

## VI.

### Glastonbury and its Kings.



IN the early history of Christianity there is no more important figure than Constantine the Great who restored liberty to the Christians after the terrible persecutions of Dioclesian, promoted learning in the Roman Empire, and presided over the famous Council of Nicæa in A.D. 325. The foundation by him of Constantinople in A.D. 324 marks, as Dean Milman says, one of the great periods of change in the history of the world.<sup>1</sup> Upon Rome itself the effect was to remove the secular arm, and give free play to the papal power. In any other city the Pope would have in vain asserted his descent from St. Peter, and the long habit of connecting together the name of Rome with supreme dominion, silently co-operated in establishing the spiritual despotism of the Papal See. All this of course neither Constantine nor his contemporaries could foresee.

Most authorities are agreed that the mother of Constantine the Great, the Empress Helena, was a Christian and a British lady, and that Constantine himself was born in Britain. Also that he was proclaimed Emperor after the death of his father, Constantius, at York,<sup>2</sup> A.D. 307.<sup>3</sup> It must be remembered that the British Isles were

1. Dean Milman's "History of Christianity," vol. ii, p. 330.

2. See also "Eusebius Pamphilus," also "Eumenius."

3. Collier's "Church History," 1. 25.

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well known over all the Roman Empire ; that they had been the scene of many warlike actions since the days of the Emperor Claudius ; that Roman legions were planted there for a considerable period, especially at *Caer Leon* (*castrum legionis*) and many other places. Roman villas and Roman remains testify, as at Bath, Silchester, (*Calleva Atrebatum*), *Caerleon*, *Caerwent*, and scores of other places, to the presence of a great civilization, lasting till A.D. 450. Intermarriages between the British and the conquering Roman race must have been frequent even in the lower grades of society. We have the authority of Zosimus for saying that Constantius, the father of Constantine, had his chief residence in Britain. The circumstances under which he came to Britain merit a short review.

For some years preceding his arrival, Britain had been famous all over the Roman world for the revolt of Marcus Aurelius Carausius, that British adventurer who, although deputed for the time to keep watch and ward over the English Channel and the narrow seas on behalf of Dioclesian, hoisted his own flag, took over the navy of the day, and assumed the Imperial purple. The outlines of this extraordinary revolt are hidden in darkness, and, as this movement took place when the Emperor Dioclesian was on the throne, it would be interesting to know whether it was in any fashion prompted by the Dioclesian persecutions which raged certainly in and near *Caerleon*. Amphibalus the teacher of Albanus, Britain's proto-martyr, and Julius and Aaron were all citizens of *Caerleon*. William Stukeley in his medallic history of Carausius assumes that he was a "Menapian" of S. David's, not a Batavian. In Ossian's poems, Carausius figures as Caros, and is called "The King of Ships."

However this may be, Carausius by his romantic and adventurous career gave form to the idea of Britain's imperial position amongst nations, resting, on the one

hand, upon the prestige of the Cæsars, and, on the other hand, upon the strength of a fleet which kept the seas efficiently and preserved her ramparts entire. He indicated what had long been implied in the ancient "Armoric Confederacy," viz: the power of the Celtic Paralii. His coins, struck in Britain itself, are very numerous—more than 300 types—many of them found in or near Bath. On the obverse of one is a galley with four rowers; on another "Laetitia Augusti," with a galley; on another "Ubertas Augusti," with Neptune standing on the prow of a vessel joining hands with Carausius holding a spear. Indeed, on some types a female figure holding a trident can personify nothing but the maritime genius of Britain. In 1900 a good collection of Carausius coins was found at Sully, near Cardiff, and on one of them, a silver Denarius, was the legend "Expectate Veni."

In 1891, a hoard of coins was found on Tickenham Hill,<sup>1</sup> in the Parish of Easton-in-Gordano, and amongst them those of Carausius, Dioclesian and Maximian, each bearing on the reverse Pax Auggg, i.e., the peace of the three "Augustorum" or reigning emperors—for the triple repetition of the letter "g" seems to involve this. Diocletian had the government of the east with Nicomedia as his residence, Maximian had Italy and Africa, with Milan as his residence, Carausius claimed Britain as his island empire, together with Gaul, having Gessoriacum or Boulogne as his headquarters. This idea of a *condominium* in the Roman world, founded on sea-power, was a new one, and it seems that it was not acknowledged abroad. Carausius was regarded as a pirate and an usurper, and in A.D. 292, Constantius Chlorus was sent to depose him, having Britain, Gaul and Spain as his provinces, and Treves as his residence.

It would be interesting to claim Carausius not only as

1. Som. Arch. Soc. *Proceedings*, 1905.

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a Menapian, *i.e.* an inhabitant of South Wales, but also as a Christian. That well-known stone at Penmachno in North Wales has the name of Carausius on it as well as the "Chi Rho" monogram. But as Carausius died A.D. 293, the famous symbol could only have been engraved after the victory of Constantine, and as a *post factum* tribute. The end of Carausius was a tragic one, and well-known. He was murdered by his friend and comrade in arms Allectus, who proceeded to take his place as one of the three "Augusti" of the Roman Empire. His reign was short-lived, his defeat by the troops of Constantius Chlorus taking place in A.D. 296. But both Carausius and Allectus bequeathed, if they did not discover, a great historical idea, *viz.*, the exaltation of Britain and of Britons, so far regarded by Romans as *penitus remoti*.

When Constantius Chlorus came to Britain after the overthrow of Carausius and Allectus, he came as a friend to Christians.<sup>1</sup> Eusebius said that he never joined with the other emperors, *i.e.* Dioclesian and Maximian, in destroying churches. Sozomen says that he gave full liberty to the Christians and that their churches flourished under him. Britain and Gaul, in those dark ages of persecution, must have attracted the favourable notice of all Christians. Here at any rate was one region in the great Roman empire where they might be tolerated, one place where they might worship in peace. Along the shores of the Severn Sea, in Wales, and in Caerleon itself, the home of many time-expired legionaries (as the numerous inscriptions found there prove), the seed of the gospel might have quietly floated. Perhaps at Isca Silurum (Caerwent) the faith may have prospered. And so at old Glastonbury itself.

In King Alfred's edition of "Bede" the mention of Constantius and of Constantine runs as follows: "In

1. See Stillingfleet's "Origines."

these times Constantius, who in the lifetime of Diocletian held and ruled the kingdom of Gaul and Spain, and who was a mild man and good for his age, died in Britain, and left his kingdom to his son Constantine, the good emperor who was born of the woman Elena. Eutropius writes that Constantine was born in Britain and took to the empire after his father." Eutropius was a Roman historian of good repute, who held the office of a secretary under Constantine the Great, and was, therefore, likely to know the truth.

