AN ESSAY,

ON THE QUESTION,

"WHETHER THE BRITISH DRUIDS OFFERED HUMAN SACRIFICES."

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TO

JOHN HENRY VIVIAN, ESQ. M. P.

(For Swansea and its Contributory Boroughs)

IN TESTIMONY

OF HIS PRIVATE WORTH,

AND OF THE INTEREST WHICH HE HAS UNIFORMLY

EVINCED IN EVERY MEASURE CALCULATED

TO IMPROVE WALES,

AND ELEVATE THE CHARACTER OF WELSHMEN,

THE FOLLOWING PAGES

ARE RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED BY

THE AUTHOR.

AN ESSAY.*

SACRIFICES are known to be nearly coeval with the fall of man; for we read in the Sacred Record, that Abel offered "of the firstlings of his flock, and of the fat thereof."† They must also have been appointed by God himself,‡ as it

* It is proper here to state that the Essay in its present form exhibits several features which were wanting in the original composition.

† *Gen.* iv. 4.

‡ The most plausible arguments in favour of the human origin of sacrifices are drawn from the following passages of Scripture:—"For I spake not unto your fathers, nor commanded them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt offerings or sacrifices." *Jer.* vii. 22.—"I will not reprove thee for thy sacrifices or thy burnt offerings, to have been continually before me. I will take no bullock out of thy house, nor he-goats out of thy folds.—Will I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats? Offer unto God thanksgiving, and pay thy vows unto the most High." *Ps.* l. 8—14.—"Thou desirest not sacrifice, else would I give it; thou delightest not in burnt offering." *Ps.* li. 16. "Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire; mine ears hast thou opened: burnt offering and sin offering hast thou not required." *Ps.* xl. 6.—It is replied that the expressions of the Psalmist must be understood either in a comparative sense as importing that sacrifices were not so pleasing to God as moral obedience, or as denoting their insufficiency to make a proper atonement for sin; according to the Apostle, "It is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats, should take away sins;" (*Heb.* x. 4.) and as reproving, therefore, the vain dependance of those who rested upon them for pardon and divine acceptance, without looking by faith to their great antitype, the sacrifice of Christ. It cannot be supposed that the Psalmist meant that God had never instituted sacrifices, because he had certainly done so by Moses.

is morally impossible that Abel should have possessed a correct knowledge of their nature and intent without an express revelation.

Generally speaking they had a threefold object: first, they were designed as an acknowledgement on the part of men that they received all their good things from God, and that He had a right in the whole of that of which they offered Him a part; secondly, as means of repentance and humiliation for sin, of the desert of which they were reminded by the suffering and death of the victim substituted in their room, and punished in their stead; thirdly, they were

With respect to the passage in Jeremiah, it cannot import that sacrifices were not appointed by God prior to the deliverance of the Israelites out of Egypt; for the paschal lamb, "the sacrifice of the Lord's passover," (*Exod.* xli. 27.) was expressly so instituted. For a better understanding of it, it must be taken in connection with the words immediately following: "But this thing commanded I them, saying, Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and ye shall be my people: and walk ye in all the ways that I have commanded you, that it may be well unto you." Two senses are therefore attached to the passage: first, that after God had brought Israel out of Egypt he did not *first* speak to them, and command them, concerning sacrificial rites, but concerning moral obedience. It was *before* the new institution of sacrifices at Mount Sinai that God "made for them a statute and an ordinance, and proved them, and said, If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the Lord thy God, and wilt do that which is right in his sight, and wilt give ear to his commandments, and keep all his statutes, I will put none of these diseases upon thee, which I have brought upon the Egyptians." (*Exod.* xv. 25, 26.) Secondly, the words may be taken in a comparative sense: "God did not command the fathers concerning sacrifices, but this he commanded them, to obey his voice:" that is, He did not command them concerning sacrifices, so much as concerning moral obedience; "to obey being better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." (1 *Sam.* xv. 22.) Accordingly, God is said to "desire mercy and not sacrifice;" (*Hos.* vi. 6.) or mercy rather than sacrifice. In this manner negatives are frequently used for comparatives. "It was not you that sent me hither, but God;" (*Gen.* xlv. 8.) not so much you, as God. "Your murmurings are not against us, but against the Lord;" (*Exod.* xvi. 8.) not so properly against us, as the Lord. "Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life;" (*John* vi. 27.) that is, not with so much assiduity and anxiety for the former as for the latter. See *Jenning's Jewish Antiquities*, B. I. c. v.

intended to typify, and to assist their faith in, that promised sacrifice of atonement which the Son of God was to offer in due time.*

That Abel was aware of this general purport is evident from the Divine approbation bestowed upon his oblation. "The Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering."† It will be probably urged, that although Abel could not of himself have discovered the *typical* nature of sacrifices, yet that he naturally discerned in them a part of their proper intent—an acknowledgement of God's dominion and temporal mercies, and the desert of sin, and that his offering was good as far as it went, and proportionably acceptable. If so, then upon the same principle Cain's offering would have been entitled to some degree of approbation, inasmuch as that likewise was correct as far as it went, involving an acknowledgement of the goodness of God, and man's dependance thereon. "Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the Lord." Yet we are told that "unto Cain and to his offering he had *not* respect."‡ Where lies the essential difference? The Apostle furnishes an answer; "By *faith* Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain."§ Now this faith necessarily implies as its ground and foundation some *divine promise* connected with the rite. And what could that promise be but the atoning sacrifice of the Lamb of God? A religious act typical of such mysteries, and withal so conformable to the Divine will, was indeed "a more excellent sacrifice" than any which could have been invented by man.

As sacrifices were acceptable rites of worship before, so were they after the deluge, and previously to the establishment of the Mosaic economy. Thus Noah when he went out of the ark "builded an altar unto the Lord; and took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt

* Ibid. † *Gen.* iv. 4. ‡ *Gen.* iv. 3, 5. § *Heb.* xi. 4.

offerings on the altar. And the Lord *smelled a sweet savour;*"* that is, was well pleased therewith.

According to the law of Moses it was indispensably requisite that the sacrificial victims should consist of clean and gentle animals. The circumstance of the Divine injunction on that subject being there for the first time expressly recorded, does not however exclude the idea of a prior revelation, or deprive the act of Noah of design. It is an indisputable fact, that the Mosaic code inculcates many positive rites and religious observances, which had been practised by the true worshippers of JEHOVAH from the beginning of the world. As the use of animals of harmless diposition and clean habits was intended to typify the purity and innocence of the future substance, there can be no doubt that it constituted an integral and necessary part of sacrifice ever since the rite was originally instituted. It must have been in conformity with this ancient custom that Noah selected for his offering "of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl," and the same was evidently contemplated in the unequal number of animals of both classes that were taken into the ark.

The *sacrifice* of *clean animals* may therefore be considered as an essential feature in the religion of the diluvian patriarch. As priest of his family he would take care to instruct them also in the nature and performance of this duty; and as long as they dwelt together, and respected his authority, no material degeneracy on the subject could occur. Even that great practical ungodliness, displayed by "the children of men" on the plain of Shinar, does not necessarily imply the profession of heterodoxy. Their express object, as stated in Scripture, was to "make themselves a name,† lest they

* *Gen.* viii. 20, 21.

† It may be inferred from this expression that the enterprize did not comprehend all mankind, as is popularly supposed; for in the estimation of whom could all men, united in one society, be great or famous? The same conclusion may be drawn from the name of *Nimrod*, the chief

should be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth."* The rebellious act would rather involve a total abandonment or extensive neglect of religious practices, than a willing and intentional perversion of dogmas. Habitual disregard of the rites and duties of religion, on the part of an isolated community of men, is certainly the forerunner of doctrinal mistakes. The revealed truth is gradually effaced from the public memory, so that succeeding generations who may be desirous of renewing their homage to the Creator will have lost many of the essential traits of primitive worship, and, in their attempt to restore them, will become "vain in their imaginations," and fall into deeper errors.

What gave rise to the abominable practice of sacrificing human victims is not clear. Some think that it originated in a misunderstanding of the example of Abraham. It would appear however that the custom was too general to have derived its being from that solitary instance, more particularly as that occurred some time after the separation of families. It prevailed in Phœnicia, in Palestine, in the countries of Ammon and Moab, in Idumea, in Arabia, in Egypt, among the Scythians, the Thracians, in the islands of Rhodes, Chios, and Cyprus; even among the Athenians; also in India, the South Seas, and America. More probably it arose either from the very natural notion common to mankind, that whatever we most value must be offered to God, or from the circumstance that the patriarchs, who were the priests as well

leader of the undertaking. His own subjects could never have styled him *The Rebel*, or *Son of Rebellion*. It must be confessed that the words of Moses, as they stand in our version, seem clearly to involve all mankind in the crime; but in the Hebrew, the Septuagint, and the Vulgate versions, no such meaning is conveyed. In every one of them the passage runs thus: "And the earth was of one lip, and one voice was to them all; and it fell out during the journeying of those from the east:" where it is obvious that the announcement as to the sameness of language is merely parenthetical.

* *Gen.* xi. 4.

as the supreme judges of their families, required the blood of the offenders, as forfeited by a Divine law.

