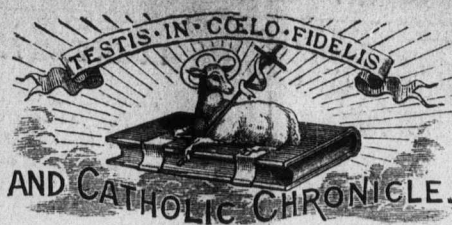


# The True Witness



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## St. Patrick Greatest of National Apostles.

St. Patrick, Apostle of Ireland and Patron of Australia, is assuredly one of the grandest and greatest characters that we encounter in the whole course of history. Entering Ireland nearly fifteen centuries ago, he found the country pagan. At his death, in 493, he left after him a Christian nation; hence Aengus in his *Felire* styles him "the blaze of a splendid sun, the Apostle of Stainless Erin." "For his good deeds," says St. Sechnall, "he is compared with angels, and for his perfect life he is equalled to the Apostles." "Pious," says St. Fiech, "was Patrick till death. He was powerful in expelling evil. That is what spread his praise up to every nation of mankind." Tillemont likens St. Patrick to "the prophets of the Old Law," and to the Apostles, "who in the grace and power of Pentecost first spread the faith of Christ."

the Catholic missionary has, therefore, ever been, and must continue to be, a work of great labor, with apparently small results. Such has it ever been among all nations; and yet Ireland seems a grand exception. She is perhaps the only country in the world that entirely owes her conversion to the work of one man. He found her universally pagan; he left her universally Christian.

It has been remarked that among pagan nations those that were the most civilized usually yielded the most abundant harvest. The Catholic missionaries went among them for the first time, civilization thus proving itself to be a natural preparation for the Gospel. Ireland, in St. Patrick's day, had reached a comparatively high degree of civilization. Fourteen hundred years before he came the Irish nation ruled by its Ard-riacht, or high king, and its four subordinate kings had its triennial Parliament at Tara. A thousand years before the Christian era the Irish people had their colleges of war, of history, and law. From the date of the Battle of Moytura, fought in the days of Moses, to the Anglo-Norman invasion, the Irish people were re-

The peculiar points of St. Patrick's teaching were the following: Fidelity to St. Peter's Chair and to St. Peter's successor, the Pope of Rome; devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary; prayer, and remembrance for the dead, and confiding obedience and love for their bishops and priests. By the first—namely, fidelity to the Pope—he secured the unity of the Irish Church as a living member of the Church Catholic; by the second—devotion to the Blessed Virgin—he secured the purity and morality of the people; by the third—care of the dead—he enlisted on the side of Catholic truth the natural love and strong feelings of the Irish character; and by the last—attachment and obedience to the priesthood—he secured to the Irish Church the principle of internal union, which is the secret of her strength.

"Ireland's preservation of the Catholic faith," continues Father Burke, "has been a puzzle to the world, and men have sought to explain it in many different ways. The true reason lies in the all-important circumstance that the religion of the Irish people was the true religion of Jesus Christ, bringing not only light to the intelligence but grace and strength to the heart of the nation. The light of the divine faith showed them the hollowness of Protestantism, in which they recognized an outrage upon common-sense and reason, as well as upon God; and the grace of their holy Catholic religion enabled them to suffer and die in its defence. Here it is that we recognize the providence of God in the teaching of St. Patrick. The

adorable sacrifice of the Son of God; nor did he ever cease to teach the people and to instruct his disciples. The following blessing, found at page 234 in the famous "Book of Rights," and addressed by the saint on behalf of all the inhabitants of Ireland, is very touching and very beautiful:

"Be Erin blessed at evening hours, When sunset gilds her fragrant bowers; When whirlwinds howl, my blessings be. My generous Erin still with thee; To thee be every blessing given, From favoring skies by bounteous heaven; Be blessings on thy bashful maids, Be blessings on thy battle blades, Blest be the fisher tribes that roam, Thy black'ning surge and whitening foam; Oh, blessed be thy stormy night, And blessings on thy morning bright, Be blessings on thy castle towers, Be blessings on thy village bowers; My blessings on thy waving corn, And every babe in Erin born; Blessed be thy thunder's angry roar, And every wave that laps thy shore, And blessed be the smiles serene Of sunshine on thy forests green, Where meadows spread, where hills locks rise, Where lordly mountains kiss the skies; On every hamlet, vale and hill, My blessing be with Erin still; Oh blessed be the rain and dew, And every breeze that visits you; And blessed be thy warriors tall, Thy chieftain's doon, thy abbot's hall; My blessings on thy matrons fair; Thy mineral treasures rich and rare; The flocks that bleat, the herds that low, The streams that warble as they flow, On every cottage, hall and hill, My blessings be with Erin still."

During a long portion of his mission in Ireland, in imitation of the Apostles, he went constantly on foot; but afterwards, by reason of age and infirmities, he used a chariot, according to the custom of the country. Over his other garments he was clothed with a white cow, so that in the form and the pure color of his dress he showed his profession, and proved himself a candidate of lowliness and innocence. Whence it came to pass that the monks in Ireland, following his example, for many years were contented with the simple habit which the wool of the sheep afforded them, untinged with any foreign dye.

In his countenance, in his gait, in his whole person, did he edify the beholders; and his discourse was well seasoned and suited to every age, sex, rank and condition. He was thoroughly skilled in four languages, the British, the Irish, the Gaelic and the Latin; and the Greek language also he partially understood. The little book of proverbs which he composed in the Irish tongue still exists, and his great volume, called "Canon Phadrug," suits every person, layman and cleric, unto the exercise of justice and the salvation of souls. So excellent was he in the spirit of prophecy that he foretold divers future events, even as if they were present.

