

THE CULDEES.

THE small Hebridean island Iona,—the celebrated seat of the parent college of the Culdees, ‘the Star of the Western sea,’ ‘the luminary of the Caledonian regions, whence savage clans and roving barbarians derived the benefits of knowledge and the blessings of religion,’

“Isle of Columba’s cell,
Where Christian pity’s soul-cheering spark .
(Kindled from Heaven between the light and dark
Of time) shone like the morning star,”—

lies off the south-west extremity of Mull, 9 miles south-west of Staffa, and about 36 miles west of the nearest part of the district of Morven, or of the mainland of Scotland.

A strait, called the sound of I, about $\frac{1}{2}$ of a mile broad, and 3 miles long, deep enough for the passage of the largest ships, but dangerous from sunken rocks, separates it from Mull. Islets and rocks—the most conspicuous of which is Soa on the south-west—are numerously sprinkled round one-half of its coast. A heavy swell of the sea, but not such as to imperil navigation, usually rolls toward it from the north. The scenery around it is, in general, desolate in its aspect and cold in its tints, requiring the aids of the burnished or tempestuated sea, the fleecy or careering clouds, and above all, the tranquil or the stirring associations of history, to render it interesting or grand. Iona has the attractions neither of pastoral beauty and simplicity, nor of highland wildness and sublimity; it utterly wants both the fertile and cultivated loveliness of Lismore, and the dark and savage magnificence of Mull; and, though relieved by some green views of Coll, Tiree, and other islands, it would seem to a person ignorant of its history and antiquities, an altogether tame and frigid expanse of treeless sward and low-browed rock. Its length is about 3 miles, stretching from north-east to south-west; its breadth is about a mile; and its superficial area is conjectured to be about 1,300 Scotch acres. All round, it has a waving outline, approaching on the whole to the form of an oval, but exhibiting an almost constant alternation of projection of land and indentation of sea. Its recesses, however, though termed bays by a topographer, would, in general, be refused the name by navigators, and afford no harbour, nor, in boisterous weather, even a tolerable landing-place. The bay of Martyrs, on the north-east side, is merely a little creek; yet it both forms the chief modern succedaneum for a harbour, and was anciently, as tradition reports, the place of debarkation for funeral parties coming hither to inter the illustrious dead. Port-na-Currach, 'the Bay of the Boat,' on the south-west side, is a still more inconsiderable creek, lined with perpendicular rocks of serpentine marble; and

derives both its name and all its importance from a tradition of its having been the landing-place of the currach, the hide and timber boat, of St. Columba. On the shore of this creek are some irregular heaps of pebbles, thrown up apparently by the sea, but represented by legendary gossip to be—in the case of one heap which is about 50 feet long—a memorial and an exact model of St. Columba's boat, and, in the case of the other heaps, results and monuments of acts of penance performed by the monks. The surface of the island consists of small, pleasant, fertile plains, in most places along the shore, and of rocky hillocks and patches of green pasture, and an intermixture of dry and of boggy moorland in the interior. At the southern extremity, excepting a low sandy tract near a creek called Bloody bay, it is merely a vexed and broken expanse of rocks. The highest ground is near the northern extremity, and rises only about 400 feet above sea-level.

On the bay of Martyrs, near the ruins which constitute the grand attraction and the glory of the place, stands the village of Threld,—a collection of miserable huts, and the scene of general squalidness, poverty, and filth. In common with the rest of the island, it was long left to thrive or starve for the future world upon its dim and malodorous traditions of the moral influences which once bathed all its neighbourhood in beauty; for though it received a visit some four times a-year from the minister of Kilfinichen, it was utterly destitute of every substantial means of either education or religious instruction. Its inhabitants constitute very nearly the whole population of the island, and are in a rude semi-barbarous condition. Besides conducting a poor trade in fish and kelp, they live, to some extent, on the gullibility and vanity of visitors. Aware how much the gems of the island are in request, young and old run in a mass to the beach on the arrival of a vessel, and obstreperously vie with one another in palming upon strangers, for twopence, for fourpence, for

sixpence, or for whatever they can obtain, anything that is likely to be received by a self-conceited starrer at the world's lions as a precious stone. Wordsworth, alluding to the part taken in this traffic by children, and fixing the warm gaze of a Christian upon the means of religious instruction which they now enjoy, says,—

