

THE HOLY GRAIL

A. E. WAITE

THE HOLY GRAIL

WORKS ON THE SECRET TRADITION

By ARTHUR EDWARD WAITE

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THE HOLY GRAIL

ITS LEGENDS AND SYMBOLISM

AN EXPLANATORY SURVEY OF THEIR EMBODIMENT
IN ROMANCE LITERATURE AND A CRITICAL STUDY
OF THE INTERPRETATIONS PLACED THEREON

By

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PREFACE

I AM about to set forth after a new manner the nature of the Mystery which is imbedded in the old Romance-Literature of the Holy Grail. As a literature it can be approached from several standpoints; and as it is needful on the ground of sincerity to establish my own view, even from the beginning, I have found that it has a direct consanguinity with other Mysteries, which belong to the more secret life of the soul. I propose to give a very full account of all the considerations involved and of the criticism which has arisen therefrom in various schools of thought. It comes about in this manner that there will be included the imperfect speculations of some who have preceded me and whose interest at a far distance is not utterly dissimilar to my own, though their equipment has been all too slight. The task will serve, among several objects, two which may be put on record at the moment: on the one hand and quite obviously, to illustrate the deeper suggestions of the Grail Legends and, on the other, certain collateral intimations which lie behind the teachings of the great Churches and are, in the official sense, as if beyond their ken. I should add that the undertaking has been imposed, in part if not entirely, through familiarity with analogical fields of symbolism, the correspondence of which must be unknown almost of necessity to students who have not passed beyond the normal fields of qualified speculation into those of more hidden research.

After adequate and sympathetic study of every hypothesis adopted or hazarded on the origin of the Grail Legend, its purpose and its term, there remain over various features of the Romances as things outside the general horizon of inquiry, and they are of the last and most real importance. For example, a scheme of criticism which fails to account for an almost *ab origine* claim on a concealed and super-valid mode of Eucharistic Consecration and, later on, for a Super-Apostolical Succession accounts for very little that matters finally.

It is indubitable that some slight acquaintance with the Legends of the Holy Grail can be presupposed in my readers; but in many it will be so unsubstantial that I have concluded to assume nothing, save only that I am addressing those who, in some wise at least, are concerned with the Great Quest in one of its departments, if not indeed dedicated thereunto. I have returned from explorations of my own with a synopsis of the results obtained to shew them that the literature of the Grail is of kinship with our common purpose and that this also is ours.

In order to simplify the issues, all the essential materials have been so grouped that those for whom the bulk of the original texts is, by one or another reason, either partially or wholly sealed, may attain, in the first place, an accurate and sufficing knowledge of that which the writers of the several great Cycles understood by the Grail itself, and that also which was involved in the Quests thereof, according to the mind of each successive expositor. I have sought, in the second place, to furnish a reasonable conversance with the intention, whether manifest or concealed, which has been attributed to the makers of the Romances by various students of these in different countries and times. In the third place, there is presented the mystical side of the Legends as that only in which the Grail literature can repay pursuit. All great subjects bring us back to the one subject which alone is great; all High Quests end in the Spiritual City; scholarly criticism, primeval folk-lore and learned researches are little less than useless if they fall short of directing us to our true end. It is on such an understanding, and so only, that either authorised scholar or graduating pupil can reach those things which will recompense knowledge concerning the Vision and the End in Grail literature, as it remains to us in the forms that survive—in which forms the Mystery of the Holy Cup has been passed through the mind of Romance and has been deflected sometimes like a staff in a pool.

Let it be joined to this that the high spirit of the Quest of old may be with us as much in the contemplation of the literature of the Quest as if we were adventuring forth ourselves in search of the Grail Castle, the Chalice, the Lance and the Sword. Herein is the consecrating motive which moves through the whole investigation. So also the Mystery of Quest does not differ in its root-matter, or considerably in its external form, wherever we meet it: there are always certain signs by which we can recognise it and may know also its consanguinities and its lineage.

Essentially speaking, the long story of critical research has left the foundation problems of the Cycles not only unsolved but untouched. That research has subsided now so far as England is concerned, the star which rules it having moved Westward and having reached perhaps its zenith in the United States. It would seem an opportune moment to look back upon the subject at large, to ascertain where we stand therein and to indicate the direction in which we should look for further light, it may be, even the term of a long protracted inquest.

The talismans of the solar hypothesis which once explained everything have melted in the hands of those who held them up. For not a few among us the knell of Vegetation Gods has sounded some time since: it is realised now that the Rites of Adonis cannot explain a Mystery which knows nothing of a Dead or Risen God. Eleusis also throws no light thereon, because the rapture and restoration of Persephone are foreign to a Cycle of Romance in which no Goddess

figures. Finally, a story without a Grail cannot explain a Grail story, whatever the age which we may assign provisionally thereto.

As scholarship, from time immemorial—that which remains authentic and that which has been exploded long ago—has been in search of a meaning behind folk-lore, custom, myth and Instituted Mystery; and as, however baffled and discounted, the feeling that it all means something has persisted; so when I met first (1) with an admittedly ancient Metrical Romance of the Holy Grail, telling of Secret Words handed down from Christ Himself, and (2) at a subsequent date, with another text affirming a Priesthood Consecrated by Him, from Him alone perpetuated and not through Church channels, I could do no otherwise than look for a meaning behind such strange clouds of intimation. I turned in all directions and produced an earlier record of Quests and Findings. The time has arrived to make a final and more methodical survey; for it may be that my day is far spent, that it is vain to hope for a life of research prolonged and that I can plan only for a space in which to revise, offer summaries in fine and deliver the last messages. The Secret Tradition in Christian Times has been the chief study of my literary life, and I have collected so far into their ultimate forms the records of exploration through the years into the Alchemical Tradition, Jewish Kabbalistic Theosophy and the *LEGENDA AUREA* of the Rosy Cross. Here now is my final construction and interpretation of the Grail Mythos, that which lies behind it included and whatever is connected therewith. As in the other cases, so here, it embodies in reconstructed form all that I have written on this subject, so far as I have proposed to preserve it. The Tradition in Emblematic Freemasonry, authentic or putative, is the next path before me and is one of peculiar difficulty because of its manufactured nature. The other Schools were things of natural growth, but this is very curious invention superimposed upon a slight basis of Operative Myth.

There is one thing further which it may be proper to add in concluding these prefatory words. I have adhered to the old orthography of Sir Thomas Malory and his beloved printer Caxton in respect of certain Knightly names, because it has been consecrated and made familiar by the use and wont of generations and even centuries. Tristram, Bors and Kay, Balyn and Balan, a dozen other Companions of the Round Table, are familiar in this spelling as household words and not under the variants of the original French texts. The orthography of MSS. especially was a chaos at that remote period; but there is a fashion pursued in these matters, to conform with which, for the benefit of all concerned, the salient distinctions are given throughout in the index.

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BOOK I

THE HOLY VESSEL AND ITS LITERATURE

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THE HOLY GRAIL

BOOK I

THE HOLY VESSEL AND ITS LITERATURE

I

SOME ASPECTS OF THE GRAIL LEGEND

THERE are a few Legends which may be said to stand forth among the innumerable Traditions of humanity, wearing the external signs and characters of some inward Secret or Mystery which belongs rather to eternity than to time. They are in no sense connected one with another—unless, indeed, by certain roots which are scarcely in time and place—and yet by a suggestion which is deeper than any message of the senses each seems appealing to each, one bearing testimony to another, and all recalling all. They kindle strange lights, they awaken dim memories in the antecedence of an immemorial past.¹ There are also other Legends—strange, melancholy and long haunting—which seem to have issued from the depths of aboriginal humanity, below all horizons of history, pointing, as we might think, to terrible periods of a past which was of the body only, not of a soul in man. To the latter class belongs part of what remains to us from the folk-lore of cave-dwellers, the Traditions of pre-Aryan races of Europe, as well as those Crafts and Arts which pass under the conventional but incorrect name of superstition,² the records of Savage Sorcery and Diabolical Magic. To the former class, among many others, belongs the Grail Legend, which in all its higher aspects is to be grouped among the Legends of the Soul.

The Mystery of the Grail is, *ex hypothesi*, a word which came forth out

¹ The meaning is that these roots are not discovered by research and do not belong to history: they are recognised by authentic intuitions of the soul; and because this kind of clairvoyance lies at the poles asunder from the common substitutes of professional psychism, those who possess the gift do not bear witness concerning it or parade its fruits.

² It has been pointed out truly that superstition connotes a survival of the sign when the thing signified has passed from all living memory. The practices to which I refer do not answer to this valid use of the word. They were acts of vital faith and their efficacy was unquestioned.

of Galilee. The literature which enshrines this Mystery, setting forth the circumstances under which it was from time to time discovered and, in fine, its imputed removal, with all involved thereby, is one of such considerable dimensions that it may be described accurately as large. This notwithstanding, there is no difficulty in presenting its broad outlines, as they are found in the texts which remain, with such reasonable simplicity that if there be anyone who is new to the subject, he can be instructed sufficiently for my purpose even from the beginning. It is to be understood therefore that the Holy Grail is represented invariably, excepting in one German version of the Legend, as that Vessel in which Christ either celebrated the Last Supper or consecrated for the first time the Elements of the Eucharist. It is therefore a Passover or Sacramental Vessel,¹ and, according to the Legend, its next use was to receive the Blood from the Wounds of Christ when His body was taken down from the Cross or, alternatively, from the side which was pierced by the Lance of Longinus. The Grail is a permanent Christian Reliquary from either point of view. Under circumstances which are recounted variously, the Vessel, its content included, was carried Westward in safe guardianship—coming, in fine, to Britain and there remaining, either in the hands of successive Keepers or in those of a single Warden, whose life was prolonged through the centuries. In the days of King Arthur the Prophet and Magician Merlin assumed the responsibility of carrying the Legend to its term, with which object he brought about the Institution of the Round Table; and the flower of Arthurian Chivalry—Perceval, Lancelot, Gawain, Bors, Galahad, among many others—set out to find the Sacred Vessel. In two of the Quests which followed, the Knighthood depicted in the greater Romances became a Mystery of Ideality, and nothing save its feeble reflection could have been found on earth. The Quests were to some extent preconceived in the mind of the Legend; but a few of them only were successful; and that which followed thereafter was the removal or deeper concealment of the Holy Grail. The Companions of the Quest asked, as one may say, for Bread and to those who were unworthy there was given the stone of their proper offence, but to a few others the Spiritual Meat which passes all understanding. That this account instructs the uninitiated person most imperfectly will be obvious to anyone who is acquainted with the great body of the literature; but, within the limits to which it is restricted, I do not know that if it were put differently it would prove to be more in harmony with the general sense of the Romances.

It might appear at first sight almost a superfluous precaution,

¹ The point of fact in both cases is that—figuratively speaking—the Last Supper fulfilled at once and abrogated the Old Law. The Passover dissolved into the Eucharist. And as regards the Grail Vessel, if it was the Dish of the Old Law it was transformed significantly into a Reliquary of the New; while if it was the Cup of the New and Eternal Testament it was the Living Sign of the Presence in the World of Legend, which was also a World of Faith at the Grail epoch.

even in an introductory sketch, to reply so fully as I have done to the assumed question: What then was the Holy Grail? Those who are unacquainted with its literature in the old Books of Chivalry, through which it entered first into the Romance of Europe, will know it by the *IDYLLS OF THE KING*. But it is not so superfluous as it seems, more especially with the class which I am addressing, since this has other concerns, like folk-lore scholarship; and many answers to the question—based on the evidence of variant texts—would differ from that which is given by the Knight Perceval to his fellow-monk in the poem of Tennyson:—

“What is it?”

The phantom of a Cup which comes and goes?—
Nay, monk! What phantom? answered Perceval.
The Cup, the Cup itself, from which our Lord
Drank at the last sad supper with his own.
This, from the blessed land of Aromat. . . .
Arimathæan Joseph, journeying brought
To Glastonbury. . . .
And there awhile it bode; and if a man
Could touch or see it, he was heal'd at once,
By faith, of all his ills. But then the times
Grew to such evil that the Holy Cup
Was caught away to Heaven and disappear'd.”¹

This is the answer with which, in one or another of its forms, chivalrous or poetic, everybody is expected to be familiar, or he must be counted as too unlettered for consideration, even in these introductory words. But it is so little the only answer, and it is so little full or exhaustive, that no person acquainted with the archaic literature would accept it otherwise than as one of its many aspects; and even the enchanting gift of Tennyson's poetic faculty leaves something to be desired in Perceval's reply to the direct question of Ambrosius. Something of the quintessential spirit has evaporated in an obscure manner. There is a strange allusiveness, a pregnancy, a suggestion about the old Legend in its highest forms—as it is found, for example, in the longer prose chronicle of Perceval le Gallois, but yet more fully in the *Quest par excellence*, which is of Galahad, the *haut prince*.² A touch of it is found later in Tennyson's own poem, when Perceval's sister, the nun of “utter whiteness”, describes her vision:—

“I heard a sound
As of a silver horn from o'er the hills. . . .
The slender sound
As from a distance beyond distance grew
Coming upon me. . . .
And then
Stream'd thro' my cell a cold and silver beam,
And down the long beam stole the Holy Grail,
Rose-red with beatings in it.”

¹ THE HOLY GRAIL, edition of 1870.

² It is to be observed that this title is ascribed to him by Malory. See MORTE D'ARTHUR, *Lib. XIII, cap. 4*. The words are written on the Siege Perilous, where Galahad takes his place.

And again :—

“ I saw the spiritual city and all her spires
And gateways in a glory like one pearl. . . .
Strike from the sea ; and from the star there shot
A rose-red sparkle to the city, and there
Dwelt, and I knew it was the Holy Grail.”¹

So also in the Books of Chivalry the Legend is treated with an aloofness, and yet with a directness of circumstance and a manifoldness of detail, awakening a sense of reality amidst enchantment which is scarcely heightened when the makers of the chronicles testify to the truth of their story. The explanation is, according to one version, that it was written by Christ Himself after the Resurrection,² and that there is no clerk, however hardy, who will dare to suggest that any later scripture is referable to the same hand. Sir Thomas Malory, the last and greatest compiler of the Arthurian Legend, suppresses this hazardous ascription, and in the colophon of the seventeenth book his immortal printer, Caxton, is contented with adding that it is “ a story chronicled for one of the truest and the holiest that is in this world ”.

There is ample evidence no further afield than Malory's own work, the *MORTE D'ARTHUR*, that the Grail Legend was derived into his glorious codification from various sources and that some elements entered therein which are excluded by the description of Sir Perceval in the *IDYLLS* or by the colophon of Malory's twelfth book, which reads : “ And here followeth the noble tale of the Sangraal, that called is the Holy Vessel and the signification of the Blessed Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, blessed mote it be, the which was brought into this land by Joseph of Armathye : therefore on all sinful souls, Blessed Lord, have Thou mercy.”

As an equipoise to the religious and devotional side of the Legend, it has been affirmed, as we shall see in its place, that more than one of the Grail Cycles took over something from Irish and Welsh folk-lore of the pagan period concerning a mysterious and magical vessel full of miraculous food. This is illustrated by the *MORTE D'ARTHUR*, in the memorable episode of the High Festival held by the King at Pentecost : in the midst of the supper “ there entered into the Hall the Holy Grail, covered with white samite ; but there was none might see it nor who bare it. And there was all the Hall fulfilled with good odours, and every knight had such meats and drinks as he loved best in this world.” That is a state of the Legend which offers little connection with the Mystical Vessel carried out of Palestine, whether by Joseph or another ; but either the simple-minded chroniclers of the past did not observe the anachronism, if they married a Christian Mystery

¹ As I am dealing at the moment with the question of atmosphere and of intimation “ high erected ”, it signifies nothing that this lovely episode had no authority in the old texts.

² This claim appears in the Prologue to a Romance usually entitled the *GRAND SAINT GRAAL*.

to a cycle of antecedent fable, or there is an explanation of a deeper kind, in which case we may meet with it at a later stage of these studies.

We shall make acquaintance meanwhile successively with various entanglements which render the Grail Legend perhaps the most embedded of all Romance Cycles. I have said that the Sacred Vessel is sacramental in a high degree, at least in the later developments: it connects intimately with the Eucharist; it is the most precious of all Relics in the eyes of all Christendom indifferently; for, supposing that it were manifested at this day, I doubt whether the most rigid of Protestant Sects could do otherwise than bow down before it. And if at the same time the roots of it lie deep in folk-lore of the pre-Christian period, in this sense it is a Dish of Plenty, with abundance for an eternal festival, like that which the Blessed Bran provided for his heroic followers. So also from another point of view, it is not a Cup but a Stone; and it came to this earth owing to the Fall of the Angels. In either case, it is brought to the West; it is carried to the East again; it is assumed into Heaven; for all that we know to the contrary, it is at this day in Northumbria; it is in the Secret Temple of a Knightly Company among the High Pyrenees; and it is in the land of Presbyter Johannes. It is like the Cup of the Elixir and the Stone of Transmutation in Alchemy—described in numberless ways and seldom after the same manner; yet it seems to be one thing only under its various veils; and blessed are those who find it.

II

EPOCHS OF THE LEGEND.

A MINUTE inquiry into the materials and their sources of a moving and stately Legend is opposed to the purposes and interests of the general reader, for whom the Grail has two epochs only in literature, so far as England is concerned: they are those of Sir Thomas Malory and the *IDYLLS OF THE KING*. As Tennyson was indebted mainly to Malory, except for things of his own invention, so it is through his gracious poems that many people have been sent back to the old Book of Chivalry from which he reproduced his motives and sometimes derived his words. But without entering into the domain of archæology, even some ordinary persons, and certainly the literate reader, will know well enough that there are branches of the Legend, both old and new, outside these two palmary names, and that some of them are close enough to their hands. They may be familiar with the Cornish poet, Robert Stephen Hawker, whose *QUEST OF THE SAN GRAAL*¹ has, as Madame de Stael

¹ *POETICAL WORKS OF ROBERT STEPHEN HAWKER, Vicar of Morwenstow, Cornwall. Original edition, 1879.*

once said of Saint-Martin, "some sublime gleams". They will have realised that the old French Romance of Perceval le Gallois, as translated into English of an archaic kind, ever beautiful and stately, by the late Dr. Sebastian Evans, is a gorgeous chronicle, full of richly painted pictures and endless pageants.¹ They will know also more dimly that there is a German Cycle of Grail Tradition—that Titurel, Parzival, Lohengrin, to whom a strange and wonderful life beyond all common teachings of Nature, all common conventions of Art, has been given by Wagner, are also legendary heroes of the Holy Grail. In their transmuted presence something may have hinted to the heart that the Quest is not pursued with horses or clothed in outward armour, but in the spirit along a *via mystica*.

There are therefore, broadly speaking, three points of view, outside all expert evidence, as regards the whole subject, and these are:—

(1) The Romantic, and the reversion of literary sentiment at the present day towards Romanticism will make it unnecessary to mention that this is now a very strong point. It is exemplified by moderately serviceable editions of the MORTE D'ARTHUR intended for general reading; by others produced for students;² by illustrated editions which are works of art; nor less indeed by those which have been modified in the interests of youth, and in which a large space is given always to the Grail Legend. They follow one another, even to this day, a shadowy masque, not excepting, at a far distance, some obscure and illiterate versions in dim byways of periodical literature.³

(2) The Poetic, and having regard to what has been said previously, I need only affirm that it has done much to exalt and spiritualise the Legend without removing the romantic element; but I speak here of modern invention. In the case of Tennyson it added that elevated emotion which belongs essentially to the Spirit of Romance, and this saved English literature during the second half of the nineteenth century. But taking the work at its highest, it may still be that the Grail Legend must wait to receive its treatment more fully by some poet who is to come. The literary form assumed by the Grail IDYLL OF THE KING—a tale within a tale twice-told—leaves something to be desired.

