go confidently to meet Him who is to satisfy the daily longing of their hearts. The empty world heeds not their passing, but highest heaven rings with the joyous anthems that the angels sing as God welcomes them home.

Here we have the source of Ireland's fervent ambassadors of Christ, the fount from which springs enthusiasm for His interests, the guardian to whom Christ has entrusted His soldiers for guidance. It is the lessons that a man learns from his mother's knee, the principles that she instils, the courage that she breathes into him, that really influence him in after life. She it is that takes the plastic soul, fresh from the hands of God, and with loving care can mould that soul to goodness and greatness.

The Irish mother co-operates with Christ in the saving of souls, and co-operates willingly, even though the pressure of the cross be felt keenly upon her loving heart. Wherever you see her she is at God's work. The souls of her children are an inviolable trust to her from God, and she guards them with her life. For her the call of earth unheeded falls on ears attuned to celestial music, the chords of which ever vibrate in her heart.

God's praises are ever on her lips in frequent speech. She passes her days calling down blessings on all whom she meets. "Bannacth lath"—a blessing with you. "A thousand praises to God" springs naturally from her heart, whatever befalls



her. How cold our "thank you" for a favour received sounds, when contrasted with her "may God spare your life," "may the Lamb of God be with you at the hour of death," or "may God and Mary protect you."

Well might she sit for the portrait of the valiant woman of Sacred Scripture. "The heart of her husband trusteth in her; she will render him good, not evil, all the days of her life." We have seen how "she hath opened her hand to the needy, and stretched out her hand to the poor," and noted that "the law of clemency is on her tongue."

Mark her well as she moves with swift hands through the daily working for her subjects—"she hath looked well to the paths of her house and hath not eaten her bread idle"; and at night as she sits at the wide hearth "her fingers have taken hold of the spindle."

Need we wonder that "her children rose up and called her blessed, her husband, and he praised her," for "the woman that loveth the Lord she shall be praised—let her works praise her in the gates."

The children of such mothers early learn the path to the church. To see a mother taking a child around the Stations of the Cross, and hear her explaining in words of burning love the meaning of each, from the shouldering of the cross in Pilate's court to the lonely funeral, with Mary as chief mourner, is a never-to-be-forgotten lesson in faith and holiness. This is the training that is responsible for the spirit of wonderfully vivid faith that is to be seen everywhere, and which fructifies in numberless vocations.



God to this people is not a mysterious distant Being, whose existence is scarce realised, or at most only carelessly thought of, and given no place in their lives, but a beneficent Creator and loving Friend, ceaselessly guarding them as a parent does a child; One who in His splendid love has come down and actually dwells with them, and who, their King, is always ready to give them audience in His throne-room—the church.

That the Christ of Calvary—of Bethlehem, is their closest Friend, and a sacred member of the family, can readily be seen by him who watches the loving affection that is shown by those who kneel on Christmas morn before the crib, or are bent in reverence before the crucifix, and who marks how they move through their lives in converse with Him. For these the tabernacle has no door—they look direct to the Heart of Christ.

Thus it comes that the child going to school stops its play as it approaches the church, and runs to kneel for a moment at the altar-rail; that the workman going to and from work kneels before his best Friend; and young men and maidens slip quietly in, faithful to the training of the mother.

Look at eventide at the home hallowed by the presence of the Irish mother. Whether it be amid the long sea-arms of Kerry, the blue mountains of Donegal and Antrim, on the green pastures of Meath or the towering hills of Wicklow, all the members of each household go moving rapidly to where she sits waiting, rosary in hand, by the hallowed hearth. The father comes from the forge or the shop of the shoemaker, where he has been “colloguing” with the elders, and the boys leave their games. Round



her they kneel, and she begins the evening prayer of Ireland—the rosary of their Mother, Muire.

Nightly the angels look down and exult as they see the nation kneeling before God, and hear that mighty cry for succour. Ireland, bound by the chain of the rosary to Mary, Queen of Heaven.

And oh! how they love that home! For them the word is sacred, and means a kingdom, wherein the mother reigns securely “until death do us part,” words of the sacrament, that have meaning when uttered by her lips. No matter how lowly the home may be, nothing but stress of circumstance will ever cause them to leave it.

I remember seeing an old Irish mother as she crossed for the last time the threshold of what had once been her home and that of generations of her people before her. The roof had been torn off, and the broken windows, like sightless eyes, stared dark across the white road from the tomb of domestic happiness behind them.

She threw herself upon the earth in a passion of tears. Lying there, quivering with anguish, she pressed her lips again and again to the stone threshold of the door, the stone that is looked upon as holy because of the generations of lips that have uttered the prayer of welcome above it. Worn deep by countless footsteps, it was sanctified by the unending litany “God’s blessing on you” of everyone who entered the house.

Poor grief-stricken soul! How often through the years she had cheerily answered that salutation uttered above the stone, now wet with her tears. As she said farewell to the wreckage that was all that was left of her home, she saw once again the



faces of long-lost friends as they stood above it. She peopled the past with loved forms, and the "God save all here" and the "God save you kindly" of dear dead voices sounded in her ear and beat upon her heart.

This intense love of home is the source of one of the greatest of Ireland's sorrows, causing an unending heartache, not only to her exiled children, but to the waiting mothers as well. How like to Mary, dwelling alone in her house at Nazareth, are those mothers of the chosen ones labouring in the service of God. They guarded the treasure lent to them by God, and wrapped it round with their love and their life. Then at His call, even though it meant severance from the "light of their life," they gave that treasure willingly for work in the vineyard of the Master. Just as Mary moved through the silent rooms of Nazareth, when her loved One had gone, living again the bygone days, and praying for reunion, so, too, do these heroines—mothers of the battalions of Maynooth, of the golden souls that have passed under the portals of All Hallows, and of saintly Irish nuns. And like Mary, their reunion with their loved ones will come only when the gates of death shall have been passed.

Besides those mothers who have given their children for God's work, other mothers there are, parted from their children by the accidents of life, who sit at home wearily waiting for the sound of a step that never falls. Yet, though separated by wide, rolling seas, there is no sundering of hearts. From every land on earth, filaments of love, tying heart to heart, white-winged messages of affection



are flashing. Like snowflakes they drift across the seas, and come pouring down in Ireland. Over the fields and the brown bogs they fly, into the mountains and the hills, till they come to rest in the hands of the loved ones waiting. Whence come these snowflakes? They come from Erin's children "on the waves of the world," sending their love and its tokens. Letters of the scattered children of the homes, they speed to the heart of the waiting mother, and still for the moment its longing. Love that is true finds expression in deeds, and this quality is not wanting in the love of the exiles, for in the space of twenty years they have sent to their homes as many million pounds sterling.

When darkness instead of light is sent to them across the sea, consolation and resignation, touching to see, comes to them from their fervent faith.

I knew a mother whose only son—the centre of all her hopes and affections—was killed in America. No one could summon up courage to break the news to her. On the following Sunday a thoughtless half-witted creature went to her as she knelt in prayer after Mass.

"Sorry," she said, "that your son is dead."

"Oh, no," said the mother, "he is not dead, he is quite well."

"He is dead," insisted the simpleton; "a big beam fell on him and crushed him, but they don't want to let you know."

She gazed horror-stricken at some neighbours near, and they reluctantly confirmed the truth of the words of the foolish speaker. Reeling under the blow, the poor mother clung to the communion rail, moaning piteously. After the first rush of



overmastering grief had passed, she steadied herself, clasped her hands, and with eyes raised to the tabernacle, cried thrice: "God's will be done!" and added: "Oh, Jesu mavourneen, he is safer and happier with You than with those that do not know You in America!"

There is a little village on the central plain of Ireland—just a cluster of white-walled cabins sheltered by a clump of dark pine trees, circled by the purple of the moor. In one of these dwells a typical Irish mother. Filled with a gentle dignity is she, and contented, although measured by worldly standards her life might seem lonely and hard. She is ever patient and calm. Leaning on her staff she says to the sympathetic visitor: "Our Lord is good, and He wishes me to suffer; welcome be His holy will." This is how she explains the paralysis with which she is afflicted. All her children are in America and "doing well, thank God." They have written often, begging her to come to them, but she always refuses. She wishes to be buried in the shadow of the church in which she was baptized, and "go to heaven from Ireland." She has their photographs ranged above the fireplace, and before them the live-long day she sits, rosary in hand, "taking the full of my eyes of them, and praying for them, for they need prayers, living among those who never darken a church door."

What a shield between her loved ones and evil are the prayers of that holy soul! There she is sitting to-day, with a smile of greeting for all who visit her in her home in the centre of the land of faith and of prayer.



“There are saints e’en to-day in Old Erin, who walk along life’s lowly ways,
From whose hearts there is ever ascending the tribute of love and of praise.
Like the gold that is tried in the furnace, their souls come triumphant through pain,
For they trust in the word of the Master, and welcome each cross as their gain.”

An Irish mother! She is foremost among the hidden saints of earth. A follower of Christ, whose cloister is within the four walls of the home, wherein she reigns as a queen! A lover of Christ, whose little kingdom comprises the treasured souls that God has given her to guide. A ruler for Christ, who draws her subjects to her by sanctity and love. Her toil-worn hands that clasp the old brown rosary are eloquent of strength to seize and lift to good all souls they meet; her lips are moulded to lines of peace by years of unending prayer and murmured benisons over sleeping babes; upon her brow eternal calm and resignation sit enthroned; her eyes are lit by the light of serene confidence, that tells of a heart secure in the friendship of God.

O Irish mothers! You know God, and know nothing apart from Him! You acknowledge no success that is obtained without Him! You measure the earth with the breadth of vision that comes from the contemplation of eternity!

