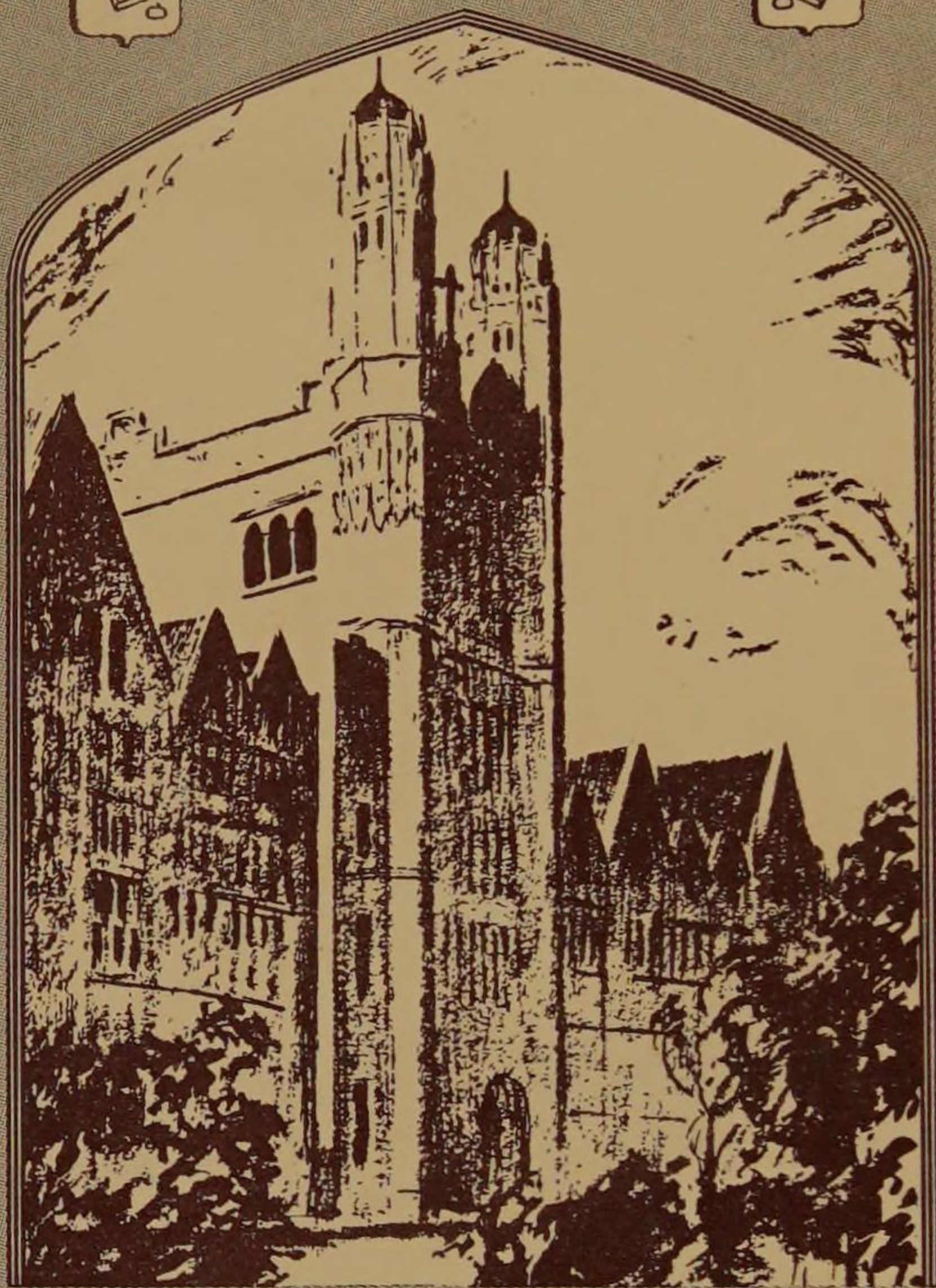
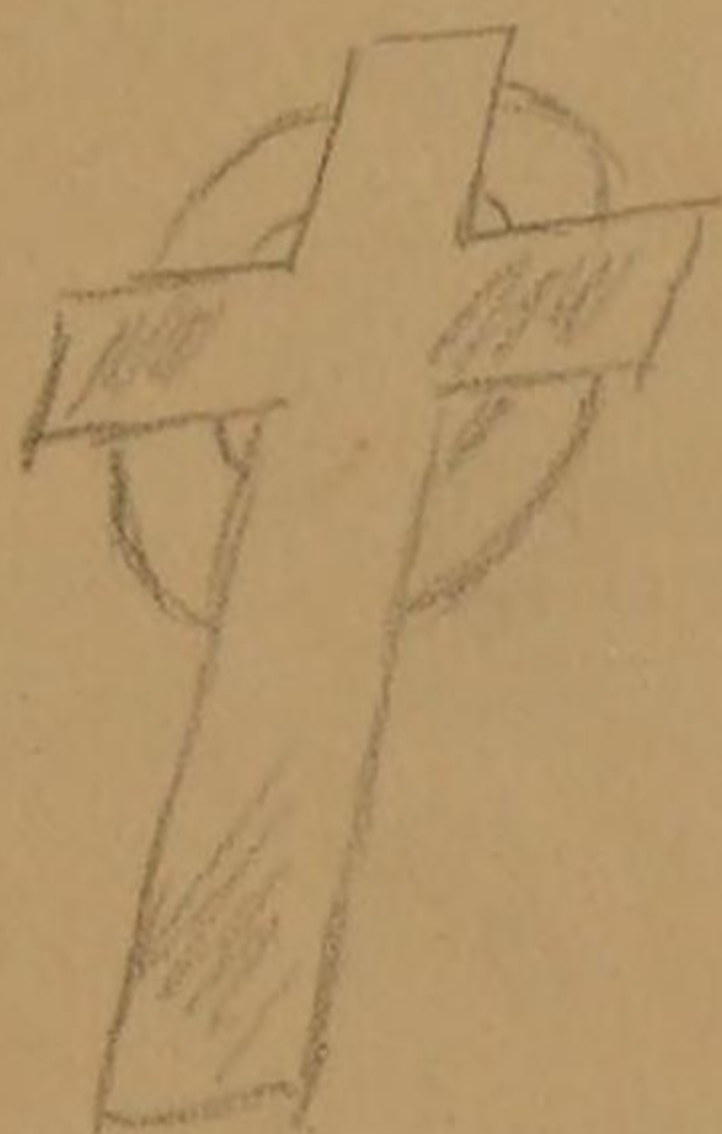


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ST PATRICK

APOSTLE OF IRELAND



ST PATRICK

APOSTLE OF IRELAND



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FOREWORD

TO make a problem of the life of St Patrick has been a labour of love for a number of writers for many years, and fresh versions of the problem have been published since the work upon which I am now engaged was undertaken. I wish to say plainly at the outset that my present purpose is to give an account of that Patrick who wrote a document known as the Confession and another document known as the Epistle, naming himself in the first words of each of these, *Patricius peccator*, "Patrick the sinner." Among all the doubts that have been raised about Saint Patrick, I do not think that anyone has yet ventured to suggest that these two documents are fabrications or fictions, or to question that they contain the authentic testimony of one man regarding matters of his own knowledge and experience. On these two documents chiefly the present account of St Patrick is based. Their evidence, however, cannot be understood from their own contents alone, without reference to other matters of history, and it is my endeavour to show how other matters of history explain them and are explained by them.

The legends of St Patrick, as such, are excluded from my plan, though here and there I have taken as historical certain things which are related in a legendary setting but which are not likely to have

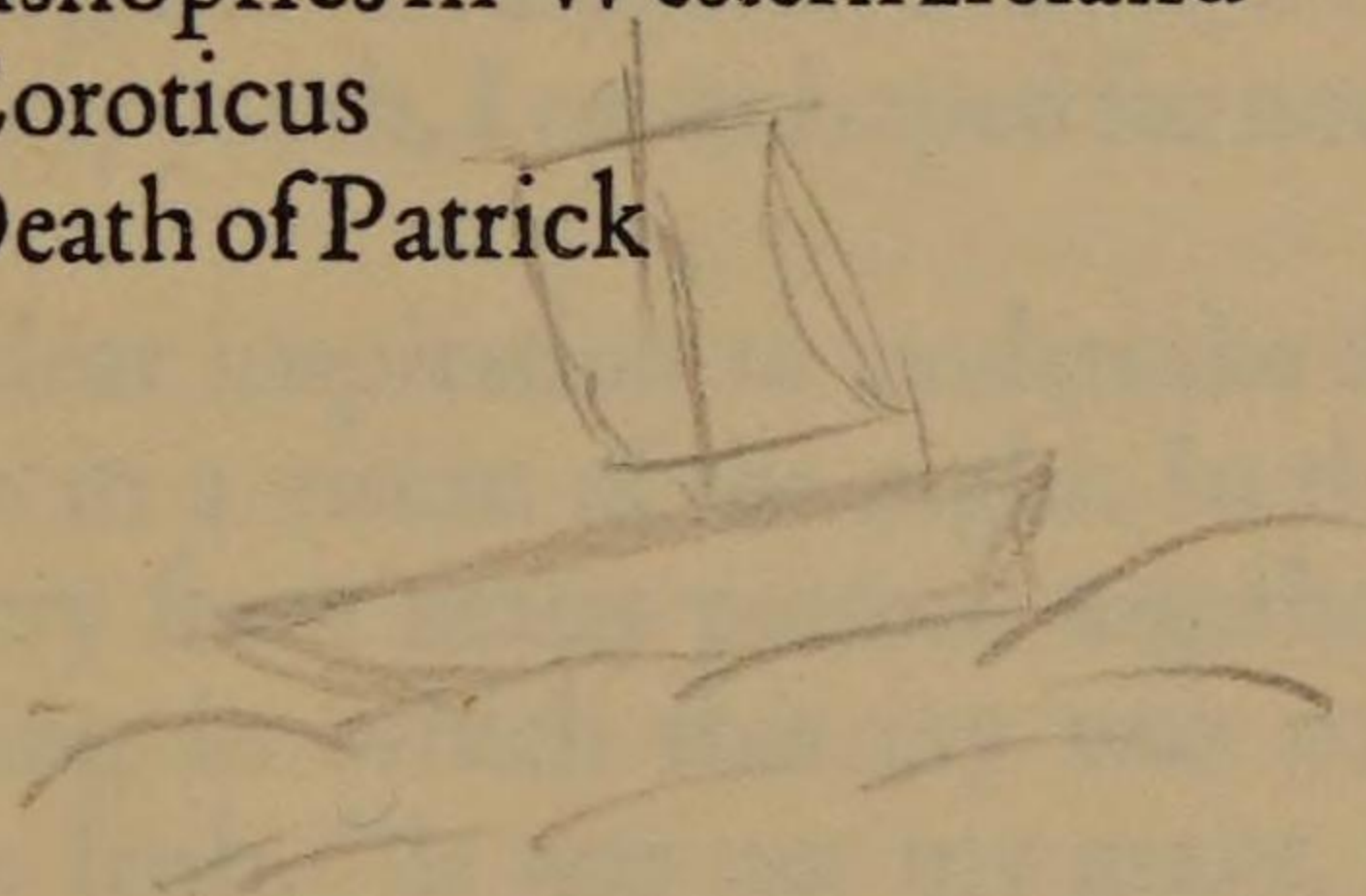
originated otherwise than in authentic written records or authentic and unbroken traditions.

The printed works of chief reference in the following pages are *Libri Sancti Patricii*, *The Latin Writings of St Patrick*, edited with English translation by Newport J. D. White, D.D., in the Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy; *The Life of St Patrick*, by Bury; *Irish Monasticism*, by Rev. John Ryan, S.J., D.Litt.; and, for the Hymn of St Secundinus, *The Praise of St Patrick*, by Rev. G. F. Hamilton.

EOIN MACNEILL

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CHAPTER I

PATRICK, APOSTLE OF THE IRISH

LET us first ask Patrick, son of Calpurnius, what position he held and in what work he was occupied when he wrote the Confession. His answer, it will be seen, is that he was a Christian bishop appointed to take principal charge of a mission for the conversion of the Irish nation to Christianity.

“God inspired me beyond others that I should faithfully serve the nation to whom the love of Christ conveyed me. . . . It was he who bestowed on me so great a grace towards that nation, a thing that formerly, in my youth, I never hoped for nor thought of.”

His first clear inspiration to undertake this work came to him in a vision of the night. In that vision he heard a cry from many persons together and he read a writing in which this cry was named the Voice of the Irish. “It was not my grace, but God who overcometh in me, so that I came to the heathen Irish to preach the Gospel to a people newly come to belief which the Lord took from the ends of the earth.”

To those Irish as a nation and a people he plainly claims to have been the first to make known the Gospel. “It was most needful that we should spread

our nets, so that a great multitude and a throng should be taken for God." Here he touches on a matter which is still of the first concern in the Church's missionary work, the raising up of a native clergy. "Most needful," he continues, "that everywhere there should be clergy to baptise and exhort a people poor and needy, as the Lord in the Gospel warns and teaches, saying: Go ye therefore now, and teach all nations. And again: Go ye therefore into the whole world and preach the Gospel to every creature. And again: This Gospel of the Kingdom shall be preached in the whole world for a testimony to all nations."

Nowhere in his writings does Patrick make a distinction between one part of the Irish nation and another. He has only one name for them all. It is the Celtic name known to him and them: *Hiberionaci*, which means the people of Ireland. He calls them also, all of them without distinction, by the familiar Latin name of the time, *scotti*. To his work for their conversion he applies the words of prophecy: "I will call them my people who were not my people; and her that had obtained mercy who had not obtained mercy. And it shall come to pass that in the place where it was said, Ye are not my people; there shall they be called the children of the living God. Whence then in Ireland they who never had the knowledge of God but until now only worshipped

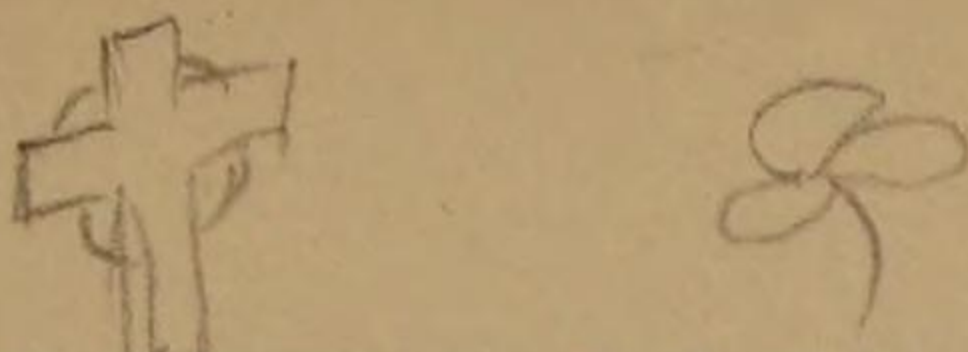

idols and abominations — how has there been lately made there a people of the Lord, and they are called children of God!”

His mission extended to the utmost bounds of Ireland. “Behold we are witnesses that the Gospel has been preached to the limit beyond which no man dwells . . . The Lord ordained clergy everywhere by means of my mediocrity. . . . I journeyed for your sake through many perils, even to the outlying regions beyond which no man dwelt, and where never had anyone come to baptise or ordain clergy or confirm the people.”

Though he was deeply convinced of a direct inspiration from God to work for the conversion of the Irish he testifies that his position in principal charge of that work was one of rightful authority derived from rightful authority. “I did not proceed to Ireland of my own accord. I hold a mission (*legatio*) on behalf of Christ my God. I do not usurp. I am a sharer with those whom he has called and predestined to preach the Gospel . . . and his priests whom he has chosen and he has conferred on them the greatest divine sublime power that whom they should bind on earth should be also bound in heaven. I avow myself to be a bishop rightly appointed (*constitutum*) in Ireland.”

From these words and many others of like import and from the general tenor of the documents it will

be recognised beyond doubt that their author claims to be nothing less than the Apostle of Christianity to the Irish Nation, the first to carry out the work and establish a Christian Church in Ireland.

CHAPTER II

BIRTH AND BOYHOOD IN BRITAIN

SEEING then that the writer of the Confession and the Epistle tells us plainly enough that he is the Apostle of the Irish Nation, the founder of the Christian Church in Ireland, let us now go on to see what he tells us about his own life.

He was a native of Roman Britain. *Brittaniae*, the name by which he calls his native country, signified, in his time, the Roman Provinces of Britain. After his escape from captivity he writes: "Again I was in Britain with my family (or parents)." Again he tells of his resolve never to part with his Irish flock, "not even," he says, "to go to Britain to visit my fatherland and parents." Addressing the fellow-countrymen of the British prince, Coroticus, he says: "I am a slave in Christ to a foreign nation and if my own know me not, a prophet hath no honour in his own country."

