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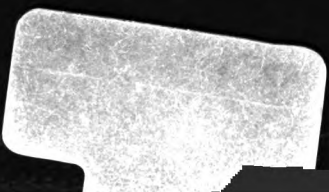
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**The life of st.
Patrick,
apostle of
Ireland. With a
preliminary ...**

**William Bullen
Morris**



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THE LIFE OF SAINT PATRICK.

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E. S. KEOGH,
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Imprimatur.

✠ **HENRICUS EDUARDUS,**
Card. Archiep.



THE
LIFE OF SAINT PATRICK
APOSTLE OF IRELAND

WITH

A PRELIMINARY ENQUIRY INTO THE AUTHORITY OF
THE TRADITIONAL HISTORY OF THE SAINT

BY

WILLIAM BULLEN MORRIS

PRIEST OF THE ORATORY

Qui s'étonnera que dans une entreprise toute Apostolique. . . Dieu ait conduit, comme les Prophètes et les Apostres, un Saint qui paroist leur avoir esté plus semblable qu'aux Saints qui sont venus après eux. . . En un mot, on y voit beaucoup le caractère de S. Paul.

TILLEMONT, t. xvi. (*Art. S. Patrice*).



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*TO THE
MEMBERS OF THE CONFRATERNITY OF ST. PATRICK
ESTABLISHED
AT THE LONDON ORATORY,
WHO,
WITH THE CHILDREN OF THE SAINT
IN MANY LANDS,
ARE
THE ENDURING WITNESSES
OF
THE FAITH
WHICH SEETH HIM WHO IS INVISIBLE.*

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ON THE AUTHORITY

OF THE

TRADITIONAL HISTORY OF ST. PATRICK.

THE original idea of this short sketch of St. Patrick's life was purely devotional; but it has been thought worth while at starting to give some account of the sources from which his history is derived, and of the evidence in support of its authenticity; for it is well known that the Saint's life has been exposed to such continued assault and ridicule, that even amongst Catholics the idea is prevalent that little evidence of a character to satisfy historical critics can be brought forward in its defence; whereas, it is only necessary to lay before our readers the real state of the case to convince them that St. Patrick's history is supported by the very strongest cotemporary evidence.

The hostility of Protestant writers to the traditional St. Patrick is plainly to be attributed to the necessities of their position: the Founder of

▲

Christianity in Ireland must either be shorn of that supernatural character so incompatible with the idea of a Protestant prelate, or they must relinquish all hopes of religious dominion in that country. For, from the time when St. Patrick made Ireland the "Island of Saints," he has been the chief representative of its national as well as its religious life, while the trials endured and the blood shed in succeeding ages by those who have witnessed to the Faith which he taught, have only served to make him more and more one with the people, and to intensify their passionate loyalty ; and it is this double character of the Apostle of Ireland which accounts for the persevering efforts made to alienate the children from the father by those learned and ingenious writers who, from the time of Archbishop Ussher, have laboured to prove that St. Patrick was the precursor of Protestantism in Ireland.

This bold and original view, which appears to have been the life of a form of the High Church¹ movement in Ireland, might be safely treated as an erudite pleasantry if it were not for one serious result : for some time past it is the enemies of the

¹ During the agitation preceding the disestablishment of the Irish Protestant Church, the theory that she had orders and descent from St. Patrick found many devoted adherents in England as well as Ireland. See "Irish Reformation," by W. Maziere Brady, D.D., p. 29.

Catholic tradition who have been most prominently before the public in dealing with ancient Patrician literature: Protestant writers, differing almost as much amongst themselves as with us, have come forward to lay claim to the Saint, and, as always happens in such circumstances, controversy has done great violence to history.

Writers who hold all miracles to be impostures which are attributed to Saints coming after the last of the apostles of Christ, will, of course, reject those of St. Patrick. We are prepared for this; with them it is a matter of life and death in claiming him as their own; but one cannot understand those Catholic writers who are staggered at finding miracles in the life of a Saint, and ashamed of that in which they ought to glory. We do not object to the most rigid scrutiny; there was no regular process of canonisation in St. Patrick's time, and even were it so, in no case, except in the inspired writings, are Catholics bound to believe *all* that is recorded in the Lives of the Saints; but we have a right to complain of the presumption or inconsistency of those who, professing Catholic doctrine, attempt either altogether to eliminate the supernatural from such records, or on their own authority to enact positive laws as to the possible and the probable in such matters.

We have every variety of view about the Saint,

fluctuating between the clear faith of Father Colgan, who takes the Saint as he is found in history and tradition; the *via media* of Dr. Lanigan, and the utter disbelief of Ledwich, which rears its head again in the pages of the "Dublin University Magazine" of March 1876, where we are told that "Patrick was but one of many prehistoric figures floating in the imagination of the people, and deriving life, colour, and movement from the bards, the ever-ready exponents of the dumb wishes and desires of the people." This last-mentioned theory is the logical conclusion of the second. Mgr. Moran, in commenting on Dr. Lanigan's attempt to fix the date of the Saint's death, observes, "He abandoned the straight road of facts, and, wishing to establish a favourite theory, he involved in inextricable confusion the missionary labours of St. Patrick."¹ But this is not all; he found the history of St. Patrick's mission bound up with records of supernatural events, which he has taken it upon him to reject; he has attempted to separate the man from the Saint, and the result has been that the Apostle of Ireland vanishes from his pages. In St. Patrick's case, it is *Aut Cæsar aut nullus*; either the Saint was such as the old Lives picture him, or we must be content to believe that the great Apostle and Legislator of Ireland can only be known in his

¹ Essays on Early Irish Church, p. 46.

work, and that, like another Melchisedeck, he is "without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life."

It is significant that when Montalembert, in his "Chronicles of the Monks of the West,"¹ reaches St. Patrick and the history of the conversion of Ireland, his heart fails, and he recoils before the critical difficulties of the subject, contenting himself with referring his readers to Dr. Lanigan's "Ecclesiastical History," which, he says, may be consulted "with profit, though not with pleasure;" but the profit may also be questioned, if, as it appears, one of the most voluminous writers on St. Patrick in our times has only involved his life in obscurity.

Dr. O'Donovan, in his annotations to the "Annals of the Four Masters,"² writes in the same spirit as Dr. Lanigan, and tells the reader that "the absurdity of the miracles attributed to St. Patrick by all his biographers, on every frivolous occasion, without number, measure, or use, has created a doubt in modern times of the truth of everything they relate." He also lectures the ancient writers on the "injudicious" way in which these miracles

¹ Tom. ii. p. 413.

² Vol. i., sub Anno 493, in which year the death of St. Patrick is recorded.

have been described. If the old chroniclers had the chance of defending themselves, they might answer that they did not write for the modern mind, and that, so far as the influence of St. Patrick is owing to their labours, the result, up to this time, has not proved that they were "injudicious." As to the "use of his miracles," it is not an uncommon opinion that the humiliation of intellectual pride¹ is one of God's chief designs in interrupting those laws of nature whose apparent stability is the snare of men who cannot bear the control of an intelligent and personal God. Miracles belong to an order of things transcending, not opposed to, reason. To say nothing of many in Holy Scripture—as, for instance, those of Samson—what explanation can we give of the Divine purposes of miracles in some of the best authenticated Lives of the Saints? There was St. Joseph of Cupertino, who died in the year 1663, and was canonised in 1767, like Brother Juniper, the companion of St. Francis, of whom St. Clare said that he was "the plaything of the good God." St. Joseph's life, with its amusing prodigies, is a revelation of that love which the inspired writer describes as *ludens in orbe terrarum*—"playing in

¹ "Dieu donc, indigné contre la raison humaine, qui ne l'avait pas voulu connaître par les ouvrages de sa sagesse, ne veut plus désormais qu'il y ait de salut pour elle que par la folie."—Bossuet, *Panegy. de S. F. d'Assise*.

the world"—for the resurrection of the humble and the ruin of the proud.

If a record of stupendous miracles such as St. Patrick's, or those related of St. Antony by St. Athanasius, were found in old writers with little or no result, we might fairly look for evidence similar to that of a process of canonisation ; but in the case of the Apostle of Ireland, his work and the enduring traditions of the nation stand in its place. We only claim for St. Patrick's miracles the same measure of assent as is freely granted to those of other Saints, by all who can patiently endure the idea of the unlimited interference of God in the world which He has created. He has never told us what are the limits of the power He is willing to commit to man. We must take St. Patrick's miracles as we find them ; they are not matters of faith, neither are they necessary for the Saint's glory ; it is his work which is the most prodigious and supernatural part of his life. By the power given him by God, he converted a nation of Pagans into a nation of Christians ; and if it were proved he did this, working as few miracles as St. Vincent de Paul, or none, like St. John the Baptist, it would only make his personal character all the more wonderful. We believe in St. Patrick's miracles, because such things are just what a Catholic expects to find in the life of a Saint. To borrow the words of Father Newman : " Did I read

of any great feat of valour, I should believe it if imputed to Alexander or Cœur de Lion. Did I hear of any act of baseness, I should disbelieve it if imputed to a friend whom I knew and loved. And so, in like manner, were a miracle reported to me as wrought by a member of Parliament, or a bishop of the Establishment, or a Wesleyan preacher, I should repudiate the notion. Were it referred to a Saint, or the relic of a Saint, or the intercession of a Saint, I should not be startled at it, though I might not at first believe it.”¹ Moreover, it should be borne in mind that an extraordinary gift of miracles has been almost always the appanage of those Saints whom God has sent to convert heathen nations. The record of St. Patrick’s supernatural powers will present no difficulties to those who are familiar with the lives of Saints like St. Antony of Padua or St. Vincent Ferrer, or with that of St. Gregory Thaumaturgus, in an age nearer that of St. Patrick. His life, as told by his namesake, St. Gregory of Nyssa, bears a remarkable resemblance to that of our Saint. There is the same prodigious character in their miracles, so that the biographers of Gregory as well as Patrick do not shrink from comparing them to the miracles of Moses. St. Basil, who lived in the century following that of St. Gregory, relates² that

¹ Present Position of Catholics, p. 308.

² De Spiritu Sancto. s. 74.

even the enemies of the truth called Gregory another Moses; and he supplies us with another interesting point of resemblance between him and the Apostle of Ireland in the abiding influence he preserved over the people he had converted. According to St. Basil, the memory of St. Gregory remained so new and ever fresh in the minds of the people, that no length of time could affect it, and they had a sort of jealousy and repugnance towards any new religious rite or custom other than those introduced by their apostle. Unchanging tradition and the religious life of the people witnessed to Gregory in Pontus as they now witness to Patrick in Ireland.

The Bollandists have raised doubts about some of St. Patrick's miracles, on the ground that they are like those recorded in the lives of other Irish Saints; but Irish hagiography is not singular in this respect. There is a great sameness in the ordinary miracles of the Saints; the circumstances or the necessities which call for them are similar at all times; and it may also be added, that while a miracle is always a direct interposition of God, still the initiative comes from man, and it is natural that the remembrance of what God has done in the past should encourage the expectation that He will do the same again. It is remarkable that both in the life of St. Gregory Thaumaturgus and in that of St. Antony of Padua we find miracles identical

with the famous one told of St. Patrick, when a man feigning death, in mockery of the Saint, was found to be really dead. Anyhow, as the stream of history does not flow upwards, and as the authenticity of the ancient Lives of St. Patrick is so well established, it is the Lives of the later Saints which are on trial if there is any charge of plagiarism; but when FF. Henschenius and Papebroke brought out St. Patrick's Life at Antwerp in 1668, the priority of our Saint's history was unsupported by the mass of evidence which has been since supplied by modern criticism.

The theory that the traditional idea of St. Patrick had its origin in the imagination of the bards, once started, has received great support from the way in which many modern writers have dealt with the facts of his life. He has been presented as they conceive he ought to be, not as he stands in those records, which alone have any right to be regarded as evidence. When Dr. Todd allowed himself the free use of hypothesis in imputing motives¹ to the

¹ As in the following paragraphs: "It seems probable that the Irish biographers of St. Patrick felt themselves compelled to shorten the life of Palladius in order to make room for the new commission to succeed him which they assume to have been given to St. Patrick by Pope Celestine." Again, in attempting to prove instances of opposition to St. Patrick, and the partial failure of his work: "The biographers of the Saint would, no doubt, have recorded many similar instances, had it been their object to chronicle the failures instead of the triumphs of their hero."—*Apostle of Ireland*, pp. 303, 502.

biographers of the Saint, he opened the way for the sceptic to undermine the structure which his great historical knowledge had raised in support of St. Patrick's history. We are therefore not surprised that the bardic theory has still got adherents. It is possible, of course, that there should have been a well-concerted and universal conspiracy on the part of the bards, annalists, and people of Ireland to invent an apostle; but as it is a mere supposition of the imagination, it cannot demand a logical refutation. All that can be said is, that so far from being capable of proof, it is impossible even to assign a motive for it. All the probabilities are against the theory. A runaway slave, a native of one of those nations which for centuries had been the hereditary foes of the Irish, was not the sort of hero that the followers of Ossian would have chosen. Moreover, St. Patrick's chief contest was with the bards themselves, who were the leaders and representatives of that Paganism which he destroyed. St. Patrick dethroned the bards; therefore, if his history had been an imposture, they would have been the first to assail it with that fierce irony before which even the monarch in Ireland quailed. This is not mere conjecture; we have clear evidence of the view which the bards, as poets, took of St. Patrick in the Ossianic poems. In these writings, which fill several volumes of the "Transactions of the Ossianic Society," the bard, with poetic

license, introduces St. Patrick as contending with Ossian the son of Fingal, who flourished nearly two centuries before the Saint. Ossian is represented in the following strain as alternately lamenting the old Pagan glories of the past, or blazing forth fierce invective against their destroyer—

“Sorrowful for me that the Tulach of the Fenians¹
Is now under the bondage of clerics.”

Then having bewailed the desolation of one of the ancient palaces, over the site of which the chase now passes, he breaks out thus—

“Thou man of the golden vestments,
Who assumest the prosperous position,
Happy for thee that Conan does not live,
Lest his clenched hand might touch thee.”

Ossian asks St. Patrick whether the heroes of the poets' race had inherited heaven, and on receiving an unfavourable answer, at first he mourns over them, then indignation masters him, and he tells the saint—

¹ Lord Strangford suggests the substitution of “Fenian” for “Ossianic,” in designating these poems, “which we, misled by an impostor, call by the name of one author, Ossian.” He adds, “That one man who did more irreparable mischief to the correct English appreciation of genuine Gaelic poetry, and who committed more injustice to Ireland, in a literary point of view, than any or all other men and circumstances, was James Macpherson, the arch-fabricator and father of distortion.”—*Philological Papers, &c.*, pp. 177, 237.

“ Had Conan survived to my time,
 The foul-mouthed man of the Fenians,
 He would break thy neck
 For thy contention, O cleric.”

Again, in another place, on receiving a similar answer, Ossian says—

“ Now on the virtue of thy white book
 And the crozier which lies at its side,
 Under the chiming of thy high-sounding bells
 Dost thou lie in what thou sayest.”¹

The theory of bardic invention is therefore utterly without foundation. The history of St. Patrick holds together along the whole line. To him *alone* is attributed the conversion of the nation, with a rapidity unexampled in the history of the Christian Church; and from his time the only glory left for that galaxy of native saints who followed close upon him in the next century is that of founders of monasteries, doctors, or apostles in other lands. Such were SS. Brendan, Ciaran, Columbanus, and St. Columcille or Columba, the idol of the Irish bards!² St. Patrick fills up the first age

¹ Transactions of the Ossianic Society, vol. i. pp. 69, 71, 99; vol. iv. p. 121. In a note, vol. vi. p. 155, the editor observes, that there is reason to suppose that these compositions, in their original form, were coeval with St. Patrick's arrival, or immediately after.

² It was owing to the influence of St. Columba that the order of the bards was saved from extinction at the Convention of Drumcealt (A.D. 590). This privileged class had become intolerable to the people by their exactions. St. Columba proposed the restriction of their powers, instead of suppression, and his opinion prevailed.—*Lanigan*, vol. ii. p. 236.

of the Church in Ireland ; the fifth century belongs to him. The sixth and seventh are those in which Ireland was known as the "Island of Saints and Doctors," when the country was like one great sanctuary, where religion and science found a home amidst the universal desolation which followed the inroads of the barbarians. For a century Ireland alone was the "storehouse of the past and the birthplace of the future,"¹ until, in the seventh century, the sister island of the north began to divide the glory with her ; but during a great part of this century England drew much of her religious life from the Church of St. Patrick. Montalembert² affirms that more than two-thirds of England owed its final conversion exclusively to the labours of the Irish monks brought up in the great schools of Iona, Old Melrose, and Lindisfarne. Mr. Green, when referring to the science and biblical knowledge which at this time made "Durrow and Armagh the universities of the West," and to the missionary zeal of the Irish, observes : "Patrick, the first missionary of the island, had not been half a century dead, when Irish Christianity flung itself with a fiery zeal into battle with the mass of heathenism which

¹ The Isles of the North, by J. H. Newman. Hist. Essays, vol. i. p. 124.

² Moines d'Occident, tom. iv. p. 128.

was rolling in upon the Christian world. . . . For a time it seemed as if the course of the world's history was to be changed, as if the older Celtic race, that Roman and German had swept before them, had turned to the moral conquest of their conquerors, as if *Celtic and not Latin Christianity* was to mould the destinies of the Churches in the West." And he adds that there was a time when England seemed to be "annexed" to the Irish Church.¹ From the words here italicised, it appears that this very dispassionate historian adopts the view, prevalent in Protestant writers, that there was some essential difference between the Church of St. Peter and that of St. Patrick. We can hardly expect him to understand that the controversies on discipline in the questions of the time of keeping Easter and the tonsure in no way affected the integrity of the Catholic faith; the truth is, that the very violence of the conflict only made the unity of faith all the more manifest, when in a great part of Christendom the innumerable disciples of the Celtic Saints, Columbanus and Columba, surrendered themselves and their conquests to the Roman St. Benedict, transferring their allegiance so quietly, that it is hard to tell when the change took place. Few Saints were better calculated to inspire enthusiasm than the great monastic founders, the

¹ Hist. English People, pp. 22-28.

chivalrous Columbanus and the mystical Columba, and those who understand how strong are the traditions of religious orders, will see in the submission of their disciples a convincing proof of the unity of spirit existing between Ireland and Rome.

It is questionable whether a critical account of all the sources of St. Patrick's history is possible in the present unexplored state of ancient Irish literature. St. Patrick is the central figure of the age in which he lived, and Mr. O'Curry,¹ one of the greatest Irish scholars and critics, writing some twenty years ago, declares that up to that time there had been nothing written which could be called a history of Ireland, and he deprecates the idea of such a work until much more has been done in preparation. As the life of St. Patrick is an integral part of the history of Ireland, it may be objected that it is imprudent to attempt it until the historical foundation has been more securely laid. To this it may be answered, that devotion

¹ Manuscript Materials of Ancient Irish History, p. 443. Of this great work Mr. Skene remarks: "For the masterly and complete survey taken of the subject, as well as for accurate and minute details, they are almost unexampled in the annals of literature."—*Introd., Dean of Lismore's Book*, p. lxxxvi. O'Curry tells us (p. 456), that the Irish MS. materials are "perhaps more abundant than the ancient and contemporary records of any other European nation could supply." It is O'Curry's greatest glory as a critic that, in fiercely controverted questions, he has won the confidence of members of every creed, and the evidence forthcoming for the truth of St. Patrick's history from so impartial a writer is invaluable.

to the Father of Irish Christianity is the present necessity of millions, and that the difficulties in our way are, after all, only the same as are to be found in every historical question where the sources are numerous and of venerable antiquity.

Again, there is no part of Irish history on which so much exact criticism has been expended as on particular parts of St. Patrick's life by Mgr. Moran, Dr. Todd, and others, while the first step towards a complete Life of the Saint has been made by Miss Cusack. In 1871 this well-known writer published a magnificent quarto volume which professes to embody "all the existing material"¹ on the subject. In addition to the writer's own composition, it contains one of the most ancient Lives of St. Patrick, styled "The Tripartite," from its arrangement in three parts, translated by the eminent Celtic scholar, W. M. Hennessy, Esq., M.R.I.A.,² also the "Confession and Epistle of the Saint," in Latin and English, with other important documents bearing on his history. This work presents a striking contrast to the Memoir of

¹ Preface, p. 1.

² Mr. Olden makes the introduction of this original matter a ground of reproach to Miss Cusack, and very unfairly leads his readers to suppose that she places the account of St. Patrick's Purgatory on the same level as the ancient Life. Miss Cusack distinctly declares that there is no evidence in favour of the belief that St. Patrick established this devotion.—*Epistles, &c., of St. Patrick*, Rev. J. Olden, M.R.I.A., p. 5.

St. Patrick by Dr. Todd, which, while it gives us much valuable information, in its form is little more than a learned essay in support of the author's own views. Miss Cusack gives facts, and allows them to speak for themselves; Dr. Todd attempts to make them speak for him, and with so little success, that the impression left by the book is that his conclusions finally overthrow his premisses.

The first volume of Dr. Lanigan's "Ecclesiastical History" is almost entirely devoted to St. Patrick. A translation of Jocelyn's Life of the Saint has been published in America;¹ and these works with the "Tripartite" give us all the main facts of St. Patrick's history. The last-named work is probably the chief of the ancient sources of his life, and it is much to be regretted that Mr. Hennessy's translation of the "Tripartite" has disappeared from the second edition of Miss Cusack's work. The modern Life is in part a commentary on the ancient chronicle, to which, in the course of the narrative, the reader is often referred. Although there is little order in the "Tripartite" itself, and the simultaneous study of the two Lives requires no ordinary patience, still the reader will be repaid for his trouble. As the same form, with all the references, is

¹ The Most Ancient Lives of St. Patrick, &c. By Rev. J. O'Leary. New York, 1874.

retained in the second edition, the following work, already begun when it appeared, has been continued in the hope that there is still room for a short and simple narrative of St. Patrick's life, mainly with the intention of bringing out his personal character.

We possess several authentic documents on which to build St. Patrick's life : two written by himself, others with good evidence that they were written either by his cotemporaries or immediate followers. We need not trouble our readers with evidence in support of the authority of St. Patrick's "Confession" and "Epistle to Coroticus," as they are admitted to be genuine works of the Saint by every author whose opinion is of any value on the subject.¹ Those parts which fit in with the narrative will be introduced into the text, and will convince the reader that, extraordinary as are the supernatural powers attributed to St. Patrick by his biographers, they are in keeping with his personal character. The "Epistle" will be noticed in its place ; it breathes the same spirit as the "Confession," which is one of those inimitable writings which could only come from a Catholic Saint. It gives some account of his early life, of his doctrine,² and of his labours ; but at times it is almost incoherent, from the contradiction

¹ Dr. Todd mentions Ussher, Ware, Cave, Spelman, Tillemont, Mabillon, D'Achery, Martene, Du Cange, Bollandus, Dupin, O'Conor, Lanigan, Villanueva, and others.—*Apostle of Ireland*, p. 347 n.

² See Appendix A.

between the facts he relates and his estimate of his own actions, between his sense of the abiding power of God within him and his own nothingness, mingled with those passionate prayers for martyrdom so common in the Saints, which reveal their utter unconsciousness of the place which they hold in this world.

Tillemont, a writer remarkable for excessive severity in dealing with the supernatural, professes to form his judgment of St. Patrick entirely on the "Confession," and the most enthusiastic clients of the Saint can find nothing to add to the following extract:—"Patrick has ever been regarded in the island (Ireland) as her Apostle, because, as we shall see, he was sent there by the special command of God, and with that overflowing plenitude of the apostolic spirit which wrought the complete, or well-nigh complete, conversion of the nation, and infused such a spirit of piety that the title of Island of Saints is said to have been given to it from that time. It is certain that there is not in our days any nation subject to heretical rulers which has upheld the faith with such courage. . . . Who can be surprised if, in an enterprise altogether apostolic, to which friends and enemies were opposed, God should have led, in the way of the Prophets and Apostles, a Saint who appears to have borne a greater resemblance to them than

to those Saints who have succeeded them. . . . In one word, we see in him much of the character of St. Paul.”¹

Aubrey de Vere, in his beautiful “Legends of St. Patrick,” gives us the same idea of the Saint; and in all that relates to his life it will be found that the poet has adhered as closely as the historian to ancient and authentic records.

The following lines express the idea which runs through the whole book, revealing the personal character of the Saint as even more wonderful than his works:—

“The Island race, in feud of clan with clan,
Barbaric, gracious else and high of heart,
Nor worshippers of self, nor dulled through sense,
Beholding not alone his wondrous works,
But wondrous more the sweetness of his strength,
And how he neither shrank from flood nor fire,
And how he couched him on the wintry rocks,
And how he sang great hymns to Him who heard,
And how he cared for poor men and the sick,
And for the souls invisible of men,
To him gave way.”

