

tendom, and the first King consecrated outside of Ireland was Aïdan, the founder of the Scotch monarchy. "He was consecrated by St. Columba," says Montalembert, "upon a great stone called the Stone of Fate, which was afterwards carried by Edward I to Westminster where it still serves as a pedestal for the throne of the Kings of England on the day of the coronation."

Further improvements in legislation were brought about through the influence of St. Columbkil, St. Moling, and St. Adamnan, the latter of whom rivals Bede in the title of "Father of British History." Perhaps in no country did the condition of woman so soon claim attention as in Ireland. The first attempt at the systematic education of women was begun, according to Fredrick Ozanam, in the Double Monasteries for which Ireland was noted in the 6th and 7th centuries. In 684 A.D. a law was passed forbidding women to accompany an army to battle or to engage personally in the conflict. Some attention was given to the other side of the problem also, for one of the ordinances of St. Columbkil was that no cow should be allowed within the bounds of his monasteries, "for" said he "where there is a cow there will be a woman, and wherever there is a woman there will be mischief."

Referring to the influence of the clergy in those days, McGee speaks as follows:—"In every recorded instance the power of the clergy was onmipotent in politics. St. Patrick had expurgated the old constitution; St. Ruadan's curse drove the Kings from Tara; St. Columbkil had established the independence of Alba, and preserved the Bardic Order; St. Moling had abolished the Leinster tribute. If their power was irresistible in the 6th and especially in the 7th centuries, we must do these celebrated Abbots and Bishops the justice to remember that it was always exercised against the oppression of the weak by the strong, to mitigate the horrors of war, to uphold the right of sanctuary, and for the maintenance and spread of sound Christian principles."

Such was the beneficent influence of Christianity on the ancient pagan laws and customs; the Irish began by applying the axe to the root of the tree. Rapid progress in religion and science was a necessary consequence of Christian legis-

lation. Monasteries sprang up everywhere, and within or beside the monasteries, schools. Read what the Protestant historian Towle has to say on this subject:—"For two centuries after the death of St. Patrick the learning and piety of Ireland were renowned throughout Europe. . . . There was a long period, indeed, when Ireland was the foremost nation in Europe in learning and religious teaching, when, from all parts of Europe, students flocked in hundreds to fill her schools to overflowing, and to learn theology and the arts in her monasteries and convents. At the same time . . . the monks tilled the fertile lands attached to the monasteries; they tended their cows, sheep and pigs; they acted as scribes for those who could not write; they worked in wood and metals. . . . They were skilful in architecture, built their own edifices and churches, and were famous for their well-drilled choirs, their stirring hymns, and their instrumental as well as vocal harmonies." Montalembert corroborates this, and McGee is enthusiastic. Referring to the schools, wherein we find the first instance in the world of absolutely free education, McGee says:—"They were essentially free schools—not only free as to the lessons given, but the venerable Bede tells us they supplied free bed and board and books. The prince and clansmen of every district in which a school was situated endowed it with a certain share of the common land of the clan. Exclusive rights of fishery and exclusive mill privileges were granted. Timber for building purposes and fuel was to be had for the cutting and carrying away." There were generous individual gifts from princes, bishops and pious ladies, until a lofty emulation seems to have seized on all the great families, as well as on the different provinces, as to which could boast the most largely attended schools and the greatest number of distinguished scholars. Some of these schools were attended by as many as 7,000 students, nor were they under-aged. "Forty years is no uncommon age for the graduate of those days, when as yet the discovery was unmade that all-sufficient wisdom comes with the first trace of down upon the chin of youth. . . . The love of *alma mater*—that college patriotism which is so sure a sign of the noble-minded scholar—never received more