

Finerty's History of Ireland

The People's History Of Ireland

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Prefatory—Territorial Divisions of Ireland—Physical Features of the Country—Peculiarities of Soil, Climate, and Scenery

THAT famous English Republican, Thomas Paine—whose political pamphlets have been admired quite as much as his theological works have been censured—uttered—in “Common Sense,” published in 1776, while he was serving under Washington in the Continental Army, this striking aphorism : “Europe, and not England, is the parent country of America.” His object was to stimulate the patriotic pride of such American colonists—and they were many—as were not of English birth or descent, and to proclaim that the other great branches of the human race, settled in America, must, of necessity, have a vital interest in the successful issue of the War for Independence. No other great country of the world has a population made up of so many divers “previous nationalities,” all combined into one gigantic political whole, as the United States of America. Most of the notable nations of the Old World are here represented not by hundreds or thousands, but by millions of citizens, “racy of the soil,” and proud to call themselves Americans. A French patriot once said, speaking in the Chamber of Deputies : “There is no French race. France is a grand political entity which all true Frenchmen, of whatever race, worship.” This fine sentiment can be even more logically applied to America and Americans, for both are still in the formative period. Several centuries hence, perhaps, a race of people distinctively American in all respects may occupy this country, but while the great stream of European immigration continues to flow toward the setting sun there can not exist such a racial condition in this Republic, except in those remote districts in which the immigrant rarely seeks a home.

Most Americans have read something of the political misfortunes of Ireland, but very many among us have not made her history even a partial study, and have often taken their views of it, at second hand, from sources that could not fail to be partial and, therefore, prejudicial. We do not need to apologize for seeking to throw more light, in a simple yet comprehensive manner, on the history of that beautiful island the blood of whose exiled children flows in the veins of not less than 20,000,000 of the American people. The Irish race owes much to America, and America, in turn, owes much to it. Truly has it been said of the American Irish that they were with the Republic at its birth, guarded its infancy, rejoiced in its growth and prosperity, and will endure with it until the end, which comes, in the fulness of time, to even the greatest among nations. Thomas Francis Meagher (Mä’her or Marr)—the young Irish patriot and orator of 1848, and afterward a famous Union general of the Civil War in one of the brilliant speeches he delivered in this country, said : “When, in 1849, I was a political captive on board an English battleship, I beheld, one bright morning, through the porthole of my cabin, while we were anchored in an Australian harbor, the Stars and Stripes floating from the mast of a stately American frigate and hailed Liberty at my prison-gate !” And this is the sentiment of every honest immigrant who seeks the shelter of our flag.

Ireland, called poetically, because of its perennial verdure, the Emerald Isle, lies in the Atlantic Ocean, immediately westward of the larger island of Great Britain, from which it is

separated by, in most parts, a wide and deep strait, varying in width from 14 miles, where the headlands of Antrim approach the western coast of Scotland, to about 125 miles, which is the maximum distance from the coast of England. This strait is called, running from north to south consecutively, the North Channel, the Irish Sea, and St. George's Channel. The high shore of Scotland is always visible, in clear weather, from the northeast coast of Ireland, and the mountains of Wales, about 65 miles distant, may be seen, under similar conditions, from Bray Head and other points on the Leinster coast, but no part of England can be seen at any time from the Irish shore. Ireland, considered geographically, is of an irregular rhomboidal shape, by some writers compared to an oblong shield, and is situated between Latitude $51^{\circ} 26'$ and $55^{\circ} 21'$ North, and Longitude $5^{\circ} 21'$ and $10^{\circ} 26'$ West, projecting farther into the Atlantic Ocean, to the westward, than any other portion of European soil. Its total area, including many small islands close to the coast, is about 32,500 square miles, or 19,000 less than England, 2,000 more than Scotland, 25,000 more than Wales, and nearly 2,000 less than our inland State of Indiana. Ireland would make, almost to a fraction, thirty-two States the size of Rhode Island, which has a Legislature of its own—a privilege the Green Isle does not, at present, enjoy.

The island is divided into four provinces in ancient times it had five ; namely, Leinster in the east, Ulster in the north, Connaught in the west, and Munster in the south. These are, again, divided into two-and-thirty counties a system of Anglo-Norman, or English, invention, and, according to the learned Doctor Joyce, savant and historian, they generally represent the older native territories and sub-kingdoms. King John, " Lord" of Ireland, formed twelve of them in the twelfth century Dublin, Kildare, Meath, Uriel (or Louth), Carlow, Kilkenny, Wexford, Waterford, Cork, Kerry, Limerick, and Tipperary. Henry VIII divided Meath proper into two counties and called one Westmeath. King's and Queen's Counties were formed in the reign of Mary I, who married Philip II of Spain, out of the old districts of Leix and Offaly. Hence their capitals are called, respectively, Philipstown and Maryborough. The county Longford was formed out of the territory of Annaly, by Deputy Sir Henry Sydney, about 1565. The same official divided Connaught into six counties—Galway, Mayo, Sligo, Roscommon, Leitrim, and Clare. The latter county, although situated on the Connaught bank of the river Shannon, was subsequently given to Munster, because it had formed a part of that province in ancient times. Antrim and Down were organized into counties early in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, and Lord Deputy Perrot, about 1584, formed seven others out of Ulster ; namely, Armagh, Monaghan, Tyrone, Coleraine (now Derry), Donegal, Fermanagh, and Cavan. Dublin County, at first, included Wicklow, but, in 1605, during the reign of James I, Sir Arthur Chichester made the latter a separate county.

