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## ARTICLE II.

## DRUIDISM.

By Rev. Edward D. Morris, Auburn, N. Y.

MOST of those errant tribes who at the beginning of the Christian era inhabited the northern and north-western portions of the continent of Europe, were distinguished by striking similarities of language, of institutions, and of character. Such resemblances plainly lead to the conclusion, that these numerous tribes, scattered over the wide regions from the shores of the Atlantic to the Baltic Sea, were the dispersed offshoots of some common oriental stock. During those long periods which lie beyond the limits of authentic history, they probably migrated at intervals from the sunny lands of Central Asia to the plains of Germany and Gaul; constantly pressed onward, partly by necessity, and partly by the larger hordes which followed them, till at last, they found their devious course obstructed by the waters of the western ocean. But, through all their long and frequent wanderings, and in spite of mutual diversities and conflicts, they carefully preserved the prominent peculiarities of that common stock from which they sprang. Their numerous dialects are manifestly the kindred scions of some generic root. Their social and civil institutions have many curious and striking points of similarity. Their religious sentiments, and their varied modes of worship, appear like fragments of some ancestral system, such as may in some past age have flourished along the banks of the Euphrates and the Indus.

None of these points of resemblance is more obvious or more remarkable than DRUIDISM. From that period in which the regions of Northern Europe were first subdued by Roman power, to that in which the advancing influences of Christianity had rooted out most of the prominent characteristics of Celtic barbarism, this peculiar institution is known to have held an important position, and wielded a commanding influence, among nearly all the Indo-Germanic tribes. As a social system, at once civil and religious, it entered into all departments of society; and left its distinct impression on all the prominent features of individual

and national life. Druidism, therefore, becomes an interesting theme of research and of contemplation, in reference both to its distinctive elements, and to its position as one of those primary forces whose influences sometimes combined and sometimes antagonistic, have evolved as a resulting product the complex society of modern Europe. It will be the main design of this Article, to bring into view the more prominent features and elements of this peculiar system; and to define the nature and extent of its influence over those unlettered tribes among whom it flourished.

It is a striking fact, that almost every nation, at some early period in its organic growth, has had within itself a distinctive body of men, who, by superior wisdom and greater sagacity, have attained a commanding position and wielded a controlling influence in the various departments of the national life. The potent agency of the several schools of Grecian philosophy, in moulding the character and shaping the destinies of the Hellenic tribes, has been the subject of frequent remark. An equally potent influence was exercised at an earlier period by that powerful priesthood, who, in the brighter days of ancient Egypt, dwelt at Thebes and Memphis. Nor are such phenomena peculiar to ancient times. The priests of modern Judea, and the philosophers of modern China, still retain a similar position. Holding in their hands the keys of both knowledge and religion, and standing at the sources of the national character, they are fashioning the ideas and coloring the destiny of the uncounted millions who swarm that eastern world. The influence of such classes as these, varies in proportion to the stage of progress at which the nation has arrived, and to the unfolding of individual sagacity and enterprise. In the earlier periods of national development, when knowledge is possessed by few, and physical is regarded as superior to mental power, that influence is extensive and controlling. But, as knowledge increases and is more generally diffused, and men begin to realize the superiority of intellectual over bodily force, it rapidly declines in both extent and potency, and is speedily lost in the general enlightenment and growth.

Precisely such a body of men were the ancient *DRUIDS*. They were the sole possessors of whatever learning and science had found their way into those northern wilds. They were the sole makers and administrators of law, subordinate to the royal authorities. They were the only teachers of both wisdom and

religion. They, therefore, necessarily occupied a commanding position in the rude tribes among whom they dwelt. No body of men, ancient or modern, ever wielded a more absolute sway. They controlled the movements of both princes and people. They incited to war, or persuaded to peace. They scattered or withheld instruction at pleasure. They were the only guides, that sought to conduct the faltering traveller through the vale of life to a distant eternity.

