

# The Christian Messenger.

A RELIGIOUS AND GENERAL FAMILY NEWSPAPER.

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## Poetry.

### THE LITTLE ONE.

Matt. xix 13, 15.

And is it true what I am told,  
That there are lambs within the fold  
Of God's beloved Son,—  
That Jesus Christ, with tender care  
Will in His arms most gently bear  
The helpless "little one?"

O yes! I've heard my mother say,  
He never sent a child away,  
That scarce could walk or run;  
For when the parent's love besought  
That He would touch the child she brought,  
He bless'd the "little one."

And I, a little straying lamb,  
May come to Jesus as I am,  
Though goodness I have none;  
May now be folded to His breast,  
As birds within the parent's nest,  
And be His "little one."

And He can do all this for me,  
Because in sorrow on the tree  
He once for sinners hung;  
And having washed their sins away,  
He now rejoices, day by day,  
To cleanse the "little one."

Others there are who love me too;  
But who, with all their love, can do  
What Jesus Christ hath done?  
Then if He teaches me to pray,  
I'll surely go to Him and say,  
Lord, bless thy "little one."

Thus by this gracious Shepherd led,  
And by His mercy gently led,  
Where living waters run,  
My greatest pleasure will be this,  
That I'm a little lamb of His,  
Who loves the "little one."

## Religious.

### THE PRIMITIVE CHURCH OF IRELAND.

It is pleasant to believe that better days are in store for Ireland, whose hope, like that of France, lies in the gospel; for, assuredly, nothing short of the truth as it is in Jesus Christ will ever quell the angry and wicked passions, which yet estrange the Irish population from those who would fain be friendly and act handsomely. While the follies of departed generations continue to yield bitter fruits, few Englishmen, we suppose, are prepared to claim all the virtue for their own side, by denying that, in the past, Ireland has been badly governed and hardly used. Unjust laws, with monstrous penalties, have been enacted; and a dominant church, enforcing its tithes by the authority of the state, has until lately sided popery in tightening its hold on the benighted inhabitants. But Ireland's cloud of affliction has had a silver lining. Let us look for an auspicious future, and work to usher in the good times England is anxious to see, and willing to hasten by any reasonable sacrifice.

Ireland's early professors were zealous believers, and her primitive Church was pre-eminently a missionary institution. She rejoiced in possessing bishops and presbyters; the former being hard-working ecclesiastics without dioceses, and the latter ordinary pastors. Then the unsettled state of society suggested the expediency of establishing religious foundations, usually called monasteries, but which, more correctly, were colleges. They were the only shelter from the rough outer world, where piety and learning could be properly cultivated.

Ireland, as a favourite seat of the ancient Church, during seven hundred years, bore the name of Scotia; and, during the early centuries, no traces are discoverable of the Romish corruptions subsequently introduced. \* \* \*

The history of Christianity in Ireland tells strongly against the papacy, and is worthy of careful study for that reason. If we go back to the beginning, we shall find the life of her evangelist, Patrick, contradicting the pretensions of Rome, and testifying against her teaching. The apostle of Ireland and the planter of its primitive church, and whom posterity recognises as SAINT PATRICK, like

too many others of his class, has been claimed by Rome as one of her great missionaries. But as Patrick laboured before Rome rose in ascendancy, and before her corruptions in their full enormity blighted the church, he is no more to be counted one of her heroes than are Columba and the Culdees. Nevertheless, monachism, which has been busy with Patrick's life, would have us believe that he was an emissary of Rome, when he had nothing to do with Rome; and would set him down as one commissioned by the pope or chief bishop, and instructed in his oracles, when the old missionary only recognised the divine call, looked to no other authority than God's word, and confessed his ignorance of the world's knowledge. Patrick told a very simple story; too simple indeed for the taste of monks who flourished in subsequent ages, and accordingly they have embellished the relation with a due proportion of fiction. In his own estimation, he was a simple uneducated man, touched with love to Christ and zeal in his cause, and was, as such, one whom heaven had commissioned to throw "the evangelic net." In this character he landed in Ireland, and sought to bring into the gospel fold the chieftains and their semi-barbarous clans. So fearful was he of being misapprehended, that he circulated a confession or pastoral letter, in vindication of himself against the charge of corruption made by certain persons, wherein, with true modesty, he urges that the blessing attending his efforts sufficiently proved the validity of his calling. Such an unadorned story, without some borrowed colouring, was doubtless intolerable to Romish apologists, already somewhat troubled at the rude style of Patrick's Latin. It was incredible that an unlearned man could preach the gospel with power and success; even if true, it would be inconvenient for the people to possess such a history. All was amended till the itinerant missionary was transformed into a popish saint, and his life and work confounded with another person of the same name, who seems to have been commissioned by Rome.

Patrick's family occupied a position of influence and respectability for those times—but the place of his birth is not known, some accounts making him a native of Boulogne, and others of North Britain. Though a deacon, his father was also a magistrate of some importance. Thus the family held an honourable station; but "Patrick, a sinner, the rudest and least of all the faithful," as he calls himself, sacrificed alluring worldly prospects for the sake of the gospel. Where he was exactly located in early youth is not known, this much only being plain,—he was seized, with many other youths in his sixteenth year, and carried off by savage heathen pirates, who, on landing in Ireland, sold him into slavery.

