

which he shed his was in so far a conquest of moral power and tended to improve and civilize whatever of the old population was left to mingle with the new. The subjugation by the other races are of a more doubtful character; for though the great improvements of modern times have originated among a population certainly not Celtic, yet the power and consequently the emulation has been among those other races; and the Celts from the smallness of their numbers, the position of their countries, or by direct political hardships, have had not scope for the free development of their energies, but have been, as it were, in the house of political and physical bondage.

Wherever an individual Celt has been brought properly into action, he has displayed a character different from that of the other races, but certainly not inferior to them. The estimate hitherto formed of them was greater energy, but not prolonged endurance—a higher spirit for the moment, but not so long on the wing—more bold daring and practical in the single idea, but not so close in the logic or continuous in the chain! This, if so, may be the result of the Celt being a separate people in language and manners, but no people at all in political status. Without general institutions, public opinion, or anything to rally round as Celts, they have been prevented from forming a Literature, but we are not on that account to suppose them incapable of doing so. Without kings and rulers, that they could call their own, and set by the rulers of other nations, they have had nothing to elevate them as a people, but we are not thence to infer that they are incapable of elevation. Caesar did not, though they were divided into small sects find them an easy conquest. Whatever may have been the cause of their first subjugation, there are among the Celts no traits of inferiority which may not be traced to, and accounted for, by the circumstances in which they have been placed.

The Celtic population of Ireland are in a different position from the Celts inhabiting any other country: they are far more numerous; they have to contend with greater disqualifications; and less attention, up to late years, has been paid

to their education. In Ireland there are it is estimated nearly a million who understand nothing but Irish; and there are several hundred thousand, who have emigrated to the great towns of Britain, who though many of them can speak English, yet prefer their native tongue as the vehicle of their communication with each other. Thus there is a population equal to that of a considerable kingdom among whom the means of instruction in their own literature, and in the useful arts are not circulated; though the laudable attempt now in progress, may be in time productive of good not only to those who aspire to the knowledge of the language for sentimental reasons, but to those who can be reached more effectually by the old Celtic tones. The Irish people have had—and though it be “laid on the shelf,” have still a Literature. It may be conceded that they have not been the instructors of Western Europe, to the whole extent, that the expounders of Irish history, contend any more than the Carthaginian speech in the Roman play is Irish as stated by General Vallancey, or than as others have said the Irish can converse freely with the Basques even though the whole vocabulary, and much of the grammar of the two languages be different. But there are still Irish manuscripts written in the Irish character and there is every probability that they were once more numerous.

Whatever be the subject of those manuscripts they are valuable. They would throw some light upon times and people with regard to whom the world is much in the dark. The very zeal with which down to the seventeenth century the English sought to destroy or conceal the manuscript libraries of Ireland tends to throw an interest over them. Scattered over many parts of Europe—disjointed by the loss or destruction of links belonging to the chain—rendered dim by that portion of fable and allegory which prevailed when all were ignorant and credulous but the few, and those few could not escape a very considerable portion of the contagion—the whole of the ancient Literature of Ireland has not yet been brought before the public in a perfectly authenticated state. As