

ART. IV.—*Cartimandua, in history, legend and romance.*
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CARTIMANDUA was queen of the Brigantes, the British tribe, mentioned by Ptolemy, who occupied the greater part of Yorkshire and the whole of Lancashire, Durham, Westmorland and Cumberland. It may be considered as within the scope of our Society to collect what has been written in history and romance of this queen of the ancient North.

The two classical passages which have reference to Cartimandua occur in Tacitus. The first is in his *Annals*, xii, chapters 36 and 40:

“Caratacus sought the protection of Cartimandua, queen of the Brigantes; but, as there is no safety in adversity, he was bound and handed over to the victorious invader, nine years after the war in Britain began.

But after the capture of Caratacus, the outstanding figure in knowledge of warfare was Venutius, of the tribe of the Brigantes, as already recorded. He had long been loyal to the Romans and had been protected by their arms, while he was married to Queen Cartimandua. But presently, when divorce came about and war promptly followed, he became inimical to us. At first the struggle was between themselves, and Cartimandua by her cunning stratagems entrapped the brother and kinsmen of Venutius. In consequence her enemies were sharpened by the disgrace of submitting to a woman's control and, as a powerful army of picked warriors, invaded her realm. This we forestalled, and despatched cohorts to her assistance. A sharp engagement occurred, the beginning doubtful but the issue favourable. The legion which Caesius Nasica commanded was not less successful; for

Didius, advanced in years and laden with honours, was satisfied to act through deputies and to hold the enemy in play. These events, which occurred over a course of years and during the administration of two governors, I have run together in one narrative, fearing they would be less easily remembered, if divided. I now return to the chronological order."

The second passage may be found in *Histories*, iii, 45:

"These dissensions, and the recurrent rumours of civil war, raised the courage of the Britons at the instigation of Venutius, who, besides being naturally wild spirited, and hating the name of Rome, was fired by his private animosity against Queen Cartimandua. Cartimandua ruled the Brigantes in virtue of her illustrious birth; and she strengthened her throne, when, by the treacherous capture of king Caratacus, she was regarded as having given its chief distinction to the triumph of Claudius Caesar. Then followed wealth, with the self-indulgence of prosperity. Spurning her husband Venutius, she took Vellocatius, his armour-bearer, as partner of her bed and throne. By this enormity the power of her house was at once shaken to its base. On the side of the husband were the affections of the tribe, on that of the adulterer the lust and savage cruelty of the Queen. Accordingly Venutius, by outside help and by a simultaneous revolt of the Brigantes themselves, brought Cartimandua into the utmost peril. She asked for some Roman troops, and our auxiliary infantry and cavalry, after fighting with variable success, contrived to rescue the Queen from her peril. Venutius retained the kingdom, and we had the war on our hands."

For a complete understanding of these references of Tacitus, it will be necessary to sketch briefly the history of the Roman activities in Britain during the life of Cartimandua. In A.D. 43 the Emperor Claudius determined on a subjugation of Britain. He chose four legions

for the purpose, and placed them under the command of Aulus Plautius. With Plautius served two officers later destined each to be Emperor, Galba and Vespasian. The objective of the Roman campaign was Camulodunum (Colchester), capital of the Trinovantes. The Trinovantes were led by the two sons of their king Cunobellinus—Caratacus and Togodumnus. After two days' fighting, Plautius forced a passage across a river, possibly the Medway, and awaited the arrival of Claudius near Londinium. At the Emperor's approach, the Britons were routed in a pitched battle, and Camulodunum was taken. Claudius returned to Rome, and celebrated a triumph A.D. 44.

Plautius remained in Britain till A.D. 47, when he was succeeded by P. Ostorius Scapula. Meantime, Caratacus, the prince of the Trinovantes, had betaken himself into Wales. Ostorius first attacked the Deceangli, inhabiting the region of Flintshire; and then turned against the Silures in Hereford, Monmouth and South Wales. Caratacus maintained the struggle among the Silures for three years, and after that withdrew north to the Ordovices A.D. 51, and took up a defensive position in a large hill-fort, with a river flowing at its base. This fortification has by some been taken to be Coxall Knoll near Leintwardine, and the river to have been the Teme. Another suggestion for the site is Cefn Carnedd, near Llanidloes. Caratacus was overthrown. His wife and daughter were captured. His brothers later surrendered. Caratacus himself fled to Cartimandua, queen of the Brigantes, and threw himself on her protection. Cartimandua, however, gave him up to the Romans. Caratacus was carried prisoner to Rome, and subsequently pardoned by Claudius. So much for this heroic episode in British history, which has been universally famous in song and romance.

