

## **King Arthur in Cornwall / by W. Howship Dickinson.**

### **Contributors**

Dickinson, W. Howship (William Howship), 1832-1913.  
Royal College of Physicians of London

### **Publication/Creation**

London : Longmans, Green, and Co., 1900.

### **Persistent URL**

<https://wellcomecollection.org/works/xg7yk2hm>

### **Provider**

Royal College of Physicians

### **License and attribution**

This material has been provided by This material has been provided by Royal College of Physicians, London. The original may be consulted at Royal College of Physicians, London. where the originals may be consulted. Conditions of use: it is possible this item is protected by copyright and/or related rights. You are free to use this item in any way that is permitted by the copyright and related rights legislation that applies to your use. For other uses you need to obtain permission from the rights-holder(s).



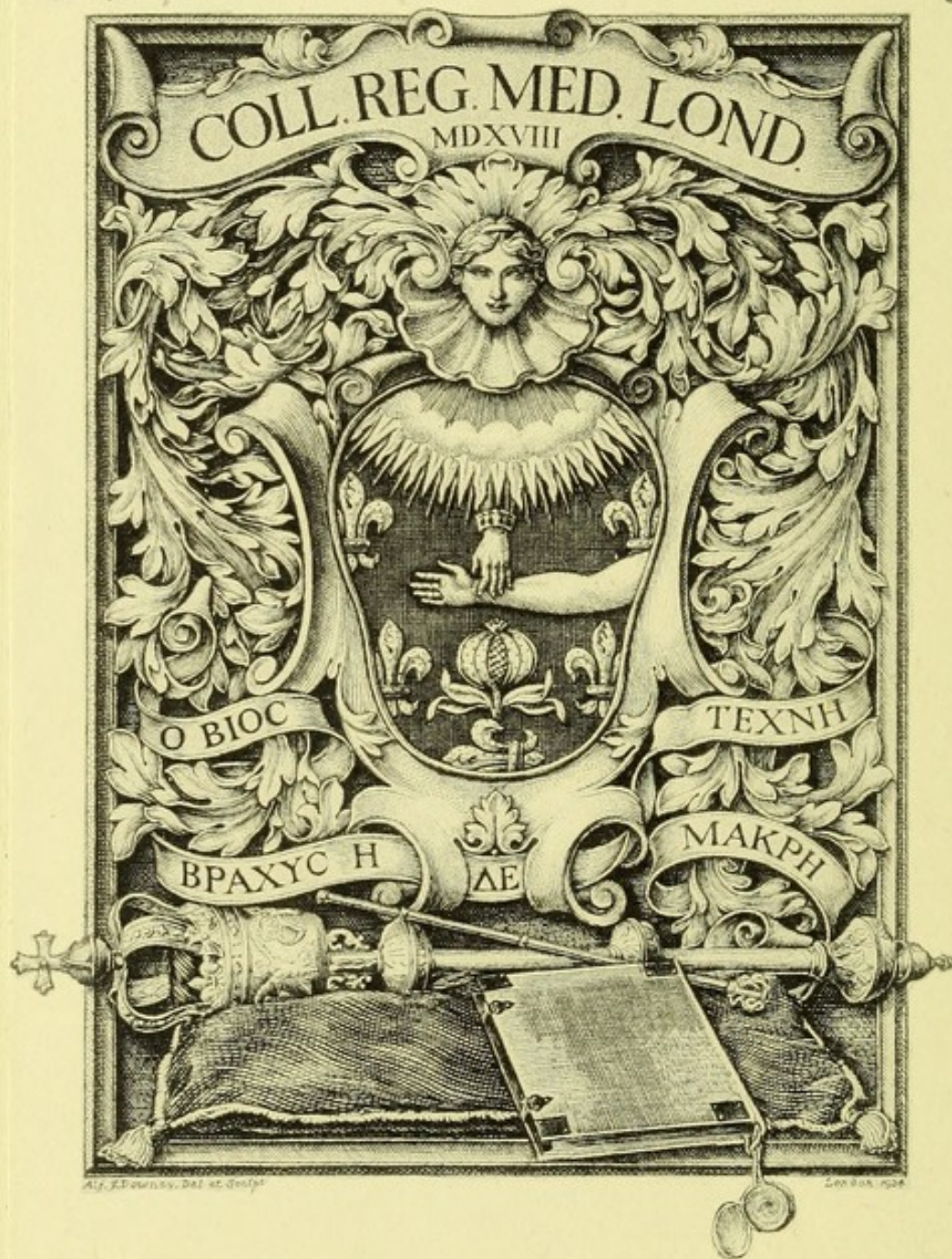
Wellcome Collection  
183 Euston Road  
London NW1 2BE UK  
T +44 (0)20 7611 8722  
E [library@wellcomecollection.org](mailto:library@wellcomecollection.org)  
<https://wellcomecollection.org>





STA COLL

C08 DIC









Digitized by the Internet Archive  
in 2015

<https://archive.org/details/b24974936>

KING ARTHUR IN CORNWALL





65-9.13

# KING ARTHUR IN CORNWALL

BY

W. HOWSHIP DICKINSON, M.D.

HONORARY FELLOW OF GONVILLE AND CAIUS COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE



LONGMANS, GREEN, AND CO.

39 PATERNOSTER ROW, LONDON

NEW YORK AND BOMBAY

1900

All rights reserved



STA Coll

ROYAL COLLEGE OF PHYSICIANS	
LONDON	
CLASS	CO8 DIC
ACQIN.	22,999
SOURCE	Author. Gift
DATE	Mar. 1900

## PREFACE

THE following pages present an attempt to bring together what may be accepted with regard to the personality and actual life of King Arthur, while putting aside everything that is obviously or probably fabulous. I have endeavoured to give due weight to the evidence, both positive and negative, rather than to work up to a pre-determined conclusion. With regard to the evidence of a positive kind, if so it may be called, I have given especial weight to the details of topography, more particularly in Cornwall, with the Arthurian localities of which I happen to be more familiar than with those elsewhere.

The fame of Arthur as expressed by the association of his name with places is greater than that of any other personage save one who can claim this sort of connection with our island. On this showing, Julius Cæsar and Oliver Cromwell sink into insignificance



as compared with the Cornish Chief. Only the Devil is more often mentioned in local association than Arthur. That name, indeed, is almost ubiquitous, since it is to be found wherever local peculiarities exist which were not explicable to our forefathers save by infernal agency. The Devil's Dyke, The Devil's Bridge, the Devil's Jumps, the Devil's Frying Pan, the Devil's Post-Office, the Devil's Punch-Bowl, are a few instances among many. Next to the Devil in bestowing names on localities comes Arthur. But the two names are distributed in a very different fashion: that of the Devil is scattered impartially, being placed at random wherever thought suitable; that of Arthur is limited to certain districts in which according to history or tradition the hero lived or moved. This dissemination and limitation of the name must have some origin, and may be most obviously and reasonably explained by connecting them with an individual to whom it actually belonged. I hold Arthur to have been as real a person as Cæsar or Cromwell, though less advantageously circumstanced for the recording of his deeds. The British Chief lived in the dark interval between two civilisations, between the departure of the



Romans from the island and the establishment of the Saxon polity. The west and the north, which were the seats of his exploits, were remote from what had been the centres of Roman learning, and it may be presumed that Arthur's fighting men were only less illiterate than the Saxons with whom they contended. There may have been priests among them, for Christianity had already reached Ireland and touched the western extremity of England, but the priests, if priests there were, were probably more religious than literate. There was no Xenophon in Arthur's army, and perhaps no one who could read or write. No manuscript has come down to us from Arthur's time and place, though we have reason to believe that among his contemporaries and immediate successors were some who could compose and others who could learn, recite, and remember with advantages the deeds of a leader who made an impression on his countrymen which will probably never be obliterated. What was crystallised in metre was easily remembered and handed down with something approaching to verbal accuracy. The narratives not so expressed gathered



exaggeration as they went on, until in the course of time both the facts and the fiction acquired the permanence of writing. Oral tradition is not to be ignored ; indeed, a large proportion of ancient history must have had this origin.

Putting aside obvious and inevitable exaggerations, the general outlines of Arthur's story are consistent with historic probability and with his great fame, which cannot be otherwise explained ; while, as will presently be seen, many details are strikingly confirmed by the correspondence of the topography with the traditions.

I have not attempted to construct a biography of Arthur, nor even to arrange in chronological sequence the deeds attributed to him and the circumstances which, according to tradition, preceded his birth. So far as I have used the order of time, it has had to do with the records to which I have referred rather than with the events of which I have made mention.

# CONTENTS

	PAGE
I. INTRODUCTORY . . . . .	I
II. TRADITIONS AND HISTORY BEARING UPON THE LIFE OF ARTHUR . . . . .	10
III. ARTHUR'S LAST BATTLE—THE DOUBTS WHICH SURROUND HIS PLACE OF BURIAL . . . .	31
IV. TOPOGRAPHICAL ASSOCIATIONS . . . . .	49
V. CONCLUSIONS . . . . .	78





## ILLUSTRATIONS

FIGURE	PAGE
1. TINTAGEL CASTLE AS REPRESENTED BY NORDEN, 1584-1600 . . . . .	62
2. TINTAGEL CASTLE, FROM THE 25-INCH ORDNANCE MAP . . . . .	63
3. DAMELIOCK CASTLE, REPRODUCED FROM THE 25- INCH ORDNANCE MAP . . . . .	69
4. CASTLE KILLIBURY, FROM THE 25-INCH ORDNANCE MAP . . . . .	73
5. CARDINHAM CASTLE, FROM THE 25-INCH ORDNANCE MAP . . . . .	76





# KING ARTHUR IN CORNWALL

## I

### INTRODUCTORY

*Ex nihilo nihil fit.* For the story of King Arthur there must be some foundation, however the primary facts may have been distorted and exaggerated. Two rules may be safely laid down with regard to tradition : it usually has some truth to rest upon ; that truth is not accurately presented to us, but has been altered and probably magnified by verbal transmission. We may believe that Troy was besieged and captured by the Greeks, though we hesitate to accept the many instances of divine intervention which the siege afforded ; we may believe that Ulysses met with many adventures at sea, though we may have our doubts concerning the Sirens and Polyphemus. The creative power of man's mind is small ; he is more



ready to embellish than to invent. We may give to tradition a credence as to something which has an origin in fact, though it is not always easy or possible to separate that fact from the superstructure by which it has been overlaid. Tradition, first oral and latterly written, pointed to the grave of Agamemnon : a skeleton with a gold mask was found there, after the lapse of 3,000 years, with surroundings which appeared to indicate that it was that of the King of Men. Tradition preserved the memory of a church at Peranzabuloe which was buried in sand and lost to view—some say in the 8th or 9th century—certainly at a remote period of English history. In the year 1835 a great storm shifted the sand and exposed the minute archaic edifice where tradition had placed it, and where it had been hidden for we cannot say how many centuries.

A tradition came down from Druidical to recent times to the effect that near the Cheesewring in Cornwall the Arch-Druid had his seat, and there dispensed wine to hunters out of a gold cup, which, like the widow's cruse, was inexhaustible. In the year 1837 a gold cup was found in Rillaton Barrow, within a quarter of a mile of the supposed



seat of the Druid. This cup was decided by archæologists to belong to the Bronze Age.<sup>1</sup>

In looking at the legend of King Arthur one is immediately struck with its wide distribution. Originally of Celtic origin, it has taken root in certain localities, and held its place in them notwithstanding that the people among whom it originated have suffered admixture or even been entirely replaced by other races. There are four groups of what are called 'Arthurian localities'—localities in which the name 'Arthur' is frequently used in connection with places or structures, or in which some name or tradition is retained which connects Arthur with them. Some of the designations referred to are certainly ancient, some of doubtful antiquity, some obviously modern.

The four groups of 'Arthurian localities' are :—

<sup>1</sup> I have to thank the Rev. S. Baring-Gould for supplying me with these particulars, which are to be found in the Report of the Launceston Meeting of the Cambrian Archæological Society, *Archæologia Cambrensis*, No. 51, fifth series, July 1896. This relic is preserved in the royal collection at Osborne, and is described and figured in the *Archæological Journal*, vol. xxiv. p. 189. The vessel is represented as in excellent preservation and of artistic design. It is of hammered gold, and is supposed to be of Scandinavian workmanship.



1. In North Cornwall, from Boscastle to Wadebridge. This is the most interesting, and the traditions belonging to it are the most explicit, and relate not only to Arthur's life, but to events which preceded it.