The existing division of the counties among the provinces is as follows : Munster comprises Clare, Cork, Kerry, Limerick, Tipperary, and Waterford ; Ulster contains Antrim, Armagh, Cavan, Donegal, Down, Fermanagh, Derry, Monaghan, and Tyrone ; Connaught has Galway, Leitrim, Mayo, Roscommon, and Sligo ; Leinster comprises Carlow, Dublin, Kildare, Kilkenny, King's County, Longford, Louth, Meath, Queen's County, Westmeath, Wexford, and Wicklow.

The reader ought to know, however, that a majority of the Ulster and Connaught counties, and some in Leinster and Munster, did not recognize their English designations, or yield to English law, in any shape, until after the accession of James I to the British throne, in 1603. They were governed by their own princes, chiefs, and judges, under the old Brehon law, until " the Peace of Mellifont" in that year.

While the Irish counties differ very materially in extent, the provinces show the following proportions : Munster, 6,064,579 acres ; Ulster, 5,475,458 ; Leinster, 4,871,118 ; Connaught, 4,392,043. The island is further subdivided into 316 baronies, 2,532 parishes, and 60,760

townlands, which average about 300 acres each. These are figures with which every student of Irish history should be familiar.

The country is, in general, very fertile, and grows cereals luxuriantly. The green crops, such as turnips, parsnips, cabbages, and kindred vegetables, are unexcelled. Its grazing capacity is very great, and Irish horses, horned cattle, sheep, and swine are among the choicest in Europe. Apples, pears, plums, and the smaller fruits grow abundantly in the mild, moist climate, but the Irish sun will not ripen peaches, grapes, or tomatoes, unless they are under glass. Poultry thrive wondrously, and there is a large exportation of fowl and eggs to the British markets. Irish butter ranks high also. Yet the country is poor, chiefly because of the scarcity of manufactures, and for other reasons that will be explained as we proceed.

The Irish climate is equable, but, in general, damp, when compared with that of America. Neither summer heat nor winter cold produces discomfort, except at very rare intervals. Violent storms are infrequent, except along the western coast, and electrical disturbances are much rarer than in our atmosphere. Only one cyclonic storm, that of January 6, 1839, visited Ireland during the nineteenth century, and it is known to this day as “the Big Wind.”

Irish scenery is peculiar in character—soft, yet bold of outline, as regards its mountain regions. The cliffs on the Connaught, Ulster, and Munster coasts are tall and beetling—those of Moher, in Clare, and those that flank the Giants’ Causeway a remarkable basaltic formation in Antrim being the most notable. All the elevations that rise above a thousand feet are clothed with the heather, which is also peculiar to Scotland, and this plant changes its hue with every season so that there is a constant shifting of color, which adds much to the charm of the landscape. The Irish sky, too, is changeful, so much so that an Irish poet, in paying tribute to the beauty of his wife, wrote :

“ Eyes like the skies of dear Erin, our mother,
Where shadow and sunshine are chasing each other !”

Snow generally disappears from the summits of the Irish mountains about the second week of May. The mildness of the climate in a latitude so far toward the north is due to the powerful influence of the warm Gulf Stream, and this also explains the verdure of the country at almost all periods of the year. A striking characteristic of the Irish mountains is that they, in general, rise abruptly from the plain, which gives them an appearance of greater altitude than they really possess ; the highest peak in the island—that of Carn Tual in Kerry—being only a trifle over 3,400 feet. There is still another peculiarity of the Irish mountain system which strikes all tourists—the highland chains, for the most part, rise near the coast, and follow its course, thus making it one of the boldest and grandest in Europe, while some detached groups, such as the Galtee and Slieve Bloom ranges in Munster and Leinster, the Curlews in Connaught and Slieve Snacht (Snowy range) in Ulster, seem to be independent formations.

The Irish lakes are numerous and, in general, picturesque. Lough Neagh (Nay) in the north, Lough Corrib in the west, and Lough Dearg an expanse of the Shannon are the largest, but the most famed for scenery are those of Killarney in Kerry, Lough Dan in Wicklow, and Lough Gill in Sligo. The Irish rivers are many, and, in the main, beautiful streams. The Shannon is the greatest river in the realm of Great Britain and Ireland, while the Suir, the Barrow, the Nore, the Slaney, the Corrib, the Erne, the Foyle, the Boyne, and the Liffey are also considerable rivers and possess enough water-power, were it scientifically utilized, to turn the wheels of the world’s machinery. The Munster Blackwater, celebrated, like its sister river, the Suir, in the charming poetry of Edmund Spenser, is called, because of its peculiar loveliness, “the Irish Rhine.” After a winding and picturesque course through the south of Munster, it falls into the ocean at Youghal—a town of which the famous Sir Walter Raleigh, of Queen Elizabeth’s Court, was once mayor.