The passage in "Bede" upon which King Alfred improved, runs thus: "At this time Constantius who while Diocletian was alive governed Gaul and Spain, a man of extraordinary meekness and courtesy, died in Britain. This man left his son Constantine, born of Helen his concubine, emperor of the Gauls. Eutropius writes that Constantine, being created emperor in Britain, succeeded his father in the sovereignty."

It will be noted that the royal editor omits the word "concubine" as applied to Elena and further adds that Constantine was born in Britain, a fact ignored by Bede.

It has been one of the puzzles of ancient history to ascertain for certain where and how Constantius Chlorus met Helena his wife. British authorities have said that Helena was the daughter of King Coilus. Could Coel have been a king or prince of importance amongst the brave Silures or some region of the Dumnonii? Or was he king at Colchester as some have suggested, amongst them the doubtful "Richard of Cirencester" and that old retailer of fables, "Geoffrey of Monmouth," who lived in the twelfth century? Most of the Saxon writers and monkish annalists have omitted to say much upon this period of our Island history. Was it because this period was British and preserved British traditions? The Saxon Benedictine monks were not slow to give the Pagan and Woden pedigrees of the Saxon kings, but,

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strangely enough, they forgot the Romano-British pedigrees which were certainly more honourable.

Glastonbury, however, as we should expect in the "tumulus sanctorum" of British Ynys Witrin, takes over King Coilus. As already noted (Chapter II), John of Glastonbury (1, 30) reminds us that "in this tomb of the saints rests Coel Rex Britonum, father of S. Helena, the mother of Constantine, the great Imperator, also of a Caradocus Dux Cornubiæ." In this puzzling historical point there are here, as elsewhere, two classes of evidences to deal with, the voice of tradition, local and otherwise, and the pens and manuscripts of the Benedictine monks. Sometimes in Glastonbury one appears, sometimes another. But what is the "litera scripta" worth of many of those old Benedictines who wrote in a scriptorium? One monkish version of the founding of Ynys Witrin is that the Isle of Avalon, together with the XII hides was given to the first pilgrims by three pagan kings, Marius, Arviragus and Coilus. But manifestly this is confusing. It has already been pointed out that the very word "hide" is of Saxon origin, and could only have been used after A.D. 450. Still the tradition that there was a prince called Coilus may be true enough. In despair some fanciful writers have conjectured that Coilus must have been the original of "Old King Cole" of the nursery rhyme, forgetting the anachronism involved of the "pipe." Mr. Baring Gould, who has written a picturesque account of "The Lives of Saints," evidently adopts the light vein of historical criticism here, forgetting perhaps that Geoffrey of Monmouth, whom he quotes, is hardly a sober historian. History, however, cannot be settled by the *obiter dicta* of picturesque commentators.

Adam of Domerham (1, 45) hands down a tradition that Coilus had a son Lucius, who was the first Christian king of Britain, in whose days SS. Faganus and Diruvianus came to Glastonbury.<sup>1</sup> Churches in South

1. "Giraldus de Instructione Principum."

Wales were dedicated to S. Fagan, and he may have been a real saint, although old Adam of Domerham places both Coilus and S. Fagan too far back. In saying also that Coilus had a son called Lucius, Adam of Domerham may have fallen in with some Roman and Benedictine theory of history, connecting Lucius and Pope Eleutherius, which theory finding so much of real importance and of real antiquity at Glastonbury, took everything over without much regard for dates and persons. King Coilus may surely have been a real prince, and the name itself may possibly have been a dynastic name, and a Coilus have succeeded to a Coilus as an Amurath to an Amurath for many generations.

In a note appended to the "*Sacræ Historiæ*" of Sulpicius Severus, an old commentator on the text, remarks that the Empress Helena was described as "*Rheaviensis*." This he assumed to mean that she came from the town or district of Rhages, the same as Edessa, situated in the far east. But may not the town and district be, with greater reason, that of Rheged in South Wales, lying between the Swansea and the Caermarthen rivers? According to Mr. E. Guest,<sup>1</sup> Southern Rheged lay between the Silures and the Demetæ. This of course is only a supposition, but, if there is anything in it, the birth place of Helena, and the realm of King Coilus would be brought to the Severn Sea, and in close proximity to the celebrated monastery of Ynys Witrin, and its "*tumulus sanctorum*," where it was claimed that he was buried, presumably as a Christian.

Amongst the finds of Roman coins on that notable Roman station at Ham, in Somerset Hill (1882-3), there is a third brass coin of Helena, mother of Constantine the Great. On the obverse, "*Flavia Helena Augusta*:" on the reverse "*Securitas Reipublicæ*," representing a female figure walking to the left with a palm branch

1. "*Origines Celticæ*."

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in her right hand.<sup>1</sup> This coin, as well as others, should fix the titular and rightful position of the Empress Helena. She became by her marriage with Flavius Constantius Chlorus one of the celebrated "Flavian" gens, the gens of the great Vespasian, known both in Great Britain and in the East—notably during the celebrated siege of Jerusalem. Both east and west claimed Vespasian as a soldier of renown." "Vespasian's camp," on the borders of Selwood forest, marks his exploits in Britain. Helena bore the palm as a pilgrim to Palestine.

All the disparaging stories fabricated and handed down from one generation to another about the Empress Helena, should be discounted by the mute but surely irrefragable evidence of coins. If it was true that she was only the "concubine" of Constantius, would she then have been called Flavia Helena Augusta? Long ago this charge was met by Josephus Egyptius, when he wrote that Constantius married Helena after she had been betrothed by the consent of her parents (*parentum consensu desponsata et in uxorem ducta*). Moreover, if Helena had been only a concubine, would the Roman Church have placed her amongst the saints and given her the title also of Empress? Further, it seems clear from Sulpicius Severus, who wrote his "Sacrae Historiæ," not far from Tours, and not long after her time, that she reigned together with her son. In one passage he writes how: "Helena mater principis Constantini, quæ Augusta cum filio conregnabat" went to Jerusalem and destroyed the idols and pagan temples, building a basilica on the site of our Lord's birth, and also of His passion. Hence she was (by some at least) called "Stabularia," as she commemorated the stable of the birth. Others, indeed, have twisted the word into a commonplace and even an opprobrious meaning, amongst them Gibbon (whom Baring Gould evidently adopts as his

1. Som. Arch. Soc. *Proceedings*, vol. liv, p. 122.

authority), the apologist of saints and martyrs and the sceptical historian—

“Sapping a solemn creed with solemn sneer  
The lord of irony, that master-spell,”

thus meeting on this strange common ground of decrying the first great Christian empress of British birth.

However, it is well in this instance to be on the side of the angels, and to endorse Dean Milman's<sup>1</sup> opinion about the Empress Helena as “a blameless and devout woman, who used the legitimate influence of her station, munificence and authority over her imperial son, to give that splendour, which to her piety appeared becoming, to the new religion: to communicate to the world all those excitements of symbols, reliques and sacred memorials which she found so powerful in kindling her own devotion.” To Milman she was in striking contrast to the Empress Irene, who lived after her and passed an evil life. Eumenius in his well-known panegyric of Constantine might well say that Britain was fortunate in acclaiming him emperor first—he the son of Constantius and Helena!

