CELTIC INFLUENCE ON THE ENGLISH

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It has been too commonly believed by a majority of past generations, even by the English people themselves, that there is no Celtic element to be found in the English nation. It has been said that the English people have nothing to do with the old Celtic population; that the Celt has had no more influence on the English nation than the animals of the forest found in England when the Celts were overcome by the Teutonic invasions; that the old inhabitants were entirely exterminated or driven out of the island; that the English are an entirely Germanic people. But why be accepted, when the evidence points to the contrary, when there is no contemporaneous historical record to prove it. This period is obscured in mists of intellectual darkness, we have no trustworthy account; thus it is in great contrast with the history of other barbarian conquests on the continent of Europe. The first historians we have of this period lived
Two hundred years after the conquest, they acknowledge, but they received their account from foreigners, that they knew nothing more than what was handed down in traditions, these histories which tell us of the extermination of the Celt are full of contradictions. If in many places their testimony is in direct opposition to Caesar, whom we know to be a critical and trustworthy observer and writer.

When first the island was brought into the light of history, it is known to have been inhabited by a Celtic people who had advanced to no inconsiderable degree of civilization. We learn from Caesar that these were a fierce, warlike people, who advanced into the water to attack the invading Romans. They were held in respect by Caesar, who carried back from them many new ideas and inventions. The invasion of Caesar was only temporary, but the Romans returning later, made a partial conquest of the island, remaining in Britain.
about two centuries. That the Romans exerted a beneficial influence on the Celt cannot be denied, but the Celt did not lose his nationality; he remained purely Celtic.

The Romans withdrew from the island at the beginning of the fifth century and the Britons were left to defend themselves against the barbarians of the northern part of the island, who had been uninfluenced by Roman civilization and also against the Germanic tribes from the continent, who were at this time making raids on the island. Not being able to protect themselves, they invited in their Germanic allies to aid them, they converted to Angles, Saxons, and Jutes from the north sea. They were to receive certain portions of land for their services. Those who first came carried back such glowing accounts of the island that many more followed. The Britons became alarmed at the increasing numbers refused them grants...
Iland med the Jutes turn'd their arms against the Britons themselves. Then followed a long period of ribbon-warfare, lasting more than one hundred and fifty years before the island was subjugated.

The Teutonic conquest of Britain presents quite a different aspect from the barbarian conquests of the Roman Empire. There tribes which forced over the borders of the Roman Empire had been influenced to a greater or less degree by Roman civilization. Rome had advanced her boundaries to the Rhine. She was continually struggling with the boundaries to protect and maintain her frontiers and thus, when she gave way to those tribes who pressed over her boundaries, were far enough civilized to respect Roman grandeur and splendor. There was not the brutal warfare which would otherwise have occurred, although there was a certain amount of destruction which followed all warfare, especially barbarian. The Roman
cities, laws and customs survived.

In the Roman conquest of Britain the conditions were entirely different. Those who conquered Britain came from lands farther to the north. If they had heard of Rome it could only have come to them through rumor. When they invaded the island they scarcely knew of the Roman Empire. They found the island inhabited by a people who had been Christianized, and thus there was a mutual hatred between the two races. This would thus be a strong opposition to a large settlement of the barbarians, and there would be ways a long and bitter war before the conquered people would submit. Therefore we see here an entirely different aspect, the amount of change destruction and havoc must have been much greater and the killing and driving out much more complete; if the conquerors had been influenced as were the Goths and Franks, the result would probably have been much different, and the English
nation of today would have more nearly resembled the
Romano-Germanic nations of Europe.

Another difference of the two conquests is that in
the Roman provinces the people had become Roman; they
had Roman titles of which they were proud; they had always
been protected and they looked on the Roman legions to defend
them. If they could not do this, there would be no choice
left but to submit; it was simply a change of masters; now
they would not be necessary for wholesale slaughtering
or driving out. The Britains on the other hand did not fight
for a name, a brilliancy of glory that dazzled them; but they
fought for their own soil, their own country, their own honor
and their own freedom; for all that is most dear to man, there
must have been felt by them a patriotism that was not
felt by Roman subject.

The barbarians met with a national resistance, this
was no national uprising under a single leader, but...
The resistance was universal. Companies of Roman landed at different places at different times. There was no meeting of forces on either side. At times the Britons would be successful and again the Britons. Neither side could always win. But gradually the Britons, being reinforced by fresh bands gained the conquest, settling on their lands he had won. That the conqueror, in their struggle largely exterminated the conquered is admitted by all. It can be shown by difference between the English and Romance nations of the continent, where Celt formed part of the population. It may also be shown by the fact that the Celtic customs, language and laws were displaced by the Germanic, while in France the old customs and laws remained.

But the establishment of different language, customs and laws does not prove the extinction of the race. The Celt as a race, as a nation disappeared, they were
no longer a ruling class in their part where the Britons
conquered. But it is far from true, that the Celts
regarding them as individuals were entirely exterminated.

