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ST. PATRICK: APOSTLE OF IRELAND

A Ten Chapter Excerpt (Chapters 9-18)
from "History of the Scottish Nation"

by

REV. JAMES A. WYLIE, LL.D

1808-1890

Author of "The History of Protestantism"

-- <http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Voice/History.Protestant.v1.b1.html> --

"The Papacy," "Daybreak in Spain," &c.

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from "History of the Scottish Nation"**

Vol. II.

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ST. PATRICK: APOSTLE OF IRELAND

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by J. A. Wylie

CHAPTER 9.

PATRICK-- BIRTH, BOYHOOD, AND YOUTH-- CARRIED OFF BY PIRATES.

With Patrick comes a second commencement of Scotland's History-- The Patrick of the Monkish Chroniclers-- The real Patrick-- His Birthplace-- His Parentage-- His Boyhood and its Pleasures-- His Conscience asleep-- A terrible Calamity befalls him-- Carried captive to Ireland-- Sold for a Slave.

THE scene that next opens takes us to a land which a narrow sea parts from the country to which, at this day, the name of Scotland is exclusively applied. But though withdrawn for a time from the soil of Scotland, it does not follow that we are withdrawn from the history of Scotland. On the contrary, it is only now that we feel that we are fairly launched on the great stream of our nation's annals, and may follow without pause its ever-enlarging volume. The events on which we now enter, though episodic, are the pregnant germs of the great future that is to succeed. They determine that Scotland shall be a puissance in the world; not a puissance in arms like Rome, but a moral puissance, to go before the nations, and open to them the paths of knowledge and liberty.

This new and greater commencement in our country's career had its birth in the soul of one man. Let us mark its beginning, so obscure as to be scarce perceptible. We behold one of Scotland's sons, borne away to captivity in Ireland, and there, amid the miseries and wretchedness, bodily and mental, attendant on the lot of a slave, brought to the true knowledge of God, and prepared as an instrument for spreading the light of the Gospel in the land to which he was carried captive. From Ireland that light is to be carried back to Scotland where it is to shine in a splendour that shall far surpass the feeble illumination of all previous evangelisations. The time was driving near when the dim and expiring light of Candida Casa was to be superseded by the brighter lamp of Iona.

Between the setting of the one and the rising of the other, comes in the episode of Succat. This youth, whose story rises from romance to the dignity and grandeur of history, forms the connecting link between the two Scotlands, the Scotland on the hither side of the Irish Channel, and the Scotland on this, its eastern shore. In his life and labours the history of the two countries runs on for some time in the same channel in the same person.

In entering on the story of Succat, whom our readers will more familiarly recognise under his later and better known appellation of St. Patrick, we feel that we tread on ground more stable and reliable than that which we had to traverse when relating the earlier evangelization of Whithorn. St. Patrick, it is true, has not wholly escaped the fate which has usually befallen early and distinguished missionaries at the hands of their monkish chroniclers. Unable to perceive or to appreciate his true grandeur as a humble preacher of the Gospel, some of his biographers have striven to invest him with the fictitious glory of a miracle-worker.

No monk of the Middle Ages could have imagined such a life as Patrick's. These scribes deemed it beneath their heroes to perform, or their pens to record, whatever did not rise to the rank of prodigy. Humility, self-denial, deeds of unaffected piety and benevolence, discredited rather than authenticated one's claim to saintship. Boastful professions and acts of fantastic and sanctimonious virtue were readier passports to monkish renown than lives which had no glory save that of sterling and unostentatious goodness.

We can trace the gradual gathering of the miraculous halo around Patrick on the pages of his successive chroniclers. His miracles are made to begin before he himself had seen the light. His story grows in marvel and prodigy as it proceeds. Each successive narrator must needs bring a fresh miracle to exalt the greatness of his hero and the wonder of his readers. Probus in the tenth century outdoes in this respect all who had gone before him, and Jocelin, in the twelfth, outruns Probus as far as Probus had outrun his predecessors. Last of all comes O'Sullivan in the seventeenth century, and he carries off the palm from every previous writer of the "Life of St. Patrick." The man who comes after O'Sullivan may well despair, for surely nothing more foolish or more monstrous was ever imagined by monk than what this writer has related of Patrick.

So rises this stupendous structure which lacks but one thing-- a foundation. But happily it is easier in the present instance than in most cases of a similar kind, to separate what is false, and to be put aside, from what is true, and, therefore, to be retained. Before the monks had any opportunity of disfiguring the great evangelist by encircling him with a cloud of legends, Patrick himself had told the story of his life, and with such marked individuality, with such truth to Christian experience, and with such perfect accordance to the age and the circumstances, that we are irresistibly led to the conclusion that the life before us is a real life, and must have been lived, it could not have been invented. The confessions here poured forth could come from no heart but a heart burdened with a sense of guilt; and the sorrows here disclosed with so simple yet so touching a pathos, authenticate themselves as real not ideal. They are the experiences of the soul, not the creations of the imagination Succat the first name of the man who has taken his permanent place in history as Patrick or St. Patrick was born on the banks of the Clyde. So much is certain, but the exact spot it is now impossible to determine. The present towns of Hamilton and Dumbarton compete for the honour of his birthplace; near one of the two must he have first seen the light. He himself says in his "Confession," "My father was of the village of 'Bonaven Taberni,' near to which he had a Villa, where I was made captive." [1] In the dialect of the Celtic known as the ancient British, Bonaven signifies "the mouth of the Aven," and the added "Taberni," or place of Tabernacles, indicates, doubtless, the district in which the village of Bonaven was situated. This favours the claims of Hamilton, and leads us to seek in Avondale, on the banks of the torrent that gives its name to the dale, and near the point where it falls into the Clyde, the birthplace of the future apostle. And what strengthens the probability that here may be the spot where Patrick was born, is the fact that some greatly defaced remains show that the Romans had a station here; and as the legionaries had but recently quitted Britain, the buildings they had vacated may be presumed to have been comparatively entire and fresh in Patrick's time. This would decide the point, if the evidence stood alone, and did not conflict with other and varying testimony.

Fiacc, one of the earliest and most reliable of his biographers, tells us that Patrick "was born at Nemthur," and that his first name, among his own tribes, was Succat. Nemthur signifies in Irish the lofty rock; and the reference undoubtedly is to All-Cluid, or Rock of the Clyde, the rock that so grandly guards the entrance of that river, now known as the Rock of Dumbarton, which then formed the capital of the British Kingdom of Strathclyde. Here too are the yet unobliterated vestiges of a Roman encampment, and one of much greater importance than any on the southern shore, for here did the Roman wall which extended betwixt the Firths of Forth and Clyde terminate. This must have led to the creation of a town, with suburban villas, and Roman municipal privileges, such as we know were enjoyed by the community in which the ancestors of Patrick lived. Tradition, moreover, has put its finger on the spot, by planting here "Kilpatrick," that is Patrick's Church. Here then, on the

northern shore, where the Roman had left his mark in the buildings, in the cultivation, in the manners, and in the language of the people, are we inclined to place the birth of one who has left a yet deeper mark on Scotland, and one infinitely more beneficent, than any left by Roman.

There is yet greater uncertainty as regards the year in which Patrick was born. We can hope only to approximate the time of his birth; and we think we are not far from the truth when we place it towards the end of the fourth century. It was an evil age. Apostolic times were fading from the memory, and apostolic examples vanishing from the sight of men. An incipient night was darkening the skies of countries which had been the first to brighten beneath the rays of Christianity. There was need that the simple Gospel should anew exhibit itself to the world in the life and labours of some man of apostolic character, if the decline setting in was to be arrested. Tokens are not wanting that it is to be so. For now as the shades gather in the south, the light of a new day is seen to suffuse the skies of the north.

Patrick was descended of a family which, for two generations at least, had publicly professed the Gospel. His father, Calpurnius, was a deacon, and his grandfather, Potitus, a presbyter in the Christian Church. He was well born, as the phrase is, seeing his father held the rank of "decurio," that is, was a member of the council of magistracy in a Roman provincial town. These facts we have under Patrick's own hand. In his autobiography, to which we have referred above, written but a little while before his death, and known as "Patrick's Confession," he says, "I, Patrick, a sinner, had for my father, Calpurnius, a deacon, and for my grandfather, Potitus, a presbyter." We should like to know what sort of woman his mother was, seeing mothers not infrequently live over again in their sons. Patrick nowhere mentions his mother, save under the general term of "parents." But judging from the robust and unselfish qualities of the son, we are inclined to infer that tradition speaks truth when it describes "Conchessa," the mother of the future apostle, as a woman of talent, who began early to instruct her son in divine things, and to instill into his heart the fear of that God whom his father and grandfather had served.

Here, then, on the banks of the Clyde, within sight, if not under the very shadow of the rock of Dumbarton, was placed the cradle of that child, which, in after life, was to win, though not by arms, so many glorious triumphs. The region is one of varied loveliness and sublimity. It is conspicuous, in these respects, in a land justly famed for its many fine combinations of beauty and grandeur. As the young Succat grew in years, his mind would open to the charms of the region in which he lived. His young eye would mark with growing interest the varying aspects of nature, now gay, now solemn; and his ardent soul would daily draw deeper and richer enjoyment from the scenes amid which his home was placed. He saw the ebbing and flowing of the river on whose banks he played, And doubtless mused at times on those mighty unseen forces that now compelled its waves to advance, and now to retreat. He saw the white-winged ships going and coming on its bosom: he saw the fisherman launching his net into its stream, and again drawing it ashore laden with the many treasures of the deep. He beheld the silver morning coming up in the east, and the day departing behind the vermilion-tinted tops of the mountains in the west. He saw the seasons revolve. Spring, with her soft breath, wooing the primroses and the buttercups from their abodes in the earth to bedeck mountain and vale; autumn spotting the woods with gold; and winter bringing up her black clouds, in marshaled battalions, from the western sea. These ever-changing aspects of nature would awaken their fitting responses in the soul of the youth. His heart would expand this hour with joy as the hills and shores around him lay clad in light; and now again, as mountain and vale were wrapped in gloom, or

trembled at the thunder's voice, there would pass over his soul, as over the sky, darkness and terror. Thus he would begin to feel how awful was that which lived and thought within him! How vast the range of its capacity for happiness or for suffering: and how solemn a matter it is to live.

So passed the boyhood of the future apostle of Ireland. As he advanced in years, his nature expanded and grew richer in generous impulses and emotions. All those exquisite sensibilities which fill the bosom in the fresh dawn of manhood were now stirring within him. Every day opened to him a new source of enjoyment, because every day widened the range of his capacity to enjoy. A sudden thrill of pleasure would, at times, shoot through his being from objects he had been wont to pass without once suspecting the many springs of happiness that lay hidden in them. Relationships were growing sweeter, friendships more tender. In a word, all nature and life seemed to teem with satisfactions and pleasures, endless in number, and infinitely varied in character. He has only to open his heart and enjoy. But this was a happiness which was born of earth, and like all that springs of the earth, it returns to the earth again. Young Succat's sensibilities were quickened, but his conscience slept.

The youth had not opened his heart to the instructions of home. The loving counsels of a mother, and the weightier admonitions of a father, had fallen upon a mind preoccupied with the delights of sense, and the joys of friendship: his cup seemed full. He knew not that the soul which is the man cannot feed on such pleasures as these, nor live by them. It must drink of living waters, or suffer unappeasable thirst. His relations to God that matter of everlasting moment had awakened in him no thought, and occasioned him no concern. The age, we have said, was a degenerate one. The lamp of Candida Casa burned low and dim. The teachers that emanated from it possessed but little authority; their reproofs were but little heeded. The truth which is the light was dying out from the knowledge of men; and the feeble Christianity that remained in the kingdom and church of Strathclyde, in which Succat's grandfather had ministered, was becoming infected with pagan ideas and Druidic rites. A few more decades, it seemed, and the Christian sanctuaries of Caledonia would give place to the groves of the Druid, or the returning altars of the Roman.

The handful of missionaries sent forth from the school of Ninian, could but ill cope with the growing, apostasy. They were but poorly equipped for the warfare in which they were engaged. There needed one man of commanding eloquence and burning zeal to redeem the age from its formalism and impiety. But no such man arose; and so the stream of corruption continued to roll on; and among those who were engulfed in its flood, and drifted down in its current, was the grandson of the Presbyter Potitus. Succat, with all his fine sympathies, and all his enjoyment of nature and life, lived without God, and he would so have lived to the end of his days, had not He who had "chosen him from the womb, and ordained him a prophet to the nations," had mercy upon him. Sudden as the lightning, and from a cloud as black as that from which the lightning darts its fires, came the mercy that rescued him when ready to perish.

One day a little fleet of strange ships suddenly made their appearance in the Clyde. They held on their course up the lovely firth till past the rock of Dumbarton. Whence, and on what errand bound, were these strange ill-omened vessels? They were piratical craft from across the Irish ocean, and they were here on the shores of the Clyde on one of those marauding expeditions which were then but too common, and which the narrow sea and the open navigable firth made it so easy to carry out. Succat, with others, was at play on the banks of the stream, and they remained watching the new arrivals, not

suspecting, the danger that lurked under their apparently innocent and peaceful movements. Quietly the robber crew drew their barks close in to the land. In a few minutes the bandits, rushing through the water, leaped on shore. The inhabitants of Bonaven had no time to rally in their own defense. Before they were well aware of the presence of the piratical band in their river, the invaders had surrounded them, and some hundreds of the inhabitants of the district were made captive.

Driving the crowd of bewildered and unhappy men before them, the pirates embarked them in their ships, and bore away with them to Ireland. In this miscellaneous company of miserable captives was the son of Calpurnius the deacon, now a lad of nearly sixteen. He himself has recorded the event, telling us that it happened at Bonaven Taberni, "near to which my father had a farm, where I was taken captive. I was scarcely sixteen years of age. But I was ignorant of God, therefore it was that I was led captive into Ireland with so many thousands. It was according to our deserts, because we drew back from God and kept not His precepts, neither were obedient to our Presbyters who admonished us for our salvation." [2]

What a crushing blow to the youth! When it fell on Succat he had reached that season of life when every day and almost every hour brings with it a new joy. And if the present was full of enjoyment, the years to come were big with the promise of a still richer happiness. Standing at the portals of manhood and casting his glance forward, Succat could see the future advancing towards him dressed in golden light, and bringing with it unnumbered honours and joys. For such must life be, passed amid conditions like his, a region so picturesque, companions so pleasant, a station securing respect, and dispositions so well fitted to win and to reciprocate love. But while he gazed on the radiant vision it was gone. In its room had come instant and dismal blackness. A whirlwind had caught him up, and cruelly severing all the tender ties that bound him to home and friends, and giving him time for not even one brief parting adieu, it bore him away and cast him violently on a foreign shore, amid a barbarous and heathen people.

Bending to their oars the sea-robbers swept swiftly down the Clyde. The meadows and feathery knolls that so finely border the river at that part of its banks where Succat's youth had been passed, are soon lost to his sight. Dumbarton rock, with its cleft top, is left behind. The grander masses of Cowal, not yet the dwelling of the Irish Scots, and the alpine peaks of Arran, are passed in succession, and sink out of view. The galleys with their wretched freight are now on the open sea, making straight for the opposite shore, where we see them arriving. The lot of the exile is bitter at the best, but to have slavery added to exile is to have the cup of bitterness overflow. This cup Succat was doomed to drink to the very dregs in the new country to which we see him carried. And without stop or pause did his misery begin. The pirates who had borne him across the sea, had no sooner landed him on the Irish shore, than forthwith they proceeded to untie his cords, and expose him for inspection to the crowd which had hastened to the beach on the arrival of the galleys, not failing, doubtless, to call attention to his well-shaped form, and sinewy limbs, and other points which alone are held to be of value in such markets as that in which Succat was now put up for sale. The son of Calpurnius was a goodly person, and soon found a purchaser. His captors sold him to a chieftain in those parts, at what price we do not know.

We can imagine Sucatt eagerly scanning the face of the man whose slave he had now become, if happily he might read there some promise of alleviation in his hard fate. But we can well believe that

in the rough voice and stern un pitying eye of this heathen chieftain, he failed to discern any grounds of hope that his lot would be less dismal than his worst fears had painted it. His apprehensions were realised to the full when he learned his future employment: truly a vile and degrading one, for the son of Calpurnius. Henceforth he is to occupy himself in tending his master's herds of cattle and droves of swine in the mountains of Antrim.

Endnotes

[1] S. Patricii Confessio, cap. i., sec. i. The best judges have pronounced this work the genuine composition of Patrick, Mabillon, Tillemont Dupin, Ussher. To these may be added Neander, who says, "This work bears in its simple rude style an impress that corresponds entirely to Patricius's stage of culture." Five manuscripts of the Confessio exist: one in the Book of Armagh (7th cent.), a second in the Cotton Library (10th cent.), two in the Cathedral Library of Salisbury, and one in the French Monastery of St. Vedastus.

[2] Pat. Confess., section i. Villulam enim prope habuit (Calpurnius) ubi ego in capturam dedi... nostrem salutem admonebant. These raids of the Scottish coasts, that is, on the Britons of the Roman Valentia, were not uncommon. They were made not improbably by the Scots of Ireland. Gibbon refers to them; and the early chronicler Gildas speaks of them as being made at regular intervals, and calls them "anniversarias predas." Gildas, cap. xiv.

CHAPTER 10.

PATRICK'S CAPTIVITY IN IRELAND-- HIS CONSCIENCE AWAKENS-- PROLONGED ANGUISH.

A veiled Actor-- Unpitied Anguish-- The timing of Patrick's Calamity-- Patrick in Adversity's School-- The son of Calpurnius a Swineherd-- He sees himself-- His past Life as seen by him a thing of Guilt and Horror-- An Ulcer in the Soul-- The Tempest within makes him insensible to the Tempest without-- Terror of God-- His Cry for Pardon-- End gained by his prolonged Distress.

HISTORY is no mere register of events. It is the reverent study of the working of a Hand that is profoundly hidden, and yet, at times, most manifestly revealed. To the man of understanding there is no earthly actor so real and palpable as is that veiled agent, who stands behind the curtain, and whose steps we hear in the fall of empires and the revolutions of the world. We have come in our narrative to one of those sudden shiftings of the scenes that betoken the presence and the hand of this great Ruler. A stronger evangelization than any that can ever proceed from Candida Casa, is about to be summoned into existence to keep alive the elements of truth and the seeds of liberty during those ages of darkness and bondage that are yet to pass over Europe. We have already seen the first act of the new drama. It opens in a very commonplace way indeed, and is altogether out of keeping, we should say, with the grandeur of the consequences which are to spring out of it. A band of Irish pirates make their descent on the Scottish shore, and sweep off into captivity a wretched crowd of men and women.

Amongst the miserable captives, kidnapped, and carried across the sea, is a youth who is destined to originate a movement which will change the face of northern Europe.

Neither the pirate crew, nor the agonized crowd that filled their galleys, knew who was in the same bottom with themselves, or how momentous their expedition was to prove. Meanwhile, Patrick is lost in the mass of sufferers around him. No one observes or pities the anguish so vividly depicted on the face of the youth. No one seeks to assuage the bitterness of his grief by addressing to him a few words of sympathy or whispering grounds of hope. Unhelped and unpitied he bears his great burden alone. Of his many companions in woe, each was too much absorbed in the sense of his own miserable lot to have a thought to bestow on the misery of those who were his partners in this calamity. Through dim eyes, and with a heart ready to break, Succat sees the Irish shore rise before him, and as the ship that carries him touches the land, he rouses himself from his stupor to see what change of fortune this new evolution in the tragedy, which still seems like a terrible dream, will bring him.

The timing of this event was not the least remarkable circumstance about it. Had this calamity befallen Succat at an earlier, or at a later, period of his life, and not just when it did, it would have been resultless. As a chastisement for the sins and follies of his past career it might have profited, but it would not have availed as a discipline for the lifework before him. This was the main thing in the purpose of Him from whom this affliction came. Patrick's life-trial befell him at that stage of his existence, which of all others is the most critical in the career of a human being. He was now sixteen years of age. It is at this age that the passions rouse themselves with sudden, and sometimes overmastering force. It is at this time of life accordingly that the character of the man in most cases becomes definitely fixed for good or for evil. He stands at the parting of the ways and the road then chosen is that which in all ordinary cases he will pursue to the end.

This, which is the law that rules human life and character in so many instances, is operative with special and almost uniform force in the case of those who have been born in a pious home, and reared, as Patrick was, amid the instructions and observances of religion. If they overpass the age at which Patrick had now arrived without experiencing that engrafting of the soul with a divine principle, which the Bible calls "being born again," they have missed the "new life," and very probably missed it for ever. At all events the likelihood of their ever attaining it grows less and less from that time forward. Habit, day by day, shuts the heart up yet more closely; the sleep of the conscience grows ever the deeper, and the man goes on his way content with such light and pleasure as the world can give him, and never sees the radiance of a new dawn, nor ever tastes the joys of a higher existence.

