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**The Modern Status of Archaeology and the Hopes of Archaeology  
in Relation to Certain Dark Periods in Britain**

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THE MODERN STATUS OF ARCHÆOLOGY AND THE  
HOPES OF ARCHÆOLOGY IN RELATION  
TO CERTAIN DARK PERIODS IN  
BRITAIN.

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THE area of Gloucestershire, limited in breadth as the county perforce is, is yet so rich from an archæological point of view, that within its own borders it includes representative examples of almost every period and style in Western Art. Hence those who live here have at hand uncommonly rich material for reconstructing for themselves the life of the past. In addition to ancient remains belonging to those various periods, they possess very abundantly the literary records which serve to illustrate and corroborate the stories they tell. By means of these the student, it is no exaggeration to say, may hope not only to clothe again, even with some warmth and colour, any surviving monuments that represent civil, or military, or ecclesiastical life, but to make them almost as intelligible to-day as when they freshly expressed the conditions of a now bygone civilisation.

There are, however, some periods in relation to which the literary record is either entirely lacking, or is so fragmentary that the judgment must, perforce, wait upon the arbitrament of the spade and the patient application of "the comparative method." There are, indeed, certain dark spots, resembling the coal-sack, as sailors call a certain space in the southern heavens, in the historical firmament which the most careful eye seems to sweep in vain. With regard to certain of these dark spots, or periods of history, Gloucestershire is no worse off than most other counties, and I am one of those who are

not without hope—rather, who entertain a firm belief—that especially in regard to one of these, namely the doubly dark period that ensued after the severance of Britain from the Roman Empire in A.D. 406, until the battle of Dyrham in A.D. 577—a period of one hundred and seventy years—Gloucestershire will still bring forth additions, both Pagan and Christian, to enrich our knowledge.

This brings me incidentally to a consideration of the astonishing progress made by archæology during the last half-century, and the sympathy which it more and more finds with the general public of this country. For it is on this support and encouragement that our hopes of throwing further light upon dark and difficult periods, such as that referred to, must depend.

The archæologist of to-day differs from the honoured antiquary of the days of George IV. and Sir Walter Scott, chiefly in the more methodical handling and sifting of his evidence when collected. The scientific spirit of this history-loving age has enabled him at last to recognise the intimate relationship of his pursuit to every section of historical study. It has, consequently, made him conscious, in a way unfelt by his antiquarian forefathers, of his responsibilities toward every department of allied research. We may not be able to discover more significant monuments than they did; we may find ourselves confronted with far more difficult problems for solution than they were confronted by, but in addition to the experiences our forbears have fortunately handed down to us, it is certain that we enjoy the advantage of vastly improved methods of research, and thus it must be at once our ambition to be found worthy of our inheritance, and, by pursuing this modern advantage, to reach fresh and far-reaching conclusions. The main fact stands that archæology has undergone a vast expansion, and one analogous to that observed in the world of natural history since the application of the doctrines of Charles Darwin. The archæologist to-day resembles the modern miner, who can no longer be content, as his

predecessor, to merely dig out and crush the ore-bearing rock, but he must subject even the "old remainders"—the ancient debris as we should call it—to a chemical process, and extract from it wealth hitherto unsuspected—myriads of "unconsidered trifles" that lay far beyond the reach of ordinary scrutiny.

Thus it is that with almost deleted documents, by the application of a simple solution of borax, we can to-day recover the lost text of poem, gospel, manor-roll, or monkish chronicle. With delicate papyri, instead of finding them break like mere biscuit in the hand, we take watchful weeks to unfold them, by the gentle aid of steam, so as to make them at last give up their long-hidden secrets. It is nowise different with the more solid monuments which we survey, such as Avebury and Stonehenge; we dig around, and perhaps trench through them; we photograph, we sift with a sieve! we subject the very seeds from the wells of Roman villas to the microscope; further, we collect the broken potsherds, analyse the glaze on them, and take profiles of their rim-mouldings; and then we arrange and classify, we argue, and finally we draw our conclusions. I do not hesitate to say that it is in consequence of this application of the comparative method that archæology, in our time, has ripened from the purely amateur position it formerly held into a status which approaches the professional, a status, however, which it is only just beginning to enjoy in this country. I look forward to a day when a chair of archæology will be held at every university in the empire. But I look forward to something more—to a time when every well-constituted county archæological society will possess a library affiliated to the central library of the county capital, which shall be open at least three days in the week for study, where not merely will be found a clearly organised set of first-rate books of reference, but registers of all known documents, manor-rolls, inscriptions, and charters relating to the county, and records of the whereabouts of all original portraits, engravings, pictures

and plans relating likewise to it, and to all sites of interest within it.

Instead, therefore, of being any longer regarded as a dry-as-dust hobby, or as a pursuit mercifully provided by Providence for the entertainment or speculation of eccentric and solitary old country gentlemen, archæology is recognised as a sane and noble study, conducive to health of mind and body, and to the enrichment of every department of historical knowledge. Truly, a very wonderful transformation.

It is legitimate, then, to inquire for a moment what has brought this change about. If it was, indeed, worth effecting, why did it come about so slowly? Probably it could not have come more rapidly. For it is not due only to the spread of knowledge, but to its concentration; not to widening of areal surface, but to better ploughing. It is by means of profounder conceptions of the past story of mankind, and a more liberal atmosphere for the conceptions to flourish in than used to prevail, that the very intimate relationship of this once so-called "dry-as-the-dust hobby" to life, its manners, customs, arts, and religions, "and everything that is its" has at last come to be fully acknowledged. It no longer claims compassion or invites trivial "chaff." It flourishes in the broad golden day, and is crowned with honour.

