

PLEASANT HOURS

A PAPER FOR OUR YOUNG FOLK

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OVER and over again,
No matter which way I turn,
I always find in the book of life,
Some lesson that I must learn;
I must take my turn at the mill,
I must grind out the golden grain,
I must work at my task with a resolute
Over and over again.

IONA, STAFFA, AND FINGAL'S CAVE.

BY THE EDITOR.

THE south-western isles of Scotland present some of the finest scenery and most interesting associations of any part of Great Britain.

The little steamer *Iona* leaves the busy quay of the Broomielaw at Glasgow, and glides down the river Clyde, through the crowded shipping from every land which through the busy port. On the north shore we pass the little hamlet of Kilpatrick, the reputed birth-place of the patron saint of Ireland. According to legend, the holy man was so beset by the minions of Satan, that he fled in a small boat to the Isle of Saints. Satan, enraged at his escape, seized a huge boulder and flung it after the fugitive.

If you presume to doubt the story, you are shown the identical stone, Dumbarton Rock, crowned with its lofty castle, 460 feet in air. To the left is the Port of Greenock, in whose quiet "God's acre" sleeps the dust of "Highland Mary," the object of Burns' purest and most fervent love, and the subject of his most tender and touching ballad.

We enter now the winding channel of the Kyles of Bute, the cliffs rising abruptly from the sea, like a land-locked

lake. Crossing Loch Tyne, we enter Crinian Canal, which saves a *detour* of seventy miles around the Mull of Cantyre, and threading the Jura Sound, between magnificent cliffs and crags, we glide into the beautiful "White Bay" of Oban.

From Oban, a staunch little seaworthy steamer—for the passage is often very rough—conveys one around the rugged island of Mull, calling at Iona's holy isle, and at the marvellous cave of Staffa. The island of Iona—Isle of the Waves, or Icolmkill, the Isle of St. Columba's cell—is very small, only two miles and a half in length, by one in breadth—but here burned for long ages the beacon fire of

manuscripts of the Gospel and Psalms. When grown to man's estate, in fulfilment of a vow, he became a missionary to the pagan Picts and Scots. With twelve companions, in skin-covered osier boats, he reached Iona's lonely isle, amid the surges of the melancholy main. Here he reared his monasteries of wattled huts; his chapel, refectory, cow byre, and grange. The bare ground was their bed, and a stone their pillow. The sea-girt isle became a distinguished seat of learning and piety—a moral lighthouse, sending forth rays of spiritual illumination amid the dense heathen darkness all around. Much time was spent by the monks in the study of the Greek and Latin tongues,

their pious toil, some of which survived the stormy tumults of a thousand years.

The island has no harbour, and only one very rude pier, visitors, therefore, must land in small boats, but few will be deterred by this drawback from treading the sacred soil of the "Blessed Isle." The village consists of about fifty low stone-walled cottages, tenanted by simple fisher-folk and tillers of the soil. The chief attraction of the island is the roofless and ruined cathedral, 160 feet in length, with its massive tower, rising 70 feet in height. Here are shown the cloisters, the bishop's house, and the alleged burying place of St. Columba himself. That man

is little to be envied," said Dr. Johnson, as he moralized amid these mouldering monuments of the early Celtic faith. "Those patriot isms would not gain force upon the plains of Marathon, or whose piety would not grow warmer among the ruins of Iona."

Nine miles north of Iona is the tiny island of Staffa, scarce a mile in circuit. Its appearance is highly picturesque, amid an archipelago of sister islands.

The island rises at its highest point 142 feet above the sea. It is covered with luxuriant grass, which affords pasture for a few cattle. The



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the Christian faith, when pagan darkness enveloped all around.

Among the wild mountains of Donegal, in Ireland, early in the sixth century, was born a child of royal race, destined to become famous throughout the world as the Apostle of Christianity to Scotland, and the patron saint of that land, till he was superseded by St. Andrew. This boy was Colum, or Columba, who in his youth had a passion for borrowing from the convent founded by St. Patrick, and copying

and in the transcription of MS. copies of the Scriptures.

The pious Celts, as these missionaries were called, in their frail osier barks, penetrated the numerous gulfs and straits of that storm-lashed coast. They carried the Gospel to the far-off steeps of St. Kilda; to the Orkney, Shetland, and Faroe Islands; and even to Iceland itself, where relics of their visit, in Celtic books, bells, and crosses, have been found. Three hundred monasteries and churches are ascribed to

entire façade of the island, the arches and flooring of the caves, strangely resemble architectural designs. The whole island may be said to be honey-combed with these grottoes; but the chief marvels are on the eastern side, where those scenes are displayed which have long been the theme of painters' pencils and poets' pens. The special wonder is Fingal's Cave, the sides and front of which are formed of perpendicular basaltic columns. The arch is 70 feet high and supports a roof thirty