

CHAPTER XIV.

Of the Library at Iona.—Account given of it by Pennant, from Bocce.—Causes assigned for its Destruction ;—Devastations by the Danes ;—by Edward I. ;—by the Reformers ;—by Cromwell ;—during the period of Persecution.—Books, formerly belonging to it, said to be still extant.—The Culdees preserved till about the Time that the Lollards appeared.—Of the Reformation in Scotland, whether by Bishops ?—Of those called Superintendents.

NOT a little has been said with respect to the *Library at Iona*. But, besides having to regret the loss of this very ancient collection, we have not even the slender consolation of certainly knowing what was its fate. It is more than probable, however, that, like other monuments of antiquity, which have fallen a sacrifice to the depredations of time, its value has been considerably overrated.

“The public,” says Pennant, “was greatly interested in the preservation of this place, for it was the repository of most of the antient Scotch records. The library here must also have been invaluable, if we can depend upon Boethius, who asserts, that Fergus the II., assisting Alaric the Goth, in the sacking of Rome, brought away, as share of the plunder, a chest of books, which he presented to the monastery of Iona. Aeneas Sylvius (afterwards Pope Pius II.) intended, when he was in Scotland, to have visited the library, in search of the lost books of Livy, but was prevented by the death of the king, James I. A small parcel of them were, in 1525, brought to Aberdeen, ¹ and great pains were taken to unfold them, but, through age and the tenderness of the parchment, little could be read; but, from what the learned were able to make out, the work appeared by the style to have rather been a fragment of Sallust than of Livy.” ²

But the account given by Boece is clogged with difficulties. 1. It is said, that, besides the chest of books, there fell to the share of Fergus *sacra quedam vasa*, “certain sacred vessels,” which he also brought with him. Now, Boece himself has told us, what we know from other sources, that the Goths respected the sacred edifices. Alaric gave a peremptory order, that all the consecrated vessels, belonging to St Peter, should be transported, without damage or delay, to his church. ³ But, although these only are mentioned, in con-

¹ Boethius, lib. vii. p. 114. Paulus Jovius, quoted by Usher, Br. Eccl. 597.

² Voyage to the Hebrides, p. 296.

³ Gibbon's Decline and Fall, V. 312, 313.

sequence of their being found, by the soldiers, under the care of an aged virgin ; it is most probable, that this prince would shew the same regard to all other vessels consecrated to the purposes of religion.

2. This account involves a gross anachronism. Fergus must have made his donation to the monastery of Iona, about a hundred and sixty years before the foundation stone of it was laid. For Boece says, that Alaric sacked Rome A. 412. Now, Columba did not land in Iona till the year 563, or, as some say, 565. ¹ Here, we are told, Fergus employed approved scribes, for reducing the manuscripts to the form of books, several ages, as would seem, before the art of writing was known in the country. ²

3. The same writer elsewhere says, that although Fergus had appointed Iona to be a repository for the public records, yet Alexander I., on account of the great difficulty of the access to Iona, had caused our annals to be transferred to the priory of Restennet, in Angus. ³ Maitland has observed that

¹ Pinkerton, Vit. Sanct. p. 27. Enquiry, ii. 265.

² Ferunt, praeter sacra quedam vasa, multaque et preciosam suppellectilem, arcam quandam libris refertam, Fergusio militari pro instituto sorti obuénisse : eumque—incredibili diligentia eandem seruasse : et in Hebrides secum, post multos cum Gothis in Italia labores, per Germaniam deportasse intactam : locasseque tandem in Iona insula, aedibus ad tam celebria (ut rebatur) monumenta, simul cum sue gentis egregie gestis : delectis ad id opus probatis scriptoribus, in codices redactis, perpetuo seruanda, diligenti opera constructis. Boeth. Hist. Fol. 118, a.

³ Multos post annos vt Restennothy (munitioni nomen est olim in Angusia vbi nunc canonicorum diui Augustini cœnobium) quum ad Ionam difficilis admodum erat aditus, nostri annales inde traducti reseruarentur, Alexander

hence it was evident, that in Boece's time there could be no records at Iona: and, therefore, that he could not get his *Veremundus* from this island.*

As Boece mentions our annals only, it may be said, that he did not refer to the ancient classical works, which Alexander might not think of demanding from the monks of Iona.

