

Layamon

Brut

Translated by A. S. Kline © 2023 All Rights Reserved.
This work may be freely reproduced, stored, and transmitted, electronically or otherwise, for any non-commercial purpose.

Contents

<u>List of Characters</u>	2
<u>Part I:</u> From Brutus to Dunwale	27
<u>Part II:</u> From Dunwale to the Roman Invasion	90
<u>Part III:</u> From Caesar to Gratian	131
<u>Part IV:</u> From Gratian to Aurelius Ambrosius	202
<u>Part V:</u> From Aurelius to Arthur	256
<u>Part VI:</u> King Arthur: to the gathering at Caerleon	307
<u>Part VII:</u> King Arthur: to the last battle	367
<u>Part VIII:</u> From Arthur to Cadwalader	425

List of Characters

Aaron, of Caerleon, British saint, martyred c304AD, during Diocletian's persecution of the Christians.

Abren, the daughter of Locrin and Astrild.

Adlein, son of Cledauks, an earl under Arthur. Present at the gathering at Caerleon.

Aelcus, King of Iceland, at the time of Arthur.

Aeridius, King of Scotland, contemporary with Cassivellaunus.

Aeneas, prince of Troy, who journeyed to Italy after the fall of the city. His first wife was Creusa. His second wife Lavinia. His son by Creusa was Ascanius, and his son by Lavinia was Silvius Aeneas.

Aescil, king of Denmark at the time of Arthur. Present at the gathering at Caerleon.

Aessel, of Galway, contemporary with Cassivellaunus.

Aganippus, a French king to whom Cordoille was wed.

Aican, an earl under Arthur. Present at the gathering at Caerleon.

Alain, King of Brittany, the son of Salomon.

Alban, British saint and proto-martyr. Martyred c304AD, during Diocletian's persecution of the Christians.

Albanac, son of Brutus and Ignogen. King of Albanie (Scotland) His brothers were Locrin and Camber.

Aldadus, a bishop, brother to Aldolf (3).

Aldolf (1), King of Britain, the son of Arkinaus.

Aldolf (2), an earl in Kent, at the time of Octaves. The father of Conan.

Aldolf (3), a nobleman at the time of Vortigern. Earl of Gloucester, and Steward, under Aurelius and Uther Pendragon.

Aldroein, King of Brittany, the son of Conan.

Aldus, King of Britain, son of Cherin. His brothers were Fulgenius and Andragus.

Alfin, King of Norway, contemporary with Brenne.

Allectus, a Roman commander sent to deal with Carraais. Subsequently ruler of Britain.

Aluric (or Alla), King in Northumberland under Ethelred.

Amphibal, Saint (d. 304AD), said to have converted Sant Alban to Christianity.

Anacletus, a nobleman of the household of King Pandrasus.

Andor, the best-mannered of the daughters of King Ebrauc.

Andragus, King of Britain, son of Cherin. His brothers were Fulgenius and Aldus.

Androgeus, Earl of Kent, the eldest son of King Lud.

Angel, King of Scotland under Arthur. Present at the gathering at Caerleon.

Anna, sister to Arthur. Mother of Walwain and Mordred.

Anster, an African king at the time of Carric.

Antenor of Troy, counsellor to Priam, its king. Layamon has him as founder of a city in Spain.

Antigonus, brother to King Pandrasus of Greece.

Appas, an informer, who brought Pascent news of Aurelius and Uther.

Argal, King of Britain, a son of King Morpidus. His brothers were King Gorbonian, Elidur, Jugenes and Peredur.

Argal (2), Earl of Warwick under Arthur. Present at the gathering at Caerleon.

Argante, the Fair, ruler of the Isle of Avalon.

Arkinaus, King of Britain, brother to Blethgabreat.

Arnald, Earl of Salisbury under Arthur. Present at the gathering at Caerleon.

Arthur, King of Britain, the son of Uther Pendragon. His sword is Caliburn (Excalibur), wrought in Avalon. His helm, which belonged to Uther, is named Goswhit; his shield Pridwen; his lance Ron.

Arviragus, the younger son of Kinbelin.

Ascanius, son of Aeneas by Creusa, half-brother to Silvius Aeneas. Father of Silvius.

Asclepidiotus. King of Britain. Successor to Carrais.

Assarac, one of the sons of King Ebrauc, and their leader in Lombardy and Germany.

Assaracus, an ally of Brutus, of Trojan origin.

Astrild, a princess. Lover, then second wife, of Locrin. Mother of Abren.

Athelstan, a Saxon leader at the time of Cadwalader, not the later Athelstan, King of the English with whom he is here confused. The later Athelstan (c894-939AD) was indeed the son of Edward the Elder and his consort Ecgwynn, and is often considered to be 'the first King of England'.

Athionard, an earl, and steward to Maximian (2). Brother to Caradoc. Uncle to Maurice. His daughter was Ursula.

Augustine, Saint, of Canterbury (mission completed c604AD), termed the 'Apostle to the English'. The first Archbishop of Canterbury. His mission to England was

initiated by Pope Gregory in 595AD. Layamon's text would indicate that the 'Arthurian' period extended from the death of Aurelius and Halley's comet's appearance in 530AD (if the comet mentioned was indeed Halley's) until twenty years or so before Augustine's mission, to allow for the brief reigns of the later kings preceding Layamon's Ethelred. More specifically, given Uther's prior reign, Arthur, who one assumes came to the throne as a young man, would have ruled, from c550AD to c570AD. Layamon's mention, in one surviving text, of a period of a hundred and five years of heathen rule without Christianity, is then an anomaly.

Augustus Caesar (63BC-14AD), the Roman emperor.

Aurelius Ambrosius, the second son of King Constantine. His brothers, according to the text, were Constance and Uther.

Bal, a senator of Rome, at the time of Arthur.

Baldolf, the Fair, brother to Colgrim.

Baldric, Earl of Cornwall at the time of Aluric.

Balien, Earl of Silchester under Arthur. Present at the gathering at Caerleon.

Basian, King of Britain, a son of Septimius Severus. The name Basian is derived from that of Severus' son the Roman emperor Caracalla (188-217AD), born Lucius Septimius Bassianus, Caracalla being a nickname. The text assigns him a fictitious British mother. He assassinated his brother Geta in December 211.

Bedivere, Arthur's cupbearer, and Earl of Normandy. Present at the gathering at Caerleon.

Belan, steward to Cassivellaunus.

Belin, King of Britain, son of Dunwale, and brother of Brenne.

Beof, Earl of Oxford under Arthur. Present at the gathering at Caerleon, and in Burgundy.

Biduz, King of Brittany at the time of Vortigern.

Bladud, King of Britain, the son of Rudhudibras.

Bledon, King of Britain, the son of Merian.

Blethgabreat, King of Britain, successor to Oein.

Boccus, King of Media, an ally of Rome at the time of Arthur.

Boclovius, an earl, a follower of Arthur.

Borel (1), a Saxon earl under Childric, slain by Arthur.

Borel (2), a noble knight under Arthur, made lord of Le Mans. Present at the gathering at Caerleon.

Brendan, (c484-577AD), an early Irish saint, known as Brendan the Navigator.

Brenne, son of Dunwale, and brother of Belin.

Brian, a knight of the chamber, to King Cadwalan; his nephew, the son of the king's sister. He assumes the name Kinebord as a pseudonym, when he feigns to be a wine-merchant from Spain.

Bride, (also Brigit, or Brigid, c451-525AD) an early Irish saint.

Britael (1), King of North Wales, contemporary with Cassivellaunus.

Britael (2), steward to Gorlois, the Earl of Cornwall, under Uther Pendragon.

Brochinal, a British earl, in Leicester, at the time of Ethelred.

Brutus, a leader of Trojan origin, descended from Aeneas, and the son of Silvius. Declared to be the first king of all Britain, which was named after him. Accidentally killed his father Silvius, while hunting. Father of three sons, Locrin, Camber, and Albanac, by his wife Ignogen.

Brutus Vert-Escut, eldest son of King Ebrauc, and his successor.

Cadal, a Pict in the service of King Constantin.

Cador, a lord in the service of Uther Pendragon. Earl of Cornwall under King Arthur. Present at the gathering at Caerleon.

Cadwal, King of North Wales under Arthur. Present at the gathering at Caerleon.

Cadwalan, (d. 634AD) son of Cadwan, and king of the lands south of the Humber.

Cadwalader, the son of Cadwalan, and a Welsh king (from c655-682AD). He died as a result of plague in Wales in 682AD according to other sources, or in Rome, in May, according to Layamon, at the earliest two and a half years after Sergius' Papacy commenced (December 687AD), and at the latest two and a half years after it ended (September 701AD), that is, in May 700AD, or as late as May 704AD).

Cadwan, King of North Wales at the time of Aluric.

Caesar, Julius Caesar (c100-44BC), Roman proconsul of Gaul (58-49BC), dictator (49-44BC).

Camber, son of Brutus and Ignogen. King of Cambrie (Wales). His brothers were Locrin and Albanac.

Cap, King of Britain, the son of Bledon.

Capor, King of Britain, successor to Pir.

Caradoc, an earl of Cornwall, under Octaves. His son was Maurice. His brother was Athionard.

Carrais, a dissident in the days of Basian, and thereafter King of Britain.

Carric, King of Britain, the successor to Malgus.

Carrius, a senator of Rome at the time of Arthur.

Cassivellaunus, King of Britain, brother to Lud and Nennius, uncle to Androgeus and Tennancius.

Catel, (Catellus) one of the six leading senators of Rome, at the time of Arthur.

Catiger, the son of Vortigern and Rowena, his brothers were Vortimer and Pascent.

Catulus, King of Britain, son of Gorontes.

Cenan, son of Androgeus.

Cherin, King of Britain, kin to Porex.

Cheslon, King of Scotland, deposed by Brenne.

Childric, a chieftain holding land on the coast of Germany. An ally of Colgrim and his brother.

Claudius (10BC-54AD), the Roman emperor. He invaded Britain in 43AD, and left behind a Roman occupying force, when he departed. His British queen here is fictitious, as is his daughter Genuis.

Cledaus, King of Britain, successor to Eliud.

Clofard, an earl under Arthur. Present at the gathering at Caerleon.

Cloten, King of Cornwall, after Poreus was murdered.

Cocta, one of the six leading senators of Rome, at the time of Arthur.

Coel, King of Britain, after Asclepidiotus.

Coil, King of Britain, the son of Maurus.

Coillus, King of Britain, son of Catulus.

Colgrim the Fair, King of the Saxons in the north, after Octa. Related to Hengist.

Columba (521-597AD), an early Irish Saint. Layamon indicates that Arthur was alive after the deaths of Saint Brendan, Saint Bride and Saint Columba, which would place him in the early seventh century, rather than the sixth.

Columban, King of the Scots, at the time of King Asclepidiotus.

Compert, King of Norway at the time of Octaves and Trahern.

Conan (1), an earl under Octaves. The son of Aldolf (2). Subsequently an ally of Maximian (2) who made him king of Armorica.

Conan (2), King of Britain, and nephew to that Constantine (2) who was Arthur's successor.

Constance, the eldest son of King Constantin. His brothers, according to the text, were Ambrosius Aurelius and Uther.

Constantin, brother to Aldroein. King of Britain. His sons were Constance, Ambrosius Aurelius, and Uther.

Constantine (1), the Great (c272-337AD), Roman emperor (306-337). The son of Constantius I. He defeated the unacknowledged emperor Maxentius at the Battle of the Milvian Bridge in 312AD.

Constantine (2), King of Britain, the son of Earl Cador of Cornwall, and successor to Arthur.

Constantius I, (c250-306AD), Roman co-emperor (305-6, in Diocletian's Tetrarchy). In Britain in 305, with his son Constantine, who was later Emperor. His first wife and Constantine's mother was Saint Helena (Layamon's Helen), though she was not of Romano-British origin.

Constantius II, (317-361AD), Roman emperor (337-361), son of Constantine the Great.

Cordoille, the youngest daughter of King Lear, her sisters were Gornoille, and Regau.

Corineus, a leader of exiled Trojans, allied to Brutus. Father of Gwendoline.

Cradoc, son of Catel, an earl under Arthur. Present at the gathering at Caerleon.

Creusa, Aeneas' first wife. Mother of Ascanius.

Cunedagius, a son of one of Cordoille's sisters.

Cursalein, Earl of Chester under Arthur. Present at the gathering at Caerleon.

Cynric, a derogatory name for King Carric, implying he was of Saxon origin, the name perhaps equivalent to 'son of a dog'.

Damus, King of Britain, a son of Sillius. His brother was Rummarus. His son was Morpidus.

Dagon, a mythical supreme deity, worshipped in Rome in the days of Belin and Brenne.

Delgan, the daughter of King Alfin of Norway, and wife of Brenne. Lover of Godlac.

Deruvian, a legendary bishop who, with Fagan, first Christianised Britain, at the time of Lucius.

Dinabuz, a playmate of the young Merlin.

Dinoth (or Dunawd), Saint, Abbot of Bangor Iscoed monastery on the banks of the Dee, at the time of Saint Augustine of Canterbury.

Diocletian, (245-316AD), Roman Emperor (284-305)

Doldanim (Doldanet), the ruler of Jutland at the time of Arthur. Present at the gathering at Caerleon.

Doten, King of Britain, successor to Cledaus.

Dubric (Dubricius), Saint (c465-550). Bishop of Erging (Archenfield) Herefordshire. Bishop of Caerleon, under Aurelius, according to Layamon. Archbishop of Caerleon under Arthur. Present at the gathering at Caerleon.

Dunwale, son of Apries, an earl under Arthur. Present at the gathering at Caerleon.

Dunwale (Dunwallo) Molinus, King of Britain, the son of Cloten.

Ebissa, brother-in-law to Octa.

Ebrauc, the son of Menbriz. King of Britain. His twenty sons were: Brutus Vert-Escut, Margadud, Sisilvius, Regin, Bladud, Moruit, Lagon, Ebedloan, Ricar, Spaden, Gaul, Pardan, Eldad, Gangu, Kerin, Luor, Ruc, Affarac, Buel, and Hector. His thirty daughters were: Gloigin, Ocidas, Ourar, Ignogen, Guardid, Radan, Guendlian, Angarad, Guenboden, Methalan, Malure, Ecub, Zangustel, Scadud, Kambrada, Methahel, Gaz, Echem, Nest, Gorgon, Wladus, Ebraen, Blangru, Ebron, Bedra, Aballac, Eangnes, Andor, Scadiald, and Galoes.

Edwin, (c586AD-633AD) son of Aluric, and king of the lands north of the Humber. He was baptised in 627AD and died at the battle of Hatfield Chase (near Doncaster, 633AD).

Elfwald, a noble in the days of Gratian. His brother was Ethelbald.

Eli, a magistrate at Carmarthen in the days of Vortigern.

Elidur, King of Britain, a son of King Morpidus. His brothers were King Gorbonian, King Argal, Jugenes and King Peredur.

Elidur (2), an earl under Arthur. Present at the gathering at Caerleon.

Eligille, King of Britain, successor to Capor.

Eliud, King of Britain, kinsman to Urian.

Enmaunus, King of Britain, the son of Argal. His brother was Morgan (2).

Epistrod, King of Greece, an ally of Rome at the time of Arthur.

Escol, the son of King Aelcus of Iceland.

Ethelbald, a noble in the days of Gratian. His brother was Elfwald.

Ethelbert (c550-616), King of Kent (from 589AD), and effective overlord of Britain.

Ethion, Duke of Boeotia, an ally of Rome at the time of Arthur.

Evander, King of Syria, an ally of Rome at the time of Arthur.

Evelin, a nobleman at the court of Cassivellaunus. The son of Androgeus' sister.

Fagan, a legendary bishop who, with Deruvian, first Christianised Britain, at the time of Lucius.

Febus, leader of the Roman troops in Britain, at the time of Melga and Wanis.

Fereus, a son of King Gorbodias, brother to Poreus.

Frolle, King of France, at the time of Arthur. He was born of a Roman line according to Layamon. France, the Kingdom of the Franks, stretched from Cologne in the north-east, to Orleans in the south-west, with Paris, Rouen and Rheims as major settlements. Brittany was still a separate realm. France was subsequently extended by Clovis, and his descendants, southwards into much of Iberia, and eastwards into the Germanic territories.

Fulgenes, a leader of the alliance of Britons and Picts at the time of Severus.

Fulgenius, King of Britain, son of Cherin. His brothers were Aldus and Andragus.

Gabius, one of the two lords ruling Rome, in the days of Belin and Brenne.

Gaius, one of the six leading senators of Rome, at the time of Arthur.

Galarne, sister to Brian.

Galoos, queen of Wales. The fairest and best-loved daughter of King Ebrauc.

Galuan, king of Wales.

Garengan, earl of Kent under Vortigern.

Gecron, son to a prince of Babylon, present at Arthur's final battle.

Genuis, a fictitious daughter of the emperor Claudius, wed to Arviragus.

Gerion (1), a priest who advised Brutus.

Gerion (2), the younger son of the African king Anster.

Gerin, Earl of Chartres, under Arthur.

Germain of Auxerre, (c380-448AD), bishop and saint, sent to Britain c430AD, by Pope Celestine. Lupus of Troyes accompanied him. Germaine returned to Britain in 447AD.

Geta, (189-211AD), son of Septimius Severus. His brother was the emperor Caracalla. The brothers ruled jointly until Caracalla assassinated his brother in December 211. The source text calls him Gezan.

Gillemaur (1), King of Ireland at the time of Octaves.

Gillemaur (2), King of Ireland at the time of Aurelius, Uther and Arthur. Present at the gathering at Caerleon.

Gille Calaet, a knight in Voltigern's guard of Picts.

Gille Caor, King of Ireland at the time of Maurus.

Gille Patric, King of Ireland at the time of Cadwalan.

Gloi, Duke of Wales, the son of the emperor Claudius by a British woman. Gloucester named after him.

Gloigin, the wisest of the daughters of King Ebrauc.

Godlac, King of Denmark, lover of Delgan.

Goffar, king of Poitou.

Gogmagog, among the number of the giants of Britain.

Gonwais, Chieftain of the Orkney Isles at the time of Arthur. Present at the gathering at Caerleon.

Gorbodiagus, King of Britain, the son of King Mark. Father of Fereus and Poreus.

Gorbonian, King of Britain, the son of Morpidus.

Gorlois, Earl of Cornwall under Aurelius Ambrosius.

Gornoille, the eldest daughter of King Lear, her sisters were Regau, and Cordoille.

Gorontes, King of Britain, the son of Elidur.

Gradie, Duke of Lombardy in the days of Gratian.

Gratian, (359-383AD), Roman emperor (367-383), the son of Valentinian I, half-brother to Valentinian II.

Gratianus, a military commander under Constantine I, the Great. His sons, Valens and Valentinian I, ruled as co-emperors.

Gregory, Pope (c540-604AD).

Grimark, son of Kinmark, an earl under Arthur. Present at the gathering at Caerleon.

Guaertaet, King of South Wales, contemporary with Cassivellaunus.

Guencelin (1), King of Britain, the son of Gurguint. His wife was Marcie.

Guencelin (2), archbishop in London, at the time of the final Roman withdrawal

Guinevere (Guenayfer, Wenhaver), wife to Arthur, kin to Cador, Earl of Cornwall.

Guitard, King of Gascony and Earl of Poitiers, under Arthur. Present at the gathering at Caerleon.

Gurguincius, King of Britain, successor to Cledeus.

Gurguint, Earl of Hereford under Arthur. Present at the gathering at Caerleon.

Gurguint Bertruc, King of Britain, the son of Belin.

Gurgustius, King of Britain, the son of Riwald.

Gurmund, the elder son of the African king Anster.

Gwendoline, daughter of Corineus, and first wife of Locrin.

Hamun, a noble advisor under the emperor Claudius.

Helen, the sister of Penda, King of Mercia.

Helena, the daughter of King Coel, wife to Constantius, later queen in Jerusalem, and canonised as Saint Helena.

Helenus, a prince of Troy, brother to Aeneas. He journeyed to Greece after the fall of Troy.

Heli, King of Britain, son of and successor to Eligille. His three sons were Lud, Cassivellaunus, and Nennius.

Hemeri, Duke of Cornwall, husband to Regau.

Hengist and Horsa, legendary Germanic brothers who supposedly led the Angles, Saxons and Jutes in their invasion of Britain in the 5th century. Hengist ruled the Jutes in Kent, after Horsa was killed in battle. Coningsburgh, the place of Hengist's final execution by Aurelius Ambrosius, according to Layamon, may be identified with Conisbrough, Doncaster, which was an important Viking stronghold in South Yorkshire.

Herigal, a nobleman at the court of Cassivellaunus, the son of the king's half-sister.

Howel, ruler of Brittany, and kin to Arthur. Present at the gathering at Caerleon.

Howeldin, a noble knight under Arthur, and Earl of Flanders. Present at the gathering at Caerleon.

Humbald, ruler of Armorica, at the time of Maximian (2). Armorica was the ancient name for the area of France between the Seine and the Loire, including Brittany.

Humber, King of Humbrie, an invader.

Ignogen, daughter to King Pandrasus, and wife to Brutus. Mother of three sons, Locrin, Camber, and Albanac.

Igraine (Ygerne), the wife of Earl Gorlois, loved by Uther Pendragon. The mother of Arthur.

Irtac, King of Turkey, an ally of Rome at the time of Arthur.

Isemberd, a French nobleman, allied to Gurmund.

Iwallo, King of Britain, the son of Jugenes.

Jonathas, Earl of Dorchester under Arthur. Present at the gathering at Caerleon.

Joram, a sage at the time of Vortigern.

Judon, the mother of Fereus and Poreus. Wife to King Gorbodias.

Jugenes, a son of King Morpudus. His brothers were the kings Gorbodias, Argal, Elidur, and Peredur. He ruled over part of the country.

Julian (or Julius), of Caerleon, British saint, martyred c304AD during Diocletian's persecution of the Christians.

Jurdan, knight of the chamber to Gorlois, the Earl of Cornwall, under Uther Pendragon.

Kay, Arthur's steward (seneschal). Earl of Angers. Present at the gathering at Caerleon.

Kegein, son of Elauth, an earl under Arthur. Present at the gathering at Caerleon.

Keredic, a knight at the court of Vortigern.

Kerin, an earl under Arthur. Present at the gathering at Caerleon.

Kinard, Earl of Striguil under Arthur.

Kinbelin (Cymbeline?), King of Britain, the son of Tennancius. His sons were Wither and Arviragus.

Kincar, an earl under Arthur. Present at the gathering at Caerleon.

Kineus, son of Coit, an earl under Arthur. Present at the gathering at Caerleon.

Kincalin (or King Calin), King of Frisland at the time of Arthur. Present at the gathering at Caerleon.

Kinmare, Earl of Canterbury under Arthur. Present at the gathering at Caerleon.

Labius, an earl, a follower of Arthur.

Lador, King of Britain, the son of Gorbonian.

Lago, King of Britain. The son of Sisillius.

Lavinia, Aeneas's second wife, mother of Silvius Aeneas.

Lear, King of Britain, the son of Bladud. His daughters were Gornioille, Regau, and the youngest Cordoille, (*Shakespeare's Goneril, Regan, and Cordelia*).

Leir, King of Britain, the son of Brutus Vert-Escut.

Leir (2), Earl of Boulogne, under Arthur. Present at the gathering at Caerleon.

Leonin, uncle to Helena, mother of Constantine I. Father of Maximian.

Livius Gallus, a Roman commander sent to Britain to deal with Carraais.

Locrin, son of Brutus and Ignogen. King of all southern Britain, east of the Severn. His brothers were Camber and Albanac. Husband of Gwendoline, then Astrild. Father of a son, Madan by Gwendoline, and a daughter Abren by Astrild.

Loth, the King of Lothian, husband to Anna, Arthur's sister. Present at the gathering at Caerleon.

Luces, King of Britain, the son of Coil.

Luces (2), Emperor of Rome in Arthur's time. Following Layamon's inferred chronology, Luces would seem to correspond to Justinian the Great.

Lucus, one of the six leading senators of Rome, at the time of Arthur.

Lud, King of Britain, son of Heli. His brothers were Cassivellaunus and Nennius. Father of Androgeus and Tennancius.

Lupus of Troyes, (383-478AD), bishop and saint, sent to Britain c 430AD, by Pope Celestine. Germain of Auxerre accompanied him. Germaine returned to Britain in 447AD.

Madan, the son of Locrin and Gwendoline. Father of Menbriz and Malin.

Madoc, an earl under Arthur. Present at the gathering at Caerleon.

Maerwal, son of Penda.

Magan, a wise man, at the time of Vortigern.

Maglaunus, King of Scotland, husband of Lear's daughter, Gornioille.

Mahound, a Medieval name, used derogatively, for Muhammad, thought by the Christians, incorrectly, to be worshipped by Muslims (who worship Allah); more generically a name for all pagan gods, Greek, and Roman gods, such as Apollo, and later a name for the Devil.

Malgod, an evil counsellor attached to Brenne.

Malgus, King of Britain, after Vortiporus.

Malin, the son of Madan, and brother to Menbriz.

Malverus, King of Iceland at the time of Arthur. Present at the gathering at Caerleon.

Marcel, a noble knight of Rome, at the time of Arthur.

Marcie, the wife of King Guencelin.

Marcus, one of the six leading senators of Rome, at the time of Arthur.

Margadud, King of South Wales at the time of Cadwalon.

Margoit, an earl under Arthur. Present at the gathering at Caerleon.

Marin, uncle to Helena, the mother of Constantine I.

Mark, King of Britain, the son of Lago.

Maurice, the son of Cradoc. His father was an earl under Octaves.

Maurin, a relative of King Arthur. Earl of Winchester under Arthur. Present at the gathering at Caerleon.

Maurus, King of Britain, the son of Arviragus and Genuis.

Maxentius, (c283-312 AD) nominally Emperor of Rome from 306 to 308, but not recognised as such by his fellow emperors of the Tetrarchy. He was the son of Maximian (1).

Maximian (1), (c250-310AD), co-emperor under Diocletian (to 305). He appointed his commander Carausius to combat piracy in the English Channel, who, by 36AD, after rebelling against Maximian's command, controlled Britain and Northern Gaul.

Maximian (2), the son of Helena's uncle, Leonin, according to the text. Co-emperor in Rome, under Constantine I, and subsequently King of Britain, again according to the text. Perhaps derived from the historical Maximian (1).

Maximian (3), likely identical with **Magnus Maximus** (d.388), Roman emperor (383-388), who usurped the throne from Gratian. He was likely in Britain in 368, and assigned there in 380. Made emperor in Britain and Gaul, he defeated Gratian in 383 and contested power with Valentinian II. Layamon's text appears to confuse him with Maximian (1) and Maximian (2) above.

Melga, a Norwegian earl, at the time of Octaves.

Melion, son of Mordred.

Meodras, King of Spain, an ally of Rome at the time of Arthur.

Menbriz, the son of Madan, and brother to Malin.

Membricius, a nobleman loyal to Brutus.

Merian, King of Britain, successor to Gurguincius.

Merlin, the wizard of the Arthurian legends. Met with by Vortigern's knights at Carmarthen.

Metel, one of the six leading senators of Rome, at the time of Arthur.

Mildburg, son of Maerwal, grandson of Penda.

Mordred, the son of Anna, sister to Arthur. Brother to Walwain.

Morgan, a son of one of Cordoille's sisters.

Morgan (2), King of Britain, the son of Argal. His brother was Enmaunus.

Morpidus, King of Britain, son of Damus. His sons were Gorbonian, Argal, Elidur, Jugenes and Peredur.

Morvith, Earl of Gloucester under Arthur. Present at the gathering at Caerleon.

Nennius, brother to Lud and Cassivellaunus.

Netan, an earl under Arthur. Present at the gathering at Caerleon.

Neton, an earl under Arthur. Present at the gathering at Caerleon.

Numbert, an envoy to King Goffar.

Octa, the son of Hengist.

Octaves, Duke of Wales, then King of Britain, after the death of Trahern.

Oein, King of Britain, the successor to Cap.

Ofustesar, King of Africa, an ally of Rome at the time of Arthur.

Osric (1), the son of King Edwin.

Osric (2), the son of Oswy.

Ossa, a companion of Octa and Ebissa.

Oswald, kin to King Edwin.

Oswy, brother to Oswald.

Pandras, King of Egypt, an ally of Rome at the time of Arthur.

Pandrasus, King of Greece at the time of Brutus.

Pantolaus, a Spanish chieftain, at the time of Gurguint, and proclaimed King of Ireland.

Pascent, the son of Vortigern and Rowena, his brothers were Vortimer and Catiger.

Patrick, a Scottish thane allied to Arthur.

Pelluz, a wise Spaniard at the court of Edwin.

Penda, (d. 655AD) King of Mercia.

Peredur, King of Britain, a son of King Morpidus. His brothers were the kings Gorbonian, Argal, and Elidur, and also Jugenes, who ruled part of the country but was not King of Britain.

Peredur (2), an earl under Arthur. Present at the gathering at Caerleon.

Petreius, a noble roman warrior, at the time of Arthur

Piner, King of Logres, after Poreus was murdered.

Pir, King of Britain, successor to Samupensel.

Piram, archbishop of York, appointed by Arthur.

Pollidices, King of Bitunia, an ally of Rome at the time of Arthur.

Poreus, a son of King Gorbodias, brother to Fereus.

Porex, King of Britain, kin to Catulus and his son Coillus.

Prosenna, one of the two lords ruling Rome, in the days of Belin and Brenne.

Quencelin, a Roman nobleman at the time of Arthur. Kin to the emperor Lucus.

Redait, King of Britain, brother and successor to Redion.

Redion, King of Britain, the successor to Aldolf.

Regau, daughter to King Lear, her sisters were Gorniole, and Cordoile.

Richer, an earl at the time of Arthur.

Riculf, a Norwegian earl, king-elect of Norway, at the time of Arthur, the Norwegians seeking to deny the deceased Sichelin's wish that Loth should be king after him.

Ridwathlan, the son of Bedivere's sister.

Rimarc, an earl, a follower of Arthur.

Rime, King of Britain, the son of Peredur.

Riun, a king of France slain by Arthur.

Rodric, a Scythian king, leader of the Picts.

Romain, pope and saint, according to the text. The Catholic Church's date for the mission of Germain of Auxerre and Lupus of Troyes, sent to Britain by Pope

Celestine, c 430AD, is here at odds with the arrival date for Hengist and Horsa of c449AD according to the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle. The former date is a firmer one, while much of the history of Britain in the 5th century is surmise.

Rowena, daughter to Hengist.

Rudauc, King of North Wales, after Poreus was murdered.

Rudhudibras, King of Britain, the son of King Leil.

Rumareth, King of Winetland (Wendland, or possibly Finland?), at the time of Arthur.

Rummarus, King of Britain, a son of Sillius. His brother was Damus.

Run, an earl under Arthur. Present at the gathering at Caerleon.

Salomon, King of Brittany at the time of Cadwalan. Cousin to the latter, being Cadwalan's aunt's son.

Sampson (Samson), Saint. Bishop of York, under Aurelius, according to Layamon.

Samupensel (or Samul-Penicel), King of Britain, successor to Redait.

Sergius, Saint Sergius I of Palermo, Pope in Rome (687/8AD, to his death in 701AD) at the time of Cadwalader's vision.

Severus, the Roman emperor Lucius Septimius Severus (145-211AD), emperor 193-211AD. He was in Britain from 208 until his death at York in 211.

Sextorius, King of Libya, an ally of Rome at the time of Arthur.

Sichelin, King of Norway in Arthur's day.

Sillius, the son of Guencelin and Marcie.

Sillius (2), King of Britain, the son of Oein.

Silvius, son of Ascanius, named after Silvius Aeneas, his father's half-brother. Father to Brutus by Lavinia's niece.

Silvius (2) King of Lombardy, and of Trojan descent.

Silvius Aeneas, son of Aeneas and Lavinia, half-brother to Ascanius.

Sisillius, King of Britain, son of Gurgustius.

Siward, a king of France, in the days of Fereus and Poreus.

Stater, King of Scotland, after Poreus was murdered.

Stater (2), King of South Wales, under Arthur. Present at the gathering at Caerleon.

Suard, a thane of King Goffar.

Syrian, the Roman emperor Heliogabalus (reigned 218-222AD). He came from an Arab family, of Homs in Syria, though related to the Severan dynasty.

Teilesin (Taliesin?), a wise man, considered a prophet, in the days of Kinbelin.

Tennancius, Earl of Cornwall, then King of Britain. The younger son of King Lud, and father of Kinbelin.

Tervagant, a mythical deity, worshipped in Rome in the days of Belin and Brenne.

Teucer, Duke of Phrygia, an ally of Rome at the time of Arthur.

Tonuenne, Queen of Britain, wife to Dunwale, and mother of Belin and Brenne.

Trahern, uncle to Helena, the mother of Constantine I.

Trahern (2), an earl under Arthur. Present at the gathering at Caerleon.

Tremoriun, a bishop in Caerleon at the time of Aurelius.

Turnus, Duke of Tuscany. Aeneas' rival in Italy, whom he slew.

Turnus (2), a kinsman of Brutus.

Ulfin, a counsellor to Uther Pendragon.

Urgein, Earl of Bath under Arthur. Present at the gathering at Caerleon.

Urian, King of Britain, the son of Andragus.

Urien, King of Moray under Arthur. Present at the gathering at Caerleon. His son was Yvain.

Ursula, daughter to Athionard.

Uther, the youngest son of King Constantin. His brothers, according to the text, were Constance and Ambrosius Aurelius. Regarding the comet, whose form Merlin interprets, if this is taken as a reference by Layamon to Halley's comet and its cyclic re-appearance, then a date of 530AD would mark the end of Aurelius' reign and the beginning of Uther Pendragon's.

Valentinian I, (321-375AD) Roman emperor (jointly with his brother Valens). The son of Gratianus.

Valentinian II, (371-392AD) Roman emperor (375-392, initially with his half-brother Gratian).

Vespasian, (9-79AD), Roman emperor (69-79AD). He served in Britain during Claudius' invasion, and became emperor in the 'Year of the four Emperors', 69AD. During his reign Agricola replaced Coelius as commander of the Legio XX (Valeria Victrix) stationed in Britain. Vespasian's return to Britain is an invention.

Vortigern, an earl, and steward under King Constantin. King of Britain after usurping the throne from Constantin's eldest son, Constance. Regarding the place of his death, a strong candidate for the location identified by Layamon, is Little Doward hill, near Ganarew, in the ancient realm of Erging. The names correspond to Layamon's Cloard, Genoie, and Hergin. The hill near the Wye, north-east of Monmouth, occupied in pre-historic times, is topped by an iron-age hillfort.

Vortimer, the eldest son of Vortigern and Rowena, his brothers were Pascent and Catiger. King of Britain while his father Vortigern still lived.

Vortiporus, King of Britain, successor to Conan (2).

Walwain, the son of Anna, Arthur's sister. Brother to Mordred. He was raised in Rome by Pope 'Supplice' according to Layamon. If the Pope referenced is the saintly Boniface IV, who leant to the monastic life, then again Layamon is suggesting a seventh century dating for Arthur.

Wanis, a Norwegian earl, at the time of Octaves.

Wigein, Earl of Leicester under Arthur. Present at the gathering at Caerleon.

Wither, the elder son of Kinbelin.

Wyggar, an elven smith, who wrought Arthur's steel armour.

Xerxes, King of Ituria, an ally of Rome at the time of Arthur.

Ypolite, King of Crete, an ally of Rome at the time of Arthur.

Yuni, Cadwalader's nephew, his sister's son.

Yvaine, the son of Urien, a commander in Arthur's host. Present at the gathering at Caerleon.

Yvor (or Ivor), Cadwalader's stepson.

End of the Character List

Part I: From Brutus to Dunwale

Contents

Translator's Introduction	29
Brut.....	29
The Author's introduction.....	29
Aeneas of Troy (<i>Eratosthenes dates the fall of Troy to 1184BC</i>)	30
Aeneas in Italy	31
The lordship of Ascanius his son	32
Silvius, the son of Ascanius	33
Brutus, the son of Silvius	33
Assaracus pledges allegiance to Brutus	34
Brutus writes to the king, Pandrasus.....	35
The king sends his armies against Brutus and Assaracus.....	36
The king flees and his brother Antigonus is defeated by Brutus.....	37
Pandrasus besieges the castle at Sparatin (<i>Sparta?</i>).....	38
Brutus and Anacletus	39
Brutus gathers his forces to attack the king	40
The enemy camp is assailed.....	40
The aftermath of Brutus' victory	41
Membricius advises that they leave the land and seek another	42
Pandrasus replies to Brutus' demands	43
Brutus insists on their departure	44
Brutus, having wed Ignogen, sets sail.....	45
The island of Logice and the temple of Diana.....	45
Diana's prophetic words	46
Brutus departs from Logice	47
He joins forces with Corineus of Spain	48
They anchor at Nantes, in the Loire estuary	49
Corineus encounters Numbert the envoy	49
King Goffar sends out his army	50
Brutus and Corineus fight against King Goffar.....	51
Suard, the king's man.....	52
King Goffar seeks aid from the Twelve Companions	52
Brutus builds a fortress in Armorica.....	52
Brutus and Goffar contest the fortress at Tours.....	53

Brutus sails, and lands at Dartmouth, by Totnes	54
The Giants of Albion.....	55
Corineus and Gogmagog wrestle on the cliffs.....	56
The Trojans settle in Albion, renamed as Britain	57
The origin of the name England.....	57
The founding of London (<i>Trinovant</i>).....	58
The death of Brutus, and the division of Britain.....	59
The arrival of Humber, King of Humberie.....	60
Astrild and Locrin	61
The birth of Locrin's daughter Abren, and son Madan	63
On Corineus death, Gwendoline is sent back to Cornwall	64
Locrin is slain in battle, near the river Stour.....	64
Madan is succeeded by his sons, Menbriz and Malin	65
The reign, and death, of Menbriz.....	66
Ebrauc the son of Menbriz	66
Ebrauc builds burghs at York and Maiden Castle (<i>Durham?</i>)	67
The reign of King Leil, and the founding of Carlisle	68
The reign of Rudhudibras, the founding of Winchester and Canterbury ...	69
Bladud's reign, the healing waters at Bath	69
Bladud's magical flight, and death	70
King Lear, and the founding of Leicester	70
The division of his kingdom, Cordoille's exile	73
Lear reaps the results of his own folly	75
Lear seeks sanctuary in France	78
Lear returns to Britain with an army	81
The death of Lear, and of Cordoille.....	81
Morgan And Cunedagius contest the realm.....	82
The reign of Cunedagius (<i>contemporary with the founding of Rome, 753BC</i>)	83
The reign of Riwald his son	84
The brief reigns of Gurgustius, Sisillius, Lago, Mark, and Gorbodias...	84
The conflict between Fereus and Poreus	84
The death of Poreus, and civil conflict	85
Dunwale Molinus battles for the kingdom	86
He defeats and slays the two kings, Rudauc and Stater.....	89
The death of Dunwale	89

Translator's Introduction

Layamon, an English poet of the late 12th/early 13th century, describes himself in his surviving work, *Brut*, as a priest living at Ernley (*Erneleye or Earnley, now Areley Kings, ten miles north of Worcester, England*) beside the Severn. *Brut*, written in Anglo-Saxon dialect, was most probably composed sometime between 1189 and 1215, during the reign of King John. Known also as the *Chronicle of Britain*, it derives from Wace's Anglo-Norman French work, the *Roman de Brut*, which is in turn a version of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae* (*History of the Kings of Britain*). The latter, in a mixture of legend and historical surmise, provided the first work following the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle (created in the late ninth century during King Alfred's reign) to relate anything like a history of Britain. The title *Brut* reflects the claim that a certain Brutus of Troy was Britain's legendary founder.

Layamon's work is a lengthier development of the works of Wace and Geoffrey, and contains a more extensive account of King Arthur's life and deeds. Written in a loosely alliterative style, the two halves of each line are occasionally linked by rhyme. The most complete surviving manuscript is Cotton Caligula A ix, in the British Library, dating from the third quarter of the 13th century.

Dates and comments given in brackets after a heading provide possible dates, derived from external historical sources, for events in Layamon's account.

Brut

The Author's introduction

There was a priest in this land, his name Layamon,
And he was Leuca's son, God's grace be upon him.
He dwelt at Ernley, beside the noble church there,
On the banks of Severn, fast there by Radistone.
Pleasant, he found it; and many a book he read there.
It came to his mind, and became his foremost thought,
That he'd set down the noble deeds of the English,
Who those people were, where they had come from,
That, of the English lands, first took possession,
After that great Flood, sent by the Lord on high,
The which destroyed all living things on Earth,
Except for Noah, and Shem, and Japheth, and Ham,
And their four wives, who were with them in the Ark.

Layamon then journeyed, through the land, far and wide,
And sought for noble books, to take for a pattern.
He found one in English, by the Venerable Bede,
And another book in Latin, made by Saint Albin
With that fair Augustine who brought us baptism.
Then, a third book he found, and set it between them,
That was made by a French clerk, one Wace by name,
Which he, a fine writer, had gifted noble Eleanor,
And she was queen to Henry, high king of all the land.
Layamon laid the three books he'd gathered before him,
And turned the leaves lovingly, may the Lord bless him,
Took a pen in his fingers, and wrote on the parchment,
And set together all of the true words he found there,
Until, of the three books, he had made a single one.
Now Layamon prays that each good and honest man,
For the Love of the Lord, that shall read of this book
And learn from the writing, may say this, truthfully:
'Upon the soul of his father, he that did him engender,
And the soul of his mother, she who gave him birth,
And upon his own soul, may the best befall. Amen.'
Now he speaks, with lofty tongue, the priest of this land,
All that the books said, that he took for his pattern:

Aeneas of Troy (*Eratosthenes dated the fall of Troy to 1184BC*)

The Greeks had conquered, and laid waste, great Troy,
And all the land about it, and slain all its people,
In revenge for the taking of Menelaus' queen,
Whom Paris had stolen by a stratagem of his,
Helen, for whom that day, a hundred thousand lay dead.
Out of that fight, that waxed exceeding fierce,
Aeneas, the prince had escaped with much toil.
He had his son with him, whom he'd led to safety,
Ascanius by name; he had no other children.
Aeneas, and his companions, now set out to sea.
Twenty good ships he'd filled, and well-filled were they
With his kith and kin, who now followed the prince,
With the men and goods, they had brought to the shore,
And the ships fared far and wide, over the wintry sea,

From storms and ill-weather, suffering injury.
And so, with pain, and trouble, they came to land.
To where Rome now stands, to Italy, they came,
For as yet Rome was still unfounded neath the sun.
Aeneas the prince, with this band of followers,
Had wandered far and wide, over the wide waters.
Many a land he'd skirted, yet counsel had failed him.
He came to Italy's shore; to him it seemed pleasing.
He found food in that land, and gained it honourably,
With gifts and with gold, and by speaking peaceably.
The Tiber's mouth he found, where the sea meets the sand,
Near to that very place, where Rome now stands.
Latinus was the king there, a noble man was he,
One possessed of wealth, a man full of wisdom,
Bowed down with years, such was the will of God.
There Aeneas came, and greeted the old king,
Who in turn received him, amidst all his people.
Much land he gave him, more land he promised,
All along the shoreline, and far and wide inland,
Which displeased the queen, though she endured it.
Now the king had a daughter, to him most dear,
And he promised her to Aeneas, to be his wife,
And the kingdom also, when his day was done,
For he had no son, and the sorer was his heart.

Aeneas in Italy

Lavinia the maid's name, that was queen thereafter,
And fair was that woman, and admired by all.
But Turnus, that was called the Duke of Tuscany,
He loved the maid, and would wed her with honour,
And said he would take her to be his noble queen.
Yet word came to him, and it was widely known,
That King Latinus had given his Lavinia,
His beloved daughter, to Aeneas as his bride.
Then was Turnus sorry, and sorrowful in mood,
For he yet longed for her; he had pledged his love.
Troubled by his wrath, Turnus now made war,
And fought against Aeneas, in fiercest fight,

Hand to hand, those warriors fought each other;
And toiling in battle, there mighty Turnus fell,
His sword hacked to pieces, his honour the less.
Aeneas took Lavinia, lovingly, to wife;
He was king, she his queen, and they ruled the realm
In harmony and peace, and much loved were they.

The lordship of Ascanius his son

Once Aeneas had won Lavinia and the realm,
He built a strong castle, with lofty stone walls;
Lavinia was his wife, so he named it Lavinium,
Because of his love for her, his well-beloved.
Four winters he held his fair lady in honour,
Then after the fourth he died, to his friends' sorrow.
Lavinia the queen, bore his child in her womb,
And, not long thereafter, had a son for solace.
Silvius Aeneas he was named, full nobly.
Now, Ascanius his brother, who with his father
Had fled from Troy, took charge of the infant,
Ascanius was the royal child's half-brother,
For they were not born, that pair, of the same mother.
Creusa, King Priam's daughter, bore Ascanius,
She that Aeneas, his father, lost when Troy fell,
For, in that fight, she was captured by the foe.
Ascanius, for many a year, held the kingdom,
And, in the realm, he built a great township.
Alba Longa the name by which he called it,
And the place was well-wrought in but little time.
His stepmother held it: for love of his brother
He gave her the land, and Lavinium, the castle,
That Aeneas had made, while he was yet living;
And all this he granted her till her life's ending.
The Penates, the divinities folk worshipped there,
That Aeneas, midst his host, had brought from Troy,
Were in Alba Longa, though soon they departed;
Forth with the wind, the Fiend sped back with them.
Ascanius the wise, who ruled in the king's stead,
Four and thirty winters, he cared for his people,

And he held the land, in peace and tranquility,
Then came his life's end, although he was loth.
To Silvius his half-brother, Lavinia's son,
Passed all of that realm Aeneas had possessed.

Silvius, the son of Ascanius

Ascanius had a son, called Silvius, also,
The child being named for the father's half-brother,
Yet a brief life had Silvius, for his own son
Shot him thereafter, and so caused his death.
When Silvius was young, he loved a maiden,
Lavinia's niece, and in secret he loved her.
It came to pass, as it does nigh everywhere,
That this young woman found herself with child,
While Ascanius yet lived, the lord of this land.
The thing was discovered, her state soon known,
And so, Duke Ascanius, lord of the kingdom,
Summoned all those who knew the incantations,
For he would learn, by means of the dark arts,
What this thing might be she had in her womb.
They cast their spells, the Fiend was amongst them,
And found by their craft, things most sorrowful.
For the woman would bear a son, wondrous to tell of,
Since he would slay both his father and mother;
Through him they would die, death they would suffer,
And he be driven, through their death, from the land,
Yet, after a long while, be welcomed with honour.
And thus, as the lots were cast, so it all happened.

Brutus, the son of Silvius

When her time came, and the boy-child was born
In this town of Alba Longa, the mother died,
While the child, its mother's bane, yet survived.
The son was named Brutus, nor was he like to die.
He lived, and he throve, and he loved virtue well.
Now, when he was fifteen, one day he went hunting,
And his father with him, who thereby was undone.

For they came on a herd of deer, a mighty herd;
The father drew near them, to his own misfortune.
Towards his son, he drove them, to his harm.
Brutus fired an arrow, to bring down this 'tall' deer,
And his own father fell, pierced through the chest.
Woeful then was Brutus, and woeful while he lived,
Through the death of his father, whom he had slain.
And when the huntsmen came, who were of his House,
And learned of the arrow, and how he had killed him,
They banished him from the land, and forth he went,
Over the ocean stream, reaching the shores of Greece.
And there he found kinfolk, many exiles from Troy,
Dispersed at the city's fall, now led by Helenus
Who was son to King Priam; full many of that nation
Who were nobly born, yet now were rendered slaves.
Many a year had passed, since his kin had come there,
The men waxed in numbers, the women had thriven,
And many were the herds of cattle that grazed there.
Now Brutus had been in that land but a brief while,
Ere he was loved by all, and won him much honour.
For he was a man most like to please the people,
Being free-handed, which brings honour to a man.
By all was he beloved, all those who looked on him,
Thus, they gave him gifts, and courteous greeting.
They said to him aloud, and in private meeting,
That if he were brave enough, and dared attempt
To lead them thence, lead them from bondage,
He should be their duke, and thereby rule them.
They said: 'We have here, beside all the women
That bear no weapons, seven thousand knights.
The youths, and the children, can tend the cattle.
For much we'd bear, much sorrow we'd endure,
Could we but leave this land, and win our freedom.'
And all that were present confirmed this judgement.

Assaracus pledges allegiance to Brutus

Now in Greece was a young man, thirty years old,
Assaracus his name, and of noble lineage,

His father a lordly Greek, his mother of Trojan birth,
Though she was a concubine, so of lesser worth.
Nonetheless it befell, within a few years, or so,
That the father was dead, and lost to his kinfolk.
Three castles he had given to Assaracus his son,
And all the land besides, that lay thereabout.
Assaracus had a brother, that was born in wedlock.
This brother held the rest of all the father's land,
In accord with the heathen law ruling that place,
And loathed the former, who held the three castles,
Gifts soundly given, from the hand of their father.
He desired them so Assaracus might not prosper.
Thence arose strife and slaughter, and many an evil.
Assaracus, a fine knight, took the fight to the Greeks,
And had much aid in this, from his powerful friends,
From full many a Trojan, born of his mother's kin,
Due to the bonds of love, so forged between them.
Assaracus now advised them, communing in secret,
That he and all the Trojans should appoint Brutus
With his own help, to be their duke, and lead them,
And grant him their homage, with all due honour.
Brutus sent his heralds, far and wide, o'er the land,
Summoning his folk to him, to open assembly.
The men and the women, the poor and the wealthy,
All these he summoned, then sent them to safety,
But for seven thousand men, manning the castles,
And many that rode to seek arms and provisions,
For great was their need; the lesser folk were led
To the hills, his armies before and behind them.

Brutus writes to the king, Pandrasus

He then took counsel, communing with a few,
And wrote a fair letter, filled full with wisdom,
Greeting Pandrasus, the king, in words of peace,
And sent him that letter, which stated within it:
'Since in mortal shame, and in great dishonour,
They, that are of the Dardanian race descended,
Now dwell in this land, in disgrace and bondage,

Thralls to hard labour, they have met together,
As worthy folk, that would gain their freedom,
And all are agreed that I should be their duke.
We have in our castles seven thousand soldiers,
And, in the mountains, wait many thousands,
Who would rather live on the mast from the trees,
Like the wild swine that root in your forests,
Than further suffer their harsh state of bondage.
So, wonder not that, longing for their freedom,
They beg you, in friendship, to set them free.
This they request, in the words here written:
That they may dwell, wherever they choose to,
In peace, and at liberty, in friendship with you.
Yet if you deny them, the worse shall it be.’
Now Pandrasus he took the letter in hand
And he read the writing, with growing anger;
Strange they seemed the words held within it.
Then he spoke openly, menacingly, saying:
‘They have writ this to their own destruction.
These slaves in my land make threats against me.’
Then through all the land went a royal summons,
Calling both rich and poor to a great assembly,
All the fighting men that could bear a weapon,
On pain of life and limb, all those in that land.
And on horse, and on foot, forth the folk journeyed.
The king threatened Brutus, likewise Assaracus,
With besieging all of their loathsome company,
And when, by force, they were swiftly defeated,
He would hang them all from the tallest trees.

The king sends his armies against Brutus and Assaracus

Brutus heard, and the news he heard was true,
That Pandarus the king, with a mighty army,
Yet doomed to perish, was marching towards them.
Brutus took counsel as to what was best to do.
He took his brave men, that goodly company,
And marched to the woodland, to the wilderness,
To a narrow place where the king must pass by.

Brutus had good men, as many as were needed,
Three thousand warriors he led to that ambush.
The king came riding, with his nobles about him,
And there Brutus struck them a sudden grim blow;
He struck those Greeks fiercely, in grim onslaught,
The Greeks unaware of the harm he'd intended,
And they turned, and they ran, the noble lords fled.
A river named Achalon was not far away,
And into the water plunged many a thousand.
Brutus came after, and endlessly harried them,
With sword and with spear, he drove and scattered them,
In the water and on land, he struck those men down.
The king fled swiftly when he saw his friends fallen.
Mickle folk there were slain, and in many a wise.

The king flees and his brother Antigonus is defeated by Brutus

Now the king had a brother, nor had he another,
Antigonus his name, a great lord of Greece.
He viewed his brother's men, saw how they fared there,
On land, in the water, the which was loath to them.
Antigonus, his warriors gripping their weapons,
Advanced towards Brutus, to his own destruction.
Their hosts met together, revealing great courage,
And one, that was nigh them, might have beheld there,
Many a man sore wounded, and many a mishap,
Many a head or limb there, strewn on the ground.
Many a man fought hard, many a man took flight,
Many a man, for his sins, was felled in that battle.
The Trojans slew the Greeks that were near them,
There Brutus took Antigonus, Pandrasus' brother,
And led him prisoner, glad to have captured him.
He had him tight bound, with many a binding,
And those of his company, those he'd had by him.
This he learned of, Pandrasus; little it pleased him,
That his brother Antigonus was bound, a captive.
The king sent word, wherever his land stretched,
Summoning all those that could march or ride,
To come to him, at the castle of Sparatin,

And no castle was stronger in all of Greece.
He thought it the truth, though true it was not,
That Brutus held there all those he had taken,
And they yet alive, in the depths of the castle,
And Brutus himself was there with the spoils.
But Brutus wrought better, and better befell him.
He placed there six hundred of his good knights,
While he went swiftly, in strength, to the woods.
The king now marched with his men to the castle,
And lay all about it, his enemies within.
And, on every side, men besieged that fortress.
They often assailed the walls, charging together.
With steel weapons, they dealt men bitter strokes
With shafts and with stones, they made fierce conflict;
Amidst Greek fire, the ill-fated lay fallen.
There was much bloodshed, disaster was rife.
The knights in the castle countered them strongly,
So, the king's host might not take and slay them;
While the king, of his men, lost many a thousand.

Pandrasus besieges the castle at Sparatin (*Sparta?*)

The king, now mourning the loss of his men,
Drew back for a while, threatening the castle,
Telling those within that, once he had won there,
He would slay them all, he would burn them alive.
Then he dug a great ditch that was wondrous deep,
All about the fortress, filled with branches of thorn,
And he lay thereabout, and repaired his losses.
The king was wrath, and he swore many an oath,
That he'd not retreat till his enemies were dead.
In the castle were many men, food they wanted,
For the food soon went, since many consumed it.
They chose a messenger, good in a time of need,
And sent him to Brutus, he who was dear to them.
He greeted their lord then, with many a fair word,
And asked him to aid them with all of his strength.
While they were yet safe there, all his good men.
Brutus bethought him of the great need they had

And said to himself, in his heart, these true words:
'Who helps his good friends, he honours himself,
And so will I honour mine, while I'm yet living.'

Brutus and Anacletus

Now, there was a nobleman named Anacletus
Captured with the king's brother that lay bound.
Brutus seized him, his mood sanguine and bitter,
And grasped him by the hair, as if to slay him,
Laying his naked sword against his neck.
And these were the words, that fell Brutus said:
'You're a dead man except you obey my will,
As is your lord, as well, if you fail to do so.
Do as I wish, and you'll aid the two of you.'
Said Anacletus: 'Lord, I will do your will,
With all my might, and aid my lord, and I.'
'Do so, and the better it shall be for you,
You shall have life and limb, and be my friend,'
Said Brutus, and swore he'd not break his word.
Then said Brutus, of knights among the best:
'Anacletus dear friend, tonight you shall go,
At the perfect time, when men go their beds,
Wending your way to the tents of the king,
And when you come to the knights that guard him,
There you must gather a good seven hundred,
The keenest warriors, and then address them,
And, speaking in a familiar way, declare:
'I, Anacletus, whom you know, have broken free
Of the heavy bonds that Brutus laid upon me;
And another thing, moreover, the king's brother
I have brought from that slaughterhouse of a prison
Where he held him, and tomorrow would hang him,
And I have concealed him in the woods nearby.
Knights, come with me, and let the king sleep sound,
And, trusting in fortune, go abroad, quiet as thieves,
And I will lead you to where I hid my lord,
At the edge of the wood, in among the branches.
And you will do well to bring him to the king;

Since this is his only brother, he has no other.'
He was known to the knights, they all knew him,
They thought that the words he said were all true,
But all were false, for the man betrayed his folk.
Nowhere is a man so wise he may not be fooled.
Anacletus went before, the knights followed after.
He went towards the pass, as Brutus had ordered,
Where Brutus had set his men before and behind.
The way was long and narrow, the cliffs were steep.
Brutus now attacked the foe with all his forces.
He caught them there together, and none he spared.
Some he slew, some he bound, the rest he let live,
Disposing of all in the way he thought best.

Brutus gathers his forces to attack the king

Brutus then divided his whole army in four,
And commanded his men to battle for honour,
The young and the old, the strong and the bold,
And fight bravely, faithfully against the foe,
Advancing full swiftly against Pandrasus.
'I forbid,' Brutus said, 'all my loyal thanes,
By the great love that there is between us,
That none prove so wild or devoid of wit,
That he speaks to another, or utters a sound,
Till he hears my war-horn blown right loudly,
For I will advance to the tent of the king,
And, as soon as I can alight from my steed
And blow my war-horn so all may hear it,
Then, my men, lay on; wake them from sleep
And see that the Greeks all slide to the ground;
They are fated to fall, for our enemies are they.'

The enemy camp is assailed

Then all his knights did as Brutus commanded,
While he rode on before, to the tent of the king,
Leapt from his steed, and blew his horn loudly.
His Trojans heard; they advanced on the Greeks,

Awakening men outright, midst dreadful slaughter.
There, heads were destined to fall on the field,
Full many a limb; their ill-fortune the worst,
Many a thousand fled, trailing their entrails,
As Brutus, amidst his knights, captured the king.
Still whole, fully sound, he cried out aloud:
'I have this folk's king, now fell all his people!
Let none of them flee alive to their bolt-holes,
And their king I will now lead away beside me.'
And he then took possession of all before him,
And raised the siege of Sparatin his castle.

The aftermath of Brutus' victory

On the morrow, with daylight, the night departed,
Brutus summoned all of his dear comrades,
Ordering them for love of him, all that good host,
To take up the slain, and in the earth bury them;
Deep in a common grave they should set the dead.
And soon it was done, full many toiled at the work.
And all the spoils they'd won those knights shared;
With honour, all his loyal men Brutus rewarded.
Once this deed was done, he performed another.
He had heralds climb on high and loudly proclaim
That all his good folk should gather, in that morn,
And all his noblemen should assemble with them,
And right joyfully they were gathered there that day.
All his folk, all the goodly knights, assembled,
And their lord spoke, and this to them he said:
'Listen my knights, come, listen my loyal lads,
And give me your counsel, as you think is good.
I have bound in close bonds the king of this land,
And his brother also, and so much the better.
His people slain, now he hates me the more,
For all he had I have given my noble friends.
If it be your counsel, all you good men of mine,
I'll cut off his head with a stroke of my sword.
For if you so will it, his blood I will spill,
Yet if you wish, I will grant him his freedom,

If he gives me treasure, of gold and silver,
All of his wealth, in exchange for his life.'
Then all his noble knights answered their lord.
Some there were agreed he should slay the man,
And possess the land, and be their crowned king,
And some said otherwise, so the speeches went.
'Give us this king,' some said, 'all of his gold,
And all of the treasure he has in this land,
Give us robes and rich clothing, and give us horses,
Give us one furthest part of his whole kingdom,
Give us hostages too, and well done shall be all.'

Membricius advises that they leave the land and seek another

Now many a nobleman that heard was uncertain
Whether twas better to fare forth or dwell there.
And, while they debated, up spoke Membricius,
Who was a rich and a most prudent noble,
Wise and thoughtful, of sound understanding:
'What is this, you Knights, what is this, you say,
Here amongst you all? There is none has spoken
Words sound enough to rightly advise us.
Yet if you will give me leave, my lord Brutus,
And if you approve of my right to give counsel,
Then I will give you the best of my own advice.'
And the folk answered: 'That we fain would hear.'
Then spoke Membricius, and loudly he cried it:
'Let us demand of the king all these good things:
That, first of all, he shall grant us our freedom,
And then let us ask that he gives his daughter
To be bound in wedlock with our Lord Brutus.
And then as much of his corn as contents us,
And of gold and of treasure, and of fine horses.
And all the best of the stores that his knights hold,
And all the fine ships that belong to this land,
And all that is needed for those vessels to sail,
And money and weapons, that we may go forth,
Then fare over the sea, wherever we wish to,
And so, sail on at length, till we come to land,

And journey through all that land till we come
To a place that is fitting and, there, Lord Brutus
We may crown as our king, who of us is the best,
And this king's fair daughter, Ignogen, queen.
For if we should live on here amongst the Greeks,
They will prove our foes, for we stood against them.
And their kindred we slew, that sleep in the earth,
So, to them we are hateful, for that great injury.
They'll seek to beguile us, through their evil craft,
And the worse for us, then the better they'll like it,
Since, with our weapons, we've slain their kindred,
And many a thousand, there, with our right hands.
Placing our trust in them will bring us all to death,
Confidence in their justice will bring destruction;
The more they wax in strength, the worse our fate.
Well may I say, for I think this thing is true,
There's no man so high, there's no man so low,
That we've not felled some dear friend to the ground.
And so, if you agree, you who are wise in thought,
Let us depart this land where the folk loathe us.
All their goods we'll take, and leave them little.
Let them dwell in misery, having lost so much;
We'll depart with their wealth, if all are agreed,
For all the goods in this land we'll bear with us.
And they, now wretched, will e'er be afflicted,
While the rich have room to ward off wretchedness.'

Pandrasus replies to Brutus' demands

His words having ended, his speech was approved.
Any who'd been there had heard a mighty din,
Many a shout, much clamour from many men,
For they all cried thus: 'Membricius speaks true!'
Since all there agreed that his counsel was sound.
They had the king brought from incarceration,
And his brother too, both that pair together,
Before lord Brutus, and bound with iron bands.
They called to the king, loathsome words they cried.
They said he should hang from the highest tree,

Or by horses drawn apart, in pain and torment,
If he would not let them depart the land freely,
And grant them all the goods he might possess,
And all his good ships floating upon the flood,
And his daughter Ignogen to be their duke's queen.
Then the king bethought himself what he might do,
Full sorry to be alive, these tidings loathe to him.
For he feared death, was sore troubled in mind.
This Pandrasus answered them words of woe:
'You seek my daughter the fair, and I in bonds,
And my brother, Antigonus, likewise tormented,
Have slain all my men, and demand my treasure,
And then that my daughter wed whom she loathes.
Yet the man that is bound he needs must bow low.
All you ask I grant, though tis loathsome to me,
And yet if you would but dwell in this country,
I would grant lord Brutus a third of all my land,
And free his folk, and take oaths of friendship,
And grant to your duke Ignogen my daughter,
And thus, we might live as true brothers together,
And live out our lives, and spend them as one.'

Brutus insists on their departure

Then Brutus, that was their duke, he answered him:
'This will we not have, now fare forth from the land,
And so, we will spare you truly, thus, from death.
If you would seek to live, grant us now, all we wish.'
The king sent his men forth, through the land of Greece,
And commanded they bring there all he possessed,
And ready the vessels he had, that rode the flood.
And all those so commanded they did as he sought,
So, they might save their lord from pain and death.
And all his men did, as asked, at his sole behest.
The ships were readied, and all well-filled with goods,
Then the king gave his daughter to Brutus in marriage,
And so, what was pledged it was now all delivered.

Brutus, having wed Ignogen, sets sail

Then the whole of that host departed presently.
All those many knights went down to the sea;
Much were they blithe, those Brutus had with him.
Now Brutus led Ignogen aboard a fine vessel.
They righted the ropes, and they reared the mast,
Raised the sails, the wind stood as they wished.
Sixteen times twenty ships went from the haven,
And four great vessels too, all fully laden
With the finest stores and weapons Brutus had.
Then they went forth, out of the land of Greece,
Over the wide seaways, the wild waters tame.

The island of Logice and the temple of Diana

Two whole days and two nights they were out at sea,
And then, on the third day, their vessel came to land,
Logice that isle was called, of folk there were none,
Neither of men nor of women, its paths deserted.
Brigands had ravaged the place, slaying its people,
And so, it lay waste, bereft of all human life.
But a host of wild deer caused them to wonder,
Which the Trojans approached and did as they would,
And bore to their ships the creatures they slew there.
They found in the island a castle most strong.
The walls had toppled, the great halls were fallen.
A temple they found that was wrought of marble,
Both tall and wide, and the goddess possessed it.
Within was an image, made like to a woman,
It was fair and noble, and the heathen named her
The goddess Diana, and the Fiend he loved her.
She wrought wondrous magic; the Fiend helped her.
She was queen of the woods, all that cover the earth.
In the heathen rites, she was held a high goddess.
To her were drawn all those skilled in the craft,
And things-to-come she would make known to them,
In visions, and dreams, as they were sleeping.
While there were living folk on that island,

They worshipped her likeness; the Fiend possessed it.
So, Brutus learned, from those in his vessel,
Who had been there before, and knew of the rites.
He then took twelve sages who were his wisest men,
And a priest of his creed, of the heathen ways,
Gerion the priest was named, one of high standing.
They went to the shrine, where Diana's image stood,
Brutus entered the shrine, the twelve were with him,
And he told all the people to wait there, outside.
A vessel he bore, in his hand, of red gold,
Milk was within the thing, mingled with wine,
The milk of a white hind, he himself had slain.
He lit a fine flame to burn by the altar there,
Then nine times he circled the altar, twas needful,
And prayed to the Lady, she that was dear to him;
With his mild words he entreated her might.
Oft he kissed the altar, with beseeching looks,
And, with these mild words, poured milk on the fire:
'Lady Diana; Diana, beloved of us,
Noble Diana, aid me, in my hour of need.
Teach me, and counsel me, with your wisest craft,
Whither I might sail, and there lead my people
Into a fine country where they all might dwell.
If I should win that land, and my people enter,
I will build, in your name, a spacious temple,
And there will honour you, with high worship.'

Diana's prophetic words

So, spoke Brutus, and took up the hind's hide,
And, before the altar, spread it, much like a bed.
Then he knelt upon it, and lay down upon it,
And began to slumber, and thereafter to sleep.
And as he lay sleeping, in dream it seemed to him
That his lady Diana beheld him, lovingly,
With a kindly smile, she made him a promise,
While graciously placing her hand on his head,
And this she said to him, while he lay sleeping:
'Past France, to the west, you shall find a fair land,

By the sea surrounded; and there you shall prosper.
There you'll find fish and fowl; there fine deer dwell.
There is wood, there is water, and many a wilderness.
The land is most pleasant, with clear-flowing springs,
Though many a strong giant inhabits that land.
Albion, they call it, and no man lives there now.
There you shall go, and there build a new Troy.
There, of your line, shall its high kings be born,
And your powerful kin shall rule all that country,
And be praised on earth, and you whole and sound.'
Then Brutus awoke, and felt that his life was blessed.
He thought of his dream, and all she had prophesied.
And lovingly told all she'd said to his people,
How he had dreamt, and the lady had greeted him.
He thanked her earnestly, in most gracious words.
He had made her a promise, and well he fulfilled it,
That her he would worship, and build her a temple,
With her image in red gold, when he reached land.
And that, all of his life, he'd obey her command.

Brutus departs from Logice

They took leave of the lady, and boarded the ship,
And the wind and weather bore them on smoothly,
Thirty days, thirty nights, they sailed straight ahead.
Past Africa, they voyaged, to west and to north.
Through the waters of Silvius, and Philisteus,
By Ruscikadan, they sailed over the sea,
And by the mountainous country of Azare.
On the sea they met pirates, the fiercest of those days,
And strongest, full fifty ships; many their enemies.
With Brutus they fought, and felled some of his men;
Triumphant, he slew the doomed, binding the quick.
Many the fine spoils, there, that lord Brutus won,
Of treasure and stores, his honour the greater.
There was never a man of his that was now so poor,
That he had not fine gold, and good cloth upon him.
Then they fared forth on a voyage of many days.
Upon the Malva, a river, that flowed full long

They disembarked, then, in Mauritania.
They roamed o'er that land and its people they slew,
And all the food and the drink that they found there,
Whatever seemed good, they bore to their vessels.

He joins forces with Corineus of Spain

Then they fared forth, full prosperous their passage,
Many the spoils they had gathered ere sailing.
They came to the Pillars of Hercules, great his strength,
And there were tall posts of stone, solid the marble.
Hercules wrought them and, thereabouts, the land
Was long and was broad, in their hand they held it.
There they found mermaids, creatures of great deceit,
Women they seem, but below the waist they are fish.
They have so sweet a song, be the day e'er so long,
None weary of hearing the sound of their singing,
Half woman, half fish, this world's tokens surely,
Their songs are so sweet, that few can forgo them.
Brutus heard tell, from his sailors' murmuring,
Of the foul deceits that the mermaids practised.
He had men to the halyards, sails to the topmast,
To run before the wind, plough the sounding waves.
From every side, the mermaids swam to them,
Greatly they sought to thwart them with evil craft,
And yet Brutus escaped them without being harmed,
Sailed on straight ahead, the ships running swiftly.
A steersman gave him glad tidings, sighting Spain.
They drew towards harbour; his folk were most blithe.
To the land they came, and good folk they found there,
A fourfold host of many a thousand men,
Fine knights, that were ready and eager to fight.
They were their kinsmen, and so much the better,
These were four hosts of men driven from Troy.
Antenor had led them there, he their commander,
He that fled Troy, with that great host of people,
When the Greeks took the city with bitter slaughter.
Corineus was now their duke, since Antenor died;
Corineus was a fine man, a leader of ample might.

For powerful and strong was he, like to a giant.
Corineus now heard that Brutus had come thither,
That was glad to be alive; ne'er had he felt blither.
The two met together, and oft clasped each other.
Brutus told him his news, that he sought out a land
Where he might dwell, and with him his good people.
Corineus answered him: 'Then, I shall go with you,
And all my dear folk, and share our fate with you.
And hold you as chief, and our lord you shall be.'
This the pair so agreed, and sailed on together.

They anchor at Nantes, in the Loire estuary

From Spain they steered a course towards Britain;
Armorica it was called, before it was named so.
Past Poitou on the right, there they came to land,
In a lovely place, where the Loire joins the sea.
Seven nights and a day, Brutus lay in that haven,
And he sent out adventurers, to view the country.
To Goffar, the king of Poitou, twas not pleasing,
To find that adventurers were scouting the land.
The king ordered counsellors, wise men and eloquent,
To travel towards the coast, there where the host lay,
And learn of the knights there, what it was they sought;
And, if peaceful, whether they'd meet with the king,
Or whether they were hostile, and bent on fighting;
Numbert led the men whom he sent on that errand.
Corineus was in the woods, chasing the deer there,
With five hundred knights, hounds, and hunting horns.

Corineus encounters Numbert the envoy

There they came upon Numbert, the king's envoy,
And Numbert called out to them, crying loudly:
'Whence be you from, knights, that act so boldly?
You hunt in the king's chase, and so you must die.
You shame my monarch, you'll feel his anger,
His chase is denied you, and so you must suffer.'
Corineus was angered, advancing towards him,

Filled with wrath, he then spoke this speech to him:
'Knight, you're a fool, to utter such words to me.
If you king forbids it, so much the worse for him.
I'll not cease from hunting, despite this ban of his.
I shall slaughter both hind and hart, all that I find.'
Then Numbert was angered, that was the king's steward,
He had a strong bow that he gripped in his hand,
And strung it, and drew it, though to his own harm.
He set there an arrow, and let it fly fiercely,
But past bold Corineus' side, the dart glided.
Corineus paled, but swift struck it aside,
Then, like a lion, he leapt towards Numbert,
And, with all his strength, he grasped at the bow.
He smote Numbert with it, and shattered his skull,
Such that blood and brains burst from the wound.
Those who were with the victim fled swiftly,
And sought King Goffar, and gave the ill-tidings,
That Numbert was slain, that was his steward.
The king was sore grieved, and saddened at heart,
And sent his messengers o'er all the kingdom,
And gathered his warriors, those men ill-fated.

King Goffar sends out his army

The army was summoned, and then it marched forth,
Towards Brutus' camp where he lay, by the shore.
Now Brutus was wary, a wise man in warfare,
He sent out spies to gaze on the king's army,
To view where they went, and where they might fight.
The spies were sent forth, and soon they returned,
And came to their lord, where he lay in the haven,
And spoke these words to him, true-tongued were they:
'Hail to you, Brutus, the noblest amongst us!
Now, Goffar the king has gathered his army,
A great host, and strong, and these were his words,
That he would slaughter all those found alive;
The ships he would sink, and the women he'd drown;
None here would he leave in the land of the living.'
So, Brutus sent all the young folk to the ships,

And he shared out his stores among the people,
Then Brutus the Good, he spoke to his men:
‘You men are dear to me, hark to my counsel,
Come you men never back to this haven,
Until my word I grant, in plain speech, to you,
That I have the upper hand o’er the king.’

Brutus and Corineus fight against King Goffar

Brutus gathered his knights, and straight forth he went,
To where he was counselled the king would pass
As he rode, with that host of men, upon the way.
Their forces met, and right fiercely they fought;
That was a great battle, many doomed there to die.
There many a brave man was hewn by the steel;
All day the fight lasted, fell many a good knight.
Corineus advanced now, and to himself he said:
‘Come, Corineus, are you not a chosen knight?
Show forth your strength, reveal your great might,
And so, strike these folk of Poitou to the ground.’
Corineus attacked them, like to a savage wolf
That rushes among the sheep working them harm.
He grasped in his right hand his sword broad and strong,
And all that he struck with it tumbled to earth.
Though a man be e’er so strong, and all clad in iron,
If with that sword he smote, he rose no more.
When he had hewn two hundred good men at least,
From the point to the hilt his blade broke in his hand.
Then Corineus, much angered, these words he cried:
‘Woe to the smith that wrought you with his hand!’
Then he gazed all about him, filled with his anger,
And seized a great battle-axe from a man’s hand,
And those that were near him he set on and slew.
The king took to flight, and his host they fled after,
Corineus then followed, pursuing them keenly,
And in fury he called to them, did that knight:
‘Why do you flee Goffar, now, with your forces?
You should forego the like, if you’d drive us hence,
You must fight harder if you would see us depart!’

And, riding on swiftly, no man could abide him.

Suard, the king's man

The king had a steadfast thane, Suard his name.
And he looked back at Corineus, pursuing.
Now, Suard led a host of three hundred horsemen;
He turned about swiftly, and then he fought boldly.
Yet Suard could hold his ground there but awhile,
For Corineus attacked him with all his great might;
He struck Suard on the head, felling him to the earth,
Slashing his chest across, down to the ribs beneath,
For none was so forceful they could endure him.
Corineus sliced them, down to their rib-bones, thus,
Scattered them on the field, many a thousand died.
And those men that fled him, they met with Brutus,
All those that came to him, that great leader slew.

King Goffar seeks aid from the Twelve Companions

So, then King Goffar took stock of his losses,
And, not without hardship, fled from the fight.
He fled from the land, abandoning his people,
He fled into France, where he found friendship,
To the Emperor, and his Twelve Companions,
And told of the harm that Brutus had done him.
In France they lay those Twelve Companions,
The 'Douze-Pairs' the French folk called them,
For all those twelve were mighty noblemen,
Kings they were titled, and oft made it known.
They promised Goffar that they would aid him,
Free him of foes, so that he might breathe easy.
They sent throughout France, gathered their forces,
For a full seven-night, they summoned their men.

Brutus builds a fortress in Armorica

Then Brutus led all his host into Armorica,
And was filled with delight at the spoils he gained.

He scoured the land, and the towns he burned,
He harried that land, which he held in his grip.
All the land he ruled, and its power he wielded.
He advanced with his host, to a broad hill-top,
It was tall and fair, and he gazed all about him.
He took counsel and, there, a fort would build;
And when it was built, it was good and strong.
A little while after, King Goffar attacked him,
With a mighty army of folk out of France,
And out of the countries that France bordered.
When Goffar the king learned of the fortress,
He was so pained that his wits nigh left him.
He led his most eager troops there, swiftly,
Then split them in twelve battalions, advancing,
To meet with the Trojans that came against them,
Who laid on the ground three thousand Frenchmen.
The French were dismayed, but fought nonetheless,
And so, with harsh insults pushed back the Trojans,
Then drove Brutus and all back into the fortress,
And, in that same onset, felled many a man of his.
All day they assailed and assaulted that fortress,
Until they, at nightfall, could battle no longer.
There was dread in the fort; at midnight they gathered,
And took counsel that, into the woods, Corineus
Would lead all the folk that he had in his force.
And so, they marched out, all as silent as thieves,
Into the dense woods that stretched all around them,
While Brutus took charge of the fortress, and held it.

Brutus and Goffar contest the fortress at Tours

On the morrow, at dawn, when day comes to men,
Was Brutus emboldened, as the wild boar rallies
When the hounds surround it, deep in the forest.
He commanded his men to don their breastplates,
And grip their weapons, to advance to battle.
They drew back the gates, and went forth boldly,
They reached the French and attacked them fiercely.
Hard was the fight on each side, and weary;

Many a man fought; many a knight was slain.
Brutus had there a kinsman, named Turnus,
So furious in battle that soon he was slain.
For he felled the Frenchmen in many a wise;
With his own hand, he felled many a hundred,
But strayed too far from his close companions,
Till, on every side, by the foe surrounded.
Their weapons wounded him, swiftly they slew him.
Brutus found him dead, and bore him within,
And there he was buried beside the stone wall.
So, from him, Tours that fortress was named,
And the region Touraine, from the dead Turnus.
Then Brutus went forth, and fared to the fight,
There to wreak revenge, for love of his friend.
The foes met together, and fought full fiercely,
There, the clashing of swords, in grievous battle,
A furious fight, where many were doomed to die.
Wondrous fierce was the battle, till Corineus
Came with his strong force to succour his leader.
Brutus struck one flank, Corineus the other.
They shot flights of arrows, sharpened and fatal,
And killed all the Frenchmen, all they could find.
They won the field, and slew all their foes there.
And no man, that was born, was ever so wise
He could tell in a day all the count of the dead,
The thousands on thousands they felled to the ground.

Brutus sails, and lands at Dartmouth, by Totnes

Then Brutus blew loud, and gathered his nobles,
And they spoke together, and took wise counsel,
And resolved, in that forum, to fare on their way.
It was declared, and proclaimed throughout the army,
That Brutus the Good would set forth on the sea.
They marched to the ships with all of their spoils,
All the gold, and the silver, of Goffar the king,
And that of the Frenchmen who died in the battle,
Then fared forth from the haven, the warriors blithe.
The wind matched their will, the wild fish leapt,

Full blithe were the men, for the waters were calm.
The fleet sailed onwards till they reached this land,
At Dartmouth by Totnes; well pleased was Brutus.
The ships beached on the sand; all the folk landed.
Then had Brutus the gift, that Diana had promised
In the Isle of Logice, now they'd reached shore.
Much was the joy and the mirth of his people,
And they gave most humble thanks to the goddess,
That they now enjoyed the day they had longed for.

The Giants of Albion

Twenty strong giants they found in the land,
I've heard not their names in song, or in speech,
Except that of him who was their high chief,
Gogmagog he was called; he the most powerful,
A foe to the gods, and beloved of the worst.
Brutus and his good folk now perceived them,
And shot their steel arrows towards them, swiftly.
That did them much harm, so they fled to the hills,
And withdrew, in the wilderness, into their caves.
It befell on a day that Brutus, with all his folk,
Performed holy rites, with most noble worship,
And partook of food and drink, and made merry.
Things of gold and silver they bore in their hands,
And their horses and clothes delighted the people.
Those good folk they were blither than ever.
Descended the twenty giants from the hillside,
And they were all mighty, both tall and strong.
Trees as clubs they bore, and advanced together,
They charged at Brutus' folk and did them harm.
In but a little while, they slew there five hundred,
With clubs and stones fierce trouble they made.
But, the Trojan men, they returned in strength,
Let fly their arrows, and forced the giants to flee;
They let their darts fly, there, from every side
And the giants now fled who had seemed so bold.
Nineteen were slain, and Gogmagog captured,
And so, before Brutus they brought him alive.

Brutus had him bound, tight as was needed,
So that they then might make trial of his strength.
Gogmagog, before Brutus, would fight Corineus.
Brutus played judge, from the heights of a hill,
And, upon the cliffs there, the Trojans now gathered.

Corineus and Gogmagog wrestle on the cliffs

Forth came Corineus, advancing full boldly,
And the giant also, so that all there beheld them.
Many a man looked on, many a woman watched,
A host of good folk were there at the wrestling.
The pair raised their arms, and gripped one another,
Breast against breast, till their bones nigh cracked.
They thrust out their legs; those fighters were strong.
Head clashed with head, while the folk gazed on.
Often, they fell, as though they would lie there,
Often, they leapt up, as though they had wings,
And deadly glances would flash from their eyes.
They gnashed their teeth, raging like wild boars.
Now, their faces were swollen, and black of hue,
Now they were red with the force of their anger,
Each of them strained there to conquer the other.
With skill, deceit, and with marvellous strength.
Gogmagog bethought him, and thrust Corineus
From off his breast, then drew him towards him,
And, gripping him tight, he broke four of his ribs,
Marring him mightily; he shrugged it off bravely.
Though little seemed lacking to end his challenge,
Yet Corineus took thought as to what he might do.
He stretched out his arms, and gripped Gogmagog,
Till the bones of the back broke; grasping his waist,
He heaved him up grimly, there on the cliff top.
Corineus gripped him, and flung the giant down,
And as he was falling, his bones broke asunder,
His body was shattered, ere he fell to the ground.
And so, down to Hell went that mighty opponent.
Now the cliff has a name, and forever is called so,
Among all of the peoples, tis Gogmagog's Leap;

And with that foe's ending, the giants were dead.

The Trojans settle in Albion, renamed as Britain

Now all of that country was in Brutus' sole hands.
And the Trojan men, having won past their perils,
Then were they blithe in their hearts, and rejoiced.
And they built them houses, and held them securely;
They made villages, towns, and they tilled the earth;
Their seed corn they sowed, meadows they mowed.
All the land they ploughed as seemed good to them,
For all was their own, that they looked upon there.
The land was called Albion, Brutus came upon,
But he said that it should be called so no more,
That after his own should its name be fashioned.
He was named Brutus, the land he called Britain.
And the Trojan men that declared him their lord,
They called themselves Britons, after that name.
And the name lasts yet, and cleaves to this land.

The origin of the name England

Then to Corineus, his most dear companion,
Brutus gave of the land, placing it in his hand.
Corineus, its lord, his realm he called Corinee.
And later the folk, who dwelt in that region,
Called that land Cornwall, changing its name.
Their own Trojan speech altered later to British,
But the English host changed its name again,
For Gurmund came, and he dwelt in this land.
This Gurmund, it was, that drove out the Britons,
And his men he called by the title of Saxons,
From the tip of Germany; the Angles their tribe.
From Angles came Englishmen, and thus England.
The English conquered, and subdued the Britons,
Such that they ne'er might rise by dint of counsel.
Brutus held Britain, Corineus held Cornwall.
Brutus took all his folk that made up his army,
And placed them about him; they were dear to him.

Corineus called, to his side, all his chosen men,
And he placed them all, here and there, as needed.
Their numbers waxed, and full well they throve,
Each had what they wished, and in no great time,
The folk were so many there was no end to them.
Brutus bethought him; he beheld all his people.
He beheld all the mountains, both tall and fair,
He beheld the vales, that were sweet and spacious,
He beheld the waters, the herds of wild deer,
He beheld all the fish, and the birds of the air,
He beheld the pastures, the lovely woodlands,
He saw how the leaves blew, saw how the corn grew,
And all that he viewed here was dear to his heart.

The founding of London (*Trinovant*)

Then he thought of Troy where his kin had suffered,
And he journeyed all over, viewing the land.
He found a most pleasant site, close to the water,
And twas there he began to raise a rich burgh,
With bowers and halls, and with high stone walls.
The burgh was built well, and wide and spacious.
The burgh was most fair, and he gave a name to it,
And a glorious name, it was called Troy the New,
As a mark of the kindred, from whom he had come.
Much later, the people, when speaking its name,
Uttered it otherwise; Trinovant they called it.
After many a winter, it chanced there arose,
A most powerful king, of Brutus' true line.
And he was named Lud, and the burgh he held dear,
And there he did dwell, for many a winter.
And had it proclaimed, among all the people
That it be named Caerlud, after their king.
After that came other kings, and new customs,
And men called it Luddon, throughout all the land.
Later the English ruled, London they called it,
Later the French ruled, who came here, and conquered,
And in their land's language, they called it Londres.
Thus has the fair burgh fared since it was reared,

Thus has this isle of ours passed from hand to hand.
Such that the burghs, that Lord Brutus first founded,
And the names they were granted in Brutus' day,
Are nigh destroyed through the changes of rulers.

The death of Brutus, and the division of Britain

When Brutus had built the burgh he named New Troy,
He caused many of his dear folk to settle there;
He handed it into their care, and wrought all well,
Laying upon them laws that were good and fair.
And he saw to it that their dealings were loving,
That each was respected by night and by day;
Those that would not behave must be punished,
And if they proved evil enough, they should hang.
On account of this, they feared the hand of justice,
And were a folk that did good, and loved counsel.
Brutus ruled this land four and twenty winters,
And had three fine sons of Ignogen his queen.
When their father died, they were of one mind;
In the burgh of New Troy, they saw him buried,
Which Brutus found much pleasure in making.
And afterwards these three all met together,
And, with love, they then divided this whole land.
Now the eldest of the brothers was named Locrin;
He was the wisest of the three, and the wariest,
He was the strongest, and most resolute of will.
For his share, he took the land across the south,
And that realm was called, in his honour, Locres.
Camber was the second, the middle brother,
That land which fell to him was called Cambrie,
Which is that wild land the Welsh folk love.
Later it was called Wales, for Queen Galoes,
And for Duke Galuan; the Welsh they were called.
The third was Albanac, whom Humbert destroyed;
Albanac held the land at the north end of the isle,
That which is now called Scotland by the people,
Which Albanac, in his day, called Albanie.
Locrin's realm stretched to the south and east,

Albanac had all that there was to the north,
While Camber held all to the west of Severn.
The three brothers, when they possessed this land,
Showed their great love for all their people,
In peace and friendship for seventeen winters.

The arrival of Humber, King of Humberie

After these seventeen years, and not long after,
A chief arrived that was the king of his people,
Humber he was called, the king of Humberie,
Evil were his customs, and eager his men.
He had wasted many a land, many a people,
And many a hundred isles by the sea-strand.
All the greatest part from here to Germany.
King Humber, and all the fleet that bore his army
Entered Albanac's land, and fought the people,
Burning, ravaging, dealing the folk much harm.
Albanac came to seek him with a great force,
They met together, and many a warrior died.
All of Albanac's men were felled to the ground,
Except those that fled to the woods and coverts.
While Albanac himself was slain in the fight.
Such harm in the land wrought Humber the strong.
Those that escaped the fight, and fled that realm,
Went into the British lands of Locrin the bold.
They told him, in true and sorrowful speech,
How that his brother Albanac had been slain.
And that Humber it was that had destroyed him.
So then, the remaining brothers met together,
Locrin and Camber, and brought all their men,
And all of the brave knights they could gather.
Then towards Humber they marched, in strength.
Humber was so angered, now he held the land,
That he sailed the Scottish seas with his warriors,
For they were eager to conquer all of Britain.
And Locrin and Camber now came against them,
They roused their armies; war was upon the folk.
There Humber was slain, and all the folk were blithe;

Through Locrin and Camber, all his men were lost,
And with great trouble he fled, and into a river,
Where he, and much of his army, were drowned.
Humber that flow was named, for the dead chieftain,
Who with his host had made war in Germany,
Greatly wasted the land, and harmed the people.

