

Sleeping Hero Legends

folktales of type 766 and migratory legends
about heroes who, instead of dying, lie asleep
awaiting a time of special need when they will rise up
and defeat their nations' enemies,
translated and/or edited by



[D. L. Ashliman](#)

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Geroldseck

Germany

Years ago many stories were told about Geroldseck, an old castle in Wasgau. The ancient German heroes -- Kings Ariovist, Hermann, Wittekind, Siegfried with the horny skin, and many others -- were seen at this castle at a certain time of the year. When the Germans were in greatest distress and facing defeat they would appear with ancient German peoples and come to their aid.

- Source: Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, *Deutsche Sagen* (1816/1818), no. 21.
 - Link to the German text [Geroldseck](#).
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Frederick Barbarossa in Kyffhäuser Mountain

Germany

Many legends are in circulation dealing with this emperor. They say that he is not dead, but that he shall live until the Day of Judgment, and also that no legitimate emperor shall rise up after him. Until that time he will remain hidden in Kyffhäuser Mountain. When he appears he will hang his shield on a dead tree, and leaves will sprout from the tree, and then better times will be at hand. From time to time he speaks to those who find their way into the mountain, and from time to time he makes appearances outside the mountain. Generally he just sits there on a bench at a round stone table, asleep with his head in his hands. He constantly nods his head and blinks his eyes. His beard has grown very long, according to some it has grown through the stone table, according to others it has grown around the table. They say that it must grow around the circumference three times before he awakens. At the present time it has grown around the table twice.

In the year 1669 a peasant from the village of Reblingen who was hauling grain to Nordhausen was taken into the mountain by a little dwarf. He was told to empty out his grain and allowed to fill his sacks with gold in its place. He saw the emperor sitting there entirely motionless.

In addition, a dwarf led a shepherd into the mountain who had once played a tune on his flute that had pleased the emperor. The emperor stood up and asked: "Are ravens still flying around the mountain?" When the shepherd answered "yes," the Kaiser responded: "Then I must sleep for another hundred years."

- Source: Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, *Deutsche Sagen* (1816/1818), no. 23.
 - Link to the German text [Friedrich Rotbart auf dem Kyffhäuser](#).
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Emperor Karl at Nürnberg

Germany

According to legend, Karl the Great (Charlemagne) condemned himself to remain in the deep well at the castle in Nürnberg. His beard has grown through the stone table at which he is seated.

- Source: Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, *Deutsche Sagen* (1816/1818), no. 22.
 - Link to the German text [Kaiser Karl zu Nürnberg](#).
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Emperor Karl in Untersberg Mountain

Germany/Austria

In this marvelous mountain sits Emperor Karl, a golden crown on his head, his scepter in his hand, and accompanied by other princely and noble lords. He went into a trance at Great Walserfeld, and has kept the same form that he had during his mortal life. His beard is grey and long, entirely covering his golden breastplate. On special occasions he divides his beard into two parts, half on his right side and half on his left, each tied with a precious pearl band. The emperor has a keen and profound look, and he is friendly and sociable toward all of his subjects who walk back and forth with him across a beautiful meadow. No one knows why he is there and what he intends to do. These remain mysteries of God.

Franz Sartori claims that it is Emperor Karl V., but others say that it is Frederick, who sits at a table around which his beard has grown more than two times. As soon as the the beard has reached the last corner of the table for the third time, the last days of the earth will have arrived. The Antichrist will appear; a battle will be fought on the fields at Wals; angels will sound their trumpets; and Judgment Day will have begun.

- Source: Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, *Deutsche Sagen* (1816/1818), no. 28.
 - Link to the German text [Kaiser Karl im Untersberg](#).
 - Untersberg is a prominent mountain near Salzburg, Austria. It straddles the border between Germany and Austria.
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King Karl and His Army in Odin's Mountain

Germany

King Karl fought a great battle at the foot of Odin's Mountain. So much blood was shed that it eroded deep furrows into the ground. These often have been dammed up, but the rain always washes them open again. The floods of blood streamed together and finally poured into the River Besse. Karl fought and prevailed. In the evening the mountain opened up, received him and his exhausted warriors, and then closed its walls.

However, the stories about these events contradict one another. According to some, Karl, pursued by the enemy, fled to Odin's Mountain where he beseeched the Godhead to take him and all of his people into the mountain. The mountain opened up, and Karl went inside with his entire army, whereupon the crevice closed behind them.

The king rests from all his heroic deeds in this mountain. He has promised to come out every seven or every hundred years. When the time comes, one can hear weapons rattling in the air, the neighing and hoof beats of horses, and the sounds of drums and bugles. Karl the Fifth and his warriors are leaving their underground home. The procession goes to Glis Spring, where the horses drink, and then continues its round and finally returns to the mountain.

