Borrow George

# Wild Wales: The People, Language, & Scenery

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**Borrow G.**

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# Содержание

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## INTRODUCTION

### TALK ABOUT “WILD WALES”

### BY

### THEODORE WATTS-DUNTON

# I
# WHY "WILD WALES" IS A SIMPLE ITINERARY

I have been invited by the editor of this series to say a few words upon Borrow's "Wild Wales." The invitation has come to me, he says, partly because during the latter days of Borrow's life I had the privilege as a very young man of enjoying his friendship, and partly because in my story, "Aylwin," and in my poem, "The Coming of Love," I have shown myself to be a true lover of Wales – a true lover, indeed, of most things Cymric.

Let me begin by saying that although the book is an entirely worthy compeer of "Lavengro" and "The Romany Rye," and although like them it is written in the autobiographic form, it belongs, as I propose to show further on, to an entirely different form of narrative from those two famous books. And it differs in this respect even from "The Bible in Spain." Unlike that splendid book, it is just a simple, uncoloured record of a walking tour through the Principality. As in any other itinerary, events in "Wild Wales" are depicted as they actually occurred, enriched by none of that glamour in which Borrow loved to disport himself. I remember once asking him why in this book he wrote an autobiographic narrative so fundamentally different from "Lavengro" and "The Romany Rye" – why he had made in this book none of those excursions into the realms of fancy which form so charming a part of his famous quasi-autobiographic narratives. It was entirely characteristic of him that he remained silent as he walked rather sulkily by my side. To find an answer to the queries, however, is not very difficult. Making a tour as he did on this occasion in the company of eye-witnesses – eye-witnesses of an extremely different temper from his own, eye-witnesses, moreover, whom he specially wished to satisfy and please – his wife and stepdaughter – he found it impossible to indulge in his bohemian proclivities and equally impossible to give his readers any of those romantic coincidences, those quaint arrangements of incidents to illustrate theories of life, which illuminate his other works. The tour was made in the summer and autumn of 1854; during the two or three years following, he seems to have been working upon this record of it. The book was announced for publication in 1857, but it was not until 1862 that his publisher, who had been so greatly disappointed by the reception given to "Lavengro" and "The Romany Rye," took courage to offer it to the public.

# II
# BORROW'S EQUIPMENT FOR WRITING UPON THE WELSH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

In 1860 Borrow's interest in Wales and Welsh literature had specially been shown by the publication of his English version of "Gweledigaethau y Bardd Cwsg," a curious kind of allegory in the form of a vision, written in the early years of the eighteenth century by a Welsh clergyman named Ellis Wynne. The English reader of Borrow's works will remember the allusion made to this book. As might have been expected, Borrow's translation of this Welsh prose classic is not very trustworthy, and it has been superseded by the translation of Mr. R. Gwyneddon Davies, published in 1897. A characteristic matter connected with Borrow's translation is that in the *Quarterly Review* for January 1861 he himself reviewed it anonymously, and not without appreciation of its merits – a method which may be recommended to those authors who are not in sympathy with their reviewers. The article showed a great deal of what may be called Borrovian knowledge of the Welsh language and Welsh literature, and perhaps it is not ungenerous to say a good deal of Borrovian ignorance too. For never was Nature's love of whim in the fashioning of individuals more delightfully exemplified than in the case of Borrow's irresistible desire for scholarship. Nothing whatever had he of the temperament of the true scholar – nothing whatever of the philologist's endowment, and yet to be recognized as a scholar was the great ambitious dream of his life. I wish I had time to compare his disquisitions upon the Welsh language and literature in this article with a very rare little book on the same subject, the "Sketch of the History of the Welsh Language and Literature," by a remarkable man as entirely forgotten now as Borrow is well remembered – Thomas Watts of the British Museum. In the one case we get nebulous speculation and fanciful induction based upon Borrovian knowledge; in the other, a solid mass of real learning accompanied by the smallest possible amount of speculation or fanciful induction.

Borrow had a certain something of Mezzofanti's prodigious memory for words, accompanied by the great Italian's lack of philological science. It may be remembered in this connection that Mr. Thomas St. E. Hake in his reminiscences in *Notes and Queries* of a relation of mine, the late Mr. James Orlando Watts, says that the learned recluse used to express a good deal of humorous contempt of Borrow's "method of learning languages from dictionaries only," without any grammatical knowledge. And these strictures, if we consider them, will explain much in regard to the philological disquisitions in "Lavengro," "The Romany Rye," and "Wild Wales," where the knowledge is all "dictionary knowledge." But it was not the shaky philology that caused "Wild Wales" to fall almost dead from the press. What, then, was the cause? It arose from the fact, as I hinted above, that "Wild Wales" belongs to a different kind of autobiographic narrative from "Lavengro" and "The Romany Rye," and also, if the truth must be said, from "The Bible in Spain."

At the period when Borrow wrote this book the great and vigorous renascence of the Cymric idea, the new and deep interest that Welshmen are now taking in the preservation of the Welsh tongue, had not begun. That Borrow did not live to this day, when Welsh is much more spoken among the cultivated class than in his time, is to be lamented. With regard to this revival, whatever may become of it (whether the Welsh language can really be made to survive in the great linguistic struggle for life, which will be one of the principal features of the twentieth century), no one will deny that it is a language which from the poetic side as well as from the historic ought to survive. If I tread here upon dangerous ground, I may yet venture to say that one great obstacle against the spread of the Welsh language beyond Wales is the strange orthography. It is difficult for a person unacquainted with Welsh to believe that the sounds represented by such awkward arrangements of consonants as Welsh displays are otherwise than unmusical. And yet as a matter of fact those sounds are very

musical. It may be remarked here that there is another language spoken in Europe which suffers from the same misfortune in regard to phonetics – the Magyar language. I have elsewhere in a novel, whose scene is partly laid in Hungary, made a character speak of the disappointment expressed by the traveller in Central Europe, when crossing the Austrian frontier into Hungary by rail, at the sight of the Hungarian names with which the stations become suddenly placarded. German is an ugly-looking language enough, but in this respect it is nothing to the Hungarian. And yet it would be hard to find in the whole of Europe a more musical tongue than that which is represented by the uncouth consonantal syllables. It is not a little striking too that between the Cymric race and the Magyar race there are many points of likeness; one of these is the intense love of music displayed by the two, another is the blending of poetic imagination with practical sagacity. The Magyars have been called a race of lawyers, but their love of law-points and litigation is not greater than that of the Welsh, and yet how poetical is each race to the core!

With regard to languages – to survive will in the present century mean to spread. Languages that do not spread will be crushed out. People who talk glibly about the vast expansion of the English language all over the world do not seem to realize that it is not the excellence of a tongue which makes it survive and causes it to spread over the earth, but the energy, military or commercial, of the people who speak it. It is not the excellence of the tongue of Shakespeare and Milton that has carried it all round the globe, but the busy energy of the commonplace people who migrated for the most commonplace ends imaginable, and took the language with them, and then increased and multiplied, building up new English-speaking communities. It is for this reason that the English language seems destined to become, if not the "universal language," at least the *lingua franca* of the world. And nothing is more pathetic than to observe the dread among Continental nations that this will be the case in the future; and nothing is more humorous than the passionate attempts to invent artificial languages, Volapük, Esperanto and what not, to do the work that the English language is already doing all over the sea, and will, apparently, soon be doing all over the land.

I dwell here upon this interesting subject in order to say that if Welsh does not survive it will not be because it is not a fine language, but simply because Destiny has decreed that it shall share the fate of many another language spoken at present much more widely than Welsh.

