died out in the southern part of the Island under the ruins
heaped up everywhere by the Saxon conquest. Paganism
and barbarism, vanquished by the Gospel in the Highlands
of the north, again arose and triumphed in the south, in the
most populous, accessible and flourishing districts, through
out all that country which was destined in succeeding
centuries to play so great a part in the world, and which
already began to call itself England. From 569 to 586, ten
years before the death of Columba, and at the period when
his authority was best established and most powerful in the
north, the last champions of Christian Britain were finally
cast out beyond the Severn, while at the same time new
bands of Anglo-Saxons in the north, driving back the Picts
to the other side of the Tweed, and crossing the Humber to
the south, founded the future kingdoms of Mercia and
Northumbria. It is true that at a later period the sons of
Columba carried the Gospel to those Northumbrians and
Mercians. But at the end of the sixth century, after a
hundred and fifty years of triumphant invasions and strug-
gles, the Saxons had not yet encountered in any of the then
Christian, or at least converted nations, Britons, Scots and
Picts, which they had assailed, fought and vanquished,
either missionaries disposed to announce the glad tidings to
them, nor priests capable of maintaining the precious nucleus
of faith among the conquered races.

Eleven years before the momentous event we commemo-
rate this month, the two last Catholic bishops of Britain,
those of London and York, abandoned their churches and
took refuge in the mountains of Wales, carrying with them
the sacred vessels and holy relics which they had been able
to save from the rapacity of the idolaters. Other husband-
men were then necessary. From whence were they to come?
From the same inextinguishable centre, whence light had been
brought to the Irish by Patrick, and to the Britons and Scots
by Palladius, Ninian and Germain. At the moment when
Columba approached the term of his long career in his