On this fateful brink stood Patrick when this whirlwind, with force so boisterous, yet so merciful, caught him up, and carried him away from the midst of enjoyments, where he would have fallen asleep to awake no more, and placed him where he could find neither rest nor happiness, because around him was only naked desolation. Not a moment too soon, if we rightly interpret Patrick's own statement, was the grasp of this strong hand laid upon him. He tells us, in his "Confession," that at this period of his life he fell into a grave fault. What that fault was, neither he himself, nor any of his biographers, have informed us, or even dropped a hint from which we might infer its nature or form. A rather grave offense, we are inclined to think, it must have been, seeing it was remembered, and brought up against him long years after when he was about to enter into the sacred office. His foot had well-nigh slipped, and it would have slipped outright, and he would have fallen to rise no more, had

not this strong hand been put forth at this critical moment to hold him up. He would have cast off the form of religion, which was all as yet that he possessed, and would have drifted with the current, and gone the same downward road which was being trodden by so many of his fellow-countrymen of the kingdom of Strathclyde. His ardour of soul, and his resoluteness of purpose would have made him a ringleader in the apostate band; and to show how completely he had emancipated himself from the traditions of his youth, and the faith of his ancestors he would have taken his seat in the chair of the scorner, and mocked at that which he had been taught in his early home to hold in reverence. It is the way of all who forsake "the guide of their youth."

We must follow Patrick across the sea, and see him sent to a new school seeing the first had been a failure and put under a new instructor, one who knows how to open the ear, and not the ear only but the heart also. Patrick was not to be like the teachers of the age, and so was not reared in the same school with them. He must be stern, bold, original, but the sickly and sentimental influences of Ninian's school would never have made him such. Rougher forces and hotter fires must melt and mould him. Kidnaped, forced down into the hold with a crowd of captives, tossed on the waters of the channel, and when landed on the Irish shore, sold to a heathen chieftain, and sent into the wilds of Antrim: such beginning had Patrick's new training. In this solitude his mother's voice will speak again, and Patrick will listen now. His heart will open at last, but first it must be broken. The iron will pierce his soul. It is Adversity's school in which he sits, where the discipline is stern but the lessons are of infinite price, and are urged with a persuasive force which makes it impossible not to understand them, and once understood and mastered, impossible ever to forget them. From this school have come forth many of the worlds wisest instructors, and greatest benefactors. Let us mark the youth as we behold him at the feet, not of doctor or pope, but at the feet of a far greater Instructor.

On the mountain's side, day after day all the year through, tending his master's herds of cattle and swine, sits Patrick the son of Calpurnius the Scottish deacon. Was ever metamorphosis so complete or so sudden? Yesterday the cherished son of a Roman magistrate, today a slave and a swine herd. Pinched with hunger, covered with rags, soaked with the summer's rain, bitten by the winter's frost, or blinded by its drifts, he is the very picture which the parable had drawn so long before of that prodigal who was sent into the fields to keep swine, and would fain have filled his belly with the husks on which the animals he tended fed. No one would have recognised in the youth that sat there with famished cheek and mournful eye, the tenderly-nurtured and well-favoured son of Calpurnius, or would have remembered in his hollow and sepulchral voice the cheerful tones that had so often rung out on the banks of the Clyde, and awakened the echoes of that stately rock that graces its shores. Only through this death, and through a death yet more profound, a death within of all past feelings, hopes, and joys, could Patrick pass into a new life. When he awoke from the stupefaction into which the blow, doubtless, had thrown him, he opened his eyes upon blank misery. But he opened them on something besides. He opened them on his former self! on his former life!

How different did that life now appear from what it had seemed, under the hues in which it had clothed itself in his eyes but a few years, a few days before! The colourings in which a self-righteous pride had dressed it, and the less warm but equally delusive lights thrown over it latterly by an incipient scepticism, or a dreary formalism, were now completely dispelled, and it stood out before him as it really was, an unlovable, a ghastly, a guilty thing. Sitting here, the Irish Channel between him and his home, his past severed from his present by this great dividing stroke, he could calmly

look at his life as if it were no part of himself, as if it had a subsistence of its own, and he could pronounce a dispassionate verdict upon it. It was a life to be wept over. But when again it refused to sever itself from himself, when it cleaved to him with all its blackness, and he felt that it was and ever would be his, it evoked more than tears; it awakened within him horror. A father's prayers and a mother's counsels, despised and scorned, all rose up before him in the deep silence in which he sat, amid the desolate hills, tending his flock under the gathering blasts. He shuddered as the remembrance came back upon him. He had bowed the knee at the family devotions but he had not prayed; he had but mocked that Omniscient One he professed to worship. These hypocrisies gave him no concern at the time, he was hardly sensible of them, but they lay heavy upon his conscience now. He thought of them, and a darker cloud came between him and the heavens than that which was coming up from the western sea to let fall its rain or hail on the hills amid which he fed his swine. Still darker remembrances came crowding upon him, and he trembled and shook yet more violently. When preachers came from Candida Casa to warn him and his companions of their evil way, and entreat them to turn from it and live, had he not flouted and jeered, or given tacit encouragement to those that did so? Though the grandson of a Christian presbyter, he had helped to swell that chorus of derision and defiance with which these preachers of repentance, and dolorous prophets of evil were sent back to those from whom they came. The retrospect of his hardihood filled him with amazement and horror. Thus, as one's image looks forth from the mirror on one's self, so did Patrick's life look forth from the past upon Patrick in all its vileness and blackness and horror.

But deeper still was his eye made to pierce. It turned inward, and questioned his spirit what manner of life it had led in its thoughts and purposes. He was shown a chamber where lodged greater abominations than any that had deformed him outwardly. His heart, which he believed to be so good, he saw to be full of envy, hatred, malice, revenge, pride, lust, hypocrisy, idolatry, and all the things that defile a man. How was this fountain of evil to be cured, for if not cured, it would send forth even blacker streams in time to come than any that had flowed from it in the past. Where was the salt which, cast into its bitter waters, would sweeten them? This hidden iniquity, this ulcer in the soul, pained and appalled him even more than all the transgressions which had deformed him outwardly and given scandal to others.

Such was the odious picture that rose before the captive youth as he sat ruminating amid the mountains of Antrim; his past life, rather than his vile charge or his heathen master, before him. Such had been; and till his life was cleansed at its source, such would be the son of Calpurnius the Christian deacon. He stood aghast at this veritable image of himself. He felt that he was viler than the vilest of those animals that he tended. "Oh, my sin! my sin!" we hear him cry! What shall I do? Whither shall I flee?

It is no imaginary scene that we are describing. "In that strange land," says he, speaking of this period of conviction and agony, "the Lord imparted to me the feeling [1] of my unbelief and hardness of heart, so that I should call my sins to remembrance though late, and turn with all any heart to God." And again he says, "Before the Lord humbled me, I was even as a stone lying in the depth of the mire, and He who is able [2] came and lifted me up, and not only lifted me up but set me on the top of the wall," that is, made him a corner stone in the spiritual building, for we cannot fail to perceive here an allusion to the beautiful emblem of Scripture which presents the church as a living temple built up of living stones.

While this sore struggle was going on, the outward discomforts of his lot, we may well believe, gave Patrick but little concern. The violence of the storm that raged within made him heedless of the blasts that beat upon him as he watched his herds in the woods and among the mountains. The black cloud would gather and burst, and pass away, and the stricken youth, absorbed in the thought of his distant home and his past life, and sick in soul, would hardly be conscious of the pelting rain, or the driving snow, or the bitter furious gusts that were shaking the oaks and fir trees around him. The hail and lightning of the clouds were drowned in the voice of those mightier thunders which came rolling out of a higher sky, and seemed to his ear to emphasize the award of that Book which says, "the wages of sin is death."

The youth had been overtaken by a series of calamities, which singly were overwhelming, and taken together, were worse than death. He had been torn from his home and his native land, he had been robbed of his liberty, he had been sold to a heathen lord, and now he had no prospect before him save that of passing the years of his wretched life in a vile employment. The blow was the more crushing, that all these miseries had fallen upon him in the same moment, and had come without warning. And yet they were to Patrick but as the trifles of a day compared with those darker sorrows which gathered round his soul. These last were the ripened fruits of the evil seed his own hand had sowed. In enduring them he had not even this small consolation that he was suffering by the unrighteous will and cruel power of another. Nor would they pass with the fleeting years of the present life, for death, which is the termination of all other evils, would only deliver him up to an endless misery. This terrible thought was ever present to him as he sat alone amid the desolate hills; it was his companion in the silence of the night. and in the nearly equally profound silence of the day. It was here that his miseries culminated. He was entirely in his master's power, who might for the slightest offense, unrestrained by any feeling of humanity, and without question from any one, doom him to die. But wherein was this master to be feared, compared with that Greater Master, who could kill body and soul? He had lost his liberty, but what was the loss of liberty to one who was in imminent jeopardy of losing himself, and that for ever?

Sleep forsook him, he tells us. He would lie awake for nights on end. From his lowly couch he watched the stars as they passed, each in its appointed place, and at its appointed time, across the sky. He feared as he looked up at them. Their ever-burning fires and silent majestic march, suggested that endless duration of which their vast cycles are but as a handbreadth. And when he thought of that Eye which was looking down upon him from above these orbs, with a light to which theirs was but as darkness, where, he asked, "shall I find hiding from it? When these orbs shall have paled their fires in an eternal night, this Eye will still be looking down upon me." Where was there night or darkness in all the universe deep enough in which to bury himself, and be unseen for ever?

He now broke out into meanings. When his grief ceased to be dumb, its paroxysm somewhat abated. These moanings were the first feeble inarticulate cries for pardon. Then followed words of supplication. He stood up, like the publican in the temple, and striking upon his breast, cried, "God be merciful to Patrick, the sinner." It was now seen that the lessons of his early home had not been in vain. The seed then sown in his mind appeared to have perished: yet no; though late, that seed began to spring up and bear fruit. Without the knowledge imparted by these lessons, Patrick would never have seen his sin, and without the sight of his sin his conscience would have continued to sleep, or if

peradventure awakened, not knowing the way of pardon, he would have been driven to despair.

He had heard, on the Sabbath evenings in his Scottish home, that the "King of Heaven is a merciful King." And now, in that far land, and far away from that father from whose lips the once-forgotten but now remembered words had fallen, a sea of trouble all round him, nor help nor pity on earth, he turned his gaze upwards, and said, "I will arise, and go to my Father." He rose, he tells us, before the dawn to pray.

How long Patrick continued under this distress of soul before finding peace, we do not know. It is probable that his conflict lasted with more or less severity for some years. It is not the wont of that Physician who had undertaken his case to dismiss His patients till He has perfected their cure, and made them altogether and completely whole. And there were special reasons in Patrick's case why this severe but most merciful discipline should be prolonged. Patrick's sore had to be probed to the very bottom, and he had to know the malignity of the malady under which he laboured, and the strength with which it holds captive its unhappy victims, not only for his own sake, but for the sake of those many others, to whom he was in after years to act the part of physician. He was to be a Healer of nations. But how could he acquire the insight and tenderness necessary for the right discharge of his grand function the reverse of the warriors, who goes forth to destroy and know how deep these wounds go into the soul, and how they rankle there, and be able in his treatment of them to combine perfect sympathy with perfect fidelity "merciful" and faithful like the great Physician if he had not himself first been wounded, and made to bleed, aye, bleed unto death, well nigh before being sent forth to be a healer of others?

Endnotes

[1] Aperuit sensum.Pat. Confessio.

[2] Qui potens est.Ibid.

CHAPTER 11.

PATRICK FINDS PEACE-- UNCONSCIOUS PREPARATION FOR FUTURE WORK-- ESCAPES FROM IRELAND.

A Hand put forth to Heal-- An old Truth with a new Meaning -- Patrick enters into a new Life-- His Joy-- His preparation for his lifework thorough-- He begins to have Dreams of Deliverance from Captivity-- He flees-- Finds a Ship and is taken on Board-- Returns Home.

NOW, at last, a hand was put forth to heal this sorely wounded man. As he lay on the mountains of Antrim, stricken down by an unseen but mighty power, with no friend by his side to pour oil into his wounds and bind up his sores, there passed by One who turned and looked with compassion upon him, and stretching out His hand lifted him out of the "mire" to use his own phrase, in which he lay. "HE WHO ALONE IS ABLE" are the few simple but emphatic words in which Patrick records this mighty transaction, "He who alone is able came, and in His mercy lifted me up."

This deliverer, Patrick saw, had Himself been wounded, and so deeply wounded that He still retained the marks of His sufferings. Hence His sympathy, which would not let Him pass by and leave Patrick to die of his hurt. Drawing near to him, and showing him the wounds in His own hands and feet, and the scar deep graven in His side, He said to Patrick, "Fear not: I bore your sins on the bitter tree. All is forgiven you. Be of good cheer."

These words were not altogether new to the son of Calpurnius. He had heard them, or their equivalents, in his early home. They had been woven into his father's prayers, and they had received yet more formal statement in his mother's counsels and instructions. But he had failed to grasp their momentous import. The salvation which they announced was to him a matter of no immediate concern. What mattered it to Patrick whether this salvation were an out-and-out gift, or whether it were wages to be worked for and earned like other wages? What good would this birthright do him? So thought he then, but it was otherwise now. He saw that without this salvation he was lost, body and soul, for ever. When, therefore, these truths, so commonplace and meaningless before, were heard again, he felt as if the finger of a man's hand had come forth and written them before him in characters of light, and written them specially for him. The veil dropped. He saw that the words were "eternal life," not an abstract dogma announced for the world's assent, but an actual gift held out for his own acceptance. He knew now what the wounds in the hands and feet of that compassionate One who had passed by him signified. He saw that they had been borne for him; and so he cast himself into His arms. A wonderful joy sprang up in his soul. In that moment the bolt of his dungeon was drawn back, and Patrick walked forth into liberty into a new life.

The future apostle of Ireland, and through Ireland of Northern Europe, now clearly saw that it was not his own tears, though copious and bitter, nor his cries, though frequent and loud, which had opened the door of that dark prison in which he had so long sat. It was God's sovereign blessed hand which had flung back that ponderous portal, and brought him forth. There he would have been sitting still had not that gracious One passed by him, and shown him His wounds. He had been traveling on the great broad road which the bulk of Christendom was to pursue in the ages that were to come, that even of self-inflicted penance and self-righteous performances. But journey as he might he came no nearer the light; around him was still the darkness, within him was still the horror. He had not caught even a glimmer of the dawn. But when the sight of the Wounded One was vouchsafed to him it was as when the sun rises on the earth. He saw himself already at the gates of that Peace which he had begun to despair of ever finding. Thus was Patrick made to know the better and the worse road, that standing, as he did, at that eventful epoch, when Christendom was parting into two companies, and going to the right and to the left, he might lift up his voice and warn all, that of these two paths, the beginnings lie close together, but their endings are wide apart, even as death and destruction are from life. From tending his master's swine, on the bleak hillside, amid the stormy blasts, Patrick was taken to teach this great lesson at this formative epoch to the men of Christendom, having himself first been taught it. But not just yet was he to enter on his work.

As aforetime, weighed down by the great sorrow that lay upon him, he felt not the pangs of hunger, nor regarded the rude buffeting of the tempest, so now, the new-born joy, that filled his soul, made him equally insensible to the physical discomforts and sufferings to which he was still subjected. He was still the slave, if not of his first master, of some other chieftain into whose hands he had passed;

for he speaks of having served four masters; and the vile drudgery of the swineherd continued to occupy him from day to day; but, no longer sad at heart, the hills which aforetime had reechoed his complaining now became vocal with his joy. It was his wont to rise while it was yet dark, that he might renew his song of praise. It mattered not though the earth was clad in snow and the heavens were black with storm he "prevented the dawning," not now to utter the cry of anguish, but to sing songs of deliverance. He tells us in his "Confession" that he rose, long before daylight, and in all weathers, in snow, in frost, in rain, that he might have time for prayer; and he suffered no inconvenience therefrom, "for," says he, "the spirit of God was warm in me."

Patrick had now received his first great preparation for his future work. His conversion was arranged, as we have seen, in all its circumstances, so as to teach him a great lesson; and in the light of that lesson he continued to walk all his life after. It brought out in clear, bold relief, the freeness and sovereignty of God's grace. No priest was near to cooperate with his mystic rites in effecting his conversion, no friend was present to assist him with his prayers. Patrick was alone in the midst of the pagan darkness; yet there we behold him undergoing that great change which Rome professes to work by her sacraments, and which, she tells us, cannot be effected without them. How manifest was it in this case that the "new creature" was formed solely by the Spirit working by the instrumentality of the truth, the truth heard when young, and recalled to the memory to the entire exclusion of all the appliances of ecclesiasticism. What a rebuke to that Sacramentalism which was in that age rising in the church, and which continued to develop till at last it supplanted within the Roman pale the Gospel. And what a lesson did his conversion read to him, that "not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us." When Patrick presented himself at his Heavenly Father's door, it was in no robe woven on his own loom, it was in no garment borrowed or bought from priest; he came in his rags, the rags of his corrupt nature and sinful life, and begged for admittance. Was he told that in this beggarly attire he could not be admitted? was he bidden go back to the Church, and when she had purified him by her rites and penance, return and be received? No! the moment he presented himself, his Father ran and fell upon the neck of the wretched and ragged man, and embraced him and kissed him. Thus did Patrick exemplify, first of all, in his own person, the sovereignty of grace, and the power of the truth, before being sent forth to preach the Gospel to others. It was here that he learned his theology. He had no Bible by him, but its truths, taught him when young, revived in his memory, and he read them all over again by the new light which had dawned in his soul. They were more palpable and clear than when he had read them on the actual page, for now they were written not with pen and ink, they were graven by the Spirit on the tablets of his heart. A theology so pure he could not have learned in any school of Christendom at that day. Patrick drew his theology from the original and unpolluted fountain: the Word of God, and the Spirit; the same at which the apostles had drunk on the day of Pentecost. It was the theology of the early church, which in God's providence is ever renewed when a Divine revival is to visit the world.

Patrick was now replenished with the gift of Divine knowledge, but he was not immediately let go from bondage, and sent forth to begin his great mission. He needed to have his experience deepened, and his knowledge enlarged. If meditation and solitude be the nurse of genius, and if they feed the springs of bold conception and daring effort, not less do they nourish that sublimer genius which prompts to the loftier enterprises of the Christian, and sustain at the proper pitch the faculties necessary for their successful accomplishment. The young convert, led by the ardour of his zeal, is sometimes tempted to rush into the field of public labour, his powers still immature. Patrick was

preserved from this error, and it was essential he should, for the work before him was to be done not at a heat, but by the patient and persistent forth-putting of fully ripened powers. He lacked, as yet, many subordinate qualifications essential to success in his future mission. He must learn the dialect of the people to whom he was afterwards to proclaim the Gospel. He must study their dispositions and know how access was to be obtained to their hearts. He must observe their social habits, their political arrangements, and above all, he must ponder their deep spiritual misery, and mark the cords with which idolatry had bound them, that at a future day he might undo that heavy yoke, and lead them forth into the same liberty into which a Divine and gracious hand had conducted himself. Therefore was he still retained in this land, a slave to his master, though the sting had now been taken out of that slavery, and though occupied in ignoble tasks, learning all the while noble lessons.

Six years had passed away, and now Patrick had fulfilled his appointed term of captivity. Dreams of escape from Ireland began to visit him by night. In his sleep he heard a voice saying to him, "Youth, thou fastest well, soon thou shalt go to thy native home. lo! thy ship is ready." Was it wonderful that the exile should see in his sleep his fatherland, and imagine himself there again, or on the way thither? Without seeing miracle or vision in this, as many of his biographers have done, we see none the less the mysterious touches which the Divine Hand sometimes gives to the human spirit when "deep sleep falleth on man." Patrick knew that his captivity was wholly of Divine ordering; he knew also that it had gained its end; and this begot in him an ardent hope that now its close was not distant, and by night this hope returned clothed in the vivid drapery of an accomplished reality. The dream gave him spirit and courage to flee.

How far the youth had to travel, or at what point of the coast he arrived, it is impossible to determine amid the dubious and conflicting accounts of his biographers. The "Book of Armagh" makes Patrick journey two hundred miles; the "Scholiast on Fiacc" reduces the distance to sixty, others say a hundred. Lanigan makes him arrive at Bantry Bay.[1] On reaching the shore he saw, as it had seemed in his dream, a ship lying close in land. The sight awoke within him a yet more intense desire to be free. Lifting up his voice, he besought the captain to take him on board. A refusal, much to his chagrin, was the reply sent back. An emaciated figure, clad in the garb of a swineherd, the plight doubtless in which Patrick presented himself, was not an attractive object, nor one fitted to make the ship's crew wish to have any nearer acquaintance with him. The ship was on the point of departing without him. He sent up a prayer to heaven the cry of a heart that panted for deliverance and fully confided in God. It was the act of an instant. The voice was again heard speaking to him from the ship, and telling him that the captain was willing to take him on board.