Next in importance to St. Patrick’s own writings come the old Lives of the Saint which have been preserved by the Franciscan Father Colgan, the greatest of Irish hagiographers, in the collection known as the “*Trias Thaumaturga*,” which forms part of his “*Acta Sanctorum Hiber-*

¹ Hist. Eccl., vol. xvi. pp. 454, 455, and 464.

niæ," and consists of seven different Lives of St. Patrick, with Lives of St. Brigid and St. Columba. Father Colgan, who belonged to that famous band of Celtic scholars so well known as the authors of the "Annals of the Four Masters," published his work at Louvain in 1645,¹ and the Lives of our Saint in this collection, containing the chief sources of the history of St. Patrick, are classified in the following order, with the names of their authors:—

Vita Prima, by St. Fiacc, Bishop of Sletty (in verse).

Vita Secunda, by Patrick Junior.

Vita Tertia, by St. Benignus.

Vita Quarta, by St. Eleran, surnamed the Wise.

Vita Quinta, by Probus.

Vita Sexta, by Jocelyn.

Vita Septima, by St. Evin (the "Tripartite," or "Life in Three Parts.")²

According to Colgan, all these Lives, with the exception of those by St. Eleran and Jocelyn, were written either by disciples of the Saint, or by authors of the sixth century, to the verge of which St. Patrick's own life was prolonged. Mr. O'Curry, however, whose authority is well-nigh paramount on such questions, inclines to the opinion that the "Vita Quinta," by Probus, belongs to the tenth century.³

¹ See Appendix B.

² References to this version of the Life will come under "Trias Thaumatis." When the "Tripartite" is mentioned, Mr. Hennessy's translation is quoted.

³ MS. Materials of Irish History, p. 390.

This Life has a special interest and value attached to it, from the fact that it appears identical with that of Maetheni found in the "Book of Armagh." "It has often been remarked," writes Mgr. Moran,¹ "that the Life of St. Patrick which bears the name of Probus is nothing more than an amended text of Maetheni;" and thus, in another way, this Life acquires both antiquity and value as great as that attributed to it by Colgan. The following account of the "Book of Armagh,"² one of the most extraordinary historical relics in existence, will not be out of place here:—"The collections concerning St. Patrick in the first part of the 'Book of Armagh' constitute the oldest writings now extant in connection with him, and are also the most ancient specimens known of narrative in Irish and Hiberno-Latin. They purport to have been originally taken down by Bishop Tirechan from Ultan, who was Bishop of Ardraccan towards A.D. 650, and by Muirchu Maccu Maetheni, at the request of his preceptor, Aed, Bishop of Sletty, in the same century. . . . It would seem that the 'Book of Armagh' was supposed to have been written by St. Patrick's own hand, from the following passage on page 21, at the end of the copy of his 'Confession:—*Hucusque*

¹ Essays on the Early Irish Church, p. 77.

² See Appendix C.

volumen quod Patricius manu conscripsit sua."¹ This identity of the Life by Probus with that in the "Book of Armagh" has led some writers to attach an authority to it greater than any of the others, although in the judgment of the learned in these matters, the seventh Life, which is the longest in Colgan's collection, excels it both in antiquity and authenticity. Colgan attributes this Life to St. Evin, who flourished in the sixth century, and therefore may himself have seen St. Patrick, or if not a cotemporary, must almost certainly have known some of those who had lived with the Saint. Of this Life Dr. Petrie writes: "The 'Tripartite,' usually ascribed to St. Evin, an author of the seventh century, and, even in its present interpolated state, confessedly prior to the tenth,"² thus placing St. Evin in the seventh century; but O'Curry has found evidence which leads him to believe that St. Evin was living in the year 504, and he adds, "So that he had very probably seen and conversed with St. Patrick, who had died only eleven years before this time, or in 493."³ He weighs the arguments used by Colgan to prove that it was written in the sixth century, which chiefly rest on passages wherein individuals are mentioned as living in the

¹ Appendix, Sixth Report of the Deputy-Keeper of the Public Records in Ireland, p. 105.

² Petrie on the Domnach-Airgid. Transactions R. I. A., vol. xviii. p. 19.

³ MS. Materials, p. 351.

time of the writer, who can be proved, with tolerable certainty, to belong to the sixth century, and he sees no reason to doubt that these passages are genuine. O'Curry's chief objection to attributing this Life to St. Evin arises from the fact that St. Columcille, and others, who lived some time after St. Evin, are given in the text as having recorded St. Patrick's miracles; but to this objection he observes, "Father Colgan offers a very obvious explanation, that the passages in which they are mentioned are interpolations."¹ Thus in the main the judgment of O'Curry on the "Tripartite" agrees with that of Petrie. "The antiquity of this Life," he observes, "in all its parts may be well understood from the fact that, in the Middle Ages it required an interlined gloss, by the most learned masters, in order to make it intelligible to their pupils and to other less learned readers;" and he adds, "There can be little doubt that the short sketch of St. Patrick's life written into the 'Book of Armagh' was taken from this tract."² In this last statement it will be seen that O'Curry differs from the writer in the Public Records, who seems to attribute the Life in the "Book of Armagh" to St. Ultan, while O'Curry holds that it has only the annotations of this Life by Tirechan, which were supplied by St. Ultan. But enough has been said

¹ MS. Materials, p. 350.

² *Ibid.*, p. 347.

for our purpose ; all we want is to establish the authenticity, and in some respects the unity, of the two most important Lives of St. Patrick, and to satisfy our readers that in these Lives we have records written by men who *probably* lived with the Saint himself, or *certainly* with his immediate disciples.

We can dispense with an enquiry into the antiquity of the four other Lives, which Father Colgan attributes to authors of the sixth and seventh centuries. They are short ; the longest, that of St. Eleran, containing just one-fourth of the matter of the "Tripartite ;" and they serve our purpose almost equally, whether considered as abridgments of this Life or as independent compositions.

In order to avoid interruption in the narrative when we come to the Saint's life, it will be worth while here to anticipate certain difficulties which Catholic writers have found in it. These are—

1. The uncertainty as to the precise place of the Saint's birth.
2. The number of his years at the time of his death.

As to St. Patrick's birthplace, although the weight of authority gives to France the glory of being his native land, there still appears to be some uncertainty on this point. However, in this respect

we are no worse off in St. Patrick's case than in that of many others. The birthplaces of the Saints in those times seem to have been little regarded by their biographers; either the one character of Christian obliterated national distinctions, or the Roman power had fused all its subject nations into one. Thus the precise birthplaces of St. Ambrose and St. Leo the Great are uncertain; of St. Augustine,¹ the Apostle of England, we know absolutely nothing before his mission from St. Gregory; while Ireland contends with England for the glory of giving birth to St. Boniface, the Apostle of Germany, and St. Cuthbert of Lindisfarne.²

This is a point, therefore, of very little importance compared with the chronological difficulty which we must now face. We cannot get the facts of St. Patrick's history to hold together unless it is established that his life was prolonged during a period of one hundred and twenty years, which is the age attributed to the Saint by the best authorities, ancient as well as modern. Miss Cusack, in abandoning this point, while faithfully giving the facts as found in the ancient sources, has been compelled to adopt contradictory and self-destructive systems of chronology, which place St. Patrick's arrival in Ireland

¹ Montalembert, *Moines de l'Occident*, vol. iii. p. 355. *English Saints*, vol. i. p. 73.

² Mgr. Moran (now Bishop of Ossory), *Essays on the Early Irish Church*, pp. 151-198.

alternately in 432 and 440, and fixes his death after the year 510, a date which is impossible to suppose can be intended. In one page 406, and in another 410, is given as the year of the Saint's escape from captivity in Ireland. This latter point is one which deserves special attention, as on its determination depends, not only the date of St. Patrick's birth, but also the veracity of the ancient Lives regarding important events in the Saint's history.¹

We know for certain from St. Patrick's "Confession" that he was in the twenty-second year of his age when he fled from Ireland to France. Moreover, as Miss Cusack justly observes at pp. 143 and 166, "the unanimous testimony" and "an accumulation of evidence" from the Lives of the Saint establish the fact that St. Patrick, after his captivity in Ireland, spent some years with his kinsman St. Martin of Tours, who died in the fourth century, most probably in 397. This is irreconcilable with Miss Cusack's statement at p. 120, that "according to the best and most carefully computed chronology, St. Patrick was captured A.D. 400, and remained in captivity until 406." The writer sees and candidly acknowledges the difficulty, and can only explain it at p. 166 by saying, that "those who wrote the Lives of the Saints in early ages were much more anxious to

¹ Life of St. Patrick, new ed. Compare p. 211 with p. 222, also p. 162 with p. 346, and p. 120 with pp. 145 and 165.

record their virtues, and to relate their labours, than to attend to those critical details which modern writers consider so essential." But the truth is, that it is modern, not early writers, who have sinned, and treated the chronology of the Saint's life in the same arbitrary manner as his miracles. The computation just mentioned, so far from possessing the authority attributed to it, is nothing more than a theory founded on a very questionable interpretation of some words of St. Patrick found *only* in those copies of his "Confession" which are themselves of doubtful authenticity.

This theory, which would make St. Patrick one hundred and five years old at the time of his death, is now the only one which can claim to be heard against the overwhelming weight of authority supporting the account in the "Tripartite"¹ that the Saint lived to the age of one hundred and twenty years ; and it cannot be denied that, even granting the primary importance attached to this Life by O'Curry, still it must yield to the evidence of the Saint's "Confession," if this is found to contradict it.

¹ It is hardly necessary to allude to a discrepancy found in this Life itself. At the end of the first and third parts the Saint's death is recorded in almost precisely the same words ; but in the first it runs thus, *Anno ætatis suæ cxii.*, while in the third, where figures are not used, the words are, "He resigned his spirit afterwards to heaven, in the one hundred and twentieth year of his age." Numerals in old manuscripts are no evidence against the text ; they are the special snare of copyists. The sense of a sentence keeps them exact in narrative

The statement of the "Tripartite," that St. Patrick reached the age of one hundred and twenty years, is also found in "Vita Secunda" and "Vita Quarta" of Father Colgan's collection, in the "Lebar Brecc," in the "Annals of Tigernach," and the "Annals of Ulster." Amongst modern writers it is supported by Father Colgan and Ussher.¹ The testimony of the "Annals of Ulster," which, as Dr. Petrie observes, are "so remarkable for their accuracy,"² when joined to that of the Lives, might be taken as conclusive upon this point, if it were not for an objection drawn from St. Patrick's "Confession," which apparently was first started by Tillemont. In order to shorten this discussion, we shall take for granted that, since the appearance of Mgr. Moran's Essays on the Early Church, the fact that St. Patrick was sent to Ireland by Pope Celestine in 432, and died in 493, is placed beyond all doubt. It is certain he was consecrated bishop in the same year

and reasoning, while an error in numbers will slip in unnoticed. Mgr. Moran (Essays, Irish Church, p. 47) points out how Lanigan was led astray by a similar error in a corrupt edition of Marianus Scotus, which gives *xl* for *lx annos*, as the term of St. Patrick's apostolate. In the autograph of Marianus, preserved in the Vatican Library, and lately edited by German antiquaries, we find written in full *per annos sexaginta*, with the Saint's arrival in Ireland in 432, and his death in 493.

¹ Trias Thaum., pp. 13, 38; Lebar Brecc, p. 15 (Whitley Stokes); O'Curry, MS. Materials, p. 65; Annals of Ulster, An. 492; Trias Th., v., App. 233; Ussher's Works, vol. vi. p. 448, Dublin, 1847.

² Essay on Tara, p. 87.

that he came to Ireland, and Tillemont argues from a passage in the Saint's "Confession" that he could not have been more than forty-five years of age at that time. If Tillemont is correct, the chronology of the Tripartite Life and that of Probus cannot be reconciled with that of the "Confession," as both these Lives record the fact that after his captivity St. Patrick spent some years under the direction of St. Martin of Tours. Now St. Patrick tells us in his "Confession," that he was twenty-two years of age when he made his escape ; and as St. Martin died A.D. 397, if we follow Tillemont in giving forty-five years to our Saint in 432, the date of his mission, he could only have attained his tenth year at the time of the death of St. Martin, and therefore the meeting of the Saints, under the circumstances related by St. Patrick's biographers, is impossible : 409 would then be the date of his escape, that is, twelve years after St. Martin's death.

It is remarkable that this passage, on which the argument against the veracity of the Lives is founded, does not exist in the most authentic copy of St. Patrick's "Confession,"—viz., that of the "Book of Armagh;" so even if it were clear, which it is not, that the paragraph is at variance with the authentic Lives of the Saint, we should only have additional reasons for distrusting all copies of the "Confession" except that contained

in the "Book of Armagh," which is said to have been written by St. Patrick himself. Tillemont used the Bollandist copy of the "Confession," and probably knew nothing about that in the "Book of Armagh." The following passage, on which he builds his theory, is very obscure. St. Patrick's course was nearly run when he wrote his "Confession," and in this place he is supposed to allude to certain objections which were made to his episcopal consecration. "And when I was put to the test by some of my seniors, who on account of my sins came to oppose my laborious episcopate, sometimes on that day I was grievously tempted to fall away then and for ever; but the Lord graciously spared a convert and a stranger for His name's sake, and very powerfully assisted me when thus borne down, because the stain and the reproach were unmerited. I pray God that this occasion may not be laid to their account as a sin: after thirty years they found me, and accused me of that which I had confessed before I was a deacon. Because of my distress, in sorrow of soul, I told my dearest friend what I had done in one day, or rather in one hour, when a child, because I was then unable to overcome. I know not, God knows, if I was then fifteen years of age."¹

¹ "*Et quando tentatus sum ab aliquantibus senioribus meis, qui venerunt ob peccata mea, contra laboriosam episcopatum meum: nonnumquam*

Tillemont concludes from these words that the confession of the fault was made at the age of fifteen, at the time it was committed, that is, before St. Patrick was carried captive into Ireland; so that, giving thirty years more from that time would make him forty-five at the date of his mission, A.D. 432. The desire to prove this last point, and thus reduce St. Patrick's age to a more ordinary standard,¹ seems to have blinded Tillemont and those who have followed his view; for the obvious sense of the passage is, that St. Patrick is indignant, and complains of the revival of some difficulty which had been manifested and set at rest at the time when he was ordained deacon, thirty years before his episcopal consecration. We learn from the testimony of Probus and the Tripartite Life² that it was St. Martin who conferred minor orders on Patrick, and that he advanced no further in the

in illo die fortiter impulsus sum ut caderem hic et in æternum: sed Dominus pepercit proselyto et peregrino propter nomen suum, et mihi benigne valde subvenit in hac conculcatione, quod in labem et opprobrium non male deveni. Deum oro ut non illis in peccatum reputetur occasio: post annos triginta invenerunt me adversus verbum quod confessus fueram antequam essem diaconus. Propter anxietatem, mæsto animo insinuavi amicissimo meo quæ in pueritia mea, una die gesseram, imo in una hora, quia necdum prevalebam. Nescio, Deus scit, si habebam tunc annos quindecim."—*Conf. Sti. Patritii, Acta SS. Mart. xvii.*, p. 535.

¹ The number of instances of extraordinary longevity, lately proved beyond all doubt, takes away one difficulty felt by many in regard to St. Patrick's age.

² *Trias Thaum.*, pp. 48, 121.

clerical state during the lifetime of that Saint. Patrick had reached his twenty-fourth year when St. Martin died, and, according to our explanation of his own words, he was promoted to the diaconate six years later, at the age of thirty.

The traditions of the Church of Tours are in harmony with those of Ireland in recording the relations of our Saint with its great bishop. The old Church of St. Patrick, on the north bank of the Loire, near Tours, which was built certainly not later than the tenth century, and possibly in the ninth, bears witness to the antiquity of the devotion to him in those parts; but nature does even more than art in perpetuating the tradition of St. Patrick's connection with St. Martin.

The writer has to thank Lord Emly for the first account of the extraordinary phenomenon known as "*Les Fleurs de St. Patrice.*" Year after year, and from time immemorial, in defiance of the seasons, in the depth of winter, and always at the same time of the year, that is, at Christmas, the "Flowers of St. Patrick"¹ appear on a black thorn tree, near the ancient church dedicated to that Saint, which stands on the bank of the river. The

¹ This prodigy hitherto has baffled all the assaults of infidel science, and a full account will be found in Appendix D., extracted from "*Les Annales de la Société d'Agriculture, Science, &c., du Département d'Indre et Loire,*" and furnished by M. Fleurant, Curé de St. Patrice.

tree flowers, then bears fruit, and is seen covered with snow and flowers at the same time. Tradition records how, at the holy season of Christmas, St. Patrick reached this spot on his way from Ireland to join his kinsman St. Martin; and how, while he rested beneath the tree, all at once, out of reverence for the Saint, it shook off the snow which covered its branches, and burst out in flowers, which were white as the surrounding snow, and that after this the Saint arose, and having laid his cloak upon the waters, crossed the river upon it.

Father Colgan's "*Trias Thaumaturga*" is unfortunately very rare, and a critical edition and translation of this work is much to be desired.

The "*Vita Sexta*," by Jocelyn, was the one selected by the Bollandists, and is found in the "*Acta Sanctorum*," March 17. The Life by St. Evin, already mentioned as translated by one of the first Celtic scholars of the day, gives us the chronological order of the most important events in the Saint's history; while Jocelyn's is chiefly a record of miracles, after the manner of the four books "*De Miraculis Sti. Martini*," by St. Gregory of Tours. Indeed, it is so like this book in style, that we may suppose Jocelyn modelled his work upon it, desiring to do for St. Patrick what St. Gregory had done for his great kinsman; but, as the chief object of the following Life is to bring out briefly

and clearly the personal character of the Saint, those miracles have been generally selected which, from the attendant circumstances, serve in some way to manifest the spirit of St. Patrick.

Jocelyn tells us¹ that at the time he wrote (A.D. 1185), two Lives of St. Patrick, now lost, were in existence, one by St. Mel, the other by St. Luman, both disciples of the Saint; and Jocelyn professes to have compiled his work from these sources, as well as from the Tripartite Life by St. Evin, and the Life by St. Benignus. The four Lives in Colgan's collection, attributed to Patrick Junior, St. Benignus, St. Eleran, and Probus respectively, give little more than St. Patrick's life up to the account of his contest with King Laeghaire and his Druids in the first year of his mission. They seem to have regarded his victory at this point as complete; and it should be observed that this part of the Saint's life—as marvellous in its results as in its attendant circumstances, which more than any other suggests the idea of poetic exaggeration—is supported by the concurrent authority of all these writers.

The version of the Saint's hymn which has been chosen will be found to differ very little from that of Mr. Whitley Stokes.²

Grateful acknowledgments are due to W. M.

¹ Acta SS. xvii. Mart., p. 578.

² See Appendix E.

Hennessy, Esq., M.R.I.A., and J. E. O'Cavanagh, Esq., for valuable suggestions, and to Professor O'Looney, M.R.I.A., for his assistance in collating the text of a passage in the "Book of Armagh." At the same time, it must not be supposed that these distinguished Celtic scholars are in any way responsible for the views contained in this work.

Nothing is recorded in the following pages which is not to be found in one or other of the seven Lives of St. Patrick already mentioned. The writer is fully conscious of the patchwork character of many parts of his composition, and its consequent want of clearness and unity. Frequent references, where controversy has rendered them necessary, break the thread of the narrative. Moreover, the old records from which it has been extracted were almost all written by men who lived in the infancy of Christianity in Ireland; its mysteries and its supernatural events were new and strange to them, and consequently their writings are rude and vague. The Tripartite Life, written partly in Celtic and partly in most ungrammatical Latin, affords intrinsic evidence of its own primitive origin in those days when St. Patrick himself gave lessons in Latin to his disciples.¹

¹ In four different places in this Life the writer tells us how St. Patrick gave "Alphabets" to his converts; and this Roman character, then so widely spread, is now only preserved in Celtic literature.

It is to be hoped that fidelity to those Lives, written when the recollections of the Saint were fresh, will atone in some measure for literary defects, and it remains to be seen whether from these simple and unstudied productions we can get an idea of the genius and character of that extraordinary man, who for fourteen centuries has continued his apostolic office in Ireland, without ever giving place to a successor. The "Virgin Island" has merited that fair name in faith as well as in morals, and purity has multiplied the children of faith.¹ In our own times, millions have gone forth from Ireland to plant the faith in the New World or to revive it in the Old. We may estimate the Episcopal sees, Apostolic delegations, Vicariates, and Prefectures of the Catholic Church at something over a thousand, and at least two hundred of these are found in nations using the English language. No hierarchy of any race or language is so numerous, and no other increases with such prodigious rapidity. Pius IX. has created thirty new bishoprics in the United States of America alone, and when we count the number of prelates in that country, and in others as well, who have received

¹ From a return made to the Irish House of Lords in 1732, we find that the proportion of Catholics to Protestants in Ireland at that time was not 2 to 1 (*Edinburgh Review*, November 1820), the population being about two millions. In 1841 the Catholics were nearly 7 to 1 in a population of over eight millions.

either their faith itself or their flocks from St. Patrick, we can realise the place held by the Apostle of Ireland in the Church of the nineteenth century. "In the Vatican Council," writes Cardinal Manning, "no Saint had so many mitred sons as St. Patrick." When his children were driven forth on their sorrowful exodus, neither the friends nor the enemies of the Church could have anticipated the result :

*"Euntes ibant et flebant mittentes semina sua,
Venientes autem venient, cum exultatione portantes manipulos suos."*
—Ps. cxxv.

THE
LIFE OF ST. PATRICK.

CHAPTER I.

*THE CHURCH IN THE FOURTH CENTURY—BIRTH AND
PARENTAGE OF PATRICK—EARLY MIRACLES—HIS SIX
YEARS' CAPTIVITY IN IRELAND.*

A GREAT part of the history of the Church may be found in the Lives of her Saints, and in this respect sacred and secular history resemble each other, for in both our attention is concentrated on the few great men who were the representatives as well as the rulers of their age. The century in which St. Patrick was born, the fourth after Christ, was one in which God wonderfully revealed His power; and as His instruments are ever in proportion to the work required, the character of our Saint, as one of God's chief agents at that time, comes before us invested with all the supernatural grandeur of the age in which he lived. It was then that the promise made by God through His prophet seemed on

the eve of its complete and manifest fulfilment—
“The stone that struck the statue became a great
mountain and filled the whole earth.” The Church
had scarcely come forth from the catacombs, when
the Roman Empire yielded place and retired before
her, surrendering the Imperial city itself to the
Vicar of Christ, while Paganism, as it was nothing
more than a religion of the State, was extinguished
by the power that had made it, when Constantine, in
the last exercise of his office of *Pontifex Maximus*,
turned the gods out of the temples, setting some to
stand in the streets, and others in even more ignoble
places.

It is true that heresy and the usurpations of the
civil power soon chilled the high hopes which had
been enkindled when the lord of the earth became
a Christian : still it is remarkable that for some
time fidelity to the Church and material prosperity
went together ; it was the first Christian Emperor
who reunited the empire ; and it was Constantine,
and after him the great Theodosius, who upheld
the majesty of the Roman name, and gave it back
some of its old glory ; but the very year that the
latter died (A.D. 395), the barbarians, who in the
century before had shaken the foundations of the
empire, broke once more upon it, and then its long
and terrible agony began. St. Patrick lived through
the years of Alaric, Attila, and Genseric, and saw

the final extinction of the empire of the West, and it was in the midst of the desolation of those days—all the more appalling from the contrast with what had gone before—that God gave him the heart to undertake the conversion of one of the fiercest of those races who were then grinding the ancient world into dust. His life carries us away from the spectacle of the struggle which was going on around the great centres of the Roman power, between the old civilisation and barbarism, and reveals how it fared with those who lived in countries which formed the frontiers of the empire. When the signal was given, and the legions, which for centuries had garrisoned the world, began their retreat on Rome, many of her colonists, who, under the shelter of their protection, had gathered together possessions, and made homes for themselves in the distant provinces, seem to have clung to the countries which they had adopted, and, like the stragglers of a retreating army, it was they who suffered most from the enemy. To this class our Saint's family belonged; and his life has a special interest from the light which it throws on the state of things in our own part of the world at a time of which we have so few records. It tells us how frail was the tenure of life and liberty for those who were dwelling upon the shores of Gaul or Britain, when Scots from Ireland, and Saxons from the

banks of the Elbe or the Rhine, scoured the Irish and English Channels in search of spoil or adventure, or made inroads on the mainland when they had swept the seas. It was at a time, too, when those who fell in war seem to have had the least share in the woes of the vanquished, for captivity then meant slavery. Patrick's mother, Conchessa, was the first to drink of that bitter chalice of captivity and bondage which was afterwards to be her son's portion, and in the stern school of adversity she learned those lessons which fitted her to be the mother of a Saint. She was a near relative of St. Martin; some writers call her his sister, others his niece; and she must have been carried captive from France before that great Saint was elected Bishop of Tours (A.D. 371). The circumstances of her seizure by the barbarians are not recorded; we only know that she was sold, and that Potitus was the name of her master. The old chronicler gives a touching picture of the grace and dignity of the high-born slave, and tells us how in the end they won the heart of her master's son Calphurnius, and how he married her, and that from this union sprang the child who was destined to be the light of the Western world, and the greatest wonder-worker of his age.

