

any coming changes which might once more call them into activity. During the whole, indeed, of this disastrous period, the interests of the British Church, as such, would seem to have suffered less than the civil and political overthrow of the British themselves might have led us to expect. For, although the war of extermination carried on by their treacherous allies seemed at first to have taken, at least partially, the form of persecution;* yet there were, even then, causes at work which tended primarily to the toleration, and then necessarily to the extension of Christianity. These causes were, mainly, the friendships which soon sprang up between the Picts and Saxons, and the propagation of Christianity amongst the former, who were made acquainted with it early in the fifth century, through the preaching of the British missionary, Ninias. It is to be regretted that the history of the latter movement has not come down to us more in detail; but it was certainly both important and successful. Many Episcopal sees were founded, though their several names have not been preserved. The contact of the Saxons with Christianity, so little practically understood as it was among the barbarous Picts, resulted, no doubt, in toleration, inquiry, and further propagation of the faith; and a way was thus opened, at a further stage of which the banner of the cross was successfully planted amongst the Saxons themselves, in the following century.

The obstacles to the northward spread of Christianity amongst the Picts seems to have been greater on account of the inaccessible nature of the country, so that it was not introduced by Columba among the Northern Picts till a hundred and fifty years after it had been preached by Ninias in the Lowlands.

Another predisposing cause in favour of Christianity in the Saxon mind, before its formal establishment among that people in Britain, was the knowledge of its principles which they had acquired by intercourse with the kindred nations of continental Europe, many of whom professed Christianity in the fifth century. Foremost of these were the Franks, a people which exercised the most lasting influence upon the British Church. We have seen the Pelagian heresy suppressed by the mediation of the Gallic Church; the acceptance of the faith by the Saxons was considerably furthered from the same quarter. The friendship between Gaul and Britain was cemented by the marriage of the Gallic Princess Bertha to King Ethelbert. This took place, most probably, as early as the year 570, but a few years after the conversion of the

* This seems to be implied by Bede (Eccl. Hist. i, 15) in the expression, "*passim sacerdotes inter altaria trucidabantur*."