Patient with the patience of the martyr! Strong with the strength of Christ! The very sight of you lifts men’s thoughts to God, for, O Irish mothers! you are the living embodiment of the spirit of our faith.

I look back to Ireland, and hear the prayers of



Irish mothers filling the land, as they send shafts of love in incessant pleading to the Creator on behalf of their dear ones, and I know that the future of Ireland is safe while that army of mothers moves through her valleys and across her plains, bringing Christ's benison on their country. No wonder that they are holy, for what is sanctity but poverty and perfect conformity to the will of God?

Saintly Irish mothers! Pray for us to the Sacred Heart of Him whom you know and love so well!

CHAPTER XII

MARTYRDOM OF IRELAND



HE martyrdom of Ireland forms one of the most awful and yet one of the most glorious pages in the history of the world. Awful, in the deliberate malignity of the long persecution; glorious, in the splendid valour of the faith that triumphed over all. Christendom knows no parallel to this page of Irish history. Bitter persecutions it had felt from the earliest ages; but never before had it seen a whole nation, men, women, and children, unfalteringly climb Calvary to crucifixion; never before had it seen the martyrdom of a people. The Island of Saints and Scholars was to pass through the furnace of suffering, and become the Island of Martyrs.

The guilt and shame of this martyrdom is to be laid, not upon the English people, but upon those in power, and their hirelings. History has shown again and again that where the sister nations meet in knowledge, friendship always follows. Unfortunately, Ireland was either unknown, or known only as painted by the tongue of calumny, to the great body of the English nation. This in great measure is true even to-day.



We set forth the story of her martyrdom, not to perpetuate strife (God forbid!) ; but to show the grandeur of the national spirit of faith that carried Ireland triumphant over all, and the splendid spirit of forgiveness—Christlike because copied from Christ—that she has ever shown towards those who smote her so cruelly. Poor Ireland, prostrate in agony, blinded and bleeding from the lash, has again and again raised her weary head, and given her hand in friendship when the scourger's heart seemed softened towards her, imitating her cross-nailed Leader, and giving to the world a noble example of sublime Christian charity, that lifted her above all worldly wisdom.

Ireland for a thousand years had been a beacon of the faith to Europe and a centre of civilisation and culture, driving back the darkness of paganism from the nations. But heresy smote where paganism failed, and wave on wave of fanatical hate rolled across the land in determined endeavour to quench that light. For be it always remembered that adherence to the ancient faith was the primary cause of Ireland's being broken on the wheel. The priest was described as a beast to be extirpated, and was classified with the wolf. A lord lieutenant declared that "if the priests had not been in Ireland the troubles would not have arisen." In 1641 both Houses of Parliament in England declared that they would never give their consent to any toleration of the Catholic religion in Ireland, or in any part of his majesty's dominions. Every church was destroyed, every altar desecrated, every tabernacle broken, in vain endeavour to tear the Faith from the heart of the nation. To be a Catholic was to be a



traitor and a rebel. All that was needed to escape this stigma was to relinquish the Faith, and "nothing more would be required of them." This Ireland would not do. When she had to choose between following God and His Church and being recreant to Him, Ireland—true to her tradition—never hesitated. She entered unflinchingly upon her long-drawn agony, an agony that began with the Tudors of the Reformation, steadily increased in horror until the summit of Calvary was reached in the eighteenth century, and Ireland was nailed to the cross of the penal laws.

It is sad reading, for it tells of a deliberate attempt to annihilate a nation for no crime but the desire to worship God.

Emissaries of the Tudors traversed the land, burning and slaying. Corn and cattle, the support of the people, were seized, and nothing left but "ashes and carcasses." The soil was taken by a horde of hungry adventurers, and the nation, despoiled of food and homes and land, stood helplessly starving on the highway. The people saw their houses and lands occupied by strangers, who had thrown them out because they were Irish and Catholic. One Sir W. Cole reports that "we starved and famished 7,000 of the vulgar sort, whose goods were seized on by my regiment." In Elizabeth's time the sword was not sheathed until fertile Munster was left a wilderness, where a few shadows of men crawled feebly through the woods, striving to escape from the oppressor, who slaughtered all even to the cradled babe, and gloried in the fact that he "strangled the cubs" of the Irish wherever he found them.



But the nation sank to deeper depths of woe under the Stuarts and Cromwell. Men look back in horror to the burning of Rome by Nero, who sang and played in the glare of the flames: the burning of Rome was but a spark beside the Cromwellian blaze that left Ireland a blackened waste, a blaze lit by those who sang psalms as they burnt and impaled.

Through the smoking ruins the survivors of the people were driven before the thrusting steel, held by marauders who knew neither justice nor mercy, and who, amid scenes of horror almost without parallel, ceased not to harass them even when, starving and dying, they went streaming through the boulder wastes of Connaught.

The nation was proscribed, and the Catholic nobility and gentry were declared "incapable of pardon, of life, or estate," and were banished to Connaught, then a waste so ravaged that many chose death or transportation sooner than face its rigours. Death was the penalty decreed for the Catholic found east of the Shannon. Complete annihilation seemed to be the end aimed at, and it would have been attained but that the manhood of many of the officers and soldiers revolted against their instructions, and they secretly showed mercy to the outcasts.

Whole towns, cleared of inhabitants, became desolate; farms became wastes. The fine port of Galway fell into ruin when the Irish were swept beyond its walls, and their houses were offered to Liverpool merchants. Parliament paid its debts by giving streets of empty houses to its creditors. For instance, it freed itself of its obligation to a



Captain Arthur by giving him 200 houses in Wexford.

Fire, sword, and famine killed swiftly, but not swiftly enough for the destroyers. Ireland was to know yet another horror. It seems incredible today, but none the less it is too true, that that human monster, the slave-trader, was called in to hasten the death of the nation. The horror that prowled in the darkness of the jungles of Africa was let loose upon defenceless Ireland. Fair maidens and youths were seized, carried shrieking to slave ships, and sold to West Indian planters to wear out their lives as slaves under the lash of the plantation overseer. For thirty-three years these ghouls took their toll of Irish lives—a toll that is variously estimated at from 20,000 to 100,000.

But all efforts, even the bloodiest, were vain. The oppressor learned that to attempt to annihilate a nation is to attempt the impossible. Ireland lived and Ireland grew, upheld by her Catholic spirit. As strength came back to her sorely stricken body, animated by her unconquered Catholic soul, she dauntlessly staggered back to where the stranger held her homes, heedless of the death that still menaced her. Across the Shannon, with its edging of bayonets and high-swung gallows noose, the people came creeping, starving in the morasses, hiding in the woods, back across the lands from which they had been driven. With indomitable courage they waited through the years, until their oppressors were forced to acknowledge their presence and permitted them to exist, though on the barest sufferance. In the eyes of the law they had no existence. In 1759 a Catholic was told by a judge



on the bench that “the laws do not presume a Papist to exist in the kingdom, nor can they *breathe* without the connivance of the Government.” If such a judge had controlled the atmosphere, Ireland would have been in danger of national asphyxiation.

A Parliament was placed in the country, but no Catholic could sit in it, and of it Lecky tells us—“few legislative bodies ever exhibited a more savage intolerance than the Irish Parliament in the first quarter of the eighteenth century.” It passed measures designed to leave the Irish nothing but their eyes to weep with. Catholics were excluded from government, from all professions, from the army and navy, from all civil offices. They had no rights of inheritance, no schools, no churches. In the effort to keep them in a state of perpetual serfdom, it was decreed that they could not legally possess property greater in value than a few pounds. Under this law, for example, if a Protestant met a Catholic riding a horse worth more than £5, he could tender him £5, and there and then seize the horse as his own. The law pursued the poor Catholic even after death, and forbade him burial in consecrated ground.

Until the Emancipation Act of 1829, no Catholic took part in the government of Ireland. The aim of the Parliament was to prevent “the growth of Popery,” and to this end its penal code was shaped. Of this Edmund Burke says :

“The code against the Catholics was a machine of wise and elaborate contrivance, and as well fitted for the oppression, impoverishment, and degradation of a people, and the abasement in them of



human nature itself, as ever proceeded from the perverted ingenuity of man."

All industry was crushed, even the very fisheries, and a state of constant starvation resulted. The straits to which the people were reduced may be judged from the fact that every week "the cattle were bled, and their blood boiled with sorrel gave the poor a miserable sustenance."

Having thus reduced them, one of the oppressors can ask "whether there be upon earth any Christian or civilised people so beggarly wretched and destitute as the common Irish."

The same gentleman, the Protestant bishop, Berkeley, advised that "all able-bodied vagrants should be compelled to work in public and in chains." And this, after creating a nation of homeless wanderers!

Famine followed the blaze of the spoiler's torch, and pestilence followed famine. Ireland's cup of sorrow overflowed. Five-sixths of the people perished. It was a land of silence and of death. Wolves prowled along the deserted roads, tearing unburied bodies.

As if the destroying angel had visited it, the nation lay at its last gasp. The roads were littered with the dead, the dying lay by the cold hearth.

An English member of parliament, speaking in the House of Commons, said:

"The priest and the pauper famishing together: no inquests, no rites, no record even; the high road a charnel house, the land a chaos; a ruined proprietary, a panic-stricken tenantry; the soil untilled,



the work-house a pest; death, desolation, and despair reigning through the land.”

Criticising the neglect of those in power, the Protestant minister, Sydney Smith, uses these scathing words :

“ Profligacy in taking office is so extreme that we have no doubt public men may be found who for half a century would postpone all remedies for a pestilence if the preservation of their places depended upon the propagation of the virus.”

