

Vulgate Cycle, though as regards the GRAND SAINT GRAAL they know nothing concerning a younger Joseph.

From one point of view, the succession, as it is found in the Vulgate texts, involves fewer difficulties, because it exhibits a rudimentary sense of symbolical chronology and develops in consequence a long line of successive Custodians. They are, however, quite shadowy, and exist only to bridge the gulf of time in the order following: (1) Joseph of Arimathæa and Joseph II; (2) Alain, the Son of Brons; (3) Eminadap, the Son of Joshua, who was himself a Brother of Alain; (4) Carceloys; (5) Manuiel; (6) Lambor: the last four were Kings, holding from Calafas of *Terre Foraine*, called Alphasan or Alphisem in baptism; (7) the King Pelles.¹

So far as regards the GRAND SAINT GRAAL, and it is difficult to say what version or prototype of this text was before the authors of the VULGATE and HUTH MERLIN; but whatever it was they seem to have drawn from the same source. The Grail Castle, as we have seen, is Corbenic, situated in the realm of Listenoys, and the Keeper is King Pelles. As much and no more may be said concerning the prose LANCELOT. Enumerations of this kind serve very little purpose, and I will speak therefore only of the alternative Keepers who were in evidence during the days of Quest. On the one side, there is Brons, to whom succeeded Perceval at the close of a life of search;² on the other, there is King Pelles, of the Castle Corbenic, whose Daughter, Elaine, gave Galahad as issue to Lancelot, himself the lineal descendant of the King reigning at Sarras in the days of Joseph of Arimathæa and the first flight of the Grail. Galahad was the last Keeper recognised by this Cycle, and he seems to have been appointed only for the purpose of removing the Vessel. It was: *Ite, missa est, and est consummatum*, when he died and rose to the stars.³ As the PERLESVAUS is extra-lineal and thus stands by itself, I will say of it only in the present place that the King's title is that adopted by Chrétien, namely, the King Fisherman, and that his name is not declared otherwise.⁴ His successor is Perceval; but he enters into the Secret Royalty after an interregnum only, and his Stewardship also is with a view to the withdrawal of the Mystery. As regards the German Cycle, which will be dealt with elsewhere, the succession of Grail Keepers is Titurel, Frimutel and Anfortas, to whom succeeds Parzival. Titurel at the beginning was a saintlike hero of Earthly Chivalry, to whom a Divine Voice brought the strange tidings that he had been elected to guard the Holy Grail on Mont Salvatch. His progenitor was a man of Cappadocia who was attached to the Emperor Vespasian, and received for his services a grant of land in Southern France.⁵

The Hereditary Stewardship of the Holy Grail was the Most Secret

¹ Sommer's VULGATE VERSION OF ARTHURIAN ROMANCES, I, p. 289.

² See *post*, Book IV, § 4, s.v. DIDOT-MODENA PERCEVAL.

³ Sommer: *Op. cit.*, VI, *passim*.

⁴ Potvin, *Op. cit.*, I, LE ROMAN EN PROSE, p. 130 and elsewhere.

⁵ See *post*, Book VII, § 1.

of all Mysteries, and never initiated anyone outside the predestined family. There is seclusion in all cases, but that of the Brons Keepership is greater beyond comparison than that of Alain and his successors in the GRAND SAINT GRAAL. One explanation of this may be sought speculatively in the simple fact that, as regards the first case, several intermediate texts are wanting and may have been planned in part, if indeed they were never finished. This is admissible *per se*; but in the most proximate pre-Arthurian period, and in the time of the King, we find still the same concealment, though it is not quite so unvaried in the records of the CONTE DEL GRAAL as it is in the EARLY HISTORY OF MERLIN and in the DIDOT-MODENA PERCEVAL. The comparative position seems as another line of demarcation between the Lesser and Vulgate Chronicles; but the distinctions between the two branches will be appreciated most clearly by a comparison between the EARLY HISTORY OF MERLIN¹ and the later VULGATE² and HUTH texts.³ The Sanctuary is shrouded in the EARLY HISTORY, and we know only that those who have the Sacred Vessel are somewhere in Northumbria. In the Vulgate, the Keeper, King Pelles, is in continual evidence. He is also a King in warfare, and it is by no means certain that he is always on the side of the Over-Lord Arthur. In the HUTH MERLIN the Grail Castle is so accessible that King Pellinor can be maimed by a strange Knight.

It would be easy to extend this section very much further than I purpose doing, in view of all that is to follow. My intention here is a schedule, or this mainly; and the specific summary is as follows. There are two Early History versions, and they are represented, firstly, by Borron's Metrical Romance, which is much earlier than any other historical account: they are represented, secondly, by the GRAND SAINT GRAAL, allowance—at its value—being made in both cases for the hypothetical possibility of those earlier drafts which were dear to the heart of scholarship, now somewhat far in the past. About the extant work in the second case there are two points certain: (1) that it is very much later than any first recension or transcript of the alleged book which had come into the hands of Robert de Borron; (2) that it is later also than the QUEST OF GALAHAD as we know it, which involves also an antecedence in some form of the prose LANCELOT and the later histories of Merlin. We are left therefore with two claims which appear to be at the root of the Mystery of the Holy Grail, as it is manifested in French literature of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries: these are the claim of an Eucharistic formula, the validity and efficacy of which transcended the Words of Institution known by the Official Church, and the claim of a Priesthood which did not draw from the Official Apostolate, though it did not question its authority. These two are likely to be one in their essence, and it is out of these respectively that we may come to understand why Perceval

¹ Sommer, *Op. cit.*, II, pp. 19, 27.

² *Ib.*

³ MERLIN: ROMAN EN PROSE, edited by Gaston Paris and Jacob Ulrich.

is withdrawn into the innermost seclusion by the Lesser Chronicles, and why in the Vulgate Cycle Galahad is assumed into Heaven—both carrying their warrants.

VIII

THE PAGEANTS IN THE QUESTS

THE presence of the Holy Vessel signified the Divine Presence. The Life of Life had remained in the Precious Blood. The Voice of the Angel of Great Counsel, the Voice of the Son and the Voice of the Holy Spirit abode therein, or spoke as if from behind it. The Presence was sacramental, but the Presence was also real, and through the soul it was one which sustained the body itself at need. So far as regards the Lesser Chronicles and in those which may be called Greater—otherwise, the Vulgate Cycle—there was a Reservation which continued through centuries, an Arch-Natural Mass—*ex hypothesi* a Daily Celebration according to its Rule of Institution, and in any case—an unfailing ministry to body and soul alike. In a word, the Last Supper was maintained for ever and ever. It was a sacramental side of the eternal Festival of the followers of Bran,¹ and those who say that the roots of the Mystery are in folklore say only the most negligible part of the truth concerning it; for if I accomplish by a secret science the transmutation of lead into gold, it will be useless for any scholarship of science to depose that the important fact is the lead. The latter is the antecedent, and as such is, of course, indispensable, but the great fact is the conversion; and I say the same of the Grail literature.

On this and all other considerations, it will be understood that the Mystic Castle was a place of the highest reverence, and that all things concerning the Sacred Vessel were done with ceremonial solemnity, following a prescribed order. In this way it comes about that the Quests present the Pageant of the Grail on its manifestation within the Hall and Shrine of the Castle. There are instances in which it is exceedingly simple, and others in which it is ornate. It is the former in the Lesser Chronicles, and demands scarcely the express name of a Pageant; in the Vulgate Cycle it is decorative, and this term will apply to some of the manifestations which are described in the *CONTE DEL GRAAL*. The section which is referable to Chrétien offers, however, nothing to detain us. The Procession enters the hall in single file, and consists in succession of a Page, or Squire, who carries the mysterious Sword which will break in one danger only; of another Squire who bears the Sacred Lance from which the blood issues; and then of two Squires together, each supporting a ten-branched candlestick. Between these there walks the gentle and beautiful Maiden who

¹ That is, the Blessed Bran of Celtic lore.

lifts up the Holy Grail in her two hands: she is followed by another Maiden, who carries the Silver Dish. The Procession passes twice before the couch on which the King of the Castle reclines, and it is to be noticed that whatever efficacy and wonder may reside in the objects which are manifested thus, the office of the Bearers is as purely ceremonial as that of the Acolytes and Thurifers at any High Mass in the world.¹ When the Questing Knight pays his first visit in the DIDOT-MODENA PERCEVAL, the Offices are transposed partially and the Sword is missing from the Pageant.² He who upraises the Lance enters in the prescribed manner; but he carries it with both hands and is followed by a Maiden with two silver plates and a napkin on her arm; while the Vessel containing the Precious Blood of our Saviour, as if it were a Phial or Reliquary, is in the charge of a second Squire. On the occasion of the later visit, it is said, still more tersely, that the Grail and the other Venerable Relics come out from a chamber beyond; but we do not learn who carries them.³ It is a characteristic of all the versions that, even in telling the same story, this is done with respect to a certain genius of difference and of variants intervening in the text. The pseudo-Wauchier text recounts in two versions the visit of Monseigneur Gawain to the Grail Castle, in the more important case under circumstances of unexplained Mystery, for no one was less on the Quest. This is comparable to the Reception, in some Mystery-House, of a Neophyte who is neither introduced nor prepared, but is mistaken at first for another. The Pageant is dismembered also, for the Dish does not appear, while the Hallow of the Broken Sword is placed upon the breast of a dead body, which lies on a rich bier.⁴ As if it were a subsidiary Hallow, a Stately Clerk carries an enormous Cross of jewelled silver, and the only Procession described is that of Canons in silken copes, who celebrate an Office of the Dead amidst thuribles and golden candlesticks. The Grail itself does not appear till the supper is served in the hall, when it is held by no visible hand and no other Sacred Object is seen in connection therewith. At a later stage of the episode, the Lance manifests and the Blood which distils from its point is received, as we have seen, in a Silver Cup. The Broken Sword, in fine, reappears at the close: it is a very curious and piecemeal Pageant. When Perceval revisits the Castle, the account of Wauchier de Denain is in better conformity with what may be termed the conventional or authorised ceremonial type.

Passing to this point at the close of the continuation by Wauchier, there is again a very simple Pageant, in which the Grail comes first—a Holy and Glorious Vessel—under the charge of a Maiden, who issues from the Secret Chamber and passes before the Royal Table, carrying the Hallow exalted.⁵ There follows a second Maiden, than whom none is fairer, clothed in white drapery, and bearing the Lance from

¹ Potvin, *Op. cit.*, II, pp. 146-148.

² *Ib.*, I, p. 482.

⁴ Potvin, *Op. cit.*, III, pp. 363-368.

² Hucher, *Op. cit.*, I, p. 465.

⁵ *Op. cit.*, V, pp. 143-150.

which flows the Mysterious Blood. In fine, there enters the Squire exposing a naked Sword, broken in the middle thereof. It is at this point that, abruptly enough, the continuation reaches its term and is taken up by Manessier,¹ who causes the Grail and Lance to pass for a second time before the King and his Guest, together with a noble Silver Dish, which is carried by a third Maiden—a Procession of Vestals only, seeing that the work of the Sword—which has been resoldered partly by Perceval—has no longer its place in the Pageant. When the questing hero pays his third visit to the Grail Castle, under the auspices of the same poet, the Lance and Grail are carried by two Maidens ; but a Squire holds the Silver Dish, enveloped in his rich amice of red samite.² The Sacred Objects pass three times, and return whence they issued, into the Secret Chamber, the Mystery of which is never disclosed fully by the makers of this Romance. In fine, when Perceval is crowned—and this is his fourth visit—a gentle Maiden exalts the Holy Vessel, the Lance is borne by a Squire, while another Maiden holds the Silver Dish.³ It will be seen that on each occasion there is some variation in the Offices, as if these were determined by accident. The alternative of Gerbert—which should have intervened before the partial resoldering of the Sword by Perceval in the Wauchier version—some few verbal modifications notwithstanding—gives the same account of the Grail Procession.

In the prose *LANCELOT*, which prefaces the great and glorious *QUEST*, the Pageant has this characteristic—that it is preceded invariably by a Dove, which enters through a window bearing a golden censer in its beak, and the Palace fills thereupon with the eternal sweetness of the Paradise which is above. The bird passes through the Hall and out of sight into a Chamber beyond. From that Chamber—as if at a concerted signal—or almost as if the Dove had suffered transformation—there issues the Maiden of the Grail, carrying the Precious Vessel. The Grail manifestation in the *LANCELOT* is at first on the occasion of Monseigneur Gawain's visit, and he sees nothing of the other Hallows till the Lance, at a later stage, issues from the Chamber beyond and smites him between the shoulders. In the middle of the night of terror which follows this event, he beholds another Pageant preceded by a choir of voices. Once more the Maiden issues from the Hidden Chamber carrying the Sacred Vessel, with lights and thuribles before her ; and the Service of the Grail is performed on a silver table in the middle place of the Hall ; but there are no other Hallows.⁴ When Lancelot comes to the Castle—from which visit follows the conception of Galahad—the manifestation of the Grail is identical ; but because of that which must be consummated he suffers no infliction and does not behold therefore the avenging Lance. It can be said scarcely that there is a Pageant : the Dove enters and vanishes ; it passes within the Secret Chamber, that the Maiden in charge of the

¹ Potvin, *Op cit.*, V, pp. 150 *et seq.* ² *Ib.*, VI, pp. 132 *et seq.* ³ *Ib.*, pp. 151, 152.

⁴ Sommer : *VULGATE ARTHURIAN ROMANCES*, IV, pp. 342-347.

Vessel may come out therefrom : she appears accordingly, bearing the Holy Palladium, a Vessel of Gold, " the richest thing that any man hath living ". Having issued from the Secret Chamber, she returns again therein, but not before Lancelot—also for that which was to follow—is dazzled by her surpassing beauty.¹

In the time of the Great Quest there are, strictly speaking, no Pageants in the sense of the other Romances, for the Grail is going about. Its apparition at the Court of King Arthur is heralded by a sunbeam only, and it is borne by no visible hand.² In Corbenic, when all things draw to the holy marvel of their close, there is a solemn Procession of Angels to the Secret Shrine of the Grail, two of them bearing wax lights, the third a cloth, and the last the Sacred Lance, because Heaven has come down at the removal of that which is meant for earth no more.³ In Sarras, at the last scene of all, which ends the strange, eventful Mystery, there is a Great Cohort of Angels ; but this is the Choir Above descending to witness that which must be done in fine below.⁴ There is no passing between intermediate spaces.

In the PERLESVAUS two Damosels issue together from a Chapel which is attached to the banqueting-hall, one of them carrying the most Holy Grail and the other the Lance, the point of which distils its blood therein.⁵ It is suggested also, but as if by a dream within a dream, that there are two Angels, bearing two candlesticks of gold filled with wax lights. The Damosels move through the hall and pass into another Chapel. Again they come forth, and it seems then that there are three Maidens, with the figure of a Child in the midst of the Holy Grail. They pass for a third time, and then above the Vessel there is a Vision of the Crucified King.

In the PARZIVAL of Wolfram a Squire enters hurriedly, bearing the Lance, which bleeds profusely into his sleeve—an uncouth and ill-begotten symbol.⁶ Two gracious Maidens, wearing chaplets on their heads, follow with flowing hair : they are holding Golden Candlesticks. Two other Women, of whom one is described as a Duchess, carry two stools of ivory, which they place before the King. Next in order are four Maidens having as many tapers, and four other Maidens who sustain between them an oblong slab of jacinth. There are then two Princesses carrying knives of silver, and these also are preceded by four Maidens. The Princesses are followed by six additional Maidens, bearing tall glasses filled with rare perfumes. There is, in fine, the Queen of all, with the Grail in the hands of her, and behind is the Squire who carries the Sword of Legend. When we come at the proper time to see how much and how little on the surface sense of things follows from this cumbrous display, we shall turn with the more relief to versions which are less decorative, though we can understand and excuse also the influence of the oriental mind, if this be

¹ *Ib.*, V, p. 108.

² *Ib.*, VI, p. 13.

³ Sommer, *Op. cit.*, VI, p. 189.

⁴ *Ib.*, p. 197.

⁵ Potvin, *Op. cit.*, I, pp. 88, 89 ; HIGH HISTORY, Branch VI, Titles 19, 20.

⁶ See Book VII, sect. 7.

reflected in the *PARZIVAL*, whether from the alleged prototype of Kyot de Provence or from Arabian sources, through Southern France as a channel. Relief at the moment may come also from the poem of Heinrich, though it is the idlest of all the Quests. Here the Procession is in two parts. In the first there is a beautiful youth of highest mien, upholding the Sword and followed by Cup-Bearers who serve wine at the Feast. When this is over there enter two Maidens, carrying golden candlesticks; behind them come two Youths, who bear the Lance between them; they are followed by other two Maidens, in whose charge is a Salver of jewelled gold, reposing on a silken cloth. Behind these there walks the Fairest of Women, dowered with the Precious Reliquary of the Grail, and after her comes the last Maiden of all, whose hands are empty, whose Office is weeping only—a variation which will be found also in the Montpellier codex of the *CONTE DEL GRAAL*.

IX

THE ENCHANTMENTS OF BRITAIN, THE TIMES CALLED ADVENTUROUS AND THE WOUNDING OF THE KING

THE *PERLESVAUS* or *LONGER PROSE PERCEVAL* says that the Secret Sanctuary gives upon the Earthly Paradise, even as the visible world may be said to give upon the world unseen. We have now to consider how a Horror fell upon the Secret House of God and a subtle work of Sorcery on the world which encompassed it. All texts indifferently of the Northern French Cycles say that, as a consequence of certain events connected with the Castle of the Grail, there came an interdiction upon Logres. In the *LESSER CHRONICLES* it is termed an Enchantment, while in the Vulgate Cycle it is characterised as Adventurous Times; but the distinctions dissolve into one another: there is not less Adventure, nor is it less hazardous, in the Texts of Enchantment, while in the Adventurous Texts the graces and terrors of Sorcery abound on every side. We can consider them therefore together, being aspects of the same subject which are scarcely so much as alternative, and, in fact, on a study of the documents, it will be found that the Adventurous Times are almost too vague by themselves to admit of being specified separately. As regards the Enchantments, they are a consequence which works outward from within—that is to say, directly or indirectly, something which has transpired within is responsible for the inhibition without. The Enchantments are the result of an evil which has fallen on the Keeper for the time being of the Holy Grail. They are the exteriorised sorrow of the King and his Holy House. The action is however, reciprocal, for in some instances that sorrow has reached him by an intrusion of the external order, though in certain other cases it has arisen in his own Palace or in his own person. It remains that as Enchantment fell upon

Merlin, so also it has fallen about the Secret House and has entered into the Holy of Holies. Now, the places of Enchantment are also places of sadness, and the nature of the horror within, abiding as a certain cloud upon the Sanctuary, is described after several manners. In one story, the flesh, which at no time profits anything, has smitten deeply into the life of the Keeper, who has been a victim of earthly passion. In another, he is unable to die till he has seen the last scion of his House, and because of the protraction of the centuries, he is suffering, in the meantime, the heavy burden of his great age, the millstone of many centuries about his neck. He has received alternatively a dolorous stroke, or as a final explanation he is afflicted by the failure of a Knight to ask a conventional Question, which is at once vital and mystic. These things are reflected upon the order without, sometimes, as it would seem, only in the immediate neighbourhood of the Castle ; more generally through the whole of Logres ; while in rare instances the world itself is involved, at least by imputation.

The Perceval Quests turn entirely on the asking of that Question which I have specified in the previous enumeration, and the pivot of the Question itself is the failure to perform what is expected in this respect—namely, to ask and to receive. In the Chrétien section of the CONTE DEL GRAAL the explanation of the King's sickness is that he was wounded by a spear in battle, and hence is carried by four sergeants because he has no strength in his bones.¹ In the DIDOT-MODENA PERCEVAL, Brons, the Rich Fisherman, is said to be in great infirmity, an old man and full of maladies, nor will his health be restored until the Office of the Question has been fulfilled in all perfection.² But this is not ordinary old age ; rather—as I have just intimated—it is the oppression of many centuries. It is clear, however, that Brons was not suffering from any curse or enchantment : he cannot depart from this life until he has communicated to Perceval the Secret Words pronounced at the Sacrament of the Grail, which he learned himself from Joseph. This and the instruction which will follow the Question asked by the hero shall put a period to the Enchantments of Britain. There is a failure in the first instance, as in the poem of Chrétien. The Quest in the CONTE DEL GRAAL is to some extent assumed by Gawain, who visits the Grail Castle in the continuation of pseudo-Wauchier. He does ask, and thereupon the King promises him that, subject to one other condition, he shall hear the great story of the Broken Sword and of the woe which it brought upon the Kingdom of Logres. But Gawain fails and falls asleep.³ The failure of Perceval has worked the destruction of kingdoms, which may mean certain petty principalities of Britain passing under this name—otherwise they cannot have been of this world, as the alleged visitation does not come to pass herein. On the occasion of Perceval's second visit, the King is seated on a couch as before, and the discourse is not

¹ Potvin, *Op. cit.*, II, pp. 144, 151.

² Hucher, *Op. cit.*, I, pp. 418, 419.

