

BOOK XI

Chap. I — *Mordred makes a great slaughter of Arthur's men, but is beaten, and flees to Winchester.*

Of the matter now to be treated of, most noble consul, Geoffrey of Monmouth shall be silent; but will, nevertheless, though in a mean style, briefly relate what he found in the -British book above mentioned, and heard from that most learned historian, Walter, archdeacon of Oxford, concerning the wars which this renowned king, upon his return to Britain, after this victory, waged against his nephew. As soon, therefore, as the report, of this flagrant wickedness reached him, he immediately desisted from his enterprise against Leo, king of the Romans ; and having sent away Hywel, duke of the Armoricans, with the army of Gaul, to restore peace in those parts, returned back with speed to Britain, attended only by the kings of the islands, and their armies. But the wicked traitor, Mordred, had sent Cheldric, the Saxon leader, into Germany, there to raise all the forces he could find, and return with all speed: and in consideration of this service, had promised him all that part of the island, which reaches from the Humber to Scotland, and whatever Hengist and Horsa had possessed of Kent in the time of Vortigern. So that he, in obedience to his commands, had arrived with eight hundred ships filled with pagan soldiers, and had entered into covenant to obey the traitor as his sovereign; who had also drawn to his assistance the Scots, Picts, Irish, and all others whom he knew to be enemies to his uncle. His whole army, taking pagans and Christians together, amounted to eighty thousand men; with the help of whom he met Arthur just after his landing at the port of Richborough, and joining battle with him, made a very great slaughter of his men. For the same day fell Augusel, king of Albany, and Gawain, the king's nephew, with innumerable others. Augusel was succeeded in his kingdom by Eventus, his brother Urien's son, who afterwards performed many famous exploits in those wars. After they had at last, with much difficulty, got ashore, they paid back the slaughter and put Modred and his army to flight. For, by long practice in war, they had learned an excellent way of ordering their forces; which was so managed, that while their foot was employed either in an assault or upon the defensive, the horse would come in at full speed obliquely, break through the enemy's ranks, and so force them to flee. Nevertheless, this perjured usurper got his forces together again, and the night following entered Winchester. As soon as queen Guinevere heard this, she immediately, despairing of success, fled from York to the City of Legions, where she resolved to lead a chaste life among the nuns in the church of Julius the Martyr, and entered herself one of their order.

Chap. II — *Modred, after being twice besieged and routed, is killed, Arthur, being wounded, gives up the kingdom to Constantine.*

But Arthur, whose anger was now much more inflamed, upon the loss of so many hundreds of his fellow soldiers, after he had buried his slain, went on the third day to the city, and there besieged the traitor, who, notwithstanding, was

unwilling to desist from his enterprise, but used all methods to encourage his adherents, and marching out with his troops prepared to fight his uncle. In the battle that followed hereupon, great numbers lost their lives on both sides; but at last Mordred's army suffered most, so that he was forced to quit the field shamefully. From hence he made a precipitate flight, and, without taking any care for the burial of his slain, marched in haste towards Cornwall.

Arthur, being inwardly grieved that he should so often escape, forthwith pursued him into that country as far as the river Camel, where the other was expecting his coming. And Modred, as he was the boldest of men, and always the quickest at making an attack, immediately placed his troops in order, resolving either to conquer or to die, rather than continue his flight any longer. He had yet remaining with him sixty thousand men, out of whom he composed three bodies, which contained each of them six thousand six hundred and sixty-six men: but all the rest he joined in one body; and having assigned to each of the other parties their leaders, he took the command of this upon himself. After he had made this disposition of his forces, he endeavoured to animate them, and promised them the estates of their enemies if they came off with victory.

Arthur, on the other side, also marshalled his army, which he divided into nine square companies, with a right and left wing; and having appointed to each of them their commanders, exhorted them to make a total rout of those robbers and perjured villains, who, being brought over into the island from foreign countries at the instance of the archtraitor, were attempting to rob them of all their honours. He likewise told them that a mixed army composed of barbarous people of so many different countries, and who were all raw soldiers and inexperienced in war, would never be able to stand against such brave veteran troops as they were, provided they did their duty. After this encouragement given by each general to his fellow soldiers, the battle on a sudden began with great fury; wherein it would be both grievous and tedious to relate the slaughter, the cruel havoc, and the excess of fury that was to be seen on both sides. In this manner they spent a good part of the day, till Arthur at last made a push with his company, consisting of six thousand six hundred and sixty-six men, against that in which he knew Modred was; and having opened a way with their swords, they pierced quite through it, and made a grievous slaughter. For in this assault fell the wicked traitor himself, and many thousands with him. But notwithstanding the loss of him, the rest did not flee but running together from all parts of the field maintained their ground with undaunted courage.

