

THE HISTORY OF THE
KINGS OF BRITAIN

Dedication

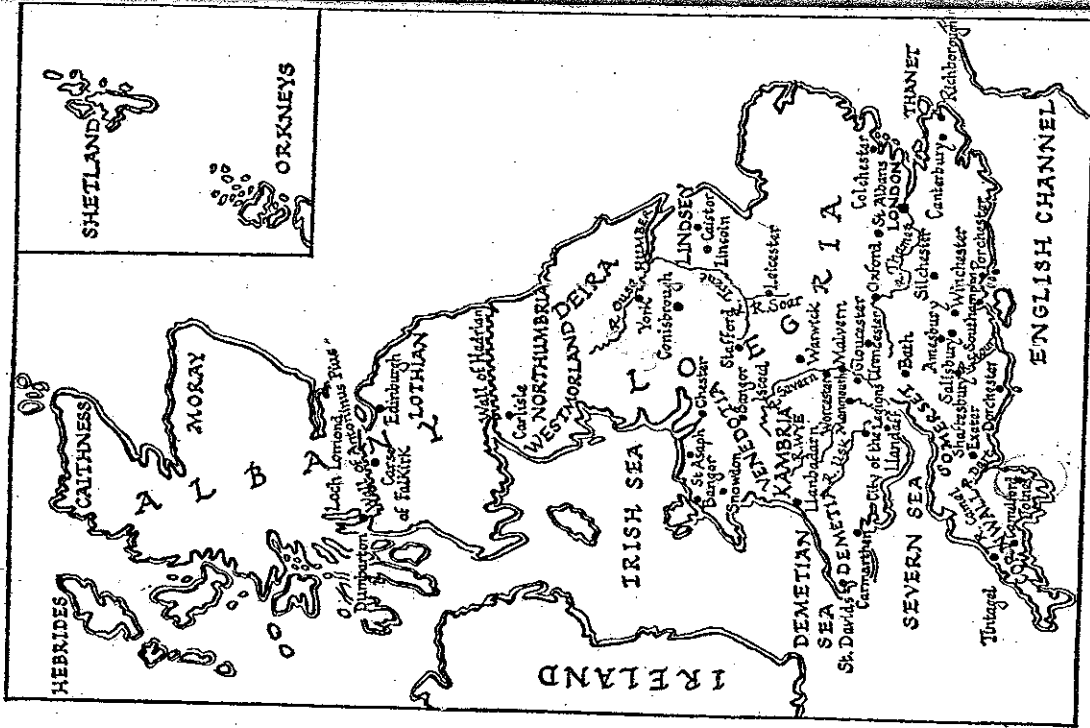
[1-7]

WHENEVER I have chanced to think about the history of the kings of Britain, on those occasions when I have been turning over a great many such matters in my mind, it has seemed a remarkable thing to me that, apart from such mention of them as Gildas and Bede had each made in a brilliant book on the subject, I have not been able to discover anything at all on the kings who lived here before the Incarnation of Christ, or indeed about Arthur and all the others who followed on after the Incarnation. Yet the deeds of these men were such that they deserve to be praised for all time. What is more, these deeds were handed joyfully down in oral tradition, just as if they had been committed to writing, by many peoples who had only their memory to rely on.

At a time when I was giving a good deal of attention to such matters, Walter, Archdeacon of Oxford, a man skilled in the art of public speaking and well-informed about the history of foreign countries, presented me with a certain very ancient book written in the British language. This book, attractively composed to form a consecutive and orderly narrative, set out all the deeds of these men, from Brutus, the first King of the Britons, down to Cadwallader, the son of Cadwallo. At Walter's request I have taken the trouble to translate the book into Latin, although, indeed, I have been content with my own expressions and my own homely style and I have gathered no gaudy flowers of speech in other men's gardens. If I had adorned my page with high-flown rhetorical figures, I should have bored my readers, for they would have been forced to spend more time in discovering the meaning of my words than in following the story.

I ask you, Robert, Earl of Gloucester,¹ to do my little book this favour. Let it be so emended by your knowledge and your advice

1. Robert, Earl of Gloucester, the illegitimate son of Henry I, who died on 31 October 1147. The date of his birth is not known.



that it must no longer be considered as the product of Geoffrey of Monmouth's small talent. Rather, with the support of your wit and wisdom, let it be accepted as the work of one descended from Henry, the famous King of the English; of one whom learning has nurtured in the liberal arts and whom his innate talent in military affairs has put in charge of our soldiers, with the result that now, in our own lifetime, our island of Britain hails you with heartfelt affection, as if it had been granted a second Henry.

You too, Waleran, Count of Mellent,¹ second pillar of our kingdom, give me your support, so that, with the guidance provided by the two of you, my work may appear all the more attractive when it is offered to its public. For indeed, sprung as you are from the face of the most renowned King Charles, Mother Philosophy has taken you to her bosom, and to you she has taught the subtlety of her sciences. What is more, so that you might become famous in the military affairs of our army, she has led you to the camp of kings, and there, having surpassed your fellow-warriors in bravery, you have learnt, under your father's guidance, to be a terror to your enemies and a protection to your own folk. Faithful defender as you are of those dependent on you, accept under your patronage this book which is published for your pleasure. Accept me, too, as your writer, so that, reclining in the shade of a tree which spreads so wide, and sheltered from envious and malicious enemies, I may be able in peaceful harmony to make music on the reed-pipe of a muse who really belongs to you.

1. Waleran, Count of Mellent, or Meulan, 1104-1166, son of Robert de Beaumont, Count of Meulan, and twin brother of Robert, Earl of Leicester. For the importance of these two dedications, see p. 11 and n.7.

Part One

BRUTUS OCCUPIES THE ISLAND OF ALBION

BRITAIN, the best of islands,¹ is situated in the Western Ocean, [2.1] between France and Ireland. It stretches for eight hundred miles in length and for two hundred in breadth. It provides in unending plenty everything that is suited to the use of human beings. It abounds in every kind of mineral. It has broad fields and hillsides which are suitable for the most intensive farming and in which, because of the richness of the soil, all kinds of crops are grown in their seasons. It also has open woodlands which are filled with every kind of game. Through its forest glades stretch pasture-lands which provide the various feeding-stuffs needed by cattle, and there too grow flowers of every hue which offer their honey to the flitting bees. At the foot of its windswept mountains it has meadows green with grass, beauty-spots where clear springs flow into shining streams which ripple gently and murmur an assurance of deep sleep to those lying on their banks.

What is more, it is watered by lakes and rivers full of fish, and at its southern end by a narrow strait across which men sail to France. There are three noble rivers, the Thames, the Severn and the Humber, and these it stretches out as though they were three arms.

1. This description of Britain is similar in many ways to the opening chapter of Bede's *Ecclesiastical History*. It can be traced further back still, to §§ 7-9 of the *Historia Brittonum* of Nennius, written towards the end of the eighth century, where the thirty-three cities of the Britons are listed. As early as the sixth century something very similar to it appears in the *De excidio Britanniae* of Gildas, who, in his §3, writes of 'the mouths of two noble rivers, the Thames and the Severn, as it were two arms, by which foreign luxuries were of old imported', of 'eight-and-twenty cities' and of 'transparent rivers, flowing in gentle murmurs, and offering a pledge of sweet slumber to those who recline upon their banks'. (Translation by J. A. Giles, 1841, as in all the notes which follow on Gildas and Nennius.)

Part Seven

ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

[IX.1] AFTER the death of Utherpendragon, the leaders of the Britons assembled from their various provinces in the town of Silchester and there suggested to Dubricius, the Archbishop of the City of the Legions, that as their King he should crown Arthur, the son of Uther. Necessity urged them on, for as soon as the Saxons heard of the death of King Uther, they invited their own countrymen over from Germany, appointed Colgrin as their leader and began to do their utmost to exterminate the Britons. They had already over-run all that section of the island which stretches from the River Humber to the sea named Caithness.

Dubricius lamented the sad state of his country. He called the other bishops to him and bestowed the crown of the kingdom upon Arthur. Arthur was a young man only fifteen years old; but he was of outstanding courage and generosity, and his inborn goodness gave him such grace that he was loved by almost all the people. Once he had been invested with the royal insignia, he observed the normal custom of giving gifts freely to everyone. Such a great crowd of soldiers flocked to him that he came to an end of what he had to distribute. However, the man to whom open-handedness and bravery both come naturally may indeed find himself momentarily in need, but poverty will never harass him for long. In Arthur courage was closely linked with generosity, and he made up his mind to harry the Saxons, so that with their wealth he might reward the retainers who served his own household. The justness of his cause encouraged him, for he had a claim by rightful inheritance to the kingship of the whole island. He therefore called together all the young men whom I have just mentioned and marched on York.

As soon as this was announced to Colgrin, he assembled the

Saxons, Scots and Picts, and came to meet Arthur with a vast multitude. Once contact was made between the two armies, beside the River Douglas, both sides stood in grave danger for their lives. Arthur, however, was victorious. Colgrin fled, and Arthur pursued him; then Colgrin entered York and Arthur besieged him there.

As soon as Baldulf, the brother of Colgrin, heard of the latter's flight, he came to the siege with six thousand troops, in the hope of freeing the beleaguered man. At the time when his brother had gone into battle, Baldulf himself had been on the sea-coast, where he was awaiting the arrival of Duke Cheldric, who was on his way from Germany to bring them support. When he was some ten miles distant from the city of York, Baldulf decided to take the advantage of a night march, so that he could launch an unexpected attack. Arthur heard of this and ordered Cador, Duke of Cornwall, to march to meet Baldulf that same night, with six hundred cavalry and three thousand foot. Cador surrounded the road along which the enemy was marching and attacked the Saxons unexpectedly, so that they were cut to pieces and killed, and those who remained alive were forced to flee. As a result Baldulf became extremely worried at the fact that he could not bring help to his brother. He debated with himself how he could manage to talk with Colgrin; for he was convinced that by consulting together it would be possible for them to hit upon a safe solution -- that is, if only he could make his way into his brother's presence.

Once Baldulf had come to the conclusion that no other means of access was open to him, he cut short his hair and his beard and dressed himself up as a minstrel with a harp. He strode up and down in the camp, pretending to be a harpist by playing melodies on his instrument. No one suspected him and he moved nearer and nearer to the city walls, keeping up the same pretence all the time. In the end he was observed by the besieged, dragged up over the top of the walls on ropes and taken to his brother. When Colgrin set

eyes on Baldulf he had the solace of embracing him and kissing him to his heart's desire, as though Baldulf had been restored to him from the dead. Finally, when, after exhaustive discussions, they had abandoned all hope of ever escaping, messengers returned from Germany to say that they had brought with them to Albany six hundred ships which were commanded by Cheldric and loaded with brave soldiery. When Arthur's advisers learned this, they dissuaded him from continuing the siege any longer, for if so large an enemy force were to come upon them they would all be committed to a most dangerous engagement.

[4.2] Arthur accepted the advice of his retainers and withdrew into the town of London. There he convened the bishops and the clergy of the entire realm and asked their suggestion as to what it would be best and safest for him to do, in the face of this invasion by the pagans. Eventually a common policy was agreed on and messengers were dispatched to King Hoel in Brittany to explain to him the disaster which had befallen Great Britain. This Hoel was the son of Arthur's sister; and his father was Budicitus, the King of the Armorican Britons. As a result, as soon as he heard of the terrifying way in which his uncle was being treated, Hoel ordered his fleet to be made ready. Fifteen thousand armed warriors were assembled and at the next fair wind Hoel landed at Southampton. Arthur received him with all the honour due to him, and each man embraced the other repeatedly.