Though in his manifold virtues he equaled all other saints, in the virtue of humility he surpassed even himself, for in his epistles he was wont to mention himself as the lowest and vilest of sinners, and, little accounting the signs and miracles that he had wrought, he thought himself not to be compared to any just man, and, being but of small stature, he used often to call himself a dwarf, even in the spiritual sense. Often, after the manner of St. Paul, he toiled with manual labor, fishing and tilling the ground, but chiefly in building churches, to which employment he urged his disciples, both by exhortation and example. Nevertheless, right earnestly did he apply himself to baptizing the people and ordaining the ministers of the Church, so that a very large number of bishops and priests did he prepare, besides a still greater multitude of monks and nuns.

His great work, styled his "Confessions," was composed in his old age, and some short time before his death. The last words are: "This is my confession before I die." It

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"There is," says the great antiquarian, O'Curry, "abundant evidence in the manuscripts relating to that period to show that St. Patrick found on his coming to Erin a regularly-defined system of law and policy, a fixed classification of the people, according to various grades and ranks under the sway of a single monarch presiding over certain subordinate provincial kings, and such was the love of learning in this ancient race that when the ollav or philosopher was ordained by the king, he was entitled to sit at table next to the king himself. The nation, therefore, that St. Patrick came to evangelize was a civilized race, a people gracious and high of heart, not worshippers of self or dulled through sense. Under such a then, we expect rich results, and we are not disappointed, for his disciples are more than real."

"Bard and Brehm, priest and chief, Spurned their old, false dreams like dross, And each enrolled himself a knight, Neath the banner of the Faith, Neath the Standard of the Cross."

is composed in very homely Latin, for which the saint excuses himself by alleging that he had been obliged to adopt another language, the Irish, and had thus nearly forgotten the language that had been first taught him. His principal object in writing it was to glorify God, who through his means had done such great things in Ireland; and also to confirm to their faith the converts whom he had baptized by proving that God had raised him up in an extraordinary manner, even from the state of captivity, for the purpose of securing their salvation.

In the "Leabhar Breac," which the learned Petrie pronounces to be "the oldest and best Irish manuscript relating to Church history now preserved, or which, perhaps, the Irish ever possessed," we find the following statement: "The year, therefore, that St. Patrick came to Ireland was the four hundred and thirty-third from the Incarnation, in the ninth year of the reign of Theodosius, king of the world, and in the first year of the Episcopacy of Sixtus, the Coarb of Peter, and in the fourth of the reign of Leoghaire MacNiall at Tara, and in the sixtieth year of his own age; and for sixty years he baptized and instructed the men of Erin."

As Fiacr says, "He preached for three-score years the Crucifixion of Christ to the tribes of the Fen." It was St. Celestine, the predecessor of Pope Sixtus, that sent St. Patrick to Ireland, and he did not live, it is said, more than one week after the saint's consecration.

According to the commonly-received opinion, St. Patrick was born near Boulogne, in France. His father, Calphurnius, was of a noble Roman family, and his mother, Conchessa, was sister to St. Martin of Tours. Before his death the saint was warned that he should not die in Armagh, but in Saul, his favorite retreat, where he had built upon the land given him by his first convert, Dichu. Being so admonished by his angel guardian, he fortified himself with the divine mysteries from the hand of his disciple, the Bishop Tassach, and, lifting up his eyes, he beheld the heavens opened, and Jesus standing in the midst of a multitude of angels.

Then, raising his hands and blessing his people, and giving thanks, he passed forth out of this world, from the faith unto reality, from his pilgrimage unto his country, from transitory pain unto eternal glory. The death of St. Patrick occurred on March 17, 493. The Saint's remains were interred at Down; hence the popular dictum:

"In Down three Saints one grave do fill—Bridget, Patrick and Columbaill."

### SHAMROCK LACROSSE CLUB OFFICERS RE-ELECTED

The annual meeting of the Shamrock Lacrosse Club was held last Monday evening in the Hall of St. Ann's Young Men's Association, a goodly number of the members of the club being present. The financial statement, which was presented by Mr. W. P. Lunny, the secretary-treasurer of the Shamrock Association, showed that the club had a surplus for the year of \$5,624.56. The net gate receipts were \$10,575.32.

The election resulted as follows, nearly all of last year's officers being re-elected:

Honorary President, Ald. Tom O'Connell.

President, Mr. H. E. McLaughlin.

First Vice-President, Mr. T. F. Slattery.

Second Vice-President, Mr. Hughes.

Hon. Secretary, Mr. M. J. Brennan.

Assistant Secretary, Mr. D. Callaghan.

Mr. McLaughlin, in a brief address, thanked the members for re-election to the office of president. He remarked that the increase in membership during the past year had been the greatest in the history of the club. Brief speeches were made by several of the other officers.

Mr. John Dodds said that the club was supposed to be composed of Irishmen and sons of Irishmen and therefore he thought an Irish national flag should float over the club house. He made a motion, which was seconded by Ald. Tom O'Connell, authorizing the committee to purchase an Irish flag to be used on the club house.

Mr. P. Brennan suggested that it would be a good thing to encourage the players by promising them a trip to the Old Country if they won the championship. He said the team could play at the Dublin Exhibition and it would be sure to receive a warm welcome in the old land.

The general opinion of the meeting seemed to be that Mr. Brennan's proposition was a good one, but no definite action was taken in the matter.

**DIED.**

**MYERS**—At the residence of his brother-in-law, M. J. Fleming, 249 St. Joseph St., Lachine, John Myers, aged 78 years, native of County Clare, Ireland. Funeral from the above address Tuesday morning at 8.30 to the parish church. Friends are invited to attend. Member of St. Gabriel's T. A. & B. Society.