St. Patrick was born A.D. 373. He tells us, in his letter to Coroticus, that his father held the office

of decurio under the Roman Government ; but the place of his residence and the country of the Saint's birth are still matters of controversy, from the difficulty of identifying the old names of places given in St. Patrick's own " Confession " and other ancient records. He speaks of his relatives among the Britons ; but this does not help us, as in his time there were British Celts in France¹ as well as in Great Britain. So as regards the rival claims of France and Scotland to our Saint, it is prudent to imitate the diffidence of that writer who excuses himself from attempting a decision in the matter, saying that he does not wish to deprive any nation of the right or title they may have to the Saint, for " St. Patrick is too rich a jewel to be lost but upon good evidence."

Our Saint must have had the blood of many races in his veins ; his mother's family came from Pannonia, the modern Hungary, and settled at Pavia after the birth of St. Martin.² Probus and others attribute a Celtic origin to St. Patrick ; but judging from the names of his ancestors, there is little doubt that they had intermarried with Roman colonists. It is also worthy of remark, that when the Saint alludes to the nobility of his family, he identifies it

¹ William of Malmesbury tells us that a numerous colony from Britain settled in the west of France in the time of Constantine the Great.—*Gesta Regum*, Angl. lib. 1, sec. 1.

² Sulpicius Severus, *Vita Sti. Martini*.

with the Roman dignity of his father : thus in his Epistle to Coroticus he says : " According to the flesh I am of noble birth, my father being a decurio. I have bartered my nobility for the good of others, and for this I have neither shame nor regret. I have become a slave in Christ to a foreign nation for the ineffable glory of that eternal life which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." In his " Confession " he mentions that both his father and grandfather were in holy orders. Now this was written when his work was nearly done, concluding with the words : " This is my Confession before I die." It seems to have been specially addressed to that monastic clergy on whom from the first he imposed so rigid a law of celibacy ; and as he mentions the fact without comment, we must conclude that the Saint merely alluded to what has been permitted in all ages of the Church, when married men like St. Gregory of Nyssa or St. Hilary, being separated from their wives by death or mutual consent, have taken holy orders.¹

¹ Mabillon (*Annal. Bened. I.*, lib. viii., An. 590) holds that St. Patrick introduced into Ireland the Rule of St. Martin, which he had learned at Marmoutier, and that it was embraced even by the bishops who were his disciples. The Rule of St. Columbanus, which dates from the sixth century, imposed the penance of two days' fast on bread and water, or two hundred strokes of the scourge, on the monk who was seen speaking alone with a woman (*Regula Sti. Columbani*, Migne, t. 80, p. 223); and the " Penitential " of St. Cummian, written in the seventh century, ordains that the priest or deacon who has broken his vow shall do penance by rigorous fasts and humiliations, for

St. Patrick was one of those upon whom God set His seal even in infancy, manifesting by miraculous gifts and favours the designs which He had formed concerning him. The priest to whom the child was brought for baptism was blind, and no water could be procured for the Sacrament : by a sudden inspiration the priest took the hand of the infant, and with it made the sign of the Cross upon the ground ; forthwith a fountain broke forth in which the priest baptized the child, then washing his own eyes in the miraculous waters, his sight was restored.¹

As the child grew in years, the favours of God were multiplied. When an inundation threatened the

three years, with deprivation of the Holy Eucharist during half this time of expiation.—*Lib. Pœnitentiæ*, Migne, t. 87, p. 984.

- ¹ “ How can the Babe baptized be
 When font is none, and water none ?
 Thus wept the nurse on bended knee,
 And swayed the Infant in the sun.
- “ The blind priest took that Infant’s hand :
 With that small hand, above the ground,
 He signed the Cross. At God’s command
 A fountain rose with brimming bound.
- “ In that pure wave, from Adam’s sin
 The blind priest cleansed the Babe with awe ;
 Then, reverently, he washed therein
 His old, unseeing face, and saw.
- “ He saw the earth ; he saw the skies,
 And that all-wondrous Child, decreed
 A Pagan nation to baptize
 And give the Gentiles light indeed.”

—*De Vere, Legends of St. Patrick.*

house in which he dwelt, he dipped his fingers in the advancing waters, and having flung a few drops back again, making the sign of the cross in the name of the Holy Trinity, the flood receded, and those who looked on saw sparks of fire falling from the hand of the child. Another time, when in the fields with his sister Lupita, she fell; and, striking her head against a stone, wounded herself so severely that she seemed to be dying. When Patrick saw this he wept aloud, and raising her, made the sign of the cross over the wound, which healed at once, a white scar alone remaining as evidence of the miracle. Moreover, it is recorded that God gave him power to raise the dead. One day, when Patrick was carried by his uncle to a great assembly of the people, suddenly the man fell down dead in the midst. At first the crowd was silent, and then arose the cries and lamentations of the friends of the dead man, and his wife, turning to the child, whose power with God was so well known, said, "Why, thou *gilla*, didst thou let the man who was carrying thee die?" When Patrick heard this, he ran, and putting his arms round his uncle's neck, said, "Arise, and let us go home," and at his words the dead man was restored to life.¹

To this child was also given that power over the

¹ Tripartite Life, p. 374.

brute creation which God has sometimes bestowed upon His Saints, in which we see a restoration, in favour of innocence and purity, of one of those gifts which man has lost by the fall. At his prayer a wolf brought back a lamb which he had carried away from the flock, and, like St. Thomas of Hereford, and St. Joseph of Cupertino in later times, St. Patrick raised dead animals to life. The miracles and external signs of God's favour to the Saint in his pure and holy childhood have been recorded, but the unseen gifts of grace poured upon his soul are hidden from us. We may, however, in some way estimate them, from the fact that at sixteen his soul was found prepared for and equal to trials before which even a veteran soldier of the Cross might recoil. At this age the horrible scenes of his mother's captivity were repeated; an armed band landed on the coast and laid the country waste. His parents were slain, and he, and two of his sisters, carried into captivity. These were Lupita, mentioned already, who bore the "white wound" as a memorial of her brother's love and power, and another named Tigris. Many thousands, the Saint tells us in his Confession, were carried into slavery by the enemy, and the children being separated, knew not that they were companions in sorrow.

Three of the ancient lives of the Saint, edited by

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Colgan, declare that the enemy came from Ireland, whereas the Tripartite Life says that the expedition was commanded by the seven sons of Fechtmad, King of Britain; but as it also adds that they were in exile "*ex patria relegati*,"¹ there is no difficulty in the fact of their being on the side of the Irish. The fleet set sail for Ireland; passed along the coast for the purpose, apparently, of finding a market for the sale of the captives, for they sold the sisters in Louth, and, passing northwards, the boy was purchased by a chieftain in Antrim named Milcho,² who sent him into the mountains to tend his sheep.

This treatment of captives taken in war was the common thing in those days, and the Irish were no worse than their neighbours, but it was one of those practices which in after years called forth the Saint's most burning denunciations; and when, nearly eight centuries after the time of his own captivity, the Irish seemed to have forgotten his teaching, and slave-dealing amongst them had assumed such gigantic proportions that Henry II. made their purchase and possession of English slaves a pretext for his invasion, St. Patrick seemed to speak again to his children by the Council of Armagh, which,

¹ Trias Thaumaturga, p. 119.

² Father Colgan (Acta, SS. Hib. p. 741), mentions a chieftain of this name in the north of Ulster at the end of the fourth century, whom he considers to have been St. Patrick's master.

in 1171, to appease the wrath of God, decreed that all the English slaves in Ireland should be emancipated.¹

In his Confession, St. Patrick attributes the calamities which had fallen upon him to his own sins. He says: "I was carried captive into Ireland with many thousands of men, as we deserved, for we had not guarded the commandments, nor obeyed our priests who taught us the way of salvation." Such is his own account, but it is not safe to take the Saints as witnesses against themselves, and we may fairly see in these words an instance of that holy exaggeration into which humility often seems to lead them when speaking of themselves. The

¹ "The united clergy of Ireland being assembled at Armagh, and having treated at length, and deliberated on the coming of strangers into the island, their common judgment was, that on account of the sins of their people, and especially because in times past they were in the habit indiscriminately of buying the English as slaves, as well from merchants as from robbers and pirates, by the judgments of the Divine vengeance this trouble had come upon them, that they themselves, in their turn, should be reduced to slavery by the same nation. For the English people (Saxons), while their power was unbroken, had committed the national crime of offering their own children for sale, and, while yet they knew neither want nor hunger, made traffic with their own children and relatives in Ireland. Therefore it may well be believed that as already the sellers, so now the buyers, by this common crime have brought on themselves a yoke of slavery. It was decreed, therefore, in the above-named Council, and prescribed by common consent, that all the English throughout the island who had been reduced to slavery, should be restored to their former liberty."—Mansi, *An. Christi* 1171, Ex. Giraldo Cambrensi, p. 534.

passage which follows gives a very different idea of St. Patrick's spiritual state at this time: "After I had come to Ireland, I was daily tending sheep, and many times in the day I prayed, and more and more the love of God, and His faith and fear, grew in me, and the spirit was stirred; so that in a single day I have said as many as a hundred prayers, and in the night nearly the same, so that I remained in the woods and upon the mountains, and before the dawn I was called to prayer by the snow, the ice, and the rain, and I did not suffer from them, nor was there any sloth in me, as I see now, because then the spirit was burning within me."¹

Milcho proved a hard master, but he must have seen that there was something wonderful in this boy. It is probable, also, that he was not entirely a stranger to those strong impressions of the supernatural which even at that time seem to have characterised his nation. One night, in a dream, Patrick all on fire appeared to him entering the house, flames issuing from his mouth, nostrils, eyes, and ears. Milcho repelled the burning hair of the boy as he approached, so as not to allow the flames to touch him. Then they seemed to turn aside, and envelop and consume his two little daughters, who were lying in the same bed. After this the

¹ Confessio Sti. Patritii, Acta SS. Mart. xvii. p. 554.

wind arose, and lifting the ashes bore them to many parts of Ireland. When Milcho awoke, he lay pondering on this strange vision, and summoning Patrick, asked him if he could interpret it. Then Patrick, to whom God had already begun to reveal the secrets of the future, answered: "The fire which you saw coming forth from me is that faith in the Holy Trinity with which I am entirely illuminated, and which I endeavour to preach to you; but my words will find no place in you, because your blind soul shuts out the light of Divine grace, and you will die in the darkness of unbelief; but at my preaching your two daughters will believe in the true God, and serve God in holiness and justice during their lives, then dying the death of the just, their ashes, that is to say, their relics, shall be carried to many parts of Ireland, and will bring health and blessings to many."¹

We gather from these words, that even at this time he had received a revelation from God of the work for which he was destined, and the account he has left us of the sublime heights of prayer to which he had been raised, prove that the boy's soul had already begun to live in that invisible world where God speaks and works with His Saints. Probus relates that it was at this time that the angel Victor, afterwards the Saint's constant guide

¹ Acta SS. Mart. xvii. cap. ii. p. 543.

and adviser, began to visit him every seventh day, and "spoke to him as man is wont to speak to man."¹ St. Patrick, as is to be expected from one in whom the desire of self-abasement amounted to a passion, makes no mention of this in his Confession, and evidently we should have known nothing of his gifts of prayer in his youth, if it were not that he was led to contrast it with what he called "the sloth" of his old and worn-out body, upon which he had no mercy.

Six years were thus passed in slavery, during which period Patrick had time to acquire the Irish language, and learn many things about the people which were afterwards of use to him, and then he was told to fly. "One night," he tells us in the Confession, "I heard a voice in my sleep saying, 'Thou dost fast well—fasting thou shalt soon go to thine own country;' and again after a little time I had an answer saying, 'Behold, thy ship is ready.' And the place was not near, but perhaps at the distance of two hundred miles, and I had never been in the place, and knew none of the people who lived there." Now a journey to a distance of two hundred miles must have been southward, and as the south coast of Ireland would naturally be his point of departure in sailing for France, this part of the narrative confirms the opinion that France, and

¹ *Trias Thaumaturga*, p. 49.

not Scotland, was the Saint's "own country" to which he was directed in the vision. It is inconceivable that he should have travelled to Bantry Bay in order to reach Scotland, whose shores are visible from Antrim.

He continues: "After this I fled, and left the man with whom I had been for six years; and I came in the strength of the Lord, who guided my way for good; and I had no fear until I reached the ship. On the day of my arrival the ship had moved out of her place, and I asked that I might be taken on board and sail with them, but the master was unwilling, and answered angrily, 'By no means attempt to come with us.' When I heard the answer, I turned away to seek the cottage where I had lodged, and on the way I began to pray; and before my prayer was ended, I heard one of them shouting with a loud 'Come quickly, for these men are calling thee,' and returning at once, they addressed me, and said, 'Come, we receive thee in good faith; let us be friends in whatever way you will.'"

The part of the Confession which follows is very obscure, but we gather from it that the Saint preached to these men, and converted them to Christianity. He continues: "After three days we reached the land, and for twenty-eight days journeyed through an uninhabited country. The

men's provisions failed, and they suffered grievously from hunger ; and one day the master said to me, ' What sayest thou, O Christian ! thy God is mighty, and can do all things ; why cannot you then pray for us, since we are nigh to death with hunger, and it will go hard with us ever to see the face of man again ? ' Then I said to them plainly, ' Turn in faith to the Lord my God, to whom nothing is impossible, that He may send us abundant food upon our way, for His storehouses are in all places.' And, by the help of God, so it came to pass, for, behold, a herd of swine appeared on the way, before our eyes, and the men killed a great number, and remained there for two nights greatly strengthened, for already many had been left half-dead on the road. After this they gave the greatest thanks to God, and I was honoured in their eyes." The Saint, however, had soon reason to sorrow over his converts, who still clung to their pagan superstitions ; for, finding wild honey, they offered it in sacrifice, and then gave some to St. Patrick, who tasted, but when he was aware of the evil use to which it had been put, he was filled with grief and indignation, and in reparation he took no food for twenty days.¹ He does not accuse himself for any

¹ This fast of St. Patrick's is one of the instances of extraordinary and protracted abstinence given by Benedict XIV. in his Treatise on Beatification and Canonization.—Lib. iv. P. 1, chap. xxvii.

fault in this matter, although so ready to condemn himself; but it seems that he had to suffer for the sins of others, for that very night a terrible temptation assailed him, which he thus describes. "On that same night, in my sleep, I was fiercely tempted by Satan (which I shall remember as long as body and soul hold together). There fell, as it were, a great stone upon me, and all my limbs were paralysed. Then it came in some way into my mind to call upon Elias, and at that moment I saw the sun rise in the heavens, and while I called with all my strength upon Elias, behold the splendour of the sun fell upon me, and at once shook off the weight, and I believe that Christ my Lord cried out for me, and I hope that so it will be in the day of my distress." ¹

The Saint adds that after some time he was again taken captive, but that he was liberated at the end of two months, and that after this, he and his companions arrived at their destination. We have seen that already the fires of apostolic zeal were burning within him, and therefore we may conclude that from this time St. Patrick set himself to prepare for the mission which God had revealed to him.

¹ Acta SS. Mart. xvii. p. 535.

CHAPTER II.

ST. PATRICK AND ST. MARTIN—ST. GERMANUS—“THE VOICE OF THE IRISH”—ST. PATRICK IN ENGLAND—THE ROMAN MISSION—DEATH OF POPE ST. CELESTINE.

THE period of our Saint's life to which we have now come embraces those years which he spent in preparation for his apostolate. His probation was long and searching, and in proportion to the greatness of God's purposes with His servant. It is the part of his life of which we have the best authentic record; but if we remember the circumstances of the time, it will help us to understand how great must have been his difficulties, and how persevering the energy which surmounted them. St. Patrick had to fit himself for the priesthood and apostolate in those calamitous years which followed the death of Theodosius the Great. During this time Rome was three times besieged, and afterwards sacked and set on fire by Alaric and his Goths; then came horde after horde of barbarians, involving the cities of the empire and the sanctuaries of the Church in a com-

mon destruction. A great part of the East was infested by heresy, and paganism still held possession of half of France and the best part of Germany. It was an age when God seemed to make the fate of the world depend upon a few great men, whose light shone all the brighter from the darkness which surrounded them ; when St. Ambrose was the oracle of Italy, and St. Augustin upheld the faith in Africa ; when St. Jerome kept watch over the written Word at Bethlehem, and St. John Chrysostom resisted heresy in high places at Constantinople. But no Saint was doing more for the Western Church than St. Martin, the great Bishop of Tours, who was in the zenith of his glory in that last decade of the fourth century, when his young kinsman set out on his search for the fountains of ecclesiastical spirit and doctrine. It was natural, therefore, that St. Patrick should first direct his steps to Marmoutier, the famous monastery near Tours, which had been founded by St. Martin, who, first monk, then Bishop, returned to the desert in his old age, and with his eighty followers imitated and rivalled the austerities of the Eastern solitaries ; two thousand monks followed him to the grave, and so great was the popular veneration in which he was held, that for some time in France the day of his death was taken as the starting-point of a new era, and the years were counted from it. Both

St. Evin and Probus mention St. Patrick's journey to Tours and his stay with St. Martin: the first-named writer tells us that our Saint received the monastic tonsure, and from that moment "he put away all earthly pleasures and cares, and resolved never more to eat meat," and Probus adds, that he received his "learning and doctrine from St. Martin,"¹ whose "double spirit" was given to one who may be called his greatest disciple.

The Bollandists and Tillemont fix A.D. 397 as the date of St. Martin's death: it is probable, therefore, that his kinsman was one of those who wept and prayed by the dying Saint in that well-known scene, when he consented to prolong his exile on earth, if he were still necessary to his people. There is an ancient tradition that St. Ambrose, when at Milan, bilocated, being at the same time miraculously present at the funeral of St. Martin at Tours, so our Saint may have had the privilege of seeing him who brought Theodosius to repentance, and whose memory lives in the Church as the representative of Her Majesty in reproving the sins of earthly rulers. The traditions of the churches of Milan and Tours both record the fact, which is thus related by St. Gregory of Tours, writing in the sixth century: "It came to pass on this day of the Lord, after the lection of the prophet, when the reader,

¹ *Trias Thaum.*, pp. 48, 121.

standing before the altar, was about to begin that of St. Paul, the most blessed Bishop Ambrose slept at the altar. Many saw it, but no one presumed to awaken him until two or three hours had passed in this way. Then they aroused him, saying, 'The hour is past, let our Lord command the reader to proceed, for the wearied people are waiting.' Then the Bishop Ambrose replied, 'Be not troubled, for this sleep has been of great profit to me, to whom God has manifested so great a miracle. For you must know that the soul of my brother Martin, the priest, has departed, and that I have paid the last offices to him in the usual way; the little chapter (*capitellum*) alone I have not finished, because of your interruption.' In astonishment and wonder they noted the day, and having made careful inquiries, they found that the Saint had passed away on the same day, and at the same time when the Blessed Confessor declared that he had assisted at his obsequies."¹

Immediately after the narrative of his escape from captivity given in the Confession, St. Patrick

¹ St. Gregory of Tours, *De Miraculis Sti. Martini*, Migne, vol. lxxi. p. 919. This tradition has been questioned by some who have held that St. Ambrose's death preceded that of St. Martin; but the Bollandists accept it in a dissertation on the year and day of the death of St. Ambrose prefixed to the *Acta SS.* April, tom. i., using it as one of their arguments in fixing the death of St. Ambrose in 398; and to this connection with St. Ambrose they attribute the great honours paid to St. Martin in the Church of Milan.

adds that after a few years he revisited his relations. St. Eleran tells us that he was then about thirty years¹ of age, and as we gather from his own words² that he received holy orders at this time, this was probably his farewell visit on the eve of his ordination. He gives a touching account of the affection shown him by his kinsfolk, who tried hard to retain him with them, reminding him of all he had endured since they had been separated. The Saint does not tell us whether his resolution faltered under this assault of flesh and blood, but it seems to have been a hard one, and he was supernaturally supported by a vision, which he thus describes: "In the bosom of the night I saw a man who seemed to come from Ireland, and he bore innumerable letters with him, one of which he gave to me. And I read the beginning of the letter, in which was written, 'The voice of the Irish,' and as I read aloud the first words of the letter, I thought I heard in my mind the voices of those who were nigh to the forest of Fochlut, which borders the Western Sea; and they cried out, 'We entreat thee, holy youth, to come and walk still among us.' And my heart was deeply pierced, so that I could read no more, and so I awoke. Thanks be to God, that after many years the

¹ *Quasi annorum triginta.*—Trias Thaum., p. 38.

² Introduction, p. 34.

Lord hath granted their desire, as they cried to Him.”

Of the years intervening between this vision and the mission to Ireland, we have but very scant records; we can only conjecture, from the society in which the Saint was placed, what sort of life he must have led. Part of this time was passed in the Island of Lerins, the *Insula Tamerensis* or *Insula beata*, as it was then styled, one of the most famous sanctuaries of piety and learning in the world. Half monastery and half university, it filled France with Saints and doctors. In the west it ranks amongst the earliest of those great ecclesiastical strongholds for the training of apostles and missionary bishops, which were so necessary in those wild times, and so St. Patrick's life of preparation was thus the figure of those things which were to come, when his sons and successors passed through a similar novitiate in the great Irish monasteries at home, or in their colonies at Luxeuil, Iona, and Lindisfarne. Lerins in St. Patrick's time was sanctified by the presence of St. Hilary of Arles, St. Eucherius of Lyons, St. Lupus of Troyes, and St. Vincent of Lerins, and it was as a pupil of this great school that St. Patrick first made his appearance in Rome.

The same supernatural attraction which had guided St. Patrick to Marmoutier and Lerins, now

led him to place himself under the spiritual direction of St. Germanus, Bishop of Auxerre. He spent many years with him, "in patience, obedience, charity, and chastity, in sanctity of heart and soul, preserving his virginity in the fear of the Lord, and living in goodness and simplicity during the whole period of his mortal career."¹

St. Germanus was well suited to complete the training of the future Apostle; perhaps no Bishop in Gaul at that time had a greater reputation for sanctity and learning. He seems to have taken St. Martin's place in the French Church, and it was in his company that St. Patrick began his apostolic career. The Pelagian heresy then infected Britain, and the reigning Pope, St. Celestine, had sent St. Palladius, Archdeacon of Rome, into the country to support the orthodox party, but he had had so little success that he was compelled to ask the Pope for help, and at the same time there came a deputation from Britain to the Bishops of France imploring them to grant them missionaries capable of opposing the advances of the heresy. St. Germanus was appointed by the Pope as his legate for this purpose, and the Bishops of France induced St. Lupus of Troyes to accompany him. St. Patrick was one of their company, and as every meeting with a Saint is a great event in life, it is worthy of

¹ Probus, *Trias Thaum.*, p. 48.

mention that as the legate and his attendants passed through the village of Nanterre, near Paris, they found there St. Genevieve.¹ She was then about ten years old, but St. Germanus foresaw, and foretold, the sublime sanctity of the future patroness of Paris, and leading the child to the church, she made, in his presence, her solemn consecration to God.

The great success of St. Germanus in Britain is well known, and St. Patrick had his share in the work. It is recorded that in one city the preaching of the legate producing no fruit, he took counsel with his followers as to the course they should adopt, and that, when our Saint's turn to speak came, he said, "Let us for three days observe a rigorous fast at the city gates, and then leave the matter in the hands of God." His advice was taken, and a manifest interposition of God was obtained by this act of evangelical penance. We have already seen from his Confession that St. Patrick well knew the power of fasting in obtaining help from God, but here he appears to have consecrated an Irish pagan custom to a Christian purpose.²

¹ Giry, *Vie des Saints*, 3 Janvier.

² Scholiast on St. Fiacc. *Trias Thaum.* p. 5. A full account of this very beautiful custom may be found in the Introduction to "Ancient Laws and Institutes of Ireland," p. xlvi. In cases where any one of the rank of a chieftain unjustly withheld payment of a lawful claim, the creditor had the right to 'fast on him,' which consisted in going to his residence, and waiting there for a certain time

St. Germanus and his companions were sent to Britain A.D. 429, and it was about this time that the Vicar of Christ, upon whom rests the burthen of the world's conversion, turned his eyes on Ireland, and determined to gain her for his Master; and with this end in view he sent St. Palladius, who had been already at work in Britain. But as it had been in that country, so now in Ireland—St. Palladius had to make way for another. The result of his mission is thus described by one who wrote some two centuries after the death of St. Patrick. “Palladius, Archdeacon of Pope Celestine, Bishop of Rome, and forty-fifth successor of St. Peter in the Apostolic See, was ordained, and sent to convert this island, lying under wintry cold. But he was unsuccessful, for no one can receive anything from earth unless it be given to him from heaven; and neither did these fierce barbarians receive his doctrine readily, nor did he himself wish to remain long (*transigere tempus*) in a land not his own; wherefore he returned to him who sent him. On the way, however, after passing the first sea, having begun his land journey, he died in the territory of the Britons.”¹

without food. If the chieftain did not relent, the law then took its course. The writer adds that the same observance is to be found amongst the Hindus, where this sort of compulsion is used even against princes, and may not be resisted by force.

¹ Book of Armagh, fol. 2, ap Petrie, *Antiq. Tara*, p. 108.

