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BY THE

REV. W. LINDSAY ALEXANDER, D.D.,

FELLOW OF THE SOCIETY OF SCOTTISH ANTIQUARIES.

"That illustrious island, which was once the luminary of the Caledonian regions, whence savage clans and roving barbarians derived the benefits of knowledge and the blessings of religion."—DR. JOHNSON.

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CHAPTER I.

THE ISLAND.

"How beautiful beneath the morning sky
The level sea outstretches like a lake
Serene, when not a zephyr is awake
To curl the gilded pennant gliding by!
Within a bow-shot Druid Icolmkill
Presents its time-worn ruins, hoar and grey
A monument of eld, remaining still
Lonely, when all its brethren are away."

D. M. Moir.

God is often pleased, in the administration of the affairs of earth, to employ the feeblest instruments, as they appear to us, for the accomplishment of most important ends; and to select what we might be apt to deem the most unpromising spots, as centres of great and world-famous changes in the affairs of men. Of

this the entire course of the church's history furnishes striking illustrations. The calling of Abraham out of Ur of the Chaldees, a locality otherwise so utterly unknown to history, that it is only by conjecture that its position on the map can be now identified; the selection of Judæa, a mere corner of the earth, and connected with none of the great monarchies of the ancient world, as the scene of those special revelations of His being and perfections, by the knowledge of which the whole world is ultimately to be recovered from a state of rebellion and misery to a state of joyful submission to his will; the choice of Bethlehem, a small village appertaining to the smallest of the tribes of Israel, as the birthplace of the great Deliverer, by whom the race of man is to be saved; the appointment of twelve humble, poor, and for the most part illiterate men, as the apostles of that faith which is destined to supersede all others, and regenerate the whole aspect of human society:— these, with a multitude of like instances, strikingly show that, in this respect as in others, God's thoughts are not our thoughts, neither are his ways our ways. When man would produce any great result, he betakes himself to what appear the mightiest agents

and the most promising circumstances for the carrying out of his plan: when God would effect any of his great ends, he chooses "the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: that no flesh should glory in his presence," 1 Cor. i. 27—29.

It is the design of this book to unfold the history of a locality, which human wisdom would never have selected as a centre of influence, but which God was pleased to employ, many ages back, as the scene of some of the most important events in the early ecclesiastical history of this and adjoining countries. One of the smallest of the British isles, situated near a rugged and barren coast, surrounded by dangerous seas, and possessing no sources of internal wealth, Iona, has obtained an imperishable place in history, as the seat of civilization and religion, at a time when the darkness of heathenism hung over almost the whole of northern Europe, and as the source whence these blessings were very widely diffused in countries

whose inhabitants have ever since been in the foremost ranks of the human race.

This interesting little island has been known by different names, all of which are of Celtic origin, and all of which have a reference more or less directly to its reputation as a seat of learning and religion. In the earliest times, before the introduction of Christianity, it received a name, by which it is sometimes still designated by the Highlanders, *Innis-nan-Druidneach*, the Isle of the Druids, from the circumstance that this body had a college there. By the early writers it is frequently called *Hy* or more correctly *Ii*, (pronounced *Ee*,) which means island, a name which it seems to have borne by way of eminence, just as in Scripture the Euphrates is called "*the* river," and as among the ancient Romans "*the* city" meant Rome. After St. Columba, by his residence in it, had associated it inseparably with his name, and when, in consequence of this, it became a favourite place of sepulture for those whose rank entitled them, and whose devotion prompted them to ask a resting-place for their bones among its sacred dust, it came to be called *Ii-Cholum-chille*, that is, the island of Columba's cell, or cemetery, a name which it still retains

in the corrupted form of *Icolmkill*. The name *Iona*, or, as it is often written by the older authors, *Hyona*, has by some writers been referred to the Hebrew, from the idea that as *Columba* in Latin and *Jonah* (יוֹנָה) in Hebrew both signify a *dove*, the island was thus named out of learned reverence for the memory of the saint;* but this is a mere dream of men acquainted with the learned languages, whilst ignorant of that used by the inhabitants of the country to which this island belongs, as well as forgetful that the island has borne the appellation of which this is a corruption, from a period when the most learned of its inhabitants knew about as much of Hebrew as they did of Chinese.† The word is Gaelic, like the rest of the names bestowed on this island; it is a corruption of *Ii-shona*, (pronounced *Ee-hona*, the

* Even Pennant ("Tour in Scotland," p. 243) and Keith ("Catalogue of Scottish Bishops," p. 294) fall into this error. Neander commits the same mistake, with the additional one that the island was named St. Iona in consequence, and so he names it throughout his history.

† By all the old writers, the name applied to the island is either Hii or Hyona, or I-hona, never Iona. Adamnan, in his Life of Columba, refers to the identity of meaning between the name of the saint and that of the prophet Jonah, but never offers the most distant hint of any connexion between this and the name of the island.—See his second Preface, at the beginning.

s in Gaelic being silent before an aspirate,) and signifies *Holy Island.* Iona is often referred to by the historians who wrote in Latin under the name of "*Insula Sancta*," or Holy Island.*

Iona is situated in 56° 59′ of north latitude, on the south-western extremity of the island of Mull, from which it is separated by a strait of half a mile in breadth; its distance from the nearest point on the mainland of Scotland is thirty-six miles. It is about three miles in length, and one and a half in breadth. To visitors advancing from the east it presents the appearance of a plain, slightly elevated above the water, and which, as it recedes from the shore, is broken by numerous rocky hillocks of irregular shapes, and few of which exceed one hundred feet in height. The highest, called *Dun-Ii*, reaches an elevation of four hundred feet above the level of the sea. The surface of the plain is covered with the ruins of ecclesiastical buildings, intermingled with remains of the abodes of those who were wont to worship in them, and the miserable huts and shielings which furnish shelter to the present

* The same name was given by a colony from Iona to an island lying off the coast of Northumberland, and still, to this day, called Holy Isle.

inhabitants of the island. Numerous little valleys or basins, covered with verdure, stretch between the rising grounds, affording pasture for cattle, and a pleasant retreat for those who can enjoy solitude, or who would seek in retirement from the busy scenes of life a solace for grief, or an opportunity for meditation and prayer. It is pleasant to fancy how in the old times, when this island was a favourite spot for religious recluses, many a wounded spirit may have had his "rooted sorrow" assuaged amid the soothing quiet of these lonely valleys; and many an earnest prayer may have gone up to heaven from godly worshippers, who felt their devotion elevated, as they gazed from these "loopholes of retreat" upon the wild magnificence of the adjacent scenery, or listened to the solemn music that booms unceasingly from the roar and swell of the vast Atlantic.

Iona is estimated to contain a superficial area of two thousand imperial acres, of which about six hundred are under cultivation, the rest being natural pasture, morass, or rock. The climate is remarkably temperate, but the weather is uncertain, from the immense quantity of vapour continually drawn into the atmosphere from the surrounding ocean. The heat in summer is so

great, that a very few weeks suffice to quicken and ripen the grain; and were there a little more of enterprise and activity amongst the inhabitants, a plentiful return might be obtained from the soil. The pasture, which covers the hills from base to summit, is rich and abundant. The minerals, also, are of a kind which might yield a revenue to the proprietors, if properly worked out.

The shore of Iona is rugged and rocky at the extremities of the island, taken lengthwise; but on the two sides the coast runs more in a straight line, and forms, with occasional interruptions from rocks, a low sandy beach. There is no proper harbour on any part of the island: visitors usually land at a small sandy bay below the ancient abbey, where there is good anchorage within two cable-lengths of the shore. On the south-west part of the island there is another landing-place, called *Port-na-Curach;* but this can be used only in calm weather, as it is exposed to the western swell of the Atlantic; it was at this spot, as tradition goes, that Columba landed when he arrived from Ireland in his boat, and the name it bears (signifying Port of the Boat) is said to have been given to it in honour of this event. On one side is a mound

of earth, resembling in shape a boat with the keel turned up, which is said to have been raised to commemorate the arrival of the saint, and to give the exact length of his curach, namely, sixty feet; it is more probable that the resemblance to a boat is the result of accident, and being observed, some one invented the tradition by way of accounting for it.

In 1841, the population of Iona was five hundred, of which the greater part was collected together in the small village of Shuld. This is but a poor place, consisting chiefly of mud-built hovels, and not remarkable for any attention to cleanliness or comfort on the part of the inhabitants. Ecclesiastically, Iona forms part of the parish of Kilfinichen, in Argylshire; and, until a comparatively recent period, its inhabitants had no means of enjoying either religious or secular instruction on the spot, except from a quarterly visit paid to them by the minister of that parish. Some years ago, however, the Scottish Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge appointed a minister and schoolmaster to reside upon the island, both of whom are supported from the funds of that society. Since the formation of the Free Church also, a minister connected with that body has resided and laboured on the

island, so that the religious wants of the inhabitants may now be said to be amply provided for, so far, at least, as the outward means of instruction are concerned. The character of the people has, in a moral point of view, been always, upon the whole, respectable; their worst faults are indolence, and a disposition to prey upon the enthusiasm and credulity of the visitors whom the ancient fame of their island brings to its shores. The extent to which this is carried, makes it a serious annoyance to those who would fain enjoy the full effect of the sacred and unworldly associations of the place. As soon as the steamer lands its train of strangers upon the beach, a rush is made upon them by young and old, all eager to exchange bits of pebbles, or anything that will pass for a relic, for such sums as the ignorant or good-natured can be persuaded to give for them In reference to this—which is an evil almost inseparable from all localities where the people are poor, and to which either the charms of natural scenery or the recollections of bygone ages attract visitors, Wordsworth thus exclaims:—

"How sad a welcome! To each voyager
Some ragged child holds up for sale a store
Of wave-worn pebbles, pleading on the shore

Where once came monk and nun, with gentle stir,
Blessings to give, news ask, or suit prefer."

"Yet," he adds, with a glance at the little church, in which the elements of a purer and more elevating faith than that which monk or nun usually profess are now taught to the people—

"Yet is yon neat trim church a grateful speck
Of novelty amid the sacred wreck,
Strewn far and wide. Think, proud philosopher!
Fallen tho' she be—this glory of the west—
Still on her sons the beams of mercy shine;
And hopes, perhaps, more heavenly bright than thine,
A grace by thee unsought and unpossessed,
A faith more firm, a rapture more Divine,
Shall gild their passage to eternal rest."

Let us trust that these auspicious anticipations of the great poet shall be extensively realized among the inhabitants of Iona, and that by the faithful preaching among them of God's word, all the native excellences which belong to them may be more and more fully developed, and whatever vices ignorance and poverty may have entailed upon them, may be entirely eradicated. Their thrift, their powers of endurance, and a certain loftiness of bearing, which, in spite of all their meanness and wretchedness, seems to distinguish the inhabitants of this island—as if they caught insensibly a sort of elevation from

the traditionary associations and venerable remains amid which they have grown up—all induce us to indulge the hope, that "the Day Star of the West" may yet become the abode of a people worthy of its early pre-eminence and its imperishable fame.

A natural curiosity of some interest, the exact site of which has recently been discovered by a persevering stranger who carefully explored the island, and has with great accuracy delineated its remains, is the Spouting cave, as the natives call it. "It is situated [on the west side of the island] amongst very rugged crags and precipices of hard rock, and consists of a deep cavern, into which, at all states of the tide, the sea continually rolls, and at a particular height of the tide the *spouting* commences. It is apparently caused thus: A wave rolls into the cave, completely filling up the mouth, and as it advances, the air within becomes violently compressed at the end of the rocky passage. Then the wave losing its impetus, and the elasticity of the air causing it to expand as violently as it had been compressed, the sea is forced back out of the cave, and a great quantity of it finds a vent in a narrow crevice or chimney in the rocky roof, through which it rushes with

great force, throwing up into the air several tons of water—a gigantic *jet d'eau*. When it is considered that the unbroken force of the Atlantic dashes upon this rugged shore, it may be imagined with what fearful impetus this column of water, accompanied with a loud bellowing noise, issues from the bosom of the rock, carrying with it sea-weed, shells, and sometimes fragments of wrecks, to a great height, and then descends in a cataract, whilst the mist and spray are borne away by the gale like the smoke of a furnace. In moderate weather, when the spout is playing in milder mood, the effect is increased by the comparative calmness of the surrounding shores; and when the sun is shining, a continual rainbow hovers over the cave amongst the mists that float in the air, and which have not time to subside in the intervals between the *spouts*. At low water the spouting ceases, and allows of examining the crevice in the rock. The sea is heard reverberating in the vault below, and the air rushes up now and then, with a deep hollow sigh, which increases in force as the tide flows and the water rises in the cave."*

The ecclesiastical and monumental ruins

* "Antiquities of Iona," by H. D. Graham, Esq., p. 26.

which abound on this island constitute its principal objects of interest to the stranger. Of these some account will be given in a subsequent chapter, after we have glanced at certain points of interest in the early history of Iona.

CHAPTER II.

THE DRUIDS' ISLE.

"Et vos barbaricos ritus, moremque sinistrum
Sacrorum, Druidæ, positis repetistis ab armis.
* * * * * * * * Nemora alta remotis
Incolitis locis." LUCAN, Phars. i. 450.

"The Druids now whilst arms are heard no more,
Old mysteries and barbarous rites restore:
A tribe who singular religion love,
And haunt the lonely coverts of the grove." ROWE.

It has been already mentioned, that the earliest name borne by Iona, so far as now known, was *Innis-nan Druidneach*, or Isle of the Druids. This appellation indicates, that before the introduction of Christianity into these islands Iona was occupied as the seat of a Druidical college. Retreating before the hostility of the Romans, the Druids seem to have betaken themselves to the islands on the western shores of Britain, and there to have planted their schools or settlements; and though no record

even of a traditional kind is preserved of their residence in Iona, beyond the name above given, corroborated by the existence of a few Druidical remains still traceable on it and on the adjoining island of Mull, there seems no reason to doubt that the origin of such a name is to be sought in the fact, that the Druids had on this island an establishment of the same kind as those which they had in Anglesey.

We may, therefore, without impropriety, occupy a few pages in giving a slight sketch of the Druidical system, especially under its religious aspect, and of those collegiate institutions, one of which we believe to have been located on Iona.

The term "Druid" has been thought by some to be borrowed from the Greek word for an *oak*, δρυς, because of their attachment to this tree, and the reverence they paid it in a religious point of view. But this similarity in sound between the two words is probably merely accidental, as it is not at all likely that the Celtic tribes of Britain would use Greek words to denote such familiar objects as trees, or that they would name their most revered functionaries from a mere accident of their usages. It seems much more rational to derive the word

from the Celtic *Druidh*, a *sage* or *magus*, in which sense the word is still used.

The Druids combined the functions of the priest, the magistrate, the scholar, and the physician. They stood to the people of the Celtic tribes, amongst which they predominated, in a relation closely analogous to that in which the Brachmans of India, the Magi of Persia, and the priests of the Egyptians, stood to the people respectively by whom they were revered.* The affinities between the religious and philosophical systems of all these are so many and so close, that it is impossible to resist the conclusion that they all sprang from a common source, and that we have in them a remnant of the traditionary faith and science which the different tribes, after the Dispersion, carried with them from the original storehouse of patriarchal knowledge.

It has been common with a certain class of philosophers, to represent the earlier stages of man's history on earth as characterized by ignorance, darkness, and superstition, out of which he has had to work his way gradually,

* Diogenes Laertius classes the Druids with the Magi, the Gymnosophists, and the Chaldæans, as the originators of Philosophy (Procem. i. 1.) See also Origen *contra Cels.* lib. i. p. 14, ed. Spencer; Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* i. 16, § 71.

and by dint of hard labour; so that, according to them, the natural progress of man, when left to himself, is from ignorance to knowledge, from goodness to civilization, from a gloomy and materialized mythology to purer and more spiritual conceptions of God and his service. Never, perhaps, was there a theory formed more unsupported by facts than this. All the evidence extant bearing on the subject leads to an opposite conclusion. The authoritative narratives of the Bible—the traditionary recollections of all people—the remains of primeval theology and philosophy preserved by some of the oldest nations—and the actual experience of the race, as attested by the records of historical times—all concur in showing that the cradle of humanity was surrounded by a clear and brilliant illumination, and that man's subsequent course, when left without aid from above, has invariably been away from that light into ever-growing darkness and degeneracy. The very mythologies of the heathen tell of a golden age in the lost but unforgotten past, from the light and purity of which man has gradually degenerated; and poets and moralists in every age have delighted to dwell on the pleasant and profitable recollections of that

happy time, when their ancestors were not so vexed with doubts and questionings, or so immersed in darkness and impurity, as their descendants of a brazen or an iron age. What Wordsworth has poetically, but somewhat fancifully said of individuals, expresses well the feeling with which humanity, left to itself, longingly looks back to the good age that has for ever gone :—

> "Though inland far we be,
> Our souls have sight of that immortal sea
> Which brought us hither :
> Can in a moment travel thither,
> And see the children sporting on the shore,
> And hear the mighty waters rolling evermore."

Go where we will, we shall find the common belief, that time was when men were better than they are now; and to what can this common, this universal belief be ascribed, but to the traditional memorial of the fact, that the earlier ages of man's history were characterized by an amount of intelligence and piety which has, in the progress of human degeneracy, been wholly, or for the most part lost? That such was really the case the Bible distinctly informs us; and history, which is full of instances of man's sinking from knowledge and goodness to ignorance and impurity, but furnishes no case in

which an opposite course has been followed apart from extraneous illumination, suggests that it cannot have been otherwise. We may, therefore, safely repudiate the theory above stated—though it has many great names on its side—as one which only ignorance of the facts of the case could have led any one to frame, and only prejudice can induce any to retain.

Assuming the opposite of this theory to be true, we may expect to find, that the older any system of mythology is, the purer, generally speaking, it will be; we say *generally speaking*, because to expect this universally would be to overlook the influence of accidental or peculiar circumstances upon popular opinion and usage. Making due allowance for this qualifying influence, facts will be found in perfect harmony with the expectation above announced. In all the oldest systems of religion—in what may be called the primitive faiths of the Gentile world—we find indications, more or less marked, of their close relationship to that scheme of Divine truth which we have reason to believe was professed and taught by Noah, both whilst he acted as a preacher of righteousness to the antediluvian world, and when, after the flood, he discharged the functions of a patriarchal

chief to his posterity—functions which involved the duties of the priest as well as those of the prince.

Among these primitive faiths, the Druidical holds a high place. The Celtic tribes appear to have formed part at least of the great wave of population that moved from the original seats of the human family westward, to and over the plains of Europe. Descended from Japheth, they carried with them the principles of the patriarchal faith, in a form characteristic of the manly and vigorous intellect of that branch of the Noachian family; and as they continually moved in advance of the successive tides of immigrants that rolled into Europe from Asia, they retained for many ages their primitive creed, untinctured by any foreign admixture. Especially in the British islands was the purity of this ancient faith preserved; so much so, that young men from the continent, who were designed for the priesthood, were often sent over to the Druidical colleges of Britain, that they might learn there the principles of their religion more perfectly.* In the Druidical religion, therefore, as taught in Anglesey and Iona, we have, perhaps, the purest

* Cæsar *De Bello Gall.* lib. vi.

form in which tradition has been able to preserve the patriarchal faith.

Our information regarding the Druids is borrowed from notices contained in some of the classical writers, compared with the remains of Welsh and Gaelic poetry still extant. These latter, it is true, were composed at a period subsequent to the time of the Druids, but they are deeply imbued with the Druidical spirit, and they preserve entire many of the maxims which were current among the Druids, as well as the terms by which they were wont to designate objects of religious worship or veneration.

From these sources we learn that the Druids taught the existence of one God, to whom they gave the name of *Hu*, (pronounced *Hee*,) or *Dia*, *Dhia*, or *Dhe;* the former being the Welsh, the latter the Gaelic form of this word, which probably stands associated with the Hebrew *Jah* and *Jahve.* In Scotland, another name was applied to the supreme Being, namely, *Be' al*, which Celtic antiquaries tell us is a contraction of *Bea' uil*—"the life of everything," or "the source of all beings;"* and which, undoubtedly, has affinity with the Phœnician *Baal*, so often

* Smith's "Gaelic Antiquities," p. 16.

mentioned in Scripture. What renders this affinity more striking is, that the Phœnicians regarded their Baal also as the formative or quickening principle in nature,* and that both they and the Druids identified this, their supreme deity, with the sun. Among the latter, the sun was also called *Grian*, which is explained as signifying "the essence of fire," and was applied to the orb of day as the symbol of the supreme Deity. They seem also to have used different designations for God, according to the different relations they regarded him as sustaining, or the different agencies through which they believed Him to operate; and this, probably, is the source of the mistake committed by some of the classical writers, in attributing to them a multiplicity of gods.

The Druids used no images to represent the object of their worship, nor did they meet in temples or buildings of any kind for the performance of their sacred rites. A circle of stones, generally of vast size, and surrounding an area of from twenty feet to thirty yards in diameter, constituted their sacred place; and in the centre of this stood the *cromleach*, or altar, which was an obelisk of immense size, or a

* Munter, *Religion der Karthager*, s. 6.

large oblong flat stone, supported by pillars.* These sacred circles were usually situated beside some murmuring stream, and under the shadow of a grove or wide-spreading oak—an arrangement which was probably designed to inspire reverence and awe in the minds of the worshippers, or of those who looked from afar on their rites. Like others of the Gentile nations also, they had their "high places," which were large stones, or piles of stones, on the summits of hills; these were called *carns*, and were used in the worship of the Deity under the symbol of the sun. In this repudiation of images, and worshipping of God in the open air, they resembled their neighbours the Germans, of whom Tacitus says, that from the greatness of the heavenly bodies, they inferred that the gods could neither be inclosed with walls, nor assimilated to any human form; and he adds, that "they consecrated groves and forests, and called by the names of the gods that mysterious object which they beheld by mental adoration alone."†

In what manner and with what rites the Druids worshipped their deity, we have not the means of ascertaining with minute accuracy.

* Toland mentions one in Pembrokeshire, twenty-eight feet in height, and twenty in circumference.—*Miscell.* p. 97.

† *De Mor. Germ.* c. 9.

There is reason to believe that they attached much importance to the ceremony of going thrice round their sacred circle, from east to west, following the course of the sun, by which it is supposed that they intended to express their entire conformity to the will and order of the supreme Being, and their desire that all might go well with them according to that order.* It may be noticed, as an illustration of the tenacity of popular usages and religious rites,—how they abide with a people, generation after generation, in spite of changes of the most important kind, nay, after the very opinions out of which they have arisen have been repudiated, —that even to the present day certain movements are considered of good omen only when they follow the course of the sun,† and that in some

* Smith's "Gaelic Antiquities," p. 38.