He names the town where his father held office, living near to it on a small estate where Patrick was taken captive. In the copies of the Confession that have come to us the name is Bannavem Taberniae. In his Life by Muirchu it is Bannavem Thaburinde. In Muirchu's time before the year 700 the place was no longer known by that name and Muirchu gives

it another name, Vemtre, and says that it is not far from our sea, the Irish Sea. The poem on St Patrick's life, which was known to Muirchu, gives Nemthur as the name. Many modern writers have tried to identify this place but no certainty about it has been reached or is likely to be reached unless some fresh evidence is discovered. For a time the place that was most in favour was near Dumbarton in Scotland, but there never was a Roman town with decurions holding office in it in that region or indeed in any part of Scotland. The most likely locality in view of all the circumstances would be somewhere near the shores of the Severn estuary.

The name of Patrick's father was Calpurnius. We read in one place that his father was a deacon (*diaconum*), in another place, a decurion. It is not unlikely that he wrote decurion in both places. A decurion was a member of a council for administering the affairs of a Roman township. The decurions were personally responsible for the collection of the Imperial taxes in their district. Hence they were chosen from the men of wealth and standing. Their office was regarded as a great burden and many sought to avoid it, but it was also a mark of honourable rank. Patrick writes "I am born of a father who was a decurion but I sold my noble rank, I blush not to state it nor am I sorry, for the profit of others." He speaks in the same passage about the manser-

vants and maidservants of his father's house. In short we may say that Patrick's father, Calpurnius, had a social standing resembling that of a squire in modern Britain. His grandfather, Potitus, was a priest.

Patrick was born in the year 385 or 386. The date is indicated in two different parts of his Confession.

Let us take a glance at Roman Britain as it was during his time. For some years before his birth the Roman Empire was already falling into ruin in consequence of internal disorder and the constant pressure of the hostile nations, the barbarians, as they are called, who dwelt beyond its frontiers. The legions upon which the Roman power mainly rested were largely recruited from these barbarians. An ambitious military commander who could win the affection of the army in any region might set up a claim to be Emperor. More than one attempt to seize the imperial authority originated in Britain.

The earlier Emperors had extended the Roman territory in Britain to the Firth of Clyde and the Firth of Forth, but before the year 200 the Romans had been obliged to fall back upon a frontier farther to the south, guarded by a strong line of fortifications, from the Firth of Solway to the mouth of the Tyne. This abandonment of territory emboldened the inhabitants of Northern Britain and also of Northern Ireland to feel that Roman power was something less than invincible. Before the end of the third cen-



tury we find it avowed that the Roman territory adjoining the new frontier was accustomed to hostile attacks from the Irish, called Scots, that is raiders, in Latin, and the peoples of Northern Britain, called by the Latin by-name of Picti or Painted Folk.

From that time forward the raids of the Picts and Scots are a familiar trait in the history of Roman Britain. In Ireland they seem to have led to organised piracy on a large scale comparable to the piratical enterprise of the Norsemen centuries afterwards or of the Algerians at a still later time. The Irish kings raised standing forces in imitation of the Romans and great earthworks constructed in Ireland during the same period are likely to have been inspired by the model of the Roman Walls in Britain. In 367 or 368 the raiding of Roman Britain by the Picts and Scots appears to have come to its height. There were great devastations, but the statement that has appeared in some recent writings that the towns of Roman Britain were destroyed at this time is quite unfounded.

At all events there is strong evidence that about that time the Irish had begun to take possession of a large part of Wales. Writing not long before his death (*Journal of Roman Studies* XIV, 123) Sir William Ridgeway shows that the latest Roman coins found in Wales are those of the Emperor Gratian, who reigned from 367 to 383, and draws the conclusion that the Irish

under the High-King Niall at that time or not long later had not only raided that country but mastered it. The Romans, however, continued to hold a kind of frontier extending through the modern shires which border on Wales. Here in a line stood the military centres, important towns, of Chester, Wroxeter, Caerwent, and Caerleon. In the same paper and from similar evidence, the complete disappearance of Roman coinage, Ridgeway writes: "The coins found at Chester, Wroxeter, Caerleon and Caerwent all point to a catastrophe having overtaken these towns in or about 395, the very year in which the Scot mobilised all Ireland in combination with the Picts, the Saxons, and the Franks against the Empire." He is referring to verses of the Latin poet Claudian written at the time where he says:

totam cum Scottus Hibernen

Movit.

In Ridgeway's view there was "a very high probability, especially in view of the Irish evidence of Niall's continuous activities, that it was he who destroyed these towns in that year." We shall refer later to this event in connection with the capture of St Patrick.

The disorders of the Empire increased and it is the general view of historians that the last of the Roman forces in Britain were withdrawn to the Continent in
b

409 or 410. Viewed from the distance of our time the departure of the Roman army might appear to mark the severance of Britain from the Empire. For the Britons themselves, though they found it a calamity, it had no such significance. For a long time before they had not merely accepted the Imperial authority but had become strongly attached to it and were proud to regard themselves as Roman citizens.

The history of the early growth of the Christian Church in Roman Britain remains in the main obscure. This much is certain, that when we come to St Patrick's time it is taken for granted that every Briton is a Christian. St Patrick himself in both his documents plainly takes this for granted. At no later time is there any mention of the conversion of Britons anywhere to Christianity or of professed heathenism still existing among them or of any relapse among them into heathenism. This is true not alone of the Britons within the bounds of Roman authority but also of those northern Britons, north of the Roman frontier, whose territories appear to have extended far into the middle of Scotland and farther northward still along the eastern coast. When St Patrick proclaims himself to be a Roman citizen it is probably in his mind that the bounds of Christendom and the bounds of the Roman Empire were practically the same. Even those independent Brit-

ons of the North regarded themselves in a sense as Romans. Roman personal names were adopted among them and at least the purpose of adopting Roman culture is shown in a considerable number of Latin inscriptions found in the southern parts of Scotland and as far as the neighbourhood of Edinburgh.

Patrick gives his readers to think that he grew up in his father's home surrounded by ease and comfort and leading the life of a careless boy. He hints at the companionship of many other boys, likening himself to them or them to himself. "We departed away from God and kept not his commandments and were not obedient to our priests who used to admonish us for our salvation." He accuses himself of some fault committed when he was about fifteen years of age, apparently only a fault of the tongue but grave enough to be remembered and confessed at the time of his ordination to the deaconship, and remembered even after that with anxiety so as to be told in confidence to a friend and to bring about what he describes as the great crisis of his life. We must bear in mind that Patrick looked back on the days of his youth from the standpoint of one who had received a monastic training at the time when monasticism was at the height of its vigour and fervour and stood out in Christendom as a contrast not only to the vices but also to the follies and frivolities of social decadence in the Ro-

man world. He had learned more fully to recognise the meaning of his religion and the right relations between man and his Creator and so he speaks in terms of severity about the ignorance of his boyhood before he knew God, or could distinguish between good and evil. He had not yet come to a living faith. "I did not believe in the living God nor had I since my infancy but I remained in death and in unbelief until I had been chastened exceedingly and humbled in truth by hunger and nakedness and that daily." (C.27.)

He was equally careless in what concerned his worldly education. From various other writings at the time we know the kind of education that was aimed at for the youth of his social standing, even in the outlying parts of the Western Empire. Literary culture in the Latin language had passed through and beyond its age of classical excellence and had begun to live upon its past. In Italy itself the Latin of the classics largely regulated by Greek models had always been more or less in conflict with the Latin of the common people. Outside of Italy Latin was daily exposed to the influence of various foreign idioms and everywhere the difficulty of maintaining the standard of educated speech was very great and increased with every passing year. To contend against this decay of Roman culture, for such among the higher classes of society it was felt to be, schools

sprang up in the cities of the Western Empire conducted by a class of teachers who bore the name of Rhetors. One of these Rhetors became afterwards the great St Augustine. He belonged to the generation before Patrick and died shortly before Patrick's mission to Ireland began. From his pen we have a description of the kind and degree of Latin education carried on in those schools of Rhetoric, as it was called.

This effort to maintain a classical standard in education was something quite different in its aim and nature from the study of the classics as an element of culture in the schools of our time. The ruling notion in the schools of the Rhetors was to enable young people to speak Latin according to classical standards in ordinary social intercourse and for the purposes of daily life. We have the instance of a bishop admonishing his clergy to avoid too high a standard in preaching to their congregations lest the people should fail to understand them.

In his home at the outer edge of the Roman world surrounded by a population who beyond doubt continued to speak their own Celtic language but could freely make use of a broken and careless Latin when matters of government or law or business required it, it could hardly be expected that a boy of fifteen could have attained the classical elegance of the schools. He regrets the shortcomings of his early

education. He even feared to write, lest his mistakes might expose him or rather expose his office and his work to belittlement. "I had long since thought of writing," he says, "but I hesitated until now for I feared lest I should fall under the censure of men's tongues because I have not studied as have others who most fittingly have drunk in both law and Holy Scripture alike and have never changed their language from the time that they were born, but on the contrary have been always rendering it more perfect. For my speech and word is translated into a tongue not my own, as can easily be proved from the savour of my writings in what fashion I have been taught and am learned in language." Patrick himself did not despise or decry the high standard that others were able to attain. He goes on to say: "But what avails excuse-making, no matter how true, especially when accompanied by presumption? Since now I myself in my old age covet that which in youth I did not acquire, because my sins prevented me from mastering what I had read through before. But who believes me, though I say again what I have already said? In my youth when I was still no more than a beardless boy I was taken captive before I knew what to seek or what to desire or what to avoid, and so to-day I blush and am greatly afraid to expose my awkwardness. For not being learned I am unable to make my meaning plain in few words.

If I had had the same privileges as others I would not keep silence and if perchance it seems to many that I am thrusting myself forward in writing this with my want of knowledge and my slow tongue, yet it is written: The tongue of the stammerers shall quickly learn to speak peace . . . And again the Spirit testifies: And rusticity is ordained by the Most High."



CHAPTER III CAPTIVITY AND ESCAPE

WHEN Patrick was about sixteen years of age the Lord, he says, poured upon him the fury of his anger. He was captured at his father's home and with him the man-servants and the maid-servants of his father's house, and he was led into captivity to Ireland with many thousands of others, and the Lord scattered them among many heathens unto the ends of the earth.

How this event took place we can have little doubt. The date can be fixed in the year 401. In Ireland at that time Niall of the Nine Hostages ruled as High-King, and no other king in Irish tradition surpasses his celebrity. A few years later he met his death, we are told, on the sea between Britain and Gaul where he had sailed in command of a fleet from Ireland. Before he began to reign Crimthann, king of Munster, had invaded the western parts of Britain, and a later king of Munster, Cormac mac Cuilennain, who was also a bishop and a man of learning, records the tradition of his house, going doubtless far beyond the fact, that Crimthann made himself master of Britain as far as the southern sea. From the British historian, Nennius, we know that a branch of Crimthann's family settled themselves in

rule over a region in South Wales, corresponding more or less to Glamorganshire. To the west of this the kingdom of Demetia became an Irish colony under an Irish line of rulers, which remained in power until the tenth century, when it was merged through marriage with the line of Howel Dda, king of Wales. In Cormac's time, about the year 900, an ancient fortress in the lands of the Cornish Britons, that is in Cornwall or Devonshire, was known by a name that commemorated the settlement there of another branch of the kindred of Crimthann. Its name in the British tongue was Din Map Letan, in Irish Dun Mac Liathain, the stronghold of the sons of Liathan. Numerous inscriptions in the Ogham character and in the Irish language testify to the presence of a strong Irish element, especially in South Wales, but also over other parts of Wales and in Devonshire and Cornwall. One of these inscriptions has been found as far east as Silchester in Hampshire. We have thus the clearest historical evidence that the Irish of that period, under the command of their kings, were especially active in the parts of Britain north and south of the Severn Sea. Brecknockshire takes its name, in Welsh Brycheiniog, from an Irish prince called in Welsh Brychan, in Irish Broccan or Braccan, who in the same period established a principality there for himself and his descendants. Some hold that

Vortigern, whose mention by Gildas became the root of an imaginative romance, was also a prince of Irish blood.

St Patrick's account of his capture, the phrase "with many thousands of men," and the added phrase that they were dispersed throughout heathen Ireland to the farthest bounds are specially significant. We have to remember that Patrick is not so much telling the story of what happened as appealing to a knowledge of facts about which many who were alive to receive his words, some in Ireland and some in Britain, were thoroughly well informed. Those phrases therefore bear witness to an invasion from Ireland in very great force. Nothing less than an army was needed to scour the country and round up and carry off thousands of prisoners, and nothing less than a great fleet of ships was needed to transport such an army and such a multitude of captives. The event may appear less strange if we compare it with another which is recorded by an Irish annalist in its own time. In the year 870 Olaf and Imar, reigning jointly over the Norsemen of Dublin, fitted out a fleet and sailed to the attack of the great historic fortress of the Britons at Dumbarton at the head of the Firth of Clyde. They besieged Dumbarton for four months and finally captured and destroyed the fortress. In the following year 871, in the words of the Annals of Ulster, Olaf and Imar returned to Dub-

lin from Albion with two hundred ships, and a very great booty of men, Angles and Britons and Picts, were brought with them to Ireland in captivity.

It seems reasonable to connect so great an enterprise of piracy as that related by Patrick with the evidence produced by Ridgeway regarding the destruction of the Roman towns on a line extending through the counties on the border of Wales, and it also appears reasonable to date their destruction by the year of St Patrick's capture 401. This is six years later than the reign of the Emperor Gratian whose Roman coinage is the latest found in the sites of the destroyed cities, but the events of the intervening years on the Continent are sufficient to explain how Roman coins issued in those years could have failed to reach the western parts of Britain.

Whilst slave-raiding was carried on on such a scale a market or markets for slaves must have been set up somewhere in Ireland. It was an ancient and firm tradition, which there is no good reason to question, that Patrick became a slave to a petty king named Miliucc, perhaps by purchase, perhaps because Miliucc himself was a sharer in the expedition. He and his people belonged to the Irish Picts. His sept is named Dal Buain and he himself is named with a corresponding surname, Miliucc Moccu Buain. His territory continued to bear the name Dal Buain until modern times. It appears to have ex-

tended from the eastern side of Lough Neagh northwards as far as Sliabh Mis (Slemish) within the present county of Antrim. Patrick's occupation as a slave was the tending of flocks, flocks of swine pastured in the forests and flocks of sheep pastured on the mountain. He gives no hint that he had any other slave from his own country for a companion. Notwithstanding what he says about his heedless boyhood, the Christian teaching of his parents and pastors bore fruit in his captivity. This is best shown in his own words: "Now after I arrived in Ireland, tending flocks was my daily occupation and constantly I used to pray in the daytime. The love of God and the fear of Him increased more and more, and faith grew and the spirit was roused so that in one day I would say as many as a hundred prayers and at night nearly as many, even while I stayed out in the woods and on the mountain. I used to be roused to prayer before daybreak, through snow, through frost, through rain, nor was there any sluggishness in me such as I now see because then the spirit within me was fervent."

Again he says that at this time he was chastened exceedingly and humbled by hunger and nakedness day by day.

This is all that he tells about his life as a slave during six years, except to remark in excusing his defective Latin that he was forced at this time to change

his language. Though Latin was the language of his home he was no doubt familiar with the Celtic of Britain. It is not unlikely that at this time, in the beginning of the fifth century, British and Irish Celtic, which afterwards diverged so widely, were near enough to each other to allow the people of one tongue to understand those who spoke in the other. Be that as it may, the familiarity that Patrick acquired during his captivity with the language of Ireland fitted him providentially for his future mission.

He tells how his captivity came to an end. "One night I heard in my sleep a voice saying to me: Thou fastest well, who art soon to go to thy native land." This is the first of his visions that he relates. He does not conceal that they came to him in dreams of sleep. His words took root and grew in popular tradition, in the ordinary ways of folk-lore, and already in the seventh century the earliest writings about him transform these dreams of the night into visits of an angel who becomes Patrick's special and familiar angel bearing the name of Victor. This first voice was followed either in the same or in another dream by another voice. Patrick writes: "And again after a very short time I heard an answer saying to me: Lo! thy ship is ready." Here and in various other parts of the Confession he calls such voices responses, sometimes divine responses.

It is curious to note that St Joan is said to have

spoken in the same way of the supernatural voices that came to her.

“Thy ship is ready;” and he continues: “and it was not near at hand but was perhaps distant two hundred miles, and I had never been there, nor did I know anyone there. And then after that I took to flight and left the man with whom I had been for six years and I came in the strength of God who directed my way to good and I felt no fear until I reached that ship.”

When Patrick tells us that he felt no fear he means to stress the supernatural character of the voices he had heard. As a fugitive slave he would have been easily recognised and he would have been at everybody's mercy.

The two hundred miles is not merely a guess, for it was written in the knowledge that Patrick acquired afterwards in his travels in Ireland and in association with many who knew the country well. The place to which he came was probably somewhere on the south-eastern coast, we may say in the neighbourhood of Wexford.

