

Brut eBook

Brut by Layamon

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Page 1

LAYAMON'S BRUT

At Totnes Constantin the fair and all his host came ashore; thither came the bold man—well was he brave!—and with him two thousand knights such as no king possessed. Forth they gan march into London, and sent after knights over all the kingdom, and every brave man, that speedily he should come anon.

The Britons heard that, where they dwelt in the pits; in earth and in stocks they hid them like badgers, in wood and in wilderness, in heath and in fen, so that well nigh no man might find any Briton, except they were in castle, or in burgh inclosed fast. When they heard of this word, that Constantin was in the land, then came out of the mountains many thousand men; they leapt out of the wood as if it were deer. Many hundred thousand marched toward London, by street and by weald all it forth pressed; and the brave women put on them men's clothes, and they forth journeyed toward the army.

When the Earl Constantin saw all this folk come to him, then he was so blithe as he was never before in life. Forth they took their way two nights and a day, so that they came full truly to Melga and Wanis. Together they rushed with stern strength, fought fiercely—the fated fell! Ere the day were gone, slain was Wanis and Melgan, and Peohtes enow, and Scots without number, Danes and Norwegians, Galloways and Irish. The while that the day was light lasted ever this slaughter.

When it came to the eventime, then called the Earl Constantin, and bade that guides should ride to the waters, and active men toward the sea, for to guard them. A man should have seen the game, how the women forth marched over woods and over fields, over hills and over dales. Wheresoever they found any man escaped, that was with Melga the heathen king, the women loud laughed, and tore him all in pieces, and prayed for the soul, that never should good be to it. Thus the British women killed many thousands, and thus they freed this kingdom of Wanis and of Melga.

And Constantin the brave marched to Silchester, and held there his husting of all his British thanes, all the Britons came to the meeting, and took Constantin the noble, and made him king of Britain—much was then the mirth that was among men. And afterwards they gave him a wife, one wondrous fair, born of the highest, of Britain the best of all. By this noble wife Constantin had in this land three little sons. The first son had well nigh his father's name; Constantin hight the king, Constance hight the child. When this child was waxed, that it could ride, then his father caused him to be made a monk, through counsel of wicked men, and the child was a monk in Winchester. After him was born another, who was the middle brother, he was named Aurelius, his surname hight Ambrosius. Then was last of all born a child that was well disposed, he was named Uther, his virtues were strong; he was the youngest brother, but he lived longer than the others.

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Guencelm the archbishop, who toward God was full good, took charge of the two children, for love of the king. But alas! that their father might live no longer!—for he had good laws the while that he lived; but he was king here but twelve years, and then was the king dead—hearken now through what chance. He had in his house a Peoht, fair knight and most brave; he fared with the king, and with all his thanes by no other wise but as it were his brother. Then became he so potent, to all his companions unlike; then thought he to betray Constantin the powerful. He came before the king, and fell on his knees, and thus lied the traitor before his lord: “Lord king, come forthright, and speak with Cadal thy knight, and I will thee tell of strange speeches, such as thou never ere on earth heardest.”

Then arose the king Constantin, and went forth out with him. But alas! that Constantin’s knights knew it not! They proceeded so long forward that they came in an orchard. Then said the traitor there: “Lord, be we here.” The traitor sat down, as if he would hold secret discourse, and he approached to the king, as a man doth in whispering. He grasped a knife very long, and the king therewith he pierced into the heart; and he himself escaped—there the king dead lay, and the traitor fled away.

The tidings came to court, how the king had fared; then was mickle sorrow spread to the folk. Then were the Britons busy in thought, they knew not through anything what they might have for king, for the king’s two sons, little they were both. Ambrosie could scarcely ride on horse, and Uther, his brother, yet still sucked his mother; and Constance the eldest was monk in Winchester; monk’s clothes he had on, as one of his companions. Then came to London all this landfolk, to their husting, and to advise them of a king, what wise they might do, and how they might take on, and which one of these children they might have for king. Then chose this people Aurelie Ambrosie, to have for king over them.

That heard Vortiger, a crafty man and most wary; among the earls he stood, and firmly withstood it, and he thus said—sooth though it were not: “I will advise you counsel with the best; abide a fortnight, and come we eft right here, and I will say to you sooth words, so that with your eyes ye shall see, and your while well bestow; this same time we shall abide, and to our land the while ride, and hold amity and hold peace, freely in land.”

All the folk did as Vortiger deemed; and he himself went as if he would go to his land, and turned right the way that into Winchester lay. Vortiger had Welshland the half-part in his hand; forty knights good he had in his retinue. He proceeded to Winchester, where he found Constance, and spake with the abbot who governed the monastery where Constance was monk, the king’s son of Britain. He went into the monastery with mild speech; he said that he would speak with Constance. The abbot granted it to



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him, and he led him to the speech-house. Thus spake Vortiger with the monk then there: "Constance, hearken my counsel, for now is thy father dead. There is Ambrosie thy brother, and Uther the other. Now have the elders, the noblest in land, chosen Aurelie—his surname is Ambrosie—if they may through all things they will make him king; and Uther, thy brother, yet sucketh his mother. But I have opposed them, and think to withsay, for I have been steward of all Britain's land, and earl I am potent, unlike to my companions, and I have Welshland half part in my hand; more I have alone than the others all clean. I am come to thee, for dearest of men thou art to me; if thou wilt swear to me oaths, I will take off thee these clothes, if thou wilt increase my land, and thy counsel place in my hand, and make me thy steward over all Britain's land, and through my counsel do all thy deeds, and if thou wilt pledge me in hand, that I shall rule it all, I will through all things make thee Britain's king." This monk sate well still, the speech went to him at his will. Then answered the monk with much delight: "Well worth thee, Vortiger, that thou art come here; if evermore cometh the day that I may be king, all my counsel and all my land I will place in thine hand, and all that thou wilt do, my men shall accept it. And oaths I will swear to thee, that I will not deceive thee." Thus said the monk; he mourned greatly how else it were, that he were monk; for to him were black clothes wondrously odious. Vortiger was crafty and wary—that he made known everywhere—he took a cape of a knight of his, and on the monk he put it, and led him out of the place; he took a swain anon, and the black clothes put on him, and held secret discourse with the swain, as if it were the monk.

Monks passed upward, monks passed downward; they saw by the way the swain with monk's clothes; the hood hanged down as if he hid his crown; they all weened that it were their brother, who there sate so sorry in the speech-house, in the daylight, among all the knights. They came to their abbot, and greeted him in God's name: "Lord, benedicite, we are come before thee, for strange it seemeth to us what Vortiger thinketh in our speech-house, where he holdeth discourse, throughout this day no monk may come therein, except Constance alone, and the knights all clean. Sore we dread, that they him miscounsel." Then answered the abbot; "Nay, but they counsel him good; they bid him hold his hood (holy order), for now is his father dead." Vortiger there abode the while Constance away rode. Vortiger up arose, from the monastery departed, and all his knight out went forth-right.

The monks there ran thither anon, they weened to find Constance; when they saw the clothes lie by the walls, then each to other lamented their brother. The abbot leapt on horse, and after Vortiger rode, and soon gan overtake the Earl Vortiger. Thus said the abbot to Vortiger where he rode: "Say me, thou mad knight, why dost thou so great wrong? Thou takest from us our brother,—leave him, and take the other. Take Ambrosie the child, and make of him a king, and anger thou not Saint Benedict, nor do thou to him any wrong!"



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Vortiger heard this—he was crafty and very wary;—soon he came back, and the abbot he took, and swore by his hand, that he would him hang, unless he him pledged, that he would forthright unhood Constance the king's son of this land, and for such need he should be king of this country. The abbot durst no other, there he unhooded his brother, and the child gave the abbot in hand twenty ploughlands, and afterwards they proceeded forth into London. Vortiger the high forbade his attendants, that they to no man should tell what they had in design. Vortiger lay in London, until the same set day came, that the knights of this land should come to husting.

At the day they came, many and numerous; they counselled, they communed, the stern warriors, that they would have Ambrosie, and raise for king; for Uther was too little—the yet he might suck—and Constance was monk, who was eldest of them, and they would not for anything make a monk king. Vortiger heard this, who was crafty and most wary, and leapt on foot as if it were a lion. None of the Britons there knew what Vortiger had done. He had in a chamber Constance the dear, well bathed and clothed, and afterwards hid with twelve knights. Then thus spake Vortiger—he was of craft wary: “Listen, lordings, the while that I speak of kings. I was in Winchester, where I well sped, I spake with the abbot, who is a holy man and good, and said him the need that is come to this nation by Constantin's death—therefore he is uneasy—and of Constance the child, that he had holden. And I bade him for love of God, to take off the child's hood, and for such need he should be king in the country. And the abbot took his counsel, and did all that I bade him; and here I have his monks, who are good and chief, who shall witness bear before you all. Lo! where here is the same child, make we hereof a king, and here I hold the crown that thereto behoveth, and whoso will this withsay, he shall it buy dear!”

Vortiger was most strong, the highest man of Britain, was there never any so bold that his words durst deprecate. In the same town was the archbishop dead, and there was no bishop that forth on his way did not pass, nor monk nor any abbot, that he on his way did not ride, for they durst not for fear of God do there the wrong, to take the monk child, and make him Britain's king. Vortiger saw this—of all evil he was well ware, up he gan to stand, the crown he took in hand, and he set it upon Constance—that was to him in thought. Was there never any man that might there do Christendom, that might do blessing upon the king, but Vortiger alone did it clean for all! The beginning was unfair, and also was the end, he deserted God's hood (holy order), therefore he had sorrow! Thus was Constance king of this land, and Vortiger was his steward.



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Constance set all his kingdom in Vortiger's hand, and he did all in the land, as he himself would. Then saw Vortiger—of much evil he was ware—that Constance the king knew nothing of land (government?), for he had not learnt ever any learning, except what a monk should perform in his monastery. Vortiger saw that—the Worse was full nigh him!—oft he bethought him what he might do, how he might with leasing please the king. Now thou mayest hear, how this traitor gan him fare. The best men of Britain were all dead, now were the king's brothers both full little, and Guencehn the archbishop therebefore was dead, and this land's king himself of the law knew nothing. Vortiger saw this, and he came to the king, with mild speech his lord he gan greet: "Hail be thou, Constance, Britain's lord! I am come thus nigh thee for much need, for to say to thee tidings that are come to land, of very great danger. Now thee behoveth might, now weapons behove thee to defend thy country. Here are chapmen arrived from other lands, as it is the custom; they have brought to me toll for their goods, and they have told me and plighted troth, that the King of Norway will newly fare hither, and the Danish king these Danes will seek, and the King of Russia, sternest of all knights, and the King of Gothland with host most strong, and the King of Frise—therefore it alarmeth me. The tidings are evil that are come to land; herefore I am most adread, for I know no good counsel, unless we may with might send after knights, that are good and strong, and that are well able in land, and fill thy castles with keen men, and so thou mightest defend thy kingdom against foreigners, and maintain thy worship with high strength. For there is no kingdom, so broad nor so long, that will not soon be taken if there are too few warriors."

Then answered the king—of land he knew nothing—"Vortiger, thou art steward over all Britain's land, and thou shalt it rule after thy will. Send after knights that are good in fight; and take all in thine hand, my castles and my land, and do all thy will, and I will be still, except the single thing, that I will be called king."

Then laughed Vortiger—he was of evil most ware—was he never so blithe ere in his life! Vortiger took leave, and forth he gan pass, and so he proceeded through all Britain's land, all the castles and all the land he set in his own hand, and the fealty he took ever where he came. And so he took his messengers, and sent to Scotland, and ordered the Peohtes, the knights best of all, three hundred to come to him, and he would well do to them. And the knights came to him thereafter well soon; thus spake the traitorous man: "Knights, ye are welcome. I have in my hand all this regal land, with me ye shall go, and I will you love, and I will you bring before our king; ye shall have silver and gold, the best horses of this land, clothes, and fair wives; your will I will perform Ye shall be to me dear, for the Britons are hateful to me, loud and



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still I will do your will, if ye will in land hold me for lord.” Then forth-right answered the knights “We will do all thy will,” and they gan proceed to Constance the king. To the king came Vortiger—of evil he was well ware—and said him of— had done—“And here I have the Peohtes, who shall be household knights; and I have most well stored all thy castles, and these foreign knights shall before us fight.” The king commended all as Vortiger purposed, but alas! that the king knew nothing of his thoughts, nor of his treachery, that he did soon thereafter! These knights were in court highly honoured, full two years with the king they dwelt there, and Vortiger the steward was lord of them all. Ever he said that the Britons were not of use, but he said that the Peohtes were good knights. Ever were the Britons deprived of goods, and the Peohtes wielded all that they would. They had drink, they had meat, they had eke much bliss. Vortiger granted them all that they would, and was to them as dear as their own life; so that they all spake, where they ate their meat, that Vortiger were worthy to govern this realm throughout all things, better than three such kings! Vortiger gave these men very much treasure.

Then befell it on a day, that Vortiger lay at his inn; he took his two knights and sent after the Peohtes, bade them come here, for they all should eat there. Forth-right the knights came to him, to his inn, he tried them with words as they sate at the board, he caused draughts to be brought them of many kinds of drinks, they drank, they revelled, the day there forth passed. When they were so drunk that their shanks weakened, then spake Vortiger what he had previously thought: “Hearken now to me, knights, I will say to you forth-right of my mickle sorrow that I for you have mourned. The king delivered me this land for to be his steward. Ye are to me liefest of all men alive, but I have not wealth to give my knights, for this king possesses all this land, and he is young and also strong, and all I must yield to him that I take of his land, and if I destroy his goods, I shall suffer the law, and mine own wealth I have spent, because I would please you. And now I must depart hence far to some king, serve him with peace, and gain wealth with him; I may not for much shame have here this abode, but forth I must go to foreign lands And if the day shall ever come that I may acquire wealth, and I may so well thrive, that ye come in the land where I am, I will well reward you with much worship. And have now all good day, for to-night I will go away, it is a great doubt whether ye see me evermore”—These knights knew not what the traitor thought Vortiger was treacherous, for here he betrayed his lord, and the knights held it for sooth, what the traitor said Vortiger ordered his swains to saddle his steeds, and named twelve men to lead with himself, to horse they went as if they would depart from the land.



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The Peohtes saw that—the drunken knights—how Vortiger would depart, herefore they had much care, they went to counsel, they went to communing, all they lamented their life exceedingly, because Vortiger was so dear to them And thus said the Peohtes, the drunken knights: “What may we now in counsel? who shall us now advise? who shall us feed, who shall us clothe, who shall be our lord at court? Now Vortiger is gone, we all must depart,—we will not for anything have a monk for king! But we will do well, forth-right go we to him, secretly and still, and do all our will, into his chamber, and drink of his beer When we have drunk, loudly revel we, and some shall go to the door, and with swords stand therebefore, and some forth-right take the king and his knights, and smite off the heads of them, and we ourselves have the court, and cause soon our lord Vortiger to be overtaken, and afterwards through all things raise him to be king;—then may we live as to us is befest of all.”

The knights proceeded to the king forth-right; they all went throughout the hall into the king’s chamber, where he sate by the fire There was none that spake a word except Gille Callaet; thus he spake with the king whom he there thought to betray: “Listen to me now, monarch, I will nothing lie to thee We have been in court highly honoured through thy steward, who hath governed all this land, he hath us well fed, he hath us well clothed And in sooth I may say to thee, with him we ate now to day, but sore it us grieveth, we had nought to drink, and now we are in thy chamber give us drink of thy beer” Then gave the king answer “That shall be your least care, for ye shall have to drink the while that you think good” Men brought them drink, and they gan to revel, thus said Gille Callaet—at the door he was full active “Where be ye, knights? Bestir you forth right!” And they seized the king, and smote off his head, and all his knights they slew forth-right And took a messenger, and sent toward London, that he should ride quickly after Vortiger, that he should come speedily, and take the kingdom, for that he should know through all things, slain was Constance the king. Vortiger heard that, who was traitor full secret; thus he ordered the messenger back forth-right anon, and bade them “well to keep all our worship that never one depart out of the place, but all abide me, until that I arrive, and so I will divide this land among us all.”

Forth went the messenger, and Vortiger took anon and sent over London, and ordered them quickly and full soon, that they all should come to husting. When the burgh-men were come, who were most bold, then spake Vortiger, who was traitor full secret,—much he gan to weep, and sorrowfully to sigh, but it was in his head, and not in his heart. Then asked him the burgh-men, who were most bold. “Lord Vortiger, what is that thou mournest? Thou art no woman so sore to weep.” Then answered Vortiger, who was traitor full secret: “I



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will tell you piteous speeches, of much calamity that is come to the land. I have been in this realm your king's steward, and spoken with him, and loved him as my life. But he would not at the end any counsel approve, he loved the Peohtes, the foreign knights, and he would not do good to us, nor anywhere fair receive, but to them he was gracious, ever in their lives I might not of the king have remuneration (or wages), I spent my wealth, the while that it lasted, and afterwards I took leave to go to my land, and when I had my tribute, come again to court. When the Peohtes saw that the king had no knights, nor ever any kind of man that would aught for them do, they took their course into the king's chamber I say you through all things, they have slain the king, and think to destroy this kingdom and us all, and will forth-right make them king of a Peoht. But I was his steward, avenge I will my lord, and every brave man help me to do that. On I will with my gear, and forth-right I will go."

Thirty hundred knights marched out of London; they rode and they ran, forth with Vortiger, until they approached where the Peohtes dwelt. And he took one of his knights, and sent to the Peohtes, and said to them that he came, if they would him receive. The Peohtes were blithe for their murder (that they had committed), and they took their good gear—there was neither shield nor spear Vortiger weaponed all his knights forth right, and the Peohtes there came, and brought the head of the king. When Vortiger saw this head, then fell he full nigh to the ground, as if he had grief most of all men, with his countenance he gan he, but his heart was full blithe. Then said Vortiger, who was traitor full secret: "Every brave man lay on them with sword, and avenge well in the land the sorrow of our lord!" None they captured, but all they them slew; and proceeded to the inn, into Winchester, and slew their swains, and their chamber-servants, their cooks, and their boys, all they deprived of life-day. Thus faired the tidings of Constance the king.

And the worldly-wise men took charge of the other children; for they had care of Vortiger they took Ambrosie and Uther, and led them over sea, into the Less Britain, and delivered them fairly to Biduz the king. And he them fairly received, for he was their kin and their friend, and with much joy the children he brought up; and so well many years with him they were there.

Vortiger in this land was raised to be king; all the strong burghs stood in his hand; five-and-twenty years he was king here. He was mad, he was wild, he was cruel, he was bold; of all things he had his will, except the Peohtes were never still, but ever they advanced over the north end, and afflicted this kingdom with prodigious harm, and avenged their kin enow, whom Vortiger slew here.



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In the meantime came tidings into this land, that Aurelie was knight, who was named Ambrosie, and also was Uther, good knight and most wary, and would come to this land, and lead an army most strong. This was many times a saying oft repeated; oft came these tidings to Vortiger the king; therefore it oft shamed him, and his heart angered, for men said it everywhere:—"Now will come Ambrosie and Uther, and will avenge soon Constance, the king of this land; there is no other course, avenge they will their brother, and slay Vortiger, and burn him to dust; thus they will set all this land in their own hand!" So spake each day all that passed by the way.

Vortiger bethought him what he might do, and thought to send messengers into other lands, after foreign knights, who might him defend; and thought to be wary against Ambrosie and Uther.

In the meantime came tidings to Vortiger the king, that over sea were come men exceeding strange; in the Thames to land they were come; three ships good came with the flood, therein three hundred knights, kings as it were, without (besides) the shipmen who were there within. These were the fairest men that ever here came, but they were heathens—that was the more harm! Vortiger sent to them, and asked how they were disposed (their business); if they sought peace, and recked of his friendship? They answered wisely, as well they knew, and said that they would speak with the king, and lovingly him serve, and hold him for lord; and so they gan wend forth to the king. Then was Vortiger the king in Canterbury, where he with his court nobly diverted themselves; there these knights came before the sovereign. As soon as they met him, they greeted him fair, and said that they would serve him in this land, if he would them with right retain. Then answered Vortiger—of each evil he was ware—"In all my life that I have lived, by day nor by night saw I never ere such knights; for your arrival I am blithe, and with me ye shall remain, and your will I will perform, by my quick life! But first I would of you learn, through your sooth worship, what knights ye be, and whence ye are come, and whether ye will be true, old and eke new?"

Then answered the one who was the eldest brother: "Listen to me now, lord king, and I will make known to you what knights we are, and whence we are come. I hight Hengest; Hors is my brother; we are of Alemaine, a land noblest of all, of the same end that Angles is named. In our land are strange tidings; after fifteen years the folk is assembled, all our nation-folk, and cast their lots; upon whom that it falleth, he shall depart from the land. The five shall remain, the sixth shall forth proceed out of the country to a foreign land; be he man ever so loved, he shall forth depart. For there is folk very much, more than they would desire; the women go there with child as the wild deer, every year they bear child there! That is fallen on us, that we should depart; we might not remain, for life nor for



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death, nor for ever anything, for fear of the sovereign. Thus we fared there, and therefore are we now here, to seek under heaven land and good lord. Now thou hast heard, lord king, sooth of us through all things.” Then answered Vortiger—of each evil he was ware—“I believe thee, knight, that thou sayest to me right sooth. And what are your creeds, that ye in believe, and your dear god, whom ye worship?” Then answered Hengest, fairest of all knights—in all this kingdom is not a knight so tall nor so strong:—“We have good gods, whom we love in our mind, whom we have hope in, and serve them with might. The one hight Phebus; the second Saturnus; the third hight Woden, who is a mighty god; the fourth hight Jupiter, of all things he is aware; the fifth hight Mercurius, who is the highest over us; the sixth hight Appolin, who is a god brave; the seventh hight Tervagant, a high god in our land. Yet (in addition) we have a lady, who is high and mighty, high she is and holy, therefore courtiers love her—she is named Frea—well she them treateth. But among all our dear gods whom we shall serve, Woden had the highest law in our elders’ days; he was dear to them even as their life, he was their ruler, and did to them worship; the fourth day in the week they gave him for his honour. To the Thunder (Jupiter) they gave Thursday, because that it may help them; to Frea, their lady, they gave her Friday; to Saturnus they gave Saturday; to the Sun they gave Sunday; to the Moon they gave Monday; to Tidea they gave Tuesday.” Thus said Hengest, fairest of all knights. Then answered Vortiger—of each evil he was ware—“Knights, ye are dear to me, but these tidings are loathsome to me; your creeds are wicked, ye believe not on Christ, but ye believe on the Worse, whom God himself cursed; your gods are of nought, in hell they lie beneath. But nevertheless I will retain you in my power, for northward are the Peohtes, knights most brave, who oft into my land lead host most strong, and oft do me much shame, and therefore I have grief. And if ye will me avenge, and procure me their heads, I will give you land, much silver and gold.” Then answered Hengest, fairest of all knights: “If Saturnus so will it, and Woden, our lord, on whom we believe, it shall all thus be!”

Hengest took leave, and gan wend to his ships; there was many a strong knight; they drew their ships upon the land. Forth went the warriors to Vortiger the king; Hengest went before, and Hors, next of all to him; then the Alemainish men, who were noble in deeds; and afterwards they sent to him (Vortiger) their brave Saxish knights, Hengest’s kinsmen, of his old race. They came into hall, fairly all; better were clothed and better were fed Hengest’s swains, than Vortiger’s thanes! Then was Vortiger’s court held in contempt! the Britons were sorry for such a sight.



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It was no whit long before five knights' sons who had travelled quickly came to the king; they said to the king new tidings: "Now forth-right the Peohtes are come; through thy land they run, and harry, and burn, and all the north end fell to the ground; hereof thou must advise thee, or we all shall be dead." The king bethought him what he might do, he sent to the inn, after all his men. There came Hengest, there came Hors, there came many a man full brave; there came the Saxish men, Hengest's kinsmen, and the Alemainish knights, who are good in fight. The King Vortiger saw this; blithe was he then there.

The Peohtes did, as was their custom, on this side of the Humber they were come. And the King Vortiger of their coming was full aware; together they came (encountered), and many there slew; there was fight most strong, combat most stern! The Peohtes were oft accustomed to overcome Vortiger, and so they thought then to do, but it befell then in other wise, for it was safety to them (the Britons) that Hengest was there, and the strong knights who came from Saxland, and the brave Alemainish, who came thither with Hors, for very many Peohtes they slew in the fight; fiercely they fought, the fated fell! When the noon was come, then were the Peohtes overcome, and quickly away they fled, on each side they forth fled, and all day they fled, many and without number. The King Vortiger went back to lodging, and ever were nigh to him Hors and Hengest. Hengest was dear to the king, and to him he gave Lindesey, and he gave Hors treasures enow, and all their knights he treated exceeding well, and thus a good time it stood in the same wise. The Peohtes durst never come into the land, no robbers nor outlaws, that they were not soon slain; and Hengest exceeding fairly served the king.

Then befell it on a time, that the king was very blithe, on a high-day, among his people. Hengest bethought him what he might do, for he would hold secret discourse with the king; he went before the king, and gan greet fair. The king up stood, and set him by himself; they drank, they revelled—bliss was among them. Then quoth Hengest to the king: "Lord, hearken tidings, and I will tell thee of secret discourse, if thou wilt well listen to my advice, and not hold in wrath what I well teach." And the king answered as Hengest would it. Then said Hengest, fairest of all knights: "Lord, I have many a day advanced thy honour, and been thy faithful man in thy rich court, and in each fight the highest of thy knights. And I have often heard anxious whisperings among thy courtiers; they hate thee exceedingly, unto the bare death, if they it durst show. Oft they speak stilly, and discourse with whispers, of two young men, that dwell far hence; the one hight Uther, the other Ambrosie—the third hight Constance who was king in this land, and he here was slain through traitorous usage. The others will now come, and avenge their brother, all consume thy land, and slay



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thy people, thyself and thy folk drive out of land. And thus say thy men, where they sit together, because the twain brothers are both royally born, of Androein's race, these noble Britons; and thus thy folk stilly condemn thee. But I will advise thee of thy great need, that thou procure knights that are good in fight; and give to me a castle, or a royal burgh, that I may be in, the while that I live. For I am for thee hated—therefore I ween to be dead, fare wherever I fare, I am never without care, unless I be fast inclosed in a castle. If thou wilt do this for me, I will it receive with love, and quickly I will send after my wife, who is a Saxish woman, of wisdom excellent, and after my daughter Rowenne, who is most dear to me. When I have my wife, and my kinsmen, and I am in thy land fully settled, the better I will serve thee, if thou grantest me this." Then answered Vortiger—of each evil he was ware—"Take quickly knights, and send after thy wife, and after thy children, the young and the old, and after thy kin, and receive them with joy; when they to thee come, thou shalt have riches to feed them nobly, and worthily to clothe them. But I will not give to thee any castle or burgh, for men would reproach me in my kingdom, for ye hold the heathen law that stood in your elders' days, and we hold Christ's law, and will ever in our days." The yet spake Hengest, fairest of all knights: "Lord, I will perform thy will, here and over all, and do all my deeds after thy counsel. Now will I speedily send after my wife, and after my daughter, who is to me very dear, and after brave men, the best of my kin. And thou give me so much land, to stand in mine own hand, as a bull's hide will each way overspread, far from each castle, amidst a field. Then nor the poor nor the rich may blame thee, that thou hast given any noble burgh to a heathen man." And the king granted him as Hengest yearned.

Hengest took leave, and forth he gan pass, and after his wife he sent messengers, to his own land, and he himself went over this land, to seek a broad field whereon he might well spread his fair hide. He came to a spot, in a fair field, he had obtained a hide to his need, of a wild bull that was wondrously strong. He had a wise man, who well knew of craft, who took this hide, and laid it on a board, and whet his shears, as if he would shear. Of the hide he carved a thong, very small and very long, the thong was not very broad, but as it were a thread of twine; when the thong was all slit, it was wondrously long, about therewith he encompassed a great deal of land. He began to dig a ditch very mickle, there upon a stone wall, that was strong over all, a burgh he areared, mickle and lofty. When the burgh was all ready, then shaped he to it a name, he named it full truly Kaer-Carrai in British, and English knights they called it Thongchester. Now and evermore the name standeth there, and for no other adventure had the burgh the name, until that Danish men came, and drove out the Britons; the third name they set there, and Lanecastel (Lancaster) it named; and for such events the town had these three names.



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In the meantime arrived hither Hengest's wife with her ships; she had for companions fifteen hundred riders; with her came, to wit, mickle good ships; therein came much of Hengest's kin, and Rowenne, his daughter, who was to him most dear. It was after a while, that that time came, that the burgh was completed with the best of all. And Hengest came to the king, and asked him to a banquet, and said that he had prepared an inn against him (his coming) and bade that he should come thereto, and he should be fairly received. And the king granted him as Hengest it would.

It came to the time that the king gan forth proceed, with the dearest men of all his folk; forth he gan proceed until he came to the burgh. He beheld the wall up and down over all; all it liked him well, that he on looked. He went into the hall, and all his knights with him; trumps they blew, games men gan to call, boards they ordered to be spread, knights sate thereat, they ate, they drank, joy was in the burgh!—when the folk had eaten, then was the better befallen to them.

Hengest went into the inn, where Rowenne dwelt; he caused her to be clad with excessive pride; all the clothes that she had on, they were most excellent, they were good with the best, embroidered with gold. She bare in her hand a golden bowl, filled with wine, that was one wondrous good. High-born men led her into the hall before the king, fairest of all things! Rowenne sate on her knee, and called to the king, and thus first she said in English land: "Lord king, wassail! for thy coming I am glad." The king this heard, and knew not what she said, the King Vortiger asked his knights soon, what were the speech that the maid spake. Then answered Keredic, a knight most admirable; he was the best interpreter that ere came here: "Listen to me now, my lord king, and I will make known to thee what Rowenne saith, fairest of all women. It is the custom in Saxland, wheresoever any people make merry in drink, that friend sayeth to his friend, with fair comely looks, 'Dear friend, wassail!'—the other sayeth, 'Drinchail!' The same that holds the cup, he drinketh it up; another full cup men thither bring, and give to his comrade. When the full cup is come, then kiss they thrice. These are the good customs in Saxland, and in Alemaine they are accounted noble!"

Vortiger heard this—of each evil he was ware—and said it in British, for he knew no English: "Maiden Rowenne, drink then blithely!" The maid drank up the wine, and let do (put) other wine therein, and gave to the king, and thrice him kissed. And through the same people the custom came to this land of Wassail and Drinchail—many a man thereof is glad' Rowenne the fair sate by the king; the king beheld her longingly, she was dear to him in heart, oft he kissed her, oft he embraced her; all his mind and his might inclined towards the maiden.



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The Worse was there full nigh, who in each game is full cruel; the Worse who never did good, he troubled the king's mood; he mourned full much, to have the maiden for wife. That was a most loathly thing, that the Christian king should love the heathen maid, to the harm of his people! The maiden was dear to the king, even as his own life; he prayed to Hengest, his chieftain, that he should give him the maid-child. Hengest found in his counsel to do what the king asked him; he gave him Rouwenne, the woman most fair. To the king it was pleasing; he made her queen, all after the laws that stood in the heathen days; was there no Christendom, where the king took the maid, nor priest, nor any bishop, nor was God's book ever handled, but in the heathen fashion he wedded her, and brought her to his bed' Maiden he had her, and ample gift bestowed on her; when he had disgraced himself on her, he gave her London and Kent.

The king had three sons, who were men exceeding fair; the eldest hight Vortimer,—Pascent, and Catiger. Garengan was an earl, who possessed Kent long, and his father before him, and he afterwards through his kin (by inheritance), when he best weened to hold his land, then had it the queen, and Hengest in his hand; strange it seemed to the knight, what the king thought. The king loved the heathens and harmed the Christians, the heathens had all this land to rule under their hand, and the king's three sons oft suffered sorrow and care. Their mother was then dead, therefore they had the less counsel—their mother was a woman most good, and led a life very Christian, and their stepmother was heathen, Hengest's daughter.

It was not long but a while, that the king made a feast, exceeding great, the heathens he brought thereto, he weened most well to do; thither came thanes, knights and swains. And all that knew of book (the Christians) forsook the feast, for the heathen men were highest in the court, and the Christian fold was held for base; the heathens were blithe, for the king loved them greatly. Hengest bethought him what he might do; he came to the king, with a hailing (salutation), and drank to the king. Then thus spake Hengest, fairest of all knights who lived of heathen law in those days: "Hearken to me now, lord king, thou art to me dear through all things; thou hast my daughter, who is to me very dear, and I am to thee among folk as if I were thy father. Hearken to my instruction, it shall be to thee lief, for I wish chiefly to help counsel thee. Thy court hate thee on my account, and I am detested for thee, and thee hate kings, earls and thanes; they fare in thy land with a host exceeding strong. If thou wilt avenge thee with much worship, and do woe to thy enemies, send after my son Octa, and after another, Ebissa, his wed-brother. These are the noblest men that ever led army; and give them of thy land in the north end. They are of mickle might, and strong in fight; they will defend thy land well with the best;



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then mightest thou in joy thy life all spend, with hawks and with hounds court-play love; needest thou never have care of foreign people.” Then answered Vortiger—of each evil he was ware—“Send thy messengers into Saxland, after thy son Octa, and after thy friends more. Cause him to know well, that he send his writs after all the knights that are good in fight, over all Saxland, that they come to my need, and though he bring ten thousand men, all they shall be welcome to me.” Hengest heard this, fairest of all knights, then was he so blithe as he was never in his life.

Hengest sent his messengers into Saxland, and bade Octa come, and his wed-brother Ebissa, and all of their kindred that they might gain, and all the knights that they might get. Octa sent messengers over three kingdoms, and bade each brave man speedily to come to him, who would obtain land, or silver or gold. They came soon to the army, as hail that falleth, that was to wit, with three hundred ships. Forth went with Octa thirty thousand and eke more, brave men and keen; and Ebissa, his companion, afterwards arrived with numberless folk, and he led to wit an hundred and fifty ships; thereafter arrived five and five, by six, by seven, by ten, and by eleven; and thus the heathen warriors they arrived toward this land, to the court of this king, so that this land was so full of foreign people, that there was no man so wise, nor so quick-witted, that might separate the Christians and the heathens, for the heathens were so rife, and ever they speedily came!

When the Britons saw that sorrow was in the land, therefore they were sorry, and in their heart dreary, and proceeded to the king, the highest of this land, and thus to him said with sorrowful voice: “Listen to us, lord king, of our discourse; thou art through us (by our means) bold king in this Britain, and thou hast procured to thee harm and much sin; brought heathen folk—yet it may thee harm;—and thou forsakest God’s law, for foreign folk, and wilt not worship our Lord, for these heathen knights. And we would pray thee, for all God’s peace, that thou leave them, and drive from thy land. If thou else (otherwise) mightest not, we will make mickle fight, and drive them from land, or fell them down, or we ourselves will lie slain, and let the heathen folk hold this realm, possess it with joy, if they may it win. And if they all are heathen, and thou alone Christian, they will never long have thee for king, except thou in thy days receive the heathen law, and desert the high God, and praise their idols. Then shalt thou perish in this world’s realm, and thy wretched soul sink to hell; then hast thou dearly bought the love of thy bride!” Then answered Vortiger—of each evil he was ware:—“I will not leave them, by my quick life! For Hengest is hither come, he is my father, and I his son; and I have for mistress his daughter Rouwenne, and I have wedded her, and had in my bed, and afterwards I sent after Octa, and after more of his companions;—how



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might I for shame shun them so soon, and drive from land my dear friends?" Then answered the Britons, with sorrow bound: "We will nevermore obey thy commands, nor come to thy court, nor hold thee for king, but we will hate thee with great strength, and all thine heathen friends with harm greet. Be Christ now, that is God's son, our help!" Forth went the earls, forth went the lords, forth went the bishops, and the book-learned men, forth went the thanes, forth went the swains, all the Britons, until they came to London.

There was many a noble Briton at the husting, and the king's three sons they all were come thither; there was Vortimer, Pascent, and Catiger, and very many others, that came with the brothers; all the folk came thither, that loved the Christendom. And all the rich men betook them to counsel, and took the king's eldest son, who was come to the husting, and with mickle song of praise elevated him to be king. Then was Vortimer Christian king there, and Vortiger, his father, followed the heathens. All thus it happened, as the counsel was done.

And Vortimer, the young king, was most keen through all things; he sent Hengest and Hors his brother, unless speedily they departed from this realm, he would evil do to them, both blind and hang them; and his own father he would destroy, and all the heathens, with great strength. Then answered Hengest, fairest of all knights: "Here we will dwell winter and summer, ride and run with the King Vortiger; and all that with Vortimer go, they shall have sorrow and care!" Vortimer heard that—he was wise and most wary—and caused a host to be assembled over all this land, that all the Christian folk should come to his court. Vortimer, the young king, in London held his husting; the king ordered each man that loved the Christendom, that they all should hate the heathens, and bring the heads of them to Vortimer the king, and have twelve pennies for reward, for his good deed. Vortimer the young marched out of London, and Pascent, his brother, and Catiger, the other; to them was come word, that Hengest lay at Epiford, upon the water that men name Darwent. There came together sixty thousand men; on one half was Vortimer, Pascent, and Catiger, and all the folk that loved our Lord; on the other half were chiefs with Vortiger the king, Hengest and his brother, and many thousand others. Together they came, and combated with might; there fell to the ground two and thirty hundred of Hengest's men; and Hors was wounded. Catiger came there, and with his spear ran him through, and Hors forth-right there wounded Catiger. And Hengest gan to flee with all his followers, and Vortiger the king fled forth as the wind; they flew forth into Kent, and Vortimer went after them; there upon the seashore Hengest suffered pain; there they gan to halt, and fought very long; five thousand there were slain, and deprived of lifeday, of Vortiger's men, of the heathen race.



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Hengest bethought him what he might do; he saw there beside a haven very large, many good ships there stood in the sea-flood. They saw on their right hand an island exceeding fair, it is called Thanet; thitherward they were brisk; there the Saxish men sought the sea, and anon gan pass into the island. And the Britons followed after them, with many kind of crafts, and surrounded them on each side; with ships and with boats they gan to smite and shoot. Oft was Hengest woe, and never worse than then; unless he did other counsel he should there be dead. He took a spear-shaft, that was long and very tough, and put on the end a fair mantle, and called to the Britons, and bade them abide; he would speak with them, and yearn the king's grace, and send Vortiger with peace to the land, to make this agreement that he might depart without more shame into Saxland.