Sunday's children who were born between two churches have often seen the procession. Most of the soldiers are maimed; the one has lost an arm, another a leg or an ear. Many have gaping wounds.

One time some people went to Odin's Mountain and heard the sound of drums but did not see anything. Then a wise man asked them, one after the other, to look through the circle he had made by bending his arm against his body. They did this and saw a band of soldiers drilling with their weapons, coming and going from Odin's Mountain.

Inside the mountain they grow oats for their horses. "The Quint" throws out all the oats that he does not need for his horses. Every day the warriors clean and thresh oats and pile up large stores in their chambers. Once a swineherd noticed that one of his sows always ran away from the herd when he brought them to Odin's Mountain, and she always returned fat and full. One day he followed her. She ran through a hole into the mountain where there was a great store of oats.

Every seven years the mountain opens up, and anyone who happens to find the opening that leads inside is very fortunate, because great treasures lie within the mountain. But the passageway is only open for a fourth of an hour, and anyone who does not return to the outside before this time is up will have to remain there until the next seven years have passed. However, those whose fate it is to stay there do not grow any older while they are inside the mountain. They remain just as they were at the moment that the mountain closed.

Until just a few years ago no one would approach the mountain without shuddering for fear of Karl the Fifth. Children who collected nuts and strawberries there were warned by their parents, "Be careful that the Quint doesn't get you!" Further, mothers disciplined their children with the threat, "The Quint is coming!"

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- Source: Karl Lyncker, *Deutsche Sagen und Sitten in hessischen Gauen* (Kassel: Verlag von Oswald Bertram, 1854), [no. 6, pp. 5-7](#).

- Charlemagne, known in German as Karl the Great, born about 742, died 814, was crowned "Emperor of the West" in 800 by Pope Leo III. German Catholics often called him Karl the Fifth, or simply "the Quint."
 - Odin's Mountain (Odenberg) lies near the town of Gudensberg, south of Kassel in central Germany. This is but a short distance from Geismar, the place where Boniface is said to have felled Thor's Oak in the year 723. For more place names related to Odin in this vicinity see "Wuodensberg und Odenberg" in Karl Lyncker, *Deutsche Sagen und Sitten in hessischen Gauen* (Kassel: Verlag von Oswald Bertram, 1854), [no. 4, pp. 3-4](#).
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Emperor Heinrich in Sudemer Mountain

Germany

Emperor Heinrich the Fowler liked to stay at Goslar, which he often did, and many stories are told about him there. Above all they tell about how marvelously beautiful his wife was, and how he could not be consoled when she died.

After his grief had subsided somewhat, he revealed to his own daughter, who was almost more beautiful than her mother, his sinful desire to marry her. She appropriately resisted him, finally convincing him to first to travel to the courts of all the kings and counts in Europe in search of a spouse more beautiful than she. He traveled far and wide, but finally returned with the news that a more beautiful woman could not be found anywhere. But still she resisted his pleas and his advances.

Finally he set the condition that he would desist from his demands if she could create a blanket upon which all of the earth's animals could be seen. She went into a small chapel in the upper city and fervently prayed to God, but she found no comfort in her prayers, so finally in despair she called upon the devil to come and help her. He appeared immediately, saying that he would bring the blanket to her, if she could remain awake in the chapel for three days and three nights.

She brought her little dog into the chapel with her and spent the time ceaselessly praying. However, during the third night, just as morning was breaking, sleep almost overcame her. At that moment the devil approached, and her little dog, seeing him, pulled at her skirt so vigorously that she jumped up.

The devil angrily dropped the blanket, furiously threw the little dog against church wall, and disappeared. She took the blanket to her father, who then was overcome by such powerful pain that he lost all will to live. He bewitched himself into the Sudemer Mountain near Goslar, whose watchtower is visible throughout the region. There he sits until the present day, and will return only when Goslar finds itself in great need, or when the Day of Judgment arrives.

Others say that the emperor is sitting in Rammel Mountain, and that before his death he had three stones mortared into the Goslar's city wall, saying that he would

return when these stones fall out. But no one knows which stones they are.

Notes:

- Source: A. Kuhn and W. Schwartz, "Kaiser Heinrich in Sudemerberg," [*Norddeutsche Sagen, Märchen und Gebräuche aus Meklenburg \[Mecklenburg\], Pommern, der Mark, Sachsen, Thüringen, Braunschweig, Hannover, Oldenburg und Westfalen: Aus dem Munde des Volkes gesammelt*](#) (Leipzig: F. A. Brockhaus, 1848), [pp. 184-85](#).
 - Heinrich (Henry) the Fowler was born about 876 and died in 936. His wife Matilda founded many monasteries and is a saint of the Roman Catholic Church.
 - Goslar in Lower Saxony is one of northern Germany's best preserved medieval cities.
 - The incest motif in this legend is reminiscent of the type 510B folktales told throughout Europe. Link to additional tales of this type: [The Father Who Wanted to Marry His Daughter](#).
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The Three Tells

Switzerland

According to the beliefs of the people and the shepherds who live in the wild mountainous region surrounding the Waldstätter Lake in Switzerland there is a cave in a cliff there where the three redeemers -- they are called the three Tells -- are sleeping. Dressed in ancient costume, they will arise, come forth, and rescue their fatherland when the need arises. Only the very lucky have succeeded in finding the entrance to the cave.

