

ARTICLE II.

ST. PATRICK, AND THE PRIMITIVE IRISH CHURCH.¹

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IRELAND, called originally Hibernia and Scotia,² was almost a *terra incognita* to the ancients. Lying outside of Britain and Gaul, the Roman conquests did not reach it; and although some traditions of its fertility and beauty came to the knowledge of the Grecian mariners, it was, as to all useful purposes, an unknown country.

Its first settlers, like those of Gaul and Britain, were Celts. We know but little of the early history of this people. They seem to have constituted the first wave of immigration which rolled over from Asia into northern and western Europe. Through all their vicissitudes the Celts have been a peculiar people. Impulsive, light-hearted, fond of poetry, revelry, and song, they differ widely from the Slaves, the Saxons, the Teutons, and the original inhabitants of Germany. They still occupy, as they have ever done, Wales, Ireland, and a considerable part of France.

The religion of this people, in their heathen state, was that of the Druids. This was a frightful, awful system, involved in deep mystery, inspiring terror, and well fitted to hold in subjection a turbulent and reckless people. It permeated their whole political and social state, forming their minds, their customs, and laws, and causing its influence to be felt everywhere, from the cottage to the throne.

¹ The authorities which I have chiefly consulted in preparing this Article, are Usher's Works, Vol. i.; Todd's Life of St. Patrick, with a Review of the same in the London Quarterly for April, 1866; Neander's Memorials; Ebrard's Manual, Vol. i.; and especially "A History of the Irish Primitive Church, with the Life of St. Patrick, by Daniel de Vinne."

² Archbishop Usher affirms that until the eleventh century, the name of Ireland was Scotia, and its inhabitants were called Scots.

The Druidical priests secluded themselves as much as possible from the view of others. They dwelt in impenetrable forests, dens, and caverns, and practised their religious rites in the greatest secrecy. They are said to have been worshippers of the oak, and when their sacred tree was cut down, would deify its shapeless stump. The misseltoe, a parasite clinging to the boughs of the oak, was also an object of high veneration. Their sacrifices were offered in thick groves of oak, and on some occasions in temples, or more properly enclosures, formed of massy stones. Several of these cromlechs or enclosures are still standing in different parts of England and Ireland. It will give us a sufficiently dreadful idea of the rites of the Druids to know that they were in the frequent, if not constant, practice of offering human sacrifices. The victims were generally selected from among criminals; but when these were wanting, they did not scruple to sacrifice innocent persons. Lucan describes a grove in which the Druids performed their rites; and, after stating that the trees were so thick and interwoven that the rays of the sun could scarcely penetrate them, he adds: "There was nothing to be seen there but a multitude of altars, upon which the Druids sacrificed human victims, whose blood had turned the very trees to a horrid crimson color."

Such then was the religion of the earliest inhabitants of Britain and Ireland; and such it might have been to this day, had not these countries been visited by missionaries, and blessed with the rising light of the gospel.

Christianity was introduced into England, perhaps in the first century, but it did not reach Ireland, in a way to make an impression there, until near the middle of the fifth century. There may have been individual Christians there at an earlier period, but the country cannot be said to have been *Christianized* till the time of St. Patrick, who is with great propriety denominated "the Apostle of Ireland."

There is, perhaps, no distinguished individual of the ancient church of whom modern Christians know so little, and of whom the views commonly entertained are so erroneous, as St. Patrick.

We hear it said that he drove the snakes and toads out of Ireland, and performed other things equally marvellous and ridiculous; and this is about all that we know of him. We see our Roman Catholic friends celebrating his Saint's day with revelry and song, and lavishing upon him, we had almost said, their worship and we think of him as a pre-eminently good Catholic — an obedient servant of the bishop of Rome. Whereas, he was never a Romanist in any sense. He has nothing to say of the Pope of Rome, and never acknowledged the slightest subjection to him. He was a humble, devoted missionary of the cross, not altogether free from superstition, but yet of the genuine apostolic stamp. He was one of the most successful missionaries of the primitive age; and when he died, the fruits of his labors remained to testify of him, for hundreds of years.

The reason why we know so little of St. Patrick, and why the views commonly entertained of him are so erroneous, is, that we hear of him only through the legends of Roman Catholic writers, in their *Acta Sanctorum*, "Lives of Saints," written hundreds of years after his death, and filled (as their custom is) with marvels, and miracles, in place of reliable facts.