The Britons went to the land, to Vortimer their king, and Hengest spake with Vortiger, in most secret converse. Vortiger went on the land, and bare a wand in his hand. The while that they spake of peace the Saxons leapt into their ships, and drew up high their sails to the top, and proceeded with weather in the wild sea, and left in this land their wives and their children, and Vortiger the king, who loved them through all things. With much grief of mind Vortiger gan away fare; so long they proceeded, that in Saxland they were (arrived). Then were in Britain the Britons most bold; they assumed to them mickle mood, and did all that seemed good to them; and Vortimer, the young king, was doughty man through all things. And Vortiger, his father, proceeded over this Britain, but it was no man so poor, that did not revile him, and so he gan to wander full five years. And his son Vortimer dwelt here powerful king, and all this nation loved him greatly. He was mild to each man, and taught the folk God's law, the young and the old, how they should hold Christendom.

He sent letters to Rome, to the excellent Pope, who was named Saint Romain—all Christendom he made glad.—He took two bishops, holy men they were both, Germain and Louis, of Auxerre and of Troyes; they proceeded out of Rome, so that they hither came. Then was Vortimer so blithe as he was never ere here; he and all his knights went forth-right on their bare feet towards the bishops, and with much mirth mouths there kissed. Now mayest thou hear of the King Vortimer, how he spake with Saint Germain,—for their coming he was glad. “Listen to me, lordings, I am king of this people; I hight Vortimer, my brother hight Catiger; and Vortiger hight our father—miscounsel followeth him! He hath brought into this land heathen people; but we have put them to flight, as our full foes, and felled with weapon many thousands of them, and sent them over sea-stream, so that they never shall come again. And we shall in land worship our Lord, comfort God's folk, and friendly it maintain, and be mild to the land-tillers; churches



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we shall honour, and heathendom hate. Each good man shall have his right, if God it will grant, and each thral and each slave be set free. And here I give to you in hand each church-land all free; and I forgive to each widow her lord's testament, and each shall love other as though they were brothers. And thus we shall in our day put down Hengest's laws, and him and his heathendom that he hither brought, and deceived my father through his treacherous crafts; through his daughter Rowenne he betrayed my father. And my father so evilly began, that he shunned the Christendom, and loved the heathen laws too much, which we shall avoid the while that we live."

Then answered Saint Germain—for such words he was glad—"I thank my Lord, who shaped the daylight, that he such mercy sent to mankind!" These bishops proceeded over this land, and set it all in God's hand, and the Christendom they righted, and the folk thereto instructed; and then soon thereafter they departed to Rome, and said to the Pope, who was named Romain, how they had done here, restored the Christendom. And thus it stood a time in the same wise.

Go we yet to Vortiger—of all kings be he most wretched!—he loved Rowenne, of the heathen race, Hengest's daughter, she seemed to him well soft. Rowenne bethought her what she might do, how she might avenge her father and her friends' death. Oft she sent messengers to Vortimer the king; she sent him treasures of many a kind, of silver and of gold, the best of any land; she asked his favour, that she might here dwell with Vortiger his father, and follow his counsels. The king for his father's request granted to her her prayer, except that she should do well, and love the Christendom; all that the king yearned, all she it granted. But alas! that Vortimer was not aware of her thought; alas! that the good king of her thought knew nothing; that he knew not the treachery that the wicked woman thought!

It befell on a time she betook her to counsel, that she would go to the King Vortimer, and do by his counsel all her need, and at what time she might do well, and receive the Christendom. Forth she gan ride to Vortimer the king; when she him met, fair she greeted him: "Hail be thou, lord king, Britain's darling! I am come to thee; Christendom I will receive, on the same day that thou thyself deemest fit."

Then was Vortimer the king blithe through all things; he weened that it were sooth what the wretch said. Trumpets there blew, bliss was in the court; forth men brought the water before the king; they sate then at the board with much bliss. When the king had eaten, then went the thanes-men to meat; in hall they drank; harps there resounded. The treacherous Rowenne went to a tun, wherein was placed the king's dearest wine. She took in hand a bowl of red gold, and she gan to pour out on the king's bench. When she saw her time, she filled her vessel with wine, and before all the company she went to the king,



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and thus the treacherous woman hailed him (drank his health): “Lord king, wassail, for thee I am most joyful!” Hearken now the great treachery of the wicked woman, how she gan there betray the King Vortimer! The king received her fair, to his own destruction. Vortimer spake British, and Rowenne Saxish; to the king it seemed game enow, for her speech he laughed. Hearken how she took on, this deceitful woman! In her bosom she bare, beneath her teats, a golden phial filled with poison; and the wicked Rowenne drank (or drenched) the bowl, until she had half done, after the king’s will. The while that the king laughed, she drew out the phial; the bowl she set to her chin, the poison she poured in the wine, and afterwards she delivered the cup to the king; the king drank all the wine, and the poison therein. The day forth passed, bliss was in the court, for Vortimer the good king of the treachery knew nothing, for he saw Rowenne hold the bowl, and drink half of the same wine that she had put therein. When it came to the night, then separated the courtiers; and the evil Rowenne went to her inn, and all her knights with her forth-right. Then ordered she her swains, and eke the thanes all, that they in haste their horse should saddle; and they most still to steal out of the burgh, and proceed all by night to Thwongchester forth-right, and there most fast to inclose them in a castle, and lie to Vortiger, that his son would besiege him. And Vortiger the false king believed the leasing.

Now understood Vortimer, his son, that he had taken poison; might no leechcraft help him any whit. He took many messengers, and sent over his land, and bade all his knights to come to him forth-right. When the folk was arrived, then was the king exceeding ill; then asked the king their peace, and thus he spake with them all: “Of all knights are ye best that serve any king; there is of me no other hap, but that speedily I be dead. Here I deliver you my land, all my silver and all my gold, and all my treasures—your worship is the greater. And ye forth-right send after knights, and give them silver and gold, and hold ye yourselves your land, and avenge you, if ye can, of Saxish men; for when as I be departed, Hengest will make care to you. And take ye my body, and lay in a chest, and carry me to the sea strand, where Saxish men will come on land; anon as they know me there, away they will go; neither alive nor dead dare they abide me!”

Among all this discourse the good king died; there was weeping, there was lament, and piteous cries! They took the king’s body, and carried to London, and beside Belyns-gate buried him fair; and carried him no whit as the king ordered. Thus lived Vortimer, and thus he ended there.

Then the Britons fell into evil counsel; they took Vortiger anon, and delivered him all this kingdom; there was a well rueful thing, now was eft Vortiger king! Vortiger took his messengers, and sent to Saxland, and greeted well Hengest, fairest of all knights, and bade him in haste to come to this land, and with him should bring here a hundred riders. “For that know thou through all things, that dead is Vortimer the king, and safe

thou mayest hither come, for dead is Vortimer my son. It is no need for thee to bring with thee much folk, lest our Britons eft be angry, so that sorrow eft come between you.”



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Hengest assembled a host of many kind of land, so that he had to wit seven hundred ships, and each ship he filled with three hundred knights; in the Thames at London Hengest came to land. The tidings came full soon to Vortiger the king, that Hengest was in haven with seven hundred ships. Oft was Vortiger woe, but never worse than then, and the Britons were sorry, and sorrowful in heart; they knew not in the worlds-realm counsel that were to them pleasing. Hengest was of evil ware—that he well showed there—he took soon his messengers, and sent to the king, and greeted Vortiger the king with words most fair, and said that he was come as a father should to his son; with peace and with friendship he would dwell in amity; peace he would love, and wrong he would shun; peace he would have, peace he would hold; and all this nation he would love, and love Vortiger the king through all things. But he had brought, in this land, out of Saxland, seven hundred ships of heathen folk, “who are the bravest of all men that dwell under the sun, and I will,” quoth Hengest, “lead them all to the king, at a set day, before all his people. And the king shall arise, and choose of the knights two hundred knights, to lead to his fight, who shall guard the king preciously through all things. And afterwards the others shall depart to their land, with peace and with amity, again to Saxland; and I will remain with the best of all men, that is Vortiger the king, whom I love through all things.” The tidings came to the Britons how Hengest them promised; then were they fain for his fair words, and set they peace and set amity to such a time that the king on a day would see this folk. Hengest heard that, fairest of all knights; then was he so blithe as he was never ere in life, for he thought to deceive the king in his realm. Here became Hengest wickedest of knights; so is every man that deceiveth one, who benefits him. Who would ween, in this worlds-realm, that Hengest thought to deceive the king who had his daughter! For there is never any man, that men may not over-reach with treachery. They took an appointed day, that these people should come them together with concord and with peace, in a plain that was pleasant beside Ambresbury; the place was Aelenge, now hight it Stonehenge. There Hengest the traitor either by word or by writ made known to the king, that he would come with his forces, in honour of the king, but he would not bring in retinue but three hundred knights, the wisest men of all that he might find. And the king should bring as many on his side bold thanes, and who should be the wisest of all that dwelt in Britain, with their good vestments, all without weapons, that no evil should happen to them, through confidence of the weapons. Thus they it spake, and eft they it brake, for Hengest the traitor thus gan he teach his comrades, that each should take a long saex (knife), and lay by his shank, within his hose, where he it might hide. When they came together, the Saxons and Britons, then quoth



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Hengest, most deceitful of all knights: “Hail be thou, lord king, each is to thee thy subject! If ever any of thy men hath weapon by his side, send it with friendship far from ourselves, and be we in amity, and speak we of concord; how we may with peace our lives live.” Thus the wicked man spake there to the Britons. Then answered Vortiger—here he was too unwary—“If here is any knight so wild, that hath weapon by his side, he shall lose the hand through his own brand, unless he soon send it hence.” Their weapons they sent away, then had they nought in hand;—knights went upward, knights went downward, each spake with other as if he were his brother.

When the Britons were mingled with the Saxons, then called Hengest, of knights most treacherous, “Take your saexes, my good warriors, and bravely bestir you, and spare ye none!” Noble Britons were there, but they knew not of the speech, what the Saxish men said them between. They drew out the saexes, all aside; they smote on the right side, they smote on the left side, before and behind they laid them to the ground, all they slew that they came nigh; of the king’s men there fell four hundred and five—woe was the king alive! Then Hengest grasped him with his grim gripe, and drew him to him by the mantle, so that the strings brake. And the Saxons set on him, and would the king kill, and Hengest gan him defend, and would not suffer it; but he held him full fast, the while the fight lasted. There was many noble Briton bereaved of the life! Some they fled quickly over the broad plain, and defended them with stones, for weapons had they none. There was fight exceeding hard, there fell many a good knight! There was a bold churl of Salisbury come, he bare on his back a great strong club.

Then was there a noble earl, named Aldolf, knight with the best, he possessed Gloucester, he leapt to the churl, as if it were a lion, and took from him the club, that he bare on his back; whomsoever he smote therewith, there forth-right he died; before and behind he laid them to the ground. Three and fifty there he slew and afterwards drew towards a steed, he leapt upon the steed, and quickly gan him ride, he rode to Gloucester, and the gates locked full fast. And anon forth-right caused his knights to arm, and marched over all the land, and took what they found, they took cattle, they took corn, and all that they found alive, and brought to the burgh with great bliss; the gates they closed fast, and well them guarded.

Let we it thus stand, and speak we of the king. The Saxons leapt towards him, and would kill the king, but Hengest called forth-right, “Stop, my knights, ye shall him not destroy; for us he hath had much care, and he hath for queen my daughter who is fair. But all his burghs he shall deliver to us, if he will enjoy his life, or else is sorrow given to him.” Then was Vortiger fast bound, gyves exceeding great they put on his feet, he might not ever bite meat,



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nor speak with any friend, ere he had to them sworn upon relic that was choice, that he would deliver them all this kingdom, in hand, burghs and castles, and all his kingdoms. And all so he did, as it was deemed. And Hengest took in his hand all this rich kingdom, and divided among his people much of this land. He gave an earl all Kent, as it lay by London, he gave his steward Essex, and on his chamberlain he bestowed Middlesex. The knights received it, and a while they held it, the while Vortiger proceeded over this land, and delivered to Hengest his noble burghs. And Hengest forth-right placed his knights therein, the while much of the baser people lay in Sussex, and in Middlesex much of the race, and in Essex their noblest folk. The meat they carried off, all that they found, they violated the women, and God's law brake, they did in the land all that they would.

The Britons saw that, that mischief was in the land, and how the Saxish men were come to them. The Britons shaped to the land a name for the shame of Saxish men, and for the treachery that they had done, and for that cause that they with knives bereaved them of life, then called they all the land East-Sex and West-Sex, and the third Middle-Sex. Vortiger the king gave them all this land, so that a turf of land did not remain to him in hand. And Vortiger himself fled over Severn, far into Welsh-land, and there he gan tarry, and his retinue with him, that poor was become. And he had in hoard treasure most large, he caused his men to ride wide and far, and caused to be summoned to him men of each kind, whosoever would yearn his fee with friendship. That heard the Britons, that heard the Scots, they came to him riding, thereafter full soon; on each side thither they gan ride, many a noble man's son, for gold and for treasure. When he had together sixty thousand men, then assembled he the nobles that well could advise: "Good men, say me counsel, for to me is great need, where I might in wilderness work a castle, wherein I might live with my men, and hold it against Hengest with great strength, until that I might the better win my burghs, and avenge me of my enemies who felled my friends, and have all my kingdom wrested out of my hand, and thus driven me out, my full foes?" Then answered a wise man, who well could counsel: "Listen now to me, lord king, and I will show to thee a good thing; upon the mount of Reir I will advise, that thou work a castle with strong stone wall, for there thou mightest dwell, and live with joy; and yet thou hast in thy hand much silver and gold, to maintain thy people who shall thee help, and so thou mightest in life live best of all." Then answered the king: "Let it be made known in haste, over my numerous host, that I will go to the mount of Reir, and rear there a castle."



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Forth went the king, and the host with him; when they thither came, a dyke they began soon; horns there blew, machines hewed; lime they gan to burn, and over the land to run, and all west Welsh-land set in Vortiger's hand; all they it took, that they nigh came. When the dyke was dug, and thoroughly deepened, then began they a wall on the dyke over all, and they laid together lime and stone; of machines there was plenty—five-and-twenty hundred! In the day they laid the wall, in the night it fell over all, in the morrow they reared it, in the night it gan to tumble! Full a se'nright so it them served, each day they raised it, and each night it gan fall! Then was the king sorry, and sorrowful through all things, so was all the host terribly afraid; for ever they looked when Hengest should come upon them.

The king was full sorry, and sent after sages, after world-wise men, who knew wisdom, and bade them cast lots, and try incantations, try the truth with their powerful craft, on what account it were, that the wall that was so strong might not ever stand a night long. These world wise men there went in two parties, some they went to the wood, some to the cross ways; they gan to cast lots with their incantations, full three nights their crafts there they practised, they might never find, through never anything, on what account it were, that the wall that was so strong every night fell down, and the king lost his labour. But there was one sage, he was named Joram, he said that he it found—but it seemed leasing—he said that if men found in ever any land, ever any male child, that never had father, and opened his breast, and took of his blood, and mingled with the lime, and laid in the wall, that then might it stand to the world's end. The word came to the king, of the leasing, and he it believed, though it were false. Soon he took his messengers, and sent over all the land, so far as they for care (fear) of death durst anyways fare, and in each town hearkened the rumours, where they might find speak of such a child.

These knights forth proceeded wide over the land; two of the number went a way that lay right west, that lay forth-right in where now Caermarthen is. Beside the burgh, in a broad way, all the burgh-lads had a great play. These knights were weary, and in heart exceeding sorry, and sate down by the play, and beheld these lads. After a little time they began striving—as it was ever custom among children's play,—the one smote the other, and he these blows suffered. Then was exceeding wrath Dinabuz toward Merlin, and thus quoth Dinabuz, who had the blow: “Merlin, wicked man, why hast thou thus done to me? Thou hast done me much shame, therefore thou shalt have grief. I am a king's son, and thou art born of nought; thou oughtest not in any spot to have free man's abode, for so was all the adventure, thy mother was a whore, for she knew not ever the man that begat thee on her, nor haddest thou any father among mankind. And thou in our land makest us to be shamed, thou art among us come, and art son of no man; thou shalt therefore in this day suffer death.” The knights heard this, where they were aside; they arose up, and went near, and earnestly asked of this strange tale, that they heard of the lad.



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Then was in Caermarthen a reve that hight Eli; the knights quickly came to the reve, and thus to him said soon with mouth:

“We are here-right Vortiger’s knights, and have found here a young lad he is named Merlin, we know no whit his kin. Take him in haste, and send him to the king, as thou wilt live, and thy limbs have, and his mother with him, who bore him to be man. If thou this wilt do, the king will receive them, and if thou carest it not, therefore thou wilt be driven out, and this burgh all consumed, this folk all destroyed.” Then answered Eli, the reve of Caermarthen “Well I wot, that all this land stands in Vortiger’s hand, and we are all his men—his honour is the more!—and we shall do this gladly, and perform his will.” Forth went the reve, and the burghers his associates, and found Merlin, and his playfellows with him Merlin they took, and his companions laughed, when that Merlin was led away, then was Dinabuz full glad, he weened that he were led away for to lose his limbs, but all another way set the doom, ere it were all done.

Now was Merlin’s mother strangely become in a noble minster a hooded nun. Thither went Eli, the reve of Caermarthen, and took him the good lady, where she lay in the minster, and forth gan him run to the King Vortiger, and much folk with him, and led the nun and Merlin. The word (tidings) was soon made known to the King Vortiger’s mouth, that Eli was come, and had brought the lady, and that Merlin her son was with her there come. Then was Vortiger blithe in life, and received the lady, with looks most fair and honour promised, and Merlin he delivered to twelve good knights, who were faithful to the king, and him should guard. Then said the King Vortiger, with the nun he spake there: “Good lady, say to me—well it shall be to thee—where wert thou born, who begat thee to be child?” Then answered the nun, and named her father:—“The third part of all this land stood in my father’s hand, of the land he was king, known it was wide, he was named Conaan, lord of knights.” Then answered the king, as if she were of his kin: “Lady, say thou it to me—well it shall be to thee—here is Merlin thy son, who begat him? Who was held for father to him among the folk?” Then hung she her head, and bent toward her breast; by the king she sate full softly, and thought a little while, after a while she spake, and said to the king: “King, I will tell thee marvellous stories. My father Conaan the king loved me through all things, then became I in stature wondrously fair. When I was fifteen years of age, then dwelt I in bower, in my mansion, my maidens with me, wondrously fair. And when I was in bed in slumber, with my soft sleep, then came before me the fairest thing that ever was born, as if it were a tall knight, arrayed all of gold. This I saw in dream each night in sleep. This thing glided before me, and glistened of gold, oft it me kissed, and oft it me embraced, oft it approached



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me, and oft it came to me very nigh; when I at length looked to myself—strange this seemed to me—my meat to me was loathsome, my limbs unusual, strange it seemed to me, what it might be! Then perceived I at the end that I was with child, when my time came, this boy I had. I know not in this world what his father were, nor who begat him in this worlds-realm, nor whether it were evil thing, or on God's behalf dight. Alas! as I pray for mercy, I know not any more to say to thee of my son, how he is come to the world." The nun bowed her head down, and covered her features.

The king bethought him what he might do, and drew to him good councillors to counsel, and they said him counsel with the best, that he should send for Magan, who was a marvellous man.—He was a wise clerk, and knew of many crafts; he would advise well, he could far direct, he knew of the craft that dwelleth in the sky (astronomy), he could tell of each history (or language). Magan came to court where the king dwelt, and greeted the king with goodly words: "Hail be thou and sound, Vortiger the king! I am come to thee, show me thy will." Then answered the king, and told the clerk all, how the nun had said, and asked him thereof counsel, from the beginning to the end, all he him told. Then said Magan: "I know full well hereon. There dwell in the sky many kind of beings, that there shall remain until domesday arrive; some they are good, and some they work evil. Therein is a race very numerous, that cometh among men; they are named full truly Incubi Daemones; they do not much harm, but deceive the folk; many a man in dream oft they delude, and many a fair woman through their craft childeth anon, and many a good man's child they beguile through magic. And thus was Merlin begat, and born of his mother, and thus it is all transacted," quoth the clerk Magan.

Then said Merlin to the king himself: "King, thy men have taken me, and I am to thee come, and I would learn what is thy will, and for what thing I am brought to the king?" Then said the king with quick speech: "Merlin, thou art hither come; thou art son of no man! Much thou longest after loath speech; learn thou wilt the adventure—now thou shalt hear it. I have begun a work with great strength, that hath my treasure well much taken away; five thousand men work each day thereon. And I have lime and stone, in the world is none better, nor in any land workmen so good. All that they lay in the day—in sooth I may say it—ere day in the morrow all it is down; each stone from the other felled to the ground! Now say my wise and my sage men, that if I take thy blood, out of thy breast, and work my will, and put to my lime, then may it stand to the world's end. Now thou knowest it all, how it shall be to thee." Merlin heard this, and angered in his mood, and said these words, though he were wrath: "God himself, who is lord of men, will it never, that the castle should stand for my heart's blood, nor



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ever thy stone wall lie still. For all thy sages are exceeding deceitful, they say leasings before thyself—that thou shalt find in this day's space. For Joram said this, who is my full foe; the tidings seem to me sport, I was shapen to his bane! Let Joram thy sage come before thee, and all his companions, forth-right here, who told these leasings to the king, and if I say thee my sooth words of thy wall, and why it down falleth, and with sooth it prove, that their tales are leasing, give me their heads, if I thy work heal." Then answered the king with quick voice: "So help me my hand, this covenant I hold thee!"

To the king was brought Joram the sage, and seven of his companions— all they were fated to die! Merlin angered, and he spake wrathly:— "Say me, Joram, traitor— loathsome to me in heart—why falleth this wall to the ground, say me why it happeneth that the wall falleth, what men may find at the dyke's bottom?" Joram was still, he could not tell. Then said Merlin these words: "King, hold to me covenant! Cause this dyke to be dug anon seven feet deeper than it is now; they shall find a stone wondrously fair, it is fair and broad, for folk to behold." The dyke was dug seven feet deeper, then they found anon there-right the stone. Then said Merlin these words: "King, hold to me covenant! Say to me, Joram, man to me most hateful, and say to this king what kind of thing hath taken station under this stone?" Joram was still; he could not tell.

Then said Merlin a wonder: "A water here is under; do away this stone, the water ye shall find anon." They did away the stone before the king anon, the water they found anon. Then said Merlin: "Ask me Joram, who is my full foe, after a while, to say thee of the bottom, what dwelleth in the water, winter and summer." The king asked Joram, but he knew nought thereof. The yet said Merlin these words: "King, hold to me covenant! Cause this water to be carried off, and away cast; there dwell at the bottom two strong dragons; the one is on the north side, the other on the south side, the one is milk-white, to each beast unlike, the other as red as blood, boldest of all worms! Each midnight they begin to fight, and through their fight thy works fell, the earth began to sink, and thy wall to tumble; and through such wonder thy wall is fallen, that happened in this flood, and not for my blood." This water was all carried off; the king's men were glad, great was the bliss before the monarch, and soon there-after they were sorry; ere the day came to an end, strange tidings they heard.

When the water was all carried off, and the pit was empty, then came out these two dragons, and made great din, and fought fiercely down in the dyke. Never saw any man any loathlier fight; flames of fire flew from their mouths! The monarch saw this fight, their grim gestures; then was he astonished in this worlds-realm, what this tokening were, that he saw there at the bottom, and how Merlin knew it, that no other man knew. First was the white above, and afterwards he was beneath, and the red dragon wounded him to death; and either went to his hole— no man born saw them afterwards! Thus fared this thing that Vortiger the king saw. And all that were with him



loved Merlin greatly; and the king hated Joram, and deprived him of his head, and all his seven comrades that with him were there.



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The king went to his house, and led Merlin with him, and said to him with much love: "Merlin, thou art welcome, and I will give thee all that thou desirest, of my land, of silver and of gold." He weened through Merlin to win all the land, but it happened all otherwise ere the day's end came. The king thus asked his dear friend Merlin, "Say me now, Merlin, man to me dearest, what betoken the dragons that made the din, and the stone, and the water, and the wondrous fight? Say me, if thy will is, what betokeneth all this? And afterwards thou must counsel me how I shall guide me, and how I may win my kingdom from Hengest, my wife's father, who hath harmed me greatly." Then answered Merlin to the king that spake with him: "King, thou art unwise, and foolish in counsel, thou askest of the dragons that made the din, and what betokened their fight, and their fierce assaults? They betoken kings that yet are to come, and their fight, and their adventure, and their fated folk! But if thou wert so wise a man, and so prudent in thought, that thou haddest inquired of me of thy many sorrows, thy great care, that is to come to thee, I would say to thee of thy sorrow." Then quoth Vortiger the king: "Dear friend Merlin, say me of the things that are to come to me." "Blithely," quoth Merlin, with bold voice, "I will say to thee; but ever it will thee rue. King, king, be-see thee (see to thyself), sorrow is to thee given of Constantine's kin!—his son thou killedest; thou causedest Constance to be slain, who was king in this land; thou causedst thy Peohtes to betray (or destroy) him basely; therefore thou shalt suffer sorrows most of all! Afterwards thou drewest upon thee foreign people, the Saxons to this land, therefore thou shalt be destroyed! Now are the barons of Britain arrived; it is, Aurelie and Uther—now thou art thereof aware;—they shall come to-morrow, full truly, in this land at Totnes, I do thee well to wit, with seven hundred ships; and now they sail speedily in the sea. Thou hast much evil done to them, and now thou must the harm receive; thou hast on both sides bane that to thee shall seem; for now thy foes are before thee, and thy enemies behind. But flee, flee thy way, and save thy life—and flee whither that thou fleest, they will pursue after thee! Ambrosie Aurelie he shall have first this kingdom; but he through draught of poison shall suffer death. And afterwards shall Uther Pendragon have this kingdom; but thy kin shall kill him with poison; but ere he suffer death, he shall din (contest) make. Uther shall have a son, out of Cornwall he shall come, that shall be a wild boar, bristled with steel; the boar shall consume the noble burghs; he shall destroy (or devour) all the traitors with authority; he shall kill with death all thy rich kindred; he shall be man most brave, and noble in thought; hence into Rome this same shall rule; all his foes he shall fell to the ground. Sooth I have said to thee, but it is not to thee the softer;—but flee with thine host, thy foes come to thee to thy court!" Then Merlin the wise ceased his words, and the king caused thirteen trumpets to be blown, and marched forth with his army exceeding quickly. There was not forth-right but space of one night, that the brothers came, both together, to the sea-strand full truly, at Dartmouth in Totnes.



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The Britons heard this, and were full surely blithe; they drew themselves out of the woods, and out of the wilderness, by sixty, and by sixty, and by seven hundred, by thirty, and by thirty, and by many thousands—when they came together, full good it seemed to them! And the brothers brought to this land a numerous host, and here came before them these bold Britons, a numerous folk, who would it all avenge, that ere were over the woods wondrously scattered, through the mickle dread, and through the great misery, and through the mickle harm that Hengest wrought them, and who had murdered all their chief men with knives, with axes cut in pieces the good thanes! The Britons held husting with great wisdom; they took anon Aurelie, the elder brother, in the noble husting, and raised him to be king. Then were the Britons filled with bliss, blithe in mood who ere were mournful. These tidings came to Vortiger the king, that Aurelie was chosen and raised to be king. Then was Vortiger woe, and eft to him was worse! Vortiger proceeded far to a castle, named Genoure, upon a high mount; Cloard hight the mount, and Hergin hight the land, near the Wye, that is a fair water (stream). Vortiger's men took all that they came nigh; they took weapons and meat, on many a wise; to the castle they brought as much as they cared for, so that they had enow, though it little helped them. Aurehe and Uther were aware of Vortiger, where he was upon Cloard, inclosed in a castle. They caused trumpets to be blown, their host to be assembled—a numerous folk of many a land—they marched to Genoure, where Vortiger lay. A king was within, a king was without; knights there fought with fierce encounters; every good man made himself ready. When they saw that they had not the victory, then a wondrous great force went to the wood; they felled the wood down, and drew to the castle, and filled all the dyke that was wondrously deep. And fire they sent in, on every side, and called to Vortiger: “Now thou shalt warm thee there, for thou slewest Constance, who was king of this land, and afterwards Constantine his son. Now is Aurelie come, and Uther his brother, who send thee bale!” The wind wafted the fire, so that it burnt wonderfully; the castle gan to burn, the chambers there were consumed; the halls fell to the ground. Might no man there against the fire make fight; the fire went over all, and burnt house, and burnt wall; and the King Vortiger therein he gan to burn; all it was consumed that therein dwelt! Thus ended there, with mickle harm, Vortiger!

Then Aurelie had all the land in his hand. There was the strong earl, named Aldolf, he was of Gloucester, of all knights skilfullest; there in the land Aurehe made him his steward. Then had Aurelie, and Uther his brother, felled their foes, and were therefore the blither! Hengest heard this, strongest of all knights; then was he afraid exceeding greatly. He marched his host, and fled toward the Scots, and Aurelie the king went after him in haste. And



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Hengest thought that he would, with all his army, if men pursued him, flee into Scotland, so that he might thence with guile escape, if he might not for Aurelie remain in the land. Aurelie marched forth, and led his host right north, with all his might, full a se'nnight. The Britons were bold, and proceeded over the weald. Then had Aurelie a numerous force; he found ravaged land, the people slain, and all the churches burnt, and the Britons consumed. Then said Aurelie the king, Britain's darling: "If I might abide, that I should back ride; and if the Lord it will, who shaped the daylight, that I might in safety obtain my right (or country), churches I will arear, and God I will worship. I will give to each man his right, and to every person, the old and the young, I will be gracious, if God will grant to me my land to win!"

Tidings came to Hengest of Aurelie the king, that he brought an army of innumerable folk. Then spake Hengest, most treacherous of all knights: "Hearken now, my men—honour to you is given—here cometh Aurelie, and Uther eke, his brother; they bring very much folk, but all they are fated! For the king is unwise, so are his knights, and a knave is his brother, the one as the other; therefore may Britons be much the un-bolder, when the head (leader) is bad, the heap (multitude) is the worse. And well ye may it remember, what I will say; better are fifty of us, than of them five hundred—that they many times have found, since they in land sought the people. For known it is wide, of our bold feats, that we are chosen warriors with the best! We shall against them stand, and drive them from land, and possess this realm after our will." Thus bold Hengest, fairest of all knights, emboldened his host, where he was in field, but otherwise it was disposed ere came the day a se'nnight. Forth came the tidings to Aurelie the king, where Hengest abode upon a mount.

Aurelie had for companions thirty thousand riders, bold Britons, who made their threat; and eke he had Welsh, wondrously many. Then caused he his knights to be ever weaponed, day and night, as if they should go to battle; for ever he had care of the heathen folk. And Aurelie with his host marched quickly towards him. When Hengest heard that Aurelie was near, he took his army, and marched against him. When Aurelie was aware that Hengest would come there, he went into a field, well weaponed under shield; he took forth-right ten thousand knights, that were the best born and chosen of his force, and set them in the field, on foot under shield. Ten thousand Welsh he sent to the wood; ten thousand Scots he sent aside, to meet the heathens by ways and by streets; himself he took his earls and his good warriors, and his faithfulest men, that he had in hand, and made his shield-troop, as it were a wild wood; five thousand there rode, who should all this folk well defend. Then called Aldolf, Earl of Gloucester, "If the Lord, that ruleth all dooms, grant it to me, that I might abide, that Hengest should come riding, who has in this land so long remained, and betrayed my dear friends with his long axes beside Ambresbury, with miserable death! But if I might of the earl win to me the country; then might I say my sooth words, that God himself had granted good to me,



if I might fell my foes to ground anon, and avenge my dear kindred, whom they have laid adown!"



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Scarcely was this speech said to the end, that they saw Hengest approach over the down. With a numerous host they fiercely marched, together soon they came, and terribly they slew, there the stern men together rushed themselves, helms there gan resound, knights there fell, steel went against the bones, mischief there was rife; streams of blood flowed in the ways; the fields were dyed, and the grass changed colour! When Hengest saw that his help failed him, then withdrew he from the fight, and fled aside, and his folk after speedily moved. The Christians pursued after, and laid on them, and called Christ, God's son, to be to them in aid; and the heathen people also called loud, "Our God Tervagant, why failest thou us now?" When Hengest saw the heathens recede, and the Christian men come upon them, then fled Hengest through and through, until he came to Coningsburgh; in the burgh he went, safety to obtain. And the King Aurelie went after him anon, and called to his people with loud voice: "Run ever forth and forth! Hengest is gone northwards!" And they pursued after him until they came to the burgh. When Hengest and his son saw all the host come after them, then said Hengest, of all knights wrathest, "Will I no more flee, but now I will fight, and my son Octa, and his wed-brother Ebissa! And all my army, stir ye your weapons, and march we against them, and make we strong slaughter! And if we fell them not, then be we dead, laid on the field, and deprived of friends!" Hengest marched on the weald, and left all his tents; and made his shield troop all of his heathen men. Then came Aurelie the king, and many thousands with him, and began there another fight, that was exceeding strong; there was many great stroke dealt in the combat! There were the Christians well nigh overcome. Then approached there five thousand riders, that Aurelie had on horse to fight; they smote on the heathens, so that they down fell; there was fight most strong, combat full stern!

In the fight came the Earl Aldolf of Gloucester, and found Hengest, wickedest of knights, where he fought fiercely, and felled the Christians. Aldolf drew his good sword, and upon Hengest smote; and Hengest cast the shield before him, and else were his life destroyed; and Aldolf smote on the shield, so that it was shivered in two. And Hengest leapt to him, as if it were a lion, and smote upon Aldolf's helm, so that it parted in two. Then hewed they with swords—the strokes were grim—fire flew from the steel, oft and well frequent! After a time, then leapt Aldolf to the ground, and saw by him Gorlois, who was a keen man full truly; of Cornwall he was earl, he was widely known. Then was the baron Aldolf much the bolder, and heaved high his sword, and let it down swing, and smote Hengest on the hand, so that he let go his good brand; and in haste grasped him, with his grim looks, by the cuirasses hood that was on his head, and with great strength struck him down; and then he him up drew, as if he



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would crush him, and with arms embraced him, and forth him led. Now was Hengest taken, through Aldolf, the brave man! Then called Aldolf, the Earl of Gloucester: "Hengest, it is not so merry for thee now as it was whilom by Ambresbury, where thou drewest the axes, and slew the Britons, with much treachery thou slewest my kindred! Now thou shalt pay retribution, and lose thy friends; with cruel death perish in the world!" Hengest proceeded still (without speaking); he saw no help; Aldolf led him to his sovereign, and greeted the sovereign with loving words: "Hail be thou, Aurelie, of noble race! Here I bring before thee Hengest, the heathen, who was thy kindred's bane, who hath sought to us harm; God granted it to me, that I have him grasped! Now I give him to thee, for dearest of men art thou to me; and let thy attendants play with this hound, shoot with their arrows, and his race anon destroy!" Then answered the king with quick voice: "Blessed be thou, Aldolf, noblest of all earls! Thou art to me dear as my life, thou shalt be chief of people!" There men took Hengest, and there men bound Hengest; there was then Hengest of all knights most wretched! This fight was overcome, and the heathens fled. Then saw Octa, that his father was full woe; and with Ebissa, his wed brother, joined them together, and fled into York, with harm enow, and made ready the walls, and pulled down the halls. Some of the heathens went to the wood, where the folk on foot laid them to ground.

Then was Aurelie the king pleased well through all things; he proceeded into Coningsburgh, with all his folk, and thanked the Lord for such might. Three days and three nights the king dwelt there forth-right, to heal the wounds of his dear knights, and rest in the burgh their weary bones. When the third day came, and the folk had made none, then caused the king the trumpets to blow, and summoned his earls, that they should come to husting, to Aurelie the king. When they came together, the king asked them soon, what they would counsel him, who were his rich men, by what death Hengest should die, and how he might best avenge his dearest friends, who lay buried near Ambresbury.

Then stood up Eldadus, and with the king he spake thus;—towards God he was good, he was a holy bishop, Aldolf the earl's brother, he had no other:—"Lord king, listen now to me, what I will thee tell. I will make the sentence, how he shall be put to death. For he is most hateful of men to us in the world, and hath slain our kindred, and deprived of life-day; and he is a heathen hound—hell he shall seek; there he shall sink for his treachery! Lord king, hearken to me, what I thee will tell. A king was in Jerusalem, who was named Saul; and in heathendom was a king of mickle might, who was named Agag—Jerusalem he hated—he was king of the Amalech—the Worse was full nigh to him! Ever he hated Jerusalem with harm the most; never would he give them peace, but ever he withstood them; he burnt them, he slew



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them, he did them sorrow enow! It fell on a time that the sun gan to shine; then sate Agag the king on his high chair; his fated blood was troubled, and urged him to march. He called his knights anon forth-right: 'Quick to your steeds! and forth we shall ride; we shall burn and slay all about Jerusalem!' Forth went the king, and a great host with him; the land they gan through-run, and the towns to consume. The men saw that who dwelt in Jerusalem; and they advanced against them, knights and swains, and fought with the king, and with fight him overcame, and slew all his folk, and Agag the king they took; and so they with him came to Saul the king. Then was Saul the king blithe through all things! The king asked counsel at his rich knights anon, which he might the better do to him, either slay or up hang. Then leapt up Samuel, a prophet of Israel;—he was a man exceeding holy, high toward the Lord; no man knew in those days man so high in God's law. Samuel took Agag the king, and led him in the market-place, and caused him most fast to a stake to be bound; and took with his right hand a precious brand; and thus called to him Samuel, the good man: 'Thou hightest Agag the king, now thou art in sorrow! Now thou shalt receive the retribution for that thou destroyedest Jerusalem, for that thou hast this noble burgh so greatly injured, and many a good man slain, and deprived of life-day! As I hope for mercy, shalt thou do so no more.' Samuel heaved up the sword, and strongly down struck, and cut the king all in pieces in Jerusalem's market, and threw the pieces wide over the streets. Thus Samuel took-on (acted), and so oughtest thou do to Hengest."