We turn over the leaves of our histories in vain to find a counterpart of the great Flavia Helena Augusta, backwards to the annals of imperial and decadent Rome. Here we meet with such characters as Sabina Poppæa, the mistress of Nero, and Messalina, the wife of Claudius, and many others of unbridled lusts and licentiousness. Forwards, in the centuries, when monastic theories had degraded the idea of noble womanhood, we meet with more than one queen swayed by the sophism of a Dominican, or perverted by the crafty arguments of a Jesuit father confessor. The Empress Helena stands, surely, midway in the centuries as a noble woman upon whom the light of the gospel first shone. The old shrine of

1. “History of Latin Christianity,” vol. ii, 283. See Stanley's “Sinai and Palestine.”

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Glastonbury did well to cherish the memory of her father, and also to preserve her relics.

Constantine the Great seemed to hold the western type in honour. There was that well-known order of his written and placed upon the altar of the church of S. Sophia in Constantinople, that no Roman emperor should intermarry with any foreigner except the Franks, because Constantine himself was born in the country of the Franks.<sup>1</sup> By the "Franks" the later Greeks comprehended all the western Europeans, including Britain, whence also Constantine summoned to the first council of Arles (A.D. 314) the three British bishops of York, London and Caerleon: he may have done so in order to honour them especially as representatives of the land where he had first put on the imperial purple. When he died Constantine left to his eldest son (as the most honourable part of his empire) Britain, Spain and Gaul. Had not Treves been the imperial centre of his father, Constantius? Better, indeed, than Constantinople itself!

The first council of Arles (A.D. 314) was not a large one, but taking place when it did and under the auspices and reign of Constantine the Great before the council of Nicæa (A.D. 325), it is of great interest to Britons. We know little about Eborius, bishop of York, Restitutus, bishop of London, and Adelfius, bishop of Caerleon, beyond their names, nor do we know whether they were metropolitans, but they must have represented some kind of episcopal organisation. In this council the bishop of Rome, Silvester, was not present, but he was treated as *par inter pares*, and is addressed by assembled bishops as "most beloved brother" in a letter sent to him. But the council was regarded as complete as far as it went without him, and was summoned by the Emperor Constantine. These important points in the early history of the British church are emphasized by Collier.

1. See "The Ecclesiastical History of Great Britain," by J. Collier, p. 24.

This council was summoned *causa Donatistarum*, i.e. for the sake of dealing with the Donatists, and it is evidently this council that the British Gildas had in his mind when he wrote "*De Excidio Britanniae*," especially when he reproved the British *Sacerdotes* for wandering about outside their dioceses and contravening the second canon, which insisted that where a *Sacerdos* was ordained there he should minister. This first council of Arles was essentially a Gallic council, and in the list of delegates<sup>1</sup> the British representatives are placed amongst them, proving their close associations. This carries out exactly the expression used by Sulpicius Severus,<sup>2</sup> the Gallic historian, who spoke of the churches of Aquitania, Gaul and Britain, as "our" churches, to which allusion has already been made. With regard to this council also, it may be noted that Constantine summoned eleven representatives from Africa, a far larger number than those from Italy and Sicily.

At a council of this sort, summoned by the British-born Constantine, it is clear that the British delegates were brought into contact with the Christian church in its wide extensions not only in Europe but also in Africa. The allusions to Africa are not infrequent in old Gildas, whom we may claim as a Glastonbury historian, and again in Sulpicius Severus.

Occasionally we are at a loss to explain the lofty ideas and the magnificent conceptions that loom upon us, as through a magnifying mist, of Arthurian times. If Arturus Rex existed he could, according to some, have only been a Dumnonian prince. Further, there is also the golden and almost unaccountable thread of Christian chivalry and Christian adventure. How can we reconcile all this with what at first sight were barbaric times? But here on the very threshold of the enchanting subject we question whether these were barbaric times.

1. Spelman's "*Concilia*."

2. "*Sacræ Historiæ*."

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At any rate the surface of the land contained many glorious creations of Roman magnificence. Even Bath and Caerleon tell their own story. As late as the reign of Henry II, Giraldus Cambrensis<sup>1</sup> hands down that well-known description of the remains of Roman magnificence at Caerleon, the favoured abode of Rex Arturus.

Here, he says, the legions sent from Rome used to winter, and so it was called the "Urbs Legionis." Here was an ancient and famous city formerly built nobly of walls of solid masonry. Here you might see many signs still remaining of former grandeur; palaces of immense size, with their gilt roofs reflecting the pride of the Romans, raised first by Roman nobles; here a vast tower upraised, there the baths, yonder the remains of temples and theatres, all inclosed by walls, some of them still standing in their magnificence. You will find these subterranean buildings, aqueducts, and underground channels, and what is most wonderful to notice, the skilfully wrought chambers of the hypocausts. The site of the city is a noble one on the Usk, fitted for navigation as the tide flows in, a city adorned with woods and parks. Hither also foreign ambassadors came of old to the famous court of that great king, Arthur; here was the great archbishopric, etc., etc.

The old world surroundings of Caerleon, like many other Roman centres, such as Bath itself and Silchester ("Calleva Atrebatum") must have induced thoughts and reminiscences of Imperial Rome. That mind must have been dull that did not respond to the plain view of the noble ruins in front of it. If the ground of Britain was littered indeed with the ruins of the past pointing to some great age of Roman civilisation lasting, more or less, for 400 years, so indeed the history of Britain was full of more than one inspiring picture. The Romanised Britons could not forget it. The history of Britain,

1. Itinerary.

especially in the days of Carausius, Constantius, and Flavius Maximus, was crowded with romantic adventure. No longer a mere province, but a self-constructed western empire, with its arms stretched out across the channel to continental domains!

What Carausius had conceived (although he was stigmatised as a "pirata" by some of the Roman annalists of the day for dissociating himself from the great Roman empire as centralised at Rome) that Maximus tried to achieve. He called himself Flavius, and was therefore presumably of the same Flavia Gens as the great Constantius. Ambition stirred Flavius to a vast enterprise—no less than the throne itself of the Cæsars. Rome was rotten at the heart, and Rome was falling into decay, and the destinies of Rome seemed to lie at the disposal of the tumultuary vote of soldiers. Why not make a bold bid for Rome was the thought of Flavius Maximus—this Romanised Briton! the reputed descendant of Constantius himself. Moreover, Maximus and his empress were both Christians and disciples at the feet of S. Martin of Tours (*c.* 400), as appears in the history and writings of Sulpicius Severus.

