# CULTURE

IN

# EARLY SCOTLAND.

BY

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TO

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A SMALL TRIBUTE

TO THE WORTH OF THE MAN, THE INSPIRING POWER OF THE PROFESSOR, AND THE WELL-EARNED REPUTATION OF THE EDITOR OF, AND CONTRIBUTOR TO, THE MONUMENTAL WORK,

"*Allgemeine Geschichte in Einzel-Darstellungen.*"

# PREFACE.

THE subject treated in the following chapters embraces the Prehistoric, Roman, and Celtic Christian Culture of Scotland. Though North Britain was not known by the name of Scotland before the eleventh century, and the term Scotia must always be understood of Ireland previous to that time, I have retained it as most convenient, while not limiting myself exactly to the modern territorial boundary. As I explain further on, I use the word culture in a wide sense to denote anything of interest in the social, religious, and intellectual condition of a people. I have in a critical, yet, I trust, unbiassed spirit, gathered my material from every source fitted to throw light on what is in some portions of it an obscure subject. In treating such portions I have largely used the illustrative method, aiming to set before the reader a suggestive general picture of a state of things with which the want of sufficient information baffles a detailed acquaintance. Happily, however, the testimony of archæology, of folk-lore, and of the older historians such as Bæda, Gildas, Adamnan, and others, who have noticed ancient Scotland, has enabled me to deal in a more direct fashion with other periods in the culture of our forefathers. Happily, too, there are not wanting outstanding figures within the pale of the historic epoch, treated in the second and third books, whose lives may be taken as an epitome of the culture of their age. While giving in the footnotes the authorities on whom I base some statement or conclusion, I have refrained from lingering in the text over intricate and dry processes of archæological or historical

reasoning, and have striven to render the story of our past readable as well as instructive. This merit cannot be claimed, with the rarest exceptions, for the treatises on the history or archæology of Scotland, which are irksome reading to all but the knowledge-thirsty student. Whilst I acknowledge my obligations to the scholars whose industry and erudition have done much for the elucidation of our early civilisation, I claim the indulgence of the reader in making an independent attempt to portray the culture of early Scotland in the sense of the German "cultur." In regard both to the method of treatment adopted, and the conclusions come to, I would remark, in the words of a great modern English historian,* that "in fairness the author has a right to demand that his critic should have tried to put himself in his place, and look at the subject from his standpoint."

* Stubbs, "Lectures on Mediæval and Modern History," p. 60.

# CONTENTS.

## BOOK I.—PREHISTORIC CULTURE.

# BOOK I.

## PREHISTORIC CULTURE.

### CHAPTER I.

#### INTRODUCTORY.

I USE the word culture in a general sense. It embraces the mental condition of man and its modes of expression,—whatever, in short, is of interest and importance in the condition of a people. It refers to its intellectual and moral state, its sense of art or its manual skill, its customs and social institutions, &c., as far as these may be inferred, or have been handed down by written record. The term is usually applied to denote intellectual acquisition or refinement, and viewed in this sense may appear entirely out of its element in conjunction with the words barbarian or savage. It may seem, at first sight, to be degrading gold with a coating of tin. But culture need not be the equivalent for high intellectual refinement or attainment, though it has come to have this special meaning in literary phraseology. The history of the race, as of the individual, is a history of development, and every stage of civilisation indicates a grade of culture, however low it may be. There is such a thing, then, as primitive culture, and the manner in which the primitive man thinks and acts is truly a phase of that growth by which the highly refined man has reached maturity. The culture of to-day rests indeed on that of primeval ages, and it is not difficult to find in the customs, the traditions that have survived from the remote past, the traces of its presence and its

influence. "Survival in culture," says Dr Tylor, "placing all along the course of advancing civilisation waymarks full of meaning to those who can decipher their signs, even now sets up in our midst primitive monuments of barbaric thought and life."* We may feel a vast gulf between ourselves and our primeval ancestors, who lived in caves and hunted with the flint arrowhead, and in many respects we cannot be said to be related by any bond of sympathy. The influences which shape our thoughts are largely different, for instance; still there is the race connection, there is the human spirit, in whose workings a real though rude soul reflects itself. Genius there may not be in our sense of the term, but reason certainly, and we must be shortsighted and supercilious to a degree if we can perceive no trace of our likeness in the reflection.

In the case of a highly civilised country, the indications of this lower culture must be looked for in the archives of the soil, in those prehistoric deposits of objects found in the graves of the dead, or left on purpose or by accident in the sand or the moss by the living. The dawn of written record broke comparatively late for many peoples, and beyond their first appearance in history there lie long ages of silence, whose secrets are but meagrely and dimly disclosed by the researches of the archæologist. This is markedly the case with Britain, lying, as it does, in a remote north-western corner of Europe, far from the scene of the earlier civilisations. Though not unknown to the Greeks of the time of Pytheas, the Humboldt of antiquity, who visited it and the islands northward of it in the middle of the fourth century B.C., and connected by traffic with the Greek merchants of Massilia (Marseilles), the information derived from historic sources is extremely fragmentary before the Roman invasion. It is not indeed till the age of Domitian that the pregnant pen of Tacitus, in describing the campaigns of his father-in-law, Agricola, touches on the martial tribes of Caledonia, and, unfortunately, he has not immortalised their manners in the same systematic and graphic way that he has those of the Germans. From this time to the advent of the Christian missionary

* "Primitive Culture," p. 21.

we get occasional glimpses of the barbarian inhabitants of Northern Britain from foreign authors like Dion Cassius and Ammianus Marcellinus, which we shall notice later on. Of this written information we shall make use as tending to some extent to reflect the prehistoric culture with which we purpose to deal in this book, but for the ages which preceded Roman governor and Christian missionary we must have recourse chiefly, as I have said, to the archives of the soil. These afford us, however, a varied and eloquent tale of the peoples that have successively colonised our northern land in prehistoric times, or are found contemporaneously occupying it during its earliest historic period. The surface of the country may, in fact, be compared to a manuscript in which the record of the culture of many nations, who have marked their presence, if not with pen and ink, in the less coherent but still eloquent characters of their weapons and implements, their monuments and ornaments, is strangely interwritten. Finn and Goidel, Brython and Roman, Saxon and Norseman, and may be others long forgotten, have contributed their share to this record, which the soil of the country has preserved. We may not, in the shadowy light that falls on it, especially in considering the remains of the remoter cultures of the Stone and Bronze Ages, hit on the right interpretation of this intricate record; but the writing is there, and our archæologists can at least claim that they have done their best to decipher it. And not without result. We may hesitate, for instance, before accepting the evidences of Phœnician influence, and an elaborate Druidic cult, which Colonel Leslie Forbes* finds in the mysteriously inscribed blocks of stone in Aberdeenshire, but to any man of trained observation, the objects which the primeval mourner placed in the graves of the departed so far explain themselves, and Sir Daniel Wilson, Dr Anderson, Dr Monro, and others have interpreted those and other prehistoric remains, in their monumental works on Scottish archæology, with an enthusiasm tempered by a scientific spirit. Their inferences as to the social condition and moral character, for instance, of the men who used the implements and

* "The Early Races of Scotland."

weapons and erected the cairns and stone circles of the Stone and Bronze periods, seem to me too flattering at times (of which more anon), and the vagueness that hangs like a dreamy haze over the remote past will not be disenchanted even by enthusiasm and science. But facts speak for themselves and tell us something definite, whether our general conclusions be right or wrong.

An important question suggests itself at the outset. Can the mass of objects recovered from their lair underneath the surface of the soil be arranged in intelligible order, so as to yield some sort of connected story? Is there a means of distinguishing objects representing a more remote culture from those which may represent a less remote one? A gradual succession of date is of course impossible where no written record exists to guide us, but there is a principle of arrangement which, in some degree, supplies its place. It is as simple as it is obvious. The method is just to proceed, as a rule, from the ruder things to the less rude, from the simple to the less simple, from the stone or bone which came more easily to the hand of primitive man to the metal which required for its production a skill and observation gained by increased experience. The tribes of the human race, which occupy the lowest level of civilisation in our modern world, have been found to be those who worked or hunted with instruments fashioned of bone or stone. Wherever there is a knowledge of the metals, the degree of culture is correspondingly higher. This order of development is thus as historically certain as it is intuitively probable. But there still remains the question as to the order in the use of the metals. Here again the amount of skill and experience necessary for their production suggests the answer. The knowledge and use of copper and tin must precede the manufacture of bronze, which marks one of the epochs in the history of inventive genius, and which forms the natural stepping-stone to a discovery still more significant in the history of culture—the smelting of iron. It is not necessarily evident that the manufacture of iron in every case succeeded that of bronze. It is conceivable that the former process may have been discovered by some sagacious individual among

a people to whom the fusion of copper with tin was unknown. The modern savage, we know, passed in many instances, by contact with the European merchant or colonist, from the use of stone or bone or wood to that of iron without any intervening stage. But it is certain that the possession of iron instruments denotes a higher condition of culture than the use of the less serviceable alloy of copper and tin, and we may safely regard the conventional divisions of prehistoric time into the Stone, Bronze, and Iron Ages as accurately expressing progressive stages in the culture of our insular ancestors.

Of course, there may have been, probably were, intervening stages corresponding to the use of other materials besides these three. Articles of tin, copper, and lead are also found amid the remains of our prehistoric insular culture. Among the American Indians, tribes have been found using only instruments of copper, and axes of this material existed in Scotland, Italy, and Hungary. Herodotus informs us that the Massagetæ, a people living near the Caspian Sea, had no iron or silver, but plenty of gold and copper. Their lances and axes were of copper, and their caps and belts were decorated with golden ornaments.* It is more than likely that in a country where copper was not unplentiful, and which is easily worked, there was a time when the awakening intelligence of the savage fashioned instruments of this material, or used it as he did the gold and tin, for making the ornaments with which he decorated himself. But copper, tin, or lead do not singly possess the qualities which go to produce a serviceable instrument, and thus we do not find them in the abundance which lends such a typical distinction to the objects made of iron, bronze, or stone. These divisions may thus not be quite exhaustive, but they are not arbitrary, like many of the divisions which the historian makes when dealing with written record, and discussing the progress of events or the growth of institutions. In these we may sometimes perceive the reflection of opinion

* Herodotus, i., c. 215: "They make great use of gold and copper; . . . they use no silver or iron."

rather than the indication of fact. But stone, bronze, and iron mark with unmistakable emphasis so many stages in human experience and progress.

This principle of arrangement, according to these three prevailing types of material, may be objected to on the ground that, though we may separate them on the shelves of a museum into their respective periods, they are often found together in the same deposit, as if the man who owned an iron sword, also wore a bronze armring, and used a stone hammer or drinking cup. It is very probable that he did, nay, it is certain. We must guard against the mistake of supposing that the objects embraced by these divisions stand out distinct and unconnected. The use of bronze did not result in the discontinuance of the use of stone, nor that of iron in the disappearance of its two predecessors. The advance of the human race is by gradual development rather than by distinct leaps, and while there is progress by new departures, there is the survival of the old along with it. Our modern culture, as I have already remarked, comes not merely from, say, the resplendent antiquity of Athens or Rome, but from the days as well when what is now the rush-covered mass of stones and mud in some bog or "mere" was a lake dwelling, and from a past reaching even further back. But there is a means of deciding whether weapons or implements of stone, bronze, or iron recovered from the soil really belong to the age when this material furnished the means of making war or obtaining sustenance. When we find only fragments of stone tools in a grave, we may safely take this as an indication that the mourners who placed them there were unacquainted with anything else. Or should we light upon some cemetery of the Bronze Age, and dig up a collection of bronze weapons and ornaments, with perhaps an urn bearing a peculiar style of ornamentation, we may quite as safely conclude that they mark the last resting-place of one who fought with weapons of bronze, but who had never wielded a sword or an axe of iron. So too,—apart from the objects themselves,—the type of structure in which they are found, or of the art by which they are decorated, enables the archæologist to

denote what stage in the culture of our forefathers these things represent.

These old things, which thus arrange themselves in the cases or on the shelves of an antiquarian museum, like that of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland at Edinburgh, are replete with living interest, when we try to realise their importance. For one thing, they come to us as messengers from the dead, because, as I have already observed, the workers of these remote periods, living as it were at the back of time, wrote the outlines of their existence with the weapons or implements they fashioned. Be it remembered, too, in considering this message in bronze or stone or iron, that the effort of skill necessary to conceive and produce a gracefully fashioned and chastely decorated urn, for example, is no contemptible evidence of that intelligence in the individual which is the secret spring of progress in the community. And these things appeal not merely to the speculative reason, but to the imagination as well. They reflect upon the dim canvas of the remote past a picture which is not without its fascination, all the more that it is so unlike the world in which we live. We feel as if looking into the unseen, not the to be, but that which has been and vanished. The finding of some article, it may be thousands of years old, three or four feet beneath the present surface of the soil, is an unveiling of the past akin to that which we strive, during moments of longing or reflection, to wring from the vague future, and lends an interest to some waste and barren spot more real than poet inspired could give it. Truly the archæologist has his hours of romance, and if we catch him sometimes dreaming rather than soberly reasoning, we must not forget that dreams now and then foreshadow or reflect a truth. At all events, his inductions add to the poetry of the past. Sir Daniel Wilson,* for instance, finds in the now desolate hillsides of parts of Argyleshire indications of a degree of cultivation having existed at some former period far beyond what is exhibited in that locality at the present day. And such evidences of ancient population and industry are, he informs us, by no means confined to the remote districts of

* "Prehistoric Annals of Scotland," p. 231.

ancient Dalriada. They occur in many parts of Scotland, startling the believer in the unmitigated barbarism of the country, prior to the mediæval era, with the evidence of a state of prosperity and civilisation at some remote epoch, the date of which has yet to be ascertained. Another significant glimpse of this kind, to mention but one more example, was afforded by the discovery of two pairs of celt moulds in the parish of Rosskeen, Ross-shire. "The site of this interesting discovery," says the same author,* "is about four miles inland, on the north side of the Cromarty Firth, on a moor which the proprietor is reclaiming from the wild waste and restoring once more to the profitable service of man. In the progress of this good work abundant evidence demonstrated the fact that the same area, from which the accumulated vegetable moss of many centuries is now being removed, had formed the scene of a busy, intelligent, and industrious population."

* Pp. 223, 224.

## CHAPTER II.

### THE SAVAGE.

WE may, without being guilty of calumniating the dead, pronounce our ancestors of the Stone Age savages. However eloquently the archæologist may draw pictures of their skill or their taste, the fact will not be blinked. The evidence, such as it is, reveals, for the most part, a state of wretchedness and rudeness compatible only with the culture of a people at a low stage of development. The tradition of the degradation of the human race from a high condition of primeval civilisation to that of savages, has given place, in the view of thinking men, to the inference that the progress of the race has rather been from a lower to a higher culture. Archæological and anthropological investigation into the dim past of the race discloses no paradise, no golden age in which an elastic fancy has fondly placed the early ancestors of a people. Intellectual and material progress, not degradation from some long lost culture, is the verdict of history. "The notion of the intellectual state of savages," it has been well said,* "as resulting from decay of previous high knowledge, seems to have as little evidence in its favour as that stone celts are the degenerate successors of Sheffield axes, or earthen grave mounds degraded copies of Egyptian pyramids." There have undoubtedly been cases of relapse. What we may find in the individual or the community we find also in the race at large. Misfortune may reduce many a tribe in the scale of civilisation, and in this sense there has been degradation. The Bushman, who was pressed into the barren wilds along the south-western coast of the Cape by invading tribes from the north-east, was compelled to become the victim of a wilder and less prosperous existence than when he dwelt in the more fertile regions, of which he was dispossessed. There are instances, too, in which a

* Tylor, "Primitive Culture," p. 68.

more civilised race has left the monuments of its culture as the witness to its memory when a less civilised one has taken its place, as in the case of the mound builders of the Mississippi.* Civilisations too have flourished and passed away, and the degenerate posterity of a people has more than once survived, in puny impotence, the grandeur and strength of their forefathers. But it does not follow from this that the people, which is found in a rude state of culture, has as a rule fallen back from a comparatively high state. Where there is no evidence of the existence of a high culture, we are not entitled to reason from the emblems of savagery that have come down to us, say from the remote Stone Age, that any higher culture preceded that which they indicate. Britain may have been the scene of a culture as high as that of ancient Egypt or Babylon, but there is nothing to indicate this in its prehistoric annals; they reveal, on the other hand, the progression, which is observable in the history of the human race in general—from savagery to barbarism and from barbarism to civilisation. If Roman civilisation was swept away by the rude Pict and the fierce Saxon, the disturbance was but temporary, and new growth succeeded the decay and destruction of the old.

It is in the drifts and gravel beds of the Age of Ice that we must seek the records of the primeval British savage. What archæologists like Prestwick,† Evans, and others, discovered in the gravel beds of the Somme—hand-shaped flints embedded along with the remains of animals—was subsequently found in other valley deposits in Europe. The course of the Thames, for example, has yielded a considerable number of these flint implements, and the period of their use may be vaguely estimated by the difference in the level of the river then and now, ranging from between 80 and 120 feet. The animal remains in these gravel deposits include the bones of the mammoth, elephant, rhinoceros, hippopotamus, horse, bear, elk, stag, and wild ox, so that the first trace of the human species is found in association with existing animal nature — that is, when

* *Cf.* Mitchell, "Past in the Present," lect. i.

† *Archæological Journal*, vol. xlviii.

the animals of an earlier period had disappeared, or nearly so.

The period to which such relics belong has been variously named the Palæolithic, the Early Stone, or Drift Age, and their absence in North Britain has been assumed to indicate* that this region was still icebound and uninhabitable. To my mind, however, this is a subject on which there is still room to make allowance for the chances of future discovery, and the presence in the north of objects, such as rude stone implements and canoes deeply embedded in the soil, of the same character as those found on the sites of human habitation in the south, suggests a date remote enough to be contemporary with the man of the Drift or Early Stone Age. Shell mounds have in fact been discovered on the shores of the Moray Firth. Those of Denmark, where they are very numerous and are known as *Kjokkenmoddings* (kitchen middens),—the refuse heaps of a people who lived on shell-fish,—are assigned to the Early Stone Age. Those of the north of Scotland are, however, believed by Lubbock† to belong to a later time.

The conditions of life in a climate arctic in its severity could only have admitted a hard and cheerless existence. The dwelling of the savage would be the cave‡ or rock shelter, his diet the wild animals and shell-fish. The few tools and weapons, with which he sought to aid himself in the struggle for existence, would consist of flint knives, stone hammers, adzes, and implements for working in leather. The imagination of a Milton might have revelled in describing the rigours of such an existence, and one involuntarily thinks of that grim passage§ in which the miseries of the region beyond the river Lethe are pictured.

> "Beyond this flood a foreign continent
> Lies dark and wild, beat with perpetual storms
> Of whirlwind and dire hail, which on firm land
> Thaws not, but gathers heap and ruin seems
> Of ancient pile, all else deep snow and ice."

* *Archæological Journal*, vol. xlviii. † "Prehistoric Times," p. 233.

‡ Hence called also the Cave Period. The remains of implements and animal and human bones show that this was one mode of human dwelling in the remote Stone Age. A notable example in Britain occurs at Brixham, near Torquay.

§ "Paradise Lost," ii., p. 107 (Masson's edition).

Yet it is a remarkable fact that it is with these savage tribes of the Early Stone Age that the history of art commences. Ornaments in the shape of beads and amulets have been found in the gravel deposits, as we should expect among even the rudest tribes. "The passion for self-ornamentation," says Lubbock,* "seems to prevail among the lowest, as much as, if not more than, among the more civilised races of mankind." But we should not have looked for the representations of animals with so much spirit, so much likeness to their objects in them, as in the group of reindeer scratched with the point of a flint on a piece of bone found in the cave of La Madeleine in the Dordogne. The fact that they have called forth the admiration of men of culture in our day, says a great deal for the artistic instinct of the cave-dweller, who maintained the struggle for life at a time when the reindeer and perhaps the mammoth roamed in the south of France, and a whale or a canoe might have stranded several miles inland from the present shore of the Solway or the Forth. I remember being struck during my travels in Southern Africa with the animal figures which the degraded Bushman had traced with red clay on the face of some rock. Still such a fact in itself would not lead us to infer a high culture, though it implies a certain creditable capacity. The Age of Bronze, for instance, was certainly an advance on that of Stone, but the imitative faculty seems to have lain dormant.

As we must turn to the Early Stone Age for the first specimens of art known to man, so we must seek in the Neolithic or Later Stone Period for the time-worn monuments of his primitive architecture, at least within our island. It seems meet that it should be from the graves of a long-forgotten era that this knowledge should come to us. No structure remains which can be assigned as the abodes of the living in the Stone or Bronze Ages in Scotland, except perhaps that extremely ancient form of dwelling—the crannog or lake dwelling. Our remote forefathers seem to have been more concerned to perpetuate the memory of the departed than to preserve the haunts of the living. Their dwellings must have been of a slight and perishable

* "Origin of Civilisation," p. 71.

character; but the mounds or cairns in which they placed their dead have withstood the changes of many centuries, and yielded instructive results to the zeal and acuteness of archæologists like the late Mr Rhind and Dr Anderson. These huge masses of stone, covered over now by a layer of turf and earth, extending over the whole area of Britain, but in Scotland most numerous in Caithness, Orkney, and Argyle, have been found to be built upon a plan, which only the transformation of age has concealed from the passer-by. Though but the charnel houses of a rude and hoary antiquity, they represent the rudiments of the architectural art which these forefathers of ours had learned, and the interest attaching to them as such is increased by the presence of an internal chamber in which objects used by the living as well as the remains of the dead have been deposited. Some of those explored in Caithness are horned, that is, they have two hornlike projections at either end, but they all bear indications of having been constructed by the same race, or within the same period, by the ever-recurring feature of the vaulted chamber, usually divided into three compartments,* with a passage giving access from the outside, and by the character of the articles found in them. These included human and animal bones (the former sometimes preserved in a round-bottomed, rudely ornamented urn), both burnt and unburnt. In one the presence of thirty skulls was inferred from the fragments picked up. The flooring was, indeed, found in most cases to be composed of clay mixed with bone ashes, and the intermingling of the remains of animals such as the ox, the deer, the sheep, the pig, the horse, the dog, prove that the funeral rites of the people of the Later Stone Age included a rude banquet, supposing that they were not placed there as food for the dead, who were apparently equipped for their journey into the unseen with the stone axe and flint-pointed arrows, also found among the remains.† These rude mausoleums have figured a good

* Those in Orkney show a slightly different plan of chamber. It consists of one apartment with a number of cells opening off it.

† The Stone Age in Scandinavia reveals much the same characteristics as in Scotland. Its relics in both countries, such as domestic animals, pottery, instruments, appear to resemble each other. See a good account of Scandinavia in Du Chaillu, "Viking Age," i., chap. viii.

deal in popular tradition and mediæval tale as the haunt of the fierce dragon, which it was the boast of the Norseman, who has left the traces of his daring in the runes scratched on the walls of that of Maeshowe in Orkney, to have overcome when searching for the treasures it was fabled to guard. But to us their interest consists in the idea which they enable us to form of their builders. They were unacquainted with the use of bronze or iron. They employed no tool to shape the material which they used in building, nor mortar to cement it together. But they were skilful enough to erect a rough beehive-roofed chamber as a resting-place for their dead, and to mark them by huge masses of stone, built on a well-defined plan, which have survived throughout long ages the less durable abodes of the living. 'Tis after all a creditable performance to produce something, whatever it be,—however rude and unshapely,—that will endure for several thousands of years. Is there not somewhat of the infinite longing of the soul in this unsightly mass of stones? A type, too, of the "something attempted, something done," which is one of the most fruitful sentiments of the human heart,—an expression of the ambition to realise one's strength in the contemplation of the work of one's hands. Very impressive, too, is it not, as the mute witness of the thoughts of men engulfed in eternal silence? All the world is one country, as the Italian proverb has it, and a conception like this, however rude its expression, reminds us that so has it been from of yore, for the same soul moves in primeval savage and modern philosopher, though it reveals itself after a different fashion.

The size of some of these cairns, necessitating combined effort for their erection, has been interpreted to signify that their builders lived in communities. The same argument has been drawn from the lake dwellings in England and Wales, inferred to belong to this period.* Like the villagers on the Roumelian lake, who taxed their share in the work of construction by the number of wives each man could afford to keep, necessity must have revealed to them the benefits of a division of labour. That, at all events, they

* Some of the Swiss Pfahlbauten belong to the Stone Age. See the interesting chapter on this subject in Lubbock's "Prehistoric Ages."

had reached the pastoral stage, the association of the domestic animals with the departed in the great chambered cairns clearly shows. The principle that unity is defence and the guarantee of a certain amount of comfort which isolation cannot secure, would soon teach the savage wherein his interest lay. The savage is to a great extent a child in understanding, and invariably shows the child's aversion to abstruse questions as to creed with which the missionary may puzzle him, but he has more practical shrewdness than he often gets credit for, and may be trusted to make the best of circumstances. He has a philosophy of life, such as it is,—principles which may not be dogmas, but are at all events unconscious moulders of life and destiny. He has only reached, it is true, the myth-making age, and possesses the crude poetic imagination, often indeed of remarkably vivid power, that finds mature expression in the fancy of the modern poet. Nevertheless the experiences of life beget in every mortal thoughts which weave themselves into a practical philosophy, ideas which mould his age and his destiny, as in the case of higher civilisations. No age, even that of the savage, is so poor that it is not characterised by some leading thought—the offspring of the thinking brain—which lends it colour and movement, which is the mainspring of its history.

From the specimens of stone implements which have been picked up where they were deposited or accidentally dropped thousands of years back, we learn that though the builder of the Later Stone Age used no tools, he was not destitute of tools of a sort. The axes, manufactured from granite or porphyry or other durable stone, were used by him as weapons and as implements for hewing, and some examples show that he knew how to grind and polish them skilfully. Several grinding stones which have survived would have attested this fact had no actual instance of their use been forthcoming. The larger number of the axes is unperforated, so that they must have been fitted into the hole bored in the wooden handle, as in the case of one recovered from a depth of six feet below the surface of the Solway Moss. The intelligence of their makers is apparent in the acuteness with which they adapted the form to the

properties of the material used. Evidently the necessity of adapting means to ends—one of the great secrets of human progress throughout the ages—did not come to him without its lesson. Moreover, the fluted ornament of the beautiful flint arrow and spear heads—such welcome finds in our schooldays—is the expression of an art which it seems is now unknown to the savage who still works in stone, and remains a mystery to the man of science.* "In the matter of arrowheads," says Burton,† "Scotland can claim pre-eminence above any other land. They are exquisite marvels of handiwork." It appears, too, that the hoards of flint chips, which enabled us to supply some ploughman with material for striking a light for his pipe in the days when matches were scarce in the north, mark the scene of some primeval workshop, where the flintworker not only plied his craft, but stored his supply of the precious material, never very abundant in Scotland. Our savage ancestors had certainly no thought of our highly problematic existence, but the skilful hand was destined to perpetuate his memory even unto this era of future time,‡ for the delicate forms he produced to kill the deer with may be seen to-day adorning the breast of some fair dame as a pendant to a necklace. Even if many links in the chain that binds the present to the past be lost, notwithstanding the facility with which the Scot has been credited for constructing a pedigree, we have doubtless his living representative among us still, were we only acute enough to discover him. This, some have attempted. An examination of the bones found in these sepulchral mounds in England, as well as in the flint mines of Norfolk and Sussex, has led to the conclusion that the people of the Stone Age were of short stature and small boned, with skulls of a long and narrow type. The women are markedly smaller than the men, and the conditions of life are judged to have been the reverse of easy or favourable to physical development. They probably resembled

* Anderson, "Scotland in Pagan Times," p. 380.

† "History of Scotland," i., p. 128.

‡ The association of the present with the remote Stone Age is strikingly illustrated by the custom, still practised in Shetland, of heating milk or water by placing a hot stone in a vessel filled with one of these liquids. See Mitchell, "Past in the Present," lect. v.

in habits and appearance the modern Lap, the Samoeid, and the Esquimaux.* But they could not have been destitute of daring and courage, if the Silures, who gave the Romans so much trouble in their attempt to subdue Wales, were their representatives at a time when the torch of history begins to illuminate the haunts to which they had been driven by new invaders to seek refuge. Their modern survivors have been looked for, not merely in the Principality, but in certain parts of England, and among the short, blackhaired people of Ireland,† and the Highlands and islands of Scotland, whose "strange, foreign look" has struck the eye of the traveller. Considering the slender grounds we have for forming a judgment, such an attempt seems to me rather audacious. In the absence of historic evidence, part of the chain must perforce be cast in the moulds of fancy or conjecture. But it would be unreasonable to conclude that the primeval Briton completely disappeared. Tribes and people have died out, no doubt, and this, alas, has been too much the tendency where a more civilised or a stronger race has come into contact with one at a lower stage of culture or vigour. The track of the conqueror was, till comparatively recently, marked by the grim excesses of carnage and desolation. Britain itself has more than once suffered from this baneful fate of the race. The fierce Saxon and Dane, as well as the more highly civilised Roman, established their power at the point of the sword, planting their standards in the blood-dyed soil of a vanquished people. Conquest and carnage—this awful double-faced spectre even yet rears its head above the most civilised regions of the earth, and the grim apparition has often stalked throughout our island home, bringing death and desolation in its train,—how often cannot be told, since the pall of oblivion wraps so large a portion of the past in its folds. Yet that the remnants, at least, of the tribes that have been, contributed to form this heterogeneous Britain to-day, is as evident as it is probable, though the attempt to unravel the genealogical skein of the modern

* Latham, "Ethnology of the British Isles," p. 25; Elton, "Origins of English History," p. 130.

† Supposed to represent the Fir Bolgs of Irish tradition.

Briton still leaves a good deal of haze, even if clothed in the crisp diction of a Matthew Arnold.* Tacitus, for example, has left on record the opinion of observers living at the comparatively early date of the first century, that the inhabitants of Britain were composed of tribes different in race and appearance.† But what Lubbock‡ says of the inhabitants of the succeeding Bronze Age is still more applicable to those of their predecessors of the Stone Period—"Until we have a considerable body of evidence, it would be very unsafe to speculate on their character." Whoever these primeval tribes were, they have been credited by those who have minutely examined the remains of their culture, with qualities, of which their modern descendants need not be ashamed. No people at a low stage of development have deserved better the title of "the noble savage," if the inferences of our archæologists are to be trusted. This seems to me questionable as far as their general condition is concerned, but for the present let the long-unremembered dead have the benefit of the doubt. "Reviewing the whole phenomena of the Stone Age," says Dr Anderson, "as these are manifested in Scotland, we find them affording evidence of capacity and culture in the individual associated with evidences of civilisation in the community."§ This is learned. Is it also fact? The ages are wrapped in silence, and the eloquence of tools and ornaments is, after all, not quite so explicit as that of some of its modern interpreters. It is but justice to mention that the products of the Stone Age in other lands have likewise stirred the admiration of those competent to pass judgment on the skill and taste of the savage. Mr Du Chaillu,‖ an authority of high rank on Scandinavian antiquities, is as appreciative as Dr Anderson, and he claims an even higher degree of civilisation for the Stone and Bronze Age inhabitants of Scandinavia than existed among those of Central and Western Europe during the same periods.

* "On the Study of Celtic Literature," sect. iii.

† "Agricola," c. 11. ‡ "Prehistoric Times," p. 145.

§ Sir Arthur Mitchell ("Past in the Present," lects. i. and iv.) likewise adduces reasons for crediting the Stone Age man with intellectual capacity and correct sentiments.

‖ Du Chaillu, "Viking Age," i., chaps. viii. and ix.

## CHAPTER III.

### WORK AND PROGRESS.

THE discovery of bronze in a grave, which contains the traces of great antiquity, may be regarded as an epoch-making event in the history of a country. It furnishes convincing evidence of work and progress. While development is apparent in the more skilfully constructed instruments of the Later Stone Age as compared with the Earlier, it becomes a predominant feature as soon as we find the presence of a metal like bronze. It represents a revolution in society which, though lost to history, must have been fraught with important results. It means for one thing a certain advance in material comfort. The workman furnished with a bronze axe was far more the master of circumstances than he who only possessed one of stone. It means also a corresponding development in the habits of life. The use of his implements and weapons would keep the man, who was acquainted with the manufacture of bronze, from remaining a savage. They would lend him a means of helping himself, which must speedily transform his whole life, giving him a better chance of clearing the forest, of tilling the ground, of providing shelter for himself and his dependants, of defending his home from the attacks of wild beasts, and of securing a richer diet than was possible before. It means, further, an impulse to trade and intercourse, an advance from the mere nomadic state to at least the rudiments of an industrial life—the exchange of manufactured articles and the spirit of enterprise which this includes. It means, too, the growth of intelligence. The education of the human race in its lower stages must depend largely on such tangible objects as men use in the ordinary work of life. These furnish an object-lesson, where thinking, without the aid of things that compel thought, is at a discount. They are to such, what a library is to the educated man of to-day. It is around them that

his thoughts cluster more than anything else—the uses, the processes they represent, are familiar exercises on which his mind works. This embraces a large proportion of his culture. Any one intimately acquainted with the ways of country people, for instance, must have observed how much of their talk and their meditation is of their occupation, and everything related to it. His spear and his mattock—how much do these represent, too, of barbarian man. And the higher the type of implement, the more intricate and beneficial the uses to which it is put, the more developed the intelligence of the workman.* The peasant who has taken advantage of the mechanical progress of the last half-century, and uses the most approved implements in cultivation, is clearly a more intelligent man, and represents a higher intellectual life, than he who has lagged behind the age.

Intelligence must grow with knowledge, and if the first stages of growth were slow compared with the rapid pace at which man now advances in insight and enlightenment, they were all the same steps in advance, the one of the other. The ancients expressed their sense of the progress represented by the discovery of the metals by associating it with some marvellous event. Lucretius considered that the secret treasures of the earth were revealed to man by a terrible conflagration of a forest growing in metalliferous soil. Posidonius would have us believe that the gold and silver which added so much to the wealth of Spain, were revealed in the same way. So marked, at any rate, is the progress, social, intellectual, material, represented by the step from stone to bronze, that it has been regarded as indicating the advent of a new people. So Worsaae; and Lubbock,† judging from the marked difference between the art of the two periods, comes to the same conclusion. Wilson,‡ on the other hand, is of opinion that the likeness of the first

* Sir Arthur Mitchell ("The Past in the Present," lect. iv.) holds that working in metals does not of itself necessarily imply a greater mental power, or greater culture, than working in stone, but the example illustrative of this is that of the degraded portion of a highly civilised community, an exception which does not invalidate the general rule.

† "Origin of Civilisation," chap. ii.

‡ "Prehistoric Annals of Scotland," pp. 250-252.

bronze weapons to those of stone indicates the transition by the same race from the latter to the former. The hypothesis of the advent of a new race means invasion ; that of a gradual transition of the same race, contact rather by means of barter. There is historical evidence, of a very remote date, of both these means of connection between Britain* and the Continent, and both undoubtedly share the merit of having given an impulse to our insular culture. At all events, the probability is that a discovery of this kind came from an external source rather than by dint of insular genius. The centre of civilisation in the ancient world was on the eastern shores of the Mediterranean, and the power which has given an impetus to the development of the human race has always radiated from some more or less limited centre. Since the intellectual revival of the fifteenth century, this influence has been derived from the north and west of Europe ; previously the path of progress was from the south and east. "It appears probable," says Lubbock, "that the knowledge of metal is one of those great discoveries that Europe owes to the East." † The discovery of stone and bronze moulds, in which the implements of the Bronze Age were made, indicates that, whether introduced from without or not, their manufacture was afterwards carried on in the island.

The new race which the use of bronze is thought to have added to the population of Britain, and which drove such of the older inhabitants as did not amalgamate into the less accessible regions, is inferred to have been of Finnish extraction—a tall, fair-haired, strong-limbed people, with short, round skulls, and rapidly retreating foreheads, non-Aryan, like their predecessors of the Stone Period, but better fitted by the possession of superior implements for maintaining the struggle for existence, and bringing with them a higher culture. Professor Rhys‡ believes that he has found the fragments of such a non-Aryan and non-Celtic language in such words as Leucopibia, the ancient name of the site of Whithorn, in Galloway, and in the tribe

* Lubbock finds in certain kinds of stone, which are not native to Europe, traces of a trade with the East in the Neolithic Age.

† "Prehistoric Times," p. 64. ‡ "Celtic Britain."

of the Epidia whom Ptolemy places in the north-west of Scotland. Others have recognised their posterity in the "huge-limbed and red-haired men of the north" of Vitruvius, and the fierce-eyed giants with whom Tacitus peopled Caledonia. Speculation of this kind is not history, but the inquisitive reader will find in the "Origins of English History,"* a collection of curious facts, which are held to lend it weight.

In whatever way the use of bronze became common in Britain, the era of its duration is so remote that no human dwelling has survived throughout the intervening centuries, if we except, perhaps, the form of habitation known as the lake dwelling. Examples of their architecture have been preserved nevertheless, but, as in the case of the Stone Age builders, they are the memorials of the dead. The culture we are considering is so old that we must still haunt the tombs of the dead for knowledge of the living. Some of these are marked by no external erection, and such spots in which the nameless dead have reposed these ages long have been discovered by accident and recognised as cemeteries† of the Bronze Age, by the finding of human remains, along with one or more urns, and weapons or ornaments of bronze. Others are commemorated by cairns, like the one at Collessie—huge, shapeless masses of stones,‡ showing neither chamber, nor external plan, whose investigation has disclosed a stone cist resting on the surface of the ground, and, in one or two cases, underground interments. But the striking feature of the cemetery of the Bronze Age are the impressive circles§ of standing stones, so numerous even yet, especially in the north, though the unconscious sacrilege of the agriculturist has diminished their numbers. The two most imposing specimens are at

* Elton.

† Such as those at Magdalen Bridge, Midlothian; Lawpark, St Andrews; Shanwell, Kinross, &c.

‡ The degradation of type often thus forms a curious accompaniment of advancing civilisation. New forms replace the old, which lingers only as a ruder and meaner survival. See Mitchell, "Past in the Present," lect. iii.

§ Other groups of stones, though not circular, but placed in parallel lines, as at Garhouse and Clyth, in Caithness, to which district they are limited so far as known, are also considered, with reasonable probability, to mark sepulchres of the Bronze Period.

Stennis, in Orkney, and Callernish, in Lewis, and it may afford some idea of their dimensions, as well as the labour required to set up those massive undressed blocks of which they are composed, if we bear in mind that the former with its encircling trench, measures 366 feet in diameter, and probably numbered as many as sixty erect stones. The largest of those left standing measures fourteen feet in height, and eighteen feet in breadth. Their imposing dimensions might lead us at first sight to the conclusion that these circles were erected as public memorials of the deeds of some great hero, or of some great event, which rendered the scene sacred and memorable in the unsung annals of the past. In our ignorance of, and consequent indifference towards that faded past, we are apt to think that it contained nothing worthy of the inspiration of the bard. We forget that without a Homer the stirring deeds enacted before the walls of Troy would have been lost in the shadows of oblivion, and the heroic figures of a Hector and an Achilles, the wisdom of a Nestor, the noble sentiments of an Agamemnon, would never have thrilled the world to latest ages. Do I overstate the truth when I say that an Iliad might have been composed from the wars and adventures, the tales and rousing deeds of that lost age of which these impressive circles are the silent monuments? After all, we possess but a fraction of the history of the human race. A moderate-sized library might contain, the multiplication of books notwithstanding, all that lies on this side of the borderland of myth and tradition, which divides us from the vast unknown and unrecorded incidents in the story of man. What sentiments of admiration, perhaps of reverence, if also of horror, might not move us, if we only understood what has been handed down in writing of stone like this, if we could only realise all that clusters around it. The discovery of more interments than one seems to indicate, however, that such circles were usually meant to commemorate the repose not of a single hero, but are rather the burying-place of a family or a tribe. But even if nothing more, they may be regarded as witnesses to history, for who has held converse with a fellow-mortal without stumbling on something worthy of note,

something worthy a place in the biography of humanity? One thing is certain—they have an historical significance, they at least represent the thoughts and deeds of those who in this way strove to give them permanent expression. Victor Hugo speaks the truth, "L'architecture a été jusqu'au quinzième siècle le registre principal de l'humanité . . . toute idée populaire comme toute loi religieuse a eu ses monuments; le genre humain enfin n'a rien pensé d'important qu'il ne l'ait écrit en pierre. . . . L'architecture est le grand livre de l'humanité, l'expression principale de l'homme à ses divers états de developpement, soit comme force, soit comme intelligence." *

For long these venerable monuments of a lost age possessed what has been shown to be quite a fictitious interest. They were enveloped in a sinister mystery as the remains of Druidic temples. I remember as a boy being impressed with a feeling of awe, as I occasionally passed one of them in a field near my native place, and thought of the grim rites of human sacrifice that tradition associated with it, and recalled in fancy the blood and smoke stained priests who maintained their savage superstitions at such inhuman cost to a priest-ridden people. But this belief has been discredited by the researches of antiquaries like Mr Ch. Elphinstone Dalrymple, who did so much by personal investigation to discover the true significance of these venerable monuments, and thus consigned it to the limbo of so many exploded fancies which pass for truth in popular story and in the dusty tomes of byegone writers. Less than a quarter of a century ago it found a strenuous advocate in so accomplished an author as Colonel Leslie Forbes.† But more of this anon, when we are brought face to face with the cult of North Britain in the authentic records of early missionary enterprise. The presence of human remains in the site of most of those examined justify us in regarding them as family or district cemeteries—the last resting-places of our ancestors of the Bronze Age, around which the thoughts of the living centred in pious and mournful meditation in some such fashion as the

* "Notre Dame de Paris," i., pp. 256, 265.

† "The Early Races of Scotland."

passer-by beholds the Christian churchyard of his native village. This does not, of course, exclude the possibility of their having been the scene of religious rites. Cæsar and Tacitus are weighty authorities for the existence in Britain of the bloody ceremonial of a barbarous cult, while Gildas * speaks of ancient temples whose images were mouldering away in his day. They may afterwards have come, in association with such rites, to have a different use from their original one. The pagan of a later time, as we learn from the life of St Boniface, made use of them as altars whereon to sacrifice the living, or regarded them as the favourite haunts of malicious or benevolent spirits. The power of something old or mysterious to attract the reverence of those by whom its primitive use is unknown or overlooked, is a fact which appears in history still. Even a comparatively trivial object may be thus honoured, if its antiquity lends it the charm of mystery. Many of the flint and stone weapons thus came to be regarded as emblems of the spirit-world, and many a fairy tale might be told of the Elfinarrow, the Elfbolt, the Thunderbolt of the North of Scotland and of Scandinavia, the Hünebedden or Giants' beds of Germany, the Pixy rocks and Odin's Stone of English lore, and the Dolmens des Pierres Turquoises of Brittany. Much more so in the case of monuments, whose imposing dimensions and weatherbeaten isolation excite in the passer-by even yet an involuntary tribute of reverence. One of these stones had been appropriated as a gatepost by a farmer of a neighbouring parish to that in which my home was situated, but it had to be replaced, on the ground that it would not remain stationary, but moved from side to side.

The human remains found in the sepulchres of the Bronze Age are both cremated and unburnt, but the former mode of burial was, it appears, the more common. Besides these, they have usually yielded urns, pieces of bronze instruments, ornaments of the same material as well as of gold, jet, and amber, in the form of armlets, rings, necklaces, and bracelets, and articles of stone or flint, such as a stone battleaxe recovered from the circle at Crichie in

* "Historia," sect. 4.

Aberdeenshire. The presence of these objects, which pass under the lugubrious name of "grave goods," affords us an instructive glimpse of the cast of thought of our forefathers of this remote age. They reveal the existence of a custom which survived to historic times in the paganism of Europe, and which even yet lives, in Catholic countries, in the practice of burying the higher orders of the clergy in full canonicals. The monarch or knight who was interred in the Middle Ages with his weapons and the emblems of his rank, affords another lingering trace of the same primeval custom. It is also prevalent among many rude tribes of modern times. Only, wherever the Christian creed is adopted as its spiritual simplicity, and the close of the earthly life is regarded as the commencement of a higher, the practice is but an unmeaning survival, or a mere tribute of the respect of the living towards those whose dignity is thus recognised even in death. But among those who had not reached this enlightened stage of spiritual idea,—among the rude people of Africa in modern times as among our forefathers of the Bronze Period,—it expresses a natural phase of realistic thought. The future life naturally appears to such as a continuation of the life they lead here. The savage or the barbarian is not equal to the refined abstractions of the metaphysician or the theologian. He paints on the canvas of his fancy a Walhalla in which the same world, the same pursuits, the same recreations are reflected. A certain ideal doubtless lends a lighter shimmer to the colouring of his picture of the future. Even the rudest man must have at least the germ of an ideal in his human soul, with that innate susceptibility of sorrow and joy, pain and trial, death and woe. It may lack elevation, perspective; but the feeling of hunger and cold alone cannot but beget the thought of, the longing for the happier circumstances to which warmth and plenty lend their rosier hues. The Viking sought in his Walhalla, the wild adventures, the fierce combats of his warrior life on earth, but the ideal of a deathless existence in spite of war and wounds transfigured his mundane idea of a future heaven.* All the same his

* Lubbock thinks that, if this belief was general, there ought to be found articles in every grave, whereas a large proportion of Bronze Age graves show

future is essentially but the present transposed, and this is true, too, of these children of nature, whose thoughts we may still read in the tombs of their dead. The bereaved Christian who lays the departed in the earth in the hope of a blessed resurrection is not the sole possessor of the consolation of an inspiring faith. The rude pagan who placed the weapons of the warrior in the stone cist or the death chamber in which he was laid to rest, was not devoid of a comfort as real. He had but passed by the gateway of the grave into a state where he had still need of the tools, the weapons, the ornaments, he had handled in this life. And the emblems of human affection are not more touching, not more expressive in the form of a wreath, or a granite cross, than of a valuable ornament of gold which was placed in many of these graves by one whose affection surmounted greed and taught him self-sacrifice. A shady side there is, however, for such a phase of thought as these grave goods indicate, has often been associated with a grim superstition. If the warrior chief had need of his weapons and martial ornaments in the region of the dead, did he not also require the services of his slaves and followers? We know the excessive inhumanity of which this is the cause in many an African community. In Dahomey the death of a king is the occasion of the slaughter of his wives and slaves in order that the deceased may not go forth on his journey into the invisible, bereft of all the joys and services which he enjoyed here. This belief gives rise, indeed, to a continuous slaughter, and the captive taken in war is often feasted and cared for only in order that he may the better bear the message of the king to his sire in the realms of the spirit-world, be the matter ever so trivial. Where such a superstition darkens the mind, life is a miserably cheap commodity, and may even be said to cost more lives than the slave trade ever did. The ancient world, too, furnishes abundant examples of the same inhumanity, resulting from religious belief.

no "goods." "The articles found in graves cannot be seriously considered as affording any evidence of a definite belief in a future state of existence" ("Preh. Times," p. 149). On the other hand, it seems to me most natural that they should have been placed there for this rather than for any other reason.

"The Gauls had once believed, like their Latin neighbours, in a shadowy existence of the dead, and in some Hades or Elysium fashioned after the type of the present world. They used to cast on the funeral pyre whatever things the dead man loved, so that his spirit might enjoy them in the world to come, and at the end of the funeral, his favourite slaves and dependents were burned alive on the pile to keep their master company."* I am inclined to believe that, as the same belief as to the other world evidently existed among our forefathers of the Bronze Age, so did the practice, and that scenes of suffering characterised their ancestral worship. This has, in fact, been suspected on other and more apposite grounds. When considering similar phenomena of the Stone Age, Dr Latham remarks, "Around a skeleton more or less entire are often found, at regular distances, the ashes of bodies that were burnt, just as if the chief was interred in the flesh, but his subordinates given over to the flames."† We may, with Dr Anderson, regard the presence of grave goods as "evidences of the piety and affection which expressed themselves in this manner," or "of the intensity of their devotion to filial memories and family ties,"‡ and yet see in them the indication of a brutal practice. Even Cicero could honestly and enthusiastically say in regard to the gladiatorial games, "It is the greatest pleasure in life to see a brave enemy led off to torture and death." Murder and brutality are after all to a certain extent subjective terms, and have even found apologists among men professing a religion of universal Love, but who, under the influence of a barbarous intolerance, have regarded the burning of a heretic as serviceable to religion and acceptable to God.

Men are thus in morals and religion, as in other things, but the creatures of their age, and a great deal of what is called revelation is in reality but the reflection of this fact. "There are in human nature," says Leckie, "and more especially in the benevolent affections, inequalities,

* Elton, "Origins of Eng. History," p. 266. *Cf.* Cæsar, "Bell. Gall.," bk. vi., ch. 19.

† "Ethnology of Britain," p. 23.

‡ "Scotland in Pagan Times," pp. 96, 227.

inconsistencies, and anomalies, of which theorists do not always take account. We should be altogether in error, if we supposed that a man who took pleasure in a gladiatorial combat in ancient Rome, was necessarily as inhuman as a modern would be who took pleasure in the same spectacle. A man who falls but a little below the standard of his own merciful age is often in reality far worse than a man who had conformed to the standard of a much more barbarous age, even though the latter will do some things with perfect equanimity from which the other would recoil with horror."*

These grave goods, supplemented by the hoards of bronze objects discovered throughout the country, throw light also on the mode of life of the inhabitants of North Britain during this remote period. The man of the Bronze Age was evidently a warrior of no mean order. Like the martial Zulu or Basuto of to-day, he was apparently fond of rendering his aspect more formidable by some fantastic head-gear. Portions of what are deemed bronze helmets have been discovered, and though associated with instruments of iron, may have been a survival of an earlier culture. When he entered the fray, he bore on his left hand a shield whose surface was ornamented with studs or knobs of the same material. He fought with sword, spear, and dagger. The sword was short, leaf-shaped, double-edged, pointed, but unfurnished with a guard—fitted for thrusting rather than for cutting. Some of them are beautiful specimens of workmanship. The dagger and the spear resembled it, in shape, the latter being fixed by a round socket to a wooden shaft. But the warrior was equally expert, it seems, in wielding the axe, with which he felled the giant trees, whose gnarled boughs added to the gloom of the primeval forest. Those axes are mostly wedge-shaped and socketed, and the canoes which, with their aid, and perhaps with that of fire, he hollowed out of the trees, form the rudimentary attempt at marine architecture, which has grown to be one of the triumphant features of Scottish industry. We cannot forbear some sympathetic reflections on the brawny son of Vulcan who wielded the blow that

* "History of European Morals," i., p. 305.

rang from the anvil discovered in Sutherlandshire, and which has ever been a familiar note in the march of civilisation. So, too, have the carpenter, the fisherman, the reaper, the goldsmith, perpetuated their craft through the imperishable character of the implements they used or the objects they fashioned, enabling us to infer the possession of a practical intelligence, a capacity for industry of various kinds, which reveals the ordered community existing in virtue of the great modern factors of combination and co-operation. War and work—thus swings the pendulum of time as it measures the progress of the race.

A very striking feature is the apparent abundance of gold—a fact which is also characteristic of Scandinavian remains of this period.* Nor need this surprise us. It is not so long ago that nearly the whole gold coinage of Scotland was minted out of the native metal. The moors of Lanark, the uplands of Dumfries, were the hunting ground of the miner, whose exertions were not infrequently rewarded by the smile of Fortune.† There is thus no necessity for inferring that the precious metal was obtained by barter, and it is not the first time that a country once rich in this metal has subsequently yielded only very scanty supplies. Spain was the Mexico of the ancient world, though the Spaniards afterwards had to seek their El Dorado across the western main. "The Tagus rolled gold, and the Guadiana silver; the Phœnician sailors were said to have replaced their anchors with masses of silver for which they had no room on board, and the Iberians to have used gold for mangers and silver for their vats of beer."‡ The barbarian Briton of the Bronze Age appears, then, to have helped himself liberally from the native ore, and what is more remarkable, judging from the amount of skill and taste he expended on its manufacture into ornaments, many of which are both massive and elegant in form, to have appreciated its value. A certain strong intelligence reveals itself in this. Our rude barbarian ancestor

* Du Chaillu, "Viking Age," ch. ix.

