

Early British and Irish Monasteries.

THE early history of these ancient Institutions has so long been buried beneath the rubbish of Rome, as to almost obliterate their Catholic spirit and christian character. In a recent scholarly work by the Rev. William Carthcart, D. D. (who is one of the best historians of our day) entitled: "*Ancient British and Irish Churches*," the writer has so removed the mask of Rome from the face of these ancient schools, as to enable us to see them in their true light; and when thus seen, they are none other than christian universities, theological seminaries, great Home and Foreign Missionary Societies. In later times these christian institutions were either completely destroyed by the influx of Anglo-Saxon paganism or more slowly corrupted by Romish dogmas. That there were strong and influential Christian Schools and Churches in a high state of culture and civilization in Briton and Ireland centuries before the time of the Romish Augustine, 596 A. D., is a well supported fact.

As to the exact date of the founding of these colleges it is difficult to fix. Bingham states that the University of Bangor in Ireland was founded about 520, A. D., and that there was also a British Monastery (University) in Wales, called Bangor. This is clear from the writings of Bede and others. Of Bangor in Wales, Bede says: "So great was the number of Monks that the Monastery was divided into seven parts, with a ruler over each; and none of the parts contained less than three hundred men, who lived by the labor of their hands." Here we have a great University with hundreds of students in attendance. That these schools had reached a high rank in learning is also declared by Bede, who while a devout Roman Catholic, was also a man of letters, a superior scholar of his day. He tells of a delegation that met in conference with the celebrated Augustine, A. D., 603. "There came," he says, "as it is asserted, seven Bishops of the Britons, and many most learned men; particularly from their most noble Monastery of Bangor." The testimony of Bede to the scholarship of these men and proficiency of the University of Bangor (Wales) should have weight. Dr. Johnson speaking of the Irish Monasteries, said: "Ireland was the school of the west, the quiet habitation of sanctity and literature." And Dr. Carthcart adds: "To most readers this declaration, even from Samuel Johnson, appears almost incredible, and yet historical students everywhere respect it." Michelet, writing of the seventh century, said: "All the sciences were at this period cultivated with much renown in Scotch and Irish Monasteries." Archbishop Usher, who has gathered many testimonies regarding the proficiency of these early Institutions, says: "Our Monasteries in ancient times were the Seminaries of the Ministry: being as it were, so many colleges of learned divines unto which the people did resort for instruction . . . yea, this was the principal means by which a knowledge of the Scriptures and other good learning was preserved in that inundation of barbarism wherewith the whole West was in a manner overwhelmed." We have