When St. Germanus heard that the missionaries from Rome had begun their work in Ireland, he saw that Patrick's time was now come. Our Saint was then far advanced in years, and his life, from his childhood, had been one long preparation for this mission to which he had been so plainly called by God. He therefore set out for Rome to obtain the Pope's sanction and benediction; "but first," says Probus, "he thus prayed to God. 'O Lord Jesus Christ! lead me, I beseech Thee, to the seat of the holy Roman Church, that, receiving authority there to preach with confidence Thy sacred truths, the Irish nation may, through my ministry, be gathered to the fold of Christ.' And soon after, the man of God, Patrick, being about to proceed to Ireland, went, as he had desired, to Rome, the head of all the churches, and having asked and received the Apostolic benediction, he returned, pursuing the same road by which he had journeyed thither." ¹

We have now come to the question of St. Patrick's mission from Rome. When we compare the narrative in Probus with that of St. Evin, it is evident that St. Patrick received two missions from Pope St. Celestine, and that the first, the one here alluded to, took place before the news of the death of St. Palladius had reached Rome, when St. Patrick was a simple priest; and the second, when, having set

¹ Probus, *Trias Thaum.* p. 48.

out on his road to Ireland to assist in the apostolic work already going on, and having heard of the death of St. Palladius and the failure of his enterprise, he retraced his steps, and received from St. Celestine the office which had already been given to St. Palladius. The contradictory statements made by old writers as to the place of St. Patrick's consecration, and the name of his consecrator, are probably to be attributed to their confounding these two missions. As to the view that St. Patrick could not be dependent on the Pope if he received his mission from St. Germanus, who was legate of the Holy See in Britain in 429 and again in 446, it is so hard even to see what it means, that we shall not attempt to meet it, contenting ourselves with the following account of St. Patrick's consecration borrowed from an author,¹ who on this question has left little to be added by subsequent writers, simply premising that it is cumulative evidence which should be regarded in a question like this. When St. Evin wrote that St. Patrick was consecrated at Rome, he had probably very little idea of the geography of Italy. In the following extract Monsignor Moran agrees with the Bollandists in fixing the spot of St. Patrick's consecration at the modern Ivrea, styled Eboria by Father Colgan, Eboria in the Book of Armagh, and Euboria by Probus :—

¹ Mgr. Moran, *Irish Ecclesiastical Record*, October 1866.

“John of Tinmouth writes, that St. Patrick ‘turned aside on his journey to a certain famous man named Amator, a chief Bishop and Saint, and obtained the rank of Bishop from him.’ Probus says he was ‘a man of wondrous sanctity,’ and ‘a chief Bishop;’ and Maccuthenus, in the Book of Armagh, also styles him ‘a wonderful man, a chief bishop.’

“Now it is difficult,” says Monsignor Moran, “to conceive a Bishop so remarkable amongst his contemporaries, and so famed for his sanctity, and yet uncommemorated in the many records of the French Church about the year 430. Neither in the synod then held in France, nor in the lives of St. Germanus and of the other great ornaments of France at that time, is there found any mention of his name.”

But if in Gaul, neither a town can be found to correspond with Eboria, as all acknowledge, nor a Bishop who might answer for St. Amator : can such a town and such a Bishop be found in Italy ? We unhesitatingly answer that they can. Indeed, as to the town in which St. Patrick received the intelligence of the death of Palladius, we precisely find at the foot of the Alps an Eboria, or Eporia, also styled Iponia and Eporedia, lying on the route from Ravenna (where probably St. Germanus then lived) to Gaul and Ireland. This is the modern

town of Ivrea. Formerly travellers passed through it in journeying from Italy to Gaul. It was the route pursued by the army of Hannibal in olden times, as by the first Napoleon in the beginning of this century. What is more striking, it was the road hallowed by the relics of St. Germanus when they were translated with solemn pomp from Ravenna to Auxerre. We learn that from Ravenna they were first conducted to Vercelli, and there the presence of the angelic choir around the Saint's relics was said to have dedicated the newly-built cathedral. From Vercelli to Ivrea, and thence along the Alps, the triumphal route is marked by the many churches dedicated to St. Germanus, each of which was erected on the spot where his precious relics were deposited for a little while. Thus in the town and small diocese of Ivrea, there are at present seven chapels bearing the name of St. Germanus, and marking the route taken in this sacred procession.

“It is, perhaps, no small confirmation of the opinion that Eporia, or Ivrea, was the town thus referred to by our ancient writers, that it brings together, in one harmonious whole, all the elements of their at first sight discordant narrative. We understand at once how our Apostle is said to be on his way from Pope Celestine when he received in Eboria the news of the death of St. Palladius ;

we understand how it is that St. Patrick's consecration is so emphatically described as having been performed in a neighbouring town, *in conspectu Theodosii*, *in conspectu Celestini*, and again *in conspectu Germani*. There is nothing, indeed, to prevent these accounts from being literally true. The history of St. Germanus justifies the conjecture that he was then actually at the Court of the Emperor who often journeyed to and fro from Ravenna to the Imperial city Turin, the *Augusta Taurinorum* of those times. The Popes, too, are often met with, even in the scanty records of that age that have come down to us, visiting Ravenna, the head-quarters of the Western Empire, and other cities of North Italy.

“ Thus, again, another point becomes intelligible on which our ancient writers are agreed, and which, nevertheless, was wholly unintelligible on the supposition of St. Patrick's consecration having been celebrated in Gaul ;—viz., that at the time of his consecration St. Celestine gave him the name of Patricius, *i.e.*, Patrick. This was a name commonly assumed in Italy in the fifth century, as Gibbon assures us. Now, the Book of Hymns in its scholia on St. Fiacc attests that Patricius¹ was his name at

¹ All through the Tripartite Life the name of Patrick is given to the Saint ; but other writers tell us that in his baptism he received the Celtic name of *Succat*, signifying God of War.

his degree, *i.e.*, his highest order or consecration, and it was Celestine, the Comarb¹ of Peter, who gave it to him (Ap. Todd, *St. Patrick*, p. 363, and Colgan *Trias Thaum.* p. 4.)

“Some one will, perhaps, say that there was no Saint at that time in the north of Italy whose name corresponds with Amator, or Amatheorex, remarkable for his learning and sanctity. We reply that there was at this time the great St. Maximus ruling the See of Turin, which city, in a straight course, is not more distant than a few miles from Ivrea. The name Maximus in the old Celtic form would be precisely Amahor, and the transition from that to the various Latinised names given above is easily explained.

“From all this we may conclude that St. Patrick, when he received intelligence of the death of St. Palladius, was still in close relation with Pope Celestine, as also with the Emperor and St. Germanus; that the town of Eboria, at which he had arrived when the intelligence was brought to him, is no other than the modern town of Ivrea, hallowed by the memory of the other ornaments of the Church—St. Malachy and the blessed Thaddeus, and, in fine, that it was from the great Doctor of Turin, the illustrious St. Maximus, that our Apostle received his episcopal consecration.”

¹ Successor.

St. Patrick, in his Confession, tells us of a vision granted to him which appears to have had some mysterious connection with his own consecration as Bishop. His words are: "On another night, whether within me, or near me, God knows, I heard profound words, and I had no intelligence of them until the end, when it was said, 'He who gave His life for thee is He who speaks within thee,' and so I awoke filled with joy. And again I saw one praying within me, and I was, as it were, within my body, and I heard that is above the inner man, and there he prayed earnestly with groanings. And I was stupefied, and filled with wonder, and considered who this could be who prayed in me. But at the end of the prayer it came to pass that it was a Bishop, and I awoke, and remembered that the Apostle said: 'Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities, for we know not what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself asketh for us with unspeakable groanings,' and again, 'The Lord is our advocate, who also maketh intercession for us.'"

St. Patrick had now reached his sixtieth year. The graces of his youth, the Divine lessons of adversity, and the society of the wisest and holiest men of the age, had combined to prepare him for his mission; and with the blessing of the Vicar of Christ and of the friend and guide of his youth, St.

Germanus, he set out on his way to Ireland. We gather from his own words that he turned neither to the right nor to the left. "Did I come," he writes, "to Ireland according to God or according to the flesh? Who compelled me? I was led by the Spirit that I should see my relations no more."¹

He was consecrated Bishop A.D. 432, and in that year Christ sent him to make that covenant with Ireland which has remained unbroken for fourteen centuries. In that very year the great Pope St. Celestine died. He had just confirmed the decrees of the Council of Ephesus, and vindicated the honour of the Mother of God, and it seemed as if his eternal recompense was only deferred just long enough to give him the glory of founding the Church in Ireland.

¹ Epistola St. Patritii, Acta. SS. Mart. xvii. p. 539.

CHAPTER III.

*ST. PATRICK AND ST. LEO—CONDITION OF IRELAND A.D. 432
—LANDING OF ST. PATRICK—BENIGNUS—DEATH OF
MILCHO—KING LAEGHAIRE AND HIS DRUIDS—ST. PAT-
RICK'S "LORICA"—MIRACLES AT TARA—THE "SENCUS
MOR."*

WITH the year 432 begins the Christian history of Ireland. The number of the "Irish believing in Christ," to whom, according to St. Prosper,¹ St. Paladius was sent, must have been very inconsiderable, as no mention is made of them in the course of the narrative of St. Patrick's mission. When St. Patrick came to Ireland in the name of that imperial city which had subdued the world, Rome had changed masters, and begun that career of conquests in the spiritual order which has so far surpassed her material triumphs. When St. Leo contrasted the victories of the Apostolic see with those of imperial Rome, and declared that already in his time the Church ruled over nations into which

¹ BASSO ET ANTIOCHO COSS. *Ad Scotos in Christum credentes ordinatur a Papa Cælestino, Paladius, et primus episcopus mittitur* (St. Prosp. Chron. Migne, t. 51, p. 595.

the legions of the empire had never penetrated, we have good reason to suppose that Ireland was one of the countries to which he alluded, from the evidence we possess that he was in relations with St. Patrick and his Church from the first years of his pontificate.¹

For more than four hundred years the Romans had held possession of Britain. Many of their emperors had visited the country, or commanded the armies which defended this important province of their empire ; but during this long period they suffered Ireland to remain unmolested. It is strange that the Romans, so insatiable in their thirst for conquest, should never have made an attempt on that island whose mountains rose so near them in the west.

¹ In the Annals of Ulster, under the year 441, we find the following entry : "*Leo ordinatus xlii. romanæ ecliæ ep̄s 7 probatus est in fide catolica patricius ep̄s.*" The character before "*probatus est*" is regarded by Mr. Hennessy as the siglum for "*et,*" so the sentence runs thus : "Leo was ordained forty-second Bishop of the Roman Church, and the Catholic faith of the Bishop Patrick was approved." In the "Profession of Faith" of St. Mochta, published by Mgr. Moran, we have an additional proof of the relations of St. Patrick and St. Leo. St. Mochta, or Macteus of Louth, was a disciple of St. Patrick, who visited Rome about the year 460, and presented a profession of faith to the Pope, probably in the name of the Irish Church, then governed by St. Patrick. It was discovered by Muratori amongst the MSS. of the celebrated monastery of Bobbio, in Piedmont, founded by St. Columbanus, and with Montfaucon he describes the MSS. as being at least a thousand years old.—*Essays on Irish Church*, pp. 94, 296.

We learn from Tacitus¹ that Agricola, who governed Britain from A.D. 78 to 84, contemplated the invasion of Ireland; and that under an appearance of friendship he retained one of the Irish princes who had been driven from his own country, hoping in the end to find him useful. Agricola's reason for urging the Romans to invade Ireland was that by its conquest they would strengthen their hold on Britain—when Roman armies were everywhere triumphant and the spectacle of liberty was taken away, *si velut e conspectu libertas tolleretur*. The event justified the foresight of the great consul, and the trouble the Irish gave to the conquerors of the world is not the least of their military glories. According to the Irish tradition, it was about the middle of the third century that Caibre Righfada, called Reuda by Venerable Bede, crossed over with a colony from Ireland, and settled in Argyleshire. At first allies of the Picts in the east of Scotland, they gradually either conquered or absorbed them, until in the end the whole of North Britain became known as the land of the Scots, or "Scotia Minor," while Ireland retained the name of "Scotia Major" for many centuries after St. Patrick's time. For more than three hundred years this Irish colony was dependent on the mother country, whence fresh bands of

¹ Vita Agricolæ, § 24.

auxiliaries continually arrived, and at one time it appears that they were in a fair way to get possession of the south as well as the north. In 368 they advanced as far as London.¹ The Roman legions, whose leaders were slain, gave way before them, and it was not until the great general Theodosius crossed over from Gaul with reinforcements that they were driven back. But in 446 they returned, and then it was that the Britons appealed to the Romans for help in the well-known letter which began thus: "To Ætius, thrice consul, the groans of the Britons," going on to say, "The barbarians drive us to the sea, the sea drives us back to the barbarians; between them we are exposed to two sorts of death, we are either slain or drowned."² The Romans at this time were unable to defend their own capital, much less the provinces, so the Britons turned to the Germans for help, and received those Saxon allies who soon made themselves masters of the country.

It is hard to say whether Ireland lost or gained by her independence and comparative isolation. If the Romans could have done no more for her than they did for Britain, it would seem that, on the whole, she had no reason to regret their non-appearance on her shores. Anyhow, she preserved

¹ Knight's History of England, i. 54.

² Bede, Ecclesiastical History, c. xiii.

the vigour of her national life, and the souls of her people were unpolluted by the spectacle of imperial orgies, and the still more fatal fascination of that impure art and literature which, coming from Greece, first corrupted Rome, and then the whole world. The pure and exalted morality which Montalembert¹ has remarked even in the poetical legends of the Irish, may in some measure be attributed to this immunity.

Britain was not the only country which suffered at this time from the warlike propensities of the Irish. Their annals also record expeditions into Gaul and other countries, and it would seem at first sight as if a nation so martial and adventurous were but ill-suited for the reception of the Gospel. On the other hand, the Irish had had the advantage, almost singular in those days, of being for centuries free from foreign invasion, and there is clear evidence of great intellectual activity and respect of learning among them, both of which qualities were turned to good account by the Church. The chief offices of the nation at this time were filled by those who belonged to some one of the learned classes, so that, besides the special privileges which they enjoyed, the Druids (priests), the Brehons (judges), and the Bards, all of whom belonged to

¹ “*La légende irlandaise, d’une moralité toujours si haute et si pure.*”
—*Moines d’Occident*, iii. p. 109.

the same order, appear to have possessed powers second only to those of the king, and in some cases independent of him. "The Ollamh or philosopher," writes Mr. O'Curry, "when *ordained* by the king or chief—for such is the expression used on the occasion—was entitled to rank next to the monarch himself at table. . . . He was, besides, entitled to a singular privilege within his territory, that of conferring a temporary sanctuary from injury or arrest by carrying his wand, or having it carried around or over the person or place to be protected. . . . Similar rank and emoluments were awarded to the Seanchaidhe, or historian."¹ The learned writer quoted above adds: "There is abundant evidence in the MSS. relating to this period (the authority and credibility of which will be fully proved to you), to show that St. Patrick found on his coming to Erin a regularly-defined system of law and policy, and a fixed classification of the people according to various grades and ranks, under the sway of a single monarch presiding over certain subordinate provincial kings."²

¹ MS. Materials of Irish History, pp. 2, 4.

² It should also be borne in mind that from the time of Agricola to the year 432 was a period of nearly four centuries; now, when Tacitus wrote, he says the Irish were like the Britons in their customs, but he also adds that the ports of Ireland were frequented by foreign merchants; and this active intercourse with other countries must have told on the manners and customs of the people. Again, it is within this period that the Irish annals place the most

Such was the state of Ireland, A.D. 432, when St. Patrick returned to her shores. He landed at the mouth of the river Vartry in Wicklow, where he was opposed by Nathi, the son of Garchon, the ruling chieftain. This man was the same who had resisted and expelled St. Palladius; so our Saint, seeing that the time was not yet come for the conversion of that part of the country, again embarked, and, following the same course along the coast as that which the enemy had taken when he was carried captive in his boyhood, landed in Meath.

It is in the very beginning of his mission that we find mention of the boy Benignus, who was one of the first of the Irish to join St. Patrick. The Saint had lain down to rest on the banks of Inbher-Nainge,¹ and as he slept the boy drew near, and collecting all the fragrant flowers which he could find, placed them in the old man's bosom. Those who stood by forbade him, lest he should awake the Saint; but he, rising up, foretold the boy's future greatness, and said, "He will be the heir of my kingdom." Another writer, completing the touching record, relates how, when Patrick passed the night in the house of the parents of Benignus, the child would rest nowhere but at his

glorious period of their history, which culminated in the reign of Cormac M'Airt in the third century.

¹ Now the mouth of the river Nanny.

feet, which he tenderly kissed ; and how, when the morning came, and the Saint rose to depart, Benignus again embraced his feet, and with many tears implored permission to follow him ; and that the Saint, blessing him, lifted him up, and from that hour he became the companion of the Apostle in his labours and triumphs. It was because of his gentle and affectionate disposition that the other disciples¹ gave him the name of Benignus, or the "Benign." He became the beloved disciple of the Saint, and was his successor in the see of Armagh.

Leaving Meath, St. Patrick proceeded on his way to the north, until he reached Strangford Lough in Down, where he again landed. Here he was met by Dichu, prince of that province. According to Jocelyn, he had received information of the arrival of the Saint from the court of the chief monarch Laeghaire at Tara. There is a tradition that, some years before, the King's Druids had foretold the Apostle's coming, describing even his vestments and tonsure, declaring that he would destroy idolatry, and that the religion which he should introduce would live for ever in Erin. Laeghaire

¹ Tripartite, p. 381, Acta SS. Mart. xvii. p. 549. The Tripartite, p. 378, gives the names of Auxilius and Iserminus as ordained on the day of the Saint's consecration. The Annals of Ulster, under the year 439, state, "Secundinus, Auxilius, and Iserminus, being bishops, were sent into Ireland to the assistance of Patrick." It may be that the two latter were with the Saint on his arrival, and then returned to the Continent, where they were consecrated bishops.

had therefore given orders that when this intruder landed, he should at once be driven from the shores of Ireland. Accordingly, when Dichu's servants brought the tidings of the landing of one whose appearance seemed to correspond with that of the prophet foretold by the Druids, the chief descended to the coast. At first, either from superstitious dread of the strange visitor, or from disdain of drawing his sword on an old, unarmed man, he set his dog at him; but upon the Saint repeating the words of the Psalm, "Deliver not up to beasts the souls that confess to Thee," the animal stood still, rigid as stone. Then Dichu raised his sword, but found his hand held in the air by the same strange power; and fear brought light and faith to his soul, and he was the first in Ulster who received baptism from Patrick.

The Saint does not appear at this time to have made any stay in Down, but steadfastly to have set his face to the north. One thought urged him on, and seems to have given him no rest, and this was his desire to see Milcho, his old master: it was the man who had most wronged him whom he most desired to save. St. Evin writes that Patrick took gold with him, that by his gifts he might first win the heart of this man, who was a great miser, and thus induce him to listen to the message from heaven. When Milcho heard of the return of

Patrick to Antrim, he appears to have regarded his arrival as the beginning of the fulfilment of that strange dream which had so troubled him. He could not have forgotten the signs of supernatural greatness which had shone forth in the poor boy whom he had so cruelly treated, but it was rage, the repentance of the proud, which filled his heart at the thought of having to yield to one who had been his slave, and in a fit of despair he gathered all his treasures into his house, and setting it on fire, perished in the flames. "Then it was that Patrick proceeded past the northern side of Sliabh-Mis (there is a cross in that place), and he saw the fire afar off. He remained silent for the space of three or four hours, thinking what it could be, and then said, "That is the fire of Milcho's house, after his burning himself in the middle of his house, that he might not believe in God in the end of his life."¹

It was in 433, the year following his arrival in Ireland, that the Apostle was first brought face to face with King Laeghaire and the chief ministers of the religion then established in Ireland. When Easter drew nigh, the Saint, who was then at Slane, resolved to make an attack upon the reigning idolatry by celebrating the great Christian Feast in

¹ Tripartite Life, p. 383.

the chief stronghold of superstition, Magh-Bregh, in Meath, near the royal residence of Tara. This was the time of the year when the pagans kept their great festival called the "Fes of Tara," and the subordinate kings and chieftains, as well as the priests and Druids, met at the court of Laeghaire. We may suppose that St. Patrick foresaw what the result of a victory of the faith would be in such a place and under such circumstances, and how he might here strike at once at the superstition of the whole nation through its spiritual and temporal chiefs. He knew the risk that he ran, but he had come with his life in his hand for the sake of the Irish nation, and does not seem to have known what fear meant.

The accounts given of St. Patrick's contests with the ministers of paganism at Tara are substantially the same in all the old lives of the Saint, though all are not equally minute. We gather from these narratives that while his success must be chiefly attributed to those prodigious supernatural powers which were his credentials as the Ambassador of Christ, there was something in the character of the people which prepared them for the Gospel. The honour they paid to learning was a sort of worship given to that which, in their eyes, was divine in man. They had the simple hearts of children ready to believe, and even in their resistance we

seem to see signs of a real though vague impression that there was a religion purer and more exalted than their own. It may be that the wild and fantastic traditions by which the Irish bards and historians had led the minds of the people back into an interminable past, while they preserved faint recollections of original truth, helped to keep them at the threshold of the invisible world listening for the voice of that unknown God whom, like the Athenians, they worshipped ignorantly.

The events now to be related are very strange and unearthly, very far removed from the common course and order of grace as well as nature. They are a revelation of the contest between the powers of light and darkness on a scale so gigantic, that patience under the recital can only be expected from those who, in the matter of miracles and supernatural events, accept the principle that it is only the first step that can be really said to cost us anything. All writers of St. Patrick's life, like St. Gregory of Nyssa in the case of St. Gregory Thaumaturgus, must take the humble position of apologists; they cannot pretend that the evidence produced is on a par with that of a modern process of canonization. The facts shall be given in almost the precise words of the authentic lives of the Saint, reminding the reader that "the very same scoffing temper which rejects the teaching of the Church,

primitive and modern, concerning Satan's power, as 'pagan,' 'Oriental,' and the like, does actually assail the inspired statements respecting it also. . . . I have no wish to trifle or argue with subtlety upon a very deep subject. This earth had become Satan's kingdom. Our Lord came to end his usurpation, but Satan retreated only inch by inch. The Church of Christ is hallowed ground, but external to it is the kingdom of darkness. Many serious persons think that the evil spirits have even now extraordinary powers in heathen lands, to say nothing of the remains of their ancient power in countries now Christian. There are strange stories told in heathen populations of sorcerers and the like."¹

It was in Holy Week that our Apostle, leaving Slane, set out for Tara, and arriving at a plain in sight of the king's palace, lit the Easter fire. Now, it was one of the laws of the festival which the pagans were then celebrating, that upon this night the fires should be extinguished in every hearth in Erin, and death was the penalty if any one kindled his own before the first fire lit in Tara was seen shining in the darkness of the night. "Patrick knew not this," says St. Evin,² "and if he knew it, it would not prevent him." King Laeghaire saw

¹ J. H. Newman, *Hist. Sketches*, iii. p. 109, 110.

² *Tripartite Life*, p. 385.

the sacred fire, and asked who it was that had thus violated the law. Then the Druids told him that if this fire was not put out before morning, it would never be extinguished, and that the man who had lighted it would be exalted above kings and princes. The king, infuriated at these words, mounted his chariot as the day was breaking, and set out to meet the Saint, at the same time declaring his determination to put him to death. When Laeghaire came in sight of St. Patrick and his companions, he was warned by his priests not to go near the fire, but to send for the Saint, and orders were given that no one should rise up to meet him. The servant of God was not slow in answering the summons of the King, and as he drew near he sang the Psalm, "Some trust in chariots, and some in horses; but we will call on the name of the Lord our God." The royal party had dismounted, and in the words of St. Evin, "They were before him, and the rims of their shields against their chins, and none of them rose up before him, except one man alone, in whom was a figure from God, *i.e.*, Erc, son of Dega. . . . Patrick blessed him, and he believed in God."