“ 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 is yon neat trim church a grateful speck
 Of novelty amid the sacred wreck
 Strewn far and wide. Think, proud philosopher!
 Fallen though 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 unpossess’d,
 A faith more fixed, a rapture more divine,
 Shall gild their passage to eternal rest.’ ”

Iona was probably uninhabited, or at best but occasionally visited by the people of Mull, previous to the time of Columba, and, at all events, comes first into notice as a quiet retreat gifted over to the saint for the uses of his missionary establishment. His having been accosted upon his landing by some Druids in the habits of monks, who, pretending to have also come to preach the gospel, requested him and his followers to seek out some other asylum, and who, on his detection of their imposture, made a speedy and complete departure, is either one of the idle legends with which his biographers barbarously embellished their accounts of his life, or points to some conspiracy formed among the heathen ecclesiastics on their getting bruit of his purpose to attempt

an inroad on their territory. Columba was a native of Ireland, descended by his father from the King of that country, and by his mother from the King of Scotland; and, after having travelled in many countries, and acquired great reputation for learning and piety, he concocted a scheme of missionary enterprise, with Scotland and Ireland for its field, which, at once in the Christian heroism of its spirit, and the far-sightedness of its views, and the brilliance of its immediate success, has had no parallel or even distant imitation in the missionary movements of any subsequent age. He wished to apply to Scotland and to Ireland a moral lever which should lift them up in the altitude of excellence, and bring them acquainted with the moral glories of heaven; and he sought a spot on which he might rest the fulcrum of the simple but mighty instrument he designed to wield. What he wanted was, not an arena crowded with population or a vantage-ground of political influence over the rude tribes whom he wished to be the instrument of converting,—for, in that case, he would have remained in his fatherland, or taken a place in the kingly courts to which his birth gave him access; but it was a secluded nook, where he could lubricate his own energies for the agile yet herculean labours which he had proposed to himself as his task, and where he could train and habituate a numerous body of youths to the hardy moral gymnastics which should fit them for acting with equal nimbleness and strength against the battle-array of the idolatries and barbarity of united nations.

In 563, or, according to Bede, in 565, when he was 42 years of age, he left Ireland, accompanied by a chosen band who were akin to him in character and the companions of his councils, whom a grateful but superstitious posterity canonized, as they did himself, and asserted to be more than mortal, and whom the usages of Columba's successors pronounced to be twelve in number, after the example of the twelve apostles of the Redeemer, though the recorded list of

their names shows them to have been thirteen, and the beautiful simplicity of Columba's character might have demonstrated them to amount to just as many as could be made to appreciate and reciprocate the motives which impelled his movement,—accompanied by this band, the saint, since we must call him so, or rather the energetic missionary, ran in among the Hebrides as a territory common, in a sense, to Ireland and Scotland, and offering fair promise of the retreat which he sought. Oronsay, lying only 60 or 65 miles from the mouth of Loch-Feyle, the grand outlet of Ireland on the north, and both nearly of the same size as Iona, and similarly situated with relation to Colonsay as Iona is with relation to Mull, was first tried, and became, as is said, the seat of such commencing operations as afforded some promise of stability. But *I*—the island par excellence—was destined speedily and permanently to receive the bold and apostolic missionary. Either while his tent was fixed at Oronsay, or after having made a passing visit to Iona, he went into the eastern parts of Scotland, or the territories of the Picts, and was the instrument—with the aid of miracles, say his romancing biographers—of converting Brude or Bridei, the Pictish King, whose reign terminated in 587. From either this monarch, or more probably from Conal, king of the Scots—or, as Dr. Jamieson conjectures, from both, the frontiers of their respective kingdoms not being well-ascertained—he received a grant of either whole or part of the island which was henceforth to be rendered illustrious by the association of his name.