There can be no doubt that the practice in question, as well as other religious corruptions, was first adopted by the accursed descendants of Ham. Nevertheless we find that among them the true religion was more or less maintained as late as the year 543 after the flood.* The exact period when human sacrifices commenced is uncertain. The first allusion to them in holy writ refers to the time of Moses, who forbids them to the children of Israel, as appears from the following passages; "Thou shalt not let any of thy seed pass through the fire to Molech."† "Whosoever he be of the children of Israel that giveth any of his seed unto Molech, he shall surely be put to death; the people of the land shall stone him with stones."‡ "There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire."§ This prohibition naturally supposes the existence of the abominable practice. But if it merely alludes to the custom of making children pass through the flames, or between two fires, which is generally called *lustrare per ignem*, we have, notwithstanding, the direct testimony of Scripture that the Israelites when they reached the promised land actually immolated human victims, in imitation of the heathens, and in honour of their gods: "yea, they *sacrificed* their *sons* and their *daughters* unto devils, and *shed innocent blood*, even the blood of their *sons* and of their *daughters*, whom they sacrificed unto the idols of Canaan; and the land was *polluted with blood*."‖

It does not appear from Scripture that human sacrifices were ever intentionally offered to the true God. They are there invariably spoken of in connection with Molech, Baal, devils, idols, and false gods in general. Even the Israelites on every occasion that they committed the error, seem clearly

* *Gen.* xxvi. † *Lev.* xviii. 21. ‡ Ib. xx. 2. § *Deut.* xviii. 10.
‖ *Psalm* cvi. 37, 38.

to have forgotten the God of their fathers. They sacrificed their children not unto Him, but unto *devils*, and the *idols* of Canaan. "Have ye offered unto ME sacrifices and offerings in the wilderness forty years, O house of Israel? But ye have borne the tabernacle of your *Moloch* and *Chiun* your *images*, the *star of your god*, which ye made to yourselves."* But though we cannot determine the exact period when human sacrifices were first introduced, it was unquestionably subsequent to the general partition of the earth. That event took place in the days of Peleg, who was born about a century after the flood, and died ten years before Noah. Religion was then pure. "The whole earth was of one language (opinion) ond of one speech (sentiment)."† In all probability the different families reached their respective habitations with an unadulterated creed. This is strongly intimated by St. Paul in his eloquent discourse at Athens: "God that made the world and all things therein, hath made of one blood *all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth*, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the *bounds of their habitation;* THAT THEY SHOULD SEEK THE LORD, if haply they might feel after him, and find Him."‡ In some instances at least division and actual possession were simultaneous. Thus Moses having enumerated the seven sons of Japheth, and his grandsons by Gomer and Javan, expressly adds; "*by these* were the isles of the Gentiles *divided in their lands;* every one after his tongue, after their families, in their nations."§

Now according to the Jews, who are admitted to be the best expositors of the historical part of the Old Testament, this palpable statement would include Britain, for the "isles of the Gentiles" are by them interpreted to mean the continent‖ of Europe, and all its adjacent islands.

* *Amos* v. 25, 26. † *Gen.* xi. 1. ‡ *Acts* xvii. 24, 26, 27. § *Gen.* x. 5.

‖ In sacred Geography the word *island* does not always mean a spot surrounded by water. It rather imports a *settlement* or *plantation;* that is to say, a colony or establishment, as distinct from an open, un-

This view of the early colonization of Britain, and the probable introduction of the patriarchal worship, is moreover supported by our best national traditions. We subjoin extracts from a series of Triads which purport to be "memorials of the events which befel the race of the Cymry from the age of ages."

"There were three names given to the Isle of Britain from the beginning:—Before it was inhabited it was called Clas Merddin *(the sea-girt green spot)*. After it was inhabited, it was called Y Vel Ynys *(the Honey Isle)*; and after the people were formed into a commonwealth by Prydain the son of Aedd Mawr *(the Great)*, it was denominated Ynys Prydain *(the Isle of Prydain*, or *Britain)*. And no one has any right to it but the tribe of the Cymry; for they first settled in it; and before that time no persons lived therein, but it was full of bears, wolves, crocodiles and bisons."*

"The three awful events of the Isle of Britain.——First, the bursting of the lake of waters, and the overwhelming of the face of all lands; so that all mankind were drowned, except Dwyvan and Dwyvach,† who escaped in a naked vessel (without sails) and of them the Isle of Britain was repeopled."‡

"The three chief master works of the Isle of Britain.—— The ship of Nevydd Nav Neivion, which carried in it a male and a female of all living, when the lake of waters burst forth.

appropriated region. So Job xxii. 30. "He shall deliver the *island* of the innocent," i. e. *settlement* or *establishment*. And Isaiah xlii. 15. "I will make the rivers *islands*;" rather *settlements* of human population. *See Calmet's Dict. by Taylor, sub voc.* ISLANDS; *and Parkhurst, sub voc.* אי.

* Myv. Arch. Vol. II. Triad i.

† The *godlike man* and *woman*. The man in the succeeding Triad is called Nevydd Nav Neivion, which imports the *celestial one*, the *Lord of the waters*. "Our old Bards call him *Dylan ail Môr; Dylan*, or *Dyglan, son of the sea*, from *Dy-glaniaw, to land*, or *come to shore*—whence perhaps, *Deu-calion*." Davies's Celtic Researches, p. 163.

‡ Triad 13.

The drawing of the *avanc** to land out of the lake by the branching oxen of Hu Gadarn *(the Mighty)* so that the lake burst no more.

And the stones of Gwyddon Ganhebon, on which were read the arts and sciences of the world."†

" The three benefactors of the race of the Cymry.——The first, Hu Gadarn, who first shewed the race of the Cymry the method of cultivating the ground, when they were in the country of Hâv [namely where Constantinople now stands] before they came into the Isle of Britain."‡

" The three national pillars of the Isle of Britain.—— First, Hu Gadarn, who first brought the nation of the Cymry to the Isle of Britain. They came from the country of Hâv,§ which is called Defrobani [that is, the place where Constantinople now stands], and they came over the sea of Tawch‖ to the Isle of Britain, and to Llydaw,¶ where they settled."**

* An amphibious animal. † Triad 97.

‡ Triad 56. Iolo Goch, a Bard who flourished from about A. D. 1370 to 1420, alludes to the fact recorded in the Triad;—

" Hu Gadarn—
After the deluge, held
The strong beamed plough, active and excellent."

§ The country of Hâv, literally translated, would be " *the summer country.*" " Hâv, in our old orthography (as in *Lib. Land.*) would be *Hâm;* it may import *Hæmus,* or *Hæmonia. Defrobani* may either be *Dy-vro-banau,* the *land of eminences,* or *high points, Thrace* in general; or else *Dyvro-Banwy,* the *land* or *vale of the Peneus,* Thessaly, Hæmonia." *Davies's Celtic Researches,* p. 165.

‖ *Môr Tawch;* literally the *Hazy Sea,* that is, the German Ocean, the haze of which is well known to mariners. Perhaps it should be the *Dacian Sea,* for Germany in the middle ages frequently went by the name of *Dacia.* Polydore Virgil says that the Dacians moved from the middle of Germany to the coast opposite to Britain; that they inhabited the shore of the German sea, and from thence continually harrassed the English. " *Hæc itaque gens ferox, quæ Germanicum nunc Oceanum accolit.——Haud enim Dacia longo oceani maris intervallo ab Angliâ discreta est.*"

¶ Letavia or Lexovia, *the water side.* This name is confined at the present day to *Britany;* but it formerly comprehended the entire coast of Gaul.

** Triad 4.

"The three social tribes of the Isle of Britain.——The first was the tribe of the Cymry that came with Hu Gadarn into the Isle of Britain, because he would not possess a country and lands by fighting and persecution, but justly and in peace.

The second was the tribe of the Lloegrians,* who came from Gwasgwyn;† and they were descended from the primitive tribe of the Cymry.

The third were the Brython who came from the land of Llydaw, and who were also descended from the primitive tribe of the Cymry.

These were called the three peaceful tribes, because they came by mutual consent and permission, in peace and tranquility; and these three tribes had sprung from the primitive race of the Cymry; and the three were of one language and one speech."‡

The words inserted within crotchets, relative to the geographical position of the country of Hâv, do not belong to the original Triads, but are the comment of some antiquarian at least as old as the middle of the twelfth century,§ inserted no doubt on the authority of documents or traditions existing at the time.

The substance of the preceding memorials on the subject

* The dwellers about the Loire or Liger.

† Gwas-Gwyn or Gwas *Gwynt*, the country of the *Veneti*, about the mouth of the Loire, and not *Vasconia*.——It was the country to which the Britons sent their fleet, in order to assist the Celtæ of Gaul, their relations, against the arms of Cæsar. Compare Triad 14 with Cæsar, B. G. III. 8, 9. *Davies's Celtic Researches, p.* 155.

‡ Triad 5.

§ To the copy, from which a transcript of these Triads was made for the Myvyrian Archaiology, the following note is annexed;—"These Triads were taken from the book of Caradoc of Nantgarvan, and from the book of Jevan Brechva, by me, Thomas Jones of Tregaron—and these are all I could get of the three hundred—1601." Caradoc of Nantgarvan, or Llangarvan, lived about the middle of the twelfth century.——Jevan Brechva wrote a compendium of the Welsh Annals down to 1150.

under consideration is this;—that Britain was first inhabited by a colony from the East which came over under the guidance of a person, in whose days, or not long previously the universal deluge took place. Thus much is clear; but perhaps we may further deduce from them the following particulars;—a recognition of the principle which annexes Britain to the isles appropriated by the sons and grandsons of Japheth. "No one has any *right* to it but the tribe of the Cymry, for they *first* settled in it." They took possession of it "*justly* and in peace." Also that these primary occupants were in no wise connected with the rebellion of Nimrod;*—they were emphatically a "social and peaceful nation."

Devotedness to the arts of peace and the principles of justice involves the practical cultivation of primeval wisdom. In their migration the Cymry were engaged in no broil or contention which would interrupt the regularity of the machinery of instruction. When they arrived in the island they adopted the principle of the grand division as the basis of their civil constitution, for Hu Gadarn "collected the race of the Cymry and *disposed them into tribes.*"† He also improved the art of oral tradition, as appears from the following Triad;—

"The three inventors of song and record of the race of the Cymry.——Gwyddon Ganhebon, the first man in the world that composed vocal song (poetry).

Hu Gadarn, who first adapted vocal song to the preservation of memory and record.

And Tydain Tad Awen, who first conferred art on poetic song, and system on record.

