

shadow forth its distress, comes teeming from the loosened and inspired tongue. The very sources of the soul seem broken, and the overwhelming torrents of affliction to gush from the springs of life. We find this specially and permanently manifested in the plaintiveness of Irish music. The spirit of melancholy is inwrought through all its movements. Using a beautiful expression of Wordsworth's, we may well call it "the sweet, sad music of humanity." It is fraught with sentiment, with reflective and solemn associations, with the melody of the affections, with the regrets of a mournful nationality. It is a dirge for the past: a long, low wail upon the grave of glory; a requiem over the dust of heroes, whose aspirations perished in defeat; a lament amidst the tombs of the conquered brave. The Irish bards whose tones have come down to us, tuned their harps in despondency, and struck the chords in unison with sighs: they sat under the shadow of their national ruins; they sang amidst the wrecks which the stranger scattered, and the echo of their grief was thrown back upon their ears, from the lonely halls which the victor had rifled; they sent forth the burden of their complaint in long-drawn sweetness, and the pallid ghosts of warriors listened to the sound in the haunted valley or the dismal cave. With all the low and lonely voices of nature this music harmonises; with the gurgle of the wave, which girds the island shore of Ireland, with the murmur of the sea; with the cataracts amid the verdant hills; with the chorus of the winds upon her solitary heaths. Irish music is the music of regret; the sighings of memory; the breathings of a dream.

If my remarks thus far are correct, the *ideal* and *emotional* are principal elements in the character of the Irish. The Irish are strongly affected by the past and the spiritual; and this disposition, all their traditions, their superstitions, and their religion tend to cultivate. The Irishman lives surrounded by the past, and he cannot escape from it; it flows through all his associations, and its mementos are constantly before his senses. Olden story fills his mind, and sacred monuments surround his sight. Ireland had the light of the Gospel in her homes when the neighboring countries were covered with the darkest paganism: the feet of Messiah's messengers were beautiful on her mountains, when Germany was crouching to bloody Odin, and Britain was reeking with the terrible immolations of the Druids. Retreats for erudition and piety, sanctuaries of faith and knowledge were to be found in every part of the kingdom, and these when all besides, was ravage, were safe and sacred. In the most

stormy confusion no arm was lifted against priest or scholar; no hand of plunder violated the altar or the shrine. The fragments of many grand and solemn structures are still scattered over the face of the country, and these are not wholly dead, wholly without power. The history of Ireland before the British invasion, it is true, is but the wreck of a vision, the reflection of a dim and distant dream; still it has shot glancings of light and beauty across a long night of mourning and lamentation. The weed has grown upon the castle tower, and the grass is rank in the courtly hall; the raven screeches where song resounded; the owl makes his habitation where man gloried in his bravery and woman rejoiced in her beauty; the walls crumble to dust, but the recollections of other days do not crumble along with them: "even in their ashes live their wonted fires." Through gloomy ages of humiliation, the peasant turns towards those palmy days, which his imagination encircles in a golden halo; and dreary as the intervening period seems, the proud persuasion that his country had once been the home of saints and sages, gives some dignity to his own sordid lot. He toils in the field under the shadow of a lonely monastery; and the soil that he tills has been trodden by venerable feet; if he is on a journey, he turns from the road, to rest at mid-day in the shelter of an ancient castle, or to pray in the cloister of a solitary abbey: he hears the voice of a thousand years in the halls of the sainted dead, where the bones of his fathers lie and where the spirits of his fathers speak.

As tradition fills the past, superstition peoples the present. In conformity with the social and kindly character of the Irish, their superstitions are also social and kindly. No spot in the green island is a desert, and no hour is lonely. The stream that bubbles along has invisible multitudes on its brink that chorus its sportive music. In the moon-lit grove, the secluded glen—the fairies love to congregate; there they play their pranks unscared under the silver stars and the glowing sky: there they dance merrily to the jovial sound of their elfish bag-pipes: there the marauders eat and drink what they have stolen from well-stored cellars, and from housewife's dairies; and there occasionally they entrap a roving wassailer as he staggers home in the highest region of bravery and Usquebaugh. In more solemn scenes, we hear of the Banshee, the lonely and fearful shade, the mournful spirit of loyalty, who attends the generations of her tribe and wails over the hour of their death and sorrow: whom no change of fortune can repulse, whom no