³ Potvin, *Op. cit.*, III, pp. 84, 364-368 ; IV, 1-6 ; III, 369-372.

closed in the section of Wauchier.¹ The conclusion of Manessier recounts how the Broken Sword dealt that stroke which, prior to the voided Question, has destroyed the Realm of Logres and all the surrounding country. The unfinished inquiry of Gawain, before he fell into slumber, restored verdure to the land about the Grail Castle, and the waters found their course. It was not, however, the Keeper but his Brother who received the Dolorous Stroke, being slain treacherously in a battle. The Sword, which broke in the act, was placed upon the bier when the body was brought to the Castle; it was taken up incautiously by the King and in some undeclared manner it wounded him in both thighs—a wound which could not be healed till the death of his Brother was avenged.² For these events the late Prologue to the CONTE DEL GRAAL substitutes a desolation which fell upon Logres prior to the coming of King Arthur. There were certain Maidens who kept the wells and ministered refreshment to travellers out of golden cups. So admirable as was this custom, an Evil King despoiled the Maidens and scattered them, after which the service ceased. The elements of the Prologue stand apart from the rest of the literature, like an allegory in another tongue; and though it is very curious in itself, it connects with nothing which follows in the texts that it is supposed to introduce.

The GRAND SAINT GRAAL, like the Metrical Romance of Borron, antecedes the period alike of Enchantments and Quests; but as it is later in fact than the Chronicles which it is supposed to precede, so, as a part of its warrants, it forestalls many of their characteristics by a kind of spurious prophecy. It tells how the younger Joseph, the Second Keeper of the Grail, was smitten in the thighs by an Angel for aiding certain people who did not embrace Christianity; and it testifies that the Avenging Spear with which the wounds were inflicted will be heard of again at the beginning of those marvels that shall occur in the Land of Britain. In this manner it appears to foreshadow the particular Dolorous Stroke of which we have a full account in the HUTH MERLIN, with all the Sorrowful Adventures that follow thereon. They are destined to continue for twenty-two years, corresponding to the twenty-two days during which the head of the Lance was imbedded in the flesh of Joseph.³

The Vulgate Merlin has nothing to say concerning Enchantments of Britain: on the contrary the Prophet's skill and discretion were gifts vouchsafed by God so that he might accomplish the Adventures of the Holy Grail. That it was the rumour of the Sacred Vessel which inaugurated the Times of Adventure is clear from this text, as it is also from the HUTH MERLIN, which speaks of a prophecy written by the

¹ Potvin, *Op. cit.*, V, p. 140-150.

² *Ib.*, pp. 159-162, ll. 35187-35290.

³ There is no question that the Lance or Spear which ranks as second only in importance to the Hallow-in-Chief of the Grail Castle is always and only that Lance of Longinus which pierced the side of Christ, or that the Blood which flows therefrom represents the Precious Blood. Whether carried as now by an Angel or as later by the Knight Balyn, one would have thought that an object so utterly sacred would not have been in what must be called promiscuous use. I refer only to the Northern French Cycle,

Enchanter on parchment and concerned with those wonders which would characterise the Quest, encompassing in fine the destruction of the marvellous Lion, that is to say, the overthrow of King Arthur. The implicits of this statement are one crux of the Merlin Cycle. It is also, as I have intimated, to the HUTH MERLIN that we owe our first acquaintance with the beautiful story of Balyn and Balan, the two brethren born in Northumberland, who were good Knights, according to Malory. Balyn was destined to inflict the Dolorous Stroke, which during the allotted period of twenty-two years would cause dire distress throughout three kingdoms; for by this Stroke he would pierce the most holy man in the world and inaugurate the Marvels of the Grail in Great Britain.¹

There can be no doubt that the Warden of the Sacred Vessel is here the intended victim, and that the stroke is actually given in the Grail Castle, with the Hallowed Lance of the Legend. Balyn himself nearly loses his life in the cataclysm which follows, and is informed by Merlin that he has deserved the hatred of the whole world, the obvious reason being that he has desecrated a Great Sanctuary. The recipient of the wound is said, however, to be King Pellehan, who is the Brother of King Pelles the Keeper. In any chronological tabulation this event would most likely precede the sole visit of Gawain—in the Vulgate Cycle—to the Grail Castle and indubitably to the first arrival of Lancelot therein. These occurrences are related in the prose LANCELOT; but in this Romance the Keeper of the Sacred Vessel is, as I have said, King Pelles, and he is not wounded. Pellehan reappears in the QUEST OF GALAHAD not only as the Maimed King, but as he who bears the title of Rich Fisher, which is reserved to the Royalty of the Grail Wardens. It will be seen therefore that a certain confusion has arisen, owing doubtless to continuous editing; and it may follow that there was originally but one King in the Castle, that his name was Pelles, that he was wounded by the Dolorous Stroke, and was destined to be healed by Galahad at the term of the Quest.² As it is, there is actually a dual healing—that of the King Pellehan and that of another personage whose sin dates back to the first times of the Legend, being one of unprepared intrusion into the Most Secret Mysteries of the Grail. In the QUEST OF GALAHAD the confusion which I have noticed is made greater by the story of Perceval's Sister concerning the maiming of King Pelles, who found the Ship of Solomon towards the coast of Ireland. He entered therein and drew the Sword of David about half-way from its scabbard. In punishment of this rashness a spear smote him through both thighs, and never since might he be healed, says she, "to fore we come to hym".³ None of this takes place actually, but it goes to shew

¹ The Marvels do not emerge, except as the occasional and rather fitful manifestation of the Sacred Vessel, and the fact that its Temple was thrown open to rare visitors, awaiting the time when he would appear at last who should heal the Maimed King.

² It may be thought alternatively that the complete disability of Pellehan brought to pass the succession of Pelles—a speculative possibility about which we cannot rule.

³ Sommer, *Op. cit.*, VI, p. 150.

that the original intention of the story was the intention of the Perceval Quests—namely, to wound the Keeper of the Grail, or insure otherwise (1) his prolonged suffering and (2) his ultimate healing by the heir to come. Speaking otherwise of this great Romance, the whole process of the Quest is lifted into a high spiritual region, the implicits of which may provide us at a later stage with one key of the Mystery.

In the LONGER PROSE PERCEVAL or PERLESVAUS it is said that there shall be no rest in the land till the Grail has been achieved. But here the Horror of the House was the failure of Perceval to ask that Question, the simplicity of which is the seal of the whole enigma. As a consequence, the shepherd has been smitten and the sheep have been scattered. Those who ministered in the Castle were sent out by the general fatality beyond the Sacred Precincts, for no other reason apparently than to act as witnesses of the woe abroad before the face of the world; and so therefore in place of Ceremonial Pageants within there are strange Processions without.¹

In the German Cycle, the adequate consideration of which must be referred as before to a later stage,² the PARZIVAL of Wolfram makes a blot on the scutcheon by shewing that sin entered the Sanctuary; and in this, as in other respects, the story is set apart from all else in the general scheme of the literature. On the other hand, the poem of Heinrich, though its root-matter is almost out of knowledge, conforms, as it does usually, to the more normal Tradition in points of detail, saying that the Doom of the King was the outcome of war between Brothers. With this, in other connections and a far other sense, we have some analogy in the LONGER PROSE PERCEVAL.

It may be that the implicits of the Grail Keepers rank among the most important of those which at once challenge and elude explanation. While they are connected more especially with the Headship in the persons of successive Wardens, there are also subsidiary matters emerging therefrom or belonging otherwise thereto. Woe has fallen on the Wardens, though, speaking symbolically, they abide in the place of life. Not only is the Hereditary Custodian of the Secrets that person in most of the Romances on whom comes the symbolic grief, but he is dependent peculiarly on help expected from without, and although his sustenance is within his healing is beyond the Sanctuary. Even the unqualified Monseigneur Gawain can bring him a partial consolation. He receives a nondescript savage like Perceval, as he is depicted in the more primitive stories, within the fold of election, for doing something after a clownish failure which any child might have been expected to perform at once. All this is so out of reason on the surface that a meaning in concealment seems inevitable. Its investigation stands over of necessity; but as something consistent with the subject, down the first vistas of which we are looking only, it may be said, as the characteristic of every Initiation, that the Candidate does not ask

¹ Potvin, *Op. cit.*, I, p. 2; HIGH HISTORY, Branch I, Title 1.

² See Book VII, § 1.

questions : it is he who is catechised and must answer. One key from one point of view might again be the counsel : Ask, and ye shall receive. But the Grail Quester is to bestow before he receives. It has been proposed that we are dealing with a Rite which follows a defined procedure ; but—if so—it is one which works rather the reverse way, so far as normal Instituted Mysteries are concerned. That Rite has been going on for generations, inviting and accepting no Candidate, for it is perpetuated by hereditary transmission, though its treasury has been a heritage of woe. There is no symbolical object in all the lore of Mysteries to compare with the Secret Guardianship, whether the Keeper is wounded for his own, or another's, and even for our transgressions ; whether also the consideration of his Mystery arises from the texts themselves or from suggestions belonging thereto and admitted from a very high standpoint. No one could find the Castle, or come into the presence of the King, except by a special warrant and almost invariably by a congenital election. The Castle was hidden from the world, like the analogous House of the Holy Ghost in the Rosicrucian Mystery, and he who entered therein had somehow to awaken the Oracle. The Hidden Life of the Keepers passed in the Castle, but not in the visionary rapture of those who go into Avalon and other Isles of the Blessed.¹ Now, there are two palmary Mysteries connected with two divisions of the Chronicles of Quest—one is the silence of Perceval and the other is the conception of Galahad. By the way of anticipation, something more will be said of the first in the next section.

X

THE SUPPRESSED WORD AND THE MYSTIC QUESTION

IT is agreed that the essential and predominant characteristic of the Perceval literature is the asking and answering of a Question which bears on its surface every aspect of triviality, but is yet the pivot on which the whole circle of these Romances may be said to revolve. On the other hand, the Question is absent from the Galahad story, and in place of it we have a stately Pageant of Chivalry moving through the World of Logres to find the High Mystery of Sanctity. But that finding is destined only to dismember the Arthurian Empire and to pass, in fine, leaving no trace behind it, except the sporadic vision of a rejected Knight, which is mentioned but not described, and occurs under circumstances that justify grave doubts as to its existence in any original text.

Now, the entire critical literature of the Grail may be searched in vain for a serious explanation as to the actuating motive, in or out of folk-lore, concerning the Grail Question. On the part of folk-lore

¹ This offers therefore a useful distinction between the Quest of the Holy Grail and that of Other World Islands in records of folk-lore.

authorities there have been attempts to find something antecedent within the scope of their subject; but the analogies have been no analogies, and as much extravagance has resulted as we have yet heard of in the connection which some scholars have vaguely termed Mysticism. The symbolical and sacramental value of the Grail Quest, outside all issues in folk-lore, is from my standpoint paramount, as it is this indeed without any reference to opinions which are founded in folk-lore or to speculations arising therefrom. For the rest, it is impossible to survey the Cycle of Perceval Quests without seeing that the Question of the Grail is second in importance only to the Grail itself and that the one is a key to the other, as it is also a title to the knowledge of those Secret Words which should uncover the whole Mystery. If ever a Rite of Initiation was veiled in myth it is assuredly in the Perceval Cycle, which bears the seeming marks and seals by which those who are Initiates themselves can recognise the presence of a Mystery. At the same time, Initiation, like folk-lore, knows many offices of silence but few of asking; and after many researches I conclude—at least tentatively—that in this respect the Grail Romances stand practically alone.¹

In the CONTE DEL GRAAL of Chrétien, the law and order of the Quest is that Perceval shall ask the meaning of those wonders which he beholds in the Pageant at the Castle of the Quest. The references are many in the poem, but they are merely repetitions. Perceval did not ask (1) how such things came to pass; (2) nor anything whatsoever; (3) he did not dare to ask about the Grail, *qui on en servoit*, because his teacher in Chivalry had cautioned him against idle curiosity and such impertinence; (4) for which reason he reserved his speech.² It is understood—and we have seen—that through the oppression of the centuries the Keeper of the Holy Grail is, according to the DIDOT-MODENA PERCEVAL, in a state of distress, longing for his delayed release. Before he can go in peace he must pass on the Divine Tradition of the Secret Words; but before he can so transmit them he must be asked a Question. That Question is: *De quoi li Graus sert*. It will perform a two-fold office, firstly, to heal the King and, secondly, to liberate his speech. Perceval reaches the Castle; but notwithstanding that the voice of One who was invisible had announced at the Court of King Arthur, in Perceval's presence and in that of all the Knights, both the nature and effect of the Question, he inquires nothing for fear of offending his host. Hence he departs in disgrace, and the King remains unhealed.³

¹ It was suggested, now long ago, by Birch-Hirschfeld that the Question of the Grail was an invention of Borron and devoid of real significance. See *DIE SAGE VOM GRAL*, in which it is held not only that the DIDOT-MODENA PERCEVAL was the work of Robert de Borron but that his trilogy anteceded Chrétien and was used by him in the CONTE.

² Potvin, *Op. cit.*, II, ll. 4380-4390, p. 147; ll. 4420-4431, p. 148. Cf. *ib.*, ll. 4744-4782, pp. 159, 160, containing the denunciation of Perceval's silence by his cousin on the morning following his first visit to the Grail Castle. Cf. also the malediction pronounced on him by the Messenger of the Grail at the Court of King Arthur, *ib.*, ll. 6024-6061, pp. 201-203.

³ Hucher, *Op. cit.*, I, pp. 464-466.

Within the limits of the pseudo-Wauchier section of the CONTE DEL GRAAL there are not less than three versions of the visit of Monseigneur Gawain to the Grail Castle, representing specific variations of different manuscripts. Without exercising any discrimination between them, but rather by a harmony of all, it may be said that he does ask concerning the Lance and Grail; but as he cannot resolder the Sword, he can learn nothing regarding the Sacred Vessel, or, if there is a sign of willingness to communicate on the part of the Keeper, Gawain goes to sleep and so escapes most of the story.¹ The result is that the Enchantment is in part only removed from the land. When Wauchier himself recounts the second visit of Perceval, that Knight on beholding the Hallows does not know where to begin, but at length prays that he may hear the whole truth concerning the Grail, the Sword and the Lance. The condition of the answer, as in the case of Gawain, is that he shall resolder the Sword, and we have seen already that in this task Perceval is successful partly; but the king's healing does not happen to be effected, though the path thereof is open: so the knight has not yet achieved the Quest.² The result on external Nature is not stated by Manessier.

At the beginning of the PERLESVAUS it is said that the reticence of the Questing Knight at the Grail Castle caused such mischances in Greater Britain that all the lands and islands fell into sorrow. There appeared to be war everywhere, no knight meeting another in the forest without running on him and slaying him, if he could. The King Fisherman himself passed into languishment. The Question which ought to have been asked was: "Unto whom one serveth of the Grail."³ Many penances will be ended, it is said, when he who visits the Castle demands unto whom it is served; but this event never comes to pass in the story. The desire to ask questions seems to have been rare therein, for Gawain when conversing with a wandering damsel, who was formerly the Bearer of the Grail, fails to inquire why she carries her arm slung from her neck in a golden stole, or concerning the rich pillow whereon her arm reposes. He is told that he will give no greater heed at the Court of King Fisherman.⁴ The King himself dwells always on the misfortune which overtook him through the failure of Perceval. When Gawain reaches the mystic Castle, he sees the Grail and the Lance; but he is lost in a joy of contemplation and he utters no word.⁵

It has been said that there is a Question in the Romance of Galahad, and it might have been added that there is one in the prose LANCELOT: the second illustrates the first, and we shall find that they are both mere traces and survivals, as the Prologue to the CONTE DEL GRAAL has the shadow of the Secret Words, peculiar to the Cycle of Borron,

¹ Potvin, *Op. cit.*, IV, pp. 5, 6. See *ante*, p. 87.

² *Ib.*, V, pp. 148, 149, ll. 34890-34899.

³ *Ib.*, I, pp. 26, 27; HIGH HISTORY, Branch II, Title 1.

⁴ *Ib.*, I, pp. 34, 35; HIGH HISTORY, Branch II, Title 4.

⁵ *Ib.*, pp. 86-91; *ib.*, Branch VI, Titles 17-23.

when it affirms that the Grail Secret must be never disclosed.¹ I do not think that, as regards the later instance, I should be justified in assuming that he who wrote this Prologue was in touch direct with the implicit of the Borron Cycle, and I do think alternatively that if people were disposed to lay stress on such remanents of the Question as I am citing here, they are likely to find that it will work rather in a reverse direction. The fact remains that Lancelot saw the Grail according to the text of Malory ; that he asked the Question which is so important in some other Romances ; that he asked it quite naturally—as who would have failed to do ?—that he was answered also naturally, and that nothing depended therefrom. He cried in his wonder : “ O Jesu ! what does this mean ? ” He was told : “ This is the richest thing in the world.”² In the Galahad Romance, when he beheld, by the Stone Cross in the wild, a sudden passage of the Grail and the healing of a certain Knight, it is said to be hinted by some texts that he ought to have asked something ; but he was so far right on the fact that his imputed omission carried no visible consequence.³

The hindrance to the question in the PARZIVAL is the same as we have found in Chrétien : at all that he saw the Knight of the Quest was agaze with wonder ; he thought also that if he refrained from asking he would be told eventually. That which followed herefrom was sorrow to the host, with continued suffering, and woe also to the guest. For this silence he is represented always in the Romances as earning reproach and contumely from persons outside the Castle ; but in the German poem there is no suggestion of an external Enchantment. It is to be noted further that Parzival has not received a prefatory warning regarding the Question, as he has in the CONTE DEL GRAAL and the DIDOT-MODENA PERCEVAL.

In DIU CRÔNE by Heinrich, when the Questing Knight has beheld the Reliquary and the Spear, he does the opposite exactly. He can no longer contain himself, and so asks his host, for the sake of God, to tell him what the marvels mean and who also are the great Company whom he beholds. Even as he speaks, all present spring from their seats with a loud cry and the sound of great rejoicing. The host tells them to sit down again, and then he explains to the Knight that he has seen the Holy Vessel, of which he may say nothing,⁴ except that joy and consolation supervene upon his saving Question. Many are liberated from the bondage which they have endured so long, having little hope of a quittance. There was a time when they trusted in Perceval, as in one predestined to enter into the knowledge of the Grail, as if through everlasting portals ; but he fell away like a Knight

¹ Potvin, *Op. cit.*, II, p. 1, ll. 4, 5.

² MORTE D'ARTHUR, Book XI, *cap.* 2. Not in the corresponding account of the Vulgate LANCELOT.

³ For the episode in question, see *ib.*, VI, pp. 41-45, but it does not contain the suggestion, nor have I met with it in any printed edition : the reference is therefore to unspecified MSS. It would seem that Lancelot on the Quest of the Grail had far other cares than those of interrogations and responsions.

⁴ It may be said therefore that the Vessel reserves its speech—in truth a voided Quest.

of no spirit who dared and demanded nothing. Had he done otherwise, he would have released many from their toil who remain in the semblance of life and are yet dead. The woe came about through the strife of kinsmen, "when one Brother smote¹ the other for his land." For this disloyalty the judgment of God descended upon him and his consanguinities, so that doom overtook them all. The living were expatriated and the dead, under greater disaster, remained in the shadow of life. To end their woe it was necessary that a man of their race should seek an explanation of these sad, long-enduring prodigies. It does not emerge that either Grail or Spear has any connection with the Passion of Christ, and there is no Secret communicated, for the History of the Sacred Vessel is not recounted.

From the consideration of this subject we may come away therefore, confirmed in our reasonable certainty that the Question with which we have been dealing is unlike anything in literature. We shall see ultimately how it has been accounted for by expert knowledge of folk-lore—connected or otherwise with Quests and Vengeance Missions in Welsh or English literature.

XI

THE HEALING OF THE KING

IT came about therefore at the end of the Quest that the Suppressed Word was at last spoken, that the Question was asked and answered. There are certain texts in which such asking and answering are all that was required by the hypothesis, and then it was well in the Secret House of the Wardens. There is another text in which the King's healing depended upon a dual office, of which the first part was the Question itself as a kind of interlocutory discourse, and then upon a Mission of Vengeance. It was fulfilled in either case. The Head of the Blessed Bran does not appear in the symbolism of these branches; but the Head as the sign of the accomplished sacrifice is essential to the Quest completed; and this is the characteristic-in-chief of the CONTE DEL GRAAL.² As a Rite of the Observance with Mercy, the Question and its answer were held to be all-sufficient in the Lesser Chronicles, because the curse on the Keeper is like that on the Wandering Jew—it is the ages continued henceforward; and he comes at length to his rest.³ The Vulgate Chronicles offer another Pageant of the Quest, the particulars of which are as follows: (1) The Building of a Ship of the Secret Faith, that at the end of a certain time it might carry into the far distance the most valid and efficacious symbols of the Mystery of Christ; (2) the healing of a King of the East who is not to be confused with the Keeper him-

¹ As when Simon de Montfort smote his brother in Christ, Raymond of Toulouse, for his fiefs in Southern France and the faith of Rome.

² Potvin, *Op. cit.*, VI, p. 130.

