

and his people. "Your words and offers," replied the king, "are fair; but they are new to me, and, as yet, unproved; I cannot abandon at once the faith of my Anglian ancestors." But the missionaries were entertained with courteous hospitality. Their severely monastic lives, their constant prayers, fastings, and vigils, with their confident demeanor, impressed more and more favorably the barbaric mind. Rumor attributed to them many miracles. Before long the king of Kent was an avowed convert; his example was followed by many of his noblest subjects. No compulsion was used, but it was manifest that the royal favor inclined to those who received the royal faith.

The British Church, secluded in the fastnesses of Wales, could not but hear of the arrival of the Roman missionaries, and of their success in the conversion of the Saxons. Augustine and his followers could not but inquire with deep interest concerning their Christian brethren in the remote parts of the island. It was natural that they should enter into communication; unhappily they met to dispute on points of difference, not to join in harmonious fellowship on the broad grounds of their common Christianity. The British Church followed the Greek usage in the celebration of Easter; they had some other points of ceremonial, which, with their descent, they traced to the East; and the zealous missionaries of Gregory could not comprehend the uncharitable inactivity of the British Christians, which had withheld the blessings of the Gospel from their pagan conquerors. The Roman and the British clergy met, it is said, in solemn synod. The Romans demanded submission to their discipline, and the implicit adoption of the western ceremonial on the contested points. The British bishops demurred; Augustine proposed to place the issue of the dispute on the decision of a miracle. The miracle was duly performed—a blind man brought forward and restored to sight. But the miracle made not the slightest impression on the obdurate Britons. They demanded

a second meeting and resolved to put the Christianity of the strangers to a singular test, a moral proof with them more convincing than an apparent miracle. True Christianity, they said, "is meek and lowly of heart. Such will be this man (Augustine), if he be a man of God. If he be haughty and ungentle he is not of God, and we may disregard his words. Let the Romans arrive first at the synod. If on our approach he rises from his seat to receive us with meekness and humility, he is the servant of Christ, and we will obey him. If he despises us and remains seated, let us despise him." Augustine sat, as they drew near, in unbending dignity. The Britons at once refused obedience to his commands, and disclaimed him as their metropolitan. The indignant Augustine (to prove his more genuine Christianity) burst out into stern denunciations of their guilt in not having preached the Gospel to their enemies. He prophesied—a prophecy which could hardly fail to hasten its own fulfillment—the divine vengeance by the arms of the Saxons. So complete was the alienation, so entirely did the Anglo-Saxon clergy espouse the fierce animosities of the Anglo-Saxons, and even imbitter them by their theologic hatred, that the gentle Beda relates with triumph, as a manifest proof of the divine wrath against the refractory Britons, a great victory over that wicked race, preceded by a massacre of twelve hundred British clergy, chiefly monks of Bangor, who stood aloof on an eminence praying for the success of their countrymen.