(3) The Archæological, and this includes naturally a number of branches, each of which has the character of a learned inquiry calling for special knowledge, and it is only of limited interest beyond the field of scholarship.

¹ THE HIGH HISTORY OF THE HOLY GRAAL, 1898 and 1903, the second or octavo edition being much better and adorned with pictures in the spirit of the story.

² There should be mentioned in this connection Dr. Oskar Sommer's magnificent edition of Vulgate Arthurian Texts prepared under the auspices of the Carnegie Institute.

³ It is not always illiterate: there is the ever-memorable and desirable YOUNG FOLKS' BUDGET, in which William Sharp once had a hand, when Fiona Macleod was immanent as yet in his consciousness. And there Roland Quiz—who was Quittenton—wrote about a transfigured Jack and the Beanstalk, who became JACK THE VALIANT and an Arthurian Knight. There also in a long sequel Tor of the Round Table was Companion to Jack the Valiant. And Proctor drew the great page pictures from issue to issue through many moons of dream.

Outside these admitted aspects which lie, so to speak, upon the surface of current literature, there is a fourth point of view which has been in course of emerging for some years past, though scarcely into public view: it is only in an accidental and sporadic fashion that it has entered as yet into the written word. For want of a better term it must be called spiritual: it cares little for the archæology of the subject, little for its romantic aspects, and possibly rather less than little for the poetic side. It would know scarcely of Hawker's *QUEST*—not that it signifies vitally—and would be disposed to contemplate the Grail exclusively as one of the Legends of the Soul: I might have said, as a Sacramental Legend; but this point of view is not usual, nor is it found to an appreciable extent among those who hold extreme or any Eucharistic views. In other words, it is not specially a High Anglican or a Latin interest: it characterises rather those who regard Religious Doctrine, Institute and Ritual as things typical or analogical, without realising that they may rank as such among Channels of Grace. So far as their conception has been put clearly to themselves, they look upon the Grail as an early recognition that doctrinal teachings are symbols which are no more meant for literal acceptance than any express fables. It includes also a hazardous inquiry into obscure Migrations of Doctrine from East to West, outside the Christian aspects of Grail literature.¹ This view appreciates perhaps only in an ordinary degree the evidence of history, nor can history be said to endorse it in existing forms of presentation. At the same time it is much too loose and indeterminate to be classed as a metaphysical construction of certain facts manifested in the life of a literature. It is a consideration of several serious but not fully equipped minds, and in some cases it has been impeded by sentimental aspects; but the reference made here enables me to add that it might have reached a better term in stronger and surer hands. No one can read the available Romances without seeing that the Legend has its spiritual side, though it may have that also which connects with folk-lore. No further afield than the *MORTE D'ARTHUR*—where it embodies the Quest of Galahad—the theme is treated openly as an allegory, where episodes have a supernatural meaning, which is explained sometimes in rather a tiresome manner.

Superfluities and misinterpretations notwithstanding, it is directly or indirectly from the fact of this spiritual side, thus designated tentatively, that the present thesis emerges as its development and final term. The literature carries, moreover, on its surface the proof rather than the mere suggestion of a hidden motive as well as a hidden meaning, and three sources of evidence can be cited on the authority of the texts: (1) Confessed allegory; but this is occasional only, being

¹ *LE VASE SACRÉ ET CE QU'IL CONTIENT*, by Emile Burnouf, is a French case in point; the late Mrs. Cooper-Oakley's *MYSTICAL TRADITIONS* is a typical English example; and those who care to go in quest of a German instance may consult: *CHRISTLICHE, THEOLOGIE, COSMOSOFIE NACH DEM ZEICHEN DES HEILIGEN GRAAL*, under the pseudonym of Intermediarius, 1914, privately printed at Stuttgart.

confined to two branches. (2) Ideological metathesis, the presence of which is not to be confused with allegory. (3) Certain traces and certain express claims which tend to set the Custodians of the Holy Grail in a position superior to that of the Official Church, though the Cycles are not otherwise manifestly hostile to that Church.¹ On the contrary, its own language is spoken and its own doctrines are enforced apparently.

It must be understood otherwise that the critical difficulties of Grail literature are grave within their own lines and that authorities thereon have been in conflict over issues which, from their own standpoint, are occasionally not less than vital. This notwithstanding, the elements of the problem lie actually within a comparatively small compass, though scattered through a literature which is not readily available, while it is, for the most part, in languages very far from familiar to readers of modern French and German. It has been so far mainly in the hands of those who, whatever their claims, have no horizon outside the issues of folk-lore, and who, like other specialists, have been a little disposed to create, on the basis of their common agreement, a certain autocracy among themselves, recognising nothing beyond their particular canons of criticism and the circle of their actual views. To these views there is no reason that we ourselves should take exception: they are excellent in their way, but from time to time they may not happen to signify, unless antecedently or provisionally, for those higher consequences with which we shall be concerned here. The sincerity of scholarship imputes to it a certain sanctity, but in respect of these consequences most scholarship has its eyes bandaged.

III

THE LITERATURE OF THE CYCLES

SOME of my readers may remember the "heap of letters" which, according to Matthew Arnold, was put into the hand of man and out of which he was left to make what word he might and would. He produced many combinations, but ever was haunted by a feeling that the right and true word had not come out of the medley. The Cycle of the Holy Grail seems put into our own hands like counters which can be arranged after more than one manner: it came about therefore that through recent generations scholarship has been turning them over and over, while some who stand and watch have wondered whether they have found their true meaning.² It happens also, having regard to the complications of Grail literature, that what may obtain reasonably for a specific purpose will

¹ They are the very opposite, as we shall see, throughout.

² It is not, however, the only kind of watch which can be pictured in the Grail subject; for scholarship may have watched—and perhaps rather disdainfully—the esoteric interpretations which have been offered from time to time of the past in England,

not conform of necessity to a given chronological order which on other considerations may be recommended to archæological research and maintained keenly till—as ever and continually—the makers of such research find cause to change their views. It will be pertinent therefore to say a few words about the classification adopted for these studies. In the first place, it should be indicated that my arrangement depends solely from the indubitable sequence of texts, as they stand now, and secondly, by an exercise of faith, from several palmary findings of scholarship itself. It follows that the disposition of the literature adopted for my own purpose is, on the evidence before us, a legitimate way in which to treat that literature. There are certain texts which arise out of one another, and it is a matter of logic to group them under their proper sections. It has been affirmed at its value that comparatively few documents of the general Cycle have reached us in their original form, even subsequently to that period at which several old Legends are thought to have been taken over in Christian interest, while others have been unified and harmonised so that they could be placed together in a series. It is the relation which has been thus instituted that I have sought to preserve, because among the questions posed for our consideration there is that of the motive which prompted various writers to create texts in succession, designed to follow from one another—although often of distinct authorship; as also to re-edit earlier inventions; and adjust works to one another with the object of presenting in a series of connected narratives the Mystery of the Holy Grail manifested in Britain. The bulk of the texts as they stand represents the acquisition completed and certain intentions exhibited to their highest degree. Hence an arrangement which shews this most plainly is for my object the reasonable grouping of all, that object depending from almost the last state of the literature and differing to this extent from ordinary textual criticism, to which the first state may be not only important but vital.

The Grail Cycle, as it is understood and as it will be set forth in these pages, belongs chiefly to France and Germany. Within these limits of place and language there is also a limit of time, for textual criticism has assigned, under specific reserves, the production of the chief works to a period of *circa* fifty years intervening between 1170 and 1220. As regards the reserves, I need mention only that the Romance-Histories of Merlin subsequent to the coronation of Arthur have not been regarded so far by scholarship as an integral part of Grail literature,¹ while one important German text has been ignored

France and Germany for the elucidation of the literature and that which lies behind it: it happens that too many of these could not have been proffered, had their writers any real knowledge. And there is more even than this; for I think that some of us who have dwelt through the years in figurative Houses of the Grail, who know them in one sense as if from roof to basement, may be most of all disposed to feel that there is another door to open, leading to a more Secret Sanctuary, if only they could discover where it is.

¹ We shall see that Robert de Borron, who may be called the first historian of the Grail, wrote a poem on Merlin which had no other object than to indicate his intimate connection with the Holy Grail and its manifestation in Arthurian days. His story was retold in prose and long sequels were added thereto, actuated by the same motive.

practically in England. Seeing that within the stated period and perhaps later many of the texts were subjected, as just indicated, to editing and even to re-editing, it seems to follow that approximate dates of composition would be the most precarious of arrangements for my special design. As regards that course which I have chosen, the chief French Romances fall into three divisions and cannot be classified otherwise. The elaborate analyses of contents prefixed to these divisions will of themselves convey the general scheme; but I speak of it more expressly in the present place because of the implicits with which we shall be concerned shortly.

It can be assumed as indubitably correct that the earliest Romances of the Holy Grail—certain speculative versions which have been supposed in the interests of folk-lore being set apart for obvious reasons—are the first portion of the *CONTE DEL GRAAL*, written by Chrétien de Troyes, and the metrical *JOSEPH OF ARIMATHÆA* by Robert de Borron, as the text now stands.¹ In the earlier records of criticism the preference was given to the latter in respect of date, but it is exercised now in favour of the former text. Ignoring the non-Christian Legends of Peredur, of Syr Percyvelle and a Bowl of Plenty—which will be considered in their proper place—there was another class of Traditions taken over in the interests of the Holy Grail. That the Arthurian Legend had pre-existed in a different form is shewn not only by incorporations of early chronicles, by Nennius and pre-Nennius, by William of Malmesbury, Layamon and Geoffrey of Monmouth, but by the early metrical literature of Northern and Southern France and possibly by a few late and isolated English texts, such as the fourteenth-century *MORTE D'ARTHUR*, which suggest older prototypes that are not now extant.² It is shewn otherwise by certain Welsh *MABINOZION* which represent indigenious, if not early Traditions, irrespective of others which derive from French sources. The Northern French Romances were reconstructed in the interest of Grail sub-surface design, whatever that may be held to have been. The most notable example in another sense is perhaps the Merlin Cycle, which took over floating Traditions concerning the Prophet and Enchanter, creating two divergent Romances, each having the object of connecting Merlin with the Grail. The general process was something after the manner following: (1) Lays innumerable, originally oral but drifting into the written form; (2) the same Lays re-edited in an Arthurian interest; (3) the Grail Mystery, at first independent of Arthurian Legend, or such at least is the recurring inference concerning it; (4) the Grail Legend married to Arthurian Romance, the connection being at first incidental; Arthurian Tradition after it had been assumed entirely in the interests of the Holy Grail.³

¹ The proposition brought forward by Hucher, its first and only editor, that a prose version of the *JOSEPH* is earlier than the metrical, has found practically no acceptance.

² It will be remembered that Layamon paraphrased *LE ROMAN DE BRUT* of Wace. There are two *MORTE D'ARTHURS*, an alliterative and a stanzaic, both of the fourteenth century.

³ It has been so assumed in the great so-called Vulgate Arthurian Cycle, analysed in Book V of the present work.

I recur therefore to my original thesis, that there is one aspect at least in which for my purpose a superior importance resides not in the primordial elements of the literature—real or alleged—but in their latest and unified form. As a typical example, it is customary to recognise that there was an early state of the GRAND SAINT GRAAL which is not now extant. The text, as we have it, is later than most of the Cycle to which it belongs,¹ yet it poses as an introduction thereto. When a day came for the major branches of the literature to be brought together and harmonised, there is a sense in which the historical text was and remains entitled to the priority which it claimed; but such priority is of course in respect of its place in a series and not in respect of time.

The reconstruction of Romances in the Grail interest must be distinguished, however, from innumerable alterations made otherwise by inventive scribes, but to which no ulterior motive can be attributed. There is further no difficulty in assuming (1) that the passage of folklore into Christian symbolical literature—if indeed it ever took place—may have followed a fixed plan; (2) that when late editing exhibits throughout a number of texts some defined scheme of instituted correlation, there may have been again a design in view, and the actuality of such design is obviously one concern of our research.

The places of Grail Legend, its reflections and its rumours are France, Germany, England and Wales, Holland, Italy, Spain and Portugal. In matters of literature France and England were united during the Anglo-Norman period, and when this period was over England produced nothing but reflections of French texts and one immortal compilation therefrom.² Germany had an independent version of the Legend, derived by its own evidence from a French source which is now unknown, if it is not a matter of invention. The German Cycle differs therefore in important respects from the extant French Cycles: the central figure is a characteristic hero in each; but the central Sacred Object is different, the subsidiary *dramatis personæ* are different in certain cases—or have at least undergone transformation—and, within limits, the purpose is apparently diverse. The Dutch version is comparatively an old compilation from French sources, some of which either cannot be identified or, in the hands of the poet who translated them, they have passed out of recognition. The Italian Cycle has not been regarded as of consequence to any issue of the literature, either directly or otherwise, and has been almost ignored by students until quite recently. Its consideration is deferred and so also is that of Spanish and Portuguese contributions to the subject-matter of the Grail. As regards Wales there are difficult questions involved, and they will demand full inquiry at a later stage. Of the Grail, as we know of it in France, there is no indigenous Welsh

¹ But late or early, it is a pseudo-historicity text, leading up to Arthurian times and all the Romance thereof.

² The reference—as need hardly be said—is to the MORTE D'ARTHUR of Sir Thomas Malory.

literature, but there are certain bardic remnants and traditional tales which were held once to be fundamental elements of the subject at large, while more than one of the Questing Knights are found among MABINOGION heroes. In the thirteenth century and later some French texts were carried across the Marches and are represented by translations.

For the purpose of the classification which follows there must be set aside, for the time being, whatsoever may be found, in any and all quarters, concerning Quests, Missions and so forth, in connection with which the central object known as the Holy Grail does not appear. We shall deal with them fully when we come to the study of the textual apparatus at large. The remaining works may be grouped into Cycles, according either to affinities of intention or to the seat of their origin, and among these the chief Northern French texts fall—as we have seen—into three divisions, the distribution of two being, within their own lines, a strictly chronological arrangement.

I. The CONTE DEL GRAAL. Let me say, in the first place, that our problems are not the authorship of an individual prose or metrical Romance, nor yet the comparative dates of certain documents as they stand actually, but whether those among us who have come to know the significance and value of the Hidden Life of Doctrine, can determine by research the extent to which the intimations of such Doctrine found in the Grail literature are true or false lights. Now, I suppose that there is no question as to the literary greatness of Chrétien de Troyes, while the sequels and alternatives added to his unfinished poem are not altogether unworthy to rank after his own work; the collection, however, as a whole, offers very little to our purpose. So far as Chrétien himself carried the story, we are not only unable to gather clearly what he intended by the Grail, but why he had adventured so far from his normal path as to plan and even to begin such a story. If he had gone further, we might have found that the Sacred Vessel, Telesma or Wonder-Working Palladium carried with it the same Legend as it carried for some other writers; but we do not know and it matters less than little, for the CONTE DEL GRAAL at its best is Nature in the pronaos of the Temple testifying that she is properly prepared. If we grant this claim, we know that in Chrétien at least, however she may have been prepared conventionally, she has not been sanctified. An alternative termination of Gerbert carries the story up to a higher level, moving it in the direction of Wolfram's PARZIVAL, yet not attaining that level. So far as any spiritual term is concerned, the great CONTE is rather after the manner of a hindrance which calls to be taken out of the way: it is useless for the higher issues, and even for the business of scholarship it seems of late days to have lapsed from its first importance.¹

The chief *additamentum* of this Cycle is the unprinted metrical

¹ Cf. Miss J. L. Weston: FROM RITUAL TO ROMANCE, p. 3.

PERCEVAL, which is preserved in the library at Berne.¹ The desire of the eyes of students is a lost or supposed Provençal poem, connected by the hypothesis with Perceval, as to which we shall hear more fully when we come to the German Cycle of the Holy Grail.

The Chrétien portion of the CONTE DEL GRAAL was written not later than 1189, but the most recent speculations are disposed to place it between 1175 and 1180. The Chrétien story was left unfinished because the death of the poet intervened, and his story was continued by an anonymous writer who passes as pseudo-Wauchier, by allusion to Wauchier de Denain, who took up the theme in turn, not earlier than 1189 and probably between that year and the end of the twelfth century. Manessier and Gerbert are believed to have produced their independent conclusions between 1211 and 1244. As regards Chrétien, it has been recognised and may be called obvious that his work "presupposes an Early History".² This being so, it may not be unreasonable to infer tentatively that such History was (1) a problematical first draft of Borron's poem, on which scholarship has dwelt; (2) the extant poem itself; or (3) that it corresponded to the book from which Borron claimed to draw and of which he is possibly at this day the only representative. To cite Borron's alleged source is virtually to cite Borron himself, and it is still a moot question whether his metrical JOSEPH may not have been in existence when Chrétien opened his CONTE. On the other hand, if the particular Quest does not draw directly or indirectly from the particular History, then my own view is that in the question of date but little can be held to depend from the priority of Chrétien's poem—which is a Quest—or that of Borron—which is a History. There is hence no call to indicate a special persuasion, more especially as exact chronological arrangement in so tinkered a cycle of literature as that of the Holy Grail is scarcely possible anywhere, nor is it my concern exactly.

II. The Cycle of Robert de Borron, being that which is connected more especially and accurately with his name; and therein is comprised: (1) The Metrical Romance of Joseph of Arimathæa, in which we learn the Origin, Early History and Migration of the Grail Westward, though it does not shew that the Sacred Vessel came actually into Britain. (2) The Lesser Holy Grail, called usually LE PETIT SAINT GRAAL. We have here a prose version of the poem by Robert de Borron, which accounts for its missing portions; but the two documents are not entirely coincident: for example, the later text brings Joseph of Arimathæa into Britain, with the Palladium, though he is left behind in the Metrical Romance. (3) The EARLY HISTORY OF MERLIN, and this represents in prose another Metrical Romance of the same authorship, of which the first five hundred lines are alone extant. (4) The Didot-Modena Perceval; but this text is almost unquestionably a much later composition, though it seems to contain

¹ See Appendix I, being Additional Notes and Extensions, Note 1.

² Not, it should be observed, an earlier version or root-matter of his adventurous story, though he appeals to a *Conte* which it was his task to put into rhyme.

some primitive elements of the Perceval Quest-motive. Its designation is explained by the facts that (*a*) the Didot codex was at one time in the possession of M. Firmin Didot, a well-known Parisian bookseller;¹ while (*b*) a second and superior text, discovered long after, is preserved at Modena.² This Romance has been regarded generally as the prose version of yet another lost poem by Robert de Borron: the very serious difficulties which impede this view will be discussed later.

These documents constitute what may be termed the Lesser Histories or Chronicles of the Holy Grail. Their characteristics in common, by which they may be grouped into a Cycle, are (1) the idea that certain Secret and possibly Sacramental Words were transmitted from Apostolic Times and were taken from East to West; (2) the succession of a certain Brons as Keeper of the Holy Grail immediately after Joseph of Arimathæa. The Metrical JOSEPH may have been written soon after 1170; but the balance of opinion favours the last years of the twelfth century. Some criticism has supposed that there were two drafts, of which only the second is extant. It was succeeded in either case by the Early MERLIN. As regards the DIDOT-MODENA PERCEVAL, the first codex is dated 1301, meaning, of course, the date of the MS. and not of its composition. The Modena version is referable to *circa* 1230 and is the work of a scribe towards the end of the thirteenth century.

