

LECTURE VII.

COLUMBANUS.

THE golden age of the Irish Church was at its earliest age. From 500 to 700 was the period when most of those missionaries appeared whose names have made the fame of the early Celtic Church,—Columba, Columbanus, St. Gall, St. Colman, Adamnan, and a host of others. The missionary activity of the Irish Church did not then cease utterly and at once. It was prolonged for centuries later, till the time of Marianus Scotus, of Ratisbon, in the eleventh century.¹ But after the seventh century it was no longer the one all-absorbing national thought and passion. Other interests had arisen. The Roman controversy about Easter, and the ever-increasing claims of the Roman see, helped to distract attention. Controversy then, as now, led men's minds from practical work, and hindered the advance of the Gospel. The incursions of the Danes, too, deprived the Irish Church

¹ See Dr. Reeves on Marianus Scotus in the *Proceedings* of the Roy. Ir. Acad., vii., 290, where he notices the achievements of the following Irish missionaries, SS. Cataldus, Fiaca, Fridolin, Colman, and Kilian, none of whom find place in our Annals. St. Cataldus laboured in Southern Italy, where San Cataldo, near Otranto, is called after him; St. Fiaca in France; St. Colman is patron saint of Lower Austria; Kilian taught in Franconia; Fridolin at Glarus, where his figure finds place in the cantonal arms and banner. Cf. *Mittheilungen der Antiquarischen Gesellschaft* in Zurich, vol. ix., part 1., tab. 12, No. 10.

of that internal tranquillity needful for missionary enterprise. The boldest spirits, which used to seek the post of danger and the crown of martyrdom in foreign missions, could now find that position much nearer home. It is to the sixth and seventh centuries I must, therefore, again direct your attention when describing one who in many respects was the greatest, bravest, most thoroughly national, and most representative of all the warriors of the Cross sent forth from Irish shores.

Columbanus is quite distinct from Columba or Columcille. It is necessary to bear this most carefully in mind, for Columba and Columbanus are very often confounded, and have been so confounded even by eminent scholars. Let me briefly distinguish them. They were both Irishmen, indeed, and both born in the sixth century. Columba was an Ulster man, however, Columbanus a Leinster man. Columba was born in 521; Columbanus was more than twenty years his junior, having been born in 543. Columba was the apostle of Scotland or Caledonia; Columbanus never set foot in Scotland. He was the apostle of Burgundy, Switzerland, and Northern Italy. Columba spent his life among the Pictish pagans of North Britain; Columbanus laboured among the pagans of Central Europe. Now, some may say, or secretly think, as ignorant people are wont to do, "Is not his whole history legendary, with just as much historical truth in it as in the Arthurian legends, and not nearly so much as in Homer's account of the destruction of Troy?" This, indeed, is the real view of many who write in newspapers, whose political or national spleen leads them to confound the miserable squabbles and degradation of the mediæval Church of Ireland with its

earlier and purer period. They seem to think there are no real authentic records of early Irish Church history, and they really class Columba and Columbanus with the legends and myths of a poetic people. With such persons I have neither patience nor sympathy, because they are wilfully and inexcusably ignorant. I have already shown you the folly of such a notion about Columba, and pointed out that we have as good reason for believing the leading facts of his life as for believing any others in history. St. Columbanus is in a still more favourable position. Let me, then, briefly tell you first of all what are the authorities for his life. They are of the highest value and character. First, we have his own writings. These consist of his *Monastic Rule*, in ten chapters; a book on the daily penances of the monks; seventeen sermons, all of them very short; a book on the measure of penances; an instruction concerning the eight principal vices; a considerable number of Latin verses; and five epistles, two addressed to Boniface IV., one to Gregory the Great, one to the members of a Gallican synod, upon the question of Easter, and one to the monks of his monastery of Luxeuil, wherein he gives us various details of his life. Besides his own writings, we have his life, written by the Abbat Jonas, a contemporary of St. Columbanus and a monk in his Italian convent of Bobbio. From these documents, aided by the general history of the age wherein Columbanus played a leading political as well as religious part, we can construct a strictly historical life of this great missionary.

Columbanus was born in Leinster, A.D. 543, the same year in which Benedict of Nursia, his great monastic predecessor and rival, died at Monte Cassino. He was educated first of all on one of the islands of Lough

Erne, which in those early times was studded with sacred retreats, of which the island of Devenish, the home of St. Molaise, now presents the only remains. From Lough Erne Columbanus migrated to Bangor, on Belfast Lough, which was then at the height of its fame as a place where the greatest attainments in learning and sanctity were possible.¹ We are apt to undervalue the studies of these ancient monasteries, just as we, in our intellectual conceit, are apt to undervalue all mediæval learning, because the men of those times knew nothing of the daily press, photography, electricity, or gunpowder. In monasteries like Bangor, the range of studies was a wide one. Take up the work of the Venerable Bede, produced at the monastery of Jarrow by a man who never travelled farther than the neighbouring city of York, and then you will have some idea how extensive must have been the range of monastic studies. Listen to one of the latest and most competent judges upon this point. Bishop Stubbs, writing of Bede in Smith's *Dictionary of Christian Biography*, says, "The attainments of Bede were very great. He certainly knew Greek, and had some knowledge of Hebrew. Among the classical writers of antiquity he knew Virgil, Ovid, Lucian, Lucretius, Terence, and a host of smaller poets. Homer he quotes once. He knew nearly all the second-rate poets, using them for the illustration of the *Ars Metrica*. The earlier fathers were, of course, in familiar use. The diversity as well as the extent of his reading is remarkable: grammar, rhetoric, poetry, hagiography, arithmetic, chronology, the holy places, the Paschal controversy, epigrams,

¹ See Reeves' *Eccles. Antiqq.*, pp. 93, 199, about the foundation and celebrity of Bangor. St. Comgall, the friend and companion of St. Columba, was its first abbat.

hymns, sermons, pastoral admonition, and the conduct of penitents; even speculations on natural science, on which he specially quotes Pliny, furnished work for his pen, beside his great works on history and the interpretation of Scripture. He must have had good teachers, as well as a good library and an insatiable desire of learning." Bede was, indeed, a century later than Columbanus, yet all this description might be transferred to Columbanus and to Bangor, which must have been a thoroughly equipped and vigorous seat of learning in the latter half of the sixth century, when it could despatch such a trained and even elegant scholar as he was to convert the pagans of France. The proofs of his learning are evident to the student of his writings. The scholarship of them is manifest. He writes good Latin verses, full of quaint metrical conceits, both in the classical and monkish rhyming style. Allusions to pagan and Christian antiquity abound in his poems.¹ Where did he get this scholarship? His life on the Continent was one of rough, vigorous, all-absorbing practical effort, leaving no time for such studies. His age, too, forbids the idea. No man ever, I should think, gains the facility in Latin versification