# III
# IS NOT "WILD WALES" WRITTEN BY A CELT AND NOT BY AN ANGLO-SAXON?

In speaking of any one of Borrow's books it is always necessary to say a good deal about Borrow as a man. Besides being the very child of Nature's fantasy, he was the prince of literary egotists. Everything in human life and everything in nature upon which he looked was enveloped in a coloured atmosphere shed by the eccentric ego. That his love of Wales was genuine there can be no doubt whatever. For this there was perhaps a very special reason – a reason quite unrecognized by himself. I have somewhere – but I forget where – remarked upon a curious and common mistake in regard to Borrow – I mean the mistake of speaking of him as an East Anglian. Very gratifying was this mistake to Borrow himself. When walking with me in Richmond Park, or elsewhere, he would frequently stop, look round and murmur, "Beautiful England!" and then begin to declare eloquently that there was not in the world a country to be compared with it, and that the race which lived in this beloved land was equally incomparable in most things, especially in what he valued so much – athleticism in all its forms. This was merely because England was his place of birth. Born in East Anglia he was, to be sure; but Dr. Johnson long ago held to the opinion that a man born in a stable need not necessarily be described as a horse. When a man's father is pure Cornish (Celtic) and when his mother is mainly French, the fact of his having been born in Norfolk is not enough to make him an East Anglian. By an accident the regiment to which his father belonged was located in Norfolk at the time of his birth, just as by an accident it might have been located in Ireland or Scotland. In either of these cases he would have been George Borrow the Celt, or rather, George Borrow the Unique, but not a Scotsman – not an Irishman. It is the blood in a man's veins, it is not the spot in which he is born, that decides the question of his race. Does one call the daughters of the Irishman, Patrick Bronte, who were Celtic to the marrow, Yorkshire girls because they were born at Thornton? Does one call Mr. Swinburne a Londoner because he, a Northumbrian by a long line of ancestors, chanced to be born within a stone's-throw of Belgrave Square? Does one call the Rossettis Londoners, because it was in London, and not in Italy, that they were born? To imagine any man more Celtic than Borrow is impossible. Not a single East Anglian characteristic exhibited by him do I remember – except perhaps his Norfolk accent, and his very worthy and exemplary passion for "boiled leg of mutton with turnips and caper sauce," which he pronounced to be "food for the gods." It was his own way of writing and talking about himself, however, that fostered if it did not originate the conception that Borrow was an East Anglian. There is no more unreasonable, as there is no more winsome, trait in human nature than the form of egotism which I will call provincial patriotism – a quality of which Borrow was so full. No matter what unlovely spot in any country had given Borrow birth, it would have become in his eyes sanctified because of the all-important fact that it gave birth to George Borrow, the "word-master." Rest assured that had he been a fenman he would have been as proud of his treeless, black-earthed fen as he would have been proud of the Swiss mountains had his birthplace chanced to be Switzerland. Rest assured that had he been born upon the barren soil of Damaraland he would have been proud of his desert, as proud as he would have been of any hilly district that had chanced to have the honour of giving him birth. But being born in East Anglia, to feel that he was the typical Anglo-Saxon of all Anglo-Saxons around him, gave him a mighty joy. At "The Bald-faced Stag" his eloquent addresses, to me and the little band of friends who loved him, about Norfolk ale were inspired by the same cause. Compared to that East Anglian nectar all other nectars were "swipes." I know East Anglia well; few men know it better – few men love it better. I say emphatically that a man more out of sympathy with the East Anglian temperament never lived than he who wished to be taken, and was taken, as the representative East Anglian. Moreover, one very potent reason why he was such a failure in Norfolk

– one very potent reason why he was such a failure in his contact with the Anglo-Saxon race generally – was this: he was a Celtic duckling hatched at Dereham, who took himself for a veritable Norfolk chicken. It is no wonder, therefore, that, without knowing it, his sympathy with the Celt, especially the Cymric Celt, which he himself fully believed to be philological, was racial.

The scenery of Wales had a very especial appeal for him, and no wonder; for there is nothing like it in the world. Although I am familiar with the Alps and the other mountain ranges of Europe in their wildest and most beautiful recesses, it is with me as it was with Borrow: no hill scenery has the peculiar witchery of that around Eryri. It is unique in the scenery of Europe. Grander scenery there is on the Continent, no doubt – much grander – and scenery more soft and lovely; but none in which grandeur and loveliness meet and mingle in so fascinating a way as in Wales. Moreover, to Borrow, as to all lovers of Wild Wales, beautiful as its scenery is, it is the romantic associations of that scenery which form so large a portion of its charm. For what race in Europe has a story so poetic, so romantic, so pathetic as the Welsh? Over every inch of the Principality hovers that great Spirit who walks the earth hand in hand with his brother, the Spirit of Poetry, and throws a rainbow radiance over it – the Spirit of Antiquity. Upon this Borrow and the writer of these lines have often talked. No man ever felt more deeply than he that part and parcel of the very life of man is the atmosphere in which the Spirit of Antiquity lives. Irrational the sentiment about this Spirit may be, if you will, but stifled it will never be. Physical science strengthens rather than weakens the magical glamour of the Spirit of Antiquity. Even the most advanced social science, try to hate him as it may, cannot dim his glory. To the beloved poet of the socialists – William Morris – he was as dear, as great and as strong as to the most conservative poet that has ever lived. Those who express wonderment that in these days there should be the old human playthings as bright and captivating as ever – those who express wonderment at the survival of all the delightful features of the old European raree-show – have not realized the power of this Spirit and the power of the sentiment about him. What is the use of telling us that even in Grecian annals there is no kind of heroism recorded which you cannot match in the histories of modern countries – even of new countries, such as the United States and the Australias and Canada? What is the use of telling us that the travels of Ulysses and of Jason are as nothing in point of real romance compared with Captain Phillip's voyage to the other side of the world, when he led his little convict-laden fleet to Botany Bay – a bay then as unknown almost as any bay in Laputa – that voyage which resulted in the founding of a cluster of great nations any one of whose mammoth millionaires could now buy up Ilium and the golden fleece combined? The Spirit of Antiquity knows not that captain, and hence the Spirit of Poetry has nothing to say about him. In a thousand years' time, no doubt, these things may be as ripe for poetic treatment as the voyage of the Argonauts, or the voyage of the Cymric Prince Madoc, who the romantic lover of Wales, in spite of the arguments of Thomas Stephens, will still believe sailed westward with his fleet and discovered America before Columbus, – returned, and then sailed westward again into eternity. Now every peak and cliff of Snowdonia, and every matchless valley and dale of the land of the Druids, is very specially beloved by the Spirit of Antiquity. The land of Druidism – the land of that mysterious poetic religion which more than any other religion expresses the very voice of Nature, is the land painted in this delightful volume – Wild Wales. Compared with Druidism, all other religious systems have a sort of commonplace and modern ring, even those which preceded it by centuries. The scenic witchery of Wild Wales is great, no doubt, but it is enormously intensified by the memory of the heroic struggle of the unconquerable remnant of the ancient Britons with the brutal, physical power of Roman and Saxon. The history of Wales is an epic not to be surpassed for poetry and for romance. And even these things did not comprise all the points in connection with Wild Wales that delighted Borrow. For when the student of Welsh history and the lover of Welsh scenery is brought into contact with the contemporary Welsh people, the charm of the land does not fade, it is not fingered away by personal contact: it is, indeed, augmented tenfold. I have in "Aylwin" dwelt upon the poetry of Welsh common life, the passionate love of the Welsh people for a tiny strip of Welsh soil, the religion of hearth and

home, the devotion to wife and children. In the Arvon edition of that book, dedicated to a Welsh poet, I have said what I had previously often said to Borrow, that, “although I have seen a good deal of the races of Europe, I put the Cymric race in many ways at the top of them all. They combine, as I think, the poetry, the music, the instinctive love of the fine arts, and the humour of the other Celtic peoples with the practicalness and bright-eyed sagacity of the very different race to which they were so closely linked by circumstance – the race whom it is the fashion to call the Anglo-Saxon. And as to the charm of the Welsh girls, no one who knows them as you and I do, can fail to be struck by it continually. Winifred Wynne I meant to be the typical Welsh girl as I have found her – affectionate, warm-hearted, self-sacrificing and brave.”

# IV
# BORROW'S METHOD OF AUTOBIOGRAPHIC NARRATIVE COMPARED WITH THE METHODS OF DEFOE, WILKIE COLLINS, DICKENS AND THE ABBÉ PRÉVOST

It seems almost necessary that in this desultory talk upon "Wild Wales" I should, before proceeding any further, say a few words upon the book in its relations to two of Borrow's other autobiographic narratives, "Lavengro" and "The Romany Rye," and I do not know any literary subject more suggestive of interesting criticism.

Although Borrow always acknowledged Defoe as his master, he had, of course, qualities of his own that were as unlike Defoe's qualities as they were unlike those of any other writer. And as this speciality of his has, so far as I know, never been discussed, I should have liked, had space permitted, to give interest to my remarks upon "Wild Wales" by a thorough comparison between Borrow's imaginative works and Defoe's "Robinson Crusoe." This is impossible in the space at my command. And yet a few words upon the subject I cannot resist indulging in, for it relates to the very core and central light of Borrow's genius; and I may now never have another opportunity of touching upon it.

I remember a long talk I once had with him upon the method of Defoe as contrasted and compared with his own method in "Lavengro," "The Romany Rye," and "Wild Wales," and the method of other writers who adopt the autobiographic form of fiction. He agreed with me that the most successful of all stories in the autobiographic form is "Robinson Crusoe," although "Jane Eyre," "David Copperfield" and "Great Expectations" among English novels, and "Gil Blas" and "Manon Lescaut" among French novels, are also autobiographic in form. It is of all forms the most difficult. But its advantages, if they can be secured without making too many artistic sacrifices, are enormous. Flexibility is, of course, the one quality it lacks, but, lacking that, it cannot secure the variety of picture and the breadth of movement which is the special strength of the historic form.

The great pupils of Defoe – and by pupils I mean those writers who try to give as much commonplace ἀπάτη as possible to new and striking incidents – Edgar Poe, Wilkie Collins, Gaboriau and others, recognize the immense aid given to illusion by adopting the autobiographic form.

