



The Siege Perilous

General Synopsis

The story opens just before the death of Julian Pendragon, father of Arthur and his younger sister Anna. Anna is betrothed to Loth of Celidonia, leader of the Scoti. Arthur leaves for the north to meet Loth and escort him to Isca where it is intended the marriage should take place. Arthur's cousin Caius also accompanies him with a second force in case of any unexpected attack from Saxon invaders who are again encroaching on Britain's shores.

They arrive back in Isca to find Julian at death's door. Just before he dies, Julian asks Loth to watch over Britain until a successor to the title of dux is appointed. Being Julian's son did not give Arthur automatic right to the title, there are others to consider.

Accepting the task, Loth knows that it will not be easy. However, he does have Arthur's first cousin Merlin to advise him. As the son of Aurelianus, Merlin should really be the next dux but he prefers to remain as he is because of the 'sight'.

Loth and Anna are married but already the peace in Britain is broken. The Saxon chief Wulfstan and his sister Eadhild have landed and joined with Cerdic, another Saxon leader. The two forces now move inland towards their first quarry.

In the meantime, with his sister married and his favourite kinsman Verus away serving in Armorica, Arthur is in sombre mood. But his loneliness is soon cut short by a messenger bringing news of the Saxon invasion. Londinium and Ratae are under attack.

Sending a force to Londinium under the joint-command of Burrus and Agrippa, Arthur and Caius, with their own troops, set out for Ratae. During the battle Caius loses his sword and Arthur seeing his plight, kills Wulfstan and gives the Saxon's sword to his kinsman.

The Roman-British forces win the day and seeing Caius with Wulfstan's great jewelled sword, the troops hail him as dux. But Merlin who has seen all from a nearby hill, puts matters straight and Arthur is now hailed in his stead.

Still residing in Isca, Arthur is visited by Cador, Dux Cornwall. With him is his ward, Gwyneth. Overcome by her beauty, Arthur determines to marry her.

In the meantime the army of Britain is modified. This is made even more possible by the sudden arrival of Verus, back from Armorica with troops the like of which Arthur has never seen before in his life.

The following summer, Arthur sends Merlin to ask for the hand of Gwyneth. He leaves immediately for the land of Cornwall and Lyonesse.

Meanwhile, Cerdic is seething with anger at their latest defeat and Eadhild is breathing hatred and revenge for the death of her brother. They are therefore both heartened when they are suddenly joined by a large force of Angles under their king Athelstan. Now there would soon be a great battle and revenge would be theirs.

Merlin arrives in Cornwall and Cadoc is overjoyed at the proposal of marriage between his ward Gwyneth and Arthur. Soon Merlin and his charge are on their way to Isca.

Because of its position, Deva the 'City of the Legion', is now chosen by Arthur as the capital of Britain. Here he is to be married and here he will from now on direct all the affairs of the land. Gwyneth arrives safely under the protection of Merlin while guests from all over the Island begin to drift in. One of them, a powerful leader named Melwas, is suspiciously eyed by Verus.

The pair are married and during the banquet that follows, wedding gifts are presented including a mysterious scroll from Loth who says he was asked to keep it safe until Arthur's marriage and succession.

It looks a complicated document so Arthur hands it to Merlin who leaves so that he can study it more closely. A few days later he returns and explains its contents to Arthur. It seems it is the table-list of the Roman civil and military administration in Britain during the time of the Empire.

Arthur is delighted, this provides the foundation he needs to re-shape Britain. However, he queries after Merlin has been charged with filling the appointments on the list, why three positions still remain vacant. Merlin explains, clearing up the reason for two of them, but the third, the Siege Perilous, he vows to reveal only at the proper time.

Again war raises its ugly head and soon the new army of Britain finds itself locked again and again in mortal combat. Yet the skill and superiority of Arthur's new troops prevail.

During one of these battles Arthur's recently acquired jewelled sword is broken. Merlin suggests that a sword more fitting to his status must be found. So the two of them ride to Avalon where after crossing the lake by boat, Arthur receives this new special weapon from the hand of Sylvia the Lady of Avalon.

Winter brings all hostilities to a halt, but by the spring war is resumed. During the next few months, the ordnance factory at Corbius is destroyed and Deva sacked. In addition to this, Melwas showing his true colours has sided with the enemy and during the attack on Deva he abducts Gwyneth and takes her to his stronghold. Arthur, who is away fighting in the north, hearing of the treachery rushes south with all his forces including a new ally who has joined him called Macbeth.

Before he can rescue Gwyneth, Arthur must first free Britain from the present threat. So at Mount Badonicus where the Anglo-Saxons have gathered under their high-king Harol, Arthur and his combined troops deliver the final crushing blow to the enemy.

Arthur is hailed Caesar Augustus. This worries him, as he has always believed that the legions would one day return. But Merlin encourages him to accept the title.

Troops have also arrived from Cornwall with the news that Cadoc has married Olwen, a young woman of the same family as Gwyneth.

At the sound of his own wife's name, Arthur, with a select number of troops including the Cornish detachment, hastens to the Melwas stronghold. He is joined here by Lucullus of Armorica, a friend of Verus. Eventually Gwyneth is released, but not before evil has had a chance to do its work. She is given to the care of the Lady of Avalon.

