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CANNIBALISM IN ENGLAND.

BY C. S. GREAVES, Q.C.

At our May Meeting in 1865 a paper was read by the Revd. William Greenwell,¹ which led to a discussion as to the existence of Cannibalism in England, and on that occasion I ventured to contend that that paper contained no evidence whatever of any such practice having ever existed in England. The simple facts, from which such a conclusion was drawn, were that in a very large tumulus a great number of human bones had been found in such positions as clearly indicated that they were devoid of flesh at the time when they were placed in the tomb. Assuming that to have been the case, I maintained that that afforded no evidence whatever that the flesh had been eaten; as there were many other modes by which the positions, in which the bones were found, might be accounted for, and much more reasonably. One instance would occur at once almost to every one. A tribe had been vanquished in a battle, and left its dead on the field, at a subsequent period it returned to the battle field, and collected the bones of the dead, some doubtless broken in the battle, others possibly broken and gnawed by wild beasts, and buried them in one common tomb. It would be impossible to give a better example than the burial in one tomb of the bones of the soldiers of Varus, in the forest of Teuteberg, six years after they had been slain. Tacitus² thus describes the state in which their remains were found: "*Medio campi albertia ossa, ut fugerant, ut restiterant, disjecta vel aggerata; adjacebant fragmina telorum, equorumque artus, simul truncis arborum antefixa ora.*" Such indeed was the state that Tacitus adds that the army trium legionum ossa, nullo noscento alienas reliquias an suorum humo tegetet. Florus³ speaking of

¹ *Archæological Journal*, vol. xxii, p. 106.

² *Annal*, Lib. i, 61.

³ *Lib*. iv, 12. s. 34.

the same battle says, *alii oculos, alii manus amputabant &c.* Bearing in mind that the bodies had been exposed for six years to all the beasts and birds of the forest, and that the number of the slain amounted to several thousands, let any one endeavour to conceive what a congeries of bones in every possible state must have existed in this barrow, and his lowest estimate will very far exceed any congeries of bones ever found in England. And here I may well introduce a passage from Wilson's *Pre-historic Man*.¹ "Among the Hurons, the Mandans, the Sioux and other tribes, the body was, and with the survivors still is, most frequently laid out at full length on an elevated bier or scaffold, or otherwise disposed of above ground, where it was left to decay, and then after a time the bones of the dead, with all the offerings deposited beside them, were consigned to one common grave. Ossuaries of great extent, forming the general receptacle of large communities, have been repeatedly brought to light both in Canada and the Northern States. Creuxius quotes from Le Jeune an account of one of the great burials of the Hurons he witnessed. A grand celebration was solemnly convoked. Not only the remains of those whose bodies had been scaffolded, but of all who had died on a journey or *on the war path*, and had been temporarily buried, were now gathered together in one common sepulchre with special marks of regard. The pit was lined with furs, all the relics and offerings were deposited beside the bones, and the whole were covered with furs before the earth was thrown on them."

The burial of the soldiers of Varus, and the practice of the Hurons and other tribes, were not present to my mind at the time; but they so well support my suggestion that I have introduced them in this place.

But in answer to me four authorities were cited in the paper as proving that cannibalism had existed in England. I have since examined all these authorities, and it is very clear that they in no way support the position for which they were cited, and I have met with no trustworthy authority whatever, which even shows that any such practice ever existed in Europe.

As a mere assertion of mine, however, would be little

¹ Vol. ii, p. 291.

satisfactory, I will deal with each of these authorities in a manner which, I hope, may enable everyone to judge for himself.

Strabo,¹ at some length, treats of England, and there is not a word in his description tending to show that he had ever heard of a rumour of such a practice in it. Then in sec. 4 he speaks of Ireland, and he writes thus: "But there are both other small islands round Britain, and a large one, Ierne (Ireland), opposite to it, on the north (a pretty plain proof how little he knew of the island), which is long rather than broad; concerning which we have nothing certain to narrate² but that they who inhabit it are more uncivilized³ than the Britons, being both man-eaters⁴ and gluttons, and holding it laudable to eat their dead fathers;" and after mentioning their conduct towards women, which we may well omit, Strabo adds, "and yet we thus narrate these things, as not having trustworthy witnesses (of them)."⁵ Here then we have an author narrating these stories, and at the same time telling us, both at the beginning and at the end, that he had no certain or trustworthy proof of them; and I venture to think that to take such a narrative as any proof against Ireland, to which it applies, would be very unreasonable. But as to England, the fact that Strabo narrates such untrustworthy stories as to Ireland, and wholly omits any similar story as to England, is conclusive that no such rumour or tale had ever reached him as to England. In fact, Strabo is a very strong witness in favour of England.