³ Hucher, *Op. cit.*, I, p. 484.

self, but he dates *ab initio symboli* and is doubtless the Witness-in-chief of the Mystery even to the times of the Quest : concerning him it may be said that he tried to take the Mystery of faith by violence, outside which his existence is parallel to that of the Keeper Brons, having been prolonged through the centuries from the first times of the Legend ; (3) the redemption of the Cain of the Legend who slew his brethren ; (4) an intercalatory and voided wonder concerning the maiming of the Grail King when he drew the Sword of David.¹

The Particulars in all branches may be collected shortly as follows : In the CONTE DEL GRAAL pseudo-Wauchier presents a certain lifting of the heavy veil of enchantment, so that the desert becomes the sown, and we are enabled to compare how it was in the dry tree with that which it is in the green. Winter has passed, so to speak, and the voice of the turtle is heard again in the land.² In Manessier, the Keeper, who has suffered from that illogical maiming occasioned by the death of his Brother, is healed at the sight of his head who committed the original act of violence. The whole business is foolish, and so unutterably. It was necessary, for some reason that derived probably its roots from folk-lore, for the King to be smitten in his thighs ; the event comes to pass under circumstances that are quite and frankly impossible ; and there is also no reason why the wound which was self-inflicted unconsciously should not have been healed at once, unless death intervened as the term.³ Assuming that Gerbert knew nothing of Manessier's conclusion and that he regarded the last words of Wauchier—in which the Rich Fisher hails Perceval as the Lord of his House—as the term, in fine, of the story, his own intercalation was intended to account for the closing along better lines, and he did not concern himself with any explanation of the King's wounding. On the contrary, his intention was to shew that the proper demand and reply exercised their proper office, and that the one thing which remained to complete the whole was for Perceval to redeem his past. The poem does not offer a termination which follows from the text, while that of Manessier, from any explanatory standpoint, is so much idle baggage. The CONTE DEL GRAAL, considered as a Grail story, is therefore at once imperfect and piecemeal. The DIDOT-MODENA PERCEVAL may not be satisfactory as a completion of Borron's trilogy, but in the simple term of a Quest which is exceedingly simple, it leaves nothing undone. The Keeper of the Grail, as we have seen, must communicate his Mystery before he departs hence. The mode of communication presupposes the arbitrary Question which is a pretext for unveiling the Mysteries, and the issue, which is clear from the beginning, is not clouded subsequently by extraneous matters. The King is healed—that is to say, he is relieved of the long burden of the centuries, and he is enabled to pass in peace.⁴ In the GREAT PROSE QUEST it is the hands of Galahad which

¹ Sommer, *Op. cit.*, VI, pp. 144-163 ; 184, 185 ; 185, 186 ; 146, 147.

² Potvin, *Op. cit.*, IV, pp. 7, 8.

³ Potvin, *Op. cit.*, VI, p. 130.

⁴ Hucher, *Op. cit.*, I, pp. 482-484.

prove to be hands of healing. The Hallow of the ensanguined Lance inflicted the wound from which the unknown King Pellehan suffered through the whole period during which the Quest was prepared and achieved.¹ The restoration was accomplished by Galahad with the blood from the same weapon : therewith he anointed the King.² It is after this or another manner that the remedial elements are found in the House of the Grail ; but they must be administered by one who comes from external places. It may be admitted that, at least on the surface, both wounding and healing in the Galahad Quest are a burden to the logical understanding. For what it is worth—which is little—in other respects, there is on this point a certain consistence in the CONTE DEL GRAAL. At the beginning it carries the implicits of a Vengeance Legend, and though something is forgotten in the antecedents by Wauchier and something else by Manessier, as if they had not read their precursors fully, that is explicated in fine which was implied at first. The PERLESVAUS has a root-difficulty, because there is no attempt to explain either why the Question was necessary when all was well with the King, or why—whether necessary or not—the failure of Perceval should have caused the Keeper of the Holy Grail to fall into such languishment that ultimately he died unhealed. For these are the distinctions, among many, between this High History and all other Perceval Quests, namely, that it begins about the middle point of the story and that the Keeper perishes. Among the correspondences in the reverse order of these differences is the Quest of Monseigneur Gawain, according to DIU CRÔNE, where the King indeed dies coincidentally with his release ; but this is his desired liberation from the condition of death in life.³ Speaking generally, the death of the Wounded Keeper serves to make room for his successor. In the DIDOT-MODENA PERCEVAL he is released according to his yearning, and that almost at once ; in the CONTE DEL GRAAL Perceval, far from the Castle, awaits the Keeper's demise, which occurs in the natural course. In the PARZIVAL of Wolfram there is a kind of abdication by Anfortas in favour of the Questing Knight ; but the two abide together and, as in the DIDOT-MODENA PERCEVAL, there is in fact a trinity of Keepers. In the QUEST OF GALAHAD that glorious and saintly Knight is scarcely to be called a Keeper : if I may be pardoned the expression, he and his Companions act as the transport agents of the Sacred Vessel, to the term of all at Sarras ; though we may elect to regard Galahad as the Keeper in Heaven. We are not concerned with the healing of King Pellehan, because he is not a Keeper of the Grail, as the text stands, though we feel that some editor has blundered.

¹ Gaston Paris, HUTH MERLIN, II, pp. 32, 43.

² Sommer, *Op. cit.*, VI, p. 191.

³ See Book VII, § 3.

XII

THE REMOVAL OF THE HALLOWS

WE have seen that the Rich Fisherman, King and Warden of the Grail, was healed as the consequence of the Quest, or that, this failing, a provision was made for his successor after some other manner. Now, this is the penultimate stage of the Mystery regarded as a whole, and the one question which still remains to be answered is—What became of the Grail? Subject to characteristic variations which are particular to each text, it will be found—as I have said—that the several Romances follow or forecast one general process, suggesting a prevailing secret intention, and it is for this intention that my study will have to account. At the moment the external answer to the problem above propounded, resting on the evidence of the documents, is an example of variation—which tends, however, to one term: this term is that either the Holy Grail and the other Hallows of the Passion were removed altogether or they were taken into deeper concealment. The specific testimonies follow. After the death of King Fisher, Perceval inherits his kingdom—in the CONTE DEL GRAAL—and he reigns for seven years. He appoints his successor, who does not become a Warden of the Hallows, and he passes himself into the seclusion of a Hermitage, where he remains for ten years, having been Ordained a Priest. The Grail follows him, and he is at length assumed into the joy of Paradise, since which time the Sacred Vessel and the other precious objects have never been beheld so openly.¹ As a rider to this, it is added that no doubt they were taken to Heaven, which is an argument from the unworthiness of the world. In the DIDOT-MODENA PERCEVAL the Knight of the Quest and a certain Hermit, who is a character of importance in the Lesser Chronicles, become the Guardians of the Grail, while the Prophet Merlin also abides with them. Merlin, in fine, goes away, seeking a deeper seclusion, and neither he nor the Grail is heard of subsequently.² The inference is that the Grail remains in the Asylum of the Holy House, under the charge of its Wardens. Alternatively, it may have followed Merlin. The LONGER PROSE PERCIVAL, after a faithful picture of the Questing Knight in loneliness and rapture, surviving all his kindred, says that a secret voice commanded him to divide the Hallows—not including the Grail, which had gone before—among a certain Company of Hermits, after which a mystical ship anchored by the Castle, and Perceval, taking his leave of those who still remained about him, entered that vessel and was carried far over the sea, “nor never thereafter did no earthly man know what

¹ See the Conclusion of Manessier in Potvin, *Op. cit.*, VI, ll. 45271–45362, pp. 152–155.

² For the DIDOT PERCEVAL, see Hucher, *Op. cit.*, I, pp. 415–505, and for the Modena text Miss Weston's LEGEND OF SIR PERCEVAL, Vol. II.

became of him, nor doth the history speak of him more."¹ In the GREAT PROSE QUEST the most holy Companions—Galahad, Perceval and Bors—are conveyed in the Ship of Solomon to a place in the East, named Sarras: the Hallows with which they are charged are the Sacred Vessel and the Lance, together with the Sword of David, wherewith Galahad is girded. For a certain allotted period of days that are sad, consecrated and strange, the Companions watch over the Hallows in the City of Sarras; and then the call comes to Galahad. "There with he kneeled down to fore the Table, and made his prayers; and then suddenly his soul departed to Jesu Christ, and a great multitude of Angels bore his soul up to Heaven, that the two fellows might well behold it. Also the two fellows saw come from Heaven a hand; but they saw not the body. And then it came right to the Vessel, and took it and the Spear, and so bore it up to Heaven. Since then was there never man so hardy to say that he had seen the Sangrail."² In the German Cycle, the PARZIVAL of Wolfram leaves the Grail where it was always, since its first manifestation; but the TITUREL of Albrecht—a text which is so late that it is excluded generally from the modern canon of the literature—narrates the rise and growth of an evil time, wherein, for its better protection, Parzival and the Chivalry of the Grail, bearing the Blessed Palladium, go forth from Mont Salvatch into the far East, where is the Kingdom of Prester John; and there it may remain to this day—most surely in another Kingdom which is not of this world. After these high memorials it is almost unnecessary to speak of the Quest in Heinrich, at the term of which the Grail and its Ghostly Company dissolve before the eyes of the Questing Knight, and thenceforth the tongue of man cannot shew forth the Mysteries.

Seeing now that the Great Sacraments do not pass away, it must follow that in the removal of the Holy Grail, as it is narrated in the texts, we are in the presence of another Mystery of Intention which appears the most obscure of all. The cloud that dwelt on the Sanctuary, the inhibition which was on the world without, the hurt almost past healing which overtook the Hereditary Keeper, are ample evidence in themselves that evil had entered into the Holy place, despite all the warrants which it held and all the Graces and Hallows which dwelt therein. With one curious exception, the Keeper was, in fine, healed; the Enchantment also was removed; and the achievement of the last Warden, at least in some instances, must have been designed, after a certain manner and within a certain measure, to substitute a greater glory for the cloud on the Secret Sanctuary. All this notwithstanding, the end of the great Quests, the term of the whole Mystery, was simply the removal thereof. It occurs in each Romance under different circumstances, and it was not, as we shall learn more fully, always of an absolute kind. In the CONTE DEL GRAAL it is said—and we have

¹ Potvin, *Op. cit.*, I, p. 347, and Evans, *HIGH HISTORY*, Branch XXXV, Title 27.

² See Sommer's *VULGATE VERSION OF ARTHURIAN ROMANCES*, VI, pp. 197, 198; and Caxton's *BIRTH, LIFE AND ACTS OF KING ARTHUR*, in the Southey edition, II, p. 314. Cf. Sommer's reprint, p. 723.

seen previously—that it was taken away, possibly to Heaven. In the DIDOT-MODENA PERCEVAL it was seen no more. In the LONGER PROSE PERCEVAL or PERLESVAUS those who had higher warrants than any Warden in the manifest world removed it into a realm unknown. Perceval was called thereto and assumed therein another Office of Kinghood. In Wolfram the whole question is left open in perpetuity, for at the close of the poem the Keeper remains alive. In the TITUREL of Albrecht the Vessel was carried Eastward into the dubious realm of Prester John, and there apparently it remains. In the Quest of Galahad it is assumed by Heaven itself, and the last Keeper followed; but, in spite of this, a lost recension, represented faithfully or otherwise, by the Welsh Quest, says that though it was not seen so openly, it was seen once by Sir Gawain, the least prepared and least warranted of all the Grail seekers, whose Quest, moreover, was abandoned in the particular text, soon after it was undertaken.

Of such are the Mysteries of the Grail, considered in their manifestation and considered also in their removal. I have passed through many Houses of Initiation in Hidden Life and in literature; but I know of nothing in suggestion and allusion to compare with the House of the Grail.

BOOK III
THE CONTE DEL GRAAL

THE ARGUMENT

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BOOK III

THE CONTE DEL GRAAL

I

PRELIMINARY TO THE WHOLE SUBJECT

IT may be said that there are three epochs of the Grail Quest in Northern France :—

(1) The epoch of Chrétien de Troyes, all continuations included, and of the DIDOT-MODENA PERCEVAL, considered as a derivative of Robert de Borron, one of growth and development after its own manner.

(2) The epoch of the Great Prose LANCELOT and the QUEST OF GALAHAD.

(3) The epoch of the PERLESVAUS, as head and crown of the composite Perceval Myths.

It is understood that I am using the term epoch to characterise aspects of purpose and mind rather than succession in time, and, secondly, that the German Cycle of the Holy Grail remains over for consideration.

The agreement of scholarship is not perhaps *concensus omnium sanctorum* ; but after much fluctuation of opinion, and notwithstanding a dissentient voice heard there and here in the precincts, it has been resolved—as we have seen—that the first Romance dedicated to the Grail and its Mystery is that of Chrétien,¹ who opened the CONTE DEL GRAAL at an undetermined date between 1168 and 1190, there being a certain conditional but reasonably strong disposition towards 1180 for a *terminus* on the hither side—as we have seen also previously. A bolder hypothesis, which happens to be most recent of all, has ventured to suggest the specific alternative years 1174 or 1175.² The question may be left at this point, because the only possible other claimant to rank

¹ There is a strong feeling on my own part that something lay behind him, so to speak. It is put on record here in a note because there is no tangible evidence to offer for the expansion of intimations in my text above. I think that there was something of which Chrétien had heard or read ; but it did not connect with the folk-lore Feeding-Dish or he would have loved to provide a material feast of good things for the refectory of his errant Knight. It seems to me that he was the least likely poet of his period to invent a service-flagon or a serving-dish, which was after all a *Ciborium*, containing Sacred Hosts, and was certainly misdescribed under the title of Grail. The MEILLEUR CONTE on which he lays claim as source may have explained, at its beginning or end, and must be surely presupposed.

² J. D. Bruce, *Op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 220, 223. It is to be observed that he affirms a persuasion or predilection only and offers no evidential argument to sustain his view. I am not aware that it has enlisted any approval or attracted any notice, so little no doubt attaching to the question of a year less or more when the one possible competitor has been ruled definitely out.

as the first Grail poet is Robert de Borron, between whom and Chrétien there is only one vestige of correspondence, namely, that the Warden of the Grail in both is called the Fisher King. Independently of all dates, Borron remains the first historian of the Sacred Vessel, while Chrétien also is author not only of the first Quest thereof but is the first to present Perceval le Gallois as the Questing Knight. He is therefore the fountain source of all the French Quests, even the GALAHAD, in which Perceval is one of the twelve attaining heroes, with the son of Lancelot as first among peers.

The elements of Chrétien's poem are perhaps the most simple that it has entered into the heart to conceive. The narrative is beautiful, or perhaps I should say that it is charming, after the manner of Nature: it is like a morning in the Spring. It has something more than the touch of Nature which takes us at once into its kinship; there are moments when it seems Nature speaking; and so much of the Grail Mystery as can be said to enter within its own dimensions is this Mystery expressed in the terms of the outside world. But if Chrétien's work is that of a Nature-born poet, he has heard at a great distance, as it were, strange tidings which are not of the natural order, and he opens the story about them, as if at a venture and apart from any certain evidence on that which he has to tell. The poem, taken as a whole, has few religious elements, and it is on comparatively rare occasions only that we can recognise one touch of Grace therein. What is termed the interpolation of Gerbert must be excepted, however, from this description: in comparison with the rest, it is like a Masonic Tracing-Board Lecture compared with an essay of Goldsmith. This analogy is instituted to shew that in the widest construction Gerbert has moments and Gerbert has also allusions which sound and may be pregnant; but he does not reach a goal.

The CONTE is a product of successive generations, but this granted it is the work of a single epoch, in the previous sense of this term. If it be approached from the poetic standpoint, there is much to repay the reader who is not deterred by the difficulties of extremely archaic French verse. But of the *odor suavitatis* of the Temple, of that which criticism has agreed to describe as the mystical element, being that element which I and those whom I represent desire and look for, there is so little that it can be said barely to exist. Many who know and appreciate the Sacramental Mystery which attaches in certain parts to the Grail Quest of the Malory *Magnum Opus* and to the Longer Prose PERCEVAL, which has been termed THE HIGH HISTORY OF THE HOLY GRAAL, by Dr. Evans, its translator, will recognise this contrast and will understand that in Chrétien above all there is little of the Secret once delivered to the Saints of any Sanctuary, though he made use of materials which carried the suggestion with them. He is described by his earliest editor as the poet of love and as the poet who created the poetry of sentiment.¹ He is singularly fresh and direct,

¹ Potvin, *Op. cit.*, Vol. VI, *Introduction*, pp. lxi, lxii.

while he carried his intention plainly on the surface in respect of his presentation of the story, so far as he is known to have taken it. In brief expression, anything that seems recondite in its significance is auto-suggested to an instructed reader by that which is typical of the entire Cycle, while that which is obvious is of the poet.

II

THE POEM OF CHRÉTIEN DE TROYES

AFTER certain preliminary matters which are curious but late in comparison and dubious,¹ the CONTE DEL GRAAL was opened in ample form by a master-singer of his period. We have seen already that, in his long section of the great poem which is set for our consideration, there is no trace of that Bowl of Plenty which obtrudes continually in several later texts, though Chrétien is supposed to have heralded and inaugurated everything which belongs to the seeking part of the Grail literature. Evidently therefore it was not from this source in folk-lore that he derived his knowledge of the mysterious object which he calls a Grail and from which was diffused so great a light, according to the graphic account, though nowhere in his long contribution does he term it the Holy Grail.² It was carried by the Maid who had charge of it in both hands, from which it might follow either that it was a heavy object, as would be a large Dish, or something exceedingly sacred—to be exalted with reverence—for example, an Eucharistic Chalice or a Most Holy Reliquary. That it was certainly not the first is made evident by the fact that a Dish was carried separately in the Pageant at the Grail Castle. We know further, from the brief description given, that it was a jewelled Vessel :

“ Pières pressieuses avoit
El graal, de maintes manières,
Des plus rices et des plus cières
Qui el mont u en tière soient ;
Tote autre pières passoient
Celes dou gréal, sans dotance.”³

That it connects after some manner with the second or third in my enumeration of possible objects is shewn at a much later stage to Perceval in the narrative of his uncle the Hermit, who tells how a Hidden King of the Grail is sustained and comforted by a Sacred Host therein. Whencesoever the German poet Heinrich drew his materials, we shall see that he and Chrétien speak of the same Vessel and rather of a *Ciborium* than a Reliquary. The essence of a Reliquary is that it should contain an invariable sacred deposit, as, for example, the

¹ Appendix I, Note 6.

² This being elsewhere its almost invariable and, so to speak, official designation. We shall see, however, that in one place Chrétien finds occasion to call it a *sainte chose*.

³ Ch. Potvin : PERCEVAL LE GALLOIS, OU LE CONTE DU GRAAL, Vol. II, p. 148, ll. 4412-4417.

Precious Blood of our Saviour or the liquefying blood of St. Januarius. The essence of a *Ciborium* is that it should contain Consecrated Hosts. We are therefore at once in the region of traditional wonders. The Legends of Sanctity had borne witness already in far other texts to certain cases in which the Supersensual Bread of Life had served for the Saints as their only daily nourishment. This is therefore the manner in which Chrétien de Troyes understood—had he indeed heard of them—the “feeding properties” of the Grail. It follows—and we shall see duly—that three poets—Chrétien, Wolfram and Heinrich—who are at the poles sometimes in variance over matters of symbolism, do yet tell the same story in the most important of their concerns. And we who know better than ever they could have known all that is involved in the root-matter of their testimony, can say in our hearts, hearing these dim echoes which are far from the term of Quest :

“ Tu qui cuncta scis et vales,
Qui nos pascis hic mortales,
Tuos ibi commensales,
Cohæredes et sodales
Fac sanctorum civium.”

We have no doubt as to the service or the table, and can bear witness on our own part that “many men, both of high and low condition, in these last years past,” have to our knowledge seen the Mystery of all Sacredness and Sweetness unveiled before their spiritual eyes.¹ It follows that, even if there are many antecedents, the Grail is still one, and that even at the epoch of Chrétien the true nature and authentic office of the Sacred Vessel had been settled in the mind of those who wrote concerning it. Of himself the poet knew nothing ; but in some book or rumour which he followed there must have been strange materials, as already suggested. One of the keynotes may be that Hugh, Bishop of Lincoln, investigated about 1140 a case of miraculous sustenance by the Eucharist.²

As regards the source of his story the poet himself gives us an exceedingly simple explanation. He says that he wrote by command of a certain Count—that is to say, Count Philip of Flanders. The order was :—

“ A rimoir le mellor conte
Qui soit contes en court roial.”

The materials therefore were written materials, at least *ex hypothesi*, namely, *li contes del Gréal*, as to which *li Quens li bailla le livre*. Such was the source of the earliest Quest-matter ; and the earliest extant History-matter depends, also *ex hypothesi*, from a great book, wherein great clerks wrote “the great secrets which are called the Grail” :—

“ Ge n’ose conter ne retreire,
Ne ge ne le pourroie feire,
Neis, se je feire le voloie,
Se je le grant livre n’avoie

¹ Cf. LA QUESTE DEL SAINT GRAAL, pp. 62, 63, in Sommer’s VULGATE ARTHURIAN ROMANCES, Vol. VI.

² This incident is cited at second hand, and I have failed to trace its source ; but the alleged cases of such sustenance are numerous,

Où les estoires sunt escrites,
 Par les granz clers faites et dites :
 La sunt li grant secré escrit
 Qu'en nvmme le Graal et dit."

Whereas therefore his patron communicated to Chrétien, it was Robert de Borron who communicated to Walter Montbéliard, in whose service he was. We observe in this manner that the first poet of the CONTE DEL GRAAL claimed antecedent authority which was not of the oral kind: by one stage the question of source raised here has been moved back, and there must be left for the present.

It will be seen in the Welsh Perceval that there was a Sword which broke and was rejoined, but in the stress of the last trial it was shattered beyond recovery. The episode in Chrétien which corresponds hereto is represented sufficiently for my purpose by the details already given when considering the Hallows of the Legend. It may be added only that while certain codices make no attempt to account for the return of the Broken Sword to the Grail Castle, there are others which illustrate the foreknowledge of the King by his despatch, for example, of a messenger to follow Perceval in his travels till the mischance of the promised peril overtakes him.¹ In yet others the fragments of the weapon seem to have been spirited away. We shall find in the Welsh Perceval that there is nothing to connect the maiming of the Lord of the Castle with the gigantic Lance which is carried about therein. The connection remains naturally a reasonable inference, but we cannot tell, while the Sword serves no purpose save that of a trial of strength. In Chrétien it appears, on the other hand, almost as a part of the plot, and the scheme is carried out by the sequels in accordance with so much as may be called manifest in the intention of the first poet.

