

Christians had first sought a refuge. These remarks will tend to throw additional light on the circumstance of the cells of the ancient Culdees being converted into churches. But there was another circumstance which would attach the idea of retirement to the Christian teachers, even although they did not, in the strict sense of the word, seclude themselves from society. The Druid priests appear to have acted a very prominent part in the civil and political concerns of the country;—while, on the other hand, the Christian teachers employed themselves wholly in imparting instruction to the ignorant, in disseminating the saving doctrines of the cross, and in winning souls to Christ.

During the reign of Crathlinth the Culdees continued to prosper, and his successor Fincornach pursuing the same course, the Christian religion was pretty well established in the country. But after the death of Fincornach, about the year 348, in consequence of wars and other troubles, it rather declined for a number of years.

In the reign of Eugenius, (or Ewen I.) Maximus, the Roman governor in the south of Britain, conceived the design of bringing the whole island under the power of the Romans, by taking advantage of the occasional feuds between the Scots and Picts. He accordingly courted the favor of the Picts, and promised them that if they would assist the Romans in rooting out the Scots, he would divide the country belonging to the Scots among them. The Picts too easily fell in with this proposal, and joined with the Romans in invading the territory of the Scots. After several engagements attended with various success, the Scots were totally defeated by the united forces of the Romans and the Picts, in a battle fought at the river Doon, in Ayrshire, about the year 360, in which the Scottish King, and the greater part of the nobility were slain. The remainder of the Scots were, by the severest measures, entirely driven from the island. Some of them took refuge in Ireland, and the Hebrides, others in Scandinavia, Denmark, Norway, and Sweden; and a number of the Culdees, after wandering from place to place, and suffering the utmost hardships, settled together in Iona, one of the Western Isles.

Several attempts were made, at different times, by the Scots in Ireland and the Western Isles to regain possession of their own country, but without success.

Amongst those who fled to Denmark, were Euthodius, a brother of the king who was slain, and his son Eric or Eric, who were received into favour at the Danish court. Fergus, the son of Eric, after the death of his father and grandfather, distinguished himself as a warrior in several of the incursions that were made upon the Romans by the northern nations, and was along with Alarick, the king of the Goths, at the sacking of Rome, in the year 410; and on his return to Denmark carried with him a quantity of books he had obtained at Rome.

In the mean time, the Picts having discovered to their cost, by the tyranny under which they suffered,

that the ultimate design of the Romans in getting rid of the Scots was that they might be the better able to subjugate them, repented of their error, and hearing of the fame of Fergus, privately entered into arrangements with the exiled Scots, and both joined in inviting him to return. Accordingly, encouraged by the withdrawal of a great portion of the Roman forces from Britain to defend the more central parts of the empire, he made the necessary preparations and arrangements, and shortly after, at the head of his countrymen, and accompanied by a large body of Danes and Norwegians, he arrived in the Murray Frith, whence he marched to Dunstaffnage, in Argyleshire, where the marble coronation stone was then kept, in which he was solemnly crowned. Being now joined by the remainder of the Scots from the Western Isles and Ireland, and by a body of Irish auxiliaries, he speedily recovered the ancient territories of the Scots, and divided them amongst his followers, including such of his foreign allies as chose to remain;—and every thing was now restored to its ancient form. Sensible of the beneficial effects of sound Christian instruction in making the people moral and enlightened, and consequently in giving stability to a virtuous government, he lost no time in recalling the Culdees from their places of banishment, restored them to the places from which they had been driven by the Romans, and repaired the churches which had been defaced and thrown into ruins. He erected buildings in the island of Iona, for the accommodation of such of the Culdees as wished to remain there, and furnished them with a library, consisting of the books he had brought with him from Rome. Books being rarely to be met with in those days, this library must have been considered by the Culdees of Iona as a most valuable acquisition.

Iona from this time became famous in the history of the Scottish church. It became a sort of nursery or college where literature and gospel truth were cultivated, and whence the light of a pure gospel radiated by means of missionaries to the adjacent countries for several ages, while the dark night of Popish superstition was spreading over the rest of the Christian world.

The library at Iona, founded by Fergus, was increased from time to time by the addition of documents connected with the history of the kingdom. These, as well as the original books, were, in an after age, probably when the invasions of the Norwegians commenced, removed for safety to the Priory of Restennet in Angus, although it is supposed copies of them were preserved in Iona, as well as in other places. This Priory, being built on an island in a lake, (since drained,) seems to have been considered as a place of safety, as it was latterly made the depository of the valuable records belonging to the Abbey of Jedburgh. It was, however, plundered and destroyed by Edward I., of England, during the Bruce and Baliol wars. The part of the library which remained at Iona, was destroyed by the Norwegians, during their invasions