† The practice, at one time *religiously* observed, of circulating the bottle at table according to the sun's course, is an instance of this; to do otherwise was deemed unlucky. It is curious to find how long this apparently trivial practice has characterized the Celtic nations. Athenæus quotes a passage from Poseidonius the Stoic, in which he says, speaking of the Celtæ, "at their feasts the servant carries round the wine from right to left. Thus they serve," he adds, "and they also worship their gods turning to the right."—*Deipnos.* lib. iv. p. 77. Dr. Smith mentions, that in the Highlands of Scotland, when a child happens to swallow anything against its breath, the mother or nurse will call out *deas-iul*, "the way of the south," (which happens also to be the name given to the Druidic ceremony,) as a charm to preserve the child from choking.

of the remote parts of the country, the practice is still retained of seeking good fortune by going thrice round some supposed sacred object from east to west.

That the Druids offered sacrifices to their god there can be no doubt. Cæsar and all the ancient authorities expressly attest the fact. But there is some uncertainty as to what they offered; and of the ceremonies connected with their offering, we know almost nothing. The classical writers affirm that they offered, in certain cases, human sacrifices; and Cæsar has given a detailed account of the manner in which this was done. "The whole nation of the Galli," says he, "is greatly given to its superstitions; and hence persons afflicted with serious diseases, or persons exposed to danger or engaged in war, either sacrifice, or vow that they will sacrifice men for victims; and for such sacrifices they use the services of the Druids, believing that unless the life of man be given for the life of man, due propitiation is not made to the deity of the immortal gods. They have also instituted sacrifices of this sort in public. Others have images of immense size, the limbs of which are framed with twisted twigs, and filled with living persons; these being set on fire, those within

are encompassed by the flames. The punishment of persons apprehended stealing or robbing, or doing any other injury, they believe to be especially agreeable to the gods; but when persons of this class are wanting, they do not scruple to destroy even the innocent."* Strabo confirms this account of Cæsar, but adds, that animals of all sorts were burned along with the men; he also says, that human victims were sometimes shot with arrows, sometimes crucified, and sometimes slain with the sword, in which last case the Druids made auguries from the quivering of their muscles.† Suetonius, Lucan, Plutarch, Diodorus Siculus, and Ammianus Marcellinus, all concur in attesting the fact; so that unless their testimony can be disproved from some competent source, it must be admitted as indubitable, that our British ancestors did offer human victims on the altar of their god. Many attempts have been made by Celtic writers to shake the testimony of the classical witnesses to this fact, but, we think, without any success. That Cæsar and his countrymen may have exaggerated the extent to which this practice was carried among the Celtic tribes,

* *De Bello Gall.* lib. vi.

† Lib. iv. p. 303, ed. Casaubon. Amst. 1707. Fol.

and that they have erred in speaking of the Druids as if they were polytheists, may be admitted, without in the least damaging their testimony to the fact. Exaggeration is only an unfair way of presenting truth; it is not the invention of a pure falsehood. A polytheist might speak of a monotheist sacrificing to the immortal gods, and yet be guilty of a mere error of phraseology, natural to one who always thought and always spoke of the objects of his own worship in the plural. Notwithstanding such slight inaccuracies, the evidence of the ancient writers to the matter of fact remains substantially unimpeachable; and this horrid custom of the Druids must be viewed as another illustration of the cruelty which inhabits all places where the light of revelation has not shone; as a striking evidence that heathenism, even in its purest forms, is always a religion alike harsh to man and dishonouring to God. It may be added, that the offering of human victims is characteristic of that whole class of ancient idolatries with which Druidism stands associated. The worshippers of the sun have in all countries and in all ages stained his altar with human blood.

Of the festivals observed by the Druids in

each year, two were deemed of especial importance. Of these, the former took place in the beginning of May, which was also the commencement of their year, and was called Be' il-tin, or fire of God. On this occasion, a large fire was kindled on some elevated spot, in honour of the sun, whose returning beneficence they thus welcomed, after the gloom and desolation of winter. Of this custom, a trace remains in the name given to Whitsunday in many of the Gaelic-speaking parts of Scotland, where it is still called Beltin-day. In the Lowlands, the same name was retained till a comparatively recent date.*

The other great festival of the Druids was called *Samh' in*, or fire of peace, and was held on Hallow-eve, which still retains this designation in the Highlands of Scotland. On this occasion, the Druids assembled in solemn conclave, in the most central part of the district, to discharge the judicial functions of their order. All questions, of whatever kind, whether public

* The poem of king James I. of Scotland, entitled "Peblis to the Play," begins thus :—

"At Beltane, quhen ilk bodie bownis
To Peblis to the play," etc.

that is, at Whitsuntide, when every person betakes himself to Peebles to the play, etc.

or private, all crimes against person or property, all disputes concerning inheritances and boundaries, were at this time brought before them for their adjudication. From their judgment there was no appeal, and upon those who did not submit to their decision the severest penalties fell. Such were interdicted from religious rites; and this, like the excommunication of a later age in the Romish church, was followed by exclusion from all intercourse with the rest of the community, and by an entire forfeiture of all social rights.* With these judicial acts were combined certain superstitious usages, the chief of which was the kindling of the sacred fire, from which all the fires in the district, which had beforehand been scrupulously extinguished, might be re-lighted. This usage of kindling fires on Hallow-eve lingered in the British islands long after the introduction of Christianity, and so attached were the people to it, that the Gaelic councils had to forbid it on pain of death.† In many parts of Scotland, the practice existed within the memory of persons still alive, but it is now, with many other like follies, become almost entirely obsolete.

* Cæsar *De Bello Gall.* lib. vi.

† Borlase, "Antiquities of Cornwall," p. 131, cited by Dr. Smith, "Gaelic Antiquities," p. 33.

Besides these two great annual festivals, the Druids were also in the habit of observing the full moon, and especially the sixth day of the moon. On the latter they sought the misletoe, which grew on their favourite oaks, and to which, as well as to the oak itself, they ascribed a peculiar virtue and sacredness. The discovery of it was an occasion of rejoicing and solemn worship. "They call it," says Pliny, "by a word in their own language, which signifies *Heal-all;* and having made solemn preparation for feasting and sacrifice under the tree, they drive thither two milk-white bulls, whose horns are then for the first time bound. The priest then ascends the tree, robed in white, and cuts it with a golden sickle. It is caught in a white mantle; after which they proceed to slay the victims, at the same time praying that God would render his gift prosperous to those to whom he had given it. They think that by drinking it, [that is, a decoction of it,] animals are cured of sterility, and that it is a remedy against all poisons."* The philosophical narrator winds up his account by the pithy reflection: "So great is the religiousness of the nations, in matters for the

* *Hist. Nat.* lib. xvi. cap. 44.

most part frivolous"—a just enough observation, but which he might have applied nearer home quite as appropriately as to the Druids. In all forms of heathenism, great importance belongs to little matters of detail and ritual. When the minister of religion has no message from God to expound, no Divine revelation to unfold, no gospel to preach, he can make himself an object of interest and reverence to the people, only by multiplying the occasions on which he may act the part of an awful hierophant or a skilful master of ceremonies.

Into this evil the Druids fell, because they were heathens; but they had less of it than Pliny's own countrymen, the flamens, augurs, and pontiffs of the Roman mythology; and even less of it than we find among the priesthood of the Romish church in the present day. The reason is, that they still retained the office of teachers, and could acquire influence by the force of their instructions, even without resorting to the spells and charms of a superstitious ritual. We have seen that they taught the existence and authority of one God; and that, to a certain extent, they set forth his spirituality; though their unhappy device of employing the sun as the symbol of Deity must have greatly

counteracted, especially with the people at large, the effect of this teaching. They taught also the radical distinction between right and wrong, the moral responsibility of man, the immortality of the soul, and a future state of rewards and punishments. Of their ethical teaching a valuable specimen is preserved in the Triads of the Welsh bards, and from this we may gather that their views of moral rectitude were on the whole just, and that they held and inculcated many very noble and valuable principles of conduct. From the statement of Diogenes Laertius, it would appear that the Druids of his day were wont to convey their instructions in much the same form as the Triads preserve. "The Druids," he says, "utter their philosophy in enigmatical sentences, (teaching) to reverence the gods, to do nothing evil, and to practise manly courage."* Indeed, their teaching, both as to form and as to substance, seems to have struck with admiration the more philosophic portion of their visitors and critics from amongst the Greeks and Romans; though these haughty observers could never bring themselves to regard or speak of them otherwise than as "barbarians."

Their notions of a future state embraced the

* Procem. § 6.

conception of an island of the blessed, called by the Celts *Flath-innis*, or Isle of the Brave—the name still used in Gaelic for heaven; and of a place of woe, to which they gave the name of *Ifurin*, or Isle of the Cold Clime—their most vivid notions of suffering being connected with intense cold. The former of these places was in their belief a paradise of all kinds of delight. In the words of an ancient Gaelic song, "The valleys were open and free to the ocean; trees loaded with leaves, which scarce moved to the light breeze, were scattered on the green slopes and rising grounds. The rude winds walked not on the mountain; no storm took its course through the sky. All was calm and bright; the pure sun of autumn shone from his blue sky on the fields.* He hastened not to the west for repose, nor was he seen to rise from the east. He sits on his midday height, and looks on the Noble-isle. . . . . On the rising hill are the halls of the departed—the high-roofed dwellings of the heroes of old."†

On the other hand, their Tartarus was a place

* Autumn is the finest season of the year in the Highlands; and hence the poet speaks of his paradise as always enjoying an autumnal sun.

† Macpherson's "Introduction to the History of Britain," p. 183.

of chill, and gloom, and desolation, which no sunbeam irradiated or warmed, and where venomous serpents and ferocious animals tormented without destroying the unhappy beings who were doomed to its eternal prison. Nor were these doctrines of the Druids concerning a future state mere poetic dreams, like the Elysium and Tartarus of the classic mythology; they were brought to bear upon the minds of the people as solemn realities, under the power of which it behoved them to live and act. The effect of their belief in the immortality of the soul, in making them courageous and prodigal of life, is noticed by several of the ancient writers who have left accounts of them.* So confident was their belief in a future state, that it is recorded of them that they gave loans of money to each other, to be repaid when they should reach the island of the brave. The historian who records this adds: "I should call them fools, were it not that the stoled Pythagoras believed the same as these men in trews."†

* Cæsar *De Bello Gall.* vi.; Val. Max. ii. 6; Diodorus Sic. *Bibl.* v.; Ammianus Marcellinus, xv.; Pomp. Mela, iii. 2; Lucan, Phars. i.

† Val. Max. l. c.—Others of the ancient writers compare them with Pythagoras, in respect of this part of their faith. But Pythagoras held the doctrine of metempsychosis, or the transmigration of souls, which it is doubtful if the Druids

Before passing from the religious opinions of the Druids, it may be worth while to mention that they preserved among them a tradition of the deluge, and regarded Britain as having been peopled by the pair who escaped from the destroying waters. By some learned writers,* an attempt has been made to show that Noah, as the great deified hero of the ancient world, was the object whom the Druids identified with the sun, and worshipped as the supreme God. But though there is nothing certainly inherently absurd in the supposition that the second father of the human race may have, in process of time, become an object of religious veneration to his descendants, who, allowing the knowledge of the true God to slip out of their minds, would naturally seek to supply its place by mythical representations of an object so justly memorable as the patriarch—the theory is, nevertheless, too little sustained by evidence to justify us in adopting it.

Besides their religious functions, the Druids discharged important duties to the Celtic tribes, as judges, magistrates, and lawgivers. Their

held, at least in the form in which it was taught by Pythagoras, who was of opinion that human souls might pass into the bodies of brutes.

* Davies, "Mythology and Rites of the British Druids," p. 95.

laws were in general characterized by good sense and humanity; they inculcated the social virtues, especially that of hospitality to strangers; and they sought to secure the rights of property and of life among the different members of the community. As judges and magistrates, they were characterized by justice, inclining to severity; their power in this respect was unbounded, and they taught the people to believe that their judgments, in capital cases or cases of excommunication, extended beyond this world to the next. In cases of a dubious nature, they practised the trial by fire, called, in the Gaelic branch of the Celtic, *Gabha-Bheil*, "the jeopardy or trial of Beil." This consisted in making the accused party pass thrice barefooted through a fire, kindled for the purpose—usually the *Samh' in*, or fire of peace, mentioned previously; if he escaped unhurt, it was received as the verdict of Heaven in his favour; if he were burned, he was held guilty, and was accordingly condemned. This obviously preposterous mode of determining the truth, seems to have arisen out of an early and wide-spread tradition of the manifestations vouchsafed in early times to the patriarchs of God's omniscience and justice,

in the revelation of secret crimes to those whose duty it was to punish them. The practice of trial by ordeal may be traced among all people, and has subsisted under various forms to the present day, even in Christianized countries. It still lingers faintly amongst us in the form of the duel, which is professedly a judicial combat, or appeal to God, to decide, by the result of the encounter, which of the parties is the guilty one. But the enlightened mind of the age has pronounced its verdict of condemnation upon this barbarous usage, the relic of a dark and superstitious era, and we may hope soon to number it too among the things that are obsolete. Where God is pleased to authorize an appeal to his omniscience in dubious cases, was as done in the old times, before the coming of Christ, both among the patriarchs and the Jews, it becomes both the duty and the privilege of the people to use a fitting mode of making such appeal; but where no such authority is given, as is the case under the Christian dispensation, all attempts of this kind, however made, are alike presumptuous and foolish. It must be added, that at no time did God authorize such modes of appeal to him as that practised by the Druids. On the

contrary, they were marked by his express reprobation, (see Deut. xviii. 10—12.)

The Druids were also the men of science and learning of their age and people. Whether they were acquainted with letters or not has been disputed, though the probability is strong that they were, to a certain extent at least, familiar with the expression of words by means of alphabetical signs; but it is certain that they committed nothing of their theology, their history, their science, or their poetry, to writing. Their teaching was entirely oral, and their literature (if such a word may be used in such a case) was preserved solely by tradition. Notwithstanding this disadvantage, however, and notwithstanding the still greater disadvantages arising from their secluded position, and the limited sphere of observation to which they were confined, they seem to have made no small advances in natural science, and to have possessed a considerable stock of national history and poetry. Cicero had heard of and commemorates their attention to physiology, or the order and laws of nature;* and Cæsar tells us, that "they investigated and taught to

* *De Divinatione*, lib. i. c. 41. Comp. Strabo, *Geogr.* iv p. 197.

the youth placed under their charge many things concerning the stars and their motions, concerning the size of the world and the lands, concerning the nature of things, concerning the might and power of the immortal gods."* In this testimony other ancient writers concur;† and it seems indubitable that not only in practical astronomy, but in several of the mechanical sciences, and in many of the scientific arts, their proficiency was considerable. This enabled them to retain their power over the people, as well by the real benefits they conferred on them as teachers and as physicians, as by the artifices of natural magic to which it enabled them to resort.‡

Their history consisted of traditional tales, many of them purely fabulous, and all of them invested with more or less of a mythical garb, in which the heroic deeds of their forefathers were celebrated, and their example commended

* *De Bello Gall.* lib. vi.

† Comp. Pompon. Mela, lib. iii. c. 11.

‡ Lucan tells us, (Phars. lib. iii. v. 417—421,) that in the Druidical grove, near Marseilles, "it was reported that often the hollow caverns bellowed with an earthquake, and the yew trees which were lying down rose again, and fires flashed through the unconsumed wood, and dragons, embracing the oaks, glided swiftly round." This effect must have been produced by some detonating and explosive mixture—Could these Druids have been acquainted with gunpowder?

to their descendants. These were apparently in verse, and thus constituted part of the poetry as well as the history of the Druids. But, besides this, they had poems of various kinds, which were repeated or chanted by the bards. Of these, some were ethical, and contained the wisdom of the Druids, presented in a pointed, condensed, and memorable form, of which it is believed that a specimen still survives in the Welsh Triads. In the Gaelic poems of Ossian, also, we have, if not the actual productions of Druidical times, unquestionably very close reminiscences of the songs of the Druidical bards. Lucan has celebrated these bards in his Pharsalia, and at the same time has indicated the principal themes of their compositions :—*

> "You, too, ye bards! whom sacred raptures fire
> To chant your heroes to your country's lyre;
> Who consecrate in your immortal strain
> Brave patriot souls in righteous battle slain.
> Securely now the tuneful task renew,
> And noblest themes in deathless songs pursue."

In connexion with poetry, the bards were proficients in music; and such, it is recorded, was the power of their music over the people, that they could arrest an army on the very

* Lib. i. v. 447.

point of engaging in battle, whilst at other times their songs and shouts added increased courage and vigour to those who were struggling with the foe.

In fine, the Druids acted as the physicians of their nation. Like all heathen and ignorant nations, the Celtic tribes attributed diseases to influences which might be counteracted by magical charms and amulets; and to this belief the Druids were not unwilling to pander, as it tended to increase their authority and power over the people. One of their principal charms was the *glein-neidr*, or adder stone, called by Pliny "*ovum anguinum*," but which in reality was merely a sort of beads of different coloured glass and of different sizes. The Druids gave out that they were produced by snakes, and were obtained only by great adroitness and at considerable risk. To this the following lines refer :—

" . . . The potent adder stone,
Gendered 'fore th' autumnal moon,
When in undulating twine
The foaming snakes prolific join;
When they hiss, and when they bear
Their wondrous egg aloof in air;
Thence before to earth it fall
The Druid in his hallowed pall
Receives the prize; and instant flies,
Follow'd by the envenomed brood,
Till he cross the crystal flood."

But, besides these absurdities, the Druids used rational means for the cure of disease, and then their practice was simple, and at least harmless, if it were of little efficiency. Their sovereign remedy was the misletoe, which, as already mentioned, they named the *heal-all*. Pliny tells us that they made use of a species of the juniper, closely allied to the Savine, (*Juniperus Sabina*,) and called the Selago, which they collected with much religious ceremony, and regarded as sovereign in its preservative powers; its smoke was used as a specific for the cure of diseased eyes. Another plant used by them for medicinal purposes was one called the Samolus, a species of herb, growing in marshy places, and especially valued as curative of the diseases of their cattle. But their principal reliance seems to have been placed on nature's great prophylactics—temperance, cheerfulness, and exercise. These they earnestly prescribed to their patients, as the surest means of preserving or restoring health.* It should also be mentioned, that they taught the people that no medicine could be efficacious without the Divine blessing.

* In this their medical philosophy may be said to have come very near to that of the celebrated but eccentric Abernethy, who was wont to aver that all diseases are produced originally by one of two causes—*stuffing* and *fretting*.

Even the mystic virtues of the misletoe were regarded as ineffectual without this, and hence in cutting it they prayed to God, that he would bless his own gift to those on whom he had bestowed it.

Such were the offices of the Druids to the tribes among whom they lived; it yet remains for us to notice the relations in which the members of the Druidical body stood to each other.

The Druids were divided into classes. This much is certain; but what these classes were, or what constituted their respective functions, are points involved in considerable uncertainty. The classical writers agree in asserting that there were three grades of Druids; but whilst one enumerates these thus, Druids, Bards, and Vates,* another makes them Druids, Bards, and Eubages.† Some have supposed that Eubages is a mistake for Vates, (or, as the Greeks wrote it, *Ouates*,‡) but this is not probable, as Ammianus Marcellinus, on whom the mistake would be chargeable, was not likely to substitute by mistake a foreign word for one with which

* Strabo, lib. iv. p. 197.
† Ammian. Marcell. lib. xv.
‡ Bochart, *Geog. Sac.* p. 667.

he was daily familiar. The most probable hypothesis for reconciling the two statements is, that Ammianus has mistaken the pupils or candidates of the Druids for one of the three orders into which they were divided, and that the obscure name Eubages, which he has given, is a corruption of the Celtic *eu-phaiste*, which signifies *good* or *promising youths*. With this hypothesis agree very well what that writer has stated as the duty of the Eubages, namely, to investigate the secrets of nature. This, as we may well believe, constituted a principal part of the training in the Druidical seminaries.

Of the three orders given by Strabo, the respective functions seem to be capable of being sufficiently discriminated. The Druid, properly so called, was the minister of religion, and the person who discharged judicial and legislative duties; the Bard was the poet and historian of the tribe; and the Vates, or Faidh, was the observer of omens, the student of natural phenomena, and the predicter of events. There is reason to believe, that separate colleges, each comprising these different ranks, were formed in different places. These were independent of each other; but all were under the authority of a supreme pontiff, who held the title of Arch-

Druid, or, as the Celtic has it, *Coibhi-Druidh.* To the holder of this office the utmost reverence was paid. His word was law, and his decision the decree of Heaven.*

These different classes were subordinated to each other, and an individual passed from a lower to a higher, according as his merit entitled him. The Arch-Druid was chosen for life. When the office became vacant, if there was any one of unquestioned superiority to the rest, he succeeded to it; if not, then a person to fill the office was elected by the suffrages of the rest. So great was the anxiety to secure this dignity, that sometimes the elections were determined by an appeal to arms.†

The Druids enjoyed immunity from all taxes; and though they generally followed the army to the field, they were not required to bear

* The veneration in which his character was held, and the firm reliance which men had upon his friendship and assistance, may be learned from the following proverb:—

"Ge fagus clach do làr
'S faigse na lin cabhair Coibhi."

"*The storm is not so near the earth as the help of Coibhi is to those who need his aid.*"—Smith's "Gaelic Antiquities," p. 8.

