

WHERE WAS ST. PATRICK BORN?

(Continued.)

The earliest writer we have access to on the subject is St. Patrick himself in his "Confession," and again in his letter to *Corotic*. In each of these he says he was born in Britain—*Britanniae*, the plural form is his word in more than one place, Britannia the singular form in others—and we know *aliunde* that from the time of Julius Cesar, who died about 400 years before St. Patrick was born, until the time of the Saint's arrival in Ireland the singular and plural form were indiscriminately used to indicate just one and only one country, and that the one, namely, which is now called Great Britain. St. Patrick had been over 30 years actively engaged on the Irish mission before any author we know of had applied the singular form Britannia to any locality in Gaul; and he had died and gone to Heaven more than 100 years before any known author changed the singular form into the plural, and applied the latter to any place other than *Great Britain*. The word *Britanniae* as applicable to a portion of France cannot be proved to have been in use in St. Patrick's life time. It is almost certain that it was not; for otherwise it is exceedingly difficult to account for the fact that more than a century would pass without some accepted writer somewhere writing something about a French *Britanniae*. Even the word *Britannia* is not known to have been applied to any part of Gaul until about thirty years after St. Patrick had gone on his Irish mission. This does not say that the name in its singular form did not exist in France at an earlier period than its published date. It is probable that it did; but we can base no indisputable argument on a probability. We may, however, reasonably infer that, if the same exhaustive investigation had been made before or during Dr. Lanigan's time that has been since made into old authors, the learned doctor would not have introduced the name of Britain into his history, in the connection it now sustains in that valuable publication. Before a most minute search had been instituted into many MS. and volumes, some of them very