* Sanchoniathon, speaking of those people who were dispersed from Babel, says, "These are the people who are described as *Exiles* and *Wanderers*, and at the same time are called the *Titans*. Euseb. P. E. L. i. See also Job chap. xxx. It is remarkable that whilst almost all nations have traditionally retained traces of acquaintance with these wandering giants, none appears to have claimed them for its ancestors.

† Triad 57.

From what was done by these three men originated Bards and Bardism; and the arranging of these things into a system of privilege and discipline was (afterwards) performed by the three primary Bards, Plennydd, Alawn, and Gwron."*.

The order observed here relative to the origin and progress of poetry necessarily places Gwyddon Ganhebon prior to Hu Gadarn in point of time, and therefore before the general dispersion of mankind. The inference receives additional support from the peculiar expression used in reference to him: —he was " the first man in the *world* that composed vocal song." We have seen the same term in connection with his name embodied in another Triad;—" The stones of Gwyddon Ganhebon, on which were read the arts and sciences of the *world.*"

The prudence and foresight displayed by Hu Gadarn in adapting poesy for traditionary purposes can not be too highly admired. Verse is quickly and generally learned, its influence over the feelings is great, it dwells long on the memory, and from the nature of its structure almost defies perversion.

Still poetry was of the simplest kind; it was reserved for Tydain at a subsequent period to " introduce order and method"† into it. His improvements, whatever their precise character was, must have been of considerable importance, as he has always been honoured by posterior Bards with the distinguishing title of " Tad Awen," or " Father of the Muse."

It is observable that the improvements recorded in the Triad refer exclusively to the art of oral tradition. No mention is made of new doctrines. It was for the purpose of preserving existing customs and tenets that the regulations of Hu Gadarn and Tydain Tad Awen were expressly introduced.

The persons just enumerated from whom " originated Bards and Bardism," were of " the race of the Cymry."

* Triad 92. † Triad 57.

The Lloegrians and Brython arrived in the island before they had forgotten their primitive tongue, or had lost the original and sound principle of just and peaceable possession. That they were here before Prydain the son of Aedd Mawr, who "organized a social state and sovereignty in Britain" about a thousand years before Christ, is evident from the following Triad, in which he is mentioned as having determined the limits and tenure of the three colonies;—

"There are three principal provinces in the Isle of Britain; Cymru, Lloegyr, and Alban. Each of these is subject to the sovereignty, and is governed according to the common law of each province under one sovereign, *according to the limitation of Prydain the son of Aedd Mawr.*"*

It does not appear that these later colonies introduced any distinctive system of their own. The hypothesis is not at least countenanced by the tradition which prevailed in Gaul in the time of Julius Cæsar;—"Disciplina in Britanniâ reperta, atque in Galliam translata esse, existimatur."† Indeed the pliancy of their disposition, which was frequently exhibited in more recent times, fully warrants the supposition that they conformed to the customs of the older inhabitants, and adopted their religious institutes with promptitude, though they did not permit them to occupy a deep place in their feelings.‡ Still there was no penal enactment to enforce the general adoption of Bardism. "Before the time of Prydain, there was no justice but what was done by favour, nor any law but that of superior force;"§ neither had the Bards "a *licensed* system, or privileges, or customs, otherwise than what they obtained through kindness and civility, under the protection of the nation and the people."‖

* Triad 2. † De Bell. Gall. l. vi. 13.

‡ Druidical monuments occur frequently in the *central* counties, and in the *west*, from Cornwal to Cumberland; whereas, comparatively, few traces of them are discovered in the *eastern* part of the Island.

§ Triad 4. ‖ Triad 58.

When the original principles of justice and benevolence ceased to be the sole regulators of the public mind, it became necessary to revise the constitution, and adapt it to the altered circumstances of the times. This was undertaken by Prydain. He "suppressed the dragon of tyranny, which was a tyranny of pillage and contempt of equity, that had sprung up in the island,"* and consolidated the several states, as before intimated, under a general union which elected and acknowledged a supreme head.

In his time also, it is presumed, Bardism was reduced into a regular institution, and invested with rights and privileges. This event is recorded in the following Triad;—

"The three primary Bards of the Isle of Britain;—Plennydd, Alawn, and Gwron; that is, these formed the privileges and customs that appertain to Bards and Bardism, and therefore they are called the three primary Bards. Nevertheless there were Bards and Bardism before, but they had not a licensed system; and they had neither privileges nor customs otherwise than what they obtained through kindness and civility, under the protection of the nation and the people, before the time of these three. [Some say that these lived in the time of Prydain the son of Aedd Mawr, but others affirm that they flourished in the time of Dyvnwal Moelmud, and this information they derive from ancient manuscripts, entitled Dyvnwarth the son of Prydain]."†

It appears from the bracketted clause that there were two opinions formerly entertained relative to the time when these primary Bards lived. As however there is in the extant code of Dyvnwal Moelmud clear allusion to the pre-existence of the national college, there can be no doubt that the latter hypothesis is erroneous.

Here also it must be remarked, that the improvements introduced by Plennydd, Alawn, and Gwron, do not seem to

* Triad 55. † Triad 58.

have altered the doctrines or affected the fundamental principles of the system at all. They were confined to its external and temporal condition. "There were Bards before," though not completely incorporated and vested with exclusive privileges.

Such is the testimony of the Historical Triads respecting the origin and progressive advancement of the plan adopted by the Ancient Britons for the perpetuation of their primitive tenets, rites, and observances.

Its character is more fully developed by the laws of Dyvnwal Moelmud, who lived about 400 years* before the Christian era. We learn from them that the Bardic order was divided into three distinct classes, and that to each were assigned distinct and specific duties. They are thus described:—

"There are three orders of the profession of Bardism;—1. *The Chief Bard,* or the Bard of full privilege, who has acquired his degree and privilege through discipline under a master duly authorised, being a Conventional Bard. His office is to preserve the memory of the arts and sciences, whilst he shall continue in his office of Bard regularly instituted; and also to preserve every record and memorial of the country and tribe respecting marriages, pedigrees, arms, inheritances, and rights of the country and nation of the Cymry.

2. *The Ovate,* whose degree is acquired in right of his possessing natural poetic genius, or praiseworthy knowledge, which he shall prove by the correctness of his answers when examined before a customary and honourable congress of the Bards; or where there is no such congress, by a lawful session granted by the tribe of the lord of the district; or by twelve of the judges of his court; or by twelve jurors of the court in the customary manner. The Ovate is not to

* Myv. Arch. Vol. ii. Brut Tysilio.

be interrogated respecting any regular discipline through which he may have passed, nor respecting any thing else, except that his view of the sciences be strictly accurate. This is so regulated for the maintenance of science, lest there should be a deficiency of regular teachers, and the arts and sciences depending upon memory and regular instruction should be lost: and also for the further improvement of arts and sciences by the addition of every new discovery approved by the judgement of masters and wise men; and confirmed as such by them; and also lest the advantage arising from the powers of natural genius and invention should be repressed.

3. *The Druid Bard;* who must be a Bard regularly initiated and graduated, of approved wisdom and knowledge, and of elocution sufficient to express what his judgement and intelligence dictate. His duty is to give moral and religious instruction in the convention of the Bards, in the palace, in the place of worship, and in every family, in which he has full privilege. He is raised to this office according to the privilege granted by reason and the regular court of the tribe, and is elected by lot, which election is guaranteed by the vote of the convention."

We see here that the parochial system was adopted in the case of the Druid, or religious functionary, which secured his ministrations for the community at large. He was moreover, in common with the Chief Bard and Ovate, extensively invested with national privileges and immunities, which enabled him to devote the whole of his time and attention to his proper office, as will appear from the following Law-Triads;—

"There are three privileged arts or professions that have the privilege of complete liberty: that is, every man who thoroughly understands and professes them, has peculiar rights besides those which belong to him as a free born Briton: these are *Bardism*, metallurgy, and *learning* or *literature*. Each of these has a right to five

free acres* of ground in consideration of his profession, exclusive of, and in addition to the land due to him as a native Cimbrian. No man must study two of these arts; and if he should, he only enjoys the emoluments arising from one of them; for no single individual can attend to two arts or offices at one time with proper effect and regularity."

"There are three orders of the profession of Bardism; the Chief Bard, the Ovate, and the Druid Bard: each of these three has a just and lawful claim to five free acres of land in right of his profession, exclusive of what he is entitled to as a free born Briton. For the right by profession does not abrogate that by nature, nor the natural right the professional."

"There are three privileged persons in a neighbouring country: the Bard, the Minister of religion, and the Chief of the tribe. The privilege of embassy from a bordering kingdom can be granted to one of these three only. Naked arms must not be presented against any of these three, whether the countries to which they belong be at war or peace: for unless learning, religion, and political knowledge, have privilege and protection, the tribes that are at war cannot be brought to be at peace. It is therefore indispensably necessary to neighbouring countries that Ambassadors should be so privileged and protected, that they may go and return in peace and safety, when their mission and office are by authority for the purpose of concord."

"There are three persons who are not to be compelled to bear arms: a conventional Bard, a Scholar of the court and the place of worship, and a Judge; because arms are incom-

* "The measure of a lawful acre;—four feet in the length of the short yoke; eight in the close yoke; twelve in the lateral yoke; sixteen in the long yoke; and a rod of equal length with that in the hand of the driver, with his other hand upon the middle knob of that yoke; and as far as that reaches on each side of him is the breadth of the acre; and thirty times that is its length." *Welsh Laws.*

"Sixteen feet are in the length of the yoke; and sixteen yokes make the length of the acre; and two make its breadth." *Ibid.*

patible with their station and offices; and also because no weapon ought to be in the hand of him, who under the privilege of God and his tranquillity diffuses the arts and virtuous sciences, and is publicly employed in consequence of the need of the country and the tribe."

"There are three progressions, that wherever they go they are entitled to support and maintenance: they who have the privilege of distinction; they who have the privilege of Bards; and they who have the privilege of orphans."