Turning from the Hallows of the story, it happens to be after the manner of Chrétien to furnish his most important elucidations with the least suggestion of design. I have spoken of the Mystery of that Chamber wherein the Grail enters or returns after its manifestation in the Pageant, or into which alternatively the Dove flies in one Quest of the Vulgate Chronicles, before the Sacred Vessel is displayed. It is Chrétien only who discloses the secret of the Hidden Place, or at least manifests up to what point he understands it himself, when he says of the dweller therein, whom I interpret as sometime King of the Grail:

" . XX . ans i a estet ensi.
 Que fors de la cambre n'issi
 U le Greal veis entrer."²

It was the bedchamber of that Warden of the Hallows who was far more concealed than he who is called or miscalled the Rich Fisher in

¹ In the Mons MS. King Fisher bids a youth follow the Knight who slept in the Castle and bring back the pieces if the Sword has broken. The lad finds Perceval fighting with Orguellous de la Lande, otherwise the Proud Knight, and manages to abstract the pieces unwatched by the combatants. He takes them back to his Lord but cannot tell him who had the better of the fray.—CONTE, 5169-5295, Potvin, II, pp. 175-177.

² *Op. cit.*, ll. 7803-7805, p. 261.

the same text. The further question which arises for our consideration concerns therefore this nameless being who is the father of the King in evidence. The allusions to him are so brief and so vague that those who continued the story thought it best to ignore them, though I hold it as certain that Wauchier had the elements of an explanation in his hands. Without forestalling the little to be said on this point at the end of this section, I will refer back to an earlier part of our inquiry, when it was noted that the *Quest in Chrétien* presupposes an Early History and—notwithstanding certain confusions, as for example, regarding the origin of the title King Fisherman—that this History may have corresponded, in respect of its essence, to a supposed first draft of the Metrical Romance by Robert de Borron, or alternatively to the source from which the latter drew, and in which it may be hazarded that there seem to have been several Histories. It is of course idle to speculate whether the text or texts claimed to have been in the possession of the pious minstrel included the single story which the Count of Flanders placed in the hands of Chrétien; but there may have been a general prototype.¹ Apart from the LONGER PROSE PERCEVAL, which is extra-lineal in most details of its Tradition, there are three persons connected immediately with the Grail in the various Quests. In the PARZIVAL OF WOLFRAM there are (1) Titurel—precisely in the position of the Mysterious King in Chrétien, and like him abdicated; (2) the Reigning King Anfortas, who is fed by the Grail; and (3) Parzival, the King who is to come. In the QUEST OF GALAHAD there are (1) the Maimed King, Pellehan; (2) the Reigning King, Pelles; and (3) Galahad, the King who is to come. In the DIDOT-MODENA PERCEVAL there are (1) Brons, who is sick of the centuries, but still the Grail King; (2) his son Alain, but in this case he dies, without it being possible for us to assign his special place in the Mystery; and (3) Perceval, grandson of Brons, as a coming King who is in the warfare of his training. Now, this notion of a triple guardianship was first put forward in the Metrical Romance of Robert de Borron and is evidently one of the root-ideas of the historical branches: if in a certain sense it is broken in the GRAND SAINT GRAAL to establish some phantom of a chronological succession, the Quest which follows therefrom recurs, as we shall see, thereto. I should add that the Royal Family of the Holy Grail in the story of Chrétien and its sequels has no names in most of the codices till Perceval comes into his own; but there is a variant or interpolation in a Berne manuscript which follows the Keepership in Robert de Borron.

We must set apart from the poem of Chrétien not merely the Prologue, which is by another hand, but an introductory part, also of uncertain authorship. In the latter we hear of Bliocadrans, the Father of Perceval, as one of twelve brothers in Wales who all practised

¹ We should remember, however, that the alleged "best story" is likely to have been fairly well known in Courts and elsewhere, and that there may have been more than one copy of the *livre* in which it was contained.

Chivalry, for ever seeking tournaments or joustings. It came about that the brothers died in arms ; but Bliocadrans, being overpersuaded because of these tragedies, settled down with his wife for two years, apart from his wonted activities. There are two sons in the course of growing up, probably the fruit of a previous marriage, and the time comes for them to go forth into the world. They are commissioned to the Courts of two Kings, where they are both knighted on the same day and, though widely separated, both are also slain. Towards the end of the two years the wife mentioned in the poem and described as childless has conceived to their great joy and expects to be delivered, when her husband is called to a tournament convoked by the King of Wales and Cornwall.¹ There he performs prodigies but only to be slain in the end. The news of his death reaches the wife in due course, she meanwhile having brought forth Perceval during the father's absence. She proposes a pilgrimage to St. Brandan in Scotland, taking the babe with her ; but in reality she seeks refuge in a Waste Forest, where she rears him after a semi-savage fashion, apart from all knowledge of Courts and Chivalries and giving him, as he grows to boyhood, a solemn warning that men clothed in armour are in reality devils.

There came, however, a day in the Spring when Perceval met with five knights riding through the wood in all their glittering harness. He who was most splendidly accoutred was taken by Perceval for God and the others for Angels.² Time and again the leader asked him whether he had seen certain other knights and three damsels, who had passed on their way before ; but his only answer was to put his own questions about their lances, shields, halberts and so forth. He learned in this manner that they belonged to King Arthur's Court and that to him they owed their arms and appointments. In fine he heard that Arthur was then at Carduel. He returned to his mother, who was overwhelmed at the news of his encounter and above all at his resolve to visit the King and demand Knighthood. It shewed that all her schemes had failed and that she would never keep him at her side, to be her stay and comfort when age began to overtake her. She recounted to no purpose the fate of his brothers and his father's mournful death. In the end she prepared him for the journey as best she could, with the help of a shirt of hemp and a leathern jerkin, made in Welsh fashion. She gave him also her counsels, some of which were quaint enough. He was not only to frequent Churches and pray to God therein, not only to help ladies and damsels, to act as a loyal Knight when he became such, but he should take a kiss from a damsel, she being willing, and accept a ring if offered the gift of one. Leaving the grief-stricken lady, he started at length on his palfrey, armed with a single javelin. He

¹ No previous marriage is mentioned in the poem, and nothing is heard of the two brothers till Perceval has reached the age of fourteen years and is told of their fate by his mother. The 1530 prose version of the CONTE gives a variant account, which serves to harmonise matters. It is the maiming of Perceval's father which takes the family into the woods, where he ultimately dies of grief on learning the death of his sons.

² Potvin : *Op. cit.*, II, pp. 43 *et seq.*, beginning at l. 1283.

spent one night in the forest and next morning came to a handsome pavilion where he found a damsel sleeping, who awoke at the clatter of his entrance and of whom he required a kiss in accordance with his mother's instructions.¹ Being refused, it was taken by force, as well as a ring from her hand, though he was told that it would endanger her life. Being hungry also, he devoured a pasty and drank wine in the pavilion, after which he took his leave. As he drew to the Court of King Arthur he met and talked with a Knight in red armour, carrying a Golden Cup, of which he had deprived the King when in the act of drinking and had spilt the wine on the Queen. It appears that Arthur's best Knights were at that time out on adventure. Perceval heard these things from the lips of the King himself and replied by demanding Knighthood, but refused to come down from his palfrey, the dejected and discourseled monarch, who had undertaken to grant his wish, seeming scarcely in his view one fitted to make Knights. He demanded further the arms and armour of him who had taken the Cup; whereat Kay the Seneschal told him to go and take them. A very fair maiden listened, saluted Perceval and smiled for the first time in ten years, foretelling that if he lived there would be no more valiant or better chevalier in the whole world. This enraged Kay, who struck her to the ground and afterwards flung a fool into the fire because he had been accustomed to say that the damsel would never smile till the advent of him who should prove Master of all Chivalry.² We shall be in a position to compare the plight of King Arthur's Court on this visit of Perceval with that described in the *PERLESVAUS* when its story opens, and shall find that the latter compares favourably, all its desolation notwithstanding.

Perceval heard in silence the feeble protest of the King when Kay jeered at the youth: he witnessed also in silence the maltreatment of maid and dwarf; but the sequel shews that he remembered to some purpose, in her case at least. Meanwhile he returned to the Red Knight, who awaited further adventure, if any should come, and also a message from the King by the mouth of Perceval. The youth, however, demanded on his part that the Red Knight should lay aside arms and armour as the King had transferred them to himself. To this broad comedy the Knight replied with his lance, but only to be slain forthwith by Perceval's javelin, which passed through eye to brain. An attempt thereafter to strip the body of its mail proved more than he could manage till he was helped by a Squire of the Court, to whom he delivered the Cup, that it might be restored to Arthur. Perceval sent also salutations and his promise to the maid that the injury offered her by the Seneschal should be avenged unfailingly. Being armed at length in the likeness of the Red Knight and having mounted his horse, Perceval rode through a forest and came ere night to a Castle.³ There he was received by an old warrior and vavassour, who

¹ Potvin, II, pp. 62-67, ll. 1829-1972.

² *Op. cit.*, pp. 75, 76, ll. 2226-2254.

³ *Op. cit.*, pp. 84-97, ll. 2498-2890.

soon discovered his visitors raw youth and inexperience. He taught him how to carry his arms, lance and shield included. On the next morning Perceval received from his instructor the High Order of Chivalry and departed thereupon, the bearer of final counsels in the following terms : (1) to spare a vanquished enemy who prayed for life ; (2) to keep a still tongue ; (3) to give advice when asked ; and (4) to make his prayers in Churches that God would bless his arms and keep him ever in the way of a Christian life.

Perceval left his Sire in Knighthood with an expressed resolve to visit his Mother, if he could find the way, and learn how she fared in his absence ; but he arrived instead at another Castle, that of Beau-Repaire and the fair maid Blanchefleur. She proved to be his Instructor's Niece, now in dereliction and besieged by Clamadiou, King of the Isles of the Sea. Her it would seem that he desired beyond all isles and kingships, but she would have death rather ; and he sought to overcome her reluctance by force of arms till her walled town was wasted, her host reduced and the remnant nearly starved.¹ In such an hour Perceval came over moat and bridge, demanding and receiving harbour. He beheld the waste without but apparently no besiegers, nor did Blanchefleur speak openly, on couch in hall or at table. She came to him rather at night, when her tears aroused him, since an end must come on the morrow, town and tower being yielded. A knife in her casket would close her own days before she fell into the hands of the besieging King. Perceval gave her such fair assurance that the dark hours were spent in each other's arms. On the morrow he called for his mail, for sword and lance and shield : a gate was opened ; he thundered forth thereby, to do battle with the King's seneschal, who had charge of the siege that day. Him he overcame, him also he sent to King Arthur's Court, to place himself at the mercy of that Damsel whom Kay had smitten, saying that she should be yet avenged. On the next morning he fought and overcame Clamadiou, whom he sent to Court in like manner, with the self-same greeting and pledge. So was Beau-Repaire delivered and Blanchefleur, the Queen thereof. The Kingship was his for the claiming and the Queen as Bride ; but still on the quest of his Mother in the Waste Land, he dared not and would not tarry. Did he find her alive and well, she could be brought to the Castle : if otherwise, he would return alone.

He remembered bitterly, it will be seen, that he left her at parting in a swoon of grief, and he sought now to repair his fault. The stars ordained that he should be diverted again from his penitent quest ; and having travelled the livelong day without meeting anyone, he drew up by a deep river, where he found no means of crossing and no harbourage where he could abide in sight. There were, however, two men in a skiff, one of whom was fishing. He appealed to these and the Fisher offered to lodge him in his own hostel.

¹ The story of Beau-Repaire begins at line 2898 and ends for the time being at 4149. See *Op. cit.*, II, pp. 98-139.

The way of the Grail is the way of the Quest thereof, for those who are called and chosen. There was no one less on that mission than the lad—still in his 'teens presumably—who was called Perceval. The thought of his Mother filled his heart as he drew to the deep river and spoke with those in the little craft thereon. A prayer for her weal broke forth on his lips some few moments before he arrived at the water's brink; but he followed directions which brought him to a third Castle, and this was the Keep of the Grail, while he who had sent him thither was called the Rich Fisher, its Warden and its King. The youth was admitted and disarmed by squires, was clothed with a scarlet mantle and presented to the Lord of the place, who had somehow returned before him, appearing now as an ancient man who could not rise to welcome him because of his maimed limbs. Perceval was seated beside him on a rich couch, and when a few words had passed between them the observances of the Castle began. A Sword which would break in a single peril only was presented to the visitor under circumstances which have been described previously.¹ Amidst a great splendour of torches and candles, a Knight issued from another chamber bearing the Bleeding Lance and at the head of the Grail Procession. The tables were laid meanwhile, the meats were served and eaten, the wine was poured, with the Grail passing up and down, till in fine the Office ended and the Hallows went back as they came. Perceval longed to ask about Grail and Lance, but remembered his instructor's counsel on the gift of silence and therefore postponed questions until the morrow at least. The hour for retiring was signalled, and his sleep was unbroken through all the night; but no one appeared in the morning to help him vest and arm. When he emerged from his own room all doors were locked against him, so he went alone to the stables, where he found his horse saddled. He mounted and crossed the drawbridge, but this was drawn up so quickly that beast and man almost fell into the moat.² In vain he sought for someone to whom he could put his questions concerning Grail and Lance, for no living creature appeared about the precincts. He entered therefore the forest, as one who after good hostel has suffered rough treatment for some cause unknown. He met presently a maid in lamentation over the body of her slain lover and remained in communion with her, till not only did she discover where he had spent the night but he on his part learned with whom he had lodged. She addressed to him also two tests of merit, being whether he had asked what caused the Lance to bleed and what the Grail signified. She called him caitiff for his pains when his answers proved negative and then resumed her lamentations, saying that the Rich Fisher would have recovered his health, as well as his lands, had those questions been put. The Grail King had been pierced through both thighs in a battle no long time since, but under circumstances which were not disclosed and with which she may have been unacquainted. He was

¹ See *ante*, p. 70.

² Perceval reaches the Grail Castle at l. 4228, and the drawbridge rises at l. 4590. *Op. cit.*, II, pp. 142-154.

unable to mount a horse and was now carried in a litter to the waterside and put in a small skiff, that he might enjoy fishing as his only available relaxation. It was he who had built the Castle, prior presumably to the warfare in which he was maimed. The failure of Perceval was a sin as well as an offence against his bounteous host and would bring sorrow to himself as to others. As regards Perceval's Mother, she had died of grief when he deserted her. The maid who testified had been present at her burial, for though Perceval did not know her she knew him, being his cousin-german, who was brought up with him in his infancy. She warned him further that the Sword which had been given him at the Grail Castle would break at the first encounter in which he should attempt to use it. There was but one smith in the world by whom it could be reforged, namely, he who made it, and his smithy was by a certain lake. Perceval prayed the maiden to cast in her lot with his, but she refused decisively, as she would not move from the spot till he whom she had loved was buried.¹

He departed therefore, and his next encounter was with the Lady of the Pavilion, her whom he had kissed by force and ravished of a ring which she held apparently in trust on account of her lord. He found her riding a starved palfrey, she herself being clothed in very tatters. As he learned from her lips the cause of her woeful plight and his own hand therein, he who was her husband, the Proud Knight of the Plain, rode out of a wood and challenged, repeating to him his own story and vowing that the ill-starred damsel should never change a garment till he, the Proud Knight, should master him who had constrained her. Perceval declared himself, the attack began, but the youth conquered in the end and admitted his foe to mercy on these sole conditions: (1) that the Lady should be taken to his best manor and there restored to health; whereafter (2) the Proud Knight should lead her in rich attire to King Arthur's Court, put himself at the Monarch's command and (3) testify to the Damsel whom Kay had smitten that he, Perceval, would never return to Court till he had avenged that insult. It was so done accordingly, with such results that the King and his Knights, the Queen and her train of Ladies left Caerleon to go forth in search of Perceval.²

It came about that they encamped in a meadow where snow fell in the night, and that in the early morning after Perceval drew rein thereby, to mark how a falcon swooping attacked a flying bird, which contrived, however, to escape but left three drops of blood on the driven snow. He paused and leaned upon his lance, thinking of the red and white on the face of Blanchefleur. The hours passed over in such reverie, even from dawn to noon, when the dreaming Knight was observed by certain squires, who reported to Arthur that there was one asleep on his steed. Sagramour the Unruled was directed to awaken and bring the stranger to Court, which was attempted roughly and with the result that Perceval, aroused unduly, dealt

¹ *Op. cit.*, pp. 154-163, ll. 4609-4864.

² *Op. cit.*, pp. 163-185, ll. 4865-5532.

Sagramour a buffet with his lance and stretched him on the ground, after which he resumed his reverie. Sir Kay jeered when Sagramour returned with his own spear broken, whereupon the King bade him fare better if he could. Kay swore that he would do so, with or without the stranger's will. Going forth accordingly, he accosted Perceval with a threat, and the result of this second disturbance was another mellay, in which the Seneschal earned a broken leg and a broken arm. He was carried back swooning and Perceval returned to dream. The task of awaking the dreamer was now assumed by Gawain, and it happened that as he approached Perceval the sun was melting the blood drops, whence the sleeper had begun to awaken of his own accord. There were fair words exchanged, and with his heart of courtesy the King's nephew invited the young Knight, on the King's part, to come into the presence of the King. Perceval remembered his vow and asked whether Kay was there, in which manner he learned to his soul's content that now at last the insult offered to the maid had been well and truly avenged. His words of satisfaction revealed to Gawain that this indeed was he whom the Court had gone aseeking, while great was the joy of Perceval when he embraced one of whom he had heard so often. Sir Gawain clothed him in a coat and mantle chosen from his own store, and together they greeted the King. But Perceval greeted also the Damsel who once had smiled upon him and wished her joy and honour as the best of ladies and the fairest, according to the prose version of 1530, and as her faithful Knight, according to the poem.¹

The Court returned to Caerleon, Perceval being carried in its train. There was feasting at evening and feasting till noon followed, when a Damsel on a tawny mule, and beyond all words for hideousness,² saluted the King and his Chivalry, Perceval alone excepted. Him she denounced and him also she cursed for the business of Grail and Lance ; for the word unspoken and the woe that followed thereon ; for wounds which were not healed ; for land now lost for ever ; for dames deprived of husbands ; for maids discounselled ; for knights destroyed and widows and orphans left. She turned thereafter to the King, telling of a Proud Castle where Knights of fame abide and none repairing thither shall want for joust and battle. She told also of greater glory yet which awaited him who on a height above Mont Esclaire should liberate a besieged maiden. The Sword of Strange Hangings would be

¹ Potvin, *Op. cit.*, II, pp. 185-200, ll. 5538-5980.

² *Ib.*, pp. 200, 201, ll. 5992-6015. The description includes eyes like those of a rat, the proboscis of a monkey, lips of an ass or an ox, the beard of a goat, and a humped back. I am almost disposed to think that this description would not have occurred to Chrétien as befitting a Messenger of the Holy House, and that something coming down from the past is indicated. If I am right herein and in my previous suggestion respecting the term Grail, it may be thought that the primeval Quest or History corresponded more nearly to the wild, fantastic Prologue of the *CONTE* than to any other extant text. A Grail Warden who, owing to his skill in Sorcery, could change his semblance perpetually might have sent out the kind of emissary depicted above and reproduced faithfully by Wolfram. She would serve also as a courier of the Venusberg in the last stages of the decaying Mythos, about which we shall hear later.

his to wear henceforth. The accuser went thereafter on her way, while Sir Gawain vowed that he would seek to succour the maid, and Girflet, son of Do, that he would visit the Proud Castle. As for Perceval he resolved never to lie for two nights in the same hold till he learned who was served of the Grail and why the Lance was bleeding.

There followed five years of hard adventure in Quest and Errantry, during which the poem represents him as sending sixty conquered Knights to place themselves at the King's mercy and become at need his prisoners. But he knew so little of Grail and Lance that during all this period he heard no Mass and remembered nothing of God.¹ At the close of the faithless time he was riding, all armed as usual, through a wild country, when he met with a company of Lords and Dames, going barefoot on pilgrimage in penitential garb, and was reproached for faring in guise of war on the day of the Passion of Christ. He learned in this manner that it was Good Friday, to his great surprise and dismay, and later that the Company had confessed their sins to a Hermit who dwelt hard by in the forest. Perceval, recalled to himself and full of sorrow, sought out the good man's hold and made his own confession, more especially concerning the failure in respect of Grail and Lance. He heard on his part (1) that the sin of his Mother's death, brought about by his desertion, had sealed his lips at the Castle of the Rich Fisher; (2) that one unseen who was served with the Grail therein was the Hermit's Brother; (3) that their Sister was Perceval's Mother; (4) that the Hermit was therefore his Uncle and the Rich Fisher his Cousin; (5) that the Hidden King had dwelt for twenty years in the Secret Chamber from which Grail and Lance came forth; and (6) that during all this period the ancient man had been nourished only by a Host brought in the Grail.² Henceforth, in the name of his penitence, Perceval was to lose no opportunity of hearing Mass, of honouring God and the Priesthood, giving aid to widows and orphans, helping all in distress and ever relieving the poor. The penitent Knight pledged himself to these observances, and this was the conversion of Perceval. He remained with the Hermit till Easter Day and then received the Eucharist, with great reverence and worship. Such is the story of Perceval le Gallois according to Chrétien de Troyes, who began and left unfinished the CONTE DEL GRAAL. It is interrupted by long digressions recounting adventures of Gawain: these, however, will be considered in a later section.