To mention some of the Arthurian names in Cornwall, and the names of places with which Arthur is traditionally connected, we find King Arthur's Castle, the famous stronghold at Tintagel, where we may believe that he was born; Damelioc, whereby hangs a tale; and Kelly Rounds, which, if I am correct in identifying it with Kelliwic, has also a place in Arthurian lore. Allusive names without circumstance are numerous in the same district. To mention some, we have King Arthur's Hall, Hunting Seat, Bed, Quoit, Cups and Saucers, Tomb, and Grave. I may add Pentargon, which Mr. Baring-Gould interprets as 'Arthur's Head.' Many of these designations declare nothing more than the prevalence of the name in a certain district and the readiness of our ancestors to apply it indiscriminately. 'Arthur's Tomb' bears the name of Latinus, but is assigned to Arthur because he was erroneously thought to have been killed in the vicinity, and the inscription is difficult to be read. (See page



33). 'Arthur's Grave' is a barrow also called the 'Giant's Grave,' of which the occupant is unknown. 'Arthur's Quoit' is the top stone of a cromlech which has no probable relation to King Arthur, excepting that it is in Tintagel. 'Arthur's Cups and Saucers' are excavations made by weather in Tintagel Head. These bare names prove nothing beyond the vague retention of a memory in the district to which they relate, but so much they may be held to indicate. The names which are associated with traditions are more suggestive and will receive further consideration.

2. In Brittany, probably a mere offshoot from Cornwall—Britanny and Cornwall being closely connected geographically and by identity of race. As there is no reason to suppose that Arthur was ever in Gaul, I do not propose to dwell upon the French localisation of the Arthurian legend, nor have I the necessary local knowledge.

3. In Wales, chiefly in the south, with Caerleon-upon-Usk as a centre, but involving the north to a lesser extent. I may touch briefly upon the Welsh localisations, though it is not my purpose to dwell upon them in detail. The Welsh legends or traditions are more circumstantial than those I shall



presently refer to as Scottish or Cumbrian. Caerleon-upon-Usk was known as the City of Legions, because in the time of the Roman supremacy a legion (the Second Augustan) was stationed there. It was an Archiepiscopal See, and as such was held by Dubricius, who plays a prominent part in Arthurian mythology. According to Nennius, one of Arthur's battles was fought here. Welsh names, local and personal, abound in Arthurian literature, and the connection of Arthur with South Wales was accepted by both Hume and Gibbon as sufficient to warrant them in regarding him as a prince of the Silures. As will presently be seen, I have not adopted this hypothesis.

4. In Scotland and the North of England, reaching from north of Edinburgh to south of Carlisle, and comprising the Lowlands and Cumberland. Cornwall and Wales belong to what Sir William Harcourt once called 'the Celtic fringe'; in the Lowlands and Cumberland the Celt has been superseded by other races, who have taken, together with his territory, some reminiscence of his traditions. In the north Arthurian names are more widely scattered than anywhere else, though there is an absence of the details



which connect the Cornish localities with the personality of Arthur. Mr. Skene in his 'Four Ancient Books of Wales,'<sup>1</sup> a work to which I owe much, has discussed with learning the military career of Arthur, and shown that there is reason to believe that many of his battles took place in the north, including that in which he met his end. Mr. Stuart Glennie has followed on the same side, in the endeavour to prove that the north was 'the historical birthland of the Arthurian tradition.' I venture to think, as will presently be seen, that there is satisfying evidence that Scotland was the scene of the later events of Arthur's life and probably of his death.

The Arthurian district of the north reaches from Penrith to Strathmore, and has supplied Mr. Skene and Mr. Stuart Glennie with a large number of Arthurian names. Arthur's Seat occurs three times, Arthur's Round Table twice; besides which we have Arthurstone, Arthur's O'on (oven), Arthur's Chair, Camp, Lee, Fountain, Hill, Tomb. There are also to be found Merlin's Fountain, Merlin's Grave, Mordred's Castle, and Camlan

<sup>1</sup> See *The Four Ancient Books of Wales*, by W. F. Skene, 1868; also an essay on Arthurian localities, by J. S. Stuart Glennie, *Merlin*, part iii., published by the Early English Text Society, 1869.



or Camelon. The local association of Mordred and Camlan is of especial interest ; for Camlan, wherever it be, is the name given in Arthurian literature to Arthur's last battle. Whether this is to be placed in Scotland or in Cornwall is a question which will receive further consideration. I have no doubt that this list of Scottish place-names which refer to Arthur might be considerably increased. Ben Arthur is to be found at the head of Loch Long, and Dumbarton Castle was known in the time of David II. as *Castrum Arthuri*, near which, according to Mr. Skene's reading, occurred Arthur's ninth battle. Many of these names may be purely fanciful—applied, we know not how recently, to the places they denote ; but at any rate it may be regarded as probable that someone, presumably a Celtic chieftain (for the word 'Arthur' is of Celtic origin), left the memory of the name, if of little else, widely scattered over Scotland and the North of England.

In addition to the localisation of Arthurian names it will presently be seen that many, or I may say most, of the battles attributed to Arthur, including that in which he died, have been placed in this district. The



conclusion is not to be avoided that at some remote time, imperfectly presented to us by history, one Arthur was a prominent person in the south of Scotland and the north of England, left his name widely scattered in the Lowlands, and fought many battles hereabouts.



## II

TRADITIONS AND HISTORY BEARING UPON  
THE LIFE OF ARTHUR

APART from the evidence of names, we may inquire what is to be found in the way of history or circumstantial tradition.

Arthur has been regarded as a somewhat shadowy character ; it has even been doubted whether he was not wholly imaginary. Milton<sup>1</sup> thus expresses his uncertainty : ' Who Arthur was, and whether any such person reigned in Britain, hath been doubted heretofore, and may again with good reason.' It is said that Tennyson, who has partaken of Arthur's immortality, doubted his existence ; and so much has the Arthurian story been overlaid with romance that it is no easy matter to discover the historical facts which are concealed under the superstructure of fiction.

<sup>1</sup> *History of Britain*, by John Milton.



So much has the story of Arthur been magnified and embellished by the romancers of the twelfth and subsequent centuries, so much has it been glorified by impossible details and inflated by obvious anachronisms,<sup>1</sup> that we cannot wonder that the whole tale was distrusted where there was so much reason for rejecting the greater part. The later Arthurian story presents conditions rather befitting the Black Prince than the British king. To get to the foundations, we must dig below the superstructure, which is mostly of French origin, and examine the records, scanty though they be, which belong to Arthur's country and as nearly as may be to his time. The ancient literature of Cornwall, if there ever was any, has perished with its language, but there remains much of that of Wales, some going back possibly to the time of Arthur, probably to the century in which he lived. Some of the Triads and some of the songs of the bards are confidently believed to have been handed down from the sixth century, though we possess no manuscripts

<sup>1</sup> I need not refer to *La Morte d'Arthur*, a work of which Roger Ascham disapproves as encouraging manslaughter and incontinence: 'yet I know,' says Roger, 'when God's Bible was banished the Court, and *La Morte d'Arthur* received into the prince's Chamber.'



which have an earlier date than the twelfth. Among these survivals are many allusions to Arthur, mentioning him by name and referring to him as a fighting man and a leader, and more than one associating him with Cornwall, and with a particular earth-work which, I venture to think, can still be identified. One of these writings is entitled 'Triads of Arthur and His Warriors,'<sup>1</sup> and is thus translated :

Arthur the chief lord at Kelliwic in Cornwall, and Bishop Betwine the chief Bishop, and Caradawe Vreich-vras the chief elder.

This is referred to by Dr. Guest<sup>2</sup> as 'a poem of the sixth century, whose genuineness no scholar has ever doubted.'<sup>3</sup> The Triads do

<sup>1</sup> Skene's *Four Ancient Books of Wales*, vol. ii. p. 457.

<sup>2</sup> Guest's *Origines Celticae*, vol. ii. p. 194.

<sup>3</sup> Dr. Guest's opinion as that of an antiquarian scholar deservedly carries great weight, though some at least of the bardic fragments usually ascribed to the sixth century are held by Stephens to belong to the twelfth. (See *Literature of the Kymry*, 1849.) This writer allows certain of these fragments to have come down from the sixth century, and the admission of so scrupulous a critic goes far to establish their antiquity. I may refer to Skene's *Four Ancient Books of Wales* for information regarding the works in question, as well as for the text of some of them. There appears to be no reasonable doubt that Taliessin, Llymarch Hen, and Myrddin lived in the sixth century, though their supposed compositions are not presented to us in any manuscripts which bear an earlier date than the twelfth. *The Black Book of Caermarthen*, which contains some of these remnants, of the greatest reputed antiquity, was written in the time of Henry II.



not deal with narrative ; their purpose is served when three names are linked together. The mention of Cornwall in connection with Arthur may be taken to indicate that he was a Cornish rather than a Welsh potentate ; while that of Kelliwic, as will presently be shown, is of especial interest as indicating the locality to which he belonged. The 'Black Book of Caermarthen' contains a poem of somewhat uncertain date and authorship, in which the same place is referred to in connection with Arthur :

he killed every third person  
When Celli was lost.

Celli is evidently the place elsewhere referred to as Celliwig, another form of the name Kelli-

But though all intermediate writings have perished or remain hidden, we are not to infer that none ever existed. It is clear that some of the bardic fragments refer to the sixth century ; for example, that relating to the fight at Llongborth between Geraint and, as is supposed, Cerdric, in which Arthur is mentioned. It is possible that this and other poems may at first have been transmitted by word of mouth, but impossible that they could have been so conveyed for six hundred years. Intermediate writings there must have been ; these have not survived, but they are probably fairly represented in the *Black Book of Caermarthen* and similar records. It cannot be doubted that these compositions relating to the sixth century, by whatever means and with whatever modifications they reached the twelfth century, must have had some substantial foundation. It would have been impossible in the twelfth century to create out of nothing stories and allusions so suited to the sixth in historic probability and local association.



wic. The same 'Black Book' gives a poem relating to Geraint, who was killed in the course of it. Arthur was there, and attracted the notice and commendation of the author:—

In Llongborth I saw Arthur,  
And brave men who hewed with steel,  
Emperor and conductor of the toil.

I presume that Llongborth is a place elsewhere spoken of as Longporth, and believed to be Portsmouth; and the battle referred to, one between Arthur and Cerdric.

The same manuscript gives a poem entitled 'The Verses of the Graves.' Many graves are mentioned which are not to the present purpose; that of Arthur is referred to as unknown in the following line:—

A mystery to the world the grave of Arthur.

Taliessin was a Welsh bard who, among others, is assigned to the sixth century. He refers to Arthur frequently as the Guledig—a term, according to Skene, equivalent to Ruler or Imperator. That Arthur was not Imperator of all Britain will presently appear; that he held some position of supremacy in the west may well be believed. Taliessin refers to Arthur frequently, once as 'Arthur the blessed':—



on the face of battle,  
Upon him a restless activity.

The same poet describes with much repetition a certain expedition, of which one stanza may serve as a sufficient sample :—

And when we went with Arthur, a splendid labour,  
Except seven none returned from Caer Vedwyd.

The same poet alludes to 'the steed of Arthur' in a poem which enumerates memorable horses. In the 'Book of Aneurin,' a Welsh poet who belonged, as it is thought, to the sixth century, Arthur is made use of as a standard of comparison. A certain warrior is thus referred to :—

He was an Arthur  
In the midst of the exhausting conflict.<sup>1</sup>

Further quotations from similar sources might be brought together, but enough have been adduced to show that the name of Arthur was so widely celebrated by the Welsh bards, and was so connected by them with place and circumstance, that it is not possible to doubt that the traditions had reference to a real person. Whether any of the bardic effusions which have come down to us are correctly assigned to the sixth

<sup>1</sup> Skene's *Four Ancient Books of Wales*, vol. i. p. 426.



century, as Welsh scholars believe, I am not competent to decide. Many of them are obviously of later date ; but if we may accept what is generally believed, we must attribute some of these poetic remnants to a time when Arthur was a recent memory, and give credence to them as at least founded on fact. By the bards Arthur was represented as a military chief paramount in the country to which their knowledge extended ; as a soldier of exceptional activity, and one who attracted the admiration of those who fought under him ; as concerned in a variety of fights in a variety of places, most of which are not now to be exactly identified, but one of which was Kelliwic, a place of strength which will receive further notice ; and as resembling another great leader in the invincible obscurity which shrouded his place of rest. ' In the lost battle borne down by the flying,' his sepulchre may have been the maws of kites.

From the time of the bards—not to limit that period to the sixth century—until the ninth century no records concerning King Arthur have come down to us. It is more likely that some were written, utilised, and lost, than that the historian of the ninth



century was guided only by oral tradition. The earliest connected history of Arthur, though, as has been seen, this by no means contains the earliest mention of him, is that of Nennius, a Briton who, according to his own statement, wrote in the year 858, and concludes his history in the time of the 'Heptarchy.' Thus three centuries elapsed between the supposed death of Arthur in 542 and any collected record of his doings which is still extant. This interval, however, was not barren of Arthurian lore, for we have derived from it, as I have shown, a sufficiency of fragments and allusions to certify to the existence of Arthur, to mark his position as 'Dux Bellorum,' to present him in his fighting character, and in more than one instance to associate him with places which can still be identified.