[4.3] They let a few days pass and then they marched to the town of Kaerluideoit, which was besieged by the pagans about whom I have already told you. This town is situated upon a hill between two rivers, in the province of Lindsey; it is also called by another

1. Arthur's sister Anna is first mentioned on p. 208. On p. 209 she is married to Loth of Lodonesia. She later had two sons, Gawain and Mordred, who were thus Arthur's nephews. There is some confusion here. For 'Arthur's sister' we must read 'the sister of Aurelius Ambrosius', making Hoel I Arthur's first cousin. Cp. Madeleine Blaess, 'Arthur's sisters', in *Bulletin Bibliographique de la Société Internationale Arthurienne*, Vol. VIII (1930), pp. 69-77.

name, Lincoln. As soon as they had arrived there with their entire force, keen as they were to fight with the Saxons, they inflicted unheard-of slaughter upon them; for on one day six thousand of the Saxons were killed, some being drowned in the rivers and the others being hit by weapons. As a result, the remainder were demoralized. The Saxons abandoned the siege and took to flight.

Arthur pursued the Saxons relentlessly until they reached Caledon Wood. There they re-formed after their flight and made an effort to resist Arthur. The Saxons joined battle once more and killed a number of the Britons; for the former defended themselves manfully. They used the shelter of the trees to protect themselves from the Britons' weapons. As soon as Arthur saw this, he ordered the trees round that part of the wood to be cut down and their trunks to be placed in a circle, so that every way out was barred to the enemy. Arthur's plan was to hem them in and then besiege them, so that in the end they should die of hunger. When this had been done, he ordered his squadrons to surround the wood and there he remained for three days. The Saxons had nothing at all to eat. To prevent themselves dying of sheer hunger, they asked permission to come out, on the understanding that, if they left behind all their gold and silver, they might be permitted to return to Germany with nothing but their boats. What is more, they promised that they would send Arthur tribute from Germany and that hostages should be handed over. Arthur took counsel and then agreed to their petition. He retained all their treasure, and took hostages to ensure that the tribute should be paid. All that he conceded to the Saxons was permission to leave.

As the Saxons sailed away across the sea on their way home, they repented of the bargain which they had made. They reversed their sails, turned back to Britain and landed on the coast near Totnes. They took possession of the land, and depopulated the countryside as far as the Severn Sea, killing off a great number of the peasantry. Then they proceeded by a forced march to the neighbourhood of Bath and besieged the town. When this was announced to King

Arthur, he was greatly astonished at their extraordinary duplicity. He ordered summary justice to be inflicted upon their hostages, who were all hanged without more ado. He put off the foray with which he had begun to harass the Scots and the Picts, and he hastened to break up the siege. Arthur was labouring under very considerable difficulties, for he had left behind in the city of Alclud his cousin Hoel, who was seriously ill. He finally reached the county of Somerset and approached the siege. 'Although the Saxons, whose very name is an insult to heaven and detested by all men, have not kept faith with me,' he said, 'I myself will keep faith with my God. This very day I will do my utmost to take vengeance on them for the blood of my fellow-countrymen. Arm yourselves, men, and attack these traitors with all your strength! With Christ's help we shall conquer them, without any possible doubt!'

(ix.4) As Arthur said this, the saintly Dubricius, Archbishop of the City of the Legions, climbed to the top of a hill and cried out in a loud voice: 'You who have been marked with the cross of the Christian faith, be mindful of the loyalty you owe to your fatherland and to your fellow-countrymen! If they are slaughtered as a result of this treacherous behaviour by the pagans, they will be an everlasting reproach to you, unless in the meanwhile you do your utmost to defend them! Fight for your fatherland, and if you are killed suffer death willingly for your country's sake. That in itself is victory and a cleansing of the soul. Whoever suffers death for the sake of his brothers offers himself as a living sacrifice to God and follows with firm footsteps behind Christ Himself, who did not disdain to lay down His life for His brothers. It follows that if any one of you shall suffer death in this war, that death shall be to him as a penance and an absolution for all his sins, given always that he goes to meet it unflinchingly.'

Without a moment's delay each man present, inspired by the benediction given by this holy man, rushed off to put on his armour

1. Geoffrey sometimes calls Hoel I Arthur's 'nephew' when he means 'cousin'. Cp. p. 214, n.1.

and to obey Dubricius' orders. Arthur himself put on a leather jerkin worthy of so great a king. On his head he placed a golden helmet, with a crest carved in the shape of a dragon; and across his shoulders a circular shield called Pridwen, on which there was painted a likeness of the Blessed Mary, Mother of God, which forced him to be thinking perpetually of her. He girded on his peerless sword, called Caliburn, which was forged in the Isle of Avalon. A spear called Ron graced his right hand; long, broad in the blade and thirsty for slaughter. Arthur drew up his men in companies and then bravely attacked the Saxons, who as usual were arrayed in wedges. All that day they resisted the Britons bravely, although the latter launched attack upon attack. Finally, towards sunset, the Saxons occupied a neighbouring hill, on which they proposed to camp. Relying on their vast numbers, they considered that the hill in itself offered sufficient protection. However, when the next day dawned, Arthur climbed to the top of the peak with his army, losing many of his men on the way. Naturally enough, the Saxons, rushing down from their high position, could inflict wounds more easily, for the impetus of their descent gave them more speed than the others, who were toiling up. For all that, the Britons reached the summit by a superlative effort and immediately engaged the enemy in hand-to-hand conflict. The Saxons stood shoulder to shoulder and strove their utmost to resist.

When the greater part of the day had passed in this way, Arthur went berserk, for he realized that things were still going well for the enemy and that victory for his own side was not yet in sight. He drew his sword Caliburn, called upon the name of the Blessed Virgin, and rushed forward at full speed into the thickest ranks of the enemy. Every man whom he struck, calling upon God as he did so, he killed at a single blow. He did not slacken his onslaught until he had dispatched four hundred and seventy men with his sword Caliburn. When the Britons saw this, they poured after him in close formation, dealing death on every side. In this battle fell Colgrin, with his brother Baldulf and many thousands of others

with them. Cheldric, on the contrary, when he saw the danger threatening his men, immediately turned away in flight with what troops were left to him.

(ix.5) As soon as King Arthur had gained the upper hand, he ordered Cador, the Duke of Cornwall, to pursue the Saxons, while he himself hurried off in the direction of Albany. It had reached his ears that the Scots and the Picts had besieged his nephew Hoel in the town of Alclud, where, as I have explained already, Arthur had left him because of his poor health. Arthur therefore hastened to his nephew's assistance, for he was afraid that Hoel might be captured by the barbarians.

Meanwhile the Duke of Cornwall, accompanied by ten thousand men, instead of pursuing the fleeing Saxons, rushed off to their boats, with the intention of preventing them from going on board. Once he had seized their boats, he manned them with the best of his own soldiers and gave those men orders that they were to prevent the pagans from going aboard, if these last came running to the boats. Then he hurried off to pursue the enemy and to cut them to pieces without pity once he had found them: this in obedience to Arthur's command.

The Saxons, who only a short time before used to attack like lightning in the most ferocious way imaginable, now ran away with fear in their hearts. Some of them fled to secret hiding-places in the woods, others sought the mountains, and caves in the hills, in an attempt to add some little breathing-space to their lives. In the end they discovered safety nowhere; and so they came to the Isle of Thanet, with their line of battle cut to pieces. The Duke of Cornwall pursued them thither and renewed the slaughter. Cador drew back in the end, but only after he had killed Cheldric, taken hostages, and forced what remained of the Saxons to surrender.

(ix.6) Once peace was restored in this way, Cador set out for Alclud. Arthur had already freed the town from the harassing attentions of the barbarians. He now led his army to Moray, where the Scots and the Picts were under siege. They had fought three times against

the King and his nephew, suffering defeat at Arthur's hands and then seeking refuge in this particular district. When they reached Loch Lomond, they took possession of the islands in the lake, hoping to find a safe refuge on them. This lake contains sixty islands and has sixty streams to feed it, yet only one of these streams flows down to the sea. On these islands one can make out sixty crags, which between them support exactly the same number of eagles' nests. The eagles used to flock together each year and foretell any prodigious event which was about to occur in the kingdom: this by a shrill-pitched scream which they emitted in concert. It was to these islands, then, that the enemies of whom I have told you fled, hoping to be protected by the lake, although in effect they gained little help from it. Arthur collected together a fleet of boats and sailed round the rivers. By besieging his enemies for fifteen days he reduced them to such a state of famine that they died in their thousands.

While Arthur was killing off the Scots and the Picts in this way, Gilmaurus, the King of Ireland, arrived with a fleet and a huge horde of pagans, in an effort to bring help to those who were besieged. Arthur raised the siege and began to turn his armed strength against the Irish. He cut them to pieces mercilessly and forced them to return home. Once he had conquered the Irish, he was at liberty once more to wipe out the Scots and the Picts. He treated them with unparalleled severity, sparing no one who fell into his hands. As a result all the bishops of this pitiful country, with all the clergy under their command, their feet bare and in their hands the relics of their saints and the treasures of their churches, assembled to beg pity of the King for the relief of their people. The moment they came into the King's presence, they fell on their knees and besought him to have mercy on their sorrowing people. He had inflicted sufficient suffering on them, said the bishops, and there was no need for him to wipe out the last man those few who had survived so far. He should allow them to have some small tract

1. The text says 'forty', but this is clearly an error.

of land of their own, seeing that they were in any case going to bear the yoke of servitude. When they had petitioned the King in this way, their patriotism moved him to tears. Arthur gave in to the prayers presented by these men of religion and granted a pardon to their people.

(14.7) When all this had been accomplished, Hoel took a good look round the side of the loch which I have described to you. He was surprised to see so many rivers, islands, rocks and eagles' nests, and what is more, to find exactly the same number of each. While he was meditating upon this remarkable circumstance, Arthur came up to him and told him that in the same neighbourhood there was another pool which was even more extraordinary. It was not very far away from where they were standing. It was twenty feet wide and the same distance long, and its depth was just five feet. Whether it had been shaped into a square by the artistry of man, or by nature, it remained true that, while it produced four different kinds of fish in its four corners, the fish of any one corner were never found in any of the others.

Arthur also told Hoel that there was a third pool in the parts of Wales which are near the Severn. The local people call it Lin Ligua. When the sea flows into this pool, it is swallowed up as though in a bottomless pit; and, as the pool swallows the waters, it is never filled in such a way as to overflow the edges of its banks. When the tide ebbs away, however, the pool belches forth the waters which it has swallowed, as high in the air as a mountain, and with them it then splashes and floods its banks. Meanwhile, if the people of all that region should come near, with their faces turned towards it, thus letting the spray of the waters fall upon their clothing, it is only with difficulty, if, indeed, at all, that they have the strength to avoid being swallowed up by the pool. If, however, they turn their backs, their being sprinkled has no danger for them, even if they stand on the very brink.

(14.8) Once he had pardoned the Scottish people, the King moved to York, where he proposed to celebrate the coming feast of the

Nativity of our Lord. As he rode into the city, Arthur grieved to see the desolate state of the holy churches. Samson, the saintly Archbishop, had been driven out, and with him all men of the Christian faith. The half-burnt churches no longer celebrated God's holy office. The fury of the pagans had been so great that it had brought everything to an end. Arthur therefore summoned the clergy and the people, and appointed his own chaplain, Piramus, as Metropolitan of that see. He re-built the churches, which had been razed to the ground, and he graced them with religious communities of men and women. He restored to their family honours the nobles who had been driven out by the Saxon invasions.

