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pilgrims and soldiers of Christ. St. Bernard attests that the Irish missionaries poured like a rushing torrent on the European nations. A modern writer, though bitterly hostile to the Catholic Church, is, nevertheless, filled with enthusiasm contemplating what he styles "the endless flood of self-denying and devoted men who were pouring out of the Celtic churches, and carrying the Gospel from the north to every point at which European heathendom could be reached, even up to and over the Alps themselves." *Gesta Dei per Francos* became a proverbial expression in the age of the crusades. In those earlier ages of the spiritual crusade, *Gesta Dei per Hispanos* and the eulogy of the missionary heroes, on whom St. Patrick had set the seal of his apostolate resounded through every fairest district of Europe. An eloquent French Bishop, Monseigneur Dupanloup, in one of his beautiful discourses on Ireland, does not hesitate to say: "Verily, the nations of Europe and humanity itself, have just reason to be proud of the Irish race. I know no people," he adds, "around whom their patriotism, their pure morals, their courageous faith, their unconquerable fidelity, their bravery, their ardour, whose mission is conquest and civilisation, their disinterestedness, their patient endurance of wrong, their poetry, their eloquence, and all those noble qualities, ever elevated, never cast down, exalted and crowned by misfortune, have thrown a halo more captivating and more sorrowful." And then he tells us that it was Ireland's mission "to preach the Gospel to the infidel: to reanimate Christians crushed under barbarian invasions; to arouse to nobleness degenerate souls; to raise up powerful races; to rekindle the extinguishing torch of arts and letters to carry everywhere the light of science and of faith." Another no less eloquent writer to whom I have already referred, the illustrious Montalembert, cries out: "It has been with me for some years a source of wonder why so little is known, even by scholarly men, of the great debt which many of the nations of Europe owe to Ireland for the priceless gift of Christianity." He eulogises the Irish missionaries in that wherever they planted the cross, new centres of piety sprang up, great monasteries arose, various other institutions were organised, and fidelity to the Church took permanent root." He adds that in the Irish schools "there were trained an entire population of philosophers, of writers, of architects, of carvers, of painters, of calligraphers, of musicians, of poets and historians; but, above all, of missionaries destined to spread the light of the Gospel and of Christian education throughout Europe. Thus sprang up those armies of saints who were more numerous, more national, more popular, and, it must be added, more marvellous in Ireland than in any other Christian land.

THE MARTYR NATION OF HOLY CHURCH.

Bright was the renown thus won by Ireland among the nations of Europe during the ages of her missionary fruitfulness. We see her saluted by a grateful Christendom as a lamp of wisdom, a pharos of science, an ark of civilisation, a garden of sanctity, a hive of missionaries, a home of sages, an island of Saints. One wreath was yet wanting to her triumph, one peerless gem should be added to her crown. The red rose distinctive of martyrdom was yet to bloom and shed its fragrance in that garden of God, and Ireland was to become the Mother of Martyrs, the Martyr Nation of Holy Church. In the mysterious ways of God, some of the most favoured Churches of the early ages forfeited the Sacred inheritance of the Faith. Syria and the East, lit up by the sanctity and eloquence of the Pauls, and Gregories, and Chrysostoms, were devastated by the Saracens, and lost the faith, and have been for a thousand years submerged in the depths and darkness of superstition. Alexandria and Africa, adorned by the genius and learning of Origen and Athanasius, of Cyprian and Augustine, were lost to the Church through the invasion of Genseric and his Vandal hordes. Yet Ireland was privileged never to forfeit her prized inheritance, and the light of Divine Faith shines as brightly to-day on her green hills and valleys as it did in the days of St. Patrick. Someone perchance may say that no Saracen hordes landed on the coast of Ireland, and that no tyrant like Genseric steeped his sword in Irish blood. Would that it were so. But to the glory of God be it contended that no Church of Asia, no Church of Africa, no Church of any land has been overwhelmed with a fiercer persecution than that which for centuries swept over Ireland, and which Irish faith bravely met and conquered. When the storm of heresy was stirred up by the arts of Satan and the pride of false teachers and the lust and greed of tyrant rulers in the 16th century, Scotland and England, Norway, Sweden, Denmark and a great part of Germany, were torn away from the Church. Yet, as Lord Macaulay remarks, "Alone among the northern nations, Ireland adhered to the ancient faith." For 300 years all the terrors and cruelty of the 10 general persecutions were renewed through the length and breadth of Ireland. To the sword of Henry VIII. and Elizabeth succeeded the confiscations under the Stuarts, and then came the deluge of desolation and destruction under the Puritan Commonwealth. An eye-witness of the sufferings of Ireland in those days cries out: "All the cruelty inflicted on the city of Rome by Nero and Attila, by the Greeks on Troy, by the Moors on Spain, by Vespasian on Jerusalem, all has been inflicted on Ireland by the Puritans." And that bitter agony was perpetuated by the Penal Laws, which have been so fitly described as "a complete system, a machine of wise and elaborate contrivance, and as well fitted for the oppression, impoverishment, and degradation of a people, and the debasement in them of human nature itself, as ever proceeded from the perverted ingenuity of man." The moss-grown ruins which you meet on every side as you travel through Ireland, the broken arches, the ivy-clad towers, are abiding records of the work of destruction of sanctuary and of cloister so recklessly carried on. Yet was not the light of Ireland's faith extinguished, nor quenched the ardour of her piety. The faithful people, driven from the altars of their fathers, worshipped in the sand-pits and the bogs and mountains. Devoted bishops and priests were ever with them, and took refuge in the caves of the earth, or at times in the very sepulchres of their ancestors. The whole nation treaded the dolorous way of the cross and drank to the very dregs the cup of humiliations and sufferings.