The conversation upon this subject occurred in one of my rambles with Borrow and Dr. Gordon Hake in Richmond Park, when I had been pointing out to the former certain passages in "Robinson Crusoe" where Defoe adds richness and piquancy to the incidents by making the reader believe that these incidents will in the end have some deep influence, spiritual or physical, upon the narrator himself.

Borrow was not a theorizer, and yet he took a quaint interest in other people's theorizings. He asked me to explain myself more fully. My reply in substance was something like this: Although in "Robinson Crusoe" the autobiographer is really introduced only to act as eye-witness for the purpose of bringing out and authenticating the incidents of the dramatic action, Defoe had the artistic craftiness to make it appear that this was not so – to make it appear that the incidents are selected by Crusoe in such a way as to exhibit and develop the emotions moving within his own breast. Defoe's *apparent* object in writing the story was to show the effect of a long solitude upon the human heart and mind; but it was not so – it was simply to bring into fiction a series of incidents and adventures of extraordinary interest and picturesqueness – incidents such as did in part happen to Alexander Selkirk. But Defoe was a much greater artist than he is generally credited with being, and he had sufficient of the artistic instinct to know that, interesting as these external incidents were in themselves, they could be made still more interesting by humanizing them – by making it appear that they worked as a great life-lesson for the man who experienced them, and that this was why the man recorded them. Those

moralizings of Crusoe upon the way in which the disasters of his life came upon him as "judgments," on account of his running away from his parents, seem to humanize the wheels of circumstance. They create in the reader's mind the interest in the man's personality which Defoe wished to create.

In reply to my criticism, Borrow said, "May not the same be said of Le Sage's 'Gil Blas'?"

And when I pointed out to him that there was a kind of kinship between the two writers in this particular he asked me to indicate in "Lavengro" and "The Romany Rye" such incidents in which Defoe's method had been followed by himself as had struck me. I pointed out several of them. Borrow, as a rule, was not at all given to frank discussion of his own artistic methods, indeed, he had a great deal of the instinct of the literary *histrio*– more than I have ever seen in any other writer – but he admitted that he had consciously in part and in part unconsciously adopted Defoe's method. The fact is, as I said to Borrow on that occasion, and as I have since had an opportunity of saying more fully in print, there are two kinds of autobiographic stories, and these two kinds are, if properly examined, really more unlike each other than the autobiographic form is unlike what is generally supposed to be its antithesis – the historic form. In one kind of autobiographic story, of which "Rob Roy" is a typical example, the narrator, though nominally the protagonist, is really not much more than the passive eye-witness of the dramatic action – not much more than the chorus to other characters who govern, or at least influence, the main issue. Inasmuch as he is an eye-witness of the dramatic action, he gives to it the authenticity of direct testimony. Through him the narrative gains a commonplace ἀπάτη such as is beyond the scope of the scattered forces of the historic form, howsoever powerfully handled. By the first-hand testimony of the eye-witness Frank Osbaldistone in Scott's fascinating novel, the more active characters, those who really control the main issue, Di Vernon, Rashleigh Osbaldistone, Rob, and Bailie Nicol Jarvie, are painted in much more vivid and much more authentic colours than the method of the historic form would allow.

It is in the nature of things that this kind of autobiographic fiction, howsoever strong may be the incidents, is not nearly so absorbing as is the other kind I am going to instance, the psychological, to which "Lavengro" and "The Romany Rye" belong; for in literature, as in life, the more interest we feel in the character, the more interest we feel in what befalls the character. Unlike the kind of autobiographic fiction typified by "Rob Roy," in which, as I have said, the main issue is little influenced and not at all controlled by the narrator but by other characters, or, if not by other characters, by the wheels of circumstance; – in the psychological kind of autobiographic fiction, the personality of the narrator controls, or largely controls, the main issue of the dramatic action. In other words, the incidents in the latter kind of autobiographic fiction are selected and marshalled for the purpose of declaring the character of the narrator. The most superb exemplars of this kind of autobiographic narrative are stories which in all other respects are extremely unlike Borrow's – "Caleb Williams," "Manon Lescaut," "Jane Eyre," and "Villette."

A year or two ago I recurred to this subject in some comments I made upon some judgments of a well-known and admirable critic. I will take the liberty of referring here to one or two of the remarks I then made, for they seem to bear very directly upon Borrow's method as compared with Defoe's. The same artistic instinct which we see in Defoe and in Borrow's quasi autobiographic work is exhibited by the Abbé Prévost in "Manon Lescaut." The real object of the last-mentioned story (which, it will be remembered, is an episode in a much longer story) was to paint vivid pictures of the careless life of Paris at the period of the story, and especially to paint in vivid colours a kind of character which is essentially peculiar to Paris, the light-hearted, good-natured, unheeding *grisette*. But by making it appear that the incidents in Chevalier des Grieux's life are selected by him in order to show the effect of the life-lesson upon himself, Prévost gives to every incident the piquancy which properly belongs to this, the psychological form of autobiographic fiction. It must, however, be admitted that at its best the autobiographic form of fiction is rarely, very rarely, broad enough to be a satisfactory form of art, even when, as in "The Woman in White," the story consists of a series of autobiographic narratives stitched together. It was this difficulty which confronted Dickens

when he wrote “Bleak House.” When he was writing “David Copperfield” he had felt the sweetness and fascination of writing in the autobiographic form, and had seen the sweetness and fascination of reading it; but he also felt how constricted the form is in regard to breadth, and it occurred to him that he could combine the two forms – that he could give in the same book the sweetness and the fascination and the authenticity of the autobiographic form and the breadth and variety of the historic form. To bring into an autobiographic narrative the complex and wide-spreading net that forms the story of “Bleak House” was, of course, impossible, and so he mixed up the chapters of Esther Summerson’s autobiographic narrative with chapters of the history of the great Chancery suit and all that flowed from it. In order to minimize as much as possible the confusion of so very confused a scheme as this, he wrote the historic part of the book in the present tense; and the result is the most oppressively-laboured novel that was ever produced by a great novelist.

I have dwelt at length upon this subject because if I were asked to name one of the greatest masters of the autobiographic form, in any language, I should, I think, have to name Borrow. In one variety of that form he gave us “Lavengro” and “The Romany Rye,” in the other, “Wild Wales.”

# V
# WHY ARE THE WELSH GYPSIES IGNORED IN "WILD WALES"?

"Wild Wales" seems to have disappointed Borrovians because it ignores the Welsh gypsies, the most superior branch of all the Romany race, except, perhaps, the gypsy musicians of Hungary. And certainly it is curious to speculate as to why he ignores them in that fashion. Readers of "The Romany Rye" wonder why, after his adventure with Mrs. Herne and her granddaughter, and his rescue by the Welshman, Peter Williams, on reaching the Welsh border, Borrow kept his mouth closed. Several reasons have occurred to me, one of which is that his knowledge of Welsh Romany was of the shakiest kind. Another reason might have been that in "The Romany Rye," as much of his story as could be told in two volumes being told, he abruptly broke off as he had broken off at the end of the third volume of "Lavengro." Or did the same reason that caused him to write, in "Wild Wales," an autobiographic narrative without any of the fantasies and romantic ornamentation which did so much to win popularity for his previous books, govern him when he decided to ignore the gypsies – the presence of his wife and stepdaughter? There is a very wide class, including indeed the whole of British Philistia, that cherishes a positive racial aversion to the Romany – an aversion as strong as the Russian aversion to the Jew.

Anyhow, it was very eccentric to write a book upon Wales and to ignore so picturesque a feature of the subject as the Welsh gypsies. For, beyond doubt, the finest specimens of the Romany race are – or were in Borrow's time – to be found in Wales. And here I cannot help saying parenthetically, that as Borrow gave us no word about the Welsh Romanies and their language, the work of Mr. Sampson, the greatest master of the Welsh Romany that ever lived, is especially precious. So great is the work of that admirable scholar upon the subject that he told me when I last saw him that he was actually translating Omar Khayyam into Welsh Romany! Although the Welsh gypsies have a much greater knowledge of Welsh Romany than English gypsies have of English Romany, and are more intelligent, I am a little sceptical, as I told him, as to the Welsh Romanies taking that deep interest in the immortal quatrains which, it seems, atheists and Christians agree in doing among the gorgios.

# VI
# CELT *v* SAXON

Those who have seen much of the writing fraternity of London or Paris, know that the great mass of authors, whether in prose or in verse, have just as much and just as little individuality – have just as much and just as little of any new and true personal accent, as the vast flock of human sheep whose bleatings will soon drown all other voices over land and sea. They have the peculiar instinct for putting their thoughts into written words – that is all. This it is that makes Borrow such a memorable figure. If ever a man had an accent of his own that man was he. What that accent was I have tried to indicate here, in the remarks upon his method of writing autobiographic fiction. Vanity can make all, even the most cunning, simple on one side of their characters, but it made of Borrow a veritable child.

If Tennyson may be accepted as the type of the man without guile, what type does Borrow represent? In him guile and simplicity were blent in what must have been the most whimsical amalgam of opposite qualities ever seen on this planet. Let me give one instance out of a thousand of this.