I have said that Chrétien is a poet—born of his period under the ministry of Nature; but for a last word concerning him I have left over to this point the Hermit's final instruction to his kneeling nephew. After the latter had made his solemn promise, the Uncle taught him

¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 254, ll. 7591-7611. The episode of the pilgrims ends at p. 257, l. 7704.

² D'une sole oïste li sains hom
Quant en ce Gréal li aporte,
Sa vie sostient et conforte,
Tant sainte cose est li Graaus.—ll. 7796-7799.

Whether administered (1) daily, (2) from time to time, or (3) once and for all only, does not appear in the story.

a Prayer in whispered words, repeating it over and over till the youth knew it by heart. He was covenanted, moreover, to recite it only when the danger of death was upon him. Whether it was to serve as a viaticum or as a defending formula we do not know, for it is described simply as an Orison containing certain Names of Christ too potent for human lips to utter, except in mortal peril. The brief account is as follows :

“ Et li ermites li conselle
 Une orison dedens s'orelle,
 Si l'afrema tant qu'il le sot ;
 Et en cele orison si ot
 Assés des noms Notre Signor,
 Car il i furent li gregnor
 Que nomer doie boce d'ome
 Se por paor de mort nes nome.
 Quant l'orison li ot aprise
 Deffendi lui qu'en nule guise
 Ne le déist sans grant péril.
 ' Non ferai-je, sire,' fait-il.”¹

I cannot remember that this notable incident has attracted the attention of criticism. Those who would follow its strange intimations must go back through the Christian centuries to the days of that veiled theosophist who wrote on Divine Names under the title of Dionysius the Areopagite, and behind him they may be carried further still.² Chrétien must have puzzled the later contributors to the CONTE DEL GRAAL, for they do not provide an occasion when Perceval might have used the Prayer. On the other hand, the puzzle for us is how the Minstrel commissioned by Philip of Flanders came to hear—at however far a distance—of secret, potent and super-sacred Names which were also titles of Christ, and what imagined event to come in the later story of Perceval was to justify the introduction of such an incident at an early epoch of the Quest.

III

THE EXTENSION OF WAUCHIER

AN anonymous poet succeeded Chrétien and is known—awkwardly enough—as pseudo-Wauchier, because in the opinion of certain scholars of the past his contribution was held to be the work of Wauchier de Denain, who took up the thread of the narrative where the nameless successor left off.³ This identification has lapsed, but the qualified name clings, like an

¹ Potvin, *Op. cit.*, II, pp. 262, 263, ll. 7855–7866.

² For an *aperçu* on the field which opens to the exploration of words and names of power, see F. Lenormant : LA MAGIE EN CHALDÉE.

³ According to Bruce—I, p. 229—Chrétien's poem breaks off at l. 9198, in the middle of a sentence. Nutt fixed the break at l. 10601, also in the middle of a sentence. See Potvin, II, p. 1 and II, p. 47. A note at the latter point may have influenced Nutt and others.

undesigned stigma. The question does not concern us at this point, seeing that his section of the CONTE is devoted solely to Monseigneur Gawain, whose place in the poem, and generally as a Knight of God on the Quest of the Holy Grail, will be discussed at a later stage.

It has been advanced that Wauchier had antecedent texts to go upon outside the work of his predecessors, and that one at least of these is not to be identified with purely folk-lore materials. It has been held, on the other hand, that the Metrical Romance of Borron was not among these documents; and on the hypothesis of a primordial non-Grail Quest, presumably in Northern French, it might follow that he had seen this. So also might the authors of a certain Welsh MABINOGI and an archaic English poem to which we shall come later and to which I have referred already. Now, there are traces in the MABINOGI of an intention which could have led up to the Marriage of Perceval and Blanchefleur, if his enchantment by an Empress had not extended over a period which put such a possibility out of the question. In the English metrical story the Marriage is a natural conclusion, and it takes place accordingly. In Chrétien there are the same traces, and they reappear more strongly in Wauchier, but the term of his design is unmanifest because he failed to conclude. The general consent of scholarship might be disposed to hold that the prototype—if any—of both poets celebrated a Bridal at its end. It would contain also the widely diffused story of the stag and basset, and, in one or another form, the curious episode of a self-moving Chess-Board. But, fully developed as these are in the extension of Wauchier, they are after all of his accidents only, while—*pace* Dr. Bruce—of his essence is the Grail Quest, which overrules all things else in his sheaf of inventions—or his ingarnering of diverse memorials.

The story of Perceval is resumed by Wauchier¹ at that point when the hero has departed from the Hermitage of his Uncle, who had brought him into a tolerable state of repentance, purging him by the Offices of the Church, and in a sense had communicated the first Mysteries of the Grail, being those of his own genealogy, that of Perceval and their relation to the Wardens of the Hallows. Perceval had been denounced previously for an omission which he had almost covenanted to make, and no hope had been extended that he should yet act as repairer in fine, so that from initial point to term, as he could then perceive it, some blind and implacable fatality appeared to have been at work alone. Now, on the other hand, and if not all too plainly, it looked as if there followed by inference that a high hope of achievement was held out to him by his Uncle's words. Once again, therefore, he resolved that he would not return to King Arthur's Court till he had revisited the Fisher King's Castle and inquired concerning the Grail. But all without that secret fastness was not only beset by

¹ That is to say, at l. 21917, *Op. cit.*, IV, p. 59. Pseudo-Wauchier had reached a definite point in his long story of Monseigneur Gawain, and Wauchier's first sentence is: "*Or revenrons à Perceval.*"

perils and hard encounters, but it turned in a glass of strange vision and great deception. Once more, I am not concerned in summarising the story to take in all its details, because, as usual, several of its episodes are idle and extrinsic in respect of our proper purpose.¹ The Castle of all Desire moved near or far upon the confused horizon of adventure, and at a certain point Perceval reached a river, beyond which he was assured that the bourne rose up grandly, in a rich and peopled land. But he could find no means of crossing. The day passed from noon to vespers, and still on the farther side he came to a vacant palace, beautiful exceedingly in situation, *moult bien séant*, but now standing drearily in ruins. There he found a Maiden who was prepared to shew him a place of crossing and mounted her mule for the purpose; but her intention was only to drown him.² I find nothing herein except an unmeaning hindrance, and the same may be said of an episode which occurs hereabouts in certain manuscripts, being the meeting between Perceval and a huntsman who reproached him for the fatality of the Unmasked Question at the Grail Castle. It shews only that the rumour of the ill-starred visit had gone about the district, which was acquainted otherwise, and too well, with the sorrows of the Holy House and their effects beyond the precincts. As regards the Maiden and the mule, I would note further that in the *CONTE DEL GRAAL* there is a curse on Logres which occupies a middle term between Times of Adventure and Times of Enchantment, an irresponsible spirit of revenge, which might be now that of a Water-Fairy, belonging to the Kelpie type, or the malice of an earthly maiden. The brief occurrence in the present case may be due perhaps to the former, in the imagination of Wauchier. However this may be, the Knight, having been better counselled, learned of a ford and so entered presumably on the direct road which led, by the hypothesis, to the desired House of Great Hallows. Yet he was still far from his term, and many adventures in the vicinity intervened without him reaching the goal. First among these was a visit to another deserted Castle—such desolation being perhaps a part of the curse—and therein he found that self-moving Chess-Board of which we have heard previously and which managed to mate Perceval several times when he sat down to play.³ A maid of great beauty rose from the midst of the lake into which Perceval proposed in his fury to cast the board and pieces. The fact that she came into the Castle and that her reproaches held his hands substituted another Quest, as if it were in place of the Grail. A white stag ranged in the park of the Castle, and if he would receive those favours which her beauty led him to demand he must—for no assignable reason—bring her the head of this animal, to facilitate which she lent him a basset, with express injunctions to return it. I do not propose to follow the adventures that arose out of this undertaking. The favours involved by his covenant had been granted to Perceval in the case of Blanchefleur, though not perhaps

¹ Appendix I, Note 7.

² Potvin, *Op. cit.*, Vol IV, pp. 73-76, ll. 22291-22392.

³ *Op. cit.*, ll. 22393 *et seq.*

when her distress, at the time of their first meeting, had brought her to his bedside and into his arms afterwards, through the whole night.¹ Her true love was to follow her liberation by him from the violence of an undesired suitor. But it was granted indubitably in the plenary sense when he reached her Castle—still in the course of his stag and basset quest—for the second time unexpectedly. Still it was under circumstances which are not apt to occur in these Romances of Chivalry unless the consummation of Marriage is intended at the close of all. That she was a bride-elect is clear enough in the poem, and in yielding, it was to her future husband that she yielded, which makes one later episode in Perceval's story the more inexcusable for this reason. That Perceval, his inconstancy notwithstanding, was self-devoted to Blanchefleur follows from the episode of the love-trance; but his inclinations are variable in the CONTE, as they are in that Welsh story to which I have referred already and possibly out of due time. For the love of the Lady of the Chess-Board he goes through long-enduring toils, which so end that at length he attains his desires—as will be found shortly. In all this there are only two points which concern us—firstly, that the attainment involves the desertion of Blanchefleur under circumstances that for the Knight are disgraceful; and, secondly, that the prolongation of the adventures which follow the slaying of the stag are due to a Daughter of the Fisher King, or at least in part, and are designed—out of all reason—to punish Perceval for not having asked the Question.²

I have said that the locality of the Grail Castle is as if it were a place in flux: there is nothing in the opening of the story to lend colour to the supposition that the Sacred Vessel, its Mystery and the House of these were close to the manorial residence and rural retreat wherein Perceval passed his childhood. Hence it is because peradventure the Castle was here to-day and gone to-morrow that they are brought suddenly into comparative proximity. Perceval was still in the course of his stag-adventures and still seeking the prize which was to follow their completion; still also he was hearing casually concerning the Grail, or at least was in occasional speculation regarding its whereabouts; when he found himself, without expectation and without intention, at the door of his old home, for the first time only in ten years. There he entered, there he tarried but too briefly, and there he met with his Sister—of whom Chrétien knows nothing, even as Wauchier elects to ignore entirely the cousin-german introduced by the earlier poet. He may, however, have been following—by bare possibility—some earlier stage of the Legend, to which the LONGER PROSE PERCEVAL and the Great Quest also conform; and in that last and glorious text the personality of the Sister is exalted to a high grade of sanctity, of which we find nothing but the first traces—for the first

¹ Dr. J. D. Bruce differs decisively on this point and sees no evidence for any alternative view. So also did Nutt before him.

² It is obvious that she delays thereby her Father's desired healing.

traces are present—in the account of Wauchier. Herein she is a spirit of recollection and a meditative recluse—

“ Une moult très cointe pucièle,
Blanc com flours en may novele.”

But she is clothed richly withal and encompassed by a fair retinue, so living sad and unfriended in the woodland, lamenting the loss of her Brother, of whose fate she had heard nothing. When Perceval declared himself there was great joy between them, and of her he learned the particulars of their Mother's death, through the love and the loss of him. Together they visited a Hermit Uncle who is not to be identified with the former, being on the Father's side. To him Perceval made his confession—though of all prayers he knew only the *Pater Noster*—was present when a Mass of the Holy Ghost was celebrated, knelt at the tomb of their Mother, and of his Uncle prayed piteously that he might learn concerning the Grail and the other Hallows. But this Uncle would tell him nothing at the time, though he gave him instruction regarding Holy Mysteries of Religion. That the heart of Perceval was not reached, his reverence notwithstanding, was too soon made evident by the fact that he bequeathed his Sister to renewed isolation, with a mere promise to return which is never fulfilled; and soon or some time afterwards he was in a position—as we shall see—to claim and receive his dues from the Lady of the Chess-Board.¹

Neither sin of concupiscence nor sin of desertion has disqualified him for the Quest of the Grail in the opinion of Wauchier; and he was still less or more on that Quest when he came to a Castle of Maidens, who were reputed to have raised the beautiful edifice with their own hands—

“ Ains le fisent . . . IIII . . . pucièles,
Moult avenans et moult très bièles.”

Of these he heard the story, though he was weary and looked rather for rest. So was he delivered to his slumber; but the place was all work of faërie, and he reposed that night in enchantment. Faërie Houses are, however, like faërie gold—dead leaves and dry in the morning, or luminous shadow and rainbow semblance which dissolve in the Eastern Light.² So Perceval woke in a meadow with an oak murmuring above him. From all this there follows nothing; but it is designed that the next adventure should take him a further step in the direction of his term. It seems that in the neighbourhood of the Grail Castle there was always a river to cross, and as on the first occasion he met with a Lady and a mule, from whom followed his destruction almost, so now there was another Maiden with a similar beast in her charge, thus creating a kind of equilibrium between false and true assistance. The story is very long, and much of it is outside the object, but it may be reduced under three heads: (1) Perceval was riding with

¹ For Perceval's visit to his old house, see *Op. cit.*, IV, pp. 187–209, ll. 25758–26448.

² *Op. cit.*, IV., 210–227, ll. 26471–27003.

the Lady, whom he lost at night in the forest. Alone and also lost, he beheld a great light—very clear and very resplendent—but it was followed by tempest. (2) In the morning he recovered the Damosel, who said that it was the light of the Grail, which the Rich King Fisher was accustomed to carry in the forest, so that no infernal temptation should have power over him. In the CONTE therefore, as in the QUEST OF GALAHAD, the Grail goes about ; but it is not for the same reason. (3) The Maiden described the Vessel as that which contained the Glorious Blood of the King of Kings, which was received therein as He hung upon the Cross.¹ This is rather the account of the VULGATE MERLIN than of Robert de Borron ; but the distinction is one of detail, and it follows that the Early History which was known to Wauchier was that of a Relic of the Passion. (4) More than this the Lady would not reveal, because it was a thing too secret for Dame or Damosel to recount : it was also a tale of terror, though a man of holy life might express the marvels. (5) That which she might and could she would do, however—namely, lend him her white mule—the beast which another Romance declares to be on God's side—and she would lend him also her ring, by which the mule was governed. Thus assisted, he would be able to cross a certain bridge of glass, over which he might travel direct to the King's Castle. Thereafter the mule would return of itself. He was not destined all the same to continue his journey far beyond the waterside. He was riding the mule, and leading his horse by the bridle, when he encountered a Knight who gave him news of a tourney about to be held by King Arthur, and—ignoring his original resolve—he turned aside from the straight path to attend it. The digression delayed his achievement ; but it left him the Best Knight of the World, and this was a condition of the achievement. It did not meet, however, the views of the Damosel who was owner of the mule and the ring ; for she reappeared and demanded their return, on ascertaining that his Quest was not achieved. They were both delivered, and thereafter—without salutation or farewell—he was left to shift as he might on the way, now all unknown, to the Holy House. It was at this time, as if once more without God in the world, that his road took him back to the Castle of the Chess-Board, for during all these scenes and times he was burdened by the stag's head and the dog of the damosel.² The term of this foolish business should have increased the difficulties of his Quest, but—on the contrary—the Lady was to a certain extent his conductress in place of the Maiden of the mule ; for she it was who took him again to the waterside and to a great boat there at hand which carried him—horse and all—to the opposite shore, beyond which stretched that broad way which led to the Court of King Fisher.³

The subsequent occurrences are intended to connect intimately with his arrival thereat and with the Rite of Questioning which is his prime object ; but they are fantastic rather than important—which

¹ *Ib.*, pp. 250, ll. 27711 *et seq.*

² *Ib.*, V, pp. 1, 2, ll. 30499–30520.

³ *Op. cit.*, IV, p. 321, ll. 29900 *et seq.*

appears also on their surface. He found a child of apparently five years old, clothed in rich vestments and seated on a branch of a tree higher than any lance could reach.¹ Of him Perceval, now full of his mission, inquired concerning the Fisher King, but was told only that if he would learn news which might prove good and pleasant he must go to Mount Dolorous, after which the speaker put a period to further questioning by ascending higher in the tree and thence in fine vanishing. Perceval reached the Mountain and met with a Maid coming down on a palfrey who counselled him against the adventure; but he began the ascent and at the summit found fifteen crosses, of which five were white, five red and five blue. These encircled a pillar, to which he must fasten his steed. To fail was to lose reason. The achievement seems childish; but it was a proof of valour devised of old by Merlin in order that the flower of Chivalry should alone serve King Arthur; and the Maid who told this story was Merlin's Daughter, of whom we find nothing otherwise in the canonical Romances of the Grail. Seeing that very few Knights of the Round Table ever heard of Mount Dolorous and much less of the testing, the account seems an idle invention; but it was once regarded as important for early Arthurian history. Perceval being still on his journey, at the conclusion of this adventure, and having received some further directions from the Maid in question, came next to a great tree which was illuminated by innumerable candles, like a High Altar at the Exposition of the Most Holy Sacrament.² It was the spectacle of a moment only, for the lights vanished on his approach, and he found himself at a wonderful Chapel, where a dead Knight lay in repose on the Altar and a black hand, appearing behind the Altar, extinguished one great light thereon. The significance—such as it is—of this episode appears in the sequel. In fine, Perceval arrived at the Grail Castle. Therein he found the King and told him of his latest adventures, namely, those on his way to the Castle. The Hallows appeared, and for the first time in the poem the expression *Saint Greal* is used in connection with the actual vision of the object. When the Procession had passed and repassed, Perceval asked, as we know, the required Questions; whereat the King told him that these were great matters, and in the first place he recounted the meaning of the child seated on the branch of that tree which the Knight passed on his way thither. Perceval did not learn what he wanted, because of his sins, and the episode as a whole indicated that the thought of man should be raised towards his Creator—an allegorical trifle which is after the manner of Masonic Teaching, as this appears on the surface, or much ado about little. Before he could hear further Perceval was invited to piece the Broken Sword together, which he did, apparently by the power of his magnetism as the Best Knight in the World. He left only a slight crevice at the point of junction, which I should account for as signifying those other points in time at which the sorcery of sense

¹ Potvin, *Op. cit.*, V, pp. 109–112, ll. 33755–33839.

² *Ib.*, p. 132, ll. 34410–34429.

entered into his life. But this is without prejudice to the explanation provided in one of the sequels which stand over for consideration. The partial success led the Keeper of the Hallows to embrace and hail Perceval as one of the Lords of the House, though it was obvious that the Quest was yet unfinished.¹ In other words, the Keeper is not healed. The next teller of the story will be found, however, to import still another element, which so far may have been an implicit of the poem but has not been explicated. For the rest, Wauchier explains nothing concerning that withdrawn and abdicated King, of whom we hear vaguely in Chrétien, nor does he make more than the one reference, which I have cited, to the Daughter of the Rich Fisher: to all appearance, however, she continued her Office as Bearer of the Holy Grail.

IV

THE CONCLUSION OF MANESSIER

THERE is a disposition to think that the extension of Wauchier broke off in the middle of a sentence, which was brought by the poet who followed him to its due point, and the narrative continues thereafter, in his hands remaining to the very end. This poet was Manessier.² We have to remember, however, that at or about the alleged break there intervened another singer, who intended, almost certainly, to furnish an alternative or independent conclusion, not a prolonged interpolation leading up to a further and already existing sequel. As the text is found in the extant MSS., it opens by completing the broken sentence of Wauchier's version, or just after the Fisher King calls Perceval to enter within the fold of the house—

“ Sires soiés de ma maison,
Je vos met tout en abandon
Quan que jou ai, sans nul dangier ;
À tous jours vos arai plus cier
Que nul homme qui jà mais soit.”³

It explains to Perceval, on the part of the Fisher King, that he has failed in the Sword trial because of his Mother's death and cannot know as yet the Secret of the Grail.⁴ Perceval is plunged in desolation by this judgment, whereas in the Manessier version he is filled with joy, for there is no further question respecting the Sword. The two

¹ The story of Perceval's second visit to the Grail Castle is found in *Op. cit.*, V, pp. 139-150, between ll. 34611 and 34934. It looks as if Wauchier stultifies Chrétien by the fact that the Question is asked, but the Keeper is not healed.

² Manessier belongs to the thirteenth century and wrote at the instance of Countess Jeanne of Flanders, whose rule extended from 1206 to 1244—or 1214-1227, according to Nutt. So also did Wauchier de Denain, though his work has been ascribed to the end of the thirteenth century.

³ Potvin, *Op. cit.*, V, p. 150, ll. 34925-34929.