Before proceeding to speak more minutely of the Druidic order, it is desirable to define more exactly the precise limits within which their influence was exercised. Although they were scattered throughout the whole of Northern Europe, they, nevertheless, appear to have flourished mostly in certain special districts. The region of Bretagne and the northern part of Wales, including the modern isle of Anglesey, seem to have been the grand centres of their power. Here were the residences of the chief men of the order. Here were established their largest schools, and their most spacious temples. Here were gathered together the most learned and discreet of their number, whose decrees, prepared in council, the inferior members of the order were bound to carry into execution. Here was found all the learning, that could be obtained from internal or from foreign sources. In these strongholds, the order were able for many centuries to maintain their position against every opposing power. Nor was it till these seats of Druidic empire had been overthrown and destroyed by the Roman axe and fire, that the influence of the order began to waver and decline.

Bearing this fact in mind, let us now proceed to the proposed investigation. There are three directions in which this singular body of men should be considered: as *men of learning*, on whom devolved the entire business of public and private instruction; as a *political organization*, to whom was committed the administration of justice, whether civil or criminal; and as *religious teachers*, whose calling it was to instruct the ignorant multitudes in those solemn relations which this life bears to another state of being. For it is an unquestionable fact, that the Druidic order sustained each and all of these relations to the tribes among whom they dwelt. Secular instruction in every department was given by them alone. The forms of public law were moulded by their hands. They constituted the only civil tribunal. They had the management of all religious ceremonies;

and from them came the only light that shone on that barbaric darkness.

As *men of learning*, the Druids appear to have been widely known and greatly revered. Like the Romish priesthood of the Middle Ages, they held within their grasp all the learning of their times; and lent their scholarly aid even to men of the most exalted position. To them came all the youth of Northern Europe for training and instruction. Even the sons of nobles and monarchs sat at their feet, in order to be initiated into their curious mysteries. These they often bore away into their retired groves, in the heart of which their schools were always located; where they trained them, sometimes for a long term of years, in natural, in political, and in religious science. The instruction in all of these departments was always oral, and generally in the form of triadic verse.<sup>1</sup> It is a curious fact, that, although the order were unquestionably acquainted with the art of writing, no attempt was ever made to preserve their instructions in any connected form. Every such attempt was understood among them to be a punishable crime; so anxious were they to preserve their acquirements within their own limits, and thus to continue their ascendancy over the popular mind.

It is obvious, that much uncertainty must exist in relation to the actual amount of knowledge possessed by the Druidic order. They lived among an uncultivated people. They were almost wholly cut off from contact with Grecian and Roman civilization. And yet we have clear evidence, that for the rudimental times in which they lived, their learning in some directions was eminent and extensive. That they were somewhat acquainted with astronomy, and, therefore, with all those branches of science which are subordinate to this, is evident from their ability to determine by solar and lunar motions the return of their monthly and annual religious solemnities. They also laid claim to a thorough acquaintance with botany and mineralogy, with espe-

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<sup>1</sup> The British Triads, among the most curious phenomena to be found in literature, are based on the assumption that every substance has three, and only three, proper qualities; and that all true science consists in the correct discovery of these, and all true instruction in the accurate statement of them to others. Let the following serve as an illustration: Tri chynnorion doethineb: uvuddhâl i ddeddvau Duw; ymgais ab lles dyn; a dioldev yn lew pob digwydd bywyd. There are three characteristics of wisdom: obedience to the laws of God; effort for the good of men; and brave endurance of the chances and mischances of life.

cial reference to the uses of plants and minerals in the practice of medicine. Rhetoric, and, especially, the kindred art of poetry, were made by them an object of particular study and culture.<sup>1</sup> The political relations of the order created a necessity for the cultivation of some crude form of political science; for the enacting and administration of law cannot be carried on, even in the rudest forms of society, without the development of, at least, the rudiments of jurisprudence. But their position as teachers of religion, gave them still fairer opportunity for meditation and improvement. Their speculations in this department, so far as they have been preserved, give ample evidence of much patient and ingenious thought respecting the nature and attributes of God, the position and character of man in this life, and his existence and destiny hereafter. Taliesin, the earliest of the Welsh bards, speaks of himself as a member of the Druidic order, and acquainted with their mysteries; and frequently alludes to their views of the formation of the world, of the nature and powers of man, and of the inherent principles of things.