† Royal Commission appointed to inquire into the subject of Mining Royalties (2nd Report).

‡ "Origins of Eng. Hist.," p. 9.

of this period did not exult with childish glee over a worthless trinket like the wild African of modern times. He was in possession of jewellery of no mean workmanship, and of a value equal to large sums of our money—jewellery which we can hardly imagine him bartering away for a brass button, like the native of Darkest Africa, to whom a tusk of ivory is worth a few cotton handkerchiefs. There is here a keener perception of the relation of things. The Peruvians, who worked in gold, were, we know, found to be in a far higher state of civilisation than the tribes first discovered by Columbus. Another point in his favour is that his taste and skill were not limited by the value of the material in which he worked. He seems to have carried his sense of beauty, his passion for ornament, into all that he made. The sword and dagger blades are beautifully cast and finished, solidly but neatly fastened by rivets into their handles, which are sometimes decorated with mountings of gold ornamented in repoussé work.

The clay urns found in the tombs, though not turned on the potter's wheel, are well made, and carefully ornamented by combinations of straight lines. One found under a stone circle at Glenballoch, near Blairgowrie, is, according to Mr Romilly Allen, of such excellent workmanship that "it will compare favourably with those of any other production of ceramic art, ancient or modern." * The assertion must be taken for what it is worth, but a mere glance at the finer specimens of the art, the mechanical skill, the sense of beauty of those men who worked in bronze and gold, makes it impossible to deny that they had in some respects made an approach to some of the refinements of civilised life. The community may be rude, but these things indicate the presence of moulding powers which require but a fair field in order to elevate the culture of the mass. A good workman is one of the greatest forces in the elevation of a community. He is a teacher to his own generation; he is a prophet for the future. Skill and taste are the soul of the world's material progress, and this soul is immortal.

* "Proc. Soc. Antiq. Scot.," vol. xiv., p. 90.

## CHAPTER IV.

### ARCHITECTURE AND WAR.

THE sense of beauty, going hand in hand with skill in execution, which characterises the remains of the Bronze Culture, becomes still more marked in that of the Iron Age. I do not think we shall err if we regard the tools and weapons made of this metal, and the objects of bronze, or silver, or other material associated with them, as evidence of the presence of men of Celtic race in the island. It is highly probable that it is to this immigration of a new people that we owe the first use of iron in Britain. The culture which it represents can hardly lay claim to a remoter date than the day on which the first Goidelic adventurer or trader anchored his coracle under the shadow of Albion's cliffs, if, indeed, it reach so far back as this. It is certain, at all events, that the type of art of the prehistoric Iron Age is Celtic, the simple forerunner of that intricate style in which the Celtic monk long afterwards gave scope to his taste and fancy. Unlike the combination of straight lines of the Bronze Age, it consists of divergent spiral curves, and was very extensively applied. The desire to make a thing beautiful as well as serviceable, betrays itself in the ornamentation of articles for common use as well as the most exquisitely finished jewellery, of the bronze harness of their horses and the stone balls which they threw with a sling, as well as the armlets, bronze hand-mirrors, and other nicnacs of more delicate form and use. Sometimes it is associated with a graceful zoomorphism, as in the case of the armlet found in the sands near the mouth of the Findhorn, which has the form of a coiled serpent, and is so beautifully executed, that it might pass for the work of a highly skilled workman of the nineteenth century. One circumstance is of great significance as tending to confirm the foregoing opinion regarding the comparatively late date of the Iron Age culture, of which it is a char-

acteristic feature. A bronze saucepan of Roman manufacture has been discovered in North Britain, along with a bronze armlet ornamented in this fashion, and we may acquiesce in the conclusion that "the native style of art (*i.e.*, characteristic of the prehistoric Iron Age) was already in the period of its highest development at or about the time of the Roman occupation of the southern portion of Scotland." *

Not only so, but the presence of articles of Roman workmanship in the architectural remains belonging to the pagan Iron Age of Scotland, enable us to assign the period of their erection in a more exact manner than was possible in the case of the cairns and stone circles of former epochs. The shadowy night of a remote antiquity begins to merge in the still indistinct, yet light-bearing dawn of history. The tramp of the legions—that first note in the authentic story of many of the tribes of Western Europe—has broken the solitude of the Caledonian forest. It has advanced beyond the Forth and the Tay, receded, died away—hesitating before those rugged, barren mountains, and the foe that lurked in every glen and thicket. Nevertheless its traces are discernible, not merely in Roman camp and road, but amid the ruins of the native structures which have survived the vicissitudes of many centuries. A piece of Samian ware from a broch in Orkney,† a plate of brass and a silver fibula from another at Carnbeath, Dunrobin, bronze dishes and Samian ware from the lake dwellings of Galloway and Ayrshire, stones dressed in Roman fashion from earth-houses in Roxburghshire, Midlothian, and Forfarshire, are indications that the inmates of such dwellings of the Iron Age might have witnessed the march of Severus at the beginning of the third century, or that of Theodosius towards the end of the fourth, and joined in the attempt to defeat their purpose of conquest.

These architectural remains are no longer merely the monuments of the dead. They are the dwellings of the living, and their occupants had evidently become conscious in some degree of that moulding power of the human

* Anderson, "Scotland in Pagan Times," p. 152.

† East Broch of Burray in Orkney.

spirit, to whose untrammelled exercise modern culture owes its existence. They mean something more than the mere manual dexterity, the mere feeling of taste which we have seen in this and the art of the Bronze Age, though these are very praiseworthy qualities. They form no contemptible evidence of intellectual activity, of the workings of that creative faculty which marks the progress of man towards the higher civilisation, and which have yielded the greatest triumphs over nature and circumstance. The architect is the first great thinker among a rude people, and this we may affirm of the architect of a structure like the Broch They tell us, too, of the community and the home with a directness which cannot be mistaken, as it might be in the case of the cairn and the stone circle of more remote ages, for here we find no mere memorial of the dead, but the dwellings of the living, no "grave goods," but the remains of human habitation. No graves belonging to the pre-christian iron period have, in fact, been discovered. The custom of depositing relics in the resting-places of the dead appears to have become a rare occurrence, if it had not entirely gone out of fashion.* Graves in which iron objects had been placed have been explored, but their contents show that they are those of the Viking invader of the ninth and tenth centuries.

The structures to which the unmelodious name, brochs, has been given, are found over the whole area of Scotland. Only lately a very large one has been investigated at Torwoodlee in Peeblesshire. It possesses a more than ordinary interest, as the northern termination of the Catrail or Picts' Wall, that mysterious line of fortification, which is believed to have extended as far as Peel Fell in Northumberland, and which may yet turn out to be dotted, Roman fashion, with a series of North British strongholds. So far as research has gone, however, they are most numerous in the five northern counties, which alone contain over three hundred. The best preserved specimen is that of Mousa in Shetland ; others might be mistaken at first sight for a cairn of stones, whilst many, until excavated, are unrecognisable under their layer of soil, as the work of a human

* Yet this characteristic of paganism was too widespread to permit us to believe that it had altogether disappeared.

hand. But they all reveal the same peculiarity of conception, though variation in detail, showing the influence of the individual mind, just as any other type of our architecture does, is not wanting. Rising to about a height of perhaps fifty feet, they must have resembled in outward form the Nuraghi of Sardinia, or the Round Towers by which the Celtic monks of a later time sought to protect themselves and their property from the attacks of Scandinavian pirates. The walls, built of unhewn stone, without mortar, are from nine to twenty feet thick at the base. A single door gives access to the interior, which, in the case of that of Mousa, has a diameter of forty-five feet. On the ground floor, several apartments are formed in the wall, and a circular stair leads up through its interior to the summit. After the first ten feet or so, the centre of the wall becomes hollow, so as to allow the formation, by a flooring of stone slabs, of several tiers of galleries, which are connected with one another by the stair. These are lighted by loopholes, looking into the area of the tower, so that, with the exception of the entrance, its exterior presents an unbroken solid surface. However unbeautiful its aspect, its internal arrangement is unique, so much so, that it has been regarded as embodying an architectural type, not only confined to Scotland,* but peculiar among all the structures erected by man. It is not too much to say that it would be difficult to conceive a more ingenious contrivance in stone for the purpose of defence. That this was the idea of the architect is evident. We cannot believe that the builders of these brochs would have incurred so much labour, or hit upon such a peculiar arrangement of the interior in the construction of a mere dwelling. The beehive hut of stone or boughs probably satisfied the ambition of the most extravagant. Regarded then as a stronghold, it must have admirably served its purpose at a time when the most formidable weapons consisted of the war chariot and the iron sword or spear, even if minus the

* The Irish Cathairs or stone forts bear a resemblance to them, however. See Romilly Allen, "Monumental Hist. of the British Church," pp. 45, 46. The fact of their presence on the Border makes it probable that they may be found south of it.

outworks which give an additional strength to some. They presented to the foe a lofty and unbroken barrier on all sides, and if they succeeded in accomplishing the difficult feat of forcing an entrance through the long and narrow passage to the interior, they found themselves in a narrow court exposed to an easy and almost certain discomfiture from the missiles of their assailants in the galleries in the wall above. In the absence of famine and battering rams of great strength, the occupants of the brochs were practically invincible.

That they were not the haunts of lawless bands who subsisted by plunder and murder, appears certain when we consider their number and the area over which they are scattered, as well as their situation on or near arable lands. Some of them were not unacquainted with occasional inmates of this character in historic times, when the roving Viking* dispelled their solitude with the noise of his roystering feasts. The Saga has preserved a love tale or two, to lend them the interest of romance. More than once the gallant jarl found an impregnable refuge for himself and his fair bride from the pursuit of some outwitted rival. But this was an accidental and later use of these ancient Celtic strongholds, which, to judge from the remains of an earlier culture discovered in them by Dr Anderson, Mr Rhind, Dr Joass, and others, were occupied about the dawn of the historic era by a people who were settled cultivators of the soil, and who erected them to protect, on emergency, their lives and property. That they were not averse to fighting when necessity or advantage rendered it desirable, is more than probable from what we know of the warlike character of the northern tribes, but they were certainly not unacquainted with the arts and industries of a peasant community.† They ground the corn which they reaped from

* A Scandinavian origin has been ascribed to them, but the facts are more in favour of the view that they are Celtic—the defensive works of a settled population, not the strongholds of the Norse marauder.

† I differ from Dr Anderson, who represents them as exclusively peaceable, industrious, farming communities, forgetting that history presents us with an independent, spirited, and booty-loving people, who descended from their hills and forests into the Roman settlements on the slightest provocation.

the surrounding lands in stone querns or handmills. They reared the goat, the sheep, the ox, the pig, the dog, and the horse, hunted the deer, and fished the bays and lochs. The presence of moulds and crucibles shows that they made their own ornaments and articles of domestic use, such as pins of bone and bronze, stone lamps, and drinking cups, &c. Native craftsmen manufactured the iron swords, spears, knives, axes, chisels, pincers, &c., which formed their weapons and implements. The women did the spinning and weaving,* made the pottery, and ground the grain. Thus those gaunt walls, the witness may be of the want and fear that war begets, resounded likewise with the cheerier notes of a rude but settled domestic life.

The manufactured articles, as well as the animal remains, discovered in the lake dwellings mostly resemble those found in the brochs. These dwellings are composed of various layers of logs, rising tier upon tier over the bottom of the lake, with masses of brushwood, stones, and gravel, interspersed, until a height of several feet above the surface has been attained. A paling of oak piles, whose opposite sides were connected by transverse beams, mortised into them at intervals, as the work of building proceeded, served to bind the whole mass firmly together. The uppermost layer of logs thus afforded a solid and stable area on which the lake dwellers erected their huts. To obviate the risk of falling into the water, to which their children and cattle were exposed, the little hamlet rising on its surface was encircled by a barrier of hurdles or similar fence. The canoes, which have been rescued in a wonderful state of preservation from the deep mud in which they have long lain, afforded means of communication with the shore, but access was also provided by a submerged wooden gangway, for the passage of their cattle.†

* At least the discovery of spindle whorls, to the number of thirty in one broch, and the presence along with them of eighteen combs, resembling in form those still used in India, and several smoothing bone instruments, much worn, have been regarded as warranting this conclusion.

† As an example of the wild notions that often pass for learning, take the following, which is the latest I have seen:—"The poems of the British Merddin or Merlin clearly indicate that the practice of building houses in the water arose out of the desire to escape from the superintendence of reforming

Unlike the brochs, the type is not confined to Scotland. It was at one time a common form of dwelling throughout Europe, and was known to Herodotus,* whose description of the village settlement on the Roumelian lake furnishes us with a living picture of the semi-civilised communities, who, with no less skill than labour, raised the Pfahlbauten of the Swiss lakes,† the crannogs of the Irish bogs, the Scottish lochs, and the English meres and fens. Their historic antiquity is thus very great, but, as we have already seen, this kind of defensive structure has been assigned to as early a period as the Age of Stone. Those belonging to a later time are characterised by greater boldness of idea and skill in execution, being no longer built on shallows near the shore, but in deep water and at a considerable distance from the land. Those investigated by Dr Monro ‡ in the lochs of Galloway and Ayrshire are no inconsiderable specimens of this kind of architecture. Their builders cannot claim the merit of having invented a contrivance uniquely ingenious in the sense that the brochs are. They merely made use of a derived idea, and we may see in the ruins of their pile settlements—which were evidently occupied about the period of the Roman rule in Scotland—only the improved imitation of the rude attempt of the primeval savage to protect himself from danger. Dr Monro, in his lavish praise of the mechanical genius of the lake-dwellers of North Britain, has overlooked this. But it argues no little resource and industry to construct so simple, yet so effective a fortress. To lay in the soft bottom of a deep lake the foundation of a firm structure, which formed perhaps the home of many successive generations, and whose ruins preserve even yet a considerable portion of their work intact, is a feat of engineering in its way. He further thinks that there is only one hypothesis that can satisfactorily

rulers, who sought to abolish human sacrifices. . . . There is no evidence that the Cymri or any other Celtic people took to pile villages, . . . their structures were of stone, not of wood (!), and their foundation was necessarily the solid earth" (Campbell, "The Hittites: Their Inscriptions and History," ii. 298).

* Bk. v., c. 16.

† Investigated and described by Dr Ferdinand Keller.

‡ "Ancient Scottish Lake Dwellings."

account for all the facts and phenomena which his investigations have placed before the reader, viz., that these lake dwellings were constructed by the population of the south-west of Scotland, for the protection of their lives and movable property from the attacks of Angles. Picts, and Scots, on the withdrawal of the Roman troops. The ancient date of these structures in Switzerland gives, however, a much wider scope for fixing their date in Scotland, especially in view of what was apparently the warlike state of society before the advent of the Romans.

We are indebted to the plough for the discovery of the earth houses, which are found mostly underneath arable land, from the Border to Shetland. Like the brochs and the lake dwellings, they are constructed on a uniform plan, viz., that of a long, low, narrow, curved gallery, with sides, floor, and roof of stone—always widening and increasing in height from the low and narrow entrance inwards. Like the lake dwellings, too, they seem to have been in common use in Northern Europe. Posidonius mentions their use as grain stores by the population of Southern Britain. They must have resembled the underground structures mentioned by Tacitus,* which ordinarily served the purpose of granaries among the Germans, and which afforded them shelter from the rigours of winter and a secret retreat for their property in time of invasion. They formed, too, a common mode of dwelling among American tribes at a much lower stage of culture than the Germans or the Southern Britons, since they resorted to this type of structure when unable to take advantage of the ready shelter of caves. They appear in the Sagas as the haunt of the outlaw. The traces of an over-ground dwelling in connection with some of these in North Britain shows, however, that this was not their ordinary purpose, and the contents of those at Cairn Conan and other places disclose the presence of a settled population, who, like the occupants of the other structures of the pagan Iron Age, had to a certain extent felt the influence of Roman civilisation—cultivated grain, reared cattle and sheep, and used, in addition to stone utensils of a rude character, wheel-made pottery and implements of iron, bronze, and lead.

* "Germania," c. xvi.

There is little in the picture that we are thus enabled to conjure from these structures of the pagan Iron Age in Scotland that does not harmonise with the first historic glimpses of the condition of the people furnished by Greek and Roman authors. Pytheas, who was sent, several centuries before the Christian era, by the Greek merchants of Marseilles on a voyage of discovery along the western coast of Europe, to Britain, the Baltic, and the far north, wrote an account of his observations and adventures, which was as popular in the ancient world as the travels of Captain Cook in the modern. The loss of his diary is one of those irretrievable calamities from which the early history of so many countries has suffered, but fragments have been preserved by his commentators and critics, Eratosthenes, Polybius, Strabo, and others.* This accurate "Humboldt of his age"† remained, on his own confession, for some time in Britain, and visited most of its accessible parts. All that remains of his observations in reference to the north of the island is confined to a note of the strange phenomenon presented by the absence of night in summer, but the suggestive picture which he drew of the inhabitants of the southern regions has fortunately been handed down. "The natives," he tells us, "collect the sheaves of wheat in great barns and thrash out the corn there, because they have so little sunshine that our open thrashing-places would be of little use in that land of clouds and rain. There are cultivated fruits, a good abundance of some domestic animals, a scarcity of others; the inhabitants feed on millet and other vegetables, and on fruit, and the roots of plants, and they make a beverage of wheat and honey."‡

Posidonius, a later traveller, who is believed to have visited the east of Britain, besides the mining district of Cornwall, is credited with the authorship of a similar picture of the agricultural communities, resembling many of the African tribes of our time, which then inhabited the largest of the islands "that lie in the ocean." Naturally the southern tribes had reached a more advanced stage of

* See Elton, "Origins of English History," p. 14.

† Brehmer, "Entdeckungen im Alterthum," ii., p. 345.

‡ Strabo, iv. 201. *Cf.* Elton, pp. 30-32.

culture, owing to intercourse with their kindred on the opposite shores of the channel, who were powerfully influenced by the civilisation of the Mediterranean. Speaking of Belerium, the modern Cornwall, Posidonius says, "The inhabitants of that promontory are very fond of strangers, and, from their intercourse with foreign merchants, are civilised in their manner of life."* Cæsar and Strabo, on the other hand, had gleaned a little information about the interior tribes, and as we should expect, represent them as considerably lower in the scale of civilisation. But it is difficult to believe that even at that early time they were almost wholly unacquainted with the cultivation of the soil. "Most of the inland people," writes the former,† "grow no corn, and are clad in the skins of beasts." On the other hand, we may not forget the general assertion of Tacitus, more than a century afterwards, that "the soil of Britain is fertile, and yields corn in great plenty."‡

The state of the country, and the comparatively thin population, preclude the idea of agriculture on a modern scale. The trackless forest, the wide moor, the undrained plain, covered with furze or buried underneath treacherous marshes, were for centuries after the commencement of the historic period, the haunt of the wild beast—the wolf, the bear, the wild ox. The progress of cultivation was but very gradual. Even the Romans, the eloquence of their orators notwithstanding, left many a square mile of unreclaimed ground as virgin soil for the spade and the plough of the Christian monk in after-times. Many an acre in Aberdeenshire has been reclaimed from the supremacy of whin and broom since my boyhood. Still the northern tribes to which we are introduced in the pages of Tacitus are not mere hordes of naked savages as in the hearsay and credulous reports of Herodian and Dion Cassius. They are an active, high-spirited people, and if the great historian may sometimes have heightened the colours of his descriptions for the purpose of adding effect to the picture of his hero, it is not too much to infer that the culture of a people whose defence of home and fatherland cost Agricola several campaigns, who thwarted so effectually

* Diod. Sic., v. 22. † "De Bell. Gall.," v. 14. ‡ "Agricola," c. xii.

the ambition of Severus, and eventually overwhelmed the Roman province itself, was at least that which is represented in the ruins of the brochs, and which evidently extended into, and partly beyond, the Roman period.

The fact that these structures—brochs, lake dwellings, underground houses—like the numerous forts that crown the lesser ridges of our Scottish hills, are meant for defence or shelter is very significant. It throws an ominous light on the condition of the country during the period of their occupation. They are just the structures which we should expect to find among a people to whom security of life and property was a very precarious privilege. They had not reached the stage of culture which makes an effective government and a united nation possible. The first historic glimpse that we get of the population of North Britain, from the map of Ptolemy and the pages of Tacitus, tends to confirm this conclusion. At the dawn of reliable history we find the inhabitants of Caledonia divided into a large number of tribes. The Novantæ and the Selgovæ, whose name has perpetuated itself in the modern Solway, occupied the wilds of Galloway. North and east from them were the Dumnonii and the Otadini, who shared between them the remainder of the lowlands south of the Forth. The inhabitants of the regions beyond that river appear in the Latin poets of the first century (Lucan, Martial, Valerius Flaccus, Statius) under the general name of the Caledonians, but they consisted of numerous and frequently hostile tribes such as Caledonians and Vacomagi, in parts of the modern Argyle and Perth shires; Vernicomes and Tæxali, in Forfar and Aberdeen; Epidii, Cerones, Carini, along the north-west coast; Cornavii and Decantæ, in the remote north-east. According to the latest authority* on this subject, the most northerly of these clans were a non-Aryan, and consequently non-Celtic race, and represented such of the earlier inhabitants of Britain as had not amalgamated with the hordes of Celtic invaders, but had been forced by the Goidel or Gaelic Celt ever farther into the northern fastnesses, as he, in his turn, had to yield

* Professor Rhys, "Celtic Britain," p. 223. *Cf.* "Rhind Lectures," by the same author.

ground to the Brythonic Celts, who came after him. This view is merely the result of the difficult attempt to extract historic information from Celtic names compared with what its author considers to be the traces of a non-Celtic language in North Britain. It may, at least, claim in its favour the probability that the course of invasion from the Continent would naturally be what it implies—a gradual expansion northward of those who did not amalgamate with the invader, leading us to look for such remnants of the original population in the more remote and less attractive districts of the island. Professor Rhys is further of opinion, that, though at first rendered tributary by the Goidelic tribes, they had succeeded, before the departure of the Romans, in recovering supremacy in northern independent Britain. However this may be, we find the population beyond the Roman frontier, in the latter part of the fourth century, still divided into at least two leading tribes, while the generic name of the Caledonian of the poets had given place to that of the Picts, first mentioned by Eumenius about the end of the third century (296). This twofold division is noticed by Dion Cassius and Ammianus Marcellinus.* It is still observable in the time of Bæda,† who speaks of the Northern and Southern Picts. The name refers to the habit of tattooing the body,‡ and was originally applicable to all the inhabitants of Britain, but towards the end of the Roman occupation it became limited, with the probable exception of the inhabitants of Galloway, to the tribes beyond the northern wall, among whom the practice naturally survived longer than in the south.

Thus the divided condition of the population, as disclosed by the first historic glimpses, is such as explains the presence of the many strongholds and shelters whose ruins

* The former names them Caledonii and Meatæ, the latter Dicalidonæ and Vecturiones.

† "Hist. Eccl.," lib. iii., c. 4.

‡ The custom was widely prevalent in the ancient world, as we learn from Herodotus and others. Sidonius, Bishop of Clermont in the fifth century, graphically speaks of some Saxons who daubed their faces with blue stain. I myself have seen in South Africa the Red Kaffirs who made use of clay of this colour to improve their appearance.

still have a significant testimony. Though they could combine when threatened by a common danger, as Agricola and Severus found by experience in many a hard-contested fight, and though, under the ominous name of Picts, they shook the Roman power in Britain to its base more than once, the bond seems to have been fragile at the best. The sound of strife, the clang of sword and spear, rang through the glens and forests of Caledonia, and the combatants were not always Roman and native. The smoke of burning village, the desolation and carnage that mark the track of human hate and strife, bespoke the presence of internal feud as well as of the foreign conqueror. Cæsar,* speaking of the Gaulish tribes, significantly remarks that previous to his time they were engaged in almost annual conflicts, either by aggressive expeditions against some neighbour or by defending their territory from external attack. Tacitus,† in like manner, speaks of the Britons as a "fierce and savage people, running wild in the woods, ever addicted to a life of warfare," and as divided into factions under various chieftains—a circumstance, he adds, "highly favourable to the Roman arms against a warlike people—independent, fierce, and obstinate." Tribal wars, invasion from without, this was the history of Caledonia for generations before the advent of the legions, as it was for so many centuries afterwards, even when central government had found expression in the form of the feudal monarchy.

Nevertheless, these structures, if they tell of strife and invasion, tell also of the desire, in some degree, and the precaution to avoid them. They are significant, it is true, of unsettled times, significant also of the preference of their occupants for an industrious domestic life over the pursuit of war, and the love of plunder, at a time when every human abode of which we have any knowledge was a stronghold or a hiding-place, and when the temptation to disorganisation was a strong one. The effort to maintain the community and the home, independence and industry, such as the contents of these brochs, lake dwellings, and earth houses reveal, must count as an important fact in the culture of a people. Certainly it was not that which is

* "De Bell. Gall.," vi. 15. † "Agricola," c. xxi. ; *cf.* c. xii.

conjured before us by a Herodian or a Dion Cassius.* The Caledonian of the Roman epoch was no brutalised savage or semi-aquatic animal, who passed the greater portion of his time swimming in the lochs, or hiding from his foe in the mud, with only his head visible above the marsh, who roamed without hut or hamlet over the rugged mountains and the bare moors, and who subsisted almost exclusively on the produce of the chase, or on the nuts and wild fruits of the woods. Such a description might have applied to the savage tribes of the Stone Age, and it is not inconceivable that, just as in the case of the remote inhabitant of the glens and islands in modern times compared with those of the cities and fertile tracts of the Lowlands, there were communities whose condition was rude and primitive. But it is impossible to believe that this was an accurate account of the warlike peoples of the third and fourth centuries of our era, whose inroads spread terror and ravage over the Roman province. Whilst Herodian describes the Caledonians as barbarians of a very low type, the fact that he mentions that they possessed iron swords and war chariots does not harmonise with the description, and is an evidence of the absence of accurate observation. However wretched their condition might have appeared to the highly civilised Roman or Greek traveller, we must guard against accepting the tales which had their origin in the "yarns" of the Roman soldier, and which were welcomed as fact by a credulous and superstitious author like Dion Cassius. "It frequently happened," says Tacitus,† in his description of Agricola's campaign against the Caledonians, "that in the same camp were seen the infantry and cavalry intermingled with the sailors, all indulging their joy, full of their adventures, and magnifying the history of their exploits; the soldier describing in the usual style of military ostentation the forests which he had passed, the mountains which he had climbed, and the barbarians whom he had put to the rout; while the sailor, no less important, told of storms and tempests, the wonders of the deep, and the spirit with which he had

* "Herodian," iii. 14; Dion Cassius (Xiphilinus, lxxvi. 12).

† "Agricola," c. xxv.

conquered winds and waves." It is significant that the same author has omitted to enliven his pages with such stories, preferring, as he puts it, "the plain truth, to conjecture which previous writers adorned with all the graces of language."* Even Procopius,† as late as the sixth century, gravely invests the region north of the wall of Antoninus with purgatorial horrors that might stand for a picture from Dante or Milton. These northern latitudes, with their rugged scenery and wild seas, all the more impressive from their remoteness from, and unlikeness to the fairer lands of the south, afforded from very ancient times an apt theme for the imaginative Greek romancers, whose productions, such as "Wonders beyond Thule," "Hyperboreans," &c., were among the most popular works of fiction of antiquity. From these arose the travellers' tales of one-footed men, of Germans with monstrous feet and ears, of fantastic kings in Thule, and Irish tribes who devoured their parents. They thus allowed fancy to play the same havoc with the history and geography of the islands and peninsulas of the far north, as in the case of the unexplored regions of the remote south. "The ancients," says Gibbon,‡ "who had a very faint and imperfect knowledge of the great peninsula of Africa, were sometimes tempted to believe that the torrid zone must ever remain destitute of inhabitants, and they sometimes amused their fancy by filling the vacant spaces with headless men, or rather monsters, with horrid and cloven-footed satyrs, with fabulous centaurs, and with human pigmies, who waged a bold and doubtful warfare against the cranes." With such pictures of a little known or inferior race we must contrast the testimony of those ruins found in the glens and the lochs of Scotland, which reveal a stage of culture, barbarian indeed, but not savage. All the same there is a danger in using such terms as "culture," "civilisation," "organisation," and so forth, in regard to these prehistoric ancestors of ours—a danger which our archæologists have not always

* "Agricola," c. x.

† So deadly was the air, so horrible the reptiles, that it would be impossible for a man to live half an hour.

‡ "Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire," vol. iv., p. 294 (Milman's edition).

avoided—the danger, viz., of forgetting the reality of things. While a high civilisation may co-exist among the same people with one that is much ruder, as in the case of the dwellers in the Black Houses of the Hebrides, and the makers of the coarse Barvas pottery, who inhabit the same country with the owner of the magnificent villa, and the manufacturer of the finest hardware, we may safely conclude that the possession of implements or ornaments which reveal cleverness of workmanship, or the ability to build structures of no mean strength, was not associated with that degree of civilisation which we to-day would call comfortable, or even bearable. Compared with the conveniences and requirements of modern times, or with the state of civilisation in ancient Greece, Rome, Persia, or Egypt, the existence of our forefathers, whether of the Iron or of the Bronze Age, must have been rude at the best, and would be wretched in the extreme to us their refined posterity. That it was natural and enjoyable to them is likely enough, for man is always more or less the creature of his age; and it is, alas! the curse of a high civilisation like ours to break in upon the rude contentment, the natural simplicity of the barbarian, and degrade and kill him off with vices, or with improvements to which he is a stranger. Only let us not idealise away the realism of such scenes by the use of a learned terminology, as the archæologists are apt to do. Culture, civilisation, organisation, &c., the remains of these dim ages, we have sought to traverse, do disclose, but only in a relative sense. Even Augustus, it has been facetiously, though not quite correctly, remarked, had neither glass to his windows, nor a shirt to his back! Whilst then giving our rude forefathers credit for ingenuity, for taste, for skill—culture of a kind—we should have to make large reservations in the use of words when drawing a comparison with the culture of our age, if we would keep by the truth.

## CHAPTER V.

### CELTIC PAGANISM.

WE may safely conclude that there was no written literature among the northern tribes in prehistoric times. So long as our forefathers remained savages—cave-dwellers, who used only stone implements and weapons—their stage of culture precludes the idea. "No race of men in the Stone Age," says Lubbock,* "had attained the art of communicating facts by means of letters, or even by the far ruder system of picture writing, nor does anything perhaps surprise the savage more than to find that Europeans can communicate with one another by means of a few black scratches on a piece of paper." Not that the savage does not possess qualities of mind which, when trained, might produce the most exquisitely *naïve* poetry. "Savages have been for untold ages, and still are, living in the myth-making stage of the human mind,"†—amid those fancies, whose realism brightens or terrorises their existence. They understand so far the art of interpretation, of combination, inasmuch as they can give expression in tale or song to their unsophisticated contemplation of the universe. We may, indeed, hear the echo of a primeval antiquity in some portions of that traditional lore in which Scotland is so rich. Nor was the cave-dweller of the Palæolithic age a contemptible artist, as we have seen. But the art of communicating his thoughts, otherwise than by a childish realistic language, was a mystery to him. In one sense, the savage of the Stone Age did give expression to his thoughts in more durable, significant fashion, in the great stone piles which cover the dead, and testify to the presence of definite ideas, but this dumb eloquence in stone is the only evidence of any attempt to render his thoughts in outward fashion, which the savage of the Stone Age has, or could have left

* "Origin of Civilisation," p. 47.

† Tylor, "Primitive Culture," p. 283.

us. We may see in the mysterious tracings on the blocks of Aberdeenshire granite the attempt to render thought by tangible signs.* In the, to me, inscrutable forms of the double disc and the crescent, the fish, the serpent, the bird, &c., may be the record of the religious ideas of far remote times. These hieroglyphic inscriptions may thus represent, like the use of images and pictures in Catholic countries, an attempt at popular education, and some future Champollion may disclose their significance, but they do not probably reach beyond the Celtic settlement, if, indeed, as Dr Anderson asserts, they are not symbols of the early Christian period.†

At all events I do not think that the bards, who, according to Lucan, perpetuated the memory of the fallen brave by their praises, wrote their poems,‡ or the priests their prayers, or the chiefs their laws, before the dawn of our era. The Gaulish Druids were acquainted with letters, and made their calculations in Greek characters, but this was due to the influence of the Greek culture of Marseilles. Speaking of the romanising of the natives of Southern Gaul during the first century B.C., Mommsen§ says, "In early times Hellenism had also to a certain degree influenced these regions; the elements of a higher culture, the stimulation of the culture of the vine and the olive to the use of writing and to the coining of money came to them from Massillia." The ruder and more conservative devotees‖ of the Druid

* Some have seen in these a trace of Phœnician influence. The Phœnicians of Carthagena and Cadiz might have been responsible for these and for the introduction of letters at an early period, if their trade extended, as was long believed, to the Scilly Isles; but the Cassiterides of Herodotus and other authors are now believed to have been a group of islands off the coast of Spain, and the British tin trade with the Continent was begun at a later time by the merchants of Southern Gaul. Lubbock, however, is a strong advocate of the Phœnician connection with the Scilly Isles.

† The wild but erudite author of "The Hittites: their History and Inscriptions," will have it that these mysterious markings are the handwriting of this ancient Turanian people. He confidently asserts, too, that many of the chief figures of Celtic lore are only Hittites in disguise. The Highlander in search of a pedigree need now be at no loss.

‡ "The Britons," says Tacitus, "like all barbarous nations, have no written records" ("Agricola," c. ii.).

§ "History of Rome," iv. 214 (Dickson's translation).

‖ Cæsar, "De Bell. Gall.," lib. vi., c. 13, says that in order to make themselves themselves more thoroughly acquainted with its rites, Gaulish students went to Britain.

cult in Britain trusted to unwritten tradition—that living literature of the early ages of a people.*

Of the religious cult that prevailed in the earlier ages of Britain, we have no knowledge beyond what is disclosed by the tombs of the dead. The presence of "grave goods" is, as we have seen, an evidence that our ancestors of remote prehistoric times had a faith. This is more than has been asserted of several rude tribes of modern times. Observers not inclined to scepticism in such matters—Christian missionaries, both Catholic and Protestant—have recorded their inability to discover any trace of religious belief or practice among the African and American communities, whose gross ignorance they sought to dispel. Cassalis, Moffat, Father Dobritzhoffer, were not likely to rush to hasty conclusions of this kind, yet the evidence from which they drew them has been found, on closer scrutiny, not to warrant such inferences. Facts are recorded which, as Dr Tylor has shown, contradict these assertions. We mean religion in a relative sense, of course. It would be in vain to look for any reasoned system of belief among those who in reason are mere children. There is force in the remark of Lubbock,† "As regards the lowest races of men, it seems to me even *a priori* very difficult to suppose that a people so backward as to be unable to count their own fingers should be sufficiently advanced in their intellectual conceptions as to have any system of belief worthy of the name of a religion." A system of belief. Certainly not. That would imply a dialectic process far beyond the powers of the savage; but there may be religions without system, and the religious instinct or sentiment asserts itself in some form or other in every human soul capable of fear, wonder, longing. The idea of the supernatural may be absent, for the savage does not define in the manner of the theologian of the

* O'Curry, however (lect. i.), is of opinion, which he bases on MSS. belonging, as he thinks, to the period of the introduction of Christianity into Ireland in the fifth century, that the Druids were in possession of books before the arrival of St Patrick. Many ancient writings fell a prey to the Danish occupation of Ireland. But what space the word "ancient" covers is a question, and the enthusiastic Celtic scholars may be trusted not to limit it too much.

† "Origin of Civilisation," p. 213.

higher faiths. Yet some notion of the immaterial exerts its influence, so far as our knowledge goes, on every reasonable being.

Whatever the rude creed of the remoter inhabitants of the Stone and Bronze Ages, our Celtic ancestors had attained a comparatively advanced stage of religious culture. We find them, in the pages of Cæsar and Tacitus, in possession of a priestly ritual, with temples, idols, and sacrifices, devoted to the service of the divine hierarchy. The Celts, like other branches of the Aryan race, carried with them, in their wanderings from their predisruption home, a theology in which their ideas of the divine had found expression. Their religion bore the same character as that of the Greeks or the Latins, or any other Aryan people—a system of polytheism, more or less elaborate and refined, according to their state of culture. The household had its altar, at which the head of the family, as among the ancient Germans, offered the worship of its members, until supplanted by the priestly class, which succeeded in usurping the functions of religion.* By the time that history begins to throw a dim light on the sombre seclusion of the north, the Celtic tribes of Britain and Gaul were a priest-ridden people, and if they had asserted in some cases their right to free government, they submitted to a terrible form of sacerdotal tyranny. "The whole nation of the Gauls is extremely religious," says Cæsar, "and therefore those who are afflicted with grievous diseases, or exposed to dangers in war or otherwise, either offer men as victims, or vow to sacrifice themselves. At these sacrifices the Druids officiate."† The wrath of their savage deities, he further tells us, could only be appeased by the shedding of human blood, and when the supply of criminals, who were thought the most acceptable to the gods, failed, they did not hesitate to force the innocent to mount the sacrificial pile, whose awful glare lighted up the oak groves, where they celebrated their inhuman rites.‡ Other

* Prof. Rhys holds that Druidism was originally not a Celtic cult, but adopted by the Celts from a non-Aryan people in the west of Europe, whom they conquered. Evidence of this is not forthcoming, however.

† "De Bell. Gall.," vi., c. 16.

‡ *Ibid.*

writers * add that they sometimes crucified, sometimes slew, their victims with the sword, or with arrows, and drew their auguries from the contortions of their bodies, or from the flow of their blood. So prodigal of human life were those grim priests, that they were wont to proclaim that the crops would be abundant in proportion to the harvest of death. The imagination quails before the awful picture—the smoke and blood-begrimmed Druids, in richly embroidered robes, resplendent with ornaments of massive gold, mingling their savage chant with the shrieks of their victims—and yet we need not assume that it was overdrawn, or that Cæsar was merely recounting the hearsay and untrustworthy evidence which he, as a practical soldier, took no trouble to question, and Pliny was simply conjuring the spectres of his own credulity.† Inhumanity of this sort, springing from priestly delusion and despotism, is, alas! no solitary exception in the annals of mankind. It is not so long ago that Europe was ringing with the cry of religious persecution, and the burning of witches and heretic preachers was accounted the sacred duty of the Christian magistrate. Even in our day brutal orgies are celebrated in many an African grove, and the watchword of some fanatic might spread death and hatred in many a civilised community. This phase of the crude and inhuman fanaticism which man has so often mistaken for religion, and which was grimly exemplified by the Druids, left its trace far into historic times in Europe. The idea not merely perpetuated itself, till comparatively recently, in some of the popular beliefs regarding witchcraft—such, for instance, as that one man must die in order to secure the recovery of another‡—but the fact was not unknown in Northern Europe as late as the tenth century. At Upsala there was a celebrated temple, round which the ghastly display of the corpses of the human victims sacrificed by the priests of Odin was to be seen in the time of Adam of Bremen. The practice only yielded to the influence of Christianity in those

* Strabo, "Geog.," lib. iv.; Diod. Sic. "Hist.," lib. v., c. 31. *Cf.* Pliny, "Hist. Nat.," lib. xvi.

† Burton, "History of Scotland," vol. i., ch. vi.

‡ *See* some striking instances in Leslie Forbes, "The Early Races of Scotland."

northern countries which had not come under the civilising influence of the Romans. Even after the humanising doctrines of Jesus had become the popular creed, the power of this grim rite occasionally asserted itself in the practice of slaying or burying a victim, before or during the erection of a building, in the belief that only thus could it be made secure.* "L'usage de tuer un homme pour que son esprit demeure attaché à l'endroit de sa mort et en soit le gardien se pratique dans de nombreux pays." † Though such bloody rites were expressly forbidden by the Romans, B.C. 95, the custom lingered till the time of Constantine, when a gladiator appears to have been sacrificed to Jupiter Latialis. A people, who looked upon the savage combats of the circus, or the slaughter by each other of the unfortunate captives that added glory to the triumph of the Roman commander, would not be easily shocked by an occasional excess of this kind. There is indeed evidence enough that the Aryan race in its earlier stages of culture had not surmounted the sombre idea that so long coloured man's relation to his deity, and which is but thinly disguised sometimes in the beautiful diction of Hebrew patriarch and prophet. The Celts of Gaul and Britain need not therefore be credited with merely having adopted it ‡ from the non-Aryan race that they conquered and partly absorbed in their progress westwards. The suppression by the Romans was owing, not merely to the sanguinary character of its rites, but to the power and patriotism of the priests. "The Roman government, which elsewhere let alone all local peculiarities of worship with indifferent toleration, contemplated this Druidic system, not merely in its extravagances, but as a whole, with apprehension. The institution of the Gallic annual festival in the purely Roman capital of the country (Lugdinum, Lyons), and with the exclusion of any link attaching to the national culture, was evidently a counter-move of the

* The Old Irish "Life of Columba" represents him as sacrificing Odran when landing in Iona, in order to gain the protection of Heaven—a tradition which at least points to the prevalence of the custom in ancient times.

† Gaidos, "Melusine," iv. 16.

‡ Rhys, "Celtic Britain," p. 69.

government against the old religion of the country, with its yearly council of priests at Chartres, the centre of the Gallic land. . . . That the occupation of Britain, which had been from of old the chief seat of these priestly actings, was in good part resolved on in order to get thereby at the root of the evil, will be fully set forth in the sequel."* Accordingly, in this island, we find the priests, who had remained untinctured by the Greek culture of Southern Gaul, where the sacred groves were schools of instruction in philosophy, astronomy, geography, and theology,† as well as places of sacrifice, in possession of the more literal orthodoxy that signalises a cruder culture, and animated by a fierce patriotic spirit, fomenting resistance and rebellion, inspiring their followers with the daring of fanaticism, and inflaming them with the glory of fighting for their gods and their altars, as well as for their homes and hearths. Hence they were particularly obnoxious to the Roman invaders, and their ritual and power, not merely as priests, but as lawgivers and judges,‡ were overwhelmed in the ruins of the national independence. But the vivid pen of Tacitus has pictured to us these grim functionaries, and the awful recesses of their bloody groves, ere their cult was transformed into the harmless nature worship, combined with a strong belief in magic, which we shall find it in the biographies of the early missionaries. Describing the conquest of Anglesey by the legions under Suetonius Paulinus in A.D. 61—"The Druids," he says, "were ranged in order, with hands uplifted, invoking the gods, and pouring forth terrible imprecations. The novelty of the sight struck the Romans with awe and terror; they stood in stupid amazement, as if their limbs were benumbed, riveted to one spot, a mark for the enemy. The exhortations of the general by-and-by diffused new vigour throughout the ranks, and the men by mutual reproaches inflamed each other to deeds of valour. They felt the disgrace of yielding to a troop of women and a band of fanatic priests; they advanced

* Mommsen, "Provinces of the Roman Empire," i., p. 105 (Dickson's translation).

† Cæsar, "De Bell. Gall." lib. vi., c. 14.

‡ *Ibid.*, vi. 13.

their standards, and rushed to the attack with impetuous fury. The Britons perished in the flames which they themselves had kindled; the island fell, and a garrison was established to retain it in subjection; the religious groves, dedicated to superstitious and barbarous rites, were levelled to the ground. In these recesses the natives embrued their altars with the blood of their prisoners, and in the entrails of men explored the will of the gods."* "Thus," remarks Mommsen, "the old vehement Celtic faith, which had given the Romans so much trouble, burst forth once more, for the last time, in a mighty flame." † On another occasion, when the barbarians north of the Forth were preparing to resist the advance of Agricola, the same author speaks of "the solemn rites and sacrifices"‡ with which they celebrated their league in the cause of freedom, but, unfortunately, does not delineate the picture as in the above graphic fashion. Lucan, his contemporary, in his apostrophe of the Druids, is not more explicit on the subject, but, like Cæsar, adds a little to our knowledge of their creed. "And you, ye Druids, now that the sword was removed, began once more your barbaric rites and weird solemnities. To you only is given knowledge or ignorance (whichever it be) of the gods and the powers of heaven; your dwelling is in the lone heart of the forest. From you we learn that the bourne of man's ghost is not the senseless grave, not the pale realms of the monarch below; in another world his spirit survives still. Death, if your lore be true, is but the passage to enduring life."§

The gods whom the Druid hierarchy worshipped with such ferocious rites, and whose attributes they explained to the youths that flocked to listen to their instructions, were identified by Cæsar‖ with Mercury, Apollo, Mars, Jupiter, and Minerva. Mercury, he adds, as the inventor of the arts, and the patron of trade and intercommunication, counted the largest number of altars, and the popularity of this god is explained by the flourishing state of traffic and manufactures in Gaul.¶ Apollo was supplicated as the

* "Annales," xiv., c. 30. † "Provinces," i., p. 180.
‡ "Agricola," c. 27. § Matthew Arnold, "Study of Celtic Literature."
‖ "De Bell. Gall.," vi. 17.
¶ Mommsen, "History of Rome," iv., p. 220.

healer of disease. Minerva was especially the patroness of the handicrafts, while in the groves sacred to Mars they piled a portion of the spoil, in gratitude for success in war. Jupiter, as the Father of Heaven, received a homage which the Aryan race, from the plains of India to the Western Isles, offered to the wonders of the sky. Their Celtic names are still recognisable in the Latin inscriptions on the stone tablets, which have been discovered in Gaul and Britain, and which preserve to us the act of piety of some devout or grateful worshipper. Mercury appears in combination with the word Artaius (Welsh *ar*, ploughland), Apollo with Maponas (Welsh *mapon*, boy). Jupiter was known as Taranucus, the Thunderer (Welsh *taran*, thunder), Mars as Caturix, the battle king (Irish *cath*, battle, and *rix*, king), and as Camulos, to whom Camulodunum, the capital of the Trinobantes, and other places were dedicated, and who is recognisable in an inscription to "Mars Camulus," which has been found along the Roman wall between the Forth and the Clyde. Minerva passed among the Britons under the title of Belisama, once the name of the river Ribble.* The investigations, by philologists like Professor Rhys and M. Gaidos, of these votive inscriptions, found in Britain and France, especially in the latter country, have thus tended to confirm the remark of Tacitus that "in both countries the same religious rites, the same superstitions were observed." These are, however, but a few of the principal deities among the innumerable gods that played such a *rôle* in the thought of our Celtic forefathers. The lively imagination, the vivacious temperament of the Celt, made him particularly susceptible to the influences of nature. The religious instinct, working in the vein of a lively fancy, peopled the land with its aerial creations—the genii to whom the Romans paid homage in every district, in which they formed a station. They saw a divine virtue in the healing properties of springs and herbs, they felt the presence of a god in the brooding mists, the gloomy thickets, the wildfire that flitted across the sky, the mysterious moonbeams, and the glorious sunrays, the will

* This subject has been examined by Prof. Rhys in his "Hibbert Lectures." *See* especially lect. i.

o' the wisp of the swamps, the mountains, and the plains ; the ever-animated flow of the stream* or the sullen stillness of the pools, the life-giving breath of spring, and the florid beauty of summer. Nature was thus one vast pantheon, and if, before the advent of the Roman, his cult was debased by the horrors of human sacrifice, it was not without its poetic charm. It is characterised by an intensity that can only find a resting-place in the conception of the manifold and the vast. Its sentiment presses on to the impalpable, the ideal. The forest of trees and the forest of rocks—something Titanic, something weird as in the Ossianic poems—not hewn timber and carved stones—Stonehenge with its pinnacles of boulder suit its aspirations for something not to be bounded nor expressed.† At a later time many of these realistic fictions, which wove themselves into the inmost life and thought of our pagan forefathers, became transformed, in the tale of the bard, into the heroes who filled up the blanks of our earlier history. The old gods vanished before the advance of a more spiritual faith, yet they returned to enjoy, in the pages of Geoffrey of Monmouth and the romances of the Middle Ages, a renewed lease of life, only they were no longer gods, but men—mighty heroes and giants, who assist King Arthur in his combats to maintain the national cause against the pagan Saxon, great leaders like the old solar god, Hugh the mighty, or enchanters like Gwydion, who, with the exquisite and magic charm of the Celtic fancy, transformed the flowers of the oak, of the broom, and the meadow sweet, into a woman. It is a strange fact that some of the mythical saints of the early British Church should be resolvable into pagan gods, and their virtues and miraculous doings prove to be those of the banished deities, transformed by the romancing pen of the monkish biographer. St Bran, who, from his fabled conversion at Rome in the first century, and his activity on his return to his native land in preaching the doctrine of the Cross,

* "A blind people," says Gildas, referring to the temples and mouldering idols of his time (sixth century), "paid divine honour to the mountains, wells, and streams."

† *See* Matthew Arnold, "Study of Celtic Literature," sect. v.

earned the title of the Blessed, turns out to have been originally a war-god. Another great figure of the religious imagination of our Celtic forefathers, the ocean god, Lir, whom Geoffrey gravely reduced to historic shape as the founder of Leicester in the age of the prophet Amos, survived to become, in one of the most powerful of Shakespearian dramas, the unfortunate King Lear, the tragic victim of filial ingratitude. Bran was in fact one of his divine progeny, and the Lady Brangwaine, the fairest of his daughters, who plays a *rôle* in the romance of Tristram and Iseult, was once worshipped, under the title of Branwen of the Fair Bosom, as the Venus of the North. Her miraculous fountain, in an islet off Anglesey, cured the sorrows of unfortunate lovers. Gwydion, the arch-magician, whose castle was in the milky way, was a member of another group of deities—the children of Don—who inhabited the stars and the constellations. But the outstanding figure in that numerous fanciful hierarchy of our myth-making ancestors, which has been preserved in the legends and romances of a later time, was that of Nodeus or Nudd—the insular Zeus, to whom his votaries appear to have ascribed the *rôles* of a Neptune and Mars combined. A magnificent temple in his honour was erected by the Romans at Lydney, on the western bank of the Severn. The mosaic floor contains representations of sea-serpents and fishes, the principal figure in a bronze plaque is crowned with rays like Phœbus, and stands in a chariot drawn by four horses, like the Roman Neptune. The typified winds on either side of it, and the site of the temple near the tidal bed of the Severn, are also in favour of the deity's connection with the ocean, though the inscriptions still in existence indicate that he also enjoyed the honours of Mars. The worship of such a deity—a kind of marine Mars—forms, as Professor Rhys* has remarked, a curious prelude to the history of that composite British people, whose merchantmen and men-of-war now cover all the seas. Stonehenge itself is believed to have been one of the numerous scenes of his worship in this country, and a trace of it lingers even yet in the forest of Brecelieu in Brittany. In seasons of great drought the

* "Hibbert Lectures," i.

inhabitants walk in procession to the fountain of Baranton, led by priests and banner-bearers. On arrival, the rector dips the foot of the cross into the water, the rain must come in consequence within a week's time, and the power of the old god is thus acknowledged, though under a different rubric. "Almost all our superstitions," as M. Renan has well remarked, "are the remains of a religion anterior to Christianity, and which Christianity has not been able entirely to root out. If, at the present day, we wished to recover a living image of paganism, we should have to look for it in some village lying forgotten in the depths of some country district, altogether behind the times."* In Catholic countries, where the ritual of the Church, in which many of the ancient customs of the people were thus absorbed, survived the revolutions wrought in Britain and other parts of Northern Europe by the Reformation, a great deal of the pagan cult has been preserved, though modified by Christian ideas. The missionaries of the Cross were usually more lenient with the religious customs of the pagans, than the Romans had been with the grimmer features of the Druid ceremonial, and while their converts transferred their allegiance to Christ and the apostles and the martyrs, they still retained many of their old ideas and practices, under a different name perhaps. Even in our country, which substituted for the Catholic ritual a rigid and inartistic service, many elements of a remote paganism remained bound up with the thought and customs of the people. These beliefs and practices of a shadowy past, often on the surface but unmeaning superstitions, have lived on with extraordinary tenacity for many centuries, and it would be well, in view of such a fact, if those who are inclined to hold, with unreasoning bigotry, traditional beliefs in religion would pause to inquire into the origin of many a dogma or shibboleth, even though it pass under the title of Christian, and seem a pillar of the Christian system. The popular belief in witchcraft, which cast its dark shadow over so many innocent lives in mediæval and even in modern times, was simply a survival from pre-christian ages. I remember hearing of a case in Banffshire less than twenty years ago,

* "Influence of the Institutions, Thought, and Culture of Rome," p. 32.

in which an otherwise shrewd man seriously accused a neighbour of having bewitched his cow, by drawing off the milk, and causing it to flow into a pitcher from the end of his table. The idea that the witches could raise storms by certain spells, that their charms were proof against weapons, that they held their meetings on wild heath or dark mountain top, and could ride through the air or transport themselves into cats, hares, or were-wolves, that they could cause disease by demoniacal powers, and convey thorns, pins, &c., into their victims' bodies—this was essentially a pagan idea and a pagan practice.* The same origin is to be assigned to the sacrifice of a cock for the cure of epilepsy, the leaving of a rag, as an offering, on a bush beside a well, which for ages has had the repute of being able to afford recovery from disease, the refraining from killing fish in some loch or pool, the curtseying to the new moon or the greeting that is offered her by young women in the Highlands from the earthfast stone, in order to discover their future husbands, the fear of the water-kelpie—the aquatic bull or horse whose appearance brings death and calamity,—the worship of fire represented by the bonfires of Hallowe'en, the sacrifice of a bull to some saint such as St Mouri at Applecross, or St Cuthbert at Kirkcudbright. In "Hallowe'en," with its pawky tale of all the simple artifices to which the Ayrshire rustic resorts, in the endeavour to discover his or her future mate in life, Burns has unconsciously left us a succinct text-book of the ancient paganism of the countryside.