Nearly all that we do know of St. Patrick is derived from his own writings, and he wrote but little. He has left only two well authenticated pieces, his "Confession," and his "Epistle to Caracticus." Others have been ascribed to him, but they are spurious.¹ His Confession is, to some extent, an autobiography; for it narrates his birth, his captivity, his conversion, his call to Ireland, and his trials and labors there; and this is nearly all that we know concerning him.

There has been much dispute as to the place of his nativity. He says: "I had Calphurnius, a deacon, for my father, who was the son of Potitus, heretofore a presbyter, who lived in the village of Banavem in Taburnia; for he had a little farm there, where I was captured." But where was this little village of Banavem in Taburnia, in which the ancestors of

¹ Some hymns have been attributed to him, but their authority is doubtful

St Patrick lived? Some think it was in Scotland, and others in Gaul, but the probability is that it was somewhere in Britain: For on his return from his captivity in Ireland, he speaks of visiting his parents in Brittany.¹ This seems to have been their home, and here he was born, unless they had changed their residence during his absence. He is supposed to have been born about the year 387.

It is commonly said that his name at the first was Succath or Succathus. It may have been so; but we see no objection to its having been Patricius. Patricius, to be sure, is a Roman name; and he tells us, in his epistle to Caracticus, that his father was of Roman descent, and had held the office of decurion, or municipal senator. Hence it is not unlikely that he would give his son a Roman name. In his Confession the writer calls himself Patricius; and we incline to the opinion that this was his original name.²

The first sixteen years of his life Patrick (for we will now drop the saint) spent with his parents. And, as his father and grandfather were not only Christians, but officers in the church of Christ,—the one a presbyter, and the other a deacon,—it is pretty certain that he was religiously educated. He was made acquainted with the great truths and facts of the gospel; though they seem not to have exerted a saving power upon his heart.

In the barbarous times of which we speak, it was not uncommon for freebooters to cross the narrow sea between England and Ireland, one way and the other, plunder the inhabitants, and carry some of them into captivity. In one of these marauding expeditions Patrick was taken captive, carried into Ireland, and sold as a slave. His master's name was Milcho. He lived in a part of Dalriada, now included in the county of Antrim. Patrick's business during his captivity was that of a shepherd; he kept his master's

¹ Brittany in Gaul received its name from the Britons who settled there after the Saxon invasion of England. St. Patrick was born long before this.

² How he came by his saintship it is hard to say. He could not have been canonized by the church of Rome, until five or six hundred years after his death.

sheep. The situation was favorable to reflection, and he remained in it six years. And here it was that he began to think upon his ways, and turn his feet unto God's testimonies. It was here that he became a child of God. The story of his conversion must be given in his own words: "My constant employment was to feed the flocks. I was frequent in prayer. The love and the fear of God more and more inflamed my heart. My faith and fervor were increased, so that I prayed a hundred times a day, and almost as many by night. I rose before day to my prayers, in the snow, in the frost, and in the rain, and received no damage. Nor was I affected with dulness or slothfulness; for the Spirit of the Lord was hot within me."

This account of his early experience is both scriptural and rational. His heart was warm with the love of God; he was full of the spirit of prayer; he was quickened and happy in the house of his bondage.

Patrick obtained his liberty at the close of the sixth year; but how, we are not informed. Some have thought that there was a law among the ancient Irish, like that of the Hebrews, by which those in servitude went out at the end of the sixth year.

A little before his release Patrick dreamed that he was about to return to his parents, and that on the seashore was a vessel ready to take him over. When he came to the shore he found the vessel; but on applying for a passage, he was refused. He retired, and began to pray; and before he had gone far, one of the sailors ran after him, and offered him a passage. After a voyage of three days they reached land, and immediately commenced their journey through the wilderness, which took them twenty-eight days. While on their journey the provisions of the company failed; and the captain appealed to Patrick, as a Christian, that he would pray to God for food. He did so; and on that same day they found a herd of swine, and on the following day, some wild honey.

About this time Patrick was again made a prisoner; but

his captivity was short. His enemies retained him only two months. "I prayed for deliverance," says he, "and the Lord delivered me out of their hands." At length he reached his parents in Britain, who joyfully received him, and besought him never again to leave them.