The fight now grew more furious than ever, and proved fatal to almost all the commanders and their forces. For on Modred's side fell Cheldric, Elasius, Egbrict, and Bunignus, Saxons; Gillapatric, Gillamor, Gistafel, and Gillarius, Irish; also, the Scots and Picts, with almost all their leaders: on Arthur's side, Olbrict, king of Norway; Aschillius, king of Denmark; Cadur Limenic Cassibellaun, with many thousands of others, as well Britons as foreigners, that he had brought with him. And even the renowned king Arthur himself was mortally wounded; and being carried thence to the isle of Avalon to be cured of his wounds, he gave up the crown of Britain to his kinsman Constantine, the

son of Cador, duke of Cornwall, in the five hundred and forty-second year of our Lord's incarnation*.

Chap. III — *Constantine meets with disturbances from the Saxons and Mordred's sons.*

Upon Constantine's advancement to the throne, the Saxons, with the two sons of Mordred, made insurrection against him, though without success; for after many battles they fled, one to London, the other to Winchester, and possessed themselves of those places. Then died Saint Daniel, the pious prelate of the church of Bangor; and Theon, bishop of Gloucester, was elected archbishop of London. At the same time also died David, the pious archbishop of Legions, at the city of Menevia, in his own abbey; which he loved above all the other monasteries of his diocese, because Saint Patrick, who had prophetically foretold his birth, was the founder of it. For during his residence there among his friars, he was taken with a sudden illness, of which he died, and, at the command of Maelgwn, king of the Venedotians, was buried in that church. He was succeeded in the metropolitan see by Cynog, bishop of the church of Llanbadarn, who was thus promoted to a higher dignity.

Chap. IV — *Constantine, having murdered the two sons of Mordred, is himself killed by Conan.*

But Constantine pursued the Saxons, and reduced them under his yoke. He also took the two sons of Mordred; and one of them, who had fled for sanctuary to the church of St. Amphibalus, in Winchester, he murdered before the altar. The other had hidden himself in a convent of friars at London, but at last was found out by him, brought before the altar, and there put to death. Three years after this, he himself, by the vengeance of God pursuing him, was killed by Conan, and buried close by Uther Pendragon within the structure of stones, which was set up with wonderful art not far from Salisbury, and called in the English tongue, Stonehenge.

Chap. V — *Aurelius Conan reigns after Constantine.*

After him succeeded Aurelius Conan, his nephew, a youth of wonderful valour; who, as he gained the monarchy of the whole island, would have been worthy the crown of it, had he not delighted in civil war. He raised disturbances against his uncle, who ought to have reigned after Constantine, and cast him into prison; and then killing his two sons, obtained the kingdom, but died in the second year of his reign.

* The mention of Constantine brings Geoffrey's work into connection with that of Gildas: the reader may perhaps from this point detect some slight degree of verisimilitude in this otherwise fictitious narrative.

Cuap. VI — *Vortiporius, being declared king, conquers the Saxons.*

After Conan, succeeded Vortiporius, against whom the Saxons made insurrection, and brought over their countrymen from Germany in a very great fleet. But he gave them battle and came off with victory, so that he obtained the monarchy of the whole kingdom, and governed the people carefully and peaceably four years.

Chap. VII — *Maelgwn, king of Britain, and a most graceful person, addicts himself to sodomy.*

After him succeeded Maelgwn, one of the handsomest men in Britain, a great scourge of tyrants, and a man of great strength, extraordinary munificence, and matchless valour, but addicted very much to the detestable vice sodomy, by which he made himself abominable to God. He also possessed the whole island, to which, after a cruel war, he added the six provincial islands, *viz.* Ireland, Iceland, Gotland, the Orkneys, Norway, and Denmark.

Chap. VIII — *Britain, in the flame of a civil war under king Ceredig, is miserably wasted by the Saxons and Vandals.*

Arter Maelgwn, succeeded Ceredig, a lover of civil war, and hateful to God and to the Britons. The Saxons, discovering his fickle disposition, went to Ireland for Gormund, king of the Vandals, who had arrived there with a very great fleet, and had subdued that country. From thence, at their traitorous instigation, he sailed over into Britain, which the perfidious Saxons in one part, in another the Britons by their continual wars among themselves were wholly laying waste. Entering therefore into alliance with the Saxons, he made war upon king Ceredig, and after several battles fought, drove him from city to city, till at length he forced him to Cirencester, and there besieged him. Here Isembard, the nephew of Louis, king of the Franks, came and made a league of amity with him, and out of respect to him renounced the Christian faith, on condition that he would assist him to gain the kingdom of Gaul from his uncle, by whom, he said, he was forcibly and unjustly expelled out of it. At last, after taking and burning the city, he had another fight with Ceredig, and made him flee beyond the Severn into Wales. He then made an utter devastation of the country, set fire to the adjacent cities, and continued these outrages until he had almost burned up the whole surface of the island from the one sea to the other; so that the tillage was everywhere destroyed, and a general destruction made of the husbandmen and elergy, with fire and sword. This terrible calamity caused the rest to flee whithersoever they had any hopes of safety.