Astrild and Locrin

Humber had captured, there, three fair maidens;
The one was named Astrild, a high king's daughter,
And the fairest of all the women in this world.
These three were in the ships with Humbert's men,
They that had charge of his treasure while he fought.
When Humber was drowned, and dead, in the river,
Locrin and Camber advanced upon his fleet.
To take ownership of all that he had possessed.
Among those aboard ship, they found these maidens,
Locrin saw Astrild there, and lovingly beheld her;
He took her in his arms, and joy was in his heart,
And he said to the maiden: 'Good will come to you.
Woman you are comely; I shall take you to wife,
And hold you in high honour, as my fair queen,
All the while I live, and I shall have no other.'
Corineus was yet alive, that was Duke of Cornwall
And he had one daughter, and she to him was dear.
Now Locrin was pledged to take her hand in marriage,
And had plighted his troth, before all the household,
But now Locrin would quit her, for Astrild's sake.
Corineus heard this, he that was Cornwall's duke,
That his beloved daughter was scorned by Locrin,
Corineus was troubled, and in melancholy mood.
He advanced into Britain, until he met with Locrin.
Now upon his shoulder, he bore a great battle-axe,
He stood before Locrin, and loathly looked on him.
And these words he spoke, that warrior Corineus:
'Know now, Locrin, know now you loathsome fellow,
Know now, you blatant fool, woe will come upon you.
You have scorned my daughter, she who was dear to me,

Insulting myself thereby, and surely you shall die.
I marched with your father, and I led his army,
In many a day of toil and sweat, many a sore combat,
Many a vicious onset, with many a mighty blow,
And many a wound, in many a wondrous fight,
I suffered in the field, battling before Brutus,
He that was my dear friend, and my noble lord.
Now, shall you die; for he was ne'er your father;
If you were Brutus' son, you'd not so shame me.
For love of him, I've laid full many a giant low,
And yet you'd repay all my labours with harm,
By deserting my lovely daughter Gwendoline,
For this foreign maid, she that they call Astrild.
You know not from what land she came hither,
Nor what foreign king might be her father,
Nor what foreign queen might be her mother.
For love of her you'll have what you will hate,
For you shall be hewn asunder by my axe.'
Corineus heaved on high, his axe descended,
And struck upon the stone where Locrin stood.
The hard stone shattered, as Locrin stepped back.
And all then hastened to them from every side,
To part them: strife was among those people,
There was many a proud word; and the noblest
Now held a great council, the highest in the land.
They'd not allow, for the sake of foreign gold,
That things go ill twixt Locrin and Corineus,
But, having consulted, and taken council, they
Would have Locrin take Gwendoline to wife,
And hold to the pledge he'd given Corineus,
Be true to his word, and keep the people's love;
While Astrild he should send from out the land.
Locrin approved the decision of his council;
He took Gwendoline as his spouse and queen.
And he declared, even though it was untrue,
That he would send fair Astrild from the land.
Yet he did not so, thinking to deceive them,
But summoned a hired man, whom he trusted,
And ordered him to go secretly from the court,

To the town that was later called Trinovant,
And that in our speech is now known as London.
And once there, making haste with everything,
To build a lodge, underground, beautiful and fair,
With walls of cut stone, and doors of whale-bone,
And in a place most fair, private from the people,
And set therein much fuel, and clothes a-plenty,
Robes, and purple-dyed capes, and golden plate,
Much wine, wax-candles, many a pleasant thing,
And then go forth himself, in the dark of night,
And, in deepest secrecy, lead Astrild therein.
This, that noble man did, as Locrin had demanded,
For all good men should do as their lord commands.
Astrild was seven years in this underground lodge,
Never seen without, and none knew she was there.
Except for King Locrin, and his close companions.
When he went to Trinovant, he told Gwendoline
He'd be there seven nights to worship his deity,
And would do so in secret, for else he dared not,
Lest any man learnt what he sought to do there.
This Gwendoline believed; such was his craftiness;
So acted Locrin the wild; Astrild he got with child,
And Gwendoline his wife, with child were these two.

The birth of Locrin's daughter Abren, and son Madan

Astrild bore a daughter, within her lodge of stone,
And she was baptised, in accord with their rites.
The child was named Abren, and none was fairer.
Gwendoline had a son; she was blithe at heart,
And Madan he was named, that son of the king.
The child waxed and throve, and was loved by all.
When he could walk, and talk and speak with folk,
The king had brought to him his fair son Madan,
And sent him to Corineus, and into that realm,
That he might instruct him, teach him manners,
And that he did most loyally, as long as he might.
Then came the time that each man must abide,
And Corineus the strong reached his life's end.

On Corineus death, Gwendoline is sent back to Cornwall

The king heard of it, and much the news pleased him!
For, when he knew, in truth, that Corineus was dead,
He next summoned twelve good men of his people,
And they led Gwendoline back to her father's realm,
Into that Cornwall which was her native country.
Now Gwendoline was home, with her son Madan,
And much she complained of that fact to her men,
All those that were of his household while he lived.
She gathered together her friends, her kith and kin,
And all of the knights she could draw to her cause,
And all of that country's folk that gave her support,
And foreigners who flocked to her from many lands,
That pledged to fight for her, for silver and gold,
And bade them, for her sake, revenge her injury.
Now Locrin the king had taken Astrild to wife,
For she pleased him, and had made her his queen.
Beneath the cloak of bliss there came many harms.
His men told Locrin that, into the realm he ruled,
Came Gwendoline with an army from her land,
To wreak revenge on the king, and on his queen.

Locrin is slain in battle, near the river Stour

The king with all his host advanced against her,
And they met in close encounter by a river;
That river, they named the Stour, was in Dorset,
The battle was fierce, and there Locrin was slain.
For an arrow pierced his heart, and so he fell.
There he was killed, and most of his army too.
While those who remained alive fled far away.
Gwendoline therefore had now the upper hand,
And all his realm the former queen possessed.
She went to the castle where Astrild now dwelt,
And she ordered Astrild and Abren to be bound,
And had the pair of them cast into deep water,
Wherein they were drowned, and so put to death.

Then was Gwendoline queen over that people.
She, after thinking deeply, then commanded
That the river where they drowned, be called
The Avon, on account of the daughter Abren,
And for Locrin's sake, who was her royal lord,
He who had begotten Abren upon Astrild.
So died the king, his new queen, and the child.
Tis Avon yet, that at Christchurch meets the sea.
Gwendoline then held power o'er all of Britain,
And was well-disposed to grant each man his right.
All could travel safely, though they carried red gold.
Ten years she'd been with Locrin, in grief and woe.
Fifteen years and nine days, after Locrin was dead,
She ruled Britain, and governed as do the best,
In peace and concord, and happy were her people.
Then she gave all of his father's realm to Madan,
And to Cornwall she fared, to her father's realm,
And dwelt in that land, much to the people's joy.

Madan is succeeded by his sons, Menbriz and Malin

Now Madan wedded a wife who was most fair,
And by her had two sons, yet both were wicked.
Menbriz was the elder, and Malin the younger.
Forty years, Madan held his realm, with honour,
And, at his life's end, considering what to do,
He divided his rich kingdom between his sons.
But when he was dead the two sons plotted evil;
Between them trouble arose, the pair were foes.
Sorrow and slaughter there was, of their enmity.
Menbriz acted basely, he was the worst of traitors.
He seemed to make peace with his brother,
For he promised true friendship to the other.
And appointed a day when all the noblemen
Would come together, in peace and amity.
On the day that was set, they met together.
Menbriz had named a truce, but now made war.
He wrought sorrow enough; he slew his brother,
And so won all this land, he held in his power.

The reign, and death, of Menbriz

Menbriz hated his kin, none of them was pleasing;
The wealthy he made wretched; the poor cursed him.
If any was so great that the king might not be seen
To slay him openly, the man soon died of poison.
A fair wife Menbriz wed, and begat on her a son,
Ebrauc he was called, famed throughout the land.
Menbriz worked evil, and the worst fate took him.
Evil was pleasing to him, he scorned his fair queen,
He took servants to his bed, abandoning his wife.
Twenty years he held the land, and harmed the people,
But then a time came when he too came to harm,
For he went amidst the woods, riding all alone,
Hunting a wild deer, and thereby suffered death.
Midst the trees, he'd found a fair and wondrous hind,
And with great clamour the hunt had followed after,
Riding on so wildly. that the king went all astray,
Till he had beside him not a single one of his men.
He soon arrived in a valley where he met his death,
For he happened upon a pack of ravenous wolves.
The wild creatures leapt upon him from every side
And they clawed him and tore him limb from limb.
And attacked his mount also, thus, both were dead.
So fared Menbriz who'd betrayed his brother Malin.

Ebrauc the son of Menbriz

Menbriz had but the one son, by his lovely queen,
And that was Ebrauc, among the noblest of kings
That e'er held this land, and e'er ruled the people.
His kindred he enriched, the wealthy and the needy,
The rich caused no hurt, and the poor went free.
He caused the fields to be tilled, and all loved him,
In all manner of ways, joy was there in that realm.
He kept a goodly peace; no man broke his word.
Knights he possessed, good, strong, and forceful;
They all longed for war, and the gods were angry.

The king, he knew it well, but he dared not say so.
He had good ships built, and launched by the shore,
And, after a while, the fleet was all set to sail,
And he filled the ships with his noble knights,
And sent them into France with a mighty army.
They conquered France, and lands far beyond,
They conquered all that about that country lay.
Great was the treasure they amassed as spoils,
And they came hither home, all safe and sound.
Ebrauc was our first king that pillaged abroad,
Whose army passed the sea and ventured there.
For a long time after, the people were wealthy,
Made so by the spoils of his foreign campaign.

Ebrauc builds burghs at York and Maiden Castle (*Durham?*)

Then it came to the good king Ebrauc's mind,
That he would have built two mighty burghs.
He took his men and fared forth into the north;
On this side of Scotland, there he would bide.
First, he made a burgh and called it Caer Ebrauc,
The other he made on a down, naming it Adud.
What was first Caer Ebrauc became Eborac;
Invaders came and they called it Eoverwic.
Those men of the north that ruled thereafter,
In their ill-fangled custom renamed it York.
Then further north the king made a new burgh,
Upon Agnetes mount, and most wondrous fair,
Maiden Castle; I know not why it was done.
Ebrauc lived long, and held the land with honour;
Sixty winters he was king, and held it in peace.
Many women had he to his bed, great progeny,
Twenty sons alive, each by a different mother.
He fathered thirty daughters, and all were fair.
Of his sons I will tell you, hark to their names:
Brutus Vert-Escut, Margadud; Sisilvius, Regin, Bladud,
Moruit, Lagon, Ebedluan; Ricar, Spaden, Gaul, Pardan,
Eldad, Gangu, Kerin, Luor; Ruc, Assarac, Buel, Hector,
These were the sons of Ebrauc, the noble king.

Hear now the names of his daughters, nobly-born,
The eldest, that was Gloigin; Ocidas, Ourar, Ignogen,
Guardid, Radan, Guendlian; Angarad, Guenboden, Methalan,
Malure, Ecub, Zangustel; Scadud, Kambrada, Methahel,
Gaz, Echem, Nest, Gorgon; Wladus, Ebraen, Blangru, Ebron,
Bedra, Aballac, Eangnes; Andor, Scadiald, Galoes.
It was after this Galoes that Wales was named,
And she was the fairest; above all the others
Beloved by the king, all her sisters and brothers.
Andor was the best mannered, her actions were good.
While Gloigin, the eldest was, in all things, wisest.
Silvius King of Lombardy was their near-kin.
He sent a rich envoy to Ebrauc, king of this land.
He bade him send his daughters, whom he would give
To his wealthy nobles to wed, to their Trojan kin,
Rich men of their race, in Lombardy, over the sea.
No women there, in Lombardy were to their taste,
So, he sought the king's daughters, that all might wed.
King Silvius won his boon, as king of Lombardy.
And these, of his Trojan kin, he drew to his court.
Some of the brothers went thither with their sisters.
They procured ships, and then procured weapons,
They procured men who could give them counsel,
Through all the land they sent to gather an army,
From Britain, through Lombardy, entered Germany.
His brothers named as their leader, Assarac of our land;
With wisdom and caution, they went, till they were there.
Many a fort they won; slew, burnt, and conquered the land.

The reign of King Leil, and the founding of Carlisle

Ebrauc held this realm; sixty winters was he the king.
And he retained his eldest son here, by his side,
He was greatly renowned, was this Brutus Vert-Escut,
Who held the realm twelve years, after his father died.
And he had a son named Leil, who held it after him,
For full five and twenty years, from his father's death.
Leil built a noble burgh, twas comely and most fine,
As mark of his kingship, and called the place *Caer Leil*,

And in all the Northlands there was no place so fair.
Leil the king held the land well, and firm his rule,
Yet, when near to his life's end, dire evil befell him.
Fort all his wealthy earls, and his noble barons,
Brought fierce conflict, nor for the king would cease,
The king had naught from all those men but scorn,
And every wilful man, there was, but did as he willed.
Then the king fell sick, broken by grievous sorrow,
And soon there came the day that the king lay dead.

The reign of Rudhudibras, the founding of Winchester and Canterbury

The king he had a son, who was himself a good man,
He was a fine, brave knight; his name Rudhudibras.
This knight he took power, and then held the realm,
And for nine and thirty winters he ruled this land,
After the death of his father, that true king, Leil.
He calmed the folk, and fair peace he wrought,
Set sound laws, and was stern towards the foolish.
He loved all those folk that followed his laws,
And with rich gifts he honoured all good men.
He ordered peace and quiet, on pain of life and limb.
He built a most noble burgh called Winchester,
For such a thing was most pleasing to his mind.
And afterwards Rudhudibras built Canterbury,
And Cestesbury Castle, on Waledures Down.
Yet, ne'er has there come about a stranger thing,
A great eagle, that perched on the wall, gave a cry,
A cry that Rudhudibras the king himself heard,
And every one of the knights that were with him.
In that cry, the bird foretold the death of the king,
And Rudhudibras soon died; woe to the people!

Bladud's reign, the healing waters at Bath

His son was named Bladud, he was a vigorous man,
He was both large and strong, and rich and mighty.
He knew the evil craft, and spoke with the Fiend,
And all that he wished to know the Fiend told him.

Now, this same King Bladud he built warm baths,
With much skill, and much artistry, out of stones
Broad as beams, that he laid round a wellspring,
For those waters flow hot, and heal the people.
Bladud built a temple not far from these baths;
It was made in the name of a heathen deity.
Who'd hear her name, Minerva she was called,
He'd fond belief in her, called her 'the Lady'.
He had a fire kindled, that blazed in the temple,
And never was quenched, winter or summer,
But was tended ever, as the king commanded,
To the worship of 'the Lady', dear to his heart.
Thus did Bladud the king, as was widely known.

Bladud's magical flight, and death

When he'd done this thing, he thought of another,
He boasted he'd fly in the likeness of a bird.
So, his folk might see him, and his flight behold.
He wrought him wings, of which he had much shame.
For to London he went, with many of his folk.
There he donned his wings, and his flight began.
Borne by feathers, he thus took to the sky,
He flew high in the air, close to the heavens,
But the wind blew counter, the wings weakened,
The strings broke, that held them outstretched,
And he fell to the ground: so King Bladud died.
He fell upon a place that there was in London.
The shrine of Apollo, a fiendish heathen god.
He fell upon the roof, and was dashed to pieces.
Thus was this kingdom of its king bereaved.
Twenty winters had Bladud the realm in hand,
After his father's death, that Rudhudibras,
Who was son of King Leil, the noble king.

King Lear, and the founding of Leicester

Now Bladud had a son, and he was named Lear.
After his father's death, he held this lordly land,

For the whole of his life, for full sixty winters.
He built a noble burgh, through his artful craft,
And after himself he caused it to be named.
Caer Lear the burgh was called, dear to the king,
That we folk call Leicester in our native tongue.
In the olden days it was a burgh most noble,
Yet afterwards there came upon it much sorrow,
Such that it was destroyed, the people slaughtered.
Sixty winters did Lear govern this whole land;
The king had three daughters by his noble queen,
But he had no son, and by that he was saddened,
None to sustain his honour, but his three daughters.
The eldest daughter she was named Gornioille,
The second was Regau, the third was Cordoille,
She was the youngest, and in looks the fairest,
And as dear to her father as was his own life.
Now the king grew old and, failing in strength,
He thought what he might do, as to the realm,
After his death, and declared thus, to himself:
'The realm I'll divide between my daughters;
I'll grant them the land, and they shall share it.
But first I would know which cares for me most,
And she shall have the best part of my kingdom.'
Thus thought the king, and thereafter he wrought.
He summoned Gornioille, his comely daughter,
From her chamber, to speak with her dear father.
And thus, as he sat in state, spoke the old king:
'Tell to me, in truth, Gornioille, my daughter,
That are so dear to me, how dear am I to you?
How worthy are you to wield the sovereignty.'
Gornioille was wary, as women must ever be,
And spoke a falsehood to her father the king.
'Beloved father dear, as I hope for mercy
So help me Apollo, in whom is all my trust,
You are dearer to me than is the whole world;
And more will I say, you are dearer than life.
And this is the truth, that I speak, believe me.'
Lear, the king, believed in his daughter's lie,
And this was the answer that he gave to her:

‘I say to you, Gornoille, beloved daughter dear,
Good shall you receive for your fair saying.
I am, in my old age now, much enfeebled,
And you love me more than your life itself.
I will divide my noble land in three parts,
And you shall have the best, my dear daughter,
And you shall have for spouse my finest thane,
The finest of all the noblemen of my realm.’
After this the old king spoke with the second:
‘Regau, beloved daughter, come now, counsel me,
Say, before my folk, how dear am I in heart?’
She answered prudently, and not from her heart,
‘All that is alive is not half so dear to me,
As is your life itself, before my very own,’
Yet spoke not a word of truth more than her sister.
Though her father believed the falsehood wholly.
Then said the king, for her answer pleased him:
‘The third part of my land I shall grant to you.
And you shall take and wed the lord you choose.’
Even now the king would quit not his folly,
He bade his daughter Cordoille come before him,
She was the youngest, and of word the truest,
And the king loved her more than the other two.
Cordoille had heard the lies they had told the king,
She swore a lawful oath that she would not lie.
The truth she would tell whether twas liked or not.
Then said the aged king, foolishness followed him:
‘I would hear from you, Cordoille, my daughter,
So, help you Apollo, how dear is my life to you?’
Then gave answer Cordoille, loudly and clearly,
With a smile, and playfully, to her dear father:
‘You are most dear to me, since you are my father,
And to you am I dear, as I am your daughter,
True is my love for you, since we are closest kin,
And, as I do hope for mercy, I say you more:
You are worth as much as you are master of,
And while you have it, others will love you,
For soon is he scorned, the man that has little.’
So said the maid Cordoille, and then fell silent.

Now the king was wrath; she had not pleased him.
He thought twas contempt for him she had shown,
That she thought him worthless, nor did she love him,
As did her two sisters, who had both told a lie.
Then the king's face turned black, as if in mourning,
His skin was now dark of hue, he grieving deeply.
And the king was so angered he fell in a swoon.
Then slowly he rose, and the maid was afeared,
And his speech broke forth; it was evil he uttered.
'Hark to me, Cordoille, now I shall speak my will,
Of my daughters the dearest, now the most hated,
You shall hold never a part of my kingdom;
Between the other two, shall I divide my realm,
And you shall want, and wander in wretchedness;
Never did I ween that you would shame me so;
And thus, shall you die, now flee from my sight,
Your sisters shall have the land; such is my will!
The Duke of Cornwall shall wed my Gornoille,
And the Scottish king shall wed Regau the fair.
And to them I shall grant the realm I rule over.'
Then the old king did all that he said he would.
Oft was the maiden sad, never worse than then.
Woe was in her mind, given her father's wrath.
She went to her chamber where oft she sat sorry,
Because she'd not lie to the father she loved.
The maid was most shamefast, her father she shunned,
As was the best counsel; and kept to her chamber.
And suffered in her mind, and much she mourned.
And thus, things stood awhile, in this same wise.

The division of his kingdom, Cordoille's exile

In France, there was a king, rich and most eager,
Aganippus was his name, chief of his people;
He was made king when young, wife he had none.
He sent a message into this land of ours,
And Lear the king he greeted in amity.
And said his wish was to ask for Cordoille,
And he would wed her, and make her his queen,

And thereafter do all for her she might wish.
For British travellers had told of the maid,
Of her grace and kindness, before the king,
Of her great beauty, and of her true honour,
How patient she was, and of her fine manners.
No woman so courteous in all of Lear's land.
Then, King Aganippus had sent to King Lear.
Lear now bethought him of what he might do.
He caused a letter to be writ, of the noblest,
And sent it by messenger then, into France.
Thus spoke the king's letter, and widely twas known:
'Lear of Britain, who is king of that country,
Greets Aganippus, noble monarch in France.
My thanks you have earned, for your fair offer,
And for your fair message given in greeting.
And now I'd have you know, as is written here,
That my whole realm I've divided in two,
Granting one half to each of my daughters,
Those two of the three who are dearest to me.
A third I do have, I know not where she is,
For she has scorned me as one of no worth.
And, on account of my age, does despise me.
She made me so wrathful, ill fall upon her,
That of all my land, and all of my people,
Of all I possess, or may own to in future,
She shall have naught of it, nay not a whit.
Yet if you will have her, for the maid is fair,
I'll set her aboard a ship, and send her to you,
In the clothes she has on, she'll have no more.
If you will receive her, then that I shall do.
Such is the case, and sound health I wish you.'
This letter reached France and the noble king,
He had the thing read, dear was the news to him.
Then the king thought, that it was mere guile,
That Lear, the father, would keep her from him,
And ever more madly he longed for the maid.
Then the king, Aganippus, said to his barons,
'I am wealthy enough, no more gold do I need,'
Ne'er shall this Lear keep now the maid from me,

But I will wed her, and she shall be my queen.
Her father may keep his land, his gold and silver,
I ask none of his treasures, for I have enough,
All but this maid Cordoille; she is all my wish.'
By word and letter, he often addressed this land,
Bidding King Lear send him his lovely daughter.
And he would receive her richly, and with honour.
Then the old king summoned his noble daughter,
And let her pass overseas, in the clothes she wore,
And with naught else, for her father waxed severe.
Aganippus, the French king, welcomed the maid,
And, pleasing the folk there, made her his queen,
And there she remained, most dear to the people.

Lear reaps the results of his own folly

Now, the old king, Lear, lived on, in this land,
Having gifted his daughters all of his kingdom.
He had married Gornioille to Scotland's king,
Maglaunus his name, whose power was great;
And to Cornwall's duke, Regau his daughter.
Then it befell, and it was not long thereafter,
The duke and the Scottish king spoke together.
In secret conversation, exchanging counsel,
That having all this land in their own hands,
They would feed Lear the king while he yet lived,
And house him night and day, with forty knights
Of theirs, and find for him hawks and hounds,
That he might ride and hunt, about the country,
And live a life of bliss for the rest of his days.
And Lear heard this, but afterwards disdained it.
First Lear went to dwell with the Scottish king,
With Maglaunus his son-in-law, and Gornioille.
The king was welcomed in generous manner,
He was well-served there by his forty knights,
With horses and hounds, all that was due him.
But then it befell, and not long thereafter,
That Gornioille bethought what she might do.
For her father's state she thought brought ill,

And she complained of it to her lord, Maglaunus,
 And said to him in bed, as they spoke together,
 'Say, my lord, sweet man that is dearest to me,
 Is not my father, methinks, no longer sane?
 No worship he knows, and his wits are lost.
 Methinks that the old man is in his dotage.
 Day and night he's forty knights to serve him,
 All those thanes he has, and all their servants,
 Hawks, and hounds, by which we take much harm.
 Nowhere do they speed, and ever they spend,
 And all the fine efforts we make for them,
 They receive blithely, and all that we receive
 Is base ingratitude for the gifts we grant them.
 They bring shame on us, and they beat our men,
 My father has here far too many an idle man.
 A good fourth of them let us now thrust forth,
 Thirty are quite enough for our house to host,
 We have cooks enough for us in the kitchen,
 We've porter and cupbearers enough for all.
 Let some of his great throng fare where they will,
 As I hope for mercy, I'll suffer it no longer!'
 All this Maglaunus listened to, from his wife,
 And then he answered her in a noble speech:
 'Lady you are wrong, have we not wealth enough?
 Leave your father in bliss, he'll not live long.
 If foreign kings were to hear of such a thing,
 And that we acted so, all would reproach us.
 We should let him have the folk that he wishes,
 Such is my counsel, for soon he will lie dead.
 We have now, in our hands, half his kingdom.'
 Then said Gornioille: 'Lord, leave this to me,
 I will manage the whole, and so dismiss them.'
 As a stratagem, she sent to the knight's lodgings,
 And told them to go their way, they'd not be fed,
 A fourth, that is, of the thanes and their servants,
 Of those that had come there with Lear the king.
 Soon Lear heard of this, and the man felt wrath.
 Then spoke out the old king, in woeful words,
 Thus said Lear the king, with pain in his voice:

'Woe to the man that holds his land with honour,
 Yet gives it his child while he might yet enjoy it,
 For well it may befall, of that same he'll repent!
 Now I will at once fare forth and into Cornwall,
 And there I hope for fair counsel of my daughter,
 That has Hemeri as her duke, and half my kingdom.
 Forth went the king to the south, to the western tip
 Of Britain, to Regau his daughter, lacking counsel.
 On reaching Cornwall, there he was well-received.
 And dwelt there six months, with all of his retinue.
 Then said Regau, to her noble Duke, Hemeri:
 'Lord, hearken to me, for I say to you, in truth,
 We have done unwisely, in welcoming my father,
 With his thirty knights, for the thing's not pleasing.
 Let us do away with twenty, ten are sufficient.
 They drink and eat, and yet are no use to us.'
 Then said Hemeri the duke, betraying the old man,
 'So ever I be alive, he shall have but five,
 Tis retinue enough for all that he seeks to do,
 And, if he will fare hence, let him soon do so.'
 All they performed, much as they had spoken,
 Removing the knights and all of their servants,
 And left him bereft of all but five thanes.
 Leir the king saw this; woe while he lived.
 His mind was troubled and he mourned greatly,
 And these words he said, with a sorrowful face:
 'Good fortune, fair fortune, how you deceive us!
 Scarcely these two full years have passed by me,
 Since I was wealthy, and had my knights by me.
 Now have I reached a day where I sit naked,
 Bereaved of possessions; then, woe unto me!
 I was with Gornioille, my goodly daughter,
 With thirty knights still, I dwelt in her land,
 And might have lived so, but thence I departed;
 I thought to do better, but worse have received.
 I'll again to Scotland, to see my fair daughter,
 To ask for her pity, and that she respect me,
 And will receive me, with but my five knights.
 For there will I dwell, and endure this harm,

But a little while, for I shall not live long.'
So, Lear the king went forth to his daughter,
There, in the north, she lodged him three nights,
On the fourth day, she swore, by the powers above,
That he should make do with but one knight there.
And if he would not, he might fare where he would.
Now great was Lear's woe, never greater than this,
Then said the old king, sorrow was in his heart:
'Woe death, woe death, that you do not take me!
True spoke Cordoille, my youngest daughter,
For I see it all now; she was long dear to me,
But loathed thereafter; yet she said most truly:
He that has little is held worthless, and hated,
And my worth was measured by what I possessed.
True all the young maid said, wisdom follows her.
While I had my kingdom, my people loved me;
For land and their fees, my earls fell to their knees.
Now am I a wretched man, and no man loves me.
Ah, my daughter spoke true, and now I believe her.
While both of her sisters told me a falsehood,
Said I was dear to them, dearer than life itself.
Cordoille, my daughter, told me full honestly,
She loved me as dearly as one should a father.
What more, then, should I ask of a dear daughter?
Now will I go forth, and sail over the sea,
And learn of my Cordoille what is her will.
Her true words I took in anger, all to my shame,
For, now, I must beg for that which I despised.
The worst she might do is forbid me her land.'
Lear went aboard ship, with a single servant,
Into that ship he went, and no man knew him.

Lear seeks sanctuary in France

Over the sea they sailed, and soon made harbour.
Forth went King Lear, with but the one servant,
They asked for the queen that they might see her,
And people told them where the queen might be.
Lear went into a field, to rest his weary bones,

And sent ahead his servant, his trusted man,
Who reached the queen, and said to her, privately:
'Hail to you fair queen, I am your father's man;
Your father has come hither, his land foregone.
Both of your sisters, indeed, have foresworn him,
And out of dire need he is come to this country.
Help him if you may; as your father tis but right.'
Then the queen, Cordoille, sat silently the while,
And reddened where she sat, as from drinking wine,
With the servant kneeling, who soon would prosper.
For her voice broke forth, and she spoke kindly:
'Lord Apollo, I thank you, that he has come to me!
For good tidings are these, that my father is alive,
And let me die, if I grant him not good counsel.
Listen now good servant, and hark to what I say,
I will give you a rich coffer, coins secure within,
And the contents shall be worth a hundred pounds.
I shall give you a fine steed, one good and strong,
To carry this weight of coins to my dear father.
And say to him I greet him with good greeting,
And bid him go swiftly to some noble burgh,
And find fair lodging there within that town,
And buy at once all that he's most in need of,
Meat, and drink, and rich and decent clothing,
Hounds, and hawks, and the finest steeds to ride,
And let him keep forty knights in company,
And let them be clad in rich and noble garments.
And have a fine bed made up, and bathe himself,
And have his blood let, be it little and often.
When you need more silver, seek it from me,
And I will send him enough from my own,
So that nothing be known of his former state,
By his new servants, nor by these our thanes.
When forty days are gone, make it known anon,
To my own lord, that Lear is here in the land,
Come over the waves, to visit his daughter.
And I will make pretence that I knew it not,
Then come you with my father to greet my lord,
And fain to rejoice at this unexpected meeting.

So, send this in writing to my lord and king.
Now these coins receive and see you do well;
And if you do this, twill be to your benefit.'
The servant took the coffer, and went to his lord,
To Lear the king, and told him these good tidings,
Where he lay in a field, all woeful, on the ground.
Soon the old king was wondrously comforted.
And these few words he said, in a humble voice:
'After evil comes good, well is he that receives it.'
They sought a burgh, as the queen had commanded,
And there did all as she had bidden them do.
And then, when forty days had passed and gone,
Then Lear the king had his most loyal knights
Go and greet Aganippus, his noble son-in-law,
And say to him that he had come into the land,
To see his daughter, whom he held most dear.
Aganippus was most blithe that Lear had arrived,
And rode to meet him, with all his company,
And Cordoille his queen; so, Lear had all his wish.
They met together, and full oft they embraced,
They rode to the burgh, and joy was in the house.
The sound of trumpets rose, and the fifes played,
All the halls were hung with fair tapestries,
And with gold-plate every board was decked.
And gold rings had every man on his fingers,
Fiddles and harps accompanying the singing.
The king had criers stand on the town wall
And cry, from on high, that King Lear was come:
'Know, says Aganippus, who is lord over all,
That you shall obey this Lear that is a king,
And he shall be as a lord of this kingdom,
For as many years as he seeks to dwell here,
With Aganippus our king as his underling.
He that would keep his life, avoid all strife,
He that breaks the peace, he shall be punished.
And he charges all his people to observe this.'
Then answered the people: 'So shall we do,
Both at home and abroad, all the royal will.'
Through all that same year, all was done so.

With much amity, and with much concord.

Lear returns to Britain with an army

When the year was done, Lear would go home,
To his own country, and asked the king's leave.
Then King Aganippus answered him thus:
You shall not go there without a great army,
And so, I will lend you of my noblest knights,
Five hundred ships, all filled with the finest,
And all it behoves them to have on campaign.
And your daughter Cordoille, queen of this land,
She shall fare with you, and that mighty host.
And go the land where you were once king,
And if you find any that would oppose you,
Deny you your rights, deny you your kingdom,
Then fight them straight, fell them to the ground,
Win back the land, and set it in Cordoille's hand.
So that she might rule it, long after your day.
So spoke Aganippus, so did the old king,
And all he wrought, as his friend had taught him.
To this land he came with his dearest daughter
Made peace with the best, that chose to submit,
And he felled all those that fought against him
And so all of this kingdom he won to his hand,
And gave it to Cordoille, that was queen of France,
And so, things stood for some while to come.

The death of Lear, and of Cordoille

Now Lear he lived for three years thereafter,
Then came his last days, and the king lay dead,
And his daughter laid him to rest in Leicester,
There in Janus' temple, or so the book says.
And Cordoille held this land, of her strength,
For full five years was Cordoille our queen here,
But, in the meanwhile, her French lord, he died.
Word came to Cordoille that she was a widow;
And when the tidings came to Scotland's king,

That both Lear and King Aganippus were dead,
He sent envoys to Britain, thence into Cornwall,
And urged its duke to war in the southlands,
While he in the north would conquer the land.
For it brought much grief to him, much sorrow,
That ever this queen should rule o'er the country.
Yet their sons should not, that were nobler than she,
For were they not the sons of her elder sisters.
'We'll bear it no more; we shall have all the land!'
So, a war they began, and mischief came quickly.
These sons of her sisters now gathered an army,
Their names they were Morgan and Cunedagius.
They oft led their forces forth, often they fought,
And oft were on top, and oft were defeated,
Until at the last they achieved what they wished,
They slew the Britons, and captured Cordoille.
Then they imprisoned her in a house of torment,
And the sons oppressed her more than they ought,
Till she, so distraught she was hateful to herself,
Seizing a long knife, therewith took her own life.
Twas an evil thing, that she was driven so to do.

Morgan And Cunedagius contest the realm

Then was this realm in the hands of those two sons,
Morgan and Cunedagius; they conquered in battle,
And divided all this noble land between them.
Cunedagius held the east as far as the Humber,
Morgan the west and north, and so they held the land.
For a full two years, having taken possession thus.
Now, when the two years were gone, they quarrelled.
Morgan was in Scotland, the far north he had in hand;
In Cornwall, Cunedagius had many a fine place.
Morgan had in his household a host of knights
Who loved not the people; they loathed them all.
They spoke with Morgan and scorned his manhood.
And this these wicked wretches said to their lord:
'Why will you not fare forth, lord, with an army,
March through all Britain and take it to your hand?

For we feel much shame, and are angered at heart,
That you share a realm that should be yours alone.
Are you not brave, and born of the eldest sister?
Yet you share it with one who lessens your honour.’
Thus, they addressed him, so spoke the traitors.
And urged him on, the while, till he believed them.
He gathered an army that was exceeding strong.
He passed over the Humber and did great harm.
He harried, and burnt, and the folk he destroyed.
The news soon came south, and wide was it known,
That Morgan led an army, and harmed the people.
When Cunedagius heard what Morgan had done,
He became filled with wrath, and said these words:
‘Covetousness be accursed, many a man you harm,
Through you, my cousin Morgan loses honour.
And for that he shall pay dearly, should I yet live.’
Then Cunedagius sent men throughout the land,
And gathered in a host; and made ready an army.
With honour he marched, towards Morgan his cousin,
But when they met, and he’d fight, then Morgan fled,
While Cunedagius chased him from place to place.
Morgan fled into Wales, his cousin chased after,
And there, when his army had overtaken Morgan,
Struck off his cousin’s head, who had fared the worst,
And slew every man of that host that he came nigh,
Except such wretches as hid, and escaped alive.
They took Morgan’s body, and laid it in the ground.
Deep they buried him, that had been lord of Wales.
That place was named Margan, after Lord Morgan.

The reign of Cunedagius (*contemporary with the founding of Rome, 753BC*)

Now Cunedagius held this land, and was its lord,
And three and thirty winters he ruled this realm.
In peace and concord, to the joy of all his friends.
In Cunedagius day, that was king of our people,
Romulus and Remus, twin brothers, founded Rome.
Though he was his brother, the former slew the other,
After those thirty winters, Cunedagius lay dead.

The reign of Riwald his son

He had one noble son, and he was called Riwald,
He was wise and just; thus, he governed this land,
And all that lived, in this his kingdom, loved him.
At this time, there came a wondrous happening,
Such as has never been known before or since.
From the skies came a flood; three days it rained blood,
Three days and three nights, and caused great harm.
When the rain was gone, there came another marvel,
There came black flies, and these flew into folk's eyes,
Their mouths, noses, and rendered their lives wretched.
Such a multitude of flies, they spoiled the grass and corn,
And woe were all the people that dwelt in this land.
Thereafter, came such sickness few emerged alive,
And came evil news that King Riwald was dead.

The brief reigns of Gurgustius, Sisillius, Lago, Mark, and Gorbodiagus

King Riwald had a son, that was named Gurgustius,
He held the land for half a year, and then he died.
Sisillius reigned thereafter, but he was soon dead,
Then came Lago, who lived for eight weeks only.
And next King Mark, that for thirty weeks was king.
Gorbodiagus the good, he then reigned five years.
And that king had two sons and both were wicked,
The elder was named Fereus, the younger Poreus,

The conflict between Fereus and Poreus

This pair were so wild, and averse to each other,
That they were all enmity, and ever at variance,
And each hated the other, as no brother should,
And both brought hatred, and harm to this land,
Till Gorbodiagus, the father, feared his two sons,
For even before him the pair would seek to fight.
The elder said all this land he'd have to his hand,
The younger gave him answer: 'I, with this spear,

Would sooner slay you than see you possess it,
While I am alive.' Now, Poreus, the younger,
Had so wicked a heart, and so hated his brother,
He thought to destroy him, in some subtle wise.
Fereus heard it mooted, by one that was truthful,
That his brother sought his death, and sad was he.
He did what he thought best, and sailed o'er the sea,
And went to greet the king of France, one Siward,
He offered obedience, saying that he would serve
As his loyal knight, both by night and by day.
The king was glad of his coming, and those with him,
And, once in his household, esteemed him greatly.
So, for full seven years there, he served the king,
To the king was pleasing, and also the queen.
The seven years now over, Fereus sought leave,
To return once more into his own country,
The king lent him an army of his finest men,
While he himself sent messengers far and wide,
Summoning all the knights that they could find,
Then he went aboard ship, with all his great host,
And they all reached this land of ours, safely.
Anon they began to fight, and he killed his foes,
But his brother, Poreus, marched against him,
And being powerful in battle, Fereus he slew,
And his mighty army he felled to the ground.
Judon was their mother, who was high and noble,
She wept greatly at this act of fratricide,
Whereby her younger son had slain the elder.
The dead son dearer to her, the living odious.
The living son was now so hateful to her,
That she thought to rob him of his very life.

The death of Poreus, and civil conflict

Poreus lay abed, there great danger befell him.
Where he lay in comfort and sleeping soundly.
His mother came there, in hatred and cunning,
With six other women, all gripping long knives.
And there the wicked woman murdered her son,

For she cut her son's throat; woe to her forever!
Then the evil women sliced his corpse to pieces,
And split apart his limbs; each from the others.
Then was there much talk throughout the realm
Of Judon the queen and how she slew her son,
And of the deep sorrow that afflicted the land.
For Fereus was dead, and now Poreus also,
And the mother had lost the respect of all folk,
Nor were there living now any close-kindred,
That might take upon them the rule of the realm,
Nor man nor woman, but this wretched Judon.
Now the folk gathered, and drowned her in the sea.
Then arose great strife, for the peace was broken,
And harsh was the conflict, with theft and pillage,
Each man robbed another, though it be his brother,
Mischief was in the land, and woe to the weak!
Here was hunger and hatred, here was greatest harm,
Here was much slaughter, till few remained alive.
Now, there were four rich men, with a vast host,
They oppressed all others, crushed them beneath.
And these four spoke together and they declared
That they'd divide all of this land between them.
Thus, they spoke, and thereafter did as they'd said.
Of the four of them, Stater was Scotland's king,
While in Logres the kingdom was ruled by Piner,
Cloten had Cornwall, and Rudauc North Wales.
Though Cloten had greatest right to rule the realm,
The others were stronger and far wealthier
In hoarded gold, other treasure, and in land.
Cloten, they hated and despised his forces,
Yet Cloten that Cornwall held, held it in peace.
Now Cloten had a son who was mortal bold,
He was handsome, tall, and brave in a fight.
He was eager in battle, and open-handed,
Many the goodly virtues he kept in mind.

Dunwale Molinus battles for the kingdom

Dunwale Molinus was this bold son's name,

He the finest man that e'er ruled this realm.
Bearing weapons, on his well-handled steed
He ranged o'er this land as if he were a lion.
He killed Piner the king, and slew his army,
Trampling all that withstood him under-foot.
And all of Logres he held beneath his hand,
Then he changed course, and went forth to Wales,
And, there, met King Rudauc, brave in battle.
Beside whom fought Stater, Scotland's king.
They spoke there of concord, friendship and peace.
And oaths they took, that they swore not to break.
So, they all agreed, and away went Dunwale
And all his men, back to Cornwall his country.
Once Stater knew Dunwale was now far off,
He advanced further with his vast Scotch army,
While Rudauc with his Welsh added to the host.
Into the land they advanced and harried the folk,
Wide they roamed, and many a town they burnt.
Did great harm, and much of the land laid waste.
News of this reached Dunwale, yet in Cornwall,
Tidings of what Rudauc and Stater had wrought,
Then said Dunwale, who was a steadfast man:
'Now are they forsworn, with their treachery.
By Apollo, never shall I believe them more.
Now we shall meet together, and race to battle,
And let right, under the heavens, then prevail!
Send my messengers forth throughout the land,
And say to all men that would hold true to me,
And would win true peace, to gather here soon.
And send abroad after other warlike warriors,
That would fight for me, for silver and for gold,
And I will march to battle, to fight for my rights,
Against these perjurers, that are thus foresworn.
Well oft do they fail, those that are in the wrong,
None foresworn can maintain their honour long.'
When Dunwale had spoken all his folk concurred.
He summoned a force greater than any on earth
Since the days when Brutus first landed here.
He gathered his forces and marched in great state,

Against those kings, and met them upon the weald.
They battled together, bravely both sides fought;
The ill-fated fell, men's faces were wan and pale,
As all the fields about were dyed with their blood.
Many a brave man's sword was hacked to pieces.
Dunwale was wondrous eager for the fight,
The battle was hard fought and harsh and long,
Dunwale had many a fine knight on that field,
Wise, and wary, and many an enemy they slew.
Dunwale bethought him as to what they might do.
He drew from his army six hundred noble knights,
The best in combat, all the hardiest of his men,
And thus, he said to them, speaking to them apart:
'Take we these weapons that lie upon the field,
And hold our broad-shields before our chests,
Then take to the flank as if part of their army,
While our other forces seem to press the fight.
When Stater's folk see our bright shields draw near,
Then it will seem to them to be most pleasing,
For, seeing our weapons, they will think us friends.
We shall be ready, and slay Rudauc their king,
Then shall we fell the King of Scotland, Stater.
In strength we shall pierce the enemy ranks,
Slay our foes, and leave them dead on the field.
So spoke Dunwale, that was a daring warrior,
And all this they wrought as he'd commanded.
They grasped the shields that lay upon the field;
Broad and strong were these, adorned with gold.
They advanced in combat towards the two kings,
Who were pleased, seeing the shields they bore,
Thinking, by those tokens, these were their men.
As Dunwale drew near he ordered they be slain:
'Put them to the sword, for they are forsworn!'
Rudauc, they slew, while Stater they captured,
And then that Scottish king they dismembered.
Their blades strong, they sliced away at his flesh.
Then they rode to re-join their companions,
And, once together, they smote the foe as one,
Whose kings were dead; their forces scattered;

Their knights defeated, and their honour fallen.

He defeats and slays the two kings, Rudauc and Stater

Dunwale's men slew all that they came nigh,
And all that great host they felled to the ground.
Except such wounded as escaped, filled with woe.
Now had Dunwale all this land in his two hands,
And proved a noble king, known far and wide.
And many a wonder the books tell of the man.
He was the first, since Brutus came to Britain,
To set a gold wreath, in triumph, on his head,
And he brought such peace, such tranquility,
That many of his laws stood long thereafter.
He made a decree, confirming it with an oath:
Each to enjoy the same peace as he himself;
Each traveller that had slaughtered, or stolen,
And he escaped into a burgh, to be bailed,
And then, and evermore, to be shown mercy,
To go to his home, and keep his possessions,
And all that sought to harm him to suffer doom;
And all former crimes the king now forgave.
The king made many laws that yet hold today,
And the laws he made in his day were sound.

The death of Dunwale

Forty winters he ruled, and bliss was in this land,
And then the king died, and woe to his people.
His earls came together, they laid him in the earth,
In London's fair burgh, they interred him nobly;
In a rich temple there, and with gold entombed.

The End of Part I of Layamon's 'Brut

Part II: From Dunwale to the Roman Invasion

Contents

The sons of Dunwale, Belin and Brenne	91
Of Godlac and Delgan.....	93
Belin and Brenne battle for the kingdom.....	96
Belin's reign as King of Britain	97
Brenne contests the realm once more	99
Queen Tonuenne reconciles the two brothers.....	100
Belin and Brenne wage war in France	102
The brothers agree to venture to Rome.....	103
The Roman envoys seek audience of Belin	105
Belin and Brenne decide to invade Germany	107
Brenne fights the Roman army, Belin the imperial troops	108
Belin defeats the imperial army; the brothers besiege Rome	109
Belin and Brenne attack the city	112
The sack of Rome (<i>Taken by the Gauls in 390BC, after the battle of the Allia</i>)	113
Belin founds Caerleon.....	114
The building of Belin's tower, and Billingsgate.....	114
The reign of Gurguint, Belin's son	115
The settlement of Ireland	117
The reign of Guencelin and Marcie	118
The reign of Sillius.....	118
The reign of Morpidus	119
Morpidus and the sea-monster	120
The reign of King Gorbonian.....	121
The reign of Argal.....	121
The reigns of Elidur, three times king, and of his younger brothers	122
The line of succession from Elidur to Enmaunus	125
The reign of King Enmaunus	126
The order of kings from Iwallo to Cherin.....	126
The reigns of Cherin and his sons.....	126
King Urian, and his successors, to Merian	127
The reign of Merian and his successors.....	127
The line of succession from Blethgabreat to King Lud.....	128

The sons of Dunwale, Belin and Brenne

King Dunwale had, by his wife, two living sons,
The elder was named Belin, the younger Brenne,
The brothers were friends, through wise men's counsel.
Belin gave his dear brother a large part of his realm,
Beyond the Humber, for him to hold in honour.
North and towards the sea, all for his well-being,
That he might be his man, and homage do him.
Belin held the south and Cornwall in his hand,
And Wales he ruled, and ruled it most fairly.
For five years it was thus, with love between them.
And each man loved the other, as his dear brother.
Yet base men served Brenne, ill was their counsel,
Each day they taught him, with craft and cunning,
To seek to break the covenant with his brother.
Now a knight of his household, one of this party,
Who meditated mischief, spoke thus to Brenne:
'Come tell, my lord, most dear to me of all men,
Why is it that Belin, that is your own brother,
Holds much of the land, while you hold so little?
Had you not the one father, the same mother,
Being of the one line, as all the people know?
Now stands all this land in Belin's own hand.
With you his man, which is woe and not right.
Are you born of some concubine, to suffer so?
Either you are such that you care not for land,
Or you think to die, and quit the world of men.
Believe the truth, as you believe sworn oath,
That all your people are exceeding wrathful.
Hark to your counsellors, for they will aid you.
We find it wondrous you will not crush him,
For you are much the better in close combat,
Greater is your courage, and your hardihood.
Cheslon, you conquered, and seized his Scotland;
Of Muraine was he king, and fought you boldly,

Before you overcame him and, after, slew him.
With all his army that he brought to this land.
But, most truly, I believe we are hateful to you,
Your thoughts you conceal from your own folk.
Yet on no account will we e'er desert you,
Not once would we do so, on our very lives.
Act now upon our counsel, and take with you
Twelve of your sages, your wisest retainers,
And fare forth tonight, into Norway, outright,
To Alfin, the king, for there you'll be welcome;
Go greet that land's ruler, and all his people.
The king has a daughter, she most dear to him,
Ask her for your own, to be your fair queen.
Seeing so fair a knight, he'll grant her to you.
After that, ask that the king lend you an army,
To lead to this land, and embolden your folk.
Bid every knight whose aid you can muster,
For silver or gold, to come fight in this land,
And we, in a while, shall have hold of the realm.
And work it all secretly, this same campaign,
So, Belin knows naught, though he's your brother.
Go there, and return swiftly, such is our counsel.
When you return home, then shall we be ready,
With our great host, to march through the country,
Take vengeance on Belin, that on you brings shame.'
So spoke this Malgod, who was ever a traitor;
The others did like, and woe widely they wrought.
Once Brenne had listened, and mused on their advice,
He rejoiced in mind, for their counsel seemed good.
He gave them his answer, that thus he would do,
Then his knights he readied, and went forth by night,
And rode till he reached the court of King Alfin.
The king he greeted, and all of his noblemen,
And the monarch's reply was exceeding fair.
Then spoke Brenne, and made his request of him,
Sought the king's daughter to make her his queen.
And the king granted all this that he asked for,
Of gold and treasure, and goods, and warriors;
Then Brenne was bolstered, and blithe at heart.

The maiden he wed, to his bed he now took her.
Seven nights, that seemed seven years, he was there,
Before he returned, to fight with his brother.
Mad indeed were those that so counselled him.
In Norway was Brenne, while Belin was here.
And Belin heard, through some truthful report,
Of his brother's marriage, where he had gone,
And to what end he was dwelling in Norway.
Belin thought deeply, and then he declared
These words, and this that he uttered was true:
'Woe on the man that betrays his own brother!
Where be you, my knights; where be you all,
Where be you, liegemen; now let us go forth.'
They marched to Northumberland, where thy took
Many a strong castle, and strengthened the walls.
To the sound of trumpets, he took all the burghs
In his brother's land, that he'd held in his hand.
He stocked them with food, and many a warrior,
To make sound defence against Brenne's power.
He and his knights then marched down to the shore,
Where they held the coast, and kept a careful watch.
Now, in Norway, Brenne knew naught of what passed,
And thought his brother knew naught of his doings.
He took leave then of Alfin, the king of Norway,
Who gave him fair reply: 'E'er may you fare well!
Likewise, Delgan, my daughter, who is dear to me.'

Of Godlac and Delgan

Now, the young queen knew that she must depart,
And yet she had a lover whom she loved deeply,
Twas Denmark's king, who was dear to her heart.
He was a worthy knight; Godlac he was named.
So, Delgan the queen, she sent into Denmark,
And made known to Godlac, her darling lover,
By means of secret missives for him to read,
That she was wed to Brenne, the King of Britain,
That he'd married her, and taken her to his bed,
All against her will; that thus she was most uneasy,

And that he must take her away to his own land.
She'd but three nights ere Brenne would depart:
'For soon it must befall that I go from hence,
May you have peace and bliss, ne'er more shall we
Speak, yet greeting I send you, and my gold ring.'
When Godlac read this, then was he filled with woe,
Indeed, he well-nigh swooned there upon his throne,
And his men threw cold well-water, upon his face,
Until he was aroused, though still much afflicted.
He cried outright: 'Where be you now, my knights?
Go we swift towards the sea, my worthy warriors.'
The king summoned to him all his goodly folk,
Down to the sea they went, and boarded ship.
A fleet was soon formed, and they rode the waves,
Towards the place whence now Brenne had sailed.
Once Brenne was on the high seas, both fleets met,
Ship ran against ship until one shattered to pieces,
Beak rammed against beak, till the weaker sank.
Many a breast was pierced by the thrust of a spear,
Helms rang with the blows, and brave knights fell.
Sorrow was rife, and swiftly did Brenne flee,
With Godlac after; many a ship he captured;
He saw a ship that passed by with silken sails.
He called to his warriors: 'On, on, you wretches!
For that is the queen's vessel there before us.
Sail alongside the ship; if you can take her,
Then evermore shall I love you, while I live.'
They bore down hard, and removed the queen.
Godlac slew the crew, and seized the treasure,
Then bore the queen, Delgan, off to Denmark.
Thinking then that he'd have her to himself,
But in a while all things happened otherwise.
Godlac sailed forth, a happy man at heart,
He was set to make Delgan Denmark's queen;
Yet great ill-luck beset him, all-wise hateful.
In the east a storm arose, the skies darkened,
The wind was against them, the sea enraged,
The waves rose on high, the water seething,
The rigging all tore away, and woe was rife.

Vessels sank; three and fifty ships went down,
The downed sails wallowed in the raging sea.
Godlac's ship was sound, although he fretted,
And now he set to thinking what he might do.
He seized an axe, its blade sharp and strong,
And severed the mainmast, cutting it in two,
Leaving the sail and shattered spars to drift away.
Thus said Godlac, and sorely he was angered:
'Let every man strive, so we reach shore alive;
As long as we make land, tis no matter how.'
So, driven by the wind they knew not whither,
After five days of tempest, they came to land.
Belin's knights, that held the shore, found them,
And seized queen Delgan, and Godlac the king,
And addressed the pair in evil speech, saying:
'Now are you all but dead; yet still you may live,
If you say whence you come, and what you seek.'
Godlac answered them in these goodly words:
'We are sea-weary folk, and what I say is true:
These men know not to what land they've come.
Nor do we know this shore which late we sought,
Not the land's name, nor the people, nor its lord;
Nor know we whether we speak not to our foes.
Yet I pray you, noble men, lead us to your king,
And there I may speak to him of joy and sorrow.'
So, the knights led them to their sovereign king;
Godlac and the queen, friends, goods, and all,
Saying they were in Britain, in Belin's land.
Now, once before the king, he called out, wisely:
'Hail to you King Belin, whose brother is Brenne.
My name is Godlac, lord of a people am I,
For I am King of Denmark, and this is Delgan.
Brenne, he came to Norway, to Alfin its king.
The king gave him Delgan, my lover, to wed.
Messengers came and told me the truth of this;
They said when he would leave along with her.
I fared towards him with forty goodly ships,
And as many knights as the ships would bear.
His fleet was vast, full seven hundred vessels,

And I launched a sea-battle, and Brenne fled.
His crews, I conquered, and full many were slain.
And then I found Delgan, that is my beloved.
I tell you, in truth, your brother he still lives,
For he held his course and he came to harbour,
As I met the queen's ship sailing on swiftly,
And so followed after, and brought it to heel.
Then was I blithe indeed, glad to be yet alive.
Then, on the high seas, the wind against me,
The weather grew wild, and the sea was wrath.
And drove my vessel here, to your country.
And now I seek mercy, being in your power.'
The king had them held, in a place most secure,
In a strong castle, once therein well-guarded.
Now but four weeks after all this had passed,
Brenne touched upon the shores of Scotland,
With four hundred ships, doomed all his folk.
He sent news of his coming to Belin, his brother,
And bade him send the queen to him quickly,
With that King Godlac who slew all his men.
And, if he failed to do so, the worse for him:
'Through the land I will go, and slay all I find,
With fire and the blade, and never will I cease,
Except you give me all of that which I ask for,
And quit my land, and go into your kingdom,
And yield me my burghs, and my fine castles,
My towns, and towers, whose loss harms me.'
Forth went the messenger, to Belin the king,
And spoke the words from Brenne his brother.
And Belin denied him all that he asked for.
While he yet lived, never would he yield so.
The man returned, and relayed this to Brenne.
Brenne was wrathful, and summoned his forces,
And armed his soldiers, preparing for battle,
Gathering his brave knights, full ready to fight.

Belin and Brenne battle for the kingdom

On his side, Belin advanced to meet him.

Much anger was there by the wood at Kalatere,
Where those two met, and with evil greeting.
Together they came now, in swift encounter,
Fiercely they battled and, there, thousands fell.
Now Belin fought well, and so did his Britons,
Most valiant were they and swept o'er the field,
Till Brenne retreated, then fled with his people,
Towards the shore, and with great misfortune.
And Belin came after and hunted them all down;
Sixty thousand the dead that lay on that ground.
Brenne came to his ship, that stood by the shore;
The ship he boarded, with but twelve good men,
No others reached safety, of all that vast army.
O'er the sea he sailed, and so escaped to France,
And as for the wounded, they fled to the woods.
When the battle was done, and Brenne had fled,
Belin held a husting, at York, of his earls.
He asked the wisest to give him good counsel,
What should he do now with this same Godlac
This King of Denmark, that he held confined.
For Godlac had sent him word by one trusted,
If he were set free from these bonds he hated,
That he would be Belin's man, good and true.
And yield all the gold in the land of Demark,
And send three thousand pounds every year,
And, against his pledge, grant noble hostages,
If he would let him and his comrades depart,
And lead her he loved dearly into Denmark.
King Belin now granted him all that he asked,
And allowed him to go, with all his companions.
Belin had tribute secured, with those pledges,
And won Godlac's homage, so gaining honour,
While Godlac led forth that woman so fair,
Having paid dearly, he knew, for the pleasure.

Belin's reign as King of Britain

Belin ruled the realm well, for many a year,
And so maintained the kingdom in freedom;

He made sound peace, and his folk held to it.
Good and strong then, were the laws he made,
And all loved the monarch that ruled this land.
Now Belin held power o'er all of Britain,
He travelled the country, laying down the law.
He viewed the woods, and the wildernesses,
The meadows, and moors, and the high hills,
Burghs and towns, all that was in the realm.
The king bethought him what he might do.
He began a road that was long, and straight,
Well-wrought and wide, through all his kingdom,
And the Fosse Way he and his folk named it.
It ran from Totnes to the north, to Caithness,
Totnes in Cornwall, to Caithness in Scotland.
And another road he made, one most useful,
That ran from Southampton out to St Davids.
And a third he made that divided the realm.
Once these 'streets' were laid, he made laws,
That whoever broke the peace, on the road,
Then his life was made forfeit to the king;
He that met others there should give fair greeting.
These were the king's roads that I have named.
Now, Brenne, the king's brother, was in France;
In his heart was much anger, shame in his mind,
That he'd lost his land, and the one he held dear.
It shamed him greatly that he was so disgraced.
He dwelt in France with his twelve companions.
And he served the king, and pleased him greatly,
Such that the French folk showed him all respect.
For Brenne had gained much wealth and shared it,
He was not covetous, but generous with his gifts.
He was a noble lord there, good were his deeds;
All things went well for him; he was respected.
Once he was widely-known there, and famous,
Known to all folk, and a favourite of the king,
Then his friends sought audience of the monarch,
That he should assist him, and his fine people,
To regain all his lands from Belin his brother.
The king so promised, and well it was fulfilled.

Brenne contests the realm once more

Brenne took his leave, then he sought out Seguin,
Lord of Burgundy and 'Britain beyond the sea'.
The former greeted this lord and sought his aid,
He said he would serve him, and hold him master,
And bowed to him humbly, as his beloved lord.
The duke was pleased, and gave him fair welcome.
Brenne was accomplished, and great his skills,
Brenne knew the ways of both hawk and hound,
He knew how to play most adroitly on the harp,
And for his knowledge the courtiers loved him.
So, this lord made him welcome, like to a son.
The duke had a daughter, one most dear to him.
Yet he lacked a son, a thing that saddened him.
The duke beheld Brenne, handsome in body,
And said to him, and declared the truth of it:
'Brenne you are handsome and nobly-born,
A brave knight, and fair and pleasing to me.
You came over the sea, are of royal issue,
And obey my wishes, such that I love you.
All that I promised you, to that will I hold.
I will give you my daughter who is dear to me,
And, after my day, shall you rule my realm,
For all my barons approve of this matter
That thus it be done, and you command them.'
Then Brenne answered, humble was his speech:
'I thank you for it, and likewise all your people,
For the great honour that thereby you show me.'
All was performed as the duke had promised,
Blithe was the court, for Brenne wed the maid,
And with much honour he dwelt with the duke.
After a year had passed, in this same manner,
The duke died, and Brenne now ruled the realm,
And all of its folk held him dear as their life,
For he held the peace, and was mild with all men.
Much land he possessed, and he kept all in hand,
And had a good wife he loved more than his life.

Now, within a year or two, Brenne bethought him,
Of how Belin his brother had seized all his land,
So, he sent messengers through all Burgundy,
And they gathered his forces in, far and wide.
When the host was rendered innumerable vast,
He marched into Normandy, then set out to sea,
And, safe and sound, soon reached this country.
Then, Brenne descended, in force, on this land.
The news reached Belin, twas said to be true,
That Brenne his brother had entered the realm,
And with an innumerable host he had landed.
King Belin summoned the men of his kingdom,
Bidding them come to him, this side the sea,
To come at his need, and drive out the strangers.
His army was ready, and forthwith they marched,
Until the two armies closed upon each other.

Queen Tonuenne reconciles the two brothers

Now the old queen, Tonuenne, was still living,
And she was the mother of Belin and Brenne.
She was most wise, that she now well-showed.
She dressed in a skirt that was naught but tatters,
And she drew the hem well-nigh to her knees,
And she went barefoot, and all this to do good.
She went to the host that had come to this land,
And asked whereabouts in the field was Brenne.
She found him armed, and preparing for battle,
Where his men were donning their breastplates.
She approached him as she had been directed,
Then rushed to embrace her youngest in her arms.
Full oft she clasped him, full oft she kissed him:
'Ah, what now Brenne, what mischief is this?
If you slay your brother, you have no other;
You are but the twain, my sons both are you.
Think of your mother, think of your honour,
Think on my counsel, that are my dear son.
These are the breasts that suckled you, child,
Here is the woman that gave you your life,

Here is the womb where long you first lay.
This body, the same, put it not now to shame,
See me not slay myself for your ill deeds.
Seven years have passed since you were here,
Now you break covenant, with your brother.
You were his man, you he loved like a son,
And oaths you swore, that you'd ne'er deceive.
You are in the wrong, and so do yourself harm.
O'er the waves you went, all without his leave,
To King Alfin there, and married his daughter,
Yet now you come to this land with an army,
Shaming yourself, to fight with your brother.
At sea you were troubled by Denmark's king,
Thereafter you came here, met you with harm
And fled o'er the wave, yet now come again.
You seek to be lord of the land, worse for us,
Your foreign army will slaughter your kindred;
Yet none should seek to oppress the defeated,
Nor any wreak evil upon their own country.
My beloved Brenne, now soften your thoughts,
Lay down you war-gear, and your red shield,
Lay down your spear, and your sword so strong,
Hark to your mother now, and love your brother.'
Her sad tears trickled down over her face,
Brenne perceived it, his heart was saddened.
He let his spear fall, and it slid to the ground.
He cast his fine shield far out into the field.
He hurled down his sword, and cast off his mail,
Then he and his mother fared forth full mildly,
And, in the open field, Belin approached them.
And there wept his brother, as did the other.
Then their mother spoke, gentle her speech:
'You, my beloved sons, go you together,
And be ever in concord, and so live blithely,
Kiss and embrace, as do all worthy kinfolk.
Though you be knights, awhile was I a queen,
And tis not unfitting your mother so bids you.'
Then they embraced that pair of royal sons;
Before the armies they swore new friendship.

The trumpets blew loud, the people were blithe,
The gleemen sang, to the sound of the pipes;
So great was the joy it could ne'er be greater.
Thus was Brenne reconciled with his brother,
He then called a gathering of all his nobles,
They to come to London, or forfeit forty pounds,
There to join in the husting, before the king.
And so, all the nobles assembled in London.
There was Belin the king, and all his kingdom,
Britons and Scots, and many another thane,
And there was Brenne, the Duke of Burgundy.
Then were the brothers blithe in their mood,
And host there to guests from many a land.
The kings took counsel of all their noblemen,
And determined to lead an army to France.
In France the laws were strange in those days,
And strange the customs, there were four kings.
Said Belin to Brenne: 'We'll go forth swiftly,
Into this France, and we'll conquer in battle.'
They blew the trumpets, and gathered their forces,
And sailed the sea, and fine was the passage;
With nine hundred ships, they entered the roads.
They entered the land, and oppressed the people.
To the four kings these ill tidings now came,
That Belin was come, and Brenne his brother,
With a numberless host, to conquer all France.

Belin and Brenne wage war in France

The kings met together, and oaths they swore
That together they'd live or they'd die as one.
And treat each other as if they were brothers.
A binding oath they swore, and full well it held.
They assembled an army, exceeding strong,
And then they marched, swiftly, towards Belin,
Ere they met with Belin, they came upon Brenne,
Together the pair advanced, leading their forces,
And foe against foe there, fiercely they fought.
There Scots and Britons marched side by side.

And Belin their lord went forth before them,
Alongside Brenne and his knights of Burgundy.
They smote there as one, and helmets resounded,
Broad spears were broken, shields were shattered,
While the red blood flowed, as brave warriors fell.
There was much gnashing of teeth, and destruction;
The hills and the dales were clothed with the dead.
Belin raised his helm, and called out to Brenne:
‘See you not, my brother, the French are broken,
While the bulk of our army is sound and whole.
Let us fare forth ourselves, and fierce be the onset,
And lay point and edge of our blades upon them!’
Brenne was bold indeed, and this he welcomed.
All that they came upon, all those men they slew;
And the four French kings they laid on the ground.
Any knights that escaped them, fled to a castle,
And they pursued them, with spear and sword;
No other course had those but to long for peace.
The pair took the castle, the folk there they slew.
Thus, those two conquered the country of France.
In that same year was Belin made emperor,
With his brother Brenne, they ruled together,
For in that battle all France they had gained,
And all of the free lands that lay about her.

The brothers agree to venture to Rome

Now that a wealth of land was in their hand,
They spoke together, the two noble brothers,
And declared that they would hold a husting
Of all the noblemen that obeyed their law,
In all of the countries now under their rule.
There all agreed they would venture to Rome,
And avenge, on the folk there, Remus the fair,
Whom, in Rome, his brother Romulus slew,
Many years before, ere a multitude dwelt there.
Now the kings went forth, as they had agreed,
And gathered their forces in the land of France.
When all had assembled, they marched forth,

Their vast host so mighty, and innumerable,
That scarce could the camp there hold them all.
They passed by Mont Aiguille, all of that army,
And then to the place that they call Mont Cenis.
Then they conquered both Turin and Ivrea,
Capturing all of the burghs of Lombardy,
From Venaus to Pavia and Cremona,
From Milan, to Piacenza and Bologna.
Next, they crossed over the water of Taurim,
And then they proceeded over Bardun.
They swiftly conquered all of Tuscany.
In Sulmona, they slew many a thousand,
And so, the army drew closer to Rome,
Though long it seemed ere they had reached it.
Then the people of Rome were sorely afeared,
For ill news came there from Belin the king.
All of the magistrates dwelling in Rome,
And all the rich men that governed the city,
Had between them chosen two lords that year
To defend the land and govern the people,
And lead the army where it was needed.
The names of those two lords I will tell you;
The one was Gabius, the other Prosenna.
These lords were alert, both fine brave men.
All the folk in Rome obeyed their counsel.
These two came to the wise men of Rome,
And sought their decision, in time of need,
Whether to summon troops to counter Belin,
Or speak with him, and seek to forge a peace.
There were, among these, men of cunning,
Who thought to deceive Belin with their wiles.
They took to debating, and wrought a plan,
That they should not go forth as if to fight,
'Rather we'll go in peace and seek friendship,
We will set in their hands all that Rome owns,
And honour them in the land, as men their lord,
Give them gold and silver, and all this realm,
All of the possessions that they might seek,
And our children as hostages if they wish,

Every noblest son that dwells in this city,
The very finest lads that may be chosen,
Those most fair, hostages four and twenty,
And yearly tribute, a thousand pounds in gold.
These two kings are strong, of a foreign land,
They have a vast host, and none e'er greater.
These kings are young, and high in courage,
And, as soon as they hear this offer of ours,
Accept it they will, for they could ask no more,
Except, in truth, that we seek of them mercy.
And if it turns out well, and they accept this,
And depart our land, and return to their own,
We shall be free to live as we would wish,
For better it is we lose our dear children,
Than that we follow a course that slays us,
And all Rome be set on fire, and consumed,
And all the neighbouring land about Rome
That is now so fertile be widely devastated.
For if Tervagant, this land's deity, so wills,
We shall deceive and, later, destroy them.
Such that they'll ne'er return home in safety.
Then said they in the hall: 'This we approve.'

The Roman envoys seek audience of Belin

The lords made ready, dressed in rich garb,
And, with as many knights as seemed good,
They mounted fine horses clad in rich palls,
And each man grasped a purse full of red gold.
Then forward they rode, for four whole days,
Till they came to the place where Belin was,
Midst all his host, with Brenne his brother.
The Roman lords asked where the kings lay,
And were shown the royal tents in the field.
Swiftly they fared, till they arrived thither,
And were much taken by the sight they saw,
So vast a host it filled them with wonder.
They saw Belin the king come from his tent,
And, courteously, went down on one knee;

They knelt before the king, upon the ground.
And then spoke humbly to him in these words:
'Lord, have mercy, you are the sovereign king,
We thus yield to you Rome, and all our realm,
And all of the lands that girdle Rome about.
And all of the treasures that we have in hoard,
All of the wealth that your men might seek.
And oaths we'll swear that we tell no lie,
By our almighty god, that we call Dagon,
We shall be your men, and exalt your honour,
Every night and day, and with true devotion,
And we will deliver to you, from our realm,
Four and twenty children of noble birth,
The chosen ones, of our greatest families.
We shall come, in time of need, to your aid,
And send our armies whither you may say.
We were sent hither to further this offer,
And we seek your mercy now and evermore.'
Belin was silent; the envoys spoke untruths,
The king believed all they said was sooth,
Yet they thought to slay him and his brother.
The king gave utterance, and mildly he spoke:
'Your promise is fair, and if to this you hold,
Twill be the best for you, and this covenant
I will endorse if you take me for your lord,
To have and hold your land, and we be friends.
In seven-nights' time, in the morn, bring to me,
Your gold, and your gifts, and your hostages,
And bring you before me the nobles of Rome,
And swear it on oath, for that will be better,
And become my men, and exalt my honour,
And if you'll not do so, then you will I slay.
Now ride you home swiftly, here I'll await you;
If you speak the truth, come seven-days hence,
But, if you speak falsehoods, remain in Rome
And I'll come to you, bringing sorrow and care.'
The deceivers set off, and rode back to Rome,
And there made ready their gifts and hostages,
And, on the day set, they brought them to Belin.

He welcomed them, and offered his friendship.
They delivered the hostages, were now his men,
And, the covenant sworn, then away he went,
While the arrant deceivers rode back to Rome.

Belin and Brenne decide to invade Germany

Now Belin and Brenne together took counsel,
And debated as to the course they should take.
They'd enter Lombardy, and on to Germany,
And conquer that land, and the folk within it.
The men of Germany learned of their coming,
And they gathered a mighty host against them,
Summoned from all the lands of the emperor.
As soon as the men of Rome were certain
That Belin and Brenne had both departed,
They made ready two hundred bold riders,
And sent them swiftly, to follow in haste,
And they caused another host to set forth,
Ten thousand strong, of their finest knights,
To go before them, and aid the emperor,
To fight with Belin, and halt and hold him,
And the troops of Rome rode behind them.
They thought them near, among the high hills,
And sent their ranks deep into the narrows,
To slay lord Belin, both he and his brother,
They forgot the hostages, the longed-for peace,
Their oaths, the covenant, and met with sorrow.
For Belin, and his brother, became aware
Of the treachery now practised by Rome,
And the aid it offered the German emperor.
Then they took counsel, great was their need,
And decided that Brenne should turn about,
To fight with the Roman army and fell them.
While Belin passed the mountains in strength,
To engage with the emperor, and his Germans.
And seek to conquer them there, if he might,
And whichever brother might win his battle,
Would then ride swiftly to aid the other.

Brenne fights the Roman army, Belin the imperial troops

The men of Burgundy turned back with Brenne,
And of France and of Poitou, swearing loyalty,
And Maine and Touraine served him most truly,
And Flanders and Normandy aided him freely,
With the hosts of Lorraine, there in full strength,
And of Gascony, who scorned to make peace.
The men of many lands marched with Brenne,
To meet Rome's army that had followed after.
Brenne and his knights progressed towards them.
When they saw Brenne and his force advancing,
The ranks of the Romans were minded to flee.
He pursued them, and many were slaughtered,
While many indeed fled, and then ran for Rome.
Brenne, that noble lord, pursued them slowly,
With his army, in strength, he marched on Rome.
King Belin, meanwhile, campaigned in Germany,
With forces enough, nigh beyond all measure,
Britons, and Welshmen, Scotsmen, and Danes
Led by Godlac their king, a good man at need.
When the ten thousand knights, out of Germany,
Aiding the emperor, heard that Brenne was close,
Had broken the Romans, and had scattered them,
They took counsel, and rode there, ere he arrived.
Now Belin heard news of Brenne his brother,
How he'd sped forth, and the deeds he had done,
And a second messenger came, who told him
That the ten thousand knights out of Germany,
All eager to fight, would now advance on Rome.
They were preparing thus to march at nightfall.
Now Belin was wise in warfare, and cautious,
And full many a German he'd hewn in pieces,
And many a knight had he bound and secured.
He had captured two learned men in the fight,
Who knew the laws, and spoke the language,
And King Belin, he led them aside, and said:
'Harken you, knights, to what I make known,

In tight constraint I have you both held here,
If you do as I bid you now, both shall go free,
With fine garments on you, and riches beside.
Go along with me, and your friend shall I be.
If you, who know the country, will lead me
To the right road that you know of full well,
Along which this army of knights are riding
Then we shall surprise them swiftly, and fight,
And fell all those foes, and fare after Brenne,
And, with wise counsel, Rome we'll besiege.
This I beg you to do, so we may all succeed.'
They were both wise, with their wits about them,
And agreed to all that King Belin requested,
And led them forth towards Mont Aiguille.
They entered a vale among the mountains,
Where the foe must pass, men that were fated.
Now Belin lay, silently, there in ambush,
And the army came that was headed for Rome.
Then Belin attacked them, to front and to rear,
They all unarmed, when the alarm was raised,
For they thought themselves quite safe from attack.

Belin defeats the imperial army; the brothers besiege Rome

King Belin took none alive, for all were slain.
He'd not a single knight that failed that day,
Nor any servant that fought not like a lord,
Nor never a squire but was furious in fight.
The battle lasted from midnight till the dawn,
And that day they scoured the mountainsides,
And slew all those that had escaped by night.
Next morn he caused the trumpets to be blown,
Gathered his host, and ordered them outright
To take themselves to the road that led to Rome,
To reach Brenne his brother, who'd gone ahead.
Brenne heard of this, and waited for the other.
Then forth they marched till they reached the city.
That burgh they now besieged with their forces,
And the folk within fought fiercely against them.

Belin and Brenne surrounded them all about,
While the enemy fired arrows and darts enough.
And poured boiling lead down over their heads,
Beams of woods, and stones, and boiling water.
Right well those folk defended the walls of Rome.
Such that for all the cunning of Belin's warriors,
And all the labour of his fighting men in attack,
They failed to breach the wall, or take the city.
But he lost many thousands of good men there,
And retreated from the walls, saddened at heart.
The brothers bethought them what they might do.
And agreed together: 'Bring forth the children,
Those four and twenty hostages that we hold,
And set up the gallows whereon to hang them,
And so, avenge the treachery of our enemies,
For yet we shall conquer them, to their woe.'
The gallows were raised, the hostages appeared,
And they hung them there before their fathers,
Woe to the parents viewing their sons' hanging.
Their mouths uttered fierce oaths, from the heart,
Let the worst come, never would they make peace.
These were the richest and the noblest of all
That saw with their own eyes what those men did,
That hung their children from the gallows-tree.
The earls that should defend them were far-off,
For both Gabius and Prosenna were long gone,
Into Lombardy, to search for reinforcements,
That might aid them against Belin and Brenne.
Yet there came a messenger from the two earls,
Who bore a letter to all the burghers of Rome,
Telling them that the earls would come that night,
With ten thousand knights, and a mighty army,
An immense host of foot-soldiers, to follow,
Who would slay King Belin and his brother,
Both of them together; said the messenger:
'Trust my news and, as soon as it is evening,
Send forth your knights, and begin a battle,
And, ere it be daylight, the truth I tell you,
Gabius and Prosenna will bring their troops,

And will take vengeance fiercely on your foes.’
So, when day was done, they opened the gates,
And began a mighty battle against their foes,
And they fought all night till the break of day.
Then saw they the approach of a mighty host,
Gabius and Prosenna, arrived from Lombardy,
With a great force, marching towards Brenne.
And thereon Brenne’s forces resisted strongly,
While Belin attacked the force holding Rome,
And they fought fiercely with endless slaughter.
There was great woe, as many a Briton fell,
There, Belin and Brenne received great harm.
And men cried to them, from the walls of Rome:
‘What do you, and your British king, do here?
Think you with your stratagems, you wretches,
To conquer Rome? Think you with brute force
To fell our people, and thus enrich yourselves?
You’ll drink your own blood, woe be upon you!
You, our children’s bane, shall be cut to pieces;
For our people shall fell you, all to your loathing.’
Belin and Brenne withdrew from the fighting,
Behind a great ditch they caused to be delved,
So that all their force might be well-defended.
And there they spoke, and communed a while.
It was not long ere they agreed between them:
‘If we fare hence, then they will follow after,
And if it befalls that we reach home in safety,
Our hearts will be sore, and our kin reproach us.
Take the sword to them, they shall be destroyed,
While our kindred we’ll honour, and our knights.
For tis e’er a better thing to die with honour,
Than to go safely, and yet disgrace our kin.’
The while that they spoke thus, and communed,
The folk in Rome thought that they must depart,
And said, as they took counsel, behind the walls:
‘For, now, they’ll go hence, abandoning the fight.’
But Belin and his brother, determined otherwise.

Belin and Brenne attack the city

Rome sent forth forty hundred steadfast knights,
To a noble fortress, so that they then might keep,
A close watch on Belin, and Brenne his brother,
And fight with them boldly if they chose to stay,
And the rest of Rome's army went behind them,
To slay all between them, and right their wrongs.
These knights were on the march, outside Rome,
When Belin and Brenne gave out their orders:
'Alight from your steeds, stand on your own two feet,
Carve your long spears, render them short and strong,
Trim your shields, make them but targes, and we
Swear now to fight, and live or die, beside you.
Let every man prove himself sure and steadfast,
And the poorest man shall be rich indeed this day.
Blow your trumpets now, and gather your forces,
And make we of our troops, fifty battalions,
And over each, shall be our bravest chieftains,
To embolden them, and so hold them together,
Then, from every side, advance you to the walls,
Fare forward swiftly, and all things shall be well.'
They blew their trumpets for those in Rome to hear,
And the whole camp strode forth, marching bravely.
When those in Rome saw Belin and his brother,
They called aloud to summon up all their forces:
'Now our foes shall flee, as we march upon them.'
With the vanguard there went forth Prosenna,
Gabius followed with fifteen hundred knights,
With their shields and lances that were heavy,
While the enemy was swift, their weapons light.
The armies met and fought each other fiercely.
They of Rome were mounted, their foes on foot,
And the latter went boldly against the Romans,
And they slew their horses, so they were bested.
Gabius, they killed, and Prosenna they captured,
And they wreaked their will on the men of Rome,
For every man they slew that stood against them.

The sack of Rome (*Taken by the Gauls in 390BC, after the battle of the Allia*)

They shattered the walls of Rome on every side,
Then they swarmed within, and captured the city,
Thus, Rome was taken, that city rich and strong,
And they found therein gold, and much treasure.
They burst the locks, and drew forth the jewels,
The palls and purple cloths wrought in Apulia,
All the treasures that were many and precious.
There was many a poor man that became rich.
For a seven-night, every knight had his wish
Of both silver and gold enough, in that land.
And both the kings then wrought many a fair thing,
Re-timbering the halls, and repairing the walls,
That were shattered to pieces in the fierce fight.
They had men climb on high, and tell all the folk:
That the king would speak, and affirm the peace;
That none be so mad as to shed another's blood,
Nor seek his goods of him, except he granted it;
While all of those fugitives that had fled Rome,
Might now return, if they kept the king's peace,
As the king's loyal men, and did as they'd heard.
All might come in friendship, live their life there,
And obey the same laws as made by their elders.
'And Belin our king grants Rome to his brother,
And Brenne shall dwell here as your emperor,
While Belin will take leave of you, and depart,
And seek a course that will lead him to Britain.
Great was the weeping when Belin went thence,
But they found solace in Rome's rich kingdom.
Brenne dwelt there, and was King of Lombardy,
While Belin, the king, he returned to this land.
He carried out royal works, saw to his fortresses,
He righted the halls, and strengthened the walls,
Had chambers built, and towers raised on high,
And all of that land he governed with honour.
Thus, full fifteen years, did Brenne rule Rome,
Then he lay dead, and the Romans were free,
For they took back their lands, into their hands,

Their burgh and their liberty, once he had died.

Belin founds Caerleon

In this land, Belin, meanwhile, made strong laws,
And the laws were good, that stood in his day.
Belin went forth to Wales, there he built a burgh,
Nobly twas made, beside Usk, the broad river,
From that same flood the place took its name.
To the king twas dear, and Caer-Usk he called it,
And Caerleon twas after, and I'll tell you why.
Twas about seven years after Brenne's decease,
And in Rome they said: 'He brought us sorrow;
Now he is buried let us deal with the Britons.
Into their land we'll fare, bring them woe and care.'
And so, they sent forth, from the Roman army,
Four companies like to those we call fyrds,
That in those days the Romans called legions,
Where in every legion were many warriors,
Six thousand, six hundred, and sixty comrades.
They came o'er the water, in warfare were wise,
And did much hurt, in this land, to the people,
Yet ever themselves they remained unharmed.
Now, every year they would winter in Wales,
Having conquered the burgh called Caer-Usk,
And stayed till more of their countrymen came.
Thus, they renamed Caer-Usk as Caer-Legion,
While those who came after called it Caerleon,
Now I have told you the source of the name
Of that fort Caerleon, that lies in Glamorgan,
Return we to Belin, that fortunate ruler.
Once he had built it and named it Caer-Usk,
And it was strong and fair, he travelled thence.

The building of Belin's tower, and Billingsgate

He rode to London, the burgh he loved greatly.
He began there a tower, in that place the strongest,
And a water gate, with much art, thereunder.

And the men of that time called it Belin's Gate,
And now, and for evermore, so the name stands.
Belin the king lived well, and lived blithely,
And all of his people loved him exceedingly.
In his day there was meat beyond measure,
While through drunken surfeit thousands perished.
That king, Belin, lived long ere his ending came.
In London he died, and sorrowful his people;
Woe to the living, that the monarch was dead!
They went to his hoard, and they took of his gold,
And they wrought a tomb, of gold and of gems,
And entombed the king, that was their lord Belin.
They raised him up high on the Tower's heights,
That men might behold him, wide o'er the land.
This they did from love; for their dear lord was he.

The reign of Gurguint, Belin's son

So departed Belin the king, and came his son,
Gurguint, after him, that was Gurguint Bertruc.
Nobel and prudent, he ruled the realm wisely,
Peace and concord he loved, the wicked he loathed.
He maintained the peace, as his father before him,
As best as one might, but the men of Denmark,
They refused outright to send tribute to Britain,
Neither gold, nor treasure, nor the goods of the land.
King Gurguint bethought him what he might do.
He sent messengers, far and wide, through the realm,
He summoned his folk and made ready an army,
A mighty host he raised, of innumerable men.
Then they boarded ships, and held from the shore,
Over the salt stream, as it seemed good to them.
On the second day they came nigh to Denmark,
And the king disembarked, for such was his wish.
Tribute he asked of that land that his father held,
That King Godlac had given him of his free will.
Then said Godlac's son, with an angry tongue:
'Though twas my father's will, such is not mine.
Depart now, from out my land, if you would live.'

The word came to Gurguint that was Britain's king:
'Where be you, my knights? Where be you, my thanes?
Where be you my warriors, all of my valiant men?
Ride you and march, and burn up all this land,
And slay all the men that you come upon here,
Their wives and their children cast in the water,
And shatter their walls, and set fire to their halls,
Raze all their towers, and scorch their chambers.
Till they know I am Britain's king, lord of the land,
And that they must yield, as they did to Belin.'
Forth went the host, as the monarch had bid them,
In strength went they, and did harm to that realm.
The king of that land, with a powerful army,
Came against Gurguint, and great was its strength.
They fought hard, but Gurguint slew the Danish king,
And the warriors of Denmark he felled to the ground.
He marched to the burgh, and all there submitted,
For all had he conquered, the best with the worst.
His men they became, and fast oaths they swore,
And gave him in hand three hundred hostages,
And all of the treasure that Godlac had promised,
When Belin had freed him and his companions.
King Gurguint now returned to this land of ours,
And he laid his course by the furthest Orkneys.
And he met, out at sea, with thirty good vessels.
The ships they were filled with men and women,
And weapons of many a kind, and most excellent.
It appeared to the king much the strangest thing,
He wondered what were the ships he found there.
So, he sent out a boat, and he asked that they say
Whence they had come, and what they might seek.
And if they would speak with the king, in peace.
Then their high chieftain gave him good answer:
'We would speak with the king, for peace we seek.'
They met together, and soon achieved concord.
Then said Pantolaus, their chief, to King Gurguint:
'We are sea-weary folk, driven here by the wind.
I am Pantolaus, and you are now lord o'er us.
Your land this is, and your laws we will keep,

You may rule us all, we'll abide by your will.
From Spain was I driven, with all my noble folk,
Long have we sought a land, by the sea's shores,
One where we might live, and one pleasing to us,
And yet before now we have found no such thing,
No land for our people wherein we might dwell.
We have known much harm, and hunger and thirst,
Much struggle and strife, among these wild waters,
Now we beg your favour, that we might no longer
Endure this, and if it's your will, and you grant it,
And allow us this furthest end of your kingdom,
We will be your folk, and uphold your honour,
And will dwell in this place for the rest of our lives.'
Then answered Gurguint, that was Britain's king,
'That I'll not do, though accepting your homage,
For, indeed, I will send you into another land,
Knowing not who you are, or whence you come.
You shall have steersmen to further your passage,
Four hundred brave knights of mine I will lend you,
To secure you a land, in which you might live.
And follow your laws, and so govern your people.'
Then Gurguint sent all those folk into Ireland,
That knew no folk since Noah's flood drowned it.

The settlement of Ireland

Then Gurguint went forth, and entered that island,
And Pantolaus dwelt there, and had of the best.
He had himself crowned king, and his wife queen.
And he made strong laws to govern his people,
That had many a sorrow endured on the waves.
For seven long years they had wandered the sea,
Their clothes were in tatters, ill they were clad,
Half-naked were they, and yet nothing they cared
Who viewed the limbs they had on their bodies.
Thus, they ruled that land, long they all prospered,
While Gurguint dwelt blithely in this realm of ours,
And sound was the peace, the while his life lasted.
In Caerleon he died, and all his people sorrowed.

The reign of Guencelin and Marcie

A brave son he had, and he was named Guencelin,
He ruled the folk, this land, after his father died.
He was, throughout all, a good and an honest king.
He led a noble life, and a virtuous wife he had,
Marcie she was called, her name is widely known,
Now and for evermore, here, she's remembered.
The queen loved knowledge, wise in book-learning,
She treasured the lore, lovingly in her heart,
And of her great wisdom, the folk spoke widely,
Saying how wise she was in all worldly doom.
Then wrought she the laws, that folk abided by;
This code she wrought, and the Britons called it,
After their lady, the Marciane law.
Many a hundred winters thereafter,
Came Alfred the king, England's darling,
And wrote that British law in the English tongue,
And he changed its name to the Mercian law.
And this I say to you, for true is the thing,
That she made it first, and not Alfred the king.
She, the queen wrought it, that was named Marcie,
While King Alfred only penned it in English.