There were in York three brothers sprung from the royal line, (14.9) Loth, Urian and Augustus, who had been Princes in those parts before the Saxon victories. Arthur was determined to do for them what he had done for the others: that is, to grant them back their hereditary rights. He returned the kingship of the Scots to Augustus; to Urian, the brother of Augustus, he gave back the honour of ruling over the men of Moray; and Loth, who in the days of Aurelius Ambrosius had married that King's own sister and had had two sons by her, Gawain and Mordred, he restored to the dukedom of Lotlian and other near-by territories which formed part of it.

Finally, when he had restored the whole country to its earlier dignity, he himself married a woman called Guinevere. She was descended from a noble Roman family and had been brought up in the household of Duke Cadour. She was the most beautiful woman in the entire island.

As soon as the next summer came round, Arthur fitted out a fleet and sailed off to the island of Ireland, which he was determined to subject to his own authority. The moment he landed, King Gilmaurus, about whom I have told you before, came to meet him with a numberless horde of his peoples ready to fight against him. However, when Arthur began the battle, Gilmaurus' army,

which was naked and unarmed, was miserably cut to pieces where it stood, and ran away to any place where it could find refuge. Gilmairius himself was captured immediately and forced to submit. The remaining princes of the country, thunderstruck by what had happened, followed their King's example and surrendered. The whole of Ireland was thus conquered.

Arthur then steered his fleet to Iceland, defeated the people there and subdued the island. A rumour spread through all the other islands that no country could resist Arthur. Doldavius, King of Gotland, and Gunhpar, King of the Orkneys, came of their own free will to promise tribute and to do homage.

The winter passed and Arthur returned to Britain. He established the whole of his kingdom in a state of lasting peace and then remained there for the next twelve years.

[x.] Arthur then began to increase his personal entourage by inviting very distinguished men from far-distant kingdoms to join it. In this way he developed such a code of courtliness in his household that he inspired peoples living far away to imitate him. The result was that even the man of noblest birth, once he was roused to rivalry, thought nothing at all of himself unless he wore his arms and dressed in the same way as Arthur's knights. At last the fame of Arthur's generosity and bravery spread to the very ends of the earth; and the kings of countries far across the sea trembled at the thought that they might be attacked and invaded by him, and so lose control of the lands under their dominion. They were so harassed by these tormenting anxieties that they re-built their towns and the towers in their towns, and then went so far as to construct castles on carefully-chosen sites, so that, if invasion should bring Arthur against them, they might have a refuge in their time of need.

All this was reported to Arthur. The fact that he was dreaded by all encouraged him to conceive the idea of conquering the whole of Europe. He fitted out his fleets and sailed first of all to Norway, for he wished to give the kingship of that country to Loth, who was

his brother-in-law.¹ Loth was the nephew of Siehelm, the King of Norway, who had just died and left him the kingship in his will. However, the Norwegians had refused to accept Loth and had raised a certain Riculf to the royal power, for they considered that they could resist Arthur now that their towns were garrisoned. The son of this Loth, called Gawain, was at that time a boy twelve years old. He had been sent by Arthur's brother-in-law to serve in the household of Pope Sulpicius, who had dubbed him a knight. As soon as Arthur landed on the coast of Norway, as I had begun to explain to you, King Riculf marched to meet him with the entire population of the country and then joined battle with him. Much blood was shed on either side, but in the end the Britons were victorious. They surged forward and killed Riculf and a number of his men. Once they were sure of victory, they invested the cities of Norway and set fire to them everywhere. They scattered the rural population and continued to give full licence to their savagery until they had forced all Norway and all Denmark, too, to accept Arthur's rule.

As soon as he had subdued these countries and raised Loth to the kingship of Norway, Arthur sailed off to Gaul. He drew his troops up in companies and began to lay waste the countryside in all directions. The province of Gaul was at that time under the jurisdiction of the Tribune Frolo, who ruled it in the name of the Emperor Leo. The moment Frolo heard of the coming of Arthur, he marched out supported by the entire armed force which he had under command. He was determined to fight against Arthur, but in effect he could offer little resistance. The young men of all the islands which Arthur had subdued were there to fight at his side, and he was reported to have so powerful a force that it could hardly have been conquered by anyone. What is more, the better part of the army of the Gauls was already in Arthur's service, for he had bought them over by the gifts which he had given them. As

¹ Geoffrey in his usual confused state about Loth and Gawain. Cp. p. 214, n. 1 and p. 216, n. 1. In the text Loth is called Arthur's 'uncle by marriage'.

soon as Frollo saw that he was having the worst of the fight, he quitted the battle-field without more ado and fled to Paris with the few men left to him.

There Frollo reassembled his scattered people, garrisoned the town and made up his mind to meet Arthur in the field a second time. Just as Frollo was considering how to strengthen his army by calling upon neighbouring peoples, Arthur arrived unexpectedly and besieged him inside the city. A whole month passed. Frollo grieved to see his people dying of hunger, and sent a message to Arthur to say that they should meet in single combat and that whichever was victorious should take the kingdom of the other. Being a man of immense stature, courage and strength, Frollo relied upon these advantages when he sent his message, hoping in this way to find a solution to his problem. When the news of Frollo's plan reached Arthur, he was immensely pleased; and he sent word back that he would be willing to hold the meeting that had been suggested. An agreement was come to on both sides and the two met on an island outside the city, the populace gathering to see what would happen to them.

Arthur and Frollo were both fully armed and seated on horses which were wonderfully fleet of foot. It was not easy to foretell which would win. For a moment they stood facing each other with their lances held straight in the air: then they suddenly set spurs to their horses and struck each other two mighty blows. Arthur aimed his lance with more care and hit Frollo high up on his chest. He avoided Frollo's weapon, and hurled his enemy to the ground with all his might. Arthur then drew his sword from the scabbard and was just hurrying forward to strike Frollo when the latter leapt quickly to his feet, ran forward with his lance levelled and with a deadly thrust stabbed Arthur's horse in the chest, thus bringing down both horse and rider. When the Britons saw their King thrown to the ground, they were afraid that he was dead and it was only with great self-control that they restrained themselves from breaking the truce and hurling themselves as one man upon the

Gauls. Just as they were planning to invade the lists, Arthur sprang quickly to his feet, covered himself with his shield, and rushed forward to meet Frollo. They stood up to each other hand to hand, giving blow for blow, and each doing his utmost to kill the other. In the end Frollo found an opening and struck Arthur on the forehead. It was only the fact that he blunted the edge of his sword-blade at the point where it made contact with Arthur's metal helmet that prevented Frollo from dealing a mortal blow. When Arthur saw his leather cuirass and his round shield grow red, he was roused to even fiercer anger. He raised Caliburn in the air with all his strength and brought it down through Frollo's helmet and so on to his head, which he cut into two halves. At this blow Frollo fell to the ground, drummed the earth with his heels and breathed his soul into the winds. The moment this was made known throughout the army, the townsfolk ran forward, threw open their gates and surrendered their city to Arthur.

As soon as Arthur had won his victory, he divided his army into two and put one half under the command of Hoel, ordering him to go off to attack Guitard, the leader of the Poitevins. With the other half Arthur busied himself in subduing the remaining provinces which were still hostile to him. Hoel soon reached Aquitania, seized the towns of that region, and, after harassing Guitard in a number of battles, forced him to surrender. He also ravaged Gascony with fire and sword, and forced its leaders to submit.

Nine years passed. Once Arthur had subjected all the regions of Gaul to his power, he returned once more to Paris and held a court there. He called an assembly of the clergy and the people, and settled the government of the realm peacefully and legally. It was then that he gave Neustria, now called Normandy, to his Cup-bearer Bedevere, and the province of Anjou to his Seneschal Kay. He gave a number of other provinces to the noblemen who had served him. Once he had pacified all these cities and peoples he returned to Britain just as spring was coming on.

When the feast of Whitsuntide began to draw near, Arthur, [32-12]

who was quite overjoyed by his great success, made up his mind to hold a plenary court¹ at that season and place the crown of the kingdom on his head.² He decided, too, to summon to this feast the leaders who owed him homage, so that he could celebrate Whitsun with greater reverence and renew the closest possible pacts of peace with his chieftains. He explained to the members of his court what he was proposing to do and accepted their advice that he should carry out his plan in the City of the Legions.

Situated as it is in Glamorganshire,³ on the River Usk, not far from the Severn Sea, in a most pleasant position, and being richer in material wealth than other townships, this city was eminently suitable for such a ceremony. The river which I have named flowed by it on one side, and up this the kings and princes who were to come from across the sea could be carried in a fleet of ships. On the other side, which was flanked by meadows and wooded groves, they had adorned the city with royal palaces; and by the gold-painted gables of its roofs it was a match for Rome. What is more, it was famous for its two churches. One of these, built in honour of the martyr Julius, was graced by a choir of most lovely virgins dedicated to God. The second, founded in the name of the blessed Aaron, the companion of Julius, was served by a monastery of canons, and counted as the third metropolitan see of Britain. The city also contained a college of two hundred learned men, who were

1. This plenary court held at Caerleon reminds one of many other plenary courts described in the French Arthurian romances and of the pageantry of similar scenes in the *romans d'aventure*. The field sports which follow the feast make one think of the opening lines of Marie de France's *Lanval*.

2. . . . and place the crown of the kingdom on his head. Arthur had been crowned at Silchester by Dubricius, Archbishop of the City of the Legions, p. 212. Here he holds plenary court at the City of the Legions and wears his crown in state. Similarly, on p. 198, Aurelius Ambrosius wears his crown in state at a Whitsun assembly at Mount Ambris. Cp., for example, 'The Conqueror wore his crown in state in Winchester every Easter, as he wore it at Westminster at Whitsuntide and at Gloucester at Christmas', *Etc. Brit.*, xxiii, p. 647, *sub titulo* Winchester.

3. New Monmouthshire.

skilled in astronomy and the other arts, and who watched with great attention the courses of the stars and so by their careful computations prophesied for King Arthur any prodigies due at that time.

It was this city, therefore, famous for such a wealth of pleasant things, which was made ready for the feast. Messengers were sent to the different kingdoms and invitations were delivered to all those who were due to come to the court from the various parts of Gaul and from the near-by Islands in the Sea. The following people came: Augustus, King of Albany, which is now known as Scotland; Urian, King of the men of Moray; Cadwallo Lauth, King of the Venedoti, who are now called the North Welsh; Stater, King of the Demetae, now the South Welsh; and Cador, King of Cornwall. There came, too, the Archbishops of the three metropolitan sees: London, York, and Dubricius from the City of the Legions. The last named, who was the Primate of Britain and legate of the Papal See, was so remarkably pious that by merely praying he could cure anyone who was ill. The leading men from the principal cities were there: Morvid, Earl of Gloucester; Mauron, Earl of Worcester; Anarauth, Earl of Salisbury; Artigualchar, Earl of Guerenis, which is now called Warwick; Jugéin from Leicester; Cursalem from Caistor; Kynniare, Duke of Durobernia; Urbgenius from Bath; Jonathel of Dorchester; and Boso of Rydychen: that is, Oxford.

