

pillars of Iona or the Gothic perfections of Holy Cross, in the Irish College of the Propaganda, in the *debris* of Kells and Clonmacnoise, the phantom glories of Monasterboice, the seven ruins of Celtic revelations at Glendalough, in the classic halls of Oxford or Lindesfarne, amidst vanished greatness or rising powers, in the shadows of a once universal propagation of faith and learning, in the ubiquity of a present adherence to the one and dispensation of the other, by the Liffy or the Hudson, from the summit of Sleine-Donard to the banks of the Loire, and back from the peaks of the Alps to the shores of the Shannon—in all climes, in all lands, in all ages since Christianity first came to them—through sunshine and shadow, the children of Erin have clung to the faith of St. Patrick, and have perpetuated the glories of that well-earned title, "The Isle of Saints and Martyrs."

To trace, even roughly, the history of Faith in Ireland, without entering into its numberless vicissitudes and dangers, would demand space that no magazine could possibly afford. Volumes might be written, and still volumes would remain to be penned before the hundredth part of those interesting details could be given. I have no intention of even approaching so gigantic a subject; I merely wish to fill a page of THE OWL's St. Patrick's Day number, and to recall, by an example to the children of our race, the beauties of those ages of Faith. The history of the endless and bitter persecutions to which the Irish people were subjected is too well known to the world to need any recapitulation. The swords of the invaders and the statutes of the Pale, the black raven of the north, and the red flag of the Commonwealth, the venomous hatred of the English, the terrors of Strongbow, the cannon of Cromwell, the victims of Wexford and the broken treaty stone without the Thomond Gate of Limerick, the military brutality and the judicial inhumanity, the hunted priest, the purchased jury, the hedge school and the scaffold, the bribery and the informer's adventures, all these and a thousand other details have been recorded in our histories, sung in our ballads, flung upon the canvas of our painters, traced by our caricaturists, repeated by our wandering minstrels, learned faithfully by our peasants and their children, and have served

to keep alive the torch of faith and to fan into perpetual existence and immortality that gift which St. Patrick confided to our forefathers' keeping centuries and centuries ago.

We are now in the middle of Lent, and we look forward to the coming of Easter. So is it with the Irish race. The Lenten season of over seven hundred years of sorrow and persecution has nearly passed over, the dawning of Easter is at hand, when the Angel of Freedom shall "come down and roll away the stone from the sepulchre" of a nation's liberty, and command her to arise to a glorious Resurrection—and the armed watchers over the sleep they deemed eternal, will grow pallid in their armour, and their swords will fall from their palsied hands. Then in the fires of Freedom's Pentecost, filled with the spirit of more than earthly heroism, "with divers tongues," the children of the Celtic race shall go forth—as of old—to preach to all nations the grandeur of that faith which they had kept throughout all the vicissitudes of the past, and which in turn has guided them, like the fiery pillar of captive Israel, "through the dreary desert of their bondage," and conducted them to the land of their promised triumph.

In no more fitting manner could I illustrate the fidelity with which the Irish people have clung to their national religion than in recalling one of their many pious customs—customs that became as national as the lighting of "Bel-fires" on St. John's eve, or the mid-summer festival of "Lady-Day." Amongst no people are imprecations as well as devotions more prevalent than amongst the Irish. In the Celtic a curse is something fearful: a prayer is something transcendently sublime. The peasant's "God save you kindly," or "May Heaven be your bed," conveys a religious idea, a fervor, that our "Good morning," or "Thank you," pales before. The very slightest and simplest act in the day is usually preceded by an invocation to God or the Blessed Virgin. So accustomed have the people become to thus call upon Heaven for aid, that one is not surprised to hear "God help me," or "Holy Mother!" and such-like expressions used where other people would say "I am in trouble," or "by *this* or *that*!" This habit amongst individuals corresponds strikingly with the custom of uni-