

All Ireland Review

A Correction: The Nature Gods of the De Danaans, &c.

Author(s): M. M.

Source: *All Ireland Review*, Vol. 2, No. 21 (Jun. 8, 1901), p. 161

Published by: [All Ireland Review](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20545415>

Accessed: 21/06/2014 16:27

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at
<http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.



All Ireland Review is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *All Ireland Review*.

<http://www.jstor.org>

down on them from the summit of a cairn, or molested their ancient tenure with his solitary crom-lech. And do we not actually know that they fought a gallant, if forlorn, battle, against the early saints and many foreign missionaries with such vigour and pertinacity, that though final defeat is inevitable the struggle is not yet wholly over. The banshee and the leprechaun, Cleena and Findvarra, Mananan, Tir-na-nogue, and Tir-fa-toun may now be mere fables; but they have left an impress on the mind and character of the Irish race deeper even than Christianity has left, and which even all-corroding time itself may not wholly destroy.

While believing, then, that Ancestor Worship does not adequately explain the origin of the spirits referred to above, neither do I believe that it gives a satisfactory explanation of the originating cause of the belief in a Supreme Being, whose knowledge and power is as infinite as Time and Space; to whom all the spirits of earth, air, and sea are subordinate ministers and obedient vassals.

The origin of this belief is a matter of endless controversy; but however it originated, we know that it was held at a comparatively early stage of man's development, at least by the thoughtful heads of the race, who found the multiplicity of spiritual powers with which popular theology filled the world too complicated, and perhaps too irrational for their minds. It may be that they were urged to believe in a Supreme God by logical necessity, or perhaps from analogy with social institutions around them. At all events we know they did believe in one Great Cause, and whether they named it Jupiter, or Bal, or Brahm matters little.

The theogony of Orpheus represents Love as a beneficent deity who created form and order out of chaotic matter; and who from its spiritless substantiality evolved the incomprehensible alternation of vegetable growth and decay; and the still more wonderful principle of animal life, with its countless diversified manifestations, from the minute, almost lifeless, and probably senseless monad, to the delicate and complicated mechanism of the human body. And long before the days of Orpheus, the sages of Egypt and Chaldea had reached the belief in a Supreme Personal Cause.

The inadequacy of materialism as an explanation of life and destiny, and the absurdity of conferring the attributes of omnipotency and ubiquity on the ghosts of mere mortal men would naturally lead to the belief in One Supreme Being. I do not know whether our Aryan ancestors had reached this stage of religious development before their dispersion. But we have some evidence in our traditions and literature that the De Danaans had reached it at or before the date of the Milesian invasion.

The Dagda, for instance, as known by the titles of "An Dagda Mor" and Ollathair, or Father of All. He was apparently the Jupiter of the De Danaan Olympus. The epithets Mor and Ollathair taken in connection with the compound word Dagda itself, which, I think, means beneficent God, points to his divine supremacy, and the recognition of that supremacy by the De Danaans.

Lir too stands out pre-eminently above his fellow-gods. He was the vital spirit of the boundless infinite sea, or rather, to keep close to etymology, of the boundless All of Space; the ruler of the vast infinite which contains not only the sea, but Earth, Heaven, and Hell also. In origin he was probably the god of some vigorous maritime tribe who felt the Infinite in their voyages on the open sea, the boundlessness of which would suggest the attributes of Lir. Compared to him the Dagda was a mere god of *terra firma*, whose attributes were correspondingly

limited by his terrestrial jurisdiction, while Lir had the infinite waste of waters and the boundless and unknown world under his control. He was in short the vital spirit of the Universe. His son Mananan obtained the sea for his patrimony.

M. M.

(To be continued).

A CORRECTION.

Portion of last week's article, page 153, end of column beginning "Let us first see," is mixed up probably through my own carelessness. It should read as follows:—"Words shall not be hacked, mangled, or tortured out of recognition for the purpose of proving a theory or fortifying a statement. Any novice in etymology, any beginner of the study of our Irish tongue, can follow my observations with ease if not with approval or endorsement. Let us first see if we can find a meaning in the word Eathoir. I think it may properly be regarded as a derivative of *eath* or *iath*, which in old Irish meant corn, food, the *edible*, *par excellence* in fact. Nor can there be a doubt that this word belongs to the same root as the modern Irish word *Itim* (I eat). We find the same root in the Latin word *edo* and in the English word *eat*. Eathoir then must mean," etc., etc.

The rest of article is all right, except the word haven't should be hadn't (further on column 2, page 153).

M. M.

THE LITTLE GREY SHAWL.

(A Post-Vacation Vision).

Alone in my den in the city to-night,
The fire burning sullenly low,
Strange figures phantastic I trace in its light
Of pictures that come, and that go.
And now a vague picture I doubtfully trace
Where coals are beginning to fall,
And now, more distinctly, a sweet little face,
Half hid in a little grey shawl.

I see an old road run along the hillside
Where often I've wandered—*by chance*;
I've chosen that road, tho' the country was wide,
Not knowing but *she* was in France!
Yet Chance is a thing I could ne'er understand,
And accidents happen us all,
For just as if knowing that I was at hand,
She'd come, in that little grey shawl!

I see her draw near, and my pulses beat fast,
She smiles but looks ever so coy;
I hope I can tell her my secret at last,
But ah! I'm a diffident boy!
Yet, never a soldier who went to the war,
'Mid trumpets and cannon and all,
Was willing to follow his banner so far
As I am, that little grey shawl!

And now we sit down on the turf by the way
And I talk like a taking-machine,
While she swallows serenely each word that I say,
And I call her "the darling *colleen*";
My arm (quite unconsciously) steals round her waist—
The coals, into chaos they fall,
And Jove! I regret that I didn't make haste
Ere vanished that little grey shawl!

'Twas half in the fire and 'twas half in my head,
But 'twas all evanescent and vain,
For the fire is gone out and the vision is fled,
And I'm a poor student again!
Yet oh! that I only each night in the fire
That sweet smiling face could recall,
And fancy I'm chatting, before I retire,
With her in that little grey shawl!