Strabo, however, adds, "Nevertheless the practice of man-eating is *said* to be Scythian, and the Celts and Iberians and many others are said to have done it in the straitness of sieges;"⁶ and we might add that mothers are said to have eaten their children in the first siege of Rome by Alaric.⁷ But when we remember that to turn

¹ Lib. 4, c. 5, s. 1, 2, and 3 (226).

² Περὶ ἧς οὐδὲν ἔχομεν λέγειν
σαφές.

³ ἀγριώτεροι.

⁴ ἀνθρωποφάγοι.

⁵ Καὶ ταῦτα δ' οὕτω λέγομεν,
ὥς οὐκ ἔχοντες ἀξιοπίστους

μάρτυρας.

⁶ ἐν ἀνάγκαις πολιορκητικαῖς.

⁷ Jerome ad Principiam, vol. 1, p. 121, cited 5 Gibb. D. and F., 292. Ad nefandos cibos erupit esurientium rabies, et sua invicem membra laniant; dum mater non parcat lactanti infantie, et recipit utero quam paulo ante effuderat.

a smiling land into a howling wilderness¹ was to make peace; which is so graphically described by Jerome, who tells us that the cities were laid waste, the inhabitants slain, that beasts, birds, and fishes were destroyed, and that everything had perished, except the heaven and the earth and the increasing briars and the thickening woods in Illyrium, Thrace, and Pannonia;² and when we also remember that the inhabitants of Masada, sooner than fall into the hands of the Romans, destroyed themselves, their wives and their children;³ and that the days had long passed when a Scipio restored a Spanish Princess to her lover;⁴ and that times came when German women, having vainly begged to become the slaves of the Vestal virgins, destroyed themselves and their children, rather than be subjected to the insults of the Romans,⁵ of the nature of which some idea may be formed from the shameless boast of Proculus as to his treatment of one hundred Sarmatian virgins, which was so gross that even Gibbon could not defile his pages with a translation of it;⁶ we shall not be disposed to look with too severe an eye upon acts which, if, in fact, they ever were perpetrated, were done for the sole purpose of preserving that which was dearer than life itself.

Nor can I fail to remark that, if in the pressure of a siege, such a thing ever did take place, how very probable it is that a report would be spread that the people were man-eaters, especially when we remember that the Greek word, *ἀνθρωποφάγος*, applies to eating human flesh under any circumstances. Indeed Strabo, as we have seen, applies it to the eating of human flesh in the straitness of sieges, which proves that the word was sometimes

¹ Quando solitudinem faciunt, pacem appellant.

² Jerome, Lib. vii, p. 250, cited 4 Gibb. D. and F., 416. Et vastatis urbibus nominibusque interfectis, solitudinem et raritatem bestiarum fieri et volatilium pisciumque testis Illyrium est; testis Ithracia; testis, in quo ortus sum, solum; ubi, præter cælum et terram et crescentes vepres et condensa sylvarum, cuncta perierunt. And see Gibb. iv, D. and F., 416, as to iii Cæs. Com., 16, vi, 31, and vii, 27.

³ Josephus, Bell. Jud. lib vii, c. 8, s. 6, 7. 9.

⁴ Liv., lib. xxvi, c. 50, Captiva adeo

eximiâ formâ, ut, quâcunque incedebet, converteret omnium oculos.

⁵ Gibbon, D. and F. i, 370, citing Tacit. Germ. vii, Plutarch in Mario.

⁶ Gibbon, D. and F. ii 77. Ex his decem unâ nocte inivi; omnes tamen quod in me erat mulieres intra quindecim dies reddidi. Vopiscus in Hist., Aug., 246.

Well might Virgil say of Polyxena—
O felix una ante alias Priameia virgo,
Hostile ad tumulum Trojæ sub manibus
altis

Jussa mori, quæ sortitus on pertulit ullos,
Nec victoris heri tetigit captiva cubile.—
Æn., iii, 321.

used in a very different sense from the word Cannibalism, which means the voluntary and habitual use of human flesh for human food.