The sail spread and the anchor lifted, we behold the vessel, with Patrick on board, ploughing her way through the waters of the Irish Channel, her prow turned in the direction of the British shore. The youth was fleeing from slavery, with all its humiliating and brutalizing adjuncts, but with a heart full of thankfulness that the day had ever dawned upon him the darkest he had ever seen, as he then deemed it; the happiest of all his life, he now saw it to be, when the robber-band, darting from their galleys, and enclosing the quiet village of Bonaven, made him their prey, and carried him captive to that land whose mountains, in his flight from it, were now sinking behind him. By losing his liberty he had found it, but he had found a better liberty than the liberty he lost. Nor though the crime reflected disgrace not only on its perpetrators, but also on the country to which they belonged had Ireland cause to reflect, save with profoundest gratitude, as the sequel will show, on an occurrence which had

brought this youth to its shore, and retained him so many years a bondsman.

Endnote

[1] See Todd's Life of St. Patrick, p. 36, Dublin, 1864.

CHAPTER 12.

PATRICK AGAIN AT HOME-- THOUGHTS OF IRELAND-- DREAMS-- RESOLVES TO DEVOTE HIMSELF TO ITS CONVERSION.

Spiritual Greatness through Agony-- Illustrative examples -- Luther etc.-- Patrick at his Father's Door-- Again amid the Scenes of his Youth-- His old Companions around him -- Ireland the land of his second and better Birth-- His Heart still in it-- Hears Voices in his Sleep calling him to return to it -- Resolves to give himself to the Conversion of Ireland-- His purpose opposed by Parents and Presbyters-- Patrick's Preparations and Equipments as a Missionary-- His Anointing not of Man.

PATRICK, the apostle of Ireland, is not the first, nor is he by any means the last, whose career illustrates that great law, according to which the highest eminence in the church by which we mean not the eminence of official rank, but the higher eminence of spiritual gifts and holy service is attainable only through great and often prolonged struggles of soul. It is amid these throes and agonies that great souls are born. And then to inward distress and conflict there are added at times, as in the case before us, bitter outward humiliations and sufferings. The most cursory survey of the past justifies our remark. Whether we turn to the names that shine as stars in the firmament of Holy Writ, or to those that illumine the page of ecclesiastical history, we trace in all of them the operation of a law which was established in ancient times, and is as changeless and imperative as that other of which it was said that it "altereth not."

And it must needs be so. The brilliant prizes which wait on ambition; the sweets of power, the grandeur which surrounds rank and wealth, the luster which superior knowledge sheds on its possessor all these are potent enough to nerve the man whose aim is a high one, we admit it is to maintain his country's rights, or enlarge the boundaries of science. But it is far otherwise with those whose aim is the eternal good of their fellowmen. The very passions and ambitions which need to be fostered in the former class of workers, must be purged out in the latter. It is in the furnace heated sevenfold that this purification is effected. It is in its fires that the dross of selfishness is consumed; the nobler but still earthly passion of ambition conquered; the love of human applause, which so enfeebles and vitiates, extinguished, and the soul becomes able to yield an entire devotion to truth, and to exercise an absolute dependence on God. The man now stands clothed in a moral strength which is proof alike against the seductions of error and the terrors of power.

Moses by one rash act threw back the deliverance of his people, and drove himself into exile. Many a bitter hour did the thought cause him in the solitude of Midian. But we behold the hot impulsive spirit which he brought with him from Egypt, and which had been fostered doubtless by the flatteries of the

court, toning down day by day amid these silent wastes, till of all the sons of men, Moses is now the meekest, and he who had fallen before the provocation of a moment was able to bear the burden of a whole nation for forty years. It was in a prison among felons, whose fetters he wore, that Joseph acquired that knowledge of human nature and matured those great faculties which he afterwards displayed in the government of Egypt. Luther entered the convent at Erfurt as proud a Pharisee as ever walked the earth, full of the project of being his own saviour, but he buried the Pharisee in his cell, and returned to the world "a sinner saved by grace." What the Augustinian convent was to Luther, the mountains of Antrim were to Patrick. There, in his struggles for his own eternal life, he learned the secret of Ireland's darkness and bondage, and matured the faculties by which he effected its emancipation, making it morning in that land when the shadows were falling thick and fast on so many of the countries of Europe.

Two months elapsed before the exile reached his home on the banks of the Clyde. This was a long time for so short a distance. But the two countries lay much farther apart in that age than in ours, if we measure the distance by the difficulties of the road rather than by the number of its miles. Three days, or at most a week, would be spent on the sea voyage, leaving seven weeks for the journey from the point of disembarkation, of which we are ignorant, to his father's dwelling at Bonaven. But the country to be passed through was unsettled, and liable to sudden raids; and the exile's journey, we know, was full of hazards and escapes, of which, however, we have only transient and scarcely intelligible glimpses. He would seem on his way to have fallen into the power of a hostile tribe, and to have suffered some detention at their hands, for he speaks of a second captivity undergone by him after his escape from his first in Ireland. But it does not concern the object of our history to arrange or reconcile these obscurely recorded incidents. Let it suffice that Patrick was again with his parents. "After a few years," says he, referring probably to his six years of absence in Ireland, "I was again with my parents in the Brittani," the customary term for the Roman provinces in Britain. Once more Succat stands at his father's door.

Emaciated, way-worn, attired in the garb of a swineherd, shall his father know him under this disguise? The shock of the first surprise over, Calpurnius recognizes in the figure before him the flush of excitement contending on his cheek with the pallor of suffering and endurance his long-lost son, of whom no tidings, probably, had ever reached him since the day the pirate fleet bore away and was lost to view beyond the Argyleshire hills. He throws himself upon the neck of his son, as unexpectedly restored as he had been suddenly snatched away. While he gives him the kiss of welcome, he little dreams how much more precious is the son whom he now receives back than was the son who went forth from him! He could not see, he could not even guess the rich experiences and the lofty aspirations that lay hid beneath the tattered raiment that covered the form he was now pressing to his bosom. The son he now so gladly welcomes had just returned from a school, though Calpurnius had yet to be told this, where, if the regimen is sharp, it is beyond measure salutary, and if the lessons are hard they repay an hundredfold the pain it costs to learn them.

We behold Patrick once more in the home of his youth. Around that home all was unchanged. There, as aforetime, were the vales flecked with flocks; there were the hazel and the birch crowning the rocky crests and knolls; there was the noble river washing as of yore the feet of the grand rock that towers up on its shore; there were the far-off mountains opening wide their stony portals to give exit to the expanding flow of the Clyde into the Irish Sea; lovely as ever were the gray tints of the morning and

the vermilion dyes of the sunset. But Patrick gazed on all these with other eyes than those which had drunk in their beauties in his boyhood and youth. His old companions came round him in the hope of hearing the tale of his adventures, and helping him to forget in their jovial society the hardships of his exile. They found him strangely changed though they knew not why. He could not join their laugh nor re-echo their scoffs.

Their delights were no longer his delights. Black melancholy, they said, has set her mark upon him. The light of his once exuberant spirit has gone out. Let us leave him to his moody humours. Yes! Patrick had come to himself. Awakened, he felt how solemn it is to live; how awful to laugh or mock all through the short years, and go down into the grave loaded with the guilt of vast undischarged responsibilities. In truth, those who said that he had escaped from Ireland only in body, were in the right; his heart was in that country still.

"The traveller," it has been said, "changes his sky, but not himself." The remark does not hold good in the case of the exile whose history we are tracing. Patrick, when he crossed the Channel, the cords round his limbs, changed his sky, but he changed also himself. Ireland was the land of his birth, of his second and better birth; and he now thought of it, therefore, and felt towards it as towards his native land. The ties that bound him to it were holier and stronger than those that linked him to the home of his fathers. While he wandered by the banks of his native Clyde, he ever and anon turned his gaze wistfully in the direction of the western hills. The image of the poor country beyond them rose before him night and day.

The cold, the hunger, the night-watchings he had there undergone, were now sweet and blessed memories. The bitterness had gone out of them. Amid the comforts of his home in his father's house he looked back with regret to the nights he had spent watching his flock on the mountains of Antrim, his spirit within him singing songs of gladness while the storm was raging without. But though Patrick had as good as forgotten the miseries he had endured in that land, he had not forgotten the misery he had seen there. The thought of its sons groping on through life in darkness and going down into an eternal night, was ever present with him and ever uppermost. Could he wash his hands and hold himself wholly guiltless of their blood? He owed himself to Ireland, surely the least he could do towards payment of the debt was to give himself to it. Why had he left it? Had he not acted the part of the ancient prophet, who, when commanded to go and preach repentance to Nineveh rose up and fled, leaving the million-peopled capital of Assyria to its fate? These were the thoughts that stirred within him and gave him no rest.

What by day were abstract considerations of duty appealing to his conscience, took to themselves by night embodiment and shape, and appeared before him as suppliants who had come to plead the cause of that wretched country from which he had fled. It seemed to Patrick; as if a man of Ireland stood on the other side of the Channel, and gazing beseechingly across, like the man of Macedonia who beckoned to Paul, cried to Patrick and said, "Come over and help us." "In the dead of the night," says he, "I saw a man coming to me as if from Hiberio, whose name was Victoricus, bearing innumerable letters. He gave me one of them to read. It was entitled, 'The Voice of the Irish.' [1] As I read I thought I heard at that same moment the voice of those that dwell at the wood of Foclaid, near the western ocean; and thus they cried, as with one mouth, 'We beseech thee, holy youth, come and walk still among us.' I felt my heart greatly stirred in me, and could read no more, and so I awoke." [2]

"Again on another night, I know not, God knoweth whether it was within me, or near me, I heard distinctly words which I could not understand, except that at the end of what was said, there was uttered: 'He who gave his life for thee, is He who speaketh in thee.' And so I awoke rejoicing" On another occasion he tells us, that it seemed to him as if one were praying within him. But he makes clear in what sense he interpreted his dream by telling us that when he awoke he recollected the apostle's words, "The Spirit helpeth the infirmity of our prayer. For we know not what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself maketh intercession for us, with groanings that cannot be uttered, which cannot be expressed in words." And again, "The Lord our advocate intercedeth for us." [3]

Patrick has removed by only a few centuries from an age in which God had spoken to men in dreams, and visions of the night. Was the Most High again having recourse to this ancient method of communicating His will? There was divine interposition, but no miracle, in the occurrences we have related; nor does Patrick himself see miracle in them. They were the echo in his now awakened conscience of the great command given on the Mount of Olives, "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature." This Patrick regarded as his special warrant to essay the great work of evangelizing Ireland. His commission had come to him, not from the Seven Hills, but direct from the Mount of Olives. Christ Himself it was who sent him forth; and that commission received in due course its seal and signature in a converted Ireland.

Days and months passed on, and Patrick was still with his parents in the Britanni. Had the cry of Ireland waxed faint, and died away? or had Patrick become deaf to an appeal which had stirred him so powerfully at the first? The cry from across the Channel grew louder day by day, and Patrick was more eager than ever to respond to it; but there were many and great hindrances in the way, which he feared to break through. Who was Patrick, the exile, the swineherd, that he should essay to bring a nation out of darkness, from which he himself was but newly escaped? He must lay his account, in the prosecution of such an enterprise, with encountering the sophistry of learned Druid and the hostility of powerful chieftain. The one would fight for his altar, and the other for his slave, and he would draw down the wrath of both upon his poor head. Last, and perhaps greatest, he would inevitably rouse the suspicion and perhaps the violence of the masses, who would not take kindly that he should disturb and unsettle their long-cherished superstitions and beliefs. These were the formidable obstacles that arrayed themselves against his enterprise ever as he thought of it. What pretensions had he to the learning or eloquence without which it were folly to think of achieving so great a work?

As he hesitated and delayed, the cry of Ireland sounded again in the ear of his conscience. That cry, agreeably to the ideas of the age and the warm temperament of the youth, embodied itself in the dramatic form of voices and dreams by night. There seemed again to stand before him suppliants from across the Irish Sea, who pleaded with him in behalf of those who lay plunged in a misery from which he himself had been delivered. With the return of day these suppliants who had stood all night long by his couch took their departure, only to let conscience speak.

He had no rest. If he wandered by the Clyde he saw its waters flowing away to join the Irish sea. If he watched the setting sun it was going down over Ireland, and its last gleam was gilding the wood of Focluid. If the storm-cloud came up from the southwest, it was laden with the sighs of that land over which it blew in its passage from the great Western ocean. At last his resolution was unalterably

taken. He would arise and go in the character of a missionary to that land to which he had been carried as a slave. Unlettered, as regards the learning of the schools, unanointed, save by "an unction from the holy One," uncommissioned, save by the last words spoken on Olivet, and floated across the five centuries to his own day, he would cross the Channel, and borrowing the strength of Him who had dispelled the night around his own soul, he would attack the darkness, and throw down the idols of Ireland.

He broke his purpose to his parents. Surprised and grieved, they strongly opposed it. Had he not suffered enough already in that barbarous country? Was he ambitious of being a second time the slave of its chieftains, and the keeper of its swine? Even some of the clergy of the Church of Ninian discountenanced his design. Their own dying zeal was far below the pitch that could prompt them to such an enterprise; and they derided the idea that it should be undertaken by a youth who had never passed a single day within the walls of Candida Casa, or of any missionary institute of the age, and who had no qualifications for the task, that they could see. Nay, the old fault was brought up against him; but all was in vain. Neither the tears of parents, nor the sneers of prudent-minded ecclesiastics, could shake his resolution. A greater than father or presbyter commanded him to go, and His voice he would obey. "Oh, whence to me this wisdom!" we find him writing in after days, "who once knew not so much as to count the number of the days, and had no relish for God? Whence to me this, so great and saving a grace, that I should thus know God, or love God? that I should cast off country and parents, refusing their many offers and weeping and tears, and, withal, offend my seniors (elders) contrary to my wish?... Yet not I, but the grace of God which was in me, which resisted all impediments to the end that I should come to the Irish tribes to preach the gospel." If he had been able to offer himself in the service of this heathen country, he takes no merit to himself. It was not strength of will that had achieved this victory. The old Patrick would have remained at home with parents and friends. The new Patrick must go forth and begin what he calls his "laborious episcopate." "Not I," says he, with a greater apostle, "but the grace of God that was in me." [4]

His biographers make Patrick prepare himself for entering on his field of labour by making the tour of the then famous monasteries or mission-schools of the continent of Europe. They send him first of all to Tours in Gaul, which then reflected the luster of the genius and labours of Martin, a near relation, as some have affirmed, though on no certain evidence, of his mother, Conchessa. From the school of Tours they make him proceed to that of Lerins, where Vincent was then rising into repute. Last of all, they place him at the feet of the celebrated Germanus, Bishop of Auxerre. In this training thirty years pass away, and when Patrick has become learned in all the wisdom which these seats of knowledge had to impart, his biographers send him to Ireland. [5]

This progress through the schools on the part of our missionary, we believe to be wholly imaginary; in short, a fable. Patrick himself says not one word from which we could infer that he passed through so lengthened a course of study. When reproached with being unlearned, as he sometimes was, what more natural than that he should have pointed to the famous schools he had frequented, and the great teachers at whose feet he had sat. Instead of doing so, he always frankly confesses that the accusation was true, and that he was unlearned. Moreover, it is very improbable that one who knew, as Patrick did, Ireland's misery, and whose heart yearned, as his yearned, for that country's deliverance, have spent thirty years in going from school to school, where he could learn little that would be of use in his future work, and might forget much of essential service which he had been already taught by more

infallible guides.

Patrick set out for Ireland clad in no armour of the schools. The scholastic age, with its great doctors, was yet a long way off. Aristotle had not yet come into vogue in the Christian Church. The clergy of those days bowed to Plato rather than to the Stagerite. The doctrines of Paul, in their estimation, lacked the "salt" of philosophy. By combining the wisdom of the Greek with the gospel of the Jew, they would produce a system more likely, in their belief, to find general acceptance with the nations.

Augustine, who saw in this the subversion of Christianity, strove to stem the torrent of corruption, and lead back Western Christendom to the original sources of divine knowledge; and could we persuade ourselves that his writings had traveled as far to the north as the banks of the Clyde, we would say that the future apostle of Ireland was a disciple of the bishop of Hippo, and had learned from him the two cardinal doctrines which are the kernel of all theology, the beginning and the end of religion as a system, even the utter helplessness of man, and the absolute freeness of the grace of God. But Patrick was not taught by man. He had learned his theology on the mountains of Antrim. The two great doctrines of his teaching had been revealed to him, as the law was revealed to the Israelites, amid the darkness and thunders of an awakened conscience. There was a revelation of them within himself. When the terrors of God, like great waters, were rolling round his soul, and he was preparing to make his bed in hell, a Hand from above drew him out of the depths and set him upon a rock, and this sudden and gracious deliverance made him see how helpless he himself was, and how free and sovereign the grace that had rescued him.

It is in the furnace that the true priest receives his anointing: it is in the furnace that the soldier of the cross is harnessed for the battle. It was in a furnace heated sevenfold that the apostle of Ireland had the sign of his apostleship stamped upon him. His sufferings were a more glorious badge of office than crosier and miter. "I was amended of the Lord," he says, "who thus fitted me to be today what I was once far from being, namely, that I should busy myself with, and labour for the salvation of others at a time when I thought not of my own."

Endnotes

[1] Vox Hiberionacum.

[2] Pat. Confess., sec. xi.

[3] Pat. Confess., sec. xii.

[4] Pat. Confess., sec. 15.

[5] See Todd's Life of St. Patrick.

CHAPTER 13.

PATRICK GOES TO IRELAND-- THE GREATNESS OF HIS MISSION-- ITS

**OPPORTUNENESS-- YEAR OF PATRICK' S ARRIVAL-- HE PRECEDES PALLADIUS--
PALLADIUS SENT FROM ROME TO COUNTERACT HIM.**

Sets out for Ireland-- Opportuneness of his Mission-- Arrives in Ireland A.D. 405-- Was Palladius or Patrick the first to arrive in Ireland-- Medieval chroniclers make Palladius the first to arrive-- Proofs that the Mission of Patrick did not follow but preceded the Mission of Palladius-- Palladius sent by the Pope to counteract Patrick-- Hence rejection of Palladius by the Scots.

ATTENDED by a few companions, humble men like himself, Patrick crossed the sea, and arrived in Ireland. He was now thirty years of age. The prime of his days and the commencement of his life-work had come together. The work on which we now behold him entering, and in which he was to be unceasingly occupied during the sixty years that were yet to be given him, is one that takes its place among the great movements of the world. Till we come to the morning of the sixteenth century we meet with no work of equal magnitude, whether we have regard to the revolution it produced in Patrick's own day, or to the wide issues into which it opened out, and the vast area over which its beneficent influence extended in the following centuries. It was, in fact, a second departure of primitive Christianity; it was a sudden uprising, in virtue of its own inextinguishable force, of the pure simple Gospel, on new soil, after it had been apparently overlaid and buried under a load of pagan ideas, philosophic theories, and Jewish ceremonialism in the countries where it first arose.

The voyage of Patrick, to begin his mission, was the one bright spot in the Europe of that hour. The wherry that bore him across the Irish Sea may with truth be said to have carried the Church and her fortunes. The world that had been was passing away. The lights of knowledge were disappearing from the sky. Ancient monarchies were falling by the stroke of barbarian arms. The Church was resounding with the din of controversy, and the thunder of anathema. Religion had no beauty in the eyes of its professors, save what was shed upon it by the pomp of ceremony, or the blaze of worldly dignities. Christianity appeared to have failed in her mission of enduing the nations with a new and purer life. She had stepped down from her lofty sphere where she shone as a spiritual power, and was moving in the low orbit of earthly systems. It was at this time of gathering darkness that this man, in simplicity of character, and grandeur of aim, so unlike the men of his age, went forth to kindle the lamp of Divine truth in this isle of ocean, whence it might diffuse its light over northern Europe.

Patrick arrived in Ireland about the year A.D. 405. In fixing this date as the commencement of his labours, we differ widely from the current of previous histories. All the medieval writers of his life, save the very earliest, and even his modern biographers, date his arrival in Ireland thirty years later, making it fall about A.D. 432. This date is at variance with the other dates and occurrences of his life in short, a manifest mistake, and yet it is surprising how long it has escaped discovery, and not only so, but has passed without even challenge. The monkish biographers of Patrick had Palladius upon their hands, and being careful of his honour, and not less of that of his master, they have adjusted the mission of Patrick so as to harmonize with the exigencies arising out of the mission of Palladius. They have placed Patrick's mission in the year subsequent to that of Palladius, though at the cost of throwing the life and labours of both men, and the occurrences of the time, into utter confusion.

We think we are able to show, on the contrary, that Patrick was the first to arrive in Ireland; that he preceded Palladius as a worker in that country, by not less than twenty seven years, and that it was to the converts of Patrick that Palladius was sent as their first bishop. This is the fair, one may say, the

unavoidable conclusion to which we are constrained to come after comparing the statements of history and weighing the evidence on the whole case. But this is a conclusion which inevitably suggests an inference touching the view held by the Scots on the claims of the pontiff, and the obedience due to him, which is not at all agreeable to the assertors of the papal dignity, either in our own or in medieval times; and so the two missions have been jumbled and mixed up together in a way that tends to prevent that inference being seen. Let us see how the case stands. It throws light on the condition of the Christian Scots at the opening of the fifth century, and their relations to the Italian bishop.