Let us glance, then, for a moment or so on the past that we have left. In former days learning had not felt around and realised every corner of her spacious cage. There were still islands and mountain ranges to be discovered, new languages to vocabularise, races to describe, bonds of convention to break, and strait-waistcoats of what now is regarded as laughable superstition to defy. The world—(can we realise it?)—even but seventy years ago, resembled a moth just breaking with its quasi-mediæval wrappings, except in matters purely scientific. Perhaps that was why it so despised the Middle Ages.

The more we realise its judgments, more and more strange they seem to us. For instance, in art it still thought Carlo

Maratta and Carlo Dolce first-rate and precious masters ; it considered Caracci and Guido far greater than Velasquez and Rembrandt. It saw, without a trace of regret, its way out of the fine furniture of the eighteenth-century masters. The inlaid clock and the Chippendale chairs and cabinets, that to-day record amazing values, were expelled to the house-keeper's room, or dispatched to the cellar or to the loft, with the Caxton and the Folio Shakespeare, with the old glass and the queer fire-dogs and the Sheffield plate. It was a vain thing for the antiquary—Mr. Dry-as-dust, as he was called—to lift the voice of protest, though to his honour, and sometimes to his profit, he certainly did so. The new utilitarian spirit, like a riotous, over-healthy youth, was a bit of a tyrant with his severe sense of the “ practical.” Gothic stained glass was gloomy, while cheap cathedral glass was light, and could be renewed, if the boys broke it, very easily. “ Instead of oak,” they said, “ which is hard to cut, let us have Norwegian pine, and paint it and vein it to imitate oak. Instead of stone mantel-pieces, let us paint them and vein them to resemble marble. Instead of the stupid old-fashioned flowers in the garden, let us have the gardener's ingenious double-dahlia, and try to double and distort and re-create everything else that is there. And as for those vaunted Worcester and Derby ‘ services,’ let us rather have the cheap and gay modern Sèvres.”

It is manifest that a person of taste who had known his Britain well in the forties and fifties, and had emigrated, but had returned thither now as an old man, yet with an unimpaired memory, would to-day be positively staggered at the complete revolution in regard to the value placed upon works of art, and indeed upon everything antiquarian. He would find monuments that used to be neglected and passed by carefully fenced in, written about, illustrated, and visited annually by multitudes with untiring interest ; while others, that used to be regarded as things “ elegant,” and most proper to be admired, he would hear condemned as “ frightful,” or as

“ monsters ” of Victorian art. What, however, might impress him most especially, he would find no branch of art or of antiquity, however humble, neglected for lack of earnest students. At every turn he would hear of discoveries and of new researches, and perhaps he would soon conclude that the whole world had turned “ collector,” or else had gone mad, for everyone now collects or studies something, or at least wishes to be thought so to do. Such a person would then ask himself the reason for this universal change. Perhaps he might without difficulty draw these conclusions.

First, the mere eagerness manifested for the possession of certain classes of objects is doubtless in proportion as the known amount of these in the world, like gold itself, is now realised to be limited. But it is not by any means due to a love of archæology. It is too often due to no higher motive than self-advertisement and love of display. It is the millionaire’s chosen way of proclaiming his sudden, but profound, culture, his crâving for recognition. Secondly, every one of these classes of object in some way is recognised to illustrate past history. It is therefore evident that the study of history itself has become far more serious and absorbing than it was of old, that archæology has come to be recognised as an integral part of her, and archæological inquiries as abstracts and brief chronicles of portions of the mighty past. It is at the same time realised that a great deal of history has been irretrievably lost ; and equally, that though many discoveries remain to be made, there is bound to be some limit to the antiquarian treasure yet remaining to be discovered. People feel that there will soon be scarcely enough old work to go round ; at any rate, little of it that cannot be methodically classed. “ Since my day,” our “ Revenant ” might continue, “ a far more scientific condition of mind has universally supervened, and it reveals itself by a very passion for classification. It classifies everything upon which it can, or cannot, lay hands, both with regard to each country, each people, each period, down to county and town and parish

history, and that of private houses. It evidently does its best in order to extract all available knowledge from whatever is put before it. It is no longer content with the surface, but tries for the very marrow of things. Moreover, it requires to illustrate everything. Men no longer search a suspected site merely to discover and expose a mosaic pavement, leaving the rest of the villa and its out-buildings to moulder unquestioned in the field, or to be torn out by the plough. On the contrary, they patiently search and sift the entire site, measure the walls and note their details (even though only the footings remain), analyse the materials, scale out and photograph the whole plan, and finally, from the mass of collected facts they reconstruct, as far as may be possible, a conception of the arts and customs of life in a Roman colony or in a Celto-Roman province. If possible they secure the remains from further damage. Moreover, the same method is applied by them to things Saxon, to things Scandinavian, to things Norman ; in fact, to inquiries relating to all periods known to us.

“Again,” he might say, “whereas in the days of my youth people only thought of history itself in purple patches or stories, isolated from the rest of the historic purview ; thought also of kings and emperors, not of the peoples and their institutions ; thought of families, not of races ; now they are filling up the dim gaps, and finding missing links of every kind. Their eyes do not merely attend to the statue in the niche, but they find interest in the study of the bald masonry—ay, even of the miserable rubble, of all which we thought little, if at all, but rather took it as a matter of course, not worthy of discussion, far less writing about. Doubtless most of this momentous growth is due to the stimulus given by the scientific enlightenment of this age. At any rate, the real importance of the study of archæology is unquestionable. It is indeed no longer a ghost of a pastime. Its real rank and serious substance is only too apparent. It is intimately interconnected with various very royal branches of science. For instance, the study of things belonging to the Stone Age, of the remains of men and animals

in the cave-drifts, belongs to geology and zoology, and to anthropology, but it also belongs to the domain of archæology. Indeed, in the art of all that lies the vast problem of the 'antiquity of Man,' about which we were scarcely allowed a question in my day. Again, the study of masonry and mouldings, of design, of decoration of all kinds, of heraldry, and of bindings belongs clearly to high art, but likewise essentially it belongs to archæology. The study of implements and vessels of metal and enamels concerns metallurgical science, but it also belongs to archæology. In fact, there is very little, when one thinks of it in this light, that is not related, at no great remove, to archæology. It appears really to be almost a Shakespeare among sciences, which at some point touches and understands most things."