In the discussion which then began, the Saint's chief antagonist was Luchru, one of the heathen priests, who had so deluded the people by his

magical arts¹ that they gave him something like divine honours. We are told how he boasted that he had power to ascend to heaven, and how, in the sight of all, he arose from the earth; how the man of God, Patrick, prayed, and how his prayer brought the impostor down, and stretched him lifeless on the earth; how the King and his people, maddened at the sight, rose against the Saint and tried to kill him; how he drew the sword of the Word and intoned the Psalm, "Let God arise, and let His enemies be dispersed, and let them that hate Him fly before His face;" and how God heard His servant, for a terrific tempest swept across the plain, and the swords of the Pagans, in the panic and darkness which ensued, were turned against each

¹ It is remarkable that a strongly-supported tradition records that the first Milesian colony which, passing through Spain, found its way to Ireland, halted in its migration westward for some time in Egypt, in the age of the Pharaohs (*Celtic Ethnology, Home and Foreign Review*, Jan. 1864). That country seems then to have been the hotbed of magic and the black art, and it is therefore conceivable that the descendants of the colonists retained a knowledge of Egyptian necromancy, and remained under its influence until the arrival of St. Patrick. Mr. O'Curry complains of the way in which this part of the traditional history of Ireland has been handled by writers who, on this point, as well as on the Roman mission of St. Patrick, have managed to infuse a sectarian spirit into a purely historical question, to the destruction of fair discussion and candid examination; and he observes of the opponents of this tradition that "not one has ever ventured upon assigning any other origin to the peculiarly-constituted race of the Gaedhel, at least none founded on anything more than mere conjecture, and that of the weakest kind."—MS. Materials, p. 446.

other, so that fifty men were slain. The Queen was won to the faith, and thus ended the first day of Patrick's struggle at Tara. Laeghaire, still unsubdued, dissimulated, and asked the Saint, who readily complied, to come to see him at his palace on the next day: doubtless he still thought, like Simon Magus when witnessing the Apostle's powers, that St. Patrick was no more than a magician, and that in the end he might find some way to subdue him. In the first place, he determined to make another attempt on the Saint's life, so with this design he posted men on all the roads which led from Slane to Tara. The Saint, to whom God had revealed the King's intention, took eight of his clerics and the boy Benignus to bear him company, and having blessed them, set out on his way; and the soldiers of the King saw nothing but eight deer followed by a fawn¹ passing them along the mountain. It was on this journey from Slane to Tara that the Saint composed and sang that beautiful hymn of invocation known as St. Patrick's Lorica or Breastplate, portions of which are still used by the Irish peasantry in their prayers.

¹ In the *Lebar Brecc* (Whitley Stokes Trans., p. 25) the words are "one fawn with a white bird on its shoulder, that is Benén with Patrick's book-satchel on his back." The Saint himself was totally invisible.

ST. PATRICK'S LORICA

I bind to myself this day
 The strong virtue of the Invocation of the Trinity,
 The Faith of the Trinity in Unity,
 The Creator of the Elements.

I bind to myself this day
 The virtue of the Incarnation of Christ and His Baptism,
 The virtue of His Crucifixion with His Burial,
 The virtue of His Resurrection with His Ascension,
 In virtue of His coming to the sentence of the Judgment.

I bind to myself this day
 The virtue in the love of Seraphim,
 In the obedience of Angels,
 In the hope of Resurrection unto reward,
 In the prayers of the Patriarchs,
 In the predictions of Prophets,
 In the preaching of Apostles,
 In the faith of Confessors,
 In the purity of Virgins,
 In the deeds of Righteous Men.

I bind to myself this day
 The strength of Heaven,
 The light of the sun,
 The whiteness of snow,
 The force of fire,
 The flashing of lightning,
 The swiftness of wind,
 The depth of the sea,
 The stability of the earth,
 The hardness of rocks.

I bind to myself this day
 The Power of God to guide me,
 The Might of God to uphold me,
 The Wisdom of God to teach me,
 The Eye of God to watch over me,
 The Ear of God to hear me,
 The Word of God to give me speech,

SAINT PATRICK,

The Hand of God to protect me,
 The Way of God to lie before me,
 The Shield of God to shelter me,
 The Host of God to defend me
 Against the snares of demons,
 Against the temptation of vices,
 Against the lusts of nature,
 Against every man that meditates injury to me,
 Whether far or near,
 Whether alone or with many.

I have invoked all these virtues
 Against every hostile, savage Power,
 Warring upon my Body and my Soul,
 Against the Incantations of False Prophets,
 Against the black laws of Gentilism,
 Against the false laws of Heresy,
 Against the deceits of Idolatry,
 Against the spells of Women, Magicians, and Druids,
 Against every knowledge which blinds the Soul of Man.

Christ protect me this day
 Against poison, against burning,
 Against drowning, against wounding,
 That I may receive abundant reward.

Christ be with me, Christ before me,
 Christ be after me, Christ within me,
 Christ beneath me, Christ above me,
 Christ at my right hand, Christ at my left,
 Christ in the fort,
 Christ in the chariot seat,
 Christ in the poop,
 Christ in the heart of every man who thinks of me,
 Christ in the mouth of every man who speaks to me,
 Christ in every eye that sees me,
 Christ in every ear that hears me.

I bind to myself this day
 The strong faith of the Invocation of the Trinity,
 The Faith of the Trinity in Unity,
 The Creator of the Elements.

Domini est Salus,
 Domini est Salus,
 Christi est Salus,
 Salus tua Domine, sit semper nobiscum.¹

On Easter Sunday, St. Patrick arrived at Tara, and appeared before the astonished King. The Pagans had resumed their festivities; Laeghaire with his court was at table, probably seeking to drown the terrible recollections of the previous day, when, the doors being closed,² the man of God appeared amongst them. The scene of the day before was repeated; the King remained seated, and all the royal party followed his lead, except two, who rose to honour the saint; these were Dubhtach, the royal poet, and a tender youth named Fiacc,—the name of the latter, as saint and poet, has become familiar in the Irish Church. The remaining seated seems to have been, in the customs of the country, the form of protest against an unwelcome guest.

Patrick was then invited to eat, and was offered a goblet of poisoned ale. The Saint blessed the goblet, and overturning it, the poison alone fell out in the sight of all. When the party had arisen from table they adjourned to a plain outside Tara, and a great multitude went with them. Here the

¹ De Vere, "Legends of St. Patrick."

² The words in the Tripartite are "*Januis clausis ut Christus in cennaculum*" (*sic*), "because Patrick meditated," p. 387.

Druid Luchat Mael challenged the Saint to work wonders before the multitude : in the contest which followed, God allowed the magician to exercise strange and preternatural powers, which turned in the end to his own confusion. By his spells and incantations he brought snow upon the ground up to the men's girdles, and involved the whole plain in darkness, but he could neither remove the snow nor dispel the darkness, both of which disappeared at the prayer of Patrick. The King proposed that they should both throw their books into the water, and that whosoever books came out dry, should be declared worthy of adoration. Patrick consented, but the Druid refused, saying that the waters were Patrick's God, for he had heard that it was through water that the Saint baptized. At this the King urged them to try their books by fire, but the magician again objected, and said that this Christian, in alternate years, venerated either a god of fire or one of water. The Saint, who at first had shown an unwillingness to tempt God by demanding miracles, saying, "I do not wish to go against the will of God," was now inspired to make a proposal which reveals at the same time the boldness of his own immeasurable faith, and the power which he had of imparting it to others. He told his opponents that he adored not any of the elements, but the Maker of all, and as an evidence

that his God was their Lord, he proposed that the boy Benignus, whom he loved, should be placed in a house apart with the magician, that this house should be made one-half of dry faggots, the other of green wood; that Benignus should wear the Druid's tunic, and he put on the Saint's *casula*; that then the house should be set on fire, leaving it to God to defend His own. The Druid at once accepted an ordeal in which all the chances were on his side; and when the Pagan priest and the Christian boy had entered the house, the door was fastened on the outside, and fire applied. As Patrick prayed, he guided the fierce element, which consumed the Druid, and the wet green wood around him, leaving the *casula* of the Saint untouched, while it passed through the dry wood, and, surrounding Benignus, only burnt the Druid's tunic which he wore. When the Christian boy came forth from the fires, while the smoke of the magician's torments ascended to heaven, it seemed as if the cause was finished; but it was not so. The King, like some wild beast, irritated rather than humbled, seems to have lost his reason in his rage. The concluding scene of this memorable day is thus given in the Bollandists from Jocelyn:—
“The heart of King Laeghaire was hardened against the commands of God like that of Pharaoh in the presence of Moses, for in spite of all these miracles

he did not fear to arouse the wrath of the Most High God, or to irritate His servant Patrick." We are told how he and his followers prepared to make another attack on the life of the Saint. "But the Omnipotent God, the supreme protector and defender of His own, armed the zeal of the creature against these senseless idolaters. For the earth opened in obedience to its avenging Lord, and engulfed them, with many of their supporters, from amongst the people of Teamhrach; as it is written, Hell opened its mouth, and they were taken down, as it were, in life. The survivors, and all that dwelt in that land, beholding and understanding these things, being aghast and stricken with a great fear, believed in Christ, and came without delay to receive baptism, lest a like punishment should fall upon themselves. The terrified King, falling at the feet of St. Patrick, implored his mercy, and promised obedience for the future to all his commands. The compassionate father mercifully forgave all the wrongs done to himself; but although he spent a long time in teaching him the faith of the Lord Jesus, he never could bring him to baptism. So the Saint dismissed him, that, using his own free will, he might go according to the inventions of his own heart, lest he should seem to compel him to receive the faith. Nevertheless, by an interior revelation he openly declared

to him the things which were coming upon himself and his descendants. 'Because,' said he, 'you have ever resisted my teaching, continuing to cause me sorrow beyond all measure, scorning the faith of the Creator of all things, thou art a son of death, and with, yea, more than, your adherents, you deserve even now to begin your eternal punishment; but as you have come to me humbly asking forgiveness, and, like the King Achab, you have humbled yourself before my God, the Lord will not bring upon you at once the evil things you have merited, but none of your seed after you shall ascend your throne; your younger brother shall believe in my God, and his seed shall rule for ages.' The queen believed in Christ, and receiving baptism and the blessing of Patrick, made a holy death in the Lord. Then Patrick with his followers passed through the whole country baptizing the believers in the name of the Holy Trinity, and God was his helper, and confirmed the word by the signs which followed."¹

The proud spirit of Laeghaire appears to have been completely subdued, and although there is little doubt that he remained "a son of death" and a Pagan until he died, A.D. 458, we do not hear of his making any attempt to oppose St. Patrick during this period: indeed, it is said that,

¹ Acta SS. Mart., xvii. p. 550.

from motives of political expediency, he made a hypocritical profession of Christianity, which, as he must have clearly perceived, was rapidly becoming the dominant creed of the nation. The fact that, as early as 438, the Pagan laws of Ireland were modified by the Saint as they are now found in the *Senchus Mor*, or *Cain Patraic*, is a convincing proof of his rapid and complete success.¹

The manner of Laeghaire's² burial, as related in the *Leabhar na Huidhre*, was in keeping with his life. "The body of Laeghaire was afterwards brought from the South, and interred with his arms of valour, in the south-east of the external rampart of the Royal Rath-Laeghaire at Temur (Tara), with his face turned southward upon the Lagenians, as it were, fighting with them; for he was the enemy of the Lagenians (men of Leinster) in his lifetime."³

¹ See Appendix F.

² Irish names are given indiscriminately in the Celtic or Latin form, according to the sources from which they have been derived. Laeghaire, pronounced *Leary*, is written Laeghairé, Læghaire, and Laoghaire by O'Curry, Hennessy, and Todd respectively.

³ Petrie, *Antiq. Tara*, p. 170.

CHAPTER IV.

THE RELIGION OF THE ANCIENT IRISH—WORSHIP OF THE SUN—ST. PATRICK IN CONNAUGHT—THE DAUGHTERS OF THE KING CONVERTED—THE SAINT'S PRAYER ON CROAGH PATRICK.

ST. PATRICK'S success at Tara seems to have laid the country at his feet. In attacking Paganism in its stronghold, and breaking its power, he appears to have won for himself a sort of sovereignty over Ireland, and from this time he met with little or no resistance. It is no exaggeration to say that the picture given of him in all the ancient records is that of a conqueror subduing a nation in one battle. When we remember his prodigious supernatural powers, and that he came to a people to whom everything about him was new and strange, we are not surprised at the impersonal style of the old lives of the Saint. It seems as if a profusion of tremendous miracles hid the personal character of the Saint from his contemporaries. If his life had been more like that of other men, checkered by reverses and disappointments, and if the proportions of his supernatural character had

been less colossal, we should probably know more about him ; but evidently, in the eyes of his followers, he was more like some being from another world mingling in human affairs, than a mortal man subject to the vicissitudes of life ; so they chronicled his deeds without attempting to measure the man, looking at him in some such way as we may fancy men will regard Elias, the precursor of the second Advent, when he visits the earth again.

We shall follow the chronological division of the Saint's life given in the Tripartite. The first of the three parts into which this life is divided contains all the events already recorded ; the second describes his journey into Connaught, and his work in that province, embracing a period of seven years ; and the third gives us his return by Ulster, north and east, and his mission in Leinster and Munster, terminating with his last journey back to Ulster, and death at Armagh.

From Tara St. Patrick went to Telltown, in Meath, where he found Cairbre and Conall, two of the sons of Nial of the Nine Hostages, and brothers of the reigning King Laeghaire. Conall, receiving the Saint joyfully, was baptized, and at his desire St. Patrick founded the Church at Donagh-Patrick ; but Cairbre, like the king, remained obstinate in his unbelief.

Passing through the western part of the territory of Meath, and preaching as he went, the Saint arrived at "Magh-Slecht" (Plain of Adoration, or Genuflexions), in the modern county of Cavan, which appears to have been the chief seat of idolatry,¹ properly so called. O'Curry thus translates the account of St. Patrick's visit given in the Tripartite Life:—"Patrick after that went over the water to Magh-Slecht, where stood the chief idol of Erin—*i.e.*, 'Cenn Cruaich'—ornamented with gold and with silver, and twelve other idols ornamented with brass around him. When Patrick saw the idol from the water, which is named Gut-hard—[loud voice]—(*i.e.*, he elevated his voice); and when he approached near the idol, he raised his arm to lay the staff of Jesus on him, and it did not reach him, he bent back from the attempt upon his right side, for it was to the south his face was, and the mark of the staff lives in his left side still, although the staff did not leave Patrick's

¹ It is hard to determine the extent of the worship of idols in Ireland at this time, but it does not appear to have been the prevalent superstition; no mention is made of it in the contest with the Druids at Tara. St. Patrick alludes to it once in the Confession, but it is the worship of the sun which he specially attacks. Describing the resurrection, "We shall rise one day in the brightness of the sun—that is, in the glory of Christ Jesus our Redeemer." He continues, "But, on the other hand, that visible sun, which rises daily for our sakes at His command, shall never reign, neither shall its splendour last; moreover, all those unhappy ones who adore it shall end miserably in tortures."

hand; and the earth swallowed the other twelve idols to their heads; and they are in that condition in commemoration of the miracle; and he called upon all the people, 'Cum rege, Laeghaire'—they it was that adored the idol; and all the people saw him (*i.e.*, the demon), and they dreaded their dying if Patrick had not sent him to hell."¹

It is very interesting to follow the great Irish scholar and critic just mentioned as he identifies the very spot where the miracle took place, having found in the annals of Loch Ce an account of the battle of Magh-Slecht, which took place in 1256. He says, "Magh-Slecht (that is, the Plain of Adoration or Genuflexions), the situation and bearing of which are so minutely laid down here, was no other than the same plain of 'Magh-Slecht,' in which stood Crom Crauch [called 'Cean Crauch' in the Tripartite Life], the great idol of Milesian pagan worship, the Delphos of our Gadelian ancestors from the time of their coming into Erin, until the destruction of the idol by St. Patrick, in the early part of his apostleship among them. The precise situation of this historical locality has not been hitherto authoritatively ascertained by any of our antiquarian investigators; but it is pretty clear that if any man fairly acquainted with our ancient native documents, and practised in the examination

¹ MS. Materials, Appendix, p. 539.

of the ruined monuments of antiquity so thickly scattered over the face of our country—if, I say, such a man, with this article in his hand and an extract from the life of St. Patrick, should go to any of the points here described in the route of the belligerent forces, he will have but little difficulty in reaching the actual scene of the battle, and will then stand, with certainty, in the veritable Magh-Slecht; nay, even may, perhaps, discover the identical Crom Cruach himself, with his twelve buried satellites, where they fell, and were interred when struck down by St. Patrick with his crozier, the *Bachall Josa*, or Sacred Staff of Jesus.”¹

Before leaving Cavan, St. Patrick founded a church on the spot where he had overthrown the idols; then, turning his face westward, he passed over the Shannon into Connaught, near the present Clonmacnoise, and here we find him again in relations with members of the reigning royal family. Ethne and Feidelm, the two daughters of King

¹ MS. Materials, p. 103. This crozier, or “*baculus*” as it was called in the ecclesiastical language of the time, was said to have been given to the Saint by our Lord Himself. It is mentioned by St. Bernard, in his *Life of St. Malachy*, Archbishop of Armagh, as being in his time, one of the chief insignia of that see. It was plated with gold, and adorned with precious stones, on account of the tradition that the Lord Himself had fashioned it, and held it in His own hands. So great was the veneration in which it was held, that whoever possessed it was foolishly regarded by the people as the true Bishop.—*Vita S. Malachiaë*, c. xii.

Laeghaire, were living at Cruachan, the palace of the kings of Connaught, which lay near the place now occupied by the town of Roscommon; and two of the king's Druids, Mael and Caplait, were appointed to guard and educate the royal maidens. We must here give in full the account, from the Tripartite Life, of the princesses' meeting with the Saint; it is one of the most curious and interesting revelations which we possess of the religious ideas of the time. "Patrick went afterwards to the fountain—*i.e.*, Clibech—on the slopes of Cruachan at sunrise. The clerics sat down at the fountain. Laeghaire M'Neill's two daughters, Ethne the Fair and Feidelm the Red, went early to the fountain to wash their hands, as they were wont to do, when they found the synod of clerics at the well, with white garments, and their books before them. They wondered at the appearance of the clerics, and imagined they were *fir-sidhe*, or phantoms. They questioned Patrick, 'Whence are you, and whither (*sic*) have you come? Is it from the *sidhe*? Are you gods?' Patrick said to them, 'It would be better for you to believe in God than to ask regarding our race.' The elder daughter said, 'Who is your God, and in what place is He—in heaven or in earth? Is it under the earth, or on the earth, or in the seas, or in streams, or in hills, or in valleys? Has He sons and daughters? Has

He gold and silver? Is there a profusion of every good in His kingdom. Tell us plainly how we shall see Him, and how He is to be loved, and how He is to be found. Is He young or old, or is He ever-living? Is He beautiful, or have many fostered His son, or is His daughter handsome, and dear to men of the world?' St. Patrick, full of the Holy Spirit, responded: 'Our God is the God of all, the God of heaven and earth, the God of the seas and the rivers, the God of the sun and moon, and of all the other planets; the God of the high hills and low valleys; God over heaven, in heaven, and under heaven; and He has a mansion—*i.e.*, heaven—and the earth, and the sea, and all things that are in them. He inspireth all things; He quickeneth all things; He enkindleth all things; He giveth light to the sun and to the moon. He created fountains in the dry land, and placed dry islands in the sea, and stars to minister to the greater lights. He hath a Son co-eternal and co-equal with Himself; and the Son is not younger than the Father, nor is the Father older than the Son. And the Holy Ghost breatheth in them; and the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost are not divided. I desire, moreover, to unite you to the Son of the heavenly King, for ye are daughters of an earthly king.' And the daughters said, as if with one mouth and heart, 'How shall

we come to believe in that King? Teach us duly that we may see the Lord face to face—teach us and we will do as you will say to us.’ And Patrick said, ‘Do you believe that through baptism the sin of your mother and of your father shall be put away from you?’ They answered, ‘We believe.’ ‘Do you believe in repentance after sin?’ ‘Yes.’ And they were baptized, and Patrick blessed a white veil upon their heads, and they desired to see Christ face to face. And Patrick said to them, ‘You cannot see Christ except that you first taste death, and unless you receive the body of Christ and His blood.’ And the daughters replied, saying, ‘Give us the communion, that we may be able to see the Propheted One.’ And they after this received the communion, and fell asleep in death, and Patrick placed them under one covering, and in one bed [grave], and their friends made great lamentation over them.”¹

This narrative helps us to see one side of the Saint’s character, which his biographers do not often dwell upon. Saints, as well as other people, are very much at the mercy of those who write their lives. Even when doing their best to give a true picture, biographers are led to identify themselves with their hero, and instinctively to select the incidents which support their own conception.

¹ Tripartite Life, p. 407.

The writers of those lives of our Saint which have come down to us, evidently chose to dwell on the stern and awful side of his character, as there is a special interest attached to those parts of his life which reveal the tenderness of his heart. We catch sight of it in the Saint's relations with the boy Benignus, and again in his interview with the two princesses. The fearless and beautiful simplicity of the royal maidens, and their complete trust in the words of the stranger, are evidence that our Lord had given to His servant that same gift of opening the heart which He Himself manifested by the well of Sichar, and that mysterious attractiveness which comes from His own presence in the hearts of His saints.

Leaving Roscommon, St. Patrick went up to Sligo, baptizing many, and founding churches for his converts ; then descending, he passed westward through Mayo, until he reached that high mountain, now bearing his name, which looks to the north on Clew Bay, and to the west over the Atlantic. It was on Shrove Saturday that he ascended Croagh Patrick ; a little more than a year had passed since his landing in Ireland, and already he had carried the gospel from the Eastern to the Western Sea. On Croagh Patrick, sacred for ever to his children, the Saint encountered an Adversary, and had to struggle with One compared

to whom all his former opponents were weak and insignificant. God Himself resisted His creature, whose demands seemed to entrench on His own sovereignty. It would be hard to find in the records of man's dealings with God anything more sublime than the picture given us of St. Patrick, alone on the mountain side, wrestling in prayer with his Creator, and gaining all that he asked for, because he had that courage which does violence to Heaven. The circumstances and the very words of this contest have been minutely recorded.

An angel came and told him that God would not grant his demands, because they were so great. Then the Saint answered that, if that was God's decision, his own was fixed not to leave that mountain until he died, or all his prayers were granted. For forty days and nights no food or drink passed his lips, while his heart was wrung out before the throne of God, and his tears fell so fast that they drenched his monastic cowl. At the end of this time the demons gathered round him in the form of black birds, and in such numbers that he could see neither heaven nor earth. Then the angel returned and cleansed his cowl; and the demons having fled, white birds came about the mountain, who sang sweet melodies for him. The vast Atlantic lay before them, and the angel offered him as many souls as would cover the wide expanse as

far as eye could reach ; but the Saint was not satisfied. His eyes, he said, could not reach far over the sea ; he demanded, as well, a multitude vast enough to cover the land that lay between him and the sea. The angel yielded, and then bade him leave that mountain from which he laid siege to heaven. But Patrick's demands increasing with his success, as he saw God's justice yielding to His mercy, he said, " I shall not depart, because I have been tormented, until I am recompensed." He asked for seven souls from hell every Thursday, and twelve on Saturday ; that the barbarians should not hold Erin by consent or force while he was in heaven ; that no one repeating his hymn from the words, " Christ with Me," uttering that sacred name, and doing penance in Erin, should go to hell, and that on the Day of Judgment he should deliver seven souls from hell for every hair¹ on his *casula*. All these things were granted, and again the angel told him to leave the mountain ; but the

¹ These words are clearly to be taken in the sense of those of David, " Thou hast brought forth, O Lord, my soul from hell," as meaning liberation from sin that merits hell. We have here a very remarkable incidental confirmation of St. Patrick's connection with St. Martin of Tours. Sulpicius Severus, in his life of the latter Saint, relates that his disciples wore a habit made of camel's hair (" Plerique camelorum setis vestiuntur ; mollior ibi habitus pro crimine erat," Migne Patrol., t. xx. 166), so we may suppose that St. Patrick still used the same description of monastic habit as that with which he had been invested by St. Martin.

Saint said, "I will not depart, because I have been tormented, until I am gratified;" and then he claimed from God that on the day that the twelve royal seats shall be "on the mount, and when the four rivers of fire shall be about the mount, and when the three peoples shall be there—viz., the people of heaven, the people of earth, and the people of hell—I myself shall be judge over the men of Erin on that day." The angel said this thing could not be obtained from the Lord; then Patrick said, "Unless this is obtained from Him, I will not consent to leave this Cruachan from this day for ever; and even after my death there shall be a caretaker for me there." The angel went to heaven; Patrick went to his offering. The angel came in the evening. "How now?" asked Patrick. "Thus," answered the angel, "all creatures, visible and invisible, including the twelve Apostles, entreated, and they have obtained." . . . "Strike thy bell," said the angel; "thou art commanded from Heaven to fall on thy knees, that it may be a blessing to the people of all Erin, both living and dead." "A blessing on the bountiful King that gave," said Patrick; "the cruachan shall be left."¹ It was on

¹ Tripartite, p. 415. Mr. Hennessy's translation of St. Patrick's petitions on Croagh Patrick has been followed, with one exception, where "barbarians" is substituted for "Saxons," which is Father Colgan's version. The Saxons had probably appeared off the coast of Ireland before St. Patrick's time, and the Annals of Ulster record

Holy Thursday, according to Jocelyn, that the Saint came forth from his solitude and returned to his people.

their first incursion in the year following St. Patrick's mission to Connaught (A.D. 434, *Prima preda Saxonum in Hibernia*). We may suppose, therefore, that the words "Saxon" and "barbarian" or "heathen," were used indiscriminately. Father Colgan, in a note (*Trias Thaum.*, p. 179), appears to interpret the words in a spiritual sense, and adds, "Hitherto we have witnessed their fulfilment, and so, we may piously believe, they will be for ever."

CHAPTER V.

