

FOR REVIEW

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**THE EARLY MONASTIC
SCHOOLS OF IRELAND**

The Early Monastic Schools of Ireland

Their Missionaries, Saints and Scholars

FOUR LECTURES

BY

W. G. HANSON

*With a Foreword by Canon G. A. Hollis, M.A.,
Principal of Wells Theological College*

"I have given up my whole soul to
Greek learning, and as soon as I get
any money I shall buy Greek books."

Letters of Erasmus.

1927

W. HEFFER & SONS LIMITED

CAMBRIDGE, ENGLAND

TO THE DEAR MEMORY OF

ELEANOR

("Nellie")

FOR NINE HAPPY YEARS MY COMPANION IN LIFE
AND STUDY

Consummatus in brevi, explevit tempora multa.

WISDOM iv, 13.

AMAVIMUS: AMAMUS: AMABIMUS.

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Foreword

THE lives of the Irish Saints and the contribution of the Irish Monastic Schools to the life of the Church in the Seventh, Eighth and Ninth centuries, deserve to be better known. Mr. W. G. Hanson has made himself familiar with their story and passed on his knowledge in four lectures.

Three points stand out clearly—their devotion, their missionary zeal, and their learning. No hardships were too severe to interfere with the utter devotion to our Lord of these saintly men. In a corrupt age, before immoral and dissolute courts, they gave their witness and administered rebuke with an entire disregard of personal danger. The same fearlessness and zeal sent them out with the message of the Gospel. Some of them passed to Scotland and England and remained there. More of them passed through to the Continent, and many parts of Western Europe owe their Christianity to these Irish monks. At that time Ireland was the chief home of education. These men drew their knowledge from the ancient Classics and other Greek sources. Their studies were little to the taste of the official learning of the day, and they had to encounter bitter, and often cruel, opposition. It must be admitted that their freedom of thought had its dangers, as the last lecture especially will show; and the weight of an ever-growing authority at last crushed them out. But what wonderful

men they were, with their splendid devotion and all the attractive human side of their training and outlook! Such devotion and zeal and learning would do the Church much good to-day. It is an attractive story, and on all these points has a message for us.

The work has been a labour of love, inspired by the event which the dedication reveals. I have been glad to write this Foreword in grateful remembrance of her loyal and valuable help in the parish of S. Michael, Headingley, Leeds.

G. ARTHUR HOLLIS.

THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE,
WELLS, SOMERSET.

*Feast of the Purification of the Blessed
Virgin Mary, 1927.*

Author's Preface

THIS little book, which was born of a great sorrow and the memory of a great happiness, is the record of an almost forgotten chapter in the History of Education, as well as of Church History.

I should like to express my thanks for the help I have received from my Roman Catholic friends, Rev. F. E. O'Hanlon, D.D., Ph.D., Rector of S. Mary's, Wednesbury, for giving me access to documents which I should otherwise never have seen, and Mr. John Carroll, M.A., Second Master of the West Bromwich Municipal Secondary School, for reading my manuscript in order to detect such errors as I, who make no pretensions to exact scholarship, unwittingly made.

I wish also to thank Professor Henry Bett, M.A., of Handsworth College, Birmingham, for revising and correcting the manuscript of my last lecture, Dr. W. Douglas Simpson, M.A., F.S.A. Scot., Librarian in the University of Aberdeen, for his kind permission to make use of his recent monograph on "The Historical St. Columba," and last, but not least, Canon G. A. Hollis, M.A., for his appreciative Foreword.

W. G. HANSON.

BRANDELHOW,

GRANGE-OVER-SANDS.

9th June, 1927 (St. Columba's Day).

Lecture I

"The tribes of Ireland, free from barbarian invasions as they had been free from Roman armies, developed a culture which was not surpassed in the West or even in Italy. And this culture, like the art, was national, spread over the whole land. But while the Irish drew to themselves from the Empire art, learning, religion, they never adopted anything of Roman methods of government in church or state. The Roman centralised authority was opposed to their whole habit of thought and genius. They made, therefore, no change in their tribal administration. As early as the second century, Irishmen had learned from Gaulish landowners to divide land into estates marked out with pillar stones which could be bought and sold, and by 700 A.D. the country was scored with fences, and farms were freely bequeathed by will. But these estates seem still to have been administered according to the common law of the tribe, and not to have followed the methods of Roman proprietors throughout the Empire. In the same way the foreign learning brought into Ireland was taught through the tribal system of schools. Lay schools formed by the Druids in old time went on as before, where students of law and history and poetry grouped their huts round the dwelling of a famous teacher, and the poor among them begged their bread in the neighbourhood. The monasteries in like manner gathered their scholars within the 'rath' or earthen entrenchment, and taught them Latin, canon law and divinity. Monastic and lay schools went on side by side, as heirs together of the national tradition and language."—ALICE STOPFORD GREEN, *Irish Nationality*, pp. 32-3.

"The classic tradition, to all appearance dead in Europe, burst out into full flower in the Isle of Saints, and the Renaissance began in Ireland seven hundred years before it was known in Italy. During three centuries Ireland was the asylum of the higher learning which took sanctuary there from the uncultured states of Europe. At one time Armagh, the religious capital of Christian Ireland, was the metropolis of civilisation."—M. Darmesteter, quoted by Dr. DOUGLAS HYDE, *Literary History of Ireland*, p. 216.

The Schools

IF the history of the early monastic schools of Ireland is obscure, that which is known is none the less astonishing. In the sixth century there was a region of Western Europe where the tradition of Greek and Latin letters was conserved, and where companies of young Christians gathered round teachers who taught them to understand, not only the Christian Fathers—Origen, Justin Martyr, Clement of Alexandria, Athanasius, Augustine,—but Homer and Virgil, and that region was Ireland. For my own part I do not know in the history of human knowledge another fact which is of greater importance, which merits greater attention; and yet, in spite of the researches of Archbishop Ussher, M. Ozanam, M. Hauréau, Mr. James Bass Mullinger, Mr. Arthur West Haddan, Dom Louis Gougaud, Herr Levison, Dr. P. W. Joyce, and Mr. Reginald Lane Poole, it has not yet received sufficient notice.

The Count de Montalembert, in his *Monks of the West from St. Benedict to St. Bernard*, has noted that in the sixth and seventh centuries Ireland was regarded by all Christian Europe as the principal centre of knowledge and piety. "In the shelter of its numberless monasteries," he says,

"a crowd of missionaries, doctors and preachers were educated for the service of the Church and the propagation of the faith . . . A vast and continual

development of literary and religious effort is there apparent, superior to anything that could be seen in any other country of Europe. Certain arts—those of architecture, carving, metallurgy, as applied to the decoration of churches,—were successfully cultivated, without speaking of music, which continued to flourish both among the learned and among the people. The classic languages—not only Latin, but Greek,—were cultivated, spoken and written with a sort of passionate pedantry, which shews at least how powerful was the sway of intellectual influences over these ardent souls. Their mania for Greek was carried so far that they wrote the Latin of the church books in Hellenic characters (Reeves's *Adamnan*, pp. 158, 354). And in Ireland, more than anywhere else, each monastery was a school, and each school a workshop of transcription, from which day by day issued new copies of the Holy Scriptures and the Fathers of the primitive Church,—copies which were dispersed through all Europe, and which are still to be found in Continental libraries.”¹

Shall we first try to discover who were the teachers of these Irish scholars? Juvenal tells us that the Gauls transmitted to the Britons the principles of rhetoric;² and there is reason to believe that those principles, carried across the sea which separates the two islands, passed from the Britons to the Irish Scots. We know also that in ancient times some young Scots found their way into Gaul, frequented the best schools there, and returned afterwards to their native isle, not only rich in knowledge, but eager to call their fellow-countrymen to enjoy the same riches. It was St. Patrick,

¹ *Monks of the West*, Vol. III, pp. 290-1.

² “*Gallia causicos docuit facunda Britannos.*” Sat. XV, 111.

a Gallo-Roman trained in the monastery of Lerins, who converted Ireland to the Christian faith; and that apostle, towards the end of his life, sent one of his favourite disciples, St. Olcan, to Gaul, giving him a mission entirely literary. Olcan must have crossed the sea without suspecting its perils to hear the doctors of Gaul, and to be initiated by them into the mysteries of learning, sacred and profane; and on his return to the shores of the Emerald Isle he opened public schools for the common instruction of Irish bishops and monks.¹

But there were schools in Ireland before the earliest monastic schools were founded, and even before Christianity secured a footing in the island. When St. Patrick came, he came to a land where there were already men of learning and "rhetoricians" who scoffed at his lack of education. There were schools of law, where was expounded the legal code which was accepted by all the tribes and recited in every tribal assembly. There were schools of history where were preserved the genealogies, the boundaries of lands, the memory of heroes and the rights of classes and families. There were schools of poetry where the traditions and literature of the race were preserved and recited. There were schools of art where the crafts of metal work in bronze and gold and illuminated manuscript writing were taught. To these schools the Irish

¹ "Discendi aviditate ardentem (Olcanum), altiorum studiorum causa, misit (Patricius) in Gallias, ubi in sacris litteris omnique meliori litteratura eos fecit fructus, ut in patriam reversus publicas aperuerit scholas, multorumque antistitum et magistrorum communis exstiterit magister."—(Colgan. Acta SS. Hiberniae. Vol. I, p. 375.)

owed the richness of their civilization, the generosity of their learning, and the passion of their patriotism. Degrees were granted to students just as in our modern universities. They were called the Seven Degrees of Wisdom, of which the highest was that of Ollamh (Doctor). The teachers were paid at first by the gifts of the people, but the chief among them were later on endowed with a fixed share of the tribal lands in perpetuity. So long as they held the land they were bound to train up in each generation one of the family who should be found to be most fitted to carry on the learning of his sires. So for centuries, long lines of learned men added fame to Ireland and drew to her schools students from far and wide; and through their labours the spirit of Ireland found expression in a code of law which shewed a fine sense of justice, in a literary language rich and musical, and in a system of metrical prosody shaped with the utmost skill. Each tribe had its own school or schools, but these were linked together in a national system. The learned man of the clan was the learned man of the Gaelic race. Teachers of every school were free to move from place to place and from court to court, and they could claim the protection of kings and warriors everywhere. The chiefs of Emain Macha placed sentries along the Gap of the North to turn back every bard who sought to leave Ireland, and to escort with honour every poet who sought admission to their country. The greatest of the teachers were given the title of "Professors of all the Gaels." Learned men—brehons, bards, druids—ranked with kings and

chiefs, and high-professors sat beside the Ard-Righ, or High King, and shared his honours. The king "could by his mere word decide against every class of persons except those of the two orders of religion and learning, who were of equal value with himself."

These numerous centres of culture scattered all over Ireland, and the regular intercourse of all these centres with each other, explain to some extent how Christianity overspread the country like a flood. The new worship was easily adapted to tribal custom. Side by side with the lay schools the monastic schools grew up. Mrs. J. R. Green says :

"Round the little monastic church gathered a group of huts with a common refectory, the whole protected by a great rampart of earth. The plan was familiar to all the Irish; every chief's house had such a fence, and every bardic school had its circle of thatched cells where the scholars spent years in study and meditation. Monastic 'families' which branched off from the first house were grouped under the name of the original founder, in free federal union like that of the clans. As no land could be wholly alienated from the tribe, territory given to the monastery was not exempted from the common law; it was ruled by abbots elected, like kings and judges of the tribe, out of the house which under tribal law had the right of succession; and the monks in some cases had to pay the tribal dues for the land and send out fighting men for the hosting."¹

The monastic Church had certain rights which it claimed from the clan. It claimed the first-born

¹ *Irish Nationality*, pp. 34, 35.

male child of every marriage, every first calf and every first lamb of each year, the first gathering of the produce of the fields, and every tenth birth afterwards, human and animal, with tithes of crops and cattle, "and every seventh day of the year to the service of God." The law governing the inheritance of an eldest son given to the Church was that he should obtain

"as much of the legacy of his father as every lawful son which the mother has . . . and he shall render the service of a free monk to the Church, and the Church shall teach him learning; for he shall obtain more of a divine legacy than a legacy not divine."¹

This new development took place approximately about the middle of the fifth century. Divers barbarous hordes had already several times overrun Gaul, and had made there more or less of a waste. However, a few towns, protected by some mysterious providence, or by opportune payments of tribute, had been able up to that time to escape a complete devastation. The most literary city of the West was Marseilles. At the beginning of the fifth century, Nestorius had written a Greek letter to the Pope Celestine; but he, knowing no Greek, and not numbering among his Latin clerks anyone who could come to the relief of his ignorance, had summoned an interpreter from Marseilles. Into the depths of darkness which had spread over Italy, a ray of knowledge, that is to say of ancient Greek civilisation, penetrated. It beamed brightly in Gaul. But even that ray was doomed to extinction.

¹ Ancient Laws, quoted by Skene, *Celtic Scotland*, Vol. II.

At the end of the sixth century there was no longer, from the banks of the Rhine to the gorges of the Pyrenees, a corner so remote as to have escaped the scourge of barbarism. Ireland alone, defended by a double sea, had not yet been subjected to foreign invasion. She did not, it is true, enjoy a perfect tranquillity. Her chiefs and princes, rivals in power and glory, engaged themselves and their clans too often in deadly combat. Sometimes, as in the battles of Culdreimhne in 561 and Coleraine in 579, these struggles had their origin in ecclesiastical disputes. Sometimes, like the battle of Cuilfedha in 587, they were wars of revenge, in cases where the right of sanctuary had been violated. And nothing was more common than the armed intervention of the monks in civil wars, or in the struggles between different tribes or clans. Piety did not always vanquish the passions of a turbulent age, and sometimes a monastic "rath" fell back to its original use as a fort. Montalembert mentions that two centuries after Columba, 200 monks of his monastery at Durrow perished in a battle with the neighbouring monks of the abbey of Clonmacnoise; and the old annalists of Ireland speak of a battle which took place in 816, in which 800 monks of Ferns were killed.¹ During these troubles studies languished, but they did not perish. It was in the year 795 that the Danes descended for the first time on the coast of Ireland. Thus, till the end of the eighth century, the treasures of learning amassed in Gaul by the Scots, pagan or Christian, were preserved from all attack. Thus, when in the

¹ *Monks of the West*, Vol. III, pp. 302, 303.

rest of the Roman world the people allowed themselves to be brutalised by the violence of the barbarian conquest to the point of forgetting even the simple elements of the Latin grammar, the Schools of Ireland lived intact and flourished, and youthful audiences there drank in, not only Latin eloquence and poetry, but Greek grammar and philosophy. It was the last asylum of letters. "Probably," says Mrs. J. R. Green, "in the seventh and eighth centuries no one in western Europe spoke Greek who was not Irish or taught by an Irishman."¹

On the testimony of Bede, if Anglo-Saxon clerks and nobles were anxious to shake off the yoke of ignorance, they crossed the sea and went to study in the Irish monastic schools: and—

"While some presently dedicated themselves to the monastic life, others chose rather to pass in turn through the cells of the masters and give their labour to study: and the Scots most readily received them, and provided them daily their food without charge, and books also to read, and free instruction."²

"Rich endowments in land, bestowed by princes and chieftains, and skilfully tilled by monks," says Rev. John Golden,

"enabled the monasteries of Erin to grant free education, food, raiment and books, to the thousands who flocked to their halls. The monastic schools of the island for two or three centuries were regarded by all Christians as the chief centres of education."³

¹ *Irish Nationality*, p. 54.

² *Historia Ecclesiastica*, Book III, Ch. XXVII.

³ *St. Columba, the Apostle of Scotland* (Catholic Truth Society).

And Montalembert, in his usual graphic style, says, confirming these testimonies:

“The monasteries which gradually covered the soil of Ireland . . . unlike the ancient Druidical colleges, were open to all. The poor and the rich, the slave as well as the freeman, the child and the old man. had free access and paid nothing . . . They opened their doors with admirable generosity to strangers from every country and of every condition; above all, to those who came from the neighbouring island, England, some to end their lives in an Irish cloister, some to search from house to house for books, and masters capable of explaining those books. The Irish monks received with kindness guests so greedy of instruction, and gave them both books and masters, the food of the body and the food of the soul, without demanding any recompense. The Anglo-Saxons, who were afterwards to repay this teaching with ingratitude so cruel, were of all nations the one which derived most profit from it. From the seventh to the eleventh century English students flocked into Ireland, and for 400 years the monastic schools of the island maintained the great reputation which brought so many successive generations to dip deeply there into the living waters of knowledge and of faith.”¹

Bede says of Ægilvin, who was afterwards Bishop of Lincoln, “*Hiberniam gratia legendi adiit, et bene instructus patriam rediit.*” Aldfrid of Northumbria, made the same pilgrimage for the same purpose. King though he became, he wished to gather around him a company of clever teachers. To become a wise man, a scholar, inasmuch as he was

¹ *Monks of the West*, Vol. III, pp. 298-9.

eager for that distinction, he must needs spend some time in Ireland, at Lismore.¹

Aldfrid was an illegitimate son of Oswy, King of Northumbria. On the death of his father he was persecuted by his half-brother Ecgfrid, and fled to Ireland, where he was known as Flann Fionn. On the death of Ecgfrid, who was slain in the battle of Drumnechtan or Nechtansmere, waged against the Picts in A.D. 685, he was recalled to England and elected to the throne of Northumbria. He is said to have composed an Irish poem, which still exists (See James Hardiman's *Irish Minstrelsy*, Vol. II, p. 372). Professor Oman says of him:

“He was a gentle and learned prince, who had been destined for the Church, and though he had refused the tonsure, had learned in a monastery to love books and scholars.”²

About the same time, Gallic clerks, also attracted to the Irish coasts, came to regain from their old pupils the knowledge which they had lost. Bede expresses himself thus on Agilbert: “*Legendarum gratia Scripturarum, in Hibernia non parvo tempore demoratus.*” When Agilbert returned to the Continent about the year 664, he so astonished the Gallic Church by the extent of his learning that, at the

¹ “*Scottorum qui tum versatus incola terris
Coelestem intento spirabat corde sophiam.*”

It is thus that the biographer of St. Cuthbert expresses himself, in speaking of Aldfrid. It is usual to attribute this poem to Bede. It is certainly by an Englishman, and not by a Scot. A Scot, an assiduous reader of Virgil and Ovid, would hardly have violated in that fashion the rules of Latin prosody.

² C. Oman: *England before the Norman Conquest*, p. 309.

death of Importunus, they pressed him to be nominated Bishop of Paris.

This is how the British St. Aldhelm, Bishop of Sherborne, towards the end of the seventh century, celebrates the literary renown of Ireland: "*Hiberniæ rus discentium opulens vernansque pascuosa numerositate lectorum, quemadmodum poli cardines astriferis micantium ornantur vibraminibus siderum.*" In a letter to Eadfrid, Bishop of Lindisfarne, he says students came from Britain to Ireland in "fleet-loads." Is it necessary to emphasize?

I need only mention a few of the principal monastic schools founded in the sixth century or earlier to shew how the whole of Ireland was practically turned into a University. There was Clogher, founded by St. Maccarthen, by order of St. Patrick himself. There was Glendalough, in the valley of the two lakes, founded by St. Kevin, the successor of St. Patrick, to which belonged nine churches, a round tower and a vast cemetery. There was Armagh, founded about 450 by St. Benignus, in which it is said, more than 7000 scholars were found gathered together. In the opening years of the sixth century the rector of the school of Armagh was Gildas the historian. There was Aran, founded in 484 by St. Enda, the son of the King of Oriel, who in a short time gathered 150 disciples around him in that remote sea-girt spot, where he died in the year 540. There was Monastereven, founded on the banks of the Barrow in 504. There was Monasterboyce, founded by St. Builhe, who died in 521, which was a great lay and ecclesiastical school in the valley of the Boyne, with a round tower

110 feet high, and two magnificent stone ornamented crosses, the taller being 27 feet high. There was Clonard, founded about 520 by St. Finnian, who was born in Ireland but trained at Menevia (now St. David's) in Wales, where he spent thirty years of his life, and who was called "the Tutor of the Irish saints." This monastery, which Dr. J. T. Fowler calls "the most famous of all the great schools of the sixth century,"¹ contained 3000 monks, and St. Columba was one of its pupils. There was Glasnevin, near Dublin, where St. Mobhi, one of Columba's fellow-students at Clonard, had a school. There was Terryglas (Tir-da-Glas) in County Tipperary founded by Columma Crimthan, another fellow-student of St. Columba at Clonard. There was Moville in County Down, founded in 540 by St. Finnian or Finbar, where also St. Columba studied. There was Clonfert, founded by St. Brendan the Voyager in 559. There were Clonmacnoise near Athlone, founded by St. Kieran in 544, Lynally, near Tullamore, in King's County, founded by St. Colmanella, Aghaboe in Queen's County, founded by St. Cainneach, Mayo, founded by St. Colman, and Birr, now Parsonstown, founded by another and less famous St. Brendan. There was Bangor on the shores of the Bay of Belfast, founded in 559 by St. Comgall, which contained 3000 monks, divided into seven alternate choirs, each composed of about 300 singers, who chanted the praises of God night and day. To this community St. Comgall gave a rule written in Irish verse. And from Bangor came St. Columban,

¹ Fowler, *Adamnan*, p. 46.

of whom more anon. Montalembert mentions St. Luan, a young shepherd who had been educated by the monks of Bangor, and who himself, according to St. Bernard, founded 100 monasteries.¹ This young man answered the Abbot of Bangor, who warned him against the dangers of too engrossing a study of the classical literature:

“If I have the knowledge of God, I shall never offend God; for they who disobey Him are they who know Him not.”