Great as was his love of Wales and the Welsh, the Anglo-Saxonism – the John Bullism which he fondly cherished in that Celtic bosom of his, was so strong that whenever it came to pitting the prowess and the glories of the Welshman against those of the Englishman, his championship of the Cymric race would straightway vanish, and the claim of the Anglo-Saxon to superiority would be proclaimed against all the opposition of the world. This was especially so in regard to athletics, as was but natural, seeing that he always felt himself to be an athlete first, a writing man afterwards.

A favourite quotation of his was from Byron —

> "One hates an author that's *all author*– fellows
> In foolscap uniforms turned up with ink."

Frederick Sandys, a Norfolk man who knew him well, rarely spoke of Borrow save as a master in the noble art of self-defence.

It was as a swimmer I first saw him – one of the strongest and hardiest that ever rejoiced to buffet with wintry billows on the Norfolk coast. And to the very last did his interest in swimming, sparring, running, wrestling, jumping remain. If the Welshman would only have admitted that in athletics the Englishman stands first – stands easily first among the competitors of the world, he would have cheerfully admitted that the Welshman made a good second. General Picton used to affirm that the ideal – the topmost soldier in the world is a Welshman of five feet, eight inches in height. Such a man as the six-feet-three giant of Dereham knew well how to scorn such an assertion even though made by the great Picton himself. But suppose Borrow had been told, as we have lately been told, that the so-called "English archers" at Crecy and Agincourt were mainly made up of Welshmen, what a flush would have overspread his hairless cheek, what an indignant fire would have blazed from his eyes! Not even his indignation on being told, as we would sometimes tell him at "The Bald-faced Stag," that Scottish Highlanders had proved themselves superior to their English brothers-in-arms would have equalled his scorn of such talk about Crecy and Agincourt – scenes of English prowess that he was never tired of extolling.

But you had only to admit that Welshmen were superior to all others save Englishmen in physical prowess, and Borrow's championship of the Cymric athlete could be as enthusiastic and even as aggressive as the best and most self-assertive Welshman ever born in Arvon. Consequently I can but regret that he did not live to see the great recrudescence of Cymric energy which we are seeing at the present moment in "Cymru, gwlad y gân," – an energy which is declaring itself more vigorously every day, and not merely in pure intellectual matters, not merely in political matters, but equally in those same athletics which to Borrow were so important. Sparring has gone out of fashion as

much in the Principality as in England and Scotland; but that which has succeeded it, football, has taken a place in athleticism such as would have bewildered Borrow, as it would have bewildered most of his contemporaries. What would he have said, I wonder, had he been told that in this favourite twentieth-century game the Welsh would surpass all others in these islands, and save the honour of Great Britain? No one would have enjoyed witnessing the great contest between the Welsh and the New Zealand athletes at the Cardiff Arms Park on the 16th of last December with more gusto than the admirer of English sparring and of the English pugilistic heroes, from Big Ben Bryan to Tom Spring. No one would have been more exhilarated than he by the song with which it opened —

"Mae hen wlad fy nhadau yn anwyl i mi."[1]

But one wonders what he would have said after the struggle was over – after Wales's latest triumph over the Saxon record of physical prowess. One can imagine, perhaps, his mixed feelings had he been a witness of that great athletic struggle which is going to be historic – the immortal contest in which after England had succumbed entirely to the Colonials, the honour of the old country was saved by Wales at the eleventh hour. His cheek would have glowed with admiration of the exploits of the only footballers whose names will be historic, and being historic must be mentioned in connection with his own Welsh pages, – I mean the names of Travers, of Bush, of Winfield, of Owen, of Jones, of Llewellyn, of Gabe, of Nicholls, of Morgan, of Williams, of Hodges, of Harding, of Joseph, and the names of the two Pritchards. Whatsoever might have been his after-emotions when provincial patriotism began to assert itself, Borrow would in that great hour of Cymric triumph have frankly admitted, I think, that for once England's honour was saved by Wales.

The following is a list of the works of George Borrow —

Faustus, His Life, Death [from the German of F. M. von Klinger], 1825; Romantic Ballads [from the Danish of Öhlenschläger, and from the Kiempé Viser], and miscellaneous pieces [from the Danish of Ewald and others], 1826; Targum, or Metrical Translations from Thirty Languages and Dialects, 1835; The Talisman of A. Pushkin, with other pieces [from Russian and Polish], 1835; New Testament (Luke), Embéo e Majaró Lucas.. El Evangelio segun S. Lucas, traducido al Romani, 1837; The Bible in Spain, 3 vols., 1843; The Zincali (Gypsies in Spain), 2 vols., 1841; Lavengro, 1851; The Romany Rye, 2 vols., 1857; The Sleeping Bard, translated from the Cambrian British, 1860; Wild Wales, 3 vols., 1862; Romano Lavo-Lil: Word-Book of the Romany, 1874; Násr Al-Din, Khwājah, The Turkish Jester [from the Turkish], 1884; Death of Balder [from the Danish of Ewald], 1889.

The Life, Writings, and Correspondence of George Borrow, by Knapp (W. I.), appeared in 1899.

[1] "The old land of my father is dear unto me."

# CHAPTER I

Proposed Excursion – Knowledge of Welsh – Singular Groom – Harmonious Distich – Welsh Pronunciation – Dafydd Ab Gwilym.

In the summer of the year 1854 myself, wife, and daughter determined upon going into Wales, to pass a few months there. We are country people of a corner of East Anglia, and, at the time of which I am speaking, had been residing so long on our own little estate, that we had become tired of the objects around us, and conceived that we should be all the better for changing the scene for a short period. We were undetermined for some time with respect to where we should go. I proposed Wales from the first, but my wife and daughter, who have always had rather a hankering after what is fashionable, said they thought it would be more advisable to go to Harrowgate or Leamington. On my observing that those were terrible places for expense, they replied that, though the price of corn had of late been shamefully low, we had a spare hundred pounds or two in our pockets, and could afford to pay for a little insight into fashionable life. I told them that there was nothing I so much hated as fashionable life, but that, as I was anything but a selfish person, I would endeavour to stifle my abhorrence of it for a time, and attend them either to Leamington or Harrowgate. By this speech I obtained my wish, even as I knew I should, for my wife and daughter instantly observed, that, after all, they thought we had better go into Wales, which, though not so fashionable as either Leamington or Harrowgate, was a very nice picturesque country, where, they had no doubt, they should get on very well, more especially as I was acquainted with the Welsh language.

It was my knowledge of Welsh, such as it was, that made me desirous that we should go to Wales, where there was a chance that I might turn it to some little account. In my boyhood I had been something of a philologist; had picked up some Latin and Greek at school; some Irish in Ireland, where I had been with my father, who was in the army; and subsequently whilst an articled clerk to the first solicitor in East Anglia – indeed I may say the prince of all English solicitors – for he was a gentleman, had learnt some Welsh, partly from books and partly from a Welsh groom, whose acquaintance I had made. A queer groom he was, and well deserving of having his portrait drawn. He might be about forty-seven years of age, and about five feet eight inches in height; his body was spare and wiry; his chest rather broad, and his arms remarkably long; his legs were of the kind generally known as spindle-shanks, but vigorous withal, for they carried his body with great agility; neck he had none, at least that I ever observed; and his head was anything but high, not measuring, I should think, more than four inches from the bottom of the chin to the top of the forehead; his cheek-bones were high, his eyes grey and deeply sunken in his face, with an expression in them, partly sullen, and partly irascible; his complexion was indescribable; the little hair which he had, which was almost entirely on the sides and the back part of his head, was of an iron-grey hue. He wore a leather hat on ordinary days, low at the crown, and with the side eaves turned up. A dirty pepper and salt coat, a waistcoat which had once been red, but which had lost its pristine colour, and looked brown; dirty yellow leather breeches, grey worsted stockings, and high-lows. Surely I was right when I said he was a very different groom to those of the present day, whether Welsh or English? What say you, Sir Watkin? What say you, my Lord of Exeter? He looked after the horses, and occasionally assisted in the house of a person who lived at the end of an alley, in which the office of the gentleman to whom I was articled was situated, and having to pass by the door of the office half-a-dozen times in the day, he did not fail to attract the notice of the clerks, who, sometimes individually, sometimes by twos, sometimes by threes, or even more, not unfrequently stood at the door, bareheaded – mis-spending the time which was not legally their own. Sundry observations, none of them very flattering, did the clerks and, amongst them, myself, make upon the groom, as he passed and repassed, some of them direct, others somewhat oblique. To these he made no reply save by looks, which had in them

