

THE WORLD'S DEBT TO THE IRISH

decorative art to the light of civilization. Then came the Italians with their wonderful work in the earlier and later Renaissance in all departments of human endeavor.

The story of the influence of these five people in the history of civilization covers the last 3500 years—the all important epoch for modern development—so effectively as to make the contributions of other peoples of but minor importance. These are the beacon lights of the race. Other nations may rise in their turn to claim a place in the progress of the race but down to the present these five people occupy the field of the history of civilization in its course down the ages so completely that they must be considered the protagonists of the movement so far above others in import that there are scarcely seconds to them.

The story of the Irish contribution to civilization which is by far the least known of all needs to be told in condensed form to our generation for it is only in very recent years that the materials for the tale have been available. What a supremely unbelievable thing it is to most people to have it said seriously, that for several centuries of the earlier Middle Ages whenever a man anywhere in western Europe north of central Italy could talk or write Greek, he owed it to an Irishman or to someone who had been taught by an Irishman. From the sixth to the tenth centuries of the Christian era, the Irish were the teachers of the West. Immediately after the conversion to Christianity of the Irish people,