



SUNDAY READING

A FAMOUS OLD ABBEY.

Where Saint Columba Began the Conversion of the Pictish Kingdom.

A very few years after the arrival of Saint Columba witnessed the conversion of the greater part of the Pictish kingdom to Christianity, and the erection of so many churches and monasteries. It is said, indeed, by the Irish annalists that upward of 300 churches and 100 monasteries were founded by him in Scotland and Ireland. But even this did not satisfy his strong missionary spirit. Northumberland also was visited by Aidan, and other monks from Iona, and the King (Oswald) and his people converted to the true faith. The influence of Iona continued long in England, and the little western island provided many teachers and preachers to the southern and greater kingdom. The monks even ventured further, and during the saint's life they found their way to Norway. Irish and Scottish missionaries spread themselves over France, Italy and many other parts of Europe, and their zeal, learning and simplicity elicited the warmest commendation.

Saint Columba's death is believed to have taken place in 597, and he had reached the age of 77. His successor in the Abbey was Baithene, his first cousin, and the line of abbots remained unbroken till 800, when the records became exceedingly defective. About this time the Norsemen began their ravages in the western isles, and Iona was repeatedly visited and the buildings burnt by the savage raiders. In order to protect the sacred relics and remains of Columba, they were removed partly to Ireland and probably at Abernethy. In 985 the island was on Christmas day pillaged by the Normans, and the Abbot, and fifteen of the learned of the church, slain.

At a very early period Iona became the burial place of the Pictish and Scottish kings, and it remained so until the time of Malcolm, the husband of St. Margaret. With the interment of Malcolm and his wife, in the Church of the Holy Trinity, at Duntermline, the island ceased to be a royal cemetery. But prior to her death, in 1093, Queen Margaret erected the chapel in the Reilig Odhran, the principal cemetery of the island, and the chapel is now the oldest erection in Iona. Four years after her death, Magnus, King of Norway, "opened the smaller church of Kollum-Kille"—probably a chapel built over the reputed tomb of St. Columba—on the occasion of his visiting the Holy Island. In the following year he seized the western isles, which were then attached to the bishopric of Man, and subjected to the metropolitan of Trondjheim. This, of course, rudely interrupted the course of the island's history; but in 1156 the Celtic influence was again restored, and the Abbey offered to Bishop O'Brolchan, Abbot of Derry. Although the offer was not accepted, the Irish element rapidly gained the ascendancy, and it is believed that the central portion of the cathedral was erected about this period, probably by a kinsman of Bishop O'Brolchan. The capital of the lower column bears this inscription: "Donaldus O'Brolchan Feicit Hoc Opus," and it may, therefore, be taken as reasonably certain that this is the same Donald whose name appears in the Annals of Ulster as dying in 1203.

The Abbey of Iona remained a separate foundation until the immediate jurisdiction of the Archbishop of Trondjheim until the western isles were finally ceded to Scotland. All connection with Norway was then severed, and the Abbot placed himself under the jurisdiction of the Bishop of Dunkeld as inheriting the rights of St. Columba, and representing the old primacy of Iona. Between 1492 and 1498, however, John, Abbot of Iona, was elected Bishop of the Isles, and in 1506 the Abbey of Iona was permanently annexed to the Bishopric of the Isles, the bishop being ex officio perpetual Commendator of Iona. It was only then that the Abbey Church of St. Mary's became the Cathedral of the Isles.

Troublesome times were, however, near. In 1561 the Act of Convention was passed "for demolishing all the abbeyes of monks and friars, and for suppressing whatsoever monuments of idolatry were remaining in the realm." Iona did not escape from the devastation which followed. The stern reformers of the time knew nothing of the aesthetic feelings of a future age. Everywhere the church property was torn down and destroyed, and it was at this time that so many of the crosses, said to have adorned Iona, were removed. The monks had to beat a hurried retreat, taking with them all they could gather of their most precious relics. With them departed the palm days of Iona, which now is but a silent witness to the great deeds which hallowed her soil and inspired her sons.

