

But the second proof of the high character of those Brehon laws, in which so many resemblances to the Common Law of England have been found, lies in the fact that St. Patrick, when called upon to revise them in view of the conversion of Ireland to Christianity, found but comparatively little to alter or to add. Did he and his two episcopal assistants seek to supersede them by the Roman law? No; we are told that they declared that the ancient Irish code contained "the judgments of true nature which the Holy Spirit had spoken through the mouths of the Brehons and first poets of the men of Erin," and that "the law of nature had been quite right." Consequently they only amended it so that it should not clash with the Word of God, and should take cognisance of the obligations of the faith and the harmony of the Church and people.

Some of the additions made by St. Patrick are noteworthy—there are four dignitaries of a territory who may be degraded: "A false judging king, a stumbling bishop, a fraudulent poet, an unworthy chieftain;" and there were penalties imposed for the following offences committed by anyone: "False judgment, false witness, fraudulent security, false information, false character-giving, bad story or lying in general."

We have not time, however, to linger over these details, which have been lately quoted in an interesting lecture by Dr. Sigerson on St. Patrick's Day in Dublin, although we may well wish that St. Patrick were here to rule us. But the two points to be observed are, first, the high tone which must have existed amongst these pagans, and which, in com-