

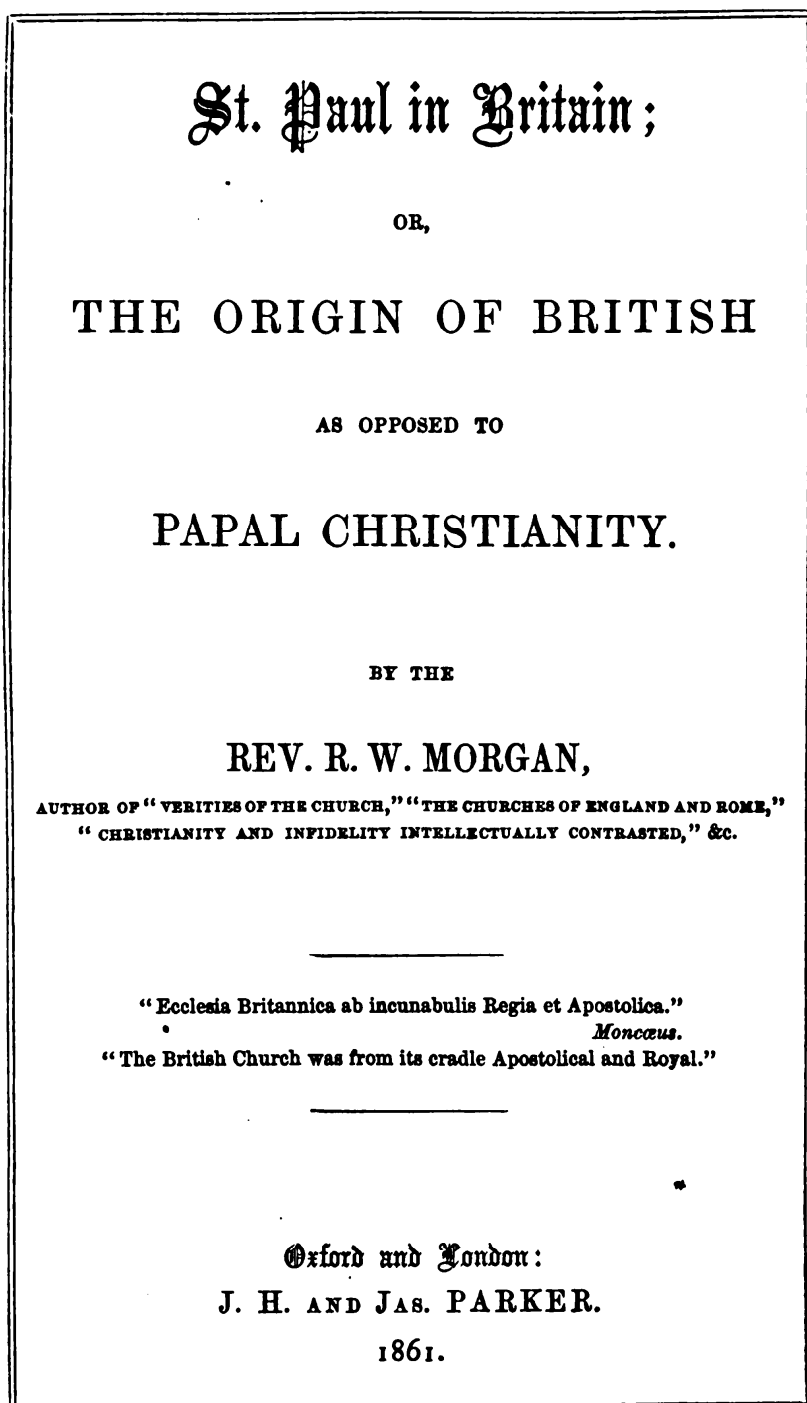
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More 15

20 November 2011

Boadicea, the original 'Queen Victoria' – R W Morgan (1861)



CONTENTS.



CHAPTER I.

THE RELIGIONS OF THE WORLD AT THE RISE OF CHRISTIANITY. THEIR ANTAGONISMS AND COMMON GROUND WITH THE NEW FAITH.—GREECE AND ITS PHILOSOPHIES.—THE JEWS.—THE INFLUENCE OF THE MESSIANIC IDEA.—THE EASTERN RELIGIONS.—ROME 1

CHAPTER II.

THE RELIGION OF BRITAIN AND WESTERN EUROPE.—DRUIDISM, THE GENTILE PREPARATION FOR CHRISTIANITY.—ITS PRINCIPLES AND INFLUENCES 57

CHAPTER III.