In addition to these great leaders there came other famous men of equal importance: Donatt map Papo, Chencus map Coil, Peredur map Peridur, Grifud map Nogord, Regin map Claut, Eddelhui map Oledauc, Kyntar map Bangan, Kynmaroc, Gorbolian map Goit, Worloit, Run map Neton, Kymbelin, Edelnauth map Trunat, Cathleus map Kathel, Kyalit map Tieton and many others whose names it is too tedious to tell. Gilmaurius, King of Ireland, came from the neighbouring islands, with Malvasius, King of Iceland, Doldavius, King of Gotland, Gunhpar, King of the Orkneys, Loth, King of Norway, and Aschil, King of the Danes. From lands across the sea came Holdin, the leader of

the Ruteni; Leodegarius, Earl of Holland; Bedevere the Cup-bearer, who was Duke of Normandy; Borellus of Cenomania; Kay the Seneschal, who was Duke of Anjou; Guitard of Poitou; the Twelve Peers from the various regions of Gaul, led by Gerin of Chartres; and then Hoel, leader of the Armorican Britons, with the princes who did him homage.

All these marched with a train of accoutrements, mules and horses such as I find it hard to describe. Once they are listed, there remained no prince of any distinction this side of Spain who did not come when he received his invitation. There was nothing remarkable in this: for Arthur's generosity was known throughout the whole world and this made all men love him.

[12.23] Finally, when they had all assembled in the town and the time of the feast had come, the Archbishops were led forward to the palace, so that they could place the royal crown upon the King's head. Since the plenary court was being held in his own diocese, Dubricius made ready to sing mass in celebration of the moment when the King should place the crown upon his head. As soon as the King was enrobed, he was conducted with due pomp to the church of the metropolitan see. On his right side and on his left there were two archbishops to support him. Four Kings, of Albany, Cornwall, Demetia and Venedotia, preceded him, as was their right, bearing before him four golden swords. A company of clerics of every rank advanced before him, chanting in exquisite harmony.

From another direction the archbishops and bishops led the Queen, adorned with her own regalia, to the church of the dedicated Virgins. Before her walked the four consorts of the Kings already mentioned, carrying four white doves according to the custom. All the married women present followed behind her with great rejoicing.

Afterwards, when the procession was over, so much organ music was played in the two churches and the choirs sang so sweetly that, because of the high standard of the music offered, the knights who were there hardly knew which of the churches to enter first.

They flocked in crowds, first to this one, then to the other, so that if the whole day had been spent in celebration they would not have been bored. Finally, high mass was celebrated in both churches.

The King and the Queen then took off their crowns and put on lighter regalia. The King went off with the men to feast in his own palace and the Queen retired with the married women to feast in hers; for the Britons still observed the ancient custom of Troy, the men celebrating festive occasions with their fellow-men and the women eating separately with the other women. When they were all seated as the rank of each decreed, Kay the Seneschal, robbed in ermine and assisted by a thousand noblemen who were all clad in ermine too, bore in the food. The same number of men, clad this time in miniver, followed Bedevere the Cup-bearer from another entrance, helping him to pass drinks of all sorts in goblets of every conceivable shape. Meanwhile, in the Queen's palace, innumerable servants, dressed in varying liveries, were performing their duties, each according to his office.

If I were to describe everything, I should make this story far too long. Indeed, by this time, Britain had reached such a standard of sophistication that it excelled all other kingdoms in its general affluence, the richness of its decorations, and the courteous behaviour of its inhabitants. Every knight in the country who was in any way famed for his bravery wore livery and arms showing his own distinctive colour; and women of fashion often displayed the same colours. They scorned to give their love to any man who had not proved himself three times in battle. In this way the womenfolk became chaste and more virtuous and for their love the knights were ever more daring.

Invigorated by the food and drink which they had consumed, [12.24] they went out into the meadows outside the city and split up into

1. An interesting study could be made of the references to livery and armorial devices in the romances and other works of fiction of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, with an appendix on the behaviour of the 'women of fashion'.

groups ready to play various games. The knights planned an imitation battle and competed together on horseback, while their womenfolk watched from the top of the city walls and aroused them to passionate excitement by their flirtatious behaviour. The others passed what remained of the day in shooting with bows and arrows, hurling the lance, tossing heavy stones and rocks, playing dice and an immense variety of other games: this without the slightest show of ill-feeling. Whoever won his particular game was then rewarded by Arthur with an immense prize. The next three days were passed in this way. On the fourth day all those who in the office which they held had done Arthur any service were called together and each rewarded with a personal grant of cities, castles, archbishoprics, bishoprics and other landed possessions.

[ix. 15] Then the saintly Dubricius, who for a long time had wanted to live as a hermit, resigned from his position as Archbishop. David, the King's uncle, whose way of life had afforded an example of unblemished virtue to those whom he had instructed in the faith, was consecrated in his place. At the same time Tebaus, the celebrated priest of Llandaff, was appointed in the place of the holy Samson, Archbishop of Dol: this with the approval of Hoel, King of the Armorican Britons, to whom Tebaus' life and saintly habits had commended him. The bishopric of Silchester was given to Mangannius, that of Winchester to Diwanus and that of Alclud to Eledenius.

While Arthur was distributing these benefices among his clergy, twelve men of mature years and respectable appearance came marching in at a slow pace. In their right hands they carried olive branches, to show that they were envoys. They saluted Arthur and handed to him a communication from Lucius Hiberius. This letter read as follows:

'Lucius, Procurator of the Republic, wishes that Arthur, King of Britain, may receive such treatment as he has deserved. I am amazed at the insolent way in which you continue your tyrannical

behaviour. I am even more amazed at the damage which you have done to Rome. When I think about it, I am outraged that you should have so far forgotten yourself as not to realize this and not to appreciate immediately what it means that by your criminal behaviour you should have insulted the Senate, to which the entire world owes submission, as you very well know. You have had the presumption to disobey this mighty Empire by holding back the tribute of Britain, which tribute the Senate has ordered you to pay, seeing that Gaius Julius Caesar and other men of high place in the Roman State had received it for many years. You have torn Gaul away from that Empire, you have seized the province of the Allobroges and you have laid hands on all the Islands of the Ocean, the Kings of which paid tribute to my ancestors from the first moment when the might of Rome prevailed in those regions. As a result the Senate has decreed that punishment should be exacted for this long series of wrongs which you have done. I therefore order you to appear in Rome, so that you may submit yourself to your overlords and suffer the penalty of whatever sentence they may pass; and I appoint the middle of next August as the time for your coming. If you fail to arrive, I shall invade your territory myself and do my best to restore to the Roman State all that you have taken from it by your insane behaviour.'

This letter was read aloud in the presence of the kings and the leaders. Arthur then withdrew with them to a gigantic tower near the entrance to the palace, to consider what ought to be done in the face of such a message. As they began to climb the stairs, Cadoc, Duke of Cornwall, who was a merry man, burst out laughing.

'Until now,' he said to the King, 'I have been afraid that the life of ease which the Britons have been leading might make cowards of them and soften them up during this long spell of peace. Their reputation for bravery on the battle-field, for which they are more famous than any other people, might well have been completely lost to them. Indeed, when it is obvious that men are no longer

using their weapons, but are instead playing at dice, burning up their strength with women and indulging in other gratifications of that sort, then without any doubt their bravery, honour, courage and good name all become tainted with cowardice. For the past five years or thereabouts we have thought of nothing but these follies, and we have had no battle experience. It is precisely to free us from this sloth that God has stirred up the resentment of the Romans, so that they may restore our courage to what it used to be in the old days.'

As Cadur was saying this to them, and much more in the same strain, they reached their seats. When they had all sat down, Arthur made the following speech:

[14.r.6] 'You who have been my companions in good times and in bad, you of whose fortitude both in giving advice and in waging war I have had ample proof in the past, give me now your closest attention, every one of you, and in your wisdom tell me what you consider we should do on receiving such a letter as this. Anything which has been planned with great care by man in his wisdom is realized the more easily when the time for action arrives. It follows that we shall be able to bear this attack of Lucius with great equanimity if we have first of all worked out with one accord how we are best to resist him. For myself, I do not consider that we ought to fear his coming very much, seeing with what a trumped-up case he is demanding the tribute which he wants to exact from Britain. He says that he ought to be given it because it used to be paid to Julius Caesar and those who succeeded him. When these men landed with their armed band and conquered our fatherland by force and violence at a time when it was weakened by civil dissensions, they had been encouraged to come here by the disunity of our ancestors. Seeing that they seized the country in this way, it was wrong of them to exact tribute from it. Nothing that is acquired by force and violence can ever be held legally by anyone.' In so far as the

1. In view of Arthur's recent activities in Europe, this is a very bland statement.

Roman has done us violence, he pleads an unreasonable case when he maintains that we are his tributaries in the eyes of the law. Since he presumes to exact something illegal from us, let us by a similar argument seek from him the tribute of Rome! Let him who comes out on top carry off what he has made up his mind to take! If the Roman decrees that tribute ought to be paid him by Britain simply because Julius Caesar and other Roman leaders conquered this country years ago, then I decree in the same way that Rome ought to give me tribute, in that my ancestors once captured that city. Belinus, that most glorious of the Kings of the Britons, with the help of his brother Brennius, the Duke of the Allobroges, hanged twenty of the noblest Romans in the middle of their own forum, captured the city and, when they had occupied it, held it for a long time. Similarly, Constantine, the son of Helen, and Maximianus, too, both of them close relations of mine, wearing the crown of Britain one after the other, each gained the throne of imperial Rome. Do you not agree, then, that it is we who should demand tribute of Rome? As for Gaul and the neighbouring Islands of the Ocean, we need send no answer, for when we snatched those lands from their empire they made no effort to defend them.'

As soon as Arthur had finished his address, Hoel, King of the Armorican Britons, was told to speak first in reply.

'Even if every one of us,' said he, 'were to take the trouble to turn all these things over in his mind and to reconsider each point deep within himself, it is my opinion that no one could find better advice to give than what has just emerged from your own experienced and highly-skilled wisdom. Your speech, adorned as it was with Ciceronian eloquence, has anticipated exactly what we all think. We should have nothing but unstinting praise for the opinion expressed by so steadfast a man as you, for the strength of so wise a mind, the benefit of such excellent counsel. If you are prepared to set out for Rome in such a cause as this, then I have no doubt at all about our being victorious. We shall be defending our liberty when in all justice we demand from our enemies what they have

sought from us in the first place. Whoever tries to steal from another the things which are that other's may justly lose to the other whom he is attacking the things which belong to him personally. Since the Romans propose to remove from us that which is our own, without any doubt at all we on the contrary shall take from them what is theirs: that is, if we once have a chance of meeting them in battle. Such a confrontation is longed for by all Britons. Do not the Sybilline Prophecies testify in verse that for the third time someone born of British blood shall seize the Empire of Rome? As far as the first two are concerned, the Prophecies are already fulfilled, for it is well known, as you yourself have said, that those famous Princes Belinus and Constantine once won the imperial crown of Rome. Now we have you as the third man to whom the supreme dignity of such an honour is promised. Make haste, then, to take in your hand what God is only too willing to bestow! Hasten to conquer that which in itself is ripe for the conquering! Hasten to exalt us all, for we shall not shrink from being wounded or even losing our lives if it leads to your being exalted! In order that you may accomplish this, I shall stand at your side with ten thousand armed men.'

(12.27) When Hoel had finished speaking, Augustus, the King of Albany, began in the following words to declare what he thought about this. 'From the moment when I realized that my lord really meant what he has said, such joy entered my heart as I cannot describe in his presence. If the Romans and the Germans remain unscathed and we fail to take vengeance on them like true men for the slaughter they have in the past inflicted upon our fellow-countrymen, then we seem to have achieved nothing at all in the past campaigns which we have waged against so many mighty kings. Now that the opportunity is promised us of meeting them in battle, I am overwhelmed with joy and only too eager for the day on which we shall come together. I thirst for their blood, as I would thirst for a spring if I had been prevented from drinking for three whole days. If only I may live to see that day! How sweet

will be the wounds which I shall give and receive, once we come together hand to hand! Death itself will be sweet, if only I may suffer it in avenging our ancestors, safeguarding our liberty and exalting our King! Let us attack these emaculated creatures! Let us attack again and again, so that, when we have crushed them, we may seize all their possessions and rejoice in our victory. For my part I will augment our army to the tune of two thousand armed knights, not counting the infantry that go with them.'