The question as to the influence of religious belief and ritual on the lives and character of a people is an interesting and important one from the standpoint of culture. The religion of our Celtic ancestors of remote pagan times was not merely a system of mythology and philosophy, whose mysteries were the exclusive property of the priestly caste and studiously kept from the uninitiated, being committed to memory, not written down, by the numerous disciples who crowded the sacred groves. That it also exercised a great influence on the people, we may gather from the power of the sacred order. Their word was law, and dis-

* *See* Tylor, "Primitive Culture," p. 138.

obedience to it was followed by a sentence of excommunication more fearful than death itself.* They were the arbiters of all public disputes, which in Gaul were submitted to the Druidic assembly held once a year at Chartres. They decided the question of peace or war. They enjoyed the most ample privileges, and were, in fact, the ruling class in the nation. In such circumstances, their doctrines and their rites were not the formal system that the national religion had become to the philosophers of Greece and Rome. The reverence for the gods, and the submission to the authority of their fierce and fanatic ministers, were intense realities to those whose minds were so impressed by the idea of the supernatural that, while impatient of kingly control,† they submissively endured the grimmest form of priestly tyranny. Such a religion must, notwithstanding the risk of being a dead mechanical weight, have exercised a certain moral power in the various relations of life. The time has passed when the champion of the Christian faith summarily limited all excellence, on dogmatic grounds, to Christianity, and proscribed every other faith by the name of pagan. Wallace, who spent several years among savage tribes, came to the conclusion that the savage is after all in many respects a better man than the Christian, and the same sentiment has been beautifully expressed by the poet Säume. The ethic philosophy of the Druids may excite a smile, but in the more civilised communities we find the idea of the family and the existence of marriage. Among the Aryan race the relations of the sexes were not of the degraded kind that prevail among peoples at a low stage of civilisation. In the household the wife was not the mere slave of the husband, but bore a part in the government of the family, and there are not wanting examples in Britain of women wielding the supreme power in the State.‡ Cartismandua or Boudicca would not have held such a position had their sex been the degraded slave of the men. True, Cæsar has recorded a report that the natives of the

* Cæsar, "De Bell. Gall.," vi., c. 13.

† *Ibid.*, v. 6; *cf.* v. 27.

‡ Tacitus, "Agricola," c. xvi. "In Britain there is no rule of distinction to exclude the female line from the throne, or the command of armies."

interior of the island lived in what we should regard as a state of communal marriage—the state in which the women are the common property of the community, and which has been found to be the case in modern times among peoples like the Bushmen of South Africa, the inhabitants of Queen Charlotte Island, and the natives of Australia. While we should not be surprised at such a brutal practice among peoples whose culture is that of the savage, we can hardly believe that the shocking moral laxity, which Cæsar had heard prevailed among the inland British tribes, was anything more than one of these incredible fictions, that were credited to the little known and much scandalised regions beyond the pale of Roman dominion. "Ten or a dozen men have their wives in common; brothers with brothers and parents with their sons, but the children are accounted those of the man to whom the woman was first assigned."* This condition of things would not necessarily mark a low state of culture, as appears from the fact that Plato advocated a community of wives, chiefly on the patriotic ground that the children would be attached more closely to their country. But if not a pure fiction, the statement may be merely an ignorant, though not wilful, caricature of the patriarchal community in which the sons of one father lived together with their wives and children, in subjection to their paternal head. This custom was not unknown among the Aryan nations in early times, and the clan system in Ireland and the Highlands remained a late and elaborate survival of this phase of social development. But it looks so like one of those tit-bits in the fabulous stories told by Hecatæus and other Greek romancers, that we are inclined to believe rather that the usually shrewd historian was for once caught napping, especially as he does not in this instance relate what he had observed himself. It is at all events quite worthy of a place beside the tales recorded by Strabo (who, however, doubts them), Dion Cassius, Solinus, and even St Jerome, about the lax relations of the sexes in Ireland, Thule, and the Hebrides, but though the picture of a grass-eating community, who had no idea of marriage, or of a king, who allowed his passions unrestrained scope

* "De Bell. Gall.," v. 14.

among his female subjects, might amuse the languid Greek in quest of novelties, and pass for fact in the learned pages of Blackstone, such tales have not been able to survive the keenness of modern research. The pen of Tacitus has drawn a very different picture of the moral vigour of the opponents of Agricola, and the speech which he puts into the mouth of Galgacus contains not a few favourable comparisons between the martial, freedom-loving barbarians, and the oppressive and demoralising character of the Roman civilisation. We may assume that, though the speech is the production of the writer, he would not have written one palpably out of keeping with the character of the barbarian chief and his followers. And certainly the Caledonian orator, with Tacitus for *souffleur*, has no cause to be ashamed of himself and his people in the presence of the legions of Rome. There is not merely the fierce declamation of the barbarian to whom battle and carnage are a delight; there is the glow of a generous enthusiasm in the cause of freedom, home, and native land, coupled with a courage, a feeling of human rights, a contempt of death, that contrast widely with the moral delinquincies ascribed by the orator to the Romans—their insolent pride, their avarice, their ambition, their brutal tyranny and cruelty. Galgacus does not talk like a man who had no idea of the sacredness of the domestic life, and an historian like Tacitus would not for the sake of mere effective writing have penned an oration, glowing with appreciation of the noblest virtues, without regard in some degree for the fitness of things.

# BOOK II.

## ROMAN CULTURE.

### CHAPTER I.

#### THE PLASTIC TOUCH OF ROME.

NO observant Scotsman, with an interest in the antiquarian remains of his country, is unfamiliar with some venerable monument of the presence of the Roman invader in Northern Britain. He may, in the same breath, grow eloquent over the heroism that vindicated his country's independence at Bannockburn, and that persistently resisted the renewed attempts to conquer it by the most martial people of antiquity, but he cannot contemplate those numerous traces of imperial grandeur, scattered over the surface of his native land, without a feeling of interest, and even of reverence. They suggest the thought—not without a strong fascination for those who feel a keen sympathy with the great deeds and the great figures of antiquity—that Scotland formed a part of the mightiest empire of ancient, as it does of that of modern times. There is at least this bond of likeness between our present and our past, and the remembrance of it may well quicken our interest in the marvellous power which has so long lain prostrate beneath the vanished centuries, as well as beget a sentiment of wonder at the strange revolutions of human history. To-day we boast that the sun never sets on the Queen's dominions. Our romanised forefathers spoke in a similar strain, for the Romans, too, had their pride of empire, and their poets could sing that "the earth is girdled with a Roman ocean." Although the territories

that owned the sway of the Roman emperors cannot be compared in extent with the giant vastness of Greater Britain, the boast of the poets was not an empty one. They embraced large possessions in three continents, and from the Euphrates to the Danube, from the north of Africa to the north of Britain, the valour of the Roman legions, and the spirit of Roman institutions, had welded peoples of many tongues and of great diversity of race into one gigantic organism, as the army and the enterprise of Britain has done, on a still grander scale, in every quarter of the modern world. To the far-seeing policy of Gracchus, the Romans owed the idea of opening up in the north-west a field for the activity of Italian merchants and the superfluous population of Italian cities. The military genius of Cæsar succeeded at length in realising the project of the Great Tribune. The same conditions, which have led to the establishment of the British colonies, existed in the Italy of Virgil and Horace as well as in the Athens of Pericles, and, along with the same instinct of conquest, led to the absorption of the verdant and fertile regions of Gaul, whose inhabitants were compelled to surrender their independence before the superlative organisation, the more enterprising spirit of their neighbours south of the Alps. In order to the consolidation of their richly remunerative possessions between the Rhine and the Atlantic, the Roman generals could not leave the adjacent island of Britain out of account, connected as it was by trade and race sympathies with Gaul, and affording a basis for the disturbing influence of deserters and rebels. It is to this policy of expansion towards the north-west, carried out with such iron energy by Cæsar in Gaul, and a succession of distinguished generals in Britain, that we are indebted for the abiding impress of Roman culture, which survived the wreck of Roman political organisation in the beginning of the fifth century, and which has left its trace so deeply in the life of the western peoples. The advance of the Romans to the forests of Caledonia, leavening in its course the barbarian Celts with the culture of Italy, is an event of world-historic importance. If the conquest of Gaul had not been achieved by Cæsar, and the northern barbarians, unrestrained by the

barrier of the Roman power on the left bank of the Rhine, had poured across that river and over the Alps and the Pyrenees, the Helleno-Latin culture could not have perpetuated itself as it has done in the thought and institutions of the north, and transformed its barbarian life. It would have been to us to-day rather like that of Persia and India, largely external, and would have exercised, comparatively speaking, but a meagre influence on our development.*

The relation in which Britain stood to the great empire of which it was an integral part, was a very close one. It was not that merely of a conquered province, connected with the seat of power mainly by means of the tax-gatherer, and the foreign trader, whose only interest in the new acquisition was that of gain. That it was so to some extent, and suffered in consequence, is only too true,† as we shall see. But it was, all the same, a colony in the organic sense, as much permeated by the life that pulsed from the heart of the empire as Australia, or Canada, or Cape Colony are by the spirit and institutions of Britannia at the present time. To its shores came not merely the Roman legions to conquer and enslave its warlike tribes, or the Roman merchant to exchange the more luxurious products of the south for the native minerals, pearls, and furs; there came also the Roman colonist to settle on its fertile plains and till its soil, to found considerable cities whose inhabitants enjoyed the rights and privileges of Roman citizens, and in which the refinements, the laws, the culture of Italy, flourished as under their softer native sky. The camp, in fact, was frequently but the forerunner of the colony, and the gigantic ruins of some of the Roman cities, such as Caerleon, Chester, and Luguballium (Carlisle), as well as the speedy subjection of the southern portion of the island, tell, with convincing emphasis, of the vigour with which the invaders transformed their remote island acquisition by the civilisation of the south. In the short interval between the second invasion under Claudius, and the desperate attempt of the Britons to throw off the hated alien yoke in the reign of Nero, under the Icenian Queen, Boadicea or

* *See* Mommsen, "History of Rome," iv. 287, 288 (Dickson's translation).

† Tacitus, "Agricola," c. 19.

Boudicca, a considerable number of Roman settlements had been effected, so that the 70,000 victims of native vengeance could be spoken of as "citizens or allies of Rome."* The policy of Trajan with reference to Dacia, whither in the words of Eutropius, "he transferred from the whole Roman world great masses of colonists to till the soil and build cities," was merely an instance of what must have happened in Britain under a Claudius, a Hadrian, an Antoninus, a Severus, a Constantine, or any of the other emperors who evinced a special interest in the most northerly province of the empire. The fact that many of the well-known names of the Roman nobility are found inscribed on the boundary stones of the estates of these Roman colonists† indicates the existence of a numerous class of Roman landowners, whose occupation of the more fertile tracts in which the Roman colonies settled served to bring their British dependants into contact with the culture of Italy. To this organic and moulding connection with the motherland must be added the solidarity with every part of the dominions of the Cæsars, which it derived from the presence of bands of settlers, of nearly every nationality embraced within their pale. The Roman army was as heterogeneous in point of race as our own, and the policy of garrisoning the military posts of the empire with soldiers from remote countries, brought to our shores men of almost every clime and language from Lebanon to Mount Atlas. Just as we find companies of British troops settled in Gaul, Spain, Italy, Illyricum, Egypt, Armenia, so the stations along the walls of Hadrian and Antoninus were occupied by detachments of Spaniards, Gauls, Moors, Germans, Thracians, Dacians, &c.‡ In some cases, indeed, the foreign settlers consisted of the whole population of a district, which was taught to maintain in exile the allegiance, so uncertain in its native haunt. Britain, we may say, reproduced the culture of Italy, with the cosmopolitanism of the

* Tacitus, xiv. 33.

† This subject has been exhaustively treated by Mr Coote, in his "Romans of Britain," an author who, whatever his exaggerations as the apologist of the Roman *régime* in Britain. is fertile in ingenious arguments.

‡ This is indicated by the "Notitia Imperii," and confirmed by the numerous inscriptions found around the ruins of these great works.

empire in its widest range. The lowlands of Scotland, as embraced within the province, shared with what is now England in the benefits of this cosmopolitan Roman culture, though less consecutively and less thoroughly, owing to the oft-recurring disturbing influences of the British inroads.

The Romans were not only a people of action; they were likewise a people of method. They understood the art of government as well as of war. They organised the various provinces of their vast empire with machine-like precision, and although their healthy development was ultimately, in the decay of the empire, cramped and withered by the fetters of an effete bureaucracy,* the establishment of a strong and central government, in place of that of the petty and quarrelsome clan chieftain or the successful usurper, was at first a highly beneficial revolution, and lent an impulse to the development of the conquered territory. Instead of being harassed by the constant quarrels and feuds of rival tribes, Britain south of the Forth enjoyed for three centuries the benefits of an orderly government, strong in the repression of internal disorder, even to the danger of being despotic in its rigour, and oppressive in its exactions. After the time of Constantine, it formed part of the vast prefecture of the west, extending from Ben Lomond to Mount Atlas. Although the several districts, into which the island was divided for the purposes of civil and military administration, were placed under separate officers, subject to a deputy-governor or vicar, the whole were under the Prefect of Gaul, whose residence was at Treves. The province was thus knitted in the strictest possible political union to the mighty fabric of Roman dominion in the west. Neither its isolation nor its remoteness could, under such a magnetic system, retard its march at equal pace with the rest of the empire; and this intimate political union, which placed it as it were on the border of Italy itself, and involved it in intimate association with the various movements of the time, derived all the more practical influence through the elaborate system of communication which prevailed in every part of the empire. With the Roman legion came the Roman engi-

* Guizot, "Histoire de la Civilisation en France," i., p. 51.

neer, and the natives of a conquered territory had cause to complain, not only of the loss of independence, but of the forced labour, which they were compelled to lend towards the construction of roads and bridges.* Wherever we find the trace of the Roman camp, we may look for the track of the Roman road. From the Forth to the Straits of Dover, and from Boulogne to the Eternal City, the merchants, the couriers, the troops, the official functionaries, the tourists, the philosophers from the imperial capital, could find a serviceable road, and even vary their journey by a choice of route. The care of these highways was entrusted to a surveyor or *curator viarum*, who enjoyed a high rank, and no expense was spared to keep them in repair, and provide for the wants of travellers. Post horses were kept in readiness at stated intervals, and the roadside inn afforded a welcome lodging, a grateful rest from the fatigue of the journey. Money and a passport were the only requisites for the traveller from end to end of Roman Europe, as they still are in the Europe of to-day. Though slower, and much more toilsome, the means of communication were almost as complete as in our age of rapid railway and steamboat travelling. The life of Hilarion displays the facility with which an indigent hermit of Palestine might traverse Egypt, embark for Sicily, escape to Epirus, and finally settle in the island of Cyprus.† The easy transition of the legions on the Forth or the Tyne to the Danube or the Euphrates, and the rapid journey of Constantine from Asia to join his imperial father at York, afford additional evidence of the services that could be rendered by these mighty factors in the spread of Roman culture to every part of the Roman world. Even beyond the frontier of the empire, amid the forests and mountains of Caledonia, the pulse of life and events in the mighty city on the Tiber was not imperceptible. The quickly flying rumour of the accession of an emperor was frequently made the occasion of a raid into the Romanised regions south of the Forth.

* Tacitus, "Agricola," c. 31, where the Caledonian chief Galgacus makes it a source of bitter complaint that "our bodies are worn out in clearing woods and marshes."

† Gibbon, "Decline and Fall," vi., p. 233 (ed. Milman).

The transformation effected by this close contact of a highly civilised people with the barbarians, whom they conquered, resembled in many respects that accomplished in Africa, Australia, and America by the colonising nations of modern Europe. There was not the same marvellously quick development of our time, because the same mechanical conditions of rapid progress did not exist then. But the conquered territory showed on all hands the stamp of Roman culture and Roman energy. A system of well-made and carefully maintained highways took the place of the ancient paths in Britain. Bridges spanned the rivers, and harbours were constructed at their outlets. Traces of busy seaports, for instance, have been inferred near the modern Cramond and Cameleon on the Forth, and at Dumbarton on the Clyde. The mining operations * carried on in Northumberland, Wales, and the Midlands show that the Romans valued the mineral wealth of the island, and knew how to turn it to account. Then, as now in our colonial possessions, the land was surveyed and distributed —not always with regard for native rights—and portions of the thick forest were cleared to make way for the plough of the colonist. The arts, the industries, the refinements of a highly civilised life, flourished in cities like York and London, Lincoln and Gloucester, St Albans and Carlisle, with their temples and basilicas, baths and public monuments, aqueducts and sewage works, busy market-places and elegant suburbs.† In the country the landowner, who filled his coffers with the fruit of slave labour, adorned his villa with all the elegance of Italy. The large proportions of many of these in the fertile districts of the south, their marble halls, tesselated floors, tasteful frescos, classic statuary, graceful pottery, extensive lawns and gardens, might have rivalled the noble mansions of the wealthy and aristocratic classes of our own time. As early as the age of Agricola‡ a great impulse was given to the erec-

* "Britain," says Tacitus, "contains, to reward the conqueror, mines of gold and silver, and other metals" ("Agricola," c. 12).

† Gildas ("Hist.," sect. 3) describes in a strain of admiration the twenty-eight embattled and embellished cities of Britain. *Cf.* Bæda, "Ecc. Hist.," i., c. 11.

‡ Tacitus, "Agricola," c. 21.

tion of magnificent buildings, by the policy of this wise governor of weaning the natives to the refinements of Roman civilisation by the building of temples, basilicas, villas, baths, and porticos.

In the north, where the remains of the Roman occupation are largely of a military character, colonisation was neither so highly luxurious, nor on so extensive a scale as in the thickly populated south, where "the painful and dangerous transition from independence to foreign rule" was comparatively rapid. The portion of Scotland which came under the direct influence of the Romans—the Valentia of later emperors—was essentially a frontier territory. The resolute and systematic attempt of Agricola had practically resulted in quelling the resistance of the fierce Highlanders, but the recall of the conqueror afforded them time to recover from the crushing defeat inflicted on them at Mons Grampius; and singular though it appear, considering the superiority and resources of the Roman armies, they subsequently remained unsubdued and defiant behind their rugged mountains. The Roman frontier never advanced beyond the chain of forts erected by Agricola between the Forth and the Clyde. The fact that Hadrian found it necessary to construct a second strong line of defence, consisting of the stone wall and earthen rampart,* whose track may still be followed over the hilly region between the Tyne and the Solway is an indication that the campaigns of Agricola in Scotland, so graphically described by his son-in-law Tacitus, had been without permanent effect in the subjugation of its warlike and independent spirited tribes. Even after Lollius Urbicus † had recovered the abandoned territory, in the reign of Antoninus Pius, and secured it by the erection of an earthen wall,‡ with

* See Collingwood Bruce, "The Roman Wall."

† This information we owe to Capitolinus, and it is confirmed by the discovery of a stone placed by the 2nd legion Augusta.

‡ Graham's Dyke, as it is called, extended from Bo'ness on the Forth to West Kilpatrick on the Clyde, and consisted of a fosse, forty feet wide and twenty deep, and a rampart of earth and stones twenty feet high, it is supposed, and surmounted by a parapet, and flanked by a road. It is supposed to have been strengthened by nineteen forts, with intervening watch towers. Recent investigation has shown that it also possessed stances of sod at regular distances, on which the Onager, a projectile machine, was placed.

watch towers and strongly occupied stations at intervals along the site of the former forts, the southern line of defence continued to be strongly garrisoned as a base of support to the troops that guarded the advanced posts in the north. We thus find in Caledonia the same condition of things that prevailed on the frontier of the empire from the mouth of the Rhine to the Black Sea. But while we feel no surprise at the maintenance of large bodies of troops, and the construction of fortifications, like the Devil's Wall, from the Danube to the Rhine, where the emperors had to defend their borders against the teeming hordes of the north, the erection of these huge defensive works, in the northern half of a small island, is a striking testimony to the power of resistance, which a brave and hardy people may offer to the disciplined armies and vast resources of a mighty empire. In the military history of the last two centuries of Roman domination, composed so largely of the struggles that continually harassed the frontiers, the name of Caledonia occupies no inconspicuous place. The movements of these restless tribes were a constant cause of anxiety to the insular commanders, and even to the distant emperors. From their mountain and forest fastnesses they swept down at some favourable moment, breaking through the northern wall, even threatening at times the highly civilised districts of the south, and only abandoning the work of pillage and carnage when compelled to retire before the energetic advance of a Severus, a Constantinus, a Theodosius, or at the persuasion of Roman gold. That their subjugation was left in abeyance, not merely because of the inattractiveness of their territory, but because of the valour of the inhabitants, and the difficulty of occupying it, is proved by the laborious, but unsuccessful attempts of Urbicus and Severus. In the decay of the Roman power their inroads at length, like those of the barbarian hosts that poured with irresistible force across the Rhine and the Alps, swept away the crumbling fabric of an effete civilisation.

Such a condition of things must have materially hindered the development of Roman culture in Northern Britain. Scenes of devastation and bloodshed, like those

which have so often been witnessed on the frontiers of our African and American colonies, marked the track of the plundering Pict. The hoards of Roman coins and implements, which have been discovered on sites occupied by colonial veterans, may be regarded as memorials of the hasty flight of some unfortunate colonist, who adopted this expedient for saving his property. The sense of security is indispensable to the thorough development of a new country, and even the huge defensive works of Hadrian and Lollius were not always a guarantee of immunity from invasion and slaughter. Nevertheless, though the evidences of a settled industry are naturally, under such conditions, more scanty than farther south, the plastic touch of Rome is still discernible here after the obliterations and revolutions of the centuries. Ascending the grassy slopes of the Pentland Hills, the eye gazing northwards and westwards, is delighted by the varied and wide prospect over fertile plain and wooded hill, over the blue-eyed Firth, the spire of many a village church, and the Castle and monuments of Scotia's capital; while far on the horizon tower the rugged bens, and hovers the black smoke that tells of modern industry. Fifteen hundred years ago, the natural features of the scene would have been much the same, only less of verdure, and more of shaggy forest; but in place of the castle-crowned city and the flame and smoke of the black country westwards, hoary Time would have pointed to the Roman station and the villa of the Roman colonist. It is on the line of this charming prospect—the site of the wall of Antoninus—that the principal traces of the Roman in Scotland disclose themselves. From Inveresk in the east to Kilpatrick in the west, the country is a veritable treasure-trove of Roman remains. To begin with, the extensive foundations of buildings excavated at Inveresk revealed the fact that some at least of the houses of this ancient colonial settlement were heated by hypocausts or underground furnaces. If, as Stuart * thinks, they formed the heating apparatus of the public baths, they furnish a suggestive glimpse into the refined habits of the polished society which, attracted by the beauty of the bay, built

* "Caledonia Romana."

their houses on its shores. A number of gold coins, fragments of Samian ware, an altar to Apollo Granicus, and a stamp, found on a heap of Roman *débris* at Tranent, with which a certain physician, Lucius Vallatinus, marked his medicines, afford a few stray hints in the same direction. Edinburgh is not behind its now so much humbler environs in its claim to the honour of having been a Roman settlement, as we should expect from its admirable position from a military point of view. The fact was long perpetuated in a very conspicuous fashion. "Until very recently," says Burton,* "a stranger sauntering down the High Street might have observed with curiosity, built into the face of one of the old houses there, two heads, male and female, sculptured in medallion of rather high relief. They are very fine works of art, and they have an air that at once stamps them as classic, without leaving room for doubt." A mile or two to the west, on the eastern highway that kept open communication with the south, the supposed site of the ancient Alaterva, with its harbour at the mouth of the Almond, has yielded several memorials of the Roman cult in the shape of altars to the Deæ Matres, to Jupiter, and to an unnamed deity, who, to judge from the figure, might have been Neptune. In addition to coins, bearing the names of many of the emperors, steelyards, and fibulæ, &c., another relic of the art of Æsculapius—a lancet resembling one found in a surgeon's house at Pompeii—vividly recalls the bond of union between the Greater Italy and the parent land these many centuries ago. Whether standing by the shore of the Firth of Forth or the Bay of Naples, we feel, when we transpose ourselves beyond the barriers of time and change, that we are on kindred soil, with an identity of culture, though under widely contrasting skies, and amid strangely unlike scenes.

Westwards, along the wall, the remains of a mighty antiquity present themselves thick and fast. The inscribed stones set up in honour of Antoninus Pius by detachments of the 2nd, 6th, and 20th legions, and by the auxiliary troops from many lands attached to them, and recording the length constructed by each, invest the ruins of this venerable

* "History of Scotland," i. 50.

monument of military engineering with a singularly realistic interest. We may wander from station to station, marking the divisions where each party of the exiled veterans toiled, and reproducing in fancy the animated though long vanished scene. But it was not one of exclusively military activity. Relics of an advanced and varied culture, of which it was the forerunner, are found associated with the wall. It is highly probable that the forts which crowned many of the eminences in its course, such as at Kirkintilloch and Castlehill, were meant to guard the houses and fields of the veterans, who had earned grants of land in the neighbourhood by their long exile on the frontier, as well as serve as a barrier against the encroaching Picts. It is inconceivable that the Romans should have held this advanced line of defence for nearly three centuries, without planting colonies and cultivating the soil in the lowlands. The foundations of extensive buildings on the site of the fort at Castlecary, including the remains of a suduarium or hot bath, an altar to Fortune, human bones, pieces of pottery, &c., and a large quantity of wheat in a neighbouring cave, quite hard and black, and mingled with pieces of charred wood, suggest the thought that some of the villages and towns in that modern region of canals, railways, and coalpits, may have grown out of the ancient Roman colonial settlements. Mingled with the *débris* of these forts, altars, tombstones, and sculptured slabs have been found, testifying to the piety, the domestic affection, and the taste for art which then found expression in the camps on the remote northern limit of the empire. The art is comparatively rude, considered as Roman workmanship, but two of the pieces of sculpture are worthy of mention from the local character which the artist has impressed on them. They represent a Roman soldier on horseback dashing over a group of naked Caledonians in chains, or lying helpless on the ground. Another object, a tazza cut out of white alabaster, of very delicate form, like the beautiful and richly decorated bronze flagon, exquisite in form and beauty of ornamentation, which so long served as a stepping-stone in a burn at Lesmahagow, shows that the refined products of Italy found their way to these remote northern settlements. The mag-

nificent collection of Italian jewellery, pottery, and statuary, which forms one of the most valuable features of the International Exhibition held this year (1890) in our city, is admirably fitted to impress the spectator with the taste and artistic refinement of that classic land, compared with the colder, duller sense of the north. But for centuries there were hidden in our soil, amid the broken gods and altars, and the crumbling masonry of Roman fort or villa, objects as exquisitely beautiful and of similar mould, which came to our shores from the same southern clime, in the wake of the conquering legions. Nor are they confined to the district along the wall. Here and there a stray object has survived the destruction, that at the fall of the empire overtook so largely the Roman settlements at the hands of the Pictish plunderers, to tell "the tale of other times." Wherever a station commanded some important point on the eastern and western highways, which connected the south with the north of the province, such as at Trimontium (Eildons) and Bremenium (High Rochester) on the former, and Castledykes, near Carstairs, and Birrens, near Middleby, on the latter, the traces of Roman art and energy are not even yet quite worn away; while in following the southern boundary of the ancient Valentia,* the observant traveller is still able to form some idea of the splendour and refinement which must have flourished under the protection of the wall of Hadrian. At nearly every station we come on the ruins of large dwellings, temples, broken columns, and statues of excellent workmanship. What had become but piles of stone have been found to be the *débris* of villas and baths, containing jewellery, pottery, and other relics of wealth and magnificence. Of all these memorials of a past grandeur amid the Northumberland hills, the ruins of Housesteads, the ancient Borcovicus,† are the most impressive. The

* The district between the walls was made by the victorious general, Theodosius, in 368, one of the five subdivisions of the British province, and named in honour of his imperial master Valentinian I. Technically, Britain was not a province, but a diocese, consisting of five provinces under a vice-prefect or vicar. Skene, however, thinks that Wales was meant, as the assertion that it was between the walls is only supported by the authority of the spurious Richard of Cirencester ("Celtic Scotland," i., p. 102).

† Called "The Pompeii of Britain"; *see* Bruce, "Roman Wall," p. 214.

broken pillars and altars show the splendour of its temples and public buildings. The statues which once adorned them are executed by a skilful hand, while the spirited and characteristic one of Victory, standing with outstretched wings on a globe, vividly reminds of the ideal of conquest and power, which inspired the Roman to brave the discomforts of these uncongenial northern regions.

As a Roman possession, Britain shared in the benefits of the carefully regulated system of education prevailing throughout the empire. The policy of Agricola, in founding schools as the best means of spreading Roman ideas among the conquered population of the island, was in keeping with the interest displayed, by the more enlightened and humane of the emperors, in the education of the youth not only of Italy, but of the provinces. Cæsar, Hadrian, Antoninus Pius, Marcus Aurelius, distinguished themselves by liberally endowing chairs from the imperial treasury, or granting their occupants immunity from public burdens, such as military service or municipal duties. The Theodosian Codex* has preserved the enactments by which the later emperors sought to carry out the wise spirit of the nobler among their predecessors. In every town there was a grammar school, and flourishing seats of learning in all the more important cities. The universities of Bordeaux and Autun in Gaul competed with those of Rome and Athens. The fame of some distinguished teacher, such as the poet Ausonius, whom Valentinian called from Bordeaux to be tutor to his son Gratian, or Epictetus at Nicopolis, had the same magnetic effect upon the knowledge-thirsty youth of many lands that it still exercises in our modern world. In these pagan schools some of the great Christian fathers had acquired a portion of the erudition or the dialectic skill which afterwards helped to make them famous. Jerome and Augustine listened to the grammarians and philosophers of the imperial city. Basil and Gregory Nazianus were fellow-students at Athens, while in the tradition of St Ninian's journey to Rome, preserved by Bæda, we have a creditable instance of a North British youth seeking, towards the end of the fourth century, in

* "Cod. Theod.," lib. xiii., tit. iii.; xiii., tit. v.; xiv., tit. i. (Godfroi).

the capital of Western Christendom, that mingled increase of knowledge and devotional fervour, which his native land denied him. "Throughout the whole world," says Augustine, "the schools of the Rhetoricians are alive with the din of crowds of students."* Some of them begged their bread like the Bettelstudenten of mediæval times, or were forced, like many a Scotch lad of to-day, to cultivate learning on a little oatmeal, or went simply because it was the fashion, as many a thoughtless scion of our aristocratic families does. "The young sybarites of Rome or Athens complained bitterly that at Nicopolis, where they had gone to listen to Epictetus, lodgings were bad, and the baths were bad, and the gymnasium was bad, and society hardly existed."† The schools of the West were largely under the influence of Greek culture—the imperishable supremacy which remained to that versatile people, in place of the political domination which Rome usurped. The poetry, the rhetoric, the philosophy of Greece asserted themselves in every quarter of the Roman empire. The political and legal system of the latter opened up a path for the intellectual inspiration of the former. The education of our higher schools and universities is indeed to a great extent the continuation of what it was in Roman Britain fifteen centuries ago. "We study literature rather than nature because the Greeks did so, and because when the Romans and the Roman provincials resolved to educate their sons they employed Greek teachers and followed in Greek paths. Greek education has been almost as permanent as Christianity itself, and for similar reasons. It passed from Greece into Africa and the West. It had an especial hold first on the Roman and then upon the Celtic and Teutonic populations of Gaul."‡ Though the direct influence of this cosmopolitan culture came to our shores from Gaul, where, especially in the Greek colonies of Provence, its power had long asserted itself, so that in Hadrian's time Britain could be described as "conquered by the Gallic

* "De Utilitate Credendi," vol. viii., 76 (ed. Migne).

† Hatch, "Influence of Greek Ideas and Usages in the Christian Church," p. 36.

‡ Hatch, *ibid.*, pp. 28, 43.

schoolmaster,"* Greek scholars also came. Plutarch met at Delphi and conversed with one of them, who was returning from Britain to his native city of Tarsus. But the armies and the travelling public, as well as the scholars of Gaul and Greece, were likewise important factors in the diffusion of literary culture in the island province. As early as the time of Cæsar there was a brisk publishing business carried on at Rome and other great cities of the empire. Rome had its Paternoster Row, where a lucrative trade in books flourished and men of letters met for literary gossip. Among the preparations for a long journey to some of the provinces, the packing of a small travelling library was not forgotten, and by these, among other means, the latest novels, speeches, and treatises found access to remote districts, and exercised their quiet influence, where the almost ubiquitous philosopher, of whose troubles, when on the road, Lucian has left an amusing picture, might not turn up. In the camp, as in the grove and the forum, the literature of Italy and Greece counted its admirers, and the veteran who faced the biting north wind on the shores of the Clyde and the Forth doubtless often comforted himself with the romances and the dramas, the satires and lyrics, warm with the breath of fondly cherished scenes far away, as the British soldier does on the frontier of India, or in the heart of Africa. The Caledonian chief, labouring, like Galgacus, to inspire his followers with contempt of the legions, might doubtless have found the same argument at hand as the Parthian vizier, who pointed out to the citizens of Seleucia the romances found in the camp of Crassus, and asked them whether they still regarded the readers of such books as formidable opponents.

The question as to the material and social condition of the province during the three and a half centuries of Roman occupation is an important one, from the point of view of culture. Did the colonisation, whose relics meet us even yet on every hand, make for progress and prosperity? Was the Roman occupation, in which a portion of Scotland shared, fruitful of good results both to the foreign settlers

* Juvenal and Martial sing of the knowledge of Greek and Roman literature possessed by Britain, and even Thule was spoken of as having a professor for itself.

who spread themselves over the more fertile tracts, and the natives who became the subjects of the empire? That commerce, agriculture, and industry flourished on an extensive scale, we may conclude from the ruins of the cities and highways, the villas and harbours, the mines and factories, which have survived to our day, as well as from the notices of contemporary writers. While Appian,* in the second century, speaks of Britain as a profitless encumbrance to the empire, Eummenius waxes eloquent, in the third, in praise of its fruitful orchards and fertile pastures, its mineral wealth, and numerous harbours. Its value as a granary of the empire seems almost to have equalled that of Egypt. Its stores of corn afforded food to the armies engaged in reducing the Germans to submission, or repelling their inroads over the Gaulish border. The large flotilla of six hundred barks (Zosimus calls it eight hundred), which Julian caused to be constructed in the Ardennes and sent down the Rhine to Britain, whence it returned laden with corn, lends plausibility to the rhetoric of the panegyrist. Unfortunately, however, a less flattering note must be mingled with his lavish praises. The development of the province was often hindered, especially during the last half-century of Roman domination, by political disturbances. The oft-recurring troubles in which the seat of government was plunged produced their baneful effects here. The struggle for the imperial throne, which so often disorganised and demoralised Italy, was felt in all its disastrous effects throughout the whole empire. It gave scope in Britain to the usurpations of ambitious generals, to the turbulence of a discontented soldiery, and to the inroads of the northern barbarians, with whom bands of Saxon pirates and Irish marauders subsequently allied themselves. Thus it was not seldom overwhelmed with all the miseries of weak, unsettled government, and they were felt with double acuteness as the empire hastened to its doom in the latter half of the fourth century. "The calamities which," in the expressive language of Gibbon,† "the provincials continued to experience from foreign war and domestic tyranny were

* "Alex. Hist. Rom. Praef.." 5. *Cf.* Eummenius, "Pan. Const.," cc. 9-19.

† "Decline and Fall," iv. 281.

aggravated by the feeble and corrupt administration of the eunuchs of Constantius, and the transient relief which they might obtain from the virtues of Julian was soon lost by the absence and death of their benefactor. The sums of gold and silver which had been painfully collected, or liberally transmitted for the payment of the troops were intercepted by the avarice of the commanders; discharges, or at least exemptions from the military service, were publicly sold; the distress of the soldiers who were injuriously deprived of their scanty subsistence provoked them to frequent desertions; the nerves of discipline were relaxed, and the highways were infested with robbers. The oppression of the good, and the impunity of the wicked, equally contributed to diffuse through the island a spirit of discontent and revolt, and every ambitious subject, every desperate exile, might entertain a reasonable hope of subverting the weak and distracted government of Britain." The spirit of corruption in the army, so ominous for the stability and prosperity of a country, spread through the whole official class, and extortion quickened the decay by which they were accused of ruining a province.* But if the lot of the Roman citizen was harassed by the misgovernment that heralded the closing scenes of a mighty empire, the hardships which the native Britons were called on to endure were still more galling. The terrible indictment against the insatiable greed and relentless tyranny of the Romans which Tacitus puts into the mouth of the Caledonian chief, who waxes indignant over the oppression, the arrogance, the slavery, with which they turned their conquests to advantage, is probably overdrawn, in order to cast its fierce light on the hated *régime* of Domitian. But the selfish principle of regarding a colony as a mere source of gain to the conquerors wrought calamity to the Britons, who were plundered of the richest of their lands on the slimmest pretexts, as in America and Africa in modern times by the Spaniards and the Dutch, and made to act the part of hewers of wood and drawers of water to the foreign

* The alacrity with which the provincials bundled off the official class on the withdrawal of the legions in 410 (Zosimus, lib. vi. 376, 383) shows how thoroughly it had earned their detestation.

lords of the soil. There were doubtless tribes that enjoyed a semi-freedom,* and the apparent disuse of the Latin language, with the departure of the legions, argues that the mass of the Celtic aborigines had not been Romanised to this extent. But we may rightly suppose that the Roman land-owner would not respect native rights when it conduced to his advantage to infringe them, any more than the Dutch Boer of the Cape did those of the Hottentot or the Bushman.

The inevitable tendency of this selfish and oppressive government was to weaken the strength of the population, whether bond or free, Celtic or Roman. Its effects discovered themselves in the helplessness of the Britons, on the departure of the legions, to maintain a successful defence against the invading hordes from the north and east. The Roman occupation, whatever its indirect advantages for the western world, did not develop in Britain, and leaven, by the better elements of Roman civilisation, a strong national life capable of perpetuity, and of absorbing and overcoming by its superior qualities the barbarism by which it was assailed. It did not tend to foster that strength of resource, that consciousness of power, which has marked the separation of the modern colony from the mother country, and which it is the glory of British colonisation to beget. The feeling of patriotism, with its exalting tendencies, could not exist in such an atmosphere—the desire for vengeance, the instinct of self-preservation alone remained as incentives to action, and while the former might rouse them to expel the Roman officials, how little the latter availed against the "war smiths" from the banks of the Elbe, the dominant race of Britain to-day is convincing evidence.

An indirect influence of the Roman occupation is traceable among the free and martial tribes, who, with their independence, preserved the bold spirit which had been sapped among their kindred farther south. The Roman camp and the Roman road have left their marks beyond the wall of Antoninus, recalling the campaigns of Agricola, Lollius Urbicus, and Severus, while the faint traces of Roman influence reveals itself, as we have seen, in the remains of the purely Celtic culture of the Iron Age.

* Skene, "Celtic Scotland," i., pp. 120, 121.

Skene ascribes to this indirect influence, which a highly civilised people, in close proximity to a barbarian one, exercises, the union created among the various tribes and the consequent advance in social organisation. M. Guizot has pictured in luminous language the fascination which a conquering people like the Romans perforce wielded on the ruder hordes of contiguous lands. "Les monuments de l'activité romaine, ces cités, ces routes, ces aqueducs, ces arènes, toute cette société si regulière, si prévoyante, si variée dans sa fixité, c'était là le sujet de leur étonnement, de leur admiration. Vainqueurs, ils se sentaient inférieurs aux vaincus; le Barbare pouvait mépriser individuellement le Romain, mais le monde romain dans son ensemble lui apparaissait comme quelque chose de supérieur, et tous les grands hommes de l'âge de la conquête, les Alaric, les Ataulphe, les Théodoric, et taut d'autres en détruisant et foulant aux pieds la société romaine faisaient tous leurs efforts pour l'imiter."* In the case of the conquering Teuton, however, the fact of possession afforded them leisure and begat the taste necessary for their enthusiastic appreciation of the wonders of a broken empire. But the bitter and long-continued hostility of the Caledonian towards his highly cultured neighbour must have made this influence comparatively superficial. He would not be slow, doubtless, to prize the booty which he managed to secure during his marauding expeditions, whilst not undergoing any material revolution in his habits. An example of what might have taken place, in such circumstances, may be seen in the attitude towards British civilisation adopted by those natives of South Africa who, till lately, were allowed to preserve a semi-independent existence. A soldier's cap or coat, or some military ornament, is a coveted object, and is jauntily paraded by the happy Zulu before his less favoured fellows, but the habits of barbarian life are too deeply engrained to be so easily exchanged for those of a higher European civilisation. So, probably, among the Picts; the mere trappings of Roman civilisation may have been eagerly adopted, its higher characteristics hardly at all.†

* "Histoire de la Civilisation en France," i. 311.

† Bæda ("Hist. Eccles." i. 11) asserts that they had a right of dominion over the farther parts of Britain, as also over the islands that are beyond it.

## CHAPTER II.

### THE BROKEN GODS AND CHRISTIANITY.

THE relics of the Roman culture in Northern Britain which have survived most numerously, next to the works of a military character, are the emblems of religion. A striking feature about them is their variety. Among the broken statues which the plough or the spade has rescued from what was once Roman soil, we find the gods of ancient Rome in harmonious association with the insular deities, as well as with those from nearly every quarter of the empire. While the Romans impressed their political power and their institutions on a conquered people with a tyranny that broke everything that resisted it, they showed themselves remarkably tolerant in the case of religion. The growth of the empire, and the commingling at Rome of a vast population, drawn from its many provinces, speedily broke down the jealous exclusiveness with which the earlier Roman censors guarded the purity of the national cult and the national manners. "Everywhere the mingling of religions was constantly on the increase with the mingling of nations."* It begat the tolerant spirit which has left its traces in the most remote provinces, and which contrasts with the narrow spirit of the Christian states that rose on the ruins of the imperial dominion. Unlike these, the Roman emperors before the reign of Constantine did not formulate and propagate a creed. There was a State religion, it is true, and its rites were intimately associated with political life, but the faith that once invested its altars with a commanding influence had lost much of its ancient charm, and while the educated classes took part in its ceremonies from merely political motives—as a concession to popular requirements, and as a matter of duty to the State—they openly avowed their con-

* Mommsen, "History of Rome," iv. 437.

tempt for the traditional gods, and some of the philosophers have left the record of it in their writings. The gods had lost their authority over the conscience, if not altogether over the imagination. A religion which had thus lost its pristine power could not be an aggressive missionary religion. It was not fitted either to displace the deities of the newly conquered territories, or to refuse to enter into fellowship with them. Religious dogma in fact—that fertile source of division and persecution—did not exist among the Romans. Their religion was more an affair of ceremony than of creed —"the art," as it has been well said, "of discovering the designs of the gods, and of influencing them by a variety of rites."* Even in such a case the spirit of intolerance might have been excited by a narrow-minded interpretation of the divine will against the rivalry of strange deities, but except when popular superstition discovered, in the aversion of the Christians to share the worship of Christ with that of the pagan hierarchy, the cause of some calamity, the liberty of no one was curtailed by the elastic spirit of the times. In contrast to the inquisition of Greek paganism and mediæval Christianity, the most thorough-going liberty of opinion was accorded to the philosopher and public teacher, however heretical their reasonings might be. When Vespasian banished the Stoics, it was not because of their contempt for the gods, but because of their meddling in State affairs; and the persecution of the Christians, which even so wise an emperor as Marcus Aurelius was guilty of, or the repression of the Druid ceremonies, was largely a political measure. Although the Delphic oracle had asserted that the best religion was that of a man's own country, good was found in all, and side by side with the ancient gods, stood the altars of the deities of almost every people of the civilised world. Never perhaps was the famous dictum of the great Frederick, to let every man choose his own road to heaven, so thoroughly exemplified as by the latitudinarian spirit of the age of which the singular medley of deities, found among the Roman remains in Scotland, is a striking memorial.

It would, however, be a mistake to conclude from the

* Pressensé, "Histoire des Trois Premiers Siècles," i., p. 192.

pliant spirit that thus characterised the polytheism of the Roman empire, that the worship, of which these broken gods were the objects, was entirely wanting in depth and earnestness. While many simply paid tribute to custom, and a system that multiplied its deities to an excess of absurdity,* must appear superficial from our standpoint, the religious instinct is a reality under all systems and in all ages. Even in the sceptical, brutal, sensual Rome of the worst of the Cæsars, the earnestness that anciently lay at the root of this mass of superstition still pulsed in many a heart. The avidity with which the world-weary soul turned to welcome the new superstitions, that crowded into the Roman temples from Egypt and the East, indicates this. We may infer it, too, of the piety which set up these broken altars and statues in the camps and settlements of this remote colony. The circumstances of the life of the Roman veteran or settler alone tended to give renewed intensity to superstition. Placed far from the blandishments of the imperial capital, surrounded by strange scenes, in which the associations of home and custom acquire a new force, impressed by the dark forests and wild landscapes that might conceal the lurking foe, the veteran that guarded the walls and stations, and the colonist, who cultivated his farm under their protection, doubtless worshipped at the family shrine and joined in the ritual of the temple with the simple sincerity of their forefathers of ancient Latium. We may not dream, as we cast a wondering glance at these timeworn memorials of a fallen superstition, how realistic the *rôle* they played in the view of their votaries, how many heart throbs have imprinted themselves upon them. The simple inscription that tells of the pious sentiments of the rough soldier—his gratitude for recovery from illness, or the tender sorrow with which he mourned the loss of some one beloved, or the prayer for the realisation of some longing amid the toils and dangers to which he was exposed—forms often a touching memorial of the common humanity that binds us to the past and to our fellow-man of every age and every race. It is the same

* "There was a little god who causes the infant to utter its first cry; there is another who presides over its first word; one who teaches the baby to eat, another to drink, and finally one who keeps it quiet in its cradle" (Renan, "The Influence of Institutions of Rome," p. 11).

human heart revealing itself in longing, joy, fear, gratitude, the same human* tone that gave colour to religion then as it still does, though in more spiritual hues perhaps.

Among the countless gods, which thus overshadowed the lives of the veterans stationed in the north of the island, we find all the chief members of the Roman hierarchy. The combination of deities which are met with on some of the inscribed stones throws a curious light on the religious capacities of the polytheist. Even Jupiter, "the greatest and best," does not always stand alone in the adoration of his votary. Among the five broken altars discovered together at Auchindavy was one "to Jupiter and Victory." On another, the honour was divided between "Mars, Minerva, the Field Deities, Epona, and Victory," the worshipper being able apparently to reconcile his partiality for the grossly impure characteristics of Epona with his devotion to the noble Minerva. Another, from the camp at Maryport in Cumberland, is quite as expressive. It is dedicated "to the Genii of the place, to Fortune who had brought him back, to Eternal Rome, and to Propitious Fate," and appears to signify the desire of the suppliant to secure, in that calculating spirit, not altogether a stranger to the sectarianism of our time, an answer from one or other of them. But the most comprehensive and characteristic of all is the inscription on the temple erected at Cambech Fort on the wall of Hadrian, "to the Deities of all nations," while the cosmopolitanism of the age, which gave rise to this tolerant appreciation, is finely expressed on an altar, "To the good of the human race," found among the *débris* of the once imposing station of Bremenium, near the Border. Particular attention was paid to the insular deities, as is shown by the statue of the goddess Brigantia,† found

* On the stone slabs which were erected over the dead, parents mourn for some "sweet innocent child." Wives are found testifying their sorrow for the beloved dead, and husbands praising the virtue of their helpmeets. One uniquely happy man records the fact that he managed to live for twenty-seven years with his wife without a single quarrel. Food and ornaments, and the indispensable coin to pay Charon, may also be regarded as expressions of deep feeling.

† Wright ("Celt, Roman, and Saxon") thinks that this was a deity from Bregenzium in Switzerland, not the goddess of the Brigantes, who inhabited the northern part of Britain, from Yorkshire to the Eildons.

at Birrens, and the magnificent temple to Nodens, the Celtic Zeus, excavated at Lydney, on the banks of the Severn. Whenever a camp was formed, or a city founded, one of the first cares of the veteran, or the settler was to propitiate the local genii—the supernatural powers with which the imagination peopled mountain and plain, stream and wood, and whose favour was a point of the first importance to the invading legions, who penetrated into the solitudes of these wild, remote regions, or kept guard under a cheerless, unsympathetic sky. Hence the prominence of "the God of the Mountains," who was worshipped at Bremenium; "the Deities of the Plains," and "Silvanus," to whom several altars have been found on the sites of Roman stations in the north. The roads too were entrusted to the god,* who devised ways and paths; and the nymphs, who presided over the streams and fountains, lived long in the religious consciousness of their Roman admirers in Scotland before they were reduced to the phantasms of poetry.

Among the deities of the foreign levies, the Deæ Matres, or Three Matrons, were most popular in the north, where there were strong contingents from the banks of the Rhine and Northern Gaul, their original haunts. The best representation of them, that I have seen, is on an altar in the museum at Cologne, in which they occupy a sitting posture, and hold each a basket of fruit. Before they were changed into the Three Furies of mediæval witchcraft, they presided over the woods and fields, prearranged the fate of individuals, and dispensed the blessings of Providence to mankind.† The superstition of the far East is represented by the worship of the Magusian Hercules‡ (so named from Magusa, a town of Ethiopia, where he was specially honoured), and of the Sun-God, Mithras, Lord of the Ages, whose rites were celebrated in a cave at Housesteads in Northumberland. So popular had the worship of the latter, with its mysteries, temples, and rites, resembling to some extent those of Christianity, become in Rome and throughout the West, that it seemed

* Cæsar gave the name of Mercury to this god among the Gauls. An altar was discovered at Gretabridge, in Yorkshire, to this unnamed deity.

† An altar was found near Cramond in their honour.

‡ An altar was found at Polmont dedicated to him.

as if it would dispute with the God of the Christians the honour of dethroning the vast pagan hierarchy, and M. Renan has hazarded the assertion "that if Christianity had not carried the day, Mithraism would have become the religion of the world." *

The mention of these, among many broken gods, may suffice to show the varied and strongly rooted superstitions, which gave tangible expression to the emotions of the soul. It became the nurse of the higher art in Britain. At Birrens there lived the sculptor Julius Cerulis Censorinus, "image-maker," as he tells us, in the inscription on a colossal statue of Mercury found there, to the guild or college of the Ligniferi, the worshippers of the God. The figure is probably his workmanship. Another, for which we are indebted to the architect Amandus, is that of the native goddess, Brigantia; a winged figure holding a spear in the right hand and a globe in the left. A third piece of sculpture, found on the wall of Antonine, represents a sacred ceremonial in which the priest stands at the altar, with four figures behind, and several animals for sacrifice in front, while a boy plays on the double whistle, the usual accompaniment of such a rite. As far north as Strathmore, the trace of this religious art has perpetuated itself on a slab which long served as the hearthstone of a cottage situated near the place where it was discovered, but which is now in the museum at Perth. It contains a representation of a martial figure seated on a car, drawn by two lions or leopards. The word Mercurius occurs in the fragment of the inscription said to have been discovered along with it. The art of this religious sculpture, of which about fifty examples have been found in North Britain, is, to use the words of Burton, "more ambitious than successful," as might be expected of objects made in a remote colony; but one found at Middleby representing a youth, standing in a niche, wearing a crown and holding a cornucopia in his left hand, and a patera, from which he pours out a libation on an altar in his right, has long excited the admiration of archæologists. It is decidedly inferior to the secular art that adorned the houses of the rich. The mythological

* "Influence," &c., p. 35.

figures, the ornamental tracery, the scenes of daily life which, in contrast to the mere mechanical decoration of prehistoric times, the taste of these Roman colonists delighted in, as ornament for their household utensils, or the walls or floors of the luxurious villas of the south, are often executed with great truth and spirit. It strikes one, indeed, that, in the matter of genre scenes, Britain surpassed, in common with Gaul, the conventional and purely mythological representations of Italy itself.