HISTORIC POSITIONS OF BRITAIN AND THE ROMAN EMPIRE AT THE COMMENCEMENT OF THE CHRISTIAN ERA 87

CHAPTER IV.

THE BRITISH ROYAL FAMILY AT ROME.—THE ARIMATHÆAN, OR FIRST INTRODUCTION OF CHRISTIANITY INTO BRITAIN.—SIMON ZELOTES.—ARISTOBULUS 126

CHAPTER V.

THE TRACINGS-UP OF THE ANCIENT ROYAL CHURCH OF BRITAIN TO ITS APOSTOLIC FOUNDATIONS.—ST. PAUL IN BRITAIN.—HIS CONNECTION WITH THE ROYAL SILURIAN FAMILY OF BRITAIN.—BURIED IN THEIR FAMILY SEPULCHRE 178

CONCLUSION 213

Nero had succeeded Claudius Sept. 28, A.D. 53. He was in his seventeenth year, and for some time remained under the influence of Seneca, a Stoic philosopher in profession, but in practice a grinding usurer. The capital of this minister amounted to fifteen million pounds sterling of modern money. Two millions of this he advanced to the Iceni of Britain on the security of their public buildings. We doubt if Rothschild or any modern capitalist would advance half the sum on such public buildings as may now be found in the old Icenic counties. The king of the Iceni was Prasutagus, his queen Victoria, (in British, Vuddig or Boeddig—Boadicea.) Tacitus speaks of him as

* Gwehelyth Iestyn ap Gwrgant.

M

a sovereign whose wealth was notorious at Rome,—
longá clarus opulentia.

The commerce between Britain and the Continent continued to be vigorously conducted. Tacitus informs us that the great foreign emporium was London, a city the foundation of which the British annals carried back 270 years before that of Rome, i.e. B.C. 1020^a. Above 80,000 Roman citizens, according to the Roman historians, perished in the Boadicean war, of whom the greater number resided in London. A Roman garrison stationed in the Prætorium,—which extended along the Thames from the temple of Diana, where now stands St. Paul's, to the Bryn Gwyn, or White Mount, the site of the Tower,—protected their property and interests. It was just as easy for an apostle to find his way into Britain as for any of these 80,000, amongst whom there must have been a fair proportion of Christians. The Roman citizen could travel from Babylon to London along the great military *itineræ* of the empire, more slowly indeed, but with fewer civil inconveniences

^a "Londinum vetus oppidum quod Augustam posteritas appellavit."—*Ammianus Marcellinus*, lib. xxvii. c. 8, 9. If London was not a præ-Roman city, Ammianus could not term it "an ancient city:" for supposing it founded the first year of the Claudian invasion, A.D. 43, it would still, in A.D. 350, be quite a new town; and as the Boadicean war broke out A.D. 60, it would be absurd to affirm that it rose in seventeen years to the condition described by Tacitus: "Copia negotiatorum et comæatum maxime celebre."—*Tacit. Annal.*, lib. i.; *Hist.*, lib. i., and lib. xiv. c. 27—30.

in the shape of passports and stoppages, and no less security, than an Englishman can now. It was not in mediæval Europe, divided amongst a thousand independent marauding states and barons, nor in the pathless wilds of a new world, but over the length and breadth of an empire possessed of a system of roads laid down with consummate engineering skill, and remaining, until the invention of railroads, without rivals on a great scale, that the first preachers of the Gospel had to travel. The Roman *iter* at Babylon would conduct them, under the protection of one law, one government, without a frontier, to Calais. The whole empire was a network of connected arteries, along which a traveller might take his ease from anywhere to anywhere under the overshadowing protection of the Eagles of the Cæsars. It was not till he had crossed the British Channel that the din and terrors of war assaulted his senses. So profound, indeed, until the brief civil commotion that resulted in placing the Vespasian family on the throne, was the peace which prevailed through Europe, that the Roman annalists are driven, for lack of national events, to fill page after page with court scandals, with the personal debaucheries and cruelties of the emperors. These emperors were despots created by the democracy against the oligarchy; they held the same position as the Tudors of later times in Britain. When a noble raised his head above his fellows, like Tarquin and the poppies, they cut it remorselessly and un-