something dangerous and menacing, and clenching without raising his fists, which looked singularly hard and horny. At length a whisper ran about the alley that the groom was a Welshman; this whisper much increased the malice of my brother clerks against him, who were now whenever he passed the door, and they happened to be there by twos or threes, in the habit of saying something, as if by accident, against Wales and Welshmen, and, individually or together, were in the habit of shouting out "Taffy," when he was at some distance from them, and his back was turned, or regaling his ears with the harmonious and well-known distich of "Taffy was a Welshman, Taffy was a thief: Taffy came to my house and stole a piece of beef." It had, however, a very different effect upon me. I was trying to learn Welsh, and the idea occurring to me that the groom might be able to assist me in my pursuit, I instantly lost all desire to torment him, and determined to do my best to scrape acquaintance with him, and persuade him to give me what assistance he could in Welsh. I succeeded; how I will not trouble the reader with describing: he and I became great friends, and he taught me what Welsh he could. In return for his instructions I persuaded my brother clerks to leave off holloing after him, and to do nothing further to hurt his feelings, which had been very deeply wounded, so much so, that after the first two or three lessons he told me in confidence that on the morning of the very day I first began to conciliate him he had come to the resolution of doing one of two things, namely, either to hang himself from the balk of the hayloft, or to give his master warning, both of which things he told me he should have been very unwilling to do, more particularly as he had a wife and family. He gave me lessons on Sunday afternoons, at my father's house, where he made his appearance very respectably dressed, in a beaver hat, blue surtout, whitish waistcoat, black trowsers and Wellingtons, all with a somewhat ancient look – the Wellingtons I remember were slightly pieced at the sides – but all upon the whole very respectable. I wished at first to persuade him to give me lessons in the office, but could not succeed: "No, no, lad," said he; "catch me going in there: I would just as soon venture into a nest of parcupines." To translate from books I had already, to a certain degree, taught myself, and at his first visit I discovered, and he himself acknowledged, that at book Welsh I was stronger than himself, but I learnt Welsh pronunciation from him, and to discourse a little in the Welsh tongue. "Had you much difficulty in acquiring the sound of the ll?" I think I hear the reader inquire. None whatever: the double l of the Welsh is by no means the terrible guttural which English people generally suppose it to be, being in reality a pretty liquid, exactly resembling in sound the Spanish ll, the sound of which I had mastered before commencing Welsh, and which is equivalent to the English lh; so being able to pronounce llano I had of course no difficulty in pronouncing Lluyd, which by the bye was the name of the groom.

I remember that I found the pronunciation of the Welsh far less difficult than I had found the grammar, the most remarkable feature of which is the mutation, under certain circumstances, of particular consonants, when forming the initials of words. This feature I had observed in the Irish, which I had then only learnt by ear.

But to return to the groom. He was really a remarkable character, and taught me two or three things besides Welsh pronunciation; and to discourse a little in Cumraeg. He had been a soldier in his youth, and had served under Moore and Wellington in the Peninsular campaigns, and from him I learnt the details of many a bloody field and bloodier storm, of the sufferings of poor British soldiers, and the tyranny of haughty British officers; more especially of the two commanders just mentioned, the first of whom he swore was shot by his own soldiers, and the second more frequently shot at by British than French. But it is not deemed a matter of good taste to write about such low people as grooms, I shall therefore dismiss him with no observation further than that after he had visited me on Sunday afternoons for about a year he departed for his own country with his wife, who was an Englishwoman, and his children, in consequence of having been left a small freehold there by a distant relation, and that I neither saw nor heard of him again.

But though I had lost my oral instructor I had still my silent ones, namely, the Welsh books, and of these I made such use that before the expiration of my clerkship I was able to read not only Welsh

prose, but, what was infinitely more difficult, Welsh poetry in any of the four-and-twenty measures, and was well versed in the compositions of various of the old Welsh bards, especially those of Dafydd ab Gwilym, whom, since the time when I first became acquainted with his works, I have always considered as the greatest poetical genius that has appeared in Europe since the revival of literature.

After this exordium I think I may proceed to narrate the journey of myself and family into Wales. As perhaps, however, it will be thought that, though I have said quite enough about myself and a certain groom, I have not said quite enough about my wife and daughter, I will add a little more about them. Of my wife I will merely say that she is a perfect paragon of wives – can make puddings and sweets and treacle posset, and is the best woman of business in Eastern Anglia – of my step-daughter – for such she is, though I generally call her daughter, and with good reason, seeing that she has always shown herself a daughter to me – that she has all kinds of good qualities, and several accomplishments, knowing something of conchology, more of botany, drawing capitally in the Dutch style, and playing remarkably well on the guitar – not the trumpery German thing so-called – but the real Spanish guitar.

# CHAPTER II

The Starting – Peterborough Cathedral – Anglo-Saxon Names – Kæmpe Viser – Steam – Norman Barons – Chester Ale – Sion Tudor – Pretty Welsh Tongue.

So our little family, consisting of myself, my wife Mary, and my daughter Henrietta, for daughter I shall persist in calling her, started for Wales in the afternoon of the 27th July, 1854. We flew through part of Norfolk and Cambridgeshire in a train which we left at Ely, and getting into another, which did not fly quite so fast as the one we had quitted, reached the Peterborough station at about six o'clock of a delightful evening. We proceeded no farther on our journey that day, in order that we might have an opportunity of seeing the cathedral.

Sallying arm in arm from the Station Hotel, where we had determined to take up our quarters for the night, we crossed a bridge over the deep quiet Nen, on the southern bank of which stands the station, and soon arrived at the cathedral – unfortunately we were too late to procure admission into the interior, and had to content ourselves with walking round it and surveying its outside.

It is named after, and occupies the site, or part of the site, of an immense monastery, founded by the Mercian King Peda in the year 665, and destroyed by fire in the year 1116, which monastery, though originally termed Medeshamsted, or the homestead on the meads, was subsequently termed Peterborough, from the circumstance of its having been reared by the old Saxon monarch for the love of God and the honour of Saint Peter, as the Saxon Chronicle says, a book which I went through carefully in my younger days, when I studied Saxon, for, as I have already told the reader, I was in those days a bit of a philologist. Like the first, the second edifice was originally a monastery, and continued so till the time of the Reformation; both were abodes of learning; for if the Saxon Chronicle was commenced in the monkish cells of the first, it was completed in those of the second. What is at present called Peterborough Cathedral is a noble venerable pile, equal upon the whole in external appearance to the cathedrals of Toledo, Burgos, and Leon, all of which I have seen. Nothing in architecture can be conceived more beautiful than the principal entrance, which fronts the west, and which, at the time we saw it, was gilded with the rays of the setting sun.

After having strolled about the edifice surveying it until we were weary, we returned to our inn, and after taking an excellent supper retired to rest.

At ten o'clock next morning we left the capital of the meads. With dragon speed, and dragon noise, fire, smoke, and fury, the train dashed along its road through beautiful meadows, garnished here and there with pollard sallows; over pretty streams, whose waters stole along imperceptibly; by venerable old churches, which I vowed I would take the first opportunity of visiting: stopping now and then to recruit its energies at places, whose old Anglo-Saxon names stared me in the eyes from station boards, as specimens of which, let me only dot down Willy Thorpe, Ringsted, and Yrthling Boro. Quite forgetting everything Welsh, I was enthusiastically Saxon the whole way from Medeshampsted to Blissworth, so thoroughly Saxon was the country, with its rich meads, its old churches, and its names. After leaving Blissworth, a thoroughly Saxon place by the bye, as its name shows signifying the stronghold or possession of Bligh or Blee, I became less Saxon; the country was rather less Saxon, and I caught occasionally the word "by" on a board, the Danish for a town; which "by" waked in me a considerable portion of Danish enthusiasm, of which I have plenty, and with reason, having translated the glorious Kæmpe Viser over the desk of my ancient master, the gentleman solicitor of East Anglia. At length we drew near the great workshop of England, called by some Brummagem or Bromwicham, by others Birmingham, and I fell into a philological reverie, wondering which was the right name. Before, however, we came to the station, I decided that both names were right enough, but that Bromwicham was the original name; signifying the home on the Broomie moor, which name it lost in polite parlance for Birmingham, or the home of the son of Biarmer, when a certain man

of Danish blood, called Biarming, or the son of Biarmer, got possession of it, whether by force, fraud, or marriage – the latter, by the bye, is by far the best way of getting possession of an estate – this deponent neither knoweth nor careth. At Birmingham station I became a modern Englishman, enthusiastically proud of modern England's science and energy; that station alone is enough to make one proud of being a modern Englishman. Oh, what an idea does that station, with its thousand trains dashing off in all directions, or arriving from all quarters, give of modern English science and energy. My modern English pride accompanied me all the way to Tipton; for all along the route there were wonderful evidences of English skill and enterprise; in chimneys high as cathedral spires, vomiting forth smoke, furnaces emitting flame and lava, and in the sound of gigantic hammers, wielded by steam, the Englishman's slave. After passing Tipton, at which place one leaves the great working district behind, I became for a considerable time a yawning, listless Englishman, without pride, enthusiasm or feeling of any kind, from which state I was suddenly roused by the sight of ruined edifices on the tops of hills. They were remains of castles built by Norman barons. Here, perhaps, the reader will expect from me a burst of Norman enthusiasm: if so he will be mistaken; I have no Norman enthusiasm, and hate and abominate the name of Norman, for I have always associated that name with the deflowering of helpless Englishwomen, the plundering of English homesteads, and the tearing out of poor Englishmen's eyes. The sight of those edifices, now in ruins, but which were once the strongholds of plunder, violence, and lust, made me almost ashamed of being an Englishman, for they brought to my mind the indignities to which poor English blood had been subjected. I sat silent and melancholy, till looking from the window I caught sight of a long line of hills, which I guessed to be the Welsh hills, as indeed they proved, which sight causing me to remember that I was bound for Wales, the land of the bard, made me cast all gloomy thoughts aside and glow with all the Welsh enthusiasm with which I glowed when I first started in the direction of Wales.