Whereupon the Abbot left him, saying:

“My son, thou art firm in the faith, and true knowledge will put thee on the right road for heaven.”²

Finally there were the many monasteries founded by St. Columba, the chief of which were Derry (Daire) founded in 545, Durrow (Dair Magh) founded in 553 on the borders of King's County and Westmeath, Kells in Meath, Kilmore, Boyle, Swords, Rechra, Raphoe and Drumcliffe, and last, but not least, Hy or Iona, founded in 563. The most remote of Columba's monasteries in Ireland was in Glen Columkille, in the westernmost part of Ulster. On the north side of the glen are still to be seen the ruins of Columba's church and traces of the monastic buildings. Dr. Norman Moore, in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, says:

“Just below it the sea is always covered with foam round the promontory of Garraras, while mists shut out from view for six months the opposite side of the glen and the path ascending it into the world. The Saint and his followers always thought the roar

¹ St. Bernard, *Vita S. Malachiae*, Chap. 6.

² *Monks of the West*, Vol. II, p. 397.

of the sea, and mists sweeping across the desolate moorland, incitements to devotion."

Of later monasteries, the most famous was the great School of Lismore, which was founded in 635 by St. Carthage. It was to this monastery that Turlogh, King of Thomond, retired when he resigned his crown to become a monk; and among its Scholars was Cathal or Cathaldus, Bishop of Tarentum.

Ussher tells us of the Abbot Caimin of Iniskeltra, an islet of Loughderg, who made a critical edition of the Psalms, an eleventh century copy of which is now in the Franciscan convent at Dublin; and there is evidence to show that the Scots possessed a Latin version of the Bible distinct from the Vulgate.¹

One of the most famous of ancient Irish manuscripts, the *Book of Durrow*, which contains the Gospels of the Vulgate, and is attributed to Columba's own hand,² is still preserved in Trinity College, Dublin; and from his monastery of Kells came another famous and beautiful manuscript, the *Book of Kells*, of which Professor J. T. Fowler, of Durham, says: "It is impossible to give any idea of the splendour and elaboration of its ornamental pages and letters, or of the extreme minuteness of the work, which often requires a lens to trace it." These two famous manuscripts are the finest extant works of their kind, and are miracles of colour work. Some beautiful facsimiles of many of the pages of the *Book of Kells* are published

¹ R. L. Poole, *Medieval Thought and Learning*, p. 11.

² Neither the *Book of Durrow*, nor the *Book of Kells* is earlier than the end of the seventh century, however (see *Introduction to Greek and Latin Palæography*, p. 374, by Sir E. M. Thompson).

by the "Studio," with a descriptive introduction by Sir Edward Sullivan, Bart.

Next to the *Book of Kells*, the *Book of Armagh*, (Leabhar Arda Macha), now in the Library of Trinity College, Dublin, stands second for beauty of execution, and it equals, and in some pages surpasses it, in richness of ornamentation. It is the work of Ferdomnach of Armagh, who finished it in 807, and died in 845. It is written in Latin, freely interspersed with Old Irish; and contains St. Patrick's Confession, which the scribe claims to have copied from a book in the saint's own handwriting, and notes on the Life and Acts of St. Patrick compiled by Bishop Tirechan, who claims to have received them from Bishop Ultan of Ardbrecain in the seventh century, together with a complete copy of the New Testament and a *Life of St. Martin of Tours*.

In Trinity College, Dublin, there are also two beautiful silver shrines enclosing two illuminated Gospel manuscripts, *The Book of Dimma*, and *The Book of St. Moling*, both written in the seventh or eighth century.

In the "Old Irish Life of St. Columba," contained in the *Leabhar Breac* (the *Speckled Book*), a fifteenth century manuscript preserved in the Library of the Royal Irish Academy, it is stated that he himself transcribed "three hundred splendid lasting books"; and if the *Cathach*, a Psalter in the same library which was venerated for more than a thousand years by the Clan O'Donnell (Columba's clan), who carried it into their battles as a talisman of victory, is from his own hand,

the epithets "splendid" and "lasting" are justified.¹

It was partly through a quarrel about a manuscript (possibly the *Cathach*) that Columba, according to reliable tradition, left Ireland. When he was 38 years old, while visiting the monastery of Moville (Magh Bile), he secretly made a copy of a beautiful Psalter kept by the Abbot Finnian in the church, working at it during the night. One night the Abbot discovered him at this secret task and claimed the copy as his right. Columba refused to surrender it, and appeal was made to the Ard-Righ (High King of Ireland), Diarmait MacCerball, who gave his judgment in oracular fashion, saying: "To every cow belongs her calf." Angry at the loss of his copy, which he was then obliged to relinquish to his old master, Columba exclaimed: "This is an unjust decision, O Diarmait, and I will be avenged!"²

¹ The handwriting is a small flowing half-uncial script, in which "the formal book-hand of the time seems to have been modified so as to enable the writer to get through his task more quickly and to use less parchment . . . Palæography offers no reason for disbelief of the tradition which assigns the *Cathach* to the pen of St. Columba." (Professor W. M. Lindsay, quoted by Dr. W. Douglas Simpson: *The Historical St. Columba*, p. 81.)

² Manus O'Donnell's *Life of Columcille* (1532) gives the following particulars about this manuscript, viz.: *The Cathach* (i.e. the Fighter, the Psalter of Battle) indeed is the name of the book on account of which the battle was fought. It is Colum Cille's chief relic in the land of Cinel Conaill. It is encased in silver and it is not lawful to open it. And if it be taken thrice sunwise round the host of Cinel Conaill when about to engage in battle, they always return safe in triumph. It is on the bosom of a Co-arb or Cleric, who is as far as possible free from mortal sin, that it should be borne round the host.

The book preserved in the Library of the Royal Irish Academy is a fragment "consisting of fifty-eight consecutive leaves all of which are more or less mutilated," and includes the Psalms in St. Jerome's translation from XXX, v, 10, to CV, v, 13. It is written throughout in one hand, and bears evident marks of haste. (See *Proceedings Royal Irish Academy*, Vol. XXXIII, Section C, No. 11, pp. 241-436).

About the same time, Columba's kinsman, the young Prince Curnan, who had unintentionally killed a fellow-competitor in the sports at Tara, and claimed sanctuary at the court of King Diarmait, was slain by the king. Columba, who had been imprisoned by Diarmait at Tara, escaped, and roused the Clan Neill and other clans to a war of revenge. A battle was fought at Culdreimhne, six miles north of Sligo, in the year 561, and Diarmait was defeated, but there was great loss of life on both sides. Diarmait called a synod at Tailte (Teltown, Meath)¹, which excommunicated Columba, but the excommunication was afterwards withdrawn on the intercession of St. Brendan of Birr. Columba went to his Amnchara (soul-friend), St. Laisren of Devenish (an island in Lough Erne), who laid on him as a penance that he must leave Ireland and never see it or set foot on its shores again until he had won as many souls for Christ as there had been people killed in the battle. He sailed from Derry for the north with twelve companions, and passing the islands of Islay and Jura, he landed first at Oronsay, climbed a hill, and found that Ireland was still visible; so he re-embarked, and eventually landed on Whitsunday, 13th May, 563, on the southern shore of Iona, at Port-na-Churaich, the Haven of the Coracle, went up the rocky hill called Carn-cul-ri-Erin (Cairn of the Back turned to Ireland), and looking south saw only the wide open sea.

¹ An ancient seat of royalty. The Ard-Righ was sometimes styled "Righ Taillteann" (King of Teltown).

Three Latin hymns : "Altus Prosator," "In te Christe," and "Noli Pater,"—are attributed to St. Columba, and were printed by Colgan in his *Acta Sanctorum Hiberniae* in 1645 and reprinted and edited by Dr. J. H. Todd in 1869 for the Irish Archaeological and Celtic Society. The original manuscript used by Colgan is at St. Isidore's in Rome, and the manuscript used by Dr. Todd, the *Liber Hymnorum*, is in the Library of Trinity College, Dublin. Dr. Todd says of the "Altus" that: "there cannot be a doubt that the hymn is of considerable antiquity, and that it is Irish. It quotes in many places a Latin version of the scriptures older than the rescension of St. Jerome. It is written in a barbaric style, with many words of rare occurrence, some of them unknown even to the researches of Du Cange." The late Marquis of Bute considered its intrinsic merits to be of the highest order, especially the last verses, which he said "would not suffer by comparison with the *Dies Irae*."¹ It consists of twenty-three verses, each commencing with a letter of the alphabet in its proper order. A fine English translation by the late Dr. Anthony Mitchell, Bishop of Aberdeen and the Orkneys, may be found in *The Story of Iona*, by Rev. E. C. Trenholme. Dr. Douglas Simpson says of the poem:

"In the 'Altus Prosator' we see Columba at his sublimest height. The mighty, passionate, insurgent spirit of the man pours itself forth in a transcendental outburst."²

¹ *Altus of St. Columba*, edited by John, Marquis of Bute, p. iv.

² *The Historical Saint Columba*, p. 46.

An interesting fact about these Latin hymns is that they are in rhymed verse, and rhyme was new, if not unknown, in Europe in Columba's day.

This is the first quatrain of the "Altus":

"Altus Prosator Vetustus
Dierum et Ingenitus
Erat Absque origine
Primordio et crepidine."

Besides these Latin hymns, there are ancient poems in his own native tongue ascribed to St. Columba, who was probably a member of the Order of Bards.

"Thrice fifty noble lays the apostle made
Whose miracles are more numerous than grass." says the Old Irish Life. There are poems bearing his name in one of the O'Clery MSS, in the Burgundian Library at Brussels, and a large collection in the manuscript entitled *Laud* 615, in the Bodleian Library at Oxford. Of this last-named collection Dr. William Reeves says that it includes everything in the shape of poem or fragment that could be called Columba's which industry was able to scrape together in the middle of the sixteenth century. In the Brussels collection is a poem bearing the inscription "Columcille fecit" which has been translated by the late Professor O'Curry as follows:

"Delightful would it be to me to be in Uchd Ailiun
On the pinnacle of a rock,
That I might often see
The face of the ocean;
That I might see its heaving waves
Over the wide ocean,
When they chant music to their Father
Upon the world's course;
That I might see its level sparkling strand.

It would be no cause of sorrow;
 That I might hear the song of the wonderful birds,
 Source of happiness;
 That I might hear the thunder of the crowding waves
 Upon the rocks;
 That I might hear the roar by the side of the church
 Of the surrounding sea;
 That I might see its noble flocks
 Over the watery ocean;
 That I might see the sea monsters,
 The greatest of all wonders;
 That I might see its ebb and flood
 In their career;
 That my mystical name might be, I say,
 ' Cul-ri-Erin ';
 That contrition might come upon my heart
 Upon looking at her;
 That I might bewail my evils all,
 Though it were difficult to compute them;
 That I might bless the Lord
 Who conserves all,—
 Heaven with its countless bright orders,
 Land, strand and flood;
 That I might search the books all
 That would be good for any soul;
 At times kneeling to Beloved Heaven;
 At times at psalm singing;
 At times contemplating the King of Heaven,
 Holy the Chief;
 At times at work without compulsion;
 This would be delightful;
 At times picking dailise (kelp) from the rocks;
 At times fishing;
 At times giving food to the poor;
 At times in a carcair (solitary cell).
 The best advice in the presence of God
 To me has been vouchsafed.
 The King whose servant I am will not let
 Anything deceive me."

"Fiona Macleod" says:

"Columba was at once a saint, a warrior, a soldier of Christ, a great abbot, a dauntless explorer, and militant Prince of the Church; and a student, a man of great learning, a poet, an artist, a visionary, an architect, administrator, lawmaker, judge, arbiter. As a youth this prince, for he was of royal blood, was so beautiful that he was likened to an angel. In mature manhood there was none to equal him in stature, manly beauty, strength, and with a voice so deep and powerful that it was like a bell, and could be heard on occasion a mile away, and once, indeed, at the court of King Bruidh at remote Inbhir Nis, the Inverness of to-day, literally overbore and drowned a concerted chorus of sullen Druids. These had tried to outvoice him and his monks, little knowing what a mighty force the sixty-fourth psalm could be in the throat of this terrible Culdee, who to them must have seemed much more befitting his house-name, Crimthan (Wolf), than Colum (Dove)."¹

Mrs. J. R. Green, who regards Columba as "the greatest missionary that Ireland ever sent out to proclaim the gathering of peoples in free association through the power of human brotherhood, learning, and religion," says of him:

"For thirty four years Columcille ruled as abbot in Iona, the high leader of the Celtic world. He watched the wooden ships with great sails that crossed from shore to shore; he talked with mariners sailing south from the Orkneys, and others coming north from the Loire with their tuns of wine, who told him European tidings, and how a town in Istria had been

¹ *The Isle of Dreams*, p. 53. But it was not the 64th Psalm, "Exaudi, Deus," which Columba sang on this occasion. It was the 45th Psalm in the Hebrew and English Authorised Version (the 44th in the Septuagint and Latin Vulgate): "Eruc-tavit cor meum."

wrecked by earthquake. His large statesmanship, his lofty genius, the passionate and poetic temperament that filled men with awe and reverence, the splendid voice and stately figure that seemed almost miraculous gifts, the power of inspiring love that brought dying men to see his face once more before they fell at his feet in death, give a surpassing dignity and beauty to his life."¹

Columba's "large statesmanship," however, had its shady side, and it would be a grave mistake to attribute all Christian work in the Highlands and the Western Isles to the Church of Iona. St. Comgall of Bangor and his deputy St. Moluag or Moluoc founded churches in Tiree, the granary of Iona; and about the time when St. Columba landed on Iona, St. Moluag was founding communities on the neighbouring island of Lismore and in Mull, Skye and Lewis. From Bangor, also in Columba's time, came St. Blaán, who was Abbot of the monastery founded by St. Catan at Kingarth in Bute, and who himself founded a monastery at Dunblane. St. Finnian of Moville, who had been trained at Candida Casa, the monastery founded by St. Ninian in Galloway, also conducted a mission into Pictland, his most northerly station being Dornoch; and St. Donnan founded a church on the island of Eigg.²

In the Martyrology of Ængus there is a striking account of an interview between St. Donnan and St. Columba. "This Donnan went to Columcille to make him his amnchara (soul-friend); upon

¹ *Irish Nationality*, pp. 44-5.

² See *The Historical Saint Columba*, pp. 19-20 and 25-30, by Dr. W. Douglas Simpson, M.A.

which Columcille said to him: 'I shall not be amnchara to a company heirs of red martyrdom, for thou shalt come to red martyrdom, thou and thy people with thee.' And it was fulfilled."¹

St. Columba died on 9th June, 597, and was succeeded by St. Baithene, who survived him only two years, dying on the same day in 599. St. Baithene was succeeded by St. Laisran, St. Columba's second cousin, who died in 605 and was followed by Fergna, whom Adamnan calls Virgno. Cummian or Cuimine the Fair, the first biographer of Columba, who died in 669, was the seventh abbot of Iona. St. Adamnan, the second biographer of Columba was born in 624 in Donegal, was descended from Columba's uncle Sedna, and was kinsman to Seghine, eighth abbot of Iona, under whose rule he lived till 679, when he succeeded him in the chair of St. Columba. About this time the exiled Prince Ealdfrith or Aldfrid of Northumbria took refuge in Iona, and when he eventually came to the throne, Adamnan visited his court, and presented to him his book: *De Locis Sanctis*, based on the notes of the Frankish Bishop Arculf, who had been in Jerusalem. Adamnan was in Ireland in 692 and again in 697 on ecclesiastical business, and it is thought he wrote the *Vita S. Columbae* between the two visits. He seems to have stayed in Ireland for some time prior to 704, when he returned to Iona, and soon after died there. The manuscript of Adamnan's *Life*, now in the Library of Schaffhausen,

¹ Martyrology of Ængus, ed. Whitley Stokes, p. 116. The Martyrdom of St. Donnan took place at Eigg on Easter Day, 17th April, 618.

was the work of Dorbbene, who succeeded him as Abbot of Iona, and died in 713.

Professor W. P. Ker says:

“There are many noble saints’ lives in the Middle Ages, and there are many legends too, where the charm of a holy life is blended with other things less religious, the colours of romance. There is none where the strength of a sober history is harmonised with the more fantastic spirit as it is in Adamnan’s *Life of Columba*. It is this that makes its excellence: Adamnan is in agreement with Bede on the one hand, with St. Brendan on the other. He is the right man to speak for Iona. The isle belongs to two worlds (at least) . . . Iona was a real place, with a calculable value, much occupied in affairs. On the other hand there are certain lights and certain conditions of the mind when Iona becomes again like one of the isles of Maelduin or St. Brendan. The beauty of Adamnan’s work is that it represents truly, one cannot but feel, both the serious solid life of Iona, such as makes it important in history, and also the vaguer atmosphere about the island. It is not a fairy story, for all the wonders in it. Yet it is not mere commonsense. The restlessness of the sea is in it, the sea that drew the Irish saints on toward the desert refuge it seemed to offer them; such as was Cormac MacLethan, who, from voyages far to the north, to the Orkneys and even beyond, was twice brought back, and touched at Iona and was greeted by Columba.”¹

The greatest of the sons of Columba was Aedhan or Aidan, the son of Lugair, of the Irish royal line of Es-Chaidh Finn. Forty-eight years after Augustine and his Italian monks landed on the shores of pagan England, an Anglo-Saxon prince,

¹ *The Dark Ages*, pp. 148-9.

Oswald, while yet a child, sought a refuge among the Scots, and in that exile he remained during the seventeen years of the reign of his uncle Edwin, who had slain his father Ethelred at the battle of the Idle River in 617. During his exile, Oswald was converted to Christianity, and baptised according to the Celtic rite; and as soon as he was firmly established in his throne his first thought was to further the triumph of the religion he had embraced. He addressed himself to Seghine, then Abbot of Iona, who sent Cormac to Northumbria as a missionary. Cormac, however, failed to win the Northumbrians because of his pedantic severity. He returned to Iona declaring that he could make nothing of the English, and that he had not been able to do them any good because they were uncivilised men, and of a most stubborn and barbarous disposition. Aidan suggested that he had been too hard and austere; he had not at first, conformably to the apostolic rule, given them the milk of more easy doctrine, till, being by degrees nourished with the word of God, they should be capable of greater perfection, and be able to practise the sublimer precepts of God. Whereupon Aidan was declared to be the man for the mission, and was at once consecrated bishop of Northumbria. At York there was a church established by Paulinus, where the deacon James, whom Paulinus left behind him, had continued to baptise and preach in spite of the ravages of Cadwallon and Penda, King of Mercia; but Aidan, given the choice of the seat of his bishopric, preferred to be in a more central position, and nearer the royal palace of Oswald

at Bamborough; and so, imitating St. Columba, he chose an island near the shore, as small and barren as Iona, the island of Lindisfarne.