It remained only for the others to say what still needed to be said. (12.29) One after the other they promised Arthur as many men as they owed him as their feudal service. In addition to those whom the Armorican leader had promised, sixty thousand armed men were mustered from the island of Britain alone. The kings of the other islands, who had not yet developed the habit of using cavalry, promised as many foot-soldiers as each man owed, so that from the six islands of Ireland, Iceland, Gotland, the Orkneys, Norway and Denmark one hundred and twenty thousand men were counted. From the various duchies of Gaul, those of the Ruteni, the Portiveses, the Normans, the Cenomanni, the Angevins and the Poitevins, came eighty thousand; and from the twelve independent territories of those who accompanied Gerin of Chartres came another twelve hundred. The total number of the entire army, not including the foot-soldiers, who were not at all easy to count, was therefore one hundred and eighty-three thousand, three hundred.'

1. Hoel promised 10,000 armed men from Brittany; Augustus promised 2,000 knights and an unspecified number of foot from Albany; Britain was to produce 60,000 armed men; the six Islands of the Sea promised 120,000 foot; 80,000 men were to come from the duchies of Gaul; and the Twelve Peers were to provide 1,200. This adds up to 273,200. We are then told that the total strength, not including the foot, was 283,300. In the manuscripts the figures were Roman ones; and the scribes, as they copied each other, made more and more mistakes. It would probably be easy to see what had gone wrong here if one collated a number of manuscripts. In any case, 120,000 foot is a most improbable figure for the Islands, and these men are expressly omitted from Geoffrey's total, as they were difficult to count. This

[12. 20] When King Arthur saw that they were all ready to enter his service, he accepted their offer and ordered them to return home immediately and assemble the troops which they had promised. He also instructed them to rendezvous at the port of Barfeur and then to be ready to march with him to the lands of the Allobroges, where they would meet the Romans. Finally, he sent word to the Emperors by their own messengers to say that he had no intention whatsoever of paying them tribute and that he was certainly not coming to Rome in order to receive their legal decision in this matter. He was coming, on the contrary, to exact from them what they had decreed in their own judicial sentence that they would demand from him. The messengers set out. At the same time the kings and princes left for home, determined to waste no time in carrying out what they had been ordered to do.

[12. 21] As soon as the contents of this reply were made known, Lucius Hiberius was ordered by the Senate to send a proclamation to the Kings of the Orient to instruct them to prepare an army and to set out in his company to conquer Britain. As quickly as possible there duly assembled Epistrotus, the King of the Greeks; Mustensar, the King of the Africans; Ali Fatima, the King of Spain; Hirtacius, the King of the Parthians; Boccus of the Medes; Sertorius of Libya; Senses, King of the Iurei; Pandrasus, King of Egypt; Micipsa, King of Babylon; Politetes, Duke of Bithynia; Teucer, Duke of Phrygia; Evander of Syria; Echion of Boethia; Ypolitus of Crete; and all the leaders and princes who owed them homage. From among the members of the Senate there came Marius Lepidus, Gaius Metellus Cocta, Quintus Milvius Catullus, Quintus Carucius and enough more to bring the total up to four hundred thousand, one hundred and sixty when they were all counted.

*.2) They made all the preparations which they considered necessary and then set out for Britain towards the beginning of August.

reduces our total to 133,200. Maybe Geoffrey's original total was 183,200. Our total is then 30,000 short. 30,000 knights from Albany would be a nice round figure.

When Arthur learned of their coming, he handed over the task of defending Britain to his nephew Mordred and to his Queen, Guinevere. He himself set off with his army for Southampton, and embarked there with a following wind.

Round about midnight, as he sailed briskly on through the deep sea, surrounded by ships too numerous to count, and following his course closely with joy in his heart, Arthur fell into a very deep slumber. As he lay lulled in sleep he saw a bear flying through the air. At the growling of the bear every shore quaked. Arthur also saw a terrifying dragon flying in from the west and lighting up the countryside with the glare of its eyes. When these two met, they began a remarkable fight. The dragon which I have described attacked the bear time and time again, burning it with its fiery breath and finally hurling its scorched body down to the ground. Arthur woke up at this point and described what he had dreamed to those who were standing round. They interpreted it for him, telling him that the dragon was himself and the bear some giant or other with which he was to fight. The battle between the two animals meant the struggle which would take place between him and the giant, and the victory of the dragon was that which Arthur himself would win. Arthur, however, was sure that it all meant something different, for he considered that this dream had come about because of himself and the Emperor.

Once the night had passed and the dawn began to glow red in the sky, they landed in the port of Barfeur. There they quickly pitched their tents and prepared to await the coming of the Kings of the Islands and the leaders of the neighbouring provinces.

Meanwhile the news was brought to Arthur that a giant of monstrous size had emerged from certain regions in Spain. This giant had snatched Helena, the niece of Duke Hoel, from the hands of her guardians and had fled with her to the top of what is now called the Mont-Saint-Michel. The knights of that district had pursued the giant, but they had been able to do nothing against him. It made no difference whether they attacked him by sea or by

land, for he either sank their ships with huge rocks or else killed them with a variety of weapons. Those whom he captured, and they were quite a few, he ate while they were still half alive.

The next night, at two o'clock, Arthur came out from the tents without telling his companions, roused his Seneschal Kay and his Cup-bearer Bedevere and set out for the Mount. Being a man of such outstanding courage, he had no need to lead a whole army against monsters of this sort. Not only was he himself strong enough to destroy them, but by doing so he wanted to inspire his men.

When they came near to the Mount, they saw a fire gleaming on the top and a second fire ablaze on a smaller peak. Bedevere the Cup-bearer was ordered by the King to make his way to this second fire by boat. He could not have reached it in any other way, for the hill rose straight up from the sea. As Bedevere began to climb up to the summit, he heard a woman's scream come from above him. This terrified him at first, for he was afraid that the monster was there. His courage soon returned, however, and he drew his sword from its scabbard and climbed up the hillside. On the top he could see nothing at all, except the great fire which he had observed before. Then he made out a newly-made tumulus nearby, and at its side an old woman who was weeping and wailing. The moment she saw him the old woman stopped weeping and began to speak to him instead. 'Unhappy man!' said she. 'What ill fortune has brought you to this spot? I pity you, for you are about to suffer death by the most unspeakable tortures. This very night a foul monster will destroy the flower of your youth. The most odious of all giants will come here. Cursed be his name! It is he who carried the Duke's niece off to this mountain. I have just buried her in this very spot. With her he brought me, her nurse. Without a moment's hesitation he will destroy you, too, by some unheard-of form of death. How hideous the fate of my fairest nursing was! When this foul being took her in his arms, fear flooded her tender breast and so she ended a life which was worthy of a longer span. Since he was unable to befoul with his filthy lust

this child who was my sister's soul, my second self, the joy and happiness of my life, in the madness of his bestial desire he raped me, against my will, as I swear by God and my own old age. Flee, my dear sir! Flee! If he comes, as he usually does, to have intercourse with me, he will find you here and tear you to pieces and destroy you miserably!

Bedevere was as much moved as it is possible for a human being to be. He soothed the old woman with kind words, comforted her with the promise of speedy help and returned to Arthur to tell him all that he had discovered. Arthur grieved for the fate of the girl and ordered the other two to leave him to attack the monster alone. Should the need arise, they were to come to his assistance as smartly as they knew how and attack the giant in their turn. They then made their way to the taller of the two peaks. There they handed their horses over to their squires and began to clamber to the top, Arthur going on ahead.

At that moment the inhuman monster was standing by his fire. His face was smeared with the clotted blood of a number of pigs at which he had been gnawing. He had swallowed bits of them while he was roasting the rest over the live embers on the spits to which he had fixed them. The moment he saw the newcomers, nothing then being farther from his thoughts, he rushed to snatch up his club, which two young men would have found difficulty in lifting off the ground. The King drew his sword from its scabbard, held his shield in front of him and rushed forward at full speed to prevent the giant from seizing his club. The giant was quite aware of the advantage Arthur was hoping to gain. He took up his club and dealt the King such a mighty blow on his shield that he filled the shore in either direction with the reverberation of the impact and deafened Arthur's ears completely. The King grew white-hot in the fierceness of his rage. He struck the giant on the forehead with his sword and gave him such a blow that, although it was not mortal, all the same the blood ran down his face and into his eyes and prevented him from seeing. The giant had warded off the

blow with his club and in this way had protected his forehead from a mortal wound. Blinded as he was by the blood which was gushing out, he rushed forward all the more fiercely. Just as a boar hurries itself at the huntsman, despite the latter's boar-spear, so the giant rushed against the King's sword. He seized Arthur round the middle and forced him to the ground on his knees. Arthur gathered his strength and quickly slipped out of the giant's clutches. Moving like lightning, he struck the giant repeatedly with his sword, first in this place and then in that, giving him no respite until he had dealt him a lethal blow by driving the whole length of the blade into his head just where his brain was protected by his skull. At this the evil creature gave one great shriek and toppled to the ground with a mighty crash, like some oak torn from its roots by the fury of the winds. The King laughed with relief. He ordered Bedevere to saw off the giant's head and to hand it over to one of their squires, so that it might be carried to the camp for all to go and stare at.

Arthur said that he had not come into contact with anyone so strong since the time he killed the giant Retho on Mount Arvaus, after the latter had challenged him to single combat. Retho had made himself a fur cloak from the beards of the kings whom he had slain. He sent a message to Arthur, telling him to rip his own beard off his face and when it was torn off send it to him. Since Arthur was more distinguished than any of the other kings, Retho promised in his honour to sew his beard higher up the cloak than the others. If Arthur would not do this, then Retho challenged him to a duel, saying that whoever proved the stronger should have the fur cloak as a trophy and also the beard of the man he had beaten. Soon after the battle began, Arthur was victorious. He took the giant's beard and the trophy too. From that day on, as he had just said, he had met nobody stronger than Retho.

When they had won their victory, as I have told you, the three returned to their tents with the head, just as dawn was succeeding to night. All their men crowded round them to gape at it and praise the man who had freed the country from such a voracious

monster. Hoel, however, grieved over the fate of his niece. He ordered a chapel to be built above her grave on the mountain-top where she had been buried. The peak took its name from the girl's burial-place, and to this very day it is called Helena's Tomb.¹

As soon as all those whom Arthur was awaiting had finally assembled, he marched from there to Autun, where he expected that the Emperor would be. However, by the time he reached the River Aube he was informed that the Emperor had pitched his camp not far away and was advancing with such an enormous army that it was being said that no one could possibly resist him. Arthur was not dismayed, for he had no intention whatsoever of abandoning the plans which he had made. Instead, he pitched his own camp on the river-bank, in a spot from which he could easily move his camp forward, or, if the need arose, withdraw under cover.