† Cæsar *De Bello Gall.* lib. vi. This latter statement must mean, not that the Druids themselves fought, for it was one of their principles to abstain from arms; but that the adherents of the respective candidates among the laity fought. Perhaps political interests were often involved in the election of such an officer then, as well as now.

arms. They were distinguished from the rest of the community by their dress and the arrangement of their person. Their upper garment reached to the heels, whilst with others it reached only to the knee; their beards were long, whilst others wore their beards short, except on the upper lip. Each had a knife of peculiar shape suspended from his girdle, and they wore white caps, ornamented with gold plates, in shape like a fan. A white wand, an egg-shaped amulet, inclosed in gold and suspended round the neck, and a white pallium or surplice, completed the costume of the ordinary Druid. The Arch-Druid, in addition to these garments, wore a white mantle edged with gold; around his neck was a golden chain, from which was suspended a gold plate, inscribed with the words, "The gods require sacrifice;" on the front of his Druid's cap was a golden representation of the sun, under a half-moon of silver, supported by two Druids, one at each cusp, in an inclined posture.* The lower grades of the Druidical college were less splendidly attired. The Bard wore a white mantle and a

* See "Ireland: its Scenery, Characters, etc.," by Mr. and Mrs. S. C. Hall, vol. i, p. 396, where also a wood-cut is given of a Druid and a Faidh.

blue cap, ornamented with a gold crescent. The Faidh wore a mantle of grey or sky-blue, with a white hood, called the prophet's hood; and his badge was a golden star, with the inscription, "The judgment of Heaven will severely punish iniquity."

These peculiar and ornate costumes, as well as the more solid advantages enjoyed by the Druidical order, were intended, doubtless, to preserve and deepen their influence over the minds of the people. To this all their institutions and usages were made conducive; and it cannot be denied, that a wise policy marked the means they employed for this purpose. At the same time, when we consider the low state of civilization of the Celtic tribes anterior to the introduction of Christianity among them, it must be admitted that the supremacy of the Druids rested upon a worthier basis than that of mere policy and craft. However much we, from our more advanced stand-point of knowledge, refinement, and religious belief, may see in their system which was false and pernicious, we need only compare them with the priests and teachers of other heathen nations under similar circumstances, to be constrained to admit, that their rule must have been, on the

whole, a boon to the people over whom they exercised it. They taught much that was true, much that was useful, much that was calculated to subserve the social interests of the community. If along with this they carefully sought their own supremacy, and often exercised their power tyrannically, it must be remembered, that among rude and semi-barbarous people, it is often necessary to resort to such means, in order to induce attention to measures without which their social welfare could not be promoted.

This ancient system struck its roots deep, and spread its branches wide, wherever the Celtic inhabitants of Europe settled. From the age of the patriarchs down to that of Julius Cæsar, it reigned with uninterrupted sway. During all that long period, however, it showed its utter incompetency to elevate a people above a very humble point in the scale of refinement. It showed, also, that a system of religion which depends solely on tradition or human reason, not only can never advance beyond the limits of its original development, but cannot preserve itself from continual deterioration. Slowly, but surely with each successive generation, Druidism departed from the simplicity of the patriarchal faith, until at length it opened its

bosom to the polytheism of the Romans, and became more fallen and degraded than ever.

But this contact with the Romans prepared the way for the entrance of a more blessed and life-giving faith among the people of these islands. Against the Druids, as their chief enemies, these conquerors of the world directed their unsparing fury, and when the inaccessible mountains of the northern part of our island repressed the further progress of the enemy, internal discord completed what the arms of Rome had commenced. The Druids, harassed at all points on the mainland, retreated to Anglesea and Iona, where for a season they found shelter, and continued their now dishonoured rites. As Wordsworth sings :—

> "The Julian spear
> A way first opened; and with Roman chains,
> The tidings come of Jesus crucified;
> They come—they spread: the weak, the suffering hear;
> Receive the faith, and in the hope abide."

"To pave the way for the introduction of Christianity," says Dr. Smith,* "seems to have been the great end which Providence had to secure in these countries by the Roman conquests, although it was in their heart only to

* "Gaelic Antiquities," p. 84.

destroy and cut off nations not a few ..... For this exchange," says the same writer, "we can never be sufficiently thankful. Druidism may have been the purest of all pagan superstitions, and perhaps the very wisest of all institutions that were merely human. But our religion is Divine."

Viewed in this light, such inquiries as those pursued in this chapter are both interesting and instructive. A poet has said, "The proper study of mankind is man;" and provided this be understood in its widest sense, as embracing not merely the philosophy of man's nature and the history of his operations on earth, but along with these his moral interests and his relation to the Being who made him, the maxim is one which deserves to be commended and adopted. But what is there connected with man so profoundly interesting—what so illustrative of his inner being and essential tendencies, as the religions he has embraced? The religious sentiment is peculiar to man among the inhabitants of this earth, and it is universally characteristic of the race. "Savage hordes," says a French philosopher, "barbarous tribes, nations in the highest region of social development, those who are languishing in the decrepitude and decay of

civilization—all demonstrate the power of this indestructible sentiment."* To trace this eminently human, this universally operative sentiment, under the several forms in which it has clothed itself, and amid the varied efforts by which it has struggled to find its object, is one of the most instructive occupations in which the student of man can engage. The history of religion is pre-eminently the inner history of humanity.

The Druidical system has not only the claim upon us in this respect which all forms of religion, professed extensively amongst men, possess; it has, besides, a peculiar importance arising from its great antiquity. As already intimated, it carries us back to the second cradle of the human race. Its birthplace was on the plain of Shinar, by the side of that daring edifice which the unsubdued pride of man sought to raise up to heaven, but which only furnished a new occasion for the manifestation of God's omnipotence and entire control over his creatures. As the branch of the Japhetic family which formed the Celtic tribes moved westwards and northwards from the original seat of the human race, its members carried with

* Benjamin Constant, *De la Religion*, liv. i. chap. 1.

them the social institutions and the traditionary faith of the patriarchs; both of which became gradually corrupted—the former into the system of clanship and vassalage, the latter into the superstition of the Druids; but both of which connect our British plains and hills, in spiritual and social relationship, with the valley of the Euphrates and the days of Noah. This cannot but make such inquiries especially interesting to every native of these islands; while to the Christian mind an additional interest will be communicated, by the contrast presented by the condition of the British people now, under the mild, elevating, and purifying influence of Christianity, and the condition of our ancestors under the reign of Druidism. Superior as the latter was to many other forms of superstition, it conferred on the people few social advantages; whilst, in regard to all that most concerned them as accountable and immortal beings, it left them to grope their way through the thick darkness of ignorance and error. It is to Christianity—at length, in these later centuries, restored to us in its proper character and spiritual majesty—that we owe all that dignifies us as a people, all that sustains us as a community, and all that makes a genuine British

fireside the purest and happiest spot on this sin-blighted earth.

Let the voyager, then, as he descends upon the shores of Iona, remember with gratitude to God, that but for the blessed dawn of Christianity upon these lands, a very different scene might have presented itself from that which greets his eye. Instead of these venerable ruins, monuments of educated skill and memorials of bygone devotion—instead of these neat, though humble churches, that bespeak a still-abiding reverence for God and hope in his grace—instead of these humble and peaceable, though poverty-stricken traffickers, who are doing their best to pass off their little wares—his eye might have rested on the shapeless and rugged stones of the cromlech, or caught a glimpse of the stealthy advance of some half-naked and crouching savage, impatient to rob him of property and life, or gazed on the hideous spectacle of a hecatomb of human victims, perishing amid the protracted agonies of the cruelest of deaths. The religion of Christ, the doctrine of salvation through faith in his atoning blood, has here, as elsewhere, proved itself the true civilizer, the only effectual ameliorater of society.

CHAPTER III.

ST. COLUMBA'S ISLE.

. . . . "Isle of Columba's cell,
Where Christian piety's soul-cheering spark
(Kindled from heaven between the light dark
Of time) shone like the morning star."—WORDSWORTH.

THE Druids retained their predominance in Iona, and over the adjacent islands and mainland, until the year of our Lord 563 or 564, when they were supplanted, and their superstitions overturned, by the arrival of St. Columba, the apostle of the Highlands, by whom the inhabitants of that district were first led to profess Christianity.

Of this very remarkable and memorable man two biographical accounts are extant, written, the one about sixty-nine, and the other eighty-three years after his death. The authors of these, Cumin and Adamnan, were both successors of Columba as abbot of Iona; so that

the main facts of his history are within reach of the inquirer.* Unhappily, indeed, both biographers have indulged that love of the marvellous which characterized all the monkish historians, and have too often sought rather to manufacture miracles than to narrate the events of Columba's life exactly as they occurred. Still, notwithstanding the mass of fable in which these writers have involved the narrative of his actual experiences and exploits, we believe that by a little care and discrimination, the true may be so far disentangled from the fictitious and the exaggerated, as to enable us to contemplate with tolerable certainty his striking and interesting career.

Columba, or Colum, (as his name originally was before it was Latinized,) was the son of Phelim, the son of Fergus, who is said to have been the grandson of the great Niell, king of Ireland.† On the side of his mother he was

* Both these narratives are to be found in Pinkerton's *Vitæ Antiquæ Sanctorum qui habitaverunt in Scotia vel in insulis ejus, etc.* London, 1789. That of Adamnan comprises three books. Of these, the first is devoted to the prophetic revelations of Columba, the second to his miracles, and the third to the angelic visions he enjoyed. The reader will see from this the sort of notion the abbot Adamnan had of the duties of a biographer.

† *Niell Naighiallach*, or Niell of the Nine Hostages, so called from the hostages he received from so many nations that were

descended from Lorn, one of the earliest princes of the Scots, or, as they were called, the Dalriads of Argylshire. He was thus a person of royal descent, and though born in Ireland, closely connected by birth with that country to which his future labours were so beneficially devoted. There is even reason to believe that he was born to large possessions as well as to lofty rank. In declining an offer of Sigibert, king of France, he is reported to have said, "It behoves not one who, for the name of Christ, has relinquished his own wealth, to accept that of others." Odonellus tells us that he voluntarily divested himself of his property, and allowed it to devolve upon his three uncles; and he even intimates, that among other things thus resigned by the saint, was his right of succession to a crown, which was to have come to him through his father.*

The exact spot of his birth has not been recorded, but the year of his birth is sufficiently attested to have been A.D. 521.† At an early

under subjection to him. He was the hundred and thirty-fifth monarch of Ireland, according to native tradition.—O'Flaherty's *Ogygia*, vol. ii. p. 328. Hely's Transl.

* Odonelli, *Vit. Col.*, cited by Smith, "Life of Columba," p. 50.

† "Annals of Tighernac, Innisfallen, Buellan, and Ulster." *Rerum Hib. Script. Vett.*, ed. O'Connor.

period he was placed under the care of a pious presbyter, named Cruinechan, who discerned in him, whilst yet a child, tokens of superior grace and ability, which he regarded as the special gift of Heaven to his pupil.* He afterwards received the instructions of Finnian, bishop of Clonard, a man of repute for his learning; of Fenbar, also a bishop and a saint; and of a teacher of Leinster, whose name was Gemman. By all of these teachers he was greatly esteemed, partly for his attainments, but principally for his piety. From Finnian he received, whilst yet a youth, the appellation of Saint. Gemman was wont to give him the same title, and though greatly his senior, to treat him as his companion and counsellor rather than as his pupil. His reputation for piety was greatly extended by a circumstance which took place whilst he was under the tuition of Gemman. One day, the two were in the field, pursuing their studies at some little distance from each other, when a girl, hotly pursued by a barbarian, cast herself at the feet of Gemman, and besought his protection. The old man instantly summoned Columba to his aid, but their efforts proved unavailing; the

* Adam. iii. 2.

infuriated pursuer rushed upon his victim, and buried his spear in her heart. Horror-struck by the scene, Gemman appealed to Heaven against such inhumanity, and asked, "How long shall atrocity like this pass unpunished?" "It may be," cried Columba, "that the soul of the murderer may reach hell as soon as that of his victim enters heaven." The words were hardly spoken when the ruffian, who was moving away, was seen to stagger and fall, and was found to have expired on the spot. The story, though told with some embellishment, is probably in substance a true one. Such scenes of lawless violence we may well believe were not unfrequent in Ireland in those times, and the speedy vengeance which overtook the murderer may have been the natural result of the fury of his passion and the exertion of his chase. To Columba's contemporaries, however, it appeared a miracle, and they took it as a proof of the special favour in which he was held, on account of his piety, by Heaven.*

Columba was now in deacon's orders, and his fame had spread over the greater part of the land. About this time, he appears to have spent some time in the monastery of Clon, on

* Smith, p. 8.

the Shannon, where he enjoyed the instructions of its founder, the celebrated St. Ciaran, who had preached to the Attacotti, or Dalriads, of Kintyre, and from whom the town of Campbelton, in Isla, the capital of that district, took its ancient name of Kil-chiaran. For this individual Columba ever retained the strongest affection, esteeming him as well for his piety and zeal, as for the benefits he had himself reaped from his society and teaching. A Latin ode, which he wrote after St. Ciaran's death, is still extant, in which he commemorates his virtues, thanking Christ for sending to the world such an apostle, and styling him the lamp of this island, (*Lucerna hujus insulæ.*) How long Columba remained at Clon is uncertain; probably till the death of St. Ciaran, which took place when Columba was in his twenty-seventh year. Of the reputation in which he was held by its inmates, we may form some conjecture from the joy they testified and the honours they paid him on his return to visit them some years afterwards. "The whole of them," says Adamnan, "singing hymns and praises, conducted him to the church, and lest, as he walked, he should be annoyed by the pressure of the multitude, a

protection, formed of pieces of wood bound together, was carried by four men, who timed their steps to his." In the year following his leaving Clon, he is recorded to have founded a monastery at Dairmagh, (the Field of Oaks,) which some identify with Durrough, in King's County, and others with the modern Derry.

After this, some time elapsed, during which Columba is said to have visited several foreign countries, including not only France and Italy, but the localities of some of the eastern churches, from which he is reported to have borrowed the model of his monastic rule. Over this part of his life, however, great uncertainty hangs, and the latter statement seems to have been merely a conjecture, adopted in consequence of the affinity between many of the institutions and usages established at Iona and those of the churches of the east.

Insinuations have been thrown out to the effect that Columba left Ireland, after his return from the continent, in consequence of troubles into which he was brought by his ambition and fondness for meddling with politics. But this is so alien from his general character, and so unlike his subsequent conduct, that we may well doubt the truth of the

statement; whilst the high reputation in which he was afterwards held in Ireland, and the honours paid to him when he visited it by men of all ranks, seem utterly incompatible with the belief that he had left it as a disgraced fugitive from punishment which his disorderly conduct had merited. His well-established piety and zeal would rather lead us to believe that his visit to Scotland was dictated by a sincere desire to diffuse through that country the blessings of Christianity, and with this supposition his subsequent conduct is in harmony. Ireland was at this time a land of gospel light, whilst the western and northern parts of Scotland were still immersed in the gloom of heathenism. Connected as Columba was by birth with the Dalriadic princes, he could not be ignorant of the condition of the Scots and Picts in this respect, nor, we may believe, was he indifferent to it. Whenever any man is himself the subject of the blessings of the gospel; whenever, as a guilty sinner, he has been led to cast himself on the propitiatory merits of Christ, and has found peace, where alone the guilty can find peace, in the pardoning grace of God, flowing through the sacrifice accomplished on Calvary—he will, above all

things, desire to communicate to others what he himself has found, and will especially commiserate those who are lying under the oppression and misery of heathenism. If Columba, then, was in any degree what history has represented him to be, he must have been anxious to carry to the country of his mother the greatest boon man can convey to his fellowmen; and as there is no part of his ascertained history which militates against this supposition, we have no right to deny him the high honour to which it would entitle him.

It was in the year 563 or 564, as before mentioned, that Columba reached Iona, on the evening of Whit-Monday, according to the annals of Innisfallen.* He made the passage in a *curach*, or wicker boat, covered with hides, accompanied by twelve friends, whose names have been preserved.† It is said that the Druids, who still occupied the island, used all

* "Prima nox ejus in Albain in Pentecosten."—O'Connor, *Rer. Hib. Script. Vett.*

† They are thus given by Adamnan:—"The two sons of Brenden, *Baithen*, called also *Conin*, and *Cobthach* his brother; *Ernaan*, the uncle of Columba; *Diormit*, his servant; *Rus* and *Fechno*, the two sons of Rodain; *Scandal*, son ot Bresal, son of Endei, son of Neil; *Luguid Mocuthemne; Echoid; Tochannu Mocufiratia; Cairnaan*, son of Branduil, son of Meilgi; and *Grillaan*.

means to prevent his settling there, and that some of them even resorted to the pretence of being Christian monks, that they might induce Columba, from respect to their rights of priority, to retire and leave them in undisturbed possession. The savage natives, also, on the adjoining shores, incommoded him by their hostility, and on several occasions endangered his life by their attacks. Even the Pictish king, Brude, of whose territory Bede says Iona then formed a part, haughtily refused to open the gates of his fastness to receive the stranger. On one occasion, a village in which he was spending the night was set on fire by his enemies. On another occasion, whilst he was on the island of Himba, a ruffian of the name of Lamhdes rushed upon him with his spear, and would have transfixed him as he stood, had not Finduchan, one of Columba's disciples, stepped forward, and received in his own bosom the blow destined for his master, and which was urged with such violence, that, had it not been for the thickness of Finduchan's leathern jacket, his own life would have been the ransom price of that of his beloved superior. But the gracious Providence which preserved Columba on this occasion, continued to protect him against both

the wiles and the violence of his enemies; until at length, his own unwearied zeal, his piety, his prudence, and the doctrines he preached, gradually won for him the respect of the rude people among whom he had come to settle, and ultimately gave him a position of high influence among them.

By what stages Columba, assisted by his faithful disciples, advanced, it is impossible for us to narrate, as his biographers have dealt rather in eulogies of his character than in details of his operations. We know only that a gift of the island of Iona was conveyed to him by the king—that there Columba established a monastery, of which he was the abbot—that he was incessant in his labours to disseminate an acquaintance with the Scriptures and the doctrines they contained throughout the Highlands and Islands of Scotland—that he still retained some ecclesiastical connexion with Ireland, and some authority over certain of its monastic institutions, perhaps those which he himself had founded*—that he was the founder

* Jocelin, in his "Life of St. Patrick," (c. 89,) says, that he founded one hundred monasteries in Ireland. Odonell says, that in Ireland and Scotland together he founded three hundred churches and monasteries, (vol. iii. p. 42.)

of many similar institutions in Scotland—that such was the reverence paid to him, that though not a bishop, but merely a presbyter and monk, the entire province, with its bishops, was subject to him and to his successors*—that Brude, the Pictish monarch, who had at first so churlishly closed his door against him, was afterwards so impressed with a sense of his wisdom and worth, that to the end of his life he held him in the highest honour—that many princes besides sought his counsel, and aided him in his evangelical labours—that though unwilling to be withdrawn from his proper duties to engagements of a secular kind, he was often constrained by the urgency of the neighbouring chiefs and princes to assist them in settling their disputes, or disentangling their embroiled affairs—that once he was called to place the crown on the head of the Scottish monarch Aidan, though not until he had been compelled by what he believed to be supernatural influence to do so—that on an other occasion he appeared as the representative of the Scottish clergy at the great council held at

* Cujus juri et omnis provincia, et ipsi etiam episcopi, ordine inusitato, debeant esse subjecti, juxta exemplum primi doctoris illius, [Columbæ,] qui non episcopus, sed presbyter exstitit et monachus.—*Beda,* lib. iii. c. 4.

Drimceat, in Ireland, (A.D. 574,) for the purpose of settling the succession to the Scottish throne and the rights of its occupant, and was mainly instrumental in conducting the business to a satisfactory and bloodless issue—that he was a great encourager of learning, and of the study of the Scriptures, and so respected the liberal arts, that though the Celtic bards were amongst the bitterest opponents of Christianity, and were usually, on that account, persecuted wherever the teachers of Christianity obtained the supremacy, he would not allow them to be harmed within the sphere of his province—that he was himself a poet, and the author of several works both in Latin and in Irish—and that he died on the evening of Sunday, the fifth day of the Ides (27th day) of June, A.D. 596, in the thirty-fifth year of his abbotship, and the seventy-seventh of his age, full of years and full of honours. These, disentangled from the mass of fable and monkish exaggeration with which they are mixed, seem to be all the facts of any moment ascertainable by us concerning the history of Columba subsequent to his settlement in Iona.

Happily, however, his biographers have preserved so many features of his character, that

we are enabled to gather a tolerably faithful portrait of this remarkable man.

His natural endowments were manifestly of a very high order. His biographer, Adamnan, styles him a first-rate man in point of genius, (*ingenio optimus*,) and all that we know of his exploits confirms the eulogy. His bold and extensive plans—the firmness, perseverance, and skill with which he carried them out—the mastery he obtained over the minds of other men, some of them persons of unquestionable abilities—and the success with which, under circumstances of peculiar difficulty, he conducted the affairs of the extensive provinces over which he held ecclesiastical superiority—all conspire to attest the elevation and vigour of his mental endowments. They say much also for his prudence, sagacity, and address; whilst his success as a preacher would justify us in ascribing to him also the gift of eloquence, to which doubtless his powerful and sonorous voice, capable of being distinctly heard at a mile's distance, not a little contributed.*

His learning was great for the age in which he lived. He appears to have diligently availed himself of all the opportunities within his

* Adamn. i. 38.

reach, during the period of his noviciate, for the improvement of his faculties and the acquisition of professional and general knowledge; nor were his habits of study relinquished in more mature life, for even amidst the pressure of many and anxious duties, he sedulously endeavoured to secure some time for the pursuit of learning, and eagerly devoted every hour which was not due to business or devotion to the exercises of the study. Odonellus tells us that he transcribed with his own hand not fewer than three hundred volumes; and so solicitous was he to further the interests of religion and learning in this way, that he continued thus to employ himself to the end of his life: only a few hours before his death he was employed in copying the Psalter. This zeal for letters he sought to foster in others. His monastery at Iona was a seminary of learning, to which students from all parts were encouraged to repair, and whence men went forth among the ignorant tribes, Pictish, Celtic, and Saxon, which then occupied Scotland and the north of England, to diffuse the blessings of knowledge and civilization. The admonition of St. Paul, addressed to Timothy, exhorting him to "give attention to reading," was carefully

enjoined by Columba on his disciples, as well as observed by himself; when he was not reading himself, he listened to the reading of one of the monks. He employed them also in copying books, and used to examine carefully and closely those which they had transcribed: "In this Psalter of yours," he said once in commending the diligence and accuracy of one of these transcribers, "there is not to be found one superfluous letter, nor are any wanting, excepting the vowel *i*, which is once wanting." He encouraged them also to attend to the useful arts, especially the culture of the fields and the garden. In that rude age, it says not a little for the skill and industry of Columba and his monks, that they had apples from their own trees, abundance of grain in their barns, and could indulge in the luxury of a Saxon baker;* whilst the encouragement they held out to others to follow their example, by making presents to their neighbours of seed to sow their lands, entitles them to the gratitude of posterity. If he is a benefactor to society who makes two stalks of corn grow where only one grew before, what eulogy shall we not pronounce on those who

* "Erat autem quidam religiosus frater, *Guereneus* nomine, Saxo pistor, opus pistorum exerceus, etc." Adamn. iii. 10.

are the pioneers of civilization, who teach rude and savage tribes to appreciate the value of the arts of peace, who turn the wilderness into a garden, and substitute the fruitful field for the inhospitable forest ?

