

FORGOTTEN FACTS OF IRISH HISTORY

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Forgotten Facts of Irish History by John Roche Ardill

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JOHN ROCHE ARDILL

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BY

JOHN ROCHE ARDILL, LL.D.

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INTRODUCTORY.

LOVE of one's country is generally accompanied by a knowledge of its history.

In Ireland, where this love prevails to an exceptional degree, we might expect to find an intimacy with Irish history exceptionally wide-spread and accurate.

This expectation is all the more reasonable because of the existence of bitter religious and political strife concerning, chiefly, wrongs and tyrannies alleged to have been inflicted in the past.

Nations, or communities, no matter how bad their motives may be, do not, as a rule, engage in warlike conflict until they have carefully inquired into the subjects concerning which their disputes have arisen.

To this rule the treatment which Irish history has received forms a remarkable and painful exception.

The animosities for which the country is notorious are almost wholly the outcome of events within the last seven hundred years, that is, during English rule in Ireland; yet the history of the greater part of that period is, to the masses of the Irish people, a sealed book.

Close on four hundred years elapsed from the Conquest to the Reformation, and during that long period the relations between the two sections of the inhabitants attained to a clear and well-defined character—the English despising and crushing the

Irish and Anglo-Irish, and these, in return, hating and rebelling against the English.

It is needless to say that the ideas, customs, social and racial controversies and party divisions which, in the progress of time, had become habitual—and “habit is second nature”—could, in no case, be easily and hastily rooted out. Those national characteristics which had been given four centuries to spring up and gain strength must continue to exert their influence for good or evil until, perhaps, four additional centuries have expired.

No unprejudiced critic will refuse to admit that up to the present time Ireland continues to reap from the seeds which her rulers scattered with a lavish hand during the first four hundred years after she had come under external control.

A remarkable feature of the case is, that during that period all parties who had to do with Ireland—both the rulers and the ruled—were, in religion, under the sole and continuous authority of the Roman Catholic Church, and it will scarcely be denied that the political power of that Church was never so great in Ireland—or, perhaps, in any part of the world except Italy—as during that time.

On the other hand Ireland during her later history, that is, since the Reformation, has been governed by rulers who were in constant protest against some essential parts of the Roman Catholic Creed, and, consequently, hostile to that Church.

It is, therefore, manifestly unfair to judge the history of Ireland under Protestant rule without giving close attention to her history under Roman rule. Protestants must have been largely the reapers of what Roman Catholics were the sowers.

Yet it is a fact that modern critics are as oblivious

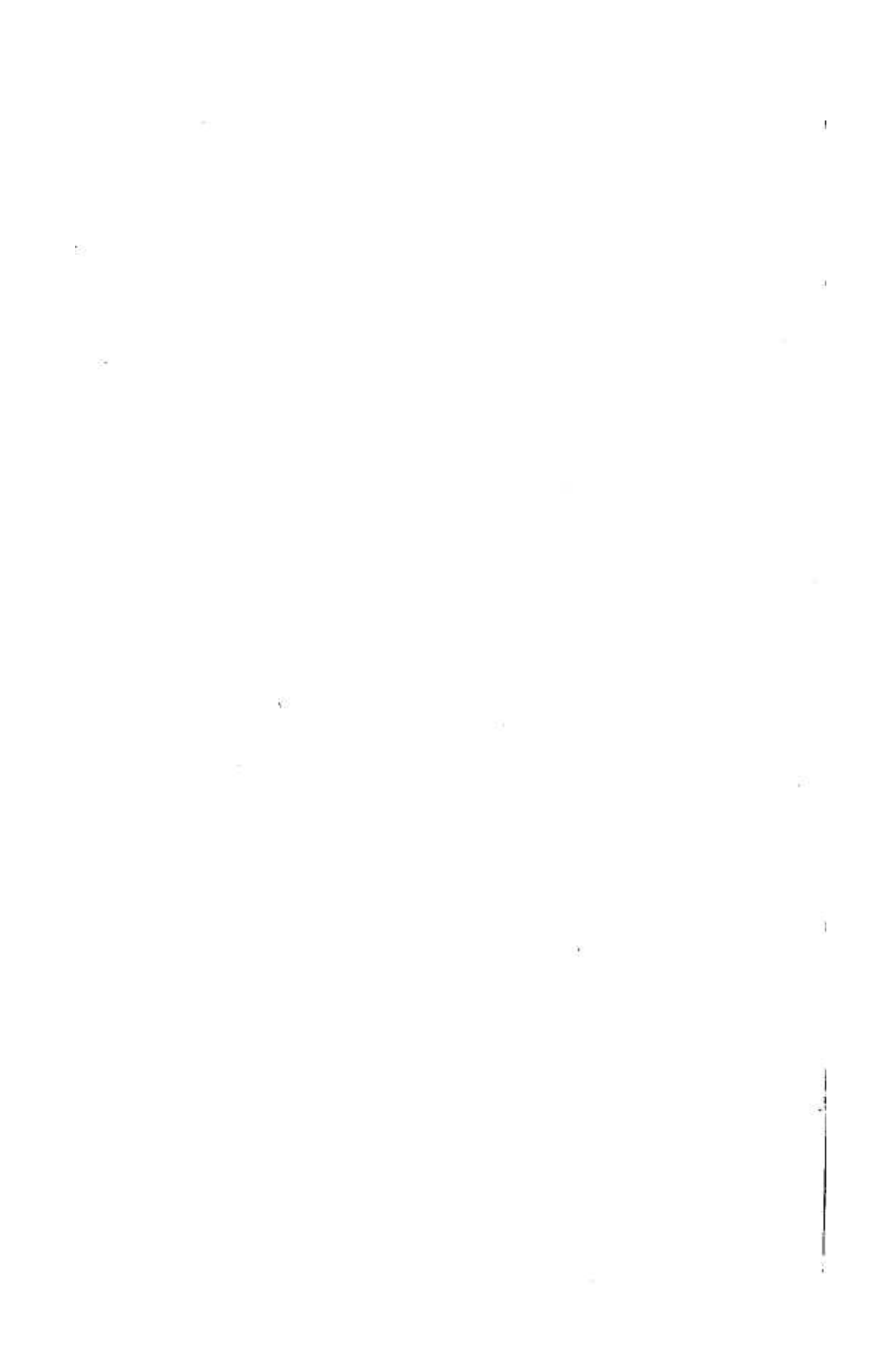
to Roman Catholic rule in Ireland, both as regards its character and its results, as if they had entered into a conspiracy of silence in this respect.

It is no uncommon thing to find writers and speakers in the present day uttering declamatory censures on "the cruel oppression" and "the terrific persecution" which Irish Roman Catholics have suffered under Protestant rulers, while, at the same time, no thought whatever is given to the kind of religious and political legacy which these rulers inherited from predecessors who, during four centuries, had impressed upon social and public life in Ireland a stamp—a character—which, in the very nature of things, it would, under the most favourable conditions, take some further centuries to undo.

My object in writing the following pages is to call attention to the partial, one-sided and sectarian treatment which popular Irish history has received, and to the misunderstandings which have arisen therefrom, with the hope that, in the time to come, this deeply important subject may attract, from the ranks especially of the Irish people, an ever-increasing number of searchers after "the whole Truth."

JOHN ROCHE ARDILL.

SLIGO, *August*, 1905.



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