

ST. MUREDACH,

FIRST BISHOP OF KILLALA, IN IRELAND.

ST. PATRICK, in his progress through Connaught, coming to a pleasant place where the river Moy empties itself into the ocean, built on the south banks a noble church called Kill-Aladh, of which he made Muredach, one of his disciples, bishop, about the year 440. It is situated in the county of Mayo. The bishops of this see have been sometimes called bishops of Tiramalgaid, now corrupted into the barony of Tirawly; sometimes of O'Fiacra-Mui—i. e., O'Fiacra, on the river Moy, a small territory; but since the twelfth century, of Killala, from Kill-Aladh. The festival of St. Muredach is observed on the 12th of August. See Ware, t. 1. p. 649.

AUGUST XIII.

SAINT HIPPOLYTUS, M.

From Prudent. hymn. 11. De Cor. ed. a P. Chamillard, in usum Delphini, p. 278.

A. D. 252.

ONE of the most illustrious martyrs who suffered in the reign of Gallus* was St. Hippolytus, one of the twenty-five priests of Rome, who had the misfortune for some time to have been de-

* Decius raised the seventh general persecution against the church, which he carried on with the utmost cruelty during his whole reign, though this did not much exceed two years; for presuming to rage against God, says Lactantius, (l. de Mort. Pers. n. 4.) he was immediately thrown down. Having marched against the Carpi, a Scythian nation, who had possessed themselves of Dacia and Moesia, in Thrace, he was surrounded by the barbarians and a great part of his army was cut off; his eldest son was killed in the battle: Decius himself, in his flight, sunk in a morass, together with his horse, and there perished. His body could never be found, and he was deprived of the honour of a funeral. His death, which happened on the 27th of October, 251, restored peace to the church for a short time. Gallus, then his general on the Tanais, to whose treachery his misfortune is ascribed, succeeded him in the empire, and created his son Volusianus, Cæsar. Hostilius, the second son of Decius, was acknowledged his colleague in the throne, but soon died, whether by a natural distemper or through some contrivance of Gallus, is uncertain. The new emperor having purchased an ignominious peace of the Scythians, by subjecting the empire to an annual tribute, and

ceived by the hypocrisy of Novation and Novatus, and to have been engaged in their schism; but this fault he expiated by his public repentance, and a glorious martyrdom. He was apprehended, and interrogated on the rack in Rome; but the prefect of the city having filled it with Christian blood, went to Ostia to extend the persecution in those parts of the country, and ordered our saint and several other Christians who were then in prison at Rome, to be conducted thither after him. St. Hippolytus being brought out of prison, many of those who had been under his care, came to beg his last advice and blessing, as he was going to martyrdom; and he vehemently exhorted them to preserve the unity of the church. "Fly," said he, "from the unhappy Novatus, and return to the Catholic church. Adhere to the only faith which subsists from the beginning, which was preached by Paul, and is maintained by the chair of Peter. I now see things in a different light, and repent of what I once taught." After he had thus undeceived his flock, and earnestly recommended to all the unity of holy faith, he was conducted to Ostia. The prefect, who was gone before the prisoners the same day, as soon as they arrived, ascended his tribunal, surrounded with his executioners, and various instruments of torture. The confessors were ranged in several companies before him, and by their emaciated faces, the length of their hair, and the filth with which they were covered, showed how much they had suffered by their long imprisonment. The

yielding up a considerable territory to them, instead of taking warning from the chastisement of Decius, soon renewed the persecution. The great plague which began in 250, and ravaged several provinces of the empire during ten years, was a pretence made use of for spilling the blood of the Christians. Gallus commanded sacrifices everywhere to be made to Apollo for averting that scourge. This gave occasion to the reviving of the persecution, which, as even Dodwell confesses, was hotter and more bloody than it had been under Decius, and continued till Gallus and Volusianus, in the year 254, the third of their reign, were slain at Interamne, now called Terni; where Æmilianus (who having quelled the Goths in Thrace, had been proclaimed emperor by his army) gave them battle; but three months after, Æmilianus being slain by his own soldiers near Spoleto, Valerian, who commanded the army in Gaul, got possession of the throne, and for some time gave peace to the church. The reign of Gallus was remarkable for nothing but the blood of many martyrs, and a continual train of misfortunes, especially the great pestilence. See Eus. l. 7, c. 1, and in Chron. ad an. 253; Orosius, l. 7; St. Cyprian, &c.

judge, finding that he was not able to prevail with any of them by torments, at length condemned them all to be put to death. Some he caused to be beheaded, others to be crucified, others burnt, and some to be put out to sea in rotten vessels, which immediately foundered. When the venerable old man, Hippolytus, was in his turn brought to him loaded with chains, a crowd of young people cried out to the judge, that he was a chief among the Christians, and ought to be put to death by some new and remarkable kind of punishment. "What is his name?" said the prefect. They answered: "Hippolytus." The prefect said: "Then let him be treated like Hippolytus, and dragged by wild horses." By this sentence he alluded to Hippolytus, the son of Theseus, who, flying from the indignation of his father, met a monster, the sight of which affrighted his horses, so that he fell from his chariot, and, being entangled in the harness, was dragged along, and torn to pieces.(1) No sooner was the order given but the people set themselves to work in assisting the executioners. Out of the country, where untamed horses were kept, they took a pair of the most furious and unruly they could meet with, and tied a long rope between them instead of a poll, to which they fastened the martyr's feet. Then they provoked the horses to run away by loud cries; whipping and pricking them. The last words which the martyr was heard to say as they started, were: "Lord, they tear my body, receive thou my soul." The horses dragged him away furiously into the woods, through brooks, and over ditches, briers, and rocks: they beat down the hedges, and broke through every thing that came in their way. The ground, the thorns, trees, and stones, were sprinkled with his blood, which the faithful that followed him at a distance weeping, respectfully sucked up from every place with sponges, and they gathered together all the mangled parts of his flesh and limbs, which lay scattered all about. They brought these precious relics to Rome, and buried them in the subterraneous caverns called catacombs, which Prudentius* here describes at large. He says

(1) Ovid. *Metam.* l. 15, fab. 14.

