

INTRODUCTION.

IN the dark, English crucible of seven hundred years of famine, fire and sword, the children of Ireland have been tested to an intensity unknown to the annals of any other people. From the days of the second Henry down to those of the last of the Georges, every device that human ingenuity could encompass or the most diabolical spirit entertain, was brought to bear upon them, not only with a view to insuring their speedy degradation, but with the further design of accomplishing ultimately the utter extinction of their race. Yet, notwithstanding that confiscation, exile and death, have been their bitter portion for ages—notwithstanding that their altars, their literature and their flag have been trampled in the dust, beneath the iron heel of the invader, the pure, crimson ore of their nationality and patriotism still flashes and scintillates before the world; while the fierce heart of "Brien of the Cow Tax," bounding in each and every of them as of yore, years, for yet another Clontarf, when hoarse with the pent-up vengeance of centuries, they shall burst like unpaired tigers upon their ancient and implacable enemy, and, with one, long, wild cry, hurl her bloody and broken from their shores forever.

Had England been simply actuated by a chivalrous spirit of conquest, alone, or moved by a desire to blend the sister islands into one harmonious whole, even then her descent upon Ireland could not be justified in any degree whatever. Ireland had been her *Alma Mater*. According to the venerable Bede and others, her noble and second rank flocked thither in the seventh century, where they were "hospitably received and educated, and furnished with books *without fee or reward*." Even at the present moment, the Irish or Celtic tongue is the only key to her remote antiquities and ancient nomenclature. The distinguished Lhuyd, in his *Archæologia Britannica*, and the celebrated Leibnitz himself, place this latter beyond any possible shadow of doubt. Scarcely a ruined fane or classic pile of any remote date within her borders but is identified with the name of some eminent Irish missionary long since passed away. What would Oxford have been without Joannes Erigena, or Cambridge, deprived of the celebrated Irish monk that stood by the