

## ESSAY

on

# Merlin the Magician.

### I.

Among the records of the Middle Ages, that is to say from the middle of the 12<sup>th</sup> to the same period of the 13<sup>th</sup> Centuries — are to be found many valuable and interesting Poetical Legends, the whole of which, whether productions of the North or South of Europe animated by the adventurous character of the period, breathe alike the true spirit of chivalrous and romantic enterprise and seem to possess too many properties of affinity to leave a doubt as to their having had either one common origin, or been propagated from one Country to the other. It is certain that fabulous tales and fictitious narratives, embodying more or less of the marvellous in their construction and agencies, were already known to the Greeks <sup>1)</sup> at a very early period and subsequently adopted from them by the Romans; but is far more difficult to state with an equal degree of certainty, where modern Romance took its rise and from whence it spread its power over all the different nations of the Middle Ages. The subject is interesting and curious and has not escaped the attention of the learned, but being involved in much darkness the origin of Romantical Poetry has been attributed with some shew of authority to

<sup>1)</sup> See Ritson Ancient english metrical Romances I. 5.

three sources altogether different from each other. To the Scandinavians<sup>1)</sup>, the Arabians<sup>2)</sup>, the Provençals<sup>3)</sup> has the merit been successively accorded, but Ritson in his 'Ancient English Metrical Romances', and Dunlop in his 'History of Fiction' have successfully ridiculed the three several systems and proved that considerable misapprehension had arisen from their supporters having blended elements which are totally unconnected. Thus the arbitrary fiction of Romance (viz: the employment of supernatural agencies, the embellishment of dragons etc.) the spirit of enterprise which pervades the tales of chivalry and the historical materials were not contra-distinguished, but treated as a whole leading to great confusion. Nevertheless the opinion they themselves advanced that the origin of Romance must be sought in the different Creeds and faiths prevailing, is not quite sufficient to satisfy<sup>4)</sup> us on this point; but the question has been more ably answered in our own times by Dr. J. G. T. Grässe, who in his standard work:<sup>5)</sup> »Die großen Sagenkreise des Mittelalters (Dresden 1842)« says<sup>6)</sup>, that in all times the grand exploits of courageous and noble heroes have been praised and commemorated by the grateful contemporaries and posterity. Nor is it at all astonishing, that the poets of the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries, hardy and enterprising, of noble rank and endowed with a rich and ardent fancy, severely felt the decline of the ebbing spirit of chivalry and being dissatisfied with their own insignificance would often be tempted to indemnify themselves by a retrospective warfare on their enemies. The current versions of the people were embodied and tradition assisting made them prodigal in assigning victories to their heroic ancestors<sup>7)</sup>. Thus they narrated with peculiar fondness the chivalric exploits of Charles the Great and with even more favor those which were performed in the consolidation of the Saxon power

<sup>1)</sup> Percy Reliques of ancient English poetry. L. 1839. p. 186.

<sup>2)</sup> Warton hist. of Eng. Poetry. 1774. I. 1.

<sup>3)</sup> Archaeologia Brit. T. XII. p. 54.

<sup>4)</sup> Ritson Anc. Metr. Rom I. p. XXXII. It seems highly probable, that the origin of Romance is to be sought in the different systems of superstition which have from time to time prevailed, whether pagan or christian. The gods of the ancient heathens and the saints of the modern christians, are the same sort of imaginary beings, who alternately give existence to romances and receive it from them. The legends of the one and the fables of the others have been, constantly, fabricated for the same purpose and with the same view: the promotion of fanaticism, which, being mere illusion, can only be excited or supported by romance.

<sup>5)</sup> The book forms a part of Dr. Grässe's excellent Lehrbuch einer allgemeinen Literaturgeschichte aller bekannten Völker der Welt. Dresden bei Arnold.

<sup>6)</sup> pag. 2.

<sup>7)</sup> G. Ellis specimens of early English Poetry I. 133.

in England. Their feelings and interests were interwoven with the subject, England was nearer and better known to them and they had full scope in the description of their ancestors' exploits, since those who in former ages contested the battle could now no longer be brought forward to claim the victory. The Era was one particularly rich in invention and ideal painting and as superstition at the same time universally prevailed that sort of imaginary beings came into existence, which are peculiar to the fictitious compositions of the Middle Ages. It is true that some elements of Scandinavian and Arabian poetry are to be met with in these fabulous narratives, but this is fairly attributable to the individual character of the respective composers whose greater or less acquaintance with classic literature induced them to allude thereto.

The poetical character of the Cymry must be judged by a standard essentially different from that of other nations. Their first and spontaneous effusions, indeed, in a primaeval state of society, must have been of a corresponding nature with those of other countries, alike simple in their themes and equally unconstrained in their flight. But there is the strongest ground for believing, foreign as well as native<sup>1)</sup>, that the institution of Bardism had, in very early times, an important influence on the poetry of this people. Governed by the rules of that singular system, and impregnated with its mystical doctrines, the ancient strains of the Cymry, as may be proved by some still extant, must have exhibited an extraordinary variance from those of most other nations. Historical, institutional, or aphoristical love became the general themes of the bard: and in his treatment of these he was bound to remember, that he belonged to an order, to whose regulations the effusions of his muse, as well as the actions of his life were accountable. But what gave to the bardic lays their most prominent, as well as their most honourable distinction was that adherence to truth<sup>2)</sup> by which as a vital principle of the bardic institution they were invariably guided. Hence it is that in matters of history the Welsh bards have ever been consulted as the faithful chronicles of their times: while by a singular contrast the oldest prose-compositions of the country are, for the most part, the mere vehicles of romance and

<sup>1)</sup> Among the classical authorities on this point we find the names of Diodorus, Ammianus, Athenaeus, Strabo, Caesar, Pliny and Lucan: and of the native testimonies, which are numerous, the most important are the institutional and Poetical Triads. See the Cambro Britain. Febr. 1820.

<sup>2)</sup> „Y Gwir yn erbyn y Byd“ or „the Truth against the world,“ was the motto of the old Bardic or Druidical Order. And „pure truth“ is reckoned in the Poetical Triads as one of the „three indispensable purities of poetry.



fiction. This inversion of the general order of writing is perhaps peculiar to Wales. Besides the ancient poetry of the Welsh is distinguished by the singular features of its construction. The oriental descent of the Welsh tongue has given to its poetry the first and most remarkable distinction from that of other European languages. The copious significance of its simple terms, and the facilities, presented in the combinations of these, have still enhanced that distinction by the various and novel sources of rhythmical harmony, which they have opened. So it possesses a richer store of metres, than was, perhaps, ever known to any other, ancient or modern: and, depending as these all do on the principle of *cynghanedd*, or literal consonancy, confined to Welsh prosody, they naturally give a strange and singular air to the strains which they regulate. Add to all this, that the grammatical structure of the language admits of a brevity and terseness of expression, which can hardly be conceived from any examples to be drawn from other sources, at least in the present day!

In Wales, the country of the ancient Bards, poetry was encouraged and flourishing at a very early period and we find the favourite subject of their many eulogies was king Arthur, whose adventures were thus celebrated throughout the whole of Europe until they died away with the last remnants of chivalry. But after king Arthur, Merlin the Magician met with particular esteem, and even in England, at a very early period, we find the story of Merlin quite current and familiar as it afterwards became in most of the countries of Europe. His prophecies were regarded with great veneration and sage historians are often found referring to the unfathomable knowledge and wisdom of that Apocalypse.

When by the efforts of Garmon d' Auxerre (Germanus) and Cadwan (Lupus) the Druids had been subdued and their power and influence irrecoverably destroyed, three bards undertook to collect the remains of the ancient national faith and in this manner preserved the sole record of their heathenish doctrines. Taliessin, a kind of a Welsh Orpheus <sup>1)</sup> is said to have written about the year 540 *Acta regis Arthuri* and there are still extant many songs and fragments which have been ascribed to his pen. Mr. Turner in his *Vindication of the Welsh bards* has been successful in establishing the genuineness of these Ancient British poems; but notwithstanding all that he advances, Taliessin appears rather <sup>2)</sup> a per-

<sup>1)</sup> See Nennius ed. Stephenson p. 52, and Turner's *Vindication of the genuineness of the ancient british poems of Aneurin, Taliessin, Llywarch-Hen and Merdhin.* Lond. 1803.

<sup>2)</sup> See Davies *Mythol.*



sonification of the whole priesthood than an individual minstrel of a fabulous origin.