* *Hym. de Cor. hymn.* 20, (alias 4,) de S. Hippol. v. 154. The catacombs here described by Prudentius are those in which St. Hippolytus

that the sacred remains of St. Hippolytus were deposited in this place near an altar, at which the faithful were fed with the heavenly banquet, and the divine sacraments, and obtained the speedy effect of their requests to God. He testifies, that as often as he had prayed there when he was at Rome, for the remedy of his infirmities, whether of body or mind, he had always found the desired relief; but professes that he was indebted to Christ for all favours received, because he gave to his martyr Hippolytus the power to obtain for him the divine succour. He adds, that the chapel which contained these sacred relics shone within with solid silver with which the walls were incrustated, and on the outside with the brightest marble like looking-glass, which covered the walls, the whole being ornamented with abundance of gold. He says, that from the rising to the setting of the sun, not only the inhabitants of Rome, but many from remote countries, resorted in great numbers to this holy place, to pay adoration to God; and that especially on the martyr's festival, on the Ides or 13th of August, both senators and people came thither to implore the divine mercy, and kiss the shrine which contained the relics. He moreover describes a sumptuous great church which was built in honour of the martyr near his tomb, and which was thronged with multitudes of devout Christians. He mentions⁽¹⁾ the effigies of the saint's martyrdom skilfully drawn over his tomb.*

It is the reflection of St. Austin,⁽²⁾ that if, with the martyr, we seriously considered the rewards that await us, we should account all trouble and pains in this life as nothing; and should be astonished that the divine bounty gives so great a

(1) Ovid. *Metam.* l. 15, fab. 14, v. 123. (2) S. Aug. *Enar.* in Ps. 93, p. 224.

was interred, in the Veran field, near the road to Tibur. The other most famous among those near Rome, are the catacombs of St. Agnes, St. Sebastian, and St. Pancras. See Aringhi, l. 3, c. 12.

* The curious ancient subterraneous chapel at Royston, in Hertfordshire, upon the edge of Cambridgeshire, still standing, founded for hermits, was dedicated in honour of St. Laurence and St. Hippolytus, and the high altar, under the patronage of St. Catharine of Alexandria, whose images with those of many other saints are still seen carved in the rock walls. Stukeley imagines this chapel, with the famous cross on the highway there, called Roheys-Cross, to have been founded by the lady Boisia, daughter of Alberic de Vere, earl of Oxford, and widow of Geoffrey de Magneville, earl of Essex, who died in 1148, in the reign of

salary for so little labour. To obtain eternal rest, should require, if it had been possible, eternal labour; to purchase a happiness without bounds, a man should be willing to suffer for a whole eternity. That indeed is impossible; but our trials might have been very long. What are a thousand years, or ten hundred thousand ages in comparison to eternity? There can be no proportion between what is finite and that which is infinite. Yet God in his great mercy does not bid us suffer so long. He says, not a million, or a thousand years, or even five hundred; but only labour the few years that you live; and in these the dew of my consolations shall not be wanting; and I will recompense your patience for all with a glory that has no end. Though we were to be loaded with miseries, pain, and grief our whole life, the thoughts of heaven alone ought to make us bear its sharpest trials with cheerfulness and joy.

ST. CASSIAN, M.

He was a Christian schoolmaster, and taught children to read and write, at Imola,* a city twenty-seven miles from Ravenna in Italy. A violent persecution being raised against the church,

Henry II. She was certainly after her second marriage to Pain de Beauchamp the foundress of the nunnery of Chikessand of Gilbertins in Bedfordshire, to which she afterwards retired, and in which she died and was buried, as Leland testifies. See Stukeley's *Origines Roystoniane* in the first part of his *Palaographia Britannica*, Lond. 1742; but Parkin, rector of Oxburgh, in Norfolk, in his answer to this work, printed an. 1744, shows this chapel to have been much older, founded by the Saxons; and thinks it and the cross on the meeting of the Roman roads Ermin-street, and Ikening-way, so called from Royes, probably a Saxon or British saint; for near High-cross in Hertfordshire was a nunnery called Roheyney, or Roheenia.

St. Hippolytus was honoured in the neighbourhood of Royston with so great devotion, that a few miles off, a town was called from him Hippolytes, and by corruption now Eppallets or Pallets. The church of this town was dedicated under the invocation of St. Hippolytus; and in it horses were blessed at the high altar with an incredible concourse, this saint being honoured as patron of horsemen. See Sir Henry Chancey's *Hist. of Hertfordshire*, p. 398.

N. B. The church honours several illustrious saints of the name Hippolytus, a Greek word, signifying a *conductor of horses*. St. Hippolytus, priest and martyr, honoured on this day, is supposed by many authors to be the same with the soldier of that name who guarded St. Laurence, was baptized by him in prison, and afterwards was drawn by wild horses; but others affirm that they were different persons.

* Imola was anciently called Forum Corneli from its founder Cornelius Sylla.