It has not unfrequently happened, not in the history of the world merely, but in that of the church also, that men of great natural abilities, commanding genius, and energetic activity, have been deficient in the milder virtues, even where they have not presented a moral character altogether devoid of those features which can alone lend dignity and worth to the individual. Happily, no deduction on this account has to be made from the high estimate which the talents and successes of Columba have led us to form of him. On the contrary, his moral character was such, that the contemplation of it only inspires us with a higher veneration for his memory.

In surveying the pictures which have been drawn of him by his biographers, it is impossible not to be struck with the remarkable combination of excellences which his character presents, and by the balance of excellence sustained by the virtues which most conspicuously adorned his life. Ardent in the pursuit of

what he wished, he was, nevertheless, not only persevering amidst difficulties, but patient in bearing with the weakness or coldness of others. Severe and almost stern in matters of discipline, he was, in the general intercourse of life, distinguished not more by the suavity of his manners, than by the kindness, the gentleness, and the generosity of his feelings. A fearless censurer of sin, an uncompromising avenger of the injured, he was ever ready to welcome and sooth the penitent, to bind up the broken-hearted, and to cast the cloak of a godly charity over the failings of the feeble. Though never slow to denounce sensual indulgence in all its forms, though perpetually inculcating upon his disciples the importance of duly striving for the mortification of the body, and though himself scrupulously conforming to "the hard and toilsome requirements (to use his own expression) of his monastic rule,"* there seems to have been nothing morbid in his asceticism, no treating of the body as if it were in itself an evil, no attaching of importance to pallor of visage, attenuation of frame, or maceration of muscle, as if in this lay

* "Dura et laboriosa monasteriola imperia." Adamn. ii. 40.

the holiness after which the Christian ought to seek. On the contrary, to preserve a healthy and vigorous body, as the best vehicle of a sound and clear mind, seems to have been his perpetual study, both for himself and others; and whilst all his biographers conspire to attest the uniform hilarity that beamed upon his countenance,* one of them tells us that from the grace of his person, the neatness of his dress, and the ruddiness of his cheeks, he always looked like a man nourished amid delicacies.† A character in which opposite virtues were thus so admirably balanced, assures us that its possessor must have been a man who was not only endowed by God with a peculiarly happy natural disposition, but whose mind was under the influence of fixed principles, and the subject of a sound and healthful discipline.

The germ of all true excellence of character is to be found in a right state of the heart toward God, produced through a believing view of his character and grace as displayed in the Bible, and especially in connexion with the

* "Hilarum semper faciem ostendeus." Adamn. i. 1. "Vultu hilaris." Odonell. iii. 43.

† Odonell. iii. 43.

redemption which is in Christ Jesus. Where this does not exist, moral goodness will either be wholly wanting, or it will exist in partial development, and be subject to continual fits of fluctuation. The moral machinery may be there, and it may be capable of being made to move, but for want of the balance-wheel all its movements will be capricious and irregular. He alone can fulfil steadily and harmoniously the moral duties of life, who has attended first to that which claims the foremost right—his duty to God.

In this lay the secret of all Columba's excellence ; from this arose the beautiful harmony and consistency of his character. He was an eminently pious man ; a man exercising a continual faith in God, recognising at every step his dependence upon God, feeling that, unworthy as he was, it was only through the merits of Christ he could be accepted of God, and seeking the favour and approbation of God as the richest reward he could obtain. He was much given to prayer, both social and private ; and so intent was he upon the regular observance of the worship of God, that even when absent from home, and surrounded by heathens, who sought to interrupt his devotions,

he stedfastly persevered in conducting, along with the few brethren who accompanied him, the daily service at the appointed time. His monastic rule required those who were subject to it to "assemble thrice every night, and as often in the day. In every office of the day they were to use prayers, and sing three psalms. In the offices of the night, from October to February, they were to sing thirty-six psalms and twelve anthems at three several times; through the rest of the year, twenty-one psalms and eight anthems; but on Saturday and Sabbath nights, twenty-five psalms and as many anthems."* To this rule Columba himself was most exemplary in conforming, even in advanced age; on the night of his death, it is recorded that as the bell sounded the hour of midnight prayer he instantly rose, and was the first to reach the church.† There is reason to doubt how far such modes of conducting devotional exercises are favourable to the end they are professedly designed to promote, and it is quite certain that they very often degenerate into a mere empty form, or become an irksome task. But, in the case of Columba, there is every

* Cited by Dr. Smith, p. 33.

† Adamn. ii. 23.

reason to believe that a real delight in such occupations first led him to prescribe the rule above cited, and afterwards sustained him in his undeviating observance of it. Of him it might without exaggeration be said, that devotion was the element in which he lived. He sought to sanctify everything by the word of God and prayer. Even in the most trivial undertakings, he acknowledged God and invoked his blessing. If he mounted his car for a journey, he first besought the Divine benediction; if a lad passed him carrying milk from the cow, it had his blessing as it was borne along. When he entered the barn, and saw the heaps of grain it contained, he lifted up his voice to thank the bountiful Giver of all good. "It seems," says Dr. Smith, "to have been his invariable rule to undertake no work, nor engage in any business, without having first invoked God. If about to officiate in any ministerial duty, he would first implore the Divine presence and aid to enable him to discharge it properly. If he himself, or any of his friends, were to go any whither, by sea or land, their first care was to implore God to be propitious, and their last words at parting were solemn prayer and benediction. If he admi-

nistered medicines for the cure of any disease, he accompanied them with prayer to the God who healeth. If he administered even counsel or advice, he would accompany it with a prayer to Him who disposeth the heart to listen, and sometimes he would accompany that prayer with fasting. . . . . In seasons of danger and alarm, whether public or private, he always had recourse to prayer, as the most effectual way to prevent, or cure, or bear every evil to which man is subject. And the better to recommend the same course to others, he used to observe and instance the return of prayer." To those who believe in the efficacy of prayer, and its reflex influence on the character of the individual who abounds in it, these statements will at once account for the elevated piety, the calm and steady excellence, and the singular success of Columba.

But where a spirit of prayer like this exists, it must be sustained by appropriate nourishment, for devotion can no more continue to be ardent in the soul without being fed, than a fire can continue to burn without fuel. Now, the proper aliment of devotional feeling is Divine truth; and it is only in proportion as that truth is known, realized, and relished, that

the spirit of genuine and fervent prayer can be kept up. Unless the propitiatory work of Christ, as the only medium by which prayer can be acceptably presented to God, be known and recognised, and the mind be fraught with just views of the grace, wisdom, and power of God, as revealed through Christ—unless those "exceeding rich and precious promises" which God has given to man in his word, and "which are all yea and amen in Christ Jesus," be habitually in the heart—unless that truth, which it is the office of the Divine Spirit to bring home to the soul, dwell richly there, it will not be possible to sustain the spirit of prayer with any persevering fervour, nor will much real delight be felt in the exercise.

Of the theological opinions of Columba we possess only a very fragmentary knowledge; but so far as we know them, he seems to have been remarkably free from those errors which had already crept into the church, and received the sanction of those who claimed to be the spiritual heads of Christendom. This exemption may, under God, have been in part due to the remote and retired locality in which the greater part of his life was spent; but much cannot be ascribed to this cause, as

before his settlement at Iona he had mingled sufficiently with persons under Roman influence, (nay, had himself, according to the testimony of Odonell, actually visited Rome,) to have come under the taint of prevailing error, had he not been fortified against it by well settled principles, derived from the fountain of Divine revelation. It is to his reverent delight in and constant use of the Holy Scriptures that his sounder theology and his vivid piety are to be principally traced. The rule which he laid down for his disciples, as prescribing the proper method of supporting their religious opinions, was "*Prolatis Sacræ Scripturæ testimoniis*"—"By proofs alleged from Holy Scripture;" and to this rule he himself scrupulously adhered. Much of his time was spent in exploring the sacred page; and he is even said to have sometimes spent whole days and nights in endeavouring to discover the meaning of difficult portions of the word of God, accompanying his examination of them with prayer and fasting. Such zeal and diligence could not miss its reward. Columba's was, doubtless, in large measure, the blessedness assured by God to the man whose delight is in his law: "He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his

fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper," Psa. i. 3.

In further illustration of the character of this remarkable man, a few anecdotes may be transferred from the pages of his biographer.

Columba was once about to undertake a voyage, shortly after his arrival in Scotland. "When do you purpose to sail, Columba?" said Briochan, a Druid or magician, who was his enemy. "On the third day hence," replied he, "if it be the will of God, and I be then alive." "You shall not," said Briochan, "for I will raise contrary winds, and spread mists and darkness over you." "All things," answered Columba, "are under the control of the omnipotent God, and every motion of mine is undertaken in his name, and entirely guided by his direction."

Columba was a lover of peace, and often used his influence to promote reconciliation between individuals or communities where there was any quarrel. "Among the rude rustics," says his biographer Adamnan, "he acted the part of a judge." In the great council at Drimceat, he mediated between kings. On one occasion, a husband and wife had a difference which his

most prudent and earnest counsel could not compose. At length he said, "You two must spend this day with me in fasting and prayer." They did so, and the result was propitious; the wife became penitent, and confessed that that could be effected by God which man was impotent to produce.

On one occasion he was called to mediate between two princes, who were contending for the inheritance of their elder brother, of whose death one of them had been, by accident, the cause. In vain had their father attempted to heal their differences. In vain had the clergy interfered to terminate the unseemly quarrel. The whole country was about to be involved in the horrors of civil war; when, opportunely, Columba's interposition was besought. The affair having been, by the mutual consent of the parties, referred to him, he, in the presence of a numerous assemblage of their followers, gave a decision which had the desired effect of reconciling the princes, and assuaging the tumult their contention had excited.

"How ardently he loved peace," says Dr. Smith, "may be inferred from its having been one of the three things which, on a particular occasion, he is said to have solemnly asked of

God at *Tulach nan Salm*, (the Hill of Psalms.) The first was, that he might never refuse any person in a reasonable demand, lest this should hurt his usefulness; the second, that the love and zeal which he had for God in his breast should never be abated; and the third, that all his friends and relations might live in amity and peace amongst themselves, and if at any time they should not, that God would rather punish the fault himself than allow them to hurt one another."

Two things in Columba's character seem to have contributed greatly to his influence over others. The one was, the affectionate interest he took in all who were associated with him or dependent on him; the other was, the inflexible equity and generous kindness which marked all his dealings with other men. His disciples and servants he always addressed by the affectionate title of "children" or "brethren." Whatever concerned them, however minute and trifling, became to him an object of interest for their sakes. When he thought them exposed to danger, he would spend hours in earnest intercession to God on their behalf. Whilst they were engaged in the labours of the field, he would visit them to cheer and encourage them

in their work. For all he had a kind word; and when any of them needed reproof, he administered it so tenderly and so wisely, that it corrected without wounding. So much did he gain upon their affections, that they not only studiously avoided whatever they knew to be offensive to him, but would endeavour to perform whatever he desired at whatever toil or cost.

Of his sense of equity, and his care to observe it in his dealings with others, the following instance may suffice. Having occasion for some stakes to construct a building, he sent certain of his monks to gather some on the land of a person named Finchan. On their return, laden with the stakes, they told Columba that Finchan had taken ill their removing the stakes from his land, though at that time, as Dr. Smith remarks, such things were never regarded in the light of property, and were indeed of no value in a country overrun with wood.* Columba no sooner heard this than he said, "Let us not offend the man; carry to him forthwith six bushels of barley, and tell him to sow it in his ground." This message restored Finchan to good humour, especially as, obeying the

* "Life of Columba," p. 85.

advice of the saint, he reaped an excellent return from the seed.*

Columba's knowledge of medicine enabled him to confer great advantages on the people among whom he sojourned, and these he was ever ready to confer. His advice was in all cases bestowed gratuitously, except when he made it the condition of some act of charity or justice to be rendered by the party to whom it was given; as when he exacted from a rich slaveholder the liberation of one of his thralls, in return for the advice and medicines he administered. Persons often consulted him from a distance, and he even sent medicines by means of messengers to other countries. Whenever it was practicable for those who consulted him to come and reside for a season under the same roof with himself, he endeavoured to persuade them to do so, as then he could not only the better study their disease, but could use means for promoting the welfare of their souls. He thus sought to turn all the influence he acquired in the direction which could best serve the cause that lay nearest to his heart—the cause of piety and salvation.

* Adamn. ii. 3.

In such a state of society as that amidst which Columba lived, the virtues of hospitality and charity are in continual requisition. We need not be surprised, then, to find that he both inculcated these on others and largely practised them himself. "Of all his virtues," says Colgan, "the first place is due undoubtedly to his compassion and charity. Never did he know of any one who was under any affliction of body or mind, to whom he did not offer relief so far as it was in his power. He suffered with the sufferers, and was weak with the weak; with those who wept he always wept, and sometimes, too, with those who wept not." Avarice and uncharitableness he denounced in all, but especially in the clergy; whilst on the other hand, whenever he found any one remarkable for generosity and deeds of charity, he gave him the highest commendation. Even the lower animals shared his sympathy and his care. His old horse came to be embraced by him ere he died, and laid its head on his breast.

As Columba approached the close of his earthly career, the piety and the gentler virtues of his soul came out into still clearer manifestation. Of his closing scene, an interesting account has been preserved by both Cumin

and Adamnan, which, with a few needful omissions, we shall here translate.

It was the month of May, and the good old man had gone out in his car to visit the brethren who were labouring in the field, on the western side of Iona. To them he said, "At the recent paschal solemnity in the month of April, I earnestly desired to depart to Christ my Lord; but that your day of joy might not be clouded with sadness, I was willing rather that my transit should be delayed a little longer." Grieved by these words, his attendants could not refrain from tears, when he immediately spoke to them words of comfort and of good cheer; after which, as he sat in his carriage, turning his face to the east, he blessed the island and its inhabitants, and then returned to the monastery.

On the following sabbath, as he was celebrating Divine service,* he suddenly looked up

* The word used by Adamnan is *missa*, which Dr. Smith has translated "mass." This latter word, however, is so identified with the superstitious ideas associated by Romanists with the sacrifice, as they regard it, of the eucharist, that to employ it here would only mislead the reader. The term "missa" originally denoted simply the public service of God in the sanctuary.—See Bingham, "Antiquities of the Christian Church," bk. xiii. chap. 1, § 4. The "sacrifice of the mass" was an innovation on the ancient Catholic faith, introduced by the church of Rome towards the close of the thirteenth century.

to heaven, and his countenance became suffused with a ruddy glow. To some who besought him afterwards to tell them the reason of this sudden exaltation, he said that he had seen an angel, who had borne to him a message from the Lord. What this was he did not divulge, but it was supposed afterwards by his attendants to refer to his approaching death. Perhaps the whole scene was the result of one of those strong presentiments of the approaching presence of Christ, through his messenger death, which are often vouchsafed to his servants who have nearly finished their course, and are looking eagerly for his appearing.

Another week elapsed, and on the morning of the next sabbath, Columba, accompanied by his faithful servant, Dermid, went into the barn of the monastery, and there gave thanks to God for the abundant supply he had provided for the wants of the monks, adding to his attendant, "I congratulate my friends, since I must soon leave them, that they have food enough in store to furnish them with daily bread for this year." Dermid hearing him speak thus, asked, why so often he made mention to them of his decease, particularly at this time; to which Columba replied, "In the sacred volume, this day is

called *sabbath*, which means *rest;* and truly to-day is to me a sabbath, for of this my toilsome life this day shall be the last; on it, after my vexatious labours, I shall keep sabbath; this night of the day of the Lord I shall go the way of the fathers." Dermid, at these words, could not refrain from weeping bitterly, when the saint tenderly endeavoured to console him as far as he could.

Returning to the monastery, he sat down midway to rest, the exertion of walking being too much for his aged frame. As he sat, an old and faithful servant, a white horse that had been used to carry milk to the monastery, came up to him, having doubtless learned by experience, as horses invariably do, the gentleness and kindness of his aged master, and laid his head on his breast, as if mourning his approaching departure. Dermid would have driven the animal away, but Columba said, "No; suffer him: suffer this creature which loves me: why should not the poor irrational brute lament the loss of its master as well as you intelligent men?"

On approaching the college, he ascended a little elevation overlooking it, and spreading forth his hands, he blessed it, saying, "Small

and mean though this place be, great honour shall be conferred upon it, not by the kings of the Scots and their people alone, but by the rulers and people of foreign and barbarous tribes; saints also, from other churches, shall greatly venerate it." A prophecy which, whether uttered by Columba or invented by his biographer, has been fulfilled to an extent which neither of them could have reasonably anticipated.

When he reached the college, he first entered a hut, probably the place set apart for writing in, or his own private apartment, and there employed himself in transcribing the Psalter. Having reached that verse of the thirty-fourth Psalm where it is written, "They that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing," he paused and said, "Here let the page and my work finish together: what follows let Baithen write." Shortly after this, he attended evening service in the church, and then retired to his dormitory. Here he dictated to his attendant his farewell exhortation to his brethren. "My little children," said he, "I commend to you, as my last words, this admonition—to have mutual and unfeigned charity among yourselves. Follow the example of holy men, and

God, the Strength of the good, will help you. I too, abiding with him, will intercede for you,* that ye may enjoy all good things, as well for this life as for that which is to come; that the reward prepared for those who keep the Divine commands may be given you."

The midnight hour now approached. At the first stroke of the bell,† Columba arose, and hastened to the church for the midnight service. Arriving there before any of the rest, he prostrated himself before the altar, as in prayer. His servant Dermid came soon after him, but in the dark being unable to perceive him, he called out, "My father, where art thou?" No answer was returned, and lights being soon after brought in, the saint was discovered lying prostrate before the altar. Dermid rushed up to him, and raising his head, supported it on his own breast. Columba lifted up his eyes, and with wondrous brightness and joy beaming

* Though these words indicate a belief on the part of Columba that the blessed in heaven may intercede for those they have left on earth, they furnish no evidence whatever that praying to the departed for such intercession was either known or maintained by him.

† Cumin says, "*pulsante campana;*" Adamnan, "*pulsata personante clocca.*" Perhaps both mean "at the sounding of the bell."

on his countenance, turned them on both sides, as if he beheld troops of angels gathering around him. It was evident to all that the vital spark was fast hastening to extinction; and Dermid, anxious that their beloved and venerated master should not depart without blessing them, lifted up his right hand for that purpose. The venerable father understood his intention, and summoning his last remaining effort, he raised his hand, that by the gesture, though unable to utter the words, he might show them that he left them his benediction. This done, he breathed his last; and whilst the church rang with the lamentations of his sorrowing disciples, a sweet smile settled on his aged cheek, and he seemed like one on whom the calm of a quiet sleep, rather than the shadow of death, had come down.*

* Hector Boece says, that the illness of which Columba died was a severe catarrh, contracted long before, on a journey which he undertook for the purpose of endeavouring to prevent a collision between Aidan, king of the Scots, and Brudeus, king of the Picts. "He fell," says the historian, "into ane gret infirmitie, be immoderat flux of caterre, which followed him to the end of his life."—Bk. ix. chap. 15, p. 93. In this same chapter, it is stated of Kinnatail, brother of Conwall, that "ane immoderat flux of caterre fel in his throte and chaftis, and causit him to resign the governance of his realm to Aidan," after which he shortly died. Perhaps an epidemic somewhat of the nature of influenza was then prevailing.

"Sublime recluse!
The recreant soul, that loves to shun the debt
Imposed on human kind, must first forget
Thy diligence, thy unrelaxing use
Of a long life; and in the hour of death
The last dear service of thy passing breath."

WORDSWORTH.

After the service was concluded, Columba's body was carried from the church to the *cœnobium*, (common dwelling place,) whence he had so recently gone forth amid the chanting of psalms on the part of the brethren. After lying three days and nights, the last rites were duly performed to the venerated remains. Wrapped in pure linen vestments, and laid in a coffin, they were committed to the dust, there to rest until, "in luminous and eternal brightness, he should be raised again."* A violent storm of wind, which had raged during the three days intervening between his death and his burial, suddenly ceased, and the sea which it had agitated became calm, as the body of the venerable saint was laid in its place of rest.

"Such," says Adamnan, "was the termination of the life of our illustrious patron. He has joined the fathers, and become united with apostles and prophets, the companion of the

* "In luminosa et æternali resurrecturum claritudine," Adamnan, iii. 23, § 4.

eternal triumphs which, as the Scriptures teach us, they enjoy. He forms one of the unspotted thousands who have washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb, and follow him whithersoever he goeth; immaculate virgins; without fault before God; raised to this privilege by our Lord Jesus Christ himself, (Rev. xiv. 1—5;) to whom with the Father and the Holy Spirit be honour, virtue, praise, glory, and dominion, for ever and ever. Amen."*

It would be foolish, as well as false, were we to hold up Columba as a specimen of perfection; and we are far from giving credit to the many miraculous powers which the superstitious reverence of later ages have ascribed to him. But it is impossible to look back through the deepening shadows of these intervening ages, without a sense of grateful admiration of the man whose doctrine was so pure, whose conduct was so exemplary, and whose whole spirit and demeanour were so apostolic, at a time when "the mystery of iniquity" was advancing towards maturity, and amid a people who had been so deeply sunk in gloomy and cruel superstition. Columba stands before us as one of the great missionary heroes of the church.

* Lib. iii. c. 23.

He has earned for himself a name which shall be "held in everlasting remembrance;" for his is the imperishable glory of having kindled a light in these northern lands, which has never since been utterly extinguished. By his zeal, his devotedness, his enlightened teaching, he reached that highest eminence of wisdom and usefulness attainable by man on earth—the winning of souls to Christ; and though there might be certain opinions and usages embraced by him which we cannot but regret, and though he certainly was not exempt from a share of the weakness and evil by which all men are in the present state more or less assailed, we cannot doubt that his "record is on high," among the number of those of whom it is written, "They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever," Dan. xii. 3.

CHAPTER IV.

IONA, THE SEAT OF THE CULDEES.