scrupulously down. A lover of the old oligarchic times, such as Tacitus, would—and no doubt in many cases justly—stigmatize such executions as judicial murders, and transmit their authors to the execration of posterity. The people at large were unaffected; the lightning passed over them; and, in return, it was the dagger of the oligarch in the chamber, not the popular tumult, which the Cæsar dreaded. He walked the streets a simple citizen without guards, but he went to the Senate armed. Meanwhile, Ostorius Scapula in Britain suffered a defeat from Arviragus at Caervelin, near Caerleon. Exhausted in mind and body by the harassing vicissitudes of the war, he petitioned to be recalled. He was succeeded by Didius Gallus, who founded Cardiff, still called by the Welsh *Caer Dydd*, ‘the Castle of Didius.’ After a short command Didius gave way to Veranius, under whom the Roman armies were again driven behind the Plautian line of fortresses, and their head-quarters fixed at Verulam. Veranius was superseded by Suetonius Paulinus, a second Fabius Cunctator, and regarded as the ablest tactician in the Roman service^b. He had under him the ninth, fourteenth, twentieth (*Vicesima Valens Victrix*), and second (*Augusta*) legions.

The expression of Tacitus, that Britain had long

^b “Cunctator naturâ, nemo rei militaris callidior habebatur.”—*Taciti Hist.*, lib. xiv. c. 20.

been the field for the employment of the great generals and picked armies of the empire^c, may be readily understood by merely reading over the names of the Roman commanders who were successively entrusted with the conduct of the war,—Aulus Plautius, Geta, Vespasian and Titus, Ostorius Scapula, Suetonius Paulinus, Cerealis, Julius Frontinus, Julius Agricola, Sallustius, Lucullus, under whom the island was lost, and the Roman armies a second time withdrawn to the Continent, A.D. 86; from which time till A.D. 118 we have but one solitary Roman name occurring in British history, Neratius Marcellus. From A.D. 43 to A.D. 86 sixty pitched battles were fought. “The series of invasions and sanguinary conflicts,” observes Smith in his “Ancient Religions^d,” “between the Romans and Britons have no parallel in any age or country.” “We are able to perceive,” writes Richardson, “from the partial story furnished by the invaders themselves, that conquest was never more dearly attempted than in the case of Britain by the Romans. By no people was every inch of country at any age contested with more bravery and surrendered more stubbornly than by the aboriginal fathers of this isle. They had become a very populous nation, so versed in military tactics as to meet the armies, which had been carrying the

^c “Magni duces, egregii exercitus.”—*Tacitus, Annal.*, lib. ii. c. 24.

^d p. 457.

Roman banners over the most famed and intellectual quarters of the world, on such formidable terms, as to render victory at every encounter little better than defeat. They had settled laws and institutions, were distinguished for an ardent love of liberty, in defence of which the highest degree of valour and self-devotion were on all occasions manifested. It is certain they revered the laws by which they had been long governed, and evinced profound homage for the memory of their forefathers: nor can we less credit their undaunted energy against the mercenary and implacable plunderers of the world, against whose experienced arms they had to contend. A man must be a barbarian himself to suppose that such a nation could be barbarous. The idea is simply ludicrous^e.”

This firm resistance to the Roman arms was mainly due to the national religion—to Druidism, which acted then much the same as Protestantism did on the British mind in the popish invasion of the Armada. Druidism had been persecuted by pagan Rome on the Continent as Protestantism in the Tudor era was by papal Rome: both had their headquarters and stronghold in Britain; both had common points admirably suited to the native bent and genius of the British race; both were religions of freedom; and both were thoroughly identified with British in-

^e Richardson's Historian, p. 10.

dependence and grandeur. The Druid, indeed, regarded the Roman mythologic religion with much the same mixture of contempt and hatred that a strong Protestant does still the image system and inquisition practices of the Papacy. "When the Romans," observes Cleland, "effected a footing in Britain, they found in Druidism a constant and implacable enemy to their usurpation. They would have been glad to introduce their religion, but to that point there was an invincible obstacle in the horror and contempt of the natives for a religion formed by a corruption of their own allegories; which made the name of their heathen gods as familiar to them as Julius Cæsar states, but in a sense which excluded them from reception in a divine one¹."