In contrast to the pliant spirit, which is so striking a feature of the polytheism of the empire, the intolerant treatment of Christianity is very marked. This much must be granted, however, that Christianity brought persecution on itself. It was the Christian rather than the pagan that was intolerant, though his intolerance sprang from high moral sentiments. The gods seemed instinctively to recognise, in the unbending attitude of the followers of Jesus, the enemy that was to overthrow them. Though some of the emperors are reported to have placed the statue of Christ in the Roman Pantheon, there was no bond of agreement between the pagan deities and the unaccommodating God of the Christians. The worship of Christ admitted that of no rival. It was, in fact, an unspoken protest against the traditional cult, with which the history of a great past was associated, and which custom at least rendered sacred. It militated, too, against the whole social system of the time, and did not hesitate to thwart the imperial will itself. Hence the bitterness with which it was assailed as an illiberal and revolutionary superstition. Hence the popular tumults and the imperial proscription, which frequently resulted in persecution and martyrdom, not merely in the seat of empire, but in the most distant provinces as well. "No rain—the Christians are the cause," became a Roman proverb, and the popular cry, "The Christians to the lions," was quickly raised, when any calamity afflicted the state or the community. Men, then, as they have often done, failed to understand the destiny of a movement like this. They either treated it as beneath their notice, as most of the pagan writers of the first three centuries did, or they thought to suppress it by intolerant

edicts. But it would neither be ignored nor killed by force. It held the future in its hands. However much their opponents ridiculed its pretensions, its adherents had the assurance of their convictions, and, as we see from the letter of Melitus of Sardis to Marcus Aurelius, looked forward to its final triumph. And not without cause. Both by its spiritual teaching and its power of inspiration, it was quietly but surely revolutionising the Roman empire, while the popular polytheism and the philosophies of the age were alike stricken by decay. "Every province conquered by the Roman empire," it has been well said,* "was a province conquered for Christianity." The Roman soldier opened the way for the Christian missionary, and the spiritual conquest which he achieved, as well as the ecclesiastical system which arose out of it, outlived alike the vast political unity which the Roman generals had founded, and the cosmopolitan paganism associated with it. But while it displaced the latter, it in a sense perpetuated the former. From the age of Constantine, it became identified with the political life of the empire, and when this fell a victim to its own decay and the vigour of the barbarian invaders, the grandeur of the Eternal City still lived in the power and pomp of the Christian Church. "The Church," as M. Renan happily puts it, "has remained up to our own day, as it were, a remnant of the empire. Throughout all the Middle Ages the Church is no other than the old Rome, regaining its authority over the barbarians who have conquered it, imposing upon them its decretals, as it formerly imposed its laws, governing them by its cardinals, as it once governed them by its imperial legates and its proconsuls." † It was certainly a splendid creation, this spiritual unity, that bound men by the bond of a common worship, in place of the political unity, shattered by the Teutonic barbarians, if it afterwards degenerated into an ecclesiastical despotism, in some respects less humanitarian than the tyranny of imperial Rome.

Such was the destiny of that "pernicious superstition," ‡

* Renan, "Influence of the Institutions, &c., of Rome," p. 19.

† *Ibid.*, p. 19.

‡ "Ann.," xv. 44.

which excited the contempt of so noble-spirited an historian as Tacitus, but which thus won its way to the possession of the West in spite of contempt or intolerance. While in the first three centuries of the empire we find it struggling to establish itself in every province—Britain not excepted—in the face of persecution, during the fourth and fifth it is professed by the emperors themselves, and the edicts that were once promulgated for its destruction, now command its reception, and before long enforce its complete domination. This result it owed partly, no doubt, to the policy of Constantine, who saw his interest in adhesion to it. But it owed it, in reality, far more to the power with which its teaching took hold of the hearts and influenced the lives of its disciples. As a theological system, it might fail to commend itself to the philosophic observer, with its popular supernaturalism and fantastic representations. I, for my part, cannot blame the cultured minds of the time if they felt little edified by many of the reasonings of the Christian Fathers, on subjects on which it is usual to make dogma pass for truth. There is not much intellectual enlightenment to be looked for in men, who were so much the creatures of their age as to regard the pagan gods not as creatures of fancy, but as demons, or who would accept a literary forgery without question, if it supported the particular view to which they were attached. Those gods, too, whom they waged fierce war against, as the enemies of Christ, will by-and-by return, as saints and martyrs to occupy anew the religious imagination. A Seneca or a Tacitus might, with no little force, excuse themselves from accepting a theological system, in which credulity quarrelled so much with reason. But Christianity is not a philosophy; it is a faith; not happily a creed simply, but a life, and it is in this latter sense that it made its power felt in that ancient world, whose moral corruption and spiritual decay were sapping the life of society. In the worship of Christ, in the influence of His teaching, in the bond of brotherhood begotten by a common faith and a common sympathy, in the reflection of the inner ideal from the pure and benevolent life, in the heroism which sprang from the most exalted ideas of duty and sacrifice, in the self-abasement that

sought inspiration from above, lies the secret of that magnetic force, which thrilled the souls of men to the remotest bound of the empire, and which is to be noted as the most fertile element of good in the experience of that period. We can forgive the age its theological controversies, its unreasonable dogma, which produced the charm that leavened society with a new life, where the old gods had utterly failed. Philosophy, too, had spoken in the schools these many centuries, but largely without powerful effect. Stoicism especially had lifted up its voice against the degradation of the moral sentiment and the superficial superstition of the age. Like Christianity, it doubtless counted its disciples amid the camps and colonial settlements of Britain. It is the figure of the Stoic, embodying the nobler type of Roman thought and character, that I prefer to conjure from the ranks of the dead veterans, who once made these long-deserted stations as full of life as a "Wallenstein's Lager." It formed the religion of many earnest souls for whom the poetry of the popular cult, or the emotional worship of the Christians, had no attraction, and its teachers inculcated many sublime truths. In contrast to the crudities of the popular rites, or the materialism of a Lucretius or a Petronius, they held the spiritual idea of God. To Cicero the Deity appeared as mind freed from all matter, and Lucan spoke of the majestic, all-persuasive spirit, whose throne is virtue and the universe.* In the emphasis which they laid on the duties of self-examination, humanity, and universal brotherhood, and submission to the divine will, their teaching bore so much resemblance to Christianity that it has been inferred, though without sufficient ground, that they had come under the influence of the Christian spirit. Many of its representatives nobly exemplified in an active public life, the doctrine that "all virtue lies in action." "Marcus Aurelius, the purest mind of the sect, was for nineteen years the active ruler of the civilised globe. Thrasea, Hebridius, Cornutus, and a crowd of others, who adopted Stoicism as a religion, lived, and in many cases died, in obedience to its precepts, struggling for the liberties of their country in the darkest hours of

* *See* Lecky, "History of European Morals," i., pp. 163, 164.

tyranny."* Like Christianity, too, it had its wandering preachers and lecturers, and the eloquence of the Stoic, Dion Chrysostom, entranced with equal force the polished audiences gathered to witness the Olympic games and the rude barbarians of Scythia. His great Christian namesake, John Chrysostom, was not more popular as an orator. Yet it did not succeed in influencing society in any appreciable degree. Its pride of rational perfection, which expressed itself in the most audacious comparisons with the Deity, its striving to attain the command of the will at the expense of the emotions, its want of enthusiasm and its impracticability to touch the common level of men, hindered its high moral and spiritual teaching from bearing much fruit. By attempting too much, and omitting to reckon with human nature, it failed to leaven and inspire the heart of the masses. Christianity, on the other hand, came as an inspiration to duty, because it appealed to the heart of the humblest and the weakest. It bent down to man and excited his devotion to a person, not to a philosophy. It taught the humility that makes our ideals seem so difficult, yet likewise kindled the love that dares all for Christ's sake. Thus it made possible to human nature a devotion, a self-sacrifice, a heroism whose story is one of the most noble heritages of the race. Not merely in the seething corruption and moral bankruptcy of pagan Rome did the intense spirit of its martyrs, before it became attenuated by the reaction of success, wield a leavening effect. Wherever the missionary came, its reviving power was felt, nor is it too much to say that it contributed greatly to save society throughout the provinces, exposed to the withering moral influences of a decaying political system. What M. Guizot† has so eloquently pictured as its recuperative effects in Gaul in opposition to such influences, doubtless applies to some extent to Roman Britain, whither not merely the schoolmaster, but the missionary, came from across the Channel, though the record of its establishment and development is all too scanty.

In contrast to the traces of the cosmopolitan polytheism of the empire, the relics of the more spiritual religion, that

* Lecky, *ibid.*, i., p. 202. † "Histoire de la Civilisation en France."

supplanted it, are extremely few in number. Besides the Christian tombstones with Latin inscriptions discovered at Kirkmadrine and at Whithorn, which evidently belong to the period immediately following the departure of the Roman troops from our shores, a single object showing association with Christian ideas—a silver bowl ornamented with the monogram of Christ, found at Corbridge, Northumberland—is the only memorial of early Christianity in the north. Even the sites of the opulent cities and luxurious villas in the more fertile and highly civilised districts of the south—the vales of Gloucester and Kent—have yielded only the most meagre evidence of the establishment of Christianity. This fact has led some archæologists to conclude that it had failed to undermine the dominant paganism in any appreciable degree. "The very small number of Roman objects ornamented with Christian devices, as compared with the total quantity of antiquities discovered in Great Britain, tends to show that Christianity can have made but little progress here during the first four centuries."* "Christianity," says the same writer,† "cannot be said to have influenced the art of this country to any appreciable extent during the period of the Roman occupation." Too much stress must not be laid on this fact, however, as in Gaul, where Christianity had firmly and generally established itself at least during the latter half of the fourth century, inscriptions do not become common till the middle of the fifth. Legend, on the other hand, putting on the sincere face of history, dates the conversion of the Britons at a very early period, and gravely claims for it the honour of an apostolic origin—St Peter, St Paul, Simon Zelotes, St James the Great, Aristobulus, and Joseph of Arimathea have been each assigned a share in the good work. Such tales are unworthy of consideration in view of their manifest absurdity, though some of them have had their advocates in comparatively recent times. Modern research has demonstrated the fictitious origin of others, of a more circumstantial character. Bran the Blessed, the earliest of these

* "Christian Symbolism in Great Britain and Ireland," J. Romilly Allen, p. 77. *Cf.* Wright, "Celt, Saxon, and Roman," pp. 353, 356.

† "Monumental History of the British Church," p. 144.

missionaries, next to the apostles themselves, or those immediately connected with them, turns out, as we have seen, to have been a Celtic war-god transformed into a missionary saint.* The assertion of Gildas† that Christianity had won for itself a footing in his country as early as the reign of Tiberius amounts to nothing more than an unwarrantable extension of certain words of Eusebius, so as to include Britain within their scope. Although the accurate Bæda gave currency to the alleged mission from Pope Eleutherus to the so-called British king, Lucius, in the latter half of the second century, the statement in the "Catalogue of the Popes," on which he relied, has been proved to be an unfounded interpolation.‡ It might well have arisen in the age of the chronicler Prosper, in the fifth century, who shows a suspicious tendency to exalt the papal power. Equally unhistoric is the application for Christian instruction and baptism by the Scottish king, Donald, to Pope Victor in 202, which we owe to Fordun and Hector Boece. No king of this name is known to have existed at this early period, nor was there any Scottish settlement in Britain before the end of the fifth century.§ An invariable feature of such legends is the long blank between the alleged event and its record, while the facility with which they increase in detail, in the hands of successive writers, does not tend to allay our suspicions. Only in the pages of contemporary authors may we look for trustworthy information regarding a subject so obscured by the fables of mediæval credulity.‖ Happily, although we have no such British source of information, the works of some of the Fathers contain instructive glimpses of British Christianity during the Roman period, which modify the meagre testimony of archæology. Of these, the first is Tertullian¶ (*c.* A.D. 108).

* Rhys, "Arthurian Legend," pp. 261, 262. † "Hist.," sect. 8.

‡ Haddan and Stubbs, "Councils and Ecclesiastical Documents," vol. i. *Cf.* Rettberg, "Kirchen Geschichte Deutschlands," Bd. i., p. 142, who disposes of the legend that Lucius went to Regensburg, where he preached and was martyred.

§ Skene, "Chronicle of the Picts and Scots." *Cf.* "Celtic Scotland," i., pp. 140, 141.

‖ "Legend," it has been truly said, "retrospectively makes history what it ought to have been, but what it never really was" (Renan, "Influence," p. 141).

¶ "Adv. Jud.," vii.

"The regions of Britain, inaccessible to the Romans, have been subdued to Christ," he triumphantly exclaims, when discoursing to his Jewish adversaries of the rapid and comprehensive spread of the Gospel. A more striking culmination for his fervid eloquence he could not have wished. To take his words literally, however, would be to overlook their rhetorical character, as well as the impossibility that Christianity had penetrated beyond the frontier of the Roman province, in the face of historical evidence that it only did so in the time of St Ninian, two centuries later. It might have been known to some tribe within the Roman dominion, which had risen in temporary revolt, but even if this be the meaning, there is still ample room for the charge of exaggeration. We may take the statement, however, as at least implying the reported existence of Christians in Britain—in those parts of the province which were subject to revolt and invasion. When the Fathers speak of the spread of Christianity, they cannot fairly expect to be taken as historians, but only as advocates. The testimony of Origen, half a century later, is rather indecisive. While he tells us in one place of the churches that comprehended Mauritania and Britain and the limits of the earth, he complains in another, that many nations, and among them the Britons, had not yet had an opportunity of embracing the faith. Such contradictory statements reveal an indistinct knowledge of the hold which Christianity had then taken in the remote quarters of the empire, and a tendency, in the earlier Fathers, sometimes to take a good deal for granted in their endeavour to make out a good case for their struggling creed. But by the expiry of another century this testimony becomes explicit. "The British Isles," writes another defender of the faith against the Jews, Chrysostom (*c.* A.D. 387), who, unlike the turgid apologist of Carthage, points his eloquence with details, "have felt the power of the Word. For there churches and altars abound; there you will hear the Gospel expounded in another voice, but not another faith; in a different tongue, but with the same understanding." Jerome, who frequently expatiates on the spread of the faith from India to the British Isles, observes that Christ was worshipped, and one rule of faith

followed in Britain, as in Gaul, Africa, Persia, India, the East, &c. Augustine is no less positive in his assertion of the strength and prosperity of the British Church. "The islands," he says, "are full of Christians, full of servants of God." *

But we are not left altogether to take on trust statements which the zeal of those who made them would not tend to weaken. The circumstance that the British Church during the fourth century shared in the events, which affected the Church throughout the empire, is a proof of its strength and importance. It was involved in the Diocletian† persecution, and contributed its martyrs to the list of heroes of the faith, though happily under the moderate rule of Constantius, it did not suffer the violence which afflicted the eastern provinces. The conversion of Constantine, son of Constantius, must have given an impulse to Christianity in Britain, where his claims to the imperial dignity had been strongly supported. We find the British Church powerful enough, too, to make its voice heard in the theological controversies which distracted the age. Its bishops took part in the Councils of Arles (314), Ariminium (359), and probably of Nice (323). That it was a national Church in the sense of embracing in its membership the population from the Forth to the Channel is impossible; but that it was a powerful organisation, exerting, as in Gaul, by its spiritual vigour and expansive sympathy, a regenerating influence on an oppressed and enervated people, is certain. One name, closely inwoven with the tradition of the northern part of Britain, has survived the forgetfulness that has buried, with one or two exceptions, those pioneers of spiritual inspiration in an unmerited oblivion. And Ninian—his age and his influence—are well worthy the attempt at portrayal.

* These and other passages, in the original Latin or Greek, are collected in Haddan and Stubbs, "Councils and Ecclesiastical Documents," vol. i.

† The assertion of Gildas, however, that it took place under Diocletian is another instance of his application to Britain of the words of Eusebius in regard to persecution in general. The martyrdom of St Alban has been preserved in the tradition associated with the name of the modern English town. Constantius, who wrote the Life of Germanus, first notes it, and Gildas adds the names of two other martyrs.

## CHAPTER III.

### NINIAN—HIS AGE AND HIS INFLUENCE.

NINIAN has had the good fortune of finding a biographer in the Venerable Bæda. He has recorded, only in briefest compass, it is true, the tradition concerning the saint and his labours, which was current in his day. His notice occurs in the paragraph of his "Ecclesiastical History of the English Nation," which he devotes to the work of Columba among the Northern Picts, but its brevity is not to be taken as measuring the importance of the movement, of which Ninian was the leader. It did not come directly within the scope of the writer, and even the mission of Columba, which he touches on from its intimate connection with the evangelisation of the Angles of Northumbria, and which we know from the fuller and equally reliable testimony of Adamnan, had produced a very powerful effect, is dismissed in a very summary fashion. He never even mentions St Patrick, though he often refers to the sister isle, and his apparent ignorance of one who enjoyed a reputation second to none among the Irish Celts, makes his curt treatment of Ninian less surprising. We must remember, too, that Bæda's fervid attachment to the ritual of the Roman Church and the supremacy of its head led him to look down on, if not altogether to ignore the British Church, which during the seventh and eighth centuries resisted the authority of the Popes in their efforts to bring about unity of practice. But the two sentences into which he compresses the traditions that kept alive the memory of Ninian throughout an interval of three hundred years, possess the merit of being comprehensive, and the authority of the usually accurate and erudite monk of Jarrow* lends them a value seldom

* We can trace the source of his knowledge in his friendship with Pecthelm, the Anglian Bishop of Candida Casa in his time, to whom the story of Ninian's labours would be a subject of the closest interest.

attributable to the diffuse pages of the monkish biographer. "For the Southern Picts, who dwell on this side of these mountains, had long before, as is reported, forsaken the errors of idolatry and embraced the truth by the preaching of Ninias, a most reverend and holy man of the British nation, who had been regularly instructed at Rome in the faith and mysteries of the truth, whose episcopal see, named after St Martin the bishop, and famous for a stately church wherein he and many other saints rest in the body, is still in existence among the English nation. The place belongs to the province of the Bernicians, and is generally called the White House, because he there built a church of stone, which was not usual among the Britons." *

The repute in which his memory was held in the ecclesiastical tradition of the eighth century, is further evinced by the tribute which another learned and polished writer of the Anglo-Saxon Church—the celebrated Alcuin—paid to it. In a letter to the monastic community at Candida Casa, which, under a different political and ecclesiastical system, maintained the tradition of the place, he extols its venerable founder whose virtues had inspired the religious muse of his former pupils at York. That it continued to maintain itself throughout the next four centuries is proved by the legendary lives composed in his honour, and the consequent popularity of his shrine as the resort of pilgrims down to the time of the Reformation. Some thirty years ago the removal of a portion of the choir of the ruined sixteenth century church of my native place, Turriff, in Aberdeenshire, brought to light the figure of a bishop, painted in bright colours on the splay of a window hitherto built up, the right hand raised in benediction, the left holding a pastoral staff, with the letters "S. Ninianus" written above—a touching homage to the merits of one who, though dead, still spoke to so many generations of the living.

One of these legendary lives we owe to Ailred, Abbot of Rievaux,† in Yorkshire (1143-1166), who was educated at

* "Eccl. Hist.," iii. 4.

† Edited and translated from the Latin by the late Bishop Forbes in vol. v. of the "Historians of Scotland."

the court of King David, and visited Galloway. Another, lately discovered, is attributed to the poet Barbour; while a third, by a nameless Irish monk, now lost, is noticed by Archbishop Ussher and the Bollandists. Written for edification, and coloured by the ecclesiastical tendencies of the age, they are of almost no historical value for the time of which they treat. That by Ailred professes to be a Latin embellishment of an older work written in "a barbarous language." It is not impossible that an account of the saint, composed by some affectionate disciple after his death, had survived down to the twelfth century, in spite even of the destruction which Gildas bewails as having overtaken the literary remains of his country, during the unsettled times following the departure of the Romans. The survival of the Epistle and Confession of St Patrick throughout the ravages of war and Norse invasion, which devastated Ireland in the Middle Ages, is evidence of this. But it would most likely have been a very different work from the laboured, meagre, and vague production of Ailred, whose rhetoric is in fact but a veil thrown over his ignorance and personal predilections. Nevertheless the movement which lies behind the shadowy obscurity of mediæval legend was undoubtedly of far-reaching importance in the history of early Scottish Culture, and though the ruins of the mediæval cathedral and the old chapel of St Ninian at Whithorn no longer attract the pilgrim, they invite the student of Culture to linger for a little in questioning mood beside their crumbling walls.

Tradition locates Ninian's birthplace on the northern shore of the Solway Firth. It also ascribes to him a royal pedigree, but this is an honour which he possesses in common with many saints, to whom posterity did homage in this fashion. His royal descent can only mean at the most that he was the son of some chief, to whom the Romans permitted a modicum of power. Remote and difficult of access as the wilder parts of Galloway and Dumfries are, there are not wanting traces of the Roman in the fertile belt of land that lies between the shore of the Solway and the moors and mountains of the interior.* The tribes that the

* On the site of Candida Casa itself, a British hamlet (Leucophibia),

Romans found inhabiting the district were certainly not the most submissive and peaceful subjects of the imperial province. Not only were they anciently engaged in constant wars with their eastern neighbours, the Brigantes, which were renewed once at least after both had been conquered by the legions, but we find them under the name of Attecotti joining the Pictish invaders in the latter part of the fourth century, and making a last strenuous effort to regain their independence.* The revolt was crushed by the vigour of the general Theodosius, and, as a precautionary measure, a large number of the able-bodied men was sent into exile as auxiliary levies of the Roman army in Gaul and Spain. Theodosius consolidated anew the Roman dominion between the walls, and organised it into a separate department. The year of Ninian's birth may, with reasonable certainty, be placed in the period when these events took place, and whether he was the son of some Christian chief, or like St Patrick, of a citizen of some Roman town in North Britain, he must have been largely influenced by Roman ideas and Roman habits.

It is not easy for us now, lingering amid the humble ruins of the marvellous civilisation that spread itself from classic Italy to the remote and rude peoples of the north, to picture to ourselves the spell wielded by Rome upon the teeming millions that owned her sway. As the ancient seat of a world-wide dominion, as the centre of events on which hung the destiny of half the world, as the queenly source of the law, the culture, the refinement that moulded human society from the borders of Persia to the walls of Antonine, the capital of the Cæsars held the minds of men enthralled by the magic of her name. Before the rise of Constantinople, her splendour dimmed that of every other city. This influence of a mighty name was inseparable from the colossal power, the high civilisation of which it was the emblem, and is a significant fact in the history of the most distant possessions of the empire. It doubtless contributed something to the preservation of that vast unity

associated with Roman military works, already stood when Ptolemy sketched his map of Britain.

* Rhys, "Celtic Britain," pp. 90, 91.

which the Roman legions and the Roman energy of government had created. It excited a sentiment of homage to the genius of Italy which the military power and the law of the conquerors might not beget in a conquered race. It made men feel proud of having a common property in the splendid traditions of a glorious past. It tended to beget that enthusiasm, tempered by reverence for what is great and memorable, which assimilates the minds of alien peoples under a foreign rule. From the mighty city on the seven hills, with its heroes and romance, its imperial majesty and classic splendour, went forth a moulding influence that was an unconscious education in itself. Even yet we experience its spell as we yield to the charm of the imperishable literature, and listen to the tale of the fallen grandeur of which it was the centre. How much more powerful this influence on the susceptible soul, in the age when men felt the living touch of the imperial and classic goddess! We remark it in the passionate strain of a poet like Rutilius Numatianus of Gaul, who had been Prefect of Rome, and wrote at the beginning of the fifth century. "Hear me, listen, O Rome! ever beauteous queen of a world that is for ever thine own, thou who art one among the Olympians, hearken mother of men and of gods; when we pray in thy temples we are not far from heaven. For thee the sun doth turn on his course; he rises upon thy dominions, and in their seas doth he plunge his chariot. From so many diverse nations hast thou moulded one sole country; from that which was a world hast thou made a city. He who can count thy trophies can tell the number of the stars. Thy gleaming temples dazzle the eye. . . . Thy year is but an eternal spring, and vanquished winter respects thy pleasures."*

To the imagination of the educated class among the distant provincials, this queen of the world must have been as the inspiration of an epos, not dulled, but heightened by distance, and we may safely believe that its quickening power was not lost on the youthful Ninian. His journey to Rome, which rests on the authority of Bæda, is, in view of this magnetic charm that influenced the whole civilised

* Quoted by Ozanam, i. 55.

world, as probable as that a young Australian or an educated native of India should be attracted to the imperial centre of British fashion and wealth. But in a country partially Christian at least, and for a youth who, according to his monkish biographer, added a strong religious enthusiasm to a deep thirst for knowledge, the impulse Romewards would be strengthened by the stirring Christian memories associated with the classic imperial capital. As the scene of the sufferings of Peter and Paul, as well as of the shrines of countless heroes of the faith, it already began in the latter half of the fourth century to attract crowds of pilgrims, whose piety sought the inspiration of communion with a stirring past at the tombs of its mighty dead. The sympathy which thus drew young zealots like St Jerome to spend frequent hours of prayer and contemplation in the Catacombs* and hermit enthusiasts to erect their cells on the sacred ground, counted its devotees from all parts of the Roman world. It invested the once pagan city with a sacred interest, second only to that of the site of the Holy Sepulchre itself, and while the historian† has remarked the presence of British Christians among the crowd of pilgrims who, about the end of the fourth century, came to intensify their devotion at the spot where Jesus suffered, the shrines of His two most celebrated apostles were not left unhonoured. This new-born reverence, in casting the glowing fervour of its enthusiasm over the proud seat of imperial triumph and classic beauty, derived thereby increased stimulus, which might well have stirred the imagination of a Ninian.

Rome, too, had begun to embody an idea which was destined to exercise an epoch-making influence on the destiny of Europe, and which even then wielded a certain power over the thoughts of men. The Roman bishops of the first four centuries were by no means equal in pomp and power to the Popes of mediæval times. Their rise to the exalted position of ecclesiastical dictators of the West, was simply the combined result of political sagacity and an unflinching struggle to maintain each new pretension.

* "Op. S. Hieron.," v., p. 433 (ed. Frankfurt, 1684).

† Theodoret, "Hist. Laus.," c. 118.

But from an early period they enjoyed a certain pre-eminence,* especially in the West. This was due partly to the lustre which they derived from their close association with the seat of empire, partly to the apostolic traditions, inwoven with the earlier history of the see. Whilst there are instances in which their authority and growing pretensions were treated with resentment and even with contempt, there are not wanting others in which their advice was received in the sense of a command. The conversion of Constantine first conferred on them an official importance in the eye of the State, and Silvester presided with all the pomp of the imperial favour over a synod of Italian bishops to consider the burning question of Donatism. It was the emperor, however, not the Roman bishop, who was the pontifical head of the Church. In becoming a Christian, Constantine did not divest himself of the office of Pontifex Maximus, but transferred it to the new religion. The edicts affecting the Church, which are embraced in the Codex Theodosianus, are issued in the imperial name and continued to be so till the reign of Valentinian II., who, finding the ecclesiastical government too irksome in the distracted state of the empire, consigned it to the Bishop of Rome. Nevertheless, the traditional importance of the see of Rome, as the seat of St Peter, had been growing in the view of Western Christendom during the first four centuries, and the removal of the imperial residence, first to Constantinople and, under the late Emperors of the West, to Milan and Ravenna, while it dimmed somewhat the ancient majesty of Rome, tended to concentrate its glorious traditions in the person of its powerful bishops. Their reputation for orthodoxy contributed an additional element to their influence with the Churches of Gaul and Italy, and led the Council of Sardica (347) to permit the right of appeal to them from the decision of council or synod. The ambition and vigour of men like Damasus, Siricus, and Innocent I., who filled the chair of St Peter during the lifetime of Ninian, were not slow to make the most of their

* This subject is treated by Milman ("Latin Christianity," i., bks. 1 and 2), with whom Renan, who ("Influence of Institutions of Rome") exalts the influence of the earlier Roman bishops, may be compared.

advantages. In these strongly marked, energetic figures, we discern the spirit of the mediæval Popes. The Decretal of Siricus, in answer to the request of Himerius, Bishop of Tarragona, for instruction regarding certain doubtful points of practice, is couched in the style of one who assumes that his words shall be accepted as law. The tone of the epistles of Innocent to the bishops and synods of various provinces, from Thessalonica to Rouen, is still more imperious. Innocent, in fact, boldly asserted, but of course without reason, that the whole of Italy, the Gallic and Spanish provinces, Africa, Sicily, and the islands lying between them, had been converted by Peter or his successors.* The splendour and affluence, which the triumph of Christianity conferred on the Roman bishops, would not tend to diminish the consciousness and the desire of power in the pontifical breast, as it must have added force to their striving for the overlordship of the Church. Pagan observers, even, felt the strength of this argument. "It is by no means surprising," says the historian Ammianus Marcellinus,† "that for so magnificent a prize as the bishopric of Rome, men should contend with the utmost eagerness and obstinacy." The same thought was humorously expressed by the prefect Prætextatus, who jestingly assured Pope Damasus that if he could obtain the chair of St Peter, he would immediately become a Christian.

The British Church, intimately connected, as we have seen, by the bond of a common faith and practice with Western Christendom, of which Rome was thus the imposing and powerful head, must have experienced the moulding touch of this ecclesiastical influence. It was not, it is true, the all-powerful force which impressed itself so indelibly on the thought and history of the Middle Ages, but it was already a colouring and motive power in the provincial culture of St Ninian's day—one of those ideas, associated with the mighty city on the Tiber, which moved the minds of men. We may suspect the monk of Jarrow of recording not a fact, but rather an inference of his own time, which witnessed the establishment in a far more

* *See* Rettberg, "Kirchen Geschichte Deutschlands."

† Am. Mar., xvii. 3 (*sub anno* 367).

intense form, of the religious influence of Rome over the British Church, after the long seclusion following the fall of the empire and the Teutonic invasion, but the journey of Ninian to Rome is quite in keeping with the spirit of his age. Jerome had made a similar pilgrimage from Pannonia some twenty years earlier to acquire at the feet of Donatus, the celebrated commentator of Terence and Virgil, the riches of Latin literature, and to fan his zeal amid the memories of the Catacombs. In his letters and commentaries he has thrown a sombre light over the Roman society of his time—clerical as well as lay—and that his animadversions were not the fruit of mere ascetic querulousness is shown by the severe criticism of Ammianus Marcellinus.

The intensity of primitive Christianity was represented in the austere fervour of the monks, which would have an irresistible attraction for a youthful zealot like Ninian, and who by the time of his sojourn in Rome had made a considerable impression on the Western Church. The life of St Anthony, written by Athanasius, Bishop of Alexandria, during his first exile in the West, was perhaps the most popular and influential book of the day. Its tale of ascetic excesses caught the imagination of many. The villas of Roman matrons, and even the august precincts of the forum as well as the sites of ruined temples, afforded an asylum for the practice of the monastic life. Thence it extended its conquest over the West till from the islets of the Nile, the arid solitudes of the Thebais, the softer scenes of Palestine, Syria, and Asia Minor, to the rocky islands of the Western Mediterranean, and the forests and mountains of Gaul, the strange spectacle presented itself of a host of devotees, voluntarily giving themselves up, from religious motives, to a life of hardship and grovelling discomfort.* The pages of Jerome resound with the praises of the many noble women, whom he, like Ambrose at Milan, won over to this form of superstitious devotion, and some of whom sought with him a fitting environment for its cultivation amid the sacred scenes of the Holy Land. It was, in fact, the dominant religious influence during the age of St Ninian, and its

* Epist. 24, "De Obit. Paulinæ."

more attractive side is glowingly and poetically pictured by Ambrose, whose fame may have drawn the young pilgrim out of his way to listen to the great orator in Milan Cathedral. The solitude and austerities of the cell did not, indeed, always shut out "the wild passions of the world." The security and quiet of a religious life attracted many of the worthless, whose hypocrisy veiled their sloth or immorality. Superstition increased as piety attached itself more and more to formal observances. Relic worship became a lucrative profession, and a scholar like Jerome could thunder, in language more emphatic than classic, against the protests of men like Vigilantius in favour of a more spiritual devotion. Miracles happened naturally to those so strongly influenced by the belief in, the expectation of them, as were the monks. The men of taste of that age were shocked at the puerile excesses to which piety often degenerated, and loaded these devotees with their ridicule "Behold," cried the poet Rutilianus, "Capraja rises before me! That isle is full of wretches, enemies of the light." This reproach betrays the animus of the easy man of the world. However contemptible their childish ideas, their puerile formalism, many of the early monks added to an austere piety the missionary spirit, and in some monasteries they were combined with the love of knowledge. Those of Southern Gaul, such as Lerins and St Victor, in the fifth century, became the nurses of theological and philosophical learning, and the seminaries in which the ablest bishops and the most devout of the clergy received their training. They took the place of the old pagan schools on the fall of the Western Empire, and gave a new lease of life to knowledge by the earnest spirit which they infused into the study of Christian theology and philosophy and the ancient classic writers.

That Ninian had practical acquaintance with the nobler traits of monastic life,—with at least its intense piety and its missionary spirit,—we may infer from the fact of his connection with St Martin. His consecration by the Pope*

* That it is by no means improbable we see from the fact that Palladius was ordained by Pope Celestinus as missionary bishop of Ireland during the lifetime of Ninian.

may be an assumption of his twelfth-century biographer, Ailred, and is all the more suspicious in that he does not give the name of the Roman bishop who performed this function; but his visit to the celebrated monastic Bishop of Tours, and the deep impression it appears to have made, are evident from the dedication of his church at Whithorn to this saint.

St Martin is an outstanding figure in the Church history of the West during the latter half of the fourth century. His life, as portrayed by the graphic and sympathetic pen of Sulpicius Severus, is full of dramatic incident, but it is as head of the monastic community of Marmoutier, which he combined with his office as Bishop of Tours, that he has an especial interest for us.

This establishment has an historic importance, for St Martin was one of the first, if not the first, to introduce the monastic rule into Gaul. In all probability it formed the model of the institution which Ninian established at Candida Casa, and which remained for more than a century a famous seat of monastic learning and virtue. The close connection of the British and Irish Churches in early times with that of Gaul is a prominent fact in tradition. The community which the bishop gathered around him at the secluded spot underneath a cliff on the banks of the Loire, about two miles from Tours, numbered eighty members. No one, according to Sulpicius Severus,* possessed any private property, all things being collected into a general fund. No one was allowed to buy or sell anything. Manual labour seems to have been thought incompatible with the monkish ideal, though it soon came, especially through the inspiration of St Benedict, to be viewed as an indispensable aid to the culture of the soul. "A labouring monk is troubled with only one devil," said Cassiodorus, a century later, "an idle one by a host of them." The art of writing is mentioned as being practised by the younger members, however, while their elders attended exclusively to religious exercises. The intellectual tone could not have been very high, to judge from the nervous and depreciative attitude of Sulpicius towards the classics. No one scarcely ever left his cell except at the call to united prayer. After the hour of

* "Vita Beati Martini," c. vii.

fasting they partook of a common repast, at which wine was eschewed, unless in case of sickness or infirmity. Their clothing consisted of a rough garment of camels' hair—the same for all, however refined their upbringing might have been. The society of women was abjured.* But this austere pursuit of mistaken perfection did not apparently exclude the possibility of resuming an active life. Many who distinguished themselves by the morbid intensity of their piety were forced by the voice of the people from their retirement to accept the episcopal staff, or to fill some vacant church.

The year of St Martin's death is the one definite key to the chronology of Ninian's life. Ailred has preserved the tradition that on learning of the death of Martin, he dedicated the church to him which he had just erected of stone at Whithorn, and this is one of the few incidental touches which strike me as expressive of fact in the rhetoric production of the worthy abbot. Another is the remark that he brought with him from Tours the masons who built it. This may be a mere inference from the practice of the founders of the Anglo-Saxon monasteries in the seventh and eighth centuries.† Moreover, Roman Britain could not have been destitute of skilled artisans, nor was this, as Ailred thought, the first stone structure in Britain dedicated to the worship of Christ, though it was customary among the natives to use wood instead of stone in building. The Roman basilica was the model of Christian architecture among the Romanised Britons, as in other parts of the Western empire. On the other hand, the artisans of Gaul were celebrated for their skill as early as the fourth century.‡ The technical schools, established by Constantine in order to arrest in the cities of Italy the decay of the arts, offered a ready training to handicraftsmen, who found a field for their industry in the less developed lands of the north. St Martin made use of their skill in the erection of the numerous churches which replaced the heathen temples.

* Sulpicius, "Dialog.," ii. 12.

† Bæda ("Vita Beatorum Abbatorum," sect. 5) tells us that Benedict Biscop brought workmen from Gaul for the purpose of constructing the church of the Abbey of Wearmouth, of which he was abbot.

‡ Baldwin Brown, "From Schola to Cathedral," p. 195.

It would therefore be no anachronism to suppose that Ninian really did bring a few of them with him on his return to his native country. Nor were there wanting churches of imposing dimensions and rich decoration in some of the Gaulish and Italian cities, probably visited by Ninian, to excite the ambition to imitate them. Though the churches of Rome could not equal in splendour that erected by Constantine at Jerusalem, or that of Paulinus at Tyre, over which Eusebius grows eloquent, those of St Peter and St John, of St Paul and St Prudentia, were imposing examples of the style that grew out of the pagan basilica. The gilded roofs, variously coloured marbles, rich mosaics, and lofty columns of those at Lyons and Vienne excited the admiration of Sidonius Apollinaris.* Doubtless in Ninian's humbler effort on the shores of the remote Solway, the thoughts inspired by these far more gorgeous productions of a triumphant Christianity would seek a not unambitious, if still modest, expression. A small mission chapel, it might make little impression on an eye familiar with the splendid piles with which Roman skill had adorned the province, but, as in the case of the earnestness of the rude sculptures in the catacombs, compared with the more superficial expression of far more pretentious examples of Roman art, the little mission chapel embodied a great idea. It was the expression of a spiritual impulse that was destined to create a new art and a new literature—to produce the great cathedrals of mediæval times, to kindle the imagination of the artist, to add a new chord to the harp of bard and scald. It was the emblem not merely of a new moral strength, but of a new creative genius. Injustice, sensualism, slavery, selfishness, were the ideas too largely associated with the splendour of Roman city and Roman mansion—ideas which had produced their natural withering effect upon the human mind ; whereas the simple mission church is the harbinger of the spirit of justice, brotherhood, and progress. The movement it symbolises is a conquering movement, too. While the imperial power is balked by the barbarians and finally overthrown ; while, baffled and effete, it is about to abandon its conquests, the little mission

* Epist. xii. *Cf.* Smith's "Dictionary of Antiquities," art. "Church."

chapel by the shore of the Solway is the emblem of a spiritual empire, the forerunner of a dominion which will win submission where imperial Rome has proved powerless.

The spot on which Ninian erected his church was, one should think, ill chosen for the purpose of missionary enterprise. While its seclusion and its charming situation within sight and sound of the sea, with the wild mountains of Galloway in the distant background, were well fitted for the pursuit of the monastic life, its isolation in the extreme south-west of Scotland made it unsuitable for aggressive work. There is a good deal of force, however, in the supposition* that he was influenced in its selection by the unsettled state of the country between the Forth and the Wall of Hadrian—the scene of frequent inroads during the last decade of the fourth century and the first quarter of the fifth. The age was, indeed, to all appearance, the most unfavourable for such an enterprise as Ninian's. He lived throughout the trying period of the fall of the imperial power in Britain, and the carnage and disorder which characterised it. It marks him out as a man of intense fervour and commanding strength of character that he accomplished so much for the higher culture of his countrymen, in spite of the adverse circumstances of the age. During the last half of the fourth century the Picts were joined in their inroads into the province by marauding bands of Scots from Ireland, who infested the western coast, and of Saxon pirates who attacked it from the east. The energetic repression of a combined attack by them on the northern district in 368† gained it tolerable security for thirty years, but the pressure of invasion, with its accompanying scenes of outrage, had again made itself so severely felt, owing to the withdrawal of the British troops to Gaul by the usurper Maximus, and the weak government of the island, that Stilicho,‡ the minister of Honorius, found it necessary in 396 to send reinforcements to the aid of the harassed provincials. The barbarians suffered a temporary check, but the strong hand of the Emperor Theodosius (died

* Grub, "Ecclesiastical History of Scotland," i., p. 13.

† Ammianus Marcellinus, xxvi. 4.

‡ Claudian, xxii. 250-253.

395) was no longer there to avert the doom which the incapable administration of his successors, Arcadius in the East and Honorius in the West, invited at the hands of their barbarian enemies.

The period of Ninian's activity was thus one of those tragically dramatic periods which mark the turning points of human history,—the period in which the old order of things is shaken to its foundation, and the new comes to birth amid the throes of war, accompanied by all the miseries of social disintegration. Yet it is possible for a great spiritual movement to maintain itself in circumstances so unfavourable to its development. Christianity had to win its way to the conquest of the Roman empire in the face of the fiercest opposition—over the path of intolerance and persecution. Nevertheless it triumphed, and in the aggressive energy of St Martin we see what it could accomplish even when its progress was hampered by the social and political disorder to which Gaul, like Britain, was exposed at the hands of the invader. The notion that a strong spiritual culture is compatible only with leisure and peaceful surroundings is not altogether founded in fact. "La Grèce et Rome," remarks M. Egger, "pour ne parler que des anciens, ont vu fleurir tous les actes de l'esprit en temps de leur plus cruelles dissensions."* That Ninian, like his great model, St Martin, rose by the strength of a commanding personality and a fervid faith above the circumstances of his age, is evident from the hold which his memory took on the traditions of his country, and the fame of his monastic establishment at Candida Casa during the century that followed his death. In after-times churches were dedicated to him from Caithness to Cumberland, and while these can afford no clue to his missionary wanderings, in the absence of authentic evidence of any actual connection with their patron, they at least justify the inference that the movement, of which Ninian was the leader, was one that commanded attention, and merited remembrance. Considering the uncertainty which hangs over these dim ages, and which reduces the history of Scotland during several centuries to a limited number of facts,—interspersed with many learned

* Egger, "La Litérature à Athène pendant la Guerre."

guesses,—this is saying a good deal, yet not too much. There was no doubt in the twelfth century a tendency to exaggerate the importance of Ninian's labours; and Ailred is altogether out of touch with fact when he represents the saint as ordaining presbyters, consecrating bishops, distributing all manner of ecclesiastical dignities, and dividing the whole of Pictland into parishes.* This is a glaring anachronism of at least six centuries, and proves that the good abbot had studied history to very little purpose indeed. But the much earlier and far more reliable testimony of Bæda, though less detailed, and consequently more trustworthy,—on the principle, of which there are so many illustrations in the historians of mediæval and ancient times, that the knowledge of an event always loses in bulk the nearer the author to the time of its occurrence,—is equally emphatic as to the success of his preaching among the wild tribes as far north as the range of the Mounth. As in the case of St Martin in Gaul, and that of Patrick in Ireland, he would have to disarm the opposition of the magicians of the pagan cult, and, as in their cases too, the charm of a powerful personality and an irresistible earnestness, combined with a sagacity that knew how to take advantage of the situation, proved superior to the magic of the Druid, and makes the phenomenal success probable and credible. He would doubtless seek to render it permanent by stationing Christian teachers from the monastery at Whithorn in certain districts; and though his death seems to have been followed by a widespread relapse of his Pictish converts† into paganism, his mission must have had, for the time being, the political and social effect of granting the population south of the wall a respite from the harassing attacks of their hereditary enemies. There is ample proof in the life of St Martin alone that the Christian bishops of this time had already acquired much political influence, which they used, not for self-aggrandising purposes, but in the service of a humane patriotism. Political offenders found in them powerful advocates of merciful treatment. Ambrose exacted a

* "Vita Niniani," c. 6 ("Historians of Scotland," v.).

† Patrick speaks, in his "Epistle to Coroticus," of "the apostate Picts."

humiliating penance from Theodosius at the door of the cathedral of Milan for the massacre of the inhabitants of Thessalonica ; and that the Church dignitaries, and even the monks, were closely in touch with the stirring age in which they lived is shown by the keen interest of a Jerome, who, from his retreat at Bethlehem, kept his watchful eye on the march of events throughout the empire, and has even noted the state of Britain. Skene supposes that the mission of Ninian to the southern Picts was actuated by a desire to alleviate the miseries of invasion, to which the inhabitants of the Roman territory between the walls were exposed. The facts I have mentioned make it probable that such a political motive was mingled with the missionary zeal that alone would account for it. At all events, I am inclined to attribute to it the remarkable fact that, on the fall of the imperial power, the Picts did not permanently overrun the northern part of the province within their reach, as the barbarians from beyond the Rhine and the Danube did the other parts of the empire. As before, the wall of Antonine remained their southern boundary, if we except a small settlement on the southern shore of the Forth, between the Pentlands and the river Carron. The power that helped to stem the tide of barbarism, and thus powerfully alleviated the miseries of the age, was the spiritual fervour, the human sympathy, the dauntless enthusiasm, that pulsed in the monkish cell by the shore of the Solway. A striking illustration of what can be accomplished by a strong-minded and fervent personality to maintain the cause of Christianity, and make its power felt in the political salvation, as well as the instruction of a people at such a time of disorder, is afforded by the labours of Severinus, who up to his death in 482 was, for thirty years, the adviser and leader of the inhabitants of Noricum, during the attacks to which they were exposed from the barbarians.*

Apart from its political significance, and viewed as a practical inspiration, I estimate highly a mission such as that of St Ninian. It was an immeasurable advance upon the pagan cult, were it only in its more spiritual idea of

* *See* Riezler, "Geschichte Baierns," Bd. i. ; *cf.* Rettberg, "Kirchen Geschichte Deutschlands," sect. 34.

God, and in its appeal to the moral sense. It brought home the fact of duty for the love of God, the fact that has begotten the noblest deeds in the history of the race. Paganism was limited at best by nature, and with all the poetic transfigurations of its marvellous phenomena, with all its childish susceptibility to the thought of the supernatural, it was as far from the great spiritual reality as the realistic world of the child is from the higher conceptions of the reasoning man. It is easy to sneer at Christianity as a popular superstition, which, unfortunately for the progress of the world, it has too largely been; but it has unquestionably come to millions as a revelation of the divine, inasmuch as it has elevated the mind to higher conceptions of the divine power that man cannot but recognise, however imperfectly. God is spirit—that is the fact, and Christianity has taught it with forcible emphasis to those whom philosophy could not have taught. Stoicism, with its transcendental doctrine, failed to catch the popular ear; modern science, with its god of force, is still an enigma to the common man, and he must be a prejudiced mortal that will not recognise that Christianity these eighteen centuries has succeeded, in some measure, in impressing on the consciences of men the eternal fact of the spiritual Power that makes for righteousness, and in inspiring the martyr spirit that would dare life itself for its sake. It is not the metaphysical deity of theology that has rendered this service to humanity. Metaphysics and missions have little connection with each other. Doubtless Ninian brought a theology with him to these northern regions—the orthodox creed that had at that time triumphed in the West, and still exacts the allegiance of modern Europe. But it was not because of its orthodoxy that it triumphed, but because of its power to elevate the mind, and captivate the affections. Stoicism could have claimed in many respects as high a rank as Christianity, but it wanted its inspiration. Not as a theologian, but as a Christian, does the missionary succeed. Yet it is of moment, from the point of view of culture, to inquire what the ideas were that gave soul to the movement of which Ninian was the leader. In the writings of St Patrick—a native of North Britain, and, if not inspired

at least indirectly by his teaching, at any rate moulded like him by Gaulish influences, if not in direct touch with Rome —we may safely perceive their likeness. In his "Confession," which the best authorities receive as authentic, we find the belief in the Trinity without the metaphysical language of the creed. In the hymns ascribed to him, there is the same simple and unquestioning faith in the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, in the outstanding doctrines of the Christian system, in the providential protection of God against the forces of nature and the snares of paganism, and in the sufficiency of Christ amid all the experiences of life. A tradition of very ancient date * contains the substance of his message to the wondering pagan. "Who is God?" ask the fair daughters of Laoghaire of the holy man, whom they found, with his following of clerics, at the fountain where they went to bathe. "Is He fair to look upon, and ever living? Is His abode in heaven or on earth, in the sea, the rivers, the mountains, the valleys? Tell us how we may find Him, and love Him?" "Our God," replied the saint, "is the God of all men, of heaven and earth, the sea and the rivers, the sun, the moon, and all the stars, the high mountains, and the lonely valleys, the God who inspireth, quickeneth, and sustaineth all things, &c.; who hath a Son co-eternal and co-equal with Himself, and in them the Holy Ghost breatheth, and they three are undivided. And to this heavenly King, ye, the daughters of an earthly king, may be united, if ye will believe." "Teach us most diligently," they reply, "how we may believe in the heavenly King." And Patrick said, "Believe ye that by baptism ye put off the sin of your father and mother? Believe ye in repentance after sin, in life after death, in resurrection at the day of judgment, in the unity of the Church?" To all which they answered, "We believe." And they were baptized, and a white garment put upon their heads, and desiring to see Christ, they received the Eucharist, and, singular sequel,† slept in death.

* Todd, "St Patrick," p. 455.

† Some have thought that this implies human sacrifice—a remnant of paganism.

The Church of St Ninian was, we may with certainty believe, not above the superstition of the age. Centuries have elapsed, and the Christian world of to-day is still largely coloured by it. The monkish spirit already revelled in miracles, relic-worship, and abstinence—in those earnest puerilities that govern the imagination and degrade the intellect. Jovinian had raised his voice in vain against the spirit of superstition which distorted the Christian view of life. One of his assertions, that marriage was as meritorious as virginity, brought upon him the bitter hostility of Pope Siricus, whose emissaries roused the ire of Theodosius and the Archbishop of Milan, Ambrose, against "the pestiferous sect" of which he was the leader. A synod, convened at his instigation and presided over by Ambrose, banished him from the northern capital. The pages of Sulpicius Severus, to cite another example, are steeped in the grossest credulity. His book on the "Life and Miracles of St Martin" was one of the most popular productions of the fifth century. It must have been as eagerly read in Britain as in other countries of the West and throughout Egypt, Syria, Ethiopia, India, Persia, Arminia, and Greece.* Hermits sent from the far East the earnest request for more of this edifying reading, and the author acceded to it by writing a supplement in three dialogues. He was an honest man, who "would rather keep silent than utter what is false," and he received his information at first hand, for he was one of the intimate disciples of the bishop. He was no contemptible chronicler either, as his valuable history of the world from the creation to his own day shows. He challenges, too, the sceptics of his time to dispute his facts. He might fearlessly do so on the strength of the tendency of the age, to which miracles came as naturally as the air that men breathed. The resolute bearing and fervent faith of a St Martin could not escape the honour of this species of fame. It is as easy for the uncultured devotee in an age of prodigies to see a miracle as it is for the philosophic mind to perceive its natural explanation. Christianity, it must be confessed, rather tended to foster than to discourage this tendency of its

* Tillemont, Mem., tom. x., pp. 309-357.

credulous converts. Had Ninian had the fortune to have a Sulpicius Severus for his biographer, his pages would doubtless likewise have been enlivened with numerous tales of contests with demons, of heavenly radiances illumining the praying saint, of visions and portents, of miraculous cures and conversions, and even of the revival of the dead. Ailred is not sparing of stories of this kind, but they are taken from the common stock of the mediæval hagiologist, and want the valuable historic and topographical traits, which lend a high value to those that make the narrative of a Sulpicius Severus or an Adamnan instructive as well as dramatic.

