

A SKETCH—THE LAND OF FAITH AND "THE MASS
ON THE OCEAN."

BY JOSEPH K. FORAN.



ANY are the titles that Ireland has received. She has been called "The Land of Heroes and Patriots:" again she is known as the "Land of Song:" but of all those designations the one in which her children most rejoice is that of "The Isle of Saints and Martyrs." The Irish Celts, from time immemorial, have been a God-fearing, Faith-loving people. Long before the advent of Christianity *Juverna* was an Island of Faith. While other nations adored their gods amidst crime, disgusting and bloody rites, persecutions, heartless cruelty and debauchery, Ireland's white-robed Druid stood in his sacred grove and pointed out the glories of a celestial reward. In fancy, like Davis, we can see him "tending the holy fire" in the lower chambers of the imperishable round towers, we can measure "with the Tyrian-taught astronomer the length of their shadows—and almost kneel to the elemental worship with the nobles whose robes had the dye of the Levant, and sailors whose checks were brown with an Egyptian sun, and soldiers whose bronze arms clashed as the trumpets from the lower top said that the sun had risen." Away back in the misty twilight of ages Ireland—the predestined martyr of nations—the one that was to carry the cross of persecution along the *vía dolorosa* of seven centuries—was ripe for the reception of Christianity. She was even then what Dr. Johnson later on called her, "the quiet home of sanctity and learning." There is not a barony in which the Gobhan Saer had not set up a pillar-tower: not a hill-top without its Brehon chair; not a valley or moat or brake without its Ogham stone. Law and religion, human equity and super-human justice were equally recognized, and over the clashing and splintering of spears in the forays of the clans, the

sword of legal authority gleamed, and louder than the war songs of the bards came the hymns to Odin, Thor and Friga, gods and goddesses brought from the chill shores of the northland by the aspirants of Volhalla, the Sea Kings of old!

A day came when the light of Redemption flashed upon Golgotha; its rays—like the beams of the sun—spread out in all directions; they traversed the blackness of European paganism, penetrated the oak groves where worshipped the Druids, tipped with splendor the summits of the Round Towers, and crowned those storied works of a buried time with the radiance of heaven, fell upon the harper's soul and wedded his song to Truth, touched the very genius of a race prepared to receive them, till from all parts of the land arose a hymn of Faith, Hope, Love and Adoration. From the moment St. Patrick set foot upon the soil, from the hour he plucked the triune leaf to illustrate the "Mystery of Mysteries" from that time—as when Moses touched the desert rock and the waters sprang forth—at the touch of the crosier of St. Patrick, a stream of religion burst from the very bosom of the island. It came first slowly meandering along; then leaping in cascades from the hills of time; now gliding under the shadow of a cloud of centuries; now gleaming forth in all the splendor of an approaching emancipation. It followed the children of the "Ancient Race" into every land, and wheresoever it was found it bathed them and the home of their exile in a sea of glory. As Meagher would have said: "The cross, like in Milan, glittered in the haze of battle and pointed to eternity!" In war, in peace, at home, abroad, in the monasteries of Europe, in the wilds of America, in the ruined shrines and shattered aisles of a desolate Irish grandeur, in the cathedrals raised by Irish hands on the Western Hemisphere, in the caverns of Michels-town or the rocky defiles of Connemara, in the Basilicas of Rome, in the broken