Besides Taliessin the two Merlins strenuously exerted themselves in upholding and promoting the interests of the Bards. Their several deeds have often been confounded and misplaced although Galfredus Monemutensis in his *Hist. reg. Brit.* VI. c. 17 et 18 has very carefully distinguished them, and in 'Radulfi Higdeni Polichronicon' we find a metrical description of Wales which contains likewise the following account of the two Merlins:

Ad Nevyn in North-Wallia  
 Est insula permodica  
 Quae Bardiscia dicitur.  
 A monachis incolitur  
 Ubi tam diu vivitur  
 Quod senior praemoritur,  
 Ibi Merlinus conditur  
 Silvestris, ut asseritur.  
 Duo fuerunt igitur  
 Merlini, ut conjicitur:  
 Unus dictus Ambrosius  
 Est incubo progenitus,  
 Ad Kaermerthyn Demeciae,  
 Sub Vortigerni tempore,  
 Qui sua vaticinia  
 Proflavit in Snawdonia;  
 Ad ortum omnis Coneway  
 Ad clivum montis Eryry.  
 Duas Embreys, ut comperi  
 Sonat collem Ambrosii.  
 Ad ripam quando regulas  
 Vortiger sedit anxius.  
 Est alter de Albania  
 Merlinus, quae nunc Scotia;  
 Repertus est binominus  
 Silvestris Caledonius,  
 A Silva Caledonia  
 Quae prompsit vaticinia.  
 Silvestris dicitur ideo  
 Quod consistens in proelio,  
 Monstrum videns in aere  
 Monte coepit excedere,  
 Ad silvam tendens propere,  
 Arthuri regis tempore.  
 Prophetavit apertius  
 Quam Merlinus Ambrosius. \*)

The second Merlin (Merddin Wylt or Merlinus Caledonius or Silvaticus — the author of some Druidical poems still in existence) is less known as a Bard or prophet than his per-

\*) See Britannia after the Romans; being an attempt to illustrate the religious revolutions of that province in the 5<sup>th</sup> and succeeding centuries. Lond. 1836. (Cymreiggiddion Society.)

decessor, his chief exertions having been directed to maintain what Merlin Ambrosius, the Magician, had established. This latter generally called Merddin bardd Emrys Wledig was born at Carmarthen (?) — the city of 10,000 warriors — or at Bassaleg<sup>1)</sup> in the fifth century and was most probably the son of a Roman soldier and a British Princess, but according to the fable begotten by a devil (Incubus) upon the beautiful daughter of the king of Demetia (South Wales). Enjoying the greatest reputation for his good conduct, well versed in mathematics and natural philosophy he became from the year 480 endeared to four kings successively viz: Vortigern, Ambrosius, Uter-Pewthragon and Arthus and it was by his advice that the order of the Round Table was established. He died on the island of Bradsey, but following the fable like Samuel he leaves his grave for a time to prophecy regarding the fate of England; he was probably the author of those prophecies which stimulated the Welsh to a struggle for their rights, until they were amalgamated with those of England by the union. His fame has pervaded the gloom of barbarous ages and his mighty magic adorned the tales of romances, and given splendour to theatric exhibitions, and when every abatement is made for the extravagance of popular opinion, enough will remain to make it credible, that one, whose name has been so transmitted, must have been a man of no common endowments.<sup>2)</sup>

About the beginning of the 12<sup>th</sup> century Gualter (Walter Calenius), archdeacon of Oxford<sup>3)</sup> travelling through

<sup>1)</sup> The place of his birth is said in Welsh history to have been Carmarthen (so called from *Caer* and *Myrdd*); but I am induced to believe that the name and its derivation have been substituted by a mistake of Geoffrey of Monmouth's Carleon. Nennius says, that Merlin was born: „In campo Electi,“ that is „in the field of battle,“ or, „Camp of Electus.“ Now the Welsh for 'Campus Electi' would be 'maes Elect'; and not far from Carleon there is a village called in Welsh 'Maesaleg', and commonly at present 'Bassaleg'. On a comparison of these names, the true reading of Nennius would be: „In campo Allecti,“ that is, „In the camp or field of battle of Alectus,“ the Roman general; and this being the birth-place of Merlin according to Nennius, the city of ten thousand must, necessarily, have been 'Carleon', in this instance. The mistake of Geoffrey may have been caused by an explanation of the word 'lleon', that is, legion, in his original. It may now on these circumstances, be assumed, that the birth-place of this celebrated character was Bassaleg in Monmouthshire; and not, as the general opinion has prevailed, Carmarthen. (Nennius says c. 42. In regione quae vocatur Glevising! It is in the hundred of Gwaunllwg, of which Glevising is, perhaps, the error of the copyist.) See P. Roberts. *The Cambrian Popular Antiquities*. Lond. 1815. p. 58.

<sup>2)</sup> See Roberts *Camb. Pop. Antiq.* p. 80.

<sup>3)</sup> See G. Monm. *Hist. reg. Brit.* I. 1.

France discovered in Armorica an ancient chronicle written in the British or Armorican tongue and requested Geoffrey of Monmouth, a learned Welsh Benedictine Monk, to translate it into Latin. This book was entitled 'Brut-y-Brenhined yn is Pridain' or the History of the kings of Great Britain and which in its Welsh copy has been generally attributed to a certain Tyssilio. Geoffrey executed his task with tolerable accuracy, but not without many interpolations, as is proved by comparing his version with the original which has been published in the Myvyrian Archaeology of Wales (Lond. 1801), or with the literal translation made by P. Roberts (Lond. 1801). As for the original Mr. Warton <sup>1)</sup> seems inclined to think that the work consisted of fables thrown out by different rhapsodists on several occasions, which were afterwards collected and digested into an entire history, with the probable addition of new embellishments and decorations of fancy by the compiler, who was possibly one of the professed bards or rather poetical historians of Armorica or Basse-Bretagne, and in this state it may have fallen into the hands of Geoffrey of Monmouth. Besides the translator does not hesitate to confess that „he took some part of his account of king Arthur's achievements from the mouth of his friend Gualter, who could have known little more than the traditions he had heard in Armorica or which at that time might have been popular in Wales. This work of Geoffrey of Monmouth has been the source of incident for all the different romances and fabulous narratives which have been written on the subject of the St. Graal and the Round Table and respecting <sup>2)</sup> the extraordinary person and adventures of king Arthur <sup>3)</sup> and in these after the Monarch himself none occupies a more prominent position than Merlin, the Magician.

The romance of Merlin is said to have been composed by Robert de Borron <sup>4)</sup> in the old french, a language so remarkable for its beauty; he lived about the reign of Henry II. and can lay but very little claim to originality, for the greatest part of the fable is contained in the work of Geoffrey of

<sup>1)</sup> See Warton's History of English Poetry I. p. 10.

<sup>2)</sup> Nennius in ch. 40—44 gives a very circumstantial account of Merlin differing very little from that which it has been amalgamated with by the romantic writers.

<sup>3)</sup> The Britons settled in Wales, Cornwall and Bretagne, were distinguished at this time on account of the numberless and fanciful legends which they possessed — a traditionary kind of literature resembling that which has since been found amongst the kindred people of the Scottish Highlands. For centuries past, Europe had been supplied with tale and fable from the teeming fountain of Bretagne.

<sup>4)</sup> See Paulin. Paris I. I. T. I. p. 122.



Monmouth already noticed, from <sup>1)</sup> which it was transferred into the Romance through the medium of the Brut a metrical version of that fabulous history written by Wace. By a manuscript <sup>2)</sup> however still extant in the royal Library of Paris it is stated, that a certain Richard translated it in the year 1272 by order of the Emperor Frederick. Nevertheless nearly all authorelative evidence goes to prove that Robert de Borron was the author without ever mentioning Richard's co-operation. Antonio Tedeschi translated the Romance of Merlin from the French into Italian: *Incomincia el primo libro de la historia de Merlino divisa in VI libri neliquali si describe primo la nativita di esso Merlino: et la vita: et poi molte pphetie lequle lui fece scrivere a piu persone.* Venezia 1480. (In the first edition of this work it is stated that the Romance had already been translated by a certain Zorzi in the year 1379, but no farther traces of this book are now to be found). It has been twice translated into Spanish under the title: 1) *El baladro del sabio Merlin con sus profecias.* Burgos 1498 and 2) *Merlin y demanda del Santo Grial.* Sevilla 1500. The old english poetical Romance of Merlin, specimens of which are contained in Mr. Ellis' famous book <sup>3)</sup> is quite original. William Rowley introduced the subject to the stage under title of „The birth of Merlin. Lond. 1662 which has latterly been translated into German by L. Tieck in his: »Shakespeare's Vorstufe« II. 219. In a modern shape the romance has been published in German by Fr. v. Schlegel in his »Sammlung romantischer Dichtungen« 1 Bb. (1804.) The ancient french editions: — *Le premier et le second livres avec les propheties de Merlin.* Paris 1498 and 1528 — have been put into modern french by M. Boulard in his work: *Le roman de Merlin l'enchanteur, remis en bon français.* Paris 1797.