"Peace to their shades! the pure Culdees
Were Albyn's earliest priests of God,
Ere yet an island of the seas
By foot of Saxon monk was trod,
Long ere her churchmen by bigotry
Were barr'd from holy wedlock's tie."

CAMPBELL.

It has been already stated, that when Columba landed on Iona he was attended by twelve followers, whom he formed into a religious body, of which he was the head. To these, as occasion required, others were from time to time added, so that the original number was always kept up. Their institution was called a monastery, and the superior an abbot; but how little their system had in common with monastic institutions, properly so called, will appear as we proceed. Other institutions of a similar kind were speedily formed in other parts of Scotland, as the influence and doctrines

of Columba spread. Nor were they confined to Scotland; in Ireland also, in the north of England, and even in some parts of the continent, the Columban institute was established. The name by which those who submitted to this rule were known, as their peculiar designation, is that of CULDEES.

Of this name many explanations have been given. The popular one is, that it is a contraction of *Cultores Dei*, [worshippers of God;] but this supposition is liable to serious objections, and is now rejected by almost all scholars. Others have derived it from the Latin for *a hood* or *cowl*, (*cucullus*,) which is still further from probability. As the parties to whom it was applied received it in the midst of a Celtic-speaking population, reason seems to require that the proper etymon or derivation of the word should be sought in the Celtic language. But here, too, varieties of opinion occur to distract us. Some maintain that it comes from the Gaelic *Cuil*, a corner, cave, or retired place, whence *Cuildeach*, a lonely person, one not fond of society, and in the plural *Cuildich*, which would thus correspond with the terms *monks* or *solitaries*. Others again contend that it is a corruption of *Gille* (or

Ceile) *De*, which means servants of God. Between these two it is not easy to decide, but upon the whole we prefer the latter, as it suggests a meaning which we are prone to believe such men as Columba and his followers would be pleased to convey to the people amongst whom they settled, by the name which they selected as their official designation, and because it is more appropriate to the case of men who were not solitaries in the strict sense of the word, but were free to sustain the family relation, and were incessantly mingling in the society of men. It may be added, that the Latinized form of the word in the old writers is *Keledei*, which favours the derivation we espouse.

So far as the scanty notices which have been preserved to us enable us to judge, the ecclesiastical order of these Culdees partook of a collegiate rather than a hierarchical form. They were a body of religious persons, associated together for the purpose of aiding each other in the common work of preaching the gospel and teaching youth, as well as maintaining in each other the fervour of devotion by united exercises of worship. Their abbot, who, after the death of Columba, was elected by

themselves, was their sole superior, but he was not such in the sense in which that term is used in connexion with monastic institutions of later date. In some sense, his authority was supreme, and yet it was not that of a bishop, but only that of a presbyter, who was recognised as the head or chief of their community. Bede says expressly of the Culdees of Iona, that "the island had for its rector always a presbyter abbot, to whose jurisdiction not only the whole province, [that is, the *civil* province,] but even the bishops themselves, by an unusual custom, behoved to be subject, after the example of their first teacher, [Columba,] who was not a bishop, but a presbyter and monk."* Perhaps we shall most nearly approach to a just conception of the polity they followed, if we suppose that each of their colleges resembled an academical senate of the present day, where a body of professors, equal in rank and privilege, are presided over by a chancellor or principal, who represents the united authority of the body, maintains order, and executes its decrees. As the bishops over whom the abbot of Iona had jurisdiction were either missionaries sent among the heathen, or

* *Hist. Eccles.* lib. iii. c. 4.

pastors of single churches, we may suppose that the allegiance they owed to the mother church of Iona was somewhat analogous to that which missionaries and pastors of mission churches among the heathen, in the present day, owe to the directors of the society which sent them out, or under the auspices of which their churches have been founded.*

The Culdees were scrupulously careful not to admit into their society any but men of tried piety and zeal. In this they followed the example of their founder, Columba. To the mind of the saint nothing was more distressing and hateful than to see persons invested with

* That the Scottish clergy were regarded with suspicion by the clergy of the Anglo-Saxon church, because of their want of proper ordination, is manifest from one of the decrees of the council held at Ceal-hythe, A.D. 816, which runs thus: "Fifthly, it is interdicted to all persons of the Scottish nation to usurp the ministry in any diocese, nor may such be lawfully allowed to touch aught belonging to the sacred order, nor may aught be accepted from them, either in baptism or in the celebration of masses, nor may they give the eucharist to the people, *because it is uncertain to us by whom or whether by any one they are ordained.* If, as the canons prescribe, no bishop or presbyter may intrude into another's province, how much more ought those to be excluded from sacred offices who have among them no metropolitan order, nor honour it in others?" Spelman, *Concil.* i. 329. This shows incontestably, that in the beginning of the ninth century, the Culdees were held by their English brethren in the light of schismatics, who pretended to orders which they did not possess.

the office of the ministry, who were not possessed of a character and principles correspondent to the sacredness of the office they had assumed. "Here is a mingling of the clean and the unclean!" he exclaimed once with indignation, when he saw an individual whom he had reason to believe guilty of immoral conduct engaged in administering the sacrament; "the pure mysteries of the sacred oblation administered by an impure man, who knows in his conscience that he is guilty of great sin!"* Hearing one day that a presbyter of the name of Finchan had ordained a man of flagitious character, but of royal descent, named Aidus-niger, (*Aodh dubh*, that is, Aodh the black,) he was greatly grieved, and exclaimed, "That right hand which Finchan wickedly placed on the head of that son of perdition, shall decay and perish with cruel agonies ere he himself shall die; whilst Aodh, whom he has unworthily ordained, shall return as a dog to his vomit, and become once more a bloodthirsty murderer, who shall himself perish by the spear."† In receiving candidates for

* Adamnan, vol. i. p. 41.

† Ibid. vol. i. p. 36. For the prophetical form in which this and other sayings of Columba are recorded, we are, in all probability, indebted to the superstition of his biographer.

the ministry, he was very careful in his inquiries respecting their previous education and conduct; especially he sought to ascertain whether their mothers were persons of piety—rightly judging that as maternal influence is supremely powerful in moulding the youthful character, it was of importance in forming an opinion of a youth, that he should know under what influences his soul had received its earliest and most powerful bias. Sometimes, when he was doubtful of an applicant's character, or motives, or capacities, he would prescribe a severe and testing probation before he would administer the vows to him, as in the case of Libranus, a serf, who had escaped from his lord, and who wished to be received into Columba's monastery; of him he exacted a probation of seven years in the island of Ethica, (Eig?) and after that enjoined him to go and procure legal release from his master, after which he was received.* Anxious to preserve those placed under his charge from whatever would sully their purity or subject their morality to trial, he urged upon them the necessity of keeping aloof from the society of the wicked or worldly, and the importance of

* Adamn. vol. ii. p. 40.

cultivating the friendship of the good. He was also studious to prevent persons of unholy character from landing on his island under whatever pretence; "Quick!" cried he to his servant Dermid, on seeing a person of this stamp about to land, "hasten to Lugaid, and tell him that the wretched person who is in his company must return instantly to Mull; let him not touch a sod of this island." * His care for the interests of morality led him to the somewhat extreme expedient of allowing no woman to reside on the island—a prohibition which he also extended to cows, alleging that if the latter were permitted it would be impossible to exclude the former.† All this indicated on his part a profound sense of the sacredness of the ministerial office, and of the importance at once of keeping persons of unfit character from intruding into it, and preserving those who were already in it from whatever might tend to seduce them from the elevated path of purity

* Adamn. vol. i. p. 22.

† A saying is ascribed to him on this subject, which has since passed into a proverb in the Highlands, where it is still common:—

"Far am bi bo, bithidh bean,
Is far am bi bean, bithidh mallachadh."
"Where there is a cow there will be a woman,
And where there is a woman there will be mischief."

and virtue, in which alone they ought to walk. The impulse thus conveyed in a right direction from their illustrious founder the Culdee societies long retained; though ultimately they succumbed to the corrupting influences which had become dominant in the church, and experienced the fate which Fuller quaintly says is incident to all religious orders, "to be clear in the spring and miry in the stream."*

On entering the order, certain vows were taken by the neophytes, but what these were we cannot now accurately ascertain. Certain it is, however, that they were not the vows which the monastic orders usually imposed upon their members; for of these, which are *three*, celibacy, poverty, and obedience, the Culdees were bound to none except the third, and that only in such degree as was essential to order in their society. To poverty they did not bind themselves; on the contrary, they seem to have laboured diligently in order to procure for themselves and those dependent on them the means of living in comfort, as far as the circumstances of their times and localities would permit.† Marriage, also, was allowed

* "Holy War," book ii. chap iv.

† Bede's *Hist. Eccl.* lib. ii. chap. iv.

to them, and most of them seem to have entered into this state. True, their wives were not permitted to reside with them in the college, but they had a residence assigned to them in some adjacent locality. Near Iona there is an island which still bears the name of *Eilen nam ban*, [women's island,] and where their husbands seem to have resided with them, except when duty required their presence in the college or the sanctuary. It appears, also, that the Culdees succeeded by hereditary right to their office, and that the property of each was at death divided between his widow and children, or nearest relatives.* Under these circumstances it is, strictly speaking, a misnomer to call the Culdees *monks*, and their establishment a *monastery*. "Although," as it has been well remarked, "they observed a certain institute, yet, in the accounts given of them, we cannot overlook this remarkable distinction between them and those societies which are properly called monastic, that they were not associated for the purpose of observing this rule. They might deem certain regulations necessary for the preservation of order, but their great

* See the authorities in Jamieson's "History of the Culdees," pp. 30—32.

design was, by communicating instruction to train up others for the work of the ministry. Hence, it has been justly observed, that they may be more properly viewed as colleges, in which various branches of useful learning were taught, than as monasteries. These societies, therefore, were in fact the seminaries of the church both in North Britain and in Ireland. As the presbyters ministered in holy things to those in the vicinity, they were still training up others, and sending forth missionaries, whenever they had a call, or any prospect of success."*

We have already seen that Columba encouraged, both by precept and example, the study by his disciples of the sacred volume. The effect of this is apparent in the theological system of the Culdees, which, amidst the rapidly advancing corruptions of the age, remained remarkably pure and Scriptural, as well as in the simplicity and purity of their religious life. On the latter point, all cotemporary testimony is unanimous, even on the part of those who repudiated their orders and censured their opinions. "This much we for certain know of him," says Bede, speaking of Columba, "that

* Jamieson's "History of the Culdees," p. 33.

he left behind him successors distinguished by great continence, Divine love, and a regular institute. As respects the time of observing the great festival, indeed, they followed dubious cycles, which is not surprising, seeing no one had conveyed to them, living so far out of the world, the synodal decrees respecting the observance of Easter. They diligently observed only such works of piety and chastity as they could learn from the writings of the prophets, apostles, and evangelists."* Of Aidan, who went from Scotland as a missionary to the Anglo-Saxon tribes of Northumbria, in the year 635, Bede says, that "what above everything else commended his doctrines to all was, that he and his followers lived in no other way than he taught;" and he adds, as a characteristic trait of his life, that "his daily practice, and that of all who followed him, was to occupy themselves in reading the Scriptures and learning the Psalms wherever they were; for which purpose they would even retire from the table of a prince, when (which, however, but rarely happened) they were invited to partake of his hospitality, as soon as their wants were relieved."† Alcuin, whilst lamenting what he considered an

* *Hist. Eccl.* lib. iii. chap. v. † Ibid. lib. iii. chap. vi.

error of the Culdees in point of ecclesiastical usage, says, "Great praise of your wisdom and piety was sounded often in our ears, both on account of the hallowed lives of the monks, and the religious conversation of the laity; the former in their seclusion seeking only to serve God, the latter amidst worldly business leading a most pious life." "Among the Culdees," says a keen Roman Catholic writer, "was seen that ideal of the Christian life, which, withdrawn from the bustle of the world and the society of men, was wholly occupied with the contemplation of celestial things."*

Whilst thus heartily commending their purity and piety, Bede laments their perversity and blindness in persisting in the uncanonical practice of observing Easter from the fourteenth to the twentieth moon, and in adhering to the wicked usage of having the clerical tonsure on the fore-part of the head, from ear to ear, like a crescent, instead of the orthodox fashion of shaving a circle on the crown of the head. On these weighty points the Scots stood firm and obstinate, in spite of all the means used to bring them to conform to the Roman customs; and

* Con, *De duplici statu relig. apud Scotos*, p. 14, cited by Jamieson, p. 203.

Bede relates, not only that they repelled all attempts to convert them to other views than those they had received from their fathers, but that they attached such importance to these points of difference that Colman, a successor of Aidan in Northumbria, finding that he and the Romanist party could no longer go on together on the principle of mutual forbearance, as in the time of Aidan, and that in the council which had been convened at Streaneshalch (now Whitby) for the purpose of settling this dispute, he had failed to gain over the king to his views, forsook his bishopric at Lindisfarne, and with all who adhered to him returned to Scotland. Bede also quotes a letter of Laurentius, the successor of Augustine in the see of Canterbury, in which he mentions that Dagan, an Irish ecclesiastic of the same way of thinking, took such high ground on the point, that he not only would not eat with Laurentius, but would not partake of food in the same house where he was. To what is this firmness to be ascribed? Shall we say that it was mere prejudice and national pride, seeing it could not be deference to Scriptural teaching on the part of the Scottish clergy, which made them resist so vehemently what was the usage of all the other Christians

of Europe? Or shall we not rather say, that they adhered to these usages as symbols of their ancient independence, as evidences which connected them with the churches of the east as the source whence they received the gospel, and as a continual protest on their part against the advancing despotism and all-embracing usurpation of the church of Rome?

That this is the just explanation of their conduct in this particular is confirmed by the fact, that on several other points the clergy of the Columban order differed from and protested against the innovations and usurpations of the church of Rome. They held the doctrine of justification by faith alone. "Not the believer," says one of them, "lives by righteousness, but the righteous by belief." They did not practise auricular confession. They did not believe in the power of a priest to grant absolution from sins. They did not require the water of baptism to be sanctified, but used any water for that purpose which was convenient. They dispensed with the sacrament of confirmation. They were ignorant of the doctrine of the real presence of the body and blood of Christ in the supper. They administered the sacred ordinance in a way totally different from the Romish

ritual, not at the altar, but in a corner of the church; not with the ceremonial of the mass, but with simplicity and humility. They dedicated their churches only to the Holy Trinity, and repudiated the worship of saints or angels. By the Romanists of their time they were looked on as heretics, and stigmatized as "friars of other and differing churches."* St. Bernard holds them up to odium as "a stubborn, stiff-necked, and ungovernable generation;" and this because "they neither pay tithes nor first-fruits, they do not enter into legitimate marriages, [that is, marriages performed by the clergy,] they do not confess, and scarcely one can be found who either seeks or renders penance."† There is some reason to believe, on these as well as on historical grounds, that an affinity subsisted between them and the Waldensian churches of the continent; indeed, the English historian, Richard of Hexham, expressly says, that "the Scots differed from the Cisalpine [Roman] church, and seemed to favour too much the hated memory of Peter of Lyons and his apostasy;" by which expressions he doubtless intends to describe the Waldenses.

* "De aliis et diversis ecclesiis fratres."—*Reg. Sti. Andreæ.*

† *Vit. Malach*, c. vi., quoted by Jamieson.

Various attempts were made to induce the Scottish and Irish clergy to submit to the authority of the bishop of Rome, and to conform to the ritual and order of the Romish hierarchy. In a few cases, these efforts were successful, but upon the mass of the Culdees they were used in vain. One of the most remarkable of those who were thus perverted from the purer faith of their nation was Adamnan, abbot of Iona, and the principal biographer of Columba. Seduced during a visit which he paid to Aldfrid, king of the Angles, he returned home to Iona, determined, if possible, to introduce the Romish usages among his countrymen. But the Culdees of Iona stedfastly resisted the efforts of their chief to induce them to follow his apostasy. He next tried the Irish clergy. Amongst them he found some success, but only beyond the pale of the Columban institute—among those, as Bede expresses it, who were "free from the authority of the Hiensians." On his return to Iona, he laboured assiduously to induce his brethren to adopt his views, but still without success. Before the arrival of Easter he died, and was thus saved, as Bede tells us, from a still more serious discord with those who would not follow his innova-

tions.* This incident shows at once the footing on which the Culdees of Iona stood with respect to their superior, and the determined hostility of that body to the doctrines and usages of Rome.

It is remarkable, that whilst some of the most zealous advocates of the Cisalpine or Ultramontane polity were found among the Saxon priesthood in England, some of its keenest opponents went forth from the Celtic clergy of the Columban order, both in Scotland and Ireland. Whilst Winfrid of Devonshire, under the name of Boniface, was devoting all the energies of his ardent, fearless, and ambitious mind to the service of the popedom, in connexion with the propagation of Christianity in the northern parts of Europe, (for Boniface was a zealous and devoted missionary as well as propagandist,) he was met and opposed by such men as Clemens, Samson, Virgilius, John of Mailros, and others of Scottish descent, who were the boldest protesters against the usurpations of Rome.† The first of these especially, both in Scotland and on the con-

* *Hist. Eccl.* v. 15.

† Flacius Illyricus, *Catal. Tertium*, tom. i. pp. 633, 634; Petrie, "Hist. of the Catholic Church," p. 100; Spottiswood, "Hist. of the Church of Scotland," p. 20. According to this writer, the following were the points on which Samson and Clemens chiefly insisted, in opposition to Boniface: "1. That

tinent, was the determined antagonist of Boniface, and so serious was his opposition, that the latter at length obtained an order from the pope for his deposition from office, and there is reason to believe for his perpetual imprisonment.* At an earlier period, as already mentioned, Wilfrid, a Saxon priest, had contended successfully against Colman, the Culdee bishop of Lindisfarne, in favour of the Romish usages—an event which a great church historian deplores, because, says he, "had the Scottish rule prevailed, England would have enjoyed a freer church constitution, and a constant principle of resistance to the Romish hierarchical system would have been established from the first."† This controversy between the

he studied to win men to the subjection of the pope, and not to the obedience of Christ; 2. That he laboured to establish a sovereign authority in the pope's person, as if he only were the successor of the apostles, whereas all bishops are their successors as well as he; 3. That he went about the abolishing of priests' marriages, and extolling a single life beyond measure; and 4. That he caused masses to be said for the dead, erected images in churches, and introduced divers rites unknown to the ancient church." Boniface, in his letter to the pope, charges Clemens with refusing the authority of the canons and the fathers, with maintaining the right of priests to marry, and with various theological errors. See Gieseler's "Church Hist." vol. ii. p. 218.

* Neander, "Church Hist." vol. v. pp. 76—80, Eng. Trans.

† Ibid. p. 29.

Saxon and Celtic clergy continued with little abatement till the end of the twelfth century. At a synod held at Northampton, in 1176, by the pope's legate Hugo, cardinal of St. Angelo, for the purpose of inducing the Scottish clergy to acknowledge the supremacy of the archbishop of York, the still unquenched independence of the northern church displayed itself in a bold and manly speech, delivered by a young priest, named Gilbert Murray, who, with much calmness, but firmly and plainly, told the English church that she did wrong thus to endeavour to oppress "her mother, the church of Scotland, which, from the beginning, hath been catholic and free;" and reminded her how, by means of this ancient church, she had been brought, "when straying in the wilderness of heathenism, into the safeguard of the true faith and way unto life even unto Jesus Christ, the Author of eternal rest;" concluding by assuring the assembly, that though he should stand alone in the matter, he would dissent "from subjecting the free church of his fathers to any other power than that of the Lord, unto whom immediately she is subject; and if it were needful to die in this cause, declaring his readiness to lay down his neck

unto the sword." This courageous avowal and advocacy of the rights of his church stirred the native generosity of the English prelates and nobles who were present, and even the archbishop of York himself, the principal party on the opposite side, could not refrain, after a groan of vexation at the damage Murray had done to his cause from laying his hand on the head of the bold speaker, and goodnaturedly exclaiming, "*Ex tua pharetra non exiit illa sagitta*," [That bolt came not from thy quiver,] meaning, probably, that he was set on to speak by others. Some who were nettled by what he had uttered gave vent to their annoyance by muttering the sharp but true proverb, "*In naso Scoti piper*," which may be thus rendered—

Haughty and hot
Is the peppery Scot.

But Gilbert and his party gained their end; the synod came to no resolution on the subject; and the pope soon after put an end to the debate, by granting that neither church should claim supremacy over the other.*

With justice, therefore, have these Scottish and Irish presbyters been numbered among the

* Petrie's Hist. pp. 378, 379.

witnesses of the truth against the encroachments of the church of Rome in the beginning of the Middle Ages.

It has been already mentioned, that from the mother seminary at Iona a multitude of similar institutions arose in different parts of the country. Documentary evidence still exists of the Culdees having had settlements at Abernethy, Lochlevin, St. Andrew's, Brechin, Dunblane, Kirkcaldy, Culross, Melros, Inchcolm, and several other places. There is reason to believe that they had establishments also in not a few localities of which no trace has with any certainty descended to our times.

Each of these establishments was a seat of education, and a centre of evangelical activity. To imbue youth with the love of letters, and to discipline the opening mind by habits of study and contemplation, was held by the followers of Columba as a very important part of their vocation. In each of their settlements, they seem to have had a library of such books as they could procure. A catalogue of that in the institution at Lochlevin, in the year 1150, when it passed from the Culdees to the canons regular, has been preserved in the register of St. Andrew's; in it we find, besides certain

books of ecclesiastical order and ritual, a Lectionary, or Collection of the Lessons for each day, the Acts of the Apostles, the Text of the Gospels, three Books of Solomon, Glossaries on the Song of Solomon, some of the works of Origen, St. Bernard, and Prosper, a Collection of Sentences, (somewhat perhaps of the same nature as Peter the Lombard's famous book of sentences, published some years later,) an Exposition of Genesis, and a Dictionary. Of the library at Iona, the notices given by ancient writers are such as to excite no small curiosity, and they have given rise to considerable discussion among antiquaries. Hector Boece, who wrote in 1526, says that "Æneas 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." He mentions further, that in his own time some of the MSS. preserved at Iona were brought to Aberdeen to be examined; but though great pains were taken to unfold them, through age and tenderness of the parchment little could be read. From what could be made out, however, it was the opinion of Boece and his colleagues that the work appeared by the style

to have rather been a fragment of Sallust than of Livy.* Gibbon, who is sufficiently credulous when the claims of Christianity are not concerned, expands this limited testimony into a declaration that Iona possessed "a *classic* library, which afforded some hopes of an entire Livy."† Without, however, going so far as this, for which there is no authority, we may well believe that, as compared with the collections in other parts of the country in that rude age, the library of the Culdees at Iona was rich both in heathen and in Christian literature. Columba's love for books is well authenticated, and he doubtless imbued his successors with a similar feeling. They had a proverb amongst them—"To every cow belongs its calf: to every book belongs its copy;" which it is said arose out of a dispute between St. Finnen and Columba, the former of whom would not allow the latter to retain a copy of a book which he had sat up several nights to transcribe.

