

of the philosopher may strive to set in motion, but strive wholly in vain. The Songs of Zion may enkindle devotion where the Sermon fails. The praises of God, sung by the lips in public worship, or warbled quietly in private, have often proved, to the Christian, the most nourishing soul-food. Like the lark, rising from the ground and shaking her dewy wing in the eye of morning, mounting up—far up in the blue skies—singing as she soars, the believer is often wafted within sight of heaven's gate, as he sings or hums his simple hymn of praise. By the way or at his daily toil, in the midst of the city's din, or the quiet of his country life, he may often enjoy more true peace and comfort, and may rise more grandly above the little cares of life, on the wings of quiet melody, than the great wise world can imagine. True, that "great wise world" may compassionate his weakness, yet he wants not compassion; he has caught glimpses of things higher than this world, and far more enduring, and his melody, simple as it is, helps to bear his spirit upwards. The effect of the songs of any country upon its morality, has long been known. He was a wise man who said, "Let me write a nation's ballads, and I care not who may write its laws." He was a pious and wise man who put this pithy question, "Should the devil have all the good music?"

St. Columba, on his arrival in Iona, found, as might have been expected, the national poets of the country possessed of much power. It was their's to be present on all state occasions, to celebrate the exploits of warriors and heroes. At the hall of feasting, they sung their songs, which were speedily caught up and re-echoed in a thousand homesteads. Woe betide the unfortunate wretch who became the object of their hatred! In their "winged words," they pointed him out for the contempt and hatred of the multitude, and his life was constantly in danger. The timid shunned him—the most cruel abused him—he was denied free intercourse with his fellow-men—his memory would descend to posterity with its lustre all tarnished—and his soul was denied a place in "Flathimis," or "the Island of the brave." Should the newly-arrived missionary incur their hatred, he would be put to death, or forced to quit the country. But St. Columba sought their friendship. He saw in them a mighty power for good, and resolved to put it to the best account. He admired the genius of the poets, but lamented that such genius should be misdirected and misapplied. Could nothing be done so as to convert the curse into a blessing? Would he attempt to put them to silence, and stop their songs for ever? As well might we think of stopping the rush of Niagara. Supposing it were possible, would it be right? Most certainly not, if this power could be made useful to the Church and the world. But it could be made useful, and he used it. Those bards soon became his best friends. Their genius

made them powerful supporters of the Truth, and the Truth purified and sanctified their genius. These two children of God—Truth and Genius—met and recognised each other. The family feud, introduced by sin, was forgotten, and, hand in hand, they marched onwards to strike the fetters from the captives, and to bring the prisoners from the prison-house. St. Columba knew that he might as well forbid her spring song to the thrush, among the spreading leaves and the bursting blossoms, as to say to the glad heart, "be silent." That men would sing when happy, and unburden their spirit when too deeply joyous for verbal utterance in the strains of music, he knew to arise from a law of their nature, wise and holy, and above and beyond his control. And could he successfully stop or dam up the fount of song, what a sad want and dreary void would he cause in this universe! Nature would indeed be stern and cold and unbeautiful, if spring had no birds or blossoms, summer no glorious skies and waving corn fields, and autumn no golden tints for fields and forests. Yet human society, wholly void of song, would present an aspect more solitary, and sad, and unlovely, than our sombre forests and fields during their death-sleep in winter. It would certainly present a different aspect from that which was intended by the beneficent Creator, who delights in His creatures' joy, and who has made a kind and wise provision for its expression. Those who would make our joyous Christianity a gloomy religion, might attempt such an unnatural distortion; but St. Columba never could. Men with whom godliness and gloom, sanctity and silence, holiness and austerity are one and the same, might think the change a good one, but how differently would the more joyous and brighter spirits, like those of David and Paul, regard it! Take away the harp from David, and how changed the King of Israel appears! Remove his crown and sceptre, and still you have left him a companion to solace his solitude and calm his cares! Still he can cause the hills of Judah to resound the praises of his God, and find a joy even in uttering his sorrow! You may cast Paul into prison, but don't prevent him from singing his Psalms, and the gloom of the prison becomes lighted up with a more than earthly brightness! Strive to prevent the natural utterances of his heart, and you strive to accomplish what must prove a failure or result in an evil! Yet, while any of the springs of life cannot be stopped from flowing, their waters can be thrown into a new channel. St. Paul was zealous before his conversion, and so, also, after he became a Christian. The Spirit quenched not his zeal, but changed its current and directed its course, so that the persecutor became a preacher, and the most bitter enemy of Christ His bravest friend. John's must have been always a loving spirit, but grace caused that love to flow Christward, for the supernatural is always built upon the natural, and the work