One-seventh of the surface of Ireland is computed to be under bogs—semi-spongy formations, claimed by some naturalists to be the decomposed relics of mighty forests with which Ireland was covered in remote ages. The aspect of these “moors,” as they are called by the British, is dreary enough in winter, but at other periods they have their charms; the heather and mosses with which they are, in many places, thickly clothed, changing hue, as on the mountains, with every season. Nearly all of these bogs are capable of being reclaimed for agricultural uses, but the people do not desire their reclamation, for the reason that they furnish cheap fuel to most of the rural districts, where there is neither coal nor timber supply. Owing to the mildness of the climate, the cut and dried sods of “peat,” called “turf,” which resemble brown bricks, take the place of coal and wood, and make quite a comfortable fire. “Stone turf,” produced by artificial pressure, and an extra drying process, makes almost as hot a fire as anthracite, but is much dearer than the ordinary article, which is softer and lighter. Indeed, the common Irish turf would be almost useless in our fierce winter weather. These fuel “reservoirs” can not be exhausted for ages to come. It is claimed that, by some mysterious process of nature, they renew themselves from time to time, after they have been “given a rest” by the turf-cutters. Many large bogs occupy the summits and sides of the mountains, and seem to be of the same character as those on the level land. Occasionally the high morasses shift their positions, like glaciers, only with a much quicker movement, and overwhelm, like the avalanche, everything in their path. These are called “the moving bogs.” The last phenomenon of the kind occurred in the County Kerry a few years ago, when much property was destroyed and several lives were lost. Scientists claim that these bogs are undermined by bodies of water, which, when flooded, lift the crust and carry it with them, in their effort to find their natural level. It is well known in Ireland that several small, but deep, lakes now occupy places that were formerly covered by these strange formations. We will devote a separate chapter to other features of this interesting country.

II

Further of the Characteristics and Resources of the Island—Present Form of Government

GOLD, silver, copper, lead, iron, and other malleable minerals are found in Ireland. The gold is discovered in small quantities, at least in modern times, but the beautiful ornaments, composed of that precious metal, and much used by the ancient Irish nobility, preserved in the Museum of the Royal Irish Academy, Dublin, and elsewhere in Ireland and Great Britain, would indicate that it was at one time plentiful in the island. Silver is found in paying quantities in several districts, and silver mines are now in operation in the northern portion of Munster. The lead, copper, and iron deposits have never been seriously worked, and, therefore, it is impossible to arrive at any satisfactory estimate of their extent. Coal is found in many counties, but the most extensive fields are in Ulster. Much light is thrown on this subject by Kane’s “Resources of Ireland,” which can be found, most likely, in the public libraries. It gives most interesting statistics, but they would be far too heavy for our more condensed narrative.

Ireland possesses over seventy harbors. Fourteen are of the first class and can shelter the very largest sea-going vessels, whether naval or mercantile. Unhappily, excepting those of Dublin, Cork, Limerick, and Belfast, they are comparatively little used for commerce, for reasons that will present themselves in succeeding chapters.

Although in olden times a thickly wooded country, Ireland of to-day is rather bare of forests. There are numerous luxuriant groves and woodlands, and many of the highroads are bordered with stately trees. The “quick-set hedges,” planted with thorn shrubs, give, particularly in summer, a well-furnished appearance to the country, except in a few rather barren districts, where stone walls, as in portions of New England, are quite common. Irish

farms are nearly all divided and subdivided by these formidable fences, quick-set or stone, so that, when viewed from any considerable height, the surrounding country looks like a huge, irregular checker-board—a much more picturesque arrangement of the landscape than our American barbed-wire obstructions, but at the cost of a vast amount of good land, in the aggregate.

The island contains many populous, finely built cities, well governed under local municipal rule. Dublin, the capital, contains, including suburbs, about 300,000 people, and is considered a very handsome metropolis. It is surrounded by enchanting hamlets, and the sea-bathing resorts in the neighborhood are delightful. Belfast, the great commercial city of Ulster, is almost as populous as Dublin, and has many of the thrifty characteristics of an American municipality. Cork, Waterford, Limerick, Galway, Sligo, Londonderry, and Drogheda are still places of much importance, although some of them have greatly declined, both in wealth and population, during the last century.

Owing to persistent agitation, and some fierce uprisings, which caused the imperial government to listen to the voice of reason, the social and political conditions of the Irish people have been somewhat improved of late years. The Irish Church was disestablished by the Gladstone Ministry, in 1869, and, under the leadership of Isaac Butt, Parnell, Davitt, and other Irish patriots, Protestant as well as Catholic, the harsh land laws have been greatly modified, and the Irish people have a better “hold on their soil,” and are much less subject to the capricious will of their landlords than formerly. They are, also, much better lodged and fed than in the last generation, and education, of a practical kind, has become almost universal. The national school system has many features in common with our own, and is improving year by year. In the higher branches of education, Ireland is well supplied. Trinity College, Dublin, the Alma Mater of many celebrated men, has existed since the reign of Queen Elizabeth, but, until the end of the eighteenth century, was not open to Catholics. Maynooth College, in Kildare, is the great Catholic ecclesiastical seminary of Ireland, and there is also a Catholic university in Dublin. Carlow, Kilkenny, Wexford, and other cities have Catholic colleges, and there are Protestant seats of learning in Ulster and other provinces. Cork, Belfast, and Galway have each branch universities, called “Queen’s Colleges,” which are conducted on a non-sectarian basis. These are only a few of Ireland’s educational institutions, but they serve to illustrate the agreeable fact that a dearth of opportunity for acquiring learning is no longer a reproach to the Irish people, or, rather, to their English law-makers. The taxes which support the institutions maintained by Government are paid by Ireland into the Imperial Treasury, so that Great Britain is not burdened by them, as many suppose. Recently, a commission appointed by the British Parliament to inquire into the financial relations between Great Britain and Ireland reported back that the latter country was overtaxed annually to the amount of \$15,000,000. This grievance, although complained of by all classes, has not yet been redressed. Dublin, Belfast, and other leading Irish cities possess very choice and extensive libraries. That of Trinity College, in the first-mentioned city, is considered one of the best in Europe, and it is particularly rich in ancient Irish manuscripts, some of which have been translated from the original Gaelic into English by the late Dr. John O’Donovan, Professor Eugene O’Curry, and other Irish savants. There are many large circulating libraries in all the principal municipalities, and most of the smaller towns. These are patronized, in the main, by poor people of literary taste, who can not afford satisfactory libraries of their own. There is now a revival of Irish literature in Great Britain as well as in Ireland itself. Many English and Scotch firms have taken to printing Irish prose and poetry in the English tongue, so that Irish authors are no longer confined, as they were, with a few exceptions, of old, to an insular constituency. Irish literary work of merit, when not strongly patriotic, sells readily in Great Britain to-day. This is due, partly, to a growing appreciation of Irish talent among the more liberal classes of the English people, and still more, perhaps, to the very large Irish population that has developed itself on the soil of “the predominant partner” within the last half of the nineteenth century. There is a strong Chartist,