The starting point of our argument is a fact which is well authenticated in history, and which must be held to rule the whole question. In the year 431, says Prosper, writing in the same century, "Palladius was sent by Pope Celestine to the Scots, believing in Christ as their first bishop." We know of no succeeding writer who has called in question the statement of Prosper; but let us reflect how much that statement concedes, and how far it goes to make good our whole contention. It is admitted, then, that in A.D. 431 the Scots, that is, the Scots in Ireland for Ireland [1] was then the seat of the nation were "believers in Christ." The words of Prosper cannot mean only that there were individual converts among the Scots; they obviously imply that a large body of that nation had been converted to Christianity. The fact of their Christianisation had been carried to the metropolis of the Christian world, it had received the grave attention of the pontiff. Celestine had judged the Scots ripe for having a bishop set over them, and accordingly, consecrating Palladius, he dispatched him to exercise that office amongst them. The words of Prosper can bear no other construction. They show us the Scots formed into a Church, enjoying, doubtless, the ministry of pastors, but lacking that which, according to Roman ideas, was essential to the completeness of their organization, a bishop, namely. And accordingly Celestine resolves to supply this want, by sending Palladius to crown their ecclesiastical polity, and to receive in return, doubtless, for this mark of pontifical affection, the submission of the Scots to the papal see.

But the medieval chroniclers go on to relate what it is impossible to reconcile with the state of affairs among the Scots as their previous statements had put it. They first show us the Scots believing in Christ, and Palladius arriving amongst them as their bishop. And then they go on to say that the Scots in Ireland were still unconverted, and that it was Patrick by whom this great revolution in their affairs was brought about. Accounting for the repulsed flight of Palladius, they say, "God had given the conversion of Ireland to St. Patrick." The words are, "Palladius was ordained and sent to convert this island, lying under wintry cold, but God hindered him, for no man can receive anything from earth unless it be given him from heaven." [2] Of equal antiquity and authority is the following: "Then Patricus is sent by the angel of God named Victor, and by Pope Celestine, in whom all Hibernia believed, and who baptised almost the whole of it." [3]

So, then, according to the medieval chroniclers, we have the Scots believing in Christ in A.D. 431 when Palladius arrived among them, and we have then yet to be converted in A.D. 432 when Patrick visited them. Either Pope Celestine was grossly imposed upon when he was made to believe that the Scots had become Christian and needed a bishop, or the medieval biographers of St. Patrick have blundered as regards the year of his arrival in Ireland, and made him follow Palladius when they ought to have made him precede him. Both statements cannot be correct, for that would make the Scots to be at once Christian and pagan. In history as in logic it is the more certain that determines the

less certain. The more certain in this case is the mission of Palladius in 431, and the condition of the Scots as already believers in Christ. The less certain is the conjectural visit of Patrick in 432. The latter, therefore that is, the year of Patrick's arrival in Ireland, must be determined in harmony with the admitted historic fact as regards the time and object of Palladius' mission, and that imperatively demands that we give precedence to Patrick as the first missionary to the Scots in Ireland, and the man by whom they were brought to the knowledge of the Gospel. To place him after Palladius would only land us in contradiction and confusion.

Other facts and considerations confirm our view of this matter. Patrick's life, written by himself, is the oldest piece of patristic literature extant, the authorship of which was within the British churches. As a sober and trustworthy authority, it outweighs all the medieval chronicles put together. The picture it presents of Ireland at the time of Patrick's arrival is that of a pagan country. Not a word does he say of any previous labourer in this field. He is seen building up the church among the Scots from its very foundations. Other witnesses to the same fact follow. Marcus, an Irish bishop who flourished in the beginning of the ninth century, informs us that Patrick came to Ireland in A.D. 405; and Nennius, who lived about the same time, repeats the statement. [4] "The Leadhar Breac," [5] or Speckled Book, which is the most important repertory of ecclesiastical and theological writings which the Irish Church possesses, being written early in the twelfth century, and some parts of it in the eighth century, or even earlier, gives us to understand that it was known at Rome that Patrick was labouring in Ireland when Palladius was sent thither, for it informs us that "Palladius was sent by Pope Celestine with a gospel for Patrick to preach to the Irish." And in one of the oldest lives of Patrick extant it is admitted that he was in Ireland many years before Palladius arrived in that country. [6]

There are three dates in the career of Patrick which have of late been ascertained with tolerable certainty. These are his birth, his death, and the length of time he laboured as an evangelist in Ireland; and while these dates agree with one another, and so afford a strong corroboration of the accuracy of all three, they cannot be reconciled with the theory that Patrick's ministry in Ireland was posterior to the mission of Palladius. According to the best authorities, Patrick was born about A.D. 373; [7] and Lanigan has adduced good evidence to prove that he died in A.D. 465. The "Book of Armagh" furnishes corroborative evidence of the same fact. It says, "From the passion of Christ to the death of Patrick there were 436 years." [8] The crucifixion took place about A.D. 30; and adding these thirty years to the 436 that intervened between the crucifixion and the death of Patrick, we arrive at A.D. 466 as the year of his demise. Traditions of the highest authority attest that he spent sixty years in preaching the Gospel to the Scoto-Irish. And as between A.D. 405, when, we have said, Patrick arrived in Ireland, and A.D. 465 when he died, there are exactly sixty years, we are presented with a strong confirmation that this is the true scheme of his life, and that when Palladius arrived "with a gospel from Pope Celestine for Patrick to preach to the Irish," he found the British missionary in the midst of his evangelical labours among the Scots, and learned, much to his chagrin, doubtless, that the numerous converts of Patrick preferred to keep by the shepherd who had been the first to lead them into the pastures of the Gospel to following the voice of a stranger.

If anything were wanting to complete the proof that Palladius came not before, but after, Patrick, intruding into a field which he had not cultivated, and attempting to exercise authority over a flock who knew him not, and owed him no subjection, it is the transparent weakness of the excuses by which it has been attempted to cover Palladius' speedy and inglorious flight from Ireland, and the very

improbable and, indeed, incredible account which the medieval chroniclers have given of the appointment by Pope Celestine of Patrick as his successor. If one who had filled the influential position of archdeacon of Rome, as Palladius had done, had so signally failed in his mission to the Scots, and been so summarily and unceremoniously repudiated by them, it is not likely that Celestine would so soon renew the attempt, or that his choice would fall on one of whose name, so far as our information goes, he had never heard at all events, one of whom he could have known almost nothing. Nor is this the only, or, indeed, main difficulty connected with this supposed appointment by Celestine. Patrick, we are told, was nominated as Palladius' successor, when the Pope had learned that the latter was dead. The Pope never did or could learn that his missionary to the Scots was dead, for before it was possible for the tidings to have traveled to Rome, the Pope himself was in his grave. Celestine died in July the 27th, A.D. 432. At that time Palladius was alive at Fordun, or, if he had succumbed to the fever that carried him off, he was but newly dead; and months must have elapsed before the tidings of his decease arrived in Rome, to find the Pope also in his tomb. It hardly needs the plain and positive denial Patrick himself has given, that he never received pontifical consecration, to convince us, that his appointment by Pope Celestine as missionary or bishop to Ireland is a fable.

The more nearly we approach this matter, and the closer we look into the allegations of the chroniclers and of those who follow them, the more clearly does the truth appear. The excuses with which they cover the speedy retreat of Palladius only reveal the naked fact; they are a confession that the Christian Scots refused to receive him as their bishop. The story of Nathy, the terrible Irish chieftain, who so frightened Palladius that he fled for his life before he had been many days in the country, is a weak and ridiculous invention. Instead of a powerful monarch, as some have painted him, Nathy was a petty chieftain, who stretched his scepter over a territory equal in size to an English county or a Scotch parish; and if Palladius could not brave the wrath of so insignificant a potentate, verily his courage was small, and his zeal for the cause which Celestine had entrusted to him, lukewarm. We cannot believe that the missionary of Celestine was the craven this story would represent him to have been, or that he would so easily betray the interests of the Papal chair, or refuse to run a little risk for the sake of advancing its pretensions. The true reason for his precipitate flight was, beyond doubt, the opposition of the Scots to his mission. They wanted no bishop from Rome. Patrick had now for twenty seven years been labouring among them; he had been their instructor in the Gospel; they willingly submitted to his gracious rule; they rejoiced to call him their bishop, although there never was a miter set on his brow; and they had no desire to exchange the government of his pastoral staff for the iron crook of this emissary from the banks of the Tiber. If the "gospel" which Palladius had brought from Celestine to preach to them was the same Gospel which Patrick had taught them, what could they do but express their regret that he should have come so long a journey to give them that which they already possessed? If it was another gospel, even though it had come down to them from Rome, which was now aspiring to be called the mother and mistress of all churches, they declined to receive it. In short, the Scots gave Palladius plainly to understand that he had meddled in a matter with which he had no concern, and that they judged his interference an attempt to steal their hearts from him who had "begotten them in Christ," and to whom all their loyalty was due, and of inflicting upon them the farther wrong of robbing them of the liberty in which they lived under the pastor of their choice, and bringing them into thralldom to a foreign lord. But the plain unvarnished record of the fact was not to be expected from the medieval chroniclers. They were worshipers of the pontifical grandeur, and hence the contradictions and fables by which they have sought to conceal the affront offered to the pontiff in the person of his deputy. Nor is the fact to be

looked for from those writers of our own day who are so anxious to persuade us that the Scots were always in communion with Rome, and always subject to the authority of its bishop. History shows us the very opposite. The first acts of the Scots on their conversion to the Christian faith are seen to be these they repel the advances of the bishop of Rome, they put forth a claim of independence, and they refuse to bow at the foot of the papal chair. Amen!!

Endnotes

[1] We must again remind our readers that the Scotland of that age was Ireland. Porphyry (middle of third century) is the first who mentions the Scotie gentes, "the Scottish tribes," as the inhabitants of the Britannic Isles. From that time Scotia occurs as the proper name of Hibernia. Claudian (A.D. 395) says: "When the Scots put all Ireland in motion (against the Romans), then over heaps of Scots the icy Ierne wept." Orosius, in the same age, says: "Hibernia is inhabited by the Scottish nations" (lib. i. cap. 20). Scotia eadem et Hibernia, "Scotland and Ireland are the same country" (Isidore, lib. xii. c. 6). Ireland is properly the country of the Scots, says Bede. The word properly is used to distinguish them from the Scots who in his day had come to be settled in Argyleshire. Ancient Scotland is spoken of as an island, and Scotland never was an island, though Ireland is.

[2] Life of St. Patrick (A.D. 700), preserved in the Book of Armagh; Todd's Life of St. Patrick p. 288.

[3] Annotation of Tirechan on the Life of St. Patrick, also preserved in the book of Book of Armagh, a MS. of the early part of the 9th century.

[4] "Its claims," says Dr. Killen (Old Catholic Church), "have been acknowledged by the best critics of all denominations," by Usher, Ware, Tillemont, Lanigan, and Neander. Dr. Killen strongly supports the view advocated in the text. He thinks that Patrick arrived in Ireland immediately after the death of Nial, or Nial of the Nine Hostages, in the year 40

[5] Introduction to the Irish version of Nennius, p. 19. Dublin, 1838.

[6] Dr. Petrie speaks of the Leadhar Breac as the oldest and best MS. relating to the Irish Church, now preserved, or which, perhaps, the Irish ever possessed. 6. Interpolated version of his life by Probus Dr. Petrie on Tara Hill.

[7] Lanigan, i. 129,130. Ibid. i. 362, 363.

[8] Betham, ii. 288. Transac. Roy. Irish Acad., vol. xviii. part ii. p. 52.

CHAPTER 14.

PATRICK CROSSES THE SEA-- BEGINS HIS MINISTRY-- MANNER OF HIS PREACHING-- EFFECT ON THE IRISH.

Patrick's following-- Disembarks at mouth of Slany, Ulster -- His first Sermon-- Simplicity of his Preaching-- Effect upon his Hearers-- The first Seal of his Commission.

NOTHING could be more unpretending, or farther removed from display, than the manner in which Patrick entered on his mission. We see him go forth, not, indeed, alone, but with only a small following of obscure and humble disciples. He has communicated his design to a few select members of the British church of Strathclyde: they have approved his purpose, and caught a portion of his spirit, and now offer themselves as the associates of his future labours. On a certain day they proceed together to the sea shore, and pass over to the other side. On that voyage hang events of incalculable consequence. If the tempest shall burst and mishap befall the tiny ship now labouring amid the tides of the Irish Channel, history must alter its course, and the destiny of nations will be changed. Tirechan, the eighth-century commentator on the "Life of Patrick," deeming so mean an escort altogether unbefitting so great an occasion, has provided Patrick with a sumptuous retinue of "holy bishops, presbyters, deacons, exorcists, ostiari, and lictors." It is hard to see the need he had of such an attendance, or the help these various functionaries could give him in his labours among the savage clans of pagan Ireland. But in truth the coracle that carried Patrick across the Channel bore no such freight. This army of spiritual men is the pure creation of the chronicler's pen.

The little party crossed the sea in safety, and arrived at Innes Patrick, a small island off the coast of Dublin. Their stay here was short, the place being then most probably uninhabited. They next sailed along the coast northward, halting at various points on their voyage to recruit their stock of provisions. In some instances the inhabitants absolutely refused to supply their necessities, and sent them away fasting, and Patrick, his biographers say, punished their niggardliness by pronouncing the curse of barrenness on the rivers and fields of these inhospitable people.[1] These "bolts of malediction," as his biographers term them, we may well believe, are as purely imaginary as the crowd of "holy bishops" that formed his train. Such fictions serve only to show how ill these writers understood the man whose character they had undertaken to portray. Patrick bore neither weapon in his hand nor malediction on his lip: he had come to preach peace, and to scatter blessings, and, after the example of a Greater, he took no account whether they were friends or enemies on whom these blessings lighted.

Continuing their course, Patrick and his fellow-voyagers reached the coast of Ulster, and finally disembarked at the mouth of the Slain, a small river now called Slany. The spot lies between the town lands of Ring Lane and Ballintogher, about two miles from Sabhal or Saul. [2] Here it was that Patrick began his great career. In the little band which we see stepping on shore at Downpatrick to begin work among the Scots in Ireland, we behold the beginning of that great movement among the Celtic nations by which Christianity, during the course of the three following centuries, was spread from the banks of the Po to the frozen shores of Iceland.

Patrick's first sermon was preached in a barn. The use of this humble edifice was granted him by the chief of the district, whom, the legend says, was the same man as his former master, Milchu. When we see Patrick rising up before a crowd of pagan Scots in this barn we are reminded of the wooden shed in which Luther, ten centuries afterwards, opened his public ministry in the market place of Wittenberg. In a fabric having as little pretension to show or grandeur did Patrick open his mission in Ireland. He spoke in the dialect of those whom he addressed. The Celtic was then the common tongue

of the North of Europe. The dialect of Ireland might differ from the dialect of Patrick's birthplace, but that presented no difficulty in his case, seeing he had made himself familiar with the dialect of Ulster during the six years that he herded sheep on its mountains. He knew not the tongue only but the hearts also of the men who now stood before him. He had learned to read them when he mingled with them as a slave. To what device had he recourse to gain their attention? How was he able to procure for his words entrance into their dark minds? How is it that the lightning penetrates the gloom of the deepest midnight? Is it not by its own inherent illuminating power? Patrick's words were light, light from the skies; and simply by their own silent and celestial power, like the lightning of the clouds, did they penetrate the pagan darkness and chase the night from the souls of these men.

The churchmen in Rome at that day were vying with each other in the glory of their official garments, and the grandeur of their temples, sure signs that they had begun to distrust the power of their message. It was in his perfect confidence in the unimpaired omnipotent power of the Gospel message, that Patrick's great strength lay. As the days when the Gospel walked in Galilee and preached to men by the sea shore and on the mountain's side, so was now to be in Ulster. The Gospel had returned to the simplicity, and with the simplicity, to the power of its youth. Smitten with premature decrepitude in the proud Italian capital, it was about to go forth with the footsteps of a mighty conqueror on the mountains of Antrim. While the eloquence of Chrysostom was evoking only the noisy plaudits of the gay citizens of Constantinople, the words of Patrick were to draw forth from the Scots of Ulster the tears of genuine penitence.

Standing up before his audience in the same garb in which he had crossed the sea, and speaking to them in their mother tongue, Patrick told them the simple but grand story of the cross. The rugged exterior of the speaker was soon forgotten in the wonder and amazement which his message awakened. Like a fire, it searched the souls of his hearers through and through. Like a great hammer, it smote upon their consciences and awoke them from their deep sleep. As it had been formerly with Patrick himself, so was it now with these ignorant and fierce men; their own former selves came out of the darkness of their ignorance, and stood before their eyes. What had their past life been but one long transgression! So did they now see it. Like men coming out of a stupor, and struggling painfully back into consciousness, so these men, in whom a moral and spiritual consciousness was now being developed, returned to life with pain and agony, feeling the load of guilt and wretchedness that lay upon them. To efface the record of these iniquitous deeds was impossible, and it was equally beyond their power to atone for them. And yet satisfaction, they felt, there must be, otherwise the approach of a doom, as terrible as it was righteous, could not be stayed. What were they to do? On every side they saw themselves confronted with stern realities, not to be met by fictions or mystic rites, but by realities equally great. Behind them were acts of flagrant transgression. In front of them was a Law in which they heard the voice of a great Judge speaking, and saying, "The wages of sin is Death" Trouble and anguish took hold upon them.

Anon there began to pass another change upon the men gathered round Patrick, and listening for the first time in their lives to the Gospel from his lips. They began to understand that this was a message from Heaven; and they gathered hope from the fact that the Great Father had sent one to call them from the errors in which they had long wandered, and bring them back to himself. It was clear that He had no pleasure in their death. Light began to break in through their deep darkness. And now there seemed to be unveiled before them, as if by an unseen hand, a Tree on which a Divine Victim was

suspended, who was bearing their sins and dying in their room. It was this wondrous sight that changed the words of the preacher from a message of condemnation and death into a message of forgiveness and life. Here was the very satisfaction which their conscience craved in order that it might lay down its burden. Here was blood of priceless value, and not a spot in all the black record of their past lives which it could not wash out. This was the door of life eternal. At its threshold neither money nor merit was demanded as the condition of admission. Why, then, should they not press into the kingdom, and sit down with the patriarchs and prophets, the kings and righteous men of former ages? They did so. Their pagan life cast off, their hearts purified by the truth, they entered and enrolled their names in that goodly and glorious company which counts among its members men of every age and of every race, and the least of whom is greater than the highest of the grandees of the empires of earth.

It was not every one in the assembly now gathered round Patrick whose heart was touched, and was able to press into the kingdom, the door of which he opened to his hearers. Nor was it, perhaps, the major part; but even if only a few responded to his call, that was much in the circumstances. The heart of the missionary was cheered. He heard in the occurrence a voice bidding him go forward and fear not. If he had been haunted by misgivings that one so humble as he felt himself to be had committed a grave imprudence in undertaking so great an enterprise, these misgivings were now set at rest. These first fruits were the pledges of a great harvest in days to come. The whole land would be given him provided he had zeal to labour and faith to wait. The Gospel had given another proof of its power, and one not the least illustrious of the many it had exhibited since it began its career. Ere this day it had visited many lands, and told its message in almost all the tongues of earth, barbarous and civilized; it had traversed the vast territory that stretches from the shores of the Nile to the banks of the Ganges, from the snows of Atlas to the mountains of the Kurds, leaving on its path all throughout that immense field the monuments of its beneficent spirit, and transforming energy in tribes emancipated and civilized, in institutions and laws ameliorated, and in individual lives rescued from degradation and ennobled by purity and hope. But it may be questioned whether the Gospel had ever entered a region where, judged from human standpoint, its success was more improbable than among the Scots in Ireland, intractable and stubborn in disposition, held in bondage by their chieftains, and inspired with awe and terror by their Druidic priests. Yet here it was that the Gospel was destined to win its more conspicuous, and certainly its most enduring triumph.

The commission of Patrick had now received its first attesting seal. "He tarried many days there," says the "Book of Armagh." He journeyed over the whole district, preaching and teaching, "and there the faith began to spread."

Endnotes

[1] Vita. Trip., i. 41; Todd, Life of St. Patrick, p. 405.

[2] See a valuable paper (privately printed) by Mr. J. W. Hanna, of Downpatrick, entitled, An Enquiry into the true landing place of St. Patrick in Ulster. Todd, Life of St. Patrick; p. 406, footnote.

CHAPTER 15.

PATRICK' S BARN-- HIS TOUR-- SIN COUNTRY DISTRICT-- SIN TOWNS-- CONVERSATIONS-- SERMONS-- TOILS AND PERILS-- EFFORTS ON BEHALF OF SLAVES-- WAS HE EVER AT ROME?

Patrick's Barn-- Monkish Caricatures of Patrick-- The Confessio the one true Portrait-- Tours in rural Villages-- His Sermons-- Visits the Towns-- A better Sacrifice than that of the Druid-- Change of his converts-- His Labours and Perils -- Patrick's real Miracles-- Efforts on behalf of Slaves-- Was Patrick ever at Rome-- His Anointing by the Pope a Fable.

