

truer laurels than those to be gained in warfare, in the fields of learning and art and music and architecture and missionary labors.

Does our tenderness for these traditions proceed from a half-acknowledged belief that these tales are but traditions, surrounded with merely the halo of charm with which we associate the fairy tales of the nursery?

If that be indeed the attitude of any here towards this lore of the early centuries of Ireland's history and fame, they lose much, much—for the spirit which is revealed in these tales of romance and chivalry and heroism largely moulded the character of the people, not only then, but for future times; the estimation in which music and literature and art was held, the justice and mercy which distinguished the Brehon laws of those old pagans should be a source of veritable pride to all who can boast of Celtic blood; and the instinct for constitutional government ruling through the will of the people expressed at these tribal and national gatherings which were so central a feature in the life of the times is one which may well claim the attention and admiration of the present generation, who are sometimes tempted to believe that to them belongs the discovery of political freedom.

There could be little scope for tyranny where it was a deep-seated custom that no action could be taken by family or tribe or people without an assembly. If the king or sub-king wanted any special work done by his vassals he called a Mithal Flatha, or "meeting of nobles," to lay it before them. If the head of a tribe wished his followers to join in some