Aldolf heard this, the Earl of Gloucester; toward Hengest he leapt, as if it were a lion, and grasped him by the head, and after him hauled him, and drew him through and through, and throughout all Coningsburgh; and without the burgh he caused him to be bound. Aldolf drew his sword, and smote off Hengest's head; and the king took him forth-right, because he was so brave a knight, and laid him in earth, after the heathen law, and prayed for the soul, that it never were happy.

And now Aurelie the king caused a husting to be summoned, and caused trumpets to be blown, and his army to assemble—there was wondrous folk—and marched right to York, and inclosed Octa with his men there within. The king caused a dyke to be dug, all about York, that no man might there either go out or in. Octa saw that; therefore he was full woe. And his heathen folk, that he had in the burgh, they betook them to counsel, what they might do. And thus spake Octa with his companion Ebissa: "I have now bethought me, what I will do. I and my knights shall forth-right in our bare-breech go out of the burgh, hang on my neck a chain, and come to the king, praying his mercy. We all shall else be dead, except we follow this counsel." And, they all did so, as Octa them advised; put off their clothes the careful knights, and proceeded out



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of the burgh, miserable thanes, twain and twain, twenty hundred! Aurelie beheld this, noblest of kings, strange it seemed to him of the naked knights. Together came the host that lay over the land; they saw Octa naked come, that was Hengest's son. He bare in his hand a long chain; he came to the king, and before his warriors he fell upon the ground, and the king's feet sought; and these words then said Hengest's son Octa: "Mercy, my lord king, through God the mild; for the love of God Almighty have mercy of my knights! For all our heathendom is become base, our laws and our people, for loathsome we are to the Lord. For us has failed in hand Appolin, and Tervagant, Woden, and Mercurius, Jupiter, and Saturnus, Venus, and Didon, Frea, and Mamilon, and all our beliefs are now to us odious, but we will believe on thy dear Lord, for all it faileth us now in hand, that we worshipped. We yearn thy favour, now and evermore; if thou wilt me grant peace, and if thou wilt me grant amity, we will draw to thee, and be thy faithful men; love thy people, and hold thy laws, if thou wilt not that, do thy will, whetherso (whatsoever) thou wilt do, or slay us or up hang us."

And the king was mild-hearted, and held him still; he beheld on the right hand, he beheld on the left hand, which of his wise men first would speak. They all were still, and kept silence with voice; was there no man so high, that durst a word utter; and ever lay Octa at the king's feet so; all his knights lay behind him. Then spake Aldadus, the good bishop, and said thus: "Ever it was, and ever it shall be, and yet it behoveth us, when we yearn mercy, that we should have mercy; worthy is he of mercy, who worthily prayeth for it. And thou thyself, lord king, thou art chief of the people, pardon thou Octa, and also his companions, if they will receive Christendom with good belief; for yet it may befall, in some country that they may fitly worship the Lord. Now stands all this kingdom in thine own hand, give them a place, where it shall be agreeable to thee, and take of them hostages, such as thou wilt require; and let them be well held in iron bonds; the hostages be found meat and clothes, be found all that to them shall belief; and then mightest thou well hold this people in thy land, and let them till the land, and live by their tilth. And if it subsequently shall befall, soon thereafter, that they fail in hand to hold troth, and weaken in work, and withstand thee, now I decree to thee the doom, what thou mayest then do. Cause men to ride to them exceeding quickly, and cause them all to be destroyed, slain and eke up hung. This I decree to thee; the Lord it hear!" Then answered the king, with quick voice: "All I will so do as thou hast deemed." Thus spake the king then: "Arise up, Octa; thou shalt quickly do well, receive Christendom." There was Octa baptised, and his companions also; and all his knights on the spot forth-right. They took their hostages, and gave to the king, three-and-fifty children they delivered to the king. And the king sent them beside Scotland; oaths they swore, that they would not deceive him. The king gave them in hand sixty hides of land, thereon they dwelt well many winters.



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The king was in York, good it seemed to him; he took his messengers, and sent over all his land, and ordered his bishops, his book-learned men, earls and thanes, to come towards him, to Aurelie the king, to a great husting. It soon came to pass, that they came together. The king greeted his folk with his fair words, he welcomed earls, he welcomed barons, and the bishops, and the book-learned men.—“I will say to you with sooth words, why I sent after you, and for what thing. Here I give to each knight his land and his right, and to every earl and every baron, what he may win, to possess it with joy; and each man I order to love peace, on his life. And I bid you all to work and build the churches that are fallen, to let the bells ring, to sing God’s praise, and each with our might to worship our dear Lord; each man by his might to hold peace and amity, and cause the land to be tilled, now it is all in my hand.” When this doom was all said, they all praised this counsel. The king gave them leave to depart thence; each fared homeward, as to them it best seemed.

Full seven nights the king lay there still, and then he gan proceed into London, to gladden the burgh-folk, who oft were busy. He caused walls to be strengthened, he caused halls to be built, and all the works to be righted that ere were broken; and gave them all the laws that stood in their elders’ days; and he made there reves, to rule the folk. And thence he gan proceed right to Winchester; and there he caused to be worked halls and churches;—there it seemed to him most pleasant;—and afterwards he went to Ambresbury, to the burial-place of his dear friends, whom Hergest with knives had murdered there. He caused men anon to be inquired for, who could hew stone, and eke good wrights, who could work with axe, he thought to work there a work wondrously fair, that ever should last, the while men lived! Then was in Caerleon a bishop, that hight Tremoriun; he was a man exceeding wise in the worlds-realm; with the king he was, over the weald. And thus Tremoriun, God’s servant, spake there with the king, of a good thing: “Listen now to me, Aurelie, what I will make known to thee, and I will say to thee the best of all counsel, if thou wilt it approve, eft it will like to thee. We have a prophet, who is Merlin named; if any man might him find, upon this weald, and bring him to thee, through any kind of thing, and if thou his will wouldest perform, he would say to thee best of all counsel, how thou mightest this work make strong and stark, that ever might last, the while that men lived.” Then answered the king—these words were to him agreeable:—“Dear friend Tremoriun, all this I will do.” The king in haste sent his messengers over all his kingdom, and bade every man to ask after Merlin; and if men might him find, to bring him to the king, he would give him land, both silver and gold, and in the worlds-realm perform his will. The messengers gan to ride wide and far; some they went right north,



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and some they went forth south; some they went right east, and some they went right west, some they went anon, so that they came to Alaban, that is a fair well in Welsh land. The well he (Merlin) much loved, and oft therein bathed him; the knights him found where he sate by the strand. So soon as they him met, they greeted him fair; and thus said the two knights to him forth-right: "Hail be thou, Merlin, wisest of men! By us he who is a goodly king, named Aurelie, noblest of all kings, greets thee, and he beseecheth thee courteously, that thou come to him; and he will give land to thee, both silver and gold, if thou in the realm wilt counsel the king." Then answered Merlin, what to the knights was full woe: "I reckon not of his land, his silver, nor his gold, nor his clothes, nor his horses; myself I have enough." Then sate he still a long time. These knights were afraid, that he would flee. When it all brake forth, it was good that he spake: "Ye are two knights come right here; yesterday ere noon I knew that ye should come, and if I so would, ye might not have found me. Ye bring me greeting from Aurelie the king. I knew his qualities ere he came to land, and I knew the other, Uther his brother; I knew both ere they were born, though I never saw either with eye. But alas! alas! that it is so ordered, that the monarch may not live long! But now will I go, and be your companion; to the king I will proceed, and perform his will."

Forth went Merlin, and the knights with him, so long that they came to the sovereign. The good tidings came to the king; never ere in his life was the king so blithe, for ever any kind of man that came to him! The king went to his steed, and out gan him ride, and all his knights with him, to welcome Merlin. The king him met, and greeted him fair, he embraced him, he kissed him, he made him his familiar. Great was the mirth among the people, all for Merlin's arrival, who was son of no man. Alas! that in the world was no wise man that ever knew here whose son he were, but the Lord alone, who surveys (or explores) all clean! The king led to chamber Merlin who was dear; and he gan ask him anon with his fair words, that he should cause him to understand of the world's course, and of all the years that were to come, for it were to him greatly in will, that he thereof knew. Merlin then answered, and to the king said thus: "O Aurelie, the king, thou askest me a strange thing, look that thou no more such thing inquire. For my spirit truly is wrathful, that is in my breast; and if I among men would make boast, with gladness, with game, with goodly words, my spirit would wrath himself, and become still, and deprive me of my sense, and my wise words fore-close, then were I dumb of every sentence. But leave all such things," quoth Merlin to the king, "for whensoever need shall come to ever any people, and man will beseech me with mildness, and I may with my will dwell still, then may I say, how it afterwards shall happen. But



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I will counsel thee of thy nearest need, and say to thee right here what thou hast in heart. A plain is by Ambresbury, that is broad, and exceeding pleasant, there was thy kindred deprived of life with knives, there was many bold Briton betrayed to the death; and thinkest to greet the place with worship, and with surprising works to honour the dead, that there shall ever stand, to the world's end. But thou hast never any man, that knows aught thereon, who can make a work that never will fail. But I will counsel thee at such need, for I know a work with wonder encompassed, far the work standeth in Ireland. It is a most surprising thing, it is named the Giant's Ring, the work is of stone, such another there is none, so wide as is the worlds-realm is no work its like. The stones are great, and virtue they have; the men who are sick they go to the stones, and they wash the stones, and therewith bathe their bones; after a little while they become all sound! But the stones are mickle, and immensely great; for was never any man born, in every any burgh, who might with strength bring the stones thence." Then answered the king: "Merlin, thou sayest strange thing, that never any man born may bring them thence, nor with any strength carry from the place, how might I then bring them hence?" Then answered Merlin to the king who spake with him: "Yes, yes, lord king, it was of yore said, that better is art, than evil strength; for with art men may hold what strength may not obtain. But assemble thine army, and go to the land, and lead thou with thee a good host; and I will go with thee—thy worship will be the more! Ere thou back come, thy will thou shalt have, and the work thou shalt bring with thee to this land, and so thou shalt carry it to the burial-place, and honour the spot where thy friends lie. And thou thyself shalt therein thy bones rest; when thy life endeth, there shalt thou rest." Thus said Merlin, and afterwards he sate still, as though he would from the world depart. The king caused him to be brought into a fair chamber, and dwell therein, after his will.

Aurche the king caused a husting to be summoned from all the lands that stood in his hand; he bade them counsel him at such need. And his noble barons they well advised him, that he should do the counsel that Merlin had said to him. But they would not lead the king out of this land, but they chose them for chief Uther the good, and fifteen thousand knights, weaponed fair, of bold Britons, who thither should go. When this army was all ready, then began they to fare with all the best ships that by the sea stood, and voyaged so long that they came to Ireland. And the brave knights took the haven, they went upon the sea-strand, and beheld Ireland. Then spake Merlin, and discoursed with words: "See ye now, brave men, the great hill, the hill so exceeding high, that to the welkin it is full high? That is the marvellous thing, it is named the Giant's Ring, to each work unlike—it came from Africa. Pitch your tents over all these fields, here we shall rest for the space of three days; on the fourth day we shall march hence toward the hill, where our will is. But we shall first refresh us, and assemble our warriors, make ready our weapons, for well they behove us (we shall need them)." Thus it remained, and there lay the army.



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Then possessed Ireland a king that was most strong; he hight Gillomaur, he was lord of the people, the tidings came to him that the Britons were in the land, he caused forces to be summoned over all Ireland's territory, and he gan to threaten greatly, that he would all drive them out. When the word came to him, what the Britons would do there, and that they came for that only, to fetch the stones, then the King Gillomar made mickle derision and scorn, and said that they were foolish fellows, who over the broad sea were thither arrived, to seek there stones, as if none were in their land; and swore by Saint Brandan:—"They shall not carry away one stone, but for love of the stones they shall abide the most of all mischiefs; spill their blood out of their bellies—and so men shall teach them (they shall be taught) to seek stones! And afterwards I will go into Britain, and say to the King Aurelie, that my stones I will defend, and unless the king be still, and do my will, I will in his land with fight withstand, make him waste paths, and wildernesses many; widows enow—there husbands shall die!" Thus the unwise king played with words, but it all happened another wise, other than he weened. His army was ready, and forth they gan march, so long that they came whereon the Britons lay. Together they came, and hardily encountered, and fought fiercely—the fated fell! But the Irish were bare, and the Britons in armour, the Irish fell, and covered all the fields. And the King Gillomar gan him to flee there, and fled forth-right, with twenty of his knights, into a great wood—of worship bereaved—his Irish folk was felled with steel. Thus was the king shamed, and thus he ended his boast, and thus went to the wood, and let his folk fall! The Britons beheld the dead over the fields; seven thousand there lay deprived of life. The Britons went over the fields to their tents, and worthily looked to (or took care of) their good weapons, and there they gan to rest, as Merlin counselled them.

On the fourth day then gan they to march, and proceeded to the hill, all well weaponed, where the marvellous work stood, great and most strong! Knights went upward, knights went downward, knights went all about, and earnestly beheld it, they saw there on the land the marvellous work stand. There were a thousand knights with weapons well furnished, and all the others to wit guarded well their ships. Then spake Merlin, and discoursed with the knights: "Knights, ye are strong, these stones are great and long, ye must go nigh, and forcibly take hold of them; ye must wreathe them fast with strong sail-ropes, shove and heave with utmost strength trees great and long, that are exceeding strong, and go ye to one stone, all clean, and come again with strength, if ye may it stir." But Merlin wist well how it should happen. The knights advanced with mickle strength; they laboured full greatly, but they had not power, so that they ever any stone might stir! Merlin



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beheld Uther, who was the king's brother, and Merlin the prophet said these words: "Uther, draw thee back, and assemble thy knights, and stand ye all about, and diligently behold, and be ye all still, so that no man there stir ere I say to you now anon how we shall commence, 'Take ye each a stone.'" Uther drew him back, and assembled his knights, so that none there remained near the stones, as far as a man might cast a stone. And Merlin went about, and diligently gan behold, thrice he went about, within and without, and moved his tongue as if he sung his beads. Thus did Merlin there, then called he Uther: "Uther, come quickly, and all thy knights with thee, and take ye these stones all, ye shall not leave one; for now ye may heave them like feather balls; and so ye shall with counsel carry them to our ships." These stones they carried away, as Merlin counselled them, and placed them in their ships, and sailed forth to wit, and so they gan proceed into this land, and brought them on a plain that is wondrously broad, broad it is and most pleasant, near Ambresbury, where Hengest betrayed the Britons with axes. Merlin gan rear them, as they ere stood, so never any other man could do the craft, nor ever ere there-before was any man so wise born, that could the work raise, and the stones dispose.

The tidings came to the king in the north end, of Merlin's proceeding, and of Uther, his brother, that they were with safety come to this land, and that the work was all disposed, and set up right. The king was in breast wondrously blithe; and caused a husting to be summoned, so wide as was all his land, that all his merry folk so very joyous should come to Ambresbury, all his people, at Whitsunday, and the king would be there, and honour the place. Thither came Aurelie the king, and all his folk with him, on Whitsunday he there made a feast, as I will thee tell in this book-story. There were on the weald tents raised, on the broad plain, nine thousand tents. All the Whitsunday the king on the plain lay; ordered the place to be hallowed, that hight Stonehenge. Full three days the king dwelt still; on the third day, his people he highly honoured; he made two bishops, wondrously good, Saint Dubriz at Kaerleon, and Saint Samson at York; both they became holy, and with God high. On the fourth day people separated, and so a time it stood in the same wise.

The yet there was a wicked man, Pascent, Vortiger's son; was the same Pascent gone into Welsh land, and there in the same days was become outlaw. But he durst not long dwell there, for Aurelie and for Uther; but he procured good ships, and went by the sea flood, into Germany he proceeded, with five hundred men, and there he won much folk, and made a fleet, and voyaged so long that he came to this land, into the Humber, where he harm wrought. But he durst not long remain in the territory. The king marched thitherward, and Pascent fled awayward, by sea so long that he came to Ireland.



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Soon he found there the king of the land, his heart was very sore, he greeted the King Gillomar with God's greeting: "Hail be thou, Gillomar, chief of men! I am to thee come; I was Vortiger's son; my father was Britain's king, he loved thee through all things. And if thou wouldest now be my companion, as we shall agree, and my father well avenge, and well avenge thy folk that Uther here killed, and thy marvellous work, that he hence drew. And eke I heard say, where I voyaged in the sea, that the King Aurelie is become sick, and lieth in Winchester, in bed full fast. Thou mayest believe me enow, for this is verily sooth." Thus Pascent and Gillomar made their compact there; oaths they swore, many and innumerable, that they would set all this land in their two (joint) hands; the oaths were sworn, but eft they were broken! The king gathered a host wide over his land; to the sea they are gone, Gillomar and Pascent; into the ships they went, and forth let them glide. Forth they proceeded quickly, so that they came to Meneve, that was in that time a town exceeding fair, that men now truly call Saint David's. There they took haven with great bliss; the ships went on the strand, the knights went on the land. Then said Pascent—toward Gillomar he went—"Say me, King Gillomar, now we are come here; now I set to thee in hand half-part this kingdom; for there is from Winchester come to me a knight's son, and saith to me such advice, that Aurelie will be dead, the sickness is under his ribs, so that he may not live. Here we shall well avenge our kindred, and win his territories, as to us shall be best of all."

To the king came the word, into Winchester, that Pascent and Gillomar were come here with an army. The king called Uther, who was his dear brother:—"Uther, summon forces over all this land, and march to our enemies, and drive them from land; either thou them disperse, either thou them fell. And I would eke fare, if I were not so sick; but if I may be sound I will come after thee soon." Uther did all as the king said to him there. And Pascent at Saint David's wrought thereby much sorrow; and to the king Gillomar much sorrow he did there; Britain they through-ran, harried and burnt. And Uther in this land assembled his host, and it was long time ere he might march aright. And Pascent set in his own hand all West Welsh land.

It was on a day, his people were blithe, there arrived Appas—the fiends him conveyed! To Pascent he quoth thus: "Come hither to us. I will thee tell of a joyful tiding. I was at Winchester, with thine adversaries, where the king lieth sick, and sorrowful in heart. But what shall be my meed, if I thither ride, and I so gratify thee, that I kill him?" Then answered Pascent, and toward Appas he went: "I promise thee to-day a hundred pounds, for I may, if thou me so gratifiest, that thou kill him." Troth they plight this treachery to contrive. Appas went to his chamber, and this mischief meditated; he was



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a heathen man, out of Saxland come. Monk's clothes he took on, he shaved his crown upon; he took to him two companions, and forth he gan proceed, and went anon right into Winchester, as if it were a holy man—the heathen devil! He went to the burgh-gate, where the king lay in chamber, and greeted the door-keeper with God's greeting; and bade him in haste go into the king, and say to him in sooth, that Uther his brother had sent him thither a good leech; the best leech that dwelt in any land, that ever any sick man out of sickness can bring. Thus he lied, the odious man, to the monarch, for Uther was gone forth with his army, nor ever him saw Uther, nor thither him sent! And the king weened that it were sooth, and believed him enow. Who would ween that he were traitor!—for on his bare body he wore a cuirass, thereupon he had a loathly hair-cloth, and then a cowl of a black cloth; he had blackened his body, as if smutted with coal! He kneeled to the king, his speech was full mild: “Hail be thou, Aurelie, noblest of all kings! Hither me sent Uther, that is thine own brother; and I all for God's love am here to thee come. For I will heal, and all whole thee make, for Christ's love, God's son; I reckon not any treasure, nor meed of land, nor of silver nor of gold, but to each sick person I do it for love of my Lord.” The king heard this, it was to him most agreeable;—but where is ever any man in this middle-earth, that would this ween, that he were traitor! He took his glass vessel anon, and the king urined therein; a while after that, the glass vessel in hand he took, and viewed it forth-right before the king's knights; and thus said anon Appas, the heathen man: “If ye will me believe, ere to-morrow eve this king shall be all whole, healed at his will.” Then were blithe all that were in chamber. Appas went in a chamber, and the mischief meditated, and put thereto poison, that hight scamony, and came out forth-right among the chamber-knights, and to the knights he gan to distribute much canel, and gingiver and liquorice he gave them lovingly. They all took the gift, and he deceived them all. This traitor fell on his knees before the monarch, and thus said to him: “Lord, now thou shalt receive this, of this drink a part, and that shall be thy cure.” And the king up drank, and there the poison he drank. Anon as he had drank, the leech laid him down. Thus said Appas to the chamber-knights: “Wrap now the king well, that he lie in sweating; for I say to you through all things, all whole shall your king be. And I will go to my inn, and speak with my men, and at the midnight I will come again forth-right, with other leechcraft, that shall be to him healing.” Forth went—while the king lay in slumber—the traitor Appas to his inn, and spake with his men; and with stilly counsel stole from the town.



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At the midnight then sent the chamber-knights six of their men to Appas's inn; they weened to find him, and bring him to the king. Then was he flown, and the fiends him carried! The men came back where the king dwelt, and made known in the chamber of Appas's departure. Then might men see sorrow enow be! Knights fell down, and yearned their deaths; there was mickle lamentation and heart-groaning, there was many a piteous speech, there was yell of men! They leapt to the bed, and beheld the king; the yet he lay in slumber, and in great sweat. The knights with weeping awakened the king, and they called to him with mild voice: "Lord, how is it with thee? how is thy harm? For now is our leech departed without leave, gone out of court, and left us as wretches." The king gave them answer: "I am all over swollen, and there is no other hap, now anon I shall be dead. And I bid forth-right, ye who are my knights, that ye greet Uther, who is my own brother, and bid him hold my land in his sway. God himself through all things let him be a good king! And bid him be keen, and always deem right, as a father to the poor folk, to the destitute for comfort; —then may he hold the land in power. And now to-day, when I be dead, take ye all one counsel, and cause me to be brought right to Stonehenge, where lie much of my kindred, by the Saxons killed. And send for bishops, and book-learned men; my gold and silver distribute for my soul, and lay me at the east end, in Stonehenge." There was no other hap—there was the king dead! And all so his men did as the king directed. Uther was in Wales, and hereof was nothing ware, never through any art hereof nothing wist; nevertheless he had with him the prophet Merlin, he proceeded towards the army that was come to the land.

Uther lay in Wales, in a wilderness, and prepared to march, to fight with Pascent. Then in the eventime, the moon gan to shine, well nigh all as bright as the sunlight. Then they saw afar a marvellous star; it was broad, it was large, it was immense! From it came gleams terribly shining, the star is named in Latin, comet. Came from the star a gleam most fierce; at this gleam's end was a dragon fair, from this dragon's mouth came gleams enow! But twain there were mickle, unlike to the others; the one drew toward France, the other toward Ireland. The gleam that toward France drew, it was itself bright enow; to Munt-Giu was seen the marvellous token! The gleam that stretched right west, it was disposed in seven beams. Uther saw this—but he was not hereof wary—sorrow was to him in heart, and strangely he was frightened; so was all the great folk that was in the host. Uther called Merlin, and bade him come to him, and thus said to him with very soft words: "Merlin, Merlin, dear friend, prove thyself, and say to us of the token that we have seen; for I wot not in the worlds-realm to what end it shall befall; unless thou us counsel, back we must ride."



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Merlin sate him still, a long time, as if he with dream full greatly laboured. They said who saw it with their own eyes, that oft he turned him, as if it were a worm! At length he gan to awake, then gan he to quake, and these words said Merlin the prophet: “Walaway! Walaway! in this worlds-realm, much is the sorrow that is come to the land! Where art thou, Uther? Set before me here, and I will say to thee of sorrows enow. Dead is Aurelie, noblest of kings, so is the other, Constance, thy brother, whom Vortiger betrayed with his treachery. Now hath Vortiger’s kin killed Aurelie; now art thou alone of thy noble kindred. But hope not thou for counsel of them that he dead, but think of thyself—prosperity shall be given to thee;—for seldom he faileth, who to himself thinketh. Thou shalt become good king, and lord of men. And thou at the midnight weapon thy knights, that we in the morning-light may come forth-right, before Meneve—there thou shalt fight; ere thou thence depart, slaughter thou shalt make; for thou shalt both slay there, Pascent and Gillomar, and many thousands of the men that are with them hither come. The token of the star, that we saw so far, sooth it is, Uther dear, that betokened thy brother’s death. Before the star was the dragon, to each worm unlike; the token was on thy half, that was thou, Uther, thyself! Thou shalt have this land, and thy authority be great and strong. Such tokens are marvellous that came of the dragon’s mouth, two gleams proceeded forth that were wondrously light. The one stretched far south, out over France—that signifies a powerful son, that of thy body shall come, who shall win many kingdoms with conflict, and in the end he shall rule many a nation. The other gleam that stretched west, wondrously light, that shall be a daughter, that to thee shall be exceeding dear. The gleams that gan to spread in seven fair strings, are seven fair sons, who shall come of thy daughter, who shall win to their own hand many a kingdom; they shall be well strong, on water and on land. Now thou hast of me heard what will thee help, quickly forth-right march to thy fight.” And Merlin gan to slumber, as if he would sleep.

Up arose Uther, now he was wise and wary, and ordered his knights forth-right to horse, and ordered them quickly to proceed to Meneve; and all their expedition (or forces) to prepare, as if they should fight. In the troop before he had knights well chosen; seven thousand knights, brave men and active. He had in the middle knights well beseen, other seven thousand good thanes. He had behind brave knights eighteen thousand, brave warriors, and of folk on foot so many thousands, that in no speech might any man tell them! Forth they marched quickly, until they came to Meneve.



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There saw Gillomar where Uther came to him, and commanded his knights to weapon them forth-right. And they very speedily grasped their knives, and off with their breeches—strange were their looks—and grasped in their hands their long spears, and hung on their shoulders great battle-axes. Then said Gillomar the king a thing very strange:—"Here cometh Uther, Aurelie's brother; he will ask my peace, and not fight with me. The foremost are his swains; march we against them; ye need never reek, though ye slay the wretches! For if Uther, Constantine's son, will here become my man, and give to Pascent his father's realm, I will him grant peace, and let him live, and in fair bonds lead him to my land." The king spake thus, the while worse him befell!

Uther's knights were in the town forth-right, and laid fire in the town, and fought sharply; with swords rushed towards them; and the Irish were naked. When the Irish men saw, that the Britons were in conflict, they fought fiercely, and nevertheless they fell; they called on their king: "Where art thou, nithing! why wilt thou not come hither? thou lettest us here be destroyed;—and Pascent, thy comrade, saw us fall here;—come ye to us to help, with great strength!" Gillomar heard this; therefore his heart was sore; with his Irish knights he came to the fight, and Pascent forth with him—both they were fated! When Uther saw, that Gillomar was there come, to him he gan ride, and smote him in the side, so that the spear through pierced, and glided to the heart. Hastily he passed by him, and overtook Pascent; and said these words Uther the good: "Pascent, thou shalt abide; here cometh Uther riding!" He smote him upon the head, so that he fell down, and the sword put in his mouth—such meat to him was strange—so that the point of the sword went in the earth. Then said Uther: "Pascent, lie now there; now thou hast Britain all won to thy hand! So is now hap to thee; therein thou art dead; dwell ye shall here, thou, and Gillomar thy companion, and possess well Britain! For now I deliver it to you in hand, so that ye may presently dwell with us here; ye need not ever dread who you shall feed!" Thus said Uther, and afterwards he there ran, and drove the Irish men over waters and over fens, and slew all the host that with Pascent came to land. Some to the sea fled, and leapt into their ships; with weather and with water there they perished! Thus they sped here, Pascent and Gillomar. Now was this fight done; and Uther back came, and forth-right marched into Winchester.

In a broad way he gan meet three knights and their swains, who came toward him. Anon as they met him, fair they him greeted: "Hail be thou, Uther; these territories are thine own. Dead is Aurelie, noblest of kings; he hath set to thee in hand all his regal land; he bade thee be in prosperity, and think of his soul." Then wept Uther wondrously much there. Uther proceeded forth-right into Winchester; then were before him, without the



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burgh, all the burghers with piteous cries. So soon as they saw him, they said to him: "Uther, thy favour, now and evermore! Our king we have lost, woe is to us therefore. Thou wert his brother—he had no other, nor he had no son, who might become king. But take thou the crown, it is thy right, and we will help thee, and hold for lord, with weapons and with goods, and with all our might." Uther heard this; he was wise and he was aware, that there was no other course, since his brother was dead. He took the crown, that came to him exceeding well, and he worthily became king, and held good laws, and loved his folk. Whilst that he was king, and chose his ministers, Merlin disappeared; he knew not ever whither he went, nor ever in the worlds-realm what became of him. Woe was the king, so was all his people, and all his courtiers were therefore mourning. The king caused men to ride wide and far; he offered gold and treasure to each travelling man, whosoever might find Merlin in the land thereto he laid mickle praise, but he heard no whit of him. Then bethought Uther, what Merlin said to him ere, in the expedition into Welsh land, where they saw the dragon, to each worm incomparable, and he thought of the tokens that Merlin taught him. The king was exceeding sorry, and sorrowful in heart, for he lost never a dearer man, since he was alive, never any other, not even Aurelie, his brother. The king caused to be worked two images, two golden dragons, all for Merlin's love— so greatly he desired his coming. When the dragons were ready, the one was his companion, wheresoever he in the land led his army, it was his standard, in every hap, the other he worthily gave into Winchester, into the bishop's see, where he stead holdeth. Thereto he gave his good spear, wherewith men should bear the dragon, when men should carry relics at processions. The Britons saw this, these dragons that were thus made, ever since they called Uther, who for a standard bare the dragon, the name they laid on him, that was Uther Pendragon; Pendragon in British, Dragon's-head in English.

Now was Uther their good king, but of Merlin he had nothing. This word heard Octa, where he dwelt northward, and Ebissa his wed-brother, and Ossa the other, that Aurelie sent thither, and set them there in his peace, and gave them in hand sixty hides of land. Octa heard full truly all how it was transacted, of Aurelie's death, and of Uther's kingdom. Octa called to him his kin that was nearest, they betook them to counsel, of their old deeds, that they would by their life desert Christendom. They held husting, and became heathens, then came there together, of Hengest's kindred, five and sixty hundred of heathen men. Soon was the word reported and over the land known, that Octa, Hengest's son, was become heathen, and all these same men to whom Aurelie had granted peace. Octa sent his messengers into Welsh land, after the Irish that from Uther were fled, and after the Alemains (Germans), that away were drawn,



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that were gone to the wood, the while men slew Pascent, and hid them well everywhere, the while men slew Gillomar, the folk out of the wood drew, and toward Scotland proceeded. There came ever more and more, and proceeded toward Octa, when they together were all come, then were there thirty thousand, without the women, of Hengest's kin. They took their host, and forth gan to fare, and set all in their hand beyond the Humber, and the people, where they gan march, there was a marvellous host! And they proceeded right to York, and on each side the heathen people gan ride about the burgh, and the burgh besieged, and took it all in their hand, forth into Scotland, all that they saw they accounted their own. But Uther's knights who were in the castle, defended the town within, so that they might never get within, in no place heard any one, of few men that did so well!

So soon as Uther of this thing was aware, he assembled a strong army, over all his kingdom, and he very speedily marched toward York, proceeded forth-right anon, where Octa him lay. Octa and his forces marched against them; encountered them together with grim strength, hewed hardily, helms resounded; the fields were dyed with the blood of the slain, and the heathen souls hell sought! When the day's end arrived, then was it so evilly done, that the heathen folk had the upper hand, and with great strength routed the Britons, and drove them to a mount that was exceeding strong. And Uther with his men drew to the mount, and had lost in the fight his dear knights, full seven hundred—his hap was the worse! The mount hight Dunian, that Uther was upon, the mount was overgrown with a fair wood. The king was there within with very many men, and Octa besieged him with the heathen men night and day—besieged him all about, woe was to the Britons! Woe was the King Uther, that he was not ere aware, that he had not in land better understood. Oft they went to counsel of such need, how they might overcome Octa, Hengest's son.

There was an earl Gorlois, bold man full truly—knight he was good, he was Uther's man,—Earl of Cornwall, known he was wide—he was a very wise man, in all things excellent. To him said Uther, sorry in heart: "Hail be thou, Gorlois, lord of men! Thou art mine own man, and very well I thee treat; thou art knight good, great is thy wisdom, all my people I put in thy counsel, and all we shall work after thy will." Then hung he his brows down, the King Uther Pendragon, and stood him full still, and bade Gorlois say his will. Then answered Gorlois, who was courteous full truly, "Say me, Uther Pendragon, why bowest thou thy head down? Knowest thou not that God alone is better than we all clean? He may to whomsoever he will give worship. Promise we him in life that we will not him deceive, and let we counsel us of our misdeeds. Each man forth-right take shrift of all his sins, each man shrive other, as if it were his brother, and every good knight take



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on him much shrift, and God we shall promise to amend our sins. And at the midnight prepare us to fight, these heathen hounds account us all here bound. Octa, Hengest's son, weeneth that we are all taken, they he in these fields covered in their tents, they are very weary of carrying their weapons, now anon they shall slumber, and afterwards sleep; of us they have no care, that we will march against them. At the midnight we shall forth-right go exceeding still, down from this hill, be no knight so mad, that he ask any word, nor ever any man be so mad, that he blow horn. But we shall step to them as if we would steal, ere they are aware, we shall destroy them, we shall approach to them, and tell them tidings. And let every brave man strongly lay on them, and so we shall drive the foreigners from the land, and with the might of our Lord, win our rights." All this host did as Gorlois had bid them, each man forth-right put him under shrift promised to do good, and Uther Pendragon foremost went down, and all his knights, exceeding still, and smote in the wealds, among all the tents, and slew the heathens with great strength, slew over the fields the yellow locks, of folk it was most wretched, they drew along their bowels, with much destruction they fell to the ground.

And there was forth-right captured Octa, Hengest's son, and his wed-brother Ebissa, and his comrade Ossa. The king caused them to be bound with iron bands, and delivered them to sixty knights, who were good in fight, fast to hold over the weald. And he himself drove him forth, and made much din, and Gorlois the fair, forth on the other side, and all their knights ever forth-right slew downright all that they came nigh. Some they crept to the wood on their bare knees, and they were on the morrow most miserable of all folk. Octa was bound, and led to London, and Ebissa, and Ossa—was never to them such woe.

This fight was all done, and the king forth marched into Northumberland with great bliss, and afterwards to Scotland, and set it all in his own hand. He established peace, he established quiet, that each man might journey with from land to land, though he bare gold in his hand, of peace he did such things, that no king might ever ere, from that time that the Britons here arrived. And then, after a time, he proceeded to London, he was there at Easter, with his good folk, blithe was the London's town, for Uther Pendragon. He sent his messengers over all his kingdom, he bade the earls, he bade the churls, he bade the bishops, and the book learned men, that they should come to London, to Uther the king, into London's town, to Uther Pendragon. Rich men soon to London came; they brought wife, they brought child, as Uther the king commanded. With much goodness the king heard mass, and Gorlois, the Earl of Cornwall, and many knights with him; much bliss was in the town, with King Uther Pendragon. When the mass was sung, to the hall they crowded, trumpets they blew, boards they spread, all the folk ate and drank, and bliss was among them.



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There sate Uther the king in his high chair; opposite to him Gorlois, fair knight full truly, the Earl of Cornwall, with his noble wife. When they were all seated, the earls to their meat, the king sent his messengers to Ygaerne the fair, Gorlois the earl's wife, woman fairest of all. Oft he looked on her, and glanced with his eyes, oft he sent his cup-bearers forth to her table, oft he laughed at her, and made glances to her, and she him lovingly beheld—but I know not whether she loved him. The king was not so wise, nor so far prudent, that among his folk he could his thoughts hide. So long the king this practised, that Gorlois became him wrath, and angered him greatly with the king, because of his wife. The earl and his knights arose forth-right, and went forth with the woman, knights most wrath. King Uther saw this, and herefore was sorry, and took him forth-right twelve wise knights, and sent after Gorlois, chieftain of men, and bade him come in haste to the king, and do the king good right, and acknowledge his fault, that he had disgraced the king, and from his board had departed, he, and his knights, with mickle wrong, for the king was cheerful with him, and for he hailed (drank health) to his wife. And if he would not back come, and acknowledge his guilt, the king would follow after him, and do all his might, take from him all his land, and his silver, and his gold. Gorlois heard this, lord of men, and he answer gave, wrathest of earls: "Nay, so help me the Lord, that formed the daylight, will I never back come, nor yearn his peace, nor shall he ever in life disgrace me of my wife! And say ye to Uther the king, at Tintateol he may find me, if he thither will ride, there will I abide him, and there he shall have hard game, and mickle world's shame." Forth proceeded the earl, angry in his mood, he was wrath with the king wondrously much, and threatened Uther the king, and all his thanes with him. But he knew not what should come subsequently, soon thereafter.

The earl proceeded anon into Cornwall; he had there two castles inclosed most fast, the castles were good, and belonged to the race of his ancestors. To Tintateol he sent his mistress who was so fair, named Ygaerne, best of all women; and he inclosed her fast in the castle. Ygaerne was sorry, and sorrowful in heart, that so many men for her should there have destruction. The earl sent messengers over all Britain, and bade each brave man, that he should come to him, for gold and for silver, and for other good gifts, that they full soon should come to Tintateol, and bade his own knights to come forth-right. When they were together, the good thanes, then had he full fifteen thousand, and they fast inclosed Tintateol. Upon the sea-strand Tintateol standeth, it is with the sea cliffs fast inclosed, so that it may not be won, by no kind of man, but if hunger come therein under. The earl marched thence with seven thousand men, and proceeded to another castle, and inclosed it full fast, and left his wife in Tintateol, with ten thousand men. For it needed the knights, day or night, only to guard the castle gate, and he careless asleep; and the earl kept the other, and with him his own brother.



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Uther heard this, who was king most stark, that Gorlois, his earl, had gathered his forces, and would hold war, with much wrath. The king summoned his host over all this territory, over all the land that stood in his hand, people of many kind marched them together, and came to London to the sovereign. Out of London's town fared Uther Pendragon, he and his knights proceeded forth-right, so long, that they came into Cornwall, and over the water they passed, that Tambres hight, right to the castle, where they knew Gorlois to be. With much enmity the castle they besieged, oft they assaulted it with fierce strength; together they leapt, people there fell. Full seven nights the king with his knights besieged the castle, his men there had sorrow, he might not of the earl anything win, and all the se'nnight lasted the marvellous fight. When Uther the king saw that nothing sped to him, oft he bethought him what he might do, for Ygaerne was so dear to him, even as his own life, and Gorlois was to him in the land of all men most loathsome; and in each way was woe to him in this world's realm, because he might not have anything of his will.

