

CHAPTER II
Missionaries of Christianity and Culture
SCOTLAND AND ENGLAND

THE conversion of the Irish people to Christianity by St. Patrick in the latter part of the first half of the fifth century was so opportune in the effect produced by it upon the rest of the civilized world within a comparatively short time, as to be considered quite literally providential by a great many people who know the times well and have a right to an opinion with regard to the sequence of events. During this and the immediately subsequent centuries the Roman Empire was broken up by the hordes of barbarians who had come down from the North and a period of intense decadence of interest in the intellectual and spiritual life ensued. The barbarians, as always when brought in contact with a superior civilization, took first the vices of their betters, while it required a long period for them to acquire the virtues of civilization. The decaying Roman Empire had only too few virtues for the invaders to take at best. For several centuries before this there had been a gradual but very sure deterioration of interest in the things of the mind. With the fall of the Empire under Augustulus in 476 political chaos supervened and with that a climax of barbaric descent in humanitarianism of