

the fires had been extinguished, and, before relighting them, the Sacred Fire must be seen to ascend to Heaven, which the Chief of the Druids was to kindle at a signal given by the monarch.

O'Neil, draped with the royal purple, was about to give the expected signal, when suddenly, at the farther end of the grounds of the "Breg," a light beamed forth amid the darkness.

The king perceived it and, tremulous with indignation, cried out in a terrible voice : " Who thus profanes this sacred night—who dares commit so great a sacrilege ? "

" We know not," replied those who stood by him. And all gazed with alarm at the small light shining in the distance like a star at night. The chief of the Druids, as he, too, looked at it, was overwhelmed with terror.

" O king ! " he cried, trembling, " listen to what the gods have inspired me to say : unless this fire be extinguished immediately, it will never more go out. it will deaden our Sacred Fire. He who has kindled it shall subjugate this Ireland which the Roman forces have failed to subdue, and none shall ever be able to wrest his conquest from him." Instantaneously, the king issues his commands, and several Druids spring into a chariot drawn by a pair of white buffaloes and, followed by some of the warriors, bound forward in the direction of the light.

This light was the Paschal Candle, which Patrick, come to Ireland, had first lighted.

The Druids rush at it, in order either to extinguish or to overthrow it. Both in vain. The light ceases not to burn ; the candle, standing on the ground, remains immovable.

Saint Patrick, clad in a sheepskin tunic, with a white hood upon his head, looked on, smiling. The Druids, infuriated, commanded him to follow them into the presence of the king. He obeyed, and as the apostle advanced, several birds, who had joined the crowd, impelled by divine inspiration, sang aloud.

" He comes, the man whose brow is crowned. From across the stormy sea, he is come to us ! "

When Patrick had reached the royal presence the king thus addressed him.

" You are not ignorant of the laws of the kingdom.