The prophecies of Merlin, all embodied in the work of Geoffrey of Monmouth were highly esteemed and even during the wars of the Roses were referred to by the historians and successively accommodated by the minstrel poets to the politics of their own time <sup>4)</sup>. They found in them nothing dissonant, incongruous or absurd nor anything foreign or averse from truth, and being moreover persuaded that the Almighty had imparted to Merlin the words which he spoke to the people concerning those things which should come to pass, they interpreted them, as events arose, after their own fashion in

<sup>1)</sup> See Dunlop's History of Fiction I. 210.

<sup>2)</sup> T. I. p. 123. 129. II. 343. Paulin.

<sup>3)</sup> Specimens of early English poetry. The abstract was made from a transcript of the M. S. No. 15 in the library of Lincoln's Inn, and some deficiencies were afterwards supplied from the more ancient and perfect copy in the Auchinleck M. S. by W. Scott.

<sup>4)</sup> See: Wynhyn de Worde's treatise of Merlin.

order to make them accord with the truth of English chronology<sup>1)</sup>. On the other hand many were incredulous and would not believe anything to be true that was contained in the Romance of Merlin, regarding it as a mere fiction. In the celebrated book: „Anglica, Normannica, Hibernica, Cambrica a veteribus scripta e bibliotheca Gulielmi Camdeni, (Francof. 1603, p. 817. 19.)“ we find a passage wherein the author mentions the birth of the prophet in the following manner: „Merlinus ipse natus est in Cambria, non ex incubo daemone (ut inquit Baleus) sed ex furtiva venere cujusdam Romani consulis cum virgine Vestali (?) in Maridunensi monialium coenobio, ut in breviario apud Gildam habetur. Et quia in Britannorum gente rigida lex erat, si qua puella in patris domo ex scortatione esset gravida, ut de montis vertice mox precipitaretur, et ut ejus corruptor capite plecteretur: miris illusionibus et mendaciis hoc facinus celatum est, ne veniret in lucem.“ In the same manner Camden judges the prophecies saying (871, 33): „Exstant apud Galfridum Histor. Britannicae libro IV Merlini vaticinia, obscura quidem illa et nihil certi continentia, quae vel antequam eveniant, sperare, vel cum evenierint promissa, vera audeas affirmare. Praeterea ita composita sunt, ut eadem ad multa diversarum rerum eventa sensibus ambiguis et multiplicibus circumflectere quis possit. Et quamquam multi his et ejusmodi imposturis delusi et decepti perierint: tamen hominum credulorum tanta est insania, ut quae non intelligant, quovis sacramento, vera esse contendere non dubitent: nec in manifesto interim deprehensi mendacio, se coargui patiantur. Ea est humani ingenii vanitas et stultitia cum a vera divini verbi regula deflexerit.“

We shall now proceed to the Romance itself, the contents of which will perhaps best explain, how Merlin became so popular a character that his sayings resounded from mouth to mouth and ear to ear, each word an oracle, for

„Merlin well verst in many an hidden spell  
His Countries Omen did long since foretell,  
Grac' d in his time by sundry kings he was,  
And all that he predicted came to passe.“

<sup>1)</sup> The life of Merlin, surnamed Ambrosius. His prophecies and Predictions interpreted, and their truth made good by our English Annals, being a chronologicall history of all the kings and memorable passages of his kingdome from Brute to the reigne of our Royall Sovereigne king Charles, by Th. Heywood. Lond. 1641.

## II.

**Merlin the Magician.**

(The Romaunt.)

The Infernal Demons alarmed at the number of victims, which since the resurrection of our blessed Lord Jesus daily escaped their fangs, held a council of war. „Who is that man, cried one fearfully, that has broken the doors of Hell and to whose power we can offer no resistance?“ Then answered another: „He is without fault or blemish, for according to the will of the Almighty was he conceived by the Holy Ghost and born of a virgin. Let us therefore in like manner devise means to form a human being after our own likeness.“

It was then resolved to send a demon upon earth to beget in some virgin a child imbued with their own power and nature to act as their vicegerent amongst men and thus counteract the great plan laid down by our Lord for the Salvation of mankind. The scheme devised was forthwith executed and the Devil (Incubus) after having ruthlessly destroyed all the family connections of a beautiful and virtuous damsel attached himself in the shape of a fantastic spirit and induced her to conceive a male child that immediately after birth was hurried to the baptismal font and received after his grandfather the name of Merlin. By the strict Laws then enforced in the country the mother would most certainly have suffered death for her crime, had she not been previously celebrated for her innocence and spotless virtue, and it was only at the earnest entreaties of father Blasius (Blaise), a pious hermit to whom she had confessed and detailed the whole of her misery, that the trial was stopped until some time after the birth of her child. However defiled in body the soul of the virgin had not been seduced, and true to her better feelings, she was enabled by divine assistance to frustrate all the hopes of the Demons when on the very verge of completion; for she had recommended herself to the protection of the Holy Trinity and, full of faith in the salvation through our Lord, humbly besought in her prayers the assistance of the Almighty; when by the intercession of the Holy Church, after true repentance and the confession of her faults, she was favored with perfect absolution and remission of her sins, and ever after followed fervently and religiously the commandments of her God. Merlin — a prodigy even at his birth — was brought forth a tall boy, covered with hair over the whole surface of his body so that he frightened all the women who were then in attendance and very soon began to talk and console his Mother's heavy grief „Fear not,“ said he, „you shall not die for my sake!“ From



his father he inherited the knowledge of past and present events so that he knew whatever had happened or was in existence, and through his mother's piety and the Baptism sanctified by the Holy Ghost he had become endowed with the gift of futurity; and thus only his body remained subject to his fantastic father, but his soul and understanding were devoted to God who had mercy upon him and most graciously accorded in his need powers more wonderful than those allotted to any other human being.

The mother had been kept confined in a tower until the youth was about eighteen months old, when her trial took place and Merlin having been allowed to address the judges displayed in his several speeches such extraordinary skill and prescience, developping the most hidden secrets with art and altogether conducting the defence in so wonderful a manner, that she was proclaimed innocent and immediately set at liberty. Now father Blasius, being a pious and learned Ecclesiastic exhorted Merlin to inform him of the cause and meaning of all these wonderful events; for their supernatural character did not escape his observation, — when the latter replied to him: „The more I speak unto you, the more you will be astonished; go now, take a book and note down whatsoever I direct you to record; this book will be of much service to posterity and will preserve many from sinful trespasses.“ Blasius assented but pledged Merlin to swear, that it should contain nothing contrary to the blessed Gospel of our Lord. Merlin then told him many things of the holy friendship that existed between the Saviour and Joseph of Arimathea — of Adulam, of de Perron and his companions and many more so that father Blasius was struck with astonishment at the marvellous tales that were told him and he continued day by day writing unceasingly and unwearied, when at length Merlin stopped and told him: „We shall be interrupted in our holy task, for there come some persons from the king who have sworn to take me, — and after having killed me on the way to present my blood as an offering at his throne; but when they have heard me they will do me no harm.“

Now Vortigern reigned at this time in Britain, having usurped the crown after the following manner. On the death of Constantine he took Constantine his son from the monastery and caused him to be proclaimed king, well judging from his easy simple habits and ignorance of the world that such a Monarch would be well satisfied with the name, leaving to his own energy and activity the sovereign power in all state affairs. The result justified his anticipations; but Vortigern unsated with this extent of power coveted himself the Diadem and for the attainment of his unhallowed purpose, gradually surrounded himself with a strong guard of Picts and Scots

whom by bribery and promises he so attached to his own person that they soon did not hesitate to declare, that their chief merited the Crown better than the king himself. Still farther to ingratiate themselves with their new master an attack was planned which proved but too successful, and they returned from the palace bearing the king's head as a present to their master.

Vortigern made a great show of sorrow in order to induce the people to believe that he had no hand in the matter and according to the laws of the Country the murderers were by his orders condemned and afterwards beheaded. Nevertheless the Nobles attached to the king's interest and those who had been companions with his younger brothers Aurelius Ambrosius and Uter Pendragon (Pewthragon) dreading the cruelty of Vortigern fled with their Princes into Little Britain.

