

SCOTLAND AND THE REFORMATION.



OR Scotch Catholics who glory in the religion of their ancestors, as well as for those who owe allegiance to the Kirk, there is much in history to justify their respective creeds. On the source from which he learns the religious history of his native land, depends the

Scotchman's view regarding the Church which claimed the homage of his forefathers. The history of Scotland during the early ages of the Christian era, sanctioned by the testimony of eminent writers of a later date, is the history of the introduction and development of Catholicity, whereas the followers of John Knox, have, in the writings of many modern historians, a huge array of evidence in support of the dominant influence of Protestantism. One fact, however, we can accept as established, Catholicity, since its introduction in the third century, has never ceased to be the religious practice of a vast portion of the Scottish people. The effects of the reformation are yet strikingly apparent, but not more so than the flame enkindled by Ninian and Columba eight hundred years before. The Lowlander, the Ulsterman of Scotland, is Protestant; the Highlander, the typical Scotchman, is Catholic.

The powerful soldiery of the great Roman Empire did unconsciously for Scotland what their arms were slow to accomplish. Unable to achieve any permanent success in the material order, they opened the way to a spiritual conquest comprehensive enough to include the whole country, and sincere enough to endure, in some places, till the present day. For ages after, the close of every century, from the days when St. Regulus, bearing the relics of Scotland's Patron Saint, landed on her shores, found the country in a more advanced state, and the people more prosperous and more peaceful, because more Christian and more Catholic. The labor of the Great St. Ninian among Southern Picts and of St. Columba in the North, gave forth fruit a hundred-fold;

before their standard fell the old druidical rites, and in answer to their call came forth the long list of consecrated men and women, who were to continue their apostolic labors, and make Scotland wholly Catholic. For thirteen centuries, the Catholic Church, reared on the foundation of the saintly Ninian, exercised a dominant influence in Scotland. From a weak and slender sapling, it became a stout and powerful tree. Confined at first, within the narrowest limits, it gradually extended its power, daily adding to its numbers, until finally it had spread itself throughout the whole land.

As early as the fourth century Druidism had been obliterated from Scotland as the religious practice of the people, and in its stead had been introduced a Catholicity so pure and so earnest that the calendars and books of liturgy left us from that time, are filled with the names of hundreds of saints, devout virgins, abbesses and other eminently pious women. In the Aberdeen calendar alone, mention is made of thirty bishops, together with their respective sees. Grateful for the favors which had been conferred on her, Scotland, as soon as she was able, reciprocated the benefits which she had received by sending her sons, her saints and scholars to extend over distant nations the blessings of religion and civilization.

With the introduction of Christianity into Scotland were laid the foundations of those habits of frugality and diligence which later on placed the country on a level with the great commercial centres of the world. The advance of its people in prosperity was regulated by its progress in piety, and, at the beginning of the tenth century, prosperity and happiness were general, religion flourished, and its ministers were honored with a due reverence, vice was everywhere discouraged, injury had ceased, and the reign of virtue, truth and justice was proclaimed throughout the land. The *Edinburgh Review* for July, 1867, has the following remarks on the state of the country at the time referred to:—

“Tradition points to the days of the Alexanders as a time of well-being. Ber-