"There are three kinds of proprietors;—the free born;—retainers of the court; and men of learning. The first of the three are termed commoners (laymen) and have the privilege of tenure upon land and emoluments; the second have the privilege of office, declared by the law; and the third, who are men of learning, have the privilege of teachers, that is, a rate from every plough within the district in which they are authorized teachers; and their land by privilege free; and free maintenance by privilege of their sciences."*

We are not expressly told in the Moelmutian code what were the religious rites and doctrines of the Druids. It is however abundantly and very clearly inferred that they observed particular days and seasons on which they publicly worshipped the One True God, and inculcated maxims of the *purest morality.*

We proceed now to the most direct, and probably the most authentic, documents on the subject of ancient Druidism—the traditions of the Silurian chair. To notice all the maxims and institutes of the system as represented there would be foreign to our purpose. It behoves us however to describe the excellent method adopted for the diffusion and perpetution of all their traditions. They are briefly and generally specified in the following Triad;—

"The three memorials (or mediums of memory) of the

* Myv. Arch. Vol. iii; Laws of Dyvnwal Moelmud.

Bards of the Isle of Britain; memorial of song; memorial of conventional recitation; and the memorial of established usage."*

Two respectable members† of the Bardic Chair of Glamorgan, lineal successors of the ancient sages of Britain, have, upon the authority of additional aphorisms, minutely detailed the time and manner of holding a convention.

"The regular times of holding a Gorsedd or meeting," says W. Owen, "were the two solstices, and equinoxes; subordinate meetings might also be held every new and full moon, and also at the quarter days, which were chiefly for instructing disciples.....The Gorseddau or meetings were always held in the open air, and in the face of the sun and eye of the light.....At the Gorseddau it was absolutely necessary to recite the bardic traditions; and with this whatever came before them was considered and determined upon."‡

"The didactic songs and aphorisms of the Bards," observes E. Williams, "were always laid before their Grand Meetings, Conventions, or Curialities, of the Solstices and Equinoxes; there they were discussed with the most scrutinizing severity; if admitted at the first they were reconsidered at the second meeting; if then approved of they were referred to the third meeting; and being approved of by them, they were ratified or confirmed; otherwise they were referred to the Triennial Supreme Convention for ultimate consideration, where all that had been confirmed at the Provincial Conventions were also recited, and the disciples, that there attended

* E. Williams's Lyric and Pastoral Poems, Vol. ii. p. 230.

† Viz. William Owen (Dr. W. O. Pughe) F. A. S. the celebrated Welsh Philologist and Lexicographer; and Edward Williams, or as he was called among the Bards, Iolo Morganwg, to whom Southey alludes in these lines:—

"Iolo, old Iolo, he who knows
The virtue of all herbs of mount, or vale,
Or greenwood shade, or quiet brooklet bed,
Whatever love of science, or of song,
Sages or Bards of old have handed down."——*Madoc.*

‡ "Bardism," prefixed to the Elegies of Llywarch Hen, p. xlvi.

from every province, enjoined to learn them, that thereby they might be as widely diffused as possible: these were recited for ever afterwards, annually at least, at every Curiality, or Convention in Britain. This being the practice, it was impossible for perversion or interpolation to take place, every thing of this kind would be soon detected and rejected; all the Bardic Traditions were thus to be for ever recited annually at one or other of the four Grand Meetings of the year: being thus guarded in every province, it was impossible for them to deviate materially from Truth."*

The Bardic Traditions include of course the tenets and customs of the Druidical or religious department.

"The whole of his (the Druid's) principles were universally diffused in the Gorseddau."†

By fixing the origin of British Druidism in patriarchal times, and describing the progress and completion of the excellent machinery whereby its designs were worked, we have prepared the reader to expect a corresponding degree of primitive integrity in the traditions preserved. It will be found, accordingly, that they embody the leading principles of the Patriarchal creed, as those principles have been expressly recorded by Moses. It is remarkable that the errors and corruptions of Druidism are proportionable to the degree of clearness in which the original subjects are represented in the Bible as maintained by the primitive worshippers of God. Thus, few and obscure hints are given in the Mosaic account of the condition of the soul after death, and of the resurrection of the body. On these points the Druids erred, and in the imagination of their hearts built the doctrine of the metempsychosis.

This doctrine may be considered the genius of Druidism as distinguished from Revelation. It imparted its influence to every tenet, rite and custom, of which the original nature or purport was either forgotten or but partially understood.

* Lyric Poems, Vol. ii. p. 229. † Dr. Pughe's Dict. sub voc. *Derwydd.*

The *mode* and *matter* of sacrifices were too clearly defined in the primitive world to be easily mistaken by posterity, however the object and intent of them might be forgotten or distorted. Accordingly the Bardic memorials testify that the Druids "sacrificed *animals*, which were always those of the *least ferocity of disposition.*"

They appear to have retained the knowledge of the original nature of sacrifices so far as to regard them in the light of "a religious co-operation with Divine benevolence," which in itself indeed involves the abstract principle of the sacrificial economy. Nevertheless they rendered this view of them subservient to the all-pervading doctrine of transmigration.

"The sacrifice of animals, which were always those of the least ferocity of disposition, was a religious co-operation with Divine benevolence, by raising such an animal up to the state of humanity, and consequently expediting his progress towards felicity."*

Looking upon the purport of sacrifices in connection with the doctrine of the metempsychosis as developed in this extract, a superficial observer would naturally infer that all animals below man might be indiscriminately selected for the altar. It would appear to some, no doubt, that there was a greater necessity for putting to death the more vile and savage, inasmuch as the punishment of the souls indwelling them was greater. However, the original injunction to sacrifice only the clean animals, and the habitual compliance of the early patriarchs with the same, were too positive and tangible to allow of any modification.

When therefore the Druid-Bard applied his attention to the subject, and investigated the reason of the Divine command for such a difference in the victims, he saw it in the general dispensation of Providence. He saw that the gentlest animals were more liable in the common course of nature to

* E. Williams's Poems, Vol. ii. p. 199.

be untimely destroyed than others of a more ferocious propensity, and consequently concluded, in perfect unison with his distinguishing theory, that the sacrificing of the former alone was "a religious co-operation with Divine benevolence." His crude preconceptions of the original institution of the rite readily admitted the character of the metempsychosis.

Now the sacrificing of human beings considered simply in a religious point of view, would be inconsistent with the doctrine of the Druids in other respects. In the first place the adoption of the abominable practice would be a too violent torture of the principle of tradition, and the caution used against the introduction of error, which we have already described. Again, it would militate against the notions contained in the following Triads relative to the nature and attributes of the Deity.

1. "There are three primary UNITIES, and more than one of each cannot exist: one God, one Truth, and one point of Liberty, and this is, where all opposites equiponderate.

2. "Three things of which God necessarily consists: the greatest Life, the greatest Knowledge, and the greatest Power; and of what is greatest there can be no more than one of any thing.

3. "Three things it is impossible God should not be: whatever perfect goodness should be; whatever perfect goodness would desire to be; and whatever perfect goodness is able to perform.

4. "Three things evince what God has done and will do: infinite Power, infinite Wisdom, and infinite Love; for there is nothing that these attributes want of power, of knowledge, or of will to perform.

5. "Three things it is impossible God should not perform: what is most beneficial, what is most wanted, and what is most beautiful of all things.

6. "The three grand attributes of God: infinite plenitude of life, infinite knowledge, and infinite power.

7. " Three things that none but God can do: to endure the eternities of the Circle of Infinity, to participate of every state of existence without changing, and to reform and renovate every thing without causing the loss of it.

8. " Three causes that have produced rational beings: Divine Love possessed of perfect knowledge; Divine Wisdom knowing all possible means; and Divine Power possessed by the joint will of Divine Love and Divine Wisdom."*

Now the annals of the world exhibit no people, who entertained sentiments so just of the Divine character, as guilty of the abomination of offering human victims. Nor can it be conceived how the practice in question could be possibly reconciled with these and other Druidical tenets. Was it adopted with a view to propitiate the Divine wrath? This was never attributed to the Deity. " The sacrifice of animals," says the late venerable Bard of Glamorgan, " was not to appease, we know not what, Divine wrath, a thing that cannot possibly exist." He further observes, " God is Love in the most positive and unlimited degree; he resists evil for the sake of annihilating it, and not for the mere malevolent purpose of punishing." God's purpose and regulations with respect to evil may be more accurately learned from the following Triads;—

1. " The three regulations of God towards giving existence to every thing: to annihilate the power of evil; to assist all that is good; and to make discrimination manifest, that it might be known what should and what should not be.

2. " There are three necessary occasions of Inchoation (metempsychosis); to collect the materials and properties of every nature; to collect the knowledge of every thing; and to collect power towards subduing the adverse and devastative, and for the divestation of evil; without this traversing every mode of animated existence, no state of animation, or of any thing in nature, can attain to plenitude.

* E. Williams's Poems, Vol. ii. Theological Triads.

3. " Three things are indispensably connected with the state of Inchoation; no subjection to injunctive laws, because it is impossible for any actions to be there otherwise than they are; the escape of death from evil and devastation; and the accumulation of life and good, by becoming divested of evil in the escapes of death; and all through Divine Love embracing all things.

4. " The three instrumentalities of God in the Circle of Inchoation, towards subduing evil and devastation: Necessity; Loss of Memory; and Death.

5. " The three victories over evil and devastation are Knowledge; Love (benevolence); and Power: for these know how, have the will, and the power, in their conjunctive capacities, to effect all they can desire; these begin, and are for ever continued, in the state of humanity.

6. " By the knowledge of three things will all evil and death be diminished and subdued; their nature; their cause; and their operations: this knowledge will be obtained in the Circle of Felicity.