All obstacles being thus removed Vortigern was elected king by unanimous consent, but after his ascension to the throne he soon became so proud, cruel and disdainful towards his subjects, that much murmuring and dissatisfaction prevailed and he ceased to enjoy tranquillity. Irritated by the rumoured return of the late king's brothers and the threatening dangers that day by day sprung up around him he retired to Wales in order to prepare a fortress in time of need<sup>1)</sup>. Here upon the hill Clorianus on the West side of the river Grana he commenced a Castle to be called Generon or Gwayneren. When the hill was dug and the foundation laid all the stones which were put in the trench sunk down and were no more seen although the ground was not in the least swampy. Again and again like efforts were made, but all in vain. So the king vexed and irritated summoned his wizards and Astrologers to explain to him the meaning of this prodigy, when after a long consultation and the casting of many horoscopes having discovered, that their lives were in imminent danger from a child that had lately come into the world without the intervention of a mortal father, they returned their answer to the king: „The stones of the new castle can never be laid together unless they be cemented with the blood<sup>2)</sup> of a child who has had no „human father.“

<sup>1)</sup> Duped by his Saxon allies and hated for his attachment to the Saxons, dreading the effects which the just irritation of his own indignant people after the treacherous massacre of the British chiefs at Stonehenge might produce, he afterwards fled to the recesses of Snowdon for security; and probably also, as neither the influence nor the credit of the Druids was extinct, with a hope of engaging them in his favour.

<sup>2)</sup> Dr. Jamieson in his „History of the Culdees,“ relates several traditional anecdotes, from which it seems, that the sacrifice of a human victim was thought by the Druids a necessary propitiation, when the commencement of an undertaking was not successful.

The king was satisfied with the answer and after having dismissed his soothsayers sent out messengers in search of the wonderful child. After many fruitless attempts they at length found Merlin at Caermarthen amongst a number of lads and having learnt somewhat of his wonderful nativity brought him and his mother into the presence of the king, not venturing to kill him because of the marvellous things he told them in the way. At the audience thus obtained Merlin and his mother told the king all they knew respecting themselves, and the impression the Magician made upon the Monarch was so deep, that the king, as the annalist informs us, began to apprehend strange promising things from his aspect. He noticed a quick and piercing eye<sup>1)</sup>, an open and gracious countenance and in his youthful face withall a kind of austerity and supercilious gravity that persuaded him, his blood was too noble to be soon mingled with the dust and rubbish of the earth. Instead of ordering, therefore, his death he took him into his Councils and after having explained his desire to build this castle and the strangely insuperable impediments, which had hindered the work, as likewise what answer the assembly of bards and wizards had returned to him, he bade him to be of good cheer, for he prized his life above ten such citadels, although erected and perfected with all the cost and magnificence that human art or fancy could devise.

Then Merlin disclosed to the king the secrets of nature saying, that in the bosom of the hill was a vast Lake, in the bottom of which were two hollow rocks of stone containing two horrible dragons fast asleep. The Lake was found as described and sluices having been cut the king assembled his knights to witness the encounter about to take place between the two Dragons; when, the waters having been drained off suddenly were beheld the two dragons issuing from their several habitations, the one white and the other red. A horrible encounter ensued which was long and bloodily contested; but at the end to the great amazement of the whole assembly the White Dragon overcame the Red. The king thereupon demanded of Merlin the portent of this miraculous exhibition, when he at first declined an answer to the request, but after long and earnest entreaties the following day uttering a deep sigh and in a prophetic spirit he said:

„Woe's me for the red Dragon, for alach,  
The time is come, he hasteth to his mach:  
The bloody Serpent, (yet whose Souls are white)  
Implies that nation, on which thy delight  
Was lately sole-fixt (the Saxons) who as friends  
Came to thee first, but ayiming at shrewd ends

<sup>1)</sup> p. 53. ed. 1813.



They shall have power over the drooping red.  
 In which the British nation's figured:  
 Drive shall he them into caves, holes and dens,  
 To barren Mountains, and to moorish fens,  
 Hills shall remove to where the valleys stood,  
 And all the baths and brooks shall flow with blood.  
 The worship of the Holy God shall cease.  
 For in thilk dayes the Kirke shall have no peace:  
 The Panims (woe the while) shall get the day,  
 And with their Idols mawmetry beare sway,  
 And yet in fine shee that was so opprest,  
 Shall mount, and in the high rocks build her nest.  
 For out of Cornwall shall proceed a Bore,  
 Who shall the Kerk to pristine state restore,  
 Bow shall all Britaine to his kingly beck,  
 And tread he shall on the white Dragon's neck."

At this report the king was quite bewildered but Merlin continued muttering to himself:

„But well-away for thee, to Britaine deere,  
 For I fore-see thy sad disarter's neere."

A short time after this the Prophecy Merlin had made proved true: for the two sons of Constantine, Aurelius Ambrosius and Uter Pendragon, assisted by their kinsman Prudentius, king of Armorica, landing with a fine army at Totness were most joyfully received by the Britons and immediately marching towards Wales they besieged and slew Vortigern in his own Castle, where he had been born, with all his people.

After the death of Vortigern Hengist the commander of the Saxons retreated with his heathens to a castle but by frequent robberies sorely infested the country around. Uter Pendragon marched with his troops to besiege him, but all his efforts were rendered abortive from the strength of the position which the Saxons had taken up, until the king was advised by those counsellors who had witnessed the preceding feats of Merlin, to apply to him for advice and assistance. Thereupon the king sent forth messengers in search of the magician, warning them not to return until they had found him. As soon as the king had given this order Merlin knew it and told father Blasius, with whom he was at that time residing, that he should meet a king's messenger with whom he would go before his Majesty. He disguised himself as an old shepherd and went into the presence of the messengers; who sitting at dinner in a tavern scorned the wild looking man.

Respecting this interview the ancient Manuscript is both graphic and curious. It runs thus:

On a day, this messenger  
 Sette hem alle to the dinner:  
 A beggar then came in,  
 With a long berd on his chin,

A staff in his hand he hadde,  
 A shoone on his fete bade <sup>1)</sup>  
 With his schuldres he gan rove <sup>2)</sup>  
 And bade <sup>3)</sup>: „good for Gody's love.“  
 They said he scolde nought share  
 Bot strokes and bis mare. <sup>4)</sup>  
 The eld man said anon,  
 „Ye be nice <sup>5)</sup>, everich one,  
 „That sitten here and skorne me,  
 „On the king's nedes that schuld be,  
 „For to finde Merlin child!  
 „The barouns ben witless and wild,  
 „That senten men him to seche,  
 „That nought ne couthe knowleche!  
 „To-day he hath yow oft met;  
 „No knew ye him never the bet.  
 „Wendeth <sup>6)</sup> home by my rede <sup>7)</sup>  
 „For him to find ne shal ye spede,  
 „Biddeth him and the barouns five  
 They come and speken him blyve <sup>8)</sup>  
 And seggeth <sup>9)</sup>, Merlin will hem abide  
 In the forest here byside. <sup>10)</sup>

Merlin likewise added that they might tell the king and his counsellor („for all the others are dead,“ he said) that he would never be the master of the country until Hengist was killed, and if he, the king, wanted the advice of the Magician he must come himself, for otherwise he would never succeed. He then vanished from their sight. The messengers now returned to the king to acquaint him with all they had heard when they found that during their absence all the royal counsellors, save one had died. Pendagron therefore confiding the government to his brother Uter sought and at length met Merlin in the forest, who having adopted the disguise of a shepherd told him to go into the next town where he would find the magician. The king consented and found there a good-looking young man who apprized him that he was sent by Merlin, the same man, whom his Majesty had met in the forest. „You do not want the prophet now,“ said he, for Hengist has been slain by your brother's hand.“ — The king replied: „You tell me astonishing news, but I shall send messengers to ascertain whether it is true.“ — After the king had got intelligence of what had happened in his brother's camp Merlin came to him in his own character and said: „Now I shall be yours for ever and I will most faithfully assist you in all your enterprizes; I am Merlin whom you sought; I was the shepherd whom you met in the forest, I was the same messenger who brought you news from Merlin and who advised your brother to fight with

<sup>1)</sup> Perfect tense from „to abide“ <sup>2)</sup> shrug <sup>3)</sup> prayed <sup>4)</sup> disgrace  
<sup>5)</sup> foolish <sup>6)</sup> go <sup>7)</sup> advice <sup>8)</sup> presently <sup>9)</sup> say <sup>10)</sup> See Ellis' Spec.  
 of Early Eng. Poet. I. 245.