Bede, who was born twenty years after his death, and was prejudiced against Columba, has nothing but praise for Aidan. He says:

“It was the highest commendation of his doctrine, with all men, that he taught no otherwise than he and his followers had lived; for he neither sought nor loved anything of this world, but delighted in distributing immediately among the poor whatsoever was given him by the kings or rich men of the world. He was wont to traverse both town and country on foot, never on horseback, unless compelled by some urgent necessity; and wherever in his way he saw any, either rich or poor, he invited them, if infidels, to embrace the mystery of the faith; or if they were believers, to strengthen them in the faith, and to stir them up by words and actions to alms and good works. His course of life was so different from the slothfulness of our times, that all those who bore him company, whether they were shorn monks or laymen, were employed in meditation, that is either in reading the Scriptures, or learning psalms. This was the daily employment of himself and all that were with him, wheresoever they went; and if it happened, which was but seldom, that he was invited to eat with the king, he went with one or two clerks, and having taken a small repast made haste to be gone with them, either to read or write . . . He never gave money to the powerful men of the world, but only meat, if he happened to entertain them; and, on the contrary, whatsoever gifts of money he received from the rich, he either distributed them, as has been said, to the use of the poor, or bestowed them in ransoming such as had been wrongfully sold for slaves. Moreover, he afterwards made many of those he had ransomed his disciples, and after

having taught and instructed them, advanced them to the order of priesthood."¹

Dr. W. Douglas Simpson says:

"The Northumbrian Church, with its marvellous artistic achievement in sculpture and illuminated work, as illustrated by the Bewcastle and Ruthwell Crosses and the Lindisfarne Gospels, and with its brilliant culture, of which Bede is the choicest flower, may justly be accounted the brightest jewel in Columba's crown."²

Every church and monastery Aidan founded became a school, where the English children received an education as complete as that given in the schools of Ireland. If we ask what was taught in those schools, perhaps the poem which Alcuin wrote in praise of his predecessor, Albert the Wise, master of St. Peter's School at York, founded in 627, may not be very wide of the mark. Alcuin says :

"Here he moistened thirsting hearts with divers streams of teaching and varied dew of learning. To some he diligently gave the art of the Science of Grammar, pouring into others the streams of rhetoric. These he polished on the grindstone of law, those he taught to sing in Æonian chant, instructing others to play on the pipe of Castaly and to run over the ridges of Parnassus with lyric feet; others the aforesaid master caused to know the harmony of the sky and of the sun, the labours of the moon, the five belts of the heavens, the seven wandering stars, their rising and their setting, the tides and earthquakes, the natures of men, cattle, birds and wild beasts, and divers kinds of number and various figures. He gave certainty to Easter's return and especially did he

¹ *Historia Ecclesiastica*, Book III, Ch. V.

² *The Historical Saint Columba*, p. 52.

unveil the mysteries of Holy Scripture, for he laid bare the abyss of the old and rude law. Whatever youths he saw of remarkable intelligence, he got hold of them, taught them, fed them, cherished them, and so this teacher had many pupils learning the sacred volumes and advanced in various arts."

The ecclesiastical school at York was not an Irish school, but the famous Abbey of Malmesbury was founded by a wandering Scot, though none of its subsequent abbots were of that race.

About the year 637 an Irish monk named Maeldubh or Maildulf¹ came to England to seek a solitude where he could pray and study in peace. This he found in an immense forest on the border of Wessex and Mercia, where he settled as a hermit in a hut which he was allowed to build under the shadow of an old castle called *Caer Bladen*, which had been captured from the British king, *Donewald of Damnonia*, by the Saxon *Gormund*, who destroyed the town and re-named the fortress *Ingelborne*. Maeldubh opened a school to provide himself with the means of livelihood, and such a thirst for instruction had arisen among the Saxons, and the fountains at which they could slake it were so rare, that the venture succeeded. The school, set up under the shadow of a wooden basilica or church, became a monastery, among the first scholars of which was *St. Aldhelm*; and at the end of fifteen years, when Maeldubh died in 673, *Aldhelm* was ordained as a priest by *Leutherius*, Bishop of the West Saxons, and elected abbot. By his exertions the foundation of the Celtic anchorite became one

¹ "Natione Scotus, eruditione philosophus, professione monachus."

of the principal monasteries of England, bearing the name of the founder, Malmesbury being a corruption of Maildulf's burgh; and a new church of solid masonry, with stone vaulting and ceiling of timber, dedicated to our Saviour and SS. Peter and Paul, was built by Aldhelm. St. Aldhelm professed and extended the rule of St. Benedict, and substituted the teachings and traditions of Canterbury for the influence of his first Irish master; but he remained faithful to the severe austerities which characterised Irish monastic life. He imposed upon himself the same extraordinary penances as were habitual to the Celtic monks. To subdue the impulses of the flesh he would plunge during the night, in winter and summer alike, into a fountain near the monastery, and there remain immersed up to the neck while he repeated the Psalms appointed for the day. To his monastery many Scots resorted. An Irishman requests from him the loan of a book, and afterwards that he would receive him as a disciple, sending him a specimen of Latin verses. Another, Cellanus, exiled in the most distant corner of the Frankish kingdom beside the tomb of his countryman St. Fursey at Lagny, begs him to send him his Latin panegyrics. The son of a Scots king, Archibald, learned in the literature of his day, sends all his works to Aldhelm in order that the file of so accomplished a genius may rub the Scottish rust from off them. It is Aldhelm who represents the metropolitan Theodore, the Greek Archbishop of Canterbury, surrounded by a troop of Irish disciples, "like a wild boar surrounded by a troop of furious

wolves," holding them back, as by strokes of his tusks, by the nervous vigour of his dialectic and the cogency of his syllogisms.

Why was this passion for learning and literary output so predominant and untrammelled in Ireland? Why did it overflow so generously into other lands? Mr. R. L. Poole throws some light on the problem. He says:

"In other countries the diocese has been the basis of Christian organisation; in Ireland it was the monastery. This was the centre of the religious community; the abbot, not the bishop, was its representative chief. When gifts were made to the church, the monastery was the recipient; the abbot was their steward . . . The absence of any fixed endowment was an insuperable obstacle to the formation of an ecclesiastical constitution after the common pattern. Almost everywhere the bishops were untrammelled by the cares of a definite diocese; often a band of many bishops is found settled at one place. The lesser clergy were driven to earn a living as they might, in the secular business of the farm or the plough. They had no hopes of ecclesiastical preferment to tempt them to stay at home; poverty was their natural lot, and it might be met with as little inconvenience abroad. Thus they poured forth upon the continent the most devoted, the least self-seeking of missionaries; how poor they were we may learn from the fact that special hostelries were founded for their reception in many places of the Frankish realm by the charity of their wealthier fellow countrymen."¹

Thus it comes about that we know less of the Irish teachers in their own country than abroad. Mr. Poole says the Irish had no sooner been enlightened

¹ *Medieval Thought and Learning*, pp. 9, 10.

than they pressed forward to make all nations participators in the knowledge of their new faith.¹ The monastic nation became the missionary nation *par excellence*. From the end of the sixth century to the end of the ninth, Britain, France, Germany, Italy, and even Spain, received numerous missionaries sent from Ireland.² They were poets and scholars, strangely dressed monks, who, confusing the religious with the literary apostolate, agitated and disturbed the Continental Church by the novelty of their teaching, and who, almost everywhere repelled, after having been welcomed everywhere with the greatest favour, did not depart without leaving some trace of their passage even in the places where they had only appeared for a moment.³

¹ "In exteras etiam nationes, quasi inundatione facta illa se sanctorum examina effuderunt." S. Bernard: Vita S. Malachixæ, Ch. 5.

² "The Celt yielded not to the Northman in his passion for travel; then as now the poverty of the land was the peremptory cause of emigration; but the ambition of the missionary supplied a far stronger incentive to distant enterprises than the mere love of adventure or the mere hope of gain; and those who had once been known but as the pirates whose terrible fleets ravaged the coasts of Britain or Gaul, became the peaceful colonists of Christianity in nearly every land where the Teuton in his advance westward had established himself. From Iceland to the Danube or the Apennines, among Frank or Burgundian or Lombard, the Irish energy seemed omnipotent and inexhaustible."—R. L. POOLE, *Medieval Thought and Learning*, p. 9.

³ "Still more striking than the intellectual development of which the Irish monasteries were at this period the centre, is the prodigious activity displayed by the Irish monks in extending and multiplying themselves over all the countries of Europe—here to create new schools and sanctuaries among nations already evangelised—there to carry the light of the Gospel, at peril of their lives, to the countries that were still pagan . . . Here is the number, probably very incomplete, given by an

The greatest of these scholar-monks was St. Columban, and to him and his contemporaries and disciples the next lecture will be chiefly devoted.

But, before passing on to the story of St. Columban, I should like to refer to what, with all my admiration for its energy and devotion, I must admit was the conspicuous weakness of Celtic Christianity, which ultimately brought Ireland more completely within the Roman obedience than England, where at her frequent Church synods kings and ealdormen, as well as bishops and monks, met to debate on equal terms under the presidency of a single archbishop for the benefit of the whole community. Here I cannot do better than quote the dictum of Professor Oman:

“The Celtic Church produced many great saints and many devoted missionaries, but it was always lacking in order and organisation. Fervour and ascetic self-sacrifice are essential virtues for those who have to build up a Church, but for those who have to administer a Church already solidly constituted, tact, practical wisdom, and a broad charity of spirit are also necessary. The Celtic Church put before it as its highest aim the extension of the monastic ideal, as is sufficiently shown by the fact that the great tribal monastery was the centre of religious life, while the bishop was a comparatively unimportant personage, inferior to the abbot in status, and only

ancient writer, of the monasteries founded out of Ireland by Irish monks, led far from their country by the love of souls, and no doubt, a little also by that love of travel which has always been one of their special distinctions: 13 in Scotland, 12 in England, 7 in France, 12 in Armorica, 7 in Lorraine, 10 in Alsatia, 16 in Bavaria, 15 in Rhetia, Helvetia and Allemania, without counting many in Thuringia, and upon the left bank of the Lower Rhine; and, finally, 6 in Italy.”—

MONTALEMBERT, *Monks of the West*, Vol. III, pp. 295-6.

necessary because he alone could make priests or consecrate sacred edifices. But all mankind, even in the most ideally pious nation, could not be swept into monasteries. Nor is the perfection of the individual soul by ascetic rules the sole aim of Christianity. As an organisation for the spiritual government of a mixed community the Celtic system left much to be desired. Its influence for good was much diminished by its narrow ideal. Most of all was it noticeable that it had no effect whatever as a unifying force for the nations among which it prevailed. The greatest blessing for Ireland would have been political consolidation, to put an end to its innumerable tribal wars. Absolutely nothing in this direction was accomplished by the Church; instead, the great monastery of each sept became a centre of its local particularism. Ireland, for want of a proper episcopal organisation, was from the ecclesiastical point of view a group of disconnected and independent monasteries."¹

¹ C. Oman: *England before the Norman Conquest*, pp. 291-2.

Lecture II

"There was indeed never a time when the life of Christendom was so confined within the hard shell of its dogmatic system that there was no room left for individual liberty of opinion. A ferment of thought is continually betrayed beneath those forms; there are even frequent indications of a state of opinion antagonistic to the Church itself. The necessity of a central power ruling the consciences of men of course passed unquestioned, but when this immense authority appeared not a protection but a menace to religion, it was seldom that it was submitted to in complete silence."—R. L. POOLE, *Illustrations of the History of Medieval Thought and Learning*, p. 3.

St. Columban and His Contemporaries

WHILE the Benedictine missionaries slowly planted the Gospel in the kingdom of the Franks, a man appeared in Gaul as the type of a distinct monastic spirit. A monk and monastic legislator, like St. Benedict, he at one time threatened to eclipse and replace the Benedictine order in the Church.

St. Columban was born in Ireland, in the province of Leinster, and brought with him to Gaul a company of twelve Irish monks, "clad," says Mrs. J. R. Green, "in white homespun, with long hair falling on their shoulders, and books hanging from their waists in leathern satchels." He was born in the same year (543) in which St. Benedict died. Instructed from childhood in literature and the liberal arts, he had also to struggle early with the temptations of the flesh. His beauty exposed him, says the monk Jonas who wrote his life,¹ to the shameless temptations of his beautiful countrywomen. It was in vain that he plunged into the study of grammar, rhetoric, geometry and Holy Scripture. The goad of concupiscence pricked him continually. He went to the cell of a pious anchoress to consult her. She told him: "Twelve years

¹ *Vita S. Columbani Abbatis, Auctore Jona, Monacho Bobbiensi Fere Æquali, ap Act. SS. O.S.B. t. II.* (This Jonas was of Susa in Piedmont, and wrote by order of Attala and Eustace, successors of St. Columban.)

ago I myself left my own house to enter into a war against sin. Inflamed by the fires of youth, thou shalt attempt in vain to escape from thy frailty while thou remainest upon thy native soil. Hast thou forgotten Adam, Samson, David and Solomon, all lost by the seductions of beauty and love? Flee, young man, flee, if thou would'st escape ruin!"

He decided to follow her advice. His mother attempted to deter him, even going to the extent of prostrating herself before him on the threshold of the door; but he stepped over the dear obstacle, left the province of Leinster, where he was born, and, after spending some time at Cluain-Inis, where he studied under the abbot Senell, who taught him how to compose a commentary on the Psalms, he found his way to Bangor, and joined the monastic community which had been founded there by St. Comgall. But soon his adventurous spirit, allied with a passion for pilgrimage and preaching,¹ drove him across the seas. He heard incessantly the voice which spake to Abraham echoing in his ears: "Get thee out of thy country and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto the land that I will shew thee."

When 31 years of age, Columban left Bangor, crossed Britain, and reached Gaul. When he landed there and was asked what he was, he replied: "I am an Irish pilgrim, and my speech and action correspond to my name, which is in Hebrew Jona,

¹"*Scottorum quibus consuetudo peregrinandi jam pene in naturam conversa est.*" Walafridus Strabo: *De Mirac. S. Galli*, Lib. II, c. 47.

in Greek *Peristera*, and in Latin *Columbanus*." He found the Christian faith existing in Gaul, but Christian virtue unknown or outraged, owing to the fury of the wars and the negligence of the bishops.

About the year 590 he arrived at the barbarous court of Gontran, King of Burgundy, of all the grandsons of Clovis the one whose life appears to have been the least blamable, and who had most respect for religion. Columban's eloquence delighted the king and his lords, and Gontran offered him and his companions whatever his kingdom could afford if they would remain. Columban answered that they had not left their own country to seek wealth, but to follow Christ and bear His cross; but the king urged them to settle in some place in his territory, and not to leave Gaul, nor dream of converting other nations, till they had assured the salvation of the Franks and Burgundians.

Accordingly they sought out a solitude, and, with that taste for the noble aspects of savage Nature, which is, so to speak, innate among the Irish, they settled at Annegrays¹ in the defiles of the Vosges. It was there, among sharp crags crowned by great woods, on rugged ground where were still visible the massive remains of a Roman fortress, that they raised their first monastery. They led there the simplest life, living for whole weeks without any other food than the herbs of the fields and the bilberries which are there plentiful.

¹ Now a hamlet of the commune of Faucogney, Haute-Saône.

Often Columban separated himself from his disciples to dwell alone in the woods. There, as elsewhere, in his long and close communion with Nature, nothing alarmed him, nor did he cause fear to bird or animal. Birds and squirrels came to him freely we are told. He expelled a bear from the cave which became his cell, and he took from another bear a dead stag, whose skin served to make shoes for himself and his companions. One day, while wandering in the heart of the woods, and meditating whether the ferocity of wild beasts was not better than the rage of men, which destroyed their souls, he saw twelve wolves approach and surround him. He remained motionless, repeating the words: "Deus in adiutorium." The wolves, having smelt his garments, seeing him without fear, turned away. Going a few paces on his way, he heard the sound of human voices, which he recognised were those of a band of Sueve brigands, who were then laying the country waste. He did not see them; but he fell on his knees and thanked God for preserving him from the double danger.

After a few years the increasing number of his disciples obliged him to seek another residence, and by the help of one of the principal ministers of the king, Agnoald, whose wife was a Burgundian of noble family, he obtained from Gontran the site of another ancient fortress, at Luxeuil, on the confines of Austrasia and Burgundy, where there had been Roman baths, and where the idols formerly worshipped by the Gauls were still to be seen in the woods. Luxeuil was to become one of the most considerable monasteries in all Gaul, and, as is

declared in several diplomas of popes and kings, the freest, the most jealous, the proudest of her liberties.

Soon after, a third monastery, that of Fontaines, was built; and Columban was able to count 220 monks in the three houses which he governed. Frankish and Burgundian nobles lavished gifts upon him and brought their sons to him to be educated, and some took the vows, and soon he was able to organise a perpetual service of praise, called "Laus perennis." Rich and poor were obliged to engage in agricultural work, and he made no allowance for any weakness. Even the sick were required to thresh wheat, or do other light work.

Twenty years passed, during which the reputation of St. Columban grew and increased, but not without opposition from the Gallo-Roman clergy, whom he displeased by the peculiarities of his garb and tonsure, by his celebrating Easter according to Irish usage, on the fourteenth day of the lunar month, when that happened to be Sunday, instead of celebrating it with the Roman Church on the Sunday after the fourteenth day,¹ and perhaps also by the intemperate zeal with which, in his epistles, he reminded the bishops of their duties. The details of his struggles with the bishops of Gaul are unknown to us, but the courage he displayed may be gathered from some passages, quoted by Montalembert,² of his letter to the synod which

¹ For a full discussion of the Paschal Controversy see *The Celtic Church and See of Peter*, by Rev. J. C. Macnaught, B.D., Chap. V, pp. 68-70.

² *Monks of the West*, Vol. II, pp. 407-410.

met to deal with the matter. He calls himself "Columban the sinner," and begins by thanking God that, owing to His grace, so many holy bishops were assembled to consider the interests of faith and morals. He exhorts them to assemble oftener, and wishes them to consider, not only the question of Easter, but other canonical observances cruelly neglected. He prides himself on his own trials and persecutions, and he says:

"I have come into these parts, a poor stranger, for the cause of Christ our Saviour, our common God and Lord. I ask of your holinesses but a single grace: that you will permit me to live in silence in the depths of these forests, near the bones of seventeen brethren whom I have already seen die. I shall pray for you with those who remain to me, as I ought, and as I have always done for twelve years. Ah! let me live with you in this Gaul where we now are, since we are destined to live with each other in Heaven, if we are found worthy to enter there. Despite our lukewarmness, we will follow, as best we can, the doctrine and precepts of our Lord and the apostles. These are our weapons, our shield, and our glory. To remain faithful to them we have left our country, and are come among you. It is yours, holy fathers, to determine what must be done with some poor veterans, some old pilgrims, and if it would not be better to console than to disturb them . . . God forbid that we should delight our enemies, namely, the Jews, heretics and pagans—by strife among Christians . . . If God guides you to expel me from the desert which I have sought here beyond the seas, I should only say with Jonah, 'Take me up, and cast me forth into the sea; so shall the sea be calm.' But, before you throw me overboard, it is your duty to follow the example of the sailors, and to try first to come to land. Perhaps even it might not be

excess of presumption to suggest to you that many more follow the broad way, and that when there are a few who direct themselves to the narrow gate that leads to life, it would be better for you to encourage than to hinder them, lest you fall under the condemnation of that text which says, 'Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in' . . . The rules of the priests and those of the monks are very different; let each keep faithfully the profession which he has embraced, but let all follow the gospel, and Christ their Head . . . Yet pray for us, as we, despite our lowliness, pray for you. Regard us not as strangers to you; for all of us are members of the same body. I pray you all, my holy and patient fathers and brethren, to forgive the loquacity and boldness of a man whose task is above his strength."

Montalembert remarks on the fact that neither in the life of St. Columban, which is written in minute detail, nor in the history of his age, is there any trace of repression or serious censure, directed against him in spite of his outspoken criticism of the bishops.¹ He regards this as a proof of the liberty then enjoyed by Christians, but it is also a tribute to the saintly and apostolic character of a noble man.

The great conflict of his life, however, was not with priests and bishops, but with a dissolute king and queen. The ancient kingdom of Burgundy, conquered by the sons of Clovis, fell to his grandson Gontran, whose hospitable reception of St. Columban and his companions I have referred to. The

¹ *Monks of the West*, Vol. II, p. 410.

monastery of Luxeuil was at the northern extremity of Burgundy. Gontran having died without issue, the kingdom passed to his nephew Childebert II, King of Austrasia, who died soon afterwards leaving two sons under age: Theodebert II, and Theodoric II. The succession was divided between them: Theodoric had Burgundy and Theodebert became King of Austrasia; but their grandmother Brunhilde or Brunehault immediately constituted herself their guardian, and assumed the royal power in both kingdoms. The feudal lords of Austrasia, however, disgusted by her violent and arbitrary temper, obliged Theodebert to expel her from his kingdom; so she took up her residence at the court of Theodoric, where she continued to exercise over the Burgundian nobles and people that haughty and cruel sway which had made her so obnoxious to the Austrasians.