The schools of the Culdees appear to have been frequented by young men from all parts of the country, and even in some cases from

* Pennant's "Voyage," p. 258.

† "Decline and Fall," vol. vi. p. 234. Milman's edit.

other countries. In Adamnan's Life of Columba, several Saxon names are mentioned among those forming part of the establishment at Iona; and Neander has remarked, that some of the names of the Culdee missionaries have a Teutonic rather than a Celtic form.* What was taught in these schools besides theology we cannot with precision ascertain. "But as Columba," to use the words of Dr. Smith, 'was himself well skilled in physic, we may believe that he would not fail to teach his disciples a science that would contribute so much to their usefulness. The *Olla Ileach* and *Olla Muileach*, the ancient and famous line of physicians in Ilay and in Mull, must, no doubt, have derived their first knowledge from this seminary. . . . . That they studied the laws, customs, and histories of nations, is plain from their having been the persons whom Aidan carried with him to the council of Drimceat, to vindicate his title to his throne; and also from the claims of the rival king having been referred to St. Columba, and when declined by him to St. Colman Eala, who has the character of having been well versed in sacred and profane litera-

* "Church Hist." vol. v. p. 46, note 4.

ture, and particularly in the antiquities of Ireland." *

The zeal of Columba for the dissemination of the gospel remained with his followers. They were deeply imbued with the missionary spirit, and everyone of their colleges was a centre whence preachers of the truth went forth in all directions. Bede, speaking of the Culdees of Lindisfarne, says, that they never went into the towns except for religious purposes, such as "preaching, baptizing, visiting the sick, in short, caring for souls;" and he mentions, that such was the desire of the people to hear them, that not only on the Lord's day in the church did they assemble in great numbers for that purpose, but whenever a priest came into a village, however unexpectedly, immediately the inhabitants took care to solicit from him the word of life.† In this way, they carried the gospel all over Scotland, even as far north as the Orkneys, and it is even said that when the Norwegians, in 900, discovered Iceland, they found in it Culdee monks. Adamnan, in his Life of Columba, frequently mentions missionary expeditions of monks from Iona to different parts of the British Isles. Of the introduction

* "Life of Columba," p. 35. † *Hist. Eccl.* lib. iii. c. 26.

of the gospel by them among the Saxons of Northumbria, Bede has given an interesting account:—

Oswald of the Bounteous hand, Bretwalda of Britain, had, when a youth, been compelled to take refuge among the Scots, from dangers which threatened him at home. Whilst in Scotland, he had been instructed in the doctrines of Christianity, which he cordially embraced, and was baptized. No sooner had he ascended the throne, than he resolved to use his influence for the propagation of the gospel among his subjects, and for this purpose sent an embassy into Scotland to request that some one might be sent who should be able to act as their instructor. The person first selected for this purpose was a man of stern, austere, and forbidding manner, who knew not how to bear with the weakness, or to gain the confidence of the rude and uncultivated tribes he was sent to teach. He speedily returned home, and in an assembly of the elders, declared that he could not effect anything for the benefit of the Saxons, as they were of a stubborn and barbarous temper. The council, unwilling to relinquish the enterprise, set themselves to deliberate how they might best overcome the unwillingness of

the Saxons to receive their emissaries; when Aidan, (or Aodh,) a disciple of Columba, who was present, a man severe to himself but gentle and wise towards others, rose, and addressing the returned missionary, said: "Methinks, brother, thou hast been more harsh to ignorant hearers than was just, and hast not offered to them, according to the apostolic discipline, in the first instance, the milk of a gentler doctrine, so that, having by degrees been nourished by the word of God, they should have been competent to make profounder attainments, and to perform the loftier precepts of God." The assembly, struck with the discretion of this speech, concluded that he who had uttered it was the fittest man to undertake the duty of performing what he had so well described, and accordingly they appointed Aidan to go into Northumberland as their missionary. On his arrival, Oswald appointed his residence on the isle of Lindisfarne, in compliance with his own desire. The king became not only one of his most attentive and devout auditors, but as Aidan had at first only an imperfect knowledge of the Saxon speech, "the lovely spectacle" (as Bede justly calls it) was often exhibited, of the king, who had acquired the Scottish

language during his exile, acting the part of an interpreter of the Divine word to those around him.

Aidan's labours were most unwearied; he was wont to traverse the whole country, urbane and rural, not on horseback, but, save in cases of necessity, invariably on foot; and whenever he observed any, rich or poor, at hand, he straightway made for them, and if they were still unbelievers, invited them to the faith, or if they were already believers, confirmed them in the faith, and exhorted them to deeds of charity, and to follow good works.* His consistency of character, his self-denial, and the many virtues which adorned his life, added influence to his teaching, so that during his episcopate the foundations of Christianity were very deeply and firmly laid in that part of England where he laboured. He died in 651, in the seventeenth year of his episcopacy, and was succeeded by Finan, another Scottish presbyter from Iona, who was bishop for ten years. After him came Colman, of whom mention has formerly been made, as the stedfast opponent of the advancing influence of the church of Rome in Britain, and who was the last Culdee bishop of Lindisfarne.

* *Eccles. Hist.* lib. iii. c. 5.

Besides their missions to different parts of the British Isles, the Culdees sent messengers to preach the gospel on the continent. St. Bernard compares them to hives of bees, or to a spreading flood; and O'Donnell, punning on the name, says, "From the nest of Columba these sacred doves took their flight to all quarters." "The number of them that went to France, Italy, and other foreign countries," observes Dr. Smith, "was so great, that the Bollandine writers observe, that 'all saints whose origin could not afterwards be traced, were supposed to have come from Ireland or Scotland.'" (*Vit. S. Blier.* 11 *Jun.*)

"The zeal of the monks of Iona in disseminating knowledge and true religion in these dark ages is, indeed, astonishing. It flamed in the bosom of age no less than in the veins of youth. Cumian, at the age of seventy, set out for Italy, where he became a bishop; and Colman, afterwards bishop of Lindisfarne, (which he resigned rather than change his way of keeping pasch,) could not have set out for England from Iona before he had arrived at the age of eighty, as may be inferred from the account of his life by Colgan."*

* "Life of Columba," p. 55.

Neander attests the amount and value of the services rendered by these Culdee missionaries to the continent. "Much as was done by the Frankish agents," says he, "a far greater work was accomplished by the Irish missionaries, through their diligence in cultivating the land, in founding monasteries, which became the centres of conversion and instruction, and in providing for the education of the young."* Among these the most famous was Columbanus, who commenced his labours in France in the year 600, where he spent many years of the most indefatigable exertion, during which he visited most parts of that country; in advanced age he travelled into Switzerland and Italy, everywhere preaching the gospel, and founding seminaries of learning and piety. Associated with him was a youth of noble descent, named Gallus, who, accompanying his preceptor into Switzerland, preached for many years to the natives of the district around the Bodensee, and founded the monastery which

* "Church Hist." vol. v. p. 35. This learned and very able historian has not sufficiently adverted to the fact, that "Irish," as used in those days, was a term descriptive not of *country* but of *language*. The missionaries went from what is now called Scotland, as well as from what is now called Ireland; in either case they were persons whose mother-tongue was the *Erse*.

still bears his name at St. Gall. Soon after his death, a Scottish monk, named Fridolin, laboured among the people on the confines of Alsace, Switzerland, and Suabia, and founded the monastery of Seckingin, on the Rhine. About the same time Thrudpert arrived at Brisgau, in the Black Forest, where he was murdered by the savage inhabitants; his memory was preserved in the locality by the monastery of St. Hubrecht, dedicated to his name.* Kilian, another Irish northern monk, became a preacher of righteousness to the people in Thuringia; but for an act of fidelity somewhat akin to that which brought upon John the Baptist the wrath of Herod, he lost his life at Wurzburg.

For this diffusive and untiring activity in the service of the gospel, Europe was indebted, in the first instance, to the counsels, exhortations, and example of Columba, whose own missionary zeal was communicated to his disciples, and by them propagated to their successors. How mighty and far-stretching may the influence for good of one pious and wise man become!

Iona continued to be the chief seat of the

* Neander *ubi sup.*

Culdees for several centuries after the death of Columba. From its position, however, in the western seas, it was exposed to the attacks of the Norwegian and Danish rovers, by whom these seas were infested; and by them it was repeatedly pillaged, its dwellings burned, and its peaceful inhabitants put to the sword. These unfavourable circumstances, to which we shall advert more particularly afterwards, led to its gradual decline, which was expedited by the subversion of the Culdees throughout Scotland. As Romish influence advanced, it became necessary to silence the continual protest which these men maintained against the doctrines and pretensions of the Romish church; and for this purpose, all those means by which a religious body may be annihilated were systematically resorted to. By corrupting those who could be tempted by the bribe of ecclesiastical rank and wealth, by expelling from their monasteries those who obstinately adhered to the belief and practice of their fathers, by vexatious and iniquitous lawsuits, by dazzling the eyes of the people with a more splendid ritual than that followed by the simple presbyters of the Columba order, by calumniating their character, and affecting a superior stan-

dard of purity of morals—in short, by all the means by which an adroit, determined, and unscrupulous party may enfeeble the influence and paralyse the resolutions of a sect it has resolved to destroy, did the adherents of the Romish church labour to sweep from the land all vestiges of the Culdees. It was not, however, till the thirteenth century that they entirely succeeded, and even then they only suppressed the colleges of the Culdees and dispersed their members. The latter still continued to labour as individuals, and in many remote parts of the country kept alive the flame of a pure Christianity, long after the whole land seemed to have sunk under papal darkness; "so that," to use the words of Dr. Smith, "the reign of error in these lands was very short, and the darkness of its night was intermixed with the light of many stars."*

* Life of Columba, p. 163.

CHAPTER V.

CHANGES AND TRIALS.

"Shun the insidious arts
That Rome provides, less dreading from her frown
Than from her wily praise, her peaceful gown,
Language, and letters;—these, though fondly viewed
As humanizing graces, are but parts
And instruments of deadliest servitude."

WORDSWORTH.

"Woe, woe to the Gael people!
Ulvfagre is on the main,
And Iona shall look, from tower and steeple,
On the coming ships of the Dane."

CAMPBELL.

THE interest attaching to the Culdees, as a religious body, has induced us to devote an entire chapter to them, for the purpose of presenting a continuous account of their history and characteristics. In doing so, we have come down to a date from which we must retrace our steps, in order to take up the chronological series of events connected with Iona from the time of Columba's death, so far as these can be

gleaned from the scanty notices which have been preserved.

The successor of Columba in the abbacy of Iona was his cousin, Baithen, one of the twelve who had accompanied him from Ireland. Baithen was a worthy successor of the pious and zealous Columba. "No man," it is said of him, "ever saw him idle;" and next to Columba, he was deemed to be the best acquainted with the Scriptures, and to have the greatest amount of learning of any on this side of the Alps. His zeal, prudence, simplicity of manners, and sanctity, were such, that Columba used to compare him to St. John. Like his predecessor, also, he was much given to prayer and communion with God. He died, according to some authorities, in 598, according to others in 600; the former is perhaps the more correct date. It was during his tenure of the superiority that Columban and Gallus, or St. Giles, went forth to the continent on their missionary tour. He was succeeded by Laisnar, whose term of supremacy was also short, terminating in the year 605. After him came Fergna, who died in 623; during his time the Scottish kingdom was much agitated by internal discord as well as foreign assault,

but the establishment at Iona remained unscathed during the storm.

The next abbot was Seigine, the son of Fiachna, who was abbot from 623 to 652, when he died. During his time, Adamnan, the biographer of Columba, was born, in the year 624. A still more important event which signalized his supremacy, was the mission of Aidan and his attendants into Northumbria, at the request, as formerly recorded, of king Oswald, for the instruction of his people in Christianity. Seigine is also commemorated in the annals of Tighernac, as having founded a church at Rechran, in the year 634; and the annals of Ulster record, that in 641 the boat of the community of Iona suffered shipwreck, but to what extent the community was injured by this we are not told.

Seigine's successor was Suibne, the son of Cuirtra, whose tenure of the supremacy was brief; he died in 657, and was succeeded by Colman, who, after being abbot of Iona for a few years, went into England, and became bishop of Lindisfarne, an office which he resigned in 664 for conscience' sake, being unable to comply with the Romish institutes respecting the tonsure and Easter, as previously narrated.

He returned to Iona, where he remained for a short time, and then passed over to Ireland, and built the monasteries of Innes-bosioren* and Magheo.† The next abbot of Iona was Cumin, surnamed Ailbe, or the White, the biographer of Columba; he died in 669, and was succeeded by Failbe, who was abbot for ten years, and died in 679, shortly after his return from a voyage to Ireland.

His successor was Adamnan,‡ the principal biographer of Columba, and one of the most important personages among his successors. He was apparently a man of but moderate natural parts, but these he had cultivated diligently, according to his opportunities; his learning was great, considering the times in which he lived, and the sequestered spot where he had spent his days; and he was reputed to be a good and wise man, though his attempt to introduce the Roman usages at Iona, in

* A small island on the coast of Ireland, which still retains its ancient name.

† Now annexed to the archbishopric of Tuam. Bede, *Eccl. Hist.* lib iv. c. 4.

‡ This person's name is very variously spelled by the older writers; it appears under the forms of Adomnanus, Adamnanus, Adamannus, Adamandus, Adobnanus, Adaemundus. The first two are the same, (*a* and *o* being interchanged,) and are undoubtedly the correct orthography. His true name was probably the Celtic Adhamhnan.

opposition to the opinions and feelings of his brethren, cannot be regarded as any great evidence of either quality. His love for these novelties was acquired in England, whither he had been sent on two successive occasions as an ambassador by his nation to king Aldfrid, who, having been educated at Iona, was personally intimate with Adamnan. Here the latter came in contact with Ceolfrid, a monk of Wearmouth, and Wilfrid, now archbishop of York, the same who, as a presbyter, had carried the day against simple bishop Colman and his inflexible Culdeeism. By their means, Adamnan was corrupted from his early faith, and he returned to Iona a zealot in the cause of Rome. His death seems to have been hastened by the troubles he brought upon himself by his endeavours to induce the Scottish clergy to embrace the views he had derived from his intercourse with the Romanized clergy of the south; it took place in the year 704, when, in the simple words of the old chronicle, "Adamnan the Wise rested in Christ, in the seventy-seventh year of his age."*

Besides the Life of Columba, he left behind him a work on the geography of the Holy

* "Annals of Innisfallen," *sub. an.* 704.

Land, entitled "*De Locis Sanctis*," [of the holy places,] or, "*De Situ Terræ Sanctæ*," [of the site of the Holy Land,] which Bede, who gives an analysis of it, says Adamnan composed chiefly upon the authority of Arculf, a French bishop according to Bede, but probably in strictness a bishop of Neustria, as his name does not appear in the early annals of any of the French sees, and as his ship, from its being cast on the western shore of Britain, must in all probability have been making for some port in Normandy. This individual had gone to Jerusalem for the sake of the holy places, and having seen all the Land of Promise, travelled to Damascus, Constantinople, Alexandria, and many islands, and returning home by sea was, by a violent storm, forced upon the western coast of Britain. After wandering for some time from place to place, and meeting with many adventures, he found his way to Iona, where he was hospitably received by the abbot, who eagerly listened to his narrative, and carefully committed to writing all he had to communicate concerning the holy places.*

Adamnan's work consists of three books; the first of which contains an account of Jerusalem

* Bede *Hist Eccl.* lib. v. c. 15.

and its vicinity; the second embraces the rest of the Holy Land, with Damascus, Tyre, Alexandria, and observations on Egypt and the Nile; and the last is devoted to an account of the principal religious objects at Constantinople, and of Arculf's return to Sicily. Judging from the style and contents of his works, Adamnan appears to have been a man of no great powers; his narrative is heavy, and entirely devoid of ornament, his reflections are of the most superficial kind, and his Latinity is by no means elegant. But he shows a laudable anxiety to place fully and clearly before the reader what he has to communicate, and the amount of information he conveys says much for his diligence and patience as a compiler. Bede says that his work on the Holy Land was beneficial to many, and particularly to those who, being far removed from those places where the patriarchs and apostles lived, know no more of them than they learn by reading.* Adamnan presented a copy of this work in person to king Aldfrid, by whom it was graciously received, and the author sent back with rewards to his country.

The successor of Adamnan, as abbot of Iona,

* *Hist. Eccl., loc. cit.*

was Conanbail, or Conan, the son of Failbi, who died in 710. After him came Ceode, or Caidan, who died in 712; then Dorbhen, who died in 715; and then Faolchuo, son of Dorbhen Mac Teinne, who was elected to fill the chair of Columba on Sunday, the 29th of August, 716. By this time, the Romanizing party had gained a strong hold upon the mind of the reigning prince, Nectan, king of the Picts, and he resolved, as it was the counter influence of the abbacy of Iona which prevented the adoption of the Cisalpine regulations, that he would, by strong measures, bring these refractory monks into compliance with his wishes. The Roman usage in regard to Easter was accordingly imposed upon the community of Iona, and seems, in the first instance, to have been submitted to. Whether the abbot Faolchuo disapproved of this or not cannot now be ascertained, but it is certain that he resigned his office almost as soon as he had received it, and was succeeded by Duncan, the son of Cinnfaola, who, after a brief supremacy, died in 717. On his death, Faolchuo resumed the office he had resigned, and with him seems to have returned the opposition of the community of Iona to the new usages they were

called to adopt, for almost immediately consequent upon his becoming abbot, Nectan banished the members of that community across Drumalbin, that is, the Grampian range.

Having got rid in this way of the men whose consciences would not allow them to change what they thought imperative religious usages at the bidding of the secular power, king Nectan had no further difficulty in carrying out his wishes. In 718, the triumph of Rome was consummated in Iona, by the community submitting to receive the coronal tonsure, which thus became the badge and signal of their apostasy from the opinions, and their relinquishment of the independence so fondly cherished by their ancient church. Faolchuo seems to have shared the banishment of his brethren; at least, we infer this from its being mentioned in the Annals of Ulster and those of Tighernac, under the date 722, that Feidlimidh *held* the primacy of Iona, whilst he is not reckoned one of the abbots of Iona, nor is Faolchuo afterwards referred to in any other capacity than that of abbot. The only way of reconciling these facts seems to be, by supposing that the expulsion of Faolchuo, along with his monks, was not held to be an act superseding

his ecclesiastical standing; he still continued, though on the other side of the Grampians, to be abbot of Iona, but the duties of the office were, in the meantime, discharged by Feidlimidh, without the title of the office having been conferred upon him.

Faolchuo died in 724, in his eighty-second year, and was succeeded by Killian Fada, or Cillenius the Long, the first abbot under the new *régime*. He died in 726, and another Killian, with the surname of Droicheach, or Droichtigh, was his successor. Under him a Saxon priest, named Egbert, who had resided in Iona for thirteen years, and had been chiefly instrumental in promoting the new measures, died; and in the year 749, during his primacy, a severe calamity befel the community of Iona by the perishing of a considerable number of them by shipwreck, during a great storm. Killian's death took place in 752, and he was succeeded by Sleibin, or Slebhen, who, in 754, seems to have abdicated his office, and passed over into Ireland, where he died in 767. His successor at Iona was Suibne II., who also visited Ireland, and during whose primacy Nial, surnamed Frasach, king of Ireland, who had abdicated his kingdom after a reign of seven

years, and entered into religious orders in the monastery of Columba, at Iona, died, and was interred there. It is noticeable that his predecessor on the Irish throne, Donald the Third, the son of Murchad, also died at Iona, whither he had gone on a pilgrimage.*

Suibne died in 772, and was succeeded by Bresal, who held the primacy for more than thirty years. During this long period, many events, of various kinds and degrees of interest, must have happened to the community of Iona; but the annals have recorded only three, and of these only one is of the least interest to us. This is, the ravaging of the island by the Northmen, who, in 794, made one of their sweeping and desolating descents upon the western coast of Scotland and the adjacent islands. On this occasion, however, the monks seem to have escaped with their lives, which was not always the case when these fierce marauders descended upon their coasts. During the primacy of Bresal's successor, Cellach, frequent attacks of this sort were made, and in several of these the peaceful ecclesiastics were not only plundered, but cruelly maltreated, and in several cases murdered. In 802, their

* O'Flaherty's *Ogygia*, vol. ii. p. 376.

dwellings were consumed by fire, and several perished in the flames; and in 806, not fewer than sixty-eight members of the community were killed. It is on one of these piratical expeditions that Campbell has founded his beautiful poem of Reullura, in which he describes so vividly the assault and sacking of Iona by the Danes, and their being driven from the island by a supposed re-appearance of Columba. The following lines may be cited as appropriate to the topic now before us:—

"The sun, now about to set,
Was burning o'er Tiree,
And no gathering cry rose yet
O'er the isles of Albyn's sea;
* * * * *
And the shield of alarm was dumb,*
Nor did their warning till midnight come,
When watch-fires burst across the main
From Rona and Uist and Skey,
To tell that the ships of the Dane
And the red-haired slayers were nigh.

Our islesmen arose from their slumbers,
And buckled on their arms;
But few, alas! were their numbers
To Lochlin's mailed swarms.
And the blade of the bloody Norse
Has filled the shores of the Gael
With many a floating corse
And many a woman's wail.
They have lighted the islands with ruin's torch,
And the holy men of Iona's church
In the temple of God lie slain."

* "Striking the shield was the ancient mode of convocation to war among the Gael."

Few nations have appeared on the theatre of history, whose thirst for blood has been so intense as was that of the Scandinavian tribes, who, at the period referred to, infested the northern seas. Other nations have been ambitious, fond of military glory, greedy of conquest; and under the influence of those passions have shed blood profusely, both on the field of battle and on the scaffold. But the Scandinavian hero always presents himself to us as one whose supreme delight was in the crash and cruelty of the conflict itself. Their nature was wolfish. They rushed to strife as to a banquet. War was their pastime, their glory, their business. The surnames which they delighted to affix to their names indicate the savageness of their disposition. Among those who invaded Scotland, one of the most redoubted was Thorfinn, who bore the name of the Skull-cleaver; another is celebrated in the ancient Sagas as the Increaser of Terror; another is called the Food-provider for the Wolves; and many of them are, both by name and by their deeds, associated with this class of animals.