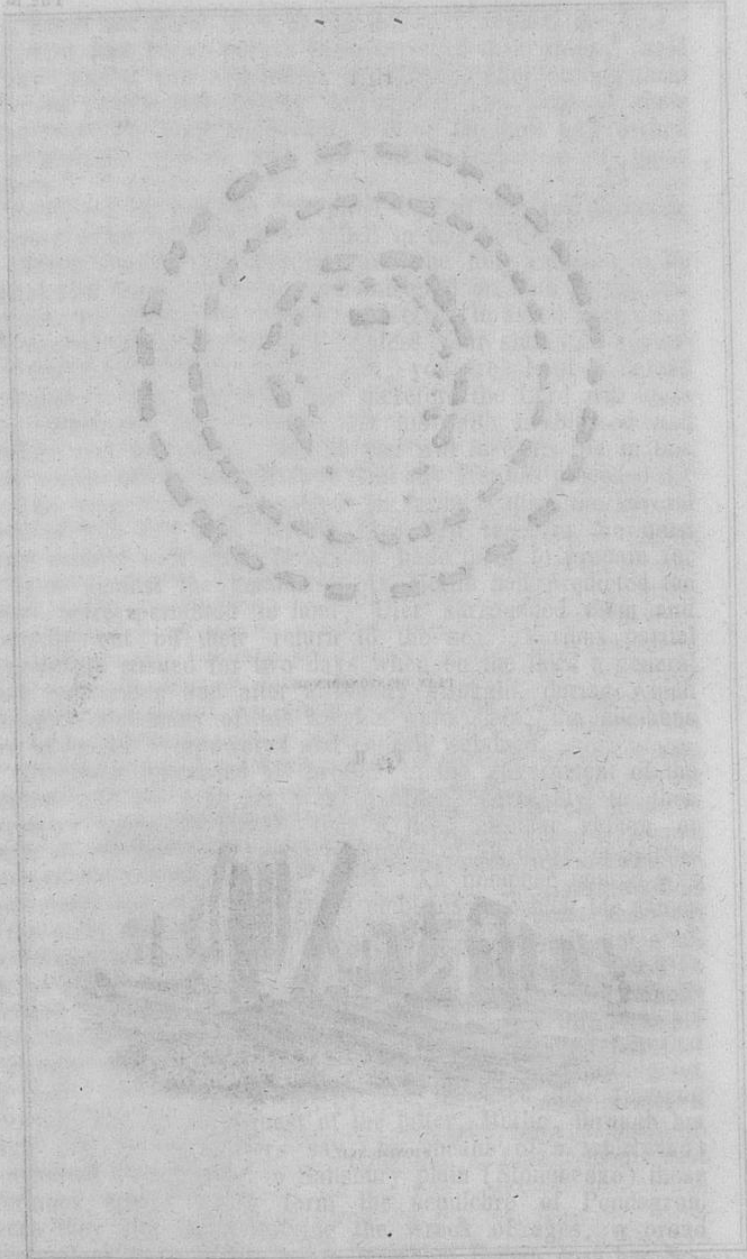
Hengist.“ — The king was very glad and questioned him concerning Hengist's death. Then Merlin told him, he had communicated to Uter, that Hengist's design was to fall upon him by night in a treacherous manner; that Uter forewarned and believing the statement awaited the traitor when the fight was bloody and obstinate, but after long conflict Uter's was the victory, for Hengist died by his hand. Merlin then left the king for awhile and returned to his friend Blasius who noted down several adventures, as we find them in his book.

Before his departure however Merlin had promised the king to meet him again on the 12<sup>th</sup> day in his brother's camp and knowing that Uter would try him, he presented himself in the disguise of a young page bringing good tidings from a beautiful and noble lady with whom Uter was then enamoured, whilst on the other side he appeared to the king in his usual form, and after having executed many pleasant fancies and humorous devices to amuse the Court he at last discovered himself to both, that he was one and the same, — Merlin the Magician.

The king being now in undisturbed possession of the middle part of Britain with all Cambria and Wales exerted himself to repair the ruined Piles in the country; he rebuilt many forts, castles and citadels that had been injured or destroyed, but especially the temples, which were much defaced by the pagan idolators, attracted his attention. He reconstructed such as had been cast down and caused divine service everywhere to be performed in them. He restored to his people their goods and reinstated them in the possession of which they had been despoiled by the enemy. But after some time the Saxons returned in great number and their troops threatened to annihilate all the good the Sovereign had effected for his people. Merlin advised the king to offer them a free passage through his dominions foreseeing that they would accept it as enabling them to leave the country without suffering harm. His suggestion was approved and accepted and the country for a long time happily enjoyed the full blessings of peace.

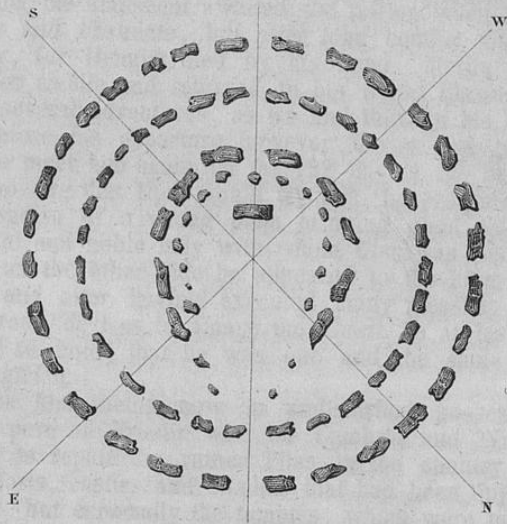
At this period the chronicle records many wonderful prognostications which were invariably fulfilled proving how plentifully Merlin was endued with the spirit of divination and how deserved his fame for a perfect knowledge of the occult sciences. One day he appeared before Pendagron and with many tears and deep sighs recalled to his Majesty's recollection the death of Hengist who was slain by Uter. „This heathenish commander,“ said he, „belonged to one of the noblest families among the Saxons, and all his friends and relatives have taken an oath not to lay down their arms until they have avenged his death and subdued our beloved country. — They will come to Salisbury in the month of June,“ he added.





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Fig. I.



PLAN OF STONEHENGE.

Fig. II.



STONEHENGE.

Lith. von C. W. Korf in Elberfeld.

„I will not allow them to get ashore!“ replied the king.

„You had better permit them to leave their ships,“ said Merlin, „and if you will follow my advice, after cutting them a way to return and having surrounded and pressed them during two days your endeavours will on the third be crowned by a glorious victory and the total extirpation of those heathens.“

„Tell us, if you can,“ replied one of the two brothers, „whether either of us will be killed in this battle?“

Merlin desired his symbols and the holy reliques to be brought and then after having administered an oath to the two brothers, by which they bound themselves to assist each other truly and faithfully, he said: „Confess your sins with repentance and take the holy Communion; you are about to defend Christianity against heathens and therefore the Lord will bless you. Whoever falls in battle for his faith is blessed and therefore fear not death. One of you will lose his life in this battle which will be more bloody than any that has preceded it.“

The king having assembled his army called the several chiefs to him and after having presented them in the most liberal manner with many favors he bade them to prepare for the battle against the heathens. As Merlin had predicted the Saxons were permitted to land, Uter surrounded them and effectually cut off their return to the sea. Various partial engagements ensued for two days when on the third a general attack was made and after a bloody struggle, during which Pendagron and many of his knights were slain, the heathens were at length overpowered and entirely subdued.

Uter now succeeded his brother in the government of the kingdom and his first act was to order, agreeably to then customary mode of burial, that a deep circular vallum or trench should be dug for the interment of all those christians who had been killed in the battle. An immense mound was then raised over them with stone emblems on which the names of the most distinguished knights and warriors were inscribed. His brother he caused to be laid down in the middle and over him he raised the largest single block of Stone that could be obtained, without name or inscription, well knowing that his noble deeds throughout all ages should be too well reported to require any. It is likewise affirmed, that in gratitude for the many favors shewn him by the deceased and reigning Monarch, and at the request of the latter, Merlin, through his magic art (the chroniclers say, by means of a whirlwind) transported from Ireland to Salisbury plain (Stonehenge) those enormous stones which form the sepulchre of Pendagron. There they still stand defying the wreck of ages, a proud memorial of that glorious battle in which Britain lost her Sovereign with so many of her valiant defenders! —