As against the positive testimony of the Bards we have a certain amount of negative evidence to which due weight must be attached, though the negation may be held to apply not so much to the existence of Arthur as a chieftain in the west as to the general supremacy assigned to him by



later writers and popular tradition as King of Britain, Comes Britanniae, lord of the whole country comprising the 'Saxon shore' as well as the remote districts of the west and north. Proceeding in chronological order, the first historical record (for the bardic fragments can scarcely be so termed) relating to 'Britain's Isle and Arthur's days' is that of Gildas, a British priest of reforming tendencies, who was born, according to his own statement, in the year of the famous battle of Badon Hill, or Mons Badonicus, and received in consequence the addition of Badonicus to his name. This battle, which was fought in the year 520, or, according to another reckoning, 516, was connected in later times with Arthur, and regarded as his crowning victory. If Gildas was born in the year of Badon Hill, he must, supposing we accept the date 520 for that engagement, have been twenty-two years old at the time assigned by tradition to Arthur's last battle. Yet Gildas makes no mention of Arthur, though he refers by name to Ambrosius as the successful leader of the Britons against the Saxons at this epoch. If, as there is reason to believe, Scotland was the scene of the latter part of Arthur's



career and of his death, it is the less remarkable that he should have escaped mention by Gildas, who apparently belonged to the south of England, for he is known to have spent part of his time at Glastonbury. Similar negative evidence is provided by the Venerable Bede, who lived nearer to the place of Arthur's exploits than did Gildas, though he was more remote from them in time. Bede was a Northumbrian priest in the time of the 'Heptarchy.' He was born in 673 and died in 735. As a writer on ecclesiastical history, it is remarkable that he found no place for Arthur as a Christian champion. Bede, who closely follows Gildas, mentions only Ambrosius. I may venture to quote from the 'Ecclesiastical History' the passage which refers to Ambrosius, from which it will be seen that this historian does not explicitly attribute the victory of Badon Hill to Ambrosius, though his words have been thought to bear that signification. 'Under him' (Ambrosius) 'the Britons revived and, offering battle to the victors, by the help of God came off victorious. From that day, sometimes the natives, and sometimes their enemies, prevailed, till the year of the siege of Baddesdown Hill, when they made no small



slaughter of those invaders.' Putting Badon Hill aside, there are other battles, which will be enumerated in due course, of which Arthur has the sole credit, which might have been expected to have drawn the attention of the priest to the hero had he been all that later chronicles represent.

Here is a difficulty which cannot be ignored ; and which consists not so much of conflicting testimony as of testimony conflicting with the absence of testimony. In such a case it is probable that more weight should be attached to positive evidence than to negative. The ignoring of Arthur by Gildas and Bede, and as I shall presently show by the 'Saxon Chronicle,' may imply no more than that he held no such position as would have caused him to be mentioned by the British writers, who named no one but the commander-in-chief, and that the field of his activity did not bring him under the notice of the Saxon chroniclers, who took no cognizance of what went on at this time in the west. The two British writers, whose notice of the wars of the Saxon invasion is confined to the briefest epitome, mention no leader on either side but Ambrosius. There must have been others, of whom Arthur may have been one. Arthur was never, like



Vortigern, King of Britain, or, like Ambrosius, commander-in-chief of the British forces : he had no concern with the ' Saxon shore ' ; he was, as we are frequently told, Guledig, or Imperator, but his authority must have been limited to the west and north.

Between the history of Bede and that of Nennius, the Arthurian legend appears to have taken tangible shape, and by the later historian was written in a connected though condensed form. If, as is probable, Nennius was guided by earlier manuscripts, they have perished or not come to light. Little is known of this writer. His ' *Historia Britonum* ' is said to have been edited by Mark the Hermit in the tenth century. According to his own statement, Nennius, who was apparently a Briton and a priest, wrote his history in the year 858. It concludes with the battle of Cocboy (or Maserfield), between two kings of the ' Heptarchy ' in the year 642. Importance (as will presently be seen) is to be attached to the date of this conclusion. Nennius in the course of his history deals with the conflicts between the Britons and Saxons after the death of Hengist, and introduces us to Arthur in these words :—



‘Then it was that the magnanimous Arthur, with all the kings and military force of Britain, fought against the Saxons. And although there were many more noble than himself, yet he was twelve times chosen their commander and was as often conqueror. The first battle in which he was engaged was at the mouth of the river Gleni. The second, third, fourth and fifth were on another river, by the Britons called Duglas, in the region Linuis. The sixth on the river Bassas. The seventh in the wood Celidon, which the Britons call Cat Coit Celidon. The eighth was near Gurnion Castle, where Arthur bore the image of the Holy Virgin, mother of God, upon his shoulders, and through the power of our Lord Jesus Christ and the Holy Mary put the Saxons to flight, and pursued them the whole day with great slaughter. The ninth was at the City of Legion which is called Cair Lion. The tenth was on the banks of the river Trat Treuroit. The eleventh was in the mountain Breguoin, which we call Cat Bregion. The twelfth was a most severe contest, where Arthur penetrated to the hill of Badon. In this engagement nine hundred and forty fell by his hand alone, no one but



the Lord affording him assistance.' <sup>1</sup> It is worth noting that a later writer, Geoffrey of Monmouth, tells a story with regard to the battle of Badon Hill resembling that which Nennius attaches to that of Gurnion Castle. Arthur had a picture of the Virgin painted on his shield, and with his own hand and his sword Caliburn slew 470 men; Giraldus Cambrensis explains that the picture was on the inside of the shield, so that Arthur might kiss it without inconvenience.

These battles are indicated by Nennius only by their localities, without mention of the chiefs to whom Arthur was opposed. It is believed that Cerdric was prominent in this capacity: he may have been so in the south, but we find no evidence that this commander ever got far enough north to take part in the majority of the fights of which Nennius is the historian and Arthur the hero. The river Gleni has been thought to be the Glen in Ayrshire; by others to be a river of the same name, a tributary of the Till in Northumberland. The Duglas, or Dubglass, has been supposed to be the Dunglas, which forms the southern boundary

<sup>1</sup> Quoted from the edition by J. A. Giles in *Six Old English Chronicles*.



of Lothian ; by others one of the rivers in Scotland which bears the name of Douglas ; by others to be the Duglas in Lancashire. The wood Celidon may be the Caledonian Forest or Englewood in Cumberland. Gurnion Castle is supposed by some to have been a Roman station near Yarmouth, by Skene to be one near Lammermoor. The City of Legion or Cair Lion, where the ninth battle was said to have been fought, should be Caerleon-upon-Usk, though this position does not correspond with that of the other contests, and on this and other grounds must be held in doubt. Giles supposes Cair Lion to have been Exeter. The river Trat Treuroit, on which was the tenth battle, cannot be satisfactorily located. The eleventh battle was apparently fought at Edinburgh, not against the Saxons but the Picts. Cadbury in Somersetshire, according to another hypothesis, has also been assigned as the place of this battle. The famous twelfth battle, which was between the British and Saxons, and resulted in the taking of Mons Badonicus or Badon Hill, has been placed at Bannesdown near Bath, at Badbury in Dorsetshire, and at Bouden Hill in Linlithgowshire. This great



battle, whatever may be the doubts as to its position, stands out as an indubitable historical fact, though Gildas and Bede have occasioned a certain ambiguity between Arthur and Ambrosius in regard to it. If, as is believed, Ambrosius died, whether by sword or poison, in 508, and Mons Badonicus was fought in 520, we may disconnect Ambrosius from this battle and give the sole credit of it to Arthur. The opponent of Arthur on this occasion was, according to evidence and probability, Cerdric, who had landed at the mouth of the Itchen in 495, defeated Natanleod near Netley in 508 ; and was himself defeated at Badon Hill in 520.<sup>1</sup> If these statements be accepted, as it seems they should be, we can scarcely place Mons Badonicus in Scotland, whither Cerdric, so far as we know, never went. He was probably sufficiently occupied at this time in establishing his kingdom of Wessex. It is possible that at Badon Hill Arthur and Cerdric may have met, not for the first time, for a bardic fragment to which I have referred (see page 14) represents Arthur as fighting, probably with Cerdric, at Llongporth or Portsmouth. English, as

<sup>1</sup> See the *Chronicle of Henry of Huntingdon*.



distinguished from Scottish, historians concur in placing Badon Hill in the south. Geoffrey says that the battle was near Bath (not that this is by any means conclusive) ; Bannesdown has been generally accepted as its situation, though Dr. Guest prefers to place it at Badbury in Dorsetshire. At any rate, we must believe that it took place in the southwest and within stroke of Cerdric. Amid much that is obscure, this battle, as between the British and Saxons and Arthur and Cerdric, presents itself as a sort of anchorage in a sea of doubt.

We may look back upon the preceding battles having regard to the presumption that in 520 Arthur was in the south of England. Of these battles, eleven in number, we have no exact knowledge as to either time or place. With regard to three of them we cannot form any reasonable conjecture. Of the remaining eight each has more than one position hypothetically assigned to it—always one in the lowlands of Scotland, where Arthurian names most abound, another generally in the north of England. It would be vain to pretend that we know enough of the particulars of the invasion to give us more than vague guidance as to the move-



ments of Arthur. It may be supposed that in his time the Angles were penetrating the island by the Humber and the Forth, and it is possible that he may have been concerned in the fighting which ensued. Manifestly he obtained great fame in the north, though we do not know when. Between the battle of Badon Hill in 520 and Camlan in 542 we are in absolute darkness as to his whereabouts. We may presume that he was in the south of England in 520 and in Scotland in 542 ; between the two dates there is room for conjecture and for much fighting. If we could adapt the traditions to probability, we should suppose that the Scotch battles took place after, and not before, Badon Hill ; that in the early part of his career Arthur was at war with Cerdric and the Saxons of Wessex, in the later part with the Angles of the north and possibly with the Picts. But if we accept the list of battles as given by Nennius, and in the order in which he places them, we must believe that Arthur went north before Badon Hill<sup>1</sup> and returned to

<sup>1</sup> As bearing upon Arthur's early campaigns and their connection with Scotland, it is of interest to recall the tradition which connects Arthur with Mordred. Arthur's sister, Anne by name, married Llew, otherwise Lothus or Lot, King of the Picts, to whom Arthur is supposed to have given Lothian. Of this marriage came Mordred, or Modred,



fight there, for all the little evidence we have indicates that some at least of the battles which this historian records were in Scotland. If this be so, Arthur must have gone north again to conclude his career at Camlan, and thus must have made more than one Scotch campaign, to the multiplication of Arthurian names.<sup>1</sup>

The 'Saxon Chronicle,' which gives a detailed account of the battles in Kent, Sussex, and Hampshire, makes no mention of any in the west or north, or of Arthur. The 'Saxon Chronicle' is an apparently truthful, if somewhat bald, history. It mentions Vortigern as King of Britain and the opponent of Hengist, it names Natanleod, Commail, Condida and Farinmail as British kings who were defeated and slain; but neither Arthur nor Ambrosius find place in this record. It has been supposed that Natanleod, who was killed, together with five thousand men, by Cerdric

Arthur's nephew and mortal enemy. From this it would appear that the southern adventurer was associated with the northern monarch before Mordred was born, and had visited Scotland apparently as a conqueror in the time of Mordred's father.

<sup>1</sup> An elaborate and learned disquisition relating to Arthur and his battles is to be found in Whitaker's *History of Manchester*, published in the year 1775. See book ii. chapter ii.



at Netley in the year 508, was no other than Ambrosius, but I have not been able to find the evidence on which this theory rests; and there is another tradition with regard to the death of Ambrosius, namely, that he was poisoned in the same year by a Saxon monk. The silence of the Chronicle, if so it be regarded, as to Ambrosius throws no doubt upon his existence; and as to Arthur, though it may indicate that he had no position of national supremacy in the east and south, it goes for nothing as touching the west and north, of which this record takes no cognizance.

The fame of Arthur may have been, or rather must have been, founded upon his deeds, but the vast superstructure raised on that foundation is to be attributed to the close association between the branches of the Celtic race in Cornwall, Wales and Brittany. The fame of Arthur, once established among the Welsh Bards and the Romancers of Brittany, easily lent itself to exaggeration and attracted to itself much that was due to others or was purely imaginary.

I have called Geoffrey of Monmouth an imaginative writer: it may admit of question whether he should be termed imaginative or



credulous. He was an indiscriminate collector of Arthurian legends, some of which may contain a modicum of truth, while others are wholly false. Of the latter variety Arthur, according to Geoffrey, conquers Ireland, Iceland and the Orkneys, subdues Norway, Dacia, Aquitaine and Gaul, bestows Normandy upon Bedver the butler, and establishes his court in Paris. He was crossing the Alps to attack Rome when he was recalled by the treachery of Mordred, to conclude his career on the Camel. Such inventions savour more of the twelfth century than the sixth, and mark Geoffrey as one whose statements are not to be accepted without concurrent testimony.

So overloaded is the story of Arthur with fiction or romance that it is difficult or impossible to discern the truth that must necessarily be at the bottom of it. The more remote are the Arthurian writings from the Arthurian epoch, the more voluminous, the more circumstantial, and the more obviously superadditiona, they become. But there must necessarily be a root under all this efflorescence, the presence of which is clearly indicated, though it cannot be fully exposed to view.



## III

ARTHUR'S LAST BATTLE—THE DOUBTS WHICH  
SURROUND HIS PLACE OF BURIAL

THE last battle attributed to Arthur has obtained more prominence than the most famous battles of antiquity, has been connected with its supposed place by geographical particulars, has been enriched with romantic detail, made the subject of poetry, and so much glorified in English literature from Geoffrey to Tennyson, that it seems like sacrilege to hint that the only fight on the Camel of which we have sure information, took place long after Arthur's death ; and that if he and Mordred encountered, as there is reason to believe they did, the place of that event was not Cornwall but Scotland.