And how, we ask, is this to be explained? We answer, because true archæology, like poetry, is only quite secondarily a pleasant pastime; primarily, it is a form of the scientific search for historic truth. It is the reverent study of all those things in the concrete world of the past, which reflect the needs and the achievements of men and women in every former stage of their progress here. It is the holding of the mirror up to the art of living as attained by man and woman in other ages, and thereby endeavouring to show us "their very form and pressure." It brings the visible and the invisible once more together, not, of course, in the fine way that poetry does, but in a solid, matter-of-fact, and not always romantic way; a way, however, more nearly related to the real than to the imaginative, as belonging more closely to exact science than to the world of the ideal. But, in any case, the human interest in it is paramount.

And yet it must not be supposed that archæology has no relations with the imaginative side of things. For if science itself is found to be helped by a scientific and controlled use of the imagination, so, to be sure, is the calling of the archæologist. By such a use of the imaginative faculty the student may take the very "wings of the morning, and dwell,"

as it were, "in the uttermost parts of the sea." Even out of the most unpromising cold flint may be brought for him absolute fire. The more by study of any class of archæological objects his imagination becomes warmed, the less remote and unrealisable will become to him the period, however remote it be, with which he may have to be dealing. "The olden times are only such in reference to ourselves.<sup>1</sup> The sun shone in Cæsar's time just as it does to-day."

Let me illustrate this from the perhaps not very attractive subject of the barrows of the Stone Age.

We see before us a mound of earth, long or circular in form, and evidently artificially raised. We open it, well aware that whatever we may find within it there will be no such object as an inscribed stone to help its understanding; probably no trace of metal, unless a significant lump of pyrites among the flint weapons. If we do find pottery, it will be of the very lowest grade, made without wheel or proper kiln, and there will be some half-incinerated bones, or merely inhumed bodies, together with some neatly chipped and polished flint implements, scrapers, or arrow-heads.

It will be admitted that the show of contents is somewhat bare and limited. Someone will perhaps say, "No doubt the people who raised the funeral-mound hunted, fought, ate and drank, and died. How they were clothed, if they were clothed, one may conjecture to have been simply in the skins of slain animals. Their cooking must have been primitive to a degree. They seem to have had no arts worth speaking about; perhaps they were cannibals. Does it really matter when these folk lived?"

But wait one moment. Let us scrutinise that piece of ill-fashioned, half-baked pottery that has just been thrown out. What is this mark extending along what was evidently the neck of it? And again, look at these little crude lines of raised points, meant, it would seem, for primitive ornament, and inter-crossing one another diagonally over the body or bowl of the vessel.

<sup>1</sup> Hazlitt.

The first mark shows itself to have been made by pressure of a twisted cord or thong upon the surface of the neck when it was wet in the hands of its maker. Here are the very fibre-prints as well as those of the potter's fingers. Already it is certain, then, that the owners possessed the knowledge of twisting fibres or grasses into cords. If they did this, then they will in all likelihood have had nets to fish with, and others to trap wild beasts, and why not woven garments, however simple? In fact, here are bones of fish from the neighbouring stream. But the inter-crossing diagonal lines of slightly raised points on the body tell us more than that. They imitate nothing if not the raised stitches used in basket-work patterns, while this zone of wavy lines below them represents equally the varied patterns used by some basket-weaver, which has served our primitive potter for his model.

Nor is this a matter of surprise, for, after all, basketry made in imitation of birds' nests may conceivably have preceded baked pottery. Almost all the shapes, let alone the decorations, we are accustomed to in early pottery may have been evolved from those of either gourds or baskets, to the woven meshes of which latter clay was applied in order to render a woven vessel or cauldron water-tight. It has been proved that nearly all their decorations have had structural origins, *i.e.* imitate actual things. Examples from Alaska, Mexico, Lapland and elsewhere show that even cooking vessels, exemplifying transitions between these two arts of the weaver and the potter, are found in use to-day among primitive tribes living there. The pot is filled with water, and not put on the fire, but hot stones from the fire are dropped into it, and the cooking follows. Most of us may be familiar with the far more advanced application of the finer art of porcelain to basketry, as used by the Japanese. At any rate, we shall be within reason in concluding that the people who raised many of these neolithic barrows, albeit without knowledge of metals, were dexterous plaiters and weavers, and that if they were, as is conjectured, the direct ancestors of the Picts, or

painted Goidhels, or Gaels, of Britain, their weaving and plaiting was elaborated with patterns in vegetable colours, both in their costume, their persons, and their food vessels.

If we light, therefore, upon a round barrow containing this poorly though significantly patterned pottery, or upon a long barrow belonging to a still earlier period, even containing none at all, we need not too hastily conclude that the civilisation of their makers was of so miserably meagre a kind that they had no skill except in chipping flint, and slaying animals and dressing in their skins. For even the far more remote palæolithic man, their predecessor, must have possessed civilisation to that extent.