III. The Vulgate Cycle of the Holy Grail and the Great Quest, comprising: (1) L'ESTOIRE DEL SAINT GRAAL, that is, THE BOOK OF THE HOLY GRAIL, or JOSEPH OF ARIMATHÆA, called also the FIRST BRANCH OF THE ROMANCES OF THE ROUND TABLE and the GRAND SAINT GRAAL. The last designation is due perhaps to its dimensions; but it may be held to deserve the title on higher considerations, as the most important development of the Legend in its pseudo-historical aspects, apart from the heroes who followed the various Quests. The work—in common with the whole Vulgate Cycle—has been imputed in the past to Walter Map, some time Archdeacon of Oxford and Chaplain to Henry II of England. It is, however, of unknown authorship, like the rest of the Cycle, though the ascription of certain texts to Map was not regarded untenderly by past scholarship.³ Unfortunately several of the Vulgate Romances seem generically distinct in respect of style, and from this point of view only their attribution to a single hand is to be set aside decisively. The GRAND SAINT GRAAL was intended to create a complete sequence and harmony between those parts of the Cycle with which it was concerned and the Galahad Quest, as well as to provide an Early History in plenary form. (2) The VULGATE MERLIN, which in certain respects is an attempt to reconcile the Borron Early History with that of the GRAND SAINT GRAAL.

¹ It is now in the BIBLIOTHÈQUE NATIONALE, and the press-reference is given by J. D. Bruce as No. 4166 of the NOUVELLES ACQUISITIONS. THE EVOLUTION OF ARTHURIAN ROMANCE, Vol. II, p. 104.

² BIBLIOTHECA ESTENSI, Bruce's press-reference being MS. 2 E. 49.

³ See Appendix I, Note 2.

The History of Merlin is taken to his final enchantment in the Forest of Broceliande, and in particular to that point when Monseigneur Gawain hears the last utterance of the Prophet.¹ An analogous term is reached by the HUTH MERLIN—another and alternative text—in respect of Bademagus, through a long series of entirely distinct episodes. It should be stated that the references to the Holy Grail are comparatively few; but they seem pregnant with meaning. As an addendum to these Branches, there is a late work called THE PROPHECIES OF MERLIN, which I know chiefly by the printed edition of Rouen. It has wide variations from the texts mentioned previously, in so far as it covers their ground, but it has also Grail references. It has been regarded as a continuation of the Early Prose MERLIN, and in this sense it would be alternative to the Vulgate and the Huth texts. (3) The great prose LANCELOT, which in spite of its subject matter is in its proper understanding a book of high purpose, or it lies at least on the fringe of this description and passes towards the close therein. (4) THE QUEST OF THE HOLY GRAIL, called also THE LAST BOOK OF THE ROUND TABLE, containing the term of the Mystery as given in the Chronicle concerning Galahad, the *haut prince*, and this is the Quest *par excellence*, the head and crown of the Grail Legend. I know that this statement would have been challenged once in certain high quarters of research in England, but the protagonists of alternative views have passed away some time since and another spirit of criticism has entered the lists. It must be added that all which is understood commonly by human interest, all that has been regarded as ethically characterising the chief German text is excluded by the Great Prose Quest. We have in place thereof a Spiritual Romance, setting forth under this guise a Mystery of the Soul in its progress. Hereof is the Galahad Quest.

These four Romances constitute what is termed the Vulgate Cycle, otherwise the Greater Chronicles of the Holy Grail. They are followed in this Cycle by the MORTE ARTHUR, as a fifth Branch, recounting the last great battle of the West, the breaking up of the Round Table, and the end of all its Chivalry. There are no Grail references, for the Grail has gone away. The characteristics of this Cycle are (1) the succession of Joseph II as Keeper of the Holy Grail immediately after his father and during the latter's lifetime, this dignity not being conferred upon Brons, either then or later; (2) the substitution of a claim in respect of Apostolical Succession—which placed the Grail Keepers in a superior position to any Priesthood holding from the Apostles—for that of a Secret Verbal Formula, sometimes connected with the Eucharist.

The dates of the texts which are included in the Vulgate Cycle differ widely, and the canon of the Grail literature was not closed in reality till the end of the thirteenth century. As to lost and alleged antecedent documents it is obvious that no dates can be assigned,

¹ See Sommer's VULGATE VERSION OF THE ARTHURIAN ROMANCES, Vol. II, LESTOIRE DE MERLIN, pp. 461, 462.

however speculative. It has been suggested, for example, that a proposed prototype of the GRAND SAINT GRAAL and the QUEST OF GALAHAD preceded the Wauchier continuation of Chrétien.

The *additamenta* of this Cycle are the Quests of the Holy Grail in Italian, Spanish and Portuguese versions, and one rendering into Welsh, but these will be dealt with in their place. There is, moreover, material of importance in a draft of the Great Quest printed at Rouen in 1488 together with the LANCELOT and the MORTE D'ARTHUR, as also in a Paris edition of 1533. Finally, the English Metrical Chronicle of Hardyng contains a version of the Galahad Legend which differs in express particulars from anything with which we are acquainted in the chief Romance texts.¹

IV. The pseudo-Robert de Borron Cycle, regarded as a derivative or alternate version of the Vulgate Cycle and presupposing therefore the GRAND SAINT GRAAL, less or more as it stands, but possibly in a shortened form. The specific claim on authorship stultifies itself and has been set aside long since. The Northern French originals of this collection are represented only by the HUTH MERLIN, which pretends to derive from Secret Archives of the Grail. It takes the Prophet's story up to the same point as the Vulgate text, with Bademagus as witness in place of Gawain, and through a long series of stirring and romantic episodes. It has been referred to 1225 or 1230 and is represented by an unique manuscript, itself belonging to the last quarter of the thirteenth century. A final part which is now wanting in French contained a version of the Galahad Quest. When Gaston Paris issued the text under notice in 1886 he indicated for the first time the existence of a pseudo-Robert de Borron Cycle. The subject attracted scholarship and has passed through various developments, the probable branches of the Cycle being tabulated after more than one manner. We need be concerned only with that of Bruce, which happens to be last and may be set forth as follows: (1) The GRAND SAINT GRAAL, most likely with few variants. It is to be noted, however, that the scribe of the HUTH MERLIN prefixed the LESSER HOLY GRAIL to his Merlin text, with which it is manifestly out of touch. (2) The EARLY PROSE MERLIN. (3) The HUTH MERLIN continuation, but this is alleged to have existed in a more expanded form. (4) The VULGATE LANCELOT, which is not supposed to have been recast and is thought to have been implied or taken for granted. (5) A Quest of Galahad, represented now by a Portuguese translation which is held to be fairly close. (6) The MORT D'ARTUS in the abbreviated form of an epilogue. It will be seen that the HUTH MERLIN corresponds roughly to this Cycle, with a substituted first branch. As the VULGATE MERLIN also lays claim on the authorship of Robert de Borron, the critical position of this supposed Cycle is not on very sure ground. It seems quite possible that in its speculative original form, as in the HUTH MERLIN, it began with the LESSER HOLY GRAIL and proceeded thence to the

¹ Appendix I, Note 3.

EARLY PROSE MERLIN, subsequently presupposing the GRAND SAINT GRAAL in its MERLIN continuation, as it does manifestly in the Huth text. Obviously also it presupposed a form of the LANCELOT or at least an excerpt therefrom giving account of the birth of Galahad.¹

V. The German Cycle, comprising three texts, which, like the CONTE DEL GRAAL, except in its latest sequels and then by chance allusions or derivations at a far distance, has nothing to tell us of Secret Words, Eucharistic or otherwise, and no hint of any Super-Apostolical Succession. The Legend is in fact revolutionised, and (1) the PARZIVAL Quest of Wolfram von Eschenbach, though it follows some broad lines of other Percevals, has suffered I know not what greatness of alteration. It was composed not later than 1210. (2) The TITUREL of Albrecht, which deserves a notice that it has never received in England, is of considerable importance to the German Cycle, but is of all texts the latest, being referable at its earliest to the year 1250. In fine, to dispose of this Cycle, there is (3) the Metrical Romance of DIU CRÔNE—*circa* 1220—by Heinrich von dem Turlin, in which Ghosts or the Dead-Alive are Custodians of the Mysteries, a fact which will lead us to estimate later on the value of those views which have sought to connect the Grail Quests with Legends of the Other World.

It must be said in respect of the above tabulation that while the Grail literature is divisible into several Cycles there are three only which belong to our most particular concern. The classification which I have made may prove serviceable therefore in yet another way, by enabling us not only to set apart that which is ultimately *nihil ad rem nostram catholicam et sanctam*, but also to come into our own.

It should be added that one text has been omitted from this classification, namely, the *Longer Prose Perceval*, called also the *Perlesvaus*, because it stands utterly alone. In one sense and one only it has an unacknowledged debt to the *Grand Saint Graal*; but this isolated fact exhibits the more clearly how the story, from beginning to end, stands far apart therefrom. The *Perlesvaus* is otherwise most important for the Cycle-General of the Holy Grail.

IV

FURTHER CONSIDERATIONS RESPECTING THE SEVERAL GROUPS OF TEXTS

THERE are several literatures which exhibit with various degrees of plainness the presence of that sub-surface meaning to which I have referred in respect of the Grail Legend. This additional sense may underlie the body-general of a literature, speaking one language without and another within, as in the

¹ The HUTH MERLIN was utilised largely by Malory in the MORTE D'ARTHUR for events leading up to the Galahad Quest. As regards the Quest itself in the pseudo-Robert Cycle, see my Book VI, Sections 6 and 7.

case of Alchemy ; it may answer to some concealed intention, which can be glimpsed there and here, as in the case of many parables ; or it may be a claim put forward evasively and yet with sufficient clearness to indicate that a wide field of significance extends behind. The sub-surface import of Grail literature belongs mainly to the third class. It is from this point of view that my departure is made here ; and if it proves a warrantable assumption some portion at least of the literature will be found, explicitly or otherwise, to contain these elements in no uncertain manner. As a matter of fact, we shall find them, sometimes as things expressed apart from comment or development, sometimes as things which are implied, or which follow as inferences ; but they may not be for such reason less decisive or demonstrable. The implicits of the Grail literature are the more unexpected and more pregnant in suggestion because of their peculiar vehicle, which is that of Romance, derived—as we shall find—in respect of its root-matter from an Apocryphal Gospel.¹

The most important of the Grail implicits are those from which my study depends ; but there are others, and in the present place they need only be specified as to the point of fact, since they belong more properly to considerations of individual texts. There is, in fine, one implicit which is reserved for the end, because it is that in which the debate culminates.

The implicit-in-chief of that Cycle which passes under the name of Robert de Borron and which I have termed the Lesser Histories or Chronicles of the Holy Grail, follows from the affirmed fact that certain Secret Words, with an affirmed application to the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar, were communicated to Joseph of Arimathæa by Christ Himself, and that these remained in reserve, being committed from Keeper to Keeper by a secret method only. It must be noted, moreover, that the Secret Words are represented in the poem of Robert de Borron as Words of Counsel on the external plane, that is to say, outside any efficacy which they may have been assumed to possess in Consecrating the Elements at the Mass. They are “ sweet, precious and holy words ”. It is these qualities which stand out more strongly in the Metrical Romance than any Eucharistic side of the formula ; and there seems consequently a certain doubt as to Borron’s chief intention respecting their office. But in a later prose version of the Metrical Romance, usually known as the LITTLE or LESSER HOLY GRAIL, this chief implicit passes into actual expression, and it becomes more clear in consequence that the Secret Words were those used *ex hypothesi* by the Wardens of the Holy Grail in the Sacred Work of the Eucharist. We shall see, however, that they were not so used in fact, on the open evidence of the texts.

Let it be understood that I am not seeking at present to press any inference but am stating a case only. If the references to Secret Words

¹ See Book IX, Sect. 2.

in the metrical JOSEPH do not offer a sacramental connection with full clearness—because they are also talismanic and protective—their operation in the latter respects must be regarded either as subsidiary and apart from the real concern of the Holy Grail or we are in the presence of another implied claim, which at the moment lies wholly *perdu* in sources that are concealed utterly. It is to be noted further that any Eucharistic Mystery has nothing to do with Transubstantiation, of which there is no trace in the Lesser Chronicles. Lastly, the sole Custodian of the Sacred Vessel lives in utter seclusion through a period of many centuries, and after the Words were at length imparted to his only lawful successor, Brons was removed for ever through the Gates of Death. The message of the Lesser Chronicles seems to be that something was brought into Britain which it was intended to manifest; but no manifestation took place.¹

When the GRAND SAINT GRAAL was produced as an imputed branch of Arthurian literature there is no need to say that the Roman Pontiff was then as now, at least in respect of his claim, the first Bishop of Christendom, and he derived *ex hypothesi* from St. Peter, who was *episcopus primus et pontifex primordialis*. The life of the Papal Pontificate, through long centuries, was a life of warfare in the aggressive and unremitting prosecution of this claim, with all that attached thereto and all that arose therefrom.² Now, the Romance in question attributes the same title to a son of Joseph of Arimathæa, who may be called the Second Joseph; and here is the first suggestion. The GRAND SAINT GRAAL and the Metrical Romance of Borron are the historical texts in chief of their particular Cycles; but it does not follow that their several continuations or derivatives are planned extensions throughout of the implicits which I have mentioned. In the second case, the Early Prose MERLIN has an implied motive of its own which need not detain us at the moment, while the DIDOT-MODENA PERCEVAL is of more than dubious authenticity as a sequel and does not as such represent fully the mind of the earlier texts, though—as suggested already—it has also an importance of its own and also its own implicits. On the other hand, in the Vulgate Arthurian Cycle, or Greater Chronicles of the Holy Grail, there is, if possible, a more complete divergence in respect of its Quest codex; and I can explain it best by saying that could we suppose for a moment that the GRAND SAINT GRAAL was produced in the interests of a pan-Britannic Church, or alternatively of some Secret School of Religion, then the Great Prose Quest or Chronicle of Galahad might represent an interposition on the part of the Official Church to take over the literature. At the same time, the several parts of each Cycle

¹ This is one reason why the DIDOT-MODENA PERCEVAL is not an authentic *terminus ad quem* of the Borron texts.

² As, for example, the iniquitous Albigensian Crusade and the Holy Inquisition, which came to birth in its later days.

under consideration belong thereto and cannot be located otherwise.¹

The further divisions under which I have scheduled the body-general of the literature, and especially the German Cycle, will be considered at length in their proper places, when their explicit and implied motives will emerge: for the present it must be sufficient to say that the German poems do not put forward the claims with which I am dealing now, namely, the Secret Formula in respect of the Borron Cycle and a Super-Apostolical Succession in respect of the GRAND SAINT GRAAL, and of that which is classed therewith.

We do not know that Wolfram had prototypes to follow outside those to which he confesses himself. As to these, he rejected one of them—at least by word of mouth—and it is only by inference that we can ascertain what he derived from the other, assuming, for a moment only, that this other is not his own invention. It will seem certain, however, for many that his acknowledged exemplar could not have originated the numerous generic distinctions which characterise the German PARZIVAL, and the fact of what Wolfram borrowed—if anything outside a single text with which we are acquainted—throws perhaps into clearer light all that which he created.

As regards both the claims with which I am concerned more especially at the present moment, we must remember that although we are dealing with a department of romantic literature, their content does not belong to Romance. The faculty of invention in stories is one thing, and it is indubitable that modern criticism has made insufficient allowance for its spontaneity; yet through all the Tales of Chivalry it worked within certain lines. It would not devise Secret Eucharistic Words or put forward strange claims which almost make void the Christian Apostolate in favour of some unheard-of succession communicated directly from Christ after Pentecost. We know absolutely that this kind of machinery belongs to another order. If it does not, then the Apocryphal Gospels were imbued with the romantic spirit and the explanation of Manichean Heresy may be sought in a flight of verse. In particular, the higher understanding of Secret Consecration is not a question of literature but of the communication to the human soul of the Divine Nature. It lies behind the Eucharistic Doctrine of the Latin Church; but on the external side that Doctrine communicates, by the hypothesis of Transubstantiation, the Divine Humanity rather than the Eternal and Divine Substance.²

I suppose that what follows from the claims has not entered into the consciousness of official scholarship; but it may have entered

¹ In so far as they are of independent authorship, those of the Vulgate Cycle were casually harmonised with the GRAND SAINT GRAIL, especially the GALAHAD QUEST. On the other hand, the DIDOT-MODENA PERCEVAL sees that the Secret Words are communicated officially to the third Custodian of the Holy Grail.

² The affirmation is requisite at this point because of the research before us, and it is put as if dogmatically: its evidential examination belongs to our final stage.

already into the thought of some among my readers whose preoccupations are similar to my own, and it can be stated in summary form. As the Sacred Palladium, which uttered its guiding Oracles from within the Holy Grail, was the Voice of Christ and the Voice of the Holy Spirit, its removal would mean that direct Divine Inspiration was taken away from the world: it depended henceforward at best on a *consensus sanctorum*, assumed to be *sensus Spiritus Sancti*. As alternatively Secret Words of Consecration, Extra-Efficacious Words which must be pronounced over Sacramental Elements, so that they may be converted into an Arch-Natural Eucharist, have never been expressed in writing, or have been enshrined only in a lost book, from which Robert de Borron claims to derive, it follows that since the Grail was withdrawn from the world, together with its Wardens, the Christian Church has had to be content with what it has, namely, a substituted Sacrament. And as the Super-Apostolical Succession, also by the hypothesis, must have ceased from the world when the last Keeper of the Grail went before his Vessel into Heaven, the Christian Church has been reduced to the ministry of some other and apparently lesser Ordination. It follows that the Grail literature is not only a Cycle of Romance originating from many Traditions but is also, in respect of those claims, a marked departure from Tradition.

In conclusion as to the greater implicits, seeing that the import of the Secret Words in the Cycle of Robert de Borron has eluded critical analysis, while that of the Extra-Apostolical Succession was appreciated by Paulin Paris¹ now many years ago and has occasioned scarcely any notice, there is one thing at least obvious, namely, that the second is written more largely on the surface of particular texts than the first, and when we come to consider in their order the Romances comprised in the Cycle of Lesser Chronicles, we shall find that there are several difficulties. It is only after their grave and full evaluation that it will be possible to put forward the possession of certain Secret Words, whether in relation to an infallible Guiding Voice or to the Eucharistic Office as being one of two sovereign implicits of the Grail literature.

The lesser implicits may, for purposes of convenience, be tabulated simply as follows: (1) The Implicits of Moses and Simeon. (2) The Implicits of the Merlin Legend. (3) The Implicits of the Grail Keepers. (4) The Implicits of the several Quests and the distinctions belonging thereto.

I recognise that the general subject of these and the other sub-surface meanings is at this stage beyond the scope of a reader who is new to the whole problem. For this reason those that are major have been sketched only in outline, while those that are minor have been limited to a simple enumeration. It has been necessary to

¹ See LES ROMANS DE LA TABLE RONDE, 1865, Vol. I, pp. 96 *et seq.*

tabulate all, so that the scope of the literature may be indicated even from the beginning in respect of our proper concern. When they have been studied in the light of the texts themselves, the greater task will follow, which is to establish, if this be possible, their motive and their term.