The reign of Sillius

Now the wise queen had, by her worldly king,
A little son, and he was named Sillius.
She had no other, which brought the queen woe.
This child, Sillius, was but seven years of age,
When his father died and forsook his people.
His mother held the realm, with counsel ruled it,
And raised her son well, she, ever beside him.
When her son was older, and bold on horseback,
He was crowned king, to the folk twas pleasing.
He was a goodly man, and would live peaceably,
Yet he lived but half our years, ere he was dead.
He left two sons, who followed their father's ways,

The elder was Rummarus, Damus the younger.
Rummarus ruled awhile, Damus came after him.

The reign of Morpidus

This Damus, in his day, favoured a concubine,
And he had, by this woman, a headstrong son.
He was named Morpidus, strongest of men,
In body and thews, of all in this land of ours.
He gained the kingdom, and held authority.
He was keen, strong, liberal, tall in stature,
And had been a fine king, but for his cruelty.
When he was angered, he'd instantly kill a man,
No knight was so powerful he'd not slay him,
Whether right or wrong, on the spot, he'd die;
But, when he was calm, did all a man bade him.
In truth, it did much harm to so fine a man,
That because of his wrath his wits went awry.
At that time the Duke of Moray campaigned,
Made a great foray here, and harmed the folk,
He came by the sea-coast, and did much hurt,
Many wrongs he committed, cruel in a fight.
Beside the shore he entered Northumberland,
And there he began to build a mighty fortress,
And took the land about to his own two hands.
Morpidus, the bold, he was mightily enraged,
And he sent through the land to gather an army,
With which he met the duke at the dawn of day.
There, was many a good Briton, many a knight,
And they fought the duke's army, all that morn,
And the king overcame the duke, nigh on noon,
Who turned to flee, the king following after.
Then the king slew the duke, and all his people;
Before the day was over, dead were they all.
Harsh was the fighting, the cause being right,
And all that he found, that day, in that place,
He caused them to be burnt or be flayed alive.
And those who saw those scenes, they related
That Morpidus, the strong, with his own hand,

Smote with the sword, and slew, seven hundred.
He caused a ditch to be dug, both long and deep,
And had all the mounds of corpses cast within,
Then he kept this land safe, for a goodly time,
So freely granting the people peace and quiet.

Morpidus and the sea-monster

Meanwhile strange tidings came to this realm,
And it was made known to Morpidus the king
That a wondrous beast had risen from the sea.
From Ireland had this creature travelled hither,
And was attacking people all along the shore.
Often it slew a hundred in but a single day,
And then the monster returned to the deep.
Thus, it came to land and troubled the people,
It terrified all the folk and ravaged the towns,
Such that the folk fled from it, on every side.
The king heard of this, and was sorry at heart.
Thither the king went, though to his own harm.
He went to deal with the beast, but reaped his death.
Once as far south as the beast's lurking place,
He ordered all his men into the castle nearby,
And had them wait, while he rode on alone.
Then forth the king went, bearing his weapons,
A sharp sword, a bow, and a quiver of arrows,
The bow being strong, and a spear full long.
At his saddle he bore an axe, and a keen knife.
Then forth he advanced, and towards the place
Where he had heard that the fierce beast dwelt.
Forward he fared, until he found the creature,
And he let fly his sharpest arrows towards it.
All of them he shot, and after that rode nearer,
Attacking the monster wildly on his steed.
He fired his arrows till his strong bow broke,
He grasped his spear, that he'd set in the ground,
Then he rode at the beast, and struck it on the neck,
The beast rearing backwards, the spear breaking.
Then the fiend reared up, and rushed at his steed,

And bit into its breast, piercing sinew and bone,
Such that its liver and lungs spilled to the earth.
And the king drew his sword, twas made for him,
And he smote the beast anon, upon the head-bone,
So, the blade sank in, as the hilt broke in his hand.
The beast opened its jaws, and drove at the king,
And severed him at the waist; thus, the fight ended.
So fared the king, who had thus proved over-eager,
For that man is a fool, that takes upon himself
More than he can do; he shall fare the worse.
Unwisdom is rash, for it urges its lord onwards,
And e'er, in a moment, fells him to the ground.
The people greatly mourned the king's mishap,
Though they were blithe at the death of the beast.

The reign of King Gorbonian

That king, he had five sons by his fair queen,
The eldest was Gorbonian, a fine and noble man,
Argal was the second of Gorbonian's brothers,
The third of the five, he was named Elidur,
The fourth Jugenes, the youngest was Peredur.
Gorbonian, as eldest, he was king of this land.
He was a monarch wise and well-mannered,
Prudent, and just, and temperate, and most fair.
He kept the country at peace, and as he willed,
And ruled in good faith, while his reign endured,
And this, indeed, he maintained to his life's end.
In London he was buried and sad were the people.

The reign of Argal

Thereafter came another, twas Argal his brother,
The second born, and he was crowned as king;
The most wicked man that ever held the realm.
Evil was dear to him, and all justice hateful.
Whoever had riches, him he made wretched;
Good men he hated, and the wicked raised up.
He gathered together a wealth of treasure;

Ever he thought about evil, and ill his deeds.
Thus, Argal led his life from youth to grave.
The rich met together, the noble and mighty,
Conducting their husting in high dudgeon,
And they swore an oath, which they then held to,
To do all they might to banish Argal the king.
Far from this realm, the nobles banished him,
And they crowned another, Elidur, his brother.

The reigns of Elidur, three times king, and of his younger brothers

He was third born; they welcomed him in peace,
And made him their king, that courageous knight,
And he was of temperate speech with every man,
Straight with the good, and stern with the foolish.
Argal that was driven out, woeful was he at heart,
He fared to many lands, and besought the people,
Beseeching many a king, many an emperor,
Many a wealthy thane, and many a bold servant.
He besought all the folk, that he passed among,
To grant him their aid, in his great time of need.
With strength or stratagem, to regain his realm,
Yet ne'er found a man that would serve his cause,
Nor assist him, in any manner, hither to fare,
Nor promise a single thing that might help him.
Then Argal the king felt woe, sorry his mood,
Saddened at heart for the great harm done him.
Argal bethought him then what he might do.
He would return once more, and seek his brother,
Or see if he might win grace from any man.
It was about five winters since he'd gone hence,
After the time he'd brought woe on himself,
That Argal came in disguise, entered this land.
Not even his own kin knew that he was here,
None knew it was he that e'er had known him.
He asked whereabouts he might find the king,
And was told where the monarch was hunting,
With his company in the woods of Kalatere.
He met the king, and he greeted him humbly:

‘Lord king,’ said he, ‘may you live hale and sound;
My brother, Elidur, may you e’er be wealthy.
Though I dare not have the people here know
Whom I might be, and that I was once their king,
Yet I seek your mercy, now, and for evermore.’
Then, said Elidur: ‘Your presence is pleasing.’
To his brother he came and kissed him lovingly,
And Elidur, the king, had tears in his eyes.
And with great kindness, comforted his brother.
And had him led, in peace, and with kindness,
To the castle, within this realm, named Clud.
And let him bathe, while a bed was prepared,
Keeping all secret, and his name concealed.
Who ever heard tell in any book, or story,
That one brother e’er did so for another,
As Elidur, the king, for his brother Argal?
The king feigned sickness, as if it were so,
Retired to his chamber, and took to his bed.
Then he sent men forth, throughout the realm,
And summoned all his thanes, to gather to him.
In word and writing, he let his nobles know,
That their king might not be long for this earth.
And sought their counsel, ere shortly he be dead,
And advice as to where his body might best lie.
The summons was known o’er all the land,
And the nobles all came to the king’s burgh,
To that great husting, where they might speak.
The king and his brother were in their chamber,
Where they had eaten well, and taken drink.
The king took to his bed, while his brother hid,
And with him the closest friends he had alive,
Forty good knights, all clad in solid chain-mail,
With sword and shield, ready for any fight.
The king lay in his bed, as if he were like to die;
To the hall he sent word, by his close attendant,
And ordered his noblemen to talk more quietly,
For his head ached so he could scarce endure it,
Being forced to listen to the noise of so many.
He had his door guarded so no man might enter,

Nor might any man alive come to the castle,
Unless he were summoned by king's messenger.
The king now arose, set chain-mail on his back,
And grasped in his hand a heavy battle-axe,
And he called to Argal, his brother, in the room,
And they sent a messenger down into the burgh,
Calling the highest thane to come to the king.
Once in the chamber, then the monarch seized him,
He leapt towards him, as if to destroy him.
And his knights surrounded him, stern of face,
As if they would hew that nobleman to pieces.
Then said Elidur the king: 'Now will I kill you,
Unless you are full quiet, and do all that I will.'
Thus answered the thane: 'That would I fain.'
'If you would live, become my brother's man;
This is Argal the king, banished from the land,
And now come hither again, your king he shall be.'
The thane was most quiet, and did the king's will,
And the king had him placed in a secret room,
And had a knight summon another nobleman,
And acted towards him, as he had to the other.
Thus dealt Elidur the king with his great nobles,
One by one, till all of them were closeted.
Then he did another thing, led forth his brother
And, with much rejoicing, brought him to York,
Where all of his people had gathered together.
Before all the folk, he took his crown in hand,
Set it on his brother's head, and made him king.
Afterwards Argal was the noblest of rulers,
Evil he forewent, and ever the good he sought.
He acted most mildly towards both old and young,
And, of a certainty, showed justice towards all.
The land was quiet, and stood in that same state,
For a full ten years, till their king fell ill.
There he lay, in sickness, for a year and a day,
And could not be cured; and so, King Argal died.
Then came the people in one place together,
And took Elidur, and restored his sovereignty;
With much joyfulness, they crowned him king,

Power vested in him, the noblest of his people.
Now Jugenes and Peredur, witnessing that Elidur
Was thus the sovereign king o'er all the land,
They gathered many men, of many a kind,
And led their army throughout the kingdom.
The two hosts came together, that of Elidur
And the forces of Jugenes and Peredur,
Fiercely they fought, and brave knights were slain,
Then, midst the fight King Elidur took to flight,
With his two brothers, in full force, pursuing.
Jugenes and Peredur, captured the fleeing Elidur.
And led him to London; woeful were his people.
In a tower most strong they placed King Elidur.
Many a day, many a year, he lay in that tower,
While his two brothers ruled o'er all this land,
For Jugenes held half, as far as the Humber,
All of the south, that brother held in his hand,
While Peredur held the rest, from Humber north.
Yet soon thereafter Peredur ruled it all,
For Jugenes lived but seven years longer.
Then had Peredur all this country in his hand,
And was wicked and loathsome to the people.
Yet death came suddenly, and struck him down.
So evil was his life that the Fiend seized him.
Then the people gathered, and fared to London,
And freed Elidur, where he lay, in the tower,
And, a strange thing, made him, a third time, king.
Then was he steadfast, as the day is bright,
Ruled the land well, and by the folk did right.
In bliss he lived, to the joy of his people,
And when from life he did wend, made a fine end.

The line of succession from Elidur to Enmaunus

Then the son of his brother Gorbonian reigned,
That had been the eldest of the five brothers.
The knight was named Lador, this island's king,
Yet this Lador he lived but a little while.
He was followed by Morgan, Argal's son,

He held the land a year and then he died.
Next came Enmaunus, who was his brother.
These were Argal's sons, and each was king.

The reign of King Enmaunus

This same Enmaunus ruled the kingdom such
That ne'er athane but would have seen him slain,
For all folk he loathed and rendered them poor.
To all men he ran counter; the Fiend loved him.
Till even his own courtiers wished him dead.
In the end, the folk of this land drove him forth,
Exiled him, and banished him far from the realm.
For his enmity, they drove him from this land,
In sorrow, full sore, and he came here no more.
And then the highest nobles they met together,
And chose them a king, of the best of knights.
He was Jugenes' son, that was Peredur's kin.
Thus, Iwallo was made king, good in everything.

The order of kings from Iwallo to Cherin

Iwallo wrought well, like the best of his ancestors,
For in acts of goodness the man was well-versed.
He practised the virtues, and bettered the people.
Yet the sad misfortune was he lived not long.
No more than seven years did he rule this land,
Dead was Iwallo the king; the people mourned.
Afterwards, a king reigned here called Rime,
The son of Peredur, that was Elidur's brother.
And then came Gorontes, he was Elidur's son,
And next Catulus, that was son of Gorontes.
Then Coillus ruled; his father was Catulus.
Next was Porex the king, that was of their kin.
Followed by Cherin, that was kin to this same.

The reigns of Cherin and his sons

Now Cherin ruled long in this land of ours,

Though, of the six kings that reigned before him,
None of them was king more than seven years.
Cherin lived long, and drank much mead and wine;
All the king's powers were consumed by drink,
And he lost all honour, through his drinking,
Nor did any manner of good towards his people.
But the strangest thing was that in all his reign,
For he ruled this land for many a long year,
Not a single foreign ruler sought out his land,
But the realm was at peace, and all was well.
Then came that day when the king lay dead.
To him his noble queen had borne three sons.
The eldest of these was named Fulgenius,
The younger sons were Aldus and Andragus.
However, but a little while lived these same.
Each of them was, for a time, king of this land.
But within four years, each of them was dead.

King Urian, and his successors, to Merian

The youngest of the brothers was the finest;
This same Andragus had but the one son.
Urian, was he named, that afterwards was king;
Only a year he lived, as monarch, then he died.
After King Urian came Eliud, his kinsman,
Then Cledaus, Doten, and Gurguincius.
These same three kings held the kingship,
One after another, until all three were dead.
Naught did they here, neither good nor evil.

The reign of Merian and his successors

Then there came Merian; he was a man most fair.
Hawks and hounds he kept, that were numberless,
Thus, every day, he hunted, and chased the deer.
And he was so fair a man, that women loved him.
Though he knew it, yet the thing pleased him not,
For he e'er loved his queen his whole life through.
After him Bledon, his son, was a glorious king.

He had wealth enough, and shared it with his men;
Never was there a king so generous in all things.
After him, came his son, and Cap was his name,
And after him Oein, that was over-fond of evil.
Next followed Sillius, and he was Oein's son.
The king after him, was one named Blethgabreat.
Since the world began, no man was so skilled in song;
And harp, and psalter, and fiddle, and horn-pipe,
Tympanum, and lyre; gleemen were dear to him.
He knew all the songs and music of every land;
Of him there was much speech in every realm.
Such that all of those folk that heard tell of him
Called him divine lord of the craft of music.
Ever the king was glad, ever he loved to play,
And, thus, he lived his life the while that he lived.

The line of succession from Blethgabreat to King Lud

Afterwards his brother, named Arkinaus, was king.
He ruled the land for seven years, in peace he dwelt.
Then his son was king, who lived most wickedly,
Men called him Aldolf, that king's deeds were evil.
There was never a good wife, in this land he ruled,
That he turned not to an adulteress, if she was fair.
Though an earl's wife, he'd rob her of her honour.
And thereby disgraced both the young and the old.
For this wicked custom, folk hated him to the death,
And yet, despite that, he'd not cease from acting so.
After him twas Redion that governed this kingdom,
Half a year and seven nights, and then died outright.
Next Redert his brother, for less time than the former.
Then came one that ruled well, named Samupensel,
So powerful he was, he was unlike every other.
After him came Pir, with a head of wiry gold hair,
Such that folk wondered whence came one so fair.
And after him Capor, was the king of all this land.
The next was Eligille; he kept all the realm at peace.
He was a man most wise; all he did was done well.
And so, in bliss he ruled, for five and twenty years.

Afterwards, for forty years, his son Heli was king,
Who partly kept the peace, partly men fought him.
He was a man most brave, and had three lively sons.
Lud, the first was named, he was a man most brave,
And, the second son, he was called Cassivellaunus.
After King Heli, Lud, his son, long ruled this land.
And this man was a monarch both brave and keen,
And strong and powerful, for wise counsel he loved.

The reign of King Lud

He fared over the land, and every burgh made strong.
Castles, Lud wrought; London he loved above all.
While Lud held this land, that city was Trinovant,
And no fortress there, but the tower Belin made,
Of which this book has told the history before.
King Lud had the wall laid, about London burgh,
That has lasted till our day, and long will last yet.
He built many a hall, and strong were they withal.
He ordered each rich man to split his wealth in two,
And take the one half, and build a fair dwelling.
All the evil men he expelled from out the burgh,
And the burgh he honoured, and he made it fair.
He renamed the place; he called it after himself,
Caer-Lud he named it, and made that known to all.
This he did for a reason that, after he was dead,
Many a man would speak of all the king had done.
Later there came folk, from abroad, into this land,
And called the burgh Lundin, after their manner.
Afterwards came the Saxons and called it Lundene,
And the name they used lasted long in this land.
Thereafter came the Normans with their evil ways,
And named it Londres, and harmed the people.
Well, this land fared, until the king's end came.
Lud the king was dead, in London men laid him.
There were noble earls laid him down by a gate,
That men called Port-Lud in the British tongue,
Afterwards there came English men full bold,
And they in their own tongue called it Ludes-Gate.

And so, it has long stood with that same name.
There were left two children, the sons of Lud,
The elder son of the king was Androgeus,
And the younger, he was named Tennancius.
They were but young when their father died,
And so, their father's brother, Cassivellaunus,
Had himself crowned king, and he reared them,
And he nurtured them, for love of his brother.
This Cassivellaunus then ruled all the land,
And the people loved him, his law was good.
He established fair customs in our country,
And he was a just king, and a noble knight.
The children flourished, and held land in hand,
For the king gave them two fine earldoms.
Androgeus, being the eldest, held London,
And therewith the king gave him all of Kent;
And he bade Tennancius hold all Cornwall,
Thus, these two brothers held the earldoms,
As long as they held the king their high lord,
For he was the lord and master of this land.
Awhile they were friends, as were their men,
The land fared well, and was ruled in peace.
But later they quarrelled, and all fared worse.
Then it was the Romans came to this country,
And demanded tribute paid in gold or silver,
Though ne'er, in living memory, had any sought
To demand of the king that governed this land,
That this country should render tribute to Rome.

The End of Part II of Layamon's 'Brut'

Part III: From Caesar to Gratian

Contents

Julius Caesar's first invasion (55BC).....	132
Caesar exchanges missives with Cassivellaunus	134
Caesar initiates the invasion.....	135
The nature of Cassivellaunus' forces	135
The first battle, by the shore	136
Caesar departs after the failed expedition.....	138
The death of Nennius; Caesar's sword 'Crocea Mors'	138
Caesar wins the Gauls to his cause	139
Caesar's activities in Gaul; Ordre's Tower.....	140
The second invasion (54BC).....	141
Caesar's fleet meets with bad weather.....	142
Cassivellaunus advances and addresses his troops	142
He engages the Roman forces	143
Caesar, forced to retreat, departs once more.....	143
Cassivellaunus gives thanks to the gods	145
Two noblemen Herigal and Evelin quarrel.....	146
Androgeus seeks aid from Caesar.....	148
Cassivellaunus marches to Dover	150
Caesar and Androgeus lie in ambush.....	152
Cassivellaunus flees to a defensive position.....	152
He sends an envoy to Androgeus.....	154
Androgeus seeks to mediate with Caesar	155
Caesar makes peace and departs	156
Cassivellaunus' death, and the succession.....	157
The reign of Kinbelin; the advent of Jesus Christ	158
The invasion of the emperor Claudius (43AD).....	159
Arviragus avenges his brother King Wither's death.....	161
Claudius renews the invasion.....	162
Arviragus, under Claudius, reigns in Britain	164
Arviragus defies Rome (c71AD) during Vespasian's reign	166
The siege of Exeter	167
The reign of Maurus; the Picts invade Scotland.....	169
The Picts of Caithness marry women from Ireland	171

The death of Maurus, and the succession	171
The Christianisation of Britain (<i>during Eleutherius' reign as Pope c174-c189AD</i>)	172
The death of Lucius, and the arrival of Septimius Severus (208AD)	173
Severus battles the alliance of Britons and Picts led by Fulgenes	175
Events following the death (211AD) of the emperor Severus	176
The usurpation by Carraais, and his reign	177
King Asclepiodotus besieges London	180
The death of Gallus and his Romans	181
The death of Asclepiodotus (<i>c286AD, Diocletian being emperor</i>)	182
The reign of King Coel; Constantius in Britain (305AD)	183
Constantine made king on his father's death (306AD)	184
Constantine defeats Maxentius (<i>at the battle of the Milvian Bridge, 312AD</i>)	185
The finding of the True Cross; and events in Rome	186
Octaves of Wales seeks to slay Trahern of Rome	187
The question of the succession	189
The reign of Maximian, King of Britain	192
Maximian conquers Armorica and appoints Conan its king	193
He then proceeds through Gaul and into Italy	195
Conan maintains his realm in Brittany	196
The fate of Ursula, Athionard's daughter	197
Melga and Wanis expelled from Britain	199
Maximian deposed; Valentinian II emperor (388AD)	200
Gratian is king in Britain	200

Julius Caesar's first invasion (55BC)

Thus, it befell, in those days, truth be told,
That Julius Caesar, with a countless host,
Marched forth from Rome, and entered France,
And the Roman foe was mightily enraged.
He won all the lands his eyes looked upon,
He thought to conquer, by force and stratagem,
All of the realms that were in middle-earth,
And hold the whole of the world in his hands.
Though he could not tread all men underfoot,
Yet a third part he won of the earth's kingdoms;
Five and fifty the realms he won to his hand,

Not counting that realm in which Rome lay.
He was known for his bravery in middle-earth,
And as the wisest man in all the wide world.
He made the calendar, that marks out the year,
And made many laws that still stand in Rome.
Alas, that any such man neath the earth should go!
Caesar fared from Rome, with many brave men,
He passed through Lombardy, by Mont Aiguille,
Conquered Germany, Louvain, Normandy,
Brittany and then Poitou, and Gascony.
Gaining Gascony, he turned back to Burgundy,
Then forth into Flanders, and gathered a fleet.
Now, on a time when he was close to Calais,
At the break of day, when the sun was bright,
Caesar rode o'er the land, and viewed the strand,
The weather was mild, and he could see this isle.
Then Julius in like words asked of the people:
'What is this isle I see, plainly, o'er the waves,
Far o'er the sea-road, which seems fair to me?
Then a wise man answered the general thus:
'That is a vast island, rich in all good things,
That Brutus first held, long after the flood.
There are fish there, and fowl, and hardy folk;
Britain the land, that you behold, is called.'
Then spoke Cesar who was learned and wise:
'I know well who Brutus was, and the books say
That we came of the one kin, for so tis written.
Our forefathers were in Troy, and suffered harm.
In that mighty war where thousands were slain.
Once defeated, they wandered far and wide,
Seeking some land wherein they might dwell.
To that isle, Brutus came, therein lived his life,
Thence came the kings, ambitious and brave,
Belin and Brenne, they that conquered Rome.
And Rome they destroyed, our noble burgh,
Took, from us Romans, much silver and gold.
The Roman hostages they caused to be hung,
And the people of Rome they caused to perish.
This did Belin and his brother; yet hear more:

Julius Caesar is my name, and my heart is sore,
That they so shamed my ancestors, ere my birth.
Therefore, will I send envoys to their island,
To ask of their lords, if they will bow to me,
And if they will send us tribute from their land.
For if they seek true peace, I'll not fight them.
Go, find me two wise men that are eloquent.'

Caesar exchanges missives with Cassivellaunus

He handed the envoys a well-written letter,
Addressing Cassivellaunus, King of Britain;
Thus said the writing that laid bare his aims:
'Julius Caesar am I, come hither from Rome.
If you seek peace, I shall not fight with you.
Send me tribute quickly, from out your land,
And be my man, and hold me as your lord,
For all my eyes can see, I seize as my own.'
Cassivellaunus read the thing, and was wrath.
Wondrously enraged at its hostile message,
And composed a reply, while filled with anger.
And sent it, without a greeting, to this Caesar.
The letter, it reached the pro-consul of Rome;
These were the words the missive contained:
'Strange, it seems, Caesar, for one thought wise,
To believe that he might rule all men alive.
You come from Rome, and utter words most bold,
Ask tribute of our land, yet shall not find it.
You are most covetous, your men most greedy,
You think to have in your hands all middle-earth.
We are an isle that stands at the world's end,
That Brutus won, and tis we that dwell herein,
And will hold it free from all the world's kings.
Ne'er will we send you tribute from our land,
For, if you were as wise as I've heard you are,
Then would you know this: a free people are we,
As free and sovereign as your people in Rome;
For our folk fled from Troy, and so we are kin,
And our ancestors and yours of one company,

If you believe me, and tis well that you should,
You shall have, of us Britons, a deal of woe;
You, and your comrades, if you journey here,
For our ancestors were e'er kings in this land.
Belin and Brenne, they campaigned together,
And with a powerful army conquered Rome.
To command this land you covet is our right.
So, you should pay me tribute from your land,
For you seize lands of mine without due right,
And thus, dire trouble you shall find forthright,
That would be master, yet should bow to me.'

Caesar initiates the invasion

Caesar read the letter, then gazed at it in wrath.
Incensed in mood, he threw the thing at his feet.
'Where be my knights, that are good for a fight,
Let my ships be made ready, for we'll embark.
Forth we shall sail, and then invade this Britain,
And take the island's king, and burn him alive,
And hold that land of theirs in our own hands.'
Sixty ships he equipped, all immensely large,
They were soundly-built, both strong and new,
And of lesser ships more than a man could tell.
There came to them weather most wondrous fair,
And they sailed from the far strand to this land.
They found their haven in the river Thames,
Where the Thames and the sea meet together.
Soon the tidings came to this island's king,
And he let it be widely known o'er the realm
That Caesar had arrived, and his landing place.
Cassivellaunus, the king, was now most wary.
He knew of their coming, and held his ground.
There he and his host waited, this island's king.
Then came the word, that grieved him sorely,
That Julius Caesar, indeed, had disembarked.

The nature of Cassivellaunus' forces

Many the manner of men with Cassivellaunus,
And he had a steward, the wisest man on earth.
Belan was his name, and he dealt men wealth;
He was a knight most ready to counsel the king.
Under the monarch, he helped govern this land,
And all of the people of the realm obeyed him.
The king had the sons of his brother Lud with him,
The elder Androgeus, the younger Tennancius.
They rode on before him those earls most bold.
Nennius was the king's brother, he had no other,
Lud being dead; and he with his brave forces,
Marched forth from Canterbury to the shore.
Androgeus, with the men of Kent, from London,
Tennancius out of Cornwall, his men most keen.
King Aeredius was the leader of the Scotsmen,
Britael, the king of North Wales, came at need,
From South Wales, came Guaertaet, the moody,
From Galway came there too, Aessel the good,
While from Moray there came many a sharp spear.
All men gathered then, to meet the sudden need
Of Cassivellaunus, high-king of all this land.
And all of those knights counselled the king
That he should defend his freedom in battle,
While he clasped hands, and pledged to do so;
That he would fight this Caesar that sought tribute.

The first battle, by the shore

Forth went he, and his host marched with him,
To the shore they went, and encountered Caesar.
Caesar, who was fully aware of their advance,
Called out to his troops: 'Make ready for battle;
For Cassivellaunus advances with his host.'
The warriors with their lances then engaged,
With axe and sword, and the spear's keen tip,
Hardily they hewed, their helms resounding,
Fiercely they fought, and many a soldier fell.
Caesar, the Roman general, was bold indeed,
His sword he drew, and many a man he slew.

He laboured in that fight, all bathed in sweat,
Single-handedly, slaying all that were nigh.
And he did wonders there with his weapon,
For he himself killed a hundred worthy men.
Androgeus called to Nennius his uncle,
At the sight; and both earls engaged together.
With many another they stood, and held fast.
They saw how Julius fought like a wild boar,
And so, towards him they advanced the fight,
Felling many of their enemies to the ground.
Nennius, charged to where Caesar laboured,
Then rushed upon him with his keen blade,
Smote him hard on the helm, till the sword bit.
It startled many a knight he came so nigh
Since the general was battling so fiercely.
Caesar said not a word but swung his sword
And struck Nennius so fiercely on the helm,
The iron split, and his head was left bleeding,
But he paled not for he was a sturdy knight.
Caesar ceased not, rather he raised his sword,
As Nennius raised his shield in his defence.
Caesar struck, and the sword pierced the targe;
He sought to wrest it free, but the blade stuck.
Julius gripped the sword, Nennius the shield,
Long they tugged away, but the blade held fast.
Androgeus saw how Caesar and Nennius fared,
And so, he advanced, bringing Nennius his aid,
Once Caesar saw that it might go ill with him,
He relinquished the weapon, and empty-handed,
He turned about, and then swiftly sought to flee.
Nennius, still on the field, reversed his shield,
And drawing the sword out, then proved most brave,
Many a Roman he felled with his own blade,
Was many a man's bane, full many he shamed.
All he smote with the sword died then and there.
All whom he touched; many, pierced to the bone,
Mortally-wounded, fell to the earth beneath.
All day it lasted, that fight, till the fall of night,
And the Roman host with Caesar, their general,

Departed the field in the deepening darkness,
To their camp they withdrew, upon the shore,
Leaving behind a good two thousand knights,
Lying beneath their shields, dead on the field.
Caesar went to his camp-bed, his men adread.
Three thousand men kept the watch by night,
In helm and breastplate, with swords of steel.

Caesar departs after the failed expedition

Julius Caesar, he was most wise and wary.
Aware of his great losses, fearful of more,
He arose at midnight, summoned his knights,
And said he would fare forth, and flee this isle.
He would go into Flanders and there abide,
Till he felt the time was ripe to try once more.
They boarded ship outright, in the dead of night,
The wind was fair, and they sailed for Flanders.
In the morn, when it was light, Cassivellaunus
Made ready his forces, and advanced to fight,
But found the Romans had now fled this land,
Such that none of Caesar's host could be found.
Then were the Britons blissful in their mood,
And great were the cries of joy that they raised.
Yet soon thereafter they felt great loss and woe.

The death of Nennius; Caesar's sword 'Crocea Mors'

Cassivellaunus the king felt this woeful thing,
That Nennius his brother could find no cure
For the head-wound that Caesar had dealt him.
No leechcraft held the power to save his life.
Of remedy there was none, and Nennius died,
And he was laid by the north-gate of London.
The king had a marble tomb inlaid with gold,
Gold and gems, and his brother laid therein.
With magnificence the Britons entombed him.
Now shall you hear a most wondrous word:
The king took the sword Nennius his brother

Had wrested free from Julius Caesar's hand,
And laid it by his brother though twas his bane.
This blade of steel was very long and strong,
And on it letters writ, on the hilt engraved,
That it was named, in Rome, 'Crocea Mors'.
So was the sword called, that was of might,
And, therewith, the general threatened this land.
For never was there a man alive that felt
A single blow from that same 'Yellow' sword,
And shed a single drop of his own red blood,
That met not there, however strong, with Death.

Caesar wins the Gauls to his cause

Now Julius, with his army, lay in Flanders,
And the word came to France how he had fared,
And, with his host, been driven from this land.
Then the French rejoiced greatly at his shame
For, towards Caesar, they felt a deal of anger.
And each brave Frenchman thought to himself
And said to his comrades: 'Let him not prosper
That now, or ever, shall bow to this Julius,
Whom the Britons have beaten, and driven forth.
We'll ne'er bow to him, or hold him our lord,
But win our freedom from him, now, in battle.
For we are no cowardlier than are the Britons.
That have driven him out, and slain his knights.'
Julius heard it said that the French spoke thus,
And that they boasted, and spoke from pride.
He entered into France, with his mighty host,
As if unaware that the French planned evil.
And summoned his men from all over France,
To come to him as they should their master.
They all came to meet him, and greeted him,
And embraced him, concealing their anger.
Julius was most wise and wary in his thought;
He had gold and treasure brought before him,
And gave thereof to the nobles closest to him,
Rich gifts, indeed, he granted of his red gold;

To every noble knight, he gifted a bright gift.
With these gifts of gold, he won them over,
In that manner that seemed to him the best,
And freely promised them what they wished.
They were his friends, now, that were his foes,
Where's the man that may not be thus won
Through fair reward to lay aside his enmity,
And make many a friend midst his opponents?
Now spoke Julius Caesar, the wise and wary:
'Hark to me, my Frenchmen, my free knights,
I will send now to Rome, to my brave people,
And ask that they send five hundred knights,
For I will cross into this Britain once more,
And you shall fare thus with me in strength,
And conquer the land to your great benefit;
For, worth shall you obtain for your service.
Your exiles shall return and own my friendship,
Gifts I'll decree, and the poor shall be wealthy,
Free shall you be, and you shall be my friends.'
Then the gathering replied, their voices loud:
'We will live with you, and shall die with you,
And win honour for you, by force and stratagem.
We will go with you boldly, and in strength,
O'er the sea to Britain, and Cassivellaunus,
To fight that king, and so avenge your knights,
And conquer that land, and set it in your hands.'
Yet much was there to do ere all that was true;
They would feel much sorrow ere it was done.

Caesar's activities in Gaul; Ordre's Tower

When Caesar had done this, shared his treasure,
And, by doing so, had gained their friendship,
He thought it best now to occupy Boulogne;
And there he built a tower most wondrous fair.
The tower was strong and high, to the sea nigh,
And the name he gave to it was Ordre's Tower.
In this stronghold, the general dwelt some while;
For thirteen months in Ordre's Tower was he.

Thither was brought all his gold and treasure.
And never was any tower so well constructed,
With such artistry and skill as Ordre's Tower.
Six thousand knights could gather in its base,
Yet a knight's cloak might cover its summit.
With the tower there, Caesar felt less care.
Into France he marched, and founded cities.
Over all he set reeves, men strong and noble,
Who would raise the land-tax and go each year
With all the monies raised to Ordre's Tower.

The second invasion (54BC)

Then he had six hundred mighty vessels built,
Wondrous great, all anchored in the harbour.
When the work was done, and all was ready,
Then the general said he would sail to Britain,
For, upon his life, he would not quit that task.
His six hundred good ships he ordered forth,
And none could count the boats that followed.
Forth they proceeded, and reached the Thames.
Now Caesar thought, and here he was unwise,
To advance his ships upstream on the Thames,
Rowing along until they came to London.
There he would disembark and fight the Britons,
And thus win all this land to his own hands.
But it was not so fated, he was soon hindered,
For wise sailors who knew all, told the Britons,
That the general was heading for the Thames,
And would disembark at London next, to fight.
The Britons, now most wary, planned wisely,
And they took long timbers, straight and true,
And shod with iron, and set them in the water,
They drove five thousand into the river-bed,
With their upper ends hooded with iron bands,
To keep the Roman vessels from the harbour;
And there the piles stood hidden by the flood.

Caesar's fleet meets with bad weather

Then came Julius Caesar, of all this unaware.
The wind drove hard, the steersmen sang out,
It drove them at will, all as they sought to flee;
Running towards shore, the ships began to heel,
The hatches were shattered, the waves burst in,
The sails were now in tatters; men were drowned,
As the Romans were blown towards the land.
A hundred and fifty vessels there were wrecked,
Caesar came following after, his heart was sore.
The ships behind luffed, and laid for the shore.
Those that came after warily sought haven,
And, by good fortune, most came safe to land.
They pitched their tents widely o'er the fields,
And sorely lamented their drowned comrades.

Cassivellaunus advances and addresses his troops

Now Cassivellaunus had received the news,
That Caesar's host was ashore near London,
And then said the king, Cassivellaunus:
Alas, Nennius my brother, no more alive,
Would that I'd 'Crocea Mors' you won in fight,
That sword, and you beside me, safe and sound,
And, at my side, Androgeus, and Tennancius,
Then might I march, and meet the Roman host,
In strength; yet we'll go and fight these people.'
Cassivellaunus the king was a knight of valour,
He gathered an innumerable host of men,
And he marched towards the Roman general.
Thus, he addressed his men, most lovingly:
'Seek brave knights, now to maintain your rights;
Bethink you of Belin, and Brenne his brother
Of how they took Rome, with a mighty army,
And conquered all the lands that lay about her,
And governed that city for many a winter.
And so held that place as long as they lived.
I say, to you knights, Rome is ours by right.

Now Caesar holds it that twice comes here,
And seeks thus, to drive you from your land.
And bids you to depart from out this realm.
Lose this land, and every man will loathe you,
Rather look lively for we are brave Britons.
Caesar camps in this isle, by the sea-strand.
Let us now advance towards him bravely,
In our full strength, as his fiercest enemies,
And destroy this Caesar, and all his army,
And rid we our land of these Roman people.’
Then answered his folk: ‘March on, swiftly,
For Julius and his host are doomed to die.’

He engages the Roman forces

Forth they went, and swiftly they advanced,
Until they came where the Roman army lay.
And then, in full strength, rushed upon them.
Fiercely they fought, and many a Roman felled.
There Caesar’s warriors were brought to earth,
Not by tens or scores, but by many a thousand.
All day they fought, and many a man lay dead.
With the fall of night, Caesar broke off the fight,
Caesar was sorrowful, and so bethought him
To flee, that night, with his remaining forces.
He was more than aware of his many losses.
The trumpets blew, and he summoned his men.
And let it be proclaimed, and known throughout,
That they should go to their tents and make plans,
And burnish their weapons against the morrow.
This the British spies heard that were nearby,
And straight these men came to Cassivellaunus,
And told him that Julius was still camped there,
And would fight, with all his knights, on the morrow,
And conquer the Britons, or himself be slain;
For this he had proclaimed to his whole army.

Caesar, forced to retreat, departs once more

Woe now, woe, that Cassivellaunus was unwary!
He knew what should be done, yet he did it not.
He drew to the one side, and there made camp.
Throughout that night, his warriors made ready
Their spears and shields, and yet he was deceived.
For Caesar was now aware of his full losses,
And, near midnight, he warned all of his knights,
Then to ship they went, and swiftly they departed.
The weather was fair, and they rode o'er the waves.
With the living, and the dead, the ships were filled,
With many a sorrowful man, sorely wounded,
And with many a dead knight of Caesar's army.
So, they fared, o'er the flood, to Ordre's Tower.
There had Caesar now, in his heart care and woe.
On the morrow, when it was daylight once more,
The news was brought straight to Cassivellaunus,
That the Roman general was gone from this land,
And how he had embarked, and fled o'er the sea,
Such that none of his Roman soldiers remained.
Then was the king filled with woe, and he cried:
'Woe upon my ill counsel; for many now must die!
Alas, that I failed to see that Caesar would depart.
Truth was it he told, the man that made this saying:
"Believe what every man says, and ill will come."
For I believed them true, the tidings I was given,
Told to me this last eve, by a cowardly traitor,
That Caesar would seek this day to conquer Britain,
Or lie here dead, with his sword in pieces shattered,
Beside all his comrades that fought around him.
This same was said, I now see, to deceive me.
Woe to me! Woe to me, for he has departed!
Nonetheless am I blithe, for we may live ever
In this land of ours, ere he seeks us out again,
And evermore he may think on what we dealt him,
For here there lie ten thousand of his companions,
As well as those vessels of his, sunk in the sea.
And I bless the gods for the honour I obtained,
For twice have I driven out Caesar and his host.
And now will I to London, that I love dearly,

And there will I thank the gods, in holy worship.
And honour them greatly, for all they have done.’
The king then caused the trumpets to be blown,
Summoned his men, and sent them to their homes,
And he ordered his household guards to be blithe,
And tend to their steeds, and prepare their weeds,
And then, in three-weeks’ time, gather in London,
With their wives and children, to make there a feast.
All of the earls and the thanes, the knights and swains.

Cassivellaunus gives thanks to the gods

All of the worthy folk that lived in Britain,
Knowing of that same day, arrived in London,
With as much magnificence as was in Rome.
The king began the service in such a wise
As the heathen rites demanded in those days.
Ten thousand men there were, filled the temple,
The noblest and choicest folk in all of Britain,
Before their deity, whom they thought mighty,
Apollo he was named, held as their high god.
Each man held in his hand a burning taper,
And each brave fellow he wore cloth of gold,
And the monarch had his crown atop his head.
Before the high altar, a sacred fire was lit,
And the king then cast rich gifts into the flames,
And after him, all the lords that were with him,
And then they offered the god noble treasure,
And thanked Apollo for all he’d done for them.
When the service was over, they gathered to eat,
And thereof I shall tell you a wondrous tale.
In the king’s kitchens were two hundred cooks,
And none could have counted those waiting-on.
Twelve thousand cattle were slain for the feast,
And three thousand stags, and as many hinds,
While of all the fowls slain, no man could tell.
All the wealth, all the gold that could be found,
In this land of ours, was brought to that service,
And never, in truth, since this our world began,

Has such a store of treasures been in one place,
Nor such varied abundance given and received.
Merry was the day, most bright was the sunlight;
The folk were drunk on ale, the nobles on wine.
They sported in the field with spear and shield.
Some took to riding, and some to running races,
And some to gamble, thus mischief came quickly;
Some at board-games, others backed their steeds.

Two noblemen Herigal and Evelin quarrel

There were there two, and proud were they both,
Herigal was the one, and Evelin was the other,
Herigal the king's kin, who that day had harm,
Evelin a brave knight, Androgeus his uncle,
Who began to skirmish with staff and shield.
Though playful at first, soon the game soured,
For Herigal struck Evelin fiercely on the chin.
They began to chide, and knights came riding.
Evelin was angered, struck out with his staff,
Smote Herigal on the ribs, and the staff broke.
Then cried Herigal: 'That was painful Evelin,
You struck me from behind, but you will pay,
For, now your staff is broken, woe you'll feel.'
Evelin was sorry that things had turned out so,
The other wished him dead, which seemed harsh,
So, he bethought him as to what he might do,
Having nothing there to hand but a little shield.
He caught sight of a nobleman that stood nearby,
Who had come there to watch the knights at play,
And this man held a sheathed sword in his hand.
With a furious glance, Evelin snatched the sheath,
And drew the blade, so that his heart was eased.
He ran at Herigal, and then smote him fiercely,
Such that his nose and lips were sliced away,
Then struck him again, and cut away his hand,
Gave him a third, and severed him at the waist.
So ended the game, for poor Herigal lay dead.
Then Evelin went thence, naked sword in hand,

And none so bold as to lay a hand upon him.
All folk he passed by, to Androgeus he fled.
Now, to Cassivellaunus it was made known
All that occurred, and that Herigal was slain.
The king sent three noblemen to Androgeus.
Who told him to bring his nephew to the king,
And if he would not do so, he'd be banished.
Androgeus returned the king this message:
'Ne'er the lad would I bring, for anything,
And see Evelin hung high, or otherwise die,
Yet I have land, that lies freely in my hand,
And tis my law rules there under the king.
So, if any knight seeks, of Evelin, his right,
Let him come to my court, and win it there.
For, in truth, he shall gain it no other way.'
Soon was this made known to Cassivellaunus.
The king was greatly angered, nigh to madness,
And these were the words Cassivellaunus said:
'Away with Androgeus, and his kith and kin;
If he meets my eye, anywhere, he is done for!'
Androgeus, forthwith, gathered his company,
And departed from London, and rode to Kent.
To a castle of his own, which he strengthened,
And stocked the place with food and weapons.
The king took London, and all about, in hand,
And then marched into Kent with a vast army,
And with sword and fire that land he troubled.
Androgeus sent two knights to seek the king.
Who spoke thus: 'Sire, Androgeus seeks peace,
He is your man, and will do all as you wish,
If you will grant him peace, and be reconciled,
And cease to burn and destroy all of his land.
Sire, is he not of Lud, and your brother's son,
And all the land you hold once his father's?
To him all shall seem well, if you'll make peace.
Nonetheless, he'll ne'er yield Evelin to you,
For fear he'll be hung high, or otherwise die'
The king, on hearing this, was more wrathful still,

And these words spoke the king, Cassivellaunus:
'Where are you my knights, my noble warriors?
Make war on Androgeus, for I shall be his bane.'

Androgeus seeks aid from Caesar

This Androgeus was told, and he gave his answer:
'It has been said before, and the thing is true,
That many a man does evil against his will,
And so must I do now, out of direst need.
I call the man a fool that sees himself undone,
The while he may defend himself in battle.
Each man will do wrong lest worse he receives.
As I bear shield and spear, I'll send to Caesar,
And greet him, and complain of my injury.
And seek counsel, for of that I have great need.'
Androgeus, that noble knight, penned a letter,
And sent a messenger o'er the sea to Ordre,
And thence to Julius, midst the Roman host.
The letter was well-writ, and most forthright:
'Hail to you, and all your people, general!
Tis to you, Julius Caesar, I make complaint,
Androgeus, that is your man, and no traitor.
Upon my life, I will stand by all I say here.
I swear to it, in the name of my mighty god,
By my lord Apollo, who is dear to my heart.
For, full oft, it happens, and in many a land,
That after hatred men yet meet in friendship,
And despite worldly shame, respect each other.
Twice were you overcome, and your men slain,
And you driven forth from this land of Britain.
Many a thousand dead have you left behind,
Not through the might of King Cassivellaunus,
But through my labour, and that of my knights.
For I led forth with me the men of London,
And all the men of Kent, fine warriors they,
And therewith many a Briton bold in battle.
We overcame you, there, and slew your men.
Now Cassivellaunus and his folk are such foes

As seek to drive me forth from out this Britain,
And to exile me, right far from my own land.
My realm they lay waste; I'm bereft of London,
And they think to ruin me and all my knights.
If you read this letter, it tells you of my plight.
When you departed last time from these shores,
Then was the king blither than ever in his life,
Yet felt care, for he knew not where you went.
Nonetheless he cried, before all his people:
"Now Julius has fled; twice is he driven out,
Twice he entered Britain, and twice felt woe.
Nevermore shall we see him approach this isle.
For here lie his best knights beaten in battle,
And we remain and are joyful at their deaths.
Let all my proud Britons come now to London,
And here grant praise to our master, Apollo,
For the great honour that I, as king, enjoy."
So, all the noble Britons gathered in London,
Knight and thanes, with their wives and children,
With all the means for worship they possessed.
When we arrived in London, then we began
To praise Apollo, and honour our other gods.
It has ne'er been said, since this world began,
There was e'er so much meat served to a feast,
Nor so much good drink poured for the people.
Great was the mirth and then they took to sport.
Some, fairly arrayed, contested games on foot,
Some, as nobly clad, contested on horseback.
There came two noblemen equipped with shields,
And they skirmished there fiercely, so defended.
One was my sister's son, Evelin is his name,
The other Herigal, a nobleman, high at court,
Of the king's kin, being his half-sister's son.
And of all his goodly folk, most dear to him.
They quarrelled there, and Herigal was slain.
When the king, Cassivellaunus, heard the news,
That Herigal was dead, and Evelin had flown,
He sent me a message, that lacked a greeting,
And bade me bring him my kinsman Evelin,

And swiftly, so the court might exact justice,
For he would have the man's head, or hang him.
And, if I would not, then I must be banished,
While, should he catch me, I'd suffer the same.
I yearned for peace, and would be reconciled,
And, thus, see all done right by, at my court,
Since I was his earl, and among the highest,
And yet I refused to render Evelin to him.
Therefore, he has banished me from his court,
Seized London from me, and has slain my knights.
Yet, have I two hundred and fifty warriors,
And twenty strong castles where I dwell in Kent,
And now battle with the king, and have no peace.
Thus, Caesar you have heard my just complaint,
And every word that this letter states is true.
This then do I write: that I will be your man,
And will hold you as my master, and my lord,
If you will but aid me, in my hour of need,
And so rid me of this king, Cassivellaunus.
The truth of this I swear, by my almighty god,
And that which is written here, that will I do.
Come swiftly to Britain; this land I yield you.
That which I drove you from, shall now be yours.'
Caesar listened to all Androgeus had written,
And this was the answer the general gave:
'In the name of our people, I'll not agree this
Unless he sends me Cenani, his son, as hostage,
With thirty other children, to Ordre's Tower.'
Caesar with his host went down to the shore,
Then he sailed amidst his fleet towards Britain,
And, come the dawn, Julius reached Dover.
Androgeus heard the news, and went thither,
And these words he uttered: 'Welcome Caesar,
That are most dear to me: this land I yield you.'
Then they spoke together, and all in friendship.

Cassivellaunus marches to Dover

Meanwhile Cassivellaunus had summoned men

From all of his kingdom, and formed an army.
To London he would march, and besiege the fort
That was yet in the hands of Androgeus' knights.
All was ready, when a rider came, in haste,
And delivered his tidings to Cassivellaunus:
'Hail to you, our king! News I bring, of the Romans,
Words that I fear may be hateful to your heart;
Your deadly foes have come ashore at Dover.
There Androgeus has conferred with Caesar.
All these words are true that I have uttered,
Think now how you might defend your people.'
Then King Cassivellaunus was most troubled,
And swiftly called for the trumpets to be blown,
So, he might speak of the news to his knights,
That Caesar, the Roman general, had arrived
With all his host, and seized Dover harbour.
Then these words King Cassivellaunus uttered:
'London we must leave, and march on Dover,
Gather your forces; we must be there swiftly.'
Forth went the king with all that countless host,
Straight to Dover, though at a disadvantage.
Caesar heard the news (he was wise and wary)
That Cassivellaunus was marching, with haste.
Then Julius was blithe; he liked those tidings.
He marched from Dover all along the sea-shore,
And concealed his forces, deep within a valley.
Androgeus led his warriors to the near end,
And into a wide wood, in the wilderness,
And thus spoke Androgeus to his troops:
'Let no knight be so mad, nor no man so wild,
As to let a sound rise beyond his spear-point,
Nor stray from his comrades, for we'll move
Swiftly now, as one, and destroy our foes.
And if any warrior here can capture the king,
Then, keep him safe and sound, without wound,
For he's my lord and kin, and I'll not slay him.
But all of his folk we should fell to the earth,
And pay heed to the battle and not the spoils;
Fell the foe, and let the armour they bear lie.'

And Caesar instructed his knights likewise.
Three thousand cavalry he had in company,
Chosen knights, and most valiant warriors,
While Androgeus led ten thousand horsemen.

Caesar and Androgeus lie in ambush

As they hid in ambush, and gave their orders,
There came Cassivellaunus the king, riding,
With all his countless force, innumerable men,
And, caught between their forces, suffered harm.
Julius lay hid before him, Androgeus to his rear
Who was the first to stir, and to leave the wood,
Leading all his men, who uttered a piercing cry.
The trumpets blew loud, to urge on his Britons,
Who advanced on the enemy from their flank.
Cassivellaunus heard the outcry behind him,
He heard a mighty sound, and a great din,
And cried outright: 'Into the fight you, knights!'
His heart was full of fear, thinking it Caesar,
But Caesar still lay in ambush, before him,
Listening to the shouts of Androgeus' men,
While his troops waited, ready to rush forth.
Now Cassivellaunus, all unaware of this,
Called to his troops, preparing for a fight,
Still but half-ready when Androgeus charged.
Who rushed towards him, fiercely, in strength.
Those knights now fit for battle began to fight,
While Androgeus met them most forcefully.
And at the first encounter felled four thousand,
Such that the king's host was much lessened.
As they sought to flee, Caesar now appeared,
Then charged at their vanguard, in swift attack,
Felling innumerable folk, in that fierce onset.

Cassivellaunus flees to a defensive position

Britain's king, Cassivellaunus, now fled.
He often knew woe, but ne'er worse than then.

Julius was before him, Androgeus behind;
From both ends they advanced, to his harm.
Cassivellaunus bethought him what to do.
He saw a high hill near, where the wood ended.
To this he retreated, with much of his folk.
With difficulty they ascended the slopes;
Fifteen thousand, nonetheless, escaped there,
Most of those still alive fleeing with the king.
The hill was high and overgrown with hazel,
And surrounded by stony cliffs on all sides.
They felled the brush, and laid it before them,
Defended themselves with sticks, stones, steel,
And then held out there, against the enemy.
The king rendered that hill strong as a castle.
In but a single night, all that work was done,
For laboured there every thane and swain,
King Cassivellaunus too, with his own hands,
For he worked hard seeking to save his army.
When all was done, they were far more secure,
Though Caesar now besieged them all about.
On that hill, lay Cassivellaunus and his men,
There they thirsted and, lacking meat or wine,
The men ate nor drank for three days and nights.
They were badly placed, the king had led ill,
In not seeking peace with Androgeus, his kin.
So, they lay on the hill, afflicted with hunger.
The king faced defeat, without plan or counsel,
For he found no source of aid on any side.
All day he saw his foes before him, in strength,
The warlike Romans, and their general Caesar,
All those warriors from Rome, bent on his harm.
And all day they cried loud to Cassivellaunus:
'Now shall you pay for all your former deeds.
You liked it well felling our friends to the earth.
Now comes woe to you; death you shall suffer,
And, ere that, hunger, and scorn, and great shame.'
Then Cassivellaunus felt dread, and sought counsel,
For he had need of some means of making peace.

He sends an envoy to Androgeus

He chose a wise knight of his, and sent him forth,
Down to the host of those who were his foes,
And there his envoy greeted Androgeus
With peaceful words from the king, his kin,
And better still in time of need, his uncle:
'I have not wrought such evil as merits death,
And tis not at any time right that a knight
Should destroy a kinsman who is guiltless.
You must give me counsel in my great need,
And reconcile the Roman general and I,
So, I might forge a peace with the Romans.
And then you and I will speak together,
And you may order our truce as you wish.
For together we shall live and we shall die.
Consider the need, reconcile Rome and I,
For if I'm slain, all will prove for the worst,
And those hateful to you, that shall slay me.'
Then Androgeus answered the envoy thus:
'How in the world has this thing occurred,
That my uncle's wrath has become so mild,
And that one so angry now sees what's right?
Five days are scarcely ended since the king
Would banish me or deprive me of my life.
To that he gave himself, and stole what's mine,
And all that I love, seemed odious to him.
The king was unwise to take it upon himself
To claim that he fought Caesar, overcame him,
Slew or captured his folk, and drove him out.
The king alone did it not, it was us wholly.
There was I in the fight with all my knights,
And many a time was I hard-pressed indeed;
Had I not been there myself with my knights
He had been taken and his brave Britons slain.
Yet we fought fiercely before our monarch,
And drove out Caesar and his Roman legions.
The king alone did it not, it was us wholly.
When we had fought so, earning much honour,

The king, full of pride, claimed the deed was his.
Yet now he is brought to this, he bethinks himself
To seek my favour with humble talk of peace!
Now his wild mood is tamed, his words are mild.
But I will temper my mood, for evil offer good,
Lessen his troubles, and mediate with Caesar.
Ere this day's end, I shall help him if I can.'

Androgeus seeks to mediate with Caesar

Androgeus, good as his word, went barefoot,
With all his knightly comrades from the fight,
And sought out Caesar, there amidst his army,
Fell at his feet, embraced him beseechingly,
And thus spoke, mildly, Androgeus the true:
'Lord Caesar, your favour now and evermore;
Let me speak with you, for I seek your grace.
You have overcome my uncle and he fled.
That hill he holds, and yet he longs for peace.
Since you've conquered King Cassivellaunus,
And felled many of his people to the earth,
And nigh on hold all his land in your hands,
Grant him his life, and let him speak with you.
Though he is king and free, let him be your man,
And each year he'll send you Britain's tribute,
Of much wealth and treasure, the honour yours.'
This Caesar heard, and of the speech was wary.
He had turned his face away, as if in scorn,
Angered thus by the words he listened to.
Androgeus was wary, but approached Caesar,
Speaking yet more eloquently as he did so:
Thus said Androgeus: 'Hark to me, Julius,
Be not hostile; I have fulfilled my promise.
And done all, as I swore before our knights.
I undertook to set all Britain in your hand,
And so, I have, and the realm you received.
But I swore never to slay Cassivellaunus.
I, his nephew and his man, have not the right.
He shall not die, while I can yet defend him.

Favour him with his life, and be reconciled.
He will be your man, his son your hostage.
And send you three thousand pounds in tribute,
Every year; and I swear this on my sword.
If you refuse, all shall go worse for you;
You and your host will not depart in safety.'
Caesar being now concerned for his army,
Thought it worth more, if they were in Ordre,
Than all the land, and all its gold and silver,
For he was most afraid, the Roman general,
Lest this Androgeus was full of treachery.
He showed his wisdom, and his caution there.

Caesar makes peace and departs

Thus, Caesar replied to the earl, Androgeus:
'Androgeus my dear friend, as you wish,
Since you have aided me in time of need.
Ne'er found I, a truer man, this side of Latium.'
His words were soon known to Cassivellaunus;
Then was the king blither than e'er before.
Down from his hill came Cassivellaunus,
Full blithe in mood, to meet with Julius.
And Julius in turn showed him much honour,
He ordered that the king be bathed, and clothed,
And given food ere he came before him.
When all this was done, they met together.
Peace was established there, and well it held.
They wrought a covenant, before their people.
Cassivellaunus was Caesar's man, and swore
To send three thousand pounds tribute a year
Oaths they swore there, that ne'er were broken,
For true men swore them, and kept them after.
Nonetheless Caesar was the first man ever
To render this kingdom subject to his will,
Since Noah and his sons came out of the Ark.
When all this was done, the two men parted.
Caesar and his army wintered in this land,
In peace and amity, and took their pleasure.

Towards summer, he departed o'er the sea,
Taking Androgeus with him, his dear friend.
And Androgeus ruled all that he desired,
Though his fate was e'er tied to that of Rome.
Neither he nor his comrades e'er returned,
While he lived thereafter but seven years.

Cassivellaunus' death, and the succession

Cassivellaunus that was king of all this land,
When his days ended, there, in York, he died,
And ere the king died, so had his dear queen,
While, to the Britons' woe, they'd had no child.
Tennancius, Duke of Cornwall, heard the news,
That his uncle was dead, and his house ended,
While Androgeus his brother had long departed
With most of his kindred, and Caesar, likewise.
Tennancius bethought him what he might do;
How he might act, and so secure the realm,
That his father, King Lud, long held before.
Tennancius sent messengers throughout Britain,
And bade men bow, and yield them to his power,
Saying it were better that they made him king,
And, without contest, render to him the land,
That Lud, his father, held in his hands before,
And he would love them the while he lived.
And, if they wished it so, he would rule them,
Otherwise, he would fight them, and fell them.
The noble Britons met, in husting, in London,
And best counsel it seemed to do as he had said.
They sent greetings to him, and made him king.
Then there was joy enough in all of Britain.
Ten and twenty winters this land he governed,
Then came the day he died; in London he lay.
And then was sorrow felt amongst the people.
The king had a son, whose name was Kinbelin,
And he had gone, with his uncle, forth to Rome.
There, Augustus Caesar made the lad a knight,
Which was but right, for, since Caesar's death,

None of Androgeus' kin had served Rome better
Than Kinbelin, in defending it against others.
This the Britons swiftly learned, that Kinbelin
Who was most brave and skilful, dwelt in Rome.
He, Tennancius' son, and of Lud's noble line.
Two knights they chose, and sent them to Rome,
And they told Kinbelin of his father's death,
And bade him depart quietly for his own realm.
It was not long indeed, ere he came hither,
And the Britons received him and made him king.

The reign of Kinbelin; the advent of Jesus Christ

In Kinbelin's day, he that was king of Britain,
There came to middle-earth, a maiden's son.
Born was he in Bethlehem to the best of all.
He was named Jesus Christ; through the Holy Ghost,
The treasure of the world, Lord of the Angels.
Father is he in heaven, and mankind's saviour,
Son was he, on earth, of the fairest maiden,
And the Holy Ghost he has within himself.
The spirit he imparts to those that love him,
As he did to Peter, the humble fisherman,
Whom he made noblest of all humankind.
Kinbelin Britain's king, was true in everything,
And here he reigned for two and twenty years.
In his day, there was a man in this country,
Whom wonders followed, his name Teilesin;
Men held him for a prophet, for he was wise.
And all that he told them of, they believed,
Marvels enough, and they found them true.
For he told them every year of things to come.
The king sent twelve wise knights to find him,
And bid him come to him, not go elsewhere.
Soon they brought him before their sovereign,
And as they met the king thus greeted him:
'Now, by my life, you are welcome, Teilesin,
Better to see you alive than a thousand pound.'
Then Teilesin answered, saying to Kinbelin:

‘And so shall I thrive, if you yourself are well.’
Then was Kinbelin glad and said to Teilesin:
‘News of strange marvels comes to this land,
From Jerusalem, things of wonder in Bethlehem.
For a little child is born within that kingdom,
Great is their awe, with tokens seen in the stars,
And moon and sun; troubled are all mankind.
Tis widely known, and letters are writ to me,
And so, I would know from you, my dear friend,
What the tokens signify; what does this portend,
For the folk of every land, they are sore afraid?’
Then said Teilesin, in swift answer to Kinbelin,
‘It was foretold in times past, and now is true,
That a child should be born, chosen o’er all,
That should be the Saviour, and aid his friends,
And release his people from their hateful bonds,
Freeing Adam from Hell, Noah and Abraham,
Zadoc and Samuel, and Simeon the old,
Joseph, Benjamin and his brothers with him,
Joel and Elisha, and Ezra and Nathan,
Isaac and his brother, and many another,
Many a hundred thousand, there in Hell.
For such a deed is he come to the people.’
These words said Teilesin, and all were true.
Once the king was informed of all he said,
Those tidings were sent o’er all the realm,
The Britons took heed; and ne’er have they forgot.
Kinbelin was a good king, ever peaceable,
And so, the Roman folk loved him greatly.
Had he sought to rebel, he might have withheld
The rich tribute, which Caesar had demanded,
But he rendered it humbly, all his life through.

The invasion of the emperor Claudius (43AD)

After the tidings came of Christ, God’s child,
Kinbelin the king lived but scarce ten years,
For then he quit this life, and in York yet lies.
He left then two sons, Wither and Arviragus;

Wither was the elder, Arviragus the younger.
And the king left Wither all of his kingdom,
And he ruled and dealt, as in his father's time.
He was a skilful knight, endured many a fight,
Yet was exceeding stern and harsh with folk.
He would no longer suffer the rule of Rome,
Nor would he send them tribute from this land.
And if he found some man had come from Rome,
He caused him to be beheaded, swift took his life,
And, with this grim sport, all such men he served.
The emperor ruling Rome was called Claudius,
And he heard tell of Wither, King of Britain,
Of how he'd insulted him, and promised more.
He showed his anger, and worse was in his heart,
And swore an oath that Wither would pay dearly.
He then sent messengers throughout the empire,
And ordered all the brave men, all the wise,
All of his leading men, to gather in council,
And they met together in the city of Rome.
The summoned their forces from everywhere,
And with countless men fared forth from Rome,
And it was not long ere they reached this land.
The emperor Claudius with all his vast army
Disembarked at Portchester, on the sea-strand,
And vigorously they then attacked the town.
The emperor had ditches dug, exceeding deep,
And all about them, he raised a strong stone wall,
Then Portchester was a fortress with the best.
But first, with his assaults, the town did tumble,
With fire and force, this Claudius razed it all.
This Wither heard of, that was King of Britain,
That Claudius had come in strength to this land.
The king gathered a host, from far and wide,
While Arviragus his brother raised another,
And marched towards the coast with a vast horde,
Until their host met with the emperor, Claudius.
Fiercely the warriors fought, and fated they fell.
While Arviragus supported his brother bravely.
Now, Claudius had a nobleman named Hamun;

He counselled the emperor and the Roman host.
Hamun observed Wither and his hostile deeds,
How, fiercely, in the fight he slew their knights,
And felled all that sought to stand before him.
Hamun bethought himself what he might do.
And how he might so slay this King Wither.
Hamun, amidst the dead, turned their corpses;
He found a knight that had been slain outright,
He took his breastplate, and his gilded shield,
Leapt on his charger, and rode a little aside,
Till he saw King Wither, engaged in the fight.
Hamun smote his own comrades as he rode,
Performing like a Briton his every action,
Such that King Wither thought the man his own,
Though Hamun drew near only by treachery,
For Hamun rode up and down a little while,
And rushed at every Roman he came upon,
Shouting with the cries that the Britons gave:
He rode about, till he came to the king's side,
And fought beside him as if he were his man,
Slaying his own folk; treachery was there.
The king trusted him, as a man of courage,
Thinking indeed that this man was his knight.
Overheated, his breastplate covered in sweat,
The king rode a little way out of the fight,
And removed his cuirass, so his chest was bare.
Hamun charged at him, with all his strength.
And drove his spear thus through the king's chest.
Wither he slew; there, was treachery enough;
And then he rode swiftly to join the Romans,
And told the emperor what his spear had wrought.

Arviragus avenges his brother King Wither's death

Arviragus saw that his brother had been slain,
And rode swiftly to where the dead king lay.
He donned the king's armour, and seized his steed,
And entered the battle as if he were the king.
The Britons there thought that it was his brother,

And charged the Romans with him, so they fled.
They slew many of Claudius' knights outright;
Nine thousand Romans they laid on the ground,
Claudius the emperor, thereupon dismayed,
Now withdrew to the ships with his legions.
Then out of this land they sailed o'er the waves,
And forth they went as if fiends conveyed them.
Yet five thousand were left there on the shore,
Unable to reach the ships, to be slain or taken.
Swiftly these all retreated to a wood nearby;
Arviragus pursued, with twenty thousand knights,
And took them, or slew, hacking men to pieces.
Hamun fled through the wood, towards the sea,
He rode to where he thought a ship might lie;
The ship had been stranded by the ebbing tide.
The while it was being floated, came Arviragus.
Hamun had but thirty horsemen riding with him,
Arviragus slew them all, and cut down Hamun.
For his brother's death, did Arviragus sorrow,
Glad on the other hand that his foes were slain.

Claudius renews the invasion

Arviragus named the place for Hamun's death.
Hamton, he called it; now and ever it stands.
And now you know how the name of it arose,
For so, in many a wise, do such names appear,
And oft from a small event, that long endures,
For naught else clings so fast as a given name.
Now Hamun and his comrades were all slain,
Arviragus was exceeding pleased, indeed,
But soon thereafter the knight met with sorrow.
He and his men had set forth not long after;
To Winchester they went, and met with harm.
The emperor, Claudius, with his remaining force,
Had made his way over the waves in safety,
He was aboard but a night, ere the wind turned,
And blew towards this land, and the sea-strand.
Claudius returned, the wind in his favour,

And speeding swiftly he came to Portchester.
Forth went the emperor then with his legions;
All in arms, they advanced to the city wall.
They marched on foot, the serried ranks refreshed,
O'er the walls they went, and they swarmed within.
The folk they slew there, and their goods they seized,
Then all that goodly burgh they burnt to the ground.
Thus, Portchester fell and never since has it risen
To be as mighty again, as in those days it was.
The emperor, Claudius, with his powerful army,
Marched to Winchester, and besieged the burgh.
Therein was Arviragus, now wretchedly oppressed,
And a great part of his kindred among the British.
Woe was on Arviragus, and to his men he said:
'Tell to me my men, say, my goodly warriors,
Will you aid me, in strength, and win me honour?'
And then gave him answer those noble knights:
'We will desert you not, whether we live or die!'
They donned their gear, and leapt upon their steeds.
The knights were full brave, the gates lay open,
They raised their shields, made a wall of steel,
All those fine knights were ready for the fight.
Arviragus then summoned all their leaders;
They rode a little apart, and there took counsel.
Then he sent two envoys forth, to the emperor,
To ask if the Romans wanted peace or war.
Then Claudius answered the two envoys thus:
'A good man is he that seeks to be reconciled.
I am wealthy enough, for Rome is my realm,
While all of the many lands have I in hand
That Julius, the conqueror, ruled before me,
Whose fate is therefore subject to my wishes.
Tis only this one kingdom honours me not,
This the one folk that holds me not their lord.
And it shames me, and wounds me to the heart,
That Rome should lose, while I live and rule,
The great honour my forebears won for her.
Nor greed nor avarice have brought me here,
Nor to demonstrate our strength in battle.

No, not for strife, but to assert my rights,
Am I here to win, or lie among the dead.
Knights, you were sent here by Arviragus,
Return now, swiftly, to your sovereign lord,
Say to him, and in truth, so he may ponder,
That if he seeks friendship, and I as his lord,
And yields to me, the better twill be for him.
If he'll pay me the tribute from your land,
Then I in return will show him much honour.
And tell him this; I will give him my daughter,
Genuis by name, as a token of our concord
And of our friendship, that all might go well.
And if he will not, he shall know far worse,
We will meet together, and battle will decide;
We shall bring slaughter, and the worse will be.'
The knights went forth, and straight to the king,
And recounted the emperor Claudius' words.
The king saw the need to consult his council,
And then honoured the knights with this message:
That he and his realm would be subject to Rome;
He'd worship the emperor, and wed his daughter.
The two leaders met, and soon were reconciled,
And, afterwards, they retired to Winchester,
Then were all in this land blithe, and songful.
In Winchester they stayed one and twenty weeks,
And Claudius sent to summon the maid, Genuis,
The maiden then came to this land full safely,
And the emperor Claudius wed her to this king.
And still is it known that she was a queen here,
That Genuis of Rome, was queen to Arviragus.
When Claudius sent to Rome, ere this was done,
The while went Claudius and King Arviragus
Into Orkney, and camped on the main island,
And that, and the isles about it, they conquered.
Two and thirty islands they won to their hand,
Established peace, and returned to Winchester.

Arviragus, under Claudius, reigns in Britain

From Rome came Genuis, the maid, in safety.
With sixty knights, to act as her companions.
The maid was wed; the king had her to wife.
Great was the joy and bliss in all of Britain,
With Arviragus as king, under the emperor;
The folk were blither than ever in their lives.
For their greater pleasure, they built a burgh
In a place most fair, by the river, Severn.
When the burgh was done, twas good and strong,
And King Arviragus handed it to Claudius,
With all the land about, enough and plenty.
And he ordered that it receive a fitting name.
For love of Claudius, he called it Caer-clou,
Though it was not for long the name so stood.
Now when Claudius was here, he saw a woman,
She was witty and wise; then, a maid was she.
Claudius' knights had captured her in the fight
At Porchester, and had given her to Claudius,
For the maiden to him seemed most pleasing.
And he ruled her, and led her forth with him,
And he loved this same woman, exceedingly.
The woman became with child by Claudius,
And, when the child was born, he was full glad.
When the time came for it to be baptised,
After the noble laws that held in those days,
They gave him a name, Gloi they called him.
He waxed and throve, and folk bowed to him.
Claudius gave him Caer-clou for his own,
And garrisoned it with knights, good in a fight.
Bade them guard it, and renamed it Gloichestre,
All for love of this son, most dear to his heart,
Who afterwards had all Wales to his own hand,
And was lord and duke, there, for many a year.
The child was sent to be raised in Gloichestre;
Once this was done Claudius returned to Rome,
And took the mother with him, to be his queen.
Not long after he reached Rome, tidings came
Of one performing miracles in that country,
A man of wonders who'd come from Antioch.

Peter was his name, many a wonder he did;
He roamed that land, turning it to God's hand.

Arviragus defies Rome (c71AD) during Vespasian's reign

When Claudius left, Arviragus ruled this isle,
With Genuis his queen, a woman most fair,
Nor did he see aught then come to harm him.
Thus, he dwelt here in bliss for twenty years.
Then news came from Rome of Claudius' death.
The king and queen were sorrowful indeed,
As were all the best folk that lived in Britain,
When the news came that Claudius has died,
With tidings of how his death had occurred.
Later, when Gloi was a most noble knight,
Arviragus made this speech to his noblemen:
'As I do hope for mercy, I shall no longer,
No matter my fate, bow down to those in Rome,
Nor evermore send them tribute from this land;
And if they then should seek to re-conquer us
Here they shall gain but bitter hurt indeed,
Conquer naught, but rather shed their blood,
And all their wives, in Rome, shall widows be.'
So said the king, yet, in truth, twas not to be.
There he sat, on his throne, sipping his wine,
But within two winters things were otherwise.
For the Romans had sent envoys to this land,
And demanded the tribute that was promised.
But Arviragus, the king, answered in anger,
And wrathfully ordered them from his sight,
Telling the men to flee, ere they were slain.
Forth they departed, and returned to Rome.
In that same year Vespasian was emperor,
And the news they brought turned him to wrath.
He summoned all the Roman lords to council,
And swore, on his life, he would go to Britain,
To secure the rights Claudius had possessed,
And if they wished for war, then he would fight.
And all the nobles of Rome agreed his counsel.

Vespasian went forth till he came to France,
Where all that he could see was yet his own.
He led its sovereign king that held him as lord,
Forth, with himself, on his passage to this land.
He marched to the sea-coast where he found
A fleet, gathered while he was yet in Rome.
He waited on the weather, fair winds soon blew,
He embarked at Wissant, and landed at Dover.
Now Arviragus, aware of this, thwarted him,
And drove him back, forcibly, into the waves.
Vespasian had with him many fine seamen,
They unfurled the sails and ran with the wind.
Forth, along the coast, they voyaged swiftly,
And full soon, in haste, to Totnes they came,
Neared the land, and disembarked on the sand.
They quickly armed, and as quickly marched on.

The siege of Exeter

They hastened together; to Exeter they came.
And thought to steal, silently, into the burgh.
But the wary burghers guarded that place well.
They closed the gates, and prepared to fight,
And set their best forces to defend the place.
Full seven days Vespasian, with his army,
Lay before Exeter and besieged it fiercely.
When the king knew Vespasian was there,
He led all the forces there were in Britain,
And swiftly he set forth towards Cornwall,
Reaching Exeter, that was now fast besieged.
Arviragus came there with his British army,
Vespasian had the burgh, as yet, surrounded.
On the morrow, at dawn, the gates opened.
Forth came the knights within, exceeding fair.
The war-horns blew, trumpets began to bray,
They all raised their spears and gilded shields,
Then thirty thousand Britons joined together,
Making a mighty host of their two armies.
There against them was the emperor Vespasian.

They met in bold encounter, and fought fiercely,
Hewed hardily; the helms they wore resounded.
Full strongly they smote with the steel's edge.
All day the ranks of men were locked in battle,
Until the shadows of evening parted the foes.
Knights from both sides lay hacked to pieces,
And most of those before Exeter came to harm.
Genuis, the queen, beheld that dreadful sight.
Saddened was she, indeed, by those fallen men.
She called to her lord, that was dear to her heart,
To the king, Arviragus, the queen spoke thus:
'My lord, bethink you of your many virtues;
You are of the true faith, that truth most sure,
And those are the things that, here, befit a king.
If he deals with good men, whether rich or poor.
Bethink you of the words that you once spoke
To Claudius, my father, that was your friend.
And honoured you, and so made me your wife,
You who are dear to me as my king should be.
My kindred are there without, and yours within,
If you now break your oath, and slay my kindred,
You and your son, I speak true, will be hated.
While if my kindred overcome, and fell you,
If you yourself, and all your kindred are slain,
Then hatred will be shown to your son and I.
Better to be reconciled, than to stir such strife.
Bethink you of the oath, that you once swore,
That, to my father, whereby you undertook
To send to Rome the tribute agreed each year,
For you live yet, long indeed may you do so,
And, therefore, must hold to what you swore.'
The court was in full agreement with the queen.
The king and courtiers stayed awake that night;
All night they communed as to the best counsel.
But none seemed as good as that of the queen.
On the morrow, at dawn, they prepared to fight,
They all marched forth together, as if to battle.
Forth came the queen, and rode betwixt the foes,
First, she signalled peace, and then she spoke,

Bringing together, reconciling, both the leaders.
Of those that were enemies, Genuis made friends.
The king now promised to maintain his pledge,
And observed the pact the while that he yet lived,
So were they reconciled, and met in concord.
Then was this Britain of ours most joyous,
And Vespasian and his army wintered here.
From burgh to burgh, they travelled, blithely.

The reign of Maurus; the Picts invade Scotland

When summer came, that host returned to Rome.
Britain remained blithe all its monarch's life.
Nov Arviragus had a son; his name was Maurus.
And he was sent off to Rome, for his schooling,
So well taught, he became both clerk and knight.
Then a message came to him, sent from this land,
The news, no less, that his father was no more,
And that he must come swiftly to his kingdom.
So, the tidings ran, and that same he did outright;
To this land he came and received the crown.
Arviragus had been rich, Maurus grew richer,
And, in this land, he fostered peace and quiet.
Here was abundant good, bliss and plenty.
And so, all things stood, till, over the sea-flood,
Came one Rodric, a king unlike to the others.
He came from Scythia, unlike all other lands,
And brought with him a mighty host of Picts.
Once this Rodric was fully grown, and able
To wreak evil, he fared ever over the flood,
And in many a land did evil, and never good.
Full many a hundred burghs had he destroyed.
Now he came, by the sea-strand, into Scotland,
And the land he wasted, bringing it great harm;
O'er the land he went, harrying and harming.
The news of all this came to Maurus the king,
How this King Rodric was ravaging the land.
And so, he sent his messengers everywhere,
Ordering every man, that would honour him,

To come, and well-armed, to the royal court.
The army gathered, and the king went forth,
He fared towards Scotland, and met with Rodric.
There they fought most fiercely; the Picts fell.
Rodric was slain, then drawn apart by horses.
Then did Maurus the king a famous thing.
On the very spot where had slain Rodric,
He had a most wondrous stone pillar raised.
And caused strange runes to be writ thereon,
As to how Rodric died and was dismembered.
And how the Picts were beaten in that battle.
He set the stone up, and it stands there yet,
And so will it do, until this world has end.
Maurus named the stone, called it Westmoring,
And much of the land that lay all about it,
The king took in hand; tis called Westmorland.
And now you know the reason it is so called.
Once the Picts had been conquered in the fight,
With Rodric dead, and full many slaughtered,
There were yet fifteen hundred that were left,
And they were the finest fighters in his host.
They had a noble, a chieftain, as their leader,
And he retreated, to seek defensive shelter,
To save their lives, and then depart the land.
Three brave earls had seen them quit the fight,
And to which part the band of men had fled.
These earls and their knights followed after,
And drove them into a wood, wreaking harm.
Now, this fair wood stood amidst a weald,
And none might escape, behind or before,
So, all of them they captured, and slew none,
But bound them, and brought them to the king,
So that he might behead them all, or hang them.
The king spoke to them; they sued for grace,
And begged him earnestly, of his great mercy,
To make them slaves, that they might serve him,
And, thus, would do his bidding all their lives.
The king granted them mercy as they sought,
And gave them a large tract of land in hand,

All about Caithness, and they settled there.
The land was good but, since the great flood,
The earth had ne'er been ploughed there or sown,
Nor had any man living dwelt in that place.
When tilled, they found the land most fertile.
They ploughed and sowed, and reaped and mowed.

The Picts of Caithness marry women from Ireland

Within three years, they named twelve envoys,
And these set forth, and came into this realm.
They greeted the Britons with peaceful words,
Wishing them well and prosperous, and said:
'We seek from yourselves a gift that is most dear,
To take, from among you, women as out wives,
And then will there be love between our kinfolk.'
The Britons on hearing this, showed their disdain,
And ordered them to depart from out their land;
Ne'er would they have that for which they yearned.
The Picts, offended, returned thence to their kin,
And related the outcome of their failed mission.
Those folk then sent their envoys forth to Ireland,
To that island's king, one Gille Caor by name,
And asked that they wed the women of his land.
And the king granted them all that they desired.
Through those women, who dwelt among them,
The folk began to speak the speech of Ireland.
And, ever after, tis the usage of their land.

The death of Maurus, and the succession

Maurus the king ruled all this isle in peace,
And e'er, in his time, the people were blithe.
But then came the day that the king lay dead.
Forth came the king's son; his name was Coil,
He was strong, and bold, and firm of mind,
And knew all the laws that governed Rome.
Alas he lived not long, to his people's woe,
But, while he lived, he held the land in bliss.

Coil the king, he that was Britain's prince,
Had a son most dear to him, named Lucius.
He was the best that ever ruled this kingdom
Since Brutus came to Britain and claimed it.
Lucius was nobly born, and well-instructed,
He was most worthy, and the Britons loved him.
Many an excellent thing King Lucius knew;
There was no man under heaven more learned.
Through this king, Britain was Christianised.
The man that would hear how it came about,
This text will tell him, and in words of truth,
How King Lucius came first to worship Christ.

The Christianisation of Britain (*during Eleutherius' reign as Pope c174-c189AD*)

Excellent men came forth, then, out of Rome.
They came to the king, and gave him the news,
Of all Peter did in Rome, and the martyrdom
That he and the other saints had undergone.
Then Lucius the king exceedingly desired
To know far more of our lord, Jesus Christ.
There were then in Rome most excellent men.
And a holy man, Eleutherius, was the Pope.
Lucius, the king, sent some of his closest men,
To seek audience of the Pope, and to greet him,
And ask him in God's name, of his goodness,
To send to the king in Britain some holy man,
For the king wished to receive Christ's creed here,
And so live virtuously, and worship the Lord,
He, and all of the people in this land of his.
Eleutherius was most joyful at these tidings,
There was no man on earth who was so blithe
As that holy man when he heard their words.
The Pope sent two bishops that knew God's law,
Hither he directed them, and forth came they,
That God's messengers might come to this land,
To Lucius the king, and his noble household.
Then Deruvian, and the other bishop, Fagan,

Spoke a sermon, before the king, he liked well.
Ere the sermon was done he longed for baptism,
And all his knights they yearned for it, outright.
The king was baptised and his nobles with him,
And all the Britons that must submit to be so.
All those folk who scorned to receive baptism,
Were yet forced to convert, on pain of death.
Once this was done, the bishops did otherwise;
They roamed over Britain, and every temple,
That the Britons had built here, they came to.
They threw all the vestments there out the door,
And did the best they could to cleanse the walls,
And all the idols, all the statues of 'Mahound',
Were dragged out by the legs, or by the arms,
And such were then destroyed in a blazing fire.
Once this was done, they again did otherwise,
Fared forth, and then, supported by God's grace,
Journeyed they from place to place, and laboured
And blessed all the shrines in the Saviour's name.
Once this was done, they again did otherwise.
They appointed bishops to oversee the people,
And over them archbishops, to rule the clergy,
And many a church they built, in many a place,
And appointed the priests there, as was needed,
Once this was done, they again did otherwise.
And Lucius came, and bestowed land all about,
To ensure God's peace, and freed the churches.
And in many a place the law is as he decreed.
Nonetheless, it was oft corrupted later,
Much debased in most hateful and wicked ways,
And only then restored, as the Lord would wish.
When all was done, the bishops sailed for Rome,
And left this land of Britain in God's hands,
And those of Lucius, dear to them in heart,
And so all here fared well for many a year.

The death of Lucius, and the arrival of Septimius Severus (208AD)

Lucius, the king, lived and ruled full long,

Two and forty winters, and with much bliss.
For food was plentiful, and the folk rejoiced,
While reaping rich harvests, beyond measure.
And so, they began to stray, and they forgot
All that noble Bishop Deruvian, had taught,
And Fagan his companion, the while before.
Now, all was peaceful while Lucius yet lived,
But there came the day when the king lay dead.
In Gloucester he, to whom peace was dear, died,
And twas there the noble Britons buried him.
The world had aged two hundred years or so,
Since Christ was born, when the monarch died,
And once Lucius was dead, all things went ill.
For he left behind him nor sister nor brother,
Nor queen, nor kin, that might rule the realm.
To Rome came tidings of Lucius the king,
Of his death, and of the lack of any counsel.
Severus was then emperor, born in Libya,
His army strong, when he came to this land.
Severus thought to swift subdue the realm,
But the Britons were active and did much harm,
While they fought him oft, in many a battle.
Severus bethought him as to what he might do,
He kept his men peaceful, and law-abiding,
Such that none might be so wild or witless,
As to cause trouble, on pain of life or limb,
With regard to aught that came to his notice.
The Britons, who were observant, saw this,
That Severus kept all peaceful in his army,
While amongst themselves all was conflict.
The Britons gathered, full seven thousand,
And spoke with Severus, seeking such calm,
And this he pledged to them, with gifts of worth.
Then Severus' men were much emboldened,
He deposed the Britons that were then in power,
Earning much love from all men that sought peace.
He marched to London, and was welcomed there,
And then ranged the realm, setting it in hand.
And ever his sworn enemies ran before him,

So much so that they fled beyond Humber,
And as far as that country held by the Picts,
Who welcomed them, and made them allies.
There they made a noble knight their leader,
A fine knight and handsome, named Fulgenes.
He it was who would rule, and counsel them.

Severus battles the alliance of Britons and Picts led by Fulgenes

Fulgenes took in hand the north of Scotland,
The north was dear to him, and called Daeire.
Severus marched south, away from Scotland,
And led his legionaries once more to London,
While Fulgenes from Scotland wrought harm.
He troubled the realm with many a fierce attack;
And plunder he took, and many a man he slew,
Long, from Scotland, much sorrow did he sow.
Severus knew of this, that was emperor then,
And afterwards all this land stood in his hand.
So, the emperor sent messengers everywhere,
And gathered many a workman from all lands,
And caused a dike to be made, wondrous deep,
And most strong and wide, on Scotland's border;
From sea to the opposite sea, this great dike ran.
And atop he built a wondrously fashioned wall,
And set knights there, to guard it night and day,
So, neither the Picts nor any other might cross,
Yet they sought for peace, and to speak with him,
And to live henceforth with Severus as emperor.
Fulgenes witnessed its building and completion,
A barrier to entering this land, by day or night.
He could find no tactics that seemed good to him.
Therefore, he summoned his thanes to a husting,
That they might counsel him, in his great need.
They advised him to fare forth into Scythia,
And swiftly he did so, and was welcomed there.
He spoke with the Picts, and promised them much,
Such that they gathered a host in that country,
And came by sea, and passed into this our land.

They marched straight to York, against the Britons,
And soon, in full strength, besieged the burgh.
Through letters and word of mouth, Fulgenes
Called upon all his friends throughout the land
To come aid him there, for they could but gain;
He would treat them well, and they win honour,
And they would be dear to him, while he lived.
Many a Briton heard this and was emboldened
To leave Severus' side, and join with Fulgenes,
Who gave them fair welcome, and promised gold.
Now Severus saw all that Fulgenes was doing,
And he gathered a host of the folk of this land,
And marched towards York, where he met his end.
When he arrived, Fulgenes was there before him.
The two armies joined in battle, most fiercely;
Folk without number were slain on both sides.
There, Severus died, and many of his Romans,
While Fulgenes was wounded wondrous sorely,
Such that, upon the third day, he died in pain.
On Severus, the Britons, there, passed judgement,
Those who held power saying amongst themselves:
'Severus was a fine knight, and he ruled us fairly
While we served him, ere we turned to Fulgenes.
Now, through their ill counsel both are dead.
Let us take Severus' corpse, and carry it to York,
And there we shall bury him, with much honour,
And repay the good he did us, in days gone by.'
So, they did, as they had previously determined.

Events following the death (211AD) of the emperor Severus

Severus left two sons; these were their names:
Basian was the elder, and Geta the younger.
Brothers they, yet not of the same mother.
Basian's mother was of this land of Britain,
While Geta's mother was of Roman descent.
The Britons took Basian and made him king,
While the Romans made Geta their emperor.
The Britons were restive, and loved Basian,

While the Romans instead loved Geta greatly.
There was much strife between the brothers,
They gathered their forces, and met in battle,
And there King Basian slew Geta his brother,
And the Romans then departed from Britain,
While many were slain in that mighty conflict.

