Irish Druids And Old Irish Religions

James Bonwick

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IRISH DRUIDS

AND

OLD IRISH RELIGIONS

BY

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PREFACE.

IRELAND, whether viewed from an antiquarian or an ethnological point of view, is one of the most interesting countries in the world. It is not the less an object of attention from the fact, that in its early history there are traces of nearly every kind of pagan belief.

It is curious that its literary treasures should have been so long neglected. Of late years, thanks to literary and scientific societies, including the new association fostered by Sir C. Gavan Duffy, Irish MSS. have engaged much thoughtful investigation.

The author of this work, conscious of the importance of inquiry into ancient faiths, has collected such information upon Irish religions as a lengthened course of general reading has thrown in his way, since it may benefit those who have less leisure or opportunity for research. He is content to state various views, presented in quotations from writers, rather than to put forth any special conjectures of his own. Examinations of old myths and folklore will often throw light upon current notions of nationalities.

This sketch of the ancient Irish mind might help to confirm the conviction that Religion, in the sense of a reverence for something beyond the individual, has been

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ever associated with human nature. Anything, however apparently absurd to some of us, that tends to restrain vice, and exalt virtue, is not to be despised in the development of our race. The heathen Irish had a worshipful spirit. As to their morals, they certainly honoured woman more than did the favoured Jews or accomplished Greeks.

The Druids, forming one subject of this publication, are still an enigma to us. They were, doubtless, neither so grandly wise, nor so low in reputation, as represented by tradition. Their ethical lessons must have assuredly prepared the way for Christian missions.

However open to criticism in literary merit, the book claims some kindly consideration, as coming from one who, in his seventy-seventh year, retains a confiding hope in the march of human intellect, and the growth of human brotherhood.

JAMES BONWICK.

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IRISH DRUIDS.

WHO were the Druids?

This question has agitated the minds of the learned for a long period; and various, as well as contradictory, have been the replies. Tradition preserves their memory as of a pious and superior race, prominently associated with the British Isles and France, and, in a lesser degree, with Belgium, Holland, Germany, and the lands of Scandinavia.

Much romance has been long attached to them. We hear their chants in the Stone Circles. We listen to the heaven-inspired utterances of the Archdruid, as he stands on the capstone of a cromlech, in the eye of the sun, surrounded by the white-robed throng, with the bowed worshippers afar. We see the golden sickle reverently cutting off the sacred mistletoe. We follow, in imagination, the solemn procession, headed by the cross-bearer. We look under the old oak at the aged Druid, instructing disciples in mystic lore, in verses never to be committed to writing. We gaze upon the assembly of kings and chieftains, before whom the wise men debate upon some points of legislation.

Then, again, we recognize the priests as patriots, resisting the invaders of their homes, and loudly chanting the Battle Hymn. We are at the convocation of Brehons, in their

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deliberations on law, and, awestruck, wait upon the observers of sun and stars, or of the signs of the times in the investigation of terrestrial phenomena. We go with them to the judgment upon offenders of an unwritten code, and witness the dread ordeal, or the fiery human sacrifice.

But our inquiry is, What has Irish tradition or literature to say to these interesting details concerning Druids?

Were the Irish Druids like those of whom we read belonging to other lands? Did they spring up from among the Irish people, or were they strangers from another and distant shore? Could they have formed a distinct community, like the tribe of Levi, intermarrying among themselves only? Amidst much ignorance, and even barbarism, can the Druids have been distinguished by the learning and refinement attributed to them?

With our conceptions of the ancient religions of Ireland, should we credit the Druids with the introduction of Sun worship, Serpent reverence, and the adoration of Idols? Were they, on the contrary, new comers, arriving subsequent to the establishment of these various forms of paganism, and merely known a little before the rise of Christianity in Erin?

WELSH OR BRITISH DRUIDISM.

Druidism has been of late years so persistently appropriated by the Welsh, that English, Scotch, and Irish have seemed to have no part in the property. Even Stonehenge has been claimed by the Welsh, on the very doubtful story of the Britons, Cæsar's Teutonic *Belgæ*, being driven by Romans to Wales. The true Welsh—the Silures, or Iberians—were in the land before the Romans appeared. Gaels from Ireland, Cymry from Scotland and England, Belgæ from Germany, Bretons, Britons, Saxons, Normans,

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English, Irish, and Flemings go to make up the rest. We know nothing of Welsh prehistoric races.

Even allowing cromlechs, circles, and pillar-stones to be called Druidical, there are fewer of these stone remains in Wales than in Scotland, Ireland, England, or France. As to other antiquities, Ireland is richer than Wales in all but Roman ruins.

It is hard upon Ireland that her Druids should have been so long neglected, and the honours of mystic wisdom become the sole possession of Wales. It is true, however, that the Irish have been less eager about their ancestral glory in that aspect, and have not put forward, as the Welsh have done, a Neo-Druidism to revive the reputation of the ancient Order. But Ireland had its *Druids*, and traditionary lore justifies that country in the acknowledgment of those magi or philosophers.

The Welsh have a great advantage over the Irish in the reputed possession of a literature termed Druidical. They assume to know who the Druids were, and what they taught, by certain writings conveying the secret information. The Irish do not even pretend to any such knowledge of their Druids. The Welsh, therefore, look down with pity upon their insular neighbours, and plume themselves on being the sole successors of a people who were under true Druidical teaching, and whose transmitted records reveal those mysteries.

The revival of the ancient faith, in the organization called *Druids of Pontypridd*,—having members in other parts of Wales, but claiming a far larger number of adherents in America,—has given more prominence to Druidical lore. The fact of the late simple-minded but learned Archdruid, Myfyr Morganwg, a poet and a scholar, after thirty years' preaching of Christianity, publicly proclaiming the creed of his heathen forefathers, has naturally startled many

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thoughtful minds. The writer can affirm, from personal knowledge of Myfyr, that he was no pretender, but an absolute believer in the tenets he taught; it is not therefore surprising that students of anthropology should inquire into this revival.

Such teaching is quite different from the *Neo-Druidism* which arose a few years ago, and whose imaginative interpretation of writings in Welsh, under the names of Taliesin, &c., were endorsed by several distinguished ministers of the Christian religion. Neo-Druidism was brought forward at Eisteddfods, and works were written to show that Welsh Druidism was simply the truth as recorded in the biblical account of the Hebrew Patriarchs.

The Pontypridd Archdruid held quite another doctrine. He embraced within his fold not only Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, but the promulgators of Hindooism, Buddhism, and all the ancient systems of so-called idolatry. He recognized his principles in them all, as they simply represented the forces of Nature, under the guise of personalities.

The mantle of the octogenarian leader has fallen upon Mr. Owen Morgan, better known as *Morien*, long an able and voluminous writer for the Press. His version of Welsh Druidism can be studied in the recently published *Light of Britannia*. He assumes for his Druids the priority of learning. From the mountains of Britain proceeded the light which produced the wisdom of Egypt, Babylon, Persia, India, Phœnicia, Judea, and Greece.

They who deem this too large a draft upon faith for acceptance, will assuredly discover in that unique work a mass of curious facts bearing upon ancient science, and be constrained to admit that the *Light of Britannia* is not the product of unreasoning Welsh enthusiasm, but is among the most candidly expressed books ever printed.

It was Dr. Lanigan who asserted, "The Christian mission-

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aries early opened schools in opposition to Druids." It was the opinion of Arthur Clive that much Druidism "blended with the Christian learning of the seventh and subsequent centuries." The same might be affirmed of Welsh Druidism. Alluding to an astronomical MS. of the fourteenth century, Clive says, "I believe that it, or rather the knowledge which it contains, is a Druidic survival, a spark transmitted through the dark ages." Gomme tells us, "that Druidism continued to exist long after it was officially dead can be proved."

Dr. Moran, Bishop of Ossory, in his *Irish Saints*, associates the Welsh Saint David with an Irish Druid. St. David was the son of an Irish Christian lady. He came to Menevia, on the Welsh promontory, made a fire on the shore, and its smoke filled the land. The Bishop then goes on to say:—

"The owner of the district was an Irishman, named Baya, a pagan and a Druid. He was one of those successful rovers who years before had carved out territories for themselves on the Welsh coast, and continued to hold them by the sword. He was filled with horror when he saw the smoke that arose from St. David's fire, and cried out to those that were with him, 'The enemy that has lit that fire shall possess this territory as far as the smoke has spread.' They resolved to slay the intruders, but their attempt was frustrated by a miracle. Seeing this, Baya made a grant of the desired site, and of the surrounding country, to St. David, whose monastery quickly arose."

Welsh patriotic zeal would receive a shock from Professor O'Curry's statement. "It appears then that it was from Erinn that the Isle of Mona (Anglesey) received its earliest colony; and that that colony was of a Druidical people." This view has been supported by other testimony. The Welsh Cerrig Edris (Cader Idris) has been identified

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with the Irish Carrick. Carrick Brauda of Dundalk, like Carig Bradyn of Mona, was renowned for astronomical observations.

Owen Morgan, in the *Light of Britannia*, has brought forward authorities to support his theory that the Welsh, at any rate, could claim for ancestors the Druids of classical writers. But Leflocq declares the language of the so-called Welsh Druids of the early Christian centuries is modern; and that even Sharon Turner—"for the mythological poems dare not assign them to the sixth century, nor attribute them to Taliesin." He considers the mystery of the Bards of Britain consists of a number of Christian sentences, interpreted according to the arbitrary system of modern mysticism; and concludes, "Such are the narrow bases of the vast pre-conceived system of our days as to the true religion of the Gauls."

But Rhys in *Celtic Britain* asserts that "the Goidelic Celts appear to have accepted Druidism, but there is no evidence that it ever was the religion of any Brythonic people." Again, "The north-west of Wales, and a great portion of the south of it, had always been in the possession of a Goidelic people, whose nearest kinsmen were the Goidels of Ireland."—"The Brythonic Celts, who were polytheists of the Aryan type; the non-Celtic natives were under the sway of Druidism; and the Goidelic Celts, devotees of a religion which combined polytheism with Druidism." He says the word *Cymry* "merely meant fellow-countrymen"; though, as he adds, "The Cymry people developed a literature of their own, differing from that of the other Brythonic communities." He makes Carlisle the centre of their influence before coming down into Wales.

The assumptions of Welsh advocates may not be very satisfactory to scholars, and all we know of Irish Druids

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furnishes little evidence for romantic conclusions; but why should tradition hold so tenaciously to the theory? Making all allowance for extravagance of views, and their variety, it is not easy to explain these early and particular accounts.

Although Welsh Druidism is represented by Welsh writers as being so different from the Gaulish, as pictured by French authors, or the Irish of Irish scholars, a few words may be allowed from the publication of the enthusiastic Morien of Wales.

"It is evident," says he, "that the Druid believed in the eternity of matter in an atomic condition, and also in the eternity of water; and that the passive, that is, the feminine principle of the Divine nature, pervaded both from eternity."—"He imagined a period before creation began, when darkness and silence pervaded illimitable space."—"The Sun is the son of the Creator, who is referred to by the Druids as the higher sun of the circle of Infinitudes above the Zodiacal Sun."—"Wherever the solar rites relating to the ancient worship had been performed, those places were still regarded by the masses as sacred."

The *Annwn* of Morien is Hades or Erebus, and that "of northern ideas is cold." Of the Archdruid he says, "The Divine Word incarnate, such was our Druidic High Priest;" especially when standing on the Logan stone. The Holy Greal was the cauldron of Ceridwen, or Venus. The Druids' ecclesiastical year commenced at midnight, March 20—21.

God was regarded through the symbol of three letters /|\ or rods, representing the light, or descent of rays, the true Logos. Hu, the divine Sun, was the *Menw* incarnate. The grave is the matrix of *Ced*, who bears the same relation to Venus as the Creator does to Apollo the Sun. The twelve battles of Arthur, or the Sun, relate to the signs of the Zodiac. Morien observes two sects in Druidism—the

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party of the Linga, and that of the Logos. His Druidism is simply solar worship,—or, in another sense, pure Phallicism. According to him, "The Christian religion is scientifically arranged on the most ancient framework of British Druidism."

