

were obliged to possess a moderate share of it, to qualify them for the priesthood, and entitle them to its emoluments. In the time of Tacitus, (A. D. 108,*) the German nations were strangers to letters; and the two following facts prove, that other nations were likely to continue illiterate, had not the teachers of the gospel exerted themselves for their instruction. The Goths having made themselves masters of Athens, (A. D. 270,) brought together into one heap all the books they found there, and would have consumed the valuable treasure, had not one of them told his companions, that while the Greeks amused themselves with those, they neglected the art of war, and were easily overcome.† Theodoric, a Gothic Prince, (A. D. 293,) would not suffer the children of his subjects to be instructed in the sciences; imagining, that such instruction enervated the mind, rendered men unfit for martial exploits; and that the boy who trembled at the rod, would never look undaunted at the sword or spear.‡ But no sooner was Christianity propagated among barbarians, than they were instructed in the use of letters. Ulphilas, a Gothic Bishop, (A. D. 380,) invented letters for his illiterate countrymen, translated the Bible into the vulgar tongue for their use, and instructed them in its doctrines; and some Goths soon became so well informed, that they compared their version with the Latin, the Greek and the Hebrew originals.§ Before the introduction of Christianity in Ireland, the natives had no alphabet, no annals but their verses, nor any thing but memory to preserve their verses, their antiquities, the genealogies of their kings, and the exploits of their heroes. The more verses a man could repeat, the more learned he was deemed, while the bard who composed any thing new was sure of being respected by the kings and the people.|| This was the state of the Irish, when the Christian missionaries came to instruct them in the use of letters, and in the truths of the gospel. Such a change, however, was wrought in them by Christianity and its teachers, that Ireland was styled the island of very pious and very learned men. Ansgarius,¶ the chief apostle of the northern nations, not only preached the gospel to those barbarians, but established schools for the instruction of youth in religion and letters. Cyril and Methodius,** who converted the Bulgarians, Moldavians and Bohemians, about the same time, previously invented the Slavonic alphabet and translated

* De Moribus Germ. c. ii. iii.

† Zonaras, Annal. lib. 12. c. 26. Gibbon's Hist. vol. I. p. 434.

‡ Procop. De Bello. Goth. lib. 1. c. 2.

§ Socrat. lib. iv. c. 32. Sozom. lib. vi. c. 36. Philostorg. lib. ii. c. 5.

|| Bolandi Acta, March, xvii.

¶ Mabillon, Annal. 826.

** Balbini Miscell. part i.