

Celtic Mythology

The Mythology of all Races

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Author's Preface

In a former work [1] I have considered at some length the religion of the ancient Celts ; the present study describes those Celtic myths which remain to us as a precious legacy from the past, and is supplementary to the earlier book. These myths, as I show, seldom exist as the pagan Celts knew them, for they have been altered in various ways, since romance, pseudo-history, and the influences of Christianity have all affected many of them. Still they are full of interest, and it is not difficult to perceive traces of old ideas and mythical conceptions beneath the surface. Transformation allied to re-birth was asserted of various Celtic divinities, and if the myths have been transformed, enough of their old selves remained for identification after romantic writers and pseudo-historians gave them a new existence. Some mythic incidents doubtless survive much as they were in the days of old, but all alike witness to the many-sided character of the life and thought of their Celtic progenitors and transmitters. Romance and love, war and slaughter, noble deeds as well as foul, wordy boastfulness but also delightful poetic utterance, glamour and sordid reality, beauty if also squalid conditions of life, are found side by side in these stories of ancient Ireland and Wales.

In writing this book it has been some relief to try to lose oneself in it and to forget, in turning over the pages of the past, the dark cloud which hangs over our modern life in these sad days of the great war, sad yet noble, because of the freely offered sacrifice of life and all that life holds dear by so many of my countrymen and our heroic allies in defence of liberty.

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Introduction

In all lands whither the Celts came as conquerors there was an existing population with whom they must eventually have made alliances. They imposed their language upon them — the Celtic regions are or were recently regions of Celtic speech — but just as many words of the aboriginal vernacular must have been taken over by the conquerors, or their own tongue modified by Celtic, so must it have been with their mythology. Celtic and pre-Celtic folk alike had many myths, and these were bound to inter-mingle, with the result that such Celtic legends as we possess must contain remnants of the aboriginal mythology, though it, like the descendants of the aborigines, has become Celtic. It would be difficult, in the existing condition of the old mythology, to say this is of Celtic, that of non-Celtic origin, for that mythology is now but fragmentary. The gods of the Celts were many, but of large cantles of the Celtic race — the Celts of Gaul and of other parts of the continent of Europe — scarcely any myths have survived. A few sentences of Classical writers or images of divinities or scenes depicted on monuments point to what was once a rich mythology. These monuments, as well as inscriptions with names of deities, are numerous there as well as in parts of Roman Britain, and belong to the Romano-Celtic period. In Ireland, Wales, and north-western

Scotland they do not exist, though in Ireland and Wales there is a copious literature based on mythology. Indeed, we may express the condition of affairs in a formula : Of the gods of the Continental Celts many monuments and no myths ; of those of the Insular Celts many myths but no monuments.

The myths of the Continental Celts were probably never committed to writing. They were contained in the sacred verses taught by the Druids, but it was not lawful to write them down ; [2] they were tabu, and doubtless their value would have vanished if they had been set forth in script. The influences of Roman civilization and religion were fatal to the oral mythology taught by Druids, who were ruthlessly extirpated, while the old religion was assimilated to that of Rome. The gods were equated with Roman gods, who tended to take their place ; the people became Romanized and forgot their old beliefs. Doubtless traditions survived among the folk, and may still exist as folk-lore or fairy superstition, just as folk-customs, the meaning of which may be uncertain to those who practise them, are descended from the rituals of a vanished paganism ; but such existing traditions could be used only with great caution as indexes of the older myths.

There were hundreds of Gaulish and Romano-British gods, as an examination of the Latin inscriptions found in Gaul and Britain [3] or of Alfred Holder's *Alceltischer Sprachschatz* [4] will show. Many are equated with the same Roman god, and most of them were local deities with similar functions, though some may have been more widely popular ; but we can never be sure to what aspect of the Roman divinity's personality a parallel was found in their functions. Moreover, though in some cases philology shows us the meaning of their names, it would avail little to speculate upon that meaning, tempting as this may be — a temptation not always successfully resisted. This is also true of the symbols depicted on monuments, though here the function, if not the myth, is more readily suggested. Why are some deities horned or three-headed, or why does one god carry a wheel, a hammer, or an S-symbol ? Horns may suggest divine strength or an earlier beast-god, the wheel may be the sun, the hammer may denote creative power. Other symbols resemble those of Classical divinities, and here the meaning is more obvious. The three *Matres*, or " Mothers," with their symbols of fertility were Earth Mothers ; the homed deity with a bag of grain was a god of plenty. Such a goddess as Epona was a divinity of horses and mules, and she is represented as riding a horse or feeding foals. But what myths lie behind the representation of Esus cutting down a tree, whose branches, extending round another side of the monument, cover a bull and three cranes — *Tarvos Trigaranos* ? Is this the incident depicted on another monument with a bull's head among branches on which two birds are perched ?