A perusal of Morien's *Light of Britannia* will give the reader an explicit account of the mystery of Welsh Druidism, but fail to prove its identity with Irish Druidism; although the connection of Ireland with Wales was most intimate before the Danish invasion, traditional Irish saints having converted to Christianity their wilder neighbours of North and South Wales, as they did of those in Cornwall and other places.

The Druid, according to Morien, and his distinguished master, the Archdruid Myfyr Morganwg, was a more picturesque individual than the person figured by Irish writers, and he is strictly associated with so-called Druidical circles, cromlechs, &c. Stonehenge and Abury, not less than Mona and Pontypridd, are claimed as the scenes of their performances. All that tradition has represented them, or poets have imagined them, the Druids were in the estimation of modern Welsh authorities.

> "Theirs were the hands free from violence,
> Theirs were the mouths free from calumny,
> Theirs the learning without pride,
> And theirs the love without venery."

They were more than what Madame Blavatsky said—"only the heirs of the Cyclopean lore left to them by generations of mighty hunters and magicians." They were, as Diodorus declared, "Philosophers and divines whom they (Gauls) call Saronidæ, and are held in great veneration." Myfyr left it on record, "That the Druids of Britain were Brahmins is beyond the least shadow of a doubt."

Much has been written about Druids' dress, their

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ornaments, and the mysteries of their craft,—as the glass boat, the cup, the cross, &c. Archdruid Myfyr, at Pontypridd (not Dr. Price), explained to the present writer, his processional cross, with movable arms; his wonderful egg, bequeathed from past ages; his *Penthynen*, writing rods, or staff book; his rosary,—used by ancient priests, not less than by modern Mahometans and Christians; his glass beads; his *torque* for the neck; his breastplate of judgment; his crescent adornments; his staff of office, &c.

The staff or *Lituus* was of magical import. Wands of tamarisk were in the hands of Magian priests. The top of such augur rods were slightly hooked. One, found in Etruria, had budded in the hand. The *barsom*, or bundle of twigs, is held by Parsee priests. Strabo noted twigs in hand at prayer. The *Thyrsus* had several knots. Prometheus hid the fire from heaven in his rod.

Glass was known in Egypt some three or four thousand years before Christ. Amber beads—Hesiod's tears of the sisters of Phœbus—were in use by Phœnicians, brought probably from the Baltic. Torques have been found in many lands. As Bacon remarked, "Religion delights in such shadows and disguises."

Nash, in his remarks upon the writings of Taliesin, writes:—"The only place in Britain in which there is any distinct evidence, from the Roman authorities, of the existence of Druids, should be the Isle of Anglesey, the *seat of the Irish population* before the migration (from Scotland) of the Cambrian tribes, the ancestors of the modern Welsh." He thus fixes the Irish Druids in Wales.

While history and philology are tracing the great migration of Cambrians into North Wales from *Scotland*, where their language prevailed before the Gaelic, why is North Britain so little affected with the mysticism associated with Welsh Druidism? A natural reply would be, that this

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peculiar manifestation came *into* Wales subsequent to the Cambrian migration from the Western Highlands through Cumberland to the southern side of the Mersey, and did not originate with the Cambrian Druids. It must not be forgotten that two distinct races inhabit Wales; the one, Celtic, of the north; the other, Iberian, dark and broad-shouldered, of the south. Some Iberians, as of Spain and North Africa, retain the more ancient language; others adopted another tongue. Many of the so-called Arabs, in the Soudan, are of Iberian parentage.

No one can read Morien's most interesting and suggestive *Light of Britannia*, without being struck with the remarkable parallel drawn between the most ancient creeds of Asia and the assumed Druidism of Wales. The supposition of that industrious author is, that the British Druids were the originators of the theologies or mythologies of the Old World.

Ireland, in his calculation, is quite left out in the cold. Yet it is in Ireland, *not in Wales*, that Oriental religions had their strongest influence. That country, and not Wales, would appear to have been visited by Mediterranean traders, though tradition, not well substantiated, makes Cornwall one of their calling-places.

IRISH DRUIDISM.

Turning to Irish Druidism, we may discern a meaning, when reading between the lines in Irish MSS., but the mystery is either not understood by the narrators, or is purposely beclouded so as to be unintelligible to the vulgar, and remove the writers (more or less ecclesiastics) from the censure of superiors in the Church. Elsewhere, in the chapter upon "Gods," History, as seen in lives of Irish heroes and founders of tribes, is made the medium for the

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communication, in some way, of esoteric intelligence. If the Druids of Erin were in any degree associated with that assumed mythology, they come much nearer the wisdom of British Druids than is generally supposed, and were not the common jugglers and fortune-tellers of Irish authorities.

As the popular Professor O'Curry may be safely taken as one leading exponent of Irish opinion upon Irish Druids, a quotation from his able Lectures will indicate his view :—

"Our traditions," says he, "of the Scottish and Irish Druids are evidently derived from a time when Christianity had long been established. These insular Druids are represented as being little better than conjurers, and their dignity is as much diminished as the power of the King is exaggerated. He is hedged with a royal majesty which never existed in fact. He is a Pharaoh or Belshazzar with a troop of wizards at command; his Druids are sorcerers and rain-doctors, who pretend to call down the storms and the snow, and frighten the people with the fluttering wisp, and other childish charms. They divined by the observation of sneezing and omens, by their dreams after holding a bull-feast, or chewing raw horseflesh in front of their idols, by the croaking of their ravens and chirping of tame wrens, or by the ceremony of licking the hot edge of bronze taken out of the rowan-tree faggot. They are like the Red Indian medicine men, or the Angekoks of the Eskimo, dressed up in bull's-hide coats and bird-caps with waving wings. The chief or Arch-Druid of Tara is shown to us as a leaping juggler with ear-clasps of gold, and a speckled cloak; he tosses swords and balls into the air, and like the buzzing of bees on a beautiful day is the motion of each passing the other."

This, perhaps, the ordinary and most prosaic account of the Irish Druid, is to be gathered from the ecclesiastical annals of St. Patrick. The monkish writers had assuredly

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no high opinion of the Druid of tradition; and, doubtless, no respect for the memory of Taliesin or other members of the Craft.

Nevertheless, we should bear in mind that these same authorities took for granted all the stories floating about concerning transformations of men and women into beasts and birds, and all relations about gods of old.

O'Beirne Crowe has some doubt about Druid stories and primitive missionaries. He finds in the Hymn of St. Patrick the word *Druid* but once mentioned; and that it is absent alike in Brocan's *Life of St. Brigit*, and in Colman's Hymn. "Though Irish Druidism," says he, "never attained to anything like organization, still its forms and practices, so far as they attained to order, were in the main the same as those of Gaul."

Those Christian writers admitted that the Druids had a literature. The author of the *Lecan* declared that St. Patrick, at one time, burnt one hundred and eighty books of the Druids. "Such an example," he said, "set the converted Christians to work in all parts, until, in the end, all the remains of the Druidic superstition were utterly destroyed." Other writers mention the same fact as to this burning of heathen MSS. Certainly no such documents had, even in copies, any existence in historic times, though no one can deny the possibility of such a literature. The Welsh, however, claim the possession of Druidic works. But the earliest of these date from Christian times, bearing in their composition biblical references, and, by experts, are supposed to be of any period between the seventh and twelfth centuries. Villemarque dates the earliest Breton Bards from the sixth century; other French writers have them later.

At the same time, it must be allowed that early Irish MSS., which all date since Christianity came to the island,

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contain references of a mystical character, which might be styled Druidical. Most of the Irish literature, professedly treating of historical events, has been regarded as having covert allusions to ancient superstitions, the individuals mentioned being of a mythical character.

A considerable number of such references are associated with Druids, whatever these were thought then to be. Miracles were abundant, as they have been in all periods of Irish history. The Deity, the angels, the spirits of the air or elsewhere, are ever at hand to work a marvel, though often for little apparent occasion. As the performances of Saints are precisely similar to those attributed to Druids, one is naturally puzzled to know where one party quits the field and the other comes on.

A large number of these references belong to the Fenian days, when the Tuatha Druids practised their reported unholy rites. Thus, Teige was the father of the wife of the celebrated Fenian leader, Fionn MacCumhaill, or Fionn B'Baoisgne, slain at Ath-Brea, on the Boyne. But Matha MacUmoir was a Druid who confronted St. Patrick. St. Brigid was the daughter of the Druid Dubhthach. The Druid Caicher foretold that the race he loved would one day migrate to the West.

In Ninine's Prayer it is written—

> "We put trust in Saint Patrick, chief apostle of Ireland;
> He fought against hard-hearted Druids."

As told by T. O'Flanagan, 1808, King Thaddy, father of Ossian, was a Druid. Ierne was called the Isle of learned Druids. Plutarch relates that Claudius, exploring, "found on an island near Britain an order of Magi, reputed holy by the people." Tradition says that Parthalon, from Greece, brought three Druids with him. These were Fios, Eolus, and Fochmarc; that is, observes O'Curry, "if we

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seek the etymological meaning of the words, *Intelligence*, *Knowledge*, and *Inquiry*."

The Nemidians reached Ireland from Scythia, but were accompanied by Druids; who, however, were confounded by the Fomorian Druids. At first the Nemidians were victorious, but the Fomorian leader brought forward his most powerful spells, and forced the others into exile. Beothach, Nemid's grandson, retired with his clan to northern Europe, or Scandinavia; where "they made themselves perfect in all the arts of divination, Druidism, and philosophy, and returned, after some generations, to Erinn under the name of the Tuatha de Danaan." The last were most formidable Druids, though overcome in their turn by the Druids of invading Milesians from Spain.

There were Druids' Hills at Uisneath, Westmeath, and Clogher of Tyrone. The *Draoithe* were wise men from the East. Dubhtach Mac Ui' Lugair, Archdruid of King Mac Niall, became a Christian convert. The Battle of Moyrath, asserted by monkish writers to have taken place in 637, decided the fate of the Druids. And yet, the *Four Masters* relate that as early as 927 B.C., there existed Mur Ollavan, the *City of the Learned*, or Druidic seminary.

Bacrach, a Leinster Druid, told Conchobar, King of Ulster, something which is thus narrated:—"There was a great convulsion. 'What is this?' said Conchobar to his Druid. 'What great evil is it that is perpetrated this day?' 'It is true indeed,' said the Druid, 'Christ, the Son of God, is crucified this day by the Jews. It was in the same night He was born that you were born; that is, in the 8th of the Calends of January, though the year was not the same.' It was then that Conchobar believed; and he was one of the two men that believed in God in Erinn before the coming of the faith."

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Among the names of Druids we have, in *Cormac's Glossary*, Serb, daughter of Scath, a Druid of the Connaught men; Munnu, son of Taulchan the Druid; and Druien, a Druid prophesying bird. D. O. Murrim belonged to Creag-a-Vanny hill; Aibhne, or Oibhne, to Londonderry. We read of Trosdan, Tages, Cadádius, Dader, Dill, Mogruth, Dubcomar, Firchisus, Ida, Ono, Fathan, Lomderg the bloody hand, and Bacrach, or Lagicinus Barchedius, Arch-druid to King Niall.

Druidesses were not necessarily wives of Druids, but females possessed of Druidical powers, being often young and fair.

Some names of Druidesses have been preserved; as Geal Chossach, or Cossa, *white-legged*, of Inisoven, Donegal, where her grave is still pointed out to visitors. There was Milucradh, Hag of the Waters, reported to be still living, who turned King Fionn into an old man by water from Lake Sliabh Gullin. Eithne and Ban Draoi were famous sorcerers. Tradition talks of Women's Isles of Ireland, as of Scotland, where Druidesses, at certain festivals, lived apart from their husbands, as did afterwards Culdee wives at church orders. On St. Michael, on Sena Isle of Brittany, and elsewhere, such religious ladies were known. Scotch witches in their reputed powers of transformation were successors of Druidesses.