Patrick was now at home, a new man spiritually, filled with the love of God, and burning with a desire to advance his kingdom; and here he remained about twenty years. How he employed these years, and through what changes and trials he was called to pass, he has not informed us. Without doubt he was much engaged in the study of the Bible, and in preparing himself for usefulness as a minister of Christ. He may have travelled into Gaul; for he tells us, late in life, how much he desired to see his "Gallician brethren," as well as his relations in Britain. It can hardly be doubted that during this interval Patrick was ordained to the work of the ministry; but where ordained, and by whom, we do not know. It is not likely that he accepted a pastoral charge. Like Timothy and Titus, he was ordained an evangelist, and held himself in readiness to enter any door of usefulness which the Lord should open.

Patrick's mediæval biographers fill up these twenty years of his life with a great variety of incidents, according as their wishes or their fancies dictate. He went to a monastery in Gaul, and there placed himself under the tuition of St. Germaine; and finally he went to Rome, where he received his commission for Ireland from Pope Celestine. But all this is said, not only without the slightest authority, but against all the probabilities of the case. The truth is, Patrick was not a learned man, even according to the standard of the age in which he lived.¹ Of course, he cannot be supposed to have enjoyed great opportunities for learning. And as to his visit to Rome, it is one of the most improbable conjectures that ever entered the head of a Romanist. He says nothing about such a visit; but many things in regard to his return to Ireland which are

¹ In his Confession, he speaks of himself as *indoctus*.

entirely inconsistent with it. He received his commission, as we shall see, from a very different source. Patrick lived ages before the Papal system was fully developed, and seems not to have known or cared much about it.

Near the close of his residence with his parents Patrick had a dream which made a great impression upon him, and which he ever afterwards considered as a call from God to return to Ireland, and attempt the conversion of that heathen people. "I saw, in my dream, a man coming to me from Ireland, whose name was Victoricus, bringing with him a great number of letters. He gave me one of them to read, in the beginning of which were these words: *Vox Hibernonacum*, 'the Irish call.' While I was reading the letter, I heard the voice of the inhabitants who lived by the woods of Foclut, near the eastern sea, crying to me, and saying: 'We entreat thee, holy youth, to come and walk among us.' I was distressed in my heart, and could read no further. Then I awoke."

Like the great Apostle to the Gentiles, Patrick "was not disobedient to the heavenly vision." He concluded at once that it was his duty to return to Ireland, and conduct a mission there. The thought of returning was, at the first, not agreeable to him. "I did not go to Ireland of my own free-will, but was every day against it, until I was brought down. I prayed mightily, with groaning, that I might be excused; but something thus spake to me: 'Who hath laid down his life for thy sake.' Then I remembered the words of the apostle: 'The Spirit helpeth our infirmities.'"

Patrick's parents and other friends tried to dissuade him from going to Ireland, but in vain: "I left my country, my parents, and the many rewards which had been offered me, and, with tears and weeping, displeased some who were older than myself. But I did not act contrary to my vow. And, so God directing me, I consented to no one. I yielded to none of them, nor to what was grateful to myself. God had overcome and restored all other matters, so that I went to Ireland, to the heathen, to preach to them the gospel."

Patrick was now forty-three years of age. He selected a few pious associates to accompany him, and left his home and country to return no more. The place in Ireland where he landed was then called Inver Dea, supposed to be the present port of Wicklow. Wherever he turned, he found only the institutions and practices of Druidism. At first, his efforts were apparently successful; but soon an opposition arose against him and his companions, and they were obliged to fly to their boats.

Patrick frequently speaks of the persecutions he was called to endure in the early part of his ministry in Ireland: "God very often delivered me out of servitude, out of twelve perils in which my life was in danger, besides many snares which I am unable to express in words. . . . At a certain time they desired to kill me; but my time had not yet come. They seized everything they found with us, and bound me with fetters; but on the fourteenth day the Lord delivered me out of their power, and whatever they had taken from us they returned to us again."

The government of Ireland, at the time of Patrick's mission, though one of the worst for the people, was, on the whole, favorable to the success of his labors. A number of petty princes — independent of each other, and almost independent of the sovereign — governed the entire country; so that, if rejected in one province, he might fly to another, and be secure, for the time, from his persecutors.

It is evidence of the unflinching courage of Patrick that he sometimes attended the great heathen festivals, and proclaimed the gospel to the multitudes there assembled. At an early period of his mission we find him at the annual festival at Tara, where the king, the chieftains, and many thousands had come together to celebrate their heathen rites. He was brought before the king and his princes to speak for his Master and defend his cause; and though not many were at the time converted, the occasion was one of great importance. For there were present here numbers from almost every part of the island, who, on their return, could tell of the wonderful things which they had heard at Tara.