Some time after, Columban was entreated by the Bishops of Burgundy to come to the court of King Theodoric. It was a dissolute court, where the example of all disorder was set by the king himself. Columban did not hesitate to reprove his immorality. Her thirst for power led Brunehault to encourage her grandson in that polygamy which seems to have been the failing of the Germanic, and especially of the Merovingian, princes.¹ From fear of having a rival in power and honour, she opposed with all her resources every attempt to replace his concubines by a legitimate queen; and when finally he determined on marrying a

¹ "Ob nobilitatem plurimus nuptiis ambiuntur." Tacitus: De Mor. Germ. Chap. 18.

Visigoth princess, Brunehault, though herself the daughter of a Visigoth king, succeeded in disgusting him with his bride, and persuaded him to repudiate her at the end of a year. St. Didier, Bishop of Vienne, who had advised the king to marry, was ambushed and murdered by her hired emissaries. Theodoric, however, who had some religious instincts, was glad that a holy man like Columban should dwell in his kingdom, and often visited him before he came to the court. Columban, like St. Didier, reprov'd him for his disorderly life, and exhorted him to espouse a legitimate wife. The young king promised amendment, but Brunehault's influence over him caused him to abandon his good resolutions. Columban went to the manor of Bourcheresse to remonstrate with her. She presented to him the four sons whom Theodoric's concubines had borne to him. "What would these children with me?" he asked. "They are the sons of the King," replied Brunehault, "strengthen them by your blessing." He refused; he hid his face from those children born in sin. "They shall not reign," he said, "for they are of bad origin." From that day Brunehault waged war to the knife against him. She began by forbidding the monks of Luxeuil to leave their monastery, and the people from receiving them or giving them help in any way.

Columban went to visit the king at Epoisses. Hearing that he had arrived, Theodoric desired him to sit at his table. Columban appeared in the dining-hall, where were assembled the convivial friends of the king; but, refusing with disdain the cup which was offered to him by the hand of an

adulterer, he astonished all the courtiers by the excess of his audacity, solemnly cursing him who forbade the servants of God to have access to the homes of other men; and we are told that at the sound of his curse the vessels which contained the various meats were miraculously shattered into fragments, so that the king, thoroughly alarmed, asked his pardon and promised amendment. (The probability is that the violence of the old man's language so terrified the attendants that they dropped the dishes they were carrying.)

Columban, mollified, returned to Luxeuil; but, hearing that the king had fallen back again into his habitual debauchery, he wrote him a letter full of violent reproaches, threatening him with excommunication.

Could Brunehault endure that outrage? It was she who had taken pains to assemble round her grandson a troop of courtesans; it was she who had corrupted his morals and enervated his mind, and, by that odious artifice, she reigned in the name of Theodoric; she governed his court and his realm. That this stranger, this Irish missionary, the obliged guest of King Gontran, should go to the length of excommunicating the heir of his benefactor, was intolerable.

Brunehault had no trouble in raising the opposition of the Court, and she tried to persuade the bishops to interfere and censure Columban and his rule. At her instigation the king presented himself at Luxeuil to demand a reckoning with the abbot. He asked why Columban went against the customs of the country, and why the interior of the monastery

was not open to all Christians, and even to women. (For it was one of the grievances of Brunehault that Columban had interdicted even her, the queen, from crossing the threshold of the monastery.) The king went as far as the refectory, saying that he would have the entrance free to all, or they must give up all royal gifts. Columban boldly replied: "If you would violate the severity of our rule, we have no need of your gifts: and if you would come here to destroy our monastery, know that your kingdom shall be destroyed with all your race." The king was afraid, and went out; but he replied: "You hope, perhaps, that I will procure you the crown of martyrdom; but I am not fool enough for that; only since it pleases you to live apart from all relation with the lay people, you have but to return whence you came, even to your own country."

The nobles of the royal suite exclaimed that they would no longer tolerate in their land men who thus separated themselves from the world. Columban replied that he would leave his monastery only when taken from it by force. He was proscribed, seized, and conducted to Besançon, to await the orders of the king; and a blockade was established round the monastery to prevent anyone leaving it.

Among the monks was one Agilus, son of Agnoald, the minister of King Gontran, who, twenty years earlier, had helped Columban to secure the site of the monastery, and who had entrusted his son to the Irish abbot to be trained. Agilus was charged with the mission of persuading the king to remove the blockade. By one of those sudden changes of

temper so common among the Merovingians, Theodoric and Brunehault received him with honour, prostrated themselves before him, and granted his request, making him valuable presents. But their attitude to Columban was not altered. He had freedom within the town of Besançon, and took advantage of it to climb one morning to the rocky height on which the citadel now stands, and which is encircled by the river Doubs; and from thence he looked towards Luxeuil, to which he resolved to return. Descending, he left the town, and without any opposition regained the monastery.

Hearing of his return, the king sent a count with a posse of soldiers to lead him back. They found him in the choir, singing the office with his monks. "Man of God," they addressed him, "we pray you to obey the king's orders and ours, and to return from whence you came." "No," he answered, "after having left my country for the service of Jesus Christ, I cannot think that my Creator means me to return." Subdued by the firmness of Columban, who repeated that he would only yield to force, the soldiers fell on their knees before him, weeping and begging him to pardon them, and not to oblige them to use violence.

At the sight of their distress the intrepid abbot yielded, and left the monastery he had founded, and which he was never to see again. The monks rent the air with their lamentations, as if at a funeral. They would all have followed him into exile, but a royal order was issued permitting only those of Irish or British blood to leave. Brunehault and Theodoric had no wish to ruin the great foundation

of which Burgundy was proud. So Columban, accompanied only by his Irish brethren, went into exile. He was taken through Besançon, Autun and Avallon to Auxerre, and from thence to Nevers, where he embarked in a vessel on the Loire.

On the road to Avallon he met a soldier of King Theodoric, who attacked him with his lance. At Nevers, when he and his companions were embarking, one of the escort struck one of the monks named Lua with an oar, whereupon Columban cried: "Cruel wretch! What right have you to aggravate my trouble? How dare you strike the weary members of Christ?" Divine vengeance will await you on this spot where you have struck God's servant." On his return, we are told, the man fell into the water, and was drowned at that very place.

Arrived at Orleans, Columban sent two of his monks into the town to buy food; but no one would either sell or give them bread. They were regarded as outlaws—enemies of the king, whom the law forbade his subjects to receive under a heavy penalty. Even the churches were closed against them by the king's orders. But, in retracing their steps, they met a Syrian woman who offered them hospitality. "I am a stranger, like you," she said, "and I come from the land of the Eastern sun."

Passing the city of Tours, Columban begged to be allowed to land and pray before the tomb of St. Martin; but his request was refused, the boatmen being ordered to keep in the middle of the stream and to put on speed. However, they could make no headway, and the boat turned of itself towards

the land. Columban spent the night at the tomb, and the Bishop of Tours, finding him there, took him next day to his house to dine. The Bishop asked him why he was travelling towards the sea. He replied: "That dog of a Theodoric has hunted me from the home of my brethren; but in three years from now he and his children will be destroyed, and his whole race rooted out by God." One of the company, who was a vassal of the king, asked: "Why do you speak thus, servant of God?" "I cannot keep back what God has charged me to speak," was Columban's reply.

Reaching Nantes, on the eve of leaving the soil of France, he wrote a letter to his monks at Luxeuil, which begins: "To his dearest sons, his dearest pupils, to his brethren in abstinence, to all the monks, Columban the sinner writes." He sets forth what he believes to be the best and most expedient arrangements for its future government; and he seems to foresee the birth of new monastic colonies when he says: "Wherever sites are suitable, wherever God will build with you, go and multiply, you and the myriads of souls which shall be born of you."¹ He remembers with tender solicitude a brother who was not present when he left the monastery. "Always take care," he says, "of Waldolenus, if he is still with you. May God give him everything that is good: may he become humble; and give him for me the kiss which I could not give him myself." He exhorts them all to confidence, patience, peace and unity; and he

¹ "Si vero vobis placent, et Deus illic vobiscum ædificat, crescite ibi benedictione in mille millia." Epist. ad Fratres.

desires that any who would disturb the peace of the community should be dismissed from among them. He sometimes addresses the whole fraternity, and sometimes a monk named Attalus, whom he had designated as his successor.

“Thou knowest, my well-beloved Attalus, how little advantage it is to form only one body if there is not also one heart . . . Be thou wiser than I: I would not see thee taking up the burden under which I have sweated. To bind all in the enclosure of the Rule, I have attempted to attach again to the root of our tree all those branches whose frailty had separated them from us . . . Thou wilt know how to adapt its precepts to each. Thou wilt take into account the great diversity of character among men. Thou wilt then diversify thyself, thou wilt multiply thyself for the good of those who shall obey thee with faith and love, and yet must still fear lest that very love should become for thee a danger . . . I had at first meant to write thee a letter of sorrow and tears, but knowing well that thy heart is overwhelmed with cares and labours, I have changed my style, I have sought to dry thy tears rather than to call them forth. I have permitted only gentleness to be seen outside, and chained down grief in the depths of my soul. But my own tears begin to flow! I must drive them back; for it does not become a good soldier to weep in front of the battle. After all, this that has happened to us is nothing new. Is it not what we have preached every day? Was there not of old a philosopher wiser than the others, who was thrown into prison for maintaining, against the opinion of all, that there was but one God? The Gospels also are full of all that is necessary to encourage us. They were written for that purpose, to teach the true disciples of Christ to follow Him, bearing the cross. Our perils are many; the struggle which threatens us is severe, and the enemy terrible; but the recompense

is glorious, and the freedom of our choice is manifest. Without adversaries, no conflict; and without conflict, no crown. Where the struggle is, there is courage, vigilance, fervour, patience, fidelity, wisdom, firmness, prudence; out of the fight, misery and disaster. Thus then, without war, no crown! And, I add, without freedom, no honour! . . . While I write, they come to tell me that the ship is ready—the ship which is to carry me back against my will to my country . . . The end of my parchment obliges me to finish my letter. Love is not orderly; it is this which has made it confused. I would have abridged everything that I might say everything. I have not succeeded. Adieu, dear hearts: pray for me that I may live in God.”¹

When Columban and his companions embarked at the mouth of the Loire on an Irish vessel, it was cast back by the waves and grounded on the beach, where it remained three days. The captain then landed the monks and their property, and sailed without them; and Columban, finding himself in the territory of Clotaire II, King of Soissons and Neustria, invoked the protection of that monarch, and asked him for an escort to Austrasia.

Clotaire gave a cordial reception to the victim of their common enemy Theodoric. That wily monarch had despoiled Clotaire of the greater part of his kingdom and now asked his assistance in the quarrel which had arisen between him and his brother Theodebert, King of Austrasia. Clotaire consulted Columban about the matter, who advised him to have nothing to do with either, since in three years both their kingdoms would fall to him. He received with good grace the remonstrances

¹ Montalembert, *Monks of the West*, Vol. II, pp. 424-26.

which Columban addressed to him concerning the disorders of his court, and promised amendment, begging the saint to stay with him. This Columban refused to do, and so Clotaire granted him the desired escort.

Theodebert, now at war with Theodoric, gave the exiles the same hearty welcome as Clotaire; and at his court Columban had the joy of seeing again several of his brethren from Luxeuil, who had escaped to rejoin him. There too, encouraged by the promises and protection of Theodebert, he decided to preach the gospel among the pagan tribes in Austrasian territory. It had always been his ambition to be a missionary to the heathen;¹ and now, after sixty years of labour among nominally Christian folk, we see him with his companions St. Gall, Maginald and Theodore, embarking on the Rhine below Mainz, and ascending that river and its tributaries as far as the lake of Zurich, staying for some time at Tuggen, at the point where the Limmat enters the lake, and at Arbon, and finally establishing himself at Bregenz (Brigantia), on the Lake of Constance, in order to combat the gods of the Sueves and Allemands, Woden and Thor.

In proclaiming the gospel to the heathen, Columban displayed all the Irish impetuosity of his nature, which age had not abated. His principal lieutenant was St. Gall (Gallech), like himself a native of Leinster and trained at Bangor, and not

¹ "Mei voti fuit gentes visitare et evangelium eis a nobis prædicari: sed fel modo referente eorum teporem, pene meum tulit inde amorem." Epist. ad Fratres.

less daring, who had a good knowledge of the German language. Sometimes they broke the vats in which the pagans brewed their beer, and burned the heathen temples, throwing the idols into the lake. These proceedings roused the fury of the pagans whom they hoped to convert; and, needless to say, they did not make many converts.

They remained at Bregenz for three years, resuming monastic life. The natives would give them no food, so they had at first to live upon wild birds and woodland fruits; but they soon had a garden of vegetables and fruit trees, and learned the art of fishing. St. Columban himself made the nets, and St. Gall cast them into the lake, and had considerable success.

There is a legend that one night, as St. Gall watched his nets in silence, he heard the demon of the mountain call to the demon of the lake: "Arise, and help me to chase away the strangers who have expelled me from my temple; it will require us both to drive them away." "What good should we do?" answered the demon of the lake; "here is one of them upon the waterside whose nets I have tried to break, but I have never succeeded. He prays continually, and never sleeps. It will be labour in vain; we shall make nothing of it." Then St. Gall made the sign of the cross, and adjured them in the name of Jesus Christ to leave those regions without daring to injure anyone. Then, rowing to the shore, he awoke the abbot, who immediately rang the bells for service; but before the first psalm had been sung, they heard the yells of the baffled demons echoing from the surrounding

heights, and then dying away in the distance like the confused shouting of a defeated army.¹

Another legend tells how Columban was deterred by a dream from undertaking a still more difficult mission on which he had set his heart. He was desirous of carrying the Gospel to the Slavs, and especially the Wends, whose country extended to the south of the Danube. One night he dreamed he saw an angel, who said to him: "The world is before thee; take the right hand or the left hand, but turn not aside from thy road, if thou wouldst eat the fruit of thy labours." This he interpreted to mean that he would have no success in the projected enterprise, and so he abandoned it.

On one occasion he left Bregenz to see King Theodebert, who was still at war with his brother Theodoric, and counselled him to make peace and take refuge in a monastery, instead of risking at once his kingdom and his salvation. This advice greatly amused the king and his courtiers. "Such a thing has never been heard of," they said, "that a Frank king should become a monk of his own free will."² "Well," replied Columban, "if he will not be a monk of free will, he will be one by

¹ "Auditae sunt dirae voces dæmonorum per montium summitates, et quasi discedentium ejulatus cum terrore confusus." Walaf. Strabo: Vit. S. Galli, c. 7.

² "Ridiculum excitavit: aiebant enim nunquam se audiisse Merovingum in regno sublimatum voluntarium clericum fuisse." Jonas, c. 57.

This recalls the words of Childebert, quoted by Gregory of Tours: "Was ever a Merovingian shaven?" and the famous saying of Clotilde concerning her grandsons: "Better that they be dead than shaven," which resulted in the murder of the two eldest, the third only escaping the same fate by receiving the monastic tonsure.

force." Soon after, Theodebert was defeated on the plains of Tolbiac, and taken prisoner. Theodoric sent him to Brunehault, who, still furious at his expulsion of her from his kingdom of Austrasia, had his head shaved, made him adopt the monastic robe, and shortly after caused him to be put to death.

At the time the battle was raging, Columban was wandering in a wood near Bregenz with his favourite disciple Cagnoald, a young Frank noble who had joined the community, and sitting down on the fallen trunk of an oak tree to read, he fell asleep, and dreamed he saw the two brothers fighting. On waking, he told the dream to Cagnoald, who replied: "But, dear father, help Theodebert with your prayers, that he may overcome Theodoric, your common enemy." Columban answered him: "You give me a foolish counsel; not such was the will of our Lord, who commands us to pray for our enemies."

By this victory the whole of Austrasia fell into the hands of Brunehault and Theodoric, and the banks of the upper Rhine were no longer safe for Columban and his companions. Their cows were stolen, and two of the monks were ambushed and slain by the pagans, who complained that the monks scared the game by their presence in the forests. Columban said: "We have found a golden cup, but it is full of serpents. The God whom we serve will lead us elsewhere." St. Gall, however, who was suffering with a fever, asked leave to remain, much to Columban's annoyance, who debarred him from saying mass. He remained with other monks, including Maginald and Theodore, in

Helvetia, to found there one of the most celebrated monasteries in Christendom; but Columban, accompanied by a single disciple, crossed the Alps into Lombardy.

Agilulf, King of the Lombards, and his wife Theodelinde, received the strangers kindly, and bestowed upon them an old church at Bobbio, situated in a gorge of the Apennines between Genoa and Milan, and dedicated to St. Peter, which Columban undertook to restore and to add to it a monastery. Despite his age, he shared in the workmen's labours, helping them to carry enormous beams of firwood for the building. From this monastery he carried on a verbal war against Arianism, which still prevailed among the Lombards, and there he lighted a lamp of learning which long illumined northern Italy. The school and library of Bobbio rank among the most renowned of the Middle Ages. Muratori has given a catalogue of 700 manuscripts which they possessed in the tenth century

From thence Columban wrote a letter of outspoken remonstrance to Pope Boniface IV, on behalf of King Agilulf, who, though Columban had converted him from Arianism to Catholicism, had undertaken to protect the followers of Theodore of Mopsuestia, Ibas of Edessa and Theodoret of Cyprus, whose works had been condemned as tainted with Nestorianism by the Council of Constantinople in 553, and by Pope Vigilius;¹ a

¹ The Eastern bishops assented to the condemnation, but the majority of the Western bishops were opposed to it. Theodore Ascidas, Archbishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia, persuaded the Emperor Justinian to interfere; and Justinian had the Pope brought to Constantinople, where after much vacillation, he finally consented to the condemnation.

condemnation resisted by the Bishops of Africa and Istria as throwing discredit on the Council of Chalcedon, which had declared itself satisfied as to their orthodoxy. Pope Gregory endeavoured to overcome their opposition, but without success. After his death the strife was renewed in Lombardy, and the rumour spread abroad that the Popes from Vigilius onwards had fallen into error, and denied the Catholic faith. It was said that Vigilius, by his confirmation of the Council of Constantinople, had approved of the heresies of Nestorius, Eutyches and Dioscur. Such was the condition of affairs when Columban arrived in Italy. He received a letter from Agrippinus, Bishop of Como, warning him to be on his guard against Pope Boniface, as at Rome heresy was favoured. Columban's reply to that letter is not extant, but we gather from his letter to Pope Boniface that he indignantly repudiated the idea that the Popes could have been guilty of favouring heresy. Such a report must be a slander, invented by the enemies of Christ. Nevertheless, he was disquieted by the rumours he heard, and perplexed by the Pope's silence. King Agilulf was much troubled at the disturbance of the peace of his realm caused by these suspicions, while Queen Theodelinde was strongly opposed to the condemnation of the "three chapters," as the writings of Theodore, Theodoret and Ibas were called. Columban too readily listened to the views of his hosts, and at their persuasion urged the Pope to deny these rumours and clear the See of Rome from the suspicion of heresy. He exhorts Boniface to arm himself with the sword of Peter (a rash thing

to do having regard to the traditional precedent), to pronounce judgement in full synod, and to excommunicate all the heretics, so that the world might know that the Chair of St. Peter was free from error. "I," he says, "believe that the pillar of the Church always stands firm in Rome." Nevertheless he breaks into words of rebuke, almost as if he made the position of those who had opposed the Popes in their condemnation of the "three chapters" his own. He says:

"It is a matter for grief and tears if in the Apostolic See the Catholic faith is not kept . . . In the name of Christ, I beseech you, come to the help of your reputation, which is defamed among the nations . . . Watch, for the water has already gotten into the ship of the Church, and the ship is in danger."¹

As Columban confesses, however, that he had not studied the theological question, his advice, couched in such provocative terms, did not carry much weight.

