

ST. BRIGID

In carrying out His wise Providence in the world, God chooses fit instruments for His work. Hence, in order to plant the faith of St. Patrick deep in the hearts of the woman of Ireland, and in order through them to make it live with perennial bloom and sweet fruitfulness within our Irish homes, God raised up a saint whose special natural and supernatural characteristics gave her a special power to charm the Celtic mind and to fascinate the Celtic soul. We may pause for some short moments to contemplate what these characteristics were.

First of all, she was a great saint, and, therefore, her holy soul was in immediate, intense, and constant union with God. But this union had special personal aspects of its own. The Four Masters write of her: "Brigid was she who never turned her mind or attention from the Lord for the space of one hour, but was constantly meditating and thinking of Him in her heart and mind."

On her long and frequent journeys, in all her work, whether in her convent home or in the fields or forests or amongst friends or strangers, amidst the many various and incessant occupations which seemed to absorb all her hours by day and often even by night, the conscious sense of the Great Presence never left her. God was ever and always visible to her soul. God spoke to her not only through the mysterious splendour and spiritual loveliness of Revelation, but, as to the great St. Francis of Assisi, so also through the sights and sounds of Nature, through its melodious messages and speaking images, through its meaning and its music, did the Divine Spirit, in a simple, yet mysterious way, appeal to the soul of St. Brigid.

The mountains, the meadows, the forests, the fields, the song of the rippling river, or the chorus of the foaming cataract—the hymns of the birds or the prayerfulness of the pine woods, the rising or the setting sun, the moon, the stars—all Nature taught her lessons, and lifted up her love to God. To her music was in a strange, true, real sense a Divine language. Thus, one day, when many friends and strangers, chiefs and nobles, men and women, priests and nuns were gathered together in the great hall of a king, wishing to express in a language understood by all the holy thoughts and sacred emotions which she would impart to all, she bade some young men in the company to take the harps that hung around the walls and play. Whereat the young men answered that they were quite ignorant of the art. Thereupon St. Brigid with her finger-tips touched their fingers, and again bade them play. As their hands, miraculously guided, swept across the strings such rapturous strains woke the enchanted air that all were hushed in awe and in delight, for it seemed to all that the gates of Paradise had been flung open to let flood forth the Divine music of the angels. She said herself that she could follow the Masses celebrated in far-off lands, and that the song and music of distant churches was often wafted by Divine power to vibrate within her ear and elevate her soul to loving rapture.

Another characteristic of St. Brigid was her bright and radiant joyfulness. The joy of the Holy Spirit which dwelt within her soul lighted up her countenance with holy attractiveness and gave to her every word of charm that won persuasion and a power that infused its own clearness and its own vigor into the listener's mind. In her very presence there was a simple yet queen-like winningness which charmed while it commanded reverence, and the calm, sweet dignity of her manner brought a smile to the face, conviction to the mind, and devotedness to the heart. Thus was she well fitted to secure the loyalty of a race which has always been fiercely impatient of force or frown, but which, by reason of natural gladness, wit, and humor sparkling within its natural temperament may easily be controlled by a frank smile, disarmed by a kind word, and conquered by the proffered hand of true friendship.

To this last characteristic we must add another. It is her homeliness. She is no stern ascetic, before

whom we bow indeed in wondering worship, but from whom we instinctively feel that we are all the more far apart. Nor is she like some great lady, who may be herself a great saint, prayerful, mortified, zealous, detached, but who is always so great as to seem to have but little human sympathy, and with whom we could never really feel at home. No! no! St. Brigid is our own sweet Brigid. In all her ways and works she was home-loving and home-like. She was a saint who is still all the more a saint because ever and always she is one of ourselves.

She loved the poor, the sad, and the suffering. While she did great work, her greatest work was in the homes of the people. Let me give one instance. A farmer came to her in great distress. His wife, his sons and daughters were all sick unto death. He was himself barely able to speak. His farm was quite neglected, and he could find no help. At once our own Brigid called some of her nuns and went straight to the man's home. They nursed the sick, who were soon miraculously restored to robust health. They tidied the house and looked after the housekeeping. They tended the flocks in the pasture land. They toiled in the tillage field: and they milked the cows. "Who shall find a valiant woman? She hath looked well to the paths of her house." St. Brigid is the type, ideal, and model of Irish maidens and of Irish mothers. She is the queen of the Irish home. Can any woman have a nobler part in life to aim at or to accomplish than to be like St. Brigid, "the Mary of the Gael"?

WEDDING BELLS

MITCHELL—O'SULLIVAN.

The wedding was solemnised at St. Mary's Church, Ahaura, on January 27, of M. J. Mitchell, only son of Mr. John Mitchell, and Eileen Maud, third daughter of Mr. and Mrs. O'Sullivan, of Ahaura. Rev. Father T. Hanrahan officiated and celebrated a Nuptial Mass. The bride, who was given away by her father, wore a frock of white crepe-de-Chine, with the usual veil and wreath of orange blossoms, and carried a beautiful shower bouquet of white flowers. The bride's sister (Nora), as bridesmaid, wore a frock of white voile with lace overdress and vieux-rose picture hat. Mr. Sarsfield O'Brien, of Nelson Creek (nephew of the bridegroom) was best man. As the party left the church the "Wedding March" was played by Mrs. Clayton. The bridegroom's present to the bride was a gold wristlet watch, and to the bridesmaid, a diamond and pearl pendant. The bride's present to the bridegroom was a solid leather suit case. After the ceremony the guests were entertained to wedding breakfast at the residence of the bride's parents. Subsequently Mr. and Mrs. Mitchell left by car for Greymouth and Nelson, where the honeymoon was spent, the bride travelling in a light grey costume and a vieux-rose hat.

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