Returning to Deva, Arthur gazes at the blackened ruins and resolves to build a new far grander city. This he does. Rising up out of the devastation, its marble and polished granite walls and building gleaming in the sunlight, the magnificence of the new city surpasses even that of Rome itself to become the Jewel of all Britain.

On its completion a name must be chosen. Deva is no longer suitable for such a grandeur sight. It is then decided that in keeping with the old Roman tradition, the name should bear some resemblance to its founders.

There are of course four such founders, Caius, Arthur, Merlin and Loth. Unfurling a banner, in large gold-edged crimson letters along with smaller silver ones to show the derivation of the name, they read: **C** aius **A** rthur **ME** rlin **LOT** h. "Camelot!"

Gwyneth returns from Avalon but although she seems restored to her normal self, the sparkle that once danced in her eyes is no longer there.

With no more threat from invasion, Britain settles down to a golden age of peace. Two sons are born to Loth and Anna, Galens and Mordred. Lucullus marries Elaine of Carbonecia and they are blessed with a son Gal Had, named after Lucullus' baptismal name, Galerius Hadrianus.

Merlin now explains to Arthur about the Siege Perilous. He admits it was not in the original document for Britain but in the list for Rome. It is of course the position of Emperor Designate.

Realising that the legions would never return, he placed it between the two consular appointments so that when the time was right and Arthur was elevated to Augustus, the Siege Perilous or status of Caesar, would ensure an immediate successor and so prevent civil war.

The golden years continue and a new generation grows up. Loth's eldest son is given one of the consular appointments while the younger, Mordred and favourite of Arthur, is never away from the court.

To Cador and Olwen a son is born whom they name Constantine. Meanwhile Merlin finds a pupil in the shape of the young and beautiful Vivien.

A stemmed cup of living crystal is brought to Arthur which Merlin identifies as the Sang Re'al and enlightens all as to its origin. It is placed in a special room with Clarentus the sword of state.

Later, Mordred kills Gal Had with Clarentus after he has conspired with Morganna, Melwas' sister, to get rid of Merlin by trapping him through Vivien.

With the Sang Re'al lost and Merlin gone, Arthur takes Vivien and his army with him to Armorica to help Lucullus repel invading forces.

Leaving Mordred, who can do no wrong in Arthur's eyes, in charge of Britain while he is away, the black-hearted prince, who has not been raised to the 'Siege Perilous' in place of Gal Had, seizes the realm for himself.

With the war in Armorica over, Arthur learns of his nephew's treachery and confers the rank of Caesar on Constantine. The Siege Perilous is again filled.

Once more Arthur and his army cross the narrow seas and fight their way onto British soil. Lucullus with his army lands further down the coast and marching inland, lays siege to the Melwas stronghold where Gwyneth is again a prisoner. Melwas is killed and his sister Morganna executed. The stronghold is this time razed to the ground. Gwyneth goes with them to Eburacum.

After two defeats, Mordred flees north to Camboglanna. The Anglo-Saxons who find great difficulty in the pronunciation of this name, call it Camlann.

Here on this spot, Mordred is killed and Arthur receives his death-blow. The once-valiant army of Britain is now a mere shadow of its former self. Yet even now, all is not lost. Arthur is taken to Avalon to die and the sword is returned to its keeper.

Constantine is raised to Augustus and a skilful young officer by the name of Aurelius Conanus is raised to the rank of Caesar, so filling the Siege Perilous.

Verus, no longer a young man now, retires to Eburacum. Gwyneth, in her grief, leaves for Avalon to end her days there. Quintus Veronius, who has been Arthur's Magister Equitum for some years, remains with Constantine who returns to Camelot with Aurelius Conanus.

Vivien goes too, retaining her status as advisor to the new Augustus. But things are not over yet. Mordred's two sons who fled the field at Camboglanna are already gathering a new army. Constantine declares that the vermin must be destroyed.

Constantine decides that as Augustus, a new regal status and title should go with the appointment to the holder of the Siege Perilous. He therefore declares that from now on, due to the unwavering loyalty of the Cymry under their leader Rhyderch, the ruler designate of Britain shall from now on hold the titles: Prince of Cymru, Dux Cornwall.

Mordred's two sons Clotan and Malgus, march south with their forces. Declaring that Clotan should be Augustus and Malgus Caesar, successor to the Siege Perilous. They split their forces, Clotan seizes Londinium while Malgus surrounds Verulanium.

With prince Macbeth as his ally, Constantine marches first to Verulanium where he defeats Malgus who dies violently at the altar by the hand of Constantine.

Conanus and Macbeth are concerned about the obsession Constantine seems to have developed in his desire to kill the sons of Mordred.

At Londinium Clotan suffers the same fate and in the same manner as his brother. Claudia, the daughter of the head official in the city kneels silently beside the dead body of her husband. Clotan, sure of his success, had married her on entering the city.

