



*King Arthur's round Table ~
Preserved as a curious piece of Antiquity in the castle of Winchester.*

The Round Table in the Great Hall of Winchester Castle. Once believed to be the work of Joseph of Arimathea, it has since been dated to the mid-13th century. In 1486, King Henry VII painted it white and green and set a Tudor rose in the middle. The solar significance is obvious, with Arthur placed at Christmas or the winter solstice. (Courtesy of the British Tourist Authority)

Chapter III

CULHWCH AND OLWEN

RICHARD M. LOOMIS

The oldest Arthurian tale, *Culhwch and Olwen*, survives in two Welsh manuscripts of the fourteenth century, but evidence of language and allusion support the conclusion that the work was given substantially its present form toward the end of the eleventh century. Its language also suggests that it was composed in regions of South Wales where the great boar, Twrch Trwyth, is hunted in the tale's climax. Topographical references indicate that the narrator is tracking the beast through places familiar to him and his audience. The storytelling calls for an audience responsive to a variety of styles, including burlesque and parody, familiar with numerous persons and topics cited, and ready to follow narrative lines marked by abrupt turns, stalls, large symmetries, small connective threads, and startling disparities.

The story tells how a young nobleman, Culhwch, wins Olwen, daughter of Ysbaddaden Chief Giant, by fulfilling the giant's demands for the wedding. In meeting these demands, Culhwch is aided by companions commissioned by his cousin, King Arthur. This is an Arthurian shaping of the international folktale motif, "Six go through the whole world" (Aarne and Thompson 513A). The giant opposes the marriage because he will die when his daughter marries. His demands are meant to be impossible obstacles, and the hero needs prodigiously endowed helpers. Their tasks turn into an attack on the giant himself, the original deadly obstacle, as revealed in their initial encounter with him. Of the forty tasks set by the giant, eighteen are not subsequently mentioned; the giant's death resolves the issue. Arthur and his warriors embrace the challenge of seeking the *anoethau*, the "wonders," or rare and difficult things required for the wedding, and these quests usually culminate in a fight. Thus the tale has more battling than courtship, like the parallel Irish tale of Cuchulainn's wooing of Emer. The pursuit of Twrch Trwyth, costing many lives, has the goal of seizing the grooming implements

(comb, scissors, and an added razor) lodged between the boar's ears, with which to trim the giant for the wedding-feast. In the upshot, the giant is not groomed but hacked and beheaded.

The story's modes include spare chronicling, vivid rhythmic description, dialogue, and lists alive with wordplay, miniature portraits, and story-fragments. The opening lines tell of a marriage subject to the demands and constraints of tribal life in ancient Britain. A chieftain seeks a wife as wellborn as he, and after he finds one, the people pray for an heir. A son is born, but in calamitous circumstances. The mother's pregnancy has caused her to go mad, and she doesn't recover her right mind until a herd of pigs so frighten her that she gives birth. The boy is named "Culhwch" at his baptism; the name means *pigsty*. Since he's of noble parentage, he is placed in the care of foster parents, a custom of the Celtic aristocracy. Culhwch's birth is enhanced by the circumstance that he is a first cousin to Arthur. Arthur's name signals that the world of the story is heroic.

Culhwch's father Cilydd is a lord, *gwledig*. The term is one of many archaic elements in the tale, for it is a title used in the earliest Welsh texts to designate leaders of the warrior aristocracy of ancient Britain. The people would pray for an heir because a warrior lord is expected to be his people's guardian and an heir is their promise of stable rule. Every resource, including those pigs, is needed to achieve a fruitful marriage. The tale proceeds to make an international drama of the transactions involved in Culhwch's own marriage, involving giants, otherworldly figures, and boar-hunting, coordinated by Arthur, who is styled chief of the princes of the island. It ends with the dry observation, that's how Culhwch won Olwen.

The warriors contend for honor, women, and land in ways that are so unapologetically self-assertive and violent that the tale seems amoral. In fact, their warrior ways are exposed to critical perspectives. On her deathbed, Culhwch's mother, Goleuddydd (the name means "Bright Day"), realizes that her husband will want another wife. Knowing that women bestow gifts, that is, manage a household's treasures, and not wanting her son to be deprived by a stepmother, Goleuddydd gets her husband to promise not to remarry until he sees a two-headed briar growing on her grave. Then she commissions a counselor of hers to keep the grave stripped so that nothing will grow there. After her death, as she had expected, her husband is obsessed with taking a second wife; he has the grave inspected every day. Seven years pass; the counselor forgets to strip the grave; Cilydd sees the longed-for briar and looks for another wife. An advisor recommends the wife of King Doged: "They agreed to go seek her. And they killed the king and carried his wife home with them, and an only daughter she had with her. And they conquered that king's land."

Not only has Cilydd taken a second wife as soon as the letter of his promise permits him, but he has abducted another man's wife, slaying the king and seizing his land while he's at it. The woman obviously has more than

the usual motives of a second wife for making the most of the marriage imposed upon her. She finds no children in the household, for Culhwch is in fosterage. Is her husband incapable of fathering a child? She gets an answer from a town hag, another knowing woman, who first equivocates and then reveals that there is a son. Presumably to secure her own interests, the stepmother attempts to arrange a marriage between her daughter and the boy. When Culhwch declines to commit himself as being too young, she pronounces the destiny upon him that he shall marry only a giant's daughter. The stepmother is sentencing Culhwch to death.

Culhwch's response is not prudent anxiety but heroic sexual excitement, instantly recognized and appreciated by his father, who doesn't steer him away from the danger but tells him how to manage it: Get Arthur to trim your hair and ask him for Olwen as a gift. The hair-cutting is symbolic recognition of consanguinity; once the blood-tie is acknowledged, Culhwch can tap the generosity that flows in a kinsman's veins. The narrator's way of recounting the hair-cutting heightens its apparent absurdity as a strategy for going against a giant; farcical discontinuity hanging by a thread of sense is a frequent comic turn in the tale. Arthur proves to be not only a good relative but a noble prince who welcomes boon-seekers because they're a means of enhancing his honor.

The tale moves from narration to lists, like those in the traditional lore of Wales that a *cyfarwydd* (knowledgeable guide, storyteller) was expected to command. Here they are burlesqued into hyperboles for Arthur's glory or for the intransigence of the Giant Ysbaddaden. Culhwch calls upon Arthur's followers as sureties for Arthur's pledge to help in winning Olwen. The ensuing flock of names is a display of the storyteller's learning and wit, for some 260 persons are named, beginning with Kei and Bedwyr (the Kay and Bedivere of later romance) and ending with Guinevere and other beautiful women of Britain.

Besides names from Welsh tradition, there are punning inventions, nonsense, a sprinkling of Irish heroes, and possible allusions to eleventh-century contemporaries of the storyteller. Sulien, a learned Bishop of St. David's, may be the source for "Sulyen mab Iaen" ["Sunday-born son of Ice"], and the "Guilennin King of France" who is recruited for and dies during the tale's climactic boar-hunt may allude to William the Conqueror. William died in 1087, having visited St. David's in 1081, on one of those political journeys by which he sought to consolidate Norman authority. 1081 was also the year of a famous battle in that part of Wales. Rhys ap Tewdwr, King of Deheubarth (a region of southwestern Wales) and Gruffudd ap Cynan of North Wales, who had been in exile in Ireland and had brought Irish allies to fight with him, were leagued there against rival Welsh forces.

One of the notable clusters of invented names in Culhwch's list of sureties is that of a family emblematic of war, among whose offspring are Plague, Want, and Need. The horrors of war were not a remote experience for an

eleventh-century storyteller. As the Normans extended their power into Wales, Welsh lords jockeyed for survival and eminence, and their contentions were for women as well as land. Nest, the daughter of Rhys ap Tewdwr, became known as the Helen of Wales because of her many liaisons. The list of sureties advertises the storyteller's repertoire and reminds an audience that Culhwch's courtship is no private matter but unfolds in an arena crowded with warriors, wonders, and beauties.

After Arthur's messengers vainly search for Olwen for a year, he commissions six men to accompany Culhwch on a quest for the giant's castle—Kei, Bedwyr, Cynddylig the Guide, Gwrhyr the Interpreter of Languages, Gwalchmai (the Welsh Gawain), and Menw the Magician. They come to a great fort before which they meet the shepherd Custennin, who tells them that Ysbaddaden ("Hawthorn" or "Whitethorn") Chief Giant, who holds the fort, is his brother. The giant has oppressed Custennin on account of Custennin's wife and has slain all but one of her twenty-four sons. At the end of the tale, the remaining son, Goreu, kills the giant and takes possession of the fort and territory. Goreu's mother, like Arthur, recognizes Culhwch as kin; his mother, Goleuddydd, is her sister. She counsels Culhwch how to approach Olwen, and Olwen herself readily gives him her love and warns him not to waver when negotiating with her father.

Once Culhwch has presented to the giant his bid to marry Olwen and has agreed with characteristic brio to accomplish everything the giant demands as preparation for the wedding, Culhwch does no more than return at last and marry Olwen. The rare and difficult things are obtained by the six original companions and a host of men and animals who help out. They start with the last and deadliest wonder, Wnach's sword (not used to kill the boar but that which Goreu will use to behead Ysbaddaden). They do battle with the forces of Ireland for a cauldron, and when Arthur returns to hunt Twrch Trwyth there, he is treated as an overlord by the Irish. The intimidating effect of military power is casually noted, an ironic echo of early Welsh saints' lives that depicted Arthur as a tyrant needing reproof. Arthur and his men have made off with a cauldron full of the treasure of Ireland, and their return campaign causes fear and trembling there, but the saints ask his protection, while the men give him food. Thereupon Irish forces leagued with Arthur fight Twrch Trwyth at great cost: "one-fifth of Ireland was laid waste." The disparity between hunting a boar and devastating a nation is presented flatly. When the hunt ends in Cornwall, many men have died, but Twrch Trwyth is driven beyond pursuit into the sea.

Ethical subtlety cannot be ascribed to a tale in which King Arthur whacks a witch into two tubs of blood, or in which Caw of Pictland gives Ysbaddaden his shave right to the bone, whisking off his ears too. "Have you been shaved, man?" asks Culhwch. The bloody skull replies, "I have." The difference between the favored protagonists and their opponents is cultural. When Arthur's warriors show up at Ysbaddaden's court, they wear combs in their hair.

Culhwch is himself described as a triumph of art over nature; even the clods his horse kicks into the air fly like choreographed swallows. And Olwen, whose name means "White Track," leaves white trefoils growing where she steps.

Ysbaddaden, on the other hand, is sluggish (his eyelids need propping up) and grossly rude. He hurls stone spears at his guests. Arthur's men, evidently blessed with a magical version of the iron technology of the Celts, catch the spears and hurl them back with what the giant describes as iron points. These make the giant's eyes water and his limbs ache, but he is not easily quelled. "If I had my way," he tells Culhwch at the end, "you would never win her."