BOOK II

THE HOLY GRAIL IN ITS MANIFESTATION AND
REMOVAL

THE ARGUMENT

I. THE KEYNOTES OF GRAIL HISTORIES AND QUESTS.—Quest Versions and Versions of Early History—The Suppressed Word of the Perceval Quests—The Suppressed Sacramental Formula—The Secret School of Ordination—The Passing of the Sacraments—The Hallows in Britain—An Alternative Division of the Cycles. II. THE INSTITUTION OF THE HALLOWS.—Texts of the Sacramental Claims—Implied Mystery of the Hallows—The Four Hallows-in-Chief. III. THE VARIATIONS OF THE CUP LEGEND.—The Holy Vessel in the Legend of Joseph of Arimathæa—Sources and Authority of the Texts—Certain Apocryphal Gospels and certain Chronicles of Britain—Variations of the Conte del Graal—The Cup in the Metrical Romance of Robert de Borron—Its Eucharistic Character—Philology of the word GRAAL—The Cup in the Lesser Holy Grail—In the Early Prose Merlin—In the Didot-Modena Perceval—The Cup in the Grand Saint Graal—The Chalice and the Paschal Dish—References in the Later Prose Merlins—The Grail in the Longer Prose Perceval—The Doctrine of Transubstantiation—The Grail in the Quest of Galahad—The Hallow in the German Cycle—Possible Hypotheses regarding the Most Precious Vessel—The Conclusion of this matter. IV.—THE GRAIL VESSEL CONSIDERED AS A BOWL OF PLENTY.—Testimony of the Conte del Graal—The Tradition in the Vulgate Chronicles—In the Poem of Robert de Borron—Concerning Spiritual Refreshment—The Grand Saint Graal as a Legend of the Feeding Dish—The Great Prose Lancelot—The Dish of Plenty in the Quest of Galahad—Two Aspects of Magical Feeding in the German Cycle. V. THE LESSER HALLOWS OF THE LEGEND.—The Summary of these matters—The Legends of the Sacred Lance—The Broken Sword—The Dish or Salver. VI. THE CASTLE OF THE HOLY GRAIL.—Abode of the Sacred Vessel—The House of the Rich King Fisherman—The Castle in the Valley—The Building of the Holy House—Corbenic as the Treasury of the Holy Vessel—The Sanctuary of the Quest—The Castle of Souls—The Feudal Fortress of the German Parzival—The Palace of Dead Men. VII. THE KEEPERS OF THE HALLOWS.—Variations of Tradition in respect of the Grail and its Guardians—How the Life of Brons was prolonged throughout the Centuries—Hereditary Stewardships—The Keepers in the Vulgate Chronicles—Of Titurel, Amfortas and Parzival—The Mystery of Succession in the Longer Prose Perceval. VIII. THE PAGEANTS IN THE QUESTS.—Order of the Ceremonial Procession in the Conte del Graal—The Pageant in the Romance of Lancelot—In the Quest of Galahad—In the Longer Prose Perceval—In the German Cycle. IX. THE ENCHANTMENTS OF BRITAIN, THE TIMES CALLED ADVENTUROUS AND THE WOUNDING OF THE KING.—The Cloud upon the Sanctuary—The Suspension of Nature—Times of Peril and Distress—The Sickness of the King—Of Sin entering the Sanctuary—Of Help coming only from

without—The Dolorous Stroke—The Place of Sorrow and the Place of Life. X. THE SUPPRESSED WORD AND THE MYSTIC QUESTION.—One Distinction between Perceval and Galahad—Mischances of the Word in its Suppression—The Word in Partial Manifestation—On the Causes of Silence—On the Plenary Demand. XI. THE HEALING OF THE KING.—Particulars in all Branches collected shortly—How the Burden was lifted from Old Age—Of Anodyne for Wounding in Battle—Concerning the Body of the Healer—A King Unhealed—Of Absolution from Sin—Of Release from Death in Life. XII. THE REMOVAL OF THE HALLOWS.—How, according to one text, they remain in Seclusion—How, in another, there was no Recession—How the Dead were set Free—How the Hallows were not seen so openly—How they were taken to Heaven—Their Hidden Period—Conclusion as to the Hallows.

BOOK II

THE HOLY GRAIL IN ITS MANIFESTATION AND REMOVAL

I

THE KEYNOTES OF GRAIL HISTORIES AND QUESTS

IT is a very curious heaven which stands about the infancy of Romance Literature, and more than one warrant is required to constitute any valid title for the interpretation of those strange signs and portents which are seen in some of its zones. The academies of official learning are consecrated places, and those who have graduated in other schools must be among the first to recognise and respect the unsleeping vigilance and patience of students who are their colleagues and brothers in a different sphere. The external history of texts and the criticisms belonging thereto are in the hands of these unincorporated colleges, whose authority at the best is final: yet the inward spirit of the literature is sometimes an essence which escapes academical processes. At the same time, any department of criticism which should decide that certain Books of the Holy Grail do not put forward extraordinary claims of an evasive kind, and do not so far contain the suggestion of an inward purpose, must be held to have failed even within its own province.¹

Having indicated after what manner the literature at large with which we are dealing falls readily into several groups for the purpose of particular classification, we are called now to regard it a little differently, though without prejudice to the schedule-in-chief of my proper choice. The distinction between Quest-versions and versions of Early History is known to students, and though it is not absolutely definite in itself, so far as the intention of criticism is concerned solely, it is important from another point of view. The reason is that both classes have their particular Mystery, which is not without its antecedents in distinct schools of symbolism. The keynotes of the historical series—to make use of the expression in a sense which is not usually or so concisely attached to it—are those which have been considered as the implicits-in-chief of the literature. They are two in number,

¹ I am concerned at the moment with the question of fact only. It does not follow that the recognition of such purpose will lead anywhere: its attempted investigation may be baffled or may issue in wild hypotheses alone.

and they are embodied in two palmary historical texts, from which they were carried forward through intermediate documents which answer, broadly speaking, to the same description, and thence through certain Quest-versions by which the literature is taken to its term. I am speaking, however, only of those Cycles which have been classified in the previous section as the Lesser and Vulgate Chronicles of the Holy Grail; but it should be understood that the same or analogous early histories are presupposed by later sequels to the poem of Chrétien de Troyes. On the other hand, the German Cycle, as represented by Wolfram von Eschenbach and the *TITUREL* of Albrecht, has an early history which differs from all existing French sources, though the Quest of Parzival is in close correspondence as such with the Perceval Quests current in Northern France, so far as the early story of the hero is concerned.

We have seen, concerning the keynotes of the Early Histories, that they are:—

I. The suppression or concealment of a potent formula, in the absence of which—if it was sacramental in character—the Office of the Christian Ministry is not indeed abrogated but is foreshortened or has become substituted, so that there seems to be something of a vital character wanting to all the Sanctuaries. Whatever therefore the elements which entered into the composition of the Grail conception, several versions of the Legend unite in relating it to the Mystery and Power of certain High Consecrations or of certain unmanifested and withheld forms of speech. Those who can acquire and retain the words may exercise at will a strange power and mastery over all about them and shall possess great credit in the sight of God. They need never fear the deprivation of their proper rights, sufferings from evil judgments or conquest in battle, so long as their cause is just.¹ It is, however, as I have intimated, either (1) impossible to communicate these words in writing or (2) they are recorded in one place only—that is to say, in unknown archives or in a Hidden Book of the Grail. They are too precious and holy for common utterance and, moreover, they are the Secret of the Grail itself.²

II. The removal, cessation or assumption of a certain School of Ordination, which held from Heaven the highest warrants, which was perpetuated from generation to generation in one line of descent, which had the custody of Sacred Mysteries, which in fine ordained no one outside its own circle; and the perpetuation, concurrently and thereafter, of an alternative form of succession which did not produce the evidence of things unseen made spiritually and materially manifest as the term of faith. To this extent did the powers of an alleged Secret Sanctuary differ by the hypothesis concerning it from the powers of Holy Church manifested in the world. In the Prologue or Preamble to the *GRAND SAINT GRAAL*, the Hermit who receives

¹ *LE ROMAN DU SAINT GRAAL*, edited by Francisque Michel, 1841, pp. 39, 40.

² *Ib.*, pp. 40, 140.

the revelations and the custody of the Mysterious Book of its Legend testifies that the Greatest Secret of the World has been confided to him, and the communication took place amidst inexpressible experiences, as if in that third heaven to which St. Paul was translated.¹ The description of his ecstasy is written in fervent language, but in place of an Indicible Formula there is a great mystery attributed to the entire text of that cryptic record which, although it is said to be translated, yet remains seemingly unknown. The form wherein we have it seems like a concession to human disqualification and even to the frailty of external Nature. It is as if we had only a substitute. On the other hand, the keynotes of the French Quests are also of two kinds, by which—if it were possible otherwise—they might be divided into two Cycles. That of the several Percevals is the Suppression of a certain Word, Question, or formula, which suppression, on the surface side of things, causes dire misery and postpones the advancement of the elect hero ; though in the end it makes for his further recognition and ensures his more perfect calling, so that he is crowned in fine as he might not have been crowned at first. If at his initial opportunity he had asked in the Grail Castle that simple Question which covers the whole adventure with so dense a cloud of Mystery, he would not have been perfected in suffering, sorrow and exile ; some of the Quests would have terminated almost at their inception ; and one vital text could not have existed at all.

The Withheld Word of the Perceval Quests takes, as I have indicated, the form of a simple Question—a Question, that is to say, which should have been asked but was not : as such it is, so to speak, the reverse side or antithesis of the old classical Legend of the Sphinx. The Sphinx asked questions and devoured those who did not reply or whose answers blundered. Perceval kept silence when he should have urged his inquiries, sometimes through false modesty, sometimes because he had been cautioned against idle curiosity ; but in both cases, by the working of some apparently blind destiny, the omission carried with it the long series of its disastrous consequences. There came, however, a time of joy and deliverance, and it followed a belated utterance of the Word : thereby great enchantments were determined, great wrongs were redressed, and the wounds and sufferings endured through many years were healed and annulled. It follows that there is a twofold Mystery of Words connected by certain texts with the Quest of Perceval. Its higher sense is that of a Sacramental Formula, and this was interned with Perceval according to the Lesser Chronicles. But the Word alternative—that which could be reserved or uttered—had performed in the meantime, and was still fulfilling, a certain office of amelioration, so that it is not by a merely vain observance that, in a sense, it is replaced by the Quests for that unknown formula which was reserved as the Last Mystery of a Hidden Sanctuary. In contradistinction to this,

¹ See *LESTOIRE DEL SAINT GRAAL*—otherwise *GRAND SAINT GRAAL*—in Sommer's *VULGATE VERSION OF THE ARTHURIAN ROMANCES*, I, pp. 1-8.

there is one Quest—and it is to be noted that it is one only—which depends entirely from the second alternative of the historical implicits—namely, the Super-Apostolical Succession. This is the Galahad Quest, which stands apart from all Mysteries of asking, all joy of answer, as if these were of the Lesser Enigmas, while it is uplifted into a world of sanctity wherein is reflected only the shadow or similitude of secret claims—doctrinal or ecclesiastical. The heroism of human life is received into the Divine Rapture, so that the last formulary of the search after and finding of the Holy Grail is in all truth that which is expressed by the Admirable Doctor Ruysbroeck—*in vastissimum divinitatis pelagus navigare*. Of such is the Grail Legend, and those who are acquainted with it in the most elect of its early forms will agree not only that many portions of it are of talismanic attraction, but that it is indeed

“ A part
Of the hunger and thirst of the heart.”

It is also on the external side a very melancholy Legend ; it is the passing of a Great Procession and a Great Sacrament, which, owing to the imputed stress and terror of the time, is destined never to return in the same form : it is a portion of the loss of humanity on one side of its manhood ; and it is no matter for surprise that in these late days, which are so full of the “ hunger and thirst ”, several persons have attempted to read into it the particular significance which appeals to them. This has been in various cases anything but that which could have been intended consciously by any maker of chronicles ; and the Question of Perceval abides therefore among us, but now in the reverse sense, seeing that it is asked, and this often, yet it remains unanswered to this day, unless in those Holy Places, beyond the external voices, of which this world as such knows not anything.

II

THE INSTITUTION OF THE HALLOWS

HAVING thus indicated after what manner the Grail Legend and its literature is tinged with Mystery and Symbolism *a parte ante et a parte post*, the next matter of our inquiry is concerned with the Institution of the Hallows. In all its forms indifferently, the Legend of the Holy Grail depends upon postulated values attaching to certain Sacred Objects. Those texts which it has become customary to term the Early Histories, equally with those which present the various versions of the Quest, revolve about these Hallows, shewing how they arose, how they came into Britain, in whose care they were placed at first, to whom they were transmitted successively, why and by whom they were sought and what, in fine, became of them.

Among the general characteristics of the French Cycles we shall find that there is the transit of these Hallows from East to West. They are in hereditary keeping, and in the end they are taken into uttermost seclusion or ascend to Heaven. There are, however, numerous phases of the Legend, important variations in the Hallows, while claims which are manifest in certain texts are non-existent in others. The Cycle in Germany took over the Legend of the Swan Knight and imported a suggestion of Templar interest: on the other hand, the introduction of certain ascetic elements seems characterised by the coming of Galahad into the Grail Quest. The peculiar ecclesiastical claims which are the sub-surface warrant of the Northern French Cycles were never put forward ostensibly in any Quest whatever; and in the Galahad Legend there remains only the shadow of those earlier designs which might be constructed as in dissonance with the Latin Rite.

The Quest of the Holy Grail and of the other Hallows which are from time to time connected therewith is followed by many knightly heroes as the Quest-motive evolves, and most of these are unsuccessful: the preliminary conditions of attainment are purity and sanctity in the latest versions; but there is nothing to shew that these were sufficient in themselves; and as there were other qualifications, so in some signal instances a partial success was not impossible in the absence, or at least comparatively, of those warrants which in given places were claimed as essential. Once more therefore, the Cycle of Northern France may be regarded as falling into four divisions: (1) The Institution of the Hallows, and more especially that which concerns the origin of the Sacred Vessel. (2) The circumstances under which the Hallows were carried into Britain, or alternatively were found therein, and the later circumstances of their partial manifestation. (3) The details of the search for the Hallows, and other things within and without which led to their removal or recession. (4) The occasion of their final departure.

The texts purport to provide therefore the complete History of the Grail, including whence it came, where it abode for a while, and whither it has gone. This is not to say that there are express books treating of each section only. The Metrical Romance of Borron does stand, however, simply for the first part, and the same applies to its prose rendering in the *LESSER HOLY GRAIL*. The second part is found in the *GRAND SAINT GRAAL*, and the third in the *DIDOT-MODENA PERCEVAL*, the *CONTE DEL GRAAL*, the *PARZIVAL* of Wolfram, the *LONGER PROSE PERCEVAL* and the *QUEST OF GALAHAD*. The German *PARZIVAL* excepted, all these stories of research give an account of the withdrawal—some at considerable length, and some briefly.

Again, the later Romances may be divided into two sections: (1) those which speak of an Enchantment fallen on Britain, and (2) those which are concerned with the termination of certain Adventurous Times. If the literature follows any set purpose, a definable importance must

be attributed to the meaning of that Enchantment and those Adventures. In this manner, the chief questions may be summarised alternatively as follows :—

- (1) The Secret Verbal Formula and its connections, so far as these appear in any Quest.
- (2) The qualifications for the Quest.
- (3) The Hereditary Keepers of the Grail.
- (4) The King's Wounding and the King's Healing.
- (5) The Enchantments of Britain in connection with the Wounded Keeper.
- (6) The removal of the Grail and the close of those times which certain texts term Adventurous, since when there has been silence on earth in respect of the Holy Grail.

The Verbal Formula is introduced in, among other documents' (1) the De Borron poem ; (2) the LESSER HOLY GRAIL ; while its shadow is projected as a secret which cannot be told in (3) the Proem to the CONTE DEL GRAAL. It seems to be found by a vague and remote inference in the LONGER PROSE PERCEVAL, while it may be identified by brief allusions in the early prose MERLIN. There is no trace of it in the Great Quest, while it is outside the Tradition as represented by Wolfram. The Quest qualifications are doubtful in Chrétien, and so also in his successors. They are what might be termed ethical in the PARZIVAL, which presents the Marriage of its hero. The so-called ascetic element appears fully, as we have seen, in the GRAND SAINT GRAAL, in the PERLESVAUS and in the QUEST OF GALAHAD. The King's Wounding is accounted for differently in every Romance ; the withdrawal of the Grail also is told differently : sometimes it passes simply into deeper concealment ; sometimes it is taken away utterly ; in one version there is another Keeper appointed, but of the Realm apart from the Hallows ; it is carried to the far East in another ; and in two texts it remains apparently where it was.

If there is a secret intention permeating the bulk of the literature, again it must reside partly in those epochs into which the literature falls : their consideration should manifest it and should enable us to deal, at the close of the whole research, with the final problem, being that which is signified by the departure of the Sacred Vessel.

Each of the Hallows has its implied enigma, besides that which appears openly in its expressed nature ; and as there are some which are met with only from time to time, so there are suggestions and inferences concerning others which never come into view. That which was always in evidence is that to which the distinctive name of Grail is applied in every text ; but enough has been said concerning it till we come to its exhaustive consideration in the next section. The second and third Hallows are the Lance and the Sword. The Lance is that which was used by the Roman soldier Longinus to pierce the side of Christ at the Crucifixion, or it is this at least according to the

more general Tradition. Of the Sword there are various stories, and it is this which in some cases serves to inflict the wound from which the Enchantments of Britain follow. It is (1) that which was used to behead St. John the Baptist, in which connection we can understand its position as a Sacred Object ; (2) that of the King and Prophet David, committed by Solomon to a mythical ship, which went voyaging, voyaging throughout the ages till it should be seen by Galahad, the last scion of the Royal House of Israel ; or (3) it is simply an instrument preserved as a token belonging to a Legend of Vengeance, in which relation it is nothing to the real purpose of the Grail.

The Dish, which is the fourth and final object included among the authorised Hallows, is more difficult to specify, because its almost invariable appearance in the Pageant of certain High Processions is accompanied by no intelligible explanation respecting it ; and although it has also its antecedents in folk-lore, its mystic explanation need not be sought very far away. Its sacramental analogy is in the Paten of the Catholic Mass. Like the rest of the Hallows, it is described with many variations in the different books. It may be a salver of gold and precious stones, set on a silver cloth and carried by two Maidens ; it may be a goodly plate of silver, or a little golden vessel, and this simply, except in the *LONGER PROSE PERCEVAL*, which as it multiplies the Hallows so it divides their ministry ; but here, as elsewhere, the Dish does not embody those feeding properties which are one aspect of the Mystery and would seem at first sight as if introduced to stultify.

In summary therefore : subject to characteristic variations which are peculiar to each text, it will be found that the several Romances follow or forecast one general process, exhibiting a general secret intention, manifested though not declared ; and it is for this intention that my study seeks to account.

III

VARIATIONS OF THE CUP LEGEND

WE have seen that the Secret of the Grail, signifying the super-substantial nourishment of man and (or) the Guiding Voice of a certain Holy Assembly, was communicated by Christ to His chosen disciple Joseph of Arimathæa, who, by preserving the body of his Master after the Crucifixion, became an instrument of the Resurrection. He laid it in the Sepulchre, and thus sowed the seed whence issued an arch-natural body. On Ascension Day this was removed from the world ; but there remained the Holy Vessel, into which the Blood of the natural Body had been received by Joseph. Strangely endued with virtues of the risen Christ and the

power of the Holy Ghost, it sustained him spiritually, and by a kind of reflection physically, during forty years of imprisonment, through which period he was in that condition of ecstasy which is said by Christian Masters of Contemplation to last for half an hour—being that time when there is silence in Heaven. We find accordingly that Joseph had no sense of duration in respect of the years : he was already in that Mystery of God into which the ages pass. After his release the Holy Vessel became a sign of saving grace, instruction and all wonder to a certain baptised Company which he was elected to take Westward. He committed it in fine to another Keeper, by whom it was brought into Britain ; and there, or elsewhere, certain lesser Hallows were added to the Hallow-in-Chief, and were held with it in the places of concealment. Those which are met with most frequently, as we have seen, are four in number ; but the Mystery is really one, since it is all assumed into that Vessel which is known for the most part as the Cup of Legend.

