

Whilst these scenes of bloodshed were being enacted, and the invaders, under their adventurous leader, were forcing their way slowly but steadily—winning victory after victory; a synod was held at Armagh to consider the unhappy state of the country, and inquire into the causes of this fearful invasion. The decision these venerable prelates came to was quite in keeping with their sacred calling and simple faith. There were no doubt some men, even in those days, who looked at the matter in a more matter-of-fact light, but they regarded it as a visitation called down on the country by the slave-trade which was then, it appears, very actively carried on.

The result of this solemn decision was the enfranchisement of every slave in the country. Still on went the invaders with undiminished success. Wexford and Waterford were captured; and no check was given to their victorious career until they unfurled their banners before the walls of Dublin.

Roderick, monarch of Ireland, witnessed the approach of this intrepid band of conquerors with dismay. The native princes deserted him; and those divisions amongst his followers, to which the evil fate of Ireland has been so frequently attributed, paralysed all action, and rendered the city an easy prey to the enemy. In reading Irish history these instances of internal division and conquest from abroad are constantly occurring, until we are almost tempted to believe the reproach so flippantly urged against the Irish for their dissensions at all times; but the history of any other country weakened by foreign oppression reveals precisely the same state of things. The Irish have had their private feuds, and they have suffered for them, but it is by no means a characteristic peculiarly their own; it is rather a moral feature, which attaches to every country weakened and debased by conquest.

A vigorous siege was opened, and Roderick defended the city as well as he could. At this critical juncture the name of St. Laurence O'Toole appears, who is the model saint on the Irish calendar for holiness and patriotism. Ireland has given birth to many good and great men, whose lives have been

devoted to the service of God's holy Church; but no name brings with it more affectionate reverence than that of St. Laurence O'Toole; for in addition to being a zealous and holy patriot—a hero, as well as a saint. Between the family of O'Toole which was very powerful, and the traitor McMurrrough, there was an old hostility. Lorcan, or Laurence, was at an early age given him as a hostage, but after a short time was released. It appears that he was then placed under the tuition of the Abbot of Glendaloch, St. Kevin, about whom there are innumerable romantic legends. On the death of St. Kevin, St. Laurence succeeded to the abbacy, and was subsequently promoted to the see of Dublin.

St. Laurence O'Toole's life was the very perfection of sanctity. He adhered to the most rigid observances of the Church; and by example, as well as by a firm and judicious administration, he succeeded in crushing abuses and effecting reforms at a time when reform was much needed.

After several days' hard fighting, a breach was effected, and the city captured. St. Laurence during this time was unceasing in his ministrations to the wounded and dying. Even the enemy respected him; and so profound was the influence of his sacred character, that he succeeded in preserving uninjured the books, the vessels, and vestments of the churches. The native troops were broken and dispirited, and their leaders divided. The conquering army of the invaders was enjoying a perfect orgie in the captured city, plundering indiscriminately, and murdering whoever offered any opposition to them. St. Laurence witnessed with bitter feelings the ruin which was going on; and in order to check it he went amongst the native princes, and besought of them to forget their private feuds, and join in a vigorous effort in expelling the invaders. His mission proved a success, and an active blockade of the city was immediately begun, the result of which was that the enemy, reduced by famine and death, offered terms of capitulation. At the suggestion of St. Laurence, these overtures were rejected. He wished to free his country from the adventurers who brought in their track