

was of that class. Such miracles are of such frequent occurrence that, however sincere we may allow Bede to have been, we can hardly acquit him of credulity. If we deduct the marvellous part of the account, it would seem that at the first conference no positive reply was given, for the reason stated, viz : that the consent of the nation was a necessary preliminary to any alteration in church discipline. But the conviction said to have been wrought in the minds of the British by Augustin's miracle is scarcely consistent with their apparently unanimous rejection of his proposals at the second meeting. And in this it is observable that the reply of the British representatives, in Bede's account, does not tally exactly with his own relation just before given of Augustin's demand.—For the refusal of the British was summed up in the words, "*nil horum se facturos, neque illum pro archiepiscopo habituros esse*," whereas the demand to be their archbishop is nowhere contained in the terms proposed to them by Augustin. So far from this, there is no assumption of authority about them : conformity in certain points of discipline was required, as well as co-operation in the general work of the mission ; but minor differences in other non-essential matters would, he told them, be tolerated. Hence, it appears, that if both accounts, that of the conditions proposed by Augustin and that of their rejection by the British, be true, they do not both represent the whole truth, either of the statements actually made on either side, or of the attendant circumstances. And this may well be without any disparagement of the historians veracity ; for allowing that no demand for submission on the part of the British Church to the See of Rome was made by Augustin, still the fact remained, from which the British Church might, rightly or wrongly, draw unfavourable inferences, that a Romish hierarchy had been already set up in the Kentish capital. Religious animosities are always most bitter, and when sustained by national antipathies become inveterate, and this seems to have been the case in the present instance. The Paschal controversy appears to have been carried on as warmly between the English and British as it had been already in the wider fields of the Eastern and Western Churches ; and the eighth century* was far advanced before the British and Irish Christians conformed, as a body, to the Roman practice in this respect. The importance of unanimity on this subject was strongly felt, but each party claimed antiquity in its favour ; and, apart from other considerations, the British refused to sink their nationality in their religion by joining the Roman mission in the work of evangelizing their bitterest enemies.

3. The heathen portion of the British nation could not be expected

* Bingham fixes the date at 800 A.D., Antiq. Bk. xx, chap. v. sec 4 ; Churton at 755.—Early English Church, chap, iii, p. 34.