

our celebration to-day is a most glorious and triumphant one. With the poet, I may say :

“Far from the hills of Innisfail,
We meet in love to-night,
Some of the scattered Clan-na-Gael,
With spirits, warm and bright.
Why do we meet? 'Tis to repeat
Our vows both night and day,
To dear old Ireland, brave old Ireland,
Ireland, boys! Hurra!”

The story of Ireland is most glorious. Hardly had the great apostle concluded his task of evangelizing the Irish people, which, in the manner of its accomplishment, was nothing less than marvelous, than our ancestors became a nation of saints and sages. Monasteries and schools sprang up everywhere with a rapidity unprecedented in the annals of Christianity. Even while practising their Druidist's superstition, the Irish showed themselves to be not devoid of learning. No wonder, then, that a race, with so keen an intellect, which, in its pre-Christian state, had attained a considerable degree of civilization, while neighboring nations were yet in the condition of barbarism, should, under the influence of the Catholic faith, gain distinction in the field of education. It was during the same epoch that the great intellectual centres in other parts of the civilized world, in the name of science, began to renounce the Gospel, and to sow the seeds of heresy. But Erin, designed, as it were, by Divine Providence, came forth to the rescue, and shed her rays of salutary light to the farthest confines of civilization. Where, indeed, do we not find Irish evangelists and teachers during these troublous times? Imbued with the fire of teaching the heathen, we find them radiating into all lands to cheer the Christian, trodden down by barbarian invasion, to rekindle the quenched fire of art and science, and to carry everywhere the light of faith and learning. Not only did Ireland enlighten those people, to whom science was hitherto unknown, but even, to use the happy expression of her best historian, “She reflected back on Rome herself the light derived from Rome.”

For three centuries this glorious epoch of peace and joy lasted—three centuries, which rendered the Irish nation, in her saints and scholars, the admiration of the Christian world. But the eighth century brought this to a close, and then began a new era, in which