The Briton soon perceived the fact that Christianity and Druidism were the two religions persecuted by Rome. The gathering prejudice against the former, because the Aristobulean mission came from Rome, gave way to strong predilections in its favour. A large class of Britons, it is true, cared as little then, as now, for religion in itself, but they were ardent patriots, and Druidic because patriots; they were indifferent what the national religion was, provided it was thoroughly anti-foreign, anti-Roman,—that it was thoroughly British. Nothing, therefore, served so much to recommend Christianity and ex-

¹ Cleland's *Ancient Celtica*, p. 13.

tend it in Britain, as its persecution by Rome. Common oppression drove the two religions into each other's arms, and finally united them in so indissoluble a union, that we cannot now separate in British Christianity the Druidic from the Christian element. Two events now occurred which crowned the national hatred towards both the arms and religion of Rome, and, in the same degree, disposed Druidism to identify its sufferings with those of Christianity,—these were the Boadicean outrage and the Menai massacre.

Orders were issued from Rome to Suetonius Paulinus to extirpate, at any cost, the chief seat of Druidism among the Cymry, or Western Britons. Seneca, who still, in some respects, acted as Nero's adviser, demanded repayment, at the same time, of his loan to the Iceni, charging exorbitant interest. The Icenic senate demurred; whereon Caius Decius, the Roman præfect at Caistor, was instructed to take possession of all the temples, castles, and palaces belonging to the state. These orders were vigorously executed. Prasutagus, the king, dying in the midst of these measures, left Nero co-heir, with his two daughters, to his accumulated treasures. On the pretext that the whole of the royal hoard came under the denomination of public property, Decius proceeded to seize it. Resistance being made, the legionaries stormed the palace, perpetrated the most inhuman outrages on the persons of Queen Victoria and her daughters,

and carried the treasures off to the Castra. Not content with these atrocities, Decius confiscated, in direct violation of the Claudian treaty, the estates of many of the Icenic *blaenorion*, or nobility. The Iceni sent Venusius to Arviragus, abjuring the Roman protectorate, and placing themselves and the Coraniaid at his disposal. Suetonius, meanwhile, by forced marches along the Wyddelian road, had reached the banks of the Menai. On either side extended the *myvyrion*, or colleges, and the cemeteries of the ancient religion, the tumuli of which are yet traceable. Here reposed, between the soaring ramparts of Snowdon, the sacred mountain, the Zion of Cymru, and the blue waters of the unexplored Atlantic, the fathers of the British Isle: chiefs whose ashes for fifteen hundred years had never been desecrated by the tramp of a foreign foe; arch-druids, the depositories of the hoary wisdom of the East; kings whose Cimbric names had carried terror over the continents of Europe and Asia. Through these sanctuaries of so many and such ancient memories, the regulated march of the mailed legions of Rome now resounded. Anglesey was then known as *Môn*, and ecclesiastically, from the number of Druidic groves which covered it, sweeping down to the margin of the Menai, as *Ynys Tywyll*, the dark isle. The massacre of the Druidic priests and priestesses which ensued is graphically described by Tacitus. It was a complete surprise. Effecting the passage of the Menai, opposite the

present seat of the Marquis of Anglesey, (Plas Newydd) Suetonius gave the colleges to the flame and their inmates to the sword, the resistance attempted by the native force on the spot being easily overcome. The myvyrion were levelled with the soil, and for many nights and days the waters of the Menai were illuminated with the glare of the conflagrations of the sacred *luci*—the favourite haunts of Druidic meditation and philosophy. Tacitus endeavours to palliate this foul wholesale assassination of the ministers of religion, by stating that the Druids were in the habit of sacrificing the Roman prisoners of war on their altars. The Romans themselves, we know, after exhibiting them in triumph, slaughtered every captive king and chief in the Tarpeian dungeons, whilst the privates were condemned in thousands to butcher each other on the public altar, or the arena of the circus, in the gladiatorial games,—even the vestal virgins smiling on the sanguinary holocausts. The immolation, on the other hand, of Roman prisoners by the Druids, rests on the solitary assertion of an enemy who, with a like scandalous indifference to truth, terms almost in the same page the Christian religion itself “a destructive superstition^ε.” The