Several ancient nunneries are conjectured to have been Druidesses' retreats, or as being established at such hallowed sites. At Kildare, the retreat of St. Brigid and her nuns, having charge of the sacred fire, there used to be before her time a community of Irish Druidesses, virgins, who were called, from their office, *Ingheaw Andagha, Daughters of Fire.* The well-known Tuam, with its nine score nuns, may be an instance, since the word *Cailtach* means either *nun* or *Druidess.* On this, Hackett remarks, "The

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probability is that they were pagan Druidesses." Dr. O'Connor notes the Cluan-Feart, or sacred Retreat for Druidical nuns. It was decidedly dangerous for any one to meddle with those ladies, since they could raise storms, cause diseases, or strike with death. But how came Pliny to say that wives of Druids attended certain religious rites naked, but with blackened bodies? Enchantresses, possessed of evil spirits, like as in ancient Babylon, or as in China now, were very unpleasant company, and a source of unhappiness in a family.

The Rev. J. F. Shearman declared that Lochra and Luchadmoel were the heads of the Druids' College, prophesying the coming of the Talcend (St. Patrick), that the first was lifted up and dashed against a stone by the Saint, the other was burnt in the ordeal of fire at Tara, that the Druid Mautes was he who upset the Saint's chalice, and that Ida and Ona were two converted Druids.

The Synod of Drumceat, in 590, laid restrictions on Druids, but the Druids were officially abolished after the decisive Battle of Moyrath, 637. The bilingual inscription of Killeen, Cormac—IV VERE DRVVIDES, or "Four True Druids," was said to refer to Dubhtach Macnlugil as one of the four, he having been baptized by Patrick.

Dr. Richey may be right, when he says in his *History of the Irish People*:—"Attempts have been made to describe the civilization of the Irish in pre-Christian periods, by the use of the numerous heroic tales and romances which still survive to us; but the Celtic epic is not more historically credible or useful than the Hellenic,—the *Tain Bo* than the *Iliad*." It is probable that the readers of the foregoing tales, or those hereafter to be produced, may be of the same opinion. Not even the prophecy of St. Patrick's advent can be exempted, though the Fiacc Hymn runs:—

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"For thus had their prophets foretold then the coming
Of a new time of peace would endure after Tara
Lay desert and silent, the Druids of Laery
Had told of his coming, had told of the Kingdom."

Ireland had a supply of the so-called Druidical appendages and adornments. There have been found golden torques, gorgets, armillæ and rods, of various sorts and sizes. Some were twisted. There were thin laminæ of gold with rounded plates at the ends. Others had penannular and bulbous terminations. Twisted wire served for lumbers or girdle-torques. A twisted one of gold, picked up at Ballycastle, weighed 22 oz. Gorgets are seen only in Ireland and Cornwall. The Dying Gladiator, in Rome, has a twisted torque about his neck.

The gold mines of Wicklow doubtless furnished the precious metal, as noted in *Senchus Mor.* Pliny refers to the golden torques of Druids. One, from Tara, was 5 ft. 7 in. long, weighing 27 ozs. A *Todh*, found twelve feet in a Limerick bog, was of thin chased gold, with concave hemispherical ornaments. The *Iodhan Moran*, or breastplate, would contract on the neck if the judges gave a false judgment. The crescent ornament was the Irish *Cead-rai-re*, or sacred ship, answering to Taliesin's *Cwrwg Gwydrin*, or glass boat. An armilla of 15 ozs. was recovered in Galway. The glass beads, cylindrical in shape, found at Dunworley Bay, Cork, had, said Lord Londesborough, quite a Coptic character. The Druid glass is *Gleini na Droedh* in Welsh, *Glaine nan Druidhe* in Irish.

The Dublin Museum—Irish Academy collection—contains over three hundred gold specimens. Many precious articles had been melted down for their gold. The treasure-trove regulations have only existed since 1861. Lunettes are common. The Druids' tiaras were semi-oval, in thin plates, highly embossed. The golden breast-pins, *Dealg Oir*, are rare. Some armillæ are solid, others hollow. Fibulæ

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bear cups. Torques are often spiral. *Bullæ* are amulets of lead covered with thin gold. Circular gold plates are very thin and rude. Pastoral staffs, like pagan ones, have serpents twisted round them, as seen on the Cashel pastoral staff.

Prof. O'Curry says—"Some of our old glossarists explain the name *Druid* by *doctus*, learned; and *Fili*, a poet, as a lover of learning." But Cormac MacCullinan, in his glossary, derives the word *Fili* from *Fi*, venom, and *Li*, brightness; meaning, that the poet's satire was venomous, and his praise bright or beautiful. The Druid, in his simple character, does not appear to have been ambulatory, but stationary. He is not entitled to any privileges or immunities such as the poets and Brehons or judges enjoyed. He considers the Druids' wand was of yew, and that they made use of ogham writing. He names Tuath Druids; as, Brian, Tuchar Tucharba, Bodhbh, Macha and Mor Rigan; Cesarn Gnathach and Ingnathach, among Firbolgs; Uar, Eithear and Amergin, as Milesians.

For an illustration of Irish Druidism, reference may be made to the translation, by Hancock and O'Mahoney, of the *Senchus Mor*. Some of the ideas developed in that Christian work were supposed traditional notions of earlier and Druidical times.

Thus, we learn that there were eight Winds: the colours of which were white and purple, pale grey and green, yellow and red, black and grey, speckled and dark, the dark brown and the pale. From the east blows the purple wind; from the south, the white; from the north, the black; from the west, the pale; the red and the yellow are between the white wind and the purple, &c. The thickness of the earth is measured by the space from the earth to the firmament. The seven divisions from the firmament to the earth are Saturn, Jupiter, Mercury, Mars, Sol, Luna, Venus. From the moon to the sun is 244 miles;

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but, from the firmament to the earth, 3024 miles. As the shell is about the egg, so is the firmament around the earth. The firmament is a mighty sheet of crystal. The twelve constellations represent the year, as the sun runs through one each month.

We are also informed that "Brigh Ambui was a female author of wisdom and prudence among the men of Erin—after her came Connla Cainbhrethach, chief doctor of Connaught. He excelled the men of Erin in wisdom, for he was filled with the grace of the Holy Ghost; he used to contend with the Druids, who said that it was they that made heaven and the earth and the sea—and the sun and moon." This *Senchus Mor* further stated that "when the judges deviated from the truth of Nature, there appeared blotches upon their cheeks."

It is not surprising that Dr. Richey, in his *Short History of the Irish People*, should write:—"As to what Druidism was, either in speculation or practice, we have very little information.—As far as we can conjecture, their religion must have consisted of tribal divinities and local rites. As to the Druids themselves, we have no distinct information." He is not astonished that "authors (from the reaction) are now found to deny the existence of Druids altogether." He admits that, at the reputed time of St. Patrick, the Druids "seem to be nothing more than the local priests or magicians attached to the several tribal chiefs,—perhaps not better than the medicine-men of the North-American Indians."

As that period was prior to the earliest assumed for the Welsh Taliesin, one is at a loss to account for the great difference between the two peoples, then so closely associated in intercourse.

The opinion of the able O'Beirne Crowe is thus expressed:—"After the introduction of our (Irish) irregular

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system of Druidism, which must have been about the second century of the Christian era, the *filis* (Bards) had to fall into something like the position of the British bards. —But let us examine our older compositions—pieces which have about them intrinsic marks of authenticity—and we shall be astonished to see what a delicate figure the Druid makes in them." On the supposition that Druidism had not time for development before the arrival of the Saint, he accounts for the easy conversion of Ireland to Christianity.

It is singular that Taliesin should mention the sun as being sent in a coracle from Cardigan Bay to Arkle, or Arklow, in Ireland. This leads Morien to note the "solar drama performed in the neighbourhood of Borth, Wales, and Arklow, Ireland."

Arthur Clive thought it not improbable that Ireland, and not Britain, as Cæsar supposed, was the source of Gaulish Druidism. "Anglesey," says he, "would be the most natural site for the British Druidical College. This suspicion once raised, the parallel case of St. Colum Kille occupying Iona with his Irish monks and priests, when he went upon his missionary expedition to the Picts, occurs to the mind." Assuredly, Iona was a sacred place of the Druids, and hence the likeness of the Culdees to the older tenants of the Isle.

Clive believed the civilization of Ireland was not due to the Celt, but to the darker race before them. In Druidism he saw little of a Celtic character, "and that all of what was noble and good contained in the institution was in some way derived from Southern and Euskarian sources." May not the same be said of Wales? There, the true Welsh—those of the south and south-east—are certainly not the light Celt, but the dark Iberian, like to the darker Bretons and northern Spaniards.

Martin, who wrote his *Western Islands* in 1703, tells us

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that in his day every great family of the Western Islands kept a Druid priest, whose duty it was to foretell future events, and decide all causes, civil and ecclesiastical. Dr. Wise says, "In the *Book of Deer* we meet with Matadan, 'The Brehon,' as a witness in a particular case. The laws found in the legal code of the Irish people were administered by these Brehons. They were hereditary judges of the tribes, and had certain lands which were attached to the office. The successors of this important class are the Sheriffs of counties."

The learned John Toland, born in Londonderry, 1670, who was a genuine patriot in his day, believed in his country's Druids. In the Hebrides, also, he found harpers by profession, and evidence of ancient Greek visitants. In Dublin he observed the confidence in augury by ravens. He contended that when the Ancients spoke of Britain as Druidical, they included Ireland; for Ptolemy knew Erin as *Little Britain.* He recognized Druids' houses still standing, and the heathen practices remaining in his country.

"In Ireland," said he of the Druids, "they had the privilege of wearing six colours in their Breacans or robes, which are the striped Braceæ of the Gauls, still worn by the Highlanders, whereas the king and queen might have in theirs but seven, lords and ladies five," &c. He had no doubts of their sun-worship, and of Abaris, the Druid friend of Pythagoras, being from his own quarters. While he thought the Greeks borrowed from the northern Druids, he admitted that both may have learned from the older Egyptians.

Rhys, as a wise and prudent man, is not willing to abandon the Druids because of the absurd and most positive announcements of enthusiastic advocates; since he says, "I for one am quite prepared to believe in a

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Druidic residue, after you have stripped all that is mediæval and Biblical from the poems of Taliesin. The same with Merlin." And others will echo that sentiment in relation to Irish Druidism, notwithstanding the wild assumptions of some writers, and the cynical unbelief of others. After all eliminations, there is still a substantial residue.

One may learn a lesson from the story told of Tom Moore. When first shown old Irish MSS., he was much moved, and exclaimed, "These could not have been written by fools. I never knew anything about them before, and I had no right to have undertaken the History of Ireland."

An old Irish poem runs :—

"Seven years your right, under a flagstone in a quagmire,
Without food, without taste, but the thirst you ever torturing,
The law of the judges your lesson, and prayer your language;
And if you like to return
You will be, for a time, a Druid, perhaps."

Druid Houses, like those of St. Kilda, Borera Isle, &c., have become in more modern days *Oratories* of Christian hermits. They are arched, conical, stone structures, with a hole at the top for smoke escape. Toland calls them "little arch'd, round, stone buildings, capable only of holding one person." They were known as *Tighthe nan Druidhneach*. There is generally in many no cement. The so-called Oratory of St. Kevin, 23 ft. by 10 and 16 high, has its door to the west. The writer was supported by the Guide at Glendalough, in the opinion of the great antiquity of St. Kevin's *Kitchen*. The house at Dundalk is still a place of pilgrimage.

The one at Gallerus, Kerry, has a semi-circular window. Of these oratories, so called, Wise observes, "They were not Christian, but were erected in connection with this early, let us call it, Celtic religion. If they had been

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Christian, they would have had an altar and other Christian emblems, of which, however, they show no trace. If they had been Christian, they would have stood east and west, and have had openings in those directions.—The walls always converged as they rose in height."

Irish Druids lived before the advent of Socialism. They appear to have had the adjudication of the law, but, as ecclesiastics, they delivered the offenders to the secular arm for punishment. Their holy hands were not to be defiled with blood. The law, known as the *Brehon* Law, then administered, was not socialistic. Irish law was by no means democratic, and was, for that reason, ever preferred to English law by the Norman and English chieftains going to Ireland. The old contests between the Irish and the Crown lay between those gentlemen-rulers and their nominal sovereign. So, in ancient times, the Druids supported that Law which favoured the rich at the expense of the poor. They were not Socialists.

They were, however, what we should call *Spiritualists*, though that term may now embrace people of varied types. They could do no less wonderful things than those claimed to have been done by Mahatmas or modern Mediums. They could see ghosts, if not raise them. They could listen to them, and talk with them; though unable to take photos of spirits, or utilize them for commercial intelligence.