The rest of the story has already been recounted from

Tacitus. Archaeology has now a contribution to make. In 1893 a hoard of Brigantian coins was unearthed at Honley, near Huddersfield. Among these was a coin of Cartimandua, the only one extant. The earlier coins in this series bear the name of a king otherwise unknown, Volisius, associated with one Dumnocoverus. The later coins retain the name Volisius, but show on the reverse CARTI——. Volisius, it is suggested, associated with himself a colleague Dumnocoverus, perhaps his son. After the death of Dumnocoverus, Cartimandua, who was probably the daughter and heiress of Volisius, inherited the royal honours from him.

If we pass now to realms of pure legend in the Welsh Triads the name of Cartimandua is usually supposed to be Aregwedd Foeddawg, by whose "craft, and deceit and treachery" the Romans made Caradawc prisoner. With this lady was associated in her crime her father Avarwy; and the two are frequently mentioned by the Welsh bards with execration. Avarwy was the son of Lludd, himself the son of Beli the Great, the son of Manogan. This being so, Avarwy, the father of Cartimandua, was first cousin to Bran the Blessed, father of Caradawc; for Lludd was the brother of Penardur, mother of Bran. By this genealogy, therefore, Cartimandua and Caratacus were second cousins. Bran the Blessed, we are told in the Triads, was the son of Llyr Llediaith; and, together with his father, accompanied Caradawc in his captivity to Rome. Bran the Blessed remained seven years in Rome, and was there converted to Christianity. Returning to Britain, Bran was the first to introduce the Christian faith into this island, whence he is named Bran Bendigeid, or the Blessed. So far the Triads. Sir John Rhys, however, denied that Bran was the father of Caradawc or Caratacus, the opponent of Ostorius Scapula. "Tacitus," he says, "makes no mention of the father of Caratacus being present among the prisoners taken with him, and

Dion Cassius (*Hist. Romana*, Claudius, 20) states that his father was Cunobellinus. The curious way in which the story arose is not difficult to sketch; the old god Bran is called in the Mabonogi *Bendigeitran*, or Bran the Blessed. . . . The Mabonogi gives Bran a son Caradawg or Caradog; he is more fully called Caradawg Vreichvras, "of the Stout Arms", the Carados Brebras of the romances; but the name Caradawg was also familiar as the later Welsh form of *Caratacus*, written by Latin authors *Caratacus*, and usually reproduced in English books as *Caractacus*, a bit of gibberish out of fashion among scholars. So it was argued backwards that the father of the historical Caratacus was Bran the Blessed." (*Studies in the Arthurian Legend* (1891) p. 172).

According to the Welsh Triads, not only were Cartimandua and Caratacus related; Ostorius Scapula also was fancifully linked with Bran the Blessed! The Welsh name of Ostorius Scapula was Eurosswydd; and he married Penardur, daughter of Beli the Great, another of whose husbands was Llyr Llediaith. According to this genealogy, therefore, Ostorius Scapula was the step-grandfather of Caratacus (if the term be permissible). The sons of Eurosswydd (Ostorius) and Penardur were Nissyen and Evnissyen. The sister of Bran the Blessed, and aunt therefore of Caratacus, was the lovely and ill-fated Branwen, so greatly celebrated by the Welsh bards and poets.

From what may be termed the native and aboriginal Welsh legends we may turn to the literary and artificial compilations, and consider *The Buik of the Cronicles of Scotland* (Records Series: edited by William R. Turnbull, 1858). This is a metrical version of the *History* of Hector Boece, made by one William Stewart. The *History* of Hector Boece or Boethius was first published at Paris in 1526-7; and Stewart's version was made by command of Margaret Tudor, sister of Henry VIII, for the instruction of

her son, King James V. This version was begun in 1531, and finished in 1535.