Arthur sent two of his leaders, Boso of Oxford and Gerin of Chartres, together with his own nephew Gawain, to Lucius Hiberius, to tell him either to withdraw altogether from Gallic territory or else to march out the next day to see which of them had more right to Gaul. The young men of Arthur's court were overjoyed at the prospect before them. They began to egg Gawain on to foment some incident in the Emperor's camp, to give them an opportunity of fighting with the Romans. They made their way into the presence of Lucius and duly ordered him either to withdraw from Gaul or to come out to fight the very next day. As Lucius was replying that he had not come there in order to withdraw, but rather that he might govern the country, his nephew Gaius Quintillanus who was present was heard to mutter that the Britons were better at boasting and making threats than they were at proving their courage and prowess on the battle-field. Gawain was immediately incensed at this. He drew his sword from the scabbard which was hanging at his belt, rushed at Gaius and cut off his head. He and his fellow-envoys then retreated to their

¹ See Lewis Thorpe, 'Le Mont-Saint-Michel et Geoffroi de Monmouth' in *Millénaire Monastique du Mont-Saint-Michel*, Vol. II, 1967, pp. 377-82.

horses. The Romans pursued them, some on foot and some on horseback, hoping to avenge the loss of their fellow-countryman upon the messengers, who were making off at full speed. Gerin of Chartres suddenly turned round, just as one of the Romans was straining to hit him, couched his lance, pierced the enemy through his protective armour and the middle of his body, and hurled him to the ground with all his might. Boso of Oxford, envious of the mighty deed done by the man from Chartres, wheeled his own horse round and stuck his spear into the throat of the first man he met, mortally wounding him and dashing him from the nag on which he was careering along. In the meantime Marcellus Mutius was making every effort to avenge Quintilianus. He was already threatening Gawain from the rear, and was on the point of laying hold of him, when Gawain swung round and with the sword which he brandished clove him through helm and head to his chest, bidding him, when he got to hell, to tell Quintilianus, whom Gawain had just cut down in the camp, that this was why the Britons were so good at boasting and making threats.

Gawain drew his troops up in some order and ordered them to wheel round in formation, each doing his utmost to unhorse one of the enemy. They agreed to what he proposed. They all turned back and each of them killed his man. All the same, the Romans continued the pursuit, hitting out at the Britons with their swords and spears, but not succeeding in capturing or unhorsing any of them.

Just as they were riding up to a certain wood, so the story goes, there suddenly emerged from the trees about six thousand Britons, who had heard of the retreat of their leaders and had concealed themselves there in order to bring them help. Out they came, sticking spurs into their horses and filling the air with their shouts. With their rounded shields hung in front of their chests, they attacked the Romans out of the blue and immediately drove them back in flight. The Britons chased after the Romans as one man, hurling some of them from their horses with their spears, capturing others and killing quite a few.

When this was made known to the Senator Petreius, he hurried to the assistance of his comrades, accompanied by ten thousand men. He forced the Britons to withdraw to the wood from which they had emerged, but not before he had lost some of his own men in the process. As they fled the Britons turned at bay in the narrow woodland paths and inflicted great slaughter on their pursuers. Meanwhile Hyderus, the son of Nu, was hurrying forward to support them as they retreated in this way. The Britons then made a stand, showing their chests now to the same Romans to whom they had previously presented their backs, and doing their level best to deal mighty blows in the most manly way possible.

The Romans, too, stood their ground, in some sectors managing to kill the Britons, but elsewhere being killed by them. The Britons wanted a fight with all their heart and soul, but once they had begun it they did not care much whether they won or lost. The Romans, on the other hand, who were given careful instructions as to when they should move forward and when retreat by Petreius Coeta, like the good captain he was, behaved with more circumspection, so that Petreius was able to inflict great damage on his opponents. As soon as Boso noticed this, he called aside from the others a number of the Britons whom he knew to be among the bravest, and delivered the following speech to them: 'Seeing that we began this skirmish without informing Arthur, we must take great care, now that our men are fully engaged, that we do not have the worst of it. If that does happen, then we shall suffer a great loss of man-power and at the same time have the King cursing us. You must all pluck up your courage and follow me through the ranks of the Romans, so that, if fortune favours us, we can either kill or else capture Petreius.'

They all set spurs to their horses, and, keeping close together, forced their way through the wedge-shaped ranks of the enemy. They reached the spot where Petreius was giving orders to his men. Boso rushed headlong at him, seized him round the neck and fell to the ground with him as he had planned. The Romans came running

up to rescue Petreius from his assailants. At the same time the Britons moved forward to give every help to Boso. There followed a tremendous slaughter between the two sides, with much din and confusion, as the Romans tried to free their leader and the Britons strove to hold him captive. Men were wounded on both sides as they dealt deadly blows and received them. In this contest it was made quite clear who was the better man with spear, sword and javelin. In the end the Britons advanced with closed ranks, withheld the onslaught of the Romans and made their way, with Petreius in their midst, to the safety of their own lines. Without a moment's respite they then made a counter-attack upon the Romans, who were now for the most part weakened, dispirited, and ready to show their backs, for they had lost their commander. The Britons pressed on against them, striking at them from the rear. They unhorsed them with their blows, plundered them where they lay, and rode on over their looted bodies in pursuit of the others. A few they took prisoner for they wanted some to hand over to the King.

In the end, when they had done all the damage they could to the Romans, the Britons withdrew to their camp with their spoils and prisoners. They explained what had happened to them and with the joy of victory in their hearts handed Petreius Cocta and the rest of their captives over to Arthur. He congratulated them, and promised them honours and yet more honours in that they had behaved so gallantly although he was not there to lead them. He decided to throw the captives into prison. He summoned to his presence the men who were to lead them off to Paris the following day and hand them over to the town gaolers for safe-keeping, against the time when he should decide what else should be done with them. He ordered Duke Cadur, Bedevere the Cup-bearer, and Borellus and Richerius, two of his leading men, with their personal bodyguards, to lead the party, until they reached a spot beyond which they need not really fear a rescue-attempt by the Romans.

[X.5] It so happened that the Romans got wind of what the Britons

had planned. At their Emperor's command they chose fifteen thousand of their troops, who, that very same night, were to hurry on ahead of the Britons, along their projected line of march, and then to attack them and do their utmost to free their fellow-countrymen. The Romans put two Senators, Vulteius Catellus and Quintus Carcius, in charge of their troops, together with Evander the King of Syria, and Sertorius the King of Libya. That very night they set out with the force which I have described, intending to follow the line of march as instructed. They chose a place suitable for an ambush and hid in a spot through which they thought their enemies would pass.

After morning came, the Britons duly set out with their captives. They soon came near to the place in question, not realizing what a trap their cunning enemies had prepared for them. As the Britons moved forward in their march, the Romans suddenly broke cover. They attacked the Britons, who were expecting nothing of the sort, and broke their line. Although they were attacked unexpectedly, and scattered, the Britons re-formed their lines and resisted bravely. They stationed some of their troops in a circle round the prisoners. The remainder they drew up into companies, which then engaged the enemy. The Britons put Richerius and Bedevere in charge of the force which they set to guard the prisoners, Cadur, Duke of Cornwall, and Borellus were given command of the others. The entire Roman detachment had rushed out in a disorderly fashion, without troubling to draw their men up into companies. They attacked with all their might, aiming to slaughter the Britons while the latter were still drawing up their own battle-lines and making plans to defend themselves. The Britons suffered great losses, and would have endured the shame of losing the captives whom they were conveying, if good fortune had not quickly brought the reinforcements of which they were in such need. Guitard, the Duke of the Poitevins, came to hear of the ambush which I have described, and he marched in with three thousand men. Now that they were able to rely upon this help,

the Britons won in the end and so managed to take revenge upon their imprudent ambushers for all the slaughter they had caused. However, they lost many of their troops in the first stage of the battle. Indeed, they lost Borellus, the famous leader of the Cenomanni, who was pierced through the throat by his opponent's spear while he was fighting with Evander the King of Syria, and so vomited forth his life with his blood. At the same time they lost four noble princes: Hyrelgas of Periron; Maurice Cadon of Cahors; Aliduc of Tintagel; and Her, the son of Hider. It would not have been easy to find braver men than these. However, the Britons did not lose their courage, nor did they despair. They made every effort to press forward, doing their utmost to guard their prisoners and at the same time to destroy their enemies. In the end the Romans were unable to stand the attack which the Britons launched, and they quickly retreated from the battle-field and began to make for their own camp. The Britons pursued them relentlessly, killing them as they went and taking many captives. They allowed them no respite until they had killed Vultreus Catellus and Evander the King of Syria, and scattered the others completely.

Once they were sure of victory the Britons sent on to Paris the prisoners they were conveying. They themselves turned back to their King with those whom they had just captured, promising him hope of a decisive victory in that they who were so few had triumphed over this immense enemy which had been dispatched against them.

[x.6] Lucius Hiberius bore all these disasters ill. Harassed as he was by a variety of anxieties, he swayed first this way and then that, for he could not make up his mind whether to engage in a full-scale battle with Arthur or to withdraw inside Autun and there await reinforcements from the Emperor Leo. In the end he let his misgiving take the upper hand. The next night he marched his troops into Langres, on his way to the city of Autun. This move was reported to Arthur. He made up his mind to outmarch Lucius along this route. That same night he by-passed the city of Langres on his

left hand, and entered a valley called Saussy,¹ through which Lucius would have to pass.

Arthur decided to draw up his troops in battle-formation. He ordered one legion, the command of which he entrusted to Earl Morvid, to stay constantly in reserve, so that, if need arose, he would know where he could withdraw, re-fit his companies, and plan new attacks on the enemy. He drew up the remainder of his troops in seven divisions,² to each of which he allocated five thousand, five hundred and fifty-five fully-equipped men. One part of each of the divisions which he drew up consisted of cavalry and the second part of foot-soldiers. They were given the following standing-orders: whenever the infantry showed signs of advancing to the attack, the cavalry of that division, moving forward obliquely with closed ranks, should do its utmost to break the force of the enemy. According to the British custom, the infantry battalions were drawn up in a square, with a right and left wing.

Augustus, the King of Albany, was put in charge of the right wing, and Cadon, Duke of Cornwall, of the left wing of the first division. Two famous leaders, Gerin of Chartres and Boso of Rydychen, called Oxford in the Saxon language, were put in command of a second division, with Aschil, King of the Danes,

1. The text has *quandem vallem* . . . *que Siesia vocabatur*. The spelling of Siesia varies considerably in the different mss. and *Jesus* has 'the Glen of Assessia'. I had decided upon Saussy from a study of the campaign and the map before I read *Tatlock's* note on his pp. 102-3: 'There is an obscure place thirty-five miles southwest of Langres named Saussy, on the way to Autun, on high land with lower land at the side; the best guess, but too far in distance and name to fit Geoffrey's words well.' Tatlock is being too difficult. Many of Geoffrey's accredited places are obscure and his sense of distance is notoriously vague. Cannae, Waterloo and Alamein were fought in obscure places. For two up-to-date views, see William Matthews, 'Where was Siesia-Sessoigne?' in *Speculum*, Vol. XLIX (1974), pp. 680-86; and H. E. Keller, 'Two topographical problems in Geoffrey of Monmouth and Wace: Estrusia and Siesia' in *Speculum*, Vol. XLIX (1974), pp. 687-98.

2. The arithmetic is faulty, but scribes play havoc with numbers. The text has *per catervas septenas*, not including the reserve division of Morvid. In effect there are four front-line divisions, four support divisions and the two reserve divisions under Morvid and Arthur, making ten in all.

and Lotli, King of the Norwegians, in charge of a third. Hoel, King of the Britons, and Gawain, the King's nephew, commanded a fourth. In support of these, four other divisions were placed in the rear. Kay the Seneschal was put in charge of one, along with Bedevere the Cup-bearer. Holdin, the leader of the Ruteni, and Guitard, Duke of the Poitevis, commanded the second. Jugein of Leicester, Jonathel of Dorchester, and Cursalem of Caistor took charge of the third, and Urbgenius of Bath of the fourth.¹

Behind all these the King chose a position for himself and for a single legion which he had appointed to remain under his orders. There he set up the Golden Dragon which he had as his personal standard. To this point the wounded and exhausted could withdraw in case of necessity, as if to a fortified camp. In the legion which he held back under his own command there were six thousand, six hundred and sixty-six men.