Next I take Diodorus Siculus.¹

Whilst writing about the Celts, he says: "But they who dwell in the north,² and border on Scythia, being the most barbarous, *it is said*, (*φασι*) that some of them eat men, as also those of the Britons who inhabit the island called Irin."³ Now Diodorus came to Rome 30 years B.C. and he published his works there six years B.C. But Strabo did not come to Rome until near 14 A.D., and wrote after Diodorus, and the probability is that he had read his works, and as he and Diodorus both speak of Ireland and Scythia, it seems very probable that this report, vague and mere hearsay as it is, and resting on no named authority, is one of the stories which Strabo distinctly states rested on no trustworthy testimony. Even if Strabo had not seen the passage, he had investigated the matter after Diodorus, and pronounced it to be based on nothing worthy of belief. The statement, therefore, fails as to Ireland, and it in no way applies to England.

Thirdly, Pliny,⁴ states that there were some races of Scythians, and indeed others who ate human flesh. That perhaps would be incredible, unless we considered that in the middle of the world, in Sicily, there were the Cyclopes and Læstrygones of this monstrous class, and very recently on the other side of the Alps it was the custom of those nations that a man should be sacrificed (in a manner) which falls little short of eating him."⁵ Now here we have a plain allusion to the sacrifices of the Druids, and a clear assertion that what was done did not amount to cannibalism. A fair estimate may be formed of the weight, which ought to be attached to Pliny as to cannibalism anywhere, from the rest of the chapter, where, with equal gravity and assurance, he narrates a number of fabulous stories, such as probably have never been collected in the same chapter either

¹ Lib. v, sec. 32.

² ὑπὸ τοῦς Ἀρκτοῦς.

³ Ireland.

⁴ Lib. vii, c. 2.

⁵ Hominem immolari gentium eorum more solitum, quod paulo a mandendo abest.

before or since ; of which, I will mention a few. First come the Arimaspi, a people with only one eye in the middle of the forehead. Then come certain men of the woods, whose feet were turned backwards, but who were exceedingly swift runners : unfortunately, however, they could not breathe in any air but their own. Next we have a race from Albania, with bright, fiery red eyes, who could see better by night than by day, but only took food every third day. Lastly comes a race, in whose bodies a poison fatal to serpents was bred by nature, and who to test the virtue of their wives exposed the children they bore to the fiercest of these serpents. To such an author the remarks of Strabo upon certain historians may, perhaps, well be applied. Strabo says¹ that certain historians, perceiving that those who undoubtedly wrote fables were in great esteem, conceived that they themselves would render their writings pleasing, if they narrated in the form of history things, which they had never seen or heard, or at least never heard from those that knew them, aiming alone at making their writings pleasing to their readers. And this passage is well worthy of note here, as it is introduced with reference to the Massagetæ, of whom, he says, the historians had nothing they could accurately write, and concerning whom nothing had been ascertained to be true,² but who as he afterwards tells us,³ were said to consider that death the best when their old men were chopped up into small pieces together with the flesh of cattle, and eaten whilst mixed up together. Here we have another instance of the extreme distrust Strabo entertained as to these stories, and yet he has been but too frequently cited as an authority for their truth, whilst no notice has been taken of the discredit which he attached to them. And one remark of his will approve itself to every one as specially applicable to these stories ; namely, that things that are said to have occurred very far off are very difficult of disproof,⁴ and, therefore, I may add, very

¹ Lib. xi, c. 6, s. 3, p. 21.

² οὐκ ἔχοντες ἀκριβῶς λέγειν
περὶ αὐτῶν οὐδέν . . . περὶ τούτων
οὐδέν ἡκριβωτο πρὸς ἀλήθειαν.

Strabo, Lib. xi, c. 6, s. 2, p. 21.

³ Lib. xi, c. 8, s. 6.

⁴ τὸ δὲ πόρρω ὀυσελεγκτον.
Lib. xi, c. 6, s. 4, p. 21.

likely to afford materials for the concoction of stories to amuse the reader.

But another passage was cited from Pliny.¹ He had just mentioned a decree of the senate that no man should be sacrificed; and that human sacrifices had existed in Gaul, but that Tiberius Cæsar had destroyed the Druids there; yet that that art was celebrated with such ceremonies in Britain that it might seem that it had imparted it to the Persians, so thoroughly had all the world agreed in it. And then he breaks forth: "Nor is it possible to estimate how much is due to the Romans, who abolished horrible rites (*monstra*), in which it was most religious to kill a man, and most wholesome that he should be eaten." Now this statement cannot apply to the Druids, as Pliny had distinctly told us that their sacrifices did not amount to cannibalism; and at most it is one of those general flourishes of fine writing, which applies to no people in particular, and in such a credulous writer is entitled to no credit as to any.

