

BOOK VI

Chap. I — *Gratian, being advanced to the throne, is killed by the common people. The Britons desire the Romans to defend them against Guanius and Melga.*

Bur Gratian Municeps, hearing of the death of Maximian, seized the crown, and made himself king. After this he exercised such tyranny that the common people fell upon him in a tumultuous manner, and murdered him. When this news reached other countries, their former enemies returned back from Ireland, and bringing with them the Scots, Norwegians, and Danes, made dreadful devastations with fire and sword over the whole kingdom, from sea to sea. Upon this most grievous calamity and oppression, ambassadors were despatched with letters to Rome, to beseech, with tears and vows of perpetual subjection, that a body of men might be sent to revenge their injuries, and drive out the enemy from them. The ambassadors in a short time prevailed so far, that, unmindful of past injuries, the Romans granted them one legion, which was transported in a fleet to their country, and there speedily encountered the enemy. At last, after the slaughter of a vast multitude of them, they drove them entirely out of the country, and rescued the miserable people from their outrageous cruelty. Then they gave orders for a wall to be built between Albany and Deira, from one sea to the other, for a terror to the enemy, and safeguard to the country. At that time Albany was wholly laid waste, by the frequent invasions of barbarous nations; and whatever enemies made an attempt upon the country, met with a convenient landing place there. So that the inhabitants were diligent in working upon the wall*, which they finished partly at the public, partly upon private charge.

Chap. II — *Guethelin's speech to the Britons when the Romans left them.*

The Romans, after this, declared to the Britons, that they should not be able for the future to undergo the fatigue of such laborious expeditions; and that it was beneath the dignity of the Roman state to harass so great and brave an army, both by land and sea, against base and vagabond robbers; but that they ought to apply themselves to the use of arms, and to fight bravely in defending to the utmost of their power, their country, riches, wives, children, and, what is dearer than all these, their liberty and lives. As soon as, they had given them this exhortation, they commanded all the men of the island that were fit for war, to appear together at London, because the Romans were about to return home. When, therefore, they were all assembled, Guethelin, the metropolitan of London, had orders to make a speech to them, which he did in these words: —

* It was unnecessary for the Britons to build a wall, because there was one built for them by Severus 200 years before.

“Though I am appointed by the princes here present to speak to you, I find myself rather ready to burst into tears, than to make an eloquent oration. It is a most sensible affliction to me to observe the weak and destitute state into which you are fallen since Maximian drew away with him all the forces and youth of this kingdom. You that were left were people wholly inexperienced in war, and occupied with other employments, as tilling the ground, and several kinds of mechanical trades. So that when your enemies from foreign countries came upon you, as sheep wandering without a shepherd, they forced you to quit your folds till the Roman power restored you to them again. Must your hopes, therefore, always depend upon foreign assistance? And will you never use yourselves to handle arms against a band of robbers, that are by no means stronger than yourselves, if you are not dispirited by sloth and cowardice? The Romans are now tired with the continual voyages wherewith they are harassed to defend you against your enemies: they rather choose to remit to you the tribute you pay them, than to undergo any longer this fatigue by land and sea. Because you were only the common people when we had soldiers of our own, do you therefore think that manhood has quite forsaken you? Are not men in the course of a human generation often the reverse of one another? Is not a ploughman often the father of a soldier, and a soldier of a ploughman? Does not the same diversity happen in a mechanic and a soldier? Since then, in this manner, one produces another, I cannot think it possible for manhood to be lost among them. As then you are men, behave yourselves like men: call upon the name of Christ, that he may inspire you with courage to defend your liberties.”

No sooner had he concluded his speech, that the people raised such a shout, that one would have thought them on a sudden inspired with courage from Heaven.

Chap. III — *The Britons are again cruelly harassed by Guanius and Melga.*

After this the Romans left the timorous people as much as they could, and left them patterns of their arms. They likewise commanded towers, having a prospect towards the sea, to be placed at proper distances along all the south coast, where the ships were, and from whence they feared invasions of the barbarians. But, according to the proverb “it is easier to mak a hawk of a kite, than a scholar of a ploughman”; all learning to him is but as a pearl thrown before swine. Thus, no sooner had the Romans taken their farewell of them, than the two leaders, Guanius and Melga, issued forth from their ships, in which they had fled over into Ireland, and with their bands of Scots, Picts, Norwegians, Danes, and others, whom they had brought along with them, seized upon all Albany as far as the very wall. Understanding, likewise, that the Romans were gone, never to return any more, they now, in a more insolent manner than before, began their devastations in the island. Hereupon the country fellows upon the battlements of the walls sat night and day with quaking hearts, not daring to stir from their seats, and readier for flight than making the least resistance. In the meantime, the enemies ceased not with their hooks to pull them down headlong, and dash the wretched herd to pieces upon