7. " Three things become more and more enfeebled daily, there being a majority of desires in opposition to them: Hatred; Injustice; and Ignorance."*

To sacrifice human beings would be to thwart the designs of Divine Providence. Man in this life has the power of attaching himself either to good or evil, and none of his fellows has any right to cut him short in the exercise of that power, except where his existence would be productive of a greater amount of evil than of good in a civil or social point of view. The doctrine of " a religious co-operation with Divine Benevolence" connected with the sacrifice of animals, is not applicable in the case of man. In the state of Inchoation, or that below humanity, there is " no subjection to injunctive laws, because it is impossible for any actions to be

* Ibid.

there otherwise than they are," and there "the accumulation of Life and Good" occurs only "by becoming divested of evil in the *Escapes of Death*:" whereas man can obtain "the accumulations of Knowledge, Benevolence, and Power, without undergoing dissolution."*

Again, if criminals were sacrificed how could the practice be reconciled with that of offering animals which were of "the least ferocity of disposition?" To put the innocent to death whether civilly or religiously would be extremely unjust. Society so far from suffering would benefit by his existence: and he would increase in the acquisition of personal merit, and thereby prepare himself for a higher state of felicity than he would have obtained had he died less holy.

Still human beings were put to death, and, as it appears, in certain cases under the superintendence of the priest, when their death partook somewhat of a religious or sacrificial character. We now proceed to examine this position.

One express declaration made by God to Noah was this; "Surely your blood of your lives will I require; at the hand of every beast will I require it, and at the hand of man; at the hand of every man's brother will I require the life of man. Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed."† This doctrine was not forgotten by the ancient Britons. "We cannot kill," said the Bards, "an animal any more than a man, but as a prevention against killing or a *punishment* for it."‡ As Bardism was incorporated with the state, the civil enactments must have concurred with its tenets. We accordingly find a recognition of the above in the code of laws compiled by Dyvnwal Moelmud:—§

"There are three persons who *forfeit their lives*, and who cannot be bought off; a traitor to the country and the tribe;

* Theological Triads. † Gen. ix. 5, 6.

‡ "Bardism," prefixed to Llywarch Hen's Elegies, &c. by W. Owen, p. lvi. § See Myv. Arch. Vol. ii.

he that kills another from real malice; and a convicted thief for the value of more than fourpence."

In perfect agreement with the Bardic view the same laws affirm, that punishment was to be resorted to merely with reference to its beneficial effects on the state of society.

" The three foundations of law;—defence, punishment, and honour, with respect to what may benefit the country and nation."

The several modes of inflicting capital penalties are thus stated;—

" There are three ways in which correction by the loss of life may be inflicted; decapitation, hanging, and burning; and the king, or lord of the territory, shall determine which of these shall be inflicted."

Now in regard to the latter mode we observe that it has among all nations been more or less associated with religion. The universality of such a connection is a fair inference that it is of patriarchal origin.

We have before remarked that the law of Moses in several instances is only a repetition of what was previously known to the patriarchs; the practice of putting to death by fire might have been one of the rites so repeated. Indeed the prompt sentence of Judah in respect of his daughter in law, so coincident with what we subsequently learn from the Mosaic code and the practice of the Jews, ought to leave but little doubt on the subject. In every case we find that the penalty in question was attached to what most prominently opposed God's peculiar attribute—HOLINESS; hence its religious impress. We quote a few passages from scripture;—

" It was told Judah, saying, Tamar thy daughter in law hath *played the harlot;* and also behold, she is with child by *whoredom:* and Judah said, Bring her forth, and let her *be burnt.*"*

" If a man take a wife and her mother, it is *wickedness;* they

* Gen. xxxviii. 24.

shall be *burnt with fire*, both he and they."* "The daughter of any *priest*, if she profane herself by *playing the whore*, she profaneth her *father*, she shall be *burnt with fire*."† "Up, *sanctify* the people, and say, *sanctify* yourselves against to morrow; for thus saith the Lord God of Israel, There is an *accursed thing* in the midst of thee, O Israel, thou canst not stand before thine enemies, until ye take away the *accursed thing* from among you. It shall be that he that is taken with the *accursed thing* shall be *burnt with fire*, he and all that he hath; because he hath transgressed the covenant of the Lord, and because he hath wrought folly in Israel."‡

In unison with the Jewish law the right of determining the mode of punishment among the Britons devolved upon the "king, or lord of the territory." Such persons as had been guilty of crimes adjudged to be highly offensive to the Divine Being, it is presumed, were brought to the Druids, who, as priests, were bound to maintain the law of God, and vindicate his honour by *burning them with fire*.‡

"Man having been guilty of crimes that are punishable by death, must be so punished,"§ the Druids maintained. And as long as the criminal remained stubborn and obstinate, his death was regarded in the light of a punishment only for the welfare of the civil community. But they averred further. "Perfect penitence is intitled to pardon; it consists in making all possible retribution for the offence, and submitting willingly to the punishment due."‖ Here the victim's death assumed somewhat of a sacrificial nature, as involving an ex-

* Lev. xx. 14. † Lev. xxi. 9. ‡ Josh. vii. 13, 15.

‡ Fire is often a symbol of Deity, Deut. iv. 24. He appeared to Moses, Isaiah, Ezekiel, and John, in the midst of fire; the Psalmist describes his chariot as a flame, (Psal. xviii. 9, 10.) and Daniel says (vii. 10.) that a fiery stream issued from before him. Fire is a common symbol of God's vengeance, also; and the effects of His wrath, as war, famine, and other scourges, are compared to fire.

§ E. Williams's Poems, Vol. ii. p. 199.

‖ W. Owens's "Bardism," p. lviii.

piation for sins. The criminal being conscious of deserving death, thus gives himself, not as being obliged, and not merely to satisfy the demands of civil justice, but, as a sinner before God, to perform a religious act through the instrumentality of the priest, and to " attach himself to the greatest degree of good that he possibly can, by giving up all of life and its enjoyments, and by suffering voluntarily all that ought to be inflicted on him for his transgression."*

It will be probably urged, that no harm could accrue to society from the enlargement or acquittal of a penitent criminal, and therefore that on the very principles of Bardism his execution should be stayed. To this we reply, that the sincerity of his professions could not be satisfactorily tested otherwise than by a voluntary submission to suffering and death. " We can never," argued the Bards, " unequivocally evince our love of virtue, justice, benevolence, or any thing else, but by suffering willingly for its sake."† Herein consisted *fortitude*, the greatest virtue in their ethical creed. But independently of this, it might have been questionable whether the evil effects of a relaxation of punishment in the case of a penitent would not on the long run more than counterbalance the amount of good which he could afterwards render to the community.

The duty of thus subjecting themselves to a willing death was not incumbent, generally speaking, upon persons at large, and who had unlimited scope for the exercise of virtuous principles. It was to vindicate these in their practical bearing that man was called upon to forego life and its enjoyments.

Such is the conclusion we have drawn relative to the subject under consideration from the domestic records of the Cymry. These documents are in certain instances apparently inconsistent with classical statements, and on that account

* E. Williams's Poems, Vol. ii. p. 199. † Ibid, p. 200.

some modern writers think proper to repudiate them as of no value or authority whatever. Among these stands the learned and ingenious author of "*The Mythology and Rites of the British Druids.*"* It is remarkable that he deigns to make use of such memorials as tell not against the theory he wishes to establish. The Historical Triads he admits—the laws of Dyvnwal Moelmud he tacitly omits—the traditions of the chair of Glamorgan he disdainfully rejects. His favourite authorities are the poems of Taliesin, Aneurin, and Merddin the Caledonian, which from their obscurity may be wrested so as to support almost any theory however wild.

Our author infers "that the ancient superstition of Druidism, or, at least, some part of it, was considered as having been preserved in Wales without interruption, and cherished by the Bards, to the very last period of the Welsh Princes. That these Princes were so far from discouraging this superstition, that, on the contrary, they honoured its professors with their public patronage."† He infers further, "that during the Roman government, there was a seminary of Druids somewhere in the north of Britain, or in an adjacent island; and probably beyond the limits of the empire, where the doctrine and discipline of heathenism were cultivated without controul: that those Druids persisted in *sacrificing, even human victims.*"‡ This, it must be confessed, is a serious charge, and it would be naturally expected that the authorities on which it rested were fair and numerous. Such however is not the case; it depends entirely on the following romantic Triad;—

"Three persons who committed the three beneficial massacres of the Isle of Britain;—

Gall the son of Dysgyvedawc, who slew the two birds of Gwenddoleu, wearing a yoke of gold, and which used to con-

* The Rev. Edward Davies, Rector of Bishopston, Glamorganshire, and author of "Celtic Researches."

† The Mythology, &c. of the Druids, p. 25. ‡ Ibid, p. 462.

sume two corpses of the Cymry for their dinner, and two for their supper.

Yscavell the son of Dysgyvedawc, who slew Edelflet king of England.

And Difedell son of Dysgyvedawc, who slew Gwrgi Garwlwyd, and that Gwrgi used to kill daily a person of the Cymry, and two every Saturday that he might not kill any on Sunday."*

Davies lays particular stress on the former clause of the Triad, and declares "if this does not imply the sacrificing of human victims, to some divinity, who acknowledged those birds for his symbols, or his attributes, I know not what to make of it."

Without pretending to explain the "birds of Gwenddoleu," we maintain that they have no necessary connection with Druidism. According to Davies's own acknowledgment, "every Triad is a *whole* in itself," so there is no context which would warrant his inference. On the contrary, another Triad affirms in reference to Gwrgi Garwlwyd, that he first tasted human flesh in the court of Edelflet king of the Saxons,† which would intimate that the cannibalism above mentioned was not indigenous, and consequently formed no part of the Bardic doctrine of the Cymry. It is true that the ingenious mythologist attempts to prove the Druidical character of Gwenddoleu, and his hostility to Christianity, from the fallacious principle of etymology, and dark allusions in the poems of Merddin. Nevertheless all his conclusions ought surely to give way to the express declaration of the following Historical Triad as to the Christian profession of the Bard, whose patron Gwenddoleu is allowed to be.—

"The three primary Baptized (or Christian‡) Bards of the

* Triad 37. † Triad 45.