Then was with the king an old man exceeding well-informed; he was a very rich thane, and skilful in each doom, he was named Ulfin, much wisdom was with him. The king drew up his chin, and looked on Ulfin, greatly he mourned, his mood was disturbed. Then quoth Uther Pendragon to Ulfin the knight: "Ulfin, say me some counsel, or I shall be full soon dead, so much it longeth me after the fair Ygaerne, that I may not live. This word hold to me secret; for Ulfin the dear, thy good counsels, loud and still I will do them." Then answered Ulfin to the king who spake with him: "Now hear I a king say great marvel! Thou lovest Ygaerne, and holdest it so secret, the woman is to thee dear, and her lord all loath, his land thou consumest, and makest him destitute, and threatenest himself to slay, and his kin to destroy. Weenest thou with such harm to obtain Ygaerne? She should do then as no woman doth, with dread unmeet hold love sweet. But if thou lovest Ygaerne, thou shouldest hold it secret, and send her soon of silver and of gold, and love her with art, and with loving behest. The yet it were a doubt, whether thou mightest possess her, for Ygaerne is chaste, a woman most true; so was her mother, and more of the kin. In sooth I thee say, dearest of all kings, that otherwise thou must begin, if thou wilt win her. For yesterday came to me a good hermit, and swore by his chin, that he knew Merlin, where he each night resteth under heaven, and oft he spake with him, and stories him told. And if we might with art get Merlin, then mightest thou thy will wholly obtain."



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Then was Uther Pendragon the softer in his mood, and gave answer: "Ulfin, thou hast well said counsel, I give thee in hand thirty ploughs of land, so that thou get Merlin, and do my will." Ulfin went through the folk, and sought all the host, and he after a time found the hermit, and in haste brought him to the king. And the king set to him in hand seven ploughs of land, if he might find and bring Merlin to the king. The hermit gan wend in the west end, to a wilderness, to a mickle wood, where he had dwelt well many winters, and Merlin very oft sought him there. So soon as the hermit came in, then found he Merlin, standing under a tree, and sore gan for him long, he saw the hermit come, as whilom was his custom, he ran towards him, both they rejoiced for this; they embraced, they kissed, and familiarly spake. Then said Merlin—much wisdom was with him—"Say thou, my dear friend, why wouldest thou not say to me, through no kind of thing, that thou wouldest go to the king? But full quickly I it knew anon as I thee missed, that thou wert come to Uther the king, and what the king spake with thee, and of his land thee offered, that thou shouldest bring me to Uther the king. And Ulfin thee sought, and to the king brought, and Uther Pendragon forth-right anon, set him in hand thirty ploughs of land, and he set thee in hand seven ploughs of land. Uther is desirous after Ygaerne the fair, wondrously much, after Gorlois's wife. But so long as is eternity, that shall never come, that he obtain her, but through my stratagem, for there is no woman truer in this world's realm. And nevertheless he shall possess the fair Ygaerne; and he shall beget on her what shall widely rule, he shall beget on her a man exceeding marvellous. So long as is eternity, he shall never die, the while that this world standeth, his glory shall last, and he shall in Rome rule the thanes. All shall bow to him that dwelleth in Britain, of him shall gleemen goodly sing; of his breast noble poets shall eat; of his blood shall men be drunk; from his eyes shall fly fiery embers; each finger on his hand shall be a sharp steel brand, stone walls shall before him tumble; barons shall give way, and their standards fall! Thus he shall well long fare over all the lands, people to conquer, and set his laws. These are the tokens of the son, that shall come of Uther Pendragon and of Ygaerne. This speech is full secret, for yet neither it knoweth, Ygaerne nor Uther, that of Uther Pendragon such a son shall arise; for yet he is unbegot, that shall govern all the people. But, Lord," quoth Merlin, "now it is thy will, that forth I shall go to the host of the king; thy words I will obey, and now I will depart, and proceed I will for thy love to Uther Pendragon. And thou shalt have the land that he set thee in hand."



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Thus they then spake: the hermit gan to weep; dearly he him kissed; there they gan to separate. Merlin went right forth south, the land was well known to him; forth-right he proceeded to the king's host. So soon as Uther him saw, so he approached towards him; and thus quoth Uther Pendragon: "Merlin, thou art welcome! Here I set thee in hand all the counsel of my land, and that thou must me advise, at my great need." Uther told him all that he would, and how Ygaerne was to him in the land dearest of women, and Gorlois, her lord, most odious of all men.—"And unless I have thy counsel, full soon thou wilt see me dead." Then answered Merlin: "Let Ulfin now come in, and give him in hand thirty ploughs of land, and give to the hermit what thou him promisedest, for I will not possess any land, neither silver nor gold, for I am in counsel most skilful of all men, and if I wished for possessions, then should I become worse in craft. But all thy will well shall come to pass, for I know such leech-craft, that shall be to thee lief, so that all thy appearance shall become as the earl's; thy speech, thy deeds among thy people; thy horse and thy weeds (garments), and so shalt thou ride. When Ygaerne shall see thee, in mood shall it be well to her; she lieth in Tintateol, fast inclosed. There is no knight so well born, of no land chosen, that might with strength unfasten the gates of Tintateol, unless they were burst with hunger and with thirst. But that is the sooth that I will say to thee, through all things thou shalt be as if thou wert the earl, and I will be every bit as Britael he is, who is a knight most hardy, he is this earl's steward, Jurdan is his chamber-knight, he is exceeding well dight, I will make Ulfin anon such as Jurdan is. Then wilt thou be lord, and I be Britael, thy steward, and Ulfin be Jurdan, thy chamber-knight. And we shall go now to-night, and fare thou shalt by counsel, whither soever I lead thee. Now to-night shall half a hundred knights with spear and with shield be about thy tents, so that never any man alive come there near, and if ever any man come there, that his head be taken from him. For the knights shall say—thy good men—that thou art let blood, and retest thee in bed."

These things were forth-right thus dight. Forth went the king, it was nothing known, and forth went with him Ulfin and Merlin, they proceeded right the way that lay into Tintateol, they came to the castle-gate, and called familiarly: "Undo this gate-bolt; the earl is come here, Gorlois the lord, and Britael his steward, and Jordan the chamber-knight; we have journeyed all night!" The gateward made it known over all, and knights ran upon the wall, and spake with Gorlois, and knew him full surely. The knights were most alert, and weighed up the castle gate, and let him come within—the less was then their care,—they weened certainly to have much bliss. Then had they with stratagem Merlin there within, and Uther the king within their possession,

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and led there with him his good thane Ulfin. These tidings came quickly unto the lady, that her lord was come, and with him his three men. Out came Ygaerne forth to the earl, and said these words with winsome speech: "Welcome, lord, man to me dearest; and welcome, Jordan, and Britael is also;—be ye in safety parted from the king?" Then quoth Uther full truly as if it were Gorlois: "Mickle is the multitude that is with Uther Pendragon, and I am all by night stolen from the fight, for after thee I was desirous, woman thou art to me dearest. Go into the chamber, and cause my bed to be made, and I will rest me for this night's space, and all day to-morrow, to gladden my people." Ygaerne went to chamber, and caused a bed to be made for him, the kingly bed was all overspread with a pall. The king viewed it well, and went to his bed; and Ygaerne lay down by Uther Pendragon, Now weened Ygaerne full truly, that it were Gorlois; through never any kind of thing knew she Uther the king. The king approached her as man should do to woman, and had him to do with the dearest of women; and he begat on her a marvellous man, keenest of all kings, that ever came among men, and he was on earth named Arthur. Ygaerne knew not who lay in her arms, for ever she weened full surely, that it were the Earl Gorlois.

There was no greater interval but until it was daylight, there forth-right the knights understood, that the king was departed out of the host. Then said the knights, sooth though it were not, that the king was flown, filled with dread, but it all was leasing that they said of the king, they held hereof much converse upon Uther Pendragon. Then said the earls and the highest barons; "Now when Gorlois shall know it, how it is passed, that our king is departed, and has left his host, he will forth-right weapon his knights, and out he will to fight, and fell us to ground, with his furious thanes make mickle slaughter; then were it better for us, that we were not born. But cause we the trumpets to be blown, and our army to assemble; and Cador the brave shall bear the king's standard; heave high the Dragon before this people, and march to the castle, with our keen folk. And the Earl Adolf shall be our chief, and we shall obey him, as if he were the king; and so we shall with right with Gorlois fight, and if he will speak with us, and yearn this king's peace, set amity with soothfast oath, then may we with worship go hence; then our underlings will have no upbraidings, that we for any timidity hence fled." All the nation-folk praised this same counsel. Trumpets they blew, and assembled their host; up they heaved the Dragon, by each standard unmatched; there was many a bold man, that hung shield on shoulder, many a keen thane, and proceeded to the castle, where Gorlois was within, with his keen men. He caused trumpets to be blown, and his host to assemble; they leapt on steed, knights gan to ride. These knights were exceeding active, and went out at the gate; together



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they came soon, and quickly they attacked, fell the fated men, the ground they sought; there was much blood shed, harm was among the folk; amidst the fight full certainly men slew the Earl Gorlois. Then gan his men to flee, and the others to pursue after, they came to the castle, and within they thrust. Soon it came within, both the two hosts; there lasted the fight throughout the daylight; ere the day were all gone, the castle was won; was there no swain so mean, that he was not a well good thane.

The tidings came into Tintageol in haste, forth into the castle wherein Uther was, that the good earl their lord Gorlois was slain full truly, and all his soldiers, and his castle taken. The king heard this, where he lay in amorous play, and leapt out of bower, as if it were a lion. Then quoth the King Uther, of this tiding he was ware: "Be still, be still, knights in hall! Here I am full truly, your lord Gorlois; and Jordan, my chamberlain, and Britael, my steward. I and these two knights leapt out of the fight, and in hither we are arrived—we were not there slain. But now I will march, and assemble my host; and I and my knights shall all by night proceed into a town, and meet Uther Pendragon, and unless he speak of reconciliation, I will worthily avenge me! And inclose ye this castle most fast, and bid Ygaerne that she mourn not. Now go I forth-right, have ye all good night!" Merlin went before, and the thane Ulfen, and afterwards Uther Pendragon, out of Tintageol's town; ever they proceeded all night, until it was daylight.

When he came to the spot where his army lay, Merlin had on the king set his own features through all things, then his knights knew their sovereign; there was many a bold Briton filled with bliss; then was in Britain bliss enow; horns there blew, gleemen gan chant, glad was every knight, all arrayed with pall! Three days was the king dwelling there; and on the fourth day he went to Tintaieol. He sent to the castle his best thanes, and greeted Ygaerne, noblest of women, and sent her token what they spake in bed; and ordered her that she should yield the castle quickly—there was no other counsel, for her lord was dead. Yet Ygaerne weened that it were sooth, that the dead earl had sought his people, and she all believed, that it were false, that the King Uther had ever come down. Knights went to counsel, knights went to communing, they resolved that they would not hold the castle any longer, their bridge they let down and delivered it to Uther Pendragon. Then stood all this kingdom eft in Uther's own hand.

There Uther the king took Ygaerne for queen; Ygaerne was with child by Uther the king, all through Merlin's craft, before she was wedded. The time came that was chosen, then was Arthur born. So soon as he came on earth, elves took him; they enchanted the child with magic most strong, they gave him might to be the best of all knights; they gave him another thing, that he should be a rich king, they gave him



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the third, that he should live long; they gave to him the prince virtues most good, so that he was most generous of all men alive. This the elves gave him, and thus the child thrived. After Arthur, the blessed lady was born, she was named Anna, the blessed maiden; and afterwards she took (married) Loth, who possessed Leoneis (Lothian), she was in Leoneis lady of the people. Long lived Uther with mickle bliss here, with good peace, with much quiet, free in his kingdom.

When that he was an old man, then came illness on him; the illness laid him down, sick was Uther Pendragon, so he was here sick seven years. Then became the Britons much emboldened, they did oft wickedly, all for absence of dread. The yet lay Octa, Hengest's son, bound in the prison of London, who was taken at York, and his comrade Ebissa, and his other Ossa. Twelve knights guarded them day and night, who were wearily oppressed with watching, in London. Octa heard say of the sickness of the king, and spake with the guardsmen, who should keep him: "Hearken to me now, knights, what I will make known to you. We lie here in London fast bound, and ye many a long day have watched over us. Better were it for us to live in Saxland, with much wealth, than thus miserably here lie asleep. And if ye would in all things accomplish this, and do my will, I would give you land, much silver and gold, so that ever ye might richly rule in the land, and live your life as to you shall be liefest of all. For ye shall never have good gifts of Uther, your king, for now full soon he will be dead, and his people all desert, then will ye have neither, the one nor the other. But bethink you, brave men, and give to us your compassion, and think what were lief to you, if ye thus lay bound, and might in your land live in joy." Very oft Octa spake so with these knights. The knights gan to commune, the knights gan to counsel, and to Octa they said full still: "We shall do thy will." Oaths they swore, that they would not deceive. It was on a night that the wind went right; forth went the knights at the midnight, and led forth Octa, and Ebissa, and Ossa, along the Thames they proceeded forth into the sea; forth they passed into Saxland. Their kindred came towards them with great flocks (forces); they marched over all the land, as to them was liefest, men gave them gifts and land; men gave them silver and gold Octa bethought him what he might do; he thought to come hither, and avenge his father's wounds. They procured a host of innumerable folk, to the sea they proceeded with great threats, they came to Scotland; soon they pushed on land, and greeted it with fire; the Saxons were cruel, the Scots they slew; with fire they down laid thirty hundred towns; the Scots they slew, many and innumerable.



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The tidings came to Uther the king. Uther was exceeding woe, and wonderfully grieved, and sent in to Loeneis, to his dear friends, and greeted Loth, his son-in-law, and bade him be in health, and ordered him to take in his own hand all his royal land; knights and freemen, and freely hold them, and lead them in a host, as the laws are in the land. And he ordered his dear knights to be obedient to Loth, with loving looks, as if he were sovereign. For Loth was very good knight, and had held many fight, and he was liberal to every man, he delivered to him the government of all this land. Octa held much war, and Loth often fought with him, and oft he gained possessions, and oft he them lost. The Britons had mickle mood, and immoderate pride, and were void of dread, on account of the king's age; and looked very contemptuously on Loth the earl, and did very evilly all his commands, and were all two counsels—their care was the more! This was soon said to the sick king, that his high men Loth all despised.

Now will I tell thee, in this history, how Uther the king disposed himself. He said that he would go to his host, and see with his eyes who would there do well. He caused there to be made a good horse-litter, and caused an army to be assembled over all his kingdom; that each man by (on pain of) his life should come to him quickly, by their lives and by their limbs, to avenge the king's shame.—“And if there is any man, who will not come hastily, I will speedily destroy him, either slay either hang.” All full soon to the court (or to the army) they came, durst there none remain, nor the fat nor the lean. The king forth-right took all his knights, and marched him anon to the town of Verulam; about Verulam's town came him Uther Pendragon; Octa was within with all his men. Then was Verulam a most royal town, Saint Alban was there slain, and deprived of life-day; the burgh was subsequently destroyed, and much folk there was slain. Uther lay without, and Octa within. Uther's army advanced to the wall, the powerful thanes fiercely assaulted it, they might not of the wall one stone detach, nor with any strength the wall injure.

Well blithe was then Hengest's son Octa, when he saw the Britons recede from the walls, and go sorrowful again to their tents. Then said Octa to his comrade Ebissa: “Here is come to Verulam Uther, the lame man, and will with us here fight in his litter; he weened with his crutch to thrust us down! But to-morrow when it is day, the people shall arise, and open our castle-gate, and this realm we shall all win; shall we never lie here for one lame man! Out we shall ride upon our good steeds, and advance to Uther, and fell his folk; for all they are fated (shall die) that hither are ridden; and take the lame man, and lay in our bonds, and hold the wretch until that he dies; and so men shall leach his limbs that are sore, and heal his bones with bitter steel!” Thus spake him Octa with his comrade Ebissa; but all



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it happened otherwise than they weened. On the morrow when it dawned, they unfastened the doors; up arose Octa, Ebissa, and Ossa, and ordered their knights to prepare them for fight, to undo their broad gates, and unfasten the burgh. Octa rode him out, and much folk followed after him; with his bold warriors there he bale found! Uther saw him this, that Octa approached to them, and thought to fell his host to the ground.

Then called Uther with quick voice there: "Where be ye, Britons, my bold thanes? Now is come that day, that the Lord may help us;—that Octa shall find, in that he threatened me to bind. Think of your ancestors, how good they were in fight; think of the worship that I have to you well given; nor let ye ever this heathen enjoy your homes, or these same raging hounds possess your lands. And I will pray to the Lord who formed the daylight, and to all the hallows, that sit high in heaven, that I on this field may be succoured. Now march quickly to them,—may the Lord aid you, may the all-ruling God protect my thanes!" Knights gan to ride, spears gan to glide, and broad spears brake, shivered shields—helms there were severed, men fell! The Britons were bold, and busy in fight, and the heathen hounds fell to the ground. There was slain Octa, Ebissa, and Ossa; there seventeen thousand sunk into hell; and many there escaped toward the north end. And all the daylight Uther's knights slew and captured all that they came nigh; when it was even, then was it all won. Then sung the soldiers with great strength, and said these words in their merry songs: "Here is Uther Pendragon come to Verulam's town; and he hath so beaten Octa, and Ebissa, and Ossa, and given them in the land laws most strong, so that men may tell their kin in story, and thereof make songs in Saxland!" Then was Uther blithe, and exceeding glad, and spake with his people, that was dear to him in heart, and these words said Uther the old: "Saxish men have accounted me for base; my sickness they twitted me with their scornful words, because I was led here in a horse-litter; and said that I was dead, and my folk asleep. And now is much wonder come to this realm, that now this dead king hath killed these quick; and some he hath them driven forth with the weather! Now hereafter be done the Lord's will!"

The Saxish men fled exceeding fast, that had aside retreated from the fight; forth they gan proceed into Scotland, and took to them for king Colgrim the fair. He was Hengest's relation, and dearest of men to him; and Octa loved him, the while that he lived. The Saxish men were greatly discouraged, and proceeded them together into Scotland; and they made Colgrim the fair for king, and assembled a host, wide over the land, and said that they would with their wicked craft in Winchester town kill Uther Pendragon. Alas, that it should so happen! Now said the Saxish men in their communing together: "Take we six knights, wise men and active, and skilful spies,



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and send we to the court, in almsman's guise, and dwell in the court, with the high king, and every day pass through all the people; and go to the king's dole, as if they were infirm, and among the poor people hearken studiously if man might with craft, by day or by night, in Winchester's town come to Uther Pendragon, and kill the king with murder;"—then were (would be) their will wholly accomplished, then were they careless of Constanine's kin. Now went forth the knights all by daylight, in almsman's clothes—knights most wicked—to the king's court—there they harm wrought. They went to the dole, as if they were infirm, and hearkened studiously of the king's sickness, how men might put the king to death. Then met they with a knight, from the king he came forth-right; he was Uther's relation, and dearest of men to him. These deceivers, where they sate along the street, called to the knight with familiar words: "Lord, we are wretched men in this world's realm; whilom we were in land accounted for good men, until Saxish men set us adown, and bereaved us of all, and our possessions took from us. Now we sing beads (prayers) for Uther the king; each day in a meal our meat faileth; cometh never in our dish neither flesh nor any fish, nor any kind of drink but a draught of water, but water clean—therefore we are thus lean."

The knight heard this; back he went forth-right, and came to the king, where he lay in chamber, and said to the king: "Lord, be thou in health! Here out sit six men, alike in hue, all they are companions, and clothed with hard hair-cloth. Whilom they were in this world's realm goodly thanes, and filled with goods; now have Saxish men set them to ground, so that they are in the world accounted for wretches, they have not at board but bread alone, nor for their drink but water draughts. Thus they lead their life in thy people, and bid their beads, that God will let thee long live." Then quoth Uther the king: "Let them come in hither, I will them clothe, and I will them feed, for the love of my Lord, the while that I live." The treacherous men came into the chamber, the king caused them to be fed, the king caused them to be clothed, and at night each laid them on his bed. And each on his part aspied earnestly how they might kill the king with murder, but they might not through anything kill Uther the king, nor through any craft might come to him.

Then happened it on a time, the rain it gan to pour; then called there a leech, where he lay in the chamber, to a chamber-knight, and ordered him forth-right to run to the well, that was near the hall, and set there a good swam, to keep it from the rain.—"For the king may not enjoy no draught in the world but the cold well stream, that is to him pleasant; that is for his sickness best of all draughts." This speech forth-right heard these six knights—to harm they were prompt—and went out by night forth to the well—there they harm wrought. Out they drew soon fair phials, filled with poison,

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of all liquids bitterest; six phials full they poured in the well; then was the well anon with poison infected. Then were full blithe the traitors in their life, and forth they went; they durst not there remain. Then came there forth-right two chamber-knights; they bare in their hands two bowls of gold. They came to the well, and filled their bowls; back they gan wend to Uther the king, forth into the chamber, where he lay in bed.—“Hail be thou, Uther! Now we are come here, and we have brought thee, what thou ere bade, cold well water; receive it with joy.” Up arose the sick king, and sate on his bed; of the water he drank, and soon he gan to sweat; his heart gan to weaken, his face began to blacken, his belly gan to swell, the king gan to burst. There was no other hap, but there was Uther the king dead; and all they were dead, who drank of the water.

When the attendants saw the calamity of the king, and of the king's men, who with poison were destroyed, then went to the well knights that were active, and destroyed the well with painful labour, with earth and with stones made a steep hill. Then the people took the dead king—numerous folk—and forth him carried the stiff-minded men into Stonehenge, and there buried him, by his dear brother; side by side there they lie both.

Then came it all together, that was highest in the land, earls and barons, and book-learned men; they came to London, to a mickle husting, and the rich thanes betook them all to counsel, that they would send messengers over sea into Brittany, after the best of all youth that was in the worlds-realm in those days, named Arthur the strong, the best of all knights; and say that he should come soon to his kingdom; for dead was he Uther Pendragon, as Aurelie was ere, and Uther Pendragon had no other son, that might after his days hold by law the Britons, maintain with worship, and rule this kingdom. For yet were in this land the Saxons settled; Colgrim the keen, and many thousands of his companions, that oft made to our Britons evil injuries. The Britons full soon took three bishops, and seven riders, strong in wisdom; forth they gan proceed into Brittany, and they full soon came to Arthur.—“Hail be thou, Arthur, noblest of knights! Uther thee greeted, when he should depart, and bade that thou shouldest thyself in Britain hold right laws, and help thy folk, and defend this kingdom, as good king should do, defeat thy enemies, and drive them from land. And he prayed the mild Son of God to be to thee now in aid, that thou mightest do well, and the land receive from God. For dead is Uther Pendragon, and thou art Arthur, his son; and dead is the other, Aurelie his brother.” Thus they gan tell, and Arthur sate full still; one while he was wan, and in hue exceeding pale; one while he was red, and was moved in heart. When it all brake forth, it was good that he spake; and thus said he there right, Arthur the noble knight: “Lord Christ, God's Son, be to us now in aid, that I may in life hold God's laws!”



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Arthur was fifteen years old, when this tiding was told to him, and all they were well employed, for he was much instructed. Arthur forth-right called his knights, and bade every man get ready his weapons, and saddle their horses very speedily, for he would go to this Britain. To the sea proceeded the good thanes, at Michael's mount, with a mickle host, the sea set them on the strand, at Southampton they came ashore. Forth he gan ride, Arthur the powerful, right to Silchester; there it seemed good to him; there was the host of Britons boldly assembled. Great was the bliss when Arthur came to the burgh; then was blast of trumpets, and men most glad; there they raised to be king Arthur the young.

When Arthur was king—hearken now a marvellous thing;—he was liberal to each man alive, knight with the best, wondrously keen! He was to the young for father, to the old for comforter, and with the unwise wonderfully stern, wrong was to him exceeding loathsome, and the right ever dear. Each of his cupbearers, and of his chamber-thanes, and his chamber-knights, bare gold in hand, to back and to bed, clad with gold web. He had never any cook, that he was not champion most good; never any knight's swam, that he was not bold thane! The king held all his folk together with great bliss, and with such things he overcame all kings, with fierce strength and with treasure. Such were his qualities, that all folk it knew. Now was Arthur good king, his people loved him, eke it was known wide, of his kingdom.

The king held in London a mickle husting; thereto were arrived all his knights, rich men and poor, to honour the king. When that it was all come, a numerous folk, up arose Arthur noblest of kings, and caused to be brought before him reliques well choice, and thereto the king gan soon to kneel thrice,—his people knew not what he would pronounce. Arthur held up his right hand, an oath he there swore, that never by his life, for no man's lore, should the Saxons become blithe in Britain, nor be landholders, nor enjoy worship, but he would drive them out, for they were at enmity with him. For they slew Uther Pendragon, who was son of Constance, so they did the other, Aurelie, his brother, therefore they were in land loathest of all folk. Arthur forth-right took his wise knights, were it lief to them were it loath to them, they all swore the same oath, that they would truly hold with Arthur, and avenge the King Uther, whom the Saxons killed here. Arthur sent his writs wide over his land, after all the knights that he might obtain, that they full soon should come to the king, and he would in land lovingly maintain them; reward them with land, with silver and with gold. Forth went the king with a numerous host, he led a surprising multitude, and marched right to York. There he lay one night, on the morrow he proceeded forth-right where he knew Colgrim to be, and his comrades with him.



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Since Octa was slain, and deprived of life-day, who was Hengest's son, out of Saxland come, Colgrim was the noblest man that came out of Saxland, after Hengest, and Hors, his brother, and Octa, and Ossa, and their companion Ebissa. At that day Colgrim ruled the Saxons by authority, led and counselled, with fierce strength; mickle was the multitude that marched with Colgrim! Colgrim heard tiding of Arthur the king, that he came toward him, and would do to him evil. Colgrim bethought him what he might do, and assembled his host over all the North land. There came together all the Scottish people, Peohtes and Saxons joined them together, and men of many kind followed Colgrim. Forth he gan to march with an immense force, against Arthur, noblest of kings, he thought to kill the king in his land, and fell his folk to the ground, and set all this kingdom in his own hand, and fell to the ground Arthur the young. Forth marched Colgrim, and his army with him, and proceeded with his host until he came to a water, the water is named Douglas, people it destroyed!

There came Arthur against him, ready with his fight; on a broad ford the hosts them met, vigorously their brave champions attacked, the fated fell to the ground! There was much blood shed, and woe there was rife, shivered shafts, men there fell! Arthur saw that, in mood he was uneasy, Arthur bethought him what he might do, and drew him backward on a broad field. When his foes weened that he would fly, then was Colgrim glad, and all his host with him, they weened that Arthur had with fear retreated there, and passed over the water, as if they were mad. When Arthur saw that, that Colgrim was so nigh to him, and they were both beside the water, thus said Arthur, noblest of kings: "See ye not, my Britons, here beside us, our full foes—Christ destroy them!—Colgrim the strong, out of Saxland? His kin in this land killed our ancestors, but now is the day come, that the Lord hath appointed, that he shall lose the life, and lose his friends, or else we shall be dead, we may not see him alive! The Saxish men shall abide sorrow, and we avenge worthily our friends." Up caught Arthur his shield, before his breast, and he gan to rush as the howling wolf, when he cometh from the wood, behung with snow, and thinketh to bite such beasts as he liketh. Arthur then called to his dear knights: "Advance we quickly, brave thanes! all together towards them; we all shall do well, and they forth fly, as the high wood, when the furious wind heaveth it with strength!" Flew over the wealds thirty thousand shields, and smote on Colgrim's knights, so that the earth shook again. Brake the broad spears, shivered shields; the Saxish men fell to the ground! Colgrim saw that, therefore he was woe—the fairest man of all that came out of Saxland. Colgrim gan to flee, exceeding quickly; and his horse bare him with great strength over the deep water, and saved him from death. The Saxons gan to sink—sorrow



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was given to them! Arthur hastened speedily to the water, and turned his spear's point, and hindered to them the ford; there the Saxons were drowned, full seven thousand. Some they gan wander, as the wild crane doth in the moorfen, when his flight is impaired, and swift hawks pursue after him, and hounds with mischief meet him in the reeds; then is neither good to him, nor the land nor the flood, the hawks him smite, the hounds him bite, then is the royal fowl at his death-time! Colgrim fled him over the fields quickly, until he came to York, riding most marvellously; he went into the burgh, and fast it inclosed; he had within ten thousand men, burghers with the best; that were beside him. Arthur pursued after him with thirty thousand knights, and marched right to York with folk very numerous, and besieged Colgrim at York, who defended it against him.

Seven nights therebefore Baldolf the fair, Colgrim's brother, was gone southward, and lay by the sea-side, and abode Childric. Childric was in those days a kaiser of powerful authority; the land in Alemaine was his own. When Baldolf heard, where he lay by the sea, that Arthur had inclosed Colgrim in York, Baldolf had assembled seven thousand men, bold fellows, who by the sea lay; they took them to counsel, that back they would ride, and leave Childric, and proceed into York, and fight with Arthur, and destroy all his people. Baldolf swore in his anger, that he would be Arthur's bane, and possess all this realm, with Colgrim his brother. Baldolf would not wait for the kaiser Childric, but thence he marched forth, and drew him forth right north, from day to day, with his bold folk, until he came into a wood, into a wilderness, full seven miles from Arthur's host. He had thought by night with seven thousand knights to ride upon Arthur, and fell his folk, and himself kill.

But all it otherwise happened, other than he weened; for Baldolf had in his host a British knight; he was Arthur's relative, named Maurin. Maurin went aside to the wood, through woods and through fields, until he came to Arthur's tents; and thus said soon to Arthur the king: "Hail be thou, Arthur, noblest of kings! I am hither come; I am of thy kindred. Here is Baldolf arrived with warriors most hardy, and thinketh in this night to slay thee and thy knights, to avenge his brother, who is greatly discouraged, but God shall prevent him, through his mickle might, And send now forth Cador, the Earl of Cornwall, and with him bold knights, good and brave, full seven hundred good thanes; and I will counsel them, and I will lead them, how they may Baldolf slay as if a wolf." Forth went Cador and all these knights, so that they came aside where Baldolf lay in tents, they advanced to him on each side; they slew, they captured all that they came nigh;—there were killed nine hundred all out told.



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Baldolf was gone aside to save himself, and fled through the wilderness, wondrously fast; and had his dear men with sorrow deserted, and fled him so far north, that he came so forth, where Arthur lay on the weald, with his powerful host, all about York—king most surprising! Colgrim was within with the Saxish men, and Baldulf bethought him what he might do; with what kind of stratagem he might come within, into the burgh, to Colgrim his brother, who was to him the dearest of all men alive. Baldulf caused to be shaved to the bare skin his beard and his chin, and made him as a fool; he caused half his head to be shorn, and took him in hand a long harp. He could harp exceeding well in his childhood; and with his harp he went to the king's host, and gan there to play, and much game to make. Oft men him smote with wands most smart; oft men him struck as men do fool; each man that met him, greeted him with derision; so never any man knew of Baldulf's appearance, but that it were a fool come to the folk! So long he went upward, so long he went downward, that they were aware, who were there within, that it was Baldulf without, Colgrim's brother. They cast out a rope, and Baldulf grasped it fast, and they drew up Baldulf, so that he came within, with such kind of stratagem Baldulf came within. Then was Colgrim blithe, and all his knights with him, and greatly they gan to threaten Arthur the king. Arthur was beside, and saw this game, and wrathed himself wondrously much; and ordered anon all his brave folk to weapon them; he thought to win the burgh with strength.

As Arthur was about to assault the wall, then came there riding Patrick, the rich man, who was a Scottish thane, fair in his land; and thus began to call to the king anon: "Hail be thou, Arthur the king, noblest of Britons! I will tell thee new tiding, of the kaiser Childric, the furious and the powerful, the strong and the bold. He is in Scotland arrived in a haven, and the homes consumeth, and wieldeth all our land in his own hand. He hath a host brave, all the strength of Rome; he saith with his boast, when men pour to him the wine, that thou darest not in any spot his attacks abide, neither in field, nor in wood, nor in ever any place. And if thou him abidest, he will thee bind; destroy thy people, and possess thy land."

Oft was Arthur woe, but never worse than then; and he drew him backward, beside the burgh; called to counsel knights at need, barons and earls, and the holy bishops; and bade that they should him counsel, how he might in the realm with his army his honour maintain, and fight with Childric, the strong and the powerful, who hither would come, to help Colgrim. Then answered the Britons, that were there beside: "Go we right to London, and let him come after; and if he cometh riding, sorrow he shall abide; he himself and his host shall die!" Arthur approved all that his people counselled; forth he gan march until he came to London.



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Colgrim was in York, and there he abode Childric. Childric gan proceed over the North end, and took in his hand a great deal of land. All Scotland he gave to a thane of his, and all Northumberland he set in the hand of his brother; Galloway and Orkney he gave to an earl of his; himself he took the land from Humber into London. He thought never more of Arthur to have mercy, unless he would become his man, Arthur, Uther's son.

Arthur was in London, with all the Britons; he summoned his forces over all this land, that every man, that good would grant to him, quickly and full soon to London should come. Then was England filled with harm; here was weeping and here was lament, and sorrow immoderate; mickle hunger and strife at every man's gate! Arthur sent over sea two good knights, to Howel his relation, who was to him dearest of men, who possessed Brittany, knight with the best; and bade him full soon, that he hither should come, sail to land, to help the people; for Childric had in hand much of this land, and Colgrim and Baldulf were come to him, and thought to drive Arthur the king out of the land; take from him his right, and his kingdom;—then were his kindred disgraced with shameful injury; their worship lost in this worlds-realm: then were it better for the king, that he were not born! Howel heard this, the highest of Brittany; and he gan to call his good knights anon, and bade them to horse exceeding speedily, and go into France, to the free knights, and should say to them that they should come, quickly and full soon, to Michael's Mount, with mickle strength, all who would of silver and of gold, win worship in this worlds-realm. To Poitou he sent his good thanes; and some toward Flanders, exceeding quickly; and to Touraine, two there proceeded, and into Gascony, knights eke good, and ordered them to come with strength toward Michael's Mount; and ere they went to flood (embarked), they should have gifts good, that they might the blither depart from their land, and with Howel the fair come to this land, to help Arthur, noblest of kings. Thirteen days were passed since the messengers came there, then advanced they toward the sea, as the hail doth from the welkin; and two hundred ships were there well prepared, men filled them with folk, and forth they voyaged; the wind and the weather stood after their will; and they came to land at Hamtone. Up leapt from the ships the furious men; bare to the land helms and burnies; with spears and with shields they covered all the fields. There was many a bold Briton that threat had raised, they threatened greatly, by their quick life, that they would greet Childric the powerful, the bold kaiser, with much harm there. And if he would not flee away, and toward Alemaine proceed, and if he would in the land with fight resist; with his bold people the barks abide; here they should leave what to them were dearest of all, their heads and hands, and their white helms; “and so they shall in this land lose their friends, and fall into hell—the heathen hounds”



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Arthur was in London, noblest of kings, and heard say sooth relation, that Howel the strong was come to land, forth-right to Hamtone, with thirty thousand knights, and with innumerable folk, that followed the king; Arthur towards him marched, with great bliss; with a mickle host, towards his relation. Together they came—bliss was among the folk—and they kissed and embraced, and spake familiarly; and anon forthright assembled their knights. Then were there together two good armies, of whom Howel should command thirty thousand knights, and Arthur had in land forty thousand in hand. Forth-right they marched toward the North end, toward Lincoln night and day, that Childric the kaiser besieged. But he the yet had nought won; for there were within seven thousand men, brave men and active, by day and night.

Arthur with his forces marched toward the burgh; and Arthur fore-ordered his knights, by day and night, that they should proceed as still, as if they would steal; pass over the country, and cease any noise; horns and trumpets, all should be relinquished. Arthur took a knight, that was a brave man and active; and sent him to Lincoln to his dear men, and he said to them in sooth, with mouth, that Arthur would come, noblest of kings, at the midnight, and with him many a good knight.—“And ye within, then be ye ware, that when ye hear the din, that ye the gates unfasten; and sally out of the burgh, and fell your foes; and smite on Childric, the strong and the powerful; and we shall tell them British tales!”

It was at the midnight, when the moon shone right south, Arthur with his host marched to the burgh; the folk was as still as if they would steal; forth they proceeded until they saw Lincoln. Thus gan he call, Arthur the keen man: “Where be ye, my knights, my dear-worthy warriors? See ye the tents, where Childric lieth on the fields; Colgrim and Baldulf, with bold strength; the Alemainish folk, that us hath harmed, and the Saxish folk, that sorrow to us promiseth; that all hath killed the highest of my kin; Constance and Constantine, and Uther, who was my father, and Aurelie Ambrosie, who was my father’s brother, and many thousand men of my noble kindred? Go we out to them, and lay to the ground, and worthily avenge our kin and their realm; and all together forth-right now ride every good knight!” Then Arthur gan to ride, and the army gan to move, as if all the earth would be consumed; and smote in the fields among Childric’s tents. That was the first man, that there gan to shout—Arthur the noble man, who was Uther’s son—keenly and loud, as becometh a king: “Now aid us, Mary, God’s mild mother! And I pray her son, that he be to us in succour!” Even with the words they turned their spears; pierced and slew all that they came nigh. And the knights out of the burgh marched against them (the enemy); if they fled to the burgh, there they were destroyed; if they fled to the wood, there they slaughtered them; come wherever they might come, ever they them slew. It is not in any book indited, that ever any fight were in this Britain, that mischief was so rife; for folk it was most miserable, that ever came to the land! There was mickle blood-shed, mischief was among the folk; death there was rife; the earth there became dun!



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Childric the kaiser had a castle here, in Lincoln's field, where he lay within, that was newly wrought, and exceeding well guarded; and there were with him Baldulf and Colgrim, and saw that their folk suffered death. And they anon forth-right, on with their burnies, and fled out of the castle, of courage bereft; and fled forth-right anon to the wood of Calidon. They had for companions seven hundred riders; and they left forty thousand slain, and deprived of life-day, felled to the ground; Alemainish men, with mischief destroyed, and the Saxish men, brought to the ground! Then saw Arthur, noblest of kings, that Childric was flown, and into Calidon gone, and Colgrim and Baldulf with him were gone into the high wood, into the high holm. And Arthur pursued after with sixty thousand knights of British people; the wood he all surrounded; and on one side they it felled, full seven miles, one tree upon another, truly fast; on the other side he surrounded it with his army, three days and three nights;—that was to them mickle harm.

