

a portrait—had been substituted for it.

"My uncle adjusted his eye-glasses and planted himself before the picture to examine it.

"My God!" he suddenly ejaculated, "my God, what an extraordinary coincidence!"

The picture was an exact representation of his little visitor of the evening before.

She was—blue eyes—falling yellow hair, pale blue muslin frock; a peculiar little countenance lighted up by the most speaking intelligence.

As he stared at her, the eyes looked back at him again, and the lips seemed ready to uncloset with a repetition of an urgent appeal, a menace:

"Don't interfere with the boys! If you do, God will punish you."

"The boys!" she was the one of the family? And had she, after all, been at the hotel the evening before, and perhaps, prompted by her mother, made an attempt to startle him?

As this suggestion occurred to him, he heard the sound of the door opening, turned and confronted my mother.

The meeting was an affecting one. My uncle, though an eminently common-sensible and matter-of-fact man, had his hidden vein of sentiment, and he was touched by my mother's fragile and spiritual beauty and sad aspect in her mourning weeds.

She on her part, did not find so much hardness as she had expected in the face of her dead husband's brother.

They clasped hands in silence; and before my mother could find her voice to bid the visitor welcome, my uncle suddenly turned to the portrait over the mantelpiece.

"First, and before everything," he said, strange as it may seem, pray tell me who is the original of that picture—if it has an original?"

"My mother's eyes followed the movement of his hand, indicating the particular picture.

"Yes," she said, "it has an original in heaven. That is the portrait of my only girl, who died five years ago."

"Many a time my mother told us the story in later years. My uncle, who was rather a ruddy man, turned, she said, quite white, and kept staring at the portrait with so strange an expression that she thought his mind had suddenly become affected.

At last he removed his gaze from the canvas and turned it on her. Two or three large, slow tears gathered in his eyes and dropped.

"My sister," he said, "it seems to me that God has been fighting your battle and intends you to win. I came here to take your boys; I shall leave them with you."

"He then, simply and shortly, told her of his experience of the evening before. My mother wept silently. Awe and impressed as she was, she had no difficulty in believing the story.

"We need not talk about it except among ourselves," said my uncle; "let me stay with you here for a few days until I think the matter out. I am not just the man for an experience of this kind. I shall take some time to digest and assimilate it."

"We were introduced (my brother and myself) to our dear uncle, whom we did not find at all the kind of person we had expected. He was bluff and kind; took us for long walks and rides, questioned us about our sports and our lessons, told us stories, and was altogether a delightful companion to us. He encouraged us to talk to him about everything, which we did, perhaps over-freely sometimes. Among other things, we informed him of how much we had dreaded his visit.

"Mother was afraid you would take us from her and send us to a kind of school she did not like," said my brother. "We prayed against you every night. Mother said to God that she would rather He would take us Himself, where He has got our little sister, than let us go with you."

"But then, she did not know the kind of man you are uncle," I hastened to say, fearing that my brother, a year or two younger, had spoken with want of tact.

"I do not wonder she did not know me," said my uncle; "for I do not seem to know myself."

"After some days he left us and went back to London; but he wrote to my mother frequently, and before long he paid us another visit. He used to stand for long minutes before my sister's portrait, gazing intently at her bright, intelligent little face; and then would turn away and pace up and down the room, lost in a reverie.

"Mary," he said one day, "a new man would seem to have been born in me on the day when I entered this room, bent on opposing you. I ask you to pray that the new-born creature may grow and develop into something more worthy of his Maker than the individual who was I."

"My mother prayed, and so did we two little boys. And, not to spin my story out to a wearisome length, the end of it was that my uncle, and afterwards his wife and children, became fervent Catholics; and my brother and I are both growing old in the priesthood."

well as from her Divine Son! Pray especially, dear children, for the grace of a happy death, through his intercession, for he is the patron of a happy death, having died in the arms of Jesus and Mary.

One who has never asked his intercession in vain.

IRELAND

THE MOTHER OF MEDIEVAL UNIVERSITIES

By Rev. John M. Ryan, C. S. C.

It is commonly believed that some seven hundred years ago, when a body of Norman knights conquered Ireland they found there an ignorant and degraded people, to whom they brought the first knowledge of the arts and sciences. Nothing could be farther from the truth.

The Irish people have a long record of wrongs done them as a nation, but the most ignominious and cruel of all is precisely this: Their oppressors systematically destroyed all knowledge of the past.

They robbed a noble and gifted people of the very memories of their ancient glories. They made trembling slaves or savage beasts out of them, and then they proceeded to kill in their souls the one gleam of comfort and hope, even the reminiscences of the ages when they were the schoolmasters of Europe, and the apostles of nations, which had looked proudly down on the little island whence they received 1200 years ago the divine lights of faith and science.