It might even be supposed, that Maitland had not sufficient ground for charging Boece with self-contradiction, as to our annals; as some of them, notwithstanding the requisition made by Alexander I., might still have been retained at Iona, being concealed by the monks, or afterwards procured by them from other quarters; of which circumstance Boece might be informed, when he made more particular inquiry with the view of writing his history. But it cannot be denied, that, by referring to works unknown to all our historians, as to those of Cornelius Hibernicus, Veremund, and Campbell, of whose writings, nay, of whose existence, we can discover no other vestiges, he has greatly injured the credibility of his whole story with respect to the communications from Iona. The most favourable opinion which can possibly be formed of the conduct of Boece, and it is very little to his credit indeed, is, that he had destroyed the manuscripts which he had used, that his own history might be in greater request. This, as we learn from Gordon of Stralough, was the

primus rex edixit, ne nostratibus, maiorum egregie gestorum quae imitarentur deesset memoria Episcop. Vitae, Dedicat. This work was written A. 1522, or four years before the publication of his history.

* History of Scotland, p. 125.

tradition which, when a young man, he had heard at Aberdeen. †

Nor can it at all be believed, that the classical MSS. were brought from Rome by Fergus. There is little probability indeed, that Fergus ever was at Rome; and still less, that an Irish prince, in that early age, would encumber himself, during his military *labours*, with a chest of books, written in a language to which, we may reasonably suppose, he was an entire stranger.

It must be admitted, however, that from a writer, who has frequently substituted fable for history, credit is sometimes withheld, even when he may have a just claim to it. This may have been the fate of Boece, in the instance before us. It must be acknowledged, that he does not, as Pennant says, assert that these books were brought from Rome by Fergus. He only gives it as a tradition, or report; *Ferunt*, &c. Besides, there is a considerable appearance of integrity in his account of the transmission and examination of these works. He claims no merit in the discovery. All the honour that he claims, is the partial execution of a plan previously formed by a person warmly attached to the interests of literature, who had come to this country as papal legate, not a century before the time that Boece wrote. If a foreigner, holding such a distinguished place, entertained the design of making a visit to Iona, for the express purpose of inspecting the library there, it must have been well known, and highly gratifying

† V. Nicolson's Scot. Hist. Lib. p. 75.

to our countrymen. Nor could the memory of this design have perished, in so short a time, among those who had any regard to learning; especially as it was frustrated by a calamitous event that so deeply interested every friend to his country. Even Boece, therefore, would not have ventured such an assertion, had he not been assured of the fact.

He also says, that it was in consequence of the great celebrity of these books, preserved in Iona, that he was so anxious to examine "what they were, and what they treated of." He assumes nothing to himself, in the account which he gives of their transmission. On the contrary, he owns that the religious of Iona did not comply with his request, till after the third application; and this chiefly by the good offices of the noble and learned Campbell, his majesty's treasurer.¹ Boece published his history while Campbell was alive;² and can it be supposed, that he would have introduced a man of his respectability as a witness to a gross falsehood, liable also to contradiction from all the monks at Iona? His history was published, indeed, little more than a year after the time assigned as the date of the receipt of these books. He had even exposed himself to recrimination from these monks, if

¹ Ceterum qui sint libri, in Iona insula, *fama adeo celebrati*, ac quibus de rebus conscripti, explorandi prouinciam sumentes apud piorum loci illius coetum nuncio *tertium* compellatum, opera maxime nobilis et eruditi viri Ioannis Campibelli, a regis thesauris, tandem obtinuimus, vt antiqui codices, qui quinque [quicunque?] illic, Romanis characteribus essent exarati, ad nos fidei nuncio Aberdoniam deferrentur. Hist. Fol. 118, b.

² Crawford's Officers of State, p. 370.

there was any ground for it ; as he ascribes the deplorable state of the manuscripts, rather to the carelessness of their guardians, than to the waste of time. ¹ A reflection of this kind might well be supposed to excite *l'esprit du corps*.

Having mentioned the lost books of Livy as the great *desideratum*, had the story been entirely a fabrication, it would have been as easy for him to have said, that the fragments which he examined indicated the style of this author, as to have ascribed them to Sallust ; and more natural, as giving greater importance to his pretended investigation.

It also deserves observation, that Boece speaks of these manuscripts as inspected, while in his custody, by a variety of learned men ; and candidly confesses, that it could not be determined, whether they had been written in Scotland, or brought from abroad, being written after the Roman mode, as they treated of Roman affairs. “ This *only*,” he says, “ appeared to the judgment of *all* who saw them, that they savoured more of the style of Sallust than of Livy.” ² Had he never received these manuscripts, or had he shewed them to none of his literary friends, would he ever have hazarded such a declaration ?