¹ At sixty-eight he addressed to a friend, named Fedolius, an epistle in Adonic verse, which everywhere bears the impression of those classical studies which the Irish monks of that period cultivated. He prays him (Opp., ed. Migne, *Pat. Lat.*, lxxx., 291) not to despise those little verses by which Sappho, the illustrious muse, loved to charm her contemporaries in lines like the following:—

"Inclya vates,
Nomine Sappho,
Versibus istis
Dulce solebat
Edere carmen.
Doctiloquorum,
Carmina linquens
Frivola nostra
Suscipe latus."

which Columbanus possessed unless he begins the study in youth. Even did time and leisure permit, the opportunity was wanting, as the Continent was then plunged in utter darkness, literary as well as spiritual. St. Columbanus, we therefore conclude, gained his extensive knowledge and elegant scholarship at the abbeys of Bangor and of Lough Erne. About the year 585, he was seized with a desire to preach the Gospel. The triumphs of Columba and of the Caledonian mission were then rousing the holy ambition of the Irish monasteries, and Bangor, within sight of the Scotch coast, must have felt a special call to such work. Some circumstances—what they were we know not—determined Columbanus and twelve companions to seek the shores of France. They crossed to Great Britain, and thence reached Gaul.

France was, towards the end of the sixth century, a bye-word throughout Europe for immorality and irreligion. When we think of the Gaul of that period, we must not think of it as it was in the fourth and fifth centuries, the age of a Hilary of Poitiers, of a Martin of Tours, or a Germanus of Auxerre. For a hundred years and more it had been the prey of every invader; and, though the country was struggling on towards better things, these better things were yet far distant. Let me quote from Milman a vigorous passage illustrating the dangers and obstacles our countryman had to face as he went forth to call the Franks and Burgundians to the obedience of Christ.

“It is difficult,” says that historian, in his *Latin Christianity*, lib. iii., cap. ii., “to conceive a more dark and odious state of society than that of France under her Merovingian kings, the descendants of Clovis, as described by Gregory of Tours. In the conflict of

coalition of barbarism with Roman Christianity, barbarism has introduced into Christianity all its ferocity, with none of its generosity or magnanimity. Its energy shows itself in atrocity of cruelty, and even of sensuality. Throughout, assassinations, parricides, and fratricides intermingle with adulteries and rapes That King Clotaire should burn alive his rebellious son with his wife and daughter is fearful enough, but we are astounded even in these times with a bishop of Tours burning a man alive, to obtain the deeds of an estate which he coveted. Fredegonde sends two murderers to assassinate Childebert, and these assassins are clergymen. She causes the Archbishop of Rouen to be murdered while chanting the service in church; and in this crime a bishop and an archdeacon are her accomplices. Marriage was a bond contracted and broken on the lightest occasion. Some of the Merovingian kings took as many wives, either together or in succession, as suited either their passions or their politics. Christianity hardly interferes even to interdict incest."

It was into a country where all the bonds which bind society together were thus totally dissolved, St. Columbanus flung himself, with all the headlong courage of his race, to be the champion of morals, the apostle of civilisation, the fearless soldier of the cross of Christ. He landed in the north of France. The two languages used by him, the Celtic and the Latin, would, of course, carry him everywhere. He at once set out on a course of apostolic wanderings, which at last led him to Burgundy, at that time ruled by Gontran, who may be described as the least immoral of the grandsons of Clovis.¹ This king received

¹ Gontran was son of Clotaire I., the youngest of the four sons

him gladly, offered him riches and honour, which the missionary declined, and settled upon him the old Roman castle of Annegrav, where the first Irish monastery ever planted on the Continent raised its head.¹ There he laid the foundations of his system as he had learned it in Ireland. These foundations were plain, aye, the very plainest, living, high thinking, and hard work. His biographer Jonas describes the simple life led at Annegrav. Columbanus lived for weeks without any other food than the herbs of the field and the wild fruits yielded by the forest around. We trace in him the same love of nature and of natural objects which we find in some of the beautiful stories told of St. Columba. Everything is said to have obeyed his voice. The birds came to receive his caresses. The squirrels descended from the tree-tops to hide themselves in the folds of his cowl. One day, when wandering in the depths of the woods, meditating whether the ferocity of the brutes, which could not sin, was not better than the rage of men, which destroyed their souls, he saw a dozen wolves approach and

of Clovis, among whom his kingdom was divided in 511. See the articles "Clotaire I." and "Guntramnus" (2) in the *Dict. Christ. Biog.* Gontran has been canonised, and his memory is celebrated in the Roman martyrology on March 28th. The article just cited will show what a strange saint he was.

¹ Columbanus drew up a rule for the use of his monasteries. It was of the sternest kind, and doubtless represents the discipline of Bangor, Clonard, Iona, and the Irish monastic system of his day. It punished the slightest fault with fasting or corporal chastisement. See *Regula Canobialis* and *De Penit. Mensurâ*. in Migne's *Pat. Lat.*, t. lxxx., 209, 223; Wasserschleben, *Die Irische Kanonensammlung*, p. lxxvi., and his *Bussordnungen der Abendlând. Kirche*, pp. 52-60. The rule has also been made the subject of a monograph by Dr. Otto Seebass, styled *Ueber Columba von Luxeuils Klosterregel und Bussbuch* (Dresden: 1883), where the author uses of set purpose the name Columba instead of Columbanus (*cf.* p. 3).

surround him on all sides. He remained motionless, repeating the words, "Deus in adjutorium." The wolves touched his garments with their mouths, but seeing him fearless, passed upon their way. The example of a quiet Christian household, shedding the blessings of civilisation, education, and religion all around, proved a very powerful one, even upon men more ferocious than wolves. Crowds flocked to the Irish teacher to learn the secret of a pure and happy life, and the great foundations of Luxeuil and Fontaines followed one another in rapid succession. They were all successful ventures, and among the disciples of Columbanus were numbered by hundreds the children of the noblest Franks and Burgundians. For twenty years the great missionary thus laboured, till the crisis of his life came, and his activity was changed to a new direction.