Columba now erected on Iona a mission-establishment, whence emanated for centuries such streams of illumination over Scotland, Ireland, the north of England, and even places more distant, as shone brilliantly in contrast to the midnight darkness which had settled down on the rest of Europe, coruscating through the sky and beautifully tinting the whole range of upward vision, like the play of the Northern lights when a long night has set in upon the world. But the estab-

ishment was very far from being monastic, and cannot, as to its external appliances, be traced in any of the existing ruins which possess so strong attractions for antiquaries and the curious. Columba and his companions were strangers to all the three vows which unite to constitute monkery; and made a brilliant exhibition of the social spirit, the far-stretching activity, the travelling and untiring regard for the diffusion of the gospel, the enlightened respect for every art which could improve and embellish human society, and the freedom from mummery and religious mountebankism, which monks are as little acquainted with as the red Indians who scour the American prairies are with polite literature or the refinements of a king's drawing-room.

Columba, for some time, took up his residence with King Brude at Inverness, and, while there, met with a petty prince of the Orkneys, and found an opportunity, by his means, of settling Cormac, one of his disciples, in the extreme north, and introducing Christianity to the Ultima Thule of the known world. He also made a voyage in his currach to the north seas, and spent twelve days in adopting such preparatory measures as gave his companions and successors an inlet to the northern parts of continental Europe. Constantine, a quondam king of Cornwall, who had renounced his throne that he might co-operate as a missionary with the saint, founded a religious establishment in imitation of Columba's at Govan on the Clyde, and, after diffusing a knowledge of the gospel in the peninsula of Kintyre, passed away from the world through the golden gate of martyrdom. Other members of the Iona fraternity—their leader guiding the way in every movement—traversed the dominions of the Picts, the Scots, and the Irish, and speedily numbered most of the first, and many of the second and third of these nations among their followers. The Irish annalists state, in round numbers, that Columba had 300 churches under his inspection; and, adopting the language and ideas of a later and

corrupted age, they add that he also superintended 100 monasteries. Their figures, as well as their words, are probably in fault. Yet, even making large allowances, the number of missionary stations modelled after the parent one of Iona, and mistakenly called 'monasteries,' and the number of fully organized and self-sustained congregations, which seem to be indicated by the word 'churches,' must have been surprisingly great to be, in any sense, estimated at respectively 100 and 300. Columba's personal influence, too, and the bright and far-seen star of fame which, from very nearly the commencement of his enterprise, stood over Iona, are evidence of the striking greatness of his missionary success. Aidan, the most renowned of the Scottish Kings, having to contest the crown with his cousin Duncha, did not, even after the complete discomfiture of his opponents, think his title to royalty secure till inaugurated by Columba according to the ceremonial of the *Liber Vitreus*; and, in all his great enterprises, he was prayed for in a special meeting of the brotherhood of Iona. So numerous were the missionaries, both in Columba's own day and afterwards, who went out from the island,—so wide was the range of their movements, and so eminent was their success, indicated in their being popularly canonized,—that, throughout France, Italy, and other parts of Europe, all the saints of unknown origin were, at a later period, reputed to be Scottish or Irish.

The Culdees, 'servants of God,' as the fraternity of Iona and the communities connected with them were called, seem to have had no connexion whatever with the corrupt and multitudinous sect which, from an early period in the 4th century, claimed the alliance of the state, arrogated to itself the title of 'the Catholic church,' and was already far advanced, all indeed but completely matured, in the innovations of Romanism. Columba acted, to all appearance, in the same independent manner as the founders of some eight or ten considerable bodies in Africa, Italy, and the East, who, in

various degrees, maintained orthodoxy and apostolicity, long after these were utterly lost in what are usually called the Latin and the Greek churches, and who—but for the two circumstances of their records having been destroyed during the inquisitorial persecutions of the dark ages, and of the fountain-heads and all the main streams of ecclesiastical history lying within the territories of parties who regarded dissenter and heretic as synonymous terms—would figure illustriously in the religious annals of the Christian dispensation. He is represented as ‘the arch-abbot of all Ireland,’ and is known to have wielded supreme ecclesiastical influence over Scotland; yet he seems to have acted rather on principles of advice than on those of authority, and in the character, not of a prelate, but simply of the founder and guide of a great Christian mission. He never renounced the humble office of a presbyter; nor ever held higher office than the abbotcy, as it was termed, or first and governing function, of the college or ecclesiastical community of Iona. Mission-establishments, or ‘monasteries’ as history improperly designates them, formed by colonization from the parent one, or under its sanction, usually had each twelve presbyters, and a superior or ‘abbot;’ but both the presbyters who continued in the colleges, and are called ‘monks,’ and those who went abroad in charge of congregations and wore the name of ‘bishops,’ were all on a footing of equality among themselves, and in the case of each community, all acknowledged the authority of their own superior or ‘abbot.’ Nor does the college of Iona seem to have differed from its offshoots in authority, or in any particular whatever except in its being the prolific hive whence successive swarms of industrious and honeyed missionaries went off to raise accumulations of sweets in the various nooks of the moral wilderness. Even ‘the abbot’ does not appear to have been, in all respects, the superior of the other members of a college; for he ranked only as a presbyter or ‘a monk;’ and, in particular, he acted strictly in