The above supposititious biographer would in all likelihood have placed his death somewhere in the second quarter of the fifth century. The date is forgotten, while his memory and its significance, which I have tried in illustrative fashion to portray, have survived.

## CHAPTER IV.

### TWO CENTURIES OF CLAIR-OBSCURE.

WHILE the Germanic invaders from beyond the Rhine and the Danube swept over Gaul in the beginning of the fifth century with resistless force, overturning at the first shock the fabric of Roman power, which the genius of Cæsar had founded five centuries before, the conquest of Roman Britain by the Saxon was both more gradual and less complete. A long interval of fierce struggle, of frightful disorder, intervened before the imperial province was transformed into a number of petty Saxon states, reaching from the Forth to the Channel, and the Celtic kingdom of the Cymry on the west. Whilst trying to grope through this shadowy period we still feel to some extent in touch with the old Roman culture. In revolting against the corruption and tyranny of the imperial officials and driving their taskmasters beyond the sea,* the British provincials did not repudiate the civilisation which for about three hundred and fifty years had asserted its influence. The ancient British culture had undoubtedly perpetuated itself among the tribes inhabiting the west and north-west —Cornwall, Wales, Galloway. It had, however, been considerably modified by the influence of Roman law and Christianity, and it would be wide of the truth to conclude that the assertion of independence by these tribes was followed by a relapse into prehistoric barbarism.† Such a conclusion is highly improbable, considering the protracted hold of Roman rule on the Britons, and tradition has preserved in the Roman genealogy of many of the names that bulk in bardic tale, a striking testimony of this Roman influence.‡ Cunedda, for instance, a name asso-

* Zosimus, lib. vi. 376-383.

† Skene, "Celtic Scotland," iii., p. 114; *cf.* Montalembert, iii., p. 11, and Freeman, "Norman Conquest," i. 19.

‡ See Skene, "Four Ancient Books of Wales," ii., p. 455; *cf.* "Celtic Scot.," iii. 102, 103.

ciated with the north of the province, and one of the post-Roman traditional leaders of the Britons, was the son of Æternus, and grandson of Paternus.* The same fact appears in "The Descent of the Men of the North," a tale to which Skene attributes an early date, while up to the commencement of the tenth century the kings of Strathclyde claimed kin with Roman ancestors. Patrick speaks of Coroticus, the savage British chief, who, about the middle of the fifth century, led a plundering band to Ireland as "no longer fellow-citizens of pious Romans but of demons." In the cities and fertile tracts where the Roman settler and the Romanised Briton were to be found, the laws and institutions, the language, literature, and art of Rome wielded supreme sway, and continued to exist far on into those two centuries of ever-increasing barbarism. Even so vigorous an advocate as Freeman of the view that "the English wiped out everything Celtic and everything Roman," admits the probability that "within the English frontier there still were Roman towns, tributary to the conquerors rather than occupied by them."† The remark of Gildas‡ about Britain still bearing the Roman name, but casting off her institutes, has reference only to the action of usurpers like Maximus, plentiful in number, who aspired to the imperial dignity in defiance of constituted authority. The letter of Honorius in 410 to the cities of Britain, admonishing them to take upon themselves the conduct of their own affairs, implies the continuance of municipal government. And though the fierce Saxon exterminated or enslaved his foes, and only that part of the old province ultimately remained to the ancient population which was more Celtic than Roman in character, there are traces in the Anglo-Saxon language, usages, and laws§ of that culture whose monuments were so largely sacrificed to the ferocity of the invader. "Our municipal institutions of the present day are all on the Roman model.

* Rhys, "Celtic Britain," p. 118.

† "Norman Conquest," i. 15; *cf.* Stubbs, "Constitutional History of England," i., pp. 2 and 3, who admits that "Roman civilisation perished slowly in the midst of a perishing people."

‡ "Hist.," sect. 13 (Giles' edit. and trans.).

§ See Coote, "Romans of Britain."

It suited the political genius of the Anglo-Saxons so well that they at once adapted themselves to it. . . . Some of the continental municipalities near the centre of power—Florence, Marseilles, Cologne—have probably enjoyed uninterrupted the rights they held under the Cæsars." * The world empire disappeared, and the mighty city, so long the lawgiver, the mistress of races the most diverse, the most remote, at last experienced, at the hands of an Alaric and a Genseric, the dishonour of conquest, by which she had compelled allegiance to her power. Everywhere throughout the west barbarism becomes sooner or later supreme, but even then the genius that had created the fabric of Roman culture is superior to the barbarian strength that rushes in with irresistible strength from the forests of Germany and conquers it in its turn. In the new forms that after centuries of revolution emerged from the ruins of the old empire, the trace of this conquest is not difficult to follow, and at the end of the nineteenth century the laws and the language of some of the highly civilised nations of Europe are still, to some extent, the living monuments of it. The comparison which Montalembert makes between the modern Briton and the ancient Roman is too limited. "The English race," he says, "has inherited the pride as well as the grandeur of that Roman people, of which it is the rival and the heir." † The inheritance is a far more organic one than that. It is true that the arts, language, and religion of Rome were all brought back again at a later time and in a corrupted form, and that it is to the Norman Conquest that we owe much of the Roman influence in the constitution and customs of the England of a later date, but I cannot believe, from my opinion of the indelible mark of Roman culture in Britain, that the laws, language, and municipal institutions of Roman Britain "perished utterly," as one of our greatest English historians would have it, ‡ and that they were not absorbed in some degree by the invaders, or maintained their influence among the tribes that defied behind their mountains the attacks of the Saxon. The old

* Burton, "History of Scotland," i., pp. 69, 70.

† "Monks of the West," iii., p. 6.

‡ Freeman, "Norman Conquest," i. 15.

British Church was for several centuries longer identical with the Church of Gaul and Italy in the fourth century. Nor can I believe that a civilisation over three centuries old was doomed to utter destruction by the furious onslaught of barbarians, who, by remaining in the country, were necessarily affected by new influences. The fact that there was a long struggle to be recorded by the bard and the monkish chronicler, is in favour of the view that the conquest was not all on one side. The question of the disappearance of the Latin language has not been settled yet, if we are to listen to Mr Coote and Professor Rhys. There is reason, too, to believe that the Roman military system, in some of its features, continued to be at least partially retained by the provincials.* And just as we cannot assume that three hundred years of British rule, say in South Africa, would not leave permanent effects on the subordinate population, no more can we represent the case differently to ourselves in the transition from Roman Britain to Saxon England and Scotland.

The chief source of our knowledge of this period of struggle with a cruel and barbarous invader, during which the old Roman culture was largely, though by no means wholly, subverted by the new forms of Teutonic barbarism, is the gloomy work of Gildas, "Concerning the Destruction of Britain."† He was evidently a Romanised Britain, born within a hundred years after the fall of the imperial power. The year of his birth, he tells us, was that of the battle of Badon, by which the Britons succeeded in checking for a time the encroachments of the Saxon, and which, according to the "Annales Cambriae," was fought in 516. Four different accounts of his life have been preserved, but they are all of much later date than the sixth century. One of his biographers makes him a native of Clydesdale.‡ If this

* Rhys, "Celtic Britain," pp. 102-111.

† The "Historia Britonum," attributed to Nennius (ninth century), contains little more, except the notice of the mission of St Germanus to Britain, than what Gildas relates. The additions have a traditional character. His facts are often mendacious. Bæda reproduces Gildas mostly. The "Præfatio Gildæ de Pœnitentia," ascribed to Gildas, is very like in style, and ascetic enough in spirit to be his.

‡ Skene, however, takes the "Regio Arecluta" to mean the Vale of Clywd in North Wales.

be so, he must have spent his early days in the region with which tradition associates the birth of another outstanding figure in the history of this shadowy period, St Patrick, who was carried thence at the age of eighteen as a slave to Ireland, the land of his subsequent missionary labours. But he displays a very vague acquaintance with the geography of the north,* and evidently wrote his History in Brittany, where he appears as the founder of the celebrated monastery of Ruys—one of those numerous British exiles who sought a refuge from the pitiless ferocity of the Saxon on the opposite coast of Armorica, and spread the benefits of Christian civilisation from their monastic settlements among its still pagan inhabitants.† His narrative bears a general character, and he only refers more particularly to the condition of the northern part of the province when noticing the inroads of the Picts and Scots after the departure of the legion, which was twice sent from abroad to the assistance of the harassed provincials. Still, the glimpses which he gives of the general condition of the province during the long period of conflict and social misery that intervened between the cessation of Roman rule and the latter part of the sixth century, embrace the old Valentia in common with other portions of Roman Britain. The picture which he paints in such dark, realistic colours, though wanting in detail of treatment, is invaluable, as coming from the hand of a spectator of the state of things which he depicts. Gildas evidently spent a part of his life in Britain as a religious leader of great eminence. He is a prominent figure in the traditions referring to this time. The visit of Irish devotees to Wales to obtain from him spiritual instruction and advice, as well as his reputed connection with Ireland as the reviver of the work of Patrick, prove this. Nor was the reputation of the writer unknown to men of historic importance who lived during, or within reasonable proximity of, his age. Columbanus, a partial contemporary, mentions "Gildas Auctor" in one of his epistles,‡ and Alcuin praises him as the wisest of the Britons. His production is, therefore, the work of a well-

* *Cf.* "Hist.," sects. 3, 17, 21. † Montalembert, ii. 260.

‡ Ad S. Greg. Pap.

known historic personage, not of a doubtful, obscure writer, and its authenticity may be accepted without further question. Nor need we hesitate to regard it as, in the main, a true, though all too hasty, delineation of an otherwise dim period. Mistakes there are, but it does not merit the very depreciating accusations of its most recent critic,* as "full of glaring contradictions," a charge also levelled against his copyists, Bæda and Nennius. Another writer† infers from the excessive depreciation of the Britons that the work is but a caricature of a losing race from the pen of some malignant enemy. Such a conclusion is not warranted in view of the character which Gildas so persistently reveals. Many of the literary productions of this age, like those of Salvian and Gregory of Tours, display the same pessimistic touch. The fervent austerity of the religious devotee, the captiousness, the unbending spirit of the cloister, appear in every page. The monk of Ruys views his war-convulsed native land from the rocky shore of Armorica with the impassioned eye of the Hebrew prophet, and if his philippic against the degenerate morals of his countrymen is coloured by the fanatic rigour of his own piety, we must not forget that the legacy which Rome bequeathed to the victims of her tyranny and misgovernment was the legacy of an enervated public and social life. Though turgid and gloomy to excess, the narrative possesses the traits of a story told by a contemporary, in contrast to the laboured productions of the forger or the traditional chronicler. We find none of the fantastic tales, the patriotic lore, with which the bard of a later time gave epic form to the fancied deeds of the past. There is no romance, but an intense and gloomy realism. The tales of Arthur and his battles, of Cunedda and his kingdom, which lend a patriotic relief to the Historia of Nennius three centuries afterwards, as well as those fruits of the later Celtic muse, or of the hagiological industry of mediæval times, which are such a weariness and constant provocation to the student of our early culture, are still enclosed in the womb of the future. There is, too, the vivid remembrance of a mighty past which the writer sees disappearing from

* Du Chaillu, "Viking Age," i. 25. † Morley.

his view, though so many echoes of it still tarry, and the respect for its worldly grandeur has evidently not been quenched by the austerity of a monkish devotion.* Though he rates his fellow-countrymen for their degenerate manners with that vigour of epithet, which is characteristic of the religious prophet of his age, there were doubtless many who shared this sentiment as they beheld the impressive monuments of a fallen antiquity.

"The subject of my complaint," he gloomily warns his reader, "is the general destruction of everything that is good, and the general growth of evil throughout the land."† The description of the excesses committed by the Saxon forms a grim illustration of this melancholy reflection, and though pitched in the most tragic key, is in harmony with the evil reputation which these pagan German tribes enjoyed in the ancient world. Salvian distinguishes their ferocity among the bad qualities which he ascribes to the various barbarian nations, and Orosius and Ammianus Marcellinus speak of their unshrinking bravery and the fury of their sudden attacks. Unaffected by Christianity or the civilisation of Rome, these savage hordes from the banks of the Elbe and the Frisian marshes, who had long directed their piratic expeditions‡ against the coast towns of Gaul and Britain, turned on the provincials with whom they had entered into a dangerous alliance against the Pictish marauders, and desolated the more accessible parts of the province with fire and sword. The dominant instinct of such an invader is destruction, and the levelled cities, whose fallen monuments and buildings were dyed with the blood of their butchered inhabitants, the pillaged churches, the murder of the priests at the altar, the desolate homesteads and fields, from which the husbandmen had fled, the crowds of forlorn fugitives who sought refuge in the woods and mountains, form the first effects of the arrival of some fresh band, seeking a settlement in the more fertile tracts along the eastern coast.§ Partial extermination,

* Sect. 4; *cf.* 24. † Sect. 1.

‡ Skene has pointed out that there were Saxon settlements on the east coast of what is now the Lowlands of Scotland at an early date.

§ Gildas, sect. 24; *cf.* Bæda, "Eccl. Hist.," i., c. 15; "Chron. Anglo-Sax.," ann. 490.

followed by the slavery of those who obtained a tardy quarter, going hand in hand with the demolition* of many of the splendid remains of Roman energy and luxury—this was undoubtedly the doom of those parts of the province on which the first weight of invasion fell. But the paucity of the numbers and the gradual arrival of these savage immigrants, as well as the spirit of the less enervated Celtic population, enabled the provincials, under leaders like Aurelius Ambrosius, to check their progress, and for nearly a century the fierce struggle for supremacy went on, with varying advantage on either side,† and ending in the Celtic remnant of the west establishing an independence, which bade defiance to the attempts of their hereditary enemies to shatter it, and only yielded to the supremacy of the Norman.

But the successful resistance to the invader in the west did not bring in its immediate train that inspiration of an elevating patriotism which has so often lent a renewing impetus to the higher culture of a people. The evil effects of Roman misgovernment long showed themselves in the disorganisation, the internal disunion, the want of creative power which deepened the miseries of an unsettled age. The idea of unity, which the imperial administration had taught its subjects with such implacable persistence, lost its force when the power to maintain it had disappeared. The military leaderships soon gave place to the assumption of kingly power, and the struggles of rival chiefs for supremacy increased the disorder and misery occasioned by the invader. The suspension of hostilities which followed a victory over the barbarian, like that of Badon,‡ was frequently the signal for the outbreak of civil commotion. "When our foreign wars cease, our civil troubles still remain," laments the monk of Ruys. In the traditional account of the battle of Arderyd, which Skene§ locates at the modern Arthuret in Liddesdale, fought between Gwendolen and Rydderch Hael (certainly an historic figure,

* This was the case, to some extent, even in Gaul, where the establishment of barbarian supremacy was not of so sanguinary a character.

† Sect. 26.

‡ Skene rather audaciously places the site in Linlithgowshire.

§ "Four Ancient Books of Wales," i., c. 10.

as he is mentioned by Adamnan), we have an example of this struggle for supremacy in the northern part of what was once the Roman province. Stability of government was impossible, where the assertion of selfish ambition, not the pursuit of the public good, was the chief aim of those in power. "Kings were anointed, not according to God's ordinance, but such as showed themselves more cruel than the rest, and soon after they were put to death by those who had elected them, without any inquiry into their merits, but because others still more cruel were chosen to succeed them." The charges of murder, immorality, and sacrilege, which Gildas hurls against those of his own time, five of whom he mentions by name, are doubtless coloured by the dark hues of a morbid fancy; but there are not wanting many such examples of lawlessness and excess in the pages of contemporary historians, like Gregory of Tours, who has left to posterity a sombre picture of the brutality, the lust, the inhumanity of the Frankish kings of the sixth century. The figure of a Mailcun or a Vortipere, blackened by crimes and vices which throw a sinister light on the profession of Christianity associated with them, is no incredible phenomenon in the age of a Chilperic and a Brunhilda. The character which St Patrick, in his "Epistle to Coroticus," draws of this lawless British king is in harmony with the prototype of the immoral tyrant in the pages of Gildas.

It would be vain to look for a high general intellectual culture among a people, so much exposed alike to the menace of invasion, the danger of extermination, and the strife of ambition and faction. The knowledge of the ancient language of Rome gradually died away, leaving its trace in the rude tongue of the Saxon, which supplanted it in the Romanised districts, and in the Cymric, which had survived the imperial occupation, and still lingers in the dialects of Wales, Cornwall, and Brittany. It is characteristic of the sepulchral monuments, bearing Latin inscriptions, and belonging to this period of transition from a purely Roman culture to that of the Saxon and Celtic populations, that divided the inheritance of the imperial province, that the later examples, like the Catstone on the

banks of the Almond, near Edinburgh, or the slab at Yarrow Kirk, in Selkirkshire, show unmistakable evidence of deterioration. "The more nearly we approach to the purely Roman period," says Dr Anderson,* "the more purely Roman become the style and character of the inscription, the less debased are its grammar, its idiom, and its letters, and the more perfectly legible its undefaced texts." The same mark of deterioration appears in this class of monuments over the whole range of the Roman provinces after the fall of the empire, indicating, suggestively at least, the decay of the culture associated with the remains of a classic antiquity.† The same influences that led to the decay of the old language of the Romanised provincials were equally unfavourable to the literary monuments of the Roman period. Gildas bewails the loss of "the records and writings of my country, which have been consumed in the fires of the enemy or have accompanied my exiled countrymen into distant lands." In composing his history he was compelled to make use of the works of Continental writers, and the range of his quotations or inferences shows that the library of the monastery of Ruys must have contained the writings of Eusebius, Ignatius, Polycarp, Basil, and other Christian authors—a circumstance not without some significance also for the literary culture of the British Church of his age. The fact, however, that Christianity asserted itself among the Celtic tribes of the west and north-west all through this long period of conflict and disorganisation, is a guarantee of the existence of a certain salutary influence upon the intellectual life of the people. The pagan Saxon showed no respect for church or monastery, and forced their inmates to seek safety in exile; but amid all their crimes and brutality, the Celtic chiefs, like the Frankish kings, had their hours of penitence or superstitious devotion, if we may trust the lives of the Welsh saints, and the names of Dubricius, Iltud, David, Cadoc, and other sixth-century founders of monasteries, like Bangor

* "Scotland in Early Christian Times," 2nd Series, pp. 246, 247.

† Only the two inscriptions at Kirkmadrine, in the neighbourhood of Ninian's establishment at Candida Casa, which mark the graves of the priests Viventius and Majorius, come near to the style of imperial times.

or Llancarvan, remind us that we must not always take too literally the sombre assertions of the monk of Ruys. It is told of Cadoc that he was an enthusiastic admirer of Virgil, and his fondness for this author brought on him the censure of Gildas.* The "Triads" profess to contain a number of his poetic aphorisms. The schools of Christian instruction under such leaders—combining the culture of the mind with that of the soul—must have exerted a considerable influence upon the rampant barbarism that had played havoc with the old Roman culture. In the north, the monastic institution of Candida Casa undoubtedly flourished for over a century under the successors of Ninian, if not so much as a missionary centre, as a seat of the Christian instruction of an earlier time. I delight to think of it as the Lerins or St Victor of the North, and to turn to the ruins of Whithorn for the site of our earliest Scottish University. Irish tradition, which authorities like Dr Skene† accept as authentic,‡ has preserved the echo of its fame, under the names of Magnum Monasterium and Rosnat, as a resort for the fervid student from the north of Ireland and the youth of the ancient Valentia. Cairnech,§ whom the "Pictish Chronicle" calls "the first martyr and the first monk of Erin," Endeus, Tighernac, and Eugenius—all of them founders of monasteries in their native Ireland, which was destined, through its monkish missionaries, to wield for two centuries an incisive influence on the culture of Western Europe—were all educated in its humble cloisters. Might not these venerable ruins put forth a just claim to the credit of having, along with the monasteries of Brittany and Wales, given birth to that intellectual and missionary inspiration, which was to make Ireland the Greece of Western Europe north of the Alps for several centuries? By one of those singular turns of history, Columba himself was at least indirectly indebted to Candida Casa, from the fact that Finnian, the first abbot of the celebrated monastic school of Maghbile, whose disciple he was, enjoyed for

* Montalembert, iii., p. 69. † "Celtic Scotland," ii. 47, 48.

‡ *See* my "Ninian und sein Einfluss auf die Ausbreitung des Christenthums in Nord-Britannien" (Heidelberg und London), pp. 37, 38.

§ "The Legend of Cairnech" makes him son of Sarran, a king of the Britons, and abbot of the monastery of Martin, evidently Candida Casa.

several years the benefit of the teaching of Mugentius. As the author of a Latin prayer, which has been preserved, the latter may claim to be the father of Scottish ecclesiastical literature. It forms a touching expression of deep contrition, and the remarks of the ancient commentator afford a rather startling glimpse into the inner life of the community, which was by no means proof against the frailties of human nature. Cupid apparently would not be denied entrance into the cell then, as in late mediæval times. It is one of these tales which lend a human touch to many an old monastic record, and the bribe of the master's books with which Drustice, the daughter of Drust, King of the Picts (presumably of Galloway), secures the aid of the knowledge-thirsty student in the realisation of her guilty design, is suggestive. Either fate or the monkish narrator takes vengeance, however, by the unfortunate issue of the love affair for both.

In addition to this trace of the survival of the intellectual culture of the Roman period, the poetry of the bards, who sang the victories of the British leaders, has come down as the faint echo of a struggle that, notwithstanding the misery and lawlessness which it occasioned, could not but stir the mind at times with a powerful inspiration. Tradition* has enshrined the names of a Taliesin and a Merdin, a Llywarch Hen, and an Aneurin, as the ancient singers of the vicissitudes of this war-torn period. There are not wanting advocates of their claims, and some of these, like Skene, who has translated their reputed works, contained in the "Four Ancient Books of Wales," are not incompetent judges of this kind of literary lore. The realistic painting of nature, the jarring note of fierce battle, the panegyric of the dead hero, the lonesome tragic sentiment that pervades these strange effusions, have certainly caught the spirit of a strongly moved epoch. Its heroes and their deeds are mostly associated with scenes in the north, between the walls of Antonine and Hadrian, and this much I may assert against the view of those who, like Stephen, in his "Literature of the Kymry," reject their authenticity and make

* Nennius (sect. 62, Giles' edit.) contains a notice of the bards famed for poetry during the struggle of the Britons to maintain independence.

them out to be, at the earliest, twelfth-century compositions, that they impress me as being at all events in sympathetic and living touch with the heroic and tragic era, which they depict with a terminology, unfortunately often obscure from the point of view both of history and topography.

The religious life of the Britons throughout this long period of conflict with the pagan invader does not appear in the pages of Gildas in a favourable light. The two visits paid by Germanus,* Bishop of Auxerre, in 429 and 448, reinvigorated for a time its ebbing spirit. To his *rôle* as controversial theologian against a Pelagian party he added that of political Mentor, and succeeded by the dauntless faith that nerved the Briton to conquer the Saxon in a battle known as the Hallelujah Victory, in identifying, for a space, Christianity with an ardent patriotism. But his two visits were after all but episodes, and the lawlessness and disorganisation, the religious degeneration, which demanded for their control the strength of a great leader, the continuous presence of a moulding hand, superior to circumstance, appear to have reasserted their blighting tendency after his departure. The vices of the clergy stand out in dark relief in the general demoralisation which the monk of Ruys paints in such shady colours. The rigid asceticism of the writer does not, however, commend him as a calm or unbiassed spectator. The harshness of his language reminds of that of St Jerome when inveighing against an opponent, like Vigilantius, of his austere and morbid views. He brands them, for instance, as "enemies of Christ and not priests," as "teachers of wickedness and not bishops," as "adversaries and not servants of Christ," and so on, in epithets hardly repeatable before refined ears. The immorality with which he charges them may be nothing more than a disinclination towards celibacy, and the worldliness, which shamed their profession of the gospel of self-sacrifice, might only have been an objection to the morbid life of the cloister. As is his wont, he plies them with Scripture, and is never at a loss for a text to point his moral. But, while we may suspect that their crime was to a considerable extent that of differing, in life

* "Vita Germani," by his contemporary, Constantinus, written, however, a considerable period after his death.

and thought, from their monkish accuser, there is sufficient ground left for concluding that the degeneration of manners which he describes—the covetousness, hypocrisy, self-seeking, servility towards the rich, harshness towards the poor, want of interest in knowledge, &c., existed alongside the stricter tendency which he also notices, and which had begun to assert itself in the monastic activity derived from Armorica (Brittany), and perhaps intensified in Gaul by the impulse emanating from St Benedict and his disciples. This tendency found expression in the labours of a David* and a Cadoc in Wales, and of a Kentigern in Strathclyde.

Between the time of Ninian and that of Kentigern, a century and a half later, little, beyond these general references of Gildas, is known regarding the condition of Christianity in the northern parts of the ancient province. Tradition, as we have seen, has preserved the fame of Candida Casa as a school, but there is reason to believe that, after the decease of St Ninian, its influence in the practical work of instructing the people waned considerably. It is through character, rather than institutions, that Christianity has wielded its power over the mass, and no outstanding figure appears on the horizon of tradition until the founder of the see of Glasgow. St Patrick, in the epistle which he wrote to the savage Coroticus, speaks of "the apostate Picts," and the phrase contains a significant hint of the decay of Ninian's work among the tribes north of the Forth, if not among those in Galloway. The labours of the Apostle of Ireland may well have had a beneficial influence on his native country. The existence of a movement, like that with which his name is bound up, could hardly fail to make itself felt in a land, distant at one point but an hour or two's sail, and connected with its leader by the associations of youth. The mission of Patrick, however, was apparently exaggerated by a later age for the purpose of maintaining the primacy of Armagh. He has been represented by mediæval tradition as achieving in a comparatively short time the complete conversion of a

* The two Synods of Llandewi Brefi and Lucus Victoriæ (abt. 569), presided over by David, were occupied with the reformation of the clergy in accordance with the more rigorous development (Haddan and Stubbs, i., p. 116).

people, among whom Christianity had hitherto made but little impression. He appears as a Moses,* who, supported by miraculous assistance, defeats all the arts and charms of his Druidic adversaries, and disarms all opposition to his teaching. But his contest with the Druidic cult in a land, where the bard and the priest wielded great power and enjoyed many privileges, was evidently not so triumphant as his mediæval panegyrists describe it. There are numerous instances in the Celtic Christian literature of the sixth and seventh centuries of the influence of the pagan worship long after St Patrick's day. His name remained long unknown to foreign historians, and neither Prosper, his contemporary in Gaul, who notes the unsuccessful mission of Palladius to Ireland in 431, nor Bæda, in the beginning of the eighth century, had apparently any knowledge of his labours. That he achieved no national adoption of the Christian faith is certain, from the fact that the Ardri, or overlord of Ireland, was not a Christian till 513. In his own simple and modest narrative, there is no claim to extensive success, but he was undoubtedly the founder of a large number of churches, of which he considered himself the authoritative bishop, in spite of those who sought to depreciate him; and in the dim traditional associations of early Irish ecclesiastics, like St Bridget, Monenna, Buitte, or Boethius, with Scotland, we may have a trace of his indirect influence on the population of his native land, during this shadowy period.† The labours of Palladius and his successors Ternan and Serf among the northern Picts are involved in the shadows of obscurity and contradiction. The two first-named are connected traditionally with the churches of Fordun and Banchory respectively.

Another name which bulks very largely in mediæval tradition and romance, and which has been associated with the maintenance of Christianity in the north, is that of King Arthur. He is not only the hero created by the poetic fancy of a people, struggling to maintain their independence

* Nennius, sects. 50-55.

† Skene ("Celtic Scotland," ii. p. 36; *cf.* p. 193) finds in Brychan, reputed founder of Falkirk and Brechin, a trace of the influence of Wales during this period, as also in the dedication, in the north, of churches to the Welsh saints, Nidan and Finan.

against the Saxon; he also appears as the champion of Christianity against the dominant paganism of the invader. In addition to the sword, with which he hews his enemies in pieces, he bears the image of the Virgin. Dr Skene, following the narrative of Nennius, boldly traces the sites of his battles throughout the south of Scotland,* regardless of the lore that represents him as the conqueror of Scandinavia and the west of Europe, and the fact that his name has left its trace over an area extending from the Forth to the Loire. It is as a culture hero, however, not as a Christian conqueror, that the explanation of his greatness is to be sought. The bards created him out of some ancient god, combining some scraps of history with a mythology that had long lost its living power, but which takes realistic shape anew in the pages of Geoffrey and the mediæval romancers. Like the mighty Barbarossa, who still awaits the call that is to summon him from his sleep in the cavern at Kiffhäuser, the poetic imagination of a people, who revelled in the imagined glories of former days, long looked for the return of this bardic figure from the isle of Avallan, whither he was carried to recover from the wounds inflicted by the false Medrant. One of the places where popular lore came to locate the waiting hero and his knights was the Eildon Hills, where shall be heard the voice

> "That bids the charmed sleep of ages fly,
> Rolls the long sound through Eildon's caverns vast,
> While each dark warrior rises at the blast,
> His horn, his falchion grasps with mighty hand,
> And peals proud Arthur's march from fairyland."†

"It may be granted," says Rhys, "that there was an historic Arthur, who may have held the office, which, under the Roman administration, was known as that of the Comes Britanniæ, that he may, like Aurelius Ambrosius, have been partly of Roman descent, that Maelgwyn was his nephew, whom Gildas accuses of slaying his uncle, that his name Arthur was either the Latin Artorius, or else a Celtic name belonging in the first instance to a god Arthur. . . . On the one hand, we have the man Arthur, . . . on the other, a greater Arthur, a more colossal figure, of which we

* "Four Ancient Books of Wales," i., chap. iv. of Introduction.

† Leyden, "Poetic Works," p. 36. *Cf.* Rhys, "Arthurian Le end," p. 18.

have, so to speak, but a torso, rescued from the wreck of the Celtic Pantheon." *

Thus, this striking torso disappears from the view of the student of our early culture to make way for the more sober, yet more tangible, figure of Kentigern (518-603?). The earliest extant life of this bishop†—the contemporary of Columba and David—is the production of Joceline, a monk of the abbey of Furness, who was commissioned by his namesake of the see of Glasgow, towards the end of the twelfth century, to write an account of the founder of the diocese.‡ As in the case of the author of the life of Ninian, he professes to draw his materials from two already existing works—the one obscured by an inelegant style, and containing matter at the beginning contrary to the "Catholic faith," the other written in the "Scotico stilo," more copious and full of solecisms. His aim, he naïvely tells us, was "to clothe so precious a treasure, if not in gold tissue and silk, at least in clean linen." The reader may not agree with his estimate of the value of the production, to which he strove to give a respectable appearance, but he must admit that the garrulous monk understood how to tell a story in a spirited manner. He manifests the tendency to become inflated, inseparable from the mediæval panegyrist, yet he evidently keeps before him the taste of his reader, who sought in the saintly biography, not mere religious edification, but the mental excitement and relaxation afforded by the modern novel. These monkish writers understood well the art of dispensing poetical justice—one of the secrets of the fascination of fiction—and the saint that always comes out of a scrape with flying colours is as interesting as the hero that must win at last. Many of the incidents differ from the insipid episodes, served up by Ailred in his biography of Ninian, by the dramatic colouring which Joceline gives them, and as for the indispensable love affair, the monk of Furness is as fertile, and fully as piquant, as the hackneyed story-teller of the present time. All the

* "Arthurian Legend," p. 48.

† Edited and translated by Bishop Forbes, "Historians of Scotland," vol. v.

‡ A fragment of a somewhat earlier life has been preserved. It was composed by "a cleric of St Kentigern." by direction of Bishop Herbert, who died 1164, but it does not add to our knowledge of the saint.

more pity that his history is so crude and so uncritical. The good monk had evidently but very hazy ideas of the period, and the acts which he depicts with such an assurance of faith, and while he may be trusted in regard to a number of leading facts in the life of Kentigern, he views them too often from the standpoint of his own time, and fills up the blanks with the confused and inaccurate fancies of a later tradition. In the account of his birth, for instance, in which King Loth figures very prominently, there is a palpable trace of the Arthurian legend, and the adventure of Queen Langoreth, the spouse of Rydderch of Strathclyde, and the knight, which serves to illustrate the sagacity, if not the supernatural power, of the holy man, is a reminiscence of the romance of Tristran and Iseult. The touch of Geoffrey of Monmouth is thus observable more than once, and the science of history, as distinguished from fiction, was yet to be. The story of his birth is hopelessly pervaded by this spirit of romance. The unhappy condition of his mother Theneu, the daughter of Loth, seduced by the wiles of her sacrilegious suitor, and driven forth as an outcast in consequence; the bold, miraculous fashion in which the skiff is made to carry its forlorn occupant across the Firth of Forth in the direction of Culros, the birth of the future bishop on the seashore, the discovery of mother and child by the shepherds, and their kindly reception by St Serf; the affectionate relations of pupil and master, who familiarly called him Mungo; the persecuting tricks with which his envious schoolfellows annoy him, his consequent flight, and the touching dialogue between the fugitive and his master across the Forth near Stirling, make a spirited and entertaining story. Only it cannot claim to be anything more than a confused compilation, by one ignorant of the past. It certainly is not history, for King Loth is a bardic creation, and St Serf, a personage who figures in the time of Adamnan, about the beginning of the eighth century, was not born till long after the days of Kentigern. Nor could Culros boast of such a monastic establishment before the time of King Brude MacDargart. If there is any truth at all in this dramatic narrative of his childhood and youth, the chronology and the topography are strangely inverted,

and need a readjustment, which seems now hopeless.* We shall probably be near the truth if we regard him as a native of Strathclyde, and educated either at Candida Casa or in some Welsh monastery. There is no mention of the former in the pages of Joceline—a blank that is suggestive of the scantiness of his knowledge of the period—though he represents Kentigern as evangelising anew the Picts of Galloway, but he takes him to Wales, where he founded the monastery of St Asaph in the vale of Clywd.

The reputation which Kentigern had acquired as a religious devotee in some British cloister led to his selection by the people and the King of Strathclyde as their bishop. Consecrated to the episcopal office by an Irish ecclesiastic, he transformed his cell on the bank of the Melindonor, where, according to tradition, he had resided some time as a religious recluse, into the head-quarters of his diocese. This spot was already associated with the spread of Christianity. Near it was the cemetery of St Ninian, and not unlikely a Roman settlement. Near it, at all events, were the numerous traces of an empire that had passed away, and some, at least, of the old stations or settlements may still have served as centres of population. Many of the religious teachers who played such an important part in the regeneration of Western Europe during the sixth and seventh centuries, took up their residence amid the desolate scenes of Roman civilisation. The charm of a mighty past still exerted its unconscious spell, and the solitude that had long haunted those sites of a fallen greatness was the nurse not only of the pious contemplation of the hermit, but of the vigorous industrial life that speedily associated itself with it. The monks, especially after the influence of St Benedict and the practical organisation, to which he subjected his monastic communities at Subiaco and Monte Cassino, had become the predominating power in the religious life of Italy and Gaul in the sixth century, became the means of undoing

* The "Aberdeen Breviary," the Bollandists, and others, try to solve the difficulty by creating two Serfs, but this would imply a double foundation of Culros.

the mischief wrought by the barbarian invasions. To the duties of obedience and devotion, St Benedict joined that of labour, and by-and-by the axe of the monk cleared away the tangled thicket that encumbered the ancient site of some Roman settlement, and his plough reclaimed the waste ground that had once been a smiling field. To the efforts of the monkish community to restore the benefits of a faded civilisation, many of the great cities of France and Northern Europe owe their origin, and we can readily believe that the huge modern industrial centre of the West of Scotland, whose ships float on the remotest seas, which bears the figure of Kentigern on its arms, and which long invoked him as its patron saint, had a similar beginning. Around the Church rose the hamlets of the clerical community, attracted by the bishop, and which ere long included, mayhap, the booth of the trader and the mechanic. According to Joceline, each lived in his separate hut (he apparently regarded them, though incorrectly, as a body of the later Culdees), possessed everything in common, and divided their time between the devotions of the oratory and the toils of agriculture. In both respects the bishop excited their emulation by personal example. He was as ready to grasp the plough handle as to bear the episcopal staff. By solitary meditation and prayer, as well as by the most rigorous self-discipline, he strove to realise the monkish ideal, and to impress it on his disciples, with the result, flattering at least to his perseverance if not to his heart, that "the sight or touch of the most beautiful maiden had no more effect upon him than the hardest flint." He was evidently a man of character, like many of those resolute devotees who wielded such a power in Western Europe in that age of transition, through Teutonic barbarism, to the new world that transformed itself from the old, and whose intense pursuit of their ideal of the religious life has floated down the centuries in that collection of legend, often monotonous in its sameness, yet rich in incident and not wanting a species of poetic charm.

There appears to have been ample scope, in the decayed Christian sentiment and demoralised condition of the descendants of Ninian's converts in the north, for the

missionary activity, which was formed by the devotional spirit of the cloister. The old paganism still counted its votaries, and survived in the semi-christian ideas which always mark such a transitionary period ; while the morality of the Gospel was at a discount where the influence of an active Christian spirit was awanting. The ecclesiastical legislation which has come down to us in the account of the Welsh Synods,* held in the latter half of the sixth century, and which had reference to such vices as concubinage and incest—vices inveighed against by Joceline—as well as the tendency to relapse into heathenism,† or to combine it with a superficial profession of Christianity, where the continuity of Christian effort has been broken, render it highly probable that the account which Joceline gives of his labours as missionary bishop, and social reformer, is a true one. His aggressive attitude towards the pagan customs and the loose moral relations of the people aroused a spirit of opposition, which resulted in his retirement to Wales for a number of years, where he founded the monastery of Llanelwi, afterwards St Asaph, a famous school of monastic learning and virtue. King Morken‡ and his advisers, whose enmity was the immediate cause of his flight, of course got the worst of it at the hands of Joceline, but there is no improbability in "the tyrant who scorned the life and doctrine of the holy man," or in the "sons of Belial who, excited by the sting of intense hatred, and infected with the poison of the devil, took counsel together how they might lay hold of Kentigern by craft and put him to death." St Patrick inveighs with equal force against a king of his time, the Briton Coroticus, "a tyrant who fears neither God nor His priests," and whose followers were "wicked rebels against Christ and betrayers of Christians into the hands of the Scots and Picts."§ The epistle, in which he thus arraigns him, conclusively shows that the saints of those days were not exempt from the

* Haddan and Stubbs, i., pp. 113-117.

† Dr Todd ("Life of Patrick," p. 101) adduces evidence to show that this result followed the death of the Apostle of Ireland, and the same is true of that of Ninian.

‡ "The Mercant of Nennius," sect. 63.

§ "Epist. ad Coroticum."

vicissitudes of the times, nor saved by their faith, or their sacred character, from outrage and failure.

In Rhydderch Hael (Roderick the Generous), under whom, some years later, a reaction in favour of Christianity took place, and who invited Kentigern to return from Wales, we have unquestionably an historical figure. He not only bulks in bardic tradition as the conqueror of his heathen rival, Gwendolen, at Ardderyd in Liddesdale, but he is mentioned by Adamnan* a century later in his "Life of Columba" as sending messengers to the apostle of the Picts, to inquire what sort of death he should die. Henceforth the diocese of the bishop was co-extensive with his dominions, extending from the Clyde to the Derwent. The inquisition into the condition of the see of Glasgow by David, Prince of Cumbria, and afterwards King of Scotland, showed that many ancient lands belonged to it even in Dumfries and Tweeddale, but all traces of the Church had been lost amid the wars and devastations of the interval, though Kentigern had many successors.† Though his power was not, as his biographer would have us believe, supreme in matters political as well as ecclesiastical, we may confidently accept the testimony of the numerous dedications of churches in his honour from Aberdeenshire to Cumberland, to his activity and influence in the restoration of Christianity and the regeneration of social abuses. At Hoddam, where he spent some years, Joceline draws a vivid picture of the manner in which, seated on a hill, he instructed the rustic population that flocked to hear him on the errors of idolatry. At length he returned to his old headquarters on the banks of the Melindonor. Here he renewed the former life of monastic devotion and missionary energy, which had decayed during so long an interruption. Exaggeration is inseparable from the task of the panegyrist, especially when he is writing on commission and under the influence of the ideas of a much later age. Kentigern did probably attempt to extend his mission to the apostate Picts beyond

* He entitles one of his chapters "De Rege Rodereo filio Tothail qui in Petra Cloithe regnavit, Beati viri prophetia."

† Innes, "Sketches of Early Scotch History," p. 31.

the Forth, but we may be certain that his biographer takes us into the realm of myth when he embraces the Orkneys, Norway, and Iceland within the sphere of the zeal of his emissaries. The absence of all knowledge of his existence on the part of Bæda, and still more of Adamnan, who, as we have seen, specially refers to Strathclyde and its Christian king, precludes the idea that he enjoyed anything more than a local reputation, though it does not detract from the success of his labours within his own sphere. In common with all the British clergy, he appears to have exercised no influence on the Saxon heathendom which had found a footing on the east coast, and was steadily advancing westwards. Politically, he was associated with a losing cause, and the defeat of the Scottish chief, Aidan, and his British allies at Degsastane (Dawston) in 603, the reputed year of Kentigern's death, and the yet more crushing defeat, inflicted on the British army at Chester soon after, contributed doubtless to throw the shadow of forgetfulness over his memory, as well as, to some extent, arrested the progress of his mission. One successor is mentioned as taking part in a British synod, and one is supposed to have been present on a similar occasion in Rome, but the history of the see is lost amid the confusions caused by Anglic conquest, and was but scantily renewed by the inquisition into his past, ordered by King David in the twelfth century. There may be truth in the dramatic account of his meeting with Columba, who is represented as paying him the homage of a visit, but if so, the relative importance of the holy men must be reversed. His sevenfold visit to Pope Gregory is pure fable. Communication with the Continent was still kept up, as the connection of the British Church with its offshoot in Armorica shows. The Saxon likewise maintained a close intercourse with his Frankish kinsmen in the north of Gaul. It would be a mistake to think that the march of events in these countries, which once, like Britain, formed the members of a vast unity, was altogether unknown in the remote north. The minds of men then, as now, were doubtless moved by the tale of great events—by those principal movements, which were moulding the destiny of

the future, such as the campaigns of Belisarius, and the destruction of the empire of the Vandals in North Africa, or the decay of the Ostro-Gothic kingdom in Italy in spite of the shade of the great Theodoric, and the settlement there of Alboin and his Lombards by the last of those revolutions, by which the old Roman Europe disappeared, and the Teutonic influence acquired that predominating power which has lasted to our day. Nor was the great Pope unacquainted with the island, which only shortly before his time was finally ceded by the Byzantine emperor to the barbarians, and which for two centuries had retained so many traces of its imperial connection. He strove with all the energy begotten of an ardently cherished scheme, not only to Christianise the Saxons, but to bring the old British Church into renewed communion with Christian Rome, and the fame of "the golden-mouthed Pope," as the Irish Cummian calls him, was likely not unknown to Kentigern, though the knowledge was probably not reciprocal.

In the pathetic words in which Gregory describes the fallen glory of the once imperial city, we may find an image of the decay which had by this time overtaken her proud monuments throughout the provinces of her once mighty empire, and the dirge of a past, which now only lived in the new, yet by no means strange, forms that had passed through the mould of a triumphant barbarism. "Rome, once mistress of the world," he exclaims, as he casts his eye upon her ruined palaces at the end of the sixth century, "how do we see her fallen! Where is the senate? Where is the people? But why speak I of men? The very buildings are destroyed, and the walls crumbled down. . . . Once her princes and chiefs spread themselves over all the earth to possess it. The sons of worldly men hastened thither to advance themselves in life. Now that she is deserted and ruined, no man comes hither to seek his fortune; there is no power remaining to oppress the poor."*

To Ireland and her monasteries, to Iona and its Celtic Christian culture, untouched by imperial ambition, we must now turn for the influences that told on our culture, and moulded that of the Continent for several centuries.

* Hom. 18, Ezek. (apud Montalembert).

# BOOK III.

## CELTIC CHRISTIAN CULTURE.

### CHAPTER I.

#### COLUMBA AND IONA.

"WE can follow the trace of the old Roman culture," says Professor Giesebrecht,* "to the end of the sixth century, after which there follows a period of the most fearful barbarism throughout the West, whose darkness is relieved by no spark of the higher intellectual life. All the literary and artistic remains of this period bear the stamp of the most frightful degeneration, now rampant everywhere in those lands which once, under the domination of Rome, had flourished so gloriously." It is in the remote Erin, which had remained practically untouched † by the ambition of Rome, that we must seek the light that brightens the prospect across this dark period of chaos. In the Celtic monasteries and their offshoots in North Britain, in France, in Germany, and even in Italy, there glowed the flame of an intense devotion to a high moral ideal, as well as to the pursuit of knowledge and intellectual excellence. The passionate enthusiasm of these unconquered tribes, whose vigour had never been sapped by Roman misrule, though too often consumed in internal feud, burst forth with irresistible ardour, when, under the inspiration of Finnian and the many distinguished disciples he had trained in his monastery of Clonard, the religious

* "Geschichte der Deutschen Kaiserzeit," i., p. 94.

† Professor Stokes, in his work on the "Celtic Church in Ireland," argues, however, that Ireland was not so free from the presence of the Roman as is usually asserted.

instinct had been aroused by a wave of monastic fervour. The old culture of the bards and the pagan priests, which had mingled the patriotic songs of a mythic past with the worship of the native deities, was transformed by this new-born intensity of sentiment. The faith and life of the Gospel took possession of the future, and made the fervid Celtic nature for two centuries, before Charlemagne arose to combine government with the development of knowledge, the most powerful force in the culture of Western Europe. The Anglo-Saxon monks, who afterwards became their rivals in missionary zeal, only followed in the footsteps of a Columbanus or a St Gall, a Fredolin or a Kilian, and were to a large extent their spiritual and intellectual offspring. For while the monasteries of the ancient Scotia gave forth those swarms of wandering missionaries, who penetrated with the Gospel among the wildest peoples beyond the Rhine and the Danube, carrying with them the treasures of classic learning, they received with open doors the crowds that poured into them from Anglo-Saxon Britain and their kindred in Gaul and Germany. Bangor, Clonard, Moville (Maghbile), Clonmacnoise, Durrow, and other famous foundations of monkish zeal in Ireland, took the place of those ancient seats of learning which had languished with the fall of the empire, and overshadowed the more renowned of the older monasteries on the Continent. Some of them, like Clonard and Bangor, counted as many as three thousand inmates each. The rise of the English schools of York, Canterbury, Jarrow, and Wearmouth did not obscure the glory of their Celtic rivals. Bæda* notes in his time the pre-eminence which they shared with Rome itself in attracting the ardent youth, eager for knowledge and perfection in the monastic life.† In the libraries of the Continental monasteries founded by them, the fruits of their industry, their scholarship, and their taste are seen in the illuminated copies of the Scriptures or the classic authors, with commentaries and glosses so valuable to the philologist and the student of culture.

* "Hist. Eccl.," iii. 27.

† There still existed at Armagh in 1092 a quarter called Trien Saxon, occupied by Anglo-Saxon students.

It cannot be said that the political condition of Ireland favoured this extraordinary growth of the new Christian culture, which had been planted by Patrick, and revived and intensified by the founders of its famous monastic schools. Like the other nations of Western Europe during this period of its noblest title to fame, it was desolated by all the miseries of war and party strife. Its Ardri or chief kings almost all died a violent death, and the feuds of its inferior monarchs and chiefs fill its annals with the monotonous tale of battle and outrage. Even the inmates of the monasteries were not at times superior to the quarrelsome, impetuous, and vindictive temperament, whose excesses have darkened its unhappy destiny. Their bloody conflicts form a peculiarly painful spectacle in the tragic drama of early Irish history. Side by side with that passionate patriotism, which has found a touching expression in some of the greatest and most austere of its saints, as well as in its treasures of bardic poetry, and which is still a living force in our day, went the uncontrollable tendency to disunion and lawless excess. Nevertheless the religious sentiment, combined with a many-sided intellectual activity, flourished in Ireland throughout the centuries of barbarism which wrapped the rest of Europe in its stifling embrace from Clovis to Charlemagne. "War and religion," it has been said, "have always been the two great passions in Ireland."

The monastery was a national institution. It partook of the vigour and intensity with which the national customs have asserted themselves so powerfully over the Celtic race. Crushed for so many centuries in those lands of the West, which were once its heritage, trodden down by the more persistent force of Teuton influence, the tenacity of its lore, its culture, has outlived the political nonentity which was its doom, and in the Highlands of Scotland, in Wales, in Ireland, in Brittany, as well as in those distant colonies where the Gael has found a new home, the touch of a venerable antiquity still makes itself felt. In English literature, as a late gifted writer* has shown, the play of its fancy, the lightness of its touch, may yet be traced.

* Arnold, "The Study of Celtic Literature," sect. iii.

The new religion that supplanted the old paganism came under the influence of this characteristic tenacity of grasp, and derived a perennial vigour from it. The Church was organised, during the period of its most splendid activity, on the basis of the tribe; it was simply a series of Christian communities bound together on the family principle, which formed the characteristic feature of Celtic national life. This identity of the Church with the forms of Celtic society enabled it to maintain its ground amid the most frightful disorders, and, along with the powerful individuality of many of the marked figures whose memories have outlived for so many centuries the decay of this splendid epoch, fitted it to wield on European Christendom such a far-reaching influence. Among those great names, that of Columba is specially dear to the student of our early Scottish culture as the bearer of this great movement, of which he was at the same time one of the fathers in his native land, to our shores. No monument honours the shade of this grand old monk, who, nevertheless, stands out as one of the greatest creative spirits in the annals of our country. After all, his life is his noblest monument, and in this respect few of the great Christian heroes, to whom humanity owes so much, have a better title to a people's reverence.

Unlike Ninian and Kentigern, Columba has been fortunate in having a biographer who lived within less than a century after his death, and who, as his eighth successor at Iona, had ample opportunity of learning the facts of his life. Adamnan's materials were drawn partly from written, partly from oral sources. He not only made use of a brief earlier account of the virtues of the saint by Cummian,* the seventh abbot, which he embodied almost literally in the third book of his work, but of the testimony of eye-witnesses of some of the events he relates. In addition to these, he had at his command a number of poems in praise of his hero by contemporary poets like Dallan,† the chief bard of Erin, and his intimate friend and successor at Iona, Baithene. Gifted with a sympathetic

* "De Virtutibus Sancti Columbæ."

† Author of the "Amra Columcille," a poem in praise of the saint, in return for his advocacy of the cause of the bards at the Convention of Drumceatt.

insight into the character of the great monk, his work may be compared with the biography of Martin by Sulpicius Severus, or that of Wilfrid by Eddius. Though coloured like them by the credulity of the time, it is the work of an accomplished scholar, who combined, with a ready faith, that respect for the truth which would commemorate "nothing that is untrue or doubtful regarding so great a man." His versatile and sympathetic narrative is wanting in that precision of consecutive statement, with which a less superstitious biographer might have furnished us, but it presents, in characteristic glimpses at least, the drama of a great movement, and brings us under the spell of a mighty personality. There is all the charm of romance in his gossipy pages. They lead us, with the firm tread of an unerring guide, into a world strangely different from ours—the world of faith and fancy, of heroic figures and impassioned souls—the world in which the old barbarism and the new culture contrast, yet mingle with each other in such effective incident—a world hoary with the antiquity of dim ages, yet bathed in the springlike freshness of a new creation. To the observant eye there is a fascination about this old-world picture, with its mingled touches of dreamland and reality, its intensity of faith and action, its freshness of dawn relieving the shades of receding night. There is a spell in the simple cell of our monkish author, and he knows how to wield it.

Other sources of information, next to Adamnan, are the "Old Irish Life,"* in the form of an ancient homily addressed apparently to a congregation on the saint's festival day; the "Life" by O'Donnell, a collection of all written information and local tradition about Columba, written in 1532; the "Annals of the Four Masters," and those of Tighernach.