In journeying from Tara to Connaught, Patrick went out of his way that he might address the multitudes generally assembled in a place called "The Valley of Slaughter," which was a haunt of cruelty and superstition, on the plains of Leitrim. On this beautiful plain there stood the grim idol, *Cean Groith*, "the Head of the Sun," which was, in reality, the Moloch of the West, and which was served with the same horrid rites that the one in the East had been, in the days of Ahaz and Manasseh. This idol was a hewed stone, capped with gold, around which stood twelve smaller stones. To this image the people sacrificed the first-born of their cattle and, on great occasions, the first-born of their children.

In this dreadful place Patrick lifted up his voice for Christ, and for the first time declared to the mute and terror-stricken thousands the character of the true God; that he delighted not in sufferings, but that his tender mercies are over all his works. We have no details of this meeting, but we may judge of it from its results; for, in a few years, this horrid idol was removed, and in place of it was erected a Christian church.

From Leitrim Patrick passed into the north of Ireland. Wherever he went the effects of the great meeting at Tara were visible. Through the information which had gone out from it, his way was prepared before him. His mission was understood, and thousands flocked to welcome him, and to hear his joyful message. No one appeared to oppose him; for the uprising of the masses was so general that all opposition seemed useless.

We have no consecutive account of the journeys of Patrick, and cannot tell how long he remained at the different parts of the island which he visited. While in the North, where he had been so busied and honored, he turned aside, with his company, and went up into a mountain, which was long called Patrick's mountain. Here, like his divine Master, he spent some time in seclusion and rest, as well as in fasting and prayer, for the blessing of God on himself and

his mission. "This visit, and the accompanying circumstances, were afterwards made the occasion of a world-wide fable. In his high retreat, Patrick and his companions made themselves booths, and were visited every night by flocks of sea-fowls, that perched on the trees around them. These harmless creatures were transformed by the imaginations of his monkish biographers of the eleventh century, into so many demons, which came to disturb the missionaries in their devotions. This occurrence is supposed to have given rise to the fable of St. Patrick's expulsion of the snakes and toads from Ireland."¹

It was at this time, after an absence of nearly thirty years, that Patrick visited his old home, the place of his captivity. His former master, Milcho, he did not see, but he saw the mountain on which he had fed his flocks, and where he had so often resolved and prayed.

During one of his visits to the North, he met a vast number of people gathered together, in consequence of the death of the provincial chief, and for the purpose of electing a successor. Here was another opportunity for Patrick to preach, and he diligently improved it for several successive days. We have no particular account of this great meeting, but all his biographers agree that it was an occasion of much interest. Thousands are said to have been converted, and great numbers of them were baptized.

From this time the Apostle of Ireland seems to have enjoyed almost uninterrupted success. The Lord had given him such favor in the eyes of the people, that they were willing to give, not only themselves, but their service and substance, to further the cause of Christ. Henceforth, say his biographers, he passed extensively through the island, establishing churches and schools, and diffusing the knowledge of salvation to thousands, who had long sat in the valley and shadow of death.

During the ministry of Patrick in Ireland, an event

¹ This fable first appeared in Joseline's Life of St. Patrick, in the eleventh century.

occurred which throws some light upon the civil and ecclesiastical affairs of the fifth century. Caracticus, a British chieftain, and nominally a Christian, made a descent upon the west coast of Ireland, and carried off and sold to the Picts, a number of the converts whom Patrick had baptized. The missionary despatched a messenger after him, requiring that he should instantly release those captives and return them to their homes. The demand was treated with contempt; whereupon Patrick issued the following rescript: "To all who fear God: these murderers and robbers are excommunicated and separated from Christ. The faithful, therefore, will not eat or drink with them, nor receive their offerings, till they shall have liberated these servants and hand-maidens of Christ." Patrick subscribes this proclamation as "a bishop in Ireland," and requests that it might be read to the people, and to the soldiers of Caracticus, that they might heed it, and turn to the Lord.¹

Patrick's last days were spent between Armagh and Sabhull, which, in Irish, means, *the barn*. It was near the site of the present Down Patrick, and was the spot where he opened his mission to the Irish people. While on a visit to this place, he was seized with his last sickness. He desired to reach Armagh, the centre of his missionary operations, but was unable. Thus Sabhull, the place where he commenced his mission, was now, after thirty-four years of unremitting and successful labor, the very place in which he triumphantly closed it. He died on March the 17th, A.D. 465, in the seventy-eighth year of his age. The anniversary of his death has ever been celebrated by the Irish, not only in their own green isle, but in other parts of the world, to which the wars and the oppression in their own ill-governed country have driven them.

