

EDITOR'S PREFACE.

Two years ago, at the instance of Mr. McKay, the publisher, we edited a revised edition of Bulfinch's "Age of Fable." The "Age of Chivalry" may be regarded as a companion-piece to that work. As a people we have never fully appreciated our mythology or national legends. Greece and Rome have received their proper attention, but few altars have been erected to the unknown gods of our early history. The Druidical age is too indefinite to admit of much save the conjectural, but the one immediately following is replete with traditional interest. The Roman invasion was one of conquest; still it made way for Christianity. The age of Chivalry that immediately followed anticipated the Crusades by hundreds of years. It was an effort to enroll Mars among the saints. Chivalry was but another form of primitive Christianity. King Arthur becomes the centre of British traditions. He is the embodiment of those higher qualities that marked the ambition of the people; Merlin was the seer and Taliesin the Psalmist of that mystic age. The actual existence of an Arthur scarcely admits of a reasonable question. This is evident for the following reasons: "The general tradition, which is too widespread to be altogether an invention; the existence of so many places in Southwestern England and Southern Scotland that bear his name; the fact that history records certain great Teutonic invasions at the very time and in those parts of Britain where he is said to have lived; the persistent local traditions in Somersetshire and Devonshire, England, where even to-day the Arthurian legends are common among the peasants; the testimony of those ancient historical writers who lived too near the time and scenes to have been altogether deceived."¹

These strange traditions for centuries lay in the sarcophagus of a dead language. The translation of the Mabinogeon marks an

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