A shepherd boy told the following story to a traveler: His father, looking for a lost goat among the cliffs, came upon this cave and entered it. As soon as he recognized the three sleeping men as the three Tells, one of them rose up and asked: "What time is it on earth?" The frightened shepherd answered: "It is high noon." The man replied: "It is not yet time for us to come," and went back to sleep. The father returned with his companions to awaken the Tells for the good of the threatened fatherland, but although he looked repeatedly, he never again found the cave.

- Source: Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, *Deutsche Sagen* (1816/1818), no. 298.

- Link to the German text [Die drei Telle](#).
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Holger Danske

Denmark

In Denmark there is an ancient castle by the name of Kronborg. It stands very close to the Øresund, where hundreds of great ships pass every day, ships from England, from Russia, and from Prussia. They greet the ancient castle with canon salutes: "Boom!" And the castle salutes back with its canons: "Boom!" That is how canons say "Good day!" and "Thank you!"

The ships don't sail there during the winter, for then everything is frozen solid all the way to the Swedish coast, it is just like a country road. The Danish flag and the Swedish flag are waving there, and the Danes and the Swedes say "Good day!" and "Thank you!" to each other, but not with canons, but rather with a friendly handshake. They take wheat bread and pretzels home with them, because foreign food always tastes better. But the grandest thing to be seen there is the ancient Kronborg. And down deep inside, in a dark cellar where no one ever goes, sits Holger Danske. He is dressed in iron and steel, with his head resting on his strong arms. His long beard hangs over a marble table, into which it has grown. The knight sleeps and dreams, and in his dreams he sees everything that is happening above in Denmark.

Every Christmas Eve an Angel of God comes and assures him that what he has dreamed is true, and that he can safely go back to sleep, because Denmark is in no real danger. But if danger ever does come, then old Holger Danske will arise, breaking the table in pieces as he pulls out his beard! And then he will come forward and strike out and be heard in all the lands of the earth.

- Source: Abstracted from H. C. Andersen, *Nye Eventyr* (1845).
- Link to ["Holger Danske" på dansk](#), H. C. Andersen's text, in the original Danish.
- Kronborg Castle, located at Helsingør, is Hamlet's castle.
- Click here for a photograph of a [statue of Holger Danske](#).
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The Knights of Ållaberg

Sweden

One time a peasant, en route to Jönköping with a load of rye, came just at dusk to Ållaberg, where he discovered a grand mansion by the way.

"Maybe I can sell my rye here," thought he, "and so be spared the journey to Jönköping," and, approaching the door, he knocked for admittance.

The door was at once opened by some unseen power, and the peasant entered.

Upon entering, he found himself in a grand hall. In the middle of the floor stood a large table and upon the table lay twelve golden helmets, grand beyond the power of description, and scattered around the room, deep in slumber, were twelve knights in glittering armor.

The peasant contemplated his beautiful surroundings, but, concluding he could not sell his rye here, went on, coming finally to a large stable, where he found standing twelve most magnificent steeds, bedecked with golden trappings and silver shoes on their hoofs, stamping in their stalls.

Curiosity getting the better of him, he took hold of the bridle of one of the horses in order to learn by what art it was made. Hardly had he touched it when he heard a voice call out, "Is it time now?" and another answer, "No, not yet!"

The peasant had now seen and heard as much as he desired, and, thoroughly frightened, hastened away. When he came out he found that he had been into the mountain instead of into a mansion, and that he had seen the twelve knight who sleep there until the country shall be in some great danger, when they will awake and help Sweden to defend herself against her foreign enemies.

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- Source: Herman Hofberg, [Swedish Fairy Tales](#), translated by W. H. Myers (Chicago, Belford-Clarke Company, 1890), [pp. 109-10](#).
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The Sleeping Warriors

England/Wales

A Welshman walking over London Bridge, with a neat hazel staff in his hand, was accosted by an Englishman, who asked him whence he came.

"I am from my own country," answered the Welshman, in a churlish tone.

"Do not take it amiss, my friend," said the Englishman; "if you will only answer my questions, and take my advice, it will be of greater benefit to you than you imagine. That stick in your hand grew on a spot under which are hid vast treasures of gold and silver; and if you remember the place, and can conduct me to it, I will put you in possession of those treasures."