Some years before his death, Patrick wrote his Confession. The following extracts from this invaluable document will show the state of the writer's mind, and the spirit in which

¹ It is not certain that Patrick was a bishop in the Episcopal sense. The terms "bishop" and "presbyter" were used interchangeably in the primitive church.

he left the world: "You know," says he to the Irish people, "and God knows, what kind of behavior I have had with you from my youth, in the belief of the truth, and in the sincerity of my heart. Moreover, in every province where I have been, I have made known my faith unto the people, and will make it known. God knows that I have defrauded none of them, nor have I stirred up any one against them through all our persecutions, lest on my account the name of the Lord might be blasphemed. When I had baptized so many thousands of the people, I might, perhaps, have expected from some of them a small compensation. Tell me if I have received aught, and I will pay it back. Or when I have ordained ministers, if I have asked from any of them, even the price of a pair of shoes, tell me, and I will return to you more than I received."

"And now I commend my soul to God, who is faithful, for whom, in reproach, I have performed this mission. I pray God that he may give unto me perseverance, that I may bear for him a faithful testimony, until my transition to my God."

"This sun which we now see, by the help of God will rise for us every day; but he will never reign, neither will his splendor be lasting. But we believe in and worship the true Sun, Jesus Christ our Lord, who will never pass away; who made all things by his own will, and shall remain forever. He reigns with God the Father Omnipotent, and with the Holy Spirit, before the worlds were, and now, and will reign through all ages of ages, Amen."

I have said already that Patrick was in no sense a Romanist. His form of Christianity, like that of Gaul and of the old British church, was from Asia, and not from Rome. In its origin it was Grecian, and not Romish. And hence we see why he makes no reference to the bishop of Rome, or to any of the particulars of the Romish worship. He has nothing to say of pilgrimages or relics, of praying to the saints or the virgin Mary. He never applies the prefix "Saint," to any one, not even to the apostles, or the four evangelists.

Unlike the Romanists, Patrick was emphatically a man of *one book*; and that book was the Bible. He loved, and studied, and earnestly recommended the holy scriptures. In his Confession, which is but a short tract, we have no less than twenty-five quotations from the Bible.

And what was true of him was equally true of his followers, for many generations. The pastors and missionaries who came up under his influence, and who labored, as we shall see, to spread the gospel in the surrounding countries, were all of them pre-eminently Bible Christians. They took their religion from the Bible; they supported it by the Bible; nor would they be turned from it by any other authority; and hence their protracted controversies with the emissaries of Rome.

We have seen already that the success of Patrick's ministry, more especially the latter part of it, was very great. One authority says that he ordained three hundred and sixty bishops in Ireland; and no one makes the number less than three hundred and fifty. Of course, these were not diocesan bishops, but plain native pastors and missionaries, such as he had trained up and stationed in different parts of his rude and extended field. If they possessed, in any considerable degree, the spirit of their master, it is no wonder that Christianity speedily took the place of Druidism, and prevailed in all parts of the island.

Respecting the government of the early churches of Ireland we know but little. The Book of Armagh says: "They had one head, who was Christ; and one leader who was Patri-cius." Archbishop Usher tells us that "all the affairs of their bishops and churches were managed at home. They were too poor, and too much secluded, to attract the attention of foreign bodies, and they grew up, carrying out that form of Christianity in which their leader had instructed them." They studied their Bibles, and followed them, and knew little of the changes and innovations which were going on in other parts of the world.

We read, occasionally, of synods among these churches,
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and it is likely that in these assemblies their ecclesiastical affairs were chiefly regulated. It would be pleasant to know who composed these synods, what was their order, and what their particular canons or rules. We can only presume that they were of the simplest kind, and that during the life of Patrick, they were under his immediate direction. We have the decrees of a synod at Armagh, convened in the year 464, which are thought to be genuine. They are chiefly directed, as we might expect they would be, against the observance of heathenish practices which still lingered among the people, such as the following of soothsayers and fortune-tellers, and consulting the entrails of beasts. Celibacy was at this time agitated in other places, but the controversy seems not to have reached Ireland, or perhaps Britain, where Patrick was born, for his father and grandfather, though both of them ministers, were married men.

The Book of Armagh, an accredited work of the seventh century, gives us some valuable information respecting the Irish church, after Patrick's death. It divides the history of this church into three periods; the first reaching from its commencement in the year 432, to the time of Columba, in 534; the second from the time of Columba to the year 600; and the third from that year to the writer's own time. "The first period," he says, "was most holy; the second very holy; and the third holy. The first shone like the sun, the second like the moon, and the third like the stars."