In the Chronicle we enter an atmosphere wholly distinct from that of the Triads. We read that, after the death of Cadalanus, Lord of Brigantia, his son Caratacus was crowned king. He established himself in the town of his nativity, Caracon, in the land of Carrik. At this time, Guyderus, king of Britain, the son of Kymbalan, rebelled against the Roman Emperor Claudius. Claudius sent Planctus to Britain; and he defeated Guyderus in the field. Thereupon Guyderus sent his herald to Caratacus, king of Scottis, for aid. Caratacus counsels him to stir up rebellion in Gaul and Armorica. Guyderus now took the field against the legat Planctus; and the King of Britis was slain. The Britis thereupon crowned as their king Arveragus, brother of Guyderus. The Emperor Claudius next sailed to Orkney, and carried off their king, Ganus, to Rome. The Roman praetor Planctus now persuaded King Arveragus to repudiate his queen Woda, sister to King Caratacus, and to espouse the Roman lady, Genissa. This Arveragus did, confining the queen, with her son and two daughters, in "ane castell strong." Upon this a rebellion broke out against Planctus among

" all the nobills of Icinia,

All Loncastell, York schyre, and Darbie."

" Kendaill, as my author sais,

And Biromschire all hail with Cumerland,

Evin to the valis of Esk and of Annand."

The British lords differed as to the choice of a leader. Some, we are told, chose the "lord of Kyndale"; but all finally united in selecting "the Scottis king, gude Caratac." Their heralds therefore came to Caratac at Coramyn; and Britis and Pechtis made Caratac the governour of all Albione. Arveragus and the legat Planctus took the field against Caratacus, who delivered an "*oresoun*" to his men. A battle ensued:

“ bernis brist, and blude ran doun bedene;
 Schankis wer schorne, schieldis and schulderis clave,
 Basnetis wer birstit.”

The armies fought till darkness separated them, leaving twenty thousand dead on the field. Planctus withdrew to London, Caratac to Caracon in Scotland.

Planctus now sent an envoy to Caratacus, urging him to espouse the Roman side; but Caratac answered that Planctus had wrongfully caused Arveragus to repudiate his queen Woda, sister of the king of Scottis. Arveragus hereupon renounced the Roman alliance, took back queen Woda, and sent away the lady Genissa, who died of “*desplesour*.” Planctus having sent word of this to Claudius, the Emperor despatched Vespasian with a new army to Britain. King Arveragus thereupon called a council to Eborac, and sent to Caratacus, king of Scottis, for aid. Shortly after, King Caratacus met Arveragus at Eborac, each with thirty thousand men. Vespasian, however, came upon Caratacus and Arveragus unawares, and put them to the rout; and Caratac

“ passit hame into Brigantia.”

Arveragus and the Britis submitted to Vespasian. Vespasian and Arveragus wintered at Eborac; and next summer laid siege to Cameldoune, “*neirhand by Forth, that nobill toun,*” and took it. Caratac gathered an army against Vespasian, who lay in Cameldoune; and Vespasian sent out Planctus against him. Planctus attacked the camp of Caratac in the night, and scattered his army. Caratac, however, refused to come to terms. Planctus died; and Claudius sent out another army under Ostorius. Caratacus came up against Ostorius, and delivered an “*ornat oresoun*.” He was however, utterly defeated, and fled:

“ Into the field was tane that samin da
 The quene, his dochter, and his brethren tua,
 His men all slane, himself on force to flee,

And wist nocht quhair, but ony companie.
 Syne at the last, to purpos he hes tane
 With few feris for to pass all alane,
 Till his step mother for maist traist to ga,
 Quhilk callit wes than Cartumandia.
 And so he did rycht sone into the tyde,
 On till hir castell wes neirhand besyde."

Cartimandua received him with feigned compassion,
 but secret malignity:

" He enterit in be cuming wes the nycht,
 And quhen he come into this ladeis sycht,
 Weipand for wo than scho begouth to greit,
 And salust him with wordis hwny sweit,
 Feinneand rycht fair as scho had bene so kynd,
 With deidlie poysoun wirkand in hir mynd.
 King Caratac that gestnyng bocht rycht deir."

Somewhat in the manner of Jael, the wife of Heber the
 Kenite, Cartimandua entertained Caratacus, and then
 sold him to Ostorius:

" Scho gaif his supper of ane gudlie gyiss,
 And seruit him of ane solempnit wyiss,
 With all plesour pertenyng to ane king,
 Their wes no want of weifair in all thing,
 Exhortand him for to be blyth anone;
 Quhen tyme wes cuming till his rest is gone.
 This wickit woman all nycht tuke gude keip,
 Quhill Caratac wes fallin sound on sleip;
 Rycht quyetlie than till his chalmer led
 Weill armit men evin round about his bed;
 And quhair he lay sleipand, I vnderstand,
 Of force that tyme thai band him fit and hand.
 Syne on the morne, be that the da wes lycht,
 On to the Romanis raikit hes full richt
 With Caratac, my author sais thus,
 Deliuerit him syne to Ostorius.'