Side by side with this campaign of deliberate physical starvation, determined efforts were constantly made to reduce Ireland to a state of spiritual starvation. To this end the priests had been killed, the churches destroyed, and heresy set up in their place. Tithes were laid upon the country to support heresy, and wrung by force from the helpless poor. A powerful host of wealthy proselytisers harassed and threatened the people. They invaded the cabins of the starving, tempting them with an abundance of well-cooked food as the price of apostasy. But Ireland recoiled in even greater horror from these vampires, whose prey was souls, than she did from the slave-traders who trafficked in the bodies of her people.

Through all this horror of bloodshed and oppression, one main end was aimed at—the extirpation of the Catholic Faith. This is evident from their words and laws as we have already seen, and is most clearly shown in the conduct of the oppressors towards the sacred ministers of our religion. Bishops and priests were hunted and killed at sight by wandering bands of soldiers. Paid spies swarmed



over the land, hunting and harrying priests. Torture was their common fate when caught. The head of a bishop earned a reward of £50, of a priest £30, of a teacher £10. When forces surrendered on terms, priests were always excepted, and death was the penalty that awaited them. One proclamation ran :

“ And for the Jesuits, priests, friars, monks, and nuns, £20 will be given to any that can bring certain intelligence where any of them are. And whosoever doth harbour or conceal any one of them is to forfeit life and estate.”

Strike the shepherd, and the sheep will bescattered, was the motto of the oppressor; but the most pitiless striking, with armies as the hammer, and torture and death as the anvil, not only proved powerless to separate the shepherds from their flocks, but it bound them together more closely. This martyrdom joined priests and people in an indissoluble union, closer even than that which binds earthly parent and child.

The priests did their duty in the face of death. In all manner of disguises they pressed through deadly dangers, succouring their loved people. Young Levites stole across to Europe, and entered the “ Irish Colleges ” that were founded by nations that felt for Ireland in her extremity. At Louvain, Salamanca, Seville, Lisbon, Paris, and Rome these colleges stood, and from them, with the oil of ordination fresh upon their hands, patriotic priests came back to labour in the gloom of the mountain cave, and under the shadow of the hedge, willingly facing martyrdom that Ireland might keep true. They



met death with the laugh of a twofold love on their lips, love of Christ and love of Ireland.

Thus it was that, despite the fact that for over two hundred years the Sacrifice of the Mass—the centre of Christianity—had been forbidden by law in Ireland, the Holy Sacrifice never ceased, and was offered over the whole of the land. It was celebrated in lowly cabin, on the granite Mass Rock, on fallen tree-trunk, and in dark Mass cave, in the presence of multitudes who knew that detection meant death.

It was the possession of the divine strength of the Mass and Communion that enabled the nation to live through those awful centuries, and be as fearlessly Catholic at the end of them as she was in the days of St. Patrick. Strengthened by the Divine Presence, the Irish nation emerged from the fearful ordeal even more strong and determined and Catholic than it was when the storm first broke. God fought on their side, and like another Chosen People, strong in His Presence, His tabernacle as their Ark of the Covenant, His Church as their Pillar of Fire, they feared no enemy. The faster the blood of the martyrs flowed, the stronger grew the Church.

In the year 1672, when Cromwell had wreaked his will, the Catholics numbered only 800,000, out of the total population of 1,100,000. Bitter persecution was carried on for centuries; and at their close, the Church that men thought they had beaten flat to the earth in utter destruction had grown to a mighty edifice, towering over all, joining Ireland to heaven, and impervious to all assaults. In the year 1834 the Irish nation numbered



7,943,840 souls, of whom the magnificent number 6,427,718 were Catholic!

Such a marvellous increase was truly supernatural, for everything from a natural point of view was against it. The Catholics had to live under iniquitous laws, whose purpose was to pauperise, degrade, and destroy them. Of those 6,000,000 people, the vast majority, nearly 5,000,000, lived in houses of one room each, and could be evicted at any moment; "pay the rent" was the only alternative to being flung on the road.

Then, little more than half a century ago, despite the fact that food was plentiful, famine fell upon the land, and, as we have seen, Ireland became a poorhouse and a cemetery. Five-sixths of the 6,000,000 perished, and the Church was again reduced to her numbers of Cromwellian days.

Years passed, and the enemies of the Church, increasing and multiplying, began to dispute the right of the Catholic to hold that his was the religion of the land. In 1861 the population of Ireland was 5,774,143, and the adherents of the tithe-supported Protestant religion, the so-called "Church of Ireland," called for a census to prove that they were equal in number to those of the true Faith. The census was taken, and again heresy shrank back in bewilderment, for it was another glorious triumph for the Church. From the handful of the faithful spared by the famine, our Church had grown through tears and poverty and repression, until it numbered 4,490,583 faithful followers.

When will the oppressors of Catholic Ireland learn wisdom from the truths of history? The shafts of persecution fall powerless before such a dauntless



people. Firm in their Faith, they walked through the gates of death, for they saw the God whom they loved smiling a welcome to them. Through all those dark days, the soul of Ireland was untouched and untroubled, the heart of Ireland beat steadfastly, and the honour of Ireland was untarnished.

Her valleys rang with the moan of the stricken ones, her hill-sides blazed and smoked at the touch of the torch of the destroyer; but the light of faith shone over all. With magnificent trust in God, they patiently and strongly held their way along the path of His commands. Their trials but made for national manhood, for heroic constancy, a passionate love of liberty and enduring sympathy with the oppressed. The tree of Irish faith, washed by the blood and watered by the tears of the nation, flourished despite torture and death, and spread its branches, until to-day almost every nation on earth finds shelter and sustenance beneath it.

In the history of other nations, special periods are pointed to with pride, as ages of faith, because of the warmth of the devotion shown in those periods towards God. Ireland knows no such periods, for every age with her is an age of faith, faith warm and full-hearted.

The Irish ever lived in the clear air of the mountain of faith, high above the clouds of doubt and despair, and have always looked down with horror and pity at the morass of heresy through which their enemies floundered. Men had striven to reduce the nation to barbarism, but Ireland was saved by her faith, for a nation that holds fast to God can never fall, nor cease to follow high ideals. The mind of the Irishman, firmly fixed on the glorious ideals of the



Catholic Faith, found in these a support that enabled him to ride triumphant over the billows of fanatic frenzy that in vain tried to submerge him. More, guided by those ideals, he was enabled to look upon all with eyes of faith, and kept in his heart in a high degree the supernatural spirit of Christian forgiveness.

These ideals kept the moral strength of the nation, the true test of national life, unimpaired, ready to leap into action when opportunity offered. It is this moral strength of the national character that keeps the Irish people moving steadily across an ocean of sorrow, battling against tides and tempests that seem to overwhelm, rudely buffeted and bleeding, but pressing fearlessly on, ever conscious of their route and destination, confidently conquering all by the magnificent strength of their faith. Stronger than the Israelites of old, who, when trouble that seemed insurmountable surged round them, hung up their harps in despair, the Irish in adversity but sound their harps more strongly, and go forward singing songs of Sion.

For them, the curving blue over Ireland is but a thin veil, behind which dwell their martyred dead: a veil through which Ireland triumphant looks in love and pride upon Ireland faithful; a veil that dims not the memories and voices and glories that crown Ireland with an immortal halo: a veil that they pierce with the eyes of vivid faith, and with clear vision see Him whom they have always trusted, and whom they have always followed unflinching. For the strength of Ireland is the drinking of the chalice of Christ, and the glory of Ireland is the carrying of the cross of Christ.

CHAPTER XIII

IRISH IDEALS



THE highest ideal to which man may aspire is the perfect performance of duty. This includes his duty to God and his duty to humanity, and presupposes a thorough knowledge of his destiny. But it is human to go astray, and the history of nations is in the main a history of deserted and buried ideals. The pursuit of high ideals fructifies in noble thoughts and deeds; the abandonment of them means a falling to a lower plane.

The tale of the centuries proves this, and shows that a nation cannot rise to greatness from the grave of buried ideals. The march of man across time is strewn with the bones of dead and forgotten nations, who fell from grandeur to annihilation because, relinquishing ideals that would have led them to the footstool of the Creator, they turned and followed those that did not rise above the earth. Their history shows that a nation that barter its soul for material ideals is a nation that is doomed.

The march of nations is not a slow struggle upwards from barbarism to high ideals, as some would



have us believe ; but, too often, is a blinded descent from honour and greatness to barbarism, because of lost ideals. It is not evolution from the mythical "caveman" upwards, but a succession of degrading fallings from the high estate in which man was placed by God. With feet clogged by the clay of earth, and eyes blinded by the mists of earth, as those without compass or helm, nations have blundered aimlessly down to nothingness.

As the student of the history of mankind stands amazed at the almost cyclic regularity of the recurrence of these falls, he cannot but be struck by one notable and almost unique exception to what seems a universal law. That exception is Ireland. As he unrolls the pages of the centuries, pages that tell of the passing of empires and the shattering of civilisation, of the discovery of new worlds, of new languages, of new beliefs, of dark epochs when the tide of ignorance flowed full and fast and barbarism threatened to rule supreme, he sees that Ireland has ever held a level course, unmoved and confident in every crisis. While others fall in helpless ruin, he sees that nation for 1,400 years steadily progressing and never declining.

The secret of her splendid strength is to be found in her heroic devotion to the ideals given to her by St. Patrick, and a comprehension of these is essential for him who would read aright her history. In giving Ireland the Catholic faith, St. Patrick gave her the perfect way through which to attain these ideals.

Nations curved away from the straight path of these high ideals and entangled themselves in pathless wastes and morasses, dark beneath the heavy



clouds of doubt and unbelief, while Ireland steadily followed the straight path lit by the light of the sun of all truth.

Nations wandered blindly, and unceasingly proclaimed that their aimless circlings and uneasy spirallings meant progress, while materially and morally they meant only incessant change of direction. But Ireland kept valorously to the heights and moved steadily and securely forward. Appreciating the high ideals that contained a truer test of valour and manhood than any she had hitherto known and gave her a field of conquest more noble than aught else on earth, despite the vicissitudes of fourteen centuries, she has held firmly to the faith that gives form to those ideals.

