

“The party who refuses to abide by their decision is punished by interdiction, which disables him from public office, brands him as impious and criminal, and cuts off his whole intercourse with his fellow creatures. These powers are rendered more dreadful by the proneness to a dire superstition which taints the Gaulish character. All the political authority which the priesthood suffer to exist is exercised by a turbulent and factious nobility, whose constant occupation is to recruit and exercise their devoted adherents. The chieftain, or Vergobret, has an uncontrolled power of life and death over the laymen of his tribe. Their domestic life corresponds to their ecclesiastical and civil polity. Husbands have the power of life and death over their wives and children. At the death of a nobleman, if there be a suspicion against the wives, they are put to the torture as slaves; if they be thought guilty, after cruel torments, they die in the flames.” It will be remembered too, that this description of the Gauls refers to a time when that people were much more advanced in civilization than the Britons, although Britain was acknowledged by the former to be the chief source and seat of Druidism.

3. The Druids are said to have taught the existence of a supreme being, and the doctrine of the transmigration of souls. The serpent and the heavenly bodies were also objects of worship with them. They considered the oak as sacred; their religious exercises were performed in the depths of the forests and within circular spaces formed by large blocks of stones. Of these Druidical circles that of Stonehenge on Salisbury Plains is the most perfect spe-