Cartimandua's motive is stated to have been to win

reward, and to maintain her kingdom in peace and amity with the Romans, believing that, with the overthrow of Caratacus, Brigantia would enjoy tranquillity:

“ In that belief to get thank and reward,
 And with the Romanis all hir tyme be spaird,
 In pece and rest als for to bruke hir land.
 For that same cause, as ze ma vnderstand,
 Rycht weill scho wist and Caratac wer tane,
 Fra that tyme furth all weiris wald be gane.”

In the *Chronicles* we read that Ostorius received Caratacus with great compassion. The British king ascribed his overthrow to Fortune, not to ill desert. He was taken to Rome, and presented to Claudius, who sent him home with rich gifts. Caratacus won over Britain to the Roman allegiance. He died, and was succeeded in his kingdom by his brother Corbreid.

Queen Cartumand, we are next told, the second wife of King Cadalane of Brigantia (father of Caratacus and Corbreid by his first wife), after the king's death, married Venetius,

“ In all Brigance of most honour and fame.”

Venetius was long defended by the Romans from the ill will provoked by the treachery of Cartimandua to Caratacus; but, when he saw that the legate Aulus Didius meditated a war on Corbreid, king of Scottis, he broke his alliance with Rome, and espoused the cause of liberty. Cartimandua thereupon threw Venetius,

“ Himself, his bruther, and his frendis all,”
 into prison in Epiac,

“ quhilk was ane nobill toun
 Into Brigance, so starklie that tyme stude
 Upoun ane strenth besyid ane rynnand flude,
 With mos and wod all parkit round about.”

This being told to king Corbreid, that monarch took the nearest way to Epiac, and set free Venetius

“ his bruther and freindis all ilkane.”

Nor did he forget the treason wrought by Queen Cartimandua both to her husband and to King Caratacus. Rather, with the consent of all men, he visited signal vengeance on that unhappy woman, and buried her alive:

“Rewardit hir as scho wes worth to haif,

Than for hir gilt tha pat hir quik in graue.”

Finally, King Corbreid and the king of Pechtis contended against the “royall Romane knyght,” Cecius Nausica, but came to terms, and Aulus Didius died. In the reign of Nero, Swetonius was sent to Britain; and Corbreid the King of Scottis and the King of Pechtis were summoned to the aid of Queen Woida, or Voyeda, Corbreid’s sister. But the story of Queen Boudicca (to give her her more familiar name) is another matter, on which we need not enter here, merely noting incidentally that the kings of Scottis and Pechtis in their campaign sacked Carlisle:

“The stonis than thai brak als small as glass,

The citie als thai brint it in till ass.”

Such then is the famous and rather horrific history of Caratacus and Cartimandua, as given in the *Chronicles*. I have quoted it at some length, both for its own intrinsic vivid interest, and for the consecutive picture it presents of life in ancient Cumbria. It has the merit of affording an imaginative account of Cartimandua’s motives and actions; and, if wholly apocryphal, we may say of it, as Froude said in effect of Shakespeare’s “Macbeth,” that, if it had only been true, what perfect history it would have been! Boece, and his transcriber, claim indeed that his authority is Tacitus:

“as sais Tacitus,

The Roman scriptour, callit Cornelius.”

But it is Tacitus a little scratched.

In 1759 William Mason, the friend of Gray, published his tragedy of “Caratacus.” In this play, Aulus Didius lands in the isle of Mona or Anglesey, with the two sons of

Cartimandua, Vellinus and Elidurus. The youthful princes have been yielded to the Roman power by the queen of the Brigantes as hostages for her good faith and allegiance. Aulus Didius promises them freedom if they will lead him to the hiding-place of the fugitive king, Caractacus, amid the oak forests and caverns of Mona. Caractacus is next seen in the recesses of the island, where he is to be initiated into the mysteries of Druidism, and put off the service of "gaunt Revenge, ensanguined Slaughter, and mad Ambition," and embrace the calm meditation of tranquillity and divine lore. An invocation of Snowdon, "the king of mountains," follows; but the rites are broken off, for the sacrifices prove unpropitious. A messenger announces that two stranger youths have been captured in a "shadowy dell."