This characteristic of the people displayed itself in their mythology, which is the deifying of bloodshed; and which, in its turn, tended to

feed and animate the native ferocity of the people. A nation which believed that their supreme god was properly named Woden, that is, the Mad or Furious One, that his loftiest title was Father of Slaughter, that he snuffed with delight the odour of blood shed upon the field of battle, and that he kept the choicest rewards of his Valhalla for those who had slain the greatest number of enemies, and who died sword in hand, could hardly be expected to exhibit any other features than those of blood-thirstiness, vindictiveness, and cruelty.

It would appear, however, that even among them cases sometimes occurred in which humanity asserted its rights, and where a respect for the ministers of religion prevailed over the ordinary habits of ferocity; for in one of the northern Sagas it is mentioned, that king Magnus, who, in the end of the eleventh century, subjugated the Western Isles, on one of his predatory expeditions "came to the Holy Island, (Iona,) and gave quarter and peace to all men that were there, and to the property of everybody." Perhaps some superstitious feeling had induced this unwonted forbearance, for which the grim Norseman lost no time in amply compensating himself elsewhere. "Then," continues

the chronicle, "king Magnus went with his army to Ila, made war there, and burnt. And having won that country, he went south to Satiri, (Kintyre,) and made war there on both countries, both upward on Scotland, and outward on Ireland. He went in a warlike manner all the way south to Man, and made war there as elsewhere. So says Bjorn—

"The valiant king bore far and wide
The shields upon the plain
Isle of Sandy. There
Was smoke on Ila
When the prince's men
Were increasing the conflagration.
The men's children of the nation of Satiri sank
Under the edges, and after
That the improvers of victory
Contrived the slaughter of the men of Man."*

Cellach resigned the primacy of Iona in 814, in order to become abbot of Kildare, in Ireland; he died in 865, in the country of the Picts. He was succeeded at Iona by Diarmicius, or Dermit, the disciple of Daigni. During his primacy, Iona was so assailed by the restless Northmen, that in 829 Dermit set out with the reliques of St. Columba, and after voyaging for two years to escape the reckless Vikingr, landed with them in Ireland in 831. Before he

* Translated by W. F. Skene, Esq. "Transactions of the Iona Club," p. 348.

left Iona, one of the community, Blaimbic, the son of Flain, was crowned with martyrdom, being slain by the heathens, that is, the Norse pirates.

The next abbot of Iona was Innruhtach, or Jurastach. He is also said to have carried over the reliques of St. Columba to Ireland, from which they were again, it is said, brought back by Kenneth McAlpin, king of Scotland, and placed in the church he had recently built at Dunkeld. In the chronicles, Jurastach is described as the *coarb* of Columba—a term which is frequently applied afterwards to the abbots of Iona, and signifies successor in ecclesiastical dignity.* Having set out on a pilgrimage to Rome, he was murdered among the Saxons in 854.

He was succeeded by Feradach, who held the primacy till 870. About this time, the Culdee settlement at St. Andrew's, then called Kilrimont, was made independent of Iona by king Grig. Feradach's successor was Flann, son of Maldun, who "rested in peace" (died) at Iona in 880. After him, Maolbride, the son of

* Colgan says it is composed of "*comh*, that is, *con* et *forb*, *i.e.*, *ager*, *patrimonium*. Usurpatur pro successione in dignitate ecclesiastica."

Torman, who had been abbot of Armagh, obtained the primacy of Iona, where he died in a good old age in 927. His successor was Dubtach, or Dubhard, "coarb of Colum-cilla and Adomnain," who died in peace in 938. Robartach, or, as he is elsewhere called, Caoinchomrach, followed, and died in 954; after him Duibdin, who died in 959; after him Duibsaich, the son of Kenneth, who died in 964; after him, Fingin, or Fiacbra, who died in 978, and was succeeded by Mugron, who is described as "a scribe and notable teacher," and who held the primacy till 980. Under his successor, whose name was Duncan, Iona was again ravaged by the Northmen, on Christmas-eve, 986, when the abbot and fifteen of his clergy were put to death. In the year following, a signal victory was obtained over these invaders by the Scots, who destroyed three hundred and sixty of them. Patrick was succeeded by Duncan, who died in 989. After him, Dubdaletha ascended the chair of St. Columba, which he retained till 996, when he died, in the eighty-third year of his age. His successor was Maolbridghdehua Rimeda, who died in 1005, and was succeeded by Muredach, son of Crican, who in 1007 resigned his office "for the service of God," but in what

capacity we are not informed; though, from his being subsequently described as "reader" at Armagh, it is probable that he resigned his abbacy in order to devote himself to the duties of a lecturer on theology, in the college at Armagh.

By "the counsel of the men of Erin," Ferdomnach was selected as his successor, and retained the office till 1005, when "he died in Christ." He was followed by Flanobra, who was abbot of Iona till 1025, when he died; after him came Cormai, son of Failan, who died in 1033; he was succeeded by Malmanhua Uchtan, who died in Christ in 1040. A period of great unsettlement seems to have succeeded, and under the date of 1055 we even read of a *battle* between Dubdaleite, successor of Patrick, and Muread O'Maels, successor of Columba, for the reliques of the martyrs, in which many were slain. In 1057, Robartach, the son of Ferdomnach, abbot of Iona, died, and was succeeded by Gilchrist O'Marldon, who died in 1062. His successor was a person whose name has not been preserved, but who is described as the grandson of Bacthan, and who, in 1070, was murdered by Indak O'Marldon. He was succeeded by Duncan, the grandson of Moenay,

who died in peace in 1099. During the primacy of his successor, Angus O'Donallan, it is recorded as a memorable event, that in the year 1105 "a camel, which is an animal of wonderful size, was presented by the king of Alban to Murchertach O'Brien."

After this date the ecclesiastical annals of Iona become very obscure. The order of the Culdees was now superseded, and their place occupied by a body of canons regular, who speedily introduced Popery in all its fulness, and with all its attendant evils. The first distinct trace of papal power in Scotland is supplied by the arrival of the pope's legate, John of Crema, in 1126. In 1152, cardinal Papiro was sent to Ireland with four stoles, or robes, from the pope, to four archbishops of the church in that country. With the acceptance of these may be said to have terminated the ancient independence of the Scoto-Irish church. As formerly mentioned, Culdeeism still survived in individuals, and was taught in remote places. There is even reason to believe that it was not wholly extinct as late as the thirteenth century in Iona; for, in 1203, one bold ecclesiastic, named Ceallach, built a monastery on that island, "in opposition to the learned of the

place," upon which a meeting of the clergy of the north of Ireland was held, by which his attempt was denounced as schismatical, and by whose order his monastery was demolished.

Under the reign of Popery, the island became the seat of a nunnery, the ruins of which still remain. The nuns followed the rules of St. Augustine, and were of the order of Canonesses. Their dress was a white gown, and above it a rochet of linen. They were allowed to remain, living in community, even after the Reformation, when the abbey was dismantled. This nunnery, it is said, was richly endowed ; besides the islands of Inniskenneth and Eorsa, there were lands belonging to it in Mull, some of which are called by the name of the Nuns' Lands at the present day.

When the bishopric of the isles was founded, Iona was included in it, and became the seat of the cathedral. This see originally included, not only all the Hebrides, but also the Isle of Man, and the bishop bore the title of *Episcopus Manniæ et Insularum*, [bishop of Man and the Isles,] and sometimes *Episcopus Sodorensis*, from which the bishop of Man still retains the additional title of Sodor. This term, about the meaning of which there has been no small

questioning, arose simply from the Scottish islands being divided into two groups, the Nordereys and the Surdereys, the northern and the southern; and as the diocese of the isles embraced the latter, the bishop was designated "of Sodor and Man."

In 1560, the act of the Scottish parliament for the demolishing of cloisters and abbey churches was passed, and the execution of it committed to certain noblemen and gentlemen, who executed their trust with unsparing fidelity, and not without shrewd suspicion of having been animated by something less pure than zeal for the Reformation, in their dilapidating of churches and confiscation of church property. In this general devastation, the abbey church of Iona shared, and many of the valuable contents of the abbey, as well as not a few of the architectural ornaments of the island, were either destroyed or carried off. The principal part of the property belonging to the abbey fell into the hands of McLean of Duart, the most powerful of the neighbouring chiefs.*

* In 1587, James VI. of Scotland issued a charter of Novodamus, in which the rental of the lands belonging to the abbey is carefully specified, and the whole made over to Hector McLean of Duart. From this it appears that the rental amounted to £162. 6*s*. 9½*d*.

In 1606, Andrew Knox was made bishop of the isles, and abbot of Icolmkill. "He was," says Keith, "a good man, and did much within his diocese by propagating religion."* In 1609, we find him treating with the chiefs of the isles at Iona, and receiving from them a bond, in which, for the remedying of "the grite miserie, barbaritie, and povertie, unto the which, for the present, [their] barran countrie was subject," they bind themselves to "profess the treu religion publictlie taucht, preichit, and professit, within this realm of Scotland, and embracit be his majestie and his estaitis of this realm as the onlie and undoutit treuth of God," and to use their endeavour for the promotion of peace, order, and loyalty, within their hereditary domains. In this document, a lamentable view is given of the moral and religious condition of the people, as well as of the utter want of any adequate means for the instruction of either young or old. It gives us a curious, and, at the same time, instructive view of the state of the country, to find the chiefs binding themselves to enforce such a law as the following, which we give in modern English: "It is enacted that

* Keith, "Catalogue of Scottish Bishops," p. 303. Russell's edition.

every gentleman or yeoman within the said island, or any of them, having children, male or female, and being in goods worth threescore cows, shall put at least their oldest son, or having no male children, their oldest daughter, to the schools in the Lowlands, and support and bring them up there till they may be found able sufficiently to speak, read, and write English." It does not appear, however, that any great improvement was effected at this time in the condition of the islanders.

In 1635, Charles I. issued orders for repairing the cathedral of Iona, and for restoring to it two bells, which had been carried off from it to the church in Raphoe. The sum of £400 sterling was ordered to be paid annually to the bishop for this purpose, but what was done in consequence of this does not appear.

From this time up to a recent date, little was attempted for the benefit, temporal or spiritual, of the inhabitants of Columba's isle. A resident schoolmaster seems to have been the only person whose business it was to endeavour to raise the minds of the people above the gross and common-place interests of their every-day existence. No wonder, under such circumstances, that visitors from the south, like Pennant, found

the islanders "stupid and lazy." Without instruction, especially without the elevating, purifying, and ennobling influence of "the glorious gospel of the blessed God," the minds of a people will never rise above the level of their animal instincts and necessities. No traditionary recollections, no splendid remains of former civilization or greatness, no sublimity of natural scenery, will, without superior influence, evoke the fallen spirit of man into either activity or excellence. Until "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ," has been caused to shine into the heart by Him "who commanded the light to shine out of darkness"—until men have been led, feeling themselves guilty in the sight of God, to lay hold upon the grace of God flowing freely to the very chief of sinners, through the atonement of the Redeemer, and have experienced the elevating, sanctifying, and gladdening influences of that new state of being which is effected by the belief of "the truth as it is in Jesus"—until, in short, they have been renewed in the spirit of their minds, and brought under the "powers of the world to come," they are in a condition in which they have neither a sufficient impulse to labour for the elevation of

their condition in this world, nor a sure guide to the attainment of a better. Happily, the state of the inhabitants of the western islands of Scotland has at length attracted the attention of Christians of all denominations in more favoured parts of that country; and the mainland, which first received the light of the gospel from Iona, has sent it back to that island, where once more it shines with a beneficent lustre, never again, we trust, to be extinguished or bedimmed.

CHAPTER VI.

ECCLESIASTICAL AND MONUMENTAL REMAINS.

"That man is little to be envied whose patriotism would not gain force upon the plains of Marathon, or whose piety would not grow warmer among the ruins of Iona."

JOHNSON.

"Iona's piles
"Where rest from mortal coil the mighty of the isles."

SCOTT.

WE have already observed, that the principal interest of Iona, in its present state, is derived from the numerous ecclesiastical and sepulchral remains which are found upon it. It is for the sake of these that it is chiefly visited by strangers, and they are such as to render a visit well worthy of the pains. A brief notice of the more important is all that can be attempted here. We shall begin with THE ECCLESIASTICAL BUILDINGS.

The inhabitants of the island are fond of connecting its antiquities as much as may be with Columba; but it is certain, that of the

ruins now existing, not one is of a date more ancient than several centuries subsequent to his time. At that early period, churches and monasteries were not built of stone, either in Scotland or England. Biscop the Blessed, abbot of Wearmouth, near the close of the seventh century, is celebrated as the person who first introduced stone buildings into use in England; but even at a period subsequent to this, king Edgar, in the charter he granted to the abbey of Malmesbury, in 974, says, "All the monasteries of my realm to the sight are nothing but worm-eaten and rotten timber and boards."* Bede, speaking of the building of the church at Lindisfarne, by Finan, head of the Scottish missionaries, says expressly, that, "after the *manner of the Scots*, he made it, not of stone, but of hewn oak, and covered it with reeds."† We may rest assured, therefore, that the buildings erected by Columba and his followers at Iona were mere wooden huts, covered with thatch—not better, perhaps, than the hovels in which most of the present inhabitants live—and that every vestige of them has perished at least ten centuries ago.

* William of Malmesbury's "Chronicle of England," p. 54. Giles's Translation.

† *Eccl. Hist.* lib. iii. c. 25.

The most ancient of the buildings of which the remains are still extant, is indubitably the Chapel of Orain, situated in the Reiliag Orain, or burial-place of Orain. Orain was one of the followers of Columba, and the first, it is said, who was interred in Iona; hence this burial-ground has ever since retained his name. The chapel, which is only sixty feet in length by twenty-two in breadth, is built principally of red granite; it is now unroofed, but otherwise is entire. Its architecture is rude, and is probably to be referred to the twelfth century. It is lighted by two very small lancet windows in the sides, looking north and south. The doorway is the only part on which any attempts at ornament have been made, with the exception of a very handsome triple arch within the chapel, forming a canopy over a tomb. This arch, however, forms no part of the original chapel; it has evidently been built at a later period, a portion of the wall having been removed for this purpose.

Next in point of age is the Chapel of the Nunnery, which stands nearest to the point at which visitors usually land. This building is in good preservation; it is nearly sixty feet by twenty. Of the roof, which was originally

vaulted, part still remains; the arches are round, with plain fluted soffits. As no women were allowed to live on the island during the reign of the Culdees, we may be sure that the date of this building does not reach beyond the commencement of the thirteenth century, though the style of the architecture, being that of the pure Norman, without a vestige of the pointed manner, or any ornament belonging thereto, might, under other circumstances and in another country, lead us to affix to it an earlier date. Vestiges of other buildings are shown, as forming part of the nunnery, but they are so faint as to render it impossible with any accuracy to trace the plan on which the buildings were constructed.

The principal edifice on the island is the cathedral, or abbey church. It seems to consist of at least two distinct parts, built at different times, besides having undergone several alterations, such as the building up of windows, the raising of partition walls, etc. The one part, that which stretches eastward from the tower, is probably of the same date as the chapel of the nunnery; the other is of later date, perhaps somewhere about the fourteenth century. The stone employed is

of different kinds, but chiefly red granite, brought from the adjoining shores of Mull. Some of the blocks are of immense size, and must have been hewn and polished at the expense of very great labour. With the granite blocks are mingled blocks of gneiss, hornblende-slate, and clay-slate, which were probably furnished by the island itself. The roof was covered apparently with a fissile mica-slate.

So much remains of the cathedral that the ground-plan of it can be easily made out.* "At present, its form is that of a cross, the length being about 160 feet, the breadth 24, and the length of the transept 70. That of the choir is about 60 feet. The tower is about 60 feet high, divided into three stories. It is lighted on one side above by a plain slab, perforated by quatre-foils, and on the other by a catherine wheel, or marigold window with spiral mullions. The tower stands on four cylindrical pillars, of a clumsy Norman design, about ten feet high and three inches in diameter. Similar proportions pervade the other pillars in

* See "Graham's Antiquities of Iona"—a work to which the author begs here, once for all, to acknowledge his obligations in drawing up this chapter.

the church, their capitals being short, and, in some places, sculptured with ill-designed and grotesque figures, still very sharp and well-preserved, amongst which that of an angel weighing souls, (as it is called by Pennant,) while the devil depresses one scale with his claw, is always pointed out with great glee. This sculpture, however, represents an angel weighing the good deeds of a man against his evil ones. It is not an uncommon feature in similar buildings, and occurs among other places at Montvilliers, where also the devil, who is at the opposite scale, tries to depress it with his fork, as is done elsewhere with his claw. The same allegory is found in detail in the legends, and it may also be seen in some of the works of the Dutch and Flemish painters. The arches are pointed, with a curvature intermediate between those of the first and second styles, or the sharp and ornamented, the two most beautiful periods of Gothic architecture, their soffits being fluted with plain and rude moulding. The corded moulding separates the shaft from the capital of the pillars, and is often prolonged through the walls at the same level. The larger windows vary in form, but are everywhere inelegant. There is a second, which is here the clerestory

tier; the windows sometimes terminating in a circular arch, at others in trefoil bends, the whole being surmounted by a corbel table."*

When Mr. Sacheverell visited Iona, in the summer of 1688, the great altar of this cathedral was still entire. "There is yet one thing," says he, after referring to some of the sepulchral remains, "which is very noble in its kind, which was the ancient altar of the church, one of the finest pieces of white marble I ever saw; it is about six feet long and four broad, curiously veined and polished; it is all yet entire, except one corner, which has been broken by accident."† Unhappily, this altar acquired the reputation of having such power over the destinies of men, that a fragment of it was deemed sufficient security against shipwreck, fire, murder, and many other evils; in consequence of which it has been subjected to a piecemeal demolition, which has now left no trace of it remaining. When Pennant visited the island in 1772, "only a very small portion" remained, "and even that," he adds, "we contrived to diminish." Perhaps, as the

* Macculloch, "Highlands and Islands," vol. iv. p. 155.

† "Voyage to I-Columb-kill," appended to an "Account of the Isle of Man," by William Sacheverell, Esq. London, 1702.

ruin was well nigh complete, his adding to it may be pardoned; but, apart from this, it is easier to extend forgiveness to the mischief caused by superstitious ignorance, than to the destructive covetousness of antiquarian curiosity.

Besides the bas-reliefs mentioned above by Dr. Macculloch, there are others still in a state of preservation, which deserve to be mentioned. They are thus described by Mr. Graham, who has very accurately depicted them in his lithograph plates. "The capitals of the columns in the cathedral are of freestone, and are carved with grotesque figures. . . . . The capital of one of the pilasters under the tower represents an ox about to be sacrificed; one figure holds its head ready to be struck down by the axe, another figure holds it by the tail, and behind him is a bearded priest, with his mouth wide open, chanting a prayer; above them is a dog hunting a hare.

"On the opposite column are two figures, busy with a pair of scales. On another column or pilaster is represented the temptation of Adam and Eve. The capital of the pillar opposite this one is defaced.

"The first column from the tower on the

south side is very much concealed by a partition wall, dividing the aisle from the nave; the only part of the capital which is visible represents the fall of Adam and Eve, and the angel with the flaming sword.

"The second column is almost entirely concealed; the part which is uncovered is carved with the figure of a man, holding an immense beast at the end of a rope.

"The third column has a representation of the crucifixion, which is partly hid by the partition wall; a figure seated upon a throne, with an angel on each side, one of whom holds a harp, the other seems to hold one limb of a rainbow, encircling the throne; a group, supposed to represent the arrest of our Saviour in the garden of Gethsemane; Peter striking off Malchus's ear; an angel weighing a man's good deeds against his bad. [This is the one described by Dr. Macculloch.]

"The fourth column represents dragons and griffins in various attitudes; one seems to be combating with a large bird; their tails wind away into scrolls of foliage. Also, an armed figure on horseback, couching his lance, and followed by a man on foot with a helmet and battle-axe.

"Above the capital of a column underneath the tower is the following inscription:—

DONALDUS OBRALOGHAN FECIT HOC OPUS.

That is—Donald O'Brallaghan executed this work.

Two years ago, the inscription was quite perfect, but since that time the corner of the capital has been knocked off, and some of the letters obliterated."

At the north side of the cathedral stands a gloomy vaulted chamber, which formed the chapter-house. The roof is still entire, though overgrown with grass and wild juniper. Over it, according to tradition, was the library of the college. It is said that this was destroyed at the time of the Reformation, but of this there is no evidence whatever. The Reformation waged no war on libraries. Books were everywhere its best friends, and it everywhere respected them as such.

Besides these remains of ecclesiastical antiquity, there are one or two belonging to a still earlier date, and pointing to the existence on the island of forms of worship and belief different from those of Christianity. These are the circular CAIRNS, which are found in various parts, and which seem to have been of Druidical origin. One of the most remarkable of these

is that called Cnoc-an-aingell, or Angel's Mount; another is one lying in a secluded spot at the base of Dun-I, and called Cabhan Culdish, or the Culdees' Retreat. These names are of course Christian, but the edifices to which they belong bear every mark of being Druidical.

From buildings of an ecclesiastical kind, we pass on to notice what form a very peculiar part of the antiquities of Iona—its CROSSES. Of these, there were at one time, it is said, not fewer than three hundred on the island—a tradition to which sir Walter Scott alludes in speaking of the abbot of Iona, in the "Lord of the Isles."

> "'The abbot comes!' they cry at once,
> 'The holy man, whose favoured glance
> Hath sainted visions known;
> Angels have met him on his way,
> Beside the blessed martyr's bay,
> And by Columba's stone.
> His monks have heard their hymnings high
> Sound from the summit of Dun-y,
> To cheer his penance lone,
> When at each cross, on girth and wold,
> *(Their number thrice an hundred-fold,)*
> His prayer he made, his beads he told,
> With Aves many a one.'"