*ST. PATRICK IN MUNSTER—BAPTISM OF ÆNGUS AT CASHEL—
MARTYRDOM OF ST. ODRAN—FOUNDATION OF ARMAGH
CATHEDRAL—THE RAID OF COROTICUS—ST. PATRICK'S
EPISTLE—EXCOMMUNICATION AND PUNISHMENT OF THE
MURDERER.*

THE Tripartite Life tells us that St. Patrick went three times across the Shannon into the land of Connaught, and that he spent seven years preaching in that province, at the end of which time he gave its people his blessing, and bade them farewell.¹ As those years were not consecutive, it may be that, in the intervals, the Saint returned to watch over his first converts in Ulster and Leinster. The record of our Saint's labours in Connaught occupies twenty-five quarto pages of Mr. Hennessy's translation of the above-mentioned life. It gives us an account of his journeys, and the churches he founded in Roscommon, Connemara, Mayo, Sligo, and Leitrim, and this so minutely that the reader is perplexed, and finds it hard to get a clear sight of the Saint himself amidst a

¹ Tripartite, p. 432.

maze of references.¹ In like manner we can trace the Saint's course when, leaving Connaught, he went up to the north into Tyrone and Donegal; then, retracing his steps to Antrim, he descended to the south, passing through Louth, Kildare, Queen's County, and Ossory, until he arrived at Cashel in Munster. The writer does not mention the length of time devoted by St. Patrick to evangelising these counties, but as the life in this part is little more than a diary of the Saint's actions, if we measure the time by the number of events recorded, taking the seven years in Connaught as the basis of our calculation, we must conclude that several years elapsed before he reached Munster. The singular accuracy of the writer in naming places and persons, although wearisome, is valuable, as bearing witness to the veracity of the life. A great part of the record of our Saint's apostolate reads like an account of an ordinary bishop's visitation of his diocese. It is because he met with so little opposition that we miss in his life those struggles and alternations of fortune which make up the lives of other missionaries, and enable writers to give a distinct picture of their labours. St. Patrick in his work,

¹ The learned translator in his notes has identified more than two hundred of the places consecrated by St. Patrick's presence in the course of his apostolate in Ireland.

as we have before observed of his personal character, is well-nigh lost in the blaze of his own glory : with the exception of the stern and obdurate Laeghaire, who so soon disappears from the scene, there is no formidable opponent to bring out the Saint's greatness, no background to the picture, which is consequently indistinct from its very brightness. For the same reason, there is little to say about the conversion of Ireland—less perhaps than of that of any other country. It was like a campaign where all the victories are on one side. In Munster, miraculous signs and wonders had prepared the minds of the people for the coming of the man of God. In the South, the provincial king resided at "Cashel of the Kings," as it was then called, and thither St. Patrick directed his steps ; for it seems to have been his custom to seek out the rulers of the provinces which he entered, knowing that if he could win them over the people would more easily follow. Ængus, the prince, whom the Saint found there, appears at this time to have been acting for his father, whom he ultimately succeeded on the throne. It is related that when the prince arose on the morning of the day of the Saint's arrival at Cashel, he found all the idols in the fort prostrate on the ground, and that, influenced, doubtless, by this sign from heaven, he received Patrick and his followers joyfully. While

the Saint preached and prepared the people for baptism, Ængus stood beside him, and the sharp point of the sacred crozier, or "staff of Jesus," upon which the Saint was supporting himself, resting on the prince's foot, pierced it; but Ængus gave no sign of pain, and when the blood flowing on the ground revealed the torture endured by the patient and heroic listener, St. Patrick asked him why he had been silent, to which the prince replied that he had supposed he was only submitting to one of the ordinances of the faith.

When we compare the account given by St. Evin of the Apostle's work in Munster with the earlier parts of the life, we are struck by the signs of that rapidly-increasing power which was so soon to make St. Patrick master of the country. We are told how the men of North Munster, to the north of Limerick, came in their boats, *a very fleet*, as St. Evin describes it: they found the Saint at Terry-Glass, in Ormond, on the shores of Lough Derg, and were baptized there. Then St. Patrick ascended a hill at Finnine, north-west of Domnach-Mor, which commanded the view to the north of Limerick, and gave his blessing to the men of North Munster, and also to the islands and the country north and west. From St. Evin's account, our Saint does not appear at this time to have entered Clare or Kerry,¹ but

¹ The writer is indebted to Mr. Hennessy for the following facts

before he retraced his steps he prophesied of the saints who were to follow him, and carry on his work; of St. Senanus, "The green island in the West," said Patrick, "in the mouth of the sea; the lamp of the people of God shall come unto it, who will be the head of counsel to this district—*i.e.*, Senan of Innis-Cathaigh¹—six score years from this." He also foretold the birth of St. Brendan, of the race of Hua-Alta, one of the greatest of the Irish monastic founders in the century after St. Patrick.

St. Evin gives a graphic account of the enthusiastic devotion manifested towards our Saint by the people of Munster. "After that Patrick had founded cells and churches in Munster, and had

in support of St. Evin's statement:—"The tradition so widely known and so carefully handed down, that the churches founded by St. Patrick in the course of his itineraries were afterwards distinguished by the name *Domnach-Mor* (*Domínica magna*), receives some confirmation from the fact that, whereas there are churches called Donaghmore in the neighbouring counties of Cork, Limerick, and Tipperary, there is no place bearing the name in Clare or Kerry. Even at the present day, Irish-speaking people are often heard to say to persons situated to the west of them, '*Bennaigim uaim siar sibh mar adubairt Naem Patraic las na Ciarraidib*' ('I bless you all to the West, as St. Patrick said to the Kerry men'). It is not improbable, however, that this tradition, having its origin in St. Evin's words, refers only to St. Patrick's *first* journey to the South. Clare and Kerry may have been converted, and their churches founded by St. Patrick's deputies, and visited later by the Saint during the long period which elapsed before his death.

¹ Scattery Island, at the mouth of the Shannon.

ordained persons of every grade, and healed all sick persons, and resuscitated the dead, he bade them farewell, and left his blessing with them." When the people heard that the Saint had left them, they rose up like one man and followed him, overtaking him at Brosna,¹ in King's County, and filling the air with shouts of joy at seeing him again. St. Patrick blessed them once more, and continued his journey.

It is at this time, when the Saint was passing through Leinster on his way to the north, that we find the record of the martyrdom of St. Odran, the only martyr of the Irish Church in St. Patrick's time. An obstinate Pagan, named Foilge Berrad, had long nourished an intense hatred against St. Patrick, in consequence of the destruction of the chief idol of Erin, Crom Craugh, in the Plain of Adoration. "For it was this," says St. Evin, "that was a god to Foilge."² He had declared his intention of assassinating St. Patrick, but St. Evin adds that, for some reason or other, St. Patrick's people did not inform him of this; perhaps experience had taught them that it was useless to warn their master against such dangers. We gather from St. Evin's narrative that St. Patrick sometimes

¹ Tripartite, p. 476. St. Evin tells us that the name Brosnacha, now Brosna—from the Irish word *brosnugad*, excitement—was given to this place in memory of the event.

Ibid., p. 477.

travelled alone with Odran, passing swiftly through the country in one of the light chariots then used in Ireland, and that one day, when the faithful servant knew that they were likely to fall in with Foilge Berrad, he asked St. Patrick to change places with him, and take the reins; the Saint consented, and by his stratagem Odran won the crown of martyrdom, falling beneath the blow intended for St. Patrick.¹

The foundation of the church and see of Armagh is the next great event commemorated in St. Patrick's life, and in the course of St. Evin's narrative it comes almost immediately after St. Patrick's return from Munster. The territory of Macha, or Armagh, which was held at this time by a certain man named Daire, whom St. Evin styles a "prosperous and venerable person," seems to have been but a small one; at one time, however, it had been a place of great importance, owing to the neighbourhood of the fortress of Emania, the residence of the kings of Ulster. The immense rath, or mound, with its deep circular entrenchments, is still to be seen, and in the middle of the seventeenth

¹ Father Colgan (*Trias. Thaum.*, Notes to Fourth Life), following Ferrar's Catalogue, fixes the Feast of St. Odran, martyr, and disciple of St. Patrick, on the 26th of October. It is remarkable that the Proto-martyrs of Ireland and England, SS. Odran and Alban, both met death in the same way, each offering his own life to save that of a priest.

century Colgan describes Emania,¹ “with its broad trenches, and the rugged and towering ruins of its walls,” as still retaining signs of its former splendour. At first Daire refused to give the Saint the land he had chosen, which was on a hill to the north of the city, but he allowed him to build a church lower down, where, according to St. Evin, the Saint remained a long time. Daire had soon reason to regret his refusal; he was seized with sickness, which seemed unto death; Patrick blessed water, and sent it to him, and by its miraculous power the sickness departed. Daire then sent the Saint a thank-offering in the shape of a brazen caldron, on receiving which he merely said, “Deo gratias.” On the return of the messengers, Daire asked them what St. Patrick had said; and, in their ignorance of the language, they replied, that he had only said one word, *gratzicum*. Daire was indignant at the Saint’s indifference to his gift, and ordered his servants to bring it back; upon which Patrick again repeated “Deo gratias.” When Daire heard this he wondered much, and said, “This is a good word with them; *gratzicum* when giving it to him, and *gratzicum* when taking it away from him;”² and he and his wife, touched by the Saint’s patience, went to him and gave him back their gift, adding the grant of the hill which

¹ Trias. Thaum., p. 6.

² Tripartite, p. 484.

before they had refused. The Book of Armagh thus completes the narrative: "And they went forth together, both St. Patrick and Daire, to view the admirable and well-pleasing gift; and they ascended the height, and found a roe and a little fawn with her lying on the spot where the altar of the northern church in Ardmacha now stands. And St. Patrick's companions wanted to catch the fawn and kill it, but the Saint objected, and would not permit them; nay, he even took up the fawn himself, and carried it on his shoulders, and the roe followed him like a pet lamb until he laid down the fawn on another eminence at the north side of Armagh, where, according to the statements of those who are familiar with the ground, miraculous attestations are to be witnessed to this day."¹ It is the opinion of those learned in the topography of Armagh, that the hill on which the new Cathedral of Armagh is now built is the very identical spot, to which, like the Good Shepherd, St. Patrick carried the fawn,—a touching image of that Church of Ireland which for ages he has loved so tenderly, and borne in his paternal arms.

The founding of the church and see of Armagh was evidently regarded by St. Evin as the crowning event in the missionary career of the Apostle of Ireland, and with it therefore, following this writer,

¹ Book of Armagh. Reeves, *Ancient Churches of Armagh*, p. 7.

we shall in this chapter conclude the chronological part of our narrative, only reserving the history of St. Patrick's death for the conclusion of the book ; but before entering upon this subject of the virtues and miracles of St. Patrick, we must give an account of that memorable event which is recorded in St. Patrick's epistle to Coroticus. It seems from internal evidence that the circumstances which led the Saint to write this letter took place many years after his arrival in Ireland, for he tells us that he had sent a previous letter to Coroticus by a priest whom he himself had taught from his infancy, unless, indeed, we suppose that he had been under our Saint's care before the mission to Ireland in 432.

We have the narrative in the Saint's own words. It may be that news had crossed the Channel of the change which had come over the warlike and adventurous Irish-Scots, once the terror of their neighbours on the adjacent coast of Britain, but who had now been subjugated by the Vicar of the Prince of Peace, and taught to sing the Psalms of David in place of their war-songs, and that Coroticus, or Caradoc, called in the Tripartite King of Britain, and who is generally supposed to have been a Welsh prince whose name is found in the records of that country in the fifth century, thought this a good opportunity for plunder, as well as for

wiping out old scores. On the day following a great religious ceremony, when a multitude of the people had been baptized, and were still clothed in white, with the "chrism of the Neophytes," in St. Patrick's words, "still flaming on their brows," they were set upon by Caradoc and his band, who slew some and carried others into captivity. St. Patrick was overwhelmed with anguish of heart when the news of this outrage reached him, for his own experience enabled him to enter into the sorrows of his children. Moreover, the fact that the sacrilegious Caradoc was a Christian,¹ made the crime all the more horrible. He first sent a priest, attended by several clerics, with a letter to Caradoc; this letter has not been preserved, but from the Saint's account it is clear that it was written in a gentle spirit, in the hope of bringing the sinner to repentance, and that it was after the Saint's messengers had been rejected with scorn that he wrote the epistle we still possess, which may be more appropriately termed a pastoral letter, in which he denounces and excommunicates the proud and obdurate prince.

The Saint begins by announcing his mission and authority, continuing in a strain of mingled anger

¹ The Bollandists (*Acta S.S.*, Mart. xviii., p. 538) agree with Tillemont (*Hist. Eccl.*, t. xvi., p. 462) in the opinion that Caradoc was, "at least in name," a Christian, and that he came from Wales.

and sorrow, which gives us a vivid picture of that heart which, like St. Paul's, was so vehement in its tenderness. "I Patrick, an unlearned sinner, for all that have been constituted Bishop in Ireland, and from God I have received that which I am. I dwell amongst strangers as a proselyte and a fugitive for the love of God. He is my witness that it is so. It is not my wish to utter such hard and stern words; but I am urged by zeal for God and the truth of Christ, who has raised me up for the love of my neighbours and children, for whom I have abandoned my country and parents, and would give even my soul unto death if I were worthy." Then he declares that he had written the letter with his own hand to Coroticus and his soldiers. "I do not say to my fellow-citizens, nor to the fellow-citizens of the pious Romans, but to those who dwell with demons, because of their evil and hostile deeds. . . . Wherefore be it known to every man who fears God, that they are separated from me, and from Christ my God, for whom I am Ambassador." After this he breaks out into passionate lamentations. "What shall I do, O Lord? Lo! Thy sheep are torn to pieces around me. . . . Ravening wolves have devoured the flock of Christ, which, with the greatest rapidity, was wonderfully multiplying in Ireland. I cannot number the sons of the Irish and the daughters of princes who are

monks and virgins of Christ. . . . It is the custom of the Christians of Rome and Gaul to send holy men, fitted for the office, with much gold, to the Franks¹ and the other heathen nations, to redeem those captives who are Christians. You slay them, and sell them to strange nations, who know not God. You deliver the members of Christ, as it were, into a den of ill-fame. What hope in God have you, or he who agrees with you, or encourages you? God will judge him. I know not what I can say, or how I can continue to speak of those departed children of God, struck down by the sword, cruel above all measure. For it is written, 'Weep with them that weep,' and again, 'If one member suffers anything, all the other members suffer with it.' Therefore the Church weeps and mourns her sons and daughters, as yet spared by the sword, but reserved and exiled into distant countries where sin abounds and is openly shameless; there free-born Christians are sold, and made the slaves especially of those most wicked, detestable, and apostate² Picts.

"Therefore I cry out with grief and sorrow. O beautiful and most beloved brethren and children,

¹ The conversion of the Franks to Christianity dates from the year 496, when their King Clovis was baptized by St. Remigius.

² Lanigan remarks that the term *apostate* could only be used of the Southern Picts, who had been converted by St. Ninian, and relapsed into idolatry. The Northern Picts were brought into the

whom I have begotten in Christ in such multitudes that I cannot number you, what shall I do for you ?”¹

Caradoc was insensible to the Saint's threats and prayers, and the tradition retained in the old lives records that a fate like to that of the King of Babylon fell upon him, and that on a certain day, as he stood in the midst of his attendants, suddenly, in the sight of all, he took the shape of a wolf, and disappeared in the distance; and Jocelyn adds, “This fact no one can fairly discredit who reads the narrative of the wife of Lot turned into a rock, and that of King Nabuchodonosor.”²

Church by St. Columcille in the century after St. Patrick's death. The Picts, united with the pagan Scots from Argyleshire, were ravaging England in St. Patrick's time, and therefore Caradoc had a market close at hand for the sale of his captives.

¹ Acta SS. Mart., xvii. p. 539.

² Ibid., 570.

CHAPTER VI.

*OF ST. PATRICK'S FAITH, AND HOW HE IMPARTED IT TO
OTHER MEN.*

OUR Lord's promise that "All things whatsoever you ask when you pray, believe that you shall receive, and it shall come unto you," was wonderfully fulfilled in the Blessed Patrick. If we may estimate his faith by his works, we shall be inclined to consider it to have been his predominant virtue. Faith belongs to this world; it has no place in heaven. Consequently, it seems to have a special reward and glory in time, and it appears to be almost an unvarying law in God's government of the world that spiritual power on earth is attributed to faith. We have seen the Saint's enduring faith in his prayer on Croag Patrick, in that trial of strength with God which has been called "The striving of St. Patrick," for, like Jacob, he wrestled with God, and in the end obtained what he desired. It is this spirit of superhuman faith revealed in his writings which has led so cautious a writer as Tillemont to compare him with the inspired Pro-

phets and Apostles, and especially with St. Paul. The extracts from the Saint's Confession in the beginning of this life give us a picture of enduring faith in the soul of a boy more wonderful than miracles. He tells us how, alone upon the mountain-side, in the silence of the night, the faith and the fear of God grew within him, and how, without priest or sacrament, during those six years of slavery his soul was in constant union with God. His faith was tried, and its enduring patience manifested in a probation of more than thirty years, during which he awaited that mission to Ireland which he so ardently desired. A vision from heaven, in his youth, brought to him from afar "the voice of the Irish," but he was an old man before God allowed him to begin his work. In his humility he styled himself "an ignorant sinner," "a fool," "the rudest and least of the faithful;" but when he spoke in the name of God, faith gave him majesty and authority, and he became in very truth that which he announced himself to be, "The Ambassador of Christ." There was a vehemence, a sacred intolerance in his faith which swept away all obstacles; it made him a stranger to respect of persons; he spoke as one conscious that he came with a message direct from God, and faith made all men equal in his eyes. It was this sense of his mission, and the conviction that "he could do all

things in Him who strengthened him," which gave his apostolate its peculiar character. He seems to have seldom sought to persuade—he subdued men by the intensity of his own faith.

We have a striking instance of the way in which he infused this faith, and took instantaneous possession of souls, in the conversion and penance of the robber chief MacKyle, afterwards a Saint and Bishop. This man and his band were the scourge of Ulster, and when he heard of the arrival of the Saint in the neighbourhood, he first thought of making away with the priest whose teaching brought such shame on his own unholy trade; but, bad and bloodthirsty as he was, some sort of wild chivalry in his heart restrained him. He therefore determined to make sport of the Saint, and thus bring discredit upon him and his mission; and with this design arranged that one of his band, named Garban, should simulate death. Accordingly, Garban laid himself upon a bier, and his companions, having covered him with a pall, entreated the Saint to bring the dead man to life. St. Patrick, who knew by divine revelation all that had occurred, prayed over the man, and then went on his way. When his associates approached, and drew the pall from the face of Garban, they found that the jest had become earnest, and that the man was really dead. In fear and trembling,

the whole band followed the Saint, and, falling at his feet, implored his pardon for their own sins, and life for their friend. St. Patrick took pity on them, and at his prayer the dead man arose; and he, with his companions, believed in Christ, and was baptized. Then their leader MacKyle came forward and confessed how he had intended to take away St. Patrick's life, and in the simplicity and energy of his repentance, asked how he could atone for his intended crime. The Saint must have seen that he had to deal with one already transformed by grace, and equal to any sacrifice, for the penance imposed and accepted could only have been justified by a divine revelation. At the command of St. Patrick, MacKyle went down to the sea-shore, and having bound and locked his feet together with an iron chain, he flung the key into the sea, and in a light coracle, or boat made of a single skin, committed himself to the waves, with God alone as his Pilot. And the Lord, mindful of the faith of His servant Patrick, and of the sublime sacrifice of the penitent, guided the boat until it was cast on the shore of the Isle of Man. There were living there at this time two Christians, Conindrus and Romulus, who are said to have been sent by St. Patrick to preach in that island. These men received and entertained the mysterious penitente, and instructed him in the Catholic faith; and in time he became

Bishop of the island, and his name was held in great veneration both in the early Irish and British Churches.

Another famous penitent was St. Assicus, whom St. Patrick had consecrated, and appointed Bishop of Elphin ; he was also the founder of a monastery in his diocese, over which he presided. Now, it happened that this servant of God once told a lie, and then, entering into himself, was filled with such bitter regret, and such a spirit of penance, that he fled the face of men, and buried himself in solitude, where for seven years he remained concealed, for he judged that he was unworthy any more to be a pastor and guide of souls. During these years his monks sought him sorrowing, and at length discovered his hiding-place, which was a cavern in a lonely valley. They besought him in vain to return to his church, which was his spouse, and expected him ; they even tried violence, but failed—for the Bishop declared himself unworthy ever again to exercise his pontifical office, since from his lips had proceeded a wilful lie, which, coming from a priest, the sacred canons declare to be a sacrilege. Such are the words of the ancient chronicler. Seeing that their beloved father and founder was fixed in his resolution, the monks, who could not bear to live away from him, turned the cave into a monastery, and remained there

until his death, and then built over his grave a monastery, which was afterwards rendered famous by the sanctity of its inmates.

The same intensity of faith which shrank from no sacrifices was seen in the fervour of those religious vocations which, even in the Apostle's own time, made Ireland the wonder of the Christian world ; for in the history of the Church there has been no other example of a heathen nation, in the lifetime of one man, springing up into the maturity of the Christian life, and becoming, in truth, what from that time she was called, "The Island of Saints."

As we have seen from the Saint's letter to Coroticus, this passion for the religious life took hold of the Irish people almost as soon as the Gospel was preached to them ; and when the great Patriarch at the close of his life looked back upon his work, and poured forth the fulness of his heart in his Confession, this was one of his consolations :—"Wherefore now in Ireland, they who never had the knowledge of God, and hitherto only worshipped idols and unclean things, in these latter times have been made the people of the Lord, and are called the sons of God. The sons of the Irish, and the daughters of princes, are seen as monks and virgins of Christ." They did not fly from persecution, unless so far as the sight and the presence of men

is a torture to those who seek to be alone with God. St. Patrick brought with him to Ireland those traditions of the religious life which, beginning in Palestine and Egypt, had been imported into the West by St. Martin and St. Ambrose; and the sacred contagion spread, so that the whole nation presented a sight similar to that seen at Milan when St. Ambrose preached his famous sermons on virginity, and mothers shut up their daughters at home because the Divine Bridegroom threatened to bear them all away. When we find how marvellous were the signs and favours by which God encouraged His chosen servants at this time, and attracted them to Himself, we are prepared for the statement that, before he died, the Saint had consecrated every tenth man and woman in Ireland to God.¹

In the biographies of the early Irish Saints we find all that freshness and simple beauty which is the special grace of those souls who are led by God, with little interference on the part of man.