The fatal battle of Camlan, as it is called, which is assigned to the year 542, in which Mordred is supposed to have been slain and Arthur mortally wounded, is stated by Geoffrey,



and generally believed, to have taken place on the Camel. There was undoubtedly a great battle on this river, near Camelford, at some remote time, and its position seems to be exactly indicated by a bridge which still bears the name of Slaughter Bridge, or Bloody Bridge. Near the bridge, close to the river, is an inscribed sepulchral stone, obviously of great antiquity, which is held in repute in the neighbourhood as marking the grave of King Arthur.

The position is a likely one to have been chosen by an army on the defensive. The stream, which was probably larger then than now, runs through a marshy bottom with hills ascending on both sides. That a great battle was fought here may be accepted as certain, and equally so that it was between the Britons and the Saxons. One of the writers who attributes it to Arthur tells us that the Camel<sup>1</sup> overflowed its banks with the blood of the slain. So far we have a likely Arthurian story, and we may look with interest at the inscription on the stone which presumably covers (or rather *covered*, for the stone has been slightly moved from its original situation) the bones of some one

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by Camden from *Marianus Scotus*.



killed in the fight, perhaps of the king himself. Carew, in his 'Survey of Cornwall,' speaks of the stone as 'bearing Arthur's name, though now depraved to Atry.' Borlase accepts the tradition that Arthur fought his last battle near this spot, but denies that the stone bears reference to that warrior. The inscription, according to Borlase, runs thus: 'Catin hic jacit<sup>1</sup>—filius Magari,' and refers not to Arthur but to the son of Magarus. The letters are about six inches high and much weatherworn. They are not easy to be made out, but the Rev. W. Iago, of Bodmin,<sup>2</sup> has brought his special skill to bear upon them, and, with the aid of casts and rubbings, has determined the inscription to be as follows:

Latini ic jacit filius Magarii.

which Mr. Iago thus interprets:

(The monument) of Latinus; here he lies; son of Magarius.

*ic* stands of course for *hic*.

<sup>1</sup> *Jacit*, instead of *jacet*, calls for remark. Mr. Iago assures me that this spelling was not unusual in the time to which the inscription belongs, and refers to Professor Hübner for instances of Christian inscriptions in Britain in which the same spelling was employed.

<sup>2</sup> See *Trigg Minor*, by Sir John Maclean, vol. i. p. 583, where is a representation of the stone and inscription provided by Mr. Iago.



The use of the Latin language points to British rather than Saxon authorship.

Latinus was probably a Briton of Roman descent who was presumably fighting on the British side. That his fellow soldiers had leisure to construct a memorial on the battle-field may be accepted as an indication that they retained their position as victors, but we seek in vain for evidence that Arthur was here concerned.

It is certain that a great battle was fought in this position in the time of Egbert in the year 823. This is mentioned in the 'Saxon Chronicle,' in 'Ethelwerd's Chronicle,' and by Henry of Huntingdon, as having taken place at Camelford between the Britons of Cornwall and the Saxons of Devonshire. Several thousands fell on both sides according to Henry of Huntingdon, but we are not told which was victorious. Probably the Britons, for the Saxons do not seem to have pushed their conquests further, at least until the time of Athelstan, nor ever to have generally replaced the former inhabitants in the further parts of the county.

So much for the historical battle in the year 823. Now for the traditional battle on the same river in the year 542. Nennius makes no mention of either. His history



terminates in the year 640, and does not reach the later battle, but his failure to mention the earlier, if it took place when and where it is supposed, is remarkable. Another English writer, Henry of Huntingdon, who is disposed to give much credit to Arthur, speaks of the twelve battles, with particular reference to Badon Hill, but makes no mention of the subsequent battle or of the death of the king. These appear to have been entirely ignored so far as English chroniclers are concerned until we reach Geoffrey of Monmouth, in the twelfth century, who must be regarded as a romancer rather than a serious historian. We must either suppose that there were two great battles on the Camel, the earlier of which, in the sixth century, escaped the notice of chroniclers until the twelfth, and then was recovered with ample circumstance and detail by the highly imaginative writer to whom I have referred ; or we must suppose that there was only one great battle in this situation ; that this was fought in the ninth century ; and that between the ninth century and the twelfth it came to be confused with a battle in Scotland in which Arthur was really engaged, and in which he met his death.



In relation to the earlier battle on the Camel, if there was one, and the supposed connection of Arthur with it, I must mention a scrap of topographical evidence, which is far from conclusive, but which may be taken for what it is worth. In this supposed battle, Cador, Duke of Cornwall, half-brother to Arthur, or, according to another account, his nephew, takes a traditional place among the slain. About three miles from Camelford, between the Camel and the sea, stands a large sepulchral mound which looks down upon the Atlantic from an elevation of over a thousand feet. This is known as Cadōn Barrow, and the tradition is that it covers the body of Cador. To this tumulus especial consideration and sanctity have long been attached. If it covers the bones of Arthur's kinsman the place consorts with his death on the Camel. At a distance of about seven miles from the battlefield, be it Arthur's or Egbert's, stands another sepulchral mound in which an interested person might find an Arthurian association. This mound is known as the Giant's Grave, or King Arthur's Grave. It lies within a gigantic double-walled enclosure which has the name of Warbstowe Bury, one of the largest of the



British camps of Cornwall. This occupies a commanding situation, and would furnish an ideal resting-place for a Cornish hero. But whatever be the purpose of the mound, we have no reason to connect it with Arthur. The name is employed somewhat at random : barrows are common in Cornwall ; and we must have consistent historical evidence before we suppose Arthur to occupy the Giant's Grave or his kinsman Cadōn Barrow.

The evidence which is wanting with regard to Arthur's battle on the Camel comes to light on the Firth of Forth. There is reason to suppose that tradition did not err in the fatal association of Arthur and Mordred, though the place of the last scene was not Cornwall but Scotland. The name Camlan, which has been freely given by later writers to the supposed battle on the Camel, is not to be found there, nor, so far as I can ascertain, in Cornwall.

Skene and Stuart Glennie maintain with much converging evidence that Camlan is Camelon<sup>1</sup> on the river Carron, in the valley of the Forth, where it is said are the remains

<sup>1</sup> Skene's *Four Ancient Books of Wales*, vol. i. p. 60 ; Stuart Glennie, *Arthurian Scotland*, Merlin Early English Text Society, part iii. p. lxi.



of a Roman town. Here, according to Scotch tradition, Arthur and Mordred met. We have evidence which appears to be sufficient that Mordred was King of the Picts, or, as he is sometimes termed, King of Scotland, and the head of a confederacy of Picts, Scots, and Saxons, or, as some authorities have it, Picts, Scots, and renegade Britons. With this composite army he gave battle to Arthur and his faithful British force, in which the latter were defeated and Arthur slain.

It is worth noting as in favour of the Scottish location of the battle that Geoffrey, who places it on the Camel, nevertheless states Mordred's force to have consisted of Picts and Scots. It is surely improbable that Arthur could have been confronted in Cornwall by a great army of these northern savages. On the Forth<sup>1</sup> they were numerous and much at home. Mordred was supposed to have been the son of Llew, to whom Arthur had given Lothian. These particulars are confirmed by the 'Chronicle of the Scots.' It may be added that an earthwork with double lines of circumvallation in the neighbouring

<sup>1</sup> The Scots with whom Arthur fought were probably, like the Picts, inhabitants of Scotland, though the term Scotti is also applied to a portion of the inhabitants of Ireland.



valley of the Tay, now known as Barry Hill, is designated by tradition as Mordred's Castle, not the only instance in which testimony of this nature has been found to throw light upon Arthurian history.

It is impossible to dissociate the place of Arthur's death from that of his supposed burial. According to the well-known story which we owe to Geoffrey of Monmouth, the king was desperately wounded on the Camel, and thence conveyed to Glastonbury, where we must suppose he died ; for there, in confirmation of Geoffrey's account, was his grave found, or said to have been found, after the lapse of 647 years. The circumstantial report of the finding and identification of the grave on the spot indicated by the story gives verisimilitude to the legend, and demands for it serious criticism. In the first place, there is reason to believe, as I have shown, that though there was a great battle on the Camel, Arthur was not in it, and though he died in battle, it was not on the Camel. If Arthur concluded his career, not on the Camel but the Forth, the question of sepulture at Glastonbury may be dismissed as a fabrication. On the other hand, if the burial in



this place can be maintained, then we must abandon the Scottish localisation of the last battle, and may accept the statement of the unveracious Geoffrey that it was fought on the Cornish river. It behoves us, therefore, to examine the Glastonbury story as one upon which much turns. The tradition that Arthur, mortally wounded on the Camel, was conveyed alive to Glastonbury may be at once discarded. Such a transporting of a desperately wounded man must be regarded as impracticable. He was within easy reach of his Cliff Castle at Tintagel and of his fortified camp of Kelliwick (assuming this to have been Kelly Rounds), and would probably, if moved at all, have been deposited in one or the other. On the other hand, if he was killed outright the removal of the body to Glastonbury by way of the Camel and the sea would be neither impossible nor unlikely.

Glastonbury was one of the earliest seats of Christianity in this island, and no doubt was revered as such in the time of Arthur. The tumulus and the churchyard were at this time competing as receptacles for the dead—the tumulus as a heathen, the churchyard as a Christian place of rest. A tumulus was raised over a Saxon chief in



the time, and with the permission, of Ambrosius. Christian burial was probably practised at Glastonbury at as early a date. Giraldus Cambrensis, together with a monk of Glastonbury quoted by Leland, professed themselves to have been witnesses of the opening of Arthur's grave. There are two accounts as to the finding of this—one that it was sought for by order of Henry II., who had learned from the British Bards that Arthur was buried between two pyramids at Glastonbury; the other that it was found accidentally in this situation in digging to bury a monk who had selected this spot for his interment. The pyramids undoubtedly existed before the alleged discovery of Arthur's grave; for they were described by William of Malmesbury in the reign of Henry I. They displayed some inscription, apparently Saxon, and an ecclesiastical effigy, but no mention of Arthur.

So circumstantial is the statement of Giraldus, who represents himself as an eyewitness of the exploration, that if in any essential respect he departed from the truth, whether by way of addition or otherwise, we can scarcely suppose that the falsehood was unintentional. Though there are differences,



as I shall presently show, relating to the date of the alleged exploration, preponderating evidence places it in the time of Henry II., in whose interest it has been suspected that a fraud was devised to gratify the king and serve a political purpose. Henry as a Norman might, it has been thought, desire to rehabilitate Arthur as, like himself, an enemy of the Saxons. Priests were deceivers ever : here they may have had both the motive and the means for deception. But it must be allowed that if the ecclesiastical explorers lied they lied so much like truth that if any exception be taken to their report it is only that it comes up too exactly to what might have been expected. The story, as told by Giraldus, is as follows. On digging between the pyramids in the monks' cemetery a leaden cross was found at a depth of seven feet, which bore this inscription in rude letters :

HIC JACET SEPULTUS INCLYTUS REX ARTHURIUS IN  
INSULA AVALLONIA, CUM WENNEVEREIA UXORE  
SUA SECUNDA

Camden gives what professes to be a facsimile of the inscription, which 'was formerly written and preserved in the



monastery of Glastonbury.' The lettering has the appearance of great antiquity, but suspicion attaches to the mention of the name of the place in connection with the interment. Avallonia, or Avalon, is of course Glastonbury—probably in Arthur's time an island in a swamp. As to its place, the body speaks for itself. It may be necessary to say whose it is; it is not necessary to say where it is; nor is it usual on tombstones or coffins to give their address.

At a depth of nine feet, or two feet below the cross, was found a coffin, consisting of a hollowed oak, in which were the bones of a man and a woman. The man was represented as of great stature. I am indebted to the scholarship of Mr. T. Holmes for as exact a translation of the words of Giraldus as the Latin of that author allows. Speaking of the male occupant of the coffin, Giraldus says: 'His tibia placed beside that of the tallest man in the place (whom the Abbot pointed out to me), and fixed into the earth by the side of his foot, extended fully three fingers' breadth above the man's knee. His skull bone also was capacious and large enough for a



prodigy or a show—so much so that the interval between the eyelids and the space between the eyes might contain the size of a man's palm fully. And in this were seen ten or more wounds, all of which, except one larger than the others and which had made a great gash, and which alone seemed to have caused death, had joined into a firm cicatrix.'