the ground; who gained at least this advantage by their speedy death, that they avoided the sight of that most deplorable calamity, which forthwith threatened their relations and dearest children. Such was the terrible vengeance of God for that most wicked madness of Maximian, in draining the kingdom of all its forces, who, had they been present, would have repulsed any nation that invaded them; an evident proof of which they gave, by the vast conquests they made abroad, even in remote countries; and also, by maintaining their own country in peace while they continued here. But thus, it happens when a country is left to the defence of country clowns. In short, quitting their high wall and their cities, the country people were forced again to fly, and to suffer a more fatal dispersion, a more furious pursuit of the enemy, a more cruel, and more general slaughter than before; and like lambs before wolves, so was that miserable people torn to pieces by the merciless barbarians.

Again, therefore, the wretched remainder sent letters to Aetius, a man of great power among the Romans, to this effect: "To Aetius, thrice consul, the groans of the Britons." And after some few other complaints they add: "The sea drives us to the barbarians, and the barbarians drive us back to the sea: thus, are we tossed to and fro between two kinds of death, being either drowned or put to the sword." Notwithstanding this most moving address, they procured no relief, and the ambassadors returning back in great heaviness, declared to their countrymen the repulse which they had suffered.

Chap. IV — *Guithelin desires succours of Aldroen.*

Hereupon, after a consultation together, Guithelin, archbishop of London, passed over into Lesser Britain, called then Armorica, or Letavia, to desire assistance of their brethren. At that time Aldroen reigned there, being the fourth king from Conan, to whom, as has been already related, Maximian had given that kingdom. This prince, seeing a prelate of so great dignity arrive, received him with honour, and inquired after the occasion of his coming. To whom Guithelin replied: —

"Your majesty can be no stranger to the misery which we, your Britons, have suffered (which may even demand your tears), since the time that Maximian drained our island of its soldiers, to people the kingdom which you enjoy, and which God grant you may long enjoy in peace. For against us the poor remains of the British race, all the people of the adjacent islands, have risen up, and made an utter devastation in our country, which then abounded with all kinds of riches; so that the people now are wholly destitute of all manner of sustenance, but what they can get in hunting. Nor had we any power or knowledge of military affairs left among us to encounter the enemy. For the Romans are tired of us, and have absolutely refused their assistance. So that now, deprived of all other hope, we come to implore your clemency, that you would furnish us with forces, and protect a kingdom, which is of right your own, from the incursions of barbarians. For who but yourself, ought, without your consent, to wear the crown of Constantine and Maximian, since the right

your ancestors had to it is now devolved upon you? Prepare then your fleet, and go with me. Behold! I deliver the kingdom of Britain into your hands.”

To this Aldroen made answer: “There was a time formerly when I would not have refused to accept of the island of Britain, if it had been offered me; for I do not think there was anywhere a more fruitful country while it enjoyed peace and tranquillity. But now, since the calamities that have befallen it, it is become of less value, and odious both to me and all other princes. But above all things the power of the Romans was so destructive to it, that nobody could enjoy any settled state or authority in it, without loss of liberty, and bearing the yoke of slavery under them. And who would not prefer the possession of a lesser country with liberty, to all the riches of that island in servitude? The kingdom that is now under my subjection I enjoy with honour, and without paying homage to any superior; so that I prefer it to all other countries, since I can govern it without being controlled. Nevertheless, out of respect to the right that my ancestors for many generations have had to your island, I deliver to you my brother Constantine with two thousand men, that with the good providence of God, he may free your country from the inroads of barbarians, and obtain the crown for himself. For I have a brother called by that name, who is an expert soldier, and in all other respects an accomplished man. If you please to accept of him, I will not refuse to send him with you, together with the said number of men; for indeed a larger number I do not mention to you, because I am daily threatened with disturbance from the Gauls.”

He had scarcely done speaking before the archbishop returned him thanks, and when Constantine was called in, broke out into these expressions of joy: “Christ conquers; Christ commands; Christ reigns: behold the king of desolate Britain! Be Christ only present, and behold our defence, our hope and joy.” In short, the ships being got ready, the men who were chosen out from all parts of the kingdom, were delivered to Guithelin.

