

of Badon Hill, near Bath, in 520, gained in the year and place of birth of Gildas the historian; and that he perished in an internecine feud provoked by his nephew Medrawd. "And even the renowned King Arthur himself was mortally wounded," says quaint old Geoffrey of Monmouth, "and being carried thence to the isle of Avallon to be cured of his wounds, he gave up the Crown of Britain to his kinsman Constantine, the son of Cadur, Duke of Cornwall, in the five hundred and forty-second year of our Lord's incarnation."

Five centuries had passed and the Celtic prince's name seemed almost forgotten when, in the reign of Henry II, his tomb was discovered, it is said, in Glastonbury Abbey in Somersetshire, the Avallon of the Cymri, and opened in presence of the Angevin monarch and his courtiers. The body of the British warrior was disclosed to the sight of the awe-struck beholders, attired in its royal habiliments, as lifelike and well-preserved in semblance as on the day it had been laid in the tomb. But at a touch it crumbled away into dust before their eyes, a sad reminder of the perishable quality of earthly grandeur. There remained of all these relics but a single golden tress, the hair of Guinevere, which had lain throughout the ages on the dead hero's breast.

A critic thus admirably summarizes the growth of the Arthurian legend and its influence on the romantic literature of all countries :

"These Celtic romances, having their birthplace in Brittany or in Wales, had been growing and changing for some centuries before the fanciful 'Historia Britonum' of Geoffrey of Monmouth flushed them with color and filled them with new life. Through his version they soon became a vehicle for the dissemination of Christian doctrine. By the year 1200 they were the common property of Europe, influencing profoundly the literature of the Middle Ages, and becoming the source of a great stream of poetry that has flowed without interruption down to our own day. Sixty years after the 'Historia Britonum' appeared, and when the English poet Layamon wrote his 'Brut' (A.D. 1205), a translation of Wace, as Wace was a translation of Geoffrey, the theme was engrossing the imagination of Europe. It had absorbed into itself the elements of other cycles of legend, which had grown up independently; some of these, in fact, having been at one time of much greater prominence. Finally, so vast and complicated did the body of Arthurian legend become, that