Glimpses of myths are seen in Classical references to Celtic gods. Caesar, whose information (or that of his source) about the gods of Gaul is fragmentary, writes ; " They worship chiefly the god Mercury. Of him there are many *simulacra* ; [5] they make him inventor of all arts and guide of journeys and marches, and they suppose him to have great power over the acquiring of money and in matters of merchandise. After him come Apollo, Mars, Jupiter, and Minerva. Concerning these they hold much the same opinions as other nations — Apollo repels diseases, Minerva teaches the beginnings of arts and crafts, Jupiter sways celestial affairs. Mars directs wars." [6] There is no evidence that all the Gauls worshipped a few gods. Many local deities with similar functions but different names is the evidence of the inscriptions, and these are grouped collectively by Caesar and assimilated to Roman divinities. There are many local Mercuries, Minervas, Apollos, and the like, each with his Celtic name attached to that of the Roman god. Or, again, they are nameless, as in the case of the Yorkshire inscription, " To the god who invented roads and paths" — an obvious Mercury. Caesar adds, "The Gauls declare that they are descended from Dispater, and this, they say, has been handed down by the Druids." [7] If, as the present writer has tried to show elsewhere, [8] Dispater is the Roman name of a Celtic god, whether Cernunnos, or the god with the hammer,

or Esus, or all three, who ruled a rich underworld, then this myth resembles many told elsewhere of the first men emerging from the earth, the autochthones. The parallel Celtic myth has not survived. In Ireland, if it ever existed there, it gave place to stories of descent from fictitious personages, like Mile, son of Bile, invented by the early scribes, or from Biblical patriarchs.

Apollonius, writing in the third century B.C., reports a Celtic myth about the waters of Eridanus. Apollo, driven by his father's threats from heaven because of the son whom Karonis bore to him, fled to the land of the Hyperboreans ; and the tears which he shed on the way formed the tossing waters. [9] Some Greek myth is here mingled with a local legend about the origin of a stream and a Celtic god, possibly Belenos, who had a neighbouring temple at Aquileia. In an island of the Hyperboreans (a Celtic people dwelling beyond the Rhipaeon Mountains whence Boreas blew) was a circular temple where Apollo was worshipped. Every year near the vernal equinox the god appeared in the sky, harping and dancing, until the rising of the Pleiades. [10] It is natural that this " circular temple" should have been found in Stonehenge.

Lucian (second century A.D.) describes a Gaulish god Ogmios, represented as an old man, bald-headed and with wrinkled and sun-burnt skin, yet possessing the attributes of Hercules—the lion's skin, the club, the bow, and a sheath hung from his shoulder. He draws a multitude by beautiful chains of gold and amber attached to their ears, and they follow him with joy. The other end of the chains is fixed to his tongue, and he turns to his captives a smiling countenance. A Gaul explained that the native god of eloquence was regarded as Hercules, because he had accomplished his feats through eloquence ; he was old, for speech shows itself best in old age ; the chains indicated the bond between the orator's tongue and the ears of enraptured listeners. [11]

Lucian may have seen such a representation or heard of a Gaulish myth of this kind, and as we shall see, an Irish god Ogma, whose name is akin to that of Ogmios, was a divine warrior and a god of poetry and speech. Ogma is called *grianaineach* (" sun-faced," or " shining-faced"), perhaps a parallel to Lucian's description of the face of Ogmios. The head of Ogmios occurs on Gaulish coins, and from one of his eyes proceeds a ray or nail. This has suggested a parallel with the Ulster hero Cuchulainn in his " distortion," when the *lón láith* (? " champion's light") projected from his forehead thick and long as a man's fist. Another curious parallel occurs in the *Tain Bó Cúalnge*, or " Cattle-Spoil of Cualnge," where, among the Ulster forces, is a strong man with seven chains on his neck, and seven men dragged along at the end of each, so that their noses strike the ground, whereupon they reproach him. Is this a distorted reminiscence of the myth of Ogmios ?