Chap. V — *Constantine, being made king of Britain, leaves three sons.*

When they had made all necessary preparations, they embarked, and arrived at the port of Totness; and then without delay assembled together the youth that was left in the island, and encountered the enemy; over whom, by the merit of the holy prelate, they obtained the victory. After this the Britons, before dispersed, flocked together from all parts, and in a council held at Silchester, promoted Constantine to the throne, and there performed the ceremony of his coronation. They also married him to a lady, descended from a noble Roman family, whom archbishop Guithelin had educated, and by whom the king had afterwards three sons, Constans, Aurelius Ambrosius, and Uther Pendragon. Constans, who was the eldest, he delivered to the church of Amphibalus in Winchester, that he might there take upon him the monastic order. But the other two, *viz.* Aurelius and Uther, he committed to the care of Guithelin for their education. At last, after ten years were expired, there came a certain Pict, who had entered in his service, and under pretence of holding some private

discourse with him, in a nursery of young trees where nobody was present, stabbed him with a dagger.

Chap. VI — *Constans is, by Vortigern, crowned king of Britain.*

Upon the death of Constantine, a dissension arose among the nobility, about a successor to the throne. Some were for setting up Aurelius Ambrosius; others Uther Pendragon; others again some other persons of the royal family. At last, when they could come to no conclusion, Vortigern, consul of the Gewisseans, who was himself very ambitious of the crown, went to Constans the monk*, and thus addressed himself to him: "You see your father is dead, and your brothers on account of their age are incapable of the government; neither do I see any of your family besides yourself, whom the people ought to promote to the kingdom. If you will therefore follow my advice, I will, on condition of your increasing my private estate, dispose the people to favour your advancement, and free you from that habit, notwithstanding that it is against the rule of your order." Constans, overjoyed at the proposal, promised, with an oath, that upon these terms he would grant him whatever he would desire. Then Vortigern took him, and investing him in his regal habiliments, conducted him to London, and made him king, though not with the free consent of the people. Archbishop Guithelin was then dead, nor was there any other that durst perform the ceremony of his unction, on account of his having quitted the monastic order. However, this proved no hindrance to his coronation, for Vortigern himself performed the ceremony instead of a bishop.

Chap. VII — *Vortigern treacherously contrives to get king Constans assassinated.*

Constans, being thus advanced, committed the whole government of the kingdom to Vortigern, and surrendered himself up so entirely to his counsels, that he did nothing, without his order. His own incapacity for government obliged him to do this, for he had learned any thing else rather than state affairs within his cloister. Vortigern became sensible of this, and therefore began to deliberate with himself what course to take to obtain the crown, of which he had been before extremely ambitious. He saw that now was his proper time to gain his end easily, when the kingdom was wholly intrusted to his management; and Constans, who bore the title of king, was no more than the shadow of one; for he was of a soft temper, a bad judge in matters of right, and not in the least feared, either by his own people, or by the neighbouring states. And as for his two brothers, Uther Pendragon and Aurelius Ambrosius, they were only children in their cradles, and therefore incapable of the government. There was likewise this farther misfortune, that all the older persons of the nobility were dead, so that Vortigern seemed to be the only man surviving, that had craft, policy, and experience in matters of state; and all the rest in a manner children,

* It is true that Constans, the son of Constantine, entered into the sacerdotal profession, but both he and his father Constantine were slain in Gaul which they had made the seat of their empire, to the entire neglect of Britain.

or raw youths, who only inherited the honours of their parents and relations that had been killed in the former wars. Vortigern, finding a concurrence of so many favourable circumstances, contrived how he might easily and cunningly depose Constans the monk, and immediately establish himself in his place. But in order to do this, he waited until he had first well established his power and interest in several countries. He therefore petitioned to have the king's treasures, and his fortified cities, in his own custody; pretending there was a rumour, that the neighbouring islanders designed an invasion of the kingdom. This being granted him, he placed his own creatures in those cities, to secure them for himself. Then having formed a scheme how to execute his treasonable designs, he went to the king, and represented to him the necessity of augmenting the number of his domestics, that he might more safely oppose the invasion of the enemy. "Have not I left all things to your disposal?" said Constans: "Do what you will as to that, so that they be but faithful to me."

Vortigern replied, "I am informed that the Picts are going to bring the Danes and Norwegians in upon us, with a design to give us very great annoyance. I would therefore advise you, and in my opinion it is the best course you can take, that you maintain some Picts in your court, who may do you good service among those of that nation. For if it is true that they are preparing to begin a rebellion, you may employ them as spies upon their countrymen in their plots and stratagems, so as easily to escape them." This was the dark treason of a secret enemy; for he did not recommend this out of regard to the safety of Constans, but because he knew the Picts to be a giddy people, and ready for all manner of wickedness; so that, in a fit of drunkenness or passion, they might easily be incensed against the king, and make no scruple to assassinate him. And such an accident, when it should happen, would make an open way for his accession to the throne, which he so often had in view. Hereupon he despatched messengers into Scotland, with an invitation to a hundred Pictish soldiers, whom accordingly he received into the king's household; and when admitted, he showed them more respect than all the rest of the domestics, by making them several presents, and allowing them a luxurious table, insomuch that they looked upon him as the King. So great was the regard they had for him, that they made songs of him about the streets, the subject of which was, that Vortigern deserved the government, deserved the sceptre of Britain; but that Constans was unworthy of it. This encouraged Vortigern to show them still more favour, in order the more firmly to engage them in his interest; and when by these practices he had made them entirely his creatures, he took an opportunity, when they were drunk, to tell them, that he was going to retire out of Britain, to see if he could get a better estate; for the small revenue he had then, he said, would not so much as enable him to maintain a retinue of fifty men. Then putting on a look of sadness, he withdrew to his own apartment, and left them drinking in the hall.