The Cathedral of St. Mary is, of course, the principal object in the island. Built in the early part of the thirteenth century, it consists of a nave, transepts, and choir, with a sacristy on the north side of the choir, and side chapels on the south. Built of many varieties of stone, among which a red granite is most conspicuous, it raises its massive square tower in solemn majesty above the shore. Besides the cathedral, the island contains many other objects of interest such as St. Oran's chapel, situated in the principal cemetery called the Reilig Odhran. Then there is the nunnery, which is believed to have been in existence about the year 1200. It is now in a very ruinous condition but retains some traces of its pristine elegance. Tempull Ronain, the Parish

church, is first mentioned in 1561, and was situated "about a quarter of a mile south of the Reilig Odhran. In 1795 this church was entire, but in a tottering condition. What is now the Parish church is the building about the size of St. Oran's chapel, on the N. E. of the nunnery, inside its enclosure, built in 1828. There are other ruins and remains of chapels all in the immediate neighborhood of the cathedral.

Not the least interesting portions of the island are the cemeteries. Reilig Odhran, was the ancient burial place of the monastery, and received its name probably from the fact that St. Odhran was the first of Columba's followers to be interred therein. The oldest tombstones in the cemetery bear Irish inscriptions. Here were buried the Scottish kings' down to Malcolm Canmore, and here Ecfrid, the Northumbrian king was buried in 684. Hither also were brought the mortal remains of King Godred in 1188, and of Haec Ospac in 1228. Of these kings no monuments remain. Of the tombstones still found, the most valuable are those of the Clans M'Kinnon, M'Lean, and M'Quarrie, whose pedigrees, still preserved, attest their noble extraction from the House of Lorne. Scattered over the island are other cemeteries and sepulchral remains, some of which are nameless.

Any account of Iona would be incomplete were no mention made of the crosses. If an anonymous writer of 1693 is to be believed, their number must have been very great. He says "In this isle was a great many crosses, to the number of 360, which was all destroyed by one provincial assembly, holden on the place a little after the Reformation. Their foundations is yet stand, and two notable ones of a considerable height and excellent work, untouched." This story is very improbable, and it is doubtful whether there were ever more than two dozen real crosses standing at one time.

Like the tombstones, the crosses consisted of a single slab of mica slate, intractable enough under the chisel, but nevertheless graven with both elaborate and intricate tracery. There are now only two remaining entire—St. Martin's Cross, a noble monument 14 feet high, opposite the west door of the Cathedral; and Maclean's Cross, on the wayside proceeding from the nunnery to the Cathedral, the shaft being 10 feet 4 inches high. St. John's Cross stood in the Cathedral ground, but only a portion now remains. Of other crosses only a few fragments exist, and in some cases only the supposed site is pointed out to the enquiring traveller.

Messages of Help For The Week.

SUNDAY: "I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord."—Psalm 122: 1.

MONDAY: "Call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me."—Psalm 50: 15.

TUESDAY: "Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him."—Psalm 11: 12.

WEDNESDAY: "Thomas saith unto him, Lord . . . how can we know the way? Jesus saith unto him, I am the way. . . . No man cometh unto the Father, but by me."—John 14: 5, 6.

THURSDAY: "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him."—Psalm 25: 14.

FRIDAY: "A good name is better than precious ointment, and the day of death better than the day of one's birth."—Eccles. 7: 11.

SATURDAY: "Again I say unto you, that if two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven."—Matt. 18: 19.

The Ruins of the Tower of Babel.

These ruins are still most imposing, and can be discovered at a distance of twenty leagues. Six of the eight stories of the Tower have crumbled away. Its base forms a square of 194 metres—over 700 feet. The bricks of which it is built are of the purest clay, and almost white. Before being baked, they are covered with inscriptions, written in a clear and regular hand. Some persons in modern days have inquired where all the bitumen came from that was used in the construction of the Tower, as recorded in the 11th chapter of Genesis. It happens that a stream of bitumen still exists in the neighborhood, and flows in such abundance at times as to be in good faith worthy the name of a river. The inhabitants at these times set fire to it, and calmly wait until the flames die away from the want of fuel.

Commit Faults That Can be Mended.