The usurpation by Carrais, and his reign

There was a young man lived in Basian's reign,
Carrais was his name, and a subtle man was he.
His father was a lowly knight, the son most stern,
And the most restive man there was in Britain,
And he cared not a jot for any man alive.
It was ever a source of woe to this Carrais
That Basian was the king over all Britain.
Basian kept the peace, Carrais liked it not.
At that time there came to the sea-coast here
Full sixty ships manned by a band of pirates.
Carrais bethought him of a most subtle plan;
In its pursuit, he would fare forth to Rome.
Forth he went to Rome, and soon arrived,
And talked with the emperor and the army.
For thus spoke Carrais, the great deceiver:
'Hail to you, Syrian, King Basian greets you,
And sends this message by word of mouth,
He can no longer send tribute from Britain,
For twice have his men set out to deliver it,
Yet out at sea were pirates that slew them all
And stole the treasure on its way to Rome.
These outlaws are so strong by land and sea,
That none may sail the waves at their ease.
And yet, if it be your will to hear my plea,
But grant me your writ, and twelve good ships,
And, protected by the power of your decree,
I shall go to sea, and slay these marauders,
And bring you the whole tribute out of Britain.
For I am a knight's son, with many kindred,
And my father has a fine fortress by the sea,

And he has knights enough, and men in plenty,
And they will help me slay this pirate band;
My hands will guard your tribute and your land.'
The emperor listened to Carrais the deceiver,
And granted the man everything he desired.
He gave him his written orders, and weapons,
And then he sent him forth again to this land.
Thus, Carrais fared, and soon arrived in France,
Showing the emperor's writ where'er he went.
He spoke to his kin, of all he'd done in Rome,
And his folk flocked to him from every side.
He marched to the sea-shore with a mighty host,
For his cavalry were a full five hundred strong,
Accompanied by countless warriors on foot.
He took the ships by the shore into his hands,
And went forth on the sea, over the waves.
Thus, in a short while, he arrived in Britain,
And ravaged the realm of Basian the king.
Carrais sent messengers o'er all this land,
And bade every young man that was idle,
Every outlaw that had found refuge here,
Every knight's son that would prove himself,
And every brave man that would treasure win,
To come to him and so gain gold and spoils.
His words were swiftly known far and wide;
Soon the fractious and ambitious gathered.
Thirty thousand at least sided with Carrais.
Then they marched forth all along the coast,
And robbed and ravaged, and left naught behind.
Castles they took, and many Britons they slew,
While many a noble Briton was burnt to death.
East and West they fared, the land made waste,
North to Scotland where they wrought much harm,
Then back to this realm, slaying all the people.
Carrais sent a ready man to the British chiefs,
Who told them of Carrais' speech, as uttered:
'Carrais the strong sends these words from camp,
And from afar sends greetings to the Britons.
You are goodly men, and I offer you peace,

And freedom will I grant, and friendship hold,
If you'll but make me king over your country.'
And the Britons answered, being loyal men,
That naught could make them depose their king,
Nor, for any man alive, would they fail Basian.
This then was their reply to Carrais the strong,
And Carrais bethought him what he might do.
He sent two wise knights as envoys to the Picts,
Who dwelt on the lands neighbouring Basian's.
To them they bore a message from Carrais.
Promising them a wealth of worldly goods.
The Picts they were wicked and lacked honour,
They pledged him their word, and swore it true,
That they would betray Basian, and in battle.
Carrais was most pleased on hearing this,
And he sent messengers outright to the king,
And told him he must fight or flee the realm.
Then said Basian 'Ere that, you'll see me dead!'
Within seven nights, the armies met in battle,
Before the city of York; fierce was the fight.
When the Picts were called upon, they deserted,
Leaving Basian and his Britons on the field.
Carrais charged and pierced him with a spear.
They slew the Britons, and captured hundreds,
And then was all this land in Carrais' hands.
Then he sent the Picts north again to Scotland,
And he granted them much land in that realm,
And their kin dwelt in that place ever more.
Exceeding-soon the tidings came to Rome,
As to all Carrais had done, slaying Basian.
They assembled two armies there in Rome,
And they were led by two great noblemen,
Allectus was the one, a man wise and strong,
And the other was named so, Livius Gallus.
They marched from Rome, they sailed to this isle,
And then advanced to meet Carrais the king.
Carrais, they slew, and his knights they captured.
Thus, the Romans again subdued the people,
And Allectus took much of the isle in hand.

King Asclepidiotus besieges London

There yet were many Britons still unconquered,
Men with strong castles, burghs long and wide.
Messengers passed south-westwards to Cornwall,
Seeking one Asclepidiotus, that was its duke.
He came in haste, and they crowned him king.
To him true thanes among the British gathered,
And all the knights he summoned to himself,
In pain of being dubbed as cowards by all.
Allectus, now the ruler, marched to London,
While the British king pursued him swiftly.
On a holy day, as the folk made sacrifice,
Allectus, the ruler, was in the temple, there,
With all of the Romans that were in London.
Then Allectus heard a mighty noise, indeed,
For all the citizens of London were stirring,
Allectus leapt up, and he drew his weapon,
And, with all the Romans there, he went forth,
Marched from the city, and saw, before him,
A vast host, drawn he knew not from whence.
The Britons advanced and, in the bitter onset,
Allectus, they slew, many men they captured,
While others retreated swiftly to the burgh.
The earl, Lucius fled, likewise, to the city,
Had the gates barred, and manned the walls,
While the Britons rode furiously about them,
And laid siege to the burgh as best they could.
Then King Asclepidiotus, that noble knight,
Sent his messengers to Scotland, seeking men,
And Wales, to add Welsh-Britons to his forces,
And sent others to the west, into Cornwall,
Ordering every man with a beard on his chin,
To come to London, on pain of life or limb.
For seven nights, the reinforcements gathered,
Then attacked the walls with wondrous strength.
While Livius Gallus defended the place ably.
Finally, the Britons broke through the walls,

And entered within, and the burgh was won.
Livius Gallus retreated to the fort within,
And entered it with all his Roman forces,
While the British king besieged the fortress,
And the Britons attacked it in full strength.

The death of Gallus and his Romans

Finding his situation most perilous, at best,
Livius addressed Britain's king, from the wall:
'King Asclepidiotus, you battle most bravely.
I would speak with you; I seek, by your grace,
To depart, peacefully, with my men, for Rome.
Let me depart, with all my remaining forces,
And I will swear to you, and keep my word,
That I will ne'er sail here, to this isle, again.'
Asclepidiotus heard him, and thought it good,
And he granted Livius all that he requested.
Forth from the fort they came, and so swore,
And then they issued forth out of London.
Then came the Scottish king to join the host,
And encountered Livius Gallus and his men.
Columban, King of the Scots, he cried aloud:
'Where be you, my knights out of Galloway?
Where you be then my good men of Moray?
Where be you, my Scots? Come, follow me.
We shall avenge our friends and fell our foes.
If this King Asclepidiotus spoke with them
And of his grace then granted them their lives,
I was not there, nor any of my comrades,
Nor will we hold to it, but avenge the dead.'
They raised their spears and swiftly advanced,
And fiercely they felled their Roman foes.
Gallus, they captured, then beheaded him,
Hurling his corpse into the stream nearby.
And all the dead they dragged to that brook,
Where Gallus lay, submerged beneath them.
Then was the land cleansed of the Romans;
And so, the Britons gave that brook a name.

Since Gallus lay there, they named it Galli,
The which, in the English tongue, is Walbrook.
Now I have told you how it won that name,
And so that stream shall be called ever more.

The death of Asclepidiotus (c286AD, Diocletian being emperor)

Then was Asclepidiotus king, that noble knight,
For full ten years he dwelt among the Britons.
Then came his death; it was a wicked thing,
That he should so soon depart from this life,
For the Britons loved him, that was most just.
In Gloucester dwelt an earl, of a noble line,
He the greatest nobleman alive in Britain.
Coel was his name, this noblest of all here,
He was of Gloi's kin, that ruled Gloucester.
And he fought Asclepidiotus in battle,
And Coel, in that fight, he slew the king.
During all this, the land was much troubled,
Such that the Roman emperor, Diocletian,
Sent Maximian hither to this country,
And he arrived here with a mighty army.
On reaching London, he found that Coel
Had won himself the kingship in battle.
He and Maximian spoke warmly together,
And there the pair swore an oath of friendship.
Then Maximian said: 'My lord, Diocletian,
Has placed in my two hands all of the lands
Between Mont Aiguille, and your Scotland,
Commanding that I pass through them all,
And slay all those folk that are Christians.'
Then was Coel, that was the king of Britain,
Sorrowful that he had sworn him friendship.
Coel did naught; Maximian did his will,
Beheading every Christian that he found,
And marking those who renounced their faith.
Thus, this Maximian martyred Saint Alban,
And, likewise, Saint Julian and Saint Aaron,
And two anchorites dwelling at Caerleon.

There was ne'er a bishop, clerk or knight,
No matter how mighty that was not slain,
Unless that same renounced Christianity.
When all was done Maximian departed,
And left Coel as the ruler of all Britain.

The reign of King Coel; Constantius in Britain (305AD)

The king had a daughter, she most dear to him,
And he gave his realm into this daughter's hands,
For he had no son that he might crown as king.
This maid, named Helena, afterwards was queen
In the realm of Jerusalem, to the people's bliss.
This maid was well taught, of great learning,
For, out of books, she gathered much knowledge,
And she dwelt here in this land with her father.
Not long after the fight, news had reached Rome,
That Coel had slain the king, Asclepidiotus,
Which pleased the Romans, for the latter
Had in his day slain many of their kindred.
But Maximian came not from Rome again,
For Diocletian now appointed a brave earl,
That was the most courageous man in Rome,
And had subdued many a land to his hand.
There was none in his day dared go against him.
So, the emperor sent him to this our island;
He entered the country with a mighty host.
Constantius was this earl, noblest of knights,
Now Coel heard that Constantius was here,
And greatly therefore he feared for his life.
He straightway summoned six wise knights,
And he sent them to Constantius the earl.
Through them, he welcomed him to this land,
And said he would come and speak with him
If he would guarantee a peaceful meeting.
The earl said that he would bring twelve knights,
And soon the pair met, and spoke together.
Then said King Coel: 'Harken now to me,
Constantius, I assert, and e'er shall do so,

That indeed I slew King Asclepidiotus.
Who, wickedly, slew full many of your kin,
And, forcibly, withheld from you the tribute,
And, for bringing such shame upon you so,
Richly deserved the fate that he suffered.
For I was one of the noblemen that swore,
That we would send the tribute to Rome.
Our oath the king broke; and so, he is dead.
Let us cease to fight, and turn to what is right,
And I will submit, and hold you as my lord,
Show obedience and regard you as my master,
And send Britain's tribute to Rome each year.'
Then noble Constantius, the brave, replied:
'Coel you are wise, and wisdom follows you.
Be a good king, and be lord of the people,
And all things shall be as you've requested.
And with honour your homage I'll receive,
For you did well, by slaying Asclepidiotus.'
So, they honoured each other and were friends,
And blithely they remained there in the burgh.
Yet, in but a while, there came a sadder time,
For forty days were scarcely come and gone,
And Coel the king lay sick in his chamber.
His head ached badly, and he was sorely ill.
Seven nights and a day the king sickened,
It gripped his chest so he was like to die.
He summoned to his bed his noble thanes,
To give him counsel, in his hour of need,
As to how to bestow Helena his daughter.
When all had spoken, they gave their counsel,
That Constantius should take her as his queen,
And the royal lands receive in his two hands.
And thus did Coel, that was King of Britain,
And, as fate indeed decreed, then Coel died.

Constantine made king on his father's death (306AD)

Constantius then took Helena as his queen,
Who was the wisest woman in all Britain,

By this queen, Constantius sired a child,
That, when it was born, was of God's elect,
And the folk were blithe that dwelt in Britain.
Then the greatest noblemen all met together,
And gave the child a name that was most fair,
They saw a likeness, and so, from the name
Of his father, they called the son Constantine,
And the child was dear to every Briton's heart,
Whose mother Helena was queen of this land.
He waxed, and throve; God's favour was upon him;
The Britons loved him, and he them, greatly,
His mother's kin, she being born in Britain,
While Constantius had been fostered in Rome;
And all whom the lad saw bowed down to him.
When the child was twelve, none was as strong,
When Constantine was angry, none dared speak,
Yet when he was joyful, mild was his manner.
He greatly loved a knight that upheld the right,
And his British kindred honoured him greatly,
While his Roman kin counselled him worthily.
Then, when he was thirteen, his father fell ill,
And, as fate decreed, Constantius then died.
The Britons took the child and made him king.
And the young king ruled this land with wisdom,
As if he were of age, and he was bravest of all.

Constantine defeats Maxentius (*at the battle of the Milvian Bridge, 312AD*)

At this time the sovereign emperor in Rome
Was named Maxentius; the Fiend loved him.
For he was the worst of those alive on earth.
Rome he wholly destroyed by his evil rule;
The nobles he hated, and the poor he harmed.
There were many in Rome, rich and brave,
Who abandoned the people, and fled the city,
To escape the taint of shame and disgrace,
That this vile emperor brought upon them.
They came to this land, to King Constantine,
And told him of their woe, the sad events,

And all the undeserved shame and injury.
That the emperor Maxentius had created,
And how they had therefore fled from Rome,
And come to this land, for they knew of none
From whom they might gain understanding,
As they could from him, who was of their kin.
They begged him, earnestly, to counsel them
As to how they might now avenge themselves
On Maxentius, who'd diminished their honour.
They so yearned for counsel the king complied.
Saying that he would go forth, in full strength,
Make his way to Rome, and be emperor there,
And thereby take revenge on Maxentius,
Who had sought to diminish their honour so.
Then Constantine, the good, gathered an army,
Of countless men, from many a tribe and place,
And the king then took the road towards Rome,
Such that his force arrived there at full strength.
The king, a fine leader, fought with Maxentius,
And slew the man, and there was bliss enough;
Then were the Roman folk blithe everywhere.
Constantine the king thenceforth ruled in Rome.
Helena, the holy queen, and her three uncles,
Dwelt there; the eldest of these was Leonin,
His younger brothers were Trahern and Marin.
Constantine handed Rome to these brave earls,
That they might govern, and counsel the people.
The lady Helen, the holy queen, went forth
To Jerusalem, with a rich train in company.
And spoke with the noble elders of the Jews,
And she offered them much wealth to aid her,
And give counsel as to how to find the Rood,
Upon which Christ redeemed this middle-earth.

The finding of the True Cross; and events in Rome

The Jews found it, and brought it to the queen.
And she was blithe as ne'er before in her life.
Many a year she lived there, beside the Rood,

While Leonin ruled in Rome under Constantine;
Of the brothers he was the eldest and the wisest.
And the nobles of Rome arranged his marriage
To a woman born of a noble family of Rome.
They were wed, and Leonin took her to his bed,
And there did as is wont, and sired on her a son.
When he was born, they named him Maximian,
And Constantine loved the child most dearly.
So, all things fared there, yet here fared worse.

Octaves of Wales seeks to slay Trahern of Rome

There was in Wales a duke who was most strong.
Octaves was his name, and he of noble kin.
He claimed that all of Britain belonged to him,
All that the sea surrounded; he was most bold.
He gathered a host, and marched o'er all the land,
Slaying the earls here, and enslaving the poor,
Humbling the magistrates, leaving none alone.
All of the realm this Octaves took to his hands.
Now, word of this came to Constantine in Rome,
Of Octaves deeds, the beheading and hanging.
Constantine the emperor was grieved at heart,
For he could, in no wise, come to this kingdom,
For he had all Rome and the empire to govern,
While his mother, Helena, would have him join her.
So, he drew Trahern, his mother's uncle, aside,
And gave him the task of subduing this land,
For Constantine himself came here no more.
Wealth, he drew on, and men, and built an army,
And gave it Trahern to lead forth to this isle,
Slay Octaves and, as his kin, hold the realm.
Trahern went forth, and journeyed to this land.
Portchester, he reached, with a mighty army.
The Britons, exceeding bold, they barred the gate,
Trahern fought them; the third day they sought peace.
Trahern marched in, and Portchester was won.
From there they made their way to Winchester;
Octaves had reached it first, and had entered in.

The armies met together, they fought and slew,
And there ne'er was greater slaughter in a fight.
Trahern counted his losses, and made his choice,
And departed at night to the sea-shore, forthright.
Ere the Britons knew, his army had all embarked,
And forth they sailed northwards, unto Scotland,
And Scotland Trahern brought beneath his hand.
From there he marauded, this side the Humber,
And ravaged the neighbouring towns in Britain.
Octaves heard of this, he the king of this land,
And, gathering his folk, he marched against him,
So that full soon they met, and there they fought.
Now Trahern had a mighty host that obeyed him,
For Scots, and Picts, and Roman knights were his,
Trahern fought with Octaves and conquered him,
The Scots raised a shout and Octaves took flight,
And the soldiers of Rome they slew the Britons.
Then was Octaves woeful, and fled towards the sea,
And, by the sea-strand, found a vessel to hand.
Into the ship he went, and he sailed for Norway.
But one and thirty knights he had from the fight,
For the rest yet living became Trahern's men,
While fifteen thousand were felled, and lay dead.
The king that ruled Norway was named Compert.
Octaves spoke with him, and sought his favour,
Telling of how Trahern had driven him forth:
'And if you will aid me with your fine warriors,
Such that I may come again to my kingdom,
I will honour you ever, and call you my lord,
In peace and friendship, for as long as I live,
And, after my death, you shall rule my people.'
Compert replied thus, that was this land's king:
'You must dwell with me here, one whole year,
And send messages most secretly to Britain,
Given by word of mouth, and in writing too,
By men wise enough to know their meaning,
To your close allies, promising gold and silver,
And land too, if any will slay this same Trahern,
Through poison, magic, or the bite of blade,

That, in some manner, robs him of his powers.
Your troubles then lessened, you may return.
I would escort you there, and make you king.'
Octaves did all that Compert had suggested.
He sent messages to Britain, as Compert taught,
While Trahern, in Britain, was as yet full blithe,
Night after night, blithe, his knights about him.
Now, in Kent there was an earl, named Aldolf,
Trahern's enemy, one privy to Octaves' plan,
And often there at court, to acquire the news.
Some merchants said where Trahern would be.
Aldolf went before, with four hundred knights,
Who wondrously weaponed, came from a wood,
Sought out the man and pierced him with a spear,
Putting to flight all Trahern's great company.
And Aldolf pursued, and many a man he slew.
And after marched to Kent, to a strong castle,
And sent tidings swiftly to Octaves the king.
Octaves made haste to sail to his kingdom,
Was welcomed as king, and found all well done.
He passed over all this land, slaying Romans,
Both rich and poor he sought, and alike he slew,
Wherever they dwelt, and not a man remained.

The question of the succession

For two and twenty years, Octaves ruled here,
In peace and quiet, a friend of all the Britons.
When he was an old man, he fell sorely ill,
The sickness gripped him, and long he suffered.
Then the king bethought him what he might do,
To whom he should deliver all the kingdom
And the governing of the people, after his day.
In a wagon he went to London, to a husting;
There the rich, brave, and wise of Britain came.
To them, the king spoke, and asked their counsel
As to whom he might leave all of his kingdom,
For he had no son that might hold the land,
No child but a daughter whom he held dear,

And on whom he might bestow the realm,
Wedding her to the noblest lord in this land.
Some said he should wed her to Earl Conan,
Who was wise and rich, and most fitting,
While others of all those present disagreed.
There was, in Cornwall, an earl, Caradoc,
He stood before the husting, and he cried:
'Hark to me, Octaves, my sovereign lord,
I have as yet heard no good counsel offered.
If you grant your kingdom to Earl Conan,
The tidings will soon be known in Rome.
Now Helena is the queen of Jerusalem,
And Constantine the emperor, is there,
While Maximian holds the power in Rome.
Dead are Leonin and his brother Marin,
And Trahern he was slain here by a spear.
Each day in Rome, Maximian the bold
Contentends with Gratianus and Valentinian,
While Constantine has forgotten Britain,
And so, we Britons are bereft of friends.
Unless you bestow the kingdom wisely,
The Romans will return to this country,
Slay our friends and allies and cause strife,
And so, will rob us of our lawful rights.
With you gone, we shall have naught but care.
Send to Rome, to Maximian the brave,
He is a man most strong, and Leonin's son;
His father was Helena's uncle, and a Briton.
Wed him to your daughter, whom you hold dear;
Make him king, with your daughter as queen.
Then we may live in peace, and friendship, here,
And throughout our lives protect our people,
In joy and honour, and display our wisdom.'
Then Conan arose and stood before the king.
He showed his wrath, angered by the speech,
And spoke against Caradoc, as if to scorn him.
But Caradoc ignored all that Conan uttered,
For all of the husting, there before the king,
Found that the counsel that he gave was needful.

Then cried Octaves, Britain's great overlord,
 Hail to you Caradoc, you shall have honour!
 Lend me Maurice your son that is most wise,
 That I may send him to Rome in time of need,
 To seek of Maximian, the rich and ambitious,
 That he might come here soon, while I yet live.
 For he shall have my kingdom, and wed Orien,
 That is my daughter, and make her his queen.
 And a fine reward I shall grant to your Maurice;
 I give him Northumberland, with my own hand;
 This I'll bestow upon him, out of my kingdom,
 If he'll but bring Maximian the fine and noble.
 Caradoc gave him his son as the king wished,
 And Maurice fared forth with three wise knights.
 And came, at last, before Maximian, in Rome.
 There was much strife there, and little peace,
 For he battled with Gratianus and Valentinian,
 Who brought much trouble there to Maximian.
 Much land they'd seized from him ere Maurice came.
 As soon as he saw him, Maximian greeted him,
 Welcoming him with many a pleasant word.
 And Maurice led him aside to private counsel,
 And thus, he spoke, in words wondrously fair:
 'Hark to me Maximian, you are of noble line,
 The son of Helena's uncle, to greatness born.
 Now ere I came here, and that not long ago,
 Octaves held a husting, there in London,
 A fair husting, a gathering of councillors,
 For age and sickness have weakened the king.
 There was many a knight, and he sought counsel,
 As to who should have his realm and his daughter,
 And govern his people, after his life was over.
 Three of the earls there said they chose Conan,
 And that Britain should be given into his hand,
 While he took Orien, the princess, as his queen.
 Conan's earldom is that of Kent; my father
 Is a noble earl, and his domain is Cornwall.
 My father is Caradoc, and indeed is of your kin,
 And I am Maurice, the eldest of his children.

When they chose Conan, up leapt my father
As if he were a lion, to oppose their choice.
There was a mighty clamour from the thanes,
But my father called for silence, and spoke thus:
“Helena, in time past, was Constantius’ queen,
She had an uncle, who was noble, in that land,
He, named Leonin, fared forth with Constantine,
While Trahern was his brother, Marin another.
Trahern was slain, treacherously, in Britain,
Conan’s father slew him which was shameful,
For Trahern the king thought they were friends.
Listen well, all you Britons, now gathered here.
Leonin had a son, and in Rome it is he dwells;
Maximian is his name, of a noble British line.
Let us send to Rome, and beg him to come soon,
And, in husting here, raise him up to be our king,
And bestow fair Orien upon him, as his queen,
And then we all may live in peace and concord.”
So spoke my father Caradoc, before the nobles.
And the king replied that the counsel pleased him,
And would delight all of his people in Britain,
But Conan was angered for their choice he hated.
Now, summon your councillors now to council,
And grant me an answer, for the morrow I depart.’
Now Maximian was most pleased at these tidings,
He called for his councillors, and met in council,
And there of Maurice’s request all were advised.

The reign of Maximian, King of Britain

Maximian went forth, in secrecy, from Rome,
Within a seven-night, and with all his knights.
The Romans thought he meant the country harm,
And would fight Gratianus and Valentinian,
The folk being fearful of him and his forces.
But he swiftly made his way towards this land,
And soon he and his men arrived in London.
He brought gifts there for Octaves the king.
The king gave him his daughter, to be queen.

Then was Maximian king, and all seemed well.
Earl Conan, in his wrath, sought out the Scots;
Many Scots came to him, and he built a burgh.
Not in all the world was there a burgh so fair.
Once the burgh was built, and full strong it was,
He chose to name the site there after himself,
And often he rode about, all through the burgh;
Coningsburgh was the name that it was given,
And now and evermore that name shall stand.
Then Conan led a vast army into the north.
He loathed Maximian, who bought many a man.
The wise men of this land, that loved the people,
Caused a meeting between Conan and the king,
There they were reconciled, becoming friends.
And made the best of peace treaties in this land.
The king promised to make him a wealthy man;
So did he after, who thus bought many a lord.
And in peace the king dwelt here a full five years.
Maximian thereby amassed a weight of treasure,
For he sent no tribute from this land to Rome.
When the five years were gone, Maximian said
That he would cross the sea, and fight the French,
And, if he there succeeded, then speed to Rome,
To avenge himself on Gratianus and Valentinian,
Who had done him many an injury in Rome.
So spoke Maximian, he that was most joyful,
For this land was at peace, and under his rule,
And he was awed by naught, Octaves being dead.

Maximian conquers Armorica and appoints Conan its king

The king he summoned an army wondrous strong,
Maximian had sound men, and immense treasure.
Forth he then proceeded, crossing from out this land,
Wrought himself much woe, and came not here again.
O'er the waves he went, and safely reached the shore,
In that rich and fertile land, they called Armorica.
The ships they came to the strand, the men to land.
There he began a castle, as fine as any there was,

Rode about the countryside, and seized much plunder.
His men found spoils enough, to take to their camp,
And then they abducted wondrously-many women,
For they did whate'er they wished in Armorica.
Humbald learned of this, who was lord of the land,
Of how this Maximian was ravaging his realm,
And Humbald sent messengers about the country,
To any of his friends that might aid his cause,
Thinking to drive Maximian from his shores.
The two sides met by day in a mighty battle.
The Britons conquered, and Humbald they slew.
And full fifteen thousand men there met their end.
After the fight, Maximian returned to camp,
And therein, wearied by the fight, he rested.
On the morrow, when it was day, he made ready,
And he marched to the noble burgh named Nantes.
And found therein none that did dare defend it,
Or could withstand them, for the men had fled,
Leaving but a few women behind, therein.
Thus, Maximian took, then garrisoned, the city,
And he summoned to him Earl Conan, and cried:
'Conan, right well have you maintained the fight,
And great therefore the reward I will grant you.
It is true that you had all Britain in your hands,
And, if I were not, you should be master there.
And yet it must go to Caradoc, who is my kin,
Even thought that, to you, may be displeasing.
But behold the streams, and rich country here,
All the fine woodlands, teeming with wild deer.
See what a pleasant land this may be to dwell in.
This land, called Armorica, I now grant to you.
And far more again if I should live to seize it.
Hereof shall you be king, and govern the land.
Though I'll drive forth all those that I find alive,
Whether young or old, that I find in this realm,
And whoso I then capture shall indeed be slain,
A message I will send to Athionard, my steward,
For, he is a loyal earl of mine, and ever active,
And to him I handed, Britain, to guard it well,

And he shall send me, into this land we've won,
Both men and women skilled in many a craft,
Many a knight and thane, and all their swains,
Six thousand knights in all, all good in a fight,
A thousand thanes, and seven thousand swains,
And seven thousand wise and wealthy burghers,
And thirty thousand women of good status, too.
And once these folk are come here, so to dwell,
Then shall this fair land be people by Britons,
And they shall call this land, 'Britain the Less',
And now and for evermore shall that name stand.'
So lapsed Armorica, the name, to rise no more.
Earl Conan received the gift, as the king's friend,
And held the land truly, and with great honour.
The king sent to Britain, and ordered Athionard,
That was his steward, and had charge of this realm,
To send the folk from here that he requested,
Delivering to sundry vessels those of each craft,
The women apart from men, except for the crew.
This plan proceeded as the king commanded,
And Conan adhered to all things, as agreed.

He then proceeds through Gaul and into Italy

The king then proceeded forth through France
Conquered the realm, and held it in his hand.
Then marched to Lorraine and the land obtained,
And, likewise, he conquered all of Louvain.
Maximian now entered into Lombardy,
And won that land; at that time Caradoc died,
Whereby Maurice his son had woe enough,
And after so great a sorrow, the son died too.
To Rome went Maximian and there he fought
Against Valentinian and Gratianus,
Capturing the one, the other seeking peace.
They were fine knights, the king imprisoned them,
And full soon he held for himself all of Rome.
Now, word came to Conan, of how he had fared,
And that Caradoc had died in Lombardy,

And, Caradoc's son Maurice, to all men's woe.
So, Conan sent a messenger, a man of wisdom,
To Athionard the strong, that was steward here.
To Athionard indeed he brought ill tidings,
Caradoc his brother, and Maurice, were dead.
Caradoc, he'd had no brother but Athionard,
And so, the latter now ruled his brother's lands.

Conan maintains his realm in Brittany

When the Gauls heard Maximian was in Rome,
And Caradoc was dead, then they took counsel,
And agreed they'd drive Conan from the land,
From the realm that Maximian had gifted him,
That which was 'Britain the Less', or Brittany.
Conan sought not peace, and fought them fiercely,
And made sure his castles were well fortified,
And his men were most loyal that came from here.
There were all the folk Maximian had promised,
The earls, and the thanes, and swains, and others,
And all the burghers that Maximian had brought.
Of women, there were but fifteen hundred or so,
And they had nigh refused to depart this land,
Until Athionard, that was highest in the realm,
Stood surety their time would not be wasted.
Now Athionard had a daughter, dear to him,
The most well-favoured of all maids on earth,
The woman was blessed; her name was Ursula.
And, to Athionard, Conan sent a messenger,
Seeking the daughter, to make her his queen.
Athionard gave answer, honour he had thereby:
'Conan's honour brings honour on my daughter!
And a seven-night hence I will send her to him,
Escorted by my knights, with all the women
Whom my lord Maximian has requested,
Thither they shall go upon pain of death,
For else shall I torment them, and slay them.'
Then Athionard, the steward of all this land,
Prepared to send his lovely daughter Ursula,

Fairest among women, over the ocean-stream,
To go wed with Conan the strong, in Brittany.
When the women of Britain heard the news,
That her father sent Ursula from the land,
Many were those that came to her, to say
That they would accompany her to Conan.
Very many besought her, more than might go.

The fate of Ursula, Athionard's daughter

When the day came that Athionard had named,
Upon which Ursula the maid should depart,
Then were there gathered twenty-seven ships
All safely anchored in the port of London.
There, upon the Thames, they raised their sails,
The wind was fair, and the weather of the best,
And they sailed forth till they came to the sea,
And, after a little while, they lost sight of land.
Then a wind arose that blew hard against them,
Thick black clouds appeared, darkening the sun;
There was hail and rain, alarming those aboard.
The waves smoked as if towns were burning,
The planks were shattered, and the women wept.
Of the ships that sailed ahead, twelve were lost,
The rest, half-wrecked, were driven by the storm,
Their steersmen aboard now rendered useless.
Ne'er was there any man born, not in any land,
Of so severe a mind, or one so hard-hearted,
That could have heard the weeping and wailing,
And wondrous loud calling to the saints above,
And not have grieved at their measureless woe.
Since this world was made, and set in our hands,
There never came worse trouble to any women.
Some of the ships rode out the storm, fifteen;
In one was fair Ursula; now the sea ran wild,
The sounding waters were bitterly enraged.
The vessels laboured northwards o'er the waves;
For three days and three nights they laboured.
There were two earls, aboard ship, out of Norway,

Melga and Wanis who were both keen and able.
Wanis had wrought much harm in Hungary,
Melga in Scythia, where he'd made trouble,
Such that he might not linger in that country.
Both had been driven in battle from Norway,
And, outlawed from Denmark also; this pair
Had roamed o'er the boundless waters widely,
And upon the seas had fared full seven years.
They'd read, in the sky, the signs of this storm,
And had drawn towards an isle to take shelter;
And lay at anchor there, as the tempest raged.
They watched the ships driven by, one by one,
A few, then more, then none, then four and five,
Wondering what those wretched vessels were,
That were so storm-tossed on the raging sea.
The wind began to lessen, the weather calmed,
And Wanis, as he watched the errant vessels,
Turned, and spoke to Melga his companion:
'Let us sail forth, and chase them down swiftly!
With fifteen of our fleet, we shall pursue them,
Filled with our knights that are best in a fight;
And let our other ships guard the anchorage,
For here is some rich king, devoid of counsel,
Proceeding to some far land, with his people,
That has met with this wild wind and weather,
And finds himself more woeful than e'er before.
Let us go, and if our dear lord Apollo wills it,
We'll fight and overcome him and his knights,
And then slay them if they be not of our creed.
Thus, we may take in hand their gold and silver,
Return to our refuge and boast of the spoils!'
Forth on the flood they went with fifteen ships,
The finest vessels, and strongest, of their day,
And the outlaws met five ships full of women.
Wondering who they were, they called to them,
But the women, mortally fearful, answered not,
They drew alongside; those five ships they took,
And sailed on further, and then captured nine,
And returned with the fourteen ships to the isle.

Ne'er has it been told, since the world was made,
Neither in books or song, or in simple speech,
That any women were treated so wretchedly,
Nor so piteously betrayed, upon the ocean.
Melga took Ursula, who'd thought to be queen,
And dealt her shame, and had her to his bed.
And when that heathen had so wreaked his will,
He gave her to his followers for their pleasure.
Of the other women, countless many they slew,
Casting the most into the depths of the sea,
While some they later sold, for silver and gold.
Some forsook Christ, and took to heathendom,
Though the most were thus betrayed to sorrow.

Melga and Wanis expelled from Britain

Now Melga and Wanis had heard it reported
That this land of Britain was bereft of knights,
For Conan had led a host to Armorica,
While Maximian had led the like to Rome,
And thus was this kingdom much the weaker.
Melga and Wanis headed north to Scotland,
Ranging this land, and harrying and burning,
Plundering for spoils, and slaying all the folk.
And thus, their force marched beyond the Humber,
Wreaking harm, and rendering the country poor.
This the noble Britons heard of, and knew woe.
They appointed envoys, and sent them to Rome,
They greeted Maximian, and spoke of Melga,
And his comrade, Wanis, and what they did here.
Now Maximian was sorrowful at their tidings,
And released Gratian the fair from his bonds,
Summoned him before him, and said to him:
'Now, Gratian, be my man, and all shall go well,
For I shall send you, in my name, into Britain,
And all that kingdom I shall set in your hands,
And, as Athionard was, you'll be my steward,
And drive forth the foreigners from that realm,
And, if all is done well, I shall make you rich.'

Then Gratian answered him, with mild speech:
'This I'll do, as you wish, and hold you for lord.'
Many an oath is sworn, and many are broken!
Maximian the emperor gathered a great host,
Choosing ten thousand of the bravest knights,
And then appointed Gratian as their leader.
And so, they issued forth into this kingdom,
And here they overcame Melga and Wanis;
Well, was it done, that Gratian overcame them.
And drove them from these shores, into Ireland.
And marched o'er this land, dearest to him of all.

Maximian deposed; Valentinian II emperor (388AD)

Now, Maximian was the ruler there in Rome,
And kept Valentinian imprisoned in a castle,
Who, like Gratian, had a wealth of kin in Rome
That saw the one brother parted from the other.
They sent messengers into Apulia, these kin,
And sent to Gradie, the Duke of Lombardy,
And into Germany sent, to the nobles there,
And into many another neighbouring land,
Bidding all the warriors everywhere to gather,
And, at a time appointed, to come to Rome,
And support the brothers against Maximian.
Maximian, the wealthy, knew naught of this,
Rather he dwelt in Rome, in great splendour.
After a little time, the hostile host appeared.
And Rome was besieged then by seven kings,
Who shattered the walls and rode in, over all.
The city they took, and Maximian they slew,
Delivering Valentinian, and his comrades,
From out the prison, and made him emperor.
They chose envoys, and sent the men to Britain,
To bring Gratian news of all that had been done,
And Gratian then took charge of this kingdom.

Gratian is king in Britain

Gratian held the realm that Maximian had ruled,
While Valentinian possessed the realm of Rome.
For, through wise counsel Maximian was dead,
And the folk, here, knew that Gratian was king.
Yet within the year, for indeed it was no longer,
King Gratian proved the most wicked of men.
He ruined the realm, its people hateful to him.
The rich he destroyed, the poor he drove away,
The wealthy nobles all feared to approach him,
And all shunned him, fleeing far from their king.

The End of Part III of Layamon's 'Brut'

Part IV: From Gratian to Aurelius Ambrosius

Contents

Ethelbald and Elfwald; the death of Gratian.....	203
Melga and Wanis re-invade from Ireland	204
The Romans send a force to Britain.....	205
The Romans finally withdraw from Britain (<i>c410AD</i>).....	207
The battle at Hadrian's Wall	207
Archbishop Guencelin seeks aid from Brittany	208
Aldroein of Brittany sends his brother Constantin to Britain	210
Constantin slays Melga and Wanis, and is made king.....	211
The death of Constantin and the succession	212
The reign of Constance	216
Vortigern recruits knights from among the Picts.....	217
He draws them into his plot	218
The Picts set out to slay the king	219
Vortigern feigns grief at the king's death	220
He tricks the Britons into slaying the Picts.....	221
Vortigern usurps the throne	222
The arrival of Hengist and Horsa (<i>449AD, according to the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle</i>)	223
Vortigern takes them into his service.....	225
Hengist and Horsa are sent to fight the Picts	226
Hengist seeks to deceive Vortigern.....	226
He builds a fortress at Lancaster	229
Hengist's daughter, Rowena, meets the king.....	229
Vortigern weds Rowena.....	230
Hengist seeks to increase his influence.....	231
He summons the Saxons to Britain, at Vortigern's request.....	233
The Christianised Britons seek to overthrow Vortigern	234
Vortimer and Vortigern contest the crown	234
The battles at Epiford on the Derwent, and in Kent	235
Hengist retreats to the Isle of Thanet, then departs Britain	236
The reign of Vortimer; the mission of Germain and Lupus	237
Rowena poisons Vortimer the king	238
Vortigern again assumes the throne	240

He yields the south to the Saxons, and flees to Wales.....	243
Vortigern seeks to build a castle	245
The boy, Merlin.....	246
Vortigern seeks counsel regarding the lad	249
He tells Merlin of his plight concerning the castle	250
Merlin denounces Magan's counsel.....	250
The white dragon and the red dragon	251
Merlin prophesies the fate of kings.....	253
Aurelius and Uther land at Totnes; the death of Vortigern	254

Ethelbald and Elfwald; the death of Gratian

Now, there were two churls in East Anglia,
 Nobly-born were they, and twin brothers,
 The one named Ethelbald, the other Elfwald.
 They saw how ruin came to many a place,
 And so bethought themselves what they might do.
 And they conspired in secret to kill the king.
 They sent through East Anglia, everywhere,
 And gathered from there seven hundred churls,
 Saying that they would go seek out the king,
 And ask that, through his grace and God's,
 He, in his power and might, uphold the right.
 Yet Elfwald and his brother planned otherwise,
 But wrought most warily, with pleasant seeming,
 Though each bore a good thick staff in his hand,
 And at his side there hung a long steel knife,
 Beneath his clothing, to defend from harm.
 So, well-armed, they and their force fared forth,
 And, a mile from court, they rested for a while.
 They greeted every courtier, that passed by,
 And asked them mildly where the king might be,
 And the courtiers told them where to find him,
 Deep in the woodlands, deep in the wilderness,
 Hunting wild boar, that he would find, full sore.
 The churls hid themselves warily in the wood,
 All but that pair, that went towards the king,
 And found the king there, where he was hunting,

And so, in loud voices, they called out to him:
'Come hither, lord king, behold a wondrous thing!
Tis a mighty boar that lurks here in this place,
For here has he made his lair, beneath the mount;
Ne'er have we e'er heard tell of such a beast.
Ride hither if you will, where he awaits you.'
The king was pleased, and to that place he rode,
Where the churls were waiting, both together.
They leapt forth, as they saw the king approach,
And cast him down, and hewed him all to pieces.
Thus, Gratian the king, and such his hunting!
The news spread everywhere; the king was dead,
And then were the Britons in sufficient bliss,
Yet soon thereafter came upon them sorrow,
For every churl was bold now as an earl,
And all the rascals made like sons of kings.
The tidings spread of how the king had fared.
Seafarers passed to Ireland and, once there,
They brought the word to Melga and Wanis
And told them of the happenings in this land,
All the realm in the hands of heedless churls.

Melga and Wanis re-invade from Ireland

Then Melga and Wanis were both gladdened,
And said they would sail forth to this land.
With a great host they came into this country;
From Gothland there came a band of outlaws,
From Norway and Demark, men most bold,
And from Ireland came Gillemaur the strong,
And from Scotland all the noblest warriors,
And from Galloway many a man most keen.
They made their way towards Northumberland.
Spoils they took, and the people there they slew,
Fortresses they built, and possessed the land,
Burghs they seized, and all that came nigh them.
When the Britons knew woe came to the realm,
They lacked all counsel, thinking all was lost.
So, messengers they sent, at once, to Rome,

Asking the Romans', then and evermore,
If they would aid them in their hour of need,
And they'd obey their rule, all their lives long,
As loving friends, if they would help them now.
These words were sent in a secret missive,
And the letter read to the noblemen of Rome.
Then up and spoke the wisest of the Romans:
'Most unwilling should we all be to aid them,
For Gratian they slew, and they felled his men.
Nonetheless, we should send knights of this land,
A modest band of men from out the empire.'

The Romans send a force to Britain

The Romans sent a band of noble knights,
Five-and-twenty hundred entered London.
Then they summoned a host from Britain's realm,
And marched forth to seek Melga and Wanis,
And fought with them, and slew their forces,
While that pair fled to the woods, to safety,
Leaving all of their host behind to be slain.
They fled then to the north, and to Scotland,
With Febus and his Roman troops pursuing;
But he failed to find Wanis there, or Melga.
Then he had a ditch dug, both wide and deep.
And above it he had built a strong stone wall,
From coast to coast, on either side of Scotland,
Where the outlaws were wont to seek this land,
And, after that, he set a brave force to guard it.
Once the ditch and the wall were completed,
The Britons, aided by the Romans, felt secure,
And back they went to the burgh of London.
Febus of Rome now held a husting there.
And many a rich man came to that gathering,
Many an earl andthane, and many a churl,
And many a rich burgher, thinking to be blithe,
Who would be sad at heart ere day was done.
Febus that fine knight, summoned the folk,
That they might show at the hustings, in full force,

And told them their swains must tend the horses,
And make all ready, as if they were to march.
And all the folk did as Febus had commanded.
And then they wended their way to the hustings.
Once all the folk were there, and in their place,
Silence was ordered, and the hall fell quiet.
Then Febus, the noble knight, stood and spoke:
'Now hearken to me, you Britons, gathered here,
For I bring you the true words spoken in Rome,
You sent your messengers to us, to our land,
To tell of the woe Melga and Wanis caused.
And I and my men have come to this country,
And we have felled your enemies to the ground.
And have driven forth Melga and his company;
Thus, we have no fear of that host, now dead.
But you've oft angered us, and are loathed in Rome,
Through withholding the tribute from your realm,
And evil you did, through slaying King Gratian,
And oft you swear an oath, and break your word.
Through aiding you we have lost, of our people,
A hundred thousand knights in this sorry land,
Since Julius Caesar touched land on these shores;
But, as we pray for grace, we'll do so no more.
Soon we shall fare forth, and return to Rome,
And leave you this same kingdom in your hands.
Hold it with joy ever, for we come here no more.
We've had of this land many a weight of gold,
That we have acquired here, but dearly bought,
For oft have we met here with trouble and woe.
Now you'd do well to find yourselves weapons,
And defend yourselves against your foreign foes.
And were not your ancestors all noble fellows,
With the land from here to Rome in their hands,
For all the land they saw, that they conquered,
With their own weapons winning all they sought?
Now build you, within your realm, strong castles,
And defend you yourselves against foreign folk,
And dwell here safe and sound; and so goodbye!'

The Romans finally withdraw from Britain (*c410AD*)

What evil chance, when those words were said!
Never was there a man born, in any burgh,
That might tell all the tale of the depth of woe,
That was come upon the folk of this our land.
Then were there, in London, dreadful cries,
There was weeping and lament, endless sorrow,
The knights of Rome rode towards their ships,
And left this island to the Britons themselves,
Who, in their grief and sorrow, knew no counsel.

The battle at Hadrian's Wall

Melga and Wanis heard these certain tidings,
And, with their army of innumerable folk,
They made their way into Northumberland.
They overran the land, and slew and burnt,
And so proceeded till they reached the wall,
That the Romans had raised there, long before.
The Britons still manned the wall, within,
While Melga was without, and now about
How he might win out, and so pass within.
They rushed to the wall, his noble thanes,
His forces gathered there from many a land,
The ditch, both wide and deep, they now did leap,
While the Britons, prepared, strongly defended.
These shot arrows inwards, those shot outwards;
Many fell, as arrows showered upon the wall.
So dense was their fall, so much like to hail
That the Britons failed to maintain the fight.
Down from the wall they went, and they fled,
And their flight, indeed, was exceeding swift.
Their foes broke down the wall, and were over,
And fiercely they pursued, and there were slain,
A wondrous many, five thousand two hundred
Of the Britons, not counting the enemy dead,
The Scots and Danes, that died there in the ditch.
So fared this kingdom now in British hands!

Where the Britons were famed knights before,
Now were they lessened from their former state,
And like never to rise but that they had help
From others, for they could not of themselves.
So fared Melga and Wanis, truly, in the fight.
The Britons in London swiftly sent to Rome,
And bade the Romans come quickly as before,
And rule the land, and take it all in their hands,
For they'd rather grant it them than strangers.
But the Romans answered: 'Ne'er will we so,
To face hard toil, and war against the heathens,
For the one they name Wanis is God's enemy,
And Melga likewise. Ne'er will we come there.
Of all, this is the end: ne'er will we thither wend,
Tis more than enough to counter ills elsewhere.'
That was the sole reply, and the envoys returned.
When these messengers to Rome disembarked,
They told their tidings, and the Romans' answer.
Then were the folk in London filled with woe.

Archbishop Guencelin seeks aid from Brittany

There was an archbishop, a good and holy man,
Much favoured by God, his name was Guencelin.
And he sent his messengers all over Britain,
To the clerics that upheld the Christian creed,
All the hooded men, to come to him speedily.
Full soon, in London, gathered all the clerks.
Thus spoke Guencelin: 'God's grace be with us!'
And as men say, in Latin tongue: 'Pax vobis!'
And 'Et cum spiritu tuo' the clerks replied.
And then he began to speak concerning God.
The archbishop's seat was then at St Paul's,
And many a year were the archbishops there,
Though, since Augustine, it is in Canterbury.
Now, Guencelin said, that was a holy man:
'List to our tidings, lordlings, of the ill Melga
And Wanis have brought, thus, upon this land;
For Christianity here may be lost and fore-done.

Therefore, shall I depart, and cross o'er the sea,
To some high king, and of that king will pray,
That he will aid us, as needed, in all things.
And if I thus find and speak with such a king,
I shall return, or ne'er come here for evermore.
Pray for me, upon bare knees, as is your wont,
Now farewell to you; I'll return yet, if I may.'
Then were all folk sad, and sorrowful at heart;
The Britons ne'er, in their lives, felt such care.
Forth then went Guencelin, and clerics with him,
Forth to the coast, to the port they thought best.
Vessels they found, and the ships they boarded,
And were pleased soon to reach that Brittany
That King Maximian had granted Earl Conan,
Though Maximian and Conan were now dead.
Aldroein was the son that Conan had begotten,
And the land of Brittany he held in his hands,
Once called Armorica, ere that name was lost.
Aldroein was king, under him many a thane.
Came Guencelin to the king, who greeted him.
He fell at the king's feet, bade him think on God,
Saying: 'Aldroein, may God be gracious to you!
You are Conan's son, of Britons thus descended,
I come to speak with you, and seek your favour.
Two heathen warriors are rampant in our land,
Melga and Wanis, and wreak on us much evil.
And they now hold the north of our country,
And we are all afraid that they may win more.
For that pair yet think much greater ill to do,
To harm Christendom, and further heathendom.
For your father took the finest British knights,
And Maximian led thousands of them to Rome,
And those they left behind for us now are slain.
Messengers we sent to Rome, seeking their aid,
And they have replied to us, by those same men,
And answered that we must do the best we may,
For they will come no more; help we must seek.
Not long ago, the Britons were best in battle,
And every fight they fought, that fight they won.

Now they are overcome, swift slain or captured,
Or were lost with Maximian and your father,
Till there is not one left that seems of any worth.
But you are of our kin, ne'er harm had from us;
Help us as you may, for we are beset by danger.'
So Guencelin spoke, that Aldroein might know.
The king began to sigh, and his tears ran down,
They fell from his eyes, for all the court to see.
Then the king gave answer, saying to Guencelin:
'All my strength I shall exert to aid you now,
For I will send to Britain two thousand knights;
They shall be the finest there are in Brittany.
And Constantin, my brother, he shall lead them,
For I know not such another under the sun;
In all the world, there is none to equal him.
Make him your king, lord over all of Britain.'
Then Aldroein called his dear brother to him,
And at once delivered to him all those knights.

Aldroein of Brittany sends his brother Constantin to Britain

Forth went Constantin, and Guencelin with him.
The king would have gone, but feared the French.
Hither came Constantin, and his host, in safety,
And it was at Totnes that the army came ashore.
Hither came the bold leader; he was full brave.
With two thousand knights no king possessed.
Then he began to march forth towards London,
Summoning all the knights from out the land,
And all brave men, to swiftly come to join him.
The Britons heard him where they were hiding,
In caverns, and holes, and earths like badgers,
In wood and wilderness, midst heath and fern,
Such that no man could find a Briton there,
Except they were fast in some burgh or castle.
When they all heard that Constantin was here,
Many a thousand men came from the hills,
Leaping forth from the woodlands like to deer.
Many a hundred-thousand marched to London,

By road and weald, forth those thousands pressed,
And the bravest women went dressed as men,
And forth they all wended towards the army.
When Earl Constantin saw these folk approaching,
Then was he blithe, as ne'er before in his life.
Forth the warriors went, two nights and a day,
And came, in strength, where Melga and Wanis lay.
Together the two sides met, and that head on,
Fiercely they fought, and there the ill-fated fell.

Constantin slays Melga and Wanis, and is made king

Ere the day was o'er, Melga and Wanis were slain,
Many a Pict, and the Scots in countless number.
Those of Galloway, Denmark, Ireland, Norway,
While it was light, were slaughtered in the fight.
When came evening time, then Earl Constantine
Bade that men should ride to the lakes and rivers,
And others to the sea, to seek their enemies there.
And what a game there was for a man to witness!
How the women went forth o'er field, hill, and dale,
And wherever they found one of Melga's men,
That had sought to flee with that heathen king,
They mocked aloud and tore him all to pieces,
And prayed his soul might, after, know but ill.
So, the British women killed many a thousand.
And the realm was cleansed of Melga and Wanis.
And Constantin the brave marched to Cirencester,
And held there a husting of all his British thanes,
All the nobles of Britian came to that gathering,
And made noble Constantin the king of Britain.
Much then was the mirth that was among men,
And they gave him to wife one wondrous fair,
Born of the noblest in Britain, highest of all.
By this noble wife, Constantin had three sons.
The eldest well-nigh took his father's name,
For Constantin it was that the king was called,
While Constance was the name of the first-born.
And when the child was old enough to ride,

The king made him a monk, through ill counsel,
And the lad was a hooded monk in Winchester.
Now, after Constance, there was born another,
Of the three, he would be the middle brother,
And the child was named Aurelius Ambrosius.
The last-born was a child that was well-disposed,
And he, named Uther, was one strong in virtue.
The archbishop Guencelin, devout before God,
Took charge of these latter for love of the king.
Yet, alas that their father had not lived longer!
He wrought good laws, the while he was alive.
Yet he was the king here but a brief twelve years,
And then he died; hark how that chanced to be!

The death of Constantin and the succession

He had a Pict in his household, fine and brave,
That was treated by the king, and all his thanes,
In no otherwise but as if he were his brother.
And thus, he grew powerful beyond all others,
And he thought to betray Constantin the king.
He went before the king, and fell to his knees,
And the traitor lied before his lord and master:
'Lord King, speak now with Cadal your knight,
And I will tell you a tale of things most strange,
Such a tale as ne'er was heard on earth before.'
Then Constantine rose, and with him went forth,
Alas, of this Constantin's knights knew naught.
They walked a while, and came to an orchard,
Then said the traitor: 'Lord, now are we here.'
And then they sat, as if he would, there, discourse,
And so leaned close to the king, as if to whisper,
But drew a knife, and pierced him to the heart.
And next he fled, and there the king lay dead.
Soon tidings came to court of the dire event.
Then was a weight of sorrow on the people,
And then were the Britons troubled in thought,
Knowing not who they should have for king,
For both of the king's sons were young indeed.

Aurelius was scarcely old enough to ride,
And Uther, his brother, suckled by his mother.
While Constance the elder was in Winchester,
Wearing a cleric's clothes with his brethren.
So, in London, gathered the nobles of the land,
At a husting there, to choose them a monarch,
There, take counsel what to think on, and to do,
As to which of the princes should be their king.
They thought Aurelius Ambrosius should rule.
On hearing this, one Vortigern, subtle and wary,
Stood forward amidst the earls, and opposed it.
And this he said, though it was mere deception:
'I will give you all good counsel with the best,
Let us wait a seven-night, and come here again,
And I shall speak true words to you once more,
So, you hear, and bestow your time right well.
Meanwhile abide; to our homes we shall ride.
And have amity and peace, freely, in this land.
Then, all the folk did as Vortigern requested,
And he himself feigned to go to his own lands,
But rode straightway, to where Winchester lay.
Now Vortigern held half of Wales in his hands,
And forty fine knights he had in his following.
He went to Winchester, found Constance there,
And he spoke there with the abbot of that place
Where Constance was, the son of Britain's king.
He went to meet the abbot, and spoke mildly,
Saying he wished to converse with Constance.
The abbot then led him to the chapter house,
And then spoke Vortigern with Constance there:
'Hark to my counsel; for your father is dead.
Here's Aurelius your brother, Uther the other,
And the elders, that are the noblest in the land
Think to choose Aurelius Ambrosius as king.
Your mother yet suckling Uther your brother.
But I have opposed them, as tis not my wish.
For have I not been the steward of all Britain,
And am a wealthier earl than all my peers?
For I hold half of Wales in my own two hands,

And am richer than all the others put together.
So, I come to you, for you are most dear to me.
If you'll swear an oath to grant to me more land,
And make me your steward over all of Britain,
And so, take counsel of me, in all that you do,
And pledge me your hand that I shall govern all,
Then I'll remove these cleric's clothes from you,
And I'll make you, in every way, Britain's king.'
Constance sat still, and listened most willingly,
Then he rendered his answer with much delight.
'Well, it is, Vortigern, that you are come here,
And if the day e'er shall come when I am king,
My counsel and my land shall be in your hand,
And all that you may command my men shall do.
And I will swear, on my oath, to perform all this.
So said Constance for it had grieved him greatly
To be a cleric, for the cloth was hateful to him.
Now Vortigern was cunning, and most wary,
And that he showed now, in doing as he did.
He took a cloak from a knight of his nearby,
Clad Constance, and led him from that place.
Then he dressed a swain in cleric's clothing,
And held speech with him as if were Constance.
Monks passed to and fro, and viewed the swain,
And thought him Constance, dressed as he was,
Seated in the chapter-house among the knights.
They went to the abbot, greeted him humbly,
Saying: 'Benedicite, lord, we come before you,
Because it seems strange to see Vortigern here,
Conversing all the day in the chapter-house.
And none other can enter there but Constance,
We dread these knights are mis-counselling him.'
The abbot replied: 'Nay they give good counsel,
They bid him remain a monk, with his father dead.
Vortigern there abode, while away Constance rode,
Then Vortigern arose, and swiftly took his leave,
And forth he rode outright, with his band of knights.
And the monks ran to and fro, seeking Constance,
And found but his robes there, lying by the wall.

Then each to the other lamented o'er their brother.
The abbot leapt astride, and rode after Vortigern.
And to Vortigern he called out: 'Say, mad knight,
Why do you do here what seems far from right?
You take our brother; leave him, have this other.
Take Aurelius who's yours, and make him king
Come, anger not the saints, nor do Constance wrong!'
Vortigern, the cunning and wary, heard all this,
And he turned back, and gripped the abbot hard,
And swore, on his life, that he would see him hang,
Unless he pledged to let Constance depart freely,
That was a prince, and should be king of this land.
The abbot dared do no other, and set the lad free,
And Constance pledged the abbot a wealth of land,
And afterwards they fared forth towards London.
Vortigern the noble, forbade all those about him
To speak to any man of the plans they had in hand.
Vortigern lay in London, until the appointed day,
When the nobles of the land came to the husting.
On that day they gathered, full many in number,
They communed and counselled, those stern lords,
And declared they'd have Aurelius as their king,
Uther being but a child, and Constance a cleric,
And, though eldest, they'd not make a cleric king.
Now, Vortigern, the cunning and wary, heard this,
And he leapt to his feet, as he were a fierce lion.
None of the Britons, as yet, knew what he had done.
He had Constance nearby, waiting him in a chamber,
Bathed, well-dressed, and hidden with twelve knights.
Up then spoke the most subtle and crafty Vortigern:
'Listen, my lordings, while I speak, now, of kings.
I was a while in Winchester, where I sped swiftly,
I spoke with the abbot there, a holy man of God,
And I told him of the need that this nation has,
And how all were uneasy, with Constantin dead,
And spoke of Constance that he now had by him.
And I bade him for love of God to set free the lad,
For he was needed to be king of all this country.
The abbot took counsel, and did as I bade him,

And I have his monks here who'll vouch tis true.
Behold, that lad, whom I shall here make king,
And I hold the crown, tis befitting that he wears,
And whoso dare withsay this, shall pay dearly!
Vortigern was strong, the noblest earl in Britain,
Nor were any so bold as would his words deny.
The Archbishop of London was now deceased,
And there was nary a bishop but rode on his way,
Nor a priest that did not flee, in fear of God,
Lest they must bless the lad, and crown him king.
Vortigern saw this, knowing that it was wrong,
And up he did stand, and took the crown in hand,
And then made Constance king, as it pleased him.
There was never a man in Christendom that might
As Vortigern did, so bless and crown the king,
But Vortigern did that thing, once and for all!
This beginning was not well, nor was the end,
For in deserting God's rite, he brought sorrow.

The reign of Constance

Now Constance was king, Vortigern his steward,
And Constance set his land in Vortigern's hand,
Who did all that he sought himself in the realm.
Then Vortigern saw, for of ills he was aware,
That Constance the king knew naught of this land,
For despite all his learning he'd learnt nothing
Except those things that a monk might perform.
Vortigern saw all this, the Fiend was nigh him,
And often he bethought him what he might do,
And how he might, by deception, please the king.
So now shall you hear just how this traitor fared.
The finest noblemen of Britain were all dead,
And this king's brothers were both but children,
And Guencelin, the archbishop, he was dead,
While this land's king knew nothing of the law.
Vortigern saw this, and went before the king,
And with mild speech his lord began to greet,
'Hail be to you, King Constance, Britain's ruler,

In great need it is, that I now come before you.
To tell you of tidings come to this our land,
News of great danger; now it comes to might,
And weapons, you need to defend our country.
Here are merchants arrived from other lands,
And they have told me, and swear all is true,
That Norway's king will shortly fare hither,
And the Danish king these shores will seek,
And the King of Russia, sternest of knights,
The King of Sweden with a host most strong,
And the King of Frisia too, which alarms me.
These tidings are all ill that come to my ears,
And I am adread, for I know no good counsel.
Unless we use our might, and send for knights,
Men good and strong, and skilled, of this land,
And fill all your fortresses with loyal men,
And so, defend your kingdom against strangers,
And maintain your honour with all your strength.
For there is no realm, however long and wide,
Will not soon be won, if there are too few men.'
Then said the king, that knew naught of ruling,
Vortigern you are steward o'er all Britain's land,
And now you must govern it after your will.
Send now for knights, that are good in a fight,
And take all in your hand, my castles and land,
And do as you will, for I shall be silent still,
Except for this thing, that I'll remain as king.'
Then Vortigern laughed, that was bent on evil,
And ne'er was he so blithe in his life before.

Vortigern recruits knights from among the Picts

Vortigern took his leave, and forth he went,
And took the land of Britain into his hands,
And demanded fealty, where'er he ventured.
He took messengers, and sent into Scotland,
Summoning three hundred of the finest knights
Among the Picts, and welcoming them warmly,
For they gathered to him swiftly, at his call.

The treacherous earl said: 'Greetings, knights,
I hold all of the royal lands in my own hands.
With me shall you go, and I'll hold you dear,
And I will bring you before Britain's king,
And you'll have fine horses, silver, and gold,
Clothes and fair wives, as meet your wishes.
You will be dear to me, the Britons hateful,
Openly, and privately, I will do your will,
If you will hold me as lord o'er all this land.'
And answered all the knights: 'That, we will.'
Then he led them before Constance, the king.
To the king came Vortigern, bent on evil,
And told him of all the deed he had done.
Here are Picts, to be our household knights,
And I have provisioned all your fortresses;
Those foreigners must now contend with us.'
The king commended all Vortigern had done,
But, alas, knew naught of the earl's thoughts,
Nor of the treachery, that was soon revealed.
The knights were much honoured by the king,
And dwelt at the court for two whole years,
And Vortigern the steward was lord of all.
Ever he said the Britons were of little use,
While the Picts were fine and skilful knights.
Ever were the Britons deprived of wealth,
While the Picts garnered all that they would.
They had fine meat and drink and were in bliss,
Vortigern granted them their heart's desire,
And was as dear to them as their own lives.
Such that they said, as they wined and dined,
That Vortigern was worthy of ruling all,
More so than were any three such kings,
While he granted these men much treasure.

He draws them into his plot

It befell one day that he was in his chambers,
And he sent two knights to gather these Picts,
And bade them come to him in the great hall,

For they would dine there; forthwith they came.
He tested them then, as they all sat at board,
For he caused much ale and wine to be brought,
And they all revelled, and drank the day away.
When they were drunk, and therefore pliable,
Then spoke Vortigern of what he had planned.
'Hark to me knights, for I shall be forthright,
And speak of the woe I have, on your account.
The king has made me steward o'er this land,
And to me, you are the dearest friends alive,
Yet I have not the wealth I'd share with you.
Tis the king's land, and he young and strong,
And I must yield him all I win from this land,
And if I take aught of his I must face the law.
Yet my own wealth I have spent to please you.
I must fare from here, and serve some king,
Be his man in peace, and gain more treasure.
For shame I may not dwell here in this place,
But forth I must fare, to a foreign kingdom.
Yet if the day come when I win more wealth,
And I so thrive, come to me in that country,
And there I will both reward and honour you.
Now fare you well, for tonight I must depart,
Tis most doubtful if I'll ever see you more.'
Now, the knights knew not his evil thoughts;
Vortigern, the traitor, would betray his lord,
And what the earl had spoken they thought true.
Earl Vortigern had his swains saddle his steed,
And he named twelve men to ride beside him,
And to horse they went, as if to quit that land.

The Picts set out to slay the king

The drunken knights, the Picts, witnessed this,
And were full of care at Vortigern's departure.
They gathered around, and took their counsel,
Railing at life, for he was dear to them, this lord,
And thus said the Picts, those drunken knights:
'Who shall advise now; where is our counsel?

Who'll feed and clothe us; be our lord at court?
Now Vortigern is gone, we must likewise leave;
For we may not dwell here with a monk as king.
Yet we might do well to go straight to the court,
And quietly and privately, do what we may,
Enter the king's great hall, and drink of his ale,
And, when we have drunk, seem to revel there.
And some shall go to his chamber, hold the door,
While others seize the king, and his other knights,
And smite off their heads, and secure the court,
And cause our lord Vortigern to be recalled,
And after all's done, raise him up, to be our king.
Then we may live, as is most pleasant of all.
The knights went forth to seek the king outright,
And some passed through the hall to his chamber,
Where he was sitting, quietly, beside the fire.
None there spoke a word, but for Gille Callaet.
He said to the king, whom he thought to betray:
'Now, monarch, come list to me, for I tell no lie.
We have met with honour in this same court,
Through your steward that governs all the land,
And he has clothed us, and he has fed us well,
And, indeed, we dined with him this very day.
Now sorely it grieves us we have naught to drink,
And, now we are in your chamber, give us ale.'
The king said: 'That, be the least of your cares!
For you shall have, to drink, all that you will.'
Men brought drink and they began to revel,
Then cried Gille Callaet, that stood by the door:
'Where be you knights? Stir yourselves, forthright!
And they seized the king, and smote off his head.
And then, forthright, beheaded his other knights.

Vortigern feigns grief at the king's death

A messenger they chose to speed toward London,
Telling him to ride, swiftly, after Earl Vortigern,
So, he might come quickly, and win the kingdom,
And bear him the news that Constance was slain.

This Vortigern, the cunning traitor, soon learned,
And soon sent the messenger back to them to say
That, on their honour, none should leave that place,
But should abide him till he could be with them,
And then he would divide the land among them.
Forth went the messenger; and then Vortigern
Summoned the burghers from all about London,
And commanded them to gather for a husting.
And when the bold burghers had all assembled,
Then spoke Earl Vortigern, the secret traitor,
While he feigned to weep, and to sigh sorely,
His tears but from his eyes, and not his heart.
Then said the bold burghers: 'Lord Vortigern,
Why do you weep, and mourn, like a woman?'
Then answered Vortigern, that secret traitor:
'I will speak to you of woe come to this land.
I have been the king's steward in this realm,
And counselled him, and loved him as my life.
But, in the end, he approved my counsel not.
He favoured the Picts, those foreign knights,
And he did us good no more, received us not,
But ever was gracious to them, in this life.
Of the king had I naught, but spent my wealth,
While it lasted, then I left to seek my lands,
And, when I had garnered riches, then return.
When the Picts saw all his true knights depart,
They made their way into the king's chamber,
I tell you the last of it; they've slain the king.
And think to usurp the kingdom, and us all,
And will make a Pict the king of all, outright!
Yet I, as his steward, will avenge my lord,
And every brave man must help me so to do.
Now shall I don my gear, and ride forthwith.'

He tricks the Britons into slaying the Picts

Three thousand knights went forth from London,
They rode and marched, and ran, with Vortigern,
Until they approached where the Picts yet lay.

And the Earl then sent a messenger to the Picts,
And said he would come to them, if they willed,
And the Picts were blithe, at all they had done,
And met him finely clad, without shield or spear.
But Vortigern had his knights there fully-armed,
When the Picts brought forth the head of the king.
On seeing this, Earl Vortigern fell to the ground,
As if he were grieved, and more than any alive.
His true feelings he hid, though his heart was blithe.
Then said Earl Vortigern, that secret traitor:
'Let every brave man now lay on with his sword,
And avenge, in blood, the slaying of our lord!'
Not one Pict they made captive, all they slew,
And passed on to their lodgings in Winchester,
And slew their swains, and their house-servants;
The cooks, and their lads, all were put to death.

Vortigern usurps the throne

Now spread the ill news of Constance the king,
And wise men took charge then of his brothers,
For fear of Vortigern; and Aurelius and Uther
They carried o'er the sea to 'Britain the Less',
And delivered them, there, to Biduz the king,
Who granted them fair welcome, being his kin,
And was more than glad to raise the children.
And so, they dwelt with him for many a year,
While Vortigern was crowned king of this land,
And all of the strong burghs were in his hands.
For five and twenty years he ruled as king,
And he was mad, and wild, and cruel, and bold,
He had his way in all things, but that the Picts
Were never quiet, and they overran the north,
And brought much dread and harm to his realm,
Avenging their kin, whom Vortigern had slain.
Meanwhile, there came tidings to this land,
Of Aurelius Ambrosius, become a knight,
And of Uther, now a knight, good and wary,
Saying they would come, with a mighty army.

This was a saying full many times repeated;
Oft came such tidings to Vortigern, the king.
And so, he felt shamed at heart and angered,
For men said everywhere: 'They will come,
To avenge Constance, king of all this land;
Aurelius, and Uther, will avenge their brother,
And slay Vortigern, and lay him in the dust,
And so, take all this land in their own hands.'
So spoke every day, all that passed this way,
And Vortigern bethought what he might do.
Thus, he sent messengers to foreign lands,
Seeking foreign knights that might defend him,
And he was wary of Aurelius, and Uther.

The arrival of Hengist and Horsa (449AD, according to the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle)

Meanwhile tidings came to Vortigern the king
Of unknown strangers arriving from the sea.
Into the Thames they came, and landed there,
For three vessels rode upriver on the tide,
Three hundred knights therein, kingly men,
Besides the seamen that comprised the crew.
They were the fairest men that e'er came here,
Though they were heathens, the more the harm.
Vortigern sent to them to seek their purpose;
If they sought peace, and wished his friendship.
They answered as wisely as they knew how,
Said that they wished to speak with the king,
And would serve him lovingly as their lord,
And so, they went forth to the royal court.
Now Vortigern the king was in Canterbury,
Where and all his court had sought diversion,
And two brothers, their leaders, came before him.
When they met, they greeted the king warmly,
And claimed they would serve him in this land,
If he would welcome, and do right by, them.
Then said Vortigern, ever ready to work evil:
'In all my life, never have I seen such knights,

And I am blithe at your coming to this realm,
 Here shall you stay, and I will grant your wish.
 Yet, by your honour, I would swiftly learn
 What men you might be, and where you hail from.
 And whether you will be true, now and later.'
 Then answered he that was the eldest brother:
 'List to me king, and I'll make known to you
 What knights we two are, and whence we come.
 I am Hengist, and Horsa here, he is my brother,
 We are of Germany, and the noblest land of all,
 From the region that is named for the Angles.
 Strange tidings are spread about our country,
 Every fifteen years the folk there assemble,
 From every part and, once gathered, cast lots,
 On whom it falls, must seek out other lands.
 Five sixths of the nation stay, the sixth departs,
 And goes from our country to a foreign realm,
 And be he ever so rich, he must yet go forth,
 For more children are born than they wish,
 The women bear children like the wild deer,
 Year after year, they each bear children there.
 The lot fell on us, and we were forced to go;
 We might not remain there, on pain of death,
 Such is the power of the monarch of that land.
 So, we fared forth, and therefore are we here,
 To seek land under heaven, and a good master.'
 Then answered Vortigern, the wise and wary,
 I believe you, knight; that all you say is true.
 And what is the creed in which you believe?
 Which god, most dear to you, do you worship?'
 Then answered Hengist, fairest of warriors,
 While none was as tall or strong, in this realm:
 'We have true gods, who are dear to our hearts,
 Whom we place trust in, and serve with might.
 The first is Phoebus, and the second Saturn,
 The third is Woden; and he is a mighty god,
 The fourth is Jupiter, he who knows all things,
 The fifth is Mercury, and noblest over us,
 The sixth is Apollo, a god of great power,

The seventh Tervagant, a high god with us.
And we have a lady, both noble and mighty,
She is high and holy, and lovers love her;
She is named Freya, all lovers she loves.
Among all our gods, whom do we serve?
Woden held the highest rule in elder days;
He was as dear to men as their own lives,
He was their lord, and they did him worship.
Naming the fourth weekday in his honour.
Thursday was Thor's, the mighty Thunderer;
To Freya, the Lady, they then granted Friday,
To Saturn, was Saturday; to Phoebus, Sunday.
Then, to the Moon, our people gave Monday,
While Tuesday was so named as Tiu's day.'
Thus spoke Hengist, the fairest of all knights.

Vortigern takes them into his service

Then answered Vortigern, learned in evil:
'Knights, you are dear to me, not your tidings;
Your creeds wicked, knowing naught of Christ;
For you believe in the Devil, whom God cursed.
Your gods are naught, and in Hell below they lie.
Yet, nonetheless, I would have you serve me,
For northward dwell the Picts, knights most brave,
That, full oft, lead mighty hosts into my realm,
And oft they seek my shame, and grant me woe,
If you will avenge me, and bring me their heads,
I will give you much land, and silver and gold.'
Then answered Hengist, the fairest of all knights,
If Saturn wills that same, in whom we believe,
And Woden, who is our lord, so shall it be.'
Then they took leave, and went to their ships,
And their warriors drew up the ships on shore.
Forth went the knights, to Vortigern the king.
Hengist marched before; Horsa beside him.
Then came the Germans, noble in their deeds,
And after them came their brave Saxon knights,
Hengist's kinsmen, folk of his former people.

All of that great host entered the king's hall,
And Hengist's swains, they were better clothed,
And better fed, indeed, than Vortigern's knights.
Then were Vortigern's courtiers put to shame;
The Britons were rendered sorry at the sight.

Hengist and Horsa are sent to fight the Picts

It was not long before five knight's bold sons
Swift messengers, came there before the king,
And brought him fresh tidings from the north.
'Now are the Picts ranging through the land,
Harrying, and burning all things to the ground.
And this we advise; take action or we die.'
So, the king bethought him what he might do.
He summoned the warriors from their lodgings;
Came Hengist, Horsa, and many a brave man.
There came the Saxons, kinsmen of Hengist,
And all the German warriors, good in a fight.
And Vortigern reviewed them and was blithe.
The Picts, as customary, crossed the Humber,
But Vortigern was ready for their incursion,
Together they met, and many there were slain.
Full fierce was the fighting, and stern the battle.
The Picts had oft overcome Vortigern's army,
And thought to do so now, but twas otherwise.
For Hengist was there to defend the Britons,
And the strong warriors out of Saxon lands,
And all the brave Germans whom Horsa led.
Many the Picts they slew there in the fight;
Fiercely they fought; and swiftly the fated fell.
When noontide came, the Picts had met defeat,
And quickly they fled away, on every side.
And the king returned to his quarters in camp,
And Hengist and Horsa were ever nigh him.

Hengist seeks to deceive Vortigern

Hengist was dear to the king; he gave him Lindsey,

South of the Humber; and Horsa treasure enough,
And all their knights he treated exceeding-well,
And things stood for some time in that same wise.
The Picts dared not trouble the northern lands,
Nor robbers nor outlaws; all such were soon slain,
And Hengist greatly pleased King Vortigern.
It befell on a time, when the king was blithe,
Upon a high-day it was; he, amidst the people,
And Hengist bethought him what he might do,
Desiring to hold private speech with the king.
He came before the king, greeted him warmly,
And the king rose, and then set him beside him.
They drank, revelled, and all about were blithe.
Then said Hengist to the king: 'List to my news,
And I will tell you a certain thing in private,
If you'll list to my counsel, and not be angered.'
The king answered mildly, as Hengist sought.
Then said Hengist, the fairest of all knights:
'Lord, I've many a day enhanced your honour,
And been a most loyal servant at your court,
And in every fight the noblest of your knights,
But I hear murmurings among your courtiers,
That they hate you right fiercely unto death.
And often they speak, privately, in whispers,
Of two most noble youths that dwell far hence,
The one named Uther, Aurelius the other,
And of a third, Constance, king of this land,
Who was slain through treacherous usage.
They say the others will avenge their brother,
Ravage your land, and destroy your people,
And drive your folk, and you from the realm.
And this they say, as they sit there together,
That these two brothers were royally born,
Both noble Britons, sprung of Aldroein's race,
And so, your people secretly condemn you.'
And I would advise you, in your great need,
To gather you knights, that are good in a fight,
And give me a burgh or a castle to dwell in,
That I may defend me, while I am alive,

For I am hated through you, and like to die,
Fare where'er I fare, I'll be filled with care,
Except I am fast enclosed in my own fortress.
Were you to do this, I would love you dearly,
And then I would swiftly send for my wife,
That is a Saxon woman, and of rare wisdom,
And for my own daughter, my dear Rowena,
With my wife and kindred settled in this land,
The better I'll serve you; if you but grant it.'
Then answered Vortigern, that doer of evil.
'Take knights swiftly, and send for your wife;
She shall bring your children, young and old,
And you kindred, and they shall be welcome.
When they come to you, you shall have riches,
To feed them nobly, and clothe them fittingly.
Yet I'll not give you a castle nor a burgh,
For all in my kingdom would reproach me.
For you keep the heathen law of elder days,
While we, in our day, hold to Christ's law ever.'
Then spoke Hengist, fairest of all the knights:
'Lord, as you wish, I'll e'er perform your will,
And do all things according to your counsel.
Thus, now shall I send right soon for my wife,
And for my daughter, who is to me most dear,
And for brave men, the best of all my kindred.
Yet grant me as much land, in my own hands,
As a bull's hide will cover, from side to side,
Right far from any castle, amidst some field.
Then neither the rich nor poor can blame you,
For granting a burgh to some heathen fellow.'
And the king granted him all that he desired.
Hengist took his leave then, and forth he went,
And sent men to seek his wife in his own land.
He himself traversed this realm to find a place
Open land, on which to lay out his bull's hide,
He came to a spot, in a wide tract of country,
And obtained, at need, a hide wondrous strong.
He had a wise fellow, well versed in the craft,
Who took the hide, spread it out on a board,

And whetting his shears, prepared to shape it.
From the hide he made a thong, thin and long,
Not thick but, as it were, a thread-like string;
When it was stretched out, its length was great,
And with it he enclosed a broad extent of land.

He builds a fortress at Lancaster

He began to dig a ditch and then, above the ditch,
He reared a mighty wall of stone, on every side,
A castle he raised, that was both tall and strong,
And when the burg was done, gave it a name,
He called it Caer-Carrai, in the British tongue,
While twas Thong-chester the English called it,
And then, and thereafter, that name stood firm,
And no other event caused the name to alter,
Until the Danes came, and drove out the Britons,
When it gained its third name, of Lancaster;
Such are the causes of it owing to three names.
To this isle came Hengist's wife, aboard her ship;
A mighty fleet of vessels, she brought with her,
And fifteen hundred knights, in her company.
On board the fleet, were most of Hengist's kin,
And Rowena, her and Hengist's dear daughter.
After some little while the burgh was complete,
And Hengist asked the king to banquet there,
With fair chambers prepared against his visit,
And bade him come, and be warmly welcomed.
And Vortigern granted all that Hengist wished.

Hengist's daughter, Rowena, meets the king

The day appointed came, and the king set forth,
With the men of his household held most dear,
And he journeyed till he came to the fortress,
He gazed all up and down the mighty walls,
And all that he looked on there he liked well.
He entered the great hall, his knights with him,
Trumpets were blown, and games were played,

Then the board was spread, and all were seated.
They ate and drank, and bliss was in the burgh.
When the folk had eaten, all was of the best.
Hengist betook him to Rowena's chambers,
And he caused her to be dressed most richly,
Every garment she had on was of the finest,
And the cloth embroidered all about, in gold.
She now took a golden bowl in her two hands,
Filled with fine wine of a wondrous vintage.
High-born knights led her straight to the hall,
And she the fairest of things, before the king.
Rowena knelt, and she welcomed Vortigern,
And spoke these words in the English tongue:
'Lord king, wassail; I am glad you are come!'
The king heard her, yet he understood her not,
And he asked his knights what the maid had said,
Then answered Keredic, a most worthy warrior,
And, of those who came here, the best interpreter:
'List to me, my lord king, and I will tell you,
What this Rowena, the fairest of women, said.
It is the custom in the realms of the Saxons,
Whenever people drink, and so make merry,
That friend says to friend, with pleasant gaze,
"Wassail, dear friend!" the other cries "Drinkhail!"
The same that holds the cup, he then drinks deep,
The cup is filled, and handed to his comrade,
And when tis empty, then the friends kiss thrice.
Such then is the pleasant custom in Saxon lands,
And in Germany all such is considered noble.'
Vortigern heard, that knew the ways of evil,
And replied to her in British, not in English:
'Fair maid, Rowena, drink then, and blithely!'
The maiden drank, and the cup was filled again,
Then the king drank, and she kissed him thrice.
Through this same, the custom came to this land,
Of 'wassail and drinkhail', that makes men glad.

Vortigern weds Rowena

Now, Rowena the fair sat there beside the king,
He longed for her, and desired her in his heart,
And full often he kissed her, and embraced her,
For his whole mind inclined towards the maid.
The Devil was nigh, that when at play is cruel;
The Fiend that ne'er does good, troubled his mood,
For the monarch wished to make the maid his wife.
That was a loathsome thing, for a Christian king
To love a heathen maid to his people's harm.
The maid was as dear to the king as his own life,
He asked that Hengist grant him the maid-child,
And Hengist thought it good counsel so to do.
He gave to him Rowena, the maid most fair,
As it pleased the king to make her his queen,
All according to the custom of heathen days.
For there was never a priest in Christendom
When the king wed the maid, bishop nor clerk,
Nor was the Holy Book in any man's hand,
But in the old heathen manner he married her,
And so brought her to his bed, in that fashion.
The maid he wed, and many a gift he gave her,
Once he had her, he gave her London and Kent.

Hengist seeks to increase his influence

Now, the king had sired earlier three fine sons,
Vortimer, the eldest, then Pascent, and Catiger;
While Garengan, an earl, had long held Kent,
His father before him, and he through his kin.
He had thought of himself to hold the land,
Yet Vortigern's queen held it in her hands.
He thought it strange what the king had done:
To befriend the heathens, to Christian harm.
The king ruled the land, held it in his hands,
And the king's three sons oft felt woe and care.
Their mother died, and they had scant counsel,
For, a good wife, she had led a Christian life,
While their stepmother, Rowena, was a heathen.
It was not long ere the king arranged a feast,

Exceeding great, and the heathens were invited.
A thing which Vortigern thought most wise to do.
Thither came the thanes, the knights and swains,
But the Christians of the Book shunned the feast,
For the heathens were held highest at the court,
While the Christian folk were thought to be base;
The heathens blithe that the king so loved them.
Now, Hengist bethought him what he might do.
He gave greeting, hailed, and drank to the king.
Then spoke Hengist, finest of knights in his day:
'Harken to me, my lord king, whom I do love,
You have my daughter who to me is very dear,
And I am, among the folk, as a father to you,
Hark to my counsel; it will be pleasing to you
For I mainly wish to aid you with my advice.
The court hate you through me, and I through you.
And there are kings, earls, and thanes, that hate you,
And roam the land with a host exceeding strong.
If you would avenge yourself, and gain honour,
And sadden your foes, send for my son Octa,
Send also for his brother-in-law, Ebissa,
They are the finest men that e'er led a host,
And grant to them tracts of land in the north.
Warriors are they, and good men in a fight,
They will defend your kingdom with the best,
And then you may spend all your life in bliss.
With hawks and hounds, enjoying courtly play,
And need give not a thought to foreign armies.'
Then answered Vortigern, wise in all evil,
'Send your messengers to the Saxon lands,
To Octa, and a host more of your friends.
Ask him to summon all of those knights,
In all those lands, that are useful in a fight,
And let him gather them against my need,
Even unto ten thousand shall be welcomed.
Hengist, fairest of all knights, heard the king,
And he was blithe as ne'er in his life before.

He summons the Saxons to Britain, at Vortigern's request

Hengist sent messengers to the Saxon lands,
Summoning Octa and his brother-in-law,
Ebissa, and all their kin, and all the knights
They could gather, so that all might profit.
Octa in turn sent throughout three kingdoms,
And bade all warriors that wished for land,
Or silver and gold, to come to him swiftly.
They gathered to his side like falling hail,
Three hundred vessels they filled with men.
Forth sailed Octa, thirty thousand and more,
Brave and eager, in those ships, while Ebissa,
He too landed on these shores with his host,
A hundred and fifty ships he commanded;
And after these, in fives or tens they came.
Thus, the heathen warriors came to this land,
And travelled to seek the court of Vortigern.
Then this land was so full of foreign people
There was none so wise or so quick-witted
Might separate the Christians and heathens,
For the heathens were many, and came swiftly.
When the Britons saw the land so afflicted,
They were woeful and most dreary at heart.
They went to the king, the highest in the land,
And said to him, in most sorrowful voices:
'List to us, lord king, and hear our counsel;
Through us, you are now the King of Britain,
Yet you have brought upon us ill and woe.
You bring heathens here that might harm you,
And forsake God's law for that of heathen folk,
Nor do what is right, on account of these knights.
In the name of God's peace, we now pray you
To shun them, and to drive them from the land.
If you will not, we must bring them to battle,
Drive them forth, or fell them to the ground;
Or we shall be slain, and so let the heathens
Have this isle, if they win it, to hold in joy.
Yet, they being heathens and not Christians,

Will not suffer you to be their king for long,
Unless you follow the heathen laws, for life,
Desert our high God, and worship their idols.
Then, when you perish from this earthly realm,
Your wretched soul will sink down to Hell.
And you will have bought your bride full dearly.’
Then answered Vortigern, the learned in evil:
‘By this life of mine, I shall not shun them,
For Hengist, who in friendship came hither,
Is my father-in-law and I, in law, his son,
And Rowena his daughter I have for wife,
For I married her, and took her to my bed.
Then, I sent for Octa, and his companions,
How should I forsake their kin so soon,
Or drive forth my dear friends from my realm?’
Then answered the Britons, in their sorrow:
‘We shall harken to your commands no more,
Nor visit court, nor hold you to be our king,
But we shall oppose you with all our strength,
And greet all your heathen friends with harm.
May Christ, that is God’s son, be now our aid!’

The Christianised Britons seek to overthrow Vortigern

Forth went the earls, forth went the noblemen,
Forth went the bishops, and the men of learning,
Forth went the thanes, and forth their swains,
All of the Britons, till they came to London.
And there was many a Briton at the husting;
And the king’s three sons, they came thither,
The eldest Vortimer, Pascent and Catiger,
And many another followed those brothers,
And all the folk that stood for Christendom.
All the noblemen gathered there, in council,
And they took the eldest son, this Vortimer,
And with songs of praise, they crowned him king.

Vortimer and Vortigern contest the crown

Then was Vortimer the Christian king here,
While Vortigern his father ruled the heathens.
All this was done as the council had agreed.
Vortimer, the young king, was soon active.
He sent Hengist word, and Horsa his brother,
That unless they quit the kingdom speedily,
He would do them evil, blind them and hang them,
And his own father he would, in truth, destroy,
And all the heathens with them, in his might.
Then answered Hengist, the finest of knights:
'Here shall we dwell, all winter and summer,
And march and ride beside King Vortigern,
While all that choose to follow Vortimer,
They shall find but trouble, here, and care!'
Vortimer, wise and wary, hearkened to this reply,
And he summoned to him a host from all the land,
Asking the Christian folk to gather to his court.
Then Vortimer, the young king, held a husting;
He commanded all that honoured Christendom,
To oppose the heathens dwelling in their land,
And bring their heads to Vortimer the king,
And have twelve pence to reward their deed.
Vortimer, the young king, marched from London,
With Pascent his brother, and Catiger the other.

The battles at Epiford on the Derwent, and in Kent

Word came that Hengist lay at Epiford,
Upon the river that men name the Derwent.
There met together sixty thousand men.
On one side Vortimer, Pascent and Catiger,
And all the Christian folk that loved our Lord.
And on the other side was Vortigern the king,
Hengist and his brother, and many another.
Together they came, and with might they fought,
Three thousand two hundred of Hengist's men,
Were slain there, and Horsa was sore wounded.
Catiger came there and he speared him through,
While Horsa wounded Catiger, there, outright.

Then Hengist fled, with all of his followers,
And Vortigern too, as swiftly as the wind.
They fled to Kent, but Vortimer followed after,
And upon the sea-shore Hengist met with pain.
There they halted; there they fought long while.
Five thousand men at least, there, lost their lives,
Of Vortigern's troops, and of the heathen host.

Hengist retreats to the Isle of Thanet, then departs Britain

Hengist now bethought him what he might do.
He had many large vessels moored in a haven,
Riding the flood in that wide space of water.
On his right hand was an isle; exceeding fair;
Called the Isle of Thanet, swiftly he sped there.
For there the Saxon warriors sought the sea,
And so made their way across to the island.
While the Britons followed after, cunningly,
And surrounded them from the land and sea.
From many a vessel there they smote and shot.
Hengist knew woe, but never worse than then;
Slain would he be, unless he did otherwise.
Taking a spear-shaft that was long and sturdy,
He tied a mantle, as a flag, to the spear's end,
And he called to the Britons, and bade them cease.
He'd speak with them and earn the king's grace;
By sending Vortigern to them, forge a peace,
If he might sail, free of shame, to his own land.
The Britons turned about, and sought their king,
While Hengist and Vortigern spoke in secret.
Vortigern went, bearing a wand in his hand,
And while he and the Britons spoke of peace,
The Saxons leapt to their ships, and made sail,
And braved the weather, there on the open sea,
Leaving their wives and children in this land,
And Vortigern the king who favoured them yet.
With sorrow in his mind Hengist fared away,
And voyaged till they reached the Saxon lands.
Then were the Britons bold in all of Britain,

Blithe in mood, and did just as they pleased.
Vortimer the young king stood ever firm,
While Vortigern his father wandered Britain,
Ne'er a man so poor as failed to scorn him,
And thus, for five full winters he wandered.