About this time his victorious persecutor, King Theodoric, having added the Austrasian dominions to his own kingdom of Burgundy, died suddenly at the age of 26. Brunehault tried to maintain her regnancy in the name of Sigebert, the eldest of Theodoric's children; but the nobles of Austrasia and Burgundy declared against her, and called Clotaire II, King of Neustria, to reign over them. Clotaire slaughtered the two eldest sons of Theodoric, and imprisoned Brunehault; and then, remembering

¹ Migne, *Patrologia Latina*, LXXX, 275.

the prophecy of Columban, desired Eustace, the then abbot of Luxeuil, to head a deputation of nobles to persuade him to return. But he refused to go back to France, and contented himself with sending a letter full of good advice to the king, commending to him the abbey of Luxeuil, on which Clotaire lavished his bounty.¹

On 21st November, 615, this great missionary and monastic founder died. His last days were passed in fasting and prayer in a cavern at Trebbia, which he had transformed into a chapel, dedicated to the Virgin Mary, which was long venerated by pilgrims. Attalus succeeded him as Abbot of Bobbio, while Eustace continued to exercise oversight over Luxeuil, the monastic capital of Gaul, and the most celebrated and most frequented school of Christendom during the seventh century. Four hundred years after his death, Columban was still called "the king of monks and conductor of the chariot of God."

Such is the history of St. Columban, as related by the hagiographers. But it does not contain the whole truth. Since the Roman Church has put Columban among the saints, let him remain in that sacred company. Nevertheless it cannot be denied that he was for his time a very liberal thinker.

Ussher and M. Augustin Thierry maintain that the ancient Irish monks, in the opinion of the Roman Church, lived in an independence bordering on heresy. Lanigan, Moore and Ozanam are ready

¹"*Litteras castigationum affamine plenas Regi dirigit gratissimum munus . . . Rex velut pignus fœderis viri Dei litteras ovans recepit.*" Jonas, c. 61.

to guarantee their orthodoxy. We must, however, recognise that these Celtic monks observed a mode of life very far removed in some respects from the practices of the Benedictine monks of France and Italy, and that on several points of religious doctrine they professed opinions absolutely opposed to those of the Roman Catholics. When, in the ninth century Lewis the Debonair overran Brittany, a few monks of Landevenech came to meet him. These ambassadors were dressed and tonsured in such a queer fashion that King Lewis could not conceal the surprise that he felt on looking at them. In answer to his remarks they replied that they had received their monastic traditions from the Irish Scots. But all that they said to justify themselves could not satisfy the Catholic King, who formally ordered them to give up their coats made of the skins of beasts, their tonsure, and their rule, which was suspected of paganism, and to adopt the rule of St. Benedict.

The rule of St. Columban has been preserved to us. It appears to have been made for a brotherhood of philosophers. It is not so much a manual of ascetic practices as it is a collection of austere maxims borrowed from the moral passages of the Bible and from divers formularies of Stoic ethics. The first of its ten chapters treats of obedience, which was to be absolute and passive. The second imposes perpetual silence upon the monks, except for useful and necessary causes. The third reduces their food to the lowest possible diet. They were to eat only in the evening. The other chapters treat of poverty, humility, chastity, discretion or

prudence, and mortification, all virtues common to the monastic condition wherever found, but which Columban deals with rather as a preacher than as a legislator. The subtleties of the Roman discipline, its stringent clauses, which compress all the flights of the faith into all the forms of devotion, remained entirely unknown to him.

Further, St. Columban, and with him all the Irish clergy, had loftily professed, concerning the celebration of Easter and the ceremonies of baptism, some opinions censured by the Roman curia, and, far from bowing to the censure, they had replied thereto by haughty and bitter manifestoes. "Your power," wrote Columban to the Bishop of Rome, "will endure as long as your reasoning is correct." It is an Irish proposition; reason is the arbiter even of faith!

But the difference which existed between the literary taste of the Irish Schools and the Roman Schools is much more noteworthy than their doctrinal differences, which to the modern mind are so unimportant as to be almost negligible. The field of study which the Latin was taught to regard, not as "the wisdom that cometh from above," but as "earthly, sensual, devilish," was that to which the Scot turned with the greatest enthusiasm. At Rome, and in the countries where the Roman mind dominated, the memorials of pagan antiquity were execrated. If they sought out the old manuscripts, it was in order to destroy them, or to efface the characters and to trace on the same vellum prayers and sacred legends. They ordered the Christian novice to eschew the impure

contact of the profane poets. Mr. R. L. Poole, says:

“The entire classical tradition, all learning in its large sense, was treated not merely as irrelevant to the studies of the Christian, but as a snare from which he was taught to flee as from a temptation of the evil one.”¹

St. Paulin de Nole writes to his teacher Ausonius:

“These Muses which I have abandoned, why insist, O my father, that they come back into favour with me? Hearts devoted to Christ refuse themselves to the Muses, and are closed to Apollo. Frivolous occupations, and leisure, and business, and a literature full of fables, all that is forbidden to us by God. To obey His laws, to contemplate His light, which would be obscured by the artifices of the sophists, the art of the rhetoricians, and the fictions of the poets, that is our duty.”

One of the Popes most versed in the knowledge of Holy Scripture, St. Gregory the Great,² who, as Mr. R. L. Poole says, has an indisputed title to be called the father of the mediaeval papacy, and whose example was a law to his successors, dared to write to Desiderius, Bishop of Vienne:

“My brother, I have heard that which I cannot repeat without sorrow and shame, that thou hast believed it thy duty to teach grammar to some of

¹ *Medieval Thought and Learning*, p. 6.

² It was Gregory the Great who, when he received Columban in Rome, marvelled inwardly, as Columban lay prostrate in the church, that God had given such great powers to so small a man. “Instantly,” says Mrs. J. R. Green, “the fiery saint, detecting the secret thought, rose from his prayer to repudiate the slight: ‘Brother, he who depreciates the work, depreciates the Author’.”—*Irish Nationality*, p. 49.

thy people. . . . The same mouth singeth not the praises of Jove and the praises of Christ. Learn how serious, how unspeakable it is (quam grave nefandumque), that a bishop should meddle with those things, which should be ignored even by a religious layman If hereafter it be clearly established that the rumour which we have heard is false, and that thou art not applying thyself to the idle vanities of secular learning, we shall render thanks to our God, Who hath not delivered over thy heart to be defiled by' the blasphemous praises of unspeakable men."¹

Now, not only had St. Columban taken care to study grammar under the best teachers, but he went to the continent to teach it to the rude companions of King Gontran, proposing to himself to sweeten their manners by cultivating their minds. Further, this Columban, this great saint, this illustrious confessor, this apostolic missionary, this stern preacher of an austere discipline, this haughty rebuker of kings, was perhaps the greatest poet of his time, and was wont to seek refreshment from his religious labours in sending his friends letters in verse, now in the rhymed couplets of his day, now in hexameters which read as the work of an entire

¹ M. Hauréau wittily compares the language which Shakespeare makes Jack Cade address to Lord Say: "Thou has most traitorously corrupted the youth of the realm in erecting a grammar school; and whereas before our forefathers had no other books but the score and the tally, thou has caused printing to be used; and contrary to the king, his crown, and dignity, thou hast built a paper-mill. It will be proved to thy face that thou hast men about thee that usually talk of a noun, and a verb, and such abominable words as no Christian ear can endure to hear." *2 King Henry VI*, IV, 7.

"On le voit, l'imagination du poète n'a pu rien ajouter au texte de la lettre pontificale."—Hauréau, *Histoire de la Philosophie Scolastique*, I, 5.

pagan. His verses have not the cadence, nor the movement, nor the fresh vigour of ancient verse; but at least they are pure, correct and unstilted, qualities very rare in the sixth century. Like St. Gregory, St. Columban was a Christian missionary; but he fulfilled his mission in recommending the reading of the ancient poets, as well as that of the ancient fathers,¹ and in invoking the authority of Juvenal in support of the gospel maxims.²

With what indignation must St. Gregory have been seized on receiving this epistle addressed by Columban to his friend Fedolius:

"I seek not the treasures which must perish in this world; the gold which the miser heaps up is always poor . . . The fatal love of gold has inspired many crimes. . . . How many evils did the Golden Fleece cause? . . . A few grains of gold upset the banquet of the gods, created the liveliest debate between three goddesses, and armed the devastating power of the Doric youth against the opulent realm of Troy . . . Often a chaste woman sells her honour for gold. Jupiter did not change himself into a shower of gold; the shower of gold was the bribe which that adulterer offered. For a necklace of gold Amphiaraüs was betrayed by a perfidious spouse. Achilles sold for a sum of gold the remains of the Trojan heroes; and we are assured that the gloomy asylum of Pluto was opened to him who paid an agreed sum in gold!"

¹ Columbanus ad Hunaldum:—

"Sint tibi divitiæ divinæ dogmata legis,
Sanctorumque patrum castæ moderamina vitæ,
Omnia quæ dociles scripserunt ante magistri
Vel quæ doctiloqui cecinerunt carmina vates."

—Ussher, *Epist. Hibern. Sylloge*, p. 8.

² "Semper avarus eget nummo, testante poeta."—*Ibid.*, p. 9.
(The poet is Juvenal, Sat. XIV).

Let us note that this pagan ode is written in Adonic verse, in imitation of the Greeks; and that St. Columban, himself designing the sweet lyre with which he strove to reproduce the ancient harmonies, names it after the gallant Lesbian, the illustrious Sappho. He prays Fedolius not to despise "these little verses by which Sappho, the illustrious muse, loved to charm her contemporaries, and to prefer for a moment these frivolous trifles to the most learned productions."¹

He concludes:

"Thus I wrote, overwhelmed by the cruel pains of my weak body, and by age; for, while the times hasten their course, I have reached the eighteenth olympiad of my life. Everything passes, and the irreparable days fly away. Live, be strong, be happy, and remind yourself of sad old age."

With this cult of Latin and Greek letters all the Irish teachers, contemporaries of St. Columban, were associated. If we know very little of St. Roding, monk of Tholey, founder of Beaulieu in Argonne, and St. Fursey, founder of Lagny, they have transmitted to us some verses of St. Livinus, Irish bishop of Brabant in the seventh century, who

¹ "Sed tamen illa
Trojugenarum
Inclyta vates
Nomine Sapho
Versibus istis
Dulce solebat
Edere carmen.
.....
Doctiloquorum
Carmina linquens
Frivola nostra
Suscipe laetus."

preached the Christian faith to the Gauls, and died, after the manner of the ancient confessors, under the sword of the infidels. They are verses composed by the noble old man in the midst of the cruel anguish of persecution, a few days before his martyrdom; and he grieved in these terms at being no longer, in the decline of age, the poet whose first efforts the plaudits of literary Ireland had encouraged. He said:

“Formerly they judged me capable of producing melodies dictated by a lyre bathed in the Castilian fount; and now the Muses no longer inspire me, except with halting verses. My saddened soul has lost the gift of joyous melody.”

One finds, as M. Ozanam observes, the same reminiscences of profane literature in the sermon of St. Gall refusing the bishopric of Constance.

Sometimes, indeed often, the incomparable knowledge of these scholars inspires them badly, and they exhibit in everything the excesses of bad taste. Cummien, in his dissertation on Easter, seems a precious writer, who preferred *jeux d'esprit* to good reasons. More learned than any theologian of the Roman schools, he knew Greek; but he was so eager to show it that he sprinkled his discourse with words unintelligible to the doctors who would be charged with the duty of replying to him. When, for example, before quoting a phrase of Origen, he calls it “chalcenterus et vere adamantinus,” he must have been quite aware that the word “chalcenterus,” *χαλκείτερος*, would not be understood on the continent, except at St. Gall and perhaps at Bobbio, Irish colonies. The same applies to another barbarous

word, "petalicus," put after the name of the Apostle St. John, and signifying, without doubt, "the exiled." M. Ozanam has collected, from several writings composed in Ireland in the seventh century, a very large number of these hellenisms.¹ They bear witness at least to a profound knowledge of the Greek language on the part of the people who used them so inappropriately.

There is a very great diversity of physiognomy between the Irish scholars of the sixth century and those of the seventh. St. Columban and his companions are poets. John of Trittenheim very happily compares St. Columban to the prince of the Druids. He is a druid, a bard, who celebrates in the Lesbian mode monastic poverty, or, in a tone more grave, more solemn, exposes the vanity of mundane joys, and shows to the Christian the only way of salvation, of happiness, the way opened up by Christ.

"Divitibus nigri reserantur limina Ditis, Pauperibusque piis coelestia regna patescunt; Quisquis amat Christum sequitur vestigia Christi."

Of the successors of St. Columban the greatest was St. Gall. Saddened by the departure of his master, but cured of his fever, he chose a retreat not far from the spot where the Rhine falls into Lake Constance, and a little to the south of the lake. A deacon named Hiltebold, a hunter who knew the country well, pointed out to him a wild solitude enclosed by wooded heights, with abundant streams, but inhabited by wild boars, wolves and bears.

¹ *Etudes Germaniques*, t. II, p. 479 ff.

"If God be for us, who can be against us?" he quoted, and the two set out with some food in their wallets, the deacon carrying a fishing net. Towards evening they arrived at the spot where the torrent of Steinach had carved out a rocky bed for itself. As St. Gall walked on, praying, he caught his foot in the undergrowth and fell. The deacon hastened to pick him up. "No," said Gall, "here is my chosen habitation; here is my resting-place for ever." Then he made a rude cross of two hazel boughs, attached to it certain relics which he wore round his neck, and passed the night in prayer. While thus engaged, a bear arrived and advanced to collect the fragments of their evening meal. St. Gall threw him a loaf, and said to him, "In the name of Christ, withdraw from this valley; the neighbouring mountains shall be common to us and thee, but on condition that thou shalt do no more harm either to man or beast."

The Count of Arbon (*Arbor Felix*), in whose territory the upland retreat was situated, sent workmen, who erected a small chapel or oratorium, which became the nucleus of the future Abbey of St. Gall. According to the *Vita S. Galli*, the number of monks who resided there during the lifetime of St. Gall reached, but did not exceed, twelve.

As far as we can gather, the little settlement was surrounded by a vallum, two sides being further defended by the Steinach brook and the Ira. A number of rude huts, built of osiers and clay, surrounded the oratorium, which was made of the finest timber, put together with great skill. No pains were spared in adorning the interior, but the chapel was so

small that a man had to bend his head on entering.¹ The Bible would be beautifully ornamented, but the sacred vessels were made of iron, because the Saviour was fastened to the cross with iron nails.²

The monks lived in separate huts, only assembling together in the chapel at the hours of prayer, or in the refectory for meals. St. Gall himself had a cave in the Sennwald, to which he retired for silent meditation.³ The Columban rule prescribed a four-fold division of the day: prayer, work, reading and fasting. The first of these was the chief business of life. Eight times a day the chapel bell rang to call the monks to the "opus Dei": Tierce, Sext, None, Vespers, Compline, Nocturnes, Matins and Prime. The Mass was only celebrated on Sundays and Saints' Days, or on special occasions. Work was of two kinds, viz., for the seniors, copying manuscripts and painting, or teaching; for the novices, hard manual labour in field or garden. Some of the monks were skilled anglers.

St. Gall is said to have possessed and to have exercised the power to cast out evil spirits. He was sent for by Cunzo, the Duke of Allemania, who had driven out Columban, to heal his daughter Friedeburga who was possessed by a devil which resented all priestly exorcisms, crying out that he would yield only to Gall, who had already banished him and his fellows from the banks of the Lakes of Zurich and Constance. Gall refused to go, and fled into the mountains of Rhaetia; but his retreat was discovered

¹ Vita S. Galli, ed. Von Knonau, cap. 43, p. 53.

² Ibid, cap. 21, p. 27.

³ Ibid, cap. 19, p. 24.

and he was taken by force to the castle of Uberlingen, where he found the young princess lying on her mother's knees, apparently dead. He knelt at her side, and after praying fervently, commanded the demon to come out of her. The princess opened her eyes, and the demon, speaking by her voice, said, "Art thou that Gall who hast already chased me away everywhere? Ingrate! it is to avenge thee that I have entered into the daughter of thy persecutor, and thou comest now to expel me again!"

When the princess was completely cured, St. Gall advised her to become a nun; but she was betrothed to Sigebert, the eldest son of Theodoric and great-grandson of Brunehault, who had just succeeded his father, and was soon to perish at the hands of Clotaire II. When he learned how and by whom she had been cured, the young king made a grant to St. Gall of all the territory he might desire between the Rhaetian Alps and the Lake of Constance.

Friedeburga, being sent to Metz for her marriage, took refuge in a church dedicated to St. Stephen, and, covering herself with a nun's veil, she knelt at the altar, and prayed to the saint who had first shed his blood for Christ to help her. The king, on hearing of this, came to the church with the nuptial robe and crown which had been intended for his bride; but she, on seeing him, clung to the altar. He, however, reassured her, and said: "I come here only to do thy will." Commanding the priests to bring her to him, he had her clothed in the nuptial robe and placed the crown on her head, saying: "Such as thou art there, adorned for my bridal, I yield thee

to the Bridegroom whom thou preferrest to me—to my Lord Jesus Christ." Then, taking her hand, he placed her before the altar, and left the church to mourn in secret over his loss. Such is the story told by Walafrid Strabo; but, considering that his father Theodoric was only 26 when he died, Sigebert, the eldest of the children whom Columban refused to bless, could hardly have been more than eleven years old at the time when this is supposed to have happened. I am afraid the Abbot of Reichenau was either a mendacious chronicler or an incorrigible romancer.

Ten years later, St. Gall received a deputation of six Irish monks from Luxeuil, who informed him of the desire of the community that he should return and rule over the abbey, the abbot Eustace having died. After some reflection, he declined the call, and continued his labours in Allemania until his death on 16th October, 646, by which time the whole province had become at least nominally Christian. Eustace was succeeded by Walbert or Waldebertus, also a disciple and companion of Columban, but both these men were Franks, not Scots.

The first of the monastic colonies of Luxeuil was at Lure, not far away. One of the Irish monks expelled with Columban in 610, a man advanced in years, and believed to be the elder brother of St. Gall, whose Celtic name of Dichul or Dichuil has been latinised into Deicolus (servant of God), was unable to proceed more than a few miles on the road to Besançon, and asked the permission of Columban to remain in the woods of Vepras.

This was given, and after a tearful parting he set out to find a hermitage in the woods. He met a swineherd driving his flock, who was astonished to see a tall stranger in monkish garb in the forest. "Who are you? whence come you? what seek you? what are you doing in this wild country without guide or companion?" he asked. "Be not afraid, my brother," replied the Scot, "I am a traveller and a monk; and I beg you for charity to shew me hereabouts a place where a man may live." The swineherd told him there was such a spot, but hesitated to shew him the way to it, lest his swine should stray in his absence; but Dichul said: "If thou do me this little favour, I answer for it that thou shalt not lose the very least of thy herd; my staff shall replace thee, and be swineherd in thy absence." So saying, he stuck his staff into the ground, and the swine gathered round it. Then the two set out through the forest to the spot of which the swineherd had spoken. Near this retreat was a little church served by a secular priest, and frequented by the peasants of the locality. The priest, fearing that Dichul would interfere with his living, told his flock that the monk was a magician, who had hid himself in the forest to practice his evil art, and that he had come at midnight to his chapel, under pretence of praying, and finding the doors closed, had opened them by his incantations. He also denounced Dichul to Weifhar, the lord of the place, and Weifhar ordered his arrest and punishment. But, before his orders could be carried out, Weifhar was himself stricken with mortal sickness; and his widow, Berthilde, made a

gift of all the land which the monk cared to have as a site for a monastery.

☩ One day, King Clotaire II was hunting in the forest, when a wild boar, pursued by the huntsmen, took refuge in the cell of Dichul, who, laying his hand upon its head, said: "Since thou comest to ask charity, thy life shall be spared." The king, when told of this, came himself to the cell, and, when he learned that the old saint was a disciple of Columban, he asked what kept him and the disciples he had gathered round him from starvation in that solitude. "It is written," said Dichul, "that nothing shall be lacking to those who fear God. We lead a poor life, but with the fear of God it suffices for us." Clotaire made a grant to the community of the royal forests, pasturage and fisheries in the neighbourhood, and so its prosperity was assured.

Soon afterwards, Dichul paid a visit to Rome in order to obtain a papal charter for the monastery. He died at Lure on 18th January, 625.

It was St. Dichul whom St. Columban asked why he was always smiling. His reply was: "Because no one can deprive me of my God."