⁴ The codex referred to by Potvin is described as *le manuscrit de Paris*, No. 12576, in what is now the BIBLIOTHÈQUE NATIONALE and had just ceased to be the BIBLIOTHÈQUE IMPÉRIALE, when Potvin published his sixth volume, where the reference will be found on p. 161. There is, however, a second MS. in the same Library.

poets are, however, of one mind as to the unfinished state of the Quest, though Manessier—on taking up the thread of the narrative, holds evidently that Perceval has accomplished enough to deserve as much information concerning the Grail and Lance as he intends to provide under any circumstances,¹ together with so exhaustive a history of the Broken Sword that the hero shall be equipped fully for the undertaking which remains to be fulfilled.² It would seem that Wauchier was concerned especially with the repair of this weapon, and it is out of the same Talisman that Manessier obtains his keynote, or that which concerns himself in the palmary sense, namely, the Vengeance Legend. It was the Sword which inflicted a certain Dolorous Stroke and by fraud encompassed the destruction of the Grail King's Brother—breaking, however, in the act. It was the Broken Sword which wounded the King himself, by a chance in which lurked a fatality, and his healing depended—as we know—on the visitation of tardy wrath and delayed justice upon him who used and misused the weapon. With Manessier's explanation of Grail and Lance we are acquainted also: it is that with which Longinus "pierced the side of God" when the Divine Majesty hung upon the Cross at Calvary. The Grail is that Holy Vessel which received the Precious Blood.³ The historical account which follows not only differs from the Romance of Robert de Borron but has variants also from the GRAND SAINT GRAAL, on which it depends mainly. It knows nothing of a Second Joseph, that Son of Joseph of Arimathæa to whom such prominence is given in the later text; but in opposition to Borron, it was the elder or, for the early version, the only Joseph of the Grail who brought the Hallows into Britain, who erected the Manor or Castle in which the King was now speaking to Perceval, and the speaker was of his own lineage.⁴

On the great night of his visit to the House of Hallows, Perceval heard other wonders than those connected with supposed Relics of the Passion or with the Sword of Wrath and Vengeance. He learned that the Maiden who carried the Holy Grail was of Royal Descent, and so also was she who bore the Salver; but the former was the King's Daughter,⁵ while the latter was his Niece, Daughter of Goon Desert, who was a King also and the Grail Keeper's Brother. He learned, moreover, that the Illuminated Tree, which he had passed recently on his journey, was a Tree of Enchantment, where the Fairies assemble;⁶ for the powers of the height and the powers of the deep and the powers of the intermediate world seem to have encompassed the Grail Castle, that the Times of Enchantment, Times of Adventure and Times of Wonder might be illustrated by abundant Pageants. He heard in fine of the Chapel and the Mystery of the Black Hand, to which I have alluded as

¹ Potvin, *Op. cit.*, V, pp. 152, 153, ll. 34990-35030.

² *Ib.*, pp. 159-164, ll. 35184-35334.

³ The inter-relation between the two Hallows is drawn closer in a Montpellier MS. than it is in the Mons version. As the Sacred Spear penetrated the side of Christ, the Grail was raised up to receive the outpouring Blood, and Joseph turned black from sorrow.

⁴ *Op. cit.*, V, pp. 154-157, ll. 35031-35138.

⁵ *Ib.*, p. 158, ll. 35159-35174.

⁶ *Ib.*, p. 165, ll. 3566-3587.

a tale of little meaning, wherein the Grail has no part, and there is no need to dwell on the explanation here.¹

After these narratives, Perceval covenanted to visit the death of the King's Brother on the person who accomplished it. On the morning following he took his leave, commending his Host to God and refusing all invitations to tarry. Perhaps Manessier did not know what to do in order to retard, for the purpose of storytelling, the accomplishment of his Vengeance Quest. Alternatively, perhaps he regarded it as a point of honour to follow his precursors by giving an inordinate space to the adventures of Gawain, with whom he couples those of Sagramour, another Knight of Fame in Arthurian Romance. In any case, there are various digressions at this point which account for one-half of his sequel. When the story returns ultimately to Perceval he was again in the Chapel which he had visited previously—that of the Black Hand, the extinguished candle and the corpse on the Altar.² He did battle with and expelled a demon, purified the place and slept therein. The next day he assisted three hermits to bury the body of the last person whom the Black Hand had slain. All this notwithstanding—indeed, perhaps because of it—for a considerable part of his mission the powers of the deep attacked him. On one occasion the Accuser, in the form of a horse, endeavoured to carry him to hell; but he was saved by the Sign of the Cross.³ Later on he arrived at that river which he had crossed originally; and there the demon sought once more to deceive him, assuming the guise of Blanchefleur coming to him in a wherry. But at the right moment another vessel appeared, with sails of samite, bearing a holy man; and Perceval took refuge therein.⁴

It is evident that the story has reached a point when its proper term is on the threshold rather than merely in sight; and the various delays which intervene can be dealt with in a few words, if we omit miscellaneous episodes which serve no important object, as they are nothing to do with the Grail.⁵ The most purposeful of all was the arrival of a messenger from Blanchefleur, who was again in peril; and so Perceval paid his third visit to Beau-Repaire, which he delivered duly and departed again from the Lady, this time, however, in all purity and reserve.⁶ She who had declared to him her love, now in the far past, she who expected to wed him, was destined to see him no more.

¹ *Op. cit.*, V, pp. 166, 167, ll. 35395-35448. It is sufficient to say that Brangemore, Queen of Cornwall, was murdered in the Chapel by her son, King Pinogrés, from which time forward every Knight who came therein was slain by a Black Hand.

² *Ib.*, pp. 304-320, ll. 39786-40288.

³ *Ib.*, VI, pp. 1, 2, ll. 40473-40522.

⁴ *Ib.*, pp. 4-11, ll. 40564-40768.

⁵ It is to be noted, however, that Perceval reaches a smithy attached to a Castle carrying a Broken Sword, when on his way to Blanchefleur, and that it is made whole by Tribuet—otherwise doubtless Trebuchet—who had forged it originally, and who bids him guard it well, as no King had ever a better one. I find nothing in the text to explain how Perceval came by the damaged weapon, nor do we hear further concerning it. Far back in Manessier's story Perceval's Sword breaks in a combat which he and Sagramors waged against ten Knights, for the delivery of a Damsel, with whom Perceval stays for a month and is healed of his wounds. For the Tribuet incident see *Op. cit.*, VI, pp. 34-37, ll. 41477-41582, and for the previous combat and the episode of the Broken Sword see V, p. 181, ll. 35861 *et seq.*

⁶ *Op. cit.*, VI, p. 45, ll. 41819 *et seq.*

The next most important episode was Perceval's stormy encounter with Hector of the Round Table, as a result of which both were destroyed nearly.¹ But in the dark of the midnight there shone a great light about them, being that of the Grail carried by an Angel, and thereby they were again made whole. It follows, once more, that here, as in the QUEST OF GALAHAD, the Grail was going about, at least on occasion, and we have had an instance previously in connection with the wanderings of the Fisher King. Like all Hallows the efficacy of which is transcendent, there was no active ministry on the part thereof, while nothing was done by the Angel. He moved simply about them, holding the Precious Vessel, and their wounds, with the pains, left them. Doubtless after such manner was the Company of the Blessed Joseph sustained and fed in the wilderness.

After this miraculous healing, Perceval, departing from Hector, as those who after great experiences have quenched all hatred in their heart, continued his way, as we may suppose, concerned now only with the accomplishment of his mission. And so in the fullness of time he reached a Castle wherein there dwelt the Knight who slew the Brother of the Fisher King. Sorrow and outrage had that evil Master of Chivalry brought to his intended victim, and more even than that to the Keeper of the Sacred Vessel. Why it had entailed such consequences nobody knows—perhaps also no one would care to speculate. The Grail had healed Perceval, and it had healed even Hector, in the absence of any desert on his own part, for he was the unworthy step-brother of Lancelot; but its own custodian it could not cure of the wound which a seeming accident had inflicted.² After a long encounter, Perceval despatched the worker of this mischief and started on his return journey to the Grail Castle, carrying the head of the destroyer with him.³ His mission once accomplished, all the hard and doubtful roads ran behind the hoofs of Perceval's horse: all the hindrances were taken out of the way. Of that way he knew nothing probably, and there was no need that he should. To the right he went and the left, with a certain sense of questing; the moons of the magical summer waxed and waned above; and all suddenly the Castle rose up before him.⁴ A herald on the walls without beheld his approach and hurried to the Master of the House, not so much with the news of his coming as of that which he bore slung from the front of his saddle; whereupon the Fisher King rose up healed—with a great cry. Perceval presented his terrible gift, and it was fixed on the summit of the tower belonging to that Castle which so far was a place of vengeance rather than of mercy. Thus finished the last and crowning adventure. Whether it was the implicit of Chrétien that the Question properly put would have restored all things within and without the Castle we cannot say: perhaps it would have led only to a Vengeance Quest, but again we cannot say. There is nothing in Chrétien to make us infer that Quest,

¹ Potvin, *Op. cit.*, pp. 113-121, ll. 44107-44348.

² *Ib.*, VI, p. 122, ll. 44355 *et seq.*

³ *Ib.*, V, p. 162, ll. 35278-35286.

⁴ *Ib.*, p. 130, ll. 44605 *et seq.*

and in the DIDOT-MODENA PERCEVAL—the Prose Romance which corresponds in the French Cycle most nearly to the first portion of the CONTE DEL GRAAL—the whole mission is one of asking and receiving a true answer. The relationship between the King and the Knight was declared now for the first time by one to another: the King appointed his lands to the hero, promising to make him King in succession at Pentecost—as one who devises to an heir, or perhaps as if he also were a Priest having power to consecrate. To this, however, Perceval would not accede so long as his Uncle was alive, and he was also under covenant to visit the Court of King Arthur, which he departed to fulfil accordingly. He was still there when a Maiden arrived with the news that the Fisher King was dead, and that there was a vacancy of the Royal Office in the House of the Grail.¹

King Arthur accompanied Perceval to the Castle with all the Chivalry of the Round Table—remaining a full month and being served daily by the Sacred Vessel. It does not appear who consecrated and crowned Perceval, whether this was effected, in the ordinary way, by a Prelate of the Church, or whether the Office itself carried with it its own anointing and enthroning. The text says only that he was crowned at the Feast of All Saints,² and thereafter followed a high festival at which all were fed by the Grail, as with Manna sent down from Heaven. After seven long years of reign in peace Perceval bequeathed the lands in turn, and the official part of his royalty, to the King of Maronne, who had married the daughter of King Fisher; but the Hallows he did not bequeath. He retired into a hermitage, whither the Grail followed him. By a departure from Tradition, he was consecrated Acolyte, Sub-Deacon, Deacon, and, in five years, he was ordained Priest and sang Mass. Thereafter so did he serve God and so love Him that he was called at length from this world into the joy of Paradise. During the last period of his earthly life one codex says that he was fed only by the Holy Grail—that is to say, by the Eucharist. It is supposed, but not affirmed dogmatically, that Grail and Lance and Dish were assumed with his soul into Heaven. In any case, no man has seen them since Perceval left this life.

V

THE ALTERNATIVE SEQUEL OF GERBERT

IT will be seen that in his wonderful kingdom Perceval had neglected Blanchefleur, who is no longer even mentioned: he went unto his own, and his own seem to have received him with no interrogation of the past. Had his sins been scarlet, the fulfilment of the Vengeance Mission and the consequent healing of

¹ Potvin, *Op. cit.*, VI, pp. 149, 150, ll. 45183-45217.

² According to the 1530 prose version, King Arthur certifies his intention to crown Perceval, and this is why the Royal and Illustrious Company escort him to the Grail Castle. It is said also that fourteen Kings in all assisted at the Great Ceremony.

the King would have made them white as snow, so far as we can follow Manessier ; and yet in some obscure manner the poet knew that the things which he dealt in were sealed with holiness and that the Office of the Warden, if it did not begin with Priesthood, and all its sanctity, must end therein. The sense of poetical justice might have suggested another conclusion, and so did, but this was not to the mind of Manessier. There is, as we are aware, a prolonged alternative sequel by another writer which interpenetrates the last lines of Wauchier, and—as it stands in the two MSS. by which it is known—leads up in over 17,000 lines to Manessier's conclusion. It is a Romance truly which is not without enchantments and vestiges of spiritual meaning. It has been summarised very fully indeed by the first editor of the CONTE DEL GRAAL ; and recently is in course of being printed in full, as it demands and deserves.¹ My own impression is that Gerbert completed the CONTE DEL GRAAL, either ignoring or unacquainted with Manessier. The scribes, however, of the two extant texts had the CONTE complete before them, as well as Gerbert's sequel and intercalated his text, less the concluding part, to the confusion of himself and Manessier.

I do not know what Gerbert de Montreuil thought of the Chess-Board episode and that which followed thereafter as the term of its whole adventure. He seems to have isolated it from his mind and thus contrived to ignore it. Certainly a subsequent action, or a denial, as I should say rather, which he attributes to his hero, seems to assume tacitly the previous continence of his life. Putting aside this question of an implicit, there are three express preoccupations to which the poem confesses : (1) that the desertion of Perceval's Mother was an offence which called for expiation ; (2) that the neglect of his Sister must be overglossed by due solicitude in the future ; and (3) that the rest of his life must atone for all his previous deficiencies in respect of Blanchefleur, who—as I do not doubt that he determined in his secret mind—must be united through him with the Grail. Of such was his programme, and after what manner he fulfilled it can be told shortly.

Perceval had reason to say in his heart : *mea culpa, mea culpa, mea maxima culpa*—for three offences, and of these one was the greatest. His task for the time being was to be one of expiation, and he was to be treated, meanwhile, precisely as we shall find that Wauchier presents the treatment of Gawain over his particular failure : he was not to know the truth concerning the Grail—the Mystery, that is to say, of all Sanctity. A state less remote from perfection was to deserve so high a prize. The King, who pronounced the judgment, consoled him, and him counselled, after which Perceval was left to his repose in the Hallowed and Glorious Castle. The night of sleep was a night also which was intended to recall him to the sense of his first duty. The clear strokes of a clock, proclaiming the hour of midnight, awoke him : he saw a great light and he heard sweet singing, after which came the voice of one who was unseen, warning him concerning his Sister,

¹ Appendix I, Note 8.

who was encompassed by great danger in the Manorial House of their Mother. He passed again into deep wells of slumber, and again—but now in the morning—he awoke, as others had awakened previously, to find himself lying on greensward, since the Castle had passed for the time being beyond the witness of the senses. He mounted his horse, which stood caparisoned and ready; he went forward, and soon—as it might seem, suddenly—a wonder of great wonders awaited him. It took the form of crystal walls, within which he heard all manner of instruments making joyful music. A door in the hither wall being fastened closely, he smote it three times with increasing vehemence, on the last occasion using his Sword for the purpose. It should be noted that this weapon neither was nor could have been the Grail Hallow or Talisman; but it broke with a great clatter. Thereupon the door moved back, and a Warder who was in white and shining appeared and challenged. For Perceval there was a rebuff to come in more senses than he could understand at the moment: albeit he entreated earnestly, not only was he denied entrance, but was told by one who knew all his failure and success at the Grail Castle, that this his business with the Sword must cost him another seven years of Quest and Exile, before he returned to the Hidden House of Hallows. Apparently for the King's sake and the relief of him, he had striven in the first place, though the measure of his intention was small: now it was his own purification that was to be the chief work in hand. So he knocked and he did not enter, even as in the youth and inexperience of his brave spirit he saw the Pageant and the Hallows, but asked nothing concerning them. On both occasions, it was accounted to him as if he had sinned with knowledge. The truth is that the counsels of prudence do not obtain in the presence of the Mysteries, nor do the high conventions of good conduct, at least utterly. This was in the earlier case, and in the present one, while it is true that the Kingdom of Heaven is taken by violence, no one can enter unwarranted into the Secret Sanctuaries that have been instituted on earth to guard the memorials of the Kingdom which as yet is not upon earth, though with harp and viol and lute, and with all manner of music and psaltery, we pray that it may come quickly.

What, it will be asked, was this enclosure—within walls as the luminous shadow of the Jerusalem which is above? What manner of Castle was this which resounded with the hallowings and enchantments of melody? Was it not, indeed, the Grail Castle, to which he had returned unwittingly by a devious way? According to the answer which the text furnishes, it was the Earthly Paradise; but another and very different text tells us that among the added names of the Grail Shrine there was to be included the Castle of Eden, that it was the Castle of Joy also—as of music for ever sounding—and that behind it there was the Earthly Paradise, one of the rivers of which encircled the sacred enclosure.¹ Therefore I leave those who will to draw the

¹ See the "Romance in Prose" of PERCEVAL LE GALLOIS, called also the PERLESVAUS and LONGER PROSE PERCEVAL, in Potvin's CONTE DEL GRAAL, Vol. I, p. 249. See also Dr. Sebastian Evans' translation in THE HIGH HISTORY OF THE HOLY GRAAL, edition of 1903, p. 267.

conclusion which pleases them, knowing, as at least I do, that places of this unquestionable order may be now on the crown of a causeway which the sea lashes, and again

“ . I . clos de mur fait a crestiax.”¹

Perceval retired discourseled; but had he been advanced further in the knowledge of secret things, he might have recognised perhaps that there was encouragement and high hope which he could put to his heart because he had not been met by Swords of Fire, keeping the way of the Tree of Life, but by one in his own likeness, exalted gloriously, who had said to him: Not yet! Moreover, at the end of the terse interlocutory discourse, he was given what is termed in the poem a Brief, Charter or Warranty, which—so long as he bore it—would insure that through all his subsequent exile he should suffer no grievous harm, for thereby was he rendered invincible and thereby would his wounds be healed. We see in this manner that all kinds of miracle in medicine and every form of palladium were available there and here for Knights of Quest and Pilgrimage; that they seemed to be reflections or radiations from the central star of the Holy Grail; and hence that when he who was served thereby and maintained thereof could find not even a palliative in its Vision and Mystery, the explanation can be only that his sickness was not of this world. It was rather of the emblematic order, enacted in a world of parable, with a meaning reserved to those who could put an authentic question, which was also figurative.

Thus equipped, Perceval resumed his pilgrimage, much as the Novice in some Temple of Instituted Mysteries circumambulates the Hall of Reception under the guidance of its Wardens, having only a vague notion of what is the intention and the term, but still progressing thereto. Again the road was strewn with wonders before him, but to his exaltation on this occasion. The world itself had assumed an aspect of May-time on a morning of Fairyland; and hold and keep and city poured out their garlanded trains, as with bells and banners and thuribles, to honour and acclaim him. Of the reason no one knew less than Perceval, or divined as little; but he had asked the Question at the Castle, and although it had not been answered, although he had learned nothing of Grail and Lance, and was therefore less instructed than Monseigneur Gawain, the interdict had been lifted from Nature; the winter was over and done, and all the cushats and turtles in all green places of the land—and all the ballad voices—broke into joy and melody, as if a Rite of Marriage had been celebrated between Heaven and Earth. He was clothed at castles in rich vestments, and from high-born maiden to simple peasant all hearts were his and all welcomes.

It must be said at this point that we know little, and so little, of Gerbert that it may be reasonably a matter for speculation whether the place at which his sequel is introduced by the scribes of certain codices

¹ Potvin, *Op. cit.*, VI, p. 163.

corresponds or not to his intention. There are some respects in which it could be allocated better if it were possible to suppose that it was part only of a Grail poem which was meant to follow immediately from the section of Chrétien. A pertinent case in favour of this view is the palmary fact that Gerbert seems to assume, as we have seen, the virginity of Perceval up to and, as we shall see, after his marriage night, which supposition is doubly impossible in view of the Wauchier section. It must be noted further that in one remarkable reference to *CRESTIENS DE TROIE*, he speaks of himself as the poet who resumed the task, following the true history:—

“ Si com li livres li aprent,
Où la matière en est escripte.”¹

I feel that in making this suggestion I am exceeding my proper province, which is not that of textual criticism, and I recognise that it has its difficulties, assuming, as it does, that the Gerbert sequel must have existed in a much more extended form, because at the opening Perceval is at the Grail Castle for a second time, which is either pursuant to the account of Wauchier or to some unknown portion of his own narrative. If, however, he followed Wauchier, then he chose to forget or ignore him at several crucial moments. Sometimes he seems to forget Chrétien himself, for except on this hypothesis it is difficult to understand his introduction of another Broken Sword, being that which was shattered on the door of the Earthly Paradise. Now we have, in all respects, to remember that the putative Hallow which causes this confusion is in the position that we should expect it to occupy, seeing that it has no true place in the Legend of the Holy Grail. Not only does its history differ in every Quest, but within the limits of the *CONTE DEL GRAAL* it is contradictory under circumstances which exclude one another. Almost at the poem's very inception the weapon is adjudged to Perceval, and he carries it away. In certain codices the only farther reference made to the Hallow by Chrétien is found in the warning which the Questing Knight receives from his cousin-german, immediately after his departure from the Castle; in others we hear how the Sword splinters in the hands of Perceval, and thereafter how it is restored to the Castle. It is there, in any case, not only on the hero's revisit but long previously—in connection with the arrival of Gawain. Manessier tells a story concerning it from which it follows that in breaking it occasioned the wounding of the King at a period which was antecedent to all the Quests. Therefore it could not have been at any time offered to Perceval, but must have remained in the Castle, with its resoldering always as the test of success in the case of each questing Knight. Now, either Chrétien had conceived a different history of the putative Hallow or he had told the wrong story; for the cousin-german of Perceval testifies in his poem that the Rich King

¹ *Op. cit.*, pp. 212, 213. It is said (1) that *CRESTIENS DE TROIE* began the story of Perceval; (2) that it was left unfinished because of Chrétien's death; and (3) that Gerbert *a reprise l'œuvre . . . selon la vraie estoire*.

Fisher was wounded in the thigh with a spear. When Gerbert intervened he left Chrétien's intention dubious, and substituted another Sword, which was not a Hallow, though, like that of his predecessor, it was one that had been forged specially—would break in one peril only and must be resoldered where it was made. After the triumph of his welcome, as related already, Perceval came to a Castle in which a smithy was set up under the guard of serpents; for this was the place of the Craftsman who forged the weapon, and he did not wish it to be mended. The duty of the serpents was to destroy any one who brought the pieces to the smithy. The reasons—if any—are not explained by Gerbert, but it may be said that in certain codices of Chrétien the life of a Smith is somehow dependent on a Sword, and its reforging foreshadows his death approaching. If we can suppose that Gerbert's continuation began at a much earlier point than is now established, some explanation might be possible, though his own evidence seems to be against this view. Perceval conquered the serpents, and the weapon was duly reforged.¹ It does not appear to serve him in any special event subsequently, and as thus nothing follows from the episode we must conclude that its introduction is idle; that in this respect Gerbert did not know what to do with materials which had come into his hands; and this is perhaps the conclusion that we should desire in respect of the Sword.

