

canonization to hallow it as a popish shrine. The real fact seems to be, however, that Columba was a Protestant, a thousand years before the Reformation ; and that in his little sea-girt kingdom he kept the primitive faith in comparative purity, while in its earlier habitats it was sinking into hopeless corruption.

As to his vocation, he seems to have been a missionary more than a monk, and his so-called monastery a seminary for training his disciples in the Scriptures and in Divine communion, to fit them to be his co-laborers in the great work of carrying Christianity into Britain. Let us think of Iona, therefore, as a fortress of the ancient faith, a stronghold of primitive Christianity, from which the spiritual conquest of our Saxon ancestors was undertaken and carried on by the sturdiest band of warriors that ever "subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions."

In spite of its rocky solitude, there is a singular charm in the natural aspects of the place ; companion islands stud the horizon in every direction, their rock-caverns affording shelter to myriads of white-winged birds ; the peculiar velvety green verdure, which the moist climate nourishes, transforming stormy islands into emerald gems ; and encircling all, an atmosphere so capricious that it alternately veils and unveils the landscape with cloud and sunshine, giving constant variety to the scene. Indeed, as the Duke of Argyle has said : "There are not many places in the world where those three voices, the sky, the sea, the mountains, can be heard sounding in finer harmony than round Columba's Isle."

Yonder within near sight lies Staffa, with its wonderful Fingal's Cave. The tourist who has visited cathedral after cathedral on the Continent, and has become satiated with the voluble discourse of verger and guide, can here gaze in silence upon one of God's cathedrals built without sound of hammer or saw, but far surpassing all others in grandeur ; for "there is nothing like this great hall of columns standing round their ocean floor, and sending forth in ceaseless reverberations the solemn music of its waves." Let a party sing "Old Hundred" as we did, beneath these arches of stone, and as its strains thunder and echo through the "long drawn aisle," let them tell us if they ever heard such majestic music before.

In Iona, however, there reigns an impressive silence, broken only occasionally by the lowing of herds and the sounds of sluggish life which issue from a few low cottages by the shore. We wander among the ruins of the little cathedral, believing or disbelieving the legend that here is the stone pillow on which the head of Columba rested at night, and here the grave in which his body was laid at his death. We enter the ruined chapel, made sacred as the scene of fervent and prevailing prayer, and the monastery where the Scriptures were profoundly studied and patiently transcribed ; but it is not the stones of the arches or the timeworn carvings which most strongly hold our attention. It is of Columba and the Culdees