common with the others in cases of ordination. The Culdees were sober, charitable, and contemptuous of worldly grandeur,—“modest and unassuming,” says Bede, “distinguished for the simplicity of their manners, diligent observers of the works of piety and chastity, which they had learned from the prophetic and apostolic writings.” They despised the ceremonies of a costly ritual, the pageantry of the choir, and the tricks and gambollings of priestcraft. They guarded, to a degree, against the innovations attempted by the wily emissaries of Rome; and, considering the circumstances of the period, made a comparatively long resistance to the influences of degeneracy which had already precipitated the most of Europe into gilded barbarism and antichristian superstition. Their doctrines probably were tinged to a considerable degree with heterodoxy; yet, when compared with those of the great body of contemporary Christians, and when seen in the rich fruits of moral worth which they produced, they may be suspected to have leaned toward error more in words than in reality.

Iona was the retreat of science and literature, and of the fine and useful arts, almost as conspicuously as of religion. Columba himself excelled in all secular learning,—was a proficient in the knowledge of medicine and the practice of eloquence,—and laboriously instructed the barbarians in agriculture, gardening, and other arts of civilized life. Not a few of the members of his community, in successive generations, were eminently skilled in rhetoric, poetry, music, astronomy, mathematics, and general philosophy and science. About the beginning of the 8th century, learning of every sort, in fact—with the exception of some poor remains of philosophy and the arts in Italy—was hunted out of every part of Continental Europe, and concentrated its energies and its glories on the little arena of Iona. Even Ireland, which was at the time brilliant in distinct literary establishments, concurred with the general voice of the civilized world,

in pronouncing Iona the pre-eminent seat of learning, in acknowledging the paramount influence of its college, and in awarding to its abbot the designation of *Principatus*. The arts and sciences which formed the curriculum were writing, arithmetic, the computation of time, geometry, astronomy, jurisprudence, and music. So much was the last of these valued at the period, that heaven was believed to have bestowed musical powers only on its favourites. At first, it allured the barbarians to the Christian modes of worship, and was attended to simply in a degree proportioned to its subordinate importance; but eventually it acquired a predominating influence, far too largely engaged the attention, retarded the progress of deeper studies, and contributed not a little to produce a general deterioration, which at length became submerged by the influx of popery.

Only a rapid and interrupted outline of the history of Iona can be here attempted. A continuous list of abbots is preserved from Buithan, who succeeded Columba, and died in 600, to Cain Chomrach, who died in 945. Another and succeeding list has perplexed antiquaries, but distinctly exhibits four more abbots, beginning in 1004, and terminating with Duncan, in 1099. Under Buithan, St. Giles, a graduate of Iona, introduced Culdeeism to Switzerland,—was the instrument of converting several thousands of the inhabitants, rejected the bishopric of Constance, held out as a bribe to lure him from his simple creed, and planted an establishment whose superiors, in after ages, were less proof than he to the blandishments of civil greatness, and came to be ranked as considerable princes of the empire. Under Fergan, who died in 622, and who was considerable in piety and learning, the scientific and literary interests of Iona had to struggle with difficulties, but went through unscathed. Under Cummin, who died in 658, and who was distinguished for his scholarship, the seminary, though sending out fewer missionaries than formerly to Switzerland, Germany, and other con-

