

OUR CHURCH IN WALES.

By the Rev. H. de B. Gibbins, M. A.

WHY IT CONCERNS US.

THE present hostile attack upon the Church in Wales is only the latest phase in the great onslaught that has been made upon the Church in general in various forms ever since the Reform Bill Agitation of 1832. The utter failure, twenty years ago, of the attempt in Parliament to disestablish the Church of England has caused the enemies of the Church to direct their attacks against it in a more guarded but not less deadly form, and, because they imagine that its position is weakest in Wales, it is there that they seek most eagerly to undermine, and finally to destroy it. Now, the Church of England and of Wales is, and has been for centuries, one and indivisible; and therefore an attack upon any one part of it concerns the whole body of Churchmen in this kingdom. It is for this reason that we wish to bring before our readers the main facts of Church history in regard to the progress of the Church in Wales.

HOW IT WAS FOUNDED AND GREW IN BRITAIN.

The Church in Wales is the direct continuation of the ancient British Church that existed in these islands long before any Danish, Anglo-Saxon, or Norman invasions, or any attempt at illegal ecclesiastical usurpation on the part of the Pope of Rome. This British Church was, in all probability, founded by the children of the famous British king Caradoc (or Caractacus), who were hostages in Rome during St. Paul's imprisonment there, and are mentioned by the Apostle in one of his Epistles (2 Tim. iv. 21), and thus it dates back directly to Apostolic times. About a century later we have it recorded that Lucius, another British king, founded (A. D. 170) the bishopric of Caerleon-on-Usk, in Wales, besides building churches in Dover, Canterbury, and London; and not long after the British Church is alluded to in the writings of the ancient Fathers, Tertullian (about A. D. 200) and Origen (A. D. 240). Then again, in the next century we find three British bishops present at the Council of Arles in Gaul (A. D. 314), as representing their Church—a fact which proves beyond dispute that, even at this early date, the Apostolic Church in Britain was now thoroughly established upon a recognised orthodox basis, with the three Orders of Bishops, Priests, and Deacons (for a priest and deacon accompanied these three bishops to Arles), and in communion with the other Christian Churches of that day in Gaul, Italy, and elsewhere. Such representative bishops were also present at the Council of Sardica in A. D. 347 and at other assemblies, and the British Church is frequently mentioned by Christian writers of the fourth and fifth centuries, and commended for the purity of its doctrine.

HOW IT GREW IN WALES.

Thus the British Church grew and flourished for several centuries, and held, as we know, frequent communication with the Churches of Continental nations. It sent missionaries into Ireland and Scotland, and founded new bishoprics in Wales. And Wales was now soon to become its chief home and refuge from the invasions of the heathen tribes who came over to Britain in the fifth and sixth centuries. These

tribes, the Jutes (who came in 449), the South Saxons (447), the West Saxons (495), and others, were all heathens, and destroyed and persecuted the Church in Britain without mercy, to such an extent that the British were compelled to retire into Wales (which then included Cornwall and Devon as well), and to settle there. In their new home, which, after all, was a part of their old home, their Church still continued to prosper and we find it, in spite of all these invasions and persecutions, still active and independent. It took care to strengthen itself now by the foundation of more bishoprics, and we can date the formation of the present Welsh dioceses from about this era. Their dates are: See of Llandaff, 500; Bangor, 516; St. David's (to which Caerleon was transferred), 540; St. Asaph, 560; and they have had an unbroken line of bishops from that day to this. Moreover, each diocese was thoroughly organized, with cathedral and colleges, while the ancient bishopric of Caerleon, now transferred to St. David's, was made the seat of the Welsh archbishop. The first archbishop of the new See, St. David, was consecrated by the Patriarch of Jerusalem when on a visit to the Holy Land, and thus the already existing Apostolic Succession in our Church was strengthened by the hands of that Patriarch, who held the position one occupied by St. James, the first Bishop of Jerusalem, the brother of our Lord.

AUGUSTINE AND THE BRITISH CHURCH.