The Welshman soon understood that the stranger was what he called a cunning man, or conjurer, and for some time hesitated, not willing to go with him among devils, from whom this magician must have derived his knowledge; but he was at length persuaded to accompany him into Wales; and going to Craig-y-Dinas, the Welshman pointed out the spot whence he had cut the stick. It was from the stock or root of a large old hazel: this they dug up, and under it found a broad flat stone. This was found to close up the entrance into a very large cavern, down into which they both went. In the middle of the passage hung a bell, and the conjurer earnestly cautioned the Welshman not to touch it. They reached the lower part of the cave, which was very wide, and there saw many thousands of warriors lying down fast asleep in a large circle, their heads outwards, every one clad in bright armour, with their swords, shields, and other weapons lying by them, ready to be laid hold on in an instant, whenever the bell should ring and awake them. All the arms were so highly polished and bright, that they illumined the cavern, as with the light of ten thousand flames of fire. They saw amongst the warriors one greatly distinguished from the rest by his arms, shield, battle-axe, and a crown of gold set with the most precious stones, lying by his side.

In the midst of this circle of warriors they saw two very large heaps, one of gold, the other of silver. The magician told the Welshman that he might take as much as he could carry away of either the one or the other, but that he was not to take from both the heaps. The Welshman loaded himself with gold: the conjurer took none, saying that he did not want it, that gold was of no use but to those who wanted knowledge, and that his contempt of gold had enabled him to acquire that superior knowledge and wisdom which he possessed. In their way out he cautioned the Welshman again not to touch the bell, but if unfortunately he should do so, it might be of the most fatal consequence to him as one or more of the warriors would awake, lift up his head, and ask *if it was day*.

"Should this happen," said the cunning man, "you must, without hesitation, answer *No, sleep thou on*; on hearing which he will again lay down his head and sleep."

In their way up, however, the Welshman, overloaded with gold, was not able to pass the bell without touching it -- it rang -- one of the warriors raised up his head, and asked, "Is it day?"

"No," answered the Welshman promptly, "it is not, sleep thou on;" so they got out of the cave, laid down the stone over its entrance, and replaced the hazel tree.

The cunning man, before he parted from his companion, advised him to be economical in the use of his treasure; observing that he had, with prudence, enough for life: but that if by unforeseen accidents he should be again reduced to poverty, he might repair to the cave for more; repeating the caution, not to touch the bell if possible, but if he should, to give the proper answer, *that it was not day*, as promptly as possible. He also told him that the distinguished person they had seen

was Arthur, and the others his warriors; and they lay there asleep with their arms ready at hand for the dawn of that day when the *Black Eagle* and the *Golden Eagle* should go to war, the loud clamor of which would make the earth tremble so much, that the bell would ring loudly, and the warriors awake, take up their arms, and destroy all the enemies of the Cymry, who afterwards should repossess the Island of Britain, re-establish their own king and government at Caerlleon, and be governed with justice, and blessed with peace so long as the world endures.

The time came when the Welshman's treasure was all spent: he went to the cave, and as before over-loaded himself. In his way out he touched the bell -- it rang -- a warrior lifted up his head, asking *if it was day*, but the Welshman, who had covetously overloaded himself, being quite out of breath with labouring under his burden, and withal struck with terror, was not able to give the necessary answer; whereupon some of the warriors got up, took the gold away from him and beat him dreadfully. They afterwards threw him out, and drew the stone after them over the mouth of the cave.

The Welshman never recovered the effects of that beating, but remained almost a cripple as long as he lived, and very poor. He often returned with some of his friends to Craig-y-Dinas; but they could never afterwards find the spot, though they dug over, seemingly, every inch of the hill. He lived in this crippled and poor condition very long, a warning to all, of the evils which result from a want of knowledge and prudence, teaching not to be covetous, not to neglect good advice, and never to trust that they can, without danger, give way to their own wishes, except one: *the wish to be good*.

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- Source: Elijah Waring, ed. [Recollections and Anecdotes of Edward Williams](#) (London: Charles Gilpin, 1850), [pp. 95-98](#).
 - Waring titles this piece "A Popular Tale in Glamorgan, by Iolo Morganwg [Edward Williams, the Bard of Glamorgan]."
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The Cave of the Young Men of Snowdonia

Wales

Countless as were the warriors of Arthur in the cave of Craig y Dinas, there is yet another army of them sleeping in Snowdonia.

Their resting-place is in the steep cliff which is on the left-hand side near the top of Llyn Llydaw. This is how it was discovered.