On the contrary, we must conjecture that the wooden hafts which firmly framed their flint blades and axes, the hard thorns which answered to the later metal pins and brooches for their clothes, and the basket cups, bowls and vases, having all of them been made of fibrous materials, have perished utterly, leaving the tombs void of everything save the imperishable flint, or the amber-bead, or the stone spindle-whorl. We may therefore take this into account.

Could we, however, as by magic be presented with a vision in which was taking place the burial of a warrior of four thousand years back in one of these Cotswold barrows, we should perhaps have much to marvel at. We should see either a small, dark-skinned and dark-haired people, or a tall one, fair-haired and moustachiod, gathered together to one of their funeral feasts, and making the landscape resound with loud lament. They would be dressed in coarse woven stuff, perhaps patterned with colour and adorned with hair and feathers, neatly fastened by thongs of leather or by pins of hard wood, or thorns. Some of those nearest in blood to the dead and their slaves would be carrying food vessels, skilfully woven by the work of women's fingers from the bark of trees and the fibre of plants that are still quite common around us; and in these would be observed the ritual food and drink, intended partly to be consumed at the feast, partly to be buried with the

defunct, for the barrow and the " temple " were one to those peoples. Others would carry bundles of dry wood, sticks of hazel, &c., for the incineration of the corpse. Other figures would be seen a little farther off guarding the victims—sheep and oxen—to be slain as offerings to the unknown. Still another might be observed carrying the hardwood bow and arrows with flint heads in a reed quiver, and yet another bearing the flint axes used by the deceased, and, lastly, we might see one striking the tough shield of the dead warrior, and calling on the ghosts of their ancestors. I need not fill up the picture for you.

But assuredly, could we speak and question these people about their arts and about their predecessors, we should be answered that they knew absolutely nothing about palæolithic man, or of the strange animals with which we know now that he must have lived in contact. They would doubtless boast of their superiority to their own enemies and immediate predecessors, but even these would, we should find, be described as people possessing rather similar arts, and trading in flint weapons and baskets, nets and skins. It would, in fact, be much like encountering some wild American-Indian or Maori tribe and assisting at their ceremony. But as to their own manufactures, they would show us many remarkable things. We should be handling flint knives set in hard horn, or wooden hafts bound round wondrously fast with gut or cord. We should find that numbers of so-called flint scrapers, instead of being applied for merely scraping skins of bird and beast, were dexterously used in making basket splints, mats, wicker huts, and possibly cradles for the tribal babies. In short, we should become rapidly acquainted with not merely the industrial arts of peoples so far unacquainted with metals, but with the skill of their women-kind, who probably made most of these articles; moreover, wove the handsome ritual food vessels, and baked the clay urns for the graves of their deceased lords.

Now it might be thought that I have pushed the point of the vanished and forgotten basket-wares too far in obtaining a

picture ; that I have perhaps strained a point, which is after all only to be hall-marked 'probable.' But I venture to think that when the ancient literary evidence, so far as it goes, is brought to bear on that point, I shall be acquitted.

It stands in all simplicity thus. Among the few words surviving to-day from our Celtic forbears, and adopted into our Saxon language, are the words *caul*, from *cawell* (Welsh) ; *calla* (Irish), a net or caul, or basket ; and *basged*, itself direct from the Welsh. It is obvious from their adoption that the Saxon invaders had no words equivalent to them, and probably did not manufacture the things at all ; hence they borrowed these words from the Romanised Celts of Western Britain—Brythons or Goidhels. That is a solid etymological fact, but it is not enough perhaps, by itself, to sufficiently substantiate the point. Let us, therefore, turn to the works of the second-century Roman poet Martialis (Bk. xiv. 99), and there we find it written :—

"Barbara de pictis veni bascauda Britannis  
Sed me jam mavolt dicere Roma suam."

That is to say, "I am a basket made by the painted Britons, but already Rome appropriates me and prefers to call me her own."

This is, indeed, a surprising tribute. To be considered worthy of a Roman poet's epigram, as well as of Rome's envy, can only mean that the British aborigines furnished astonishingly fine woven baskets, and these, coming from the heart of this island, were imported for sale into Italy. But this testimony does not stand alone. Juvenal, the satirical poet, also of Trajan's day, in Satire XII., R.T., refers to these very same "British baskets," among the stock cast out of a friend's imperilled ship with the rest of the cargo, in order to lighten her. As for the "coracle," Celtic name and thing, that survives with us still, as well as the Severn salmon-kype, these take us back to days probably behind the occupation of Cotswold by the Brythonic Dobuni.

After this, then, is it not possible that, like many a traveller who has found himself in contact with savage tribes, we, the imaginary spectators of such a scene as that suggested, would have found ourselves not surprised so much at the lack of art among those ancient barrow-raisers, but at the very abundance of it ?

I hope I am not going too far if I venture to think that the civilisation of even the long-barrow period, looked at from such a point of view, does not seem quite so dry, so cold, or so unpromising a subject as often it is said to do. Neither, I may add, does it appear quite so remote and unget-at-able. For we ought in nowise to be appalled at any gaps in the written record, nor by any others ; neither ought we to feel that Romano-British civilisation, because of its wealth of inscribed monumental record in Britain, is the furthest back about which we need seriously to trouble ourselves.

If we were to do this, we should at a stroke forego forming for ourselves what is most necessary—an adequate conception of the exceedingly interesting late-Celtic civilisation, which the Roman civilisation invaded and by the too-potent uniformity of its own art overcame, although fortunately it failed to obliterate.

