

wise to turn back, and avoid the humiliation of the sure defeat that would await them in a country where the very women understood the languages of Greece and Rome. Without vouching for the accuracy of the story about the "learned women of Maungtūt," it is certain that Latin was almost universally understood and spoken. Naturally the Vulgate which the early saints had brought from Rome was prized and copied and read. The words of Jerome may be applied to the monks of Erin, "Sleep often found them with the book in their hand, and the sacred page received their head as it dropped in sleep." The historian of literature must give a distinguished place in the matter of transcribing the Bible to Irish monks at home and abroad. As venerable Bede observes, they taught the Anglo-Saxon the art of illuminating the Sacred Volume. The manuscript treasures in European libraries bear eloquent witness to their literary labours in Germany, France, and Italy. Indeed for the circulation of the Scriptures, in mediæval times Europe was largely indebted to the many "choice scribes" from Erin. In the Imperial library of Vienna there is a codex containing the epistles of St Paul, written by Marianus Scotus, the scribe and commentator. In his retreat at Batisbonne, with the assistance given by two companions who prepared the parchment, Marianus made copies of portions of the Bible, and, indeed, of the complete Scriptures. These, though exceedingly valuable, were distributed gratuitously to the clergy or given to the needy. To copy the Word of God was looked upon as a vocation, and a heaven blessed work. In every monastery of Irish monks one room, called the scriptorium, was set apart for the "scribes." Here graphia and calami (pens and styles) cornicula atramenti (ink horns) and a supply of tabulæ (tablets) were always to be found. Independently of the desire to spread the Gospels a number of copies were required for the brethren, who had to learn the Psalter by heart and, besides the daily public reading, to study the scriptures in private. It was a principle with the monks "not to let a single hour pass in which they should not be engaged either in prayer, or reading, or writing, or some other useful work." To be a "choice scribe" was a most honourable distinction. Marianus Scotus was a "choice scribe," one "whose pen was swift, handwriting clear and beautiful, and labour incessant." Such a one also was Baithen, first cousin of Columba, and his successor as Abbot of Iona, who once hurriedly copied the Gospels, and yet only made a trivial mistake by omission of the letter i. St Baithen, compared by St Columba to St John the Evangelist in his innocence of heart, is said to have had no equal on that side of the Alps in his knowledge of Sacred Scripture. The MSS. which have been discovered cause learned men to wonder how the copies could have been so rapidly and skilfully made. Fortunately many have escaped the ravages of time. "You are shown," says a writer in *Chambers' Edinburgh Journal*, January, 1847, "in museums in Ireland, books of vellum in the ancient Irish character, bound in gold and silver, and ornamented with precious stones, which are said to be worth at the present day thousands of pounds. In the collection in the Royal Irish Academy, I was shown a copy of the Gospels which had belonged to Saint Patrick—an almost coal black little vellum book that could not be a day less than 1400 years old, also a similar antique copy of the Psalms of David, which had been the property of the pious St Columba, who went as an apostle to Scotland about the year 563. The eventful history of these literary relics was, of course, duly verified." The history of the Psalter of Columba is indeed "eventful." For many hundred years this MS., called the "cattach" or battler, had remained in the possession of the "O'Donnell's." The old tradition has it that if borne on the breast of a priest free from mortal sin three times round the O'Donnell clan, victory would be theirs. At present it is in a casket (cuidach) in the strong room of the Royal Irish Academy. It was furtively copied by St Columba from a copy of the "Galle Psalter," which his master, S. Finnian of Movilla, or Maghville, on the Strangford Lough, had brought from Rome. The visitor may inspect what remains of this copy of psalms from the Vulgate of St Jerome. The MS. contains from the 31st to the 106th psalms. Columba, whom the books of Durrow and Kells prove to have been a "choice scribe," worked secretly at his copy. Finnian discovered this when the MS. was just finished, and claimed the copy. An appeal to the King at Tara resulted in the decision that the "calf went with the cow, and the son-book, or copy went with the mother-book, or original." The friends of Columba—and these were legion and powerful—were incensed at this unjust decision. Their anger increased when Curnan, who had accidentally killed the son of the king's steward in a hurling match, was dragged from the feet of Columba and put to death. Individual members of the Clanna Naí had their own wrongs to avenge. The northmen flew to arms, and at the battle of Cul-Dreimhne (County Sligo) routed the forces of King Diarmait and killed three thousand of his men. According to an old tradition Columba was penanced by S. Moise of Iona Murray for whatever part he took in the war. To leave Erin, and never look upon his loved island again, was the command of his confessor. Columba obeyed. Erin's loss was Alba's gain. Iona was founded and now Scotland joins Ireland in revering the memory of the apostle of the North. In the library of Trinity College, Dublin, are two MSS.