Long before the Norman set foot on English soil, when he was yet a Northman, a sanguinary robber of the weak and defenseless all over Europe, Ireland had earned the splendid title of "Island of Saints and Doctors." She had numerous famous schools in which countless thousands from all over Europe came as students, and acquired a knowledge of religion, philosophy, history, languages, exact and natural sciences, fine arts, music, law and medicine, such a knowledge as could not be obtained from one end of Europe to the other. The whole island was covered with establishments of piety and learning from the sixth to the tenth century. Numberless teachers taught all the sciences of antiquity. Numberless others transcribed the teachings of the scientists. All—both teachers and students, were devoured with a thirst for knowledge such as perhaps has never before or since existed among any people.

Had these peaceful arts been allowed to flourish, had the human mind in the west been allowed to evolve its gifts under the guidance of these Irish Christian teachers, who know what might have been the course of the world's history. We might have been spared much of the barbarism and ignorance of the middle ages. Christianity might have been left more free to develop the better qualities of man, the transition from the antique to the modern society would have been accomplished with fewer convulsions, and in briefer time. We would not have had to wait the fall of Constantinople for a re-awakening of interest in the learning and culture of the polished nations of antiquity.

In order to understand why the Irish people ought to be proud of their ancient reputation for scholarship and refinement, we must go back in spirit to the history of those times, from the year 500 to 800. It was the period of the barbarian invasions of the Roman empire. Multitudes after multitudes of brutal heathen people, without law and without culture, fell upon the fairest provinces of the great empire. They deluged with blood the soil of Gaul, Spain and Italy. They reduced the populations into slavery or misery. They visited upon the subjects of mighty Rome an awful retribution for the wrongs she had wreaked upon their forefathers. In one dread night the light of civilization, fed by the streams of a thousand years of Greek and Roman culture, went out, and an appalling darkness hung over the world, which was accustomed to look upon the Roman majesty as invincible, eternal and having the promises of temporal glory and permanency.

EUROPE IN RUINS So vast was the ruin and so complete the collapse of all that the intellect and the skill of man had produced in southern and central Europe, that the writers of the day could find no words to describe it, and for our knowledge of it we are reduced mainly to the evidence of our eyes—the tremendous wreckage of antiquity, whose disordered heaps are yet visible to every traveler.

It was in this period, some twelve hundred to fourteen hundred years ago, from the fifth to the ninth centuries of our era, that the schools of Ireland flourished. The great Greek and Roman schools were closed, the civilizations they fed destroyed, the libraries consumed or scattered, the teachers made slaves, driven into the desert places or wanderers on the face of the earth. Had it not been for the ardent and intelligence with which the children of Saint Patrick took up the dying torch of science, and handed it down to one another in the glorious race for knowledge, Europe would have sunk into its original barbarism; Charlemagne and the medieval papacy would have been impossible; the great universities would not have arisen; the classics would have come down to us in fragments, and the task of Christian teaching and discipline would have been well-nigh hopeless. If the man who opens a schoolhouse in the wilderness is a

public benefactor, how much more so that multitude of holy men who built their schools, little and great, in every sweet valley and on every rounded hill of Ireland, who dotted the islands of the lakes with schools and wove a splendid garland of monasteries around the picturesque coast, of the entire island, like so many beacons of welcome and safety to the thousands who fled from the wars and the disorders of the continent.

PEOPLE OF CULTURE

The ancient Irish were a people of great refinement, barbaric and warlike in their tastes, but generous, gifted, inclined to the mystic and spiritual sides of creation. They were deeply versed in the science of poetry and history, in the weaving of narratives and romances, in such knowledge of the natural and exact sciences as was then attainable. We need not therefore wonder at the sudden blossoming of learning which took place within a century of St. Patrick's death. The soil and the time were admirably adapted. The learning of pagan Ireland was in the hands of the Druids and the Bards. Among the Christian Irish the priests at once stepped into the places and the privileges of this high literary caste and thus by the easiest of transitions the whole system of teaching became at once Christian, Ecclesiastical and Roman.

Twenty years after Saint Patrick's death the chief king of Ireland was converted and Armagh was made the chief See of Ireland. Monasteries sprang up everywhere and were the centers of learning and piety, not only for Ireland, but for all of Europe during the early middle ages. There were many communities founded for the girls and women, and particularly that of St. Brigid became very famous. Thus we see that Ireland fully merited the title of "island of saints and scholars," or rather "the island of saints and scholars," and from it was spread the learning that preserved Europe to the faith and reconquered the greater part after the barbarian invasions.