Another Irish monk who left Luxeuil with Columban, but who did not follow him to Italy, was St. Urson or Ursicinus. That was not his real name, but it was given him by the people, who thought he was supported in his solitude by the bears. The little town of St. Ursanne, on the banks of the Doubs, in the heart of the Jura mountains, still perpetuates his name. It is said that a rich man of that locality sent for him on pretence of

wishing to hear him preach, and having made him drink wine, to which he was unaccustomed, and by which he was overcome, derided him as a drunkard and a hypocrite, and accused him as such to the people. Urson cursed the house of his perfidious host, and returned to his mountain solitude; but the number of those who resorted to him and embraced the monastic life, obliged him to leave the heights and to build a monastery on the banks of the river, where he established a hospital for the sick poor, keeping baggage-cattle to convey them from their homes among the mountains. After the death of St. Urson, the monastery was occupied by another colony from Luxeuil, led by Germain, a young noble of Treves, who also founded the abbey of Grandval.

Other colonies of Luxeuil were Fontenelle, Rebais, and Jumiéges; but they were not founded by Irish monks, though they kept alive the spirit of Columban.

The nunnery of Faremoutier was also founded by Burgundofara, sister of that Cagnoald who had been a monk at Luxeuil and the faithful companion of Columban during his mission in Helvetia, and who afterwards became bishop of Laon. Burgundofara was the daughter of a noble named Agneric; and she herself had been dedicated to God by St. Columban, though her father attempted to force her into marriage, which she resisted.

In that part of La Brie between Meaux and Jouarre, then covered by a vast forest, an Irish monk named Fiacre settled, having obtained from the Bishop of Meaux, to whom the forest belonged,

permission to cut down the wood which covered so much soil as he could surround with a ditch by one day's labour. The quantity of land thus enclosed makes one think that the ditch must either have been a very shallow affair, or that the monk had some assistance on which the bishop turned a blind eye.

Not far from this enterprising settler, another Scot named Fursey sought retirement from the fatigues of a life of preaching, and there founded the abbey of Lagny-sur-Marne.

Fursey was celebrated for his visions of heaven and hell, which Ozanam regards as among the poetic sources of the *Divina Commedia*, and which were related to Bede by an East Anglian monk of his community, who had heard Fursey narrate what he had seen, and seen him break out into profuse perspiration in winter at the bare recollection of the moving and terrifying trances which he had passed through. In the chief of these visions, which are abridged and not improved by Bede, Fursey was permitted to contemplate the punishments reserved for the most abominable sins of his time. Bede says:

“When he had been lifted up on high, he was ordered by the angels that conducted him, to look back upon the world. Upon which, casting his eyes downward, he saw, as it were, a dark and obscure valley underneath him. He also saw four fires in the air, not far distant from each other. Then asking the angels what fires those were, he was told they were the fires which would kindle and consume the world. One of them was of falsehood, when we do not fulfil that which we promised in baptism,

to renounce the devil and all his works. The next of covetousness, when we prefer the riches of the world to the love of heavenly things. The third of discord, when we make no difficulty to offend the minds of our neighbours even in needless things. The fourth of impiety, when we look upon it as no crime to rob and to defraud the weak. These fires, increasing by degrees, extended so as to meet one another, and, being joined, became an immense flame. When it drew near, fearing for himself, he said to the angel: 'Lord, behold the fire draws near me.' The angel answered, 'That which you did not kindle shall not burn you; for though this appears to be a great and terrible fire, yet it tries every man according to the merit of his works; for every man's concupiscence shall burn in the fire; for as every one burns in the body through unlawful pleasure, so when discharged of the body, he shall burn in the punishment which he has deserved.'¹

In the "Acts of St. Fursey," it is stated that he was born in Munster, in which province his father was a king; but Lanigan thinks he was more probably born in Connaught. Colgan (following a vellum manuscript belonging to a Cistercian monastery in the diocese of Rheims), says he was born in Cluainferta (Clonfert), that his father was Fintan, son of Finlog, King of South Munster, and that his mother was Gelgeis, daughter of Aedhfinn, King of Connaught. Bede says he was of noble blood, but much more noble in mind than in birth. He seems to have been educated in St. Brendan's monastery of Clonfert, and then to have been placed over a small community on an island in Lough Orbsen, called Inchiquin or Inisquin. Owing to the envy and disobedience of some of his monks, he

¹ *Historia Ecclesiastica*, Book III, chap. XIX.

asked leave to retire to a place called Rathmat or Rathmagh (Rathmuighe) near Lough Orbsen, which Colgan supposes to be identical with the place called Killfursa in his time in the deanery of Enachdown in the diocese of Tuam. Popular tradition claims the ruined church of Killursa, near the eastern shore of Lough Corrib in County Galway, as the abbey church of St. Fursey. It is said that his two brothers, Foilan and Ultan, there placed themselves under his rule and direction.

His first visions occurred in the year 627. From the time of those visions he seems to have resigned the administration of his monastery, and for a year he went forth as an itinerant preacher, to teach the Irish people the truths of God's word and to announce what he had heard and seen. Then he was again seized with bodily infirmity, and seemed almost lifeless; but the angel of the Lord appeared to him in spirit, and told him he should spend twelve years in the work of preaching. At the end of that time he withdrew with a few companions to a small island, and after spending some time there, he resolved on leaving Ireland altogether. With his two brothers he came to England about 637, and reached East Anglia, intending to carry on an itinerant ministry there, but one of his visions determined him to remain there some considerable time.

King Sigebert received him with great respect, and gave him a large tract of land in the woods and near the sea at Burghcastle, Suffolk, which was then called Cnobheresburh, where he built a monastery within the enclosure of the old Roman castle

of Garionum. The buildings and wealth of this foundation were afterwards much augmented by the king and nobles of East Anglia, and eventually King Sigebert himself abandoned his sceptre and entered it as a monk, the first among Anglo-Saxon kings to receive the tonsure.

Fursey occupied himself in preaching and missionary duties, and founded in East Anglia various double communities of monks and nuns; but, wishing to devote himself altogether to heavenly contemplation, he resigned the charge of the monastery and his missions to his brother Foilan and the priests Gobban and Dichull. In company with his brother Ultan, he lived for a year the life of an anchorite. Then, seeing East Anglia more and more ravaged by the incursions of the heathen under Penda, King of Mercia, he decreed the dissolution of his communities and departed to France. At the call of his people, King Sigebert came reluctantly forth from the monastery and assumed command of the army; but the East Angles were utterly routed, and Sigebert and his cousin Egric, who had succeeded him as king, fell in the battle.

According to Colgan, Fursey arrived in Gaul about 648 or 649, and was well received at the court of Clovis II, King of Neustria and Burgundy, at Perrone. Soon after, he paid a visit to Rome, and was consecrated a rural bishop (chorepiscopus) by Pope Martin I. Returning, he directed his course to Austrasia, and was welcomed to his court by the King, Sigebert II, brother to Clovis. Clovis was about ten years old when Fursey arrived in France, and his kingdom was ruled by the Mayor of the

Palace (Magister Palatii), Erchinoald or Erconwald, who was Fursey's chief patron. In 644 Fursey founded the monastery of Latinacium or Lagny, near Chelles. Erchinoald requested him to return to Perrone, and to build a house there. Having done so, he relinquished the government of the abbey of Lagny to his countryman St. Æmilian. He was on his way to visit his brothers in England when he was seized with sudden illness at the village of Macières, and there expired. Erchinoald claimed the saint's body, and caused it to be buried in the church he was then building in Perrone.

After the death of St. Fursey, his brothers Ultan and Foilan left England for the continent. According to one account, Foilan went to Rome to obtain the Pontifical Benediction from Pope Martin I, but Dr. Lanigan thinks that Foilan was so much occupied in Brabant up to the time of his death that he had no time to visit Rome. The brothers first went to Lagny, and then to Perrone to visit the tomb of Fursey. About this time Ituberga, widow of Pepin de Landen, Mayor over the Palace of Austrasia, with her daughter St. Gertrude, lived at Nivelles in Brabant, where a religious community of men, as well as of women, had been established, and the brothers applied for admission, and were received. Their virtues and talents so far recommended them to the notice of St. Gertrude, the Abbess of Nivelles, that Foilan was appointed to instruct those under her rule in psalmody and scripture, and the charge of a monastery which she founded at Fosse, nine miles from Namur, was confided to Ultan.

About the year 655, St. Foilan set out, with three

companions, on a visit to his brother at Fosse. On their way, while passing through the forest of Soignies, they were attacked by robbers and barbarously murdered for the sake of certain rich vessels which Foilan was carrying for the monastery at Fosse. As all were put to death, no news of their fate reached their friends. Hearing no news of St. Foilan at the time of his expected return, St. Gertrude sent a messenger to Ultan, that she might learn the cause of his brother's delay. Ultan, of course, could give no information; but on the following night he dreamed of having seen a white dove, with its wings dripping blood, and he began to fear the worst. Sending to St. Gertrude a relation of his dream, she, too, was filled with gloomy apprehension, and sent messengers in all directions; but the remains of the murdered monks were not found till the following January, seventy-seven days after the crime had been committed. The oratory of Roeux was built on the spot, and this afterwards gave rise to the Abbey of St. Foilan.

After the death of his brother, St. Ultan was transferred to the charge of the Abbey of Perrone, where he died about 680, and was buried at Fosse.

Among those Irishmen who had been associated with St. Fursey both in England and France, was St. Mauguil or Madelgisilus, who was present at his death, and performed the last rites. Instead of returning to Lagny, however, he went to Centule, and entered the Abbey founded by St. Riquier or Richarius, where he remained until in a dream an angel appeared to him and bade him betake himself to a solitary retreat at Monstrelet, six miles distant.

from Centule, where he lived the life of an anchorite. Falling ill, he was succoured just in time by another Irishman, named Vulgan, who decided to join him; and so together they lived in eremitical solitude until Vulgan died. St. Mauguil did not long survive his companion, dying in 685.

St. Caidoc and St. Fricor, according to Alcuin, entered Picardy from Ireland during the reign of Dagobert I (which began in 622), probably about thirty years after the arrival of St. Columban in France. The people of that part of France were then known as the Morini; and the Irish missionaries were ill-treated by them, and were about to leave Picardy when a young nobleman named Richarius, who lived at Centule, came to their aid, took them into his house for protection, and treated them with the greatest kindness. Under their teaching he confessed his sins and embraced the gospel, and erected the monastery of Centule about the year 627, afterwards becoming its abbot, while Caidoc and Fricor became monks under his rule, both dying there about 640.

A little later St. Erkembode came from the monastery of Sithiu at St. Omer, where he succeeded the venerable St. Bertin as Abbot in the year 717, to be Bishop of Thérouanne among the Morini. There he proved himself a true disciple of his Divine Master; "for," says one chronicler, "he consoled the poor and afflicted, while he watched and prayed incessantly . . . Thanks to the zeal and solicitude of the holy bishop, who had well cultivated the Lord's vineyard, and who had well employed the treasures of his Master, the fruits of salvation

increased day by day, and they were rapidly multiplied." After ruling his diocese for twenty-six years, he died on 12th April, 742, and his remains were placed in the Church of Notre-Dame, St. Omer, where they are still venerated.

This mention of St. Erkembode carries us over into the eighth century, and to the saints and scholars of that and the succeeding century the next lecture will be devoted.

Lecture III

“Constantinopolis florens nova Roma vocatur,
Moribus et muris Roma vetusta cadis,
Transiit imperium, mansitque superbia tecum,
Cultus avaritiae te nimium superat.”

JOHN SCOTUS ERIGENA.

Irish Scholars of the Eighth and Ninth Centuries

THE sixth and seventh centuries were the heroic age of Irish missionary enterprise. Columba, Aidan, Maildulf; Columban, Gall, Fursey; these were pioneers who "blazed the trail" for others who followed and entered into their labours. Poets and seers, they seem to us like brilliant meteors passing through the firmament in erratic fashion, and leaving an impression of supernatural forces which brook no control other than an inward inspiration which is proved to be divine by its astounding results.

Towards the end of the seventh century the chants of the bards had ceased, and the arena was opened for theological strife. The successors of the bards were the unmuzzled rhetoricians, who held forth in novel terms on the truths or the problems of the Catholic faith. But this new departure does not prevent there being for both bards and rhetoricians a common foundation of learning. Whether poets or theologians, they take the Greeks for models.

A more significant change is the gradual but completely successful encroachment of the Benedictine rule over the Irish foundations. In spite of the fact that in all the colonies of Luxeuil, including not only those already named, but also Leuconnais near Amiens (founded by St. Valery), Centule on the Somme (founded by St. Riquier), Sithiu (founded

by St. Omer), Remiremont (founded by Romaric), and Solignac (founded by St. Eligius), the rule of St. Columban was observed, we find in many that the rule of St. Benedict was placed side by side with it, then gradually substituted for it, until at length, at the Council of Autun in Burgundy in 670 or 674, which was presided over by St. Leger, who had himself lived at Luxeuil, 54 bishops being present, six canons of monastic discipline were laid down in which the observance of the rule of St. Benedict was enjoined upon all. St. Columban had only been dead fifty years, but even in his own foundations the Benedictine rule henceforth superseded his own. The explanation is to be found in the fact that the Benedictine rule was much more closely associated with the authority of the Roman see, although Benedict neither sought nor obtained during his lifetime the Papal sanction for his institution any more than Columban. But Gregory the Great had given the Benedictine rule his solemn approbation, and Boniface IV, in a council held at Rome in 610, had pronounced in its favour as the supreme monastic law. Add to that the moderation, prudence and humanity of the rule of St. Benedict, and one has sufficient explanation of the conversion of all the foundations due to the powerful missionary impulse of the Irish Apostle into Benedictine monasteries.

There were eight Religious Rules established in Ireland, and one of the strictest was the Rule of St. Maelruain, who in the year 769 founded a Church and Monastery at Tamlacht, or Tallaght, in County Dublin. It is known as the general Rule of the

Celidhé Dé, or Culdees, and contains a minute series of regulations for their lives, their prayers, their preachings, their conversations, their confessions, their communions, their ablutions, their fastings and abstinences, their sleep and their relaxations. The Rule has precepts for bishops, pastors, confessors, virgins and laymen. The Culdees of Ireland and Scotland exhibited the main characteristics of secular canons in their discipline. Like the canons they were an intermediate class between monks and secular priests. They adopted the discipline without the vows of monks, while they discharged the office of ministers in various churches. The celebrated St. Ængus the Culdee was a member of St. Maelruain's community, and is thought to have assisted him in the compilation of the "Martyrologium Tamlachtense" (Martyrology of Tallaght). St. Ængus composed about the year 800 a "Féilire," or Calendar of the Saints consisting of 365 quatrains, each quatrain commemorating one or more saints whose festival or festivals occur on a particular day of the year. Both these compilations have been added to and interpolated by later writers. The "Féilire" has been translated and edited by Dr. Whitley Stokes.

About the beginning of the eighth century a monk of Iniskeltra named Coelan or Caolan wrote a Life of St. Brigid in Latin Hexameter verse. It is prefaced with a metrical prologue descriptive of Ireland, which is said to have been written by St. Donatus, the Irish Bishop of Fiesole, and begins:—

*"Finibus occiduis describitur optima tellus,
Nomine et antiquis Scotia scripta libris.*

Insula dives opum, gemmarum vestis et auri;
 Commoda corporibus, aere Sole, solo.
 Melle fluit, pulchris et lacteis Scotia campis,
 Vestibus atque armis frugibus, arte, viris."

These lines have been thus translated by Thomas Moore:

"Far westward lies an Isle of ancient fame,
 By Nature blessed, and Scotia is her name,
 Enrolled in books—exhaustless is her store
 Of veiny silver and of golden ore.
 Her fruitful soil for ever teems with wealth,
 With gems her waters and her air with health;
 Her verdant fields with milk and honey flow,
 Her woolly fleeces vie with virgin snow.
 Her waving furrows float with bearded corn,
 And arts and arms her envied sons adorn."¹

Foremost among Irish scholars of the eighth century is St. Virgil, Abbot of Aghaboe, also called Fergil the Geometer, who went to the continent in 745, finished the work begun by St. Boniface in Bavaria and died Bishop of Salzburg. King Pepin having desired to know him, made him come to his court; and a chronicler, Wiguleus Hundius, tells us that the king, admiring more every day the marvellous erudition of Virgil, kept him near him for two whole years before permitting him to return to his flock.

Virgil was, in fact, a true apostle of learning, who understood how to constrain religion to ratify the decrees of knowledge, when, among the Franks, the common judgment placed knowledge so far below religious feeling.

¹ *History of Ireland*, vol. i, pp. 300-1.

The papal letters which canonised Virgil are of the year 1233. They served then to consecrate the homage of popular piety. But that was a tardy consecration. When all the Bavarian people, following the teaching of Virgil, proclaimed their respect for that eminent doctor, by including him among the saints, the Archbishop of Mainz, Boniface, and Pope Zachary, sent him before a Council as the author of a perverse and criminal doctrine, namely, for having, on the evidence of the ancient Greeks, affirmed the existence of dwellers at the Antipodes, "in defiance of God and of his own soul."¹

One must not forget to mention after St. Virgil, St. Declan and St. Alto, who shared the perils and the glory of his mission in Bavaria, and Master Dobdan, nicknamed "the Greek," first Bishop Coadjutor of Salzburg, and then Bishop of Chiemsee, who opened in the latter place a public school, and drew to it legions of auditors, "et agmina discentium quam plurima habuit."

Another eighth century Irish missionary was St. Albuin, monk of Iona and apostle of Thuringia, who was consecrated Bishop of Frislar.

The ranks of the martyrs of the eighth century include St. Rumold, an Irish bishop, martyred near Mechlin in 775; and St. Maelrubha, who settled at Abercrossan (Applecross), in Scotland in 673, from whence he evangelised the greater part of the Isle of Skye, and was martyred on 21st April, 722.

¹ "De perversa autem et iniqua doctrina quam contra Deum et animam suam locutus est, si clarificatum fuerit eum ita confiteri quod alius mundus et alii homines sub terra sint, hunc, accito concilio, ab Ecclesia pelle sacerdotii honore privatum."—*Letter of Zachary to Boniface.*

To the same century belong Colgu or Coelchu the Wise, Cruindmelus and Malrachanus, clever grammarians.

Coelchu, who died in 794, was the supreme moderator of one of the great schools of Ireland, Clonmacnoise. Alcuin speaks of him as his master and father,¹ so it is probable that he was for a time a student at Clonmacnoise. One day, it is said, Coelchu was travelling on foot, carrying his wallet, in which his most precious treasures, his books, were contained. Another traveller met him, and greeted him with a respectful familiarity, and soon, to relieve the bowed shoulders of the venerable scholar, loaded himself with the heavy wallet. This obliging companion was St. Peter. Such is the Irish legend.² The popes suspected and sometimes cursed the profane learning; but, behold, St. Peter joins the opposition against the Popes.³

A very remarkable Prayer of St. Coelchu is to be found in the *Leabhar Buidhe Lecain* (the *Yellow Book of Lecain*), a manuscript of the fourteenth century, kept in the Library of Trinity College, Dublin. A copy, belonging to Professor Eugene O'Curry, is preserved among his manuscripts at the Catholic University, Dublin.

Nothing is certainly known of Cruindmelus, nor of Malrachanus, but some of their writings are found in the parchments of the ninth century, and the

¹ Ussher, *Epist. Hibern. Sylloge*, No. 18.

² Colgan, *Acta SS. Hiberniae*, vol. i, pp. 378-9.

³ In the *Book of Clonmacnoise* it is St. Paul who relieved Coelchu of his satchel.

sureness and breadth of their knowledge proves conclusively that they are Irish.

Malrachanus, versed in all the subtleties of grammar,¹ quotes frequently Donatus and Virgil of Toulouse. But what is particularly Irish in his method, is that he always goes from the Greek to the Latin, and, when explaining in turn the processes of the two languages, he teaches them both at once by ingenious and subtle comparisons.

Cruindmelus expounds to his pupils the rules of Latin prosody. The hatred of the Roman doctors for the ancient poets is well-known. St. Ouen, in his *Life of St. Eloi*, calls them in round words, scoundrels. Odo of Cluny treats them no better when he compares Virgil to a beautiful vase, in the interior of which frightful reptiles squirm. The Irish teachers never have any such scruples. This is the beginning of Cruindmelus:

“Discite me, pueri, versus (qui) scribere vultis;
Nam veterum rite carmina prisca sequor”;

and, in order to fulfil the engagement undertaken in this exordium, he quotes Sedulius or Prosper less often than Virgil. The borrowings which he makes from the grammarians are still more interesting, inasmuch as they reveal to us the guides and counsellors of his rare experience. Besides Donatus, Priscian and Virgil of Toulouse, they are Sergius, Pompey, Honoratus, Maximian, Paulinus, Theodorus,

¹ *Ars Malrachani*, MS de Saint-Germain des Prés, No. 1188. This incomplete work begins with the words: “Verbum est pars orationis, cum tempore et persona, sine casu.” That which remains of it treats of the verb, the accidents, the moods, the genders, the number, the figures, the persons and the conjugation.