Persecution struck long and hard at her in an endeavour to compel Ireland to surrender her ideals, but in vain. We have seen in her martyrdom how for ages wave after wave of oppression rolled across her path, but did not stay her. Poverty and pestilence dogged her steps and almost annihilated her children, but she steadily pushed beyond them. The natural effect of grinding poverty is to degrade and brutalise, and of persistent pain is to weaken, and to this end they were ruthlessly used against her by her enemies. Grinding poverty and persistent pain were hers for centuries, and they but uplifted and strengthened her, for the spiritual strength that is hers because of her fidelity to her ideals lifts her above time and its circumstances and anchors her to eternity. Through all oppression, the soul of Ireland looked upwards unmoved, her honour untarnished and her heart faithful.



A study of this fact caused the English Protestant statesman, Mr. Birrell, to utter these words :

“ After studying Ireland for many years, the main feeling left in my mind is how, after all the fighting and revolution and confiscation and menace, after all the penal laws and famines and tithe wars and coercion acts, after the destruction of native industries and the yearly drain on the population by emigration, there are still in Ireland four and a half millions of people, and the majority of them still adhere to their old religion. Such tenacity of faith is, I believe, unexampled in the history of the whole world. From the time of Elizabeth almost down to the time of Victoria to be a Catholic in Ireland was to be an outcast. They (the Catholics) were robbed of their lands ; they were given their choice between ‘ hell and Connacht ’ ; they were ousted from portions of Ulster in favour of Scotchmen, and they were killed or banished whenever opportunity offered. But they were neither annihilated nor converted ; and yet from the time of Elizabeth downward to our own day, they enjoyed all the blessings of the Protestant Establishment. They had four Protestant archbishops, between twenty and thirty bishops, I do not know how many deans and a parochial clergy, all supported by tithes wrung out of wretched tenants, none of whom ever entered the place of worship to which they were compelled to contribute.”

The sole and complete explanation of that which mystified Mr. Birrell is that it is the natural sequence of Ireland’s heroic constancy to her ideals and to her faith, from which they spring. The centre of



Irish life is in the next world, and to it she ever looks.
As her poet de Vere sings—

“Thy song was pure, thy heart was high,
Thy genius through its strength was chaste.”

Therefore is it that she resolutely refuses to be drawn to lower levels. A Lutheran archbishop unconsciously gives testimony to this trait of Irish character thus :

“The common people of this isle are more zealous in their blindness than the saints and martyrs were in the truth at the beginning of the Gospel.”

He could not in his “blindness” see that it was the same zeal for the same truth and for the same Gospel.

The poorest not only believed but understood. Their deep religious convictions, the strongest of all feelings, gave invincible strength. They were deprived of their leaders, their churches, their teachers, their schools, their lands, their houses, their language ; and yet the nation swung forward as one man, bound together and upheld by the golden chain of religion. The light of faith shone in water-logged cell and gloomy dungeon, and filled them with glory ; it took the pain from bleeding feet and strengthened weary hearts ; it filled anguished eyes with the vision of Christ and nerved broken bodies to creep up Calvary.

It gave to the nation a language and literature of remarkable purity. The grossness that stains other tongues and writings has no place in the chaste speech and writings of the Gael. The Gaelic lan-



guage is Catholic in its very essence. Some years ago a Protestant missionary college, founded in Ireland to proselytise the people, began to teach the Gaelic language to its students that they might evangelise the Gaelic speakers of the nation. As a result, so many of the embryo ministers became Catholics that the study of the language was summarily stopped.

Irish writers, conscious of a loving God looking interestedly down from the battlements of Heaven, poured out their thoughts in phrasings that owed their beauty to the prism of faith through which they passed, and made the language a sanctuary wherein are enshrined rare jewels of thoughts. Read for example the glorious Song of Praise of Tara :

“ At Tara to-day may the strength of God pilot me,
May the power of God preserve 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 before me,
Christ be after me, Christ be in me,
Christ be under me, Christ be over me,
Christ at my right, Christ at my left,
Christ in the heart of each I speak to,
Christ in the mouth of each who speaks to me,
Christ in each eye which sees me,
Christ in each ear which hears me.”

These glowing words mirror the minds of a people whose every sense and every thought are turned to the fulfilment of their ideals.

The effect of this on the national character can



scarcely be estimated. Close-linked with the Author of all virtue, the practice of heroic virtue became common in the land. Parents in thousands willingly gave their beloved children to the service of God; the rich poured out their goods in the same service, and their love flowed out upon their neighbours. Their steady adherence to these ideals gave such stability of thought and correctness of action to the nation that it was saved from the effects of the wild theories that under the name of progress injured other nations.

And marvellous as the effects of Irish ideals have been upon the spiritual life of the people, they are none the less potent where material things are concerned. Carefully keeping the things of earth in proper perspective, the Irish devoted themselves to them, and became a nation of famous leaders of men, pre-eminent in science, art, and industry.

The monasteries sanctified labour, and were bulwarks of justice and morality and brotherly love. With them the foundation of greatness was sanctity. Each had its scriptorium for writers, its halls where science and learning were taught and its workshops for trades and arts. Each was "a hive of industry, a home of learning, and an abode of sanctity."

Industry changed the land into a smiling paradise, for all men were labourers with hand as well as brain.

As artificers, they remain unequalled. Miss Stokes, speaking of the Ardagh chalice, one of the few pieces of Irish workmanship that have escaped the destroyers, says :

"The Ardagh chalice shows complete mastery



in the arts of tempering, stamping, engraving, and exquisite skill in design and execution.”

Professor Westwood of Oxford holds that at a time when the fine arts were almost unknown on the Continent, from the fifth to the end of the eighth century, the art of illumination had attained a perfection in Ireland that was almost marvellous, and which in after ages was taught to the Continent by Irish monks.

And it was on the Sacred Scriptures that they exercised their art—thus becoming light-bearers through the darkness of Europe, and preservers of the Word of God, perpetuators of the high ideals by which they were what they were.

The same high authority, speaking of the Book of Kells, says :

“It must have been penned by the hands of angels : the border of the pages in Irish manuscripts seems powdered with crushed jewels. It is the most astonishing book of the four Gospels that exists in the world. How men could have eyes and tools to work out such designs, I am sure I, with all the skill and knowledge in such kind of work that I have been exercising for the last fifty years, cannot conceive.”

A modern artist worked for six months striving to reproduce one letter of this artistic marvel from the pen of St. Columba, and finally gave up the attempt in despair.

Their love of learning was phenomenal. In the earliest ages great privileges were granted to learned men. Professor Curry on this point tells us :



“The highest generic name for a learned man was ‘ollamb.’ Each of these was allowed a standing income of twenty cows and their grasses, food for himself and twenty-four attendants, two hounds and six horses. But to reach that degree, he had to prove himself worthy by purity of learning, purity of speech, and purity of action.”

How well for the world would it be if the same credentials were demanded to-day!

And this intense love and appreciation of learning has never been lost, but has flourished in spite of the most tremendous opposition. The clouds of war rolled across the land, and ruthless invaders destroyed both monasteries and churches. When the invader was routed and the Irish stood triumphant behind their king, their first care was the restoration of the ruined shrines of knowledge and wisdom. For example, scarce had King Brian Boru vanquished the Danes than he took measures to restore the schools and monasteries, and to guard the people from falling into ignorance. Of him we read in a contemporary writer :

“He sent professors to teach wisdom and knowledge and to buy books beyond the seas, because their writings and their books in every church and in every sanctuary where they were, were plundered and thrown into the sea by the plunderers from the beginning to the end, and Brian himself gave the price of learning and the price of books to every one separately who went on this service.”

The spirit of such leaders has ever lived in the nation. It was this that upheld the Irish in the



penal days when it was transportation for a teacher if captured: when the house in which Irish manuscripts were found was burned to the ground in punishment: when the nation crept to the ditches and gained knowledge under the leafy roof of the hedge school sooner than touch the poisoned bowl of heresy.

Ireland did not scale the heights in solitary selfishness. She went across the earth "doing good"; but it would lead us too far to trace in detail the effects of Irish ideals upon the other nations of the world. Let one instance suffice. Speaking of the influence of the Irish people upon the American nation, the famous juriconsult, Mr. Taft, formerly President of the United States, says:

"There has been an easy amalgamation of the Irish with our American life. They have added much to the composite American, made from various European stocks. They have softened the American wit. They have added to American tenderness. They have increased the spirit of good fellowship, added to our social graces, increased our poetical imagination, made us more optimistic, and added to our sunny philosophy. Socialism and anarchy have found no lodgement among Irishmen. They believe in institutions of modern society. They believe in upholding our national and our State Governments. They are not full of diatribes against the existing order. They struggle for equality of opportunity, and recognise the value of liberty ordered by law. They are not seeking to invent a new society and turn the present one topsy-turvy. They are co-operating with the good fortune, the



prosperity and the happiness that are possible under our Government. They are grateful for all this, they value it, and they will fight to preserve it."

"They are grateful for all this, and they value it, and they will fight to preserve it!" Of course they will. They have valued and fought for these rights for centuries. They are but the fructification of their ideals, and they bravely sought this in foreign lands when it was denied them at home.

Those who try to measure the progress of this people by earthly standards find qualities as immeasurable as the fourth dimension, and actions that nullify ordinary human wisdom, for they square only with the infinite.