On arriving at Chester, at which place we intended to spend two or three days, we put up at an old-fashioned inn in Northgate Street, to which we had been recommended; my wife and daughter ordered tea and its accompaniments; and I ordered ale, and that which always should accompany it, cheese. "The ale I shall find bad," said I; Chester ale had a villainous character in the time of old Sion Tudor, who made a first-rate englyn upon it, and it has scarcely improved since; "but I shall have a treat in the cheese, Cheshire cheese has always been reckoned excellent, and now that I am in the capital of the cheese country, of course I shall have some of the very prime." Well, the tea, loaf, and butter made their appearance, and with them my cheese and ale. To my horror the cheese had much the appearance of soap of the commonest kind, which indeed I found it much resembled in taste, on putting a small portion into my mouth. "Ah," said I, after I had opened the window and ejected the half-masticated morsel into the street; "those who wish to regale on good Cheshire cheese must not come to Chester, no more than those who wish to drink first-rate coffee must go to Mocha. I'll now see whether the ale is drinkable;" so I took a little of the ale into my mouth, and instantly going to the window, spirted it out after the cheese. "Of, a surety," said I, "Chester ale must be of much the same quality as it was in the time of Sion Tudor, who spoke of it to the following effect: —

"'Chester ale, Chester ale! I could ne'er get it down,
'Tis made of ground-ivy, of dirt, and of bran,
'Tis as thick as a river below a huge town!
'Tis not lap for a dog, far less drink for a man.'

Well! if I have been deceived in the cheese, I have at any rate not been deceived in the ale, which I expected to find execrable. Patience! I shall not fall into a passion, more especially as there are things I can fall back upon. Wife! I will trouble you for a cup of tea. Henrietta! have the kindness to cut me a slice of bread and butter."

Upon the whole we found ourselves very comfortable in the old-fashioned inn, which was kept by a nice old-fashioned gentlewoman, with the assistance of three servants, namely, a “boots” and two strapping chambermaids, one of which was a Welsh girl, with whom I soon scraped acquaintance, not, I assure the reader, for the sake of the pretty Welsh eyes which she carried in her head, but for the sake of the pretty Welsh tongue which she carried in her mouth, from which I confess occasionally proceeded sounds which, however pretty, I was quite unable to understand.

# CHAPTER III

Chester – The Rows – Lewis Glyn Cothi – Tragedy of Mold – Native of Antigua – Slavery and the Americans – The Tents – Saturday Night.

On the morning after our arrival we went out together, and walked up and down several streets; my wife and daughter, however, soon leaving me to go into a shop, I strolled about by myself. Chester is an ancient town with walls and gates, a prison called a castle, built on the site of an ancient keep, an unpretending-looking red sandstone cathedral, two or three handsome churches, several good streets, and certain curious places called rows. The Chester row is a broad arched stone gallery running parallel with the street within the façades of the houses; it is partly open on the side of the street, and just one story above it. Within the rows, of which there are three or four, are shops, every shop being on that side which is farthest from the street. All the best shops in Chester are to be found in the rows. These rows, to which you ascend by stairs up narrow passages, were originally built for the security of the wares of the principal merchants against the Welsh. Should the mountaineers break into the town, as they frequently did, they might rifle some of the common shops, where their booty would be slight, but those which contained the more costly articles would be beyond their reach; for at the first alarm the doors of the passages, up which the stairs led, would be closed, and all access to the upper streets cut off, from the open arches of which missiles of all kinds, kept ready for such occasions, could be discharged upon the intruders, who would be soon glad to beat a retreat. These rows and the walls are certainly the most remarkable memorials of old times which Chester has to boast of.

Upon the walls it is possible to make the whole compass of the city, there being a good but narrow walk upon them. The northern wall abuts upon a frightful ravine, at the bottom of which is a canal. From the western one there is a noble view of the Welsh hills.

As I stood gazing upon the hills from the wall, a ragged man came up and asked for charity.

"Can you tell me the name of that tall hill?" said I, pointing in the direction of the south-west. "That hill, sir," said the beggar, "is called Moel Vamagh; I ought to know something about it as I was born at its foot." "Moel," said I, "a bald hill; Vamagh; maternal or motherly. Moel Vamagh, the mother Moel." "Just so, sir," said the beggar; "I see you are a Welshman, like myself, though I suppose you come from the South – Moel Vamagh is the Mother Moel, and is called so because it is the highest of all the Moels." "Did you ever hear of a place called Mold?" said I. "Oh, yes, your honour," said the beggar; "many a time; and many's the time I have been there." "In which direction does it lie?" said I. "Towards Moel Vamagh, your honour," said the beggar, "which is a few miles beyond it; you can't see it from here, but look towards Moel Vamagh and you will see over it." "Thank you," said I, and gave something to the beggar, who departed, after first taking off his hat. Long and fixedly did I gaze in the direction of Mold. The reason which induced me to do so was the knowledge of an appalling tragedy transacted there in the old time, in which there is every reason to suppose a certain Welsh bard, called Lewis Glyn Cothi, had a share.

This man, who was a native of South Wales, flourished during the wars of the Roses. Besides being a poetical he was something of a military genius, and had a command of foot in the army of the Lancastrian Jasper Earl of Pembroke, the son of Owen Tudor, and half-brother of Henry the Sixth. After the battle of Mortimer's Cross, in which the Earl's forces were defeated, the warrior bard found his way to Chester, where he married the widow of a citizen and opened a shop, without asking the permission of the mayor, who with the officers of justice came and seized all his goods, which, according to his own account, filled nine sacks, and then drove him out of the town. The bard in a great fury indited an awdl, in which he invites Reinallt ap Grufydd ap Bleddyn, a kind of predatory chieftain, who resided a little way off in Flintshire, to come and set the town on fire, and slaughter the inhabitants, in revenge for the wrongs he had suffered, and then proceeds to vent all kinds of

imprecations against the mayor and people of Chester, wishing, amongst other things, that they might soon hear that the Dee had become too shallow to bear their ships – that a certain cutaneous disorder might attack the wrists of great and small, old and young, laity and clergy – that grass might grow in their streets – that Ilar and Cyveilach, Welsh saints, might slay them – that dogs might snarl at them – and that the king of heaven, with the saints Brynach and Non, might afflict them with blindness – which piece, however ineffectual in inducing God and the saints to visit the Chester people with the curses with which the furious bard wished them to be afflicted, seems to have produced somewhat of its intended effect on the chieftain, who shortly afterwards, on learning that the mayor and many of the Chester people were present at the fair of Mold, near which place he resided, set upon them at the head of his forces, and after a desperate combat, in which many lives were lost, took the mayor prisoner, and drove those of his people who survived into a tower, which he set on fire and burnt, with all the unhappy wretches which it contained, completing the horrors of the day by hanging the unfortunate mayor.

Conversant as I was with all this strange history, is it wonderful that I looked with great interest from the wall of Chester in the direction of Mold?

Once did I make the compass of the city upon the walls, and was beginning to do the same a second time, when I stumbled against a black, who, with his arms leaning upon the wall, was spitting over it, in the direction of the river. I apologized, and contrived to enter into conversation with him. He was tolerably well dressed, had a hairy cap on his head, was about forty years of age, and brutishly ugly, his features scarcely resembling those of a human being. He told me he was a native of Antigua, a blacksmith by trade, and had been a slave. I asked him if he could speak any language besides English, and received for answer that besides English, he could speak Spanish and French. Forthwith I spoke to him in Spanish, but he did not understand me. I then asked him to speak to me in Spanish, but he could not. “Surely you can tell me the word for water in Spanish,” said I; he, however, was not able. “How is it,” said I, “that, pretending to be acquainted with Spanish, you do not even know the word for water?” He said he could not tell, but supposed that he had forgotten the Spanish language, adding, however, that he could speak French perfectly. I spoke to him in French – he did not understand me: I told him to speak to me in French, but he did not. I then asked him the word for bread in French, but he could not tell me. I made no observations on his ignorance, but inquired how he liked being a slave? He said not at all; that it was very bad to be a slave, as a slave was forced to work. I asked him if he did not work now that he was free? He said very seldom; that he did not like work, and that it did not agree with him. I asked how he came into England, and he said that wishing to see England, he had come over with a gentleman as his servant, but that as soon as he got there, he had left his master, as he did not like work. I asked him how he contrived to live in England without working? He said that any black might live in England without working; that all he had to do was to attend religious meetings, and speak against slavery and the Americans. I asked him if he had done so. He said he had, and that the religious people were very kind to him, and gave him money, and that a religious lady was going to marry him. I asked him if he knew anything about the Americans? He said he did, and that they were very bad people, who kept slaves and flogged them. “And quite right too,” said I, “if they are lazy rascals like yourself, who want to eat without working. What a pretty set of knaves or fools must they be, who encourage a fellow like you to speak against negro slavery, of the necessity for which you yourself are a living instance, and against a people of whom you know as much as of French or Spanish.” Then leaving the black, who made no other answer to what I said, than by spitting with considerable force in the direction of the river, I continued making my second compass of the city upon the wall.