It would be interesting to know if these seers of Ireland regarded the ghosts with an imaginative or a scientific eye. Could they have investigated the phenomena, with a view to gain a solution of the mysteries around them? It is as easy to call a Druid a deceiver, as a politician a traitor, a scientist a charlatan, a saint a hypocrite.

As the early days of Irish Christianity were by no means either cultured or philosophical, and almost all our knowledge of Druids comes from men who accepted what

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would now only excite our derision or pity, particularly indulging the miraculous, we are not likely to know to what class of modern Spiritualists we can assign the Druids of Erin.

Our sources of knowledge concerning the Druids are from tradition and records. The first is dim, unreliable, and capable of varied interpretation. Of the last, Froude rightly remarks—"Confused and marvellous stories come down to us from the early periods of what is called History, but we look for the explanation of them in the mind or imagination of ignorant persons.—The early records of all nations are full of portents and marvels; but we no longer believe those portents to have taken place in actual fact.—Legends grew as nursery tales grow now."

There is yet another source of information—the preservation of ancient symbols, by the Church and by Freemasons. The scholar is well assured that both these parties, thus retaining the insignia of the past, are utterly ignorant of the original meaning, or attach a significance of their own invention.

Judging from Irish literature—most of which may date from the twelfth century, though assuming to be the eighth, or even fifth—the Druids were, like the Tuatha, nothing better than spiritualistic conjurers, dealers with bad spirits, and always opposing the Gospel. We need be careful of such reports, originating, as they did, in the most superstitious era of Europe, and reflecting the ideas of the period. It was easy to credit Druids and Tuaths with miraculous powers, when the Lives of Irish Saints abounded with narratives of the most childish wonders, and the most needless and senseless display of the miraculous. The destruction of Druids through the invocation of Heaven by the Saints, though nominally in judgment for a league

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with evil spirits, was not on a much higher plane than the powers for mischief exercised by the magicians.

Such tales fittingly represented a period, when demoniacal possession accounted for diseases or vagaries of human action, and when faith in our Heavenly Father was weighed down by the cruel oppression of witchcraft.

Still, in the many credulous and inventive stories of the Middle Ages, may there not be read, between the lines, something which throws light upon the Druids? Traditional lore was in that way perpetuated. Popular notions were expressed in the haze of words. Lingering superstitions were preserved under the shield of another faith.

Then, again, admitting the common practice of rival controversialists destroying each other's manuscripts, would not some be copied, with such glosses as would show the absurdities of the former creeds, or as warnings to converts against the revival of error?

Moreover,—as the philosophers, in early Christian days of the East, managed to import into the plain and simple teaching of Jesus a mass of their own symbolism, and the esoteric learning of heathenism,—was it unlikely that a body of Druids, having secrets of their own, should, upon their real or assumed reception of Christianity, import some of their own opinions and practices, adapted to the promulgation of the newer faith? No one can doubt that the Druids, to retain their influence in the tribe, would be among the first and most influential of converts; and history confirms that fact. As the more intelligent, and reverenced from habit, with skill in divination and heraldic lore, they would command the respect of chiefs, while their training as orators or reciters would be easily utilized by the stranger priests in the service of the Church.

But if, as is likely, the transition from Druidism to Christianity was gradual, possibly through the medium of

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Culdeeism, the intrusion of pagan ideas in the early religious literature can be more readily comprehended. As so much of old paganism was mixed up in the Patristic works of Oriental Christendom, it cannot surprise one that a similar exhibition of the ancient heathenism should be observed in the West. O'Brien, in *Round Towers*, writes—"The Church Festivals themselves in our Christian Calendar are but the direct transfers from the Tuath de Danaan Ritual. Their very names in Irish are identically the same as those by which they were distinguished by that earlier race." Gomme said, "Druidism must be identified as a non-Aryan cult."

Elsewhere reference is made to the Culdees. They were certainly more pronounced in Ireland, and the part of Scotland contiguous to Ireland, than in either England or Wales.

Ireland differs from its neighbours in the number of allusions to Druids in national stories. Tradition is much stronger in Ireland than in Wales, and often relates to Druids. On the other hand, it differs from that of its neighbours in the absence of allusions to King Arthur, the hero of England, Scotland, Wales, and Brittany. Rome, too, was strongly represented in Britain, north and south, but not in Ireland.

It is not a little remarkable that Irish Druids should seem ignorant alike of Round Towers and Stone Circles, while so much should have been written and believed concerning Druidism as associated with circles and cromlechs in Britain and Brittany. Modern Druidism, whether of Christian or heathen colour, claims connection with Stonehenge, Abury, and the stones of Brittany. Why should not the same claim be made for Irish Druids, earlier and better known than those of Wales?

As megalithic remains, in the shape of graves and circles,

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are found all over Europe, Asia, and northern Africa, why were Druids without association with these, from Japan to Gibraltar, and confined to the monuments of Britain? Why, also, in Ossian, are the *Stones of Power* referred to the Norsemen only?

In the Irish Epic, *The Carrying off of the Bull of Cuálnge*, the Druid Cathbad is given a certain honourable precedence before the sovereign. That the Druids exercised the healing art is certain. Jubainville refers to a MS. in the Library of St. Gall, dating from the end of the fourteenth century, which has on the back of it some incantations written by Irish seers of the eighth or ninth century. In one of them are these words—"I admire the remedy which Dian-Cecht left."

Though a mysterious halo hangs about the Irish Druids, though they may have been long after the Serpent-worshippers, and even later than the Round Tower builders, tradition confidently asserts their existence in the Island, but, doubtless, credits them with powers beyond those ever exercised. The love for a romantic Past is not, however, confined to Ireland, and a lively imagination will often close the ear to reason in a cultured and philosophical age.

ST. PATRICK AND THE DRUIDS.

Let us see what the biographers of St. Patrick have to relate about the Druids.

A work published at St. Omer, in 1625, by John Heigham, has this story:—"One day as the Saint sayd masse in the sayd church, a sacrilegious magitian, the child of perdition, stood without, and with a rodd put in at the window, cast down the chalice, and shed the holy sacrament, but God without delay severely punished so wicked a sacrilege, for

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the earth opening his mouth after a most strange manner, devoured the magitian, who descended alive downe to hell."

Again:—"A certain magitian that was in high favor with the King, and whome the King honoured as a god, opposed himself against S. Patricke, even in the same kind that Simon Magus resisted the apostle S. Peter; the miserable wretch being elevated in the ayre by the ministery of Devils, the King and the people looked after him as if he were to scale the heavens, but the glorious Saint, with the force of his fervent prayers, cast him downe unto the ground, where dashing his head against a hard flint, he rêdred up his wicked soule as a pray to the infernnall Fiendes."

The *Tripartite* Life of St. Patrick relates:—"Laeghaire MacNeill possessed Druids and enchanters, who used to foretell through their Druidism and through their paganism what was in the future for them." Coming to a certain town, the Saint, according to history, "found Druids at that place who denied the Virginity of Mary. Patrick blessed the ground, and it swallowed up the Druids."

The book of 1625 is the authority for another story:—"Two magitians with their magicall charmes overcast all the region with a horrible darkness for the space of three dayes, hoping by that meanes to debar his (Patrick's) enterance into the country." Again:—"Nine magitians cõspired the Saint's death, and to have the more free accesse to him, they counterfeited thẽselves to be monks, putting on religious weeds; the Saint, by divine information, knew thẽ to be wolves wraped in sheeps cloathing; making, therefore, the signe of the crosse against the childrẽ of Satan, behould fire descended from Heaven and consumed them all nine." He is also reported to have caused the death of 12,000 idolaters at Tara.

St. Patrick contended with the Druids before King

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Laeghaire at Tara. One, Lochra, hardened the King's heart against the preaching; so "the Saint prayed that he might be lifted out and die, even as St. Peter had obtained the death of Simon Magus. In an instant Lochra was raised up in the air, and died, falling on a stone." This Lochra had, it is said, previously foretold the Saint's visit:—

> "A Tailcenn (baldhead) will come over the raging sea,
> With his perforated garments, his crook-headed staff,
> With his table (altar) at the east end of his house,
> And all the people will answer—'Amen! Amen!'"

The authoress of *Ireland, the Ur of the Chaldees*, ventured to write:—"When the Apostle of Ireland went there, the people believed him, for he taught no new doctrine." She thought Druidism not very unlike Christianity. Dr. O'Donovan, upon the *Four Masters*, observes:—"Nothing is clearer than that Patrick engrafted Christianity on the pagan superstitions with so much skill that he won the people over to the Christian religion before they understood the exact difference between the two systems of beliefs; and much of this half pagan, half Christian religion will be found, not only in the Irish stories of the Middle Ages, but in the superstitions of the peasantry of the present day." Todd sees that worldly wisdom in "dedicating to a Saint the pillar-stone, or sacred fountain."

It is not necessary to discuss the question as to the individual Saint himself, around which so much controversy has raged. They who read theology between the lines of old Irish history may be induced to doubt whether such a person ever existed, or if he were but a Druid himself, such being the obscurity of old literature.

St. Bridget's early career was associated with the Druids. A miracle she wrought in the production of butter caused her Druidical master to become a Christian.

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Colgan contended that St. Patrick, by "continually warring with Druids, exposed his body to a thousand kinds of deaths." In *The Guardsman's Cry of St. Patric*, which declares "Patric made this hymn," we are informed that it was "against incantations of false prophets, against black laws of hereticians, against surroundings of idolism, against spells of women, and of smiths, and of Druids."

The *Annals of the Kingdom of Ireland by the Four Masters* mentions a number of stories relative to Irish Druids, then believed to have once ruled Erin. St. Patrick was a youthful slave to Milcho, a Druidical priest. Gradwell's *Succat*, therefore, says, "He must often have practised heathenish rites in the presence of his household, and thus excited the horror of his Christian slave."

Scoto-Irish Druids.

St. Columba, the Culdee, was much the same as St. Patrick in his mission work, and his contests with Druids. He changed water into wine, stilled a storm, purified wells, brought down rain, changed winds, drove the devil out of a milk-pail, and raised the dead to life. All that tradition acknowledged as miraculous in the Druids was attributed equally to Columba as to Patrick.

Adamnan of Iona tells some strange stories of his master. One tale concerns Brochan the Druid. "On a certain day, Brochan, while conversing with the Saint, said to him, 'Tell me, Columba, when do you propose to set sail?' To which the Saint replied, 'I intend to begin my voyage after three days, if God permits me, and preserves my life.' Brochan then said, 'You will not be able, for I will make the winds unfavourable to your voyage, and I will create a great darkness over the sea.'" The wind rose, and the

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darkness came. But the Saint put off, and "the vessel ran against the wind with extraordinary speed, to the wonder of the large crowd."

The Saint wanted the Druid to release an Irish female captive, which he declined to do. But, says Adamnan, "an angel sent from heaven, striking him severely, has broken in pieces the glass cup which he held in his hand, and from which he was in the act of drinking, and he himself is left half dead." Then he consented to free the Irish girl, and Columba cured him of the wound.

OPINIONS ON IRISH DRUIDS.

Leflocq wrote his *Études de Mythologie Celtique* in 1869, observing, "Some represented the Druids as the successors of the Hebrew patriarchs, the masters of Greek philosophy, the forerunners of Christian teaching. They have credited them with the honours of a religious system founded upon primitive monotheism, and crowned by a spiritualism more elevated than that of Plato and St. Augustine." One might perceive little of this in Irish tales, like the preceding. Leflocq is justified in adding, "One will be at first confounded by the extreme disproportion which exists between the rare documents left by the past, and the large developments presented by modern historians."

Pliny speaks thus of the Druids, "A man would think the Persians learned all their magic from them;" and Pomponius Mela affirmed, "They profess to have great knowledge of the motions of the heavens and the stars." Others write in the same strain. Who, then, were the Druids of Greeks and Romans? Why did Cæsar recognize such as living in Gaul? Why did Jamblichus make Pythagoras a disciple of Gaulish priests? Why did St. Clement say the Druids

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had a religion of philosophy; and St. Cyril, that they held but one God? Why should Origen, like the foe of early Christianity, Celsus, believe that the Druids of Gaul had the same doctrines as the Jews?