Then saw Colgrim, as he lay therein, that there was without meat sharp hunger, and strife; nor they nor their horses help had any. And thus called Colgrim to the kaiser: "Say me, Lord Childric, sooth words; for what kind of thing lie we thus herein? Why should we not go out, and assemble our host, and begin fight with Arthur and with his knights? For better it is for us on land with honour to lie, than that we thus here perish for hunger; it grieveth us sore, to the destruction of the folk. Either send we again and again, and yearn Arthur's peace, and pray thus his mercy, and hostages deliver him, and make friendship with the free king." Childric heard this, where he lay within the dyke, and he answered with sorrowful voice: "If Baldulf it will, who is thine own brother, and more of our comrades, who with us are here, that we pray Arthur's peace, and make amity with him, after your will I will do it. For Arthur is esteemed very noble man in land; dear to all his men, and of royal kindred, all come of kings; he was Uther's son. And oft it befalleth, in many kind of land, where the good knights come to stern fight, that they who first gain, afterwards they it lose. And thus to us now is befallen here, and eft to us better will happen, if we may live." Soon forth-right answered all the knights: "We all praise this counsel, for thou hast well said!"

They took twelve knights, and sent forth-right, where he was in tent, by the wood's end; and the one called anon with quick voice: "Lord Arthur, thy peace! We would speak with thee; hither the kaiser sent us, who is named Childric, and Colgrim and Baldulf, both together. Now and evermore they pray thy mercy; thy men they will become, and thy honour advance, and they will give to thee hostages enow, and hold thee for lord, as to thee shall be liefest of all, if they may depart hence with life into their land; and bring evil tidings. For here



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we have found sorrows of many kind; at Lincoln left our dear relatives; sixty thousand men, that there are slain. And if it were to thee will in heart, that we might pass over sea with sail, we would nevermore eft come here; for here we have lost our dear relatives. So long as is ever, here come we back never!" Then laughed Arthur, with loud voice:—"Thanked be the Lord, that all dooms wieldeth, that Childric the strong is tired of my land! My land he hath divided to all his knights; myself he thought to drive out of my country; hold me for base, and have my realm, and my kin all put to death, my folk all destroy. But of him it is happened, as it is of the fox, when he is boldest over the weald, and hath his full play, and fowls enow; for wildness he climbeth, and rocks he seeketh; in the wilderness holes to him worketh. Fare whosoever shall fare, he hath never any care; he weeneth to be of power the boldest of all animals. But when come to him the men under the hills, with horns, with hounds, with loud cries; the hunters there hollow, the hounds there give tongue, they drive the fox over dales and over downs, he fleeth to the holm, and seeketh his hole; in the furthest end in the hole he goeth; then is the bold fox of bliss all deprived, and men dig to him on each side; then is there most wretched the proudest of all animals! So was it with Childric, the strong and the rich; he thought all my kingdom to set in his own hand, but now I have driven him to the bare death, whether so (whatsoever) I will do, either slay or hang. Now will I give him peace, and let him speak with me; I will not him slay, nor hang, but his prayer I will receive. Hostages I will have of the highest of his men; their horses and weapons, ere they hence depart; and so they shall as wretches go to their ships; sail over sea to their good land, and there worthily dwell in their realm, and tell tidings of Arthur the king, how I them have freed, for my father's soul, and for my freedom solaced the wretches." Hereby was Arthur the king of honour deprived, was there no man so bold that durst him advise;—that repented him sore, soon thereafter!

Childric came from covert to Arthur the king; and he there became his man, with all his knights. Four-and-twenty hostages Childric there delivered, all they were chosen, and noble men born; they delivered their horses, and their burnies, spears and shields, and their long swords; all they relinquished that they there had. Forth they gan to march until they came to the sea, where their good ships by the sea stood. The wind stood at will, the weather most favourable, and they shoved from the strand ships great and long; the land they all left, and floated with the waves, that no sight of land they might see. The water was still, after their will; they let together their sails glide, board against board, the men there discoursed and said that they would return eft to this land, and avenge worthily their relatives, and waste Arthur's land, and kill his folk, and win the castles, and work their pleasure.



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So they voyaged on the sea even so long, that they came between England and Normandy; they veered their luffs, and came toward land, so that they came full surely to Dartmouth at Totnes; with much bliss they approached to the land. So soon as they came on land, the folk they slew; the churls they drove off, that tilled the earth there; the knights they hung, that defended the land, all the good wives they sticked with knives; all the maidens they killed with murder; and all the learned men (clerics) they laid on embers. All the domestics (or baser sort) they killed with clubs; they felled the castles, the land they ravaged; the churches they consumed—grief was among the folk!—the sucking children they drowned in the water. The cattle that they took, all they slaughtered; to their inns they carried it, and boiled it and roasted; all they it took, that they came nigh. All day they sung of Arthur the king, and said that they had won homes, that they should hold in their power; and there they would dwell winter and summer. And if Arthur were so keen, that he would come to fight with Childric, the strong and the rich, they would of his back make a bridge, and take all the bones of the noble king, and tie them together with golden ties, and lay them in the hall door, where each man should go forth, to the worship of Childric, the strong and the rich! This was all their game, for Arthur the king's shame; but all it happened in otherwise, soon thereafter; their boast and their game befell to themselves to shame; and so doth well everywhere the man that so acteth.

Childric the kaiser won all that he looked on with eyes; he took Somerset, and he took Dorset, and in Devonshire the folk all destroyed, and Wiltshire with hostility he greeted, he took all the lands unto the sea strand. Then at the last, then caused he horns and trumpets to be blown, and his host to be assembled, and forth he would march, and Bath all besiege, and eke Bristol about berow. This was their threat, ere they to Bath came. To Bath came the kaiser, and belay the castle there; and the men within bravely began; they mounted upon the stone walls, well weaponed over all, and defended the place against Childric the strong. There lay the kaiser, and Colgrim his companion, and Baldulf his brother, and many another.

Arthur was by the North, and knew nought hereof; he proceeded over all Scotland, and set it in his own hand; Orkney and Galloway, Man and Moray, and all the lands that lay thereto. Arthur it weened to be certain thing, that Childric had departed to his own land, and that he never more would come here. When the tidings came to Arthur the king, that Childric the kaiser was come to land, and in the South end sorrow there wrought, then said Arthur, noblest of kings: "Alas! alas! that I spared my foe! that I had not with hunger destroyed him in the wood, or with sword cut him all to pieces! Now he yields to me meed for my good deeds. But so held me the



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Lord, who formed the daylight, he shall therefore abide bitterest of all bales—hard games;—his bane I will be! And Colgrim and Baldulf both I will kill, and all their people shall suffer death. If the Ruler of Heaven will grant it, I will worthily avenge all his hostile deeds; if the life in my breast may last to me, and the Power that formed moon and sun will grant it to me, never shall Childric eft deceive me!”

Now called Arthur, noblest of kings:—“Where be ye, my knights, brave men and active! To horse, to horse, good warriors; and we shall march toward Bath speedily! Let high gallows be up raised, and bring here the hostages before our knights, and they shall hang on high trees!” There he caused to be destroyed four-and-twenty children, Alesmainish men of very noble race.

Then came tidings to Arthur the king, that Howel, his relation, was sick lying in Clud—therefore he was sorry—and there he left him. Forth he gan to push exceeding hastily, until he beside Bath approached to a plain; there he alighted, and all his knights; and on with their burnies the stern men, and he in five divisions separated his army.

When he had duly set all, and it all beseemed, then he put on his burny, fashioned of steel, that an elvish smith made, with his excellent craft; he was named Wygar, the witty wright. His shanks he covered with hose of steel. Caliburn, his sword, he hung by his side; it was wrought in Avalon, with magic craft. A helm he set on his head, high of steel; thereon was many gemstone, all encompassed with gold; it was Uther’s, the noble king’s; it was named Goswhit, each other unlike. He hung on his neck a precious shield; its name was in British called Pridwen; therein was engraved with red gold tracings a precious image of God’s mother. His spear he took in hand, that was named Ron. When he had all his weeds, then leapt he on his steed. Then might he behold, who stood beside, the fairest knight, that ever host should lead; never saw any man better knight none, than Arthur he was, noblest of race! Then called Arthur with loud voice: “Lo! where here before us the heathen hounds, who slew our ancestors with their wicked crafts; and they are to us in land loathest of all things. Now march we to them, and starkly lay on them, and avenge worthily our kindred, and our realm, and avenge the mickle shame by which they have disgraced us, that they over the waves should have come to Dartmouth. And all they are forsworn, and all they shall be destroyed; they shall be all put to death, with the Lord’s assistance! March we now forward, fast together, even all as softly as if we thought no evil; and when we come to them, myself I will commence; foremost of all the fight I will begin. Now we shall ride, and over the land glide; and no man on pain of his life make noise, but fare quickly; the Lord us aid!” Then Arthur the rich man gan to ride; he proceeded over the weald, and Bath would seek.



The tiding came to Childric, the strong and the rich, that Arthur came with host all ready to fight. Childric and his brave men leapt them to horse, and grasped their weapons—they knew themselves to be hateful!



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Arthur saw this, noblest of kings; he saw a heathen earl advance against him, with seven hundred knights, all ready to fight. The earl himself approached before all his troop, and Arthur himself rode before all his host. Arthur the bold took Ron in hand; he extended (couched) the stark shaft, the stiff-minded king; his horse he let run, so that all the earth dinned. His shield he drew to his breast—the king was incensed—he smote Borel the earl throughout the breast, so that the heart sundered. And the king called anon, “The foremost is dead! Now help us the Lord, and the heavenly queen, who the Lord bore!” Then called Arthur, noblest of kings: “Now to them! now to them! The commencement is well done!” The Britons laid on them, as men should do on the wicked; they gave bitter strokes with axes and with swords. There fell of Childric’s men full two thousand, so that never Arthur lost ever one of his men; there were the Saxish men of all folk most wretched, and the Alemainish men most miserable of all people! Arthur with his sword wrought destruction; all that he smote at, it was soon destroyed! The king was all enraged as is the wild boar, when he in the beech-wood meeteth many swine. Childric saw this, and gan him to turn, and bent him over the Avon, to save himself. And Arthur approached to him, as if it were a lion, and drove them to the flood, there many were slain; they sunk to the bottom five-and-twenty hundred, so that all Avon’s stream was bridged with steel! Childric over the water fled, with fifteen hundred knights; he thought forth to push, and sail over the sea. Arthur saw Colgrim climb to the mount, retreat to the hill that standeth over Bath; and Baldulf went after him, with seven thousand knights; they thought on the hill to withstand nobly, defend them with weapons, and do injury to Arthur.

When Arthur saw, noblest of kings, where Colgrim withstood, and eke battle wrought, then called the king, keenly loud: “My bold thanes, advance to the hills! For yesterday was Colgrim of all men keenest, but now it is to him all as to the goat, where he guards the hill; high upon the hill he fighteth with horns, when the wild wolf approacheth toward him. Though the wolf be alone, without each herd, and there were in a fold five hundred goats, the wolf to them goeth, and all them biteth. So will I now to-day Colgrim all destroy; I am the wolf and he is the goat; the man shall die!” The yet called Arthur, noblest of kings: “Yesterday was Baldulf of all knights boldest, but now he standeth on the hill, and beholdeth the Avon, how the steel fishes lie in the stream! Armed with sword, their life is destroyed; their scales float like gold-dyed shields; there float their fins, as if it were spears. These are marvellous things come to this land; such beasts on the hill, such fishes in the stream! Yesterday was the kaiser keenest of all kings; now is he become a hunter, and horns him follow; he flieth over the broad weald;



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his hounds bark; he hath beside Bath his hunting deserted; from his deer he flieth, and we it shall fell, and his bold threats bring to nought; and so we shall enjoy our rights gained." Even with the words that the king said, he drew his shield high before his breast; he grasped his long spear, his horse he gan spur. Nigh all so swift as the fowl flieth, five-and-twenty thousand of brave men, mad under arms, followed the king; they proceeded to the hill with great strength, and smote upon Colgrim with exceeding smart strokes. And Colgrim them there received, and felled the Britons to ground; in the foremost attack fell five hundred.

Arthur saw that, noblest of kings, and wrathed him wondrously much, and thus gan to call Arthur, the noble man: "Where be ye, Britons, my bold men! Here stand before us our foes all chosen; my good warriors, lay we them to the ground!" Arthur grasped his sword right, and he smote a Saxish knight, so that the sword that was so good at the teeth stopt; and he smote another, who was this knight's brother, so that his helm and his head fell to the ground, the third blow he soon gave, and a knight in two clave. Then were the Britons greatly emboldened, and laid on the Saxons laws (blows) most strong with their long spears and with swords most strong; so that the Saxons there fell, and made their death-time, by hundreds and hundreds sank to the ground, by thousands and thousands fell there ever on the ground! When Colgrim saw where Arthur came toward him, Colgrim might not for the slaughtered flee on any side; there fought Baldulf beside his brother. Then called Arthur with loud voice: "Here I come, Colgrim! to the realm we two shall reach; now we shall divide this land, as shall be to thee loathest of all!" Even with the words that the king said, his broad sword he up heaved, and hardily down struck, and smote Colgrim's helm, so that he clove it in the midst, and clove asunder the burny's hood, so that it (the sword) stopt at the breast. And he smote toward Baldulf with his left hand, and struck off the head, forth with the helm.

Then laughed Arthur, the noble king, and thus gan to speak with gameful words: "Lie thou there, Colgrim; thou wert climbed too high; and Baldulf, thy brother, he by thy side; now set I all this kingdom in your own hands; dales and downs, and all my good folk! Thou climbed on this hill wondrously high, as if thou wouldst ascend to heaven; but now thou shalt to hell, and there thou mayest know much of thy kindred. And greet thou there Hengest, that was fairest of knights, Ebissa, and Ossa, Octa, and more of thy kin, and bid them there dwell winter and summer; and we shall here in land live in bliss, pray for your souls, that happiness never come to them; and here shall your yones lie, beside Bath!"



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Arthur, the king, called Cador, the keen;—of Cornwall he was earl, the knight was most keen:—“Hearken to me, Cador, thou art mine own kin. Now is Childric flown, and awayward gone; he thinketh with safety again to come hither. But take of my host five thousand men, and go forth-right, by day and by night, until thou come to the sea, before Childric; and all that thou mayest win, possess it with joy; and if thou mayest with evil kill there the kaiser, I will give thee all Dorset to meed.” All as the noble king these words had said, Cador sprang to horse, as spark it doth from fire; full seven thousand followed the earl. Cador the keen, and much of his kindred, proceeded over wealds, and over wilderness, over dales and over downs, and over deep waters. Cador knew the way that toward his country lay, by the nearest he proceeded full surely right toward Totnes, day and night, until he came there forth-right, so that Childric never knew any manner of his coming. Cador came to the country before Childric, and caused to advance before him all the folk of the land, churls full sagacious, with clubs exceeding great, with spears and with great staves, chosen for the purpose, and placed them all clean into the ships’ holds, and ordered them there to stoop low, that Childric were not aware of them, and when his folk came, and in would climb, to grasp their bats, and bravely on smite; with their staves and with their spears to murder Childric’s host. The churls did all, as Cador them taught. To the ships proceeded the valiant churls; in every ship a hundred and half. And Cador the keen withdrew, in toward a wood high, five miles from the place where the ships stood, and hid him a while, wondrously still. And Childric soon approached, over the weald, and would flee to the ships, and push from land. So soon as Cador saw this, who was the earl keen, that Childric was in land, between him and the churls, then called Cador, with loud voice: “Where be ye, knights, brave men and active? Bethink ye what Arthur, who is our noble king, at Bath besought us, ere we went from the host. Lo! where Childric wendeth, and will flee from the land, and thinketh to pass to Alemaine, where his ancestors are, and will obtain an army, and eft come hither, and will fare in hither; and thinketh to avenge Colgrim, and Baldulf, his brother, who rest at Bath. But he never shall abide the day, he shall not, if we may prevent him!”

Even with the speech, that the powerful earl spake, and promptly he gan ride, that was stern in mood, the warriors most keen advanced out of the wood-shaw, and after Childric pursued, the strong and the rich Childric’s knights looked behind them; they saw over the weald the standards wind, approach over the fields five thousand shields. Then became Childric careful in heart, and these words said the powerful kaiser: “This is Arthur the king, who will us all kill, flee we now quickly, and into ship go, and voyage forth with the water, reckon we never whither!”



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When Childric the kaiser had said these words, then gan he to flee exceeding quickly, and Cador the keen came soon after him. Childric and his knights came to ship forthright; they weened to shove the strong ships from the land. The churls with their bats were there within, the bats they up heaved, and adown right swung, there was soon slain many a knight with their clubs; with their pitch-forks they felled them to ground, and Cador and his knights slew them behind. Then saw Childric, that it befell to them evilly; that all his mickle folk fell to the ground, now saw he there beside a hill exceeding great, the water floweth there under, that is named Teine, the hill is named Teinewic, thitherward fled Childric, as quickly as he might, with four-and-twenty knights. Then Cador saw, how it then fared there, that the kaiser fled, and toward the hill retreated, and Cador pursued after him, as speedily as he might, and came up to him, and overtook him soon. Then said Cador, the earl most keen: "Abide, abide, Childric! I will give thee Teinewic!" Cador heaved up his sword, and he Childric slew. Many that there fled, to the water they drew, in Teine the water, there they perished; Cador killed all that he found alive; and some they crept into the wood, and all he them there destroyed. When Cador had overcome them all, and eke all the land taken, he set peace most good, that thereafter long stood, though each man bare in hand rings of gold, durst never any man greet another evilly.

Arthur was forth marched into Scotland; for Howel lay in Clud, fast inclosed. The Scots had besieged him with their wicked crafts, and if Arthur were not the earlier come, then were Howel taken, and all his folk there slain, and deprived of life day. But Arthur came soon, with good strength, and the Scots gan to flee far from the land, into Moray, with a mickle host. And Cador came to Scotland, where he Arthur found. Arthur and Cador proceeded into Clud, and found Howel there, with great bliss in health, of all his sickness whole he was become; great was the bliss that then was in the burgh! The Scots were in Moray, and there thought to dwell, and with their bold words made their boast, and said that they would rule the realm, and Arthur there abide, with bold strength, for Arthur durst never for his life come there. When Arthur heard, void of fear, what the Scots had said with their scornful words, then said Arthur, noblest of kings: "Where art thou, Howel, highest of my kindred, and Cador the keen, out of Cornwall? Let the trumpets blow, and assemble our host, and at the midnight we shall march forth right toward Moray, our honour to win. If the Lord will it, who shaped the daylight, we shall them tell sorrowful tales, and fell their boast, and themselves kill." At the midnight Arthur forth-right arose; horns men gan to blow with loud sound; knights gan arise, and stern words to speak. With a great army he marched into Moray; forth gan press thirteen thousand in the foremost flock, men exceeding keen. Afterwards came Cador, the Earl of Cornwall, with seventeen thousand good thanes. Next came Howel, with his champions exceeding well, with one-and-twenty thousand noble champions. Then came Arthur himself, noblest of kings; with seven-and-twenty thousand followed them afterward; the shields there glistened, and light it gan to dawn.



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The tidings came to the Scots, there where they dwelt, how Arthur the king came toward their land, exceeding quickly, with innumerable folk. Then were they fearfulest, who ere were boldest, and gan to flee exceeding quickly into the water, where wonders are enow! That is a marvellous lake, set in middle-earth, with fen, and with reed, and with water exceeding broad; with fish, and with fowl, with evil things! The water is immeasurably broad; nikers therein bathe; there is play of elves in the hideous pool. Sixty islands are in the long water; in each of the islands is a rock high and strong; there nest eagles, and other great fowls. The eagles have a law by every king's day; whensoever any army cometh to the country, then fly the fowls far into the sky, many hundred thousands, and mickle fight make. Then is the folk without doubt, that sorrow is to come to them from people of some kind, that will seek the land. Two days or three thus shall this token be, ere foreign men approach to the land. Yet there is a marvellous thing to say of the water; there falleth in the lake, on many a side, from dales and from downs, and from deep valleys, sixty streams, all there collected; yet never out of the lake any man findeth that thereout they flow, except a small brook at one end, that from the lake falleth, and wendeth very stilly into the sea. The Scots were dispersed with much misery, over all the many mounts that were in the water. And Arthur sought ships, and gan to enter them; and slew there without number, many and enow; and many a thousand there was dead, because all bread failed them. Arthur the noble was on the east side; Howel the good was on the south half; and Cador the keen guarded them by the north; and his inferior folk he set all by the west side. Then were the Scots accounted for sots, where they lay around the cliffs, fast inclosed; there were sixty thousand with sorrow destroyed.

Then was come into haven the King of Ireland; twelve miles from Arthur, where he lay with an army, to help the Scots, and Howel to destroy. Arthur heard this, noblest of kings, and took one host of his, and thitherward marched; and found the King Gillomar, who was come there to land. And Arthur fought with him, and would give him no peace (quarter), and felled the Irish men exceedingly to the ground. And Gillomar with twelve ships departed from the land, and proceeded to Ireland, with harm most strong. And Arthur in the land slew all that he found; and afterwards he went to the lake, where he left his relation Howel the fair, noblest of Britain, except Arthur, noblest of kings. Arthur found Howel, where he was by the haven, by the broad lake, where he had abode. Then rejoiced greatly the folk in the host, of Arthur's arrival, and of his noble deeds; there was Arthur forth-right, two days and two nights. The Scots lay over the rocks, many thousands dead, with hunger destroyed, most miserable of all folk!



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On the third day, it gan to dawn fair; then came toward the host all that were hooded, and three wise bishops, in book well learned; priests and monks, many without number; canons there came, many and good, with all the reliques that were noblest in the land, and yearned Arthur's peace, and his compassion. Thither came the women, that dwelt in the land; they carried in their arms their miserable children; they wept before Arthur wondrously much, and their fair hair threw to the earth; cut off their locks, and there down laid at the king's feet, before all his people; set their nails to their face, so that afterwards it bled. They were naked nigh (nearly) all clean; and sorrowfully they gan to call to Arthur the king, and together thus said, where they were in affliction: "King, we are on earth most wretched of all folk; we yearn thy mercy, through the mild God! Thou hast in this land our people slain, with hunger and with strife, and with many kind of harms; with weapon, with water, and with many mischiefs our children made fatherless and deprived of comfort. Thou art a Christian man, and we are also; the Saxish men are heathen hounds. They came to this land, and this folk here killed; if we obeyed them, that was because of our harm, for we had no man that might accord us with them. They did us much woe, and thou dost to us also; the heathens us hate, and the Christians make us sorrowful;— whereto and what shall become of us!"—quoth the women to the king. "Give us yet the men alive, who lie over these rocks; and if thou givest grace to this multitude, thy honour will be the greater, now and evermore. Lord Arthur our king, loosen our bonds! Thou has taken (conquered) all this land, and all this folk is overcome; we are under thy foot; in thee is all the remedy."

Arthur heard this, noblest of kings; this weeping and this lament, and immoderate sorrow; then took he to counsel, and had pity in heart; he found in his counsel to do what they him prayed, he gave them life, he gave them limb, and their land to hold. He caused the trumpets to be blown, and the Scots to be summoned; and they came out of the rocks to the ships; on every side approached toward land. They were greatly harmed by the sharp hunger; and oaths they swore, that they would not deceive; and they then gave hostages to the king, and all full soon became the king's men. And then they gan depart; the folk there separated, each man to the end, where he was dwelling, and Arthur there set peace, good with the best.

Then said Arthur: "Where art thou, Howel, my relation, dearest of men to me? Seest thou this great lake, where the Scots are harmed, seest thou these high trees, and seest thou these eagles fly? In this fen is fish innumerable. Seest thou these islands, that stand over this water?" Marvellous it seemed to Howel, of such a sight, and he wondered greatly by the water-flood, and thus there spake Howel, of noble race: "Since I was born man of my mother's bosom, saw I in no land



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things thus wonderful, as I here before me behold with eyes!" The Britons wondered wondrously much. Then spake Arthur, noblest of kings: "Howel, mine own relative, dearest to me of men, listen to my words, of a much greater wonder that I will tell to thee in my sooth speech. By this lake's end, where this water floweth, is a certain little lake, to the wonder of men! It is in length four-and-sixty palms; it is in measure in breadth five-and-twenty feet; five feet it is deep, elves it dug! Four-cornered it is, and therein is fish of four kinds, and each fish in his end where he findeth his kind, may there none go to other, except all as belongeth to his kind. Was never any man born, nor of so wise craft chosen, live he ever so long, that may understand it, what letteth (hindereth) the fish to swim to the others; for there is nought between but water clean!" The yet spake Arthur, noblest of kings: "Howel, in this land's end, nigh the sea-strand, is a lake exceeding great—the water is evil—and when the sea floweth, as if it would rage, and falleth in the lake exceeding quickly, the lake is never the more increased in water. But when the sea falleth in (ebbs), and the ground becomes fair, and in it is all in its old seat, then swelleth the lake, and the waves darken; out the waves there leap, exceeding great, flow out on the land, and the people soon terrify. If any man cometh there, that knoweth nought thereof, to behold the marvel by the sea strand, if he turneth his face toward the lake, be he nought (never) so low born, full well he shall be saved, the water glideth him beside, and the man there remaineth easy, after his will he dwelleth there full still, so that he is not because of the water anything injured!" Then said Howel, noble man of Brittany: "Now I hear tell a wonderful story, and marvellous is the Lord that it all made!"

Then said Arthur, noblest of kings. "Blow ye my horns with loud noise, and say ye to my knights, that I will march forth-right." Trumpets there were blown, horns there resounded; bliss was in the host with the busy king, for each was solaced, and proceeded toward his land. And the king forbade them, by their bare life, that no man in the world should be so mad, nor person so unwise, that he should break his peace; and if any man did it, he should suffer doom. Even with the words the army marched, there sung warriors marvellous songs of Arthur the king, and of his chieftains, and said in song, to this world's end never more would be such a king as Arthur, through all things, king nor caiser, in ever any realm!

Arthur proceeded to York, with folk very surprising (numerous), and dwelt there six weeks with much joy. The burgh walls were broken and fallen down, that Childric all consumed, and the halls all clean. Then called the king a distinguished priest, Pirai,—he was an exceeding wise man, and learned in book:—"Pirai, thou art mine own priest, the easier it shall be for thee." The king took a rood, holy and most



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good, and gave to Pirai in hand, and therewith very much land, and the archbishop's staff he there gave to Pirai;—ere was Pirai a good priest, now is he archbishop! Then bade him Arthur, noblest of kings, that he should arear churches, and restore the hymns, and take charge of God's folk, and rule them fair. And he bade all his knights to deem right (just) dooms, and the earth-tillers to take to their craft, and every man to greet other. And what man soever did worse than the king had ordered, he would drive him to a bare burning, and if it were a base man, he should for that hang. The yet spake Arthur, noblest of kings, ordered that each man who had lost his land by whatsoever kind of punishment he were bereaved, that he should come again, full quickly and full soon—the rich and the low—and should have eft his own, unless he were so foully conditioned, that he were traitor to his lord, or toward his lord forsworn, whom the king should deem lost (beyond the limit of pardon). There came three brethren, that were royally born, Loth, and Angel, and Urien;—well are such three men! These three chieftains came to the king, and set on their knees before the caiser:—“Hail be thou, Arthur, noblest of kings, and thy people with thee; ever may they well be! We are three brethren, born of kings. All our rightful land is gone out of our hand; for the heathen men have made us poor, and wasted us all Leoneis, Scotland, and Moray. And we pray thee, for God's love, that thou be to us in aid, and for thy great honour, that thou be mild to us, and give us our rightful land; and we shall love thee, and hold thee for lord, in each land-wise.” Arthur heard this, noblest of kings, how these three knights fair besought him; he had compassion in heart, and began speak, and said these words—best of all kings:—“Urien, become my man; thou shalt to Moray again; thereof thou shalt be called king of the land, and high in my court (or host), with thy forces. And to Angel I set in hand Scotland altogether; to have it in hand, and be king of the land, from the father to the son; thereof thou shalt my man become. And thou, Loth, my dear friend—God be to thee mild!—thou hast my sister to wife; the better it shall be for thee. I give thee Leoneis, that is a land fair; and I will lay (add) thereto lands most good, beside the Humber, worth an hundred pounds. For my father Uther, the while that he was king here, loved well his daughter, who was his desire esteemed; and she is my sister, and sons she hath twain; they are to me in land dearest of all children.” Thus spake Arthur the king. Then was Walwain a little child; so was the other, Modred his brother. But alas! that Modred was born; much harm therefore came! Arthur proceeded to London, and with him his people; he held in the land a mickle husting, and established all the laws that stood in his elders' days; all the good laws that era here stood; he set peace, he set protection, and all freedoms.



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From thence he marched to Cornwall, to Cador's territory; he found there a maid extremely fair. This maiden's mother was of Romanish men, Cador's relative; and the maid Cador on him bestowed, and he received her fair, and softly her fed. She was of noble race, of Romanish men; was in no land any maid so fair, of speech and of deeds, and of manners most good; she was named Wenhaver, fairest of women. Arthur took her to wife, and loved her wondrously much; this maiden he gan wed, and took her to his bed. Arthur was in Cornwall all the winter there; and all for Wenhaver's love, dearest of women to him.

When the winter was gone, and summer came there anon, Arthur bethought him what he might do, that his good folk should not lie there inert. He marched to Exeter, at the midfeast (St. John Baptist?), and held there his husting of his noble folk, and said that he would go into Ireland, and win all the kingdom to his own hand; unless the King Gillomar the sooner came ere to him, and spake with him with good will, and yearned Arthur's peace, he would waste his land, and go to him evilly in hand, with fire and with steel work hostile game, and the land-folk slay, who would stand against him. Even with the words that the king said, then answered the folk, fair to the king: "Lord king, hold thy word, for we are all ready, to go and to ride over all at thy need." There was many a bold Briton that had boar's glances; heaved up their brows, enraged in their thought. They went toward their inns, knights with their men: they got ready burnies, prepared helms, they wiped their dear horses with linen cloths; they sheared, they shod—the men were bold! Some shaped (or shaved) horn; some shaped bone; some prepared steel darts; some made thongs, good and very strong; some bent spears, and made ready shields. Arthur caused to be bidden over all his kingdom, that every good knight should come to him forth-right, and every brave man should come forth-right anon; and whoso should remain behind, his limbs he should lose, and whoso should come gladly, he should become rich.

Seven nights after Easter, when men had fasted, then came all the knights to ship forth-right; the wind stood to them in hand (favourably), that drove them to Ireland. Arthur marched in the land, and the people destroyed; much folk he there slew, and he took cattle enow; and ever he ordered each man church-peace to hold. The tiding came to the king, who was lord of the land, that Arthur the king was come there, and much harm there wrought. He assembled all his people, over his kingdom; and his Irish folk marched to the fight, against Arthur the noble king. Arthur and his knights they weaponed them forth-right, and advanced against them, a numerous folk. Arthur's men were with arms all covered, the Irish men were nearly naked, with spears and with axes, and with saexes exceeding sharp. Arthur's men let fly at them numerous darts, and killed the Irish folk; and greatly it felled; they might not this sustain, through any kind of thing, but fled away quickly, very many thousands. And Gillomar the king fled, and awayward drew, and Arthur pursued after him, and caught the king; he took by the hand the king of the land.



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Arthur the noble sought lodging; in his mood it was the easier to him, that Gillomar was so nigh him. Now did Arthur, noblest of kings, very great friendship before all his folk, he caused the king to be clothed with each pride (richly), and eke by Arthur he sate, and eke with himself ate; with Arthur he drank wine—that to mm was mickle unthank. Nevertheless when he saw that Arthur was most glad, then said Gillomar to him—in his heart he was sore: “Lord Arthur, thy peace! Give me limb and give me life, and I will become thy man, and deliver thee my three sons, my dear sons, to do all thy will. And yet I will do more, if thou wilt give me grace; I will deliver thee hostages exceeding rich, children some sixty, noble and most mighty. And yet I will more, if thou givest me grace; each year of my land seven thousand pounds, and send them to thy land, and sixty marks of gold. And yet I will more, if thou wilt give me grace; and all the steeds, with all their trappings, the hawks, and the hounds, and my rich treasures I give thee in hand, of all my land. And when thou hast this done, I will take the reliques of Saint Columkille, who did God’s will, and Saint Brandan’s head, that God himself hallowed, and Saint Bride’s right foot, that is holy and most good, and reliques enow, that came out of Rome, and swear to thee in sooth, that I will thee not deceive; but I will love thee, and hold thee for lord, hold thee for high king, and myself be thy underling.”

Arthur heard this, noblest of kings, and he gan laugh with loud voice, and he gan answer with gracious words: “Be now glad, Gillomar; be not thy heart sore; for thou art a wise man—the better therefore shall it be to thee, for ever one ought worthily a wise man to greet,—for thy wisdom shall it not be the worse for thee, much thou me offerest, the better it shall be to thee. Here forth right, before all my knights, I forgive thee the more, all the half-part, of gold and of treasure; but thou shalt become my man, and half the tribute send each year into my land. Half the steeds, and half the weeds (garments), half the hawks, and half the hounds, that thou me offerest, I will relinquish to thee, but I will have the children of thy noble men, who are to them dearest of all; I may the better believe thee. And so thou shalt dwell in thy honour in thy kingdom, in thy right territory; and I will give to thee, that the king shall not do wrong to thee, unless he pay for it with his bare back!” Thus it said Arthur, noblest of kings. Then had he all Ireland all together in his own hand, and the king became his man, and delivered him his three sons.



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Then spake Arthur to his good knights: "Go we to Iceland, and take we it in our hand." The host there marched, and to Iceland came. The king was named AElcus, high man of the land, he heard the tiding of Arthur the king; he did all as a wiseman, and marched against him anon; anon forth-right, with sixteen knights; he bare in his hand a mickle wand (sceptre) of gold. So soon as he saw Arthur, he bent him on his knees, and quoth these words to him—the king was afraid:—"Welcome, sir Arthur! welcome, lord' Here I deliver thee in hand all together Iceland, thou shalt be my high king, and I will be thy underling. I will obey thee, as man shall do his master, and I will become here thy man, and deliver thee my dear son, who is named Escol; and thou shalt him honour (or reward), and dub him to knight, as thine own man. His mother I have to wife, the king's choice daughter of Russia. And eke each year I will give thee money, seven thousand pounds of silver and gold, and in every counsel be ready at thy need. This I will swear to thee, upon my sword; the relique is in the hilt, the noblest of this land; like as me shall like, will I never be false to thee!"

Arthur heard this noblest of kings. Arthur was winsome where he had his will, and he was exceeding stern with his enemies. Arthur heard the mild words of the monarch; he granted him all that he yearned; hostages and oaths, and all his proffers. Then heard say sooth words the King of Orkney, exceeding keen, who was named Gonwais, a heathen warrior, that Arthur the king would come to his land; with a mickle fleet sail to his country. Gonwais proceeded towards him, with his wise thanes, and set to Arthur in hand all Orkney's land, and two-and-thirty islands, that thither in heth, and his homage, with much reverence. And he had (made) to him in covenant, before all his people, each year to wit, full sixty ships at his own cost to bring them to London, filled truly with good sea-fish. This covenant he confirmed, and hostages he found, and oaths he swore good, that he would not deceive. And afterwards he took leave, and forth he gan wend:—"Lord, have well good day! I will come when I may, for now thou art my lord, dearest of all kings." When Arthur had done this, the yet he would more undertake; he took his good writs, and sent to Gutlond; and greeted the King Doldanim, and bade him soon come to him, and himself become his man, and bring with him his two sons.— "And if thou wilt not that, do what thou wilt, and I will send thee sixteen thousand noble warriors, to thy mickle harm, who shall waste thy land, and slay thy people, and set the land as to them best seemeth, and thyself bind, and to me bring." The king heard this, the threat of the kaiser, and he speedily took his fair weeds, hounds and hawks, and his good horses, much silver, much gold; his two sons in his hand. And forth he gan wend to Arthur the king, and said these words Doldanim the good: "Hail be thou, Arthur,



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noblest of kings' Here I bring twain, my sons both; their mother is of king's race, she is mine own queen; I won her with spoil, out of Russia. Here I deliver thee my dear sons, and myself I will become thy man. And I will send thee tribute of my land, every year as thin? bestowed, I will send thee into London seven thousand pounds. That I will swear, that I will never be false, but here I will become thy man—thy honour is the greater—so long as is ever, I will deceive thee never!"

Arthur took his messengers, and sent to Winetland, to Rumareth the king, and bade him know in haste, that he had in his hand Britain and Scotland, Gutland and Ireland, Orcany and Iceland. He ordered Rumareth to come, and bring him his eldest son; and if he would not do that, he would drive him from land, and if he might him capture, he would slay him or hang, and destroy all his land, his people exterminate. Rumareth heard this, the rich King of Winet; greatly he was afraid, all as the others were ere; loath to him were the tidings from Arthur the king. Nevertheless the King Rumareth hearkened counsels; he took his eldest son, and twelve good earls, and proceeded to Arthur the noble king, and sate at his feet, and gan him fair greet: "Hail be thou, Arthur, noblest of Britons' I hight Rumareth, the King of Winetland, enow I have heard declared of thy valour; that thou art wide known, keenest of all kings. Thou hast won many kingdom all to thine own hand, there is no king in land that may thee withstand, king nor kaiser, in ever any combat; of all that thou beginnest, thou dost thy will. Here am I to thee come, and brought thee my eldest son; here I set thee in hand myself and my kingdom, and my dear son, and all my people, my wife and my weeds, and all my possessions, on condition that thou give me protection against thy fierce attacks. And be thou my high king, and I will be thy underling, and send thee to hand five hundred pounds of gold; these gifts I will thee find, every year."

Arthur granted him all that the king yearned, and afterwards he held communing with his good thanes, and said that he would return again into this land, and see Wenhaver, the comely queen of the country. Trumpets he caused to be blown, and his army to assemble; and to ship marched the thanes wondrous blithe. The wind still stood them at will; weather as they would; blithe they were all therefore; up they came to Grumesby. That heard soon the highest of this land, and to the queen came tiding of Arthur the king, that he was come in safety, and his folk in prosperity. Then were in Britain joys enow! Here was fiddling and song, here was harping among, pipes and trumps sang there merrily. Poets there sung of Arthur the king, and of the great honour, that he had won. Folk came in concourse of many kind of land; wide and far the folk was in prosperity. All that Arthur saw, all it submitted to him, rich men and poor, as the hail that falleth; was there no Briton so wretched, that he was not enriched!