A sheep fell down to a shelf in this precipice, and the Cwm Dyli shepherd, who was a famous climber, with infinite trouble made his way to the spot to rescue the animal. To his astonishment he found there an opening into the rock, only partially hidden by loose stones and turf. He cleared these away, and saw a vast cave stretching into the bowels of the mountain. There was a bright light within; he looked in and saw a host of warriors without number, all asleep, with white hazel

wands in their hands. He watched for a long time to see if they would show any signs of waking, but none stirred.

Seeing that they were so fast asleep, he felt a great desire to enter the cave and explore it. But as he was squeezing in he struck his head against a bell suspended just above the entrance inside. It rang so that every corner of the immense cavern rang again. All the warriors woke up, and, springing to their feet, gave forth a terrific shout. This so frightened the shepherd that he made off as quickly as he could, and nearly broke his neck on his way down the face of the precipice.

From that time he never enjoyed a day's health, and he died before his time. Nobody has since dared as much as to approach the mouth of the Cave of the Young Men of Snowdonia.

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- Source: W. Jenkyn Thomas, *The Welsh Fairy Book* (London: T. Risher Unwin, [1907], pp. 140-41.
 - Link to an electronic text provided by Sacred-Texts: W. Jenkyn Thomas, [The Welsh Fairy Book](#) (New York: F. A. Stokes, [1908]), [pp. 140-41](#).
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The Hunter and His Hounds

England

Under a grassy swell, which a stranger may know by its being surrounded with a wooden railing, on the outside of Brinkburn Priory, tradition affirms there is a subterraneous passage, of which the entrance remains as yet a secret, leading to an apartment to which access is in like manner denied; and as these visionary dwellings are invariably provided with occupants, it is asserted that a hunter who had in some way offended one of the priors was along with his hounds, by the aid of enchantment, condemned to perpetual slumber in that mysterious abode.

Only once was an unenthralled mortal favored with a sight of the place and of those who are there entombed alive. A shepherd, with his dog attending him, was one day listlessly sauntering on this verdant mound, when he felt the ground stirring beneath him, and springing aside he discovered a flat door, where door had never before been seen by man -- yea, that door opening upwards of its own accord on the very spot where he had been standing.

Actuated by curiosity he descended a number of steps which appeared beneath him, and on reaching the bottom found himself in a gloomy passage of great extent. Groping along this warily, he at last encountered a door, which opening readily, he along with the dog was suddenly admitted into an apartment illumined so brilliantly that the full light of day seemed to shine there.

This abrupt transition from darkness to light for some minutes deprived him of the power of observing objects correctly, but gradually recovering he beheld enough to strike him with astonishment, for on one side at a table, with his head resting on his hand, slept one in the garb of a hunter, while at some distance another figure reclined on the floor with his head lying back, and around him lay many a noble hound, ready as ever to all appearance to renew that fatal chase which consigned them all to the chamber of enchantment.

On the table lay a horn and a sword, which, seeing all was quiet, the shepherd stepped forward to examine, and taking up the horn first applied it to his lips to sound it; but the hunter, on whom he kept a watch, showed symptoms of awaking whenever he made the attempt, which alarming him he replaced it, and the figure started no longer. Reassured, he lifts the sword, half draws it, and now both men became restless and made some angry movements, and the hounds began to hustle about, while his own dog, as if agitated by the same uneasiness, slunk towards the door.

Alive to the increased commotion and hearing a noise behind him very like the creaking of hinges, he suddenly turned round and found to his dismay that the door was moving to. Without waiting a moment he rushed through the half-closed entrance followed by his dog. He had not fled ten paces when, shaking the vault with the crash, the door shut behind him, and a terrible voice assailed his ears pouring maledictions on him for his temerity.

The fugitives traversed the passage at full speed, and gladly hailed the light streaming in at the aperture above. The shepherd quickly ascended the steps, but before he got out the cover had nearly closed. He succeeded, and that was all, in escaping perhaps a worse fate than those victims of monkish thraldom which he had just left; but his poor dog was not so fortunate, for it had just raised its foreparts to come up when the door fastened on it and nipped it through!

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- Source: [The Denham Tracts](#). A collection of folklore by Michael Aislabie Denham and reprinted from the original tracts and pamphlets printed by Mr. Denham between 1846 and 1859, edited by Dr. James Hardy. Vol. 2 (London: The Folklore Society, London, 1895), [pp. 125-27](#).
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King Arthur at Sewingshields

England

Sewingshields lies between the Roman Wall and the military road, near the twenty-eighth milestone from Newcastle, and at the western extremity of Warden Parish. Of Sewingshields Castle, Mr. Hodgson informs us that in his time a square, low, lumpy mass of ruins, overgrown with nettles, still remained. "Its site is on the end of a dry ridge and overlooked from the south by the basaltic cliffs, along the brow of which the Roman Wall was built. There are also some traces of trenches near it." [Hodgson's *History of Northumberland*, part ii, vol. iii. (Note in original)] This is the castle referred to by Sir Walter Scott in the sixth canto of *Harold the Dauntless* as the "castle of the seven shields." In reference to its present condition Dr. Bruce remarks:

... No towers are seen

On the wild heath, but those that Fancy builds.