When he arrived there he appears to have been allowed to rest and to have got food in some poor man's hut. That very day, he says, a ship was there ready to sail. It is most likely to have been an Irish ship manned by Irishmen, for Patrick says that they were heathens and few of the people of Britain or Gaul were

accounted heathens in his time. The strong timber framework of Irish ships in that age was not covered with planks but with hides, just as the curach now used on the western coast of Ireland has its framework covered with tarred canvas. These ships were brought to land on the sandy or muddy shores of river mouths or sheltered bays where they could be beached without taking harm, and while they were at land they were drawn up on the shore beyond the reach of the tide. When the time came for them to sail they were brought down again and set afloat. This sort of launching is in Patrick's mind when he says: "The very day that I arrived the ship left its place," meaning that it was afloat and ready to sail. "And I spoke saying that I must needs sail with them, and the skipper was displeased and answered sharply with indignation: By no means shall you attempt to go with us." In Patrick's voice and aspect it is not unlikely that the skipper recognised a runaway slave. "And when I heard this," he writes, "I turned away from them to return to the cabin where I was lodging, and on my way I began to pray and before I could finish a prayer I heard the voice of one of them and he was shouting loudly after me: Come quick for these men are calling you. And I immediately went back to them. And they began to say to me: Come on for we are taking you in good faith. Make friends with us in any way you wish. And on that

day I refused to suck their paps by reason of the fear of God, but nevertheless I had hope that they might come to the faith of Jesus Christ for they were heathens, and for that reason I held on with them. And forthwith we set sail."

The journey lasted for three days. It is characteristic of Patrick's way of telling his story that some fact of the most remarkable kind which another writer would relate in its place comes out in Patrick's telling in some other part of his narrative and only incidentally. He does not tell us here that the ship in which he sailed for three days was carrying a cargo of Irish hounds to the Continent.

We learn from a writer named Symmachus, who wrote a few years before this time, that Irish hounds were brought as far as the city of Rome itself to be exhibited in the public games, probably in combat with other beasts. Such was their size and formidable aspect that, as this writer tells us, the people thought they must have been transported in iron cages. Besides being exhibited at public shows it is not unlikely that they were in demand as hunting dogs.

Patrick continues: "And after three days we came to land and we travelled twenty-eight days through a desert and food failed them and hunger overcame them." He speaks afterwards of a journey of fourteen days and it is possible that the twenty-

eight days first mentioned includes two journeys of fourteen days, one from the ship, the other back to it. Whether it took twenty-eight days or fourteen days to traverse the desert, the existence of a desert region of the extent indicated in any part of the Continent within three or four days' sail from Ireland requires special explanation. No natural desert of that kind is known to have existed. There is a barren, sandy region, the Landes, extending along the coast of France southward from the mouth of the Garonne, but it does not give room for a journey of fourteen, much less of twenty-eight days, nor is it easy to imagine why a merchant mariner with a cargo of hounds to be disposed of should have gone travelling at all in that district. The only intelligible explanation of the desert mentioned by Patrick, where men could travel for weeks without finding food or seeing the face of a fellow-man, is the explanation furnished by Bury. The desert was one created by the invasion of the Vandals. The Vandals, and along with them, the Burgundi and the Alani, broke down the defences of the Roman Empire and began to pour across the Rhine into Gaul on the last night of the year 406. They formed separate hordes spreading in all directions through the country, plundering, wasting and slaying. Descriptions of the destruction and terror caused by them have come to us from writers of that time. They remained in

Gaul until the year 409, when they passed on into Spain, and afterwards crossed to Africa. Bury, quite unaccountably, fixes the date of St Patrick's escape in the third year of the Vandal invasion, 409. It has been shown by Zimmer and others that a constant ancient intercourse by sea existed between Ireland and the shores of the Bay of Biscay. We may therefore be certain that the Vandal invasion became known in Ireland and especially among the seafaring folk of the Irish coast within a few months at the most of its actually taking place. Those who brought the news to Ireland are not likely to have made little of the facts. Patrick's ship must have set sail before any such news had crossed the sea. The time of its sailing therefore comes between the devastation which caused the desert and the arrival of the news of that devastation in Ireland. It must have been early in the year 407. Patrick was then about twenty-two years of age. The date thus reckoned is confirmed in another part of the Confession, where Patrick tells of what befel him at the age of forty-five.

Though Patrick's story of this journey is meagre and incomplete, a great deal is plainly implied in it. Those who made the journey bringing the hounds along with them were the ship's crew and their skipper was still in command of them. The fact that they started on such a journey over land and continued it for fourteen days shows that they were following a

known route to a known destination. It is probable that they expected to find a market for their hounds in one of the Roman cities of Southern Gaul. The fact that they came short of food shows that their way lay through a region where they expected food to be found. When things came to the worst Patrick goes on to say: "One day the skipper began saying to me: What do you say, Christian? That God of yours is great and all-powerful. Why then can you not pray for us, since we are in danger of perishing from hunger, for it looks unlikely that we shall ever again see any man. But I said to them plainly: Be converted in good faith and with all your heart to the Lord my God, to whom nothing is impossible, so that to-day He may send you food into your way until ye are satisfied, for everywhere He has abundance." We have seen that when he joined this party at first he rejected their friendship but held on with them in the hope that they might be converted. It was in a way the beginning of his mission to the Irish, and the idea that he might be an instrument for their conversion had already germinated in his mind. The skipper's words were a challenge to his faith. He took up the challenge and his story implies that the men in their extremity consented to become Christians. The hope that God would send them food was fulfilled. "Behold," he says, "a herd of swine appeared on the road before our eyes, and they killed many of them

and remained there two nights, and they were well restored and their hounds were filled, for many of them had fallen weak and were left upon the roadside half alive. And after this they gave the greatest thanks to God and I was honoured in their eyes, and from this day on they had food in plenty. They even found wild honey and offered me a share. One of them said: This is offered in sacrifice," meaning no doubt as a divine honour to Patrick himself. "Thanks be to God," he says, "I tasted none of it." He goes on to tell of a curious dream which for himself had some special significance. His words seem to imply that he took it to foreshadow a crisis in his later experience. "But on the same night I was asleep and Satan tempted me strongly, a thing that I shall remember as long as I shall be in this body, and a huge rock as it were fell upon me and I had no strength in my limbs, but whence did it come to me in inspiration that I called on Elias and thereupon I saw the sun rising into the sky, and while I shouted Elias, Elias, with all my force, behold the splendour of that sun came down upon me and forthwith it shook off all the weight from me. And I believe that I was succoured by Christ my Lord, and His Spirit even then was crying out for me, and I hope that it shall be so on the day of my distress, as it says in the Gospel: In that day the Lord testifies: It is not you that speak but the Spirit of your Father that speaketh

in you." We shall see that in his account of the crisis Patrick returns to this thought of the Spirit of God dwelling and speaking within the soul.

What he next relates is plainly an incident of the same journey, though some modern writers have sought to find another meaning for it. "And again after many years I became a captive. That first night accordingly I remained with them. I heard, however, a divine answer saying to me: Thou shalt be two months with them. And so it befell. On the sixtieth night from then the Lord freed me out of their hands. Also on the journey He provided us with food and fire and shelter day by day until on the tenth day we all came through. As I have stated above we made the journey through a desert for twenty-eight days, and that night when we all came through we had nothing left of the food."

When Patrick says that in this last part of the journey God provided food for "us," "we" journeyed through the desert, "we" all came through, "we" had nothing left of the food, it is plain that he speaks of the same persons who travelled together in the first part of the journey of twenty-eight days. Hence though he speaks of himself alone as being captured, we must think that the whole party was held in captivity for sixty days in the middle of the journey. As the other circumstances are explained by the Vandal invasion so also is this incident. Patrick and

his companions fell into the hands of a party of the invaders and were afterwards released or made their escape. When they recovered their freedom, having no doubt been robbed of all they possessed, they must have endeavoured to make their way back to the ship and it is of this part of their travels that Patrick speaks in the sentences last quoted. A verbal difficulty may seem to stand in the way. He says that this second captivity happened after many years. We need not put too rigid an interpretation on the word many. In our own way of speaking one would say "After long years of captivity I was made captive once more."

A similar difficulty has been felt in understanding the next part of Patrick's story. "And again after a few years I was in Britain with my parents, who received me as a son, and besought me earnestly that now at least I, after such great afflictions as I had borne, should not go anywhere away from them." Later in the Confession Patrick shows that part of his life between this escape and his mission to Ireland was passed in Gaul. A saying of his preserved in the book of Armagh is authentic beyond question. "I had the fear of God for my guide on my journey through Gaul and Italy and the islands of the Tyrrhene Sea." Some have thought that these travels were undertaken immediately after his escape and that they occupied the time indicated where he says:

“Again after a few years I was in Britain.” The few years here mentioned are contrasted with the many years of the preceding passage. Again let us say that phrases of this kind need not be understood in the strictest sense. The voice which foretold Patrick’s escape said: “Thou art soon to return to thy native land,” and this Patrick must have understood to be a command no less than a prophecy. We need not doubt that he took the first opportunity when he found himself free to return to his home and to his parents.

Difficulty too has been found in the words: “They received me as a son.” We may take this to mean they desired him to take up his place in the family for the future as his father’s son, a meaning borne out by the desire that he should go nowhere away from them. Elsewhere he says, speaking of his parting with his country and parents: “They offered me many gifts with lamentation and tears . . . but God overcame in me and resisted them all that I might come to preach the Gospel to the heathen Irish.”



CHAPTER IV
THE CALL OF THE IRISH
HIS PREPARATION AND TRIAL

IT was there at his home in Britain that the vision came to Patrick in which he heard the Call of the Irish. "And there I saw in a vision of the night a man, as it were, coming from Ireland whose name was Victoricus with letters innumerable. And he gave me one of these and I read the beginning of the letter containing (this title) THE VOICE OF THE IRISH. And while I was reciting the beginning of the letter I thought at the same moment that I heard the voices of those same persons who used to be near the wood of U— which is beside the Western Sea. And they cried out thus as if from one mouth: We beseech thee, holy youth, to come and walk once more among us. And I was greatly pained at heart and was unable to read more. And so I awoke. Thanks be to God that after many years the Lord granted them according to their cry."

Of all the things that Patrick relates this vision is the most fully and vividly told. Nothing could be written that was more certain to take hold of the imagination of Irish people in later times, and by the time when the first accounts of St Patrick began to be written the story of this vision had expanded into a

legend. Patrick says plainly that he was in Britain with his parents when the vision came to him. In the later accounts it comes to him in Rome or in the islands of the Tyrrhene Sea. He saw it in his sleep and at the end of it he awoke. In the later accounts the man who came from Ireland becomes an angel. His name Victoricus becomes Victor. The same angel Victor visits Patrick on many occasions. The dreams in which Patrick's escape from captivity was foretold become announcements from the Angel Victor. The very place where the Angel stood when he gave this message was known and named. It was on a rock on the top of a hill named Scirid, now in English called Skerry, and as far back as the seventh century a mark was pointed out on this rock which was said to be the track of the Angel's foot, remaining there for proof. The same mark is there and known to the present day. But in the folk-lore of the district the footprint was made by Patrick himself not by the Angel. The name of the wood in Patrick's narrative is doubtful. What is certain is that Patrick did not write Focluti. In the later accounts the story of the vision is separated into distinct events, the visit of the Angel, and the voices calling upon Patrick. The voices are no longer heard in a dream. They are real voices. It was not strange that they should be thought real, for Patrick himself felt them to be nothing less. "After many years the Lord granted to

them according to their cry." The voices are thought to come from young lads, this being suggested by the words "holy youth" and "walk once more among us." As the legend grew they became the voices of unborn babes, and finally the names of these babes and of their parents are made known. So completely did the story pass into folk-lore that the words of the cry from Ireland are altogether changed. One version, and a very ancient one, gives these words: "All the Irish call upon thee to come and save us."

There can be no doubt that Patrick took this vision for a call from God. It decided his mind to become a missionary to the heathen Irish and it assured him at the same time that his vocation to that work came to him from God.

Up to this point the Confession appears to relate the chief events of Patrick's early life in order as they occur. From this point onward no such order is observed. Patrick seems to assume that his personal history in the time that followed was known well enough to those by whom he expected his Confession to be read. He deals with later events not so much by way of telling what happened as by commenting on them and explaining them. The Confession is addressed to two classes of persons then living, those who were associated with him in his missionary work in Ireland, and others especially in Britain who pretended to hold him in scorn. He takes it for granted



that from the time when he set out to prepare for his missionary work down to the time when he wrote, all these were already acquainted with his personal history.

From the vision of the voices Patrick goes on to tell of two other visions, both seen in dreams, since he speaks of his awaking after them. These things had very great weight in his own mind. He applies to himself the words of Scripture: "And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith the Lord, I will pour out of my spirit upon all flesh and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions and your old men shall dream dreams." It is well therefore that we should have before our minds the account of those dreams which had so much significance for Patrick. "On another night," he writes, "I know not, God knows, whether within me or near me (a voice) with most learned words which I heard and could not understand except that at the end of a prayer it spoke thus: He who gave His life for thee, the same it is who speaks within thee. And so I awoke full of joy. And again I saw the same praying within me and I was as it were within my own body and I heard it above me, that is above the interior man, and it was praying there strongly with groans, and while this went on I was astonished and was wondering and thinking who it might be who was praying within me, but at the end

of the prayer it spoke in such a way that it should be the Spirit, and so I awoke and I remembered how the Apostle says: The Spirit helpeth the infirmities of our prayer, for we know not what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself asketh for us with unspeakable groanings which cannot be expressed in words. And again: The Lord our Advocate maketh intercession for us."

St Patrick's return to his home in Britain, as we have seen, should have been in the year 407. The hold of the Roman power over Britain was coming to an end. Within the next few years the last of the Imperial forces were withdrawn. The pressure of the hostile nations continued. The Irish on the west, the Picts and the independent Britons in the north, and on the east and south a medley of piratical German folks usually spoken of under the name of Saxons—there were Angles, and Jutes and Frisians and probably others besides—these together made Roman Britain a land of insecurity, where men lived in apprehension of what might next befall them. On the Continent the Western Empire was in no happier state. The Vandals after the devastation of Gaul established themselves in Spain. The Goths had overrun Italy and captured Rome. The usurping Emperor Constantine, a soldier who became Caesar by the choice of the Roman forces in Britain and who led these forces to establish his power on the Contin-

ent, ruled in Gaul and Spain with the support of the Vandals and their allies. But an invasion of a different kind had reached Western Europe from the East. The monastic life had begun to flourish in Gaul and already from about the year 360 under St Martin of Tours it had begun to attract large numbers and to gain great celebrity. In the first years of the fifth century there was founded in the islands of Lerins near Cannes a monastery whose predominance in Gaul was to be unquestioned. The founder was St Honoratus, scion of a noble Gallic family of the north.

Patrick has left on record his visit to the islands of the Tyrrhene Sea. A number of these islands had become places of retirement for hermits or ascetical groups. "Which of them St Patrick visited," as Father John Ryan writes, "it would be useless to conjecture . . . Like St Basil and Cassian among the monks of Egypt, St John Chrysostom among the hermits near Antioch and many others, St Patrick is to be pictured learning from the holy men with whom he sojourned the principles of Christian self-renunciation and imitating their devout practices. Like the former too, he would have had no hesitation in moving from one teacher or settlement to another. Each place had advantages peculiar to itself from which a fervent soul might draw profit. Owing to constant arrivals and departures intercourse was maintained between the various colonies of



ascetics and the news would in time reach Patrick's ears that on the island of Lerins there ruled an abbot whose method of guidance was more systematic than any yet known in the Occident. The abbot's name was Honoratus."

Father Ryan quotes from a sermon of St Hilary on the life of St Honoratus: "Whoever desired Christ sought out Honoratus," and from the same: "What land at this day, what nation has not its citizens in his monastery?"

Patrick speaks in his Confession of an eager desire in later life to visit once more his monastic brethren, "to go," he says, "even as far as Gaul to visit the brethren and that I might see the face of the saints of my Lord. God knows that I dearly desire it."

How long St Patrick remained in the monastery we do not know. We find him next at Auxerre, where it seems likely that he was admitted to Holy Orders by the bishop, St Amator. Amator was succeeded by the celebrated St Germanus about the year 418. All the oldest Irish accounts agree in telling that Patrick became a disciple of Germanus, and certain passages in his Confession are entirely in accord with this tradition. Indeed this tradition alone makes their meaning clear to us.