Himerius speaks of Abaris, the sage, from Scythia, but well acquainted with Greek, with this description:—"Abaris came to Athens, holding a bow, having a quiver hanging from his shoulders, his body wrapt up in a plaid, and wearing trousers reaching from the soles of his feet to his waist." Cicero knew Divitiacus, who professed the knowledge of Nature's secrets, though regarded as a Hyperborean.

Could these have been the Scythians from Tartary, the descendants of the wise men who gave their religion and the arrow-headed letters to Assyrian-Semitic conquerors, who had come down as Turanian roamers to the Plains of Babylon, and whose Chaldæan faith spread even to Egypt and Europe?

It would seem more probable—with respectful consideration of the learned Morien, who makes Wales the teacher of the world—that wisdom should emanate from a people cultured long before Abrahamic days, though subsequently regarded as rude shepherd Scythians, than proceed from a western land preserving no monuments of learning.

Then, the dress, the staff, the egg, and other things associated with Druids, had their counterpart in the East, from, perhaps, five thousand years before our Christian era.

As to so-called Druidical monuments, no argument can be drawn thence, as to the primary seat of this mysticism, since they are to be seen nearly all over the world.

An instance of the absurd ideas prevalent among the ancients respecting Druids is given in Dion Chrysostom:—"For, without the Druids, the Kings may neither do nor consult anything; so that in reality they are the Druids who reign, while the Kings, though they sit on *golden*

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thrones, dwell in spacious palaces, and feed on costly dishes, are only their ministers." Fancy this relating to either rude Irish or Welsh. Toland makes out that Lucan spoke to one; but Lucan said it not. The *Edinburgh Review* of 1863 may well come to the conclusion that "the place they really fill in history is indefinite and obscure."

Madame Blavatsky has her way of looking at them. They were "the descendants of the last Atlanteans, and what is known of them is sufficient to allow the inference that they were Eastern priests akin to the Chaldæans and Indians." She takes, therefore, an opposite view to that held by Morien. She beheld their god in the Great Serpent, and their faith in a succession of worlds. Their likeness to the Persian creed is noticed thus:—"The Druids understood the morning of the Sun in Taurus; therefore, while all the fires were extinguished on the first of November, their sacred and inextinguishable fires alone remained to illumine the horizon, like those of the Magi and the modern Zoroastrians."

Poppo, a Dutchman of the eighth century, wrote *De officiis Druidum;* and Occo, styled the last of the Frisian Druids, was the author of a similar work. Worth, in 1620, and Frickius of 1744, were engaged on the same subject. It is curious to notice St. Columba addressing God as "My Druid," and elsewhere saying, "My Druid is Christ the Son of God." The Vates were an order known in Irish as *Faidh.* Some derive *Druid* from *Druthin,* the old German for God. The word *Druith* is applied to a Druidess.

While many treat the Druids as religious, O'Curry asserts, "There is no ground whatever for believing the Druids to have been the priests of any special positive worship." Then Vallencey declares that "Druidism was not the established religion of the Pagan Irish, but Buddhism." Yet Lake Killarney was formerly *Loch Lene,* the Lake of Learning.

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The mystical, but accomplished, Massey tell us, "An Irish name for Druidism is *Maithis*, and that includes the Egyptian dual Thoth called Mati, which, applied to time, is the Terin or two Times at the base of all reckoning"—"likely that the Druidic name is a modified form of Tru-Hut."—"In Egypt *Terut* signifies the two times and before, so the Druidic science included the knowledge of the times beforehand, the coming times."

Toland, one of the earliest and most philosophical Irish writers on this subject, thus spoke of them in his *History of the Druids*—"who were so prevalent in Ireland, that to this hour their ordinary word for magician is *Druid* (Drai), the art magic is called *Druidity* (Druid-heacht), and the wand, which was one of the badges of the profession, the rod of Druidism (Slatnan Druidheacht)."

Windele, in Kilkenny records, expressed this view:—"Druidism was an artfully contrived system of elaborate fraud and imposture. To them was entrusted the charge of religion, jurisprudence, and medicine. They certainly well studied the book of Nature, were acquainted with the marvels of natural magic, the proportions of plants and herbs, and what of astronomy was then known; they may even have been skilled in mesmerism and biology." He thought that to the Druid "exclusively were known all the occult virtues of the whole *materia medica*, and to him belonged the carefully elaborated machinery of oracles, omens, auguries, aëromancy, fascinations, exorcisms, dream interpretations and visions, astrology, palmistry, &c."

As this may demand too much from our faith, we may remember, as Canon Bourke says, that "the youth of these countries have been taught to regard the Pagan Druids as educated savages, whereas they had the same opportunity of acquiring knowledge, and had really possessed as much as the Pagans of the Peloponnesus." We should further

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bear in mind the assurance of the Irish historian, O'Curry, that "there are vast numbers of allusions to the Druids, and of specific instances of the exercise of their vocation—be it magical, religious, philosophical, or educational—to be found in our old MSS."

Has not much misapprehension been caused, by authors concluding that all varieties of religion in Ireland proceeded from a class of men who, while popularly called Druids, may not have been connected with them? We know very far more about these varieties of faith in Ireland, before Christianity, than we do about any description of religion in Wales; and yet the Druidism of one country is reported as so different from that in the other immediately contiguous. Such are the difficulties meeting the student of History.

The Irish Druidical religion, like that of Britain and Gaul, has given rise to much discussion, whether it began, as some say, when Suetonius drove Druids from Wales, or began in Ireland before known in either Britain or Gaul, direct from the East.

"The Druidical religion," says Kenealy in the *Book of God*, "prevailed not only in Britain, but likewise all over the East." Pictet writes, "There existed very anciently in Ireland a particular worship which, by the nature of its doctrines, by the character of its symbols, by the names even of its gods, lies near to that religion of the Cabirs of Samothrace, emanated probably from Phœnicia." Mrs. Sophie Bryant thinks that "to understand the Irish non-Christian tradition and worship, we should understand the corresponding tradition and worship, and their history, for all the peoples that issued from the same Aryan home." Ledwich is content with saying, that "the Druids possessed no internal or external doctrine, either veiled by symbols, or clouded in enigmas, or any religious tenets

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but the charlatanerie of barbarian priests and the grossest Gentile superstition."

While Professor O'Curry had "no ground whatever for believing the Druids to have been the priests of any special positive worship,"—and Vallencey could say, "From all I could collect from Irish documents, relative to the religion of the heathen Irish, it appears that the Druidical religion never made a part of it,"—popular opinion has always been in the other direction. Yet Vallencey would credit Druids with some religion, when he mentions the Druidical oracular stone,—in Irish *Logh-oun*, in Cornish *Logan*,—"into which the Druids pretend that the *Logh*, or divine affluence, descended when they consulted it."

Dr. Richey depreciates the Druid, when writing of the early Irish missionaries: "They did not encounter any Archdruid as the representative or head of a national religion,—they found no priesthood occupying a definite political position which the ministers of the new religion could appropriate." The Welsh Archdruid Myfyr took higher ground, when saying, "This Gorsedd has survived the bardic chairs of Greece and Rome—it has survived the institutions of Egypt, Chaldæa, and Palestine." He declared, "Druidism is a religious system of positive philosophy, teaching truth and reason, peace and justice." He believed of Druids what Burnouf thought of the Hindoo Rishis, that their metaphysics and religion "were founded on a thorough grasp of physical facts."

Morien, his favourite disciple, boldly avows that Druidism, like Freemasonry, was a philosophy, founded on natural law, and not religion in the ordinary sense of that term. So L. Maclean regarded Ossian's heroes "for the greater part cabalistic, and indicative of the solar worship. Phion (Fingal) bespeaks the Phœnician; Cual, the Syrian or Dog-star worshipper, of which Conchulain with his

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crios or belt is but a variation." In Smith's *Dictionary of the Bible*, the religion of the Phœnicians is described in the way Morien has done that of the Druids;—"a personification of the forces of nature, which, in its more philosophical shadowing forth of the Supreme powers, may be said to have represented the male and female principles of production."

The Sabbath—a Babylonian word—was, it is said, kept on the 1st, 8th, 15th, 22nd, 29th of months, as with the Magi of the East. Philo says all nations of antiquity kept the seventh day holy. Porphyry mentions the same thing of the heathen. Professor Sayce finds it was a day of rest with ancient Assyrians, as Dr. Schmidt of temple pagan worship. Eusebius asserted that almost all philosophers acknowledged it. The Roman Pontiffs regulated the Sabbath, and Roman school-boys had then a holiday. The Persian word *Shabet* is clearly of Assyrian origin. The authoress of *Massaroth* says, "The Assyrians, Babylonians, Egyptians, Chinese, and the natives of India were acquainted with the seven days division of time, as were the Druids." The sun, moon, and five planets were the guardians of the days.

IRISH BARDS.

The BARDS proper occupied a high position in Ireland. The Ollamhs had colleges at Clogher, Armagh, Lismore, and Tamar. On this, Walker's *Historical Memoirs*, 1786, observes that "all the eminent schools, delectably situated, which were established by the Christian clergy in the fifth century, were erected on the ruins of those colleges." They studied for twelve years to gain the *barred* cap and title of Ollamh or teacher. They were *Ollamhain Re-dan*, or *Filidhe*, poets. They acted as heralds, knowing the gene-

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alogy of their chiefs. With white robe, harp in hand, they encouraged warriors in battle. Their power of satire was dreaded; and their praise, desired.

There is a story of the Ard Ollamh, or Archdruid, sending to Italy after a book of skins, containing various chosen compositions, as the *Cuilmeun*, &c. As heralds they were called *Seanachies*. As Bards they sang in a hundred different kinds of verse. One Ollamh Fodhla was the Solon of Ireland; Amergin, the singer, lived 500 B.C.; Torna Egeas, was last of the pagan bards. Long after, they were patriots of the tribes—

> "With uncouth harps, in many-colour'd vest,
> Their matted hair with boughs fantastic crown'd."

The *Statutes of Kilkenny* (Edward III.) made it penal to entertain any Irish Bard; but Munster Bards continued to hold their annual Sessions to the early part of last century. Carolan, the old blind harper, called last of the Bards, died in 1738.

Bards sang in the Hall of Shells: shells being then the cups. There were hereditary bards, as the O'Shiels, the O'Canvans, &c., paid to sing the deeds of family heroes. A lament for Dallan ran—

> "A fine host and brave was he, master of and Governor,
> Ulla! Ullalu!
> We, thrice fifty Bards, we confessed him chief in song and war—
> Ulla! Ullalu!"

In the far-famed Trinity College Library is *The Dialogue of the Two Sages*, in the Irish Fenian dialect, giving the qualifications of a true Ollamh. Among the famous bards were, Lughar, "acute poet, Druid of Meidhbh"; Olioll, King of Munster; Oisin, son of Cormac, King of Tara, now nearly unintelligible to Irish readers; Fergus finbel of the *Dinn Senchus;* Oisin, the Fenian singer; Larghaire, whose

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poem to the sun was famous; Lughaidh, whose poem of the death of his wife Fail is of great antiquity; Adhna, once chief poet of Ireland; Corothruadh, Fingin, &c. Fergus Finbheoil, *fair lips*, was a Fenian Bard.

Ireland's Mirror, 1804, speaks of Henessey, a living seer, as the Orpheus of his country. Amergin, brother of Heber, was the earliest of Milesian poets. Sir Philip Sydney praised the Irish Bards three centuries ago. One, in Munster, stopped by his power the corn's growth; and the satire of another caused a shortness of life. Such rhymes were not to be patronized by the Anglo-Normans, in the Statute of 1367. One Bard directed his harp, a shell of wine, and his ancestor's shield to be buried with him. In rhapsody, some would see the images of coming events pass before them, and so declare them in song. He was surely useful who rhymed susceptible rats to death.

The Irish war odes were called *Rosg-catha*, the Eye of Battle. Was it for such songs that Irish-Danes were cruel to Bards? O'Reilly had a chronological account of 400 Irish writers. As Froude truly remarks, "Each celebrated minstrel sang his stories in his own way, adding to them, shaping them, colouring them, as suited his peculiar genius." It was Heeren who said of the early Greek bards, "The gift of song came to them from the gods." Villemarque held that Irish Bards were "really the historians of the race."