The next episode in Gerbert is a kind of addendum to that of Mount Dolorous in Manessier, and to this again no consequence attaches, except that it is an accident by which the hero is brought to Caerleon and to the Court of King Arthur, when the poet gives us a new and revolutionary explanation concerning the Siege Perilous of Arthurian Romance. The Siege is a decorative Chair of jewelled gold sent from Fairyland—possibly that of Avalon—for occupation by the Best Knight in the World, and by him only with safety. For others who sit therein, the earth opens and swallows them. This Chair is taken by Perceval, as at a great Rite of Exaltation, and the earth does open; but the Siege remains suspended in middle air; and the result of this achievement is that the previous ill-starred heroes, who have been engulfed but not destroyed, are restored to light and air.² Perceval's next adventure is intended to illustrate his continence when tempted by a demon in the guise of a very fair woman. He emerged unsullied, and reached the abode of his Sister, to her unspeakable joy and comfort.³ They visited the tomb of their Mother, and then set forth together. Some time after they arrived at the Castle of Maidens, where Perceval in fine left her in hands of safety. Here there was an office of healing,⁴ which is of medicine rather than of anodyne; but though all the ways of wonder lead to and from the Castle of the Holy Grail, the King of that Castle knew too well the fatality by which he was encompassed to

¹ Potvin, *Op. cit.*, VI, pp. 167-169.

² *Ib.*, pp. 171-173.

³ *Ib.*, pp. 175 *et seq.*

⁴ *Op. cit.*, VI, 177. Perceval had been wounded seriously while protecting his Sister in a casual encounter and was healed by an ointment in the Castle, his own magical Tablet having passed from Gerbert's memory for the time being.

seek, for he would have sought vainly, his relief thereat. Within the merciful precincts of her new asylum Perceval's Sister was enrolled henceforth as a ministering spirit, and thereat the adventuring Knight learned something more concerning the antecedents of his Quest and also of his own family. The Castle of Maidens received wanderers, but sheltered women only in its ordinary course; and a reverend Dame—under whose rule the whole Company abode—declared herself a kinswoman of Perceval, being his Mother's Cousin. The name of his Mother was Philosofine, and they two had entered Logres together, carrying the Sacred Hallow; but this event of the past was evidently a part of the Historical Mystery, and was not to be declared even to the Knight of Quest until he had proved himself. He knew now that even from his very beginning he was a Scion of the Sacred House; and he might have rested content in his heart that the House would at length receive him. He learned also that it was the sinful state of the land which had caused the Holy Grail to be placed in a Concealed Sanctuary under the ward of the good King Fisher.

Meanwhile the Closing had been taken in the Degree of his duty towards his Sister; and, in the next place he was called to a subsidiary work in the region of filial duty. With whatever offence he could be charged in respect of his Mother, she was past the reach of his atonement; but his Father in Chivalry, now in the distress of Sorcery—as at the hands of those Sorceresses of Gloucester whom we shall meet with in a late Welsh Romance—demanded his vengeance. This incident is one of several which would make the investigation of Gerbert's materials a quest of high enchantment if only the road were open. Of the duty which was thus imposed and accepted in all the honour of his knighthood, Perceval acquitted himself with credit, his forgotten Brief from the Earthly Paradise coming to his aid, and the providence attached thereto. The episode, however, has a second object, more important to Perceval than itself, which is to aid in recalling a relationship between Blanchefleur and his Father in Chivalry—as the same is recorded by Chrétien—and so forward to the root-matter of the poem, which is the Marriage of Perceval, as the condition on which he will learn the Secrets of the Grail and Lance. As regards this Marriage there are two noticeable points, outside the fact that the union itself was the head and crown of exile ordeal.¹ There is (1) the ideal set before the poet, which was to preserve the continence of Perceval till he had accomplished the Quest of the Grail; and (2) the promise that at some time subsequently—when that was removed which hindered the consummation of the Marriage in chastity—there should arise, as issue from those high nuptials the Mystical Genealogy of the Swan Knight, whereby the Holy Sepulchre would be delivered. It is for this reason that—by a covenant which was made between them—Blanchefleur remained a maid on the night of her bridal.² Of such was the

¹ Potvin gives the Marriage at full length, VI, pp. 189–213.

² "Pucele i coucha voirement,
Ensement pucele en leva."—*Ib.*, p. 211.

Marriage of Perceval, and thereafter he who was Lord henceforth of all her lands, holding the sworn fealty of many Princes and Barons, went forth again into the world to prosecute the Great Quest. Of the Virgin Bride we hear nothing further, but there can be no doubt that if he had finished with her, as he seems to have planned, Gerbert would have recounted, and did perhaps, the re-union of Blanchefleur and Perceval.

I do not conceive that there is any object in prolonging this summary of a narrative which is protracted in various ways, but has reached its proper term. Some of its later, and, as one would say, redundant episodes occur or recur in the *LONGER PROSE PERCEVAL*; but we have no criterion of judgment by which to decide whether one drew from another or both from that inevitable source to which they appeal both, under their respective veils. At the end of his probation Perceval is again at the Grail Castle, ostensibly for the third time; he makes the Sword perfect; and the last lines of Gerbert repeat, as they stand in my text, those which are last of Wauchier. I have stated my opinion already, under the necessary reserves, that Gerbert carried his sequel further and produced a conclusion which did not impose upon Perceval—under the genius of Manessier—yet another pilgrimage outwards, but as in the *PARZIVAL* of Wolfram, reconciled his own institution in the Grail Castle with the healing and concurrent prolongation of the Old King's life. As regards the sources of the *CONTE DEL GRAAL* in what is termed early historical matter, it is only at a late stage that we reach accounts which are not interpolated obviously, and then they connect with the *GRAND SAINT GRAAL* and not with the simpler history of *Borron*.¹ This is true of Manessier and true in part of Gerbert, but on the understanding that the story of Perceval's Mother—in the latter case—does not represent any other extant narrative, more especially in respect of the circumstances under which the Fisher King became the Guardian of the Grail. On the other hand, Wauchier gives a few indications which are of the matter of the Vulgate Cycle.²

VI

IN WHICH MONSEIGNEUR GAWAIN IS CONSIDERED BRIEFLY AS A COMPANION OF THE HOLY QUEST

THERE are three that give testimony on earth concerning the Mystery of the Grail—Perceval, Bors and Galahad—and the greatest among these is Galahad, on the authority of the High Quest. This notwithstanding, as there are persons who, through a certain mental deviation, turn aside from the highways of Christendom and look for better paths, out of the beaten track, in the issues of obscure heresy, so it has happened that scholarship,

¹ See *ante*, Book II, § 2; Book III, § 4.

² *Ante*, Book III, § 3.

without setting aside the great heroes of research, has discovered some vague predilection for the adventurous and courtly Monseigneur Gawain. They have been led even to think that he was the first hero of the Grail Quest. In order to strengthen the view, imagination has supposed as usual certain convenient versions, now more lost than regrettable, which present Gawain more fully as a Quest Knight than any document which is extant in Northern French. In such event these versions were like the poem of Chrétien de Troyes, as it was judged by Wolfram—that is to say, they told the wrong story. At the same time there are several accessory considerations which call for mention. Gawain was exactly the kind of character who would be disposed to initiate and undertake all kinds of quests, high and low. That he was a popular Grail hero might mean that some of his chroniclers did not see exactly why his methods and mode of life should create a barrier. It happened, moreover, that in the CONTE DEL GRAAL he is not deserving of harsher judgment than Perceval in the matter of continence.¹ I think further that the old romancists had in their minds a distinction between the continuity of the sin in Lancelot and the sporadic misdemeanours of Gawain, as also between the essential gravity of the particular offence in the two contrasted instances. There is the fullest evidence of this in respect of Guinevere, when considered side by side with other heroines of the Cycles. Moreover, the Romances reflected the unquestioned concensus of opinion at the period regarding the barren woman; and it seems clear that the unfailing fidelity with which plenary favours were granted by maidens in the matter of a covenant fulfilled, and the frankness which permitted such favours to rank as the term of reward, had its root in the sentiment that, except in Houses of Religion, the womb which bore no fruit was under a greater interdict than that which conceived without consecration by the Sacred Offices of the Church. This must be remembered when the literature suggests, as it does, that the Chivalry of King Arthur's Court translated in an inverted manner the Institutes of Heaven; that it was not very particular about marrying and giving in marriage; and that it seemed to have assumed to itself an indulgence, both general and particular, to follow the untinged office of Nature without much consciousness of a stigma attaching thereto. Finally, it is just to add that the Vulgate Romances manifest a set purpose to depict Gawain in blacker colours exceedingly than any earlier texts warrant.

For the rest, and from the mystical standpoint, it seems pertinent to say that while there is no period at which it was customary on the part of the Church to impose celibacy as an ideal on those who lived in the world, and while from most of the higher standpoints the grace of chastity is less in its simple possession than in its impassioned recovery, we have to remember that the Great Masters do not marry because of

¹ Had Perceval acted differently in respect of the Lady of the Chess-Board and had he kept faith with Blanchefleur, Gerbert might not have been moved to produce his so-called interpolation of the CONTE.

the Divine Union. The connection in Chrétien between Gawain and the Grail Quest arises out of a challenge which he had accepted to clear himself of a charge of murder,¹ as to which it became, later on, a point of agreement that if he could find and bring back the Lance which bleeds he should be excused from returning to withstand an ordeal by battle. Out of this condition a Montpellier codex of the *CONTE* presents the visit of Gawain to the Grail Castle very early in the version of pseudo-Wauchier.² He beheld, firstly, a bier and, secondly, all the Hallows, asked the required Question, and was told by the Royal Warden that if he could weld the Broken Sword he should know (1) why the Beautiful Maiden who carried the Sacred Vessel was dissolved in tears; (2) why a Bier formed part of the Pageant; and (3) whose body was laid thereon. These points are peculiar to pseudo-Wauchier and his connections. The experiment with the Sword proved, however, a failure; Gawain learned nothing; he fell asleep after hearing the discourse of the King, who explained what was wanting in him; and on awaking next morning he discovered himself in the open country, with his horse and his arms close by him. It is obvious that he had found the Lance, but he had not carried it away, and for this reason he set out to take up the challenge. King Arthur intervened, however, and the matter was settled in peace.³

The codex which embodies this account gives more extended particulars of another visit which was paid by Gawain to the Castle; but it is obvious that they are exclusive mutually, and the alternative *Mons* version which omits the first visit, and determines in a different sense the question of the accusation and the ordeal, are for the Quest of Gawain the logical and preferable texts. Second or first, on this occasion, nothing was farther from the mind of the character-in-chief than to go on the Quest of the Grail, nor was he concerned with the covenant of any challenge. He assumed the responsibility of a Knight who was slain by a hand invisible when riding under his safe conduct. The identity of this Knight is never disclosed; but Gawain assumed his armour and was carried by his steed, who had mysterious fore-knowledge of the way, to a destination of which he himself could dream nothing.⁴ He arrived at his term in due course, but what took place was the reception of a masquerading neophyte, who was un-introduced, unwarranted and unqualified. In place of being he that was to come, they had still to look for another; but his harness for a moment deceived the Company about him.

Chrétien knew nothing of a bier and a dead body, in that place

¹ The episode of the challenge begins at l. 6125, *Op. cit.*, II, 205, and the connected adventures of Gawain proceed as far as l. 7589, when the story returns to Perceval. For the agreement respecting the Lance see *ib.*, p. 250, ll. 7488-7502.

² See *Op. cit.*, III, 369-372 for the Montpellier MS. version of this episode.

³ It follows that Gawain was one of the heroes who beheld the Vision of the Holy Grail. In the *CONTE*, however, it is to be noted that the Sacred Vessel was *glorious* and the Sacred Vessel was *sains*, but the election thereto was that of the Best Knight or his nearest co-heir in normal Chivalry, and not of one who was resplendent in Spiritual Achievement. Gawain was in this sense scarcely less eligible than Perceval.

⁴ *Op. cit.*, Vol. III, pp. 352 *et seq.*, onward from l. 19655.

where the sign of arch-natural life abode in perpetuity. But, according to pseudo-Wauchier and the Mons MS., the bier was in evidence at this visit of him who was unexpected, and a Procession of Canons and Clerks recited thereover the Holy Office for the Dead, with a great ceremony of solemn voices intoning. The King also visited the bier and lamented over it. The Pageant of the Grail was manifested, after the manner which I have described elsewhere, and Gawain saw it openly. At the conventional feast it was the Sacred Vessel which served so far as the food was concerned, but the sacramental communication was in one kind only, since the wine, as we have seen, was brought round by the butlers. Gawain, as in the previous case, asked all the necessary and saving Questions, and was invited to solder the Sword; but he failed, as before, in this ordeal and learned only concerning its History. A stroke which was dealt therewith destroyed the Realm of Logres and all the surrounding country. In the midst of this narrative Gawain fell asleep at the table, and was left to repose. When he awoke there was neither Hall nor Castle, neither King nor Chivalry about him, but a fairly garnished land lying on the brink of the sea and restored by so much of the belated question as he had asked the King. The common folk blessed him, and the common folk accused him, because he had not finished his work or insured their full felicity.¹

Of such is the Quest of Gawain as it appears in the CONTE DEL GRAAL, even as the Pillars of a Temple which was never finished. It intervenes between the first and second visit of Perceval to the High House of the Hallows, but on Perceval's own Quest it has no effect whatever, and the narrative of the one ignores that of the other. It is said in some old fable—which is not, I think, of the Grail,—that Arthur and Gawain at last reposed in Fairyland. There are two classes of Knighthood—that which goes in and returns, and thereof is Ogier le Danois; that which enters but does not come back evermore, and thereof is Launfal. Now, Arthur returns in the fullness of the times that are to come, and, however these dreams may be, it is certain that the Peace of the King is not the peace of Gawain. In conclusion as to the CONTE DEL GRAAL, after every allowance has been made for one statement in Chrétien, from which it follows that the Father of the Fisher King was, as we have seen, sustained by a Sacred Host taken from the Holy Grail, the keynote of the whole Cycle is that it has no sacramental connections such as we find elsewhere in the literature. On this account, if indeed on no other, the CONTE DEL GRAAL has nothing to tell us which signifies in respect of our true affair, except by way of its echoes and reflections from sources which do concern us nearly, and are better and fuller witnesses. It has every title to possess in perpetuity the kind of Perceval which it has helped materially to create—in whom the Parzival of Wolfram has little and the transfigured Knight of the HIGH HISTORY has next to nothing at all.²

¹ *Ib.*, p. 364, ll. 20003 *et seq.*, to end of vol. Also IV, pp. 1-6, ll. 20149-20328.

² It is to be noted that the adventures of Gawain in Manessier have nothing to do with the Grail.

BOOK IV

THE CYCLE OF ROBERT DE BORRON

THE ARGUMENT

I. THE METRICAL ROMANCE OF JOSEPH OF ARIMATHÆA.—The characteristics of Robert de Borron—The Metrical Romance presented in General Synopsis—Specific Considerations of the Story—The Source of the Text—The Sacred Vessel as it is understood in the Poem—The Divine Communion in the Tower of Joseph—The Secret Words and the Theological Position of the Text—The Institution of the Holy Table—The Mystery and Fate of Moses—The Branches to follow—The Marriage of Alain and the Succession of Keepers. II. THE LESSER HOLY GRAIL.—Its Critical and Literary Position in respect of the Metrical Romance—The Distinctions on Matters of Importance between the two Texts—Concerning the Sacramental Service at the Last Supper—Concerning the Secret Words and their written form—Concerning the Triple Guardianship—Of Words in Eucharistic Consecration—Concerning Joseph of Arimathæa—The Conversion of Britain. III. THE EARLY HISTORY OF MERLIN.—In what sense this Branch follows from the Metrical Romance of Joseph—The Bare Outlines of the Story—The Story as a General Introduction to the Romances of the Round Table—Its Palmary Characteristics as an intermediate Grail Romance—The Hermit Blaise—The Grail in Northumbria—The Secret Records of the Hermitage—The Round Table, its imputed connection with that of the Lord's Supper and with the Table of Joseph—The Void Seat—The Lacuna in the Succession of Texts—Of him who was to come, and whether Galahad or another—Some Implicits of the Legend. IV. THE DIDOT-MODENA PERCEVAL.—The Higher Considerations of the Quest—The Outlines of this Quest—Points of Correspondence with the Early Epochs—Place of this Quest, if any, in the Triad of Robert de Borron—Claims of the Questing Knight—Analogies with preceding Texts of the Trilogy—Discrepancies in the Legend of Moses—Of Merlin's Close in Sanctity and not in Enchantment—Conclusion as to the Lesser Chronicles.

BOOK IV

THE CYCLE OF ROBERT DE BORRON

I

THE METRICAL ROMANCE OF JOSEPH OF ARIMATHÆA¹

ROBERT DE BORRON was imbued, and even deeply, with the religious spirit of his period. I think also that in him there was a spiritual tincture which must have been a little rare at that epoch among courtly Minstrels. He had seen, according to his story, some part at least of the Great Book of the Legend, and perhaps it had changed his life. After the manner of his time, he was attached to a patron, and he wrote his poem for the *preux* and noble Chevalier Walter Montbéliard—a Crusader when the Temple was at its glory. The poem opens with an account of the circumstances which led ultimately to the Incarnation of Christ and is based on the notion that prior to this event, and prior indeed to the descent of Christ into Hades, good and bad were alike in Hell and less or more in the power of the evil hierarchy. The root-matter of the story can be expressed in a few words, and may be so offered to simplify the issues which are important to our purpose and must be dealt with therefore more fully.

The Vessel in which Christ performed His Sacrament, according to those words of the text with which we are acquainted already, was taken from the house of Simon by a Jew and delivered into the hands of Pontius Pilate, for no assignable reason except the exigencies of the story. Joseph of Arimathæa, with the assistance of Nicodemus and by permission of Pontius Pilate, took down the body of Jesus after the Crucifixion. The permission was a reward asked by Joseph in return for years of military service, and Pilate gave him in addition the Vessel which the Jew had brought him. In that Vessel Joseph received the Blood, which flowed again from the wounds of Christ when the body was being prepared for burial. He laid the body in a Sepulchre prepared for himself, and he concealed the Vessel in his house. After the Resurrection the Jews sought Nicodemus, who eluded them by flight, and Joseph, whom they seized and imprisoned in a dark tower. The only issue therefrom was at the summit, and this was sealed effectually by

¹ Appendix I, Note 9.

a heavy stone. Christ came to Joseph in the tower, brought him the Sacred Vessel¹ and communicated to him certain Secret Words which were the grace and power thereof. Joseph remained for forty years in his prison and was sustained by the Blessed Vessel, as if in a condition of ecstasy and apart from any normal consciousness concerning the flight of time. In other words, it nourished both body and soul, and this is the high sense in which the Grail appears as a Feeding Vessel in the earliest historical text. Towards the end of the forty years, Vespasian, the son of Titus, being afflicted with leprosy—and a pilgrim who reached Rome having recounted the wonderful miracles of Jesus, of which he had heard in Palestine—a commission was sent to Jerusalem in search of some relic of the Master, if the report of His death were true. The commission in due time returned with St. Veronica, who carried the *Sudarium*, or Sacred Face-cloth, and this effected the desired cure immediately. Titus and Vespasian proceeded with an army to Palestine, to avenge the death of Jesus. It was in this manner that Vespasian found Joseph still alive in the tower: the stone was removed from his sepulchre, and he who had been entombed, like Christ, like Christ also arose. After this rescue was effected, the Emperor's son was converted by Joseph.

The vengeance on the Jews being in fine accomplished, Joseph collected his Relatives as well as certain Companions who had embraced Christianity at his instance, even as those had done; and by the will of God the party started Westward, carrying the Holy Grail. For a considerable period they took possession of a certain district, not otherwise indicated, and placed it under cultivation. At length a part of the Company fell away from grace, with the result that a scarcity followed in the land: the Vessel was invoked,² and it separated the good from the evil within the ranks of the people. By instructions thus obtained, a Table was dight after the manner of that which served for the Lord's Supper, and the Vessel was set thereon. Before it there was placed a single Fish, which the Divine Voice of the Grail had directed Brons, who was the brother-in-law of Joseph, to catch in a neighbouring water. Between Joseph and Brons there was left a vacant place, corresponding to that which had been made void by the defection of Judas Iscariot. A certain part of the Company, being those who had kept in a state of grace, and believed in the Holy Trinity, sat down at the Table, while the rest who gathered about were of those who had lapsed into sin. The good people experienced all spiritual delight and inward refreshment, but the evil were not filled, and they could not even see that which was in full view, the Holy Vessel. When a question, put to them by one who was named Petrus, had elicited this fact, they were denounced as those who were guilty, and they departed in shame. It is to be inferred that soon after

¹ Presumably therefore it had remained in the house of Joseph.