It may be added, that, while the learned Usher scouts the idea of their being brought from Rome by Ferguson, he admits

¹ — Vetustate, vel custodum potius incuria adeo erosa, ut vix decimum quodque verbum legere possis. Hist. ut sup.

² Vno *omnium* qui ea viderunt iudicio Sallustianam, potius quam Liuiam redoleer eloquentiam censent. Ibid.

the narrative of Boece, as far as it regards these fragments.' Gibbon also, a writer abundantly fastidious as to evidence, has no hesitation in saying, that Iona was "distinguished—by a *classic* library, which afforded some hopes of an entire Livy."²

"There can be no doubt," it has been said of late, "but the many learned men that flourished at I, had the classics among them, and all the books on divinity and sciences these ages could afford. It can be as little doubted, that, like other societies, of learned men, they committed their own works to writing, as well as the transactions of their countrymen."³ With respect to classical works, however, it must be regretted, that we have no better proof than conjecture, besides what may be supposed to arise from the testimony of Boece. I am rather inclined to think, that their collection of theological works was never very extensive; because, in early ages at least, the religious of this seminary were chiefly devoted to the reading and transcribing of the scriptures, and of sacred hymns.⁴ Columba spent much of his time in writing. He employed his disciples in the same manner; and was at pains that they should transcribe with the greatest accuracy.⁵ Dr Smith, speaking of his successors, says; "How

¹ Primord. p. 595, 596.

² Decline and Fall, vi. 246.

³ Statist. Acc. xiv. 205. N.

⁴ See above, p. 29.

⁵ Quadam die Baitheneus, ad Sanctum accedens, ait, "Necesse habeo ut aliquis de fratribus mecum psalterium, quod scripsi, percurrens emendet." Columba informed him, that in his copy of the Psalms there was only one error, which was the want of the vowel I in a single instance. Adomn. Vit. Columb. lib. 1. cap. 23 Ed. Pinkerton.

well they studied the languages, appears from the excellent Latin of Cumin, and of Adomnan, who discovers also his knowledge of Greek and Hebrew; and wrote a geography of the Holy Land.”¹ This work Bede not only ascribes to Adomnan, but highly commends. “The same person,” he says, “wrote a book concerning the holy places, most useful to many readers. He received his information from Arculphus, a French bishop, who had gone to Jerusalem to visit the holy places; and who, having surveyed all the Land of Promise, travelled to Damascus, Constantinople, Alexandria, and many islands, and returning home by sea, was, by a violent storm, brought to the western coast of Britain. After many accidents, coming to Adomnan, the servant of Christ above mentioned, as he appeared to be learned in the scriptures, and well acquainted with the holy places, he was most readily received, and attentively listened to, by him; so that what things soever he had seen in these places worthy of remembrance, he forthwith committed to writing. Thus, he composed a work very useful, and especially to those, who, being far removed from these places where the patriarchs and apostles dwelt, know nothing more of them than what they learn by reading.”² Bede then proceeds to give some extracts from this work, which occupy two chapters. The work itself is extant in Mabillon’s Collections.³

Many works, both in Latin and in Irish, are said to have

¹ Life of Columba, p. 84. N.

² Hist. lib. v. 15.

³ Act. Ben. Sacc. 3. part. 2. p. 502. V. Not. ap. Bed. Hist. loc. citat.

been written by Columba himself; and among these, the life of the patron saint of Ireland.¹ The life of Columba, we are told, was written, in Irish metre, by his cousin, disciple, and successor, Baithen, who was also canonized.² To Abbot Cumin several writings are ascribed,³ beside the life of Columba, published by Mr Pinkerton, and referred to above, which was undoubtedly his work. Of these, of the writings of Adomnan, and of other abbots who succeeded him, there is every reason to believe that copies would be carefully preserved in the monastery. Men, who were so much devoted to writing, would strain every nerve to increase the number of their books.

“What then,” may it be inquired, “has become of this library? How can it be accounted for, that it should entirely disappear?” This has been primarily ascribed to the inroads of the Danes.⁴ These were frequent and fatal. The monastery of Iona was burnt by them, A. 797; a second time, 801; and it was destroyed by fire in the year 1069. A. 805, the family of Iona, to the number of sixty-eight, was destroyed by the pirates of that nation; and in 985 they rifled the monastery, and killed the abbot, with fifteen of his disciples.⁵ “If the barbarians,” it has been said, “had the library in their power, no doubt they would destroy it.”⁶ According to the information of Pennant, it would appear, that, perhaps, while the Norwegian princes were sovereigns

¹ Odonellus, *Smith's Life of Columba*, App. p. 135. Harris, *Writers*, p. 18.

