

common sorrows and common joys, common hopes and common aspirations—these things make up a nation, these things shape its destiny, these things determine its place in civilization.” Such had the Irish from the last quarter of the sixteenth century to the last quarter of the eighteenth.

They had a common tradition extending back further than that of any people in Europe. They had a common history, merging into this tradition about the beginning of the Christian era, and filled with more episodes of great heroes, sages, poets, kings, scholars, teachers, holy virgins, saints, missionaries,—containing more of the events that inspire men to the highest things,—than that of any other people in the world. They had a common language, the oldest and purest in Europe, one, as Davis says, “conformed to their organs, descriptive of their climate, constitution and manners, mingled inseparably with their history and soil, fitted beyond any other language to express their prevalent thoughts in the most natural and efficient way.” They had a common literature, which, as we have seen, went back to Pagan times; while in the seventeenth century despite the fact that education was by the law of the English conqueror a crime, the Irish writers, with a literary and patriotic zeal we cannot imagine, wrote in manuscripts, the history of Ireland; the Irish poets of the eighteenth century were superior to their contemporaries in France, and almost equal to their contemporaries in England; which things give us some idea of the intellectuality of the times. These same Irish of the penal times, had common institutions far superior to those of their conqueror—especially their religion, which they preserved as no other people ever did. The whole nation had the same supernatural joys of which the conqueror in his ignorance had not even the slightest idea; the same material sorrows, for the conqueror in his strength inflicted upon them a system of laws of which even a barbarian would have been ashamed. Finally they had the same hopes and ideals, to live in as their ancestors had once lived in when moral and intellectual leaders in the world.