

COBOURG, CANADA, FRIDAY, MAY 31, 1844.

Poetry.

MISSIONS.

Light for the dreary vale... Lift high the lamp that never fails... Light for the hills of Greece!

THE CALDEES.

(From the Church in Ireland,) by the Very Rev. Dean Murray.

It is stated by O'Connor, that there existed in Ireland, nearly a hundred years before the mission of St. Patrick, and independent of the see of Rome, an order of monks called Caldees.

This order was in many things very remarkable, and one of its most eminent members was our far-famed Columba, or St. Columbkille, who is considered in the martyrology of Donegal, and by Colgan, as joint patron with St. Patrick of Ireland, and whose name is as familiar to every Irish ear as that of St. Patrick himself.

In such a remote corner of the world as Ireland was then considered, this celebrated monastic order commenced. Distinguished for letters, and an inviolable attachment to their religion, their adversaries (men indeed devoted to the see of Rome) had endeavoured to consign their names and tenets to oblivion, while others of inferior merit are pompously brought forward and extolled for virtues which they never possessed.

The origin of their name has given rise to various conjectures. Toland says it is derived from Celli, de, the separated, or espoused of God. Bishop Nicholson, from Cou-du, a black hood, which, without authority, he supposes to have been the principal part of their dress; whereas, from a passage in Bede, it is probable their garments were white. Shaw's opinion is, that Celli-de, or servant of God, was latinized into Caldeus and Caldeus, from whence we derive the English name Caldees.

The great difficulty in accounting for the name, arises from not knowing the precise time when it was given, if it were at a late period, Nicholson was right, but not so if at an early one, for sanctity was attached to dress only by the late monastic orders.

Columba the founder, or rather the reviver of this order, was born of illustrious parents, A.D. 522.—The fashion of the times, and his own propensity, led him to the cultivation of ascetic virtues, and his preparatory exercises. Monachism had taken root in this kingdom, and was already flourishing in its numerous seminaries, and supported by their learned professors; the most remarkable of the former was that of St. Finian at Clonard, where at the age of twenty-five we find St. Columba engaged in study, and acquiring the rudiments of that knowledge, and exercising that discipline which were afterwards productive of such eminent advantages to Christianity, not only in Ireland, but in Scotland and England.

Having completed his monastic education in 546, he founded the monastery of Durrow, and established such admirable rules for his monks, that they soon became as conspicuous for erudition, as for sanctity of manners. The Scots have claimed these monks as their own, and as springing up in their country so early as the beginning of the fourth century, but Bishop Nicholson, no friend of the order, expressly says, "The Caldees were of the Irish rule, and carried into Scotland by St. Columba, and from thence dispersed into the northern parts of England."

Brilliant parts, and an untiring zeal in the service of religion, with a strain of powerful eloquence, exalted Columba's reputation among his countrymen to a degree scarcely inferior to that of an apostle. Such talents were too large to be confined within the narrow pale of a monkish cell; they were called forth to the regulation of state affairs, and in these he held as decided a superiority as in the cloister. Amidst this splendour of authority and of parts, it would have been miraculous if human weakness did not sometimes betray him into error, from which his biographers do not attempt to exculpate him.

In his early youth he investigated a bloody war without just cause, which being made sensible, he abjured his native land by a voluntary exile, and imposed on himself a mission to the unconverted Picts. Of this event Bede thus speaks:—"In the year of our Lord's incarnation 565, there came out of Ireland"

Columba's great was Felin, the son of Fergus, who was grandson of the great Nial, King of Ireland; and the mother of Felin was Alinne, daughter of Lorn, who first reigned in conjunction with his brother Fergus, who the Scots regarded in Argyleshire.

In those times, noblemen were not seldom the preachers of the gospel, and it is probable, they may be so again, when they shall find that neither their persons nor their property can be secure without it.—Smith's Life of St. Columba.

into Britain, a presbyter and abbot,—a monk in life and habit, very famous, by name Columba, to preach the word of God to the provinces of the northern Picts. This Columba came to Britain, when King Brideus, son of Melioch, reigned over the Picts.—It was in the ninth year of his reign, that by his preaching and example he converted this nation to the faith of Christ."

From this passage it appears evident, that Columba and his disciples have clearly the merit of promulgating the gospel with effect in Scotland, notwithstanding the partial labours of earlier missionaries; by it also the date of the arrival of the Caldees is immovably fixed.

In consequence of Columba's preaching, his example and success, the Isle of Ely was given to him, whereby to construct a monastery. This isle is one of the Hebrides; not large, "but sufficient," says Bede, "for the maintenance of five families, according to the computation of the English."

"Before Columba came into Britain," continues Bede, "he formed a noble monastery in Ireland called Dearmach, from which and Iona, many others have been established by his disciples in Britain and Ireland; over all these the island abbey, where he lies interred, has supreme rule. It is always wont to have a presbyter abbot for its rector, and even the bishops themselves, after an unusual and inverted order, ought to be subject, according to the example of that first doctor, who was no bishop, but a presbyter and monk."