You must bear with me while I go somewhat into detail about this event, as the details alone will enable you to realise the state of religion and of morals with which Columbanus was obliged to deal. About the year 600, Gaul, in its widest limits, from the British Channel to the Vosges and Jura mountains, was subject to the government of two Jezebels,—Fredegund, called the enemy of God and man, who ruled, roughly speaking, the north; Brunehault, who ruled the south and east, and of whom the best that can be said is this: she was not quite as bad as the other.¹ Now fix your attention on Brunehault, for it is with her St. Columbanus came into conflict in defence of the plainest principles of Christian morality. Brunehault ruled Burgundy as regent for the young king Thierry, her grandson. To preserve her own power, and to prevent

¹ See the article "Fredegundis" in the *Dict. Christ. Biog.*

a rival standing near the throne, she for a time successfully encouraged him in the utmost licentiousness, and opposed every attempt to replace his numerous concubines by a legitimate queen. Her ambition overcame even her national and patriotic feelings. She was herself a Visigothic princess. Thierry at last chose a lawful wife from the same house. But Brunehault so worked upon him, that at the end of twelve months he repudiated her, and St. Didier (Desiderius), Bishop of Vienne, who had arranged the match, was murdered by the agents of the queen-mother.¹ She was utterly shameless, too. Thierry, her grandson, was a man of strong passions, indeed, but still was not devoid of religious instincts, and always bore most respectfully those sharp reproofs Columbanus bestowed upon him. On one occasion the saint was thus visiting him, when he came into conflict with the queen regent. Brunehault presented to Columbanus the four sons Thierry already had by his concubines. "What would these children with me?" said the uncourtly monk. "They are the sons of the King," said the queen regent; "strengthen them by thy blessing." "No," replied the fearless saint; "they shall not reign, for they are of bad origin." From that moment Brunehault vowed war to the death against Columbanus. Another cause hastened his fall. He never would abandon his Celtic peculiarities and national customs in religion. Here we come upon the first symptoms of those controversies which were so soon to rend asunder the Celtic Church in all its branches. Columbanus would never surrender his Celtic tonsure and his Irish method of celebrating Easter. The Gallic bishops followed the custom of Rome in both respects, and strove to reduce the fearless Irishman to confor-

¹ See "Desiderius" (9) in *Dict. Christ. Biog.*

mity with their own practices. It was all useless. He not only refused obedience, but addressed a long epistle to the bishops in synod, in which he deals very plainly with them, and then touchingly sets forth his own case thus :—" I am not the author of this difference ; I have come into these parts a poor stranger for the cause of Christ the Saviour, our common God and Lord. I ask of your holinesses but a single grace : that you will permit me to live in silence in the depths of these forests, near the bones of seventeen brethren whom I have already seen die. Oh, let us live with you in this land where we now are, since we are destined to live with each other in heaven, if we are found worthy to enter there. I dare not go to you for fear of entering into some contention with you ; but I confess to you the secrets of my conscience, and how I believe, above all, in the tradition of my country, which is besides that of St. Jerome." Both Church and State were thus arrayed against the undaunted Irishman, who dared to maintain the traditions of his forefathers, and to champion the laws of immutable morality. Columbanus had soon to pay the penalty of his bravery. His monastery was regularly boycotted. The inhabitants were forbidden to have any dealings therewith. He was himself arrested and confined at Besançon, whence he soon escaped to Luxeuil. Thither a royal officer and a strong detachment of soldiers were sent to arrest him. They found him, as Athanasius was found, in church, chanting the service with his community. " Man of God," said they, " we pray you to obey the King's orders, and to return from whence you came." " No," answered Columbanus ; " after having left my country for the service of Jesus Christ, I cannot think my Creator wishes me to return." Parley

was, however, useless. The soldiers treated him with every respect, but if they did not execute their commission, their lives would have been forfeited. He was, therefore, arrested, bade a final adieu to his beloved Luxeuil, was hurried across France, and placed on board a ship of Nantes bound for Ireland. Brune-hault and Thierry thus freed themselves of their enemy, but his future work lay not in Ireland, whither they thought they had despatched him. The Bishop and Count of Nantes hastened his departure, according to the royal wishes. But though man proposes, God disposes. The Irish vessel in which Columbanus was embarked was flung back upon the sands at the mouth of the Loire. The captain, with a true sailor's superstition, imbibed the notion that Columbanus was an unlucky passenger, landed him and his Irish companions who had been exiled with him, and at once continued his voyage. Columbanus was permitted to go where he would. Thus ended his struggle and work in Burgundy. And now, when more than sixty, he began with indomitable energy to carve out a new career for himself. The prospect, however, was not inviting. His quarrel with Brunchault and Thierry shut him out from the greater part of France. For a time he took refuge with Clotaire II., son of Fredegund, but his heart was set upon the evangelisation of Northern Italy, which was even yet filled with Arian heresy and with pagan superstition.¹ But how was he

¹ The Arianism of North Italy was persistent. Some of the most authentic and interesting information about the Arian Ulfilas has been thence derived. See Scott's *Ulfilas*, pp. 38, 117 (Cambridge: 1885) and Card. Mai's *Scriptt. Vett. Nov. Coll.*, iii., 186, where Arian documents have been printed, derived from Bobbio, Columbanus' own monastery. The library of Bobbio proves the scholarship and research of the Irish missionaries. The Muratorian fragment, a MS. of the age of Columbanus, was derived

to get there? The usual routes down the Rhone and by sea, or through the passes of the Western Alps, were all cut off by the dominions of Burgundy. He, therefore, chose another road, destined to be rich in spiritual trophies which still perpetuate the fame of these devoted Irish missionaries.

Clotaire's court had no charms for Columbanus. He was in very deed no fit subject for a courtier. He was not a man clothed in soft raiment, neither did his tongue easily frame those soft and honeyed words which alone suit the tone and temper of kings' palaces. Clotaire received him generously, and protected him effectually. Yet Columbanus felt not at home. The atmosphere was tainted, heavily laden with that miasma of immorality and vice which ever haunted the descendants of Clovis. Columbanus, fearless as a John the Baptist, reproved the king for all his wicked deeds, and the king took the reproof mildly and well, and promised reformation, but never fulfilled his promise.

Columbanus longed, however, for freedom. He was, like Columba, a child of nature. The moan of the storm, the murmur of the ocean, the rustle of the forest, spoke to these men of purity, of power, and of God, and Columbanus ardently desired to regain those wilds and forests where he had laboured and conquered for Christ. One path of escape alone remained open to him. The Rhine presents a waterway often traversed in later times from the shores of the German Ocean to the very border of Northern Italy, and it lay wholly beyond the realms and power of Brunehault and

from thence; see *Canon Muratorianus*, by S. P. Tregelles, LL.D., and Dr. Salmon's article on the "Muratorian Fragment" in the *Dict. Christ. Biog.*; see below, note on p. 146.