This late-Celtic art was not at all of the primitive kind expatiated upon just now. The difference between the art of, say, the long-barrow Period, and it was far greater than the difference between it and the contemporaneous Roman art ; for both the latter belonged to the Iron Age. The Bronze Age had intervened.

This is not merely to be concluded from the fact that whereas the former was a stone age and the other the metallic—but by bronze-embossed shields and helmets found in the Thames, more beautiful than any purely Roman works of their date ; by the exquisite mirror, sword-haft and bronze bowl found near Birdlip in 1889 ; by the coins, both gold and silver, that, however rough, were minted in Britain and in the neighbourhood long before the Roman Conquest under Claudius—but

it is to be understood, above all, by the marked rapidity with which the southern and central Britons took on both the language, costume, and arts of their conquerors, and which Agricola found it so far from difficult to encourage, that Tacitus asserts in the year A.D. 80 the toga was already frequently worn by the natives, and that though until recently they had held the Roman language in disdain, many were now anxious to become eloquent in it. Moreover, he relates that they took readily to the baths, porticoes, and even to the "elegancies" of the table.<sup>1</sup> It has taken three centuries for the American Indian to make an equivalent advance. Plutarch refers to a Greek Grammarian, one Demetrius or Tarsus, who had taught Latin in Britain; and Juvenal, early in the second century, mentions British lawyers being instructed by Gaulish schoolmasters. Later on we find British builders actually imported to Autun in Gaul (France). It is not unlikely that most of the teachers, like the soldiers, who exercised their profession in Britain were Romanised Celts from Gaul, and these may have understood more than one Celtic tongue, in addition to Latin. This would also apply to trade-guild-men, such as the mosaic-workers, who had learned their designs and technique, not in Italy, but in Gaul and Spain. What they spoke, then, besides Latin was either Belgic or Celtic; but that was not, as is sometimes stated, precisely Welsh, though doubtless allied to it. So completely did they take on the Latin tongue, that the very labourers of the third century, in the brickfield at Silchester, scrawled Latin phrases upon their wet bricks, as also did a potter at Radstock, and doubtless others.

How then, it will be asked, has it come about that we almost habitually think and talk of the ancient Britons as barbarous, or as painted savages, if they were not really so? How was it that Cæsar so spoke of them, and as we heard just now Juvenal, a century and more later than Cæsar?

This is due to two reasons. First, that there were at least

<sup>1</sup> *Vita Agricolaë*, c. 21.

four different peoples inhabiting Britain when the Romans first visited it, and it took them some time to understand and differentiate between the Belgic Brythons, the Goidhelic Celts of the remoter parts, the dark Iberian Silures, and the painted aborigines or Picts, some of whom were independent of their neighbours, and some were not. Many of these may have been prisoners to the others, and served in their camps, or formed a conquered section becoming absorbed by the conquerors.

Secondly, it is due to the peculiarly deceptive effect of Roman civilisation ; for by its overpowering unity of purpose, and its sternly generalising method of administration, it has made the Celtic civilisation, which it displaced and partly absorbed, appear to us insignificant and out of all proportion. Its mechanical brilliance has made the other seem obscure, and hence justice is only to-day being done to it. We are apt to take every fibula found on a Romano-British site too readily for a Roman one.

To-day, however, by as it were mentally using a tinted medium, the archæologist finds himself enabled to scrutinise that great Roman luminary in Britain far more realistically. He can also compare its effect upon other, if lesser, luminaries, and can attempt to measure their effects upon it. The result of research more and more tends to proclaim their various strong individualities. Moreover, it tends to show that certain of the inhabitants of Britain were not by any means dark before Rome shone upon them, nor were they immediately dark after Rome had become eclipsed.

One special result of this latter-day scrutiny has been to show that though the Roman subdued and dispossessed the paramount British Celts, and though his art displaced theirs, it did not extinguish it. Like some stately monster, so to speak, he passed over and fed upon the pasture with the wild bees and ants that fed upon its flowers, and killed a few, and he maimed many more ; but the pasture, with its flowers, rose up again after he had passed by, though where his heavy

feet had rolled it the growth became perhaps even more luxuriant. But finally the native ant built her nest and reared her young, and the native bee went on making hexagonal cells and filling them with rare honey.

Now these ants and bees, for the sake of the simile, here represent the more civilised Celtic races in Britain, whose warriors (until the Roman conquest) drove beautiful chariots and sometimes carried enamelled shields and swords. The very latest post-Roman labours and outputs of their dying Art are exemplified in the beautiful early crosses, enamelled brooches, bowls and sword-hilts—things representing æsthetic influences both un-Roman and pre-Roman, that rose up again out of Western Britain and Ireland after the withdrawal of the official legions early in the fifth century. These reviving traditions and influences were, it would seem, gradually progressing eastward from the West in Britain when the Saxon, or Teutonic, shock of barbarism, worse in some respects than the previous Roman one, repelled it once more, and forced it back upon its former refuge, namely upon Wales and Ireland.

Now, it is owing very largely to this event that archæological light is so sorely needed to illumine the century and more immediately following the departure of the legions. That hundred and seventy years of civilised life, almost unaffected by the slow advance of the Saxon in this south-western part of Britain, is perhaps the darkest spot both in the Christian and secular history of our island—the veritable blot in the historic firmament of Britain. Upon it, accordingly, we ought to concentrate as much hopeful scrutiny as possible, because, although the documentary evidence relating to it is, perforce, deplorably weak, other evidence is not so wanting as to warrant the supposition of some writers that fourteen generations of organised Romano-British civilisation fell in a decade or so to chaos, or nothing; that its acquired and settled laws and methods became suddenly a dead letter, that its trade, internal and foreign, entirely ceased; that methodical estate-management, good building and farming, and cloth-weaving

and dyeing, decayed ; that local municipal governments, that military provisions and defences ceased to exist ; or, finally, that the sense of empire died out with the Latin language. Neither the Latin language died out nor Roman influences, but we can do little more than just prove it.