The body of the woman found in the same receptacle presented yellow hair nicely braided, a lock of which on being handled by a monk crumbled into dust. Here we have all we could expect—almost more. Strength and valour, together with as much of female charm as could survive six centuries. Hair will last and retain its colour for an indefinite time. With regard to the male skeleton, the large recent wound on the head corresponds with the manner of Arthur's death and the wounds of earlier infliction with the manner of his life. In the length of the tibiæ there is nothing impossible. But with regard to the skull the dimensions possible to humanity are so much exceeded that it is difficult to suppose that we are reading the honest report of an eye-witness. The palm between the eyes savours more of



imagination than observation. The space between the orbits in an ordinary skull on a level with the eyelids, where the distance is greatest, is at most  $1\frac{1}{2}$  inch. One of the largest human skeletons known is that of the Irish Giant at the College of Surgeons, which measures 7 feet 7 inches in height. The distance between the orbits in a level with the place of the eyelids is 2 inches. The palm between the eyes is impossible even to proximity. Thus doubts gather round the grave : if the king desired that this should be found attempts not wholly ingenuous might have been made to gratify him. Apart from the inscription and the skull, the completeness of the alleged discovery, the appropriately wounded skeleton and the fascinating queen, are suggestive of invention.

A postscript or corollary was added to this story in the time of Edward I. The skeletons, when first found, were removed, as we are told, from the cemetery to the church ; not as yet to find final repose, for in the year 1278 'Eduardus Longus' (Edward I. or Longshanks), together with Queen Eleanor, caused the tomb to be reopened and the bones to be again buried in front of the high altar, with the exception of the skulls, which



were kept outside for the devotion of the people.<sup>1</sup> The chests in which the bones were found were painted with representations, and the arms, of the occupants. Within the new sepulchre was placed a writing referring to the finding of the bones by Edward and Eleanor, and attested by many witnesses whose names are still to be read in the pages of Leland.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Leland's *Assertio Arturii*.

<sup>2</sup> There are discrepancies of date with regard to dis-entombment which increase the doubts which on other grounds surround the story. The date commonly assigned is that adopted by Camden, 1189, the last year of King Henry's reign. Leland gives the date as 1191, in which he is followed by Hume, in the reign of Richard I. Giraldus, who represents himself as an eye-witness, and is necessarily the earliest authority, does not give the year, but indicates the time within certain limits. He states that the grave was opened by order of Henry II. during the rule of the Abbot Henry. This Abbot was apparently Henry de Blois, the grandson of the Conqueror and the brother of King Stephen; Henry II. was therefore his first cousin once removed. It has been supposed that the consanguinity may have disposed the Abbot to gratify the king by finding what he wanted. Henry de Blois was the 37th Abbot. He was appointed in 1126, in the time of Henry I., and died in 1171, in that of Henry II. In the year 1129, three years after his appointment to Glastonbury, this Abbot became, according to Leland, also Bishop of Winchester. Giraldus tells us that the discovery took place before the Abbot became Bishop. If that were so the remains were found not later than 1129, in the reign of Henry I., not in that of Henry II., as Giraldus represents. Giraldus himself was not born until 1147, or 1150 (both dates are assigned); so it is evident that a large error has come in with regard to the date of the dis-entombment, in reference to the appointment of the Abbot to the bishopric. Putting aside this contradiction as possibly due



I think it may be credited that bones were unearthed, probably in the time of Henry II. and the Abbot Henry de Blois, which were adopted as those of King Arthur and provided with suitable conditions and surroundings. That bones were re-buried as those of Arthur and found by 'long Edward' I think admits of no doubt. But

to some mistake in the ecclesiastical records, we at any rate cannot doubt, if any credit is to be attached to Giraldus, that the exhumation took place, if at all, in the time of Henry de Blois, who died in 1171. This is inconsistent with the dates 1189 and 1191 which are respectively assigned to the event. Thus three Kings are presented as contemporary with the finding of Arthur's grave, while two Abbots and a *locum tenens* offer themselves as immediately concerned in the transaction. For in the last year of the reign of Henry II., in which according to one account the grave was opened, there was no Abbot of Glastonbury, the King from the year 1178 until his death in 1189 having retained the Abbey in his own hands and administered it by means of a subordinate. Thus in 1189, the date authoritatively assigned for the concurrence of the Abbot and the King, there was no Abbot and the King was approaching his end. In the year 1191 Richard I. and the 39th Abbot bore sway. Like the Abbot of royal blood, he was named Henry (which may have led to confusion), one Henry de Saliaco, but he does not supply the requirements of the case if we are to believe that King Henry was the instigator and his sacerdotal kinsman the agent. Thus the whole story is beset with doubts. This much may be believed : in the time probably of Henry II. the bones of Arthur were sought for ; two skeletons were found where skeletons most do congregate, which with judicious exaggeration and some invention were made to come up to what was demanded of the remains of the warrior and his beautiful consort ; these were re-interred under the names of Arthur and Guenevere, and about 100 years later were honestly accepted as such by Edward and Eleanor.



much may we doubt whether the bones were those of Arthur, not only from the inconsistency and improbabilities of the story of the disinterment, but from the lack of evidence that Arthur died within practicable reach of Glastonbury.

But perhaps the most convincing negative evidence is supplied by Gildas, to whom I have already referred. This historian, a fellow - countryman and contemporary of Arthur, was either ignorant of his existence or thought him not worth mentioning. Now Gildas, as we are told by William of Malmesbury, 'took up his abode' at Glastonbury 'for a series of years.' If Arthur died, as was supposed, in the year 542, and Gildas was born in 520, the historian must have been twenty-two years old when the king was buried under the description of 'the famous King Arthur,' *inclytus Rex Arthurius*. Gildas might have been present had this taken place as represented, or at any rate must have heard from his friends the monks of what could not fail to be of interest to the British historian. But neither Arthur's death nor his life appealed to Gildas. Thus we must discredit both the Camel and Glastonbury as connected with Arthur's death and burial.



## IV

## TOPOGRAPHICAL ASSOCIATIONS

I do not propose to follow in detail the romancers of the twelfth and succeeding centuries, excepting where they may be taken in concurrence with surviving structures and geographical peculiarities. I have said something in this sense both of the Cornish and the Scottish localisation of Camlan. Turning from the conclusion of Arthur's career to the beginning of it, I must again have recourse to Geoffrey of Monmouth, a writer who sometimes finds the corroboration which he always needs.

Uther Pendragon, King of Britain, held a festival in London, or, according to another account, at Winchester, at which were present Gorlois, King of Cornwall, and his wife Igerna, 'the greatest beauty in all Britain.' Uther was more attentive to the lady than was approved by her husband, who abruptly



left the Court and returned to Cornwall, taking his wife with him. Uther followed. Gorlois deposited Igerna in Tintagel, 'upon the sea shore, which he looked upon as a place of great safety. But he himself entered the castle of Damelioc to prevent their both being involved in the same danger if any should happen.' Damelioc is described as a strong 'castle,' having many issues out. According to the legend, Gorlois hoped here to receive succour from Ireland. In this place Gorlois was besieged by the superior forces of Uther, and was slain fighting outside its ramparts. Igerna was apparently secure in Tintagel. 'For it is situated upon the sea and on every side surrounded by it; and there is but one entrance into it, and that through a straight rock, which three men shall be able to defend against the whole power of the kingdom.' But though Tintagel was impregnable, the lady was not. Uther obtained admittance into the castle while Gorlois was in Damelioc, and Arthur was the result. According to tradition, Uther was transformed into the likeness of Gorlois by the arts of Merlin, and the King of Britain admitted under a misunderstanding to the



domestic privileges of the King of Cornwall. The sceptical may hesitate to accept this explanation of the error of Igerna, but no doubt it was furnished by the lady herself, who could scarcely fail to have been acquainted with the facts. My purpose in alluding to the story is rather local than personal. The description of Tintagel might serve at the present day. Part of the castle is on a lofty and precipitous peninsula commonly known as the Island, which has only a narrow connection with the mainland, which few could defend against many. It is obvious that it was on the Island that Igerna was placed and Arthur begotten.

The Castle of Tintagel is so closely connected with the Arthurian legend that a few particulars concerning it must be introduced. At Tintagel, according to tradition, the Kings or Dukes of Cornwall had their residence before the coming of Cæsar. The place was formerly known as Dundagell, and is supposed to be indicated by the name Donecheniv, which is to be found in 'Domesday Book,' and according to Gilbert means the fort or castle with the chain. This is the earliest reference to Tintagel, if it be one,



which I have been able to discover. The allusion to the chain is appropriate. There is evidence that the chasm which separates the insular part of the castle from that on the mainland was formerly crossed by a draw-bridge. This is likely enough, for the chasm was evidently once narrower than at present, having been enlarged by the falling away of the cliff, while the buildings on the mainland and the island are opposite and near to each other, as if they had at one time been connected. Leland in his 'Itinerary' describes the castle as it existed in the time of Henry VIII. In the earlier part of his work he refers to a draw-bridge as connecting the two portions of the fortress ; in a later part he states that the island could be reached only by long elm trees laid for a bridge. Other writers refer to the bridge. Carew in his 'Survey of Cornwall' in 1602 states that this was in existence one hundred years before he wrote, and Norden, a writer of about the same date, says that it was there within living memory. It is obvious that the historical bridge belonged to the buildings parts of which still exist. The allusion in 'Domesday Book,' if correctly interpreted, must relate to an earlier structure, for there is reason to believe, as I shall presently show,



that no part of what now remains existed at the time of the Conquest. Nevertheless, there was probably at that time some mechanism with a chain which gave access to the island from the adjacent cliff.

It is not my purpose to give a detailed description of Tintagel Castle, such as may be found in many works relating to the locality ;<sup>1</sup> but a few words bearing upon the question of its hypothetical association with Arthur seem called for.

The site of the castle is remarkable : it is partly on the mainland and partly on a peninsula which from time immemorial has been known as the Island. This is separated from the mainland by a deep chasm which is evidently in process of enlargement, or, in other words, was once narrower than it is now. The island, which is bounded by lofty precipices, is connected with the mainland only by a narrow ridge, which rises steeply from the sea, traverses the chasm, and gives access to the island by a narrow path cut in the face of the cliff, which now, as in ancient days, might be defended by a few against many.

<sup>1</sup> *History of the Deanery of Trigg Minor*, by Sir John Maclean, vol. iii. p. 194.



To take first the insular part of the castle, which no doubt was the original place of retreat and defence, the site may be associated with that of many prehistoric fortifications of earth or stone, the remains of which are to be found on the Cornish coast. The ancient engineers habitually selected a precipitous peninsula, inaccessible from the sea, with a narrow neck, across which they made barriers to protect against attack from the landward side. Thus Tintagel Head was selected as a place of defence, if not by prehistoric engineers, certainly in accordance with prehistoric methods. The buildings at present on the island are less extensive than those on the mainland. There is no evidence that any part of them is anterior to the Plantagenets. An arch which forms the gateway of the outer wall is distinctly though bluntly pointed, and must be later than the Norman period. A bluntly pointed arch, known as the Iron Gate, is also to be seen in a wall which protects what was apparently once a landing place. Outside the enclosure of the castle are the wind-swept remains of a little chapel which should be that in which Merlin vainly sought repose. Old it undoubtedly is, but



the most credulous could scarcely attribute it to the sixth century. In construction it resembles the rest of the insular part of the castle, being not too solidly built of roughly quarried unsquared slates. There is nothing of architectural style to determine the date, but the walls resemble the others and may be presumed to be like them of the early Plantagenet time.<sup>1</sup>

The buildings on the mainland give more scope for discussion. These are placed on a high, narrow elevation which rises out of a gorge: this elevation, which is steep on one side and precipitous on the other, rises above the level of the buildings on the island, with which at one point they may easily

<sup>1</sup> Among the more noticeable particulars in the buildings, both on the island and the mainland, especially on the island, are the numerous holes in the walls. These have given rise to much remark and speculation; by some they have been inconsiderately interpreted as arrow holes. It is sufficiently obvious that they once gave lodgment to the beams which formed the scaffolding employed in the construction of the walls. The orifices are rectangular, about 7 inches  $\times$  6 or 6 inches  $\times$  5. The passages in connection with them are horizontal and give no scope for the adjustment of the weapon; many of them have no exits, but come to an end against rock or masonry. The holes are generally arranged so that several are on the same level. Similar holes for the same purpose are not uncommon in the neighbourhood, and may be seen in the Vicarage wall. I am indebted to Colonel Mead, of the Royal Engineers, for the self-evident explanation which I have adopted.



have communicated. The structures on the mainland consist of two walled enclosures on different levels, connected by steps. The lower and larger is supposed to be the courtyard, the higher the keep, and indeed they do not admit of any other interpretation. The courtyard presents towards the land the remnants of a great gateway, while towards the sea the wall has fallen, exposing a precipice where once the wall stood. The gateway is of especial interest: what remains of the arch is suggestive that it once was pointed, and I have the evidence of an intelligent mason who lives hard by, and who was familiar with its condition twenty years ago, that though then broken it retained enough of the curve to indicate that originally it was bluntly pointed, and resembled in construction those still to be found on the island. I may add that I have seen a drawing executed by Mr. Sturge, about sixteen years ago, from which the same inference is to be drawn. I may draw attention to a photographic reproduction of a print of the castle as it was about 300 years ago, when the gateway was complete (see fig. 1, p. 62). The arch in question appears to be less flat than it should be were it Norman, though the scale of the



drawing is too small to display a distinct point. It has been supposed that the upper enclosure, known as the keep, is older than the lower or courtyard, and the late Prebendary Kinsman thought he had found traces of Roman methods in a projecting course of flat stones which traverses the upper part of one of the walls ; but I am inclined to agree with my friend the mason, who considers the projection to be of English invention, designed to protect the wall from weather and give finish to its top.<sup>1</sup> The keep is connected with the courtyard by a flight of steps, as if the two formed part of the same design, while the masonry of the two portions is exactly of the same character, as if they were coeval. That the upper and lower enclosures formed parts of the same design, is sufficiently evinced by the drawing which has been reproduced.