Flavius Maximus set up his capital at Treves just as the Constantine dynasty had done at first. To consolidate his power here Maximus stripped Britain of the flower of its youth, bent on thrilling oversea adventures, and so left Britain defenceless and open to the attacks of the Picts and Scots. But he failed in his great and ambitious projects and fell before the walls of Aquileia. These were stirring and great memories, and they were the inheritance of every noble Romanised Briton who lived after him and reflected upon them. To Rex Arturus these chapters of island history were well known and must have fired the genius of Taliesin, the bard of the knights of the round table, and sent their echoes far and wide along the coasts of Armorica, Ireland and Scotland.

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Dean Milman, in his "Latin Christianity," seems scarcely to have done justice to Maximus. Perhaps he had not closely consulted Sulpicius Severus, who says of Maximus that he was a man "to be celebrated for every virtue of life if he could only have refused a diadem thrust upon him by a soldiers' tumultuary vote. Once taken, this diadem could neither be put off nor could it be kept without force." He used often to call for S. Martin and treat him honourably in his palace. His whole conversation was about the present, the future, the glory of the faithful, and the eternity of the saints. His wife, still more of a worshipper of S. Martin, even desired, like Mary Magdalene, to sit at his feet and wash them with her tears.<sup>1</sup>

Gildas dismisses Maximus in very much the same way as he dismisses Boadicea, the British warrior queen, and evidently had an eye solely to the failings rather than the virtues of Maximus. Orosius calls him *vir probus*, and Sozomen says that he went to Italy, and contemplated his invasion of Rome because of innovations that had been threatened "to his ancestral faith and the ecclesiastical order," a somewhat tantalising reference, as it may have meant so much at this particular period of Latin Christianity.

Maximus is said to have set up Conan in Armorica or Brittany, and so, perhaps, laid the foundation of an independent life here. Palgrave, in his "History of Normandy," has written: "Not of the blood of Rome the barbarians claimed to be her heirs . . . the purple-clad barbarians swayed the fortunes of the world. The first real king in Germany, Ariovistus, became king by the gratitude or favour of the first of the Cæsars . . . every leader of a barbarian tribe, every aspirant to dominion, every barbarian who won the diadem in a province of the empire, liked to wear the insignia of

1. See Sulpicius Severus, "Vita S. Martini."

empire. Ethelbert impressed the Roman wolf upon his rude Kentish coin. The fair-haired Germans traced their ancestry back to the heroes who fought in the Trojan war." This key explains much in the dark period of our own island history. And when the blood of the Romans and of such "gentes" as the "Flavia Gens" was really grafted upon the foreign stemmata, there was the added impulse and notion of inheritance. Indeed, the whole province of *Flavia Cæsariensis* was called so after the *Flavii*.

In another passage Sir F. Palgrave has aptly remarked: "The dominion of the Bretwalda began by being an imitation of the imperial sovereignty of Rome. Accustomed to the presence of their own provincial emperors since the glorious days of their own Carausius, the Britons still considered their country an empire. The reminiscences of Carausius cast a gleam upon the fabled Arthur: we discover Aurelius Ambrosius and Vortigern contending for the diadem which had graced the brows of the British Constantine."

In the midst of it all the Christian thought was predominant. Had not the Empress Helena inspired the Christian world by her journey to the Holy Land and to Jerusalem? Had not she seen the holy places themselves and built a church for Christian worship there? Nay, had not she discovered the Cross itself of Christ? Was not her example, that of the first crusader, therefore, a worthy one? The search for the Holy Graal, the holy vessel said to have been brought to Britain by Joseph of Arimathea, who had caught therein the last drops of Christ's blood, looks as if it were a chapter of spiritual knight-errantry consequent upon and a natural corollary upon that search for the Holy Cross. What wonder then that Glastonbury and Caerleon led to inspiring thought and to deeds of chivalry!

The spiritual thought could not be separated from the thought of worldly dominion, and if the ambitions of

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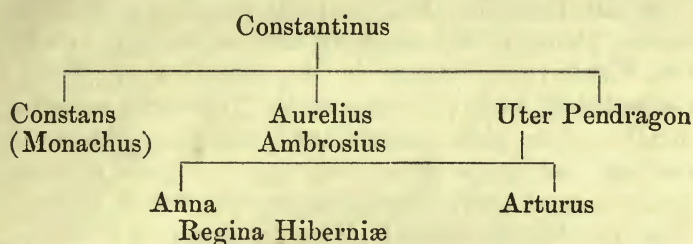
Rex Arturus and his knights went far beyond the idea of a narrow Welsh or Dumnonian principality, was not the example of Carausius and of Maximus inspiring enough to lead them on? Nor did the Celtic imagination fail the hereditary bards and singers, men whose main object was to sing of the illustrious deeds of their forefathers and at the same time to prompt the present generation to works of high enterprise. They had in view

"An Island Empire resting on the power  
Of Celtic kings and seers, like that realm  
Which Hellas built amidst her circling Isles—  
A Delphi somewhere and a Delos rock—  
Some law, tradition, tongue, and common fame  
Some ancient homage and some right Divine,  
A Roman custom and a Christian faith,  
From Bretagne to the utmost Orcades.  
Here great S. Patrick of a royal line,  
Here Cambrian David, preacher of the Word  
Through Ireland, Wales and far Armorica,  
S. Bridget, Columban and Carantacus  
Dubritius, Kew and wonder-working Keyne,  
With many a Celtic name of lesser note,  
Along the Severn Sea their blissful pilgrimage  
Plied east and west amidst the tawny waves.  
Till last not least the beacon fame of one  
Who summed together in an Epic round,  
The hopes, fears, fortunes of the Celtic race  
Great Arthur fired the lonely wind-swept shores."

We are certain, however, of one thing and this is that the name and the traditions of Constantine were always kept in the Scotch, Welsh and Cornish genealogies, and in these genealogies the romantic figure of Arthur was very often included. When he was buried at Glastonbury it was at the spiritual centre of his race, the mausoleum of Coel. In the old court genealogies<sup>1</sup> which were very common in Edwardian days, the British, Saxon and Norman names appear in order, with a very picturesque background, going back now to Trojan

1. Ashmolean Rolls, Oxford, especially no. 26 (and line 27).

ancestors such as Assaracus and Aeneas, and now again to biblical antecedents, but agreeing generally in the Arthurian descent. In one of them giving the descent of Edward I, the line passes thus for three generations :



King Arthur<sup>1</sup> himself before he died appointed a nephew Constantine, the son of Cadur the Duke of Cornwall, to succeed him.