It would seem as if a mid the terrible scenes which brought the last century to a close, the Irish Church was to be for ever consigned to the tomb. And yet through the merciful dispositions of Providence we are witnesses to-day that all those humiliations and sorrows and sufferings have been followed by a resurrection glorious, resplendent, and destined, we trust, to be immortal. We are accustomed to prize things according to their cost. The price we pay betokens the value we set on the article which we purchase. At what price did the Irish Catholics preserve the inheritance of the Catholic Faith? Home and lands, altars and schools, enlightenment and education, all hope of earthly advancement and prosperity, everything that the world holds dear was sacrificed. The whole people offered themselves to exile or to shed their blood. Tens of thousands of martyrs gave their lives, but they would not surrender their faith. If the grass is green on Erin's hills, if the triple leaf of the little shamrock yet sparkles in the morning dew, it is that the roots are nourished by the blood of martyrs, and it has been well said that the very dust on which you tread in holy Ireland is the dust of saints. The accurate historian, Mr. Matthew O'Connor, writes that "the ardent zeal, the fortitude and calm resignation of the Catholic clergy during this direful persecution, might stand a comparison with the constancy of Christians during the first ages of the Church. Sooner than abandon their flocks altogether, they fled from the communion of men, concealed themselves in woods and caverns, from whence they issued, whenever the pursuit of their enemies abated, to preach to the people, to comfort them in their afflictions, to encourage them in their trial; their haunts were objects of indefatigable search; bloodhounds, the last device of human cruelty, were employed for the purpose, and the same price was set on the head of a priest as on that of a wolf." Another later historian styles the persecution to which Ireland was subjected, "the most exterminating attack ever endured by a Christian Church. The fanatical followers of Mahomet, in the seventh century, propagated their faith by the sword; but the hordes of Cromwell abandoned the attempt to make the Irish converts, and turned all their energies to blotting out Catholicity in Ireland by the destruction of the Irish race; the Irish were recognised as ineradicably Catholic, and were slain or banished to wildernesses where it was believed they must become extinct." And then he applies to Ireland's martyred priests the words of a venerable writer: "Let us strew a few flowers on the tombs of our martyrs. Hail, venerable priests of the Roman Catholic Church. O glorious confessor of our God and His Christ, to whom it was given not only to believe in Him but also to suffer for Him; you who endured so much ignominy, who as exiles trod the narrow way of the Cross amidst the applause of heaven and the wonder of the earth, behold Me at your feet. How beautiful are the feet of those who were witnesses to God even unto the ends of the earth! And you, who, contemning the tempest and the swelling waves, ceased not intrepidly to cast your nets, you who, placed as it were in the fiery furnace, continued to bless God, to do good to men, to guard your flocks, you, burning and shining lights, who, when you might no longer be as a light placed on a candlestick to shine to all in the house, sought to gather as many as you might under the bushel where you were hidden; sacred heaven which preserved the whole body from corruption, you blest priests to whom the Lord gave spirit of heroic endurance in the midst of dangers, hail! true soldiers of Christ! Hail! holy priests, worthy of honour. Praise be to God, Who gave to you a victory, through Christ our Lord. Happy persecution which brought you such a reward. Happy prisons through which you reached the heavenly places! Happy death which gave you eternal life." Oh! from those harrowing scenes of persecution may we not lift up our thoughts to the courts of Heaven? Is there to be found there around the golden throne of our blessed Lord, a more numerous or brighter band of glorious martyrs and heroic confessors of the Faith than those, who have St. Patrick for their leader, and may we not rest assured joyously they wear their palms of victory, associated with their Apostle in the triumph of our holy faith in the ceremony at which we assist here to-day?

THE WAR WAGED BY THE PROTESTANT PROSELYTISERS.

There was one other phase of persecution to which I have not referred, and which nevertheless had an intensity and bitterness and humiliation all its own. This was the persecution carried on by the proselytisers, the relentless war waged by the wealth and intrigues of Protestantism against those who were poor and famine-stricken in the old land. I will allow an Irish prelate of the United States to tell the result of the conflict. In the year 1861 the Bishop of Pittsburg thus wrote: "Upon the partial abandonment of this form of oppression (open persecution), a system of proselytism was adopted, and is yet in full vigour (for it has become an institution, and the best-supported institution in Ireland), which, by bribes to the high and the low, appeals to every base instinct to draw men away from the faith. Yet neither confiscation of property, nor famine, nor disgrace, nor death in its most hideous forms, could make Ireland waver in that faith which our forefathers received from St. Patrick. The rich allowed their property to be torn from them, and they willingly became poor; the poor bore hunger and all other consequences of wretched poverty; and though every earthly good was arrayed temporarily before them, they scorned to purchase comfort at a price of apostasy. During the four years from 1846 to 1850, nearly two millions either perished from hunger or its attendant pestilence, or were forced to leave their native land to escape both. In the midst of the dead and the dying proselytisers showed themselves everywhere, well provided with food and money and Bibles, and everyone of the sufferers felt, and was made to feel, that all his sufferings might have been spared had he been willing to barter his faith for bread. Yet the masses could bear hunger and face pestilence, or fly from their native land; but they would not eat the bread of apostasy. They died or they fled, but they clung to the faith. In vain, I think, will history be searched for another example of such vast numbers, generation after generation, calmly, silently facing an unnumbered death, without any support on earth but the approving voice of conscience."

"GET ON THE SOIL, YOUNG MAN; GET ON THE SOIL."

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