the work of Columba in the sixth century. The famous "Book of Durrow" contains the Four Gospels in his own hand. The great work of the "Dove of the Cell" was the "Book of Kells" or "Great Gospel of Columba." Professor Westwood calls this precious volume, to be seen by the visitor to Dublin, "unquestionably the most elaborately executed MS. of an early date now in existence, far excelling in the gigantic size of the letters at the beginning of each Gospel, the excessive minuteness of the ornamental details crowded into whole pages, the number of its very peculiar decorations, the fineness of its writing, and the endless variety of its initial capitals, the famous Gospels of Lindisfarne in the Cottonian Library." The monks of Lindisfarne were Irish monks. Of course Gaelic translations were made, and their discovery will no doubt reward the German and French savants who now make such a laudable study of Gaelic literature. Omitting the Protestant Celtic version by Archbishop Daniel of Tuam (N.T.) and Bishop Bedell of Kilmore (O.T.), a Catholic MS. was found some years ago embedded in a wall in the old Cathedral of Armagh. It is a New Testament. Experts judge from entries and other evidence that it was the work of Richard FitzRalph, Primate of Armagh, and that it was executed about the year 1347. From the days of the missionaries sent by Erin through Europe, to our own time when the children of Patrick nobly fulfil, over the globe, their great religious mission, the Irish race have realised the idea of Saint Augustine that "the Scriptures are Letters sent to us from Heaven."

CONFIRMATION SERVICE AT PAEROA.

(Okinemuri Gazette, February 18.)

LAST Sunday Bishop Luck held Confirmation service at the Catholic church, Paeroa. There was a large number of candidates of both sexes, and the church was crowded on the occasion. On entering the church, Bishop Luck was presented with the following address, which was read by Mr T. Lawless on behalf of the Catholic residents of the district:—

To his Lordship, John Edmund Luck, O.S.B., Bishop of Auckland.

May it please your Lordship,—We the undersigned members of the Committee, on behalf the Catholics of the Okinemuri district, desire on this, the pastoral visit amongst us, to accord to you a most earnest and heartfelt welcome. We desire to more emphasize our appreciation of this visit on account of the present unsatisfactory state of your Lordship's health, and of the fact that the demands on your time must lead us to expect but occasional visits in this portion of your diocese. It is a source of sincere regret to us to learn of your Lordship's recent indisposition, and we your dutiful children, unite in praying that God the great Ruler and Governor of all, may soon restore to you your wonted health and energy and that you may long be spared to administer to our spiritual wants with that zeal, devotion, and ability which we all so fully recognise, and which for the past eleven years have added lustre to the religion we profess. In conclusion, we desire to avail ourselves of this opportunity of expressing our gratification at the energy and earnestness displayed by our beloved pastor, Father Hackett, during his brief administration of this parish. We beg to subscribe ourselves your Lordship's most dutiful children. (Here follow the signatures.)

After the conclusion of the address, the Bishop, accompanied by Father Hackett and acolytes, proceeded to the throne erected within the sanctuary, and there delivered his address in reply. He congratulated the people on the era of prosperity in which the Okinemuri district had entered owing to the development of the gold-mining industry, which was daily yielding such splendid returns. He hoped they would not be unmindful of their spiritual interests, but ever keep before their minds the great work of salvation. Having thanked them for their kind address and the good wishes conveyed to him therein, the Bishop assumed his place on the throne, and Mass was celebrated by Father Hackett. The singing of the boys and girls attending the Sunday school was a special feature during the service; Miss Lawless presided at the organ with her well known ability.

After the Mass the Bishop, vested in the robes of this office, proceeded with the Confirmation service. The boys wearing red badges, and the girls dressed in white, wearing wreaths and veils, advanced in procession and knelt within the sanctuary, where they were confirmed, and afterwards addressed by the Bishop on the duties which were imposed on them that day. They were to contend like soldiers of Christ against "the world, the flesh, and the devil." Mr Lawless and Miss Lawless acted as sponsors for those confirmed.

In the evening, at 7 o'clock, there was a very large congregation present, when Father Hackett preached on the "Eternal fate of the soul." The Benediction was then given. The musical portion of the evening service, was taken by the large choir, and an offertory piece, "He wipes the tear from every eye," was well rendered by Mr Stackpole.

Mr Justin Huntley McCarthy (*nee* Miss Daisy Loftus), who has been a member of Mr Augustin Daly's company in America, has had a difference with the manager, and is leaving the dramatic stage to return to the "variety" stage.

W GIMBLET, Nurseryman, Florist, and Fruit Grower, 140 Colombo St, Christchurch.—A grand collection of Bubs for flowering in the Spring. This is the Season for Planting. The new Japan Plum Trees in 12 varieties, from 2s 6d each. Also, a new strain of Californian Peach Trees. Call for a Catalogue.