Who will dare blame for folly this act of a young Irish wife? With her husband and two children she had gone to Australia and settled on the land. They failed badly, owing to dry seasons, and found themselves in Melbourne with only thirty shillings in the world. They searched for employment in vain. Their money went until they had but six shillings left. Taking this, the wife entered one of the city churches, and dropped it into a box marked "For the Poor," at the feet of a statue of St. Anthony. "There, St. Anthony," she cried, "there is all that we have in the world. Ask God to get work for us!" Permanent work came for both almost immediately. The worldly wise may doubt and speak of coincidence, but there is no doubt in the mind of that Irish wife as she daily sends warm prayers of thanksgiving to the Giver of the work.

But when all is said, the supreme test of life is death. We are given life to learn how to die, and



the manner of our dying is the measure of our success in living. He who turns from the deathbeds of those whose ideals made them poison-drinking, vein-opening suicides, and contemplates the deathbeds of the Irish, finds that death with them is but the stepping-stone to final triumph.

Come with me to the little cabin high on a Connemara hill-side. A message has come in haste to tell of a man lying at the point of death within.

Everything about the cabin speaks of the deepest poverty. The green turf, unbroken by spade or mattock, runs close up to the base of the mould-stained walls; the roof-tree sags under a weight of sodden thatch, covered thickly with thick bosses of green moss that make the whole seem but a swelling of the turf-covered mountain-side.

The wailing of children and the slow moan of a woman sound from within. As we bend under the low door to enter, we see kneeling on the clay floor a woman and five children. She is broken with grief, and her children are clinging convulsively to her.

At the left, on a low bed, is the dying father, gasping out the last moments of his life, parched with a fever that sprang from starvation. As soon as he sees us, the lines of pain fade from his wasted face, and he looks eagerly and confidently up, watching our every movement. Death is no mystery to him, for he has shaped his whole life to be ready for it. He understands everything—the Visitor who rests on the corporal, the silver phial of holy oil, the stole, the lighted candles. Quietly he makes his confession, reverently he receives his God in Viaticum, and communes in silent adoration with



Him whose Presence makes the lowly cabin a sacred tabernacle. Then, in quiet confidence he brings his thoughts back to earth. Slowly and painfully he turns his wasted body until, lying on his side, he looks with eyes filled with love down at the sobbing wife who has been pouring her heart out to Christ as He rested on the little table, pleading with Him not to take her husband and leave her alone.

“Catherine,” in weak tones calls the dying man, and at the word she kneels upright, clasping her hands to her breast as if to check the tide of sorrow, and looks at him with tear-dimmed eyes.

“Catherine,” the dying voice repeats, dropping the words syllable by syllable, slow at the touch of death, “don’t—cry ; sure—haven’t—we—got—the—Man—above ; and—when—I—see—Him—I’ll—tell—Him—about—you—and—the—children.”

He lay quietly back and began to pray again, and thus he died, and went to meet “the Man above,” as is the beautifully familiar reverent phrase of the people.

That man spent his life working like a slave on the bleak mountain wastes, often knee-deep in water all day. His life was a perpetual fight with black poverty—poverty that with its semi-starvation brought him to an early grave. He died, leaving a wife and five children without a morsel of food in the house, and yet with a heart full of faith and confidence he left all to the care of Christ.

All the adversity against which he had struggled through the slow years was no more than the passing sea mist that clung for a moment to the cliff before his cabin and vanished. He measured all and



understood all by his faith, and died a veritable conqueror.

He measured his poverty against the poverty of the cave of Bethlehem, his humiliations against those of the Cross-carrier, his years of life against eternity, and measuring, laughingly followed his Leader, whom he saw ever before him, calling him onward and upward.

The seven gifts of the Holy Ghost have room to operate in such sterling souls, and on such souls does Ireland's greatness rest.

The path of their ideals is the path of the seven sacraments, and beside it flows the perennial fountain of living water. Faithfully traversing this path, the Irish people, conquerors in life and conquerors in death, have lifted Ireland triumphant to the heights of Heaven.

CHAPTER XIV

IRISH JOYOUSNESS



THE Catholic Church is the home of joyous laughter. Her Founder came to earth announcing "tidings of great joy," a great joy based on hope and love that has ever since been one of the characteristic notes of the Church. As an Irish priest pleasantly puts it: "The true Church is distinctly joyous in its sacraments, doctrines, and devotions, and in the number of its children who have been eminent for joyousness in all ages."

Religion properly understood and practised is a spring of unending joyousness, welling in the heart and independent of the mutable things of time. St. Lawrence on his gridiron, Sir Thomas More laying his head on the block, died joking, because of this joy.

For from this joy, incessantly bubbling up in the Catholic heart from the well of faith, flows the kindly stream of humour that mellows all things human. Faith and humour go together. True, at times we find narrow souls who look askance at humour, as if, forsooth, if religiously weighed, it would be found out of harmony with piety. They forget that the Sacred Scriptures tell us that God



made the dragon "that He might laugh at him." Faith gives a strong full tide of humour that remains always with a man, changing like the tides, but ever present.

But humour that springs from faith can be understood only by him who possesses the faith. He who passes the measuring rod of eternity over human things must develop a broad kindness of outlook that finds expression in steady and thorough enjoyment. "Be of good cheer," Christ commanded his followers, and this enjoyment is the resultant of the possession of the peace of God.

When man is in harmony with the infinite, all things sing joyously to him of their Creator, and he holds the key that unlocks all barriers to progress and success. But the man who lives only for worldly pleasures misses the very purpose of life and cannot know true joyousness. He searches for joy where there is no joy, in a spinning world where "to think is to be full of sorrows and leaden-eyed despairs"; a world where the flash of teeth passes for laughter while sorrow bites at the heart; a world where there is no finality; a world oppressed by the consciousness of the presence of the twin shadows weakness and death.

Nor is the unbeliever in better plight than the sensual worlding, because for him life is meaningless. "I find," said Huxley, the agnostic, "my dislike to the thought of extinction increasing as I get older and nearer the goal. It flashes across me at all sorts of times with a sort of horror. I had rather be in hell a good deal." Herbert Spencer was tortured by similar misgivings.

How different are such lives from the lives of



those who hear and understand the message of the first Christmas : " Behold, I bring you tidings of a great joy." We see the plenitude of the effects of this message when we study the lives of those who know Christ best—His saints. The spirit of the saints sings always, despite trial and external sorrow. They caught the laughter of the universe and increased its chorus. This is beautifully shown in these words of Father Boylan, S.J. :

" Francis of Assisi was the great type of mediæval sanctity ; his heart-easing laughing rippled round the world. His deep-seated gaiety, caught by innumerable sons and followers, has traced out a luminous track through the sorrows of the earth.

" St. Teresa, the foundress of the Carmelite reform, was an austere saint, if ever there was one, and she carried to old age a light and infectious joyousness which she has left as a legacy to her children. Throughout the world to-day in the stern cloisters of Carmel, one may hear falling from the lips of aged religious, tottering with wide-open eyes to the grave, a light-hearted laughter which suggests the exuberance of perpetual youth. The saints are always young. For centuries men have dreamed of the elixir of perpetual youth, and at last have come to the conclusion that it is only a pleasant dream. But it is no dream. It is a reality, and Christ offers it to the world : ' He that drinks of the living water which I shall give him shall not thirst for ever.' "

This fullness of joy is theirs because of their deep comprehension of Christ. Laughter rings through



every cloister in the world. To such souls "God's stripes are caresses," as Stevenson says. The Apostles rejoiced in stripes, the martyrs in tortures, confessors in austerities, the saints in contempt and poverty. But in all they were guarded by the Church and ever kept the middle path where virtue dwells, and were preserved from the excess into which unguided man is so prone to fall. They are an antidote to a world that ever oscillates from one extreme to another, a world that is either too hard or too soft. Yesterday, in an excess of hardness, because the Church in her wisdom called to her aid the spirits of art and music and bound them to this service of joy, men with narrow vision, not understanding, broke organ and choir and sculpture and pictured glass, as if they feared lest man be too happy and at ease with God. To-day, such hardness of mind is vanishing and the world is falling into the opposite extreme—the unhealthy decadent softness of humanitarianism with its gospel of the avoidance of pain and sorrow as things evil.

The Church on the contrary advances by the healthy facing of pain, teaches that it is the path of joy and holds that pain is a thing that must be and is a means of progress. Suffering is trial, and trial is to moral strength what physical exercise is to the muscles of the body.

Our faith transmutes poverty, labour, and pain into means to help us on to perfection, and holds them before man as a mirror reflecting God's love.

Ireland looked on this mirror, and love of God has ever been the talisman that transmuted all her sorrows and kept the sunshine of God's laughter lighting her heart. Some there are who have



written of Ireland and shown her to their readers as a melancholy Ireland. Others have shown her as an island of dreamers, and others again as a volatile and changeable Ireland. These writers erred because of their false standards. Coming from the mad rush of modern life, that mistakes feverish unrest for happiness, and which finds joy in unending change where solid thought is impossible, they mistook the eternal steadiness of Ireland for melancholy. Because the Irish refused to burrow in the sloughs of materialism and held to their high ideals these writers describe them as unpractical dreamers, despite the fact that their history shows them to be among the most practical of the nations. They have dared to call changeable and volatile those whose tenacity and determination have upheld them while nations fell crashing in ruins about them. It is the old story of "Wherefore thou art inexcusable, oh man, because the things wherein thou judgest thou dost thyself."

A restless melancholy world, driven by those whose theories are often akin to madness, cannot judge Ireland. A world so full of misery that multitudes commit suicide to escape from it cannot understand the content of Ireland. A world that is speed-mad and covered with the grey dust of its whirlings cannot appreciate the glorious calm of Ireland. Ireland is a land of the most delightful calm and steadiness. This breathes in the very landscape. It is visible everywhere—in the fields and the cottages, on the seashore, by the ruins of the monasteries, under the shadows of the round towers, by the soft flowing streams, edged with flowered green, that slip quietly by the hedges and across



fields and beneath roads to swell the river silently running to the sea. She is a land of pasture and tillage and clear clean air: a land of little white roads that frolic from cottage to cottage, that play hide-and-seek amid the hedges, curve round lake and callow, hide in tree clusters, lose themselves in deep glens or run wriggling up the curving sides of mountains and dive into the unknown.