or republican, element in England friendly to the Irish claim of legislative independence, and this element, which we hear comparatively little of in America, for reasons it is not necessary to discuss in this history, is growing more powerful as time rolls by, and some day, not very distant, perhaps, is bound to greatly modify the existing governmental system of the British Empire, and render it more popular.

Ireland is very rich in monastic and martial ruins. The round towers which sentinel the island are declared by many antiquaries to antedate the Christian period, and are supposed to have been pagan temples dedicated to the worship of the sun, which, some historians claim, was Ireland's chief form of the Druidic belief.

“ The names of their founders have vanished in the gloom,
Like the dry branch in the fire, or the body in the tomb,
But to-day, in the ray, their shadows still they cast—
These temples of forgotten gods, these relics of the past.”

The grass-grown circular raths, or “ forts,” as the peasantry call them, varying greatly in diameter, are supposed to be remnants of the Danish invasion, but many archæologists place them at a much earlier date, and give them not a Danish but a Danaan origin—the latter tribe being claimed as among the first settlers of Ireland. The largest “ fort” or “ dun” in the island is that near Downpatrick, which is sixty feet high and three-quarters of a mile in circumference. Much of the stately architecture seen in the ruins of abbeys, churches, and chapels belongs to the Anglo-Norman period, as does also the military architecture, which survives in such types as the keeps of Limerick, Nenagh, and Trim ; but the Celtic type of church construction is preserved, after the lapse of more than a thousand years, in its primitive purity, at Glendalough in Wicklow, Clonmacnois in King's County, and Cong in Galway.

Three hundred years of warfare with the pagan Danes, and five hundred with the Anglo-Normans and Anglo-Saxons, made Ireland the Island of Ruins, as well as the Island of Saints and Scholars.

Before January 1, 1801, Ireland was a distinct and separate kingdom, having a Parliament of her own and connected with Great Britain by what has been called “ the golden link of the crown.” How that Parliament was, unfortunately for all concerned, abolished will appear in its proper order. Since 1801 Ireland has been governed by the Imperial Parliament, sitting in London, composed of representatives from England, Scotland, Ireland, and Wales—670 in all, of whom 103 are Irish members. Of these latter, 82 are Nationalists, or Repealers of the Act of Union, while 21 are Unionists, or adherents of the present political connection. The preponderating vote of Great Britain hopelessly overwhelms the Irish representation, and hence the work of reform, as far as Ireland is concerned, is slow and difficult. The executive functions are intrusted to a Lord Lieutenant, who is appointed by each succeeding Ministry, to represent the monarch of Great Britain. He is assisted in his duties by a Chief Secretary, two Under Secretaries, a Lord Chancellor, a Lord Chief Justice, a Master of the Rolls, a Chief Baron of the Exchequer, many less prominent officers, and a Privy Council, which comprises several of the officials mentioned, together with the leading supporters of the crown in the capital and throughout the country. Some of the official members of this Council are not natives of Ireland ; and the Lord Lieutenant himself is almost invariably an English or Scotch aristocrat of high rank and liberal fortune. No Catholic can fill the office of Viceroy of Ireland. The authority of the latter is, to all intents and purposes, absolute. In seasons of political agitation, even when there is no violence, he can suspend the ordinary law without having recourse to Parliament. This power has been frequently exercised even in this generation. The Lord Lieutenant's official residence is Dublin Castle, but he has also a commodious viceregal lodge in the Phoenix Park. His salary is \$100,000 per annum—just twice that of our President—but, in general, he spends much more out of his private fortune,

as he is, nearly always, chosen for his wealth as much as for his rank. When he goes among the people, he is, almost invariably, attended by a strong cavalry escort and a dashing staff of aides-de-camp, glittering in silver, steel, and gold. The military garrison of Dublin is strong, not often under 10,000 men, and at the Curragh Camp, about twenty miles distant, in Kildare, there is a much larger force. Most of the large towns are also heavily garrisoned. Thus, after an occupation, either nominal or actual, of seven and one-third centuries, England still finds it expedient to govern Ireland as a military district—a sad commentary on the chronic mis-government of ages.

III

The Original Inhabitants of Ireland

VAGUE poetical tradition flings a mystical veil over the origin of the earliest inhabitants of Ireland. The historian, McGee, who would seem to have made a serious study of the subject, says that the first account given by the bards and the professional story-tellers attributes the settlement of the island to Parthalon of the race of Japhet, who, with a number of followers, reached it by way of the Mediterranean and Atlantic, “about three hundred years after the Universal Deluge.” The colonists, because of the unnatural crimes of their leader, were, we are told, “cut off to the last man by a dreadful pestilence.”