I now come to Hieronymus or Jerome, who is regularly cited as proving that he had himself seen the Scots practice cannibalism. The passage occurs in his book against Jovinian,² who held that it was lawful to eat all sorts of food, provided it were accompanied by religious actions.³ Now the chapter, in which the passage occurs, is devoted to the consideration of the food used by different *nations*. It begins, "Who is ignorant that *every nation* is accustomed to eat, not according to the common law of nature, but those things whereof there is great abundance with them?"⁴ The chapter, therefore, applies to the usages of *nations*, and not of individuals; and to their feeding upon things which abounded in their own countries. Jerome then proceeds to prove his proposition by many examples, a few of which it will be well to mention. First, he says that the Arabs and Saracens, and all the barbarians of the desert, live on the milk and flesh of camels, because this animal is easily bred and fed in these hot and sterile regions; but that they hold it unlawful to eat swine's flesh, because swine either are not

¹ xxx, sec. 4.

² Lib. ii. c. 6.

³ Dict. Hist. Jeromè and Jovinian.

⁴ Unamquamque gentem non communi lege naturæ, sed iis, quorum apud se copia est, vesci solitum.

found there or cannot have their proper food. That the people of the East and the Libyans are wont to eat locusts, because clouds of them are found in their hot and vast deserts. That the Ickthyophagi, a tribe living by the Red Sea, live on fish alone. These examples sufficiently show that they were well chosen to prove the proposition at the head of the chapter; and the last example he gives is the passage in question, which is clearly introduced as the most conclusive proof of all of that proposition, and as a climax to the whole. "But," says he, "why should I speak of other nations, when I, a youth, in Gaul beheld the Scots, a British tribe, eat human flesh, and when they find herds of swine, cattle, and sheep in the woods, they are accustomed to cut off the buttocks of the shepherds, and the paps of the shepherdesses, and to consider these as the only delicacies of food." I have rendered the passage as it is usually rendered, but in order that my remarks may be better understood I give the original: *Cum ipse adescensculus in Galliâ viderim Attacottos, gentem Britannicam, humanis vesci carnibus, et cum per silvas porcorum greges, et armentorum, pecudumque reperiant, pastorum nates et fœminarum papillas solere abscindere; et has solas ciborum delicias arbitrari.*

Now I will point out some striking absurdities, which at once arise from this version. First, instead of conclusively proving the proposition for which it is produced, it directly contradicts it; for it makes this tribe, with abundance of cattle actually present, take the solitary shepherd or shepherdess, who was tending them; a bountiful meal for a hungry tribe! Next it makes this tribe living in Gaul which it never did; when throughout the chapter Jerome is speaking of the habits of tribes at their homes. It is true that Gibbon supposes that the passage may refer to some soldiers of a Scottish tribe serving in the Roman Army in Gaul:¹ but thus they would be made the habitual murderers of the Gaulish shepherds. Now Jerome was born A.D. 340, and he would be a youth, say from 356 to 366, and it so happens that the Emperor Julian made his first campaign in Gaul, A.D., 356 against the Germans; the next year he fought the

¹ Gibb. D. & F. iv, 298.

celebrated battle of Strasbourg, and in the following year the Germans were expelled from France. He sedulously applied himself to restore Gaul; and Gibbon¹ shall tell us what he effected. "His salutary influence restored the cities of Gaul, which had been so long exposed to the evils of civil discord, barbarian and domestic tyranny; and the spirit of industry was restored with the hopes of enjoyment. Agriculture, manufactures, and commerce again flourished under the protection of the laws; and the curiæ or civic corporations were again filled with useful and respectable members; the youth were no longer apprehensive of marriage, and married persons were no longer apprehensive of posterity; the public and private festivals were celebrated with customary pomp; and the frequent and secure intercourse of the provinces displayed the image of national prosperity." Any one must at once perceive how utterly incredible it is that any troops serving under such a commander should have been permitted, not once on a time, but habitually whenever they met with herds in the woods to murder the helpless shepherds in charge of them; and equally incredible is it that such barbarities should have been commonly practised in such a state of national well-being as is here described; and as the passage in question must apply either to the time whilst Julian was in Gaul, or to the time just after he had left it, the reasonable conclusion is that the statement as it stands cannot be correct.