The insular part, though showing similar work and material, is in better preservation ; indeed, it is not easy to doubt that it is considerably later, though belonging to the same architectural period. The pointed arches

<sup>1</sup> A similar projecting course is to be seen on a wall which cuts off the neighbouring peninsula of the Willapark from the mainland. This wall, though ancient and probably defensive, cannot be supposed to be Roman or to show Roman methods.



indicate that neither the continental nor the insular part were constructed before the introduction of this form of arch. The pointed arch gradually superseded the round arch during the reign of Henry II.—1154–1189—and did not become general until quite the end of this period.<sup>1</sup> There are indeed pointed arches in the church of St. Cross, near Winchester, which are supposed to date back as far as 1136, but this appears to have been a solitary instance some 50 years earlier than the general employment of the style. It may fairly be presumed that neither portion of the existing buildings dates back further than the twelfth century, while the insular portion is probably less ancient than that on the mainland. There is evidence that there were buildings on the island at an earlier date than can be ascribed to those now existing.

Geoffrey of Monmouth, who was made Bishop of St. Asaph in the year 1152, and probably wrote earlier, describes the place, in words which I have already quoted, as he supposes it to have been in the time of Uther Pendragon. He calls it ‘the town of Tintagel, a place of great safety. For it is

<sup>1</sup> Rickman’s *Gothic Architecture*.



situated upon the sea and on every side surrounded by it; and there is but one entrance into it, and that through a straight rock, which three men shall be able to defend against the whole power of the kingdom.' Not to insist upon Uther, it is clear that Geoffrey intended to describe the place as it was before his own time, and, by unavoidable inference, before the buildings at present on the island were constructed. For it is almost certain that none of them existed in the time of Geoffrey—quite certain that none of them were built before his birth. It is to be noted that this writer makes no allusion to the part of the castle on the mainland, which, though probably older, was presumably not made when he wrote. We cannot but infer that before Geoffrey's time there was some sort of fortification on the island, which was replaced by the existing structure; and this inference is supported by the name under which this place is referred to in 'Domesday Book,' if Gilbert is correct in his interpretation of it as 'the fort with the chain.' The evidence that Tintagel Head was used as a stronghold before the present buildings were made lends credibility to the tradition which connects Arthur with Tintagel, though



none of the present walls were constructed until at least 600 years after his death.

With the great gateway at one end and the exposed precipice at the other, the courtyard corresponds with a description written in the thirteenth century, and designed to present the state of the castle in the time of Arthur.<sup>1</sup> Through this gateway, according to the romance, rode Uther and Merlin, and within these walls Arthur was begotten. It

<sup>1</sup> I insert the description of Tintagel Castle as given in *The High History of the Holy Grail*, a French romance of the thirteenth century :

‘They (*i.e.* Arthur, Lancelot and Gawain) came into a very different land, scarce inhabited of any folk, and found a little castle in a combe. They came thitherward and saw that the enclosure of the castle was fallen down into an abysm, so that none might approach it on that side, but it had a right fair gateway and a door tall and wide, whereby they entered. They beheld a chapel that was right fair and rich, and below was a great ancient hall. They saw a priest appear in the middle of the castle, bald and old, that had come forth of the chapel. They are come thither and alighted, and asked the priest what the castle was, and he told them it was the great Tintagel. “And how is the ground all caved in about the castle?” The priest then relates the death of Gorlois and the transfiguration of Uther, “so that he begat King Arthur in a great hall that was next to the enclosure there, where this abysm is. And for this sin hath the ground sunken in on this wise.” He cometh then with them toward the chapel, that was right fair and had a right rich sepulchre therein. “Lords, in this sepulchre was placed the body of Merlin, but never mought it be set inside the chapel, wherefore perforce it remained outside. And know of very truth that the body lieth not within the sepulchre, for so soon as it was set therein it was taken out and snatched away, either in God’s behalf or the Enemy’s, but which we know not.”’ *The High History of the Holy Grail*,



is much to be regretted that the building so adapted to the story had no existence in the time to which it relates. It may be objected also that the romancer has made a capital error in placing the adventure on the mainland, and a minor error in assigning the same position to the chapel. It is to be presumed that the story-tellers long subsequent to Arthur's time adapted the legends relating to Tintagel somewhat loosely to the building as it existed in their own.

The 25-inch Ordnance Map represents the continental part of the castle as built upon the site of a camp. It is with great diffidence that I venture to question this interpretation of a trench which runs parallel to, and close to, the south wall of the castle. This trench must, I think, be accepted as having been made simultaneously with, or subsequently to, the building, for it evidently bears relation to the great gate and to an otherwise unprotected wall, of which it

by Master Blihis (1200-1250), translated by Sebastian Evans, vol. ii., p. 75.

If we may suppose, as probably we may, that Master Blihis describes the castle as it was in his own time, though affecting to adapt his description to that of King Arthur, we may infer that in the thirteenth century when the existing castle was comparatively new it had already begun to suffer from the encroachments of the sea.





Between 1 & 2 a Draw bridge decay'd. Between 1 & 3 y<sup>e</sup> Descent. Between 3 & 2 y<sup>e</sup> Ascent. 3 y<sup>e</sup> Isles. 4 Buildings fallen into y<sup>e</sup> Sea. 5 the Old Chappel. 6 a Spring of fresh water. 7 the Iron Gate. 8 a Vault thorow the Rock. 9 a Gate guarded w<sup>th</sup> Iron, at y<sup>e</sup> entrance into y<sup>e</sup> first Building on y<sup>e</sup> Land side. 10 y<sup>e</sup> Main Building on the Land side. 11 the round Building on the Island.

FIG. 1.—Tintagel Castle as represented by Norden, 1584-1600.



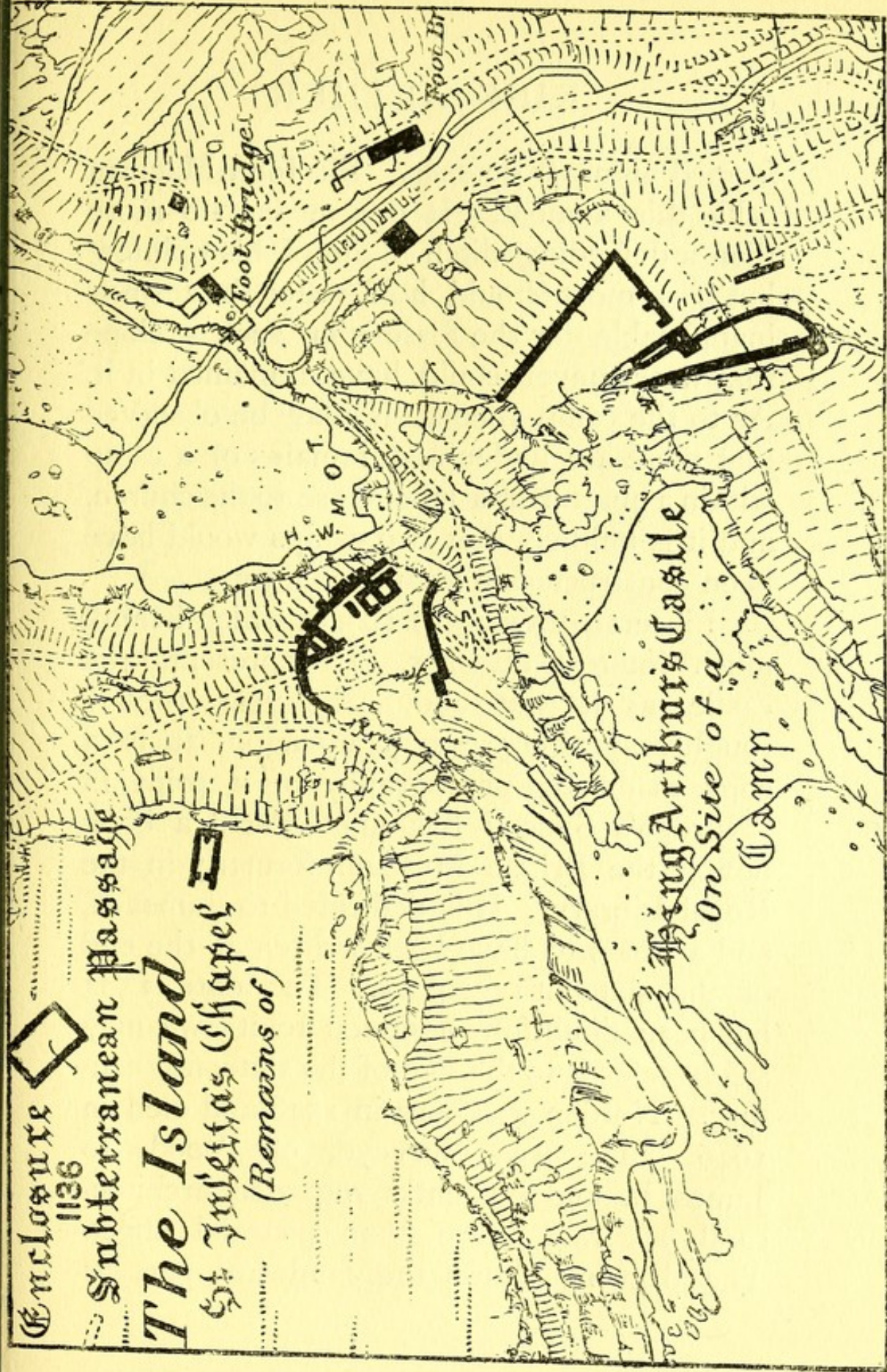


FIG. 2.—Tintagel Castle from 25-inch Ordnance Map



formed an outer defence. Sir John Maclean calls this a moat. If this means no more than a defending ditch I am of his opinion, but if a moat should hold water the term is inapplicable, for the fosse is on such a slope that water never could have remained in it. As to the camp theory, it may be observed that there are undoubted remains of a camp within a quarter of a mile, close to the church, and it is unlikely that two camps would have been constructed in such proximity.

I insert a drawing (p. 62), to which I think much interest attaches. It represents the castle as it was about the year 1600—roughly speaking, 300 years ago. It is a copy made by photography of a print in ‘Norden’s *Speculi Britanniae Pars*,’ a book now in the British Museum, formerly in the Royal Library. It is dedicated to James I., and appears to have been written at the end of the sixteenth century. The date 1584 has been doubtfully assigned to it: we may safely refer it to the end of the sixteenth century. Norden was born in 1548 and died in 1626. He was Surveyor of Woods to James I., and evidently regarded architectural accuracy more than pictorial effect. The drawing shows the landward part as



extending further seawards than at present, while it indicates a place where parts of the insular buildings had recently been engulfed. The great gateway on the mainland is entire ; the keep and the lower court nearly so ; while the relation of the three as parts of the same building, presumably built at the same time, is unmistakable. The buildings on the island are much as they are now.

I append what may also be of interest—a facsimile of as much of the 25-inch Ordnance Map as relates to Tintagel Castle. For permission to do so I have to thank the Director of Her Majesty's Stationery Office, to whom also I am indebted for similar permission touching the maps of Damelioc, Kelly Rounds, and Cardinham Castle, to which I shall presently draw attention.

So much and so little for the Castle of Tintagel and its relation to King Arthur, who certainly never saw an arch or a stone of the existing building, and could not have been begotten in a hall which was not made until many centuries after his death. What took place, and where, before the hall was built are other questions. This does not



necessarily detach Arthur from Tintagel. It is probable that Tintagel Head was a place of strength and of retreat in prehistoric times, as were many headlands on the Cornish coast. No earthworks were needed to secure it, as it had been rendered impregnable by nature. The Celts in the sixth century, and in Cornwall, though they must have had skill in stone-carving if some of the existing crosses are correctly attributed to this period, were probably not castle builders, unless the term 'castle' be applied to earthworks, as is indeed still the custom. If Arthur was the lord of Tintagel, as is indicated by an immemorial tradition, which we may, without violence to probability, accept, nothing remains of this his dwelling-place excepting the immortal ramparts which will be for ever associated with his name.

*Damelioc* or *Dimilioc* still exists as a formidable earthwork, and retains the name.<sup>1</sup> It is mentioned in 'Domesday Book' under the term *Damelihoc*. 'Domesday Book' is a mere rent-roll and does not deal in descriptions, but

<sup>1</sup> In connection with the identification of *Damelioc* Castle, I have to acknowledge my obligation to the Director-General of the Ordnance Survey, and to Staff-Surgeon Trevan, of Bideford.



the name is significant if Gilbert<sup>1</sup> is correct in his interpretation of it as 'the place of battle.'