Among the tasks the heroes must accomplish is the freeing of Mabon son of Modron, and the counsel of the oldest animals is needed to find him. The name "Mabon" is derived from the Romano-British deity Apollo Maponos, and "Modron" comes from the Celtic goddess Matrona. The name translates as "Youth God, son of the Mother Goddess." Whatever this might have meant to an eleventh-century audience no longer believing in pagan deities, Mabon is given a history in the tale. Ysbaddaden tells that he was taken from his mother as an infant and is held prisoner somewhere; no one knows where or knows even whether he is alive or dead. Once freed with the help of a mighty salmon, Mabon joins Arthur, who from his court at Celliwig in Cornwall directs the several expeditions. Mabon's release is an instance of the freeings that occur (more happily than devastations) as Arthur's soldiers range for treasure, culminating in the defeat of Ysbaddaden that frees Goreu as well as Culhwch and Olwen.

Courtship is shown as also engaging the otherworldly character Gwyn ap Nudd ("Gwyn son of Nudd"—in this translation all the Welsh patronymics are translated). In Welsh tradition, he is the leader of the *tylwyth teg*, a band of spirits from the Otherworld. Here he is said to have been filled with demons to spare the world (like the swine of Gadarene), yet he is listed as one of Arthur's own band of companions. He is also one of those whom Ysbaddaden tells Culhwch he'll need but won't get for the hunting of Twrch Trwyth, and Culhwch's "Easy!" has more than bravado to support it in this and similar instances, since Gwyn has already been invoked by Culhwch as a follower of Arthur's. Later we learn that Gwyn has abducted the bride of Gwythyr ap Greidawl before they could sleep together, provoking a war that requires Arthur to mediate a truce. The girl is to remain in her father's house, while Gwyn ap Nudd and Gwythyr ap Greidawl fight for her every May Day till Doomsday. Their endless competition for a wife, linked to summer's recurring emergence and retreat, echoes other courtship battles in the tale. Gwyn gives counsel and assistance to Arthur in trying to subdue the witch whose blood is needed as shaving cream for Ysbaddaden. Arthur's own strength prevails, but his exercising leadership over Gwyn ap Nudd gives him an otherworldly cast, too, like Irish heroes who freely mingle with the *sidhe*.

Pieces of the tragic drama of the fall of Arthur and his court are discernible in *Culhwch and Olwen*. They are allusions only, like the references to Camlan, scene of Arthur's last battle, but evidently ones the audience could catch. An instance is the depiction of Kei, whose own murder is mentioned. Kei objects to admitting the obstreperous Culhwch to Arthur's court and has to be reminded by Arthur that they are noble only so long as they are sought after. To win glory, they have to be generous. Kei has prodigious traits, such as being as tall as he wishes or generating heat that can ignite a campfire to warm his companions. But his father Cynyr has said that if his son resembles him, he will be cold of heart, cold of hand, and stubborn. These qualities are shown later in the tale. Kei brings to Arthur a leash made from the beard of the giant Dillus, whom Kei has subdued by trickery and killed after plucking his beard. Arthur, noted in the Welsh *Triads* as a "frivolous bard," a lord capable of composing playful verses, responds with an epigram that if Dillus were well, he'd kill Kei. The court list had earlier noted that Arthur would be the avenger of the murder of Kei. Now, after hearing Arthur's epigram, Kei sulks, while Arthur prepares to go questing for another rare and difficult thing. The storyteller comments that from that time on, even when Arthur lacked resources and his men were slain, Kei would not go with him. The tale edges its comedy with shadows.

Bibliographic note: A critical edition is now available: *Culhwch and Olwen: An Edition and Study of the Oldest Arthurian Tale*, edited by Rachel Bromwich and D. Simon Evans (Univ. of Wales Press, 1992). This is an expansion of the editors' Welsh edition of 1988, which was built on work that Sir Idris Foster left unfinished at his death. The 1992 edition has a full critical apparatus and commentary in English. The editors have also assembled a complete glossary, published separately as *Glossary to Culhwch ac Olwen*, compiled by Rachel Bromwich and D. Simon Evans, Welsh Studies Volume 7 (Edwin Mellen Press, 1992).

The tale has been translated by Lady Charlotte Guest (first published in 1849) in *The Mabinogion* (Everyman's Library, 1906), 95–135; Gwyn Jones and Thomas Jones, *The Mabinogion* (Everyman's Library, 1949), 95–136; Jeffrey Gantz, *The Mabinogion* (Penguin, 1976), 134–76; Patrick K. Ford, *The Mabinogi and Other Medieval Welsh Tales* (Univ. of California, 1977), 119–57. For commentary on traditional characters and motifs of early Welsh literature, see Rachel Bromwich, *Triedd Ynys Prydein: The Welsh Triads* (Univ. of Wales, 1961; 2nd edition, 1978); on the international folktale, Antti Aarne and Stith Thompson, *The Types of the Folktale: A Classification and Bibliography* (New York: Burt Franklin, 1928; 1971), and Kenneth Jackson, *The International Popular Tale and Early Welsh Tradition* (Univ. of Wales Press, 1961), 71–81. On literary relationships and Irish affinities, see Idris Foster in R.S. Loomis, ed., *Arthurian Literature in the Middle Ages* (Oxford, 1959), 31–9. On saints' lives, see Elissa R. Henken, *Traditions of the Welsh Saints* (D.S. Brewer, 1987).

Critical studies include Proinsias Mac Cana, *The Mabinogi* (Univ. of Wales Press, 1977; 1992); Doris Edel, "The Arthur of *Culhwch ac Olwen* as a Figure of Epic Heroic Tradition," *Reading Medieval Studies* 9 (1983), 3–15; Joan N. Radner, "Interpreting Irony in Medieval Celtic Narrative: The Case of *Culhwch*

ac Olwen," *Cambridge Medieval Celtic Studies* 16 (1988), 41–59. Brynley F. Roberts discusses the tale in chapter 3 of *The Arthur of the Welsh*, edited by Rachel Bromwich, A.O. Jarman, and Brynley F. Roberts (Univ. of Wales Press, 1991), 73–95. See also Roberts' earlier study of the tale in the reissued *A Guide to Welsh Literature*, edited by A.O.H. Jarman and G.R. Hughes, vol. I (Univ. of Wales Press, 1976; 1992), 214–20; and his "From Traditional Tale to Literary Story: Middle Welsh Prose Narratives," ch. 7 in L.A. Arrathoon, ed., *The Craft of Fiction: Essays in Medieval Poetics* (Solaris, 1984), 211–30. For an analysis of the tale as a document of political ideology, see Stephen Knight, ch. 1 in *Arthurian Literature and Society* (London: Macmillan, 1983; 1985), 12–37.

Culhwch and Olwen

Cilydd son of Lord Celyddon wanted a wife as noble as himself. The wife he chose was Goleuddydd daughter of Lord Anlawdd.* After he lodged with her, the country went to prayers that they might have an heir. And through the prayers of the country, they had a son. And from the hour that she became pregnant, she went mad and would not approach any dwelling-place. When her time came, her right mind came to her. It came in a place where a swineherd was keeping a herd of pigs. And from fear of the pigs the queen gave birth. And the swineherd took the boy and came to the court. And the boy was baptized, and the name Culhwch was given him because he was born in a pig-run. But the boy was noble; he was a first cousin to Arthur; and he was entrusted to the care of foster parents.

And after that the boy's mother, Goleuddydd daughter of Lord Anlawdd, became sick. She called her husband to her and said, "I shall die of this sickness, and you will want another wife. Nowadays wives are the bestowers of gifts. But it is bad for you to deprive your son. So I beg you not to choose a wife until you see a briar with two heads upon my grave."

He promised her that. She summoned her counselor to her and asked him to strip the grave every year so that nothing would grow on it. The queen died. Then the king sent a servant every morning to see whether anything was growing on the grave. After seven years the counselor forgot to do what he had promised the queen. One day while hunting the king came to the cemetery; he wanted to see the grave that might permit him to marry. And he saw the briar.

When he saw it, the king went to be advised where he could find a wife. One of his advisers said, "I know a woman well suited for you to marry. She is the wife of King Doged." They agreed to go seek her. And they killed the king and carried his wife home with them, and an only daughter she had with her. And they conquered that king's land.

One day the good woman went out for a walk and came to the house of an old hag in the town who had no teeth in her head. The queen said, "Old

*See the note on Welsh pronunciation in the introduction to Chapter II.

woman, tell me what I shall ask you, for God's sake. Where are the children of the man who took possession of me by violence?" The hag answered, "He has no children." The queen said, "A sad thing for me, to come to a childless man." The hag said, "There is no need to be sad. It is prophesied he will have an heir, and by you, since he has not had one by another woman. Besides, do not be sorrowful, he has one son."

The good woman went home happy. And she asked her husband, "What reason did you have to hide your children from me?" The king said, "I will not hide him." They sent messengers for the boy, and he came to the court. His stepmother said to him, "It would be good for you to marry, son, and I have a daughter fit for any nobleman in the world." The boy responded, "I am not yet old enough to marry." She said, "I shall lay a destiny on you: that your side will not strike a woman until you win Olwen daughter of Ysbaddaden Chief Giant."

The boy blushed, and love of the girl entered all his limbs, though he had not yet seen her. His father said to him, "Ho, my son, why are you reddening? What's the matter with you?"

"My stepmother has sworn that I shall not have a wife until I take Olwen daughter of Ysbaddaden Chief Giant."

"It's easy for you to do that, son," said his father to him. "Arthur is your first cousin. Go to Arthur so that he can trim your hair, and ask that of him as a gift for you."

The boy went off on a steed with a dapple-grey head. It was four winters old, firm-jointed and shell-hoofed, with a bridle of tubular gold in its mouth. A costly gold saddle was under the boy, and two sharpened silver spears in his hand. A battle-ax was in his hand, from ridge to edge as long as a grown man's forearm. It would draw blood from the wind; it would be swifter than the swiftest dew from the stalk to the ground, when the dew is heaviest in June. A sword with a golden hilt was on his thigh, and its blade was gold. And on him a shield of braided gold having the color of the lightning of heaven in it and an ivory boss. And two greyhounds white of breast dappled, were in front of him, with a collar of red gold about the neck of each one, from the swell of the shoulder to the ear. The one that was on the left side would be on the right, and the one that was on the right side would be on the left, like two sea-swallows playing around him. The four hooves of the steed cut four divots, like four swallows in the air over him, now above him, now under him. A four-cornered purple mantle was on him, with an apple of red gold at each corner; each apple was worth a hundred cattle. There was precious gold worth three hundred cattle in his footgear of shoes and stirrups, from the top of his thigh to the end of his toe. Not a strand of hair on him out of place, so light was the steed's pace under him, heading for the gate of Arthur's court.

The youth said, "Is there a gatekeeper?"

"There is. And you, you may lose your head because you ask. I am gatekeeper for Arthur every first day of January. But my deputies for the rest

of the year are none other than Huandaw and Gogigwr and Llaesgymyn and Penpingion, who goes on his head to spare his feet, neither heavenward nor earthward, but like a rolling stone on the floor of the court."

"Open the gate."

"I will not."

"Why won't you open it?"

"Knife has gone into meat and drink into the drinking horn, and there is a thronging in Arthur's hall. No one may enter but the son of a king of legitimate rule or a craftsman who brings his craft. There is mash for your dogs and grain for your horse and hot hearty chops for you, with wine overflowing and delightful songs before you. Food for fifty men awaits you in the guest house; men from afar eat there, and the sons of foreign lands who offer no craft in Arthur's court. It will not be worse for you there than with Arthur in his court. A woman to sleep with you and delightful songs before your two knees. Tomorrow at midmorning, when the gate is opened for the throng that came here today, the gate will be opened for you first, and you will sit in Arthur's hall wherever you choose, from its upper to its lower end."