² Harris, *ut sup.* p. 21.

³ *Ibid.* p. 39.

⁴ *Statist. Acc.* xiv. 205.

⁵ *V. Caledonia*, i. 474. N.

⁶ *Statist. Acc.* *ut sup.*

of the isles, they judged it proper to carry some of the more valuable MSS. to a place of security in their own country. "I am informed," he says, "that numbers of the records of the Hebrides were preserved at Drontheim, till they were destroyed by the great fire which happened in that city, either in the last, or present century." ¹ This, however, might take place after the cession of the Hebrides; for, by the treaty made on this occasion, "the patronage of the bishopric of Sodor was reserved to the Archbishop of Drontheim in Norway." ²

The learned Torffaeus does not seem to have been so well informed, with respect to the depredations made by his countrymen in the island of Iona, as might have been expected. He says, that in the year 1210, a squadron of piratical ships, to the number of twelve, under Birkibein and Bagli, taking advantage of the intestine divisions of the princes of the Hebudæ, committed many depredations in this quarter, and plundered the *Holy Island*, or that of St Columba, which, till that time, had never been subjected to any injury from the Norwegians, as being protected by its sanctity. He asserts this, as attested by all their annals. ³ The facts formerly quoted, however, rest on the combined testimony of the Annals of Ulster, and of the Irish martyrologists.

Bishop Nicolson, speaking of the library at Icolunkill, says;

¹ Voyage to the Hebrides, p. 296.

² Dalrymple's Annals, i. 178.

³ Haebudæ, anno sequente decimo, scilicet, testantibus annalibus omnibus, intestinis regum suorum bellis discordes, ab iis exspoliatae, et in his insula sancta, seu Divi Columbi, in illum diem ab injuriis Norvegorum intacta, et religione tuta. Rerum Orcadens. Hist. p. 153.

“ Our King Edward the First, having claimed the sovereignty of Scotland, made a most miserable havock of the histories and laws of that kingdom ; hoping, that, in a short time, nothing should be found in all that country, but what carry’d an English name and face.”¹

“ The second great loss of the Scotch records,” according to his mode of enumeration, “ happen’d upon the mighty turn of the Reformation ; when the monks, flying to Rome, carry’d with them the register-books, and other ancient treasure of their respective monasteries.”² “ At the Reformation,” says another writer, “ the MSS. of I were in part carried to the Scotch colleges of Doway, or to Rome, at least the chartularies, and such as were esteemed most valuable by the monks.”³ The college of Ratisbon has also been mentioned, as possessing part of this spoil.⁴ But, from all that I have been able to learn from such of our countrymen as have resided, or been trained up, in the Scotch colleges on the con-

¹ Scottish Hist. Libr. p. 241.

² Ibid. p. 243-4.

³ Statist. Acc. xiv. 205.

⁴ The same account has been given by the Rev. Mr M’Nicol. Of Dr Alexander Campbel in Argyleshire, he says ; “ He was told by his father, the celebrated Mr Colin Campbel, minister of Ardhattan, a man eminent for learning in general, and for mathematical and antiquarian knowledge in particular, that the greatest part of the books of value belonging to Iona, in the latter centuries, were carried to Doway, in French Flanders ; where the Scots had a seminary, which still continues.” Remarks on Dr Johnson’s Journey, p. 341. He, in the same place, refers Dr Johnson to Dr Campbel, who, he says, “ among other things, will make him acquainted with a very old MS. in Gaelic character, which makes a large volume of a quarto size ; and which, with a variety of other subjects, gives a particular account of the feuds which had formerly subsisted between the families of *Fion* (or Fingal) and *Gaul*.”

tinent, it would appear, that there has been far less ground for this assertion than has been generally imagined. If an accurate search were made, by such travellers as really possessed a literary character, and took an interest in the ancient history of our country, more perhaps might be discovered among the treasures of the Vatican, than any where else.

The indiscreet zeal of the reformers has also, with too much reason, been viewed as a principal cause of the destruction of this library. "The register and records of the island," according to Pennant, "all written on parchment, and probably other more antique and valuable remains, were all destroyed by that worse than Gothic synod, which at the Reformation declared war against all science." * He might perhaps allude to the act of the convention of estates, A. 1561, "passed *at desire of the church*, for demolishing all the abbeys of monks and friars, and for suppressing whatsoever monuments of idolatry were remaining in the realm, the execution whereof in the west parts was committed to the Earls Arrane, Argile, and Glencarne." In consequence of this appointment, "ensued a pitiful vastation of churches and church-buildings throughout all the parts of the realm; for every man made bold to put to his hand, (the meaner sort imitating the greater, and those who were in authority). They rifled all churches indifferently, making spoil of every thing they found.—The very sepulchres of the dead were not spared, but digged, ript