Of these crosses, however, only a very few now remain. Orders were given, it is said, at the time of the Reformation, for the removal of these memorials of the ancient superstition; and

a great many were, in consequence, cast into the sea. It is possible this may be to a certain extent true; but it is indubitable, that very many of the crosses erected at Iona have been transported to different parts of Scotland, where they have been set up as market-crosses, or as monuments in churchyards. Mr. Graham says, "During an excursion in Lorn, (Argyleshire,) I visited many burial-grounds, and found in nearly every one some stones brought from Iona." The sacredness attaching to the locality, and, in some cases, the excellence of the workmanship, were doubtless the causes of these depredations.

Of those still remaining, the following are the most noticeable :—

Maclean's Cross.—This stands to the north of the cathedral. It is a very remarkable object, consisting of one stone, and is about eleven feet in height, including the pedestal. Tradition assigns it a date as old as the time of Columba; but without claiming for it so high an antiquity as this, it may be regarded as amongst the oldest Christian monuments in Scotland. The stone of which it is composed is hard whin-stone; it has withstood the effect of time, so as to be but little impaired. It is

rudely carved; on the upper part is the representation of a crucifixion of some saint.

McKinnon's Cross.—Of this the lower part alone remains; it lies within the Chapel of St. Orain. On the obverse, above the pedestal, is the representation of a galley, which is thought to indicate connexion with the Norwegian princes of the Hebrides. Above the galley is an inscription, still quite legible, as follows :—

HÆC EST CRUX LACHLANNI MAC-A-FINGONE ET EJUS FILII JOHANNIS, ABBATIS DE HY: FACTA ANNO DOMINI, M°. CCCC°. LXXXIX.

That is—"This is the cross of Lachlan McKinnon and his son John, abbot of Hy: made in the year of our Lord 1489."

On the reverse side, there is a griffin at the bottom, the tail of which ascends up into scrolls of foliage. The height of this fragment is six feet and a half.

St. Martin's Cross.—This stands in the front of the cathedral, and is of large size, being fourteen feet high, eighteen inches broad, and six inches thick. It is composed of one solid column of the hardest whin-rock, and is fixed into a massive pedestal of red granite, about three feet high, in which are cut three steps round. The carving has been somewhat

obliterated by the effects of the weather, and is much overgrown with lichen. The quarrying of such a column, the transporting of it to the island, the carving and the erecting of it, have justly excited the admiration of visitors, as indicating an amount of skill and resources, at a very early period possessed by the inhabitants of the western islands, greatly beyond what is commonly supposed.

St. John's Cross.—This cross stood opposite the door of the cathedral. It was, like the preceding, fixed in a pedestal of granite, but is now lying on the ground, having by some violent means been broken and cast down. On the part of the pillar still remaining, there is sculptured an exceedingly rude representation of the Temptation. The arms and upper part of the cross are buried in the ground, with the exception of a fragment of one of the arms, which is lying by the pedestal.

The next objects claiming our attention are the ANCIENT SEPULCHRAL MONUMENTS still extant and capable of being identified.

From an early period Iona became a favourite place of sepulture to the Christians, not merely of Scotland, but of the adjacent islands and of Ireland. Christianity dignifies the grave by

teaching that death is not annihilation, nor even permanent dissolution, but only a condition interposed between the present and another which is to be eternal. Hence, the believer in Jesus is led to regard with something very different from stoical indifference the place where his body is to rest till the resurrection; and a wish naturally arises in his mind that his remains should be placed among those of "his own people," those with whom he expects to share in the exulting joys of the resurrection morning. The patriarchs and pious Jews of old desired to be buried in the tomb of their fathers; but with the early Christians, who, even among those nations which were in the habit of consuming the bodies of the dead on the funeral pyre, invariably adopted the usage of burial, their supreme desire was to be laid beside their associates and brethren in Christ, without any especial regard to the claims of relationship. Out of this arose, as the progress of degeneracy led to a superstitious veneration for the places where martyrs and eminent confessors or teachers of Christianity were laid, a corresponding desire to occupy a grave near to theirs. Traces of this are observable at an early period; and in some of

the inscriptions which yet remain in the cemeteries of the Christians, in the catacombs of Rome, special mention is made of the party to whom they refer having been buried "*retro sanctos*," [behind the saints,] or *ἐνι χωρῳ μακαρων*, [in the place of the blessed,] expressions which denote proximity to the remains of the martyrs.* This was a feeling which was not likely to decay as superstition increased in the church; and accordingly we find it deepening and strengthening all through the dark ages, and often displaying itself in very fantastic and soul-injuring forms.

That so eminent a saint as Columba, one so extensively known and so universally respected and beloved, should confer especial sacredness, in the estimation of the surrounding communities, upon the spot where his remains were deposited, will not, under these circumstances, be wondered at; the wonder would have been had it been otherwise. Neither shall we feel surprised that the dust of Iona, thus consecrated, should be that among which superstitious devotees were desirous that their mortal remains should decay. On this island, also, there was a spot

* See Maitland's deeply interesting work, "The Church in the Catacombs," p. 41.

peculiarly sacred, still called *Clagh nam Martireach*, [the martyrs' cemetery,] reserved for those who might fall for their attachment to, or in the service of Christianity; and within this place of extraordinary sanctity, it was the ambition of the best and greatest that their bodies should repose after death.

The principal burying-place on the island is the *Reilig Orain*, [burying-place of Orain,] which surrounds St. Orain's Chapel. This is an extensive inclosure, and is thickly covered with tombstones. Munro, who was dean of the isles in 1549, says, that "in it are three tombs of staine, [stone,] formit like little chapels, with ane braide grey quin staine, [broad grey whinstone,] in the gairl [gable] of ilk ane [each one] of the tombes. In the stain of ane is written '*Tumulus Regum Scotiæ*,' that is, the tomb of the Scottes kings. Within this there lay forty-eight crowned Scottes kings. The tomb on the north side has this inscription, '*Tumulus Regum Hiberniæ*,' that is, the tomb of the Ireland kings; there were four Ireland kings in it. Upon the north side of our Scottes tomb the inscription bears '*Tumulus Regum Norwegiæ*,' the tomb of the kings of Norroway. Within this sanctuary, also, lye the most part

of the lords of the isles, with their lynage; the clan Leans, with their lynage; McKinnon and McQuarrie, with their lynage; with sundrie other inhabitants of the haille [whole] isles, and also our kings, as we have said." Buchanan, who translates this account, adds,* that the number of Norwegian princes buried, according to report, in their tumulus, is eight. Of the Scottish princes interred at Iona, sixteen are said to be of the race of Alpin, of whom the most famous was Kenneth, the first king of Scotland properly so called, as under him the Celtic and Pictish principalities were consolidated into one kingdom. The last of the Scottish kings said to have been buried at Iona is the famous Macbeth, whose name Shakespeare has immortalized, but whose true history was very different from that given by the dramatist.† Shakespeare alludes in that drama to the usage of burying the Scottish kings at Iona, when he makes Macduff say of the body of the murdered Duncan, that it has been—

> "Carried to Colmes Kill,
> The sacred storehouse of his predecessors,
> And guardian of their bones."

Of these royal tombs nothing now remains,

* *Rerum Scott. Hist.* lib. i. c. xxxvii.

† See Scott's "History of Scotland," chap. ii.

except certain heaps of a ridge-form, which mark the foundations of the chapels, and are still called *Iomaire nan Righ*, [ridge of the kings.] South of the chapel lies an unpolished stone of red granite, said to cover the remains of a king of France; a cross is rudely cut upon it, but without any inscription.

Of the tombs mentioned by dean Munro, the most imposing is that of the Mac Quarrie. The figure of a knight in full armour is carved upon it. There is an inscription on the pillow on which the head of the knight rests, but it is now so obliterated as to be illegible. The tomb belongs to one of the chiefs of the clan Mac Quarrie, a clan of great antiquity, and whose seat was on the island of Ulva.

Of the Lords of the Isles who are interred here, the only tomb that can be identified is that of Angus Og, Angus the Young; it is chiefly adorned with sculptured foliage; at the upper part is the ship, with its sails furled, the badge of descent from the Norwegian princes of the Hebrides; and above this is the following inscription:—

HIC JACET CORPUS ANGUSII, FILII DOMINI ANGUSII MAC DOMNILL DE ILA.

That is—"Here lies the body of Angus, the son of Angus Macdonald, lord of Islay."

This Angus was the attached friend of Robert Bruce, and was with him at the battle of Bannockburn. He is the hero of sir Walter Scott's "Lord of the Isles," though the poet has, for the sake of euphony, changed his name into Ronald, a name which often occurs in the genealogy of that family. Besides him, however, many of the lords of the isles, or, as they were called by the Gaelic genealogists, kings of Fiongall, lie buried in this tomb. His son John was a great benefactor to the abbey of Iona, and on his death his body was embalmed, and on its arrival at Icolmkill, "the abbot, monks, and vicar came, as they ought, to meet the king of Fiongall, and out of great respect to his memory mourned eight days and nights over it, and laid it in the same grave with his father, in the church of Orain, 1380."*

One of the best preserved monuments in the Chapel of St. Orain, is one representing an ecclesiastical person of rank. No inscription is upon the stone, but tradition ascribes it to a bishop of the name *Aodh Camo-Chasach*, or Hugh Crook-legs. It is probable, however, that this latter appellation is due to the peculiar

* Notes to the "Lord of the Isles;" note 7, canto i.

position in which the sculptor has placed the feet of the reverend ecclesiastic.

Of the MacLeans several tombs remain, some of which are worthy of notice. The finest is that of MacLean of Coll. On it is represented a knight in armour, in the act of drawing his sword, very boldly cut out from the stone. An angel is figured on each side of the head, one of them holding a sword. The feet tread on what looks like some aquatic bird, but this part of the figure has been somewhat defaced. An inscription on the pillow is now no longer legible; near the right shoulder the words *Hi* and *Pino* can be easily read.

This tomb lies in the middle of the Reilig Orain, and close by it are two others, belonging to members of the same clan, though of different and even hostile families. That of MacLean or MacLaine of Lochbuy, who appears in armour, and in the act apparently of buckling on his sword, is the tomb of *Eoghan a chinn bhig*, [Ewen-of-the-little-head,] a very terrible person in the superstitious regard of the family of Lochbuy, as he is said to make his appearance, even at the present day, on a black horse, and amid a dismal clashing of chains, whenever any member of that family

dies. The other tomb is that of MacLean of Duart; on it is sculptured a figure in armour, with a long beard, a shield on his left shoulder, a spear in his right hand, and a sword stuck in his belt. His shield bears a blazonry of a winged dragon, a tower, and an ornamental border. Beneath his feet is a crouching greyhound.

Of the warlike and fierce family of Duart, another member lies beneath a stone, on which is sculptured a ship, surrounded with elaborate carving. This is the tomb of *Ailean nan Sop*, [Allan of the brand,] a name which he received in consequence of his notoriety as an incendiary and freebooter. He is said on his deathbed to have lamented that he had only made nineteen *raids*, or marauding incursions upon his neighbours, and had not at least completed the score. If this story be true, it only adds another to the numerous instances already on record, of the blinding, degrading, and utterly hardening tendency of a life of unrestrained sin.

A collateral member of the family of MacLean, who lived in more recent times, and pursued more peaceful occupations, and whose memory is preserved among the memorable dead in the Reilig Orain, was Dr. John Beton, physician to

James II. The inscription on his tomb is as follows :—

HIC JACET JOHANNES BETONUS, MACLENORUN FAMILIE, MEDICUS; QUI MORTUUS EST 19 NOVEMBRIS, ANNO DOMINI 1657, ET ETATIS SUE 63. DONALDUS BETONUS ME FECIT, 1674.

ECCE CADIT JACULO VICTRICI MORTIS INIQUE
QUI TOTIES ALIOS SOLUERAT IPSE MALIS.
SOLI DEO GLORIA.

"Here lies John Beton, of the family of the MacLeans, a physician, who died on the 19th of November, 1657, and in the 63rd year of his age. Donald Beton erected me, 1674.

Lo! he who rescued others by his art,
Himself succumbs to death's all-conquering dart.
To God alone be glory."

One of the most beautiful stones in the Reilig Orain is that of the four priors; it has suffered considerably from the abrading hand of time, but still presents a gracefully and elaborately ornamented surface. Round the edge of the stone was a handsome carving; on the upper part is the figure of a hound pursuing a hare; the surface is divided into two parts, between which is an inscription, now nearly obliterated; each part is divided into two squares, filled with florid carving; and round the whole runs an inscription in old English characters, as follows :—

Hic jacent quatuor Priores de ¥, ex una natione; d. Johannes, Hugonius, Patricius, in decretis olim Bacularius, et alter Hugonius, qui obiit anno Domini millesimo quingentesimo.

"Here lie four priors of Y, (Iona,) of one tribe; viz., John, Eugene, Patrick, formerly a bachelor in divinity, and another Eugene, who died in the year of the Lord 1500."

Of the multitude of other stones, some of them beautifully sculptured, in the Reilig Orain, we deem it unnecessary to offer any account, as no information could be communicated respecting the parties whom they were designed to commemorate. Before passing on, we may notice that the precinct of these tombs was held sacred, and enjoyed the privileges of a sanctuary, within which persons who had been guilty of minor offences were permitted to take refuge, and were protected in life and limb. In the old Scotch law, also, provision was made for penitents taking advantage of such retreats. "Gif any," says the old statute, "fleis to Halie Kirk, moved with repentance, confesses there that he heavilie sinned, and for the love of God is come to the house of God for safetie of himself, he sall nocht tine [shall not lose] life nor limme, bot quhat he has taken frae anie man he sall restore sa meikill [as much] to him, and sall satisfie the king according to the law of the countrie. And swa sall swere upon the Holie Evangele that thereafter he sall never commit reif, [robbery,] nor

theift."* Such a provision was doubtless necessary in times when the supremacy of law was not fully acknowledged, and the blessings of order not adequately secured to the community. In such times, the church, with its consecrated precincts, formed the only refuge for the penitent, and the only protection of those who had committed minor offences from the hasty and unmeasured retaliation of passion, pride, and revenge. In the present day, happily, such sanctuaries are not needed, as the strong arm of law not only guards society by punishing the criminal, but protects the criminal from all injuries, except such as the law may award as the due penalty of his offence. In those times, also, a useful lesson was perhaps inculcated upon the people, by the association of a sanctuary for the endangered and the penitent with the privileges of the church, whose business it is not only to inculcate forgiveness of injuries but to proclaim to men, being penitent and believing, the pardon of all their offences, through Him of whom it was predicted, that the Lord of hosts himself shall be for a sanctuary. (Isa. viii. 14.)

Leaving the Reilig Orain, and proceeding to the cathedral, the first monument we notice is

* Quoted from the *Regiam Majestatem*, by Pennant, p. 252.

that of Macleod of Macleod, which lies in the centre of the chancel. It is the largest tombstone in Iona, and is a massive and very hard stone. The figure is sunk into the stone, and was evidently originally filled up with metal—tradition says with silver, in which case it is not surprising it has all disappeared, though even baser metal might have proved too strong a temptation for Celtic cupidity. The Macleods are of Scandinavian extraction, and have long existed as a very powerful clan in the western islands of Scotland; but which of their chiefs lies under this stone tradition does not inform us. Let us hope it is not the ferocious monster of whom sir Walter Scott narrates, in one of his notes to the Lord of the Isles, that in order to avenge some insult which certain of his dependents had received from the Macdonalds of Eig, he chased the inhabitants of that island into a cave, at the entrance of which he kindled a huge fire, composed of turf and fern, which was maintained with unrelenting assiduity until all within were destroyed by suffocation. The narrator might well say of the clan which furnished such a chief, that "some were late and imperfect converts to Christianity."

Near to the altar is the tomb of the abbot

Mackinnon. It represents the effigy of the abbot, with the crozier in his left hand, and his right raised as in the act of benediction; his head rests on a pile of cushions, once supported by two angels, the bodies of which are now broken off; another angel nestles in the fork of the abbot's mitre. Beneath his feet were two lions, but both feet and lions are now gone; of the lions which supported the tomb one still remains. Round the edge of the tomb runs this inscription :—

Hic jacet Joannes Mac Fingone Abbas de I, qui obiit anno Dni Millesimo Quingentesimo, cujus animæ propitietur Deus altissimus. Amen.

"Here lies John Mackinnon, abbot of Iona, who died in the year of the Lord 1500, to whose soul may the most high God be propitious. Amen."

This tombstone must have been a very excellent piece of sculpture when entire, but the depredations of tourists have grievously and disgracefully disfigured it. One of these pilfering virtuosi had the audacity, some time ago, to split off the face of the venerable abbot, and was walking away with it, when, happily, he was discovered, and obliged to restore his ill-gotten prize.

On the other side of the altar is the tomb of the abbot Kenneth Mackenzie, a cadet of the

Kintail family. The material of this tomb is hard freestone; the sculpture has been almost entirely destroyed by time and the irreverence of visitors, but in its original state this must have been a fine piece of art.

On the floor is the effigy of Niall an Roiss, Neil of the Ross, (of Mull,) the head of a family of Macleans, famous for their heroism and strength, and hence called "the race of the iron sword." The figure is in armour, with a long beard; the right hand holds a spear; across the breast is a shield, with the Norwegian ship and a lion rampant upon it; a sword is suspended from a belt; and the feet rest on a hound couchant. By the side of the figure is a whilk, "as if," says Pennant, "he just had returned from the feast of shells in the hall of Fingal;" part of this has been carried off. The whilk was used as a drinking shell in ancient times among the Celtic tribes, and hence the name given in the Gaelic poems to the banquet-room—"the hall of shells."

In the nunnery there are a great many tombs, on several of which are carved a comb, a pair of scissors, or a mirror. These emblems are found on the most ancient sepulchral monuments in the Christian cemeteries, and appear

to have been used as symbols of the female sex.* When Pennant visited Iona, the tomb of the last prioress, Anna Macdonald, was still entire, though covered several feet deep with the accumulated ordure of cows. This Pennant, by fair words and a bribe, prevailed on some of the listless natives to remove, and by that means once more exposed it to the light. The figure of the prioress is cut on the face of the stone, an angel on each side supports the pillow under the head, and above there is a mirror and a comb. The prioress has her hands joined, as in prayer, and under her feet is the legend, "*Sancta Maria ora pro me.*" This prayer is supposed to be addressed to the virgin Mary, whose effigy occupied the other half of the stone. This part is now destroyed, but it was entire when Pennant saw it. The virgin appeared crowned and mitred, the child in her arms, and a sun and moon appeared above. Round the tomb is inscribed:—

Hic jacet Domina Anna, Donaldi Terleti filia, quondam Priorissa de Iona quæ obiit ano Mo. Do. XLo. IIIo. Cius Animam Altissimo commendamus.

* In the epitaph of Veneria, observed by Mr. Maitland on the wall of a passage, No. 22, Piazza di Spagna, at Rome, all these symbols are depicted.—See "Church in the Catacombs," p. 180. Mr. M. thinks they are signs of her trade, but this may be doubted.

"Here lies the Lady Anna, daughter of Donald Charles, formerly prioress of Iona, who died in the year 1543. Her soul we commend to the Highest."

It is a pity that the inscription should have been marred by the superstitious and absurd address to the virgin, which occupies a place on the tomb!

At the east end of the nunnery is a stone, much mutilated, dedicated to the memory of two ladies, whose effigies are sculptured on it. Part of an inscription still remains:—

HIC JACET MARIO [TA] FILIA JOHANNIS LACHLANI DOMINI DE . . . . . [Q] UARUM ANIMAM PROPITIETUR DEUS.

"Here lies Mariota, daughter of John Lachlan, lord of . . . . . to whose soul may God be propitious."

There are several other tombstones in the nunnery inclosure, some of which are remarkable for the elegance of the sculptured ornaments upon them, and one of which represents seven figures, four of females in the attitude of prayer, a priest, and his two attendants. But on none of these have the inscriptions been preserved, nor does tradition record the names of the parties to whom they belong.

In closing our notices of these memorials of the dead, it is impossible to avoid the reflection: How little, after all, is the worth of an epitaph,

as a record of the person over whom it is inscribed! Of those whose names have been preserved on their monuments, what more do we know than of those whose names have been obliterated? Mighty warriors, perhaps, in their day; heroes, whose names and exploits filled men's minds with wonder or dismay; wise, pious, or politic churchmen, perhaps, venerated for their virtues, deferred to for their sagacity, or, it may be, feared and hated for their depravity and covetousness; meek, contemplative ladies, doubtless, who quietly pursued their routine of service, or attracted notice only by the severe benevolence of their piety—what of them all remains now but a decaying monument and a forgotten name! What a poor reward for life, if this were all! Let us indulge the hope, that of some at least of those whose sepulchres we have been visiting, a nobler and more enduring memorial remains. Let us trust that they have a record on high—a record of their faith, their purity, their godliness, their beneficence whilst on earth—kept in perpetual remembrance before God. All fame but this is fleeting and unsatisfying. The exploits of the warrior, the schemes of the diplomatist, the genius of the artist, the power

of the ruler, may perpetuate their names for a few generations; and those who have been fortunate enough to be celebrated by some poet, whose works the world will not let die, may chance to be known or named even to the latest age: but the end will come at last, and all such reputations will perish in that final and overwhelming catastrophe, when the earth and the things that are on it shall be burned up.

"Only the actions of the just
Smell sweet, and blossom from the dust."

Only those who have spent life in laying up treasure in heaven shall find an inheritance which is incorruptible, and a name which is immortal. The *man* saved by the grace of God, through faith in the atoning death of Christ—the *works* of piety and benevolence he has performed, for the sake of Christ, on earth—these alone, of all earth's things, shall survive the flames of the last fire, and have a place in the "new earth" which is to emerge from the ashes of the old. "I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth; yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them."

May the author be permitted to ask the reader of this book, what are *his* prospects for futurity?

In a very few years at most, the hand that has penned these lines, and the eye that peruses them, will have mouldered into dust; but the mind which guided the hand, and the mind which looked through the eye, will continue to exist, with all their susceptibilities for happiness or misery not only unimpaired, but immeasurably quickened and increased. It is a solemn thought; and it prompts the no less solemn question—Were my future state to be determined *now*, what would be its character, and where its locality? Yes; *What?* and *Where?* Happy or miserable? In heaven or hell? Let a brief space be given to the serious pondering of these questions, and whilst conscience on the one hand is sure to testify against us, and set our sins in array before us, demanding our condemnation, let the glad tidings of the gospel be welcomed by us, on the other, and let us shelter ourselves under the omnipotent protection of Him who hath come to seek and to save the lost, who hath taken away sin by the sacrifice of himself, and who, because he ever liveth to make intercession for us, is able "to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him."