

SAINT COLUMBA.



WE are indebted to a well known illustrated journal for many beautiful pictures and sometimes for valuable information. But its claim to rank always as "a best possible public instructor," cannot always be admitted. It passes beyond

all conceivable newspaper blundering when speaking of Saint Columba. This will be shown after we have given a few words of the history of the illustrious Saint.

Columba was connected by birth with the Royal Families of Ireland. Being a devout Christian, he was anxious to possess a copy of the Book of Psalms, which was kept in the Church of an Abbot of the country. The Abbot refusing to favour him with a copy, he stealthily made one himself under night, light, as the legends affirm, being provided in a supernatural manner. The copy being completed, Columba claimed it as his own. The Abbot would not admit his claim, and so the matter was brought before the chief king of Ireland. His majesty gave his decision in the words: "To every cow her calf." This was hostile to Columba, and being sorely disappointed at losing the fruit of his labour, and having influence with one of the lesser kings through his near relationship, he raised an insurrection against the chief king. This was held by the Christian people to be a grievous sin. The holy men of the land—whom Columba consulted, pronounced that on account of raising civil war and causing bloodshed, severe penance must be undergone. Columba concurring in this opinion, resolved to go into perpetual exile. Abandoning, accordingly, the land which he loved so dearly he repaired to Scotland and settled in Iona, an island in the country of the Scoti who had long been a Christian people. On his arriving there, the journal would have us * believe that Columba in order to propitiate the Priests of Druidism, put to

death, as a sacrifice, a most dear companion and friend who had accompanied him from Ireland. This was going beyond Druidical practice, the Druids, as is now generally believed, sacrificing only criminals. Their superstition and their priesthood had ceased to exist in the country of the Scoti, long before the arrival of St. Columba. Who was there then to conciliate? Or, was it necessary that the apostolic man who was destined to be the Saviour of the Picts (Pechts), should shock the feelings of a Christian people by committing an atrocious murder?

The sacrifice was to the powers of evil too. Truly, Columba must have been strangely resolved to out-do the Druids, who sacrificed only to the Supreme Deity. The Christian Monk, no doubt, knew more about Satan than the Druids, and thought it as well to make alliance with him. It is of no consequence that we do not understand how this could be, his infernal majesty, having been known to aid powerfully in pulling down churches, and above all, for his unceasing hostility to the Church with which Columba was in communion.

There are no bounds to the extravagance and falsehood of some *traditions*, or, to the credulity of those who receive them. In the accepted histories of St. Columba, there is no mention of the absurdities which the writer in the illustrated journal ascribes to him. No history could be received as genuine which represents a consistently Christian man actually undergoing self-inflicted punishment for his sins, adding to his iniquities by becoming guilty of the most cruel criminal act that could possibly be committed by any human being.

From his chosen abode in Iona, Columba went forth in order to gain over to christianity the Pictish people, who occupied the north eastern parts of Scotland. We are inclined to believe that he commenced his labours by apostolic preaching, and not by miraculous violence. The King of the Picts at first refused to grant him an audience. Finally, however, he consented to receive Columba, and then, we cannot