This spirit of contentment and calm flows out upon the land from the tabernacle, the centre of life in each village and town. It rests by the hearth, it sweetens the labour of the fields, and makes smooth the path of the traveller.

The simple and natural way in which the Irish turn to the tabernacle is sometimes astonishing to one not accustomed to it. One feast day I was kneeling, before dawn, in an Irish church. The town outside was silent in the cold and darkness of winter. Suddenly, just as Mass was beginning, the sound of many feet was heard, and soon, seat after seat was filled with a hooded and cloaked crowd, who knelt and reverently followed the Holy Sacrifice. They were a band of young folk returning from a ball, and the fact that they had spent the night in merry-making did not cause them to forget their duty to God. Before going home all came to the church to the Mass of the feast.

“Incongruous,” you murmur. No! not in Ireland. Irish amusements are wholesome and Irish dances are clean and modest, healthy and hearty, so different from the sensuous slidings of some nations. God is with them in their pleasure as in their sorrows, in their assemblies as in their loneliness. They take their amusements conscious



of the presence of God. Even when holiday-making Ireland does not forget, but carries the same spirit with her.

High on the central plateau of Northern Clare is the holiday resort Lisdoonvarna. It exists only for pleasure-seekers, and during the season its streets are thronged. The excursions by day and dance and song each evening, that make the hours fly, are not peculiar to Ireland. They are to be found in other lands, but what is peculiar to Ireland is the sanctification of this joyousness that is to be seen each morning, and is characteristically Irish.

In Lisdoonvarna, as everywhere else in Ireland, the church stands in the centre. Each morning the first Mass begins at five o'clock, and after that Masses are celebrated every half-hour until ten o'clock. The church is full to overflowing at each of the Masses and great numbers go to Communion. At the early Masses are to be seen the ardent fishermen and sportsmen with their rods and guns, hearing Mass before setting out on a long day's tramp over moor and mountain.

"Himself" and "Herself" come gravely down to the later Masses clad in the dignity that befits their maturer years. They look with amused tolerance at the vivacious energy that searches far afield for trout and pollock, rabbit and grouse. The joy that springs from a light conscience goes eddying from end to end of the plateau.

At Lisdoonvarna, the stream of joyousness ripples openly in the sunshine, but it is to be found also flowing quietly and strongly beneath the dark clouds of adversity in places where it is so hidden beneath exterior privation that it can only be seen



by eyes of faith, for its presence in such places is a marvel of faith.

If we step off the plateau by the bluff shoulder of Moher and follow the roads that run south and east through the land we shall catch glimpses of it flashing from stony fields, where it drives back despair, and from solitary cabins by the roadside, where it banishes loneliness from souls tied by poverty.

To the truth of this let a good old soul whom I found in a wayside cabin in Clare bear witness.

Her husband had been dead for many years and all her children, yet the spirit of contentment rested upon her brow as she looked out upon the world from her half-door. I stood and spoke with her and learned her history.

“So you are quite alone in the world?” I said.

“Oh no,” she answered at once, and quite decidedly, “oh no, I’ve God and His Blessed Mother with me.”

The beads of the Blessed Mother lay on the corner of a little table just inside the door, and beyond on the white wall a picture showed that St. Joseph was not forgotten.

She was twin soul to the other Irish mother, whom I met on a Limerick hill-side in similar plight. Frail and old, she was toiling painfully up a steep hill carrying a bucket of water from a well at the foot. I took the bucket from her, and as we walked up the hill she told me a sad story of emigration and death, yet one gilded by marvellous contentment and resignation. She saw God’s hand in all.

As we drew near a cottage by the road-side I asked who lived there.



“God and myself,” was her answer.

“What need of loneliness when I’ve Him to talk to?” was her answer to another question.

Such souls are apt pupils in the school of Christ, and earth can teach them nothing.

Irish joyousness finds full power of expression in the language of these people. The tongue of the Gael is the shrine of national memories, and irreparable loss has been inflicted upon generations of Irish because they were deprived of it.

Ireland possessed a splendid literature, and, despite the ravages of invaders, many traces of it remain. He who would study the history of the Celtic nations of Europe must go to Irish manuscripts. As Darmesteter says :

“Ireland has the peculiar privilege of a history continuous from the earliest centuries of our era to the present day. She has preserved in the infinite wealth of her literature a complete and faithful picture of the ancient civilisation of the Celts. Irish literature is therefore the key that opens the Celtic world.”

National language is the natural vehicle for the expression of the thought and the ideals of a people, and no substitute can be found for it. To speak in a foreign tongue brings many disadvantages, not the least of which is the sense of inferiority felt by him who is conscious of defects in pronunciation and idiom.

This was the reason of the answer of the Galway man to the English member of parliament who vainly endeavoured to make him speak English.

“Ah, if we talked English,” said he, “you would



be a wiser man than I ; in Irish it is not that way the story is ! ”

And as the thought and ideals of Ireland have ever been deeply religious, the suppression of the language embodying these struck a blow, not only at national sentiment, but at national religion.

Who so swift and clean of speech as the Irish ?

The so-called “ Irish bull ” is the outcome of the quick flash of mind that expresses one idea by apposite and opposite illustrations.

In the year 1834, in spite of fierce legislation against it, there were 3,000,000 people who used the Irish language as their mother tongue. But famine and pestilence, emigration and the penal laws worked against it, and the English tongue took its place save where it languished in the south and west.

Priceless manuscripts in great numbers were destroyed, and a generation arose in ignorance and knew not what they had lost, till in the year 1893 by the Gaelic revival lovers of Ireland began to fan the spark almost buried under cold ashes. Already a bright flame is burning, prophetic of the day that is coming when the joyously Catholic speech of the Gael shall hold its rightful position.

Side by side with the Irish language runs the stream of Irish music and song. Song sprang naturally to the lips of the Irish, and the odes of the bards were memorised by the people and sung by them at their gatherings.

“ It is no exaggeration to say,” says Douglas Hyde, “ that by no people was poetry so cultivated and so remunerated as in Ireland. There were sixteen grades of bards, and each grade had its own peculiar metre, of which the Irish had over three hundred.”



Life without music and song would be impossible for such a people, and they brought both to a pitch of perfection rarely attained in any nation. Ireland is the only country that has a musical instrument as the national emblem.

Of the music of Ireland Dr. Ernest Walker says :

“ Few musicians have been found to question the assertion that Irish folk music is, on the whole, the finest that exists. It ranges, with wonderful ease, over the whole gamut of human emotion, from the cradle to the battlefield, and is unsurpassed in poetical and artistic charm. If musical composition meant nothing more than tunes sixteen bars long, Ireland could claim some of the very greatest composers that ever lived ; for in their miniature form, the best Irish folk tunes are gems of absolutely flawless lustre. For sheer beauty of melody, the works of Mozart, Schubert, and the Irish composers form a triad that is unchallenged in the whole range of the art.”

And Cambrensis, speaking of their skill with musical instruments, says :

“ The attention of these people to musical instruments is worthy of praise, in which their skill is beyond comparison superior to other people. The modulation is not slow and solemn, but rapid and precipitate ; it is extraordinary in such rapidity of the fingers how the musical proportions are preserved.”

Her joyousness swept across Ireland in an unrivalled outburst of music and song. The whole



nation, like a gigantic harp, thrilled with the praise of God as the Irish exultantly lifted up their hearts to Him "in hymns and canticles singing and making melody in their hearts to the Lord."

So it ever is with man when his heart is at rest and his mind steadied by definite purpose. Joy sings in the heart of the goldseeker, even though his path crawls across the Chilcoot pass and races at lightning speed over the creamy rush of White Horse canyon, with death at every oar tip. The lure of the gold and the power of its possession urge him onward; buoyed by the thought of riches ahead he struggles forward though death watch every step.

The world looks on in admiration when it sees him laboriously burning the frozen earth and braving climatic conditions that render life almost impossible, and judges that the prize is worth the risk, because it is the price that he is content to pay for a lifetime to be spent in the enjoyment of all that this world gives to the possessor of riches.

So too is it with the Irish. Not for earthly gold, but for heavenly gold this people press on, breaking all difficulties beneath their feet, with hearts and eyes fast fixed on the prize ahead.

They travel through life with the Beatitudes set as signposts and they confidently steer their course by them. Thus it is that the meaning of poverty and tribulation and pain—in short, the meaning of life, a mystery to worldlings—is quite clear to them. With them "Delight has taken Pain to her heart," and they understand fully that the sacred office of pain is to purify the gold of the heart from the dross of earth.



Speaking of the outlook of the Irish people upon life, an English Protestant writer, Harold Begbie, says :

“ It seemed to me that these hard-working, simple-living, family-loving, and most warm-hearted people had done what we in England have largely failed to do even in our villages, to wit, solved the problem of life. The charm which every traveller feels in the South of Ireland is the character of the Irish people, and my investigations forced me to the judgment that this character is the culture of Irish Catholicism.”

Ireland is a proof, that the whole world may see, of the joy of life and sanity of outlook that spring from the Catholic Church, the Church of the tabernacle.

The sacramental Presence of God sets the whole nation moving joyously around Him, and persecution and trial but strengthen this content, because suffered for Him who assures them that blessed are the poor, the oppressed, and the persecuted.

The tabernacle of the divine Presence gives Ireland immovable strength and confidence ; from it also she has been nourished by the life of nations. Ireland, intensely loyal, rejoices in all times and circumstances in the Presence of her King,—“ of Thee shall I continually sing, and I am become unto many as a wonder, but Thou art a strong helper, my lips shall greatly rejoice when I shall sing to Thee.”