We have now brought our history down to the middle of the sixth century. We have seen how our present Church in Wales was really the ancient British Church of Apostolic days, which, centuries later, fled westwards to escape utter destruction at the hands of the heathen, and which found in Wales a secure resting-place. There it remained, free and independent, while what is now England was slowly growing into shape politically amid many wars and much confusion. There, also, it was flourishing when Augustine came from Rome on his mission to Christianise southern and eastern England from his basis of operations at Canterbury (A. D. 597). As we all know, St. Augustine founded the Anglo-Saxon Church, and became the first Archbishop of Canterbury, though receiving his consecration as bishop not from the Bishop (or Pope) of Rome, but from the Bishops of Arles and Lyons in France. He was a great and good man, but yet did much harm by attempting to introduce Papal authority into these islands—an attempt which the Welsh bishops stoutly resisted, and which was opposed often, and successfully, by both Welsh and English prelates afterwards. His attempt had the unfortunate effect of preventing for many years the union and fusion of the British (or Welsh) and Anglo-Saxon (or English) Churches, which were one in matters of doctrine, and only differed in quite insignificant points of ritual.

THE CHURCHES OF ENGLAND AND WALES MADE ONE.

But it is pleasing to notice that a point of union was found between the two Churches in the consecration of Chad as Bishop of York in 665 A. D., who was consecrated by the Bishop of Winchester, assisted by two Welsh bishops, and thus united in his person both the Italian and British lines of Apostolic Succession. Chad afterwards became Bishop of Lichfield. Another point of union was the amalgamation, in 926 A. D., of the British Church in Cornwall (a branch of the Welsh Church) with the Anglo-Saxon Church, when the Cornishmen submitted to King Athelstan. The final union was, however, yet to come. Once again we see signs of its approach when the diocese of Ely was carved out of that of Lincoln, and Hervé le Breton, bishop of Bangor, was translated to the new See in 1109 A. D. A few years after this event the union of the Church of England and the Church of Wales became an accomplished fact, some time (be it noted) before the political union of the two countries. Such a union of these two

historic Churches was much to be desired, and there was absolutely nothing in point of doctrine to prevent it. The only difference between them consisted in a few minor points of ritual, no more important than the differences which are found to-day in various parishes belonging to our one and united Church. It was plainly to be seen also that sooner or later Wales must become politically one country with England, and the action of the Welsh Church did much to facilitate this inevitable arrangement. The Archbishop of St. David's consented to surrender his authority and there, in 1115, the bishops of the Welsh dioceses, through him, took the oath of canonical obedience to Ralph, the Archbishop of Canterbury, as their Primate. So now the English Church, founded by various British, Roman, and Scotch missionaries, and gradually consolidated till it became one organic whole, was united into one body with the still more ancient British Church of Wales, whose history we have traced up to the days of the Apostles.

NOT AN ALIEN CHURCH.

The subsequent life of the two Churches has been one, and in broad outlines the history of the one is the history of both; for they are one and indivisible. But in the next paper we will follow the special development of the Welsh portion of the united Church, and see what special vicissitudes it has undergone. In concluding this short summary of its early history, we may point out to our readers that in this historical study lies the answer to the utterly untrue and false assertion that the position of the Church in Wales is that of an alien and foreign organization. Nothing could possibly be further from the truth. So far from being foreign, it has been the only Church in Wales ever since the days of the Apostles, and was united to the Anglican Church even before the political union of the two countries; and thus cannot, by any stretch of imagination, be regarded as an alien community imposed upon Wales against the will of the nation. It is the native Church of the Welsh people.—*Church Bells.*

DIVORCE.

Continued.

It has been contended that this is not the teaching of Our Lord but that He does allow a divorce with the right to marry again in one case at least. The supposed exception is based upon His words in St. Matthew's Gospel where He says in the Sermon on the Mount, "But I say unto you that whosoever shall put away his wife saving for the cause of fornication causeth her to commit adultery; and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery." Again in the same Gospel He repeats, "And I say unto you whosoever shall put away his wife except it be for fornication and shall marry another committeth adultery; and whose marrieth her that is put away committeth adultery." From these two texts it is argued that Our Lord meant to teach that unfaithfulness to the marriage relation was just grounds for a divorce, with the privilege to the injured party to marry again. But such is not the case; otherwise there would be a direct contradiction between His words here and in St. Mark and St. Luke. Not a discrepancy but an irreconcilable contradiction, "for if at one time He says that whosoever puts away his wife for any other cause than fornication, and marries another he does not commit adultery; and then at another time He says that every man who puts away his wife and marries another commits adultery—the contradiction is irreconcilable." Now we cannot suppose a contradiction nor is there any historical evid-