^ε Suppose we knew nothing more of the Jewish dispensation and of the Levitical priesthood than we find in Greek and Latin authors, it must be confessed we should have either to remain in total ignorance, or to embrace very absurd misconceptions. It may, however, be added, that the Greeks were equally unjust towards the Romans, for

news of the massacre was no sooner diffused through Britain than it excited the nation to frenzy. The war from this moment became a religious war; a crusade accompanied with all the frightful and remorseless cruelties on either side which have in all ages distinguished such hostilities^h. The Ioeni and Coranidæ had entirely forfeited the name of Britons, and their oppression alone might have been regarded in the light of a just retribution, but the Menai massacre merged all other feelings in one torrent of universal indignation and horror. Boadicea soon found herself at the head of 120,000 men in arms. The Roman accounts impress us vividly with the profound gloom in which their forces were plunged, by the heavy shadows of the forthcoming disasters. Portent on portent is recorded. At Colchester the statue of Victory, like that of Dagon at Joppa, fell backward and was shattered to fragments. A Pythoness, agitated, like Cassandra on the eve of the fall of Troy, with the insuppressible spirit of divination, caused the streets to re-echo with the cry,—“Death is at hand.” In the senate-house the British war-cry, uttered by invisible tongues, terrified and dispersed the councillors. The theatres resounded

no Greek writer deigns to mention the name of any of their authors, or, indeed, to suppose that they had any literature at all.

^h In the Boadicean war, states Tacitus, no quarter was given or asked on either side: “Neque enim capere aut venundare aliudve quod belli commercium sit,” &c.—*Annal.*, lib. xiv. c. 29—39.

with the shocks and groans of a field of battle. In the waters of the Thames appeared the mirage of a Roman colony subverted and in ruins. The channel between Dover and Calais ran at high tide with blood. On the tide receding, the sands revealed, in long lines, the impressions of files of bodies laid out for burial. The Menai massacre had, in fact, terrified the consciences of its perpetrators, as it had roused to fury the passions of the whole Druidic population. The return of Caradoc also about this period to Siluria, though bound by solemn stipulations, which he faithfully observed, not to bear arms again against Rome, augmented the general commotion. The British army, assembled at Caer Llyr (Leicester) under Venusius, was harangued by Boadicea in person. Boadicea was a near relative of Claudia. We have seen the latter princess cultivating the *belles lettres*, throwing her palace open to Martial and the *litterati* of the capital of Europe, receiving apostles, establishing the first Christian Church in her own household, uniting the graces of religion with refined art and high personal accomplishments. This is the royal Christian lady, such as we should expect to find, presiding, surrounded by the *élite* of Roman society, over the household of a Roman senator of ample possessions and powerful connexions. Dion Cassius gives us a sister picture of her cousin the Druidic queen, under very different circumstances during the same year in Britain. It is a grand

and imposing composition, quite unique in history. Greece and Rome shew us nothing like it. The Maid of Orleans, in more modern times, is the only approach to it, but all the terrible features are supplanted by gentler ones. We see a queen, stung to madness by the wrongs which most nearly affect womanhood, leading a whole nation to battle; the sense of injury has changed her whole nature into that of a Bellona, an incarnate goddess of war, and she lives only for revenge. In her eyes every Roman is a monster already doomed. She would have been less than woman not to have felt her dishonour, more than human not to have panted for the hour of retribution. "Boadicea," writes Dion, "ascended the general's tribunal; her stature exceeded the ordinary height of woman; her appearance itself carried terror; her aspect was calm and collected, but her voice had become deep and pitiless. Her hair falling in long golden tresses as low as her hips, was collected round her forehead by a golden coronet; she wore a tartan dress fitting closely to the bosom, but below the waist expanding in loose folds as a gown; over it was a chlamys, or military cloak. In her hand she bore a spear. She addressed the Britons as follows."— We give only her peroration:—

"I thank thee! I worship thee! I appeal to thee a woman to a woman, O Andraste! I rule not, like Nitocris, over beasts of burden, as are the effeminate nations of the East, nor, like Semiramis, over trades-

men and traffickers, nor, like the man-woman Nero, over slaves and eunuchs,—such is the precious knowledge these foreigners introduce amongst us,—but I rule over Britons, little versed indeed in craft and diplomacy, but born and trained to the game of war: men who, in the cause of liberty, stake down their lives, the lives of their wives and children, their lands and property. Queen of such a race, I implore thine aid for freedom, for victory over enemies infamous for the wantonness of the wrongs they inflict, for their perversion of justice, for their contempt of religion, for their insatiable greed; a people that revel in unmanly pleasures, whose affections are more to be dreaded and abhorred than their enmity. Never let a foreigner bear rule over me or these my countrymen: never let slavery reign in this island. Be thou for ever, O goddess of manhood and of victory, sovereign and queen in Britain¹.”

Colchester was carried on the first assault by the British army. The temple, garrisoned by the veterans, held out for two days, then shared the same fate. Petilius Cerealis, the Roman lieutenant, was defeated, with the loss of the ninth legion, at Coggeshall, (Cocci Collis). Cerealis himself, with a few horsemen, escaped into camp. The municipal town of Verulam was then stormed, gutted, and burnt.