IT is seldom that a great career destined to be crowned with complete and enduring success opens in victory. Yet so it was in the case of Patrick. He crossed the sea, and the Scots of Ireland surrendered to him at the first summons. So it may be said, for in these first converts the nation is seen giving pledges of full submission in due time. With the arrival of this man on the Irish shore a mighty unseen influence goes forth over the land, and like that plastic force that stirs in the bosom of the earth in spring, and sends forth the little flower to tell that winter has fulfilled its months, and that summer is returning, so this influence which was descending from a higher sky had sent forth these first blossoms to tell that the dark winter of the land was past, and that a sweeter spring tide than any that had ever before freshened its fields was drawing nigh.

In after years a church was erected on the site of the humble edifice in which Patrick had opened his ministry and gained his first triumphs. The form of that church was rectangular, like that of the barn which it replaced. And like the barn, too, the church stood from north to south. It had not yet been decreed that the true orthodox position of a church is from east to west, and that unless it is so placed, the sacraments dispensed in it lack converting power. The idea of such a thing had not dawned on Patrick's mind, and so he went on preaching in churches turned in every direction without finding that the efficacy of the Gospel was in the least impaired thereby; and the fact is undoubted that never was there such a multitude of conversions in Ireland as in those days when the churches of that country stood in directions that flagrantly transgressed the afterwards established rubric. This venerable, though uncanonical sanctuary, which arose on the site on which Patrick's first sermon was preached, was styled Sabhal Padiuc, that is, Patrick's Barn. [1] The place retains the name to this day, and is situated about two miles northeast of Downpatrick.

Drawing fresh strength, doubtless, from this auspicious commencement of his career, Patrick went forth to prosecute his ministry throughout the surrounding region. Much he joyed to give liberty to a land which had given slavery to himself, and that joy received an accession with each new convert. In following the steps of our great missionary it is vain attempting to record his progress from day to day, or even from one year to another. We cannot tell the order in which he visited the several districts and clans, nor do we know the number or the rank of the converts he baptized at the various points where he preached. The task of chronicling such a progress, stage by stage, so easy in the case of a modern mission, is altogether impossible in the case of the missions and missionaries of fourteen hundred years ago. Not only are all contemporary records, such as the men of their own day would have given, wanting, but there hangs between us and these remote evangelists a cloud of fables and prodigies, the creation of men who lived long after these early labourers had gone to their graves, and who neither sympathized with their pure spiritual aims nor were able to rise to the conception of the

simple greatness of their characters. The men and the events of those days look out upon us from a legendary fog.

In the case of the apostle of Ireland, this disadvantage exists in a more than usual degree. A score of legendary pens have been set to work to distort and disfigure him. Each individual biographer has created a St. Patrick in his own likeness. Open the pages of this biographer; the features on which we gaze are those of an excited visionary or a delirious fanatic.

Turn to a second; it is a worker of miracles and a fore teller of future events, that stands before us. A third exhibits Patrick as a necromancer, silencing contradiction and compelling submission by the mysterious forces of incantations, spells, and exorcisms. A fourth paints him as proud and choleric, more ready to avenge than to forgive an injury, and thundering malediction on all who oppose him; while a fifth invests him with power over the elements of nature, of which he makes ready use for the discomfiture of his foes, covering them with thick darkness, or dispersing them with frightful tempests, engulfing them by earthquake, or consuming them by fire from heaven. We feel instinctively that this is not the apostle of Ireland, but a grossly conceived and hideously-painted caricature.

There is but one authentic likeness of Patrick; a likeness, it is true, drawn by his own hand, but drawn all unconsciously the hand doing a work which the mind listed not of, the *Confessio*, to wit. It authenticates itself by its unlikeness to all other biographies of the same man, and by being such as the medieval biographers were utterly unable to have produced.

Let us mark the manner of the man as he has unwittingly revealed himself to us. He is clothed in a long woolen garment. His eye burns with energy; his brow is meek but courageous. Benign his aspect. He speaks, and his voice draws the natives round him. There is a tenderness and a beseechingness in it that compel them to listen. How artlessly he adapts himself to their prejudices and habits! and how gentle and patient is he with their gross and carnal ideas! how persevering in his efforts to find an entrance for the light into their dark minds! His own heart, schooled in spiritual affliction, knows how to lay itself alongside theirs. Thus quietly but earnestly he pursues his work from day to day, availing himself of the principles of natural religion which Druidism had dimly lodged in their minds, to awaken conscience to a sense of sin, and to call up the image of a judgment to come: and when he finds that the arrow has entered, and that the wound has begun to bleed oh, how does he rejoice! Not that he has pleasure in the anguish of the sufferer, but because he anticipates the joy of the cure.

On his tours he entered the huts of the peasantry, shared in their humble meal, and while seated at table with them he would take occasion to draw the conversation from ordinary matters to those of highest concern. He would tell them in simple words of that great event which had come to pass, four hundred years before, in Jerusalem, which had been already made known in so many lands, and which was now published to them also for the forgiveness of their sins. He would tell them that He who died on Calvary was now alive, was reigning in Heaven, and would come on the great final day as Judge; but meanwhile, before that great day should come, He was sending His messengers to all nations with the command that they should believe and obey His Gospel. Their hearts would be touched by the tidings of a death so wonderful and a love so great, and the visit would end as similar visits had ended in primitive times, by the householder saying, "See, here is water; what hinders that we should be

baptized"?

On the hillside he would sit down amid the shepherds and cowherds, and tell them of a Shepherd who gave His life for the sheep. He would not despise his audience because they were mean, nor despair of them because they were ignorant, seeing it was while he himself sat on the hillside as a cowherd that his own hard heart began to melt and his own blind eye to open. How vividly now would the whole scene return and present itself before his memory! As the labourers rested in the fields at noontide, he would join himself to them, and opening the Scriptures, he would read to these toil-worn men a parable or a story from Holy Writ. It might be of that Lord of the vineyard who, when evening was come, summoned His servants before Him, and proceeded to reckon with them, giving, without stint or grudge, to the man who had laboured but one hour in the vineyard even as to the man who had laboured twelve hours, the penny of an everlasting glory. Would they not like to be the servants of such a Master, and when their evening had come, to be called into His presence and have their poor services acknowledged by so transcendent a recompense?

Or he discoursed to them of that runaway from home and father who kept swine in the far country. He showed him to them, as he sat amid his vile charge, raggedness on his back, famine in his hollow cheek, and remorse in his soul, a supremely pitiable spectacle. He asks them whether they had ever known one who resembled that poor prodigal; whether they had known any one who had committed the same folly and plunged himself into the same gulf of wanton wretchedness? They answer him with a sigh, and they begin to say each within himself, "I am that prodigal. I have wandered far from my Father: alas! I know not the way back to Him." "I, too," responds the missionary interpreting their unspoken thoughts, "have played the runaway. I, too, have been in the far country, and have felt the pangs of that hunger which there preys upon the heart.

And I should have been sitting there to this hour, shut in with my wretchedness and utter despair, had not a voice spoken to me and said, 'In your Father's house there is bread enough and to spare, while you perish with hunger.' Being come to myself, I arose and went to my Father. I invite you to do so also. If you sit still in this land of famine you shall certainly perish. Your Father's door is open to you. The same welcome that met me at its threshold awaits you, and the same arms which folded me to His heart will be opened to embrace you. Arise and go to Him."

Patrick, in the prosecution of his mission, visited the towns as well as the villages and rural districts. On these occasions, we are told, he would assemble the inhabitants by tuck of drum. To face a town assembly was a more formidable affair than to open a familiar conversation with a company of shepherds on the hillside, or begin a discourse to a group of labourers in the field; but the centers of influence, which are the cities, must be won if Ireland is to be gained for the Gospel. The tocsin has been sounded, and the men of the city, knowing that it announces the arrival of one of whom they have heard such strange things, flock to see and hear him. Along with them come a multitude of the baser sort, zealous upholders of the customs of their fathers, which they have been told this man everywhere speaks against. They greet the missionary with clamour and scowls. Undismayed, Patrick rises up before them, and amid the gaping wonder of some, the rude mocking of others, and the silence of a few, proceeds to unfold his message. He does not directly attack the rites of the groves. He must first show them a better altar and a holier sacrifice than that of the Druid, and then they will forsake their bloody oblations of their own accord. He speaks to them of a God whom they have not

seen, for He dwells in the heavens, but the workings of whose power, and the tokens of whose love, are all around them. Can He who spread out the plains of earth, who decks them with the flowers of spring, and waters them with the rain of the clouds, and clothes them year by year with bounteous harvests, take delight in the cruel sacrifices you offer to him in the dark wood? So far from demanding the immolation of your innocent offspring, He has sent His own son to die in your room. Other sacrifice He does not demand and will not accept. It is a cry for vengeance, not a prayer for pardon, which rises from the blood that streams on the altar of the Druid. But the sacrifice I announce to you speaks peace: it opens the heavens: it reveals to you the face of a Father: are you willing to be reconciled to Him? We hear some in that crowd, who had felt the unseen power that goes along with this message, reply, We are willing. From this hour we go no more to the altars of the Druids. We have borne their heavy yoke too long. We cast ourselves at the feet of our Father, and humbly beg for the sake of His own son to be receded back into His love.

It was in these simple and easily understood terms, for the Gospel is ever the mightiest when preached in plain unvarnished phraseology, that Patrick found entrance for Christianity into the Scottish municipalities and clanships of Ireland. We have no written chronicle of his sermons, but we know on what model he formed himself as an instructor of the ignorant; and the incidental allusions which he makes in his "Confessio" to his ministry assure us that this was the spirit and style in which he discharged it. Yet meek and unassuming though he was, he spoke as one having authority, and not as the Druids. If his language was plain the truths he uttered were weighty, and such as even these poor ignorant men could not but see in some sort to be inexpressibly grand. They met the deepest needs and cravings of their hearts. Those who received them felt that by some marvelous power they had awakened within them feelings and motives they had never known till now. They felt that they were other men than they had been before. And this transformation of soul was not long of making itself manifest in the outward life. Their townsmen and neighbours saw that they were different men from them, and different men even from their former selves. There was a purity, a charity, an unselfishness in their lives which they could not well explain, but the power and beauty of which they could not but see, and this new and lovely character was exhibited with a grace so natural and easy that manifestly it was not assumed or acted, but genuine; it was the result of a change wrought in the deepest principles of their being. These were the monuments Patrick left behind him in every town which he visited, of the divinity of the Gospel. These men, changed in the very essence of their character, the whole scope, aim, and influence of their lives now become the very reverse of what they had aforetime been, were the most convincing proofs that in making known to them the death and rising again of that great ONE who had come on earth for man's deliverance, he had not been entertaining them with an idle tale, or trading on their simplicity and credulity by narrating to them "a cunningly-devised fable."

Having delivered his message in one town, Patrick must needs go forward and publish the "good tidings" in this other also. When he took his departure he had the satisfaction of thinking that the Gospel remained behind him, and that it would speak to the pagan populations by the transformed characters and pure lives of those who had embraced it. Thus he multiplied missionaries as he went onward. They might be few: two in a sept, or one in a city, but their strength lay not in their numbers, but in their character; they were light-bearers in their several communities.

The conquest of Ireland to the Gospel was, there is reason to think, neither easy nor sudden. On the

contrary, every reference to it, direct or incidental, in the "Confessio," confirms us in the belief that as the work was great so its accomplishment consumed long years of anxious and exhausting labour. We have seen the gleam of success that heralded its commencement; nevertheless it found no exemption in its after stages from the law that requires that every great cause shall be baptized in suffering. Delay, disappointment, and repeated failure must test the faith and mature the wisdom and courage by which ultimate success is to be achieved and rewarded. For the long period of sixty years, with but few intervals of rest, Patrick had to maintain this great combat with the two potencies Druidism and Darkness which had so long held possession of Ireland. Victory came slowly, and only late in the day. That pestiferous priest craft which had struck its roots deep into the soil, was not to be extirpated in a day, and the nation delivered by a few rapid and brilliant strokes. Such a work could be done only in anxiety and weariness, often in cold and hunger, with many tears and strong cries for help, and amid privations cheerfully submitted to, reviling meekly borne, and dangers courageously braved. Such was the man who carried the Gospel to the Scots in Ireland, and through them to the whole island. Days and nights together, he tells us, he was occupied in reading and interpreting the Scriptures to the people. All his journeys were performed on foot. We see him, staff in hand, regardless of the blast, traversing quaking bog, and threading dark wood, happy if at the end of his way he could impart light to some dark mind. And this work he did without earthly recompense. He coveted neither dignity from pope nor gold from chieftain. "I accepted nothing for my pains," said he, "lest the Gospel should be hindered."

The only reward Patrick received was persecution. This, and not papal consecration, was the badge of his apostleship. And persecution in every variety of form, save that of death, befell him. His life, though often in extreme jeopardy, was providentially shielded, for it was the will of his Master that the desire of his heart, which was the conversion of Ireland, should be given him. But, short of this last extremity, every other species of indignity and suffering had he to endure. There were incessant journeying over a wild country; there were the ambushes set for him in the way; there were the discomfort and sleeplessness that wait on a couch spread under the open night sky; there was the uncertainty of daily bread; there were the gibes and buffetings of pagan crowds; there was the dangerous wrath of powerful chieftains, who feared the effect Patrick's preaching might have on their serfs and who were not likely long to hesitate when called to decide between the life of the missionary and the loyalty of their dependents. And there was the fury of some mob or clan which the priests of Druidism had instigated to violence against the preacher, whom they branded as a contemner of their worship and a reviler of their gods. But when chased from any particular scene of labour by the frown of chieftain or the violence of the populace, his regret was the less from knowing that the work would not suffer interruption thereby, for the words he had spoken would germinate in hearts in his absence, and when the storm subsided he would find disciples to welcome his return.

It was after this fashion that Patrick stormed and won the Septs of Ireland. These were the real miracles that illustrated his career, and they far excel the marvels and prodigies which the fertile but credulous imaginations of his monkish biographers have credited him with. In these labours so patiently prosecuted, in these sufferings so meekly endured, and in the success which crowned his efforts, but of which he never boasts, we see the true Patrick not the Patrick of monkish story or of vulgar romance, who routs hydras and chases dragons from the soil of Ireland, but the Patrick who, seizing the sword of the Spirit, rushes into the darkness of that land, and encounters things more difficult to be overcome than hosts of literal monsters, even the evils begotten of deep ignorance, and

the beliefs engendered by an ancient superstition. All he discomfits, and cleanses the land from the dragon brood that possessed it. This was a higher achievement than if he had yielded sovereign authority over the elements, and been obeyed by the lightning of the sky and the waves of the deep. So did it appear to Patrick himself. "Whence to we this grace," says he, "that I should come to the Irish tribes to preach the Gospel and endure these wrongs at the hands of the unbelieving? that I should bear the reproach of being a wanderer and an alien, and undergo so many persecutions, even to bonds and imprisonment, and sacrifice myself and my nobility and rank" (he was the son of a Decurio) "for the sake of others? And I am ready, if I should be found meet, and the Lord should indulge me so far, to lay down my life for His Name, because I am greatly a debtor to God, who bestowed so great grace upon me." [2]

Not in his own person only was Patrick persecuted; he had frequently to suffer in the persons of his converts. This, we may well believe, gave him more poignant grief than what touched himself. It wrung his heart to see the serf incurring the anger and enduring the blows of his pagan master for no fault save that of obeying the call of the Gospel and becoming a follower of the cross. His sympathetic nature would not permit him to stand aloof and refuse his mediation in behalf of "the sons of the faith," when he beheld them enduring stripes and imprisonment at the hands of some cruel lord whose slaves they continued to be, although now they were the freed men of Christ. He would give his money when his other good offices failed, and in this way he was able to redeem from temporal slavery many whom he had already rescued from spiritual bondage. In the family, as in the clan, the influence of the missionary had often to be put forth. Enmities and rankling sometimes followed the entrance of the Gospel into households, and Patrick had to mediate between the heathen father and the Christian child. Such were the clouds that darkened the morning of the Christian Church in Ireland. But suffering only endeared the cause to the convert. Neither the leader in this war of invasion, nor any soldier in the army under him, thought of retreating. The auguries of final triumph were multiplying from day to day, and the banners of light were being borne farther and still farther into the darkness of the land. It is at this point of his career that some of Patrick's biographers throw in an unexpected and most surprising episode. Arresting him in his work, they dismiss him for a while from the field of his labours and of his fast-coming triumphs, and send him on a journey to Rome, to receive consecration as a bishop from the Pope. Had Patrick begun to covet the "pall" which the bishop of Rome was about this time beginning to send as a "gift" to the bishops of the Christian world, with covert design of drawing them into an admission of his supremacy? Or had he begun to doubt the sufficiency of that commission of which it had been his humble boast that he received it "from Christ himself" and did he now wish to supplement his Master's grace with the pontiff's consecration. It must be done so, if indeed it be the fact that he went to Rome to solicit the papal anointing. But where is the proof of this? What Pope anointed Patrick?

What contemporary record contains the alleged fact? Neither Prosper, nor Platina, nor any other chronicler, mentions Patrick's visit to Rome, till Marianus, a monk of Cologne, proclaims it to the world in the eleventh century, without making it clear in what way or through what channel a fact hidden from the six previous centuries was revealed to himself.

There is no earlier Irish authority for it than a manuscript of the fifteenth century. The undoubted truth is, that oil of Pope never came on Patrick's head. He put no value on papal consecration, and would not have interrupted his work for the space of an hour, or gone a mile out of his way, though it had

been to be anointed with the oil of all the Popes. Nay, we may venture to affirm that he would not have left the evangelization of Ireland were it to have been installed even in the chair of Peter. Let us first hear Patrick himself on the point. His words make it clear that from the moment he arrived in Ireland as a missionary till he laid his bones in its soil, not a day did he absent himself from the country. "Though I most earnestly desired to go to Britain," says he, "as if to my country and kindred, and not only so, but even to proceed as far as Gaul, the Lord knows how much I wished it, yet bound in the spirit which declares me guilty if I should do so, I fear lest I should lose aught of my labour, nay, not mine, but Christ's, my Lord, who commanded me to come to this people, and live with them during the residue of my life." Dr. Lanigan, the able Roman Catholic historian of St. Patrick, treats the story as a fabrication. "This pretended tour to Rome," says he, "and the concomitant circumstances, are set aside by the testimony of St. Patrick himself, who gives us most clearly to understand that from the commencement of his mission he constantly remained in Ireland. And again: "It is clear from his own testimony that he remained with the Irish people during the whole remainder of his life." [3]

All the more authentic accounts of the life of Patrick discredit this alleged consecration by the Pope; or, rather, they make it certain that it never took place. The hymn of Fiacc is silent regarding it. The author, who was bishop of Sletty, and a disciple and contemporary of Patrick, is said to have written his work to record the principal events of his life, and published it not later than the middle of the century succeeding that in the end of which Patrick died. Nevertheless, he makes no mention of his visit to Rome. The ancient Life of Patrick, preserved in the Book of Armagh, is equally silent regarding it. [4] The story may be dismissed as the invention of writers who believed that no one could be a minister of Christ unless he wore a "pall," and had neither right to preach nor power to convert unless he were linked to the chief pastor on the banks of the Tiber by the chain of apostolic succession.

We must here remark that the organization of the British church in the fifth century was simple indeed, compared with the ecclesiastical mechanism of succeeding ages. There was then no Mission Board to partition heathendom into distinct fields of labour, and to say to one, go and work yonder; and to another, come and evangelize here. The church in the early ages was a great missionary society whose members sought the spring of evangelistic activity in their own breast, and were free to go forth without formal delegation from synod or bishop, and evangelize as they might incline, at their open doors or among remote pagan tribes.

Merchants, soldiers, and even slaves were the first, in some instances, to carry the knowledge of Christianity to heathen lands. These facts help us to understand the position of Patrick. It is hard to say what church, or if any church, gave him formal delegation to Ireland. The church of Strath-Clyde in which his father was deacon, and himself a presbyter the only ordination he ever received, so far as we can make out looked with no favour on his projected evangelization of Ireland, and was not likely to have given it formal recognition. There is a story, founded on a doubtful legend in the Book of Armagh, that the church of Gaul sent Patrick to convert the Irish and that he received consecration from a bishop of that church, by the name of Amathorex. [5] But this and all similar allegations are sufficiently refuted by Patrick himself. He says, "I was made a bishop in Ireland." [6] What meaning are we to attach to these words? Certainly not that of formal episcopal consecration, for there were then no bishops or presbyters in Ireland, save those which Patrick himself had placed in that office. These men, doubtless, recognized him as their chief and bishop; for he who had created the flock had

the best right to wear the honour, or rather bear the burden of its oversight. And this interpretation of the words is confirmed by the statement that follows them, in which Patrick ascribes his mission or apostolate to God only. He appears to have viewed the extraordinary events that had befallen him as the Divine call to essay the conversion of Ireland; and hence though he passes lightly over human ordination, and even leaves it doubtful whether he ever received such, he is emphatic as regards the call of the people. He tells us that he heard "the voice of the Irish" crying to him, and saying, "We pray thee, holy youth, to come and henceforth walk: among us." He answered, "I, Patrick, the sinner, come at your call."

Endnotes

[1] It is Latinised *Horreum Patrici*, Patrick's Granary. Reeves, Down and Connor, p. 220.

[2] *Patrici Confessio*, sec. xv.

[3] Lanigan, *Eccles. Hist.*, i. 181, 319.