The youth said, "I will do none of that. If you open the door, it is well. If you do not open it, I will bring shame on your lord and slander on you. And I shall raise three shouts at the door of this gate that will be as loud at the top of Pengwaedd in Cornwall as in the depths of Dinsol in the North and in Esgeir Oerfel in Ireland. And every pregnant woman in this court will miscarry, and for those who are not pregnant, their wombs will become an affliction so that they will never be pregnant from this day on."

Glewlwyd Mighty-grip answered, "Whatever you may shout regarding the laws of Arthur's court, you will not be let in till I go speak to Arthur first."

And Glewlwyd came into the hall. Arthur said to him, "Have you news from the gate?"

"I do. Two-thirds of my life are past, and two-thirds of yours. I was once in Fort Se and Asse, in Sach and Salach, in Lotor and Ffotor. I was once in India the Great and India the Less. I was once in the battle of the two Ynyrs, when the twelve hostages were brought from Llychlyn. And I was once in Europe. I was in Africa, and in the islands of Corsica, and Fort Brythwch and Brythach and Nerthach. I was there when you slew the band of Gleis son of Merin, when you slew Black Mil son of Dugum. I was there when you conquered Greece in the East. I was once in Fort Oeth and Anoeth and Fort Nefenhyr. Nine fair generous rulers we saw there. But I never saw a man so handsome as the one who is now at the door of the gate."

Arthur said, "If you came in walking, go out running. And whoever looks at the light and shuts his eyes, an injunction on him. Let some serve with golden drinking horns and some with hot hearty chops, till there be enough food and drink for him. It's a disgrace to leave in wind and rain such a man as you speak of."

Kei [Cei, Kay] said, "By the hand of my friend, if my counsel were taken, the laws of the court would not be broken for him."

"Not so, good Kei. We are noblemen so long as we are sought after. The greater the reward we give, the greater will be our nobility and our praise and our glory."

And Glewlwyd came to the gate and opened the gate to Culhwch. And Culhwch did not dismount at the gate on the mounting block, as everyone did, but came inside on his steed. Culhwch said, "Hail, chief prince of this island! Greetings to the lower end of this house no less than to the upper! Greetings equally to your lords and your men and your warriors. May none be without a share of the greeting I give you. May your grace be as full as my greeting, and your faith, and your glory in this island!"

"By God's truth, so be it, chieftain! Greetings to you as well! Sit between two of the warriors, with delightful song before you, and the privilege of an heir upon you, a successor to a kingdom, as long as you are here. And when I distribute my goods to guests and men from afar, it shall be with your hand that I shall begin in this court."

The youth said, "I did not come here to seek food and drink. But if I get my gift, I shall give recompense for it and praise it. If I do not get it, I shall deprive you of your renown as far as your fame has reached to the four quarters of the world."

Arthur said, "Though you do not dwell here, chieftain, you shall have the gift your mouth and tongue may name, as far as the wind dries, as far as the rain wets, as far as the sun runs, as far as the sea spreads, as far as there is earth—except for my ship and my mantle, and Caledfwlch [Hard Breach] my sword, and Rhongomyniad [Lance Hower] my spear, and Wynebgwrthucher [Face of Evening] my shield, and Carnwennan [Bright Hilt] my knife, and Gwenhwyfar [Guinevere] my wife."

"God's truth on that?"

"You shall have it gladly. Name what you will."

"I will. I want my hair trimmed."

"You shall have that." Arthur took a golden comb and scissors with silver handles, and he combed his hair. And he asked who he was; Arthur said, "My heart grows tender towards you. I know you come of my blood. Say who you are."

"I shall: Culhwch son of Cilydd son of Lord Celyddon, by Goleuddydd daughter of Lord Anlawdd, my mother."

Arthur said, "It is true: you are a first cousin to me. Name what you will and you shall have it, whatever your mouth and tongue may name."

"God's truth to me on that? And the truth of your kingdom?"

"You shall have it gladly."

"I ask you to get me Olwen daughter of Ysbaddaden Chief Giant. And I call upon your warriors to confirm this."

The Catalog of Arthur's Companions

To confirm that gift from Arthur he called upon Kei, and Bedwyr [Bedivere], and Greidawl Gallddofydd, and Gwythyr son of Greidawl, and Greid son of Eri, and Cynddylg the Guide, and Tathal Open-deceit, and Maelwys son of Baeddan, and Cnychwr son of Nes [Conchobar mac Nesa], and Cubert son of Daere, and Fercos son of Poch [Fergus mac Róich], and Lluber Beutach, and Corfil Berfach [Conall Cernach], and Gwyn son of Esni, and Gwyn son of Nwyfre [Firmament], and Gwyn son of Nuadd, and Edern son of Nuadd, and Cadwy son of Geraint, and Fflewddwr the Flamelord, and Rhuawn the Strong son of Dorath, and Bradwen son of Prince Moren, and Prince Moren himself, and Dalldaf son of Cimin Cof, and the son of Alun of Dyfed, and the son of Saidi, and the son of Gwryon, and Uchdryd Protector in Battle, and Cynwas Cwryfagyl, and Gwrhwr Rich-in-Cattle, and Isbery Cat-claw, and Gallgoid Gofynynad, and Duach and Brathach and Nerthach, sons of Gwawrddur Cyrfach [Steel-king the Hunchback]—from the uplands of Hell did these men come. And Cilydd Hundred-holds, and Hundred-holds Hundred-hands, and Bog Hundred-claws, and Esgeir Gulhwch the Reed-cutter, and Drust Iron-fist, and Glewlwyd Mighty-grip, and Llŵch Stormy-hand, and Restless the Winged, and Sinnoch son of Seventh, and Wadu son of Seventh, and Naw son of Seventh, and Gwenwynwyn son of Naw son of Seventh, and Bedyw son of Seventh, and Gobrwyr son of Echel Mighty-thigh, and Echel Mighty-thigh himself. And Prince son of Roycol, and Dadweir the Blind-headed, and Garwyli son of Gwythawg Gwyr, and Gwythawg Gwyr himself. And Excess son of Ricca, and Menw son of Teirgwaedd [Little Son of Three Cries], and Enough son of Too-much, and Selyf [Solomon] son of Sinoid, and Gwsg son of Lineage, and Strength son of Strong, and Brave-lad son of Tryffin, and Boar son of Perif, and Boar son of Restless, and Iona, King of France, and Watch son of Watch-dog. And Teregud son of Iaen, and Sulien son of Iaen, and Bradwen son of Iaen, and Moren son of Iaen, and Siawn son of Iaen, and Cradawg son of Iaen—men of Fort Dathal, kin of Arthur's on their father's side.

Scorn son of Caw, and Iustig son of Caw, and Honor son of Caw, and Angawdd son of Caw, and Smith son of Caw, and Holly son of Caw, and Stalk son of Caw, and Patron-saint son of Caw, and Gwyngad son of Caw, and Path son of Caw, and Red son of Caw, and Meilyg son of Caw, and Cynwal son of Caw, and Protector son of Caw, and Striker son of Caw, and Someone son of Caw, and Gildas son of Caw, and Calcas son of Caw, and Huail son of Caw—he never begged at a lord's hand.

And Samson Dry-lip, and Taliesin Chief of Bards, and Manawydan son of Llŷr, and Llary son of Lord Casnar, and Sberin son of Fflergant king of Brittany, and Saranhon son of Glythwr, and champion son of Acre, and Anynnawg son of Menw son of Teirgwaedd, and Gwyn son of Nwyfre [Firmament], and Flame son of Firmament, and Geraint son of Erbin, and Ermid

son of Erbin, and Dywel son of Erbin, and Gwyn son of Ermid, and Cyndrwyn son of Ermid, and Hyfeidd One-cloak, and Eiddon the Magnanimous, and Rheiddwn Arwy, and Excess son of Ricca—a brother to Arthur on his mother's side, his father being the chief elder of Cornwall. And Llawnrodded the Bearded, and Nodawl Cut-beard, and Berth son of Cado, and Rheiddwn son of Beli, and Isgofan the Generous, and Isgawyn son of Banon. And Morfran son of Tegid; no man put his weapon into him at Camlan, he was so ugly; everyone supposed he was a devil assisting; he had hair on him like a stag's hair. And Sandde Angel-face; no man put his spear in him at Camlan, he was so fair; everyone supposed he was an angel assisting. And Saint Cynwyl, one of the three men who escaped from Camlan; he parted last from Arthur, on his horse Hengroen [Old-skin].

And Uchdryd son of Erim, and Eus son of Erim. And Winged Henwas [Old Servant] son of Erim, and Henbeddestyr [Old Walker] son of Erim, and Sgilti Lightfoot son of Erim. Three features had these three men: Henbeddestyr never found a man who ran as fast as he did, on horseback or on foot; Henwas the Winged, no four-footed creature could ever travel alongside him the length of an acre, let alone a distance farther than that; Sgilti Lightfoot, when the impulse was on him to go on his lord's errand, he never took a road, provided he knew where he was going, but if there were trees, he would go on the tops of the trees, and if there was a mountain, he would go on the tips of the reeds, and all his life, not a stalk bent under his feet, much less broke, he was so light.

Teithi Hen [Old Right] son of Gwynnan, whose land the sea overran and who himself just barely escaped and came to Arthur; his knife had this feature, that from the time he came here, the hilt never stayed on it, and because of that, a sickness developed in him and a weakness as long as he lived, and he died of that. And Carneddwr son of Gofynion the Old, and Gwenwynwyn son of Naf, Arthur's first warrior, and Llygadrud Emys [Red-eye the Stallion], and Gwrfoddw the Old (they were Arthur's uncles, his mother's brothers). Culfanawyd son of Gwryon, and Llenlleawg the Irishman from the headland of Gamon, and Dyfnwal the Bald, and Dunarth the King of the North. Terynon Twryf Liant, and Tegfan the Lame, and Tegyr Talgellawg. Gwrddywal son of Efrei, and Morgant the Generous. Gwystyl son of Nwython, and Rhun son of Nwython, and Llwydeu son of Nwython, and Gwydre son of Llwydeu by Gwenabwy daughter of Caw, his mother (Huail his uncle stabbed him, and for that there was hatred between Arthur and Huail, because of the wound).

Drem son of Dremidydd [Sight son of Seer] who saw from Celliwig in Cornwall as far as Pen Blathaon in Scotland when a fly would rise in the morning with the sun. And Eidoel son of Nêr, and Glwyddyn the Builder, who built Ehangwen [Spacious-fair], Arthur's hall. Cynyr Fair-beard; Kei was said to be son to him, who said to his wife, "If there is something of me in your son, girl, his heart will always be cold, and there will be no warmth in his

hands; another feature will he have if he is my son, he will be stubborn; another feature will he have, when he carries a load, great or small, it will never be seen either from in front or from behind; another feature will he have, no one will stand water and fire as well as he, another feature will he have, there will not be a servant or officer like him."

