

But sad to say the splendor of Ireland's sky was soon to be dimmed by the dark lowering clouds of tyranny, oppression and misrule. Early in the sixteenth century, the so-called Reformation gained ascendancy in England, and in due time carried its dire effects into the beautiful sister isle. Then opened a scene such as had never been witnessed even under the most cruel persecutions of the tyrants of old Rome. The whole strength of the British nation was brought into play to force the new religion upon Ireland. The first act of the "reformers" was to close the convents and monasteries which the people long had loved as seats of learning and holiness. Their catholic ancestors had built these religious houses, which had since been consecrated by the lives of a thousand saints within their walls; and when the pretended ministers of the new religion, backed by ferocious English troopers, began to turn out and slay their inmates, close their doors, pillage them, set them on fire, or convert them into private dwellings for an imported aristocracy, is it any wonder that the natives of the green Isle looked with suspicion on the religion thus introduced? But, above all, when they beheld how the inmates of those holy houses were treated, when they saw them cast out upon the world, penniless, persecuted, hunted down, insulted by the soldiery, arrested, cruelly beaten, bound hand and foot, and hung up either before the door of their burning monastery or even in the church itself before the altar, is it any wonder that they were unprepared to receive the new religion? Is it any wonder that when they saw the slightest chance of success, when they saw on the throne of England a man whose Catholic parentage led them to look upon him as a friend,—is it any wonder, I say, that they took up arms against so cruel an imposition? And how noble, indeed, was their cause! Hope of religious freedom is certainly the noblest sentiment that can move

the breast of man, and if there is reason for admiration in the motive which urges men to fight and die for their firesides and their families, how much more is there in that which causes them to place before all their altars and their God? Magnificent, however, as was the object for which they fought, the Irish were not destined to succeed. Outnumbered, impoverished, disappointed and deceived on every side, and shamelessly betrayed even where they trusted most, they were finally overpowered by the infamous and merciless Cromwell. Then began the real wars of Ireland. Then, and for many years afterwards, the Irish by numerous decrees of English kings and parliaments were deprived of everything which a man not guilty of crime has a right to enjoy. Land, citizenship, the right of education, of acquiring property, of living on their own soil,—everything was denied them, and death in every form was decreed in every line of the new Protestant Code, to men, women and even children, whose only crime consisted in remaining faithful to their religion. And yet they lived. True they had but one token of nationality, but that was sufficient to preserve unquenched the sacred fire of true patriotism. They had the wooden altars of their glens, of their marshes, of their mountain fastnesses, where, often before day, a multitude was to be seen kneeling in fervent prayer, and a priest standing under the canopy of heaven amid the profound silence of the holy mysteries. Though the whole island was dotted with churches built, in days gone by, by catholics, but now profaned, in ruins, or devoted to heretical worship, not one of them was allowed to serve as a place where even a fraction of the population might adore their God according to the rites approved by their conscience. There was however a means by which they could have warded off all the calamities and scourges I have described. Had they only bowed to the new dogma of the spiritual supre-