For did not after the settlement of the Romans, he
kept pushing his conquests farther inland to the
west and north. These were became less and less brutal
as time went on; and in those parts conquered later,
there is a much greater Celtic element. These two
peoples gradually blended into one to form the English
man; and by time of Alfred we do not find them as
distinct people.

There are various circumstances which tended to
preserve the Celtic element. The tribes which came over
were mere marauding tribes, headed by some man
of high birth and great courage, that went out on
expeditions of plunder and aggression. These confined
on account of the small size of their vessels and the character
of their expeditions would not take with them any women or young men whom they began to settle in the country. They would select wives from among the old Celtic population. The Celts had also a great respect for women, and there is no reason to believe that they would wantonly put to death the weaker sex.

A portion of the Celts would make terms with the conquerors, seeing no chance of escape they would submit rather than suffer death. There were those probably of higher spirit and tender nature who would prefer exile or emigration. But many would submit and remain tillers of the soil and would not be liable to suffer much except loss of freedom. Those would, as time went on, become more like their conquerors and rising to a higher rank would not in a few centuries be distinguishable from them.

It was this custom in all early barbarian society.
for a certain portion of the conquered people to be made slave, this was given as a substitute for death. Hence it is probable that a part of the Britons were reduced to slavery, the descendants of these would be forced to remain in the same condition, but in time these slave would pass into a condition of villanage, which is a middle stage between slavery and full freedom. Then passing into the state of freedom, they gradually rose from a state of slavery to one of citizenship, with rights of their former masters, when they would not be distinguished from them.

Thus we see the blood of Dr.Rem is gradually mixed and diffused, and after a few centuries we are not able to distinguish either Celt or Saxon. They have amalgamated to form the Englishman.

If there is a Celtic element in the English people from the Anglo-Saxon conquest I think that other conquests
tended to preserve it, more than Germanic element.

The Danes who invaded the island in the ninth century came from so small a territory that if the whole population had come, it would have been insignificant in proportion to the numbers of the inhabitants of England. The first and main force of this invasion fell upon the eastern coast of England where the Anglo-Saxon element was greatest, where the Celt was most completely terminated. Hence the destruction of Germanic element was greater than the Celtic. From the extent of the conquest it is probable that the people of the eastern coast joined with their Germanic conquerors, and therefore received no very great Danish element into our nation.

Following this came the Norman conquest in the eleventh century. The Normans were a small tribe who had settled in France some two hundred years before. They had in mean time lost their nationality; they had
become Frenchmen. Of those who came over to England at the Norman conquest, some were descendants of the Romans, but the larger part were of the old population, nearer akin to the Celtic than the Germanic race.

It is not necessary to rest on hypothetical conditions in supporting the opinion that we may find a Celtic element in English. The fact is substantiated by both physical and psychological proofs. It has been said that in judging the elements that enter into any race we must bear in mind that personal observation, depend on imagination. By characteristics, with history as a basis, and in this manner we may come nearer to the truth. The physical traits of the English people, even in those parts where the Anglo-Saxon conquest was most complete, show distinct traces of Celtic element.

The range of Celtic blood is much greater than the range of Celtic element in the English language, but this element
is sufficient to prove that the Celt must have lived along side the Teuton. There are words relating to government, agriculture, household life, service, and many of the other arts of life, which may be traced to Celtic origin. Celtic names are found in old English charters, and in names of mountains, rivers, and cities, and after making allowance for uncertain etymologies, there yet remains a larger Celtic element than is generally supposed. Many words are of such a character as would not from two peoples engaged in war, or from two in simple, short contact, but give evidence of long familiarity.

The Celtic names of places, rivers, and mountains remain in almost all parts of England, often part of the word is Celtic with some suffix. Take the names of rivers, Avon, Thames, Calder, Tyne, and Isis, these and many more may be traced to Celtic origin. Many prefixes in names of cities as Dor in Dorchester, Cam in Cambridge.
3. Men in Manchester. Many words relating to different occupations and common words have an etymology in the Celtic and not in Anglo-Saxon, as coat, glov, gore, knit, nail, crowd, hawk, match, tackle, hunch and many others. It may find another in certain sounds which are found in Celtic and in English, but not in German, as the sound of the or the. There is no evidence of it being brought in by Anglo-Saxon while it is found among Welsh today. The fact to which there is so great a tendency in German while it is scarcely heard in Welsh and the lower classes of England follow the Welsh.

After the conquest in code of the Anglo-Saxon are found laws which relate to Britons. It is shown by old records that in time of Alfred the rule was equally divided between Saxon and Briton. After the conversion of the Anglo-Saxon there are laws in Henry which relate to both people, and show the Britons as free laborer
rather than plain. In chapters of early times are names which are not Germanic and therefore must be Celtic. This points to the fact that the Britons must have held positions of dignity.