Having walked round the city for the second time, I returned to the inn. In the evening I went out again, passed over the bridge, and then turned to the right in the direction of the hills. Near the river, on my right, on a kind of green, I observed two or three tents resembling those of gypsies. Some ragged children were playing near them, who, however, had nothing of the appearance of the

children of the Egyptian race, their locks being not dark, but either of a flaxen or red hue, and their features not delicate and regular, but coarse and uncouth, and their complexions not olive, but rather inclining to be fair. I did not go up to them, but continued my course till I arrived near a large factory. I then turned and retraced my steps into the town. It was Saturday night and the streets were crowded with people, many of whom must have been Welsh, as I heard the Cambrian language spoken on every side.

# CHAPTER IV

Sunday Morning – Tares and Wheat – Teetotalism – Hearsay – Irish Family – What Profession? – Sabbath Evening – Priest or Minister – Give us God.

On the Sunday morning, as we sat at breakfast, we heard the noise of singing in the street; running to the window, we saw a number of people, bareheaded, from whose mouths the singing or psalmody proceeded. These, on inquiry, we were informed, were Methodists, going about to raise recruits for a grand camp-meeting, which was to be held a little way out of the town. We finished our breakfast, and at eleven attended divine service at the cathedral. The interior of this holy edifice was smooth and neat, strangely contrasting with its exterior, which was rough and weather-beaten. We had decent places found us by a civil verger, who probably took us for what we were – decent country people. We heard much fine chanting by the choir, and an admirable sermon, preached by a venerable prebend, on "Tares and Wheat." The congregation was numerous and attentive. After service, we returned to our inn, and at two o'clock dined. During dinner, our conversation ran almost entirely on the sermon, which we all agreed was one of the best sermons we had ever heard, and most singularly adapted to country people like ourselves, being on "Wheat and Tares." When dinner was over, my wife and daughter repaired to a neighbouring church, and I went in quest of the camp-meeting, having a mighty desire to know what kind of a thing Methodism at Chester was.

I found about two thousand people gathered together in a field near the railroad station; a waggon stood under some green elms at one end of the field, in which were ten or a dozen men with the look of Methodist preachers; one of these was holding forth to the multitude when I arrived, but he presently sat down, I having, as I suppose, only come in time to hear the fag-end of his sermon. Another succeeded him, who, after speaking for about half an hour, was succeeded by another. All the discourses were vulgar and fanatical, and in some instances unintelligible, at least to my ears. There was plenty of vociferation, but not one single burst of eloquence. Some of the assembly appeared to take considerable interest in what was said, and every now and then showed they did by devout hums and groans; but the generality evidently took little or none, staring about listlessly, or talking to one another. Sometimes, when anything particularly low escaped from the mouth of the speaker, I heard exclamations of "How low! well, I think I could preach better than that," and the like. At length a man of about fifty, pock-broken and somewhat bald, began to speak: unlike the others who screamed, shouted, and seemed in earnest, he spoke in a dry, waggish style, which had all the coarseness and nothing of the cleverness of that of old Rowland Hill, whom I once heard. After a great many jokes, some of them very poor, and others exceedingly threadbare, on the folly of those who sell themselves to the Devil for a little temporary enjoyment, he introduced the subject of drunkenness, or rather drinking fermented liquors, which he seemed to consider the same thing; and many a sorry joke on the folly of drinking them did he crack, which some half-dozen amidst the concourse applauded. At length he said —

"After all, brethren, such drinking is no joking matter, for it is the root of all evil. Now, brethren, if you would all get to heaven, and cheat the enemy of your souls, never go into a public-house to drink, and never fetch any drink from a public-house. Let nothing pass your lips, in the shape of drink, stronger than water or tea. Brethren, if you would cheat the Devil, take the pledge and become teetotalers. I am a teetotaler myself, thank God – though once I was a regular lushington."

Here ensued a burst of laughter in which I joined, though not at the wretched joke, but at the absurdity of the argument; for, according to that argument, I thought my old friends the Spaniards and Portuguese must be the most moral people in the world, being almost all water-drinkers. As the speaker was proceeding with his nonsense, I heard some one say behind me – "A pretty fellow, that,

to speak against drinking and public-houses: he pretends to be reformed, but he is still as fond of the lush as ever. It was only the other day I saw him reeling out of a gin-shop."

Now that speech I did not like, for I saw at once that it could not be true, so I turned quickly round and said —

"Old chap, I can scarcely credit that!"

The man whom I addressed, a rough-and-ready-looking fellow of the lower class, seemed half disposed to return me a savage answer; but an Englishman of the lower class, though you call his word in question, is never savage with you, provided you call him old chap, and he considers you by your dress to be his superior in station. Now I, who had called the word of this man in question, had called him old chap, and was considerably better dressed than himself; so, after a little hesitation, he became quite gentle, and something more, for he said in a half-apologetic tone – "Well, sir, I did not exactly see him myself, but a particular friend of mine heer'd a man say, that he heer'd another man say, that he was told that a man heer'd that that fellow – "

"Come, come!" said I, "a man must not be convicted on evidence like that; no man has more contempt for the doctrine which that man endeavours to inculcate than myself, for I consider it to have been got up partly for fanatical, partly for political purposes; but I will never believe that he was lately seen coming out of a gin-shop; he is too wise, or rather too cunning, for that."

I stayed listening to these people till evening was at hand. I then left them, and without returning to the inn strolled over the bridge to the green, where the tents stood. I went up to them: two women sat at the entrance of one; a man stood by them, and the children, whom I had before seen, were gambolling near at hand. One of the women was about forty, the other some twenty years younger; both were ugly. The younger was a rude, stupid-looking creature, with red cheeks and redder hair, but there was a dash of intelligence and likewise of wildness in the countenance of the elder female, whose complexion and hair were rather dark. The man was about the same age as the elder woman; he had rather a sharp look, and was dressed in hat, white frock-coat, corduroy breeches, long stockings and shoes. I gave them the seal of the evening.

"Good evening to your haner," said the man. "Good evening to you, sir," said the woman; whilst the younger mumbled something, probably to the same effect, but which I did not catch.

"Fine weather," said I.

"Very, sir," said the elder female. "Won't you please to sit down?" and reaching back into the tent, she pulled out a stool which she placed near me.

I sat down on the stool. "You are not from these parts?" said I, addressing myself to the man.

"We are not, your haner," said the man; "we are from Ireland."

"And this lady," said I, motioning with my head to the elder female, "is, I suppose, your wife."

"She is, your haner, and the children which your haner sees are my children."

"And who is this young lady?" said I, motioning to the uncouth-looking girl.

"The young lady, as your haner is pleased to call her, is a daughter of a sister of mine who is now dead, along with her husband. We have her with us, your haner, because if we did not she would be alone in the world."

"And what trade or profession do you follow?" said I.

"We do a bit in the tinkering line, your haner."

"Do you find tinkering a very profitable profession?" said I.

"Not very, your haner; but we contrive to get a crust and a drink by it."

"That's more than I ever could," said I.

"Has your haner then ever followed tinkering?" said the man.

"Yes," said I, "but I soon left off."

"And became a minister," said the elder female. "Well, your honour is not the first indifferent tinker, that's turn'd out a shining minister."

"Why do you think me a minister?"

"Because your honour has the very look and voice of one. Oh, it was kind of your honour to come to us here in the Sabbath evening, in order that you might bring us God."

"What do you mean by bringing you God?" said I.

"Talking to us about good things, sir, and instructing us out of the Holy Book."

"I am no minister," said I.

"Then you are a priest; I am sure that you are either a minister or a priest; and now that I look on you, sir, I think you look more like a priest than a minister. Yes, I see you are a priest. Oh, your Reverence, give us God! pull out the crucifix from your bosom, and let us kiss the face of God!"

"Of what religion are you?" said I.

"Catholics, your Reverence, Catholics are we all."

"I am no priest."

"Then you are a minister; I am sure you are either a priest or a minister. O sir, pull out the Holy Book, and instruct us from it this blessed Sabbath evening. Give us God, sir, give us God!"

"And would you, who are Catholics, listen to the voice of a minister?"

"That would we, sir; at least I would. If you are a minister, and a good minister, I would as soon listen to your words as those of Father Toban himself."

"And who is Father Toban?"