Conanus and Macbeth arrive on the scene. Conanus enters in time to hear Clotan's last words. Verus who has been allowed to accompany them, also enters and gazes down at the corpse. A strange feeling sweeps through his body as he suddenly realises how alike the features are to that of his late friend Arthur.

For years peace reigns once more in Britain. Verus passes away quietly in his sleep while Conanus and Claudia set up home in Isca. Later, Quintus is killed in a fall from his horse.

Constantine declares the Notitia Dignitatum void except for certain civil offices and Merlin's original safeguard, the Siege Perilous!

The banner of the golden dragon continues to fly over Camelot while a new banner incorporating the red dragon of Cymru and the peregrine falcon of the House of Conanus, flies over the city of Isca Dumnorium.

In the fourth year, Constantine is taken ill and dies. He is buried close to Stonehenge. Returning to Camelot, Conanus is Confirmed as Augustus while a brilliant young officer by the name of Flavius Vortiporius is confirmed Caesar, thus filling the Siege Perilous.

With the death of Constantine the House of Pendragon comes to an end. Preferring Isca to Camelot, Conanus reverts it back to its original name of Deva. He feels that the name of Arthur and Camelot should now forever live only in their hearts.

A year after his elevation to the grand title of Augustus, Conanus received a disturbing report from one Marcus Trevelyan, a commander of the fortress at Tintagel. He was returning from Lyonesse when reaching Belerium en-route for Penzantium, he suddenly felt the ground move beneath him. Glancing behind, he was just in time to see the land disappearing beneath the waves. Because of this, Conanus awards the House of Trevelyan its own coat of arms. A white horse rising from the sea, with the motto - 'Deo Volente'.

Musing over the whole affair, Conanus feels now that everything has come full-circle. The Royal House of Dumnonia survives while the family of the Pendragon exists now in name only.

Ambrosius saved the country from a fate worse than death and Arthur put his seal on it. Now the seal was broken and as if in acknowledgement of this, the sea too had claimed its share.

The sun dips low over the horizon casting a golden-red glow over the whole land, while the sea, picking up the reflection became transformed into a liquid mirror of rare orichalcum.

Now only time and unforeseen circumstance would rule as king, imposing in the face of all opposition, its own Siege Perilous!



Patricius Arthurus Britanniae Gallie Germanie Dacie Imperator

These titles of Arthur of Britain are found written in print on his seal in reed wax, closed in beryl and the seal itself rests in the Abbey at Westminster.

**Cross Reference
On
Mallory's
'Le Morte D'Arthur'**

<u>Siege Perilous</u>	<u>Le Morte D'Arthur</u>
Constantine III	.
Constans	.
Ambrosius Aurelianus	.
Julian Pendragon	Uther Pendragon
Merlin 'Emrys' Ambrosius	Merlin
Arthur Pendragon	Arthur
Lothus	Lot
Marcus	Mark
Cador	.
Caius	Kay
Verus	Bedivere
Valerius	Percivale
Galens	Gawain
Burrus	Badouin
Lucullus	Lancelot
Gal Had	Galahad
Agrippa	Agravain
Drustans	Tristram
Gwyneth	Gwynevere
Blaise	.
Sylvia	Lady of the Lake
Vivian	Nyeve

Identification of appointments
As per Merlin's
Revised
'Notitia Dignitatum'

Arthur Pendragon	Dux Britanniae - later – Avg
Lothus	Dux Lothian in Celidonia
Cador	Dux Cornwall & Lyonesse
Gal Had	Caesar Avg Designate
Valerius	Consul of Maxima Caesariensis
Galens	Consul of Valentia
Verus	Commander of Palatini Arthur's Personal guard as Avg
Burrus	Commander of Cohorts (Cataphracti)
Agrippa	Commander of Cohorts (Legionary - foot)
Drustans	Commander of Cornish Forces
Caius	Vicarius of Britanniae Commander of all Light Cavalry

Arthur Dux Britanniae

Vicarius, Count of the Saxon Shore and Duke of Britain	03
Under the Vicarius, the provincial governors	05
Under the Count of the Saxon Shore, the commanders of the forts	09
Under the Duke of Britain, the garrison commanders and commanders Of units (excluding those of the wall)	14
Total	31

Arthur's Table List Of Roman Civil and Military Administration 'Notitia Dignitatum'

Praefectvs Praetorio per Gallias

Vicarivs Britanniarvm				
Praeses Flav C	Praeses Brit II	Praeses Brit I	COS VAL	COS MAX C
I	I	I	II	II

Magister Peditvm		
Dux Britanniarvm	Comes Britanniae	Comes Lit. Sax.
V	V	V

This shows 31 appointments according to the Document. While holding title of Dux Britanniarvm Arthur was able to fill only 28.
Of the remaining three, two were of Consular Appointment, the remaining one being the 'Siege Perilous'.

Vacant Left	Siege Perilous	Vacant Right
COS VAL	?	COS MAX C
Galens	Gal Had	Valerius

When Arthur became Avg instead of Dvx he was able to fill these three vacant positions, which included the position of Caesar or Emperor Designate (Siege Perilous?)



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Many of the above manuscripts and documents are brought together in the book "An Arthurian Reader" by John Matthews (1988) published by The Aquarian Press.

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