Rev. James Hay, in his "Life of Dean Swift," says that the Dean was the best and kindest of masters. His domestics adored him. Yet he never spared their faults. He rebuked them in such comical ways that they never could forget the rebuke or be offended. At dinner one day in the Deanery, a joint had been overdone. He desired the butler to call the cook. The fat old woman instantly made her appearance in the dining-room in fear and trembling. "Sweetheart, said Swift, "take this nutron down to the kitchen, and do it less." In utter amazement she stammered out, "Sir, that is impossible." "Then, for the future," said Swift "if you commit faults, commit faults that can be mended."

Christ in the Midst.

In the great hall of the museum at Copenhagen, there stands in the midst, with outstretched hands, the stately figure of the Christ. From the benignant face the waiting apostles grieve and light, from the outstretched hands, abundant blessing. So, in the Presence Chamber of that near eternity, into which the Christian enters in thought and prayer, the human soul, in faith and patience, comes under the invigorating influence of a life which bestows the richness of blessing, "and He addeth no sorrow with it."

NEWS AND NOTABILIA.

The chief Rabbi of Jerusalem, Rabbi Rafael Meir Fanidgil, Haham Bashi, died the first week of January.

The German Emperor recently issued an order that no sermon preached before him by a Court Chaplain must exceed fifteen minutes in delivery.

An international exhibition of "Christian Art" is projected to be held in London within the next two years on the site of the future Roman catholic cathedral at Westminster. It is believed a wonderful collection of rich treasures will be brought together.

Dr. Pentecost, the American preacher, who has been invited to succeed the late Dr. Donald Fraser at Marylebone presbyterian church, has stipulated for an income of £1,500, with house rent-free, and the congregation have agreed. This will be the largest stipend paid to any presbyterian minister in England, it not in Scotland.

The largest baptist church in the world is that of the Metropolitan Tabernacle, London. Its returns for the last year give a membership of 5,328. There are twenty-three mission stations in connection with it, supplied by 130 lay preachers and others. In the twenty-seven Sunday and ragged schools there are 8,001 children, with 592 teachers.

A steady increase in the number of Roman catholic clergy in England is shown by the statistics in the new catholic directory for 1893. They now number in England and Scotland 2,950. In Ireland there are 3,059. A considerable number of foreign priests, chiefly members of religious orders, are, however, included in the Anglo-Roman clergy.

The richest clergyman in the world is said to be the Rev. Dr. C. F. Hoffman, Rector of All Angels' church, New York. He built the church of which he is rector, and maintains it out of his own pocket; also several other religious establishments, of which he is the head. Expenses of every description are borne by this reverend gentleman, and the congregations are on no account appealed to for support.

Archdeacon Farrar is a hard worker. His working days opens at half-past eight o'clock in the morning, and does not close until ten o'clock at night, when for an hour or so, he will give himself up to the novel or book of the hour, or other form of recreation. Much of his serious work, however, is done at the Athenæum club, where, in the library, he is secure of the unbroken quiet which might be interrupted at home.

A rich chasuble will be offered to the Pope on his episcopal Jubilee, by the ladies of Rome. This sacerdotal garment is not yet finished, and is still in the workrooms of the artist who does nearly all the Vatican work in articles of jewellery. This chasuble, the ground work of which is of a violet colour embroidered in gold with real pearls, is to be worn while Pope Leo XIII. is celebrating Mass in the cathedral of St. Peter's on February 19th.

A life of indulgence is not the way to Christian perfection. There are many things that appear trifles which greatly tend to enervate the soul, and hinder progress in the path of virtue and glory. The habit of indulging in things which our judgments cannot thoroughly approve grows stronger and stronger by every act of self-gratification, and we are led by degrees to an excess of luxury which must greatly weaken our hands in the spiritual warfare.

In the year 1892 the number of marriages celebrated by clergymen of the established church of Scotland was 45.17 per cent. of the whole, a figure which is slightly in advance of that for the previous year, though below the average for the last 36 years, which is 45.53. The free church celebrated 19.47 per cent. of the marriages, and the united presbyterian church 11.27. In both cases the figures are the lowest recorded during the last 36 years.

Archbishop Ireland, dedicating a church for the colored congregation in St. Paul, assured the colored people that every catholic church in the city was open to them on equal terms with the whites. Said he: "Make your own choice. The first pew in the cathedral may be yours, as well as your white brother's, and, as things are, for the sake of strong protest against prejudice, I would for my part prefer to see it occupied by a colored man rather than by a white man."

