

know of the general course of Patrick's missionary labors. Even after an interval of two hundred years, they have still preserved trustworthy materials. These, however, were so mingled with fable that the son of Cogitosus, imitating Luke, begins as follows :

"Forasmuch as many, my lord Aidus, have taken in hand to set forth a narration, according to what their fathers and they who from the beginning were ministers of the word, have delivered unto them ; but by reason of the very great difficulty of the narrative, and the diverse opinions and numerous doubts of many persons, have never arrived at any one certain truth of history. But, lest I should seem to make a small matter great, I will now attempt, with little skill, from uncertain authors, with frail memory, with obliterated meaning and barbarous language, but with a most pious intention, obeying the commands of thy belovedness and sanctity and authority, out of the many acts of Saint Patrick, to explain these, gathered here and there with great difficulty."

Thus it appears that many doubts and diverse opinions about Patrick's history were afloat about two centuries after his death, and on the scene of his labors, where innumerable monuments must have met the eyes of his followers. His biographer experienced no ordinary difficulty in interpreting his authorities, Muirchu's modesty and uprightness are much to be commended, and are worthy of imitation by all such as pretend to an accurate knowledge more than a thousand years after the son of Cogitosus was gathered to his fathers. From the *Notes of Tirechan* and the *Life* by Muirchu, when both have been subjected to careful criticism, has been encogitated a tolerably connected account of Patrick's mission, from his landing at Wicklow Head to his death at Saul, near Dounpatrick, where he had made his first convert. I shall not follow the narrative of Patrick's labors in Antrim, Meath, Connaught, and Donnegal, as given in the *Lives*, but rather at present exhibit his remarkable personality as seen in his own authentic writings.

Patrick begins his Confession in these words: "I, Patrick, a sinner, the rudest and least of all the faithful, and most contemptible to very many, had for my father Calpornius, a deacon, a son of Potitus, a presbyter, who dwelt in the village of Bannavem Taberniae." In his letter to Coroticus he says: "I was a free-