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Here man may tell of Arthur the king, how he afterwards dwelt here twelve years, in peace and in amity, in all fairness. No man fought with him, nor made he any strife; might never any man bethink of bliss that were greater in any country than in this; might never man know any so mickle joy, as was with Arthur, and with his folk here!

I may say how it happened, wondrous though it seem. It was on a yule-day, that Arthur lay in London; then were come to him men of all his kingdoms, of Britain, of Scotland, of Ireland, of Iceland, and of all the lands that Arthur had in hand; and all the highest thanes, with horses and with swains. There were come seven kings' sons, with seven hundred knights; without the folk that obeyed Arthur. Each had in heart proud thoughts, and esteemed that he were better than his companion. The folk was of many a land; there was mickle envy; for the one accounted himself high, the other much higher. Then blew men the trumpets, and spread the tables; water men brought on floor, with golden bowls; next soft clothes, all of white silk. Then sate Arthur down, and by him Wenhaver the queen; next sate the earls, and thereafter the barons; next the knights, all as men them disposed. And the high-born men bare the meat even forth-right then to the knights; then toward the thanes, then toward the swains, then toward the porters, forth at the board. The people became angered, and blows there were rife; at first they threw the loaves, the while that they lasted, and the silver bowls, filled with wine, and afterwards with the fists approached to necks. Then leapt there forth a young man, who came out of Winetland; he was given to Arthur to hold as hostage; he was Rumareth's son, the King of Winet. Thus said the knight there to Arthur the king: "Lord Arthur, go quickly into thy chamber, and thy queen with thee, and thy known relatives, and we shall decide this combat against these foreign warriors." Even with the words he leapt to the board where lay the knives before the sovereign; three knives he grasped, and with the one he smote the knight in the neck, that first began the same fight, so that his head on the floor fell to the ground. Soon he slew another, this same thane's brother; ere the swords came, seven he felled. There was fight exceeding great; each man smote other; there was much blood shed, mischief was among the folk!

Then approached the king out of his chamber; with him an hundred nobles, with helms and with burnies; each bare in his right hand a white steel brand. Then called Arthur, noblest of kings: "Sit ye, sit ye quickly, each man on his life! And whoso will not that do, he shall be put to death. Take ye me the same man, that this fight first began, and put withy on his neck, and draw him to a moor, and put him in a low fen, there he shall lie. And take ye all his dearest kin, that ye may find, and strike off the heads of them with your broad swords, the women that ye may find of his nearest kindred,



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carve ye off their noses, and let their beauty go to destruction; and so I will all destroy the race that he of came. And if I evermore subsequently hear, that any of my folk, of high or of low, eft arear strife on account of this same slaughter, there shall ransom him neither gold nor any treasure, fine horse nor war-garment, that he should not be dead, or with horses drawn in pieces—that is of each traitor the law! Bring ye the reliques, and I will swear thereon; and so, knights, shall ye, that were at this fight, earls and barons, that ye will not it break.” First swore Arthur, noblest of kings; then swore earls, then swore barons; then swore thanes, then swore swains, that they nevermore the strife would arear. Men took all the dead, and carried them to burial-place. Afterwards men blew the trumpets, with noise exceeding merry; were he lief, were he loath, each there took water and cloth, and then sate down reconciled to the board, all for Arthur’s dread, noblest of kings. Cupbearers there thronged, gleemen there sung; harps gan resound, the people was in joy. Thus full seven nights was all the folk treated.

Afterwards it saith in the tale, that the king went to Cornwall; there came to him anon one that was a crafty workman, and met the king, and fair him greeted:—“Hail be thou, Arthur, noblest of kings’ I am thine own man; through many land I have gone; I know of tree-works (carpentry) wondrous many crafts. I heard say beyond the sea new tidings, that thy knights gan to fight at thy board, on a midwinter’s day many there fell; for their mickle mood wrought murderous play, and for their high lineage each would be within. But I will thee work a board exceeding fair, that thereat may sit sixteen hundred and more, all turn about, so that none be without; without and within, man against man. And when thou wilt ride, with thee thou mightest it carry, and set it where thou wilt, after thy will, and then thou needest never fear, to the world’s end, that ever any moody knight at thy board may make fight, for there shall the high be even with the low.” Timber was caused to be brought, and the board to be begun; in four weeks’ time the work was completed.

At a high day the folk was assembled, and Arthur himself approached soon to the board, and ordered all his knights to the board forth-right. When all were seated, knights to their meat, then spake each with other, as if it were his brother; all they sate about; was there none without. Every sort of knight was there exceeding well disposed, all they were one by one (seated), the high and the low, might none there boast of other kind of drink other than his comrades, that were at the board. This was the same board that Britons boast of, and say many sorts of leasing, respecting Arthur the king. So doth every man, that another can love; if he is to him too dear, then will he lie, and say of him more honour than he is worth; no man is he so wicked, that his friend will



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not act well to him. Eft if among folk enmy areareth, in ever any time between two men, men can say leasing of the hateful one, though he were the best man that ever ate at board, the man that to him were loath, he can him last find! It is not all sooth nor all falsehood that minstrels sing; but this is the sooth respecting Arthur the king. Was never ere such king, so doughty through all things! For the sooth stands in the writings how it is befallen, from beginning to the end, of Arthur the king, no more nor less but as his laws (or acts) were.

But Britons loved him greatly, and oft of him lie, and say many things respecting Arthur the king that never was transacted in this worlds-realm! Enow may he say, who the sooth will frame, marvellous things respecting Arthur the king. Then was Arthur most high, his folk most fair, so that there was no knight well esteemed, nor of his manners (or deeds) much assured, in Wales nor in England, in Scotland nor in Ireland, in Normandy nor in France, in Flanders nor in Denmark, nor in ever any land, that on this side of Muntgiu standeth, that were esteemed good knight, nor his deeds accounted (brave or aught), unless he could discourse of Arthur, and of his noble court, his weapons, and his garments, and his horsemen, say and sing of Arthur the young, and of his strong knights, and of their great might, and of their wealth, and how well it them became. Then were he welcome in this worlds-realm, come whereso he came, and though he were at Rome, all that heard of Arthur tell, it seemed to them great marvel of the good king!

And so it was foreboded, ere he were born; so said him Merlin, that was a prophet great, that a king should come of Uther Pendragon, that gleemen should make a board of this king's breast, and thereto should sit poets most good, and eat their will, ere they thence departed, and wine-draughts out draw from this king's tongue, and drink and revel day and night; this game should last them to the world's end.

And yet said him Merlin more that was to come, that all that he looked on to his feet to him should bow. The yet said him Merlin, a marvel that was greater, that there should be immoderate care (sorrow) at this king's departure. And of this king's end will no Briton believe it, except it be the last death, at the great doom, when our Lord judgeth all folk. Else we cannot deem of Arthur's death, for he himself said to his good Britons, south in Cornwall, where Walwain was slain, and himself was wounded wondrously much, that he would fare into Avalon, into the island, to Argante the fair, for she would with balm heal his wounds,—and when he were all whole, he would soon come to them. This believed the Britons, that he will thus come, and look ever when he shall come to his land, as he promised them, ere he hence went.



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Arthur was in the world wise king and powerful, good man and peaceful, his men him loved. Knights he had proud, and great in their mood, and they spake to the king of marvellous thing, and thus the assemblage said to the high king: "Lord Arthur, go we to the realm of France, and win all the land to thine own hand, drive away all the French, and their king slay; all the castles occupy, and set (garrison) them with Britons, and rule in the realm with fierce strength" Then answered Arthur, noblest of kings "Your will I will do, but ere (previously) I will go to Norway, and I will lead with me Loth my brother-in-law, he who is Walwain's father, whom I well love. For new tidings are come from Norway, that Sichelme the king is there dead, his people has left, and he hath ere bequeathed all his kingdom to Loth. For the king is of all bereaved, son and eke daughter, and Loth is his sister's son—the better to him shall it befall—for I will make him new king in Norway, and well instruct him to govern well the people. And when I have done thus, I will afterwards come home, and get ready my army, and pass into France, and if the king withstandeth me, and will not yearn my peace, I will fell him with fight to the ground"

Arthur caused to be blown horns and trumpets, and caused to be summoned to the sea the Britons most bold. Ships he had good by the sea-flood, fifteen hundred pushed from the land, and flew along the sea, as if they had flight (wings), and bent their course into Norway, with bold strength. So soon as they came, they took haven, with mickle strength they stept (disembarked) on the realm Arthur sent his messengers wide over the land, and ordered them to come soon, and have Loth for king, and if they would not that, he would slay them all. Then they took their messengers, the Norwegian earls, and sent to the king, and bade him back go—"And if thou wilt not depart, thou shalt have here sorrow and care; for so long as is ever, that shall never come to pass, that we shall raise a foreign man for king. For if Sichelme is departed (dead), here are others choice, whom we may by our will raise to be king. And this is the sooth; there is no other, either move thee awayward, and turn thee right homeward, either to-day a se'nright, thou shalt have great fight."

The Norwegian earls betook them to counsel, that a king they would have of their own race, for all Sichelme's words they held to be folly.—"And so long as is ever, it shall not ever stand! But we shall take Riculf, who is an earl exceeding powerful, and raise him to be king—this is to us pleasing—and assemble our forces over all this country, and march towards Arthur, and defeat him with fight, and Loth we shall chase, and drive from land, or else we shall fell him with fight." They took Riculf, the Earl of Norway, and raised him to be king, though it were not to him by right, and they assembled their host over Norway's land. And Arthur on his part, over the land gan march; the



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land he through passed, and the burghs he consumed, goods he took enow, and much folk he there slew. And Riculf gan him ride against Arthur anon; together they came, and fight they began. The Britons advanced to them—woe there was rife! Swords exceeding long they plucked out of sheath; heads flew on the field, faces paled; man against man set shaft to breast; burnies there brake; the Britons were busy, shivered shields, warriors there fell! And so all the daylight lasted this great fight; moved they east, moved they west, there was it the worse to the Norwegians; moved they south, moved they north the Norwegians there fell. The Britons were bold, the Norwegians they killed; the Norwegian men there fell, five-and-twenty thousand, and Riculf the king was there slain, and deprived of life day; little there remained of the folk; whoso had the wretched life, they yearned Arthur's peace. Arthur looked on Loth, who was to him well dear, and thus gan to him to call, Arthur the rich man: "Loth, wend hither to me, thou art my dear relative. Here I give to thee all this kingdom; of me thou shalt it hold, and have me for protector."

Then was Walwain thither come, Loth's eldest son; from the pope of Rome, who was named Supplice, who long had him brought up, and made him knight. Full well was it bestowed, that Walwain was born to be man, for Walwain was full noble-minded, in each virtue he was good; he was liberal, and knight with the best. All Arthur's folk was greatly emboldened, for Walwain the keen, that was come to the host; and for his father Loth, who was chosen to be king. Then spake Arthur with him, and bade him hold good peace, and bade him love his peaceful people, and those that would not hold peace, to fell them to ground.

The yet called Arthur, noblest of kings: "Where be ye, my Britons? March ye now forth-right; prepare ye by the flood my good ships." All did the knights as Arthur them ordered. When the ships were ready, Arthur gan to the sea fare; with him he took his knights, his Norwegian thanes, and his bold Britons, and proceeded forth with the waves; and the doughty king came into Denmark; he caused his tents to be pitched, wide over the fields; trumpets he caused to be blown, and his coming to be announced.

Then was in Denmark a king of much might; he was named AEscil, the highest over the Danes; he saw that Arthur won all that was to him in will. AEscil the king bethought him what he might do; loath it was to him to lose his dear people. He saw that with strength he might not stand against Arthur, with ever any combat. He sent greeting to Arthur the king; hounds and hawks, and horses exceeding good; silver and red gold, with prudent words. And yet he did more, AEscil the great; he sent to the highest of Arthur's folk, and prayed them to intercede for him with the noble king; that he might his man become, and deliver his son for hostage, and each year send him tribute of his land, a boat of gold and of treasure, and of rich



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garments, filled from the top to the bottom, in safety. And afterwards he would swear, that he would not prove false. Arthur heard this, noblest of kings, that AEscil, King of the Danes, would be his underling, without any fight, he and all his knights. Then was gladdened Arthur the rich, and thus answered with mild words: "Well worth the man, that with wisdom obtaineth to him peace and amity, and friendship to hold! When he seeth that he is bound with strength, and his dear realm ready all to destruction, with art he must slacken his odious bonds." Arthur ordered the king to come, and bring his eldest son; and he so did soon, the King of Denmark. Arthur's will soon he gan to fulfill; together they came, and were reconciled.

The yet said Arthur, noblest of kings: "Fare I will to France, with my mickle host. I will have of Norway nine thousand knights; and of Denmark I will lead nine thousand of the people; and of Orkney eleven hundred; and of Moray three thousand men; and of Galloway five thousand of the folk; and of Ireland eleven thousand, and of Britain my knights bold shall march before me, thirty thousand; and of Gutland I will lead ten thousand of the people; and of Frisland five thousand men; and of Little Britain Howel the bold, and with such folk France I will seek. And as I expect God's mercy, yet I will promise more; that of all the lands, that stand in my hand, I will order each brave man, that can bear his weapons, as he would wish to live, and have his limbs, that he go with me, to fight with Frolle, who is King of the French—slain he shall be!—he was born in Rome, of Romanish kin." Forth proceeded Arthur, until he came to Flanders, the land he gan conquer, and set it with his men. And next he marched thence, into Boulogne, and all Boulogne's land took it in his own hand.

And afterwards he took the way that in toward France lay. Then bade he his command to all his men, that fare wheresoever they should fare, they should take no whit, unless they might it obtain with right; with just purchase, in the king's host. Frolle heard that, where he was in France, of Arthur's speed (success), and of all his deeds; and how he all won that he looked on, and how it all to him submitted that he saw with eyes, then was the King Frolle horribly afraid! At the same time that this was transacted, the land of the French was named Gaul; and Frolle was from Rome come into France, and each year sent tribute of the land, ten hundred pounds of silver and of gold. Now heard Frolle, who was chief of France, of the great sorrow that Arthur did in the land. He sent messengers soon the nearest way toward Rome, and bade the Romanish folk advise them between, how many thousand knights they thither would send, that he might the easier fight with Arthur, and drive from the land Arthur the strong. Knights gan to ride out of Rome-land; five-and-twenty thousand proceeded toward France. Frolle heard this, with his mickle host, that the Romanish folk rode toward the land. Frolle and his host marched against them, so that they came together, keen men and brave, of all the earth an immense force.



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Arthur heard that, noblest of kings, and assembled his army, and advanced against them. But never was there any king, that was alive on earth, that ever ere on land such folk (multitude) commanded; for from all the kingdoms that Arthur had in hand, forth he led with him all the keenest men, so that he knew never in the world how many thousands there were. So soon as they came together, Arthur and Frolle; hardily they greeted all that they met. Knights most strong grasped long spears, and rushed them together, with fierce strength. All day there were blows most rife; the folk fell to ground, and wrought destruction; the angry warriors sought the grass-bed; the helms resounded, murmured earls; shields there shivered, warriors gan fall. Then called Arthur, noblest of kings: "Where be ye, my Britons, my bold thanes? The day it forth goeth; this folk against us standeth. Cause we to glide to them sharp darts enow, and teach them to ride the way toward Rome!" Even with the words that Arthur then said, he sprang forth on steed, as spark doth of fire. Fifty thousand were following him; the hardy warriors rushed to the fight, and smote upon Frolle, where he was in the flock, and brought him to flight, with his mickle folk; there slew Arthur much folk and innumerable.

Then fled into Paris Frolle the powerful, and fastened the gates, with grief enow; and these words said, sorrowful in heart: "Liefer were it to me, that I were not born!" Then were in Paris grievous speeches, full surely, sorrowful cries; burghmen gan to tremble; the walls they gan repair, the gates they gan to form; meat they took, all that they came nigh; on each side they carried it to the burgh; thither came they all, that held with Frolle. Arthur heard that, noblest of kings, that Frolle dwelt in Paris, with an immense force, and said that he would Arthur withstand. To Paris marched Arthur, of fear void, and belay the walls, and areared his tents; on four sides he belay it (the city), four weeks and a day. The people that were there within were sore afraid, the burgh was within filled with men; and they ate soon the meat that was there gathered.

When four weeks were gone, that Arthur was there stationed, then was in the burgh sorrow extreme, with the wretched folk that lay there in hunger, there was weeping, there was lament, and distress great. They called to Frolle, and bade him make peace; become Arthur's man, and his own honour enjoy, and hold the kingdom of Arthur the keen; and let not the wretched folk perish all with hunger. Then answered Frolle—free he was in heart:—"Nay, so help me God, that all dooms wieldeth, shall I never his man become, nor he my sovereign! Myself I will fight; in God is all the right!"



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The yet spake Frolle, free man in heart: “Nay, so help me the Lord that shaped the daylight, will I nevermore yearn Arthur’s grace; but fight I will, without any knight’s aid, body against body, before my people; hand against hand, with Arthur the king! Whetherso of us is the weaker, soon he will be the leather; whetherso of us there may live, to his friends he will be the liefer; and whether of us that may of the other obtain the better (superiority), have he all this other’s land, and set it in his own hand. This I will yearn, if Arthur will it grant; and this I will swear upon my sword. And hostages I will find, three kings’ sons, that I will hold firmly this covenant; that I will it not violate, by my quick life! For liefer it is to me to lie dead, before my people, than that I should see them on the ground perish with hunger. For we have with fight destroyed our knights—men felled fifty thousand; and many a good woman have made miserable widow, many a child fatherless, and bereaved of comfort; and now this folk with hunger have wondrously harmed. It is better therefore betwixt ourselves to deal and to dispose of this kingdom with fight; and have it the better man, and possess it in joy!” Frolle took twelve knights, with these words forth-right, and sent them in message to Arthur the king, to know if he would hold this covenant, and with his own hand win the kingdom, or lie dead before, to the harm of his people; and if he it won, should have it in his power.

Arthur heard that, noblest of kings; was he never so blithe ere in his life, for the tiding liked to him from Frolle the king; and these words said Arthur the good: “Well saith Frolle, who is King of France; better it is that we two contest this realm, than there should be slain our brave thanes. This covenant I approve, before my people, at an appointed day to do what he me biddeth; that shall be to-morrow, before our men, that fight we shall by ourselves, and fall the worst of us! And whether (which) of us that goeth aback, and this fight will forsake, be he in each land proclaimed for a recreant! Then may men sing of one such king, that his brag (or threat) hath made, and his knighthood forsaken!”

Frolle heard that, who was King of France, that Arthur would fight himself, without any knight. Strong man was Frolle, and stark man in mood; and his boast he had made, before all his people, and he might not for much shame disgrace himself; quit his bold bragging that he had said in the burgh. But said he whatever he said, in sooth he it weened, that Arthur would it forsake, and no whit take to (accept) the fight. For if Frolle, who was King in France, had it known, that Arthur would grant him that he had yearned, he would not have done it for a shipful of gold! Nevertheless was Frolle to the fight exceeding keen; tall knight and strong man, and moody in heart; and said that he would hold the day, in the island that with water is surrounded—the island standeth full truly in the burgh of Paris.—“There I will with fight obtain my rights, with shield, and with steel, and with knight’s weed; now to-morrow is the day; have it he that may it win!”



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The tidings came to Arthur the king, that Frolle would with fight win France; was he never so blithe ere in his life! And he gan to laugh, with loud voice; and said these words Arthur the keen: "Now I know that Frolle will with me fight, to-morrow in the day, as he himself determined, in the island that with water is surrounded; for it becometh a king, that his word should stand. Let the trumpets blow, and bid my men, that every good man watch to-night for that, and pray our Lord, that all dooms wieldeth, that he preserve me from Frolle the fierce, and with his right hand protect me from disgrace. And if I may obtain this kingdom to mine own hand, every poor man the easier shall be, and work I will the great God's will! Now aid me thereto that all things may well do; the high heavenly king stand me in help; for him I will love (or praise), the while that I live!"

There was all the long night songs and candle-light; loudly sung clerks holy psalms of God. When it was day on the morrow, people gan to stir. His weapons he took in hand, Arthur the strong; he threw on his back a garment most precious, a cheisil shirt, and a cloth kirtle; a burny exceeding precious, embroidered of steel. He set on his head a good helm; to his side he suspended his word Caliburn; his legs he covered with hose of steel, and placed on his feet spurs most good. The king with his weeds leapt on his steed; men reached to him a good shield; it was all clean of elephant's bone (ivory). Men gave him in hand a strong shaft; there was at the end a spear most fair; it was made in Caermarthen by a smith that hight Griffin; Uther it possessed, who was ere king here. When that the stern man was weaponed, then gan he to advance; then might he behold, who were there beside, the mighty king ride boldly; since this world was made, was it nowhere told, that ever any man so fair rode upon horse, as Arthur he was, son of Uther! Bold chieftains rode after the king; in the foremost flock forty hundred, noble warriors, clad in steel, bold Britons, busy with weapon. After that marched fifty hundred, that Walwain led, who was a bold champion. Afterwards there gan out follow sixty thousand Britons most bold; that was the rearward. There was the King Angel; there was Loth and Urine; there was Urine's son, named Ywain; there was Kay and Beduer, and commanded the host there; there was the King Howel, noble man of Brittany; Cador there was eke, who was keen in flock; there was from Ireland Gillomar the strong; there was Gonwais the king, Orkney's darling; there was Doldanim the keen, out of Gothland, and Rumaret the strong, out of Winet-land; there was Aescil the king, Denmark's darling. Folk there was on foot, so many thousand men, that was never a man in this worlds-realm so wise, that might tell the thousands, in ever any speech, unless he had with right wisdom of the Lord, or unless he had with him what Merlin he had.



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Arthur forth gan march, with innumerable folk; until he came full surely unto the burgh of Paris; on the west side of the water, with his mickle folk. On the east side was Frolle, with his great force, ready to the fight, before all his knights. Arthur took a good boat, and went therein, with shield and with steed, and with all his weeds (armour); and he shoved the strong ship from the land, and stept upon the island, and led his steed in his hand; his men that brought him there, as the king commanded, let the boat drive forth with the waves.

Frolle went into ship; the king was uneasy that he ever thought with Arthur to fight. He proceeded to the island, with his good weapons; he stept upon the island, and drew his steed after him; the men that brought him there, as the king commanded them, let the boat drive forth with the waves; and the two kings alone there remained.

Then men might behold, that were there beside, the folk on the land, exceedingly afraid; they climbed upon halls, they climbed upon walls; they climbed upon bowers, they climbed upon towers, to behold the combat of the two kings. Arthur's men prayed with much humility to God the good, and the holy his mother, that their lord might have there victory; and the others eke prayed for their king. Arthur stept in steel saddlebow, and leapt on his steed; and Frolle with his weeds leapt also on his steed; the one at his end, in the island, and the other at his end, in the island; they couched their shafts, the royal knights; they urged their steeds—good knights they were. Never was he found in ever any land, any man so wise, that should know it ere that time, whether (which) of the kings should lie overcome; for both they were keen knights, brave men and active, mickle men in might, and in force exceeding strong. They made ready their steeds; and together they gan ride; rushed fiercely, so that fire sprang after them! Arthur smote Frolle with might excessive strong, upon the high shield, so that it fell to the ground; and the steed that was good leapt out in the flood. Arthur out with his sword—mischief was on the point—and struck upon Frolle, where he was in the flood, ere their combat were come to the end. But Frolle with his hand grasped his long spear, and observed Arthur anon, as he came nigh, and smote the bold steed in the breast, so that the spear pierced through, and Arthur down drove. Then arose the multitudes' clamour, that the earth dinned again, the welkin resounded for shout of the folk. There would the Britons over the water pass, if Arthur had not started up very quickly, and grasped his good shield, adorned with gold, and against Frolle, with hostile glances cast before his breast his good broad shield. And Frolle to him rushed with his fierce assault, and up heaved his sword, and struck down right, and smote upon Arthur's shield, so that it fell on the field; the helm on his head, and his mail gan to give way, in front of his head; and he received a wound four inches long;—it



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seemed not to him sore, for it was no more;—the blood ran down over all his breast. Arthur was enraged greatly in his heart, and his sword Caliburne swung with main, and smote Frolle upon the helm, so that it parted in two; throughout the burnyshood, so that at his breast it (the sword) stopt. Then fell Frolle to the ground; upon the grass-bed his ghost he left. Then laughed the Britons, with loud voice; and people gan to fly exceeding quickly.

Arthur the powerful went to land, and thus gan to call, noblest of kings: “Where art thou, Walwain, dearest of men to me? Command these Rome-men all with peace to depart hence; each man enjoy his home, as God granteth it him; order each man to hold peace, upon pain of limb and upon life; and I will it order to-day a se’nnight; command this folk then to march all together, and come to myself—the better it shall be for them. They shall perform homage to me with honour, and I will hold them in my sovereignty, and set laws most good among the people. For now shall the Romanish laws fall to the ground, that before stood here with Frolle, who lieth slain in the island, and deprived of life-day. Hereafter full soon shall his kindred of Rome hear tidings of Arthur the king, for I will speak with them, and break down Rome walls, and remind them how King Belin led the Britons in thither, and won to him all the lands that stand unto Rome.”

Arthur proceeded to the gate, before the burgh wise men that took charge of the burgh, came, and let Arthur within, with all his men; delivered to him the halls, delivered to him the castles; delivered to him, full surely, all the burgh of Paris—there was mickle bliss with the British folk! The day came to burgh, that Arthur had set; came all the populace, and his men became. Arthur took his folk, and divided them in two; and the half part gave to Howel, and bade him march soon, with the mickle host, with the British men to conquer lands.

Howel did all thus as Arthur him bade; he conquered Berry, and all the lands thereby; Anjou and Touraine, Alverne and Gascony, and all the havens that belonged to the lands. Guitard hight the duke, who possessed Poitou; he would not submit to Howel, but held ever against him; he would ask no peace, but Howel fought with him; oft he felled the folk, and oft he made flight. Howel wasted all the land, and slew the people. When Guitard saw, who was lord in Poitou, that all his people went him to loss, with Howel he made peace, with all his host, and became Arthur’s man, the noble king. Arthur became gracious to him, and loved him greatly, and bade him enjoy his land, for (because) he bowed to his feet;—then had Howel nobly succeeded!

Arthur had France, and freely it settled; he took then his host, and marched over all the territory; to Burgundy he proceeded, and set it in his hand; and afterwards he gan fare into Loraine, and all the lands set to himself in hand, all that Arthur saw, all it submitted to him; and afterwards he went, full truly, again home to Pans.



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When Arthur had France established with good peace, settled and composed, so that prosperity was among the folk, then ordered he the old knights, that he had long retained, that they should come to the king, and receive their reward; for they many years had been his companions. To some he gave land, some silver and gold; to some he gave castles, some he gave clothes; bade them go in joy, and amend their sins; forbade them to bear weapon, because age upon them went, and bade them love God greatly in this life, that he at the end, full surely, might give them his paradise, that they might enjoy bliss with the angels. All the old knights proceeded to their land, and the young remained with their dear king. All the nine years Arthur dwelt there; nine years he held France freely in hand, and afterwards no longer the land he governed.

But the while that the kingdom stood in Arthur's hand, marvellous things came to the folk; many proud man Arthur made mild, and many a high man he held at his feet! It was on an Easter, that men had fasted, that Arthur on Easter-day had his noble men together; all the highest persons that belonged to France, and of all the lands that lay thither in; there he gave his knights all their rights; to each one he gave possessions, as he had earned. Thus quoth him Arthur, noblest of kings: "Kay, look thee hitherward; thou art mine highest steward; here I give thee Anjou, for thy good deeds, and all the rights that thither in are set. Kneel to me, Beduer; thou art my highest cup-bearer here; the while that I am alive, love thee I will. Here I give thee Neustrie, nearest to my realm." Then hight Neustrie the land that now hight Normandy. The same two earls were Arthur's dear men, at counsel and at communing, in every place. The yet said him Arthur, noblest of kings: "Wend thee hither, Howeldin; thou art my man and my kin; have thou Boulogne, and possess it in prosperity. Come near, Borel; thou art knight wise and wary; here I deliver thee the Mans, with honour, and possess thou it in prosperity, for thy good deeds." Thus Arthur the king dealt his lordly lands, after their actions; for he thought them to be worthy. Then were blithe speeches in Arthur's halls; there was harping and song, there were blisses among!

When Easter was gone, and April went from town, and the grass was rife, and the water was calm, and men gan to say that May was in town, Arthur took his fair folk, and proceeded to the sea, and caused his ships to be assembled, well with the best; and sailed to this land, and came up at London; up he came at London, to the bliss of the people. All it was blithe that saw him with eyes; soon they gan to sing of Arthur the king, and of the great worship that he had won There kissed father the son, and said to him welcome; daughter the mother, brother the other; sister kissed sister; the softer it was to them in heart. In many hundred places folk stood by the way, asking of things of many kind; and the knights told them of their conquests, and made their boast of mickle booty. Might no man say, were he man ever so skilled, of half the blisses that were with the Britons! Each fared at his need over this kingdom, from burgh to burgh, with great bliss; and thus it a time stood in the same wise—bliss was in Britain with the bold king.



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When Easter was gone, and summer come to land, then took Arthur his counsel, with his noble men, that he would in Kaerleon bear on him his crown, and on Whitsunday his folk there assemble. In those days men gan deem, that no burgh so fair was in any land, nor so widely known as Kaerleon by Usk, unless it were the rich burgh that is named Rome. The yet many a man was with the king in land, that pronounced the burgh of Kaerleon richer than Rome, and that Usk were the best of all waters. Meadows there were broad, beside the burgh; there was fish, there was fowl, and fairness enow; there was wood and wild deer, wondrous many; there was all the mirth that any man might think of. But never since Arthur thither came, the burgh afterwards thrived, nor ever may, between this and dooms-day. Some books say certainly that the burgh was bewitched, and that is well seen, sooth that it be. In the burgh were two minsters exceeding noble; one minster was of Saint Aaron; therein was mickle relique; the other of the martyr Saint Julian, who is high with the Lord; therein were nuns good, many a high born woman.

The bishop's stool was at Saint Aaron; therein was many a good man; canons there were, who known were wide; there was many a good clerk, who well could (were well skilled) in learning. Much they used the craft to look in the sky; to look in the stars, nigh and far;—the craft is named Astronomy. Well often they said of many things to the king; they made known to him what should happen to him in the land. Such was the burgh of Kaerleon; there was much wealth; there was much bliss with the busy king.

The king took his messengers, and sent over his land; bade come earls; bade come barons; bade come kings, and eke chieftains; bade come bishops, bade come knights; bade all the free men that ever were in the land; by their life he bade them be at Kaerleon on Whitsunday. Knights gan to ride exceeding wide, rode toward Kaerleon from lands of many kind. At the Whitsunday there came the King Angel, King of Scotland, with his fair folk; many was the fair man that followed the king. Of Moray King Urien, and his fair son Ywam; Stater, King of South Wales, and Cadwal, the King of North Wales; Cador, Earl of Cornwall, whom the king loved; Morvith of Gloucester; Maurm of Winchester; Gurguint, Earl of Hereford, and Beof, Earl of Oxford; Cursal the bold, from Bath there came riding; Urgent of Chester; Jonathas of Dorchester; Arnalf of Salisbury, and Kinmare of Canterbury; Bahen of Silchester; Wigen of Leicester; Argal, Earl of Warwick, with folk exceeding strange (or numerous); Dunwale, son of Apnes, and Kegem, son of Elauth; Kineus, that was Coit's son, and Cradoc, Catel's son, AEdlem, Cledauk's son; Grimarc, Kinmark's son; Run, Margoit, and Netan; Clofard, Kincar, and Aican; Kenn, Neton, and Peredur; Madoc, Trahern, and Elidur. These were Arthur's noble earls, and the highest thanes brave of all this land, without (besides) the nobles of Arthur's board, that no man might ken, nor all the folk name. Then were archbishops three in this country; in London, and in York; and in Kaerleon, Saint Dubrich—he was a man exceeding holy, through all things excellent! At London lay the archbishop's stool, that to Canterbury was subsequently removed, after that Englishmen had won to them this land.



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To tell the folk of Kaerleon, no man might it do! There was Gillomar the king, of Irish men the darling; Malverus, King of Iceland; Doldanet, King of Gutland; Kinkalin of Frisland; and AEscil, King of Denmark. There was Loth the keen, who was king by the North; and Gonwais, King of Orkney, of outlaws the darling. Thither came the fierce man, the Earl of Boulogne, who was named Laeyer, and his people with him; of Flanders the Earl Howeldin; of Chartres the Earl Geryn. This man brought with him all the French men; twelve earls most noble, who ruled over France. Guitard, Earl of Poitiers; Kay, Earl of Angers; Bedver, Earl of Normandy—the land then hight Neustne; —of the Mans came the Earl Borel; of Brittany the Earl Howel. Howel the earl was free man, and fair were his weeds. And all the French folk were clothed fair, all well weaponed, and horses they had fat. There were besides fifteen bishops. Was there no knight nor any swain, nor good man that were thane, from the ports of Spain to the towns of Alemaine, that thither would not have come, if he were (had been) invited; all for Arthur's dread, of noble race. When all this folk was come; each king with his people, there men might behold, who were there beside, many a strange man, who was come to the burgh, and many kind of tidings (novelties) with Arthur the king There was many a marvellous cloth (garment); there was many a wrath knight; there were lodgings nobly prepared; there were the inns, built with strength; there were on the fields many thousand tents; there came lard and wheat, and oats without measure; may no man say it in his tale, of the wine and of the ale; there came hay, there came grass; there came all that was good!

When all this folk was assembled by the good king, when the Whitsunday came, as the Lord it sent, then came all the bishops before their king, and the archbishops three, before Arthur; and took the crown, that was to him by right, and set upon his head with great bliss; so they gan him lead, all with God's counsel. Saint Dubrich went before—he was to Christ chosen;—the Archbishop of London walked on his right hand, and by his left side the same of York. Fifteen bishops went before, of many lands chosen; they were all clothed with garments most rich, that were all embroidered with burning gold. There walked four kings before the kaiser; they bare in their hands four swords of gold. Thus hight the one, who was a most doughty man, that was Cador the king, Arthur's darling; the second of Scotland, he bare sword in hand; and the King of North Wales and the King of South Wales.

And thus they gan lead the king to church; the bishops gan sing before the monarch, trumpets there blew; bells there rung; knights gan ride, women forth glide. In certainty it is said, and sooth it is found, that no man ever ere saw here with earthly men half so great pomp, in ever any assembly, as was with Arthur, of noble race.



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Into church came Arthur the rich man; Dubrich the archbishop—the Lord was to him full good; of Rome he was legate, and prelate of the people—he sang the holy mass before the monarch. Came with the queen women fair; all wives of the rich men that dwelt in the land, and daughters of the noble men the queen had sought (or selected), all as the queen had ordered, on pain of their paying full penalty. In the church, in the south half, sate Arthur the king himself; by the north side Wenhaver the queen. There came before her four chosen queens; each bare in the left hand a jewel of red gold, and three snow-white doves sate on their shoulders; who were the four queens, wives of the kings who bare in their hands the four swords of gold before Arthur, noblest of kings. There was many a maid-child with the noble queen; there was many a rich garment on the fair folk; there was mickle envy from land of many kind; for each weened to be better than other. Many knights anon came to the church; some for gain; some for the king; some to behold the women that were noble. Songs there were merry, that lasted very long; I ween if it had lasted seven years, the yet they would more, that were thereat. When the mass was sung, from church they thronged; the king with his folk went to his meat, with his mickle folk—joy was among the people. The queen on the other side sought her lodging; she had of women wondrous many.

When the king was set, with his men to his meat, to the king came the bishop Saint Dubrich, who was so good, and took from his head his rich crown; on account of the mickle gold the king would not it bear; and placed a less crown on the king's head; and afterwards he gan do to the queen also (likewise). In Troy this was the custom in their elders' days, of whom Brutus came, who were excellent men; all the men at their meat sate asunder by themselves, that to them seemed well done; and also the women their station had.

When the king was set with all his people to his meat, earls and barons, at the king's board, then came stepping the steward, who was named Kay, highest knight in land under the king, of all the assemblage of Arthur's folk. Kay had before him many a noble man chosen; there were a thousand bold knights wondrous well told, that served the king and his chiefs; each knight had a cloth on, and adorned with gold, and all their fingers covered with gold rings. These bare the things sent from the kitchen to the king. On the other side was Beduer, the king's high cup-bearer, with him were earls' sons of noble race born, and the noble knights' sons, who were thither come; and seven kings' sons, that with him moved. Beduer went foremost, with golden bowl; after him a thousand pressed towards the folk, with drink of all the kinds that men could think of. And the queen at her end, women most fair attended; a thousand walked before her, rich and well choice, to serve the queen, and them that were with her.



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Was he never born, of any man chosen, clerk nor layman, in ever any land, that could tell it in speech of any kind, of half the wealth that was in Kaerleon, of silver and of gold, and good weeds; of high born men that dwelt among the folk; of horses, and of hawks, of hounds for deer, and of rich weeds, that were among the people. And of all the folk that dwelt there in land, the folk of this land was accounted the fairest of people, and also the women, comely in hue, and most nobly clothed, and best of all educated. For they all had in declaration, by their quick lives, that they would have their clothes of one hue. Some had white, some had red; some had eke good green; and variegated cloth of each kind was to them wondrous odious; and each ill-usage they accounted unworthy.

Then had English land the best fame of all; and this country-folk eke was dearest to the king. The high born women that dwelt in this land had all declared in their sooth words, that none would take lord (husband) in this land, never any knight, were he nought (never) so well formed, unless he were thrice tried in combat, and his courage made known, and himself approved; then might he boldly ask him a bride. For that usage the knights were brave, the women excellent, and the better behaved; then were in Britain blisses enow.

