

Iona's lonely isle, amid the surges of the melancholy main. Here he reared his monasteries of wattled huts; his chapel, refectory, cow byres, 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, and in the transcription of MS. copies of the Scriptures.

The pious Culdees, 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 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 Culdee faith, "whose patriotism 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:—

"Ulva dark and Colonsay,  
And all the group of islets gay,  
That guard famed Staffa round."

The island rises at its highest point 144 feet above the sea. It

\* See Withrow's "Romance of Missions,"—the Conversion of Britain.