Palemon and Maurius Servius.¹ If we question an Italian or Gallic doctor of the same century, or of the century following, concerning these grammarians, we shall find that he knows only Priscian and Donatus, and his didactic competence is not superior to his erudition.

The eighth century ends. Charlemagne reigns over the whole of France; Italy salutes him as the heir of the Caesars, and his protecting or avenging arm extends from the confines of Saxony to the southern side of the Pyrenees. At the height of his glory, at the summit of his power, he launches an enterprise more difficult than the subduing of the Moors or the Saxons. With that adventurous and superb confidence which never measures the obstacles before they present themselves, he decrees the restoration of the antique learning. To employ an expression of Alcuin, he wishes to found a new Athens.

Pupils were not lacking. Charlemagne himself having resolved to be included in the company of the studious, who would not have been eager to find a place at the side of the most glorious Emperor? But it was much more difficult to find teachers. Italy furnished Paul Diacre and Peter of Pisa, literary men of some renown. Theodulfus came from the borders of Septimania, in order to be the Pindar of the Court, of which the Anglo-Saxon

¹ Cruindmelus, *De metrica ratione pauca*, MS. de Saint-Germain des Prés, No. 1188. This volume comes from the Monastery of Corbie, where the Irish had anciently penetrated. The date of this MS. is not, like others, uncertain. It is of the ninth century. Like the treatise of Malrachanus, this of Cruindmelus is incomplete.

Alcuin was the Horace. The erudite were sent by Ireland.

Thus Ireland, alone spared by the barbarians, is especially charged with the education of the barbarians; and, transmitting to the new world the traditions of the ancient world, she comes to urge them to model themselves on the past.

The Latin which could have been understood by a Roman of the Augustan epoch, had become by this time almost a sealed language to the inhabitants of Western Europe. Hallam, writing of this period, says that

“the revolution of language had now gone far enough to render Latin unintelligible without grammatical instruction. Alcuin and others who, like him, endeavoured to keep ignorance out of the Church, were anxious, we are told, to restore orthography; or, in other words, to prevent the written Latin from following the corruptions of speech.”

It is when we bear this in mind that the literary work of Charlemagne, his encouragement of schools, Gallo-Roman or Irish, and his patronage of learning, assume their true proportions. He had many obstacles to contend with. Since the end of the fifth century there had been many changes in mind and manners among the western nations. The devastating brutality of the Merovingians had submerged the light of learning in Gaul even more completely than the Lombards submerged it in Italy, and the earlier Saxons and Danes in England. Nevertheless, in the midst of all these revolutions, Rome did not cease to labour to regain the empire of the world, and by her constant efforts a certain

order was established; a certain peace, founded on servitude of conscience, had replaced the disorder and turbulent confusion which had followed the barbarian conquest. There existed a Roman orthodoxy, but its domination had not then extended to Ireland. That which still dominated Ireland was Hellenism, the Alexandrian Hellenism, with its learned subtlety, its wrangling and rash dialectic, and its enthusiasm for liberty. I have already noted the contrariety of these two tendencies. It shone out much more clearly when the representatives of both met each other in the same theatre.

That theatre was set up by Charlemagne in the year 782. He called it the School of the Palace. Let us in imagination follow thither the crowd of princes and princesses, warriors and clerks. There the Latin and the Greek masters occupy rival chairs, and we shall soon hear them contradict and attack one another. That will be their prelude to serious hostilities. Later on they will proceed to outlaw each other.

One of the biographers of Charlemagne, the Monk of St. Gall, who has been identified with Notker Balbulus, tells us in naïve terms of the arrival of two Irishmen at the court of Austrasia. The two travellers set up their stall in the open market, not exposing for sale any merchandise, but in order to announce in that manner to the crowd of astonished people which the singularity of their costume attracted: "If anyone desires wisdom, let him come to us and receive it; we have it to sell." The magnanimous Charles, always a lover of wisdom, having heard tell of these strangers, summoned them into his presence,

questioned them closely, using the Latin tongue, in which language they replied, marvelled at their knowledge, and entertained them for a time in his household. When he asked them what payment they would expect, they answered:

“We require proper houses and accommodation, pupils with ingenious minds, and really anxious to learn; and, as we are in a foreign country where we cannot conveniently work for our bread, we shall require food and raiment; we want nothing more.”¹

“Afterwards, when he was constrained to warlike enterprises,” says the chronicler,

“he enjoined the one, by name Clement, to abide in Gaul; to whom he entrusted boys of the most noble, middle and lowest ranks, in goodly number, and ordained that victual should be provided them according as they had need, with fitting houses to dwell in. The other Albinus, he dispatched into Italy, and appointed him the monastery of Saint Austin beside the Ticinian city,² that there such as were willing to learn, might gather unto him.”³

That tale, perhaps, does not strictly conform to the truth. Later it was embellished with glosses which departed much further from it. But it is certain that there were several Irishmen among the heads of the Palatine School, and that they exercised a great influence there. The most celebrated among them was the grammarian Clement, called “the Hibernian.”

It was long believed that there remained no work

¹ *The Story of Ancient Irish Civilisation*, page 59, P. W. Joyce, LL.D.

² Pavia.

³ Acts of Charles the Great, quoted by R. L. Poole, *Medieval Thought and Learning*, p. 15.

of this Clement. However, the *Catalogus librorum Angliae et Hiberniae*, published at Oxford in 1697, makes the following mention, among the manuscripts of Vossius: "Excerpta e Grammaticis antiquis a Clemente quodam collecta." But this indication appears very vague, and likely to be delusive. More precise information has been furnished by Sinner. In his catalogue of the manuscripts of Berne, Vol. I, p. 345, Sinner designates: "Clementis Scoti de partibus orationis"; but after an incomplete manuscript, which lacks the beginning and the end. However, Sinner quotes some sentences of it. This is the first: "Major populus et magis egregius artibus pollens Tusci fuere quidem natura linguae suae," etc. But a patient enquiry, ultimately rewarded by success, enabled M. Hauréau in 1861 to find that phrase in the MS. No. 1188 of the Archives of Saint-Germain, folio 131, verso, in the middle of an anonymous dissertation on the Parts of the Discourse, entitled: "Ecloge de libris Grammaticorum." Thus we possess this work of Clement the existence of which until then had seemed doubtful, and the manuscripts of Vossius, Berne and Saint-Germain are three copies of the same work. It is a dialogue, full of difficult questions and of replies which reveal a fund of knowledge extraordinary for the times. The erudition of the author is sufficiently demonstrated by the great number of authorities whom he invokes; for, not to mention the unedited grammarians, he quotes again and again Comminianus, Maximianus, Papirinus, Sulpicius, Æneas, Servilius, Lucanus, Gelvidius, Etherius, Praetorius, Hilarius, Glengus and Galbungus. As to his method, it is still more surprising. He knows Greek, and he knows

it so well that he reproduces in Greek letters some verses of Homer. Further, he declares that in all knowledge the Greeks are his masters, and that he marches under their banner: "Graeci quibus in omni doctrina doctoribus utimur." Finally, this prolix dissertation on the Parts of the Discourse, in which Clement appears to have condensed all his knowledge, is a constant comparison between the common principles and the different idioms of the Greek and Latin languages.

If Clement is a philosopher according to the modern acceptation of that word, he does not show it in his Grammar. One may search in vain for some philosophic sentence. However, there is reason to believe that at the Court of Charlemagne he offended more than one ear by the freedom of his discourse and by the naïvete of his Hellenism. Theodulfus, Bishop of Orleans, the principal poet of the Court, enumerates among the enemies of his glory a Scottish teacher, a great scholar, but, he adds, a great pedant withal, whose disputatious humour everyone at the Court feared; and he curses him in these extremely lively terms:

"Res dira, hostis atrox, hebes horror, pestis acerba,
Litigiosa lues, res fera; grande nefas,
Res fera, res turpis," &c., &c.¹

¹ "Il (Théodulfe) avait à la cour de Charlemagne un rival, un véritable ennemi, qu'il poursuit de fréquentes invectives. Sans le nommer (c'était Clement l'Hibernien), il le désigne comme un perfide logicien, formé, pour le malheur des honnêtes gens, dans les écoles de l'Irlande; et, quand il parle de leurs mutuelles discordes, il dit:—

Ante canis lepores alet, aut lupus improbus agnos . . .

Quam Geta cum Scotto pia pacis foedera jungat;

ou bien encore:—

Attamen arma minans Scottus jam praelia tentat,

Gaetulumque caput ense ferire volens."

HURÉAU, *Singularités Historiques et Littéraires*, p. 39.

To the imprecations of Theodulfus are joined the more measured but not less remarkable remonstrances of Alcuin. Alcuin, born in Great Britain, of an Anglo-Saxon family, was a pupil of the School of York; and, like all the people of his country, he entertained towards the Scots a sentiment which was not far removed from aversion.¹ After having for some time directed the Palace School, he had retired to the monastery of St. Martin of Tours, where he continued to train pupils. But grievous news reached him in that retreat. He learned that the Emperor and his courtiers had been seduced by the brilliant scholarship of the Irish, and that the influence of those doctors had become preponderant in the School which he had left. It grieved him; it alarmed him; so that he wrote to King Charles himself: "On my departure, I left Latins with you. I do not know who has replaced them with *Egyptians*." That classification is at once ingenious and precise. The most learned city of Egypt was Alexandria; and the heresy of the Scots on the subject of Easter, their sophistic pride, their method, their doctrines,—in a word, all their Hellenism, was quite in the Alexandrian tradition. So that this contemporary of Clement and his most illustrious rival here calls the Irish teachers by their true name. Their spiritual home is Egypt. They are Egyptians introduced by guile into a School of Latin foundation. And the Anglo-Saxon, in the fervour of his zeal for the Latin cause, demands that they be

¹ "There was clearly a repugnance between the plain, solid, English temperament, and the more adventurous speculative genius of their neighbours."—R. L. POOLE, *Medieval Thought and Learning*, p. 20.

driven out. However, they will not be got rid of yet.

The ninth century began for the Scots a long period of domestic troubles, inasmuch as the Danes were at last established in their country. But at the same time, and for the same cause, the emigrations multiplied. The Irish teachers are propagating in every place both their learning and their doctrines. Everywhere they are listened to, they are admired, they have honours heaped upon them.

Are we to include among the number of these illustrious emigrants the monk Dicuil, who wrote in A.D. 825 a complete geography of the world as known to his generation, entitled: *De mensura orbis terrae?* It is supposed that this Dicuil was Abbot of Pahlacht; but there is nothing to prove that he had left Ireland. In Glastonbury in the ninth century, Irish masters taught with great success, and among their students was St. Dunstan. William of Malmesbury says that Dunstan studied diligently arithmetic, geometry, astronomy and music under the Irish teachers.

To the same period belong the interpreter Claudius who has left commentaries on nearly all the books of Holy Scripture, and the mathematician Gildas, eulogized by Bale and Ussher. It is not known whether Claudius and Gildas travelled. But one sees, wandering more or less from the Irish coast, the grammarian Dungal, authorised by Charlemagne to instruct the youth of Pavia, refuting the errors of Claudius of Turin, and writing, in order to reassure the alarmed Emperor, a letter on the eclipse of the

sun of the year 810;¹ St. Killac, Abbot of Kildare, and the heroic Abbot Blaithmac, who went to instruct the Alban Scots; St. Ernulf and St. Buo, who evangelised Iceland; the Abbot Indract and the monks Dubslann, Macbeth and Malmunn, who visited and catechised England; the anchorite Eusebius, and the blessed Marcellus, together with the Bishops Erlulfus and Cortilla, who travelled all over Germany.² Erlulfus was Bishop of Verden near Bremen, and obtained the crown of martyrdom, though the date of his death is not certainly known.

It is in Gaul more especially that we meet these pilgrim doctors. Charlemagne protected them even against Alcuin. Lewis the Debonair had an equal estimation for them. Charles the Bald invited them to his table, treated them as boon companions, and even accorded to them, we are assured, the right of familiar criticism.

Here is the testimony of Heiric of Auxerre, come back from the Palace School, and relating, in the dedication to Charles the Bald of his poem on the Life of St. Germain, what he has seen there. "What shall I say," he says, "of Ireland, which, scorning the perils of the sea, has descended on our shores, with almost her whole troop of philosophers?" It is clear that this language is hyperbolic. Nevertheless it is certain that during the reign of Charles

¹ Dungal is said to have brought to the Continent the autophony of the Monastery of Bangor, written about the year 680, in order to save it from destruction by the Danes, and which was found in the Library of the Monastery of Bobbio in the seventeenth century, and, together with the Bobbio Missal, the date of which is c. 911 A.D., removed to Milan by Cardinal Borromeo.

² Colgan, *Acta Sanctorum Hiberniae*, vol. i, p. 256.

the Bald, a fairly large number of Hibernians appeared in Gaul, and we much regret that we know only three of them, Helias, Mannon and John Scotus Erigena.

The authors of the *Gallia Christiana*, do not mention the schools where Master Helias taught; but they testify at least, that he was wonderfully successful, "in Gallia mirifice scholas rexit." His merit was rewarded. He died Bishop of Angoulême.¹ Must we conclude, on the witness of an old man, quoted by the brothers Sainte-Marthe, that the learned doctor Heiric was the favourite disciple of Helias? That ancient authority, in setting out the names of the first regents of the Schools of Gaul, has committed some evident errors; but in that which relates to Heiric and Helias he has not perhaps been ill-informed. The glosses of Heiric, enamelled with Greek words translated with considerable freedom, are sufficient to convince us that he had studied under an Irish master.

Mannon was Provost of the Abbey of Saint-Oyand de Joux, which later took the name of St. Claude, in the diocese of Lyons, and he died there on 16th August, 880.²

A manuscript of the ninth century, numbered 2832 in the Royal Archives at the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, contains some poems of Dracontius, St. Cyprian, Drepanius, Vandelbertus and Theodulfus; and on the first leaf of the manuscript we read "Voto bonae memoriae Mannonis. Liber ad sepulcrum sancti Augendi oblatus"; a work presented by

¹ *Gallia Christiana*, vol. ii, col. 983.

² *Ibid.*, vol. iv, col. 246.

Mannon to the Monastery of Saint-Oyand. We find the same note in a collection of the Library of the School of Medicine of Montpellier, under the number 157, and in a manuscript of Troyes which contains the commentaries of Florus, Bishop of Lyons, on the Epistles of St. Paul. Mannon, towards the end of his life, bequeathed all his books to the Abbey of Saint-Oyand, where, in the absence of the titular Abbot, the Archbishop Remi occupied the first cloistral dignity. One regrets not to have other information to give concerning a man who seems to have enjoyed so great renown. Let us hope that a further search will be happier in result, and that in the libraries of Ireland, hitherto so negligently explored, another Ussher will some day exhume some work of Mannon. While awaiting this discovery, John Scotus Erigena, to whom our concluding lecture is devoted, tells us at least what was the character and what were the opinions of the Irish philosophers of the ninth century. Had we no other information than that contained in his own books it would suffice us.

Before passing on, however, I ought to mention Sedulius Scottus, a wandering Irish scholar who was one of the foremost Latin poets of the ninth century. Professor W. P. Ker says of him:

"Sedulius the Irishman has left traces of his work in many quarters, including a Greek Psalter written by his hand. His poems,¹ of the familiar occasional sort, are distinguished by something personal and characteristic. He does not forget his own land; victories of the Irish over the Northmen are recorded; he knows something of Wales, also."²

¹ Poet. Carol., ed. Traube, III. 1. ² *The Dark Ages*, p. 160.

Another Irish poet, known as "Hibernicus Exul," whom Prof. Ker suggests may have been Dungal of Pavia, was also prominent at the Court of Charlemagne.¹ His theme was the exploits of the Emperor, which he treated in epic fashion.

¹ *The Dark Ages*, pp. 155, 216.

Lecture IV

“La théologie de Jean Scot, héritière de plus grandes conceptions de l’Eglise d’Orient, ne convenait pas au Christianisme du moyen âge. Elle ouvrait à la pensée religieuse d’immenses perspectives; elle répandait de hautes clartés sur les problèmes les plus difficiles de la métaphysique chrétienne; elle continuait les traditions de ces magnifiques génies, qui avaient élevé le Christianisme au sommet de la philosophie elle-même. Mais telle lumière était trop éclatante pour les faibles yeux de la scolastique.”— VACHEROT, *Histoire de l’école d’Alexandrie*, III, p. 81.

John Scotus Erigena

It is the dictum of Mr. W. B. Yeats that "Ireland has produced but two men of religious genius: Johannes Scotus Erigena, who lived a long time ago, and Bishop Berkeley, who kept his Plato by his Bible; and Ireland has forgotten both."¹

If by "religious genius" Mr. Yeats means speculative genius, I would agree; but *religion* owes more to St. Columba and St. Columban than to Erigena or Berkeley, and those apostolic men were not inferior in genius to their philosophic compatriots.

Johannes Scotus Erigena, or, more properly, Eriugena,² whom Professor Henry Bett styles "the loneliest figure in the history of European thought," was born somewhere in Ireland between 800 and 815 A.D. At that time the Eastern and Western Churches were drifting apart. Erigena was the one great thinker of the West in that dreary epoch, and all his sympathies, as of so many of his countrymen at that time, were with the East. He was a Hellenist, and his affinities were with the Neo-Platonists, and, curiously enough, with the modern idealists like Hegel. We know nothing of his early life, but we find him at the Court of Charles the Bald in Paris,

¹ *The Dial*, February 1926.

² He was known to his contemporaries as Ioannes Scottus, Scotus, or Scotigena; but in his translation of Dionysius he designates himself Ioannes Ierugena. The derivation is probably from Eriu, Erin or Ierne. There are also contemporary references to him as Ioannes Sophista and Ioannes Sapiens.

before 847, and we know that he became a teacher and probably regent of the Palace School. We also know that he was in early life the friend of Prudentius, Bishop of Troyes, and that he was called in by Hincmar of Rheims to confute Gottscalc in the Predestinarian controversy. Professor W. P. Ker says:

"They wanted a skilled apologist; they found one whose help, like that of the magic sword in certain fairy tales, might be dangerous for the side that used it. They asked him to oppose the excessive cruelties of predestination, as maintained by Gottscalc. But he would not be limited to the requisite amount of controversy, and before the Irish philosopher could be checked, he had refuted Sin and Hell."¹

The same authority says also:

"His translation of Dionysius on *The Celestial Hierarchy*, besides its importance for theology, had a large imaginative influence, culminating long afterwards in Dante's *Paradiso*. His great work on *The Division of Nature* has been appreciated as the one purely philosophical argument of the Middle Ages . . . Neo-Platonist he is called, but in his case the name does not stand for eclectic oriental work; his mind is as clear as Berkeley's, with a vastly greater and more articulate system to explain and develop. For literature, the merit of his writing is that it expresses his meaning without hurry or confusion, and that his meaning, whatever its philosophical value, is certainly no weak repetition of commonplaces. It is to be noted that he takes a different view of Dialectic from what sufficed the ordinary professors. Dialectic is not a human contrivance. Dialectic is concealed in Nature by the Author of all the Arts, and discovered by those who

¹ *The Dark Ages*, W. P. Ker, p. 162. See also R. L. Poole, *Medieval Thought and Learning*, pp. 46, 47.

look for it wisely. The proper study of Dialectic is the study of Reality. Erigena is discontented with abstractions. The current formulas of the schools are not enough for him, in his Platonic quest for the Real. On the other hand, he saves himself from the more dangerous temptation of mysticism; he is not swallowed up in blind ecstasy. The world in its fulness is not dismissed as a shadow. He is rational, logical, though with a livelier and more imaginative logic than the common. If, like the mystics, he speaks of the ineffable Unity, he has also, like Lucretius, an exultation in the welling energy of the world and its innumerable variety. . . . Although he makes little show of it, he was touched in imagination by the old poetic faith in the Soul of the World. He quotes, after a passage from the *Timaeus*, the famous lines from the *Aeneid*—'Spiritus intus alit'—which were taxed by Gibbon for their too close resemblance to 'the impious Spinoza,' and Erigena certainly cannot escape the same condemnation."¹

Erigena is not, in fact, content to be a realist; he is that to excess, like Spinoza. After having affirmed the substantial unity of all beings, he recognises that they differ in some things, but he goes on to declare that all difference is simply superficial. Nevertheless he is not a pagan. With Christians he proclaims the sole Author of all creatures, personified under three separate hypostases. He holds Catholic doctrine as a symbolic approximation to truth, but he emphasises the super-essential reality of the unknowable God, the eternity of the process of creation, and the non-existence of evil in the true Neo-Platonic fashion. Plato is one of his masters, and he interprets him in such a way as to make one believe that he has had more than one conversation

¹ *The Dark Ages*, pp. 161-3.

with him under the Academic shades. He knows Greek, and, as M. Hauréau points out, he does not know it after the same fashion as Bede, Alcuin, Heiric, Remi of Auxerre, and many other apprentice Hellenists of the Latin schools, who, because they have learnt some Greek words in intercourse with Irish teachers, make great parade of them, and afterwards betray by the most foolish errors the imperfection of their knowledge. He knows Greek as well as a learned man of the sixteenth century, and his translation of the works of the pseudo-Dionysius is still to-day available to us.¹

It was Charles the Bald who ordered Erigena to translate the works of "Dionysius the Areopagite." Paris was in close proximity to the Abbey of St. Denis, whose fame had attracted thither the dying Pepin; and it was this that gave Erigena the first opportunity for making his great gifts known. The belief that the foundation dated from the Areopagite, one of the few converts made by St. Paul at Athens, was then universally held, and when writings attributed to him were brought thither, their contents aroused curiosity, and Erigena was the translator who was chosen to reveal them. The translation may or may not have satisfied the Abbot and the royal patron, but the influence of the books on the mind of the translator was enormous. The works ascribed to Dionysius placed him in possession of a metaphysical system ostensibly founded on works of Plato which were unknown to Western Christendom, and whose speculative fearlessness was equally foreign to its spirit.