All this could verily be supposed only did we retain suppositions—once prevalent, but now happily put to rest—that the departed garrison of Roman Britain had been composed of Roman soldiers, actually born and bred in Italy, that the builders and dwellers in our villas and towns, such as Corinium and Glevum, and Silchester, or Calleva, were citizens and officials of the Latin race merely rewarded for services with lands carved out of a new province twelve hundred miles to the north-west of their natural abodes in Italy. We were further than that distance out in our reckoning.

We know that nothing of the sort happened, and this cannot be repeated too frequently. Instead of having been composed of Italians, far less of Romans, the Roman legions were made up of men from the three Gauls, from the Rhine, from the lands of the Danube, from Helvetia, and from Northern Spain. The governors of Britain, it is true, were, at any rate during the first two centuries, Romans or Latins, as were many, though certainly not all, of the commanders, tribunes and prefects. But even the legions recruited in Italy herself, like the emperors, were very far from being purely Latin in those days ; and much less could it be expected that any especially Latin legions should be drafted into a remote province with a climate to which not only were they unused, but of which they entertained a lively horror. There were 8,000 Britons already enrolled in the army of Vitellius in A.D. 69. The army which in the third, fourth and fifth centuries constituted the permanent garrison of Britain was nowise an army resembling that of Julius Cæsar of three hundred and more years earlier. It was, on the contrary, composed largely of Celts of various conquered nationalities, which had been themselves completely Romanised, and had,

moreover, derived from Romanised Celtic parents. These, while permanently stationed here during three centuries, had married women born in the land, generation after generation, and had been recruited also with drafts raised again and again among Celtic, Iberic and Teutonic tribes across the water. That is the stuff of which the Roman legions in Britain were made, and the funeral inscriptions found all over the land relating to their officers tell us the one unfailing story. Their names reveal them to have been "barbarians" latinised. The owners of these names were more or less completely Romanised Celts, possibly becoming more and more British or Brythonic as time went on.

What would be the natural sequence of effects consequent upon the withdrawal *c.* A.D. 406 of the four permanent legions thus composed? How would the legions themselves regard it? The legions might be glad of the change from Northern and Eastern Britain to a desirable southern climate, might be glad to look for less hard living and more fighting, or at any rate for more adventure. But were they not leaving behind them their friends and families, and many possessions? When they quitted Britain they left behind them men and women born like themselves and educated to Romano-British ideas in life, both public (municipal and military) and private (familiar and social), and perhaps well able, at least for a time, to take good care of themselves. And our evidence, so far as it goes, warrants our believing that these effectually did so.

It must, moreover, be recollected that the fourth century, or that extending from Diocletian's time through Constantine down to Honorius and the departure of the legions, had been, as evidence of many kinds has shown us, the most prosperous of all in Britain. It is to that period we owe the greater part of the remains met with in this island, though many villas doubtless date like Woodchester from the second, and probably none at all to the first century. In A.D. 363 Britain had been able to supply from her own superabundance the corn which

staved off the severe famine afflicting Rhenish Gaul and beyond the Rhine. Of the Roman coins that are found in this country, one would judge those of the fourth century to outnumber the rest at the rate of ten to one of the first century, five to one of the second, and about three to one of the third. The almost infinite amount of extremely small change is practical witness, bad though the coins be, of the activity of civilised commerce.

Unfortunately, throughout this fourth century Roman Art of all kinds, and in all lands, had been undergoing rapid degeneration. Now we could scarcely expect art in Britain to improve when Roman art was everywhere else on the decline. Roman ideas of art, of construction, naturally declined here as they did elsewhere, and we are not going to say that of a consequence the long-suppressed or isolated Celtic art rapidly revived in order to fill the gap created. But what we do say is that almost at the very moment of the recall of the legions, Christianity, which hitherto in Britain seems to have numbered merely isolated, well-to-do converts, and the more cultivated among its adherents, received its first real impulse in South-Western Britain from the missionary disciples of St. Martin of Tours, who had died in A.D. 397. It was still one hundred and sixty years before the landing of St. Columba at Iona, and one hundred before Gildas and St. David were to be trained in the theological college of Llantwit, in what is now Glamorganshire, and it was just two hundred years before the arrival of St. Augustine in Kent.

With the advent of fresh devotional needs, it would be natural that to their service would become attracted whatever elements of art did remain in the land, whether these elements were Roman or Celtic. As, however, the least-prepared, as well as the least-disturbed, portions of Britain were naturally those in the west, it was equally natural that any revival of religious art, however feeble, should emanate from thence, rather than from the areas more chronically concerned with combating the Saxon invaders.

What we have to show then is, first, that Roman influences did long survive here, especially in South-West Britain; and, secondly, that local Celtic art did very slowly re-awaken from its sleep, but that it only became fully awakened at last under the wings of the Western Church, that is, under the religious influences radiated from certain established centres of Christianity in these islands. Situated as Corinium was at the crossing of two main trunk-roads, it would have formed a natural centre for missionary work. Unfortunately, we have no proof yet forthcoming that it did so.