Henwas [Old Lad] and Hen Wynneb [Old Face] and Hen Gedymddeith [Old Companion]. Gallgoig, another one; whatever town he came to, though there were three hundred homesteads there, if he needed anything, he never allowed sleep on a man's eye while he was there. Berwyn son of Cyrenyr, and Paris, King of France (for whom the citadel is called Paris). Osla Big-knife, who carried Bronllafn Ferllydan [Sloping Blade, Short and Wide]; when Arthur and his armies came to the edge of a river, a narrow place was found on the water, and his knife in its sheath was placed across the river, and it would be enough of a bridge for the armies of the Three Realms of Britain and its Three Adjacent Islands and their booty.

Gwyddawg son of Menestyr, who killed Kei (and Arthur killed him and his brothers to avenge Kei). Garanwyn son of Kei, and Amren son of Bedwyr [Bedivere]. And Eli, and Myr, and Rheu Rhwydd Dyrys [Rheu the Generous and Wild], and Rhun Rhuddwern [Red-alder], and Eli, and Trachmyr, Arthur's chief huntsman. And Llwydeu son of Cel Coed, and Huabwy son of Gwryon, and Gwyn Godyfron, and Gweir Dathar the Attendant, and Gweir son of Cadellin the Pay-master. And Gweir Treacherous-valor, and Gweir Bright-shaft (uncles of Arthur, his mother's brothers).

The sons of Llwh Stormy-hand from beyond the Tyrrhenian Sea. Llenlleawg the Irishman, and Ardderchawg [the Excellent One] of Britain. Cas [Enmity] son of Saidi, Gwrfan Rough-hair, Gwilenhin the King of France, Gwitard son of Aedd the King of Ireland, Garselid the Irishman, Panawr the Chief of the Host, Atlendor son of Naf, Gwyn Hywar the overseer of Cornwall and Devon, one of the nine who plotted the battle of Camlan. Celi, and Cuel, and Gilla Stag-leg (he would leap three hundred acres in one bound, the chief leaper of Ireland).

Sol, and Gwadyd Osol, and Gwadyd Oddeith [Blazing Sole]. Sol could stand all day on one foot. If Gwadyd Osol stood on top of the greatest mountain in the world, it would become a level plain under his foot. When something hard met Gwadyd Oddeith, the bright fire of his soles was like the hot metal when it is drawn from the forge; he cleared the way for Arthur in battle.

Tall Erwm and Tall Atrwm. The day they came to a feast, they would seize three districts for themselves, feasting till noon and drinking till night. When they went to sleep, they would consume the heads of insects from hunger, as if they had not eaten food before. When they went to a feast, they left neither fat nor lean, neither hot nor cold, neither sour nor sweet, neither fresh nor salt, neither boiled nor raw.

Huarwar son of Halwn, who, as his reward, asked Arthur for his fill. He was one of the three great plagues of Cornwall and Devon when they got him his fill. Not a faint smile was found on him except when he was full.

Gwarae Golden-hair. The two whelps of the bitch Rhymhi. Gwyddrud and Gwydden the Obscure. Sugyn son of Sugnedydd [Suck son of Sucker], who would suck up the sea on which there were three hundred ships till there was nothing but dry beach; he had red breast-fever. Cacamwri, Arthur's servant; let him be shown a barn, though the harvest of thirty plows were in it, he would strike it with an iron flail till it was no better for the planks and the cross-beams and the side-beams than for the small oats in the bin on the floor of the barn.

Llwnng [Damp], and Dygyflwnng, and Anoeth the Bold. And Tall Eiddyl and Tall Amren (they were two servants of Arthur). And Gwefyl son of Gwastad [Lip son of Constant]; the day he was sad, he would let one of his lips down to his navel and the other would be a hood upon his head.

Uchdryd Cross-beard, who would cast his projecting red beard across fifty rafters in Arthur's hall. Elidyr the Guide. Ysgyrdaf and Ysgudydd; they were servants of Gwenhwyfar [Guinevere]; on their errand, their feet were as swift as their thoughts. Brys son of Brysethach, from the Hill of the Black Fernbrake in Britain. And Gruddlwyn Gor [Cheek-bush the Dwarf].

Bwlch [Breach] and Cyfwlch [Perfect] and Sefwlch, sons of Cleddyf Cyfwlch [Perfect Sword], grandsons of Cleddyf Difwlch [Unbroken Sword]. Their three shields were three brilliant gleams; their three spears were three pointed thrusts; their three swords were three sharp carvers. Glas [Blue], Glesig, Gleisad, their three dogs. Call [Prudent], Cuall [Sudden], Cafall [Steed], their three horses. Hwyrddyddwg [Late-bearer] and Drwgddyddwg [Ill-bearer] and Llwyrdyddwg [Full-bearer], their three wives. Och [Oh] and Garym [Cry] and Diasbad [Shriek], their three grandchildren. Lluched [Plague] and Neuwed [Want] and Eisywed [Need], their three daughters. Drwg [Bad] and Gwaeth [Worse] and Gwaethaf Oll [Worst of All], their three maidservants.

Eheubryd son of Cyfwlch, Gorasgwrn son of Nerth [Bigbone son of Strength], Gwaeddan son of Cynfelyn Ceudod, Pwyll Half-man.

Dwn the High-spirited Chieftain. Eiladar son of Pen Llarcan, Cynedyr the Wild son of Hetwn Silver Brow, Sawyl High Head, Gwalchmai [Gawain] son of Gwyar, Gwalhafed son of Gwyar. Gwrhryr the Interpreter of Languages, who knew all languages. And Cethtrwm the Priest.

Clust son of Clustfeinad [Ear son of Hearer], if he were buried seven fathoms in the earth, he would hear an ant fifty miles away when it rose from its couch in the morning. Medyr son of Medredydd [Skill son of Hitter], who from Celliwig would hit a wren on Esgeir Oerfel in Ireland precisely through its two legs. Gwiawn Cat-eye, who would cut a corner [of a lid] on the eye of a gnat without harm to the eye. Ôl son of Olwydd [Track son of Tracker]; seven years before he was born, his father's pigs were stolen, and when he

grew to be a man, he tracked the pigs and came home with them in seven herds. Bidwini [Baudwin] the Bishop, who blessed Arthur's food and drink.

The gentle, gold-torqued maidens of this island. Besides Gwenhwyfar [Guinevere], the first lady of this island, and her sister, Gwenhwyach, and Rathtyen, the only daughter of Clememyl, Celemon daughter of Kei, and Tangwen daughter of Gweir Dathar, the Attendant. Gwen Alarch [White Swan] daughter of Cynwal Hundred-pigs, Eurneid daughter of Clydno Eidin, Eneuawg daughter of Bedwyr [Bedivere]. Enrhydeg daughter of Tudathar, Gwenwledyr daughter of Gwardur the Hunchback, Erdudfyl daughter of Tryffin, Eurolyn daughter of Gwyddolwyn the Dwarf. Teleri daughter of Peul, Indeg daughter of Garwy the Tall. Morfudd daughter of Urien of Rheged. Beautiful Gwenlliant the Great-hearted Maiden. Creiddylad daughter of Lludd Silver-hand, the girl of most grandeur who ever lived in the three realms of Britain and its three adjacent islands, and for her Gwythyr son of Greidawl and Gwyn son of Nudd fight every May Day till Doomsday. Ellylw daughter of Neol Cyncrog (she lived for three generations). Essyllt [Isolde] Fair-neck and Essyllt Slender-neck.

In the name of all these did Culhwch son of Cilydd implore his gift.

The Quest for Olwen

Arthur said, "Ah, chieftain, I have never heard of the maiden you speak of, nor of her parents. I shall gladly send messengers to find her. Give me time to find her." The youth said, "Gladly. From this night till the same night next year."

And then Arthur sent messengers to every land in his domain to find the maiden. From that night till the same night a year later the messengers went wandering. By the end of the year Arthur's messengers had found nothing. And then Culhwch said, "Everyone has received his gift, but I am still without one. I shall leave and take your honor with me."

Kei said, "Ah, chieftain, you scorn Arthur too much. Come with us; till you say she is nowhere in the world or till we find her, we shall not part from you." Then Kei stood up. Kei had this feature, that for nine nights and nine days he would hold his breath under water. For nine nights and nine days he would go without sleep. A sword stroke of Kei's no physician could heal. Well endowed was Kei: he would be as tall as the highest tree in the wood when it pleased him. Another feature he had: his natural heat was so great that when it rained hardest, whatever was in his hand would be dry a handsbreadth above and below his hand. And when it was coldest for his companions, that heat would be kindling for them to light a fire.

Arthur called on Bedwyr [Bedivere], who never feared a quest on which Kei would go. It was true of Bedwyr that no one in this island was as handsome as he, except Arthur and Drych son of Cibddar [Mirror son of Cup-lord]. And this too, that though he were one-handed, three warriors would

not draw blood faster than he in the same field with him. Another feature he had, that there would be one thrust of his spear to nine counterthrusts.

Arthur called on Cynddyllig the Guide, "Go on this quest for me with the chieftain." He was no less able a guide in a land he had never seen than in his own land. He called Gwrhdyr, Interpreter of Languages, who knew all languages. He called Gwalchmai [Gawain] the son of Gwyar, because he never came home without the quest he had gone seeking. He was the best on foot and the best on horseback. He was Arthur's nephew, his sister's son, and his first cousin. Arthur called on Menw son of Teirgwaedd, because if they came to a heathen land, he could cast a spell on them so that no one would see them, but they would see everybody.

They went off till they came to a great open plain. There they saw a fort that was the greatest fort in the world. They walked that day. When they thought they were near to the fort, they were no nearer than before. And the second and the third day they walked. And they barely came there. But when they came to the same field as the fort, they saw a great flock of sheep there without limit or end to it, and a shepherd on top of a mound tending the sheep. He had a cloak of skins on him and at his side a furry mastiff larger than a stallion of nine winters. It was his custom that he never lost a lamb, much less a grown animal. No company had ever gone past him that he had not done them injury or death. His breath would burn every dead tree and bush on the field right to the ground.

Kei said, "Gwrhdyr, Interpreter of Languages, go talk to that man there."

"Kei, I promised to go only as far as you would go too."

"Let us go together."

Menw the son of Teirgwaedd said, "Do not be afraid to go there. I will cast a spell on the dog so that he will not hurt anyone."

They came to where the shepherd was. And they said to him, "You are well off, shepherd."

"May it never be better for you than for me."

"By God, yes, for you are a chief!"

"There is no harm can damage me but for my wife."

"Whose are the sheep you are tending, and who owns the fort there?"

"Slow-witted men that you are. It is known throughout the world that it is the fort of Ysbaddaden Chief Giant."

"And you, who are you?"

"Custennin son of Mynwyedig am I. And because of my wife, my brother Ysbaddaden Chief Giant did me damage. And you, who are you?"

"Messengers of Arthur are here, seeking Olwen."

"Ah, men! God help you! For all the world, do not do it! No one has come seeking that who went away with his life."

The shepherd stood up; and as he got up, Culhwch gave him a golden ring. The shepherd tried to wear the ring, but it would not go on him. And he put it on the finger of his glove and went home and gave the glove to his wife.

