

in her day of freedom, and her vitality after seven centuries of wasting bondage (applause). The Irish race never had fair play. Their growth as a nation was mutilated at the moment when all the other States of modern Europe were struggling out of chaos. Judging Ireland by her state at the Norman conquest is like judging English Parliamentary institutions by the condition of the Saxon churls after the battle of Hastings, or the civilization of Rome by the days when an emperor was stabbed or poisoned every other year by the palace guards. Yet, if we confine our judgment of Ireland to those centuries from the coming of St. Patrick to the Danish invasions—centuries during which the other nations of Europe were simply shifting camps of savages—we shall find Ireland the sanctuary and the only uncontaminated fountain of civilization, and a civilization all the more marvellous that it was not derived from Rome or Greece, but grew up of its own native vigour like a violet in some unvisited dell (applause). Roman history furnishes no fairer picture than that of Ireland in her golden age—the one lustrous star in an European night. Her people enjoyed the equality of a modern republic. Their chiefs were of their own choice; the lands belonged to the whole people. A system of law prevailed so mild that the bard was the most formidable power in the community. The sound of festivities in their halls, the chant of a thousand saints in their thousand churches, the enthusiasm of learning that lighted their schools, come down to us across the gloomy gulf of ages that followed, and make us doubt whether modern civilization, with all its new fangled refinements, but redoubled cares, can give us anything to compare with the simple happiness of that old race, with their bright wits, their mirthful hearts, the sensitive organization which could be ruled by the power of music, and the glorious enthusiasm which inspired them to bear the torch of religion and learning to the ends of a darkened world (loud applause). Her laws, religion, arts, and hospitality were combined with a colonizing capacity beyond any

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