When the king had eaten, and all his people, then proceeded out of the burgh the thanes most bold; all the kings, and their chieftains; all the bishops, and all the clerks; all the earls, and all the barons; all the thanes, and all the swains, fairly clad, spread over the fields. Some they gan to ride; some they gan to race, some they gan to leap, some they gan to shoot, some they wrestled, and contest made; some they in the field played under shield; some they drove balls wide over the fields. Games of many a kind there they gan to play; and whoso might win honour of his game, men lead him with song before the sovereign, and the king for his game gave him gifts good. All the queens, that there were come, and all the ladies, leaned over the walls, to behold the people, and the folk play. This lasted three days, such games and such plays.

Then on the fourth day, the king gan to speak, and gave his good knights all their rights; he gave silver, he gave gold; he gave horses, he gave land; castles eke and clothes; his men he pleased—there was many a bold Briton before Arthur. But now came to the king new tidings! Arthur the bold king sate at a board; before him sate kings, and many chieftains; bishops and clerks, and knights most brave.



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There came into the hall marvellous tales!—there came twelve thanes bold, clad with pall; noble warriors, noble men with weapon; each had on hand a great ring of gold, and with a band of gold each had his head encircled. Ever two and two walked together; each with his hand held his companion; and glided over the floor, before Arthur, so long that they came before Arthur, the sovereign. They greeted Arthur anon with their noble words: “Hail be thou, Arthur king, darling of Britons; and hail be thy people, and all thy lordly folk! We are twelve knights come here forthright, rich and noble; we are from Rome. Hither we are come from our emperor, who is named Luces, who ruleth Rome-people. He commanded us to proceed hither, to Arthur the king, and bade thee to be greeted with his grim words, and saith that he is astonished, wondrously much, where thou tookest the mood in this middle-earth, that thou darest of Rome oppose any doom (will), or heave up thine eyes against our ancestors; and who dared it thee to counsel, that thou art so doughty become, that thou darest threaten the lord of dooms, Luces, the emperor, highest of men alive! Thou boldest all thy kingdom in thine own hand, and wilt not serve the emperor of the land; of the same land that Julius had in hand, who in former days won it with fight; and thou it hast retained in thy power; and with thy bold knights deprivest us of our rights. But say us, Arthur, soon, and send word to Rome; we shall thine errand bear to Luces our emperor, if thou wilt acknowledge that he is king over thee, and if thou wilt his man become, and acknowledge him for lord, and do right to the emperor on account of Frolle the king, whom thou slewest with wrong at Paris, and now holdest all his land with un-right in thy hand. If thou within these twelve weeks turn to the right, and if thou wilt of Rome any doom suffer, then mightest thou live, among thy people. And if thou wilt not do so, thou shalt receive worse, for the emperor will come here, as king shall to his own, king most keen; and take thee with strength, lead thee bound before Rome-folk;—then must thou suffer what thou erst despisedest!”

At these words the Britons leapt from the board; there was Arthur’s court exceedingly enraged; and swore mickle oath, upon our mighty Lord, that they all were (should be) dead, who this errand bare; with horses drawn in pieces, death they should suffer. There leapt towards them the Britons exceeding wrath; tore them by the hair, and laid them to the ground. There were (would have been) the Romanish men pitifully treated, if Arthur had not leapt to them, as if it were a lion; and said these words—wisest of all Britons!—“Leave ye, leave quickly these knights alive! They shall not in my court suffer any harm; they are hither ridden out of Rome, as their lord commanded them, who is named Luces. Each man must go where his lord biddeth him go; no man ought to sentence a messenger to death, unless he were so evilly behaved, that he were traitor of his lord. But sit ye down still, knights in hall; and I will me counsel of such need, what word they shall bear to Luces the emperor.”



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Then sate all down, the folk on their benches, and the clamour ceased before the monarch. Then stood him up Arthur, noblest of kings, and he called to him seven sons of kings, earls and barons, and those that were boldest, and all the wisest men that dwelt in the folk, and went into a house that was fast inclosed, of old stone work—strong men it wrought—therein they gan to commune, his wise councillors, what answer he would give to Luces the emperor. When all the nobles were come to bench then was it all still that dwelt in the hall; there was great awe with the mighty king; durst there no man speak, least the king would it punish.

Then stood there up Cadur, the earl most rich here, and said these words before the rich king: “I thank my Lord, who formed the daylight, to abide (have abode) this day, that is arrived to the folk, and this tiding that is come to our king; so that we need no more lie here inert! For idleness is evil in each land; for idleness maketh man lose his manhood; idleness maketh knight lose his rights; idleness causeth many wicked crafts; idleness destroyeth many thousand men; through idle deeds little men well-speed. For long we have lain still; our honour is the less! But now I thank the Lord, who formed the daylight, that the Romanish folk are so fierce, and make their threat to come to our burghs, our king to bind, and to Rome him bring. But if it is sooth that men say, as people it tell, that the Romanish people are so fierce, and are so bold, and so mischievous, that they will now come into our land, we shall prepare for them rueful tales; their fierceness shall turn to themselves to sorrow. For never loved I long peace in my land; for through peace we are bound, and well nigh all in swoon.”

That heard Walwain, who was Arthur’s relative, and angered him much with Cadur, who said these words; and thus answered Walwain the good: “Cadur, thou art a powerful man; thy counsels are not good; for good is peace and good is amity, whoso freely therewith holdeth, and God himself it made, through his divinity; for peace maketh a good man work good works, for all men are the better, and the land is the merrier.”

Then heard Arthur the dispute of these knights; and thus spake the mighty man with his fierce folk: “Sit ye down quickly, my knights all, and each by his life listen my words!” All it was still that dwelt in the hall. Then spake the bold king to his noble folk: “My earls, my barons, my bold thanes, my doughty men, my dear friends; through you I have conquered under the sun, so that I am man most powerful, and fierce against my enemies; gold I have and treasure; of men I am ruler. I won it not alone, but we did, all clean. To many a fight I have led you, and ever ye were well skilled, so that many kingdoms stand in my hand. Ye are good knights, brave men and active; that I have proved in well many lands” The yet spake him Arthur, noblest of kings: “But now ye have heard,



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my noble thanes, what the Romanish men counsel them between, and what words they send us here, into our land, with writ and with words, and with great wrath. Now we must bethink how we may with right defend our country and our great honour, against this powerful folk, against this Rome-people, and send them answer with our good words; with much wisdom send our writ to Rome, and learn at the emperor, for what thing he us hateth; for what thing he greets us with threat and with scorn Exceeding sorely it incenseth me, and immoderately it shameth, that he reproaches us our loss that we before have lost. They say that Julius Caesar won it (Britain) with combat in fight. With strength and with fight men do many wrongs; for Caesar sought Britain with bold strength. The Britons might not against him defend their land, but with strength they went in hand, and delivered him all their land; and thereafter soon all became his men. Some of our kin they had slain, and some with horses drawn to pieces; some they led bound out of this land; and thus this land won with wrong and with sin, and now asketh by right tribute of this land! All so we may do, if we it do will, through right of Belin king, and of Brenne, his brother, the Duke of Burgundy. These were our ancestors, of whom we are come; these belay Rome, and the realm all conquered, and before Rome the strong their hostages up hung, and afterwards they took all the land, and set it in their own hand, and thou ought we with right to besiege Rome. Now will I let remain Belin and Brenne, and speak of the caiser, Constantine the strong, he was Helen's son, all of Britons come (descended), he won Rome, and possessed the realm. Let (leave) we now of Constantine, who won Rome all to him, and speak of Maximian, who was a man most strong, he was King of Britain, he conquered France. Maximian the strong he took Rome in hand, and Alemaine (Germany) he won eke, with wondrous great strength, and all from Rome into Normandy. And all these were my ancestors, my noble progenitors; and possessed all the lands that unto Rome lay; and through such authority I ought to obtain Rome. They yearn of me in hand tribute of my land; all so will I of Rome, if I have counsel. I desire in my thoughts to possess all Rome; and he desireth in Britain to bind me most fast, and slay my Britons, with his evil attacks. But if my Lord grant it, who formed day and night, he shall sorely pay for his bold threat, and his Rome-people shall therefore perish; and I will be bold, wherein he now ruleth! Dwell ye now all still, I will say my will, no man shall do it otherwise, but it shall stand thereon. He desireth all, and I desire all that we both possess; have it now and ever who may it easier win, for now we shall prove to whom God will grant it!"

Thus spake the bold king, that had Britain under his rule, that was Arthur the king, Britain's darling! His warriors sate, and to his words listened; some they sate still, a great while; some they made much communing between them; some it seemed to them good; some it disturbed their mood.



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When they had long listened to the king, then spake Howel the fair, noble man of Brittany, and said these words before the fierce king: “Lord king, hearken to me, as I ere did to thee. Thou hast said sooth words—may fortune be given to thee!—For it was of old said, what we now shall learn, in the years before what is now here found. Sibeli it said; her words were sooth, and set it in book, for example to folk, that three kings should go out of Britain, who should conquer Rome, and all the realm, and all the lands that thereto lie. The first was Belin, who was a British king; the other was Constantine, who was king in Britain; thou shalt be the third, that Rome shalt have. And if thou wilt it begin, thou shalt it win, and I will thereto help, with great strength, I will send over sea, to my good thanes, to my bold Britons—the better we shall proceed,—I will command all, the nobles of Britain, by their limbs and by their lives, over all my lands, that they be ready soon with thee to march to Rome. My land I will set in pledge for silver, and all the possessions of my land for silver and for gold, and so we shall proceed to Rome, and slay Luces the emperor, and for to win thy rights, I will lead to thee ten thousand knights.” Thus spake Howel, noblest of Brittany.

When that Howel had said what seemed good to him, then spake Angel the king, Scotland’s darling, and stood upon a bench, and both his brothers, that was, Loth and Urien, two most noble men. Thus said Angel the king to Arthur the keen: “Lord Arthur, I say to thee through my sooth words, the same that Howel hath spoken, no man shall it avoid, but we shall perform it by our quick lives! And, lord Arthur the noble, listen to me a while, call to thee to counsel thy earls rich, and all the highest that are in thy folk, and bid them say to thee with their sooth words, in what they will help thee thy foes to destroy. I will lead to thee knights of my land, three thousand champions brave, all chosen, ten thousand men on foot, to fight most good, and go we to Rome, and conquer the realm. Full greatly it may shame us, and full greatly it may us anger, that they should send messengers after tribute to our land. But so help us the Lord that formed the daylight, they shall pay for it with their bare life! For when we have Rome, and all the realm, we shall seize the lands that thereto he, Poille (Apuha?) and Alemaine, Lumbardy and Brittany, France and Normandy—then it hight Neustrie—and so we shall tame their immoderate mood (pride).” When the king had said then answered all. “Disgraced be that man that will not help thereto, with goods and with weapons, and with all his might!”

Then was Arthur’s folk sternly incensed, knights were so enraged, that all they gan to be agitated. When Arthur had heard the clamour of his folk, then gan he call—the king was angry—“Sit ye down still, knights in hall, and I will you tell what I will do. My writs I will make, that shall be well indited, and send to the emperor minds sorrow and mickle care, and I will full soon fare into Rome. I will not thither any tribute bring, but the emperor I will bind, and afterwards I will him hang; and all the land I will destroy, and all the knights put to death, that stand against me in fight!”



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Arthur took his writ in hand, with hostile words, and delivered it to the men, that had brought the errand, and afterwards he caused them to be clothed with each pomp, with the noblest garments that he had in bower, and bade them fare soon to Luces of Rome, and he would come after them as quickly as he might.

These twelve went their way toward their land; were in no land knights so bedecked with silver and with gold, nor through all things so well arrayed as these were by Arthur the king. Thus Arthur them treated, all for their words! These twelve knights proceeded until they came to Rome; they greeted their emperor, their sovereign: "Hail be thou, Luces, thou art highest over us! We were with the fierce man, with Arthur the king, we have brought thee writs, words exceeding great Arthur is the keenest man that we ever looked on, and he is wondrous powerful, and his thanes are bold, there is every knave as if he were knight, there is every swain as if he were rich thane, there are the knights as if it were kings, meat there is most abundant, and men most bold, and the fairest women that dwell alive; and Arthur the bold himself fairest over all! By us he sendeth word to thee, that he will come to this land, no tribute he will bring, but thyself he will bind, and afterwards he will thee hang, and this land all destroy, and take Alemaine and Lumbardy, Burgundy, France, and Normandy. And Frolle he slew, his foe, so he will to us all do, and possess himself alone the land that we own all clean, hereto he will lead kings, earls, and chieftains. And here we have in hand the writs that he thee sendeth that telleth thee what he will do, when he cometh in hither."

When the errand was said, the emperor was a full sorrowful man, and all the Rome-folk were stirred with strong wrath. Oft they went to counsel, oft they went to communing, ere to them might be determined what they would do. Nevertheless at the end a counsel they found, that was through the senator, who held the senate, the emperor they counselled that he should write letters, and send his messengers over many kingdoms, and bid them all come soon to Rome, from every land, who loved them aught, and all that willeth with fight obtain land or goods. Folk there came soon to the burgh of Rome, so mickle as there never ere any man assembled! They said that they would march over Muntgiu, and fight with Arthur, wheresoever they him found, and Arthur slay or hang, and his host all destroy, and possess for the emperor Arthur's realm.

The first king that there came, he was a man exceeding keen, Epistrod, king of Greece; Ethion, Duke of Boeotia, came with a great force; Irtac, King of Turkey; Pandras, King of Egypt; of Crete the King Ypolite; of Syria the King Evander; of Phrygia the Duke Teucer; of Babylon, Maptisas; of Spain the Caiser Meodras; of Media the King Boccus; of Libia the King Sextorius; of Bitunia, Pollidices; of Ituria the King Xerxes; Ofustesar, King of Africa; was there no king his like; with him came many an African; of Ethiopia he brought the black-men. The Rome-people themselves marched them together, that were at nearest, of Rome the noblest; Marcus, Lucas, and Catel, Cocta, Gaiut, and Metel; these were the six, who the Senate all ruled.



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When this folk was assembled, from lands of many kind, then caused the emperor all the host to be numbered. Then were there told right, to fight most bold, four hundred thousand knights in the heap (assemblage), with weapons and with horses, as behoveth to knights. Never was he born, in every any burgh, that might tell the folk, that there went on foot! Before harvest-day forth they gan to march, ever right the way that toward Muntgiu lay.

Let us now leave this host a while, and speak we of Arthur, noblest of kings, when that he had besought his good thanes, and each had gone home where he had land. And soon again came the knights in assemblage, with weapons well provided, through all their might, of Scotland, of Ireland, of Gutland, of Iceland, of Norway, of Denmark, of Orkney, of Man; of these same lands are a hundred thousand brave thanes, all well weaponed in their country's wise. They were not all knights, nor in this wise arrayed, but they were the keenest men that any man knew, with great battle-axes, and with long saexes. Of Normandy, of Anjou, of Britain, of Poitou, of Flanders, of Boulogne, of Lorraine, of Lovaine, came a hundred thousand to the king's host, knights with the best, completely provided with weapons. There came the twelve companions that France should obey; twelve thousand knights they brought forthright; and of this land Arthur took in hand fifty thousand knights, keen and brave men in battle. Howel of Brittany led ten thousand of his land-folk, knights with the best. Of footmen; when they forth marched, through no kind of speech could any man them number!

Arthur then ordered, noblest of kings, the folk to be assembled at a set time, by their bare life, at Barbefleote; and there he would gather his good people. This land he delivered to a famous knight; he was Walwain's brother, there was no other; he was named Modred, wickedest of men; truth he had none to ever any man; he was Arthur's relation, of his noble race; but knight he was wondrous good, and he had very much pride; he was Arthur's sister's son; to the queen was his resort—that was evilly done—to his uncle he did treachery. But it was all secret, in host and in hall, for no man it weened, that it should be, but men in sooth weened him, because Walwain was his brother, the truest man of all that came to the folk; through Walwain was Modred by men the more beloved, and Arthur the keen full well was pleased with him. He took all his kingdom, and set it to Modred in hand, and Wenhaver, his queen, worthiest of women, that then in this nation dwelt in land. Arthur gave to them all that he possessed, to Modred and the queen—that to them was pleasing. That was evilly done, that they were (should have been) born; this land they destroyed with numerous sorrows; and themselves at the end the Worse gan disgrace (or destroy), so that they there lost their lives and their souls, and ever afterwards became odious in every land, so that never any man would offer a good prayer for their souls, on account of the treachery that he did to Arthur, his uncle. All that Arthur possessed he gave to Modred, his land and his people, and his dear queen; and afterwards he took his army of folk most fair, and marched full soon toward Southampton.



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There came numerous ships soon sailing over the wide sea, to the king's folk; the king distributed the folk over the long ships; by thousands and by thousands to the ships they thronged; the father wept on the son, sister on the brother; mother on the daughter, when the host departed. The weather stood at will, the wind waxed in hand; anchors they up drew, joy was among the folk. The thanes wondrous blithe wound their way into the wide sea, the ships thereforth pressed, the glee-men there sung; sails there they hoist, ropes there they right; weather they had softest of all, and the sea slept. For the softness (calm) Arthur gan to sleep; as the king slept a dream he dreamt; marvellous was the dream, the king it alarmed!

When the king him awoke, greatly he was frightened, and began to groan with loud voice. Was there none so bold knight under Christ, who durst ask the king of his welfare, ere the king himself spake, and discoursed with his barons there, and thus Arthur him said, when he awoke from his sleep: "Lord governor Christ, ruler of dooms, protector of middle-earth, comforter of men through thy merciful will, ruler of angels; let thou my dream turn to good!" Then spake Angel the king, Scotland's darling: "Lord, say us thy dream, for prosperity is given to us" "Blithely," quoth the king, "to bliss may it turn! Where I lay in slumber, and I gan for to sleep, methought that in the welkin came a marvellous beast, eastward in the sky, and loathsome to the sight; with lightning and with storm sternly he advanced; there is in no land any bear so loathly. Then came there westward, winding with the clouds, a burning dragon; burghs he swallowed, with his fire he lighted all this land's realm; methought in my sight that the sea gan to burn of light and of fire, that the dragon carried. This dragon and the bear, both together, quickly soon together they came; they smote them together with fierce assaults, flames flew from their eyes as firebrands! Oft was the dragon above, and eftsoons beneath; nevertheless at the end high he gan rise, and he flew down right with fierce assault, and the bear he smote, so that he fell to the earth; and he there the bear slew, and limbmeal him tore. When the fight was done, the dragon back went. This dream I dreamt, where I lay and slept."

The bishops heard this, and book-learned men; this heard earls, this heard barons; each by his wit said wisdom, and this dream they interpreted, as to them best seemed. There durst no knight to evil expound no whit, lest he should lose his limbs that were dear to him. Forth they gan to voyage exceeding quickly; the wind stood to them at will, weather best of all; they had all that to them was need; to land they came at Barbefleot. To Barbefleot, at Constantin, therein came a mickle multitude, from all the lands that Arthur had in hand. So soon as they might, out of ship they moved, the king ordered his folk to seek lodging, and the king would rest, until his folk came.



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He was not there but one night, that a fair knight came to him; he told tidings to Arthur the king, he said that there was arrived a monster, westward from Spain; a fiend well loathsome; and in Brittany was busy to harm. By the seaside the land he wasted wide—now it hight Mount Saint Michel—the land he possesseth every part.—“Lord king,” quoth the knight, “in sooth I make known to thee right here, he hath taken away thy relative, with great strength, a nobly born woman, Howel’s daughter choice, who was named Helen, noblest of maidens. To the mount he carried her, noblest of maidens; now full a fortnight the fiend hath holden her there right; we know not in life whether he have her not to wife. All the men that he seizeth, he maketh to him for meat, cattle, horses, and the sheep, goats, and the swine eke; all this land he will destroy, unless thou allay our care, the land and this people; in thee is our need.” Yet said the knight to the monarch: “Seest thou, lord, the mount, and the great wood, wherein the fiend dwelleth that destroyeth this people? We have fought with him well many times; by sea and by land this folk he destroyed; our ships he sank, the folk he all drowned, those that fought on the land, those he down laid. We have driven (suffered) that so long, that we let him alone, to act how so he will, after his will, the knights of this land dare not with him any more fight.”

Arthur heard this, noblest of all kings; he called to him the Earl Kay, who was his steward and his relative; Beduer eke to him he called, he who was the king’s cup-bearer. He bade them forth-right be all ready at midnight, with all their weapons, to go with the king, so that no man under Christ should know of their journey, except Arthur the king, and the two knights with him, and their six swains, brave men and active; and the knight that counselled it to the king should lead them. At the midnight, when men were asleep, Arthur forth him went, noblest of all kings. Before rode their guide, until it was daylight; they alighted from their steeds, and righted their weeds. Then saw they not far a great fire smoke, upon a hill, surrounded by the sea-flood; and another hill there was most high; the sea by it flowed full nigh, thereupon they saw a fire that was mickle and most strong. The knights then doubted, to whether of the two they might go, that the giant were not aware of the king’s movement. Then Arthur the bold took him to counsel, that they should go together near the one fire; and if they there him found, kill him to death. Forth went the king, so that he came near; nought he there found but a mickle fire there burning. Arthur went about, and his knights by his side; nought they found alive upon earth but the great fire, and bones innumerable; by estimation it seemed to them thirty fother. Arthur then knew not any good counsel, and began him to speak to Beduer, his earl:— “Beduer, go quickly down from this hill, and pass thee over the deep water, with all thy weeds;



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and with wisdom advance to the fire; and go thou aside, and behold diligently, if thou mayest find ought of the fiend. And if thou mayest him perceive, in wise of any kind, go down still, until thou come to the water, and say me there soon what thou hast seen. And if it so befalleth, that thou come to the fire, and the fiend thee perceive, and proceed toward thee, have my good horn, that all with gold is adorned, and blow it with strength, as man shall for need. And advance thee to the fiend, and begin to fight, and we shall come to thee, as most quickly we may do it. And if thou findest him near the fire and thou all unperceived back mayest go; then forbid I thee, by thy bare life, that thou ever with the monster begin fight.”

Beduer heard what his lord said to him; his weapons he put him on, and forth he went, and ascended up the mount that was immense. He bare in his hand a spear exceeding strong; a shield on his back, ornamented all with gold; a helm on his head, high, of steel; his body was covered with a fair burny; he had by his side a brand all of steel; and forth he gan step, the powerfully strong earl, until he arrived near the fire; and he under a tree gan him tarry. Then heard he one weep, wondrously much, weep and whine with piteous cries. Then the knight weened that it were the giant, and he became incensed as if it were a wild boar, and soon forgot what his lord said to him. His shield he drew on his breast, his spear he grasped fast, and near gan wend toward the fire; he thought to find the stern fiend, that he might fight, and prove himself. Then found he there a woman shaking with her head, a hoary-locked wife, who wept for her wretchedness; she cursed her lot that she was alive; that sate by the fire, with piteous cries, and sat and ever she beheld a grave, and said her words with plaintive voice: “Alas! Helen; alas! dear maid; alas! that I thee fed, that I thee fostered; alas! that the monster hath thee here thus destroyed; alas! that I was born; my limbs he hath broken in pieces!”

Then looked the woman about, where the giant should arrive; and looked on the Earl Beduer, who was come there. Then said the woman hoar, where she sate by the fire: “What are thou, fair wight? art thou angel, art thou knight? are thy wings hung with gold? If thou art from heaven, thou mayest in safety go hence, and if thou art earthly knight, harm thou wilt have forth-right. For now anon cometh the monster that all thy limbs will draw in pieces; though thou wert all steel, he would thee destroy, every bit. He went to Brittany, to the best of all mansions, to Howel’s castle, noble man in Brittany; the gates he all brake in pieces, and within he gan wend. He took the hall wall, and pulled it to ground; the chamber’s door he cast down, so that it burst in five; he found in the chamber the fairest of all maids; Helen she was named, of noble race; Howel’s daughter, noble man of Brittany, Arthur’s relative of most noble lineage.



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I was her foster-mother, and fair her fostered. There the giant took us forth with himself, fifteen miles, into this wild wood, hither to this same place; thus he us treated to-day a sen'night. So soon as he hither came, so he took the maid; he would have carnal intercourse with the maiden. Age had she no more but fifteen years; the maiden might not endure his force; anon so he lay with her, her life she lost soon! And here he her buried, fairest of all maids, Helen, mine own foster, Howel's daughter! When he had this done, so myself he took; on the ground he me laid, and lay with myself. Now hath he all my bones loathsomely broken; my limbs all dismembered; my life to me is odious! Now I have thee told, how we are led here. Flee now quickly, lest he thee find; for if he cometh enraged, with his direful onsets, was he never born that may stand thee before!"

Even with these words that the woman said, Beduer gan to comfort her with fair words: "Dear mother, I am a man, and knight am brave; and I will say thee through my sooth words, that no champion was born of ever any lady, that man may not with strength stoop him to ground; and serve thee an old woman—very little are thy powers. But have now very goodday, and I will go my way."

Down went him Beduer to his sovereign, and told him how he had care, and all how he had fared, and what the old woman told him of the maiden, and how the giant each day by the old woman lay. There they them between held their communing, how they might take on, so that the fiend were destroyed.

The while arrived the giant, and proceeded to his fire; he bare upon his back a great burthen, that was twelve swine, tied together, with withies exceeding great wreathed altogether. Adown he threw the dead swine, and himself sate thereby; his fire he gan mend, and great trees laid thereon; the six swine he drew in pieces, and ever he to the woman smiled, and soon by a while he lay by the woman. But he knew not of the tiding that came to his lemman. He drew out his embers; his flesh he gan to roast; and all the six swine he gan eat ere he arose from his seat, all besmeared in the ashes—evil were the viands; and afterwards he gan to roar, and vociferated much, and down lay by the fire, and stretched his limbs.

Let we now the giant be, and go to the king. Arthur at the water took his weapons in hand, and the Earl Beduer, good knight, wise and wary; and the third was Kay, the king's steward and his relative. Over the water they came, weaponed with the best, and ascended up the hill with all their strength, until they arrived near the fire, where the giant lay and slept, and the woman sate and wept. Arthur drew him beside and spake to his companions; forbade them by their limbs and by their bare life, that none were so keen that they should come near, unless they saw that it were need. Beduer tarried him there, and Kay, his companion.



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Arthur gan step forth, sturdy-mooded warrior, until he came to the floor, where the fiend lay and slept. Ever was Arthur void of fear; that was manifest therein, wondrous though it seem; for Arthur might there have hewed the giant in pieces, slain the monster where he lay and slept; then would not Arthur no whit touch him in his sleep, lest he in future days should hear upbraiding. Then called Arthur anon, noblest of kings: "Arise, fiend-monster, to thy destruction! Now we shall avenge the death of my relative!"

Ere the king had this fully said, the giant up started, and grasped his mickle club, and weened with the blow to dash Arthur all in pieces; but Arthur drew his shield high above his helm; and the giant smote thereon above, so that all it gan to shiver. And Arthur struck at him in haste with his sword, and smote off him the chin, with all the hair, and started him behind a tree, that there stood near; and the giant smote after quickly, and hit him not, but he smote the tree, so that his club brake all in pieces. And Arthur quickly ran round about the tree; and so Arthur and the monster ran round it thrice about. Then was the giant exceeding heavy, and Arthur was the swifter, and overtook the giant, and up heaved his good brand, and smote from him the thigh; and the giant down fell.

And Arthur stopt and beheld; then gan the fiend to speak: "Lord, lord, give me peace; who is it that fighteth with me? I weened not that any man in this world's realm might me thus lightly defeat in fight, except it were Arthur, noblest of all kings; and nevertheless was I never of Arthur sore afraid." Then said Arthur to him, noblest of kings: "I am Arthur the king, Britain's darling. Tell me of thy race, and where is their habitation; and who should be to thee father or mother accounted on earth; and from what land thou art hither arrived; and why thou hast destroyed with murder my relative?" Then answered the fiend, where he lay and beheld: "All this I will do, and thy troth receive, on condition that thou let me live, and heal my limbs." Arthur him wrathed, wondrously much; and he called Beduer, his bold champion: "Go near, Beduer, and take off from him here the head; and carry it forth with thee, down from this mount." Beduer came near, and deprived him of his head; and so they proceeded thence down to their companions. Then sate the king down, and gan him rest; and said these words Arthur the good: "Never fought I any such fight, upon this land, but when I slew the King Riun, upon the mount of Ravin!"

Afterwards they forth went, and came to the host; when that they the head saw, wondrous it seemed to them, wherever under heaven were such head begotten! Howel of Brittany came to the king, and the king said to him all of the maiden. Then was Howel sorry, and sorrowful therefore in heart; and took all his companions, and fared to the mount where the British maid lay buried in earth. He caused there to be areared soon a church most fair, in Saint Mary's name, the Lord's mother; and afterwards he gave a name to the hill, ere he thence departed, and named it Helen's Tomb,—now it hight Mount Saint Michel.



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Then was Arthur's host numerously collected; from Ireland, from Scotland, thither were they come. Then caused the king the trumpets to be blown in the host, and marched from Britain, busy men and keen, throughout Normandy, that then hight Neustrie. They proceeded throughout France, and the folk marched after them; they went out of France into Burgundy. His spies there came, and held his companions; and made known to the king, there in the country, that Luces the emperor, and all his Romanish host, thitherward they came, out of their land, and so they would march in toward France; and all the land conquer; and afterwards proceed hither, and kill all the Britons, quick that they found, and Arthur the keen led bound to France. Then was enraged the boldest of all kings, and ordered all his tents to be pitched in the fields; and there he would abide until he the sooth knew, where he might the emperor certainly intercept (or hostilely engage). The water hight Albe, where the bold king lay. A wise knight there came riding to the king's host, who was all wounded, and his folk greatly felled; the Romanish men had bereaved him of all his land. He told to the king new tiding, where the emperor lay, and all his Romanish army, and where he might him find, if he him would with him fight, or make peace with the Romanish men. "But, lord Arthur," quoth the knight, "I will shew to thee here right, that better for thee is it to have friendship, than for to fight; for against thy two they have twelve; so many kings, so many chieftains! He is in no land who may it make known to thee, for all the folk, that followeth the emperor, without (besides) the Rome-people, of his own territory, and without the folk that yearn the king's favour."

When the tales were all told, and Arthur had them understood, then called the king forth-right his dearest knights, and they counselled them between a castle to arear, beside the water that Albe was named. On a spot exceeding fair it was built full soon, there helped many a hand, in haste was it done; for if Arthur mis-fared, when he came to the fight, or his folk fell, or set to flight, then thought he to remain in the strong castle. Then called he earls twain, noble men and wise; high men born, to the king exceeding dear; the one was of Chartres, and hight Gerin—much wisdom dwelt with him; the other hight Beof of Oxford—well wide sprang the earl's fame. The yet the king called Walwain, who was his dearest relative; for Walwain understood Romanish; Walwain understood British; he was nurtured in Rome well many winters. The king took these three knights fair, and to the emperor them sent, and bade him with his army go back to Rome, and that he never into France his host should lead. "And if thou thither marchest, and ledest thine host, thou shalt be received to thy destruction! For France is mine own land, and I won it with fight; and if thou wilt not relinquish, that thou wilt not hither come, go we two to the fight, and fall the worst; and let we the poor folk dwell in quiet. For whilom the Rome-people conquered all the land, and afterwards they losed the land with fight; and I with fight it won, and with fight will hold."



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Forth the knights went, goodly champions; that was, Gerin, and Beof the fair, and Walwain the bold, cuirassed and helmeted on their noble steeds; and each carried on his shoulder a shield exceeding good; they bare in their hands spears most strong. Forth they gan ride, noble men, from the host; much of the folk that with Arthur dwelt, with Walwain went, and earnestly prayed him, that he should raise some dispute with the Rome-folk:—"That we may with fight prove ourselves; for it is many years that (since) their threats came here; and their menace they make, that they will us behead. Now is it much folk-shame, if it thus shall allay, unless there be some strife ere we become reconciled; shafts broken in pieces, burnies torn, shields shivered, warriors hewed, and swords bathed in the red blood." Forth the earls proceeded through a great wood, and marked a way that over a mount lay, so that they came soon to the folk of Rome; worthily weaponed they rode on their horses. There men might behold, the man who were beside, many thousands throng out of the tents, all to behold these three bold knights, and beheld their steeds, and beheld their weeds, and hearkened tidings from Arthur the king. And next forthright questioned the knights, and if the king had sent them to the emperor, for to speak with the emperor, and to yearn his peace. But for never any speech these three noble earls would abide, ere they came riding before the tent's door, wherein was the emperor. Down they gan alight, and delivered their steeds; and so they weaponed with all advanced into the tent, before the emperor that Luces was named. Where he sate on his bed their errand they to him made known; each said his say as to him seemed best, and bade him go back to his land, so that he never more with hostility should seek France. The while that these three earls said their errand, the emperor sate as if he were dumb, and answer never any gave to these earls; but he listened eagerly, wicked in his thought. Then Walwain became angry, as a thane enraged; and said these words Walwain the keen: "Luces the mighty, thou art emperor of Rome! We are Arthur's men, noblest of Britons. He sendeth to thee his messengers, without greeting; he bids thee march to Rome, that is thine own realm, and let him hold France, that he won with fight; and hold thou thy realm, and thy Rome-folk. Whilom thy ancestors invaded France; with fight they there won immense possessions; so awhile they there lived, and afterwards they it lost. With fight Arthur it won, and he it will possess. He is our lord, we are his warriors; he ordered us to say sooth to thyself, if thou wilt not back march, thy bane he will be. And if thou wilt not back turn, but execute thy will, and thou wilt win the kingdom to thine own hand, now to-morrow is the day, have it if thou it may obtain"

Then answered the emperor, with great wrath: "I will not back march, but France I will win; my ancestors it held, and I will it have. But if he would become my man, and acknowledge me for lord, and truely serve me, and hold me for master, I will make peace with him, and all his men; and let him hold Britain, that Julius had awhile in his hand, and many other lands, that Julius had in hand, that he hath no right to, though he possess the realm, that he shall all lose, unless he make peace."



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Then answered Walwain, who was Arthur's relative: "Belin and Brenne, both the brothers, Britain they possessed, and France they conquered; and afterwards they marched soon, and won Rome, and there they dwelt afterwards well many years. When this was all done, then was Brenne emperor, and ruled Rome, and all the people. And thus is Rome our right, that thou holdest in hand, and if we may live, we will it have, unless thou wilt acknowledge that Arthur is king over thee, and each year send him tribute of thy land; and if thou goest to him in amity, thou mayest live the quieter!"

Then sate by the emperor a knight of his kin, named Quencelin; noble man in Rome. This knight answered before the emperor, and thus him said—the knight was wicked:—"Knights, return you back, and make known to your king, that the Britons are bold, but they are accounted worthless; for ever they make boast—their honour is little!" More he thought to say, when Walwain drew his sword, and smote him upon the head, so that it fell in two, and he hastily anon ran to his horse; and they up leapt with grim countenance; and these words said Walwain the good: "So help me the same Lord, that formed the daylight, if ever any of your men is so keen, that after us he pursue, I will him kill, he shall be cut in pieces with my broad sword!" Even with the same speech then called the emperor: "Hold them! hold! They all shall hang upon high trees, or with horses be drawn in pieces!" Even with this saying that the emperor said, the earls gan to ride, and spurred their steeds; they shook in their hands spears exceeding long; bare their broad shields before breast. Soon gan to ride the bold earls, and ever the emperor loud gan to call: "Seize them! slay them! They have us disgraced!" There men might hear, who were there beside, thousands of the people call: "Hither, hither, weapons! Go we after them! Hither our shields; the men will escape!" Soon after them went weaponed warriors; there six, there seven, there eight, there nine. And ever the earls rode quickly, and ever awhile looked behind them; and ever the knights of Rome quick after came.

And there came near a knight, riding swiftest of all, and ever he called most keenly: "Turn again, knights, and defend you with fight! It is to you much shame, that ye will fly." Walwain knew the shout of the Romanish men; he turned his steed, and to him gan ride; and smote him through with the spear, as if he were spitted, and drew to him the spear—the man died soon—and these words said Walwain the keen: "Knight, thou rodest too fast; better were it to thee (haddest thou been) at Rome!" Marcel hight the knight, of noble lineage. When Walwain saw that he fell to ground, soon his sword he out drew, and smote from Marcel the head; and these words said Walwain the good: "Marcel, go to hell, and there tell them tales, and dwell there for ever, with Quencelin, thy companion; and hold there your communing,—better it were to you in Rome; for thus we shall teach you our British speech!"



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Gerin saw how it fared, how that the Romanish lay there down; and spurred his horse, and met another, and smote him throughout with his spear, and these words spake: "Ride now so, Roman, and sink thee to hell, and thus we shall sink you, if God will us help! Threat is worth nought, unless there be deeds eke!" Beof saw, the brave man, how his comrades had done; and turned his horse wondrously quick, and with all his might advanced to a knight, and smote him above the shield, so that his good burny burst, and throughout the neck the spear drove full soon. And thus the earl gan to call keenly to his companions: "The Britons will us destroy, if we hence go, unless we the better begin ere we hence depart!" Even with the speech that the earl said, they turned them soon, wondrously prompt; and each drew his sword quickly, and each slew his Roman; and afterwards their horses they turned, and held their way. And the Romanish men rode ever after them; oft they smote on them, oft they them reproached; oft they said to them: "Ye shall pay for the deed!" but they might not through anything any of them down bring, nor any harm there do to them in the conflicts. But ever awhile the earls back turned, and ere they separated, the worse was to the Rome-folk.

Thus they proceeded fifteen miles, until they came to a place under a fair wood, hard by the castle where Arthur lay fast. Three miles therefrom to the wood thronged nine thousand bold Britons, whom Arthur thither sent, who best knew the land; they would learn the sooth, of Walwain the keen, and of his companions, how they had fared; whether they were alive, or they lay by the way. These knights proceeded through the wood wondrously still, upon a hill, and eagerly beheld. They caused all the horsemen to alight in the wood, and get ready their weapons, and all their weeds (garments), except an hundred men, that there should look out, if they might descry through thing of any kind. Then saw they afar, in a great plain, three knights ride with all their main. After the three knights there came thirty; after the thirty they saw three thousand; thereafter came thronging thirty thousand anon, of Romanish folk, clad in armour. And ever the earls before them quickly rode, ever the right way that toward the wood lay, where their comrades were well hid. The earls rode to the wood; the Romanish men rode after; the Britons attacked them on their rested steeds, and smote in front, and felled an hundred anon. Then weened the Rome-folk that Arthur came riding, and were very greatly afraid; and the Britons pursued after them, and slew of the folk fifteen hundred. Then came them to help sixteen thousand of their own folk, whom Arthur had thither sent, bold Britons, with burnies clad.