According to the prophecies and visions which preceded his birth, the pre-eminence of the future apostle of the Northern Picts ought to date even before that event! An angel appears to the fond imagination of his mother,

* "Leabhar Breac," translated by Hennessey in "Celtic Scotland," ii., app. i. Another interesting life in the vernacular is in the "Anecdota Oxoniensia," pt. v., 168-181.

bearing a robe of extraordinary beauty as an emblem of the subsequent greatness of her unborn child. Posterity remembered too, that is invented, the prophecy of "Maucta, a pilgrim from Britain," of the birth of a son, "whose name, Colomb, shall be announced in every province of the isles of the ocean." Columba doubtless owed not a little of the pre-eminence he enjoys in such popular stories to his royal rank. His father, Fidlimidh, the chief of a mountainous district in the north-west of Ireland, was a great-grandson of one of its supreme monarchs (Niall Naigiallach), his mother a descendant of a celebrated king of Leinster. His half-uncle, Muircertach, occupied the throne in the year 521, the probable date of his birth, and during his lifetime it was held by a succession of his near relatives. It was to the fact of these powerful connections by birth, as much as to his reputation for sanctity, that he owed the influence which he wielded on the political affairs of Ireland and the Scottish colony in North Britain, and which forms a striking feature of his after-career. His foster parents were the O'Firghils, and with them, in accordance with the Celtic custom of fosterage,* by which the children of the higher classes were brought up in the family of some dependent, he spent his childhood at a place called Doire Eithne,† in the vicinity of Gartan, his birthplace. It is a wild spot in the midst of mountain and lake scenery, still, it is said, the haunt of the eagle, the raven, and the badger, and fitted to nurture the weird spirit of the Celtic muse in his imaginative soul. In addition to the instruction of the priest Cruithnecan,‡ who had baptized him, and who appears to have acted as his tutor, he spent some time as a pupil of Bishop Bragach of Rathenaigh, whom he surprised by his ability to read the "Misericordia."§ At the age of seventeen (the period over which fosterage extended) he entered the celebrated monastic school of Finnian, at Maghbile (Moville), at the head of Strangford Lough, who ordained him a deacon.

* Skene, "Celtic Scotland," iii., p. 190.

† Now Kilmacrenan.

‡ It was from his habit of constant attendance in the Church of Tullach Dubhglaise (Temple Douglas), during this period, that he earned the title of Columcille—Columba of the Church.

§ "Adamnan," iii. 3. *Cf.* "Old Irish Life."

There he imbibed that love of knowledge which he retained throughout his missionary life. He zealously copied the books within his reach, and delighted then, as afterwards at Iona, in reading and writing. His studies at Moville, and under the still more distinguished Finnian of Clonard, whither he subsequently removed, seem to have been concerned largely with the Scriptures,* but he was acquainted with the Latin language. The knowledge of the classic languages and the pursuit of a relatively broad culture were not unknown in the Irish monasteries of this time, as we see from the works of Cummian, as well as in the "Life of St Brendan," or that of Columbanus. At all events, the studies of the cloister did not stifle the keen interest he felt in the lore of his country. His love of poetry led him to spend some time after he left Moville with the aged bard Gemman, with whose "divine wisdom" the inspiring deeds of his countrymen and the humanising charms of his native scenery would doubtless be blended. Anciently the champion and the nurse of paganism, the Irish muse had begun to associate itself with Christianity, and the Irish monastery had its bard, who recorded its history in verse, and sang the praises of its founder and its more notable inmates. His triumphant defence of the bardic order, long afterwards, at the convention of Drumceatt, and the poems attributed to him, in which the religious sentiment is broadened by the appreciation of nature, and the fervour of patriotism, show that in the rapt spirit of the great missionary there was room for the human emotions with which a plastic fancy enriches our nature. At Clonard, Columba had as fellow-students Comgall, Ciaran, Cairnech, and others, whose names have been enshrined in the Irish Calendar, and with whom, after being ordained priest by Etchen,† he spent some time in meditative retirement on the banks of the Findglas, preparing for his eventful life as "father and founder of monasteries."‡ A pestilence broke up the community, and drove Columba northwards, probably in the year 544.

* Adamnan speaks of him, when at Moville, as "still a youth in Scotia, learning the wisdom of the Holy Scriptures under St Findbar (Finnian) the bishop."

† The "Felire of Angus the Culdee" is the only authority for this tradition. See Todd's "St Patrick." p. 71.

‡ Adamnan, preface.

With his return to his kindred began the active work of his life; and if we take the miraculous virtue ascribed to him by his superstitious biographer as an indication of his early reputation, his name already carried with it the weight of unusual ability and devotion. The scene of his first recorded labours was at Derry, anciently Daire Calgaich, a fortified hill, so named from some long-forgotten chief,* whose oakclad sides supplied the material for his humble church, and still humbler cell. The next fifteen years, until the battle of Culdrebhne in 561, which looms in tradition as the turning-point of his career, were devoted to the establishment of numerous monastic communities throughout Ireland. The largest of these was at Durrow, "a noble monastery," in the words of Bæda, "next in importance to Iona only, which, from the great number of oaks, is called Dearmach in the Scottish tongue." The most secluded, if not the smallest, was in Glen Columcille, a weird, tempest-swept spot, in the far west of Ulster, whose wild music, brooding mists, and wave-lashed shore formed a congenial environment for the rapt minds of these stern devotees.† In such solitudes the spirit of asceticism found undisturbed exercise, beyond the reach of the savage warfares, the murderous lawlessness, which filled the land with desolation and bloodshed, and of which Tighernac gives so many instances.‡

"In the second year after the battle of Culdrebhne, and in the forty-second year of his age, St Columba, resolving to seek a foreign country for the love of Christ, sailed from Scotia to Britain."§ In this simple statement, which agrees with that of Bæda,‖ we see the realisation of what was evidently a long-cherished ideal. Columba was influenced not merely by the spirit of knowledge and monkish asceticism, but by the missionary zeal and love of travel which characterised the Irish monks of the sixth and seventh

* "National Dict. of Biog.," art. "Columba." According to the Irish Life, it was granted to him by King Aedh.

† Dr Reeves, in his edition of Adamnan, gives a list of thirty-seven Irish monasteries which honoured Columba as their founder.

‡ "Annals," ii., p. 133, &c.

§ Adam., 2nd Præf. A quotation from a poem of the bard Cenfaled.

‖ "Hist. Eccl.," iii. 4.

centuries. To his youthful mind, such a life of adventurous usefulness had an irresistible fascination, and the dream of a great future often fanned the zeal of the scholar in the cloister at Moville and Clonard,—a dream, whose realisation it did not require the gift of prophecy to foreshadow, in the case of one possessed of such energy of mind. "Columba," we are told, "solicited three things from God —chastity, wisdom, and pilgrimage, all of which were granted to him." Tradition has, however, invested this missionary pilgrimage with a tragic interest. It represents the departure of Columba from his beloved Erin as an act of penance, and his sojourn in Iona as an involuntary exile. The primary cause of the battle of Culdrebhne was ascribed by it* to his resentment at the death of Curnan, who had murdered a nobleman at the feast of Tara, and who was slain by Diarmit, King of Ireland, regardless of the protection of the saint, to whom he had fled for refuge. The sense of injury was aggravated by the adverse decision of the king on the question of the ownership of a copy of the Psalms (the cathach or battler, a pledge of victory in battle), which he had surreptitiously made from the book of Finnian in the church of Moville, and which he was compelled to give up, on the ground that, as to every cow belongs her calf, so to every book its copy. At his instigation, his kinsman, the northern Hy Niall, took arms and avenged his wrongs by inflicting a defeat on the army of the king. The impulsive, resentful temperament of the Irish monks, which often broke through the restraints of religion and involved them in the feuds of the age,† makes it by no means improbable that Columba was indirectly guilty of the bloodshed that resulted from this quarrel. It is certain that he brought upon himself the censure of the Church, which passed sentence of excommunication upon him at a synod held at the royal residence of Tailte. But his biographer adds that the sentence was unjust‡ and in opposition to the opinion of St Brendan of Birr, who sees

* Tighernach, "Annales," "Annales iv. Magistrorum," and O'Donnell.

† Columba was connected with two other battles, according to tradition—those of Cul-Rathan (Coleraine), 579, and Culfedha, 587.

‡ He speaks of "the pardonable and very trifling reasons," which, however, he does not state.

"a most brilliant pillar, wreathed with fiery tresses," preceding his approach. The remorse awakened by this censure, to which the penalty of perpetual banishment from Ireland was added by Molaise,* who is represented as the arbiter of his fate, led him to seek atonement for the past in attempting the conversion of the Northern Picts. But this tradition contradicts contemporary evidence. Not only is the silence of his biographer on such a notable event in the life of his hero a strong presumption in favour of its mythical character, but we find him visiting his native land on several occasions, taking an important part in its political and religious affairs, and retaining his jurisdiction over the numerous monasteries he had founded there. In the missionary fervour of the age, not the remorse of the convicted culprit, lay rather the origin of that great movement which transformed the pagan Picts into a Christian people, and made the barren islet of Iona, for several centuries, one of the great centres of Celtic Christianity and the noble seat of intellectual culture.

Its solitude,† as well as its situation near the border of the heathen Picts and the Scottish colony that had settled in Argyleshire, since the end of the fifth century,‡ adapted it as a convenient spot both for the solitary religious life to which the Celtic monk showed such a marked tendency, and for the exercise of that missionary fervour which always went along with it. Some of these tempest-swept island solitudes that overlook the rugged shores of Ireland and Britain had long been consecrated to the ceremonies of pagan superstition. Their inhabitants bore a sacred character. One was the reputed abode of the imprisoned Cronus, over whom Briareus, assisted by his divine attendants, kept guard. Another was inhabited by a priestly race, who understood the portents of nature, and who were inviolable in the view of the Britons.§ They were the haunt, too, of

* He imposed upon him, according to tradition, the task of winning for Christ as many souls as had perished in battle through his instrumentality.

† Skene, however, suspects that it was already the scene of a Christian settlement. The Old Irish Life certainly speaks of a bishop who left the island on his arrival.

‡ "Chronicle of the Picts and Scots," pp. 18, 66.

§ Plutarch, Didot edition, iii. 511.

the spirits of the departed, who were prevented by the watery barrier from intruding their presence on the living, and the inviolability with which superstition thus once invested them may have partly influenced the Irish monks to select them as the fitting sites of their monastic colonies.* Of these, Iona or Hy, though insignificant compared with many of the rugged members of the western archipelago, has won a world-wide renown.

The monastery erected on it by Columba and his twelve companions was humble enough—very unlike the mediæval pile whose ruins rivet the eye of the modern tourist. It consisted of a cluster of wooden huts, surrounding a church built of the same material, and enclosed, like the Celtic village of the time, by a rath or rampart of stone or earth. A little apart, on a slight eminence, and overlooking the beehive huts of the monks, stood the dwelling of the founder. Other important erections were the writing room or library, where the manuscripts were copied and kept, the refectory, with kitchen attached, the bakery, and the workshops of the smith and the carpenter. The cultivation of the soil, of which about a third was arable, necessitated the erection of a cowstall, a mill driven by the water of a small lake, a kiln, and a granary, which were placed outside the rampart. A number of paths connected the rude hamlet with the creeks that served as harbours for the numerous craft, ranging from the wooden built *longæ naves* and the *curucae*, constructed of wickerwork covered with hides, down to the small cobble or ferry-boat, by which the island community maintained intercourse with the outside world.

Before erecting his simple monastic village, Columba paid a visit to his kinsman, Conall, the chief of the Scottish colony in Argyle, who appears to have encouraged his plan of settling on the island.† Two years later we find him accompanied by two of his most celebrated followers, Comgall and Cainech, seeking admittance to the residence of the Pictish king, Brude, on the banks of the Ness. One motive of this visit was, according to Bæda,‡ to obtain the royal assent to, or rather, perhaps, confirmation of the

* Rhys, "Arthurian Legend," p. 369. † *See* Tighernach, under date 574.
‡ "Hist. Eccl.," iii. 3.

possession of Iona, but a still more momentous one was to pave the way for the missionary activity on which he was bent. His foresight and his experience among the Celtic tribes of Erin would suggest to him this mode of procedure, as best fitted to realise his scheme of the evangelisation of a whole people. The favour and co-operation of the king were an indispensable condition of effective success.

His reception was not at first encouraging, but his intrepid bearing, heightened by his unswerving faith, won for him the respect of the superstitious chief. This favourable impression on the royal mind was not shared by the ministers of the pagan cult, who apparently occupied an influential position in the Pictish court. They possessed neither the culture nor the elaborate priestly system of the Gaulish priests, whom Cæsar describes by the same name of Druids.* They resemble rather the witch doctor of modern barbarian tribes—the ministers of a system of magic—priests of a sort of nature-worship, which, while it had its festival days, as the bonfires that heralded the advent of spring and autumn, not yet extinct in some parts of the north, remind us, was now, whatever it may have been at an earlier time, largely an affair of charms and spells. Its only sacred places were the solitude of nature —wells, fountains, and forest. Of temples and sacrifices there is no hint in Adamnan; still it had the force of custom behind it, and the jealousy of a rival influence, on the part of its ministers, would not be overcome without a struggle, apparently long protracted, to undermine it. "As the saint was engaged, along with his companions," says Adamnan, evidently referring to the occasion of his first visit to Brude, "in chanting the evening service outside the royal fort, some Druids† coming near to them did all they could to prevent God's praises being sung in the midst of a pagan nation. On seeing this the saint began to sing the 44th Psalm, and so wonderfully loud, like pealing thunder, did his voice become, that king and people were struck with terror and amazement." Evidently a case of a new super-

* The word "Druids" always appears in Celtic lore synonymous with the Latin *Magi*, magicians.

† The leader of this opposition, Broichan, figures on different occasions as the champion of paganism.

stition growing up on the strength of the old, but with far nobler elements of life and teaching in it, which gradually, but very gradually, let us remember, worked their way into the minds of a rude people. The pious phraseology in which many ecclesiastical historians, whose style is coloured by the language of the pulpit, describe the change from paganism to Christianity, as if it were a thorough-going conversion to the truth—a complete breaking away from past usages—is a mere assumption in favour of a preconceived idea. The transformation wrought by such childish episodes as these could not be very deep. It is not thus that truths take possession of the inquiring mind. To King Brude and his followers, Columba appeared simply as a more skilful magician than Broichan and his brethren, and the profusion of such stories, in which the new Gospel makes headway by the aid of some trifling fancy, shows how little the mind was freed from the influence of past ideas. Columba was a preacher richly gifted with the eloquence of his countrymen, and he took diligent advantage of such impressions in his favour to explain "the Word" to his pagan listeners. But his own commanding personality, aided by the fancied magic of some trifling incident, had more power on minds, which were susceptible to such influences, while incapable of grasping the spiritual teaching of the Gospel. The saint himself, like all these zealous missionaries, was not above the crude realistic ideas of his time. Adamnan, in some cases, is doubtless reporting the belief that subsequently grew up around some incident, but the belief of his age estimates more or less that of a century earlier. An intellectual transformation in any wide sense such a conversion certainly was not; yet the acceptance of a more spiritual system, while it may not be, from the standpoint of a more enlightened age, synonymous with truth, makes for progress in thought and life, and in this sense we may regard the conversion of King Brude, which dates from this visit.*

Columba's life in the subsequent prosecution of his aim is rich in incident, and some of these throw a sombre light on the social condition of the rude tribes of the north. His track is frequently marked by the outrage and desola-

* "Chronicle of Picts and Scots," p. 7.

tion that accompanied the feuds of contending clans, or the violence of the marauder. Forest and secluded glen flare forth, in burning hut and hamlet, the tidings of lawlessness and strife, and the silence of the night is broken by the wail of the starving fugitives, driven forth to seek shelter from murder or slavery. The following two incidents illustrate those scenes of pillage and cruelty, amid which the intrepid missionary pursued his mission of peace and righteousness. "When the saint," says Adamnan, "was staying in that district which is called in the Scotic tongue Coire Salchain,* the peasants came to him. One evening, when he noticed one of them approaching, he said to him, 'Where dost thou live?' 'I live,' said he, 'in that district which borders the shore of Lake Crogreth' (Loch Creran). 'That district of which thou speakest,' replied the saint, 'is now being pillaged by savage marauders.' On hearing this, the unhappy peasant began to lament his wife and children, but when the saint saw him so much afflicted, he consoled him, saying, 'Go, my poor man, go, thy whole family hath escaped by flight to the mountains, but thy cattle, furniture, and other effects, the ruthless marauders have taken off with their unjust spoils.' When the poor man heard these words he went home, and found that all had happened exactly as the saint had foretold." On another occasion he comes to a small village, lying amid deserted fields, on the banks of a river where it flows into a lake. "There the saint took up his abode, and that same night, while they were yet but falling asleep, he awoke his companions and said to them, 'Go out this instant with all speed, bring hither quickly the boat you left on the other side of the stream, and put it in a house near us.' They did at once as they were directed, and soon after they had again fallen asleep, the saint aroused Diormit, and said to him, 'Stand outside the door and see what has happened to the village in which you had left your boat.' Diormit went out accordingly, and saw the whole village on fire, and returning to the saint he told him what was taking place. Then the saint told the brethren the name of the rancorous foe who had burned the houses that night."

* Corry in Morvern.

Other episodes illustrate with equal vividness the eventful character of those toilsome journeys of the missionary preacher from hamlet to hamlet, that clustered on some lake islet, or nestled in some secluded glen amid "the steep and rugged mountains," whose "savage aspect" had stayed the advance of the Roman, and seemed to Bæda* the impersonation of inaccessible grandeur. While sojourning in the wilds of Lochaber he finds a poor man, who, with his wife and children, is at the point of starvation, and after supplying their wants out of his scanty store, he blesses the branch of a tree, which thereafter acquires the reputation of being able to protect its owner against wild animals, and bring him an unbounded supply of venison. In the same district he rewards the hospitality with which he was treated by another poor man by some substantial mark of thanks, which tradition transformed into the impossible boon of turning five small heifers into twenty times as many cows. The hostility and inhospitality of another individual—a certain rich man—call forth the prediction that his son shall die a violent death as a beggar. In the island of Hinba,† whither he had gone to excommunicate "some destroyers of the churches," his life is for a moment endangered by the attack of one of the sons of King Conall, but the spear of his assailant is unable to penetrate the garment of the monk who throws himself in front of the saint. In the battle in which he is slain in the following year by the dart of Cronan, "shot in the name of Columba," we see the trace of opposition on the part of the lawless portion of the inhabitants—both Scotic and Pictish‡—inspired by their marauding habits, if not by their anti-Christian attitude. His interference on behalf of a certain Columban, to whose humble board he had once been made welcome, and who had been plundered by the brother of

* "Hist. Eccl.," iii. 4.

† Garveloch Islands, one of the group of.

‡ In the "Life of Comgall," for instance, we read that one day while working in a field near the monastery he had founded in the island of Tiree (Heth), a number of Pictish plunderers landed, and seizing everything they could lay their hands on, including the monks, carried them away to their ship. Comgall's prayers, however, brings shipwreck upon them, and they deliver up their plunder.

the former, brings upon him the jeers of the robber. In obedience to the curse of the angry saint, his boat is engulfed in the waves. On another occasion he interferes on behalf of a female slave, and compels Broichan, her Druid master, who sees in the illness which seizes him an evidence of the divine vengeance in answer to Columba's prayers, to release her. Again he succeeds in discomfiting the Druids, who evidently always came off second best in measuring their magic arts against the superior powers of Columba, by banishing the demons of the old superstition from a certain fountain to which divine honours were offered, and consecrating it to the service of the new. Again, Broichan is forced to resign his command of the elements before the saint's intrepid faith. "Tell me, Columba," said he, "when dost thou purpose to set sail?" "After three days, if God permits me, and preserves my life." "On the contrary," said Broichan, "thou shalt not be able, for I can make the winds unfavourable to thy voyage, and cause a great darkness to envelop thee in its shade." "The almighty power of God," returned the saint, "ruleth all things, and under His guiding providence all our movements are directed." "What more need I say?" asks his biographer. "That same day the saint, accompanied by a large number of followers, went to the long lake of the river Nesa (Loch Ness), as he had determined. Then the Druids began to exult, seeing that it had become very dark, and the wind was very violent and contrary. Our Columba, therefore, called on Christ the Lord, and embarked in his small boat, and whilst the sailors hesitated, he the more confidently ordered them to raise the sails against the wind. No sooner was the order executed, while the crowd was looking on, than the vessel ran against the wind with extraordinary speed, and after a short time the wind veered round to help them on their voyage, to the intense astonishment of all. And thus throughout the remainder of that day the light breeze continued most favourable, and the skiff of the blessed man was carried safely to the wished-for haven." Evidently the knowledge of natural causes, I may remark in passing, was as alien to the spirit of Columban Christianity as to the paganism over which its superior magic triumphed.

It is impossible to follow the track of Columba in anything like consecutive fashion during the long period of this eventful captivity. Nor is it necessary for my purpose, which is to reflect, through the more salient features of his life and work, the culture which he impressed upon the Northern Picts. Such incidental glimpses are not unsuggestive from this point of view. He doubtless continued to pursue, in his dealings with the various clans, the plan of operation which we see in the interview with King Brude. The Celt, naturally impetuous and uncontrollable, but capable, when swayed by the sentiments of affection or gratitude, of the most unwavering devotion to his leader, in contrast to the law-abiding yet self-dependent Saxon, was peculiarly susceptible to the influence of the head of the clan. The same motive which drew Columba to the stronghold of the Pictish king, would therefore direct the course of his subsequent wanderings throughout the country. It is to influence of this kind that we must look for the partial explanation of the spread of Christianity throughout the ancient world. "As the lower ranks of society are governed by imitation, the conversion of those who possessed any eminence of birth, or power, or of riches, was soon followed by dependent multitudes."* Besides, the fort or dun of the district chieftain was very probably the centre of a considerable population. Reasons both of policy and convenience would thus guide the steps of the missionary thither, and this supposition is confirmed by the ancient legend in the "Book of Deer," which purports to give an account of the circumstances of the foundation of that Church.

Columba and his companion Drostan having obtained from Bede the Pict, mormaer or chief of Buchan, the donation of Aberdobboir (Aberdour), situated in what was evidently even at that time a populous district, crave the gift of another town, "which was pleasing to Columba because it was full of the grace of God"—a touch which reveals the resemblance recognised by him in the oak woods around Deer † to his old foundations amid the groves of

* Gibbon, chap. xx., 269; *cf.* v., p. 116.

† The true derivation of Deer is, according to Dr Stuart (Preface to "Book of Deer"), *daire*, an oak, not *deara*, tears, as the legend has it.

Derry or Durrow. This request is at first refused, but afterwards granted on the recovery of the chief's son from a dangerous illness, through the prayers of the holy men. Such a grant we may confidently regard as an example of other benefactions of the same kind by influential patrons, whose favour the sagacious missionary had taken pains to secure. One of these is mentioned in the poem of a contemporary.* He was no less a personage than the chief of the Southern Picts, Gartnaidh, and successor of King Brude, who died in 584, in the supreme power. By the aid of his influence, Columba strove to revive the decayed church of Ninian. The best evidence of his success is the establishment of a monastic church at Abernethy, the traditional site of an earlier foundation.† Adamnan mentions the existence of numerous such monastic churches,‡ which were thus planted in the more populous districts throughout the country. They were placed under the care of monks from Iona, and became in their turn the base of aggressive work in the neighbourhood. If we may judge the extent of his labours from the numerous monastic and missionary foundations that owed their origin to him during his brief career in Ireland, we may conclude that throughout the thirty-four years that elapsed between his arrival in Iona and his death, the zeal of Columba and his many coadjutors had dotted the country, the more inaccessible districts excepted, from Caithness to the Clyde, and from the Hebrides to Buchan, with the humble monuments of Christian teaching and worship. Others were founded by Irish monks, contemporaries of Columba, though not connected with Iona, whose love of seclusion, or religious fervour, led them to visit the mainland of Alba and its islands. Moluog had evangelised Lismore before the advent of Columba; and St Brendan, the famous voyager and founder of the monastery of Clonfert, is said to have "laid out a church and village" in the island of Tiree, and at a place called Ailech—perhaps Alyth in Perthshire. The work of St Finbarr, or Finnian, his early master at Moville, is commemorated in Barra, to

* Dallan Forgail, author of the "Amra Columcille."

† See "Chron. Picts and Scots," p. 201.

‡ Book ii., c. 47; *cf.* Bæda "Hist. Eccl.," iii. 4.

which he gave his name, while that of Ronan still lingers in St Ronans in Lewis, and in the lonely islet of Rona, fifty miles to the north of it. Traces of the labours of the martyred Donnan and of Finlagan remain in Eigg and Islay. The presence of St Cainnech is distinguishable in Kilkenneth and Kilchenzie, a common name of churches in Argyleshire and the western islands; and legend speaks of him as having a hermitage at the modern St Andrews. Regulus is also associated with the latter place, by a tradition which afterwards underwent great elaboration,* in order to make him the bearer of the relics of St Andrew from Constantinople in the time of King Angus. Comgall, famous in Irish annals as the first abbot of Bangor and its celebrated school, was also remembered in Alba as the founder of a church in Tiree.†

In estimating the results of Columba's work, seconded by the occasional efforts of such zealous missionaries, it must be borne in mind, as already pointed out, that the direct effects of his mission were largely superficial. To the crude minds of his converts, the sublime mysteries and practical teachings of Christianity must have presented themselves in a form more or less coloured by the ideas and practices of the ancient cult. It is a superficial form of Christianity—a system of impressions, often puerile, rather than definite conceptions—that is spread by missionary activity of this kind, whether in the sixth or the nineteenth century. But we must recognise the influence of a moulding mind in Columba. This significance we may read into the words of Bæda,‡ that "he converted the Pictish nation to the faith of Christ by his preaching and example;" and the effect of his intercession on King Brude on behalf of Cormac, who had sailed to the north "to discover a desert§ in the ocean," and whom the king recommends to the protection of the barbaric ruler of the Orkneys, can only be

* "Celtic Scot.," ii. 268.

† "Vita Comgalli," c. 22.

‡ "Hist. Eccl.," iii. 4.

§ The abode of the members of a monastic community, who wished to lead a solitary life, was called a "desert," from the Latin, *Desertum*. St Martin also sought such a "desert" on an isle near Albenga.

ascribed to one who wielded a commanding power over the minds of a rude people.*

In the adventurous voyages of this Cormac, we see an evidence of that spirit of adventure, which Walafrid Strabo notes as a second nature in the case of the Scotic monks, combined with that delight in weird isolation, so congenial to the temperament of the Celt, which bore the new civilisation of Ireland and Iona to the furthest islands of the Hebrides, and to the remote Iceland,† if not to the shores of America itself. Three times Cormac sets sail from his native Erin, and steers his frail coracle far over the trackless waves—on the third occasion, for fourteen days before a south wind—in search of absolute solitude, regardless of the perils of storm and want, in his eagerness to gain the merit of this self-denying form of the ascetic life. The heaps of loose stones on such remote islands as North Rona, in the North Atlantic, far out of reach of human dwelling, which, when examined, were found to be the remains of some hermit cell, "presenting the earliest type of Christian construction remaining in Scotland,"‡ still testify to the mistaken but adamantine piety that braved the tempests of the open ocean and courted the isolation of some wild inhospitable rock. Doubtless the missionary would go hand in hand with the ascetic spirit, and the hazardous voyages of a Baitan, a Cormac, or a Brendan, would extend to many of the more remote of the western isles the higher life and teaching, which Columba was endeavouring to spread on the mainland.

From the missionary activity of Columba and his coadjutors, I turn to the monastic community at Iona over which he presided, and whose character reflects the main outlines of the early Christian culture which originated from this source. The chief figure is that of the abbot, who wielded authority, not only over the members of the

* The "Old Irish Life" extended his sphere of labour to the Britons and the Saxons, "whom he brought to faith and religion, after he had wrought many miracles, and awakened the dead from death." A Saxon baker is mentioned as an inmate of Iona.

† The Norwegians found, in the ninth century, in Iceland relics of the early Irish missionaries.

‡ Anderson, "Scotland in Early Christian Times," i., p. 125.

island community, but over all the monasteries founded both in Scotia and Alba by himself or his monks.* The presence of a bishop is noted on several occasions, but while the abbot accords him the honour due to the exercise of the function of ordination, he appears subject to his jurisdiction,† and is not the superior dignitary—the head of a diocese, to whom all ranks and institutions within its boundaries are subordinated—that the bishop in other Christian lands had come to be. In the missionary and monastic aims of a Columba, a hierarchy of presbyters, under himself as superintendent,‡ but with room left for the exercise of the episcopal office in the matter of ordination, was all that was contemplated, and adapted from reasons of its suitableness, apart from any nervous anxiety about its formal propriety. The inmates of the monastery, of whatever rank, who took the vow on bended knee in the oratory, were subject to a code of rules,§ by which discipline was maintained. A rule of Columcille, containing a number of precepts principally applicable to a solitary life, has been preserved, but it is probable that the early Irish Church did not possess any system of discipline like that elaborated by a Benedict. The members were divided into seniors and juniors, the former comprising those of tried wisdom and piety, the latter such as were under training for the higher grade. In addition to the daily religious exercises, the abbot occasionally summoned the brethren to church by the sound of the bell in the middle of the night, and addressed them from the altar. Manual labour—the cultivation of the soil, gardening,‖ fishing, the care of the cows, the crafts of the blacksmith, carpenter,

* The mention by Adamnan of his visits to his earlier Irish foundations, as well as to those on Tiree and Clachan, shows this.

† Bæda, "Hist. Eccl.," iii. 4. *Cf.* Adamnan, whose references warrant this conclusion.

‡ In the Church of St Patrick, however, the bishop is the principal figure, and their number is remarkable, resembling in this respect the Western Church of the first four centuries. In the Irish Church of Columba's day the monastic element predominated.

§ Referred to by Wilfrid in his famous dispute with Colman at the Synod of Whitby.

‖ Adamnan mentions Laisren the gardener,—the founder, I suppose, of Scotland's pre-eminence in this art.

&c.—was shared by all, the abbot himself setting an example by carrying his own portion of corn to the mill and grinding it,* although the heavier portion fell to those, of which there was a large number connected with these early monasteries, whose meagre acquirements unfitted them for the higher duties of the presbyter. On admission to the monastery, the novice undertook to practise celibacy, and placed all his property at the disposal of his brethren, on the ground that "it is not befitting a religious life to have any distinction of property with his own free brother." The sense of obedience is apparent in their readiness to undertake a long journey, or a hazardous voyage, at the abbot's command, and in the conception of their calling as "soldiers of Christ." An open door was kept for strangers and travellers. The pages of Adamnan contain pleasing instances of the hospitable greetings that resounded from the little harbour; while almsgiving, and the care of the deserving poor and the sick, who resorted to Iona for medical aid, form the burden of two expressive precepts, often thus sympathetically exemplified in the generosity of the abbot and his monks. Transgression of the vows of the monastic life was atoned for by penance, which, in the case of the criminals and delinquents of all kinds who came from Ireland to confess to the saint, extended to as much as seven or even twelve years' sojourn in some island, such as Elachnave, with perpetual exile from their native land, in some cases. One wretch who had been guilty of a heinous offence was debarred from landing on the island. The practice of the deeper principles of piety is expressed in the injunction to the love of God and our neighbour, and the cultivation of a forgiving, devotional spirit. Though great stress is laid on trifling external perfections, the impression we get from the pages of Adamnan is that of a cheerful, even life, earnest and strict of purpose, but one whose monotony is relieved by the easy, kindly intercourse of the monks with the abbot and with each other, and whose bent was largely towards the practical and useful. The effect of such a settlement on the morals of a barbarian people must be regarded as not the least

* "Old Irish Life."

meritorious characteristic of such an institution. Nor did the devotion of the cloister deaden their interest in the outside world. The arrival of a boat from Scotia was always an event of keen interest, bringing with it the welcome tale of men and affairs in beloved Erin; and even "the yarns" of the captain and crew of a large trader, which had arrived in the neighbourhood from Gaul, sent a thrill of worldly curiosity through the souls of the saint and his brethren. Iona was not so isolated from the rest of Europe as is usually asserted. The emigration of Irish monks from Bangor, Clonard, and other great seminaries, to Gaul, Germany, and Switzerland, headed by Columbanus, began towards the end of the sixth century. Iona too sent its missionaries to found some of those Celtic monasteries on the Continent, like Wurzburg, which afterwards became celebrated as a centre of religious and intellectual life. Less than half a century after Columba's death, we find its abbot in correspondence with Rome, one of the presbyters to whom Pope Honorius writes on the Easter controversy being Segenius of Iona (623-652).*

A fruitful germ of intellectual culture existed in the school, in which the influence of education, if not of knowledge in the modern sense, was at work. Mention is made of one Berchan, "a pupil learning wisdom," and though the wisdom was largely only that of a superstitious age, it is a sign of intellectual activity of a kind. It embraced the knowledge of the Scriptures, especially the Psalms, which were committed to memory. Latin certainly, and Greek probably, were taught. Columbanus, the first of the Celtic missionaries to Gaul, and in part a contemporary of Columba, was acquainted, not merely with the classic tongues, but with Hebrew, for he gives the equivalents of his name in these languages to those who asked him whence he came. "I am a Scottish pilgrim," he told them, "and my speech and actions correspond to my name, which is in Hebrew, Jonah; in Greek, Peristera; and in Latin, Columba, a dove." He and his companions spoke Latin fluently, as the clerical language of the west. Iona, as the head of so many religious houses in Ireland and so many mission

* Bæda, ii., c. 19.

branches in Alba, would not be behind the more famous of the Irish schools in this respect, especially since its founder laid stress on literary and intellectual activity. The reputation of Baithene, his successor, for knowledge of the Scriptures and extensive learning was, according to tradition, unequalled on this side the Alps.* History was not neglected, though it might be confined to the lives of distinguished saints † and the traditions of the past. In the case of a monastery whose abbot was himself no mean poet, and who evidently took delight in the songs which the poet Cronan accompanied with his lyre, the poetry of the bards very likely formed a subject of instruction. The ability to write on waxed tablets, or on parchment, was prized as a high accomplishment, and the scribe was held in special honour. We frequently find Columba and Baithene engaged in this occupation in the chamber where the books and the *calami* or *graphi* used in writing were kept. The books thus produced seem to have been mostly copies of portions of the Scriptures, but this does not preclude the possibility of original authorship,— poems, homilies, a chronicle of events connected with the monastery. Several Latin and Gaelic poems exist which were ascribed to Columba. This occupation, at all events, was evidently more than a mechanical process; it was regarded as an art, and gave scope to the taste and æsthetic ingenuity of the scribes. The excellence attained in it, judged from the magnificent specimens preserved in the books of Durrow and Kells, believed by competent authorities to touch the age of Columba, reveals, in these early monks, the gift of an exquisite artistic feeling, and contrasts strikingly with the humble civilisation amid which they lived and worked. Whilst the cells in which they dwelt and the churches in which they worshipped were little in advance of the pagan huts of their day, the illumination, the gorgeous ornamentation of the MSS. which they wrote, as well as the delicately wrought ornament work of bells, brooches, &c.,

* Montalembert, "Monks of the West," iii. 214.

† Adamnan's familiarity with such literature is proved by a reference to the "Life of Germanus" (ii. 35), and he mentions, in relating an incident in the saint's life at Iona (iii. 13), a part of the service in which the name of St Martin is commemorated.

are worthy, as we shall see in another chapter, of a refined civilisation. Rude they were these monks in their ways, and puerile, nay senile, in much of their belief, but there was a noble enthusiasm in their souls which made them heroes in the mission field, and an exuberance of fancy, a sense of the supernatural, which, while it made them the victims of a strange medley of religious phantasms, gave an impulse to the higher strivings of the soul.

The personality of Columba has left a deep impression on the history of his adopted country. It must have done so had there been no Adamnan to record his miracles, prophecies, and visions.* Of him it may be truly said, that he found his vocation and fulfilled it. With a tall commanding figure, he combined a voice of such extraordinary strength and clearness, that he could be heard chanting the Psalms at a distance of more than a mile, and on one occasion it sounded "like pealing thunder" in the ears of the affrighted Druids. His career is expressive of the energy of thought and will that can conceive and execute vast schemes. As Cassius says of Cæsar, we may say of him, "He doth bestride the narrow world like a Colossus." He was the most influential man of his time in Erin and Alba, whose word was sufficient to depose or appoint kings, and whose opinion was regarded in the light of a divine dictum. As M. de Coulanges says, "The life of a saint was not at all the life of a monk;—c'est presque toujours la vie d'un homme qui s'est occupé des affaires publiques et a été en rélations incessantes avec les rois et les grands de la terre." Rhydderch Hael, king of Strathclyde, sends to know his future fate. Aidan, king of Dalriada, receives his kingdom from him, and consults him regarding his successor. At the council or parliament of Drumceatt his intercession obtains the release of Scanlan, a noble captive; the virtual independence of the Scottish kingdom of Dalriada in Argyleshire, between whose inhabitants and the Irish monarch there was considerable friction; and favourable terms for the bards, whose exactions had brought upon them the threat of banishment.† No doubt he owed

* His work is divided into three parts, respectively dealing with these subjects.

† Preface to the "Amra Columcille."

part of the influence which he thus wielded to his royal descent, and to the reputation for sanctity which was believed to confer on him miraculous gifts. But it was likewise the result of an impassioned intensity of soul. "He so preserved the integrity of his body and the purity of his mind," says his biographer, "that though dwelling on earth he appeared to live like the saints in heaven. He never could spend the space of one hour without study or prayer, or writing, or some other holy occupation. So incessantly was he engaged night and day in the unwearied exercise of fasting and watching, that the burden of each of these austerities would seem beyond the power of all human endurance." "There was not born of the Ghaedil," remarks the preacher in the "Old Irish Life," "one more illustrious, or more wise, or of better family, than Columba. There came not of them any person more modest or more humble." With his fervid monkish piety was mingled a strong touch of human affection. His parting with the companion of his wanderings, Drostan, at the monastery of Deer melts the austere saint into tears. A crane, driven exhausted by the storm upon the beach of Iona, is tended until it regains strength sufficient to fly back to its native Erin. On the departure of his aged uncle, Conan, to preside over the monastery in Elachnave, he embraces him affectionately, and looks after him with the remark, "This friend of mine who is now going away I never expect to see alive again in this world." "After a few days the same Conan became very unwell, and desired to be taken back to the saint, who was much rejoiced at his return, and set out for the harbour to meet him. Conan, though feeble, attempted without assistance to walk half way, but when there was only the short distance of twenty-four paces between them, death came suddenly upon him before the saint could greet him alive, and he breathed his last as he fell to the ground." His Celtic impetuosity of temper could ill brook opposition or injury, and broke out at times in a torrent of curses. He was as vindictive as he was irascible, if we may judge from his pleasure at the death of a marauder whom he had pursued into the sea, and whose boat was capsized by the waves. His fertile imagination is

attested by the visions which opened to him the vista of the unseen. Now he receives the visit of angels; now he toils in battle with a host of demons; now he feels himself transported to heaven by celestial guides. This mystic imaginative tendency finds a congenial environment in that strange, weird old world, with its haunted solitudes, its realistic beliefs, contrasting so strikingly with the practical, intellectual world of to-day, but lending a singular fascination to the religion of that time.

## CHAPTER II.

### THE CELTIC MISSIONARY IN NORTHUMBRIA.

UNDER Columba's successors in the jurisdiction of the monastery of Iona and its numerous dependent churches in Alba and Scotia, his mission among the Picts was continued and consolidated. The martyrdom of Donnan and the community over which he presided in the island of Eigg (617), who were consumed in the flames of the wooden church, to which they had retired to celebrate the eucharist, discloses the continued presence of a hostile pagan element in the north-west. The efforts of Talorgain, who died a year before this tragic event, to extend the Christian faith in the north-east, have been preserved in the name Kiltarlity—the district extending from the Ness to Ross-shire.* More than half a century elapsed, however, before the remote country in the far north was successfully Christianised by St Maelrubha, founder of the church of Applecross, and by Comgan and Fillan in the district between Lochalsh and Loch Sunart. We can only add to such meagre details as these, recorded by the Irish annalist Tighernach, or extracted from the names of places, the general statement of the monk of Jarrow as to the spirit and labours of Columba's immediate successors. They were distinguished "by their great charity, divine love, and strict attention to discipline. They followed, indeed, uncertain cycles in their computation of Easter (a great point with Bæda), yet they diligently observed such works of piety and charity as they could find in the gospels and in the writings of the prophets and apostles."†

Under Seghine a new period of missionary activity began, which found a field for its exercise among the heathen Angles of Northumbria, and which for thirty years made the influence of the Scottish missionaries supreme, from the remote islands of the Hebrides as far as the

* "Celtic Scotland," ii., p. 153. † Bæda, "Hist. Eccl.," iii. 4.

Humber. By the settlement of Aidan on Lindisfarne, the obscurity of the Columban Church amid the islands and mountains of the north was dispelled. There was, as has been pointed out, a lively interest in the monastery at Iona* in the affairs of the continental nations. The island community was not wholly cut off from communication with the larger world beyond the seas. Apart from the arrival of an occasional voyager, whose tale of events and persons in far-off lands stirred the Celtic soul, the travels of Columbanus and other restless Celtic monks to Gaul, Germany, and Switzerland were certainly known at Iona. Some of its inmates had doubtless by this time been stirred by the desire to emulate the example of the founders of Luxeuil and St Gall. But such communication with the outside world must have been limited at the best. Iona was isolated from continental Christendom by the barrier of the pagan Anglian kingdoms of Bernicia and Deira ; and it was the enthusiastic response which it made to the invitation of the Northumbrian king, Oswald, to instruct his subjects in the Christian faith, which he himself had learned when living in exile in the north, that brought it into much closer touch with the complex life of the age, as well as secured it an enduring monument to its fame in the luminous pages of Bæda.

The pagan people whom the Columban monks were invited to Christianise, was the Teutonic conquerors whom we have already seen in such deadly conflict with the population of the Roman province. They had already penetrated, under the warlike predecessors of Oswald, as far north as the Forth. The name of the modern Scottish capital testifies to the extent of the sway of Ædwin. The resistance of the combined Scots and Cumbrian Britons had been shattered at Degsastane (603) by a decisive victory of the Anglian invader under Æthelfrith, who united the two petty states of Deira and Bernicia into the kingdom of Northumbria, extending from the Forth to the

* The legends of Columba's visit to Pope Gregory, and of his pilgrimage to St Martin's shrine at Tours, although possessing no foundation in fact, may contain an echo of intercourse between Iona and Ireland on the one hand, and Gaul and Italy on the other, at this early time.

Humber. Four years later, the defeat which the same king inflicted on the western Britons at the battle of Chester, extended his dominions from sea to sea, and laid the foundation of that supremacy which Northumbria enjoyed in the north, and among the Saxon kingdoms, up till the overthrow of Ecgfrith by the Picts at the battle of Nectansmere (685).

Unlike the British Church, which was affected by the spirit of bitterness and hatred towards the Saxon intruder, the community at Iona counted Saxons among its members, and welcomed, besides Oswald and his brother Oswy, a large number of the Northumbrian nobility, who accompanied the sons of Æthelfrith into exile, on the accession of Ædwin. To it belongs the merit of having done for the people of Northumbria what Augustine and his successors did for those of Kent and Wessex.

A recent writer* has laboured to establish the thesis that these pagan invaders were not Germans, but Northmen. He thinks that only a seafaring race could have colonised Britain, and that the only people fitted to do this were the ancestors of the notorious vikings of mediæval times, who at a very early period were celebrated for their maritime greatness. This proposition, which the author defends with much learning, is against the historic testimony of early writers, whether Saxon or British; and it is not enough to discredit this evidence by saying that Gildas or Bæda is unworthy of credence, when they describe the advent of three Germanic tribes—the Saxons, Jutes, and Angles—from the banks of the Elbe. While there is reason to believe, as already pointed out, that the invaders were not uninfluenced by the Roman culture which they displaced, we shall not err, I think, if we regard the culture of these fierce colonists as, in its more salient features, that described by Tacitus in his treatise on the manners of the Germans, making allowance, however, for the modification, probably not very far-reaching, which it had undergone during the interval between the fifth and the first century. Their institutions were those of martial, freedom-loving barbarians, who, whilst following the leader of their choice

* Du Chaillu, "The Viking Age," chaps. i., ii., and iii.

—a Hengist, an Ælla, an Ida—retained, as the right of each freeman, a voice—as a member of the scirmoot or district council, and the witenagemoot or parliament of the people—in the administration of justice, in the settlement of public questions. Slavery was not unknown among them, but the slaves were those conquered in war. Crime alone, or absolute destitution, could deprive a freeman of his rights, while those of women * were recognised and protected in a chivalrous spirit, altogether unique among barbarous peoples. The family was sacred to virtue, and the moral education of the children excited the admiration of Tacitus, who did not fail to improve the opportunity of reading a lesson in this particular to his degenerate countrymen. Their institutions,†—based on the spirit of freedom, —rendered strong by the healthy moral tone that prevailed in the family, were those of a conquering race, destined to overwhelm the empire both in Italy and the provinces.

This spirit of freedom—the mainspring of Anglo-Saxon national life, before the encroachments of the kings and the aristocratic class subverted the rights of the people, as was the case in England at a later time—went hand in hand with the spirit of reverence for the gods, which intimately associated their religion with their national and social life. Each freeman was the priest of his own family,‡ and performed under his own roof those rites which he was bound to recognise by his presence on the occasion of some elaborate public ceremonial. Like most peoples whose mode of life removes them from the humanising influences of the village and the city, the realism of the supernatural was closely interwoven with the scenery amid which they lived. The consciousness of a supernatural presence, underlying all things, took form in a medley of childlike fancies embracing the beneficent and malignant powers of nature, which the music of a Wagner now unfolds to us like a poetic dream, in notes of hope and doubt, of wonder and despair, but which was an absorbing reality, an eloquent

* See Tacitus, "Germania," chaps. xviii. and xix.

† The early Anglo-Saxon institutions have been exhaustively treated by Kemble, Stubbs, Freeman, and Gneist.

‡ Tacitus, "Germania," chap. x.

revelation, to the ruder minds, the untutored imaginations of these Anglo-Saxon forefathers of ours. In storm and battle, in the shaggy forest and the lonely moor, amid spring's budding life and winter's gloom, with the mystery of death and the silence and beauty of the great starry dome above, uttering their never-ceasing appeal to the overwhelmed soul of man, they felt the impress of a divine power, interpreted it in their own childlike manner, and evolved a mythological system,* which is richly poetic, if it cannot claim to be a modern philosophy. In Woden and Thor, Frea and Baldaeg, Hel and Nastrond, Grendel and the Nicors, they sought to harmonise, to systematise that mass of inexplicables, that tissue of marvels with which nature and the experiences of life impress the mind. This crude belief doubtless served to fulfil the highest vocation of a religion—it afforded to generation after generation inspiration in life and consolation in death. Tested by the domestic virtues, and the spirit of courage and freedom which it fostered, it passes examination better than other religions of more pretentious claims to excellence.

It had, however, begun to lose its efficacy by the time of the advent of the Celtic missionaries. The honest priest Coifi, when asked his opinion at a council held by King Ædwin to discuss the claims of Christianity *versus* the national cult, did not scruple to tell the truth. His devotion to Woden and Thor had not been productive of result, and the neglect of the hierarchy, which this implies, may be taken as an index of widespread indifference among the people. "None of your people, Ædwin, has worshipped the gods more faithfully than I ; yet there are many who receive greater favours from you, and are more fortunate and prosperous. Were these gods good for anything, they would not have forgotten me, who have been careful to serve them." The more reflective minds, impressed by the mystery, the insignificance of existence, were naturally disposed to accept a system which opened up so sublime a prospect of eternal life and felicity. They found a spokesman in one of the chief men, who likened the present life,

* See Grimm's "Deutsche Mythologie," and Simrock's "Handbuch der Deutschen Mythologie."

in comparison to the unknown beyond it, to the swift flight of a sparrow through the room, in which the king sits at supper with his courtiers, while the bright fire burns in the midst and the wintry storm rages without. "The sparrow, I say, flying in at one door and immediately out at the other, whilst he is within is safe from the wintry blast, but after a short space of fair weather he vanishes out of your sight into the dark winter from which he had emerged. So this life of man appears for a short space, but of what went before, or what is to follow, we are utterly ignorant. If therefore this new doctrine contains something more certain, it seems justly to deserve to be followed." Thus encouraged, Paulinus, the chaplain of Ædwin's Christian queen, Ethelburga, daughter of the King of Kent, found little difficulty in enjoining the superior claims of Christianity. The Witenagemot was unanimous in favour of the change. Ædwin was further influenced by success in battle against the West Saxon king Cuichelm, which was ascribed to the aid of the God of the Christians. Like the Franks, who followed Clovis to the baptismal font as readily as to the battlefield,* the Northumbrians were baptized, by the thousand, by the zealous Paulinus. The liberality and sagacity displayed by the Church of Rome, reflected in the letter† of Pope Gregory to Augustine of Canterbury, in which he directed him and his fellow-missionaries to conciliate the prejudices of the Saxons by retaining the temples as places of Christian worship, and as many of their religious practices as were compatible with the spirit of Christianity, likewise contributed to this result.

The six years between the conversion and death of Ædwin form one of the most prosperous intervals that brighten the troubled annals of Northumbria. Its supremacy was asserted over the petty British and Saxon states in the south and west. A revolt, headed by Penda, the king of Mercia, and Cadwallon, a powerful Welsh chieftain, resulted in its temporary overthrow. Ædwin was slain at the battle of Hethfield, near Doncaster (633), and his territory exposed to the ravages of invasion. The savage bigotry of the pagan Mercians found

* Gibbon, "Decline and Fall," vi., p. 302.

† Bæda, "Hist. Eccl.," i., c. 30.

a ready co-operation on the part of their British Christian allies. The churches were wrecked or given to the flames, the villages and homesteads pillaged and destroyed, large numbers of both sexes, young and old, put to death; and after the flight of Paulinus and the queen to Kent, the work of the past six years was largely undone. The kingdom was again broken up into the two independent states—Bernicia and Deira—under Eanfrith and Osric. The renunciation of the new faith, which appears to have followed, is merely an example of what took place in most of the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms on the death of the first Christian monarch. The untutored mind would instinctively leap to the conclusion, amid the calamities of invasion and ravage, that there was no virtue in the God of the Christian, and would see in the bloodshed and outrage, which filled the land, a manifestation of the anger of the gods, whose temples they had destroyed or dishonoured. Fear and perplexity would thus drive crowds back to the old faith, whose supremacy would be established as easily as it was overthrown. Before a year had passed, the weak rule of Osric and Eanfrith, who had both turned apostate, was swept away by Cadwallon, who seemed in a fair way of realising, as far as Northumbria was concerned, his resolve to avenge the wrongs of his race by the extermination of its Saxon oppressors. But the progress of the British conqueror received a check at the hands of Oswald, Eanfrith's brother, who, advancing with a small force from the north, routed the British army and slew its leader at Heavenfield, near the Roman wall (634). This victory was regarded as a triumph of the Christian faith that inspired it. On the eve of the engagement Oswald caused a cross to be erected in the presence of his army, himself holding it with both hands, while his companions fixed it firmly in the earth. "Let us kneel," said he, when the work was finished, "and jointly beseech the true and living God Almighty in His mercy to defend us from the haughty and fierce enemy, for He knows that we have undertaken a just war for the safety of our nation."* Then advancing, in the early dawn, in sight of the sacred emblem, they swept their foes with great

* Bæda, "Hist. Eccl.," ii., c. 20, and iii., c. 1 and 2.

carnage before them, and thus conferred upon the spot the sacredness long after associated with it, as the scene of the victory of the cross and the deliverance of the kingdom.

