

THE TESTIMONY OF TRADITION

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The testimony of tradition by David MacRitchie

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DAVID MACRITCHIE

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OF TRADITION**

THE TESTIMONY OF TRADITION.

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DAVID MACRITCHIE

AUTHOR OF "ANCIENT AND MODERN BRITONS"

WITH TWENTY ILLUSTRATIONS.

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PREFACE.

A LARGE portion of this work has already appeared in the form of a series of articles contributed to the *Archaeological Review* (Aug.-Oct., 1889, and Jan., 1890), but these have here undergone some alteration and have been supplemented to a considerable extent.

With regard to the correctness of the deductions drawn in the following pages from the facts and traditions there stated, there may easily be a difference of opinion. And indeed one writer, Mr. Alfred Nutt, in the course of a very learned dissertation on the Development of the Fenian or Ossianic Saga,¹ has expressed his dissent from the theories advanced in the articles referred to. It would be out of place to enter here into a consideration of the grounds of Mr. Nutt's objections, even if that did not demand an undue amount of space; but it may be pointed out that the articles upon which his criticism is based only state very partially the case which even the following more enlarged version is far from presenting fully. But what is of much greater importance is, that the theory which I have here endeavoured to set forth has the peculiar advantage of

¹ Appended to the collection of "Folk and Hero Tales from Argyllshire" which forms the second volume of the series entitled "Waifs and Strays of Celtic Tradition" (London, 1890; published by the Folk-Lore Society).

possessing a tangible test of its worth. What that test is will be readily seen by every reader. If the result of future archæological excavations should be to confirm tradition (as it is needless to say the writer of these pages believes will be the case), the question then will be one, not of interpreting tradition so that it may square with current beliefs, but of modifying or altering these beliefs, where they are distinctly in disagreement with tradition.