She took the ring from the glove. "From where did this ring come to you, husband?" she said. "It is not often that you have treasure."

"I went to the sea to find sea-food, and look! I saw a dead body coming in with the waves. I never saw a dead body as beautiful as that. And on its finger I found this ring."

"Alas, husband, the sea does not leave the dead in it beautiful. Show me that body."

"Wife, he whose body it is you will soon see here!"

"Who is he?" said his wife.

"Culhwch son of Cilydd son of Lord Celyddon, by Goleuddydd daughter of Lord Anlawdd, his mother; he has come to seek Olwen."

Two feelings were hers: joy that her nephew, her sister's son, was coming to her; and sorrow because she had never seen anyone go away with his life who had come on that quest.

They came to the gate of the court of the shepherd Custennin. She heard the sound of their coming. She ran to meet them joyfully. Kei took a log from the woodpile. And she came to meet them, to try to put her hands around their necks. Kei put the stake between her two hands. She squeezed the stake till it became a twisted twig. Kei said, "Woman, if you had squeezed me like that, no one else would ever need to love me. That's a bad love!"

They came to the house, and they were attended. After a while, when they all went thronging, the woman opened a stone chest that was in front of the chimney, and a lad with curly yellow hair rose from it. Gwrhdyr said, "It would be a pity to hide a lad like this. I know it is for no fault of his that he is punished."

The woman said, "He is the remnant. Ysbaddaden Chief Giant has slain twenty-three of my sons, and I have no more hope of this one than of the others."

Kei said, "Let him keep company with me, and we shall not be slain except together."

They ate. The woman said, "What have you come here for?"

"We come to seek Olwen."

"For God's sake, since no one from the fort has seen you yet, turn back!"

"God knows we shall not turn back till we see the girl. Will she come where she may be seen?"

"She comes here every Saturday to wash her head. And in the basin where she washes, she leaves all her rings, and neither she nor her messenger ever comes for them."

"Will she come here if she is sent for?"

"God knows I will not kill my own dear soul! I will not trap one who trusts me. But if you pledge to do her no injury, I will send for her."

"We give our word," they said.

She was sent for. And she came, with a robe of flame-red silk about her and a torque of red gold around the girl's neck, and precious pearls on it and

red gems. Her hair was yellower than the flowers of the broom. Her flesh was whiter than the foam of the wave. Her palms and her fingers were whiter than buds of sweet clover amid the fine gravel of a welling spring. Not the eye of the mewed hawk, not the eye of the thrice-mewed falcon, not any eye was lovelier than hers was. Her two breasts were whiter than the breast of the white swan; redder were her two cheeks than the reddest foxgloves. Whoever saw her would be filled with love for her. Four white clovers would grow up behind her wherever she went. And because of that, she was called Olwen [White-track].

She entered the house and sat beside Culhwch on the front bench, and as soon as he saw her, he recognized her. Culhwch said to her, "Ah, girl, it is you that I have loved. Come with me."

"I cannot do that, for sin would be charged to you and to me. My father has asked me to pledge not to leave without his counsel, because there is life for him only until I go off with a husband. But I'll give you advice, if you will take it. Go ask my father for me. And however much he may ask of you, promise to get it. And you shall win me. But if he doubts a thing, you will not win me, and it will be well for you if you escape with your life."

"I promise all that, and I shall get it."

She went to her chamber. They got up to follow her to the fort. And they killed nine gatekeepers who were at nine gates, without a man crying out, and nine mastiffs without one of them squealing. And they went on to the hall. They said, "Greetings to you, Ysbaddaden Chief Giant, from God and man!"

"And you, where are you going?"

"We come to seek your daughter Olwen for Culhwch son of Cilydd."

"Where are my worthless servants and my louts?" he said. "Raise the forks under my two eyelids so that I can see my intended son-in-law." That was done. "Come here tomorrow. I will give you some answer."

They arose, and Ysbaddaden Chief Giant seized one of the three poisoned stone spears that were at his hand and threw it after them. And Bedwyr caught it and threw it back and pierced Ysbaddaden Chief Giant squarely through the kneecap. Said the giant, "Cursed savage son-in-law! I shall walk the worse on a slope. The poisoned iron has hurt me like a gadfly's sting. Cursed be the smith who made it and the anvil he made it on, it is so sore!"

They lodged that night in the house of Custennin. On the next day they came to the hall with majesty and with fine combs fixed in their hair. They said, "Ysbaddaden Chief Giant, give us your daughter in exchange for her dowry and her marriage fee to you and her two kinswomen. And unless you give her, you will meet your death because of her."

"She and her four great-grandmothers and her four great-grandfathers are still alive. I have to confer with them."

"You will do that," they said. "Let us go to our food." As they got up, he took the second stone spear that was at his hand and threw it after them. And

Menw the son of Teirgwaedd caught it and threw it back and pierced him in the middle of the breast, so that it came out in the small of the back.

"Cursed savage son-in-law! The hard iron has hurt me like the bite of a many-mouthed leech. Cursed be the forge where it was heated. When I go up a hill, there will be tightness in the chest for me and stomach ache and frequent queasiness."

They went to their food. And on the third day they came to the court. They said, "Ysbaddaden Chief Giant, do not shoot at us any more. Do not seek harm for yourself and mortal injury and death."

"Where are my servants? Raise the forks—my eyelids have fallen over the balls of my eyes—so that I can look at my intended son-in-law."

They got up. And as they got up, he took the third poisoned stone spear and threw it after them. And Culhwch caught it. And he threw it back just as he wanted to and pierced him through the eyeball so that it came out at the nape of the neck.

"Cursed savage son-in-law! So long as I am left alive, the sight of my eyes will be the worse. When I go against the wind, they will water. There will be headache and dizziness for me at every new moon. Cursed be the forge where it was heated! The poisoned iron has pierced me like the bite of a mad dog."

They went to their food. The next day they came to the court. They said, "Do not shoot at us, nor seek the deadly injury and harm and martyrdom that are upon you—and what might be worse, if you keep after it. Give us your daughter."

"Where is he who is said to be seeking my daughter?"

"It is I who seek her, Culhwch son of Cilydd."

"Come here where I may see you." A chair was placed under him, facing him. Ysbaddaden Chief Giant said, "Is it you who seek my daughter?"

"It is I who seek her."

"I want your pledge that you will not do me less than justice."

"You have my pledge."

"When I have got what I shall name to you, you will get my daughter."

"Name what you will."

"I will. Do you see that great brushwood there?"

"I do."

"I want it uprooted from the earth and burnt on the ground so that the char and its ashes will be fertilizer for it. And I want it plowed and sown so that by morning when the dew dries, it will be ripe, and from it, food and drink may be made for your wedding guests and the girl's. And I want all this done in one day."

"It's easy for me to manage that, though you think it's not easy."

"Though you manage that, there's something you won't get: a farmer to farm that land. And no one can do it but Amaethon son of Dôn. He won't come with you freely, and you can't force him."

"It's easy for me to manage that, though you think it's not easy."

"Though you manage that, there's something you won't get: Gofannon son of Dôn to come to the top of the field to tend the iron blades. He won't work freely except for a legitimate king; you can't force him."

"It's easy for me to manage that, though you think it's not easy."

"Though you manage that, there's something you won't get: the two oxen of Gwlwydd Wineu, yoked together to plow that hard land well. He won't give them freely, and you can't force him."

"It's easy for me to manage that, though you think it's not easy."

"Though you manage that, there's something you won't get: I want the Yellow-white and the Speckled Ox yoked together."

"It's easy for me to manage that, though you think it's not easy."

"Though you manage that, there's something you won't get: the two horned oxen, one from the farther side of Mynydd Bannawg [the Horned Mountain], and the other from this side; and to drive them together after the same plow. They are Nyniaw and Peibiaw, whom God turned into oxen for their sins."

"It's easy for me to manage that, though you think it's not easy."

"Though you manage that, there's something you won't get: do you see that red tilled ground there?"

"Yes."

"When I first met the girl's mother, nine hestors [eighteen bushels] of flaxseed were sown there; neither black nor white has come from it yet. And I still have that measure. I want it sown in the new ground, so that it may become a white linen veil for my daughter's head at your wedding-feast."

"It's easy for me to manage that, though you think it's not easy."

"Though you manage that, there's something you won't get: honey nine times sweeter than the honey of the first swarm, without drone or bees, to make bragget for the feast."

"It's easy for me to manage that, though you think it's not easy."

"Though you manage that, there's something you won't get: the cup of Llwyrr son of Llwyrrion, that has the best drinks in it. For there's no vessel in the world except it that can hold that strong drink. You won't get it from him freely, and you can't force him."

"It's easy for me to manage that, though you think it's not easy."

"Though you manage that, there's something you won't get: the basket of Gwyddneu Garanhir. If the world, three times nine men at a time, came around it, everyone would get from it the food he wanted, as he liked it. I'd like to eat from it the night my daughter sleeps with you. He won't give it freely to anyone, and you can't force him."

"It's easy for me to manage that, though you think it's not easy."

"Though you manage that, there's something you won't get: the drinking horn of Gwlgawd Gododdin, for pouring for us that night. He won't give it freely, and you can't force him."

"It's easy for me to manage that, though you think it's not easy."

"Though you manage that, there's something you won't get: the harp of Teirtu to entertain me that night. When a man pleases, it plays itself; when wished, it is silent. He will not give it freely, and you can't force him."

"It's easy for me to manage that, though you think it's not easy."

"Though you manage that, there's something you won't get: the birds of Rhiannon, that waken the dead and put the living to sleep; these I would have entertain me that night."

"It's easy for me to manage that, though you think it's not easy."

"Though you manage that, there's something you won't get: the cauldron of Diwrnach the Irishman, the Steward of Odgar son of Aedd, King of Ireland, to boil the meat for your wedding guests."

"It's easy for me to manage that, though you think it's not easy."

"Though you manage that, there's something you won't get: I have to wash my head and shave my beard. I want the tusk of Ysgithyrwyn Chief Boar for shaving me. It won't do me any good unless it's pulled from his head alive."

"It's easy for me to manage that, though you think it's not easy."

"Though you manage that, there's something you won't get: no one in the world can pull it from his head but Odgar son of Aedd, King of Ireland."

"It's easy for me to manage that, though you think it's not easy."

"Though you manage that, there's something you won't get: I don't trust anyone to keep the tusk but Cadw [Caw] of Pictland. The sixty districts of Pictland are subject to him. He won't come freely from his kingdom, and he can't be forced."

"It's easy for me to manage that, though you think it's not easy."

"Though you manage that, there's something you won't get: I have to stretch out my hairs to shave myself. I'll never stretch them out unless we get the blood of the Dark Black Witch, daughter of the Pale White Witch, from the head of the Valley of Sorrow in the uplands of Hell."

"It's easy for me to manage that, though you think it's not easy."

"Though you manage that, there's something you won't get: I can't benefit from the blood unless we get it warm. There's no vessel in the world that keeps the warmth of a liquid put inside it except the bottles of Gwyddolwyn the Dwarf that keep the warmth in them from when liquid is put inside them in the east till they are carried to the west. He won't give them freely, and you can't force him."

"It's easy for me to manage that, though you think it's not easy."