‡ In old British documents a "*Christian*" is generally designated by the term "*Baptized*," or "*of Baptism*."

Isle of Britain:—Merddin Emrys, Taliesin the chief of the Bards, and *Merddin* the son of Madawc Morvryn."*

In another Triad Madawc Morvryn is said to have been a member of the congregation or monastery of Illtyd, and to have there distinguished himself as a teacher.†

More than this, Gwenddoleu himself is said to have been instructed in the Christian faith at the same college, and his name is still retained in the catalogue of British Saints.‡

But if the isolated Triad which Davies adduces to establish human sacrifices did really allude to the horrid custom, would it not prove what no body is willing to accuse the Druids of, that they actually feasted upon their victims?

After all, whether the northern Druids did, or did not, offer human sacrifices at the time specified is not much to our purpose. About the commencement of the Christian era almost all the island was over-run with strangers, who had recently established themselves either by conquest or permission.§ These must have introduced religious systems differing in many respects from the primitive Druidism of the island. The conduct of " the invading tribes" is in itself a practical proof of this position. Wherever these lawless clans were situated it is natural to infer that the native hierarchy which contained principles so hostile to their incursions would be debilitated, and many new and extraneous dogmas be forced into its creed. The circumstance therefore adduced by the author of "*The Mythology and Rites of the British Druids,*" even if clearly proved, would as little interfere with our argument as what Diodorus Siculus relates of the Britons who inhabited Iris or Erin, that they devoured human flesh.‖ Or

* Triad 125. † Triad 98. Rees's Essay on the Welsh Saints, p. 169.

‡ Essay, &c. p. 208.

§ The principal tribes, besides the aborigines, which then occupied the island, were the Coranians, the Celyddon *(Caledonians)* the Gwyddyl *(Irish)*, the people of Galedin, the Gwyddyl Fichti *(Irish Picts)*, and the Belgæ.

‖ Lib. v.

the express declaration of St. Jerome, that he had seen in his youth in Gaul the Scots, a British people, feeding upon human bones.* Even Davies himself attributes a foreign origin to the particular superstition he speaks of above; and infers that it was first introduced into Britain by the Phœnicians who traded with the natives in tin.†

About the period of the Roman invasion genuine Druidism had retired within the bosom of the Cymry, with whom it originated, and for whom it was especially calculated. It was even confined within the bounds of Siluria, where alone the integrity of the ancient throne was preserved, when the rest of the island had more or less lost its original independence. It is in this recess that we are to look for the representatives of the primitive British Bards at the time when the Greek and Latin writers published to the world their accounts of Druidism. These alone are entitled to the distinctive appellation at the head of this Essay. "Of whatever country these may be, they are entitled Bards according to the privilege and custom of the BARDS OF THE ISLE OF BRITAIN."

Having disposed of the only objection which was grounded upon native documents, let us now examine the testimonies of classical authors. These are principally the following;—Julius Cæsar, Diodorus Siculus, Strabo, Pliny the Elder, Tacitus, and Suetonius.

Cæsar says that the Druids, in case of sickness, danger, or public distress, offered human sacrifices—that they encased the wretched victims alive in large wicker idols, and so burnt them to death. That for such expiations they generally made use of those who were guilty of theft or robbery, or some other scandalous crime; but that, in default of these, they sacrificed even the innocent.‡

Diodorus Siculus, who flourished about 44 years before

* Hieron. † Mythology and Rites of the British Druids, Sect. v.
‡ De Bell. Gall. Lib. vi. 16.

Christ, affirms, that on extraordinary occasions human beings were stabbed by the sacrificial knife, under the superintendence of the Saronides, and that future events were predicted from the flowing of the blood, and the convulsions of the members of the victims.* A similar statement is also made by Strabo, who died A. D. 25.†

Pliny likewise intimates that the Druids were in the habit of sacrificing men, and adds, that it cannot be estimated what thanks are due to the Romans for removing such monsters from society.‡

Tacitus informs us that when Suetonius Paulinus was Nero's general in Britain, the Druids in the island of Anglesey used to sacrifice those they took prisoners, and that they drew prognostications from a view of their entrails.§

Suetonius describes the Druidism of the Gauls as a religion of dread cruelty.‖ These three lived in the first century of the Christian era.

It is necessary now to inquire how far these several historians were enabled to ascertain the nature and character of the practice in question, what amount of credit is due to their statements, and how far they are applicable to British Druidism.

Diodorus is said to have bestowed much time and considerable care on the compilation of his history; but, notwithstanding, he is represented as too credulous in some of his narrations, and often wanders far from the truth. His account of Druidism refers exclusively to Gaul, and he is said to have borrowed it from Posidonius.

Strabo is considered to have been very diligent in procuring accurate information on subjects of which he was treating. His account of Druidism likewise refers simply to Gaul, and was borrowed from Posidonius.¶

* Hist. v. c. 31. † Lib. iv. p. 302. ‡ C. Plinii Hist. Nat. Lib. xxx. cap. 1. § 4. § Annal. Lib. xiv. 30. ‖ Suet. in Claud. c. 25. § 15.

¶ "Uterque (Diod. & Strabo) habet ex Posidonio; uter vero rectius equidem ignoro"— *P. Wesseling.*

Suetonius was a very impartial and correct writer.* Nevertheless he makes no allusion to the Druidical rites of the Britons.

The foregoing, however worthy of credit, as they confine their remarks to the continental form of worship, might here be dismissed at once as impertinent to our purpose, did not the other writers intimate the existence of a certain connection or affinity between the systems of Gaul and Britain.

Pliny's identification of British and Gallic Druidism, particularly in the matter of human sacrifices, is very indefinite. He says that the Druids had been done away with by the Emperor Tiberius, but that their magic art was practiced in Gaul even to his time, and that Britain too celebrated it then with so many ceremonies, that she might seem to have communicated it to Persia. He then enlarges the similarity;—"So much alike are these things all the world over," and immediately notifies the service done to society by the Romans in abolishing such monstrous rites, "in which it was regarded a most religious act to put a human being to death, and a most healthy practice to eat his flesh." Though the historian doubtless has Gallic Druidism primarily in view, yet as he so universally expands its practices, it is difficult to determine any particular connection between it and that of Britain, so that the charge of offering human sacrifices can be properly imputed to the latter. The "ceremonies" which are more specifically attributed to the Britons were no doubt such as were practiced by the foreign tribes which had recently established themselves in the island. This is clearly indicated by Pliny, where he represents the magic art as having crossed the ocean from Gaul into Britain. Pliny's information on matters of which he was treating, seems to have been chiefly derived from books, and his work is con-

* Casaubon says of him;—"Scriptor doctus et accuratus—eruditissimus—præstantissimus—insignia tantum notat."

sidered a judicious collection, though many of his own ideas and conjectures are sometimes ill founded.

Though Tacitus is generally mentioned as a very accurate historian, yet all his statements on the subject of religion are not to be implicitly believed, as appears clearly from the inexcusably partial manner in which he speaks of the Jews and Christians. He had no such opportunity to form a correct estimate of the Druids as he had in respect of these. But if what he says of the Druids of Anglesey be true, the fact will not prove that their practices constituted an essential part of genuine Bardism. This was now confined within the limits of Siluria, whereas North Wales had been a few years previously under the domination of a band of Irish,* and again was exposed to the ravages of the Belgæ on their passage to Ireland. These people would not fail to stamp in some degree the worship of the natives with the character of their own superstitions, which in those turbulent times could not be afterwards easily effaced. Indeed the proximity of Anglesey to Ireland rather countenances the supposition that the impression would become gradually deeper. Nevertheless, allowing for the exaggerations arising from the prejudice of the historian, which the want of personal observation would naturally increase, his description of Druidical sacrifices does not essentially militate against the theory we are advocating. The Bards would regard all such as were engaged in aggressive wars as criminals, and their captives would be accordingly put to death. An expression having reference to this custom is still proverbial

* Triad 8. The religion of the Irish was originally derived from Britain; but circumstances similar to those which affected the Gallic worship wrought a gradual change in it, so that eventually it became a combination of several systems, and more particularly of the British, Phœnician, and Persian. It is certain that human sacrifices formed a part of it. *See Moore's Hist. of Ireland*, Vol. i. *(Cab. Cycl.)* The Institutional Triads reckon the Irish among those who "corrupted what was taught them of the British Druidism, blending with it heterogeneal principles, by which means they lost it."

in the principality—"*Bwrw caeth i gythraul*"—"Casting a captive to the devil." The assertion of Tacitus as to the sameness of Gallic and British superstitions is too vague to warrant an argument on the particular subject under consideration.

Though Asinius Pollio,* who was cotemporary with Julius Cæsar, thinks that his writings were composed with but little accuracy and regard for truth; yet his account of Druidism merits our attention in a greater degree than that of any other classical author. It is maintained that the extensive success of his arms afforded him ample opportunities of making himself generally acquainted with the character and customs of Druidism; and, moreover, that he enjoyed the confidence of Divitiacus Æduus, a Druid, at the very time he drew up his account of the system.† Be this as it may, his description will admit of modification on the very principle of reserve which he himself attributes to Druidism; and it will also appear not to have been entirely drawn from the actual communication of Divitiacus. However, we will content ourselves without detracting from any of his statements. We will give him full credit for authenticity in regard of all his observations on Druidism. Still we must recollect that they are made with direct and especial reference to the system which prevailed on the continent. But yet he gives a more definite shape to the intimacy alleged to exist between the Gallic and British institutions than the preceding writers. He says, that Druidism was commonly reported to have originated in Britain, and to have been thence translated into Gaul; and asserts moreover that even in his time disciples from the latter country were in the habit of frequenting the

* Pollio Asinius, parum diligenter, parumque integrâ veritate compositos, putat, cùm Cæsar pleraque et quæ per alios erant gesta, temere crediderit, et quæ per se vel consulto, vel etiam memoriâ lapsus, perperam ediderit: existimatque, rescripturum et correcturum fuisse." Suet. 1.