The Four Hallows are therefore the Cup, the Lance, the Sword and the Dish, Paten or Patella—these four and the greatest of these is the Cup. As regards this Hallow-in-Chief, of two things one : either the Grail Vessel contained the most sacred of all Relics in Christendom—living and also speaking—or it contained also a Secret Mystery of the Eucharist. Now, the first question which arises is whether the general description that obtains concerning it reposes on the authority of texts outside its own Cycles, as well as within. Here also will be found our first difficulty. There are three available sources of information concerning the Sacred Vessel : (1) The Myth of Joseph, being Apocryphal Legends respecting Joseph of Arimathæa. (2) The Early English Chronicles which recite the conversion of Britain. (3) The Romances themselves, which are the chief bases of our knowledge, but on the understanding that there is no criterion for the distinction between that which is embodied Tradition and that which is pure invention.

As regards the evangelisation of Britain by Joseph of Arimathæa there is no authentic record in any Chronicle till about the end of the twelfth century,¹ onward from which period the sources of information utilised to expand the Glastonbury stories of William of Malmesbury are the Grail Romances themselves. These also were known and used by John of Glastonbury. The Pious Legends which connect Joseph with the cultus of the Precious Blood are late, and they lie under the suspicion of having been devised in the interests of Glastonbury, or through Glastonbury of ecclesiastical pretensions on the part of the British Church at or about the period of Henry II. Above these as a substratum of solid fact—I refer to the fact of the inventions—there has been superposed the dream of an alleged pan-Britannic Church, which belongs, however, more particularly to the Romance of History. The Chivalrous Romances have so overlaid the Grail object with decorations and wonder elements that the object itself

¹ J. Armitage Robinson : TWO GLASTONBURY LEGENDS, 1926, p. 50.

has been obscured, and in some cases its nature can be scarcely extricated.

We come therefore to the putative Historical Romances and the Poems and Tales of Chivalry which contain the developed Legend of the Grail. The CONTE DEL GRAAL, which is the first text for our consideration, has many embroidered descriptions of the Sacred Vessel; but they present certain difficulties in the successive sections, as will be exhibited by their simple recitation in summary. (1) It was covered with the most precious stones that are found in the world, while it gave forth so great a light that the candles on the table were eclipsed, even as are the stars of heaven in the glory of the sun and moon (Chrétien de Troyes).¹ (2) It passed to and fro quickly amidst the lights; but no hand appeared to hold it (pseudo-Wauchier).² (3) It was borne uplifted by a beautiful Maiden, who was discourseled and weeping (Montpellier MS.).³ (4) It was carried to and fro before the table by a Maiden more lovely than flowers in April (account of Wauchier de Denain,⁴ with which compare a similar recital of Gerbert).⁵ (5) It was exalted amidst great light by an Angel, to heal Perceval (Manessier).⁶ (6) It was supported in the Pageant by a Maiden through the Castle Chamber (*ibid.*).⁷ (7) It was manifested in full view at the Coronation of Perceval, also in the hands of a maiden (*ibid.*).⁸ (8) It was in fine ravished with the soul of Perceval and has never since been seen so openly :

" Ne ja mais nus hommes qui soit nes
Nel vera si apiertement."⁹

What follows from these citations will have occurred to the reader : that the CONTE DEL GRAAL has no intelligible description of the Sacred Object; that the poets of the various sections knew of it as if at a far distance only; that some of their references might indicate a brilliant lamp rather than a Chalice. When those who followed Chrétien allocated it to Christian Symbolism, they seemed to have wavered in their understanding between the notion of the Paschal Dish and the Cup in which Christ Consecrated the Wine of the first Eucharist; but we cannot tell. I should add that the Prologue,¹⁰ which is the work of another hand, and embodies some curious material, mentions very briefly the Pageant of the Grail Procession, saying that the Vessel appears at the Castle without sergent or seneschal, but again there is no description.¹¹ In conclusion of this account, the alternative ending of Gerbert retells with variations part of the story of Joseph, and although there is once again no intimation as to

¹ See Perceval le Gallois, ou le CONTE DEL GRAAL, edited by C. Potvin, 1866-1871, Vol. II, pp. 147, 148, lines 4398-4417.

² *Op. cit.*, III, pp. 367, 368, ll. 20114-20132.

³ *Ib.*, V, pp. 143, 144, ll. 34738-34768.

⁴ *Ib.*, pp. 119, 120, ll. 44275-44315.

⁵ *Op. cit.*, VI, p. 151, ll. 45234-45236.

⁶ *Op. cit.*, VI, p. 151, ll. 45234-45236.

⁷ *Ib.*, p. 155, ll. 45352-45362.

⁸ *Ib.*, p. 155, ll. 45352-45362.

⁹ *Ib.*, p. 155, ll. 45352-45362.

¹⁰ Otherwise, the ÉLUCIDATION DE L'HYSTOIRE DU GRAAL, as it is termed in the prose version of 1530.

¹¹ Potvin, *Op. cit.*, II, p. 11, ll. 303, 304.

the form of the Grail, an account of the service performed at an Altar over "the holy, spiritual thing"—the Vessel more beautiful than eye of man has seen—is there recounted, while it leaves no doubt in the mind that this service was a Mass of the Graal, though it is not so termed. It is the only suggestion of the kind which is afforded by the vast poem, though Gerbert's origin and early history of the Sacred Object is in accordance with received Tradition.

The fuller memorials of this Tradition are embodied, as we have seen, in two Cycles of the literature; but the text which is first in time and chief in importance is the metrical ROMANCE OF THE GRAAL, OR JOSEPH OF ARIMATHÆA, by Robert de Borron. A French and a German critic have said that this is the earliest text of the Grail literature proper, and an English writer—among others—has concluded, on the contrary, that it is not: *mais que m'importe?* I will not even ask for the benefit of the doubt, so far as enumeration is concerned. The metrical JOSEPH says that the Grail was a passing fair Vessel, wherein did Christ make His sacrament.¹ This is vague admittedly and, assuming a certain confusion in the mind of the writer, it might have been that Dish in which the Paschal Lamb was eaten by Christ and His disciples. In place of the words *mout gent*, which are given by the original French editor of the only text, Paulin Paris, following I know not what authority, or imagining a variant reading, substituted the words *mout grant*, which might well apply to the Paschal Dish. But Robert de Borron certifies to his own meaning when he recites an utterance of Christ in His discourse to Joseph, for it is there said that the Vessel which has served as a Reliquary shall be called henceforth a Chalice:

" Cist vaisseau ou men sanc meis,
Quant de men cors le requeillis,
Calices apelez sera."

It is difficult to read the later verses in which the Eucharistic Chalice is compared with the Sepulchre of Christ, the Mass Corporal with the grave-clothes, and the Paten with the stone at the mouth of the tomb, without concluding that by the Grail there was intended the first Eucharistic Vessel; and the presence of this symbolism in the mind of Robert de Borron suggests a figurative intention on his part throughout the Legend which he presented. If it be objected that his idea of a Chalice does not correspond to a Vessel the content of which is Sacramental Wine, it should be remembered that a Reliquary which by the hypothesis contained the Precious Blood was obviously in Sacramental correspondence with Eucharistic Wine. We shall see, however, at a later stage that we are placed in many

¹ *Op. cit.*, ed. Michel, p. 17, l. 396. Paulin Paris proposed reading *lavement* instead of *sacrement*, in which case the Grail would be the Vessel in which Christ washed the feet of the Apostles, the excuse being that Borron gives account of this observance but does not mention the First Eucharist. But Christ Himself describes it to Joseph in the Tower where the latter is imprisoned. See *ib.*, p. 38, ll. 893-900. The substitution is therefore arbitrary.

difficulties by the description thus allocated incautiously to a Divine Source.¹

Be it added for the moment that the idea of the devotional poet, supposing it to have been as purely mystical as he was himself deeply religious, might have embodied an attempt to shadow forth in the perpetuation of the most precious of all Reliquaries the Sacramental Mystery of the Real Presence.

It seems certain, in any case, that when Robert de Borron speaks of the Grail as that Vessel in which Christ made His Sacrament, this ought not to be understood as referring to the Paschal Dish, though one probable derivation of the word Grail would support the latter view. In the dialect of Languedoc, *Grazal* signified a large vessel, usually of clay; in that of Provence *Grasal* was a bowl or platter; in Anglo-Norman, *Graal* was a dish made of some costly material for the purpose of great feasts, which, it may be said, is the description of Helinandus. With all this some of the later romancers were dissatisfied and, following Robert de Borron, they exalted the Vessel into a Chalice, so that they might bring it into line with the Eucharistic side of the Legend. The material of such a Chalice in the days of Robert de Borron must be left an open question, and still more that of a Wine Cup in the House of Simon of Jerusalem. It follows from Tertullian that in Rome at the beginning of the third century they used Glass Chalices; so did the Bishop of Toulouse at the end of the fourth century; and about A.D. 550 the same custom prevailed, as appears by the life of Cesarius, Bishop of Arles. A Council of Rheims in the days of Charlemagne is said to have forbidden Glass Chalices because they were brittle. The use of precious metals would grow from more to more as time went on and the wealth of the Church increased.

The LESSER HOLY GRAIL places its own construction on the Secret Words, which are applied decisively to the Consecration of the Eucharist. Where the poem says that there is a Great Book in which has been written the Great Secret called the Grail,² the LESSER HOLY GRAIL says: "This is the Secret uttered at the Great Sacrament performed over the Grail—that is to say, over the Chalice."³ The Vessel is described otherwise as the one in which Christ "sacrificed" at the First Mass, and from an Eucharistic standpoint this seems much stronger than the corresponding *feisoit son sacrement*, which are the words of Robert de Borron. The repetition of the experience at the Sacred Table which is enjoined on Joseph in both texts is in both termed the Service of the Grail; but in the prose version alone is it adjudged to the hour of Tierce, as if a Mass of the Grail were celebrated.

¹ One of them may be mentioned at the moment and is occasioned by the fact that there is only a single Hallow in the Metrical Romance of Borron. Obviously Christ did not "make His Sacrament" in a single Vessel: there must have been a Dish or Paten for the Bread and a Cup for the Wine. I cannot remember that this inevitable *lieu commun* of the subject has ever occurred to any critic of the text.

² Michel, *Op. cit.*, p. 40, ll. 929-936.

³ See E. Hucher: *LE SAINT GRAAL*, Vol. I, p. 227.

The EARLY MERLIN and the DIDOT-MODENA PERCEVAL neither reduce nor increase the evidence.

In the EARLY MERLIN there is no allusion to the Office of Secret Words and no Grail Hallows are mentioned, excepting the Cup, as it is obvious that we cannot include the Sword of Merlin—sometimes identified with Excalibur—through which Arthur was chosen to be King. It does not appear that this weapon had any antecedent history. In the DIDOT-MODENA PERCEVAL the rumour and the wonder of the Grail moves pageant-like through all the pages; but it is more shorn of descriptive allusions than anything that has preceded in the Cycle to which it belongs. When the Predestined Knight visits the Castle, Tower or Hold in which the Hallow has been preserved through so many centuries, he sees it plainly enough at the supper-table, along which it passes, carried with no ostentation by a mere Page of the Chamber; but he is said only to hold a Vessel wherein the Blood of our Saviour reposed.¹ This is at the first visit, and at the second, when Perceval is initiated into the whole Mystery and becomes Lord of the Grail, this description is repeated, as if it were a counsel of perfection to maintain and even to increase in the third text of a supposed trilogy whatsoever could be called vague and dubious in the first.

The GRAND SAINT GRAAL, even when it reproduces with several variations the prose version of Robert de Borron's poem, gives in some of its codices an explanation of the Sacred Vessel which is the antithesis of his own. It is described as that Dish in which the Son of God partook of the Last Supper before He gave to the disciples His own Flesh and Blood.² It was therefore the Paschal Dish, in reality a preposterous suggestion, seeing that there are no circumstances under which it could serve as a Reliquary. Certain manuscripts differ, however, so widely that it is difficult to determine the original state of the text. Another codex follows the account of the LESSER HOLY GRAIL. According to a third codex, it was the content and not the vessel which was called the Holy Grail; but, speaking generally most versions concur in describing it as the Holy Dish. The connection with the Eucharist is otherwise sufficiently close, for he who is elected to say the First Mass and to Consecrate the Unspotted Elements is he also to whom by Divine Instruction Joseph surrenders the Vessel, being that which belonged to him in virtue of his High Office. But the Blessed Reliquary of the GRAND SAINT GRAAL would seem to have been rather the outward witness to the Presence within those Elements. For example, in the first unveiled vision of the Holy Grail which is granted to anyone outside Joseph himself, we hear of an Altar, on one side of which were the Nails used for the

¹ It was a Reliquary pure and simple, and the shapes of these are manifold.

² Cf. Sommer's text in VULGATE VERSION OF THE ARTHURIAN ROMANCES, Vol. I, p. 13. In the house used for the Last Supper, *le jor de paskes*,—that is, on the day of the Passover—Joseph found *lescuele en le quele li fiex dieu avoit mangiet*—the Vessel in which the Son of God had eaten. It is the antithesis of Borron's account.

Crucifixion, together with the Hallowed Lance ; on the other side was the Dish ; and in the centre there was an exceeding Rich Vessel of gold in the semblance of a Goblet—obviously the Chalice of Consecration : it had a lid after the manner of a *ciborium*.¹ More astonishing still, the Cup of the Eucharist is placed within the Grail during a ceremony which corresponds to the Mass.² In a Romance so overcharged with decoration and so lavish in episodes of wonder, we should expect, and shall not be disappointed, that many pageants and ornaments would collect about the Holy Vessel, and that it should work many marvels. The Sacrament consecrated within it reveals the Mysteries of Christ openly to chosen eyes ; but thereon can no man look until he is cleansed from sin. It gives also on occasion the vision of an Eternal Eucharist and a Great Company sitting at a High Table in the Paradise which is above. So far as concerns the authority of the text itself, it would appear that the Mass of the Grail is not like that of the Church without but an Arch-Natural Sacrifice, at which the Incarnate Christ figures as the sensible oblation and subsequently as the Melchisedech of the Rite, communicating Himself to the witnesses,³ while a thousand voices about him give thanks to God amidst a great beating of birds' wings, and

“ Young men whom no one knew went in and out
With a far look in their eternal eyes.”

The texts of the later MERLIN have several references to the Grail, and it is the chief purpose which moves through the two Romances, leading up as they do obviously to a Quest of the Sacred Vessel. But what is understood thereby must be gathered chiefly from its reflections of the Joseph Legends. We shall see that in certain codices the account differs from that of Robert de Borron. The VULGATE MERLIN has one very remarkable passage, which tells how the tidings of the Holy Grail spread through the realm of King Arthur, and how the Grail was that Vessel in which Joseph of Arimathæa received the Blood from the side of Jesus Christ when He hung upon the Cross.⁴ It represents therefore a tradition which is familiar enough, not only in the literature of Romance but in that of Religious Legend, though it is the antithesis of the account given in the Lesser Chronicles, wherein we are told that the Blood was drawn into the Vessel after Joseph and Nicodemus had taken down the Body of the Lord.⁵ Secondly, the Grail was that Holy Vessel which came from Heaven above into the City of Sarras, a notable suggestion, recalling the Grail Stone of the German Cycle and Wolfram's supposititious source in Kyot de Provence. Thirdly, and to us most important, the Grail was that Vessel in which Christ first Sacrificed His Blessed Body and His Blood by the mediation

¹ Cf. Furnivall's edition of Lovelich's HOLY GRAIL, p. 79.

² *Ib.*, p. 91. The Chalice is so placed by an Angel.

³ Cf. the corresponding Vision which took place at Corbenic in the Galahad Romance when the term of Quest was finished.

⁴ See Sommer's text, *Op. cit.*, II, pp. 334, 335.

⁵ Michel, *Op. cit.*, pp. 24, 25, ll. 551-574.

of His Bishop, the Second Joseph, whom He Ordained with His own hands.¹ According to the HUTH MERLIN the Grail was that Vessel in which Jesus and His Apostles ate the Last Supper.² It was again therefore the Paschal Dish.

The LONGER PROSE PERCEVAL has many descriptions of the Vessel, all of which are designed, directly or otherwise, to connect it with the Chalice, but they are highly enigmatic in their nature. As one of the most express attempts to relate the Grail with the Eucharist, it must be regarded as important for the subject of the Hallow-in-Chief. This Romance and the great QUEST OF GALAHAD are both texts of Transubstantiation, and they must rank also among later documents of the literature. The Lesser Chronicles, even in the prose version of Borron's poem, offer no suggestion concerning this doctrine, the Grail Vessel being simply a Hallow containing a Precious Relic, as we have seen previously. About the period of the QUEST and the PERLESVAUS, the tide of ecclesiastical feeling, which long previously had set towards the definition of the dogma, must have permeated the mind of the laity, prepared as it also was by the desire of things sensible and tangible in matters of religion. It was, this notwithstanding, still long to the establishment of the high, symbolical Festival of Corpus Christi, which provided an external epilogue to the closed canon of the Grail, as if by a final substitution that which was taken away, or at least *ex hypothesi*, was to be in perpetuity memorialised about the precincts of the gate by the Wardens thereof. In connection with Transubstantiation, it may be remarked that the Religious Office of Knighthood was above all things to hear Mass and, next, to confess sins. There are few records in the Grail Romances that the Chivalry of Logres communicated, except in the QUEST OF GALAHAD, and then only in the case of Elect Knights. All high festivals were observed, all penances fulfilled; but to participate in the Eucharistic Mystery seemed apart from the life of the world and withdrawn into the sphere of sanctity. However this may be, the LONGER PROSE PERCEVAL has two cryptic descriptions of the Grail Vessel, which, on account of their complexity, I must present as they stand in the story. (1) It is said concerning Monseigneur Gawain, when he looked at the Grail in his wonder, that it seemed to him a Chalice was therein, "albeit there was none at this time."³ Was it therefore an Ark or a Tabernacle which was designed to contain a Cup, but when the latter was removed it held the shadow or semblance thereof? (2) In the course of the same episode a change was performed in the aspect of the external object, and it appeared to be "all in flesh," meaning that it was transformed into a vision of Christ crucified.⁴ Towards the close of the story, when a certain Queen Jandree relates her visions to Perceval, she sees, in one of these, an

¹ Sommer, *Op. cit.*, I, pp. 40, 41.

² See Gaston Paris: MERLIN, ROMAN EN PROSE, etc., I, p. 95.

³ Potvin, *Op. cit.*, I, p. 88; HIGH HISTORY OF THE HOLY GRAIL, translated by Sebastian Evans, Branch VI, Title 18.

⁴ *Ib.*, p. 89; Title 20.

image of the crucifixion from which people collect the Blood into a most Holy Vessel, elevated for that object by one of them. There are no names mentioned, but for purposes of simplicity it may be assumed that they were Joseph and Nicodemus. In the Castle of King Fisher-man the Office of the Cup was to receive the Blood which fell from the point of the Sacred Lance. The Priest who officiated at the Grail Service is said to begin his Sacrament, with which expression we may compare the words *feisoit son sacrement*, which are those of Robert de Borron.¹ There is indubitable reference to the Eucharist in both cases. Speaking generally, the historical account of the Cup follows the GRAND SAINT GRAAL rather than Borron's poem; for the Blood which flowed from the wounds of Christ when He was set upon the Cross is said to have been received into the Sacred Vessel. There is no ministry in respect of material sustenance attributed to the Grail in this Spiritual Romance.