¹ *Acta SS. Mart.*, xvii. p. 475. As it was after St. Patrick's death that the great monasteries of Clonard, Bangor, Clonfert, &c., were founded, we may suppose that the majority of the men and women whom St. Patrick consecrated to God lived in the world like the members of one of those Third orders now so common in the Church, and that, in process of time, the spirit infused by St. Patrick gathered them into communities. Many of these, like that of Bangor in Down, counted their members by thousands. St. Bernard, in his *Life of St. Malachy*, tells us that one monk from Bangor

There was the blessed child, Saint Treha, whose holiness was foretold by St. Patrick before her birth. She was the daughter of a powerful chief named Carthend, who was converted to the faith; and when he and his wife were receiving baptism, the Saint told the mother that the unborn child which she bore, was one whom he, in the fulness of time, should veil, and consecrate for a heavenly Lover. When the child had reached her tenth year, she set out in search of the Saint to obtain the fulfilment of his promise. On her way she arrived at the shores of a lake, from which she saw the Saint in the distance on the other side of the water. Wearied with the journey, she sat down on the bank, and, with an anxious heart and longing eyes, followed the distant form of the man of God. Then St. Patrick, understanding and compassionating her trouble, prayed, and the waters receding, made way for the child to pass. When the Saint had received her vows, and consecrated this spouse of Christ, there is a tradition that an Angel of the Lord laid a veil upon her head, which,

is said to have founded as many as a hundred monasteries; and the glory of this great sanctuary reached its climax when, about the year 823, being attacked by the Danes, it gave in one day nine hundred martyrs to Christ. It appears also that the number of anchorites dwelling in complete solitude and silence was very great; and Mr. Haverty (Hist. Ireland, p. 120) tells us of some who, in their passion for solitude, spent their days at sea alone in their light boats, seeking for a *desert* on the ocean.

covering her eyes, extended to the nostrils. The Saint was about to lift the veil, but the maiden objected, and earnestly besought Him, saying, "I implore thee, O my Lord, to allow this veil to remain as it is, so that never again mine eyes may see the vain things of this world, and that thus with pure interior vision I may be able to contemplate the bright beauty of my Spouse." The Saint, filled with consolation, assented; "and thus," continues the narrator, "this veil, descending from heaven, remained all the days of her life, covering those cheeks and eyes which were like those of the turtle-dove; keeping out all visions of evil, lest death should by any chance enter in at the windows."¹

St. Cinne, another soul consecrated by St. Patrick to God, was the only child of a prince named Eochaidh, and her parents had promised her in marriage to Cormac, son of Cairbre McNeill. At the exhortation of Patrick, the virgin declined this alliance with one who appears to have belonged to the reigning royal family, and consecrated herself to Christ. When her father found that his daughter's determination was immovable, he sent for the Saint, and made a strange proposal. He told him how he had expected to find in his grandchildren his own consolation and the strength of

¹ Tripartite Life, p. 445; Acta SS. Mart., xvii. p. 538.

his house, but that in thus influencing his daughter, St. Patrick had cut off his succession, and frustrated all his hopes : if however, in return for this loss, the Saint would promise him the kingdom of heaven, and at the same time not compel him unwillingly to receive baptism, he would allow his daughter to go her way. St. Patrick, trusting in the mercy of God, made the strange agreement demanded, seeing, we may suppose, something in the man's simplicity which made both his sacrifice and his demand acceptable in the sight of God. The maiden received the veil, and was consecrated to Christ ; and serving God in virginity and great holiness, she led many people to follow her example, and was glorified by miracles in her life and after her death. At length the time came when the old man, her father, was struck down by sickness, and knowing that he must die, he sent a messenger to summon the Blessed Patrick, for he now desired to receive that baptism which in health he had refused ; at the same time he gave strict orders that, in the event of his death, his body should remain unburied until the arrival of the man of God. Patrick, who at this time was at Saul in Ulster, knowing in spirit of the man's death, set out on his journey before the arrival of the messenger ; but Eochaidh had been dead twenty-four hours before the Saint reached his house. Kneeling down

beside the corpse, St. Patrick prayed over it, and forthwith Eochaidh was restored to life ; and having received baptism, he related to the awe-struck bystanders all that he had learned concerning the joys of heaven and the tortures of the damned, and declared that he had seen the place in heaven which Patrick had promised him ; but, because he was unbaptized, he had not been able to enter. The Saint asked him whether he would now rather remain in this world, or go at once to the reward prepared for him ? And Eochaidh answered that he counted the dominion of the whole world, with all its riches and pleasures, as an empty shadow compared to those joys of heaven which with his own eyes he had witnessed. So, when he had received the viaticum, he lay down again and died.¹

Like St. Francis Xavier, who was wont to send children to work miracles for him, our Saint sometimes appointed deputies to do these wonderful works. There was a chief named Elelius, who obstinately shut his ears to the teaching of St. Patrick, until at length sorrow and tribulation changed his heart. He had one child, a son, whom he loved tenderly, who was attacked by a herd of swine, and torn limb from limb. The wretched father came to the Saint, and declared that he would believe in

¹ Tripartite Life, p. 453 ; Acta SS. Mart., xvii. p. 557.

his God and obey Him, if in His name he would restore his son to life. Then St. Patrick turned to one of his disciples, named Malachy, and told him to go and do as the man wished; but Malachy's faith was weak, and on his refusing, saying that it would be tempting God on his part to attempt such a thing, the Saint asked him if he had not read the promise of the Lord, saying, "Whatsoever thou shalt ask the Father in my name"? and again, "If you have faith as a grain of mustard-seed, you shall say to this mountain remove from hence hither, and it shall remove"? and foretold that, for the future, he should be empty-handed in the Church. Then St. Patrick chose two other disciples, who with great faith accepted his commission, and while the Saint remained in prayer, restored the child not only to life, but to all his former strength and beauty. It is needless to say that the father believed, and was baptized with all his house.¹

¹ Acta SS. Mart., xvi. p. 558; Tripartite Life, p. 467.

CHAPTER VII.

OF ST. PATRICK'S TENDERNESS OF HEART, AND OF THE WAY IN WHICH HE TAUGHT HIS DISCIPLES CHARITY.

A SAINT'S own words are always the clearest manifestation of his spirit, and the extracts already given from St. Patrick's Letter to Coroticus are a touching revelation of that love which he had for those whom he had begotten in Christ, and of that sympathy which made their sufferings his own. "We have become outcasts," he says when his children are carried away into slavery.

Like all the saints, he showed not only compassion but reverence for those in affliction; this was specially manifested in his loving service of those who were stricken by the loathsome malady of leprosy. If our Saint had any need of an instructor in this work, he had one in his glorious master, St. Martin, of whom we are told that, upon a certain occasion, when he came to the gates of Paris, and the people went forth in great multitudes to meet him, the Saint saw a leper who was deformed and hideous even to look upon. Approaching the poor man, he put his arms round his neck

and kissed him, and at his touch the leper was healed. In St. Patrick's time the victims of this terrible malady were the object of a superstitious horror and fear, which must have greatly aggravated their miseries. The Jewish law had forbidden any one to touch a leper, ordaining that, "All the time that he is a leper and unclean, he shall dwell alone, without the camp,"¹ and during the reign of Paganism they were considered as accursed by the gods. The example of our Lord, in the tenderness which He showed to this afflicted class, was enough for the saints, but it was a long time before the popular feeling gave way to the divine charity of the Gospel. St. Patrick had great tenderness for these unhappy beings, for he saw in them the image of Him of Whom the Prophet has written, "And we have thought Him as it were a leper, and as one struck by God and afflicted."² It is recorded how the man of God retained several lepers near him, and ministered to them in all things for Christ's sake; and of one especially we are told how, with his own hands, the Saint washed the ulcers which devoured his flesh, and gave him the food suited to his state. This poor man, destitute of all bodily gifts, grew wonderfully in those of the Spirit, so that he spent all his time in prayer and giving thanks to God; and at length, that he

¹ Levit. xiii. 46.

² Is. liii. 4.

might spare his companions, and free them from the sight of his horrible malady, in his humility he withdrew of his own accord from their company, and made a dwelling for himself in a hollow tree, where he lived alone with God. The extraordinary sanctity to which this man attained, by his sufferings, was probably the reason that St. Patrick did not exert his miraculous powers on his behalf. At length the time came for this great lover of the Cross to receive his reward. On the day of his death, which had been revealed to him, looking out from his hiding-place, he saw a man passing by, and calling him, he inquired what religion he professed. When the other replied that he was a Christian, he begged him, for the love of Him in Whom he believed, to go to a wood close by and pluck one of the saplings from the earth, and bring it to him: the man did as he was asked, and forthwith a bright fountain burst forth on the spot. He returned to the solitary and told him what had happened, whereupon the dying man gave thanks to God, and said: "Be it known to thee, dearest brother, that our Lord Jesus Christ has brought thee hither that thou mayest wash my body in the water of that fountain, and bury it in the same place." Saying this, and lifting his eyes and hands to heaven, he expired. When the man had washed the leper's body in the fountain, every trace of leprosy dis-

appeared, while the air was filled with the fragrance which exhaled from those sacred remains; and having buried the body, he went on his way. Some time after, one of the disciples of St. Patrick, being on a journey, halted at this spot, and in the silence of the night he heard angelic choirs singing, while a great light surrounded the grave of the leper. He related this to St. Patrick, and expressed a wish to remove the body of this Saint from so unhonoured a place; but St. Patrick forbade him, predicting that there, in time to come, should dwell Ciaran, "a son of life yet unborn," who should people it with an army of saints, and give great glory to these relics.¹

We find mention of St. Patrick's charity towards lepers at other times in his life, as when at Armagh he cured sixteen at one time, who had come together from various quarters, attracted by the fame of his mercy and power; they were all restored to health in the act of receiving baptism from the Saint's hands. Again, when St. Mochta had retired to his hermitage, we are told that St. Patrick often visited his disciple to hold communion with him on divine things, and that he gave over

¹ St. Ciaran, born in 516, was the founder of Clonmacnois, which continued to be the seat of learning and sanctity, the retreat of devotion and solitude, and the favourite place of interment for the kings, chiefs, and nobles of both sides of the Shannon, for a thousand years after the founder's time.—O'Curry, MS. Materials, pp. 58-60.

to him, as a precious inheritance, twelve lepers whom hitherto the Apostle had served and tended himself.

The Saint's supernatural knowledge ministered to his gift of sympathy. On one occasion, when engaged in instructing and baptizing, he remained so long in the same place that the ardent Benignus grew impatient at the delay, and complained with all the freedom of the beloved disciple. The Saint then declared that he could not bring himself to leave the neighbourhood before the arrival of some of his followers who were on the sea, coming from a distance. On the following day the sky was darkened, and so violent a tempest arose that those who watched the waves said the boat must certainly perish. The Saint's face became very sorrowful, and he told his companions that his children in the boat were in sore distress, and that he compassioned one in particular, a boy named Eerc, who was quite beside himself with terror; and then the Saint betook himself earnestly to prayer. After a short interval, in the hearing of all present he commanded the winds and the waves, in the name of God, to cease their fury and be still; and forthwith the sky cleared, and the sea became quiet. On the same day the travellers arrived, and it was found that they had been delivered from their danger at the very hour that the man of God

had seen them in spirit, and prayed for their deliverance.

The holy master Patrick was one who taught clearly that charity was not a mere matter of feeling, but a duty, as we see from the punishments he inflicted on those who sinned against this virtue. An instance of this is recorded in the case of a blind man, who, hearing that the Saint was passing, ran to meet him in the hope of receiving his sight; and as he hurried on, staggering and falling, as he had no one to guide him, one of the clerics in the Saint's company burst out laughing, and made sport of the poor man. St. Patrick was filled with indignation, and as a warning to those around him, after he had rebuked the scoffer and chastised him with his own hand, said, "Amen: I say to you that in the name of my God the eyes of this man, now shrouded in darkness, shall see the light, while your own, that are open to evil and provoke others to mockery, shall be closed." When he had made the sign of the Cross on the eyes of the blind man, his sight was restored, and the jester became blind.¹

A still more terrible judgment fell upon a chief named Trian. Patrick, being on a journey, passed through a wood in which he found some men cutting trees, and saw that their hands were bleeding. To

¹ Acta S.S. Mart., xvii. p. 566.

the questions of the Saint they replied that they were the slaves of a hard master named Trian, who condemned them to work in this way, and that, to make their work intolerable, he would not even allow them to sharpen their axes. Patrick blessed the axes, and the men were able to cut easily with them, and then he visited the chief, and tried to soften the obduracy of his heart. Finding that words failed, the Saint sat down at Trian's gate, and "fasted upon him," remaining there for a long time without food, for Patrick was his creditor in the name of the charity of Christ; but all was in vain, and the Saint departed, declaring that the hard-hearted man would come to an evil end. Trian was only exasperated by the Saint's remonstrances, and in revenge he bound and went on torturing the poor slaves who had told Patrick of his cruelty, until at length, as the Saint had foretold, the wrath of God fell upon him. Driving one day on the shores of Lake Trena, his horses ran away, and carried chariot and driver into the lake. St. Evin adds: "Loch Trena is its name. This was his last fall. He will not arise out of that lake till the Vespers of Judgment, and it will not be in happiness even then."¹

St. Patrick once gave two brothers a lesson in fraternal charity in the following manner. Their

¹ Tripartite Life, p. 479.

father had lately died, and a dispute arose between them about the inheritance ; and passing from words to blows, they drew their swords, and attacked each other in the presence of the Saint. Filled with horror and fear of the threatened fratricide, he betook himself to prayer. Then, raising his hand, he blessed them ; whereupon the arms of the combatants became immovable, and remained uplifted and rigidly fixed in the air. The Saint again blessed them, and made peace between them ; and they having surrendered the disputed land to St. Patrick for the repose of their father's soul, he built a church on the spot.

CHAPTER VIII.

*OF THE SAINT'S WONDERFUL PRAYERS AND PENANCES, AND
OF THE SUCCESS WITH WHICH HIS LABOURS WERE
CROWNED—HIS LAST YEARS AND DEATH.*

THE man of God Patrick was marvellously favoured with heavenly visions and revelations in prayer. "When," says his biographer, "he every day in the Mass sacrificed the Son to the Father, or devoutly recited the Apocalypse of St. John, it was granted to him to see the heavens opened, and Jesus standing surrounded by a multitude of angels; and whilst he meditated on these great visions his soul was altogether lost in God." Three times in the week the angel Victor visited and conversed with him, filling his soul with celestial consolations. The labours of the day amongst men seem to have been less arduous than those of the night with God. He divided his time, so that the first part of the night he recited a hundred Psalms, making at the same time two hundred genuflections;¹ the

¹ Repeated prostrations and genuflections seem to have been common even in the most sublime contemplations of the saints of this period. It is related of St. Simon Stylites, a contemporary of

second part he spent immersed in icy-cold water, with heart, eyes, and hands lifted up to heaven until he had finished the other fifty Psalms. After this, he gave the short time that remained to sleep, lying on a rock, with a stone for a pillow, while the rough haircloth which he wore macerated his body even in his sleep. This is really the prodigious part of St. Patrick's life. We are not surprised that God should give power over nature to a man who had such power over himself, and are therefore prepared for the statement that the working of miracles was of almost daily occurrence with him, that he gave sight to the blind and speech to the dumb, cured all manner of diseases, and raised thirty-three persons from the dead, in the name of the Holy Trinity.¹ From his union with God in prayer, there was such beauty and power in his preaching that on one occasion, when a great multitude had come together to hear the word, and the Saint interpreted the four Evangelists, for three days and nights the people were so entranced

St Patrick—"He had adopted the habit of expressing his worship at times by deep reverences, bowing so low that his forehead nearly touched his feet. One of Theodoret's companions once counted twelve hundred and forty-four of these adorations, one after another, and then grew weary of counting" (*Fathers of the Desert*, Hahn Hahn, p. 334). The practice of frequent genuflections in prayer is recommended by the Council of Clovesho in England, A.D. 747 (*Haddan and Stubbs*, v. iii. p. 372).

¹ Acta SS., pp. 576, 578.

and spellbound by his inspired eloquence, that the time seemed to them but as the space of one day.

Not only was the conversion of the Irish people to Christianity effected with extraordinary rapidity, but to this first grace God added another almost as great, in the abiding presence of the great Patriarch with his children. Other Apostles have had to leave their work to be finished by inferior men, but for fifty-nine years after the power of paganism had been broken at Tara, St. Patrick held undisputed sway as Pontiff and Teacher of the Church in Ireland. He lived long enough to see the grey hairs on the heads of those whom he had baptized as children, so that he had time to organise and consolidate the infant Church, and to create a native clergy, works quite as difficult, perhaps, as the conversion of the nation.

There seems to be no doubt that St. Patrick retired from the government of the See of Armagh many years before his death, probably in 455, and during the long interval between that period and his own death he saw four bishops successively fill that see. It was Cormac,¹ the fifth successor of the Saint, who outlived him. Sixty years of ecclesiastical rule in Ireland gave St. Patrick time, not only to teach the faith, but to establish traditions. The rulers of the Church during this

¹ Colgan, *Acta SS. Hiberniæ*, p. 358.

time were his own spiritual children, so while one generation passed away, and another succeeded, there was no change nor disturbance in the life of that Church, which had all its discipline, as well as its doctrines, from one man. The same prodigious power which in the beginning had broken all opposition, preserved unity and peace when the struggle was over, and made the fold of St. Patrick like the infant Church in Judea, when "the multitude of believers were of one heart and one mind." As we have seen, it was St. Patrick who imprinted on the Church in Ireland that monastic character which was her strength and glory for centuries; and so great and universal was the enthusiasm of the people, that they devoted a tenth of their herds, and of the produce of the land, to the use of the Church and the monasteries.¹

St. Patrick's example in retiring from his bishopric, and that of St. Assicus in resigning the see of Elphin, suggest an explanation of a statement in the Saint's life which has been too much for many modern writers — viz., that he consecrated over three hundred bishops with his own hand. Grave authors have held it to be probable that St. Patrick introduced the order of Chorepiscopi into Ireland; and if we accept the view that these prelates were often nothing more than simple priests, and that

¹ Acta SS. Mart., xvii. p. 575.

they have been included in the total number of those styled Bishops, there is no difficulty in the numbers. But even if we take the statement in its ordinary sense, as meaning Bishops with or without sees, there is no extravagance in the conjecture that many may have resigned their sees, induced either by their master's example or by love of solitude and the contemplative life, which had such attractions for the holy souls of that period. It was an age of wonders in Ireland, when grace was given without measure, and the records of that time cannot be tried by ordinary standards. Jocelyn tells us that in those days no one was chosen for the episcopal office, or the government of souls, unless he was declared worthy by Divine revelation, or some evident sign.

The latter years of the Saint's life were spent for the most part at Saul, or Armagh, where in solitude he held communion with God; and the Last Day alone will reveal the lights then given to him, and the graces which he obtained for his children. Once the Saint had a great vision, in which the actual state and the future of the Church in Ireland was revealed to him. First he saw the whole land, as it were, like a great furnace whose flames reached to the sky, and he clearly heard the voice of an angel saying, "Such is the state of Ireland now in the sight of the Lord." After a little time, instead of

this far-spreading universal fire, he saw flaming mountains here and there over the land, then torches shining, succeeded by glimmering lights as darkness increased ; and last of all, a few live coals buried, and burning deep in the earth. And the angelic voice was heard saying that such, in times that were coming, should be the successive states of the Irish people. Then, with tears rolling down his cheeks, the Saint repeated many times those words of the Psalmist, " Will God then cast off for ever ? Or will He never more be favourable again ? Or will He cut off His mercy for ever from generation to generation ? Or will God forget to show mercy ? Or will He in anger shut up His mercies ? " And the angel answered and told him to look to the north of the land, and that there he should see the change of the hand of the Most High. The Saint lifted up his eyes, and behold, a little light arose in Uladh, which struggled long with the darkness, until at length the whole island was filled with the brightness of its glory, and Ireland returned to its first state of all-pervading fire.¹ At the time when Jocelyn wrote, in the twelfth century, conflicting interpretations of this vision were prevalent. The days of darkness were taken to be the terrible time of the Danish persecution in the ninth century. The light that began in Uladh was

¹ Acta SS., p. 575.

thought by some to be a figure of the great St. Malachy, first Bishop of Down in Uladh, then of Armagh, and Legate of the Holy See under Innocent II., whose life and labours have been recorded by his friend St. Bernard; while the English invaders boldly asserted that the light was a figure of the state of things which they had introduced. Jocelyn wisely abstains from giving any opinion on the subject,

The time at length came when St. Patrick understood by divine revelation that his end was near. He was then in Uladh, and as he desired to be buried near his children at Armagh, for whom he seems to have had a special love, he turned his steps towards that city; but on the way the angel Victor met him, and told him that it was the will of God that he should die in Uladh, which was the province he had first converted, and that the city of Down was to be the place of his resurrection; at the same time reminding the Saint of his prediction and promise to the sons of Dichu, his first converts, that he should die in their land. The Saint for a moment was troubled by this message; then recovering himself, he accepted the obedience, and returned to Uladh.

A few days after this, the holy old man Patrick sat down with a number of his followers in a certain place not far from the city of Down, and began

to treat of the glory of the saints and the mansions of the blessed. While he spoke, a bright light was seen shining over one particular spot in a neighbouring cemetery, and when the lookers-on asked the Saint to tell them the meaning of this light, he turned to St. Brigid,¹ and ordered her to explain the mystery, upon which the holy virgin declared it to be a sign that in this place would soon be laid the body of some great servant of God. St. Ethembria, described by Jocelyn as the first of the virgins of Ireland consecrated to Christ by Patrick, was present, and secretly asked St. Brigid to tell her the name of the Saint. She replied that it was the Father and Apostle of Ireland himself; and at the same time revealed to her friend her desire to have the privilege of investing his sacred remains in a shroud which she had herself woven for his burial. St. Patrick, who knew in spirit what was passing in his daughter's mind, turned to her and bade her go back to her convent and bring this shroud which she had prepared. The Saint himself then set out for his monastery at Saul, and upon his arrival took to his bed, knowing now that the end of his life was come. When St. Brigid had

¹ St. Brigid died A.D. 425. A poem attributed to St. Berchan about A.D. 690 says that St. Brigid came to Downpatrick at this time to procure that St. Patrick might be buried at Kildare.—O'Curry, MS. Materials, p. 415.

reached her convent on the Curragh, she took the shroud, and, with four of her daughters to bear her company, with all speed retraced her steps to Saul ; but, worn out with fasting and the length of the journey, she and her companions grew so faint that they could proceed no farther. Their distress was revealed to the dying Saint, and in the same hour he sent five of the light chariots of the country to meet them, so that they arrived in time to present their offering ; and having kissed his feet and hands, they received his benediction.¹

St. Patrick died March 17, 493. The conclusion of his life shall be given in the words of St. Evin : “ A just man indeed was this man ; with purity of nature like the patriarchs ; a true pilgrim, like Abraham ; gentle and forgiving, like Moses ; a praiseworthy Psalmist, like David ; an emulator of wisdom, like Solomon ; a chosen vessel for proclaiming truth, like the Apostle Paul ; a man full of grace and the knowledge of the Holy Ghost, like the beloved John ; a fair flower-garden to children of grace ; a fruitful vine-branch ; a sparkling fire, with force and warmth of heat to the sons of life, for instituting and illustrating charity ; a lion in strength and power, a dove in gentleness and humility ; a serpent in wisdom, and cunning to do good ; gentle, humble, merciful to the sons of life—dark, ungentle towards

¹ Acta SS., p. 579.

the sons of death ; a servant of labour and service of Christ ; a king in dignity and power for binding and loosening, for liberating and convicting, for killing and giving life.

“ After these great miracles, therefore—*i.e.*, after resuscitating the dead ; after healing lepers, and the blind, and the deaf, and the lame, and all diseases ; after ordaining bishops, and priests, and deacons, and people of all orders in the Church ; after teaching the sons of Erin, and after baptizing them ; after founding churches and monasteries ; after destroying idols, and images, and druidical arts—the hour of death of St. Patrick approached. He received the Body of Christ from Bishop Tassach, according to the advice of the angel Victor. He resigned his spirit afterwards to heaven, in the one hundred and twentieth year of his age. His body is here still in the earth, with honour and reverence. Though great his honour here, greater honour will be to him in the Day of Judgment, when judgment will be given on the fruits of his teaching, like every great Apostle ; in the union of the Apostles and disciples of Jesus ; in the union of the nine orders of angels, which cannot be surpassed ; in the union of the divinity and humility of the Son of God ; in the union of the Holy Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.”¹

¹ Tripartite Life, p. 500.

The body of the Saint was wrapped in the shroud woven by St. Brigid, and the prodigies attendant on his death were in keeping with those of his life. A sweet fragrance exhaled from his sacred flesh, and during the twelve days that his body lay unburied, a bright light was seen in that part of the country, and it is said that the voices of the angels were heard singing night and day the praises of the servant of Christ. At the end of this time a dispute arose between the people of Armagh and the Ulidians as to who should possess the relics of the Apostle, and a miracle decided the contest; for when the body was laid upon a funeral car, drawn by two oxen, the men of Armagh, as it seemed to them, followed it, going towards their own city, until they found that they had been led astray, and pursued what was only a phantom; while the Ulidians carried away the body of the Saint, and buried it, as he predicted it should be, amidst the sons of Dichu in Downpatrick.

APPENDIX.

APPENDIX.

(A.)

THE DOCTRINES TAUGHT BY ST. PATRICK.

No attempt has been made to meet the arguments of those controversial writers who assume that they are justified in narrowing St. Patrick's teaching to the precise measure of his own recorded words. In his Confession, St. Patrick makes a short profession of his faith in the Holy Trinity and Incarnation; and the Rev. Messrs. Gough Gubbins and Olden compare this with the creed of Pope Pius IV., the latter writer having first carefully bracketed the two creeds. Mr. Gubbins triumphantly remarks, "Here, then, are the respective and distinctive creeds of the Church of Rome and Ireland;" while Mr. Olden concludes, "From this comparison it is obvious that St. Patrick knew nothing of the twelve new articles added to the primitive faith by the Church of Rome."¹ It is only necessary to observe, that baptism and belief in the Holy Scriptures are included in those *new* articles, about which, according to Mr. Olden, St. Patrick *knew nothing*. St. Patrick's creed was the whole creed of the age in which he lived, as the doctrine of St. Jude was the whole doctrine

¹ "What Doctrines, &c., did St. Patrick Teach?" By Rev. G. G. Gubbins, M.A. P. 15. "Epistles, &c., of St. Patrick." By Rev. T. Olden, M.R.I.A. P. 39.

of the Apostles, although he has not thought it necessary to inform us of the fact in his Epistle.

Dr. Todd more cautiously assails St. Patrick's doctrine in attacking the Roman mission, when he remarks, "There is reason to believe, therefore, that national vanity and national prejudice have corrupted this part of the history."¹ Mgr. Moran, in those Essays on the Irish Church so often referred to in the preceding pages, has conclusively proved that those "reasons" have no foundation other than Dr. Todd's own preconceived theories and prejudices. The following extract from p. 120 of the Essays is peculiarly interesting, and one proof amongst many of the unity of the early Irish Church with the See of Rome: "It is a characteristic feature, and hence, too, a special glory of our Irish Church, that her Apostle, by an express decree, marked out for her and sanctioned the hallowed course she should pursue in reference to Rome. The statute of St. Patrick is preserved in the ancient 'Book of Armagh,'² and moreover in '*that part of the same old MS. which was copied from the book written by St. Patrick's own hand.*'"³

After indicating some cases of special importance reserved for the decision of the Bishop of Armagh, to whom, as it is decreed, "perveniet causa totius negotionis cæteris aliorum iudicibus prætermisissis," "the examination of the whole matter will be reserved, all other inferior judges being passed over," it is further enacted—

"Item quæcumque causa valde difficilis exorta fuerit, atque ignota cunctis Scotorum gentium iudicibus ad cathedram archiepiscopi Hiberniensium (id est

"Moreover, if any case of extreme difficulty shall arise, and one which the various judges of the Irish nation cannot decide, let it be referred to the see of the chief

¹ Apostle of Ireland, p. 303.