Again, what possible reason can there be to suppose that these people selected the flesh of shepherds in preference to all other human flesh, or that they selected the flesh of shepherds only who tended their flocks in the woods?

We think we have said enough to show that there is ample ground for supposing that the passage must be corrupt, and an attentive examination of it will turn that doubt into a perfect certainty. First it seems next to impossible to decide what was the name of the people as written by Jerome. To prove this I need only cite the high authority of Camden,² who says, "here we are to read Attacotti, upon the authority of MSS., and not Scoti with Erasmus, who at the same time owns *the place*

¹ D. & F. iii, 235.

² Brit. Intr. p 122, Edit. 1695, Gibson.

to be faulty; though I must confess in one MSS. it is Attigotti, in another Catacotti, and in a third Cattiti. But of the Scots it cannot, as 'tis commonly, be understood." Now these different readings are material in two ways. There is no doubt that the Attacotti were a tribe of Scotland, but at a time even later than this the Scoti were in Ireland.

Maduerunt Saxone fuso
Orcades ; incaluit Pictorum sanguine Thule ;
Scotorum cumulos flevit glacialis Ierne.¹

The country, therefore, as well as the name of the people, seems uncertain.

Secondly, the difference between a word of two, and one of four syllables is very material, as it shows that the MSS. was very difficult to read, either because it was written with abbreviations, or otherwise.

The next remark is that the context clearly shows that the word "viderim," "I saw," is corrupt. To use Mr. Greswell's words, "no one can read this passage and not see that, though with the reading of 'viderim,' it appears to affirm something which Jerome had seen, it does in reality only mean something that Jerome had heard, and therefore that the reading of "viderim" must be a mistake for "audierim ;" and all that Jerome can be understood to affirm of a certain people is what he had heard say, not what he had seen himself."² Now the context shows this must be so. Jerome never could have seen the *tribe* in Gaul ; as they never were there, whether they were Scoti or Attacotti. Again Jerome never could have seen what the tribe were *accustomed to do whenever* they met with cattle in the woods. This statement consequently must have rested on mere hearsay.

Next let us consider the statement as to what these people find. They "find herds of swine, cattle and sheep in the woods." Taking this description by itself, any one might conceive that it meant wild swine, cattle, and sheep? "The boar out of the wood doth root it up, and the wild beasts of the field devour it."³ Then come the critical

¹ Claud. de quarto consulatu Honorii, 31. Honorius was born A.D. 384, died 432.

² The Revd. Edward Greswell was as learned a scholar as any of his day, as

his voluminous works testify, and I as his pupil know full well, and he considered this passage thoroughly at my request.

³ Psalm lxxx, v. 13.

words *pastorum nates et fœminarum papillas*. Now "pastorum" is the genitive plural of two words, the one being "pastor," a shepherd, the other "pastus," a participle, signifying "fatted" or "well fed;" and consequently the passage may be rendered they cut off the buttocks of the well fed males and the paps of the females. If so rendered, it is obvious that it would prove the very proposition for which Jerome introduced it; for it would show that, where wild cattle abounded in the woods, these people cut off those parts only which they considered as the greatest delicacies: a practice precisely similar to that which Bruce describes as prevailing in Abyssinia. Taking the words therefore as they stand, this rendering makes the passage consistent with the object for which it was introduced; and when a passage can be rendered in two ways, one consistent, and the other inconsistent, with the object for which it was written, it is obvious that the former ought to be adopted. However, I am not sure that the word *pastorum* was written by Jerome. It is manifest that the word here, whatever it was, stood in antithesis to *fœminarum*. Now *fœmina* precisely corresponds to our word "female," and as the antithesis to that word is male, so the antithesis to *fœmina* is *mas*; and as we apply the terms male and female to all animals, so did the Latins, for Pliny says *Bestiæ aliæ mares, aliæ fœminæ*. This leads me to think that the correct reading may be *marium*. However, I am rather disposed to prefer *masculorum*, of the males, for this reason. If this word were written contractedly, it probably would be written *maslorum*, and a line intended to show the contraction might run across the *l*, and cause it to be mistaken for *t*, and a copyist, knowing no such word as *mastorum*, which could apply to this passage, and having seen herds of cattle mentioned just before, might very likely conclude that the correct word was *pastorum*, and so write it. If this be considered a good conjecture, *fœminarum* must be changed to *fœminearum* by the insertion of the letter *e*, which would render the passage perfectly consistent, as both words would be adjectives, agreeing with male and female cattle.