In the first place the Saxon throughout this period continued, as he had long been, pressing along the east and southern coast and through the lands adjacent; but in the last decades of the fifth century he was destined to consolidate his hold, and to begin his substantial conquest of this island. But in spite of his often successful onslaughts, his progress was remarkably slow. Even the great and small Roman roads do not seem to have helped him as might have been concluded they would do. This surely reveals how effectual was the native resistance offered. He did not reach the neighbourhood of Bath and Cirencester until one hundred and seventy years after the legions had left. He did not capture Exeter until the ninth century. So that all this portion of Cotswold England, with its solid cities and villas, continued, we may presume, its decadent Romano-British life, not necessarily very peacefully, or free from Celtic, tribal and family conflicts, Irish invasions, &c.; but as best it might. We lack almost all written records of it, and therefore have to weigh other evidences, whatever these may be.

Now what is the main fact recorded for us concerning the ill-fated British force which opposed the Saxon in 577 at Dyrham? Why, we are told that three British kings, or leaders, who fell before it in the desperate battle were the rulers of Bath, Glevum, and Corinium: that is, they were found fighting, but, most strange to say, united against the common enemy. Moreover, their names are absolutely Celtic—

Kynmægl, Kynddydan, and Farin-mægl, the second of whom Professor Rhys has identified with Kynddylan, of early Welsh literature, who kept his court at Pengwern, otherwise Shrewsbury, which the Saxon Ceawlin presently ravaged and burned.

This banding together, however, of the Celtic leaders is precisely what we should least expect. Is that how, later on, they let the Norman into Ireland? Not at all. And, moreover, listen to what Tacitus says of their characteristic conduct in Britain four hundred years before: "It is seldom that even two or three communities concur in repelling the common danger, and thus, while they engage single-handed, all are subdued by us."<sup>1</sup> The conclusion is irresistible that the lesson of unity taught by Roman civilisation had by no means been forgotten, even in the later half of the sixth century, at any rate in this region of Britain.<sup>2</sup> Why, then, should we doubt that the rest of British civilisation at that time more or less faithfully reflected its former sources of inspiration? There were yet two other reasons which must have emphatically conduced to weld the Britons into that unity, and that was the fact that they were now Celtic Christians fighting in the Roman manner for

<sup>1</sup> *Vita Agricolaë*, c. 12.

<sup>2</sup> I am indebted to the Rev. Charles Taylor for the following apposite and helpful note:—If Henry of Huntingdon is to be trusted, Roman military discipline survived at least until 591. "*Tertio autem post hunc anno Brittanni et Saxones bellum constituerunt apud Wodnesbirue. Cum autem Brittones, more Romanorum, acies distincte admoverent, Saxones vero audacter et confuse irruerent, maximum prælium factum est, concessitque Deus victoriam Britannis.*" (M.H.B. 714, C.) Three years after this the Britons and Saxons joined battle at Wodnesbeorg. For when the Britons advanced their hosts in marshalled order, after the Roman fashion, while the Saxons charged forward rashly and without discipline, a mighty fight ensued, and God granted victory to the Britons." As a result of the battle Ceawlin, King of the West Saxons, was driven from his realm after reigning for more than thirty years. Henry is a picturesque writer with a taste for old ballads, but though he wrote more than five centuries after the battle, it is likely enough that he had access to good authorities which are not now extant.

hearth and home against the pagan Teutonic invader ; and, secondly, that the Roman road system in these parts of Britain constituted so grand and easy a means of inter-communication. For the space of, perhaps, one hundred and twenty years before that battle there had been a Celtic or British Church, both in Ireland and South Britain, owning organisation, and actively propagating Christianity through regions more or less prepared not to violently resist its teaching. From Jocelin of Furness (xii. c.) we learn that Theonus, Bishop of Glevum, who had been Bishop of London A.D. 542, fled from his ruined See into Wales with all his Clergy in 586.<sup>1</sup>

At the date of the battle Gildas had been educated at Llantwit Major some fifty years, and St. Columba had undertaken the conversion of the Picts at Iona only fifteen years before it—that is, about A.D. 563—and these, like Nennius, wrote in the Latin language, and we must infer they used the Roman alphabetical characters.

A question, therefore, asked of archæology is, What manner of art-work, however degenerated in style, prevailed in Celtic Britain during that dark one hundred and fifty years, in which had become actually constituted in it a pre-Augustinian British Church, as apart from a mere sporadic efflorescence of Christianity here and there in these islands ? Was it Roman or was it Celtic in its characteristics ? or did it partake of both ?

Inasmuch as archæology can yet give it any answer, it can only say there were at work combined Celtic and Roman-Byzantine influences. In so far as Roman art was concerned, things had woefully degenerated, as surviving inscriptions show. There appears to have been little that could or can be dignified with the name of art. The ferment in many portions of the land consequent upon the Saxon progress undoubtedly checked whatever output there was. The Celtic style of the Christian or post-Augustinian period immediately succeeding must have been forming, but that was not to take

<sup>1</sup> Stubbs, *Episcopal Succession*, p. 151.

its distinctive, concrete shape until after the conversion of the Saxons themselves during the seventh century. At least, so seem our scarce evidences to say.

In so far, then, as the fatal sixth century is concerned, we have little more evidence to show than the oghamic inscribed stones, and a few sepulchral stones, and the bronze bowls from Chesterton-on-Fossway. But we may at least point to their significant distribution. Let me, therefore, call to your minds the nature of ogham.<sup>1</sup> An oghamic inscription is a Celtic inscription or epitaph made according to a code invented by some Romano-Briton, with vertical strokes placed above, below, or across a horizontal line. But a few years ago oghams were supposed to be mere tallies. It is now known that it was devised as a system to be understood by the specially instructed, and was contrived by some academic Celt or grammarian either in Ireland or in South Wales. It has been recognised that the inventor derived his written characters from numeral strokes on Roman scoring-boards. Here again, then, is direct Roman influence. For although the Celts had even in pre-Roman days been used to mark the tombs of their great men with large stones—(and these oghamic stones are sepulchral stones with epitaphs set up over illustrious Christian dead)—it was not at any time the custom of the Celt to inscribe his funeral monolith. Therefore here is yet one more distinct witness to surviving Roman influence, and to its continuity so often denied nowadays. It was Roman civilisation which had taught the Celt to inscribe these fifth- and sixth-century stones, though it was the ingenuity of an educated Celt which now provided a patent literary code. Finally, it was Christianity which told him what to say.

