

Such is a slight sketch of that Pagan society which Christianity was by degrees to regenerate—such is a dim outline of the Roman slave, who was about to be freed, body and soul, as we shall see through the teaching of that divine Galilean who, in order that he might free mankind, chose himself to become a slave and to die the death of a slave—the death of the Cross.

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IRISH LEARNING IN ANCIENT TIMES.

Ptolemy who wrote early in the second age of the Christian era, in his table of Europe, enumerates, in the Greek language, ten distinguished cities in the interior and on the coasts of Ireland, and his annotator adds that Ptolemy placed Ireland amongst the most celebrated islands in the world.

Spencer, in his treatise entitled, "*A view of the State of Ireland*," written upwards of 250 years ago, says, "All the customs of the Irish which I have often noted, and compared with what I have read, would minister occasion of a most ample discourse of the original of them, and the antiquity of that people, which, in the truth, I think to be more ancient than most I know of in this end of the world." In another part of the same work he describes the country so antique that "no monument of her beginning and first inhabiting remains."—and he adds again—"it is certain that Ireland hath had the use of letters very anciently and long before England."

Camden, in his "*Britannia*," written more than two centuries ago, says, "From hence (Ireland) our old Saxon ancestors seem to have had the form of their letters, as they plainly used the same characters which are at present in use among the Irish."

Lord Littleton, in his History of the reign of Henry II., says, "A school was formed at Armagh, which soon became very famous, many Irish went from thence to convert and teach other nations. Many Saxons out of England resorted thither for instruction, and brought from thence the use of letters to their ignorant countrymen."

Dr. Johnson, in his history of the English language, prefixed to his dic-

tionary, makes this observation, "What was the form of the Saxon language when about the year 150 they first entered Britain, cannot now be known. They seem to have been a people without learning, and very probably without an alphabet."

Bede, in his History of the Primitive Church of England, written 1100 years ago, designates Ireland thus:—*Geniem innoxiam et nationi Anglorum semper dulcissimum*. In the same manner the celebrated Aelinus, who wrote 70 years after Bede, bears similar testimony, and in his poem about the prelates, and holy men of the church of York, describes the people of Ireland *Anglis semper amicus*.

Bede, in the third book of the history already quoted, gives an account of the conversion to Christianity of Oswald, king of Northumberland, by Aidanus, a venerable Irish missionary, who had been sent to him in compliance with the king's request, "that those who had conferred the sacrament upon his son Alfred and his attendants while in Ireland, would send some zealous and learned prelate to instruct his English subjects in the faith of Christ, and administer the sacrament to them. After this many priests began to come daily from Ireland into England, to preach the Christian faith with great zeal and devotion, in every part of King Oswald's dominions, and to administer the sacrament of Baptism to all such as were converted. Churches were built in many places, the people, with joy, assembled to hear the word of God."

In the next chapter he gives a brief history of the mission of St. Columban:

"In the beginning of the reign of Justin the younger, who succeeded Justinian in the government of the Roman Empire, A. D. 565, Columban, a priest and abbot of great celebrity, whose life corresponded with the habit of a monk, which he had taken, came from Ireland into Britain to teach the word of God to the northern provinces of the Picts. He converted the whole nation in a very short time, by his eloquence and good example, as a tribute of gratitude for which he received the Isle of Icombkil, to build and endow a monastery."

Asserius, a contemporary writer with King Alfred, in his annals of the year