So much, at least, is known respecting the amount of information possessed by this peculiar order. Far more than this has sometimes been asserted; but, as there is reason to believe, on insufficient evidence. It may, however, fairly be presumed, though it be improper with our present light to assert, that their knowledge extended in other directions besides those already mentioned. For an acquaintance even with the rudiments of astronomy and medicine, legislation and theology, implies such a degree of development as renders the possessor competent to understand, and make himself master, to the same extent, of every other department of human investigation. The presumption in question is, therefore, warrantable, though the facts are not at hand to prove it true.

As a *political body*, the Druids seem to have exercised a powerful influence among all the Celtic tribes. It has already been remarked, that they were the sole enactors and administrators of law, subordinate to the royal authorities. The civil code was thus almost exclusively under their control. To every crime they attached a religious as well as civil penalty; thus making every act of transgression a moral as well as a political offence.

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<sup>1</sup> The general subject of the Ancient Poets and Poetry of Wales, and, as included in this, the special relations of the Bardic to the Druidic order, have already been considered at sufficient length in Bib. Sac. April, 1850.

Before them as a supreme tribunal, from whose decision there was but one appeal, came every offender against the public order. In the execution of their decrees, whether relating to civil or to religious affairs, they often visited those who refused to obey them, with the most condign punishment. Resistance made the victim both an outlaw and an apostate. Civil power granted him no protection; and society no favor. Cut off, like the Hebrew leper, from all communion with his kind, he wandered away accursed and neglected into some distant mountain recess, where his life and his miseries were ended together.

This intimate connection between the civil institutions and the religious system of the Celtic tribes, is a striking feature in their history. It suggests, at once, the blended civil and religious elements in the Mosaic code. It has even been urged with great earnestness as a convincing argument to prove the oriental origin of the Druidic order. Like that of the early Hebrews, the Celtic law was rendered doubly effective by thus superadding to civil punishment a fearful priestly condemnation. Over the one race as over the other, the mandate of recognized authority must have wielded an undisputed control. It is to this blending of the civil and the religious, that we are also to trace that strong sentiment of fraternity which existed so generally among these northern tribes. Though widely separated in position, and sometimes quite diverse in character, this common element of Druidism bound them all into one living and effective whole. At no period was the strength of this sentiment more manifest, than when the several tribes of Britain, incited by Druid leaders, maintained for so many years a bloody conflict with the invading legions of Rome. Nor was it, till the most vigorous efforts had succeeded in destroying the grand centre of Druidism in the ancient isle of Mona, and had thus cut this common bond of union, that victory was secured to the Roman arms.

As a *religious organization*, the Druids deserve a special consideration; for, while they acted as teachers of secular learning, and occupied so prominent a place in political affairs, they were still preëminently a religious body; their spiritual function being viewed and treated as the most important. Under this general head, we will notice successively their doctrines, their rites and ceremonies, and their temples and sacrificial altars:

*Doctrines.* The doctrines of the order, if we may judge from the scanty remains yet in preservation, were a somewhat curious

compound of poetic fancies and philosophical speculations. The author of the *Celtic Researches*, who was profoundly versed in the archaeology of Northern Europe, has affirmed that no body of men in heathen nations, ever preserved the early religious opinions of mankind with more simplicity or with more sincerity. At the same time, it must be admitted, that, with these truthful views of the nature of religion, there was blended much that was in a high degree fanciful and superstitious.

The Druids believed in a single supreme Deity, who created and governed all things by his own inflexible will. To this supreme being they gave the names of *Sûl*, the sun; *Faran*, the thunder; and perhaps certain others, such as *Hesus* and *Toutates*. They also affirmed the existence of many inferior divinities; some of whom were creations of the original Deity, while others were princes and heroes, who, for their bravery and virtue, had been exalted to this high station. These inferior beings were especially ordained to carry into execution the mandates of the One supreme; though they possessed an inherent power over men, which they could exercise independently of all superior control.