About the time of Patrick's captivity a Briton named Pelagius came into notoriety as the advocate of a peculiar doctrine about the grace of God. This

doctrine, condemned by the Church, continued to be held and propagated by some in Britain. In 429, as the historian Prosper being then at Rome records, the Pope St Celestine at the instance of a deacon named Palladius commissioned Germanus to go to Britain for the purpose of bringing this heresy to an end. Germanus spent some months in Britain visiting many parts of it and holding conferences with the bishops and clergy. His activities are specially connected in tradition with Wales, where his memory was held in high veneration in later times. During these conferences, above all in the western parts of Britain, it could not have escaped notice that the neighbouring island of Ireland still remained heathen. There were large Irish settlements, as we have seen, in those western parts, and there were thousands of British Christians still held in slavery by the Irish. There was one conference in particular at which some of Patrick's brethren of the clergy of Auxerre were present, and at which the project was brought forward of a mission for the conversion of Ireland. Patrick's name came under discussion as one who might be chosen to take charge of such a mission. Among his fellow clergy there was one whom he calls his dearest friend. Reference has been made above to some fault committed by Patrick at the age of fifteen. This fault, he says, he had confessed before he became a deacon, but he allowed it after-

wards to trouble his conscience and he once spoke about it to his friend. "On account of my anxiety, in a sorrowful spirit, I confided to my dearest friend things that I had done in my boyhood on one day, nay in a single hour, for as yet I had no strength. I know not, God knows, if at that time I was fifteen years of age, and I did not believe in the living God and not from my infancy [meaning of course that he had not a lively faith] but I remained in death and in unbelief until I was grievously chastised and in very truth was humiliated by hunger and nakedness and from day to day." He tells us briefly and not in proper sequence what happened in his regard at the conference aforesaid. "I learned from certain of my brethren, a matter in which I had no part, for I was not in Britain nor will I be the first to tell it, that my friend became advocate for me in my absence. He had even said to me himself with his own mouth: Behold thou art to be raised to the rank of bishop,—a thing of which I was not worthy." Let us again remind ourselves that Patrick takes for granted a general knowledge of these matters on the part of those whom he addresses and for that reason finds it needless to be fully explicit. A conference held in Britain in which Patrick's fellow-clergymen took part, at which his merits were discussed, and some at least expected that he would receive the rank of bishop,—these things can only be explained with reference to

the project for a mission to Ireland. A second conference was held of greater importance than the first and therefore put first by Patrick in his order of telling. Here his own seniors, that is to say the higher clergy of his community, were present and took a prominent part. Patrick himself was present. So too was his dearest friend. This conference therefore would have been held at Auxerre after the return of Germanus from Britain and we may date it in the year 430. It will be seen that the conference was concerned, perhaps mainly, with the project of a mission to Ireland and that the institution of such a mission followed quickly. Though Patrick must have thought of it in this aspect and have taken for granted that his readers had all this knowledge of it, his account of the event has quite a different character. He describes it not as the beginning of the greatest episode in the history of a nation but as a great and perilous crisis in his own spiritual life. It is hard to escape the notion that he saw in it the fulfilment of that curious dream which he has already told, where he was pressed to the earth as if a great rock lay upon him and where he was strongly tempted by Satan until the sun shone out and all his fear and anguish were dispelled. He passes to this part of his narrative from the description of those other dreams in which he felt that the Spirit of God spoke to him and prayed for him within his own soul.

“And when I was tried by some of my seniors who brought forward my sins against my laborious episcopate, verily in that day I was strongly driven that I might fall here and forever. But the Lord in his goodness spared the stranger and sojourner for His name’s sake and came powerfully to my aid when I was thus trampled down so that I did not fall badly into disgrace and bad repute. I pray God that it be not imputed to them for sin. They found the occasion after thirty years and against a word which I had confessed before I was a deacon.” He then relates how he had confided his anxiety about this fault to his dearest friend.

A difficulty has been found in understanding Patrick’s words where he says that his seniors, that is his ecclesiastical superiors, brought forward this censure in opposition to his laborious episcopate. This has been taken to mean that he was already a bishop engaged on the work of the Irish mission when he was brought under censure. Here again a too strictly logical interpretation is not to be applied. There is no good reason to think that Patrick would not use these words in the sense that his seniors were opposed to his appointment as a bishop for an episcopal charge which he wishes to be thought of as burdensome and laborious rather than as a position of dignity and nobility, for already at that time in all the older churches of Christendom the bishops en-

joyed the honours of princes. He returns to this matter in a later part of the Confession: "I shall always have to thank God without ceasing, who was often indulgent to my want of knowledge and my negligence . . . And I did not readily give way, according to what had been shown to me and as the Spirit suggested, and the Lord had mercy upon me unto thousands and thousands of things, because He saw in me that I was ready but that I did not therefore know what I was to do about my own position since many were opposing this mission." Here again it can be seen that he speaks of his mission even before he had been appointed to it. "Also among themselves they were telling things behind my back and they were saying: Why does this fellow push himself into danger among enemies who know not God. It was not because of malice, but they were dissatisfied, and I avow that I myself was so minded, on account of my want of education."

We return now to his account of the conference. He continues it as if he had already written what we have just quoted about the accusation of thrusting himself forward. "On the contrary," he says, "I did not seek of my own accord to go to Ireland until my strength almost failed me. But rather this trial was for my good, for by this means I was amended by the Lord and he fitted me that to-day I might be what was once far from me, that I should have a charge

and be concerned for the salvation of others, whereas then I was not even thinking about myself." From all this we get some glimpse of the view that his seniors are likely to have taken of Patrick and the proposal to send him as a bishop in charge of an important mission. Let us suppose in our own time the case of a young priest, pious, humble and ascetic, but firmly convinced that he had received a direct call from God to become a missionary in a heathen land where the Church had not yet been established, making no secret of this belief or of the fact that it was based on his private experience in dreams of the night. His education falls far below the standard expected and commonly attained in the priesthood, still more below the standard required for the episcopate. The responsibility of choosing him to take charge of such a mission was a very grave one. At the critical moment a weight was thrown into the scale and the balance was turned against him.

His friend and confidant who had taken his part at the previous conference in Britain and had assured him that he was to be raised to the rank of bishop, having now returned to Gaul, found reason for a complete change of face. He revealed to the seniors what he had heard from Patrick about the fault committed in his boyhood. He professed to regard it as a matter of the greatest gravity, for, writes Patrick, "In the presence of all both good and bad he publicly

defamed me in a matter which before of his own accord and gladly he had held me pardoned, as the Lord had done who is greater than all." The end of it was that Patrick was rejected. "*Reprobatus sum*," he writes, using the words of the Sacred Text said of the stone that was rejected by the builders. This event and the same comparison are in Patrick's mind in an earlier part of the Confession where he writes: "So I was at first uneducated, an exile, ignorant indeed, one who knows not to provide for the future, but this I know most certainly that before I was humiliated I was like the stone that lies in the deep mud, and He came, who is mighty, and in His mercy took me up and indeed verily raised me on high and set me on the top of the wall." The effect of his rejection on Patrick's mind at the time is to be measured by his words: "I was driven to the danger of falling then and for eternity." He continues the account of the conference.

"Then on that day on which I was rejected by those above mentioned, in that night I saw in a vision of the night—it was written against my face without honour, and therewith I heard a divine response saying to me: Not well have we seen the face of such a one, making known his name. Nor did it say thus: Not well hast thou seen, but not well have we seen, as if it joined itself to me, as it is written: He who touches you is as one who touches the apple of

my eye.” This vision seems to have raised Patrick from the depth and reassured him. For the moment the hope of his life appeared to have vanished and his faith in a supernatural call was shaken if not ruined. The relief that came to him is told in his own words. “Therefore I give thanks to Him who gave me strength in all things, for that He did not withhold me from the progress that I had put before me and from my work also of which I had learned from Christ my Lord, but rather from this event I felt in myself no small power and my faith was proved before God and men. Therefore I say boldly that my conscience does not blame me in this and what was to come. I have God as my witness that I have not lied in the accounts that I have given to you. But rather I grieve for my dearest friend why we should have deserved to hear such a response as this. One to whom I trusted my very soul . . . I have said enough. Yet it is not right that I should hide away the gift of God which He has bestowed on us in the land of my captivity, for at that time I strongly sought him and I found him there and he preserved me from all iniquities. So I believe by reason of His indwelling Spirit who has wrought in me even to this day. Again boldly. But God knows if a man had made this known to me perhaps I would have kept silence for the love of Christ. Therefore I give unwearied thanks to my God who kept me faithful on the day

of my trial so that to-day I may confidently offer to Him in sacrifice as a living victim my soul to Christ my Lord who preserved me from all my trials."

As to how the judgement of his superiors was reversed and how he was chosen for the great work to which he was so strongly impelled, Patrick again in this connection supposes the facts to be well known and all that he says about it is this: "My good faith was approved before God and men." He rightly sees that to be chosen after such a rejection was the strongest proof of choice. We have to recognise that at every stage in the Confession Patrick is defending himself against charges of unworthiness, self-seeking and presumption. For the actual history of the beginning of his mission we have to depend on other sources. Let us go back to 429. In that year St Germanus received his commission from the Pope to visit Britain at the instance of the deacon Palladius and in Britain the project of a mission to Ireland was brought forward. In 430 the proposal to place Patrick in charge of that mission was rejected. In 431 Palladius was ordained Bishop by Pope Celestine and sent as first bishop to the Irish believing in Christ. These are the words of the contemporary historian Prosper who was then in Rome. How the mission of Palladius fared we know only from Irish tradition in writings of the seventh century and later. In its main features this Irish tradition contains

nothing questionable, is in accord with the other known facts, and enables us to understand them.

Palladius reached Ireland in the year of his consecration, 431. He is likely to have landed at the port of Arklow, for the only details that are told of his missionary work are placed in the adjoining region, the Fortuatha of Leinster. Inbhear De, the port of Arklow, must have been a place of resort for sea-going ships from remotely ancient times. Besides its convenient position regarding Britain and the Continent it was close to the mining district of that Irish gold of which the products even in the Bronze Age are known to have reached various parts of the Continent and as far as Denmark. Not long after the beginning of his mission and still within the year 431 Palladius crossed over to Britain. The purpose of his visit to Britain is unknown. It may well have been in search of clergy to supply the needs of missionary work. During his visit to Britain Palladius died. For what happened in the sequel we are dependent on Muirchu, whose history of St Patrick was written not long before the year 700. But Muirchu's account can be shown to be derived at least in part from older written sources and shows a certain confusion which in itself bears evidence of older writings that Muirchu did not fully understand.

This is Muirchu's account. "Accordingly when the death of St Palladius in Britain became known,

for the disciples of Palladius, that is, Augustinus and Benedictus and others, returning, brought tidings to Ebmoria regarding his death, Patrick and those who were with him turned aside on their journey to a certain admirable man, a bishop of high rank, by name Amathorex, who dwelt in a neighbouring place; and there St Patrick, knowing what things were to befall, received the episcopal order from the holy bishop, Amathorex. Also Auxilius and Ierninus and others of the lower grade were ordained on the same day as St Patrick."

Muirchu had already related how Patrick had been sent by Germanus to Ireland before he was ordained bishop. "When the opportune time required, accompanied by the divine aid, Patrick set out on his journey to the work for which he had already been prepared, the work of the Gospel, and Germanus sent with him a senior, that is the priest Segitius, that he might have a companion for a witness, for Patrick had not yet been ordained to the pontifical rank by the holy lord Germanus."

It has long been recognised that the bishop Amathorex of whom Muirchu speaks is to be identified with St Amator who was succeeded by St Germanus in the bishopric of Auxerre. The date of Amator's death is not known to a year, but it was in 418 or not long before or after. That Patrick could have received episcopal consecration from Amator or in his

lifetime is out of the question. Muirchu must have built his account on some early written document which was no longer understood in Ireland when he wrote. The substitution of Amathorex for the name Amator would not have taken place in oral tradition and points to a written source. The same is to be said of the unknown placename Ebmoria. The confusion in Muirchu's story is best explained on the ground that a written account existed which told of Patrick's ordination by Amator, probably his admission to minor orders. This would also explain the statement that Auxilius and Iserninus and others in minor orders were ordained at the same time as Patrick. It will be noted that Muirchu did not know Amator to have been bishop of Auxerre and so has to suppose him to be bishop in some other place not named.

As regards Patrick, what Muirchu relates is likely to be close to the actual events and we may venture to reconstruct this part of his history. Patrick submitted to the judgment of his seniors, receiving it with resignation and humility. His conduct at this juncture must have been under close observation from his superiors, and especially from the bishop Germanus. We can see significance in Patrick's remark, "My good faith was approved in the eyes of God and men." The men who approved his good faith must have been chiefly those who were over him in authority.

The approval of Germanus took the form of sending Patrick, but as a priest not a bishop, to join the Irish mission under Palladius, and as Patrick's fitness and record had come under censure, and this must have been known to Palladius, Germanus sent with him the senior priest Segitius as a witness bearing assurance that Patrick now came to Ireland with the approval of his superiors and at their command. Such testimony would have been all the more appropriate since it was a matter of common regulation in that time that clergy should not wander from one diocese into another of their own accord.

On the journey from Auxerre towards Ireland Patrick and those who were with him were met by clerics coming from Ireland who brought with them the tidings of the death of their bishop Palladius. The place where they met, which Muirchu calls Ebmoria, is fairly certain to have been Ebroica, which lies on a straight line between Auxerre and the mouth of the river Seine. Its name is now Evreux. The news of the death of Palladius made it necessary for Patrick and Segitius to return to Auxerre. The course of events had made Germanus in some sense the protector and virtually the Apostolic agent for the project of the mission to Ireland. Indeed from what is known of his relations with Palladius and Pope Celestine it is not unlikely that the commission which he received from the Pope to the Church in

Britain was supplemented by some express authority to deal with the matter of the Irish mission. Need we wonder if at this juncture Germanus came to believe that Patrick had indeed been chosen in the purpose of God to become the Apostle of the Irish nation. Patrick was consecrated bishop and arrived in Ireland in 432, the year following the mission of Palladius.



CHAPTER V

IRELAND IN ST PATRICK'S TIME

BY this time, 432, the Irish period of piratical raids and settlements beyond the sea appears to have come quite to an end. The last of the pirate kings, Nath-i, had met his death by lightning in 429 at the head of an expedition that had gone forth from Ireland, to the Continent in some accounts, to Britain in others. His followers brought back his dead body to be buried with his ancestors in the ancient pagan cemetery at Cruachain. He was succeeded in the High-Kingship by Laoghaire, son of Niall. Laoghaire is described in the old writings as a fierce and warlike king, and the Annals show him time and again at the head of his armed forces, but all his campaigning was done in Ireland. Its principal object was apparently to establish his authority over the kings of Leinster and to compel them to pay him tribute. The cessation of maritime activity may have a two-fold explanation. The Roman Imperial power had made a kind of rally in the West under great commanders like Stilicho and Aetius. In Britain, after vain attempts to induce the Romans to return for their protection, the Britons had begun to organise their defence under princes of their own. These native princes, whose authority was not de-

rived from the Empire, were called Tyranni, a name which in their instance must be taken to mean usurpers rather than tyrants. The name is applied by Patrick to one of these princes who meets us later. Whereas, a generation earlier, the Britons were still harried by Irish raiders and invasions, we find this British prince, Coroticus, raiding Ireland for slaves and booty.

In the early part of the fifth century, between St Patrick's first coming to Ireland as a captive slave and his second coming as a captain of the kingdom of Christ, an event took place that was destined to mould the history of Britain from that time to this. Within the bounds of Roman Britain centuries of subjection had rendered the people not merely tame but in a great degree degenerate and servile. The words of Tacitus had been proved true. In their ignorance, as they became romanised, what they took for civilisation was a part of their enslavement. North of the Roman frontier in what is now the south of Scotland the Britons, while they had become Christians in religion and had adopted some of the apparatus of Roman culture, remained a free people. Under the lead of one of their princes, Cunedda, and of his sons, they invaded Wales and took possession of the greater part of it, expelling the Irish or reducing them to subjection, and establishing a headship over the Irish colonies that continued to be

ruled by dynasties of the Irish stock. This was in fact the origin of the Welsh nation in which the national tradition of the ancient Britons was chiefly perpetuated. The vigour of the new principality that arose in Wales, and by example in other parts of Britain, proved a stronger barrier than the decaying Empire against piratical incursions and invading settlements from Ireland. The two countries reached a state of equilibrium that was soon followed by peaceful and friendly intercourse. Credible traditions tell of many missionaries who came over from Britain to the assistance of St Patrick. Not content with showing that these were Patrick's compatriots, our old writers liked to believe and to have their readers believe that many of them were of Patrick's kith and kin.

In Ireland itself the period of warlike enterprise that followed the first backward movement of the Roman military power in Britain had brought about a whole series of internal changes which were also shaping towards a state of permanent equilibrium at the time when St Patrick's mission began. In imitation of the Romans the greater Irish kings had engaged permanent military forces in their service, and a class of professional fighting men had sprung up all over the country. Their memory in epic form was preserved in later ages in the lays and tales of the Fianna. Normally in Irish law and custom, as we may learn plainly from the ample records of the

ancient law tracts, professional and permanent military service did not exist, and it ceased again to exist when this militant period had passed away. Military service was a duty of the ordinary freeman, and to perform it he was called out from his ordinary civil occupation.