* Voyage, ut sup. He refers to "MS. Advocates' Library;" but without any specification.

up, and sacrilegiously violated. Bibliotheks destroyed, the volumes of the fathers, counsellors, and other books of humane learning, with the registers of the church, cast into the streets, afterwards gathered in heaps, and consumed with fire.”¹ Could we give full credit to this account, who could read it without regretting, that men, whose intentions were good, should act with as little discrimination, as if they had reckoned learning inimical to religion, or proposed, as their pattern, the sentence of the Saracen caliph with respect to the inestimable library of Alexandria! But it can scarcely be supposed, that any of the nobility or ministry would give their sanction to the destruction of libraries. What happened in this way must be attributed to the unbridled licentiousness of the ignorant rabble, when once let loose. Spotswood himself views it in this light. For he subjoins; “But popular fury, once armed, maketh no difference; nor doth it any thing with advice and judgment.”

With respect to the library of Iona, “it is said, that some of the MSS. were carried to Inveraray, and that a Duke of Montague found some of them in the shops there, used as snuff paper.”² This traditionary account most probably respects the time referred to in the sentence immediately subjoined: “If any of them were in the library of the family of Argyll, the persecution that family underwent, in the time of Charles II. accounts for none being there now.” What is here said receives considerable support from a circumstance mention-

¹ Spotswood's Hist. MS. quoted by Keith, Hist. p. 503.

² Statist. Acc. xiv. 205.

ed by Sacheverell, in relation to a book which had certainly been brought from Iona. "The dean of the isles, Mr John Frazer, an honest episcopal minister,—told me, his father, who had been dean of the Isles, left him a book with above 300 inscriptions," taken from the monuments of Iona, "which he had lent to the late Earl of Argile, a man of incomparable sence, and great curiosity; and doubts they are all lost by that great man's afflictions."¹

With respect to our ancient registers in general, Bishop Nicolson says; "The third, and killing, blow was given them by Oliver Cromwel; who brought most of the poor remains that were left into England; and they likewise were mostly lost in their return by sea."² It is probable, that he alludes to those of the monastery of Iona, in common with others. Whether Cromwell actually sent to Iona, with an intention to carry off any gleanings that might be found there in his time, we cannot determine. But it will afterwards appear, that his usurpation has been viewed as at least the accidental cause of the destruction of a considerable portion of its precious remains.

Whether it was owing to the depredations of the Danes, or to the indifference of the Culdees of Iona to the works of the fathers, it is not easy to determine; but the fact seems well authenticated, that, in the ninth century, the only book of this description, which they had, was one of the writings of Chrysostom. The anonymous author of the life of this father gives the following account. "Certain clergymen,

¹ Voyage to I-Columb-kill, p. 132.

² Scot. Hist. Libr. p. 244.

who, from among those who inhabit the extremities of the world, coming, upon the account of some ecclesiastical traditions, but particularly the observation and exact calculation of Easter, to the royal city [of Constantinople] did wait upon the patriarch who at that time resided therein. This was Methodius, a man famous in the days of our ancestors; by whom being question'd from what place, and on what occasion, they had travelled thither? they answer'd, that they came from the *Schools of the Ocean*; and withall they clearly explain'd to him the occasion of coming from their own country.—He demanding, by what traditions of the fathers or doctors they govern'd themselves? they said, that they had one onely book of the father Chrysostom, from whence they happen'd clearly to learn the faith, and the exact observation of the commands; affirming, that they daily reap'd great advantage by this piece, which was very agreeable and acceptable to all, being handed about from one to another, and diligently transcrib'd; insomuch that there was no city, as they said, nor any of their clans, or territories, that remained void of so great and important a benefit."†

A few books have been mentioned, by different writers, within the last century, or a little farther back, some of which may have once formed part of the library at Iona.