† Mythology, &c. of the British Druids, p. 45.

British schools to finish their education.* This consideration therefore requires that we bestow particular attention on his evidence. His own words on the subject of human sacrifices are these;—

" Natio est omnium Gallorum admodum dedita religionibus; atque ob eam causam, qui sunt affecti gravioribus morbis, quique in prœliis periculisque versantur, aut pro victimis homines immolant, aut se immolaturos vovent, administrisque ad ea sacrificia Druidibus utuntur; quòd, pro vitâ hominis, nisi hominis vita reddatur, non posse aliter deorum immortalium numen placari, arbitrantur: publiceque ejusdem generis habent instituta sacrificia. Alii immani magnitudine simulacra habent, quorum contexta viminibus membra vivis hominibus complent, quibus succensis, circumventi flammâ exanimantur homines. Supplicia eorum, qui in furto, aut in latrocinio, aut aliquâ noxâ, sint comprehensi, gratiora diis immortalibus esse arbitrantur; sed, quum ejus generis copia deficit, etiam ad innocentium supplicia descendunt."†

The immolation of human victims, as here described, will at first naturally strike the reader as being too widely removed from the practice represented by British documents to admit of common origin, and continued connection. If such were really the case, yet in matters which concern our own country and ancestors, the statements of foreigners should yield to domestic records, even supposing their respective claims to authenticity rested on equal grounds. We have seen the value of Cæsar's evidence on the subject;—it becomes us now to weigh the merits of the Welsh traditions.

The Historical Triads were obviously put together at different periods, and they record events from the earliest times down to the seventh century. There are several collections of them preserved at this day in old copies upon vellum. These vary in the selection, number, and order of their Triads; but

* De Bel. Gal. Lib. vi. 13. † Ibid, Lib. vi. 16.

when the same Triad occurs in different copies, it is given to the same effect, and generally in the same words. Though the testimony of transcribers as to the antiquity of the manuscripts which they consulted goes no higher than to the tenth century, yet that circumstance will not prove that the Triads were never collected in writing previously. Some of them were evidently familiar to the age of Aneurin and Taliesin, for they are cited by those Bards.* The authenticity of the more recent can be attested by collateral evidence, but those which refer to very remote times, and in this number we include the selection made for this Essay, must be judged by their own intrinsic merits. The contents of these Triads bear the traces of great antiquity, for some exhibit terms the original and true meaning of which it is now extremely difficult to explain, and others such as are absolutely inexplicable. That they are of native origin is clear, for they are almost invariably made to refer either to "the Isle of Britain," or to "the race of the Cymry," even in regard of those events which are known to have been of a more comprehensive character. Persons and occurrences connected with the universal deluge bear British names of a peculiar significancy, which indicate that the triadic accounts respecting them were derived immediately through the Cymry from diluvian times. Indeed it would be difficult to account for them on any other ground than as genuine traditions of the island. They were no doubt handed down by the Bards, whose office as we learn from the Moelmutian laws, was "to preserve every record and memorial of the country and tribe respecting marriages, pedigrees, arms, inheritances, and rights of the country and nation of the Cymry."† From the same laws we would also infer

* See the Mythology and Rites of the British Druids, p. 27, &c. It is true that a degree of confusion and modernism may be detected in some of these documents as they now stand, but this is the inevitable effect of transcript and comment, and ought not to shake their general credit.

† Myv. Arch. Vol. iii. Laws of Dyvnwal Moelmud.

that the Historical Triads were preserved and transmitted in writing.

But what is the authority of the code ascribed to Dyvnwal Moelmud? Whoever will duly examine it, as inserted in the third volume of the Myvyrian Archaiology, will find that it contains strong internal evidence of its genuineness, or at least of its Druidical antiquity. It contemplates a state of things incompatible with what Britain exhibited subsequently to the arrival and settlement of the Coritanians, Belgæ, and Romans. It refers to the incorporation of the Bardic college, and the practical influence, liberties, and privileges of its members. It contains no allusion to Christianity, but all along recognises the Druid as the authorised minister and teacher of religion.*

The unfavourable opinion so generally entertained of the state of society among the ancient Britons should not be permitted to weigh against these facts. It is even recorded in Saxon as well as in British annals, that the Moelmutian code contained excellent principles, which also formed the basis of the common law of England. It is said that Dyvnwal's laws were translated by Gildas into Latin, and also those of Marcia, the wife of Cyhylin (the third from Dyvnwal), and that this translation was communicated to Alfred the Great by Asserius, Bishop of St. David's; and that Alfred translated these laws from Gildas's Latin into Saxon, and called the code the Merchenlage.† Caradoc of Llancarvan, in the twelfth century, says that Hywel Dda went to Rome A. D. 926, "to obtain a knowledge of the laws of other kingdoms and cities, and the laws that the Roman emperors put in force in the island of Britain during their sovereignty.—That after a careful research respecting every country and city, *the laws*

* In one instance indeed there is a reference to Christian practices, but from the manner it is introduced, as well as from the very late period to which it alludes, there can be no doubt of its being an interpolation.

† Rom. Hist. Lib. i, p. 202. of Gale. Roberts's Sketch of the Early History of the Cymry, p. 84.

of Dyvnwal Moelmud were found superior to the whole, and moreover, *in concurrence with the law of God."**

The Bardic memorials of Siluria depended entirely on oral tradition until Wales finally lost its national independence. Nevertheless, as we are informed, the traditionary channel through which they were transmitted, was superior to any thing of the kind ever known or adopted.

It is a fact clearly recognised in the annals of Wales, that the system of Bardism has been continued in an unbroken succession to the present day, and that under the protection of the native princes it was enabled to hold its Congresses in due form for the perpetuation of its maxims. When those meetings were afterwards interdicted, the Bards began to collect their traditions into books. With a view to consolidate and confirm the collections thus made, several Congresses were again held, from the beginning of the fifteenth century, under the sanction of Sir Richard Neville and others. One was held for that purpose in 1570, under the auspices of William Herbert earl of Pembroke, the great patron of Welsh literature. What was done at those meetings received considerable improvement at one held by Sir Edward Lewis of the Van, about the year 1580, from the arrangement of the venerable Llywelyn of Langewydd; and lastly, a complete revisal of all the former collections was made by Edward Davydd of Margam, which received the sanction of a Gorsedd or Convention held at Bewpyr, in the year 1681, under the authority of Sir Richard Basset, when that collection was pronounced to be in every respect the fullest illustration of Bardism.†

Two objections calculated to bring discredit on the Bardic traditions require to be removed.

First;—these traditions represent *search after truth* as one of the fundamental principles of the system. If then the

* Myv. Arch. Vol. ii.

† "Bardism" prefixed to Llywarch Hen's Elegies, by W. Owen, p. lxi.

origin of Bardism be referred to patriarchal times, how happens it that in defiance of the oral art, as well as this essential principle, the Druids fell into the grand error of the metempsychosis? We have already answered this objection in part, when we intimated that the primitive doctrine, on which it is evidently founded, was but obscurely understood by the patriarchs. The state of the soul after death, and the resurrection of the body, can only be clearly ascertained by revelation. The Japetidæ, therefore, having, as we presume, but a vague idea of those things, would naturally mould it into a definite and intelligible theory. Independently also of the indistinctness originally attached to those doctrines, the art of oral tradition might have been at first inadequate to preserve the integrity of revealed truth. We have seen from the Historical Triads that it attained its ultimate efficiency by a gradual progress. The channel of tradition was at first simply song, as is further attested by the following passage extracted from an old manuscript entitled, "A Dialogue between a Pupil and his Tutor:"—

"Pupil.—Pray, who first preserved the memory and knowledge of Bardism, and conferred instruction on wisdom?

"Tutor.—The Gwyddoniaid;—that is, the wise men of the nation of the Cymry preserved the knowledge and wisdom of Bardism by means of the record of *vocal song*, and bestowed instruction thereon, and there was *neither privilege nor licence* in respect of the sciences of the Gwyddoniaid but what was obtained through courtesy, *neither system nor chair*."*

The other objection is this;—if the Bards adhered to, or departed from their primitive traditions, according to the evidence that might be acquired from time to time, in their search after truth, how can we be sure that the religious aphorisms consolidated in the sixteenth century faithfully represent ancient Druidism, and were not rather the received

* Cited by Taliesin Williams in his Essay on "Coelbren y Beirdd."

tenets of the Bardic system under Christianity? On this point we would remark, that those traditions exhibit generally internal marks of the greatest antiquity. Moreover, it is historically proved, that the Christian Bards practically abandoned or reformed what appeared to them inimical to, or inconsistent with, the profession of the Gospel; but at the same time carefully preserved among themselves the original dogmas of their system as curious relics of antiquity. They seem to have added a maxim to their code which would enforce or promote the observance of the latter custom:—

"Three things which a BARD ought to maintain;—the Welsh language, the primitive Bardism, and the memorial of every thing good and excellent."*

Among the remnants of primitive Bardism would be the Druidical Theology. That the Triads, of which we inserted a selection, were not modified by the Bards, so as to square with their Christian views, is evident from the fact, that they exhibit doctrines palpably at variance with what is to be found in their evangelical poems. We need only instance Taliesin, who flourished in the sixth century, and who of all others is supposed to have approximated nearest the Druidical doctrine of the metempsychosis. His Christian belief is thus expressed;—

> "Multitudes there were in the confused course
> Of hell, a cold refuge,
> During the five ages of the world,
> Until Christ released them from the bondage
> Of the immensely deep abyss of *abred;*
> All those has God taken under his protection."†

This is widely distant from the Triadic doctrine, which teaches the transmigration of the soul through different animal bodies. Yet that very doctrine is also implied in some

* See "An Outline of the Characteristics of the Welsh, &c. by W. Owen Pughe," appended to his Dictionary.