The events in the life of a great evangelist, like the holy Patrick, are valuable as indicating the condition and customs of contemporary society; and we prize the record, because it reveals the anti-papal character of the church of those days. Patrick's experience in this early period of his history not only shows his freedom from saint and virgin worship, but it also certifies that no such idolatry was known to his immediate followers.

On landing in Ireland, the missionary found only a wretched life before him. His food was coarse, his lodging that of a cow-herd, and his employment feeding cattle. Fortunately these troubles exercised a salutary religious effect on his broken spirit; for, when his life went hardest, the young Christian sought closer communion with heaven, and being much given to prayer, he found retirement in any convenient shelter afforded by the woods and fields. His experience was truly a severe discipline, till, in the midst of the horrid slavery he dreamed he should soon be released; and like some others of his class, the dream appears to have been the cause of its own fulfilment. Encouraged by the night vision, Patrick fled from his servitude of six years, "in the power of the Lord who directed my

way for good," as he himself says in his Confession. Roaming about the coast after escaping, the fugitive met with a vessel, which, as we suppose, carried him back to the north of Britain, or wherever his home was situated. The people with whom he journeyed were only slightly above those he had left, and his intercourse with them was equally unedifying. After being three days at sea, the party landed and wandered for a month in a desert, on a short allowance of food. The "desert" is supposed to be identical with a tract in the north of Scotland, which, in the winter season of that rude age, may have appeared like a desert to the wanderers. "Turn ye in faith to my Lord God," cried Patrick to his followers, when all were threatened with starvation, "to whom nothing is impossible, and he will send you food, for he has abundance everywhere." Meeting with a drove of pigs, they had food enough for the time being; but, on another occasion, when invited to eat with the company, Patrick declined, fearing they had thanked an idol for the feast. He passed sixty days with these rough sailors, and then, as he tells us, "the Lord delivered me from their hands." On escaping from his deliverers, Patrick returned to his native district, and was joyfully received by friends at home, who, however, strongly urged that he should "not expose himself to fresh dangers"—an expression from which we may infer that his relatives sought to repress his missionary aspirations.

It was at this time, and as a young man of twenty-two, that Patrick conceived the idea of undertaking a Christian mission to the Irish, whose fierce and dark heathenism he had had so singular an opportunity of witnessing. This was a noble manner of returning good for evil, worthy even of the apostolic era. As a captive he had observed the people's need, and now he would fain return and instruct them in the oracles he found so precious to his own soul. The usual additions by the monks to this part of the history—of an angel appearing to him, of a pilgrimage to Rome completed before sailing for Ireland, and, of a commission from "Pope Celestine"—are rhetorically ornamental, but have the disadvantage of being untrue. Though no angel appeared, the future missionary was in a condition of mind bordering on enthusiasm, and he dreamed a dream, which by way of embellishment to their legends, monkish pens have appropriated as so much material out of which (their) angels are made. In the stillness of night and during sleep, Patrick thought he saw a man approaching from Ireland, and bearing letters, while in the background voices, mingling with the roar of the ocean, prayed him to settle in Scotia and preach the gospel. When he awoke, being "greatly pricked in heart," his previously formed resolution to go on the contemplated mission was mightily strengthened. At a subsequent time, he dreamed that Christ spoke to him, and, says he, "I awoke rejoicing." He was a young enthusiast whose zeal was all for Christ, and the things he relates come naturally from one of his temperament and piety. Nevertheless, so long as we keep to Patrick's own account, "there is no incredible or absurd miracle," as Dr. Todd remarks: "He believed, no doubt, that his call was supernatural, and that he had seen visions and dreamed dreams. But other well meaning and excellent men, in all ages of the church, have in like manner imagined themselves to have had visions of this kind; and to have been the recipients of immediate revelations."

On finally resolving to undertake what appeared so forlorn a mission, other trials than hardships in prospective awaited the missionary. His plans were opposed by friends at home, who naturally used their influence against his forsaking good prospects for the sake of benefiting barbarians, who had only used him ill. But Patrick, in the true spirit of Christ, had counted the cost and would make the sacrifice. He would not be hindered, though, as he saw, he must go "without honour"

and "without a name." He tells us, "I gave thanks to him who hath comforted me in all things, and did not hinder me from the journey I had resolved upon, nor from my labour which I had dedicated to my Lord Christ."

