

CORRESPONDENCE

The following communication reached us too late for last week's paper, we therefore take much pleasure in presenting it to our readers in this week's issue.

ST. PATRICK'S DAY AT ALBERTON

St. Patrick's day was celebrated in a most becoming manner at Alberton. At the request of the Pastor, the whole congregation turned out in a body to approach the Sacraments and the sight of so many devout worshippers thronging the House of God at the early masses was truly edifying. At nine o'clock, solemn High Mass was sung, with the choir at its best, the celebrant being the Rev. Dr. Chaisson of Palmer Road, with the Revs. Fathers Turbide & Burke as deacon and sub-deacon respectively. Immediately before the Introit of the Mass, the well beloved strains of "Patrick's Day" with organ & violin accompaniment, floated through the Church; whose words awaken a responsive echo in every Irish heart whether at home or abroad. The oration of the day was pronounced by the Rev. Father Burke, and it need scarcely be said that the subject could not have fallen into better hands. In fact, the Rev. Gentleman, whose heart was plainly in his work, seems to have excelled himself on this occasion, thrilling the hearts of his hearers as never before, with the story of Ireland's Saint and Ireland's wrongs, and arousing in one and all a noble ambition to live as become the worthy descendants of a grand old race. The Rev. speaker dwelt on the life of St. Patrick, his birth of noble parentage in some part of Britain—his captivity into Gaul at the age of sixteen, where the delicately-nurtured youth had to undergo all the hardships of the rude life of a herder of cattle—and his wonderful release from his captors by the interposition of Divine Providence. But Patrick, though restored to his family, does not linger under the paternal roof to enjoy the home-comforts which one would think doubly appreciable after a painful exile. No, led on by the Hand of God and taking compassion on the poor Irish people who, as he tells us, in his waking or sleeping, seem to be ever calling to him for aid, he leaves his home to prepare himself by years of study in a theological seminary for the great work he felt called upon to do. And history informs us that he went to Rome to receive the sanction of the Pope, his spiritual Head; and we know that Celestine I, the then reigning Pontiff, clothed him with Episcopal authority, conferred on him the noble name of Patricius or Patrick, the highest title in the land, and with a blessing sent him forth on his arduous mission.

St. Patrick lands in Ireland. He finds the people's civilization even then to compare most favorably with that of their neighbors, they had their pagan priests, their lawyers, and their bards or poets, with a literature, the richest in Europe. He opens his mission; preaches to the people; fasts and prays for them and we know the result. It is unique in the life of St. Patrick that at the close of his long days he could lay down his staff and say that his work was accomplished: as a result of his life-work, Ireland had become Christian and Catholic from one end to the other. On every hillside and every plain, churches arose colleges and schools sprung up and flourished, seats of learning to which came in after years, (when the inroads of

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nothern barbarians had well nigh overturned the Cross itself in Europe) men from all the continental nations to imbibe knowledge from her scholars, and to unite their voices in one common tongue, the Latin, in sounding the praises of the Most High. Yes, Ireland in the Dark Ages was the Nursery and protectress of the arts and sciences; and, though it was thrown up to her then that not a drop of blood was shed in bringing about her conversion, she has amply offered in the 300 years that precede our time, to add laurels innumerable to her queenly brow. The long galaxy of Irish saints and martyrs cannot be enumerated for we have lost the records; but we know what poor Ireland has had to endure: we are familiar with the fiendish persecutions, the grinding-down beyond man's strength to bear of that unfortunate people; but to their glory be it said, that not all the wiles of Henry and Elizabeth or the scheming of other unscrupulous tyrants could rob her of the proudest jewel in her crown: the glorious all-surpassing gift of faith, bequeathed through St. Patrick and treasured through succeeding ages as the most precious legacy a nation can guard. Aye, come weal or woe, imprisonment or death, the Irishman clung to his faith: he would not forsake his Spiritual Head, would not recognize Henry VIII instead of Peter, would not shut off his dear departed from the reach of his charity nor give up his love and veneration for the mother of God. And for these same traits: obedience to ecclesiastical authority, devotion for the Souls in Purgatory and reverence for the name of Mary, the Irish people are noted the world over. And furthermore, statisticians' figure prove that the women of Ireland take precedence of their European sisters in the purity of their lives and morals. Glancing at the inner life of Patrick, we see the secret of his success; three virtues shone out pre-eminently in his career: he was a man of supreme penance. Every undertaking of his was heralded by prayer and fasting. He not only preached but practised to the letter the Scriptural injunction, "Except ye do penance, ye shall all likewise perish." Penance was the great basis on which he worked. Side by side with Penance, he placed the great virtue of Humility, the corner stone of all Christian life, and in him it was brought to a wonderful degree of perfection; so much so, that he, on every occasion, represented himself as the "greatest of sinners" and "the servant of servants." And to crown all, was his wonderful zeal for the conversion of souls. Understanding as he did the value of an immortal soul, no sacrifice was too great to throw in, no obstacle too stubborn to be overcome if in the way of reaching that soul. This is the keynote to his success. No wonder that the land he loved and labored for so well, and over which he still watches from his abode above, came to earn for itself in time the glorious epithet of "Isle of Saints," nor that it has supplied so abundantly and still supplies bishops and priests to two continents and men of illustrious Irish name to every walk of life. As of old,

the proud boast of a Roman was his "Civis Romanus sum," I am a Roman citizen; so the true son of Erin in any part of the world can proudly hold up his head and say: "I am an Irish Catholic." It was only the other day that, grouped at the feet of the venerable Roman Pontiff, a little band of Irish pilgrims heard from the lips of the August Vicar of Christ these consoling words: "You are my best beloved children." Not French, nor Spanish, nor English nor any other favored nation, but you, the poor down-trodden Irish whose heart-rending cry for freedom has resounded down the centuries, you are my best-loved children: Words from such a source and on such an occasion, to be transcribed in golden characters to brighten for all future time one of the dark pages of our History.

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