A British goddess Sul, equated with Minerva at Bath, is mentioned by Solinus (third century A.D.) as presiding over warm springs. In her temple perpetual fires burned and never grew old, for where the fire wasted away it turned into shining globes. [12] The latter statement is travellers' gossip, but the " eternal fires" recall the sacred fire of St. Brigit at Kildare, tended by nineteen nuns in turn, a day at a time, and on the twentieth by the dead saint herself. The fire was tabu to males, who must not even breathe on it. [13] This breath tabu in connexion with fire is found among Farsis, Brāhmans, Slavs, in Japan, and formerly in Rügen. The saint succeeded to the myth or ritual of a goddess, the Irish Brigit, or the Brigindo or Brigantia of Gaulish and British inscriptions, who was likewise equated with Minerva.

A tabued grove near Marseilles is mythically described by Lucan, who wrote in the first century of our era, and doubtless his account is based on local legends. The trees of the grove were stained with the blood of sacrifices, and the hollow caverns were heard to roar at the movement of the earth ; the yew trees bent down and rose again ; flames burned but did not

consume the wood ; dragons entwined surrounded the oaks. Hence people were afraid to approach the sacred grove, and the priest did not venture within its precincts at midnight or midday, lest the god should appear — “ the destruction that wasteth at noonday.” [14] In Galatia Artemis was thought to wander with demons in the forest at mid-day, tormenting to death those whom she met ; while Diana in Autun was regarded as a midday demon who haunted cross-roads and forests. Whether these divinities represent a Celtic goddess is uncertain, and their fateful midday aspect may have been suggested by the “ midday demon” of the Septuagint version of Psalm xc. 6. Both accounts occur in lives of saints.

Several references suggest that the gods punished the taking of things dedicated to themselves, and therefore tabu to men. Caesar says that this was a criminal action punished by torture and death, [15] and Irish myth also discloses the disastrous results of breach of tabu. The awe of the priest of the grove is paralleled by incidents of Celtic history. After the battle of Allia in 390 B.C., where the Celts saw divine aid in the flight of the Romans and stood awestruck before it, they were afraid of the night. [16] After the battle of Delphi (279 B.C.) “ madness from a god” fell on them at night, and they attacked each other, no longer recognizing each other’s speech. [17] Another fear based on a myth is referred to in Classical sources, that of the future cataclysm. The Celts did not dread earthquakes or high tides, which, indeed, they attacked with weapons ; but they feared the fall of the sky and the day when fire and water must prevail. An Irish vow perhaps refers to this : something would be done if the sky with its showers of stars did not fall or the earth burst or the sea submerge the world. Any untoward event might be construed as the coming of this catastrophe or analogous to it. How, then, was the sky meanwhile supported ? Perhaps on mountain-peaks like that near the source of the Rhône, which the native population called “ the column of the sun,” and which was so lofty that it hid the northern sun from the southern folk. [18] Gaidoz says that “ the belief that the earth rests on columns is the sole *débris* of ancient cosmogony of which we know in Irish legends, but we have only the reflexion of it in a hymn and gloss of the *Liber Hymnorum*. In vaunting the pre-eminence of two saints who were like great gods of old Christian Ireland, Ultán says of Brigit that she was ‘ half of the colonnade of the kingdom (of the world) with Patrick the eminent.’ The gloss is more explicit — ‘ as there are two pillars in the world, so are Brigit and Patrick in Ireland. [19] In some of the romantic Irish voyages islands are seen resting on pillars, and an echo of these myths is found in the Breton tradition that the church at Kernitou stands on four columns, resting on a congealed sea which will submerge the structure when it becomes liquid. [20]

Divine help is often referred to in Irish myths, and a parallel instance occurs in Justin’s allusion to the guidance of the Segovesi by birds to the Danubian regions which they conquered. [21] Such myths are depicted on coins, on which a horse appears led by a bird, which sometimes whispers in its ear. Heroes were also inspired by birds to found towns. Birds were objects of worship and divination with the Celts, and divinities transformed themselves into the shape of birds, or birds formed their symbols.