The Picts at this sight were in inexpressible sorrow, as thinking what he had said was true, and murmuring said one to another, "Why do we suffer this monk to live? Why do not we kill him, that Vortigern may enjoy his crown? Who is so fit to succeed as he? A man so generous to us is worthy to rule, and deserves all the honour and dignity that we can bestow upon him."

Chap. VIII — *Aurelius Ambrosius and Uther Pendragon flee from Vortigern, and go to Lesser Britain.*

After this, breaking into Constans's bedchamber, they fell upon him and killed him, and carried his head to Vortigern. At the sight of it, he put on a mournful countenance, and burst forth into tears, though at the same time he was almost transported with joy. However, he summoned together the citizens of London (for there the fact was committed), and commanded all the assassins to be bound, and their heads to be cut off for this abominable parricide. In the meantime, there were some who had a suspicion that this piece of villany was wholly the contrivance of Vortigern, and that the Picts were only his instruments to execute it. Others again as positively asserted his innocence. At last, the matter being left in doubt, those who had the care of the two brothers, Aurelius Ambrosius, and Uther Pendragon, fled over with them into Lesser Britain, for fear of being killed by Vortigern. There they were kindly received by king Budes, who took care to give them an education suitable to their royal birth.

Chap. IX — *Vortigern makes himself king of Britain.*

Now Vortigern, seeing nobody to rival him in the kingdom, placed the crown on his own head, and thus gained the preeminence over all the rest of the princes. At last, his treason being discovered, the people of the adjacent islands, whom the Picts had brought into Albany, made insurrection against him. For the Picts were enraged on account of the death of their fellow soldiers, who had been slain for the murder of Constans, and endeavoured to revenge that injury upon him. Vortigern therefore was daily in great distress, and lost a considerable part of his army in a war with them. He had likewise no less trouble from another quarter, for fear of Aurelius Ambrosius, and his brother Uther Pendragon, who, as we said before, had fled, on his account, into Lesser Britain. For he heard it rumoured, day after day, that they had now arrived at man's estate, and had built a vast fleet, with a design to return back to the kingdom, which was their undoubted right.

Chap. X — *Vortigern takes the Saxons that were newcomers, to his assistance.*

In the meantime, there arrived in Kent three brigandines, or long galleys, full of armed men, under the command of two brothers, Horsa and Hengist*. Vortigern was then at Dorobernia, now Canterbury, which city he used often to visit; and being informed of the arrival of some tall strangers in large ships, he ordered that they should be received peaceably, and conducted into his presence. As soon as they were brought before him, he cast his eyes upon the two brothers, who excelled all the rest both in nobility and gracefulness of person; and having taken a view of the whole company, asked them of what

* It is the generally received opinion that Hengist and Horsa landed in Britain A.D. 449.

country they were, and what was the occasion of their coming into his kingdom. To whom Hengist (whose years and wisdom entitled him to a precedence), in the name of the rest, made the following answer: —

“Most noble king, Saxony, which is one of the countries of Germany, was the place of our birth; and the occasion of our coming was to offer our service to you or some other prince. For we were driven out of our native country, for no other reason, but that the laws of the kingdom required it. It is customary among us, that when we come to be overstocked with people, our princes from all the provinces meet together, and command all the youths of the kingdom to assemble before them; then casting lots, they make choice of the strongest and ablest of them, to go into foreign nations, to procure themselves a subsistence, and free their native from a superfluous multitude of people. Our country, therefore, being of late overstocked, our princes met, and after having cast lots, made choice of the youth which you see in your presence, and have obliged us to obey the custom which has been established of old. And us two brothers, Hengist and Horsa, they made generals over them, out of respect to our ancestors, who enjoyed the same honour. In obedience, therefore, to the laws so long established, we put out to sea, and under the good guidance of Mercury have arrived in your kingdom.”

The king, at the name of Mercury, looking earnestly upon them, asked them what religion they professed. “We worship,” replied Hengist, “our country’s gods, Saturn and Jupiter, and the other deities that govern the world, but especially Mercury, whom in our language we call Woden, and to whom our ancestors consecrated the fourth day of the week, still called after his name Wodensday. Next to him we worship the powerful goddess, Frea, to whom they also dedicated the sixth day, which after her name we call Friday.”

