

## THE APOSTOLATE OF ST. PATRICK.

We take the following report of an address delivered on St. Patrick's Day by Cardinal Moran, from our contemporary the Sydney *Nation*.

His Eminence entered the pulpit, and gave the text of his discourse as follows:—

"Arise, arise, put on thy strength, O Zion, put on the garments of thy glory, O Jerusalem; loose the bonds from off thy neck, O captive daughter of Sion. How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, and that preacheth peace, of him that showeth forth good, that preacheth salvation, that saith to Sion, Thy God shall reign." (Isaiah, chap. 52). He said:—These words were addressed by the prophet of old to the children of Israel, who, though seated by the pleasant waters of Babylon, were weighed down with sorrow in the bondage of slavery. They would not intone the songs of their fathers, for they were in an alien land; but now the prophet summoned them to tune their harps and chant their glad-some anthems of rejoicing, for the day of their freedom was at hand. The same words were addressed by the Apostle to the faithful who were called from spiritual death to life in Imperial Rome, and from age to age they have never ceased to find an echo in holy Church as nation after nation was gathered into the saving fold of Christ. And what shall I say of the joyous anthems of thanksgiving and praise which were caught up by the choirs of angels, and were re-echoed through the wide-spreading plains of Ireland when her apostle, St. Patrick, landed upon her shores, and when, through his preaching, the light of the faith shone upon her green hills never more to set. Beautiful, indeed, was the message of this Apostle of salvation, this missionary of peace. And those anthems of thanksgiving shall never cease. At 10,000 altars the feast of St. Patrick is kept to-day with solemn pomp; the Church loves to proclaim his praise, the hearts of his children are thrilled with joy, and the nations whose lamp of faith was kindled at Erin's shrines are made partakers of their rejoicing. [The preacher, after sketching the eventful career of St. Patrick in Ireland, and pointing out the special fruits of his apostolate, thus proceeded]: The time was now come that he should rest from his labours. He was as Saul when the summons came to enter into his eternal reward. This was the first Church which he had founded in Ireland. It was now destined to be the place of his repose. St. Bridget was privileged to prepare the shroud to enshrine his remains. To her and her virgin companions he addressed sweet parting words on the glory of the blessed, and the joys of paradise. Bishops and priests, whom he had formed to virtue and led to the sanctuary, gathered round him for his last blessing. He exhorted them to peace, forbearance, and charity. At the hands of a loved disciple, St. Thaseak, he received the viaticum of eternal life, and praying a blessing upon the Irish Church, and again and again repeating the words which were so familiar to him during life, "Deo Gratias," "Thanks to Thee, O God, for all Thy wondrous mercies," he rested in peace. The whole clergy of Erin kept vigil around his hallowed remains for seven days; but what with the chant of the religious choirs and the fragrance of paradise, and the heavenly light that lit up the sanctuary, and the melody of the angels, the whole time seemed to them to be but one short hour. St. Patrick had gone to his reward, but his apostolate did not cease, and through his prayers the fruitfulness of heavenly blessings which he bestowed upon his spiritual children shall be their inheritance till the end of time. It is recorded in one of the lives of the Saint that in an ecstasy of prayer he asked of God a ninefold share of reward for the chosen people whom he had led to Christ. And this manifold reward was granted in the triple merit of their heroism of sanctity, the triple merit of their zeal in spreading the light of divine truth, and the triple merit awarded by the nations of Christendom for their unparalleled fortitude in enduring martyrdom for the faith. Thus the apostolate of St. Patrick was complete. It was complete in that he had gathered the whole nation of Ireland into the fold of Christ. It was complete in that during his lifetime, the convents and cloisters and sanctuaries were filled with chosen bands of the sons and daughters of Erin, and priests and bishops whom he had himself trained to piety ministered with devotedness among the people whom he loved. It was complete in the peaceful triumph achieved by Divine truth, for, though St. Patrick had himself to suffer a great deal at the hands of wicked men, yet the sword of persecution was not unsheathed against the Church, and the princes and chieftains and people alike embraced the faith. It was above all complete in the perfection of sanctity which adorned the Irish Church. From the chill spell of the winter of idolatry, Ireland had passed almost without a springtime into the summer glow of spiritual life, and the land which St. Patrick found immersed in the darkness of paganism was at the close of his apostolate an island of saints. Everywhere the profane altars of superstition were overthrown and the idols forsaken. Religion triumphed and the blessings of God filled the land. The people in crowds hastened to satiate their thirst at the fountains of mercy, the divine lessons of life and light were caught up with joy, the anthems of piety resounded through every smiling valley of Ireland, and those ornaments of virtue, temperance, charity and peace, each one of which, when distributed among the nations of Christendom, suffices for the privileged blessedness of a Christian people, were all blended and entwined to form the peerless aureola of Ireland's sanctity. One of the ancient Irish writers has described under poetic imagery, the marvellous conversion of the nation. The daughter of Lir—it is thus he designates the people of Erin—was held captive under Druidical spell for 400 years. Clothed in the snow-white plumage of the swan she moved silent and solitary over the waters of Lough Foyle. St. Patrick, arriving on the shores of the lake, erected his altar to offer the sacrifice of thanksgiving and praise. At the moment of the elevation, when the tinkling of the little bell was heard over the still waters, the spell of enchantment was broken, and the fair daughter of Lir arose once more in the full grace and bloom of youth, and arrayed in heavenly comeliness, and enlightened by divine faith, knelt for the Saint's blessings at the altar of God. Thus was the blessing of heaven set as a seal on the apostolate of St. Patrick. The hills, and valleys, and glens of Erin were lit up with the light of the Gospel