The reign of Vortimer; the mission of Germain and Lupus

His son Vortimer was now the king in power,
And all the people here loved him greatly.
He was mild to all, and he taught God's law,
To young and old, how to live a Christian life.
And he sent letters to the Pope, Saint Romain,
Who chose two bishops, both were holy men,
Germain of Auxerre, and Lupus of Troyes.
These two journeyed from Rome, and came hither;
Vortimer was blithe as ne'er in his life before.
All his knights went barefoot to meet the bishops,
And, with much joy, their mouths they kissed.
And now shall you hear of how King Vortimer,
Spoke with Saint Germain, glad of his coming:
'My lords, list to me, I am king of this people,
I am Vortimer, Pascent and Catiger my brothers;
Vortigern is my father; him ill-counsel follows.
He welcomed heathen people into this land,
But, being foes, we have put them all to flight,
And we have slain, of them, many a thousand,
And sent them o'er the sea, to come no more.
Now shall we worship our Lord in this land,
Comfort God's people, and live in friendship,
Treating mildly all those who till the fields.
The Church we'll honour, hating heathendom.
And each shall have his rights, if God so grant,
And every thrall and slave shall be set free.
While the Church lands shall be held freely,
And each widow be forgiven her lord's debts.
Thus, in our day, Hengist's laws shall be forgot,
And he, and his heathendom he brought hither,
Deceiving my father through his evil craft

Using his daughter Rowena, in treachery.
So, it was, my father turned to evil ways,
Shunned Christendom, loved the heathen law,
Which we shall all oppose the while we live.'
Then answered Germain, glad of these words:
'I thank the Lord above who shaped the day
That he sends such mercy to this world below.'
This pair of bishops set the land in God's hand,
Righted Christendom, and taught the people,
And then they made their way again to Rome,
And told the Pope, he that was named Romain,
What they'd done here to restore Christendom,
And so, things stood, in this wise, for many a day.

Rowena poisons Vortimer the king

Turning to Vortigern, of all kings most wretched:
He loved this Rowena, she of the heathen people,
Hengist's daughter, that seemed to him most fair.
Rowena now bethought her what she might do,
To avenge her father's death, and her kindred.
She oft sent messages to Vortimer the king,
With many treasures, of finest silver and gold.
She asked his favour that she might dwell here,
With Vortigern his father, and take his counsel.
The king, for his father's sake, granted her this,
On condition that she embrace Christianity.
Alas, for Vortimer, that knew not her thoughts!
Alas, for the good king that he knew them not,
Unaware of the cunning woman's treachery.
It befell, on a time, that she sought his counsel,
As to when she should welcome Christianity.
So forth she rode, to meet Vortimer the king,
And when they met, she greeted him warmly:
'Hail to you, my lord king, Britain's darling,
I am come to you to receive the Christian faith;
I will do so on a day that to you seems fitting.'
Then was Vortimer the king most blithe indeed,
Thinking that what Rowena spoke was true.

The trumpets blew, there was bliss at court,
Water was brought, they cleansed their hands,
And they sat down to the board with pleasure.
When the king had eaten, the thanes did so,
They drank in the great hall, the harps played.
Then Rowena arose and went to her chamber;
There was placed the king's favourite wine.
She took in her two hands a bowl of red gold,
And returned, to pour it out at the king's table.
Choosing her time, she filled her cup with wine,
And she advanced, before all, towards the king,
While thus the treacherous woman hailed him:
'Wassail, lord king, to you I wish much joy!'
Hark to the treachery of that cunning woman,
How she betrayed the king, Vortimer, there!
The king answered her, to his own destruction.
Vortimer spoke British, and Rowena Saxon;
To the king all seemed fair, and he smiled at her.
Hark now to what she did, in her treachery!
She clasped to her breast a gilded flask of poison,
The while she drank but half the wine in the cup.
As the king smiled, she slid the ampule out,
And hid behind her hand, poured in the poison,
And then she handed the chalice to the king.
The king then drank all of the poisoned wine.
The hours passed away, the court was blissful,
For of her treachery Vortimer knew naught,
For he'd seen Rowena drink half of the wine.
When night fell the courtiers took their leave,
And Rowena, the traitress, went to her rooms,
With all her band of knights escorting her,
And then she ordered her thanes and swains,
To saddle their horses swiftly as they might,
And then slip from the burgh, and ride forthwith,
To Lancaster, by night, and once they were there
To bar the castle gates, and hold the place fast,
And tell Vortigern his son would besiege them.
Vortigern, that foolish fellow, believed the lie.
Once Vortimer realised he had taken poison,

And no aid was forthcoming from leechcraft,
He sent his messengers forth o'er all the land,
And bade his knights gather to him outright.
When they came they saw he was exceeding ill;
He wished them peace, and spoke to them thus:
'Of knights e'er served a king, you are the finest.
Things are such with me, that I soon must die,
I deliver to you my land, my gold, my silver,
My treasures, that your honour be the greater.
And you must forthwith send for other forces,
Pay them silver and gold, and hold your land,
And avenge me, if you can, on the Saxon men,
For when I am gone, Hengist will invade you.
Take my body then, and lay me in a coffin,
So, bear me to the shore, where they will land;
For, on seeing me, the Saxons will swift depart,
For neither quick nor dead will they abide me.'
After this speech of his, the good king died.
Then was there weeping, woe, and piteous sighs.
They took his body, and bore it to London,
And buried him splendidly by Billingsgate,
Nor did they, one whit, as the king had ordered.
So lived King Vortimer, and so he ended.

Vortigern again assumes the throne

Then the Britons harkened to ill counsel;
They again granted Vortigern the throne.
Then was a sad thing; Vortigern was king!
And he sent messengers to the Saxon lands;
He greeted Hengist, fairest of all knights,
And bade him come in haste to his realm,
And to bring a hundred warriors with him:
'For, know that the king Vortimer is dead;
Dead is my son, and hither you may come.
There is no need to bring too many men,
Lest our Britons may be angered by you,
And thereby much trouble come between you.
But Hengist gathered there a fleet of vessels,

Seven hundred, each bearing three hundred knights.
In the Thames, by London, he came ashore.
Now, tidings soon came to Vortigern the king,
That Hengist had brought seven hundred ships.
Of the felt woe, but never more so than then,
And the Britons were most sorrowful at heart.
Nor knew good counsel then in all the world.
Hengist was wary of evil, and that he showed.
He chose messengers and sent them to the king,
And he greeted Vortigern in words most fair:
And said he was come as a father to his son,
And in peace, and friendship, he would dwell.
Right, he would love, and wrong, he would shun,
Peace he would have, and peace he would hold,
And all this people he would respect and love,
And, through all, honour Vortigern the king.
But he had brought here, from the Saxon lands,
Seven hundred shiploads of heathen warriors,
They the bravest men that lived under the sun.
'I will,' said Hengist, 'bring them to the king,
On a certain day, and before all his people.
The king shall arise, and then shall he choose
Two hundred knights, to defend him in a fight,
And guard him, carefully, whate'er occurs.
The rest will then depart, and will return,
In peace and friendship, to the Saxon lands.
And I will stay here with my dearest friend,
With Vortigern the king, whom I ever love.
Word came to the Britons of all he'd promised,
And they were most pleased at his fair words,
And agreed to wait, in peace and amity,
For the day when the king reviewed these folk.
Hengist heard this, the fairest of all knights,
And was blither than e'er in his life before,
Seeking to deceive the king of this realm.
He showed himself the evillest of knights,
As are all who deceive those they befriend.
Who would have thought, for all the world,
That he'd deceive one wed to his daughter,

Yet there is none so wise may not be cheated.
They set a day when all would meet together,
And gather there, in true peace and amity,
On a pleasant plain not far from Amesbury;
The place was Elenge, now called Stonehenge.
There, Hengist the traitor, in word and writ,
Claimed to the king he would bring his forces,
But only, in company, three hundred knights,
They the wisest men, of all that he could find.
And the king should bring as many bold thanes,
The wisest of all that there might be in Britain,
In their finest clothes, and without weapons,
Such that no evil might happen by mischance.
So, Saxons spoke, and oft their word they broke,
For Hengist, the traitor, ordered each comrade
To take a long knife and strap it to his shank,
Hid beneath his hose, where none might see.
When the Saxons and Britons met together,
Then, said Hengist, most treacherous of knights:
'Hail to you, lord king, each is your underling,
And if any here shows a weapon by his side,
Send him far from us, and from our friendship.
Let us seek amity, and speak of harmony,
And of how we may live our lives in peace.'
So, the traitor spoke to deceive the Britons.
Then answered Vortigern, all too unwary:
If here there is any knight that is so wild
As to show an uncouth weapon at his side,
He shall lose a hand, and by that same brand,
Unless he swiftly sends that weapon away.'
This they all did, and so went empty-handed,
The knights, mingling then, went to and fro,
And spoke together, as brother to brother,
And, as the Britons and the Saxons mingled,
Then said Hengist, that most treacherous man:
'Draw your knives, now, my trusty warriors,
Bravely bestir yourselves, and spare you none!'
The noble Britons, ignorant of their tongue,
Knew not what the Saxons said between them,

As the latter drew the knives hid at their sides.
Then, smiting to the right and left, the Saxons
Before, behind, felled Britons to the ground,
And every man they slew, that they came nigh.
Of the king's folk, fell four hundred and five.
Woe to him then, for Hengist gripped him grimly,
And dragged him by the cloak, till the cord broke,
The Saxons set on him, and would have slain him.
But Hengist defended him, and forbade the deed.
Yet he held him full fast, while the fight did last.
There many noble Britons were deprived of life.
Some of them fled swiftly o'er the broad field,
Wielding stones, for of weapons they had none.
Hard was the fight, and fell there many a knight.
One was a bold churl, out of Salisbury come,
Who bore upon his back a great strong club,
There too was a noble knight named Aldolf,
One of the finest, who ruled all Gloucester,
Who leapt at the churl, as if he were a lion,
And seized the club that he bore upon his back.
Whoever he smote with it, they died outright,
Before, and behind, he laid them on the ground.
Three and fifty he slew, and to his steed he drew
Their corpses, leapt on his steed, and off he rode.
To Gloucester went he, and the gates fast barred,
And then forthwith he called his knights to arms.
They scoured the land, and took what they found,
Cattle, and corn, and all there they found alive,
And blithely they brought all back into the burgh,
And barred fast the gates, and kept them guarded.
Let us leave it there, and speak again of the king.

He yields the south to the Saxons, and flees to Wales

The Saxons had leapt towards him, and would slay,
But Hengist called to them, and he spoke outright:
'Halt now, my warriors, seek not to destroy him,
He has cared for us, he that wed my daughter fair.
But all his burghs he shall render into our hands,

If he'd save his life, or else sorrow he shall feel.'
Then was King Vortigern bound, and shackled,
Nor had he meat to eat, nor friend to speak with,
Till he swore, upon relics sacred to the Saxons,
That he would render his realm into their hands,
His burghs and his castles, and all his kingdom.
And all this he did, as twas thought he would.
And Hengist took in hand all of this rich realm,
And he shared out the land among his people.
He gave an earl all of Kent, as far as London,
His chamberlain Middlesex, his steward Essex.
His knights received the land, awhile they held it,
And Vortigern the king journeyed o'er the land,
Rendering up to Hengist all his noble burghs.
And Hengist forthwith placed his knights therein,
While many of his lesser folk settled in Sussex,
And many of his nobler Saxons in Middlesex,
And, in his steward's Essex, the noblest of all.
The foodstuffs they seized, all that they found,
They raped the women, and broke God's law,
And did whate'er they would, o'er all that land.
Thus, the Britons suffered mischief everywhere,
And saw that the Saxons would rule the realm.
The Britons gave names to the lands they lost,
In order to bring great shame on the Saxon host.
Because with their knives ('saexes') they had slain,
They called those wide tracts Essex, and Wessex,
And the third and fourth Middlesex and Sussex.
Vortigern the king, he gave them all those lands,
So that not a turf of them was in his own hands,
Then Vortigern himself fled o'er the Severn,
Far into Wales, and there he chose to dwell,
And all of his landless companions with him.
Now, he had a hoard of treasure; it was large,
And he caused his men to ride forth, far and wide,
And summon to him men of whatever kind,
That would offer him their allegiance for a fee.
This word the Britons heard, and this the Scots,
The riders came to him then, from every side,

Thither, from everywhere, they began to gather,
Many a nobleman's son, for gold and treasure.

Vortigern seeks to build a castle

When he had sixty thousand men about him,
Then he brought together the wise in counsel:
'Good men advise me, for of that have I need.
Tell me where I might build, in the wilderness,
Dwell in a castle there, with all my household,
And hold it, in its strength, against this Hengist,
Until I might win back my burghs, and better,
Take vengeance on the foe that felled my friends,
And has wrested all my kingdom from my hands,
For so has my enemy thrust me from my realm.'
Then answered a wise man, learned in counsel:
'List my lord king, for I speak a goodly thing,
Upon the mount of Reir, I would advise you,
Build your castle, with thick walls, tall and strong,
And therein you may dwell, and live in bliss.
In your hand, you have yet much silver and gold,
With which to maintain those who will aid you.
And there might you live the best life of all.'
Then the king answered him: 'Let it be known
Amongst all my mighty host, that I shall go
To the mount of Reir, and there raise a castle.'
Forth went the king, and all his host with him,
And when they came there, a ditch they dug,
Horns were blown, and great machines laboured,
And lime they burnt, laid mortar to the stones,
For, once the ditch was made, and dug full deep,
They built a wall above the ditch, high over all;
Of machines there were five and twenty hundred.
Though by day they laid the wall, at night it fell,
Raised on the morrow, yet it tumbled in the night.
For a seven-night, their labour served them so.
Each day they raised it and still, at night, it fell.
Then was the king sad, at this woeful thing,
While all his army were troubled and afraid,

For ever they looked if Hengist might come.
Sorrowful was the king and he sent for sages,
For those men worldly-wise that knew wisdom,
And bade them cast lots, chant incantations,
And seek for the truth, with their potent skills,
As to why a wall that they had built so strong,
Might not stand for as long as a single night.
These wise men formed two separate parties,
Some went to the woods, some the crossways,
They cast their lots, and chanted incantations,
And full three nights their craft they practised.
Yet could find no cause why the mighty wall
That seemed so strong yet tumbled every night,
And all the labour of the king's men was lost.
Yet there was one sage; his name was Joram,
He gave the king advice, though he was lying,
Saying that if men could find, in any realm,
A male-child that had never had a father,
And opened his chest, and took of his blood,
Mingled it with lime, and made their mortar,
The wall would stand till the world's ending.
These words were relayed to King Vortigern,
And he believed them though they were false.
Swiftly he sent his messengers o'er the land,
As far as they might fare, despite the danger,
And, in each town, they sought for any rumour
Of there being, in that place, any such child.
These knights roamed widely o'er the land,
And two of them took a road towards the west,
That led the way to where Carmarthen lies.

The boy, Merlin

By the burgh, in a wide way, were lads at play,
The knights were weary, sorrowful at heart,
And sat by the lads, and watched them play.
After a while the lads fought as children will,
The one struck the other who felt his blows.
This Dinabuz was angry, he that was struck,

Towards the other lad that was named Merlin.
 This said Dinabuz, that the blow encountered:
 'Merlin, you wicked fellow, why did you thus?
 You have brought me shame, and shall have woe.
 I am a king's son, and you are born of naught,
 In no place should you dwell like a free man.
 This be the truth, your mother was a whore,
 That knew not the man ever that begot you,
 Nor had you ever a true father midst mankind.
 And yet on our own land you bring me shame,
 As no man's son have you come here among us,
 And so, you deserve to suffer death this day.'
 The knights heard this where they were seated,
 They rose, and drew near, and asked eagerly,
 Concerning this strange tale, told of the lad.
 In Carmarthen dwelt a magistrate called Eli,
 And these knights came swiftly to the reeve,
 And addressed the man, urgently, and said:
 'We are, in truth, knights loyal to Vortigern,
 And have seen a young lad here named Merlin,
 And not a whit is known of this lad's father.
 Take him in haste, and send him to the king,
 If you would wish to keep your life and limbs.
 And his mother too, she that bore this same.
 Do this, and the king will receive them both;
 Refuse, and you'll be driven forth from here,
 This burgh will be burned, and its folk ruined.'
 Then answered Eli, the reeve of Carmarthen:
 'I know all this land lies in Vortigern's hand,
 And we are all his folk, more honour to him,
 So, we will do it gladly, and fulfil his wish.'
 Forth went the reeve and his fellow burghers,
 And sought out Merlin, with his playfellows.
 Merlin, they took, as his companions mocked.
 When Merlin was led away, Dinabuz was glad,
 And cried he was led away to lose his limbs,
 Yet things went otherwise, ere all was done.
 Now Merlin's mother had erstwhile become
 A hooded nun, dwelling by a noble minster.

Thither went Eli, the reeve of Carmarthen,
And led the good lady from where she lay,
And sped forth swiftly to King Vortigern,
Full many escorting Merlin and the nun.
Soon were the tidings come to Vortigern,
That Eli had come there, bringing the lady,
And that Merlin her son had come with her.
Then was Vortigern blithe as ever in life.
And with looks most fair he greeted the lady,
While Merlin he handed to twelve fine knights,
Loyal to the king, who were set to guard him.
Then Vortigern the king, spoke to the nun:
'Good lady, tell me; it shall go well with you;
Where were you born, and whose is the lad?'
Then the nun answered him as to her father:
'My father held in his hand a third of this land.
He was king of this land as is widely known,
And he was named Conan, the lord of knights.'
Then answered the king, treating her as his kin:
'Now lady, tell me; it shall go well with you;
Here is Merlin your son; who then begat him?
Who was held as his father among the folk?'
Then she hung her head, and bowed it low,
And sat quietly by the king, full silent awhile,
And after a while she spoke, and told the king:
'My lord king, I'll tell you a wondrous tale,
My father, King Conan, he loved me ever,
And I grew in time to be marvellously fair.
When I was fifteen, I dwelt in a fair mansion,
And wondrous fair the maids my companions.
One night, when I lay in bed, and soft asleep,
There appeared before me the finest born,
As if he were a tall knight, arrayed in gold.
This I saw, in a dream each night, in sleep.
This vision glided before me, all glistening,
And full often he embraced me and kissed me,
Oft he approached me, oft he came full nigh,
When, at last, I came to glance at my body,
My flesh was strange to me, hateful my form,

And most strange it seemed what this might be!
Yet, finally, I perceived that I was with child.
And when my time came, I bore me this son.
I know not who, in this world, his father was,
Nor who begat the child on me, in this world,
Nor whether it was evil, or on God's behalf.
Alas, as I seek for mercy, I know no more
That I might say, as to how my son came here.'
And the nun bowed her head, and hid her face.

Vortigern seeks counsel regarding the lad

The king now bethought him what he might do,
And summoned his counsellors to advise him,
And their best counsel was to send for Magan,
That was a man of wisdom, and many a craft,
Who could counsel well, and foresee the future,
For he had the craft to read the heavens above,
And knew the histories told in many a tongue.
Magan came to court, and stood before the king,
And he greeted Vortigern with goodly words:
'Hail, and good health to you, King Vortigern,
I am come before you; what do you wish of me?'
Then the king answered and told the wise man
All that the nun had said, and sought his counsel.
From beginning to end, he told this Magan all.
Then said Magan: 'Of all such things, I know.
There are in the heavens many kinds of being,
That shall remain there till Doomsday comes.
Some are noble and good, and some work evil.
Therein is a numerous sort that haunt mankind,
And they are truly named "incubi daemones".
They do little harm, but to deceive us mortals,
For many a one in their dreams they will delude.
By their craft, many a woman is got with a child,
Many a good man's child beguiled with magic.
So was Merlin begot, and born of this mother,
So has all this transpired,' said Magan the wise.

And then said Merlin himself, to Vortigern:
‘King, your men have brought me; here am I.
I would learn then what might be your will,
And for what cause am I led before the king?’

He tells Merlin of his plight concerning the castle

Then Vortigern answered the boy, full swiftly:
‘Merlin you are come hither as no man’s son.
List, since you long for speech you may loathe;
If you would learn the reason, you shall hear it.
I have applied my strength to a mighty work,
That has well-nigh consumed all my treasure.
Five thousand men labour each day thereon.
I’ve lime and stone, none better in this world,
Nor are there better workmen in any country.
All they build in a day, this the truth I tell you,
By the morrow, has all come tumbling down.
Each stone, from the others, fallen to the ground.
Now my wise, and my learned, counsellors say
That I draw the blood from out your breast,
And add it to my lime, to make the mortar,
These walls will stand to the world’s ending.
Now you know; how sits that then with you?’

Merlin denounces Magan’s counsel

Merlin listened, and he was wrathful in mood,
And yet, though he was angered, he said this:
‘God himself, who is lord over all mankind,
Wills not the castle raised by use of my blood,
Nor ever that your fortress shall stand secure.
All these wise men of yours, are deceivers,
They stand before you and they tell you lies,
And that you shall discover, this very day.
All this was said by Joram who stands my foe.
His counsel false, I am shaped to be his bane.
Let your wise man Joram come before you,
And let all his companions now stand here,

All those who tell such lies to their true king.
And if I tell you the truth now, of the wall,
And why, though it be well-built, it falls again,
And if I prove in truth that their words are lies,
And raise you your wall, grant me their heads!’
Then Vortigern answered the boy full swiftly:
‘By this right hand, I give my word to you.’
So Joram the wise was brought before the king,
And seven of his fellow sages, all ill-fated.
Merlin was wrathful, and he spoke angrily:
Tell me, Joram the traitor, hateful to my heart,
Why does this wall, by night, fall to the ground,
And what is it may be found beneath the ditch?’
Now Joram was silent, since he could not say.
Then said Merlin: ‘King, hold to your word!
And let the ditch be dug seven feet deeper,
And they shall find a stone, wondrous fair,
Both fine and broad, for your folk to behold.’
And so, the ditch was dug seven foot deeper,
And, forthwith, they found that very stone.
Said Merlin again: ‘King hold to your word!
Now tell me Joram, one loathsome to me,
What kind of thing dwells beneath this stone?’

The white dragon and the red dragon

Now, Joram was silent since he could not say.
Then Merlin spoke a wonder: ‘Water lies under;
Raise up the stone, for beneath the water lies.’
Before the monarch, they moved away the stone,
And the water they found, and then Merlin said:
‘Come, tell to me now, Joram; my mortal enemy,
What dwells in this water, winter and summer?’
And the king questioned Joram, but he knew not.
Then Merlin said again: ‘King, hold to your word!
Cause all of this water now to be drained away,
For, in its depths, there dwell two great dragons,
The one to the north, and the other to the south.
The one is milk-white, whiter than any creature,

And the other, boldest of worms, is red as blood.
Each night, at midnight, these two begin to fight,
And through their fighting the stonework falls,
The ground begins to sink, and the walls tumble.
Here's the wondrous cause of your castle falling,
The answer lies in the flood, not in my blood.'
The water was drained away, the men were glad,
Great was the joy they showed before their king,
But soon they were sorry, and filled with woe,
For, ere the day was ended, strange tidings came.
When the water was drained, and the pit empty,
The dragons sallied forth, with a mighty roar,
And fought fiercely there, deep within the ditch,
Ne'er has any man seen a more loathsome battle,
For blasts of flame flew from the dragons' jaws.
Vortigern viewed the fight; grim was the sight,
Wondering what in the world this betokened,
And how Merlin had known what no other knew.
First the white worm was above, and then below,
And there the red dragon wounded him to death.
Then both went into the pit, nor were seen again.
So, did all this happen, as Vortigern looked on.
And all that were with him, hailed this Merlin,
While the king shunned Joram, and offed his head,
And those of his seven comrades that were there.
The king went to his hall, and Merlin with him.
And said to him warmly: 'Merlin, you are welcome,
And I will give you everything that you desire,
Of my land, and of my silver, and of my gold.'
He thought through Merlin to regain the realm,
Yet, ere the day's end, he saw twas otherwise.
The king then said to Merlin, his dear friend:
'Tell to me, Merlin, now dearest to me of all,
What did the dragons and their noise betoken,
The stone, the water, and the wondrous fight?
Tell me, if you will, what all this betokens.
And, afterwards, advise me what I should do,
And how I may regain my realm from Hengist,
My wife's father, he who has harmed me greatly.'

Then answered Merlin, to the monarch's speech:
'King, you are unwise, and lacking in thought,
In asking, of the dragons that made such din,
The meaning of their fight and fierce conflict.
For they betoken the kings that are to come,
Their fight, their venture, and their peoples' fates.
And yet if you were wise, and of prudent mind,
You might have asked me of the many sorrows,
And of the care and woe, that will come to you.
And I would have told you of all such trouble.'

Merlin prophesies the fate of kings

Then said Vortigern: 'Merlin, my dear friend,
Tell me of all that will happen, then, to me.'
'Willingly,' said Merlin, in a voice full bold,
'I shall tell you, and yet you will rue it ever.
King, king, see you not woe will come to you,
From Constantin's kin, whose son you killed,
Causing Constance to be slain, that was king;
You caused the Picts to wickedly betray him.
Thus, you must suffer the worst woes of all.
Afterwards, you drew here a foreign people,
You brought us the Saxons, and shall be ruined.
For now, the noblemen of Britain are arriving,
That is Aurelius and Uther, and now you know,
They will reach this land tomorrow, at Totnes,
I will have you know, with seven hundred ships.
For e'en now they sail full swiftly o'er the sea.
You have done them harm, and harm must feel,
And on both sides your bane shall seem to be,
Since your enemies lie before you and behind.
So, flee, flee far away, and thus save your life!
Yet, flee where you will, your foes will follow.
Aurelius Ambrosius first shall rule the realm,
But he, by means of poison, shall suffer death.
Then Uther Pendragon shall have the kingdom,
Yet your kin, with poison too, will murder him,
Though, ere he dies, he shall raise great conflict.

Uther will have a son; out of Cornwall come,
Much like to a wild boar, bristling with steel,
And that boar shall consume most noble burghs,
And all the traitors he shall destroy with ease.
He will put to death all your wealthy kindred,
He shall be one most noble and brave in mind,
And lands as far as Rome this same shall rule,
For all of his foes he shall fell to the ground.
The truth I tell, nor sweet may it seem to you.
Flee with your host, your foes are come to court!’

Aurelius and Uther land at Totnes; the death of Vortigern

Then Merlin the wise, ceased his prophesy,
And the king had full thirteen trumpets blown,
And then marched forth, swiftly, with his host.
Now, was it within the space of a single night,
That the two brothers came ashore together,
At Totnes, that lies at the mouth of the Dart.
The Britons heard of this and they were blithe;
They emerged from the woods and wilderness,
In sixties, and in sixties, and seven hundreds,
In thirties and in thirties, and so in thousands.
And as they gathered, good to them it seemed.
A mighty host the brothers brought to this land,
And many a bold Briton marched before them,
In countless numbers, and bent upon revenge,
That midst the woods and hills had lain hidden,
Because of the weight of misery, and the harm,
And the dread, that Hengist made them suffer,
That had murdered their leaders with knives,
With those ‘saexes’, cut to pieces their thanes.
The Britons took counsel at a great husting,
And they took Aurelius, the elder brother,
In their noble husting, and made him king.
The tidings swiftly reached King Vortigern
That Aurelius had been chosen as their ruler.
Then was Vortigern woeful, with worse to come.
King Vortigern now proceeded to a fortress,

That was named Genoire, set on a high hill,
The hill called Cloard, and the land Hergin,
Near to the Wye, that flows there, a fair river.
Vortigern's men gathered in all they found
Of foodstuffs and weapons, of many a kind,
And brought to the fortress all they desired,
Enough for their needs, though of little help,
For Aurelius and Uther were well aware
That Vortigern was on Cloard in a fortress,
The trumpets blew, they roused their army,
A countless host of men, from many a land,
And marched to Genoire, where Vortigern lay.
A king was without, and a king was within;
The knights fought there in fierce encounter,
Every good man girded his loins and fought.
When the besiegers saw their attack had failed,
They went in numbers to the wood nearby,
Felled the trees, and dragged them to the ditch,
And filled all that moat, dug wondrous deep.
Burning brands, they hurled in from all sides,
And called to Vortigern: 'Now, we'll warm you,
For slaying Constantin, king of all this land,
And afterwards our Constance, his eldest son.
Here now is Aurelius, with his brother Uther,
To bring you ill!' And the wind fanned the flames,
The fortress burned, the dwellings were consumed,
And all that stronghold was razed to the ground.
None there could fight against that fierce blaze,
The fire went over all, burning roof and wall,
And King Vortigern within was burnt to death,
For all were consumed that had been therein.
So ended, amidst much harm, King Vortigern,
And Aurelius held this land in his two hands.

The End of Part IV of Layamon's 'Brut'

Part V: From Aurelius to Arthur

Contents

Aurelius Ambrosius marches against Hengist	257
Aldolf, Earl of Gloucester, captures the Saxon leader.....	260
Hengist is put to death (488AD, according to the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle).....	261
Octa, Hengist's son, is treated mercifully	263
The king calls for a husting.....	265
Aurelius seeks Merlin's counsel	266
Merlin counsels the king	268
Uther leads the expedition to Ireland	270
The Britons encounter King Gillemaur in battle	271
The Giant's Ring is re-erected at Stonehenge	272
Pascent allies himself with King Gillemaur of Ireland.....	273
He conspires with Appas to assassinate Aurelius	275
The death of Aurelius Ambrosius (530AD, if the comet described here was <i>Halley's Comet</i>)	277
Merlin explains what the comet betokens.....	278
Uther defeats Pascent and Gillemaur, at St. David's	280
He is crowned King of Britain	281
The two dragon-banners	282
Octa and his followers revert to heathendom, and besiege York	283
Earl Gorlois of Cornwall counsels King Uther.....	285
Uther subdues the north, then marches to London	286
Uther casts his gaze on Igraine, the wife of Gorlois	287
Gorlois confines Igraine to his castle at Tintagel	288
Uther Pendragon seeks the aid of Merlin.....	290
Merlin prophesies the reign of Arthur	291
He performs his magic	292
Uther, in the likeness of her husband, is welcomed by Igraine	293
Meanwhile his knights defeat Gorlois	294
Uther hears the news of Gorlois' death	295
Igraine surrenders the castle of Tintagel	296
The birth of Arthur	297
Octa and his comrades are freed, and leave the country.....	297
He returns with an army	298

The battle at St Albans	299
The Saxons seek to murder the king, in Winchester	301
Uther Pendragon's murder	303
Arthur is crowned king	304

Aurelius Ambrosius marches against Hengist

There was an earl, of Gloucester, named Aldolf,
 Noble was he, and the most skilful of knights.
 Now, Aurelius made him steward of this land,
 When Aurelius there, and Uther his brother,
 Had felled their foe, and were thus the blither.
 Hengist, strongest of knights learned of this,
 And he was greatly afeared of these brothers,
 So marched his host north towards the Scots,
 While Aurelius hastened after him at speed,
 For Hengist thought by guile to escape him,
 By fleeing into Scotland with his whole army,
 If he could not, now pursued, stay in this land.
 Aurelius marched forth, and led his forces north,
 Marching with all their might for a seven-night.
 The Britons, full bold, passed o'er the weald,
 Aurelius now showing his strength in numbers,
 And found the people slain, the land ravaged,
 The churches burnt; the Britons, thus, consumed.
 Then said Aurelius the king, Britain's darling:
 'If it should come to pass that, hither, I return;
 If the Lord so wills it, He that brings us light,
 That I survive, and obtain my rightful realm,
 Churches I will raise, and the Lord I will praise;
 I will grant due rights to every single knight,
 And to every person, whether old or young,
 I shall be gracious, if God grant me victory.'
 News of Aurelius had reached Hengist's ears;
 Then spoke Hengist, most treacherous of knights:
 'Hearken now, my men, you shall gain honour,
 For Aurelius comes, with Uther, his brother,
 And many a warrior they bring us, all ill-fated.
 For the king lacks wisdom, as do his knights,

And his brother's a knave, one with the other.
Therefore, the Britons will lack our boldness;
When the head is ill, then worse is the body.
So, remember this right well, this that I utter:
Fifty of us are worth five hundred of them,
Which oft they've found, since we came here.
For tis widely known, regarding our bold deeds,
That we are warriors to set among the best.
Against them we'll stand, forth from the land
We shall drive them all, and win it to our will.'
So spoke Hengist, boldly, fairest of all knights,
Exhorting his troops, ere they took the field,
And yet, ere a seven-night, all went otherwise.
Now, forth came tidings to Aurelius the king,
That Hengist was positioned on a hill-side.
Aurelius led there thirty thousand riders,
Bold Britons, threatening the foe, in force,
And of Welshmen too, he'd wondrous many.
He had his knights fully-armed day and night,
With their weapons sharpened, ready for war,
For, ever, was he wary of those heathen folk.
When Hengist heard that Aurelius drew near,
He gathered his host, and marched against him.
When Aurelius heard Hengist was on the move,
He took to the field, armed behind his shield,
And led forth ten thousand knights, forthwith,
That were the noblest, the best of all his host,
Who took to the field, on foot, behind shields;
And ten thousand Welsh he sent to the woods,
And ten thousand Scots held the roads and ways.
Then he took his earls and his household guard,
His most faithful warriors present in the land,
And made a shield-troop, as thick as a forest,
Five thousand riders, to support the others.
Then said Aldolf, the mighty Earl of Leicester:
'If the Lord above, who orders the fate of all,
Grants me to be where Hengist comes riding,
That has so long, in this our land, remained,
He who betrayed my friends to fell death,

Through the knives of his folk, by Amesbury,
And I regain from that earl, this our country,
Then in truth I'll say God had been good to me,
For I shall have felled my foes to the ground,
And avenged the dear kindred they have slain.'
They say that scarcely had his speech ended,
When they saw Hengist riding o'er the down,
And a mighty host came marching behind him.
Together the armies came, full fiercely they slew;
There those stern warriors met in harsh encounter;
There the helms rang out; there the warriors fell.
Steel met with bone, and sorrow there was rife,
Where streams of blood flowed o'er the ground,
The fields dyed crimson, and the grasses stained.
When Hengist saw that his luck had failed him,
He retreated from the fight, and swiftly fled,
All his broken ranks following quickly after.
The Christians charged then, and attacked them,
Calling upon God's son to be to them their aid,
While the heathens cried aloud to their deity:
'Tervagant, our lord, why do you fail us now?'
When Hengist saw his heathen army fleeing,
He rode outright, till he came to Coningsburgh,
And into the burgh he entered then for safety.
But the King, Aurelius, soon went after him,
And he called out to his men, in a loud voice:
'Ride ever forth and forth; Hengist rides north!'
And so, they followed, till they reached the burgh.
When Hengist, and his son, saw the foe arrive,
Then said Hengist, of all men most full of wrath:
'I will flee no more, rather I'll stand and fight.
Come, Ebissa my son-in-law; Octa my son;
All my vast army now, come stir your weapons,
And we will counter them, and wreak slaughter.
For if we fell them not, then dead men are we,
Laid on the field, and parted from our friends.'
Hengist left camp, and marched o'er the weald,
And made a shield-troop of his heathen force.
Then came Aurelius, with many a thousand,

And a second battle began, both full and fierce.
There was many a harsh stroke dealt in anger.
There were the Christians well-nigh overcome.
Then came a charge by five thousand horsemen,
Aurelius' cavalry, downing many a heathen;
Then was a mighty fight, most stern the conflict.

Aldolf, Earl of Gloucester, captures the Saxon leader

Aldolf of Gloucester, he charged midst the ranks,
And found Hengist there, that wicked knight,
Who fought right fiercely, felling Christians.
Aldolf drew his sword, and dealt a great blow,
Hengist raised his shield, else he'd been slain,
But Aldolf smote the shield so that it shattered.
Hengist now leapt towards him, like a lion,
And smote Aldolf's helm which split in two.
They hewed away with many a grim stroke;
Sparks flew from the steel, many and often.
After some while, Aldolf leapt to the ground,
And found Gorlois, a fine knight, beside him,
He was the Earl of Cornwall, and well-known.
Thus was the earl, Aldolf, much emboldened.
He raised his blade on high, and fierce it fell,
Striking Hengist's hand that gripped his sword,
Then, with a grim look, he grasped the Saxon,
By the rim of the cuirass, guarding his neck,
And, putting forth his strength, dragged him down.
Then, he grasped him as he would crush him,
Raised him in his embrace and led him forth.
So was Hengist taken, by Aldolf the brave!
Then cried Aldolf, that was Earl of Gloucester:
'Hengist, you were happier far at Amesbury,
Where your people's long knives slew Britons,
Slaughtering my kin, through your treachery!
Now you'll pay the price; quit your friends,
Meet cruel death, and all this world forego!'
Hengist was silent, for he saw no help there.
Aldolf led him to his king, and cried, warmly:

‘Hail to you, Aurelius, born of a noble line,
Here is the heathen, Hengist, that wreaked harm,
God granted him to me, and so I grasped him!
Now I grant him you, the dearest of men to me.
Let all your household toy now with this hound,
Shoot with their bows, and so destroy his line.’
Then swift answered the king, with loud cry:
‘Blessings upon you, Aldolf, noblest of earls,
You are as dear to me as is my own life,
And you shall be a lord over many people!’
Men gripped Hengist, and Hengist they bound,
And then most wretched of warriors was he;
The fight was done, and the heathens had fled.
Octa his son, on viewing his father’s plight,
Fled with Ebissa, his brother-in-law, to York,
Doing harm enough, then manning the walls.
More of the heathens had fled to the woods,
Where the king’s men, on foot, laid them low.

Hengist is put to death (488AD, according to the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle)

Aurelius, the king, was well pleased with all,
And rode to Coningsburgh, with all his folk,
And thanked the Lord for His show of might.
Three days and nights, the king rested there,
That his dear knights might heal their wounds,
And rest their weary bones, within the burgh.
On the third day, at Nones, in mid-afternoon
The king caused the trumpets to be blown,
And he summoned all his earls to a husting.
Once they were gathered there, about the king,
He asked his wise nobles for their counsel,
As to the death that Hengist should receive,
Whereby he might avenge his dearest friends,
Who lay beneath the ground, at Amesbury.
Then Aldadus stood, and addressed the king.
He was a holy bishop, humble before God,
And brother to Earl Aldolf, that had no other.
‘Lord king,’ said he, ‘hark now to what I say,

I'll give sentence as to how he should die,
For he is, of all the world, most hateful to us,
One that has robbed our kin of light and life.
He is a heathen hound, and Hell must seek,
Down there he shall sink for his treachery.
My lord king, hark now to what I tell you:
There was a king in Jerusalem named Saul,
And a king of the heathens, great in might,
Named Agag, the king of the Amalekites.
Jerusalem, he hated, but the Fiend he loved.
Ever he hated Jerusalem, and wrought harm;
For never did he seek peace, only conflict.
He burnt, slew, and brought trouble enough.
It befell on a day, as the sun began to shine,
When Agag, the king, sat on his high throne,
His blood, fatally stirred, urged him to battle.
So, he summoned his knights to him forthwith:
"Mount your steeds, swiftly, for forth we ride,
All about Jerusalem we will burn and slay!"
Forth went the king, and a vast host behind,
To overrun the land and consume the towns.
Seeing them draw nigh, the men of Jerusalem
Advanced against them, the thanes and swains.
And fought with the king and overcame him,
And they slew his folk, and took Agag captive.
And so, they brought the man to Saul their king.
Then was Saul, the king, blithe as could be,
And he sought counsel of his rich noblemen,
As to what should be the manner of Agag's death.
Then up leapt Samuel, a prophet of Israel,
A holy man, highly favoured of the Lord;
None there knew any man truer to God's law.
Samuel led King Agag to the market-place,
And caused him to be bound fast to a stake,
And he took in his right hand a precious blade.
Then Samuel, that good man, called to Agag:
"Agag, once a king, woe is upon you now!
Now shall you pay for harming Jerusalem,
You that have greatly injured this same burg,

And deprived many a man of light and life.
As I hope for mercy, you'll do so no more!"
Samuel raised the sword, and brought it down,
And hewed him to pieces in the market-place.
And scattered the bloody pieces o'er the street.
What Samuel did should be done to Hengist.'
Aldolf, Earl of Gloucester, he heard all this,
And he leapt towards Hengist, like to a lion,
Grasped him by the hair, and dragged him forth,
And hauled him through all of Coningsburgh,
And bound him to a post, beyond the walls.
Aldolf drew his sword, smote off Hengist's head,
And, as the Saxon had proved a mighty knight,
He laid him in earth there, after the heathen rite,
Yet prayed that his soul might yet suffer woe.

Octa, Hengist's son, is treated mercifully

Now, Aurelius the king summoned a husting.
The trumpets were blown, the army gathered,
A wondrous host, and then he marched to York.
And besieged Octa, and his warriors, within.
The king had a ditch dug all about the burgh,
Such that none might come forth nor enter in.
Octa viewed the work, and he felt much woe.
His heathen folk, now besieged in the burgh,
Gathered in council, and sought what to do.
Octa spoke then to his brother-in-law, Ebissa,
And said: 'I have bethought what I shall do.
I, will go forth half-naked, with my knights,
From out the burgh, a chain about my neck,
And so go before the king, and beg for mercy.
We must follow this counsel, or we shall die.'
They all did as Octa, Hengist's son, advised.
Removing their clothes, the wretched knights,
Went from the burgh, all those woeful thanes,
Two by two, to the number of two thousand.
Aurelius, the noblest of knights, viewed them,
The half-naked knights, and thought it strange.

The host that now held the land came together,
 And watched, as Octa, Hengist's son, drew near.
 He bore in his hands the links of a long chain,
 And, before the warriors, he fell to the ground.
 And sought the king's feet, and then he said:
 'For the sake of God, the merciful, have pity;
 For the Almighty's sake, pardon me and mine.
 Now all our strength, lord king, is overcome,
 Our laws and people are loathsome to the Lord.
 Our gods have failed us, Apollo, Tervagant,
 Woden and Mercury, Jupiter and Saturn,
 Venus, and Didon, Freya and Mamilon.
 And all of our rites are hateful to us now;
 For we now believe in your Lord above,
 All those we worshipped; all have failed us.
 We seek your favour, now and ever more.
 If you'll but grant us peace and friendship,
 We will cleave to you, and be your true men,
 And love your people, and hold to your laws.
 And if that displease you, do then your will,
 Whate'er you would wish, hang or behead us.'
 The king was merciful; his silence he kept;
 He looked to his right hand, then to his left,
 To see which of his noblemen would speak.
 They were all still; they all kept their silence,
 For none howe'er noble dared utter a word.
 While Octa lay there at the feet of the king,
 And all of his knights lay there behind him.
 Then spoke good bishop Aldadus, and said:
 'It was e'er the rule, and is now, and shall be,
 That when we seek mercy, mercy be shown.
 For worthy of mercy are those that seek it.
 You yourself, lord king, are head of a people,
 So, pardon this Octa, and all his companions,
 If they now believe in our Christian message.
 For it may yet befall in some land of theirs
 That they may most fittingly worship the Lord.
 Now stands all this kingdom in your own hands,
 Give them a place that to them seems good,

And seek from them hostages, as you require,
And let those then be bound in bonds of iron,
Yet have all the food, and clothing, they need;
Then you might let their people dwell here,
And till the land, and so live by their tillage.
And if it should then befall you, hereafter,
That they fail to remain true to their word,
And weaken in faith, and seek to oppose you,
I say you may do to them whate'er you wish;
Let your men ride to encounter them swiftly,
And let them be slain then, hung or beheaded.
This I permit you; let the Lord above hear.'
Then answered the king: 'All this I will do,
As you have directed. Arise now, Octa,
You shall be welcomed into Christendom.'
Then was Octa baptised, and all his knights,
All of his company, forthwith, in that place.
They led their hostages before Aurelius,
Three and fifty children they led to the king.
And the king gave them land this side Scotland,
Oaths they swore, that they'd ne'er deceive him.
Sixty hides of land King Aurelius gave them,
And thereon they all dwelt for many a winter.

The king calls for a husting

Now the king was in York, and all seemed well,
And he sent his messengers throughout the realm,
And ordered the bishops, and book-learned men,
The earls, and the thanes, to rally around him,
For King Aurelius would hold a great husting.
It soon came to pass that they gathered together,
And, with fair words, Aurelius welcomed them.
He greeted the earls, and he greeted the barons,
And all the bishops, and the book-learned men:
'I'll tell you, truly, why I have summoned you.
Here I give, to each knight, his land and right,
And to every earl, and to every baron here,
Whate'er he may win, to possess it with joy;

And I order each, on his life, to love peace.
I bid you to labour, and repair the churches;
Let all the bells ring, and God's praises sing,
And, with all your strength, worship the Lord.
Each man shall maintain peace and friendship,
And till the lands, that lie now in my hands.'
They heard his decree, and praised its wisdom.
The king then granted them leave to depart,
And each fared homewards, as best it seemed.

Aurelius seeks Merlin's counsel

For a full seven-night, the king remained there,
And then he set forth on the road to London,
To gladden the burghers who laboured busily
Strengthening the walls, rebuilding the halls,
Righting all the things that had been broken,
Renewing all the laws of their elders' day.
And he chose the reeves to rule the people.
And then he went, forthwith, to Winchester,
And caused to be built, halls and churches,
Where'er, it seemed to the king, most pleasant.
And, after that, he went forth to Amesbury,
To the burial-place of his friends, and kindred,
That Hengist's folk had slain with their knives.
And he sought out masons to hew the stones,
And for skilled men that could handle an axe,
For he thought to make a work wondrous fair,
That should last for as long as men might live.
There was in Caerleon, a bishop, Tremoriun,
A man of wisdom in this world's kingdom,
And with the king he rode, over the weald.
And Tremoriun, God's servant, said to him:
'Hark, Aurelius, to what I make known to you,
And I will grant you the noblest of counsels,
And if you approve it, twill bring you good.
There lives a prophet whose name is Merlin.
If a man might but seek him upon the weald,
And find a way then to bring him to you,

And, if you swear to obey all he commands,
He will then grant you the best of counsels,
As to how to make the work strong and lasting,
That it might endure as long as men shall live.'
Then answered the king, pleased by his words,
'Dear friend, Tremorion, all this shall I do.'
The king sent forth men, through all his realm,
And bade every man ask after this Merlin,
And bring him to the king if they found him,
For he'd give him land, and silver and gold,
And perform his will, in this, his kingdom.
The messengers, they ranged far and wide.
Some went northwards, and some went south,
And some rode east, and some straight west,
And some, that did so, came to Alaban,
That is a well-spring in the land of Wales.
This spring Merlin loved, and oft bathed there.
The knights found him seated, by its brink.
As they drew near, they greeted him warmly,
And forthwith, to him, said the two knights:
'All hail to you, Merlin, wisest among men!
Through us, the goodly king sends greeting
Aurelius, that is, the noblest of monarchs,
And he beseeches you, warmly, to come to him,
And he will grant you land, silver and gold,
If you will but counsel him as to this realm.'
Then answered Merlin what seemed woe to them:
'I rate not his land, nor his gold, nor his silver,
Clothes, nor horses; of these I have enough.'
Then, for a long while, the prophet sat silently.
While the knights were fearful lest he depart.
Yet when he spoke again, all then seemed well:
'You two knights, that are come from the king,
I knew yesterday, ere noon, you would come,
And if I had wished, you'd not have found me.
You bring me greetings from King Aurelius.
I knew of his nature ere he came ashore here,
Likewise of the other son, Uther, his brother;
I knew of both of them, ere they were born,

Though with my eyes I've had sight of neither.
Yet, alas! and alas! that by fate tis so ordered,
That this king of the realm shall ne'er live long.
Now I'll go with you, and be your companion,
To this king I'll fare, and I'll do as he wishes.'

Merlin counsels the king

Forth went Merlin, the two knights beside him,
And, after a while, they arrived at the court.
The good tidings came swift to the monarch,
And ne'er in his life had the king been so blithe
At the coming to meet him of any good man.
The king mounted his steed, and forth he did ride,
And all his knights with him, to welcome Merlin.
The king drew near, and greeted him warmly,
He kissed and embraced him, as his dear friend,
And great was the joy, among all the people,
At the coming of Merlin, that was no man's son.
Alas, not a wise man, in all of this kingdom,
Knew whose son he was, but the Lord alone!
The king led Merlin, his friend, to a chamber,
And right soon he asked him, in words most fair,
To give him to know of the course of this world,
And to speak of the years that were yet to come.
For, of these things, he wished, greatly, to know.
Then Merlin answered the king in these words:
'O, Aurelius, the king, a strange thing you seek.
Look not to ask of such further, I say to you,
For the spirit is baleful that dwells in my breast,
And, were I to boast of such things among men,
Or be glad to make a game of such prophecy,
That spirit would seethe with wrath, and be still,
Deprive me of sense, cut short my speaking,
And render me dumb, as regards every doom.
Forego such things,' Merlin said to the king,
'Yet whenever dire need overtakes the people,
And men beseech me, mildly, to prophesy,
And I'm still allowed to pursue my will,

Then may I yet speak here of things to come.
So, I will counsel you, as to your present need,
And tell you now, what you have in your heart.
There is a broad, and fair plain by Amesbury,
Whereon the Saxon knives slew your kinfolk,
With many a bold Briton betrayed to death.
You think to make it now a place of worship,
Build a wondrous work to honour the dead,
That shall endure till the ending of the world.
But you have none that knows aught of such,
None that can raise a work that will not fail.
While I can counsel, as regards your need,
For I know a work wondrously conceived.
In Ireland it is that this same work stands,
A marvellous thing, called the Giant's Ring.
A work of stone, ne'er was its like ere known;
Nowhere in this world is there such another.
The stones are large, and possess much virtue,
For those that are ill journey to these stones,
They bathe the stones, and lave their bones,
And after a while, they are sound again.
But the stones are heavy, and immensely large,
And ne'er was any man born, in any burgh,
Strong enough to bear the stones from there.'
Then answered the king: 'Merlin, a strange thing
You say: that, thence, none can bear the stones,
Nor had any man e'er the strength to do so?
How, then, am I to have them borne from there?'
Then Merlin replied to the monarch's question:
'Nay, nay, my lord king, it was said of yore,
That better is craft than strength, art than power,
For men may gain by craft, where power fails.
Gather your army, and sail forth to that isle,
And lead a goodly host when you go there,
And I'll go with you, and enhance your honour.
Ere you return, you shall have all your wish,
And the stones you shall carry to this land,
And they shall be borne to the burial-place,
And grace the ground in which your kindred lie.

And you yourself, your bones shall rest therein,
There shall you rest, once your life is ended.’
Thus said Merlin, then afterwards sat silent,
As though he would depart from this world.
So, the king had him led to a fair chamber,
To rest in comfort there as long as he wished.
Aurelius the king then summoned a husting,
From all of the lands that he held in his hands,
And bade men speak, being needful of counsel.
His noble barons, gathered there, advised him
To follow the counsel that Merlin had offered.

Uther leads the expedition to Ireland

Yet they would not have the king lead them forth,
Rather chose, as their leader, Uther the good.
Then, fifteen thousand knights, fully-armed,
All bold Britons, were chosen to follow him.
That mighty host, once gathered, sailed forth,
In the finest of vessels that travelled the sea,
And they journeyed on till they came to Ireland.
There the brave knights entered on the haven,
They went ashore, and Ireland they gazed on.
Then spoke Merlin, and these were his words:
‘See you that great mound, all you brave warriors,
That hill so high it nigh touches the heavens?
There is the wonder, called the Giant’s Ring,
That, unlike to all else, came out of Africa.
Come pitch your tents, over all these fields,
For here we shall rest, for a full three days,
Then on the fourth day we shall march hence,
Towards that great hill, and perform our will.
But ere that rest, while gathering our strength,
Making ready the weapons we shall need.’
So was it done, and the warriors rested there.
Powerful the king that ruled then in Ireland,
Gillemaur his name, the lord of the people.
News reached him that the Britons had landed,
He summoned his people from all of Ireland,

And threatened to drive these invaders forth.
When he learned what it was the Britons wanted,
And that they came but to bear away the stones,
Gillemaur scorned them, and made mock of them,
And declared that they were but foolish fellows,
That had dared the wide waves, to sail thither,
As if there was not good stone in their own land.
By Saint Brendan he swore, they would have none,
For love of the stones, they would win the worst,
The blood would be spilt from out their bellies.
And that would teach them to go seek for stone!
'And thereafter, I shall make sail for Britain,
And tell King Aurelius these stones I'll defend,
And unless he sits still, and obeys my will,
I will fight him in battle there, in his land,
Lay waste the roads, make many a wilderness,
And widows enough, for all their men shall die!'

The Britons encounter King Gillemaur in battle

Thus, did that king unwisely play with words,
Yet all would prove otherwise than he wished.
His army once ready, then forth they marched,
Until they came to where the bold Britons lay.
The armies met together in fierce encounter,
Full fiercely they fought, and the fated fell.
The Irish fought naked, Britons in armour;
There, the Irish fell, and covered all the field.
Then King Gillemaur turned about and fled,
With but a score of his warriors, into a wood.
Bereft of honour, steel felled his Irish folk.
Thus was the king shamed, his boasting ended,
Watching, from the wood, as his people fell.
The Britons beheld the dead upon the field,
Seven thousand lay there, all robbed of life.
The Britons went over the field to their camp,
And looked to the state of their brave weapons,
And there they rested, as Merlin had bade them.
Upon the fourth day, they began their march,

And, all well-armed, they travelled to that hill,
Where stood the wondrous work, great and strong.
The knights went up, and down, and all about it,
And, earnestly, they beheld the marvel set there,
Those thousand knights, clad and fully-armed,
While all the others guarded the ships at anchor.
Then Merlin spoke, and to the knights he cried:
‘Knights you are strong, the stones broad and long,
You must draw near, and use force upon them.
You must wrap all such about with ship’s-rope,
And shove and heave, using all your strength,
With tree-trunks, that are both great and long.
Advance to one stone, fresh and well-prepared,
And, using all your strength, try if it will stir.’
Yet Merlin knew before how it would be.
The knights advanced, in all their strength,
And laboured greatly, yet lacked the power,
Such that never a single stone would stir.
Merlin gazed at Uther, the king’s brother,
To him, Merlin the prophet said these words:
‘Uther, gather your knights, and draw back,
Then let all of you stand about, and look on,
And stand you still, such that no warrior stirs,
Till I say to you what next shall be done.’
Uther gathered his knights, and drew back,
So that none remained close to the stones;
A stone’s throw, indeed, was their distance.

The Giant’s Ring is re-erected at Stonehenge

Then Merlin went, diligently, about his task.
Thrice he went around, within and without,
And his lips moved, as if telling of his beads.
Thus did Merlin there, then he called to Uther:
‘Uther come swiftly, and all your knights too,
And take up these stones, leave not one behind,
For you may lift them all, lightly as feathers,
And carry them carefully down to the ships.’
They bore off the stones as Merlin counselled,

Loaded them aboard, and shortly sailed forth.
And so, they journeyed back to this our land,
Brought the stones to the wondrous wide plain,
Tis broad and pleasant, that lies by Amesbury,
Where Hengist's folk slew the Britons with knives.
Merlin raised the stones, as they'd stood before,
Through his craft that no other man possessed;
For ne'er before was a man born so wise,
That could place those stones, and rear them high.
So, the tidings came to the king, in the north,
Of Merlin's craft, and of Uther his brother,
And how they were safely returned to this land,
And the stones, placed aright, raised on high.
Then the king was wondrously blithe at heart,
And had all the nobles called to a husting,
Summoning from far and wide, o'er the land,
All his folk, full joyous, to meet at Amesbury,
Where they should gather, on Whitsunday.
Thither came then the monarch, Aurelius,
And all his people gathered there about him.
And, on Whitsunday, he gave a mighty feast,
Of which this book will tell to you the story.
Tents were pitched there on the broad plain;
Nine thousand fair tents on the wide weald.
On that Whitsunday, there the monarch lay,
There he bore his crown, high on his brow;
He hallowed the place, that they call Stonehenge.
For a full three days, the monarch lay there.
And, on the third day, he honoured his people.
He appointed two bishops, men saintly and good,
Dubric to Caerleon, and Sampson to York.
Both men were holy, and favoured by God.
Then the folk departed, on the fourth day,
And so, all things stood for a space of time.

Pascent allies himself with King Gillemaur of Ireland

Pascent was a wicked man, Vortigern's son,
And this same Pascent had fled into Wales,

And there as an outlaw he dwelt and wrought.
He feared, nonetheless Aurelius and Uther,
So, ships he chartered, and sailed the flood,
Reaching Germany, with five hundred men.
There he gained allies, and gathered a fleet,
And he voyaged forth, and came to this land,
Entering the Humber, and doing much harm.
But he dared not long remain in that place,
For the king marched thither, and Pascent fled,
Over the sea-flood, landing thus in Ireland.
He soon came before the king of that land,
And, sore of heart, he greeted King Gillemaur:
'Hail to you, Gillemaur, chief among men,
To you am I come; I am Vortigern's son,
For my father, Britain's king, loved you ever.
And if you would agree to be now my ally,
And avenge my father, and avenge your folk
That Uther slew, and the stones he has stolen,
I would grant to you, one half of my kingdom.
Moreover, I heard, when I was o'er the sea,
That King Aurelius is plagued with sickness,
And lies in Winchester, confined to his bed,
And this I say you may believe, for it is true.'
Pascent and Gillemaur forged a compact there,
And oaths they both swore, countless many,
That they would hold this land in their hands.
Oaths are sworn, yet full oft are they broken.
The king gathered a host from all this land,
To the shore went Gillemaur and Pascent,
And boarded their ships, and forth they sailed.
Forth they sped swiftly, to Meneva they came,
That in time became a town exceeding fair,
That all men, indeed, now call St. David's.
There they were pleased to reach safe haven;
The ships made land; the knights filled the strand.
Then said Pascent, addressing Gillemaur:
'Now, King Gillemaur, here are we both arrived.
Half this realm I shall place in your two hands,
For a knight's son comes to me from Winchester,

And he tells me Aurelius will soon be dead;
The sickness is under his ribs, he will not live.
Here we'll avenge our kin, and win his realm,
And all shall be for the best, that we perform.'
News of this reached the king at Winchester,
That Pascent and Gillemaur had brought a host.
The king then called for Uther, his dear brother:
'Uther, summon the knights from all this land,
Go march to meet our foes, and drive them forth.
So would I do, were I not sick and suffering,
And if I may soon be sound, I shall follow you.'
Uther did all the king, his brother, bade him,
And brought Pascent, at St. David's, much woe,
And brought much sorrow to King Gillemaur.

He conspires with Appas to assassinate Aurelius

Britain they over-ran, they harried and burnt
While Uther summoned a host from this land,
And it was long ere he was ready to march.
Pascent held in his own hand all West Wales,
And on a day, when all his people were blithe,
Appas arrived, that the Fiend conveyed there,
To Pascent he said thus: 'Come nearer to us,
And I will tell you now of most joyful news.
I was at Winchester, amongst your enemies,
Where the king lies sick, and sorrowful at heart.
What do you say but that I should thither ride,
And delight you by slaying the monarch there?'
Then Pascent drew closer, and answered him:
'Appas, I promise you, now, a hundred pounds,
If you can please me so, as to slay that king,'
And they there agreed to work that treachery.
Appas went to his room, and planned the deed,
And he was a heathen, come from Saxon lands.
He dressed himself as a monk, shaved his crown,
And then he ventured forth with two companions,
Journeyed the while, and so entered Winchester,
Seeming like to a holy man, that heathen devil.

He went to the gate of the burgh where the king lay,
And greeted the gatekeeper with God's greeting,
And bade him go haste to the monarch and say:
That Uther his brother had ordered him hither,
The best leech that there was in any kingdom,
That could ever a sick man cure of his illness.
Yet the wretch, in saying so, lied to the king,
For Uther was erstwhile gone with his army,
And never had Appas seen him, or been sent.
But the king thought it true, and believed him.
Who would have thought the man a traitor?
Yet next his body he bore a leather cuirass,
And that was concealed by a haircloth habit,
And o'er his head Appas wore a black cowl,
And he'd smeared all his face as if with coal.
He knelt to the king and his speech was full mild:
'Hail to you, Aurelius, noblest of monarchs,
Uther has sent me, that is your own brother,
And here by the grace of God, have I come,
For I shall soon heal you, and make you whole,
Through the love of Christ, nor aught do I ask,
Neither gift of land, nor of silver or gold,
For I heal the sick out of love for our Lord.'
Now the king heard this and he was delighted,
For who in middle-earth would have thought
That the man who stood there was but a traitor?
Then Appas took up a glass-vessel anon,
And he had the king fill it with his urine.
He took back the glass, and viewed it closely,
And held it forth before all the king's knights,
And then spoke this Appas the wicked traitor:
'I would have you believe, ere tomorrow eve,
The king shall be whole, all-healed at his wish.'
Then were they blithe, all there in that chamber.
Appas went into another, and there he devised
A poisonous drink, and therein was scammony.
Then he entered outright amongst the knights,
And cinnamon he shared out amongst them,
And ginger, and liquorice gave them widely,

And they took his gifts, and were much deceived.
Then he fell on his knees there, before the king,
And said to him: 'Lord, now drink of this draught,
But a small part only, and you shall be cured.'
And the king drank deep, the poison he quaffed,
And, when he had drunk, the leech laid him down.
Then this said Appas to the knights of the chamber:
'Wrap the king well, that he sweat out the sickness,
For I say, despite all, your king shall be well,
And I'll go to my lodgings and speak to my men,
And I, without fail, shall return at midnight,
And bring fresh leechcraft that swift shall heal him.'

The death of Aurelius Ambrosius (530AD, if the comet described here was Halley's Comet)

Forth went the traitor; the king yet did slumber;
Appas, at his lodgings, now spoke with his men,
And, as secretly planned, he sped from the town.
On the stroke of midnight, the household knights
Sent six of their men to where Appas had lodged,
To seek him, and bring him at once to the king.
They found he'd flown, the Fiend bore him away,
And the men returned where the monarch lay,
And made known to all the traitor's departure.
Then was there seen an ocean of sorrow,
Knights fell to the ground, longing for death,
Great the lament, and the heart-felt groans there,
Many a word of grief uttered, full many a cry.
They ran towards the bed, and beheld the king.
There he lay, slumbering yet, sweating greatly,
The knights woke the king with their weeping,
And they spoke to him, in most gentle voices:
'Lord, how is it with you, how is your illness?
For the leech has departed, without your leave,
Fled from the court, and has left us wretched.'
The king replied: 'I am much swollen and sore,
And, unless I find ease, I shall soon be dead.
So, I ask outright, of you my faithful knights,

To go, greet Uther, that is my own brother,
And bid him hold all my realm in his charge.
May God, at all times, make him a good king.
And bid him take note, to ever think aright,
A father to the poor, an ease to the wretched,
That he may keep the kingdom in his hands.
And, when I am dead, take counsel together,
And to Stonehenge then forthwith bear me,
Where lie my kindred, slain by the Saxons.
Send for the bishops, and book-learned men,
And gold and silver give freely for my soul,
And lay me to the east, within Stonehenge.'
Then he spoke no more; for the king lay dead,
And the knights did all that he'd commanded.

Merlin explains what the comet betokens

Now, was Uther in Wales, and all unaware,
For, he'd heard naught of the king's demise.
Yet he had beside him the prophet Merlin,
As he marched towards the foe in this land.
Uther lay yet in Wales, midst the wilderness,
Preparing to march, and to battle Pascent.
As the evening fell, the moon shone bright,
It's light nigh as bright as broad sunlight,
And Uther saw afar a most marvellous star.
It seemed broad and wide, of wondrous size,
And it shed a terrible gleam, in its shining.
A comet they call such, the Latin *cometa*,
And a glow most fierce blazed from the star;
And the tail of that glow was a noble dragon,
And from its mouth there came flames enow.
Two of these flames were unlike to the rest,
One flared towards France, the other, Ireland,
And that towards France, it was bright indeed,
For as far as Mont Aiguille spread that token!
From that to the west, shone seven bright rays.
Now Uther beheld this, but made little of it,
Yet grieving at heart, he was strangely fearful,

As were all of the noblemen in his great host.
Uther called Merlin, bade that he come to him,
And these were the mild words that he spoke:
‘Merlin, Merlin, dear friend, now prove yourself,
And interpret for us this strange star that we see,
For I know not what in this world it betokens;
Unless you say otherwise, back we must ride.’
Now, Merlin stood still and silent, awhile,
As if he were labouring deeply, in dream,
And those who saw this with their own eyes
Said that he twisted and turned, like a worm.
At length he did wake, and began to quake,
And then these words uttered Merlin the wise:
‘Woe, woe, comes now to this earthly realm,
Many a great sorrow, to trouble the people.
Where are you Uther? Stand before me now,
And much I will tell you of sorrow to come.
For dead is Aurelius, noblest of monarchs,
And joins that other, Constance your brother,
Whom treacherous Vortigern once betrayed.
Now Vortigern’s kin have murdered Aurelius,
Leaving but you, as the heir to the kingdom.
Hope not for counsel from those who are dead,
But think of yourself, that inherit the realm,
For seldom those fail who trust to themselves.
A great king you will be, a leader of men,
Arm your knights now, in the dark of night,
That we may issue forth with the morning.
For, before Meneva, there shall you battle,
And, ere you go, great slaughter shall make.
There shall you slay Pascent and Gillemaur,
And many a thousand that fight beside them,
For the star that we see from afar, in truth,
Betokens the death of Aurelius your brother,
Before it the dragon glows, like to no other.
And its flames betoken you, yourself, Uther;
You shall have this land, and firm shall rule.
Wondrous the flame out of the dragon’s mouth;
Two its tongues that burn with wondrous light.

The one stretches far, southwards o'er France,
Betokening a powerful son, to be born to you,
Who shall gain many a land in fierce battle,
For he, in the end, shall rule many a people.
The other that stretches west, wondrous bright,
Betokens a daughter that shall be dear to you,
And its seven rays, those seven fair gleams,
Shall be sevens fair sons born to that daughter,
Who will win to their hands many a kingdom,
As powerful at sea, as they shall be o'er land.
Now you have heard of me all that will aid you;
Go swiftly, forthwith, and march to battle.'
And then he fell silent, as if he would sleep.

Uther defeats Pascent and Gillemaur, at St. David's

Up rose Uther, he that was wary and wise,
And ordered his knights forthwith to mount,
And ordered them swiftly towards Meneva,
With their weapons to hand, and ready to fight.
In the vanguard went a chosen band of knights,
Seven thousand a-horse, brave men and active;
In the middle ranks, seven thousand good men,
Fine-looking fellows, bold knights at the ready,
While, in the rear, rode forth eighteen thousand,
And there went besides many thousands on foot,
Far more than the tongue of man might tell of.
Forth they went swiftly and came to Meneva.
There, Gillemaur beheld Uther advancing,
And he ordered his men to arms, in a moment.
Some gripped knives, they all fought half-naked,
Strange their look, or grasped spears in their hands,
Or slung great battle-axes o'er their shoulders.
Then King Gillemaur said an unwise thing:
'Here is King Uther, that is Aurelius' brother,
He will ask for peace, and not fight with me.
His swains ride foremost, set we against them,
And pay no heed, though you slay the wretches.
For Constantin's son, shall become my man,

And will grant to Pascent all of the kingdom,
Let him live, and go, bound close, to my land.’
So spoke the king, but far other would follow.
Uther’s knights were swiftly in the township,
Set it ablaze, and fought the enemy fiercely,
Their swords at work among the naked Irish.
The latter, seeing the Britons make advance,
Replied in kind, yet nonetheless were beaten.
They called to their king: ‘Wretch, where are you?
Why are you not here, but let us be destroyed?
Pascent, your ally, stands by and watches on.
Come in all your strength, now, and aid us!’
Gillemaur heard them, and his heart was sore.
With his Irish knights, he entered on the fight,
And Pascent beside him, both the pair ill-fated.
When Uther saw that Gillemaur was present,
He rode towards him, and struck him in the side,
Till his spear drove home, and pierced the heart.
Then he sped on by, and he overtook Pascent,
And Uther, the good, uttered these few words:
‘Hold fast now, Pascent, for Uther is upon you!’
He struck then at his face, and downed the man,
Sent the steel through his mouth, a strange meal,
Such that his sword-point pierced to the ground.
Then cried he: ‘Pascent lie here, this land is yours!
Such is your fate; Britain you grasp, though dead.
Here you may dwell, with Gillemaur, your ally.
Hold the land close now, for I grant it freely,
So that you long may dwell amongst us here!’
So said Uther, and afterwards he charged on,
And drove the Irishmen through flood and fen.
A host he slew, that had landed with Pascent,
Some fled to the sea, climbed aboard their ships,
And perished there, in a storm, midst the waves.
So ended the fight with Pascent and Gillemaur.

He is crowned King of Britain

Once the battle was over, Uther then returned,

And marched his troops towards Winchester.
While on the open road, coming towards him,
He encountered three knights, and their squires.
As they reached him, they greeted him warmly:
'Hail to you Uther, this kingdom is your own!
Dead is Aurelius, the noblest of monarchs,
Who, dying, gave this realm into your hands.
He bade you rule well, and pray for his soul!'
Then Uther wept; full wondrously he mourned.
Forthwith into Winchester, the king now rode.
There all the burghers stood before the burgh,
And loud their piteous cries, as they grieved.
As soon as they beheld him, they called out:
'Uther, your favour, now and for evermore.
Our king we have lost; woe is ours therefore.
You are his brother, nor had our king another,
Nor had he a son to reign o'er us, moreover.
So, take the crown, since it is now your right,
And we will hold you as our lord, and aid you,
With our goods and weapons, as best we might.'
Uther heard them, ever both wise and wary,
And received the realm, his brother being dead.
He took the crown, that became him so well,
For, indeed, a worthy monarch he became,
Wrought good laws, and loved his people well.
Once he began to rule, and chose his ministers,
Merlin departed, and no man knew whither,
Nor knew what became of him, in this realm.
The king felt woe, and so did all his knights,
And all his household mourned Merlin's going.
So, the king caused men to ride far and wide,
And offered gold and treasure to any traveller,
That knew where he might find him in this land.
He praised him often, but of him he heard naught.

The two dragon-banners

Uther bethought him of what Merlin had said,
Midst his campaign, when they were in Wales

And viewed the dragon, unlike to all others;
And of the prophecy that Merlin had told him.
And the king was saddened, sorrowful at heart,
For he lacked, in life, no dearer a man ever,
Not even Aurelius, that was his brother.
So, he had wrought two great dragon-banners,
With two gold images, for love of Merlin,
So great was the longing he had for his presence.
When they were done, the one went with him,
Wherever he might lead his army, in this land,
And was borne as his standard in every battle.
The other he gave most nobly to Winchester,
Into the bishop's see, to hold there in its stead.
And he set there his spear that men might bear
That banner of the dragon, midst their processions.
The Britons viewed then the banners he had made;
And from them Uther, who thus bore the dragon,
Took the name they gave him, Uther Pendragon;
Pendragon in British, Dragon's-Head in English.

Octa and his followers revert to heathendom, and besiege York

Now Uther ruled well, but of Merlin heard naught,
And this Octa heard, where he dwelt in the north
With Ebissa his brother-in-law, and with Ossa,
Whom Aurelius had sent there, to live in peace,
Having granted them sixty hides of fertile land.
Octa had the truth of the news that came there,
Of Aurelius' death, and now of Uther's kingship.
And he summoned to him all his nearest kindred,
And there they took note of their ancient customs,
Swearing that they would no longer be Christians,
And, in husting, agreed to live as heathens again.
Then came together, of dead Hengist's kindred,
Six thousand five hundred, now heathen, Saxons,
And swiftly the news travelled through the land
That Octa' Hengist's son, was Christian no more,
Nor were all those Aurelius had granted peace.
Then Octa sent many a messenger into Wales,

To gather the Irish that had fled from Uther,
And had hidden when King Gillemaur was slain,
With the Germans who had escaped to the woods
When the British despatched their leader Pascent,
And marched them out of Wales, and to Scotland.
More and ever more came to combine with Octa;
Once gathered, there were over thirty thousand,
Of Hengist's kindred not counting the women.
After that host was met, they fared forth again,
And took in hand the land beyond the Humber,
And that was a wondrous host upon the march.
They fared south until they had come to York,
And those heathen folk rode about the walls,
And besieged the city thus, upon every side.
And so occupied the land right unto Scotland,
For all that they saw they counted their own.
But Uther's knights, that were in the fortress,
Defended then the city from within its walls,
Such that the heathens could not enter there,
Nor has any heard of warriors that did better.
As soon as Uther learned of the siege of York,
He gathered an army, drawn from all the realm,
And marched his men swiftly towards the city,
Until he had reached the place where Octa lay.
Octa led his troops to the battlefield, in strength;
There men hewed hardily, and helms resounded,
And all that field was drenched with their blood,
And many a heathen soul sank down to Hell.
Yet when the day was done, all turned to evil,
For the heathen folk now gained the upper hand,
And, with a show of strength, routed the Britons,
And they drove them to a hill that was fortified.
Uther, faring the worse, withdrew to the hilltop,
Having lost a good seven hundred of his knights.
The hill that he occupied was named Dunian,
And that was all o'ergrown with a dense wood,
And the king was there with very many men,
While Octa besieged them, both night and day.
Woe to the Britons, enclosed thus all about!

Woe to Uther that he had not seen before
The lie of the land, and better understood!
Often, they took counsel, in their great need,
As to how to defeat this Octa, Hengist's son.

Earl Gorlois of Cornwall counsels King Uther

There was an earl, Gorlois, a brave man truly;
He was a fine knight, and King Uther's man.
Famed was he, that great Earl of Cornwall,
For wisdom, for excellence in every way.
Uther, who was gloomy at heart, addressed him:
'Hail to you, brave Gorlois, lord among men!
You are my own man; greatly I respect you,
For you are a noble knight, and full of wisdom.
My folk I set in your hands, to work your will.'
Then, with heavy brow, King Uther Pendragon
Fell silent, and left Gorlois to speak his counsel.
Then answered Gorlois courteously, but plainly:
'Uther Pendragon, why does your head hang low?
For God alone knows better than we e'er do,
And he will bestow honour on whom He wishes.
Let us but promise in life not to betray Him,
Take wise counsel, and think on our misdeeds.
Let each man here confess his sins, forthwith,
And absolve others, as if he were their brother,
Let every true knight do penance for his sins,
And give fair promise to God to amend them.
Then, at midnight, let us make ready to fight,
Though these heathen dogs think us yet besieged.
Octa, Hengist's son, thinks us all but defeated.
His men lie in the field, closed in their tents.
Weary of bearing weapons, now they slumber.
Soon, careless, they will sleep; let us fare forth.
At midnight we may go freely, and then advance,
In deepest silence, down from this hill, upon them.
Let none here be such a fool as to utter a word,
Nor be mad enough to blow upon his war-horn,
But rather in silence we shall steal upon them,

And, ere they are aware, we shall overcome them.
We shall advance on them, and bring ill tidings,
Let every man use all his strength against them,
And so, drive these foreigners from our lands,
And uphold the right, through the good Lord's might.'
Then all the host did as Gorlois now bade them,
Each man confessed his sins, and swore amends,
Promising he'd do good, all evil he'd forsake.
At midnight, the knights took up their weapons,
And then Uther led them, silently, from the hill,
And his knights descended silently, behind him,
And they went among the tents there, in the field,
And, employing all their might, slew the enemy.
They slew o'er the field the folk with flaxen hair,
Disembowelling the wretched Saxon warriors.
Many fell there, amidst that fierce destruction.
And there was Octa captured, brave Hengist's son,
His brother-in-law Ebissa, and Ossa his friend.
The king had those three shackled with iron chains,
And set them in the hands of sixty bold knights,
Men strong in a fight, to guard them in the field,
While he himself went forth, midst great clamour,
And Gorlois, the fair, rode forth there at his side.
Their knights slew every foeman they could find,
Some crept, on their hands and knees, to the woods,
And, that morrow, were the most wretched of men.
Octa was led, bound still in his chains, to London,
While Ebissa and Ossa, they ne'er knew such woe.

Uther subdues the north, then marches to London

The battle being done, King Uther went forth,
His mood being blithe, into Northumberland,
And then to Scotland, and set all in his hands,
And ensured that all was peaceable and quiet,
And a man might travel the land, gold in hand.
He established a wider peace than any leader,
Since the days when the Britons first came here.
After a time, Uther marched south to London,

And he was there at Easter, midst his good folk;
London town gave thanks for Uther Pendragon.
And he sent his messengers o'er all the realm,
He summoned the earls, he summoned the churls,
And the bishops, and all the book-learned men,
Thanes and swains to London, to Uther the king.
To Uther Pendragon, their king, in London town.
The noble and the wealthy swift gathered there,
With their wives and their children as commanded.
With Gorlois, and many a knight beside him,
The high king listened there to a godly Mass,
And all rejoiced in their Uther Pendragon.
After the Mass, in the great hall they gathered,
Trumpets were blown, then the board was spread,
And the folk ate and drank; bliss was upon them.
There, sat Uther, the king, set in his lofty seat,
And against him Gorlois, that excellent knight,
He, the Earl of Cornwall, with his noble wife.

Uther casts his gaze on Igraine, the wife of Gorlois

Once the earls were all seated for their feast,
The king took close notice of Igraine, the fair,
The Earl Gorlois' wife, she the loveliest of all.
Often, he glanced at her, with a roving eye,
Often, he sent his cup-bearer to that table,
And full often he gazed upon her and smiled.
She replied, though I know not if twas love.
Now the king was not so wise or so cautious,
That he could conceal his thoughts from others,
And the king was so long about this business,
That Earl Gorlois felt wrath; he was angered
By the king's attentions to his wife, Igraine.
The earl and all his knights now rose forthwith,
And, wrathfully, went forth with the woman.
Uther the king saw this, and was most sorry,
And sent twelve knights to go after Gorlois,
To bid him come, and swiftly, to the king,
And do right by his king, and confess his fault

In shaming the monarch, and quitting the feast,
For he, the Earl, and his knights were far from right,
For the king was most favourable towards him,
And but wished to drink the health of his wife;
While, if he'd not return, and confess his guilt,
The king would pursue him with all his might,
And take from him his land, his silver and gold.
Gorlois, the lord of men, received this message,
And the earl, most full of wrath, his answer gave:
'Nay, the Lord so help me, that grants us light,
I'll not return, nor will I make peace with him,
For never shall he bring shame upon my wife.
Tell Uther the king to find me at Tintagel,
If he will ride, then I will abide him there,
And there it shall go hard if he be not shamed.'
Forth rode the Earl, and, mightily aggrieved,
Showed himself greatly angered by the king,
He, and his thanes, muttering many a threat,
As yet unknowing of all that would befall.

Gorlois confines Igraine to his castle at Tintagel

The Earl returned to his realm of Cornwall,
Where he held two castles, both tight enclosed;
And these were fine forts built by his ancestors.
To Tintagel he sent his wife, Igraine the fair,
And she was the best and truest of all women,
And Gorlois confined her closely in that place.
Now, Igraine was sad and sorrowful at heart,
That so many men, through her, were in danger,
For the Earl sent messengers o'er all of Britain,
And he bade every brave man gather to him,
For gold and silver and many another gift,
Telling them to come to him at Tintagel,
And summoned his own knights there outright.
When all the bold thanes had gathered there,
His army was full fifteen thousand strong,
And they were all enclosed within that fortress.
There, upon the sea-strand it stands, Tintagel,

Fronted by cliffs, and so may not be conquered,
By any, except those within are starved to death.
The Earl took seven thousand men and marched,
Passing from that place to another castle,
Leaving Igraine, in Tintagel, with eight thousand,
For those warriors were needed, day and night,
To guard that castle well, keeping watch in turn.
The Earl held the other, with his own brother.
Now, Uther learned of this, the king of this land,
That Gorlois had gathered a host, hot for war,
So, the king summoned an army from his realm,
From all this land that he held in his two hands,
And many and varied the folk that met together
And marched to London, to join there with the king.
Then Uther Pendragon fared forth from the town,
And he and his knights travelled into Cornwall,
Passing o'er the river that's named the Tamar,
And marched to the castle held by Earl Gorlois.
He besieged the castle, with all the men he had,
And often they attacked the walls in strength,
Together they tried to scale them, and many fell.
For seven nights the king besieged that place,
His men met with woe, and naught was gained,
A full seven-night lasted that wondrous fight.
When Uther the king saw that naught went well,
He bethought him time and again what he might do,
For Igraine was as dear to him as his own life,
While Gorlois was, of all that lived, most loathsome,
And all things seemed dark to him in this world,
Because he might not have that which he wished.
The king had by him an old, and learned, man,
He was a wealthy noble, wise in stratagems;
Ulfin was his name, and most experienced was he.
The king raised his eyes, and looked upon this Ulfin,
Sorrowful his gaze, and his mood greatly troubled,
Then said Uther Pendragon to Ulfin the knight:
'Ulfin grant me your counsel, else I shall die,
Since I feel such longing for the fair Igraine.
Keep my secret; and your counsel, dear Ulfin,

I will follow in private, and public when I may.’
Then answered Ulfin to his monarch’s words:
‘Now I have heard my king speak great folly!
You love this Igraine, and you do so in secret;
The woman is dear to you, the lord loathsome;
You would consume his land, and ruin him,
Slay the man, and destroy his kith and kin.
Think you in such ill manner to win Igraine?
If so, she would behave as no woman does,
Holding love sweet that comes cloaked in dread!
But if, indeed, you do love this same Igraine,
Then keep it secret, and send her golden gifts,
And woo her lovingly, and with fair request.
For it yet remains in doubt if you can win her,
Since Igraine is chaste, and a woman most true,
As was her mother, and others of her line.
In truth, I tell you, dearest of kings to me:
You must do otherwise if you would gain her.
For yesterday a good hermit came to me,
And swore on his life that he knew the place
Where Merlin rested each night under heaven,
And oft talked with him, and of spells he spoke.
And if we might have but use of Merlin’s art,
Then you may have all that you would wish.’
Uther Pendragon was softened in his mood,
And answered: ‘Ulfin, your counsel is good.
I’ll give thirty acres of land into your hands
If you thus employ Merlin to work my will.’

Uther Pendragon seeks the aid of Merlin

So Ulfin searched the land, and among the folk,
And after some little while he found the hermit,
And then, in haste, brought him before the king.
Uther offered the hermit seven acres of land,
If he could find Merlin, and bring him there.
And the hermit journeyed then far to the west,
Into the wilderness there, to a mighty wood,
Wherein he had dwelt for many a winter past.

And full often he had met with Merlin there.
As soon as he entered, he came upon Merlin,
Standing beneath a tree, and went towards him.
Merlin saw the hermit, and hastened to him;
Joyfully they embraced, in friendly greeting.
The said Merlin, a person of great wisdom:
'Tell to me, my friend, why you did not say
That you were journeying to see the king;
Though I soon knew, when I first missed you,
That it was to Uther Pendragon you had gone.
And I know too how the king answered you,
And what he offered you to bring me there.
For Ulfin found you, and led you to the king,
And Uther gave him full thirty acres of land,
While it was but seven acres, he offered you.
Now, Pendragon yearns for this Igraine the fair,
Gorlois' wife; full wondrously he desires her.
Yet he'll not win her, while the world endures,
Unless he employs some stratagem of mine,
For there's no truer woman upon this earth.'

Merlin prophesies the reign of Arthur

'Nonetheless, he shall have the fair Igraine.
And beget on her one that will rule widely,
The son he will beget shall prove wondrous.
His fame will ne'er die, while the world lasts.
While this world stands, his glory will endure,
He shall rule over all the knights of Rome,
And all will bow to him that dwell in Britain.
Of him shall the minstrels endlessly sing,
Upon his courage, noble poets shall feed,
On draughts of his blood, shall men be drunk,
From his eyes, fiery embers forth shall fly.
Each finger of his hand, a sharp steel brand,
Before his face, strong stone walls will tumble,
And barons give ground, and standards fall.
So shall he fare o'er the lands, everywhere,
Conquering the folk, establishing the laws.

These are my prophecies of the king to come
One born of Uther Pendragon and Igraine,
Though this prophecy is now our secret,
For neither Igraine nor Uther knows of it,
Nor that of Uther Pendragon he shall rise,
For he that will rule is, as yet, unbegotten.
But Lord, since it is your will I should go,
To stand before the king's goodly host,
I shall obey your words, and shall depart,
For love of you, greeting Uther Pendragon,
And you shall have the land he grants, in hand.'
Thus, they spoke; the hermit began to weep,
Fondly they embraced, and so they parted.
Merlin went south, on paths known to him,
And proceeded forthwith to seek the court.
As soon as Uther saw him, he approached.
Cried Uther Pendragon: 'Merlin, you are welcome!
All the counsel of my lands is in your hands,
So, you might give advice, in my great need.'
Uther then told Merlin of all that he wished,
And how Igraine was the dearest to him of all.
And how Gorlois, her lord, was the most loathsome:
'And, if I have not your counsel, I shall die!'

He performs his magic

Then answered Merlin: 'Summon Ulfin here,
And grant him then his thirty acres of land,
And give the hermit also what you promised.
For I'll not take of you land, silver, or gold,
Since I am in counsel the most skilled of men,
And If I owned aught would possess less art,
While all you long for, that shall come to pass,
For I have spells that will be to your liking,
And shall change your looks to those of the earl,
In his speech and actions amongst the people,
Likewise, your horse and clothes; so, shall you ride.
When Igraine sees you, all will be well with her.
There she lies in Tintagel, all fast enclosed.

And there's no knight so powerful, of any land,
That could by strength open Tintagel's gate,
Unless those within were dying of starvation.
But here's the truth of what I now say to you:
At all times you shall appear to be the earl,
And I will seem to be that fine knight Britael,
Who is an excellent man, and the earl's steward.
Now, Jurdan is the earl's knight of the chamber,
And I will make Ulfin like to this same Jurdan,
Then you will be earl, I, Britael, and Ulfin
Shall seem like to your knight of the chamber.
Go this night, follow my counsel everywhere.
This night, shall fifty knights with spear and shield
Stand all about your tents to guard those same,
Such that ne'er a man alive shall draw near you,
For if any man should, his head they will have.
And say to all the knights, your goodly thanes,
That your blood is being let, and you rest there.'
These things progressed in the manner prescribed.
Forth went the king, yet naught of it was known,
And with him forth went Ulfin and wise Merlin.
And they took the roadway that led to Tintagel.
They came to the castle, and called, familiarly:
'Unbar the gate, for here the earl would enter,
Gorlois, your lord, and Britael his steward,
And Jurdan his knight; all night we journeyed.'
The guard cried aloud; knights ran to the wall,
Called to Gorlois, and thought they saw the earl.
Then all were active, and raised the castle-gate,
And let their lord within, abandoning all fear,
For certain they were that all would go blithely;
Yet, through Merlin's stratagem, he was within,
And likewise, Uther, and his good thane Ulfin.