In the account of the island of Mull, which is separated

† Anonym. Vit. Chrysost. V. Toland's Nazarenus, p. 5, 6. Methodius was made patriarch, A. 842. Cave, Hist. Literaria, p. 533. This anonymous life of Chrysostom was written after the year 950. Ibid p. 272. It may be doubted, however, whether this passage refers to Iona, or to Ireland.

from Iona, only by a narrow sound, it is said ; “ Since the Reformation, the parish has produced none eminent for learning, if we except the Beatons of Pennicross, who were doctors of physic. The family is now extinct : but they are still spoken of in the country with admiration for their skill in physic. It is said, that one of them was sent for to attend one of the kings of Scotland. They had a large folio MS. in Gaelic, treating of physic, which was left with a woman, the heiress of the Beatons, and seen by some now living ; but what became of it, the incumbent, after all his inquiries, could not find. It is perhaps lost, as the heirs of this woman are quite illiterate.”¹

In this monastery particular attention seems to have been paid to the science of medicine. “ The *Olla Ileach*, and *Olla Muileach*,”² says Dr Smith, “ the ancient and famous line of physicians in Ilay and in Mull must no doubt have derived their first knowledge from this seminary. I had from Major Maclachlan, in the neighbouring island of Luing, a

¹ Statist. Acc. xiv. 204, 205. Perhaps this is the same name with that of *Baithen* or *Baithne*, the relation and successor of Columba. In the list of his disciples and contemporaries, we find also *Baithan*, and Maol-umha son of *Beothan*. V. Life of Columba, p. 157. 160.

² “ *Olla* signifies a doctor or professor in any science, particularly in physic.” M^cNicol, ut sup. p. 263. Of these Beatons he says, “ They were both educated in Spain, and were well versed in the Greek and Latin languages ; but they did not understand one word of English. *Olla Ilich* lived in the reign of James VI. and held free lands of his majesty, as one of his physicians. He wrote a Treatise in Physic, in the Gaelic character, with quotations from Hippocrates. This manuscript was seen at Edinburgh some years ago, by a gentleman of my acquaintance, in the possession of Dr William Macfarlane, now the Laird of Macfarlane.” Ibid.

MS. in the Irish character and language, on the subject of medicine and surgery, which appeared, from being compared with Astle's specimens, to have been of a most remote antiquity ; and it is likely that it was written by some of the learned men in Iona." ¹

"Of what has been written at Iona," says Mr M^cNicol, "I have heard, in particular, of a translation of St Augustine *De Civitate Dei*, and a Treatise in *Physic*, which is very old. The former was in the possession of the late Mr Archibald Lambie, minister of Kilmartine, in Argyleshire ; and the latter was preserved in the Advocates' library at Edinburgh, where, no doubt, it is still to be seen." ²

Many copies of the Life of Columba seem to have been dispersed through the islands, in the vernacular tongue. "The Life of Columbus," Martin says, "written in the Irish character, is in the custody of John Mack-Niel, in the isle of Barray ; another copy of it is kept by Mack-Donald of Benbecula." ³

"We are informed by Mr Lloyd," ⁴ says Dr Macpherson, "that there is still in the Bodleian library, at Oxford, an Irish manuscript, entitled *The Works of Columbcille*, ⁵ in verse, con-

¹ Life of Columba, p. 83, N.

² Remarks on Dr Johnson's Journey, p. 261-2. Some account will be given of the last of these manuscripts in the Appendix, V. No. XXV.

³ Western Isles, p. 264.

⁴ Catalogue of Irish manuscripts.

⁵ The ingenious Mr Pennant has misapprehended the signification of this name of Columba, and thence ascribed a singular species of idolatry to his followers. "After the death of St Columba," he says, "the island received the name of *Y-columb-cill*, or the isle of the cell of Columba. .. In process of

taining some account of the author's life, together with his prophecies and exhortations to princes.

“The same industrious writer observes, that there is in the library of Trinity College, at Dublin, some other most curious and wonderfully ancient manuscript, containing the four gospels, and a variety of other matters. The manuscript is called, *The Book of Columb-cille*, and thought to have been written by Columba's own hand. *Flann*, King of Ireland, ordered a very costly cover to be given this book. On a silver cross, which makes a part of that cover, is still to be seen an Irish inscription, of which the literal meaning is, ‘The prayer and blessing of Columb-cille to *Flann*, the son of *Mail-sheachnail*, King of Ireland, who made this cover: and, should the manuscript be of no greater antiquity than the reign of that prince, it must be about nine hundred years old.’ “This story, however,” Dr Macpherson adds, “carries with it a great degree of improbability; and it is more than probable, that this *Book of Columb-cille* arose from the pious fraud of a much later age.”²

time the island itself was personified, and, by a common blunder, in early times converted into a saint, and worshipped under the title of *St Columbkilla*.” *Voyage*, p. 280.

But, as we have formerly seen, p. 23, *Columcille* signifies, not *the cell of Columba*, but *Columba of the cells*, because so many had their origin from him. All the respect, therefore, paid to *St Columcille*, was paid to Columba himself, without the slightest reference to Iona. Mr Pennant's remark carries its own confutation. Had the island been “converted into a saint,” it would have been denominated *St I-columcille*.