And save a fosse that tracks the moor with green,

Is nought remains to tell of what may there have been.

[*Wallet-Book of the Roman Wall*, p. 109. (Note in original. This book is Denham's source of the legend that follows.)]

It stood in the center of the only patch of ground in "the moss," which is now subjected to the plow. The walls have been uprooted and the vaults removed, but the following tradition relating to it will not readily perish:

Immemorial tradition has asserted that King Arthur, his queen Guinevere, his court of lords and ladies, and his hounds, were enchanted in some cave of the crags, or in a hall below the Castle of Sewingshields, and would continue entranced there till someone should first blow a bugle-horn that lay on a table near the entrance of the hall, and then, with "the sword of the stone," cut a garter also placed there beside it. But none had ever heard where the entrance to this enchanted hall was till the farmer at Sewingshields, about fifty years since, was sitting knitting on the ruins of the castle and his clew fell and ran downwards through a rush of briars and nettles, as he supposed, into a deep subterranean passage.

Full in the faith that the entrance into King Arthur's hall was now discovered, he cleared the briary portal of its weeds and rubbish, and, entering a vaulted passage, followed, in his darkling way, the thread of his clew. The floor was infested with toads and lizards; and the dark wings of bats, disturbed by his unhallowed intrusion, flitted fearfully around him. At length his sinking courage was strengthened by a dim, distant light, which as he advanced grew gradually brighter, till at once he entered a vast and vaulted hall, in the center of which a fire without fuel, from a broad crevice in the floor, blazed with a high and lambent flame that showed all the carved walls and fretted roof, and the monarch and his queen and court reposing around in a theater of thrones and costly couches.

On the floor, beyond the fire, lay the faithful and deep-toned pack of thirty couple of hounds; and on a table before it the spell-dispelling horn, sword and garter. The shepherd reverently but firmly grasped the sword, and as he drew it leisurely from its rusty scabbard the eyes of the monarch, and his courtiers began to open, and they rose till they sat upright. He cut the garter; and as the sword was being slowly sheathed the spell assumed its ancient power, and they all gradually sank to rest; but not before the monarch had lifted up his eyes and hands and exclaimed:

O woe betide that evil day

On which the witless wight was born,

Who drew the sword -- the garter cut,

But never blew the bugle-horn.

Of this favorite tradition the most remarkable variation is respecting the place where the farmer descended. Some say that after the king's denunciation, terror brought on a loss of memory, and he was unable to give any correct account of his adventure or the place where it occurred. But all agree that Mrs. Spearman, the wife of another and more recent occupier of the estate, had a dream in which she saw a rich hoard of treasure among the ruins of the castle, and that for many

days together she stood over workmen employed in searching for it, but without success.

- Source: [The Denham Tracts](#). A collection of folklore by Michael Aislabie Denham and reprinted from the original tracts and pamphlets printed by Mr. Denham between 1846 and 1859, edited by Dr. James Hardy. Vol. 2 (London: The Folklore Society, London, 1895), [pp. 125-27](#).
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The Wizard of Alderley Edge

England

Connected with Alderley Edge there is a curious tradition which preserves a very ancient fragment of mythological belief, and is, therefore, worthy of notice.

The legend of the wizard of Alderley Edge first appeared in print in the *Manchester Mail* of 1805, by a correspondent who obtained it from the narration of a servant of the Stanleys, whose proper name was Thomas Broadhurst, but who was better known as "Old Daddy."

According to this veteran the tradition says that once upon a time a farmer from Mobberley, mounted on a milk-white horse, was crossing the Edge on his way to Macclesfield to sell the animal. He had reached a spot known as the Thieves' Hole, and, as he slowly rode along thinking of the profitable bargain which he hoped to make, was startled by the sudden appearance of an old man, tall and strangely clad in a deep flowing garment. The old man ordered him to stop, told him that he knew the errand upon which the rider was bent, and offered a sum of money for the horse. The farmer, however, refused the offer, not thinking it sufficient.

"Go, then, to Macclesfield," said the old man, "but mark my words, you will not sell the horse. Should you find my words come true, meet me this evening, and I will buy your horse."

The farmer laughed at such a prophecy, and went on his way. To his great surprise, and greater disappointment, nobody would buy, though all admired his beautiful horse. He was, therefore, compelled to return. On approaching the Edge he saw the old man again. Checking his horse's pace, he began to consider how far it might be prudent to deal with a perfect stranger in so lonely a place.