Uther, in the likeness of her husband, is welcomed by Igraine

Igraine came forth to meet her wedded lord,
And spoke these words, in familiar speech:
'Welcome, my lord, who is dearest to me,

And greetings also good Jurdan and Britael.
Have you then in safety parted from the king?’
Then said Uther, sounding like to Gorlois:
‘Great is the host with Uther Pendragon,
And I have, by night, stolen from the fight.
For I longed for you, who to me are dearest.
Go to my chamber, see that the bed is made,
And I will rest here, for the space of a night,
And all day tomorrow, to please my people.’
Igraine departed, and saw the bed was made,
The which was spread with an ornate cover.
Her lord approved, and into the bed he went,
Then Igraine lay down by Uther Pendragon.
Igraine thought, all the while, he was Gorlois,
Nor ever guessed that it was Uther the king.
The king dealt with her as man with woman;
With the dearest of women, he had to do,
And he begat on her a most wondrous son,
The noblest of kings that was e’er amongst us,
And he was named Arthur, famed among men.
Igraine knew not who it was that she embraced,
Thinking ever it was her own lord, Gorlois.
It was not long before the daylight entered.
Then Uther’s brave knights heard the tidings
That the king had departed from his army.
And said the knights, though it was untrue,
That the king had fled, for dread of the earl.
Yet all was untrue that they said about him,
Though they spoke much of Uther Pendragon.

Meanwhile his knights defeat Gorlois

Then said the king’s barons and all the earls:
‘When Gorlois learns all that has transpired,
That our king has departed and left the host,
He will arm forthwith and march to the fight,
And many a fierce thane fell us to the ground.
Then were it better that we had not been born.
So let the trumpets blow and our host gather.

Cador the brave shall bear the king's standard.
Heave on high the dragon, before our people,
And march with our forces towards the castle.
And Earl Aldolf shall be our mighty leader,
And we will obey him as if he were the king,
And thus, being in the right, with Gorlois fight.
Yet if he will speak with us, and sue for peace,
Then may we all in honour go from hence.
Then our men will have no cause to scorn us,
Saying that we through cowardice have fled.'
All his countrymen praised this same counsel.
They blew the trumpets, gathered in their host,
And up on high was heaved the peerless dragon.
Then many a bold man slung shield on shoulder,
Many a brave man marched towards the castle
Wherein Earl Gorlois lay, and all his army.
He in turn gathered his men, the trumpets blew,
They leapt to their steeds; the host began to ride,
And full swiftly his knights had passed the gate,
And attacked the enemy, as they met together.
Those who were fated fell, and found the earth,
There was much bright bloodshed, many harmed,
While amidst the fight they slew the Earl Gorlois.
His men began to flee, and the others followed,
And entered the castle, and thrust deep within.
And then the two sets of forces battled there,
Inside the walls, the fight lasting all that day,
Yet ere the day was gone, the battle was won,
And ne'er a king's swain but was made athane.

Uther hears the news of Gorlois' death

The tidings were carried swiftly to Tintagel,
Into that castle, where King Uther now lay,
News that their lord, Gorlois, was slain indeed,
And all his soldiers, and the castle captured.
The king heard this while in amorous play,
And he leapt from the chamber like a lion.
Then said King Uther, following these tidings:

‘Be still, be still, my knights throughout the hall!
Here am I, in the flesh, your lord Gorlois,
Jurdan my chamberlain, Britael my steward.
I, and they, have withdrawn from out the fight,
Hither we came, as you see, and are not slain!
Now while you summon up the host, I’ll march,
I and these knights will make entry to a burgh,
Meet with Uther, and if he speaks not of peace
Then I will avenge myself upon him, nobly.
Bid Igraine not mourn me, then bar the gates,
For I leave forthwith, and bid you thus farewell.’

Igraine surrenders the castle of Tintagel

Merlin went first, with the boldthane, Ulfin,
Then Uther Pendragon, from Tintagel town,
And through the night they rode till it was light.
When they came to where the king’s host lay,
Merlin returned Uther to his own likeness,
So that the host of knights knew their sovereign,
And many a brave Briton was filled with bliss.
Then was there bliss enough in all of Britain,
And the horns blew, and the minstrels chanted,
And every knight was dressed in brightest garb.
Three days Uther Pendragon dwelt in camp,
And on the fourth he returned to Tintagel.
He sent his wisest thanes to the castle there,
With greetings to Igraine, fairest of women,
And gave token of what they had said in bed,
Ordering her to surrender the castle swiftly,
There being no other counsel; her lord was dead.
Thus, Igraine still believed that it was the Earl
Had sought his people, and had slept with her,
And that among them Uther had never been.
The knights within communed and took counsel,
And resolved not to defend the fortress longer,
And thereupon they lowered the drawbridge,
Delivering all that place to Uther Pendragon.

The birth of Arthur

Then stood all this kingdom in Uther's hands,
And Uther took Igraine the fair, as his queen,
While Igraine was with child by Uther the king,
All through Merlin's craft, ere they were wed.
The appointed time arrived; and Arthur was born.
Once on Earth, he was taken by the elven folk,
With strong magic they enchanted him about,
Blessed him with strength to be the finest knight,
And, another thing, to be wealthy among kings,
And a third, which was that long would he live,
Then they granted the prince virtues most noble,
Such that he was the most generous man alive.
These gifts the elves gave, and the child thrived.
After Arthur, his sister, the blessed maid, was born,
And she was named Anna, that maiden blessed,
Who later married Loth, the Lord of Lothian,
And she was, in Lothian, that people's lady.

Octa and his comrades are freed, and leave the country

King Uther lived long, a life of great bliss,
In peace and quiet, freely within his kingdom.
When he was old, a sickness came upon him,
That drove him to his bed, gravely ill was he.
Seven years in sickness lay Uther Pendragon.
Then the worst Britons were much emboldened,
And, free of dread, they wrought most wickedly.
Octa Hengist's son, who was taken at York,
Along with Ebissa, and his comrade Ossa,
Still lay close-bound in the tower of London,
Twelve knights guarding them day and night,
Who were much wearied with guarding them.
Now, Octa heard tell of the king's illness,
And spoke with the soldiers who stood guard:
'Hark to me, knights, hear what I make known,
We lie here, close-bound, in London town,
And you have watched over us many a day.

Better were we if we were on Saxon land,
And wealthy than wretchedly prisoned here.
If you will accomplish everything I desire,
I will give you land, and silver and gold,
So that you might live richly in this land,
And live out your lives as you think best.
Ne'er shall you receive such gifts from Uther,
For he will soon die, and his folk be ruined,
And you win neither one thing nor the other.
Rather think you good men, and so pity us;
Think what you would wish if you were bound
And yet would live in your own land in bliss.'
Octa often spoke so to these same knights,
And they gathered and took counsel together,
And then to Octa said: 'We shall do your will.'
Oaths they swore, promising not to break them.
On a night when the wind was blowing aright,
Forth went the knights at midnight, secretly,
And then they freed Octa, Ossa and Ebissa.
Down the Thames they went, and reached the sea.
Forth they passed o'er the waves to Saxon lands.
Their kinfolk there, gathered to them in strength,
And marched through those lands dear to them,
And they were promised land, silver and gold.

He returns with an army

Then Octa bethought him what he might now do.
He thought to return here, and avenge his father.
So, he gathered to him an innumerable army,
And to sea they went, threatening this country.
To Scotland they came, and scorched the fields.
The Saxons were cruel; many a Scot they slew,
And razed three hundred townships to the ground,
And countless were the folk within they killed.
The tidings of all this came to Uther the king,
Who was exceeding grieved, most wondrous so.
And he sent to Lyonesse, unto his dear friends,
Greeting Loth his son-in-law, wishing him well,

And commanded him to take the realm in hand,
The knights and freemen, and lead them freely,
A vast host, according to the laws of the land.
He commanded his knights to obey this Loth,
And look on him kindly, like to their sovereign,
For as Loth was an excellent lord in a fight,
And was ever most generous to every man,
He delivered to him command o'er all this land.
Now Octa made war, and Loth fought against him,
And often Loth gained ground, and often lost it,
For the Britons were rebellious and full of pride,
And they lacked respect, because of the king's age,
And looked contemptuously on Loth the earl,
And they executed all his orders right badly.
And of two counsels cared for their own more.
These tidings were carried to the old king,
How that his nobles scorned and despised Loth.

The battle at St Albans

Now, in this same history, will I tell to you
What Uther, the sovereign, set himself to do.
He determined to go, himself, to find the host,
And see with his own eyes how they behaved.
So, he caused to be brought a horse-drawn litter,
And gathered a large escort from his kingdom,
Bidding them, on pain of death, to move swiftly,
Not sparing life or limb, and avenge his shame.
'And if there is any will not come in haste,'
Said he, 'I'll have his head or I will hang him!'
Full swiftly to the court the warriors came.
Not a one dared linger, whether high or low.
The king forthwith assembled all his knights,
And marched to Verulam, that is St Albans;
To Verulam came King Uther Pendragon.
Now Octa was in the town, with all his men,
Then was Verulam a most revered place,
For Saint Alban was there deprived of life,
Though, later, that burgh fell and many died.

King Uther now lay without, and Octa within.
Uther's army advanced towards the walls,
And his thanes then attacked them, furiously,
Though they could not displace a single stone,
Nor, despite all their force, could do it harm.
Blithe indeed was Hengist's son Octa, then,
Seeing the Britons draw back from the walls,
And retreat sorrowfully towards their tents.
Then said Octa, to his son-in-law Ebissa:
'Here is Uther the lame come to Verulam,
And will battle with us here from his litter!
He thinks with but a crutch to beat us down!
But tomorrow at dawn let our knights arise,
Open the castle gates, and win this realm,
We'll not be penned by but one lame man!
Forth we shall ride on our goodly steeds,
And advance on Uther and fell all his folk,
For all are fated to fall that he brings here.
Take us the lame man then, and bind him fast,
And hold the wretch till the king is dead.
Thus, shall we treat his limbs that are sore,
And heal his bones, within bonds of steel.'
So said Octa, to his comrade Ebissa,
But it happened otherwise than he planned.
That morrow, at dawn, they unbarred the gates,
For up there rose Octa, Ossa and Ebissa,
And ordered their knights to prepare to fight,
To unfasten the gates, and open up the burgh.
Then Octa rode out, and many a man after,
And there, with his bold warriors, came to grief.
For Uther saw him making his fierce advance,
And he sought to fell that army to the ground.
Uther shouted loudly to rouse his warriors:
'Where are you my Britons, my bold thanes?
Here is the day now come, the Lord will aid us,
And seek out this Octa that hopes to bind me.
Think of your ancestors, fierce in the fight,
Think of the honour I've e'er brought you.
Let not these heathen foes enjoy your homes!

Let not these ravenous hounds seize your land!
I will pray to the Lord that gave us daylight,
And to the saints that are sanctified in heaven,
That He may grant me succour upon this field.
Now march swiftly, and may the Lord help us,
May God in all his power protect my thanes!’
The knights began to ride, the spears to glide,
Broad lances broke, and shields were shattered,
Bright helms were split apart, and brave men fell.
The Britons were bold, and eager for the fight,
And the heathen hounds were felled to the ground.
There, was this Octa, Ebissa, and Ossa slain,
There, were seventeen thousand sent to Hell,
While many more escaped towards the north.
All that day did King Uther and his knights
Slay or capture all those that came their way;
At last, when evening fell, the thing was done.
And then his warriors sang with all their might.
These were the words of their gladsome song:
‘Here is Uther Pendragon come to Verulam,
And he has beaten Octa, Ossa, and Ebissa,
And laid down the law in the Saxons’ lands,
Such that their kin shall tell of it in story,
And make song of it among the Saxon folk.’
Then was Uther blithe, most exceeding glad,
And he spoke to his men, whom he held dear,
And these were the words of Uther the old:
‘The Saxons accounted me of little worth,
My illness they mocked with scornful words,
For on a mere horse-litter was I borne here.
They said I was half-dead, and my folk asleep,
And yet now here is a wonder in this land,
The dead king has slaughtered all the quick,
Or driven them forth, scattered to the wind,
And so let the Lord’s will be done, hereafter!’

The Saxons seek to murder the king, in Winchester

The Saxons fled as swiftly as they had come,

All those that had retreated from the battle,
Halting not till they'd returned to Scotland,
And Colgrim, the fair, they made their king.
He was of Hengist's kin, and dear to him,
And Octa too loved him while he yet lived.
The Saxons, downhearted, kept to Scotland,
While Colgrim rebuilt his army in that land,
Yet they thought to work their wicked craft
And, in Winchester, kill Uther Pendragon.
And woeful it was that it should happen so!
The Saxons gathered and, in council, said:
'Let us send six knights, men active and wise,
Skilled in spying, to enter Uther's court,
And, in poor men's guise, dwell nearby the king,
And let them, each day, go with the other folk,
To seek the king's dole, as if they were infirm,
And hearken to all the people as they go by,
To learn if by any craft, or by day or night,
They might draw close to Uther in that town,
And by some means assassinate the monarch.
Then, would our will be wholly accomplished,
And we care naught for Constantin's kindred.'
And so, the six knights went forth in daylight,
And, in wickedness, did harm in Uther's court,
For they sought the dole, as if they were infirm,
And they learned the nature of the king's illness,
And so found a means to put the king to death.
They met a knight who had come from the king,
And he was of Uther's kin, and dearest to him.
They called to him in a most humble manner:
'Lord, we are wretched men in this ill world,
Who once were accounted wealthy and noble,
Until the Saxon invaders brought us down,
And bereaved us of all our fond possessions.
Now we chant prayers here for Uther the king,
With never a morsel of meat in our dishes,
For neither fish nor flesh e'er comes our way,
Nor have we aught, to drink, but plain water.
Mere water serves for all, and so we are lean.'

Having heard these words, the knight returned,
And came before the king in the royal chamber,
He said to the king: 'My lord, good health to you!
There sit six men, all like to each other in hue,
And all of that company are clad in hair-cloth.
They were once right noble thanes in this land,
And wealthy, but the Saxons have despoiled them,
Such that they are but beggars in this world now.
They have no bread, naught but water to drink,
So, they live among your folk, tell their beads,
And pray that you, their monarch, may live long.'
Then said Uther the king: 'Let them come hither.
For I will clothe them, and I will feed them,
For love of the Lord above, while I yet live.'
The treacherous knights entered the chamber,
The king ordered that they be clothed and fed,
And saw that each had a bed at night to lie on.
While for their part they spied upon him closely,
Each seeking to find a way to kill the king,
Yet they could see no way to murder him,
Nor by craft attack, and slay him, at any time.

Uther Pendragon's murder

It chanced upon a time the rain rained down,
And a leech, who lay in the royal chamber,
Summoned a knight and sent him to the well
To set a guard upon it, and keep off the rain,
For the king might drink of no other water
But that of the cold well-spring which pleased him,
The best of all draughts to ease his sickness.
This speech of his, the six traitors overheard.
Quick to harm him, they went forth at night,
Straight to the well, and his harm they wrought.
For they had upon them six phials of poison,
Six phials of bitter poison they cast below,
Till all the well-spring was tainted within.
Then they were all blither than e'er before,
And back they went not daring to remain.

In time there came forth two noble knights,
Who bore in their hands two golden bowls.
They came to the well, the bowls they filled,
And then they returned to Uther the king,
Entering the chamber where he lay abed.
'Hail to you, Uther, we are come!' they cried,
And have brought what you have asked for,
Cold well-water, receive it now with joy.'
Up rose the king, and sat there upon his bed,
Drank the water, and soon began to sweat,
His pulse grew weak, his features darkened,
His stomach began to swell, right fit to burst.
No hope was there. Uther the king was dead,
As all now died that drank of the well's water.
When the household knew of the king's fate,
And of all the rest that had been poisoned,
A band of knights went down to the well,
And destroyed the source with painful labour,
And they heaped it o'er with earth and stones.
Then his folk took up the dead king's corpse,
And bore him forth, grave-minded warriors,
To Stonehenge, there to lie by his brother.
And, side by side, those two dead kings lay.

Arthur is crowned king

Then the noblest lords they met together,
The earls, barons, and book-learned men.
They came to London to a great husting,
And the powerful thanes there took counsel,
And then sent messengers over the sea,
Into Brittany, who, there, sought out the best
Of all the youths that e'er was in this world,
And that was Arthur, the finest of knights,
And bade him come soon into his kingdom,
For Uther was dead, as Aurelius before him,
And no other son had Uther Pendragon,
That might after his time set out the law,
Rule the Britons, and govern with honour,

While as yet the Saxons were in this land,
Colgrim the keen, and his many kindred,
That oft wrought harm and injury on them.
Thus the Britons sent forth three good bishops,
And seven knights who were strong in wisdom.
To Brittany they came, and sought out Arthur,
'Hail, Arthur,' they cried, 'noblest of warriors!
Pendragon, the king ere he died, declared,
That you should be ruler of his kingdom,
And defend the Britons, and make the law,
And aid your folk, as a good king should,
And drive their enemies from out the land.
He prayed then to the merciful son of God,
To grant help to you, so you might do good,
And receive the land from God's own hand.
For dead, indeed, is King Uther Pendragon,
And you, Arthur, are his sole living son,
While dead too is Aurelius his brother.'
So, they spoke, the while Arthur was silent,
At one moment wan, most exceeding pale,
And then, he blushed, full moved at heart.
When he spoke, in turn, his words were good,
For thus said he, that noble knight, Arthur:
'Christ, our Lord above, be an aid to me,
That I may, all my life, uphold God's law!'
Now Arthur was a mere fifteen years old,
When these tidings were uttered before him,
Years well-employed, for he was well-taught.
He summoned his knights to him forthwith,
And bade his men make ready their weapons,
And saddle their horses, swift as they could,
For he would make the journey to Britain.
Those goodly knights went down to the shore.
From Mont Saint-Michel, the host set sail,
And twas at Southampton they disembarked.
Then Arthur, the strong, to Silchester he rode,
Such his choice, while the Britons gathered there.
Great was the bliss when he came to the burgh.
To the peal of the trumpets, and cries of joy,

There, the young Arthur was crowned their king.

The End of Part V of Layamon's 'Brut'

Part VI: King Arthur to the gathering at Caerleon

Contents

Arthur's nature and character.....	308
He pledges to drive the Saxons from Britain.....	309
Arthur makes war on Colgrim	309
He addresses his troops mid-battle	311
Colgrim is defeated at the ford, and flees to York.....	311
Baldolf comes to his brother Colgrim's aid.....	312
Cador, Earl of Cornwall, goes against Baldolf	313
Baldolf resorts to a ruse to gain refuge in York.....	313
Arthur receives news of Childric's actions in Scotland.....	314
He seeks aid from Howel of Brittany his kin.....	315
Howel reaches England.....	316
The combined armies march to Lincoln and attack Childric.....	317
Childric retreats to the woods	318
He and his allies seek to make peace with Arthur	319
Childric and his men leave Britain.....	321
Childric's host returns and ravages the south	322
Arthur determines to slay Childric.....	323
The battle at Bath (<i>Mount Baden</i>).....	325
Arthur slays Colgrim and Baldolf.....	328
He then sends Earl Cador to deal with Childric.....	328
Cador slays Childric on Teignwick (<i>Highweek</i>) Hill	330
Arthur relieves the besieged Howel in Clud (<i>Strathclyde</i>).....	331
King Arthur marches on the Scots in Moray	332
Arthur repels Gillemaur of Ireland	333
The aftermath of Arthur's campaign in Moray.....	333
The Elven Pool and the Enchanted Loch.....	335
Arthur departs Scotland	336
He re-establishes the church and law.....	337
Arthur weds Guinevere	338
He decides to invade Ireland.....	339
Arthur captures King Gillemaur	340
Arthur gains the fealty of the King of Iceland	342
Likewise, that of Gonwais of Orkney	342

Likewise, that of Doldanim of Jutland.....	343
Likewise, that of Rumareth of Winetland (<i>Wendland?</i>).....	344
Arthur returns to Britain.....	345
A quarrel at the Christmas feast.....	345
The making of the Round Table	347
Of Merlin's prophecies and Arthur's fate.....	349
Arthur agrees to an expedition into France.....	350
He first visits Norway to install Loth as king there	351
Arthur defeats Riculf.....	352
He then sails to Denmark	352
Arthur proceeds to France.....	354
He encounters Frolle leading the French and Roman troops.....	355
The siege of Paris	356
Arthur agrees to fight Frolle in single combat	358
The roll-call of Arthur's commanders	360
He slays Frolle in the duel	360
Arthur enters Paris	362
Arthur divides his forces: Howel conquers the central realms	363
Arthur completes the immediate conquest.....	363
And rewards his knights.....	364
Arthur returns to London	365
He declares his wish to be crowned at Caerleon	365

Arthur's nature and character

When Arthur was king, twas a wondrous thing,
 How generous he was to each man alive,
 And the best of knights, most wondrous keen.
 A father to the youngest, a balm to the old,
 And yet with the foolish most wondrous stern.
 All ill deeds to him were a loathsome thing,
 While the right was, to him, endlessly dear.
 All his cupbearers, and his chamber-thanes,
 Sported gold-cloth on their backs and beds.
 Never a cook had he that was not champion,
 Nor ever a knight not the boldest of thanes.
 The king ruled his folk, and all were in bliss,
 In such fair things, he surpassed all kings,
 In the strength of his realm, and its treasure,

And such his virtues all men knew of him.
Thus, Arthur was good, beloved of his people,
And his kingdom famed throughout the lands.

He pledges to drive the Saxons from Britain

Now the king held a great husting in London,
And his noblemen, they all journeyed there,
The rich and the poor, to honour their king.
When all had gathered, in countless number,
Up rose Arthur, the best and noblest of kings,
And had the reliquaries brought before him,
And the king knelt three times before them,
While his people awaited what he might say.
He raised his right hand, and swore an oath,
That upon his life, and by no man's law,
Would the Saxons here e'er know bliss,
Nor own good land, nor hold pagan rites,
But as enemies he would drive them forth,
For they'd slain a king, Uther Pendragon,
His father, and mighty son of Constance,
As they'd slain Aurelius, Uther's brother,
And so, they were the most loathed of folk.
Arthur forthwith summoned his wise knights,
And, whether they loathed or liked the oath,
They swore they would hold true to Arthur,
And avenge Pendragon whom Saxons slew.
Arthur sent his writ wide, o'er all the realm,
Summoning all the knights he could gather,
Demanding they all come soon to the king,
And he would liberally grant them good land,
And further endow them with gold and silver.

Arthur makes war on Colgrim

Forth the king fared with a mighty host,
And that wondrous army advanced to York,
Where he lay one night, then marched outright,
On the morrow, to where Colgrim would be,

And all his friends and companions with him.
Now since Octa was slain and deprived of life,
Who was Hengist's son, out of Saxon lands,
Colgrim was the noblest Saxon yet living,
Succeeding Hengist, and Horsa his brother,
And Octa, and Ossa, and their ally Ebissa.
Colgrim then ruled the Saxons in these days,
By authority, counsel, and his fierce strength;
Many the warriors that marched with Colgrim.
Colgrim heard tidings of Arthur the king,
Who advanced upon him, to do him harm,
And Colgrim thought as to what he might do.
He gathered his knights from out of the north.
There came together all the Scottish people,
Joined with the Picts and Saxons, in force.
Men of many a tribe thus followed Colgrim.
Then forth he marched with a countless host,
Against Arthur, by far the noblest of kings,
Thinking to slay this monarch, in his land,
And fell his ranks of knights to the ground,
And thereby take the kingdom for his own,
Upon the death of this young King Arthur.
Forth marched Colgrim and his warriors,
And advanced till they approached a river,
Named the Douglas Water, slaying many.
But there came King Arthur against him,
His brave warriors full ready for battle.
At a broad ford, the hosts met together;
Fiercely their bold champions attacked,
And many an ill-fated man met his doom.
There was much bloodshed, woe was rife,
Many a shaft was shivered, good men fell.
Arthur viewing the field was most uneasy.
The monarch bethought him what he might do.
He retreated somewhat o'er the wide plain.
Then was Colgrim glad, and all of his host,
Thinking they saw their foes about to flee.
They thought King Arthur fell back from fear,
And followed, o'er the river, in their madness.

He addresses his troops mid-battle

When Arthur saw Colgrim cross the water,
And draw near to him, his side the river,
Spoke Arthur thus, that noblest of kings:
‘See you, my Britons, how the foe draws close,
Colgrim the strong, he of the Saxon lands,
Our greatest enemy, may Christ destroy him!
His kindred once slew our forefathers, here,
But the day is now come the Lord appointed,
That he shall lose his life and his comrades,
Or we ourselves shall die: he must be slain,
And the Saxon warriors here meet with woe.
We must take true revenge for our friends.’
Arthur raised up his shield before his breast,
And rushed forward, howling like a wolf,
As it leaps, from the woods hung with snow,
And seeks to savage the sheep, as it pleases.
As he charged, he called to his own dear knights:
‘Advance you, swiftly now, my brave thanes,
Charge them now, as one, and we’ll all do well,
Forth they will fly like the topmost boughs,
When the furious wind blows full strength.’
O’er the field went thirty thousand shields,
And smote hard at Colgrim, the earth shaking.
Spears were shattered, shields were broken,
And many a Saxon was felled to the ground.

Colgrim is defeated at the ford, and flees to York

Colgrim saw sorrow was now upon him,
He the finest warrior out of Saxon lands.
He was forced to flee, as swift as he could,
And his steed, in its might, bore him forth,
O’er the flood, saving its rider from death.
The Saxons sank deep, woe o’er took them.
Arthur turned his spear, altered direction,
And hindered them from leaving the ford.

There the Saxons drowned, seven thousand,
Some were driven, as a wild crane oft is,
In a moorland fen, when denied the air
By the swift hawks that pursue it closely,
And, hounded by the dogs among the reeds.
Finds neither are good, nor land nor flood,
For fierce hawks smite, and the hounds bite,
And then is the royal bird near to its death.
Colgrim sped, right swiftly, o'er the fields;
He rode furiously, till he came to York.
He entered in, then the gates were barred,
Ten thousand within, fine townsmen there.
Arthur pursued, with his thirty thousand,
Marched straight towards York, a mighty host.
And besieged Colgrim who stoutly defended.

Baldolf comes to his brother Colgrim's aid

Seven nights before, had Baldolf the fair,
His brother, sailed south, and camped by the shore,
Where one Childric dwelt, amongst his people.
This Childric was powerful, a local chieftain,
Who in Germany held fine lands of his own.
When Baldolf heard, as he lay near the sea,
That the king was besieging Colgrim in York,
He gathered a force of seven thousand men,
All bold fellows who lived near the coast,
And they took counsel and chose to ride forth,
Leaving Childric behind, to aid his brother.
Fight against Arthur, and destroy his army.
Baldolf swore, in anger, to be Arthur's bane,
And possess the realm himself with Colgrim.
Baldolf waited not for Childric, but marched,
North he went, day by day, with his host,
Till they came to a wood in the wilderness,
Some seven miles from King Arthur's army.
Baldolf thought to ride, with his seven thousand,
To attack by night, fell his force, and slay him.
But all happened otherwise than he hoped,

For a British knight was in Baldolf's force,
Who was king to Arthur, Maurin by name.
Now Maurin, went through woods and fields,
Until he came nigh to King Arthur's tent,
And once within, he said this to the king:
'Hail to you, Arthur, noblest of monarchs!
I am come hither, that am of your kindred.
Baldolf has come, with many a fighting man,
Thinking to slay you, with your host, by night,
To rescue his brother, who is disheartened,
But the Lord, in his might, He will prevent it.
Send forth Cador, now, the Earl of Cornwall,
And with him bold knights, the good and brave,
Full seven hundred of your strong champions,
And I will counsel them, and show them how
They may fall like wolves upon this Baldolf.'

Cador, Earl of Cornwall, goes against Baldolf

Forth went Earl Cador, and his band of knights,
And he came to where Baldolf was encamped,
And his men then advanced, from every side,
Slaying or capturing all that they came nigh.
Full nine hundred foemen, all told, they slew.
Baldolf had retreated to save his own life,
And fled through the wilds wondrous swiftly,
Sadly, abandoning his host of warriors,
And yet fled so far north that he issued forth
Where Arthur lay, midst his host, in the field,
Besieging York, much to Arthur's surprise.
Colgrim with his Saxons still held the burgh,
And Baldolf bethought him what he might do,
Seeking a means by which he might enter,
And join Colgrim, his brother, dearest to him.

Baldolf resorts to a ruse to gain refuge in York

Baldolf shaved his beard, so his face was bare,
And half his head of hair, as men shave a fool.

He had once learned to play the harp as a child;
He entered the king's host, and began playing.
Many a man struck him with his stick, harshly,
Treating him much as the fool that he seemed,
And all that encountered him scorning the man,
For none there deemed that this might be Baldolf,
Rather that here was a fool to humour them.
He went to and fro, till the troops in the city
Learned that Baldolf was here, Colgrim's brother.
They lowered a rope then, which Baldolf grasped,
And drew him upwards, till he clambered within.
Such then was the stratagem Baldolf employed.
Then was Colgrim blithe, and all of his knights,
And they began threatening Arthur the king.
Arthur was beside himself, fooled by his ploy.
Greatly angered, he ordered his men to arms,
Thinking through battle to conquer York city.

Arthur receives news of Childric's actions in Scotland

As Arthur prepared to assault the high walls,
Came one Patrick, a wealthy Scottish thane,
Of that land a noble, who called to the king:
'Hail to you, Arthur, the noblest of Britons,
I bring you news of the chieftain, Childric,
Strong is he, most powerful, furious, and bold.
He has sailed north, and landed in Scotland,
Burns our homes, and takes the land in hand.
He leads a brave host, all the strength of Rome,
And when in his cups the man boasts aloud
That you'll ne'er withstand his sudden attack,
Whether in woodland, or field, or in any place,
And, if you oppose him, he'll bind you fast,
Destroy your people, and conquer your realm.'
Arthur knew woe but ne'er worse than this,
And so, he retreated a while from the burgh,
Summoning his knights to counsel, at need,
His barons, and earls, and the holy bishops.
He bade them advise as to how he might

Preserve realm and honour; with his army,
Fight to fell this Childric, and all his forces,
And prevent him from bringing Colgrim aid.
The Britons, gathered about him, answered:
‘Let us march to London, and let him follow,
And if he rides against us, let him feel woe,
For he and the whole of his host shall be slain.’
Arthur approved of all that his people urged,
And forth he marched till he reached London.

He seeks aid from Howel of Brittany his kin

Now Colgrim, in York, was awaiting Childric,
While Childric began now his march to the north,
And took in hand thus a vast tract of land.
He gave Scotland’s realm to a thane of his,
While he gave Northumberland to his brother.
Galloway, and Orkney, one of his earls held.
He himself ruled from Humber to London,
Determined to grant no mercy to Arthur,
Except Uther’s son now became his man.
Arthur dwelt in London with his Britons,
He summoned warriors from all the land,
Instructing each warrior to come to London.
Then was England subject to every harm,
There was woe and weeping, and lament,
While hunger and strife haunted each place.
Arthur sent out two knights of his, by sea,
To Howel his kin, dearest of men to him,
And best of knights, who ruled in Brittany.
And he bade him come to help him, swiftly,
For Childric had much of this land in hand,
With Colgrim and Baldolf both aiding him,
Thinking to drive Arthur out of this land,
And rob him of his right to the kingdom,
Whose kin would meet with shame and harm,
Their honour forever lost in this world,
And then were it better he’d not been born.
Howel, Brittany’s ruler, heard this news,

And at once he summoned his messengers,
Bidding them mount their steeds speedily,
And ride to France to the free knights there,
And say that they must come now, quickly,
In all their strength, to St. Michael's Mount,
All those who wished to win silver and gold,
And win great honour in this world's realm.
Into Poitou, thus, he sent his trusted knights
While others rode swiftly towards Flanders.
On to Touraine, two bold envoys hastened,
And others of his household to Gascony,
Summoning men to St. Michael's Mount,
Promising fine gifts, ere they set out to sea,
So, they might more blithely quit the shore,
And reach Britain, led there by Howel the fair,
Bringing aid to Arthur, the noblest of kings.

Howel reaches England

Two weeks had passed since the envoys left,
And Howel's fleet darkened the sea, like hail.
Two hundred vessels were then fit to sail,
And, once full of folk, forth they voyaged,
The wind and the wave both in their favour,
Till they all made anchor at Southampton.
Forth from the ships sprang the men, in fury,
Clad in breastplate and helm, swarmed ashore,
Their spears and shields covering the field.
Many a bold Briton had taken up arms so,
And, upon their lives, they all swore aloud,
That they would wreak on Childric the strong,
Brave though he might be, a deal of harm.
And if he should fail to flee to Germany,
But chose to remain, and fight against them,
His folk would leave here their dearest things,
Their heads, hands, bright helms, and friends,
And sink down to Hell, those heathen hounds.
King Arthur was in London when he heard,
That noblest of kings, of Howel's landing,

That he had come ashore at Southampton,
With thirty thousand knights, a great host.
So, Arthur marched towards him, blithely,
And met there with the troops of his kindred.
Together they met, and the folk were glad,
And the two men kissed there and embraced,
And then disposed their respective armies.
The pair had, thus, two fine sets of forces,
Howel leading his knights, thirty thousand;
Arthur forty thousand, under his command.

The combined armies march to Lincoln and attack Childric

Forthwith, the two armies marched northwards,
Towards Lincoln city, besieged by Childric,
Though the latter had as yet gained but little,
For there were within seven thousand men,
Brave warriors, guarding it, night and day.
Arthur marched with his host to the burgh,
And he commanded his men to move quietly,
And steal through the countryside in silence,
Foregoing the cry of war-horns and trumpets.
Arthur chose a knight, both bold and wary,
And sent him to his dear folk in Lincoln,
To tell them that he'd be there at midnight,
And with him brought many a brave knight:
'When you hear a din, throw back the gates,
Come forth from the burgh, and fell your foes,
And smite Childric the strong,' said the man,
'For we Britons shall give them a tale to tell.'
At midnight, with the moon high in the south,
Arthur marched with his host to the burgh,
His warriors moving as softly as thieves,
And advanced till they saw Lincoln's walls.
Then Arthur the keen, called out to his men:
'Where are you, my knights, my warriors?
Behold Childric's tents, there, on the field,
With Colgrim, and Baldolf, in full strength,
These German troops that would do us harm,

These Saxon folk, sworn to bring us sorrow,
They that killed the noblest of my kindred,
Constance, and Constantin, and my father
Uther Pendragon, and Ambrosius my uncle,
And full many a thousand of our fair kin.
Go we to meet them, and attack their ground,
Avenge our kinfolk, and the realm they ruled.
Now come ride forthwith each warrior-knight.'
Arthur set forth, and the host began moving,
As if they rode, thus, to the world's ending.
They drove hard, in among Childric's tents,
And loud, their leader, Arthur, Uther's son,
Cried to his men, as becomes a martial king:
'Now help us, Mary, God's gentle mother!
I pray that your Son may aid and succour us!'
At his cry the warriors lowered their spears,
Turned again, and pierced and slew all by.
The foe marched against them, from the burgh,
Yet, ere they fled there again, were destroyed,
Or, if they fled to the woods, were slaughtered.
Wherever they rode the king's warriors slew.
Ne'er was a greater battle told of, in Britain,
Where mischief and slaughter were so rife.
Wretched were those who invaded this land.
Death was all around, and the ground ran red.

Childric retreats to the woods

Now Childric lay there, within Lincoln Castle,
That was newly-wrought, and now well-manned,
While Baldolf and Colgrim stood at his side,
Watching their warriors hurled to the ground.
Yet, clad in their armour, they fled the place,
Quitting the castle, as men lacking courage,
And fled forthwith to the woods of Caledon.
Beside those chieftains went seven thousand,
Leaving forty thousand slain on the field,
Robbed of life, all scattered over the ground.
Then Arthur, the noblest of kings, perceived

That Childric had flown, towards Caledon,
With Colgrim and Baldolf, his companions,
Into the deepest woods, into the high holm.
So, Arthur pursued, with sixty thousand men,
The knights of Britain, and surrounded them.
On the one side, they felled the woods around,
Swiftly, tree upon tree; while on the other side,
He besieged the foe for three days and nights,
And great the plight that the enemy were in.
Colgrim weighed the danger of starvation,
For neither they nor their horses had food,
And thus spoke Colgrim to Childric the chief:
'Tell me, Lord Childric, why do we cower here?
Why should we not ride forth with our host,
And fight worthily with this monarch, Arthur?
Better dead, and beneath the earth, in honour,
Than to perish, in this place, from starvation,
For, so sorely it grieves our folk, it will slay.
Or send to King Arthur again, and seek peace,
Grant the king hostages, beg for mercy,
And freely seek friendship thus with the king.'
Childric listened, where they stood, on the wall,
And thus, he answered, with sorrowful voice:
'If it be Baldolf's will, your fair brother,
And that of the rest of our comrades here
To seek peace and friendship with this Arthur,
Then I'll act according to your counsel.
For Arthur is deemed noble in all this land,
Dear to his men, and born of a royal line,
For is he not Uther Pendragon's son.
And it oft comes to pass, in many a land,
Where knights contend, that they who win
All that they gain at first, lose thereafter.
So now; yet prosper we may, if we live.'
The knights replied forthwith: 'This counsel,
We praise, for what you say is said wisely.'

He and his allies seek to make peace with Arthur

Forthwith they sent twelve knights to Arthur,
Where he lay in his tent, beyond the woods.
And their leader spoke, loud was his voice:
‘Peace, Arthur, for we would speak with you.
Our chieftain, Childric, he has sent us here,
As did Baldolf his kin, and Colgrim, likewise.
Now, and for evermore, they beg for mercy,
And will be your men, and uphold your honour,
Grant you hostages, and hold you their lord,
In dearest manner, if they may now but leave,
And, granted their lives, depart to their land.
For here we have met but sorrow and woe,
And left our friends dead upon Lincoln field;
Sixty thousand lie here, that you have slain.
And, should it be your will that we set sail,
Ne’er shall we come here, to your land, again;
Ne’er shall we return, while this world lasts!’
Then Arthur laughed, in triumph, and cried:
‘Thanks be to the Lord, who wields our fate,
That Childric the strong wearies of Britain.
He thought to divide it freely among his men,
And to drive myself forth from my country,
Holding me as naught, and possess the realm,
To slay my kindred, and destroy my people.
But his fate is that of the fox, that is bold,
And rules the weald, and feasts on his prey,
He climbs the hill, and seeks midst the rocks,
And he makes a den there, in the wilderness.
Fare whoever may fare there, he cares not,
Thinking himself the boldest of creatures.
But when the huntsmen ride under the hill,
With their hounds, and horns, and loud cries,
When they halloo, and the hounds give tongue,
Then they drive that fox over dale and down.
He flees to the holm, his den midst the cliffs,
And, into the depths of that hole, he now flees.
And there is the bold fox robbed of all bliss,
As the men dig to reach him from every side,
Then is that proud creature most wretched.

So goes it with Childric, the rich and strong,
For I've driven him now to naked death,
To where I may hang the man, or behead him.
Yet I would make peace with him, let him speak,
Neither hang nor behead but receive his pleas.
I must have hostages, of your noblest families,
And war-horses and weapons, ere you depart,
Then you wretches may go and seek your ships,
And sail o'er the sea to your own Saxon lands,
And there live worthily in your own country,
And tell the tale of how Arthur has set you free,
For the sake of my father's soul, and my own,
And, for love of liberty, solace poor wretches.'
Thereby did Arthur the king gain less honour,
Yet none, there, dared counsel him otherwise,
Though of this he repented, not long thereafter.

Childric and his men leave Britain

Childric came from hiding, to Arthur the king,
And became Arthur's man, as did his knights.
Four and twenty-hostages Childric delivered,
All of them hand-picked, true noblemen born.
And his men forewent their steeds and armour,
Their spears, their long-swords and their shields.
All the weapons they owned to they surrendered.
They began to march forth, and reached the sea,
Where their ships still lay at rest on the shore.
The weather was fine, the wind in their favour,
As they freed their longships from the sands,
They left the land behind, ran with the waves,
Till not a stretch of the coast could they see.
The deep was as calm as they might desire;
They raised the sails, and glided side by side;
Yet the warriors swore to return, and often,
To wreak a revenge for their dead kindred,
To waste Arthur's realm, to slay his people,
Take his fortresses, and so work their will.
Thus, they sailed, o'er the waves, till they came

To a tract of sea twixt England and Normandy,
And then they veered, turned their ships about,
Such that they came to Totnes by Dartmouth,
And so, blithely, made their approach to shore.

Childric's host returns and ravages the south

Once they had landed, the folk there they slew,
Driving the churls out that tilled all the fields,
Hanging the knights that sought to defend them.
Their wives they slew, and the maidens too,
And cast all the learned men into the flames.
All of their households they downed with clubs,
Razing the fortresses, ravaging all about.
The churches they razed; oh, woe to the folk;
E'en suckling babes they drowned in the water!
The cattle they herded-in, slaughtering all,
And carried the carcasses off to be roasted,
Killing, and eating, all those they came nigh.
They sang of the fate of Arthur the king,
Claiming they'd won a home for themselves,
One which they'd hold fast in their hands,
And, winter and summer, there they would dwell.
And if Arthur dared come fight against Childric,
They would make a bridge of that king's back,
And take the bones of that noble monarch,
Tie those bones together with golden ties,
And lay them down at the hall's threshold,
Where men entered and left, to honour
Childric the strong, Childric the powerful!
This was their burden, the shaming of Arthur,
But shortly thereafter things befell otherwise.
The shame was theirs, for all of their boasting,
As ever it is, where men act as did these folk.
Childric their chieftain gained all that he saw,
All Somerset he conquered, and all of Dorset,
And destroyed the folk who dwelt in Devon,
And Wiltshire, too, treated to fierce enmity;
He conquered all the land, to the sea-strand.

Then at the last he had the trumpets blown,
And all the war-horns, and gathered his host.
Forth he would march, Bath would besiege,
And the town of Bristol he would surround.
This he threatened as they marched to Bath,
And there they came, and besieged the castle,
While the warriors within defended bravely.
Armed to the teeth, they mounted the walls,
And resisted the power of Childric the strong.
There was the chieftain, and Colgrim his ally
With Baldolf the brother, and many another.
King Arthur knew naught of this, in the North;
He traversed Scotland, and held it in his hand,
The Isle of Man, Orkney, Galloway, Moray,
And all of the land and the islands thereabout.
For Arthur had thought it a most certain thing
That Childric would sail on, to his own land,
And nor was he like to return to this realm.
When the tidings came to Arthur the king,
That Childric had come again to these shores,
And was now in the south, wreaking havoc,
Then said Arthur, the noblest of monarchs:
'Alas, alas that I chose to spare Childric
Rather than having him starve in the wood,
Or, hacking him, with sharp steel, to pieces.
My reward he grants me for my good deed,
But, by the Lord who grants us the daylight,
That man shall reap the most bitter of fates.
Hard for him it shall go; his bane I will be.
And this Colgrim too, and Baldolf I'll slay,
And all of their people, death they will suffer.
If the King of Heaven will grant it me,
I shall avenge all whom they have killed.
As long as life lingers, here in my breast,
And He, that made sun and moon, allows,
Ne'er shall this Childric deceive me more.'

Arthur determines to slay Childric

Then Arthur cried allow to his followers:
‘Where be you, my knights, bold and brave?
To horse, to horse, my band of warriors,
And we shall march swiftly south, to Bath.
Raise high the gallows tree, and bring forth
All the hostages before our goodly host,
And they shall hang in the air above us.’
There he saw slain four and twenty youths,
All those noble sons of the German race.
Then came fresh tidings to Arthur the king,
That Howel his kinsman lay ill, in Clud,
And so, sorrowfully, he left him behind.
Forth he rode swiftly to the plain by Bath,
And there he alighted, with all his knights,
And he ordered them to don their armour,
Then he split his force into five divisions.
Once all were clad, and rightly disposed,
He donned his armour, fashioned of steel,
An elven smith had wrought with his arts,
And that was Wygar, the skilful maker.
His shanks he covered with hose of mail.
At his side he hung Caliburn, his sword,
Wrought with magical skill in Avalon.
High on his head he set his helm of steel,
With many a gemstone set there in gold.
Uther the king’s it was, its name Goswhit,
And wrought unlike to every other helm.
He hung about his neck a precious shield,
Its name in the British tongue was Pridwen,
Thereon was engraved, traced all in gold,
A richly wrought image of God’s mother.
His spear, its name Ron, he took in hand,
And fully armed so, leapt upon his steed.
Then they beheld, that stood there, at his side,
The finest warrior that e’er took the field.
For ne’er saw any man a fairer knight
Than Arthur, that king of noblest race.
Then Arthur called out, in a loud voice:
‘Lo, here before us, are these heathen dogs,

The loathliest of all things in our land,
That, through wickedness, slew our ancestors.
Now shall we march upon them, and slay them,
And we shall avenge our kin most worthily,
Slay those who brought shame upon our realm,
Come voyaging o'er the waves to Dartmouth.
All of them are foresworn, all shall mourn,
All shall be slain, with the good Lord's aid!
March we now swiftly onwards, together,
As quietly as if we brought them no ill.
Ere we attack them, I shall give the sign;
Foremost of all, this same fight I'll begin.
Now let us ride, and o'er the land we'll glide,
And let none, on pain of death, make a sound.
But go we quickly, and may the Lord aid us!'
Then Arthur, the mighty king, began to ride
And headed onward, o'er the weald, to Bath.

The battle at Bath (*Mount Baden*)

Then tidings came to Childric the strong,
That Arthur came with his host, prepared to fight.
Childric and his bold knights leapt to the saddle,
Grasping their weapons, feeling the foe's hatred.
Soon Arthur gazed on them, that noblest of kings,
He saw the heathen chieftain riding towards him
With seven hundred knights, all ready for battle.
Childric himself came on, at the head of his men,
While Arthur too rode forward, leading the host.
Arthur the bold, took his spear, Ron, in hand,
Lowered the bare shaft, that strong-minded king,
Urged his steed to the charge, so the earth rang,
And, clasping his shield to his breast, in his rage,
He smote Earl Borel sore, and pierced his chest,
So, the heart was sundered; then called aloud:
'The foremost are ours; may the Lord now aid us,
And the heavenly Queen, she that bore our Lord!'
Then once more Arthur cried, that noblest of kings:
'Now, at them, at them, our labour is well-begun!'

The Britons laid on, as men should on the wicked,
Dealing them bitter blows with axe and sword,
There, full two thousand fell, of Childric's men,
While Arthur scarcely lost a knight of his own.
Then were the Saxons the most wretched of folk,
Then were those Germans a most woeful people.
King Arthur wrought destruction with his blade,
For all at whom he smote were swiftly conquered.
The king was in a rage as great as some wild boar
Meeting with tame swine among the beech-trees.
Childric perceived this and swiftly sought to flee
Over the Avon, to save himself from danger,
But Arthur pursued him, and like a lion in anger,
Drove him to the water, where many were slain.
Two thousand five hundred drowned in its depths,
Until the Avon's stream was bridged with corpses.
Childric crossed with fifteen hundred warriors,
Thinking to reach the coast beyond, and sail.
Arthur saw Colgrim climb to the highest hill,
That stands above Bath, and after him Baldolf,
With his remaining force; seven thousand knights.
They thought to make a stand upon the hillside,
Defend themselves nobly, and do Arthur harm.
When Arthur saw where Colgrim made his stand,
Then that great king called loudly to his troops:
'Advance, my knights, advance upon the hill,
For yesterday this Colgrim was boldest of all,
But now he is placed as is the mountain goat
That wields his horns in fight on the clifftops,
When the wolf attacks him where he stands.
Though the wolf be alone, outside the pack,
And there be five hundred goats in the fold,
The wolf will be among them and savage all.
So shall I this day, destroy this fellow, Colgrim,
For I am the wolf, and he, the goat, shall die.'
Then Arthur, that noblest of kings, spoke on:
'Yesterday was Baldolf bold among warriors,
But now he's upon the hill, and see the Avon,
See how the silvery fish lie there in the flow!

Though set about with steel, their life is taken,
Like scaly shields, dyed with gold, they float;
They float there, steel fins like bladed spears.
What wonders now are come to this our land,
Such goats upon the hill, fishes in the stream!
Yesterday was Childric bravest of chieftains,
Now, hunter turned hunted, horns pursue him.
He flies o'er the wide weald, with his hounds,
And both Bath and the hunt he leaves behind;
He flies from his herd of deer, that we shall kill,
Render his threats naught, and uphold our right!'
Even as he spoke these words, Arthur, the king,
Raised his shield on high to defend his chest,
Grasped his spear, and spurred his charger on.
Nigh-on as swift as a flock of birds will soar,
Five and twenty thousand martial warriors,
Fiercely-armed, rode in strength to the hill,
And smote Colgrim's men with mighty blows,
While Colgrim there received the Britons' charge,
And felled a good five hundred to the ground.
Arthur, that finest of kings, viewed the field,
And was wondrously angered at what he saw,
And thus, cried out, Arthur, that noble man:
'Where be you, my Britons, my bold knights?
Here, stand before us our chosen enemies.
Come my brave fellows, fell them to the earth!'
He gripped his sword and struck a Saxon knight,
And cleft him with his bright blade, to the teeth,
Then he smote another, that same man's brother,
Such that the head, in its helm, fell to the ground.
While his third fierce blow sliced a man in two.
Then were the Britons mightily emboldened,
And laid their heaviest blows on the Saxons,
With their long spears, and their strong swords,
So that the Saxons stumbled to their deaths.
There, hundred upon hundred sank to earth,
Thousand upon thousand littered the ground.

Arthur slays Colgrim and Baldolf

Though Colgrim saw King Arthur advancing,
Hampered by the dead, he could not flee,
While Baldolf fought on beside his brother.
Then Arthur called out, with a mighty cry:
‘Her am I, Colgrim! We’ll contest the realm,
And divide the land, ne’er to your own liking!’
Even as he spoke, he raised his sword on high,
Brining it down hard upon Colgrim’s helm,
And clove it through, and through the collar,
Till the blade was lodged in Colgrim’s chest.
Next, he dealt a blow, sideways, at Baldolf,
And with his left hand he struck off his head,
Then Arthur, that noble king, laughed aloud,
And, thus, he began to speak in playful words:
‘Lie there Colgrim, you that climbed on high.
Baldolf, your brother, lies there by your side.
Grasp, if you can, this kingdom in your hands,
Its dales and downs, and all its goodly people!
Wondrously far you clambered up this hill,
As if you would scale the high heavens above.
Yet now you must to Hell, to seek your kin,
And greet there Hengist, boldest of warriors,
Ebissa, Ossa, Octa, all of your kindred’s host,
Where they dwell, winter and summer alike,
While we shall live here in this land in bliss,
Praying that your souls there may never rest.
Here, by the walls of Bath shall your bones lie!’

He then sends Earl Cador to deal with Childric

Then Arthur the king, called to Cador the keen,
He that was Earl of Cornwall, a valiant knight:
‘Hark to me Cador, being of my own kindred,
Now is Childric flown, and will seek to sail,
Thinking to come, in safety, some other time.
But take you of my host five thousand men,
And go forthwith, and follow day and night,

So that you reach the coast ere Childric may.
And all that you may win there, do so in joy,
For if you do him ill, and slay that chieftain,
Why, then I will place all Dorset in your care.’
As soon as the noble king uttered these words,
Cador issued forth like a spark from the fire,
With full seven thousand following the earl.
Cador the bold, with his kindred about him,
Rode o’er the wealds, through the wilderness,
Through dales, o’er downs, o’er the rivers.
Knowing the swiftest paths of that country,
He rode by the shortest route towards Totnes,
By day and by night till he reached that town.
While Childric knew naught of his coming.
Cador thus reached the coast before Childric,
And had all the churls there, those savvy folk,
Take up their staves, and spears, and cudgels,
And sent them all to hide in the ships’ holds,
And lie low so Childric knew naught of them,
But when his men came, and sought to board,
To grasp their cudgels, and smite them hard,
And then with staves and spears slay them all.
The churls did all that Cador had asked of them,
Into the vessels went those valiant warriors,
A hundred and fifty men, or so, in every ship,
Then Cador the bold withdrew into a wood,
Five miles from the vessels in their harbour,
And his men hid themselves, and lay silent.
Childric soon came marching o’er the weald,
Hastening to embark, and then flee this land.
As soon as Cador the bold had him in sight,
And trapped between his force and the churls,
Then the Earl cried, in a loud voice, to his men:
‘Where be you now, my brave, bold knights?
Think on what Arthur, our king, commanded,
Ere we left his presence, and rode from Bath.
Behold where Childric seeks to flee this land,
And sail for Germany where his kinfolk dwell,
There to raise a host, and return once more,

To avenge Colgrim and his brother Baldolf,
Who lie dead; yet he will not if we deny him.'
With those words the Earl began the advance,
Riding forth swiftly, while stern was his mood.
His men leapt from the borders of the wood,
Pursuing Childric the strong and powerful.
Childric's knights turned, and looked behind,
And saw the banners winding o'er the weald,
Five thousand shields gleaming o'er the field.
Then was Childric most sorrowful at heart;
That powerful chieftain uttered these words:
'There rides Arthur the king who'd slay us all.
Let us march to the ships, and sail forth swiftly,
And then let the waves take us where they will.'
Once he'd ceased to speak, he sped on quickly,
While Cador, the bold earl, came on behind.
Childric and his knights came to the harbour,
They sought to embark there, and so quit this land,
But the churls aboard ship raised their cudgels,
Heaved them on high, and brought them down,
And many a knight with their clubs they killed;
Their spears and staves felled them to the ground,
While Cador's knights slew them from behind.

Cador slays Childric on Teignwick (*Highweek*) Hill

Now, when Childric saw that all had gone awry,
All his bold warriors were being slaughtered,
He sought to retreat to a hill, exceeding great,
Not far from which there flows the river Teign.
The hill is named Teignwick; Childric fled there,
Swift as he might, with four and twenty knights,
Earl Cador saw how all fared, his foe retreating,
And, quick as he could, Earl Cador then pursued,
And soon was on their heels, and overtook them.
Then cried Earl Cador, the finest of warriors:
'Wait, Childric, wait; Teignwick you shall have!
And, heaving high his sword, Childric he slew.
Many of the foe now fled, and sought the water,

And, deep in the river Teign, there they perished.
Earl Cador slew all those that he found alive;
Those crawling to the wood were still destroyed.
Once Cador had slain them, and held the field,
He made a peace in the land, that long held good.
And though a traveller might bear golden torcs,
Ne'er a man dared to hedge him round with evil.

Arthur relieves the besieged Howel in Clud (*Strathclyde*)

Arthur had now fared forth into Scotland,
For Howel was in Clud, and fast besieged.
The Scots, by cunning, had ringed him round,
And if Arthur had not soon come to relieve him
Then Howel had been taken, and his folk slain.
But Arthur came promptly, and in full strength,
And the Scots fled into Moray with their host.
Earl Cador had marched to Scotland, to Arthur,
And both of them now proceeded into Clud,
And found Howel there was in good health,
For he had been fully cured of his sickness,
And great was the bliss that was in that place.
The Scots now in Moray sought to dwell there
And they sent many a boastful word abroad,
And said that they would now rule that land,
While Arthur must remain there under siege,
For Arthur would ne'er dare come against them.
When Arthur, who knew no fear, heard all this,
All that the Scots had said in scornful speech,
Then said Arthur, the bold, greatest of kings:
'Where are you, Howel, noblest of all my kin,
And you, Cador the bold, out of Cornwall?
Let the trumpets blow, and gather in our host,
And at midnight we shall march to Moray,
And there, on the field, shall much honour win.
If the Lord wills, who grants us mortals light,
We shall make of them a sorry tale to tell,
Ending their boasting, slaying all that host.'

King Arthur marches on the Scots in Moray

And so, at midnight, Arthur arose forthwith,
And the great war-horns were blown aloud,
And knights began to rise, with sober mien.
With a mighty host he marched into Moray;
And before him went thirteen thousand men,
With the fiercest warriors, in the vanguard.
After them came Cador, the Earl of Cornwall,
With seventeen thousand good fighting men;
And next came Howel with his fine warriors,
With his one and twenty thousand champions;
Then came Arthur himself, noblest of kings,
With seven and twenty thousand following.
The shields, there, gleamed in the dawning light.
Word then came to the Scots where they were.
That Arthur, the king, was nearing their land,
Marching speedily, with innumerable men.
Then were they fearful, that before were bold.
Swift, they fled to the water, full of marvels,
For there in middle-earth was a wondrous mere,
A broad marshland filled with reeds and fens,
With fish, and water-birds, and ill things too.
Wide was this lake and, there, Nixies bathed;
There, elven sprites played midst the dark pools.
Sixty islands rose above those wide waters,
And on each was a strong and rocky height,
On which eagles, and other great birds, nested.
This was the rule, when any king should come,
Whenever an army marched into that country,
Then those great birds all rose into the sky,
Many a thousand of them, and fought there,
Then were the folk sure that woe was theirs,
Woe from some host that came to their land.
Full two or three days, the birds would war,
Ere any host of strangers reached that place.
And, wondrous to tell of, into that wide lake,
Fell sixty streams, from dale and high down.
Through the deep vales these waters poured,

And no man could ever find their outflow,
Except that a stream at one end descended,
And ran from the lake, in silence, to the sea.
The Scots were scattered, most wretchedly,
Over those many islands in the marshland,
Arthur's men made boats and rowed to them,
And slew countless many, going to and fro,
While others starved to death where they lay.
Arthur with all his host camped to the east,
Howel, the good, lay on the southern side,
Cador, the noble earl, guarded the north,
While lesser nobles held the western shore.
They held the Scots on their isles, for sots,
Where they lay, fast enclosed, in the marsh,
Sixty thousand, of their foes, met with woe.

Arthur repels Gillemaur of Ireland

Then came the King of Ireland to harbour,
To aid the Scots by slaying Howel's men.
The Irish camped twelve miles from Arthur,
The noble king, who, hearing of their landing,
Gathered a host of men and marched thither,
Seeking Gillemaur where he'd set foot on shore.
Arthur fought with him, and gave no quarter,
And felled a mass of Irishmen to the ground.
Gillemaur, with twelve ships, fled these shores,
And, much diminished, sailed back to Ireland,
While Arthur slew all his foes he could find.
Then he returned to the lake where he had left
Howel, the fair, his kinsman, the most noble
Lord in Britain, excepting the noblest, Arthur.
Arthur found Howel encamped beside the lake,
And the warriors of that host rejoiced greatly
Greeting Arthur and praising his great deeds.
There Arthur rested for two days and nights.

The aftermath of Arthur's campaign in Moray

The Scottish dead littered the rocky isles;
For many a thousand had died of starvation,
Or were slain, of those most wretched folk.
On the third day, at dawn, it showing fair,
All the priests and clerics came to that place,
Three wise bishops, most learned in the texts,
The clerks and hooded monks in vast number,
And the canons, many and good, of the land,
Bearing all the noblest relics of that country,
To seek Arthur's mercy, and to sue for peace.
Thither too came the women that dwelt there,
Bearing their infants, wailing, in their arms.
They wept their countless tears before Arthur
Tore at their yellow hair, cut off their tresses,
And, before his folk, scattered them at his feet.
Then, scratching at their faces till they bled,
Well nigh naked, they supplicated the king,
Seeking mercy, as one, in their wretchedness:
'Great king, we are the most woeful on earth,
We seek mercy, in the God of Mercy's name.
Our men they are no more, starved or slain,
By weapons or by drowning, or otherwise.
Our children are fatherless and comfortless.
You are a Christian, as are we Scots, here,
While your Saxon foe are but heathen hounds.
They came to this land, and slew full many,
And we obeyed them lest they do more harm,
For we had none who might treat with them.
They brought us sorrow, as you have here.
The heathens hate us, Christians bring woe;
What will become of us?' they asked the king.
'Grant us the lives of those who yet may live,
Upon the stony isles, increase your honour,
Through your grace to us folk, for evermore.
Lord Arthur, our king, free us from bondage,
For you have seized and conquered all this land,
We kneel at your feet; all remedy lies with you.'
Arthur, noblest of all kings, heard their plea,
Their weeping, and lament, and endless sorrow,

And so, he took counsel there within his heart,
Found pity there, and granted what they sought,
Gave the folk life and limb, and land to hold.
For he had the trumpets blown, to call the Scots,
And the men crept from the rocks to the boats,
And so, they came to the shore from every side.
They were suffering greatly from lack of food,
And swore oaths they promised not to break,
And, also, they gave hostages to King Arthur,
Becoming, by these tokens, the king's men.
Then the folk began to scatter and depart,
Each to the place where they had their dwelling,
And Arthur made peace there, and the king said:
'Where are you my kinsman Howel, dear to me?
Behold this great marsh where the Scots perished.
Behold those lofty trees, and the eagles in flight.
Innumerable fish are swimming in these pools,
Behold those islands scattered about the fen.'
Howel marvelled at the sight of its splendours,
And he wondered greatly gazing at the flood.
And then spoke Howel, that lord of noble race:
'Since I was born, I ne'er saw such a vision,
As I now behold, stretching before my eyes.'
All the Britons gazed on, and wondered greatly.

The Elven Pool and the Enchanted Loch

Then said Arthur, that noblest of monarchs:
'Howel, my kinsman, dearest of men to me,
Listen while I speak of a greater wonder,
Of which I shall tell you, and truth I speak.
At the edge of this marsh, where is the outlet,
Is a certain little pool, the wonder of men,
It is in length four and sixty palm-widths,
And measures in breadth five and twenty feet,
Five feet its depth; twas dug by elven folk.
Four-cornered, it holds four kinds of fish,
With each kind gathering in its own corner,
And none may choose to swim to any other.

No man born is of such keen understanding
That can comprehend, howe'er long he lives,
What stops the fish from exchanging places,
For naught separates the four but clear water.'
Then Arthur, noblest of kings, spoke further:
'Howel, where this land borders on the sea,
There lies a lake whose waters are enchanted,
For, when the tide is full, and the waves roar,
And the sea pours swiftly in to fill the lake,
Yet the loch's water never gains in height.
But when the tide ebbs, and the sea is calm,
And all seems in its former place, once more,
Then the loch swells, and its waters darken,
And leap to a height that is exceeding great,
Overflow its shores, and terrify the people.
And if any man, in ignorance, comes there,
And witnesses this marvel by the sea-strand,
If he looks towards the loch, he shall be safe;
The flood will pour by, and yet harm him not,
He may stand there for as long as he wishes,
And receive no injury from the lake-waters.'
Then said that lord of Brittany, noble Howel:
'Now have I heard a thing most wonderful,
And wondrous is the Lord that wrought it all.'

Arthur departs Scotland

Then cried Arthur, the noblest of all kings,
'Blow the trumpets, as loudly as can be,
Tell my knights that I will march forthwith.'
The trumpets and the war-horns were blown,
Bliss was in the host, at that proclamation,
For each was glad to return to their own land.
The king forbade them all, on pain of death,
To show themselves so mad, or so unwise,
As to break the king's peace; if any did so
Whate'er he was, twould prove his own doom.
Upon those very words, the army marched,
The warriors singing many wondrous songs,

Of Arthur the king, his lords, and captains,
Saying, in song, though the world last long,
Ne'er would there be such a king as Arthur,
Nor an emperor, nor chieftain, in any land.

He re-establishes the church and law

Arthur matched to York, with a wondrous host,
And he dwelt there six weeks to people's joy.
The walls of the burgh there had been shattered,
Childric had razed the churches, and the halls.
Then the king called a worthy priest, one Piram,
For he was a man most wise in book-learning.
'Piram, my own priest, it shall go well with you'
Said the king, and took a relic, good and holy,
And gave it to Piram, granting him much land,
And in his hands placed the archbishop's staff.
So Piram, a priest before, was archbishop now.
Then Arthur told him to raise churches anew,
And restore the rites as they had been before,
Take charge of God's folk, and treat them justly.
And he told his lords and knights to judge aright,
And the ploughmen to till the fields once more,
And each man to give fair welcome to another.
And whosoever failed to do King Arthur's will
He would be driven naked to the flames,
And, if but a base fellow, the man should hang.
Then Arthur, the noblest of kings, commanded
That every man who had suffered loss of land,
Bereft of it through some means of affliction,
That he should come before him right swiftly,
Whether high or low, and have again his own,
Unless he had been a foul traitor to his lord,
Or so forsworn the king should deem him lost.
There came to him three brothers, royally born,
Loth, Angel, and Urien were those fine three.
They came to the king, and knelt before him:
'Hail to you, Arthur, noblest of all kings,
And with your lords also may all be well!

We three are brothers, of a line of kings,
Yet our rightful realms lost from our hands,
For the heathen warriors have left us poor,
Wasting all Lothian, Scotland and Moray.
So, we pray to you now to lend us your aid,
And, of your grace, be merciful towards us.
Grant us our own lands, and we shall love you,
And hold you as our lord, in all those places.’
Arthur, the noblest of kings, listened closely
To all that these fair knights had requested,
And felt compassion in his heart, and said:
‘Urien, be my man, and so hold Moray,
And you shall be called the king of that land,
And be high in my host among the warriors.
And to Angel I grant the whole of Scotland,
To hold it in hand, from father to son given;
Be king in that realm, and become my man.
And you, Loth, who are my own dear friend,
God keep you; take my sister now to wife,
And the better it shall be for you and yours.
I grant you Lothian, that land rich and fair,
And shall add fine land beside the Humber,
A realm that is worth a full hundred pounds.
For when Uther, my father, ruled the realm,
Greatly he loved his daughter, ever his care,
And she, my dear sister, has borne two sons,
The dearest children to me in all this land.’
Now Walwain was the one, but a little child,
As was the other, young Mordred his brother.
Woe that she bore him, great the harm in store!
Arthur now wended his way to London town,
Leading his host, and held a husting there,
And settled the laws that held in elder days,
All the sound laws that stood then among us,
Such that all were at peace, secure and free.

Arthur weds Guinevere

Thence he went to Cornwall, to Cador’s realm,

And he found there a maiden exceeding fair,
This maid's mother was of a line of Romans,
Kin to Cadur that bestowed on him the maid,
And he welcomed the maid, and cared for her.
She was of Roman ancestry, of a noble line,
Nor in any country was there a maid so fair
In speech or deed, or with such fine manners.
She was named Guinevere, noblest of maids.
Arthur wed her, and loved her wondrous much;
The maiden he wed, and took her to his bed.
Arthur was in Cornwall for all that winter,
All for the love of Guinevere, fairest of all.

He decides to invade Ireland

When the winter was gone, and summer came,
Arthur bethought himself what he should do,
So that his mighty army should not lie idle.
To Exeter he marched at the midsummer feast,
And held a gathering there of his noblemen,
And told them that he would go into Ireland,
And win all that kingdom to his own hand.
Unless King Gillemaur was to come to him,
And speak to him fairly, and seek for peace,
He would deal ill to him, and waste that realm,
With fire and steel, working a hostile game,
And slay the folk there that stood against him.
To the words he spoke, the folk answered fair:
'Lord King we are ready to go, at your word,
And ride abroad, wherever, as you may need.'
Many a bold Briton, there, bristled like a boar,
Showing the wrath brewing in his thoughts.
They went to their lodgings, knights and men,
Polished their armour, and readied their helms,
And rubbed down their steeds with linen cloths,
Curried their coats, shod their hooves with steel.
Those men of courage shaped both horn and bone,
Wrought steel darts, and thongs good and strong,
Some flexed their spears, as some readied shields.

Arthur made it known, throughout the realm,
That all brave knights should gather forthwith,
Those who would not, deserved to lose a limb,
While those who came gladly would grow rich.
Seven nights after Easter when they'd fasted,
All the host embarked, then the vessels sailed,
And a favourable wind bore them to Ireland.
Arthur marched through the land, destroying,
Slaying the folk, and seizing herds of cattle,
While ordering the churchmen left in peace.
Tidings came to Gillemaur, king of that isle,
That Arthur was there and wrought much harm.
He gathered the people from his whole realm,
And marched his Irish warriors to the fight.
Forth they went till they came against Arthur.
That noble king and his knights, fully-armed,
Advanced to meet them, in countless number.
They were clad in armour, the Irish half-naked,
Bearing spears and axes, and sharpened stones.
King Arthur's men let fly many a fierce dart,
And slew the Irish folk; there, full many fell.

Arthur captures King Gillemaur

The Irish failed to stand firm, thousands fled,
King Gillemaur himself departing in great haste.
Arthur followed him close, and detained the king,
He grasped by the hand, the king of all that land.
Then Arthur the noble warrior sought lodging,
Happy to have King Gillemaur beside him.
For, now, did Arthur, the noblest of monarchs
Display his merciful and amicable nature,
Causing Gillemaur to be clothed most richly,
And sit beside him, and eat at his left hand.
Gillemaur drank the wine, though sour to him,
Yet when he saw that Arthur was most glad,
Though sad at heart, he uttered these words:
'Lord Arthur, peace to you, grant me my life,
And I will be your man, and my three sons

I'll give you as hostages, to do your will.
 Grant me your grace, and I will do yet more,
 I will give many wealthy lads as hostages,
 Sixty fine youths, sons of the rich and mighty.
 Grant me your grace, and I will do yet more,
 Each year I'll send you seven thousand pounds,
 From out this land, and sixty marks of gold.
 Grant me your grace, and I will do yet more,
 Steeds with their trappings, hawks, and hounds,
 All the rich treasures of my land, I'll give you.
 And if you so do, upon the sacred relics
 Of Saint Columba, he that did God's will,
 And Saint Brendan's head, that God hallowed,
 And Saint Bride's right foot, holy and blessed,
 And many a relic that has come from Rome,
 I'll swear to you that I will not deceive you,
 But I will love you, and hold you as my lord,
 Yourself the king, myself your underling.'
 Arthur the noblest of all kings, on hearing this,
 Smiled, and answered him with gracious words:
 'Be glad Gillemaur, grieve not in your heart;
 You are wise, for better it will be for you.
 One should e'er welcome wisdom in a man,
 And you, for your wisdom, shall not do worse.
 And the more you offer the better all shall be.
 Here, forthwith, before all my noble knights,
 I'll forego half of your treasure and your gold,
 But you shall be my man, and half, each year,
 Of all that you promised, you shall send to me.
 Half the number of steeds, and half the weeds,
 And half the number of hawks and of hounds,
 That you have offered I'll relinquish to you.
 But I will have in hand your noble hostages,
 Your lords' sons, those dearest of all to them,
 To hold you to your word, and you shall dwell,
 With every honour, in your rightful kingdom,
 Nor shall the king, with impunity, wrong you.'
 So spoke King Arthur, the noblest of all kings.

Arthur gains the fealty of the King of Iceland

Now that Arthur held all Ireland in his hand,
And its king's three sons he held as hostages,
King Arthur spoke thus to his lords and knights:
'Go we to Iceland, and there take it in hand.'
The host sailed, and to Iceland then they came;
Its king was named Aelcus, the lord of that isle.
He heard these tidings of Arthur, the monarch,
And, acting wisely, he came forth to greet him,
Swiftly enough, and with but sixteen knights,
And bearing, in his hand, his golden sceptre.
As soon as he saw Arthur, he knelt before him,
And, fearful of that monarch, he said to him:
'Welcome King Arthur, welcome my lord!
Here I give, into your hand, all of Iceland,
You shall be high king, I your underling.
I shall obey you, as a man obeys his master,
And become your man, and render my dear son,
He is named Escol, and may you honour him,
And dub him knight, as your man; his mother,
My wife, she is the King of Russia's daughter.
And every year I will pay a tribute to you,
Seven thousand pounds of silver and gold,
And be ready, at need, to join your council.
And this I will swear to you upon my sword,
For its hilt holds the noblest relic of this land,
And, do as I will, I shall ne'er be false to you.'
Arthur, noblest of kings, gave ear to all this:
He was temperate whene'er he had his way,
Yet exceedingly severe with his enemies.
Arthur heard the mild words of this chieftain,
Granted his request, and accepted his pledge,
Under oath, and with the hostages as offered.

Likewise, that of Gonwais of Orkney

Then the king of the Orkney Isles, Gonwais,
A bold and courageous heathen warrior,

Heard that Arthur the king sought his land,
And was sailing there with a mighty fleet.
Gonwais came to meet him, with his knights,
And gave all the Orkneys into Arthur's hand,
All the two and thirty islands that lie there,
And paid homage to him with great reverence.
Then he pledged to Arthur, before his people,
To send full sixty ships, at his own expense,
To London, each year, with their haul of fish.
This he affirmed, and rendered up hostages,
Swearing fine oaths that he'd ne'er renege.
Then he took his leave, and departed saying:
'Lord, farewell, I will come whene'er I may,
For you are now my lord, dearest of kings.'

Likewise, that of Doldanim of Jutland

Arthur did all this, but would yet do more.
He sent envoys with messages to Jutland,
Greeting the ruler there, one Doldanim,
Bidding him come to meet him in haste,
And bring his two sons, and be his man:
'And if you choose to do not as I demand,
I will send sixteen thousand fighting men
Who will waste your land, and slay your folk,
And control the Orkney Isles as they see fit,
And bind you captive, and bring you to me.'
The king on hearing Arthur's harsh threats,
Clad himself swiftly in his finest clothes,
And made his way towards Arthur the king,
With hounds, and hawks, and noble steeds,
And much silver and gold, and his two sons.
Once there, Doldanim the good uttered this:
'Hail to you, Arthur, noblest of all kings,
Hither I bring two hostages, my two sons,
Their mother, my queen, is of noble line,
For I won her, with spoils, out of Russia.
I will be your man, and render up my sons,
And send you tribute each year as promised,

I will send to London seven thousand pounds.
This will I swear, and ne'er will I prove false,
But be your man, the honour is the greater,
And ne'er seek to deceive you, evermore.'

Likewise, that of Rumareth of Winetland (*Wendland?*)

King Arthur then sent envoys to Winetland,
To Rumareth, its king, and let him know
That he held all of Britain and Scotland,
Orkney and Ireland, Iceland and Jutland.
He summoned the king, with his eldest son,
And would drive him forth, if he came not,
Or if he captured him, behead or hang him,
Ravage his country, and destroy his people.
Rumareth, rich king of Winet, heard this,
And was fearful as those other kings before.
Loath to him were these words of Arthur's,
But he nonetheless hearkened to the call,
And took his son, and twelve good earls,
And went to seek Arthur, the noble king,
Knelt at his feet, and greeted him fairly:
'Hail to you, Arthur, noblest of Britons!
Here am I, Rumareth, King of Winetland.
Much have I heard of your great valour,
For which you are famous, brave monarch.
Many a realm you have won to your hand,
No ruler of any land can withstand you,
Not emperor, king or chieftain, in battle,
For, in all you begin, you work your will.
Here am I come, bringing my eldest son,
To set in your hand myself and my realm,
And my dear son here, and all my people,
My wife, my goods, and all that I possess.
If you will forego all fierce attack upon me,
You shall be my king, and I your underling.
I shall pay, in tribute, five hundred pounds,
And that same will find each and every year.'

Arthur returns to Britain

King Arthur granted him peace as he desired,
And afterwards gathered to him all his knights,
And said he would now return to this country,
To be with Guinevere, his most lovely queen.
The trumpets were blown, the army massed,
And marched to the ships; the men were blithe.
The wind was in their favour, the weather fine,
Pleasing them well; to Grimsby thus they came.
The noblemen of this land all heard the news,
The queen had tidings of Arthur, her king,
Saying he was safe, and that he'd prospered.
Then was there in Britain, much joyfulness,
Playing of harps and fiddles, and brave song.
The trumpets, and the pipes, sounded loudly,
The poets chanted boldly of Arthur's deeds,
And of the great honour that he had gained.
Folk gathered together, from many a place,
And far and wide, the people thus rejoiced.
All those that Arthur saw submitted to him,
Rich or poor, as plentiful as fallen hail,
And not a Briton but was made wealthy by it.
Now one might tell of how Arthur remained,
At peace, in justice and amity, twelve years.
None fought with him, nor did he make war,
Nor was there e'er such bliss in any country.
Ne'er did any man know such a time of joy,
As King Arthur knew then, as did his people.

A quarrel at the Christmas feast

Hear my tale, wondrous though it may seem.
On a day near Christmas, Arthur lay in London,
And guests from every realm gathered there,
From Britain, Scotland, Ireland and Iceland,
And all the lands Arthur held now in sway,
All the knights and thanes, and all their swains.
And there were seen there seven sons of kings,

With seven hundred men, amid Arthur's folk.
Each of them was full of pride, and thought
That he was the best of all his companions;
The folk were of many lands, and jealous,
Each man thought himself above all others.
There, trumpets were blown, the tables laid,
And servants brought water in golden bowls,
Then soft towels, all of white silken thread.
Arthur was seated, by Guinevere, the queen.
Next the earls and barons took their places,
And then the knights, according to their rank.
The noblemen passed the meat to the knights,
Thence to the thanes and swains at the board,
And then the porters too sat down to feast.
Midst some a quarrel began; blows were rife,
First, they hurled loaves of bread at each other,
And then the silver bowls, yet filled with wine,
Until fists began to pound on chests and necks.
A young man leapt up, one born in Winetland,
Who had been rendered to Arthur as a hostage,
For he was son to Rumareth, Winetland's king.
Thus said this young knight to Arthur the king:
'Sire, retire to your chamber, with the queen,
And we will settle our quarrel with these folk.'
As he spoke so, he leapt towards the table,
Where sharp knives lay before the sovereign.
He took up three, and then with one of them,
He smote the knight that had begun the fight,
And sent the man's head rolling on the floor.
He swiftly slew another, that man's brother,
And seven he had slain ere swords were drawn.
The fighting spread; each man smote another,
Much blood was shed, and mischief was rife!
Then the king came forth from his chamber,
And a hundred armoured, helmeted nobles,
Each with a blade of steel in his right hand.
Then cried Arthur, the noblest of all kings:
'Seat yourselves, swiftly, on pain of death!
He who will not so, shall as swiftly die.'

Let the corpse be taken of him that began it,
Set a chain about it, and draw it to the moor,
And so cast it in the marsh, where it may lie.
And let all his nearest kin, that can be found,
Have their heads struck from their shoulders,
And the women that are his nearest kindred,
Let their noses be cut off, their beauty spoilt,
Let all their fair comeliness go to destruction.
For thus will I deal with all that villain's line.
And if I ever hear tell, from this day forth,
That any of my folk, be they high or low,
Cause strife with regard to this same quarrel,
Nor gold nor treasure shall serve for a ransom,
Nor fine armour, nor steeds, shall redeem him,
For he shall be drawn to pieces by my horses,
Or beheaded, as the traitor deserves by law!
Bring me the relics, and I will swear thereon,
And so shall all that were present at this fight,
Earls, barons, knights, and break not your oath.'
First Arthur swore, who was noblest of kings,
Then the earls and barons, thanes and swains,
That ne'er would they stir such conflict again.
Men took up the dead and carried them forth,
Then the trumpets were blown, full loudly.
Willing or not, each took water and towel,
And, once hands were laved, sat to the table,
In their dread of Arthur, the noblest of kings.
Cupbearers thronged, and the minstrels sang,
Harps sounded, and all the folk there rejoiced.

The making of the Round Table

Full seven nights thus, the people were treated,
Then, so it's said, Arthur went to Cornwall,
There a skilled craftsman met with the king,
And, once before him, he greeted the monarch:
'All hail, to you, Arthur, the noblest of kings!
I am your man, though much have I travelled,
A craftsman in wood, of much wondrous skill.

News is abroad that men fought at your board;
On a midwinter's day many a man fell there,
For their angry mood wrought murderous play,
Their pride would win them the highest seat.
Now a table I'd make you, exceeding fair,
That would easily seat a good hundred or more.
Side by side, so no knight seemed the highest.
When you journey, it might then go with you,
To be set where you wish, as you might decide.
Ne'er would you fear, to the world's end, ever,
That some fierce knight might engender a fight,
For the high and the low shall there be equals.'
So timber was brought, and the work was begun,
And in four weeks or so the same was finished.
On a high-feast day the knights were assembled.
And Arthur himself sat down first to the board,
Then he ordered the host of knights to be seated.
When all there were seated to address the feast,
Each spoke to another, as brother to brother;
All sat round about, none were seated without.
Every manner of knight was accommodated,
Seated side by side, both the high and the low.
None might boast of superior food or drink,
Than his comrades had, that were seated there.
For this was the table that Britons yet boast of,
For they tell many tales of Arthur, the king,
As will many a man that respects another,
Making a legend of one who is dear to him,
Granting him honour, more than he is worth.
None is so ill a friend will not boast of him.
Yet often if enmity comes between men,
The one man will speak ill there of the other
Though he were the best that ate at his board.
The one he now hates is then last, to his mind.
What minstrels sing, though, is not always lies,
For this is the truth respecting King Arthur,
That ne'er was a king of such virtues before,
For all that is written of here, that befell him,
From beginning to end, it certain and true,

And no more nor less were his kingly deeds.
The Britons so loved him, they boasted of him,
And uttered many things respecting Arthur,
That ne'er came to pass in this world's realm!
Yet there are marvels enough to tell of him,
Who would speak but truth of Arthur the king.
Then was Arthur exalted, his people most fair,
Such that no knight that was much-esteemed,
Well-noted for his manners, and for his deeds,
In England or Wales, in Scotland or Ireland,
France or Normandy, Denmark or Flanders,
Nor any land on this side of Mont Aiguille,
Was now thought a fine knight, his deeds aught,
Unless he knew of, and could speak of Arthur,
And of his noble court, and of his weapons,
And of his modes of dress, and his horsemen;
And could speak, and sing of the young king,
And of his knights, of their strength in battle,
And of their wealth, and how it became them.
For then was he welcomed in every realm,
Where e'er he came, even in mighty Rome,
And to all that heard tell of this King Arthur,
He seemed to them a fine and wondrous king.

Of Merlin's prophecies and Arthur's fate

For thus was it prophesied ere he was born,
By Merlin that was a great seer in this world,
That a prince would be born of Uther's line,
That poets would make a board of his deeds,
And fair minstrels sit to eat, and dine at will,
And draw draughts of wine from his valour,
And drink and make revel, both day and night,
Assured of a fine theme till the world's end.
And he prophesied more of things to come,
Saying that all would kneel at Arthur's feet.
And Merlin spoke of a greater marvel still,
Of the great depths of woe at his departure,
And that no Briton would believe his death

Could be till the coming of Judgement Day,
When the Lord will judge all Christian folk.
Nor can we speak otherwise of his dying,
For Arthur himself said to his brave Britons,
In Cornwall there, where Walwain was slain,
And he himself was harmed wondrous much,
That he'd fare thence to the Isle of Avalon,
To Argante, the fair, who'd heal his wounds.
And once he was all whole, he would return.
This the Britons believe: that he will so do,
And e'er they look for when he might return,
As he promised them, ere leaving this realm.

Arthur agrees to an expedition into France

While Arthur was yet powerful in this world,
A wise king, at peace, and loved by his men,
With many proud knights mighty in courage,
His folk spoke to him of a wondrous venture,
For thus the gathering said to their high king:
'Lord Arthur, we would venture into France,
And win all the land there to your own hand,
Drive out the Frenchmen, and slay their king,
Take their forts, and garrison them with Britons,
And rule then, in strength, all that fair country.'
Then answered Arthur, the noblest of kings:
'I'll do as you wish, but visit Norway first,
And take my brother-in-law, Loth, with me,
He whom I love, he that is Walwain's father,
For tidings have come to me from Norway
That Sichelin, who was king there, is dead,
And to Loth he has bequeathed his kingdom.
For he is bereft of either son or daughter,
And Loth is his sister's son; well, it befalls.
I shall crown Loth as the Norwegian king,
And instruct him how to govern the people.
Then, after doing so, I say, I shall return,
And ready the army and pass thence to France,
And if the king denies me, and seeks not peace,

I will fight him, and topple him to the ground.'

He first visits Norway to install Loth as king there

So, Arthur had the horns and trumpets blown.
And summoned to the shore his bold Britons.
Many a good ship was anchored in the flood,
And full fifteen hundred set out from land,
And flew o'er the waves as if borne on wings,
Setting their course thus, full sail, for Norway.
Swiftly reaching the land, they made harbour
And disembarked, in strength, upon the shore.
Arthus sent messengers o'er all the country,
And ordered all to render up Loth their king,
For if they would not then he must slay them.
The lords of Norway sent envoys in reply,
To tell the monarch that he must depart:
'And, if you will not, woe you shall find here,
For it shall ne'er come to be that our folk
Will e'er accept a foreigner, here, as king.
Though Sichelin be dead, yet we shall choose
One from the many here, at will, to rule us,
And this is the truth: no other shall we have.
Either go your ways, and turn you homeward,
Or, this day a seven-night, prepare to fight.'
The lords of Norway held to their counsel,
That a king they would have of their own folk,
For they held Sichelin's wishes as pure folly;
None but their own man should rule them ever.
'Rather we'll choose Riculf, the powerful earl,
And we will raise him up to be our monarch,
As it pleases us to do, and gather our forces,
March on Arthur, and conquer him in battle.
Loth we shall hunt and harry from our land,
If we fail to destroy him also, in the fight.'
They took Riculf, and raised him to the throne,
Though Norway's realm was not his by right,
And they summoned a host from everywhere.
For his part Arthur marched about the realm,

Passed o'er the land, and destroyed the towns,
Rich spoils he took, and many a man he slew.

Arthur defeats Riculf

Riculf swiftly marched against King Arthur;
The hosts met together, and battle began.
The Britons advanced, and sorrow was rife,
Bright blades were plucked from their sheathes,
Faces grew pale, and heads flew to the field,
Men set lances to breasts, strong armour shattered,
The bold Britons pierced shields, and warriors fell.
And so, while it was yet light, lasted the fight.
To east and west the Norwegians were driven,
Whether twas north or south Norwegians fell.
Bold were the Britons, Norwegians they slew,
Full five and twenty thousand felled to earth,
While Riculf their king lay dead on the field.
But few of the foe were left, to sue for peace.
Arthur looked at Loth, who was dear to him;
The noble king called to his brother-in-law:
'Loth, my close relation, come hither to me.
Now I do grant you all of this kingdom here.
You shall hold it for me, as your protector.'
Then came Walwain there, Loth's eldest son,
From the Pope in Rome, one named Supplice,
Who had raised him and dubbed him a knight.
Well, was it that Walwain was e'er born,
For he was noble-minded and full of virtue,
He was e'er generous, and the best of knights.
All Arthur's men were greatly emboldened,
Now Walwain the brave had come to the host,
And Loth, his father, was confirmed as king.

He then sails to Denmark

Then Arthur spoke with Loth, and bade him
Keep the peace, and in peace love his people,
And to slay all violent men that broke the law.

Then Arthur, the noble king, called to his knights:
'Where are you, my Britons? We march forthwith.
Prepare my good ships anchored by the shore.'
And all the knights did as Arthur commanded.
When the fleet was ready, Arthur fared to sea,
And with him went all his Norwegian thanes
And his bold Britons, sailing o'er the waves.
The noble king next came ashore in Denmark,
And had his tents pitched wide o'er the fields,
And trumpets blown to announce his coming.
In Denmark, then, there ruled a mighty king,
He was named Aescil, the lord of the Danes.
He saw that Arthur had won all that he willed.
Aescil the king bethought what he might do,
For loth would it be to him to lose his knights.
He saw that he might not withstand Arthur
By marshalling the forces that he possessed.
He sent greetings therefore to Arthur the king,
And hounds and hawks, and the finest steeds,
Silver, and red gold; his words most prudent.
And he did more, did Aescil the noble king,
He sent messages to Arthur's noblest lords,
And prayed them to intercede at court for him,
So that he might become King Arthur's man,
Saying that he would render his son hostage,
And send a tribute each year from his realm,
A boatload of gold, treasure and rich garments,
Its hold filled to the top; this he'd guarantee,
For he would swear that he'd not prove false.
Arthur, noblest of kings, heard these tidings,
Amid his knights, that Aescil the Danish king
Would be his underling, and without a battle.
Then the noble monarch was much gladdened,
And, thus, he gave answer, with mild words:
'Tis well for the man that shows his wisdom,
And wins peace and amity, with friendship,
Who, when he sees that he is bound about,
His beloved realm doomed to destruction,
Skilfully loosens the bonds that hold him.'

He summoned the king and his eldest son,
And the King of Denmark came promptly.
What Arthur willed the king sought to fulfil,
So, they met together, and were reconciled.