Vortigern replied, “For your credulity, or rather incredulity, I am much grieved, but I rejoice at your arrival, which, whether by God’s providence or some other agency, happens very seasonably for me in my present difficulties. For I am oppressed by my enemies on every side, and if you will engage with me in my wars, I will entertain you honourably in my kingdom, and bestow upon you lands and other possessions.” The barbarians readily accepted his offer, and the agreement between them being ratified, they resided at his court. Soon after this, the Picts, issuing forth from Albany, with a very great army, began to lay waste the northern parts of the island. When Vortigern had information of it, he assembled his forces, and went to meet them beyond the Humber. Upon their engaging, the battle proved very fierce on both sides, though there was but little occasion for the Britons to exert themselves, for the Saxons fought so bravely, that the enemy, formerly so victorious, were speedily put to flight.

Chap. XI — *Hengist brings over great numbers of Saxons into Britain: his crafty petition to Vortigern.*

Vortigern, therefore, as he owed the victory to them, increased his bounty to them, and gave their general, Hengist, large possessions of land in Lindsey, for

the subsistence of himself and his fellow soldiers. Hereupon Hengist, who was a man of experience and subtilty, finding how much interest he had with the king, addressed him in this manner: —

“Sir, your enemies give you disturbance from all quarters, and few of your subjects love you. They all threaten you, and say, they are going to bring over Aurelius Ambrosius from Armorica, to depose you, and make him king. If you please, let us send to our country to invite over some more soldiers, that with our forces increased we may be better able to oppose them. But there is one thing which I would desire of your clemency, if I did not fear a refusal.”

Vortigern made answer, “Send your messengers to Germany, and invite over whom you please, and you shall have no refusal from me in whatever you shall desire.”

Hengist, with a low bow, returned him thanks, and said, “The possessions which you have given me in land and houses are very large, but you have not yet done me that honour which becomes my station and birth, because, among other things, I should have had some town or city granted me, that I might be entitled to greater esteem among the nobility of your kingdom. I ought to have been made a consul or prince, since my ancestors enjoyed both those dignities.”

“It is not in my power,” replied Vortigern, “to do you so much honour, because you are strangers and pagans; neither am I yet so far acquainted with your manners and customs, as to set you upon a level with my natural born subjects. And, indeed, if I did esteem you as my subjects, I should not be forward to do so, because the nobility of my kingdom would strongly dissuade me from it.”

“Give your servant,” said Hengist, “only so much ground in the place you have assigned me, as I can encompass with a leathern thong, for to build a fortress upon, as a place of retreat if occasion should require. For I will always be faithful to you, as I have been hitherto, and pursue no other design in the request which I have made.” With these words the king was prevailed upon to grant him his petition; and ordered him to despatch messengers into Germany, to invite more men over speedily to his assistance. Hengist immediately executed his orders, and taking a bull’s hide, made one thong out of the whole, with which he encompassed a rocky place that he had carefully made choice of, and within that circuit began to build a castle, which, when finished, took its name from the thong wherewith it had been measured; for it was afterwards called, in the British tongue, *Caer Correi*; in Saxon, *Thancastre* [*Caistor*], that is, *Thong Castle*.

Chap. XII — *Vortigern marries Rowena, the daughter of Hengist.*

In the meantime, the messengers returned from Germany, with eighteen ships full of the best soldiers they could get. They also brought along with them Rowena, the daughter of Hengist, one of the most accomplished beauties of that age. After their arrival, Hengist invited the king to his house, to view his new

buildings, and the new soldiers that were come over. The king readily accepted of his invitation, but privately, and having highly commended the magnificence of the structure, enlisted the men into his service. Here he was entertained at a royal banquet; and when that was over, the young lady came out of her chamber bearing a golden cup full of wine, with which she approached the king, and making a low courtesy, said to him, "Lauerd king wacht heil!" The king, at the sight of the lady's face, was on a sudden both surprised and inflamed with her beauty; and calling to his interpreter, asked him what she said, and what answer he should make her.

"She called you, 'Lord king,'" said the interpreter, "and offered to drink your health. Your answer to her must be 'Drinc heil!' "

Vortigern accordingly answered "Drinc heil!" and bade her drink; after which he took the cup from her hand, kissed her, and drank himself.