There is another small fact which tends the same way: the word *papilla* is much more appropriately applied to the dugs or teats of animals than to the nipples of the human breast.

For these reasons it seems to be quite clear that this passage only relates to cattle and sheep; if that be so, then the word "humanis" in the previous passage must be corrupt. What the true reading was may be doubtful; it might, perhaps, have been "inhumanis;" and the mistake we have suggested as having led to the error in the other passage may have led to the alteration of "inhumanis" to "humanis" to make the passages consistent. Or it may be possible that, as Jerome had just before said of the Scythians and Huns "*semicrudis vescuntur carnis*," he here used some adjective, denoting the state in which the flesh was eaten, *crudis* or *cruentis*.

The conclusion then of the whole is that these people, whoever they were, had been in the habit of treating cattle in the mode described, and that the statement altogether rests upon what Jerome had heard. And testimony is not wanting to fortify this view, and to show how such a report might be very likely to arise. It appears that from the year 343 down to 366,¹ Britain had been repeatedly invaded from Scotland. Ammianus Marcellinus in one passage tells us that the Picts, Saxons Scotti and Attacotti had vexed the Britons with continual grievances;² and in another passage that, amongst others who invaded England, the Attacotti, a warlike nation, and the Scotti, wandering in different directions, spread devastation far and wide,³ and had even reached London itself. That the tidings of such events should spread through the Roman Empire, no one could doubt, even if we had no statement that they did. But Ammianus Marcellinus⁴ furnishes us with the strongest testimony of the melancholy and alarming tidings, which came from Britain. He tells us that Valentinian received in Belgium the astounding intelligence that Britain was reduced to the last extremity by a conspiracy of the Barbarians; and that the Count of the sea shore, and the Roman General had been cut off. Struck with horror, Valentinian first sent Severus, the Count of the domestics,

¹ Gibb, D. & F, iv, 295.

² Hoc tempore Picti Saxonesque et Scotti et Attacotti Britannos ærumnis vexavere continuis, 26, 5.

³ 27, 8. Illud sufficit quod eo tempore Picti, in duas gentes divisi, Bicaledones

et Vecturiones, itidemque Attacotti bellicosa hominum natio, et Scotti, per diversa vagantes, multa populabantur, A.D. 347

⁴ Lib. 27, c. 8.

to repair the mischief that had been done, but soon recalled him. Then Jovinius was sent; and lastly, in consequence of the many terrible reports which continually arrived, Theodosius was directed to hasten thither. Such reports would spread through Gaul, and reach the ears of Jerome, if he were there at the time, and probably with such exaggeration, and perversion as would render them unworthy of belief.

It is no small confirmation of this view that both the Attacotti and Scotti are named by Ammianus in all the inroads; as Jerome may have mentioned both, and the different readings may have originated from some copyist having omitted one of them. These passages very strongly tend to negative Gibbons' conjecture, for it is very improbable that either Attacotti or Scotti should be serving in the Roman army at a time when the tribe were invading the Roman provinces; and it is obvious, too, that Jerome is speaking of the doings of a tribe, not of particular soldiers of a tribe.

When Cæsar invaded Britain the Britons seem to have been in the habit of driving their cattle into the woods for safety;¹ and the practice may have been followed when these Northerners overran the country, and the joint mention by Jerome of "herds of swine *and* cattle *and* sheep" rather looks as if he was speaking of an assemblage of all, than of each of them separately. Such an assemblage would afford a super-abundance from which to select.

We have now dealt with every authority cited in support of cannibalism in England, and it is perfectly clear that they altogether fail to prove anything of the kind. Nor have we met with any other authority that has any tendency of the kind. On the contrary, much exists which seems to be quite conclusive against it. We have hitherto dealt with authors, who never were in Britain at all; but there were others who were here, and legion after legion of Roman soldiers served here year after year, and age after age; and they must have had the best possible means of knowing the truth; and it is to the last degree incredible that these Romans should have been

¹ *Cæsar. Bell. G. Lib., 5 c. 19, 21.*

ignorant of its existence, if it had existed, and no possible reason can be assigned why the historians who were in England did not mention it, if they had ever heard of it. Cannibalism, wherever it has been shown by trustworthy testimony to exist, has commonly been practised upon slain or captive enemies. If a single Roman had ever been so dealt with, can it be doubted that poets and historians would have chimed in together to accuse of cannibalism "*Britannos hospitibus feros.*"¹ The total silence then of the writers affords the strongest possible evidence against its existence.