Thierry.¹ He, therefore, embarked upon that river, and traversed a large part of the beautiful defile between Mayence and Bingen which has made the name of the Rhine famous. It must have been very hard work pulling against that stream. Those who have not seen it, or, still better, tried to swim against it, have no idea of the force and power wherewith the river rushes from the tableland of Switzerland to the sands of the Dutch coast. It is hard work even for the powerful express steamers which daily strive to overcome it. They descend the stream from Bingen to Cologne in almost half the time which they take to ascend it; but what must have been the exertions used by St. Columbanus and his companions as they slowly battled their way in their coracles all up the defile of the Rhine, and then along through the calmer waters between Heidelberg and Strasbourg, and thence by Bâle, and Schaffhausen, and the falls of the Rhine, till they emerged into the great broad expanse of the Lake of Constance? There they halted for a time, evangelised, preached, taught, and established the monasteries of Reichenau, and above all of St. Gall, a monastery which to this day is one of the richest repositories of Irish MSS. and Irish literature on the continent of Europe. St. Gall was a companion of Columbanus; he has given the name to the town and canton of St. Gall. In preaching the Gospel to the Swiss, Columbanus displayed all the impetuosity of his temper. Sometimes he broke the boilers in which the pagans prepared the beer they offered—a truly national sacrifice—to Woden.

¹ Even so late as two centuries ago, about the year 1659, the Rhine formed the route traversed by the followers of Johannes Bollandus on a famous literary journey to Rome. Cf. the "Life of Bollandus," capp. xiii.-xx., in the first volume of the *Acta Sanctorum* for March; *Contemp. Review*, January 1883, p. 75.

At times he burned their temples or broke their images. Such conduct naturally provoked opposition. The Irishmen were driven from place to place with violence, and refused food by the inhabitants. But such sturdy missionaries were no way disconcerted. They erected their huts of timber, planted their gardens, snared the wild fowl, fished like apostles on the Lake of Constance. Columbanus made the nets. Gall, the learned and eloquent preacher, flung them into the lake with no small success. A fine legend illustrates the difficulties they so long encountered and so bravely overcame in Helvetia. One night St. Gall was in his boat, silently watching his nets, when he heard the demon of the mountain calling to the demon of the waters. "Here I am," answered the water demon. "Arise then," said the other, "and help me to chase away the strangers who have expelled me from my temple; it will require us both to drive them away." "What good should we do?" answered the demon of the lake; "here is one of them upon the water-side whose nets I have tried to break, but have never succeeded. He prays continually, and never sleeps. It will be labour in vain; we shall make nothing of it." Gall made the sign of the cross, and said to them, "In the name of Jesus Christ, I command you to leave these regions without injuring any one." Then he hastened to land, awoke the abbat, and rang the bell for nocturns; but before the first psalm had been intoned, they heard the yells of the demons echoing from the tops of the surrounding hills, at first with fury, then losing themselves in the distance, and dying away like the confused voices of a routed army.

Success attended the labours of Columbanus in Switzerland, and even greater success attended his

disciples, but his soul was not yet satisfied. He felt as if he had not yet attained the great end for which his spirit panted. Columbanus, in truth, was made to rule, and to rule a large community. He felt the need of a sphere where his activity could find scope for its exercise, as at Luxeuil and Fontaines. Other influences, too, combined to lead him from Switzerland. King Thierry had been extending his dominions, which now embraced the very district where Columbanus was living. The inhabitants had got tired of him and his preaching. They stole his cows; they slew his monks. They complained to the duke of the province that these strangers scared away the game of the royal chase, by infesting the forest with their presence and their prayers. It was necessary to depart. Columbanus put it vigorously: "We have found a golden egg, but it is full of serpents." He set out, therefore, with one companion, painfully crossed the Alps, probably by the route of the St. Gothard pass, and arrived at the court of Agilulf, King of the Lombards. There he was received with the greatest respect, and endowed with the church and territory of Bobbio, in a retired gorge of the Apennines between Genoa and Milan. An old church, dedicated to St. Peter, was in existence there. Columbanus undertook to restore it, and to add to it a monastery. Despite his age, he shared the workmen's labours, and bent his old shoulders under the weight of enormous beams of fir-wood. This abbey of Bobbio was his last stage. He made it the citadel of orthodoxy against the Arians, lighting there a lamp of knowledge and instruction which long illumined Northern Italy.¹ The monastery

¹ Even modern learning owes something to it. The school and library of Bobbio rank among the most celebrated of the

existed till suppressed by the French in 1803, while the church still serves as a parish church. Bobbio was in one sense his last stage. It was his final scene of work, whence he evangelised the pagans and Arians all around. In another sense it was not. Columbanus ended life by seeking a solitude more profound still. Upon the opposite shore of Trebbia he discovered a cavern, which he transformed into a chapel, and there, like other Irish anchorites, he spent his last days "in a desert" till God called His faithful and fearless servant home, on November 21st, 615.

Did time permit, we might devote, and with much profit, a whole lecture to consider the ecclesiastical position of Columbanus. It has been a great crux for modern Ultramontanes. In Columba's life there is not one trace of the pope or the slightest acknowledgment of his claims. There is silence, however, and this is at most only a negative argument. In the *Life of Columbanus* there is many a mention of the pope and several epistles to popes, but there is also an express rejection and denial of their claims, and a use of plain language to them which no Irish priest of the Roman obedience would now dare to use. For an Ultramontane's explanation of this phenomenon I must refer you to Montalembert in his *Monks of the West*. It is very amusing. For instance, striving to explain away his letter to Pope Boniface IV., Montalembert says: "Doubtless some of the expressions he employs would be now regarded as disrespectful, and justly

middle ages. Muratori has given a catalogue of seven hundred MSS. which the monastery possessed in the sixteenth century. Thence, for instance, came the famous palimpsest from which Cardinal Mai published the *De Republica* of Cicero. See Tregelles, *Canon Murator.*, part i.; Muratorii *Antiqq. Ital. Medii Ævi*, t. iii. (Mediol. MDCCXL.), coll. 809-880; and note, p. 142, above.

rejected. But in those young and vigorous times, faith and austerity could be more indulgent." Let me, however, give a brief extract from his epistle on the Easter question, written to one of the greatest popes, Gregory the Great, in defence of his own Irish rites and ceremonies, and in opposition to the Roman mode. The unbiassed student can then draw his own conclusions. "How is it that you, with all your wisdom, you, the brilliant light of whose sanctified talents is shining abroad throughout the world, are induced to support this dark Paschal system? I wonder, I confess, that the erroneous practice of Gaul has not been long since abolished by you. . . . You are afraid, perhaps, of incurring the charge of a taste for novelty, and are content with the authority of your predecessors, and of Pope Leo in particular. But do not, I beseech you, in a matter of such importance, give way to the dictates of humility or gravity only, as they are often mistaken. It may be that in this affair a living dog is better than a dead lion" (or Leo). "For a living saint may correct errors that have not been corrected by another greater one."¹

I do not think that the reverence of Columbanus for the pope or his belief in papal infallibility can have been very great, when he would use such language.²

¹ The full force of the play upon words in this passage only comes out in the Latin. It was not very complimentary to Pope Gregory to call him a living dog.