and the various tribes of the nation, with a heroism and fervour, and devotion, and gratitude never surpassed in the history of the Church, embraced the Catholic Faith, and were gathered into the one true fold. For 300 years after the advent of St. Patrick the lamp of faith burned brightly throughout the length and breadth of the land. Ireland was the joy of Christendom, an island of saints, a shrine of piety, a garden of the Christian virtues, a sanctuary of civilisation and learning. Happy was it for Europe that Divine Providence had thus prepared a home for religion in the hearts of the Irish race. Triumphant barbarism was very soon to trample down the pride of Imperial Rome, uprooting its civilisation and transforming its most favoured province into a desolate and barren wilderness. The Saxons will ravage Britain with fire and sword. The Franks will occupy the fruitful territories of Gaul, Atilla and his Huns shall plunder Italy. Goths, Allemanni, and Burgundians shall lay waste the other fairest districts of Christendom, till it may seem that Europe can never again rise from the fetters of barbarism, and that her sun of civilisation and learning has for ever set. It was then that the Island of Saints entered upon her mission as the burning and shining light of the Western world. Her Church in those days has been likened to the luminous beacon of some lofty lighthouse planted on a rock amid the foaming surge of the ocean and casting its light over the dark sea to guide the mariner in his course. Venerable Bede writes that the sons of the Anglo-Saxon Knights and Thanes proceeded in crowds to the Irish schools, to be trained in the paths of knowledge—human and divine. Others came from France and Switzerland, from Germany and Italy. Even from the remote monasteries of Egypt and the East men bent their pilgrim steps towards Erin to trim at her sanctuaries their lamp of faith, and to perfect themselves in the knowledge of divine truth and in the science of the saints. And from the schools and monasteries of Ireland innumerable missionaries fearlessly went forth on the arduous mission to renew the spent glories of civilisation, and to revive the Christian life of Europe. So many were these missionary bands that a French writer a thousand years ago cried out in astonishment, "All Ireland with her train of saints and sages is migrating to our shores." And what was the work in which the zealous missionaries were engaged? I will allow another eloquent Frenchman of our own day to answer: "It was to preach the gospel to unbelievers; to reanimate Christians crushed under barbarian invasions; to arouse to nobleness, degenerate souls; to raise up powerful races; to rekindle the extinguishing torch of arts and of letters; to carry everywhere the light of science and of faith." The missionary field of the saints and scholars of Erin in those days embraced almost the whole of Europe, from the Orkneys to the Thames—from the shores of the Channel to the sources of the Rhine and the banks of the Danube. They penetrated to the southernmost provinces of Italy; they bore the Gospel northwards, over stormy and icy seas, even to the Faroe Islands and the shores of Iceland. Austria honours St. Colman as her patron; St. Killian, with a chosen band of assistants, evangelised a great part of France, and penetrating thence into the heart of Thuringia, laid deep the foundations of the Holy Church, which he cemented with his blood. Need I name St. Columbanus and St. Gall, St. Cathaldus of Taranto, St. Donatus of Piesole, St. Romuald of Macolin, St. Virgilius the Apostle of Corinthia; St. Boniface, whom all Germany salutes as patron and apostle. When I was proceeding from Rome to Ireland a few months ago I turned aside from the direct road to visit the relics of St. Fridolin at Seckingen. He is still honoured there as chief patron. His memory is still cherished by his devoted children, and new honours are every day decreed to his name. Suffice it to say that more than 300 of the Irish missionaries of those days have received the honours of the altar—a well-deserved tribute to their heroic devotedness and self-sacrifice—from the grateful churches of Christendom. Nor was it a mere passing breath of sanctity that was thus wafted from the shrines of Ireland to the nations of the continent. The schools and monasteries and other institutions founded by those missionaries continued for centuries to reflect lustre on the fair name of Ireland as centres of enlightenment and bulwarks of morality and piety. Who is there that can pretend to enlightenment at the present day, and not feel grateful to the Irish Monastery of Bobbio, which jealously guarded the literary treasures of Greece and Rome in perilous times, and handed them down in safety to us? From that Irish Monastery went forth two of the greatest Pontiffs of the middle ages, Sylvester the Second and Hildebrand, who did so much to stimulate the practice of Christian virtue, and to revive the sacred and polite studies throughout Europe. The Monastery of St. Gall, on the shores of Lake Constance, was a pharos of light for all Germany. Luxeul and Fontaines were for centuries like fruitful vines, whose religious fruit gave joy to the dioceses and monasteries of France. Nearer to their parent home, need I recall the island sanctuaries of Iona and Lindisfarne. A classic writer in England has in fond admiration linked together the names of Iona and Marathon; but how far more glorious and beneficent than the battlefields of worldly strife were the achievements of the saintly armies of the Celtic monastery, whose long roll of heroes and victories is inscribed in the imperishable pages of the Book of Life. Lindisfarne, the Holy Island of North Britain, vied with Iona in the fruitfulness of sanctity. Its missionaries evangelised the whole territory from the Humber to the Thames, and continued for twelve generations to lead innumerable souls to Christ. When the tide of ruin swept over Christendom in the fifth and sixth centuries, many names of invading tribes and peoples were heard for the first time in Europe, and they were the symbol of everything that was rude and barbarous. All that has been changed. Those same tribes and peoples have for more than a thousand years been the synonym for Christian enlightenment and chivalry. Whence came this marvellous change? The world is indebted for it to the Irish Missionaries and saints who bore with them to the continent the blessing and the fruitful zeal of their own apostle; and who can wonder if to-day these regenerated nations of Christendom rejoice whilst offering their tributes of gratitude and praise to the Island of Saints and to St. Patrick from whose bright sanctuaries were reflected upon them of old the quickening rays of civilisation and Christian virtue. There was a wreath yet