

But though true religion was in some places discouraged, in others but feebly supported, and by some of its professed friends most wickedly betrayed, Providence was preparing the way for its dissemination through the whole heptarchy. Various causes and instruments which we have not room to describe, were employed to bring about this desirable end. In Ireland also, as well as in Scotland and Wales, the cause of truth made considerable progress, and filled the hearts of the pious both with gratitude and hope. It is difficult, in our situation, and with our views, to realize the state of things at the period in question; but that there was a great effusion of the Spirit in England during this century, so that numbers were turned from idols to the living God, is established by abundant testimony. Yet towards the end of the period, factious disputes arose which obstructed the progress of the truth. It is not to be supposed that "pure and undefiled religion" prevailed to so great an extent as the nominal profession of it. The Roman Church, as it gradually degenerated, acquired more and more influence in the British isles, though it was, as yet, far from pervading their whole extent. The good effect produced by the preaching of the gospel, though evil was mixed with it, is demonstrated by the fact that, in this century, the northern parts of Europe were visited with the light of life through the instrumentality of British, Scotch, and Irish Missionaries.

EIGHTH CENTURY. The most remarkable man in the church at this period, in England, was the venerable Bede, one of our earliest historians. He composed an Ecclesiastical history of the country, down to the year 731. He was eminently pious as well as learned; and though he did not wholly escape the influence of superstition, he saw and pointed out some of the errors of the church to which

he belonged, and urged upon his superiors the duty of correcting them. Had he been ambitious, he might have risen to high preferment in the church; but he chose to remain a presbyter, and to spend his time, which he did most diligently, in the promotion of learning and true religion. His attainments were surprising, and his exertions contributed much to the extension of Christ's kingdom in the land.

In most of the countries in which religion was professed, idolatry was insinuating itself among the professors of the gospel; and men were forsaking the faith and precepts of Jesus. Britain and Ireland were, at this period, most free from the Roman superstition.

The worship of images, which had long been gaining ground in the papal community, prevailed in this century to an alarming extent, and a warm controversy was maintained on the subject throughout Christendom. The second council of Nice, held in 727, decided in favour of idolatrous worship; but our own island, at that time, was decidedly hostile to idolatry, and the British churches execrated the decision of the council. Wini-fred, an Englishman, afterwards under the name of Boniface, Archbishop of Mentz, was, at this period, very active and successful in dispensing the gospel through a great part of Germany. We shall find ourselves, however, as we pursue the narrative, approaching a season of thick and melancholy darkness.

ONLY THIS ONCE.

[The injurious effects of weak compliances with what we know to be wrong, in order to gratify the wishes of others, have been experienced by many; and yet many to this day are guilty of the same folly. The narrative which follows places this matter in so strong a light, that