² A full analysis of the life and letters of Columbanus will be found in Ceillier, *Hist. des Auteurs Ecclesiast.*, vol. xi., pp. 612—630. Migne's *Patrologia Latina*, t. lxxx., offers a convenient edition of his works, including his Latin poetry. See also Fleming's *Collectanea Sacra* (Lovan.: 1667); and for the bibliography of the subject "Columbanus" in the *Dict. Christ. Biog.*

LECTURE VIII.

THE PASCHAL CONTROVERSY.

I HAVE now endeavoured to sketch the histories of Patrick the apostle of Ireland, of Columba, the apostle of Scotland, and of Columbanus, the apostle of Burgundy. These three men represent the early Celtic Church in its origin and development, during the fifth and sixth centuries. In considering their careers I have omitted many interesting questions. The organization, the liturgy, the government of the Church have merely been alluded to. Our attention has been fixed on men, not on measures.¹ The period which elapsed from the seventh to the twelfth centuries, or, broadly speaking, from St. Columbanus to the Anglo-Norman conquest, is an unknown time for most people. Men have heard of Brian Boru, and perhaps of Cormac of Cashel, and they have a vague idea that they lived some time in that period; but in their secret hearts regard them as mythical personages. And when we pass beyond them there is no other personality which stands out dominating the whole horizon and calling attention to his work as does the

¹ A French historian has well remarked that "history studies not merely facts and institutions. Its true object is the human soul. It ought to seek to know what that soul has believed, thought, and felt during the different ages of the life of the human race." Fustel de Coulanges, *Cité Antique*, pp. 103, 104; cf. Jean Réville, *Religion sous les Sévères*, Pref., p. i.

personality of a Patrick or of a Columba. Yet the period of five hundred years we have now to study is an extremely interesting one, and no more mythical or dark than the same period in the history of England. Original Irish documents, original Irish works, and original Irish records of that age abound. They lie concealed, sometimes in manuscripts, sometimes in the ponderous volumes of a D'Achery, a Canisius, a Colgan, the *Four Masters*, or the tomes, even more ponderous still, of the Bollandists; but there they are, to reward the diligent student with a contemporaneous glimpse of the ways and doings of the ancient Celtic Church. There are two distinct methods in which we might study this period. I might present you with a record as voluminous, minute, and accurate as I could make it of the successions and struggles of the multitudinous chieftains and ecclesiastics who lived in Ireland. I might, in fact, copy out and read to you the annals of the *Four Masters*; but I fear you would not be much the better, but rather the worse for such a style of treatment, as you would have the feeling intensified—which too often prevails already—that Irish history is intensely stupid and intensely uninteresting.

There is another and more useful method of dealing with our subject. I may avoid burdening your memory with bare lists of names, and present you instead with a series of pictures of great movements, or of leading characters, which will illustrate the whole spirit of the times and shed light upon the course which the development of the national life followed. This latter is the method which I shall adopt, and in doing so I shall begin with the first great external movement which impinged on Irish national life, modifying at first, and then radically altering, its whole tone and character.

That movement I call the Paschal Controversy. Let me explain this for you, and in doing so I must preface a few words.

The feast of Easter has been a subject of controversy since the second century. Polycarp of Smyrna and popes Anicetus and Victor of Rome, held diverse views as to the proper time of its observance¹ Polycarp and the Churches of Asia followed the Jewish method of computation, while all other Churches observed the Christian style. This caused the celebrated Quartodeciman Controversy. With that controversy the Irish Church had nothing to say, though its adversaries, to give it a bad name, designated it by the opprobrious name of Quartodeciman. Irish churchmen agreed with their opponents in celebrating Sunday and Sunday alone as the feast of the Resurrection. But they differed from them as to the method of computing the Sunday. Let me explain how this happened. You will see that my explanation will throw some light upon the vexed question of the age and period at which Irish Christianity first arose. The earliest Easter cycle of the Christian Church was naturally identical with that used by the Jews. It was called the eighty-four year cycle.² During the debates of the second century this cycle was discovered to be faulty, whereupon the celebrated Hippolytus, bishop of Portus, devised his cycle of one

¹ See art. "Anicetus" in the *Dict. of Christ. Biog.*, p. i., 116.

² The Jews at the time of our Lord's crucifixion probably used an eight-year cycle (*Octaëteris*). After the fall of Jerusalem they adopted the eighty-four year cycle. See on the whole question the article on Easter in the *Dictionary of Christian Antiquities*, and Dr. Salmon's articles on the Chronicon Cyprianum and Hippolytus in the *Dict. of Christ. Biog.*; Hefele's exhaustive treatise on the Easter question and the Nicene Council in his *History of the Councils*, vol. i., pp. 298-341 (Clark's trans.); Bingham's *Antiq.*, xx., c. 5.

hundred and twelve years, which we find inscribed on the chair of his statue, discovered in 1551, and now in the Lateran. The Fathers of Nice took up the question. They laid great stress upon the true time of keeping Easter. They placed their ban upon the Quartodecimans and all who followed Jewish customs, and to ensure uniformity entrusted the duty of calculating and announcing the true time of Easter to the bishops of Alexandria, as living at the great scientific centre of the existing world. However, even in such a slight matter Rome was not willing to be second to Alexandria; so the Roman Church fell back, with that conservative instinct she has always displayed, upon the original Jewish cycle of eighty-four years, while the Alexandrian Church used the ancient metonic cycle of nineteen years, as arranged by Anatolius, Bishop of Laodicea, about the year 284. Now mark this point. During the fourth and first half of the fifth centuries the Alexandrian Church used the nineteen-year cycle; the Roman Church used the old Jewish cycle of eighty-four years. This divergent use at last caused great inconvenience. Thus from an epistle of St. Ambrose¹ we learn that in the year 387 Easter was observed at three distinct dates: by some on March 21st, by others on April 18th, and by others on April 25th. The popes of Rome, with their old imperial notions of accuracy and uniformity, chafed at this. It was bad enough to be subject to Alexandria on such a topic, but it was still worse when Alexandria seemed unable to give a certain, or at least an accurate answer.² The uncertainty which prevailed

¹ Quoted in Bingham's *Antiq.*, bk. xx., ch. v., sec. 4.

