

that oral tradition was largely cultivated in Britain: it also enables us to see in what manner poems of considerable length could be transmitted with tolerable accuracy. "*Disciplina in Britannia reperta: atque inde in Galliam translata esse, existimatur; et nunc, qui diligentius eam rem cognoscere volunt, plerumque illo, discendi causa, profiscuntur. * * Tantis excitati præmiis, et sua sponte multi in disciplinam conveniunt, et a parentibus propinquisque mittuntur. Magnum ibi numerum versuum ediscere dicuntur. Itaque annos nonnulli vixenos in disciplina permanent. * * Id mihi duabus de causis instituisse videntur: quod neque in vulgum disciplinam efferri velint, neque eos, qui discant, literis confisos, minus memoriae studere: quod fere plerisque accidit, ut præsidio literarum, diligentiam in perdiscendo, ac memoriam remittant.*"* In his Greek Classical Literature (p. 60), Brown thus remarks: "Accustomed as we are to all that assistance to literary composition which the art of writing supplies, and, what is still more important, to the substitute for memory itself, which the power of committing our thoughts to paper furnishes, it is scarcely possible to form any idea of the natural powers of the memory when obliged to depend on its own resources. * * It is not, therefore, so impossible a thing as it may at first sight appear, to conceive a poem of many thousand lines composed and arranged as a perfect whole, by an effort of memory, and then so perfectly retained in the mind as to be capable of recitation. Instances are not unknown of the wonderful power of memory when it is compelled to exert itself. Plutarch mentions the astonishing memories which the Greeks possessed." In the preface to MacCallum's *Ossian* (p. 17), the following very judicious remarks are made regarding the poems of Ossian: "With regard to the manner in which the originals of these poems have been preserved and transmitted, which has been represented as mysterious and inexplicable, we have the following plain but satisfactory account: that until the present century, almost every great family in the Highlands had its bard, to whose office it belonged to be master of all the poems of reputation in the country; that among these poems, the works of Ossian are easily distinguished from those of later bards, by several peculiarities in the style and manner; that Ossian has always been reputed the Homer of the Highlands, and all his compositions held in singular esteem and veneration; that it

* *De Bello Gallico*: Lib. 6; 13, 14.