The second colony, also a creature of tradition, was said to have been led by a chief called Nemedh from the shores of the Black Sea across Muscovy to the Baltic, and from that sea they made their way to the Irish shore. In Ireland, they encountered a stronger race, said to have been of African origin, called Formorians, with whom they had many severe battles and were by them finally defeated and either killed or driven from the country, to which some of their descendants returned in after years.

After Nemedh came the Firbolgs, or Belgæ, under the five sons of their king, Dela, who divided the island into five parts and held it undisputedly until the Tuatha de Danaans, said to be descended from Nemedh, and having magical power to quell storms, invaded the island, carrying with them the “*lia fail*,” or “Stone of Destiny,” from which Ireland derived its fanciful title of “*Innis fail*,” or the “Island of Destiny.” The Danaans are said to have been of the Greek family. In any case, it is claimed, they subdued the Belgæ and made them their serfs. They ruled mightily, for a time, but, in turn, were compelled to give way to a stronger tide of invasion.

This was formed by a people who called themselves, according to most Irish annalists, Gaels, from an ancient ancestor ; Milesians, from the appellation of their king, who ruled in distant Spain, and Scoti, or Scots, from *Scota*, the warlike mother of King Milesius. These Milesians are said to have come into Spain from the region of the Caucasus, and all agree that they were formidable warriors. Tradition says that Ireland was first discovered, as far as the Milesians were concerned, by Ith, uncle of the Spanish king, who, while on a voyage of exploration, sighted the island, and, attracted by its beauty, landed, but was attacked by the Danaans and mortally wounded. His followers carried him to his galley, and he died at sea, but the body was brought back to Spain. His son, Loci, who had accompanied Ith, summoned all the Milesian family to avenge their kinsman’s death and conquer the Promised Island of their race. Milesius, or Miledh, had expired before Loci’s return, but his sons, Heber the Fair, Amergin, Heber the Brown, Colpa, Ir, and Heremon rallied to, the call of vengeance and conquest, set sail for Ireland, landed there, and, in spite of Danaan witchcraft and Firbolgian valor, beat down all opposition and became masters of the beautiful island. Thomas Moore, in his immortal Irish Melodies, thus deals with this legendary event :

“ They came from a land beyond the sea,

And now o'er the Western main,
Set sail in their good ships gallantly
From the sunny land of Spain.
' Oh, where's the isle we've seen in dreams,
Our destined home or grave ?'
Thus sang they as, by the morning's beams,
They swept the Atlantic wave.

“ And, lo, where afar o'er ocean shines
A sparkle of radiant green,
As though in that deep lay emerald mines
Whose light through the wave was seen.
' 'Tis Innisfail ! 'tis Innisfail !'
Rings o'er the echoing sea,
While bending to heaven the warriors hail
That home of the brave and free.

“ Then turned they unto the Eastern wave,
Where now their Day-God's eye
A look of such sunny omen gave
As lighted up sea and sky,
Nor frown was seen through sky or sea,
Nor tear on leaf or sod,
When first on their Isle of Destiny
Our great forefathers trod.”

The migration of those Celto-Iberians to Ireland is generally placed at from 1500 to 2000 years before the birth of Christ ; but there is not much certainty about the date ; it stands wholly on tradition. On one point, at least, a majority of Irish annalists seem to be agreed namely, that the Milesians were of Celtic stock and Scythian origin, but the route they took from Scythia to Spain, as well as the date of their exodus, remains an undetermined question. Celtic characteristics, both mental and physical, are still deeply stamped on the Irish people, notwithstanding the large admixture of the blood of other races, resulting from the numerous after invasions, both pagan and Christian. Thomas Davis, the leading Irish national poet of the middle of the nineteenth century, sums up the elements that constitute the present Irish population, truly and tersely, thus :

“ Here came the brown Phnœician,
The man of trade and toil ;
Here came the proud Milesian
A-hungering for spoil ;
And the Firbolg, and the Kymry,

And the hard, enduring Dane,
And the iron lords of Normandy,
With the Saxons in their train.

And, oh, it were a gallant deed
To show before mankind,
How every race, and every creed,
Might be by love combined ;
Might be combined, yet not forget
The fountains whence they rose,
As filled by many a rivulet

The stately Shannon flows !”

And the fine verses of the Irish poet may be applied with almost equal propriety to the cosmopolitan population of the United States—more varied in race than even that of Ireland. No good citizen is less of an American simply because he scorns to forget, or to allow his children to forget, “ the fountains whence they rose.” Anglo-Americans never forget it, nor do Franco-Americans, or Americans of Teutonic origin ; or, in fact, Americans of any noted race. Americans of Irish birth or origin have quite as good a right to be proud of their cradle-land and their ancient ancestry as any other element in this Republic ; and the study of impartial Irish history by pupils of all races would do much to soften prejudices and remove unpleasant impressions that slanderous, partial historians have been mainly instrumental in creating.