[4] Todd, *Life of St. Patrick*, pp. 313-315.

[5] Todd, *Life of St. Patrick*, pp. 316-319.

[6] The statement occurs in his letter to Coroticus, a British pirate, who had made a descent upon Ireland and carried off a number of Patrick's converts. The passage is as follows: "*Patricius, peccator, indoctus silicet, Hiberione constitutum episcopum me ease fateor. Certissime a Deo accept id quod sum. Inter barbaros itaque habito, proselytes et profuga ob amorem Dei.*" The words imply that Patrick's ordination, whatever its form, was in Ireland; *Hiberione*, in Ireland not *Hiberoni*, for Ireland.

CHAPTER 16.

PATRICK'S "DAY OF TARA"-- CONVERSION OF IRELAND, ETC.

Patrick and Luther, Columba and Calvin, Patrick's first Congregation-- Extension of His Mission-- Rumours of a Great Advent-- Festival of Tara-- Patrick goes thither-- His Fire on Hill of Slane-- Brought into Presence of King-- His Address to King Logaire-- Converts of High Rank-- Patrick enters Meath-- The Games interrupted-- Goes Westward-- Arrives at Wood of Focloid-- Evangelises in Leinster and Munster-- Ireland Christianised.

WE have followed the footsteps of our missionary as he scatters the good seed amid the rural populations and the provincial towns of the north of Ireland. His journeys had yet extended beyond the limits of the Irish Dalriada, the second cradle of the Scottish race, and the seat, as yet, of the body of the nation. But within these bounds the evangelistic labours of Patrick had been prosecuted with untiring assiduity. With a lion-like courage and a popular eloquence that remind us of Luther, Patrick would seem to have carried captive the understandings and hearts of the nation. So sudden an

awakening we do not meet with till we come down to the era of the Reformation. In truth, there are certain great traits common to both Reformations that of the fifth century and that of the sixteenth. Patrick may be said to have been the Luther of the earlier evangelisation, and Columba though at a vast distance its Calvin.

Patrick gave the first touch to the movement; Columba came after and gave the laws by which its course must be governed, if it would not expend itself in a burst of emotion and enthusiasm. And for both Calvin and Columba a secure retreat was provided, where, in the very presence of countless foes, they might carry on their work. To Calvin was given the little town at the foot of the Alps, which had as its impregnable defense the rival and conflicting interests of the four great monarchies that lay around it. What Geneva was to Calvin, the rock of Iona was to Columba. It had for its rampart the stormy seas of the west. The gates of Geneva were opening day by day to send forth missionaries and martyrs into France and Switzerland, as at an earlier day trained evangelists from the feet of the elders of Iona were constantly crossing the narrow strait to spread the light amongst the British tribes and the pagan nations that were pouring into Europe.

Of the petty chieftains of the north of Ireland several had been won to the Gospel, and among the first fruits of their devotion were gifts of land for the service of the mission. On these plots of ground Patrick erected humble churches, into which he gathered his first converts, for instruction and worship. These young congregations he committed to the care of pastors, whom he had converted and trained, and himself went forward into the surrounding heathenism to make other converts, whom he committed in like manner to the care of other pastors. Never did warrior pant more earnestly for new realms to subdue, than Patrick longed to win fresh triumphs for the Cross; and never was joy of conqueror so ecstatic as was that of the missionary over these flocks gathered out of the arid wilderness of Druidism and now led to the clear waters and green pastures of the Gospel.

Before Patrick began his mission in Ireland, it was the inviolable abode of almost every species of oppression and every form of evil. But now, we may well believe, its northern part began to wear the aspect of a Christian land. Wherever the feet of the missionary had passed, there was seen in the wilds a tract of light, and there was felt the sweetness and fragrance of Christianity. The terrible hardness and selfishness of pagan life had departed; a secret charm was infused into existence; and though the relation of master and serf still subsisted, it had been wondrously mellowed and sweetened. Every duty was somehow easier. Faces formerly dark with hatred or suspicion, now beamed with kindly looks; and the very soil bore testimony to the moral and social amelioration which had been effected, in the better husbandry of the fields, and the air of peace and comfort that began to surround the dwellings.

Patrick could now reflect with satisfaction that his mission had got a foothold in the country. The organisation of the infant church had reached a stage where it would be able to maintain itself, and even to make progress without the presence and the labours of its founder. But the missionary was not content with what he had accomplished. There were other septs, there were wider provinces, and there were more powerful chieftains to be subjected to the sway of the Gospel. The time was come, he judged, to carry the evangelical banners into the West and South of Ireland. It was now that his movement opened out into national breadth, and that Patrick from being the evangelist of a province became the apostle of a nation, and the herald of a movement that ultimately extended to the Celtic

nations of northern Europe.

The fear of Patrick had already fallen upon the priests of the old religion. This helped to open his way into the land. In the footsteps of the missionary the priests of the groves heard the knell of the downfall of Druidism. "Who is this," we hear then say, as they turned on one another pale faces, and spoke in trembling accents, "who is this who marches through the land casting down the altars of the country's faith, and withdrawing the hearts of the people from their fathers' gods? Whence comes he, and who gave him this power?" Prophecy from its seat amid the hills of Judah had announced the coming of a Great King who was to sway His scepter over all the world. The echoes of that Divine voice had gone round the earth, awakening expectation in some, terror in others. Nations groaning in chains listened to it as the Israelite did to the silver trumpet which at dawn of the year of Jubilee sent its glad peal throughout all his coasts, telling every Hebrew bondsman that his forfeited inheritance had come lack, and that his lost freedom was restored. So had this great prophecy sent its reverberations through all lands, awakening, even among savage tribes, the hope that the period of oppression would soon run out, and a golden age bless the earth. Even the bards of Druidism had sung in halting strains the coming of this King, and the happiness and peace that would illustrate His reign.

Fiacc records a prediction of the poets of Erin, similar to the vaticination that prevailed among the classic nations previous to the advent of the Saviour, to the effect that a King would arise who should sway His scepter over all the earth, and establish peace among all nations. And he adds, that no sooner did Patrick appear preaching than the Druids told King Logaire that the time for the fulfillment of the prophecy was come, and that Temor, the place of their great annual festival, was about to be deserted. We give below an extract from the hymn of Fiacc. [1]

This brings us to the "Day of Tara," the greatest day in the career of Patrick. This day transferred the scene of his labours from the rural hamlet, with its congregation of rustics, to the metropolitan Temor, with its magnificent gathering of the clans and chieftains of Ireland. The year when the event we are about to relate took place, it is impossible to fix. The legends of fourteen hundred years leave in great uncertainty both the object of the festival and the season of the year when it was usually celebrated. The modern writers who have attempted to clear up the matter, after hazarding a multitude of guesses, and expending no little critical lore, have left the matter very much where they found it. We shall not follow their example by indulging a profitless discussion over the subordinate circumstances of an event, the substance and issues of which are all that concern us; and in these all are agreed. Like all the great festivals of the age, that of Tara was, probably partly religious, partly political; the priesthood, to whom the regulation of such affairs was mainly committed, taking care, doubtless, to make the former character predominate. We shall keep as clear as possible of the mythicism of legend, and guide ourselves by the probabilities of the case.

The great annual festival of Tara, called "Baal's fire," was at hand. No other occasion or spot in all Ireland, Patrick knew, would offer him an equal opportunity of lifting his mission out of provincial obscurity and placing it full in the eye of the nation. The king, accompanied by the officers of his court, would be present. To Tara, too, in obedience to the annual summons, would come the chieftains of the land, each followed by his clan, over which he exercised the power of a king. The priests would there assemble, as a matter of course; nor would the bards be wanting, the most influential class, after the priests, in the nation. The assembly would be swelled by a countless multitude of the common

people out of all the provinces of Ireland. Patrick resolved to lift high the standard of the cross in presence of this immense convocation. The step was a bold one. If he should convince the monarch and his people that Druidism was false, and that the Gospel alone was true, the victory would be great, and its consequences incalculable. But should he fail to carry the assembly on Tara with him, what could he expect but that he should become the victim of Druidic vengeance, and die on the altar he had hoped to overthrow? That his blood should fall on the earth was a small matter, but that the evangelization of Ireland should be stopped, as it would be should he perish, was with Patrick, doubtless, the consideration of greatest moment. But full of faith, he felt assured that Ireland had been given him as his spiritual conquest. So girding up his loins, like another Elijah, he went on to meet the assembled Druids at Tara, and threw down the gage of combat in the presence of those whom they had so long misled by their arts, and oppressed by their ghostly authority.

Mixing with the multitudes of all ranks which were crowding to the scene of the festival, Patrick pursued his journey, and arrived in the neighbourhood of Tara without attracting observation. He and his attendants immediately began their preparations. Ascending the hill of Slane, which, though distant from the scene of the festival, was distinctly visible from it, the little party collected the brokers branches and rotten wood which were lying about and piling them up on the summit of the hill, they applied the torch and set the heap in a blaze. The flame shot high into the air. Its gleam cast a ruddy glow far and wide over the country around. On that night the fire on every hearth in Ireland must by law be extinguished. If even a solitary lamp were seen to burn, the rash or profane man who had lit it drew down upon himself the heavy penalties which fenced round the great annual solemnity of Tara. And yet on yonder hill of Slane, growing ever the brighter as the dusk deepened, a bonfire was seen to blaze. How came this? Some impious hand had kindled this unhallowed flame! The priests beheld the inauspicious portent with surprise and indignation. The ancient and venerable rites of Tara had been mocked, and the great act of worship, the solemn celebration of which, year by year, called together the whole nation of Ireland, had been studiously and openly outraged. Terrible calamity was sure to follow so flagrant an act if permitted to go unpunished. If the altar was thus contemned, how long would the throne continue to receive the reverence and obedience of the people? Let the king look to it. So reasoned the priests. They loudly demanded that the perpetrator of this odious deed should be sought for and made answerable for his crime. [2] The fire that continued to blaze on the summit of Slane guided the pursuers to the man whom the king and the Magi sought. Nor was Patrick loath to accompany the messengers to the presence of the king, seeing it was with this object that he had kindled this fire, to Druid so prophetic and ill-omened.[3]

At last we behold Patrick at the gates of the citadel of Irish idolatry. If he shall succeed in storming this stronghold and replacing the black flag of the Druid, which for ages has floated over it, with the banner of the Cross, Patrick will have enlisted in the service of Christianity a race rude and unprofitable at this hour, but rich in noble gifts, which need only to be awakened by the Gospel to burst into the fair blossoms of literature, and ripen into heroic deeds of faith and grand evangelistic enterprises. The apostle of Ireland now maintains the great controversy between Druidism and Christianity in presence of the king, the priests, the chieftains, and the septs of Ireland. No chronicle records the arguments he employed on this great occasion. Tradition has forgotten to carry down these, though it has carefully treasured up and transmitted a load of prodigies and wonders which transform the preacher of truth who yields only the "Sword of the Spirit" unto a necromancer who conquers by magic. Not so the man who now stood before Logaire, the reigning king.

The monarch beheld in Patrick a man plain in dress, like one who dwelt more in the wilderness than in cities, his features roughened by exposure to sun and storm, yet stamped with an air of great dignity. On his brow the close-knit gathered lines of resolve; in his eye the fire of a lofty zeal; his voice strung with energy; his words courageous, but calm and wise; every step and movement of his person betokening self-possession. No such man had Logaire ever before looked upon. Rugged, weather-beaten though he was, no one of all the Druids at his court had ever inspired him with such awe as this prophet-like man. He must hear what he has to say. The king motions to the courtiers to stand aside and let the strange figure approach; he bids the Druids be still. There is silence, and Patrick speaks. Respectfully, yet not flatteringly, fearlessly, yet not offensively, does Patrick address Logaire. To know what is in man is to possess the secret of moving and ruling him. Patrick knew that in the heart of the monarch, as in that of the serf, is a deep-seated sense of guiltiness, and an equally deep-seated foreboding of punishment, and that no sooner does reason unfold than this burden begins to press. It is a shadow that will not depart.

To find a region where this specter cannot follow one, a region where the heart, weary of its burden, may lay it down, is the object of desire and pursuit to all living. But before showing Logaire how this craving of his heart was to be met, Patrick must first stir yet more deeply the sense of guiltiness within him. He must awaken his conscience. With this view he appeals to his sense of sin; and what is this sense but just the being within himself testifying that there is a law which he has transgressed. He points to the forebodings and terrors which haunt him; and what are these but witnesses that cannot lie, and that will not be silenced, that there is a penalty attached to transgressions, a judgment to come. Thus does the preacher avail himself of the monitions of the moral sense, the lights of nature, not yet wholly extinguished, to lead his vast audience around him through the deep night that enshrouds them to a clearer light.

He asks them whether it is not these fears this pale specter which has driven them to the altars and sacrifices of the Druid? whether they have not sought these bloody oblations in the vague hope of expiation and relief? Well, have you found the rest you seek? At the altar of the Druid, has the sense of guilt left you? Has the blood that streams on it washed out the stain? If you shall permit your hearts to speak, they will answer, No, the sin is still unpurged, and the terror is still unconquered. Why, multiply rites which are as profitless as they are cruel? Flee from these altars whereon never yet came victim that could avail for expiation.

Cease from these sacrifices of blood, which pollute, but do not cleanse, the offerer. Listen to me. I will tell you of a better altar, and a greater Priest, a Priest who has opened to you the road to the skies. I will tell you of a Father who sent His Son to be a sacrifice in your room. That Son, having offered His sacrifice, and returned from the tomb, as the conqueror of death, has ascended into the heavens, and now sitteth on the right hand of His Father, the crown of an everlasting dominion on His head. He is sending His ambassadors to all nations to proclaim that there is not a wanderer on the face of the earth, there is not one of the sons of men, the humblest, the vilest, the guiltiest, who is not welcome to return, and who shall not be received by the Father, coming by that Priest, who, having no sin of His own, was able to make a real and complete expiation of the sin of others.

On these lines, doubtless, did Patrick proceed in announcing the "good news" to this great assembly.

With a Divine message there ever comes the co-operating influence of a Divine power. That power meeting the sense of guilt within, opened, doubtless, not a few hearts for the entrance of that message of a grace and love so stupendous, of a compassion and benignity so boundless, surpassing even in its scope and grasp the wide extent of their own vast misery and helplessness, that they felt that such a purpose could have its origin in no human heart; it infinitely surpassed the measure of man; it could originate only in the bosom of the great Father. On that bosom did many of those now around Patrick cast themselves. Turning away from the fires of Baal, and the altars of the Druids, they clung to the one sacrifice and the one Saviour whom Patrick had preached to them.

Among the converts of the day of Tara were some who held high rank and enjoyed great consideration in the nation. The king remained unconverted, but the queen and her two daughters transferred their faith from the altars of the groves to the Cross of Calvary. A few days after the queen's conversion, the Christian party in the royal court was reinforced by the accession of the king's brother, Connal, who was not ashamed to confess himself a disciple of the Saviour. There followed, lower in rank, but perhaps higher in influence, Dubbach, chief of the bards, whom we should now call poet laureate, but who possessed an authority far beyond any known to this functionary in our day. To these is to be added a name not less eminent than any of the preceding ones, that of Fiecc. Logaire remained on the side of the old religion, though, it would seem, cooled in his attachment to it.

If the address of Patrick had not resulted in the conversion of the monarch, it had at least overcome his scruples to having the Gospel preached throughout his dominions. The Druids, it is said, had assured him that if this new doctrine should prevail, his throne would not be secure. The king had listened, but had failed to discover any ground other than illusory, for the fears with which it was sought to inspire him. Patrick might go wherever he would throughout his territories and proclaim the new faith. If his people should embrace it, well, the Druid might be less potent, but his subjects would be none the less loyal, nor his own throne any the less secure. These were the triumphs of the day of Tara.

This great victory was followed up by strenuous efforts to advance the standard of the Cross into the south and west of Ireland. From Tara, Patrick proceeded to Meath. A vast concourse was annually drawn to this spot by the games which were there wont to be celebrated, and Patrick resolved to go thither, and proclaim the "good news" to the assembled multitudes. The actors in the games had some cause to complain. A formidable competitor had unexpectedly entered the lists with them. From the moment the strange man stood up and began to tell his strange story, the players ceased to monopolise the attention of the onlookers. Those who came to feast their eyes on feats of dexterity and strength, were compelled, in spite of themselves, to forget the sports, and to have their attention absorbed by other and far more serious matters. They were made to feel that they themselves were runners in a race, were wrestlers in a combat, and that they should win or miss a prize infinitely higher than that for which the combatants in the arena were at that moment straining their every power to the uttermost. The words which fell from the lips of the preacher had, they felt, a strange power; they refused to leave their memory. They carried them back with them to their homes. They imparted them to their neighbours, and, in cases not a few, these words doubtless became the seeds of a new life. Thenceforth the games of Tailteann (Telltown) were to them one of the more memorable epochs in their past lives.[4]

From Meath, Patrick set out westward across the country. In those days the toil and danger attendant on such a journey were great. The country to be traversed was inhabited by wild tribes. The pathways were infested by robbers; the chieftains often held the traveler to ransom; and in the case of Patrick there were special dangers to be feared, springing out of the malice of the Druids. The seven sons of a chieftain who ruled in those parts formed his escort; nevertheless he, and the "holy bishops" that is, the preachers whom he had trained, and who were the companions of his journey, and the sharers of his labours were oftener than once exposed to violence and subjected to loss. Nevertheless they held on their way, till at last they arrived on the western shores of Connaught, where their farther progress was stopped by the waters of the Atlantic.[5]

This region, with its bleak surface, its uncivilized inhabitants, and its frequent tempests breaking in the thunder of ocean, and drenching its seaboard with the salt spray of the Atlantic, was one of touching interest to Patrick. Here was the Wood of Focloid,[6] which recalled some deep and tender memories. He had first heard the name in his dreams when a youth, for from the wood of Focloid, as it seemed to him, proceeded those voices which called to him, to come over and walk among them.

Fully fulfilled was now his dream, and in its fulfillment he read a new and striking authentication of his mission. This doubtless quickened the ardour with which he laboured in those parts; and he had the joy of seeing these labours crowned with success. He opened his mission on the assembly ground of the clan Amaldaigh. This place is near the mouth of the Moy, between Ballina and Killala.[7] Here he found the clan assembled in force, their chieftains at their head; and, standing up before the multitude, he preached to these rude men who had known no god but that of the Druid: Him who made the sea and the dry land, and Jesus whom He had raised from the dead. "He penetrated the hearts of all," says the author of the 'Tripartite Life' [8] and led them to embrace cordially the Christian faith and doctrine." "The seven sons of Amaldaioh, with the king himself, and twelve thousand men, were baptised," says Dr. Todd, quoting from the "Tripartite Life," "and St. Patrick left with them as their pastor, St. Manchem, surnamed the Master, a man of great sanctity, well versed in Holy Scripture." It is to these labours and their results, doubtless, that Patrick refers in his "Confessio," where he says, "I went among you, and everywhere, for your sakes, in many dangers, even to those uttermost parts, beyond which no man was, and whither no man had ever gone to baptize." [9] Having attacked and in part dispersed the darkness in this remote region, so long the abode of night, Patrick took his departure from Connaught, and went on to kindle the light in other parts of Ireland.

Following on the faint tract of the chroniclers as they dimly trace the steps of the missionary, we are led next into Leinster. Here, too, Patrick's mission was successful. He is said to have preached at Naas, then a royal residence, and baptized the two sons of the king of Leinster. His reception by the chieftains was various: some repelled his advances; others met him with cordial welcome, and in the Gospel which crossed the threshold along with him they had an ample recompense. He next visited the Plain of the Liffey; from thence he went onward to the Queen's County, preaching and founding churches. He passed next into Ossory, as the "Tripartite Life" informs us; and so pleased was he with the reception he there met with, that he pronounced a special blessing on the district, promising that Ossory should never feel the yoke of the stranger so long as its people continued in the faith which he had preached to them.[10]

Our apostle is next found evangelizing in Munster, although the "Book of Armagh" is silent on this portion of his labours. The chroniclers that record his visit to this province tell us that the idols fell before him, as Dagon before the Ark; that the king of Cashel came forth to meet him, and conducted him, with every mark of reverence and honour, into his palace, and received baptism at his hands. But here, it is evident, we tread on the verge of legend. These great spiritual victories were not won in a day, nor were they the result of a few stirring addresses delivered as the missionary passed rapidly over his various fields of evangelization. His biographers assign him a term of seven years labour in Connaught, and another term of seven years in Leinster and Munster. Even a shorter period would have sufficed to nourish into spiritual manhood those whom by baptism Patrick had admitted into the Church. He could reckon his converts by thousands, but what pleasure could he have in them if they were only nominal disciples? What satisfaction could it be to administer the Christian rite to men who were immediately thereafter to lapse into paganism? He took every care that his labours should not thus miscarry, nor his dearest hopes be thus blasted. He erected churches for his converts, he formed them into congregations, and he ordained as pastors those whom he knew would watch over their flocks with diligence, and feed them with knowledge. His "Confessio" written at the close of his life, may be regarded as his farewell to his converts, and in it he discloses a heart full of the tenderest solicitude for his children in the faith, whom he alternately warns, exhorts, and entreats to stand fast, that they may be to him "a joy and crown" in the great day.