The birth of heroes from a god and a human mother occurs in Irish myth. One classical parallel to this is found in the account of the origin of the northern Gauls given by Diodorus. They were descended from Hercules and the beautiful giant daughter of the King of Celtica, and hence they were taller and handsomer than other peoples. [22] This is perhaps the Greek version of a native myth, which is echoed in the Irish tale of the gigantic daughter of the king of Maidens’ Land and her love for Fionn. [23] Again, when Diodorus speaks of Hercules assembling his followers, advancing into Celtica, improving the laws, and founding a city called Alesia, honoured ever since by the Celts as the centre of their kingdom, he is probably giving a native myth in terms of Greek mythology. [24] Some native god or hero was concerned, and his story fitted that of Hercules, who became popular with the Celts.

The Celts had beliefs resembling those of the Greeks and Romans about *incubi*. Demons called *dusii* sought the couches of women out of lust, a belief reported by sub-Classical authors. The Classical evidence for Celtic belief in divine descent is also furnished by the form of several proper names which have been recorded, while lineage from a river or river-god is associated with the Belgic Viridomar. [25]

A legend reported by Pliny concerns some natural product, perhaps a fossil *echinus*, in explanation of the origin of which this myth was current, or to it an existing serpent-myth had been attached. Numerous serpents collected on a day in summer and, intertwining, formed a ball with the foam from their bodies, after which their united hissings threw it into the air. According to the Druids, he who would obtain it must catch it on a mantle before it touched the ground and must escape hastily, putting running water between himself and the pursuing serpents. The ball was used magically. [26]

Classical observers cite vaguely some myths about the otherworld and they admired profoundly the Celtic belief in immortality, which, if Lucan's words are correct, was that of the soul animating a new body there. Diodorus also affirms this, though he compares it with the Pythagorean doctrine of transmigration ; [27] yet in the same passage he shows that the dead passed to another world and were not reborn on earth. Irish mythology tells us nothing about the world of the dead, though it has much to say of a gods' land or Elysium, to which the living were sometimes invited by immortals. This Elysium was in distant islands, in the hollow hills, or under the waters. Plutarch, on the authority of Demetrius, who may have been a Roman functionary in Britain, reports that round Britain are many desert islands, named after gods and heroes. Demetrius himself visited one island lying nearest these, inhabited by a people whom the Britons regarded as sacred, and while he was there, a storm arose with fiery bolts falling. This the people explained as the passing away of one of the mighty, for when a great soul died, the atmosphere was affected and pestilences were caused. Demetrius does not say whither the soul went, either to the islands or elsewhere, but islands named after gods and heroes suggest the Irish divine Elysium, and this is confirmed by what Demetrius adds, and by what Plutarch reports in another work. On one of the islands Kronos is imprisoned, and Briareos keeps guard over him, [28] along with many deities (*δαίμονας*) who are his attendants and servants. What Celtic divinities or heroes lurk under these names is unknown, but the myth resembles traditions of Arthur in Avalon (Elysium), or of Fionn or Arthur sleeping in a hollow hill, waiting to start up at the hour of their country's need. Elsewhere Plutarch speaks of an island in which the barbarians say that Kronos is imprisoned by Jupiter in a cavern. There Kronos steeps, fed by birds with ambrosia, while his son lies beside him as if guarding him. The surrounding sea, clogged with earth, appears to be solid, and people go to the island, where they spend thirteen years waiting on the god. Many remain, because there is no toil or trouble there, and devote their time to sacrificing, singing hymns, or studying legends and philosophy. The climate is exquisite, and the island is steeped in fragrance. Sometimes the god opposes their departure by appearing to them along with those who minister to him, and these divine ministrants themselves prophesy or tell things which have been revealed to them as dreams of Saturn when they visit his cave. Plutarch's alleged informant had waited on the god and studied astrology and geometry, and before going to another island he carried with him golden cups. [29] In this latter story the supposed studies and ritual of the Druids are mingled with some distorted tradition of Elysium, and the reference to cups of gold carried from the island perhaps points to the myth of things useful to man brought from the land of the gods. [30]

The sixth century Byzantine historian Procopius has a curious story about the island of "Brittia," which was divided by a wall from north to south. West of the wall none could live, so foul was the air, so many the vipers and evil beasts ; but in its inhabited part dwelt Angles, Frisians, and Britons. The island lay between Britannia and Thule. Thule is probably