Raised by this success to the throne of Northumbria, and eager to restore Christianity, Oswald sent a messenger to Iona to invite the assistance of the Columban monks. But where the sagacity and moderation of the Roman missionary had succeeded, the austerity of the Celtic monk failed, and he soon returned to report the fruitlessness of his attempts to overcome the obstinacy and barbarism of the English. The disappointment and perplexity of the brethren at this news were dispelled by the shrewdness of Aidan. "I think," said he, "that you were more severe to your unlearned hearers than you ought to have been, and did not at first, conformably to the apostolic rule, give them the milk of more easy doctrine, till being by degrees nourished by the Word of God, they should be capable of greater perfection, and be able to practise God's sublimer precepts." The discernment of the speaker marked him out as a suitable successor, and he was ordained missionary bishop of Northumbria. On the island of Lindisfarne, which was granted at his request by Oswald, he erected his cell. Situated a few miles to the north of Bamborough, the chief royal residence, and separated from the shore by a channel two miles in breadth, which at ebb tide was passable on foot, it was just such a spot as would attract a Scottish monk, for whom its solitude, broken only by the beating of the surf against the rock, possessed a peculiar fascination. The thought of Iona, which it would recall, led him to see in it the fitting headquarters of the monastic brotherhood, who erected their huts around the wooden oratory, and added to their missionary labours the toils of agriculture, or the pursuit of writing and study, according to ability. The monastic community was thus a reproduction of that founded by Columba,* and Aidan's efforts to evangelise the Northumbrians were carried on after the same model. He turned, in the first instance, to the king's

* Except that its abbot was likewise bishop; but the monastic, not the episcopal feature of his character and of the institution, was the distinctive characteristic.

personal followers and the chief men of the country. Whilst the founders of Christianity addressed themselves more to the lower orders, and the creed of the early Church gradually fought its way upwards till at length it took possession of the imperial throne; the process was reversed by the missionaries of a later age. The conversion of the higher orders was the forerunner of that of the peasant. The Christian bishop or monk absorbed the place of the heathen priest at the royal court, and gradually throughout the shires and "marks" of the kingdom. The efforts of king and bishop were united in furthering the common object, the former lending his sanction and the aid of his example and his generosity to the striving of the latter; and while Christianity gained, it paid back the benefit by placing the monarch under the patronage of heaven, and enhancing his power. Oswald himself, who had acquired the Scottish language during his exile in the north, acted as Aidan's interpreter when he discoursed to the nobles of his court, and the prestige of being the king's messenger contributed to secure a ready reception for his preaching as he wandered from hamlet to hamlet. The moderation, charity, and unselfish devotion of the bishop himself, with which he inspired the numerous emissaries of the faith that flocked to Lindisfarne from Iona, tended powerfully in the same direction. He traversed the country on foot, unless when some urgent call made it necessary to travel on horseback, stopping at each settlement to unfold to his hearers the Christian view of the All-Father, of whom the pagan mythology had some conception, or lingering by the way to exhort the infidel to faith, the believer to good works. The charity and self-sacrifice, illustrating the principles of love and duty, which formed the soul of this Celtic Christianity, appealed to the heart with a force which the speculative mysteries of the faith might fail to exert on the mind. The crowds who were attracted to the churches established by him and his fellow-missionaries, yielded a ready ear to words that exemplified a life as well as embodied a creed. The diligence in devotion or useful labour, which Aidan exacted from the inmates of the monastery of Lindisfarne, was not remitted during these journeys. The fatigues of

the way were forgotten in meditating on the Scriptures, or learning the Psalms by heart. Even at the royal table he did not allow the pleasures of the feast to interfere with the intense bent of his nature, but, having partaken of a slight repast, retired to read or write. Content with the produce of the fields around the island monastery, tilled by the monks for the common sustenance, he used the lavish gifts of the king and the wealthier of his converts, like Gregory the Great, to supply the wants of the poor or to ransom the slave. Many of the latter, after receiving a course of instruction at Lindisfarne, became priests. Others were settled on the Church lands, being allowed to labour half the working week, and to rest on Sunday, thus exchanging a harsh and degrading slavery for the comparative ease and freedom of an honourable serfdom.* In the humane treatment of the victims of poverty or selfishness lies one of the most beneficent effects of the new religion. The ancient Saxon institutions made no provision for the poor; their rude statute-book contained no humane law which expressed the obligation of the State to care for those, whom the ills or accidents of life had deprived of the means of sustenance; the unfortunate freeman had only the alternative of starvation, or serfdom under a wealthy lord; poverty brought with it the loss of freedom. Nor did it recognise any right on the part of the slave. The actions of Aidan exemplified the principle of benevolence distinctive of the new religion, but unknown to tribes among whom the conquered possessed no rights, and only the free landholder was a man. Oswald proved himself an apt pupil of such teaching. Like Alfred at a later time, his highest aim was his people's good. He strove to spread the Christian religion in his kingdom, not as a means of political capital, as in the case of Conwalch of Wessex, but because he saw in it a potent agent of his people's enlightenment and happiness. Though the Venerable Bæda shows a tendency to exalt his Christian heroes at the expense of depreciating their pagan rivals, the moral beauty of Oswald's character is evidently reproduced by a truthful, if warmly appreciative, pen. The most powerful

* Seebohm, "English Village Communities," p. 328.

monarch of his time, and embracing within the sphere of his influence the greater portion of the island,* it was his glory to adorn his commanding position more by the virtues of humility and benevolence than by the pomp of an earthly crown. Mingling in free intercourse with his subjects, he was ever accessible to the poor and the stranger, and his hand ever ready to relieve their wants. Sitting one Easter Day at dinner along with Aidan, the servant whose office it was to attend to the relief of the distressed, announced that a large crowd of needy persons had assembled without, and begged the king's bounty. He immediately ordered the contents of the table to be distributed, and a large silver dish to be cut up and divided among them. At which the bishop, moved by this touching example of generosity, seized his right hand, and exclaimed, "May this hand never perish." Legend has preserved, among other miracles attributed to his virtues after death, the story of its being found entire and uncorrupted among his mutilated remains on the battlefield on which he was slain, and preserved in the church of St Peter at Bamborough.

By their victory at Maserfield,† where Oswald fell in 642, the prosperity of Northumbria was interrupted anew by the ravages of the Mercians. Again and again during the long reign of his brother Oswy the army of Penda broke into the country, pillaging, slaying, and burning, wreaking vengeance, in the destruction of the churches, on the apostasy of the inhabitants. During one of these periodic irruptions, the pagan host, having wasted the country far and near, laid siege to Bamborough, the capital, which, being built on the rocky promontory that still retains its name, and protected by strong walls, defied their protracted efforts to take it. At length Penda tried the plan of reducing it by fire. Collecting a mass of beams, wattles, and thatch from the plundered villages in the neighbourhood, he made a huge fire around the walls, and the flames, being carried by the wind towards the town, threatened a speedy accomplishment of his purpose. Seeing the smoke

* Bæda says he brought under his dominion all the nations and provinces of the Britons—Picts, Scots, and English (iii. 6).

† Either Owestry in Shropshire, or Winwich in Lancashire.

enveloping the city from his cell on the islet of Farne, whither he frequently retired for solitary prayer, Aidan fell on his knees, and, with upraised hands, exclaimed, "Behold, Lord, how great mischief Penda does." A sudden change of wind driving the fire back on the foe, and causing them to abandon their attempt, was regarded as an answer to his prayer. This incident illustrates the savage and disturbed character of the time in which the labours of the monk-bishop were carried on, during the latter half of his episcopate, and such scenes of plunder and devastation must have checked the extension and consolidation of the new religion. The divided political state of the kingdom doubtless formed an additional hindrance. For a number of years Oswy shared the government with Oswin, the nephew of Ædwin. The friction between them ended in the treacherous murder of the latter. Like Oswald in his tragic fate and elevated character, his tall figure and generous mind were long held in affectionate remembrance in the north. The reverence and docility with which he received the instruction, or the reproof of Aidan found expression in a touching incident shortly before his death. He had presented a superb, richly caparisoned horse to the bishop, to be used by him in his missionary journeys. Meeting a poor man shortly afterwards, Aidan gave him the valuable gift, "for he was very compassionate, a great friend to the poor, and, as it were, the father of the wretched." When Oswin was informed of this generous deed, he upbraided the bishop for his thoughtless extravagance and apparent inappreciation of his kindness, remarking "that there were other horses in his stall good enough for the purpose." "What is it you say, O king?" asked Aidan, "is that foal of a mare more dear to you than the Son of God?" He then took his seat at the royal table, but the king, vexed at the fate of the animal, remained some time at the fire with his attendants. Then suddenly ungirding his sword, and falling at Aidan's feet, he besought his forgiveness. "From this time forward," he exclaimed, "I will never speak more of this, nor will I judge of what or how much you shall give to the Son of God." Aidan begged him to be seated, but whilst they feasted a deep sadness

overcast the face of the saint. "I know," said he to one of the monks who asked the cause of his melancholy, "that the king will not live long, for I never before saw so humble a prince; whence I conclude that he will soon be snatched out of this life, because this nation is not worthy such a ruler." Not long afterwards this foreboding received its tragic fulfilment, and twelve days later (651) Aidan himself passed quietly away, while leaning his weak frame against a post that supported the wall of a church, built for him by Oswald near the royal residence, and was buried in the little churchyard in Lindisfarne.*

The credulous veneration of his age found vent in the miracles which it ascribed to his merits, and which Bæda reverently records. His impartial mind has also done justice to his virtues, notwithstanding the prejudices which he frequently betrays against the uncanonical practices of these Scottish missionaries. "I have written this much," he concludes, "concerning the person and works of the aforesaid Aidan, in no way commending or approving what he imperfectly understood in relation to the observation of Easter, nay, very much detesting the same, as I have most manifestly proved in the book I have written, 'De Temporibus'; but like an impartial historian, relating what was done by him or with him, commending such things as are praiseworthy in his actions, and preserving the memory thereof for the benefit of my readers, viz., his love of peace and charity, his continence and humility, his superiority to anger and avarice, his detestation of pride and vain-glory, his industry in keeping and teaching the heavenly commandments, his diligence in reading and watching, his authority becoming a priest in reproving the haughty and powerful, and, at the same time, his tenderness in comforting the afflicted and relieving or defending the poor."†

Under his successors, Finan and Colman, Christianity took an even firmer hold of the Northumbrians. Its progress, and the renewed prosperity of the kingdom, were greatly advanced by the overthrow of Penda. Roused by

* His remains were afterwards laid beside the altar of the larger church that replaced the simple wooden oratory.

† "Hist. Eccl.," iii., c. 17.

the continual ravages of the Mercian king, which promised, if unchecked, to reduce his kingdom to a waste, Oswy, after a vain attempt to propitiate his implacable enmity, resolved to stake his kingdom on the issue of a battle. On the banks of the Winwaed* his small army engaged with the thirty divisions of Penda and his British and East Anglian alies, killing the king and nearly all his thirty commanders. Those of the fugitives who escaped the sword perished in the swollen current of the stream. The cross had triumphed over the sacred banners of Woden. The pertinacity with which the pagan champion maintained the struggle against the supremacy and the Christianity of Northumbria, show him to have been a leader of great character and resource; and the excesses which marked these wars, though probably intensified by religious bitterness, were only the usual accompaniments of the incessant strife that convulsed these petty Saxon states. Such friction and disunion saved the Britons of Wales and Strathclyde from complete conquest, while contributing a Rembrandtian colouring to the picture of the culture of this period. Bæda, we presume, would incline to paint such a character in dark hues. The pagan ferocity of a Penda—type of the pagan Saxon chief—could hardly have been guilty of a more dastardly deed than the murder of Oswin by the Christian Oswy. One good trait he has recorded which reveals the manly honesty of the rough old pagan. "He hated and despised those whom he perceived not to perform the works of the faith which they had received, saying they were contemptible and wretched who did not obey the God in whom they believed." Towards the end of his reign his hostility towards Christianity seems to have abated. He showed himself tolerant towards the Church of the South Mercians, whose chief, Peada, his son, had listened to the preaching of Finan when on a visit to the Northumbrian court to ask the daughter of Oswy in marriage, and had been baptized with his followers at one of the royal seats near the Roman Wall. Lindisfarne supplied a missionary bishop in the person of

* Skene thinks that the battle of Winwaed, in the region of Loidas, was fought not in the district of Leeds, but of Lothian, also known by the name of Loidis.

Diuma, and his four successors were either Celtic monks or Saxons, who had been educated at Lindisfarne.*

While the arms and influence of Oswy conduced to the extension of the power of the cross beyond the confines of Northumbria, its steady expansion between the Forth and the Humber is attested by the number of monastic establishments, that impressed the culture of Lindisfarne on the life of the people. In acknowledgment of the victory that had shattered the power of Penda, the king dedicated twelve farms, each capable of sustaining ten families, for the support of a like number of monasteries. Of these one-half was in Deira, the other in Bernicia. His infant daughter, Elfleda, was consecrated to the religious life in the monastery of Hartlepool,† of which the celebrated Hilda was abbess. Two years later Hilda founded another at Streaneshalch, the modern Whitby, where her royal pupil afterwards became her successor, and where the remains of Oswy and his queen found a resting-place. Another was established at Lastingham by Bishop Cedd, who had been educated at Lindisfarne, and who during one of his visits to Northumbria from his diocese among the East Saxons, received a piece of land from Ethelwald for the erection of a cell. On the banks of the Tweed, at Old Melrose, a few miles from the site, which the beautiful ruins of the Cistercian abbey have rendered so famous, rose the cells of Eata and his companions, which were not merely the nurse of the life of devotion, but a centre for the evangelisation of the inhabitants of the Lammermoor and Cheviot uplands, and a half-way house between Iona and Lindisfarne. At Coludi, the modern Coldingham, on a high cliff in face of the stern North Sea, Ebba, the sister of Oswy, gathered a large number of monks and nuns in separate establishments, on the model of the great institution of Whitby. Side by side with this development of the monastic life, fostering among the people a spirit of industry, and finding its extreme outcome in the solitary, contemplative life of the anchorite or hermit, there sprang up a thirst for knowledge which led many of

* Bæda, "Hist. Eccl.," iii., c. 21 and 24.

† Heruten (island of the stag), founded in 649.

all classes—noble and peasant alike—to repair to the celebrated schools of Ireland, where they were hospitably received, and supplied with books and instruction gratis. Some, like Ecgbert, assumed the monastic habit, and earned for themselves the reputation of labouring in exile for the sake of Christ. Others went from one school to another, as the fame of a celebrated teacher attracted them, and, like Ethelwin, returned to their native land to fill the episcopal office, or to spread the light of their knowledge from the monasteries which they founded. The religious fervour of the time brought Northumbria, on the other hand, into close relations with the Churches of Gaul and Italy, as had already been the case in Kent, whence large numbers of devotees, among them the daughters of King Earconbert, sought retirement from the world in the religious establishments of Brie, Chilles, and Andelys. The enthusiasm which despised riches and honours, and the desire to look upon the scenes hallowed by the presence of the chief apostles, and to learn the rules of the faith at the headquarters of Western Christendom, led several to visit Rome, bringing anew the culture of the Eternal City into direct contact with the far north. Among these were Wilfrid, a pupil at Lindisfarne, and Benedict, a wealthy young noble, both destined to become famous in Northumbria, the former as the champion of Roman ecclesiastical usages, the latter as the Nestor of art and learning in the monasteries of Wearmouth and Jarrow.

The peaceful religious and intellectual progress, which the victory of Oswy had secured to the kingdom, was disturbed by strife of another kind. Cut off by Saxon invasion from the close intercourse with the Western Church, which it had cultivated during the third and fourth centuries, the native British and Irish Churches had been little influenced by the enactments of the Roman See. The Roman missionaries to the Anglo-Saxons at the end of the sixth century found the customs of an earlier time prevailing among the British hierarchy, especially in regard to the tonsure and the celebration of Easter.* Instead of

* After mentioning their erroneous celebration of Easter, Bæda adds: "Besides they did several other things which were contrary to the unity of the Church."

the coronal tonsure, which was practised in the Roman and Gallican Churches, the British and Irish ecclesiastics shaved the forepart of the head; whilst they followed the older cycle of eighty-four years in calculating the time of Easter, instead of that of nineteen years adopted by Pope Hilarius in 525. Augustine, the leader of the missionary band sent by Pope Gregory to Kent, had striven to persuade them to change their views, but in vain. The efforts of Laurentius, his successor at Canterbury, to bring about a union of fellowship and missionary effort on the basis of Roman usage, were equally unsuccessful; and so tenacious were the Scots and Britons in clinging to their ancient customs, that, as he relates in a letter to the bishops and abbots throughout Scotia, one of their number had refused to eat at the same table, or in the same house with him. Columbanus and his fellow monks carried the quarrel over to the Continent, and did not hesitate to maintain the claims of the practices, hallowed by the memory of Patrick and Columba, against the learning of Gaul and Italy. The bishops of the south of Ireland had already yielded, however, to the authority and the arguments of Pope Honorius and his successor (634), as we learn from a letter of Cummian, abbot of the monastery of Durrow, to Seghine, the fourth successor of Columba at Iona. To us the controversial value of the epistle has little interest, but the glimpse it affords of the active intercourse between Rome and the monasteries of remote Scotia, and the extensive erudition in patristic lore, as well as mastery of the sacred tongues, are important from the point of view of culture. That Iona, too, bulked by this time in the distant horizon of Rome is apparent from the epistle on this subject, directed a few years later by the Apostolic See to Seghine, among other doctors of the Scottish Church. It failed to convince, however, and the Church of North Ireland and of Iona and its dependent monasteries were still staunch adherents of their ancient usages when the quarrel broke out with renewed violence in Northumbria. Its commencement was due partly to the efforts of those who had studied in the schools of France and Italy to persuade the Scottish monks of Lindisfarne to

conform, partly to difference of opinion on the subject between Oswy and his queen, Eanfleda, brought up in Kent in the Romish system. "It happened," says Bæda, who loses no opportunity of exaggerating the importance of the matter in dispute, "that Easter was twice kept in one year, and that when the king, having ended the time of fasting, kept his Easter, the queen and her followers were still fasting and celebrating Palm Sunday. Doubtless, too, the independent and irascible Celt chafed against the authoritative and aggressive attitude represented by the impetuous Wilfrid, who, on his return from Rome and Lyons, where he had spent several years, zealously propagated the new views from his monastery of Ripon, which his devoted patron, Alchfrith, Oswy's son, and governor of Deira, had taken from the community of Celtic monks on whom he had originally bestowed it. Though this quarrel is trivial in itself, it is of great importance in the history of the intellectual life of the period, as it proved the subject of dialectic gymnastics in Northern Britain, with more or less prominence, for nearly two centuries—from the Conference at Augustine's Ac, in the beginning of the seventh, to the latest quiverings of the strife at Iona and in Wales in the latter half of the eighth. It gives colour to the culture of the time. It was as absorbing a theme to the politicians and ecclesiastics of those days as the Disruption controversy or the Reform movement in the nineteenth century. It called into activity the talents, the passions, the prejudices, the antagonisms of several generations. It gave an impulse to historical study, although the disputants were uncritical, and biassed in their use of historical data.

Under Colman the strife and perplexity became so intense that Oswy resolved to convene a synod at Streaneshalch (Whitby) for the purpose of deciding the point at issue. We have here the first of those ecclesiastical assemblies, which have wielded such an influence on the legislation and the culture of our land. The principal debaters on the side of Eanfleda and Alchfrith were Romanus, the queen's chaplain; Agilbert, bishop of the West Saxons; James, who had maintained the Roman usage and the Christian

faith in the church of York since the flight of Paulinus, after the death of Ædwin; and, above all, Wilfrid, who had begun to take that leading part in the Church of the North, which he strove to sustain throughout the strange vicissitudes of a stormy career. On the side of Colman were, besides the king himself, who naturally favoured the practice he had learned to love when an exile at Iona, Bishop Cedd and the Abbess Hilda. Oswy presided over the discussion, and the liberality of his mind is seen in the impartiality with which he exhorted the disputants to aim only at truth and unity. It behoved those who served one God, he remarked, to observe the same rule of life, and as they all expected the same kingdom in heaven, so they ought not to differ in the celebration of the divine mysteries, but rather to inquire which was the true tradition, that the same might be followed by all.* Colman defended the practice of the Scots on the ground that it was sanctioned by his forefathers—men celebrated for their piety and zeal—and was supported by the authority of St John and Anatolius. But he was unable to maintain his position before the greater erudition and argumentative skill of Wilfrid. Some of his assertions, however, might easily have been refuted by an adversary, cooler and better acquainted with history than Colman seems to have been. Wilfrid quotes Scripture, for example, in which there is no mention whatever of a paschal cycle, and the decretals of the Church, of which only that of Nice contains any reference to the subject, enjoining that Easter should be celebrated on a Sunday—a practice which the Celtic Church did not contradict. The crucial point of the debate was the appeal by the champion of Rome to the authority of the successors of St Peter against that of Columba. "As for your Columba," exclaimed Wilfrid, almost contemptuously, "however pious he may have been, however great his merits, can his authority be compared to that of St Peter, to whom Christ said, 'Thou art Peter, and on this rock I will build My Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it, and I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven'?" "Is it true, Colman, that these words were spoken to Peter?" inquired Oswy.

* Bæda, "Hist. Eccl.," iii., c. 25.

"It is true, O king," replied the bishop. "Can you show any such power given to your Columba?" "None," was the reply. "Do you both agree that these words were principally directed to Peter, and that the keys of heaven were committed to him by our Lord?" "We do." "And I also declare unto you," concluded the king, "that he is the doorkeeper whom I will not contradict, but will, as far as in me lies, obey his decrees, lest when I come to the gates of the kingdom of heaven there should be none to open them, he being my adversary who is proved to possess the keys." The decision of Oswy left no choice between submission and departure. Colman chose the latter, and, along with those who still clung to their convictions, returned to Iona. Tuda, a native of the south of Ireland, was appointed bishop in his place; Eata, abbot of Melrose, being placed, at the request of Colman, over the abbey of Lindisfarne. Otherwise, there was not much difference between the creed of Iona and that of Rome. Whilst Columbanus in Gaul stoutly refused to receive anything not based on "the doctrines of the evangelists and the apostles," the same superstitious realistic element is discernible in both, the same belief in the miraculous, the same notion of saintly intercession, the same crude anthropomorphism, the same tendency towards the external. And if we fail to discover in the ecclesiastical life of the Scots the pomp of imperial Rome, we look in vain for the fastidious spiritualism of modern Puritanism.

The tribute which Bæda pays to the worth of these sturdy adherents of custom is all the more valuable, inasmuch as it comes from one whose reverence for the Roman Church could only see, in the opposition of a Colman to its authority, the obstinacy of a prejudiced mind. Their influence was not used for selfish ends. In self-forgetfulness and poverty they wandered from village to village, preaching, visiting the sick, relieving the wants of the poor, and extorting, by their industry, from the land, on which they founded their monasteries and churches, a frugal subsistence for themselves. Their only wealth consisted in a few cattle and the produce of the fields. The days of episcopal retinues and costly entertainments were not yet, "there

being no need to entertain the great men of the world, for such never resorted to the church (at Lindisfarne), except to pray and to hear the Word of God. But if they happened to take a repast there, they were satisfied with the plain and daily food of the brethren." So great was their indifference to things material, so intense their devotion to their noble calling, that none of them received lands and possessions for building monasteries, unless they were compelled to do so by the temporal authorities. Their simplicity left its traces on their departure from Lindisfarne in the few rude huts surrounding the church, which, according to the Scottish custom, was built of wood and roofed with reeds. "For this reason," says Bæda, who seems to hold up this picture of simplicity and devotion as a reproach to the corruption of his own times, half a century later, "the religious habit was held at that time in great veneration, so that wherever a priest or monk happened to come, he was joyfully received by all persons as God's servant. . . . Great attention was paid to their exhortations, and on Sunday the people flocked eagerly to the churches or the monasteries, not to feed their bodies, but to hear the word of God; and if any priest happened to enter a village, the inhabitants eagerly assembled to hear from him the word of life."

The toleration which had permitted diversity of opinion and practice in the Northumbrian Church during the administration of these devoted Scottish missionaries, was, we may infer from the pages of Bæda, incompatible with the new spirit of the age. Although the Roman Church had sanctioned a wise policy of forbearance in dealing with the Anglo-Saxon paganism, it did so only from a consideration of its utility, and not because it recognised the rights of private judgment. We look in vain in the dominant tendency of the time—represented by the dogmatism of Wilfrid *—for the freedom of thought which underlies our modern culture, and which has struggled for over a thousand years against the ecclesiastical and intellectual tendency

* The intrepid champion of Rome was destined, however, to call forth a reaction against himself, if not against his tendency, by his dogmatic assertiveness, and the political liberty of the Anglo-Saxons maintained itself in the persons of Oswy and Ecgbert against his attempts to dictate in the quarrels of a subsequent time.

which triumphed at Streaneshalch. The controversy which resulted in the establishment of the influence of Rome on the people of Northumbria in place of that of Iona, is, I repeat, of small importance in itself. The trivial points of difference did not concern the practical effect of Christianity on the life of the people, which, whether at Iona or at Rome, depends on the spiritual force influencing the will and the heart. Unfortunately, the trivial character of the subjects discussed is only too closely in keeping with those which have absorbed the attention of council and conclave, of presbytery and assembly, in the mistaken striving to exalt the mysteries and forms of Christianity at the expense of exciting disunion and repressing its spirit. From a philosophic point of view, it is not easy to discover in what respects the culture which Columba introduced among the Picts, and Aidan among the Northumbrians, could have had a more beneficial effect, had they happened to be in exact unison with the rest of Christendom on the matters of the tonsure and the Easter celebration. But trivial and unessential as the points of difference were, the decision of the council in favour of unity of practice undoubtedly had an important lesson to teach both Celt and Anglo-Saxon. Underlying the puerile discussions which terminated in favour of Rome, we see the idea of a united Church taking the place of the imperial unity,—an idea which was to find a practical expression in the administration of Theodore, Archbishop of Canterbury, who was sent five years later, by Pope Vitalian, to organise the English Church. The idea of a Church, one in government, practice, and doctrine, thus mooted at Whitby and realised by Theodore, was fitted to have an important effect in fusing the petty kingdoms of Saxon Britain, and, at a later time, the warring tribes of Alba, into organic nations. Though it must not be forgotten that the most potent agent in attaining this result was after all the sword of the strongest,* the example of a united Church, with a central jurisdiction and subordinate divisions, was an eloquent guide-post, pointing to national unity. Dissension in the Church in the then divided con-

* Green, in his "History of the English People," overlooks this aspect of the question.

dition of Britain could only have tended to perpetuate disunion in the state, and I readily recognise the service rendered by Roman intolerance to English nationality. And if we regard the Church, not as a unity in diversity, but as, according to the Roman view, a universal organisation, this trivial controversy between Celt and Saxon assumes an importance which, regarded from a more spiritual point of view, it does not possess. In such an organisation a small detail has its place alongside a weighty fact, and, apart from the despotic claims of an ecclesiastical ruler, striving to wield divine jurisdiction over the minds of men, a tolerant, flexible brotherhood, one in spirit and aim, would have embodied the Christian ideal better than the ridiculously schismatic, narrow individualism of our own land at the present time. There is a good deal to be said for M. de Guizot's standpoint. "Fait glorieux et puissant, qui a rendu du V^e^ au XIII^e^ siecle d'immenses services à l'humanité. L'unité de l'Eglise a seule maintenu quelque lien entre des pays et des peuples que tout d'ailleurs tendait à separer, et sous son influence, quelques notions générales, quelques sentiments d'une vaste sympathie ont continuer de se developper et du sein de la plus epouvantable confusion politique, que le monde ait jamais connu, s'est élevée l'idée la plus étendue et la plus pure, peut-être, qui ait jamais rallié les hommes, l'idée de la société spirituelle, car c'est là le nom philosophique de l'Eglise, le type qu'elle a voulu réaliser." *

The decision in favour of Rome brought the north into close touch with the influences of a culture, which could not have emanated from Iona or Ireland, however much credit we may reasonably give them for knowledge and piety. The architecture, art, and refinement of Italy, which came in the track of the Roman prelate, could not have come in the train of the Irish monk. Theodore and his companion Hadrian, both masters of ancient learning, profane and sacred, founded schools in which a larger and more refining knowledge was imparted to the crowds of eager students that resorted to them, than could be obtained in the humble cells of the Scottish monks. Benedict Biscop collected a

* "Histoire de la Civilisation en France," i., p. 339.

noble library in his monastery at Wearmouth, and attracted the most celebrated teachers within his reach to instruct the youth of Northumbria. The wisdom and science of the time suddenly illuminated Northumbria with an even more radiant light than had shone upon it from Iona, and the rude Saxon mind now eagerly responded to the touch of that Rome, whose power and culture had formerly fared so badly at his hands. In the erudition of a Bæda, in the poetry of a Caedmon, in the fluent diction of an Eddius, we see a reflex of the renaissance of intellectual life, which sprang from the direct relation to Rome. "For as much as both of them (Theodore and Hadrian) were well read, both in sacred and secular learning, they gathered a crowd of disciples, and there daily flowed from them rivers of knowledge to water the hearts of their hearers. Besides the books of Holy Writ, they also taught the arts of ecclesiastical poetry, astronomy, and arithmetic. A testimony of which is, that there are still living at this day some of their scholars who are as well versed in the Greek and Latin tongues as in their own. Nor were there ever happier days since the English came into Britain, for their kings, being brave and good Christians, were a terror to all barbarous nations; and the minds of all men were bent upon the joys of the heavenly kingdom of which they had heard, and all who desired to be instructed in sacred reading had masters at hand to teach them." *

About the same time that this revival of Roman culture was thus conquering the northern portion of the old Roman province, we light upon the trace, north of the Forth, of a more pliable spirit towards the claims and usages of Rome —a spirit fitted also to respond to the culture for which they paved the way in Northumbria. It appears in the amiable, erudite, and humanitarian Adamnan, the biographer of Columba, and abbot of Iona from 679 to 704. Next to that of its founder, Adamnan's is the most considerable name connected with the great island monastery. His reputation was as great and as influential in Northumbria as in Ireland, in whose affairs he seems to have taken an active and enlightened part, as the law (Lex

* Bæda, "Hist. Eccl.," iv., c. 2.

Adamnani), which exempted women from the barbarous custom of taking part in warlike expeditions (hostings), bears evidence. He was a welcome guest at the court, and in the monasteries of Northumbria. Bæda has paid a generous tribute to his memory, as an acceptable writer and as a reformer in the service of the new Northumbrian culture. The polished Aldfrid, who succeeded to the throne after the death of his brother Ecgfrid, at the battle of Nechtansmere against the Picts (685), and who had learned to prize the friendship of Adamnan when living in exile at Iona and in Ireland, maintained the closest intercourse with the scholarly abbot. One of his visits was dictated by the humane purpose of obtaining the release of a number of Irish captives, who had been carried off from their native land during the hostile expedition sent by Ecgfrid against Ireland. We are already acquainted with one of the products of his literary activity, his biography of Columba, which remains, next to Bæda, the most valuable source of information on the history of the north during an epoch of singular interest and importance. Another, his tract on "The Holy Places" ("De Locis Sanctis"), is a short but lucid account of what he had learned from Bishop Arculfus, who was shipwrecked on the west coast on his return from Gaul, during the winter months that he was compelled to spend in the monastery. It includes notices of Tyre, Alexandria, Constantinople, and Sicily, and is a monument of the curious interest which was beginning to pulsate in the minds of men, awakening from the onesidedness of their too isolated situation. It was highly prized by Bæda, into whose hands it came from the Northumbrian court, Adamnan having presented his work to King Aldfrid. It possesses the additional interest of having given rise, at a much later time, to a breezy literary controversy between the Protestant divine Casaubon and the Jesuit scholar Gretzer. The former had animadverted on the credulity of Baronius in accepting the testimony of Arculfus as authentic, when the latter vindicated both by publishing the text of Adamnan at Ingolstadt in 1619. Adamnan had a turn for poetry of the mediæval realistic cast as well as for history, if the vision attributed to him of

what he saw when his soul was taken to paradise and hell be a production of his. The weird tale, reminding of the dream of the Celtic monk Fursa preserved by Bæda, may be regarded as one of the forerunners of the Divina Comedia, or the passion-plays of an analogous though later culture. Though Adamnan succeeded in bringing about conformity to Rome in the north of Ireland and in Strathclyde,* he encountered strong opposition from a conservative party at Iona, which appears to have maintained its ground far on into the eighth century, in spite of the success of the Saxon monk Ecgbert, educated in Ireland, in bringing over the majority. The revolution in the Church of the Picts was accomplished in a much more imperative and thorough fashion by King Nechtan, in whose action in sending messengers to Ceolfrid, the successor of Abbot Benedict at Wearmouth, for instruction in the Roman usages, we may see the growing influence of the Saxon Church in the north, where a bishop had been settled at Abercorn on the south shore of the Forth, previous to the defeat of Ecgfrid by the Picts,† and perhaps a reaction on the part of the Picts against the ecclesiastical supremacy of the Scots, with whom there henceforth arose a good deal of political friction.‡ Nechtan demanded conformity on the part of the Columban monks within his territories, with the alternative of expulsion across Drumalban, and, on their refusal, put in force the threat with an intolerance which Oswy had not manifested in Northumbria. But he did not confine his reforming labours to mere points of ecclesiastical order. He sent for architects as well as preachers, and had a church built, probably at Abernethy, in the Roman style, which had already supplanted the Celtic wooden oratory in Northumbria. Ecclesiastical Rome had at length accomplished what imperial Rome and her Saxon enemies had been unable to do—she had conquered the Grampians. Additional

* Skene infers this of the Britons of Strathclyde, from an expression of Bæda to the effect that Adamnan converted a number of "the Britons" to the Roman usages.

† After the battle of Nechtansmere, Trumuin, the bishop, and his clergy, had fled southwards, however.

‡ As the hostilities noted in the chronicles show.

evidence of this is furnished by the dedication of churches to St Peter, St Andrew, the Trinity, and by a series of legends—especially those of Boniface and Servanus, who were both reputed to come from Rome in the beginning of the eighth century, and had even filled the chair of St Peter—pointing to the active influence of the Northumbrian Church in its efforts to Romanise the Christian communities north of the Forth and the Tay.

## CHAPTER III.

### THE MONK OF MELROSE.

IN the interval between the death of Aidan and the withdrawal of Colman to Iona, the evangelisation of the northern part of Northumbria, between the Tweed and the Forth, had been prosecuted by Cuthbert. Bæda is again our trusty guide, and so outstanding a figure was he in the history of this epoch, that he wrote a separate biography of the great missionary ascetic, as well as took ample notice of his life and labours in his "Ecclesiastical History." The immortal historian grappled with his task in that spirit of discernment and industry, of which he has left a monument in his voluminous works. "What I have written concerning our holy father, Bishop Cuthbert," he remarks in the preface to his history, "either in this volume or in my treatise on his life and actions, I partly took and faithfully copied from what I found written of him by the brethren * of the church of Lindisfarne, but at the same time took care to add such things as I could myself find out by the faithful testimony of such as knew him." The credulity which saturates his pages, while it unfits him for the *rôle* of philosopher, adds to the flow and the naive charms of the narrative of the historian.

Irish tradition claims for Cuthbert a Celtic parentage, and professes to detail the romantic events of his earlier life, bringing him from Ireland to Galloway, thence to Iona and Dull in Blair Athole, and finally announces his future activity among the Angles. He was at least the spiritual offspring of the Celtic monastic spirit; and as the representative of its simpler, ascetic tendency, in contrast to the more cosmopolitan and hierarchic attitude of a Wilfrid, I

* "De Vita et Miraculis Sancti Cuthberti, Episcopi Lindesfarnensis," translated by Stevenson. Another life by an anonymous author, a monk of Lindisfarne ("Vita Sancti Cuthberti, auctore anon."), contains little additional.

take his life and work as furnishing a remarkably vivid picture, an eloquent epitome, of Celtic Christian culture.

Bæda does not tarry to be minute about his parents or the place of his birth,* and introduces him as a child at play in that charming Border district, to which the genius of Scott has lent a classic interest, but which was then a rude, and for the most part pastoral land. It was a land of mist and marsh, of forest and lonely heath, of furze and swamp, —the appropriate haunt of those ill-bearing monsters with which the Saxon mythology peopled such places,—which would play an important *rôle* in the life of the imaginative lad as he followed his father's sheep. Cuthbert, as a boy, was of cheerful temperament, active and full of spirit, fond of play, and excelling all his companions in the boyish games in which he took delight. There is no mention of his having had the benefit of early instruction in the elements of the knowledge of his time, as in the cases of Columba and Kentigern. Probably his only school before entering the monastery of Melrose, after he had resolved to dedicate himself to a monastic life, was the home of his Christian parents, who were undoubtedly people of affluence, where he would learn the facts of Scripture story as they had heard them. His only additional training would be that of his simple circumstances. The self-culture of devotion and meditation came to the frolicsome lad through the agency of a child, so the legend has it, who first directed his attention from play to the idea of a great vocation in the future. He was evidently gifted with a quick fancy, which could read its own meaning into things and events, and which henceforth took on a religious colouring. "He often saw and conversed with angels, and when hungry was fed with unwonted food direct from God," and this creative power of a simple fancy often relieved the gloom of the trials of after-life. When suffering, shortly afterwards, from a swelling in the knee, and given up as incurable by the medicine man of the district, he sees in the compassionate stranger—perhaps some skilful monk—who,

* The writer of Art. "Cuthbert," in "National Dictionary of Biography," places it at Tyningham in East Lothian, but the Tyne, with which his name is associated, is more probably the larger river farther south.

in passing, efficaciously prescribed a poultice of wheaten flour sodden with milk, a messenger from heaven. At another time, whilst engaged tending his flock during the summer months among the distant hills through which the Leader flows,* he kept awake in watching and prayer, according to custom, when a shower of meteors, shooting through the calm summer sky, becomes a band of angels bearing upwards a soul of surpassing brightness through the portals of the opened heavens. Awaking his companions, he related to them what he had seen, and they unite in praising God. Soon after, the news of Aidan's death explained the wonderful incident to their simple minds.

This vision strengthened in Cuthbert the resolution to embrace the religious life. He was already distinguished for the fervour of his piety, which naturally was coloured by the influences of the age. While journeying amid the hilly solitudes of the Lammermoors or the Cheviots, he turns aside into a village to rest and procure food for his horse, and finds a ready welcome in the hut of a pious woman, who offers to provide him with a dinner out of her scanty store of provisions. Though exhausted, and repeatedly pressed by his kind hostess, he refused, being unwilling to break his fast, "for it was the sixth day of the week, on which many of the faithful, out of reverence for the Lord's passion, were accustomed to extend their fasting to the ninth hour." After a short rest he resumed his journey, and as evening draws near he is still far from any human habitation, and seeks the shelter of some frail shepherds' huts, deserted by their owners not long before, when they removed their flocks to pasturage less exposed to the storms of winter. Whilst resigning himself to the cheerless situation, with the thought of the merit of prolonging his fast throughout the night, his horse pulling at the grass, which served for a roof, drew down a piece of bread and meat, wrapped in a white cloth, which he shares with the animal. This he regards as a miraculous reward of his unwavering faith, forgetting that it was only the luncheon which some shepherd had omitted to take with him a day or two before.

* Anonymous Life.

This spirit of superstitious simplicity naturally led him to solicit admission into the monastery of Melrose, in the year 651. In the absence of Eata, the abbot, one of the more distinguished of the youths whom Aidan had educated at Lindisfarne, he was received by Boisel, the prior, whose memory has perpetuated itself in Tweeddale in the modern St Boswells, and who subsequently recommended him for the tonsure. The instruction given in the monastery seems to have been limited in its range. Melrose embraced a community devoted to missionary enterprise and spiritual devotion, rather than a school for learning and study. Nevertheless every religious community in Northumbria, even at this early period, had a school attached to it in which the youth of the district were instructed. Besides the rules of monkish discipline, in which Boisel enjoyed the reputation of a master, the only study mentioned is that of the Scriptures; but writing at least was also taught, and such history as the traditions of the past, and the lives of the fathers and saints afforded. Cuthbert at once became a sedulous student. The pre-eminence which he had enjoyed among his playmates marked him out in the serious exercises of the cloister from among his fellow-monks. Of robust strength and active disposition, he gave the time which remained over from study and devotion to severe manual labour.

About the same time that Cuthbert was enrolled among the pupils of Boisel at Melrose, another youth, destined to play an important part in the religious life of Northumbria during half a century, and whose enthusiasm and strength of character likewise distinguished him as a boy from his companions, and earned him the patronage of Queen Eanfleda, entered the school of Lindisfarne. The life of Wilfrid was a very eventful one. Unlike that of the gentle missionary ascetic, to whose retiring disposition the quiet of the cloister and the seclusion of the remote hamlets of Upper Tweeddale and Northumberland were more congenial than the excitement of travel and the strife of controversy, the biography of this restless, zealous ecclesiastic possesses all the elements of a powerful drama. The careers of both monkish students afford the same striking

illustration of concentration of soul in the pursuit of its purpose. But here the similarity ends. In Wilfrid, this intensity of resolution is pervaded by a decision, a combativeness of temper, a love of predominance and power, which were allowed ample play in a life full of stirring movement. The restless energy of the ambitious ecclesiastic, his youthful devotion and eagerness for knowledge, his studies at Rome and Lyons, his journeys in Gaul and Italy, his intrigues and quarrels and controversies, his thrice repeated banishment from his diocese in Northumbria, and chequered life as an exile, his mission among the Frisians and South Saxons, his prominent figure in Roman conclave and Northumbrian Witenagemot, are pictured in the vivid narrative of Eddius.* As a piece of clerical biography, his work is unusually free from the baneful credulity of the time, and comes nearer to the trustworthiness of sober history than the conventional narrative of miracle and monkish virtue, with a fact interspersed here and there, or hidden under the haze of supernatural belief, which makes up the greater part of the lives of the "holy men" of these shadowy centuries. Even the accurate and painstaking Bæda has filled page after page of his sober and lucid history with the credulous stories of simple monk and nun. The presence of only a few miracles in those of Eddius is high praise of his historical sentiment, even if he pretends to infallibility as an advocate.

A few years after Cuthbert's entry into Melrose, he was transferred, along with some of his fellow-monks, to Ripon, where Alchfrid of Deira, Oswy's son, had granted to Eata forty hides of land for the erection and maintenance of a monastery. He occupied the post of steward and almoner, or dispenser of the hospitality of the establishment to strangers and travellers and to the poor, for the monastery of that time was likewise an inn where the wayfarer could find shelter and refreshment. Such an office must have been a very congenial one to the affable monk, whose communicative mind took delight in recounting, for the edification of his brethren, the traditions of the past, and

* "Vita Sancti Wilfridi, Episcopi Eboracensis, auctore Eddio Stephano (ed. Gale).

who listened to the tales of those whom he entertained with a spice of right worldly curiosity. His childlike fancy sometimes discovered among his numerous guests some angelic visitor, and it is not without regret that we see them crumble into fable at the touch of the modern critical spirit. Under the intolerant influence of Wilfrid, the favour of their patron was withdrawn on their refusal to accept the Roman Easter, and the monastery transferred to its champion. On the death of Boisel, who about the year 661 fell a victim to one of those pestilences, frequently mentioned in the annals of the eighth century, Cuthbert became his successor at Melrose as prior and instructor in the Scriptures and the monastic life. Though himself still suffering from the effects of the plague, he spent the seven days preceding the death of his old master by his bedside, reading and meditating on the gospel of St John,* "seeking only therein that simple faith which works by love, and not troubling themselves with minute and subtle questions." †

Cuthbert followed the high ideal of his master in his calling of prior and preacher. In the then meagre organisation of the Church in this part of Northumbria, and the consequent dearth of regular instruction, the Christianity of many of the remote settlers must have been of a very superficial character. While some of its ceremonies and mysteries were blended with the remnants of the old superstition, the knowledge and practice of its precepts could only be very imperfect. Besides Melrose, Coludi (or Coldingham) and Abercorn ‡ were centres of Christian effort, and probably the churches connected with the name of Baldred § in East Lothian were already founded, but

* Simeon of Durham mentions this book as still preserved in that church in his time.

† Bæda, "Vita S. Cuth.," c. 8.

‡ The spread of Christianity in the north was zealously prosecuted somewhat later under the episcopate of Wilfrid, before the outbreak of the quarrel with Oswy and Ecgfrid, which resulted in his banishment. "Under Bishop Wilfrid," says Eddius ("Vita S. Wilfridi," ch. xxi.), "the churches were multiplied in the south among the Saxons, and in the north among the Picts, Scots, and Britons, Wilfrid having ordained everywhere presbyters and deacons, and governed new churches." One of these was Abercurnaig, or Abercorn.

§ That Baldred was a person of reputation is evident from the fact that he is mentioned in a poem of Alcuin.

they do not appear to have exercised much influence on the more outlying districts among the hills of the southern highlands of Scotland. The outbreak of a pestilence, or the accident of a bad harvest, were regarded as evidence of the worthlessness of the new religion, and drove the people to seek help from the idols and enchantments of the old. About this time, for instance, the East Saxons sought to limit the ravages of a deadly plague by restoring the temples and celebrating the rites from which they had been converted by Cedd. The same tendency is observable among the Anglian colonists of Tweeddale, Lauderdale, or Teviotdale, and what Jaruman did for the former, Cuthbert accomplished for the latter. He frequently interrupted the duties of the schoolmaster and the monk by making a journey, sometimes on horseback, but oftener on foot, into the remote hilly district where no missionary had ever penetrated. Sometimes he spent as much as a whole month thus wandering from hamlet to hamlet—those clusters of wooden hovels in which the shepherds of the upland glens and moors lived—preaching as he went with a fervid eloquence that was not without its effect on his rustic hearers. At every village a little crowd of the inhabitants gathered around the strange preacher. However unfamiliar his message might be, the sympathetic insight, quick to read the souls of his audience, lent it its peculiar fascination. "It was then the custom of the English people that when a clerk or priest came into the town they all at his command flocked together to hear the word. But Cuthbert was so skilful an orator, so fond was he of enforcing his subject, and such a brightness appeared in his angelic face, that no man present presumed to conceal from him the most hidden secrets of his heart, but all openly confessed what they had done, because they thought that guilt could not be concealed from him, and thus wiped it off by worthy fruits of penance as he commanded them."* The childlike belief which peopled the solitudes of these lonely hills and glens with ghostly forms and powers, play a considerable *rôle* at these preachings.

* Bæda, "Hist. Eccl.," iv. 27.

The powers of evil pursue him in his progress, watchful to impair his influence, and to preserve their supremacy. Once, while addressing the inhabitants of a village, the devil tries to distract the attention of his hearers by enveloping a hut in flames, and all hurry off to fetch water to quench it. It was apparently a false alarm, and the preacher succeeds in vanquishing the wily foe by prayer, and then improves the occasion by reproving the fickleness of the people, and warning them against temptation,—an incident which is an instructive index of the simplicity of mind, both of preacher and hearer, and no less of Bæda who most gravely relates it. But these long journeys, in the midst of malevolent agencies, were not unmarked by manifestations of a more pleasingly human kind. Here and there a pious woman accords a ready welcome to the hungry and weary traveller. On one occasion, while on a journey to one of these remote mountain hamlets, his patient faith finds means, on the approach of night, of replenishing the empty wallet of his attendant. "Seest thou that eagle overhead? God is able to make it the instrument of supplying our need, if He will!" Running forward to where the bird had alighted on the bank of the stream that watered the glen, the boy finds a fish that it had dropped in its startled flight, and, leaving the half for their unwilling benefactor, they make their supper on the other in the hamlet where they find shelter for the night. At another time, his prayers succeed in allaying a fit of nervous excitement from which the wife of Hildemer, the prefect or thegn of the district, was stricken; and such a triumph, in a quarter so influential, would not fail to carry conviction to minds whose attitude towards Christianity was largely influenced by the example of their superiors, and may be taken as an example of what happened in many districts of Northumbria. One of these journeys extended into the wilds of Galloway,* where he must have been entertained by the tales of the shadowy saint who reposed in the monastery at Whithorn, and which was soon to be revived as the seat of a bishop by the

* Bæda, "Vita S. Cuth.," chs. x. and xi. Kirkcudbright remains as the witness of his presence so far west.

Northumbrian Church. The extensive sway of King Oswy, over the region from the Humber to the Tay, which some years afterwards (669-678) was to form the diocese of Wilfrid, doubtless widened the orbit of his wanderings as the bearer of the Christian culture of the time, although his name is specially associated with the eastern lowlands.*

On the appointment of Eata (664) as abbot of Lindisfarne in place of Colman, Cuthbert was entrusted with the office of superintending and teaching the discipline of the monastery. By his imperturbable gentleness and patience he succeeded in restoring the unanimity among the community which the recent controversy had disturbed. Some of the monks still rebelled against the innovations of the Roman party, and taunted their prior with being a renegade and subverter. But the tact and meekness of Cuthbert disarmed an opposition which he wearied out by his forbearance, and at length changed into assent. Occasionally he spent several nights in some retired spot in meditation and prayer, or walked round the island finding inspiration, like the Celtic monks, in the mystic gloom, the wild music of the breakers, and the infinite dome above. At other times he sought to disarm the power of the phantoms which lurked in the bosom of the night, or to gain the reward of eternal rest, by spending the hours while the others slept in doing some manual labour or chanting the psalms. Like Columba, he sometimes summoned his fellow-monks to join in these nocturnal vigils; and, as at Melrose, only interrupted this intense application to the realisation of his monkish ideal, by an occasional tour in the neighbourhood, to eliminate the lingering traces of paganism, or to leaven the life of the people by his teaching and example. Standing one day near the mouth of the Tyne, whilst a storm lashes the sea into great billows, he descries a boat laden with timber, which, with its occupants, is in danger of being engulfed. The peasants standing around began to scoff at the monks of the monastery on the opposite bank, to whom the boat belongs, and whose efforts to render assistance to their

* We have the authority of Dr Skene for asserting that Cuthbert founded a church on the site of the present St Cuthbert's, Edinburgh.

brethren are unavailing. "Nobody shall pray for them," they cry, in answer to St Cuthbert's rebukes; "may God spare none of them, for they have taken away from us the ancient rites and customs." But a sudden change of wind drives the boat landwards, and the efficiency of Cuthbert's intercession, to which the change is attributed, proves, of course, the power of his God.

The mystic tendency by-and-by asserted its power over the practical, and he retired (670) to lead a contemplative life—that of an anchorite—on the islet of Farne, a few miles east of Lindisfarne. This lonely spot had hitherto been haunted by the malignant creations of the popular fancy, which found in such solitudes a fitting abode for the monsters of the old superstitions. To the overstrained imagination of Cuthbert these were vivid realities; but they fled before the intrepidity of his faith, and left him unmolested to erect, with the assistance of his fellow-monks, his rude two-chambered cell of unhewn stones and turf, with its roof of straw supported by a few rough poles. A larger hut at the landing-place served as a shelter for visitors from the monastery or strangers from the mainland. These provided him with bread, which, with a little water from the well in the rocky floor of his hut, formed his only nourishment. Afterwards, however, desiring to maintain himself after the example of the apostle and the famous anchorites of byegone times, he obtained a little wheat from the monastery and sowed it in a plot which he had tilled. The soil not proving suitable, he substituted some barley, and the crop thus reared supplied his simple wants. At first he allowed himself the relaxation of a chat with the monks from Lindisfarne, but as the fascination of solitude strengthened the influence of a morbid spiritualism over his mind, he denied himself even this indulgence, and sought the attainment of his unnatural ideal in the neglect of his person, and in the almost complete seclusion from both nature and human society. The gloom of his narrow cell was rarely broken except when he opened the window to give his blessing to some pilgrim, and the filth and discomfort of his body contributed to the merits of his fasts and vigils. "So little heed did he pay to his body, for fear of neglect-

ing his soul, that he would spend a month without taking off his leathern gaiters. He sometimes kept his shoes on from one Easter to another, and in consequence of the frequency of his prayers and genuflexions he contracted a hard swelling at the junction of the feet with the legs." Thus the striving of the nobler souls of that old world to idealise the higher nature of man sank to the level of a degrading and disgusting materialism, and made them the victims of a morbid hallucination. The development of the moral and intellectual nature was cramped by a superficial formalism. The instinct of the time fastened on the legal side of Christianity, and reduced it to an absurdity by its puerile excesses. Intensity and earnestness there are in that striving to realise the highest good, but they are concerned with trivialities. The imagination alone of the soul's faculties finds full play, but instead of inspiring and enriching the mind with a fuller life, it withers its growth by its sickly touch. It is a child's world, without its simplicity and poetry, for what would be charming and ingenuous in the child is repulsive and unworthy in the man. "How many times," he complains, "have the powers of evil pushed me headlong from yonder high rock, how often persecuted and discouraged me by their apparitions, how often endangered my life by the stones they hurled at me!" This is the age of vision and miracle; the life of man is suffused with a mystic element that transforms the poetry of the invisible and spiritual into material realities. It is evident that these Christian teachers—and Cuthbert is in this respect a connecting link between Celt and Saxon—gave to the mind a false bent, whose influence may be traced for centuries, and which does not improve by contrast with the tendency of the classic culture, which it largely displaced throughout mediæval times.