The Druids also held, that man is a fallen intelligence, who by his fall has lost all knowledge of former states of being; and that in order to regain his original position, he must pass through several preparatory stages of existence, of which this life is the first and introductory. They believed that man is the grand end of nature, as well as the most glorious being in it; for whom, in his fallen condition, this world and all it contains were especially created. Maintaining that man is capable of discerning good and evil, they held that, if he preferred the evil, he lapsed again into a lower and more brutish state of being; from which he might, though with less hope of success, attempt to regain his original position. But if, on the other hand, he preferred the good, he was borne at death to a higher sphere, where the memory of his first mode of being returned, and where he rapidly advanced toward the perfection which properly belongs to him. They also held that even in this life the good and the true are becoming more and more established; that, finally, the whole race would reach such a stage of perfection, that this world would be of no further service as a scene of trial and discipline; and that, when this culminating period arrived, and the race had been translated to a higher abode, the earth would be swept out of being.

To these fundamental tenets, the order added many minor speculations, which it would be impracticable here to notice in detail. These general statements, taken in connection with all that is implied in them, will furnish the reader with an accurate impression of the doctrinal element in the Druidic religion.

*Rites and Ceremonies.* Respecting the modes of worship observed by the Druids, little can be known with certainty. The remaining ruins of their places of congregation furnish plain evidence, that they frequently offered sacrifices; nor can it be denied, that human life was sometimes made an offering to their supreme divinity. There are, however, some of their ceremonies, such as the veneration paid by them to the oak, and their monthly gathering of the mistletoe, respecting which authentic information has come down to modern times.

The regard entertained by the ancient Britons for the oak, a regard which has been perpetuated in Wales even to the present day, is deserving of some notice.<sup>1</sup> The earliest Welsh poetry extant frequently speaks, in Druidic phrase, of the oak as the natural symbol of their supreme Deity. In all their religious observances, the members of the order were crowned with garlands made from the leaves of the oak. All instruction, whether secular or religious, was given in groves of oak. In these consecrated places, far removed from all disturbing scenes, the Druids held their daily and monthly worship. Frequent allusions to this fact are found in the classic authors. In no particular did the Roman armies encounter so great difficulty in their assaults upon the British tribes, as in their endeavors to enter these secret penetralia. Nor was it till they had almost wholly destroyed their opponents, that they were able to pierce those dim and imposing forests, which protected the central ones of the order, in the little isle of Anglesey.

Perhaps the most curious among the Druidic observances was the monthly gathering of the mistletoe. When the moon had reached the sixth day of her waxing, the Druids proceeded with great pomp, and accompanied by the multitudes, to some tree on which the desired plant had been found to be growing. White bulls were led with the procession, for the purpose of sacrifice. A priest, clad in white, ascended the tree, and severed from it

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<sup>1</sup> It is generally admitted that the term Druid is a proper derivation from the Cymric word Dryw or Derw, an oak. That the ordinary Welsh word, Dewydd, which signifies a Druid, is a derivative from this old root, is unquestionable.

the coveted prize, which was received in a white cloth below. The consecrated victims were then sacrificed; and the ceremony was concluded with feasting and general rejoicing. The plant thus obtained was supposed to be a valuable remedy for all diseases, and especially a preventive against poison. The monthly gathering of it was, therefore, an occasion of great joy among the people.

*Temples and Sacrificial Altars.* It is now generally conceded, that most of the ruins found in different sections of England and Wales, are of Druidic origin. The traces of the Roman invasion are so distinct from these more ancient remains, that it is impossible to confound them. We are carried back to a period anterior to the times of Caesar and Paulinus, a period when quite another race lived and flourished in the Anglian Isle. These remains are commonly divided into three classes: the Gorsedd, the Cromlech, and the Cistvaen. We will notice them in their order:

The gorsedd at Stonehenge stands on a level area, at the summit of a hill, around the base of which a circular bank and trench are still visible. In this area sixty stones, from thirteen to twenty feet in height, are arranged in a circle of an hundred feet in diameter. Within this circle is another, composed of forty stones about six feet in height, arranged in the same order as those of the outer circle. Within this inner circle is an elliptical ring, composed of stones ten in number, which increase in size as they approach one of the extremities. In one of the foci of this ellipse lies a marble slab, sixteen feet in length and four in width, which is surrounded by a number of single stones of a smaller size than any before mentioned. In each of these circles many of the stones are still upright, though some of them have been prostrated in the course of ages.