In the observation of Easter, Columba was a quatuordeciman. He left it in charge to the monks of Iona, to keep it from the 14th to the 20th of the moon, which they continued to do until the year 716. This eminent missionary, worn out in the service of his divine master, died at Iona, A.D. 597, aged 75 years. To distinguish him from others of the same name, he was called Colum-celle, from having been the father of above one hundred monasteries.

Bede, though sincerely attached to the See of Rome, yet with candour and truth confesses the merits of the Caldees. "Whatever he was himself, (speaking of Columba), we know of him for certain, that he left a succession renowned for much continence, the love of God and regular observance. It is true, they followed uncertain rules in the observation of the great festival, as having none to bring them the synodal decrees for the keeping of Easter, by reason of their being seated so far from the rest of the world, therefore only practising such works of charity and piety, as they could learn from the PROPHETICAL, EVANGELICAL, AND APOSTOLIC WRITINGS."

Their warmest panegyrist could not pronounce a finer eulogium on the purity of their faith and integrity of their practice. It is true, they did not adopt the corruptions of the Romish Church, nor the superstitions which had corrupted Christianity. For centuries they preserved their countrymen from the baneful contagion, and at length fell a sacrifice in defence of their ancient faith.

No sooner had the papal power got footing in England, than it made attempts on the Irish Church, which had so successfully established itself in that kingdom; but the vigorous opposition of the Caldees delayed for some time, though it could not finally prevent its establishment. "It was not a doubtful ray of science and superstition," as the elegant, though infidel historian of the Roman empire remarks, "that those monks diffused over the northern regions; superstition on the contrary found them her most determined foes."

In 635, Oswald, king of Northumberland, who had been converted to the faith of Christ, among the Irish, and was no admirer of Roman innovations, sent to Iona for a Caldee bishop to instruct his people in evangelical truth. In consequence of which, Aidan, an Irishman, and a Caldee of Iona, was consecrated and sent over to him.

"He was a man," says Bede, "of the greatest modesty, piety, and moderation, having a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge, for he kept the Lord's day of Easter, according to the custom of his country." This abstinence of his merit could not be passed over by a votary of Rome, but it is conveyed in no rancorous nor intolerant language.

"The king," continues Bede, "gave the bishop the Isle of Lindisfern, on the coast of Northumberland, for his episcopal see. York was fixed upon by Pope Gregory before this time, but this nomination Aidan rejected, for two reasons, first, it was not agreeable to the spirit of Caldeism, which chose Islands in preference to the mainland, in imitation of their master Columba; and, secondly, he considered it would be an acquiescence in the decision of the Roman Pontiff, which the Irish hierarchy, complete and independent in itself, had not submitted to."

"Oswald personally attended Aidan's ministry—when the latter preached, but not perfectly understanding the Anglo-Saxon tongue, the king was his interpreter; he was I Hy or Aoi, (as written in the annals of Ulster, which were latinized into Hyona or Iona, the common name of which is now I-Colam-Kill, the Isle of Colum of the cells), included in one of the parishes of the Island of Mull. Its venerable ruins still command respect, and the papal bull, founded upon a prophetic oracle ascribed to St. Columba, is, that they may yet recover their ancient splendour."

O sacred dome, and my beloved abode, Whose walls now echo to the praise of God; And time shall come, when leading monks shall cease, And living herds here occupy their place; But, better ages shall hereafter come, And praise re-echo in the sacred dome.

The first part of the prophecy was literally fulfilled for ages, till the present noble proprietor, the Duke of Argyll, caused the sacred ground to be enclosed with a sufficient wall. Before that, the Cathedral was used sometimes as a pen for cattle—sic transit gloria mundi. "We were now," says Dr. Johnson, "reading that illustrious island which was once the luminary of the Caledonians regions, whence savage clans and roving barbarians derived the benefit of knowledge, and the blessings of religion. To abstract the mind from all local emotions, would be impossible if it were attempted; and would be foolish, if it were possible."

The Dearmach mentioned by Bede, Camden, and Walsh, is supposed to be Armagh, but improperly. The word is Durmagh, commonly called Durrow, and which Bede and Adamnan rightly interpret the oak field.

The Christians in the second century, says Mosheim, celebrated anniversary festivals in commemoration of the death and resurrection of Christ, and of the effusion of the Holy Ghost upon the apostles. The day which was observed as the anniversary of Christ's death, was called the Paschal day, or Passover, because it was looked upon to be the same with that on which the Jews celebrated the feast of that name.

In the manner, however, of observing this solemn day, the Christians of Lesser Asia differed much from the rest, and in a more especial manner from those of Rome. They both indeed fasted during the great week, (so that was called in which Christ died), and afterwards celebrated, like the Jews, a sacred feast, at which they distributed a paschal lamb, in memory of our Saviour's last supper. But the Asiatic Christians kept the feast on the fourteenth day of the first Jewish month, at the time that the Jews celebrated their passover, and three days after commemorated the resurrection of the triumphant Redeemer. They affirmed that they had this custom from the apostles John and Philip, and pleaded moreover in its behalf the example of Christ himself, who held his paschal feast on the same day that the Jews celebrated their passover. In the Western Churches observed a different method. 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