This looks as if Constantine were the favourite name of king Arthur's dynasty, and leads us to the assumption that it was so adopted from the original association with Helena, the wife of Constantine. At Ynys Witrin the part which the British-born Constantine played in the great outside world would naturally attract and rivet attention. Round this great and commanding personality were centred all the hopes of Christendom, just recovering from the Dioclesian persecutions. That famous vision in the sky revealed to Constantine gave a battle-cry to the whole world. "By that conquer" was the motto of the cross.<sup>2</sup> The "Chi Rho" monogram, although not yet discovered at Glastonbury, has been identified on stones at S. Just and Penwith in Cornwall, and at Kirkmadrine and Wigtown. Very early Christian

1. Warrington's "Wales," bk. 1, 119.

2. "After his victory over Maxentius, Constantine caused the famous Labarum to be made, which for a long time was borne at the head of the imperial armies. The shaft of this celebrated standard was cased with gold : above the transverse beam, which formed the cross, was wrought in a golden crown the monogram, or rather the device, of two letters which signified the name of Christ. And so for the first time the meek and peaceful Jesus became a God of battle."—Milman's "Latin Christianity," vol. ii, 237.

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crosses have been found also on stones near Margarn<sup>1</sup> in Glamorgan, also at S. Clements, Truro, and Castledôr in Cornwall. The Glastonbury seal shows the "Chi Rho" (*q.v.*).

In A.D. 712, King Ina, the great benefactor of Glastonbury, thought that when he took in marriage Guala, the Welsh representative of the last king of Wales, Cadwalader,<sup>2</sup> he was taking over the "Coronam benedictam," together with Cambria and Cornubia. This royal marriage between a Saxon king and a British princess meant a great deal. Here was the old British throne! Here the British crown! Here the survival from the remote past of some original consular rule in Roman days, hallowed by Celtic churchmen with traditions of Ambrosius, King Arthur, and, in the far distance, the purple of the Caesars, and of the great Constantine himself. At Glastonbury itself, the tumulus sanctorum, the dynastic steps were shown from King Coilus. Even the barbaric splendours of a Cerdic and of Woden ancestry paled before the new alliance.

Intermarrying with the British was only a natural thing for the Saxon conquerors of Wessex to do. In Romanised Britain they were face to face with a far higher civilisation than they or their forefathers had ever known in Frisia or Old Saxony. Guala (*propter quam vocata est Wallia*, says the commentator, with a doubtful attempt at etymology) brought to Ina the

1. "Monumental History of the Church," by Romilly Allen," p. 82.

2. Cadwalader, son of Cadwallon, succeeded to the nominal sovereignty of Britain in A.D. 660. Disheartened at the victories of the Saxons he went to Rome in A.D. 686, and died in A.D. 703. With him the title of the king of the Britains as a paramount or suzerain chief ceased, and such parts of the British Isles as were not conquered by the Saxons were governed by different chiefs, such as Strathclyde, Cornwall and Wales. In the Triads he is styled one of the three princes who wore the golden bands, being emblems of supreme authority which were worn around the neck, arms and knees. He was also called one of the three blessed kings on account of the protection he afforded to the fugitive Christians. There is a church dedicated to him in Mona, and another in Denbigh.--Turner's "Hist. of the Anglo-Saxons," vol. 1, p. 382.

prestige of an imperial lineage, and there is no doubt that Ina was dazzled by Rome, and by the Roman imperial and secular connection. The followers of Ina took British wives also, as their king had done. It was in the neighbourhood of Glastonbury and Pedret or Petherton, and also in Wells and Taunton that the great consolidation of the Wessex kingdom, which was to be summed up in Egbert, Ethelwulf and Alfred, took place. Where else could the dynastic story be better told and preserved than at the old monastery itself? King Ina built Taunton Castle, and is supposed to have had a palace (still so called) at South Petherton. His obit<sup>1</sup> (as already noted) was kept at Wells in 1539. What was inherited by the Saxon dynasty from the British kings was passed on, naturally, to the Normans. This was done on the female side when Henry I married Maud, daughter of Malcolm, the king of the Scots, by Margaret, sister to Edgar Atheling. By this marriage the Saxon and Norman lines were united both in blood and title. S. Margaret appears, it will be remembered, on the great seal of Glastonbury. (See p. 31).

When Edward I conquered Llewelyn in 1283, there were found<sup>2</sup> at Carnarvon amongst the spoils of war, and the treasures of the Princes of Wales, the bones of Constantius, father of Constantine the great, a fragment of the true cross, known as the rood of S. Neot (or in Welsh *crosnaith*), and the crown of King Arthur. All these relics were suggestive in their way. By the bones of Constantius the old Roman imperial connection was symbolised, the Welsh descent being *ex regiâ stirpe*. The very name Constantinus meets us in the "Tyrannus Dumnoniæ" mentioned by Gildas; in the valiant Geraint son of Constantinus, who fell fighting at Llongporth (Langport). S. Neot may have been that Cornish saint

1. Wells MSS.

2. "Chronicle of Nicholas Trivet" and "Matthew of Westminster," and "Dawn of the Constitution," by Sir J. Ramsay.

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(perpetuated in the Neotstoke or S. Neots of Domesday), the friend of King Alfred and brought up at Glastonbury, who, as John of Glastonbury<sup>1</sup> remarks, journeyed to Jerusalem, whence he may have brought the crosnaith. Or had the crosnaith a still earlier history dating back to the finding of the true cross by the Empress Helena herself?

By the crown of King Arthur was symbolised that "Benedicta Corona" which King Ina took, together with Guala.

In that remarkable speech or address of King Edgar,<sup>2</sup> the descendant of Ina and Alfred, addressed to the elders of the churches and monasteries, about the abuses which had crept in and defiled the religious life of the day, the king uses these remarkable words: "Ego Constantini vos Petri gladium habetis in manibus. Jungamus dextras: gladium gladio copulemur ut purgetur Sanctuarium Dei." The expression "I have the sword of Constantine," is a significant one, and is full of a deep historical meaning. King Edgar thought that he inherited this imperial power, and in his charter to the abbey of Malmesbury (A.D. 974) he subscribes himself "Ego Edgarus totius Albionis Basileus (an eastern title) necnon maritimorum seu insularum Regum circum habitantium," and in another, "Ego Edgar Basileus angliae et Imperator, Insularum," *i.e.* of a sea empire.

It will be remembered that when the Empress Helena was credited with the discovery of the true Cross at Jerusalem, the nails of it were afterwards inserted round the head of Constantine in that famous statue<sup>3</sup> erected at Constantinople, representing the rays of the sun, as a kind of nimbus. According to another account the nails of the Passion were turned into a bit for the war-horse of the emperor, symbolic of the military power of Con-

1. John of Glastonbury and Vita S. Neoti.

2. "Adam of Domesday," ii, 667.

3. Milman's "Latin Christianity," vol. ii, pp. 337-349.

stantine. In his statue he held in his hand the sceptre and the globe, emblematic of universal dominion. It would be interesting to discover whether the crown of Arthur, which fell to Edward I as part of the booty of war, was ever kept or described.

In early British history there are certain undercurrents of history very powerful in their influences, but ignored at the time by historians who may have neither sympathy nor perception. The monastic writers of the day—especially the Benedictines—were not to be trusted, their chief endeavour being to bring the society into bondage under S. Peter at Rome. The sword of Constantinus—to use King Edgar's phrase—was not much use to them unless it could be wielded at the discretion of the representative of S. Peter at Rome, and for his exaltation. On the other hand, in the minds of the people of these islands the Constantine traditions must have meant, broadly speaking, Christian traditions, not Papal traditions or Benedictine aspirations. Herein lay great differences. Constantine takes us to the east and to the eastern church.