It is said that the Pope of Rome is the only priest in Christendom who never preaches a sermon. Only once during 300 years has this rule—it rule it is—been departed from. This was in 1847, when Pius IX. was Pope. Father Ventura, a famous orator in Rome. A great crowd assembled to hear him, but at the appointed hour there was no priest. Presently the Pope arrived; probably he, too, had come to listen to Ventura. Taking in the situation at a glance, Pio Nono was equal to the occasion, for he preached the sermon.

The British Minister at Constantinople has called the attention of the Porte to the interesting doings of the press censor in his handling of the New Testament, hymn books, and other Christian books intended for circulation in the Turkish provinces. The Porte has promised redress. Something of the character of the changes made may be gathered from the one instance of the insertion of the word "Christian" before "sinners" in the passage "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners." Changes of this nature have a tendency, at least, take the edge off Christian missionary effort.

The committee having in charge the building of the choir of the new cathedral of St. John the Divine, New York, has been directed by the trustees to begin work as soon as possible. The cost of the choir, it is estimated, will be \$900,000. Three years are required to complete it. Treasurer Morgan's report shows that there is now in the treasury \$300,000 available for the building. An additional \$5,000 has been donated by the woman who have already given a like amount for the Ludlow Memorial window. It is also announced that a prominent New Yorker had declared himself willing to be one of the ten men to subscribe \$100,000 each for the cathedral. The contribution of \$500,000 for the cathedral still remains anonymous. At a meeting of the trustees, Treasurer J. Perpont Morgan reported that the gift had been received and the balance of \$170,000 due on the cathedral site paid.

How Lorenzo de Medici Died.

Lorenzo de Medici lies dying in the city of Florence; in the horrors of death he has sent for the one man who had never yielded to his threats or caresses—the brave Savonarola. Lorenzo confesses that he has heavy on his soul three crimes—the cruel sack of Volterra, the theft of the public dower of young girls, by which many were driven to a wicked life; and the blood shed after Pazzi. He is greatly agitated, and Savonarola, to keep him quiet, keeps repeating, "God is merciful," "God is good." "But," he added, "there is need of three things." "And what are they, father?" "First, you must have great and living faith in the mercy of God." "This I have, the greatest." "Second, you must restore that which you have wrongfully taken, or require your children to restore it for you." Lorenzo looked surprised and troubled; but he forces himself to compliance, and nods his head in sign of assent. Then Savonarola rises to his feet, and stands over the dying prince. "Last, you must give back their liberties to the people of Florence." Lorenzo summoning up all his remaining strength, disdainfully turns his back, and, without uttering another word, Savonarola departs, without giving him absolution.

Sunny Rooms and Sunny Lives.

Light is one of the most active agencies in enlivening and beautifying a home. We all know the value of sunlight as a health-giving agent to the physical constitution; and it is not less so to our moral and spiritual natures. We are more active under its influence—can think better and act more vigorously. Let us take the airiest, choicest, and sunniest room in the house for our living-room—the workshop where brain and body are built up and renewed. Let us there have a bay-window, no matter how plain in structure, through which the two twin-angels of nature—sunlight and pure air—can freely enter. Dark rooms bring depression of spirits, imparting a sense of confinement, of isolation, of powerlessness, which is chilling to energy and vigour; but in light rooms is good cheer. Even in a gloomy home, where walls and furniture are dingy and brown, we have but to take down the curtains, open wide the window, hang brackets on either side, set flower-pots on the brackets, and let the warm sun stream freely in, to bring health to our bodies and joy to our souls.

The Power of Sympathy.

Happy is the man who has that in his soul which acts upon the dejected as April air upon violet roots. Gifts from the hand are silver and gold; but the heart gives that which neither silver or gold can buy. To be full of goodness, full of cheerfulness, full of sympathy, full of helpful hope, causes a man to carry blessings of which he is himself unconscious as a lamp of its own shining. Such an one moves on human life as stars move on dark seas to bewildered mariners; as the sun wheels, bringing all the seasons with him from the south.

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