From the temporary militant conditions of that period the chief advantage came to the kings of Connacht. They ruled over the least fertile region in Ireland, but it is a matter of history in various parts of the world that the less fertile regions are the most prolific in producing the human material for migration and conquest. The Connacht kings extended their power eastward in generation after generation, occupying Uisneach, where Professor Macalister has recently explored their royal house, and afterwards Tara, the ancient seat of a Leinster dynasty, where they set up and effectually established their claim to be kings of all Ireland. Then facing northwards, in successive stages, they invaded and annexed most of the territories of the old Pictish kingdom of Ulster, capturing and destroying its capital Emain about a century before St Patrick's mission began. It was about the time of his captivity when they completed their conquests of territory under the sons of the high-king Niall by the annexation of the western parts of Ulster. A brother of these princes, Laoghaire, reigned in Tara when Patrick the bishop came to

Ireland. Laoghaire reigned also in Cruachain, the old capital of Connacht. It is there that Tirechan, himself of the royal stock of Connacht, stages his dramatic story of the meeting between Patrick and the daughters of Laoghaire. Laoghaire's position was probably stronger than that of any of the high-kings before him. With the exception of the seaboard regions in the north-east extending from Lough Foyle to Dundalk bay the northern half of Ireland, north of a line drawn from Dublin Bay to Galway Bay, was under the effective rule of princes of his kindred. The primacy of the king of Tara was not disputed, but if he sought to give effect to it by exacting services or tributes from the kings of Leinster, Munster or Eastern Ulster his claims were likely to be resisted with all the force that these could command. Formal recognition was accorded to him by the presence of the other kings and magnates and their following at a great social function called the Feis of Tara.

The accounts that have come to us in later times of Tara as a seat of royal state might appear to be romantic glorification of the past if the great earthworks that cover the hill of Tara were not still there to bear witness that these writings, if they embellish the tale, cannot be said to exaggerate it. Especially well preserved is the site of the great banqueting hall, the Teach Miodhchuarta. The foundations of this hall

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are about seven hundred feet in length. It was entered by doors six or seven in number on each side and most of these can still be traced on the ruined site. Tara stood in the middle of a region of unmatched fertility. Between the great plain of Meath and the lowlands of northern Leinster there was no natural frontier. The kings of Leinster still laid claim to the plain of Meath from which their ancestors had been ousted by the ancestors of Laoghair. On the other hand the conquest of a part of Leinster encouraged the kings of Tara to claim special powers over the existing Leinster kingdom and this claim took the form of demanding a heavy tribute. Throughout the reign of Laoghair, the effort on one side to recover territory, on the other to extend authority, produced a condition of hostility breaking at times into actual warfare between the king of Leinster and the king of Tara.

The history of the kingdom of Munster in this period and before it cannot be said to be fully investigated. It is certain that the dynasty then ruling in Munster was of no great antiquity and that, like the dynasty of Connacht and Tara, it was engaged in a policy of expansion. Its collateral branches were forming new principalities in different parts of the province and it was extending its territory eastward at the expense of Leinster. Eastern Ulster was divided into a number of minor kingdoms and none of

these held a permanent headship over the others. The kingdom of Dal Riada in the north-eastern corner facing Cantire, though it was small in extent and poor in fertility, had the advantage of lying nearest to the Irish settlements beyond the channel in the islands and forelands of southwestern Scotland. The kings of Dal Riada do not appear to have taken up their own abode in those parts until a time some years later than St Patrick's death. A full thousand years were yet to pass before Scotland was united under their sovereignty.

Within the larger kingdoms, commonly called provincial kingdoms, there were numerous small states and each of these had a king at its head. Each of them formed a separate jurisdiction with political institutions which if they were of a simple kind were complete for all their purposes. They were subject to the authority of the provincial kings, but these rarely interfered in their internal affairs, and when they did interfere it was by arbitrary action rather than by any normal exercise of authority. Each little state had its own assembly over which its king presided. The kings were also judges in matters of litigation or criminal action and they took personal command of the forces of the state in case of war. There is reason to think that they also exercised priestly functions on the public behalf.

The land was everywhere divided among large

numbers of freeholding families, and the freeholders of land formed in the main the class of freemen throughout the country. Besides these there was a large class of occupiers who were not freeholders, and who did not hold the franchise of freemen, but were subject to the rule of local nobles. Besides landed freeholders, the free class included men of learning and skilled craftsmen of every kind. There were also at this time slaves in great numbers, some of them, no doubt, descendants of an ancient class of native slaves, but many of them, as we have already seen, foreign captives brought into Ireland during the piratical period or the children of these. The captive slaves for the most part must have been already Christians. It has been the fashion with some modern writers to picture Ireland as a land of perpetual wars and of what they choose to call tribal hostilities. It is true that the Annals and also the Sagas record many battles, but these battles are not wars. When there was a resort to arms the issue was almost always decided by a single battle, which might be regarded and was in fact regarded as a trial by combat on a large scale. The Irish states were rural communities throughout. Where the kings resided there must have been aggregations of craftsmen and servitors of different kinds. Tara, in its best days, to judge from the extent of its remaining earthworks must have reached the proportions of many an an-

cient or medieval city, and the seats of the provincial kings may have been surrounded by clusters of population on a smaller scale. But towns in the ordinary sense, where a population engaged in industry or commerce dwell close together, did not exist at all in ancient Ireland.

Some modern writers again, with imaginary notions of primitive life in their minds, undertake to say that the rural economy of Ireland in this age was purely pastoral. The ancient laws, on the contrary, deal with agricultural communities and show that tillage was everywhere the custom, raising cereals of different kinds, wheat, oats, and barley, also crops of flax and dyestuffs. Water mills for the production of flour and meal were common everywhere.



CHAPTER VI

DRUIDISM AND IRISH HEATHENISM

THE distinctive element in Ireland down to St Patrick's time, as in Gaul before the Roman Conquest, was Druidism, and in it can be recognised many of the features which Caesar and other early writers described in Gallic Druidism. The resemblance indeed would probably be more complete but for the silence imposed on themselves by Christian writers in Ireland who refrain from giving a clear expression to traditions of heathenism which, nevertheless, were alive and abundant in their times. This much stands out clearly enough that in Ireland, as formerly in Gaul, the Druids were not what many modern writers have imagined them, a priesthood of Celtic heathenism. They claimed to be masters and teachers in every kind of knowledge above and beyond what belonged to ordinary men and to skilled craftsmen. Among the branches of knowledge which they professed, occult science and doctrines relating to a supernatural world and its inhabitants had a prominent place.

When Latin learning with its Greek heritage had expanded in Ireland under the auspices of the Church and through the teaching of the monastic schools, much of the older science of the Druids was

altogether displaced and they came to be remembered chiefly in connection with magical notions and magical practices. In fact the early Latin writers of Ireland commonly use *Magi* as their name for the Druids. Christianity did not abolish the druidical order and the druidical tradition. These on the contrary continued to flourish with great vigour. The name was changed but those who formerly bore it now called themselves *Filidh*, which was translated by *Poetae* in Latin and is now commonly translated Poets in English. As O'Curry wrote many years ago this name in its ancient usage signified philosophers rather than poets. The *Filidh* continued to profess and to teach every branch of higher knowledge that belonged to the national tradition and was not comprised in the learning and teaching of the Latin schools. The druidical schools continued to exist, and much of what Caesar tells of them remains still true of them in early Christian Ireland. They were numerous and frequented. Their pupils remained under instruction for a long course of years. The teaching was delivered orally and, as Caesar tells, through innumerable verses. It was not until the middle of the seventh century or thereabouts that the *Filidh* in general adopted the apparatus of the Latin schools, including the Latin alphabet and the use of reading and writing, to transmit and record their various teachings.

The druidical tradition was imbued with a strong cultural spirit, and this was perhaps its chief character, certainly its most lasting character. The early biographies of St Patrick are fond of picturing him in conflict with the Druids, who appear in the role of hostile magicians and are of course worsted in every encounter by a superior power. Nevertheless the same biographies enable us to see that in many instances the Druids welcomed the new faith and gave a lead for its wider welcome.

Regarding the older religion or religions, the reticence of the early Christian writers leaves us more or less in the dark. We know, however, that the Celts in Ireland as in other countries worshipped many gods. In Ireland especially, great religious honours were paid to the memory of dead ancestors. The commemoration of the dead was a prominent feature in the greater assemblies. The high-king's assembly, Aonach Tailteann, was held annually in the grounds of an ancient heathen cemetery. Cuan O Leochain, who was official poet to the last of the continuous line of high-kings, Melachlin II, gives a description of the site and the various kinds of ancient tombs that it contained. The chief assembly of Leinster, Aonach Carmain, was likewise held on the ground of an ancient heathen necropolis.

“A burial ground of kings is its noble cemetery,

ever specially dear to hosts of high rank ;
under the mounds of assembly are many
of its host of a stock ever-honoured.”

These verses, like the poem of Cuan, show that the traditional connection between places of assembly and the heathen honours of the dead was still fully recognised in the eleventh century.

A prominent feature in Irish heathenism was the worship of the forces of nature. Chief amongst these was the sun. In Patrick's writings there is express reference to sun-worship. “We shall rise on that day in the brightness of the sun, that is in the glory of Christ Jesus our Redeemer, as sons of the living God and joint-heirs with Christ, and conformed to His image that will be, since of Him and through Him and in Him are all things. To Him be glory for ever and ever. For in Him we shall reign. For that sun which we behold, by the command of God, rises daily for our sakes ; but it will never reign, nor will its splendour endure ; but all those who worship it shall go in misery to sore punishment. We, on the other hand, believe in and worship the true sun, Christ, who will never perish, nor will anyone who doeth His will, but he will abide for ever, as Christ will abide for ever, who reigneth with God the Father Almighty and with the Holy Spirit, before all time, and now, and for ever and ever. Amen.”

We have an ancient poem which was known as St Patrick's Irish Hymn to the seventh-century writers. To modern criticism the necessary positive evidence is wanting that would establish St Patrick as its author, but the traditional evidence is upheld by the absence of any reasonable alternative. In it St Patrick imagines himself in conflict as if it were the conflict of two parties before the court of an Irish king. He sets out by declaring who his sureties are.

"I take for my sureties to-day the Trinity and Unity of God, the birth of Christ, His baptism, crucifixion and burial, His resurrection and ascension, His coming to the judgment of doom; the Seraphim, the Angels, the Archangels, the hope of resurrection, the prayers of the Patriarchs, the prophecies of the Prophets, the teachings of the Apostles, the faith of the confessors, the purity of virgins, the works of just men." Then he passes on to claim for his side, and so to speak to reclaim from heathenism, the forces and virtues of created things: the power of the heavens, the brightness of the sun, the glitter of snow, the glory of fire, the swiftness of lightning, the speed of the wind, the depth of the sea, the firmness of the land, the solidity of the rocks. He places all those powers on his side against the powers of evil and error: against the prophecies of false prophets, the dark laws of heathenism, the deceitful laws of heresy, the service of idolatry, the spells of women and smiths

and Druids, against every knowledge that corrupts the souls of men. It is right to observe that the verses in which these natural and magical powers are named are somewhat different in form from the rest of the hymn, so as to suggest a possibility that they are of later addition.

From the purely Christian standpoint, the inanimate forces of nature that Patrick calls to his aid were things of no account. To the mind of Irish heathenism they embodied supernatural powers, and the hymn, face to face with this heathen tradition, boldly claims that whatever virtue there is in these things belongs to Patrick and not to his adversary. The notion of supernatural powers attached to the forces of nature persisted long. A monastic annalist records that Laoghaire, in pursuit of his policy for the subjugation of Leinster, was defeated in battle in the year 458 and was made prisoner, but was set free upon his swearing by the sun and winds to abandon his claim to tribute. Four years later, the year after Patrick's death, Laoghaire in violation of his oath once more invaded Leinster. He had only crossed the border when death overtook him, and the annals say in recording the event: "Perhaps it was his sureties to the men of Leinster, the sun and the wind, that slew him."

The gods of the old tradition were transformed by the literary historians of a later time into a human

race represented as having once inhabited Ireland, the Tuatha De Danann. An old writer, however, with this transformation before his mind, contrasts it with the ancient tradition. "Others tell," he says, "that the Tuatha De Danann are demons of a special grade who when the devil was exiled came from heaven at the same time. They assume bodies of air to confound and to tempt the race of Adam. That is the purpose for which the folk of that remnant have come after the fall of the devil and his followers." (Note that the writer speaks of them in the present tense as existing and active in his own time.) "Now that folk come into the fairy hills. They go beneath the seas. They go in wolf shapes. They visit those who make left-hand circuits. They visit witches. They have all the same origin. They are all people of the devil. They have knowledge and wisdom so that they used to be adored and they composed the spells of smiths and Druids and leeches and steersmen and cupbearers and herdsmen."

In truth a very rich store of the ancient heathen beliefs has been preserved in various guises and disguises in the literature of medieval Ireland.



CHAPTER VII

THE BUILDING OF THE CHURCH

WE have two accounts of the beginning of Patrick's missionary work in Ireland. One of these appears to duplicate the tradition of Palladius: Patrick lands on the eastern coast of Leinster but is repelled by the rulers of that region. The other account, which comes from older sources, has been more generally accepted. Patrick's ship touches first at the island which bears his name, Inis Padraig (Holmpatrick), off the coast at Skerries, some miles north of Dublin. It then passes on northward and Patrick lands at the head of a creek not far from Downpatrick. The late Francis Biggar pointed out with some reason that if this were really Patrick's landing place and the place where his missionary work began, he must have come there as a result of some previous arrangement or invitation. A glance at the map will show that the ship would have threaded its way for miles through the narrow and shallow channel of Strangford and would then have turned westward through a still more difficult channel to reach the landing place near Saul. Such an end to such a voyage would certainly appear to have been pre-arranged. The local ruler, Dichu, belonged to the royal line of the kings of the Ulaidh. He consented to be baptised by Pat-

rick and granted him a piece of land upon which stood a great barn or storehouse. This became the first Christian church founded by Patrick in Ireland. It got the name of Sabhall Padraig (Patrick's barn), a name which it still bears.

It is not proposed to relate here in detail the progress of St Patrick's missionary work in this region or in other parts of Ireland. Our principal sources for detailed information are the Latin work by Tirechan, which he calls a *Breviarium*, and the *Tripartite Life*, which shows evidence of having been written in its original form by the same Tirechan. The history of Patrick by Muirchu, so far as it deals with his missionary work, is confined to a small number of more or less dramatic anecdotes. How much there is in these earliest biographies that reaches back in tradition to the actual facts and how much represents a later legendary growth is a problem not easily resolved. These writings are closely connected with the temporal aims and interests of the church of Armagh. In the centuries that had elapsed since St Patrick's time the great development of monasticism in Ireland had eclipsed and well-nigh obliterated the episcopal constitution of the Irish Church. The standing and dignity of the primatial church of Armagh had suffered in consequence. Towards the close of the seventh century a counter-movement to recover for Armagh an effective primacy can be seen

taking shape. Of this movement Muirchu, his friend Bishop Aedh at whose instance his history of Patrick was undertaken, and Tirechan who was also a bishop, were evident adherents, and much of their writings, especially of the writings of Tirechan, is shaped and coloured, limited and extended by the evident purpose of sustaining the claims of Armagh.

Of less questionable authority are the events of St Patrick's mission recorded without embellishment in the ancient annals. The Irish annals for this early period, by virtue of their own contents and character, conveyed the impression of historical records authentic in a high degree to the mind of Bury, who in regard of his experience and standing in matters of historical investigation and criticism was second to no other. Some years after the publication of Bury's *Life of St Patrick*, from a study of the Annals of Tighearnach I showed evidence that this chronicle and also the Annals of Ulster down to the year 610 were based upon an ancient Irish chronicle completed in that year. Next to St Patrick's own writings they contain the earliest written record of events in Ireland in his time. The events directly bearing on St Patrick's mission are the following:

A.D. 431. The mission of Palladius.

A.D. 432. Patrick arrives in Ireland.

A.D. 439. Secundinus, Auxilius, and Iserninus,

themselves also bishops, are sent to Ireland to the aid of Patrick.

A.D. 441. Leo ordained Bishop of Rome and Patrick the Bishop was approved in the Catholic faith. In the Annals of Innisfallen: The probation of St Patrick in the Catholic Faith.

A.D. 443. Patrick the Bishop flourishing in the ardour of faith and the doctrine of Christ in our province.

A.D. 444. Ard Macha was founded.

A.D. 447. Death of St Secundinus in the seventy-fifth year of his age.

A.D. 459. Auxilius the Bishop died.

A.D. 461. The death of Patrick.

A.D. 468. Iserninus died.

From this record we gather that the first seven years of St Patrick's mission bore sufficient fruit to require that the newly established Church should have three other bishops to assist in its administration and propagation.