The church in Armagh was built in 455, and was probably the first edifice of the kind in Ireland. The structure, no doubt, was small, and was formed of humble and frail materials, which soon passed away; but other houses of worship succeeded it, and though often plundered and destroyed, yet for fourteen hundred years, the site which Patrick selected has never been long without a church upon it. It is commonly said that Patrick was archbishop of Armagh, and that Benignus was his successor; but this is all fiction. There were no archbishops, prelates, dioceses, and other appendages of a hierarchy known in Ireland before the eleventh century.

Patrick and his successors were the patrons, not only of religion, but of learning. Wherever they could collect a congregation they founded a school in connection with it. In their commencement, these were common schools, resorted to by pupils of all classes; but at a later period, many of them assumed a theological character, from which issued ministers and missionaries for the churches. In a little time they became eminent (or some of them did) for learning and religion, and were resorted to by students from other countries. In the *Literary History of France*, it is said: "The Irish people, living in the ends of the earth, and not being exposed to revolutions, have done more to preserve and promote learning, than all other parts of Europe." The *Pictorial History of England* says that, "from the eighth to the tenth centuries, and down to a later date, the chief seat of learning in Europe was Ireland, and the most distinguished scholars in other countries were either Irishmen, or those who had been educated in Irish schools."

During the dark ages, the monastery or seminary at Armagh was the most celebrated seat of learning in Western Europe, having at one time no less than seven thousand students. In the year 846, this noble seminary was destroyed by the Danes, and its students were carried into captivity; but in the next generation it was rebuilt, and its reputation became greater than before.

The institution at Armagh was but one among many which sprang up in Ireland in these primitive times. There was Clonard Abbey, founded about the year 500, and situated on the river Boyne. Bede says that "crowds came to it from other kingdoms, that they might receive instruction and lead a holier life." There was Clonmacnois, situated on an island in the Shannon, "long celebrated as one of the silent and gloomy retreats of the Druids, but now reverberant with the sound of prayer and praise." There was Bangor, situated on the heights of Ulster, founded in the year 550. It sent out hundreds of scholars and missionaries into central Europe, among whom was Columbanus and Gallus. The

monastery or school at Derry was founded in 555, and that at Glendolough in 618.

The course, and the end, of these celebrated institutions was much the same. They flourished and were eminently useful for a time, after which they were plundered, first, by the Danes, and then by the invading Saxons from England, and thus were subverted and destroyed.

Among the missionaries which went forth from the schools of Ireland, the first to be noticed is Columba. He was born at Donegal, A.D. 521, and was educated at Clonard Abbey, where he was distinguished for piety and learning, and especially for his knowledge of the holy scriptures. Before he went abroad on his mission he travelled extensively in Ireland, calling upon men, wherever he went, to repent and believe the gospel. At the age of forty-three, the same at which Patrick commenced his mission, Columba selected twelve associates, and embarked for the neighboring coasts of Scotland, having in view a mission to the northern Picts.¹ At first he met with much opposition from the Pictish king; but Columba was not a man to be driven back. He persevered in his endeavors, until the king was won over to the truth, and began to exhort his people to follow his example. After this achievement, Columba and his companions extended their labors over the hills and through the glens of that wild and sparsely-settled country, bringing to its barbarous inhabitants, for the first time, the humanizing doctrines of the gospel. Many of them were converted and baptized.

To reward the missionaries for their disinterested exertions, the king put them in possession of the little island of Iona, lying on the outer shore of Mull, one of the principal of the Hebrides or Western islands. On reaching their island, their first object was to build themselves huts, and to erect a little church. But as the fame of their enterprise spread, and numbers resorted to them for instruction, these original structures soon gave place to others of a more permanent

¹ The Picts were not of Celtic origin, but are supposed to have descended from the Scythians.

character. In a little time, Iona was covered with cloisters and churches, and became the residence of a numerous body of teachers and students. The institution was supported partly by charitable contributions, and partly by the labor of the inmates; being modelled after the pattern of the schools in Ireland.