The language—Gaelic, or Erse, as it is called in our day—spoken by the Milesian conquerors of Ireland so many thousand years ago, is not yet nearly extinct on Irish soil ; and it is often used by Irish emigrants in various parts of the world. More than thirty centuries have faded into eternity since first its soft, yet powerful, accents were heard on Ireland’s shore, but still nearly a million people out of four and a half millions speak it, and hundreds of thousands have more or less knowledge of the venerable tongue in its written form. Great efforts have been put forth of late years to promote its propagation throughout the island, and it is a labor of love in which all classes, creeds, and parties in Ireland cordially work together. It is not intended, of course, to supplant the English language, but to render Gaelic co-equal with it, as in Wales a thoroughly Celtic country, in which the native language—Kymric—has been wondrously revived during the past and present century.

IV

The Religion of Ancient Ireland—Many Writers say it was Worship of the Sun, Moon, and Elements

WE have mentioned that sun-worship was one of the forms of ancient Irish paganism. There is much difference of opinion on this point, and the late learned Gaelic expert, Professor Eugene O’Curry, holds that there is no reliable proof of either sun-worship or fire-worship in antique Irish annals. On the other hand, we have the excellent historian, Abbe McGeoghegan, chaplain of the famous Franco-Irish Brigade of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, supported by other authorities, instancing the sun as, at least, one of the objects of Irish pagan adoration. Other writers, including the painstaking McGee, seem to accept the startling assertion that human victims were occasionally sacrificed on the pagan altars. This, however, is open to doubt, as the Irish people, however intense in their religious convictions, have never been deliberately cruel or murderously fanatical. We quote on these sensitive subjects particularly sensitive where churchmen are concerned from McGeoghegan and McGee, both strong, yet liberal, Catholic historians. On page 63 of his elaborate and admirable “ History of Ireland,” McGeoghegan remarks : “ Great honors were paid to the Druids and Bards among the Milesians, as well as to those among the Britons and Gauls. The first, called Draoi in their language, performed the duties of priest, philosopher, legislator, and judge. Cæsar has given, in his Commentaries, a well-detailed account of the order, office, jurisdiction, and doctrine of the Druids among the Gauls. As priests, they regulated religion and its worship ; according to their will, the objects of it were determined, and the ‘ divinity ’ often changed ; to them, likewise, the education of youth was intrusted. Guided by the Druids, the Milesians generally adored Jupiter, Mars, Mercury, Apollo, the sun, moon, and wind ; they had also their mountain, forest, and river gods. These divinities were common to them and to other nations of the world. . . . According to the Annals of Ulster, cited by Ware, the antiquarian, the usual oath of Laegore (Leary) II, King of Ireland, in the time of St. Patrick, was by the sun and wind.”

McGee, writing of the same subject, on pages 5 and 9 of his “ Popular History of Ireland,” says : “ The chief officers about the kings, in the first ages, were all filled by the Druids or pagan priests ; the Brehons, or judges, were usually Druids, as were also the Bards, the historians of their patrons. Then came the Physicians, the Chiefs who paid tribute to or received annual gifts from the sovereign, the royal Stewards, and the military leaders, or Champions. . . . Their religion in pagan times was what the moderns call Druidism, but what they called it themselves we now know not. It was probably the same religion anciently professed by Tyre and Sidon, by Carthage and her colonies in Spain ; the same religion which the Romans have described as existing in great part of Gaul, and, by their accounts, we learn the awful fact that it sanctioned, nay, demanded, human sacrifices. From the few traces of its doctrines which Christian zeal has permitted to survive in the old Irish language, we see that Belus or Crom, the god of fire, typified by the sun, was its chief divinity—that two great festivals were held in his honor on days answering to the first of May and last of October. There were also particular gods of poets, champions, artificers, and mariners, just as among the Romans and Greeks. Sacred groves were dedicated to these gods ; priests and priestesses devoted their lives to their service ; the arms of the champion and the person of the king were charmed by them ; neither peace nor war was made without their sanction ; their own persons and their pupils were held sacred ; the high place at the king’s right hand and the best fruits of the earth and the water were theirs. Old age revered them, women worshiped them, warriors paid court to them, youth trembled before them, princes and chiefs regarded them as elder brethren. So numerous were they in Erin, and so celebrated, that the altars of Britain and Western Gaul, left desolate by the Roman legions, were often served by hierophants from Ireland, which, even in those pagan days, was known to all the Druidic countries as the Sacred Island.”

The two greatest battles fought in Ireland during the early Milesian period were that near Tralee, in Kerry, where the Milesian queen-mother, Scotia, perished, and the conflict at Taltean, in Meath, where the three Danaan kings, with their wives and warriors, were slain. After these events, Heber and Heremon divided Ireland between them, but eventually quarreled. A battle ensued, in which Heber fell, and Heremon was thereafter, for many years, undisputed monarch of all Ireland. A large majority of the Celtic families of the island are descended from the two royal brothers and bitter rivals. Their most famous Milesian successors in pagan times were Tuathal (Too-hal), the Legitimate, who formed the royal province of Meath, which existed for many ages, and is now represented, but on a much smaller scale, by the modern counties of Meath and Westmeath. The province itself was dismembered centuries ago, and, since then, Ireland has had but four provincial divisions instead of five. Tuathal is also credited with having originated the Borumah (Boru) or “ Cow Tribute,” which he imposed on Leinster as a penalty for a crime committed against two of his daughters by the king of that province. This tribute was foredoomed to be a curse to the Irish nation at large, and its forceful imposition by successive Ard-Righs caused torrents of blood to be shed. It was abolished toward the end of the seventh century by the Christian king of all Ireland, Finacta II, surnamed the Hospitable. “ Conn of the Hundred Battles” made a record as a ruler and a warrior. Cormac MacArt, because of his great wisdom, was called the Lycurgus of Ireland. Niall of the Nine Hostages—ancestor of the O’Neills—was a formidable monarch, who carried the terror of his arms far beyond the seas of Ireland. His nephew, King Dathi (Dahy) was also a royal rover, and, while making war in northern Italy, was killed by a thunderbolt in an alpine pass. Dathi was the last king of pagan Ireland, but not the last pagan king. His successor, Leary, son of the great Niall, received and protected St. Patrick, but never became a Christian. After Leary’s death, no pagan monarch sat on the Irish throne.