The oldest Irish traditions tell that Auxilius and Iserninus had been fellow disciples of Patrick under Germanus of Auxerre. Secundinus must also have been sent from Gaul, most probably from Auxerre, since he came at the same time. He is said to have been a Lombard and in late accounts his mother is said to have been a sister of Patrick. As the legend of

St Patrick grows, the number of his sisters, brothers and other relatives keeps growing likewise. The death of Secundinus in 447 at the age of seventy-five makes it unlikely that he could have been a nephew of St Patrick. The oldest traditions assign him a place of importance in the Irish Church second to Patrick himself. We shall revert later to the poem in praise of St Patrick which Secundinus is said to have composed. The Church to which his see was attached still bears his name Domhnach Seachlainn (in English Dunshaughlin) about five miles from Tara. One of the most frequent of Irish personal names is Maol-sheachlainn, meaning one dedicated to St Secundinus.

Nothing is told of Auxilius beyond the record in the Annals and the tradition that he was a companion of Patrick at Auxerre and that both were ordained at the same time by Amator. The church of his see however has always preserved his name, Cell Ausailli, now corrupted in English pronunciation to Killossy.

Of the missionary work of Iserninus the Book of Armagh preserves an account at some length copied from a seventh-century original. His church was at Ath Fadhad, in English Aghade, on the river Slaney, and his sphere of action appears to have been mainly in the valleys of the Slaney and the Barrow. In the region of the Barrow north of Carlow
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he founded various churches and converted the sons of a ruling prince. The king of Leinster, Enda Cennselach, took offence at their conversion and banished them, along with Iserninus, from his kingdom. After this king's death, of which the date is not known, he was succeeded, perhaps not immediately, by his son Crimthann, who had become a Christian, and Iserninus returned to his charge. He outlived Patrick by seven years, dying in 468. Some errors of interpretation by modern writers have created the erroneous notion that Iserninus was an Irishman.

The names of these four bishops, Patrick, Secundinus, Auxilius, and Iserninus, are joined together as authors of the earliest collections of canons for the regulation of the Irish Church. One of these canons is cited in the Book of Armagh. It ordains that when questions of difficulty arise they are to be referred for decision to the Bishop of Armagh, and if the difficulties cannot be solved by him they are to be referred to the Apostolic See at Rome. It is added: these are they who have decreed concerning this, Auxilius, Patricius, Secundinus, Benignus. Benignus was one of Patrick's Irish converts, and was only a child at the time of his conversion. He could not have been a bishop joined with the others named in forming this regulation, but after Patrick's death he became Bishop of Armagh, and the regulations drawn up by the older bishops may have been sent out anew

with his signature appended. The omission of the name of Iserninus is perhaps to be explained by his banishment.

Another document contains a body of canons for the Irish Church. It begins with these words: "We give thanks to God, the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost. To the priests and deacons and all the clergy, Patricius, Auxilius, Iserninus, bishops, *salutem!*" This may accordingly be dated after the death of Secundinus in 447. It is addressed by the three bishops named to the priests and deacons and other clergy, but not to other bishops who, if there had been any such, would have been mentioned in the first place. These documents lead us to the conclusion, which even on other grounds would appear reasonable, that in the first seven years of his mission Patrick was the only bishop in Ireland, and that down to some time after the death of Secundinus there were no bishops other than the four whom we have named.

There is much historical significance in the geographical position of the episcopal sees assigned to these four bishops. They throw light on the progress of Patrick's mission and show how the Irish Church began to be organised on a territorial basis. As a part of the plan of organisation Patrick chose Armagh for his own metropolitan see, the seat of the Irish primacy, where it has ever since remained. Through-

out his writings Patrick speaks without qualification as chief pastor of the Irish Church. His choice of Armagh supports the tradition that his missionary work began in eastern Ulster, but also indicates that in 443, when Armagh was founded, his mission had been successful over a region spreading westward through a large part of Ulster. It cannot, however, have been a mere chance that the new ecclesiastical capital of Ireland was placed close beside the most famous site in the heroic saga tradition. About a mile and a half to the west of Armagh are still to be seen earthworks marking the place where the former kings of Ulster had their centre of government, Emain Macha. In what remains of the oldest Irish chronicle, written about the year 600, we find the record, well supported by other ancient traditions, that, before the rise of Tara, Emain Macha was the capital not merely of Ulster but of Ireland, the seat of an ancient line of kings of Ireland. A poem composed in the seventh century contains a brief biography of St Patrick, the oldest known. The comparison between Emain Macha and Ard Macha and its historical significance were plain to the poet's mind.

“In Ard Macha behold the kingship,
Long hath it departed from Emain.”

The church of Secundinus was within an hour's

walk of the high-king's capital at Tara. The church of Auxilius was closer still to the chief seat of the kings of northern Leinster, Nas na Riogh, Naas of the kings. The church of Iserninus was about nine miles distant from Rath Bhile, Rathvilly, the home of Crimthann who ruled in South Leinster and was king of all Leinster. In fixing these sees, Patrick and his fellow bishops followed the general policy of the Church in ancient times. Throughout the Roman Empire, for the most part, the seats of ecclesiastical government were closely associated with the seats of secular authority.

This first organisation of the Irish Church has a still further significance. It shows that Patrick's missionary work for many years was chiefly successful in the eastern half of Ireland. The western half during those years is likely to have remained in the condition of a missionary territory. This inference is supported by the record of the Annals. The Annals of Ulster and the Annals of Innisfallen give the names and obits of twenty Irish bishops down to the year 527, two generations after St Patrick's death. Of the twenty, two only are in Connacht and one in Munster. Two others are in the middle parts of Ireland. The remaining fifteen all belong to the eastern half.

Bury attaches great importance to the record in the Annals of Ulster that Patrick, in the year in which the great St Leo became pope, was proved or ap-

proved in the Catholic Faith. This is evidently recorded as an event of Patrick's life. It is still more clearly stated as an event in the Annals of Innisfallen—"the probation of Patrick in the Catholic Faith." There may be a special reference to it in the poem of Secundinus where Patrick is said to be "*testis Domini fidelis in fide Catholica*, the faithful witness of the Lord in the Catholic Faith." Taking this entry of the Annals along with the tradition that Patrick paid a visit to Rome and brought back to Armagh from Rome relics of the Apostles Peter and Paul and of the martyrs Stephen and Laurence, Bury infers that at this stage of his mission, in 441 or 442, with the establishment of a metropolitan see in his mind, Patrick found it desirable to seek approval for his work, his teaching, and his plan from the highest authority in Christendom and by a visit in person to the Apostolic See. The visit to Rome cannot be held to be proved fully by the evidence we have. It is at least highly probable, and the arguments produced against it from the anti-Roman standpoint are of little weight.

Speaking of his Irish flock, especially of converts and Christian slaves who remained faithful in spite of persecution, threats and reproaches, Patrick writes: "Therefore even if I wish to part with them, and journeying to Britain, as I was gladly prepared to do as if to fatherland and parents, and not only

that but to go as far as Gaul in order to visit the brethren and behold the face of the saints of my Lord, God knoweth that I used to desire it exceedingly, yet I am bound in the Spirit who witnesseth to me that if I should do this He would mark me guilty; and I fear to lose the labour which I began, and yet not I but Christ the Lord who commanded me to come and be with them for the remainder of my life if the Lord will." And again: "Wherefore let it not happen to me from my God that I should ever part with his people which he purchased in the ends of the earth. I pray God to give me perseverance and to deign that I render myself to Him a faithful witness until my passing hence for the sake of my God." It is argued that these declarations preclude the possibility of a visit to Rome. That is surely to put the greatest strain on what they mean. Patrick's words plainly signify that he was resolved to devote his whole life to the work of his mission and not to turn his back upon his flock even for a short time so that he might have the personal gratification of visiting his own country and family or the brethren and holy men with whom he had formerly been associated in Gaul. They do not justify the inference that Patrick, in pursuance of the work to which he had been called and appointed and in furtherance of his undertaking, could not pay a visit of duty to Rome or to any other place.



CHAPTER VIII
THE HYMN OF SECUNDINUS

SECUNDINUS died in 447, eight years after his arrival in Ireland. There is no reason to question his authorship of the poem in praise of Patrick which ancient tradition ascribes to him and to him alone. Beyond doubt there are many fictitious ascriptions of works in Latin and in Irish produced in a later time. St Fiac, St Colmcille, Fionn MacCumhall, Oisín, and other celebrities appear in the manuscripts as authors of various works in verse which, for various reasons more or less obvious, are seen not to have been composed by them or in their time. Throughout an uncritical age lasting into modern times, such statements of authorship were commonly accepted without question. The development of philological science brought a reaction, and for a generation or two it became the vogue of scholarship not merely to raise enquiry, but to endeavour sometimes by arguments that were strained and unsound to assign the latest possible date in the study of every ancient document. The Hymn of Secundinus, as it is called, bears no resemblance to any other works of the kind that are fictitiously ascribed. The sole ground upon which its authorship is questioned with any show of reason is the sustained and unstinted praise which

the author pours upon Patrick and his work, addressing Patrick himself. For this laudation of Patrick in his own time there was, however, a good and sufficient reason.

The Confession is in the main St Patrick's answer to critics and fault-finders. He says that they were many in number. We gather from it that a general charge was brought against him of unworthiness for the position he held, on the grounds that he was a person of low degree, poorly educated, inspired by a selfish ambition, and a self-seeker in other respects. Those who brought these accusations against him were not in Ireland or of Ireland. In Ireland, the poem of Secundinus testifies, "he is venerated as an angel by all men." The hostile critics who belittled him were among his own fellow-countrymen in Britain. This can be inferred in part from the Confession and still more clearly from the Epistle. The antipathy to Patrick in Britain may well have had its origin in that conference, accompanied no doubt by discussions and canvassings outside of it, which took place in Britain three years before Patrick's mission and at which the project of the mission was brought forward and Patrick's merits to be placed as a bishop in charge of it were considered and were defended, therefore probably were in some measure adversely criticised.

It is curious to observe that the ancient biographers

of Patrick do not advert at all to this matter of his belittlement, so prominent in his own writings which were well known to them. The hostility to Patrick is likely to have ceased from the time of his death, and two centuries later, when men set about the writing of his history, all that aspect of his work in Ireland and of his own writings may have seemed to have no meaning whatsoever. The obloquy which was cast upon Patrick is reflected in by-names that were given to him. The very meaning of these was forgotten in the time of the seventh-century writers. One of these by-names was Succet, a word of British origin meaning swineherd. Another was Magunios which meant the slaveling. That this was a current by-name for Patrick in Britain is proved by the fact that it was known to Nennius in its later Welsh form of Maun. Chief amongst Patrick's assailants were a certain class of persons whom he singles out and addresses directly, describing them *vos dominicati rhetorici*, in Dr Newport White's translation "ye lordly rhetoricians." This close rendering in English might convey to modern readers the impression that Patrick pointed to his chief opponents as men addicted to eloquence and oratory. Let us recall what has been said above about the rhetors, their schools, and their aim to preserve or restore among the educated classes, including the clergy, a classical standard in the use of the Latin language. St Patrick's phrase

actually means men who pride themselves highly on their classical attainments. There is no reason to believe that there were any such in Ireland in his time. In the Epistle he brings it out still more clearly that those who professed to hold him in contempt were of his fellow-countrymen in Britain. It is to these, and especially to the British clergy, that the Epistle is addressed. "I, Patrick, the sinner, unlearned as everybody knows, do claim that I have been appointed bishop in Ireland. Most assuredly I deem that I have received from God that which I am. And so I dwell in the midst of barbarous heathens, a stranger and an exile for the love of God . . . Have I come to Ireland without God or according to the flesh? Who has compelled me? . . . I am bound in the spirit no more to see any of my kinsfolk." Here let us recall the contemptuous by-names Swineherd and Slaveling. "I was free-born according to the flesh. I am born of a father who was a decurion but my noble rank, I blush not to state it nor do I rue it, I have sold for the profit of others. Indeed I am a slave, a slave in Christ to a foreign nation for the sake of the unspeakable glory of the eternal life which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Then, to show clearly from what quarter dishonour comes to him, he goes on at once to say: "And if my own know me not, it is written that a prophet has no honour in his own country. Perchance you and we are not of one and the same fold and have not one

God and Father . . . It is not meet that one pulleth down and another buildeth up . . . Men look askance at me. What shall I do, O Lord! I am exceedingly despised . . . Therefore in sadness and grief shall I cry aloud . . . I am not worthy to come to the aid of either God or men. The wickedness of the wicked has prevailed against us. We are become as it were strangers. Perchance they do not believe that we have received one baptism or that we have one God and Father. It is in their eyes a shameful thing" (he speaks here in the name of his Irish flock) "that we were born in Ireland. As He said: Have ye not one God? Why have ye forsaken each one his neighbour."

All this is in a letter which Patrick sent not merely to be read but to be published as widely as possible among the people of Britain. In its own words: "I beseech earnestly that whatever servant of God be ready, he be the bearer of this letter, so that on no account it be suppressed by anyone but much rather be read out in the presence of all the people."

Next to St Patrick's own testimony concerning himself, rather indeed side by side with it, stands the testimony of Secundinus, for eight years a bishop in Ireland in St Patrick's time. The importance of the Hymn of Secundinus for the history of St Patrick and of the Irish Church has not been duly recognised. An excellent edition of this poem has been

written and published by the Rev. G. F. Hamilton, rector of Ballingarry, Co. Limerick. In his second edition Mr Hamilton gives in summary a clear statement of the reasons for and against the authorship of Secundinus. The question resolves itself into this. Was the poem composed in Patrick's lifetime, or is it the work of a later author composed with that pretence? If the evidence shows that it was a genuine work of Patrick's time, the tradition of its authorship by Secundinus will hardly be called in question. To the evidence in favour of that authorship collected by Mr Hamilton certain points of some importance may be added. The Latin style of the poem is somewhat artificial and pretentious, but in these traits it shows no special resemblance to other compositions in Latin verse which are known to be of Irish origin. Its Latinity is more likely to reflect the Gallic culture of the early fifth century. The poem contains certain allusions to facts of St Patrick's missionary labour, allusions which are not at all likely to have occurred to the mind of any later writer, and which, if by any chance they had so occurred, would not have been expressed as we find them in this poem.

As the work of the missionaries progressed, churches sprang up in one region after another, and priests and deacons were everywhere ordained to minister to the Christian flocks. "God granted me," says Patrick, "that clergy should everywhere be

ordained for a people newly come to the Faith. It was greatly necessary that we should spread our nets so that a great multitude should be taken for God and that everywhere there should be clergy to baptise and exhort a people poor and needy." The poem says that the Saviour promoted Patrick for his merits to be a pontiff, to instruct the clergy in the heavenly warfare. It was not, however, merely a matter of education, training and ordination. Wherever there was a church and a priest, it was necessary that books should be provided, copies of the Sacred Scriptures and of the ritual order for the Holy Sacrifice and the Sacraments. In these days of printing let us not forget that every such book in St Patrick's time had to be written letter by letter and page by page by the hands of competent scribes, and that one of Patrick's chief cares must have been to provide for the proper transcription and distribution of such books. A century after his time, half a century after his time, such provision was an every-day affair, a matter of course, with which everyone was familiar. For St Patrick it was a special labour and so it is described in the poem. Similar special provision was necessary for the preparation and distribution of the altar bread and the altar wine, especially the wine, which had to be imported from the continent and distributed throughout the regions where Christian communities had come into being. The poem says of Patrick:

“Unwearied he feeds the faithful with the heavenly repasts, lest those who are seen in Christ’s company may faint upon the journey, to whom he deals out as loaves the words of the Gospel, words which like the manna are multiplied in his hands.”

Having spoken as already quoted about the instruction of the clergy, the poem adds:

“To them Patrick distributes the heavenly food along with vestments” (*cum vestibus*)

and in this phrase there is no figure of speech. The supply of vestments and altar linens for the new churches in various parts of the country must indeed have been one of Patrick’s heavy cares. A generation later all provision of that kind had become, so to speak, automatic, a part of the ordinary life of the Christian community, and no poet or biographer of a later time ever thought of enumerating such things among the labours of the Apostle of Ireland.

Patrick in this poem is the Apostle of Ireland, the founder of the Irish Church.

“Constant in the fear of God and firm in faith, upon whom as upon Peter a Church is built, who has received from God his apostleship, against which the gates of hell do not prevail. The Lord has chosen him to teach barbarian heathens . . . He has glory with Christ and honour in the world and

is venerated by all as an angel of God. God has sent him like Paul, an apostle to the Gentiles.”

Patrick's assailants are likely to be referred to in the verses where they say:

“For the sake of the Divine law he despises all the glory of the world. Beside the Lord's table he reckons all things as chaff, and he is not moved by the menacing lightning of this world but rejoices in opposition when he suffers it for Christ.”

Patrick's habit of using quotations from the sacred text in preference to the wording of his own thoughts in Latin, which he used with difficulty, is reflected in the poem.