Arthur proceeds to France

Then said Arthur, the noblest of all kings:
'I'll fare now to France with my brave host.
I'll take nine thousand knights from Norway,
And nine thousand more from Denmark too.
Eleven hundred shall I have from Orkney,
And from Moray full three thousand men.
Five thousand shall be mine from Galloway,
Full eleven thousand more out of Ireland,
While thirty thousand of my bold Britons,
Shall I have, in force, to march before me;
From Jutland too ten thousand warriors,
And from Frisland five thousand, in my host,
To add to Howel's bold men in Brittany.
With all these I shall seek to enter France,
And, by the Lord, I will muster yet more,
For from all the lands that I have in hand,
I will summon every man that can fight,
On pain of life or limb if he should not,
And they will go with me to battle Frolle,
Who was born in Rome, of a Roman line,
And is King of the French; he shall be slain!'
Forth went Arthur, till he came to Flanders.
The land he won, and garrisoned with men,
Thence to Boulogne, took the land in hand,
And marched his men deeper into France.
Arthur ordered his knights to take naught,
Wherever they went, unless they did aright,
And paid its price, as purchased by the king.
Frolle, in France, heard of Arthur's coming,
And how he won all that he looked upon,
For whoever met his eyes yielded to him.
Then was Frolle, the king, greatly afraid.

At the time when all this was transacted
The land of the French was known as Gaul,
And Frolle had come from Rome to France.
And every year sent tribute from his land,
A thousand pounds of silver and red gold.
Now Frolle, that was the ruler of France,
Heard of the woe that Arthur had brought.
And he sent messengers direct to Rome
And bade the Roman people to advise him
Of how many thousand knights they'd send
That he might better fight against this Arthur,
And drive the mighty monarch from his land.
A host of knights rode forth from Rome,
Full five and twenty thousand entered France.
Frolle, midst his host, heard of their coming,
And he and his army marched to meet them,
So that both, brave and keen, made together,
An immense and powerful force, set for battle.

He encounters Frolle leading the French and Roman troops

Now Arthur, noblest of kings, heard of this,
Gathered his men, and advanced against them,
And ne'er was there any king alive on earth,
That e'er commanded such a force as his,
For he led the bravest men from all his lands,
So many men that he knew not their number.
Both sides couched their lances, and charged,
Rushing together with great speed and strength.
All day fierce and mortal blows were rife,
Warriors wrought ruin, or fell to the earth.
And many a fierce fighting man ate dust.
Helms resounding, many an earl quoted:
'Shields shivered; men were doomed to fall.'
Then called Arthur, noblest of kings, aloud:
'Where be you, my Britons, my bold knights?
The day goes forth, the foe stands against us;
Let us attack them, with sharp spears enough,
And teach them now the road back to Rome!'

At King Arthur's words, his knights spurred forth,
Man after man, as a fire spreads its sparks.
Fifty thousand men followed their monarch;
Brave those warriors galloping to the fight.
Frolle, they smote, amidst his armoured host,
And put him to flight there, he and all his folk,
And Arthur slew countless riders of his force.
Then, towards Paris, Frolle the powerful fled,
And, sorrowing at his plight, barred the gates,
And, sad at heart, these the words he uttered:
'Far better for me, if I had ne'er been born'
Then was heard sore lament, through all Paris,
The burghers trembled, reinforced the walls;
The gates they strengthened, to sorrowful cries.
Food they gathered, all that was thereabouts,
And bore it into to the city, from every side.
Thither came all that fought alongside Frolle.

The siege of Paris

Arthur now heard, that noblest of all kings,
That Frolle, with all his forces, lay in Paris,
And boasted that Arthur he'd well withstand.
Arthur, undaunted, marched straight to the burgh,
Raised all his tents, and laid siege to the walls.
Four weeks and a day he did so, on every side.
The folk that lay there within were sore afraid.
The burgh was full, and soon the food was gone.
After four weeks, with Arthur camped about,
There was endless suffering within that city,
Its wretched people starving and lamenting;
Great was the weeping and the sore distress.
Frolle was asked to make peace with Arthur,
To become his man yet retain his honour,
To bow to the realm of Arthur the strong,
And save the folk in the city from starvation.
Frolle the great-hearted freely gave answer:
'Nay, by the God above who makes our fate,
Ne'er shall I be his man, nor he be my king.'

For myself, I'll fight; God defend the right!'
Then Frolle the great-hearted added, freely:
'Nay, by the Lord that grants us light of day,
Ne'er will I yearn or seek for Arthur's grace,
But I'll dual against him, in single combat,
Man against man, before all my people,
Hand to hand, with Arthur, the mighty king.
Whichever's the weaker will prove the lesser,
Who lives shall make his friends the happier,
And whichever gains the better of the other,
Shall win the other's land to his own hand.
This I will undertake, if Arthur will do so,
And all of this I will swear upon my sword.
And hostages I will yield, three royal sons,
As pledges, against this same agreement,
That I will ne'er violate it, upon my life.
For better it is to lie dead before my folk,
Than that I should see them die of starvation,
While many a man we have lost in battle,
Fifty thousand lie dead upon the ground,
And many a good woman is now a widow,
Many a child bereft of father, or comfort,
And my folk are gripped now by hunger.
Tis better then to deal between ourselves,
And to win or lose this kingdom in fight,
And the better man to gain it honourably.'
Frolle sent twelve knights with his message,
Forthwith, to ride to Arthur the great king,
To ask if he would hold to such agreement,
And win the kingdom with his own hand,
Or be slain, to the harm of his own people,
The winner to hold France in his power.'
When Arthur, noblest of kings, heard this,
Ne'er was he so blithe in his life before,
For he liked these words of Frolle the king,
And this the answer of Arthur the good:
'Fair the words of Frolle, king of France;
Better it is that we two contest his realm,
Than that more of our brave knights be slain.

This challenge I accept before all my people,
And, on the day I'll set, will do his bidding,
And that shall be tomorrow, before our men,
In single combat, and let the worse man fail.
And if either retracts, and betrays his pledge,
Let him be named a recreant in both realms,
And let men sing then of that worthless king,
That swore so, and yet his knighthood forsook.'

Arthur agrees to fight Frolle in single combat

Frolle, the king of France, received his answer,
That Arthur himself would risk single combat.
Now Frolle was both grave and firm by nature,
And had issued the challenge before his knights,
And now might not for shame disgrace himself,
And deny the offer he'd made within the burgh,
Though, in truth, despite his words, he'd thought
That Arthur would balk at, and refuse, the fight.
For if Frolle, the King of France, had known
That Arthur would respond to his challenge
He'd not have sent it for a ship full of gold.
Nonetheless, Frolle was keen for the combat,
Tall was he, and strong, and of serious mind,
And replied that he'd be there on the morrow,
Upon the isle, in the midst of the river,
Which is the centre of the burgh of Paris:
'There will I fight, and so maintain my right,
Mounted, and clad in armour, as a knight,
Let tomorrow be the day: and win who may!'
This answer Arthur, the noble king, received,
Saying that Frolle would maintain his right,
And ne'er was he so blithe in all his life.
Arthur began to laugh, and he cried aloud:
'Now it seems Frolle will fight, tomorrow;
The place he chooses, the isle in the river,
And it becomes a king to hold to his word.
Let the trumpets blow and tell my warriors,
So that every man may pray for me tonight,

Asking the Lord, who wields our every fate,
To preserve me from Frolle, this fierce foe,
And with his right hand defend my honour;
And, should I win this kingdom for my own,
Every poor knight of mine shall be the richer,
And twill prove that tis the Lord's work I do.
Now may He help me to perform all well;
Let the Heavenly King on high stand my aid,
For Him will I praise, the while I yet do live.'
All the long night men chanted by candlelight,
Loudly the clerics sang holy psalms of God.
When the morrow dawned, folk began to stir,
Arthur the strong took his weapons in hand,
He dressed him in a fine-woven linen shirt,
A cloth tunic, and precious armour of steel,
And set upon his head a most goodly helm.
At his side hung his fine sword Caliburn;
He wore steel greaves, spurs upon his ankles.
Well-armoured indeed, he mounted his steed,
And his squire handed him his fine rich shield,
It was stoutly made, and plated with ivory.
In his hand was placed the shaft of his lance,
With a fine-wrought steel spear-head at its tip,
Carmarthen-made, by Griffin the armourer,
That was Uther's, who was king here before.
When the king was weaponed, he advanced,
Boldly he rode, for all that were there to see,
And, since the world was made, none has told
That e'er so fine a knight e'er rode a steed,
As Arthur, the king, he that was Uther's son!
Brave chieftains rode there, behind the king,
Four thousand bold warriors formed the van,
Noble fighting-men all clad in polished steel,
Bold Britons, bristling with fierce weapons.
After them came Walwain, with five thousand,
And after them came a further sixty thousand;
Many a brave-hearted Briton brought up the rear.

The roll-call of Arthur's commanders

There was Angel the king, Loth and Urien,
And there was Urien's son, named Yvain,
There was Kay, and Bedivere, and Howel
The King of Brittany commanding his host,
Cador was there, that was eager for battle,
And Gillemaur the strong, King of Ireland,
King Gonwais that was Orkney's darling,
With Doldanim the keen, out of Gothland,
And Rumareth the strong, of Winet land,
And King Aescil, the champion of Denmark.

He slays Frolle in the duel

Fok there were on foot, many a thousand,
So many that ne'er lived there a man so wise
That could tell those thousands in any tongue,
Except he owned the wisdom of the Lord,
Or had the wit and knowledge Merlin had.
Arthur marched forth with his countless host,
Until to the walls of Paris burgh he came.
On the west side of the river, there he lay,
To the east was Frolle, with his great force,
Ready to fight Arthur, before his knights.
Arthur called for a boat, and stepped aboard,
Gripping his shield, armed, and with his steed,
The boat was driven, firmly, from the shore,
To the isle, where he and his charger landed.
Then his men that were there, as commanded,
Held the boat from drifting, upon the wave.
Frolle likewise called a boat, though uneasy
That he had ever thought to fight with Arthur.
He went forth then to the isle, fully-armed,
And stepped ashore, leading his good steed.
Then his men that were there, as commanded,
Held the boat from drifting, upon the wave.
Upon the isle, but those two kings remained.
There might you have seen the folk afeared,

That now lined the river-banks on either side.
Some watched from walls, the roofs of halls,
Some lined the parapets, adorned the towers,
To behold the deadly combat of their kings.
Arthur's men humbly prayed to God the good,
And his Holy Mother, for aid and victory,
While others simply prayed there for their king.
Arthur grasped the saddle, mounted his steed,
While Frolle, armour-clad, performed the same,
Each man at his end of that isle in the river.
They couched their lances, those royal knights,
Urging on their steeds, those goodly warriors.
Ne'er in any land was there e'er one so wise
That might have foreseen which would conquer.
For both were brave, and skilful, and eager,
And exceeding great in their skill and might.
They spurred their steeds, and met together
So fiercely their horses' hooves raised sparks.
Arthur smote Frolle, high on his tall shield,
Whose good steed nigh leapt into the flood.
Arthur drew his sword, in its tip death lay,
He charged at Frolle as his mount recovered,
And sought to bring their combat to an end,
But Frolle grasped his long spear in his hand,
And weighing up his foe as he drew near,
He struck Arthur's charger full in the chest,
So, the lance sank deep, and Arthur tumbled.
A cry rose from both sides, the heavens rang;
The Britons would have started for the isle,
If Arthur had not leapt swiftly to his feet,
Grasped his strong shield, adorned with gold,
And with it defended himself from Frolle.
The latter drew and raised his good sword,
And rushed upon Arthur in fierce attack,
Striking hard at the British king's shield,
So that it shattered, and fell to the field.
Arthur's helm was struck, the steel gave way,
And a wound he received, four inches long,
That, being no more, failed to hurt him sore,

Though the blood ran down o'er his breast.
Now Arthur was most wrathful, in his heart,
And he swung Caliburn, with all his might,
Smiting Frolle on the helm with that blade,
So that he split both helm and head in two,
With the steel below, till it reached his chest.
Frolle fell on the grass, and his spirit fled.
Then the Britons rejoiced, their voices loud,
While their enemies sought swiftly to flee.

Arthur enters Paris

Arthur, the strong, now returned and landed,
There, the noblest of kings called to his kin:
'Where are you, Walwain, dearest of men?
Command these Romans to depart in peace;
Let each enjoy his home as God intended.
And hold to peace, on pain of life or limb.
And I order that on this day, seven-night hence,
They shall march together, and attend on me,
For if they do so, the better it shall serve them.
They shall pay homage to me, with honour,
And I will be sovereign over all their realm,
And will set just laws among their people.
For, now, the Roman laws shall cease to hold,
Those laws that were observed under Frolle,
Whose corpse lies on the isle, deprived of life.
Shortly his kin shall hear the news in Rome,
With tidings of King Arthur, for I'll go there,
To raze their walls, and remind them of Belin,
Who led the Britons there, conquered them,
And won the lands that were held by Rome.'
Arthur then rode to the gate before the city,
And the magistrates of the place came forth
To conduct the king, and all his men, within.
They delivered up the fortress and the halls,
They delivered up to him the whole of Paris,
And there was bliss among the English folk.
Then, on a day that King Arthur appointed,

All the menfolk of that city became his men.

Arthur divides his forces: Howel conquers the central realms

King Arthur divided his whole force in two.
Half he gave to Howel, and bade him march,
With a mighty host, to conquer all the land.
Howel did all that his monarch commanded,
He conquered Berry and all the lands about,
Anjou, Touraine, Auvergne, and Gascony,
And all the towns and villages they owned.
Now, Guitart was the duke who ruled Poitou,
Who'd ne'er submit, but stood against him,
He sought not peace but countered Howel,
And, oft, he felled our folk, and oft retreated.
Howel wasted the land, and slew its people.
When Guitart, the lord of Poitou, realised
That his whole nation would be ruined,
He and his host forged a peace with Howel,
And he became noble Arthur's own man.
Arthur was gracious, and loved him dearly,
And bade him enjoy his realm, under him.
Full nobly Howel succeeded in his task.

Arthur completes the immediate conquest

Arthur held France, and settled it freely.
He set his force to march o'er that land,
To Burgundy, which he then set in hand.
And afterwards he fared into Lorraine,
And over all that land he had dominion.
All that he came upon submitted to him,
And thence he turned once more to Paris.
Once Arthur had established a true peace,
And all was settled, and the folk prospered,
He ordered all his longest-serving knights,
Those who were, of old, his companions,
To come to him, and garner their reward.
To some he gave land, some gold and silver,

Some received castles, others rich attire.
He bade them go in joy, and cease to sin,
Forbidding them weapons, in retirement,
And bade them love God truly in this life,
That He might grant them sight of paradise.
There to enjoy their bliss, midst the angels.
All the older knights left for their estates,
While the younger stayed with their dear king.
For nine years King Arthur governed France,
And yet afterwards he governed it no longer,
Though while he was there, the folk prospered;
Many a proud noble bowed humbly before him.

And rewards his knights

At Easter, when the folk had finished fasting,
Arthur gathered his great noblemen together,
All of his highest lords that were in France,
And those in the many realms that lay about.
There he affirmed those noblemen's rights,
Such that each had what he'd richly earned.
For thus said Arthur, the noblest of all kings:
'Kay, you that are my steward, attend to me,
Here I grant you Anjou, for your great deeds,
And all of the rights its ownership entails.
Next, kneel to me, Bedivere, my cup-bearer,
I grant you Neustrie, the nearest to my lands.'
Neustrie was then how Normandy was named,
And these two earls were the closest to Arthur.
More, said Arthur, the noblest king there was:
'Come hither, Howeldin, my own kinsman,
Take you Boulogne, and hold it, prosperously.
And Borel, wise and wary knight, come hither,
Here I grant you Le Mans, and with all honour;
Hold it, as prosperously, for your good deeds.'
Thus, he dealt out, to men he thought worthy,
His most lordly lands, according to their deeds.
Then were blithe speeches, in Arthur's halls,
Then was harping and song, all bliss among.

Arthur returns to London

When Easter was gone, with April, from the city,
When the grass was long, and the ocean calm,
And men spoke of the month of May in town,
Arthur gathered his folk, and rode to the shore,
And readied his ships, till all were of the best,
And sailed to this land, and so came to London.
To London town he came, to the people's bliss.
All was blithe there, all that now met his eyes.
And loud they chose to sing of Arthur the king
And of the great honour the monarch had won.
Many a man kissed his son, and cried welcome,
Daughters their mothers, brothers their brothers,
Sisters kissed sisters; their hearts full softened.
In a hundred places, the people lined the way,
Asking may a question of those who'd returned,
And the knights boasted of victories, and spoils.
None, howe'er skilful with words they might be,
Could tell half the joy that possessed the Britons.
Each fared as he wished throughout the kingdom,
Travelling freely from burgh to burgh, happily.
And, thus, things stood in that same wise, a time,
For bliss was in Britain under that noble king.

He declares his wish to be crowned at Caerleon

Once Easter was gone, and summer come to town,
Then Arthur took counsel with his noblemen,
And said that he would be crowned at Caerleon,
And his folk were to gather there at Whitsunday.
In those days, men thought no place, where'er,
As fair, nor as famed, as Caerleon on Usk,
Unless it was that rich city men called Rome.
And many a good king's man in this our land,
Held it richer than Rome, Caerleon's burgh,
And that the Usk was the finest of all rivers.
Meadows were there, full broad, by the burgh,

There, were fish and fowl, and many a fairness,
And a wondrous host of wild deer in the woods.
There, all forms of mirth a man might think of.
But ne'er has it thrived thus since Arthur's day,
And ne'er shall, twixt this day and doomsday.
Some books say the burgh was then bewitched,
And, truth to tell, the thing may indeed be so,
In that burgh stood two most noble minsters,
One of Saint Aaron, holding many a relic,
And one of Saint Julian, martyred with him,
His standing high with the Lord, and therein,
Many a holy nun, many a high-born woman.
The bishop's seat was sited at Saint Aaron,
Wherein was many a canon of the Church,
And those canons were famed far and wide.
There was many a fine clerk, full of learning,
Much skill they used to observe the heavens,
To gaze at the stars above, both far and near,
And that craft of theirs is named Astronomy.
Oft they told the monarch of things to come,
Made known to him the future of his realm.
Such was Caerleon's burgh, rich in wealth;
There, much bliss, while active was its king.

The End of Part VI of Layamon's 'Brut

Part VII: King Arthur: to the last battle

Contents

Arthur's noblemen gather at Caerleon.....	368
The crowning of King Arthur	370
The feast at Caerleon.....	371
The games at the feast.....	373
The embassy of twelve Roman knights	374
Arthur takes counsel as to his response	376
The Sibyl's prophecy	379
Angel adds his support to that of Howel.....	379
Arthur sends his reply to Rome	380
The messengers return to Rome and deliver Arthur's reply.....	381
The roll-call of Rome's allies	382
Arthur's force goes to meet them.....	383
He entrusts the kingdom meanwhile to Mordred.....	383
King Arthur's dream	384
News of a monster out of Spain.....	386
He sets out with Kay and Bedivere to slay the creature	387
Bedivere and the crone.....	388
Bedivere and Arthur confer as the giant returns	390
Arthur challenges the giant	390
The giant is conquered.....	391
Arthur advances to Burgundy	392
He sends an embassy to the Roman emperor	393
The embassy reaches the Roman encampment.....	394
Walwain slays Quencelin and Marcel	396
Arthur's troops confront the Roman pursuers	398
Boef, the Earl of Oxford, defeats Petreius	400
Arthur orders Petreius to be taken to Paris	400
Emperor Luces sends an army to rescue him	401
Guitard, King of Poitou joins the battle	403
Having slain Evander and his men, he retreats	404
Arthur sets a trap for the emperor, at Saucy	404
Luces marches from Langres	407
The armies engage	408

Bedivere is slain, Kay is mortally wounded	409
Ridwathlan avenges his uncle, Bedivere	410
A fierce contest ensues.....	411
Walwain and Howel engage the Roman emperor	412
Arthur rallies his men; the emperor is slain.....	413
Kay is laid to rest at Kinun (Chinon).....	414
Bedivere is buried at Bayeux	414
Arthur proposes to march to Rome.....	415
King Arthur's dream	415
He vows to avenge Mordred's treachery	418
Arthur returns to Britain.....	419
The hosts meet in fight; Walwain is slain.....	419
Arthur pursues Mordred to Winchester	420
Guinevere departs	421
The last battle	422
King Arthur's departure; Merlin's prophecy	423

Arthur's noblemen gather at Caerleon

Arthur sent messengers through all the land,
 He bade the earls and the barons gather,
 He bade the kings and the chieftains come,
 He bade the bishops, and he bade the knights,
 He bade the realm's freemen, upon their lives,
 To be there at Caerleon, on Whitsunday.
 So, knights everywhere, began their ride,
 Towards Caerleon, from many a kingdom.
 On Whitsunday, there appeared King Angel,
 The king of Scotland, with his fine people,
 Many a fine Scotsman following that king;
 Urien, from Moray, with his son Yvain;
 Stater, of South Wales, Cadwal of the North;
 Cador of Cornwall, whom Arthur held dear;
 Maurin of Winchester, Morvith of Gloucester;
 Gurguint of Hereford, and Beof of Oxford.
 Cursalein the bold, out of Bath, came riding;
 Jonathas of Dorchester, Urgein of Chester;
 Kinmare of Canterbury, Arnald of Salisbury;
 Balien of Silchester, and Wigein of Leicester;

Argal of Warwick, with many a companion;
 Dunwale, Apries' son, Elauth's son Kegein;
 Coit's son Kineus, and Cradoc, Catel's son;
 Adlein, Cledauk's son, Grimark, Kinmark's son;
 Run, Margoit, Netan; Clofard, Kincar, Aican;
 Kerin, Neton, Peredur; Madoc, Trahern, Elidur;
 These were Arthur's earls, the noblest of thanes,
 To add to the nobles of Arthur's Round Table,
 Whose count none knew, nor could all name.
 There were three archbishops, then, in this land,
 York, London, and Saint Dubric, in Caerleon,
 A holy man, and most excellent in all things.
 The archbishop's seat that was then at London,
 Was later moved to be the see of Canterbury
 When the English, afterwards, won this land.
 None might count the folk there at Caerleon.
 There was King Gillemaur, darling of the Irish,
 Malverus of Iceland, and Doldanim of Jutland,
 Kinkalin of Frisland, and Aescil King of Demark;
 There was Loth the Keen, the King of Lothian,
 And Gonwais of Orkney, darling of the outlaws.
 Thither that fierce man, the Earl of Boulogne,
 That was named Leir, came with his people,
 And from Flanders marched the Earl Howeldin;
 This earl brought with him all the French lords,
 Twelve earls most noble, that ruled all of France,
 With Guitard, Earl of Poitiers, Kay, of Angers,
 Bedivere, of Normandy, then called Neustrie,
 Borel of Le Mans, and Earl Howel of Brittany,
 He that was a free man, fair were his garments,
 And all the French folk were clothed right fair,
 With fine arms and armour, and sleek horses;
 And, besides all these, came fifteen bishops.
 Ne'er a knight was there living, nor a swain,
 Nor a good man that was rightfully athane,
 From the Spanish ports, to the German lands,
 That would not have been present, if invited.
 In their fear of, and respect for, noble Arthur.
 When all were there, the kings and their folk,

There were full many men to view besides.
Many a foreigner had come to the burgh,
And many a novelty was before the king;
Many a bold knight, wondrously dressed.
And there were lodgings nobly prepared,
There were inns, neatly and strongly built,
And many a thousand tents upon the field.
There too meat, wheat, oats beyond measure;
None can tell the tale of the wine and ale.
There was fodder too, and all that was good.

The crowning of King Arthur

When the king had gathered all these folk,
On that Whitsunday, sacred to the Lord,
All the bishops appeared before their king.
The three archbishops stood before Arthur,
And took up the crown that was his by right.
Then, with great joy, they set it on his head,
And with God's counsel went in procession.
Saint Dubric, Christ's chosen, walked before,
He had London's archbishop on his right,
While York accompanied him, upon his left.
Fifteen bishops, of many countries, followed,
And they were clothed in garments most fine,
That were embroidered with gleaming gold.
Four kings walked next, leading the monarch,
Who bore in their hands four golden swords.
He who went first was that steadfast knight,
Cador of Cornwall, he King Arthur's darling.
The second, sword in hand, was Scotland's king,
Then the kings of North Wales and South Wales.
And, thus, they led the monarch toward church.
The bishops chanted, leading forth their king;
The trumpets blew, and all the bells were rung;
Many a knight did ride, the ladies forth did glide.
Of a certainty tis said, and true indeed it was,
That no man e'er saw, in this mortal world,
Half so great a pomp, or so fine a gathering,

As advanced with Arthur, born of noble line.
Into the church went Arthur, that high king.
Archbishop Dubric, one blessed by the Lord,
Legate of Rome, and prelate of the people,
Then chanted the holy mass before the king.
The queen was there, with many a fair lady,
The wives of the wealthiest men in the land,
And noble daughters chosen by the queen,
As the queen commanded, on pain of penalty.
On the south side of the church sat Arthur,
On the north side sat Guinevere, his queen.
Came before her four queens she had chosen,
Each bore a golden wand in her left hand,
And three white doves sat on each shoulder.
These were the wives of the four great kings
That each bore in their hand a sword of gold,
And had preceded Arthur, that great monarch.
Many a maid attended there upon the queen,
And many a rich garment clad those fair folk.
And many from foreign realms felt jealousy,
Each thinking themselves finer than another.
Many the knights that gathered to the church;
Some in hopes of gain, others for the king,
And some to behold the many noble ladies.
Cheerful hymns were sung, that lasted long.
Yet I deem, if they had lasted full seven years,
Those therein would yet have wished for more.

The feast at Caerleon

When the mass was done, they left the church,
And the king and his nobles went forth to feast,
And joy there was amongst that host of people,
While the queen for her part sought her rooms,
With that wondrous crowd of ladies about her.
Ere the king sat down to table, with his folk,
Saint Dubric, that good man, came to the king,
And took from off his head the golden crown,
Whose weight of gold Arthur might not bear,

And he placed a lighter crown upon his head,
Then went to find the queen, and did the same.
This was the custom in olden times, in Troy,
Among those fair folk of whom Brutus came.
The men, when feasting, set themselves apart
From the women, and thought that it was well.
Once the king was seated with the menfolk,
His earls and barons all at table for the feast,
Then came forth his steward, and he was Kay,
The noblest knight in the land, next the king.
Kay had at his command many a chosen man,
There were a hundred knights there all told,
To serve the king, his barons, and his earls,
And each wore garments adorned with gold,
And upon their fingers many a golden ring.
They bore all from the kitchen to the king.
By Kay's side was Bedivere, the cup-bearer,
And with him were earls' sons of noble line,
And the sons of noble knights, come hither,
And seven king's sons followed after him.
Bedivere led them, bearing a golden bowl.
And after these a hundred stepped forward
With all the kinds of drink men might seek,
While fairest ladies waited on the queen,
A hundred chosen noblewomen before her,
To serve her, for her part, and those with her.
And ne'er was there a man born of woman,
No layman or clerk ever, in any country,
That could tell, in whate'er tongue might be,
Of a half of the wealth that was in Caerleon,
Of the silver and gold, of the fine garments,
Of the noble lords there amid that gathering,
Of the deer-hounds, the hawks, and the horses,
All the rich display of that crowd of people.
Of all that fair folk, that dwelt in this land.
For this land's folk were deemed the fairest,
And its women were thought the most charming,
The best dressed, most learned, and the wisest.
Lively of mind, they'd agreed that each lady

Would wear fine garments each of one colour,
Some wore red, some white, and some green;
Wondrous vile to them was the mixing of hues,
And those that did so they thought unworthy.
This country then was more famous than any,
And the folk of this land most dear to the king.
The noble women that dwelt in this country
Had, as one, declared, demanded, in truth,
That none should take to herself a husband,
No matter how handsome might be the man,
Except he'd been three times tried in combat,
His courage known, and he thus approved.
Then he might boldly go seek for to wed her.
Because of that custom, the knights were brave,
And the ladies nobler, with the best of manners.
In Britain was bliss enough, in Arthur's day.

The games at the feast

When the king and all his folk had eaten,
Out of the burgh went the boldest knights,
All of the kings there, and all the chieftains,
All of the clerks, and all of the bishops,
All of the earls, and of the noble barons,
All of the thanes, and all of the swains,
In their fair garments, and took the field.
Some raced on horseback, and some on foot,
Some began leaping, and some fired bows,
And other folk wrestled, in noble contest.
Some in the field fought with lance and shield,
And some drove balls all across the meadow.
Many a manner of game they played there,
And whoever, in all their play, won honour,
Was lead, with song, before his monarch,
And Arthur would grant a gift rich and fine.
The queens and ladies watched from the walls,
To see all the thanes and the swains at play,
And such games and play lasted three full days.

The embassy of twelve Roman knights

On the fourth day the king made a speech,
And gave rewards to all of his fair knights.
Silver and gold, land and horses, he gave,
Castles, and clothes to please his companions;
Many the bold Briton that stood before Arthur.
Now, many a fine novelty viewed the king,
As Arthur the noble graced the festive board,
And before him sat many a king or chieftain,
Bishop, or clerk, or brave knight and bold.
Into the hall came a wondrous procession,
There came twelve knights most finely clad,
Most noble warriors, noble was their armour.
Each had on his finger a great ring of gold,
And encircling his head was a golden band.
Two by two these knights entered together,
Each holding the hand of a brave companion,
And glided over the floor, towards Arthur,
Until they all stood before Arthur the king.
They greeted him boldly, with noble words:
'Hail to you, Arthur, darling of the Britons,
Hail to your people, all of your lordly folk!
We come here, twelve rich and noble knights,
Sent hither, from Rome by our emperor Lucus,
He who now rules all the Roman people.
He bade us come to greet Arthur the king,
And to speak in words of utmost severity,
Saying he is astonished, wondrously much,
That given your place and role in middle-earth,
You dare thus to oppose the will of Rome,
And set your sights on what our ancestors held.
And that you are counselled, and are so bold
As to threaten Lucus, commander over all,
Our emperor, and the noblest of men alive.
You hold all this kingdom in your sole hand,
And will not serve its one and only emperor,
The land that Julius held, and won in battle,
You hold all power, and deny Rome its rights.

Send word, now, to Rome, by us, King Arthur,
And we shall bear it to our emperor, Luces,
Saying you concede that he's your overlord.
And you'll become his man, and hold him so,
And so right the wrong done our emperor
In slaying Frolle the king of France, at Paris,
Whose land you wrongly hold, thus, in your hand.
If within twelve weeks you choose the right,
And suffer the punishment approved by Rome,
Then you may live still among your people.
And if you will not, so much the worse for you,
For the emperor will come to his own land here,
As a true king should, and display his strength,
And lead you, bound before him, back to Rome;
Then will you suffer what you now put to scorn.'
At these words the Britons leapt to their feet,
Then did all Arthur's knights show their anger,
And swore a mighty oath, by the Lord on high,
That those who bore this word to them must die,
And be drawn apart by horses, such their doom.
The Britons leapt towards them, in their wrath,
Caught their hair and dragged them to the ground.
Then the Romans would have been ill-treated,
Had Arthur not leapt, like a lion, to their aid,
And spoke these words, that noblest of Britons:
'Leave them alone, and swiftly; they shall live;
Nor shall they suffer harm in this my realm.
They are come hither as their lord commanded,
And that is their emperor, that men call Luces.
Every man must go where his lord bids him go,
And none should condemn a messenger to death,
Unless he should prove a traitor to his master.
So, sit you still, all you, knights within the hall,
I will take counsel as to what should be done,
And what word they shall bear to their emperor.'
Then the folk retired again to their benches,
And the clamour died down before the king.

Arthur takes counsel as to his response

Then up rose Arthur, the noble monarch,
And summoned to him the seven princes,
The earls, and barons, and the boldest knights,
And the wisest heads amongst the people,
And he went into a chamber fast enclosed,
Of ancient stonework, fair built by craftsmen,
And therein he and his counsellors communed,
As to what answer to grant the emperor, Luces.
When all the noblemen were seated there,
In awe of the king, the counsellors fell silent,
For none dared speak in fear of reprimand.
Then up stood Cador, noblest of the earls,
And spoke these words before the high king:
'I thank the Lord, who granted us the light,
That I am alive to hear the present tidings,
This message, brought to us and our king.
For, now, we may no longer lie here idle,
And tis idleness does harm to every land.
In idleness a man will lose his manhood;
Idleness turns a knight from what is right;
Idleness conjures a deal of wickedness;
Idleness has ruined many a thousand men.
Through scant deeds idle folk ne'er speed.
Long have we lain still; our honour the less,
But now, thank the Lord that grants us light,
The Roman folk, it seems, are so emboldened
That they threaten to attack us in our burghs,
And bind our king, and bear him off to Rome.
Yet if all is true that these messengers say,
And their masters have become so daring
As to invade our land, we should prepare
A tale for them to tell, of pain and woe.
Let their boldness bring upon them sorrow.
Ne'er have I loved peace, at home, overlong;
Peace binds us fast, and well-nigh in a swoon.'
Walwain, that was Arthur's kin, heard all this,
And he was much angered by Cador's speech,

And this answer gave him Walwain the Good:
‘Cador, you’re a man above such ill counsel,
For peace is good, and amity good likewise,
When freely kept as the Lord has wrought it.
For peace leads good men to do good works,
All folk are better, and the land knows bliss.’
Arthur listened to the dispute of these knights,
And thus spoke the monarch to his fierce folk:
‘Come, be seated, swiftly now, one and all.
And each man, upon his life, hark now to me.’
Then all were still, and most silent in the hall,
And the noble king spoke thus to his bold folk:
‘My earls, my barons, my courageous knights,
My steadfast warriors, my own dear friends,
With you have I conquered, beneath the sun,
And am powerful, and fierce against all foes.
Gold and treasure have I, and rule o’er many.
Nor was this won alone; we all wrought so.
To many a battle I’ve led you, and your skill
Has, thus, set many a realm in my two hands.
You are good knights, and bold men in a fight;
Tis a thing I’ve well-proven in many a land.’
Then again spoke Arthur, noblest of all kings:
‘Now, my noble thanes, Rome’s proclamation
You have heard, all the message that they send
To us, in words and writ, and of their wrath.
Now we must think how we may rightly defend
Our realm, and our honour, against these folk,
These powerful Romans, and give them answer,
And send a reply, in prudent terms, to Rome,
And learn of this emperor why he so hates us,
And why he greets us threateningly, with scorn.
For greatly it shames, and greatly it angers me,
That he reproaches us for Rome’s past conquest.
Julius Caesar won this land, they say, in battle.
By showing power through conflict men do harm,
So, Caesar sought, by strength, to quell the Britons,
Who failed to defend their realm, and their land,
Bur delivered all this country into his hands.

Thereafter all those Britons became his men.
Some of our kin were slain, some he executed,
Drawn apart with horses, some he led captive.
Thus, this land he conquered, though wrongly so,
And now Rome asks for tribute from our realm.
Yet we might ask such of them, if we so wished,
By right of King Belin, and Brenne his brother,
Duke of Burgundy, for from them we descend.
They besieged Rome, conquering all that realm,
And hung her hostages before Rome the strong,
And after took the land, and set it in their hand.
Thus, by rights, we should besiege Rome too,
Besides Belin and Brenne, what of Constantine,
He was Helen's son, who came of British line.
He won Rome, and was emperor o'er that realm,
And, besides Constantine, who ruled that land,
We might speak too of Maximian the strong,
That was King of Britian, and conquered France;
For Maximian the strong took all Rome in hand,
And Germany, with wondrous deeds, he gained,
And held the lands from Rome to Normandy.
All these warriors were my noble ancestors,
And owned the realms to which Rome laid claim,
Thus, by precedent, Rome should be mine too.
She wishes, it seems, for tribute from our land,
Which, rather, I'll have of Rome if you so will.
In my thoughts I desire to possess all Rome,
While Rome desires in Britain to bind me fast,
And slay my Britons, in some wicked action,
But if the Lord grants, who made day and night,
Then Rome shall surely pay for her bold threats,
And tis her own Roman people that shall perish,
While I shall rule where her emperor does now.
Now, sit you all still, and I will speak my will.
And none shall do otherwise than hold to it.
The emperor and I want all that both now hold,
And let him that has his wish hold all forever,
For we shall prove to whom the Lord grants it.'

The Sibyl's prophecy

So spoke the noble king who ruled the Britons,
And that was Arthur, who was Britain's darling.
His warriors sat there listening to his speech.
Some sat still the while, some spoke together;
To some it seemed good, others were troubled.
When they had listened at length to the king,
Then spoke Howel the fair, lord of Brittany.
These were the words he uttered to the king:
'Lord, hearken to me, as I have done to you,
True are the words you say, fortune to you;
Of old it was prophesied what we shall see.
Long years ago, before the times we know,
The Sibyl spoke it, and her words were true,
And wrote it within a book for folk to learn,
That three kings would go forth from Britain,
And would conquer Rome, and all her realm,
And all the countries that do lie towards her.
The first was Belin, that was Britain's king,
The second Constantine, that was emperor,
And you shall be the third to conquer Rome.
If you choose to begin this, then you will win,
And I will aid your cause with all my strength.
I'll send messages o'er the sea to my thanes,
To my bold Britons, that we might prosper.
All the knights of Brittany I will command,
Throughout my realm, that upon their lives
They must be ready soon to march on Rome.
My lands I'll set in pledge for gold and silver,
All the goods that I possess for silver and gold;
To Rome we'll go, and slay the emperor, Lucus.
Ten thousand knights I'll lend, to gain your rights.'
Thus spoke the noble Howel, king of Brittany.

Angel adds his support to that of Howel

When Howel had spoken, as he thought fit,
Up spoke King Angel, Scotland's darling.

He stood upon a bench, between his brothers,
Loth and Urien, that is, two most noble men.
Thus spoke King Angel to the monarch, Arthur:
‘Lord Arthur, I speak now words of truth to you,
In concord with all that Lord Howel has said.
No man shall fail you, but all shall undertake
This same campaign of yours, upon our lives.
And hark awhile, Lord Arthur, to my speech.
Amidst your Council, demand of your earls,
And of all the highest nobles in your lands,
To say in truth what they will do to aid you,
In slaying your foes, and gaining your rights.
I shall lend you three thousand champions,
And ten thousand foot-soldiers, brave in battle,
And we shall go to Rome, and conquer there.
For greatly it shames us, and greatly it angers,
That they should seek for tribute from our land.
But with the Lord’s help, who grants us light,
They shall all pay for doing so with their lives.
When we have conquered Rome, and her realm,
We shall win all the lands that lie towards her,
Apulia, Germany, Lombardy, and Neustrie,
(So, Normandy was known), and hold France,
And Brittany, and tame Rome’s swollen pride.’
When Angel ceased, then all there answered:
‘Shamed be the man that fails to help thereto,
With goods and weapons, and with all his might.’
Thus were all Arthur’s folk right truly angered,
The knights so wrathful they leapt up and down.

Arthur sends his reply to Rome

King Arthur, on hearing the mighty clamour,
Called aloud for silence, filled yet with anger:
‘Sit still, knights in the hall, that I may speak,
And I’ll tell you all what message I shall send,
My writ I shall send, and a writ well-indited,
To fill the emperor there with woe and care,
Saying that I will soon fare forth to Rome,

Not to bear tribute there, but to bind him fast,
For I will hang him, and lay waste his realm,
And slay every knight that faces me in fight.'
Arthur composed his writ, full of hostile words,
And it was handed to the messengers to bear,
Though he granted them fine garments to wear,
And bade them go swiftly to Lucus in Rome.
And he would follow as swiftly as he might.

The messengers return to Rome and deliver Arthur's reply

The twelve knights departed for their land,
None were so burdened with silver and gold.
Thus, Arthur treated them, despite their words.
The twelve fared forth till they reached Rome
And greeted their emperor, their overlord:
'Hail to you, Lucus, that are highest o'er us!
We were with Arthur, fiercest of monarchs,
And his proud message we bring to you.
This Arthur is every inch the warrior-king,
Wondrous powerful he, and his knights full bold.
There, everythane bears himself like a knight,
Every swain bears himself like some richthane,
While the knights carry themselves like kings.
Meat is abundant there, and the men are bold,
And the women like to the fairest now alive,
And Arthur, the bold king, is the finest of all.
He sends this message, by us, to give to you;
This word he sends, that he will come to Rome,
No tribute he'll bring, yourself he will bind,
And then he will hang you, and hold this realm,
Germany, Lombardy, Burgundy, Normandy,
France too, for Frolo he slew, thus will he do
Likewise, to us, and will seize our realm entire.
Here will he bring his kings, earls, chieftains.
We have here, to hand, the writ that he sends,
That says what he'll do when he comes here.'
Having heard the writ, the emperor felt ire.
And the nobles of Rome were full of anger.

They met oft in counsel, and there communed,
Ere they could agree on what they should do.
And the senators, who advised in that realm,
Counselled the emperor to issue his writ,
And send his messengers o'er many lands,
And bid those warriors who were allied
To their true cause, and sought land and wealth,
To come, if they ever loved them, to their aid.
Many came, swiftly, to the Roman burgh,
A far greater host than men had e'er seen.
They said they would march by Mont Aiguille,
And fight Arthur's troops where'er they were,
Behead or hang Arthur, destroy his army,
And seize his whole realm, for the emperor.

The roll-call of Rome's allies

The first who arrived was a fighting king,
And he was the ruler of Greece, Epistrod;
Then came Ethion, the duke of Boeotia,
And he was there with a mighty force,
Then Irtac of Turkey, and Pandras of Egypt,
Crete's King Ypolite, Syria's Evander,
Phrygia's Duke Teucer, Babylon's Maptisas,
Meodras of Spain, and Media's King Boccus,
Sextorius of Libya, Bitunia's Pollidices,
Ituria's King Xerxes, and Ofustesar of Africa,
There with his Africans, no king his like,
Leading his dark-skinned Ethiopian host.
The Roman knights marched out together,
Joining their allies, the noblest of all Rome,
Marcus, Lucus, Catel, Cocta, Gaius, and Metel;
These were the six men that led the Senate.
Once these folk from many a land were gathered,
The emperor took a count of that martial host,
And of bold knights, assembled ready to fight;
Four hundred thousand men were numbered,
Mounted and fully-armed, as became a knight.
And ne'er was there a man born, in any burgh,

That could count the soldiers that went on foot.
Before harvest-day that host began to march,
All along the road that led past Mont Aiguille.

Arthur's force goes to meet them

Let us leave them awhile, and speak of Arthur,
Noblest of lords, who'd summoned his kings,
Each of whom had then gone to his own land,
And returned with his knights to the assembly,
Bearing weapons displaying their great might.
They came from Scotland, Ireland, and Jutland,
Iceland, Denmark, Norway, Orkney and Man,
A hundred thousand brave knights fully-armed.
And besides the knights arrayed in this manner,
Came hosts of the boldest men known to any,
With great battle-axes, and long-bladed knives.
And a hundred thousand knights joined the host
From Normandy and Anjou, Brittany and Poitou,
Flanders and Boulogne, Lorraine and Louvain,
The best of men, fine weapons in their hands.
There came the twelve defenders of France,
And twelve thousand men they brought outright,
While Arthur led fifty thousand from this realm,
All bold knights, and courageous folk in battle.
Howel of Brittany had his ten thousand there,
Noble knights, the best that were in that land.
There, were more men on foot, when they set forth
Than any man alive could make full count of.
King Arthur ordered all that host to assemble
On pain of death, on a set day, at Barfleur,
For there he would gather all his good people.

He entrusts the kingdom meanwhile to Mordred

The rule of this land he passed into the hand
Of a well-renowned knight, Walwain's brother,
Mordred, an evil man; nor had Walwain other.
Thus, Mordred was Arthur's kin, and of his line.

A wondrous fine knight was he, but full of pride.
Arthur's sister's son, his love was for the queen,
Which was ill-done, a treachery to his uncle.
Yet all was kept secret abroad, and in the hall,
For no man dreamed that such a thing was so.
Men thought him, as Walwain's brother, true;
The truest knight that e'er was amongst them.
Through Walwain, Mordred was loved the more,
And Arthur, the noble, well pleased with him,
Placed his whole kingdom in Mordred's hands,
And those of Guinevere, the highest woman
That dwelt amongst the people of this land.
He entrusted all to Mordred and the queen,
(Ill that they were born) which pleased the two.
Yet they brought this land to endless sorrow,
And the Devil shamed them both, in the end.
The traitor Mordred lost his life and his soul,
And, thereafter, he was loathed in every land,
So much so that for his soul none would pray,
Due to his treachery towards King Arthur.
All that Arthur possessed he handed Mordred,
His land and his people, and his dear queen,
And then took his army, of folk most fair,
And marched at speed towards Southampton.
Soon many a ship was anchored in the roads,
And the king filled them with his mighty host.
Thousands on thousands boarded those vessels,
While father wept for son, sister for brother,
Mother with daughter, as the fleet departed.
The weather was good, favourable the wind,
Anchors were raised, and the host were joyful.
The fleet now wound its way to the open sea,
The ships surged forth, and the gleemen sang,
The sails they hoisted, hauling on the ropes;
The weather was mild, and the waves were calm.

King Arthur's dream

So still was the sea, that Arthur fell asleep,

And, as the king slept, he dreamed a dream,
So wondrous a dream it troubled the monarch,
Such that he then awoke, and was much afraid.
And, being so troubled, began to groan aloud.
None of the Christian knights there was so bold
As to ask the king's state, ere he spoke himself.
Thus, Arthur spoke, to himself, when he awoke:
'Lord Christ above, that governs each man's fate
Protector of middle-earth, comforter of all folk
Through your merciful will, and ruler of angels,
Through your grace turn my ill dream to good.'
Up spoke Angel, the king, Scotland's darling:
'Lord, come say if your dream bodes well for us.'
'Willingly;' said the king, 'may it promise bliss;
Where I lay, in my slumber, I began to dream,
And thought a wondrous beast rose in the sky,
In the east it rose, most loathsome to the sight,
And with storm and lightning, sternly, advanced;
No huge bear is there in any land so loathsome.
Then from the west, winding o'er the heavens,
Came a burning dragon; burghs he swallowed,
And he with his fiery breath lit all this realm.
In my dream I thought the sea began to burn,
Because of the fiery flames and light it shed.
This dragon and the bear then met together;
They smote each other fiercely in swift assault.
The sparks flew from their eyes like firebrands.
Often the dragon was above, and then beneath,
Nonetheless, in the end, he boldly rose on high,
And then plunged downwards in fierce attack,
And smote the bear so hard that it fell to earth;
Then it slew the bear, and tore it limb from limb.
When the battle was done, the dragon departed.
Such the dream I dreamt, where I lay and slept.'
The bishops, and the learned men, that listened,
And all the earls and the barons, who had heard,
Uttered words of wisdom according to their wit,
Interpreting the dream, as seemed best to them.
But nary a knight dared do so in evil manner,

Lest he lose the limbs and life so dear to him.
Forth they began to voyage, sailing swiftly;
The wind was with them, and the weather fine;
Both met their needs, and they landed at Barfleur.
To Barfleur, in Cotentin, came a mighty host,
From all of the lands that Arthur had in hand.
As soon as they could each group disembarked,
While the king ordered his men to seek lodging,
So that he might rest till his folk were there.

News of a monster out of Spain

He was there but a night, when a warrior came,
A knight, bringing tidings to Arthur the king.
He said a monster was abroad, out of Spain,
A loathsome fiend that came from the south,
And was e'en now wreaking harm in Brittany.
He was wasting the land hard, by the shore
Where lies Mont Saint-Michel, far and wide.
'Lord king,' said the knight, 'I say outright,
That he has stolen a kinswoman from you,
For a lady, nobly-born, lies in his power,
Howel's lovely daughter is she, one Helen,
Noblest of maids, the fairest maid of all.
He has borne that noble lady to the Mount,
A full fortnight he has prisoned her there,
And we know not if he's taken her to wife.
He seizes for his meat, all men he meets,
Cattle and horses, goats, swine and sheep.
Our land he will destroy, unless you aid us,
Both land and folk need you to ease our care.'
Then spoke the knight again to the monarch:
'Behold that great wood, lord, by the Mount,
Wherein is the fiend that destroys our folk.
We have fought against him many a time,
Yet at sea, and on land, our folk he arms,
The ships he sank, those aboard he drowned,
While those that fought on land, he laid low.
Long we've endured, in leaving him alone,

To do as he so pleases, after his own will.
For our knights no longer dare to fight him.'

He sets out with Kay and Bedivere to slay the creature

Hearing all this, Arthur, the noblest of kings,
Called for Kay, his steward, and kinsman;
Bedivere too he called for, his cup-bearer.
He bade them ready themselves, at midnight,
To accompany their monarch, fully-armed.
Not a Christian must know of their going,
None but themselves, and their companions,
For they had six bold swains to serve them,
Their guide the knight who'd brought the news.
When all were asleep, at midnight, they set forth,
Led by the monarch, Arthur, noblest of kings.
Their guide led them on, till it was daylight;
Then they dismounted, and prepared themselves.
They saw the smoke from a fire, not far off,
On an island that rose from the shallow sea,
And there was another hill close to the shore,
Where burned a second fire, large and bright.
They were unsure then which hill to ride to,
Such that the giant might not see their coming.
Arthur chose to advance to the nearer fire,
And slay the giant if they found him there.
Forth rode the king, until they reached it.
But found there only the great fire burning.
Arthur rode about it, his knights by his side,
But found only the fire, and countless bones,
Thirty cart-loads at least it seemed to them.
Arthur, uncertain, called to Earl Bedivere:
'Bedivere go down swiftly from off this hill,
And ride through the water, and fully-armed
Approach the fire on the island, cautiously,
And look, all about you, there, for the fiend.
If you perceive the monster, in any wise,
Descend again until you reach the water,
And tell me quickly what you have seen.

If you reach the fire, and the fiend sees you,
And advances upon you, here's my war-horn,
Gold-bedecked, blow it with all your might,
And we shall come to you as fast as we may.
If you find him by the fire, and are not seen,
I forbid you to commence a fight with him.'

Bedivere and the crone

Bedivere listened to all that Arthur said,
Gathered his weapons, and forth he went,
And reached the isle and climbed the steep.
He bore in his hand a spear exceeding strong,
And a shield at his back, glittering with gold.
The helm, high on his head, was all of steel,
His body was clad in a fine suit of armour,
And he carried a sword of steel, at his side.
Forth he now advanced, the powerful earl,
Till he reached the fire, and halted neath a tree,
Where he heard one weeping wondrous much,
Weeping and whining with piteous cries.
The knight, believing that the giant was there,
And waxing in anger, much like a wild boar,
Now forgot all that his king had said to him,
Raised his shield to his chest, gripped his spear,
And swiftly approached the blazing fire,
Thinking to meet the fiend, and prove himself.
Yet he found a woman there, shaking her head,
A grey-haired wife who wept from wretchedness,
Cursing her fate that she still lived on earth.
She was seated by the fire, weeping piteously,
Gazing at a grave, and murmuring, plaintively:
'Alas, Helen! Alas, poor maid I fed and fostered!
Alas, that the cruel monster has destroyed you!
Alas, that I was born! My limbs he has broken!'
Then she looked about her, fearing the giant,
But, looking all around, saw Bedivere nigh her.
Then said the grey-haired crone, seated by the fire:
'Who are you, fair thane? Are you a knight-in-arms,

Or are you an angel, your wings decked with gold?
If from heaven, then safely may you go hence,
If an earthly knight, harm shall be yours outright.
For, now, the monster comes, that will tear you
Limb from limb, though you were made of steel.
He fared to Brittany, to the finest of mansions,
To the castle of Howel, the noblest man there,
Broke the gate to pieces, and stormed within.
He pulled the great hall's walls to the ground,
He cast the doors down, scattered them five ways.
And found, in her chamber, the fairest of maids.
Helen she was named, born of a noble line,
Daughter of Howel, the noblest in Brittany,
Arthur's kin, and a ruler of noblest lineage.
I was her foster-mother, and raised her tenderly.
The giant led us forth and, full fifteen miles,
Into this same place, to the wild wood here;
Thus, has he treated us, a seven-night today.
As soon as he came hither, he raped the maid,
For fleshly relations he would have with her,
While she was scarcely fifteen years of age,
And could not withstand a giant's forcefulness,
So that he lay with her, and she wasted away.
Here then is buried Helen, fairest of maids,
My own foster-child, and Howel's daughter.
Once he had done with her, twas me he took,
He pushed me to the ground, and lay with me.
Now my bones the loathsome fiend has broken,
My limbs are shattered, life is hateful to me.
Now have I told you how he has dealt with us,
Flee swiftly from here, lest he should find you,
If he comes, his dire attack will prove fatal,
Ne'er was a man born that can withstand him.'
On hearing this speech that the woman uttered,
Bedivere sought to solace her with fair words:
'I am a man, dear mother, a brave knight am I,
And I will speak truth to you upon this matter,
That there was ne'er a combatant of any kind
A knight might not send sprawling to the ground,

To serve you, an old woman of little strength.
Yet good day for now, for I must take my way.'

Bedivere and Arthur confer as the giant returns

Down went Bedivere to find his sovereign,
And told him of how he had fared above,
And what the old crone had said of the maid,
And how the giant lay with the crone each day.
Then they conferred as to what they might do
So that the monstrous fiend might be destroyed.
Meanwhile the giant arrived back at his fire,
Bearing, upon his back, a mighty burden,
Consisting of twelve swine bound together,
Wreathed and tied with withies all about.
He threw down the carcasses, and sat nearby,
Then he laid great branches upon the fire,
And cut up six of the swine, smiling the while,
For he knew not of the visit she'd received,
And afterwards he lay with the old woman.
Then he raked the coals, and roasted his meat,
And began to make a meal of the six swine.
Next, he rose from his feast, smeared with ashes,
For the ashes of the fire had coated the meat.
Then he began to grumble and roar aloud,
And then he stretched his limbs, and lay down.
Let us leave the fiend, and return to the king.

Arthur challenges the giant

Arthur, by the water, took up his weapons,
As did Bedivere that wise and wary knight;
And Kay was there, Arthur's steward and kin.
Over the water they went, armed with the best,
And climbed the hill swiftly, in full strength,
Till they reached the fire where the giant lay.
He slept, while the woman sat there and wept.
Arthur then went aside with his companions,
And forbade them, on pain of life and limb,

To tread near unless they perceived the need.
Bedivere thus waited apart, with Sir Kay.
Arthur stepped forth, a stern-minded knight,
Till he reached the fire where the giant slept.
Now Arthur was e'er a warrior free of fear,
As was then manifest; wondrous it seemed,
That though he might have hewed the fiend,
Slain the monstrous creature where it slept,
Yet Arthur would not touch him, sleeping,
Lest he might be reproached for it thereafter.
Then Arthur, that noblest of kings, cried out:
'Arise, monstrous fiend, and meet destruction,
For, now, will I avenge the death of my kin!'

The giant is conquered

Before the king had ended his challenge,
The giant arose, and grasped his great club,
Thinking to shatter Arthur, at first blow,
But the latter raised his shield up on high,
And the giant's cudgel sent it shivering.
Arthur struck him swiftly with his blade,
And sliced away the chin, and the beard,
Then leapt behind the tree that rose nearby.
The giant pursued him, but struck him not;
He smote the tree, so shattering his cudgel.
Arthur then ran three times round the tree,
With the monster e'er running at his back,
But the giant was slow, King Arthur faster,
Thus, he overtook the giant, raised his sword,
Dealt a stroke, and smote him in the thigh.
The giant fell, Arthur halted, the fiend spoke:
'Grant me peace, lord; who are you that fight?
I thought there was none in this world's realm
That might defeat me lightly thus in battle,
Unless he were Arthur, noblest of monarchs;
Yet of Arthur, nonetheless, I was ne'er afraid.'
Then said Arthur the king, Britain's darling:
'I am Arthur; speak of your line and dwelling;

Who is declared your father, who your mother,
From what land have you now come hither,
And why have you murdered my close kin?’
The fiend answered, as he lay on the ground:
‘If you will let me live, and my limbs to heal,
All this will I answer, and do so faithfully.’
Then Arthur was angered, wondrous much.
And called to Bedivere, his brave champion:
‘Go to him, Bedivere, and strike off his head,
And bear it down with you from this high hill.’
Bedivere approached and beheaded the fiend,
And they went down to rejoin their companion.
Then the king sat down, to regain his breath.
And these were the words of Arthur the Good:
‘Ne’er fought I such a fight, in this country,
Except in slaying King Riun on Mount Ravin.’
Then they went forth, and came to the host,
Where the knights, viewing that severed head,
Wondered greatly where such giants were born.
Then, Howel of Brittany came to the king,
And the king told him of his daughter’s fate.
Then was King Howel much saddened at heart,
And he and his company fared forth to the hill,
Where Helen the maid lay buried in the earth.
He caused there to be raised a church most fair,
To the Lord’s own mother, the sacred Mary,
And then he named the hill, ere he departed,
Helen’s tomb, that is now Mont Saint-Michel.

Arthur advances to Burgundy

Now was Arthur’s host gathered all together,
From Ireland, and Scotland, and many a land.
So, the king caused the trumpets to be blown,
And the king of the bold Britons marched forth.
Through Normandy, known then as Neustrie,
Through France he went, leading on his host,
And out of France, and marched into Burgundy.
His scouts returned and the army halted there.

For they made known to the king, in that place,
That Luces the emperor, and his Roman host,
Came marching thither, from out their realm,
Seeking to conquer France, and all that land,
And then come hither and slay all the Britons,
And lead Arthur the bold, bound, back to France.
Then Arthur was angered, and pitched camp there,
There to abide till he knew where Luces was.
The river where the king lay was named the Albe.
There came a warlike knight to the king's host.
He was sore wounded; his folk had been slain,
And the Romans had then seized all his lands.
He brought tidings of where the emperor lay,
And would be found, if Arthur sought a fight
Or to forge a peace with the Roman people.
'For my lord Arthur,' said he, 'I say aright,
Better to seek their friendship than to fight,
For their force is as twelve against your one.
So many the kings and the chieftains has he,
Nowhere is there a man could number them,
All the men that follow him, and his Romans,
All those that attend on him for his favours.'

He sends an embassy to the Roman emperor

When the tale was told, and he'd heard all,
Arthur then summoned his dearest knights
And they met in counsel in a fort to the rear,
Beside the river that was named the Albe.
The fort, in a most fine and pleasant place,
Had been swiftly built, by many a soldier,
For Arthur thought, if the battle went astray,
And his soldiers were slain, or put to flight,
That he might take refuge in that same fort.
Then he summoned two wise nobles of his,
Both earls, and both to the king most dear,
The one the Earl of Chartres, named Gerin,
And much wisdom and experience had he;
And the other man was Beof, Earl of Oxford,

And far and wide was that warrior famed.
Then the king called for Walwain, his kin,
For he knew the Roman and British tongues,
Being nurtured in Rome for many a winter.
King Arthur sent these three to the emperor,
And bade him return to Rome with his host,
And ne'er lead his army forth to France again:
'For, if you march there leading your soldiers,
You will, indeed, receive a ruinous welcome,
Since France is my own realm, won in battle.
And if you agree not, but advance against us,
Then we will fight, and may the best man win,
And leave the poor folk to live on in peace.
Though the Romans conquered all this land,
Thereafter, they lost that same in the field,
While I won it in fair fight; that land will I hold.'
Forth went the knights, the goodly champions,
Gerin, Beof the fair, and Walwain the bold,
Armoured and helmeted, on their noble steeds.
Each bore at his shoulder a fine strong shield,
While a stout spear he grasped in his right hand.
Forth went many a noble youth from the host,
And rode to Walwain and begged him, earnestly,
To raise a quarrel with these people of Rome:
'So that we may fight and so prove ourselves,
For they have menaced us for many a year,
And threatened to behead us, many a time.
Shameful it would be if we now made peace
And there was no battle, ere we reconciled,
No lances broken, nor breastplates shattered,
Shield shivered, men hewn, blades bathed in blood!'
Forth went the three earls, through a mighty wood,
And took a path that led o'er the mountains,
Such that they came at last to the folk of Rome,
Riding, richly armed, upon their war-horses.

The embassy reaches the Roman encampment

There, a man might have viewed a vast host,

Thronging from their tents to see the knights,
And gaze upon their garments, and their steeds,
These men bringing word of Arthur the king.
For many questioned the three earls outright,
Asking if they had been sent to the emperor,
To speak before him, and to arrange a peace.
But never a word would the three earls say,
Until they reached the entrance to that tent
In which the emperor himself was dwelling.
They alighted, and relinquished their mounts,
And, still fully-armed, entered the pavilion,
And stood calmly before the emperor Lucus.
He was seated on a bed, they spoke the message
Each earl speaking in turn, as he thought fit,
And bade the emperor return to his own realm,
Nor seek again to bring an army into France.
While they spoke, the emperor said not a word,
He made ne'er a reply to those three brave earls.
But listened closely, evil thoughts in his mind.
Then Walwain was angered, wrathful that thane,
And these were the words of Walwain the bold:
'Lucus, the mighty, great emperor of all Rome,
We are Arthur's men, and he the noblest of kings!
He sent us on embassy with this harsh greeting:
He bids you march back to Rome, your realm,
And leave, to his rule, France he gained in fight,
And go remain in Rome, with your Roman folk.
Your ancestors invaded France, and won here,
Occupied the land awhile, then lost it thereafter.
Arthur gained it in battle, and he holds it now.
He is our lord and, we three, his brave warriors.
He has ordered us to say, clearly, to yourself,
That if you will not turn back, your bane he'll be.
For if you will not so do, but follow your will,
And would win his realm, tomorrow is the day
That you may have it so, if you can obtain it.'
Then the emperor answered him, in his anger:
'I'll not retreat, but rather this France I'll win.
My ancestors held the same, and I shall have it.

But if he accepts me as his lord, to be my man,
And will serve me truly, holding me his master,
I will make peace with him and all his knights.
And allow him Britain, that Julius once held,
And many another land he held in his hand,
Which, though he rules, he lacks all right to,
And which he will lose unless he makes peace.’
Then answered Walwain, that was Arthur’s kin:
‘Two brothers, Belin and Brenne, held Britain,
Conquered France, and then marched on Rome.
And dwelt there, afterwards, for many a year.
And Brenne he became emperor in that place,
And he had Rome; he ruled over all its people.
So, we have a right to the city you command,
And we, if we live, will hold that realm again,
Unless you acknowledge Arthur as your king,
And send him each year a tribute of your land.’
Now, beside the emperor, one of his kindred sat,
A great nobleman of Rome, named Quencelin;
This knight who was evil, answered his words.
‘Return to your land, knight, and tell your king
That bold you are, but we account you worthless;
The more you Britons boast the less your honour.’

Walwain slays Quencelin and Marcel

He would say more, but Walwain drew his sword,
And struck him on the head, and split his skull,
Then ran to his horse, leapt to the saddle swiftly,
And grimly then he shouted, Walwain the Good:
‘So help me, Lord, that granted us the daylight,
If any man be eager enough to pursue us now,
I will cut that same to pieces with my sword!’
Even as he spoke so, thus cried the emperor:
‘Arrest them all, for they shall be hung on high,
Or be drawn apart by horses; detain them all!’
While he spoke so, the three earls spurred away,
Each brandishing his long spear in his hand,
While raising his broad shield before his breast.

Swiftly the three rode on, as the emperor cried:
‘Seize them, slay them, they have shamed us all.’
Those that were there might have heard the shouts
From many a Roman calling: ‘To arms, to arms!
Bring me my shield; follow ere they escape us!’
Soon bold warriors were after them, fully armed,
Eight or nine or more, as e’er the earls rode on.
E’er, they looked back, e’er the Romans pursued.
A knight reached them, for he was fastest of all,
He called loudly: ‘Turn again, knights, and fight!
Shameful it is of you, thus, to take to flight.’
Now Walwain, he heard this Roman’s challenge,
Turned his steed about, and charged at the man,
Spitted him on his lance, and speared him through.
The knight died quickly, and Walwain cried out:
‘Better, knight so swift, if you’d stayed in Rome!’
Marcel was the name of that doomed nobleman.
Walwain, when he fell, had unsheathed his sword,
And now smote Marcel’s head from his shoulders.
Then spoke, Walwain the Good, in this manner:
‘Marcel, go tell the shades in Hell, your tale
And dwell there with Quencelin as companion;
Converse there, though better were you in Rome.
For this is how we teach men our British tongue!’
Gerin saw how Walwain had slain the Roman;
He spurred his steed, and charged at another,
And smote him through with his lance, and cried:
‘Ride now, Roman, and seek your place in Hell,
Thus, with God’s aid, we shall serve your like.
Threats are worthless unless the deed follows!’
Beof the Brave watched his comrades triumph,
Turned his horse about and charged at the foe,
Smote a man o’er his shield so his armour burst,
And drove his spear through the neck full soon.
Then the earl called out to his two companions:
‘The Britons will ne’er forgive us if we depart
Without achieving more than we have before!’
As the earl spoke, the three turned back as one,
And each, with his sword, then slew a Roman,

Then turned his steed, and they went their way.
The Roman knights pursued them as they rode,
Oft reproaching them, and flailing their swords,
Crying out: 'You shall pay now for those deeds!'
But, whate'er they did, could not unhorse them,
Nor do them harm, despite their bold attacks,
For oft the earls would turn their steeds about,
And the Romans fared the worst ere they parted.

Arthur's troops confront the Roman pursuers

So, they rode, for fifteen miles, till near a wood,
Hard by the fort where King Arthur now lay,
While for three miles, from the fort to the wood,
Stretched a host of nine thousand brave Britons
Who knew the lie of the land, sent by Arthur.
They sought to know if Walwain and his friends
Were yet alive, or if they'd be slain on the way.
The vanguard of this force traversed the wood,
In wondrous silence, till they came to a hilltop,
From which they could view all, and so halted.
They alighted there in the wood, armed and ready,
Except for a hundred men to keep good watch.
These saw three knights speeding o'er the plain,
And after them thirty, followed by three thousand,
And then thirty thousand Romans, in full armour.
Ever the earls rode swiftly on towards the wood,
Where their comrades were gathered, well-hidden.
The earls rode for the wood, and the Romans after.
There the Britons, on rested steeds, attacked them,
Striking them in front, and felling a hundred men.
The Romans saw Arthur advance, and were afraid,
And the Britons pursued, and slew fifteen hundred,
For Arthur sent thither sixteen thousand warriors,
Bold Britons, their breasts all clad in steel armour.
Against them came Petreius, a noble Roman earl,
With sixteen thousand warriors to aid their army,
And his force then attacked the Britons in strength,
Capturing some few men, and slaughtering many.

The Britons fled to the wood, the others pursued,
There the Britons on foot faced the Roman cavalry,
And the Britons advanced, and slew their horses,
And captured many, then drew back into the wood.
Then Petreius was angered at his faring the worst,
And he retreated, and turned back from the wood,
While the Britons followed, slaying men from behind.
The Britons came from the wood onto the plain,
And withstood the Roman army there, in the field.
There was a great fight; earls fell and many a knight,
Fifteen thousand fine men fell, ere the evening came.
There a knight, that set out to prove his strength,
Would have found many a duel to indulge him;
Might against might, shield on shield, men fell.
O'er the blood-soaked ground, littered with shields,
Both sides maintained the fight while it was day.
Petreius and his warriors now held their ground,
And soon the Britons fared the worst of the two.
Brave Boef, the noble Briton, the Earl of Oxford,
Saw that the Britons must lose, without counsel,
And summoned to him the wisest of his knights,
The best he knew, and the bravest in the field,
And rode to and fro before the host of Britons.
Then, uneasy as yet in mind, he addressed them:
'Knights, hark to me; may the Lord be with us.
We have come her to undertake this battle,
Without Arthur's counsel, who is our master.
If we do well, then we will please him greatly,
But if we do ill then he will take against us.
Follow my counsel, to victory we shall ride,
For we are three hundred helmeted knights,
All brave and active fellows, and nobly born,
Show your courage, you who are my kindred,
Follow my counsel, and ride where'er I ride.
Advance towards their host, as I now do,
And halt not to seize their steeds or armour,
But slay every foe that you meet, outright!'

Boef, the Earl of Oxford, defeats Petreius

With these words, the Earl of Oxford rode forth,
Like a hound that seeks to seize the wild hart,
And all his comrades followed him, in force,
Their horses sped swiftly; the foe they slew.
Woe to those who sought to stand before them!
Their mighty steeds trod their enemies down,
And they captured Petreius in that bold attack.
Boef rode to him, and seized him in his arms,
And pulled him from his steed to the ground,
Supported by his brave comrades around him.
The fighting Britons dragged Petreius with them.
While the Romans struggled boldly to free him.
Such that none there knew whom he did strike.
Much blood was shed; mischief was in that fight.
Now Walwain saw clearly what was taking place,
And began a charge of seven hundred knights,
That destroyed nigh every obstacle in their way.
He dragged Petreius onto his galloping steed,
And bore him away, loath though it was to him,
And left him in the wood where he was guarded,
Then returned to the field, and the fierce battle.
There a man might have viewed sorrow enough,
Many a shield shattered; many a knight fallen,
Helms bowing, and many a brave man dying,
Many a face pale, o'er the blood-stained field.
The Britons rushed to attack; the Romans fled.
The Britons slew many, many they took alive.
Woe! Woe, to the Roman folk, as the day ended!
Then men bound the captured Roman knights,
And led them to the wood, before Walwain.
Two thousand warriors guarded them that night.

Arthur orders Petreius to be taken to Paris

On the morrow, at dawn the folk began to stir.
They marched to greet their sovereign, Arthur,
Bringing him the captives, to his delight.

And thus said Arthur: 'Welcome, Petreius!
Now shall I teach you our British tongue.
You boasted to the emperor you'd slay me,
Capture my castles, and possess my realm.
Much good will that claim of yours do you!
Truly, I will grant you my castle in Paris.
There you shall dwell, though loth to do so,
For ne'er will you be free in this life again.'
Arthur saw all the knights they had captured,
And ordered three hundred of his company,
Knights that were brave and eager in a fight,
To rise the morrow, bind them all with chains,
And lead Petreius, with them, to Paris burgh.
Four earls he instructed to command them,
Cador and Borel, and Bedivere, and Richer.
He bade them act together, for their safety,
And then return full soon to their sovereign.
This was spoken openly, and the foe knew,
For their spies were present amidst the host,
And they heard all that Arthur had commanded,
And of where he would send the captive men.
And these spies travelled, by night, to Rome,
And told their tale there, before the emperor,
How the earls would lead Petreius to Paris,
And of the road they must take to that city,
Where men might take them, in a deep vale,
Rescue Petreius, and bind the Britons fast.

Emperor Lucus sends an army to rescue him

Lucus the Roman emperor heard their tale,
And, like a lion, prepared to attack his foe.
He ordered ten thousand knights to horse,
And sent them marching to that very place.
He summoned Sextorius, King of Libya
And Duke also of Turkey, Evander too,
From Babylon, who had joined his host,
And the senators Bal, Catel, and Carrius,
That were noblemen, and of the royal line,

And bade them ride to liberate Petreius.
As soon as evening fell, they marched forth,
Guided by twelve knights, of that same land,
Warriors exceeding wary, that knew the way.
The men of Rome rode out, armour clanging,
Helms on their heads, shields at their backs.
They marched swiftly all through that night,
Till they came to the road that ran to Paris.
They were the closer, the Britons still afar.
Alas, that Cadur, the keen, knew not that fact,
That the Romans had ridden there before them!
The Romans reached a fine place in a wood,
In a deep valley, the sides of it in shadow,
And they chose to ambush the Britons there.
They rested silently awhile till it was dawn,
And the creatures of the wild began to stir.
Then Arthur's men approached, on the way,
Who sang as they rode; the men were blithe,
And came to where their enemies now lay.
Nonetheless, Cadur was both wise and wary;
He and Borel the Rich, advanced together,
Leading the vanguard of five hundred knights,
Armed like champions, behind their shields.
Richer and Bedivere, rode on behind them,
Leading the knights whom they had captured,
The tightly-bound Petreius and his comrades.
There they soon came upon the Roman folk,
Who rushed towards them fiercely, in strength,
And smote the Britons hard, with bitter blows,
Breaking their ranks; mischief was among them,
The woods resounding there, where warriors fell.
The Britons resisted, making a stout defence.
Richer and Bedivere heard the sound of conflict,
They gathered Petreius, and sent their prisoners,
With three hundred men, deep into the woods,
While they advanced to support their comrades,
And smote the Roman folk with all their strength.
There many a blow fell; many a man was slain.
Then Evander, Syria's heathen king, perceived

That his fortunes waxed, while the Britons' waned,
And, gathering his troops, he advanced upon them.
The Britons, weakened, had much the worst of it.
The foe captured and slew all they came nigh.
Woe to the Britons, there, unaided by Arthur,
Thus, lacking all remedy, in their hour of need!
There was Borel caught, there he lost his life,
For Evander the king slew him most wickedly,
And three noble Britons, fighting at his side.
Three hundred of their company were slain;
Many were taken alive, and then tightly bound;
The rest, now bereft of all help, thought to die.
Nonetheless the Britons fought hard and bravely.

Guitard, King of Poitou joins the battle

Now the bold King of Poitou, had left the host;
Guitard was his name, Gascony he possessed.
Steadfast and renowned, he had ridden forth,
With a force of five hundred mounted knights,
And three hundred archers, eager for the fight,
And seven hundred on foot, prepared for war.
They had ridden up-country in search of stores,
Food for the men, and fodder for their steeds.
They heard the clamour from the Roman army,
Quit their mission, and rode towards the noise.
Strong-minded were they, and devoid of sloth,
And Guitard's forces soon reached the field,
The knights advancing, grasping their shields,
The archers and foot-soldiers pressing forward.
They fought as one, dealing out mighty blows.
Before this first bold attack, the Romans fell.
Full fifteen hundred were hurled to the ground.
And there was slain the noble King Evander,
There Catellus of Rome forgot his stern decrees!
Those who had thought to win now turned to flee;
The Romans turned their backs to the foe and ran,
The Britons pursuing them to work them harm.
Many they captured and many more were slain,

Till there were none left for the Britons to kill.
The Romans that escaped rode to the emperor,
And told him these tidings of Arthur the king,
For they thought it was Arthur that led the fight.
Thus, the emperor and his court were much afraid.

Having slain Evander and his men, he retreats

The Britons were content with that massacre.
Swift, they retreated, boldly, with their spoils,
Having buried the dead scattered o'er the field.
Forth they marched away, following Petreius
And the prisoners with their new captives,
And brought them tightly bound to Paris burgh.
Three castles they filled with their prisoners,
Held fast, as the noble Arthur had commanded.
All the Britons loved Arthur, while the folk
Throughout that whole land lived in fear of him,
And the emperor too was troubled by the king,
For all men went in dread of that noble monarch.
Then was Merlin's prophecy found to be true;
He had said that all Rome would bow to Arthur,
Ere its walls of stone be tumbled to the ground,
And Lucus the emperor, and Rome's senators,
That came there with him, would be conquered.
All that Merlin had said was now proven true,
As his prophecies long before, and e'er would be;
For, ere Arthur was born, Merlin foresaw it all.

Arthur sets a trap for the emperor, at Saucy

Now emperor Lucus had by then received report
Of how his men had been taken, his soldiers slain.
Then were there many sorrows amidst his army;
Some wept for their friends, some cursed their foes,
Some readied weapons, mischief was among them.
Lucus saw evil was befallen upon him, men lost,
And felt the harm of those losses, his noble host.
He was much concerned, for fear of King Arthur,

And spent his time in communing and counsel,
Then chose to march to Autun with his men,
Proceeding forth by Langres, for fear of Arthur.
Now, Arthur had his spies in the enemy ranks,
And so, soon knew whither the emperor went.
The king then caused his forces to assemble,
Gathered his best men, by night, most silently,
And forth the king marched with all his host.
He passed by Langres on his right-hand side,
And advanced to where Lucus soon must be.
When he came to a dale below a high down,
There he halted, that most bold of monarchs,
And the name of that dale was, in truth, Saucy.
Arthur alighted and gave orders to his men,
To prepare to fight as noble knights should,
So that when the Romans came riding by
They might attack like true warriors, bravely.
All of the swains and lesser thanes and such,
Many a thousand, the king placed on a hill,
With his many banners, as a wise stratagem,
Of whose success he hoped to boast full soon.
Arthur sent ten thousand of his noble knights,
All armour-clad, to man the right flank there,
Another ten thousand to the left-hand side,
Ten thousand went before him, ten behind,
His central force, some sixteen thousand strong,
While seventeen thousand well-armed soldiers
He sent into a fair-sized wood as his reserve,
All ready to issue forth if they were needed.
There was a nobleman, the Earl of Gloucester,
Morvith he was named, and exceeding keen.
Him he charged with the forces in the wood.
Arthur addressed his knights: 'If it befalls,
As God wills, that their army is overcome,
Pursue them if they flee, as best you might,
And all that you come upon take and slay,
The fat, the lean, the wealthy and the poor.
For never in any realm, nor any country,
Was there a band of knights as fine as you,

Knights as brave or strong, not in any land.
You are the best of all Christian warriors
As I am the mightiest king, beneath God!
May all here do fine deeds, and God speed!’
Then all, till then silent under the heavens,
Answered: ‘All we shall do, and do all well.
He will be naught that shows not his might.’
They ordered the foot-soldiers to their post,
Then raised the Dragon, the peerless standard,
Delivering it to the king’s own right hand.
Angel, the King of Scotland, led the vanguard,
Cador, the Earl of Cornwall, marched behind,
Beof, the Earl of Oxford, led forth a troop,
Gerin, the Earl of Chartres, had the fourth.
Upon the down, Aescil of Denmark stood,
Lot had one force, he was dear to the king,
And Howel of Brittany ruled o’er another.
Walwain the bold, was at the king’s side.
Kay, Arthur’s steward, led forth his men,
As did Bedivere the monarch’s cupbearer.
Howeldin, Earl of Flanders, led one force,
Guitard, king of Gascony, a mighty band,
Jonathas of Dorchester, Wigein of Leicester,
Commanded two bands that went on foot.
Cursalein of Chester, Urgein, Earl of Bath,
Commanded the forces on their two flanks,
That under those two brave knights advanced.
Arthur knew those two knights to be true.
When all was disposed as he thought good,
The King of Britain summoned his councillors,
Men wise in judgement, and to them he said:
‘Hark now to me, friends, that are dear to me,
Twice you have met the Roman host and won,
Slaying or taking those who covet our land.
My heart tells me these shall be overcome,
With the Lord’s help, and be taken or slain.
You have overcome Danes and Norwegians,
Scotland and Ireland too you have in hand,
France and Normandy you’ve won in battle.

Full thirty kingdoms are now in my power,
That you have gained for me, beneath the sun.
And these are the least of all men yet alive,
Heathen folk, and most loathsome to God,
That desert the Lord, and flock to Mahound.
Luces the emperor cares not for our God,
His host are heathen hounds, and God's foes.
We shall destroy them, yet prove safe ourselves,
Felling them, by God's will, who rules our fate.'
Then answered all the earls: 'We are ready
To live, or die in battle, with our dear King.'
The army then prepared for war by daylight.

Luces marches from Langres

Now Luces had set out, by now, from Langres;
He'd ordered the golden trumpets to be blown,
And readied the host, for forth he would go,
From Langres to Autun, as his road now lay.
Forth they had marched, that host of Romans,
Till they were less than a mile from Arthur.
Then the Romans saw the enemy ranks ahead,
The dales and downs gleaming with their helms,
Sixty thousand banners waving in the breeze,
Bright shields, shining breastplates, gold vests,
Stern warriors, steeds pawing at the ground.
The emperor saw King Arthur by the wood.
Luces, the lord of Rome, called to his knights:
'Who are these outlaws that would bar the way?
Raise your weapons now, and march upon them.
They shall be flayed alive, and so destroyed;
They must be destroyed with many a torment!'
At his words, the warriors raised their weapons,
And then spoke on, Luces, the Lord of Rome:
'Advance swiftly upon them, and fight hard!'
There accompanied him five and twenty kings,
Earls, and dukes, the lords of the Eastern world,
All heathen folk, holding their land for Rome.
'Lordings, may Mahound be gracious to you!'

Lucas cried, 'You are puissant thanks to Rome.
Rome is rightfully mine, the richest of burghs,
I, by rights, should be the greatest lord alive.
Here, in the field, you see our present foes,
Who think to rule on high o'er all our realm,
And hold us as base, and acquire our riches.
Let us attack them in strength, and boldly,
For our race bore the noblest of mortal men
And won every land that they looked upon.
Julius the mighty, ventured into Britain,
He who conquered many a fine kingdom.
Now these underlings would rule o'er us,
Yet shall pay for that boast with their lives.
Ne'er shall they return to Britain's shores!'
As he spoke, the whole host began to rouse,
Thousand upon thousand they assembled,
And each of the kings made ready his men.
When all was disposed, and the ranks filled,
Then were there fifteen companies all told,
Twenty kings, in pairs, commanded ten,
Four earls and a duke, ruled o'er the others,
While the emperor led his ten thousand men.
As they stirred, the ground began to echo,
Trumpets blew o'er the host in fine array,
War-horns resounded with strident voice,
As sixty thousand stirred beneath that noise.
The sound from Arthur's host was greater
Than of the sixty thousand and their tumult.
The sky shook, the earth began to tremble;
They charged as one, twas as if the heavens fell.

The armies engage

First swift darts flew, harsh as the driving hail,
Then sharp stones were hurled through the air.
Shields cracked, as strong spears were shivered,
Helms rolled to the ground, and fine men died.
Armour shattered, as the blood flowed forth
Staining the ground and their fallen banners.

Wounded men now wandered o'er the weald,
Six thousand were trodden beneath the steeds.
There, knights perished and the red blood ran,
Flowing along the roads in crimson streams.
Woe was midst the folk in that boundless fight.
In all the writings that the poets have wrought,
This battle was the third greatest ever fought.
At the last, none knew whom they should smite,
Nor knew whom they should spare, in the fight.
None knew another, so blood-stained were they.
Now, the armies changed position in the field,
Then they rushed together furiously again,
Until that fresh conflict hung in the balance,
Though the Romans were grievously harmed.
There rode forth the three kings of heathen lands,
Of Ethiopia, of North Africa, of Libya,
They came against the Britons, from the east,
And broke the stubborn ranks of their host,
And felled full fifteen hundred valiant men,
While Arthur's soldiers made a swift retreat.
But then against them rode two brave earls
Bedivere, that was cupbearer to the king,
And Kay that was his steward and his kin.
Seeing their Britons hewn by enemy swords,
Those two brave knights were filled with rage,
And pressed on, with ten thousand, to the fight,
And amidst the densest part of the throng,
They slew those Roman folk, most furiously,
Roaming the field according to their will.

Bedivere is slain, Kay is mortally wounded

Yet, too daring both, they fared most evilly.
Alas, alas that they proved not more wary,
Better guarding themselves against the foe!
For they were too bold, and fought too rashly,
And rode too far midst the widening conflict.
Then came, Boccus, the King of the Medes,
And that mighty heathen chief wrought harm.

He led his host of twenty thousand horsemen,
And gripping a strong spear in his right hand,
He thrust it forth and smote brave Bedivere,
High on the breast so that his armour burst,
Before and behind, while wounding his chest,
From out of which the warm blood flowed down.
There, Bedivere fell, stone dead to the ground,
There, indeed, was cause for woe and sorrow.
Sir Kay then sought to bear his corpse away,
Advancing swiftly with two thousand knights,
And they fought hard, and felled the Roman foe,
Slaying many a thousand among the Medes,
In a contest that proved both fierce and long.
Yet a proud and loathsome king approached,
With sixty thousand men from out his realm;
This was the bold Sextorius, ruler of Libya,
And that mighty king began to fight Sir Kay,
Wounding him nigh to death in that contest,
And grievous indeed was that woeful deed!
His knights bore Kay swiftly from the scene,
Piercing through the ranks with all their might.
Arthur was filled with sorrow at that news.
Now Ridwathlan, son of Bedivere's sister,
Descended, thus, in turn from that noble line,
Saw Boccus slay Bedivere with his spear,
And a woe it was to him to be still alive,
When his uncle that he most loved was dead.
He called forth the good knights, their kindred,
Those dearest to his uncle while he yet lived,
And five hundred gathered at his summons.
Then cried Ridwathlan, that noble warrior:
'Knights of my line, come hither now to me,
And we will avenge Bedivere, my uncle,
The best of our race, whom Boccus has slain.
Ride we on together now, and fell our foes!'

Ridwathlan avenges his uncle, Bedivere

So, saying, he charged, his comrades with him,

And found Boccus the king amidst the melee,
Who with his spear had slaughtered full many.
Ridwathlan drew forth his sword, and struck,
Smiting the fierce monarch through his helm,
So that it split in two, and his armour's collar,
Cleaving his head in two, down to the teeth;
The vile heathen king's soul sank down to hell.
Ridwathlan, his mood most harsh, cried out:
'Dearly you pay, Boccus, for Bedivere's death;
May your soul seek company with the Devil!'
With those words he sped swiftly to the fight.
Much like a whirlwind, raising high the dust,
So did Ridwathlan rush upon his enemies.
While they could wield their heavy weapons
That band of his slew all that they came nigh.
No better knights were active in that battle,
While the true hearts still beat in their breasts.
Boccus the king they slew, with a thousand foes,
Until Sir Bedivere's death was fitly avenged.

A fierce contest ensues

There was a brave earl there of a noble line,
And that was Leir, the lord of Boulogne,
And he saw an enemy captain now advance,
A prince of Babylon, who felled full many.
Seeing him succeed so, the earl was troubled,
He raised his shield, and grasped hard his spear,
And spurred his charger on with all his might
And struck this prince smartly neath his breast,
So that his armour burst, the lance sank through,
Pierced a fathom deep behind, and so he fell.
This prince's son, one that was named Gecron,
Saw, grasped his spear, and smote Earl Leir,
Sore on his left side, piercing through the heart,
So deep that the earl fell dead upon the ground.
Walwain saw this, as he fought amidst the press,
And was wrathful, as was Howel of Brittany, too,
Who then advanced, with fifteen hundred men,

Hardy warriors who charged behind their lord.
Walwain went before, a man most stern of mood,
With two thousand five hundred brave comrades.
They fought then, and their Roman foes suffered.
Howel attacked, with Walwain, in swift onslaught,
Up went a wondrous shout, the heavens trembled,
The earth shook, the very stones there shivered.
Streams of blood poured from the Roman folk,
The Britons slaughtering till they were weary.
Kinard, Earl of Striguil, parted from Howel,
With, after him, Labius, Rimarc, and Boclovius.
They were the finest servants of any monarch;
Strong earls, and of the mightiest among men.
So, out of pride, they refused to follow Howel,
But labouring alone slew all that they came nigh.
Then a powerful knight among the Roman host
Seeing how bold Kinard slaughtered their men,
Dismounted, grasping a steel spear in his hand,
And, bathing it in blood, fought his way onward
Till he came to the spot where Kinard laboured,
Shattered Kinard's breastplate, and slew the earl.
Then the whole Roman host shouting, advanced,
Felling the standards, striking the Britons down;
There, shields were shattered and warriors fell.
Fifteen thousand Britons died; vile mischief rife.
Long the contest lasted, and fierce was the fight.

Walwain and Howel engage the Roman emperor

Walwain made his way amidst the slaughter,
Gathering his knights where'er they fought,
While to him came riding Howel the mighty.
They massed their fair folk, forth they went,
Charging the Roman warriors in their anger.
Swift, they rode against them, and broke them.
Walwain caught sight of the emperor Lucas,
Struck with his sword at the other's shield,
At which the bold emperor returned the blow.
Shield clashed with shield, sword met sword,

Sparks flew from the steel, the hosts engaged.
Enraged, the bands of knights fought fiercely,
As the emperor sought to destroy Walwain,
That he might boast of the feat in after days.
All the Britons now thronged towards the pair,
While the Romans extricated their emperor,
Then the hosts clashed as if the sky would fall.