Damelioc Castle is a British camp of great strength. It lies about eight miles from Tintagel Castle by the modern roads, though in earlier time the distance may have been as much as ten miles, which is assigned by tradition as the distance of Damelioc from Tintagel. It is in the parish of St. Kew, close to the road which connects Tintagel with the mouth of the Camel, and, taking a wide scope, may be said to lie between the north of Cornwall and the south of Ireland. The work is said to extend over an area of twelve acres. It once consisted of three concentric ramparts, of which two remain effective if not complete, while portions of a third and outer are still to be seen, though much of it has yielded to the invasion of agriculture. Outside each of the two nearly complete ramparts, of which the outer is the higher, lies a ditch. This rampart is from 20 to 30 feet high, measured from the bottom of the ditch ;<sup>2</sup> it is about 11 yards thick and

<sup>1</sup> See Gilbert's *History of Cornwall*, 1838, vol. i. p. 328, vol. iv. p. 94.

<sup>2</sup> These measurements and others relating to the camps are only to be taken as approximate, the horizontal distances were measured by pacing, the heights by the eye. They



the ditch 10 yards wide. The inner circle is less perfect than the outer, or more properly the middle, little remaining except the ditch, which is about 5 feet deep. The enclosure, measuring from the inside of the middle rampart (the outermost is not complete enough to reckon by), has a diameter of about 170 yards and a circumference of about 530 yards. The enclosure formed by this rampart would, according to Colonel Mead, whose assistance I had in examining the fortification, give comfortable accommodation to 2,000 men, supposing them to be besieged for a week or ten days, while under temporary pressure 5,000 people might be crowded into it. Were the outer circle restored according to the indications afforded by its remains, it is obvious that the camp would hold a much larger number than that referred to as capable of being contained within the middle defence. Like others of the Cornish earthworks, it stands on a commanding elevation among hills which are higher than itself.

It has been seen that Tintagel and

will serve to give a generally correct impression, though not made with the accuracy of a land-surveyor. This may be found in the Ordnance maps which are attached.



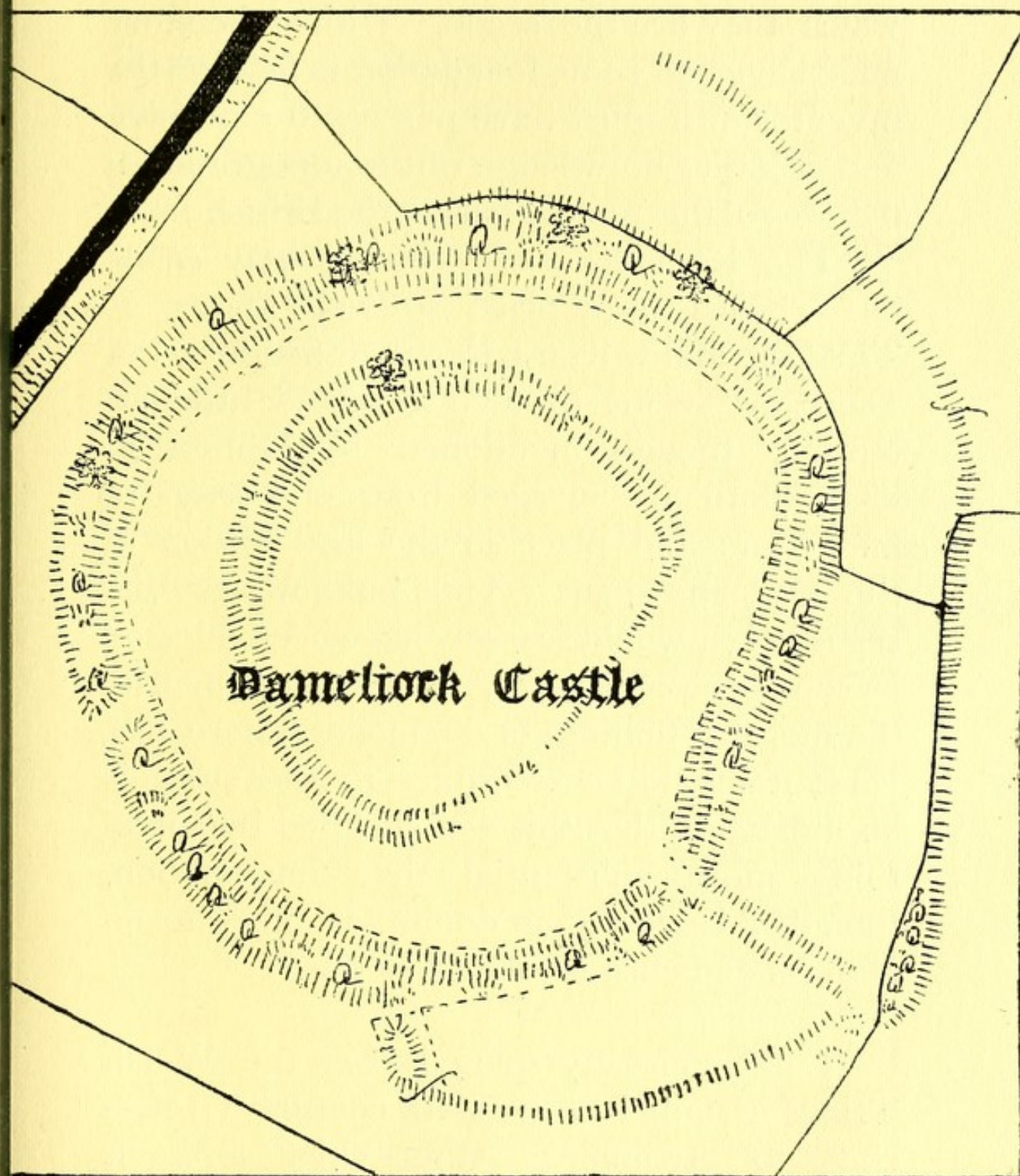


FIG. 3.—Reproduced from the 25-inch Ordnance Map.



Damelioc are exactly adapted to the story of which they are the scene. Either the story must have had some foundation in fact, or the inventor of it must have possessed extensive and accurate knowledge of the topographical features of this remote part of the British Isles.

The Romancers of Brittany may easily have heard of a place so well known as Tintagel, and woven it into their fictions ; but Damelioc seems to have attracted little attention, though mentioned by Gilbert in 1838, until it emerged from obscurity to find name and place in the last edition of the Ordnance map. Thus unknown or disregarded, it would scarcely have been selected as the scene of a purely imaginary romance. To me, the finding of Damelioc where and what it should be according to the story is an indication that this was dictated by something more substantial than imagination, though this faculty no doubt had much to do with its embellishment.

I have already quoted from the Welsh Triads assigned to the sixth century a reference to Arthur as 'the chief lord at Kelliwic,' and have referred also to other Welsh compositions, probably of little less



antiquity, in which Kelliwic or Celliwig is spoken of in the same connection. Professor Rhys finds in the Triads an account of a raid made by Mordred<sup>1</sup> upon Arthur's Court, apparently in Arthur's absence, where the intruder left neither food nor drink unconsumed so much as would support a fly, and where he outraged the Queen. This is said to have occurred at Kelliwic in Cornwall, though it must be admitted that the association of the northern king with the southern fortress is suggestive of doubt. Kelliwic is elsewhere referred to as a place from which a certain marksman of exceptional ability was able to hit a wren in Ireland. Dismissing this as one of the super-additions to which tradition is liable, I revert from the archer to the king. If there be any truth in the tradition which places Arthur's court or camp at Kelliwic, we ought to find some trace of it. If Kelliwic could be found as a place of defence in the Arthurian country, we might at least say that the coincidence was remarkable, unless the tradition had some substratum of fact. Now I venture to suggest that we have Kelliwic still with us

<sup>1</sup> *The Arthurian Legend*, by Professor Rhys, pp. 15 and 38.



under the name of that remarkable earthwork known as Kelly Rounds.

*Kelly Rounds* or *Castle Killibury* is about five miles from Damelioc, to which it bears a general resemblance, though possessing only two ramparts, with no traces of a third. The work is situated near the road between Camelford and Wadebridge, about  $2\frac{1}{2}$  miles from the latter, which is a well protected port. It consists—or rather I should say consisted—of two concentric circles, each with rampart and ditch. It is obviously a British camp. A road now cuts it into two nearly equal parts, of which that on the south has been nearly obliterated, while the northern segment is comparatively uninjured. The ramparts, of which the inner is the higher, present a maximum height of perhaps 15 feet, judging roughly by the eye. The diameter of the remaining semicircle is about 210 yards, measuring from the inside of the outer rampart, while the semi-circumference in the same position is 290 yards. On the west side are the traces of an outwork, or partial enclosure, which was evidently designed to protect the entrance.

The extravagance of the archer who ‘shot with a lusty longbow’ from Kelliwic



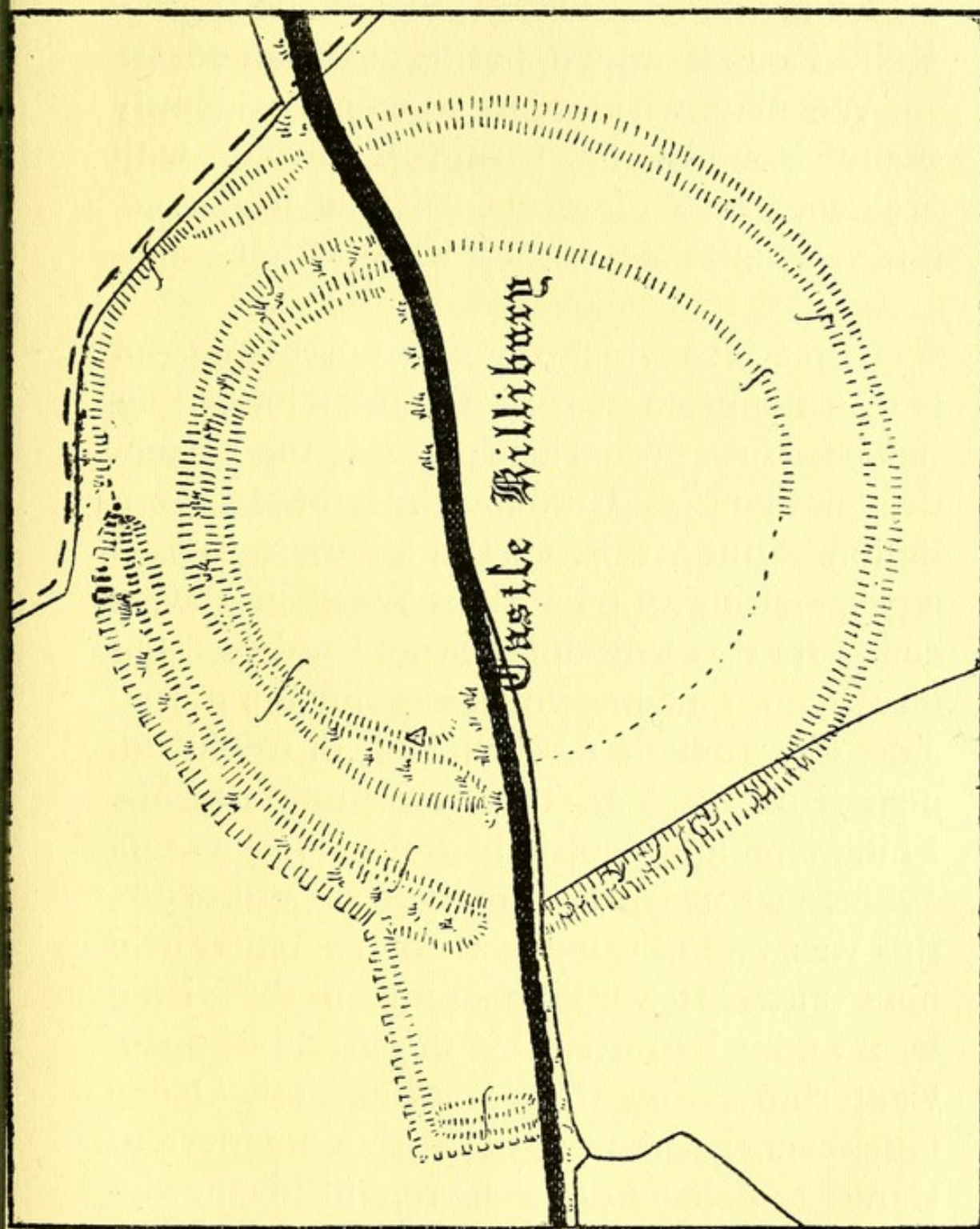


FIG. 4.—From the 25-inch Ordnance Map.



to Ireland is not quite without significance, for it may be held to show that Kelliwic, like Kelly Rounds, was opposite the Irish coast.

We may with some confidence identify Kelly Rounds, or Castle Killibury, with Kelliwic, and discern in it, as in Dame-lioc, a definite association with Arthur.

A place to which the name of *Caradigan* is given is prominent in Arthurian lore. This has been interpreted as Cardigan, the ancient designation of Cardiganshire being Keri-digion.<sup>1</sup> But Mr. E. G. B. Phillimore, who is a great authority on ancient Welsh literature, considers that Caradigan is not Cardigan, but Cardinam, now known as Cardinham, a considerable, though much damaged, earthwork near Bodmin. In this interpretation Mr. Phillimore apparently has the approval of Professor Rhys. If Caradigan is Cardinham, this was one of the places where Arthur held his Court. It was at Caradigan that Enid was wedded to Eric by the Archbishop of Canterbury, in the presence of Queen Guenevere. It was to Arthur's Court at Caradigan that Lancelot brought his newly-married wife, Iblis.