Ancient Ireland was known by several names. The Greeks called it Iernis and Ierni ; said to have meant “ Sacred Isle” ; the Romans Hibernia, the derivation and meaning, of which are involved in doubt, and the Milesians Innisfail, said to mean “ the Island of Destiny,” and Eire, or Erinn, now generally spelled Erin, said to signify “ the Land of the West.” Many

learned writers dispute these translations, while others support them. Within the last six centuries, the island has been known as Ireland, said to signify West, or Western, land, but, as the savants differ about this translation also, we will refrain from positive assertion.

The Roman legions never trod on Irish soil, although they conquered and occupied the neighboring island of Britain, except on the extreme north, during four hundred years. Why the Romans did not attempt the conquest of the island is a mystery. That they were able to conquer it can hardly be doubted. Strange as the statement may seem to some, it was unfortunate for Ireland that the Romans did not invade and subdue it. Had they landed and prevailed, their great governing and organizing genius would have destroyed the disintegrating Gaelic tribal system, which ultimately proved the curse and bane of the Irish people. They would also have trained a nation naturally warlike in the art of arms, in which the Romans had no superiors and few peers. With Roman training in war and government, the Irish would have become invincible on their own soil, after the inevitable withdrawal of the Legions from the island, and the Anglo-Normans, centuries afterward, could not have achieved even their partial subjection.

V.

Advent of St. Patrick—His Wonderful Apostolic Career in Ireland—A Captive and a Swineherd for Years, he Escapes and becomes the Regenerator of the Irish Nation

A MAJORITY of learned historians claim that Christianity was introduced into Ireland by Catholic missionaries from the continent of Europe long before the advent of the accepted national apostle, St. Patrick, who, in his boyhood, was captured on the northern coast of Ireland, while engaged in a predatory expedition with the Gauls, or some other foreign adventurers. In regard to this period of the future apostle's career, we are mainly guided by tradition, as the saint left no memoirs that would throw light on his first Irish experience. Such expeditions were not uncommon in the age in which he lived, nor were they for ages that followed. It seems certain that his captors offered him no bodily harm, and he was sent to herd swine amid the hills of Down. This inspired boy, destined to be one of the greatest among men and the saints of God, remained a prisoner in the hands of the pagan Irish—whom he found to be a generous, and naturally devotional, people—for many years, and thus acquired a thorough knowledge of their laws, language, and character. Whether he was finally released by them, or managed to escape, is a question of some dispute, but it is certain that he made his way back to Gaul—now known as France—which, according to many accounts, was his native land, although Scotland claims him also, and thence proceeded to Rome, where, having been ordained a priest, he obtained audience of Pope Celestine, and was by him encouraged and commissioned to convert the distant Irish nation to Christianity. Filled with a holy zeal, Patrick repaired as rapidly as possible to his field of labor, and, after suffering many checks and rude repulses, at last, about the year 432, found himself back in Ulster, where he fearlessly preached the Gospel to those among whom he had formerly lived as a serf, with miraculous success. Afterward, he proceeded to the royal province of Meath, and on the storied hill of Slane, “over against” that of Tara, where the Irish monarch, Leary, was holding court, lighted the sacred fire in defiance of the edict of the Druid high-priest, who worshiped the fires of Baal and forbade all others to be kindled, and, by its quenchless flame, flung the sacred symbol of the Cross against the midnight skies of pagan Ireland. The pagan king summoned the daring apostle to his presence, and asked him concerning his sacred mission. Patrick explained it, and, having obtained the royal consent, proceeded to preach with an eloquence that dazzled king, princes, chiefs, and warriors. He even captivated some of the Druid priests, but the high-priest, who dreaded the apostle's power of words, would have stopped him at the outset, had not King Leary extended to him his favor and protection, although he himself remained a pagan to the end of his life. The saint, having made a deep impression and converted many of high and low degree, took to baptizing the

multitude, and tradition says that the beautiful river Boyne was the Jordan of Ireland's great apostle. It was while preaching at Tara that St. Patrick's presentation of the mystery of the Blessed Trinity was challenged by the Druid priests. He immediately stooped to the emerald sod, plucked therefrom a small trefoil plant called the shamrock—some say it was the wood sorrel—and, holding it up before the inquisitive and interested pagans, proved how possible it was to an infinite Power to combine three in one and one in three. Since that far-distant day, the shamrock has been recognized as the premier national symbol of Ireland, although the “sunburst” flag, emblematic of the Druidic worship, it is presumed, precedes it in point of antiquity. The harp, which is another of Ireland's symbols, was adopted at a later period, in recognition of her Bardic genius.