¹ *Archæologia*, p. 432. Lloyd also observes, that this book contains certain interpretations of Hebrew names.

² *Critical Dissertations*, xx.

I shall conclude this meagre account of a library once so famous, with the latest notices which I have met with on the subject. They occur in a posthumous work of the late learned Dr Walker of the university of Edinburgh. "All that I could learn of its fate," he says, "was, that the reformers came so suddenly upon Icolumbkill, that the inhabitants had time to carry little or nothing away. Some of the books and papers, however, were conveyed to the castle of Cairnburg, belonging to the chief of the Macleans, and then judged impregnable. Here they remained till a siege, in the time of Cromwell, when they were mostly destroyed by fire. Some of them, however, still escaped, of which I got notice of one manuscript, and saw an old gentleman in whose hands it had been for some time; but found, after hunting it through three or four islands, that the last leaves of it, as it was unhappily vellum, had fallen a sacrifice for measures to a taylor. It was a Latin translation of an Arabian work on physics."¹

From what we have formerly seen, "it is plain," as Sir James Dalrymple has observed, "that the Culdees continued till the beginning of the fourteenth century." In this century, he adds, "Renatus Lolardus² appeared in France, and

¹ Essays on Natural History, p. 140.

² The person here referred to seems to have been properly denominated *Walter Lolthard*. He preached in Germany, denying extreme unction, the virtue of penance, the authority of the pope, &c. Other doctrines, evidently inconsistent with scripture, have been imputed to him. But this might proceed from the ill will of his adversaries. He was burnt, as a heretic, at Cognon A. 1322. While some learned writers derive the name *Lollards* from him, others deduce it from old German *loll-en*, *lull-en*, to sing with a low voice; as-

Wicklif in England.—The *Lolards* appeared in this kingdom under the government of R. D. of Albany ; and shortly thereafter James Resby and Paul Craw were burnt for maintaining these doctrines. In the reigns of James the Third and Fourth, great numbers of them appeared in Kyle and Cunningham ; and the first beginning of the Reformation of religion was embraced in these districts.”¹

Here we have a singular proof of the providence of God in preserving the truth, in our native country, even during the time that *the Man of Sin* was reigning with absolute authority over the other nations of Europe ; and in transmitting some of its most important articles at least, nearly to the time of its breaking forth with renewed lustre at the Reformation. It would be inconsistent with the design of this inquiry, to enter into any discussion with respect to the scriptural warrant for the presbyterian form of government. But it cannot reasonably be supposed, that the memory of the Culdees had, even in the sixteenth century, completely perished in a country, in which, only two centuries before, they had been contending for their ancient rights, not merely in opposition to the whole power of the primacy, but to the additional support of papal authority ; and where they seem to have con-

serting that, in the year 1309, certain strolling hypocrites were called *Lollards*, or *praisers of God*, who deceived some women of quality in Hainault and Brabant. But whatever was its origin, this designation was contemptuously given to those in Britain, who, before the Reformation, opposed the corruptions of Rome. V. Hofmann. *Lex. in voc. Mosheim's Eccl. Hist. III. 355-8.*

¹ Collections, p. 285.

stituted the majority of the ordinary pastors, till within a short time of their overthrow. Although we have no written documents concerning them as a body, later than the beginning of the thirteenth century, it is by no means improbable, that individuals, trained up by them, or adhering to their principles, continued to discharge the pastoral duties, especially in those places which were more remote from the episcopal seats.

It is no inconsiderable confirmation of the accounts given of them by our later writers, before the Reformation, how much soever some affect to despise their testimony; and no contemptible proof of the strong bias that was in the mind of the nation in opposition to prelacy; that, as soon as they had the power in their hands, they preferred a form of government nearly allied to that ascribed to the Culdees.

It has been asserted, indeed, by the friends of the hierarchy, that the government, adopted by our Scottish reformers, was not presbyterian, but episcopalian. The ground of this assertion, is the appointment of those ministers who were denominated *Superintendents*. It cannot be denied, that a greater degree of power was given to these office-bearers than to ordinary pastors. But those, by whom they were appointed, had no idea of any distinction of office; and even the power, entrusted to them, was so limited, that they appear in a very different light from those usually denominated *Bishops*. Such, indeed, were the limitations to which they were subjected, and the services required, that any one who chiefly sought his ease, or wished to sacrifice to ambition, might, with