" Britons do they seem,
And of Brigantian race."

These are Vellinus and Elidurus.

The princes are taken to the cave of Caractacus; but Vellinus escapes, and flees to the Roman camp, to betray the fugitive king. Elidurus is seized by the Druids, and is on the point of being slaughtered for the treachery of his brother, when he is pardoned by the intercession of Evelina, the daughter of Caractacus. The fugitive king is at last taken captive by the Romans, acting with the aid of the false Vellinus. Caractacus finds the dead body of his son Arviragus in the Roman camp, that prince having fallen in conflict with the invader. Caractacus is then carried away captive to Rome, pronouncing a blessing on his daughter Evelina and the other son of Cartimandua, the faithful Elidurus:

" Come hither, youth; be thou to me a son . . .
Children, we go to Rome."

Aulus Didius is represented as acting throughout as deputy to Ostorius.

This is a fine play, of classic dignity and pathos. The

Chorus of Druids and Bards invoke the presences of Nature with a solemnity and power not at all unworthy of Wordsworth himself. The drama, says Thomas Campbell, "leads the imagination into scenes, delightfully cast amidst the awfulness of superstition, the venerable antiquity of history, and the untamed grandeur of external nature."

It may be noted that Shakespeare's *Cymbeline* is *Cunobellinus*, the father of *Caratacus*. *Caratacus* is not introduced in Shakespeare's drama; but his legendary brothers, *Guiderius* and *Arviragus*, appear. If *Queen Cartimandua* were the step-mother of *Caratacus*, as some romances assert, she would seem to be the "Queen Wife to *Cymbeline*," of Shakespeare's play. According to *Holinshed*, "*Kymbeline* or *Cymbeline* was brought up at Rome and there made knight by Augustus Cesar, under whome he served in the warres, and was in such favour with him, that he was at libertie to pay his tribute or not."

In all this there may seem something shadowy and intangible, far remote from our own Cumberland. The capital of the Brigantes was at *Aldbrough* in the vicinity of *Ripon*. *Cartimandua* is nowadays associated with the hill-fort of *Almondbury*, near *Huddersfield*. But wherever her citadel was, it must have been rather a far cry thither from the battlefield among the *Ordovices*, in *Shropshire* or elsewhere, on which *Caratacus* made his last stand. The British prince seems to have got away into the hills, and sought a refuge in the fastnesses of the Brigantes. This being so, a passage in the writings of our late President, Professor R. G. Collingwood, is not without interest. In his paper on "*The Hill-fort on Carrock Fell*" (*Transactions*, N.S. xxxviii, Art. II), he writes: "I suggest the possibility that the fort on *Carrock Fell* was the capital of a Brigantian sept occupying *Cumberland* or *Cumberland* and *Westmorland*; that it was built not long before the Roman invasion; and that it was stormed and ruined

by the Romans when they conquered our district in the reign of Vespasian." Here, then, amid so much that is legendary and fluctuating, appears a site appropriate in drama but if not in history for the last scene when the fugitive prince, struggling through the morasses of estuary and fen, breasted the steep incline to the hill-fort that looks over moor and forest to the peaks of Scotland, the Solway and the sea, and fell at the feet of the false red-haired queen of the mists, whether his kinswoman or no, who was, like Clytaemnestra, to enmesh and consign him, not to her own vengeful axe, but to the chains and fetters of world-conquering Rome.

That the true character of the Brigantian queen can never emerge from these fragmentary studies is evident. To set her accurately amid the conflicting tensions of her age, to lay bare the nerves, emotions, ambitions, subterfuges of a possibly sensitive woman, seeking the humanising light of a world-order and unequally mated to a Border ruffian of inbred savagery, we should need that intricate narrative, that interwoven web and woof of criss-cross impulse and revulsion, which might have resulted had the British queen chanced to fall under the purview of Robert Browning. Then had we heard the voice of the huntsman:

" I am the man my lord spoke to;
Help'd queen Brigant to cast off his yoke too;
So here's the tale from beginning to end."

Whether, however, the grave of the ill-omened Cartimandua lies in the Cumberland hills, we do not know. It may be that by some black and wind-swept tarn beneath the crags the indignant spirit of the lady rises and wails to the ambient desolation.