From that time to this, it has been the custom in Britain, that he who drinks to any one says, "Wacht heil!" and he that pledges him, answers "Drinc heil!" Vortigern being now drunk with the variety of liquors, the devil took this opportunity to enter into his heart, and to make him in love with the damsel, so that he became suitor to her father for her. It was, I say, by the devil's entering into his heart, that he, who was a Christian, should fall in love with a pagan. By this example, Hengist, being a prudent man, discovered the king's levity, and consulted with his brother Horsa and the other ancient men present, what to do in relation to the king's request. They unanimously advised him to give him his daughter, and in consideration of her to demand the province of Kent. Accordingly, the daughter was without delay delivered to Vortigern, and the province of Kent to Hengist, without the knowledge of Gorangan, who had the government of it. The king the same night married the pagan lady, and became extremely delighted with her; by which he quickly brought upon himself the hatred of the nobility, and of his own sons. For he had already three sons, whose names were Vortimer, Catigern, and Pascentius.

Chap. XIII — *The bishops, Germanus and Lupus, restore the Christian faith that had been corrupted in Britain. Octa and Ebissa are four times routed by Vortimer.*

At that time came St. Germanus, bishop of Auxerre, and Lupus, bishop of Troyes, to preach the gospel to the Britons. For the Christian faith had been corrupted among them, partly by the pagans whom the king had brought into society with them, partly by the Pelagian heresy, with the poison whereof they had been a long time infected. But by the preaching of these holy men, the true faith and worship was again restored, the many miracles they wrought giving success to their labours. Gildas has in his elegant treatise given an account of the many miracles God wrought by them. The king being now, as we have said, possessed of the lady, Hengist said to him: "As I am your father, I claim the right of being your counsellor: do not therefore slight my advice, since it is to my countrymen you must owe the conquest of all your enemies. Let us invite

over my son Octa and his brother Ebissa, who are brave soldiers, and give them the countries that are in the northern parts of Britain, by the wall, between Deira and Albany. For they will hinder the inroads of the barbarians, and so you shall enjoy peace on the other side of the Humber." Vortigern complied with his request, and ordered them to invite over whomsoever they knew able to assist him. Immediately upon the receipt of this message, came Octa, Ebissa, and Cherdich, with three hundred ships filled with soldiers, who were all kindly received by Vortigern, and had ample presents made them. For, by their assistance, he vanquished his enemies, and in every engagement proved victorious. Hengist in the meantime continued to invite over more and more ships, and to augment his numbers daily. Which when the Britons observed, they were afraid of being betrayed by them, and moved the king to banish them out of his coasts. For it was contrary to the rule of the gospel that Christians should hold fellowship, or have any intercourse, with pagans. Besides which, the number of those that were come over was now so great, that they were a terror to his subjects; and nobody could now know who was a pagan, or who a Christian, since pagans married the daughters and kinswomen of Christians. These things they represented to the king, and endeavoured to dissuade him from entertaining them, lest they might, by some treacherous conspiracy, prove an overmatch for the native inhabitants. But Vortigern, who loved them above all other nations on account of his wife, was deaf to their advice. For this reason the Britons quickly deserted him, and unanimously set up Vortimer his son for their king; who at their instigation began to drive out the barbarians, and to make dreadful incursions upon them. Four battles he fought with them, and was victorious in all: the first upon the river Darent; the second upon the ford of Epsford, where Horsa and Catigern, another son of Vortigern, met and, after a sharp encounter, killed each other; the third upon the sea shore, where the enemies fled shamefully to their ships, and betook themselves for refuge to the Isle of Thanet. But Vortimer besieged them there, and daily distressed them with his fleet. And when they were no longer able to bear the assaults of the Britons, they sent king Vortigern, who was present with them in all those wars, to his son Vortimer, to desire leave to depart, and return back safe to Germany. And while a conference upon this subject was being held, they in the meantime went on board their long galleys, and, leaving their wives and children behind them, returned back to Germany.

Chap. XIV — *Vortimer's kindness to his soldiers at his death.*

Vortimer, after this great success, began to restore his subjects to their possessions which had been taken from them, and to show them all marks of his affection and esteem, and at the instance of St. Germanus to rebuild their churches. But his goodness quickly stirred up the enmity of the devil against him, who entering into the heart of his stepmother Rowena, excited her to contrive his death. For this purpose, she consulted with the poisoners, and procured one who was intimate with him, whom she corrupted with large and numerous presents, to give him a poisonous draught; so that this brave soldier, as soon as he had taken it, was seized with a sudden illness, that deprived him of all hopes of life. Hereupon he forthwith ordered all his men to come to him,

and having shown them how near he was to his end, distributed among them all the treasure his predecessors had heaped up, and endeavoured to comfort them in their sorrow and lamentation for him, telling them, he was only going the way of all flesh. But he exhorted those brave and warlike young men, who had attended him in all his victories, to persist courageously in the defence of their country against all hostile invasion; and with wonderful greatness of mind, commanded a brazen pyramid to be placed in the port where the Saxons used to land, and his body when dead to be buried on the top of it, that the sight of his tomb might frighten back the barbarians to Germany. For he said none of them would dare approach the country, that should but get a sight of his tomb. Such was the admirable bravery of this great man, who, as he had been a terror to them while living, endeavoured to be no less so when dead. Notwithstanding which, he was no sooner dead, than the Britons had no regard to his orders, but buried him at London.

