

ST. PATRICK: HIS LIFE AND TEACHING

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St. Patrick: his life and teaching by E. J. Newell

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E. J. NEWELL

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LIFE AND TEACHING**

PREFACE.

THIS little book is an attempt to supply what has long been an evident want, by furnishing a cheap and accurate sketch of the life and teaching of Britain's first missionary and Ireland's great Apostle. The life of a saint, if wisely studied, will foster saintliness; the life of a hero will lead to heroism. St. Patrick was both saint and hero, and yet was beset by infirmities and sins, like the weakest. But he overcame, and his victory may encourage others.

I have consulted modern authorities, and have illustrated the customs of St. Patrick's age and church from all sources at my command, but have based my narrative of his life and conception of his character upon his own writings and upon ancient records. Thanks to recent criticism and research, it is now possible to distinguish among early documents between the false lives and the true: between the legendary impostor who has been dignified by Patrick's name, and the historic Patrick, the saintly Apostle of Ireland. Two great scholars especially have rendered invaluable service to seekers after the truth—the late Rev. Dr. Todd in his "St. Patrick, Apostle of Ireland," and Dr. Whitley Stokes, who, in his edition of "The Tripartite Life of Patrick, with other Docu-

ments relating to that Saint," has fully demonstrated the Tripartite Life to be a comparatively late composition, and has exhaustively treated the whole subject in a manner which places all subsequent students of St. Patrick's life under the deepest obligations of gratitude and respect. I have made use of both these works, as also of the valuable edition of St. Patrick's writings in "Councils and Ecclesiastical Documents relating to Great Britain and Ireland," edited by the late Rev. A. W. Haddan and the present Bishop of Oxford, and of many other authorities to which references are given in my foot-notes.

There are many details of St. Patrick's life which are still matter of discussion, and it would be unwise and scarcely possible absolutely to ignore this fact in any biography. I have not attempted the impossible, but have aimed rather at making discussion interesting where it is inevitable, and have in such cases taken my readers into my confidence, declaring what I believe to be the truth, and indicating by notes or in the text the grounds of my belief. The character of St. Patrick's teaching and of St. Patrick's church is an integral part of the history of his labours; and in treating thereof I have felt it incumbent upon me to show the difference between the legendary and the historic Patrick, and the necessity of discriminating between them.

I hope that this book may give help to some, and lead to a fuller knowledge of the life of a saint who is well known, indeed, by name, but whose marvellous personality is not so generally appreciated as it deserves to be. At a time like the present, when Celtic problems are prominent, if not predominant,

the study of the history of the Celtic Saint who, by his self-devotion changed the beliefs of the Irish people, and for ever won their love, may have a certain opportuneness. Mr. Ruskin, in a letter on the Choice of Books, has said :—" There are many saints whom it is much more desirable to know the history of [than St. Augustine]—St. Patrick to begin with—especially in present times."

E. J. NEWELL.

July, 1890.

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CHAPTER I.

BIRTH AND BOYHOOD.

THE saintly life should frequently be the subject of study, as it presents an example which reflects in a measure the ideal life of the Divine Son of Man, of which it is an Imitation. All Christians are "called to be saints," but there are various types of the saintly character. Some are called to pursue "the trivial round, the common task," and to find in the quiet, unselfish fulfilment of small duties, even in the sweeping of a room, "as for His laws" and "for His sake," the blessing of their holy calling; others have to prove that "even in a palace life can be lived well." Some again find their vocation in the patient endurance of sickness, or of ill-success and contumely; others suffer the keener trial of worldly honour and prosperity, and hide the sackcloth of penitence beneath the brave garments of noble rank. Some are called to a life of ascetic rigour; there are others,

"Whose sweet subdual of the world
The worldling scarce can recognise."