Oghams have been found in so many places, that although great numbers must perforce have been destroyed, still more are certainly awaiting discovery; and there is no place except

<sup>1</sup> Ogham-Ogmios, a Celtic-Gaulish divinity to whom was attributed the invention of a learned dialect and an alphabet.

Caerwent where the discovery of one would less surprise one or more intensely interest one than in this town of Corinium, lying as it does between Wales and Oxfordshire. The number of them already met with traces distinctly for us an eastward movement from Ireland and South Wales. But at the very period that this must have been taking place, the slow Saxon invasion was as surely consolidating itself westward for the great blow to be delivered at Dyrham in A.D. 577.

Let us look, then, for a moment at what we may call the ogham track—the areal distribution of these oghamic inscriptions. Ireland, to start with, has yielded 148, Wales 20, Devon and Cornwall 3. And until a few years ago we thought these marked the eastward limit of their probable distribution. But while the well-known excavations were proceeding in Silchester, near Reading, a fresh example came to light there, and at present that marks for us the extreme eastward limit of that Celtic movement. It is, in fact, its last boundary-stone. We may be certain that it could not have stood in site many years ere there resounded about it the clash of Saxon arms, and it was overthrown. “It was put up,” says Mr. Haverfield, “by some western Celt, who must have reached and lived at Silchester before that town was abandoned by its citizens or burned by the Saxon.” For we know that the Saxons occupied what is now Hampshire in about A.D. 510.

Several of the Welsh examples of ogham are bi-lingual, though this one is not so. Hence those inscriptions were addressed to Christian passers-by, who knew this academic code, and also to any of those who could read Latin, yet might not understand ogham. The Roman official language of the province, therefore, must have prevailed and been taught still during the early sixth century, but the second language or code, adopted for Christian funeral inscriptions, had now become ogham. Those inscribed on stone and lead have survived; those on wood or parchment have perished.

But for the fact that we possess evidence as to the real revival of a definitely Celtic art in Saxon Britain during the

eighth and ninth centuries, as illustrated by the beautiful strap and plait-work crosses, of which Gloucester Museum contains portions of two examples, we should rather regard these Celtic oghams as the last dying speech and confession of Roman civilisation than as a token of the beginning of a Celtic revival.

On the other hand, the key to the ogham alphabet has been handed down to us, not in Roman literature, but in early Irish MSS., and the means of proving the correctness of it was supplied by an ogham stone found at St. Dogmael, near Cardigan. Now, of the finely decorated Irish MS., the earliest that we possess is undoubtedly the Book of Lindisfarne in the British Museum, written by Bishop Eadfrith, whose date is A.D. 698-721, which is nearly two hundred years later than the setting up of the Celtic ogham stone at Silchester; but it is also more than one hundred after the battle which threw Corinium and Glevum into the hands of the Saxon. In this Book of Lindisfarne or St. Cuthbert, well-developed forms of Celtic art with Saxon elements are found to have already coalesced and influenced one another; so that it can safely be concluded that, but for later Saxon and other devastations, we should possess still earlier examples of this transitional interminglement of Saxon and Hibernian art; and that these would have illustrated, if ever so meagrely, the primitive stages of the obscure Celtic revival. For this art, having originally been what may be truly called a development of the late Iron Age, say 400 B.C. to A.D. 150, had suffered suppression during the Roman period, and had retreated into Wales and Ireland, from whence, charged with Lombardic, Saxon, and even Scandinavian elements, it again struggled back to existence as Christian Celtic art, revealing itself by its curious love of spirals and elliptical curves applied to the treatment of plant and animal forms. During the seventh and eighth centuries it re-emerged in the splendid knot and plait-work designs which we see upon Celtic crosses, sepulchral slabs, and enamelled jewellery. It attained its

fleeting perfection before the Norman Conquest. It was an art, the origin of which carries us directly back to the pre-historic Ægean civilisation, and yet one so gifted with life, that, spite of all vicissitudes, it was thus destined to reappear after the western Empire of Rome had fallen, and cover portions of these islands with monuments, such as were once those fragmentary crosses at Gloucester, and others doubtless still to be discovered. For upon sculptured stones and MSS. of this Christian period in Britain are found again the identical Celtic patterns, which have come to light in works of the late bronze period, disclosed in the Glastonbury Lake-village. The famous Tara brooch of the Christian Celt, the books of Kells and Durrow, and the bronze crucifixion (plaque) from Athlone are all of early date in Christian Celtic art. They and their kindred objects were small and perishable, and few examples have survived until to-day. But they had predecessors and rivals; and these must have been produced in Western Britain by metal-workers, scribes and designers precisely within the dark hundred and seventy years after the official close of the Roman occupation; and it is to be earnestly hoped that, like that of the ogham inscription at Silchester, further enlightening discoveries will be made belonging to that period.

I have spoken of certain dark periods. It will be well to reflect that the little light which we painfully get is only a spark here and there amid the perhaps unknowable. But, aware of that, the only thing left to do seems to be for each one of us to multiply these humble sparks until we may hope to contribute them to a steady, continuous flame. The harvest for which archæology is now sowing in many fields will be gathered gratefully in a far future.