[Stonehenge, <sup>1)</sup> on Salisbury Plain, about seven miles from Salisbury and two miles to the west of Ambresbury, is certainly more artificial in its structure than Abury, and its construction may therefore be safely referred to a later date. Fig. I. is a restored plan of this Wonder of the West, as it may well be called. The larger circle is 105 feet in diameter, and between it and the interior smaller circle is a space of about 9 feet. Within this smaller circle, which is half the height (8 feet) of the exterior one, was a portion of an ellipsis formed by five groups of stone, to which Dr. Stukely has given the name of trilithons, because formed by two vertical and one horizontal stone: the former are from 17 to 18½ feet high, the middle trilithon being the highest. Within this ellipsis is another of single stones, half the height of the trilithons. The outer circle was crowned with a course of stones similar to an architrave or epistylion, the stones whereof were let into or joggled with one another by means of egg-shaped tenons formed out of the vertical blocks. The ellipsis was connected in a similar manner. Within the inner elliptical enclosure was a block 16 ft. long, 4 ft. broad, and 20 in thick. This has usually been called "the altar stone." Round the larger circle, at the distance of 100 ft., a vallum was formed about 52 ft. in width, so that the external dimensions of the work was a diameter of 420 ft. The vallum surrounding these sacred places seem to have been borrowed by the Canaanites in imitation of the enclosure with which Moses surrounded Mount Sinai, in order to prevent the multitude from approaching too near the sacred mysteries. The number of stones composing this monument is variously given. In the subjoined account we follow Dr. Stukely:

	Stones.
Great circle, vertical stones . . . . .	30
Epistylia . . . . .	30
Inner Circle . . . . .	40
Vertical stones of outer ellipsis . . . . .	10
Epistylia to them . . . . .	5
Inner ellipsis . . . . .	19
Altar . . . . .	1
Stones within vallum . . . . .	2
A large table stone . . . . .	1
Distant pillar . . . . .	1
Another stone, supposed to have been opposite the entrance . . . . .	1
Total . . . . .	140

<sup>1)</sup> See: Gwilt's Encyclopaedia of Architecture — and: The Apprentice and Trade's Weekly Register. Septbr. 1844. p. 52.

Northwards from Stonehenge, at a distance of a few hundred yards, is a large single stone, which, at the period of its being placed there, has been by some thought to have marked a meridian line from the centre of the circle.

Fig. II. is a view of the present state of this interesting ruin from the West. — ]

Then king Uter exerted himself to repair the damages inflicted on his people. It was now when peace and prosperity reigned throughout the land that Merlin reminded the king of the table which Joseph of Arimathea had formed in the desert and the benefits it had conferred on his people. He told him that this table with its one empty seat, left for Judas the traitor, had been so highly esteemed as to be called the Sangreal. „The holy vessel,“ <sup>1)</sup> he said, „which they had on their table, is now in the Occident and if you follow his worthy example by forming such a Society in the name of the Holy Trinity you will one day have occasion to rejoice at it.“ The king gladly assented to the proposal and Merlin immediately proceeded to Carlisle (Cardueil) to prepare the Round Table at which he seated fifty knights with one vacant place. The curiosity of the king being excited he enquired for whom the empty seat was destined. „During your lifetime,“ answered Merlin, „the man who shall one day take it, will yet be born, but his father will not know him. All I require is that you will assemble three times a year at Cardueil duly and solemnly to maintain the festivities of the Round Table. I now leave you for a time, but you will hear from me soon; farewell!“

Merlin went then direct to Northumberland to Father Blasius who noted down the several events in his book.

In the meantime the newly formed Round Table had produced a wonderful effect. All those knights who had been associated there felt so hearty an attachment to each other that although many had never met before, ere they parted they loved one another even as a father does his son. Mutual resolves were exchanged to defend one another most faithfully and they found themselves raised in their own and the general esteem. The vacant seat at the Table was not yet occupied, when one day a knight more earnest than the rest enquired of the king, why he did not fill that empty place? the latter answered, that Merlin had forbidden it; whereupon

<sup>1)</sup> See Dunlop's Hist. of Fiction I. 218. The vessel from which our Saviour was supposed to have drunk at the last supper and which was afterwards filled with the blood that flowed from the wounds with which he was pierced at the crucifixion. The early history of this relic, the quest of which is the most fertile source of adventures to the knights of the Round Table is related in the Romance of the St. Graal.

the knight laughing and ridiculing the magician, whom he pretended to be dead, besought the king's permission to take that place. Uter at length assented, but in the very moment that the knight essayed to seat himself, he sank down into the earth and was no more seen.

Shortly afterwards Merlin returned and reproached the king for his misdeed. „Beware,“ said he, „for the future, or you will be miserable, for know, that this place is of the highest importance, it is indeed the most worthy seat in the whole kingdom.“ Then the king expressing much contrition swore to observe his promise more faithfully for the future.

At the feast of Christmas, which the king kept at Cardueil with great pomp and magnificence and to which all the nobility with their wives and daughters were invited, came Yguerna, wife of the duke of Cornwall, the most lovely woman of that age. Her beauty and modest demeanour so enchanted the monarch that he became desperately enamoured of her and suffered much pain when the festival was over and the noble chieftains were about to return to their own castles. Lady Yguerna could not mistake the meaning of the looks and words which the king had addressed to her, but true to her plighted faith when the king at their second meeting renewed his proffers of affection she communicated all to her beloved Lord and he incensed with rage and jealousy, without the king's leave took his wife at the dawn of the day and with his peers secretly left Cardueil. When intelligence of his departure reached the king, he brooked not the indignity but sent forth messengers ordering his immediate return, as his council was required in matters of State — and threatening on pain of refusal to treat him as a rebel. But the Duke peremptorily declined to comply, whereupon the king collecting a strong army invaded the dukedom and took most of the towns and strongholds without much difficulty. Well aware of his inability to oppose so mighty a prince the Duke sent to Ireland for assistance and because he deemed it prudent not to hazard all in one venture he divided his forces leaving his wife Yguerna in his strong and impregnable castle of Tintayol with his best appointed and most experienced soldiers, whilst he himself went with the remainder into the strong fort of Dimilioch. Here he maintained himself during a siege of many days; for the king was advised by his Council of War to attack and subdue the duke first, since this accomplished it might not be necessary to besiege the other castle at all.

The king could not restrain his disappointment at the little progress made in the siege, when as he was one day sitting in his tent vexed and moodily meditating Merlin suddenly appeared before him and commiserating his misfortune bade him be of good cheer, for a happy issue awaited his exer-



tions; he then promised by magic art to transform him into the likeness of Gorlais, duke of Cornwall and so procure his admission into the castle of Tintayol. His ardent expectations were not long kept in suspense, for being disguised as aforesaid he immediately proceeded thither and was welcomed by the duchess of Cornwall as her liege lord and husband and their amorous connection produced to the world a second Hercules, viz. the illustrious Arthur <sup>1)</sup>).

Meanwhile duke Gorlais having got intelligence of the king's absence issued forth and made a most terrible assault upon the besiegers, but his hardy underprize was not crowned with success. He was received with equal bravery by the troops maintaining the siege and being outnumbered and overpowered was slain with nearly the whole of his soldiers, the castle was immediately entered, stripped and the greater part of it burnt down. Nevertheless some of the besieged escaped the cruel massacre and hurrying to the gates of Tintayol brought tidings of their sad disaster. The duchess was much dejected when she heard that the castle was taken and destroyed, but she comforted herself in reflecting on the safety of her lord and husband, and when the messengers beheld the king in the disguise of their master they blushed at the report they had made respecting his death.

The king rejoiced at the news he had heard and parting with Yguerna told her, that he would go to the camp and submit himself, trusting his gracious Sovereign would mercifully pardon a repentant subject, promising in the event of success that he would come back again in a few hours.

Soon as they had left the castle Merlin dissolved the spell and released the king from the charmed shape in which he had appeared before Yguerna and they returned into the camp, when he immediately ordered the body of duke Gorlais to be searched out, had it embalmed and treated with every mark of respect. He then wrote condoling letters to the duchess informing her of the issue of the battle and respectfully inviting her to the funeral of her late husband. But previously to this he had taken an oath, never to acquaint Yguerna of his former connection with her in the Castle in the disguise of her lord, and he had promised Merlin to confide the child that Yguerna might bear to his especial charge <sup>2)</sup>).

<sup>1)</sup> This deception has been evidently suggested by the classical story of Jupiter and Alcmena.

<sup>2)</sup> The anecdote of this intrigue is the fabrication of a later writer than Nennius, who does not state any imputation of Arthur's illegitimacy. Besides it was by the Welsh laws in the power of the father, by a public acknowledgement in presence of the heads of his family, to confer legitimacy on an otherwise illegitimate child.

After the usual period of mourning had expired the king renewed his advances to Yguerna and in the most earnest manner besought her to share the throne with him. She submitted the matter to her relatives and Councillors who duly considering the many perils a refusal might engender, and considering likewise that the Duke was now dead, and that the king to the extent of his power had made every honorable amends for the injury done him and had duly recorded his sorrow at the loss of so noble a chieftain; advised assent and they were accordingly shortly afterwards united amid much pomp and ceremony to the great joy of the whole Court.