Walker's *Irish Bards* affirms that the "Order of the Bards continued for many succeeding ages invariably the same." Even Buchanan found "many of their ancient customs yet remain; yea, there is almost nothing changed of them in Ireland, but only ceremonies and rites of religion." Borlase wrote, "The last place we read of them in the British dominions is Ireland." Blair added, "Long after the Order of the Druids was extinct, and the national

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religion changed, the Bards continued to flourish, exercising the same functions as of old in Ireland." But Walker claimed the *Fingalians* as originally Irish. Sir I. Ferguson, in his *Lays of the Western Gael*, says, "The exactions of the Bards were so intolerable that the early Irish more than once endeavoured to rid themselves of the Order." Their arrogance had procured their occasional banishment. Higgins, in *Celtic Druids*, had no exalted opinion of them, saying, "The Irish histories have been most of them filled with lies and nonsense by their bards." Assuredly a great proportion of their works were destroyed by the priests, as they had been in England, Germany, France, &c.

The harp, according to Bede, was common in the seventh century. St. Columba played upon the harp. Meagor says of the first James of Scotland, "On the harp he excelled the Irish or the Highland Scots, who are esteemed the best performers on that instrument." Ireland was the school of music for Welsh and Scotch. Irish harpers were the most celebrated up to the last century. Ledwich thought the harp came in from Saxons and Danes. The Britons, some say, had it from the Romans. The old German harp had eighteen strings; the old Irish, twenty-eight; the modern Irish, thirty-three. Henry VIII. gave Ireland the harp for an armorial bearing, being a great admirer of Irish music; but James I. quartered it with the arms of France and England. St. Bernard gives Archbishop Malachy, 1134. the credit of introducing music into the Church service of Ireland.

The Irish *cruit* was the Welsh *crwdd* or *crwth*. Hugh Rose relates, that "a certain string was selected as the most suitable for each song." Diodorus Siculus recorded that "the bards of Gaul sang to instruments like lyres." The *crotals* were not Bardic, but bell cymbals of the Church. They were hollow spheres, holding loose bits of metal for

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rattling, and connected by a flexible shank. The *corn* was a metallic horn; the drum, or *tiompan*, was a tabor; the *piob-mela*, or bagpipes, were borrowed from the far East; the bellows to the bag thereof were not seen till the sixteenth century. The Irish used *foghair*, or whole tones, and *foghair-beg*, or semi-tones. The *cor*, or harmony, was *chruisich*, treble, and *cronan*, base. The names of clefs were from the Latin. In most ancient languages the same word is used for Bard and Sage. Lönnrot found not a parish among the Karelians without several Bards. Quatrefages speaks of Bardic contests thus: "The two bards start strophe after strophe, each repeating at first that which the other had said. The song only stops with the learning of one of the two."

Walker ungallantly wrote, "We cannot find that the Irish had female Bards," while admitting that females cried the *Caoine* over the dead. Yet in *Cathluina* we read, "The daughter of Moran seized the harp, and her voice of music praised the strangers. Their souls melted at the song, like the wreath of snow before the eye of the sun."

The Court Bards were required, says Dr. O'Donovan, to have ready seven times fifty chief stories, and twice fifty sub-stories, to repeat before the Irish King and his chiefs. Conor Mac Neasa, King of Ulster, had three thousand Bards, gathered from persecuting neighbouring chiefs.

> "Musician, herald, bard, thrice may'st thou be renowned,
> And with three several wreaths immortally be crowned."

Brehons—Breitheamhain—were legislative Bards; and, said Walker, in 1786, they "promulgated the laws in a kind of recitative, or monotonous chant, seated on an eminence in the open air." According to McCurtin, the Irish Bards of the sixth century wore long, flowing garments, fringed and ornamented with needlework. In a *Life of Columba*, 1827,

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it is written, "The Bards and Sennachees retained their office, and some degree of their former estimation among the nobility of Caledonia and Ireland, till the accession of the House of Hanover."

"Nothing can prove," says O'Beirne Crowe, "the late introduction of Druidism into our country more satisfactorily than the utter contempt in which the name *bard* is held in all our records.—After the introduction of our irregular system of Druidism, which must have been about the second century of the Christian era, the *Filis* (bard) had to fall into something like the position of the British Bards—hence we see them, down to a late period—practising incantations like the Magi of the continent, and in religious matters holding extensive sway."

Ossianic literature had a higher opinion of the Bards; as, "Such were the words of the Bards in the days of the Song; when the King heard the music of harps and the tales of other times. The chiefs gathered from all their hills, and heard the lovely sound. They praised the voice of Cona, the first among a thousand bards." Again, "Sit thou on the heath, O Bard! and let us hear thy voice. It is pleasant as the gale of the spring, that sighs on the hunter's ear, when he wakens from dreams of joy, and has heard the music of the spirits of the hill.—The music of Cardil was like the memory of joys that are past, pleasant, and mournful to the soul. The ghosts of departed Bards heard it." "My life," exclaimed Fingal, "shall be one stream of light to Bards of other times." Cathmor cried, "Loose the Bards. Their voice shall be heard in other ages, when the Kings of Temora have failed."

Keating, amusingly credulous as an *Irish historian*, records with gravity the story of an ancient militia, numbering nine thousand in time of peace, who had both serjeants and colonels. Into the ranks of these *Fine Eirion*

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no one was admitted unless proved to be a poetical genius, well acquainted with the twelve books of poetry.

The *Dinn Seanchas* has poems by the Irish Bard of the second century, Finin Mac Luchna; and it asserts that "the people deemed each other's voices sweeter than the warblings of the melodious harp." On Toland's authority we learn that, for a long time after the English Conquest, the judges, Bards, physicians, and harpers held land tenures in Ireland. The O'Duvegans were hereditary Bards of the O'Kellies; the O'Shiels were hereditary doctors; the O'Brodins, hereditary antiquaries; the Maglanchys, hereditary judges. The Bards were Strabo's hymn-makers.

Mrs. Bryant felt that "The Isle of Song was soon to become the Isle of Saints;" and considered "Ireland of the Bards knew its Druids simply as men skilled in all magical arts, having no marked relation either to a system of theology, or to a scheme of ceremonial practice."

The *Brehon Law* gives little information respecting Druids, though the Brehons were assumed to have been originally Druid judges. St. Patrick has the credit of compiling this record.

These Brehons had a high reputation for justice; and yet it is confessed that when one was tempted to pass a false sentence, his chain of office would immediately tighten round his neck most uncomfortably as a warning. Of the Brehons, it is said by the editors—O'Mahony and Richey—"The learning of the Brehons became as useless to the public as the most fantastic discussions of the Schoolmen, and the whole system crystallized into a form which rendered social progress impossible." Though those old Irish laws were so oppressive to the common people, and so favourable to the hereditary chiefs, it was hard indeed to get the people to relinquish them for English laws.

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In 1522, English law existed in only four of the Irish counties; and Brehons and Ollamhs (teachers) were known to the end of the seventeeth century. The founding of the book of Brehon Law is thus explained:—"And when the men of Erin heard—all the power of Patrick since his arrival in Erin—they bowed themselves down in obedience to the will of God and Patrick. It was then that all the professors of the sciences (Druids) in Erin were assembled, and each of them exhibited his art before Patrick, in the presence of every chief in Erin.—What did not clash with the Word of God in the written law, and in the New Testament, and with the consciences of the believers, was confirmed in the laws of the Brehons by Patrick, and by the ecclesiastics and the chieftains of Erin."

ISLE OF MAN DRUIDISM.

The Isle of Man lies just between Ireland and Wales. Let us examine what can be shown about these matters therein.

Boetius, translated by Alfred the Great, had a particularly doubtful story to tell; too similar, alas! to the narratives of early Christian writers. "Cratilinth, the Scottish King, A.D. 277," said he, "was very earnest in the overthrow of Druidism in the Isle of Mon and elsewhere; and upon the occasion of Dioclesian's persecution, when many Christians fled to him for refuge, he gave them the Isle of Mon for their residence." He relates that Mannanan Beg "was the establisher and cultivator of religion after the manner of the Egyptians.—He caused great stones to be placed in the form of a circle."

Train, in his *History of Man*, refers to Mannanan Beg, Mac-y-Leirr, of the first century, having kept the Island

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under mist by his necromancy. "If he dreaded an enemy, he would cause one man to seem a hundred, and that by Art Magic." King Finnan, 134 B.C., is said to have first established Druids there. The Archdruid was known as *Kion-druaight*, or *Ard-druaight*. Plowden thought the Druids emigrated thither after the slaughter at Mona; others declare Mona to have been an Irish Druidical settlement. Sacheverell refers to Druidical cairns on the tops of hills, which were dedicated to the Sun, and speaks of hymns having what were called cairn tunes. Train says, "So highly were the Manx Druids distinguished for their knowledge of astronomy, astrology, and natural philosophy, that the Kings of Scotland sent their sons to be educated there." He thought that until 1417, "in imitation of the practice of the Druids, the laws of the Island were locked up in the breasts of the Deemsters." The old rude edifices of stone are still called *Tinan Druinich*, or Druids' houses. McAlpine says that *Druid* in Manx is *Magician*.

FRENCH DRUIDISM.

The *Derво* of Brittany were more ancient, said Henri Martin, than those Druids known to Romans; being "primitive Druids, a sacerdotal caste of old Celts." Yet Forlong, who believed the Gallic coast tribes long traded and intermarried with the Phœnicians, saw "abundant evidences for their worshipping Astarte and Herakles." They were Saronidæ, or judges. They were the builders, masons, or like Gobhan Saer, free smiths. Of Saer, O'Brien in his *Round Towers* says—"The first name ever given to this body (Freemasons) was *Saer*, which has three significations: firstly, *free;* secondly, *mason;* and thirdly, *son of*

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God." Keane calls him "one of the Guabhres or Cabiri, such as you have ever seen him represented on the Tuath de Danaan Cross at Clonmacnoise."

A Breton poem, *Ar Rannou*, a dialogue between a Druid and his pupil, is still sung by villagers, as it may have been by their ancestors, the *Venite* of Cæsar's story. The seat of the Archdruid of Gaul was at Dreux.

French writers have interested themselves in the Druidic question. The common impression is that Druids were only to be found in Brittany; but other parts of France possessed those priests and bards. Certainly the north-west corner, the region of megalithic remains, continued later to be their haunt, being less disturbed there. It was in Brittany, also, that the before-mentioned Oriental mysticism found so safe a home, and was nurtured so assiduously. But Druids were equally known in the south, centre, and north-east of France.

Dijon Druids, or the *Vacies*, were described in 1621 by Guenebauld of Dijon in *Le Reveil de Chyndonax, Prince des Vacies Drvydes Celtiqves Diionois.* Upon the tomb of the Archdruid Chyndonax was found an inscription in Greek, thus rendered by the Dijon author—

> "En ce tombeau, dans le sacré boccage
> Du Dieu Mithras, est contenu le corps
> De Chyndonax grand Prestre; mechant hors,
> Les Dieux Sanneurs le gardent de dommage."

Numbers of the learned went to view the inscription, and an urn found within the tomb. Mithras was a form of Apollo, or the Sun. There are other evidences of the southern Gaulish Druids using Greek characters, beyond Cæsar's assertions.

Guenebauld spoke of the prohibition of the Druidical religion by the Emperors Augustus, Tiberias, and Claudius; adding that the Druids "furent chassez du mont Drvys or

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Drvyde proche d'ostum, à cause de leur trop cruel sacrifice d'hommes." He declared that after the general Edict of Claudius "il ne s'en treuva plus, parmy les Gaulois." When banished from Gaul, they retired to Britain, though Druidesses were mentioned as being at Dijon in the time of Aurelian.

Beaudeau, in 1777, published *Memoire à consulter pour les anciens Druides Gaulois*, intended as a vindication of them against the strictures of Bailly in his letters to Voltaire. He had a great belief in the astronomical skill of the Druids, from their use of the thirty years cycle, the revolution period of the planet Saturn.

