

My Lord Cardinal, my Lord Bishop, Right Rev. and
Rev. Fathers, Men and Women of Tyrconnell: -

1897

"I am a poor man who never left Ireland,
I do not understand Latin, and I do not love English,
But when I have to speak, I use the Gaelic."

You have heard so much to-day, both in Irish
and in English, regarding the life and deeds of St. Columba
kille that it is ~~unnecessary~~ ^{unnecessary} for me to add much. People
are assembled here to-day from near and far to honour
and exalt the memory of the great Saint who first
drew breath on this sacred spot - a Saint whom
all authorities agree in pronouncing to have been
the greatest Saint of the Celtic race. Is it for a
day's outing, for a day's pleasure, that we all come
together here? No; we should have had, and I
sure we all have had, a more serious intention and
motive for our pilgrimage. Every day for the last
few months we have all been working hard to do
something that would be advantageous and profitable
to us for the time to come - preparing the soil for
the crops, sowing them, and attending to their manage-
ment and growth. We should count any day a loss
in which we had not been able to do something to
forward this business. To-day, likewise, we should try
to gain some advantage and profit for the future
from our journey here, and from all we have seen and
heard. If we simply pass the day pleasantly, but
not profitably, we are sadly mispending it, we
are letting slip a grand opportunity and an efficacious
means of benefiting ourselves. Those of us who
assisted, as I trust we all did, with the proper
dispositions at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass which
was

was offered here to-day have derived untold blessings therefrom; if we have listened with care and attention to the eloquent discourses delivered by the clergy, and if we firmly resolve to practise the good counsels given us, we shall thereby make this day a day of graces and blessings for ourselves during the rest of our lives. To derive the greatest and most lasting good for ourselves from this day's Celebrations we should often call to mind the virtues which St. Columbkille most practised, and try to rule and guide our lives on the model of his. He had the virtues, but likewise many of the failings, of the Irish character. But such faults ~~as~~ ^{as} were in his nature he mastered and overcame by prayer and penance and strong trust in God. This is a great source of encouragement and strength to us, as, by the same means we can accomplish the same end. Let us, then, to-day earnestly set before ourselves to overcome our vices and try to practise, ^{as far as this is in our power,} those virtues for which St. Columbkille was most noted. The virtues which glowed the warmest and shone the brightest in the heart and soul of this great Saint were

- 1^o. Love of God, and zeal for God's honour and glory.
- 2^o. Love of Country.
- 3^o. Love of learning.
- 4^o. Temperance in all things.
- 5^o. Humility.
- 6^o. Diligency.

1. You know that St. Columbkille was descended from a line of kings on his mother's side as well as on his father's. His father was Felim, son of Fergus, son of Conall Gulban, son of Riall Mór. Through his mother, Ethnea, of the race of Cahis Mór, he was related to all

to all the reigning and noble families of the South of Ireland. He was also connected with the O'Connors of Connaught, as Niall Mor's brothers, Brian and Fiachra, were the progenitors of the Connaught Kings. Loarn Mor, who was the father of Columbkille's grandmother, ^{wife of Fergus,} ^A was an ancestor of the Chief Scotch families, so that the Saint could claim kinship with the latter also. Yet notwithstanding his royal lineage and the high rank and power of his kindred, you have heard how he gave up, through love of God, his title to kingship and authority, ~~and~~ ^{as the heir of kings,} ^A forsook all the comforts, honours, and privileges which ^{enjoyed,} ~~he could have~~ ~~possessed~~ ~~as the heir of kings,~~ ^A and, through his great and strong desire of increasing God's honour and glory, spent his life in setting up churches, schools, and monasteries, in teaching and converting ^{the} ^A half-savage tribes ^{of Scotland,} ^A and in edifying all by his sanctity and mortification. Now, it is not given to everyone to be able to ~~set up~~ build churches and schools; but we have again in our midst, thank God, a second Columbkille who is nobly striving to follow in the footsteps of his great patron, and by helping him to the best of our ability in carrying out the works he has undertaken we can imitate, in a remote way, this first virtue of the great Columba. Moreover, by leading good Christian lives and setting a good example to all around us we can try in an humble way to imitate the Saint's zeal for God's glory.

