

IRISH AFFAIRS IN 1782.

From the "Catholic World."

THE occurrence of the centennial anniversary of few dates has evoked more glorious memories in the minds of men than will that of the 16th of April, 1782, in the thoughts of Irishmen. It is true that they cannot boast the keeping intact the great rights their predecessors won, and the glorious winning of which 1882 will remind them, and equally true that they can hardly review the history of their country during the past century with unmixed feelings; but gloom-covered and sad as may be the record over which they cast their gaze, yet still amidst its sombre writings, its black entries of oppression, rebellion, and famine, some brighter ones appear, and that scroll which tells the story of 1782 and of the winning of Catholic emancipation, is not one of which Irishmen need be ashamed or regard with aught but feelings of pride.

The year 1782 saw England sorely pressed by many foes, hemmed in by a circle of enemies. Struck down at Yorktown by the genius of Washington and the valor of his soldiers, again at Nevis and St. Christopher, at Minorca and in the Bahamas, by Frank and Spaniard, the ensign of England was never upheld more proudly than at Gibraltar and St. Vincent by the determined Elliott and the valorous Rodney. It was at this climax of her struggle, when foes were pressing her sore, that England discerned that to the circle of those leagued against her there seemed about to be added another. The newcomer was Ireland demanding rights God-given. England was in her hour of sorest need. Necessity the most dire compelled her to yield to Ireland what her sense of justice would hardly have induced her to give; and Ireland, without bloodshed, by the mere exhibition of the power, the military strength, which had so long lain dormant in her people, achieved a great victory and accomplished a great revolution. In the story of 1782 a curious fact stands out: the belief, strong almost as religious faith, in the nationality of Ireland was preserved at a most critical period by those who can hardly be accounted the

hereditary guardians of that most precious heritage; and if we carry our glance onwards beyond the limits of this article, we will see that when the Irish Catholic was fitted again to uphold the banner of his country's rights, when a few years of comparative freedom had taught him again to walk erect and the limbs so long paralyzed by enervating chains had regained some of their olden vigor, then the cause of Ireland again fell to his keeping. In truth, no stranger story is there in all the strange episodes which histories tell than that which recounts how, almost against their will, the descendants of the English settlers in Ireland, the descendants of Norman Cromwellian, and Dutch invaders, were driven to take up and uphold the banner of Ireland's nationality. The Catholic people of Ireland, plundered and oppressed, hunted to the hills and bogs of Connaught, banned, disinherited, and despoiled, deprived of education and the commonest rights of man, by a miracle were enabled to keep their religious faith—kept it in spite of temptation and terror. But a people in such straits were hardly fitted to maintain, could hardly hope to defend properly, the abstract and actual rights of their native land to political freedom. And yet God willed not that those rights should sink into oblivion; while the Catholic people of Ireland, bruised and hampered by their disabilities, were unable to keep them as they kept them in the days of yore, Irish Protestants were driven to maintain them and to uphold the right of Ireland to freedom.

When Ireland was first "conquered" by the Anglo-Normans of Henry II., and the Irish chiefs pledged their fealty to that monarch, he called a council or parliament at Lismore, at which it was mutually agreed that the laws then in force in England should become effective in Ireland. But it must be borne in mind that even Henry was not so rash as to seek to make them operative without the consent of the representatives of the Irish people. On Henry's return to England he appears to have sent to Ireland a "*Modus tenendi parliamentum*," or form of holding parlia-