

ple, by Pope Celestine the First, who sent him to preach the Gospel to the Irish nation. In his tender years nothing was seen foolish or childish in his comportment, he was the joy of his parents, and not less endeared to his surrounding neighbours. And thus he continued in the grace of the Lord, and with every virtue blessed, until about the beginning of his sixteenth year, when it was the will of heaven to put his virtue to the test, conformable to the testimonies of holy writ; as the furnace tries gold, and the fire of tribulation the just man, so were there severe trials prepared for our Apostle, in order thereby more amply to receive the riches of celestial grace. It was at the same age in which Joseph is recorded to have been sold to the Egyptians, that St. Patrick was torn from the endearments of his parents and brought captive to Ireland, where neither the severity of his employ, the cruelty of his masters, nor the idolatrous example of the people could corrupt his heart or estrange him from the Lord: even the idolators were moved by his example and astonished at his wonderful perseverance; in the ardent aspirations of his soul to the Lord, he passed six years in this painful bondage in the service of Milcho, and as it is mentioned in the law, that after six years spent in servitude, a person has a right to demand his liberty; and so at the expiration of six years spent in bondage, he was delivered after a manner truly miraculous and again restored to the embraces of his parents. An angel of the Lord expressly delegated for that purpose, came down from Heaven to comfort the beloved of God and instruct him in the ways necessary for effecting his deliverance; and as gold was so much esteemed by the avaricious king, the angel marked out the way for the fa-