A still more wonderful ruin is found at Avebury, in Wiltshire. Within the outer circle of this gorsedd stands the present village; the area enclosed by it being more than twenty acres. The first circle of stones within this area is thirteen hundred feet in diameter; and within it are arranged, as at Stonehenge, two smaller circles, set in the manner before described. Here also is a central stone of immense size which appears to have once subserved the purpose of an altar for religious worship. The avenues to each of these structures, are still distinctly visible in the plain below, though the intervening centuries must have done much

to obliterate them. There can be little doubt that these remains were originally places of Druidic worship. Bones of deer and oxen are found in abundance in and around them; indicating that sacrifices were frequently offered there.

The cromlech is a much smaller structure than the gorsedd. It commonly consists of a large flat stone resting on several supporters. One of these remains, found but a short distance from Brecknock, is constructed as follows: Three rude stones are firmly set in the ground at the three points of a rectangular triangle; and on the top of these lies a large flat stone eight feet long and four in width. On all of these stones are drawn a number of strange characters never yet deciphered. In the surrounding area is found a number of smaller stones, though now so disarranged as to render their relation to the rest, a matter of much uncertainty.

A much larger cromlech is still standing near Pentrev Ivan, in the county of Pembroke. Here, as in the former instance, are found three perpendicular stones about ten feet in height; and on these, a flat stone eighteen feet by nine. Near by is another flat stone, about ten feet by five, which is supposed to have broken off from the former. Around this central group, arranged in the form of an arc, are seven other upright stones, which appear to have been part of the original structure. Many other specimens of the cromlech have been found in different parts of Wales and England. It is now generally conceded, that they were constructed and employed as altars for public sacrifice. No examination of them has ever led to the discovery of any other design. It is quite probable that they were intended for this purpose alone.

The cistvaen is commonly a space enclosed by four stones, arranged like the sides of a chest, and surmounted by a horizontal slab as a lid or cover. A group of five such structures, set in order around what was once a large cromlech, is found near Newport. The lids of these chests vary from ten to thirteen feet in length, and are of corresponding width. Within the enclosed spaces have been found ashes, particles of bone, pieces of earthen ware, and other similar articles. In some other instances, these chests have been discovered to contain bones of men and animals, human skulls and hair, and even the entire skeletons of men. These structures are very numerous; and sometimes of enormous size. One is found, the parts of which

are supposed to weigh from twenty to twenty-five tons. They were once supposed to be the graves of distinguished chieftains; but no certain indications of such a use have as yet been discovered. Their ordinary position, near some cromlech or gorsedd, and the material commonly found in them, lead rather to the conclusion that they were employed either as minor altars, or for some other purpose in the Druidic worship.

The question respecting the origin of this educational, political and religious system, is deserving of some notice. Beyond a doubt, it is to be viewed as a reproduction on European soil of some gigantic system, cherished by these barbaric tribes before they had abandoned their oriental home. It may have been some stupendous scheme of idolatry, resembling, in the main, the Buddhism or the Brahminism of Eastern Asia. It may have been, as the author of the *Celtic Researches* affirms, some degenerate form of that primal religion implanted by the Deity in the heart of the race, and which continued to shed a dim but mellow light long after the full orb of truth had sunk below the horizon. But, whatever its parentage, it was certainly oriental. Borlase, in attempting to prove this point, has drawn out a somewhat striking parallel between the British Druids and the Persian Magi. Other writers have instituted a similar comparison between this order and both the Jewish and the Roman priesthood. And, though these writers often fail to establish the special point on which they are insisting, they still furnish ample and satisfactory foundations for this general conclusion.