We cannot further pursue the labours of Patrick in Ireland. We must return to another land, where his evangelisation, continued through the instrumentality of others, was to yield its more permanent fruits. The light of the Gospel had now been carried from the northern extremity of the island to a line so far south that it met an earlier evangelisation, which had probably entered Hibernia from the neighbouring coast of Gaul, or the more distant shore of Spain. Rescued from a form of paganism specially polluting and enslaving, Ireland was now a Christian land. Not Christian as the countries afterwards evangelised by the Reformation of the sixteenth century are Christian. Patrick was a man of the fifth, not of the sixteenth century. He knew the Scriptures; he often quotes them; but the circle of truths in which he moved was that of his own times, not that of an age lying far in the future, and of which it had been foretold, "Knowledge shall be increased." True, the Bible of the fifth was the Bible of the sixteenth century. The sun is as full of light at the hour of morning as at the hour of noon; but his beams shining upon us through the not yet wholly dispersed vapours of night lack the brilliance which they possess when they fall direct upon us from the mid heaven. The Bible was as full of light in the fifth century as in the sixteenth, but its rays, struggling through the lingering fogs of paganism, reached the church in measure less full and clear than in after days. As time went on, the study of devout minds, the sharp contrasts of error, the severe siftings of controversy, the bold denials of skepticism, above all, the teaching of the Holy Spirit, brought out more fuller the meaning of the Bible. We do not say that they put into the Bible anything that was not in it before that they added so much as one ray to this source of light, or supplemented by a single new truth this storehouse of supernatural knowledge but they enabled the Church more deeply to perceive, more accurately and comprehensively to arrange, and more perfectly to harmonize the several parts of that system of truth which was "delivered to the saints once for all." Patrick, though "a burning and shining light," attained the stature neither of an apostle nor of a reformer. Though ahead of all his contemporaries, he was yet in some respects a man of like weaknesses, like misconceptions, and like superstitious fears with them. He appears to have believed that the demons of Druidism had power to do hurt, and that a subordinate empire had been assigned them over the elements of the external world a belief that

descended far beyond his day. But if tainted somewhat with the superstition that was passing away, he was wholly free from that which was preparing new fables and inventions to mislead the human mind and forging for it the fetters of a second bondage.

The doctrine which he so indefatigably preached was drawn, not from the font of Roman tradition, but from the unpolluted well of Holy Scripture; and if the Christianity which he propagated in Ireland was rudimentary, which, doubtless, it was, it is ever to be borne in mind that the feeblest Christianization is both a higher and a more beneficent agency than the most advanced and refined paganism. The one is a fructifying dew which silently penetrates to the roots of national and social virtue, the other is a blazing sun which burns up that which it burnishes.

Endnotes

[1] The diviners of Erin predicted

"New days of PEACE shall come;
Which shall endure for ever,
The country of Temor shall be deserted.
His Druids from Logaire,
The coming of Patrick concealed not
The predictions were verified,
Concerning the KING whom they foretold."

And again in a very ancient dialect of the Irish language, and preserved by the scholiast on Fiacc's hymn, is the following prophecy:

"He comes, he comes, with shaven crown, from off the storm-tossed sea,
His garment pierced at the neck, with cork-like staff comes he,
Far in his house, at its east end, his cups and patens lie,
His people answer to his voice, amen, amen, they cry. Amen, Amen."

[2] The time of celebration was probably the first day of May, or the last day of October. The first date was the Druidical festival of Beltine, or Baal's fire. The second date was the Feast of Temor, or Convention of Tara. One of the bards of Erin, Eochaidh O' FLYNN (984), describes this festival as of the nature of a Parliament or legislative assembly but partaking also of a religious character.

[3] "On the king's Inquiring," says Dr. Lanigan, "what could be the cause of it, and who could have thus dared to infringe the law, the Magi told him that it was necessary to have that fire extinguished immediately, whereas, if allowed to remain, it would get the better of their fires, and bring about the downfall of the kingdom." Petrie on Tara Hill, Trans. Of Royal Academy, vol. xviii., part ii. p. 54. Dublin, 1839.

[4] Todd, Patrick, p. 439.

[5] Todd, Patrick, 445-445.

[6] Tirawley, County Mayo, Langan, i 162.

[7] Dr. O Donovan, ex. Todd, Patrick, p. 448.

[8] Lib. li c. 87.

[9] Pergebum caussa vesta in multis periculis etiam usque ad extreras (extremas) pertes, ubi nemo ultra erat. Santi Patrici Opusscala, etc.

[10] A Joachimo Laurentio Villaneuva, Dublin, 1835, p. 236.

CHAPTER 17.

THE THREE HUNDRED AND SIXTY-FIVE CHURCHES.

Sum of Patrick's Labours in Ireland-- Three hundred and sixty-five Bishops-- Were these Diocesan or Congregational Bishops?-- Picture of Roman Church in Third Century, as drawn by Hippolytus-- In Third Century a Congregation, a Pastor, and Elders formed a complete Church-- Elders a Teaching and Ruling Body-- How the Cardinalate arose -- After Council of Nice great Changes-- Picture of Cyprianic Church in Africa-- Down to Middle of Third Century Bishop and Pastor were the designation of the same Church-Officer -- Patrick's Bishops not Diocesan but Village Bishops-- His Monasteries and first Churches-- His Death.

AS regards the accumulated results of his mission there is a sort of unanimous consent among the biographers of Patrick. His labours are commonly summed up in three hundred and sixty-five churches founded, three hundred and sixty-five bishops ordained, and an army of three thousand presbyters, or about nine presbyters to every bishop. So says Nennius, writing in the ninth century, and his successors repeat the statement, with some variety as to numbers. This may be accepted as a probable approximation to the fact. It is a truly marvelous achievement, when we reflect that it was accomplished in one lifetime, and mainly by a single man, in a barbarous country, and in the face of a powerful Druidism. It truly entitles Patrick to the proud appellation of the "Apostle of Ireland." It justifies for him a high rank among the benefactors of mankind, and places him on a loftier eminence than the founders of empire. Lands far remote from the Hibernian shore, and generations long posterior to Patrick's day, have had cause to bless his memory and pronounce his name with reverence.

We must view the ecclesiastical machinery which he constructed, in the light of the age in which it was created, the condition of the country in which it was set up, and the stage which Christian knowledge and personal piety had then reached. "Three hundred and sixty-five" is the low estimate of the number of bishops ordained by him. The term "bishop" has since Patrick's day changed its meaning. That Ireland was partitioned into three hundred and sixty-five dioceses; that each diocese was presided over by a bishop; that each bishop had under him a staff of priests, and that each priest had committed to him a congregation or parish, is a supposition so extreme and violent that few, if

any, we believe, will find themselves able to entertain it. Doubtless these three hundred and sixty-five bishops of the one country of Ireland, like the company of presbyters of the one city of Ephesus, whom Paul styles bishops,[1] were the overseers, pastors of single congregations. Their special duty was to preach. The others associated with them would find ample scope for their gifts in the various labours of teaching the youth, of visiting the sick, and exercising a general superintendence of the flock. Diocesan episcopacy was not possible in Ireland in Patrick's day. Other organizations in the Irish Church, besides that stated above, we are unable to trace. We can see nothing like the modern machinery of Presbytery, Synod, and General Assembly, although it is reasonable to believe that Patrick at times took counsel with the body of the pastors, and, as the result of these joint deliberations, issued directions in cases of emergency and difficulty, and these would furnish a groundwork for the doubtful record of "canons" and "synods" of Patrick which have come down to our day.[2]

Nothing will assist us more in forming a correct idea of the ecclesiastical order established by Patrick in Ireland, than a short study of the Christian Church as seen in the pages of the New Testament, and the writings of the early Fathers. A flood of new light has been thrown on the organization of the Church at Rome in the first ages by the recently discovered work of Hippolytus.[3] His book gives a picture of the Roman church in the beginning of the third century that is, about two hundred years before Patrick's time. The apostle of Ireland would naturally copy the model that was before him. Here it is as seen and depicted by Hippolytus while that model was still in existence. "Every town congregation of ancient Christianity was a church," says Bunsen, in his analysis of the work of Hippolytus. The first part of the church to come into existence was the congregation not the bishops or overseers, but the flock the body of believers. The essential powers of a perfect society the right of liberty and the power of order were lodged in these persons. All rights and privileges are inherent in the congregation, and are exercised by them and for them, and none the less when transferred by delegation to their pastors and elders. The epistles of inspired men are addressed to the congregations in the various cities and provinces. Acts of discipline are done by the congregation and declared and carried out by the pastor or elder. His power is not lordly but ministerial. In Paul's epistles and in the writings of Clemens, Romanus, Ignatius, and Polycarp, the highest organ of power in the church is the congregation, guided and ruled in the earliest times by a body of elders. These elders discharged the double function of teaching and ruling. The next step was to elect one of their number to preside over the body of the elders. The one judged the fittest was chosen, and to him was given the name of overseer, bishop or pastor.

Through this functionary the congregation governed itself. Its bishop or pastor was its servant, not its master. The elder, whose special work was teaching, was chosen by the congregation, and being so elected, the pastors of the neighboring congregations inducted him into his office by prayer, and the laying on of hands. Consecration and ordination was one and the same act. Such are the conclusions fairly deducible on this head from the facts disclosed by Hippolytus.[4]

Everyone who had charge of a congregation in a city was styled a bishop.[5] Hippolytus had charge of the congregation at Portus, a small town at the mouth of the Tiber, opposite Ostia, the harbour of Rome. As bishop or pastor of Portus, he was a member of the Presbytery of Rome. The Roman Presbytery in Hippolytus' day consisted of the bishop, the presbyters (pastors), and deacons of the city of Rome, with the bishops (pastors) of the suburban congregations. "Much smaller towns than Portus

had their bishop," says Bunsen; "their city was called their diocese." In those times there existed no parishes in the proper sense of the word. The city of Rome, however, formed an exception. From the earliest days of Christianity there were certain centers of Christian work in the metropolis corresponding with the regiones of the city. After the time of Constantine, a church was built in each of these regiones. These churches were termed cardines, and from this is derived the title cardinalis for a parish priest, a word which has been in use from the time of Gregory, about A.D. 600.

The parochial clergy of this city formed the governing body of the Church of Rome. With them were associated in this government the seven deacons, established for the service of widows and the poor, and the seven suburban pastors or bishops.[6] This body grew ultimately into the college of cardinals. We now see the congregational liberties beginning to be curtailed, and the laity excluded from the government of the Church. The plea of the Presbyterian divines of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, that the elders were both an officiating, that is, a teaching and ruling body, "is quite correct," says Bunsen, judging by the light thrown by Hippolytus on the early organization of the Church at Rome. "The ancient Church," says Bunsen, "knows no more of a single presbyter than of clerical government and election." [7] It was only in very small and remote villages that a single bishop using the word in the sense in which Paul and Peter use it managed his little community. "He was called," says Bunsen, "a country bishop" (chorepiscopus, i.e., a country curate).[8]

Standing alone he could exercise no act of government in the strict sense. The rule of the Church was in the hands of no single man in early times; it could be administered only by a body or council of church officers. For the pastor there was set a chair in the apse or circular recess at the eastern end of the church. On either side of the pastor's chair not yet changed into a throne were ranged rows of benches, on which sat the elders. The communion table occupied the space between pastor and elders and the congregation; it was the connecting link between clergy and people. It was a table, not an altar, for as yet no sacrifice had been invented save the symbolic one of self-dedication over the bread and wine, which alone were seen on that table.

In the times that preceded the Council of Nice (325), the government of the church was presbyterial; in the post Nicene period it was hierarchical. "The Ante-Nicene Law," says Bunsen, "exhibits every town as a church presided over by a bishop and a board of elders (presbyters); but at the same time, it represents the bishops (not the congregations) of the smaller places, as clustered round the bishop of the large town or city, which was their natural metropolis. These bishops formed part of the council or presbytery of the mother-congregation for all matters of common interest. In the post-Nicene system the congregation is nothing, its bishop little. The ante-Nicene canon law is fundamentally congregational, and its bishop, as such, represents the independence and, as it were, sovereignty of the congregation." [9]

In the days of Hippolytus, the bounds of the presbytery of Rome were modest, indeed, compared with what they soon afterwards came to be. Down to the middle of the third century, the presbyterial bounds embraced only the pastors of the city and those of its seven suburban towns. After the beginning of the fourth century, the presbytery of Rome extended its authority to all the subvicarian towns, its jurisdiction equal to the jurisdiction of the Vicar of the City, which stretched to the Apennines on the north and the shores of the Italian peninsula on the south. This was the prelude of much greater extensions in the centuries that followed; and as this jurisdiction widened its sphere it

grew ever the more hierarchical and despotic, and departed ever the farther from the simplicity, the equality, the liberty, and also the purity of the church of apostolic and primitive days.

Our general summing up from the facts disclosed in the work of Hippolytus is to this effect, that where there was a congregation, a pastor, and a body of elders, there was held in early times to be a complete church, self-governing and independent. In this deduction we have the support of Bunsen's concurrence. "Where such a council can be formed," he says, "there is a complete church, a bishopric." The elders are teachers and administrators. If an individual happen to be engaged in either of these offices more exclusively than the other, it makes no real alteration in his position, for the presbyters of the ancient church filled both situations. Their office was literally an office, not a rank.[10]

Let us next turn our eyes for a few moments on the church of Africa. It is the middle of the third century, and the most conspicuous figure that meets our gaze is Cyprian, bishop of Carthage. But though styled bishop, Cyprian's rank, duties, and powers, are simply those of a pastor of a single congregation. He has no diocese save the city of Carthage. He has no pastors whom he superintends as their diocesan. There is but one congregation in Carthage, and Cyprian is its pastor. Sabbath by Sabbath we see him preaching to this flock and dispensing to them the sacraments. He has a body of presbyters, eight in number at most, and seven deacons who assist him in his pastoral work. These presbyters have no congregation; they instruct the youth, they visit the sick and the prisoners, and being supported by the congregation,[11] they give their whole time to their duties.[12] In his exile Cyprian writes to the people of Carthage,[13] as forming one Christian flock, himself being their one and only pastor, and Carthage his whole diocese. No candid reader of his letters can fail to see that the "bishop" of the Cyprianic age was a preaching minister, and that the Cyprianic presbytery in most things represented our parochial session.

The Irish Church in Patrick's day was the Cyprianic Church over again as regards the number of its bishops. In Pro-Consular Africa alone there were 164 bishops.[14] Now Pro-Consular Africa was only a small part of the Roman possessions in that continent. In the days of Cyprian there must have been several hundred bishops in Africa. Many of them discharged their ministry in towns and hamlets so obscure that the learned Pamelius is at a loss where to place them. It is not possible to believe that all these were diocesan bishops. There was not room enough in Roman Africa for a fourth of that number. It was in Roman Africa only that Christianity had been embraced. Most of that great continent was still inhabited by the native population, the Moors. To them the Latin was an unknown tongue, and as the Gospel was preached in Latin only it ceased to be intelligible when it reached the confine of the Roman colony, and touched the Moorish border. This accounts for the fact that Christianity never gained an extensive footing in Africa, and that it disappeared at an early period. When the Saracens entered Africa the light of Christianity was found to be all but extinct.[15]

We conclude: it is the undoubted historical fact, attested by the records of the African Church in Cyprian's day, and by the records of the early Roman Church so unexpectedly and authentically brought to light through the discovery of the work of Hippolytus, that down to about the middle of the third century, bishop and pastor were terms indicating the same church officer; that this church officer presided over a single congregation, that his congregation was his diocese; and that he was assisted by a body of presbyters or elders, some of whom took part in the government only of the flock, while

others of them, having earned for themselves a good degree, were admitted to teach, though without being set over a congregation. Such is the picture of the primitive church, which has been drawn by the hand of a man who lived while the church was still young.

Mingling freely in her councils, Hippolytus had the best opportunities of observing and depicting her true lineaments. It is no imaginary portrait which he has given us. Long hidden in darkness, it has been unexpectedly disclosed, that we, too, in this late age, might be able to look upon the face of the church primitive, and know the simplicity, the purity, and the beauty that won for her the love and reverence of her early members.

There rose three hundred and sixty-five churches for the use of these three hundred and sixty-five bishops. This is proof, were proof needed, that these were not diocesan, but parochial or village bishops. Had they been dignitaries of the rank which the term "bishop" came afterwards to mean, with a clergy three thousand strong, not three hundred but three thousand churches would have been needed. These churches were humble edifices. Probably not one of them was of stone. Armagh, the metropolitan church of future times, was as yet an altogether undistinguished name in the ecclesiastical world. It enjoyed in Patrick's days neither pre-eminence nor jurisdiction. In the north of Ireland the churches were constructed of planks or wattles, and in the south, of earth. Like the humble altars of the Patriarchs on the plains of the early Palestine, they borrowed their glory from the Almightyness of the Being to whose worship they were consecrated, and also from the fact that they were served by men adorned not with pompous titles, but with the gifts of knowledge and the graces of the Holy Spirit the oil of their consecration.

A school rose beside the church, named not infrequently a monastery. The monasteries of Patrick's days, and of the following centuries, were not at all the same institutions with those which bore that name in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. They were not the retreat of the idle and the ignorant; they were not communities of men who groaned under the burden of exerting their drowsy voices in intoning the various offices which marked the passing of the weary hours between matins and evensong. The monasteries of Patrick's day were associations of studious men, who occupied their time in transcribing the Scriptures, in cultivating such sciences as were then known, and in instructing the young. They were colleges in which the youth were trained for the work of the home ministry and the labours of the foreign mission-field; and with what renown to their country and benefit to other lands the members of these institutions discharged this part of their important duties, we shall see when we come to speak of the great Columban establishment at Iona. When the youth had finished their studies for the day, they would shoulder axe and mattock, and would sally forth and address themselves to the laborious and profitable occupation of clearing the forest, or trenching the moor and changing the barren lands around their abode into arable fields, green in spring with the sprouting blade, and golden in autumn with the ripened grain.

It was Patrick's prudent custom, on entering a district, to address himself first of all to the chieftain. If the head of the sept was won to the faith the door of access was opened to his people. A plot of ground on which to erect a sanctuary was commonly the first public token that the chief had embraced the Gospel, and that he desired, at least did not oppose, its spread among his tribe. These churches were of small size; the whole inhabitants of Ireland did not then probably exceed half a million, and its sparsely populated districts could furnish no numerous congregations. In the distribution of these

churches, Patrick conformed himself to the tribal arrangements. His servitude in Ireland made him well acquainted with its social condition, and enabled him to judge of the best methods of overtaking its evangelisation. In some places he planted the churches in groups of sevens, probably because the population was there the more numerous; and each group had its seven bishops another proof that, like the four hundred bishops of Asia Minor in early times,[16] these were parochial and not diocesan ecclesiastics. It was not unusual to surround the ecclesiastical building with a strong stockade. The power of the Druid, though weakened, had not yet been wholly broken, and the missionaries of the new faith were still exposed to hostile attacks from the mob, or from the chieftains, at the instigation, doubtless, of the priests of the ancient worship.

The time had now come when the labours of the apostle of Ireland were to close. They had been indefatigably prosecuted for upwards of thirty years some, indeed, say sixty and the latter is not too long a period for so great a work. Patrick was now verging on fourscore; and welcome, doubtless, was the rest which now came to him in the form of death. Of his last hours we have many legends, but not a single line of trustworthy record. Whether he descended suddenly into the grave like Wycliffe and Luther, or whether he passed to it by months of lingering decay and sickness like Calvin and Knox, we know not. The year of his death is uncertain. The Bollandists make it 460: Lanigan, founding on the annals of Innisfallen, 465. He died at Downpatrick. A star in the sky, say the legends, indicated the spot where his ashes were to repose. St. Bridget, with her own hands, embroidered the shroud in which his corpse was wrapped, and his requiem was sung by a choir of angels, who were heard mingling their strains with the lamentations of the pastors as they carried his remains to the grave; and for twelve days, some say a whole year, the sun, ceasing to go down, shed a perpetual day on the spot where he was interred. After legend has exhausted its powers to throw a halo round his departure by heaping prodigy upon prodigy, the simple historic fact remains the more sublime. And that fact is, that on the spot where he began his ministry there he ended it, and there, after all his battles, did the gates of an eternal peace open to receive him.

Endnotes

[1] Acts xx, 17,28.

[2] Dr. Todd declares against the genuineness of the works ascribed to Patrick in Ware and Villeneuve, with the exception of the Confessio. And as regards the ecclesiastical canons ascribed to him, Dr. Todd holds these, from external evidence, to be the production of an after age. We believe most students of history will agree with him. See Todd's Life of St. Patrick, pp. 484-488.