"The extravagant tales which display the fiction, without the genius of poetry, have seriously affected the reason, the faith, and the morals of the Christians. Their credulity debased and vitiated the faculties of the mind; they corrupted the evidence of history, and superstition gradually extinguished the hostile light of philosophy and science. Every mode of religious worship which had been practised

by the saints, every mysterious doctrine which they believed, was fortified by the sanction of divine revelation, and all the manly virtues were oppressed by the servile and pusillanimous reign of the monks. If it be possible to measure the interval between the philosophic writings of Cicero and the sacred legend of Theodoret, between the character of Cato and that of Simeon, we may appreciate the memorable revolution which was accomplished in the Roman empire within a period of five hundred years."* This is severe criticism, yet it is not unfounded, as we may see from a few atrocious examples in Celtic hagiology. Finchna, like Ite, caused his body to be eaten into by chafers or stag beetles, and even slept with corpses brought for burial. Findean wore a girdle of iron that cut to the bone. Ciaran mixed his bread with sand. Mochua lived in "a prison of stone," apparently walled up, with only a little aperture left for letting food down to him.† And yet there is intensity in it all. It produced, too, its cathedrals, —fitted to rival Roman basilica or Greek temple,—with their earnest grandeur, their demons, and fantastic horrors. It exercised, too, a practical influence. Hundreds of pilgrims sought the cell of Cuthbert. The miserable hovel on the islet of Farne stands in the foreground of the picture of the religious life characteristic of the period. "Allured by the fame of his virtues, a great many persons came, not only from the neighbouring district of Lindisfarne, but also from the remoter parts of Britain, to confess to the man of God the sins which they had committed, or to lay before him the temptations of demons under which they suffered, or at least those troubles with which they were afflicted in common with all men. For, by laying bare their distresses to one of so great sanctity, they hoped to receive consolation. Nor did their hope deceive them. For no one departed from him without joy and consolation, and the sorrow of mind which each man brought with him accompanied him no more on his departure. For Cuthbert knew to refresh the mourner with pious exhortations; he knew how to remind those in tribulation of the

* Gibbon, "Decline and Fall," vol. vi., p. 254 (Mil.'s edit.).

† *See* Stokes, "Anecdota Oxeniensia," v., pref. c. xviii.

joys of heavenly life, and to show that both the smiles and frowns of the world are equally transient. He was skilled in revealing to those who are tempted the manifold wiles of the old enemy. He showed how readily the soul that was void of brotherly or divine love might be taken prisoner, and how he that walked in the strength of entire faith might pass safely through the snares of the adversary, with the Lord's assistance, like as through the threads of a spider's web." *

His reputation as a paragon of sanctity, and a sort of Christian wonder doctor, secured in 684 his election by the Synod of Twyford, on the Alne, as Bishop of Hagulstad † (Hexham), afterwards exchanged at his request for that of Lindisfarne. Only the entreaty of King Ecgfrid himself could draw him from his solitude, and, like Aidan, he persevered, amid the toils of the episcopal office, in the pursuit of his monkish ideal. In the zealous bishop, wandering from place to place in apostolic fashion, we recognise the self-denying preacher of the Border uplands. It is the same intense yet sympathetic personality that impresses by its eloquence, and touches the hearts of the people by its penetration. For the renewed miracles which accompanied his labours we are indebted to the credulity and loquacity of his attendant Baldhelm, "who used to relate the virtues of Cuthbert with great sweetness;" but a better evidence of their benevolent efficacy is to be found in his advocacy of the rights of the weak against the strong, in his compassionate care for the infirm and the destitute, in his sympathy with the sorrowful, and his eloquent appeal in favour of the higher life. During his episcopate a plague wrought frightful havoc among the population, some of the villages being deserted by the few survivors, while others contained but a fraction of their former inhabitants. In such scenes of death and pestilence the admonitions of the preacher did not fall on careless ears, and the belief in their power gave a healing efficacy in not a few cases to his prayers. We find him, for instance, entering a village, and after comforting and admonishing the few surviving in-

* "Vita S. Cuthberti," ch. xxii. (Stevenson's translation).

† Northumbria had by this time been divided into several bishoprics.

habitants, he turns to his attendant and asks whether there is still any one whom he may visit. The priest points to a woman standing at a short distance, supporting her sick child in her arms, and weeping over the recent loss of another. Kissing the little sufferer, Cuthbert comforts its mother with the prophecy of its speedy recovery. Widely different as is the spirit of the age compared with ours, human nature is the same. Sorrow, affection, sympathy, —humanity in the complexity of its experiences,—reflect themselves in the mirror of history, whether in the seventh or the nineteenth century.

To the ravages of pestilence was added the gloom of national calamity. Under the vigorous rule of Ecgfrid (670-685) Northumbria reached the height of its greatness. A battle with the Mercian king Wulfhere, who had rendered the subjection of the kingdom to Northumbria little more than nominal, reasserted the supremacy of the northern kings. A quarrel with the Britons of Strathclyde, who, since the victories of Ethelfrith at Chester and Degsastane, had apparently enjoyed immunity from Saxon aggression, resulted in the extension of his authority to the northwest. His army even attempted the conquest of Ireland (684), plundering the churches and monasteries, and burning the towns and villages of the coast, in revenge for the obstinate defence of the natives, which prevented the subjection of the interior. In the bloodshed and injustice which marked this career of aggression, Cuthbert perceived the shadow of coming Nemesis. Elfleda, the successor of Hilda at Whitby, sharing the anxiety with which he regarded the questionable triumphs of her brother, consulted the man of God, who prophesies his speedy death. The same year Ecgfrid led his army beyond the Forth, to confirm and extend the conquests of his father Oswy among the Picts, who had become restive under the rule of the alien. The upshot was the battle of Nechtansmere (685), and the death of the king and the greater portion of his army. That which Cuthbert had feared as certain to accrue from the restless and reckless character of Ecgfrid had found its speedy fulfilment. He had come to Carlisle (Lugubalia) in answer to the summons of Queen Ermen-

burga, anxiously awaiting there, in her sister's monastery, news of the expedition. On the morning after his arrival, he was taken to see the remains of the Roman works in and around the town. The threatening aspect of the sky intensified the thoughts of disaster that oppressed his mind. "Do you see how wonderfully the air is changed and disturbed?" he asked those to whom he had communicated his fears, and who were inclined to a more hopeful view. "Who is able to investigate the judgments of the Almighty?" Then came the fatal news, and the Queen, receiving from Cuthbert consecration to the religious life, swelled the long list of royal personages who in these rude, changeful times ended a life of pleasure or turmoil in the quiet of the monastery.

In the same city two years later (687) the foreboding of his own decease came to him. "Remember, brother Herbert," said the bishop to an aged friend, an anchorite, who lived on an islet in the lake that feeds the Derwent, and who had annually visited the cell of Cuthbert,—"remember to ask me at this time all the questions you desire to have resolved, and say all you design, for we shall see one another no more in this world, for I am sure that the time of my dissolution is at hand, and I shall speedily put off the tabernacle of the flesh." "I beseech you," replied his aged friend, falling on his knees, "not to forsake me, but to remember your most faithful companion, and to entreat the Supreme Goodness that, as we served Him together on earth, we may depart together to behold His bliss in heaven." Cuthbert assented, and bade him an affectionate adieu, and, after visiting the churches and monasteries in his diocese, withdrew to his cell on Farne to prepare for his death by prayer and meditation. After several weeks' illness in the solitude of his island home, attended lovingly towards the end by a number of the monks from Lindisfarne, the tidings of his death were flashed by a torch across the narrow sound to the watchers on Lindisfarne. His last words show a trace of the strife which had stirred the minds of men during the bitter quarrels between Wilfrid, on the one hand, who claimed exemption from all interference in his pretentious rights and functions, on the part of the

secular power, and Oswy and Ecgfrid on the other. There is in them, too, an echo of the ecclesiastical strife by which Celt and Saxon, to both of whom Cuthbert belongs, had for a time parted company. "Keep peace with one another and heavenly charity, . . . and maintain concord with other servants of God. Despise not those of the household of faith who come to you seeking hospitality, but be careful to receive such, to entertain them, and to send them away with friendly kindness. . . . But with those that err from the unity of the Catholic peace, either by not celebrating Easter at the proper time, or by living perversely, have no communion." *

* Bæda, "Vita," c. 39.

## CHAPTER IV.

### DEGENERATION AND DECAY.

OUR information as to the history of Scotland during the four centuries succeeding the ecclesiastical revolution in the time of King Nechtan—during the period that elapsed before Celtic Scotland became feudal Scotland—is of a very fragmentary character. A few notes of events in the Pictish Chronicle and the Irish Annals, some glimpses from the "History" of Simeon of Durham and the "Historia Britonum" of Nennius, the Book of Deer, and the Lives of Blaithmac and Caddroe, the Register of St Andrews,* and a stray tradition that has survived in the writers of later times, contribute the meagre literary sources from which the student of the culture of this period must draw his materials. Happily they are supplemented from the storehouse of archæological remains, such as stone and metal work, which have been investigated by authorities like Anderson and Stuart.

The political and ecclesiastical history, which had formerly been utterly distorted by the romancing genius of John of Fordun, Hector Boece, and George Buchanan, has been reconstructed in a critical spirit by Robertson, Reeves, Burton, Skene, and Rhys.† Though there must perforce be a good deal of guessing and mere inference in such attempts, the horizon of the political movement in the north during these dim centuries has at any rate been cleared of much of the mirage of fable, and leading events established with reasonable certainty. Happily it forms no part of my task to treat the reader to a minute and tiresome analysis of the meagre records of the time for the purpose of arriving at historic fact. I merely refer to them in so far as they

* The Register itself has been lost, but extracts have been preserved.

† I refer to such well-known works as "Scotland under her Early Kings," "The Culdees of the British Isles," "Celtic Scotland," Burton's "History of Scotland," and the "Rhind Lectures" by Rhys (*Scottish Review* for 1890 and 1891).

have something to tell us of the condition of the country and its culture up to the time that Celtic Scotland merged into feudal Scotland, and seek to supplement the story by the testimony of archæology.

At the beginning of the eighth century North Britain was divided into four independent States. The kings of the Picts ruled over all the territory to the north of the Forth and Clyde, with the exception of Argyleshire or Dalriada, which was possessed by Scottish immigrants from Ireland, consisting of the three tribes of Loarn, Connal, and Gabran, under their own line of kings. Strathclyde formed another principality, whose capital was at Alclyde or Dumbarton ; while the country to the east between the Forth and Tweed remained part of the kingdom of Northumbria. No portion of these territories, which together subsequently formed the kingdom of Scotland, was then known by that name. Scotia was applied exclusively to Ireland, and the Scots were understood by all writers, previous to the eleventh century, as the inhabitants of that country. Only when the Scoto-Pictish kings had succeeded in uniting the various territories co-extensive with modern Scotland under their sway, was the name of Scotia applicable to North Britain in the modern sense. The first important step in this direction was the accession of Kenneth M'Alpin, King of Dalriada, but related through his mother to the Pictish dynasty, who took advantage of a crushing defeat, inflicted by the Danes on the Picts, to cross Drumalban, and possess himself of a portion of Pictavia or Alba. By the year 844 he had quelled all opposition, and asserted his supremacy over the remainder. A century later Strathclyde was ceded to Malcolm, son of Donald, though it retained its native kings, in dependence on the monarchs of Alba, down to the time of David, who first became Prince of Strathclyde, and afterwards, as King of Scotland, united it to the Scottish crown. The conquest of Lothian had long been the striving of the Pictish kings, and the object of many battles between the Picts and the Northumbrians. The accession of many of the kings of the former, down to Malcolm, the son of Kenneth, was marked by a bloody contest with those of the latter, who, with the exception of a brief

interval under Eadbert, about the middle of the eighth century, had never been able to wield the extensive sway which had cast such a lustre on the reigns of Oswy and Ecgfrid. The victory of Carham (1018) at length made the Tweed, instead of the Forth, the southern boundary of Malcolm's kingdom, and by the middle of this century the usurper Macbeth (1039-56), who, as Mormaer of Moray, had a strong hold in the north, brought under his sway the districts beyond the Moray Firth, which had owned the jurisdiction of Norwegian jarls, so that he was supreme ruler from the Cheviots to the Pentland Firth. The Western Isles, with Orkney and Shetland, were under Norse domination. During the one hundred and fifty years between the commencement of the ninth century and the middle of the tenth, these fierce invaders—Danes and Norwegians, generally known as Vikings and Norsemen—had made incessant descents on the coasts of Britain. Attacks like those on Lindisfarne (793) and Iona (795), which had plunder for their object, were followed by protracted attempts at conquest. Simeon of Durham, for instance, describes their incursions into the heart of Northumbria in the first part of the tenth century, ravaging the defenceless country, and, after wintering near the Tyne, attacking the Galwegian Picts and the Strathclyde Britons. It was the effect of a formidable Danish invasion in breaking the power of the Picts that enabled M'Alpin to take possession of the Pictish throne. The inhabitants of North as well as South Britain lived in constant dread of the inroads of these fierce Norsemen, who, like their forerunners, the Saxon pirates from the banks of the Elbe and the Frisian flats four hundred years earlier, came at first to slay and burn, and then to take possession of the districts they had laid waste. But while they succeeded in seizing large tracts in England, and giving to that country a race of Scandinavian kings, their hold in Scotland was confined to the Western Isles, and the extreme north, where they left their mark on the language and monumental remains of the people. What with these continual attacks on the part of a race whose business and pastime alike lay in war, the ever-recurring combats between the Picts and the Northumbrians, between both and the

Britons of Strathclyde, the traces of internal feud between clan and clan, the murder of kings and the feebleness of justice, the condition of the people was one of extreme disorder and misery throughout this dark interval in the records of our country. A glance at the "Chronicles" * emphasises this with monotonous distinctness.

"Kenneth, son of Alpin, invaded Saxony (later name for Northumbria) six times, burned Dunbarre, and took Marlos (Melrose)."

"The Danes invaded Pictavia and Cluanan and Duncalden."

"The Norsemen laid waste Pictavia" (reign of Donald, son of Constantine).

"Kenneth, son of Malcolm, wasted Saxony."

The "Historia Britonum" is as suggestive:—

"A.D. 750.—War between Picts and Britons, and the king of the former, Talorgan, killed by the Britons."

"870.—Castle of Alclyde destroyed by the pagans."

"946.—Strathclyde devastated by the Saxons."

Noteworthy, too, is the recurrence of words like "strages" and "jugulatio" in annalists like Tighernach, who occasionally refers to the affairs of North Britain. Yet there existed a machinery of government. Besides the king, there were the mormaer † or governor of a province (apparently seven in number), the toisech or clan chief, and the brehon or judge; but in an age in which the people must have been largely demoralised by being familiarised with war and plunder, and force was the chief ruler, their authority could not have been very powerful.

The record of the life of the Church is characterised by the same meagreness and indistinctness that set the chroniclers of a later age inventing kings, and romancing about their exploits. It is a suggestive spectacle that of an epoch disappearing from the horizon, and leaving but a stray fact, a shadowy tradition of its existence,—all the more so, inasmuch as it was as much a thing of oblivion to those living comparatively near it, as it appears to us to-

* Skene, "Chronicles of the Picts and Scots," pp. 8 and 9.

† These officers are mentioned in marginal notes to the "Book of Deer."

day. No Bæda, no Adamnan, to guide us through the maze of those dim centuries. No outstanding figure like that of a Columba or a Cuthbert appears as the epitome of the culture of his time. Iona is still a centre of monastic culture, but it already lives in its past glory—as the shrine of the mighty dead. The dramatic element, which enters so largely into the story of a great missionary movement like that which circles round the lives of a Columba or a Kentigern, an Aidan or a Cuthbert, gives place to the curt and dry notes of the annalist. Nevertheless every age has its memories, and there is something to tell, after, it must be confessed, a good deal of judicious piecing together, of the life and work of the old Celtic Church.

During the greater part of the eighth century we discover at Iona a trace of intellectual activity of a kind, in the continuance of the ecclesiastical bickerings, that stirred the passions and exercised the dialectic skill of the disputants at Whitby. Rival abbots kept alive the spirit of discussion down to the year 772. The devotedness of the golden age of Christian activity in early times is echoed in the missionary zeal of Maelrubha at Applecross, and throughout the North-Western Highlands. That the fervour of a more heroic time lighted up the gathering darkness is evident from the tragic story of the death of Blaithmac* in 825, while bidding defiance, from the altar of the oratory at Iona, to the threats of the marauding Norsemen. "Whoever feels strong enough to suffer for the name of Christ," cried Blaithmac to his fellow-monks, on receiving the tidings of the pirates' approach, "let him stay; but let those whom fear threatens to overcome hasten their flight, for the trial of death draweth nigh." Thus sifted, a little band of heroes, men of muscle and mighty faith, who might have conquered at Marathon or Bannockburn, gathered round their intrepid leader, and calmly awaited the stroke that was to bring them the martyr's crown. At last came the turn of Blaithmac. "Tell us," demanded the ruffians, "where the treasure lies concealed." "Even if I knew,

* For his life—a metrical composition, by Walafrid Strabo—*see* Pinkerton, "Vita Sanctorum," p. 459.

which I do not," exclaimed the saint (he had directed it to be hid at a place unknown to him), "I would never betray my trust," and fell, hacked in pieces by the swords of his enraged assailants. On several subsequent occasions it was the object of attack, and so late as 986 the heroism of Blaithmac and his companions was equalled by the abbot and fifteen of his monks, who preferred death to flight. A similar scene took place on the Isle of May, which, like the Bass, Inchcolm, and other isles on the east coast, was sought out as a suitable retreat for a monastic establishment, offering alike solitude for devotion, and a retreat from the disorders of the times. Abbot Adrian, whom tradition brings from the East with a royal following, but who was far more probably an Irish monk of the name of Odran,* was murdered with a large number of his community, and his martyrdom, like that of Blaithmac, was evidently a much-talked-of event throughout these stormy centuries, rich in weird scenes though they must have been. While Walafrid Strabo, the erudite abbot of the monastery of Reichenau, made the death of Blaithmac the theme of his muse, Wyntoun has chronicled in verse that of his no less dauntless contemporary. The monasteries, as the storehouses of many valuable articles,—such as the gold and silver shrines in which MSS., crosiers, &c., hallowed by the memory of some saint, were placed,—naturally roused the cupidity of those plundering bands, and invited almost certain destruction, before the erection of a lofty round tower, such as those that still stand at Abernethy, Brechin, and Egilsay in Orkney, bade defiance to the fierce assailants of the monks. There may be something in the idea,† too, as explaining the fury shown by the Norsemen towards the ministers of the Christian religion, that there were among them many refugee Saxons, who, fleeing from the cruel aggression of Charlemagne, turned pirates and emigrants, and sought to wreak vengeance on the faith which they hated as the emblem of national oppression.

* *See* Stuart, "Records of the Priory of the Isle of May," Pref., p. vi. While Iona was restored immediately after, the monastery in the Isle of May lay in ruins till the time of King David.

† Burton, "History of Scotland," vol. I.

The constant exposure to the risk of attack led to the removal of the remains and other relics of Columba, partly to Kells in Ireland, partly to Dunkeld,* in the reign of Kenneth M'Alpin, who established a community of Columban monks there. With the accession of a Scottish king to the throne of the Picts, the Scottish monks would seem to have regained some of the influence across Drumalban which they had lost on their expulsion by King Nechtan, —a result for which the disappearance of all difference from the secular clergy,† introduced from Northumbria, in the matter of canonical usages, since the cessation of controversy, would the more easily pave the way. Evidently, too, some of the Columban communities, such as the very ancient foundations of Deer and Turriff, which still existed in the twelfth century, must have conformed to the injunctions of King Nechtan, and thus escaped the banishment preferred by most to the renunciation of the ancient customs. Though Dunkeld now appears to have occupied the pre-eminence which belonged to Iona, — to be soon transferred first to Abernethy, and then permanently to St Andrews,—the old shrine of Columba still possessed the charm of a mighty name, and attracted many to pray amid its hallowed memories. The monastic brotherhood still continued under their abbots or "coarbs," who, however, often resided in Ireland as the head of some cognate establishment.

The unsettled and barbarous character of the times necessarily exercised a very adverse influence on the religious condition of the country. If at the end of the tenth century King Alfred could scarcely find, in many parts of his kingdom, a single priest who could read, the state of matters in Scotland must likewise in many cases have compared badly with that under an Adamnan or a Columba. The greater part of the lands which had been granted to some abbot or holy man for the maintenance of religion

* The church had been founded by Constantine MacFergus about the beginning of the ninth century.

† Bæda ("Hist. Eccl.," v. 21) refers to the existence of a secular clergy, when, speaking of King Nechtan's decree enforcing the Roman usages, he remarked that "all the ministers of the altar and the monks adopted the coronal tonsure."

and education became the hereditary possession of some chief or noble, who, while preserving the ecclesiastical title, was really a secular lord. Thus what Bæda* laments and reprobates as taking place in Northumbria, even in his comparatively early time, occurred with like disastrous results in Alba. Moreover, the expulsion (in 717) of the greater part of the Columban monks, furnished to every unprincipled chief or noble an inviting opportunity of enriching himself by seizing the church lands, with their privileges and revenues, and merely retaining the title, while neglecting the duties attached to it. For instance, Crinan, Abbot of Dunkeld, appears as a great secular lord, at the beginning of the eleventh century, who took an active part in the wars of his time, and fell in battle; while the Register of St Andrews furnishes another case, of the revenues in possession of laymen, the clerical duties being performed, on the most niggardly allowance, by a humble community of Culdees. The most significant instance of this decay in the life and organisation of the Church, resulting from the disorders of the times, is the state of the ancient diocese of Kentigern, as revealed by the inquisition ordered by King David in the twelfth century. Not only had the episcopal office ceased to exist, but the church lands had been entirely alienated and the former churches had disappeared.

We miss, too, after a while, the active and once so beneficent intercourse with Ireland. The barrier of the Norse settlements in the Western Isles, Man, and the east coast of Erin itself, interrupted the former close relations, and isolated Scotland from the pristine source of its Celtic Christian culture.† Ireland itself had indeed outlived its golden age; and England, if we may credit the description of Asser in his "Life of Alfred," was sunk in the deepest barbarism. In Caddroe, who flourished in the first half of the tenth century, we perceive the last link in the golden chain that for centuries bound Scotland and Ireland in the unity of a culture, which once moulded that of Western

* Letter to Egbert, Bishop of York, written in 734 or 735.

† We now and then light on the trace of intercourse with Rome. In 854, the Abbot of Iona, Mureachtach, was slain by "the Saxons" while on his way thither. In the latter half of the tenth century, Leot and Sluagdach proceed from St Andrews, apparently to obtain a decision regarding some quarrel.

Europe. His life affords a suggestive glimpse of the religious condition of the country. He was the son of noble parents, in the district of Strathearn, who, being long childless, made a pilgrimage to Iona to pray for the intercession of Columba. Some time after, the birth of a son rewards their piety. The custom of fosterage was still common among the Picts, and he is given over to the care of one of the numerous friends, who competed for the honour of bringing him up. After exhausting the means of instruction at his disposal, probably in the school of Abernethy, supplemented by his uncle Beanus, to whom the church of Kinkell, in Strathearn, was dedicated, he crosses to Ireland, and prosecutes at Armagh, still a famous school, the study of poetry, oratory, philosophy, arithmetic, music, and astronomy. After some years he returns to teach the knowledge he had acquired at the great Irish university. "From the time of Caddroe's arrival," continues his panegyrist, "none of the wise men had crossed the sea, but dwelt in Ireland." His fame attracts the notice of King Constantine (son of Ædh, 900-943), but the spirit of adventure, blended with the piety which discovered in a vision a divine call to leave his native land, gives birth to the desire to travel. After bidding adieu to the people in the church of Abernethy, he took his departure southwards, in spite of the entreaties of the king to remain, and added still another to the long roll of Celtic monks who, in Gaul or Germany, won fame as founders of monasteries and leaders of the religious life of their time.

The rigour, if not the vigour, of the age of Columba appears for a time, not in the secular clergy on the Roman model, who replaced the refractory Scottish monks among the Picts, but in the few Columban communities who conformed, such as presumably that of Deer, or re-established themselves in the century following their expulsion, and in the Culdee communities, like that of Lochleven, which appear to have played a considerable *rôle* throughout this period. We first find them, representing a strict tendency, amid the laxity that began to prevail in the Irish Church towards the end of the eighth century. Maelruam, the Abbot of Tallaght, gave the name of Cele-n-de—"friend," or

"servant of God" * in the sense of rigorous piety—to the community he gathered at this spot near Dublin, and for whom he composed a rule of conduct. Reeves and Skene are of opinion that they were established on the model of the order of canons instituted by Chrodegang at Metz, a class that joined the functions of secular clergy with the regular life of monks.† They certainly came to form an ecclesiastical order, for we find them in Scotland living in communities, and continuing, until their decay, the spirit of the old Columban monasteries, though not taking their origin from Iona. There were devotees from an early time in the Celtic Church, as in the Church at large, who sought the perfection of a solitary life of contemplation. Columba and Kentigern occasionally practised this form of the ascetic life; whilst in the person of a Cormac, we have met a striking example of the persistence and heroism of those who braved the waves in search of a "desert in the ocean." Their first appearance in Alba, as a community, is in the establishments of Servanus‡ at Culross and Lochleven about the beginning of the eighth century. The legend of St Regulus§ reveals the existence of a hermit community, along with a group of secular clergy, at St Andrews at an early period. Charter record furnishes the evidence of the existence at the beginning of the twelfth century of such communities at Dunblane, Abernethy, Lismore, Brechin, Muthil, Monymusk, Iona, Dornoch, Rosemarkie; and Reeves thinks it probable that they existed at many other places, such as Scone, Melrose, Montrose, Arbirlot, Dull, &c. It has been the fate of the early history of Scotland to give rise to a great deal of learned verbiage, circling around some mysterious term, such as Pict, and the word Culdee can almost vie with it in notoriety of this sort. They have been regarded as heterodox Christians of Druid origin on the one hand, and evangelical

* Skene thinks that the term was equivalent to Deicolæ, worshippers of God. It is certain, at any rate, that it denoted originally one who gave himself to the ascetic service of God.

† This view is at least supported by a tradition representing the Cele De as coming over the sea in a miraculous manner, preaching to the Irish.

‡ There are some charters in the Register of St Andrews containing various grants of land to St Servanus and the Keledei hermits in Lochleven.

§ "Chronicles of the Picts and Scots," pp. 138 and 183.

presbyterians on the other. That they were neither is certain, and judging from the ascetic tendency implied in the name, we may infer that, originally at any rate, they were anchorites or hermits, who were afterwards organised under canonical rule, just as many a great monastic order has grown out of some small movement in the history of the Church. As showing their pristine spirit, I may quote a sentence or two from the Rule of the Cele De.* While its directions are mostly of a trivial character, and we should not call the intellectual standpoint of these devotees very high, there are several of some moral importance. "Frequent confession," we are told, "is of no profit when the violation is frequent also." "Three works are obligatory every day —prayer, labour, and reading; and the work should consist in giving instruction, writing, sewing of clothes or other duty, which is profitable to do in order that there may be no idleness." For ordination by a bishop, evidence of ability to instruct in religion and reading, of aptitude for the care of souls, of knowledge of laws and rules, and the proper remedy for sins, is necessary. One rule might be recommended to those who are still troubled with scruples as to attitudes of worship. It halves the difference in the great question of standing or sitting at praise. "When a Psalm is sung, it is to be sung by them successively standing and sitting, for when they sit only it induces sleep, and if they stand too long it is tiresome."

Like every religious order, the Culdees degenerated in spirit and discipline, affected probably by the adverse influences of this period. It would be difficult to recognise in the relaxed vigour,† the general worldliness of many of their establishments in the time of David I., the devotion, the moral strength of the days of St Serf. They had become an antiquated and largely effete survival of another age, and their religious establishments fell an easy prey to the reforming zeal of Queen Margaret and her son, "the sair sanct for the croon." This revival of life took again the

* Reeves, "Culdees," p. 48.

† While Turgot gives us a gloomy picture of the corruption of the Church in Queen Margaret's time, exaggerated perhaps by the force of zeal for a different order of things, we find mention made of many hermits living in caves and cells, and thus preserving the spirit of a former age.

form of a renovation after an external model. The new monastic orders of the mediæval Roman Church—whose ardent missionaries David and his mother proved themselves to be—along with the full-fledged diocesan episcopacy, under the primacy of St Andrews and a parochial organisation, took the place of the effete Culdees and the decayed monastic system of the Celtic Church. Those splendid ancient ruins—the lofty cathedrals, the massive monasteries, from Caithness to Tweed, which we now behold with regretful eye, and which marked such an advance on the simple Celtic hamlet, and the rude Celtic oratory—form the best tribute to the enlightenment, the love of art, and the soaring conceptions which signalised this reform. Yet it takes us back, by analogy at least, to the quickened religious life of the age of Columba, whose already venerable monuments it so largely swept away. The devoted enthusiasm of Queen Margaret and her son, though taking its inspiration from England and Rome, is a ray from the same sun of Christian sentiment that threw its radiance over Iona, and lighted up, at one time, the country from the Orkneys to the Humber, and even beyond.

## CHAPTER V.

### THE CELTIC MONASTERY.

IF the history of this long period of our past is but dim, and we get only a glimpse here and there of its culture from written record, we are fortunate in being able to supplement it by the testimony of that more durable record in the shape of objects which have survived the ravages of the centuries.

Ireland, the ancient home of that Celtic Christian culture, which embraced Pict, Scot, and Saxon, penetrated to Gaul and Italy, and attracted crowds of students from Britain and the Continent to its monastic schools, is particularly rich in architectural remains belonging to this period. We are struck, however, by their simple and primitive character, contrary to what we should expect in view of the high intellectual culture of the Irish monastery of the seventh and eighth centuries. The churches and ecclesiastical dwellings or cells of these primitive Christian times resemble the buildings of the pagan period. On some remote island, difficult of access, such as St Michael's Rock off the coast of Kerry, or in some wild solitude among the hills, the pilgrim may yet gaze on the ruined haunts of the grim devotions of these cyclopean ancestors of ours. A few huts, built of stone, without mortar, and shaped like beehives; one or more structures, rectangular in form, sometimes partly constructed with lime, and having the doorway at the west, and a small window in the east, the whole hamlet surrounded by a rath or cashel, if the inaccessibility or strength of the natural situation was not deemed sufficient,—such was the primitive Celtic religious establishment. The beehive huts were the dwellings of these religious devotees; the square structure served as an oratory; the rath, which, significantly enough, is found

down to the twelfth century, to defend the establishment from its enemies, who, in these unsettled times, were rife enough. The remains of the earliest type of Celtic Christian architecture which have survived in Scotland are far rarer. Only a few spots—all islands *—show traces of these beehive hamlets, yet they form an eloquent witness of the religious life of a dim past.† The primitive oratory gave place in Ireland and Scotland to the still rude church, consisting of nave and chancel,‡ connected at first by a doorway, and afterwards by the arch, and approaching the superior art of mediæval Christendom which displaced the more primitive Celtic style. In the cases where wood was the material used,—and this was so to such an extent that Bæda takes note of the fact as a peculiarity of Celtic architecture,§—the effects of decay and the ravages of the Norsemen have obliterated many a monastic establishment, whose ruins would have formed an instructive item in the archæological lore of the country. But we owe, as some compensation, to the devastating attacks of the Norsemen, the round towers, which remain as a curious and instructive relic of the old Celtic Church. Though connected with churches, they served the purpose of strongholds in time of feud or invasion, where the clergy could find protection for themselves and their property. This form of self-defence was common throughout Western Europe, where their remains are not unknown, from Brechin and Abernethy to St Maurice Epinal in Lorraine, and Ravenna.‖

As in the case of the Celtic monks who carried their learning to Gaul, Germany, Switzerland, and even

* One in Loch Columcille in Skye, the Brough of Deerness in Orkney, and Eilean na Naoimh,—the Hinba of Adamnan,—lying between Scarba and Mull.

† Dr Petrie, an authority of no mean rank, accounts the ruins in Loch Columcille "the most undoubted remains of a monastic establishment of St Columba's time."

‡ Dr Anderson discovered a trace of this development in the chapel of St Mac O'Charmaig, and the church of Kilvicocharmaig with which it is associated, on an island off the coast of Knapdale.

§ Bæda was wrong in thinking the custom confined to the Britons. Wooden erections were common among the Franks and the Saxons.

‖ *See* Romilly Allen, "Monumental History of the British Church," p. 108.

Italy, so in Scotland, though but scantily, the scholars who studied and copied the Scriptures or the classics have left, in the manuscripts which they wrote, the witness of their taste and their learning. The extant copies which we may claim for certain as the work of scribes * in the monasteries of Alba, are the "Book of Deer," and the "Life of Columba" by Adamnan. That there were others is evident, from the mention of books written in the Scotic or Pictish dialect,—that is, in Gaelic or Irish,—to which reference is made by the biographers of the twelfth century and in the register of St Andrews.† As early as the beginning of the eighth century there is evidence of this kind of literary activity, in the transcription of Ceolfrid's letter to Nechtan, copies of which were read throughout the kingdom. The legendary Bonifacius—the Irish monk Cuiritan, and founder of Rossmarkie—is, indeed, said to have written a hundred and fifty books of the gospels; and the traditional notice of those possessed by other saints, like Ternan and Fothad, indicates that the monasteries of Alba were not without their libraries‡ of sacred, patristic, and saintly literature. A glance at such a collection in some Celtic monastery on the Continent will tell us more definitely what its contents might have embraced. In a catalogue of the books in the library of St Gall,—the Latinised form of Cellach, its Irish founder,—compiled in the first part of the ninth century, we find among the thirty-two volumes, "Scottice Scripti,"—not merely works of a Biblical character, such as gospels, epistles, and commentaries, but the works of Virgil, Juvencus, and Prosper, those of Bæda on the "Metrical Art" and on the "Proverbs," the "Life of St Hilary," and the "Martyrdom of St Marcellus and Peter," the "Enchiridion of Augustine,"

* At a later time we find the Ferleighin, or lecturer and annalist, such as those at Turriff and Abernethy, taking the place of the scribe.

† The writer, speaking of the legend of St Andrew, says he had transcribed what he had found in "Veteribus Pictorum Libris"; and again, referring to some charters of grants to Lochleven, that he had taken his information from an old book, "Antiquo Scotorum Idiomate."

‡ Among the property belonging to the oldest Culdee establishment in the country, and seized by the Bishop of St Andrews, was a small library of patristic books.

&c. There was a veritable literary workshop, consisting of two storeys, the upper for the books, the lower for the scribes. We have here, I take it, a vivid glimpse of the intellectual life of the Celtic monastery, such as it might have been at Iona in its most flourishing days. Still further distant, on the other side of the Alps, the travelling scholar and monk from Iona, or Durrow, or Bangor have left the trace of their mental culture, to which we owe many a literary treasure, so valuable now, as Zeuss, followed by scholars like Rhys and Stokes, has conclusively shown, for philological purposes. Preserved at Turin, Milan, Florence, south of the Alps, and at St Gall, Würzburg, Carlsruhe, &c., on the north, and thus lost to the countries whence this intellectual culture had its origin, they likewise remind us of the supreme influence exercised by the Scottish monks on the thought and knowledge of their time, from the soft scenes of Italy even to the snows of Iceland. Never at any other period have Scotland and Ireland possessed such a European reputation, such a far-reaching importance; and although we with difficulty recognise the names by which the memory of these monks is associated with the scenes of their labours over the vast area to which their influence extended, it is but an act of patriotic appreciation to remember such names as Columbanus and Gall, Donnat and Kilian and Cataldo.

The "Book of Deer"* consists of the Gospel of St John and parts of the other three evangelists, in Latin, along with the Apostles' Creed, a fragment of an office for the visitation of the sick, and some Gaelic marginal notes in writing, which Dr Stuart† considers of ninth century date. The text, according to the same authority, is that of the Vulgate, interspersed by earlier versions of the New Testament. The spelling and grammar are anything but classic.‡ So is the art of the ornament, consisting of figures of the evangelists and designs of a geometric character. But it would be unfair to judge of the scholarship and artistic skill of the

* It was discovered at Cambridge in 1850, by Mr Bradshaw.

† "The Book of Deer," edited for the Spalding Club by John Stuart, LL.D.

‡ It shows us Latin as the ecclesiastical language, and Celtic as that of the country.

Celtic Church in Alba from one or two examples, especially in the face of the high attainments of a Cummian or an Adamnan, a Brendan or a Columbanus. Another MS. of surpassing importance for the history of culture in Scotland during this period, is that of the "Life of Columba" by Adamnan, discovered in 1845 by Dr Keller in a bookchest in the monastery of Schaffhausen. Unlike "The Book of Deer," whose author was too modest to give his name, although he asks in a very humble spirit for the prayers of the reader, a colophon informs us that the writer was Dorbene, very probably the abbot of that name who was one of the successors of Adamnan and died in 713. The character of the writing tallies with this date. It shows, too, unlike the Deer MS., no effort at artistic illumination further than some daubs of paint in the large capitals. How it came to find a long-forgotten resting-place in this distant monastery is explained by the wandering spirit and missionary zeal of the Celtic monks, who were as much at home amid the lakes and mountains of Switzerland as amid the lochs or hills of Alba or Scotia. A third MS. copy of the Gospels,—now in Trinity College, Dublin,—very richly illuminated, has a special interest as being ascribed to Columba; and there is at least no improbability in the supposition that it was written in that busy study at Iona, in which the saint applied himself to reading and writing with such laborious diligence. Another, "The Book of Kells," the most splendid of all, and surpassing in the beauty of its ornamentation even the gospels of Lindisfarne,—which, though written by the Saxon Eadfrith, bishop of the old Celtic monastery from 698 to 721, is ornamented in Celtic style,—is also associated with the name of Columba,* though the probability is that it was not written before the ninth century. Unlike the Greek and Italian MSS. of contemporary date, the initial letters of these Celtic books are of very large size, and the designs by which they are beautified are merely ornamental, not illustrative of the text, and are not intercalated. This art looks extremely rich and intricate; it bespeaks apparently a fancy revelling in an extravagence of form; but it is reducible to the combination of three different

* Professor Westwood inclines to give credit to its early date.

patterns, consisting of interlaced, spiral, and fret work, and is often zoomorphic in character—making use, that is, of animal forms, such as dragons, monsters, and birds' heads. Many have expressed the admiration which a close study of this peculiar national art has aroused in them. "It is no exaggeration to say," remarks Miss Stokes,* of this work, "that, as with the microscopic works of nature, the stronger the magnifying power brought to bear on it, the more is its perfection revealed,—no single false interlacement, no uneven spiral curve, no faintest sign of a trembling hand is ever visible." And Dr Anderson,† to whose excellent *resumé* of the subject of the Celtic MSS. relating to Scotland, I am indebted for most of my information, speaks in the same strain of enthusiasm of the unparalleled beauty, the bewildering intricacy and minuteness of the best specimens of this art. Some of them derived a special value from their association—real or reputed—with some great name, and were kept in costly cases of gold or silver, studded with gems. Thus, apart from their artistic beauty, or the worth of their contents, these venerable MSS., and especially those connected with the name of Columba, kept the memory and the inspiration of a great life in touch with the minds of men. In this respect the worship of the saints, the reverence for the past, served a high utilitarian purpose; and I the more willingly recognise its practical value, that I have no sympathy with the superstitious form in which it found expression. We should certainly not realise one of the great motive ideas of the age did we overlook the power that survived in the memory of a man like Columba. In this sense he was an apostle, a prophet in death as well as in life. To this category of things sacred to a great memory, and therefore possessing, apart from their artistic value, a practical influence, we may reckon the enshrined bells‡ and crosiers,§ the Brecbannoch or banner of Columba, thought to bring vic-

* "Christian Inscriptions of Ireland," ii., p. 144. In a similar strain Waagen and Westwood.

† "Scotland in Early Christian Times," i., lecture iv.

‡ Such as those discovered at Kirkmichael, Glassary, and Castle Guthrie.

§ Those of Columba and Fillan.

tory in time of war. It is a significant fact that the asceticism, to which the Celtic monk subjected himself, thus did not stifle the delight in ornament, in things of beauty. The Calvinistic Puritanism, which took its place in modern times, was in this respect far more fastidious and narrow. Even yet it requires no small courage on the part of the candidate for the favour of a Presbyterian congregation to appear on the day of the preaching match with a ring on his finger! I have known more than one aspirant for a parish who was prudent enough to denude himself of this emblem of worldliness, and carry it in his vest pocket for the occasion. The ancient Celtic monk was more rational in this respect than the modern Presbyterian minister. He appears to have been very fond of pretty trifles, nor did he think, with the austere Calvin and his votaries, that this fondness for beautiful things was incompatible with the devotional sentiment. Hence the numerous objects of this sort,—brooches, chains, &c.,—which, though not used for a sacred purpose, emanated from the monkish workshops, or were made by those trained in them. Some of them, like the Hunterston brooch, are remarkable for the beauty of their art, which is identical with that of the MSS. As in the study of the scribe, so in the workshop of the silversmith, we find a feeling for art, which is not without its fascination for one who sees in it the index of a capacity and a culture superior to that indicated by the ruins of their humble dwellings,—the wattled hut, the beehive cell. It is, too, a distinctive development on the metal work of pagan times. "Celtic metal work of the Christian period, though retaining some of the ornamental forms and processes used previously, differs in many respects from the pagan metal work."*

The artists who wrought these ornaments in silver, gold, or bronze, had equally skilful fellow-craftsmen who wielded the chisel and the mallet. Scotland, north of the Clyde and the Forth, is rich in monumental remains connected with the old Celtic Church. At Meigle, Glamis, Kirriemuir, Aberlemno, Arbroath, and as far north as Caithness, large

* Romilly Allen, "Monumental History of the British Church," pp. 166, 167.

numbers of dressed slabs have been found, on which the monkish sculptor hewed out the Celtic cross * on the obverse side, and gave scope to his fantastic imagination and his draughtsmanship in the figures of men and animals, the mysterious symbols of the comb, brush, &c., the spirals, fret, and interlaced work, with which he ornamented the reverse side. They contrast markedly with the undressed stones on which the earlier pagan sculptors traced the symbols or hieroglyphics that amused their fancy or nurtured their piety, and which his more highly-trained Christian successor usually retained.† Beyond the Grampians—along the West Highlands, with Iona as centre—we find a different series of monuments, viz., freestanding crosses of Celtic form,‡ their shafts placed in pedestals, and exhibiting the same style of decoration—interlaced, fret, spiral work, and figure subjects, minus, however, the mysterious symbols. In the opinion of Dr Anderson, these highly decorated monuments —dressed slabs and freestanding crosses—cannot be assigned an earlier date than the commencement of the tenth century, whilst the few undressed stones situated in various parts of the country, showing simply an incised cross, such as at Ratho in Midlothian, Hawkhill near Alloa, and Arbirlot in Forfarshire, &c., are inferred from their ruder character to belong to the time preceding that century. It is evident, at all events, that the intricate and elaborate style of art which characterises the more highly decorated stones,—whether slabs or freestanding crosses,—was derived from the MSS., so that the scribes who illumined the copies

* The Celtic cross is notched at the intersection of the interlaced arms, in contrast to the simple rectangular form of the Latin cross.

† Whether they are pagan or Christian is still a subject of dispute, however. Anderson regards them as Christian symbols. See also Stuart, "Sculptured Stones of Scotland," preface xii. and xiv.

‡ Besides these freestanding crosses, whose form and art are identical with those of the slab monuments in the eastern district, there are numerous examples which show a marked difference in both respects. They have a solid circular head, from which the arms protrude ; and their decoration consists of foliageous scrolls instead of the zoomorphic forms of the former. In the view of Anderson and Romilly Allen, this feature indicates a later date ("Scotland in Early Christian Times," 2nd series, p. 82 ; "Mon. Hist. Brit. Ch.," p. 159). The former thinks that they are subsequent to the twelfth century, and they lie therefore outside the limits of our period.

of the gospels or missals of the Celtic monasteries were the forerunners of the sculptors who applied their designs to stone, or the artist who wrought in metal, and were the founders of this early national school of decorative art. Such an intricate style of ornamentation would naturally be elaborated by the brush or the pen rather than the chisel; and at any rate the date assigned to the earlier MSS. is considerably older than that of the monuments which show a decoration corresponding in character. And as in the MSS., so in the monuments, the prevailing and therefore distinctive artistic idea is an arrangement of the spaces decorated into panels, which are filled with symmetrically arranged patterns.* Further, the character of these patterns is the same on the monuments as in the MSS.—they consist of interlaced lines, either curved or rectilinear, sometimes zoomorphic, but oftener in simple squares, oblongs, triangles, circles, &c., yet so as to convey to the eye a rich and varied effect; of fretwork, that is, of straight lines arranged in an ingenious variety of forms, but not interlaced; and of spiral lines, singly or in groups, connected with each other so as to form the most intricate combinations.† Symmetry, conjoined with elaboration, resulting in variety, seems to have been the aim of the artist, and he might have fairly claimed the merit of having realised it. The scribes of the monasteries who invented this style for themselves were evidently men of fertile design, of instinctive artistic conception. "To have produced the designs, implies a culture of the imagination, a refinement of taste, and a faculty of art composition, which are not always found among men who are specially instructed, and which does not exist at all among the masses of the community."‡ Some of the figures of animals, with which this lavish, yet symmetrical combination of lines to produce beauty of effect is associated, are extremely spirited and true. The

* Anderson, "Scotland in Early Chris. Times," 2nd series, pp. 98-100.

† Anderson (p. 132) thinks that this art was "totally unknown" in pagan times, whereas Romilly Allen is of opinion (p. 148) that the origin of spirals may be traced to the metal work of pagan times. The germs of the fret and interlaced work may, he thinks, have been introduced into this country with the early MSS. of the gospels.

‡ Anderson, p. 107.

human form is but poorly done, however, hardly equal to what we should look for even among a people in a state of barbarism, and there is, of course, a danger of finding more art in these stones than there really is. The strain of its panegyrists seems to me to be pitched too high at times, forgetting that the arrangement of lines is after all a piece of ingenuity rather than art, and that the mere covering of a square stone surface with figures of animals is a poor conception of a plastic representation, when compared with the master productions of sculpture in ancient or modern times. But they are highly interesting and valuable as relics of a past artistic culture. Such representations, simple and rude though they be, have too something to tell us of the life and the habits of the period to which they belong. "For instance," says Dr Anderson,* "we learn from a comparison of all the different representations, that the horsemen of that period rode without spurs or stirrups, cropped the manes and tails of their horses, used snaffle bridles with check rings and ornamental rosettes, and sat upon peaked saddle cloths; that when journeying on horseback, armed, they wore a kilt-like dress, falling below mid-thigh, and a plaid across the shoulders; that they used long-bows in war and cross-bows in hunting; that their swords were long, broad-bladed, double-edged, obtusely-pointed weapons, with triangular pommels and straight guards; that their spears had long lozenge-shaped heads, while their bucklers were round, and furnished with bosses; that they fought on foot with sword and buckler, and on horseback with sword, spear, and shield; that when journeying on foot they wore trews or tight-fitting nether garments, and a plaid loosely wrapped round the body, or a tight jerkin with sleeves and belt round the waist; that they wore their hair long, flowing, and curly, sometimes with peaked beards, at other times with moustaches and shaven cheeks and chin; that they used covered chariots or two-wheeled carriages, with poles for draught by two horses, the driver sitting on a seat over the pole, the wheels having ornamental spokes; that they used chairs with side arms and high curved backs, sometimes ornamented with heads of animals; that their boats

* "Scotland in Early Christian Times," 2nd series, pp. 123-125.

had high prows and stern-posts; that the long dresses of the ecclesiastics were richly embroidered; that they walked in loose short boots, and carried croziers and book satchels."

Besides being to us illustrative of the life of the time, these plastic representations are often symbolic. They were meant to convey an object-lesson in religion to the spectator. This custom passed from paganism into the Christian Church. The figure of Orpheus, for example, was taken as representing the Good Shepherd, the dragon which guarded Andromeda at Joppa did duty for the whale in the story of Jonah. This was especially the case in regard to the mere accessories of the picture, such as winged genii, allegorical figures of Victory, centaurs, caryatides, hippocampi, &c. Thus, even in the Christian sculpture of remote Scotland during this dim period, the forms of Roman and Greek pagan art commingle with the representations of Christian subjects. The likeness of Celtic Christian art in this respect, as well as regards the idea symbolised, to that of other countries which came under the influence of imperial Rome, shows that Rome was the centre from which this Christian symbolism spread. Naturally it underwent some modification in the process of development to such remote lands, and sometimes the stages of the process are difficult to trace. The more common objects symbolised on stone monuments in Italy and Gaul in early Christian times were the temptation in Eden, the deluge, the drowning of the Egyptians in the Red Sea, the sacrifice of Isaac, the translation of Elijah, Daniel in the den of lions, Jonah and the whale, &c. At St Vigeans, Meigle, Iona, Dunkeld, the figure of Daniel surrounded by two or four lions is recognisable as the same representation as those at Velletri or Podgoritza. The position of the figure is a standing one, with outstretched arms, and indicates the attitude of prayer. The story of Jonah and the whale, sculptured on a highly decorated monument at Dunfallandy, and on a stone now at Abbotsford,—the whale, as in the Vatican Codex, being represented as a quadruped,—was meant to symbolise the resurrection. This idea is also figured by the raising of Lazarus on the shaft of a cross at St Andrews. Other

symbolic representations on the Scottish monuments, and which are paralleled by similar ones in Gaul and Italy, are the destruction of Pharaoh's army, the ascension of Elijah, and the temptation in Eden. The sculptor was thus a moralist, and, like the architect before the invention of printing, one of the prophets of his day. He spoke to his fellows even in the details of his handiwork. From the known tendency to moralise over the habits and characters of animals, which gave rise to the mediæval bestiaries, there was doubtless a moral meaning conveyed by the figures of the numerous animals sculptured on the monuments. In seeing in some rude picture of the chase, for instance, the lot of the soul when pursued by the passions, or the evil one, the pious bystander was only doing what the faithful in all the countries of the West were taught to see, from the fifth to the twelfth century, as is indicated by the quaint moral treatises in which the habits of the panther, lion, tiger, and other animals are made the vehicle of useful moral instruction. The sculptor did not, however, leave his combinations altogether to explain themselves, but occasionally scratched an inscription in writing, which has received the name of Ogham, from a note in the "Book of Ballymote" (A.D. 1391), in which we are told that Ogma, "a man much skilled in dialects and poetry," invented the system of Ogham writing "for signs of secret speech known only to the learned." Besides its presence on stone monuments, some plain, some decorated in luxuriant style, in the eastern district of Scotland, from Fife to Shetland, it is found in the form of marginal notes in a number of MSS., such as that of Priscian now at St Gall, and that of the "Annals of Innisfallen" in the Bodleian Library at Oxford. It also occurs on as many as one hundred stones in Ireland, and there are twenty-five examples in Wales and two in Devon,* but it is strictly peculiar to the Celtic area. It consists of simple combinations of short straight lines grouped about a stem line. On eleven of the Welsh stones, as well as on the Newton stone in Aberdeenshire, this peculiar writing is associated with Latin

* Romilly Allen ("Monumental History of the British Church") gives weighty reasons for considering these inscribed monuments as marking Christian tombs.

inscriptions in debased characters, and the application of the Ballymote key shows that the one was merely a translation of the other. They yield no information beyond a few names, but they form one of the most peculiar literary curiosities, and are an additional indication of the ingenuity, the literary tendency, of the Celtic monk.

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## ADDENDUM.

SINCE page 11 was printed, the Rev. Mr Smith (Glasgow), at the meeting of the British Association, at Edinburgh this year (August 1892), claimed to have discovered in gravel beds numerous traces of Palæolithic man in Scotland. He is in possession of 350 specimens of stone implements which he believes to belong to this remote period.