² Fol. 21, bb.

³ O'Curry's Lectures, p. 372. Petrie, Essay on Tara, p. 81.

Patricii) atque hujus antistitis examinationem recte referenda.

“Si vero in illa cum suis sapientibus facile sanari non poterit talis causa prædictæ negotiationis, ad Sedem Apostolicam, decrevimus esse mittendam id est ad Petri apostoli cathedram auctoritatem Romæ urbis habentem.

“Hi sunt quæ de hoc decreverunt id est, Auxilius, Patricius, Secundinus, Benignus.”

Bishop of the Irish (that is, of Patrick), and submitted to his episcopal examination.

“But if such a case of the aforesaid importance cannot easily be decided in that see, with the assistance of its wise counsellors, we have decreed that it be sent to the Apostolic See, that is to say, to the chair of the Apostle Peter, which holds the authority of the city of Rome.

“These are the persons who decreed as above, viz., Auxilius, Patrick, Secundinus, and Benignus.”

(B.)

THE BOOK OF ARMAGH.

(Extracted from Sixth Report of the Deputy-Keeper of the Public Records in Ireland, p. 105.)

The Book of Armagh is now defective at the commencement. Its first portion is occupied with notes in Latin and Irish on St. Patrick's Acts; a collection styled “Liber Angueli,” relating to the rights and prerogatives of the See of Armagh, and the Confession of St. Patrick, ending, “hucusque volumen quod Patricius manu conscripsit sua.” These are followed by St. Jerome's Preface to the New Testament; Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John; Epistles of St. Paul, including that to the Laodiceans, with prefaces, chiefly by Pelagius; Epistles of James, Peter, John, and Jude; Apocalypse; Acts of Apostles; and Life of St. Martin of Tours by Sulpicius Severus. It also contains coloured drawings of the

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evangelistic symbols, and of these, one page, in four compartments, is reproduced on Plate XXVIII.

The name of the scribe of the Book of Armagh was ascertained in recent times by the Rev. Charles Graves, now Bishop of Limerick. Having noticed ancient and elaborate erasures on some of its pages, he conceived that matter connected with the history of the book might be recovered through a careful examination of them. Under these erasures vestiges were found of entries in which Ferdornach, in the customary manner of ancient Irish transcribers, entered his name, and requested a prayer from the reader. The only scribes named Ferdornach mentioned in Irish records are two who died at Armagh in A.D. 790 and A.D. 844 respectively. The latter was characterised as a wise man and a distinguished scribe. That he wrote the first part of the Book of Armagh in A.D. 807 is assumed mainly on the following grounds:—

At the end of the Gospel of St. Matthew, the scribe records, in semi-Greek characters, that he finished the writing of this Gospel on the festival of that Apostle. That this was during the single year A.D. 807, in which Torbach held the bishopric of Armagh, is inferred from a fragment—*bach*—of the name of “the successor of Patrick” brought to light from under another ancient erasure. Torbach was the only Bishop of the see whose name terminates with those letters during the time of any known scribe styled Ferdornach.

The collections concerning St. Patrick in the first part of the Book of Armagh constitute the oldest writings now extant in connexion with him, and are also the most ancient specimens known of narrative composition in Irish and Hiberno-Latin. They purport to have been originally taken down by Bishop Tirechan from Ultan, who was Bishop of Ardbraccan towards A.D. 650, and by Muirchu

Maccu Machteni, at the request of his preceptor, Aed, Bishop of Sletty, in the same century. . . . It would seem that the Book of Armagh was supposed to have been written by St. Patrick's own hand from the following passage on page 21, at the end of the copy of his Confession, *Hucusque volumen quod Patricius manu conscripsit sua.*

THE DOMHNACH AIRGID.

The Domhnach Airgid (the Silver Shrine):—

Among ancient manuscripts preserved in, or connected with Ireland, which have survived to the present time, the first place in point of age is assigned to that contained in the antique metal case styled in Irish, *DOMHNACH AIRGID* (the silver shrine).

This reliquary would appear to be that mentioned as follows in an old Life of St. Patrick, to have been given by him to his disciple and companion, St. MacCarthen, when he placed the latter over the See of Clogher in the fifth century:—

“Aliquantis ergo euolutis diebus MacCærtennum sive Cærthennum Episcopum præfecit sedi episcopali Clocherensi ab Ardmacha regni Metropoli haud multum distanti: et apud eum reliquit argenteum quoddam reliquarium *Domnach Airgidh* vulgò nuncupatum, quod viro Dei, in Hiberniam venienti cœlitùs missus erat.”—*Vita Sancti Patricii*, by St. Evin.

The Domhnach Airgid was preserved as a reliquary in the neighbourhood of Clones, in the county of Monaghan, till deposited in the Museum of the Royal Irish Academy, about the year 1832.

The manuscript in the reliquary was then in four portions, the membranes of each of which had become tenaciously incorporated into an opaque solid mass. Some of

the external leaves, successfully detached and expanded, were found to contain part of the first chapter of a Latin version of the Gospel according to St. Matthew, in uncial character not inconsistent with the age to which, on examination, the manuscript was assigned by the eminent archæologist, George Petrie, LL.D., author of a treatise on "The Ecclesiastical Architecture of Ireland anterior to the Anglo-Norman Invasion." The view of Dr. Petrie, communicated by him to the Royal Irish Academy in 1838, was that "we might with tolerable certainty conclude that the Domhnach is the identical reliquary given by St. Patrick to St. MacCarthen;" and that "as a manuscript copy of the Gospels, apparently of that early age, is found with it, there is every reason to believe it [the manuscript] to be that identical one for which the box was originally made.—Ibid., pp. 90, 91.

(C.)

FATHER COLGAN.

(*Account of his Life and Labours, extracted from the Report of the Historical MS. Commission. Appendix to Fourth Report, p. 599. London: 1874.*)

Among the institutions which, after the Reformation, were established for Irish Roman Catholics on the Continent, the College of the Irish Franciscans, or Minor Friars, at Louvain, acquired the highest national literary reputation, as the centre, in the seventeenth century, of an organisation for the preservation and publication of the early history and hagiography of Ireland. . . . The project of editing the Acts of the Irish Saints and other ancient monuments of Ireland was first conceived by Friar Hugh

Ward, professor and subsequently guardian of the Franciscan College of Louvain. Ward, or Mac an Bhaird, a graduate of Salamanca, was of an ancient Donegal family, which from remote times professionally cultivated literature. His proposed work was no doubt promoted by the literary controversy which sprang out of the attempt made by some injudicious Scotch writers to appropriate to their country the renown for religion and learning which Ireland had acquired in the ages during which she was styled "Scotia Major." The design of Ward having received the sanction of the heads of his Order, was entered upon with zeal by Friars Patrick Fleming and Brendan O'Connor, who commenced researches for him in foreign libraries. The learned Irish Jesuit Stephen White, professor at Dilengen, also co-operated, and supplied transcripts made by himself of documents at Biburg, Ratisbon, and Reichenau.

The task of collecting all Gaelic materials to be obtained in Ireland was committed to the lay brother Friar Michael O'Clery, who belonged to a family of native hereditary Irish chroniclers, and was himself considered one of the most learned in that line. Aided by some support from native Irish proprietors, to whose religion and pride of ancestry he appealed, and supplied occasionally with food and shelter in the places of refuge of the proscribed Franciscans in Ireland, Michael O'Clery indefatigably laboured, with some of his kinsmen and other Irish antiquaries, to collect, transcribe, and methodise all available native materials. Among the works in the Irish language thus executed and transmitted to Louvain were the "Leabhar Gabhala, or Chronicle of the Conquests of Erin;" the "Calendars of the Irish Saints;" the "Successions and Pedigrees of the Irish Kings and Saints," in the present collection; the Annals of Ireland by the Four Masters, styled also the "Annals of Donegal," from having been com-

piled in a hut built amid the ruins of the then lately dismantled Franciscan Convent of Donegal. Fleming made considerable collections from libraries in Italy for the history of Columbanus, but before they reached the press he was sent to take charge of the Irish Franciscan house at Prague, and was murdered amid the commotions incident to the siege of that town in 1632. Ward died in 1635, without having completed any of the works which he had projected. The materials then came to the hands of John Colgan, also a native of Donegal, professor of theology in the same college. In 1643 Michael O'Clery's vocabulary or glossary of difficult Gaelic words was printed in Irish type at Louvain.

Colgan, though suffering severely from bodily infirmities, applied with energy to the task of preparing some of the hagiographical manuscripts for the press, and received much encouragement from Hugh O'Reilly, the Roman Catholic Primate of all Ireland, who defrayed the cost of printing a collection of the Acts of the Irish Saints for January, February, and March. This, which Colgan intended to form the third volume of the "Ecclesiastical Antiquities and History of Ireland," was published at Louvain, with the following title, in 1645, a few months after the death of Michael O'Clery:—

"Acta Sanctorum veteris et maioris Scotiæ, sev Hiberniæ sanctorvm insvlæ, partim ex variis per Europam MS. codd. exscripta, partim ex antiquis monumentis et probatis authoribus eruta et congesta; omnia notis et appendicibus illustrata per R. P. F. Joannem Colganvm, in conventu FF. Minor. Hibern. Strictioris obseru. Louanij S. Theologiæ Lectoris Jvbilatam. Nunc primum de eisdem actis juxta-uordinem mensium et dieram prodit tomvs primvs, qui de Sacris Hiberniæ antiquitatibus est tertius, Januarium, Februarium, et Martium complectens."

Another volume, containing ancient Lives of SS. Patrick, Brigid, and Columba, was, mainly at the expense of Lord Slane's son, Friar Thomas Fleming, Archbishop of Dublin, published two years subsequently at Louvain, under the following title:—

“Triadis Thvamaturgæ sev divorvm Patricii Columbæ et Brigidæ, trivm veteris et maioris Scotiæ, sev Hiberniæ, sanctorvm insvlæ, commvnivm patronorvm acta, à varijs, ijsque pervetustis, et sanctis authoribus scripta, ac studio R. P. F. Ioannis Colgani in conventu FF. Minor. Hibernor,” &c., &c.

The following additional particulars appear in a unique and torn copy of a printed obituary memorial issued by the Order at the time:—

“Anno Domini 1658, 15 Januarii, Lovanii in Collegio S. Antonii de Padua, Fratrum Hibernorum, strictioris observantiæ, omnibus ecclesiæ sacramentis præmunitus, migravit ad Dominum anno suæ ætatis 66, sacerdotii 40, professionis 38, R[everendus] A[dmodum] P[ater] Frater Joannes Colganus, S. theologiæ lector jubilatus, et collegiorum suæ provinciæ aliquamdiu commissarius. Vir erat ab eruditione, pietate et animi candore valde commendabilis, et præclare meritis de suo instituto, patria [ejusque] sanctis, quorum actis, in publicam notitiam proferendis [triginta sex] et amplius annis pertinaci labore, indefessoque ad mortem usque sedulus incubuit patrocinium prome . . . humana fragilitate aliquid adhuc luendum . . . vestris precibus enixe commendamus. Requiescat in pace.”

A catalogue of the MSS in Colgan's cell at the time of his death is extant in this collection. Some of these are now in the library of the Dukes of Burgundy at Brussels, and others, as will be seen, in the present collection. Among the unpublished compilations of Colgan and his fellow-workers were some of great interest on the labours

of, and establishments by Irish missionaries in England, Belgium, Bretagne, Alsace, Lorraine, Burgundy, Germany, and Italy.

(D.)

LES FLEURS DE S. PATRICE.

(*Extrait des Annales de la Société d'Agriculture, Science, &c., du Département d'Indre et Loire, t. xxx., année 1850, f. 70.*)

A quelques lieues de Tours, sur les bords de la Loire, il se produit chaque année, de temps immémorial, un phénomène fort remarquable, dont la science n'a point encore donné d'explication satisfaisante. Ce phénomène trop peu connu, c'est celui de la floraison, au milieu même des rigueurs de l'hiver, de l'épine noire, *prunus spinosa*, connue vulgairement sous le nom de prunellier.

Ce phénomène, nous venons de le constater nous-même de nos propres yeux, et nous pouvons l'affirmer hautement sans crainte d'être démenti. Nous avons cueilli ces fleurs merveilleuses et nous pouvons appeler à notre aide les témoignages des milliers de personnes qui chaque année à la fin de décembre le voient se renouveler sous leurs yeux. C'est donc un fait incontestable. C'est à S. Patrice, non loin du château de Rochecotte, que se trouve ce curieux arbuste, sur le penchant du coteau. Le mouvement de la sève, qui devrait être stationnaire à cette époque de l'année, se manifeste d'une manière sensible. L'écorce, toute humide de cette sève d'hiver, se sépare sans peine du bois qu'elle recouvre; les boutons se gonflent, les fleurs s'épanouissent comme au mois d'Avril et chargent les branches d'une neige odorante; quelques feuilles essaient plus timidement d'exposer leur

verdure délicate à la bise glacée. Le dirai-je ? Aux fleurs succèdent les fruits, et dès les premiers jours de janvier, on voit apparaître au sein des pétales, flétris et décolorés, à l'extrémité d'un long pédoncule, une petite baie qui bientôt se ride et se dessèche.

Cette floraison si curieuse est presque inconnue, et cependant elle se produit chaque année de temps immémorial. Les vieillards les plus âgés de S. Patrice l'ont toujours vue s'accomplir à une époque précise quelle que fût la rigueur de la saison. C'était aussi l'antique tradition de leurs pères et la légende que nous racontons plus bas semble attribuer à ce fait une origine très reculée.

L'arbuste dont nous parlons semble cependant être encore fort jeune ; mais il est probable qu'il se renouvelle par les racines. Du reste le phénomène est circonscrit à la localité et à l'arbuste en question. Les branches que l'on a voulu transplanter ailleurs n'ont offert que la floraison du printemps et les aubépines qui croissent au milieu des prunelliers ne manifestent aucun mouvement de sève.

Mais, nous diront les incrédules, après tout, ce phénomène n'est pas plus merveilleux que celui de la floraison des lilas dans le mois de novembre, lorsque les bourgeons, par une méprise imprudente, croient trouver dans une température encore tiède les douces haleines du printemps. Que nos lecteurs se détrompent : l'épine noire de S. Patrice croit, se développe et fructifie au milieu des rigueurs de l'hiver, par la température la plus froide. Cette année, les fleurs se sont épanouies depuis Noël jusqu'au 1^{er} janvier, c'est à dire à une époque où le thermomètre a été presque constamment au dessous de glace. Quoique sur le penchant du coteau, l'arbuste n'est point abrité des vents du nord, le givre en couvre les branches, une bise glaciale y souffle avec violence, et il arrive souvent que l'arbuste

est chargé tout à la fois et des neiges de l'hiver et des neiges de ses fleurs.

(L'auteur réfute l'hypothèse d'une source thermale qui serait à une faible profondeur : le sol, dit-il, reste couvert de neige—les autres arbustes ne fleurissent pas.)

Les habitants de S. Patrice se racontent une vieille tradition qui, dans sa naïveté, est pleine de fraîcheur et de poésie. Un jour, disent-ils, S. Patrice vint d'Irlande dans les Gaules. Il se rendit auprès de S. Martin, attiré par la réputation de sa sainteté et de ses miracles. Arrivé sur les bords de la Loire, non loin du lieu où depuis fut bâtie l'église qui porte aujourd'hui son nom, il se reposa sous un arbuste. C'était au milieu d'un hiver rigoureux, à l'époque des fêtes de Noël. L'arbuste par respect pour le Saint, étendit ses branches, secoua la neige qui le recouvrait, et, par un prodige inouï, se couvrit d'une neige de fleurs. S. Patrice traversa la Loire sur son manteau, et arrivé sur le bord opposé, se reposa sous une autre épine noire, qui fleurit aussitôt. Depuis lors, dit la chronique, les deux arbustes n'ont cessé de fleurir chaque année, à Noël, en témoignage de S. Patrice.

(Translation.)

On the banks of the Loire, a few leagues from Tours, a very remarkable phenomenon is repeated year by year, and from time immemorial, one concerning which science as yet has given no satisfactory explanation. This phenomenon, too little known, consists in the blossoming, in the midst of the rigours of winter, of the blackthorn, *prunus spinosa*, commonly called the sloe. We have lately verified this circumstance with our own eyes, and can vouch for its truth without fear of contradiction. We can appeal to the testimony of thousands who at the end of December in each year are eye-witnesses to its repeti-

tion, and we have ourselves gathered these extraordinary flowers. This remarkable shrub is to be found at St. Patrice, upon the slope of a hill not far from the Chateau de Rochette. The circulation of the sap, which should be suspended in winter, is plainly revealed by the moist state of the bark, which easily separates from the wood which it covers. The buds swell, the flowers expand as in the month of April, and cover the boughs with odorous and snowlike flowers, while a few leaves more timidly venture to expose their delicate verdure to the icy north wind. Shall I venture to add? to the flowers succeed the fruit, and at the beginning of January a small berry appears attached to a long peduncle in the midst of the withered and discoloured petals, which soon shrivels and dries up.

This singular growth of flowers is almost unknown, although it has been repeated every year from time immemorial. The oldest inhabitants of St. Patrice have always seen it take place at a fixed period of the year, no matter how severe the season may be, and such has also been the ancient tradition of their forefathers, while the legend we are about to relate appears to attribute a very remote origin to the fact; while, as the shrub itself appears quite young, it is probable that it is renewed from the roots. However, this phenomenon is limited to the locality and to the shrub in question. Cuttings transplanted elsewhere have only blossomed in the spring, and the hawthorns which grow amidst the sloes do not manifest any circulation of sap.

The incredulous will object that, after all, this circumstance is not more extraordinary than the flowering of the lilac in November, when the buds by an unwary mistake suppose that, in the still mild temperature, they have found the soft breath of spring. Our readers must not be deceived; the blackthorn of St. Patrick grows, develops, and bears

fruit in the midst of the rigours of winter in the most icy temperature. This year the flowers were in bloom from Christmas until the first of January, that is, at a time when the thermometer was almost always below freezing—point. Although growing on the slope of a hill, this shrub is in no way sheltered from the north wind, its branches are encrusted with hoar-frost; the icy north-east wind blows violently amongst them, and it often happens that the shrub is loaded at one and the same time with the snow of winter and the snow of its own flowers.

(The author refutes the hypothesis of the proximity of a thermal spring; the ground, he observes, remains covered with snow, and the other shrubs do not blossom.)

The inhabitants of St. Patrice record an ancient tradition, which in its simplicity is full of freshness and poetry. St. Patrick, it is said, being on his way from Ireland to join St. Martin in Gaul, attracted by the fame of that Saint's sanctity and miracles, and having arrived at the bank of the Loire, near the spot where the church now bearing his name has been built, rested under a shrub. It was Christmas time, when the cold was intense. In honour of the Saint, the shrub expanded its branches, and shaking off the snow which rested on them, by an unheard-of prodigy arrayed itself in flowers white as the snow itself. St. Patrick crossed the Loire on his cloak, and on reaching the opposite bank, another blackthorn under which he rested at once burst out into flowers. Since that time, says the chronicle, the two shrubs have never ceased to blossom at Christmas in honour of St. Patrick.

(E.)

ST. PATRICK'S HYMN.

(From *Goideleca: Old and Early-Middle Irish Glosses, Prose and Verse. By Whitley Stokes. London: 1872.*)

Patrick made this hymn. In the time of Loegaire, son of Niael, it was made. The cause of making it, however, was to protect himself with his monks against the deadly enemies who were in ambush against the clerics. And this is a corslet of faith for the protection of body and soul against demons and human beings and vices. Every one who shall sing it every day, with pious meditation on God, demons shall not stay before him. It will be a safeguard to him against every poison and envy, it will be a comna to him against sudden death: it will be a corslet to his soul after dying. Patrick sung this when the ambuscades were set against him by Loegaire that he might not go to Tara to sow the faith; so there they seemed before the ambuscaders to be wild deer and a fawn after them, to wit, Benén; and *fæd fiada* (guard's cry), is its name.

I bind myself to-day to a strong virtue, an invocation of
(the) Trinity.

I believe in a Threeness with confession of an Oneness in the
Creator of the universe.

I bind myself to-day to (the) virtue of Christ's birth with
his baptism,

To (the) virtue of (his) crucifixion with (his) burial,

To (the) virtue of (his) resurrection with (his)
ascension,

To (the) virtue of his coming to (the) Judgment of
Doom.

I bind myself to-day to (the) virtue of ranks of Cherubim,
In obedience of Angels,
(In service of Archangels),
In hope of resurrection for reward,
In prayers of Patriarchs,
In predictions of Prophets,
In preachings of Apostles,
In faiths of Confessors,
In innocence of holy Virgins,
In deeds of righteous men.

I bind myself to-day to (the) virtue of Heaven,
In light of Sun,
In brightness of Snow,
In splendour of Fire,
In speed of Lightning,
In swiftness of Wind,
In depth of Sea,
In stability in Earth,
In compactness of Rock.

I bind myself to-day to God's virtue to pilot me,
God's Might to uphold me,
God's Wisdom to guide me,
God's Eye to look before me,
God's Ear to hear me,
God's Word to speak for me,
God's Hand to guard me,
God's Way to lie before me,
God's Shield to protect me,
God's Host to secure me,
Against snares of Demons,
Against seductions of Vices,
Against lusts (?) of nature,
Against every one who wishes ill to me,
Afar and anear,
Alone and in a multitude !

So have I invoked all these virtues between me (and these)
 Against every cruel, merciless power which may come
 against my body and my soul :
 Against incantations of false prophets,
 Against black laws of heathenry,
 Against false laws of heretics,
 Against craft of idolatry,
 Against spells of women, and smiths, and druids,
 Against every knowledge that defiles men's souls.

Christ to protect me to-day
 Against poison, against burning, against drowning,
 against deathwound,
 Until a multitude of rewards come to me !

Christ with me, Christ before me, Christ behind me, Christ in
 me !

Christ below me, Christ above me, Christ at my right, Christ
 at my left !

Christ in breadth, Christ in length, Christ in height !
 Christ in (the) heart of every one, who thinks of me !
 Christ in (the) mouth of every one who speaks to me !
 Christ in every eye that sees me,
 Christ in every ear that hears me !

I bind myself to-day to a strong virtue—an invocation of (the)
 Trinity.

I believe a Threeness with confession of a Oneness in (the)
 Creator of (the universe).

Domini est salus, Domini est salus, Christi est salus.
 Salus tua Domine, sit semper nobis cum.—pp. 149-153.

(F.)

THE SENCHUS MOR, OR CAIN PATRAIC.

(*Extracted from Preface to Ancient Laws of Ireland, vol. i.*
Dublin : 1868.)

The modification of the Pagan law in Ireland was ascribed so entirely to the influence of St. Patrick, that the Senchus Mor was subsequently called "Cain Patraic," or Patrick's law. The Senchus Mor was so much revered that the Irish judges, called Brehons, were not authorised to abrogate anything contained in it. (The writer adds that this code of laws maintained its authority amongst the native Irish until the beginning of the seventeenth century, that is, for a period of twelve hundred years.)

In the introduction to the Senchus Mor the occasion of its being compiled is thus explained :—

"St. Patrick, after the death of his charioteer Odran, and the judgment which was pronounced on the case by Dubhthach Mac ua Lugair, chief of the royal poets, and chief Brehon of Erin, requested the men of Erin to come to one place and hold a conference with him. When they came to the conference, the gospel of Christ was preached to them all; and when the men of Erin heard . . . all the power of Patrick since his arrival in Erin, and when they saw Laeghairé with his Druids overcome by the great signs and miracles wrought in the presence of the men of Erin, they bowed down in obedience to the word of God and Patrick.

"It was then that all the professors of the sciences in Erin were assembled, and each of them exhibited his art before Patrick, and in the presence of every chief in Erin.

“It was then that Dubhthach was ordered to exhibit the judgments and all the poetry of Erin, and every law which prevailed amongst the men of Erin, through the law of nature, and the law of the seers, and in the judgments of the Island of Erin, and in the poets.

“Now the judgment of true nature which the Holy Ghost had spoken through the mouths of the Brehons and just poets of the men of Erin, from the first occupation of this island down to the reception of the faith, were all exhibited by Dubhthach to Patrick. What did not clash with the Word of God in the written law, and in the New Testament, and in the consciences of the believers, was confirmed in the law of the Brehons by Patrick and by the ecclesiastics and by the chieftains of Erin; for the law of nature had been quite right, except the faith and its obligations, and the harmony of the Church and the people.

“And this is the Senchus.”—Pp. i. ix.

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