It is also probable that the Druids had existed in Gaul and Britain for several centuries anterior to the Christian era. At the time of the first Roman invasion, they had reached the height of their popularity and influence. But, as fast as the Romans extended their conquests, and introduced a new style of civilization, the importance of the order gradually declined. The Roman leaders, finding in them their most determined enemies, and seeing that both princes and people were constantly incited by them to fiercer resistance, adopted most vigorous measures for their extirpation. They erected Roman temples, and compelled those whom they had subjugated to frequent them. They forbade the observance of Druidic rites and ceremonies, and severely punished all who transgressed their requisition. They deprived the Druids of all authority in civil affairs, and, so far as practicable, of all social or religious influence. Under such rigid

regulations as these, the order soon lost much of their original preëminence.

A still more destructive crusade was carried on by Suetonius Paulinus, in the reign of Nero. Leading an army against Mona, the grand centre of the order, he made himself master of the island; drove away or destroyed its former possessors; cut down their sacred groves, and overturned their structures for religious worship. This was a vital stroke. The spirit of the order was broken; and their influence soon declined. They retired to certain sections of Wales and Ireland, where they retained for some centuries a feeble hold upon the native inhabitants. Little by little, like the state of society in which they lived, they faded away; until at length, in the introduction of a higher civilization, the very traces of their existence became extinct.

Some general thoughts, connected with the present investigation, will close this somewhat protracted Article. The vast extent of the influence exerted by the Druidic order, and the peculiar qualities of that influence, require us to make it a subject of special consideration. Hume affirms, that no idolatrous worship ever attained such an ascendancy over mankind, as that of the ancient Gauls and Britons. Ramsay declares, that no system of superstition was ever more fearful; none ever better calculated to impress ignorance with awful terror, or to extort implicit confidence from a deluded people. When the ministers of a prevailing religion undertake to exercise an influence in social and civil affairs, that influence is usually indirect, and easily counteracted. But when any such body of men grasp the triple sceptre of dominion, and control at the same time the intellectual, the political, and the religious interests of any people, their power becomes tremendous and dreadful. Whenever such a phenomenon occurs in an enlightened state, where the evils attendant upon it will surely be seen and counteracted, the view excites at once our detestation and our fear. But we are scarcely able to realize how much more dangerous and detestible such consolidated influence becomes among an uncultured people, where there is far less power of resistance, and where the tendencies to superstition and submission are far more strong and universal.

Care should be taken, however, to view the influence of this priestly order from a proper point of observation. The Druids are not to be tried by the standard of more modern times. They

lived in a barbarous age; a period when almost every ray of that earlier revelation, that came from Eden and from Sinai, had been dissipated by the fogs of a formal Judaism; and when the clearer revelation, which came by Jesus Christ, had not yet begun to dawn. Not even the partial civilization of Egypt or Syria, of Greece or Rome, had penetrated the wilds of Northern Europe. All the light which shone on that worse than Egyptian darkness, came, unassisted, from within. It may, therefore, well befit us, on whom the true light now shineth, to be generous in our estimate, and lenient in our judgment, of this remarkable body of men. Great as were their deficiencies, and fatal as were their errors, we shall be, when we fully appreciate their circumstances, far more ready to pity than to blame.

That great and grievous evils grew out of this system, cannot be denied. All knowledge, religious as well as secular, was shut up within the sacred enclosure of the order. Their political intrigues were often productive of the most hurtful consequences. Their judicial decisions were often marked by injustice, and their penal enactments by the severest cruelty. They kept from all, except a favored few, the scanty knowledge of religious truth which they themselves possessed. They threw around religion the mystic veil of superstition; they overloaded it with senseless rites and ceremonies. They ruled alike by their despotic power the vassal and the prince; none too low, and none too high, to be their subject. That these were great and grievous evils is manifest. And they are evils necessarily incident to such a system. They are its direct and legitimate fruits. Wherever in the progress of humanity such a body of men, possessing such powers and exalted to such a supremacy, have appeared on the stage of life, their appearance has necessarily been connected with such calamities as these.