Chap. IX — *The author upbraids the Britons.*

“Why foolish nation! Oppressed with the weight of your abominable wickedness, why did you, in your insatiable thirst after civil wars, so weaken

yourself by domestic confusions, that whereas formerly you brought distant kingdoms under your yoke, now, like a good vineyard degenerated and turned to bitterness, you cannot defend your country, your wives, and children, against your enemies? Go on, go on in your civil dissensions, little understanding the saying in the Gospel, 'Every kingdom divided against itself shall be brought to desolation, and a house divided against itself shall fall'. Since then your kingdom was divided against itself; since the rage of civil discord, and the fumes of envy, have darkened your minds, since your pride would not suffer you to pay obedience to one king; you see, therefore, your country made desolate by impious pagans, and your houses falling one upon another; which shall be the cause of lasting sorrow to your posterity. For the barbarous lionesses shall see their whelps enjoying the towns, cities, and other possessions of your children; from which they shall be miserably expelled, and hardly if ever recover their former flourishing state."

Chap. X — *Loegria is again inhabited by the Saxons. The Britons, with their bishops, retire into Cornwall and Wales.*

Bur to return to the history; when the inhuman tyrant, with many thousands of his Vandals, had made a devastation almost over the whole island, he yielded up the greater part of it, called Loegria, to the Saxons, whose villainy had been the occasion of his arrival. Therefore, the remainder of the Britons retired into the western parts of the kingdom, that is, Cornwall and Wales; from whence they continually made frequent and fierce irruptions upon the enemy. The three archbishops, *viz.* the archbishop of Legions, Theon of London, and Thadiocus of York, when they beheld all the churches in their jurisdiction lying level with the ground, fled with all the clergy that remained after so great a destruction, to the coverts of the woods in Wales, carrying with them the relics of the saints, for fear the sacred bones of so many holy men of old might be destroyed by the barbarians, if they should leave them in that imminent danger, and themselves instantly suffer martyrdom. Many more went over in a great fleet into Armorican Britain; so that the whole church of the two provinces, Loegria and Northumberland, had its convents destroyed. But these things I shall relate elsewhere, when I translate the book concerning their banishment.

Chap. XI — *The Britons lose their kingdom.*

For a long time after this the Britons were dispossessed of the crown of the kingdom, and the monarchy of the island, and made no endeavours to recover their ancient dignity; but even that part of the country which yet remained to them, being subject not to one king, but three tyrants, was often wasted by civil wars. But neither did the Saxons yet obtain the crown, but were also subject to three kings, who harassed sometimes one another, sometimes the Britons.

Chap. XII — *Augustine, being sent by pope Gregory into Britain, preaches the gospel to the Angles.*

In the meantime, Augustine was sent by pope Saint Gregory into Britain, to preach the word of God to the Angles, who, being blinded with pagan superstition, had entirely extinguished Christianity in that part of the island which they possessed. But among the Britons, the Christian faith still flourished, and never failed among them from the time of pope Eleutherius, when it was first planted here. But when Augustine came, he found in their province seven bishoprics and an archbishopric, all filled with most devout prelates, and a great number of abbeys; by which the flock of Christ was still kept in good order. Among the rest, there was in the city of Bangor a most noble church, in which it is reported there was so great a number of monks, that when the Monastery was divided into seven parts, having each their priors over them, not one of them had less than three hundred monks, who all lived by the labour of their own hands. The name of their abbot was Dunod, a man admirably skilled in the liberal arts; who, when Augustine required the subjection of the British bishops, and would have persuaded them to undertake the work of the gospel with him among the Angles, answered him with several arguments, that they owed no subjection to him, neither would they preach to their enemies; since they had their own archbishop, and because the Saxon nation persisted in depriving them of their country. For this reason they esteemed them their mortal enemies, reckoned their faith and religion as nothing, and would no more communicate with the Angles than with dogs.

Chap. XIII — *Aethelfrid kills a great number of the British monks, but is at last routed by the Britons.*

Therefore Aethelberht, king of Kent, when he saw that the Britons disdained subjection to Augustine, and despised his preaching, was highly provoked, and stirred up Aethelfrid, king of the Northumbrians, and the other petty kings of the Saxons, to raise a great army, and march to the city of Bangor, to destroy the abbot Dunod, and the rest of the clergy who held them in contempt. At his instigation, therefore, they assembled a prodigious army, and in their march to the province of the Britons, came to Leicester, —where Brochfael, consul of the city, was awaiting their coming. To the same city were come innumerable monks and hermits from several provinces of the Britons, but especially from the city of Bangor, to pray for the safety of their people. Whereupon Aethelfrid, king of the Northumbrians, collecting all his forces, joined battle with Brochfael, who, having a less army to withstand him, at last quitted the city and fled, though not without having made a great slaughter of the enemy. But Aethelfrid, when he had taken the city, and understood upon what occasion the monks were come thither, commanded his men to turn their arms first against them; and so two hundred of them were honoured with the crown of martyrdom, and admitted into the kingdom of heaven that same day. From thence this Saxon tyrant proceeded on his march to Bangor; but upon the news of his outrageous madness, the leaders of the Britons, *viz.* Bledric, duke of Cornwall, Margaduc, king of the Demetians, and Cadfan, of the Venedotians, came from all parts to

meet him, and joining battle with him, wounded him, and forced him to flee; and killed of his army to the number of ten thousand and sixty-six men. On the Britons' side fell Bledric, duke of Cornwall, who was their commander in those wars.