The spell of Rome's temporal power did not mean the prerogative of S. Peter's chair. The days of the Ultramontane special pleaders were not yet. Gildas himself wrote: "It is also promised to every good priest whatsoever thou shalt loose upon earth shall be loosed in Heaven." With him the true priest was the Rock. It was the iniquity of the false messengers of the gospel that aroused the wrath of Gildas, together with wickedness in high places. In his capacity of general mentor he would have spared neither pope nor erring cardinal.

In the days of Gildas Rome was imposing as the conqueror of the world, sinking down certainly beneath the combined attacks of the barbarians, but still great in the legacies she bequeathed to succeeding generations: her laws, her arts, her civilization, and her military system. There were many signs of Roman greatness in such

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places, as already noted, in Caerleon itself, and in the roads that led to and from it everywhere in Britain. But these very roads did not lead to the chair of the supreme pontiff, or to the "limina apostolorum," or to any British school at Rome.

It is around the tomb of Rex Arturus, however, that so much centres at Glastonbury, and from time to time the kings of England have shown their interest in the story of it. As late as the reign of Henry VII the Prince of Wales was called Arthur,<sup>1</sup> in memory of the celebrated king of the Britons, from whom Henry wished it to be thought that he was descended. In recent times the late Prince Consort revived the old office of constable and governor of Tintagel Castle, the reputed birthplace of the king. It was in 1245 that Richard, king of the Romans, entertained David of Wales there as his guest, the castle being of most undoubted antiquity. It was just such a sea-fortress as would suit some bold Dumnonian chief whose kingdom was of the sea.

King Arthur, after the famous battle of Camlan (so the story ran), was buried at Glastonbury in A.D. 542. A wild tale was propagated amongst the population that the king had withdrawn into some magical region, from which at some time he was to re-appear and to lead the Celts in triumph. Henry II, who twice visited Wales, had heard from an ancient British bard that Arthur was interred at Glastonbury and that two pyramids marked the place. These pyramids long remained at Glastonbury, and have been represented, together with their inscriptions, in Spelman's "Concilia" (p. 21). At the bidding of the king the monks dug between the pyramids until they came to a leaden cross lying under a stone, which had this inscription: "Hic jacet sepultus inclytus Rex Arturus in insula Avallonia." This, Giraldus Cambrensis saw himself and handled. (See Chap. II).

1. Lingard, vol. v, p. 385.

Below this, at the depth of sixteen feet from the surface, a coffin of hollowed oak was found, containing bones of an unusual size.<sup>1</sup> The leg bone was three fingers' breadth longer than that of the tallest man present. This man was pointed out to Giraldus. The skull was large and showed the marks of ten wounds (*cicatrices*). Nine of these had concreted into the bony mass, but one had a cleft in it, and the opening still remained, which was apparently the mortal blow. Giraldus has also recorded that the bones of one of King Arthur's wives were found there together with his, but distinct, and lying at the lower end. Her yellow tresses lay apparently perfect in substance and colour, but when a monk too eagerly grasped at them and raised them up they fell to dust. The bones were removed from their original position into the great church of Glastonbury, and placed in a magnificent shrine.<sup>2</sup>

This account is circumstantial enough, and there is no reason whatever to doubt the truth of Giraldus. Whether in this particular instance it was simply curiosity that impelled Henry II to begin his investigation at Glastonbury, or simply a desire to establish some genealogical fact in his own ancestry, does not appear. Nearly 100 years afterwards Edward I, together with his Queen Alienora, visited Glastonbury (A.D. 1278) in state. His object then was to convince the Welsh, with whom he was just on the point of opening a campaign, that King Arthur, their idealised champion, (who they thought

1. "Giraldus de Instructione Principum."

2. "Os enim tibiæ ipsius (*arturi*) appositum tibiæ longissimi viri . . . et juxta pedem terræ illius affixum, tribus digitis trans genu ipsius se porrexit. Os etiam capitis . . . capax erat et grossum adeo ut inter cilium et oculos spatium palmalem amplitudinem longe contineret. Apparebant autem in hoc vulnera decem aut plura quæ cuncta præter unum majus cæteris (quod hiatum grandem fecerat, quodque solum lethale fuisse videbatur) in solidam convenerant cicatricem.—Giraldus Cambrensis "De Instructione Principum."

The inscription on the coffin ran thus: "Hic jacet sepultus inclytus Rex Arturus cum Wennevereia uxore sua secunda in insula Avalonia."

would rise again and lead them to victory) was really dead and buried.

The ceremony of the visit has been somewhat fully described by Adam of Domerham. The royal visit was timed for Easter, and the Archbishop of Canterbury, Robert Kilwarby, came to administer the holy chrism by leave of the Abbot and convent—so the jealous monk writes. The Archdeacon of Wells was present, the Bishop being away, and showed the oil and balsam, the monks serving, although the Wells clergy (Wellenses) fought against it. But the archbishop broke off the dispute. On Easter day the archbishop, as on the three previous days, performed the solemn services. On Easter Monday the assizes were held “outside the XII Hides,” as already noticed (Chapter I), and on Easter Tuesday the king and his whole court were entertained by the monks.

In the evening the lord king caused the sepulchre of King Arthur to be opened. Then in two chests (in duabus cistis), with their pictures portrayed (imaginibus depictis), they found the bones of the aforesaid king, of a wonderful size; also the remains of queen Gwunnara, lying separately. The skull of the king showed a cut across the left ear and marks of the blow of which he died. With each of the bodies clear writing was found. On the morrow the lord king took the bones of the king and of the queen, and wrapping them each in a precious cloth (palliis preciosis) replaced them in their chests setting their seals upon them and commanding that the sepulchre should be placed before the great altar (ante majus altare).

The heads of both the corpses were kept outside to attract the worship and attention of the people, the following writing being placed before the relics :—

“Here are the bones of the most noble King Arthur, which in the year of our Lord, 1278, on the 13th of the kalends of May, were placed here by King Edward, the

noble king of England, in the presence of the most serene Alienora, the consort of the aforesaid king, and the daughter Domini Ferandi, king of Spain : of magister William de Middleton (tunc Norwycensi electo, *i.e.* Bishop of Norwich) ; magister Thomas de Bek, then Archdeacon of Dorset and treasurer of the aforesaid king : Lord Henry de Lacy, Earl of Lincoln ; Lord Amadeus (comite Salvinia vel Subaudia) and many other English magnates.

Another royal visit was made to Glastonbury in the time of Adam de Sodbury, who in 1331 entertained king Edward and queen Philippa at a vast expense.<sup>1</sup> The Abbot is said to have spent £800 on this visit which represented a very large sum for those days. Edward III took the opportunity of going with his court (*cum sua curia*) to Wells when he celebrated his birthday.