<sup>1</sup> *The Arthurian Legend*, by Professor Rhys, pp. 129 and 132.



The doings at Caradigan are obviously mingled with fiction, if not wholly fictitious. The Archbishop of Canterbury was not yet, and Eric as a knight of mediæval chivalry is, like the Archbishop, an anachronism ; but there is something in a name, and Caradigan associates Arthur with the Cornish stronghold.

Cardinham Castle, as it is called, though far inferior in size and distinctness to Killibury and Damelioc, is worth more notice than it has yet received. About five miles from Bodmin, on the edge of Cardinham Moor, lies Old Cardinham, now represented by a solitary farm-house. In a field behind the house stands an earthwork, of small extent but great natural advantage. It is situated, like Damelioc and Kelly Rounds, on high ground among hills which are higher than itself, but not near enough to command it without artillery. This stronghold or place of defence displays the remains of one rampart enclosing an ovoid or irregularly elongated space on the side of a hill, within which the experts of the Ordnance Survey discern a small inner circumvallation. In designing the enclosure the natural slope has been made use of to



co-operate with the rampart on the north side, while the rampart on the south is wholly

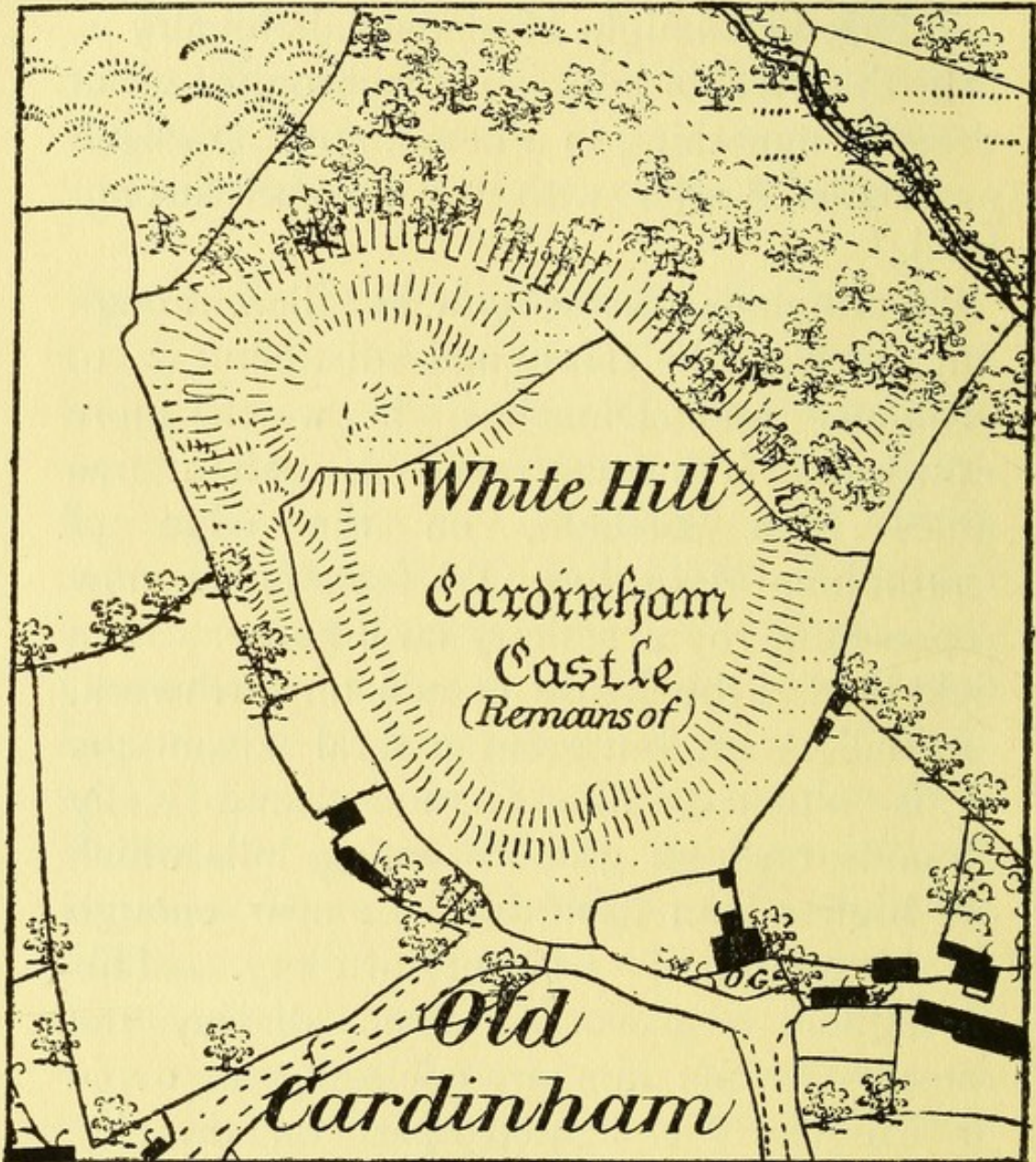


FIG. 5.—From the 25-inch Ordnance Map.

artificial, much broken, and in places obliterated.



The partial destruction of the south wall makes the enclosure incomplete, and gives it a horse-shoe shape. The entire circuit along the tops of the existing and nearly obsolete ramparts is about 267 yards, and this comparatively small circumference encloses a narrow and elongated space of relatively small capacity. The surface is irregular, and may once have had buildings upon it, of which there are now no remnants. This small but well-protected enclosure seems to have been better fitted for a fortified residence than a resort for an army. It may conceivably have held the residential quarters of a Cornish chieftain in the sixth century, and its legendary association with Arthur may not impossibly have had some foundation in fact.



## V

## CONCLUSIONS

To piece together the dislocated fragments which are all that remain of the life of Arthur, they thus present themselves. Arthur, though unknown or unrecorded by the Saxon chroniclers of the invasion, who say nothing of what went on in the west and north, finds abundant mention among the Welsh bards and poets assigned to the sixth century, who speak of him by name, attribute to him great fame as a warrior, and briefly refer to certain details which connect him with places some of which can still be identified. This positive and detailed evidence is of more weight than the negative evidence, if so it can be called, which lies in the omission of Arthur's name by Gildas and Bede, two ecclesiastics who touch only incidentally upon the wars of the sixth century and are satisfied with the mention of Am-



brosius, who preceded Arthur, and apparently occupied a position more nearly approaching that of commander-in-chief, having regard to the whole country, than did the later champion.

But it is not my purpose now to recapitulate the writings to which I have already referred, but only to put together, with their help, some indications as to the probable biography of a personage who is at once so famous and so obscure.

We may look upon Tintagel as the birth-place of Arthur, and believe that he was the son or putative son of a petty Cornish king. The exact fitness of Tintagel and Damelioc for the story of which they are the scene lends probability to it: not that we need accept the narrative precisely as related. Time, verbal transmission, and Celtic imagination have to be allowed for; but we may without undue credulity believe that Gorlois was slain at Damelioc and Arthur born at Tintagel. We may presume that Arthur remained in possession and occupation of the country of his nativity. Tintagel Castle has been from time immemorial known as King Arthur's; Kelliwic, which is mentioned in the earliest records in connection with Arthur, may with probability be identified with Kelly Rounds



and placed near the estuary of the Camel ; and Cardinam Castle, which credible though later tradition assigns to Arthur as a palace or residence, exists near Bodmin. Great interest, to my mind, attaches to these memorials. Military engineering is older than the corps of Royal Engineers ; and it may be said that the most ancient history of our country is written in earth. These memorials, together with Tintagel, a fortification constructed by the hand of nature, indicate that King Arthur occupied the coast line from Tintagel to the Camel, and the inland country to the vicinity of Bodmin.

If we accept the evidence of names, that of Pentargon in particular, we must suppose Boscastle to be included in the Arthurian country, which would thus extend from the mouth of the Camel to the mouth of the Vallency. The town of Camelford lies within this district, and it is difficult not to think of Camelot as possibly on the Camel, though we have no indication, excepting the name, to justify the assumption, and other places compete for the distinction of supplying the site of this somewhat hypothetical creation.

We can speak with more confidence of Kelliwic, assuming that it is still with us



under the name of Kelly Rounds. This lies  $2\frac{1}{2}$  miles from Wadebridge, where the Camel forms a practicable tidal harbour, and was no doubt used as such in the sixth century. The fortification covered the landing-place, at a convenient distance, and commanded what must have been the chief line of communication between Arthur's Cornish domain, Wales, Ireland, and the north-west coast. The sea is a connection rather than a separation, and may have provided the lord of Kelliwic with an access to the north which would have been practically unattainable by other means.

It may be doubted whether in Arthur's time the Saxons had reached Tintagel: it is clear that in the ninth century they were fighting on the Camel, apparently unsuccessfully, and that they never generally superseded the Celtic population much further to the west than the traditional territory of Arthur. That Arthur ever fought a great battle on this river is improbable; nor is it likely that the Saxons in his time got far enough to the west to assault his earthworks; but these at any rate may have served as places of retreat, and been used by him as Torres Vedras was by Wellington.



We may accept the statement of Nennius, who was apparently an historian of honest intentions, that Arthur was selected to command against the Saxons, and that in this capacity he fought many, perhaps twelve, battles. There must, it is certain, have been much fighting in the west and north as well as elsewhere, and we may give Arthur the credit of much of it, though details, if not entirely absent, are by no means explicit. It seems clear that he entered Scotland, perhaps more than once, became a prominent character in the Lowlands, as the dissemination of his name implies, and finally perished at Camelon or Camlan, near the Firth of Forth, fighting against a coalition of Saxons, or, strictly speaking, Angles, Picts, and Scots, or, according to another tradition, against one consisting of Picts, Scots, and revolted Britons. It is a far cry from Cornwall to Scotland, but the feat is not impossible. Agricola marched from the south of England to Scotland at an earlier date ; but he had the resources of the Roman Empire behind him. Arthur must have been aided by his access to the sea, and probably found allies in the Celts of the west and north-west along the whole front of the Teutonic encroachments.



His movements in the south and in the north were attended with a series of British victories in which the invaders were pushed back from the western parts of the island, and which contributed to the preservation of the Celtic race in the regions of Cornwall and Wales, where it still survives. Such achievements were enough to make Arthur famous from the Camel to the Forth, however little in those days of imperfect communication his reputation extended to the 'Saxon shore.' The places where above all others he was held in memory and where his name was handed down as a local tradition were his little inheritance in Cornwall, where he was born, and which we cannot doubt that he occupied—more or less; and the northern region, where he apparently did much fighting and where he ultimately perished. I need not repeat that if, as seems probable, Arthur's last battle was in Scotland we must dissociate his death with the Camel and his burial with Glastonbury.

So much for what may be accepted as history. We might have had more had the Cornish language survived like the Welsh. I do not propose to deal with the superstructure of romance which in succeeding



centuries collected about Arthur's name. The magnitude of this echo, if so it may be called, is in some sort a measure of the impression produced by Arthur in his life time. The romance seems to have come chiefly from France. There was little communication in Arthur's time between the west and east of England: even between Cornwall and Devonshire there seems to have been little. The chief connection between Cornwall and the rest of the world was by sea, and Wales, Brittany and Ireland were the countries in the most intimate association with this peninsula. Navigation is an ancient art, older than the mariner's compass: in the comparatively late sixth century crossing the Channel and the narrow seas must have been familiar to our ancestors, whether Saxon or British. Brittany and Wales, countries within touch of Cornwall, were, like it, occupied by Celts, a race gifted with more imagination than has been granted to the practical and hard-headed Saxon. The fictions of which Arthur is the centre, constructed chiefly in France, but to a lesser extent in Wales, were brought to England in the twelfth and later centuries, and replaced history by myth. In



these poetic regions this story attained a complicated development the like of which is not to be found in British history, though we can discern something like it in connection with the siege of Troy and the subsequent adventures of some of the persons supposed to have been concerned in it.

That Arthur was a patriot, a defender of the soil against foreign invaders, is sufficiently obvious. That he was also a Christian must be believed. Christianity reached Cornwall before St. Augustine preached in Kent: Britain probably received some sprinkling of Christianity during the Roman occupation, though we cannot suppose that much of this religion penetrated from London to Cornwall. The western extremity of the island was much associated with Ireland, and we have reason to believe that as early as the fifth century the creed of St. Patrick was brought to Cornwall, which thus became one of the earliest places in Britain to receive the Christian religion. It is worth observing that the ancient Cornish crosses, of which there are so many, generally present the Greek cross rather than the Latin, and would appear to belong to the Eastern rather than the Western Church. The oldest



of these crosses are supposed to date back to the sixth century. It is more than probable that a Cornish chieftain at this period would have been a Christian, and possible that Arthur himself may have knelt before some of the crosses which still exist.

THE END

PRINTED BY  
SPOTTISWOODE AND CO., NEW-STREET SQUARE  
LONDON























11125