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Then came there riding one that was a rich earl, named Petreius, a noble man of Rome, with six thousand warriors, to help the Romanish forces; and with great strength they leapt to the Britons, and few there they captured, but many they slew. The Britons fled to the wood; the others pursued after them; and the Britons on foot firmly against them stood, and the Romanish men fought riding; and the Britons advanced to them, and slew their horses, and many there took, and into the wood drew. Then was Petreius wrath, that his force was there the worse; and he with his host retreated from the wood; and the Britons followed them, and slew them behind. When the Britons were out of the wood, come out in the field, then withstood the Rome-folk with fierce strength. Then began the mickle fight!—there fell earls and many a good knight; there fell in that day fifteen thousand of noble men, ere it were even. There might he find, whoso would prove his strength, hand against hand, the strong against the strong, shield against shield, knights there fell! The paths ran with bloody streams; goldcoloured shields lay over the fields; all the day long they held the strong fight. Petreius on this side his folk held together; then it soon happened that the Britons had the worse. The noble Earl of Oxford, who was named Beof, a noble British man, saw that, that in no wise might it be, that the Britons should not fall, unless they had counsel. The earl then called to him noble knights, of the best of all, the Britons, and of the keenest of all, that there were alive, and drew him in the field, near the host; and thus him said—in heart to him was uneasiness: “Knights, hearken now to me; the Lord us help! We are hither come, and have undertaken this fight, without Arthur’s counsel who is our chief. If to us good befalleth, we shall please him the better, and if to us befalleth evil, he will hate us. But if ye will do my counsel, then shall we ride all merry. We are three hundred knights, helmed thanes, brave men and keen, nobly born; shew ye your courage—we are of one kith—ride ye when I ride, and follow my counsel. Advance ye all to him, to the knight that I do; take ye no steed, nor any knight’s weed, but every good knight slay ever downright!”

Even with the words that the knight of Oxford said to his companions beside, then gan he to ride, even all they rode then as swift as hound driveth the hart, and his comrades after, with all their might, throughout the mickle fight, all the troop; they flew on their steeds; the folk they there killed. Woe was to them born, that were in the way before them, for all they it trod down, with horses and with steeds; and so they came near, and Petreius they captured. Beof rode to him, and with arms him clasped, and drew him off his steed, and on earth him stretched; he knew beside him were his bold knights. The Britons down smote; Petreius they drew along; and the Rome-folk fought boldly; and at the last man might not know



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who smote other; there was much blood shed, mischief was in the conflict! Then saw Walwain truly, where he was beside; with seven hundred knights he gan thither move, and what he found in his way, all he it destroyed. And riding he took Petreius, on his good steed; and led forth Petreius, loath though it were to him, until they came to the wood, where he well knew surely to hold the noble man of Rome; and eft out in the field proceeded, and began to fight. There men might see sorrow enough! shields break; knights fall; helms dropping; noble men dying; bloody fields; paled faces! The Britons rushed towards them; then the Rome-folk fled; and the Britons them slew, and many they took alive; and when the day ended woe was to the Rome-folk, woe! Then bound men fast the Romanish knights, and led them to the wood, before Walwain; twenty hundred knights watched them in the night.

When it was day on the morrow, the folk gan to stir; forth they gan march to their sovereign, and brought him such offering, that was lief to him to have. Then spake him Arthur thus: "Welcome, Petreius! Now is one here that will teach thee British speech. Thou boasted before the emperor, that thou wouldest me kill; take all my castles, and my kingdom; and much good should be to thee of that thou desiredest to have. I will give thee, full truly, my castle in Paris; and there thou shalt dwell, as to thee will be most loathsome of all; shalt thou nevermore thy life thence lead!" Arthur took the knights that there were captured, three hundred riders he took eke anon, who all were comrades, knights most brave, and keen men in fight, and bade them on the morrow manly arise, bind the Romanish men with strong chains, and lead Petreius to the burgh of Paris. Four earls he commanded to bring them forth; Cador, Borel, Beduer, and Richer; he ordered them to be companions, so that they were secure, and to come again soon to their sovereign.

This was all thus spoken, but it was soon known. Spies went over the king's host, and heard say sooth words, whither Arthur would send the knights that he had in bonds; and the spies forthright proceeded forth by night, until they came soon to the emperor of Rome, and told all their tale, how these four earls should march, and lead forth Petreius to the burgh of Paris; and all they told the way that in to Paris lay, and where men might them intercept in a deep valley, and take from them Petreius the noble man, and the four earls conquer, and fast them bind. Lucus heard this, the emperor of Rome, and he leapt to weapon as it were a lion; and ordered ten thousand chosen knights to horse and to arms, quickly forwards to march. He called Sextonus, of Lybia he was king, of Turkey duke; he sent after Evander, who from Babylon was come there; he called to the senators Bal, Catel, and Carnus,—these were all of royal birth, and these were all chosen,—promptly to ride, and to liberate Petreius.



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Anon as it was even forth they marched; twelve knights them led of the people that were exceeding wary, and knew the ways. When the Rome-folk rode, resounded burnies; they set on their heads high helms; shields on their backs—the valiant Rome-folk. They marched all night, exceedingly fast, until they came in the way that into Paris lay; then were they before, and the Britons behind. But alas! that Cador the keen knew it not, that the Rome-folk had before rode them! They came in a wood, in a spot exceeding fair, in a deep dale, dark on the sides; they swore between them, that there they would engage. There they lay still a little while; and it gan to dawn, and the beasts gan to stir. Then came Arthur's men advancing by way, right the same way where the other host lay; they rode singing—the men were blithe! Nevertheless Cador was there, most wise and most wary; he and Borel the earl rich, advanced them together, and took between them five hundred knights, and marched before, weaponed champions. Richer and Beduer came behind them there, and led the knights, whom they had captured, Petreius and his companions, who were taken. Then came they riding upon the Rome-folk; and the Rome-folk rushed towards them with fierce strength, and smote on the Britons with exceeding bitter blows; brake the Britons' ranks—mischief was among the folk—the wood gan resound, warriors there fell! The Britons withstood them, and strongly defended themselves. Richer heard that, and the earl Beduer, how their comrades before them fought. Petreius they took, and all their prisoners, and with three hundred swains sent them into the wood. And they themselves advanced toward their comrades, and smote on the Rome-folk with fierce strength; there was many a blow given, and many a man there was slain. Then perceived Evander, who was a heathen king most wary, that their folk gan wax, and the Britons gan wane; and his best knights approached them together, and advanced upon the Britons, as if they would them bite. The Britons then were weakened, and theirs was the worse; they (the Romans) slew, they took all that they came nigh.

Woe was there to the Britons without Arthur! Their remedy was too little there, at their great need. There was Borel slam, and deprived of life-day. Evander the king him killed with his wicked craft, and three Britons eke, high men born. There were slain three hundred of their companions; and many they took alive, and fast them bound;—then knew they not any good counsel, for they all weened to be dead; nevertheless they fought as bravely as they might.

Then had out marched from Arthur's host the king of Poitou, hardy man renowned; Guitard he hight; Gascony he possessed; he had for companions five hundred riders, three hundred archers, keen men to fight, and seven hundred on foot that were prompt for harm. They were gone in to the land to obtain fodder, both fodder and meat, to carry to their host. The clamour they heard of the Rome-folk, their deeds they



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relinquished, and thitherward gan ride the strong minded men and swift, of sloth devoid, until they came soon near to the fight. Guitard and his knights there right forthright grasped their shields, knights most bold; and all the archers pressed them beside; and the men on foot gan advance; and all together they on smote, with their smart blows. At the first onset the Romanish men fell; fifteen hundred to the ground; there was slain Evander, who was ere king full stern; Catellus of Rome forgot there his decrees! Then made they there flight, who ere held conflict; the Rome-folk turned the backs, and fled. The Britons pursued after them, and greeted them with mischief; and so many there they took, and so many there they slew, that the Britons' host might not fell any more! And the Romanish men, that there might escape, rode full soon to the emperor, and told him tiding of Arthur the king,—for they weened in sooth that Arthur thither were come; then was the emperor and his host greatly afraid, whom the Britons had slain—that to them seemed good. Backward they (the Britons) then went, with bold booty, and came again to the place where the fight had been, and buried the dead, and the alive they gan forth lead. And they sent after Petreius, whom they previously captured, and after his companions, that were previously taken, and sent them all full truly in to the burgh of Paris, and filled three castles, and fast them inclosed, after Arthur's command, noblest of all kings. All the Britons loved Arthur; to all of them stood dread of him that dwelt in the land, so did it to the emperor, of Arthur he had mickle care; and all the Rome-folk of Arthur were afraid.

Then was it in sooth found, what Merlin whilom said, that Rome should for Arthur fall in fire, and the walls of stone quake and fall. This same token should be of Luces the emperor, and of the senators, who with him came from Rome; and in the same wise, they there gan fall; what Merlin in fore-days said, all they it found there, as they did ere, and subsequently well everywhere; ere Arthur were born, Merlin it all predicted.

The emperor heard say sooth words, how his men were taken, and how his folk was eke slain. Then were in his army manifold sorrows; some lamented their friends; some threatened their enemies; some got ready their weapons—mischief was given to them! Then saw Luces, that evil was befallen to him, for each day he lost of his people, but he the harm felt, his noble men he lost. He became then afraid wondrously much, and betook him to counsel and to some communing, that he would march to Aust, with all his host; forth by Lengres he would proceed,—of Arthur he had mickle care!



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Arthur had his spies in the army of the emperor, and they soon caused him to know whither he (the emperor) would go. Arthur caused soon his host to be assembled, stilly by night his best knights; and forth the king marched with his good folk. On his right hand he let Lengres stand, and proceeded forward in the way that Luces would pass. When he came in a dale, under a down, there he gan halt, keenest of all kings,—the dale is in sooth named Sosie. Arthur there alighted down, and ordered all his people that they in haste should get ready their weapons, and prepare them to fight, as brave knights should; so that when the Rome folk there should come riding, that they should attack them, as brave knights should do. All the swains, and the impotent thanes, and of the small (base) folk many thousands, the king set them on a hill, with many standards,—that he did for stratagem; thereof he thought to boast, as it afterwards happened, thereafter full soon. Arthur took ten thousand of his noble knights, and sent on the right hand, clad in armour, he caused other ten thousand to march on his left hand; ten thousand before; ten thousand behind, with himself he held sixteen thousand; aside he sent into a fair wood seventeen thousand good knights, well weaponed men, the wood to guard, so that they might fare thither, if to him were need. Then was of Gloucester an earl with the best, Moruith he was named, a man exceeding keen; to him he committed the wood and the host. “And if it befalleth, as the living God will, that they be overcome, and begin to flee; pursue ye after them, with all your might, and all that ye may overtake deprive it of life-day; the fat and the lean, the rich and the poor. For in never any land, nor in any nation are knights all so good as are with myself, knights all so brave, knights all so powerful, knights all so strong, in ever any land! Ye are under Christ knights keenest of all, and I am mightiest of all kings under God himself. Do we well this deed, God us well speed!” The knights then answered, stilly under heaven: “All we shall well do, and all we shall undertake; nuthing be the knight, that sheweth not his might here right!” Then sent they on both sides, all the men on foot; then caused he the Dragon to be set up, the matchless standard, delivered it to a king who well could it hold. Angel, King of Scotland, held in hand (commanded) the foremost troop; Cadon, the Earl of Cornwall, held the troop behind; Beof had one, the Earl of Oxford; the Earl of Chester, Gerin, the fourth troop held with him. The force upon the down held AEscil, King of Denmark. Lot held the one, who was dear to the king, Howel of Brittany held another. Walwain the keen was by the king. Kay commanded one, who was steward of the king; Beduer another, who was the king’s cup-bearer. The Earl of Flanders, Howeldin, had a troop with him. A mickle troop had Gwitard, the King of Gascony land. Wigain, Earl of Leicester, and Jonathas, Earl of Dorchester,



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they commanded the two troops that there were on foot. The Earl of Chester, Cursaleyn, and the Earl of Bath, who hight Urgein, they commanded both the troops that were there beside; these should on two sides advance to the fight, with these two earls, that brave knights were,—Arthur had troth the earls were true. When all the troops were set as Arthur thought good, then called to him the King of Britain all his councillors, that were skilfullest in judgment; and thus said Arthur anon to his noble men: “Hearken now towards me, my dear friends; ye have twice attacked the Romanish men, and twice they are overcome, and slain, and captured, because they all with wrong covet our land. And my heart saith to me, through our high Lord, that yet they shall be overcome, both slain and captured. Ye have overcome Norwegians; ye have overcome Danes, Scotland and Ireland ye have all won to your hand; Normandy and France ye have conquered with fight. Three and thirty kingdoms I hold in mine own hand, that ye have won for me under the sun! And these are the worst men of all men alive; heathen people! To God they are loathsome; our Lord they desert, and to Mahoun they draw. And Lucus, the emperor, of God’s self hath no care, who hath for companions heathen hounds, God’s enemies; we shall them destroy, and lay them to ground, and ourselves be safe, with the Lord’s will, that ruleth all deeds!” Then answered the earls there: “All we are ready, to live and to lie with our dear king!”

When this army was all prepared, then was it daylight; and Lucus at Langres moved, and all his Rome-folk; he commanded his men to blow his golden trumpets, get ready his host, for forth he would march from Lengres to Aust, as his way right lay. And forth gan ride the Romanish people, until they came a mile near to Arthur.

Then heard the Rome-folk hard tidings; they saw all the dales, and all the downs, and all the hills covered with helms; high standards, warriors them held, sixty thousand waving with the wind; shields glitter, burnies shine; gold-coloured vests, men most stern; steeds leap—the earth stirred! The emperor saw the king fare, where he was by the wood-shaw; then said he Lucus, the lord of Rome, and spake with his men with loud voice: “What are these outlaws, that have preceded us in this way? Take we our weapons, and march we to them; they shall be slain, and some alive flayed, they all shall be dead, with torment destroyed!” Even with the words they seized their weapons. When they were arrayed with their good weapons, then spake soon Lucus, the lord of Rome: “Quickly advance we to them; we all shall do well!” There were come with him five and twenty kings, heathen folk all, that held of Rome, earls and eke dukes, of the eastern world. “Lordings,” quoth Lucus then, “Mahoun be gracious to you! Ye are powerful kings, and obey unto Rome. Rome is my right, richest of all burghs; and I ought to be highest of all men alive. Ye see here on the field those who are our foes; they



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think to rule highly over our realm; hold us for base, and themselves become rich. But we shall oppose them with bold strength; for our race was highest of all men alive, and won all the lands that they looked on; and Julius the strong marched into Britain, and won to his hands many kingdoms. Now would our underlings be kings over us, but they shall buy it with their bare backs; never again shall they return to Britain!"

Even with the words then moved the army; by thousands and by thousands they thronged together; each king prepared host of his folk. When it was all formed, and the army appointed, then were there right told full fifteen hosts; two kings there were ever comrades; four earls and a duke disposed them together, and the emperor by himself, with ten thousand champions. When the folk gan to stir, the earth gan to din; trumpets there blew; hosts were arrayed; horns there resounded with loud voice, sixty thousand blew together. More there sounded of Arthur's companions than sixty thousand men with horns; the welkin gan to din, the earth gan to tremble! Together they charged as if heaven would fall! First they let fly, exceedingly quick darts all as thick as the snow down falleth; stones they let afterwards sternly wind through the air. Then cracked spears; shivered spears,—helms rolled, noble men fell;—burnies brake in pieces, blood outflowed;—the fields were discoloured, standards fell! Wounded knights over all wandered over the weald, and sixty hundred there were trodden to death by horses! Knights there perished, blood out ran;—flowed by paths bloody streams,—woe was among the folk,—the harm was without bounds! So all as say the writings that skilful men made, that was the third greatest battle that ever here was fought, so that at the last no warrior knew on whom he should smite, and whom he should spare; for no man knew other there, for the quantity of blood!

Then removed the fight from the place where they ere fought, and they began widely to rush together; and a new conflict began, narrowly contested;—there were the Rome-people grievously treated! Then came there three kings, of heathen land; of Ethiopia was the one; the second was an African; the third was of Lybia, of heathen land. They came to the host at the east end, and brake the body-of-troops that the Britons there held, and anon felled fifteen hundred bold thanes of Arthur's folk; then the Britons turned the backs soon. But then came there riding two keen earls, that was, Beduer and Kay, Arthur's cup-bearer and his relative; their Britons they saw hewed in pieces with swords. There became enraged the earls most bold, and with ten thousand knights pressed to the fight, amid the throng, where they were thickest, and slew the Rome-folk very grievously; and went over the fight, after their will. Then were they too daring, and ruled them too evilly; alas! alas! that they were not then wary; that they could not guard themselves against their



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enemies! For they were too keen, and too presumptuous, and fought too rashly, and too far advanced, and spread too widely over the broad conflict. Then came the King of Media, the mickle and the broad; a heathen chief,—there he harm wrought; he led for companions twenty thousand riders; he held in his hand a spear exceeding strong. The spear he forth thrust with his strong might, and smote the Earl Beduer before in the breast, so that the burny soon burst, before and behind, and his breast was opened; the blood came forth lukewarm. There fell Beduer anon, dead upon the ground; there was misery and sorrow enow! There Kay found Beduer lie him dead there, and Kay would carry away the body with himself; with twenty hundred knights he approached thereabout, and strongly fought, and felled the Rome-folk, and slew there many thousand men of Media; the fight was exceeding strong, and they were thereat long. Then arrived there a king most hateful, with sixty thousand good men of his land; Setor the keen, who came him from Lybia. There the strong king gan him fight with Kay, and wounded Kay sorely in the strong fight, to the bare death—grievous was the deed!

His knights there right carried him from the fight, with mickle strength through the fight they pierced. Woe was to Arthur the king for the tiding! That saw the rich thane, who was named Ridwathlan, Beduer's sister's son, of noble Britons he was descended, that Boccus with his strong spear had slain Beduer. Woe was to him alive, when his uncle was dead; for he of all men most him loved. He called knights most good of his kindred, and of the dearest of all that he knew alive; five hundred by tale advanced together. Then said Ridwathlan, noble man of Britain: "Knights, ye are of my kindred, come ye here to me, and avenge we Beduer, mine uncle, who was best of our race, whom Boccus hath slain with his strong spear. Go we all together, and fell our foes!"

Even with the words he forth pushed, and all his noble companions with him anon; and Boccus the king they knew, where he was in the combat; with his spear and with his shield many a knight he killed. Ridwathlan drew out his sword soon, and struck at him, and smote the king on the helm, so that it severed in two, and eke the burny-hood, so that it (the sword) stopt at the teeth; and the heathen king fell to the ground, and his foul soul sank into hell! Ridwathlan then said—cruel he was in mood—"Boccus, now thou hast bought dear that Beduer thou slew; and thy soul shall now be companion of the Worse!" Even with the words, as if it were the wind, he pressed to the fight; as a whirlwind doth in the field, when it heaveth the dust high from the earth, all so Ridwathlan rushed on his enemies. All they it slew that they came nigh, the while that they might wield their noble weapons; in all the fight were no knights better, the while that the life lasted them in their breasts. Boccus the king they slew, and a thousand of his knights; then was Beduer avenged well with the best!



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There was a brave earl, of noble race, who was named Leir, lord of Boulogne; he beheld in the fight an enemy advance, that was an admiral, of Babylon he was prince; much folk he felled down to the ground. And the earl that perceived; in heart was to him uneasiness; he drew to his breast a broad shield, and he grasped in his hand a spear that was most strong, and spurred his horse with all his main, and hit the admiral with a smart blow under the breast, that the burny gan to burst, so that the spear pierced through there behind him full a fathom; the wretch fell to the ground! That saw soon the admiral's son, who is named Gecron; and grasped his spear anon, and smote Leir the earl sore on the left side, throughout the heart,—the earl down fell. Walwain perceived that, where he was in the fight; and he wrathed him wondrously much; that saw Howel, noble man of Brittany, and he thither advanced, with fifteen hundred men; hardy warriors with Howel went; and Walwain before them man most stern of mood; he had for comrades five and twenty hundred bold Britons,—then began they to fight!

There were the Rome-folk grievously treated; Howel them attacked, Walwain them met; there was wondrous cry, the welkin resounded; the earth gan to tremble, the stones there shivered! Streams of blood ran from the wretched folk, the slaughter was immense, then were the Britons weary! Kinard, the Earl of Striguil, left the King Howel, and took with him Labius, Rimarc, and Boclovius. These were the keenest men that any king had, these were among men earls mighty strong! They would not, for their mickle mood (pride), follow Howel the good, but by themselves they slew all that they came nigh. That saw a powerful man of the Rome-people, how Kinard the keen killed there their folk, and the knight gan him alight from his dear steed, and took him in his hand a spear made of steel, and bathed it in blood; and he aside went, until he came to the spot where Kinard the strong fought. Kinard's burny he up raised, and he the earl there slew. Then shouted loud all the Rome-folk, and turned to the Britons, and brake their troops; and felled the standards, the folk down sank; shields there shivered, warriors there fell; there fell to ground fifteen thousand bold Britons—mischief there was rife! So lasted long the fight exceeding strong.

Walwain gan pass over the mickle slaughter, and assembled all his knights, where he found them in the fight. There near came riding Howel the mighty; they assembled their fair folk anon, and forth they gan wend, and rode to the Rome-folk with strong wrath, and quickly approached them, and brake their French ranks. And Walwain forth right, there he found Lucus the emperor live under shield, and Walwain struck at him with the steel sword, and the emperor struck at him, who was man exceeding stern; shield against shield, the pieces there flew; sword against sword clashed well often, fire flew from the steel; the adversaries



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were enraged! There was fight most strong—all the host was stirred! The emperor weened to destroy Walwain, that he might in after days boast for the deed. But the Britons thronged towards them, most angrily, and the Romanish men liberated their emperor; and they charged together as if heaven would fall! All the daylight they held afterwards the fight, a little while ere the sun went to ground. Arthur then called—noblest of all kings: “Now go we all to them, my brave knights! And God himself aid us our enemies to fell!”

Even with the words then blew men the trumpets; fifteen thousand anon thronged together to blow horns and trumps; the earth gan to tremble for the great blast, for the mickle clamour! The Rome-folk turned backs to the fight; standards fell,—noble men perished,—those fled who might,—the fated there fell! Much man-slaughter was there; might it no man tell, how many hundred men were there hewed in pieces in the mickle throng, in the man-slaughter! The emperor was slain in strange manner, so that no man of ever any country afterwards ever knew it to say, who killed the emperor. But when the fight was all done, and the folk was all in joy, then found men the emperor pierced through with a spear.

Word came to Arthur, where he was in his tent, that the emperor was slain, and deprived of life-day. Arthur caused a tent to be pitched, amidst a broad field, and thither caused to be borne Luces the emperor, and caused him to be covered with gold coloured clothes, and caused him there to be watched three full days, the while he caused to be made a work exceeding rich, a long chest; and it to be covered all with gold. And he caused to be laid therein Luces of Rome, who was a most doughty man, the while his days lasted. The yet did Arthur more, noblest of all Britons, Arthur caused to be sought all the powerful men, kings and earls, and the richest barons, who in the fight were slain, and deprived of life-day; he caused them to be buried with great pomp. But he caused three kings to bear Luces the emperor, and caused a bier to be made, rich and exceeding lofty; and caused them soon to be sent to Rome. And greeted all the Rome-people with a great taunt, and said that he sent them the tribute of his land, and eft would also send them more greeting, if they would yearn of Arthur's gold; and thereafter full soon ride into Rome, and tell them tidings of the King of Britain, and Rome-walls repair, that were of yore fallen down;—“And so will I rule the fierce Rome-folk!” All this boast was idly done, for otherwise it fared, all otherwise it happened: the people he left, through wicked tiding, all through Modred his relative, wickedest of all men!



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In the mickle fight Arthur lost of his knights, five and twenty thousand, hewed in pieces on the ground, of Britons most bold, bereaved of life. Kay was wounded sore, wondrously much; to Kinun he was carried, and soon thereafter he was dead. He was buried there beside the castle, among hermits, who was the noble man. Kay hight the earl, Kinun the castle, Arthur gave him the town, and he thereat was entombed, and set there the name after himself; for Kay's death he named it Kain (Caen); now and evermore so it hight there. After Beduer was slain, and deprived of life day, Arthur caused him to be borne to his castle Baeios (Bayeux), and there he was buried, in the burgh; without the south gate in earth men him laid. Howeldin was floated forth into Flanders; and all his best knights there floated forth-right into the earldoms whence they there came. And all the dead in earth men them laid; in Terouane they lie all clean.

Leir, the earl, men carried into Boulogne; and Arthur then thereafter dwelt in a land in Burgundy, that to him seemed best; the land he all ruled, and all the castles appointed; and said that he would himself hold the land. And afterwards he made his threat, that he would in summer march into Rome, and acquire all the realm, and himself be emperor where Luces ere dwelt. And many of the Rome folk would that it so should be, for they were adread to their bare death, so that many away there fled, and their castles abandoned; and many sent messengers to Arthur the strong; and many spake with him, and yearned Arthur's peace; and some they would against Arthur hold, and hold Rome against him, and defend the realm. And nevertheless they were afraid for their destruction, so that they knew not under Christ any good counsel. Then was it there come to pass, what Merlin said erewhile, that Rome-walls should fall down before Arthur; that was fulfilled there by the emperor, who fell there in the fight, with fifty thousand men; there sank to the ground the rich Rome-people! Then Arthur weened in sooth to win all Rome, and dwelt in Burgundy, noblest of all kings.

Then came there on a time a brave man riding, and brought tiding to Arthur the king, from Modred, his sister's son; to Arthur he was welcome, for he weened that he brought news most good. Arthur lay all the night long, and spake with the young knight; so never would he say to him sooth how it fared. When it was day on the morrow, and people gan to stir, Arthur then up arose, and stretched his arms; he arose up, and sate down, as if he were exceeding sick. Then asked him a fair knight—"Lord, how hast thou fared to-night?" Arthur then answered—in mind he was uneasy: "To-night in my sleep, where I lay in chamber, I dreamt a dream—therefore I am full sorry. I dreamt that men raised me upon a hall; the hall I gan bestride, as if I would ride; all the lands that I possessed, all I there overlooked. And Walwain sate before me; my sword he bare in hand. Then approached Modred there,



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with innumerable folk; he bare in his hand a battle-axe strong; he began to hew exceeding hardily; and the posts all hewed in pieces, that held up the hall. There I saw Wenhaver eke, dearest of women to me; all the mickle hall roof with her hand she drew down; the hall gan to tumble, and I tumbled to the ground, so that my right arm brake in pieces,—then said Modred, ‘Have that!’ Down fell the hall; and Walwain gan to fall, and fell on the earth; his arms both brake. And I grasped my dear sword with my left hand, and smote off Modred his head, so that it rolled on the field. And the queen I cut all in pieces with my dear sword, and afterwards I set her down in a black pit. And all my good people set to flight, so that I knew not under Christ, where they were gone. But myself I gan stand upon a weald, and I there gan to wander wide over the moors, there I saw gripes, and grisly fowls! Then approached a golden lion over the down;—a beast most fair, that our Lord made;—the lion ran towards me, and took me by the middle, and forth gan her move, and to the sea went. And I saw the waves drive in the sea; and the lion in the flood went with myself. When we came in the sea, the waves took her from me; but there approached a fish, and brought me to land;—then was I all wet, and weary from sorrow, and sick. When I gan to wake, greatly gan I to quake; then gan I to tremble as if I all burnt with fire. And so I have all night of my dream much thought; for I wot with certainty, gone is all my bliss, for ever in my life sorrow I must endure! Alas! that I have not here Wenhaver, my queen!”

Then answered the knight: “Lord, thou hast wrong; men should never a dream with sorrow interpret. Thou art the mightiest man, that reigneth in land, and the wisest of all that dwelleth under heaven. If it were befallen—as will it not our Lord!—that Modred, thy sister’s son, had taken thy queen, and set all thy royal land in his own hand, that thou to him committedest, when thou thoughtest to go to Rome; and had he done all this with his treachery, the yet thou mightest thee avenge with weapon worthily, and eft thy land hold, and govern thy people, and thine enemies fell, who did evil to thee, and slay them all clean, that there remain not one.”

Arthur then answered, noblest of all kings: “So long as is ever, weened I that never, that ever Modred, my relative, who is man dearest to me, would betray me, for all my realm, nor Wenhaver, my queen, weaken in thought; would it not begin, for any worldly man!”

Even with the words forth-right then answered the knight: “I say thee sooth, dear king, for I am thy underling. Thus hath Modred done; thy queen he hath taken, and thy fair land set in his own hand. He is king, and she is queen; of thy coming is there no expectation, for they ween not ever in sooth, that thou shalt come back from Rome. I am thine own man, and saw this treason; and I am come to thyself, to say thee sooth. My head be in pledge, that I have said thee sooth, without leasing, of thy loved queen, and of Modred, thy sister’s son, how he hath taken Britain from thee.”



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Then sate it all still in Arthur's hall; then was there sorrow with the good king; then were the British men therefore exceedingly dispirited. Then after a while voices there stirred; wide men might hear the Britons' clamour, and gan to tell in speeches of many kind, how they would destroy Modred and the queen, and slay all the people that held with Modred.

Arthur then called, fairest of all Britons: "Sit ye down still, knights in hall, and I will you tell strange discourse. Now to-morrow, when it is day, and the Lord it sendeth, forth I will march in toward Britain; and Modred I will slay, and burn the queen; and all I will destroy, that approved the treachery. And here I will leave the dearest of men to me, Howel, my loved relative, noblest of my kin; and half my army I will leave in this land, to maintain all this kingdom, that I have in my hand. And when these things are all done, back I will come to Rome, and deliver my fair land to Walwain my relation; and afterwards perform my threat, by my bare life; all my enemies shall be destroyed!"

Then stood him up Walwain, who was Arthur's relative, and said these words,—the earl was incensed: "Almighty God! ruler of dooms, guardian of all middle-earth! Why is it befallen, that my brother Modred this sin has wrought? But to-day I forsake him here, before this assembly; and I will him destroy with the Lord's will; myself I will him hang, highest of all wretches; the queen I will, with God's law, draw all in pieces with horses. For may I never be blithe, the while I am alive, until I have avenged mine uncle with the best!"

Then answered the Britons with bold voice: "All our weapons are ready; now to-morrow we shall march!" On the morrow when it was day, and the Lord it sent, Arthur forth him moved, with his good folk; half he it left, and half it forth led. Forth he marched through the land until he came to Whitsand; ships he had soon, many and excellent; but full a fortnight there lay the host, abiding the weather, deprived of wind (becalmed).

Now was there some wicked knight in Arthur's army, anon as he heard it determined of Modred's death, he took his swain quickly, and sent to this land; and sent word to Wenhaver, how it had happened, and how Arthur was on his march, with a great host, and how he would take on, and all how he would do. The queen came to Modred, who was to her dearest of men, and told him tiding of Arthur the king, how he would take on, and all how he would do.

Modred took his messengers, and sent to Saxland, after Childrich, who was king most powerful, and bade him come to Britain—thereof he should have possession. Modred bade Childrich, the strong and the rich, to send messengers wide, on the four sides of Saxland, and bid all the knights that they might get, that they should come soon to this kingdom; and he would to Childrich give part of his realm, all beyond the Humber; because he should him help to fight



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against his uncle King Arthur. Childrich proceeded soon into Britain. When Modred had assembled his host of men, then were there told sixty thousand hardy warriors of heathen folk, when they were come hither, for Arthur's harm, and to help Modred, wickedest of men! When the army was gathered of each people, then were they there in a heap an hundred thousand, heathens and christians, with Modred the king.

Arthur lay at Whitsand; a fortnight seemed to him too long; and Modred knew all what Arthur there would; each day came messengers to him from the king's army. Then befell it on a time, much rain it gan to rain, and the wind it gan to turn, and stood from the east end. And Arthur proceeded to ship with all his host, and ordered that his shipmen should bring him to Romney, where he thought to come up into this land. When he came to the haven, Modred was opposite to him, as the day gan light, they began to fight, all the day long; many a man dead there lay! Some they fought on land, some by the strand; some they let fly sharp spears out of the ships. Walwain went before, and cleared the way; and slew there soon eleven thanes; he slew Childrich's son, who was come there with his father. To rest went the sun; woe was then to the men! There was Walwain slain, and deprived of life-day, through a Saxish earl—sorry be his soul! Then was Arthur sorry, and sorrowful therefore in heart; and these words said, mightiest of all Britons: "Now I have lost my loved swains! I knew by my dream, what sorrow were given to me! Slain is Angel the king, who was mine own darling, and Walwain, my sister's son—woe is me that I was born man! Up now from ship, quickly, my brave knights!"

Even with the words sixty thousand good warriors pressed anon to the fight, and brake Modred's ranks, and well nigh himself was taken. Modred began to flee, and his folk to follow after; they fled exceedingly, the fields eke trembled; the stones jar with the blood-streams! There would have been all the fight ended, but the night came too soon; if the night had not been, they all would have been slain!

The night separated them over slades and over downs; and Modred came so far forth, that he was at London. The burghmen heard how it had all fared, and denied him entry, and all his folk. Modred thence went toward Winchester; and they him received, with all his men. And Arthur pursued after, with all his might, until he came to Winchester, with a mickle host, and the burgh all besieged; and Modred therein abode. When Modred saw that Arthur was so nigh to him, oft he bethought him what he might do. Then on the same night, he ordered all his knights, with all their weapons, to march out of the burgh; and said that he would with fight there make a stand. He promised the burghmen free law evermore, on condition that they should help him at his great need.



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When it was daylight, then ready was their fight. Arthur that perceived—the king was enraged; he caused trumpets to be blown, and men to be assembled to battle; he commanded all his thanes, and his noble knights, together to take the fight, and fell his enemies, and the burgh all to destroy, and hang the burgh-folk. They stept together, and sternly fought. Modred then thought what he might do; and he did there as he did elsewhere, treachery with the most! For ever he did wickedly; he betrayed his comrades before Winchester, and caused his dearest knights to be called to him anon, and his dearest friends all, of all his folk; and stole away from the fight—the fiend him have!—and let the good folk all there perish. They fought all day; they weened that their lord there lay, and were near them at their great need. Then bent he the way that toward Hampton lay; and bent toward the haven—wickedest of men—and took all the ships that there good were, and all the steersmen, to the need of the ships; and proceeded into Cornwall—wickedest of kings in those days! And Arthur besieged well firmly Winchester the burgh; and slew all the people—there was sorrow enow—the young and the old, all he killed. When the folk was all dead, and the burgh all burnt, then caused he withal all the walls to be broken in pieces. Then was it there come to pass, that Merlin whilom said:

“Wretched shalt thou be, Winchester! the earth shall thee swallow!” So Merlin said, who was a great prophet.

The queen lay in York; never was she so sorrowful; that was Wenhaver the queen, most miserable of women! She heard say sooth words, how often Modred fled, and how Arthur him pursued; woe was to her the while, that she was alive! Out of York she went by night, and toward Kaerleon drew, as quickly as she might; thither she brought by night two of her knights; and men covered her head with a holy veil, and she was there a nun; woman most wretched! Then men knew not of the queen, where she were gone, nor many years afterwards man knew it in sooth, whether she were dead, or whether she herself were sunk in the water.

Modred was in Cornwall, and gathered many knights; to Ireland he sent his messengers quickly; to Saxland he sent his messengers quickly; to Scotland he sent his messengers quickly; he ordered them all to come anon, that would have land, or silver, or gold, or possessions, or land; in each wise he warned himself each man;—so doth each prudent man upon whom cometh need.

Arthur that heard, wrathest of kings, that Modred was in Cornwall with a mickle army, and there would abide until Arthur approached. Arthur sent messengers over all his kingdom, and bade all to come that was alive in land, that to fight were good, weapons to bear; and whoso it neglected, that the king commanded, the king would him all consume alive in the land. Innumerable folk it came toward the host, riding and on foot, as the rain down falleth!



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Arthur marched to Cornwall, with an immense army. Modred heard that, and advanced against him with innumerable folk—there were many fated! Upon the Tambre they came together; the place hight Camelford, evermore lasted the same word. And at Camelford was assembled sixty thousand men, and more thousands thereto; Modred was their chief. Then thitherward gan ride Arthur the mighty, with innumerable folk—fated though it were! Upon the Tambre they encountered together; elevated their standards; advanced together; drew their long swords, and smote on the helms; fire out sprang; spears splintered; shields gan shiver; shafts brake in pieces! There fought all together innumerable folk! Tambre was in flood with blood to excess; there might no man in the fight know any warrior, nor who did worse, nor who did better, so was the conflict mingled! For each slew downright, were he swain, were he knight. There was Modred slain, and deprived of life-day, and all his knights slain in the fight. There were slain all the brave, Arthur's warriors, high and low, and all the Britons of Arthur's board, and all his dependants, of many kingdoms. And Arthur himself wounded with a broad slaughter-spear; fifteen dreadful wounds he had; in the least one might thrust two gloves! Then was there no more remained in the fight, of two hundred thousand men that there lay hewed in pieces, except Arthur the king alone, and two of his knights.

Arthur was wounded wondrously much. There came to him a lad, who was of his kindred; he was Cador's son, the Earl of Cornwall; Constantine the lad hight, he was dear to the king. Arthur looked on him, where he lay on the ground, and said these words, with sorrowful heart: "Constantine, thou art welcome; thou wert Cador's son. I give thee here my kingdom, and defend thou my Britons ever in thy life, and maintain them all the laws that have stood in my days, and all the good laws that in Uther's days stood. And I will fare to Avalun, to the fairest of all maidens, to Argante the queen, an elf most fair, and she shall make my wounds all sound; make me all whole with healing draughts. And afterwards I will come again to my kingdom, and dwell with the Britons with mickle joy."

Even with the words there approached from the sea that was a short boat, floating with the waves; and two women therein, wondrously formed; and they took Arthur anon, and bare him quickly, and laid him softly down, and forth they gan depart.

Then was it accomplished that Merlin whilom said, that mickle care should be of Arthur's departure. The Britons believe yet that he is alive, and dwelleth in Avalun with the fairest of all elves; and the Britons ever yet expect when Arthur shall return. Was never the man born, of ever any lady chosen, that knoweth of the sooth, to say more of Arthur. But whilom was a sage hight Merlin; he said with words—his sayings were sooth—that an Arthur should yet come to help the English.

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