The most venerable of these ancient schools is that of Armagh. All the Christian learning of the Gael comes down from the swelling heights of Macha, where Patrick built his Church, and fixed his episcopal chair. Long before Patrick, it had been famous as a school of poetry and romance, for Armagh was the classic land of the ancient Celtic chivalry—the home of the Red Branch Knights, and close by was the splendid palace of the northern kings. The piety and fancy of the Celts have woven the facts of the foundation into the tenderest of legends.

TEMPLE OF LEARNING

It is told how when Patrick was ascending the slope of the sacred hill, book in hand, surrounded by the clergy and people, a startled deer with its little fawn, broke from the thicket nearby. The attendants wanted to kill them, but the gentle old man forbade it. He took the little fawn upon his shoulders, the timid doe followed after him, and thus they went to the convent of the Nuns of Na Feara, where the fawn and the doe were tenderly cared for. Even in this Patrick was a teacher, for he impressed upon the rough warriors about him, lessons of Christian mildness. "He showed himself the Good Shepherd, of whom he spoke to them so often, and they were made to learn that the gospel of Patrick was a gospel of love—of love of God, their Great Father in heaven, and for all their fellow men on earth."

Beside the little Cathedral there arose the houses of monks and students, the library and the archives were soon added, and in a short while the Hill of Macha was a busy center of Christian students and studies. The material wants were well provided for, and the discipline was closely locked after. A prison for the refractory was built upon the grounds. For protection of his church and school, Patrick surrounded them with a huge earthen mound, and in the neighborhood he planted a large grove in which the students and the clergy might refresh themselves from their labors.

MUSIC IS DEVELOPED

The first president of this school was Benignus, an affectionate youth especially beloved by St. Patrick. In the first days of Patrick's mission Benignus had abandoned all to follow our Saint, and now Patrick placed him over the most important of his foundations, the new Cathedral school of Armagh. Benignus was a sweet musician, he was the psalm singer of St. Patrick, that is, he directed the musical services which the wise apostle established wherever he went. The ancient Celts were passionately fond of music and highly gifted with the necessary vocal and instrumental talents. In the school of Armagh, we may well imagine that the ancient church music flourished. The wild-eyed Celtic youth learned to submit to strict training and the throats which had loved to chant the sorrows of Deirdre, or the high deeds of Cuchulain, now learned to pour forth the solemn, majestic church song of Rome.

The Christian sons of the Bards tuned their harps and their pipes to the classic harmonies of Greece and the children of the proud Celtic chieftains, who had scorned the Roman yoke, began to learn Greek, Latin and Hebrew. They had escaped the yoke of the pagan only to bear the sweet and salutary yoke of the Christian Rome. The sacred Scriptures were studied daily. They were copied with accuracy and devotion. The only complete copy of the New Testament which the old Celtic

church has handed down to us was made in the school of Armagh. The theological students were well acquainted with the works of St. Jerome and every scholar knows what a mine of erudition they are. For over twelve hundred years they were the chief resources of all Christian students of the Scriptures. Countless priests and bishops were schooled at Armagh on the writings of Gregory the Great, notably his *Moralia*, the most successful work ever written on the relations of bishops, priests and people. The writings and the sayings of St. Patrick were for centuries part of the teaching at Armagh. The autographs of the Apostle were preserved with reverence by the professors, as well as the writings of Benignus, the first president, who brought peace among the discordant clans by his Book of Rights, which established the various rights and privileges of the various civil rulers in Ireland, from the chief king to the lowest chieftain. It is a work which may compare in interest with the Domesday book of England, and like it, throws a flood of light on the manners and habits of the people. Benignus wrote also a life of St. Patrick, which has been lost in the period of wild disorder that came on in the ninth and tenth centuries, and we well may regret it, for who could so well depict the gentle Apostle of Erin, as his bosom friend and constant companion, the beloved Benen.

MANY BOOKS MADE For a thousand years the school of Armagh was a busy center, where books were written, transcribed and given away. Copies of the Scriptures, the Fathers, the classical writers, the grammarians, geometrical and the natural scientists of the old classical world, were sent over the continent. Today out of all that incessant activity there remains but one volume—the Famous Book of Armagh, copied in the year 807, over one thousand years ago, by the scribe Ferdomnach. It contains the oldest and most authentic account of the life of St. Patrick. Even in the middle ages the book was looked on as a priceless treasure.

In 987 the king of Ireland had a splendid shrine made for it, and a special custodian was appointed. The office was handed down from father to son, until 1681, when an apostate pledged the treasure for 45 sterling, which he used to go to London to swear away the head of Oliver Plunkett, the holy Archbishop of Armagh. It was at last found its way into the library of Trinity College, having been purchased from its owner in 1833 for 43,000. Today many thousands of pounds could not purchase this last holy relic of the school of Armagh, the oldest and the last venerable link that binds the Ireland of the past and the Ireland of the nineteenth century.