The course of study at Iona was eminently scriptural. It is recorded of Columba, that "he was much devoted to the study of the holy scriptures." He taught his pupils to confirm their doctrines by the Bible, and to receive that alone as of divine authority which was so established. The consequence was, that the students at Iona were simple Bible Christians, uncontaminated with the superstitions which were then prevailing in other parts of the Christian world. The venerable Bede, though not of this party, bears ample testimony to their pureness of doctrine, their sanctity of life, and also to their learning. "They were bound," he says, "to exercise themselves in the reading of scripture, and in the learning of psalms. They would receive those things only as matter of doctrine which are contained in the writings of the prophets, the apostles, and evangelists."

After the commencement of his great establishment at Iona, Columba did not desist altogether from personal missionary labors. We hear of him, at a certain time, in the neighborhood of Inverness, among his old friends, the Picts, where he preached to the rude inhabitants through an interpreter. But his principal influence, from this time, was by means of those who had been trained for usefulness under his instructions. These, with their successors, were the Culdees, of whom we hear so much in the Middle Ages. They penetrated into every part of Scotland, so that, before the close of the sixth century, the mass of the people were nominally converted. They preached also in Ireland, in Wales, in some parts of the Belgic provinces, and also in Germany. They extended their labors to the north of England, and aided essentially in the conversion of the Anglo-Saxons, who now governed that country. And they would

have done more for this turbulent people, but that they encountered here a class of missionaries from Rome, with whom they disagreed on many points, and by whom they were compelled to retire into Scotland.

Columba presided over the institution at Iona till his death, in the year 599. He was succeeded by Adamnanus, who wrote his life.

In process of time several other establishments grew up in Scotland, constituted after the model of Iona. One was at Abernethy, another at Dunkeld, another at St. Andrews, and others at Dunblane, Monimusk, and Scone. It is thought by some writers that not less than a hundred of these establishments came into being in different parts of Europe in the next four hundred years. The missionaries from these schools were found in every part of the British islands, and beyond them, and constituted a noble body of teachers and preachers. They were distinguished for their love of the Bible, for the simplicity of their faith and worship, and for their steady and persevering opposition to the usurpations and superstitions of the church of Rome.

Next to Columba, the most distinguished Irish missionary of these times was Columbanus. He went first to France, taking with him, as Columba had done, twelve young men to be his assistants — men who had been trained under his influence. But not finding here an open door, he went to the pagans of Upper Burgundy, near the foot of the Alps, and took up his dwelling in the ruins of an old castle. For a time he and his companions suffered for the necessaries of life; but when they had broken up the rugged soil, and brought it under cultivation, their wants were supplied, and the mission became self-supporting. Here Columbanus resided twenty years, establishing schools, preaching the gospel, and in other ways performing the work of an evangelist. But at length, through his fidelity, he had the misfortune to displease the king of the country, by whom his establishment was broken up, and he was ordered to return to Ireland. This, however, he did not do, but repaired, first to Germany

and then to Switzerland. He spent a year near Lake Constance; laboring among the Suevi, a heathen people in that vicinity. This territory coming, at length, under the dominion of his enemies, he crossed the Alps into Lombardy, and founded a school near Pavia. Here this unwearied missionary passed the remainder of his days. He died in the autumn of 615, at the age of seventy-two.

Gallus, a favorite pupil and follower of Columbanus, did not go with him into Italy, but remained in Switzerland. He also was an Irishman, and like his master had a great love for the sacred volume. In what was then a wilderness, he founded a monastery, which "led to the clearing up of the forest and the turning of the land into a fruitful field." The Canton of St. Gall received its name from him. He died in the year 640. His monastery was distinguished for the number and beauty of the manuscripts prepared in it, many of which are still preserved in the libraries of Germany.

Other and later Irish missionaries, who labored in different places on the continent, were Fridolinus, Furseus, Livinius, Killian, and Virgilius. These and their associates were faithful men, who shunned no toils or dangers in the service of Christ. Several of them laid down their lives for his sake. Virgilius was a philosopher, as well as Christian. He taught, among other things, the rotundity of the earth, and its diurnal revolution. This was five hundred years before the time of Galileo. For his discovery Virgilius, like Galileo, was accused and persecuted. The Pope decided that "if Virgilius did really hold that the earth was round, and that men lived on the other side of it, a Council should be called, and he should be excommunicated."

For the first three hundred years after the death of Patrick, secluded Ireland seems to have enjoyed general peace and prosperity. Her schools were increased in number and improved in character; her pastors were laboring faithfully at home, and her missionaries were toiling in other lands. It was at this time that she became, what she was proverbially called, "an island of saints."