† Myv. Arch. Vol. i.

of his less Christian poems. This circumstance, which applies equally to other Christian Bards, clearly proves that they were in possession of dogmas at variance with their evangelical profession.

Having cleared these objections the Bardic traditions will fully recommend themselves to our attention and respect. We will not insist upon their being more authentic on the subject in hand than Cæsar's account, but will allow to both equal credit. Nothing then remains but to reconcile them to each other. Cæsar, it will be remembered, appears to describe the continental Druidism differently from the British institution, as this is represented by the Silurian records, and yet says that the former was reported to have been derived from the latter, and that even in his days the Gallic youths generally resorted to the British schools to finish their education. Are we not to infer inevitably from this, that the two systems were perfectly identical? A reconsideration of the historian's words will discover that so far from really conveying that idea, they necessarily imply that the Druidism of Britain was not only different from, but even purer than that of Gaul. Why else did the youths of the latter country, who wished to learn the Druidical maxims and discipline more accurately, repair for that purpose to Britain? Does not this circumstance even import that the continental form was destitute of fundamental and fixed principles—that it placed no confidence in its own regulations—that it contained not in itself the seed of propagation?

Still it appears improbable that a system derived originally from Britain, and maintaining a constant communication with it, should so far differ from its prototype, as to substitute polytheism for the doctrine of one God, which was a prominent article in the Bardic creed. This improbability however must vanish when we duly reflect how the present church of Rome, notwithstanding her constant appeal to antiquity, has departed from primitive Christianity, " not

only in her living and manner of ceremonies, but also in matters of faith."*

Agreeable to the statement of Cæsar as to the greater antiquity and purity of British Druidism is the evidence of the Institutional Triads of the Bards.†

" For three reasons are the Bards titled *Bards according to the rights and institutes of the Bards of the Isle of Britain;* first, because *Bardism originated in Britain;* secondly, because *pure Bardism was never well understood in any other country;* thirdly, because *pure Bardism* can never be *preserved* and *continued* but by means of the *institutes* and *voice conventional of the Bards of the Isle of Britain;* for this reason, of whatever country they may be, they are titled Bards according to the rights and institutes of the Bards of the Isle of Britain."

" Three nations *corrupted* what was taught them of the British Bardism, blending with it heterogeneous principles, by which means they *lost it;* the Irish, the Letavian Cymry,‡ and the Germans."§

After all it may not be necessary to insist upon this difference in the present instance. When Cæsar wrote the primitive Bardism of Britain was chiefly confined within the narrow bounds of Siluria. The Gallic disciples might therefore in his days have imbibed their notions of British Druidism among some of the tribes on the south eastern coast, and the system which there prevailed might contain tenets and rites not dissimilar to those related by Cæsar of continental Druidism.

The foregoing observations render it now unnecessary to recur to the statements of Diodorus Siculus, Strabo, and Suetonius.

* Article XIX. † See E. Williams's Poems, Vol. ii. p. 230.

‡ The Bretons of France.

§ " Sunt illis (Germanis) hæc quoque carmina, quorum relatu, quem *barditum* vocant, accendunt animos," &c. *Tacitus* de Germ. c. iii.

In conclusion, we will briefly inquire into the probable causes of the corruption of continental Druidism.

First; one cause was the circumstance of its not being indigenous to the country. Both Cæsar and the Welsh traditions, as we have seen, intimate that it was originally derived from Britain. This fact implies two things; that the Druidical institution of the continent was younger than that of our own island, and that it was founded upon a previous hierarchy. It is not probable that this hierarchy had been erected into a well defined and regular system. Its loose and floating character however would occasion a rapid deterioration of morals and religion, and it must needs be that some of its peculiar corruptions clung to the scheme which was destined to supersede it. Even Christianity at first hardly escaped from being affected in some countries by the prevailing notions of the people. It is therefore very natural to suppose that the Celtæ of Gaul blended some of their former opinions with the doctrines of British Druidism at their first reception of it, and that there is a peculiar force in the expression of the Institutional Triads, that "pure Bardism was *never* well understood in any other country."

Secondly;—the Institutional Triads furnish us with another reason why the Gallic form would become gradually corrupt, even if it had been purely established at first.—"Pure Bardism can never be preserved and continued but by means of the institutes and voice conventional of the Bards of the Isle of Britain." Britain then was the centre of unity of Bardism. It was at the British Congresses that all the institutes and doctrines of Bardo-Druidism were required to be regularly examined, sanctioned, and diffused: and all the Druids of other countries were to be considered as delegates from the British college, and subject to its authority. Now several circumstances would occur to check the due observance of this rule. In some instances the pride of the human heart would disdain submission to a foreign

jurisdiction. In others national matters would prevent a regular intercourse with Britain. This in course of time would raise the system into a state of independence, and not being in itself furnished with the original, full, and clear tenets and customs of the parent institution, it would then readily succumb to the dictates of depraved nature, and assume the hue and impress of the intrusive theology of the Massilian Greeks.

Even the plain aphorisms of British Bardism were wrested into a correspondence with the prevailing opinions of the day, as we may see from the following Triad which has been preserved by Diogenes Laertius.

Σεβειν Θεους
Και μηδεν κακον δραν
Και ανδρειαν ασκειν.

To worship the *Gods*,
To do no evil,
And to exercise fortitude.

The original of this Triad is still on record, and runs thus:—" Tri chynnorion doethineb; uvuddhad i ddeddvau Duw; ymgais a lles dyn; a dioddev yn lew pob digwydd bywyd."

" The three primary principles of wisdom; obedience to the laws of God; concern for the welfare of mankind; and suffering with fortitude all the accidents of life."

Here we see that the word *Duw* (God) has been rendered in the translation by the plural Θεους (Gods) evidently in conformity with the predominant notions of the Greeks.

It is beyond doubt that new principles and practices are more easily communicated from one people to another than invented by man's own evil imagination. The Jews, when they apostatised from the worship of Jehovah, always adopted the abominations of the surrounding Gentiles. The ancient Britons were comparatively out of the reach of such a

* Ethical Triads; E. Williams's Poems, Vol. ii. p. 248.

temptation as long as they maintained exclusive possession of the island, which was until about 200 years before Christ.

The representations of classical writers in general would lead us to infer that the Druidism of Gaul was in their days in a certain state of independence, though, as appears from Cæsar, a relic of the ancient custom of sending deputies to attend the supreme convention of Britain was still retained. "Even now," says the historian, "those who wish to become more perfectly acquainted with the Druidical discipline most commonly repair thither for the sake of learning it."

Thirdly;—another circumstance which would occasion many errors in an exotic system would be the deceitfulness of translation. In instructing their foreign disciples the British Bards always employed the Cymraeg. It is true that the languages of the different tribes which professed Druidism were originally and essentially the same, yet in course of time circumstances so varied them that they gradually became of a distinct character. Some of those tribes would inevitably commit blunders in rendering the Druidical doctrines into their own peculiar dialects. This circumstance again in union with the assumed independence of the system, as well as the prominent customs of strangers resident among them, would naturally produce practices unlike those of the parent institution.

We have several instances in which British Druidism appears evidently to have been misunderstood, and consequently perverted through the treachery of translation. Thus CLER was a term used to designate "the teachers or learned men of the Druidical order, who under the Bardic system, were, by their privilege, employed in going periodical circuits, to instruct the people, answering the purpose of a priesthood."* It had also another signification; it meant *gadflies*. When the Carthaginians discovered the British islands, they found

* Dr. O. Pughe's Dict. voce CLER.

them full of Clêr-Druids, but in an attempt to translate the original name of this distinguishing character of the countries, a whimsical blunder was committed in the adoption of the other import of the word, and the islands of Britain were named, *Oestrymnides*, islands infested by the *Oestrum*, or *gadfly*.

Again, Herodotus speaks of ABARIS the Hyperborean priest of Apollo, carrying an arrow round the earth *fasting* (ουδεν σιτιομενος). Here we recognise the Bardic doctrine of "Cylch yr ABRED" (the Circle of the Courses), and one of the privileges of the Druids;—"*Trwyddedogaeth lle'r elont*," ("maintenance wherever they went,") by which they were relieved from the necessity of making a provision for their journey.*

Saronides, also, which according to Diodorus Siculus, was the general term by which the Gaulish philosophers and divines were called, and which admits of no easy and appropriate etymology in any of the classical or continental dialects, is clearly a corruption of the British Seronyddion (astronomers), three of whom are mentioned in the following Triad;—

"The three happy *Seronyddion* (astronomers of the Isle of Britain. Idris Gawr, Gwydion the son of Don, and Gwyn the son of Nudd. So great was their knowledge of the stars, and of their nature and situation, that they could foretel whatever might be desired to be known to the day of doom."†

The term is a compound of *Sêr* (stars) and *honydd*, pl. *honyddion* (one who discriminates and points out).

These are a few of the many examples which might be adduced of the perversion of British Bardism in consequence of a misapprehension or false translation of original terms. We need not be surprised therefore when we duly consider the natural tendency of the combination of the foregoing causes, that the Druidism of the continent should latterly

* Celtic Researches, p. 183. † Triad 89.

differ so widely from that of Britain, even though a communication was professed to be kept up between them.

But different though they be, and in spite of these destructive causes, there is still enough left in the Gallic system to enable us to identify it originally with that of Britain. Thus in the case of human sacrifices, we learn from Cæsar, that they were generally performed under the impression that the immortal gods could not be appeased unless life was rendered for life. The principle of *life for life* was recognised also by the Britons, and on it was founded the practice which in certain aspects was viewed by them as sacrificial. Both the Britons and the Gauls agreed likewise primarily as to the particular victims to be immolated, which were criminals of the worst description, or those whose existence would prove most detrimental to the social weal. It does not appear however that the Gauls had any well defined reasons for offering such characters: hence, when they could not be conveniently supplied with them, rather than omit the duty of sacrificing, they substituted even the innocent in their stead.

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