MAGNET FOR STUDENTS The school of Armagh became at once the intellectual center of northern Europe. Soon swarms of students came across from Wales and Britain. A whole quarter of the town was given over to the Saxon students, just as centuries later they had a section of Rome for themselves. They were the sons of the fierce German pirates, who had scourged the great waterways of the north; but they learned refinement, gentle manners, the arts and sciences from the Irish school masters. Armagh was chiefly a school of theology. It was to be expected that the Christian learning of Ireland should be based on Christian principles and an accurate knowledge of the teachings of Jesus. But no narrow nationalism presided over its development. One of the early presidents was a Welshman, Gildas the Wise, whose piety and learning did much to make the school popular among the neighboring Kingdoms.

Armagh has always been the true center of Irish national life. When the Danes began their murderous career at the end of the eighth century, that closed only with the opening of the eleventh, Armagh was the objective point at all times of their piratical raids. Nine times in two centuries this ancient seat of learning was pillaged by the northmen. On every occasion they brought the books of the professors and students into the open court of the cloisters and made bonfires of them.

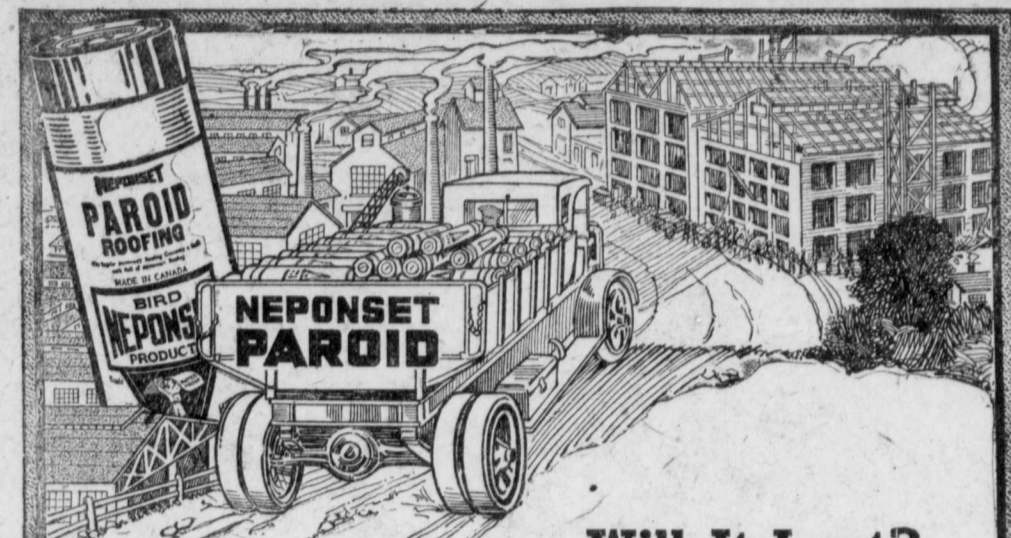
MANUSCRIPTS DESTROYED Within five centuries it was burned to the ground sixteen times. No wonder that the literary labors of its inmates have disappeared. The sword, the flames, neglect, ignorance, barbarism, and, worst of all, the contempt of later centuries have made havoc with the thousands of manuscripts that once adorned the shelves of the library. The Irish annals mention frequently the death of famous professors at Armagh. They are called learned scribes, professors of divinity, wise doctors, moderators of the school, paragons of learning, the heads of western Europe for piety, devotion and scientific attainments. Some of their names have come down to us, such as O'Hagan, O'Drughan and St. Malachi, whom St. Bernard pronounced the most accomplished priest of his age. For over a thousand years this venerable school spread the light of religious and profane science. It really belongs to the order of the Christian schools of Edessa and Nisibis, with those of Alexandria and Antioch. As the light of faith grew dark in the orient, it blazed up with new splendor at the extremity of the west. Oxford and Cambridge are of yesterday compared with it.

In those days of Celtic culture and independence, reedy swamps and

great oak forests covered the soil, where now rise the proud turrets of these great schools, which owe their existence to the earlier labors of

Celtic students. How grateful they have been, let countless legions of Irish martyrs tell before the Supreme Court of the Judge of Nations, let

the sorrows, the wanderings, the manifold woes of seven centuries be witnesses before the tribunal of humanity.



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ST. JOSEPH

Let us ask the good St. Joseph during this month, dedicated in a special manner to him, to obtain for us faith and humility like unto his own.

In all the Catholic Calendar there is no purer, no holier, type of profound humility and of strong faith than St. Joseph, nor is there any saint who possessed similar opportunities to study our Blessed Saviour closely and to lavish upon Him every token of tenderest love.

How intimately he studied Jesus and loved Him; how well he learned humility and faith from Mary, as