Nor can it be said that their attention was not directly called to the point. Tacitus tells us that when Mona was taken, the groves sacred to savage superstitions were cut down; for the Druids held it to be lawful to burn the blood of captives upon the altars, and to consult the gods by means of the entrails of men.² This may be what we have seen alluded to by Pliny, as only falling a little short of cannibalism. But it makes it quite clear that Tacitus had never heard a word of cannibalism, or he would have mentioned it. From other sources, however, we obtain a clear light as to what the Druidical sacrifices really were. Cæsar³ tells us that the Druids believed that the deities could not be appeased for the killing of one man, unless the life of another man were rendered for it⁴ and that they had sacrifices of that kind publicly instituted. He adds, that they considered that the penal sacrifices (*supplicia*) of those, who had been guilty of any crime, were the most pleasing to the gods⁵ and that innocent persons were never sacrificed, unless the number of criminals was deficient,⁶ which plainly means, when the number of criminals fell short of the number of deaths which needed atonement. And Diodorus tells us that the Druids imprisoned malefactors five years before they sacrificed

¹ Hor. Carm. iii, 4, 34.

² Ann. Lib. xiv, 30, *Excisique luci, sævis superstitionibus sacri, nam cruce captivo adolere aras, et hominum fibris consulere Deos, fas habebant.*

³ Lib, vi, c. xv, p. 124.

⁴ Pro vita hominis nisi vita hominis reddatur, non posse aliter Deorum immortalium numen placari, arbitrabantur,

publiceque ejusdem generis habent instituta sacrificia.

⁵ *Supplicia eorum, qui in furto aut latrocinio aut aliqua noxa sunt comprehensi, gratiora Diis immortalibus arbitrantur.*—*Ibid.* p. 125.

⁶ Sed quum ejus generis copia deficit, etiam ad supplicia innocentium descendunt. *Ibid.* p. 126.

them.¹ Now when we remember that the ground, on which these sacrifices rested was the same as that which is found in the Mosaic law, and even earlier,² and which is still acted upon by ourselves, and that the victims, as far as possible, were murderers and other malefactors, who at one and the same time suffered the punishment for their offences, and formed propitiatory sacrifices; that by our own common law, every felony was punishable with death, and that till A.D. 1790,³ female traitors were always sentenced to be burnt; we shall view these penal sacrifices of the Druids, in which they burnt the living victims in wicker-work statues, in a very different light from that of hostile Romans, and we shall not fail to admire the patient forbearance of the Druids, who allowed five years to pass before the criminal was punished, and who seem to have practised to an extent unknown elsewhere the merciful maxim that no delay is too long in determining whether a man is to be put to death or not.⁴

Nor can I fail to remark that writers, like Pliny, are entitled to little credit in anything they have said against the Druids, when we find that human sacrifices took place in Rome itself, and that on Cæsar's triumph two victims were sacrificed on the Campus Martius, though Dio⁵ says he could not discover any reason for this; as neither the Sibyll nor any oracle had commanded it.

And let me add that in considering any question touching the state or conduct of the ancient inhabitants of this country, we ought ever to bear in mind that the only Historians we have were their mortal enemies, and therefore we may fairly accept as true statements in their favour, whilst we treat statements to their discredit with extreme caution and distrust. Any one who has read the statements and allusions of Roman writers as to the Jews, and has compared them with the authentic accounts from other sources, will know how little reliance is to be placed on Roman writers.

Next let us see whether the state of civilization of the Britons does not totally negative the supposition of

¹ Cæs. Lib. 5, note 2, p. 125.

² Gen. ix, 5, 6.

³ 30 George III, c. 48.

⁴ De morte hominis nulla cunctatio est longa. Co. Litt.

⁵ Lib. xliii, cited note 3, p. 124.