² That which Joseph invoked before the Holy Grail was the Holy Spirit; but it was Christ Who answered.

they separated from the Company once and for all. The one exception was a certain Moses, who manifested great sorrow, though he was really an unbeliever at heart.¹ His prayers in fine obtained him permission to take a place at the Table ; but the Void Seat was the one which was alone available, and when he sat down thereon the Siege and its occupant were both swallowed by an abyss which opened beneath him. Meanwhile the Office of the Table had become a daily, as it were, a Divine Service,² and so continued till the Company was divided further to continue the journey Westward, even the farthest West, in successive parties, as ordained by Christ Himself, speaking from the Grail. Alain, the Son of Brons, and his eleven Brothers under his guidance were the first to start, he carrying a certain proportion of what must be termed the revealed knowledge of the Holy Grail ; but it did not include apparently the Secret Words. The communication which had been made to Alain was because when the time came for Brons and his wife to seek some kind of settlement in life for their twelve boys, the eleven had elected to marry and were provided therefore with wives, but Alain, the youngest of all, chose the vocation of celibacy. It came about that for this reason he was put over his brethren and was taken by Joseph into his heart after a special manner. This party was followed by that of Petrus, whose connection with the family of Joseph, if any, is not stated ; but he was favoured in another manner which would seem to be more distinctive, since he carried a Brief or Charter sent down from Heaven itself. Unfortunately, the account given of this notable document contradicts and stultifies itself.³ The chosen destination of Petrus was the Vaux d'Avaron. The last to depart was Brons, apparently with the remanent of the people, and to him Joseph, by Divine Ordination, delivered the Sacred Vessel and communicated the Secret Words. Joseph of Arimathæa remained behind—though the text is corrupt at this point—his mission being accomplished, and is promised *la joie perdurable* of the Paradise which is above.⁴

The theology of the poem is in part of the popular legendary character and may seem a little fantastic even within these limits. For the Early Church and the writers thereto belonging, in places remote from the centre, the world of Christian Doctrine was a world not realised ; and Rome might well have been astonished at certain things which were said and sometimes taught with all innocence of intention on the verges of the horizon Westward. It would be easy to furnish examples

¹ A lacuna follows at this point in the only extant manuscript, but the missing episodes are supplied by the Prose Version.

² It was held, as explained already, at the hour of Tierce and was called the Grace of the Grail. We may remember that this was the canonical hour for the Mass-in-Chief of the day.

³ It is said that the communication licensed Petrus to proceed wheresoever he pleased, but afterwards that it was to remain unread till the coming of a Son who would be born to the supposed celibate Alain, which Son would apparently break the seals and divulge the content.

⁴ According to a later statement, Joseph "remained in the land where he was born"—which, however, he and his Company had left long since and gone Westward. Obviously, the later statement is also a late addition.

of elements in Borron which are not less than heretical from the doctrinal standpoint ; but there are indications also of curious learning and traces of strange sympathies. Among the latter may be mentioned a certain tenderness towards Pontius Pilate, the difficulty of whose position as the Procurator of Judæa, when acting almost under the compulsion of a Jewish faction, was from any point of view undeniable. The important point, however, is that the sympathy reflects at a far distance the Apocryphal Legends¹ which represent Pilate as one who was converted ultimately, who became a Bishop of the Church and sealed his testimony with martyrdom. More noticeable than this, perhaps, for the ordinary reader is the writer's seeming ignorance concerning the Jewish Doctrine of rest in the bosom of Abraham for those at least of the faithful departed who died in the peace of Israel.

In the kind of research with which we are concerned here, we must be careful not to mistake the unintended blunder for an express doctrinal view. As a rule, it is easy to distinguish simple errors, but occasionally a specific point may puzzle the most careful reader. While Borron seems wholly unconscious of opposition to the claims of Rome, there is, of course, very full indication of a Secret which inheres in the Grail and some ground for thinking that the rumour of this Secret had gone forth abroad in the world prior to his poem. It is, however, a verbal formula, not apparently a doctrine. "Those who can learn and retain these words," says Christ to Joseph, "shall be virtuous among people and pleasant unto God ; they shall not be forejudged in court, nor conquered in battle, so only that their cause is just."² Speaking also of the common hell into which all souls went prior to the coming of Christ, Robert de Borron says : "It was necessary that the ransom of our first fathers should be provided by the Three Divine Persons Who are one only and the same substance". Now, the identity of the Three Persons in Christ is unquestionably a heresy ; but, as it happens, this is a recurring Doctrine of Swedenborg, for whom Christ was the manifested Trinity. It is curious to recall the analogy, though the notion could at no time have formed part of any Secret Teaching, supposing that this were otherwise to be found or expected in Borron. So also we must not interpret as a trace of any Secret Doctrine the implicit of his comparison between the conceptions of Eve and the Most Holy Virgin. He says in effect that Eve conceived in suffering ; that the posterity of our first parents were, like them, doomed to die ; and that the possession of their souls was claimed by the demon as his right. To purchase them from hell our Saviour was conceived in the womb of the Virgin Mary, and in this manner the sin of generation according to the common course of Nature was annulled by a virginal conception. But in the analogy there is no ulterior motive, no *arrière pensée*.

The apostolic priority of Rome has been held to underlie the following

¹ See Book IX, § 2.

² LE ROMAN DU SAINT GRAAL, ed. by F. Michel, pp. 39, 40.

statement, which is put into the mouth of our Saviour: "I leave this example to Peter and to the Ministers of the Church." Comparatively early criticism looked upon it as equivalent to an acknowledgment of St. Peter as the Official Chief of the Catholic Holy Assembly, and it was remarked that no such admission is found in the GRAND SAINT GRAAL, which, it should be said, is however untrue. If we pass now to the consideration of the Sacred Vessel and to the question what Borron designed to signify thereby, we may note in the first place that, by the hypothesis of the poem, it is not visible to evil-livers, though it is evident that they encircled the table at which they could not sit on the occasion when it was first manifested to the elect. The correspondence of this will be found much later on in the PARZIVAL of Wolfram, wherein the Talisman which answers to the Grail was invisible to a pagan, though he was a man of noble life and a kinsman of the Secret House. Borron speaks by implication (1) of a Vessel,¹ not otherwise named, in which Jesus washed the feet of His disciples; (2) of that passing fair Vessel, already described, in which Christ made His Sacrament, though the Ritual Institution of the Eucharist is not mentioned more specifically; (3) of yet another Vessel in which Pilate washed his hands to signify that he was not responsible for the judgment which he had pronounced unwillingly. As regards the second, I have explained in the summary that a Jew carried it from the house of Simon, when Jesus had been led forth therefrom, and brought it to Pilate. At a later stage Pilate took the Vessel, and remembering thereof that it was beautiful, he gave it to Joseph, saying: "Much hast thou loved this man." Joseph answered: "Thou hast said truly." But the gift was less an instance of generosity than of the procurator's desire to retain nothing which had belonged to Jesus, whereby it was possible that he might be accused. Either the present state of the text or the poet's method of expression leaves things so much in confusion that a further question has arisen whether the *piscina* used for the washing of the feet was identical with that Vessel which became ultimately the Grail. It has been suggested, and we have seen already, that for the last word in the line

" Ou Criz feisoit son sacrement,"

what was written and intended originally was the word *lavement*;² but this is extremely unlikely in view of the general content and is certainly not countenanced by the LESSER HOLY GRAIL. It has been suggested further (1) that St. John does not mention the Institution of the Eucharist³ and is the only Evangelist who does describe the washing of the Apostles' feet; (2) that Robert de Borron knew only the

¹ It is *une grande piscine* according to the prose version of his poem, while the latter mentions the water used for the purpose but says nothing of its container.

² It is made by Paulin Paris in his very inaccurate version of the Metrical Romance. See LES ROMANS DE LA TABLE RONDE, Vol. I, p. 127.

³ It is mentioned, however, in the poem, whence it follows that Borron was acquainted with at least one other Gospel than that of St. John.

Fourth Gospel, possibly through that of Nicodemus in the Christian Apocrypha. But these questions are settled by the text itself in the discourse of Christ to Joseph at the beginning of his imprisonment in the Tower. It is there said (1) that at the Last Supper on the Thursday Christ blessed the Bread and the Wine, and told His disciples that they partook in those Elements of His Flesh and Blood;¹ (2) that the Table of that Supper should be represented in many countries; (3) that the Sacrament should never be Consecrated without commemoration of Joseph, who had taken down the Divine Body from the Cross and laid it in the Sepulchre; (4) that this tomb should be signified by the Altar; (5) that the winding-sheet in which the Body was wrapped should be called the Corporal; (6) that the Holy Vessel in which Joseph received the Blood should be called the Chalice; (7) that the stone with which the Sepulchre was sealed should be signified by the Paten. Nothing can be more express, both as to the Mass and the Eucharist. Unfortunately, nothing can be clearer also in the mind of the poet than the content of the Palladium of his Legend—being the blood of Three Persons in one God. And this, I think, is all that need be said in this place concerning the Cup of the Holy Grail according to Robert de Borron.

That Christ had in nowise forgotten one who had at need befriended Him was shewn by Him bringing it into the prison, holding it in His own hands, while the tower was illuminated by its great light; for it was full of the Holy Spirit.

The Divine Discourse which occurs in this tower between the visionary Christ and Joseph is remarkable from several points of view, and especially by the categorical assurance that the Risen Saviour brought none of His disciples to the conference, because none was acquainted with the great love which subsisted between Himself and His auditor. It seems, however, to have been a prototype of that love which is the immanence of Christ in the believing soul, and the Palladium in Joseph's care was the symbol of the Redeemer's death, as it is the Eucharist in the external Church. The specific and material explanation is that Joseph took down the body of Jesus from the Cross, and for this reason he was to be a partaker in all glory. Of the colloquy there were, in any case, no witnesses, and the Gospel narratives could offer no contradiction. I suppose that I should add an implicit which seems almost evidently to have been in the poet's mind—that Joseph had made the Resurrection more, humanly speaking, possible by preserving the body as nearly intact as the circumstances of the Crucifixion would permit. The difficulty which seems to have been present to the sub-surface mind of Borron was perhaps not unrealised by one Gospel narrative which is careful to indicate that the bones of Christ were not broken on the Cross.²

The especial direction to Joseph was that he should guard well the Sacred Vessel, committing it only to those persons who were designed

¹ Michel, *Op. cit.*, pp. 38, 39.

² St. John: XIX, 31-33, 36.

thereto, and by these it should be taken as given in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. The possessors were to be three and no more, because of the Trinity; they were: (1) Joseph; (2) Brons; and (3) the grandson of Brons, who was to be born in the fullness of time. It must be said that this enumeration appears to omit one person who, according to the text itself, was intended for some High Office. When Joseph prayed before the Cup for guidance over the future of his Company—recalling an ordinance which had told him that at what time soever he desired Secret Knowledge, he should come into the presence of the Reliquary wherein was the Glorious Blood—he was answered by the Voice of the Grail that the celibate son of Brons was to be shewn the Sacred Vessel, so that he could see the content thereof. Now this son was Alain, and it might be supposed that the venerable charge would pass to him from his father, more especially as, in spite of his choice, he was to beget the Keeper in fine, and was not dedicated therefore to permanent celibacy, but held rather in Maidenhood for a Marriage which was predestined already. The instruction to Petrus announced that he was to await the arrival of Alain's Son, who would reveal to him the virtues of the Holy Vessel—being something omitted in his undeclared Brief or Charter, or something hidden therein till the last Legate of the Mystery arrived in Arthurian days—and would make known to him what had become of Moses.

As to this ill-starred personage, who had suffered so strangely for parading a spurious election, with intent to deceive those who were chosen in truth and faith, it is decreed that he shall be heard of no more in song or story till the Knight comes who will fill the Void Seat. In this dubious manner it seems to be indicated that the wrath of the Grail would not be visited to everlasting.

After the departure of the several bands of pilgrims, the poem comes to its conclusion for want of written materials. The author had carried it so far on the evidence of the Sacred Book to which I have cited already the chief reference. He leaves it in the expectation that he will recount later on as follows:—¹

- (1) What became of Alain, whither he went, whom he married, and what heir was born to him.
- (2) Whither Petrus proceeded.
- (3) The fate of Moses, so long lost.
- (4) The destination of Brons, who, outside all inferences of the logical understanding, had received the title of the Rich Fisher, on account of that single occasion when he angled in a certain water and caught one fish.

¹ Criticism supposes that these propositions form part of an Epilogue which begins at or near line 3461 and was composed later. It is allowed, however, to be of the same authorship. The contradiction mentioned in a previous note bears other testimony on one point of the Epilogue.

Meanwhile, Robert de Borron had apparently the records of the Fifth Branch, and to that he passed on, so producing a Metrical Romance concerning the Prophet Merlin. Let us therefore on our part conclude also as follows: (1) the formulary which incorporated the Great Secret of the Grail was, without evasion apparently, recorded in the prototypical chronicle by which the poet was guided. (2) The Secret was itself denominated the Grail, as if by a general title, the name not being applied exclusively to the Sacred Vessel.¹ (3) The last directions to Joseph regarding Brons, the Second Keeper, are these: "Tell him how God did communicate unto thee the Holy Words, which are sweet and precious and gracious and piteous, which are properly called and named the Secret of the Grail."² (4) There is no real evidence in the poem that they belonged to the Eucharist and were those of Eucharistic Consecration in any form whatever.

The METRICAL ROMANCE OF JOSEPH is the nearest and earliest reflection of all that which could have been imputed as historical in any lost book. It is unalloyed by folk-lore admixtures, for no two things can be less alike than any pre-Grail Feeding-Dish and the Hallow of Robert de Borron's Christian Legend. The distance between the old Myths and this devotional poem is too great for us to say that the latter is the archetypal state of the former after its assumption by Christianity: there is in truth no kinship. It is that from which the Lesser Chronicles and the Vulgate Cycle draw at their respective distances, though they gathered certain elements from elsewhere. Here at least there are no adventitious Hallows: it is the Grail as the one thing only. And the Holy Grail is a symbol of the Angel of Great Counsel made visible.

¹ Michel, *Op. cit.*, p. 40, ll. 935, 936.

² *Op. cit.*, p. 140, ll. 332-336:

" Les seintes paroles dist t'a,
Ki sunt douces et precieuses
Et gracieuses et piteuses,
Ki sunt proprement apelées
Secrez dou Graal et nummés."

Nutt and others have suggested that the Secret Words are or may be Christ's explanation to Joseph of "the Mysteries of the Grail in its relation to the Sacrament" (STUDIES p. 73), meaning the artificial and not too consistent analogies instituted between Altar and Sepulchre, Winding-Sheet and Corporal, Chalice and Joseph's Reliquary of the Precious Blood, Stone before the Tomb and Paten. Michel: ROMAN DU SAINT-GRAAL, *Op. cit.*, pp. 38, 39. That they are obviously not the poem shews clearly, giving the place of record as a certain Great Book, which Borron had seen with his own eyes. The prose version is still more express, as will be seen in the next section: the Secret Words are uttered at the Great Sacrament performed over the Grail. Obviously therefore they are not an unprofitable description of figurative analogies.

II

THE LESSER HOLY GRAIL

THE first and only editor of this text¹ put it forward as the original Prose Romance from which the poem was produced subsequently by some unknown hand, not so much writing ostensibly under the name of Robert de Borron as reflecting in rhymes and measures the actual words of the original.² This view did not obtain at its period any special acceptance and has been long abandoned. The codex as it stands is an accurate rendering of the poem, *plus* certain variations and expansions, of which some are important to our purpose and must be recited briefly. But any literary or other distinction between the metrical story and its disposition in a prose vesture leaves the narrative untouched, both versions working from the same beginning to the same term, so that any general description of LE PETIT SAINT GRAAL would be superfluous in this place.

The circumstances under which certain Secret Words were communicated originally, their transit Westward and a scheme designed for their perpetuation constitute the Mystery-in-chief of the Metrical Romance, and we have reserved for later consideration the important question whether these Words were a formula of Eucharistic Consecration.³ It is to be observed that they were not used by Joseph when he had occasion to appeal for guidance to the Divine Voice which spoke from within or about the Sacred Vessel, or when he separated the grain from the tares in his band of pilgrims. But the artificial and unconvincing analogy which the text indicates between the Sacrament of the Altar and the Vessel, with its antecedents and environments, suggests that they may have belonged to a Mass; and it happens that their Eucharistic character is made much more explicit in the LESSER HOLY GRAIL, where it is said, speaking of the Discourse in the Tower: "Thereupon did Christ Jesus teach him those words which cannot be spoken or written, should any one wish to do so, except he have read the Great Book wherein they are recorded, and this is the Secret which is uttered at the Great Sacrament performed over the Grail, that is to say, over the Chalice; and I—Robert de Borron—do, for God's love, pray all those who shall hear this present book in the reading thereof that they ask no further herein concerning the said matter; for he who should try to say more might well lie concerning it, since more he could in nowise tell, and such falsehood would profit him nothing."⁴

¹ Eugène Hucher: LE SAINT-GRAAL, OU LE JOSEPH D'ARIMATHIE, 1875, Vol. I, p. 12 *et seq.*

² Hucher regards Borron as a pious Trouvère rather than an Adventurous Knight and as a friend of ascetics rather than a man of the world. *Ibid.*, I, p. 164.

³ Hucher speaks in his preface of *les secrètes paroles du Sacrement du Graal*. *Op. cit.*, I, 10. But this is the point at issue, and it can be determined only when the literature has been surveyed in full.

⁴ *Op. cit.*, I, pp. 175 and 227.

That the Secret Words were committed therefore to writing is witnessed by both versions, and seeing that these Words are found in neither, it follows that the "Great Book" of the prose version is not the record of Borron's Metrical Romance, though a late addendum to the latter suggests that he and no other was the first to write of the Grail.¹

The additional light which is gained concerning the Holy Vessel is (1) that it was the blessed and very object wherein Christ sacrificed² at the Last Supper; and this is more express than the words *feisoit son sacrement*, which I have quoted more than once from the poem; (2) on the other hand, the prose version makes it plainer than the poem that the Vessel brought by the Jew was given to Pilate after the death of Christ, or coincidently therewith, for which reason it could not have been used by the Procurator to wash his hands³ before he pronounced Sentence, as stated by Paulin Paris; (3) the Vessel is described by Christ as *la sénéfiance de ma mort*, which might apply to a Reliquary containing the Precious Blood, but more obviously to the Sacrifice of the Mass.

Among points left dubious in the poem we have seen that there is the question whether Joseph of Arimathæa remained where he was, not proceeding further Westward than the point of separation determined for the whole Company. Now that which is left doubtful in the poem is carried into triple confusion by the prose version. One of its codices—following the addendum to Borron's poem—says that Joseph went into that country wherein he was born; another says that he departed and came to his term in the land whither he was sent by Jesus Christ; yet it seems to follow from this second text that the whole Company was already in *la bloie Bretagne* and that Joseph had converted it newly to the belief in Jesus Christ.⁴

It will serve no purpose to enlarge upon minor debatable points which occur in the prose version, as, for example, on the doubt which it creates whether (1) the Third Keeper of the Grail will be the Son of Brons, by which we should understand Alain; (2) whether he shall be the Son of his Son, as in the Metrical Romance; and (3) whether the triple Guardianship, corresponding to the Holy Trinity, should be enumerated after Joseph has surrendered the symbol of his mission, which is the reading of one prose codex. It is sufficient to state in conclusion that as regards the Second Table, and the reason why it was established, the texts in verse and prose are both in agreement that whatever the needs of the Company there was (1) no miracle in the multiplication of food; (2) only a spiritual refection; (3) the Office of which was to fill the participants with Grace; (4) one proof being that the Fish of Brons becomes wholly symbolical and figures continually at the Service.

¹ Here is further, final and conclusive evidence that the so-called Epilogue is the work of one who blundered so seriously over his author's text that it might be questioned whether he had read it.

² Hucher, *Op. cit.*, I, p. 216.

³ *Op. cit.*, p. 128.

⁴ *Op. cit.*, I, 262.

III

THE EARLY HISTORY OF MERLIN¹

THE Mystery of the Holy Grail was a Mystery of Grace Abiding in a Hidden Sanctuary till the time came for it to be manifested at the period of the Quests; and among the texts in which it is exhibited, as if working from afar and vaguely, there is that which I have termed for convenience the EARLY HISTORY OF MERLIN, being the transcript in prose of another Metrical Romance by which Robert de Borron proceeded, for want of intermediate materials, from the History of Joseph to the period which just antedated the birth and life of King Arthur. The Tradition of the one Romance is brought over by the other, and as such it is at once extremely interesting and important for our purpose. With the story itself we are concerned only in the least possible degree. It narrates, in the first place, a conference of demons, summoned—immediately or soon after the Descent of Christ into Hell—to consider the best means of minimising the opportunity of human redemption which had been inaugurated by the sudden translation of all the just of old from the supposed power of Infernus into the joy of Paradise. The conclusion attained was that if only some emissary of theirs could be born on earth, having for his father one of the *vil personæ* and for his mother a woman in the flesh, they would recover some part at least of the patrimony which they claimed in souls. There was one in the council, belonging to that Averse Hierarchy which is termed the Powers of the Air, who had the gift under certain conditions to make earthly women conceive; and he went forth upon this mission. What he did, however, was to surprise a pure maiden, apart from all knowledge of hers, at an unwary moment. After this manner was Merlin born into the world, in the accomplishment of which plot we are translated, with no suggestion or manifest sense of the intervening centuries, from the days that followed the destruction of Jerusalem to the reign of Vortigern in Britain. The device of perdition went, as usual, astray, without let or hindrance; for the mother was saved spiritually by her innocence and, on the discovery of her predicament, by recourse immediately to the Offices of Holy Religion. She was accused indeed before the judges of the country; but the child himself saved her; for, being a babe, he yet spoke—now with the cunning which might be ascribed to his father in Sheol, and now with the subtlety and foresight which suggested the intervention of another and higher power, as if this had taken him for its own purpose into its safe custody.

Throughout the story Merlin, in virtue of his dual origin, is in part like true steel and in part as clay. Robert de Borron borrowed

¹ Appendix I, Note 10.