² There is no formal canon or decree of the Council of Nice now extant committing the function of calculating Easter to the Alexandrian patriarch. Pope Leo I. refers, however, to some such decision in an epistle addressed to the Emperor

in the fifth century may be illustrated by one fact. Pope Leo the Great wrote to St. Cyril of Alexandria, the very last year of St. Cyril's life, to inquire concerning the true date of Easter. The Roman calculation made it March 26th, while the Alexandrian fixed it to April 23rd. The Roman Church determined at last to shake itself free from this thralldom, and to assert its competence to determine all such questions for the entire Western world, of which the Roman See was now becoming more and more visibly the guide and leader. So Rome determined to have a reform of the calendar. For this purpose Pope Hilary, in the year 463, employed Victorius, an abbat of Aquitaine, who framed a new cycle. Hitherto, as I have said, the Roman Church used the old Jewish cycle of eighty-four years. Henceforward they used the new cycle of Victorius and Dionysius Exiguus, which embraced a period of five hundred and thirty-two years. But the Irish Church had received with St. Patrick and its first teachers the old Jewish and Roman cycle of eighty-four years. Barbarian invasions and wars and distance separated them from Rome and its new fashions. They knew nothing of the new cycle of five hundred and thirty-two years. Their whole energy was concentrated on study and missionary effort, and so continuing faithful to the practices of their forefathers, they found when St. Augustine and the Roman mission came to Canterbury, about the year 600, that Rome and Ireland

Marcian, where, speaking of Easter, he says: "Studuerunt itaque Sancti Patres occasionem hujus erroris auferre, omnem hanc curam Alexandrino episcopo delegantes (quoniam apud Ægyptios hujus supputationis antiquitus tradita esse videbatur peritia) per quem quotannis dies prædictæ solemnitate Sedi Apostolicæ indicaretur, cujus scriptis ad longinquiores ecclesias iudicium generale percurreret." See Hefele's *Councils*, vol. i., p. 327 (Clark's trans.)

differed very considerably about this important question.¹

Now observe two facts: (1) The mission of Augustine, about A.D. 600, first raised this question; (2) As I shall afterwards show you by contemporary evidence, the Irish Church never heard till then of the new Roman cycle introduced for the first time in 463. And from these two facts I conclude that Christianity must have been introduced into Ireland prior to 463, or, in general, about that epoch, the first half of the fifth century, to which St. Patrick's mission is usually attributed. But why, you may say, did they make so much fuss about such a trumpery matter as the proper method of calculating a date? The answer is easy. We all know from our own experience that the bitterest quarrels in religion rage over apparently the pettiest details. What can seem to an external observer more insignificant than the proper position of the celebrant at the Holy Communion, whether he should look towards the south or towards the east? and yet two parties in the English Church have fought most bitterly, threatening even at times to rend that communion in twain, over this point. And why have they done so? Not that they saw any special virtue in either the south or the east, but because this position symbolised for both parties views they either cherished or abhorred with equal vigour. So it was with the question of Easter. The Council of Nice and the Church of the fourth century regarded the Quartodecimans as heretics, and cut them off from Christian communion. The Roman Church transferred

¹ The Irish Church came, as we shall see, into contact with the Roman missionaries from the very outset. See Bede, *H.E.*, ii., 4; cf. Baron. *Annal.*, A.D. 601, sec. 25, Greg. Mag. in Migne's *P.L.* lxxvii., 1203; Ussher's *Sylloge*, Opp. iv., 399, 402.

the same penalty to all those who would not conform themselves to her calculations. She regarded them as Judaizers and Jews, and Judaizing and the Jewish controversy were still a real terror and a real danger to the Christian Church.¹ Let this suffice upon the importance of the question. We shall now proceed to the history of this bitter strife.

St. Augustine landed in England towards the close of the sixth century. His mission was twofold : first, to preach to the pagan Saxons ; secondly, to correct and instruct the members of the old Celtic Church. In the year 603, or thereabout, Augustine assembled the bishops of the Celtic Church to a conference at a spot near the Severn, afterwards called Augustine's Oak. There he propounded three points upon which he demanded conformity with the customs of Rome : (1) The use of chrism in baptism ;² (2) The new Easter cycle ; and (3) The fulfilment of the primary duty of every Christian Church, the preaching of the gospel to the pagan Saxons, which the British Celts in their national hatred refused to do. Augustine failed, and failed utterly, to bring the Celts over to his view. Augustine died the very next year, and was succeeded by Archbishop Laurentius, who soon discovered that the British Celts were supported in their controversy by the Scots, the Irish Celts, who held precisely the same views as the

¹ The Theodosian Code, bk. xvi., title viii., treats of the privileges, disabilities, offences, etc., of the Jews, and shows how actively hostile to Christianity they still were in the fifth century. Gebhardt and Harnack in their *Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur*, Bd. i., Hft. 3, Leipzig, 1883, have given us a specimen of the Jewish controversy of the fifth and sixth centuries in a dialogue called "Altercatio Simonis Judaei et Theophili Christiani." Their Introduction shows what a burning question it then was.

² See note on p. 318 concerning the difference between Rome and Ireland about chrism.

Celtic Church of England. He wrote, therefore, an epistle to the bishops and abbats of Ireland about the year 605. It is most important, for it is the earliest document, save one, connecting Rome and Ireland, and places us at the very fount and origin of this prolonged controversy. We find it in Bede, Bk. ii., ch. 4. "To our most dear brothers, the lords, bishops, and abbats throughout all Scotland, Laurentius, Mellitus, and Justus, servants of the servants of God." You will observe what a convincing proof we here have of the episcopal character of the Celtic Church of that period. Some persons have endeavoured to make out that its government was presbyterian. Laurentius has many faults to find with it. But neither he nor any subsequent controversialist ever impugned its church government as defective, which they undoubtedly would have done had it been presbyterian. This letter then proceeds: "When the Apostolic See, according to the universal custom which it has followed elsewhere, sent us to these western parts to preach to pagan nations, we came into this island which is called Britain without possessing any previous knowledge of its inhabitants. We held both the Britons and the Scots in great esteem for sanctity, believing that they had proceeded according to the customs of the universal church; but becoming acquainted with the errors of the Britons, we thought the Scots had been better; but we have been informed by Bishop Dagan coming into this aforesaid island, and by the Abbat Columbanus in France, that the Scots in no way differ from the Britons in behaviour; for Bishop Dagan coming to us not only refused to eat with us, but even to take his repast in the same house where we were entertained."