It is therefore in one sense the antithesis of the QUEST OF GALAHAD, which dwells with equal fullness on the food-giving properties of the Vessel and on its connection with the Mystery of such a Mass and such an Office of the Eucharist as never before or after was or would be said in the wide world, apart from this sacred text. When the Holy Grail enters the Court of King Arthur and into the banqueting-hall it is clothed in white samite; but neither the Vessel nor its Bearer is visible to human eyes.² On a later occasion it manifests as a Holy Vessel on a table of silver in an old chapel.³ Elsewhere it is observed that the Flesh and Blood of God are present in the Grail.⁴ When it appears to Lancelot in the Castle of Corbenic it is still upon a table of silver; but this time the object is covered with red in place of white samite, and it is surrounded by Angels.⁵ In the course of the Ceremony Lancelot sees three men, who represent the Trinity, exalted above the head of the Officiating Priest. Two of them place the youngest between the hands of the Priest, by whom He is uplifted.⁶ On another occasion a Child enters visibly into the substance of the Mass-Bread. A Man also is elevated, bearing the signs of the Passion, and this Personage issues out of the Vessel, coming subsequently among the Knights present and causing them to communicate sacramentally.⁷ It is after this episode that the Grail is removed to the Spiritual City of Sarras. There Christ appears to Galahad and his Companions, and this is the last manifestation in connection with the Sacred Vessel. It is the *viaticum* of the *haut prince*, who thereafter exercises the high option which has been granted previously and demands that he should be taken away.

As the chief Hallow in the PARZIVAL of Wolfram differs from all the other Romances, it will be left for more full consideration in dealing

¹ *Ante*, pp. 52, 53.

² Sommer, *Op. cit.*, Vol. VI, p. 13.

³ *Ib.*, pp. 42, 43.

⁴ It is also (1) the Heavenly Food which sustains both soul and body—*Op. cit.*, p. 117; (2) a Treasury of "Great Secrets"—*ib.*, p. 96; (3) "good pasture" and "food of sweetness"—*ib.*, p. 113; (4) Grace of the Holy Spirit—*ib.*, p. 114.

⁵ *Op. cit.*, p. 180.

⁶ *Ib.*

⁷ *Ib.*, p. 190.

with the German Cycle ; but seeing that in this Cycle there are correspondences, outside Wolfram, with the Northern French accounts, one of these may be placed here so as to illustrate the Germanic allusions to the Sacred Vessel in the general understanding thereof. *DIU CRÔNE*, the poem of Heinrich, says that it was borne on a cloth of samite and had a base of red gold, on which a Reliquary of gold and gems was superposed. It was carried by a Crowned Maiden. There is here, however, a fresh departure from the Grail in Christian symbolism, for as, on the one hand, it is the Quest of a different hero, so, on the other, the content ascribed to the Reliquary is not the true content. It holds the semblance of Bread, as if that of the Divine Body ; but the Wine or Royal Blood, which corresponds to the Second Element of the Eucharist, is distilled from the Lance of the Legend.

We are approaching now the term of the inquiry allocated to this section, and it will be seen on reflection that we have three possible hypotheses regarding the Precious Vessel : (1) that it was a cruet or phial, wherein the Blood of Christ was reserved permanently—in which case we can understand the Legend on the score of comparative possibility ; (2) that it was an open Platter or Bowl, which, it is obvious, could have held no permanent content, much less the Precious or indeed any other Blood ; (3) that it corresponded to the notion of a Chalice but probably with a cover, after the manner of a *Ciborium*. It is in late texts that the Vessel appears most indubitably in connection with the Sacrifice of the Mass : it was and could be only that which was recognised by *DIU CRÔNE* of Heinrich, namely, a Reliquary ; but the mystical side of the Legend, reflecting in the minds of the romancers many conflicting issues, took it over to the Eucharist, influenced by the irresistible connection between the Sacramental Blood and the *sang réal* poured out at the Crucifixion. There is evidence that this view is almost coincident with the marriage of the Legend to Romance. The mind of Romance connected the Vessel and its Office with Secret Words of Consecration and a wonderful Grade of Priesthood.

In conclusion as to this matter, the Holy Grail, according to the Greater Chronicles, was not the only Hallow which was brought into Britain by those whose mission was to preach first the gospel therein ; but it was more especially the exotic of the Legend, as this was developed in Northern France. In several cases the other Hallows, as we shall see, were either present in Britain or arrived some centuries later. As regards the Lesser Chronicles, it may prove warrantable to decide that, in the mind of Robert de Borron, the Sacred Vessel was a covered Chalice, and that in some manner which is not declared clearly it was connected with a Sacramental Service performed in great seclusion. As regards the Vulgate Cycle, it was originally a Dish, and that Dish in which the Paschal Lamb was eaten at the Last Supper ; but from the very beginning of this ascription the notion of a Cup was essential to the Eucharistic Office which resided also in the Vessel. In

one codex at least of the GRAND SAINT GRAAL we have seen that a Cup is inserted therein ; but in later texts of the Cycle the Dish sometimes undergoes transmutation and reappears as a Chalice.

IV

THE GRAIL VESSEL CONSIDERED AS A
BOWL OF PLENTY

THE incidental allusions which have been made already to certain physical properties which are ascribed to the Holy Grail in several branches of the literature seem to call at this point for some further explanation, without anticipating what will be said at the close as to any higher aspects of this Tradition or exhausting specifically its connections with folk-lore, which remain to be examined separately. The conception itself seems so repugnant to all that we attach to the Grail that it is at least desirable to ascertain its scope in the texts. As it appears to embody a transcript from old non-Christian fable, we should expect it to be most prominent in those texts which are nearest to a postulated transitional stage, and more especially in the Chrétien portion of the CONTE DEL GRAAL. It should be understood in the first place—as indeed it follows sufficiently from previous sections—that in the Perceval Quests—one sequel of the CONTE excepted—and in more than one of the Gawain Quests the visit to the Grail Castle is followed by a banquet or supper, at which the Questing Knight is treated for the most part as an honoured guest.

The exception as regards Perceval is in the longer prose Romance or PERLESVAUS, the action of which is subsequent to the first visit of the hero, and he does not enter it a second time till he has taken it by force of arms out of the hands of God's enemy and the enemy of Holy Church.¹ In other cases, where the ceremonial meal is described—sometimes at considerable length—it is nearly always at the table, and before or in the midst of the festival, that the Grail and the other Hallows make their processional appearance ; and there are certain texts which say that the Sacred Vessel serves the High Company—sometimes with rarest meats, sometimes also with wine. In these specific instances the manifestation is that which occurs first after they are seated at table. It was to be expected, as I have said, that we should hear of this material efficacy in Chrétien ; but though the courses of the banquet are described fully, and are rare and precious enough, it is only a high reverence in a lordly castle of this world, and it is precisely from this text that it proves wanting. The wonder resides in the Hallows ; but they dispense nothing to the body. It follows that a certain anonymous poet who continued the work of

¹ It is not a Quest, and Perceval is not seeking to repair his original failure.

Chrétien prior to Wauchier had no precedent in his precursor, and it was therefore from other antecedents that he derived his notion of a Feeding Dish and from yet others his knowledge of early Grail history which does not appear in Chrétien. When he brings Gawain to the Grail Castle, he says that the Sacred Vessel served various courses ; but the wine was served by the butlers.¹ His idea of the Sacred Vessel must have corresponded therefore rather to the Paschal Dish than to a Reliquary of the Precious Blood. On the other hand, Wauchier's account of Perceval's second visit contains no allusion to this side of the festival. Manessier, in continuation of the same visit, offers no suggestion ; but when the time comes for him to tell the story of Perceval's third arrival, the Hallows appear in their order and all are filled at the table.² At the fourth and final visit, and the Coronation of the Questing Knight, Manessier recounts how the Grail sustains the whole Company with costliest meats and wines.³ On the other hand, Gerbert, preoccupied by far other matters, gives no indication of the kind.

Except in so far as the EARLY HISTORY OF MERLIN reproduces one episode from the LESSER HOLY GRAIL, it has no allusion to the properties under consideration, and they are absent also in the DIDOT-MODENA PERCEVAL. On the other hand, the Greater Chronicles or Vulgate Cycle, represented by the GRAND SAINT GRAAL and the QUEST OF GALAHAD, embody a marked development of this particular Tradition. Between them there is the later MERLIN without any reference whatever ; the prose LANCELOT, in which the Grail provides all manners of meats and drinks when Sir Bors visits Corbenic ; and the LONGER PROSE PERCEVAL, into the consciousness of whose author it has not entered once, and by whom assuredly it would have been repudiated. Its recurrence on a single occasion in the presence of Galahad, and in connection with his Quest, may seem unsearchable, having regard to the claims which inhere in this Romance ; but in the order of texts it is explained by antecedents in the first form of the first document of the Cycle. We must recur therefore to the root-matter of the Early Histories.

The poem of Robert de Borron narrates that among those who accompanied Joseph on the journey Westward a certain number departed from Grace, through the sin of luxury ; but the spiritual mind of the minstrel has spared us all particulars. The result was famine in the Company : it does not appear that it fell upon all without exception, for the fact of want among the people was brought to the notice of the leaders ; but, these apart, good and bad seem to have suffered indifferently. An appeal was made to Brons that he should take counsel with his kinsman Joseph, which was done accordingly, and Joseph invoked the Son of God on his knees in the presence of the Grail, reciting the petition of his people, who were in need of

¹ CONTE DEL GRAAL, edited by C. Potvin, III, p. 367.

² *Ib.*, VI, p. 132.

³ *Ib.*, p. 151.

bread and meat. He was told in reply to expose the Sacred Vessel openly in the presence of the Brethren on a Table similar to that of His own Last Supper, by which means the sinners would be discovered speedily.¹ It is the Holy Spirit Who was speaking, and He ordained further that Brons should repair to a certain water and there angle for a Fish. The first which he caught must be brought straightway to Joseph who, on his part, should place it upon the Grail Table over against the Sacred Vessel.

The people were then to be summoned and informed that if they were true believers, who had kept the commandments and followed out the teachings of Christ, as given through Joseph, so that they had trespassed in nothing, they would be welcome to sit down at the Table. These instructions were followed, with the result that a part only of the Company accepted this invitation.² The Table was arranged duly, and whosoever was seated thereat had the accomplishment of his heart's desire, and that entirely. Petrus, who was one of the recipients, asked the crowd that stood about whether they did not experience anything of the good which penetrated those at the Table, and they answered that they felt nothing. Thereupon Petrus denounced them as guilty of a vile, dolorous sin, and they went forth out of the house of Joseph covered with shame. The poem says :—

“ La taule toute pleine estoit,
Fors le liu qui pleins ne pooit
Estre ; ”

but the experience of the sitters, thus collected together, seems to indicate that they were fed from within rather than from without.³ It will be seen and we must remember always that the chief necessity and often the chief privation of early Quests and Ventures in the Voyages of Romance was that of food in season ; but in this case what I have called the spiritual mind of the poet could not connect the idea of physical refreshment with the Divine Powers of the Relic. As regards the elect who were present, when the Service was finished each of them rose up and went out among the rest, Joseph commanding that they should return day by day to partake of the grace administered. Thus was the Vessel, says the poem, proved for the first time. In the speech of Petrus to the people who were rejected there is further evidence that the sustenance was more especially of the spiritual order, and it is important to establish this point from the earliest of the Grail Histories. He speaks of the great delight experienced in what is called the Grace and of the inexpressible joy with which the communicants were penetrated. They were filled as the Psalmist was filled and she who sang the Magnificat : *Esurientes implevit bonis*. What was filled was the heart of man and what was

¹ ROMAN DU SAINT-GRAAL, edited by Francisque Michel, pp. 104 *et seq.*

² “ Dou pueple assist une partie,
Li autre ne s'assistrent mie ”, p. 108.

³ The statement is that they experienced the fulfilment of their hearts' desire. *Ib.*

refected was the entire soul. My contention is therefore that—whether or not Robert de Borron had the idea of the so-called Feeding Dish present to his mind when he made the scarcity of food for his company an opportunity for the discriminating test of the second great Table of Refection—in place of bodily meat and bread, symbolised by the single Fish, as something placed intentionally out of all reasonable proportion, he administered *extasis*. That question of Petrus to the unworthy crowd about him: do you experience nothing? is so evidently impossible, in their case, as a reference to eating and drinking that there is no need to dwell thereon. It left no opening to the prose editors whose versions complete the trilogy, and they lose all touch with the subject. Presumably the Grace of the Grail preserved the animal body from corruption.

As regards the Fish, by which there is brought to remembrance an early and pregnant form of Christian symbolism, the text offers a comparison which, although a little cryptic, seems also significant. It says that in the sight of the Grail, in its presence and the service thereof, true believers experience as much satisfaction as a fish, which, having been taken by a man in his hand has contrived to escape therefrom and again go swimming in the sea. The specific Fish of the story was placed before the Sacred Vessel, as instructed, and was covered with a cloth. There is no suggestion that it was eaten, and it appears to have remained as a kind of fixed dish whenever the Service was celebrated.¹

It follows by inevitable inference that the Company partook of no physical sustenance, while all processes of language seem enlisted by Robert de Borron to shew that they were sustained spiritually. Apart from this the palmary miracle accomplished by the Vessel on this first occasion was one of discrimination between the good and evil among the people: for such judgment the Table of Joseph was set up and the goats were separated from the sheep. Presumably there was no question in the poet's mind that what could nourish the soul, which is vital, could refresh at need the body, which is accessory only. It is small wonder therefore that when the fountain text says so little the records which derive therefrom and belong thereto as its sequels are content to leave it thereat, and they add, as I have said, nothing. For Joseph and his brethren it remained that the Lord was the part of their Chalice, as if in the last understanding that famine which fell upon the Companions was a scarcity of Grace in the soul rather than of food in the stomach.

On the other hand, the GRAND SAINT GRAAL is in one sense a Legend of the Feeding Dish consecrated and exalted; while seeing that as the texts stand it is that from which the greatest of all Quests is made to derive *ex hypothesi*, it is essential that we should understand its position clearly, and I will tabulate the references as follows:—

(1) The people on their way to Britain are fed marvellously with all

¹ We have seen that this was daily, like Daily Mass. ROMAN, p. 109.

manner of viands, both meat and drink, as, for example, at Houses by the way and at Lordly Castles. (2) In this primary allusion the Grail is not said to feed them. (3) They receive nourishment from the Table of the Grail; but this is the Eucharist, and it is stated expressly that the Company had nothing else on that day.¹ (4) At a later stage, a second instance is given of this Super-Substantial Refreshment. (5) It is not till we are approaching comparatively the close of the Chronicle that we reach something more definite. The Company are already in Britain, and through the persecution of their heathen enemies they are hungry. Twelve loaves are obtained; they are broken by Joseph, in the presence of the Grail, and they feed 500 people, more than the twelve loaves being left subsequently.² (6) It does not prove food of spiritual life, for those who were filthy before are filthy still. (7) At yet a later stage, the heathens test the feeding powers of the Vessel by the imprisonment of the Christians. In Wales the Vessel again furnishes all manner of viands, and one fish is a super-abundant provision for the whole company. After a similar manner, they are nourished with all possible delicacies in Scotland.

Passing over the later Merlin Romances, which are neither exactly Grail Histories nor Quests, and offer nothing to our purpose, we find that the shadow of the Quest is projected into the prose LANCELOT, though there is no questing intention; and the visit of Gawain to the Grail Castle is the one example of indignity offered to a guest therein.³ The responsibility, however, does not rest with the royal and saintly host, whose "high-erected thought" is "seated in a heart of courtesy." There is the flight of the mystical dove from casement to Inmost Shrine, as if the bird went to renew the virtues of the Holy Grail; there is the apparition of the unattended Damosel, bearing that which itself bore the likeness of a Chalice; there is the genuflection of all knees before the Holy Vessel; and there are sweet odours with all delicacies lavished upon the great table. But in the feast which follows, the peer of the Round Table alone has an empty plate. It was the discrimination and forejudgment of the Hallow in respect of that Knight who, in the days of Galahad was prompted to propose the Quest but did not persevere therein.

In the LONGER PROSE PERCEVAL, after the restitution of all things, there is abundance everywhere in the Castle, "insomuch that there is nought wanting that is needful for the bodies of noble folk," even as for noble souls.⁴ But the source of all this plenty is in a river which comes from the Earthly Paradise and not in the Holy Grail. On the occasion of Gawain's visit the Table is garnished richly; but it is with game of the forest and other meats of this world. It is the same on the arrival of Lancelot; and then even the earthly food does not vary.

¹ Sommer, *Op. cit.*, I, p. 41.

² *Ib.*, pp. 216, 217.

³ *Ib.*, s.v. LE LIVRE DE LANCELOT DEL LAC, Part II, vol. 4, pp. 343 *et seq.*

⁴ Potvin, *Op. cit.*, I, p. 249; HIGH HISTORY, Branch XXII, Title 1.

In the QUEST OF GALAHAD the manifestations of the Grail are these: (1) In the banqueting-hall of King Arthur, and here is the only record of its appearance in any Castle of the external world, the reason being that the Grail is "going about". On this occasion—yes, even in the presence of Galahad—"every knight had such meats and drinks as he best loved in this world". The Table having been dight for the Festival, it seems to follow that what had been provided otherwise underwent transformation, probably in the minds of the participants. (2) At the Stone Cross in the forest and in the waste land, where stood the old Chapel and where in the presence of Lancelot a sick Knight was made whole by the Precious Vessel. (3) To Lancelot in the Grail Castle, where there was, firstly, a Mass of the Grail and, secondly, a banquet at which all were fed by the Vessel, but under such circumstances and after such an experience that whether they were nourished in or out of the body—that is to say, in the soul—there is no criterion for distinction. (4) To Galahad and his Elect Companions at the Consummation of the Quest; but the sweet meats were those of the Eucharistic exalted to an arch-natural degree. (5) In Sarras at the close of all, "when the deadly flesh began to behold the spiritual things", and Christ's transcendence was manifested in Christ's immanence. Of these five changes in the Exposition of the Holy Grail, the first only and the lowest was in the guise of earthly food: it was communicated, as if by a special indulgence in the Palace of a Lord of the World as an encouragement to the Quest of Heaven.¹

If we turn to the German Cycle, we shall find that the feeding qualities are before all things obvious in Wolfram. At the first visit of Parzival, what is taken from the Grail is bread, but other dishes stand full before it in great plenty, both rare and common.² Some say that there are no such riches on earth, but to the poet this is a word of foolishness, since the Grail is the crown of all. The wine also was the gift of the precious object, and the cups on the table were filled by the power thereof. In the great and high festival, when the Questing Knight was crowned as King and Warden of the Mystery, even the ordinary fowl of the forest were taken from the Grail. I am afraid that such ministry in the PARZIVAL is comparable to the Procession therein, somewhat indiscriminate in method and "like a tale of little meaning, though the words are strong." In the curious Chronicle of Heinrich, the service of the Table is after the manner born of this world; but the host does not partake till he is served from the Sacred Reliquary with something which, by its description, bears the external semblance of the Symbolical Bread of Heaven. The poem, however, has otherwise no sacramental connections, nor has the Vessel, strictly speaking, what is understood here by feeding properties.