They look upon all earthly ills as coin for gaining sanctity. They have read aright the law of suffering and know that it is part of the law of life ; that the crown of thorns was the halo that Christ wore



on earth and showed to the world when dying crucified. Ireland realises what A'Kempis teaches, "the cross is strength and joy of spirit and the price of a kingdom."

The Catholic Faith is the fountain of Irish joyousness, a fountain whence gushes the living water of life in a stream so strong that it bursts through the misery of life and transmutes it till it gleams as a heavenly gift in a spray of golden rain.

CHAPTER XV

TRIUMPH OF IRELAND



ISTORIANS have often painted glowing pictures of periods that were considered to be times of triumph in the lives of nations. Yet too often when tried by the testing fingers of time the triumph proved to be but a simulacrum.

The passage of the centuries places all in proper perspective, and shows that national success is not to be measured by commercial greatness, or extent of territory, or the subjugation of peoples. These may exist and dazzle the vision of those whose horizon is narrowed within the confines of one generation, while the soul of the nation is sinking to death. A nation, no less than an individual, cannot find true greatness in material acquisitions, but must attain it by rectitude of thought and act.

Earth is full of the mystery of nations who attained worldly greatness, yet have vanished and left not even a name behind them. This mystery meets the traveller in the buried cities of the forests of Yucatan with their tree-pierced marble floors; it astounds him among African savages and on Asian hill-sides.

And the recorded history of nations proves again



and again that the nation who barter her soul for conquest and power is a nation doomed.

As we turn the pages of the early history of mankind, and ponder wonderingly at the unerring sureness that with the certainty almost of a natural law ends the career of the nation that offends, we see one remarkable instance of real triumph achieved through devotion to high ideals. From the dawn of creation across the generations we can trace the splendid record of the Jewish nation, the Chosen People of God, who, despite weakness and exile and oppression, conquered all while they remained faithful.

Egypt with her subtle seductive civilisation strove strenuously to crush them. She sank and died, leaving naught behind but a few stones, half hidden in the drifting desert sands, and the Chosen People lived on.

Assyria, brutal in her might and arrogance, and drunk with the lust of power, marched forward in the path of passion, and sprang to annihilate them. The setting sun glittered on silver spear, and shone on golden helmet; the air was filled with the thunder of marching squadrons and the trampling of the war-horse. The rising sun looked down on a silent plain and a silent army. Spear and helmet, horse and rider lay low in the dust. God had intervened to protect his Chosen People, and that mighty host was stricken back to its elemental clay.

Babylon, proud and degraded, stretched forth impious hands to slay them. The earth was filled with the noise of her armies; but God told the faithful Jews to fear not, "for the owl shall hoot in their houses and wild beasts shall rest there."



The greatest civilisation and power of them all, resplendent Greece, arose—Greece, of whom the Sacred Scriptures said, “She slew the kings of the earth, she went through even to the ends of the earth, and took the spoils of many nations, and the earth was silent before the Macedonian soldier.” This earth-conquering nation marched with her hitherto invincible hosts against the Jews, who, with the valiant Judas Maccabaeus at their head stood, a tiny handful, awaiting the onslaught. “There is no difference in the sight of God,” fearlessly cried the Jewish leader, “to deliver with a great multitude or with a small company, for the success of war is not in the multitude of the army, but strength cometh from Heaven; the Lord Himself will overthrow them.” And even so did it happen. As a great tidal wave that, sweeping with resistless rush over leagues of ocean, crashes like a green mountain against an iron coast, and is flung back baffled and broken in seething confusion, so that great earthly force fell back, defeated and dismayed, before the invulnerable power that guarded the Chosen People.

They stood unmoved by all assaults, relying on the word of their prophet, who, speaking of the seemingly overwhelming attack of the Assyrians, had assured them—“Fear not, for with him is an arm of flesh; with us the Lord our God fighteth for us.”

Ages after the passing of the kingdom of the Jews, the same spirit animated the Irish king, Brian Boru, who, when told of the threats of the powerful Danish invader, asked, “Hath the king in his vain boasting said ‘if it please God’? No? Then we need not fear him.”



This is the spirit that is the secret of true greatness and of national success—a spirit that keeps a nation in accord with the laws of the Creator, and sends it forward to true triumph, the fulfilment of its destiny.

The Jews, vivified by this, moved forward across the ages, while their enemies fell by the wayside, lost in the darkness of materialism. But the Jews, alas, missed the fullness of the triumph that was to have been theirs, because they fell from the splendid path that they trod while true to their destiny.

They were strong in the revelation of the coming of the Redeemer; but as the ages rolled by without the fulfilment of the promise, the mists of earth blinded them, and when at last the Saviour came and stood among them, they did not know Him. They had so fallen, that in their blindness they came to measure things by earthly standards, and looked for a powerful leader who in his might would make them conquerors of all. They could not realise that Christ was mighty in His poverty, powerful in His meekness, conqueror in His cross.

That revelation came to Ireland, and she fell into no such error. She recognised the Saviour of men when He came to her, and has ever since been faithful to Him. Therefore is it that her history is one of ever-increasing triumph.

The Spirit of Pentecost runs full in her veins, and to this spirit is to be traced Ireland's triumph. Because of this, though old in sorrow and experience, she is young in vigour of life and supernal hope. Her triumph is founded on her fidelity to



Catholic ideals, and her history shows generation after generation fighting valiantly to uphold these.

Many count it among her glories that her sons are a strong power in all lands; that they are high in the council-chambers of the nations; that they are princes of commerce and industry; that they are pre-eminent on the battle-field. And they are right in doing so, for the splendid history of her sons among the nations is one of Ireland's glories. Marshals in France, Ministers in Spain, Ambassadors in every court of Europe—they have in great measure written the history of the Old World.

In the forming of the New World they are even more prominent. Nearly half of the Presidents of the United States were of Celtic blood, and the Irish were the foremost in the American struggle for liberty. Custis, the adopted son of Washington, writes :

“The aid we received from Irish Catholics in the struggle for independence was essential to our ultimate success. In the War of Independence Ireland furnished one hundred men for every single man furnished by any other foreign nation; let America bear eternal gratitude to Irishmen.”

President Roosevelt speaks of their influence in America thus :

“In every walk of life men of Irish blood have stood and now stand pre-eminent as statesmen and soldiers, on the bench, at the bar, and in business. They are doing their full share toward the artistic and literary development of the country.”



Ireland is proud of the part her sons have taken in building up the greatest democracy on earth, but she is prouder still of the fact that all this earthly success was solidified by the spirit of faith. Worldly success did not turn them from God. Eloquent testimony of this is given by the great American, Dr. O. A. Brownson, in the following words :

“ Here the Irish and their descendants are by all odds and under every point of view the purest, the best, and the most trustworthy of the American people.”

To be proud of their worldly success and to measure their progress by it would be to repeat the error which, as we have seen, brings death to nations. Rome counted this as a sign of greatness, and she fell, till her people were human wolves ravenous for slaughter. So low did she fall, that her idea of the greatest national triumph possible was a long line of captives led through the streets, tied for butchery, while captive kings walked before the chariot of the victor, and were dropped to strangulation or starvation under the grating of the Mamertine pit, while the people revelled in the blood-reek of the amphitheatre.

Therefore, we do not point to the worldly success of her sons as a mark of Ireland's triumph, for to do so would be to follow the error of ancient Rome and others who based a nation's greatness upon things that scarce touch at all the real life of a people. All the power and wealth and fame acquired by her sons would be but failure if accompanied by loss of Catholic faith, for it would mean the desertion



of the service of God for that of Mammon. It is precisely because Ireland recognises this that she possesses her undying vitality. She has ever guarded her faith and made it her first care to provide for the fitting worship of God.

The triumph of the Irish lies in the fact that, while making such worldly progress, while displaying such rare patriotic energy, they have vivified all by their faith, and measured all success by the light of faith. Maguire in "Irish in America" shows this very clearly :

"What Ireland has done for the American Church every bishop and every priest can tell. Throughout the vast extent of the Union, there is scarcely a church, a college, an academy, a school, a religious or charitable institution, an asylum, a hospital, or a refuge, in which the piety, the learning, the zeal, the self-sacrifice of the Irish, of the priest or the professor, of the Sisters of every Order and Congregation, are not to be traced: there is scarcely an ecclesiastical seminary for English-speaking students in which the great majority of those now preparing for the service of the sanctuary do not belong, if not by birth, at least by blood, to that historic land to which the grateful Church of past ages accorded the proud title—'Insula Sanctorum.'"

Forty years ago an American writer could say :

"This vast continent affords a most striking proof of what religion means to the Irish people. Count the colleges, schools, academies, hospitals, and asylums of charity that have sprung up as if by magic all over the land, and tell me is there any-



thing that speaks more eloquently to the heart than the faith that inspired such unselfish devotion. Religion as a name is useless; it is only precious for what it enables us to be and to do. It is religion that has made the Irish people what they are. It has made them just towards others, lovers of order and progress, firm in the support of just authority, and courageous in resistance to lawless tyranny. No State can thrive without such virtuous citizens, and no country can be hopelessly lost that has the happiness of possessing them."

And what Ireland has done in America she is doing in every quarter of the globe. It would seem that her destiny is to diffuse the Catholic Faith through the whole of the English-speaking nations. The Gael is the salt that gives savour to the English world. Wherever her sons go they build churches and convents and orphanages and schools, in the face of a corrupt world, and support them by severe self-sacrifice.