It is quite clear from this epistle that hostility and

separation between the Roman and the Irish party were bitter, clear, and distinct when an Irish bishop would not even eat in the same house or beneath the same roof as his Roman opponents. Yet the Roman party soon made extensive conquests in Ireland. Ireland from its earliest history had been divided into two great sections, separated broadly by that curious chain of sandhills which takes its rise at the Green Hills near Tallaght and terminates at Galway Bay. The southern half of Ireland was of course very conveniently situated for intercourse with southern England and with France. Harbours like Cork and Waterford and Wexford offered abundant opportunities for intercourse with the Continent, of which the monks largely availed themselves. This continental intercourse helped rapidly to undermine the old Irish customs. Pilgrimages to Rome became the fashion, and Rome soon gained the affections of the Munstermen, while then, as still, the heart of Ulster remained sternly anti-papal. It is easy to see how it was so. The untutored Irish, accustomed to their own humble homes, crossed the Bay of Biscay, and there came into contact with the Roman Church in all its majesty. They beheld its liturgical service developed by the genius of a Gregory the Great, its magnificent churches, its hierarchy ever growing in power and dignity, and dominating the rough and rude though powerful princes of that age, and then, contrasting their own mean circumstances at home, they were prepared to hear and to acquiesce in the argument of a Pope Honorius when he wrote to these Munstermen, as he did about the year 634, "exhorting them not to think their small number placed in the utmost border of the earth wiser than all the ancient and modern churches of Christ throughout the world ;

and not to celebrate a different Easter contrary to the Paschal calculation and the synodical decrees of all the bishops upon earth." Active negotiations now were set on foot between Rome and Munster. The principal agent in this transaction was St. Laserian, Abbat or Bishop of Old Leighlin, where to this day the old cathedral marks the site of his seventh-century monastery.¹ He was one of those Irishmen who had travelled to Rome and been seduced by its charms from allegiance to his national rite. He is said to have been ordained priest at Rome by Gregory the Great, and bishop some thirty years later by Pope Honorius, who sent him as his deputy to bring the Irish into submission. He called a synod for this purpose, but was defeated for a time by the interposition of St. Fintan, Abbat of Taghmon, near Wexford, the most famous saint of that time. Fintan was an Ulster man, an adherent of the Columban order, and a thorough Irishman, opposed to all foreign notions and interference. Fintan's action was characteristic. It reminds us of St. Patrick on Tara. He challenged Laserian to the proof, and offered him a threefold choice. "You have three options given you, O Laserian. Let two books, one of the old order, another of the new, be cast into the fire, and let us see which of them will escape from the flames; or, let two monks, one of yours and another of mine, be shut up in the same house, and let the house be set on fire, and we shall see which of them will escape unburnt. Or let us both go to the sepulchre of a dead monk and raise him up to life, and he will tell us which order we ought to observe in the celebra-

¹ See art. "Laserian," in *Dict. Christ. Biog.*, vol. iii., p. 625; Ussher's Works, ed. Elrington, iv., p. 342, vi., pp. 503—505, 604, 605.

tion of Easter." All of which proposals the Roman deputy declined, on the ground that Fintan's holiness was so well established that if he prayed "that yonder mount," pointing to the cliffs of the neighbouring Slieve Margy, "were to change places with this white field," pointing to the site of Old Leighlin, "God would at once grant the request."¹

But notwithstanding all opposition Rome rapidly gained ground in the south, till at last the whole province yielded obedience. We have a historic document of the most clear and satisfactory character, which certifies us of this fact, and at the same time illustrates the state of learning and the intercourse with Rome and the Continent, as then existing in the Church of Ireland. That document is the letter of St. Cummian² to Segienus, Abbat of the Columban monastery of Iona. The Columban monks and monasteries were the great opponents of Rome, and the supporters of the Irish Easter. Cummian had been trained as a Columban monk in their celebrated monastery at Durrow, in the Queen's County. He now joined the Roman party, and sent an epistle, preserved for us by Ussher,³ which is a wonderful monument of Irish learning in that age, and at the same time sheds most important historical light on the events of the time. The epistle begins by an apology on Cummian's part for daring

¹ See Ussher's Works, ed. Elrington, t. vi., p. 504, where this story is told; cf. Ephraim (6) in *Dict. Christ. Biog.*

² See "Cummian" in *Dict. Christ. Biog.*, i., p. 723. The name in various forms was very common in ancient Ireland (see "Cumin" in *Dict. Christ. Biog.*). Mr. Bradshaw attributes the collection of Irish Canons called *Hibernensis*, to an abbat Cummian, of the south-east of Ireland, living early in the eighth century (see Wasserschleben's *Irische Kanonensammlung*, zweite Aufl., Einleit., S. lxxii.)

³ *Sylloge*, ep. xi., Works, ed. Elrington, iv., pp. 432—444.

to differ from the Abbat of Iona. "What I have here to say in defence of my conduct I do not presume to thrust upon the notice of your holiness in an offensive manner, but I desire that you should as a father accept of my apology; for I call God as a record upon my soul that it is not from disrespect towards you, nor from a conceit of my own moral wisdom, regardless of what others may think, that I have not adopted the mode of celebrating Easter which is used by other sensible men." He then proceeds to discuss the question from the scriptural point of view, beginning with the first institution of the Paschal feast in Exodus. In doing so he quotes commentators like Jerome and Origen. Then he proceeds to later authorities and the views of the Fathers, where he discusses the calendars of the Macedonians, Egyptians, and Hebrews, the opinions of Augustine, Cyprian, Cyril, Pachomius, the head and reformer of Egyptian monasticism, and of Gregory the Great, whom he revered most of all, and describes as one "qui etsi post omnes scripsit, tamen est merito omnibus præferendus." He refers to the views of ancient Irish saints which he had investigated during the previous twelve months. He quotes St. Patrick as "Sanctus Patricius noster papa." He mentions names that are now regarded as shadows or myths; Ailbe of Emly, Kieran of Clonmacnois, and Brendan of Clonfert. He balances the decrees of Councils like those of Nicæa and of Arles, and sums up his case very neatly and very epigrammatically by asking, "Quid autem pravius sentiri potest de Ecclesia matre, quam si dicamus, Roma errat, Hierosolyma errat, Alexandria errat, Antiochia errat, totus mundus errat, soli tantum Scoti et Britones rectum sapiunt?" (What can be thought worse concerning the Church, our mother, than

that we should say Rome errs, Jerusalem errs, Alexandria errs, Antioch errs, the whole world errs; the Scots and Britons alone know what is right?) This letter is well worth study. It bears the most interesting notes of time and of historical truth evident upon its face. It repeats the very language of Pope Honorius' letter, as described by Bede. It ridicules the claim of the Celts to set up for themselves, "being but an eruption on the very chin of the world." It mentions an embassy sent to Rome some three years before on this point, and finally notices a circumstance which completely establishes its own authenticity. Cumman points out that the Irish deputies found during their stay at Rome that the Roman Easter was divided by a whole month from the feast celebrated by the Irish Church, which happened in the year 631, when Easter fell on March 24th at Rome and on April 21st in Ireland.

