



Wicker Idol of Ancient Britain.

OUR PAGAN ANCESTORS.—NO. II.

I told you in my last Paper about our pagan ancestors, something of their barbarous condition in reference to their ways of living, fighting, and so on; and this time have to tell you something about their religion.

Their religion was called Druidism, from the name of their priests, who were called Druids. Learned men are not quite sure why they were called Druids; but some think it was because the word "*Druidh*" meant, in their language, a "*wise man*," and so was given to them from their supposed wisdom.

I shall tell you something about these priests, the doctrines they taught, the places where they worshipped, and the ceremonies they performed.

The priests were of three classes, Druids, Bards, and Faids. The Druids were properly the priests, who offered sacrifices, and performed all the rites of religion. The Bards were a sort of historians, and by composing poems, which they sung and taught to the people, handed down the accounts of battles, and other matters, belonging to the history of the country. The Faids of Vates were the prophets and sacred musicians. They attended at all the religious solemnities, and sung

and played on their harps the hymns they composed in honour of their gods.

The Druids were by far the most numerous class. Each temple required a great many of them, and these lived near the temple where they had to serve. But some lived like hermits, others like monks, and some at courts, and in the houses of great men, as private priests. There was one chief Druid, called the Archdruid of Britian, who resided, it is believed, in the island of Anglesey, and lived in great splendour for those times. In the western islands of Scotland there are the remains of several small round houses, just large enough to hold one person, and which are called "*Druids' houses*," and supposed to have been the residences of their hermits; and in Anglesey, the remains of the Archdruid's palace is belived to exist. These priests seem to have been supported by the presents brought to the temples at the time of sacrifices; by portions of the spoil taken from enemies; by gifts from the people; and by a regular tax; besides the produce of several islands on the western coast of England and Scotland, such as Anglesey, Man, Harris, &c., and which belonged to them.