

#89

Tanya O.

Age 14

"They Call Us Barbarians"

It has been a long time since my people were able to practice our culture. Who am I, you ask? My name is Edain, or it was Edain, now my name is Livia. My name is changed because I live in Rome now, in the year 14 A.D., but I am no Roman, I am a Celt. I come from an ancient people that began more than seven hundred years ago.

The Celts were a great people, living mostly on the land called Gaul. There my ancestors flourished by using a metal called iron to fashion weapons, wheels, and other items of great importance. We were the first people to use iron. We also made roads throughout the land. Our language was Gaelic, but we learned to speak Greek and Latin. I have had to learn Latin, now that I live in Rome.

My ancestors were primarily farmers, living off the land. However, a favorite pastime for the men was of course, hunting. My people also were very connected with the horse. Our horse goddess, Epona, was a very important goddess to us. We love our horses very much; they were subjects of many of our artwork such as statues in particular. We even had gold coins with horses pulling chariots. We Celts were known to be very cultured and civilized, very peaceful, except towards the Romans.

The Romans had been our bitter enemies for years, centuries even. You see, it is all because my ancestors had to sack and ravage their city of Rome about four hundred years ago. In the year 390 B.C. The Romans could never forgive us for doing such a thing to them. My ancestors managed to take Rome and stayed there for seven months, controlling it for a period that lasted approximately forty years. Then somehow, the Romans managed to summon and get together professional soldiers. Well my ancestors were mainly just simple farmers, most were untrained and unprofessional, just volunteers. So the Romans rather easily conquered them.

Even though we were conquered, we can still remember our history. It is still a custom for Celts to remember our religion, laws, and folklore as well. And even though we have no written language, as it is forbidden for us to commit our teachings to writing, we still use the alphabet of the Greeks to write down everything else, such as our public affairs and other things like that.

We also had a calendar, which has nothing to do with the Romans. We created this calendar long before we even really came to know the Romans. On it we would show the perfect dates for planning, harvesting, bringing in the herds and cattle, and all the dates for our special dates for our special ceremonies and festivals. There is also something rather unfair. The Romans thought that we were uncivilized also because we performed human sacrifice. It was a part of our religion and our beliefs, and besides, the Romans also performed human sacrifice as well. It was only abolished about one hundred years ago, how unfair is that?

I would say that for my Celtic ancestors, life was pretty much peaceful, easy going, and routine. They were just simple farmers who loved doing what they did, worshipping their gods, and celebrating the occasional festival of ceremony. Their life was pretty good, life changed however, when the Romans conquered them.

We can no longer worship our own gods; we must worship their gods, such as Jupiter, Juno, and Mars. We have to speak in Latin, not in Gaelic, like my ancestors did. Also, the Roman emperor, Augustus, has made several coins of the conquer over us. They show

our lands, being conquered by Roman soldiers. I try not to use those in particular.

There is one coin, though, that I will not use because I have only one of it. I am actually quite fond of it, even if it is a Roman coin.

On the front of it there is a picture of the first and current emperor of Rome, the Emperor Augustus. He became emperor in 31 B.C., after defeating a fellow general, some man named Marc Antony or something like that, and an Egyptian queen named Cleopatra. Now he is emperor, and he has made several coins bearing his likeness. This one I had found on the Palatine Hill a couple of week ago when I was taking a walk. Anyways, this coin I have kept simply because it interested me, like I said, it has the head of Emperor Augustus and a friend and general of his named Agrippa. On the back, there is a picture of a crocodile chained to a tree. That side doesn't make sense to me.

Anyways, being a Celt in Rome is different from life as a Celt in Gaul. It is a different way of life. I speak Latin now, although it is crucial and vital for me to remember the language and culture of my people. After all, it survived for centuries, and I want it to keep on surviving. The city of Rome look more grandeur I will have to admit, but I like the rustic sort of looks that Celtic towns seemed to have. The houses were made of wood, and the roofs of thick leaves, my ancestors used farming and agriculture for just about everything.

I am also amazed at how short the Romans can be. I am not as tall as the Roman men, but I am certainly the tallest Roman woman around. I guess it is just because Celts have been known to be rather tall.

Something also amazes and astounds me. The women in Rome have very few rights. All they are allowed to do is stay home and care for the household and the children. They are not allowed to own property or anything. Did you know that for my ancestors, Celtic women had the same rights as men? They could do anything a man could do. The women could own property, and especially important, they could maintain ownership of all their belongings and possessions even after they had gotten married. Roman women would not even dare to think about such a thing. I think that is one thing that my ancestors had that was more advanced than the Romans.

Anyways, my people may have been conquered by the Romans, but I still think that we are somewhat still alive. My people are still allowed to know our old ways, even though we now have to live as the Romans do, but things are different. In Rome, war is the way of many people's lives, but for Celts, farming was what was done, agriculture was the biggest importance. Even if we did use a lot of iron. The gods that we must worship are different, and I have also noticed that there are more goddesses in Celtic religion the in Roman religion. I guess it also has something to do with the rights of the women in Rome. Celtic women had many more rights than Roman women, I would like to see that here in Rome, but I don't think that will happen anytime in the near future. But I still know of a time when the Romans had not yet conquered the Celts, and they lived peacefully, I guess now we must try to live peacefully here in Rome.

Works Cited

Duffy, Kevin. Who were the Celts? New York: Barnes and Noble, Inc., 1996. 1-15

Norton-Taylor, Duncan. The Celts. New York: Time-Life Books, 1996. 1-33