At the Congress of Arras, in 1853, the question debated was—"Up to what period Roman polytheism had penetrated into Belgic Gaul;—and up to what period continued the struggle between Polytheism and Christianity?" The French author remarks, "The Romans did but one thing—gave the names of their gods to the divinities of the people of Fleanderland. And these divinities—what were they? Evidently those of the country from which the people had been forced to flee."

Dezobry and Bachelets, in their *Dictionnaire de Biographie*, &c., affirm that "the Celtic word *derouyd* (from *de* or *di*, God, and *rhoud* or *rhouid*, speaking) signifies Interpreter of the gods, or one who speaks from the gods. According to others, the etymology should be, in the Gaelic language, *druidheacht*, divination, magic; or, better, *dern*, oak, and *wydd*, mistletoe." Acknowledging the ancient renown of their knowledge, it is admitted to be imperfectly known to us, though Pythagoreans pretended to be the founders thereof. The French authors had the following account of the Druids' great charm—

"They carried suspended from their neck, as a mark of dignity, a serpent's egg—a sort of oval ball of crystal, that

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in the time of Pliny tradition pretended to be the product of the foam of a quantity of serpents, grouped and interlaced together. This egg has been the origin of a crowd of superstitions, which, up to a century ago, were in vogue in Cornwall, Wales, and the mountains of Scotland; they continued to carry these balls of glass, called *serpent stones*, to which they attributed particular virtues."

Druidesses of Gaul had a sanctuary on the Isle of Sena, Finisterre. Druidism in France was condemned as late as 658, by the Council of Nantes; and, later on, by the Capitularies of Charlemagne. Renan supposed that Druidism remained a form exclusively national. Justin's remark, that "the Greek colony of Marseilles civilized the Gauls," may help to explain how Gaulish Druids knew Greek, and how some French writers traced Druidism to the Phocians of Southern Gaul. Then, again, we have Ammianus Marcellinus saying, "The Druids were formed into fraternities as the authority of Pythagoras decreed." Cæsar, in his account of Gaulish Druids, had clearly in his mind his own country's faith. They were like his own augurs, and their Archdruid was his *pontifex maximus*.

D'Arbois de Jubainville, in his account of Irish Mythology, has, of course, references to the Druids. He lays emphasis on the difference between those of Gaul and those of our islands. The judicial authority was vested in the *Filí*. These need not, like the Druids proper, celebrate sacrifices. He traces the word *file*, a seer, from the same root as the Breton *givelout*, to see.

The French author records that Polyhistor, Timagenus, Valerius Maximus, and others wrote of the north-western men holding Pythagorean doctrines; but he adds, that while a second birth was regarded by the Pythagoreans as a punishment of evil, it was esteemed by the others as a privilege of heroes.

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GERMAN DRUIDISM.

Louis de Baecker, 1854, gave an account of Teutonic Druidism, similar to that of the Belgæ of Britain, in his *De la Religion du Nord de la France avant le Christianisme.* He, unlike men of the Welsh Druidic school, joins Dr. Ledwich, and some Irish authorities, in tracing Druidism to the German and Scandinavian races, saying, "The religion of our pagan ancestors was that of Odin or Woden." But he evidently refers to north-eastern France rather than north-western, as he derives the religion from the Edda. In the book *Volu-Spa*, or the Priestess, the first song of the poetic Edda, he discovers what Ossian and other British and Irish bards describe as Spirits of the air, of earth, of waters, of plains, and woods. "Cæsar was deceived," says he, "when he said that the Germans had neither priests nor religious ceremonies; for Tacitus mentions them in his *Germania* in the most formal manner." By the way, if Cæsar was so mistaken about the Germans, whom he knew so well, is his evidence about Gaulish Druids worth much?

Baecker's northern Gauls had priests of various kinds. The sacrificers were called *Blodmanner*, or *Pluostari;* the sustainers of order were *Ewart* and *Gotes-ewart;* the protectors of sacred woods, *Harugari*, *Parawari*, or *Wihes-mart;* the prophets, *Spamadhr*, *Wisago*, *Vitega*, *Veitsga*, *Weissager*, *Wetekey*. The Priestesses were the *Vaulur*. The horse, bull, boar, and sheep were sacrificed. "It was in the middle of the wood," he writes, "that the Belgæ offered their sacrifices." The Belgic Britons, doubtless, had a similar Druidism.

Cæsar asserts that the Germans had no Druids, while he credits the German Belgæ of South Britain with having them.

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DRUIDICAL MAGIC.

As to magical arts, exercised by Druids and Druidesses, the ancient Irish MSS. are full of stories about them. Joyce has said, "The Gaelic word for *Druidical* is almost always applied where we should use the word *magical*—to spells, incantations, metamorphoses, &c." Not even China at the present day is more given to charms and spells than was Ireland of old. Constant application of Druidic arts upon the individual must have given a sadness and terror to life, continuing long after the Druid had been supplanted.

It was a comfort to know that magician could be pitted against magician, and that though one might turn a person into a swan or horse, another could turn him back again.

Yet, the *chewing of one's thumb* was sometimes as effectual a disenchanter as the elevation or marking of the cross in subsequent centuries. Thus, when Fionn was once invited to take a seat beside a fair lady on her way to a palace, he, having some suspicion, put his thumb between his teeth, and she immediately changed into an ugly old hag with evil in her heart. That was a simple mode of detection, but may have been efficacious only in the case of such a hero as Fionn. Certainly, many a bad spirit would be expelled, in a rising quarrel, if one party were wise enough to put his thumb between his teeth.

Charm-mongers, who could take off a spell, must have been popular characters, and as useful as wart-removers. It is a pity, however, that the sacred salmon which used to frequent the Boyne is missing now, when examinations are so necessary, as he or she who bit a piece forgot nothing ever after. Balar, the Fomorian King, was a good-natured fellow, for, finding that a glance from his right eye caused death to a subject, he kept that eye constantly closed.

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One way of calling spirits from the deep, to do one's will, was to go to sleep with the palms of both hands upon the cheek. The magic cauldron was not in such requirement as with the Welsh. But it was a Druidic trick to take an idol to bed, lay the hands to the face, and discover the secret of a riddle in dreams. Another trick reminds one of the skill of modern spiritualistic mediums, who could discover the history of a man by a piece of his coat; for, Cormac read the whole life of a dog from the skull.

Healing powers were magical. Our forefathers fancied that a part of enjoyment in heaven was fighting by day and feasting at night, the head cut off in daylight conflict resuming its position when the evening table was spread. The rival forces of Fomorians and Danaans had Druids, whose special work was to heal the wounded at night, so as to be ready for the next morning's battle.

In the *Story of Deirdri* it is written, "As Conor saw this, he went to Cathbad the Druid, and said to him, 'Go, Cathbad, unto the sons of Usnach, and play Druidism upon them.'" This was done. "He had recourse to his intelligence and art to restrain the children of Usnach, so that he laid them under enchantment, that is, by putting around them a viscid sea of whelming waves."

Nothing was more common than the raising of Druidic fogs. It would be easier to do that in Ireland or Scotland than in Australia. The *Story of Cu* speaks of a King Brudin who "made a black fog of Druidism" by his *draoidheacht*, or magic. Druidic winds were blasting, as they came from the East. The *Children of Lir* were made to wander on the Irish Sea till the land became Christian.

A wonderful story in an old MS. respecting Diarmuid is connected with the threatened divorce of the lovely Mughain, as no prince had appeared to her husband the King. "On this," says the chronicler, "the Queen went

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to Finnen, a Magus (Druid) of Baal or Belus, and to Easbad, named Aedha, son of Beg, and told them she was barren. The Reataire (chief Druids) then consecrated some water, of which she drank, and conceived; and the produce of her womb was a white lamb. 'Woe is me!' said Mughain, 'to bring forth a four-footed beast.' 'Not so,' replied Finnen, 'for your womb is thereby sanctified, and the lamb must be sacrificed as your first-born.' The priests blessed the water for her, she drank, and conceived. Say the priests, 'You shall now bring forth a son, and he shall be King over Ireland.' Then Finnen and Easbad Aedha blessed the Queen and the seed of her loins, and giving her more consecrated water, she drank of it, and called his name *Aedh Slaines*, because he was saved from the sacrifice."

Well might Vallenccy exclaim, "The whole of this story is strong of Chaldæan Paganism, and could not have been invented by any Christian monks whatever."

Cuchulainn of Ulster was much given to magic. He caught birds by it. He left his wife to be with a lady in fairy-land. Caught by spells, he was brought back home. He drank the draught of forgetfulness that he might not remember fairy-land, and she drank to forget her jealousy. All this is in *Leabhar na-h-Uidhré.*

When the Danaans raised a storm to drive off the invading hosts of Milesians, this was the spell used by Milesius, as told in the *Book of Invasions*:—"I pray that they reach the land of Erinn, these who are riding upon the great, productive, vast sea—that there may be a King for us in Tara,—that noble Erinn be a home for the ships and boats of the son of Milesius."

By the 14th Canon of the Synod at Armagh, as asserted for the year 448, a penance was exacted for any sooth-saying, or the foretelling of future events by an inspection

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of animals' entrails, as was the practice with the Druids. It is curious to see how this magic was, by the early writers, associated with Simon Magus; so much so, that, as Rhys observes, "The Goidelic Druids appear at times under the name of the School of Simon Druid."

Fionn was once coursing with his dog Bran, when the hare suddenly turned into a lady weeping for the loss of her ring in the lake. Like a gallant, the hero dived down and got it; but all he had for his trouble was to be turned by her into a white-haired old man. On another occasion he was changed into a grey fawn. But Fionn endured the metamorphoses of twenty years as a hog, one hundred a stag, one hundred an eagle, and thirty a fish, besides living one hundred as a man. The heroine Caer had to be alternate years a swan and a woman.

The *Kilkenny Transactions* refer to one Liban, transformed for three hundred years as a fish, or, rather a mermaid, with her lap-dog in the shape of an otter after her. Bevan, however, caught her in a net, had her baptized, and then she died. In the *Fate of the Children of Lir*, we read of Aoife, second wife of Lir, jealous of her husband's children by his first mate, turning them into four swans till her spell could be broken. This happened under the Tuath rule, and lasted nine hundred years. They are reported to have said, "Thou shalt fall in revenge for it, for thy power for our destruction is not greater than the Druidic power of our friends to avenge it upon thee." However, having musical qualities, they enjoyed themselves in chanting every night. At last they heard the bell of St. Patrick. This broke the spell. They sang to the High King of heaven, revealed their name, and cried out, "Come to baptize us, O cleric, for our death is near."

An odd story of the Druid Mananan is preserved in the *Ossian Transactions*. It concerned a magical branch, bear-

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ing nine apples of gold. They who shook the tree were lulled to sleep by music, forgetting want or sorrow.

Through that, Cormac, grandson of Conn of the hundred fights, lost his wife Eithne, son Cairbre, and daughter Ailbhe. At the end of a year's search, and passing through a dark, magical mist, he came to a hut, where a youth gave him a pork supper. The entertainer proved to be Mananan. The story runs, "After this Mananan came to him in his proper shape, and said thus: 'I it was who bore these three away from thee; I it was who gave thee that branch, and it was in order to bring thee to this house. It was I that worked magic upon you, so that you might be with me to-night in friendship.'" It may be doubted if this satisfied King Cormac.

A chessboard often served the purpose of divination. The laying on of hands has been from remote antiquity an effectual mode for the transmission of a charm. But a *Magic Wand* or *Rod*, in proper hands, has been the approved method of transformation, or any other miraculous interposition. Here is one *Wand* story relative to the romance of Grainne and Diarmuid:—"Then came the Reachtaire again, having a Magic Wand of sorcery, and struck his son with that wand, so that he made of him a cropped pig, having neither ear nor tail, and he said, 'I conjure thee that thou have the same length of life as Diarmuid O'Duibhne, and that it be by thee that he shall fall at last.'"

This was the boar that killed, not the Syrian Adonis, but a similar sun-deity, Diarmuid. When Fionn, the disappointed husband, in pursuit of the runaway, found the abductor dying, he was entreated by the beautiful solar hero to save him. "How can I do it?" asked the half-repentant Fionn. "Easily," said the wounded one; "for when thou didst get the noble, precious gift of divining at

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the Boinn, it was given thee that to whomsoever thou shouldst give a drink from the palms of thy hands, he should after that be young and sound from every sickness." Unhappily, Fionn was so long debating with himself as to this gift to his enemy, that, when he walked towards him with the water, life had departed from the boar-stricken Irish Adonis.

