

Vagary



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COVER. Copied from a photograph of the statue of
King Arthur in Innsbruck Cathedral.

COMMENT ALLEY VIEW

And if that pun doesn't make some members throw up, I'm
slipping. Before I go to the 14th Mailing, did anyone notice
that F.C. Francis, the Keeper of the Printed Books Department,
was made a Companion of the Order of the Bath in the New Year
Honours List? Yes.

SCURVY, GONBOY, HALF-SHOT (Lynn Hickman) Scurvy I would call
a conversation piece, even to the sudden leaping from one sub-
ject to another, but friendly. /How did Tucker know you were a
fan - have you a beard? /When Congoers read what they've typed
in these Convention one-shots three months or more later, do
they cringe and curse the bonhomie that started the bon voyeur
before the bon voyage? All the illos were fine, except the one
on the last page of Gonboy. Bust fetchism is all very well,
but that female needs surgery.

52 ND STREET (Jim Linwood) Since I don't appreciate Jazz I
can't say much on this zine. No, why should I imagine an all-
powerful, dominant, creative entity when the scientologists
have done that already? An't you heered tell of L. Ron Hubbard,
boy? Marcia Varley. Poor Brian! First they marry him off -
now he's had a Christine Jorgenson done on him.

BIPED (Bill Harry and Norman Shorrocks) If you want your girl
friend to read more science fiction I, personally, would not
recommend the C.S. Lewis trilogy. (See Talking Point) You
mention that if you get too much material for Biped you will
pass the overflow on to NuFu or Hyphen. No doubt you will keep
the plums (you're no faned if you don't) so how do the other

faneds feel about receiving something you don't use? Having had my carp I would now like to say that you have produced an excellent magazine - please keep it up.



SIZAR (Bruce Burn) So thin there's not much I can say about this, Pommie. However, as you airmailed it, I can understand you wanting to keep the weight down. By the way, if you are ever in Blenheim you will find a potential s.f. fan at 45, Grove Road. His name is Ian MacLean, aged 8, and he is my nephew. Cultivate him as when the Worldcon is held in the Land of the Long White Cloud about thirty years from now he'll have a doddering maiden aunt who will want to be booked up for it. If you do call, my sister thinks that all S.F. fans are mad, but she got used to me so she'll be able to cope with anything fandom can produce.



STEAM (HKB) I quote from the "The Daughter of Time" by Josephine Tey: "The Sweat and the Furrow" was Silas Weekly being earthy and spade conscious all over seven hundred pages. The situation, to judge from the first paragraph, had not materially changed since Silas's last book: mother lying-in with her eleventh upstairs, father laid out after his ninth downstairs, eldest son lying to the Government in the cowshed, eldest daughter lying with her lover in the loft, everyone else lying low in the barn. The rain dripped from the thatch, and the manure steamed in the midden. It was not Silas's fault that its steam provided the only uprising element in the picture. If Silas could have discovered a brand of steam that went downward, Silas would have introduced it...." Are you trying to oblige Silas, Ken?

MORPH (John Roles) Black market - see Talking Point. I was interested in your comments on Jane Gaskell's "Strange Evil". She had a write up in one of the Sunday papers a few months ago which, I suspect, did her more harm than good. The paper quoted some rather turgid pieces from the book and taken out of their context they made it appear as though the poor child was nearly deranged. It's a pity, because now she has had all this publicity the girl will keep very much to herself with all the writing she is doing, instead of widening her horizons. Fires that are forced to blaze early waste away soon. By the way, thanks for the brief outline on the Hindu mythological characters, but you seemed to imply that Zeus had an incestuous affair with his daughter. Athene was the goddess of learning, and she was certainly "Daddy's little pet", but it was a definite father and daughter love between those two (I may have mentioned it before, and this is apropos of absolutely nothing but I always felt that, in the fight between the gods in the Iliad, it was Athene who should have had her ears boxed and not the unfortunate Artemis). Zeus did marry his sister, of



INDIAN
DEMON

course, but most of Greek mythology is based on Egyptian mythology and in Egyptian brother and sister marriages were not frowned upon. Besides, it was permissible in Ancient Greece to marry a half-sister, hence the saying of the Romans "You can go halfway to Athens and the whole way to Alexandria." I intended to keep the mailing comments short this time - now look what you've made do! And who was it who wanted to know the original names of Arthur and his Court? John Roles, do you realise you are the fan responsible for most of this issue?

BURP (Ron Bennet) Nope, I said in fun it would be interesting to stand for Taff, but I knew that I was not well enough known in American fandom, so had no intention of standing. The suggestion came out of the blue from Frank and Belle Dietz at the Convention, and I was doubtful then and pointed out that I was not all that known in the States, but Frank and Belle said that enough of their compatriots had met me so they went ahead with the idea. By the way, thanks for the King Edward VIII stamp on my copy. You mean you've lived all these years and you haven't read the "Thin Man" YET?

THE THOMPSON SAGA (John Berry) Wonderful! I can believe these tales, John. After all, I was stationed in Northern Ireland and know from experience that anything can happen there. Particularly do I remember hunting all over Belfast for the County Down Railway station. Everyone I stopped to ask the way was from Glasgow and didn't know. Strangely enough, when I returned to Glasgow, nearly everyone I met came from Belfast.

PHENOTYPE (Dick Eney) You mean because jazz leaves me cold I am not a true fan? And why shouldn't the future be better than the past? See Talking Point. Yep, I've read the "Time Masters" but I haven't got Homer W. Smith's "Man and His Gods". I must look around for a copy. And many thanks for the explanation of the water into wine trick. Did you read that another film of "I, Claudius" is being made and there is talk that Robert Graves would like to take the part of Claudius? Dammit, you are still spelling my surname with an e - suits me better without it. As for my memory - ask Joy, Vince or Sandy about that. Phenotype interesting, as always.

CINCINNATI FANTASY GROUP (DON FORD) Hullo, friends.



VERITAS (Beratom) How do you both manage to keep up this high standard? I am green with envy. You say you expect to find mention of the satellites in the mailing, but were you really surprised to find so little mention of them? What male fan is going to talk about sputniks while a discussion is going on about more interesting spheres owned by Monroe, Maynesfield, Russell, Bardot et al? I agree with John about

all-in wrestling, but Alan's right about reincarnation. I know because I was Katherine Parr, Henry VIII's sixth wife, and I recall talking that fat Lothario to death. I outlived him because I never gave him a chance to open his mouth long enough to say "off with her head". Before that I was Bradamante, the girl knight. Not that I was particularly martial, but all that talk about chivalry is a lie. Most of the damsels in distress were in distress through those crummy knights - they were too well in with the locksmiths. So the only place I felt safe was in a suit of armour. In fact, I think I can claim to be responsible for the invention of the first tin-opener.

HAEMOGOBLIN (Fred Smith). Don't you mean that the mass of a tail of a comet is very small - who knows what cosmic debris is in the head? And don't forget the eccentric orbit of some of the planetoids - perhaps in the past one or two of them came a little too close to earth. Supreme moments - see Talking Point.



POOKA (Don Ford) I'm flabbergasted - I thought the States had Boxing Day, too. It's December 26th and was the day on which Christmas boxes were originally opened - it is also what we call a Bank Holiday, the others being Easter Monday, Whit Monday and August Monday (first Monday in August) The 5th November isn't a holiday, but in

the evening all the kids raise hell with fireworks to commemorate the day in 1605 when Guy Fawkes tried to blow up James I and Parliament. The kids make "guys", effigies that sometimes bear a suspicious resemblance to someone they don't like and wheel them around in barrows for days beforehand calling "Penny for the Guy" (little perishers!). Comes Firework Night and the effigy is burned on top of a great bonfire. May Day in country districts isn't a celebration for Karl Marx, but a relic of the old pagan festival, you know, dancing round the Maypole and watching the Morris dancers - coloured ribbons, special costumes - the lot. The revels still take place - I

remember taking part in them when I was a kid - and many districts still elect a May Queen. Yep, the previous manager of the King's Court Hotel told me that redecoration would start in May, but presumably the sale of the hotel held up the plans. I was worrying my head off about a ripped stair carpet, then someone rang up and told me that it had been removed - but I wasn't told that it had not been replaced. Yes, the St. Fantony spa water was a surprise all right - when I first got the glass I thought "The lousy crumbs! They've given me water!" Then I downed it in one go and nearly lost my voice for two hours. Reminded me of the time when I could hardly tell one drink from another and tried to down pure alcohol under the impression it was pink gin. Was Nick and Noreen's rathskellar panelled with apple boxes before they visited you, Don? By the way the illo is a Cornish pixie - I couldn't find out what an Irish pooka looked like. This was read from cover to cover in one sitting.

ESPRIT (Daphne) Tsk! Still getting pinched for parking offences? I've given up trying to figure out Page 5. Are you sure there isn't such a thing as a square pound? We ship cargo by weight/measurement. Whoops - sorry - 40 cubic feet of a ton of 2,240 lbs. The pounds I collect on paydays are oblong. More Esprit next mailing, yes?

GRIST 2, ???? UR 3 (Ellis Mills) It was nice to have known you, Ellis and I'm glad you're not going to let us forget you, even though the way you name (sometimes) your magazines confuses me./You mean they make apple pie that way in the U.S. Forces, too? Only one operation? Yah - I'm nine ahead of you. I liked your adaptation of Wordsworth, but I thought the best thing in the zine was the letter from farmboy who joined the Army. I've got a medal for shooting, too. (yes, I'm one of those irritating females who can pick up a rifle and actually hit what I aim at). However, I don't claim skill - I'm lucky enough to be one of those people who are known as "natural shots."

SCOTTISHE (Ethel) Well, what sort of poetry do you like, Ethel? And what happened to your multi-coloured mag? It's gone quite pale, but it was interesting, as always. How dare you converse with me for two years and not once mention that you have "The Witch in the Wood" and "The Illmade Knight"! By the way, don't forget I still have three of your Georgette Heyer Regency books. You may know that John Coates has finished that unfinished novel of Jane Austen's - "Emma", I think, but I'm not sure, not having read any of her books past the first couple of chapters. Sorry, but when I tried to read them I just couldn't take to them. It was a long time ago, though - maybe my tastes have changed now. By the way, one of the Ompans mentioned the cover of S.12 and wondered how it didn't fall to pieces. As a matter of fact, it did and Ken and I more or less glued it to the duper. Parts of it disappeared altogether and that stippling effect wasn't the stencil, but the pattern of the inking blanket on the drum.

LONCONFIDENTIAL (Chuck Harris). I don't see why I should review this after the way you went off for a cup of tea just as I arrived at Charing Cross to meet you - after all, I was only three quarters of an hour late and you never did tell me that you had a child-like faith in females turning up on time. And you didn't expect me to wait without having a cuppa myself, did you? However, to review Lonconfidential. So far, it is the best Conreport I've seen (take a bow, you lousy stander-up of an innocent female who once had a child-like faith in the belief that no man would expect her to turn up on time), although I am inclined to disagree with you over the TAFF candidate. It doesn't seem to have occurred to anyone yet that even if the voting had been different Bob Madle may still have won. I notice you didn't mention in your report whose tumblerful of whisky it was you knocked over. The poem was terrific - you see, I knew you could finish it yourself when the right moment of inspiration arrived.

SATAN'S CHILD (Dorothy) After so many closely printed fanzines this is a startling contrast. I am still grinning over the cover - oh, yes, I noticed the title on two of those books. As for short and long words, I prefer what is called West High Germanic to the Classical, or Romance, style. The latter is inclined to be too florid for my taste and where I can possibly use a shorter word (which is quite often more apt or descriptive) I do so. Usually the first word that pops into one's head (barring obscenities when the pen leaks or the typer breaks down) is quite often the best word to use. We seem to be in agreement on some of these so-called modern symphonies - see Talking Point. Despite its brevity the article on Toulouse-Lautrec was very interesting. Oh, yes, I do have some idea of diagnostical problems and other longwinded medical terms - I once worked in the Medical Section of an R.A.F Group Headquarters. Some of the reviews said much in little, but I have my doubts about some of the others. Why bother about self-justification in this way? Irony would have been appreciated, but somehow there seems to be sarcasm creeping in. I must admit that I shall be curious to see the comments in the 15th Mailing. You should have left it to that extremely neat cover, I think. As for the Convention Report - well, we knew that we would please some of the members all the time, most of the members some of the time and a few of the members none of the time. I gather from this blank space you were in the latter category. Again, I am curious to see the reactions to this. Convention reports are a good thing as they do give the Committee of the next convention some idea of what would be preferred. Whether a report praises the Convention or criticizes it, it serves a purpose and a clever report, no matter how critical, will be of some use. However, there is a great difference between a clever report and a clever-clever one and it is rather sad to see someone of intelligence doing the latter.

XANADU (John Champion) This was a fine first issue, John, and I hope you can keep it up. The Santa Claus letters were a delight to read. As for drive-in theatres, our weather is definitely against us, but in various ingenious ways, we manage to put in a few snogging sessions. (A few years ago, the boyfriend and I had a place in the tower of a castle. No one else would go there because it was reputed to be haunted). Friend! You like Shakespeare, too! Yes, you'll find an article on Celtic mythology in this issue. And I agree with you that it is unfair that children get stuck with a religion without having a chance to make up their own mind. Yes, when I was in the Air Force a girl recently converted to Roman Catholicism told me that I had no right to go to Communion (I was a staunch Anglican then). When I asked her why she said I drank and swore. The previous night I'd been out to supper and had had exactly one glass of sherry, but was unlucky enough to trip over the cat when I entered the billet and snarled "Get out of the way, you useless bloody animal". Naturally, I was surprised by these opinions and pointed out that Christ drank wine at the wedding feast and that he didn't mince words when he threw the money changers out of the temple. Then I went on to point out that Paul was once a persecutor of Christians and that the Church had actually canonised a prostitute - and she certainly could not accuse of me of that. And that shut her up. Please don't keep us waiting a year for another Xanadu, John.

WOZ. (WAW) As for a man being a churl because he says that Maynesfield type women would flop with their clothes off and he's not likely to see them that way - well, I thought a man always saw a girl with her clothes off. But you're right, Walt, they do flop. During my time in the W.R.A.F. it may seem odd, but most girls were shy of revealing their figures to the other members of their sex. In fact, I can only remember three who didn't mind displaying their -er- charms, and only one of them had a decent figure. One of them was - well obese is the only word to describe her - and when we were off duty it was nothing for her to stroll into our billet and ask for a light as she hadn't got one on her. This was obvious as she was only wearing a cigarette and a smile. Once a month there was an addition, but this was too much and we said so in very forthright terms. But where it was possible to flop, she flopped. Towards the end of my stay at that camp, we thought she seemed to be getting fatter than ever, but we afterwards found out that that was through an airman who had craftily got himself posted overseas. The poor wretch had a miscarriage eventually. The Willis memoirs are as fascinating as ever and if the recipients of your letters have no objections to their publication I see no reason why you should not go ahead with them

ZYMIC (AVC) This was very interesting and provided much to chew on, Vince. You have pointed out one of the major problems - how to get to S.F. readers the knowledge that fandom

does exist. The only prozine which publishes fan news is Nebula, but I notice in the editor's comments to letters that he has offered to tell interested readers how to start a science fiction club that will concentrate on science fiction as those clubs and amateur magazines which exist seldom mention it. This is not surprising as most people who are interested in science fiction usually have inquiring minds and are interested in a variety of subjects. Science fiction is the central thread that holds the whole cloth together. The actifan cannot really afford to advertise in the professional publications as most of his spare cash goes on paper, ink, stencils, etc. The only idea that occurs to me - and nearly every fan would have to be in agreement - is that we could all contribute a small sum to Ken Slater (if he is willing) to put an advert. in the s.f. magazines and one or two professional scientific journals, publicizing both Fantast and fan activity and stating that leaflets would be forwarded to any interested parties. These leaflets could be forwarded to Fantast by the various fan editors and club secretaries, and they could state what sort of fan activity or policy they pursue, i.e. light-hearted, serious and constructive, flying saucers, etc. Fan editors could send a couple of shillings to cover postage. That may not sound a lot, but a number of leaflets may be sent in one envelope at the printed paper rate, or interested parties can be requested to send stamps to cover a reply. If they are really interested they will send the stamps. What do you think, Ken? By the way, is it permissible to have leaflets placed in public libraries, so that anyone interested can help themselves? Those are the only ideas I can think of at the moment. Other aspects of fandom are brought to mind. Lack of attendance at clubs, for instance - no matter how loosely organised. In a place like say, the Globe one meets all sorts and conditions of people, both fans and non-fans. Since I have been going there, I have seen a number of people come and go - for all I know I may have been responsible for some of them going, but I sincerely hope not. However, there are one or two who, to put it bluntly, make a bloody nuisance of themselves by, for instance, being so determined to be the centre of attraction, that they just don't seem to care (or are too damned thick-skinned to know) how ignorant, illbred, discourteous and ill-mannered they appear. A group of fans may be talking together and if anyone else arrives who is known for making good contributions to a conversation, he or she is invariably welcomed, and that includes newcomers to the place. But when someone comes up talking at the top of his lungs/^{so} that he can be/^{heard} at Charing Cross and is so determined to be the life and soul of the party that he will even elbow out some of the group and turn his back on them - well, one slob like that can wreck an evening and can eventually wreck a club. Has anyone else in Ompa heard the saying that a party livens up when the "life and soul" of it goes home?. There is a great difference between a sense of

fun and being the "life and soul". The latter is, after all, only a form of retarded intelligence or permanent adolescence. There are two or three of this type and several fen are now beginning to stay away because of them. In fact, I'm on the point of staying away myself, because I've restrained my temper for over a year now and I know it's not going to last much longer (and anyone who knows me well will tell you what an effort that cost me). And I can discuss sex at any time, but only certain other interesting subjects on a Thursday night and I don't see why I should have to listen to some oversexed, self-pitying egotistical loudmouthed essence of a dungheap broadcasting his night starvation to all and sundry. If he's that starved why doesn't he go to the obliging ladies in Piccadilly - preferably on a Thursday. You know, I prefer the original version of that song "Puttin' on the Style". The words then ran "That's what so many people are doin' all the while". It's not always the "young folk" as Lonnie Donegan would have us believe. Besides this type there is the monopoliser and the character who doesn't do a hand's turn when anything big is on the cards, but at the actual happening will try to take over and get the credit for all the hard work that many others have put in. For example there was the type who was supposed to have been on the WorldCon Committee. He attended the first two meetings, didn't even come near the Globe for nearly a year, but at the WorldCon he turned up full of self-importance, thrust himself forward at the Press Conference and practically tried to run it. I'd liked to have seen his face the next morning when he read through all the papers and found only one small mention of the Convention. Tchah! I spit! Let us welcome new people by all means, but could we suggest that sex problems, guitars and other bric a brac are left at home and that chips should be removed from shoulders before entering any club premises. And that if limelight at a convention is the spice of life go ahead, but how about helping with some of the grind of putting a convention on, huh?. Dammit Vince Clarke, look what you've made me do.

WAFI

BLUNT. (Sandy Sanderson). I think you should ring in Bob Bloch on this great (no pun intended) bust controversy - he's the specialist on old films. And I should think you would apologise for the reviews, too! So the Army appreciated your poems. The Air Force didn't appreciate some of mine - particularly the one parodying various

officers and which a friend ran off on the teleprinter for me, forgetting she had the machine switched through to Group Headquarters. Brian's remark anent the Demon King reminded me of the time I was stationed in the West Country. A theatrical company was putting on a pantomime in a nearby city and passing the theatre with another Waaf, we paused to look at the photographs outside. I remember observing to my companion "That bloke playing the Demon King looks as though he'd more at home

playing the Fairy Queen." Oh, well, many a true word, etc. Two days later the local paper carried the news that the Demon King had been pinched by the police after some boy-soldiers from the nearby Army barracks had reported his conduct towards them./ Do you remember my accumulator bet on five horses a year or two ago and how the horses I backed in the first four races won and how the Anglo-Saxon lousy chunk of rotten cat's meat in the fifth race came in fourth? I took the first four tips from Hotspur of the Daily Telegraph, decided he couldn't possibly pick five winners in a row and chose someone else's tip for the fifth race. Hotspur's tip won! But one of the best bets I made was when I had a dream in which all the clocks and calendars went crazy.. I remembered there was an Irish horse called "Quare Times" running in the Grand National so I backed it. That horse very kindly won./ Talking of sex symbols, the other week I was reading "Curious Myths and Legends of the Middle Ages" and the writer was trying to say that there was no such thing as a phallic symbol in mythology. He went on to describe some small thing worshipped in ancient rites and announced that it was a vase and an egg. Ye gods! If that isn't a euphemism. / I'm disgusted with you, Sanderson - failed in Religious Instruction indeed! In one of my last exams at school do you know what I got for Religious Knowledge? 100%, boy. (And wouldn't I like to see the faces at 7 Inchmery when they read that!) Just a matter of a good memory really, as I got 99% for history and that 1% was 'knocked off for my handwriting. I still think it is unfair that a left hander should be penalised for not writing in a forward sloping style./ As for music - there's something about that in Talking Point. To get back to the bust and leg discussion, I'm seriously thinking that Ethel, Dorothy, Daphne, Lee, Anne, Jean and I should gang up on the rest of you and start discussing beefcake. And for those skimpy reviews - yah! to Crosby, phooey to Sinatra! and nuts to Brynner! And if there is no Vagary in the next mailing it's because Sanderson has broken the sixth commandment.

And that wraps up the mailing comments for this issue, which is a good thing as these comments seem to be running away with me lately.

xx

"My wife this day put on her first French gown, called a Sac, which becomes her very well."

Entry in the Diary of Samuel Pepys dated March 2nd, 1669.

Back to those happy days!

I read somewhere that Lewis was once an agnostic and after reading "That Hideous Strength" I am of the opinion that even if he returned to the fold there was no need to stuff his own ideas of God down an unsuspecting reader's throat. If a Christian wants to explain why he is a Christian he has a right to be heard, but the minute he tries to tell me I should be one, too, I consider I have an equal right to explain why I am not.

Mention of a Black Market in cigarettes reminded me of the time I was first posted to Germany. At that time, the Germans were still struggling to pick themselves up and to help them the currency had been changed from Reichmarks to Deutschmarks. We were paid in vouchers that had no value whatsoever off camp, so there was a great deal of black marketing going on in cigarettes, coffee and chocolate. I had been in Germany just over a week when I went to Dusseldorf with a number of airmen and Waafs. I had no intention of bartering cigarettes for five Deutschmarks per twenty as I smoked myself and we were rationed in an effort to stamp out the black market. I did have a couple of bars of chocolate (two and a half Deutschmarks per bar was the exchange rate). When we arrived in Dusseldorf the men and girls with suspiciously bulging haversacks tapped them casually and the next moment they were surrounded by the German equivalent of "wide boys", who were obviously going to sell the loot at an even higher price to their fellow countrymen. As I moved away, a woman with two small boys came up to me and asked in broken English if I had any sugar. My German was very uncertain, but I managed to make her understand that although I had no sugar I had a couple of bars of chocolate. As she took out her purse I noticed her clothing and that of her two small sons was patched, repatched and patched again but, by gosh! they were scrupulously clean and as neat as they could make themselves. Then the woman discovered she had only four marks and asked if I would take them instead of the usual five. It was then I noticed how worn she looked and the desperation in her eyes. As I stood there with the marks in one hand and the chocolate in the other I remembered my own father had eventually died through wounds received in the first world war and how my mother was left a widow with five children to bring up. I remembered the struggle she had and how magnificently she overcame obstacles to bring us up decently; and I knew then that I couldn't take money from this German widow. A mother is a mother the wide world over and they go through enough hell during a war without forcing more on them during war's aftermath. I gave her back the marks and said she could have the chocolate, and the look on her face was worth more to me than any amount of currency. Then I was afraid she was going to cry, so I muttered the only German I could think of "Gehen sie mit Gott" and bolted. After that incident I never attempted to play the black market because I would have always wondered what heartbreak and despair was behind every mark that changed hands. So they had been our enemies! Were those two small boys responsible for starting the war? No - I refuse to subscribe to the creed that "the sins of

TALKING POINT

Those who read the article on Richard III in Vagary 6 may be interested to know that there has been some correspondence in the Sunday Times about this much maligned monarch. It started by a reader wondering why Shakespeare, after writing plays about every monarch from Richard II to Richard III (Edward IV played a large part in "Henry VI" and "Richard III") missed out Henry VII, instead collaborating with Fletcher to write "Henry VIII". The Sunday Times published two replies to the reader's query. One reply stated that Francis Bacon wrote a prose history of Henry VII (modelling it on the style of Tacitus), beginning where Shakespeare left off - the death of Richard III. The other reply leapt straight to Richard's defence by saying that if Shakespeare had given us a play about Henry VII, it would no doubt have been taken from the Tudor tradition, which so grossly misrepresented the later Plantagenet kings and Richard III in particular. The letter writer pointed out that, in any case, Shakespeare mutilated history for his own purpose and that he had already disposed of all possibilities of the "golden boy" when he disposed of Richard at the hands of the so-called Earl of Richmond. The writer finished by pointing out that even Shakespeare was probably unable to find inspiration in the colourless life of that "mean-minded, miserly founder of the Tudor dynasty."

The Sunday Times also has an annual article on the best books of the year, in which certain well-known people are asked to give the titles of books they consider to be in this category and reason why, if any. A certain Socialist, who was granted an earldom sometime ago, mentioned two books written about the last war. One he praised to the skies, the other - and I am wondering why he regarded it as one of the year's best books - he seemed to regard with some distaste and not worthy of the general who wrote it. "It is the sort of book" announced this Socialist, "one expects to be written by a valet, not a general". These are strange words from a champion of the "masses". So - "one would expect a valet to write this". Is this, or is this not, snobbery? But if a titled Socialist can use a phrase like this maybe we know how to solve the menace of nationalisation that looms over us if the Socialists win the next election, which they undoubtedly will as the "masses" have now been so nurtured by the Welfare State that they are objecting strongly to the few firm lines the present (but not one of the best) Government is taking. All that has to be done is to give every political Socialist, union leader and shop steward a title. I wonder how long it would be before they all started writing to the Sunday Times complaining bitterly that their biographies are being written by valets instead of retired generals, that death duties are crippling the leaders of the country and when will the Government bring back the Trade Union Act of 1927 and stop all these strikes that are wrecking the country's economical balance and also losing an enormous number of oversea contracts.

Some time ago I heard on the radio a programme called "Scrapbook for 1908". Mrs. Pankhurst's speech was quoted in it, pleading for the rights of women. The suffragettes did some very silly things, but they did help to bring about a better world for women. There are still discrepancies, of course, and I firmly believe myself in equal pay for equal work, but at the same time I realise that there are some jobs a woman will never be able to do because of the physiological differences of each sex. A woman is stupid if she attempts a job that requires brute strength and she will pay for it later. While in the Forces, I heard a lot of talk among the girls about this equality, and it did not take me long to observe that the most emphatic usually fell in a certain category (pinstriped slacks, pinstriped man-tailored jacket, collar and tie, no make-up and cropped hair). I remember saying after one of these types had been holding forth "Let us have equality with men by all means, but equality does not mean similarity." Sometimes I wonder why I never had my throat cut. This brings me to a point that has always puzzled me. In these days, why are the most ardent feminists among my sex so damned masculine?

Mention of C.S. Lewis in the mailing brings me to the next point. I have read his supposed science-fiction trilogy and quite frankly, although I agree that there are some excellent descriptions and fine prose passages in the three books, I cannot enthuse over them. I read "Out of the Silent Planet" and I did not care for the "grovelling before God" in it. There is a great difference between servility and humility. To call Earth completely evil is utter nonsense. After all, we can probably have peace any time we want it by breaking the sixth commandment and disposing of all the politicians and the angry self-pitying young men (and women). "Voyage to Venus" despite some of the wonderful descriptive passages in it, was more puffed up propaganda for Christianity, and human nature being what it is, the book may have lost more adherents to the Christian faith than it gained. For instance, if I want to be preached at, I'll either go to church or read the New Testament or the Koran, or even Karl Marx if it comes to that. As for "That Hideous Strength", the author did not seem to be able to make up his mind whether he was going to plump for mysticism, mythology or Christianity. When reading it I received the impression that the writer had flung everything into it except the kitchen sink and even that found its way in at the end. Lewis should have stuck to rooting for Christianity or he should have stuck to mythology, not tried to have reconcile what are now two opposing forces. In the trilogy he made Ransom God's representative on the "wicked" ball of mud, but in the third book he also makes him Pendragon. Now Uther Pendragon was only another name for Uther Ben or Bran, who was a Celtic god of Hades, so Ransom was made to represent both sides of the fence. Again, the hints of homosexuality seemed quite unnecessary to the story's development and that disgustingly sadistic scene where the policewoman tortures the girl need not be in the book, either.

I read somewhere that Lewis was once an agnostic and after reading "That Hideous Strength" I am of the opinion that even if he returned to the fold there was no need to stuff his own ideas of God down an unsuspecting reader's throat. If a Christian wants to explain why he is a Christian he has a right to be heard, but the minute he tries to tell me I should be one, too, I consider I have an equal right to explain why I am not.

Mention of a Black Market in cigarettes reminded me of the time I was first posted to Germany. At that time, the Germans were still struggling to pick themselves up and to help them the currency had been changed from Reichmarks to Deutschmarks. We were paid in vouchers that had no value whatsoever off camp, so there was a great deal of black marketing going on in cigarettes, coffee and chocolate. I had been in Germany just over a week when I went to Dusseldorf with a number of airmen and Waafs. I had no intention of bartering cigarettes for five Deutschmarks per twenty as I smoked myself and we were rationed in an effort to stamp out the black market. I did have a couple of bars of chocolate (two and a half Deutschmarks per bar was the exchange rate). When we arrived in Dusseldorf the men and girls with suspiciously bulging haversacks tapped them casually and the next moment they were surrounded by the German equivalent of "wide boys", who were obviously going to sell the loot at an even higher price to their fellow countrymen. As I moved away, a woman with two small boys came up to me and asked in broken English if I had any sugar. My German was very uncertain, but I managed to make her understand that although I had no sugar I had a couple of bars of chocolate. As she took out her purse I noticed her clothing and that of her two small sons was patched, repatched and patched again but, by gosh! they were scrupulously clean and as neat as they could make themselves. Then the woman discovered she had only four marks and asked if I would take them instead of the usual five. It was then I noticed how worn she looked and the desperation in her eyes. As I stood there with the marks in one hand and the chocolate in the other I remembered my own father had eventually died through wounds received in the first world war and how my mother was left a widow with five children to bring up. I remembered the struggle she had and how magnificently she overcame obstacles to bring us up decently; and I knew then that I couldn't take money from this German widow. A mother is a mother the wide world over and they go through enough hell during a war without forcing more on them during war's aftermath. I gave her back the marks and said she could have the chocolate, and the look on her face was worth more to me than any amount of currency. Then I was afraid she was going to cry, so I muttered the only German I could think of "Gehen sie mit Gott" and bolted. After that incident I never attempted to play the black market because I would have always wondered what heartbreak and despair was behind every mark that changed hands. So they had been our enemies! Were those two small boys responsible for starting the war? No - I refuse to subscribe to the creed that "the sins of

the fathers shall be visited unto the children even until the third and fourth generation."

There was a mention of the future being better than the past in the mailing. And why shouldn't it be? When people talk about the "good old days" I think of what the country was like about 150 to 200 years ago. No cures for smallpox and other frightful diseases, no indoor sanitation (although Sir John Harrington thought up a water closet in the sixteenth century the idea did not start to catch on until about 1840). In those days the drift to the cities had started and ugly, unhygienic tenements were built, small children worked long hours in factories and mines, a starving man could be hanged for stealing a sheep, and a girl of thirteen was actually condemned to death because she white-washed a farthing to look like a shilling (it was afterwards commuted to transportation for life - the sentence, not the shilling). Hospitals and prisons were places of dirt and dread, there was no anaesthetic and if a man had to have an operation he bit on a bullet and gripped blocks of wood. Open windows and baths were regarded with horror and one titled woman (Lady Mary Wortley) actually boasted that she had not washed her hands for ten days. Dirt, disease and poverty were accepted as the norm and kennel sewers ran down the middle of city streets, a breeding ground for the rats which carried bubonic plague. It took men and women like Dickens, Hogarth, Elizabeth Fry and Florence Nightingale to jolt the Britons out of their complacency. No, I wouldn't like these "good old days" back again and though this era may be the futile fifties, who would want a return to the thirties? Despite A-bombs, H-bombs, sputniks and guided missiles I'm glad I'm living today instead of more than one hundred years ago. This could be a great age if we come to our senses.

I see there is still an occasional mention of "supreme moments" in the mailing and I can recall three myself - one in the air, one on sea, one on land. The first occurred when I went up on a test flight in a Beaufighter. At the time I was stationed at a R.A.F. camp in East Yorkshire. When we went up I stood on the escape hatch behind the pilot and for the first few minutes he flung that aircraft about the sky as though it were a bird of paradise showing off during the mating season. Then he levelled out and, in spite of the roar of the engines, I suddenly became aware of the vastness and silence of space outside our tiny world. It was breathtaking and our camp below could have been five million miles away instead of a mere six thousand feet below. When one is a mile high and tries to comprehend space in its entirety, it does not take long to feel small and insignificant beside the wonder of it all. A Halifax bomber appeared near us and the Beaufighter swooped towards it "shooting it up". But up in that vast emptiness it wasn't a fighter pilot "attacking a bomber", but a sparrow teasing an eagle. And then we came down to earth - faster than we expected because the port engine cut out. (Nice landing the pilot made, too, considering the speed with which we dropped.)

One of the other moments occurred when I was stationed in Oban in Argyllshire. Our section worked up at Ganavan Sands and directly opposite us was the Isle of Mull. The moment I recall occurred on a cold clear day after much snow had at last ceased to fall. At the time I was standing on the mainplane of the Sunderland flying boat and I happened to glance across the water to the Isles. What I saw impressed me so much that it is as clear now as it was then. The sea was very calm and reflected the light sparkling blue of the clear winter sky. And the island itself, streaming with purple, green and white, reared proudly out of the still blue waters. The snowcapped purple peaks flung themselves at the gleaming sky in a wonderful soundless symphony of wild beauty - a beauty so awe-inspiring that you felt your heart give a tug and a lump come into your throat, then you realised that the sudden mist that obscured the loveliness was in your own eyes.

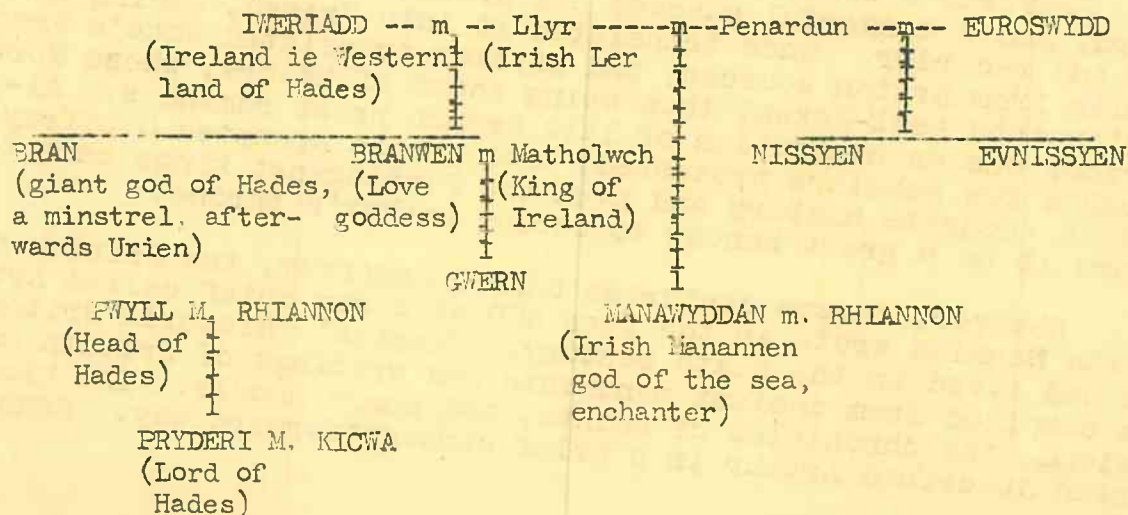
The other moment I described in another issue, but I'll describe it again. I'd gone moonlight fishing with an airman and we had rowed out into the Solent, but not too far from the shore. "It was a glorious night, too. A light, warm breeze came from the shore, bringing with it the heady scent of the wistaria with which the tired old castle clothed its ancient ruins. Across the Solent the lights of Cowes reflected in the water, and far away could be heard the faint chug-chug of a launch. The incoming tide whispered gently on the shore and the moonlight came down and met the sea, shattering soundlessly into a pathway of a million gold coins." Nature is sometimes very generous.

And so to music. Concerning modern symphonies - well, I am not sure they should be classed as music. Too many of us are inclined to listen dutifully and praise this so-called music just because some arty-crafty critics have started a trend that to do this is the "done thing" and that you're a tone-deaf pariah if you don't. I don't mind objective criticism, but as soon as some of these "arty" critics (with about as much emotion in them as my cat - and that's been dead three years) try to start a cult over a certain type of music my hackles rise. I'm not saying that every dead musician never put a note wrong. For instance, there is a great deal of Bach's music that doesn't appeal to me - so much of the stuff he composed was so mathematical that when ever I've listened to it I've always been left with the guilty feeling that I should have been working out square roots or figuring out an Einstein theory. Because I have a weakness for certain composers I have been accused of being a "Romantic". Even if I am, I don't think it is anything of which to be ashamed, and if some critics think it is they can go jump down a tuba - it makes the most appropriate noise. And if others sneer at a "Romantic" I suspect they are slavishly following these cult-starting music critics. I may be wrong at times, but at least I have the satisfaction of making up my own mind. A piece of music may be technically perfect, but if it does not appeal to my heart - for want of a better word-

then it has failed in its purpose to be memorable. From the beginning the function of music has been to express emotion, but when it ceases to do this and is only concerned with technical perfection - well, you may as well go and listen to an engine running up. The modernised version of "Lenore" always reminds me of a lot of lathes chattering away in a factory. I have already said that not all earlier musicians were geniuses and I should like to add that I don't think all this century's music should be packed away. Sibelius, Grieg, Elgar, Addinsell and others have composed much that is memorable. The English, however, aren't supposed to be musically minded, but that is their own fault. They have the idea in their heads that to be English is to be unemotional and when the "stiff upper lip" is introduced into their music - well, you can always listen to the London traffic. At least the bus and taxi drivers aren't afraid to give vent to their emotions in a traffic jam.

One other subject that made me take notice a few weeks ago. I was reading some book reviews and the book under discussion was written by a very wellknown woman in politics, who has done and said some of the most incredibly stupid things, but seems supremely unaware of the figure she cuts. The book was "Letters to My Daughter" or something similar and the reviewer was a woman who was appalled at the writer's mid-Victorian ideas on sex and she made comments that were rather caustic and how the advice sounded like a mid-Victorian mother to the daughter about to be married. "You'll just have to suffer it with patience, dear - just think of something else." So that's why Victorian Englishmen rushed all over the world like psychotic firecrackers and started madly building empires. They were really looking for a girl who was uninhibited enough to "think of nothing else". Is anyone still wanting to go back to the good old days?

GODS OF THE HOUSE OF LLYR



ARTHUR - THE HISTORY, THE LEGEND, AND THE MYTH

Geoffrey of Monmouth, Bishop of St. Asaph, a twelfth century chronicler is sometimes reputed to be the man who first mentioned the British King Arthur. It was he who traced the descent of Arthur and Cadwallader from Aeneas' great-grandson Brut, who was supposed to have founded the city of London, calling it New Troy. Geoffrey's "Historica Regum Britanie" is a mass of myths and legends disguised as history, Geoffrey declaring that he drew his facts from an ancient book that his uncle, Walter Map, Archdeacon of Oxford, had brought from Brittany.

According to Geoffrey Arthur was a king, whose reign commenced in A.D. 505. Arthur was reputed to have been the son of Uther Pendragon and Igerna, wife of the Duke of Cornwall (Uther was supposed to have gained access to her in the guise of her husband). Arthur warred successfully against the Saxons, and was supposed to have conquered all Britain, Ireland, Norway, Gaul and Dacia, but to have resisted Rome herself when asked for tribute and homage. It was while he was thus engaged on the Continent that his nephew Mordred stole his crown and his wife Guinevere (Guinevere, Gwenhwyfar) and returning in haste, Arthur defeated his nephew at Winchester and afterwards killed him in a last battle in Cornwall, being grievously wounded himself. The queen retired to a convent in Caerleon and Arthur, after conferring the kingdom on his kinsman Constantine, was mysteriously spirited away to be cured in the "Isle of Avalon". After this, no more is heard of Arthur. Geoffrey does mention that Arthur's magic sword "Caliburn" (Welsh Caladfwlch, also the name of the Gaelic Fergus's sword, spelt Caladcholg, and both meaning 'hard dinter') was made in "Ynis Avalon" (Isle of Apples), which he seemed to regard as the British equivalent of the Norse Valhalla. But there is not a word from Geoffrey about the Round Table, the Holy Grail, or Lancelot of the Lake.

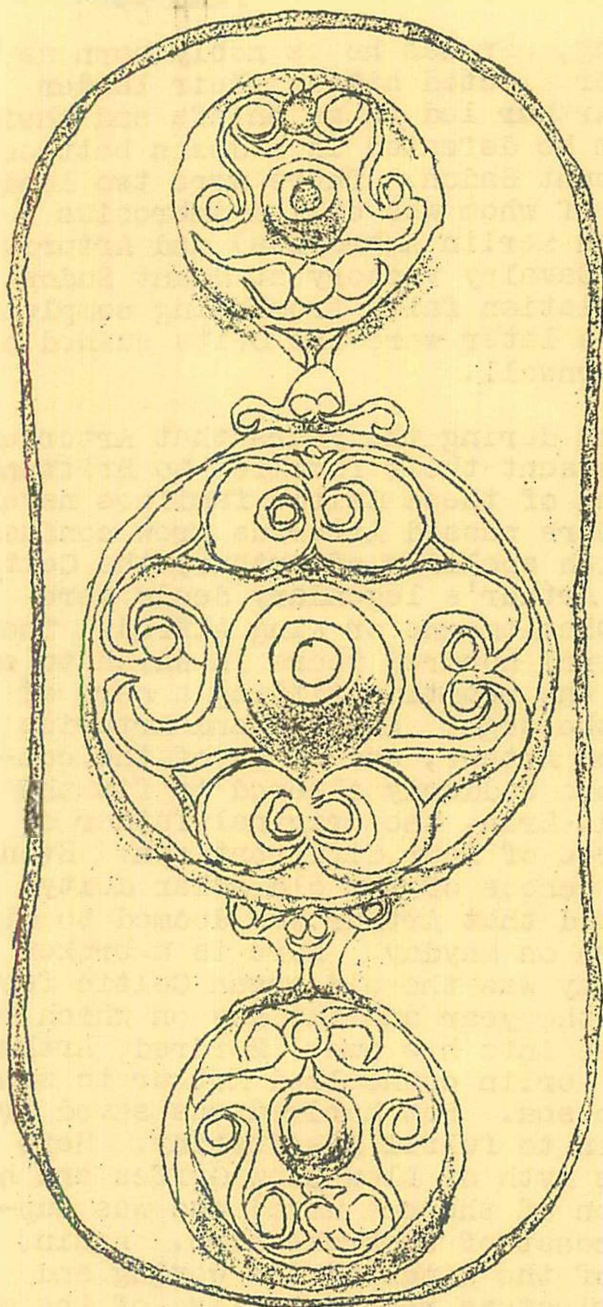
Geoffrey's book, although absolutely useless as a factual record, had a wonderful success and proved a gold mine to the poet and recorder. Wace translated it into French, adding more details from Breton sources, and Layamon translated Wace's French version into Anglo-Saxon, thus being ahead of Malory, whose *Morte D'Arthur* was an adaptation of late French prose romances. Although a few scholars protested, most people accepted Geoffrey's book as accurate history and even the Plantagenet kings came to regard it as a great honour to occupy Arthur's throne.

However, three centuries before Geoffrey, the British historian Nennius wrote in the year 800 of a war chief called Arthur who had lived in the sixth century. Nennius' "Historia Britonum" was compiled from ancient monuments and writings of Britain and Ireland, the chronicles of saints, and Roman annals. The historian described Arthur in a brief straightforward way. Nennius

declared that Arthur was not a king, nor was he as nobly born as many British chiefs, but the latter elected him as their leader because of his military genius. Arthur led these chiefs and their followers against the Saxons, whom he defeated in a dozen battles, the last of which was fought at Mount Badon. There were two leaders against the Saxons, the first of whom was called Ambrosius Aurelianus (sometimes confused with Merlin Ambrosius) and Arturius (or "King" Arthur). The latter's Cavalry victory at Mount Badon saved the Celtic clans and the Christian faith from being completely wiped out and not until fifty years later were the Celts pushed back into Scotland, Wales, Devon and Cornwall.

Tales grow in the telling and during the years that Arturius was fighting the Saxons many Celts sent their families to Brittany and parts of Gaul for safety. Many of these Celtic families never returned to Britain, but as the years passed Arturius grew confused in their minds with Artaius (Gaulish spelling of Arthur) the Celtic deity. On the Continent, many of Arthur's legendary deeds were really actual deeds of the later Charlemagne or King Alfred. The Continental story tellers had several hundred years in which to embellish their tales of Arthur, in the meantime fitting a hero of their own, Lancelot du Lac, into the saga. Artaius and Arturius had been corrupted into the name of Arthur, and names of the companions of the old Celtic deity were suddenly altered to fit the knights of Arthur's court. Indeed, Bran, the original father of Arthur, was somehow split into three or four different men. Even in some of the legends, there are echoes of the old solar deity myth. For instance, Merlin foretold that Arthur was doomed to die by the hand of someone who was born on Mayday. Here is a broken down version of the myth, for Mayday was the old pagan Celtic festival of Beltane, the first day of the year and the day on which the king of the waxing year really came into his own. Mordred, Arthur's nephew, was born on this day, and Merlin counselled Arthur to send all children born on Mayday out to sea. But Mordred was saved from a shipwreck and returned to Britain to fulfil his destiny. Here again is a faint reflection of the myth of Llew Llaw Gyffes and his twin brother Dylan Eil Ton (the son of the sea wave) who was supposed to have been drowned off the coast of Pembrokeshire. Again, the myth of the eternal struggle of the kings of the waxing and waning year for the hand of the priestess representative of the moon is echoed in the legend of Mordred running off with Arthur's queen, although in later legends Mordred was replaced by Lancelot, who cherished a guilty love for the queen.

Strangely enough, the stories of Arthur were much more popular on the Continent than in Britain. One of the oddest experiences I had occurred several years ago in Austria. I was in the cathedral in Innsbruck and flanking the empty tomb of Maximilian I saw two lines of kings, the Hapsburg features predominating, but one of the kings represented was Britain's own Arthur. The sculptor had given him features that can be seen in Britain to this day. I called it an odd experience because it was the first time I had



Sketch of Celtic red bronze shield found in Thames.

seen a statue of King Arthur (the Celts thought it irreverent to copy the human form) and I was hundreds of miles from the land of his birth. The shield, of course, is all wrong, because the quarterings on it show the lions of England and the fleur-de-lis of France, and during the time of the historical Arthur the Norman meance was 500 years in the future. Besides, the shield is Norman and triangular, whereas the Celtic shields were round or oval. However, the sculptor had made a magnificent job of the statue. So Arthur was more popular on the Continent than in England as the Saxons who had spread over the country were much more interested in their own Robin Hood. Oh, yes, Robin was a popular character long before the time of Richard I. However, this tale is of Arthur, not Robin. One of the earliest Breton sources of the Arthurian tales was the Anglo-Norman poetess Marie de France, circa 1150. She claimed to have derived her tales from Ancient Breton records and although she said very little, she did mention the Round Table and one Lanval (not Lancelot) who rejected the queen's love because he had a mistress in the fairy isle of Avalon. This is interesting because the later Lancelot was supposed to have been brought up by the Lady of the Lake.

Gawain, Tristan and Iseult are all mentioned in Marie de France's "Lais", which more or less points to Brittany as the true home of the Arthurian legends. In fact, there seems to be only one mention of Arthur in ancient British literature and that was in the Welsh tale of "Culwch and Olwen", which may be found in the Everyman edition of the Mabinogion, although it does not form part of any of the original four branches of the tales. In this tale, Arthur is not a king, but some sort of a chief and bears much more of a resemblance

to the Celtic deity than does the later King Arthur. There is, of course, no mention of the Grail in this story, but neither does Marie de France mention it.

Then in 1165 Chrestien de Troyes began his translation of the Breton "Lais" and he is the man mainly responsible for bringing the Arthurian saga into the main stream of European literature. He wrote a "Tristan" which has since been lost and either he or Walter Map introduced Lancelot du Lac into the legends. Probably Lancelot was de Troyes' idea as there is no reason why an Englishman should introduce a Breton knight into the saga (unless he wanted to impress England's Norman kings). De Troyes also wrote a "Conte de Graal", and at last we have a mention of the Grail legend and Percivale. He never finished the story and never stated what the Grail actually was. He also wrote the story of Geraint and Enid.

The Arthurian saga was known as the Matière de Bretagne, but many of the ideas seem to have come from the Matière de France - the story of Charlemagne and his knights. Gautier de Danain, who carried on where Chrestien de Troyes left off, quoted as his authority for the tales of Gawain a Welsh poet called Bleheris, probably the Bledhericus mentioned by the historian Giraldus Cambrensis and the Brëris who was quoted by Thomas of Brittany as being an authority on Tristan. So the Arthurian saga as we know it today is neither purely Welsh nor purely Breton. The Welsh exiles who settled in Brittany brought with them stories of the historical Arthur and legends of the Celtic deity whom the Gauls called Artaius. In the course of time, the two became blended into one. Later still, some genuine deeds of Charlemagne and Alfred the Great were found in the tales and the Arthurian legend was born.

But until 1070, the Welsh had never heard of King Arthur's Round Table. In that year, a Welsh prince Rhys ap Tewdwr (later spelt Tudor) brought back the story from Brittany. When the trovers introduced their Arthurian tales into Wales, they found out that that country already Arthurian stories itself - again they were a compound of the historical Arthur and the Celtic deity. In fact, the Continental stories of Arthur made very little impression in Wales, as they were so entirely foreign to Welsh historical and mythological traditions. It was not until about 150 years later that the Welsh tales showed signs of Norman-French influence, notably in the three Arthurian romances "The Lady of the Fountain", "Peredur, Son of Efrawg", and "Gereint, Son of Erbin".

The story of the Round Table brought back by Rhys ap Tewdwr was as follows. When Joseph of Arimathea departed from Jerusalem with his sister Enigée and her husband Brons, and several pilgrims, he carried away with him the Grail, the sacred cup that would supply all their needs provided none of them committed a sin. Eventually one of them did sin and the divine fury was made known by a terrible famine. To discover the culprit, Joseph built a table

and ordered Brons to catch a fish. The Grail was placed before Joseph's place at the table and all believers were invited to partake of the fish. Eleven places were occupied, with only the place set for the "Judas" empty. Suddenly a man called ^{seat} Moses, a known hypocrite, came up and sat in that particular, whereupon the earth opened beneath him and he was engulfed. In a vision Joseph was told that that seat would only be occupied again on the day of doom, but that a similar table would be constructed by Merlin and that the grandson of Brons would honourably occupy the seat, called the Siege Perilous because it was fatal to anyone who sat in it for whom it was not intended.

In Britain the sage Merlin, who was Chancellor and chief adviser to the kings, was asked by Uther, whose brother Pendragon had been slain by the invading Saxon Hengist, to build a memorial to the dead man. To oblige Uther, who added his brother's name Pendragon to his own, Merlin conveyed great quantities of stone from Ireland to England in a single night and set them up at Stonehenge. (This is a poetic flight of fancy indeed because the stones originally came from Pembrokeshire about three to four thousand years ago and were certainly erected long before the Saxons arrived). After doing this Merlin went to Caerduel (now Carlisle), where he built Uther Pendragon a castle and in it he placed a Round Table. About the table were places for a number of knights, with a seat reserved for the Holy Grail, brought to Britain by Joseph of Arimathea, but which had since vanished because the People had sinned so much. When the Table was ready a festival was announced and a large number of knights and their ladies arrived at Caerduel. Among these guests were Gorlois, Lord of Tintagel in Cornwall, and his beautiful wife Igerna (or Yguerne). Igerna already had daughters, who afterwards became the mothers of such famous knights as Gawain, Gravain and Ywain, and when Uther saw her he fell desperately in love with her. One of the king's counsellors told Igerna of his master's passion, and she told her husband. The indignant Gorlois promptly took her home and locked her up in the impregnable fortress of Tintagel, then dashed off to do battle with Uther. However, the obliging Merlin, by his magic arts, gave Uther the semblance of Gorlois so that when the king went to Tintagel the castle was opened to him and Igerna received him as her husband without suspecting the deception. This was on the eve of the battle in which Gorlois was killed and afterward Uther had a whirlwind courtship with Igerna. When Arthur was born, most people believed him to be the posthumous son of Gorlois. Years later, when Arthur was holding court at Camelot (often believed to be Winchester) he conceived the idea of founding an order of knights, sworn to be loyal to him and whom he would call the Knights of the Round Table. He had a magnificent castle built, with a special banqueting hall reserved for the Table. Nobody seems to have agreed on the number of knights, but the probable number was twelve. In the hall were niches for statues of the twelve

kings Arthur had already overthrown, each holding a brightly shining taper, which Merlin foretold would dim at the appearance of the Holy Grail. When all was ready Arthur told Merlin to name the knights who were to grace the famous table. One by one, Merlin announced the names until all but two of the seats were filled. A banquet followed and when it ended each knight saw that the part of the table at which he sat had his name blazoned on it in letters of gold. Not only that, but one of the empty seats was marked "Siege Perilous" and Merlin told the knights that this seat was reserved for a knight who would have to be absolutely pure, and if any other man sat upon it the earth would open and swallow him. One of the legends told of Merlin relates that one day the wizard absent-mindedly sat down at the Siege Perilous, was immediately swallowed by the earth and seen no more by man.

To this day, Arthur's Round Table can be seen in Winchester Castle with the names of the knights on it. This table was mentioned during the reign of Henry VI, but there seems to be no record of it before that. But there is record of a Wheel of Fortune in the ancient inventories of Winchester Castle.

It will be remembered that the original Stonehenge was circular and the Round Table is but a pale, weak imitation of this once mighty temple. The Siege Perilous of the Round Table, far from being a divine seat on which only a pure knight could sit, was probably the sacred stone or fairy shrine of a twelve pillared circle, and can be equated with the Lia Fail (a sacred Irish stone) and the Scottish Stone of Scone now in Westminster Abbey. In the old pagan days, these stones were supposed to have uttered a cry whenever a genuine divine king stood upon them.

So much for the historical Arturius and the legendary Arthur of the medieval sagas, but when one turns to his far-off origin in mythology one is inclined to throw up one's hands in despair, for Arthur as we know him today seems to be a composite of about four historical personages (Ambrosius Aurelianus, Arturius, Alfred the Great and Charlemagne) and several Celtic and Gaulish deities. This also seemed to be the case with a number of the knights at the court of King Arthur. The only way seems to be to take the characters one by one and see to what enchanted realms we are taken.

Arthur himself seems to have jumped from one deity to another and even now scholars disagree on his origin. Unfortunately, the Welsh mythology suffered far more at the hands of monkish scribes and euhemerists than did the Irish mythology. Even the Mabinogion is only a fragmentary and confused record of the ancient myths. The four branches of the Mabinogion give us a picture of very much broken down British gods, but are happily free of the Norman-French influence. Free of this influence, too, is the astonishing tale "Culwch and Olwen", in which is found the earliest Welsh mention of Arthur. He has been equated with Gwydion, the son of the god

country. It survives in the superstition that any girl silly enough to step over a broom will be a mother before she is a wife.

The confusion is not yet at an end, because Arthur has also been identified with his own father Uther Pendragon or Uther Ben

Beli and the goddess Don, and the slayer of Pryderi, Lord of Hades. Now in ancient Celtic mythology Hades was a "land of eternal summer", a "land of youth", or "Isles of the Blessed", to which a Celt travelled when he died and where he waited until

or Bran. Arthur as Gwydion was also the Odin of Norse mythology. Now Odin led the Wild Hunt (which a twelfth century monk - of all people! - swore he had seen) and the Hounds of Hell, easily recognised by their red ears and white bodies, always accompanied the Hunter, who was known by other names than Odin. In the West of England he was known as Gwyn, in Scotland as Arthur, in Wales as Bran (more properly Vron) and in eastern parts of the country as Herne the Hunter. His name still survives in a part of London - Herne Hill, as does the god Beli in Billingsgate and the god Lludd in Ludgate. (Before the Saxons called it Lud's Geate the Celts called it Parth Lludd). One may ask what Gwydion-Odin-Arthur is doing leading the Hounds of Hell on the Wild Hunt. The answer seems to be that in the darker aspect of ruler of the land of the dead, Gwyn-Bran-Herne is herding the souls of the damned to the icy northern hell of British mythology.

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kings Arthur had already overthrown, each holding a brightly shining taper, which Merlin foretold would dim at the appearance of the Holy Grail. When all was ready Arthur told Merlin to name the knights who were to grace the famous table. One by one, Merlin announced the names until all but two of the seats were filled. A banquet followed and when it ended each knight saw that the part of the table at which he sat had his name blazoned on it in letters of gold. Not only that, but one of the empty seats was marked "Siege Perilous" and Merlin told the knights that this seat was reserved for a knight who would have to be absolutely pure, and if any other man sat upon it the earth would open and swallow him. One of the legends told of Merlin relates that one day the wizard absent-mindedly sat down at the Siege Perilous, was immediately swallowed by the earth and seen no more by man.

To this day, Arthur's Round Table can be seen in Winchester Castle with the names of the knights on it. This table was mentioned during the reign of Henry VI, but there seems to be no record of it before that. But there is record of a Wheel of Fortune in the ancient inventories of Winchester Castle.

It will be remembered that the original Stonehenge was circular and the Round Table is but a pale, weak imitation of this once mighty temple. The Siege Perilous of the Round Table, far from being a divine seat on which only a pure knight could sit, was probably the sacred stone or fairy shrine of a twelve pillared circle, and can be equated with the Lia Fail (a sacred Irish stone) and the Scottish Stone of Scone now in Westminster Abbey. In the old pagan days, these stones were supposed to have uttered a cry whenever a genuine divine king stood upon them.

So much for the historical Arturius and the legendary Arthur of the medieval sagas, but when one turns to his far-off origin in mythology one is inclined to throw up one's hands in despair, for Arthur as we know him today seems to be a composite of about four historical personages (Ambrosius Aurelianus, Arturius, Alfred the Great and Charlemagne) and several Celtic and Gaulish deities. This also seemed to be the case with a number of the knights at the court of King Arthur. The only way seems to be to take the characters one by one and see to what enchanted realms we are taken.

Arthur himself seems to have jumped from one deity to another and even now scholars disagree on his origin. Unfortunately, the Welsh mythology suffered far more at the hands of monkish scribes and euhemerists than did the Irish mythology. Even the Mabinogion is only a fragmentary and confused record of the ancient myths. The four branches of the Mabinogion give us a picture of very much broken down British gods, but are happily free of the Norman-French influence. Free of this influence, too, is the astonishing tale "Culwch and Olwen", in which is found the earliest Welsh mention of Arthur. He has been equated with Gwydion, the son of the god

Beli and the goddess Don, and the slayer of Pryderi, Lord of Hades. Now in ancient Celtic mythology Hades was a "land of eternal summer", a "land of youth", or "Isles of the Blessed", to which a Celt travelled when he died and where he waited until the gods decided that he was due to be reincarnated. Pryderi and his father Pwyll were gods of either the "Iberians," the earliest race in these islands, or the first wave of Celtic invaders, the Goidelic Celts, who were pushed back in their turn by the Brythonic Celts. As always, the gods of the old religion became the demons of the new, and when the solar deities of the latest invaders overlaid the former deities, these once immortal gods automatically became rulers of Hades after their death. As in Greek mythology the elder gods became the ancestors of the later gods, though in Britain there seemed to be two separate pantheons trying to achieve mastery. The Celts, however, who were always individualists, took it into their heads to make Gwyn, nephew of Gwydion, and son of Lludd, the Warder of Hades. They even managed to make Pryderi a step-grandson of Llyr and Penardun (Gwydion's sister). Pwyll was first married to Rhiannon, the mother of Pryderi, and after his death she became the wife of Manawyddan, son of Llyr. This Manawyddan was half brother to Bran and Branwen.

Gwydion (science and light) seems to have arrived in Britain about 400 B.C. bringing the alphabet with him. He was the father of the solar deity (or sacred king) Llew Llaw Gyffes, but when in later times he became identified with Arthur, Llew Llaw Gyffes was metamorphosed into his nephew Gwalchmai, the Falcon of May. In fact, Llew was split into two and became his own brother Gwalchaved, the Falcon of Summer, whom we know today as Sir Galahad. The French troveres added to the confusion by making Galahad a son of Lancelot du Lac, and Lancelot himself replaced Arthur's nephew as the guilty lover of the queen.

Now Gwyn ap Nudd (or Lludd) was supposed to have been of great help to Gwydion and Gwyn (called Melwas in Cornwall and Avalon in Somerset) was the king of the fairies, or Warder of Hades. Arthur has also been called Gwyn. This may seem puzzling at first until it is remembered that Arthur (or Gwydion) was a solar king. As Gwydion was science and light he was probably the deity of the waxing year and Gwyn, as Warder of Hades, was the deity of the waning year. In the southwest of England and particularly in Somerset, Hades was called Avalon, and after Arthur's last battle he was conveyed away by three queens to rule in Avalon. In this place he would naturally become Gwyn.

Gwydion, like the Greek Zeus, was wedded to his sister Arianrhod, but it must have been a secret marriage (or else just a case of living together) because when a virgin foot-holder was required for Gwydion's uncle Math, Arianrhod's name was suggested. Gwydion did not seem to care for this idea and suggested that Arianrhod step over his wand to prove her virginity. No sooner

had she done so than she gave birth to a yellowhaired boychild. When the child uttered a cry she made for the door, where she gave birth to a second boy, but before anyone could get a glimpse of this one Gwydion wrapped a sheet round it and hid it in a chest at the foot of his bed.

As for the first child, Math had him baptized Dylan Eil Ton (Son of the Sea Wave) and no sooner had the child received his name than he made for the sea, which became his element and his death at the hands of his uncle Govannan was known as one of the Three Unhappy Blows of Britain. Probably in the original form of the myth he died by the hand of his twin brother Llew, who would then reign in his stead, until such time as it was Dylan's turn to reign again.

Llew, as yet unnamed, was the boy Gwydion hid in the chest and his rapid growth was one of the characteristics of a solar deity. Gwydion eventually took him to Arianrhod and told her that the boy was her son. Arianrhod who, after all, was justified in being angry with Gwydion after the trick he had played on her, especially as he had been responsible for her condition, promptly put a destiny on the boy that he should have no name until he received one from her and that she would never give. To be without a name - and perhaps die without one - was a dreadful thing to happen to a Celt, for without a name a man's soul was unprotected. (We find echoes of this even today when ministers refuse the burial of unbaptized children in consecrated ground.) The resourceful Gwydion, however, got Arianrhod to name the boy Llew Llaw Gyffes (the Lion with the Sure Hand) by a series of tricks and Llew still survives as Gwalchmai or Sir Gawain. Dylan, of course, eventually became Arthur's treacherous nephew, Medrawt, or Mordred.

The myth of Llew and Dylan is mentioned here because in one of the legends of Arthur's birth he seems to have been equated with Dylan. According to this legend, when Arthur came to the throne his enemies spread the tale that he was not the son of Uther Pendragon at all, but a babe brought from the depths of the sea on the crest of the ninth wave and deposited at Merlin's feet, who announced the babe as an heir for Uther. Indeed, Tennyson made use of this tale in the "Idylls of the King" (The Coming of Arthur). The legend seems to be a greatly distorted version of the birth of Dylan.

To digress completely for a moment, the story of Arianrhod stepping over Gwydion's wand still survives in some parts of the country. It survives in the superstition that any girl silly enough to step over a broom will be a mother before she is a wife.

The confusion is not yet at an end, because Arthur has also been identified with his own father Uther Pendragon or Uther Ben

or Bran. Arthur as Gwydion was also the Odin of Norse mythology. Now Odin led the Wild Hunt (which a twelfth century monk - of all people! - swore he had seen) and the Hounds of Hell, easily recognised by their red ears and white bodies, always accompanied the Hunter, who was known by other names than Odin. In the West of England he was known as Gwyn, in Scotland as Arthur, in Wales as Bran (more properly Vron) and in eastern parts of the country as Herne the Hunter. His name still survives in a part of London - Herne Hill, as does the god Beli in Billingsgate and the god Lludd in Ludgate. (Before the Saxons called it Lud's Geate the Celts called it Parth Lludd). One may ask what Gwydion-Odin-Arthur is doing leading the Hounds of Hell on the Wild Hunt. The answer seems to be that in the darker aspect of ruler of the land of the dead, Gwyn-Bran-Herne is herding the souls of the damned to the icy northern hell of British mythology.

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They went to war, laid the whole country waste, and in the end either killed each other or were turned into oxen as a punishment for their idicoy. One of the Arthurian legends relates that when he was a young man he came across two skeletons clad in rusty armour, with a crown on the ground between them. Arthur placed the crown on his own head and went on his way. Here it seems to be an example of the new god taking over from the old.

There is an early myth in which Gwyn ap Nudd is a rival of Gwythur ap Greidawl (Victor, Son of Scorchers) for Creuddylad, daughter of either Lludd or Llyr, later to be known as Cordelia, daughter of Lear. Each continually stole her from the other until Arthur decreed that she should be sent back to her father and that Gwyn and Gwythur should fight for her every First of May until Doomsday, then the conqueror could have her. (As if any woman would wait that long, anyway). Arthur, of course, could make no such decree as he is the dark god Gwyn fighting his solar aspect Gwythur for the possession of Spring, for Creuddylad seems to be a British equivalent of Persephone. In a later myth it is Arthur who struggles with his nephew Medrawt for Gwynhwyfar. Creuddylad means "White Apparition" and Gwynhwyfar means "White Lady" so they could, of course, represent the moon and not Spring. Hundreds of years later the medieval Lancelot replaced Medrawt as Arthur's rival for Guinevere.

It can be observed at this point that the monkish scribes and euhemerists have managed to make a thorough tangle of British mythology.

Gwydion's sister and mistress Arianrhod appears later as Arthur's sister - or mistress - and we know her best as Morgan Le Fay. Geoffrey of Monmouth called her Ana (compare with Asian Ana or Anatha, Irish Dana, Greek Danaë and Welsh Dôn) and Sir Thomas Malory called her Morgawse, but earlier still she was called Gwyar (bloodshed). As Arianrhod, in some myths she was the wife of a now obscure god called Nwvyr (atmosphere, space). As Morgan, besides being Arthur's sister (or mistress) she was the wife of the skygod Nudd (or Lludd). Her Irish counterpart, the Morrigan, bore the same relationship to the skygod Nuada. Morgan was sometimes Arthur's lover, sometimes his enemy. There are certain affinities between Arthur and the Ulster solar hero Cuchullain, who rejected the Morrigan (fairy or fate) when she wooed him. The Morrigan and Morgan got Cuchullain and Arthur in the end, of course, in their aspect as death goddesses. Morgan, like the Morrigan, was always "in at the death" and later Continental poets called her Fata Morgana. Her brother's sword Caliburn (Excalibur) only retained its magic power as long as its scabbard never left Arthur's side. It was Morgan who stole the scabbard from him, thus enabling Medrawt to wound him, yet she was one of the three queens who conveyed Arthur to Avalon. The three queens are, of course, the equivalent of Shakespeare's three weird sisters, the three Norns of Norse mythology and the

three fates - or Furies - of the Greeks. Morgan's stealing of Arthur's scabbard gives her an equivalent place in mythology with the Greek Fate Atropos, Milton's "blind fury with the abhorred shears," who cuts the thread of life. In some of the later legends it is Morgan and not Vivien who is responsible for plunging Merlin into eternal sleep. These legends seem a closer parallel to the older myths than the story of Vivien when it is remembered that Morgan was the wife of the skygod.

Now we come to Arthur's wife, the Guanhumara of Geoffrey of Monmouth, the Guinevere of the medieval legends, and the Gwynhwhyfar of the earlier Welsh tales. The mythic Arthur would naturally take his wife from the land of eternal summer and Gwynhwhyfar's father was Ogryvran, a giant bard of Hades, who owned the cauldron from which the Three Muses were born. Ogryvran bears a suspicious resemblance to Uther Bran. However, ancient Welsh tales credit Arthur with three wives named Gwynhwhyfar, one of whom was the daughter of Gwyrd Gwent (of whom nothing is known) and the third was the daughter of Gwyrthur ap Greidawl. One mythographer has advanced the theory that there were three Gwynhwhyfars because of the Welsh love of triads, but to me there seems to be a striking parallel to the Mediterranean myths of the Moon Goddess in her three aspects as Maid, Nymph and Crone. And the name Gwynhwhyfar means "White Lady", or perhaps it would be even more correct to say White Goddess.

(To digress for a moment, in the prehistoric wall paintings of Southern France there are drawings of the moon as a woman in nine aspects, ranging from right to left, portraying the women from youth to extreme age. Arthur and Peredur, son of Efwarg, both fought nine witches, which was base ingratitude as they had been taught many wonderful things by the nine. If it is true that these drawings of women representing the moon in nine aspects are twenty thousand years old, Arthur, in various guises, has been with us an incredibly long time.).

Before Lancelot appeared on the scene, it was Arthur's nephew Medrawt who contended with him for Gwynhwhyfar and the legend in which Medrawt steals Gwynhwhyfar while she is "A-maying" points to an earlier tale because Mayday was the New Year and of great significance to the Celts. It will be recalled that Medrawt, the Mayborn, was destined to deliver the fatal blow to Arthur. May was a sacred month, the month of chastity, hence the superstition that it is unlucky to be married in May - it is breaking the ancient law of chastity. But the story of Arthur, Medrawt and Gwynhwhyfar is a variant of the age old myth of the kings of the waxing and waning year sharing the moon-goddess between them.

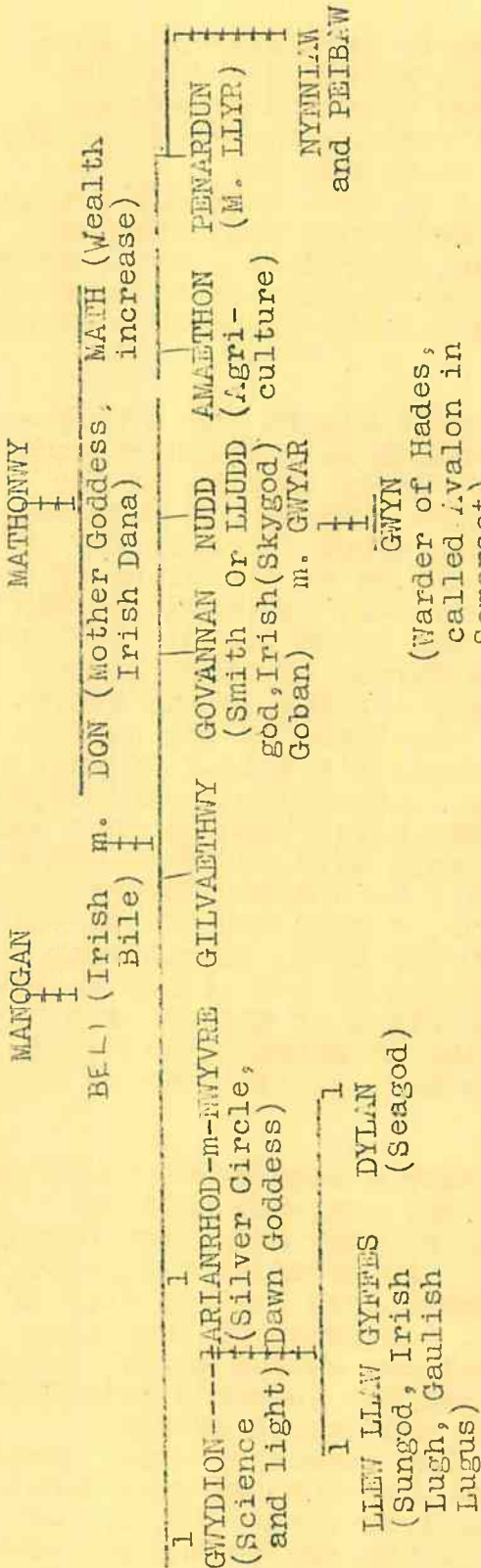
Next there is Merlin, that enigmatic old gentleman. Now known to us as a servitor of Arthur, but in the long ago and

far away, a god much greater than Arthur. His existence as a genuine historical character is somewhat doubtful. Geoffrey of Monmouth averred that he existed, but then the apocryphal Geoffrey would! There may have been a Merlin Ambrosius who was confused with Ambrosius Aurelianus or there may not. Merlin, as a historical character, was supposed to have been chief counsellor first to Ambrosius and then to Arturius, but after the battle of Solway it was related that he retired to a wood, where he broke his sword and then - with no one to know or to comfort him in the last sad moments - he died quietly alone of a broken heart.

The medieval legends made him Arthur's wizard and astrologer, who was eventually trapped and immured in a hawthorn bush (or oak tree) by the wiles of a woman. Oddly enough, no one ever bothered to explain why Arthur, that champion of medieval Christianity, openly had a wizard at his court. (Merlin is, of course, the druidical adviser who was always at the elbow of the ancient Celtic kings, and in this respect he resembles the Welsh mythological wizard Mathonwy). The later legends of Merlin's death - trapped in a tree in the forest of Broceliande in Brittany by Vivien, absently minded sitting in the Siege Perilous of the Round Table and being swallowed by the earth - all carefully point up the medieval moralist's belief in the terrible fate that awaited the ungodly. According to the legends Merlin was partly of fairy birth, as the devil planned that one of his demons should get a pure young maid with child in order that this infant should assist the devil to destroy Christianity. Satan was foiled in his plans as Blaise, a holy man, found out and christened the child as soon as he was born, thus saving his soul from eternal damnation. This legend can either be regarded as a blasphemous version of the birth of Christ or a Christianised version of the early myths in which a disguised god possesses a mortal maiden (such as Zeus visiting Danaë in a shower of gold).

But long before he was Merlin, Arthur's wizard was known as Myrddin and as the latter, was one of the original gods of Britain. Indeed, it was said that the country was first named Clas Myrddin i.e. Myrddin's Enclosure. As Myrddin, a sky-god, he was married to Elen, daughter of the Celtic war-god Coel of Colvin (Irish Cumhal, Gaulish Camulus, now known as "Old King Cole"). For her husband Myrddin, sometimes called Emrys, sometimes Lludd, she founded a town to rival her father's city Caer Colvin or Camulodonum (now Colchester) and called it Caer Myrddin, today known as Caermarthen. The number of names owned by one deity is confusing but in those days men and gods had a number of "eke-names" besides their one true name. Indeed, if the true name became known the power of the god or man was broken. In "Cad Goddeu" (The Battle of the Trees), which is an allegory of the fight between the gods Bel and Bran - light and

GODS OF THE HOUSE OF DON



darkness - Taliesin the bard found out the secret name of Bel's opponent and when he sang "Bran thou art of the high branches of alder" the god was defeated.

The earlier myths had Myrddin eventually imprisoned on an Island in the West, with the "Thirteen Treasures of Britain", where he slumbers the years away for "sleep was the bond forged for him". This identifies him with a sun or heaven god and his sleep in the west the setting of the sun. However, sea and sun god were interchangeable, which is why in the Greek myths Persephone is sometimes the daughter of Zeus and sometimes the daughter of Poseidon. In the same way Creuddylad, the British Persephone, can be either the daughter of Lludd or Llyr. Myrddin's isle of imprisonment was mentioned by a first century Greek traveller, Demetrius, who referred to the British "Kronos" sleeping forever in a western isle, which has since been declared to be Bardsey. However, the Isle of Man also had this legend and perhaps its claim is more well founded because, remembering that sky and seagod could be interchangeable, this island was sacred to the Irish seagod Manannan, son of Ler (Welsh Manawyddan, son of Llyr). One of the stories told of Manannan, or Manawyddan, was that in emergencies he could grow another leg and run like a wheel (hence the Manx crest). Myrddin is supposed to be sleeping on this island, too, and there is a curious story in connection with this legend.

There is a place called Rushin Castle on the island and until about fifty years ago it was possible to gain access to the dungeons, which were freed by Merlin from giants who inhabited the labyrinth beneath them.

These depths were said to contain many apartments and over a hundred years ago a curious traveller decided to explore them, as Theseus did the Labyrinth, with the aid of a ball of thread. After going through a number of vaults he saw a fine mansion and seeing a light coming from it, he knocked on the door. The guardian who opened it told him that if he wished to proceed further he must pass through the mansion. This he did and eventually came to an even finer mansion, which was brightly illuminated. Looking through a window he saw a great table of black marble, on which lay a man of immense stature in a deep sleep, his head resting on a book and his hand on the hilt of a huge sword. Terror at last overcame curiosity and the traveller fled to the surface.

One of the legends told of Merlin (Myrddin) is that he, like Arthur, James IV of Scotland, Frederick Barbarossa, Ogier the Dane, Earl Fitzgerald of Munster, the three Tells of Switzerland, Brian Boromhe of Ireland, the three miners of Bohemia, Thomas of Erceles-doune, Sigurd of Scandinavia, Boabdil el Chico of Granada, Olaf Tryggvason of Norway, Charlemagne, Olaf Redbeard of Sweden, and Sebastian of Portugal, will remain in deep slumber until the country is in desperate need of his help, then he will awaken to confound the enemy.

Sir Kay, Arthur's seneschal, was originally the Cei mentioned in the tales "Culwch and Olwen" and "Peredur, Son of Efraug". He had the ability to grow as high as the tallest tree and so great was his heat that he remained dry no matter how much it rained. These gifts place him as a fire or sun-god. Probably fire in its destructive aspect as he was reputed to have murdered Arthur's son Llachen (perhaps the Gronwy who killed Llew) and there is an obscure hint in one myth that he tried to make off with Gwynhwyfar. In other words, he was a Celtic Moloch. A criminal nature would be associated with fire by the British Celts as although the druids did make sacrifices by fire, it was always malefactors who were burned in the wicker baskets (the incurably sick if there were not enough malefactors). To a Celt burial was honourable, but burning was dishonourable and fit only for criminals, which probably accounts for the fact that cremation isn't as popular in Britain as it is in some other countries.

Bran, the god of the underworld, appears in several different guises in the Arthurian saga. As Uther Pendragon he was Arthur's father - before that he was Uther Ben (Wonderful Head). One of his names in the Morte D'Arthur was King Brandegore (i.e. Bran of Gower - the deity Bran had a bone fortress in Gower on the Swansea peninsula). Geoffrey of Monmouth called him King Brennius, brother of King Belinus (recognisable as Bran and Beli) and again in the Morte D'Arthur he was known as Balin, brother of Balan. One of his original names was also Urien,

patron of the bards, and by his wife Modron he had sons called Mabon and Owain. Mabon was the demigod imprisoned for a countless number of years and his release was one of the tasks that Yspaddaden, Chief Giant, set Culwch in the winning of Olwen. Owain was called the "chief of the glittering west" by Taliesin the bard, thereby identifying him as a god of the underworld. Bran, as Brandegore, opposed King Arthur, but as Sir Brandel or Brandiles (Bran of Gwales) he was a knight of the Round Table who died in Arthur's service. Again, as Ban of Benwyk (Square Enclosure) he was a foreign king friendly to Arthur. From Ogyr Vran he became King Leodegrance of Scotland and Guinevere's father. As Urience of Gower he married a sister of Arthur's, fought against his brother-in-law, but was finally won over to Arthur. This sister, of course, was probably the death goddess and Bran in his shape of God of the underworld would naturally be allied to Arthur in the end. Another name for Bran in the saga is King Rience of North Wales. Bran has come a long way from the original Bendigeidfran (Bran the Blessed) who went on the fatal journey to Ireland to avenge his sister Branwen's treatment at the hands of her husband King Matholwch. It was on his return from this journey, fatally wounded, that he asked his companions to cut off his head and bury it under White Hill, where the Tower of London now stands, saying that as long as his head lay buried there the country was safe from invasion. Arthur was supposed to have dug it up, saying that he was enough of a hero to defend the land.

Gwyn, the darker aspect of Arthur, appears in the saga in three different guises. As Sir Gwinas, Sir Guynas (Guyon) or Sir Gwenbaus he was a loyal follower of Arthur. Under his Cornish name of Melwas, he became Sir Melias and was a knight of the Round Table, but in the quarrel over Guinevere he sided with Sir Lancelot against Arthur. This is not surprising as in another guise - Sir Meliagraunce - an early myth says it was he, not Medrawt or Lancelot, who carried off Guinevere to his castle. His Somerset name of Avalon or Atvallah was turned into Evelake - a Saracen converted and brought to England by Joseph of Arimathea. (Saracen, incidentally, was a name given by the early Christians to all pagans, including Saxons). As Evelake he attempted the quest of the Holy Grail, but though he failed he received a divine promise that he should not die until a knight of his blood in the ninth degree had achieved the quest. Sir Percivale succeeded in this when Evelake was three hundred years old.

Pwyll, Head of Hades, appears again as Sir Pelles or Sir Pelleas, the Keeper of the Holy Grail and cousin to Joseph of Arimathea. Pwyll's son Pryderi, became Pellam or Pellean and joint Keeper of the Grail. This is not so surprising as it first seems when it is known that Pwyll was one of the keepers of the Celtic Cauldron of Inspiration. As Pelleas he was father of Elaine, (Elen, Myrddin's wife) whom he gave to Sir Lancelot for

a wife, also bestowing on them Castle Bliant. In the Mabinogion one of Pwyll's vassals was called Teirnyon Twyrf Vliant, a rather doubtful clue to the origin of Lancelot. As Sir Pelleas Pwyll married Nimue (a later name for Rhiannon) after an unlucky affair with a woman called Ettarre. Again, in the Mabinogion, before Pwyll married Rhiannon he ruled Annwn for a year in place of Arawn. Although the likeness of Arawn, during the whole year he never once took advantage of Arawn's wife and the story of Pelleas and Ettarre is probably a late, garbled version of the affair.

Lludd (Nudd) turns up in the legends as King Lot or Loth of Orkney. Arthur was supposed to have had an affair with his wife, which resulted in the birth of Sir Mordred, thus making him Arthur's son and not his nephew. Lot's wife was also the mother of Sir Gawain, who was probably also a son of Arthur, but who was described as his nephew. Both Mordred and Gawain retained mythological characteristics. Sir Mordred, the dark one, was the Welsh Medrawt and earlier still Dylan, the son of the sea. Sea and darkness were inseparable in the Celtic mind. Sir Gawain, even in medieval legend, retained the attributes of a sungod, for Malory described his strength as increasing from dawn to noon, then gradually waning again. He was earlier called Gwalchmai and before that he was Llew Llaw Gyffes. In one Arthurian romance Sir Gawain succeeded in the quest of the Holy Grail, in others it was Galahad, supposedly the son of Lancelot and Elaine. Galahad was once Gwalchaved and it does not make any difference whether Gawain or Galahad succeeded in the quest of the Grail as they were originally one person. As Gwalchmai-Gwalchaved in "Culwch and Olwen" they were the sons of Gwyar, who it will be recalled, was Arthur's sister and mistress. Before that Gawain-Gwalchmai-Galahad-Gwalchaved was Llew Llaw Gyffes, the son of Gwydion and his sister and mistress Arianrhod.

The treacherous King Mark of Cornwall, uncle of Tristan (though really his father) and husband of Fair Iseult, was earlier called March ap Meirchion (Horse, son of Horses) and Arthur, like his early self Gwydion, who successfully stole Pryderi's pigs from the Celtic underworld, attempted without success to steal March's pigs from Hades. March was a Celtic deity of great wealth - which is always connected with the Underworld - and was worshipped as a god by Britons who regarded the horse as a sacred animal - and most of them did, which probably accounts for the fact that even today Britons have an aversion to eating horseflesh. Whereas Midas, March's Phrygian counterpart, had ass's ears, March had horse's ears. That an actual Mark and Tristan may have existed is borne out by the fact that Cornishmen can still point out the remains of Mark's fortress, Castle Dor, and there is a burial stone over Tristan which states in Latin "Here lies Tristan, son of Mark."

In the later and the medieval legends, the bards and troveres invariably made the relationship between men an uncle and nephew one if a woman were involved, but when the myth is traced back to its beginning the relationship is usually found to be a dark and fair brother or father and son. The uncle and nephew motif was the work of medieval minds too fanatically pious to face the most basic fact - and the most supreme emotion - of all humanity.

Sir Percivale (the Parsifal of Wolfram von Eschenback) is known as the knight who went on the quest of the Holy Grail. Before that he was known in Welsh mythology as Peredur Paladhir ("Spearman with the Long Shaft" - compare with Llew Llaw Gyffes, the "Lion /or Light/ with the Sure /or Long/ Hand" and Irish Lugh Lamhfada "Lugh of the Long Hand"). Once more we find that Peredur, like many sacred kings, was wounded in the thigh by a spear, driven by Cei. The story of Peredur, Son of Efrawg, has been described as the "Grail story without the Grail". Like Percivale, Peredur was brought up by his mother to have no knowledge of war, but in both stories Percivale and Peredur were determined to become knights and rode forth with sharpened sticks and clothed in motley. They both overthrew an uncouth knight when they reached Arthur's court. Both met a damsel grieving for her brother and both set forth on quests. Neither of them ask questions, Peredur because he was told not to do so and Percivale because he was too polite to do so. They both came to a Castle of Wonders where they see a maimed king (probably a heavily disguised myth of the wounded Arthur in Avalon) and they both fight with a lion and a knight who appears by a standing stone. In short, when the story of Percivale is shorn of its medieval accretions, it is the tale of Peredur, Son of Efrawg. Maybe, if we go even further back, we may find that Peredur was once Pryderi, one of the keepers of the Celtic cauldron of inspiration.

Sir Bedivere, the knight who was with Arthur at the end was the Bedwyr of the Mabinogion. None equalled Bedwyr in swiftness, his lance made a wound equal to nine and though only one-armed he could match any three warriors in battle and he retains these mythological attributes as Sir Bedivere. There are obscure hints in one or two myths that Bedwyr was closely related to Arthur - perhaps even his father. However, the fact that Bedwyr was one-armed gives him a resemblance to Nudd, who had a silver hand, as did his Irish counterpart Nuada. As Sir Bedivere, he saw Arthur go on his last Journey to Avalon and who is there better than a father - or perhaps a son - to be with a hero in his last moments?

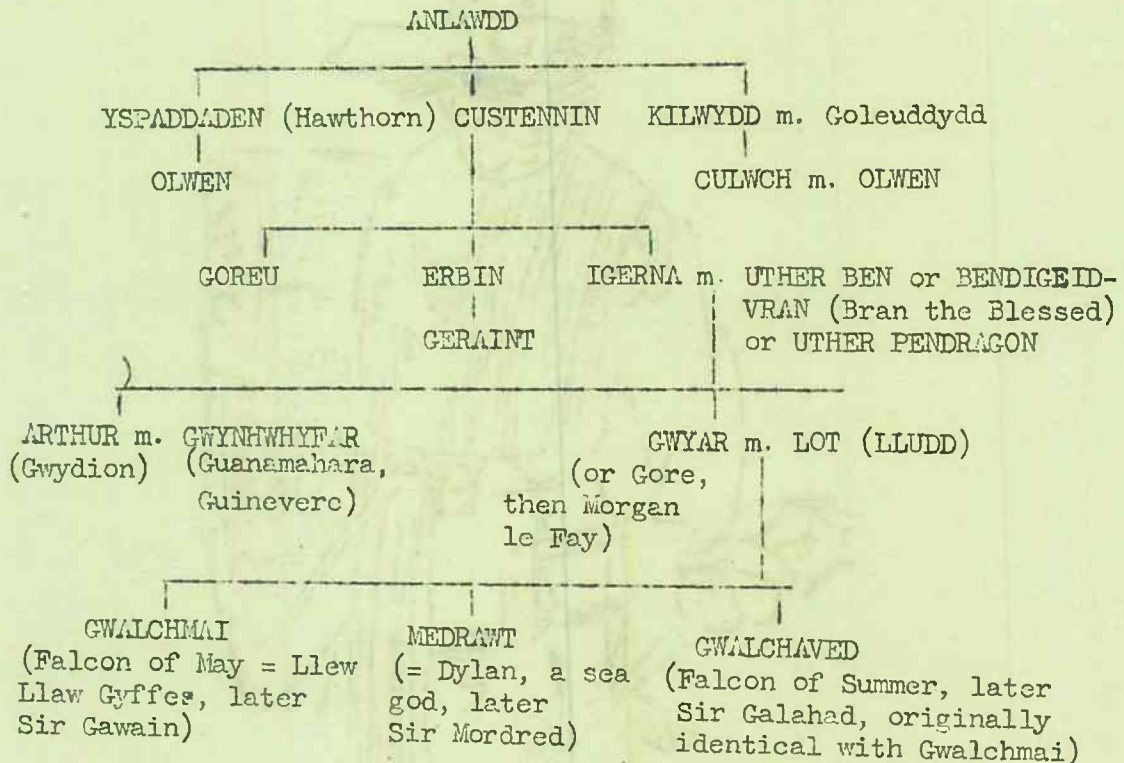
As I have already said, Lancelot did not appear until medieval times, but the suggestion has been put forward that he was originally a now obscure Celtic deity. The second syllable of his name calls to my mind King Lot (Lludd) and it will be remembered that Arthur had an intrigue with Lot's wife. Perhaps, in the course of time, the situations became reversed, but this is a very doubtful theory of my own.

To try and piece together the Celtic mythology is like being given a jigsaw puzzle with one or two key pieces missing and other pieces that, although they bear a likeness, do not belong to the completed picture. Deities change names and wives, or two or more are married to the same wife (or one has several wives who should belong to other deities) and all this is the work of scribes and schemerists who just could not mind their own business,

but had to try and fit the ancient heroes into their own ideas of the scheme of things.

But whatever Arthur and his knights may have been in the sun-misted Celtic past, there is no denying he and his followers were responsible for the blaze of chivalry that spread over Europe in the Middle Ages. Arthur was, indeed, the "swiftly moving lamp" that illuminated a dark time.

FAMILY TREE OF ARTHUR



KEY TO PRONUNCIATION OF CYMRIC NAMES

w when a consonant as in English when a vowel like oo

y when long as ee, when short like u in tug

ch as in loch c is always sounded as k.

f as v ff as English f

ll a thickened sound of l between cl and th

dd as th in "breathe"

THE END

as a first step to the future



Portrait of Arthur by Arthur (Thomson) who swears he is a direct descendant & and has got his namesake's diary and other papers to prove it.