In this period, while Ireland enjoyed the beneficent and inspiring influences of Christianity, her *material* condition was greatly improved. Many of the people had become farmers and artisans. They had no coin but gold and silver, and these were given and received by weight. They had comfortable dwellings, and domestic animals, and wheel-carriages. They had milk and butter, and grapes, apples, and honey. One of her own sons thus describes the productions of his native land :

“ Her verdant fields with milk and honey flow ;
Her woolly fleeces vie with virgin snow ;
Her waving furrows float with bearded corn,
And arts and arms her envied sons adorn.”

But the long and happy seclusion of the Irish people closed with the eighth century. From that time, they were continually exposed to the free-booters of the North—the Normans and Danes, who plundered and destroyed whatever came in their way. At length these invaders began to settle in the country, and were frequently at war, not only with the native inhabitants, but among themselves. During this bloody period, between the years 960 and 1170, the churches of Ireland were called to pass through great trials ; nor did they come out of them unscathed. Instead of being “ perfected through suffering,” they deteriorated in almost every particular.

Yet, with all its imperfections, the church, at this time, seems to have been the only power which kept society from a general dissolution. Her discipline, which had been for the most part faithfully administered, supplied the place of civil law, and was really the only authority that was respected. The terrors of future punishment, which the church constantly held up before native and foreign marauders, seem to have been the only power which held them in check. Besides, through all these wasting commotions, the church was the only conservator of learning. Some of her ministers still lingered among her ruined monasteries, and kept the embers of literature from utter extinction.

Near the beginning of the eleventh century, the popes commenced their endeavors in earnest to fasten Romanism upon Ireland. The Danes who had settled in the country were strongly in favor of the Catholic forms, and they persuaded Lanfranc, archbishop of Canterbury, to ordain in England, and send over for them, two or three bishops. One of these bishops, Gillebert of Limerick, received from the pontiff the appointment of apostolical legate for all Ireland. He was the first papal representative that had ever appeared in the country — six hundred and fifty years subsequent to the founding of the Irish church.

Another efficient agent in the work of Romanizing Ireland was Malachy O'Morgair, a native of the country. In furtherance of his object he went to Rome, where he was received with distinguished favor, and was made a saint. St. Malachy stands first in the calendar of Irish saints. He did all in his power to reconcile the Irish clergy and people to the religion of Rome, but without much success. The great body of the church were intent on retaining their original integrity and independence. Most of the clergy were married men. The badges of formal submission to Rome had never been presented or accepted. Tithes had not yet been introduced; Peter's pence had not been paid; nor had any provision been made for the support of the hierarchy which the Pope was trying to establish.

In the year 1152, Pope Eugene sent another legate to Ireland — Cardinal Papyrio — with instructions to call a synod, and incorporate the Irish church into the Romish. He divided the whole kingdom into four archiepiscopal sees, viz. those of Armagh, Cashel, Dublin, and Inam; instituted a system of tithes; claimed Peter's pence; decreed the celibacy of the clergy; and set up the regime of Rome where it had never before existed.

Still, there was something wanting to the popes and their emissaries to carry their plans for Ireland into complete effect. They needed help from the secular power; and that help was at last secured. Brakespear, an Englishman, was

made pope of Rome, taking the title of Adrian IV. At the same time Henry Plantagenet (Henry II.) was king of England. Henry had long coveted the possession of Ireland, but had no shadow of a title to it, even according to the low ideas of right which prevailed at that day. He applied to Adrian to give him a title, and the pope granted his request. The commission given to Henry is in the following words: "Thou shalt enter that island, and execute whatever thou shalt think conducive to the honor of God, saving the rights of the church, and the payment of one penny from each house to St. Peter." Henry entered Ireland with an army, and, after a long and severe conflict with a brave and independent people, he succeeded in subjugating them to his power. Such was the beginning of English rule in Ireland, a rule unjust and oppressive, on the one hand, and uniformly detested on the other.

The Synod of Cashel was called by Henry, A.D. 1172, ostensibly to reform the Irish church, but really to subject it to the authority of Rome. The great body of the native clergy, however, did not attend the synod, and paid no regard to its decrees. The people continued to follow their own ecclesiastical rules and customs, as they had done before. In fact, it was not till several hundred years after the political subjection of Ireland that Popery became fully and firmly established.

As the Irish were the last of all the nations of Europe to submit to the Papal yoke, so they may be the last to reject it. It was fatal to the prospects of Protestantism among this people, that it was urged upon them by the English government. Their hatred of that government, growing out of its long oppressions, excited a prejudice against Protestantism which they will be slow to relinquish, and which nought but the Spirit of God can overcome.