

flowed originally from one fountain. The secret doctrines of the Druids, and of all these different orders of priests, were more agreeable to primitive tradition and right reason, than their public doctrines; as they were not under any temptations, in their private schools, to conceal or disguise the truth.

But however agreeable to truth and reason the *secret* doctrines of the Druids might be, they were no benefit to the bulk of mankind from whom they were carefully concealed. For these artful priests, for their mercenary ends, had embraced a maxim, which hath unhappily survived them, that ignorance was the mother of devotion, and that the common people were incapable of comprehending rational principles. or of being influenced by rational motives; and that they were, therefore, to be fed with the coarser food of superstitious fables. This is the reason assigned by Strabo for the fabulous theology of the ancients.

"It is not possible to bring women, and the common herd of mankind to religion, piety and virtue, by the pure and simple dictates of reason. It is necessary to call in the aids of superstition, which must be nourished by fables and portends of various kinds. With this view, therefore, were all the fables of ancient theology invented, to awaken superstitious errors in the minds of the ignorant multitude." As the Druids had the same end in view with the other priests of antiquity, it is highly probable that their public theology was of the same complexion with theirs; consisting of a thousand mythological fables, concerning the genealogies, attributes, offices, and actions of their gods; the various superstitious methods of appeasing their anger, gaining their favor, and discovering their will. This farrago of fables was couched in verse full of figures and metaphors, and was delivered by the Druids, from little eminences (of which there are many still remaining) to the surrounding multitudes. With this fabulous divinity, these poetical declaimers intermixed moral precepts for the regulation of the lives and manners of their hearers; and were particularly warm in exhorting them to abstain from doing any hurt or injury to one another; and to fight valiantly in defence of their country. These pathetic declamations are said to have made great impressions on the minds of the people, inspiring them with a supreme veneration of their gods, and ardent love of their country, an undaunted courage and sovereign contempt of death.

The secret and public theology of the Druids, together with their system of morals and philosophy, had swelled to such an enormous size, that their disciples employed no less than twenty years in making themselves masters of all their different branches, and in getting by heart that infinite multitude of verses in which they were contained.

The British Druids were in the zenith of their power and glory at the time when the Romans first invaded Britain, under Julius Caesar (53 B.C.) enjoying an almost absolute authority over the minds and persons of their own countrymen, and being greatly admired and resorted to by strangers. But as the Romans gained ground in the island, the power of the Druids gradually declined, until it was quite destroyed; for that victorious people contrary to their usual policy, discovered everywhere a very great animosity against the persons and religion of the Druids. They deprived the druids of all authority in civil matters, and showed them no mercy when they found them transgressing the laws, or concerned in any revolt.

Such of the Druids as did not think fit to submit to the Roman