[3] Hippolytus was the disciple of Irenus, the disciple of Polycarp, the disciple of the apostle John. His book, which treats on the doctrines of the primitive church, was written under Alexander Severus about A.D. 225. His knowledge of the apostolic doctrine was drawn from the most authentic sources; and being a member of the Presbytery of Rome, he speaks with the highest authority on the affairs of the Roman Church. He lived at the period of the church's transition from the apostolic constitution to the ecclesiastical system. He was the contemporary of two Popes, Zephyrinus and Callistus, who played no unimportant part in the changes then in progress. Hippolytus has given us portraits of these two popes. These portraits are the first full disclosures of the real character of these

two notable ecclesiastics, but they are not such as are fitted to enhance our esteem of the men, or exalt our veneration for the papal chair. "The book," says Bunsen (vol. i. preface v.), "gives authentic information on the earliest history of Christianity, and precisely on those most important points of which hitherto we have known very little authentically."

[4] Hippolytus and His Age, by C. C. J. Bunsen, D.C.L. London, 1852. Vol. iii. pp. 219-222.

[5] Ibid., vol. i. p. 207.

[6] Hippolytus and his Age, vol. i. e. 208.

[7] Ibid.

[8] Ibid., vol. iii. p. 221.

[9] Hippolytus and his Age, vol. ii. p. 258, 259.

[10] Hippolytus and his Age. Vol. iii p.246.

[11] Cypr. Epist., i.

[12] In his sixty-ninth epistle, the author of Cyprianus Isotimus says: "Cyprian dispenser of the Word and sacrements, but also insinuate that all under his charge, all that had any interest in calling or receiving him, were ordinarily fed by and received communion from him" Cyprianus Isotimus, chap. V. p. 460 by W. Jameson, Edin. 1705.

[13] Cypr. Epist., 81 Plebi Universe.

[14] Victor Uticensis, lib. i.

[15] Nazienzeni Querela et Votum Justum, by W. Jameson, part i, sec. Vii. pp. 30,31. Glasgow.

[16] Bingham Antq. Bk, ii c. xi.

CHAPTER 18.

THE SCHOOLS OF EARLY IRELAND.

Glory of Times succeeding Patrick-- Ireland a Land of Scholars and Pastors-- Historic Testimonies of this Fact-- Its Schools richly Endowed-- Malachy the first to introduce Monks and Monkery into Ireland-- Number of Students in Irish Schools -- Resorted to by Foreign Youth-- Church and School in

every Tribe-- Send Forth Band after Band of Pastors and Missionaries-- Vast Physical and Moral Change in Ireland -- Seven Centuries of Peace.

PATRICK stamped his image upon Ireland as Knox did at a later day on Scotland. Simply by the power of Christian truth he summoned into being an Ireland wholly unlike any that previous ages had seen, and if possible still more unlike the Ireland which we find in existence at this day. At the voice of Patrick the land shook off its hoary superstitions and its immemorial oppressions, as the mountains do the fogs of night when touched by the breath of morning. It stood forth an enlightened, a religious, and a prosperous country. The man who had wrought this wondrous transformation on it was now in his grave, but his spirit still lived in it, and the tide of renovated life which he had set flowing in the nation continued for some centuries in full flood. There came no foreign invader to put his yoke upon the neck of its sons, or to rob them of their scriptural faith. Left in peace they addicted themselves to the labours of the plough, and the yet nobler labours of the study. The first made their country a land of plenty, the second made them renowned throughout Europe as a nation of wise and learned men. The glory with which Ireland at this period shone was all the brighter from the darkness which had overwhelmed the rest of the world. Asia and Africa were passing into the eclipse of Islam. The rising cloud of superstition was darkening Europe. The nations seemed to be descending into the tomb, when lo! at that moment when knowledge appeared to be leaving the earth, there was lit in the far West a lamp of golden light, which was seen shining over the portals of the darkness, as if to keep alive the hope that the night which had settled upon the world would not be eternal.

We must now bestow a glance at the times that succeeded the death of the country's great reformer. They deserve our attention, for they were astir with noble and beneficent activities. To walk in the steps of Patrick was the ambition of the men who came after him. The labours of that most fruitful period may be arranged under the five following heads: there was the building of churches; there was the erecting of schools and colleges; there was the preaching of the Word of Life; the teaching of the Scriptures; and the training and sending forth of missionaries to foreign lands. The Gospel had given the Scots of Ireland peace among themselves.

The sea parted them from the irruptions and revolutions that were at that hour scourging continental Europe. They were not blind to this golden opportunity. For what end had they been provided with a quiet retreat from which they might look out upon the storm without feeling its ravages, if not that they might be ready, when the calm returned, to go forth and scatter the seeds of order and virtue on the ploughed fields of Europe. Accordingly they kept trimming their lamp in their quiet isle, knowing how dark the world's sky was becoming, and how pressingly it would yet need light-bearers. If sept strove with sept it was in the generous rivalry of multiplying those literary and religious institutions which were fitted to build up their country and reform their age. The national bent, the perfervidum ingentium, turned with characteristic force in this direction, and hence the sudden and prodigious outburst of intellectual power and religious life which was witnessed in Ireland, in this age that is, in the sixth and succeeding centuries, and which drew the eyes of all the continental nations upon it as soon as their own troubles left them free to observe what was passing around them.

Leaving the missions for after narration, we shall here offer a brief sketch of the schools of Ireland. We have already said that wherever Patrick founded a church there he planted a school. From this good custom Patrick's successors took care not to depart. The church and the school rose together, and religion and learning kept equal pace in their journey through Ireland. The author of the ancient

catalogue of saints, speaking of the period immediately succeeding Patrick, says, "It was the age of the highest order of Irish saints, who were, for the most part, persons of royal or noble birth, and were all founders of churches," and by consequence planters of schools.[1] The historian O'Halloran writes, "Every religious foundation in Ireland in those days included a school, or, indeed, rather academy." "The abbeys and monasteries," he continues, "founded in this (sixth) century, are astonishingly numerous." And again, "The abbeys and other munificent foundations of this (seventh) age, seem to have exceeded the former ones." [2]

Curio, an Italian, in his work on Chronology, also bears testimony to the number and excellence of the schools in Ireland. "Hitherto," he exclaims, "it would seem that the studies of wisdom would have quite perished had not God reserved to us a seed in some corner of the world. Among the Scots and Irish something still remained of the doctrine of the knowledge of God, and of civilization, because there was no terror of arms in those utmost ends of the earth. And we may there behold and adore the great goodness of God, that among the Scots, and in those places where no man could have thought it, so great companies had gathered themselves together under a most strict discipline." [3] We do not wonder that this learned Italian should have been filled with astonishment when the cloud lifted, and he saw, rising out of the western ocean, an island of wise men and scholars where he had looked only for barbarous sept tyrannized over by brutal chieftains. We at this day are just as astonished, on looking back, to find Ireland in that age what these writers have pictured it. And yet there comes witness after witness attesting the fact. "The disciples of St. Patrick," says our own Camden, "profited so notably in Christianity, that in the succeeding age nothing was accounted more holy, more learned, than the Scottish monks, insomuch that they sent out swarms of most holy men into every part of Europe." After enumerating some of the abbeys they founded abroad, Camden goes on to say, "In that age our Anglo-Saxons flocked from every quarter into Ireland as to the emporium of sound literature, and hence it is that in our accounts of holy men we frequently read, 'he was sent for education to Ireland.'" [4]

Not less explicit is the testimony of the historian Mosheim. "If we except," says he, speaking of the eighth century, "some poor remains, of learning which were yet to be found at Rome and in certain cities of Italy, the sciences seem to have abandoned the Continent, and fixed their residence in Ireland and Britain." And again, "That the Hibernians were lovers of learning, and distinguished themselves in these times of ignorance by the culture of the sciences beyond all other European nations, traveling into the most distant lands, both with a view to improve and communicate their knowledge, is a fact with which I have been long acquainted; as we have seen them, in the most authentic records of antiquity, discharging with the highest reputation and applause the functions of doctors in France, Germany, and Italy, both during this (8th) and the following century." And speaking of the teachers of theology among the Greeks and Latins in the ninth century, Mosheim says, "With them authority became the test of truth, and supplied in arrogance what it lacked in argument... The Irish doctors alone, and particularly Johannes Scotus, had the courage to spurn the ignominious fetters of authority." [5]

It is hard for us at this day to realise the Ireland of those ages as these witnesses describe it, the picture has since been so completely reversed. And yet, if it be possible to prove anything by evidence, the conspicuous eminence of Ireland during those centuries must be held as perfectly established. Like Greece, it was once a lamp of light to the nations; and, like Egypt, it was a school of wisdom for the

world a lamp of purer light than ever burned in Athens, and a school of diviner knowledge than Heliopolis ever could boast.

We have called these institutions schools. The chroniclers of the middle ages, who wrote in Latin, term them monasteries.[6] We prefer to speak of them as schools. It is the word that rightly describes them. The term monastery conveys to the modern mind a wholly false idea of the character and design of these establishments. They rose alongside the church, and had mostly as their founders the same royal or noble persons. They were richly endowed with lands, the gift of kings and chieftains, and they were yet more richly endowed with studious youth. They were just such monasteries as were Oxford and Cambridge, as were Paris and Padua and Bologna in succeeding centuries. They trained men for the service of church and state; they reared pastors for the church; and they sent forth men of yet more varied accomplishments to carry on the great missions movement in Northern Europe, which was the glory of the age, and which saved both divine and human learning from the extinction with which they were threatened by the descent of the northern nations, and the growing corruption of the Roman Church. Even Bede [7] speaks of them as colleges, and so, too, does Archbishop Usher. The latter says, "They were the seminaries of the ministers; being, as it were, so many colleges of learned men whereunto the people did usually resort for instruction, and from whence the church was wont to be continually supplied with able ministers."

Historic truth, moreover, requires that we should distinguish between these two very different sets of institutions, which are often made to pass under the same name, that is, between the schools of the sixth and seventh centuries, and the Benedictine monasteries, which were obtruded upon and supplanted than in the twelfth and thirteenth. Till times long posterior to Patrick no monk had been seen in Ireland, and no monastery had risen on its soil. On this head the evidence of Malachy O'Morgain is decisive.

Malachy, Archbishop of Armagh, was one of the earliest perverts to popery among the Irish clergy, and he was one of the main agents in the enslavement of his native land. His life was written by his contemporary and friend, the well-known St. Bernard of Clairvaux in France. This memoir lifts the veil and shows us the first monks and monasteries stealing into Ireland. "St. Malachy, on his return to Ireland from Rome," says St. Bernard, "called again at Clairvaux... and left four of his companions in that monastery for the purpose of learning its rules and regulations, and of their being in due time qualified to introduce them into Ireland." In all countries monks have formed the vanguard of the papal army. "He," (Malachy) said on this occasion," continues St. Bernard, "They will serve us for seed, and in this seed nations will be blessed, even those nations which from old time heard of the name of monk, but have never seen a monk." [8] If the words of the Abbot of Clairvaux have any meaning, they imply that up till this time, that is, the year 1140, though Ireland was covered with institutions which the Latin writers call monasteries, the Irish were ignorant of monks and monkery. And this is confirmed by what we find Bernard afterwards writing to Malachy: "And since," says he, "you have need of great vigilance, as in a new place, and in a new land that has been hitherto unused to, yea, that has never yet had any trial of monastic religion, withhold not your hand, I beseech you, but go on to perfect that which you have so well begun." [9] This evidence is decisive of two things: first, that monasteries, in the modern sense of the term, were unknown in Ireland till the middle of the twelfth century, when Malachy is seen sowing their seeds; and second, that the ancient foundations were not monasteries, but schools. [10]

The primary and paramount study in these colleges were the SCRIPTURES. They were instituted to be well-springs of evangelical light. But they were not restricted to the one branch of theological and sacred learning, however important it was deemed. Whatever was known to the age of science, or art, or general knowledge was taught in the schools of Ireland. The youth flocked to them, of course, but not the youth only; patriarchs of sixty or of threescore years, in whom age had awakened a love of knowledge, were enrolled among their pupils. As every age so all ranks were permitted to participate in their advantages.

Their doors stood open to the son of the serf as well as to the son of the prince. No nation but was welcome. From across the sea came youth in hundreds to be taught in them and carry back their fame to foreign lands. Thus they continued to grow in numbers and renown. Kings and noble families took a pride in fostering what then saw was a source of strength at home and glory abroad. In the centuries that followed the death of Patrick these schools continued to multiply, and the number of their pupils greatly to increase. In some instances the number of students in attendance almost exceeds belief: although the cases are well authenticated. We give few examples. At Bencor (White Choir) there was at one time, it is said, three thousand enrolled students. At Lismore, where the famous Finnian taught, there were three thousand. At Clonard, nearly as many.

One quarter of Armagh was allotted to and occupied by foreign youth, attracted by the fame of its educational establishments. At Muinghard, near Limerick, fifteen hundred scholars received instruction. These foundations came in time to be possessed of great wealth. They shared, doubtless, in the revenues of the ancient priesthood on the downfall of Druidism. Moreover the waste lands with which they were gifted, and which the pupils cultivated in their leisure hours, were yearly growing in fertility and value, and yearly adding in the same ratio to the resources of the establishment. No fee was exacted at their threshold. They dispensed their blessings with a royal munificence. So Bede informs us.

Speaking of the times of Aidan and Colman (A.D. 630-664) he says, "There were at that time in Ireland many both of the nobility and of the middle classes of the English nation, who, having left their native island, had retired thither for the sake of reading God's word, or leading a more holy life.... All of whom the Irish receiving most warmly, supplied, not only with daily food, free of charge, but even with books to read, and masters to teach gratuitously." [11]

Estimating it at the lowest, the change which Patrick wrought on Ireland was great. Compared with the reformation of Luther, it may be readily admitted, that of Patrick was feeble and imperfect. It did not so thoroughly penetrate to the roots of either individual or social life as the German reformation. The fifth century was poor in those mighty instrumentalities in which the sixteenth century was so rich. It lacked the scholarship, the intellectual vigour, the social energy, and the brilliant examples of personal piety which shed so great a splendour on the first age of the reformation. The fifth century had no printing press. It had no Frederic the Wise; it had no theological treatise like the "Institutes," and no compend of the Christian revelation like the "Augsburg Confession."

Moreover, the light did not reach Ireland till the day was going away in other lands. It was the beams of a rising sun that burst on the world in the sixteenth century: it was the rays of a setting one that fell

on Ireland in the fifth. As Christian Ireland went forward, displacing slowly and laboriously pagan Ireland, it had to leave in its rear many a superstitious belief, and many a pagan custom. In numerous instances, doubtless, the oak groves of the Druid were given to the axe, and the dolmen and stone pillar lay overturned and broken by the hammer of the iconoclast. But not in all cases. In some localities these objects of idolatrous reverence were spared, and became snares and causes of stumbling to the converts.

But with all these drawbacks, the change accomplished in Ireland was immense. The grand idea of a God who is a Spirit a Father who has given his Son to be the Saviour of men had been made known to it; and who can estimate what a power there is in this idea to humanise and to elevate to awaken love and hope in the human breast, and to teach justice and righteousness to nations.

That the Gospel should flourish in Ireland during his own lifetime did not content Patrick; he took every means, as we have seen, to give it permanent occupancy of the land. The provision he made for bringing the whole nation under religious instruction, and drawing the people to the observance of Divine ordinances, was wonderfully complete considering the age in which it was made, and the difficulties to be overcome in a country newly rescued from paganism. A church, a school, and an academy in every tribe, was anticipation of the plan of Knox, which, as the author of the latter plan found, came too early to the birth even in the Scotland of the sixteenth century. Nor did the idea of Patrick's remain a mere programme on paper. He succeeded in realizing it. The ministers whom he planted in Ireland were of his own training, and, moreover, they were men of his own spirit: and preaching the faith he had taught them with zeal and diligence, they raised Ireland from paganism to Christianity, while earlier churches, losing faith in the Gospel, and turning back to symbol and rite, lost their Christianity, and sank again into heathenism. These schools of Divine knowledge continued in vigour for about three centuries after their founder had gone to his grave, and furnished an able but inexhaustible supply of evangelists and missionaries. Many of these men, finding their labours not needed in a land so plentifully supplied with evangelists as Ireland now was, turned their steps to foreign countries. From Ireland and Iona there went forth one missionary band after another to scatter the pagan darkness where it still lingered, or to stem the incoming tide of papal arrogance and usurpation. Rome was compelled to pause in her advance before their intrepid ranks. In Gaul, in Germany and other countries, these devoted preachers revived many a dying light, refreshed many a fainting spirit, and strengthened hands that had begun to hang down, and they long delayed, though they could not ultimately prevent, the approach of a superstition destined to embrace all Christendom in its somber folds, and darken its sky for ages. We shall again meet these missionaries.

No less happy were the social changes that passed on the country as the immediate fruit of its submission to the Gospel. From that hour the yoke of the feudal lord pressed less heavily, and the obedience of his tribe was more spontaneous and cheerful. All the relations of life were sweetened. Gentleness and tenderness came in the room of those fierce, vindictive, and selfish passions with which paganism fills the breast and indurates the human heart. The ghostly domination of the Druid was shattered, the terror of his incantations dissolved, and no more was seen the dark smoke of his sacrifice rising luridly above the grove, or heard the piteous wail of victim, as he was being dragged to the altar. Nature seemed to feel that to her, too, the hour of redemption had come. As if in sympathy with man she threw off her primeval savageness, and attired herself in a grace and beauty she had not till then known. Her brown moorlands burst into verdure; her shaggy woods, yielding to the axe,

made room for the plough; her hills, set free by the mattock from furze and prickly brier, spread out their grassy slopes to the herdsman and his flock; and plain and valley, cured of inhospitable bog and stagnant marsh, and converted into arable land, received into their bosom the precious seed, and returned with bounteous increase in the mellow autumn what had been cast upon their open furrows in the molient spring.

What a change in the destiny of the country since the day that Patrick had first set foot upon it! He had found its sons groping their way through the darkness of an immemorial night: one generation coming into being after another, only to inherit the same bitter portion of slavery. Now the springs of liberty had been opened in the land; barbarity and oppression had begun to recede before the silent influences of arts and letters. Above all, the Gospel enlightened its sky, and with every Sabbath sun came rest and holy worship. The psalm pealed forth in sanctuary rose loud and sweet in the stillness; and on weekday the same strains, "the melody of health," might be heard ascending from humble cot, where Labour sanctified its daily toils by daily prayer and praise.

We here drop the curtain on the story of the Scots on the hither side of the Irish Channel. After the days of Patrick the land had rest seven centuries. In the middle of the twelfth century there arose a new church in Ireland, which knew not Patrick nor the faith he had propagated. Breakspeare (Hadrian IV.), the one Englishman who ever sat in the papal chair, claimed Ireland as part of Peter's patrimony by a bull dated 1155. He next sold it to Henry II. for a penny a year on each house in the kingdom. The infamous bargain between the Pope and the English king was completed in the subjugation of the country by the soldiers of the latter. The laws of history forbid us entering farther on this transaction, but the two short extracts given below [12] will disclose to the intelligent reader the whole melancholy drama. The revolution in Ireland has been followed by seven centuries of calamities.

Endnotes

[1] See Usher, Antiquities, c. 17.

[2] General History of Ireland, vol. ii. pp. 85-96.

[3] Rerum Chronology, lib. ii.; Usher, Citante.

[4] "Amandatus est ad disciplinam in Hiberniam." Camden's Britannia, vol. iii. O'Halloran says this was, a proverb abroad when any one was missing.

[5] Mosheim. Century ix. part ii c.3, sec 10.

[6] Their name in the Latin documents is Cnobia.

[7] Bede says of Iona, ex eo collegeo.

[8] Apud Lanigan, vol. iv. p. 112.

[9] "Terra jam insueta, immo et inexperta monastics religionis."

[10] We doubt whether Malachy was in on the secret, or knew what a yoke he was imposing on his countrymen. He appears to have been a good man in the main, of a warm, generous disposition, an enthusiastic admirer of the Romish system, and the tool of more cunning men. He did not live to see the work he had helped to begin completed. He died at Clairvaux, 1148, in the arms of his friend St. Bernard, while on a second visit to Rome to beg the pallium for the metropolitan See of St. Patrick. Malachy heads the roll of Irish saintship, being the first of his nation to receive the honours of canonization at the hands of the Pontiff. Romanist writers speak of him as the great church reformer of the twelfth century.

[11] Bede, Eccl. History., lib. 3 c. 27.

[12] At a meeting of the Catholic Association in Dublin, Daniel O'Connell, speaking of the landing of Henry II to take possession of his new territories, gives us both a history and a picture: "It was on the evening of the 23rd of August" (October), "1172" (1171), "that the first hostile English footstep pressed the soil of Ireland. It is said to have been a sweet and mild evening when the invading party entered the noble estuary formed by the conflux of the Suir, the Nore, and Barrow at the city of Waterford. Accursed be that day in the memory of all future generations of Irishmen when the invaders first touched our shores. They came to a nation famous for its love of learning, its piety, and its heroism; they came when internal dissension separated her sons and wasted their energies. Internal traitors led on the invaders, her sons fell in no fight, her liberties were crushed in no battle; but domestic treason and foreign invaders doomed Ireland to seven centuries of oppression."¹"The independence of Ireland," says Dr. William Phelan, "was not crushed in battle, but quietly sold in the Synods of the prelates, those internal traitors, to whom the orator alluded, but whom he was much too prudent to name."²

¹ Dublin Evening Mail.

² History of the Policy of the Church of Rome in Ireland, p. 3, Lond. 1827.

THE END