cannibalism having existed amongst them. Cæsar¹ tells us that many youths resorted to the Druids in Gaul to be instructed, and that some remained learning with them for twenty years; that they learned a great number of verses; that it was considered unlawful to commit what they learned to writing; but that in other public and private matters they used (Greek) letters. Here then we have very strong evidence of a complete education, and in what did their learning consist? Cæsar tells us that they were taught many things concerning the stars and their motions; the size of the universe and of the earth; the nature of things, and the power of the immortal gods; and the editors infer from Cæsar's statement that the Druids taught geography, geometry, physiology, arithmetic, theology, and astrology. I wonder whether if Oxford and Cambridge had existed in the same state in which they now are, when Cæsar came, he would have given a more favourable account of their studies? Cæsar adds that the very first thing the Druids taught their pupils was the immortality of the soul, by which they thought that they might best be incited towards virtue, and couple with this their memorable precept, which Diogenes Laertius has preserved, "worship the Gods, do no ill, and practice manly virtue;"² and then let any candid and impartial person consider whether such a state of things be not wholly inconsistent with the existence of cannibalism. Such was the state of Druidism in Gaul; but Cæsar further tells us³ that this system of instruction by the Druids was supposed to have been discovered in Britain, and thence transferred to Gaul, and he proves that in his time the state of learning was more advanced in Britain than in Gaul; for he tells us that they in Gaul, who wished to be better acquainted with it, generally went into Britain for the purpose of learning it. If it be suggested that this learning might perhaps be confined to the higher orders, it must be remembered that the Druids were the judges of all public and private matters, and of all criminal offences, and that their sentences were carried into effect with the greatest certainty,⁴ and it is impossible

¹ Lib. vi, c. 14, p. 120, 122.

cited Cæsar, Lib. vii, c 13, p 123.

² Σέβειν θεούς καί μηδέν κακόν

³ Lib. vii, c. 12, ad finem, p. 121.

δρᾶν καὶ ἀνδρείαν ἄσκειν :

⁴ Cæsar, Lib. vi, c. 12, p. 120.

to conceive that such men as the Druids would treat cannibalism otherwise than as crime.

Nor is Cæsar alone in his character of the Druids. Strabo tells us that the Druids exercised themselves in physiology and moral philosophy, and that they were considered the most just, and on this account both private and public disputes were entrusted to them, so that they even regulated wars and stayed those that were about to engage, and trials for murder were especially confided to them.¹

We will only add the testimony of Lucan,² on account of the singular beauty of the passage—

Vos quoque qui fortes animas, belloque peremptas
Laudibus in longum vates dimittitis ævum,
Plurima securi fudistis carmina Bardi.
Et vos Barbaricos ritus, moremque sinistrum
Sacrorum Druidæ positis repetistis ab armis.
Solis nosse Deos, et cœli numina vobis,
Aut solis nescire datum : nemora alta remotis
Incolitis lucis. Vobis auctoribus, umbræ
Non tacitas Erebi sedes, Ditisque profundi
Pallida regna petunt ; regit idem spiritus artus
Orbe alio ; longæ (canitis si cognita) vitæ
Mors media est : Certè populi, quos despicit Arctos,
Felices errore suo, quos ille timorum
Maximus haud urget, lethi metus. Inde ruendi
In ferrum mens prona viris, animæque capaces
Mortis : et ignavum reditura parcera vitæ.³

The preceding pages were composed some years ago, and not a little pains were taken to prove that there was no pretence for accusing the ancient inhabitants of these islands of cannibalism ; and it is not a little gratifying to find that our conclusions are now very strongly confirmed. Canon Greenwell, whose views led us to investigate the subject, has now adopted different explanations of the remarkable appearances and condition of the bones in the barrows,⁴ and his change of opinion is as creditable to himself, as it is suggestive to others of due caution before drawing conclusions in such matters. Nor can there now exist any doubt that Dr. Thurnam was in error in supposing that “there were in those broken and scattered

¹ Strabo, Lib. iv, c. 4, 224.

² Ph., Lib. 1, 447.

³ Strabo supra tells us that the Bards were poets and minstrels, and the Vates

sacrificers and physiologists, and we have seen what the Druids were.

⁴ The British Barrows, by Greenwell and Rolleston, p. 544.

fragments of skulls and disconnected bones, the relics of barbarous feasts, held at the time of the interment, when slaves, captives, or even wives were slain or eaten."¹ For Dr. Rolleston² has most conclusively shown that the fractures of bones, on which Dr. Thurnam's opinion rested, are not only "very different as a whole from those of skulls, which we positively know to have been cut through during life or immediately after death," but that they may have been accidentally caused by falls, impact, or pressure subsequently to their burial.

There can be no doubt, therefore, that there is no evidence whatever of cannibalism in Britain; and it is to be hoped that it will never again be suggested that such an atrocious practice ever existed there.

We offer no apology for the length of this article. No time or labour could be better spent than in establishing the truth upon such an important subject, and in rescuing the ancient Britons from such a totally groundless calumny.

¹ Ibid. p. 687.

² Ibid. p. 547.