But it is in literature, especially in the poetry of the English people, that the Celtic element is most emphatically shown. Where does our literature obtain its characteristics as radically different from the German, so like those found in the old Celtic literature, if not from the Celt.

It may be said that it received these from a Norman source, it may indeed obtain some of them from that source, but they will not account for all our differences. In the amalgamation of Celt and Saxon we have the fusion of two very different peoples. The temperament of the Celt is impulsive, fiery, metuoso and reckless; he has quick intuitive perceptions, delicacy of taste, and passionate love of beauty. He is gay, social,
sustains ever-changing bravado; hence, he is kind and affectionate—though tending to unity, easily cast down and turned aside.

The Celt is slow in action, but has a steadiness and firmness of purpose, that is crowned at last with success. He is serious industrious, lacking rather in a sense of fun, with an earnestness which does not tolerate idle sentiment, but leads into grave and serious thought. He is sluggish, brutal temperamental, generally engaged in war and plunder, fond of isolation and independence, social only in drunkenness with no taste for luxury.

In this fusion of Celt and Western Celtic spirit and grains have added many characteristics which we would not today have, had the conditions been otherwise. Among the characteristics which we, at least in part, obtained from the Celt may be included melancholy, an
entering into details, love of color and form, copious use
of the simile by metaphor and interpretation of nature.
In any Celtic form where a description of any person
or object is found, a distinct image is brought vividly
before the mind, so vividly, that if you should see the
reality—you could not fail to recognize it. Mingle with
this accuracy of description we find a love of color and
form. These are old Celtic manuscripts, which were
used for religious service, with colored head lines and
pictures. Animals. In this description of a person
we praise the color of their hair, the complexion and the
different parts of their clothing. Take this following
from "Book of Dunster."
"My noble king never spoke falsehood,
In every peril his success was sure:
Black as a raven was his hair,
Sharp as a razor was his spear."
White as lime was his skin,  
He used to flash together, 
High was his shield as a champion, 
Long as an oak was his arm.

Now you will not find this minute description in old 
Scandinavian heroic verse. Take the monster Grendel. 
Who can bring before himself a vivid picture of this 
monster? It is something terrible, something to be 
feared. There is an indefinable mystery about him. 
Now with the Celt this could not be. It would have 
his every feature and color. 
The Celt is noted for his copious use of the simile and 
metaphor. He used them in all his descriptions. While 
in the old Scandian poems it is conspicuous by its absence. 
Here in the latter would you see such a piece as the 
following from the Dean of Limerick's Book: 
"Hard were it Five to Number"
Henry for me was the labor
To tell of the host that has fallen,
Stain by the valour of Oscar,
No rush of the water fall swifter,
No force of the hawk on his prey,
No whirlpool more sweeping and deadly,
Than Great in battle that day."

Goethe says, "English literature, especially its poetry
in its dark features, is touched with an earnest
melancholy that becomes transfused to all who study it."

Where did the English get this melancholy, not from Homer,
much less from Roman elements? Take the death of
Brownsea. When such a leader, such a beloved companion,
falle, we would most surely expect it, but it is not
found there. We find it however in old Celtic poems and
also in English poetry, in Byron, in Gray's "Elegy
written in a Country Churchyard."
Matthew Arnold says, "Without doubt the modern English got nearly all its natural magic, the interpretation of nature from Celtic sources." The three primary requisites of genuine among Celtic bards: "an eye that can see nature, a heart that can feel nature, and a boldness that dares to follow it." Now with these principles laid down, why should the Celt not be supreme in the interpretation of nature? He was always in close communion with it, even in religion. He did not adore images, nor worship in temple, but in the recesses of the woods, surrounded by all the beauties of nature. This was a temperament that was in harmony with nature. He could understand her inner workings, her revelations. Who but a Celt could conceive the idea of forming a bride from the flowers? The Teuton on the other hand would see nature as the botanist, the man of science does, viz., only the practical side. We find this element characteristic of the Scotch
post Rome. In Rome the love of nature was a passion. Thus it is seen from the different proofs by which we are able to judge the past, that there is a Celtic element running through the English people. The tendency of research in this direction, reveals more and more the Celtic element. This element has greatly changed and influenced the English of today. Henry Morley says: “It is for frequent and various contact with the race, that it is that barbarous ages invented peculiar dialogues with St. Patrick, and that quenched afterwards the Northman’s blood in France, Germania, England would not have produced a Shakespeare.” That this intermixture may have been hurtful in some ways may be possible, but the beneficial results have far exceeded them. This mingling has placed the English nation of today in the foremost rank. No combination would ever have produced a
race more calculated to fulfill the highest purposes of civilization. This combination of so radically different elements, has produced a literature, which far surpasses that of any other nation. It has made a language most concise in form and capable of expressing the most subtle feelings with force and effect. It has made the English nation of today, the leading nation of the world.