"Though you manage that, there's something you won't get: some may desire milk. There's no way to get milk for everybody till we get the bottles of Rhynnon Rough-beard. No liquid ever goes sour in them. He won't give them freely to anyone, and he can't be forced."

"It's easy for me to manage that, though you think it's not easy."

"Though you manage that, there's something you won't get: no comb and scissors are in the world by which to dress my hair, it's so rough, except

the comb and scissors that are between the two ears of the boar Twrch Trwyth son of Lord Taredd. He won't give them freely, and he can't be forced."

"It's easy for me to manage that, though you think it's not easy."

"Though you manage that, there's something you won't get: Twrch Trwyth can't be hunted till you catch Drudwyn the young dog of Greid son of Eri."

"It's easy for me to manage that, though you think it's not easy."

"Though you manage that, there's something you won't get: there's no leash in the world that will hold him except the leash of Bog Hundred-claws."

"It's easy for me to manage that, though you think it's not easy."

"Though you manage that, there's something you won't get: there's no collar in the world that will hold the leash except the collar of Hundred-holds Hundred-hands."

"It's easy for me to manage that, though you think it's not easy."

"Though you manage that, there's something you won't get: the chain of Cilydd Hundred-holds to hold the collar and the leash together."

"It's easy for me to manage that, though you think it's not easy."

"Though you manage that, there's something you won't get: no huntsman in the world is capable of hunting with that dog except Mabon son of Modron, who was taken from his mother when he was three nights old. It's not known where he is, nor in what condition, whether alive or dead."

"It's easy for me to manage that, though you think it's not easy."

"Though you manage that, there's something you won't get: White Dunmane, the horse of Gwedd, swift as a wave is he, to be under Mabon for hunting Twrch Trwyth. He won't give him freely, and you can't force him."

"It's easy for me to manage that, though you think it's not easy."

"Though you manage that, there's something you won't get: Mabon will never be found nor will it be known where he is until you find Eidoel son of Aer, his foremost kinsman, for he will be unrelenting in searching for him. He is his first cousin."

"It's easy for me to manage that, though you think it's not easy."

"Though you manage that, there's something you won't get: Garselid the Irishman. He is the chief huntsman of Ireland. Twrch Trwyth will never be hunted without him."

"It's easy for me to manage that, though you think it's not easy."

"Though you manage that, there's something you won't get: a leash from the beard of Dillus the Bearded, because there's nothing else that can hold those two young dogs [the two whelps of the bitch Rhymhi; an omitted request?]. And you can't use it unless it's pulled from his beard while he's alive and plucked with wooden tweezers. He won't let anyone do that to him while he's alive, and it's useless dead, because it'll be brittle."

"It's easy for me to manage that, though you think it's not easy."

"Though you manage that, there's something you won't get: no huntsman in the world can hold those two young dogs except Cynedyr the Wild, son of Hetwn the Leper. He's nine times wilder than the wildest wild animal on the mountain. You'll never get him, and you'll never get my daughter."

"It's easy for me to manage that, though you think it's not easy."

"Though you manage that, there's something you won't get: you won't hunt Twrch Trwyth until you get Gwyn son of Nudd, in whom God has put the spirit of the demons of Annwn [the Welsh Otherworld], lest this world be ruined. They won't get along without him there."

"It's easy for me to manage that, though you think it's not easy."

"Though you manage that, there's something you won't get: no horse will be of use to Gwyn to hunt Twrch Trwyth except Black, the horse of Moro Oerfeddawg."

"It's easy for me to manage that, though you think it's not easy."

"Though you manage that, there's something you won't get: until Gwilenhin, the King of France, comes, Twrch Trwyth will not be hunted without him. It displeases him to leave his kingdom, and he will never come here."

"It's easy for me to manage that, though you think it's not easy."

"Though you manage that, there's something you won't get: Twrch Trwyth will never be hunted without getting the son of Alun of Dyfed. He's a good one for unleashing the dogs."

"It's easy for me to manage that, though you think it's not easy."

"Though you manage that, there's something you won't get: Twrch Trwyth will never be hunted till you get Aned and Aethlem. They would be swift as a gust of wind. They were never unleashed on a beast that they did not kill."

"It's easy for me to manage that, though you think it's not easy."

"Though you manage that, there's something you won't get: Arthur and his huntsmen to hunt Twrch Trwyth. He is a powerful man, but he will not come with you. The reason is that he is subject to my authority."

"It's easy for me to manage that, though you think it's not easy."

"Though you manage that, there's something you won't get: Twrch Trwyth can never be hunted until you get Bwlch and Cyfwlch and Sefwlch, sons of Cilydd Cyfwlch, grandsons of Cleddyf Difwlch. Their three shields are three brilliant gleams. Their three spears are three pointed thrusts. Their three swords are three sharp carvers. Their three dogs are Glas, Glesig, and Gleisad. Their three horses are Call, Cuall, and Cafall. Their three wives are Hwyrddyddwg and Drwgddyddwg and Llwyddyddwg. Their three witches are Oh and Cry and Shriek. Their three daughters are Plague and Want and Need. Their three maidservants are Bad and Worse and Worst of All. The three men will sound their battle-horns, and all the others will come to make battle-cry, until no one would be concerned if the sky fell to the earth."

"It's easy for me to manage that, though you think it's not easy."

"Though you manage that, there's something you won't get: the sword of Wrnach the Giant. Twrch Trwyth can never be slain except with that. He will not give it to anyone, neither for a price nor as a favor, and you can't force him."

"It's easy for me to manage that, though you think it's not easy."

"Though you manage that, there's something you won't get. You will get sleeplessness at night seeking these things. But you will not get them, and you will not get my daughter."

"I shall have horses and horsemen, and my lord and kinsman Arthur shall get me all those things. And I shall win your daughter. And you will lose your life."

"Go now. You are not responsible for food or clothing for my daughter. Seek those things, and when they are won, you shall win my daughter too."

The Expeditions of Arthur's Men: Wrnach's Sword

That day they went forth until evening, till there appeared a fort of stone and mortar, the greatest fort in the world. With amazement they saw a dark man coming from the fort who was larger than three of this world's men. They said to him, "Where is it you come from, man?"

"From the fort that you see there."

"Who owns the fort?"

"Slow-witted men that you are, there's no one in the world who doesn't know who owns this fort. Wrnach the Giant owns it."

"What courtesy is there for a guest and a man from afar stopping at this?"

"Ah, chieftain, God help you! No guest has ever come out of there with his life. No one gets in there except one who brings his craft."

They went to the gate. Gwrhryr, the Interpreter of Languages, said, "Is there a gatekeeper?"

"There is. And you, you may lose your head because you ask."

"Open the gate."

"I will not."

"Why won't you open it?"

"Knife has gone into meat and drink into the drinking horn, and there is a thronging in Wrnach's hall. Except for a craftsman who brings his craft, the gate is not opened."

Kei said, "Gatekeeper, I have a craft."

"What craft do you have?"

"I am the best burnisher of swords in the world."

"I will go tell that to Wrnach the Giant and bring an answer to you."

The gatekeeper came inside. Wrnach the Giant said, "Have you news from the gate?"

"I do. There is a company at the door of the gate who want to come in."

"And have you asked whether they have a craft?"

"Yes. And one of them said that he can burnish swords."

"That one I have needed. For some time I've been looking for someone to polish my sword, and I haven't found him. Let that one in, since he has a craft."

The gatekeeper came and opened the gate, and Kei came inside alone. And he greeted Wrnach the Giant. A chair was set under him. Wrnach the Giant said, "Is it true what is said of you, that you can burnish swords?"

"I can." The sword was brought to him. Kei took a mottled whetstone from under his arm. "Which do you prefer on it, a white hilt or a dark hilt?"

"Whatever you would prefer if it were your own that you were working on."

He polished one half of the blade for him and put it in his hand. "Does that suit you?"

"More than anything in my land, I wish all of it were like this. It's unfortunate that a man as good as you has no companion."

"Very well, sir, I have a companion, though he doesn't follow this craft."

"Who is he?"

"Let the gatekeeper go out, and I'll tell his special features. The head of his spear will leave its shaft and draw blood from the wind and come down again on the shaft." The gate was opened, and Bedwyr came in. Kei said, "Bedwyr is proficient, though he can't practice this craft."

And there was great talk among the men outside, of Kei and Bedwyr coming inside. And a young lad came inside with them, the only son of Custennin the Shepherd. What he and his companions with him did, as if it were nothing for them, was to go across the three courtyards till they came inside the fort. His companions said to the son of Custennin, "You did it! You're the best man!" From then on, he was called Goreu [Best] son of Custennin. They went separately to their lodgings, to manage to kill their lodgekeepers without the giant knowing.

The polishing of the sword was finished, and Kei put it in the hand of Wrnach the Giant, as if to inspect whether the work satisfied him. The giant said, "The work is good, and I am satisfied." Kei said, "Your sheath has spoiled your sword. Give it to me to remove the wooden side-pieces from it, and I can make new ones for it." And he took the sheath, with the sword in his other hand. He came above the giant as if to put the sword in its sheath. He drove it into the giant's head, and the blow cut his head off. They laid waste to the fort and made off with what treasures they wanted. On that very day a year later they came to Arthur's court, with the sword of Wrnach the Giant.

The Oldest Animals and the Freeing of Mabon

They told Arthur what had happened to them. Arthur said, "What's best of those rare and difficult things for us to seek first?"

They said, "It's best to search for Mabon son of Modron, but we can't find him till we first find Eidoel son of Aer, his kinsman."

Arthur rose up, and the warriors of the Island of Britain with him, to go to seek Eidoel. And they came to the outer fortress of Glivi, where Eidoel was in prison. Glivi stood on the rampart of the fort and said, "Arthur, what do you want of me, that you do not leave me alone on this rocky hill? I have no wealth here and nothing pleasant, neither wheat nor oats do I have, even if you were not trying to do me damage."

Arthur said, "I have not come here to harm you, but to seek a prisoner of yours."

"I shall give you the prisoner, though I hadn't planned to give him to anyone. And with that, you shall have my strength and my support."

The men said to Arthur, "Lord, go home. You cannot go with your army to seek things as slight as these."

Arthur said, "Gwrhŷr, Interpreter of Languages, it is right for you to go on this quest. You have all languages, and you share language with some of the birds and animals. Eidoel, it is right for you to go searching with my men; he is your first cousin. Kei and Bedwyr, I hope you will achieve the quest on which you go. Go on this quest for me."

They went till they came to the Blackbird of Cilgwri. Gwrhŷr asked her, "In God's name, do you know anything of Mabon son of Modron, who was taken when three nights old from between his mother and the wall?"

The Blackbird said, "When I first came here, a smith's anvil was here, and I was a young bird. No work has been done on it except when my beak was at it every evening. Today there is no more of it than the size of a nut that is not worn away. God's revenge on me if I have heard anything about the man you ask for. But what is right and fitting for me to do for Arthur's messengers, I shall do. There is a species of animal that God made before me; I shall go as your guide there."

They came to where the Stag of Rhedynfre was. "Stag of Rhedynfre, we have come to you here as Arthur's messengers, because we know no animal older than you. Tell us whatever you may know about Mabon son of Modron, who was taken from his mother when three nights old."