tinental countries, continued its assiduity in training men in the arts and sciences. About this time, Aidan and some other alumni, in compliance with an invitation of Oswald, king of Northumbria, who had been discipled to Christianity when in exile among the Scots and Picts, introduced a knowledge of Christianity among the Northumbrian Saxons, and planted the scions of Christian excellence and literary renown among that people, from the northern limits of their territory along the Forth, to their southern limits in the centre of England. Aidan is said to have in seven days baptized 15,000 converts; and he commended his cause by great moderation, meekness, and piety;—but in common with many others who went from Iona to England, he cared little to retain the simple ecclesiastical discipline of Culdeeism; and he was appointed the first bishop of Lindisfarne or Holy Island. Eata, one of those who accompanied Aidan from Iona; after labouring for a season in Northumbria, became the apostle of the tribes who inhabited the basin of the upper Tweed, and laid the foundation and was the first superior of the Culdee establishment of Melrose,—which was the predecessor for centuries of the greatly more celebrated but incomparably less worthy popish abbey. During nearly the same period as that of Aidan and Eata's activity, all the other principalities or kingdoms of England, excepting Kent and Wessex, and the little state of Sussex, were traversed by missionaries from Iona, and received from them their chief initial instruction, or their revival from total declension, not only in Christianity, but also in the arts and sciences.

No institution, either of its own age or of any which intervened till after the Reformation, did so much as that of Iona, at this time, to diffuse over a benighted world the lights of literature, science, and the Christian faith. But as the seventh century drew toward a close, its glory became visibly on the wane, and began to assume sickly tints of remote assimilation to Romanism, or more properly, of substituting

frivolous external observances for the spirit and energy of simple truth. A celebrated but very stupid dispute, at Whitby, in Yorkshire, between Colman, one of its alumni, and Wilfred, a Romanist, on the precious questions as to when Easter or the passover should be celebrated, and with what kind of tonsure the hair of a professed religieuse should be cut, conducted on the one side by an appeal to the traditional authority of John the apostle, and on the other to the interpolated dictum of Peter, the alleged janitor of heaven, and supported on the part of Colman with all the zeal and influence of his Culdee brethren, ended, as it deserved to do, in the total discomfiture of the people of Iona, who totally forgot the moral dignity of their creed both by the silliness of the questions debated, and by the monstrous folly of appealing to the verdict of the Northumbrian prince Oswi, a diademed ninny, who "determined on no account to disregard the institutions of Peter who kept the keys of the kingdom of heaven,"—this dispute gave a virtual death-blow to Culdeeism, and the influence of Iona in England, and even paved the way for the march of the vanguard of popery upon the delightful institutions both of the island itself, and of the far-extending territory over which its moral influence presided. Colman, with a whole regiment of his clerical brethren, retreated upon Scotland, and left the sunnier clime of the south in possession of the corrupted and corrupting Romanists. Under Adamnan, who died in 703, Iona proclaimed to the world its having commenced a career of apostacy, and invited the multitudinous communities who looked to it as the standard-bearer of their creed, to follow in its steps. The ecclesiastics of the island put some trappings of finery upon their originally simple form of church government; they fraternized with the Romanists on the subject of keeping Easter; they preached the celibacy of superior clerks and professed monks,—prohibited the celebration of marriage on any day except Sabbath,—prayed for the dead,—enjoined immo-

derate fastings,—and distinguished sin into various classes; and they, in general, yielded themselves, with a surprising degree of freedom, to the power of fanatical zeal and superstitious credulity. Though still far from being as corrupt as the Romanists, and though continuing to maintain the island's literary fame, they very seriously defiled the essential purity of Christian faith and devotion.

Iona underwent, in the course of divine providence, frequent scourgings for its spiritual declension, and henceforth was conspicuous, not more for the loss of its purity, than for the destruction of its peace. In 714, the ecclesiastics, or the monks—as they may now, with some show of reason, be called—were temporarily expelled by Nectan, king of the Picts. In 797, and again in 801, the establishment was burnt by the northern pirates. In 805, the pirates a third time made a descent upon it, and put no fewer than 68 of its monks to the sword. Next year, the inhabitants of the island built a new town; in 814, they went in a body to Tarach to curse the king of Scotland, who had incensed them by his vices; and in 818, their abbot, Diarmid, alarmed by new menaces from the pirates, bundled up some saintly relics to aid in averting perils, and ploughed the seas for two years in making a retreat to Ireland. In 985, the abbot of the period, and 15 monks, or 'doctors,' were killed, and the whole establishment dispersed. In 1069, the buildings, after having been re-edified, were once more destroyed by fire. The place had long before bidden farewell to its pristine glory, and now loomed dimly in the increasing gloom of its evening twilight; and, at last, in 1208, it was formally mantled in the sable dress of night, and became the seat of a new and regular monastery, tenanted by the cowled and mass-saying priests of Rome.