Six months had elapsed since the wedding when Merlin appeared before the king and informed him that the queen would shortly bear a son concerning whom he prophesied:

The Cornish bore <sup>1)</sup> shall fill with his devotion.  
 The Christian world: the Islands of the Ocean, <sup>2)</sup>  
 He shall subdue: the Flower de Lyces <sup>3)</sup> plant,  
 The two-neckt Roman Eagle he shall make  
 To flag her plumes, and her faint feathers quake.  
 Pagans shall strive in vain to bend or break him,  
 Who shall be meat to all the mouths <sup>4)</sup> that speak him,  
 Yet shall his end be doutfull: Him six kings <sup>5)</sup>  
 Shall orderly succeed, but when their wings  
 Are clipt by death, a German Worme <sup>6)</sup> shall rise  
 Who shall the British state anatomise.  
 Him shall a Sea-Wolfe <sup>7)</sup> waited on by Woods  
 From Africke brought to passe Saint George's floods  
 Advance on high: then shall religion faile, <sup>8)</sup>  
 And then shall London's Clergie honour vaile  
 To Dorobernia: he that seventy shall sit  
 In the Eboracensick Sea; he forc'd to flit  
 Into Armorica: Menevia sad  
 Shall with the Legion Cities Pall be clad,  
 And they that in thilk days shall live, may see  
 That all these changes in the Kirke shall bee <sup>10)</sup>.

After delivering his prophecy Merlin told the king that not far from the Royal Court was living one Sir

<sup>1)</sup> Arthur was begot and born in Cornwall of a Cornish duchess.

<sup>2)</sup> Ireland, Iceland, Scotland and the Orcades, Gothland, Norway and Dacia.

<sup>3)</sup> The conquest of France.

<sup>4)</sup> Arthur's great victories over the Romans.

<sup>5)</sup> The very Relation of his noble atchievements should be a refreshing and Delight to all such as heard of them.

<sup>6)</sup> A. 543.

<sup>7)</sup> The Saxons.

<sup>8)</sup> Gormundus, king of Africa who in the time of Garetius came with a mighty navy upon the British Seas.

<sup>9)</sup> This happened when Gormundus rioted with the Saxons.

<sup>10)</sup> See on the whole of this prophecy the above mentioned book of Thomas Heywood ch. VI. p. 67. ed. 1813.

Hector, <sup>1)</sup> a man of the greatest respectability, who together with his good lady were renowned through the whole country as kindly, pious, circumspectuous and prudent people. „She has lately been delivered of a child,“ he added, „and with your permission I purpose confiding your son to her care that she may nurse and educate him. In due season I will call again for the new born infant.“

To the whole of Merlin's proposals the king gave his consent and Sir Hector was forthwith summoned into the Royal presence to receive his appointment, which he accepted expressing himself as very happy to have it in his power in any way to be able to serve his sovereign. At the appointed time that Merlin had foretold, the queen was delivered of a son, who was immediately taken by Merlin and presented to Sir Hector with this instruction: „Hurry the child to the baptismal font and let him be called Arthur (Artus). You and your kind lady will soon see what good fortune this boy will bring upon you and you will love him as though he were your own. Now farewell!“

Everything was done agreeably to the directions Merlin had laid down; and under the kindly fostering of Sir Hector and his Lady the young Prince Arthur grew and prospered daily

He was fair and well à gré  
And was a child of gret noblay.  
He was curteys, faire and gent,  
And wight and hardi, verament.  
Curteylisch and fair he spac  
With him was none evil lack.

Now king Uter reigned a long time happily and in peace when he fell dangerously ill by an attack of the gout and desired to see Merlin both on this account and because the hordes of heathens had returned and were again infesting the country whilst the efforts made by his barons to repel their incursions had been ineffectual and vain, Merlin assured him, that his arms would prevail, but he advised him, after the victory then about to ensue to apportion his riches, for he would shortly leave the country without an heir. „But where is my son?“ asked the agitated monarch. „Render not yourself anxious respecting him. He is fair, strong in body and remarkably well educated; leave his interest to my care.“

But as Merlin was about to take his leave he again reminded his Sovereign, that he would soon die, when the king demanded with a deep sigh: „Shall I then see you ever again?“

„Yes,“ replied Merlin, „but only once.“

<sup>1)</sup> He is called „Sir Autour“ in the 'Life of Merlin' and in the Welsh tale „Cynhyrgain the bearded.“



Summoning his forces from all parts the king sent forth a numerous and strong army against this heathen invaders, and through the skill and courage of his Nobles and the intrepid valour of his troops they were soon either driven out of the country or cruelly put to the sword without mercy offered or quarter given.

Peace was thus restored to the kingdom, but Uter's strength was fast declining and now, when Merlin for the last time visited him, he was hard at Death's door — nevertheless when his eyes lighted on him he leant towards him and appeared somewhat cheered, eagerly listening as the Magician muttered apart in his ear: „Console yourself, your son Arthur will reign after you; he will complete the Round Table which you have established.“ Then the king by great effort and in a tremulous voice answered: „Bid him, pray for me to our Lord Jesus Christ!“

At the conclusion of this sentence Merlin addressing the courtiers who were in attendance said: „These are the last words of our king!“ and immediately left them awe-struck and astonished, for they had long before imagined the king to be dead and did not understand the meaning of the king's parting words.

Queen Yguerna had died some time previously, therefore an assembly of the barons was called for the purpose of choosing a new king; but divisions arising amongst them they were much at a loss how to arrange the matter amicably and at length agreed to consult Merlin on the subject and abide by his dicta.

Merlin was accordingly introduced to the assembly and addressed them as follows: „A fortnight hence will be the holy Christmastime, the anniversary of the birth of our most blessed Saviour. Nobles and People, Bishops and Clergy pray each of you fervently unto the Lord, that he may enlighten you, and Heaven will assuredly send a sign whereby you may recognize him who is worthy to be your king and master.“ All were content with this adjournment and the barons and knights returned home until about Christmas when they re-assembled in London <sup>1)</sup> and amongst them was Sir Hector

<sup>1)</sup> The manoeuvre was Druidical and though London and Winchester are, by different writers mentioned as the scene of the transaction, it is more probable that it was either Silchester or Stonehenge, as the one was the station of the army, the other of the national assembly, which is likely to have been the place for that reason. At Silchester there was said to have been a stone, in a cleft whereof was lodged a sword; and on the stone an inscription, the purport of which was, that he who could draw that sword out of the cleft was the right heir to the sovereignty of Britain. See Robert's Pop. Ant. p. 88 and Morte Arthur: „In the myddes thereof was lyk an anvyl of steel afote of hyght, and therein stake a fayre sword.“

with his beloved son Arthur — who had now become distinguished for his manly figure, noble bearing and acute wisdom — and his own son, Lltreux, who had gallantly gained his knightly spurs but a short time previously. On Christmas eve all were gathered together in the church for devotional purposes and the hearing of the Grand Mass, as likewise expecting there the manifestation Merlin had predicted; but the Communion having been concluded and no sign visible some knights became sceptic and evinced their distrust when the worthy preacher from the pulpit reprobated their incredulity and impatience, reminding them likewise, that they were not only then assembled at church for the purpose of choosing a new king, but much more so for rendering thanks to the King of all kings for his eternal Salvation.

The sermon was so appropriate and delivered with such evident authority that all doubt vanished and the Assembly passed the few remaining hours of night in true devotion, awaiting with hope the coming of the following day; but when at dawn no sign was seen, some of the knights left the church and beheld before it three immense steps leading up to a stupendous block of marble bearing a Vice, in which a broad sword was fixed and on it the following inscription: „He who can withdraw this sword shall be your king by command of the Lord!“

The report of this discovery was soon spread and returning immediate thanks unto the Lord for his kindness archbishop Brice placed over it a guard of ten chosen knights both for protection and likewise to ascertain who was able to perform the mighty feat. The trial was admitted to all and during the course of the following week many persons essayed, but each in vain, for no one could be found to draw the sword although numbers of strong and powerful knights made extraordinary endeavours.