However, while he was considering what to do, the old man commanded him, "Follow me!"

Silently the old man led him by the Seven Firs, the Golden Stone, by Stormy Point, and Saddle Boll. Just as the farmer was beginning to think he had gone far

enough he fancied that he heard a horse neighing underground. Again he heard it. Stretching forth his arm the old man touched a rock with a wand, and immediately the farmer saw a ponderous pair of iron gates, which, with a sound like thunder, flew open. The horse reared bolt upright, and the terrified farmer fell on his knees praying that his life might be spared.

"Fear nothing," spoke the Wizard, "and behold a sight which no mortal eye has ever looked upon."

They went into the cave. In a long succession of caverns the farmer saw a countless number of men and horses, the latter milk-white, and all fast asleep. In the innermost cavern heaps of treasure were piled up on the ground. From these glittering heaps the old man bade the farmer take the price he desired for his horse, and thus addressed him, "You see these men and horses; the number was not complete. Your horse was wanted to make it complete. Remember my words, there will come a day when these men and these horses, awakening from their enchanted slumber, will descend into the plain, decide the fate of a great battle, and save their country. This shall be when George the son of George shall reign. Go home in safety. Leave your horse with me. No harm will befall you; but henceforward no mortal eye will ever look upon the iron gates. Begone!"

The farmer lost no time in obeying. He heard the iron gates close with the same fearful sounds with which they were opened, and made the best of his way to Mobberley.

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- Source: William E. A. Axon, [Cheshire Gleanings](#) (Manchester: Tubbs, Brook, and Chrystal, 1884), [pp. 56-58](#).
 - Axon continues this chapter ([pp. 58-68](#)) with a discussion of additional legends of this type.
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Then There Are Yet Men in the Isle of Man

Isle of Man

Castle Rushen has long been famous for its subterranean passages, and there are individuals amongst the islanders who still firmly believe that they lead to a beautiful country underground, inhabited by giants. Amongst the many tales they relate is one, that, several attempts being made to explore the passages, which in general proved unsuccessful, a number of daring fellows agreed to attempt the enterprise in company. Having armed themselves with staves, etc., etc., and procuring torches, they descended. After proceeding a little way, they found an old man, of great size, with a long beard, and blind, sitting on a rock as if fixed there. He, hearing them approach, enquired of them as to the state of the island, and at last asked one to put forth his hand, on which one of them gave him a plowshare which he had, when the old giant squeezed the iron together with the greatest ease, explaining at the same time: "Then there are yet men in the Isle of

Man."

- Source: James Hardy, ed., [*The Denham Tracts: A Collection of Folklore by Michael Aislabie Denham and Reprinted from the Original Tracts and Pamphlets Printed by Mr. Denham between 1846 and 1859*](#), vol. 1 (London: The Folklore Society, 1892), [pp. 197-98](#).
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The Enchantment of Gearoidh Iarla

Ireland

In old times in Ireland there was a great man of the Fitzgeralds. The name on him was Gerald, but the Irish, that always had a great liking for the family, called him Gearoidh Iarla (Earl Gerald).

He had a great castle or rath at Mullaghmast, and whenever the English government were striving to put some wrong on the country, he was always the man that stood up for it. Along with being a great leader in a fight, and very skilful at all weapons, he was deep in the black art, and could change himself into whatever shape he pleased. His lady knew that he had this power, and often asked him to let her into some of his secrets, but he never would gratify her.

She wanted particularly to see him in some strange shape, but he put her off and off on one pretence or other. But she wouldn't be a woman if she hadn't perseverance; and so at last he let her know that if she took the least fright while he'd be out of his natural form, he would never recover it till many generations of men would be under the mould.

Oh! she wouldn't be a fit wife for Gearoidh Iarla if she could be easily frightened. Let him but gratify her in this whim, and he'd see what a *hero* she was!

So one beautiful summer evening, as they were sitting in their grand drawing room, he turned his face away from her, and muttered some words, and while you'd wink he was clever and clean out of sight, and a lovely goldfinch was flying about the room.

The lady, as courageous as she thought herself, was a little startled, but she held her own pretty well, especially when he came and perched on her shoulder, and shook his wings, and put his little beak to her lips, and whistled the delightfulest tune you ever heard. Well, he flew in circles round the room, and played hide and go seek with his lady, and flew out into the garden, and flew back again, and lay down in her lap as if he was asleep, and jumped up again.

Well, when the thing had lasted long enough to satisfy both, he took one flight more into the open air; but by my work he was soon on his return. He flew right

into his lady's bosom, and the next moment a fierce hawk was after him. The wife gave one loud scream, though there was no need, for the wild bird came in like an arrow, and stuck against a table with such force that the life was dashed out of him. She turned her eyes from his quivering body to where she saw the goldfinch an instant before, but neither goldfinch nor Earl Garrett did she ever lay eyes on again.