The Stag said, "When I came here first, there was only one antler on either side of my head, and there were no trees here except one oak sapling. And that grew into an oak with a hundred branches, and afterward the oak fell, and today there is nothing but a red stump of it. From then till today I have been here, and I have heard nothing of the person you ask for. But since you are Arthur's messengers, I will be your guide to where there is an animal God made before me."

They came to where the Owl of Cwm Cawlwyd was. "Owl of Cwm Cawlwyd, here are messengers of Arthur. Do you know anything about Mabon son of Modron, who was taken from his mother when three nights old?"

"If I knew anything, I'd tell it. When I first came here, the great valley you see was a wooded glen. And a race of men came to it, and it was laid waste, and a second wood grew there. And this is the third wood. And as for me, my wings are mere stumps. From then till today I haven't heard anything about the man you ask for. But I will be a guide for Arthur's messengers, till you come to where there is the oldest animal in this world and the most traveled, the Eagle of Gwernabwy."

Gwrhŷr said, "Eagle of Gwernabwy, we have come as messengers of Arthur to you, to ask you whether you know anything about Mabon son of Modron, who was taken from his mother when three nights old."

The Eagle said, "I came here a long time ago, and when I first came here I had a stone, and from its top I could peck at the stars every night. Now it is only a fist high. From then till today I have been here, and I have not heard anything about the man you ask for. But on one expedition I went looking for my food to Llyn Llyw. And when I came there, I dug my claws into a salmon, supposing he would be my food for a long time. And he pulled me into the depths till it was hard for me to get free of him. What I and all my family did was to go and attack him, and try to destroy him. He sent messengers to come to terms with me. And he himself came to me, to have fifty harpoons removed from his back. Unless he knows something of what you are after, I know of none who may. But I will be your guide to where he is."

They came to where he was. The Eagle said, "Salmon of Llyn Llyw, I have come to you with Arthur's messengers, to ask whether you know anything about Mabon son of Modron, who was taken from his mother when three nights old."

"I'll tell as much as I know. With every tide I go up along the river till I come beside the wall of *Caer Loyw* [Gloucester]. And there I found such grief as I never found before. In order that you may believe it, one of you should come on my two shoulders here."

And it was Kei and Gwrhŷr, Interpreter of Languages, who went on the two shoulders of the Salmon. And they advanced till they came to the wall where the prisoner was. There was wailing and grieving that they could hear on the other side of the wall. Gwrhŷr said, "What man mourns in this stone house?"

"Ah, man, there is cause for the one here to be sad. Mabon son of Modron is here in prison. And no man was so painfully imprisoned in such a prison as I, not the prison of *Lludd Silver-hand* nor that of *Greid son of Eri*."

"Have you hope of getting free, either for gold or silver or worldly wealth, or by battle or by fighting?"

"Whatever is had of me will be won by fighting."

They returned from there and came to where Arthur was. They told where Mabon son of Modron was in prison. Arthur summoned the warriors of this island and went to *Caer Loyw*, where Mabon was in prison. Kei and Bedwyr went on the two shoulders of the fish. While Arthur's warriors at-

tacked the fort, Kei broke open the wall and took the prisoner on his back, fighting on with the men as before. And Arthur came home and Mabon came with him, free.

Dillus the Bearded and Other Quests

Arthur said, "Now what's best of the rare and difficult things for us to seek first?"

"The best is to seek the two young dogs of the Bitch of Rhymhi."

Arthur said, "Is it known where she is?"

One said, "She is at Aber Deu Gleddyf [the estuary at Milford Haven]."

Arthur came to the house of Tringad at Aber Cleddyf, and he asked "Have you heard of her here? What does she look like?"

He said, "She looks like a she-wolf. And she goes about with her two young dogs. She has often killed my livestock. And she's down in Aber Cleddyf in a cave."

Arthur put to sea in his ship Prydwen, and the others went on land to hunt the bitch, and so they surrounded her and her two young dogs. And for Arthur's sake, God transformed them back to their own shape. Arthur's army dispersed one by one, two by two.

And while Gwythyr son of Greidawl was walking one day over a mountain, he heard crying and sad groaning, and it was a fearful sound to hear. And he hurried in that direction. And when he came there, he drew his sword and cut down an anthill to the ground and thus saved the ants from fire. And they said to him, "Take God's blessing and ours with you. What no man can ever recover, we will come to recover for you." Afterward they came with the eighteen bushels of flaxseed that Ysbaddaden Chief Giant had named to Culhwch, in full measure, without anything missing from it, except one flaxseed. And the lame ant brought that one before night.

When Kei and Bedwyr were sitting atop Mount Pumlumon, on Carn Gwylathyr, in the greatest wind in the world, they looked around them and saw a great smoke to the south, far away from them, not crossing over with the wind. And then Kei said, "By the hand of my friend, look there, the fire of a hero!" They hurried toward the smoke and came near and watched from a distance as Dillus the Bearded singed a wild boar. Yet he was the greatest hero who ever kept free of Arthur. Bedwyr said to Kei, "Do you know him?"

"I know him," said Kei. "That's Dillus the Bearded. There's no leash in the world that can hold Drudwyn, the young dog of Greid son of Eri, except a leash from the beard of the fellow you see there. And it's no good unless it's pulled live from his beard with wooden tweezers, because it will be brittle if it's dead."

"What's our plan for that?" said Bedwyr.

Kei said, "We'll let him eat his fill of meat, and after that, he'll go to sleep." While Dillus did that, they made wooden tweezers. When Kei knew

for sure that he was asleep, he dug beneath his feet the biggest pit in the world. He hit him a blow too big to measure and forced him down into the pit till they completely plucked out his beard with the wooden tweezers. And after that they killed him altogether.

And from there the two of them went to Celliwig in Cornwall with a leash from the beard of Dillus the Bearded, and Kei put it in Arthur's hand. And then Arthur sang this *englyn* [traditional Welsh stanza]:

Kei made a leash
From the beard of Dillus son of Euri.
If he were well, he'd be your death!

And because of that, Kei sulked, so that the warriors of this island barely made peace between Kei and Arthur. And still, neither when Arthur lacked resources nor his men were slaughtered would Kei go with him in his need from that time on.

And then Arthur said, "Which is best of the rare and difficult things to seek now?"

"It is best to seek Drudwyn, the young dog of Greid son of Eri."

A little before this Creiddylad daughter of Lludd Silver-hand went with Gwythyr son of Greidawl. And before he slept with her Gwyn son of Nudd came and took her away by force. Gwythyr son of Greidawl gathered an army and came to fight with Gwyn son of Nudd. And Gwyn was the victor, and he imprisoned Greid son of Eri, and Glinneu son of Taran, and Gwrgwst the Half-naked, and Dyfnarth his son. And he imprisoned Oben son of Nethawg and Nwython and Cyledyr the Wild, his son. And he killed Nwython and took out his heart. And he forced Cyledyr to eat his father's heart, and for that reason Cyledyr went mad. Arthur heard of this and came to the north and summoned Gwyn son of Nudd to him, and released his noblemen from Gwyn's prison. And he made peace between Gwyn son of Nudd and Gwythyr son of Greidawl. This is the peace that was made: to keep the maiden in her father's house, undisturbed by either side. And every May Day from that day till Doomsday, there should be fighting between Gwyn and Gwythyr. And whichever of them won on Doomsday would take the girl. And when these noblemen were reconciled thus, Arthur got Dun-mane the horse of Gwedd, and the leash of Bog Hundred-claws.

After that Arthur went to Brittany, with Mabon son of Melit and Gware Golden-hair, to seek the two dogs of Glythfyr the Breton. And after getting them, Arthur went to the west of Ireland for Gwrgi Seferi and also Odgar son of Aedd, King of Ireland. From there Arthur went to the north and captured Cyledyr the Wild. Then he went after Ysgithyrwyn Chief Boar. And Mabon son of Melit went with the two dogs of Glythfyr the Breton in his hand, and Drudwyn, the young dog of Greid son of Eri. And Arthur himself went on the hunt, with his dog Cafall in his hand. And Caw of Pictland mounted Llamrei, Arthur's mare, and joined the encounter. He took a hatchet as weapon

and fiercely and brilliantly went after the boar and split its head in two and took the tusk. It was not the dogs that Ysbaddaden had named to Culhwch that killed the boar, but Cafall, Arthur's own dog.

The Hunting of Twrch Trwyth

And after the slaying of Ysgithyrwyn Chief Boar, Arthur and his followers went to Celliwig in Cornwall. From there he sent Menw son of Teirgwaedd to see whether the treasures were between the two ears of Twrch Trwyth. For it would be base to go fight with him if he did not have the treasures. But *he* was there, certainly; he had already devastated a third of Ireland. Menw went seeking the treasures, and the place where he saw them was at Esgeir Oerfel in Ireland. Menw changed himself into a bird and alighted above Twrch's lair. He tried to pluck one of the treasures from him. But he didn't get a thing except one of his bristles. The boar got up very fiercely and shook himself so that some of his poison got onto him; from then on, Menw was never without a sore.

After that Arthur sent a messenger to Odgar son of Aedd, King of Ireland, to ask for the cauldron of Diwrnach of Ireland, his Steward. Odgar asked him for it. Diwrnach said, "God knows, though he should be better for getting one glimpse of it, he won't have it." And Arthur's messenger came back from Ireland with a "no." Arthur set out with a light force with him and boarded Prydwen his ship and went to Ireland. They went to the house of Diwrnach the Irishman. The troops of Odgar saw their number. After they ate and drank their portion, Arthur asked for the cauldron. Diwrnach answered that if he were to give it to anyone, he would give it at the word of Odgar, King of Ireland. After he said no to them, Bedwyr got up and took hold of the cauldron and put it on the back of Hygwydd, Arthur's servant. He was brother by the same mother to Cacamwri, Arthur's servant, and his regular function was to carry Arthur's cauldron and to start a fire under it.

Llenlleawg the Irishman seized Caledfwlch [Arthur's sword] and swung it in a circle and killed Diwrnach the Irishman and all his band. The hosts of Ireland came and fought with them. And when the hosts fled utterly, Arthur and his men went in their presence into his ship, and with them was the cauldron full of the treasure of Ireland. And they disembarked at the house of Llwydeu son of Cel Coed at Porth Cerddin in Dyfed. And [a place called] "Cauldron's Measure" is there.

And then Arthur assembled the soldiers to be found in the Three Realms of Britain and its Three Adjacent Islands, and those in France and Brittany and the Land of Summer; and the available choice hounds and celebrated horses. And he went with all these forces to Ireland. And there was great fear and trembling in Ireland because of him. And after Arthur landed, the saints of Ireland came to him to ask his protection. And he gave them protection,

and they in turn gave him their blessing. The men of Ireland came to Arthur and gave him a tribute of food.

Arthur came to Esgeir Oerfel in Ireland, to the place where Twrch Trwyth was, and his seven young pigs with him. Dogs were unleashed at him on every side. That day till evening, the Irish fought with Twrch Trwyth. Despite that, one-fifth of Ireland was laid waste.

The next day Arthur's warband fought with Twrch Trwyth; apart from what they got of evil from him, they got nothing good. The third day Arthur himself fought with him—for nine nights and nine days. He killed only one youngling of his pigs. The men asked Arthur what was the explanation for that pig [Twrch Trwyth]. He answered, "He was a king, and for his sins God turned him into a pig."