Chap. XV — *Hengist, having wickedly murdered the princes of Britain, keeps Vortigern prisoner.*

Vortigern, after the death of his son, was again restored to the kingdom, and at the request of his wife sent messengers into Germany to Hengist, with an invitation to return into Britain, but privately, and with a small retinue, to prevent a quarrel between the barbarians and his subjects. But Hengist, hearing that Vortimer was dead, raised an army of no less than three hundred thousand men, and fitting out a fleet returned with them to Britain. When Vortigern and the nobility heard of the arrival of so vast a multitude, they were immoderately incensed, and, after consultation together, resolved to fight them, and drive them from their coasts. Hengist, being informed of their design by messengers sent from his daughter, immediately entered into deliberation what course to pursue against them. After several stratagems had been considered, he judged it most feasible, to impose upon the nation by making show of peace. With this view he sent ambassadors to the king, to declare to him, that he had not brought so great a number of men for the purpose either of staying with him, or offering any violence to the country. But the reason why he brought them, was because he thought Vortimer was yet living, and that he should have occasion for them against him, in case of an assault. But now since he no longer doubted of his being dead, he submitted himself and his people to the disposal of Vortigern; so that he might retain as many of them as he should think fit, and whomsoever he rejected Hengist would allow to return back without delay to Germany. And if these terms pleased Vortigern, he desired him to appoint a time and place for their meeting, and adjusting matters according to his pleasure. When these things were represented to the king, he was mightily pleased, as being very unwilling to part with Hengist; and at last ordered his subjects and the Saxons to meet upon the calends of May, which were now very near, at the monastery of Ambrius [Amesbury], for the settling of the matters above mentioned. The appointment being agreed to on both sides, Hengist, with a new design of villany in his head, ordered his soldiers to carry every one of them a long dagger under their garments; and while the conference should be held with the Britons, who would have no suspicion of them, he would give

them this word of command “Nemet oure Saxas”, at which moment they were all to be “ready to seize boldly every one his next man, and with his drawn dagger stab him. Accordingly they all met at the time and place appointed, and began to treat of peace; and when a fit opportunity offered for executing his villany, Hengist cried out “Nemet oure Saxas,” and the same instant seized Vortigern, and held him by his cloak. The Saxons, upon the signal given, drew their daggers, and falling upon the princes, who little suspected any such design, assassinated them to the number of four hundred and sixty barons and consuls; to whose bodies St. Aldate afterwards gave Christian burial, not far from Caer Caradauc, now Salisbury, in a burying place near the monastery of Ambrius, the abbot, who was the founder of it. For they all came without arms, having no thoughts of anything but treating of peace; which gave the others a fairer opportunity of exercising their villainous design against them. But the pagans did not escape unpunished while they acted this wickedness; a great number of them being killed during this massacre of their enemies. For the Britons, taking up clubs and stones from the ground, resolutely defended themselves, and did good execution upon the traitors.

Chap. XVI — *Eldol’s valiant exploit. Hengist forces Vortigern to yield up the strongest fortifications in Britain, in consideration of his release.*

Tjere was present one Eldol, consul of Gloucester, who, at the sight of this treachery, took up a stake which he happened to find, and with that made his defence. Every blow he gave carried death along with it; and by breaking either the head, arms, shoulders, or legs of a great many, he struck no small terror into the traitors, nor did he move from the spot before he had killed with that weapon seventy men. But being no longer able to stand his ground against such numbers, he made his escape from them, and retired to his own city. Many fell on both sides, but the Saxons got the victory; because the Britons, having no suspicion of treachery, came unarmed, and therefore made a weaker defence. After the commission of this detestable villany, the Saxons would not kill Vortigern; but having threatened him with death and bound him, demanded his cities and fortified places in consideration of their granting him his life. He, to secure himself, denied them nothing; and when they had made him confirm his grants with an oath, they released him from his chains, and then marched first to London, which they took, as they did afterwards York, Lincoln, and Winchester; wasting the countries through which they passed, and destroying the people, as wolves do sheep when left by their shepherds. When Vortigern saw the desolation which they made, he retired into the parts of Cambria, not knowing what to do against so barbarous a people.