respect to this pre-eminence, have said, with a safe conscience, *Nolo episcopari*. They were elected by the people who were to be committed to their charge. For although one, in the first choice, was previously nominated by the lords of secret council, his edict was regularly served; and not only were all the people at liberty to object to his instalment, but “question was moved to the haill multitude, if there was ony uther quhome they wuld put *in electionn* with the said” person.¹ In case of a vacancy, it is ordained, that “the cheefe towne within the province, to wit, the ministers, elders, and deacons, with the magistrate and counsell of the same towne, shall nominate, and by publick edicts proclaime, as well to the Superintendents, as to two or three provinces, next adjacent, two or three of the most learned and godly ministers within the whole realme, that from amongst them one *with publick consent* may be *elected* and appointed to the office.”²

They were to be strictly tried, by the ordinary pastors, as to their learning, prudence, piety, and character; to be set apart by them, and the Superintendents, where any had been appointed; and severally subjected to the censure and correction of the ministry and elders of the whole province. They were equally subject to deposition with the ordinary pastors. Each of them had a particular congregation especially under his charge. He was required to preach thrice every week. He was not to remain more than three or four months, in his principal residence; but to visit the province

¹ Knox's Hist. p. 269.

² First Book of Discipline, ch. VI. p. iii. § 6.

for eight or nine months, in the year. He was prohibited to reside more than three weeks in any one place, during this visitation.

Our reformers did not admit of any ordination of the Superintendents, as this would have implied investiture with an office different from that of the ordinary pastor. Therefore they say; "Other ceremonies then [than] sharp examination, approbation of the ministers and superintendents, with the publicke consent of the elders and people, we cannot allow." †

Their office, at any rate, was meant to be merely temporary. To some, this idea may appear as the interpretation of a later age, when, it may be supposed, the notion of presbyterian parity had gained more ground. But let us attend to the declaration of those very men, who first recommended, and who digested, the plan with respect to the choice of superintendents. "We consider," they say, "that, if the ministers whom God hath endowed with his singular graces amongst us, should be appointed to severall places, there to make their continuall residence, then the greatest part of the realme should be destitute of all doctrine; which should not onely be the occasion of great murmur, but also be dangerous to the salvation of many. And therefore we have thought it *a thing most expedient at this time*, that from the whole number of godly and learned men, now presently in this realm, be selected ten or twelve, (for in so many provinces we have

† First Book of Discipline, ch. VI. p. iii. § 8.

divided the whole,) to whom charge and commandment should be given to plant and erect kirkes, to set, order, and appoint ministers as the former order prescribes, to the countries that shall be appointed to their care where none are now," &c. ¹

Although this measure was adopted merely as a matter of temporary expediency, because of the great scarcity of reformed pastors, that no part of the church might be altogether neglected; they thought it better that several provinces should be vacant, than that any should be appointed who were unfit for so important a trust. ² Accordingly, although ten or twelve superintendents were, as we have seen, judged necessary, no more than five were ever appointed.

This plan, in another point of view, was very different from that of prelacy. For, as Calderwood observes, "in this head of superintendents, we have no degrees of superior or inferior, provincial or general superintendents, but all of one rank, without subordination of some to others; which is otherways in the hierarchie of the prelates, where we have bishops, archbishops, primats, and patriarches." ³

Such is the resemblance between these superintendents and the first bishops of Scotland, and also as to the mode of appointment, that one might almost suppose that our reformers had taken the college of Iona for their model. Both were chosen out of the common body. Both were subject to the authority of the presbyters or seniors. We have not

¹ Ibid. ch. VI. p. i. § 2.

² Ibid. ch. VI. p. iii. §. 6.

³ Hist. p. 27.

the slightest proof of ordination by any claiming superiority of office. They were equally teaching bishops. The principal design of the appointment of both, was the planting of churches, or, as it is expressed in the First Book of Discipline, "the establishment of the kirke;"¹ neither being suffered to live, as our reformers say, "as your idle bishops have done."² They were not distinguished from others, under any pretence of divine authority, but by man, merely for expediency. Thus the superintendents are described only as one class of preachers. Hence the compilers of the Book of Discipline say; "We have thought good to signifye to your honours such reasons as moved us to make difference betwixt preachers *at this time.*"³ Although, during several successive reigns, the crown still endeavoured to restore the hierarchy which had existed before the Reformation, it was still keenly opposed; and on every opportunity which the body of the nation had of expressing their inclinations, a national, (may I not say?) an hereditary, antipathy to this form of government was unequivocally manifested.

¹ First Book of Discipline. VI. 3.

² Ibid. VI. 2.

³ Ibid. VI. 1.