Munster yielded to the Roman customs within the first half of the seventh century, though no formal Roman connection or supremacy was thereby established. But a much harder struggle remained. More than half a century was yet to elapse before the Columban monasteries and northern Ireland would consent to abandon their ancient usages. To their subjugation the Roman party now bent every effort. The point round which the battle first raged was the Irish mission in the north of England. Aidan at Lindisfarne had inaugurated that great work about the year 635, when the Roman party had already gained the victory in southern Ireland. But what the Columban party lost in one direction they gained in another, and soon the Northumbrian kingdom acknowledged the sway of the Cross through St. Aidan's labours, while

his friends and disciples Finan and Cedd and Diuma pushed the borders of the Irish Church far down into the Midland Counties (Bede, Bk. iii., ch. 21).¹ During St. Aidan's life the controversy concerning Easter was not raised. The Roman party had quite enough to do to hold its own in the south, leaving the Columban party to pursue in quietness the work of northern evangelisation. But they soon came into contact. Just as Russia and England are daily drawing closer to each other's boundary limit in Central Asia, so during the middle of the seventh century Rome and Iona drew daily closer to each other in central England. The contest between them must be therefore settled. The crisis came, as far as England was concerned, in 664. That year was marked by a celebrated conference held at Whitby between the Roman and the Irish parties. St. Aidan and his successor St. Finan had been allowed to celebrate the Irish Easter, and to retain Irish customs in northern England.² But now great inconvenience was ensuing. The Roman party too was cleverly utilizing an agency which they still manage with great effect. Mixed marriages were playing into their hands. The Northumbrian King Oswy had married a Queen Eanfled³ who had been converted to the Roman view in Kent, and had imported Roman clergy to act as her private chaplains. Great trouble soon followed. Nothing brings a man round quicker than to find all his

¹ I lately heard of an English ecclesiastic, holding a high official position, who when visiting Dublin scoffed at the idea of England owing any of its Christianity to Irish missionaries. It is thus evident that a man may gain great ecclesiastical promotion in the English Church and yet never have opened his Bede.

² See art. "Finan" (7) in *Dict. Christ. Biog.*, t. ii., p. 516.

³ See art. "Eanfled" (2) in *Dict. Christ. Biog.*, t. ii., p. 15.

domestic arrangements upset by a difference with his wife. Thus it was with Oswy. He held to the Irish custom of Easter, but one year he found himself in an ugly predicament. The king had ended his fast of Lent and was celebrating his Easter, while the queen, who calculated with the Romans, was still fasting and observing the lengthened services of Palm Sunday and of Passion Week; and you may be sure she felt bound, as an ardent Roman, to bring Oswy round to a more catholic frame of mind, by putting him on the same meagre allowance she was herself enjoying in that penitential season. An appeal to the dinner table is usually very effective, so King Oswy determined to bring the contending parties to an interview, and to have the question threshed out. You can see the debate fully reported in Bede, Bk. iii., ch. 25. The speeches are very interesting. The conference was held in a monastery ruled by the royal Abbess St. Hilda, where the king's own daughter had taken the veil.¹ King Oswy presided, like Constantine of old at Nice, and listened attentively to the speeches, though all his prejudices were with his own bishop Colman and the Irish clergy. The priest Wilfrid for the Roman party urged the authority of the Roman See founded by SS. Peter and Paul, and of the Universal Church. Colman, the Irish champion, defended himself by the example of St. John, whose authority he pleaded, and of St. Columba. The Roman divines scorned St. Columba however. Listen to the concluding words of Wilfrid's speech: "As for you and your companions, you certainly sin if having heard the decrees of the Apostolic See and of the Universal Church you refuse to follow them; for though your fathers were holy, do

¹ See art. "Hilda" in *Dict. Christ. Bioq.*, t. iii., p. 77.

you think their small number, in a corner of the remotest island, is to be preferred before the Universal Church of Christ? And if that Columba of yours was a holy man and powerful in miracles, yet, could he be preferred before the most blessed Prince of the Apostles, to whom our Lord said, 'Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it; and to thee I will give the keys of the kingdom of heaven?'" This last was a triumphant stroke. When Wilfrid had spoken thus the king said, "Is it true, Colman, that these words were spoken to Peter by our Lord?" He answered, "It is true, O king." Then said Oswy, "Can you show that any such power was given to your Columba?" Colman answered "None." "Then," replied the king, "Peter is the doorkeeper, whom I will not contradict, but obey in all things his decrees, lest when I come to the gates of the kingdom of heaven there should be none to open them, he being my adversary who is proved to bear the keys." Whereupon the assembly was dismissed, and the hopes of the Irish party vanished for ever in England. The struggle, however, was prolonged in Ireland and Scotland for half a century longer. The Columban order died hard. Colman resigned his bishopric at Lindisfarne, but he retired into Ireland, and sought its western shores.¹ He established with his adherents, partly English and partly Irish, a monastery on the island of Inisbofin, off the coast of Mayo. Colman, however, afforded a curious example, showing the perpetuity of national tastes, customs, and affinities, for Bede tells us that the Saxons and Celts, though agreeing in opinion, could not live there in peace and unity. Listen to Bede's words:

¹ See art. "Colman" (23) in *Dict. Christ. Biog.*, t. i., 599.

“Arriving at Innisbofin, he built a monastery, and placed in it the monks of both nations, who not agreeing among themselves by reason that the Scots in the summer season, when the harvest was to be brought in, leaving the monastery, wandered about through places with which they were acquainted, but returned again the next winter and would have what the English had provided to be in common.”¹ So he removed the English monks, and placed them in a new monastery called Mayo, which long continued to be the site of a Saxon monastic settlement in the extreme west. But all resistance was in vain. The Roman view gained every day fresh accessions. Every year saw the adherents of the Columban rite become fewer and fewer, till at last the monks of Iona itself yielded to the persuasions of St. Egbert in the year 716, and consented to celebrate Easter after the universal rule. But though the Celtic Church by the beginning of the eighth century had thus consented to the universal practice of the Church both east and west alike, this consent involved no submission upon other matters to the supremacy of the See of Rome. Nay, rather we shall see hereafter that down to the twelfth century the Celtic Church differed from Rome on very important questions, which indeed formed a pretext for the conquest of this country by the Normans.²

¹ The annual migrations of Mayo harvest-men, as they are called, is thus shown to have a very respectable antiquity.

² The supremacy of Rome over Ireland would doubtless have been established much sooner but for the Danish invasions. The pagan Danes cut Ireland off from the Continent just as, three centuries earlier, the Saxon irruption completely isolated the British Islands. Rome in both cases gained access through the invaders. *Cf.* above, p. 50, note ².