To-day their influence is so great that the words of Tertullian, spoken to the Romans of the Catholics in the third century, apply with equal force to Irish Catholics:

"The liberty which we have secured to worship in freedom is but of yesterday, and already we fill your towns, your councils, your armies, and your parliaments. You have persecuted us for centuries, and behold, we spring from up the blood of our martyrs in numbers increased a hundredfold."

The Catholic Faith, as potent in the twentieth as in the third century, is the secret of Ireland's



triumph, and it will be the secret of her final glory. This has not made her less loyal to worldly authority, but on the contrary has made her loyal with a selfless loyalty so rare that it can be understood only by those who know the Catholic heart of Ireland. Whenever danger threatened the Empire, her sons sprang forward to repel it. To-day 300,000 stand in the fighting line, and beside them is a mighty host of nearly a million men of Irish blood. In every land her sons are prominent as nation-builders, and this is but a necessary resultant of their ideals. Those who work well for God always work well for man.

And as in the case of the Catholics of the catacombs, of whom Tertullian says that they sprang to strength from the blood of the martyrs, so too Ireland sprang to strength and triumph from the blood of her martyrs. Ireland's blood has been sprinkled in benediction upon a dying world, and it has fructified a thousandfold.

God in His mysterious wisdom permitted the nation to be flung bleeding to the four corners of the earth. In a pitiful stream the exiles crossed the waterways of the world, seeking that which was denied them at home. With them they brought their priest and their God. As the banished Israelites, wandering in sorrow away from the Holy Land, clung to the Ark of the Covenant as the centre of their life, so did the banished Irish, wandering in sorrow from their holy land, cling firmly to that which was greater than the Ark of the Covenant—the tabernacle, wherein God is enthroned. And fortified by the strength of nations, the exiles planted the Cross of Christ in



Arctic ice and tropic sun, on the rolling prairies and pampas of America, amid the sands of Africa, by the mountains of Asia, and on the long low plains of Australia.

The dispersion of the Irish is one of the wonders of the world. We do not recall it to arouse bitterness—God forbid! No, we look back to it as one of the glories of our Church, just as we look back to the martyrs of the Roman arena, martyrs who saved their country and their oppressors by their fidelity to our Catholic Faith. The marvellous results of this dispersion form one of the brightest pages in the history of Ireland, and one of the grandest monuments to the undying vitality and eternal strength of the Catholic Church.

The effects of this dispersion on the history of the world and the history of the Church are beyond computation. They are world-wide in extent and supernatural in power. Truly it is a case of God using the weak ones of the earth to confound the strong. We see a stream of broken-hearted, poverty-stricken exiles fleeing from their country, as helpless from a worldly standpoint as Christ's first apostles. Yet look at the result. Strong with the strength of God, these poor stricken ones have built numberless homes for their Creator—wayside churches, mighty cathedrals, seminaries, convents, orphanages, and schools—all centres whence radiates the life of the grace of God, vivifying and uplifting every land.

The extent of this mighty force is most manifest when the Irish world turns in an outburst of love to celebrate the feast day of St. Patrick. Let us watch their wholehearted devotion to him as like a great wave it goes sweeping around the earth.



In Ireland itself at the dawn of day the whole land is astir, vibrating with the light of faith. In the city streets, along the boreens and roads, down the glens by plain and mountain, all are hastening to kneel round the altar of their God. Across the broad bosom of the heather-covered bogland they make their way to the little white chapel on the hill-side. Country church and city cathedral alike are crowded, and the whole land echoes to the prayer of millions—a mighty chorus of love sounding before God's earthly throne.

Follow the sun around the globe, and watch Greater Ireland beyond the seas keeping the feast. Follow it as it swings across the broad Atlantic, until the morning sun lights up the bold headlands of the Western world. High over the waves, with hands outstretched in welcome, towers the famous monument of Liberty. But when we land in the city of New York, we find that there is another monument of Liberty. The city is dominated by a far higher and grander monument—a monument telling of true liberty. Erected to the liberty of God, it is a mighty monument worthy of the mighty continent on which it stands; a monument built by the efforts of the poor exiled Irish. What is this monument? It is a glorious white marble pile, with twin spires flinging the cross of Christ high in the heavens—the stately cathedral well worthy of its name, the Cathedral of St. Patrick.

In the early morning on St. Patrick's Day, we hear the rush of hurrying feet, and crowds—shamrock on breast—fill this immense cathedral. The organ thunders with triumphant peal, and the strains of the well-remembered hymn "Hail, glorious



St. Patrick" fill the air, reviving memories of bog-land and mountain glen, of cornfield and green breen, of past St. Patrick's Days; and the exile, kneeling with closed eyes and streaming cheeks, pours forth his soul in prayer of thanksgiving to God.

And as the westward-rushing sun drives back the night, everywhere it is the same. In railroad car and on the broad bosom of the mighty river, in populous town and lonely forest, frozen north and tropic south, we see the Irish hastening in their millions to pay homage to God and to their saint.

Across the continent we sweep on the wings of the dawn, and as it lights up the blue waters of the Pacific, St. Patrick's Day has dawned among the wondrously beautiful islands that lie sleeping under the Southern Cross.

Beneath the shadow of the snow-capped mountain chains of New Zealand, from the lonely gully and the primeval forest, march the exiles. Throughout the whole of the Dominion they gather in the splendid cathedrals and churches they have built, glorious witnesses to the vitality of their faith. There at the very ends of the earth they sing the praises of St. Patrick.

Across the Tasman sea we swing, and in the dawn the long spreading plains of Australia lie before us, dotted with hurrying crowds. At its southern point, a great cathedral towers high above Melbourne, the queen city of the south. This cathedral is the first object to catch the eye of the heart-sore exile as his ship glides towards the shore, and the sound of its name as it passes from lip to lip causes his heart to beat with joy, and lifts the feeling of



exile and strangeness that oppresses him, for it is the grand old familiar name—St. Patrick's.

Look to the north! Nestling amid the yellow corn, half hidden by the bending eucalyptus; high upon the towering mountains; standing in the lowly valleys—everywhere,—church after church, convent after convent, school after school, meet our gaze, and among them, strong as the adamantine hills, stand the guardian cathedrals.

On the bold headland that guards the beautiful harbour of Sydney, looking seawards, stands the premier seminary of the lands of the Southern Cross—St. Patrick's, Manly.

As we look, from Torres to Tasmania, the bells ring out to welcome the day, and in their hundreds of thousands the Irish gather round the tabernacles.

Out across the continent to the land of gold—Western Australia, it is the same story. Across Asia, across Africa—everywhere, we find an unending succession of altars erected by the Irish to enthrone God among men, and each surrounded by an adoring multitude. A marvellous multiplication of the Mass Rock!

For twenty-four hours the earth has echoed with unceasing prayer to God through St. Patrick! The whole round world stood in amazement and wondered at the chorus of praise that rang from east to west and from pole to pole, for on St. Patrick's Day the tramp of the Irish shakes the world!

With her glorious past, and a present of such magnificent strength and promise, who dare assert that this prediction of Ireland's future is too bold?—



“ Many a race
Shrivelling in sunshine of its prosperous years,
Shall cease from faith, and, shamed though shameless, sink
Back to its native clay ; but over thine
God shall extend the shadow of His Hand,
And through the night of centuries teach to her
In woe that song which, when the nations wake,
Shall sound their glad deliverance ;

But nations far, in undiscovered seas,
Her stately progeny, while ages fleet,
Shall wear the kingly ermine of her Faith,
Fleece uncorrupted of the Immaculate Lamb,
For ever ; lands remote shall raise to God
Her fanes ; and eagle-nurturing isles hold fast
Her hermit cells : thy nation shall not walk
Accordant with the Gentiles of this world,
But as a race elect sustain the Crown
Or bear the Cross.”

Nearly 300 years ago a Nuncio sent to Ireland by the Pope wrote these words to Rome :

“ Ireland may yet become an outwork of the Faith to Europe and its herald to America.”

Could that Nuncio have seen what we have just seen on our journey round the world, he would write to-day :

“ Ireland HAS become an outwork of the Faith to Europe, has been and is its herald to America, and Africa, and Asia, and Australia—aye, to the whole world.”

Whether kneeling in little mountain chapel at home, or in splendid cathedral abroad, whether living in peace in his cottage, or defending his



country at the battle-front, the Irishman fearlessly stands before the whole world, and unhesitatingly proclaims that his greatest pride and his greatest glory is the heritage that was given him by St. Patrick—our Holy Catholic Faith.

And this triumph is hers because of her recognition and adoration of Emmanuel, the Sacred Presence. The child of Erin ever moves in the world lit by the light of the tabernacle. To him the tabernacle is everything. It is the crib; the Holy House of Nazareth; the Holy Land where Christ does good; the Supper Room; the Calvary whereon He is sacrificed for us. Scarce is he born than he is carried to the tabernacle to be enrolled as a subject of God by the sign of baptism. Before it, at the altar, he kneels to receive from his bishop the soldier sign of confirmation; at the same altar he receives holy communion. Beneath the hallowed roof that shelters it he comes from the wild surge of earth with its passion and pride, and sin and sorrow. It lifts the shadow of sin from him in the comforting confessional. When he finds a twin soul, he comes to the tabernacle with her, and Christ takes the two pure hearts in His Sacred Hands and moulds them until the twain are one in the sacrament of matrimony. And when life is ended, he is carried to the tabernacle to be laid before God for the last time.

Here we have the reason why Ireland is Ireland, and why Ireland will always be Ireland. She has triumphed because she has fought on in the path St. Patrick has marked out for her! It is a path often rugged and painful, a path crimsoned by the blood and watered by the tears of countless genera-



THE SOUL OF IRELAND



tions of Irish hearts ; but a path that has never swerved from the straight line of honour and holiness ; a path that leads straight to where St. Patrick and greatest Ireland stand, rejoicing in the fruition of their triumph.