[x.2] When all his troops were placed in position, Arthur gave them the following order of the day: 'My countrymen, you who have made Britain mistress of thirty kingdoms, I commend you for your courage, which, far from lessening, seems to me to increase in strength every day, despite the fact that you have waged no war for five long years, during which time you have devoted yourselves to the enjoyment of a life of ease rather than to the practice of war. Nevertheless, you do not seem to have degenerated in the least from your inborn valour. On the contrary, you have retained your courage to the full, for you have just put the Romans to flight, at a moment when, encouraged by the pride which came so naturally to them, they were doing their utmost to deprive you of your freedom. Moving forward with the advantage of numbers on their side, it was they who attacked you, but they were not strong enough to resist your advance and they had to withdraw in shame to that city over there. In a short time they will march out

¹ The text is clear, but there is obviously an error here. Presumably Geoffrey meant Jugein and Jonathel to command the third support division; and Cursalem and Urbgenius to command the fourth.

again and come through this valley on their way to Atrun. You will be able to attack them when they least expect it and slaughter them like so many sheep. No doubt they imagined, when they planned to make your country pay them tribute and to enslave you yourselves, that they would discover in you the cowardice of Eastern peoples. Perhaps they have not heard of the wars you waged against the Danes and Norwegians and the leaders of the Gauls, when you delivered those peoples from their shameful allegiance to the Romans and forced them to submit to my own overlordship. We who had the strength to win a mightier battle will without any doubt at all be successful in this more trifling affair, if only we make up our minds with the same determination to crush these feeble creatures. What rewards you will win, if only you obey my will and my orders, as loyal soldiers ought to do! Once we have beaten the Romans in the field, we can immediately set off for Rome itself. As soon as we march upon Rome, we shall capture it. When we have captured it, you shall occupy it. And yours shall be its gold, silver, palaces, towers, castles, cities and all the other riches of the vanquished!'

As Arthur spoke, they all joined in one great shout of approval, for, as long as he was still alive, they were ready to die rather than leave the battle-field.

Lucius Hiberius found out about the trap which was laid for him: [x.3]

His first inclination was to run away, but he changed his mind. His courage returned to him and he decided to march out to meet the Britons through this same valley. He called his generals together, and delivered the following speech to them.

'My noble leaders,' he said, 'you to whose sovereignty the kingdoms both of the East and of the West owe obedience, remember now the deeds of your ancestors. They did not hesitate to shed their blood in their efforts to conquer the enemies of the Republic. They left an example of bravery and soldierly courage to those who were to come after them, for they fought as if God had decreed that none of them should ever die in battle. They

nearly always won, avoiding death in their victory, for they held that no death could come to any man other than that ordained by the will of God. In that way the Republic increased in power as their own prowess became greater. All the integrity, honour and munificence which distinguished men of noble birth flourished in them down the years. This lifted them and their descendants to the overlordship of the whole world. I now want to rouse this same spirit in you. I beg you to remember the bravery of your forefathers. Strong in this courage, you must now march forth to meet your enemies in the valley where they lie in ambush for you. Do your utmost to exact from them what is rightly yours. Do not imagine for a moment that I sought refuge in this city because I feared them, or was afraid of meeting them in battle. On the contrary, I imagined that they would come after us in their senseless bravado and that, as they rushed forward, we might suddenly turn upon them. I thought that we might slaughter them as they tailed out in pursuit. Now, however, since they have behaved in a different way from what we anticipated, we in our turn must make new plans. We must go out to meet them and attack them as bravely as we possibly can. If they have the first advantage, then we must withstand them without letting our lines be broken, and bear the brunt of their initial attack. In this way we shall win without any shadow of doubt. In many a battle the side that stands firm in the first assault achieves victory in the end.

As soon as Lucius had said these things and added a few other similar remarks, his men agreed with one accord. With heads erect and hands raised they swore an oath, and then armed themselves as quickly as they could. Once they were equipped, they marched out from Langres and made their way to the valley I have described, where Arthur had drawn up his own forces. In their turn they drew up twelve wedge-shaped legions, all of them infantry. They were arranged in wedges, in the Roman fashion, each single legion containing six thousand, six hundred and sixty-six men. Separate commanders were appointed to each of the legions, and

according to the orders of these generals so they were to advance to the assault or stand firm when they themselves were attacked.

The Romans placed Lucius Catellus and Ali Fatima, the King of Spain, in command of the first legion; Hirtacius, King of the Parthians, and the Senator Marius Lepidus in command of the second; and Boccus, King of the Medes, with the Senator Gaius Metellus, in command of the third. They gave the command of the fourth legion to Sertorius, the King of Libya, and to the Senator Quintus Milivius. These four legions were placed in the first line. Behind them and in their rear were another four. They placed Sertes, King of the Iurei, in charge of the first; Pandrasus, King of Egypt, in charge of the second; Polietes, Duke of Bithynia, in charge of the third; and Teucer, Duke of Phrygia, in charge of the fourth. Behind these again came yet another four legions: to the first of them they appointed the Senator Quintus Carucius; to the second Lelius Hostensis; to the third Sulpicius Subuculus; and to the fourth Mauricius Silvanus.

Lucius himself moved about among them, now here, now there, making suggestions and telling them how to proceed. He commanded that a golden eagle, which he had brought with him as a standard, should be set up firmly in the centre. He gave orders that anyone whom the tide of battle had cut off from the others should do his utmost to force his way back to this eagle.

Now at last they stood face to face with javelins raised, the Britons on this side and the Romans on that. As soon as they heard the sound of the battle-trumpets, the legion commanded by the King of Spain and Lucius Catellus charged boldly at the division led by the King of Scotland and the Duke of Cornwall, but the latter stood firm, shoulder to shoulder, and the Roman force was not able to breach it. As the Roman legion persisted in its fierce attack, the division commanded by Gerin and Boso moved up at the double. The Roman legion fought bravely, as has already been said, but this fresh division attacked it with a sudden cavalry charge, broke through and came into contact with the legion which the

King of the Parthians was directing against the division of Aschil, King of the Danes. Without a moment's delay the two forces met all along the line in a general mêlée, piercing each other's ranks and engaging each other in deadly combat. There ensued the most pitiable slaughter on both sides, with a bedlam of shouting and with men tumbling head foremost or feet first to the ground all over the place and vomiting forth their life with their heart's blood.

At first the Britons had the worst of it, for Bedevere the Cup-bearer was killed and Kay the Seneschal was mortally wounded. When Bedevere met Böccus, the King of the Medes, he was run through by the latter's lance and fell dead inside the enemy lines. Kay the Seneschal did his utmost to avenge Bedevere, but he was surrounded by battalions of Medes and received a mortal wound. Nevertheless, brave soldier as he was, he cut a way through with the force which he was commanding, scattered the Medes and would have retreated to his own support-group with his line of battle unbroken, had he not come up against the legion of the King of Libya, whose counter-attack completely scattered the troops under Kay's command. Even then he fell back with a few men still alive and made his way to the Golden Dragon with the corpse of Bedevere. How the Neustrians grieved when they saw the body of their leader Bedevere slashed with so many wounds! The Angevins, too, bewailed as they treated the wounds of their leader Kay in every manner they could think of.

This, however, was no moment for weeping and wailing, with the battle-lines meeting on both sides in a bath of blood and giving them little respite for lamentations of this sort before they were compelled to look to their own defence. Hyrelgas, the nephew of Bedevere, was greatly moved by his uncle's death. He gathered round him three hundred of his own men, made a sudden cavalry charge and rushed through the enemy lines to the spot where he had seen the standard of the King of the Medes, for all the world like a wild boar through a pack of hounds, thinking little of what might happen to himself, if only he could avenge his uncle. When

he came to the place where he had seen the King, he killed him, carried off his dead body to his own lines, put it down beside the corpse of the Cup-bearer and hacked it completely to pieces. With a great bellow, Hyrelgas roused his fellow-countrymen's battalions to fury, exhorting them to charge at the enemy and to harass them with wave after wave of assault, for now a new-found rage boiled up within them and the hearts of their frightened opponents were sinking. They were drawn up, he shouted, in better order in their battalions than their enemies, fighting hand-to-hand as they were, and they were in a position to attack repeatedly and to inflict more serious losses. The Britons were roused by this encouragement. They attacked their enemy all along the line, and terrible losses were sustained in both armies.

Vast numbers fell on the side of the Romans, including Ali Fatima the King of Spain, Micipsa the Babylonian, and the Senators Quirinus Milivius and Marius Lepidius. On the side of the Britons there died Holdin the Duke of the Ruteni, Leodegarius of Boulogne, and the three British leaders Cursalem of Caistor, Guallauc of Salisbury, and Urbgenius of Bath. The troops these men had commanded were greatly weakened and they drew back until they reached the battle-line of the Armorican Britons, which was commanded by Hoel and Gawain. However, this force burst into flame, as it were, rallied those who had been retreating, and compelled the enemy, who, a moment before, had been in pursuit, to withdraw in its turn. The Britons pressed on hard, hurling the fugitives to the ground and killing them. They did not pause in their slaughter until they reached the Emperor's own body-guard. When he saw what disaster had overtaken his men, the Emperor hurried forward to give them support.

When the battle began again, the Britons were sadly mauled. Chinmarchocus, the Duke of Tréguier, fell dead, and with him there died two thousand men. Three other famous leaders were killed: Riddomarcus, Bloctonius, and Iaginvius of Bodloan. Had these men been rulers of kingdoms, succeeding ages would have

celebrated their fame, for their courage was immense. In the attack which they launched with Hoel and Gawain, and which I have described to you, no enemy with whom they came to grips escaped alive from their swords and lances. Eventually they reached the bodyguard of Lucius himself. There they were cut off by the Romans and met their end at the same time as their leader Chinchoc and his comrades whom I have mentioned.

No better knights than Hoel and Gawain have ever been born down the ages. When they learned of the death of their followers, they pressed on even more fiercely. They spurred on this way and that, first in one direction, then in another, in their relentless attack on the Emperor's bodyguard. Gawain, fearless in his courage, did his utmost to come up with Lucius himself in the fight. He made every effort to push forward, for he was the bravest of all the knights. He decimated the enemy by his onslaught and as he killed them he moved ever forward. Hoel was in no way less brave. He was raging like a thunderbolt in another sector, encouraging his own men and bringing death to his enemies. He parried their attacks with the utmost courage, giving and receiving blows, but not drawing back for a second. It would be difficult to say which of these two was the braver.

[177] By dint of forcing his way through the enemy troops, as I have said above, Gawain finally found the opening for which he was longing. He rushed straight at the Roman general and fought with him hand to hand. Lucius was in the prime of his youth. He was a man of great courage, strength and prowess, and there was nothing that he wanted more than to join battle with a knight who would force him to prove his worth as a soldier. He accepted Gawain's challenge and fought with him. He was very keen to begin and rejoiced that his opponent was so famous a man. The contest between these two lasted for a long time. They dealt each other mighty blows, holding out their shields to their opponent's onslaught and each planning how he could kill the other.