Dr. W. R. Sullivan has a translation of the *Fair of Carman*, concerning three magicians and their mother from Athens:—

"By charms, and spells, and incantations, the mother blighted every place, and it was through magical devastation and dishonesty that the men dealt out destruction. They came to Erin to bring evil upon the Tuatha de Danann, by blighting the fertility of this isle. The Tuatha were angry at this; and they sent against them Ai, the son of Allamh, on the part of their poets, and Credenbel on the part of their satirists, and Lug Laeban, *i. e.* the son of Cacher, on the part of their Druids, and Becuille on the part of the witches, to pronounce incantations against them. And these never parted from them until they forced the three men over the sea, and they left a pledge behind them, *i. e.* Carman, their mother, that they would never return to Erin."

A counter-charm is given in the *Senchus Mor*. When the Druids sought to poison St. Patrick, the latter wrote over the liquor:—

"Tubu fis fri ibu, fis ibu anfis,
Fris bru uatha, ibu lithu, Christi Jesus."

He left it on record that whoever pronounced these words over poison or liquor should receive no injury from it. It might be useful with Irish whisky; only the translator adds that the words of the charm, like most of the charms of the Middle Ages, appear to have had no meaning.

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Spiritualism, in all its forms, appears to have been practised by the Irish and Scotch Druids. Dr. Armstrong's *Gaelic Dictionary* has an account of the Divination of the Toghairm, once a noted superstition among the Gaels, and evidently derived from Druid-serving ancestors. The so-called prophet "was wrapped in the warm, smoking robe of a newly slain ox or cow, and laid at full length in the wildest recess of some lonely waterfall. The question was then put to him, and the oracle was left in solitude to consider it." The steaming body cultivated the frenzy for a reply, although "it was firmly believed to have been communicated by invisible beings."

Similar traditions are related by Kennedy, in *Fictions of the Irish Celts.* One of the tales is of Sculloge, who spent his father's gold. While out hunting he saw an old man betting his left hand against his right. At once he played with him for sixpence, but won of the ancient Druid a hundred guineas. The next game won, the old fellow was made to rebuild the Irishman's mill. Another victory brought him as wife a princess from the far country. But Sabina, when married, besought him to have no more to do with old Lassa Buaicht of the glen.

Things went on well a good while, till the man wanted more gold, and he ventured upon a game. Losing, he was directed to bring the old Druid the *Sword of Light.* Sabina helped her husband to a Druidic horse, that carried him to her father's castle. There he learned it was held by another brother, also a Druid, in an enchanted place. With a black steed he leaped the wall, but was driven out by the magic sword. At last, through Fiach the Druid, the sword was given to Lassa Buaicht. The cry came, "Take your Sword of Light, and off with his head." Then the un-spelled wife reappeared, and the couple were happy ever after.

Conn of the Hundred Battles is often mentioned in

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connection with Druids. One of the Irish MSS. thus introduces the Magical Stone of Tara:—"One evening Conn repaired at sunrise to the battlements of the Ri Raith or Royal fortress at Tara, accompanied by his three Druids, Mael, Bloc, and Bluicné, and his three poets, Ethain, Corb, and Cesare; for he was accustomed every day to repair to this place with the same company, for the purpose of watching the firmament, that no hostile aërial beings should descend upon Erin unknown to him. While standing in the usual place this morning, Conn happened to tread on a stone, and immediately the stone shrieked under his feet so as to be heard all over Tara, and throughout all Bregia or East Meath. Conn then asked his Druids why the stone had shrieked, what its name was, and what it said. The Druids took fifty-three days to consider, and returned the following answer:—'*Fal* is the name of the stone; it came from Inis Fal, or the Island of Fal. It has shrieked under your royal feet, and the number of the shrieks, which the stone has given forth, is the number of Kings that will succeed you.'"

At the Battle of Magh Tuireadh with the Fomorians, it is said that the chief men of the Tuatha de Danann "called their smiths, their brass-workers, their sorcerers, their Druids, their poets, &c." The Druids were engaged putting the wounded in a bath of herbs, and then returning them whole to the battle ranks.

Nash, who showed much scepticism respecting Druids in Britain, wrote:—"In the Irish tales, on the contrary, the magician under the name of Draoi and Drudh, magician or Druid, *Draioideacht*, *Druidheat*, magic plays a considerable part." The Cabiri play a great part according to some authors; one speaks of the "magic of Samhan, that is to say, Cabur." A charm against evil spirits, found at Poitiers, is half Gallic, half Latin. Professor Lottner saw

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that "the Gallic words were identical with expressions still used in Irish."

We are told of a rebel chief who was helped by a Druid against the King of Munster, to plague the Irish in the south-west by magically drying up all the water. The King succeeded in finding another Druid who brought forth an abundant supply. He did but cast his javelin, and a powerful spring burst forth at the spot where the weapon fell. Dill, the Druidical grandfather of another King of Munster, had a magical black horse, which won at every race.

Elsewhere is a chapter on the Tuatha de Danaans, concerning whom are so many stories of Druids. Attention is drawn by Rhys to "the tendency of higher races to ascribe magical powers to lower ones; or, rather, to the conquered."

A Druid's counsel was sometimes of service. A certain dwarf magician of Erregal, Co. Derry, had done a deal of mischief before he could be caught, killed, and buried. It was not long before he rose from the dead, and resumed his cruelties. Once more slain, he managed to appear again at his work. A Druid advised Finn Mac Cumhail to bury the fellow the next time head downward, which effectually stopped his magic and his resurrection powers.

Fintain was another hero of antiquity. When the Deluge occurred, he managed by Druidic arts to escape. Subsequently, through the ages, he manifested himself in various forms. This was, to O'Flaherty, an evidence that Irish Druids believed in the doctrine of metempsychosis. Fintain's grave is still to be recognized, though he has made no appearance on earth since the days of King Dermot.

It is not safe to run counter to the Druids. When King Cormac turned against the Craft, Maelgenn incited the

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Siabhradh, an evil spirit, to take revenge. By turning himself into a salmon, he succeeded in choking the sovereign with one of his bones. It was Fraechan, Druid of King Diarmaid, who made the wonderful *Airòhi Druadh*, or Druidical charm, that caused the death of three thousand warriors.

A King was once plagued by a lot of birds wherever he went. He inquired of his Druid Becnia as to the place they came from. The answer was, "From the East." Then came the order—"Bring me a tree from every wood in Ireland." This was to get the right material to serve as a charm. Tree after tree failed to be of use. Only that from the wood of Frosmuine produced what was required for a charm. Upon the *dichetal*, or incantation, being uttered, the birds visited the King no more.

In the *Book of Lecan* is the story of a man who underwent some remarkable transformations. He was for 300 years a deer, for 300 a wild boar, for 300 a bird, and for the like age a salmon. In the latter state he was caught, and partly eaten by the Queen. The effect of this repast was the birth of Tuan Mac Coireall, who told the story of the antediluvian colonization of Ireland. One Druid, Trosdane, had a bath of the milk of thirty white-faced cows, which rendered his body invulnerable to poisoned arrows in battle.

A Druid once said to Dathi, "I have consulted the clouds of the man of Erin, and found that thou wilt soon return to Tara, and wilt invite all the provincial Kings and chiefs of Erin to the great feast of Tara, and there thou shalt decide with them upon making an expedition into Alba, Britain, and France, following the conquering footsteps of thy great-uncle Niall." He succeeded in Alba, but died in Gaul. A brother of his became a convert to St. Patrick.

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Grainne, the heroine of an elopement with the beautiful hero Diarmuid, or Dermot, fell into her trouble through a Druid named Daire Duanach MacMorna. She was the daughter of King Cormac, whose grave is still shown at Tara, but she was betrothed to the aged, gigantic sovereign Fionn the Fenian. At the banquet in honour of the alliance, the Druid told the lady the names and qualities of the chiefs assembled, particularly mentioning the graceful Diarmuid. She was smitten by his charms, particularly a love-mark on his shoulder, and readily agreed to break her promised vows in order to share his company. When she fled with him, Fionn and his son pursued the couple, who were aided in their flight by another Druid named Diorraing, styled a skilful man of science.

A fine poem—*The Fate of the Son of Usnach*—relates the trials of Deirdri the Fair. Dr. Keating has this version: "Caffa the Druid foreboded and prophesied for the daughter (Deirdri, just born), that numerous mischiefs and losses would happen the Province (Ulster) on her account. Upon hearing this, the nobles proposed to put her to death forthwith. 'Let it not be done so,' cried Conor (King), 'but I will take her with me, and send her to be reared, that she may become my own wife.'" It was in her close retreat that she was seen and loved by Naisi, the son of Usnach, and this brought on a fearful war between Ulster and Alba.

The *Book of Leinster* has the story of one that loved the Queen, who returned the compliment, but was watched too well to meet with him. He, however, and his foster-brother, were turned, by a Druidic spell, into two beautiful birds, and so gained an entrance to the lady's bower, making their escape again by a bird transformation. The King had some suspicion, and asked his Druid to find out the secret. The next time the birds flew, the King had his

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watch; and, as soon as they resumed their human appearance, he set upon them and killed both.

The *Book of Leinster* records several cases of Druids taking opposite sides in battle. It was Greek meeting Greek. The northern Druids plagued the southern men by drying up the wells; but Mog Ruth, of the South, drove a silver tube into the ground, and a spring burst forth. Ciothrue made a fire, and said a charm with his mountain-ash stick, when a black cloud sent down a shower of blood. Nothing daunted, the other Druid, Mog Ruth, transformed three noisy northern Druids into stones.

Spiritualism, as appears by the *Banquet of Dun na n-Gedh*, was used thus:—"This is the way it is to be done. The poet chews a piece of the flesh of a red pig, or of a dog or cat, and brings it afterwards on a flag behind the door, and chants an incantation upon it, and offers it to idol gods; and his idol gods are brought to him, but he finds them not on the morrow. And he pronounces incantations on his two palms; and his idol gods are also brought to him, in order that his sleep may not be interrupted. And he lays his two palms on his two cheeks, and thus falls asleep. And he is watched in order that no one may disturb or interrupt him, until everything about which he is engaged is revealed to him, which may be a minute, or two, or three, or as long as the ceremony requires—one palm over the other across his cheeks."

The author of *The Golden Bough*, J. G. Frazer, judiciously reminds us that "the superstitious beliefs and practices, which have been handed down by word of mouth, are generally of a far more archaic type than the religions depicted in the most ancient literature of the Aryan race." A careful reading of the chapter on the "Superstitions of the Irish" would be convincing on that point.

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Among ancient superstitions of the Irish there was some relation to the *Sacred Cow*, reminding one of India, or even of the Egyptian worship of Apis. The *Ossianic Transactions* refer to this peculiarity.

There was the celebrated *Glas Gaibhne*, or Grey Cow of the Smith of the magical Tuaths. This serviceable animal supplied a large family and a host of servants. The Fomorians envied the possessor, and their leader stole her. The captive continued her beneficent gifts for many generations. Her ancient camps are still remembered by the peasantry. Another story is of King Diarmuid Mac Cearbhail, half a Druid and half a Christian, who killed his son for destroying a Sacred Cow. But Owen Connelan has a translation of the *Proceedings of the Great Bardic Institute*, which contains the narrative of a cow, which supplied at Tuaim-Daghualan the daily wants of nine score nuns; these ladies must have been Druidesses, the word *Caillach* meaning equally *nuns* and *Druidesses*. As W. Hackett remarks, "The probability is that they were pagan Druidesses, and that the cows were living idols like Apis, or in some sense considered sacred animals."

One points out the usefulness of the Irish Druids in a day when enchantments prevailed. Etain, wife of Eochaid, was carried off by Mider through the roof, and two swans were seen in the air above Tara, joined together by a golden yoke. However, the husband managed to recover his stolen property by the aid of the mighty spell of his Druid.

NEO-DRUIDISM.

Edward Davies, author of *Mythology and Rites of British Druids*, was one of those who, with Jolo Morganwg, regarded the Arkite theory as having its foundation in Genesis. But,

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