

Friends at Court.

GLEANINGS FOR NEXT WEEK'S CALENDAR.

(Written for the N.Z. TABLET.)

February 11, Sunday.—Septuagesima Sunday.
 " 12, Monday.—St. Telesphorus, Pope and Martyr.
 " 13, Tuesday.—Prayer of Our Lord in the Garden.
 " 14, Wednesday.—St. Agathonis, Pope and Confessor.
 " 15, Thursday.—St. Martina, Virgin and Martyr.
 " 16, Friday.—St. Gregory X., Pope and Confessor.
 " 17, Saturday.—St. Fintan, Abbot.

ST. FINTAN, ABBOT.

The distinguished Abbot Fintan, surnamed Munnu, was one of the family of Niall, and son of Failchan and Feidelmia, natives of the north of Ireland. The date of his birth is not given, but it appears that at an early age he was placed at the school of Bangor, under St. Comgall, and that afterwards he studied at the school of Kilmore-Deathrib which Columbkil is supposed to have governed for some time before his departure from Ireland. His chief instructor appears to have been Sinell, son of Moynacur, with whom he remained eighteen years, perfecting himself in learning and religious observances. He also spent some time at a place now called Kilfinnan, in the county Limerick; thence he went to a place called Coonah, in the same county. Between these places Fintan passed his early years—a model of good conduct and piety.

The reputation and sanctity of the monks of Iona, under Columbkil, had made such an impression on him, that he resolved to join their community, in order to lead a life of greater sanctity in the quiet retirement of their monastery.

In order to carry out his good intentions he set out for Iona. St. Columbkil had died a few days before his arrival, and was succeeded by Baithen. To him, therefore, Fintan applied to be received into his community. Baithen questioned him as to his family, studies, conduct, and the like. Fintan modestly answered him, and humbly requested to be admitted as a monk. Baithen having heard his story, replied; 'I thank God that you are come to this place; but this you must know, that you cannot be a monk of ours.' Fintan, much afflicted at this refusal, asked, 'Is it that I am unworthy of being one?' 'No,' answered Baithen, 'but, although I should be very glad to keep you with me, I must obey the orders of my predecessor Columba, who, before he died, said to me, in the spirit of prophecy: 'Baithen, remember these words of mine, immediately after my departure from this life, a brother, who is now regulating his youth by good conduct and who is well versed in sacred studies, named Fintan, of the race of Mocu-Moi, and son of Failchan, will come to you from Ireland, and will supplicate to be reckoned among the monks. But it is predetermined by God that he is to be an abbot, presiding over monks, and a guide of souls. Do not, therefore, let him stay in these islands of ours, but direct him to return in peace to Ireland, that he may there establish a monastery, in a part of Leinster not far from the sea, and labour for the good of souls.' The pious young man shed tears when he heard this, and returned thanks to God, and said that he would follow these directions. Colgan states that before he went to Leinster, in accordance with the injunction of Columbkil, he spent five years at a monastery he established at a place called Teachelle, in the district of Heli (Ely O'Carroll), in Munster, and that he subsequently founded a monastery at a place named after him, Teach-Munnu (the house of Munnu), now Thagmon, in the County of Wexford. He wrote a work in favour of the Irish custom of observing the Easter festival, which led to a warm controversy between himself and St. Lasarian, Bishop of Leighlin, which is thus related in his life: 'On a certain time there was a great council of people of Ireland held in the White-field (Synod of Leighlin), between whom there arose a controversy concerning the order of celebrating Easter; for Lasarian, Abbot of Leighlin, who presided over 1,500 monks, defended the new order, which was then lately sent from Rome, while others adhered to the old form. But St. Munnu (Fintan) did not immediately appear at this council, though everyone waited for him. He stood by the older order. He came to the council the same day before evening. Then St. Munnu said to the Abbot Lasarian, in the presence of all the people: "It is now time to break up this Council that every man may depart to his own place. In our contention concerning the time for celebrating Easter, let us dispute briefly, but let us give judgment in the name of the Lord. You have three options given you, O Lasarian; let two monks, one of the older order and one of the new, be cast into a fire, and let us see which of them shall escape from the flames; or let two monks, one of yours, another of mine, be shut up in a house, and let the house be set on fire and we shall see which of them shall escape unhurt; or let us both go to the sepulchre of a dead monk and raise him to life, and he will show us which order we ought to observe in the celebration of Easter." To which Lasarian answered: "We will not proceed to judgment with you, because we know that if you commanded the Mountain of Marge to be changed into the White-field, and the White-field to be removed to the place where the mountain stands, that, on account of your infinite labours and great sanctity, God would immediately do this for your sake."'

From this it would appear that St. Fintan was revered by his brethren for his great sanctity and miraculous power. It seems that he also soon after saw his error in the observance of the Easter festival according to the manner of the Irish Church, and adopted that of Rome.

St. Fintan was far advanced in years when he died, at his own monastery, on the 21st of October, 635, leaving after him a distinguished reputation for sanctity and perfection in piety and godliness.

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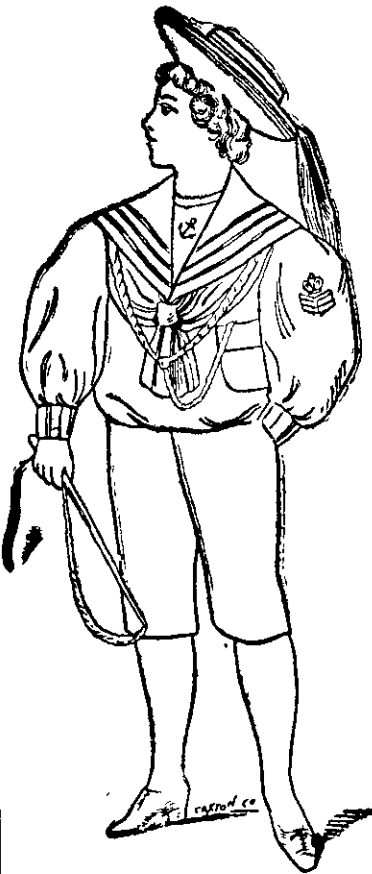
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