Arthur sent Gwrhryr, Interpreter of Languages, to try to talk to him. Gwrhryr went in the form of a bird and alighted above the lair of him and his seven young pigs. And Gwrhryr, the Interpreter of Languages, asked him, "For His sake who made you in this shape? If you can speak, I implore one of you to come and talk with Arthur."

Grugyn Silver-bristle gave a response. Like wings of silver were all his bristles; the path he took through wood and meadow could be seen by how his bristles shone. This is the answer Grugyn gave: "By Him who made us in this shape, we will not do it, and we will say nothing to Arthur. It was enough evil that God did to us, who made us in this shape, without you, too, coming to fight with us."

"I tell you that Arthur will fight for the comb and the razor and the scissors that are between the two ears of Twrch Trwyth."

Grugyn said, "Until his life is first taken, those treasures will not be taken. And tomorrow morning we shall set out from here and go to Arthur's land and do the greatest damage there that we can."

They set out by sea for Wales. And Arthur came with his armies and his horses and his dogs aboard Prydwen. And a sharp eye they kept on them. Twrch Trwyth landed at Porth Clais in Dyfed [to the south of St. David's]. That night Arthur came as far as Mynyw [St. David's]. The next day Arthur was told they had gone by. And he overtook Twrch Trwyth killing the cattle of Cynwas Cwryfagyl, after killing the men and beasts that were in Deu Gleddyf [the region about the estuary at Milford Haven] before Arthur's coming.

From the time Arthur came Twrch Trwyth headed from there toward Presseleu [the Preseli mountain range in north Pembrokeshire]. Arthur came there with the world's armies. He sent his men to the hunt: Eli and Trachmyr and Drudwyn, the young dog of Greid son of Eri, in his own hand; and Gwartheygydd son of Caw on another flank, with the two dogs of Glythfyr the Breton in his hand; and Bedwyr with Cafall, Arthur's dog, in his hand. And he grouped all the soldiers on either side of the Nyfer [a stream in north

Pembrokeshire]. The three sons of Cleddyf Difwlch came, men who had won great fame at the killing of Ysgithyrwyn Chief Boar.

And then Twrch Trwyth set out from Glyn Nyfer and came to Cwm Cerwyn, and there he stood at bay. And he killed four of Arthur's champions: Gwartheyydd son of Caw, and Tarawg of Allt Clwyd, and Rheiddwn son of Eli Adfer, and Isgofan the Generous. After killing these men he again stood at bay against them. And he killed Gwydre son of Arthur, and Garselid the Irishman, and Glew son of Ysgawd, and Isgawyn son of Banon. And then he himself was wounded.

The next morning at break of day some of the men overtook him. And he killed Huandaw, Gogigwr, and Penpingion, three servants of Glewlwyd Mighty-grip, so that God knows there was no servant of his in the world but Llaesgymyn, a man who improved no one's situation. And along with these he killed many men of the land, and Gwylddyn the Builder, Arthur's Chief Builder. And then Arthur overtook him at Pelumiawg, and he slew Madawg son of Teithion, Gwyn son of Tringad son of Nefedd, and Eiriawn Penlloran. From there he went to Abertywi and made a stand against them. He killed Cynlas son of Cynan and Gwilenhin, King of France. He went from there to Glyn Ystu, and then the men and dogs lost him.

Arthur summoned Gwyn son of Nudd to him, and asked him if he knew anything of Twrch Trwyth. He said that he did not. Thereupon all the huntsmen went hunting the pig, to the Vale of Llychwr. And Grugyn Silver-hair and Llwydawg the Suitor descended upon them and slew the huntsmen so that none of them escaped alive except one man. In response Arthur came with his armies to where Grugyn and Llwydawg were and unleashed against them all the appointed dogs. And as soon as Grugyn and Llwydawg stood at bay, Twrch Trwyth came to protect them. Since they crossed the Irish Sea, he had not seen them till then. The men and dogs fell upon him. He broke into flight to Mount Amanw. Then one of his young pigs was slain, and they went at it life for life. Twrch Llawin was killed and another of his pigs named Gwys. They moved on to Amanw Vale, and there Banw and Benwig were killed. From that place, none of his pigs accompanied him alive except Grugyn Silver-hair and Llwydawg the Suitor.

They proceeded to Lake Ewin, where Arthur overtook him. Twrch made a stand and killed Echel Mighty-thigh and Arwyli son of Gwyddawg Gwyr and many other men and dogs. From there he went to Lake Tawy. Then Grugyn Silver-bristle separated from them and went to Fort Tywi and on to Ceredigion. After him went Eli and Trachmyr and a great throng. He came as far as Garth Grugyn, and there he was killed.

Llwydawg the Suitor was in the vicinity and killed Rhuddfyw Rhys and many besides. Then Llwydawg went as far as Ystrad Yw. There the men of Brittany encountered him. He killed Tall Peisawg, the King of Brittany, and Red-eye the Stallion, and Gwrfoddw, Arthur's uncles, his mother's brothers. Then Llwydawg himself was slain.

Twrch Trwyth then made his way between the Tawy and Ewyas [a region in southeastern Wales]. Arthur summoned the men of Cornwall and Devon to stop him at the mouth of the Severn. Arthur said to the warriors of the island: "Twrch Trwyth has slain many of my subjects. By men's valor, so long as I live, he shall not go to Cornwall! I will not chase after him any more, but will go at him life for life! You do what you will."

What happened is that by his counsel an army of knights, and dogs of the island with them, was sent to Ewyas; from there they came back to the Severn and ambushed Twrch Trwyth with whatever tested fighters were in the island. They drove him battling into the Severn. And Mabon son of Modron went with him into the Severn River on White Dun-mane, Gweddw's steed, and Goreu son of Custennin, and Menw son of Teirgwaedd, between Llyn Lliwan and the estuary of the River Wye. And Arthur fell on him, and the champions of Britain with him. Osla Big-knife closed in, and Manawydan son of Llŷr, and Cacamwri, Arthur's servant, and Gwyngelli surrounded him. First they grabbed him by the feet and dunked him in the Severn till it flooded over him. On one side Mabon son of Modron spurred his horse and got the razor from him; and on the other side, Cyledyr the Wild on another horse plunged with him into the Severn and took the scissors from him. Before they could remove the comb, Twrch found land with his feet, and from the time he reached land, no dog nor man nor horse could keep up with him till he got to Cornwall.

Whatever trouble they had had trying to get those treasures, they had worse trouble trying to rescue the two men from drowning. As Cacamwri was pulled up, two millstones pulled him back to the depths. As Osla Bigknife was running after Twrch, his knife fell from its sheath, and he lost it; then his sheath got filled with water, and when he was pulled up his sheath dragged him down to the depths.

Arthur went on with his armies till he reached Twrch Trwyth in Cornwall. Whatever trouble he had had before was play compared with what he now had seeking the comb. Yet through trouble upon trouble the comb was won from him. Then Twrch Trwyth was harried out of Cornwall and driven straight into the sea. Afterward it was never known where he went and Aned and Aethlem [two pursuing hounds] with him. And Arthur went from there to Celliwig in Cornwall to bathe and cast off his weariness.

The Witch's Blood

Arthur said, "Are there now any of the rare and difficult things that we do not have?"

One of the men said, "There is. The blood of the Dark Black Witch, daughter of the Pale White Witch, from the head of the Valley of Sorrow in the uplands of Hell."

Arthur set out for the north and came to where the hag's cave was. And it was the advice of Gwyn son of Nudd and Gwythyr son of Greidawl to send Cacamwri and his brother Hygwydd to fight the witch. But when they came inside the cave, the witch attacked them and seized Hygwydd by the hair of his head and threw him to the ground under her. And Cacamwri grabbed her by the hair of her head and pulled her off Hygwydd to the ground. But she turned on Cacamwri and beat them both down and disarmed them and drove them out whooping and howling.

Arthur was infuriated to see his two servants almost killed, and he attempted an assault on the cave. And then Gwyn and Gwythyr said to him, "It's not decent or pleasing for us to see you wrestling with a witch. Send Tall Amren and Tall Eiddil into the cave."

And they went in. And if there was a bad time for the first two, there was a worse time for these two, till God knows whether any of the four of them could have got out of the place if they hadn't all four been placed on Arthur's mare, Llamrei.

Then Arthur occupied the entrance to the cave and overcame the hag with his knife Carnwennan and cut her in half, so that she became two tubs of blood. Caw of Pictland took the witch's blood and kept it with him.

The Winning of Olwen

And then Culhwch set out, and with him Goreu the son of Custennin and those who wished ill to Ysbaddaden Chief Giant, taking the rare and difficult things with them and heading for his court. And Caw of Pictland came and shaved the giant's beard—the flesh and skin to the bone, and the two ears completely. And Culhwch said, "Have you been shaved, man?"

"I have," he said.

"And is your daughter mine now?"

"She is," he said, "but you don't have to thank me for that. Instead thank Arthur, the man who made it happen for you. If I had my way, you would never win her. But it is past the time to take away my life."

And then Goreu son of Custennin seized him by the hair of his head and dragged him after him to the refuse mound and cut off his head and put it on the post of the castle yard. And he took possession of the fort and his territory.

And that night Culhwch slept with Olwen. And she was his only wife as long as he lived. And the armies of Arthur dispersed, each to his own country.

And thus did Culhwch win Olwen daughter of Ysbaddaden Chief Giant.

Chapter IV

ARTHUR IN GEOFFREY OF MONMOUTH

RICHARD M. LOOMIS

In the early twelfth century Geoffrey of Monmouth wrote a Latin history of Britain that made Arthur known to Europe. The work was completed about 1138; a year later the English historian Henry of Huntingdon was shown a copy at the monastery of Le Bec in Normandy. What is astonishing about Geoffrey's *Historia Regum Britannie* (*History of the Kings of Britain*) is that it narrates matters of which historians such as Henry had failed to find any record. These include the history of Britain before the Roman conquest and the full career of Arthur. In his dedication, Geoffrey reports that when he was once puzzling over these gaps in the historical record, Walter, Archdeacon of Oxford, presented him with just the source that he was looking for: an ancient book in the British language that told in orderly fashion the deeds of all the kings of Britain. In his plain and modest style, Geoffrey says, he has translated this ancient book into Latin.

Other historians of his own century and since have dismissed Geoffrey's claim as an imposture. No such consecutive account of the kings of Britain in the British language (that is, Welsh or Breton) has ever come to light. Archdeacon Walter could have given Geoffrey a volume containing genealogies and legends that served as a source for Geoffrey's history. But even if he made use of written Welsh or Breton traditions, the *Historia* is not just a translation. It is an artfully contrived literary composition that weaves the author's own inventions together with gleanings from various sources, including earlier Latin historians such as Gildas and Bede as well as Celtic lore. Following the *Historia Brittonum* ascribed to "Nennius," Geoffrey traces the origin of the Britons to Brutus, great-grandson of Aeneas, Prince of Troy, on the model of the mythic origin of Rome presented in Virgil's *Aeneid*. Geoffrey's account climaxes in a portrayal of Arthur as the mightiest and noblest of the kings of Britain, one who staves off the Saxon advance and subdues much of