2^o. You have been told how the Saint's heart, during his long exile in Iona, was ever full of longing and sorrow as he thought of the hills and glens, the lakes and streams, the headlands and harbours, the islands and strands of his own beloved Ireland; inasmuch that he declares in a Gaelic poem which he composed that if death should come upon him
suddenly

suddenly, the pang that would rend his heart would be the great love he had for Ireland and for her people. You are familiar with the touching story of the care and attention he gave the Irish stork which he found storm-tossed, weary, and weak on the strand. This story feelingly shows how his heart used to warm towards anything that reminded him of Ireland. Many of us have, like him, to spend the greater part of our lives in exile. The poor children of the Gael, unable to procure a means of living at home, must perforce seek it in countries far away. There is many a young person here who, through time, will, from choice or necessity, emigrate to foreign climes. And it is needless to exhort them, wherever they go, to cherish a kindly remembrance of the old country they have left. It is my belief that any one who leaves the green sod of Ireland to dwell among strangers can never forget the days of their youth in the land of their birth, as surely as the sun rises daily above them, so surely will thoughts of home come daily, nay hourly, to their minds. And this is as it should be. Even though it cause them ~~longing~~ yearning and regret let them ever keep green in their hearts a constant memory of the kindly, pleasant old people at home, of the young people with whom they played and went to school, of the rustic chapel to which they wended their way every Sunday and holiday morning, of the priest who expounded to them the word of God, of the time-honoured customs and innocent pastimes of their native place, and over and above and beyond ^{and before} all else of the parents who reared them so tenderly, loved them so dearly, and mourn their absence so sorely; and, keeping these things in mind, there is no fear of their ever going astray, or forgetting their faith, their duty, or their

own good name while sojourning in a strange land.

3^o. I have spoken of the Saints zeal in building schools and in teaching. It was also explained to you how he used to spend much of his time copying books; he went Everywhere seeking good books, and when he found one he thought nothing of sitting up night after night copying it; he thought a good book even worth fighting a great battle for. It was this whole-hearted devotion of St. Columbkille and of the other Saints of Ireland to learning that earned for our country its ancient proud title of "Island of Saint and Scholars". This love of learning descended to our forefathers through many generations; but at the present time I fear we are allowing it to die out among us. Like other peoples, we are getting to love £. s. d. more than books or learning. Our children are driven, while ~~yet~~ they should yet be under their parents' and teachers' care, to earn a petty wage among strangers. This should not be. They should get a good education; nowadays it is within the reach of all, and it is all the wealth you have to bestow on them. Ireland will never again be great or free as of yore till her people are educated first. Every boy and girl should be regularly kept at school till the age of 12 or 13 years at least. Keep them at school, put books in their hands, and see that they use them. You will never have cause to regret any little sacrifice you may make for the education of your families. Some people will say, "What use is much learning to them; they will never be anything but labourers anyhow; if they can read and write a letter, it is enough!" Do not be of this opinion. Many a clever intellect, ^{open,} ^{an} receptive and retentive brain among our young is allowed to grow up waste and barren through this false reasoning. Learning never goes to loss if accompanied,

as it

as it should be, by good conduct and sobriety. And talking of learning, do not neglect to give your children a knowledge of the dear old Gaelic tongue, in which St. Columbkille and hundreds of other Irish Saints, as well as bards, sages, and annalists spoke, prayed, sang, taught, and wrote. Surely the language that was good enough for them is too good for us. Great efforts are being made by various societies at home and in America to keep our native language alive. Learned men come from Germany, France, and other countries to Ireland to learn the proper pronunciation of Gaelic. But we who can have it without any trouble think nothing of it. When you see how much Gaelic is esteemed elsewhere, and the pains many people are taking to learn it, it should incite you to value it; teach your children their prayers and their Catechism in Gaelic; talk to them and make them reply to you in Gaelic; practice it daily and hourly; next to our faith, it is the most precious inheritance that has descended to us from our forefathers - a ^{national} heirloom to preserve and be proud of. The people who esteem Gaelic most are those who know most of other languages, because they see that none of them can stand comparison with "the timeful, powerful, sweet tongue, the strong, flowing speech, the ^{noble, high,} ~~high, noble,~~ ancient language of our own forefathers. Good luck, success, and blessings attend the Gaelic and its speakers, and God save Ireland."

H. In the Saint's life we read that he only used as much food in a week as a pauper would at one meal; he seldom tasted flesh meat; towards the end of his life his usual fare was herbs and nettles; and he never ~~tasted~~ ^{indulged} in spirituous drinks. We should imitate him at least in this latter respect. We have frequently heard, and we know without any telling, the manifold evils to soul and body that flow from drink