

NOVA SCOTIA (5) ALMANACK.

ST. PATRICK.

THE history of the four Patron Saints of Great Britain, may not be generally known to our readers, we have in this year's Almanack introduced the life of St. Patrick of Ireland. Those of St. George, St. Andrew and St. David, will be given in our subsequent Annual publications, divesting them as much as possible of fabulous legends, and collecting together as many historical facts as our many Materials can afford.—*Ed. Ak.*

The early ages of Ireland were distinguished by very great turbulence. In their own land the Irish were continually engaged in petty hostilities; and upon the sea they were notorious as pirates. Upon the opposite coast of Scotland they made frequent descents, carrying away not only all the booty upon which they could lay their despoiling hands, but also great numbers of captives. Upon one of these occasions they landed in the town of Eiburn, in the firth of Clyde, and, as usual, marked their course with plunder and destruction. Besides other booty, they carried away from this luckless town several captives of both sexes. Among these was a youth named Patrick, a native of Wales; who, on the arrival of the piratical expedition in a Irish port, was sold by its commander to an Irish chieftain named McBain. In the service of this chieftain, Patrick, who, when captured, was only sixteen years of age, continued for six years, employed in the groveling and degrading duties of a swineherd. This mean condition must have been doubly irksome and galling to the youth, from his being, for the period at which he lived, well skilled both in profane and religious learning, and of a nature peculiarly inclined and adapted to learned pursuits. But, however galling and disagreeable his yoke proved to him, he submitted himself to it patiently, and without exhibiting any symptom of discontent or indignation. His patience at length was suitably rewarded; and he regained his liberty by a mere accident. While watching his master's swine, he observed one of them rooting up something brilliant from the ground, and on approaching to examine it, he found, to his infinite surprise and satisfaction, that it was GOLD, equal in value to the sum required for his ransom. He immediately applied the welcomed gold to the purchase of that liberty of which he had been unjustly deprived.

It is necessary in this place to observe that, though the young captive was a Christian, the Irish were plunged in the most degrading and barbarous heathenism.

During his residence among them, young Patrick had abundant opportunities to observe the injurious effects produced by their superstition upon their character and condition. It is probable that even during the hopelessness of slavery, he meditated upon the important and benevolent work of leading them into the knowledge of Christianity. Indeed his subsequent conduct renders this more than probable. For he no sooner regained his liberty than he commenced, wisely and deliberately, the course necessary for qualifying himself for that great and glorious work. His uncle Saint Martin, was at that time Bishop of Tours in France. Hastening to this relative, the young enthusiast unfolded to him his views and wishes. His description of the miserable condition of the Irish greatly interested the good bishop, who at once commended