¹ *Singularités Historiques et Littéraires*, p. 31.

Erigena also translated the *Ambigua* of Maximus the Confessor, the secretary of the Emperor Heraclius who became Abbot of Chrysopolis, which work is a commentary on Dionysius and Gregory Nazianzen. He also wrote a life of Boethius. His theological views were condemned at the Synod of Valence in 855,¹ and at the Synod of Langres in 859.

After the battle of Ethandun in 878, when Alfred decisively beat the Danes, Erigena came to England, and taught at the Abbey of Malmesbury, where he is believed to have been stabbed to death by his pupils with their pens, "a pueris quos docebat graphiis perfossus;"—a melancholy end for so great a man.

His character is indicated in a letter of Anastasius the Papal Librarian: "Ioannem . . . Scotigenam, virum quem auditu comperi per omnia sanctum."²

Prudentius of Troyes describes him as "nullis ecclesiasticae dignitatis gradibus insignitum."³ He is described by William of Malmesbury as "perexilis corporis" and "ira praeproperus."⁴

In his admirable monograph: "Johannes Scotus Erigena: a Study in Medieval Philosophy," Professor Bett discusses in detail the authorities which Erigena used, and comes to the conclusion that the two most important were Gregory of Nyssa and Augustine;

¹ The Bull issued by this council contemptuously describes his arguments as "ineptas quaestiunculas et aniles pene fabulas, Scotorumque pultes" (Scots' porridge). Cap. vi, Mansi, conc. 15. 6D.

² Ussher, *Epist. Sylloge* 65.

³ *De Praedestinatione*, c. 3.

⁴ *Gesta Pontificum and Ep. ad Petrum*.

indeed, he maintains that he "got all the Neo-platonist substance of his philosophy out of Augustine."¹ Much of the substance of his thought, however, was derived from the pseudo-Dionysius, though he was a Neo-Platonist before he knew anything about the Areopagite.² Many of the characteristic features of his teaching can be traced back to the influence of Proclus, and in some respects his thought more resembles Origen than Augustine. His theory of the restitution of all things is almost entirely from Origen. Mr. Bett agrees with Mr. R. L. Poole that Erigena's knowledge of the *Timæus*, the only dialogue of Plato with which he was directly acquainted, came to him through the Latin version of Chalcidius.³

Erigena's influence is to be recognised later in some of the more obscure and extreme heresies which were denounced by Albertus Magnus and Thomas Aquinas. He and his master, Dionysius, may also be the source from which the great Flemish mystic Ruysbroeck, the German mystics Eckhart and Tauler, and the authors of the *Theologia Germanica* drank of the great stream of Neo-Platonism. If so, it was through them that he influenced Boehme, and possibly Hegel.

The *De Divisione Naturæ*, which was dedicated to Wulfadus, tutor of Charles the Bald's son Carloman, Canon of Rheims, and later Archbishop of Bourges, forms a complete philosophy of existence, and it professes to be a Christian philosophy. He says:

"Philosophy, the study of wisdom, is not one thing and religion another. What is it to treat of

¹ *Johannes Scotus Erigena*, p. 160. ² *Ibid*, p. 159. ³ *Ibid*, p. 166.

philosophy, if it is not to expound the precepts of true religion, according to which we humbly adore, and we pursue from mystery to mystery, the Sovereign and First Cause of all things, God! Whence it follows that the true philosophy is the true religion, and, reciprocally, that the true religion is the true philosophy."¹

He says elsewhere:

"Authority proceeds from correct reason, and in no wise reason from authority. But all authority of which the decrees are not approved by the reason is an authority without value; while correct reason, established as an impregnable fortress behind the rampart of its own forces, has no need to be protected by the support of any authority."²

He continues:

"I am not greatly terrified by authority. I do not fear so much the fury of unintelligent minds that I hesitate to proclaim on the housetops that which my reason unfolds clearly and demonstrates with certitude."³

The freedom of these declarations is surprising. Erigena has more right to the title of the first Protestant than Shaw's *St. Joan*. These utterances are, according to the Roman Church, so many blasphemies. To hear them repeated, it is necessary to go down the ladder of the centuries, and to travel as far as the Philosopher of Malmesbury, Thomas Hobbes.

M. Degérando says:

"It is very curious to see, in the midst of that general ignorance, at a time when the sphere of learning was so narrow, a man, a single man, suddenly

¹ *De Divina Praedestinatione*, c. i.

² *De Divisione Naturae*, book i, c. 71.

³ *Ibid*, book i, p. 39.

bursting into the highest region of abstract speculation; it is curious to see the philosophy of the Middle Age begin with an enterprise so daring and an array of such singular conceptions. . . . The appearance of such a man, at such an epoch, is, at all events, an extraordinary phenomenon; one would as soon expect to come across a monument of art standing up in the midst of the desert sands."¹

Professor Bett boldly takes up the cudgels in defence of Erigena. He says:

"If there is to be a complete Christian Philosophy at all it must be monistic. . . It must give some rationale of the beginning of evil and the end of it; of the first and final relation to God of all existence; of the creation and consummation of all things."²

That Erigena attempts to do, but not with entire success. The charge of pantheism has been brought against him. M. Hauréau says:

"Sa doctrine est précisément le dernier mot de l'audace antique. Ce n'est pas la doctrine d'Aristote; il la méprise; ni même celle de Platon; il va bien au delà. C'est à la lettre celle de Proclus, le panthéisme arrogant, sans mesure et sans frein."³

But, as Mr. Bett points out, a philosophic attempt to reduce the universe to one, and to conceive of God as all in all, must

"at least look pantheistic; it must seem at first sight to abolish evil, to imperil personality, and to volatilise the world. How could it be otherwise?"⁴

¹ *Histoire comparée des systèmes de philosophie*, t. iv, p. 353.

² *Johannes Scotus Erigena*, p. 89.

³ *Singularités historiques et littéraires*, p. 34.

⁴ *Johannes Scotus Erigena*, p. 89.

If Erigena's system implies pantheism, he goes on to say, it is pantheism

“of an entirely distinct and peculiar type. For while it holds that God is in the world and in all that exists, it also holds that He is above all and beyond all. And, if it teaches that God is wholly present to His creation, in its totality and in its parts, it also teaches that nevertheless He abides wholly in Himself.”¹

The treatise *On the Division of Nature*, consists of five books in the form of a dialogue between Master and Pupil. The first book deals with God as the Source of all, creating and not created; the second the Primordial Causes intermediary between God and His creation, created and creating; the third with the Nature of the Universe, created and not creating; and the fourth and fifth books with the Return of all things to God, as the End of all.

Erigena surveys the universe sub specie æternitas as the timeless process of the self evolution of the Divine Trinity, which in creating all things is in itself marvellously created. The created universe is thus an eternal moment in the Divine life, and creation is the unfolding through the operation of the Holy Spirit of the “Primordial Causes,” the Divine Ideas, whose unity is the Logos, the Eternal Son, as in Clement of Alexandria. The creation is thus in a sense co-essential and co-eternal with God. The primordial causes, of which the Logos is the unity and aggregate, are a kind of medium between God and the creature. The Father creates all things in the Son and perfects all things by the Spirit. The

¹ Ibid. p. 90. See also Huber: *Johannes Scotus Erigena*, p. 171.

Father is the Source of the Son and of the Spirit; the Son is the Cause of the archetypal causes which were created in Him by the Father; the Spirit is the Cause of the distribution of the causes created by the Father in the Son.

God, whose nature is incomprehensible, and Who is only known by Theophany, is the Beginning, Middle and End of all things, for all things have Being only by participation in His essence. Goodness is not an attribute of Being, but Being of Goodness. If the Good were wholly abstracted from existence, existence would cease; nothing would remain. Good is essentially creative; evil is essentially destructive. Evil corrupts the things that exist and seeks to destroy them. If it were possible for evil to triumph, all would perish.

The central point of the created universe is man, who is truly a microcosm, for in man all elements, spiritual, mental and physical are combined, so that he is rightly called "*creaturarum omnia officina.*" He knows as an angel, reasons as a man, feels as an animal, lives as a plant. He is the workshop of creation and the image of the Divine Trinity, who by his thinking creates effectualiter what the Divine thought creates causaliter. For to be and to be thought are one. But the perfection of the image has been marred by sin. At the moment of his creation, even before he was tempted of the Devil, man turned aside from God, and in sinning became involved in the illusions of the physical body. Losing his integrity, he suffered the severance into sexes which is characteristic of irrational animals. He was thus debarred from the original purpose of his

creation, the bringing back of all things into their primordial causes. Hence the significance of the Incarnation, in which the Logos becoming flesh begins the restoration of human nature. The distinction between Nature and Grace is a distinction between the "datum" and the "donum" of the Divine Goodness (cf. James i., 17). Of Nature we must say "datur"; of Grace, "donatur." Nature brings the non-existent into existence. Grace brings some of the existent beyond all existence, into union with God. It is the "datum" which gives the substantial existence of all creatures; it is the "donum" which gives the final beatification of the elect.

Erigena adopts the doctrine of the ἀποκατάστασις, Adunatio, the Return to God and the Restitution of all things, and the deification of humanity, from Origen and Gregory of Nyssa. The final consummation began with the Resurrection of Christ, and will end with the final assumption of human nature into God, and the reinvolution of all things into their primordial causes, so that God may be all in all. Every division of humanity disappears in the Risen Christ, not only of sex and race, but the divisions of the sensible and the intelligible, the created and the uncreated are also resolved in Him. To this same unity and glory He will bring His elect after the General Resurrection, when they will be one with Him and in Him. All is God and all is Man in the Risen Christ, and all is freed from the bonds of space and time. The restoration of humanity in Christ is twofold. *All* humanity is restored in Him

to its pristine Paradisal condition, but for the elect there is also beatitude and deification.

But the doctrine of Eternal Punishment raises difficulties. True to his Platonic realism, Erigena will not admit that men and women can be everlastingly punished, for humanity is one and indivisible. It is only the accidents, the perverse and evil wills of the wicked, which will suffer, not by crude bodily torments, but by their eternal frustration. The evil desire remains, without the possibility of what it desires; and so the flame of concupiscence cannot burn in anything but itself. There is no other seat of punishment, as there is no other seat of corruption, than the perverse motion of the will, which is neither from God nor from created Nature. Punishment, like sin, is not of the nature, but of the will. The illicit will of evil men is tormented in their memories, because what they desired in this life, and wished in the future, they will not find. Their punishment is by way of phantasies, images in the memory, perverted thoughts and desires. For evil has no real being. It is an abuse of good: it is a good used wrongly. Evil cannot be perpetual, but must, in the nature of things, come to an end. For if the Divine Goodness is infinite and eternal, evil, which is its contrary, must be finite and temporary. Evil will be confined and finally abolished by the abundance of the Eternal Goodness. Eventually every perverse will will be brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.

Here we touch upon the great weakness of Erigena's system, as of so many mystical philosophies and theologies from Plotinus to T. H. Green, from

Eckhart to William Law. As Dr. W. T. Davison says, in a review of Mr. Bett's book:

"The apparent lack of perception of the real evil of evil,—so characteristic of many philosophers,—of man's clamant need of Redemption, his dependence on Divine grace, on the redeeming work of Christ and the sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit, is a deep and pervasive flaw in Erigena's system if he is claimed as a representative Christian teacher. Whatever his merits as a philosopher, it is the virtual absence of the above elements which constitute such a marked contrast between the earlier teacher's *De Divisione* and the *Summa* of Thomas Aquinas. One is an Eastern and a Neo-Platonist; the other is Aristotelian and Western. A somewhat similar contrast was presented when a later mystic, Meister Eckhart, was (perhaps unfairly) accused of Pantheism, but was with justice contrasted unfavourably with Tauler and some other 'Friends of God'."

In the first years of the thirteenth century the Church sought, in order to deliver them to the avenging flames, all the writings which had contributed to the birth of the heresies which bore the names of Amalric of Bena and David of Dinant.¹

¹ These two heresies were not quite the same. Amalric, who taught in the University of Paris, was expelled in 1204, and appealed to Pope Innocent III, who confirmed the decision of the University. In 1207 he returned to Paris and recanted. Some of his disciples were burnt at the stake at Champeaux in 1210, and others at Amiens in 1211. Amalric's doctrine was a recapitulation of Erigena's system, without any perversion or development. His disciples were mystics rather than philosophers. David's doctrine, however, was a reckless development of Erigena's teaching, a grossly materialistic Pantheism, which resulted in Antinomianism. At any rate, a charge of immorality was brought against his followers, which was not brought against the disciples of Amalric. M. Hauréau says: "Le caractère particulier de David, c'est, comme on l'a vu, d'être un philosophe qui semble ignorer tous les dogmes, tous les mystères de l'orthodoxie chrétienne." (*Histoire de la philosophie scolastique*, II (i), p. 86.)

The treatise *De Divisione Naturae* was noted as the real source of the errors, and it was therefore solemnly condemned, a bull of Honorius III in 1225 enjoining a strict search for all copies of the book or any parts thereof, and ordering them to be sent to Rome to be burnt, anyone knowingly keeping back a copy being declared to be in danger of excommunication on the ground of heretical depravity.

Mr. R. L. Poole says Erigena's own views were "buried with his writings"; but the appearance of these heresies 350 years after his death, and the fact that the *De Divisione Naturae* was found in wide circulation at that time among the Albigenses in the South of France, proves that this conclusion is unwarranted.¹

But at that period the schools of Ireland were no longer such as I have tried to describe. Subjected

¹ "Bien que la philosophie de Jean Scot semble avoir été incomprise de ses contemporains, elle exerça sur le développement de la pensée du moyen âge occidental une influence considérable, dont on poursuit l'action jusqu'au XIIIe siècle . . . On trouve l'influence de Scot dans toutes les déformations populaires de la mystique."—M. de WULF, *Histoire de la philosophie médiévale*, pp. 198-9.

"Ja es hat den Ausschein, dass die Schriften des Erigena geradezu als Quelle benützt wurden, obwohl sein Name nicht genannt wird."—W. KAULICH, *Entwicklung der scholastischen Philosophie von Johannes Scotus Erigena bis Abälard*, p. 23.

"In any case, it is certain that Eckhart, the father of all the German mystics, was well acquainted with the doctrines of the Scot. . . . It was only seventy years or so after the stir made by Amalric of Bena that the young Dominican was at the University of Paris. There can be no question as to the reality of Erigena's influence upon Eckhart's thought. The slightest summary of the great mystic's teaching will make it clear It is equally certain both that Nicholas of Cusa was profoundly influenced by Eckhart, and that he was a direct disciple of Erigena."—BETT, *Johannes Scotus Erigena*, pp. 190-2.

in their turn to the Roman unity, they had left the side of Plato and Proclus in order to adopt St. Augustine and St. Gregory. The most brilliant, as it seems to me, of all the Irish teachers, John Scotus Erigena, is the last representative of their traditional insubordination and independence. With him Irish Hellenism is vanquished and proscribed; and henceforth the Palace School offers no more chairs to other Erigenas. After him the principle of liberty becomes weakened, the principle of authority begins to prevail, and the Platonising philosophers give place to the orthodox theologians.

It is here, therefore, that our lectures on the schools of Ireland come to an end. As they had abdicated their traditional personality, they lost their proper name, and became absorbed into the other Latin schools, and the knowledge of Greek died out in the Western Church until the Renaissance. Yet, perhaps, the real cause of their decline is to be sought deeper. After the end of the eighth century they seem to have thrown away the evangelist's staff and kept only the professor's cloak; but, as Dr. Rendel Harris says, "No one can sing, 'How sweet the name of Logos sounds';" and St. Bernard did not write "*Verbum, dulcis memoria.*" The faith of the Irish schools in Greek philosophy stood in their way, daring and splendid as their scholars were. Reflection must be based on experience, and the Cross is central to Christian experience. The great hymns of the Medieval Church—"Dic tropæum passionis, dic triumphalem Crucem," "Vexilla Regis prodeunt," and "Pange lingua gloriosi proelium certaminis,"—acknowledge this. There we touch Reality.

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On the eucharistic wafer used in the Greek Church there is stamped a cross, and in the four angles of the cross are the letters ΙΣ, ΧΣ, ΝΙ, ΚΑ, "Jesus Christ conquers." The secret of power is not to be learned from Plato, but from Jesus Christ, "qui dilexit nos, et lavit nos a peccatis nostris in sanguine suo, et fecit nos regnum, et sacerdotes Deo et Patri suo: IPSI GLORIA ET IMPERIUM IN SÆCULA SÆCULORUM: AMEN."

Appendix

NOTE ON THE ALLEGED AUTOGRAPHA OF ERIGENA

IN the fifth part of Ludwig Traube's *Palaeographische Forschungen*, plausible evidence was published for Traube's alleged discovery of the very handwriting of Erigena. In the MSS. of Rheims, Laon and Bamberg, he had found marginal notes which were not glosses, but seemed to be the Author's own amplification of the text, and these Traube believed to be in the hand of Johannes himself. The Rheims MS. 875 of the *De Divisione Naturae*, is the work of six or seven scribes, but they could not have taken it from the Author's dictation, for they commit errors of various kinds that argue the existence of a text that they were copying.

Two kinds of script are used in the marginalia,—that used in Ireland, and that practised at Rheims. In some cases a different ink is used. Traube supposed that the insular hand was that of Johannes; but if he could write in the continental style, why did he not make all his corrections in that script? On one page there are corrections and minor enlargements by the text-hand, then similar changes by the writer of the insular script, and, finally, corrections of the Irish script by the text hand. The most arresting consideration, however, is that there are two varieties of insular script in the volume.

The first variety is loose, pointed and flowing, with few abbreviations. With one or two exceptions, it uses a "d" with a curved shaft. The other variety is more compact and regular, and more cursive; and it uses a "d" with a straight shaft. The first is confined to folios 1-80 and 113-318. The second appears only in folios 81-112 and 319-358. Which of these is the hand of Erigena? Of the two, the first seems more free, more individual, more like the hand of an author. But if that is the hand of Johannes, why does he never correct the sections assigned to the second? And if the second be the hand of the author, why does it never appear in the sections assigned to the first? The same two insular hands that appear in the Rheims MS. appear in the also MSS. of Laon and Bamberg; and it would seem most probable that neither is that of Johannes, but that both belong to scribes employed by him to correct and enlarge the manuscripts of his works. They were evidently the most important of his workmen, for he entrusted most of the revision to them.

Possibly further research may reveal the hand of Erigena himself, but Traube's conclusions seem unwarranted, though it is certain that the enlargements in the manuscripts were made by Erigena's direction, and reveal the growth of his thought. (For a fuller treatment of the problem, see Vol. V, No. 8, pp. 135-141, plates 1-11, of the University of California Publications in Classical Philology, by Edward K. Rand.)

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