Still, it should not be supposed or asserted, that the influence of the Druidic order was entirely and exclusively injurious. Macaulay has wisely remarked, that a society, sunk in ignorance and ruled by mere physical force, has great occasion to rejoice when a class, of which the influence is intellectual and moral, rises to ascendancy. The sway of intellectual and moral power, even when embodied in such men as the ancient Druids, is better than the sway of corporeal energy. It was better for the tribes of Britain, half barbarian, and fitted only to be vassals to some higher race, to be subjected to the domination of their

priesthood rather than to the tyranny of their uncultured princes. Though it be certain, that the priesthood were lordly and exacting, it must be borne in mind, that the rulers were lordly and exacting also. The Druids at least did something toward disseminating knowledge, and introducing a higher style of humanity among the people. They established a system of jurisprudence which, all full of errors though it was, was far preferable to the mandate of a sovereign, or the judgment of ungoverned passion. They cultivated, in some degree, a religious instinct, which, without any guidance, might have played itself out in still ruder and grosser forms. They added dignity to human life, and solemnity to human action, by connecting them with another and retributive state of being.

But Druidism is especially interesting, when it is contemplated in its relation to our own times; as being one of those primary forces, that have combined to form the British character. The influence of such systems lives and acts, long after the representations of them have passed off the stage; even after the systems themselves have been forgotten. Some of the elements, deposited in it by the Druidic order, are still visible, as they have always been visible, in the character of the Welsh people. All the power of the Roman and the Saxon invasion could not drive them out. All the energies of Christianity have failed to eradicate them. The student of Welsh history from the fifth to the twelfth century is constantly impressed with this fact. The poetry of that era, especially that of Taliesin, Aneurin and Llywarch Hên, abounds in allusions drawn from the Druidic system. Many of the laws of that period have clear marks of a Druidic origin. The prevalent opinions and superstitions of the nation seem to have sprung from that ancient stock. Even their views of Christianity were tinged by the Druidic element. And, if we descend to later times, we are still confronted by the same fact. The modern bards of Wales still preserve, with undiminished love, that metrical system which, though perfected at subsequent periods, had its origin in those days when Druidic science was taught in the antique triplet, entitled *Englyn Milwr*. Many of those quaint fancies and superstitions, extant in the mountainous districts of the principality, are fragments of Druidic lore. Nor have twenty centuries of change and revolution, even with all that Christianity has accomplished among them, been able to eradicate the affection for Druidism from the heart of the nation.

The contemplation of such a class of men as the order of British Druids, cannot fail to be of service to any serious mind. No one, who loves the study of humanity, in whatever form it may display itself; no one, who is interested in those great primal movements, by which human society has been brought to its present stage of progress; and, especially, no one who loves the Christian religion, and traces with delight its immeasurable superiority over every scheme of human devising, can rise from such a contemplation without being quickened and profited thereby. If the present survey of Druidism, necessarily abbreviated and condensed even to dryness, shall have in any manner contributed to such a result, the labor laid out in its preparation will be amply rewarded.

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### ARTICLE III.

#### CASTE IN THE ISLAND OF CEYLON.

By Rev. Benjamin C. Meigs, Rev. Daniel Poor, D. D., and Rev. William W. Holland, Missionaries of the A. B. C. F. M. in Ceylon.

It is not difficult to define caste, as set forth in the Shastras of the Hindûs, or as it originally existed, and perhaps still exists, on the Continent of India. But caste, as it exists in this Province, has been greatly modified by many causes, which have been long in operation. For three centuries and a half, the people have been under the dominion of the Portuguese, the Dutch, and the English. All these governments did much, if not to exterminate, at least greatly to modify caste. Many of the people have, for a long period, been familiar with many of the truths and forms of Christianity. And, though caste still has an existence among us, it has been so modified, by these and other causes, that some of its original features are now scarcely visible.

In answering the question, *What is Caste?* (as it exists on the Continent of India), we cannot do better than to give the following extract from a document published by the Madras Missionary Conference, in 1850. It is as follows: