

THE FORTRESS OF AMBROSE, AND OF HIS CONTEST WITH THE DRUIDS.

And afterwards Gortigern invited to him twelve Druids, that he might know from them what was proper to be done. The Druids said to him, 'Seek the borders of the island of Britain, and thou shalt find a strong fortress to defend thyself against the foreigners to whom thou hast given up thy country and thy kingdom, for thine enemies will slay thee, and will seize upon thy country and lands after thee.' Gortigern, with his hosts and with his Druids, traversed all the south of the island of Britain, until they arrived at Guined, and they searched all the mountain of Herer, and there found a Dinn over the sea, and a very strong locality fit to build on; and his Druids said to him, 'Build here thy fortress,' said they, 'for nothing shall ever prevail against it.' Builders were then brought thither, and they collected materials for the fortress, both stone and wood, but all these materials were carried away in one night; and materials were thus gathered thrice, and were thrice carried away. And he asked of his Druids, 'Whence is this evil?' said he. And the Druids said, 'Seek a son whose father is unknown, kill him, and let his blood be sprinkled upon the Dun, for by this means only it can be built.'

Messengers were sent by him throughout the island of Britain to seek for a son without a father; and they searched as far as Magh Eillite, in the territory of Glevisic, where they found boys a-hurling; and there happened a dispute between two of the boys, so that one said to the other, 'O man without a father, thou hast no good at all.' The messengers asked, 'Whose son is the lad to whom this is said?' Those on the hurling green said, 'We know not,' said they, 'his mother is here,' said they. They asked of his mother whose son the lad was. The mother answered, 'I know not,' said she, 'that he hath a father, and I know not how he happened to be conceived in my womb at all.' So the messengers took the boy with them to Gortigern, and told him how they had found him.

On the next day the army was assembled, that the boy might be killed. And the boy was brought before the king, and he said to the king, 'Wherefore have they brought me to thee?' said he. And the king said, 'To slay thee,' said he, 'and to butcher thee, and to consecrate this fortress with thy blood.' The boy said, 'Who instructed thee in this?' 'My Druids,' said the king. 'Let them be called hither,' said the boy. And the Druids came. The boy said to them, 'Who told you that this fortress could not be built until it were first consecrated with my blood?' And they answered not. 'I know,' said he; 'the person who sent me to you to accuse you, is he who induced you to tell this lie; howbeit, O king,' said he, 'I will reveal the truth to thee; and I ask of thy Druids, first, what is concealed beneath this floor before us?' The Druids said, 'We know not,' said they. 'I know,' said he; 'there is a lake of water there; let it the floor be examined and dug.' It was dug, and the lake

was found there. 'Ye prophets of the king,' said the boy, 'tell what is in the middle of the lake?' 'We know not,' said they. 'I know,' said he, 'there are two large chests of wood face to face, and let them be brought out of it.' It was examined, and they were brought forth. 'And O Druids,' said the boy, 'tell what is between those two wooden chests?' 'We know not,' said they. 'I know,' said he; 'there is a sail-cloth there.' And it was brought forth, and the sail was found rolled up between the two wooden chests. 'Tell, O ye learned,' said the boy, 'what is in the middle of that cloth?' And they answered not, for they understood not. 'There are two maggots there,' said he, 'namely, a red maggot and a white maggot. Let the cloth be unfolded.' The sail-cloth was unfolded, and there were two maggots asleep in it. And the boy said, 'See now what the maggots will do.' They advanced towards each other, and commenced to rout, cut, and bite each other, and each maggot drove the other alternately to the middle of the sail and again to its verge. They did this three times. The red maggot was at first the feeble one, and was driven to the brink of the cloth; but the beautiful maggot was finally the feeble one, and fled into the lake, and the sail immediately vanished. The boy asked the Druids: 'Tell ye,' said he, 'what doth this wonder reveal?' 'We know not,' said they. 'I will reveal it to the king,' said the boy. 'The lake is the kingdom of the whole world, and the sail is thy kingdom, O king. And the two maggots are the two powers, namely, thy power in conjunction with the Britons, and the power of the Saxons. The red maggot, which was first expelled the kingdom, represents thy power; and the white maggot, which occupied the whole sail except a little, represents the power of the Saxons, who have taken the island of Britain, except a small part, until ultimately driven out by the power of the Britons. But do thou, O king of Britain, go away from this fortress, for thou hast not power to erect it, and search the island of Britain and thou shalt find thine own fortress.' The king said, 'What is thy name, O boy,' said he. The youth replied, 'Ambrose,' said he, 'is my name.' (He was Embros Gleutic, king of Britain.) 'Tell thy race,' said the king. 'My father, said he, was a Roman consul, and this shall be my fortress.' Then Gortigern left the fortress to Ambrose, and also the government of all the west of Britain, and went with his Druids to the north of the island of Britain, that is, to the land which is called Gunnis, and built a fortress there, which city is named Caer Gortigern.

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