“A faithful witness of the Lord in the Catholic rule of Faith, his words are seasoned with the divine oracles, lest things of the flesh be corrupted and eaten by the worms [the worms may have a special reference] but may be salted for the offering with a heavenly savour. Christ has chosen him a vicar on the earth who sets captives free from a twofold slavery. Many he has ransomed from the servitude of men, countless numbers he liberates from the Devil's dominion.”

Here again is a contemporary allusion. In his Epistle, Patrick commends the custom of the Gallic Christians, who ransom Christian slaves from the Frankish

and other heathens, and there can be no doubt that he practised and favoured the same custom in Ireland.

The things that Patrick especially delighted in among sacred letters and in his preaching are said in the poem to be the hymns, the Apocalypse and the Psalms of God. These verses were known to the author of the seventh-century Irish poem on Patrick's life.

“The hymns and the Apocalypse, the three times fifty Psalms he used to sing; preaching, baptising, praying, from the praise of God he never stayed.”

The same verses were in the mind of Muirchu. In the chapter of his second book on Patrick's diligence in prayer, Muirchu writes, “Daily he chanted all the Psalms and hymns and the Apocalypse of John and all the spiritual canticles of the Scriptures.”

The last lines of the poem of Secundinus became transformed in tradition into the prophecy that, as the Apostles on the day of Judgment were to judge the twelve tribes of Israel, so Patrick on that day was to be the judge of the Irish nation.

“When he shall receive the reward of his immense labour he shall reign with the Apostles a saint over Israel.”

In the poetical life of Patrick above mentioned the Angel Victor appears to him before his death, and
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among other promises says to him: "Around thee on the day of doom the men of Ireland shall go to judgment." Muirchu gives the tradition more fully. The angel announces to Patrick that four petitions have been granted to him: "The fourth petition; that all the Irish on the day of judgment may be judged by thee, as it is said to the Apostles 'and ye sitting shall judge the twelve tribes of Israel', so that they might be judges of those to whom they had been Apostles."

Mr Hamilton notes that the words and thoughts of this poem are frequently paralleled in St Patrick's Confession. The poem, however, shows no sign of being based upon the text of the Confession and the parallel passages are best explained on the ground that this defence of Patrick was known to him and that its words and thoughts were adopted by him in his own defence. For many such echoes of the verses of Secundinus in Patrick's writings the reader must be left to refer to Mr Hamilton's notes. One of them, which does not appear there, may be supplied here as a specimen. Patrick speaks in the Confession of the three Divine Persons *quem confitemur et adoramus unum Deum in Trinitate sacri nominis*. The poem has these words *quam legem in Trinitate sacri credit nominis, tribusque personis unam docetque substantiam*.

For St Patrick, then, as for one of the greatest of his sons, St Malachy, we claim another saint who lived in his time and knew him as a living witness to his sanctity.



CHAPTER IX

DANGERS AND DIFFICULTIES OF THE MISSION

LET us now turn to Patrick's writings for his own account, meagre though it be, of his missionary work in Ireland. "It is too long a story," he says, "to relate the events of my work one by one or in parts. Briefly I shall mention how the most loving God often delivered me from slavery and from the twelve perils in which my life was endangered, besides many plotting attempts and things which I am not able to express in words. I shall not vex my readers, but I have God for witness who knows all things even before they come to pass, that a divine response has often warned me though I was a poor, humble, unlearned orphan."

He has much to say about dangers, persecutions, and insults borne by himself and by Christians of his flock among the heathen Irish. "I came to the heathen Irish to preach the Gospel and to endure insults from unbelievers so as to hear the reproach of my going abroad [he refers here to his former slavery or perhaps simply to the taunt of being a foreigner] and to suffer many persecutions even unto bonds." He tells of maidens converted who took vows of virginity, adding: "not with the consent of their fathers, but they endure persecution and lying reproaches

from their parents, and nevertheless their number increases more and more and we know not the number of our race [he refers possibly here to Britons in Ireland] who are there born again in addition to widows and chaste living persons. But they who are kept in slavery suffer especially. They constantly endure even unto terrors and threats, but the Lord has given grace to many of my handmaidens, for although they are forbidden they earnestly follow the example." He found it necessary on some occasions to purchase protection or immunity from violence by gifts to the Irish kings. "I used to give presents to the kings besides the reward that I gave to their sons who travel with me, and nevertheless they seized me along with my companions, and on that day they eagerly desired to kill me, but my time had not yet come, and everything they found with us they plundered, and myself they bound in irons. And on the fourteenth day the Lord freed me from their power, and whatever was ours was restored to us for the sake of God and the near friends whom we had provided beforehand."

Even in the later days when he wrote, the prospect of martyrdom was still before him and before the Christian captives from other lands. Towards the end of his Confession he prays: "I pray God to grant to me that I may shed my blood with those strangers and captives for His name's sake, even though I

should be left unburied or that my corpse should be most pitifully torn asunder limb from limb by dogs or wild beasts or that the birds of the air should devour it."

We may judge from the Confession that those who accused Patrick of self-seeking went beyond the charge of personal ambition. Patrick vindicates himself at great length against imputations of having received gifts from converts, including some whom he had ordained, and from other persons. He appeals to the knowledge of his fellow-workers and among these to some who had known him from his youth, probably to such as Auxilius and Iserninus and others of the clergy of Auxerre who had been sent with him to Ireland or had accompanied these bishops to Ireland afterwards.

"I have made known with simplicity to my brethren and fellow servants who have believed me, for what reason I have preached and now preach to strengthen and confirm your faith. Would that you too may follow greater examples and do better things. This would be my glory, for a wise son is a father's glory. You know and God knows what has been my manner of life among you since my youth in the faith of truth and sincerity of heart. Also towards those heathens among whom I dwell I have kept faith and will keep faith with them. God knows I have defrauded none of them, nor do I think of do-

ing it for the sake of God and of His Church, lest I should stir up persecution against them and all of us, and lest the name of the Lord should be blasphemed through me; for it is written: woe to the man through whom the name of the Lord is blasphemed. For even if I am rude in all things, nevertheless I have endeavoured in some sort to keep watch over myself for the Christian brethren and the virgins of Christ and the religious women who were wont to present me of their own accord with little gifts and used to throw off some of their ornaments upon the altar, and these I returned again to them. And they were scandalised against me because I did this, but I did it on account of the hope of immortality, that I might keep a careful guard upon myself in all things, lest the unbelievers should find me or the ministry of my service to blame in any matter or that I might give cause to unbelievers for defaming or finding fault even in the smallest thing. Perchance however when I have baptised so many thousands of men may I have expected as much as half a scruple from any one of them. Tell it of me and I shall pay it back to you. Or when the Lord has everywhere ordained clergy through my little worth and I have apportioned the ministry to them for no return, if I have demanded from any one of them as much as the price of my shoe, tell it against me and I shall repay you more. I have spent for you that they might receive me, and among

you and everywhere I journeyed on your behalf amid many dangers even unto the outer parts where there was no man beyond and where never anyone had reached who might give baptism or ordain clergy or confirm the people. I by the grace of the Lord have performed all things diligently and willingly for your salvation. At times I gave gifts to the kings beyond what I gave in reward to their sons who travel with me . . . However, you yourselves are well aware how much I distributed to those who acted as guides through all the regions which I more frequently visited; for I reckon that I have paid out to them not less than the price of fifteen men in order that you might enjoy me and that I may always enjoy you unto God. I do not repent of it nor do I think it enough; I still spend and will spend more. The Lord is mighty to grant me in the time to come that I may spend my own self for your souls. Behold I call God to witness for my soul that I do not lie, and that I have not written for you that it might be an occasion for flattery or avarice, nor that I hope for honour from any one of you. For sufficient is the honour that is not yet seen but is believed in the heart. He who hath promised is faithful, He never lies. But I see myself now in the present world raised up beyond measure by the Lord. And I was not worthy nor such a one that He should grant this to me for I know most certainly that poverty and wretchedness are more

suitable for me than riches and delight. But even Christ the Lord was a poor man for our sake. I, however, wretched and unfortunate that I am, even if I desire wealth no longer have it nor do I judge myself."

The ordinary medium of payment at that time in Ireland was either cattle or silver. In St Patrick's case it would have been silver. In view of what he says with regard to his refusal to take gifts from his converts, even from those who could well afford to give them, laying their ornaments upon the altar, it is likely that his resources for payments and expenses such as he describes were supplied from outside, most likely through the hands of St Germanus and other friends of the Irish mission in Gaul.



CHAPTER X
A NATIVE CLERGY
DRUIDS FRIENDLY AND HOSTILE

IT is a part of St Patrick's defence that he has actually succeeded in establishing a Christian Church in Ireland and in bringing nothing less than a people into the fold. Of this achievement he speaks in the most general terms as of facts within the knowledge of many. "Many peoples," he says, "are born again to God through me and afterwards confirmed"—he refers to the sacraments of baptism and confirmation. "Clergy are everywhere ordained for them, for a people newly coming to the Faith." He quotes from the prophet Osee indicating that the prophecy is fulfilled in his works: "I will call them my people who were not my people."

On one point he comes from general to more particular things, that is, when he describes how among the newly converted Irish he has already introduced and established the monastic way of spiritual life. "The sons of the Irish and the daughters of the princes are seen to be monks and virgins of Christ." He repeats these words in the Epistle. "Ravaging wolves have devoured the flock of the Lord which verily in Ireland was making very good growth with the greatest diligence, and the sons of the Irish and

the daughters of the princes who are monks and virgins of Christ I am not able to number."


Regarding the form of monastic organisation introduced by St Patrick the authoritative work by Father John Ryan, S. J., on *Irish Monasticism* may be quoted (p. 93).

"Combining these data, Patrick's distinct predilection for the monastic order and the still more distinct clerical and episcopal character of the organisation which he founded, the conclusion lies ready to hand. Patrick entrusted the spiritual care of the country which he had evangelised to bishops, priests and inferior clergy, not to monks as such, but he approved enthusiastically of the stricter mode of life which the monks professed, and encouraged his clergy to undertake it. A number (especially, it would seem, of the neophytes whom he had trained up from their youth) responded to his desires; there is no ground for supposing that the majority of his clergy did. Amid the womenfolk the proportion desirous of consecrating their lives to God was so great that it surprised himself. These were placed in small groups to assist the clergy in the service of churches rather in monasteries proper."

Father Ryan thinks it likely that the practice of St Patrick as regards monasticism was derived from the example of St Martin of Tours.

“Both had monks among their disciples (some of these later charged with the government of churches), both founded monasteries, both recommended regular ascetical exercises to their clergy, but it is in no wise certain that the majority of these, whether in Tours or in Ireland, bound themselves formally by vow to the observance of the monastic rule . . . The place of monasticism in the church founded by St Patrick was important but secondary. The great Apostle, like all preachers of the Gospel elsewhere, relied on bishops and clergy, not on monks as such, to carry on his work and to bring it in due course to completion.”

For monks the name *monachi* had already come into common use and is used by Patrick; for nuns his only name is virgins of Christ. He tells of one of these and in all that he has to say of his missionary work it is the one instance in which he goes into most detail. “There was one blessed lady, an Irish woman of high birth, noble, very beautiful, grown-up, whom I baptised, and a few days later she came to us for one purpose. She made known to us that she had received a response from God’s assent and it instructed her that she should be a virgin of Christ and herself draw near to God. Thanks be to God, on the sixth day from this day she most happily and eagerly chose to herself that which all the virgins of God do in like manner, not with the consent of their



fathers." He goes on to tell of the persecution and insults they suffer, in words which we have already quoted.

In several passages Patrick mentions as a part and a signal mark of the progress and success of his work the ordination of clergy of Irish birth. He does not hint at any difficulty in finding young men suitable for ordination or in imparting the necessary education and training to them. His task in this respect, we may well believe, was rendered easier by the education imparted to large numbers in the druidical schools. Though his biographers have much to say about the hostility of the Druids they have also preserved traditions to the contrary effect. In the legends of St Patrick the most dramatic episode is that which relates his visit to the High-king's court at Tara. To this day it maintains such a hold on the imagination that one will hardly be pardoned who does not class it among the most authentic recorded facts of Patrick's life. The tradition of a special visit to the High-king at Tara is likely to be authentic. A conference with Laoghaire, to say the least, would naturally have preceded the choice of a place of abode for Secundinus so near to the High-king's residence. As for the picturesque accounts of the conflict with the Druids, let us bear in mind that the distinction between Druid and *file* was unknown in St Patrick's time and arose afterwards in a manner which has

been explained. The same traditions tell us that when Patrick entered the court of the High-king, the first in the court to stand up to do him reverence was Dubhthach, who was a *file* and a jurist, therefore also a Druid. Prominent among those whom Patrick chose to be educated for the priesthood was Fiac, who was a pupil of the same Dubhthach and who became in time, we are told, the first native bishop of the Leinstermen. It is not at all unlikely that Dubhthach and Fiac in these stories are typical instances, at least as typical as the hostile Druids in other parts of the tradition.

An account of the visit to Tara preserved in the great compilation of Irish law, the *Senchus Mor*, in the book entitled *Corus Bescna*, may have been committed to writing earlier than any other of the written traditions concerning St Patrick. It is of special interest because it comes to us not from an ecclesiastical source or through an ecclesiastical medium but from the pen of one of those poet-jurists who were successors, in tradition and largely in occupation, to the older Druids:

“It was the law of nature that the men of Ireland had until the coming of the Faith in the time of Laoghaire, son of Niall. It was in his time that Patrick came. After the men of Ireland had accepted the Faith from Patrick, the two laws were combined, the law of nature and the law of the letter (the Mosaic

law). Dubhthach Moccu Lugir, the *file*, exhibited the law of nature; Dubhthach was the first who showed reverence to Patrick, he was the first who stood up to greet him in Tara. Corc, son of Lugaid, who knelt to him, was held a hostage by Laoghaire [a son of Corc, Nat Fruich, and a grandson, Oengus, were kings of Munster in St Patrick's time]. Now Laoghaire resisted Patrick because of the Druid, Matho Mac Umoir. The Druid had foretold to Laoghaire that Patrick would steal from him the living and the dead. He shall free slaves. He shall magnify kins of low degree. [This, the ancient writer explains, was done through the grades of the Church (Holy Orders), and through the service of penance to God; for the Kingdom of Heaven is open before every kin of men having received the faith, both noble and ignoble kins; even so, the Church is open before every person of those who come under her law.] Dubhthach Moccu Lugir, the *file*, explained the jurisprudence of the men of Ireland in the law of nature and in the law of the prophets, for prophecy had ruled in the law of nature, in the jurisprudence of the island of Ireland and in her *filidh*. Prophets, too, had foretold among them the bright speech of Beatus shall come, that is the law of the letter. The law of nature extended to many things that the law of the letter did not reach, which Dubhthach explained to Patrick. That which did not come against

the word of God in the law of the letter and against the conscience of Christian men was combined in the order of the jurists by the Church and the *filidh*. The law of nature was all just, except for religion and its rites and the union of the Church with the Tuath and the due of each on both sides from the other and towards the other; for there is a duty of the Tuath to the Church and a duty of the Church towards the Tuath."

This passage in the ancient text was expanded afterwards into a legend in which a commission was set up to bring the ancient laws of Ireland into harmony with Christian law and teaching. The commission consisted of three kings, three bishops, and three jurists. They retired to a sequestered place in the country and, after a long deliberation, produced the code called the *Senchus Mor*, which the three bishops wrote in a vellum codex to preserve it for the men of Ireland. The three kings were Laoghaire and Corc and Daire. We have seen in the older account that Corc was a hostage and so could not have been king at the same time. It is doubtful indeed if he was alive at the time of St Patrick's mission. It was Daire who granted the site of Armagh to Patrick, and Muirchu, who tells the story of this grant and who must have known the traditions of Armagh, describes Daire as a wealthy and honourable man but not as a king. The three bishops are Patrick,

Benignus and Cairnech. Benignus, a child when Patrick's mission began, cannot have become a bishop until near or after the time of Patrick's death, and Cairnech belongs to a later generation still. The contrast between the two accounts serves well to exemplify the growth of legends around the memory of Patrick.

The actual text of the *Senchus Mor* and of the other books of the Ancient Laws of Ireland presents no appearance of having been revised in St Patrick's time or after it from a Christian standpoint. The legend has this justification, that the Church in Ireland quickly found a position of complete harmony with the national life. In the story of Dubhthach, the poet, the prophet, and the *file* are each of them the Druid regarded in a special function, and in St Patrick's time those who are called by these names are still Druids. Matho, who is named in this story evidently as the Chief Druid at the court of Laoghaire, appears again in Tirechan's account of Patrick's mission, where it is also implied that he is the Chief Druid of Ireland. The most attractive passage in Tirechan's work is his account of the conversion of the daughters of Laoghaire. These maidens dwelt at Cruachain in Connacht where, as well as at Tara, their father reigned as king. One of them had a Druid for tutor, and he too was converted by Patrick and tonsured, this implying that Patrick intended to admit him to Holy Orders. His brother, also a Druid,

said: "My brother has accepted Patrick's faith, but I will turn him again to heathenism and to Matho." Nevertheless, after some conflict of words with Patrick, he also was converted. Tirechan also tells of two other Druids, brothers, in the district of Elphin, one of whom welcomed Patrick and granted him a house, probably on the site where the church of Elphin was founded.



