

of the northern sea, that isle, which, when nearly the whole of Europe was sunk in darkness and ignorance, was the home of learning and culture, from which, as history proudly records, went forth devoted missionaries into the highlands of Scotland, into the forests of Germany and into the wilds of the Alps and the Appenines? (applause). Who, indeed, would not be proud to be able to trace his descent to that isle, upon whose sacred soil famed Iona, fittingly called the nursery of saints and the oracle of the west, became the most renowned centre of Christian learning and missionary zeal in the world, and which for over two centuries was the fount from which radiated light through the darkness of the surrounding heathenism, whose sons — those noble Irish missionaries in the heydey of the great Celtic Church, were not only the apostles of Christianity but instructors in every known branch of science and learning of the time, the possessors and bearers of a higher culture than was at that period to be found anywhere and who, it can be justly said, were the pioneers who laid the corner stone of the whole of western civilization and culture! (Loud applause). Does not history, in fact, record how for some ages Ireland was the chief seat of learning in Christian Europe and how the most distinguished scholars who appeared in other countries were mostly either Irish by birth or had received their education in Irish schools? Are we not told by Bede, the great English scholar and Churchman that in his day it was customary for his English fellow-countrymen of all ranks, from the highest to the lowest, to retire for study and devotion to Ireland, where, he adds, they were all hospitably received, and supplied gratuitously with food, with books and with instruction? (applause). The glory of that age of Irish scholarship and genius is, indeed, imperishable. And from that day to this have gone forth from that historic isle into all parts of the known world men who have gained distinction in every walk of life, — discoverers, colonizers, great empire-builders, statesmen, churchmen, warriors, poets, writers, artists, reformers, saints and heroes, whose names are inscribed in letters of gold on the rolls of glory in every land under the sun. (Loud applause). Well, indeed, may you be proud of your Irish origin. And especially have you reason to be proud because Ireland has ever firmly held aloft the torch of liberty and of freedom. In the darkest days, in the face of defeat, disaster

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