Scandinavia ; Britannia, which is, strictly speaking, Britain, is confused with the region lying between Brittany and the mouths of the Scheldt and Rhine. Brittia is Britain ; the wall is the Roman Wall, shown on Ptolemy's map running north and south at the present Scottish border, because Scotland was represented as lying at right angles to England. The region beyond the wall, mountainous, forest-clad, and inaccessible, was easily conceived as a sinister place by those who heard of it only vaguely. Procopius then says that on the coast of the Continent fishermen and farmers are exempt from taxation because it is their duty to ferry souls over to Brittia, doing this in turn. At midnight they hear a knocking at their door and muffled voices calling ; but when they reach the shore, they see only empty boats, not their own. In these they set out and presently perceive that the boats have become laden, the gunwale being close to the water ; and within an hour Brittia is reached, though ordinarily it would take a day and a night to cross the sea. There the boats are invisibly unladen, and although no one has been seen, a loud voice is heard asking each soul his name and country. [31] The Roman poet Claudian, writing toward the close of the fourth and the beginning of the fifth century of our era, had perhaps heard such a story, though he confuses it with that of Odysseus and the shades. [32] At the extremity of the Gaulish coast is a place protected from the tides, where Odysseus by sacrifice called up the shades. There is heard the murmur of their complaint, and the inhabitants see pale phantoms and dead forms flitting about. [33] This strictly concerns the Homeric shades, for Classical testimony to the Celtic other-world, as well as Irish stories of the return of the dead, never suggests " pale phantoms." Claudian may have heard some story like that of Procopius, though it is by no means certain that the latter is reporting a Celtic belief for other peoples than the Celts dwelt in his time opposite Britain. Possibly, however, the Celts believed that the dead went to distant islands. Even now the Bretons speak of the " Bay of Souls" at Raz, at the extreme point of Armorica, while folk-lore tells how the drowned are nightly conveyed by boat from Cape Raz to the isle of Tevennec. [34] If the Celtic dead went to an island, this may explain the title said by Pliny, quoting Philemon (second century B. C), to have been given by the Cimbri to the northern sea, *Morimarusam* = *Mortuum Mare* or possibly *Mortuorum Mare* (" Sea of the Dead")—the sea which the dead crossed. The title may refer, however, to an unchangeably calm sea, and such a sea has always been feared, or to the ice-covered sea, which Strabo [35] regarded as an impassable spongy mixture of earth, water, and air. The supposed Celtic belief in an island of the dead might also explain why, according to Pliny, no animal or man beside the Gallic ocean dies with a rising tide [36] — a belief still current in Brittany ; the dead could be carried away only by an outflowing tide. But whether or not the Celts believed in such an island, it is certain that no Irish story of the island Elysium connects that with them, but associates it only with divine beings and favoured mortals who were lured thither in their lifetime.

In Wales and Ireland, where Roman civilization was unknown, mythology had a better chance of survival. Yet here, as in Gaul, it was forced to contend with triumphant Christianity, which was generally hostile to paganism. Still, curiously enough, Christian verity was less destructive of Celtic myths than was Roman civilization, unless the Insular Celts were more tenacious of myth than their Continental cousins. Sooner or later the surviving myths, more often fragments than finished entities, were written down ; the bards and the *filid* (learned poets) took pride in preserving the glories of their race ; and even learned Christian monks must have assisted in keeping the old stories alive. Three factors, however, played their part in corrupting and disintegrating the myths. The first of these was the dislike of Christianity to transmit whatever directly preserved the memory of the old divinities. In the surviving stories their divinity is not too closely described ; they are made as human as possible, though they are still super-human in power and deed ; they are tolerated as a kind of fairy-folk rather than as gods. Yet they are more than fairies and they have none of the wretchedness of the decrepit, skin-clad Zeus of Heine's *Gods in Exile*. Side by side with this there was another tendency, natural to a people who no longer worshipped gods whose names were still more or less familiar. They were regarded as kings and chiefs and were brought into

a genealogical scheme, while some myths were reduced to annals of supposititious events. Myth was transmuted into pseudo-history. This euhemerizing [37] process is found in all decaying mythologies, but it is outstanding in that of the ancient Irish. The third factor is the attempt of Christian scribes to connect the mythical past and its characters with persons and events of early Scriptural history.