Arthur rallies his men; the emperor is slain

All that day the folk pursued their fierce fight,
Till the last moment, ere the bright sun set.
Then Arthur, noblest of kings, he called out:
'Now we will charge again, my brave knights,
And, with God's aid, we'll slay our enemies!'
With this, the trumpets sounded high and loud,
And fifteen thousand men thronged together,
Blowing their war-horns, as the trumpets cried.
And the earth trembled at that mighty clamour.
The Roman ranks turned their backs to the fight.
Standards fell; many a noble knight was slain.
Some there fled swiftly, while the fated died.
Much slaughter was there, and none might tell,
How many hundreds of that army were slain.
The emperor died there in unknown manner,
And none thereafter, of any land, could say
What man it was that had killed the emperor,
But when the fight was done, to the victors' joy,
Then was he found, pierced through by a spear.
Word came to Arthur, in his tent upon the field,
That the emperor had been thus deprived of life,
And he had a pavilion raised, upon that ground,
Into which the imperial corpse was then borne.
The body was covered o'er with gilded cloth,
And a vigil was held beside it for three days,
While a coffin was made, and clad with gold.
Then Arthur had Lucus of Rome laid therein,
That had been a most noble man while he lived.
Then Arthur, that was the noblest of the Britons,

Had the bodies of the powerful, kings and earls,
And the mightiest chieftains, slain in the battle,
Buried on the field, with pomp, and full display.
But to carry Luces' coffin a rich bier was made,
And three kings tasked with bearing it to Rome.
They were to greet the Romans with this taunt,
That here he sent them the tribute from his land,
And he would send them like tribute thereafter
If they sought to ask again for his realm's gold:
'Bring them these tidings from Britain's king,
And repair Rome's walls that once were fallen;
Therein, will I rule the fierce people of Rome.'
Yet this boast was idle, for otherwise it befell,
Since he departed his folk, all through Mordred,
Who was his kin, and yet the wickedest of men.

Kay is laid to rest at Kinun (Chinon)

Five and twenty thousand knights were lost;
All hewn in pieces, lay many upon the field,
King Arthur's brave Britons now bereft of life.
Kay had been sorely wounded; wondrous ill,
To Kinun he was borne, and soon was dead.
He was then buried there in the hermitage,
Beside the castle, the noble knight Sir Kay.
Kay was that earl, and Kinun was the castle.
Arthur had granted him the town, and there
He was entombed; Arthur named the place;
To mark Kay's death, he called it after him,
And now and for evermore the name stands.

Bedivere is buried at Bayeux

As for Bedivere, who likewise lost his life,
Arthur had him borne to his castle Bayeux,
And there he was buried, outside the burgh.
Beyond the south gate, he was laid in earth.
Leir, Earl of Boulogne was borne to that realm,
While Howeldin was carried into Flanders,

And all of the noble earls to their earldoms
From whence they came, and then all the rest,
Were buried in Touraine, where they yet lie.

Arthur proposes to march to Rome

King Arthur then dwelt awhile in Burgundy,
Which seemed to that monarch best to do.
He ruled the land, and he manned the castles,
Saying that he himself would hold that realm.
Thereafter the king renewed his former threat,
That in the summer he would march to Rome,
Win the realm, and be emperor in Luces' place.
Many of the Romans thought it would prove so,
Many, afraid, fled the city and their homes,
While others sent messengers to the monarch,
Or spoke with him of their desire for peace.
Some nonetheless sought to stand against him,
Defend the realm, and keep it from his grasp.
Though they were fearful of their own ruin,
And so knew no good counsel under Christ.
Then came to pass what Merlin had prophesied,
That Rome's 'walls' would fall before the king,
For indeed the emperor had fallen in the fight,
With fifty thousand men, its strong defence;
There Rome's rich people sank to the ground.
Arthur thus deemed that he had won all Rome,
And dwelt in Burgundy, the noblest of kings.

King Arthur's dream

Then, on a time, a brave man came riding,
And brought news to King Arthur of Mordred,
His sister's son; and the man was welcomed,
For Arthur deemed the tidings would be good.
Arthur spoke with the young knight till full late,
But the man would not say how matters fared.
On the morrow, when the folk began to stir,
Arthur rose, and stretched his arms out wide,

But then sat down, as it were much troubled.
A guard asked how he had fared, that night,
Arthur answered he was disturbed in mind:
‘This night, as I lay abed in my chamber,
I dreamt a dream that has brought me woe.
I dreamt that men set me upon a rooftop;
I bestrode that hall as if I were on a steed,
And gazed upon all the lands I now own.
Walwain sat before me, my sword in hand.
Then Mordred advanced, with a mighty host,
And bearing a strong battle-axe in his grip,
And he began to hew the posts of the hall;
All that supported it, he hewed in pieces.
There I saw Guinevere, my lovely queen;
With her hands she dragged the roof down,
The hall fell, and I tumbled to the ground,
So, the bones of my right arm were broken.
Mordred cried: ‘Take that!’ The walls fell,
And Walwain fell to earth, his arms broken.
Grasping my good sword with my left hand,
I severed Mordred’s head, which rolled away.
And the queen I sought to wound with my blade,
And after I set her down in a deep dark pit.
All of my good folk had vanished in flight,
Such that I knew not where they had gone.
Yet I myself stood firm upon the weald,
And wide I wandered then o’er the moors,
And there I saw ravens and grisly fowls.
Next a golden lioness came o’er the down,
A creature most fair, wrought by our Lord,
That leapt at me, seized me by the waist,
And bore me away towards the ocean.
I saw the waves breaking on the shore,
Then the lioness bore me into the flood.
Once amidst the tide she was swept away,
But a great fish came and drew me to land;
Then was I drenched, weary, ill with woe.
When I stirred myself, I began to shiver,
Trembling all over, as if scorched by fire.

So, all night, I have thought on my dream.
For, surely, I deem that my bliss is o'er,
And sorrow in life, now, long I must endure.
Alas that Guinevere my queen is not here!'
Then the knight answered: 'Lord, you err;
One should ne'er think a dream brings woe.
You are the mightiest monarch on this earth,
And wisest of all who dwell beneath the sky.
Were it to befall, as it will not, my lord,
That Mordred your nephew, had your queen,
And held the royal realm in his own hand,
Entrusted to his care, ere you left for Rome,
You could yet avenge his treachery by force,
And rule your land, and govern your people,
And fell the enemies that worked you evil,
And slay them all, that none might remain.'
Then Arthur, noblest of monarchs, replied:
'I ne'er have thought that Mordred, my kin,
Dearest of men to me, could e'er betray me,
Not for my realm, nor Guinevere prove untrue;
No, not for all the world, would they do so!'
Then the knight dared to utter this outright:
'My lord, I am your man; I must speak true,
So, Mordred has done, and ta'en your queen,
And set all your fair realm in his own hand.
He is the king, and she is now his queen,
And they expect no sign of your coming,
For they deem you'll not return from Rome.
I am your servant, and I beheld this treason,
And am come here myself to swear it true.
I pledge my life that all this is as I say,
I speak no lies of your beloved queen,
Nor of Mordred that is your sister's son,
For he has stolen your realm from you.'
Then all was silence, in Arthur's halls,
For a mighty sorrow fell upon the king,
And the Britons were diminished in spirit.

He vows to avenge Mordred's treachery

After a while they stirred, and voices rose;
Widely, the Britons' clamour might be heard.
And they began to speak how in sundry ways
They would destroy Mordred, and the queen,
And slay all the folk that followed Mordred.
Then cried Arthur, fairest of all the Britons:
'Be seated, and sit you still, knights in the hall,
And I will speak the strangest of words to you:
On the morrow, when the Lord sends us light,
I will go forth from here, and go into Britain,
Mordred I will slay; the queen I shall burn,
And destroy all those that like their treachery.
Here, will I leave the dearest of men to me,
King Howel, the fair, the noblest of all my kin,
And he shall rule half my army in this land,
To maintain for me the kingdom that I hold.
And, when all these various things are done,
Then back shall I come, to march upon Rome,
Handing Walwain, my kin, my land to guard.
For, upon my life, I shall perform my threat,
Every one of my enemies shall be destroyed!'
Then Walwain rose, that was Arthur's kinsman,
And, wrathful as he was, he uttered these words:
'Almighty God, that rules o'er each man's fate,
The guardian of middle earth, why is this so,
That my brother Mordred commits this sin?
Today I cast him off, before this gathering,
And, if the Lord wills it, I will destroy him.
I will hang him high, higher than any wretch,
And draw the queen apart, with mighty steeds.
For may I ne'er have bliss while yet I live,
Till I have avenged my uncle, with the best!'
Then answered the bold Britons with one voice:
'Our weapons are ready, and tomorrow we go!'

Arthur returns to Britain

On the morrow, when the Lord sent the light,
King Arthur rode out, with his host of knights.
Half his army remained; and half he led forth,
Sailed for this kingdom, and came to Whitsand,
For ships he manned, both many and excellent,
Though a full fortnight they then lay becalmed,
Awaiting the weather, deprived of any wind.
Now there was an evil knight in Arthur's army,
Who, on hearing that Mordred would be slain,
Had sent a squire of his swiftly into this land,
Bringing word to Guinivere of what had passed,
And how Arthur would march with a great host,
And what he would undertake, and sought to do.
The queen went to Mordred, now dear to her,
And brought him tidings of Arthur the king,
And all that he had said, and what he might do.
Mordred sent envoys forth, to the Saxon lands;
He sent to Childric, that great and powerful king,
Bidding him come to England, and own a part;
Bidding him send out messengers, far and wide,
To all the four corners of the Saxon realm,
And summon all the knights that he could,
That would undertake to sail to this kingdom,
For he would grant Childric a vast tract of land,
Half of Northumberland, beyond the Humber,
If he would help him counter Arthur, his uncle.
Childric swiftly made his way to England
And joined Mordred, with his heathen host.
Full sixty thousand hardy warriors all told,
Were there assembled to do Arthur harm,
All to aid this Mordred, wickedest of men.
And once the host had gathered to Mordred,
His army was a hundred thousand strong,
Heathens and Christians, answering to him.

The hosts meet in fight; Walwain is slain

Now King Arthur was delayed, at Whitsand,
A fortnight, which seemed full long to him.
And Mordred knew all that King Arthur did,
For he had spies there, midst the king's army.
Then it befell that much rain down did rain,
And the wind then turned, and blew offshore,
And Arthur set sail again, with all his knights,
Ordering the captains to make for Romney,
Where he thought to disembark on the shore.
On his coming there, Mordred opposed him,
They fought all that day from dawn to dusk;
Many a man fell, and died, upon that field.
They warred on dry land, and by the sea-strand,
While some from the ships let fly their spears.
Walwain went before and cleared the way,
He slew eleven thanes, one Childric's son,
Who had taken to the field with his father.
The sun sank to rest; woe to Arthur's men,
For Walwain had been slain by a Saxon earl.
Then was Arthur sorrowful in heart and soul,
And that mightiest of the Britons spoke so:
'Now have I lost my beloved swain, Walwain.
My dream foretold that this woe would be!
Slain is Angel, the king, my own darling,
He is lost with Walwain, my sister's son,
And sorrow is mine that I was ever born.
Up from the shore now my brave knights!'
Then sixty thousand Britons fought as one,
Broke Mordred's ranks, and nigh slew him.
Mordred fled, and his folk followed after,
They fled so swiftly that the ground shook,
The stones turned under blood-drenched feet.
There might all have ended, but night fell;
Had it not, Mordred's host had been slain.
The night parted them, midst vales and downs,
And Mordred fled so fast he came to London.
The citizens heard how his host had fared,
And denied him entry, him and his people.
So, then Mordred marched to Winchester,
And there he was received, with all his men.

Arthur pursues Mordred to Winchester

King Arthur pursued him with all his might,

Till he came to Winchester, amidst his host,
And besieged the burgh, Mordred there within.
When Mordred saw King Arthur draw near,
He set himself to think what he now might do.
That night he chose to order all his warriors
To march forth, for he sought to make a stand.
He promised the burghers free rule evermore,
If they would help him in this hour of need.
When daylight came, they readied for the fight.
Arthur saw their host, and was filled with rage.
He had the trumpets blown, the men assembled,
He ordered all his thanes, all his noble knights,
To take the field together, and fell his enemies,
And then destroy the town, and hang the citizens.
They advanced as one, and sternly they fought.
Mordred took thought as to what he might do,
And there, as elsewhere, wrought his treachery.
E'er, he did wickedness, betraying his comrades.
There before Winchester, summoning his knights,
Those that were dearest to him, of all his host.
He stole from the fight, as the Devil taught him,
And left his men behind, to fight on and perish.
They fought all day, still thinking he was there,
That he was with them, in their hour of need.
Yet he made his way to where Southampton lay,
And wickedest of men, hastened to the haven,
And commandeered all the ships and the sailors,
All that were needed, and set sail for Cornwall.
Arthur laid fast siege to Winchester the burgh,
Then he slew its people; woe enough was there;
The young, the old, all that dwelt there he slew.
When the folk were dead, then the burgh he burned,
And he caused the walls to be razed to the ground.
So, was it come to pass, as Merlin had prophesied,
'Woe to Winchester, that the earth shall swallow!'
For thus spoke Merlin that was wisest in his day.

Guinevere departs

Now the queen lay at York, ne'er felt she such woe.
That was Queen Guinevere, the sorriest of women.
She heard Mordred had fled, whom Arthur pursued,
Woe was to her the while, that she was yet alive.
She quit York by night, and journeyed to Caerleon,
Nor might see the king again in this world's realm.
In the darkness, she went with two of her knights,
Head veiled, like a nun; a woman most wretched.
And none else knew of where the queen had gone,
Nor thereafter did men know whether she was dead,
Nor if she perchance had sunk herself in the water,
Nor does any book tell the manner of her death,
And how, hence, from middle-earth, she departed.

The last battle

Now Mordred in Cornwall gathered many men,
And had his messengers sail swiftly to Ireland,
To the Saxon lands he soon sent his messengers,
And to Scotland, ordering all to come to him,
That wished for land, gold, silver, and spoils,
As a prudent man should that might be in need.
This news heard Arthur, most wrathful of kings,
That Mordred was in Cornwall with a vast host,
And there would be yet, as Arthur approached.
Arthur sent messengers throughout his realm,
Bade all men come to him, that dwelt therein,
Bearing their weapons, to fight for the right,
And whoso refused would be robbed of his life.
Countless folk came, on both horseback and foot,
As countless as raindrops that fall from the sky.
To Cornwall went Arthur, with that great army.
Mordred had news of his coming, and marched,
With a mighty number, with full many ill-fated.
Near to the Tamar the two hosts met together,
By Camelford, that field's name thereafter.
There Mordred led sixty thousand and more,
And thither rode Arthur, his soldiers countless,
Near to the Tamar was that fateful encounter.

They raised their standards, and clashed together,
Drew their long-swords, and smote upon helms,
Sparks flew, shields shivered, lances splintered,
Their shafts broke in pieces, the strokes bitter.
There they fought together the numberless folk.
The Tamar's streams flowed o'er with dark blood,
And no warrior knew who fared worse or better,
So great was the conflict in which they mingled,
Slaying men outright, were they swain or knight.
There Mordred was slain, and all of his knights,
There were slain the brave warriors, high or low,
All of Arthur's brave knights of the Round Table,
And all of his allies of full many a kingdom.
And there Arthur was wounded by a broad-spear.
Fifteen dreadful wounds did the monarch receive;
Two hands might be thrust deep into the least.
Then it seemed that naught was left of the fight,
But two hundred thousand men hewn into pieces,
Except Arthur alone, and but two of his knights.

King Arthur's departure; Merlin's prophecy

Now, while Arthur lay wondrously wounded,
There came to him a young lad of his kindred,
And he was the son of Earl Cador of Cornwall.
Constantine was the lad; he was dear to the king.
Arthur looked up, from the ground where he lay,
And uttered these words with a sorrowful heart:
'Constantine, Cador's son, you are welcome now.
For here I bestow upon you my whole kingdom,
Defend my brave Britons for as long as you live,
Maintain the laws that have stood in my days,
And all the good laws of King Uther before me.
I fare now to Avalon, to the loveliest of maids,
To Argante the queen, that elf-lady most fair,
For she will render my body all sound again,
And with healing draughts render me all whole.
And afterwards I shall come to my kingdom,
And dwell with great joy among my Britons.'

E'en as he spoke, there came, from seawards,
A little boat, o'er the waves it came floating,
And two women therein, wondrously formed.
And they took up Arthur, and bore him swiftly,
Laid him therein softly, and began to depart.
Then was accomplished what Merlin had said:
There would be much woe after Arthur's going.
Yet the Britons believe that Arthur still lives,
Dwelling in Avalon, with that fair elf-lady,
And the Britons still evermore wait his return.
There is ne'er a man born, not of any woman,
That knows, in truth, aught further of Arthur.
But the sage that lived ere now, named Merlin,
Uttered these words, and his sayings were true:
An Arthur would yet come, to the Britons' aid.

The End of Part VII of Layamon's 'Brut'

Part VIII: From Arthur to Cadwalader

Contents

The reign of Constantine.....	426
Constantine slays the sons of Mordred	427
The reign of Conan	428
The reign of Vortiporus	428
The reign of Malgus.....	428
The reign of Carric.....	429
Gurmund of Africa raises an army.....	430
Gurmund reaches Britain; the Saxons deceive Carric	430
The Saxons send messengers to Gurmund	431
Gurmund joins the Saxons and battles with Carric	432
Isemberd, a French noble, joins Gurmund.....	433
The siege of Cirencester.....	433
Carric is defeated and flees into Wales.....	434
Gurmund conquers the realm.....	435
The origins of the English.....	436
The period of five realms	437
Pope Gregory and the Angles	437
Augustine's mission to England (597AD)	437
The founding of Cerne Abbey	438
Augustine Christianizes Britain	440
Seven British bishops scorn Augustine	441
The sack of Leicester	442
The clerics petition Aluric, and are slaughtered	442
The Britons defeat Aluric.....	443
Cadwan is made king and reconciles with Aluric.....	444
The sons of Cadwan and Aluric.....	445
Cadwalan is crowned	446
Edwin asks that his coronation be allowed.....	446
He receives Cadwalan's answer.....	448
Edwin and Cadwalan war with one another	449
Cadwalan flees to Ireland.....	449
Edwin seizes Brian's sister	450
Cadwalan sails for England	450

Brian cures the king's illness	451
Cadwalan sails to Brittany	452
Brian sails for England, to remove Pelluz	452
He journeys to Edwin's court at York.	453
He enters the court, dressed as a poor pilgrim	454
Brian slays Pelluz, and awaits Cadwalan at Exeter	455
Cadwalan gathers an army and sails for Britain	456
The battle before Exeter, against Penda of Mercia	456
Penda is captured and held at Exeter	457
Cadwalan weds Helen of Mercia, and makes peace with Penda	458
Cadwalan marches against Edwin	459
Edwin gathers an army.....	459
Edwin is slain at the Battle of Hatfield Chase (<i>near Doncaster, 633AD</i>)	460
Oswald, kin to Edwin, succeeds him	460
Cadwalan and Penda move against Oswald	461
Penda deceives Oswald and slays him.....	462
Oswy succeeds Oswald	463
The gathering at Whitsuntide.....	464
Penda and Oswy meet in battle (<i>the Battle of the Winwaed, 655AD</i>)	466
The death of Cadwalan	466
The reign of Cadwalader, last king of the Britons	467
Cadwalader flees the plague; a Saxon host arrives.....	468
Athelstan's tribute to Saint Peter's	469
Cadwalader hears the news in Brittany.....	469
Cadwalader's vision.....	470
Cadwalader dies in Rome (<i>In 700AD, or as late as 704AD, according to Layamon</i>)	
.....	472
Layamon's Coda	472

The reign of Constantine

Constantine, loved by the Britons, ruled the realm;
 Most dear to them, of great worth they held him.
 Now, Mordred had two strong and powerful sons,
 And they had learned of how it fared with Arthur,
 And of how their father had been robbed of life,
 And how the Britons were suffering many an ill.
 The brothers spoke together, and gathered men,
 Those knights they thought best of the survivors,

And assembled a host drawn from this land,
To slay Constantine, and so rule in his stead.
On hearing this Constantine was full of wrath,
And sent his messengers throughout the land,
Bidding all who could fight to aid their king.
Thirty thousand youngsters gathered to him,
Whom he, there and then, dubbed as knights.
With those who had survived the great battle,
He commanded a good sixty thousand men.
Mordred's sons heard of this, and took counsel,
They decided the one should march on London,
While the other would advance to Winchester,
And there each would await the king's arrival,
And fight him, if he came, with all their might.
But, ere they could, things happened otherwise.

Constantine slays the sons of Mordred

Those who guarded the burgh heard of the plan,
And met there in a husting, and took counsel,
And chose to hold with Constantine the king.
And reject Mordred's son, who wrought so ill.
Mordred's son sought sanctuary at the altar,
But Constantine pursued him, and caught him,
And, with his sword, the king struck off his head.
And thus, filled with wrath, the monarch spoke:
'Lie there, you villain; and the Devil take you!
Now slay swiftly, men, all those you find here.'
Many obeyed, and soon wrought the slaughter.
Then King Constantine, the ruler of this land,
Had the trumpets blown, gathered in his host,
And then took the road that led to Winchester.
Forth with him went the Britons out of London,
And came to Winchester, and soon entered in.
Melion viewed them, that was Mordred's son;
He fled; he too sought sanctuary in a church,
Where, at once, he found refuge near the altar.
Constantine, with his sword, struck off his head,
Drenching Saint Amphibal's altar with blood,

And then caused all Melion's men to be slain.
Then was Constantine ruler of the kingdom,
And bliss was in Britain, and there was peace.
Here was concord and freedom among the folk,
The laws maintained that held in Arthur's day.

The reign of Conan

But, all the same, it lasted but a little while,
For Constantine the king ruled but four years.
He was slain; his folk bore him to Stonehenge,
And there they laid him, beside his ancestors.
Then was Conan raised up here, and made king;
The most wicked man the sun e'er shone upon.
Constantine's sister's son, he poisoned his uncle,
And so betrayed the rightful heir to the realm,
And with poison he murdered his uncle's sons.
He broke the peace, his men fought against him,
And he sought ill-relation with his two sisters.
The burghs in this land all fell into great ruin;
The people of the land were greatly troubled.
Then he fell from his steed, and thus he died;
And all the folk here were better for his death.

The reign of Vortiporus

After these happenings, Vortiporus became king.
Then the Saxon folk came sailing to this land.
And they wrought much harm beyond the Humber,
Capturing, or slaying, all those they came near.
Vortiporus the Fair, then gathered his forces,
And marched against, and felled the Saxon men,
And drove many thousands back to the sea-roads,
Terrified them, and expelled them from the land,
So that, in his days, they ne'er again came hither.
His reign lasted seven years, and then he died.

The reign of Malgus

Malgus, the keen, he then held all this realm,
That was the fairest man that e'er was born,
Except for Adam, and Absalom, books say.
He graced his palace with many a brave knight.
There all the swains held themselves like thanes,
And his servants had the manners of swains,
And no discourteous man dared seek his court.
He ruled all the lands that had come to him,
And then was all this Britain filled with bliss,
And the realm bore the fruit of his kingship.
He cared not for wealth, gave it to his knights;
None might scorn him for aught but one thing,
He loved that which is loathsome to our creed,
For women he forsook, and he favoured men;
His men loved men, and found women hateful.
So that many thousand fair ladies left this land,
And made their way thus into other countries,
For it seemed a shame to them they were scorned.
Nonetheless, through all, he proved a fine king.

The reign of Carric

Next, came one of his kindred, named Carric,
And held the realm, though he dwelt with woe.
Though brave and strong, he failed to prosper,
For invaders from abroad destroyed the realm.
Though this king was born of a noble line,
He was treated with derision and contempt,
They called him not Carric, but *Saxon* Cynric,
And many a book still shows us his name so.
The folk began to hate him, and deride him,
And sang scornful songs about this hated king.
There was civil war throughout this country,
And the Saxon tribes soon sailed to our shores,
And took up station here beyond the Humber.
Now, there was in Africa a powerful ruler,
He was named Anster, and had two brave sons,
Gurmund the elder, and Gerion the younger.
The old king died, for his days were now past,

And he left his realm to Gurmund his dear son.
But Gurmund wished it not, and refused it,
And, thinking otherwise, gave it to his brother,
Saying he'd not rule any realm he'd not won
With the sword, and in battle, yet he would gain
Such a kingdom or lack that same for evermore.

Gurmund of Africa raises an army

Now, this Gurmund was a mighty champion,
The strongest man that any had looked upon.
And he sent his messengers to many a land,
To Macedonia, and Turkey, and Babylonia,
And into Persia, and Arabia, and Nubia,
And summoned the youths from heathendom,
Telling them to take up their worthy weapons,
For he'd dub them knights, and lead them forth,
And seek a realm such warriors might win.
They rallied to Gurmund from many a land,
Many a heathen, many a son of noble men.
When his host had gathered, and was counted,
A hundred and sixty thousand men were there,
Above and beyond the front ranks of archers,
And the men of attendant crafts and trades.
Forth went Gurmund with his endless host;
To the sea they came, and the wind was fair.
Into the ships, went all those heathen warriors.
Seventeen were the king's sons that boarded,
Eight and twenty the offspring of mighty earls,
And seven hundred the vessels in the vanguard,
Forth, o'er the waves, passed that mighty army,
And all the islands that rose up before them
King Gurmund took and held in his own hand.
Many a king he fought that longed for peace,
While all the realms he gazed upon he won.

Gurmund reaches Britain; the Saxons deceive Carriac

And then, at the last, he came to Ireland,

Conquered the land and slew the people,
And was named the king there of that land.
Then he made the crossing to this country,
And sailed in force, and reached Southampton.
Now, in the northlands, beyond the Humber
Dwelt six chieftains out of Hengist's kindred,
And they heard tidings of Gurmund the king,
And oft gave thought to what they might do,
How they might betray their oath to Carric,
And slay the Britons by some wicked ploy.
The Saxons thus sent messengers to Carric,
Saying they wished to forge a peace with him,
As they'd rather have Carric than Gurmund,
That foreign king, if Carric wished for peace,
And granted them the land once held before,
That Vortigern the king had granted Hengist,
When he wed the latter's beloved daughter.
They would send him tribute from their lands,
And hold Carric to be their darling monarch.
This they would pledge, by yielding hostages.
Carric believed their lies, and gave them peace.
Then was King Carric betrayed upon a day,
And Carric was ever after mocked as Cynric;
With contemptuous speech men derided him,
Yet Carric had truly believed the Saxons' lies.

The Saxons send messengers to Gurmund

Meanwhile the Saxons sent word to Gurmund:
'Hail to you Gurmund, hail great heathen king,
All hail to your people, and your noble knights.
Saxons are we, of the best of all those folk
That Hengist brought hither from Saxon lands,
And we dwell in Britain beyond the Humber.
You are a heathen king, we, heathen warriors.
Carric is a Christian king, and hateful to us.
If you will but take this land into your hand,
We will fight, and at full strength, beside you,
And slay Carric, and drive all his knights away,

Grant this and we'll yield six thousand pounds
To your coffers every year, and be your men,
And render our noble sons to you as hostages.
If it be your will thus to come and lead us,
And make this covenant, and so confirm it,
We will ally with yourself, and none other.
And hold you our king, on land and water.'
Gurmund the keen broke forth in speech:
'Make ready the fleet, for forth we will go!'

Gurmund joins the Saxons and battles with Carric

They hauled on the ropes, and raised the sails,
And forth they began to voyage, o'er the waves,
And so, they journeyed to Northumberland,
And spoke there with the Saxons, in friendship,
And all swore they would hold to their covenant.
Once Gurmund had joined with the Saxon folk,
They gathered together their countless forces,
And marched upon Carric, king of this land,
While singing of that monarch, contemptuously.
Carric now summoned the Britons to his side,
Who came at need, knowing no better counsel.
Many the folk that did so, forming a vast host,
And oft they fought Gurmund's host, in battle,
For ne'er did Gurmund seek peace, while Carric,
Though despised by his enemies, grew fiercer,
And if his army had equalled that of Gurmund,
The latter, and his host, would have been lost,
But ever Gurmund's host waxed with new men,
While Carric's waned, as his troops were slain.
Gurmund drove Carric's forces far and wide,
Till Carric shut himself tight in Cirencester.
There he had gathered all that he possessed
Of his kingdom's grain, heightening the walls.
Now, Gurmund learnt of this; thither he rode,
And surrounded Cirencester in a close siege.
Gurmund thus held the country in his hand,
The forts he burned, the burghs he consumed,

The Britons he slew, and ruin was in the land.
Christian monks he tormented in many a wise;
His followers made whores of noble women.
He razed the churches, and slew the priests,
The clerics he killed, all those that he found,
Murdered the children, and hung the knights,
And ravaged the country in many a manner.
The wretched folk that could left their homes,
Some went into Wales, some into Cornwall,
Some sailed for Ireland in fear of Gurmund,
And they dwelt as slaves there in servitude,
And all their kin ne'er came hither again.
Some fled o'er the sea, and entered Brittany,
And dwelt in that land they called Armorica,
Some into Neustrie, that we call Normandy,
And so, the Britons lost rule of this kingdom.
And Gurmund laid siege still to Cirencester,
With Carric inside, and all of his warriors;
Woe was to the people that yet were living!

Iseberd, a French noble, joins Gurmund

One day, Gurmund rode forth for the chase;
With his heathen thanes he went a hunting.
There came one riding to Gurmund the king,
He was named Iseberd, France his country,
He the son of Louis that ruled that kingdom.
His father had driven him forth from the realm,
And had banished him from every place there,
So, he'd fled to this land, to Gurmund the king.
He had, in company, two thousand horsemen,
And he swore to become King Gurmund's man.
Worse he could not have done, Christ he forsook,
Ere he went forth to the Devil, and heathendom.
Now both men marched out with a mighty host,
To strengthen the siege gripping Cirencester.

The siege of Cirencester

Carric's men launched sorties from the burgh,
Deploying all their strength, slaying thousands,
Heathen hounds all, despatching them to Hell.
Carric, a fine warrior, maintained the fight,
And to his utmost strength held Cirencester,
So that Gurmund ne'er could do him harm,
Till a stratagem, from within, betrayed him.
Gurmund built five forts around Cirencester,
Three were held by a trio of heathen knights,
While he held one, and Iseberd another.
He added a tower to his, with a fine chamber,
And therein entertained himself as men did,
And had his idol there, that he worshipped.
On a day, he and his folk were passing blithe,
Drunk with wine, when a heathen appeared,
Cursed be he, and spoke to Gurmund the king:
'Tell me, Lord Gurmund, powerful as you are,
How long will you tarry here outside the burgh?
What will you grant, if I render you the place,
And all that's within, for you to do your will,
Leaving all that is there in your possession?'
Then answered Gurmund, that mighty king:
'I will grant you an earldom, to hold forever,
If you can deliver me the burgh right soon.'
They so agreed, and few knew of that same.

Carric is defeated and flees into Wales

The heathen knight rose and sought out nets,
Close was their weave wrought, fine the mesh,
And spread about seeds, and husks, oat chaff,
On which many a passing sparrow alighted,
And at the first throw he caught full many,
And gathered them up, their wings unharmed.
Then he gathered nuts, removed the kernels,
And placed tinder inside the hollow shells,
And set the flammable contents smouldering
And tied the closed shells to the sparrows' feet.
Then he let a host of these sparrows loose,

And the birds flew to their nests in the burgh,
Under the eaves, into the thatch, and all about,
And as the sparks flew, the birds crept inward,
And the night-breeze blew, swelling the flames,
And the burgh began to burn, in many a place,
Both east and west, and woe to the Britons there!
They fled into one quarter to escape the fire,
But the flames rose higher, before and behind.
Gurmund had war-horns and trumpets blown,
Fifteen thousand warriors roused to their blast.
The town burnt, and the Britons sought escape,
They leapt from the walls, and the foe slew them.
Nowhere is it spoken, or writ in any book,
That a finer people were e'er destroyed so,
As that army of Carric, the King of Britain.
The fire burned all night, the blaze endless.
The fight was done, the flames spread o'er all.
Carric the king saw that he was conquered,
Then he stole away, as if mortally wounded.
Thus, all silently, he crept from his people,
And westward went, into the land of Wales.
And in that manner vanished from his realm.
None knew what became of him thereafter,
Except once a knight came riding to court,
And brought Gurmund tidings of the man,
Saying he was gathering troops in Ireland,
And would come hither after to wage war.
But none ever heard he brought it to issue.

Gurmund conquers the realm

Thus was Cirencester and that region wasted,
And Gurmund raised as king of all this land,
The burgh being captured by that stratagem,
Burnt by the fires that the sparrows brought.
For many winters after, in common speech,
The place was known as Sparrow-chester,
And, through that deed, some so call it still.
Thus, was that wealthy burgh sadly ruined,

And Gurmund now commanded this realm,
A heathen man that scorned all Christendom,
And there was woe and sorrow at what befell.
Gurmund razed the minsters, hung the monks,
Sliced lips from knights, teats from maidens,
Blinded the priests, and injured all the people,
Warriors yet in the town he had dismembered,
And went on to savage all that was Christian.
After Cirencester he progressed to London,
And there he gathered folk in a great husting,
For there came the Saxon leaders in this land,
Countless of them becoming Gurmund's men.
They swore oaths and he gave them this land
To hold on his behalf, now that he was king.
And the king commanded all that did love him
To slay all those Britons they chanced to find,
Unless they would live in thraldom thereafter,
And forsake the Mass for the heathen rite;
If so, they might live as slaves in this land.

The origins of the English

By Germany, lay the realm of the Angles;
There lived the folk that Gurmund chose,
Those to whom he gave all of this kingdom,
As he had promised if they gained the land;
For the oath he had sworn he now fulfilled.
Since Angles they, and their realm, were called,
The name they later went by was the English,
And called this land, in their hands, England.
When Brutus first came into this kingdom,
It was named Britain, and its people Britons,
And so it was called until the Angles came.
Many the townships and lands and dwellings,
They renamed, so as to shame the Britons,
Taking their lands and setting them in hand.
Gurmund granted all this and then departed.

The period of five realms

The conquerors gathered, then, in London,
To choose a king to govern this kingdom,
And yet could not agree whom that should be,
And argued angrily, and chose variously,
Such that five kings they raised to rule the land.
Each king robbed the others of all he could,
Living in amity or in enmity, turn by turn,
And so, in this manner, long years went by,
When Christianity in this land was unknown,
For ne'er was a Mass sung, nor a bell rung,
Nor a church hallowed, nor a child baptised.

Pope Gregory and the Angles

There was in Rome a pope of God's election,
Who was named Gregory, loved by the Lord.
One day, when he was speeding on a journey,
He entered into a street that led from Rome,
And saw three fair men of the English nation,
Tight bound, to be sold, and the price was told.
The Pope asked the three from whence they came,
And the one replied, and he was exceeding fair:
'Heathens are we, and hither were we brought,
And we were sold from the land of the Angles,
And we will be baptised, if you'll but free us.'
Then Gregory, beloved of the Lord, felt pity,
And spoke these words, out of his goodness:
'Truly you Angles are most like to angels,
Being the fairest of all folk that are living!'
The Pope then set to asking them questions,
Concerning their land, and laws, and their king,
And they told him of everything they knew.
And he had them freed, and he baptised them,
And returned, shortly, to his seat in Rome.

Augustine's mission to England (597AD)

Gregory summoned one of his cardinals,
The noblest of clerics, named Augustine,
And communed with him, and spoke thus:
‘Augustine if you go, with truth in mind,
To England, and to this Ethelbert its king,
And preach God’s Gospel, it shall be well.
And I will give you forty good companions.
Tomorrow, go set yourself upon the way.’
Forth went Augustine, with all the clerics
That Gregory had chosen to grant him,
And he landed in this country, at Thanet,
And went up to the king’s court in Kent.
So, he progressed, and reached Canterbury,
A place that seemed to him most pleasant.
And there, found Ethelbert this land’s king.
He brought him tidings of the heavenly king,
Speaking the Gospel’s words to the monarch
Who listened intently, and received them well,
So that he yearned to dwell in Christendom.
Ethelbert and his knights were then baptised.
He began to build a church most exceeding fair,
To the Holy Trinity, and thereby wrought well.
Augustine went forth south, and west, and north,
Through all England, and turned it towards God.
Clerics he instructed, and churches he raised,
Healing the sick, through the Saviour’s might,
And returning southward, came to Dorchester,
Where dwelt the worst of folk in all this land.
He told them of God’s laws and they scorned him.
He spoke about Christendom, and they grimaced.

The founding of Cerne Abbey

They advanced on Augustine where he stood,
His clerics all about him, speaking of Christ
The Son of God, as was e’er his custom there;
Hung mullets’ tails on his cope, ill-advisedly;
Thronged alongside him, hurling fishbones,
And likewise threw sharp stones, to shame him;

Scorned him, and drove him from that place.
They were odious folk, and he was angered.
He travelled some five miles from Dorchester,
And he came to a hill, that was tall and fair,
And there he knelt, and he offered a prayer,
Asking God to bring vengeance on those folk
Who'd dishonoured him with shameful deeds.
Our Lord above heard, and wrought vengeance
On those wretched folk that scorned Augustine.
He set upon them mullets' tails, to shame them;
They were disgraced, all who bore those tails,
And folk called them 'mugglings' after the fish,
The mullets or 'muggles', whose tails they bore.
And every free man yet speaks ill of those same,
And English freemen, in many a land, blush
For that scornful deed; many a good man's son,
That ne'er dwelt there, is called base for that same.
Now, Augustine tarried there, fast by that hill,
With those clerics that came with him from Rome.
They called on the Lord, who granted us the light,
In their sorrow and woe; it shamed them full sore,
That those wicked folk had brought them disgrace,
And Augustine thought he'd now return to Rome,
And complain to Gregory, the Lord's apostle,
Of how the Dorchester folk had received him.
But the very night when he chose to set forth,
Our Lord appeared to him, naming him rightly,
By his true name, and right glad then was he.
'What think you, Augustine, dearly beloved?
Would you return to Rome? Leave not this land!
For you are most dear, and I am beside you,
And so, to my heavenly realm you shall come;
A place is prepared; there your soul shall be.
So spoke our Lord with Augustine his priest.
Once Augustine had seen the Lord in vision,
And heard the command that he'd been given,
And the Lord had returned to heaven, he knelt,
Praying, on the spot where he had seen Him,
And, weeping, he called on the heavenly King,

Asking for grace from the Lord, the Almighty,
And his folk all bowed them down to the earth.
By the spot, where he knelt, he fixed his staff;
There he knelt, and addressed his companions,
And they liked his discourse, exceedingly well.
When he had spoken of what the Lord had said,
He took up his staff to go to his lodging there.
He plucked out the staff, and water leapt forth,
The fairest well-stream that flows on this earth.
Before this, none lived there or had a dwelling,
But soon folk flocked to Augustine the good.
By his leave, in that place, many now gathered.
And began to build there, beside that fair water,
For many regained, there, health from that stream.
The place he called Cernel, from the Latin 'cerno',
'I see' in English, with 'el' the Hebrew for God;
Which makes 'I see God' when all's set together.
And the name Cerne shall stand to the world's end,
Derived, as the word is, from that godly naming,
Honouring the spot upon which the Lord stood,
All His angels by Him, as he spoke to Augustine.

Augustine Christianizes Britain

Augustine went far and wide throughout Britain,
He baptised the kings, he baptised their chieftains,
He baptised the earls, and baptised the barons,
He baptised the English, and baptised the Saxons,
And set those in our lands, between God's hands.
Then was he content to have brought folk bliss.
In the North, a deal of land was held by Britons;
They had built many a fort to resist the English,
But among them were monks, in large numbers.
Augustine found elsewhere several good bishops
That sang the Mass truly, one the archbishop
That had his seat at Caerleon; while Bangor
Possessed an abbey with monks innumerable,
And Dinoth, of noble line, was the abbot there;
He had sixteen hundred monks, in seven halls,

And others moreover, all bold Britons by birth.

Seven British bishops scorn Augustine

Augustine sent writs to these seven bishops,
And bade them come soon to speak with him,
Do obedience there, and receive the eucharist,
For he was their superior in all of this land.
As the Pope's legate, he was the primate here,
And he did all on behalf of the Pope in Rome.
The bishops were rude, and gave him answer:
'We priests are not beholden to Augustine,
For we are noblemen, and high in this land.
And hold our sees from our own archbishop,
An excellent priest, who dwells in Caerleon,
Who was granted his rule by Pope Gregory,
And with true worship he holds his diocese.
Ne'er shall we bow to Augustine, a stranger,
For he, and his company, prove our enemies,
For he has come here, and baptised the king,
The prince, the atheling, of those of Kent,
Ethelbert, the noblest amongst the Saxons.
Here he has found all those heathen hounds
That came with Gurmund from Saxon lands,
All of whom he baptises and 'sends to God',
Who, without right, now hold our kingdoms.
Christians are we all, of a Christian people,
As our elders were three hundred years ago,
While they but newly adhere to our creed,
Whom Augustine has baptised and accepted.
Therefore, we resent, and will ne'er obey, him.
And ne'er in this life shall we befriend him.'
Now Augustine soon heard tidings of all this,
Of the hostile answer that the bishops gave,
And the scorn in which those Britons held him.
Then was he troubled, and most sad at heart,
And made his way to court, and to the king,
And to Ethelbert, King of the East Angles,
Complained of the hostile British bishops,

And how they scorned to accept his authority.
The king, greatly angered, swore to slay them.
And so, he did, afterwards, and full swiftly.

The sack of Leicester

Ethelbert, in Kent, was king of all the land,
And one of his kindred was named Aluric,
Wickedest of all kings, in Northumberland.
And he counselled that they should be slain,
While the bishops knew naught of his mischief.
Ethelbert sent messengers through the land,
As Aluric did throughout Northumberland,
And they gathered a great host of warriors,
To destroy the Britons, and slay the bishops.
They marched to Leicester and besieged it,
Knowing one Brochinal dwelt there within,
Who was a British earl, and a stalwart knight.
Brochinal readied his men, and issued forth
And set out to battle with Ethelbert's force,
But was soon slain and his soldiers captured.
So, the king's army entered into Leicester,
And there they slew all those they came nigh,
Then declared they would march into Wales,
And slay all the Britons found dwelling there.

The clerics petition Aluric, and are slaughtered

Aluric was resting himself, content in Leicester,
Where there came to seek him monks and hermits,
The white canons, bishops, and other clerics,
Marked out by God, who now knelt before him.
They begged him, out of their mighty yearning,
To make peace with them, for love of the Lord,
And let them alone, to live here in this land,
And they would pray for him to God on high.
Then that wickedest of kings gave his reply:
'Hark to me, go, in company, into the field,
And I will send word to you of what shall be,

In accord with what my counsellors advise.'
Forth went the monks, and priests of the Mass,
Forth went the canons, and the other clerics,
Forth went all that sought peace with the king.
And had petitioned him, for the love of God.
So, there, on a broad field outside the burgh,
Those folk assembled, and sorrow was theirs!
For King Aluric had decided, scorning counsel,
That he would fell all these folk to the ground.
Five hundred knights, and nine hundred on foot,
With huge battle-axes, he ordered to that field,
And they slew every innocent that came nigh.
Fifteen hundred and sixty-five folk they slew,
Good book-learned men; death came to them,
And the tidings of this ill flew far and wide.

The Britons defeat Aluric

There were three worthy nobles, in this land,
Around whom the Britons swiftly rallied.
Baldric the brave, he was Earl of Cornwall,
The highest of the nobles among their folk,
And he held all of Devon, too, in his hands,
Where the waters of the Exe flow to the sea.
Cadwan, the bold, was king in North Wales;
In South Wales, Margadud, the fairest of men.
(The Britons ruled those lands, for many a year,
Till Athelstan the Strong, king of this land,
Subdued them, driving them from the Tamar,
So, they ne'er thereafter possessed Cornwall.
And from the fertile land all along the Severn,
From its upper reaches to the rolling sea.
For in Malvern, by the Severn, Margadud lay,
With all his folk, and Athelstan advanced there.
Then the King of the English held them fast,
And, in battle, drove them beyond the Wye,
Seizing all between the rivers Wye and Severn,
And so, dispossessing them of this realm.)
Margadud the bold, Baldric, and Cadwan,

Gathering an army, an innumerable host,
Marched on Northumberland's King Aluric,
Fought hard with him, and felled his forces.
And Aluric was wounded most sorely there,
For immeasurable was that fierce conflict,
And Baldric the earl was hewn to pieces.
Ten thousand brave knights fell in that battle,
Ten thousand bold Britons fell to the sword.
And seventeen thousand English and Saxons,
Were hewn in pieces, their host so lessened,
While King Aluric fled to Northumberland,
Wounded so sore his folk were full of woe.

Cadwan is made king and reconciles with Aluric

Cadwan and Margadud, with all their forces,
Marched forth to Leicester, and took the burgh,
And they called all in this land to a husting.
There the English gathered, and the Saxons,
And there the Britons made bold Cadwan king,
So that all bowed to him that were before him.
In Northumberland, Aluric's wounds were healed.
Though he suffered in mind the loss of his men,
Still filled with his sorrow at his folk's defeat.
Aluric heard constant tidings of King Cadwan,
Menaced by that monarch to him most hateful.
He sent messengers to Scotland and the North,
Seeking for knights, and all that might fight,
Begging them for help, in his hour of need.
Cadwan gathered men from all this country,
While all of Wales he rallied to his cause,
And then marched forth to Northumberland.
Aluric heard of this, and moved against him,
Till they were encamped but two miles apart,
Then the hosts advanced as if they would fight.
The earls, barons, bishops, and learned men
Knew that if they all met together in battle,
Many a man in that conflict would be slain.
And they bethought them what they might do.

They made a pact to respect a day's peace,
Whereon both sides spoke in amity together,
And decided that the kings should reconcile.
Thus, the two kings sought a reconciliation,
And they embraced together and full often.
Those kings in peace and friendship embraced,
The earls embraced as if they were brothers,
The swains rejoiced; the thanes all full of bliss.
Aluric was king then north of the Humber,
While Cadwan was overlord in the south,
And the hosts, on either side, were content.
Ne'er was it read of, nor was heard in song,
That any two monarchs were such friends,
For all that the one possessed was the other's,
And each to each was dearer than a brother.
Both were soon wed, and often met together;
They married at one time, and begat sons,
Who were born together on the same day,
Both mutually loved, and likewise nurtured.

The sons of Cadwan and Aluric

Now, these two children grew and thrived,
And their parents were happy, and content.
To confirm the love between their fathers,
They were well-taught and raised together,
Dressed alike and, like to their two fathers,
A mutual love they bore, wondrous to see.
And so, they lived till they were fully grown.
They rode their steeds in lovely knightly garb,
And proved their great strength many a time.
Their weapons strong, they yet broke shafts,
And smiting with their swords dealt smart blows.
Soon their two fathers led them to Brittany,
The land that was known then as Armorica,
And with much display and great rejoicing.
There the two sons were both dubbed knights.
Within a few years, both the lads' fathers died,
And the pair became kings of their two realms,

Each holding the lands his father held before.
Now Canterbury, that rich burgh, was the see
Of an archbishop that was exceeding good,
And he forbade either king to wear the crown,
Till he came himself to set one on their head.
The command of the archbishop was obeyed.
Cadwalan held the land south of the Humber,
And he was Cadwan's son; Edwin, the other,
Held all the lands beyond Humber northwards,
As princes they were raised, and sworn kings,
But their crowns forbore, in the Lord's name.

Cadwalan is crowned

Cadwalan often thought what he might do,
Now that their two fathers were both dead.
Their friendship lasted for but seven years,
For Cadwalan held many a strong castle,
And the greater sovereignty thus was his.
Cadwalan, therefore, marched to London,
And sent his men to seek the archbishop,
Commanding him to come there full soon.
The king received him, and he was content,
For he met the good archbishop at the door,
Crying: 'You are welcome!' as he did so,
Treating him lovingly, calling him 'my lord'.
He acknowledged the Lord above, rightfully,
And spoke of the creed, and of God's favour,
All his speech with the archbishop was good,
The king asking him, pleasantly and often,
To crown him as such in this his kingdom.
On the appointed day the folk assembled,
And there they crowned Cadwalan their king.
Great was the joy throughout London town.

Edwin asks that his coronation be allowed

Edwin knew naught of this; when he heard,
He was angered at heart, and railed against it:

‘War will I wage, and slay Cadwalan’s folk,
All that I find alive, that follow the false king!’
He gathered an army, many a thousand men,
Readying them to ravage this side of Humber.
Knights of worth betook themselves to counsel,
All the wisest men then dwelling in his lands,
Who soon advised King Edwin their master,
To send messengers to Cadwalan the king.
And beg him of his grace, as his dear brother,
And for the mutual love their father’s bore,
That he should be crowned King of the North.
His people would retreat beyond the Humber,
And live in peace, and nevermore maraud,
If he might be crowned king before the Lord,
And he would love Cadwalan, upon his life,
And be ready to lend him aid, in every need.
Cadwalan, King in the South, said of this:
‘I learn of my dear brother Edwin’s request,
And will think upon it, and give him answer,
As to whether I’ll grant him that same or not,
In accord with what my counsellors advise.’
A day was set upon which they would meet,
Without any knowing more of his decision.
They rode to a ford, on the day appointed,
Douglas Water was the name of the river;
There the meeting took place between them.
Edwin sought to persuade King Cadwalan
To allow his coronation; he’d love him ever.
The monarch’s counsellors spoke together,
Some advised that he do so, some decried it.
Some wished it to happen, others demurred.
As the wise nobles began their speeches,
He dismounted from his steed in a meadow,
Then the king sought sleep, as they conferred.
A knight of the chamber sat down beside him,
The king’s sister’s son; Brian was his name.
He raised the king’s head, laid it in his lap,
And combed the monarch’s hair as he slept;
The king began to sleep, and Brian to weep.

And the tears ran down o'er the king's face.
This woke the king, whose eyes oped in fear;
His cheeks felt moist, he thought that he bled.
Then with a swift glance he perceived Brian,
And saw the warrior weeping over his king.
Then Cadwalan the king, asked this of Brian:
'What ails you, dear nephew, that you weep so?
You are of worth; are these not woman's ways?
Tell me, swiftly, how do things go with you?'
Then Brian the best of knights, answered him:
'Weep we should; we prove vile that were noble,
Now that you contemplate what's ne'er been done,
That two kings should be crowned in this land.
And so, we must weep that before were noble,
For honour is lost, where once virtue reigned!'
Cadwalan, king of the land, hearkened to this;
Brian's speech stirred him to wrathful action.
And in haste he sent messengers to Edwin,
And bade him depart quickly from his realm:
'For, upon my life, ne'er shall he be crowned.
If he seeks it further, I shall forbid that same,
Seize his Northumberland, and strip him bare.
I shall have all his lands; he shall bow to me.'

He receives Cadwalan's answer

This answer was brought to Edwin, the king,
And he was then angered wondrously much,
Like a wild boar in the wood ringed by hounds,
And these the words he returned, in his wrath:
'By the Lord that granted us the light of day,
And by all the sacred temples there in Rome,
I shall wear the crown; he shall buy it dearly,
And suffer therefrom the greatest of all ills!
He shall have waste and wilderness enough,
And feel sorrow in mind over his lost honour.'
And so, it came about, full soon thereafter.
They threatened each other with dire words,
And, promising deeds as dire, then departed.

Edwin and Cadwalan war with one another

Edwin was a warrior, and his men were bold,
Cadwalan a worthy knight, and full of might.
Edwin prepared for war beyond the Humber,
Cadwalan, as wrathful, returned to London.
Then the war began, they rode and they ran,
They harried, burned, slew all that was nigh.
Woe to the commoners that dwelt in the land!
Cadwalan, in London, had assembled his host,
And had sent his messengers to many a realm.
Fifty thousand noble knights he gathered there,
To wreak his will, while Edwin, in the north,
Sent likewise to Denmark, Scotland, Galloway,
That owed allegiance, and gathered in his men,
Till he'd sixty thousand troops, eager to fight.
Cadwalan marched towards Northumberland.
He passed the Humber, and wrought much harm,
Wasting the lands that Edwin held in hand,
Edwin was unafraid, and spoke forthrightly:
'Let him be accounted naught that aids us not;
Show the wild boar's heart, the raven's cunning,
And go teach this king that we are yet alive.'
He gathered his troops, the trumpets sounded,
And he marched forth to where Cadwalan lay.
The knights from either side clashed together,
Spears were broken, shields shattered in hand,
Helms were hewn, as steel breastplates failed,
Saddles were emptied, wretched warriors fell.
Came a clamour from the folk; the ground shook,
The streams ran red with blood, as faces paled,
The ranks of Britons broke, mischief among them.
Harsh blows they dealt all day until the evening,
Then Cadwalan fled, with Edwin in pursuit.

Cadwalan flees to Ireland

Cadwalan with his knights, fled through the night.

A mere five hundred were left, of his company.
They rode for Scotland, sorrow at their left hand.
And Edwin followed after, with fifteen thousand.
Bold were his thanes, making good their threat.
An innumerable host followed Edwin's army,
As they drove Cadwalan north, from day to day.
And truth to tell, they thought soon to slay him.
Cadwalan fled to the coast, and gathered a fleet,
Ships he hired with precious gold and treasure.
And the fleet began to lay a course for Ireland,
And made harbour safely there after the voyage.
Ireland then was in the hands of a mighty king.
He was called Gille Patric, a noble warrior.
He received Cadwalan courteously with a kiss,
And granted him the freedom of his kingdom.

Edwin seizes Brian's sister

Let us leave Cadwalan, and return to Edwin,
Who slew the folk here, and burned the burghs.
Castles he razed, his troops wrought much harm,
While all Cadwalan's lands he promptly seized.
Then Edwin's spies returned and brought tidings,
(And woe to those men that ever they were born!)
Tidings of a fair maiden, Brian's comely sister,
Loveliest of women; who dwelt at Winchester.
Edwin with his host marched upon the castle;
As soon as he came there, he seized the maid,
And noble knights accompanied her to York.
The chamberlain brought her to the king's bed.
The king was unwise to seize that lovely maid,
For the woman was evermore King Edwin's foe.

Cadwalan sails for England

There dwelt at his court a clerk out of Spain.
He was named Pelluz, and learned in all lore.
Many a secret thing he gazed on, by his craft,
In the sun, and the stars, and the ocean depths.

He knew the calendar of the moon and winds,
And where the fish swam, and the worms crept.
Cadwalan had soon gathered troops in Ireland,
And set sail with his fleet, and his mighty host.
Pelluz, afar, beheld his voyage, in the stars,
He foresaw his advance upon Edwin the king,
And taught how the latter might save the realm.
By ship and shore Cadwalan sought this land,
But Edwin went before, and closed the havens;
Through Pelluz' foresight the fleet was barred.
Woe now to Cadwalan that he was ever born,
For he played the traitor to his sworn brother,
And yet to himself he did the greater harm!
Cadwalan called to him all his noblest knights,
And said that he would sail now to Brittany,
To the king there whose name was Salomon.
For he would welcome him with open heart,
For they were, both the twain, of one kindred,
Britons both, and both were likewise troubled.
Cadwalan took ship, and sailed upon the waves,
And set forth o'er the sea, sorrowful in mind.
To Yarmouth, and the Isle of Wight they came,
Like it or not, and there were forced to anchor,
On account of the wind that blew against them.
There the king, Cadwalan, felt most unwell,
With an ill fever that robbed him of his health.
After nine days, the king was much weakened,
And greatly desired venison as nourishment.
He summoned Brian his kinsman, saying:
'If I have not venison soon, I shall be dead!'

Brian cures the king's illness

Brian, oft troubled, was ne'er more so than then.
He summoned the huntsmen with their hounds.
O'er the fields and through the woods they ran,
But no deer were to be found for all their wiles,
Ne'er a hart nor a hind could they stir there.
The king, impatient, sent messengers to Brian.

Dear was the king to him, and sorrowful was he.
Oft, he bethought himself what he might do,
And this he conceived and he thought it good:
He took hold of a keen, well-whetted blade,
And took a slice of flesh from his own thigh,
Roasted it, swiftly, and bore it to the king.
'Hail to you, Cadwalan, my sovereign lord.
I have brought you the finest venison of all,
That e'er on any board was served to a king.
Approach, and eat, for it shall prove a cure.'
The king sat on his bed, his barons about him.
He ate of the roast meat, and soon was eased.
He began to sweat, and the sickness to pass,
And within five nights he was sound again,
And ne'er did he know what Brian had done.

Cadwalan sails to Brittany

The king was sound, and his folk were blithe.
The wind was favourable, they raised the sails,
The ships made headway, and the minstrels sang.
Kind was the weather, and the sea was calm;
The wind and tide now bore the fleet onward.
At Ridelet he came ashore, with joyful song,
Which is there yet, twixt Dinan and the sea.
So soon as he arrived, Salomon received him,
And most courteously; they were blithe together.
There, all winter, Cadwalan was entertained,
And then came Lent, and the days lengthened.
He began to fill his ships with countless warriors.
Thus did Cadwalan but, far-off, Pelluz knew it,
Through his magic arts, viewing the starry skies.
By many a thing on earth and in the heavens,
He forewarned Edwin of the fleet and the host.

Brian sails for England, to remove Pelluz

Cadwalan was in Brittany, with Salomon its king,
His cousin, his aunt's son, and most dearly loved.

And he heard it often said that Pelluz the wise,
That came from Spain, had warned King Edwin
Concerning future events that would transpire.
Cadwalan was troubled, and spoke with Brian,
Who was as dear to him, and they took counsel,
And decided that, while this Pelluz was alive,
Cadwalan could not covertly enter Britain.
Brian prepared to journey there, taking care
To provide himself with much silver and gold,
And countless treasures of many a varied kind.
He filled mighty casks with a wealth of goods;
To sea he went, and voyaged o'er the waves,
And among the casks was many a tun of wine,
And, once in harbour, he let his wine be tasted,
And behaved as if he were a wealthy merchant.
He entered Barbefleet, landing at Southampton,
One, there, had good wine drawn from his tuns,
And dealt it courteously to those that gathered,
Rich and poor alike, and so was loved by all.
After a seven-night he spoke with his knights,
Who were all feigning likewise to be merchants,
For a well-walled earth-house they had hired,
And within that cellar they'd stored their tuns.
They gave their lord a false name, Kinebord,
While he feigned to be a merchant from Spain.
They claimed he would range o'er the country,
And seek where he might freely sell his wine.
Forth at eve he went, with one of his knights,
And came swiftly to London, and Westminster,
Where he sought tidings of Edwin the king.
They told him that the king was now at York,
With a host of men, and in comfort enough,
So, he travelled north, with one companion,
Leaving London secretly, in wrathful mood.

He journeys to Edwin's court at York.

After travelling for a seven-night or so,
He met a pilgrim with a staff in his hand,

Who had journeyed in haste from the court.
Brian asked his business; he told his tale,
All that he chose, and after was persuaded
To exchange clothes; both went their way.
Brian, dressed as a pilgrim, found a smith,
And asked the smith to make an iron tip
To replace that from his staff he had lost.
Three days he dwelt there beside the forge,
The smith performing all they had agreed,
Forging a tip that was both long and strong;
Sharp was the end, and marvellous the staff.
Staff in hand, he now journeyed o'er the land,
And so, he then soon arrived at Edwin's court.
Brian went here and there, but could not gain
Any news of his fair sister's whereabouts,
Being careful not to enquire at the court.

He enters the court, dressed as a poor pilgrim

Come the morning, when the Lords sends light,
The king caused all in need, therein, to be fed.
All the poor folk of the city were summoned,
And hundreds upon hundreds soon appeared.
Brian went forward with the other wretches,
While giving a show of halting like one lame,
In the tattered garments of a man lowly born.
The crowd pushed him around, strange it felt;
His staff by his side he sat amongst those folk.
The king, and his attendants, stooped to serve.
The queen and her maidens bore folk drink.
Then it transpired that Galarne, Brian's sister,
Approached the queen with a drinking bowl,
And recognised her brother in the pilgrim.
Seeming poor she knew that he was noble.
As soon as she saw him, she came forward,
And drew a fine ring from off her finger,
And set that ring of bright gold in his hand.
Then said Galarne, that kind and lovely maid:
'Take this gold poor man, and God go with you,

Buy yourself warm garments gainst the cold.’
Thus, Brian realised that his sister knew him,
And with these words Brian the good replied:
‘The Lord that gave us daylight, reward you,
That deign to give such treasure to the poor!’
Then Galarne sat down betwixt two windows,
And, hidden there, she spoke with her brother,
And it warmed her heart to grant him tidings.
She pointed out Pelluz, the clerk from Spain,
And he gazed on the enemy he most hated.
After speaking thus, the siblings separated,
For not for their weight in gold would either
Let the king or a courtier find them together,
Since they’d be taken, and beheaded or hung.

Brian slays Pelluz, and awaits Cadwalan at Exeter

The folk had eaten and rose from their seats,
Amidst a drunken clamour, in that sudden din.
Pelluz was near, and bore the monarch’s cup.
Brian approached the man who’d done him ill,
His staff in hand, yet half-hidden by his cloak.
Thus, drawing nigh, he appeared behind Pelluz,
And, midst the throng, he thrust him in the back,
Such that the tip leapt forth from out the breast;
Then loosed his grip, to hide among the crowd.
Forth he went with the folk, all safe and sound.
And went swift from that place, heading south.
Thus, he journeyed far, till to Exeter he came,
Where he met a company of his bold knights,
Who asked him eagerly of how he’d fared.
Brian greeted them fulsomely and told them
That Cadwalan would bring a mighty host,
Composed of warriors from many a realm,
Such that Edwin would not dare attack him,
Nor rest easy in any burgh wherein he lay.
The men of Cornwall, Devon, Dorset heard,
And great was their bliss that they were alive.
Brian sent messengers swiftly to Brittany,

And in his letters informed King Cadwalan
Of all that he had done, and of Pelluz' death,
Bidding him come in force to this our land.
And the king did so as swiftly as he might.
Brian sent messages also to Southampton,
And had his treasure brought, and those men
That would gather to his cause, to Exeter.
Thus, steadfast warriors manned that burgh.

Cadwalan gathers an army and sails for Britain

Cadwalan, hearing the news, was full blithe.
Assembling a fleet of three hundred ships,
He equipped them all, and gathered his troops.
And Salomon summoned men far and wide,
And forth he too sailed with his bold Bretons,
In two hundred good ships, aiding his kinsman.
The wind was favourable, the weather fine,
The vessels raised their sails and set forth,
Travelling o'er the waves as they desired.
They came to Totnes, that bold pair of kings,
Salomon the good, and Cadwalan the brave,
All the folk on land joyful at their coming.

The battle before Exeter, against Penda of Mercia

Now, in the Midlands reigned a king called Penda,
Who governed the folk there under Mercian law.
And he loved King Edwin, and Edwin loved him,
And ever this Penda counselled Edwin at need.
Now King Penda heard that Brian held Exeter,
And he sent far and wide and gathered a host.
And he went forth, and he marched to Exeter,
With countless warriors, and besieged the town.
Brian the brave, with a good two hundred men,
Lay fast within, and there defended the burgh.
Tidings then came to Cadwalan, at Totnes,
Of how Brian was thus besieged, in Exeter.
He had the trumpets blown, gathered his men

And marched forth on the road to that place.
He ordered his troops into three divisions,
And full of battle-anger he called to them:
'Every good knight, now, march on outright,
For we are well-armed, a most goodly host,
And bring help to Brian who is dear to me,
Ere they can kill him and show his corpse,
And slay his comrades, before slaying us!'
So, they began to ride, bold lances to glide,
Clubs were shattered, and shafts were shivered,
Shields of bright gold were swiftly splintered.
Fell the brave knights, faces drained of blood,
On the wide field died those that were fated.
The streams ran dark red and exceeding full.
Then, earls were no greater than mere churls,
And seven thousand men of Mercia perished.
Then, the fair standards toppled to the earth,
Shields were cast aside, and the ground rang.

Penda is captured and held at Exeter

Now the wretched survivors took to flight,
And with all his might Cadwalan pursued,
And with his own hand he took King Penda,
Mildburg's grandfather, Maerwal's father.
Penda, he captured, and they bound him tight,
And guarded him fast, deep within Exeter.
Penda, it seems, was wondrously unharmed,
And Cadwalan treated him in goodly manner,
He was well fed, and his chamber fine and fair.
After a seven-night, Penda called for a knight,
That was a wise man of his, and full eloquent,
To share of his counsel, in his hour of need;
He besought this knight to seek of Cadwalan,
That was his sovereign now, to set him free,
And, for the love of God, he would be his man,
And he, and his, would exalt him night and day.
The knight went forth to Cadwalan the king,
(Blessing be on him, for a good man and true)

And where the king was, he greeted him fair:
‘Hail to you, Cadwalan, that is my sovereign,
King Penda sent me, that lies bound in prison,
For he seeks your mercy, now and evermore.
And he will be your man, and his son hostage,
And acknowledge you as lord, as your vassal,
And where’er you are be ready at your need.
For he will defend you gainst any man born!’
Cried Cadwalan the keen, king in the south:
‘If Penda will hold to what he now promises,
And renders up his son, his gold and treasure,
And will be true to me, and work me no harm,
And ne’er betray me, out of sheer wilfulness,
Then I will agree to what he now seeks of me.’
The good knight replied: ‘Lo, may I now thrive,
By standing surety, and my hundred comrades,
On penalty of our land, and our silver and gold.
And, for your grace and mercy, he will do more,
He has a fair sister that dwells there in Dover,
The fairest woman the bright sun shines upon.
Louis, the King of France, desires her greatly,
And this maid Helen he would have for queen;
Le Mans he would grant her as a wedding gift.
And I say as true as if I were your own brother,
That you would do well to take her as your own,
And through her gain the love of all her kindred,
And win the whole kingdom to your own hand,
Dwelling in this land, ruling it as your realm.’
Then granted him answer Cadwalan the king:
‘It is in my mind to do as you so advise me.
If, under Christ, you arrange this covenant,
I shall give you all of Devon for your reward,
And if she will wed me, let her come quickly.’

Cadwalan weds Helen of Mercia, and makes peace with Penda

The knight, and his troop, rode to Dover castle,
That stands by the shore, and led forth Helen,
The wondrous fair; to Winchester they led her,

Where was much bliss, and the folk full blithe.
There, King Cadwalan came forth to meet them,
There, was a rich wedding and joy unbounded;
He married the maiden, and took her to his bed,
And in the morning, when folk began stirring,
The king confirmed the terms of the covenant,
And sent a troop of knights forth, to greet Penda,
And grant him his freedom from Exeter castle,
And bid him, with love, come now to London.
King Penda came there, and was nobly received,
And Cadwalan the keen embraced him warmly,
And Penda became his man, to his great honour.
Then were the Londoners the blithest of people.

Cadwalan marches against Edwin

Not long thereafter, Cadwalan traversed the land
Granting freedom and peace to all that loved him,
Taking the lives of all those who countered him,
And all of their kin, taking what they held dear.
The king he marched north towards the Humber
And wasted the land with the utmost destruction.
Of this, Edwin heard, and all those that he loved,
And he went in dread of the deeds of Cadwalan.
He sent messengers forth now, to Saxon lands,
And he sent into Demark, and into Norway,
Into Wales and Scotland, and to far Orkney,
Galloway and Iceland, Friesland and Gothland,
Where men were keen, bidding them gather armed,
Ready to drive forth the Britons that harmed him,
For once they had hewn the Britons to pieces,
He'd set, in their hands, realms in his kingdom,
Which he would distribute as king of the land.
Yet little he knew of what would befall them!

Edwin gathers an army

There gathered to Edwin, by sea and by land,
All manner of folk, and from many a country,

Seven kings were there, and six brave princes,
Seventeen earls, and of knights sixty thousand.
Ne'er was a man born that could count the rest,
None of any burgh, nor that spoke any tongue,
And nor has it been said, nor in any book read,
That so great a host ever gathered in England.
Edwin now marched forth with his vast army,
And Cadwalan met him with his mighty host.

Edwin is slain at the Battle of Hatfield Chase (*near Doncaster, 633AD*)

At Hatfield they fought, stout shield against shield;
Twelve miles about is the weald they call Hatfield.
Edwin, on his side pitched camp, and made ready,
Set bounds, ranking the troops, raised his standard.
King Cadwalan the keen, soon came against him,
There rushed together, brave men beyond number.
There, they fought fiercely, and those so fated fell,
The brooks and streams running red with their blood.
Mischief unbounded, knights died, helms resounded,
Shields and lances shivered; bold warriors perished;
Fifty thousand brave men, their menace was ended!
There, did Edwin's host have the worst of the fight,
And Edwin himself, the most wretched of kings.
There, was Edwin killed, and his sons, the twain;
The seven kings fell, the princes six were slain.
The earls, the barons, the knights and the churls.
The swain and the lowest lad met with one fate,
Of neither the great nor the less they had mercy;
From all, was stolen life, and the light of day.

Oswald, kin to Edwin, succeeds him

Edwin's youngest son, he fled from that fight;
Fair was the man, Osric that prince's name.
He had for companions but a hundred knights.
They hid in the woods and dwelt there as outlaws,
Burnt Cadwalan's fields, and brought him harm,
Slaying his good folk thus, in many a wise.

Now Cadwalan the king heard how Edwin's son,
This Osric, dwelt in the woods like an outlaw,
And sent a contingent of warriors to find him.
Who sought him out, and then fought with Osric,
And slew that prince, and all his companions.
Thus was Cadwalan the blithest of warriors,
For he was called king now of all the English,
And Penda and other lords served under him.
Cadwalan had slain the fairest of Edwin's kin,
Except one, Oswald, bold in the Lord's sight.
He was of Edwin's kindred, and dear to him,
Now the noblest lord among all of his people.
Oswald took, in both hands, all of Edwin's lands;
Earls and warriors, all now became his men,
And he was the high king beyond the Humber.
Cadwalan heard this, and he said to his earls:
'Now, gather an army from all of my kingdom.
Oswald claims lordship of all I have conquered,
Fate shall bring on him the bitterest of evils.
By this realm, I shall slay him, felling his host,
And all those that come of his line, I'll destroy,
So, shall he be taught, for stealing a kingdom;
I'll lower his pride, that most hateful of men!'

Cadwalan and Penda move against Oswald

King Cadwalan gathered his host from this land,
And, eager for battle, marched towards Humber.
Oswald, the Lord's appointed, heard the news,
And collected his forces, but, avoiding a fight,
Though loth to flee, marched away northwards,
Cadwalan pursuing, yet failing to catch him.
Now Cadwalan, a foe of the Scots, was troubled,
For he had caused harm to the folk in the north.
He thought to turn back now, being cautious,
And delivered command of his forces to Penda,
His vassal king, to drive Oswald, Edwin's kin,
Forth from this country, he himself retreating,
Leaving Penda behind to work the expulsion.

Once Oswald heard that Cadwalan was absent,
He thought to march boldly against King Penda,
Who, in turn, conceived a plan to deceive him.
He sent word to Oswald, the king in the north,
Saying he wished to meet him in friendship,
And establish a peace, as his brotherly ally.
And then would return to Cadwalan the king,
And leave to Oswald that realm and the land.

Penda deceives Oswald and slays him

They set a day, and a place, to make peace,
And full soon the two leaders met together.
Oswald, the chosen of God, came there first
Camped on the site, now called Heavenfield,
And raised up there a mighty cross on high,
And bade all his warriors fall to their knees.
Then he prayed to the Lord to grant His grace,
Forgive their misdeeds, and bless the peace,
And if Penda broke that peace, to avenge it.
As the prayers ended, came Penda, riding,
That king most deceitful, and thus he spoke:
‘Oswald, fair greeting, and joy be upon you!
Keep your realm, but send now silver and gold,
A hundred fine hawks, and a hundred hounds,
A hundred steeds, and gold-embroidered weeds,
All in tribute, now, to Cadwalan the king,
And so, reconcile to him, and make peace,
And I will ensure that the friendship thrive.
And there is one thing more you might do,
So that the peace might ne’er be undone,
Call two true men to counsel beside us,
And I will call two, that are wise, to me.’
Then he rode out into the field that deceiver,
And Oswald too lacking a sword or shield,
And Penda drew his sword and slew Oswald.
This was Saint Oswald that Penda murdered;
Then he fled away swiftly with all his army.
Oswald’s men saw, and they pursued outright,

And slew many, fighting with all their might,
Such that Penda found it hard to thus depart,
Though escape he yet did, that arch-deceiver.

Oswy succeeds Oswald

Penda went south to find King Cadwalan.
And told the king of all that had happened.
The monarch liked it well but for one thing,
The treachery, of which he'd soon repent.
Now Oswald, that was slain, had a brother,
One, but no other, and his name was Oswy,
A steadfast man whom the north made king,
Since woe was on them for their lord's death.
Now Oswy took in hand his brother's realm.
He had cousins, the proud sons of his uncles,
Men of ambition, envious of his kingship,
Foes that thought to kill him for the kingdom.
But Oswy showed his mettle, a stern warrior,
And drove all that envied him from the land,
Chasing them southwards o'er the Humber,
So that none yet remained of those he hated.
They, in turn, made their way to King Penda,
And complained to him of Oswy the new king,
That had driven them forth from their country.
And they besought Penda, the king of Mercia,
To aid them in their cause, and destroy Oswy;
And they would be his men and honour him,
If he would but hang Oswy, or behead him.
Then answered Penda, the king of Mercia:
'You need not ask, for I am this Oswy's foe,
I that slew Oswald, the bravest of knights.
Yet Oswy his brother is a knight as bold,
No whit timid, that would seek to slay me,
So go we to Cadwalan, lord of this land,
And if he will send men from out his realm,
Proven knights out of Cornwall, and Wales,
And silver, and gold, I will fight this Oswy,
Drive him from hence, to his people's shame,

And put one to the sword whom I must hate!’

The gathering at Whitsuntide

So, they made their way to King Cadwalan,
And to that same they came with their request,
And told the king all that they’d have him do.
Now this befell at the time of Whitsuntide,
When the king had summoned all to London,
All that sought peace and concord with the king.
There came kings and chieftains, earls, barons,
Bishops came thither, and book-learned men,
Whether rich or poor, thither all folk came,
Of every manner of folk that loved the king.
The king wore his crown, and the folk felt joy,
For he was a man most true, and truth upheld.
When the people were all gathered together,
Up stood King Penda before King Cadwalan,
And, thus, he began, with a deceitful speech:
‘Lord we are come as summoned, all your men,
Both Britons and Englishmen, earls and barons,
Knight and clerks, and we kings, your underlings.
Though Oswy is not here, who would not so do,
Nor obey your commands, but seeks your harm.
None is so proud as he, who scorns your court.
But if you would grant me leave, and permit me,
And aid me by tendering me your stout forces,
And as much treasure as seems good to you,
I will march swiftly and cross o’er the Humber,
And render Oswy the most wretched of kings.
For there shall be ne’er a place he can find
Whence I’ll fail to extract him, dead or alive.
This seems good to me, and if you will not,
The worse for you, for Oswy will shame you.’
Then answered him King Cadwalan the keen:
‘Penda, I tell you, that Oswy is ill and abed,
Or else foreign invaders are come to his land,
For he’d ne’er refuse to ride here as I asked,
Summoning all in peace, friendship, love.

Now go aside Penda, while I and my earls
Commune together and seek good counsel
As to whether to grant that which you ask,
And I will send swift messengers to Oswy,
And summon him to come here, to my realm.’
Penda went aside, an earl as his companion,
While Cadwalan remained amidst his host.
Thu spoke Cadwalan, King of the English:
‘You, in this meeting hall, are all my men,
And you have heard what Penda has to say,
And how he will fight Oswy and destroy him,
If, to aid him, I will lend him troops of mine.
I would have you advise me, as is needed,
Whether I should let this Oswy be destroyed,
Or have him summoned, and, if he refuses,
Go there, and conquer him with all my host.’
Then a Welsh king among them was roused,
The king named Margadud, may he be cursed,
For he brought harm, ever, upon the English!
South Wales was his realm, and thus he spoke:
‘Hear me, Cadwalan; this I now advise you,
What you have spoken is no good counsel.
Long ago Brutus came here, and our kindred,
And they were noble knights, his Britons,
And this land they conquered and possessed.
And, Britain it was named while it was theirs,
Yet now we folk only own land in the west,
Where we Britons have dwelt many a winter.
Then came the English with their evil ways,
That through guile and cunning won this land,
And, betraying their true lord and his people,
Gave the king a heathen queen of Saxon lands,
Whose folk we hate, and through her ruined us.
So have the English kept us from our lands,
Such that we never since could obtain them.
King Penda is English, this Oswy is the same;
Let the hounds perish, gnawing at each other,
Let dog eat dog; let their whelps, about them,
Tear at each other, till not one is left alive!

Should Oswy win, advance and lay him low,
Seize his land and people, and erase his laws.
And if Penda prevails, he and his are yours.
Thus, you will have all England in your hand,
And all the honour; you alone will conquer,
And live your life, thereafter, as you wish,
With never a foe left to dare trouble you.’
Then called out one that was bold in counsel:
‘Hark to me Cadwalan, now hark a while,
There is no better counsel than Margadud’s,
If you should heed it not, the worse for you,
For all your people will later wish you had.’
After this Briton’s speech, Penda was recalled,
And Cadwalan granted him all he had sought.
Then Penda was blithe, and exceeding joyful,
And Penda and his knights took to the saddle,
And made their way towards Northumberland.

Penda and Oswy meet in battle (*the Battle of the Winwaed, 655AD*)

Oswy heard that King Penda now sought him,
Readied his forces, and marched against him.
Full stern was the battle that they now began.
Fiercely they fought; fierce enemies were they,
And countless the men that fell upon that field.
The afternoon passed, and the sun was setting,
When Oswy was slain, and so deprived of light,
With a son, and an uncle, and five of his earls;
Nine thousand were his warriors slain that day.
His folk were the less, but Penda was wounded,
And wended his way to Mercia, and his land.

The death of Cadwalan

Now Oswy had another son named Osric,
And he was fostered at Cadwalan’s court.
Osric asked to become Cadwalan’s man,
As one should, and possess his father’s land.
Cadwalan granted him all that he besought,

And gave the father's realm into his hand,
Bidding him have and hold that land, in joy.
Cadwalan did good deeds, as was his nature,
And he was the king here forty-seven years.
Yet, in going to London to gladden its folk,
He ate a quantity of fish at the feast there.
And ere all was eaten felt a grave disorder.
Seven nights and a day he lay in sickness,
Till it came to pass that the king was dead.
In London he was buried; woe to the people!

The reign of Cadwalader, last king of the Britons

Cadwalan had a son, named Cadwalader,
Penda's sister's son, royally descended,
And, after his father, this son held the realm.
He was kindly, and his people loved him,
A goodly knight, but a stern one in a fight,
Yet in his day great sorrow befell the nation.
First, the harvest failed o'er all the kingdom,
And corn was scarce, and the people starved,
Until you might journey for a seven-night,
And not find, anywhere, a loaf to purchase.
In town, and countryside, the people sorrowed,
And there was none that was free from hunger.
When this ill had long afflicted the kingdom,
There came another sorrow, and full soon;
The cattle suffered from the murrain fever.
Where the churl's oxen once drove his plough,
Now he brought homewards only half his team,
And some brought home one, and others none,
And these ills lasted long, all through the land.
And then the deepest sorrow cloaked this realm,
For a plague fell on the folk; earls, barons died,
Thanes and swains, the clergy and the laymen,
The old and young, the women and the weak,
Till the people could scarce bury their dead,
For plague e'en took them on the burial ground,
And the quick and living died amongst the dead;

And thus, it befell throughout the English lands.
Folk fled the realm then, sailed from every shore,
Till many a hundred townships were deserted,
And few were the folk that traversed the land.
Woe to Cadwalader, the king, in his kingdom!
He could not flee for shame, nor dared to stay.

Cadwalader flees the plague; a Saxon host arrives

Yet, despite the shame, he thought how to leave.
He took his treasure then, and his dearest friends,
And passed south-east o'er the sea, to Brittany,
And, there, found lodging with Alain, the king,
That was the son of Salomon, that goodly man,
Who loved King Cadwalan while he yet lived.
Alain the king received Cadwalader, graciously,
And granted him, in that realm, all that he wished.
So, full eleven years Cadwalader remained there;
For eleven years the plague here ran its course.
There was hunger and drought, people starved,
And great the mortality, throughout all the land.
Folk fled to the woods, lived among the rocks,
Slept in caves, and fared like the wild creatures.
They lived on herbs and roots, nuts and berries,
Lacking ought else; when the twelfth year came,
The plague abated, and the people stirred again,
Quit the sun and rain, and returned to the burghs.
They met in council and discoursed among them,
Then sent they messengers into the Saxon lands,
And made the death-toll known to their kindred,
And how they'd survived, for the plague abated,
And rebuilt the towns, and how the land was fair.
They bade them come, gold and silver yet remained,
And the Britons had been driven from the kingdom,
And dared not mingle yet with the English folk.
The Britons, they know naught of these messengers.
The noble Saxons heard the news they had brought,
And fifty thousand armed men sailed to England;
With their wives and children to this land they came.

Full three hundred ships came in that first surge,
Then folk in much smaller groups of six to sixty.
With them came Athelstan who was their leader,
Whom they crowned in London and made king.
Edward the king had begat him on his concubine.
Athelstan was the first Englishman to rule all here.
Crowned and anointed, England was all his own,
And afterwards he dwelt here for sixteen years.

Athelstan's tribute to Saint Peter's

It had happened in earlier days, some time before,
That there was a noble king, here, named Inne.
This English lord went to Rome, to the Pope,
And there he gladly sought Saint Peter's altar,
Bringing his precious treasures as an offering.
And more that lord did in Saint Peter's honour:
For every house of a husbandman and his wife
The king granted a penny to Saint Peter's House.
Inne was the first man that began this custom.
When Inne the king died, his laws were erased,
And the tribute ceased for five and sixty years,
Till King Athelstan had reigned here for fifteen.
He journeyed to Rome and kissed the Pope's feet,
Greeted him fair, and the same tribute granted
That Inne, the king, had offered long before,
And so, things have stood since in this realm;
And, in the Lord's name, may they long continue.

Cadwalader hears the news in Brittany

Fresh tidings came to Cadwalader in Brittany,
Where he dwelt with Alain the king, his kin,
That Athelstan had come to this land of ours,
From Saxon lands, and made the realm his own.
And how he'd appointed moots and hustings,
And set the boundaries of shires and chases,
Sanctioned baron's courts, named the hundreds,
And renamed the townships in the Saxon tongue.

And how he had set up guilds and their powers,
And raised new churches after the Saxon manner.
Men gave him the tidings thus, from all England.
King Cadwalader sorrowed that he was yet alive;
He wished he had died, rather than hear all this.
Sorrow was in his heart; sorrowful were his folk.
He spoke with his comrades how he might go
To fight with Athelstan, and obtain his rights,
And regain his realm, and retain it in his hand,
That this Athelstan now held, yet not rightfully.
Some counselled him to war, and others to peace,
Whereby he might hold his lands of Athelstan.
Deigning not to be his man, Cadwalader gathered
All the men and ships that he could command,
And thought to attack England in full force.

Cadwalader's vision

When that his host was gathered, and the fleet,
The wind blew southerly, and met their need.
Then said the king: 'Now, load the ships in haste!'
He himself went to church to work God's work,
And there he heard the high priest give the Mass.
The king knelt down and called on Jesus Christ,
And prayed to the Lord on high, that rules our fate
That he be sent a token from the Lord himself,
If that were pleasing to the Heavenly Judge,
As to whether the fleet should sail now or no.
And as he prayed, he fell into a light slumber,
And he felt joy of the Lord, who grants daylight.
The king dreamt, as he knelt there, slumbering,
That a man, one wondrous fair, stood before him,
And he spoke these words to the King of Britain:
'Awake Cadwalader, whom Christ holds dear!
Make ready to journey, but go straight to Rome,
And there you will find the Pope, best of priests,
And the Pope will shrive you of this worldly life,
Such that all your sins will fall away from you,
And so, you will be clean, all through God's will,

Of all those sins, by the great power of our Lord;
And when you die, thereafter, you'll go to heaven.
Yet nevermore shall you possess fair England,
But the Saxons they shall hold all of those lands,
And nevermore shall British folk possess them,
Until the time shall come that has been declared,
The day that Merlin, the prophet, once foretold.
Then shall the Britons come once more to Rome,
Draw your bones from beneath the marble stone
And bear them forth with them, amidst much joy,
Wrapped in cloth of silver and gold, to Britain.
Then will the Britons once again prove bold,
All they do shall be in accord with your will,
And all shall be bliss in Britain once again,
With fine weather and fair harvest, as they wish.'
Then Cadwalader awoke, wondering at his dream,
Strangely troubled, as to what it might betoken.
Often, he communed, and sought men's counsel,
And told his dream to Alain, king of that land,
He that was King Cadwalader's nearest kindred.
Alain sent his messengers through all the land,
And caused the wisest scholars to be summoned,
And told them all of King Cadwalader's vision.
Then they took counsel, and they too communed,
And advised him to do as God had commanded.
He left his fleet and folk, his way, his own will,
And called on Yuni and Yvor, both dear to him.
Yvor was his stepson, and Yuni his sister's son,
And they were both knights, and great in might.
Then spoke Cadwalader, that was King of Britain:
'Yvor and Yuni, you that are both of my people,
Hearken to my advice, and you ne'er shall rue it.
From heaven came to me a sign from the Lord,
And I must go now to Rome, to Pope Sergius,
And I, and my wife, he shall bless and shrive,
And there shall we live our days out to the end,
Whene'er that may be; you'll see me no more.
Here and now, I grant you the realm of Wales.
All of the land that still standeth in my hand.

And take you all this host and go to that land,
And hold it in joy, while you can so defend it.
And I entreat you both, by the Lord in heaven,
That you must love each other like brothers,
And hold you the realm till you both have end,
Possessing it in joy, and your sons thereafter.
Yuni, this was my destiny, as you now know,
For Merlin the wise he prophesied my death,
Of which his words spoke, and of all my fate.
And the wise Sibyl set it down, in her book,
That I would do as the Lord wished of me.
Now go your ways, both, and fare you well!’

Cadwalader dies in Rome (*In 700AD, or as late as 704AD, according to Layamon*)

Cadwalader journeyed till he came to Rome,
And there he came before Sergius the Pope,
And he shrove Cadwalader, King of Britain.
The king dwelt there but two years and a half,
Then there came on him sickness, as God willed,
Eleven days ere May he departed this our life,
And his soul rose up to seek the heavenly king.
His bones are locked full fast in a golden chest,
And there they shall remain till the time comes
That Merlin the wise foresaw in the olden days.

Layamon’s Coda

Let us return to Yuni, and to Yvor his cousin.
Who now gathered a force from all of Brittany;
And forth they voyaged with five hundred ships.
And, in no time, arrived on the coast of Wales.
The Britons were scattered midst rocks and hills,
In churches, monasteries, woods and mountains.
But soon they heard that ten times fifty vessels,
All filled to the very gunnels with bold Britons,
Had come to those shores with Yuni and Yvor.
Those Britons then gathered to the Welsh lands,

And followed their laws there, and their customs.
And there they dwell yet, and shall for evermore.
The English kings now ruled this realm of ours,
While the Britons lost this land, and this nation,
So that they nevermore held the kingship here.
That day has not yet come; yet, come what may,
What happens shall e'er happen as God so wills!

Amen.

The End of Part VIII, and of Layamon's 'Brut'