As Gawain and Lucius fought bitterly in this way, the Romans

suddenly recovered. They attacked the Britons and so brought help to their general. They repulsed Hoel, Gawain and their troops, and began to cut their way into them. It was at this juncture that the Romans suddenly came face to face with Arthur and his division. He had heard a moment before of this slaughter which was being inflicted on his men. He moved up with his own division, drew his wonderful sword Caliburn and encouraged his fellow-soldiers by shouting loudly at them. 'What the Devil are you doing, men?' he demanded. 'Are you letting these effeminate creatures slip away unhurt? Not one must escape alive! Think of your own right hands, which have played their part in so many battles and subjected thirty kingdoms to my sovereignty! Remember your ancestors, whom the Romans, then at the height of their power, made tributaries. Remember your liberty, which these halfings, who haven't anything like your strength, plan to take away from you! Not one must escape alive! Not one must escape, I say!'

As he shouted these insults, and many others, too, Arthur dashed straight at the enemy. He flung them to the ground and cut them to pieces. Whoever came his way was either killed himself or had his horse killed under him at a single blow. They ran away from him as sheep run from a fierce lion whom raging hunger compels to devour all that chance throws in his way. Their armour offered them no protection capable of preventing Caliburn, when wielded in the right hand of this mighty King, from forcing them to vomit forth their souls with their life-blood. Ill luck brought two Kings, Sertorius of Libya and Politetes of Bithynia, in Arthur's way. He hacked off their heads and bundled them off to hell.

When the Britons saw their King fighting in this way, they became more bold. They charged as one man at the Romans, attacking them in close formation. While the infantry was assailing them in this way in one sector, the cavalry strove to beat them down and run them through in another. The Romans fought back bitterly. Urged on by Lucius, they strove to take

vengeance on the Britons for the slaughter inflicted by their noble King. The fight continued with as much violence on both sides as if they had only just at that moment come to blows with one another. On our side Arthur dealt blow after blow at his enemies (as I have told you already), shouting to the Britons to press on with the slaughter. On their side Lucius Hiberius urged his men on, repeatedly leading them himself in daring counter-attacks. He fought on with his own hand, going the round of his troops in each sector and killing every enemy who came his way, either with his lance or his sword. The most fearful slaughter was done on both sides. At times the Britons would have the upper hand, then the Romans would gain it.

In the end, as the battle continued between them, Morvid, the Earl of Gloucester, moved up at the double with his division, which, as I have told you, had been posted higher up in the hills. He attacked the enemy in the rear, when they were expecting nothing of the kind. His assault broke through their lines. As he moved forward he scattered them with tremendous slaughter. Many thousands of the Romans were killed. In the end, Lucius himself, their general, was brought to bay in the midst of his troops. He fell dead, pierced through by an unknown hand. The Britons followed up their advantage and finally won the day, but only after a supreme effort.

The Romans were scattered. In their terror some fled to out-of-the-way spots and forest groves, others made their way to cities and towns, and all of them sought refuge in the places which seemed safest to them. The Britons pursued them as fast as they could go, putting them to death miserably, taking them prisoner and plundering them: this the more easily as most of them voluntarily held out their hands to be bound, like so many women, in the hope of prolonging their lives a little. All this was ordained by divine providence. Just as in times gone by the ancestors of the Romans had harassed the forefathers of the Britons with their unjust oppressions, so now did the Britons make every effort to pro-

[x.12]

fect their own freedom, which the Romans were trying to take away from them, by refusing the tribute which was wrongly demanded of them.

As soon as victory was assured, Arthur ordered the bodies of his leaders to be separated from the carcasses of the enemy. Once they were gathered together, he had these bodies prepared for burial with royal pomp and then they were carried to the abbeys of their own native districts and interred there with great honour. Bedevere the Cup-bearer was borne, with loud lamentations, by the Neustrians to Bayeux, his own city, which his grandfather Bedevere I had founded. There he was laid to rest with all honour, beside a wall in a certain cemetery in the southern quarter of the city. Kay, who was mortally wounded, was carried away to Chimon, the town which he himself had built. Not long afterwards he died from his wound. As was fitting for a Duke of the Angevins, he was buried in a certain wood belonging to a convent of hermits not far from that town. Holdin, the Duke of the Ruteni, was carried to Flanders and laid to rest in his own city of Théroouanne. At Arthur's command, the rest of the leaders and princes were borne to abbeys in the vicinity. He took pity on his enemies and told the local inhabitants to bury them. He ordered the body of Lucius to be carried to the Senate, with a message that no other tribute could be expected from Britain.

Arthur spent the following winter in this same locality and found time to subdue the cities of the Allobroges. When summer came, he made ready to set out for Rome, and was already beginning to make his way through the mountains when the news was brought to him that his nephew Mordred, in whose care he had left Britain, had placed the crown upon his own head. What is more, this treacherous tyrant was living adulterously and out of wedlock with Queen Guinevere, who had broken the vows of her earlier marriage.

About this particular matter, most noble Duke, Geoffrey of Menmouth prefers to say nothing. He will, however, in his own

poor style and without wasting words, describe the battle which our most famous King fought against his nephew, once he had returned to Britain after his victory; for that he found in the British treatise already referred to. He heard it, too, from Walter of Oxford, a man most learned in all branches of history.

As soon as the bad news of this flagrant crime had reached his ears, Arthur immediately cancelled the attack which he had planned to make on Leo, the Emperor of the Romans. He sent Hoel, the leader of the Bretons, with an army of Gauls, to restore peace in those parts; and then without more ado he himself set off for Britain, accompanied only by the island kings and their troops. That most infamous traitor Mordred, about whom I have told you, had sent Chelric, the leader of the Saxons, to Germany, to conscript as many troops as possible there, and to return as quickly as he could with those whom he was to persuade to join him. Mordred had made an agreement with Chelric that he would give him that part of the island which stretched from the River Humber to Scotland and all that Hengist and Horsa had held in Kent in Vortigern's day. In obedience to Mordred's command, Chelric landed with eight hundred ships filled with armed pagans. A treaty was agreed to and Chelric pledged his obedience to the traitor Mordred as if to the King. Mordred had brought the Scots, Picts and Irish into his alliance, with anyone else whom he knew to be filled with hatred for his uncle. In all, the insurgents were about eighty thousand in number, some of them pagans and some Christians.

Surrounded by this enormous army, in which he placed his hope, Mordred marched to meet Arthur as soon as the latter landed at Richborough. In the battle which ensued Mordred inflicted great slaughter on those who were trying to land. Augustulus, the King of Albany, and Gawain, the King's nephew, died that day, together with many others too numerous to describe. Ywain, the son of Augustulus' brother Urian, succeeded him in the kingship; and in the wars which followed he became famous because of the many brave deeds which he accomplished. In the end, but only with

enormous difficulty, Arthur's men occupied the sea-shore. They drove Mordred and his army before them in flight and inflicted great slaughter on them in their turn. Profiting from their long experience in warfare, they drew up their troops most skillfully. They mixed their infantry with the cavalry and fought in such a way that when the line of foot-soldiers moved up to the attack, or was merely holding its position, the horse charged at an angle and did all that they could to break through the enemy lines and to force them to run away.

However, the Perjurer re-formed his army and so marched into Winchester on the following night. When this was announced to Queen Guinevere, she gave way to despair. She fled from York to the City of the Legions and there, in the church of Julius the Martyr, she took her vows among the nuns, promising to lead a chaste life.

Now that he had lost so many hundreds of his fellow-soldiers, Arthur was more angry than ever. He buried his dead and then marched on the third day to the city of Winchester and laid siege to his nephew who had taken refuge there. Mordred showed no sign of abandoning his plans. He gave his adherents every encouragement he could think of, and then marched out with his troops and drew them up ready for a pitched battle with his uncle. The fight began and immense slaughter was done on both sides. The losses were greater in Mordred's army and they forced him to fly once more in shame from the battle-field. He made no arrangements whatsoever for the burial of his dead, but fled as fast as ship could carry him, and made his way towards Cornwall.

Arthur was filled with great mental anguish by the fact that Mordred had escaped him so often. Without losing a moment, he followed him to that same locality, reaching the River Cambalam,

1. On 4 August 1960 I visited Camelford and walked along the River Camel as far as Slaughter Bridge. According to local legend the battle between Arthur and Mordred took place in the near-by water-meadow. On the bank of the Camel, where the stream had cut for itself a steep bluff overhung with hazel bushes, in a spot most difficult of access, I found an ancient

where Mordred was awaiting his arrival. Mordred was indeed the boldest of men and always the first to launch an attack. He immediately drew his troops up in battle order, determined as he was either to win or to die, rather than run away again as he had done in the past. From his total force of troops, about which I have told you, there still remained sixty thousand men under his command. From these he mustered six divisions, in each of which he placed six thousand, six hundred and sixty-six armed men. From those who were left over he formed one single division, and, when he had assigned leaders to each of the others, he placed this last division under his own command. As soon as they were all drawn up, he went round to encourage each of them in turn, promising them the possessions of their enemies if only they stood firm and were successful in battle.

On the other side, Arthur, too, was marshalling his army. He divided his men into nine divisions of infantry, each drawn up in a square, with a right and left wing. To each he appointed a commander. Then he exhorted them to kill these perjured villains and robbers who, at the request of one who had committed treason against him, the King, had been brought into the island from foreign parts to steal their lands from them. He told them, too, that this miscellaneous collection of barbarians, come from a variety of countries - raw recruits who were totally inexperienced in war - would be quite incapable of resisting valiant men like themselves, who were the veterans of many battles, provided

stone, 2' 1½" × 9' 5", with some partly-defaced lettering in mixed classical and rustic capitals. The stone was uneven and broken, and the letters were straggling and irregular, but the following fragment of an inscription was clearly to be deciphered: LATINI . . . HIC IACIT FILIVS M . . . AR . . . = possibly 'Latinus hic iacet filius Merlini Arturus'. In *Corpus Inscriptionum Insularum Celticarum*, R. A. S. Macalister, 1945, Vol. I, pp. 447-9, it is transcribed as LATINI IC IACIT FILIVS MAGARI, with an Ogham inscription LA[T]INI at the top end.

always that they made up their minds to attack boldly and to fight like men.

While the two commanders were encouraging their men in this way in both the armies; the lines of battle suddenly met, combat was joined, and they all strove with might and main to deal each other as many blows as possible. It is heartrending to describe what slaughter was inflicted on both sides, how the dying groaned, and how great was the fury of those attacking. Everywhere men were receiving wounds themselves or inflicting them, dying or dealing out death. In the end, when they had passed much of the day in this way, Arthur, with a single division in which he had posted six thousand, six hundred and sixty-six men, charged at the squadron where he knew Mordred was. They hacked a way through with their swords and Arthur continued to advance, inflicting terrible slaughter as he went. It was at this point that the accursed traitor was killed and many thousands of his men with him.

However, the others did not take to flight simply because Mordred was dead. They massed together from all over the battlefield and did their utmost to stand their ground with all the courage at their command. The battle which was now joined between them was fiercer than ever, for almost all the leaders on both sides were present and rushed into the fight at the head of their troops. On Mordred's side there fell Chelric, Elaf, Egbrict and Bruning, all of them Saxons; the Irishmen Gillapatric, Gillasel and Gillarvus; and the Scots and Picts, with nearly everyone in command of them. On Arthur's side there died Odbrict, King of Norway; Aschil, King of Denmark; Cador Limenich; and Cassivelanus, with many thousands of the King's troops, some of them Britons, others from the various peoples he had brought with him. Arthur himself, our renowned King, was mortally wounded and was carried off to the Isle of Avalon, so that his wounds might be attended to. He handed the crown of Britain over to his cousin Constantine, the son of Cador Duke of Cornwall: this in the year 542 after our Lord's Incarnation.