



Glastonbury and the Grail

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GLASTONBURY AND THE GRAIL.

(Folk-Lore, vol. xxxii. p. 131 *et seqq.*)

IN criticising my paper on *Glastonbury and the Grail* Miss Weston says: "It is worth noting that the only one of the romances that can be directly associated with Glastonbury, *i.e.* the *Perlesvaus*, appears to be interested in the Abbey as the burial place of Arthur and Guenevere, not as the home of the Grail. In fact, there is reason to believe that the romance was written with the direct intention of exploiting the supposed discovery of the tomb in 1191."

Glastonbury Abbey was *never* the "home of the Grail," which local tradition hides in Chalice Hill; and Glastonbury Abbey is not the spot indicated by *Perlesvaus* as Arthur's burial place, nor could any one knowing Glastonbury suppose so. *Perlesvaus* buries Arthur in Avalon, in a religious house; but this is not the Abbey, for the story shows Lancelot visiting Avalon, and finding on a hill-top a chapel, where Guenevere's body waits burial, and where Arthur will one day lie. The Abbey is in a valley; but in the Middle Ages there was a distinct monastery on the Tor, which our author plainly had in mind. We have no reason for disbelieving that he drew his data from a Glastonbury MS.; therefore, as he must have visited Glastonbury, he would have seen the "supposed discovery" near the Abbey Lady Chapel. Thus he puzzles us by exploiting the find in a place where he knew that it was not. At the best he is not much interested in it, only mentioning it twice, cursorily.

She then says: "It is by no means clear where the author located the Grail Castle; it is certainly not in Avalon, and the final home of the Grail is in a sea-girt island." Glastonbury was once sea-girt, though in mediaeval days it had long been dry land. The author describes a long-past condition. So far as I know, no romance locates the Grail Castle or calls it Avalon—the reason doubtless being that the rites were banned, as Miss Weston says. The belief that this place is Avalon, or Glastonbury, belongs to *unwritten tradition*; but mediaeval Glastonbury did not practise the rites, though Celtic Glastonbury probably did. The Grail Castle's physical descriptions all

apply to Glastonbury, both past and present—even *Perlesvaus*' "lesser castles" all agree here. Their names are significant. "Eden" suggests the apples of Avalon. "The Castle of Souls," so-called "because none ever passed away therein but his soul went straight to Paradise," parallels William of Malmesbury's indulgence to persons dying in Glastonbury.

On Arthur's grave a pyramid—an accepted Life Cults symbol—bore the names "Bregored" and "Logwor." Bregored, a form of Miss Weston's "Bledri," suggests an early member of a clan of hereditary "questers." He was the last Celtic abbot. Logwor was a Celtic chief who, before Saxon days, gave Glastonbury land at Montacute. Montacute is named from a "pointed hill" exactly parodying a small Glastonbury Tor, and claims to be the burial place of Joseph of Arimathea, the only possible patron for Christianized Life Cults—suggesting that Logwor, by his gift, meant to affiliate the smaller cults with the greater. I suspect the rites were banished from Glastonbury by King Ine, probably withdrawing to the district indicated by Miss Weston.

'*Mons Aculus*' supports Professor Rhys's definition of Corbenic; but may I suggest *Caer Vannawg* as mistaken for some Oriental word akin to that represented by "Corbenic," not *vice versa*? There were Phoenician influences near Glastonbury. Some years ago the British Museum pronounced as Phoenician a piece of blue porcelain found in the abbey below all the successive foundations.

Miss Weston challenges my conclusions as to "Bridge Perilous," as the combat would be a grave bar to initiation; but this legend, found in differing forms everywhere, preserves the primitive form of election to the kingship, and its connection with rain-making show the king as the agricultural-spirit's human avatar, i.e. the Grail King. I cannot see that it is a worse hindrance to initiation than to the kingship.

I am guiltless of confusing Other World associations and head-gods with the Grail. The parallel Egyptian cults had them, and there is the head in *Perceval*. Though this is a minority-form, the general kinship of Grail and Adonis rites shows that British head legends had such associations; and if they

were ever distinct the two lines of tradition coalesced before the mists of antiquity gathered.

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SNAKE STONES.

(*Folk-Lore*, vol. xxxii. p. 262 *et seqq.*)

To my friend and colleague Mr. J. Glyn Davies I owe the following references in correction of a blunder in my note upon "Snake Stones," *Folk-Lore*, xxxii., p. 267, where, trusting foolishly to a secondary authority, I perpetuated a misprint, of which my ignorance of Welsh prevented the detection. The correct name of the Welsh snake stone is not Maen Magi but Maen Magl, *i.e.* spotted stone. The word magl is of some interest because it is clearly a loan word from monastic Latin. In modern Welsh, as Mr. Glyn Davies tells me, it is the every-day term for "noose," but in the *Dictionary Britannico-Latinum* of John Davies (1632), besides the entries magl, *laqueus*, maglu *illaqueare*, we find magl *macula*, while in the Latin-Welsh section *macula* is rendered magl in the sense of spot, speckle or blemish. The Maen Magl is mentioned *s.v.* glain neidr in Pughe, *A Dictionary of the Welsh Language* (1830), ii. p. 65, and this author quotes the proverbial Welsh phrase, "what, are they blowing the gem?" applied to people laying their heads together in conversation, an allusion to the way in which such stones were thought to be manufactured by the snakes. Reference to the Maen Magal, Glein Neidr, and the Cornish Mel-pref or Mil-pref is made in a letter dated 1699 of Edward Lhwyd, the Keeper of the Ashmolean Museum, published in Rowlands, *Mona Antiqua Restaurata* (London, 1766), p. 318.

I may perhaps be allowed to take the opportunity of making the following addenda to my notes:

To note 4, p. 268. Hunt, *loc. cit.*, mentions a variant specimen of the Cornish stone which was "a beautiful ball of coralline lime-stone, the section of coral being thought to be entangled young snakes."

To note 4, p. 270. Aelian states that Aristotle and Nicander were his authorities. The passages referred to must be Aristotle,