The Culdee monks, with the decline of their religious excellence, grew in earthliness of spirit; and though they originally held little communication with powerful barons except

to aid their spiritual well-being, and would not accept from them any donation of land, yet they eventually made no scruple to send their fame to the money-market, and to accumulate whatever possessions were ceded by popular and opulent credulity or admiration. They received numerous and large donations of churches and their pertinents, and of landed property, from the lords of Galloway, and are said to have obtained 13 islands from the Scottish Kings. No tolerable estimate can now be made of the amount of their wealth, nor even a certain catalogue exhibited of their islands. Raasay, Canna, Inchkenneth, Soa, and Eorsa, seem certainly to have belonged to them; Tiree, Colonsay, Staffa, and the Treshinish isles, were probably theirs; and the three Shiant isles, the three Garveloch isles, and the isle of St. Cormack, Dr. M'Culloch thinks, are awarded them by the evidence of the ruined cells and other antiquities. In 1180, all the revenues derived from Galloway and other quarters, were taken away, and granted to the abbey of Holyrood. The Romish monks who succeeded the Culdees, inherited from them little or no property, except the island of Iona, and were left to make what accumulations they could from the fame of the place, and the trickeries of their own craft.

Iona thus concentrates most of the teeming interest of its renowned name within the period of about 150 years succeeding the landing of Columba; and is seen in its real moral sublimity when the doubtful or positively fabulous story of its having been originally an island of the Druids, and the associations of its monkery and its existing ruins of popish edifices, either are entirely forgotten, or are employed only in the limnings of poetry as foils to the grand features of the scene. Regarded as the source of Christian enlightenment to the whole British isles, and as the fountain-head of civilization and literature and science to all Europe, at a period when the vast territory of the Roman empire, and nearly all the scenes which had been lit up by primeval Christianity

were turned into wilderness by barbarism and superstition, it excites holier and more thrilling thoughts by far than the most magnificent of the thousand rich landscapes of Scotland, than even the warmest in the colourings of its objects, and the most stirring in its antiquarian or historical associations. "We were now treading that illustrious island," says Dr. Johnson, in a passage familiar to almost every Scotchman, "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. To abstract the mind from all local emotion would be impossible, if it were endeavoured, and would be foolish, if it were possible. Whatever withdraws us from the power of our senses,—whatever makes the past, the distant, or the future, predominate over the present, advances us in the dignity of thinking beings. Far from me and from my friends be such frigid philosophy, as may conduct us indifferent and unmoved over any ground which has been dignified by wisdom, bravery, or virtue! That man is little to be envied, whose patriotism would not gain force upon the plain of Marathon, or whose piety would not grow warmer among the ruins of Iona." "We approached Iona," says a lively tourist, who contributes his sketch to a modern periodical, "We approached it on a lovely afternoon in summer. The steam-boat had left Oban crowded with tourists—some from America, two Germans, and a whole legion of 'the Sassenach.' The quiet beauty of the scene subdued the whole into silence—even the Americans, who had bored us about their magnificent rivers, and steam-boats sailing twenty-five miles an hour. The sea was literally like a sheet of molten gold or silver. Not a breath agitated its surface, as we surveyed it from beneath a temporary awning, thrown up on the quarter-deck. The only live objects that caught the eye were an occasional wild fowl or porpoise. As the vessel moved on among the silent rocky islands, the scene constantly shifting, yet always bearing a stern, solemn, and