Once every seven years the Earl rides round the Curragh of Kildare on a steed, whose silver shoes were half an inch thick the time he disappeared; and when these shoes are worn as thin as a cat's ear, he will be restored to the society of living men, fight a great battle with the English, and reign King of Ireland for two score years.

Himself and his warriors are now sleeping in a long cavern under the Rath of Mullaghmast. There is a table running along through the middle of the cave. The Earl is sitting at the head, and his troopers down along in complete armor both sides of the table, and their heads resting on it. Their horses, saddled and bridled, are standing behind their masters in their stalls at each side. And when the day comes, the miller's son that's to be born with six fingers on each hand will blow his trumpet, and the horses will stamp and whinny, and the knights awake and mount their steeds, and go forth to battle.

Some night that happens once in every seven years, while the Earl is riding round the Curragh, the entrance may be seen by anyone chancing to pass by. About a hundred years ago, a horse dealer that was late abroad and a little drunk, saw the lighted cavern, and went in. The lights, and the stillness, and the sight of the men in armor cowed him a good deal, and he became sober. His hands began to tremble, and he let fall a bridle on the pavement. The sound of the bit echoed through the long cave, and one of the warriors that was next him lifted his head a little, and said in a deep hoarse voice, "Is it time yet?"

He had the wit to say, "Not yet, but soon will," and the heavy helmet sunk down on the table. The horse dealer made the best of his way out, and I never heard of any other one getting the same opportunity.

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- Source: Patrick Kennedy, [*Legendary Fictions of the Irish Celts*](#) (London: Macmillan and Company, 1866), [pp. 172-74](#).
 - Kennedy's note concerning his source for this tale: What we heard from Mrs. K. in 1816, or thereabouts, is here given to the reader most conscientiously (p. 171).
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The Smith's Rock in the Isle of Skye

Scotland

There was a report that the Fians (Fingalians) were asleep in this rock, and that if anyone would enter it a blow the wooden crier (whistle), which lay beside Finn, three times, they would rise up alive and well as they formerly were.

A smith who lived in the island heard the report, and resolved that he would attempt to enter the rock. He reached the place where it was; and, having formed a good idea of the keyhole, he returned to the smithy, and made a key which fitted the hole. He then went back to the rock, and, as soon as he turned the key in the hole, the door opened, and he saw a very great and wide place before him, and exceedingly big men lying on the floor. One man, bigger than the rest, was lying in their midst, having a large hollow baton of wood lying beside him.

He thought that this was the wooden crier (whistle), but it was so large that he was afraid that he could not lift it, much less blow it. He stood for a time looking at it, but he at last said to himself that, as he came so far, he would try at any rate. He laid hold of the wooden crier, and with difficulty raised its end up to his mouth. He blew it with all his might, and so loud was the sound it produced that he thought the rock and all that was over it came down on the top of him.

The huge unwieldy men who lay on the floor shook from the tops of their heads to the soles of their feet. He gave another blast on the wooden crier, and with one spring they turned on their elbows. Their fingers were like the prongs of wooden grapes [large forks used in sea harvesting], and their arms like beams of bog oak. Their size and the terrible appearance they had put him in such fear that he threw the wooden crier from him, and sprang out.

They were then crying after him, "Worse have you left us than as you found us."

But he looked not behind him until he got outside and shut the door. He then drew the key out of the hole, and threw it out into the lake which is near the rock, and which is called to this day the Lake of the Smith's Rock.

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- Source: James MacDougall, [Folk and Hero Tales](#), Waifs and Strays of Celtic Tradition, Argyllshire Series, no. 3 (London: David Nutt, 1891), [no. 5, pp. 73-74](#). The same tale in Gaelic is printed on [pp. 74-75](#).
 - MacDougall's note on the source of the tales in this book: The following tales were collected in the district of Duror between the summer of 1889 and the spring of 1890. They were obtained from Alexander Cameron, a native of Ardnamurchan, who was then roadman between Duror and Ballachulish. Cameron learned them from Donald McPhie and other old men whom he had known in his boyhood, but who died many years ago. (p. ix)
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Links to related sites

- [Kralj Matjaž](#). An article in *Wikipedia* about a legendary king from Slovenia.
 - [The Twelve Apostles](#). A legend by the Grimm brothers about the three-hundred-year magic sleep of twelve brothers who became the apostles of Jesus.
 - [Auf einer Burg](#), a poem, in the original German, by Joseph von Eichendorff.
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- Sleeping Heroes: [Table of Contents](#).
 - D. L. Ashliman's [folktexs](#), a library of folktales, folklore, fairy tales, and mythology.
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