\* \* \* \* \*

The royal visitors of 1909 will find stately Glastonbury in ruins. But as eternal hope has spread her wings over the sanctuary in past time, so now the motto will be "resurgam." Rescued from its uncared for state by the noble and persistent efforts of the Bishop of Bath and Wells, the old abbey, dedicated henceforth to the uses of the Episcopal Church, lives again. The form of the new existence is hidden from our view, but that chapter of war between an abbot and a bishop has long been closed, and the dawn of another day is in sight. The Glastonbury thorn is showing flower again !

" A place whereat to dream  
Clothed in the fresh blossoms of another Spring ! "

In the past Glastonbury offers us two pictures : the first somewhat faint and shadowy ; the second, bolder in relief and certainly more instructive from the standpoint of warning and admonition ; viz : the picture of the Celtic

1. John of Glastonbury.

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missions, and then that of Latin Christianity under the Benedictines. Imagine for a moment the characters portrayed in the two pictures of the past. In the first a Celtic anchorite alternating his long and voluntary vigils with frequent preaching, like a Savonarola, to the outside world! An absorbed study of the sacred book was followed by eloquent exposition, the soul being chastened with self-imposed austerities, and the Celtic intellect fired into sudden flashes as the rebuke went forth (like that of old Gildas), to kings and princes and sinners in high places. He gathered his similes from the Hebrew, his diatribes from Isaiah and Ezekiel, his burning eloquence from the wild scenery of the Celtic shores.

At all ages the thoughts and rhetoric of a sea-faring folk are different from those of an inland people, being more random, wild and tempestuous, yet more often penetrated and refined by a faith in the unseen, and a trust in a higher power imposed upon them in their daily work as men occupying themselves in great waters, seeing the wonders of the deep and the marvels of the Creator. What has been termed the Celtic note has been often sounded in life and literature. In religion it is the very oldest note of all. Who but a strangely poetical people would have cherished all those dreams of a restored Arthurian dynasty, and the coming of a new age? Who but the Celtic prophets could have consecrated their dreams by heroic struggles and heroic resolves? What pathos lies around the reputed end of the great Cadwalader! What romance indeed around Llewelyn!

The Benedictine picture gives us men like Dunstan with an ordered intelligence, a great character from the mechanical point of view in human nature, ambitious, self-seeking and striving for power at all hazards. Round a life of this sort cling legends and miracles in abundance, grossly superstitious in the main, and invented for a purpose. There is little human or humane about Dunstan. He worked on his own anvil, and the

sparks he struck were not those of human sympathies. The ordinary Benedictine, tied to his routine and cultivating his ideal inside, could not and did not appeal to the great outside world. When the gates closed behind the Benedictine they closed upon a life that might beat its wings in vain against the barriers unless it found an outlet in a bishopric or abbey. But these offices were only for the few. After all, to use Wordsworth's phrase, it was a "Benedictine coop."

The ruins of Glastonbury itself tell in their mute and suggestive fashion these two tales of human effort and of human ambition. The chapel of St. Joseph tells one story, more ancient, more fascinating, and in some respects more instructive than the story of the great Benedictine church standing to the east of it. The galilee, or porch, stands between the two creations, and it is a porch indeed that evokes memories. From the sacred well in the smaller and more primitive plot—fortunately unaltered in its size and dimensions through the centuries—to King Edgar's chapel, with the king's associations of the sword of Constantine the Great, how many transitions are implied. For the two churches are not merely puzzles for the ecclesiastical architect, but studies in our history, like an old palimpsest written over and over again and hard to decipher.

In treating such a subject as Glastonbury it is impossible to exorcise the imagination. This faculty must not be of the vain, random and inconclusive kind, but an almost divine gift of Restoration. It is—as Ruskin says—to traverse the scenes of history, to force the facts to become again visible, so as to make the same impression upon us as if we had witnessed them. Without it there can be no good architect, for the man who tries to restore—carefully and technically no doubt—but without the dreams and aspirations of the past, will fail in his task. Further, the imagination should not be too diffuse, so as to waste itself and fall back upon vacuity,

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but picture one thing at a time and brood over the inevitable contrasts between the old and the new. Let it not weary of itself. The cinematograph must not move too fast.

Yonder, on Polden Hill, the imagination may be requisitioned to call up that old windmill that used to flog the air with its creaking arms on Glastonbury ground, for many years a mark for sailors who crept up in light boat or coracle the shifting reaches of the Parret. The mill itself was symbolical of much in ancient days, the baronial rights (for the abbot was a baron), the dues for grinding, and the manifold contributions that the miller gave at Michaelmas or Martinmas to the abbot's court. Indeed, the mill itself was one of the old "venticia molendina" built by an abbot.

Again, imagination is needed to take even a wider flight at Polden Hill, and where now fat oxen wander at ease, knee-deep in pasture, picture again that circling sweep of the river Parret itself, near Downend, foaming with the tidal bore and carrying on its broad bosom the merchandise of the land. There were the islands, the outer and the inner island, through which the railway train now thunders, there the deep and treacherous bog, there the osier bed and alder grove, and there the boats of the fowler or fisherman gliding from one covert to another, and yonder the Benedictine servant setting his nets for the eels or salmon that would serve for the refectory table.

Or, again, along the exposed ruins of "The Abbot's Causeway" may not imagination call up the living personages of those gorgeous and magnificent times, the abbot and his retinue, the stately trappings of a ceremonious age, the proud and defiant bearing of such an abbot as Turstin; the grandeur of Henry de Blois, the nephew of Henry I and bishop of Winchester and pope's legate in England, as well as abbot of Glastonbury; or, further back in time, the great Dunstan, who may indeed have

planned the causeway itself. They pass by in shadowy files, each with his story and life history, each with his work and purpose, and each with his niche in sacred Glastonbury, proud to have his sepulture there at last.

After the Norman Conquest, in Glastonbury Abbey there was an incident behind which lay a great deal when that celebrated dispute arose between Turstin and the monks of Glastonbury. Turstin, the proud Norman, was thrust into the office of abbot by William the Conqueror from being simply a monk of Caen. How the Saxon fraternity must have writhed beneath the foreign yoke! and how the passions of a national revolt must have been fanned by every petty regulation by which the Norman maintained his will against all the old ways! until, indeed, when Turstin chose the chants of William of Fecamps (another hateful William) and compelled the monks to abandon their old Gregorian chant and to sing his own tune, the smouldering ashes of national discontent leaped into a flame. Soldiers broke into the chapter house, the monks fled to their altars, and there the Norman abbot himself spared them not and slew them. The roods, images, and shrines of the saints were overthrown, and the holy place was defiled with blood. Even the Conqueror could not countenance this impious deed, and Turstin had to leave.