¹ Dion Cassius, *Xiphilini Excerpta*, printed in the government *Monumenta Britannica*, ad an. 58, 59.

London had received a Roman garrison, under the name of a colony, within its walls. Against it the British army, now swelled to 230,000 men, directed its vengeance. A battle was fought and lost in its defence, at Ambresbury, between Waltham and Epping^k. Such of the inhabitants as possessed the means fled, at the approach of the British Queen, to Regnum and Rutupium. The rest, including the Roman citizens and foreign merchants, took refuge with the garrison in the fortifications of the Prætorium, extending from the temple of Diana to the White Mount. The ramparts were escaladed, the city fired, public and private edifices reduced indiscriminately to ashes, the walls levelled, and above 40,000 residents put to the sword. Leaving behind this terrible example of a metropolis in conflagration, quenched with blood, Victoria swept westward to intercept Paulinus. Tacitus records but two, Dion many engagements, between her and the Roman forces. Her British epithet, Buddig, or Vuddig, (the Victorious,) implies that in more than one battle success followed her standard. Tacitus localizes the last battle on the margin of Epping forest,—a plain error. The Bri-

^k The spot of Boadicea's camp is approached across the old Ermine Street by the Camlet, (Battle-way.) Its figure is described in Cromwell's "Colchester," vol. i. p. 32, as irregular, containing twelve acres, surrounded by moats and high ramparts, overgrown with oaks and hornbeams.

tish traditions place it on the Wyddelian road, near the modern town of Newmarket, in Flintshire. The names still attached to the various sites of the field confirm this statement. Here are "Cop Paulinus," the "Hill of Arrows," the "Hill of Carnage," the "Hollow of Woe," the "Knoll of the Melée," the "Hollow of Execution," the "Field of the Tribunal," the "Hollow of No Quarter." Half-a-mile further is a monolith, the "Stone of Lamentation," and on the road to Caerwys was formerly—now removed to Downing—the "Stone of the Grave of Vuddig." Turning to the pages of Dion, we read the description of a conflict such as these names suggest—a deadly *melée* of legionaries, auxiliaries, archers, cavalry, charioteers, mingled together and swaying to and fro in all the heady currents of a long-sustained and desperate combat. Towards sunset the fortune of the day was decided in favour of the Romans. The Britons, driven back on their intrenchments, left a large number dead on the field, or prisoners in the hands of the enemy. They prepared, however, to renew the conflict, but in the interim Victoria died, by poison according to Tacitus—in the course of nature according to the Greek historian, who adds that her obsequies were celebrated with extraordinary magnificence. Her death little affected the spirit or resources of the western and northern Britons, who continued hostilities with unabated vigour under Arviragus, Venusius, and Gwallog, or Gal-

gacus¹. Harassed by the same anxieties that had undermined the constitution of Ostorius Scapula, Paulinus, at the expiration of the year A.D. 61, resigned his command to Petronius Turpilianus. The whole of the Roman empire elsewhere continued to enjoy tranquillity, Syria alone excepted, the disturbances in which were pacified in a few months by Corbulo. Whatever emperor occupied the throne, the military service was never deficient in generals of the highest order of ability. The war had now lasted eighteen years, and the Roman province was still limited by the Exe and Severn westward and the Humber on the north. Even within these lines its bounds fluctuated with the success or reverses of the imperial arms^m.

¹ We have elsewhere observed that the gallant and successful resistance of Britain to the Roman invasions was mainly due to the patriotic spirit and exalted doctrines with regard to the indestructibility of the soul breathed by their Druidic religion. Seneca was the indirect cause of the Boadicean war. His nephew Lucan, in the first book of *Pharsalia*, attributes the British fearlessness of death to Druidic teaching in the following fine lines:—

“Certe populi quos despicit Arctus,
 Felices errore suo, quos ille timorum
 Maximus haud urget, lethi metus. Inde ruendi
 In ferrum mens prona vivis animæque capaces
 Mortis et ignavum redituræ parcere vitæ.”

Cicero had noted the fact before—“In proelio morituri exultant Cimbri.”—*Tuscul. Disp.*, lib. ii.

^m “Non poterant Britanni sub Romana ditioni teneri,” is the frank admission of the *Augustini Scriptores*, p. 68.

[ENDS]