It remains now to sum up and to ask—though an authentic answer is remote in our quest—what is the meaning of all this disconcerting

¹ Sommer, *Op. cit.*, VI, LA QUESTE DEL SAINT GRAAL, p. 13; *ib.*, pp. 42, 43; *ib.*, pp. 179, 180, 182, 183; *ib.*, pp. 189-191; *ib.*, p. 197. ² See Book VII, sect. 1.

medley, which out of the Holy Grail, as an issue in time and place, brings now the voice of an oracle, like the classical BÆTYLUS ; now a certain *βασάνος* or touchstone, a criterion of judgment which separates the good from the evil ; now a suspended viaticum, which keeps the sick alive and the dead in a false life, but offers no relief in suffering for those who belong thereto ; now manifests corporeal changes in the growth of the Divine Body ; now shews Christ crucified ; and now out of all reason—like a coarse Talmudic Allegory—provides the game of the forest, all commonest and rarest meats ; yet in the Northern French Cycles is (1) a Repository of the Voice of Christ ; (2) the Mystery of the Eucharist ; and (3) a simple Reliquary containing *ex hypothesi* the Precious Blood of the Redeemer. At the moment let us note further that two out of the three texts of Transubstantiation are texts of the Feeding Dish ; but the third in the series has spiritualised all its Houses and acknowledges not the flesh or its ministry except in the Eucharist. In the Chrétien portion of the CONTE DEL GRAAL there speaks no Voice of the Spirit, yet regarding the Service of the Sacred Vessel it bears better testimony than the GRAND SAINT GRAAL or the Great Quest itself in respect of the material side, when this is taken literally. But those who continued and one who finished the CONTE are fitful in their introduction of the feeding element and reflect anterior texts.

I think in conclusion that the intention of the Vulgate Cycle concerning the Feeding Dish is to be taken in another sense of the QUEST OF GALAHAD, which says of Lancelot : “ If ye would ask how he lived, He that fed the people of Israel with manna in the desert, so was he fed. For every day when he had said his prayers, he was sustained with the Grace of the Holy Ghost ”. And, as the Welsh version has it, “ So that he thought himself to be full of the best meats ”. It seems to me that in these pregnant words there lies a way of understanding the meats and drinks even at King Arthur’s Court. From this suggested interpretation it is obvious that the poem of Wolfram stands apart.

V

THE LESSER HALLOWS OF THE LEGEND

A.—THE SUMMARY OF THESE MATTERS

THE Hallows of the Grail Legend are the beginning of its wonders and of its meanings only ; but, as I have intimated already, there is a sense in which the greater includes the lesser, and that which is of all the highest has assumed from the beginning in its symbolism the things by which it is encompassed. As it is in the light of man’s higher part that we are able to interpret the lower, as the body is explained by the soul, so even the Castle of the

Grail and the Great Temple, with all their allusions and all their sacred intimations, are resolved into the Mystery of the Cup, because there is a cloud of witnesses but one authentic voice serving as the spokesman of all. It is unnecessary therefore to lay stress upon the subsidiary Hallows as if they were an integral portion of the Holy Grail, regarded symbolically. They are of the accidents only, and as such they are not vital. The Lance is important to the Legends, but not otherwise than from the legendary standpoint; the Sword is also important, but not in a sacramental sense; the Dish has no settled significance and no traditional story is attached thereto.¹ It is to be understood that the French literature of the Holy Grail, in its form as now extant, has on the external side its roots in Traditions and Memorials connected with the Passion of Christ. The different Cycles of the literature develop their account of these memorials with motives that vary; but they combine therewith certain implied Sacred Objects derived from other sources and not belonging logically to the scheme.

Speaking generally of the Lesser Hallows, the following points are clear. The German Cycle, as represented by Wolfram, derived its idea of the Lance from a source in folk-lore apart from the Grail Legend, as we know it in Northern French. The Northern French literature is clear as to those Hallows connecting with the Passion of Christ; these are the Cup, otherwise the Paschal Dish, and the Lance. It is dubious and variable about the Sword and Dish or Platter, for which there are no real antecedents in the Passion. Several texts have carried over some of the Hallows without modification from folk-lore, even when great Christian Relics were ready to their hands. For example, the Sword used by Peter at Gethsemane did not occur to them, though it would have been more to their purpose, the reason being that there was no Official Tradition concerning it in the external life of the Church. The Dish—on the surface of the stories—is in the same position of unmodified folk-lore; the platter on which the head of St. John the Baptist was served to Herodias is a chance missed even by the *LONGER PROSE PERCEVAL*, despite its allocation of the Sword to the instrument of the Precursor's martyrdom. Other subsidiary Hallows, mentioned therein, which are by way of after-thought, increase without exhausting the possible Relics of the Passion: one of them is the Crown of Thorns;² another the Cloth with which Christ was covered when He was laid in the sepulchre;³ and yet another the Sacred Nails used at the Crucifixion. I do not think that the Scourge occurs save in the *GRAND SAINT GRAAL*. The Crown of Thorns was called the Golden Circle, having been set in precious metal and jewels by the Queen of a certain Castle where it was preserved. We have also the Pincers wherewith the Nails were drawn

¹ It is obvious that when the Grail itself is represented as the Paschal Dish in which Christ and His Apostles "ate the Lamb on Sher-Thursday", such Dish has a vital traditional story. When, however, a Dish which is not the Grail appears among the Hallows in the Northern French Cycle, it follows that the Grail is the Wine-Cup of the First Eucharist.

² Potvin, *Op. cit.*, I, p. 156; *HIGH HISTORY*, Branch XIV, Title 2.

³ *Ib.*, p. 173; *HIGH HISTORY*, Branch XV, Title 12.

from the limbs of Christ when He was taken down from the Cross.¹ Finally, the Shield of Judas Maccabæus is met with in this Romance, being won in battle by Gawain. The Sword has been referred also to the same Prince in Israel.

I suppose that the Legend of the Face-Cloth, which is part of the Veronica Legend, is the earliest of the Passion Relics; and among the Evangelisation Traditions that of Lazarus and his Companions coming to the South of France, carrying the Face-Cloth with them, has the palm of antiquity in the West. But this Relic, though it occupies an important position in the Early History of the Grail, is not included anywhere among the Hallows of the Grail Castle.

The Metrical Romance of Robert de Borron has one Hallow only, and this is the first extant Grail History. The first extant Quest is that portion of the CONTE DEL GRAAL which we owe to Chrétien. So far as his work is concerned there are four Hallows, the Vessel called the Grail, the Lance, the Sword and the Dish.² They are not in any case connected with the Passion. The Lance has been called his particular introduction: he is responsible in this manner for the Blood which flows therefrom in his own and later texts. The DIDOT-MODENA PERCEVAL, which owes something, it is thought, to Chrétien, introduces the Lance without any explanation concerning it. The Chrétien sequels, the PERLESVAUS and the Galahad QUEST lay stress upon the Sacred Sword, which is usually broken, and the task of the elect hero is to resolder the weapon. In all texts the Lance ranks next to the Cup in importance, and when the one is removed to Heaven at the close of the Galahad Quest it is accompanied by the other. The PERLESVAUS is a very late Quest, and it has Hallows innumerable. The GRAND SAINT GRAAL, at least in its present form, is a very late History, and it lays stress on the Nails of the Passion: it gives also an invented and artificial allegory to account for the Sword.

I have said that the Sword and the Dish seem but little to the purpose of the Grail, and those who took over these objects from antecedent Legends were not of one mind concerning them, more especially in respect of the Dish, which remains on the surface a superfluity in the Pageant, though at a later stage we may be enabled to ascertain its meaning. The Sword in several cases is important, especially—as I have said also—to the plot of the particular story; but it has no reason in the symbolism.

B.—LEGENDS OF THE SACRED LANCE

In the pseudo-Wauchier section of the CONTE DEL GRAAL and in the description of Monseigneur Gawain's visit to the Grail Castle, he sees among the Sacred Objects a Lance, which bleeds into a Silver Cup; but it is not the Cup of the Grail. The Lance is that weapon which pierced the side of Christ, and it is said that it will bleed till Doomsday.

¹ Potvin, *Op. cit.*, I, p. 179; HIGH HISTORY, Branch XV, Title 24.

² *Ib.*, II, pp. 146 *et seq.*

The body of the Lance was of wood ; the blade was white as snow ; and the weapon was fixed at the head of the master dais, with two tapers burning before it. The stream of blood issued from the point of the Lance and ran down the shaft into the vessel, from which it poured into a channel of gold and passed without the Hall.¹ This extravagant description is substituted for a much simpler account in Chrétien's portion of the poem : there only a single drop of blood trickles down to the hand of a Squire who bears the weapon in the Pageant. The fuller historical story is found in Manessier's section, which says that the Lance is that of the Roman soldier who pierced the side of Christ. According to a Montpellier Manuscript, Joseph of Arimathæa was present at the foot of the Cross and seeing, as the spear was withdrawn, how the blood ran down, he collected it in the Holy Vessel, turning black as he did so with sorrow. The DIDOT-MODENA PERCEVAL says only that a Squire in the Grail Castle carried a Lance in his two hands ; that it was that of Longinus ; and that a drop of blood flowed from the sacred point. I believe that this Romance reflects a primitive state of the Quest though it is regarded as late in its actual form, my reason being that the Hallows of the Passion are the only wonder-objects which belong properly to the Quest. The wider field of vision offered in the Vulgate Cycle and the multiplication of Relics in the PERLESVAUS are indubitable signs of lateness. In the GRAND SAINT GRAAL the Hallows which are seen in the vision preceding the Ordination of the younger Joseph are a great ensanguined Cross, three Nails from which blood seems to flow, a Lance—of which the iron point is stained also with blood—an ensanguined Cincture and a Scourge or Rod dyed in the same manner.² It will be seen that the writer of this Romance knew well enough that with the Grail itself he could connect only the things thereto belonging—namely, the other Relics of the Passion—and realising this fact in later branches of his Chronicle, while he perpetuates other objects through centuries of hidden life, he is careful not to locate them in the Grail Castle. The HUTH MERLIN is the only Legend of the Prophet which knows of another Hallow than the Sacred Vessel ; and this is the Lance ; but the circumstances under which it is introduced and the account which is given concerning it belong to a later stage of our research. I may say, however, that it was an instrument of mystical vengeance, and as such it reappears in the great prose LANCELOT. It is seen therein by Gawain, who is smitten by its blade of fire, but afterwards is healed by the Grail. It is seen also by Sir Bors when he visits Corbenic : an old man carries it in one hand, while he swings a censer with the other. In the Romance of Galahad, as we know it, the Lance manifests twice, and this is at the end of the Quest, when it is borne in one hand by an Angel, who holds in the other a box to receive the blood from its point. The *ipsissima verba* of the LONGER PROSE PERCEVAL are that of the Hallows there

¹ Potvin, *Op. cit.*, III, p. 369, an extract from the Montpellier MS.

² Sommer, *Op. cit.*, I, p. 33. Cf. Furnivall's text of Lovelick.

was "right great plenty." Perceval's shield had in the boss thereof some of the Blood of our Lord and a piece of His garment : they were placed therein by Joseph of Arimathæa. As regards the Lance itself, the point bleeds into the Holy Grail, and here also the weapon is one of vengeance, or rather of doom ; for he who is elected to the Quest has something to perform in respect of it, and he fails therein. This notwithstanding, the Hallow in the Romance under notice serves little purpose because it does nothing. For the sake of completeness the Lesser Hallows of the German Cycle may be mentioned with great brevity in this section, though their history and import must be held over for a long time to come. In the *PARZIVAL* of Wolfram the ensanguined head of a Lance is carried round a certain chamber : it has no connection with the Passion, but once more it is a memorial of vengeance, of fatality which is long and grievous.¹ In Heinrich's *DIU CRÔNE*, the Lance is held by two Young Men, and it sheds three great drops of blood, which are received in a salver.² I should observe in conclusion, for the time being, as to this Hallow that the French Cycle may be classified in three sections, of which the first does not mention the Lance, the second mentions but does not explain its antecedents, while the third affirms that it is the Lance of Longinus used at the Crucifixion. Late or early, there is no other history concerning it.

C.—THE BROKEN SWORD

The Grail Cup was not so much connected with the Passion as originated therefrom, because it is clear in history that, before ever Robert de Borron spoke of Secret Words, the meaning of Mass Chalices and the transit of a Great Hallow from East to West, the Precious Blood had been brought already within the wonder-world of Relics.³ So also the Sacred Lance had received its justification in Tradition before it was exalted in Romance.⁴ The allocation of other objects within the same sphere of devotion was so natural that it was not likely to be resisted ; but it must be observed that the attributions were inherited and not invented by the makers of Books of Chivalry. Face-Cloth and Loin-Cloth, Nails and Crown of Thorns had been long included among objects provided for veneration before the *GRAND SAINT GRAIL* or the *LONGER PROSE PERCEVAL* had dreamed of registering some among the Hallows of the Graal Ark, or elsewhere in their Holy and Marvellous Shrines. That Romance was capable of inventing Hallows is shewn by the history of the Sacred Sword, and such things had their imputed antecedents in Scripture ; but those of the Passion of Christ were too sacred for their interference, and they were left in the hands of the Church. The Church perhaps was not idle, and the Church did not scruple perhaps ; but minstrels and weavers of stories knew their proper limits and abode therein. Their respect in the case

¹ See Book VII, § 1. ² *Ib.*, § 3. ³ See Book IX, pp. 332-336. ⁴ *Ib.*, § 2.

under notice guarantees it in yet another, for which reason I hold it as certain that never did Robert de Borron tamper with Eucharistic formulæ, or, in other words, that, whether from far or near, he inherited and did not invent the Secret Words of the Mystery.¹

The Sword of the Grail is considerable under two aspects—firstly, as a derivative from folk-lore, which passes, as we have seen, through certain branches of the literature without suffering an especial change in its nature; secondly, as a hallowed object having an imputed derivation from the History of the Church of God under one of its two covenants. In the second case, we must be prepared to find—and this is natural also—that certain reflections from folk-lore, as from an earlier state of the object, are to be found in its consecrated form. In the Chrétien portion of the CONTE DEL GRAAL the Sword is suspended from the neck of a Page or Squire and is brought to the Master of the House as a present from his Niece, with leave to bestow it apparently howsoever he will, so only that it shall be well used. An inscription upon it says that it will never break except in one peril, which is known only to the smith who forged it.² In his time as a craftsman he made three such weapons, and no others will follow. As regards this particular example, the belt was worth a treasure, the crosspiece was of fine gold, and the sheath was of Venetian smith's work. It is given to Perceval by the King of the Grail Castle as something to him predestined. But it is only at a later stage that he learns under what circumstances it will fly in pieces and how it may be repaired—namely, by plunging it in a certain lake which is hard by the smithy of him who wrought it.³ The continuation of pseudo-Wauchier ignores these facts and reproduces the Sword at the Castle, where it is carried by a Crowned Knight: it is broken already and Gawain is asked to resolder it, in which task he fails. Perceval succeeds, on the occasion of his second visit, except for a slight crevice, thus proving that, at least in a certain measure, he is a lover of God, a true Knight, and one who loves also the Church, which is the Spouse of God. The conclusion of Manessier furnishes the history of the Hallow in full, though it has been the subject of allusion previously: (a) one stroke was given therewith; it destroyed the realm of Logres and the country adjacent thereto; (b) this stroke was inflicted on the King's Brother, in the course of a battle; (c) when the King himself took up the fragments unwarily, he was pierced through the thigh, and the wound will be healed only when his Brother's death has been avenged. In Chrétien, on the contrary, the wound of the Grail King is caused by a Spear which passes through his two thighs. The alternative conclusion of Gerbert sends Perceval again into exile, because certain imperfections in his life account for the fact that—*pace* Wauchier—he cannot resolder the Sword, and the Quest must be fulfilled better. The Hallow remains in the Castle, but another Sword is introduced and serves to indicate that behind the

¹ It is being assumed that the Mystery centred in the Eucharist and not in a Religious Oracle.

² It is not therefore a Sword of Legend.

³ See Book III, § 2.

strange memorial of this unknown poet there were sources of Legend which, if we could now recover them, might place yet another construction upon the root-matter of the Grail Myth. In Gerbert the Sword under notice is broken, not in a conflict which calls for a conventional vengeance, after the familiar motives of folk-lore, but in an attempt to enforce an entrance into the Earthly Paradise.¹

Passing over the Lesser Chronicles which—although in the DIDOT-MODENA PERCEVAL it is hinted on one occasion that there were many worthy Relics—make no reference to the Sword, and coming to the Vulgate Cycle we find that in the GRAND SAINT GRAAL there is a Hallow of this kind, and it is important not only from the standpoint of the Romance itself but for the Quest which follows therefrom. It was the Sword of David the King, and it was placed, as we have seen, by Solomon in a Mysterious Ship, destined to sail the seas for centuries as a testimony to Galahad that his ancestor was aware of his coming at the end of the times of the Grail. During the course of its history more than one wound is inflicted therewith, while the circumstances under which it is broken are told variously. In the GRAND SAINT GRAAL there are actually two Swords: to that of David the particular virtue ascribed is that no one can draw it—before the predestined hero in the days of Quest—without being visited heavily for his rashness. The doom works automatically, even to the infliction of death. It is only by a kind of accident that this Sword is broken, and then it is rejoined instantly, according to one of the codices. In another there is a distinct account, which does not say how or whether the Sword was resoldered in fine. As regards the Second Sword, it is merely an ordinary weapon with which Joseph II is smitten by a certain seneschal when he is endeavouring to convert the Prince in some part of Great Britain. The Sword breaks when it pierces him, and the point remains in the wound. After various miracles, which result in the general conversion of the people, the sufferer places his hand on the point of the Sword, which is protruding apparently from his side. It comes out of the wound, and the place heals up immediately. Joseph then takes the two portions of the Broken Sword and says: "God grant that this good weapon shall never be soldered except by him who is destined to accomplish the Adventure of the Siege Perilous at the Round Table, in the time of King Arthur; and God grant also that the point shall not cease to exude blood until the two portions are so soldered."²

It is reasonable to expect that these Hallows should prove a source of confusion as to their duplication and their purpose. I do not conceive that the Sword which is brought out of Fairyland in the HUTH MERLIN, which is claimed by Balan, which brings about the Dolorous Stroke—though this is inflicted actually by another instrument—which in fine involves two Brothers in mutual destruction, can be

¹ See Book III, § 5. At the end of Gerbert's narrative Perceval returns to the Castle of the Fisher King and makes the more authentic Sword perfect.