Indeed, the imagination may run riot from one congenial field to another, and yet we may feel sure that the pictures summoned back to the canvas had once a true original. The question is, how far back can we go in the case of this old monastery and still know and feel that the figures come within the circle of reality and of living, breathing existence. Circle winds within a circle, curve within a curve, like the involved plait-work of such a Celtic-inscribed stone as that of Llanwit Major, or like the circular knot-work of the cross shaft at Kells. We dare not unravel the story with too much completeness, we dare not deny the existence of one circle without

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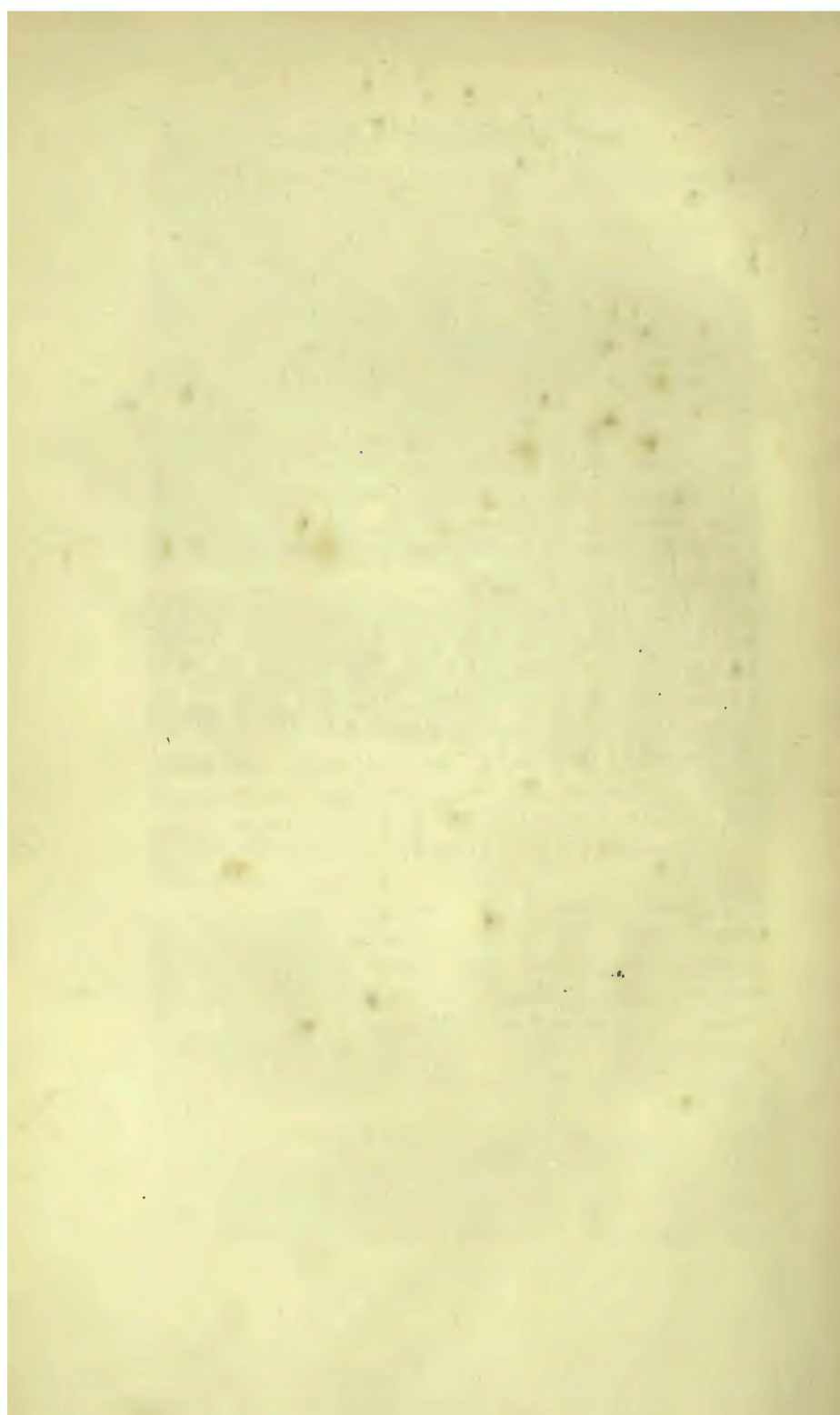
impugning the validity of the other, and so let the beautiful patchwork of old and new fall to pieces.

Then there is that other peculiar plait-work of Geoffrey of Monmouth, illustrated to the full with marvellous scroll-foliage and abnormal beasts. What a pity it was that Geoffrey threw away his splendid chance! Monmouth was just the place wherein to write the history of that great struggle by sea and land between Briton and Saxon! The walls of Caerleon should have inspired the Monmouth historian—so also those magnificent remains of Roman times that Giraldus saw. Or Gildas should have written about King Arthur and Glastonbury, as he was indeed well fitted to do. But, the story goes, that because his brother was slain by King Arthur, therefore he condemned the national chief to silence as far as he was concerned. And perhaps we cannot blame Gildas. For want of better evidence we must fill in the characters of those days where and how we may—place Gerontius or Geraint at Langport (if this be Llongporth), where that great battle for the Parret valley was fought between Saxon and British—place Arthur here, there, and everywhere, as leader in those twelve notable fights—yet feel never quite certain. For want of the exact knowledge we may betake ourselves in the quivering moonlight to Cadbury Camp, and dream around its triple ramparts. They are solid enough, and must have sheltered those hosts of men, whilst beyond and around it rose that notable British city, imitating the glories of Caerleon, with domes and ramparts, now gone for ever in ruins and absolute decay. Yonder stands the Tor of Glastonbury with its S. Michael's Church, an inspiring centre of this British life and chivalry.

Perhaps it is as well that it should be so. Had Geoffrey written like a Livy or a Thucydides, in concise and well-arranged chapters and books, with dates and paragraphs in orderly sequence, there would have

been no room for the fascinating guess-work of the arch-æologist, no region available for the attractive half-lights of a mysterious past! *Omne ignotum pro magnifico!* So let it be! They must have been majestic those British heroes! They must have been inspired those British Sacerdotes who prayed around that holy thorn! They must have been mighty those giants who lived around Brent Knoll! They must have been terrible those venomous serpents sought out and overcome by the men of God! The stoles tamed the serpents and made them docile as calves (*quasi vitulos*) as the stole of a Celtic sailor saint, Carantacus, tamed, as we have seen, some monster in the great Karre. All was marvellous around the shores of the Severn Sea and the sacred Ynys Witrin! And so let it be!

In Ynys Witrin was the eternal "Frith" or Peace of God! In Ynys Witrin there was an inviolate sanctuary! In Ynys Witrin the earthly kings' Writ did not run, alone of all places in the kingdom! Only the Writ of the Almighty guarded the sacred spot with the archangel S. Michael on the Tor!



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