These factors have obscured Irish divine legends, though enough remains to show how rich and beautiful the mythology had been. In the two heroic cycles — those of Cuchulainn and Fionn respectively — the disturbance has been less, and in these the Celtic magic and glamour are found. Some stories of the gods escaped these destructive factors, and in them these delectable traits are also apparent. They are romantic tales rather than myths, though their mythical quality is obvious.

Two mythical strata exist, one older and purely pagan, in which gods are immortal, though myth may occasionally have spoken of their death ; the other influenced by the annalistic scheme and also by Christianity, in which, though the unlikeness of the gods to humankind is emphasized, yet they may be overcome and killed by men. The literary class who rewrote the myths had less simple ideals than even the Greek mythographers. They imagined some moving situations and majestic episodes or borrowed these from the old myths, but they had little sense of proportion and were infected by a vicious rhetorical verbosity and exaggeration. Many tales revel monotonously in war and bloodshed, and the characters are spoiled by excessive boastfulness. Yet in this later stratum the mytho-poetic faculty is still at work, inasmuch as tales were written in which heroes were brought into relation with the old divinities.

The main sources for the study of Irish mythology are the documents contained in such great manuscripts as the *Book of Leinster* and the *Book of the Dun Cow (Leabhar na hUidhre)*, [38] written in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, but based on materials of older date. Later manuscripts also contain important stories. Floating tales and traditions, fairy- and folklore, are also valuable, and much of this material has now been published. [39]

Among the British Celts, or those of them who escaped the influence of Roman civilization, the mythological remains are far less copious. Here, too, the euhemerizing process has been at work, but much more has the element of romance affected the old myths. They have become romantic tales arranged, as in the *Mabinogion*, in definite groups, and the *dramatis personae* are the ancient gods, though it is difficult to say whether the incidents are myths transformed or are fresh romantic inventions of a mythic kind. Still, the Welsh *Mabinogion* is of great importance, as well as some parts of Arthurian romance, the poems about Taliesin, and other fragments of Welsh literature. The euhemerizing process is still more evident in those portions of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *History* which tell of the names and deeds of kings who were once gods.

Thus if materials for Irish and British mythology are copious, they must be used with caution, for we cannot be certain that any one story, however old, ever existed as such in the form of a pagan myth. As the mountain-peaks of Ireland or Wales or the Western Isles are often seen dimly through an enshrouding mist, which now is dispersed in torn wisps, and now gathers again, lending a more fantastic appearance to the shattered crags, so the gods and their doings are half-recorded and half-hidden behind the mists of time and false history and romance. Clear glimpses through this Celtic mist are rare. This is not to be wondered at when we consider how much of the mythology has been long forgotten, and how many hands have worked upon the remainder. The stories are relics of a dead past, as defaced and inexplicable as the battered monuments of the old religion. Romancers, would-be historians, Christian opponents of paganism, biographers of saints, ignorant yet half-believing folk, have worked

their will with them. Folk-tale incidents have been wrought into the fabric, perhaps were originally part of it. Gods figure as kings, heroes, saints, or fairies, and a new mythical past has been created out of the *débris* of an older mythology. There is little of the limpid clearness of the myths of Hellas, and yet enough to delight those who, in our turbulent modern life, turn a wistful eye upon the past.

To make matters worse, modern writers on Celtic tradition have displayed a twofold tendency. They have resolved every story into myths of sun, dawn, and darkness, every divinity or hero into a sun-god or dawn-goddess or ruler of a dark world. Or those with a touch of mysticism see traces of an esoteric faith, of mysteries performed among the initiate. In mediaeval Wales the “Druidic legend” — the idea of an esoteric wisdom transmitted from old priests and philosophers — formed itself among half-crazy enthusiasts and has been revived in our own time by persons of a similar genus. Ireland and the West Highlands have always been remarkably free of this nonsense, though some Celts with a turn for agreeing with their interlocutor seem to have persuaded at least one mystic that he was on the track of esoteric beliefs and ritual there. [40] He did not know his Celt ! The truth is that the mediaeval and later Welsh Druidists were themselves in the mythopœic stage — crude Blakes or Swedenborgs — and invented stories of the creed of the old Druids which had no place in it and are lacking in any document of genuine antiquity, Welsh or Irish. This is true also of the modern “mythological” school. Not satisfied with the beautiful or wild stories as they stand, they must mythologize them still further. Hence they have invented a pretty but ineffectual mythology of their own, which they foist upon our Celtic forefathers, who would have been mightily surprised to hear of it. The Celts had clearly defined divinities of war, of agriculture, of the chase, of poetry, of the other-world, and they told romantic myths about them. But they did not make all their goddesses dawn-maidens, or transform every hero into a sun-god, or his twelve battles into the months of the solar year. Nor is it likely that they had mystic theories of rebirth, if that was a wide-spread Celtic belief ; and existing examples of it always concern gods and heroes, not mere mortals. They are straightforward enough and show no esoteric mystic origin or tendency, any more than do similar myths among savages, nor do they set forth philosophic theories of retribution, such as were evolved by Pythagorean and Indian philosophy. Modern investigators, themselves in the mythopœic stage, easily reflect back their ideas upon old Celtic tales. Just as little had the Celts an esoteric monotheism or a secret mystery-cult ; and such genuine notices of their ancient religion or its priests as have reached us know nothing of these things, which have been assumed to exist by enthusiasts during the last two centuries.