At length upon New year's day when, as usual, a great public festival was held in a distant part of the town, to which — a general invitation being given — every body was expected to attend, and the knights in charge of the marvelous Sword saw themselves deserted, and that their services were not required, left the place and hastened to participate in the popular amusements. When the Games were about to commence Lltreux having forgotten his sword requested Arthur to go home and bring it him. Arthur returned but found the doors of the house shut — for its occupants were all abroad joining in the sports of the day — and when passing the churchyard he suddenly beheld transfixed in the Vice on the marble stone a sword, the importance of which he was then quite ignorant of; he drew it without difficulty and bringing it to his brother Lltreux explained to him

he reason why he had not brought the one he had desired. —

Llreux immediately recognized the wonderful sword and hastening to his father cried out: „I shall be king for I have drawn the sword from the vice!“ — Sir Hector was struck with astonishment but not believing his son replied: „You lie, and I shall no longer love you, if you do not speak truth.“ Llreux ashamed confessed that Arthur had given him the sword, and Sir Hector thereupon requested Arthur to put the sword again in the place from whence he had drawn it, which when he had done Sir Hector tenderly embracing him related with evident emotion all he knew respecting his birth and concluded by requesting the favour, in case he should succeed to the crown that Llreux might be appointed his Seneshal.

Sir Hector then formally presenting himself to the archbishop demanded for his son Arthur a trial which when granted he drew forth and humbly presented the sword to the Prelate who clasping the boy to his bosom sang with a loud voice: „Te Deum laudamus!“

The knights present regarding the youthful appearance of Arthur seemed dissatisfied with the result and audibly murmured when the archbishop addressing them cried out: „Although the whole world should rise against this choice, the Almighty, our Lord, has determined and so he shall be our king, for He that hath chosen him knoweth him better than you do!“

Commanding the sword to be replaced Arthur again restored it to its original position where it remained for a considerable period during which many knights made vain efforts to remove it. At length on the eve of Whitsuntide the venerable Archbishop with his hearty blessing knighted Prince Arthur and on the following day he was solemnly crowned king, when as they left the church the immense block of marble with the vice and Sword had entirely disappeared.

Many of the Nobles at first held aloof from Arthur notwithstanding Merlin had revealed to them the whole circumstances of his birth and education, but persevering in his endeavours the Magician by his wise councils and active advice eventually overcame all obstacles, the oath of fealty was universally taken and Arthur became both a powerful sovereign and a father to his people.

Having united his forces with those of Leodagan king of Thamelide he first attacked the cruel Rion and succeeding in worsting him in several engagements, he married Genevra, king Leodagan's only daughter and heiress and was successful in exterminating several petty usurpers whose extortionate exactions were crying grievance throughout the land and succeeded in planting religion and the true Christian faith in every



part of his dominions. His conquests were numerous and miraculous, his wonderful success attributable to the sage counsels of Merlin, ably supported by the zealous deeds of the Knights of the Round Table — the Order established by his Royal father and pre-eminently cherished by himself, — for mindful of his own interest therein, and the powerful support it was capable of affording, in that Order he associated and kept united a band of the truest and most valiant warriors, whilst from the judgement and impartiality displayed in their selection every vacancy as it occurred became an object of the highest ambition and noblest competition to the knight-hood of the period.

Far down a beautiful vale on the skirts of the forest of Briogne planted on a knoll or rising ground backed by a cluster of magnificent beeches — which at the period of which we speak, covered many of the hills in the middle parts of Britain — stood a lone but elegant Castle, belonging to a young fairy damsel, named Aivienne or Nynianne, but more generally designated by the tenantry in the neighbourhood as the „Lady of the Lake.“ She was the daughter of Dionas, a noble chieftain who obtained from his godmother Diana a promise, that his first child should be a daughter, distinguished for her beauty and modesty, to whom the wisest man of his time should pledge his faith, which should be lasting and endearing.

Nynianne was now about two and twenty years of age, fair in complexion and of graceful figure with a glow of robust health, lighting up a countenance of no ordinary beauty, when Merlin passing through the forest of Briogne, disguised as a young and handsome page met her as she sat at the decline of a fine summer's day enjoying the refreshing breeze in a shaded nook on the border of a clear and sparkling rivulet. Captivated by her beauty and modest womanly charms he immediately opened to her the secrets of his heart and ardently strove to assure her of his unalterable love and esteem. His efforts were not altogether ineffectual and after several similar interviews he was at length admitted to her confidence, his shrewd wit and engaging manners cementing an affection that daily increased between them. For her no effort of mind or body was spared — no labour too great, no study too intense; he taught her many of his magic secrets and devised many pleasant and right merry fancies to provoke mirth and pass the time agreeably. Their love was cemented by a happy union and many days having been spent in joy and happiness he left her only to assist king Arthur in the noble and chivalrous enterprizes which we have already detailed. —

It was at the successful termination of one of those that Arthur, with his wife Genevra, nephew Gawin, the several knights of the Round Table and the whole Court adjourned to London to return thanks to the Deity, and solemnize in festive mirth the victory they had won, when Merlin after having spent many days in such enjoyments remembered the promise he had given to Nynianne to return to her. He therefore took leave of the king for the last time and hastening to Father Blasius related to him all that had happened at the court of king Arthur, adding that they would never meet any more.

Unbounded was the delight of fair Nynianne when he again entered her roof. Enraptured she gazed on him again, and long, long was their joy protracted in the endearing reciprocation of wedded love. But pleasures are all imperfect and the human heart swollen but with Love alone revels not in unmitigated enjoyment — its heightened sensibility exposes it the more to the harrowing conviction that change must come and the agitated mind deepens the shadows of the future by contrasting them with the excessive brightness of present enjoyment.

This feeling, evincing itself by a tremulous melancholy in the eye of Nynianne did not escape the eagle glance of Merlin: who immediately enquired the reason when she said: „My dear love, you have taught me many secrets; there is only one more I should like to know.“ — „Well,“ replied Merlin, who knew the nature of the request she was about to make, „what is it?“ — „I wish you to teach me, how I may be able to bind to myself a man without prison or fetter, but in such a manner that he could not leave me if he would without my permission?“<sup>1)</sup>

At these words Merlin drawing a deep sigh answered: „I know your purpose; you intend binding me to you; but nevertheless my love is so great, that I could not if I would resist you!“ — He then taught her the whole circle of his magic secrets and she immediately created an enchanted dwelling place abounding with every comfort, and seizing an opportunity one day, when Merlin tired with a long walk taken with her in the forest of Broceliande had fallen asleep she exercised the charm he had taught her and bound him by a spell to her for ever. Merlin awaking found himself

<sup>1)</sup> Sire, mon doux amy encores ne scay ie mye vne chose q̄ ie scauroye moult volentiers. Si vous pry q̄ vous la menseigneur. Et merlin qui bien scauoit que elle vouloit faire et a quoy elle tendoit luy dist: Ma dame q̄lle chose est ce. Sire fait elle ie vueil q̄ vous menseigneur et montrez comment ie pourroye un homme enclorre y enserrer sans tour et sans mur ne sans fer ne p̄ enchantemens si que iames ne yssist si no par moy.

encircled by bushes <sup>1)</sup>, but the influence of magic made it appear to him that he was shut up in a tower. „Alas!“ he cried, „you have deceived me; if you now abandon me, I shall be miserable indeed!“ — Nynianne assuring him of her unalterable attachment promised never to abandon him, nor did she ever entertain so revolting an idea. Afterwards she frequently wished for the power to dissolve the spell, but it was so potent that Merlin could never again leave the forest of Darnantes.

Some time elapsed after Merlin had left the Court in London when king Arthur began to feel uneasy, since he could not devine the reason for his protracted absence, and suspecting that his true friend had taken offence at some cause that he knew not of, expressed much anxiety respecting him. Many knights thereupon went forth in search of the Magician, but after the lapse of a year all returned to the Court without tidings. Gawin, the king's nephew, who was among the number, mortified that all his endeavours should be useless returned home dispirited; but as he passed the forest of Broceliande heaving many heavy sighs, suddenly he heard a voice crying out to him: „Gawin! Gawin! cheer up; for all will happen what must be done!“

Gawin instantly recognizing the voice of Merlin, responded: „Come forth, Merlin, that I may see and speak to you.“ „You will see me no more,“ replied Merlin, „and this is the last time that any human being will hear my voice!“ — and having explained the reason that induced him to quit the Court and commended himself in the most affectionate manner to king Arthur, bade adieu to Gawin and was no more seen or heard.

Great was the mourning at the Court when Gawin brought back these sad tidings, and king and people alike bemoaned their loss, for the memory of Merlin was known and blessed through the whole country of Britain.

<sup>1)</sup> See Dunlop's Hist. of Fict. Pref. II. Ed. and Edinburgh Quart. Rev. 1816. p. 406. — „La damoyelle fist ung cerne autour du buysson et entour Merlin — et quant il s'esveilla luy fut advis qu'il estoit enclos en la plus forte tour du monde.“ This phrase; „luy fut advis“ is the one constantly used in romance, to express the delusions of enchantment.