primitive aspect, it was impossible not to feel that we could not have approached Iona under more favourable circumstances. * * * Iona! There is something magical in the name. Whether its etymology be I-thonna, the Island of the Waves, or I-shonna, the Blessed or Holy Isle, we care not. The combination of letters is most musical, and harmonizes completely with the associations called up by the venerable spot. Some places we admire for their rural or pastoral beauty and simplicity—others for their naked grandeur and simplicity. Iona belongs to neither of these classes; * * * yet undoubtedly in interest it surpasses them all. As the seat of learning and religion when all around was dark and barbarous—as the burial-place of kings, saints, and heroes—solitary and in ruins—inhabited by a few poor and primitive people—and washed by the ever-murmuring Atlantic, Iona possesses most of the elements of romance and moral beauty. Its natural disadvantages would have been counted as attractions by Columba and his pious votaries, when, some twelve centuries ago, they first steered their skiff across the ocean to plant the tree of life and sow the seeds of knowledge on its desert and barbarous shores. The greater the sacrifice, the higher the virtue; and from this solitary spot Columba sent forth disciples to civilize and enlighten other regions, till the fame of Iona and its saints extended over the kingdom, subdued savage ferocity, and made princes bow down before its influence and authority. Here kings and chiefs were proud to send votive altars, crosses, and offerings, and to mingle their dust with its canonized earth—here Christian temples rose in the midst of Pagan gloom—knowledge was disseminated—and Iona shone like the morning star after a long night of darkness! The whole seems like a wild confused dream of romance, as we look on that low, rugged island, with its straggling patches of corn-lands, its miserable huts, and poor inhabitants.” Wordsworth has dedicated three memorial sonnets to Iona; and Blackwood’s

Delta has penned the following lines on this far-famed islet, and its surrounding scenery :—

“ How beautiful, beneath the morning sky,
 The level sea outstretches like a lake
 Serene, when not a zephyr is awake
 To curl the gilded pendant 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.
 Dumb things may be our teachers; is it strange
 That aught of death is perishing! Come forth
 Like rainbows, show diversity of change,
 And fade away—Aurora of the North!
 Where altars rose, and choral virgins sung,
 And victims bled, the sea-bird rears her young.”

Mr. Heneage Jesse thus expresses the emotions he experienced on visiting Iona :—

“ Ye who have sail'd among the thousand isles,
 Where proud Iona rears its giant piles,
 Perchance have linger'd at that sacred spot,
 To muse on men and ages half-forgot :
 Though spoil'd by time, their mouldering walls avow
 A calm that e'en the sceptic might allow ;
 Here, where the waves these time-worn caverns beat,
 The early Christian fix'd his rude retreat;
 Here first the symbol of his creed unfurl'd,
 And spread religion o'er a darken'd world.
 Here, as I kneel beside this moss-grown fane,
 The moon sublimely holds her noiseless reign ;
 Through roofless piles the stars serenely gleam,
 And light these arches with their yellow beam ;

While the lone heart, amid the cloister'd gloom,
Indulges thoughts that soar beyond the tomb.

All-beauteous night! how lovely is each ray,
That e'en can add a splendour to decay!
For lo! where saints have heaved the pious sigh,
The dusky owl sends forth his fearful cry!
Here, too, we mark, where yon pale beam is shed,
The scatter'd relics of the mighty dead;
The great of old—the meteors of an age—
The sceptred monarch, and the mitred sage:
What are they now?—the victims of decay—
The very worm hath left its noisome prey;
And yet, blest shades! if such a night as this
Can tempt your spirits from yon isles of bliss,
Perchance ye now are floating through the air,
And breathe the stillness which I seem to share."

If any relics of the Culdees exist on the island, they must, to all appearance, be sought only among the oldest of the tomb-stones, defaced, without inscriptions, mere blocks of stone, which cannot now be identified with any age, or twisted into connection with any individuals or events. The ruins of buildings are extensive, but all posterior in date to the invasion of popery. Whatever structures were erected by Columba or his successors, are contended, successfully, we think, by Dr. M'Culloch, to have been comparatively rude, and probably composed of wicker-work or timber; and even had they been elegant and of solid masonry, must have been destroyed by the frequent devastations of the northern pirates. When Ceallach, the leader of the Romish invaders, took possession in 1203, he could scarcely have failed to appropriate an ecclesiastical edifice, had one existed, or even to have renovated or re-edified any ruins which could have been made available for housing his monks, yet he built a monastery of his own. Even Ceallach's edifice, soon after its erection, was

pulled down by a body of Irish, sanctioned by an act of formal condemnation on the part of a synod of their clergy, who still sided with the Culdees, and resisted Romanism.