[1] *The Religion of the Ancient Celts*, Edinburgh, 1911.

[2] Caesar, *De bello Gallico*, vi. 14.

[3] See especially *CIL.*, *CIR.*

[4] 3 vols., Leipzig, 1896 ff.

[5] The exact meaning of *simulacra* in this passage is a little uncertain. Possibly they were boundary stones, like the Classical *henns* (cf. *Mythology of All Races*, Boston, 1916, i. 194-95) ; but they were probably “symbols” rather than “images” (see MacCulloch [b], pp. 284-85), and may have been standing-stones (see *infra*, pp.-158-59)-

[6] *De bello Gallico*, vi. 17.

[7] *ib.* vi. 18.

[8] MacCulloch [b], pp. 29 ff.

[9] *Argonautica*, iv. 609 f.

[10] Diodorus Siculus (first century B.C.), ii. 47.

[11] *Herakles*, i ff.

[12] Soltnus, xzii. 10.

[13] Giraldus Cambrensis, *Topographia Hiberniae*, ii. 34ff>

[14] *Pharsalia*, iii. 399 ff.

- [15] *De bello Gallico*, vt. 17.
- [16] Livy, V. xxxix. 3.
- [17] Pausanias, X. xxiii. 7,
- [18] Avienus (fourth century A.D.), *Ora maritima*, 644 ff.
- [10] *ZCP* i. 27 (1899).
- [20] *ib.*
- [21] Justin (probably third century A. D.), XXIV. iv. 3.
- [22] Diodorus Siculus, V. xxiv. i.
- [23] See *infra*, p. 117.
- [24] Diodorus Siculus, iv. 19.
- [25] Propertius, V. x. 41.
- [26] Pliny, *Historia naturalis*, xxix. 3.
- [27] Lucan, *Pharsalia*, i. 455 ff.; Diodorus Siculus, v. 28.
- [28] Cf. *Mythology of All Races*, Boston, 1916, i. 6-8.
- [29] Plutarch, *De defectu oraculorum*, 18, *De facie lunae*, 26.
- [30] See *infra*, pp. 54, 90, 95-96, 119-20, 122, 127, 132, 192.
- [31] Procopius, ed. W. Dindorf, Bonn, 1833, n. 566 f.
- [32] Cf. *Mythology of All Races*, Boston, 1916, i. 145-46.
- [33] Claudian, *In Rufinum*, i. 123.
- [34] Villemarque [a], i. 136 ; Le Braz [a], i. p. xxxix.
- [35] Pliny, *Historia naturalis*, iv. 13 ; Strabo, ii. 4 (» p. 104, ed. Casaubon).
- [36] *Historia naturalis*, a. 98.
- [37] So called from the Greek Euhemerus (fourth century B.C), who, in a philosophical romance, of which only scanty fragments have survived, showed how the gods had been actual men and their myths records of actual events (see E. Rohde, *Der griechische Roman und seine Vorläufer*, 2nd ed., Leipzig, 1900, pp. 236-41, and J. Geffcken, "Euhemerism," in *ERE* v. 572-73).
- [38] Cited as LL and LU. They have been edited at Dublin in 1880 and 1870 respectively, but neither has been completely translated.
- [39] See *Bibliography of Irish Philology and of Printed Irish Literature*, Dublin, 1913, pp. 80-122.
- [40] See Wentz, *passim*.

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