The account of Patrick's mission in Ireland is unfortunately almost hopelessly involved in Romish absurdities and monkish legends, which, as the inventions of later ages, need not to be chronicled here. He landed in or about the year 440, and was immediately rewarded with a fair measure of success. He built churches and appointed presbyters or pastors, and visited the courts of the petty kings, his aim being to reach the chiefs or heads of clans; after the conversion of whom, the people would be more disposed to his message. Though unsuccessful in his efforts to convert the semi-savage king Loughaire and his son Lugaidh, two daughters of the former are mentioned as having died happily in Christ, while a son of the king of Leinster accepted the faith. The institution of clanship remained intact when Patrick travelled over Ireland; and, by a cautious procedure, he showed how well he understood the nature of the work to be done. He knew perfectly well that the outwork of paganism could not be carried by surprise; and, consequently, it was his constant anxiety to reach the chiefs, whom the people usually showed a readiness to follow; and, when a tribe thus nominally embraced Christianity, it was comparatively easy to prosecute the work in earnest.

(Conclusion in our next.)

For the Christian Messenger.

### AUTHORITY OF THE LORD'S DAY.

Dear Brother,—

I am informed that the opponents of the Christian Sabbath are disseminating their views in various parts of the province, with considerable zeal and some success. It is presumed, therefore, that a brief paper on the subject may be seasonable.

1. The original Sabbath was instituted at the beginning. God determined to give his creature, man, a periodical resting day. He occupied six of his days in the work of creation, and then rested. He directed man to labour six days, and then take a day for rest.

2. This law which was made for man, as man, and not for any nation, exclusively, became one of the ten commandments, embodied in the covenant with the Jews, and graven on the tables of stone which Moses received from God himself. Obedience was solemnly enjoined from time to time. Disobedience was punishable with death.

3. The Saviour declared himself to be "Lord of the sabbath"—an expression which indicates such power and authority respecting the institute as had not been before assumed by any prophet.

4. In the course of the "forty days" during which the Lord Jesus appeared occasionally to his disciples after his resurrection, he spake to them "of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God." The subsequent proceeding of the Apostles in founding and governing the Christian church, are to be considered as the result of those instructions. In all that they did or commanded we see the development of the Master's will. The church was "under law to Christ." Whatever may be regarded as representing the general arrangement of the churches, in administration or worship, may be fairly taken as the declaration of the "mind of the Lord."

5. Special respect to the first day of the week was early manifested. The Saviour chose that day for interviews with his disciples. It was natural that the day should be joyfully observed in remembrance of his resurrection. While the Apostles availed themselves of the Jewish Sabbath, as affording convenient opportunities for

addressing their own countrymen, and any others who frequented the synagogues, the observance of the first day of the week as the Christians resting-day gradually became general. On that day, the Christians were directed, when they held their weekly assemblies, to "lay by them in store as God had prospered them", that their contributions to the good cause might be prompt and liberal. On that day they "came together to break bread," that is to celebrate the Lord's supper. Before the end of the first century an appropriate name was given to it, and it has ever since been known as "the Lord's day." Nor does the New Testament contain any evidence that Christian churches met for worship on the seventh day of the week. That was not "the Lord's day."

6. To the testimony of the sacred writers may be added that of Christian authors in the first three centuries. They are unanimous in stating that the first day of the week was the worship-day of the churches. One passage may suffice. Justin Martyr (beheaded at Rome for the faith, A. D. 165) writes thus in his celebrated "Apology":—"On the day called Sunday all who live in cities or in the country gather together to one place, and the memoirs of the apostles or the writings of the prophets are read, as long as time permits, then, when the reader has ceased, the president verbally instructs, and exhorts to the imitation of these good things. Then we all rise together and pray." Having given an account of the celebration of the Lord's Supper, which followed, Justin adds—"Sunday is the day in which we all hold our common assembly, because it is the first day on which God, having wrought a change in the darkness and matter, our Saviour on the same day rose from the dead." This was written a hundred and fifty years before the time of Constantine, to whom some are accustomed to refer as enjoining the observance of the Lord's day by law. He found the observance universally prevalent among the Christians and gave it the sanction of an imperial statute. How far he acted wisely in so doing, we need not now inquire.

7. In celebrating the Saviour's resurrection on the first day of the week, and consecrating that day to sabbatic rest and worship we follow the example of Apostolic churches, while received their instructions to whom the Lord communicated his will during those "forty days" or from the Apostle Paul, who expressly declares respecting the Christianity which he taught "The gospel which was preached of me is not after man; for I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ" (Gal. i. 11, 12).

8. Some Christian institutes are founded on direct precept; such as Baptism and the Lord's supper. For others, we look to the practices of the first Christians; as recorded in the New Testament. Apostolic precedent is equivalent to divine precept, the injunctions of the apostles were clothed with authority. " whatsoever ye shall bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (Mat. xviii, 18.) When the Apostle John called the first day of the week "the Lord's day" he did not give to the day a merely human appellation; and the divine manifestations with which he was favoured may be fitly regarded as conveying the Saviour's sanction of his practice.

9. The Lord's day is the Christian Sabbath, the resting-day of the Church of Christ. The Jew celebrated the material creation on his Sabbath: we celebrate the spiritual creation on ours. The proportion of time is the same:—"Six days shalt thou labour and do all thy work; but the seventh is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God." We work six days, and take one day for a resting-day, just as the Jews did.

10. The Lord's day has been the jubilee-day of the Church for eighteen