CHAPTER XI

BISHOPRICS IN WESTERN IRELAND

THOUGH the first bishoprics, as we have said, were established in the eastern parts of Ireland, we may be fairly certain that before St Patrick's death episcopal sees were established in the western half. This is the less doubtful since Patrick has placed on record that he ordained clergy in the remoter parts of the country where no man dwelt beyond. We might also expect to find that such bishoprics would be established in the first instance, in the west as in the east, near to important centres of royal rule. Within a few miles of Cruachain, the ancient seat of the kings of Connaught, Patrick founded a church which bears the noteworthy name *Basilica Sanctorum*, the royal church of the saints. This became Baislec in Irish and is still so named. Traditions have been preserved which indicate that in Patrick's time it was one of the chief episcopal sees in Ireland. It appears to have been named *Basilica Sanctorum* because it had the privilege of sharing with Armagh a portion of the relics of the Apostles Peter and Paul and the martyrs Stephen and Laurence. Some written account of its early bishops and priests was known in the seventh century to Tirechan. As in the case of the eastern sees, according to Tirechan's quotation, the clergy of the

church at Baislec after its foundation, and more than one of its bishops, were foreigners. Tirechan speaks of them as Franks, but the Franks at that time were still heathens, and as Gallia became Francia before Tirechan wrote, it is possible that those whom he calls Franks were really Gauls.

With the single exception of Armagh, none of these early bishops appear to have been succeeded by other bishops in the churches originally founded. This may be explained by the absence of cities. For example, St Secundinus is likely to have been succeeded in his episcopal charge, though perhaps not immediately, by St Erc, whom Patrick converted at the court of Tara. Erc, however, took up his residence not at Domhnach Seachlainn, the church of Secundinus, but some distance from it at Slane, with which his name is always associated.

Some of the earliest native bishops are described as *pueri Patricii*, Patrick's boys, meaning that he trained them for the priesthood from their early days. One of these was Benignus, who later became bishop of Armagh. Benignus is a Latin name given to him by Patrick. Another of them was named Feredach in Irish, but Patrick gave him the Latin name Sacellus, little holy lad, and he in time became bishop of Baislec. A third was Cethiacus, in later Irish Ceth-ech, whose see was at Bri Garad. Beside his church was a well named Uaran Garad, probably at one

time a place of heathen worship, for we have two accounts of the three chief wells of Ireland in heathen times and Uaran Garad is the only one which is named in both. Its name is still attached to the same place and to the parish, called in English spelling Oran. This is at no great distance from Cruachain, and it is possible that Sacellus and Cethiacus were bishops in succession in the same diocese. It seems to have been a habit of Patrick's to give significant Latin names to young converts or to some of them whom he designed to train for the priesthood. Possibly the name Columba and its derivative Columbanus, Colman, originated in this way, for both were certainly frequent names in Ireland before the time of the great saints who bore them.

We have no definite information regarding the beginnings of episcopal administration in Munster. As in the other parts of Ireland, we might naturally expect to find an early episcopal see established near the seat of the chief kings. Cashel may not have become the royal capital of Munster until after St Patrick's death. There are strong indications that in his time the home of the ruling dynasty was at Aine, Knockainy, but Munster like Ulster had a capital of the older tradition. Its name was Temuir Erann and its place was in the hilly country south-east of Kilmallock. In this same district there was a church founded by Patrick and bearing in later times the

name Ardpatrick, Patrick's Height. It is enough to suggest that Patrick may have designed this church to have been the seat of a chief bishop for Munster, but if so, like the other sees already named, Armagh excepted, Ardpatrick has no special prominence in later times.



CHAPTER XII COROTICUS

READING St Patrick's Confession and his Epistle together, we seem to see that they belong to the same time and stage of his life and missionary work. Though the Epistle deals with a particular event it contains in sum the whole argument of the Confession, sometimes stated in similar phrases. One document echoes the other; and while it could hardly be proved to demonstration, the comparison seems to indicate that the Confession was written first. It was written at a time when Patrick felt he might not have much longer to live: "This is my confession before I die."

In the Epistle Patrick says, "I sent a letter with a holy priest whom I educated from his infancy." That letter would have been written twenty years or more after the beginning of his mission, that is to say, not earlier than the year 452. Patrick speaks in the Epistle with all the authority of a bishop in principal charge of the Irish Church, addressing in general terms his fellow-countrymen in Britain and particularly the British clergy, and protesting with even greater vigour than in the Confession against the attempts that were made in Britain to decry his merits and his work. The event which called forth this

message is plainly enough if not too coherently described. The soldiers of a British *tyrannus* named Coroticus (the later Irish form of the name indicates that it was Coreticos) made a raid by sea on the Irish coast, plundered the people of the district who were Christians, some of them recently baptised, slaughtered some of them and carried away others in captivity, taking with them also a large booty. The captives were sold as slaves to the Scots and Picts, that is to say to the Irish colonists in south-western Scotland and the Picts in northern Scotland, these two peoples being at the time still heathens. Patrick demands the release of the captives, and to compel their release and to deal properly with the crime he demands also the excommunication of Coroticus and his followers.

When he speaks of Coroticus as a *tyrannus*, Patrick means that he was one of those upstart native rulers holding no authority from that Roman government which Patrick, like the Britons in general, even down to the time of Gildas a century later, regarded as legitimate. The Epistle shows that Patrick considered himself and all other Britons to be citizens of Rome.

There need, I think, be no hesitation in identifying this Coroticus with Ceretic, in later Welsh spelling Ceredig, one of the sons of Cunedda whose invasion of Wales from southern Scotland has already been spoken of. Ceretic founded in Wales a

principality which took its name from him, Ceredigion, in its English form, Cardigan. He must have flourished in St Patrick's time. The scene of his activities was the coastland north and south bordering on the Irish Sea. He was engaged in hostile warfare against the Irish settlers in Wales. The only reason for supposing that there were two men of that name, both in St Patrick's time and both engaged in warlike enterprises across the Irish Sea, is the fact that the Welsh genealogies provide two distinct pedigrees, one for Ceretic of Cardigan, the other for Ceretic of the northern Britons; but Welsh pedigrees for that early period are largely artificial, and the Irish genealogies for the same period furnish not a few instances of distinct lines of ancestry for one historical family.

Let us quote Patrick's account of the event. "With my own hand I have written and composed these words to be given and delivered and sent to the soldiers of Coroticus—I do not say my fellow-citizens or the fellow-citizens of the faithful Roman Christians, but those who are fellow-citizens of the demons by reason of their evil work. Behaving like enemies, they are dead while they live, allies of the Scots and apostate Picts, as though wishing to gorge themselves with the blood of innocent Christians whom I in countless numbers have begotten for God and confirmed in Christ.

“On the day following that on which the newly baptised clad in white garments were anointed—the ointment was still fragrant on their foreheads when they were cruelly butchered and slaughtered with the sword by the men aforesaid—I sent a letter with a holy priest whom I educated from his infancy, clergy accompanying him, with a request that they would allow us some of the booty or of the baptised captives whom they had taken. They made mockery of them.

“Therefore I know not what I should the rather mourn, those who have been slain, or those whom they have captured, or those whom the Devil has grievously ensnared. In everlasting punishment these will become slaves, slaves of hell along with him, for verily whosoever committeth sin is a bondservant and is called a son of the Devil. Wherefore let every man who fears God know that they are aliens from me and from Christ my God for whom I am an ambassador. Patricide, fratricide! ravening wolves eating up the people of the Lord as it were bread! As it saith: O Lord, the wicked have dissipated thy law, which now of late He had excellently and kindly planted in Ireland and it was builded up by the favour of God.

“I do not usurp—I am a sharer with those whom He called and predestined to preach the Gospel amid no small persecutions, even to the ends of the
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earth, though the enemy casts an evil eye on me by means of the usurper Coroticus who fears neither God nor the priests whom God has chosen and to whom He has granted that highest divine sublime power, that whom they should bind on earth should be bound also in heaven. Whence therefore you that are holy and humble of heart, I beseech you earnestly, it is not right to pay court to such men nor to take food or drink in their company, nor is it right to accept their alms, until they by doing strict penance with shedding of tears make amends before God and liberate the servants of God and the baptised handmaidens of Christ for whom He was crucified and died.”

In these words Patrick calls upon the bishops and clergy of the Britons to excommunicate the offenders and not to restore them to communion until they have set free the captives and publicly performed the severe canonical penance. He quotes the sentence of Scripture, not indeed against the offenders but against those who may profit by their offence, with special reference to alms and donations that might come from them. “The most high approveth not the gifts of the wicked. He that offereth sacrifice of the goods of the poor is as one that sacrificeth the son in the presence of his father. The riches which he hath gathered unjustly will be vomited up from his belly. The

Angel of Death draggeth him away. He will be tormented by the fury of dragons. The viper's tongue shall slay him; unquenchable fire devoureth him. And therefore woe to those who fill themselves with what is not their own. And again: what doth it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his soul . . . Greed is a deadly sin: Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's goods: thou shalt not kill. A murderer cannot be with Christ. He that hateth his brother is accounted a murderer. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death. How much more guilty is he that hath stained his hands with the blood of the sons of God whom God hath recently purchased in the ends of the earth through my unworthy preaching."

Patrick fears that the contempt to which he is held up in Britain may be extended to these sufferers of his flock. "Men look askance at me, O Lord, what am I to do? Greatly am I despised. See here around me thy sheep torn to pieces and despoiled by those plunderers aforesaid, at the command of Coroticus in hostile spirit. Far from the love of God is he who betrays Christians into the hands of the Scots and Picts. Ravening wolves have swallowed up the flock of the Lord, which truly was increasing in Ireland with the greatest devotion. And the sons of the Irish and the daughters of their princes who have be-

come monks and virgins of Christ I am unable to number. Wherefore be not pleased with the wrong done by the unjust. Even unto hell it shall not please thee.

“Who of the faithful would not shudder to make merry or to feast with such men. They have filled their houses with the spoil of dead Christians. They live by plunder. Wretched men, knowing not that it is poison, they offer the deadly food to their friends and sons . . . The custom of the Roman Christians of Gaul is this. They send holy and proper men to the Franks and other heathens with many thousands of coins to ransom baptised captives. [Then addressing Coroticus directly] Thou slayest as many and sellest them to a foreign nation that knows not God. Thou deliverest the members of Christ as it were into a brothel. What manner of hope in God hast thou or whoever consents with thee or holds intercourse with thee in obsequious words. God will judge, for it is written ‘Not only those who commit evil but those who consent to them shall be damned.’”

Patrick was horrified to think of the lot of Christian captives and particularly of young girls sold as slaves to heathen masters in a foreign land. “The Church,” he says, “mourns and will continue to lament for her sons and daughters whom the sword has not yet slain, but who are banished and carried off to distant lands where sin openly oppresses and

abounds without shame. There freemen are put up for sale, Christians are reduced to slavery, and worst of all to most shameful, most vile and apostate Picts." We must remember that Patrick spoke from experience, and that the Christian Britons reduced to slavery in Ireland were subject to all the conditions which he described. It has been commonly assumed that the Picts who are twice called apostates in this Epistle were Picts of Galloway, the part of southwestern Scotland that lies nearest to Ireland. It is known that there, about the beginning of the fifth century, a Christian church was established by St Ninian and that a monastery of importance grew up there which exercised a great influence after St Patrick's time in the development of monasticism in northern Ireland. To quote Father John Ryan: "Ninian, according to Bede's account, was a Briton by birth, and made a pilgrimage to Rome, where he was trained 'in faith and the mysteries of truth.' Consecrated a bishop, he established his see at Whithern, on the northern shore of the Solway. Here he built a church of stone, not of wood (the material used universally among the Britons) and dedicated it to St Martin. The settlement was called *Ad Candidam Casam*, from the unusually bright appearance of the building. This event took place probably after St Martin's death, perhaps within the first decade of the fifth century. Ninian laboured among the Southern

Picts, many of whom he converted to the faith; and he found a resting-place at Whithern when the days of his earthly pilgrimage ended.”

Dr Watson has recently pointed out that the evidence of a population which continued to be known as Picts in that region during the fifth century is insufficient. It is recorded that Ninian founded a church there and also that he made converts among the Picts, but of these converted Picts all that is said is that they dwelt to the south of the mountain, that is to say, on the southern side of the great mountain range known anciently as Druim Alban, in Latin, Dorsum Britanniae, which stretches across the middle of Scotland. The southern Picts converted by Ninian may have dwelt on the borders of Argyle to the north of the Firth of Clyde. If Coroticus, as Muirchu writes, held rule in the great citadel of the Britons, Ail Cluaide, at Dumbarton, it is easy to understand how he could traffic in Irish slaves with Scots and Picts inhabiting the neighbouring regions. It was known to Patrick at all events that a Pictish population which had received Christianity had relapsed into heathenism in or before his time.

He speaks from his heart in sorrow for the fate of his converts who were massacred, in sorrow and in horror for the fate of those who were carried off alive. “In sadness, in grief, shall I cry aloud. O most lovely and loving brethren and sons whom I have begotten

in Christ, I cannot number them, what shall I do for you? I am not worthy to come to the aid of either God or men. [This is said with reference to the contempt in which he was held among the Britons.] The wickedness of the wicked has prevailed against us. We are become as it were strangers. Can it be they do not believe that we have received one baptism or that we have one God and Father? Is it a shameful thing in their eyes that we have been born in Ireland? . . . Therefore I grieve for you, I grieve, O most dear ones. But again I rejoice within myself, I have not laboured for nothing, and my journey to a strange land has not been in vain, and yet there has happened a crime so horrible and unspeakable. Thank God it was as baptised believers that you departed from this life to Paradise. I can see you, you have begun to journey there where there shall be no night nor sorrow nor death any more. . . You shall reign with the Apostles and prophets and martyrs. You shall take everlasting kingdoms, as He Himself witnesses, saying: They shall come from the east and the west and shall sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the Kingdom of Heaven. Without are dogs and sorcerers and murderers, and liars and false swearers shall have their portion in the pool of everlasting fire. Where therefore shall Coroticus with his guilty followers, rebels against Christ, where shall they see themselves?—they who distribute baptised girls for a

price, and that too for the sake of a miserable temporal kingdom which truly passes away in a moment like a cloud or a smoke that is scattered by the wind. So shall the deceitful wicked perish at the presence of the Lord; but let the just feast in great constancy with Christ. They shall judge nations and shall have dominion over ungodly kings for ever and ever, amen."

He ends his Epistle with an instruction. "I beseech earnestly that whatever servant of God may be at hand may be the bearer of this letter, so that on no account it may be suppressed by anyone but on the contrary that it be read in the presence of all congregations, aye, in the presence of Coroticus himself, if it may so be that God may inspire them at some time to have a better mind to God, so that even tardily they may repent of their impious doings—that murderer towards the brethren of the Lord—and may set free the baptised captive women whom they have taken before now, so that they may deserve to live to God and be made whole here and for eternity. Peace to the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost, Amen."

Apart from the event itself, this Epistle must be understood to tell us something of the nature and effect of St Patrick's teaching in Ireland both as regards slavery and as regards making war and dealing death upon fellow Christians. If Patrick in this

manner denounced a prince of his own countrymen for the slaying and enslavement of Christians, it is not to be believed that he shrank from teaching the same doctrine to those sons of kings whom he claims to have converted and who accompanied and protected him in his journeys through Ireland. There is no doubt that under the influence of his teaching and the teaching of the Church, although here and there men and women may have been held in slavery, as in many other ways the Christian moral law was disobeyed, nevertheless slavery as a social institution soon ceased to exist, and in the seventh century, when the laws of Ireland began to be written, they take no cognisance of legal slavery. We recall the juristic tradition quoted above in which the Druid Matho is represented foretelling to Laoghaire the changes that Patrick was to bring about. "He shall free the slaves."



CHAPTER XIII DEATH OF PATRICK

OF Patrick's last days the earliest accounts that have come to us were written more than two centuries after his death. They are heavily tinged with legend, and even in some degree reflect the passing rivalries of the time when they were written. Interesting details are furnished of his dying hours, his obsequies, and his burial, and yet Muirchu, who tells much of this, tells also that Patrick who resembled Moses in various respects resembled him in this, that where he was buried no man knows. It may have been that, in a country still in close touch with heathen beliefs and practices, where the honours of the dead were rendered in heathen rites, Patrick, who in his lifetime was "venerated as an angel," commanded his burial and his place of burial to be kept secret. Muirchu's statement is confirmed by Tirechan, who says that Colomb Cille, at the behest of the Holy Ghost, made known the place of Patrick's sepulture, which was at Saul, where his first church was founded.

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