St. Patrick, or rather Patricius, his Roman name, which signifies a nobleman, lived and labored for many, many years after he preached at Tara, and made many circuits of the island, adding tribe after tribe to the great army of his converts. So deep was the impression he made in the country that now, after the lapse of fourteen hundred years, which were periodized by devastating wars and fearful religious and social persecutions, his memory is as green and as hallowed as if he had died but yesterday. Mountains, rivers, lakes, islands, and plains are associated with his name, and thousands of churches, in Ireland and throughout the world, are called after him, while millions of Ireland's sons are proud to answer to the glorious name of Patrick. He died at a patriarchal age, in the abbey of Saul, County Down, founded by himself, A.D. 493, and the anniversary of his departure from this life is celebrated by Irishmen of all creeds, and in every land, on each 17th day of March, which is called, in his honor, St. Patrick's Day.

It is no wonder that the Irish apostle is so well remembered and highly honored. Since the disciples preached by the shores of the Galilee, there has been no such conversion of almost an entire people from one form of belief to another. The Druid priests, with some exceptions, struggled long and bitterly against the rising tide of Christianity in Ireland, but, within the century following the death of the great missionary, the Druidic rites disappeared forever from the land, and “Green Erin” became known thenceforth, for centuries, as the Island of Saints. Romantic tradition attributes to St. Patrick the miracle of driving all venomous reptiles out of Ireland. It is certain, however, that neither snakes nor toads exist upon her soil, although both are found in the neighboring island of Great Britain.

According to Nennius, a British writer quoted by Dr. Geoffrey Keating, St. Patrick founded in Ireland “three hundred and fifty-five churches, and consecrated an equal number of bishops; and of priests, he ordained three thousand.” “Let whomsoever may be surprised,” says Dr. Keating, “at this great number of bishops in Ireland, contemporary with St. Patrick, read what St. Bernard says in his Life of St. Malachias, as to the practice in Ireland with regard to its bishops. He there says that ‘the bishops are changed and multiplied at the will of the metropolitan, or archbishop, so that no single diocese is trusting to one, but almost every church has its own proper bishop.’” After this statement of St. Bernard no one can be astonished at the number of prelates mentioned above, for the Church was then in its young bloom. The number of bishops there mentioned will appear less wonderful on reading her domestic records. In them we find that every deaconry in Ireland was, formerly, presided over by a bishop. Irish annals show, also, that St. Patrick consecrated in Ireland two archbishops, namely, an archbishop of Armagh, as Primate of Ireland, and an archbishop of Cashel. After the great apostle's death, a long and illustrious line of native Irish missionaries took up his sacred work and completed his moral conquest of the Irish nation. Nor did their labors terminate with the needs of their own country. They penetrated to the remotest corners of Britain, which it is said they first converted to the Christian faith, and made holy pilgrimages to the continent of Europe, founding in every district they visited abbeys, monasteries, and universities. Ireland herself became for a long period the centre of knowledge and piety in insular Europe, and the ecclesiastical seminaries at Lismore, Bangor,

Armagh, Clonmacnois, and other places attracted thousands of students, both native and alien, to her shores. Gaelic, the most ancient, it is claimed by many savants, of the Aryan tongues, was the national language, and continued so to be for more than a thousand years after the era of Patrick ; but Latin, Greek, and Hebrew formed important parts of the collegiate curriculum, and the first-named tongue was the ordinary means of communication with the learned men of other countries.

The art of illuminated writing on vellum was carried to unrivaled perfection in the Irish colleges and monasteries, and the manuscripts of this class preserved in Dublin and London, facsimilies of which are now placed in many American public libraries, as well as in those of European universities, bear witness to the high state of civilization attained by the Irish people during the peaceful and prosperous centuries that followed the coming of St. Patrick and continued until the demoralizing Danish invasion of the eighth century.

The roll of the Irish saints of the early Christian period is a large one, and contains, among others, the names of St. Colomba, or Columbkil, St. Finn Barr, St. Brendan, the Navigator ; St. Kieran, of Ossory ; St. Kevin, of Glendalough ; St. Colman, of Dromore ; St. Canice, of Kilkenny ; St. Jarlath, of Tuam ; St. Moling, of Ferns ; St. Comgall, of Bangor ; St. Carthage, of Lismore ; St. Finian, of Moville ; St. Kiernan, of Clonmacnois ; St. Laserian, of Leighlin ; St. Fintan ; St. Gall, the Apostle of the Swiss ; St. Columbanus, the Apostle of Burgundy ; St. Aidan, Apostle of Northumbria ; St. Adamnan, Abbot of Iona ; St. Rumold, Apostle of Brabant ; St. Fear-gal, Bishop of Salzburg. These are only a few stars out of the almost countless galaxy of the holy men of ancient Ireland. Of her holy women, also numerous, the chief were St. Bridget, Brighid, or Bride, of Kildare ; St. Monina, St. Ita, St. Syra, St. Dymrna, and St. Samthan. The premier female saint was, undoubtedly, St. Bridget, which signifies, in old Gaelic, “ a fiery dart.” Modern slang often degrades the noble old name into “ Biddy.” Although thought to be a purely Irish appellation, it has been borne by, at least, two English women of note. The Lady Bridget Plantagenet, youngest daughter of King Edward IV, and “ Mistress,” or Miss, Bridget Cromwell, daughter of the Lord Protector of the English Commonwealth. Lady Plantagenet, who, in addition to being the daughter of a monarch, was the sister of Edward V and Elizabeth, Queen of Henry VII ; the niece of Richard III and the aunt of Henry VIII, died a nun in the convent of Dartford, England, long after the House of York had ceased to reign. “ Mistress” Cromwell became the wife of one of her father’s ablest partisans, and lived to see the end of the Protectorate, from which her brother, Richard, was deposed, and the restoration of the House of Stuart to the English throne.

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