Chap. XVII — *Vortigern, after consultation with magicians, orders a youth to be brought that never had a father.*

At last, he had recourse to magicians for their advice, and commanded them to tell him what course to take. They advised him to build a very strong tower for his own safety, since he had lost all his other. fortified places. Accordingly,

he made a progress about the country, to find out a convenient situation, and came at last to Mount Erir, where he assembled workmen from several countries, and ordered them to build the tower. The builders, therefore, began to lay the foundation; but whatever they did one day the earth swallowed up the next, so as to leave no appearance of their work. Vortigern being informed of this again consulted with his magicians concerning the cause of it, who told him that he must find out a youth that never had a father, and kill him, and then sprinkle the stones and cement with his blood; for by those means, they said, he would have a firm foundation. Hereupon messengers were despatched away over all the provinces, to inquire out such a man. In their travels they came to a city, called afterwards *Caer Myrddin* [*Carmarthen*], where they saw some young men, playing before the gate, and went up to them; but being weary with their journey, they sat down in the ring, to see if they could meet with what they were in quest of. Towards evening, there happened on a sudden a quarrel between two of the young men, whose names were *Merlin* and *Dabutius*. In the dispute, *Dabutius* said to *Merlin*: “You fool, do you presume to quarrel with me? Is there any equality in our birth? I am descended of royal race, both by my father and mother’s side. As for you, nobody knows what you are, for you never had a father.” At that word the messengers looked earnestly upon *Merlin*, and asked the bystanders who he was. They told him, it was not known who was his father; but that his mother was daughter to the king of *Demetia*, and that she lived in *St. Peter’s* church among the nuns of that city.

Chap. XVIII — *Vortigern inquires of Merlin’s mother concerning her conception of him.*

Upon this the messengers hastened to the governor of the city, and ordered him, in the king’s name, to send *Merlin* and his mother to the king. As soon as the governor understood the occasion of their message, he readily obeyed the order, and sent them to *Vortigern* to complete his design. When they were introduced into the king’s presence, he received the mother in a very respectful manner, on account of her noble birth; and began to inquire of her by what man she had conceived. “My sovereign lord,” said she, “by the life of your soul and mine, I know nobody that begot him of me. Only this I know, that as I was once with my companions in our chambers, there appeared to me a person in the shape of a most beautiful young man, who often embraced me eagerly in his arms, and kissed me; and when he had stayed a little time, he suddenly vanished out of my sight. But many times, after this he would talk with me when I sat alone, without making any visible appearance. When he had a long time haunted me in this manner, he at last lay with me several times in the shape of a man, and left me with child. And I do affirm to you, my sovereign lord, that excepting that young man, I know nobody that begot him of me.”

The king full of admiration at this account, ordered *Maugantius* to be called, that he might satisfy him as to the possibility of what the woman had related. *Maugantius*, being introduced, and having the whole matter repeated to him, said to *Vortigern*: “In the books of our philosophers, and in a great many histories, I have found that several men have had the like original. For, as

Apuleius informs us in his book concerning the Demon of Socrates, between the moon and the earth inhabit those spirits, which we will call incubuses. These are of the nature partly of men, and partly of angels, and whenever they please assume human shapes, and lie with women. Perhaps one of them appeared to this woman, and begot that young man of her."

Chap. XIX — *Merlin's speech to the king's magicians, and advice about the building of the tower.*

Merlin in the meantime was attentive to all that had passed, and then approached the king, and said to him, "For what reason am I and my mother introduced into your presence?"

"My magicians," answered Vortigern, "advised me to seek out a man that had no father, with whose blood my building is to be sprinkled, in order to make it stand."

"Order your magicians," said Merlin, "to come before me, and I will convict them of a lie." The king was surprised at his words, and presently ordered the magicians to come, and sit down before Merlin, who spoke to them after this manner: "Because you are ignorant what it is that hinders the foundation of the tower, you have recommended the shedding of my blood for cement to it, as if that would presently make it stand. But tell me now, what is there under the foundation? For something there is that will not suffer it to stand." The magicians at this began to be afraid, and made him no answer. Then said Merlin, who was also called Ambrosius, "I entreat your majesty would command your workmen to dig into the ground, and you will find a pond which causes the foundation to sink." This accordingly was done, and then presently they found a pond deep under ground, which had made it give way. Merlin after this went again to the magicians, and said, "Tell me ye false sycophants, what is there under the pond." But they were silent. Then said he again to the king, "Command the pond to be drained, and at the bottom you will see two hollow stones, and in them two dragons asleep." The king made no scruple of believing him, since he had found true what he said of the pond, and therefore ordered it to be drained: which done, he found as Merlin had said; and now was possessed with the greatest admiration of him. Nor were the rest that were present less amazed at his wisdom, thinking it to be no less than divine inspiration.