² Sommer, *Op. cit.*, I, pp. 253-256.

connected with either of the weapons with which we have been just dealing.¹ The alternative later MERLIN has no Mystery of Swords which can be identified with the Hallow of the Grail, and the prose LANCELOT knows nothing of that of David. It speaks, however, of a knight named Eliezer, who carries two Swords; one of them is enclosed in a priceless sheath, and is said to be that which pierced the loins of Joseph of Arimathæa and was broken therein,² thereafter repeating at full length the story recounted in the GRAND SAINT GRAAL. In the Great Quest the Sword by which Joseph was wounded is presented to Galahad for soldering; and when the Elect Knight has performed the task, it is given into the charge of Bors, because he was a Good Knight and a worthy man.³ After the soldering "it arose grete and marvellous, and was full of grete hete that many men felle for drede." It seems to follow that it was brought back to Logres on the return of Sir Bors from Sarras. The Sword of David was carried to Sarras, as we may infer, by Galahad, but it was not taken to Heaven with the Grail and Lance, the reason being doubtless that it was not a Symbol of the Passion. In the LONGER PROSE PERCEVAL the Sword, as we know, is that with which St. John the Baptist was beheaded, and though there is, firstly, no attempt to account for the presence of this Hallow in England, nor, secondly, any reference to it in the earlier literature, the identification helps us to understand better its place among the Hallows, as some other Swords met with in the texts have scarcely a title to be included among sacred objects. The office of Gawain, before he can know anything about Grail Mysteries, is to obtain this Sword from its wrongful keepers, and herein he succeeds. The scabbard is loaded with precious stones and the mountings are of silk, with buttons of gold. The hilt is also gemmed, while the pommel is a holy and sacred stone set in it by a certain Roman Emperor. When the Sword came forth from the scabbard it was covered with blood, and this seems to have been the case invariably at the hour of noon, which was the time of the Saint's Martyrdom. When noon has passed it becomes clear and green like an emerald. Its length is like that of a normal sword, but when sheathed neither weapon nor scabbard seems to be of two spans' length. It is said on the testimony of pseudo-Josephus that the Old Law was destroyed beyond recovery by a stroke of this Sword and that to effect such destruction our Lord Himself suffered to be smitten in the side with a Spear. These things are not to be understood on the open sense of the text.⁴

The Vulgate Chronicles of the Grail may be, as they are indeed, upon God's side; but the judgment concerning this sub-section of the Lesser Hallows must be that the Sword is an impediment before the face of the symbolism and little better than an idle wonder which we could wish to be taken out of the way. We could wish also—or I

¹ Gaston Paris: MERLIN, I, pp. 215-221; II, pp. 24-30.

² Sommer, *Op. cit.*, IV, pp. 323-328.

³ *Ib.*, VI, pp. 187, 188.

⁴ Potvin, *Op. cit.*, I, pp. 74, 75; HIGH HISTORY, Branch VI, Titles 4 and 6.

personally at least—that something of the Mystery behind the ascription of Gerbert might come at this day into our hands. In the *PARZIVAL* of Wolfram the hero of that Great Quest is refreshed by fruits brought from the Earthly Paradise on the occasion of his first visit to the Temple of the Holy Grail. We know not how or why, but this is another reflection, possibly from the source of Gerbert, and one which takes us no further, except that from time to time, by dim hints and allusions, we see that the Legend of the Grail is not so far apart from the Legend of Eden. In this manner we recur to the German Cycle, and there we find that there is a Sword of note in the *PARZIVAL*: it is that which was given to the hero by Anfortas, the Grail King. Now that this, amidst any variations, is the same story as that which is told by Chrétien is rather evident than likely. Another Sword broke when Parzival was fighting with his unknown Brother Feirfeis, because it would not drink the blood of his kinship; and this is the far antithesis of some of the French stories. In Heinrich's *DIU CRÔNE*, a Fair Youth of exalted mien carries a fair broad Sword, which he lays before the King of the Castle, and this Sword is given by the King to Gawain after he has asked the Question which we know to be all important. It has no later history.

In conclusion as to this matter, the Hallow of the Sword is not unlike a corresponding weapon in some of the Grades of Masonic Chivalry: in the same way as the Reverend Knights therein are not, in many cases, qualified to use the symbolic arm, so in the Grail literature the poets and romancers have accepted the custody of something which is so little to their purpose that they know scarcely what they shall do therewith. Had they only thought less of their folk-lore and vengeance-complex, they might have told a better—aye, even a truer—story from the standpoint of their own symbolism.

D.—THE DISH

The Sacred Dish being also, as we have seen, rather an unmeaning mystery, and as although it recurs frequently the descriptions are brief and the office which it holds is doubtful, it will be desirable only to distinguish those texts in which it is found. Subject to one possibility, and this is of the speculative order, it is, as we have seen, an unmodified survival from folk-lore; we should have expected it to appear therefore in the Chrétien portion of the *CONTE DEL GRAAL*, and this is the case actually; but it serves therein a very practical and mundane purpose, being used by the King and his Guests to wash their hands. It is a silver plate and is carried by a Damosel. It reappears in one codex of the continuation by Wauchier. The conclusion by Manessier describes it after a similar manner, but its purpose is not delineated: Perceval asks all the necessary questions regarding the Grail and Lance; he asks also concerning the Dish, but there is apparently nothing to tell, or at least he hears nothing. At the same

time it may have had a higher significance for this poet than for all the others, since he causes the Holy Dish to follow Perceval with the other Hallows when he accompanies a Hermit into the wilderness where he serves the Lord for ten years. Finally, Manessier states in his last words that the Dish was doubtless assumed into Heaven with the other Sacred Objects, namely, the Lance and the Sword. According to Gerbert, a Lady named Filosofine, who here, as in another Romance, figures as the Mother of Perceval, came over with Joseph of Arimathæa bearing a certain Plate; another lady carried an ever-bleeding Lance; while Joseph himself bore a fairer Vessel than eye had ever beheld. In the Lesser Chronicles there is only a single reference, which occurs in the DIDOT-MODENA PERCEVAL. When the Grail and the other Hallows are manifested first to Perceval, it is said that the Damosel bears two silver plates, adorned with draperies. In the GRAND SAINT GRAAL, and on the occasion when Joseph II is raised to the High Pontificate, the Paschal Dish is seen on the Altar, and in the middle place thereof is an exceedingly Rich Vessel of gold and precious stones. Here the reference is probably to the Sacramental Cup, but the account is confused; and elsewhere the complex Romance, in one of its codices, presents a new aspect of folk-lore, for there is pictured an Angel, bearing a Great and Glorious Head, about which we have no explanation and of which we hear nothing subsequently, either in the text itself or in later documents of the Cycle.¹ The Dish also passes out of the horizon, not only in the prose LANCELOT but in the QUEST OF GALAHAD. The German Cycle speaks of a Golden Salver, jewelled with precious stones and carried upon a silken cloth. It is used in the poem of Heinrich to receive the Blood which issues from the Lance.

It seems possible that there was an early tendency on the part of Christian romancers to distinguish between the Chalice, being the Cup "in which Christ made His Sacrament", and the Dish, being the Vessel in which He and His disciples ate the Paschal Lamb. They are confused to some extent in the GRAND SAINT GRAAL, while the prose LANCELOT knows of a single Vessel only, which is the Eucharistic Cup.² If such an implication were present to the mind of Manessier, we could understand why he says that the Dish was assumed into Heaven. It would have also a logical place among the Relics of the Passion; and if the Grail were a Mass Chalice, the Dish would be the Paten.

¹ It is found in the text edited by Dr. Furnivall for the Roxburghe Club, *anno* 1861, but not in the Vulgate Version of Sommer. See *Op. cit.*, I, p. 80, and the second manifestation of Angels recited therein.

² *Si estoit fait en semblance de calice.*—Sommer, *Op. cit.*, Vol. V, LE LIVRE DE LANCELOT DEL LAC, Part 3, p. 108. English readers may compare Miss L. A. Paton's SIR LANCELOT OF THE LAKE, based on a manuscript in the *Bibliothèque Nationale*, p. 311. The words are identical: "and it was fashioned in semblance of a Chalice."

VI

THE CASTLE OF THE HOLY GRAIL

THE Custodians of the Holy Grail, which was a Mystery of all Secrecy, "there where no sinner can be", abode sometimes in the uttermost seclusion, despite the kingly titles to them ascribed. Let us seek in the first instance to realise the nature and alternative places of that Castle or Temple which, according to the Legend, was for a period of centuries the Sanctuary of the Sacred Vessel and of the other Hallowed Objects connected therewith. Whether or not in the several locations of the Hallows we may come at a later time into fuller understanding of their Offices and of the meanings which abide behind them, they are not to be regarded exactly as a part of the Mystery belonging to the Castle itself; but at least this is more than a casket, while between the container and the things contained, distinct though their significance may be, there are points of correlation, so that the one throws light on the other.

We have seen that the Vessel itself was brought from Salem to Britain, and it follows from the historical texts that the transit had a special purpose, one explanation of which will be found ready to our hands when the time comes for its consideration. The Castle is described after several manners, the later Romances being naturally the more specific, and we get in fine a geographical settlement and boundary. In the Chrétien portion of the CONTE DEL GRAAL, Perceval discovers the Castle in a valley, wherein it is well and beautifully situated, having a four-square tower, with a principal hall and a bridge leading up to the chief entrance.¹ In some of the other Legends the Asylum is so withdrawn that it is neither named nor described. The EARLY HISTORY OF MERLIN speaks of it simply and shortly as the place where they had the Holy Vessel in keeping. According to the DIDOT-MODENA PERCEVAL, it is the House of the Rich King Fisherman: this also is situated in a valley; it has a tower and is approached by a bridge. It might be a tower merely, for the description is not less vague than are many accounts of the Cup. One of the later Merlin texts says only that the Holy Vessel is in the West—that is, in the Land of Vortigern—or that it abides in Northumbria. Another certifies that the Castle is Corbenic; but though we hear much concerning it there is no description whatever.

That section of the CONTE DEL GRAAL which is referable to Wauchier de Denain says that it is situated on a causeway tormented by the sea. The building is of vast extent and is inhabited by a great folk. We hear of a ceiling emblazoned with gold and embroidered with silver stars; of tables of precious metal; of images and of rich gems which enlighten it.² In a word, we are already in the region of imaginative

¹ Potvin, II, 142, ll. 4228-42.

² Potvin, V, pp. 139, 140, ll. 34628-44.

development and adornment; but it is all mere decoration which carries with it no meaning, beyond the heavy tokens of splendour. Manessier furnishes no special account, while Gerbert, who has other affairs at heart than solicitude about a supposed material building or desire to exalt it into allegory, leaves it unsketched entirely.

The GRAND SAINT GRAAL is the only French text which describes in a methodical manner the building of the Holy House. The first Wardens have passed from the Land of the Living, and Alain le Gros is the Keeper of the Blessed Vessel. The actual builder is a certain converted King of *Terre Foraine*,¹ and there is a covenant between him and Alain, one condition of which is that the Grail shall remain in his kingdom. The Castle on its completion is given the mystical name of Corbenic, in obedience to an inscription which is found blazoned on one of the entrance gates. The name is said to signify the Most Holy Vessel. The Grail is placed in a fair Chamber of the Castle, as if on an Altar of Repose; but all his munificence notwithstanding and all the sacramental visions which he sees in the Holy Place—beating of birds' wings and chanting of innumerable voices—the King is visited speedily for his mere presence and receives his death wound at the very Altar.² It is the judgment of the Sanctuary on those who desecrate the Sanctuary by carrying, however unwittingly, an unhallowed past therein; and it recalls the traditional conclusion of certain Cabiric Mysteries, wherein the Candidate was destroyed by the Gods. Setting aside an analogy on which I am by no means insisting, the event was the beginning of those wonders which earned for Castle Corbenic the name of the *Palace Adventurous*, because no one could enter therein, and no one could sleep, its lawful dwellers excepted, without death overtaking them, or some other grievous penalty.

The prose LANCELOT is in near correspondence with Chrétien, representing the Castle as situated at the far end of a great valley, with water encircling it.³ On another occasion it is named rather than described, and visited but not expounded, though we learn that it is situated in a town which has many dwellers therein. In the QUEST OF GALAHAD it is a rich and fair building, with a postern opening towards the sea; and this was guarded by lions, between which a man might pass only if he carried the arms of faith, since the sword availed nothing and there was no protection in harness.⁴ For the visitor who was expected or tolerated, it would seem that all doors stood open, except the door of the Sanctuary. But this would unclose of itself; the light would issue from within; the silver table would be seen; and thereon the Holy Vessel, covered with drapery of samite. There also on a day might be celebrated, with reverence of high worship, the Great Mass

¹ He was named Kalafes and became Alphasem in Baptism. The Castle is described as *fort et bon et bien seant*. It would seem that the subsequent visitation on the builder was quite arbitrary. He had slept in the Castle on a certain night and witnessed the Service of the Holy Grail, for which he was smitten with a spear between the thighs by a "fiery man" and died ten days later. It is to be noted that he was ignoring no prohibition and no caution.

² *Ib.*, V, p. 105.

³ Sommer, *Op. cit.*, I, pp. 288, 289.

⁴ *Ib.*, VI, pp. 178-180.

of the Supersanctified, and this even in the presence of those who were not clean in their past, so only that they had put away their sin when they entered on the Quest, or during the course thereof. It was beheld thus by Lancelot, though he lay as one dead afterwards, because of his intrusion.¹ So also the welcome guest had reason to know that the Court of King Pelles held a great fellowship in the town of Corbenic. But there were other visitors at times and seasons who saw little of all this royalty, like Hector de Marys, who—brother as he was to my Lord Sir Lancelot—found the doors barred against him and no Ostiarius to open, long as he hailed thereat.²

The most decorative of all the French accounts is, however, in the LONGER PROSE PERCEVAL, where the Castle is reached by means of three Bridges, which are horrible to cross. Three great waters run below them, the first bridge being a bow-shot in length and not more than a foot in width. This is the Bridge of the Eel; but it proves wide and a fair thorough-way in the act of crossing. The second Bridge is of ice, feeble and thin, and it is arched high above the water. It is transformed on passing into the richest and strangest ever seen, and its abutments are full of images. The third and last Bridge stands on columns of marble. Beyond it there is a sculptured gate, giving upon a flight of steps, which leads to a spacious hall painted with figures in gold.³ When Perceval visited the Castle a second time he found it encompassed by a river, which came from the Earthly Paradise and proceeded through the forest beyond as far as the hold of a hermit, where it "found peace in the earth."⁴ To the Castle itself there were three names attributed: the Castle of Eden, the Castle of Joy and the Castle of Souls. In conclusion as to this matter, the location, in fine, is Corbenic—not as an unvaried name, but as that which may be called the accepted, representing the Temple at its highest, and corresponding in French Romance to Montsalvatch in German—which our extant redaction of the GRAND SAINT GRAAL mentions specifically and which, all doubtful clouds of occult adventure notwithstanding, looms almost as a landmark in the LANCELOT and the QUEST OF GALAHAD.

I must speak very lightly of the German Cycle, because, through all these branches, it is understood that I shall recur of necessity, there and here, to the subject matter of the present section. In the PARZIVAL of Wolfram the Temple is so decorated that it has ceased almost to be a house made with human hands, though the descriptions on the external side may be called almost severe in their simplicity. On that side it has the strength of a feudal fortress, turret above turret rising. But on the inward side and in the master-hall of the Palace there is a wealth of oriental splendour—carpets and couches and cushions, marble hearths burning strange fragrant woods, and a great blazing

¹ *Op. cit.*, VI, pp. 180, 181.

² *Ib.*, pp. 182, 183.

³ Potvin, *Op. cit.*, I, pp. 83-85; HIGH HISTORY, Branch VI, Titles 14, 15.

⁴ *Ib.*, p. 249; Branch XXII, Titles 1, 2.

of lights. So far the *PARZIVAL* of Wolfram ; but we must turn to a later text for the building of the Temple—which is after another manner than anything told of Corbenic in the Northern French Cycle.¹ That building was the work of Titurel, the first King of the Grail ; and in answer to his prayers the High Artificers of Heaven prepared the ground-plan of the Holy Place and furnished the raw material. Over the construction itself the earthly craftsmen toiled by day and the Powers of Heaven by night. The floor was of pure onyx ; at the summit of the tower there was a ruby surmounted by a Cross of crystal, and carbuncles shone at the meeting-points of the great arches within. The roof was of sapphire, and a pictured starry heaven moved there in true order.

We are on a different level when we have recourse to the poem of Heinrich, which presents several anomalies in respect of the literature as a whole. The road leading to the Grail Castle was one of harsh and hazardous enterprise—world without end. But it brought the questing hero at some far point into a Plenteous and Gracious Land, where rose the Palace of Desire, looking beautiful exceedingly, with a meadow before it which was set apart for joust and tournament. A great concourse of Knights and Gentlewomen abode in the burg, and for the Castle itself we are told that there was none so fair. Though it will be seen that there is nothing distinctive in this account, as it is reduced here into summary, the design is among many things strange, for if it is not the Castle of Souls it is that of a Living Tomb, as the story concerning it will shew at the proper time.

So did the place of the Mysteries, from a dim and vague allusion, become

“ A wilderness of building, sinking far
And self-withdrawn into a wondrous depth,
Far sinking into splendour.”

We can scarcely say whether that which had begun on earth was assumed into the Spiritual Place, or whether the powers and virtues from above descended to brood thereon and even abide therein.

I have left over from this consideration all reference to another “ spiritual place,” in Sarras on the confines of Egypt, where the Grail, upon its outward journey, dwelt for a period, and whither, after generations and centuries, it returned also for a period. As this was not the point of its origin, so it was not that of its rest : it was a stage in the passage from Salem and a stage in the transit to Heaven. What was meant by this infidel city, which was yet consecrated so strangely, is hard to determine ; but its meaning—if any—belongs to a later stage. It is too early again to ask what are the implicits of the *PERLESVAUS* when it identifies the Castle of the Grail with the Earthly Paradise and the Place of Souls ; but we may note it as a sign of intention, and we shall meet with it in another connection where no one has thought to look for it.²

¹ Appendix I, Note 4.

² *Ib.*, Note 5.

VII

THE KEEPERS OF THE HALLOWS

SUCH was the abode of the Hallows ; and those who dwelt therein, the succession of Grail Keepers, belonged to that order which we should expect in such precincts. It should be noted that in the poem of Chrétien the Keeper is called the Fisher King,¹ but his other name and his lineage are not disclosed. It is, however, the beginning only of a very long story, and though it is difficult to say how the first poet would have carried his theme to its term, personally I do not question that he might have borne no different witness to the rest of the Grail Cycle in Northern French. By this, without exception, Joseph of Arimathæa is the first Guardian of the Sacred Vessel ; but either he passes from the scene before it has found a Sanctuary or he assumes a secondary position in his Son's favour. According to the Metrical Romance of Borron and the Borron Cycle generally, he was succeeded by his son-in-law, Brons ; but according to the Vulgate Chronicles he was succeeded by his own Son, the Second Joseph, who is unknown to the other Cycle. The Lesser Chronicles bridge the centuries between that generation which saw the Ascension of Christ and that which was to behold the Flower of Chivalry in Arthur, by means of a single Keeper, who was to remain on earth until he had seen his Grandson, Perceval, and had remitted into his hands the Secrets and Hallows of which he had been in charge so long. Perceval is the third who counts in the line of election to complete the human trinity of Grail Guardians, reflecting, after their own vaguely mystical manner, those Three who bear witness in Heaven, namely, the Divine Trinity. To accomplish the hero's geniture, Alain, the Son of Brons, although he had accepted celibacy, married in some undeclared manner ; and it was as his issue that Perceval was born in the fullness of Enchanted Times. For the EARLY HISTORY OF MERLIN the Keepers are those—not otherwise described or specified—who had the Holy Vessel, and the reticence in this case may seem like that of Chrétien : this, however, is not so actually, because the prose Romance of Merlin follows directly from the Metrical Romance of Joseph. We are told further that the promise of union with the Keepers is like *la joie perdurable*.

Pseudo-Wauchier's continuation of the CONTE DEL GRAAL offers no materials for the identification of the Fisher King, nor is even this name applied to him. But the variants or interpolated passages in the Montpellier MS. follow the Borron Cycle, representing him as the Father of Alain le Gros who married Enigea, the Sister of Joseph.² Manessier and Gerbert, on the other hand, would appear to reflect the

¹ *Le vice roi Pescéour*. See the CONTE DEL GRAAL, edited by Potvin, l. 4673, Vol. II, p. 156.

² Potvin, *Op. cit.*, IV, pp. 343 *et seq.*