"A powerful priest in these parts, sir, who has more than once eased me of my sins, and given me God upon the cross. Oh, a powerful and comfortable priest is Father Toban."

"And what would he say if he were to know that you asked for God from a minister?"

"I do not know, and do not much care; if I get God, I do not care whether I get Him from a minister or a priest; both have Him, no doubt, only give Him in different ways. O sir, do give us God; we need Him, sir, for we are sinful people; we call ourselves tinkers, but many is the sinful thing – "

"Bi-do-hosd," said the man: Irish words tantamount to "Be silent!"

"I will not be hushed," said the woman, speaking English. "The man is a good man, and he will do us no harm. We are tinkers, sir; but we do many things besides tinkering, many sinful things, especially in Wales, whither we are soon going again. Oh, I want to be eased of some of my sins before I go into Wales again, and so do you Tourlough, for you know how you are sometimes haunted by Devils at night in those dreary Welsh hills. O sir, give us comfort in some shape or other, either as priest or minister; give us God! give us God!"

"I am neither priest nor minister," said I, "and can only say: Lord have mercy upon you!" Then getting up I flung the children some money and departed.

"We do not want your money, sir," screamed the woman after me; "we have plenty of money. Give us God! give us God!"

"Yes, your haner," said the man, "Give us God! we do not want money;" and the uncouth girl said something, which sounded much like Give us God! but I hastened across the meadow, which was now quite dusky, and was presently in the inn with my wife and daughter.

# CHAPTER V

Welsh Book-Stall – Wit and Poetry – Welsh of Chester – Beautiful Morning – Noble Fellow – The Coiling Serpent – Wrexham Church – Welsh or English? – Codiad yr Ehedydd.

On the afternoon of Monday I sent my family off by the train to Llangollen, which place we had determined to make our headquarters during our stay in Wales. I intended to follow them next day, not in train, but on foot, as by walking I should be better able to see the country, between Chester and Llangollen, than by making the journey by the flying vehicle. As I returned to the inn from the train I took refuge from a shower in one of the rows or covered streets, to which, as I have already said, one ascends by flights of steps; stopping at a book-stall I took up a book which chanced to be a Welsh one – the proprietor, a short red-faced man, observing me reading the book, asked me if I could understand it. I told him that I could.

"If so," said he, "let me hear you translate the two lines on the title-page."

"Are you a Welshman?" said I.

"I am!" he replied.

"Good!" said I, and I translated into English the two lines which were a couplet by Edmund Price, an old archdeacon of Merion, celebrated in his day for wit and poetry.

The man then asked me from what part of Wales I came, and when I told him that I was an Englishman was evidently offended, either because he did not believe me, or, as I more incline to think, did not approve of an Englishman's understanding Welsh.

The book was the life of the Rev. Richards, and was published at Caerlleon, or the city of the legion, the appropriate ancient British name for the place now called Chester, a legion having been kept stationed there during the occupation of Britain by the Romans.

I returned to the inn and dined, and then yearning for society, descended into the kitchen and had some conversation with the Welsh maid. She told me that there were a great many Welsh in Chester from all parts of Wales, but chiefly from Denbighshire and Flintshire, which latter was her own county. That a great many children were born in Chester of Welsh parents, and brought up in the fear of God and love of the Welsh tongue. That there were some who had never been in Wales, who spoke as good Welsh as herself, or better. That the Welsh of Chester were of various religious persuasions; that some were Baptists, some Independents, but that the greater parts were Calvinistic-Methodists; that she herself was a Calvinistic-Methodist; that the different persuasions had their different chapels, in which God was prayed to in Welsh; that there were very few Welsh in Chester who belonged to the Church of England, and that the Welsh in general do not like Church of England worship, as I should soon find if I went into Wales.

Late in the evening I directed my steps across the bridge to the green, where I had discoursed with the Irish itinerants. I wished to have some more conversation with them respecting their way of life, and, likewise, as they had so strongly desired it, to give them a little Christian comfort, for my conscience reproached me for my abrupt departure on the preceding evening. On arriving at the green, however, I found them gone, and no traces of them but the mark of their fire and a little dirty straw. I returned, disappointed and vexed, to my inn.

Early the next morning I departed from Chester for Llangollen, distant about twenty miles; I passed over the noble bridge and proceeded along a broad and excellent road, leading in a direction almost due south through pleasant meadows. I felt very happy – and no wonder; the morning was beautiful, the birds sang merrily, and a sweet smell proceeded from the new-cut hay in the fields, and I was bound for Wales. I passed over the river Allan and through two villages called, as I was told, Pulford and Marford, and ascended a hill; from the top of this hill the view is very fine. To the

east are the high lands of Cheshire, to the west the bold hills of Wales, and below, on all sides a fair variety of wood and water, green meads and arable fields.

"You may well look around, Measter," said a waggoner, who, coming from the direction in which I was bound, stopped to breathe his team on the top of the hill; "you may well look around – there isn't such a place to see the country from, far and near, as where we stand. Many come to this place to look about them."

I looked at the man, and thought I had never seen a more powerful-looking fellow; he was about six feet two inches high, immensely broad in the shoulders, and could hardly have weighed less than sixteen stone. I gave him the seal of the morning, and asked whether he was Welsh or English.

"English, Measter, English; born t'other side of Beeston, pure Cheshire, Measter."

"I suppose," said I, "there are few Welshmen such big fellows as yourself."

"No, Measter," said the fellow, with a grin, "there are few Welshmen so big as I, or yourself either, they are small men mostly, Measter, them Welshers, very small men – and yet the fellows can use their hands. I am a bit of a fighter, Measter, at least I was before my wife made me join the Methodist connexion, and I once fit with a Welshman at Wrexham, he came from the hills, and was a real Welshman, and shorter than myself by a whole head and shoulder, but he stood up against me, and gave me more than play for my money, till I gripped him, flung him down and myself upon him, and then of course 'twas all over with him."

"You are a noble fellow," said I, "and a credit to Cheshire. Will you have sixpence to drink?"

"Thank you, Measter, I shall stop at Pulford, and shall be glad to drink your health in a jug of ale."

I gave him sixpence, and descended the hill on one side, while he, with his team, descended it on the other.

"A genuine Saxon," said I; "I dare say just like many of those who, under Hengist, subdued the plains of Lloegr and Britain. Taliesin called the Saxon race the Coiling Serpent. He had better have called it the Big Bull. He was a noble poet, however: what wonderful lines, upon the whole, are those in his prophecy, in which he speaks of the Saxons and Britons, and of the result of their struggle —

"A serpent which coils,
And with fury boils,
From Germany coming with arm'd wings spread,
Shall subdue and shall enthrall
The broad Britain all,
From the Lochlin ocean to Severn's bed.

"And British men
Shall be captives then
To strangers from Saxonia's strand;
They shall praise their God, and hold
Their language as of old,
But except wild Wales they shall lose their land."

I arrived at Wrexham, and having taken a very hearty breakfast at the principal inn, for I felt rather hungry after a morning's walk of ten miles, I walked about the town. The town is reckoned a Welsh town, but its appearance is not Welsh – its inhabitants have neither the look nor language of Welshmen, and its name shows that it was founded by some Saxon adventurer, Wrexham being a Saxon compound, signifying the home or habitation of Rex or Rag, and identical, or nearly so, with the Wroxham of East Anglia. It is a stirring bustling place, of much traffic, and of several thousand inhabitants. Its most remarkable object is its church, which stands at the south-western side. To this

church, after wandering for some time about the streets, I repaired. The tower is quadrangular, and is at least one hundred feet high; it has on its summit four little turrets, one at each corner, between each of which are three spirelets, the middlemost of the three the highest. The nave of the church is to the east; it is of two stories, both crenelated at the top. I wished to see the interior of the church, but found the gate locked. Observing a group of idlers close at hand with their backs against a wall, I went up to them and addressing myself to one, inquired whether I could see the church. "O yes, sir," said the man; "the clerk who has the key lives close at hand; one of us shall go and fetch him; by the bye, I may as well go myself." He moved slowly away. He was a large bulky man of about the middle age, and his companions were about the same age and size as himself. I asked them if they were Welsh. "Yes, sir," said one, "I suppose we are, for they call us Welsh." I asked if any of them could speak Welsh. "No, sir," said the man, "all the Welsh that any of us know, or indeed wish to know, is Cwrw da." Here there was a general laugh. Cwrw da signifies good ale. I at first thought that the words might be intended as a hint for a treat, but was soon convinced of the contrary. There was no greedy expectation in his eyes, nor, indeed, in those of his companions, though they all looked as if they were fond of good ale. I inquired whether much Welsh was spoken in the town, and was told very little. When the man returned with the clerk I thanked him. He told me I was welcome, and then went and leaned with his back against the wall. He and his mates were probably a set of boon companions enjoying the air after a night's bout at drinking. I was subsequently told that all the people of Wrexham are fond of good ale. The clerk unlocked the church door, and conducted me in. The interior was modern, but in no respects remarkable. The clerk informed me that there was a Welsh service every Sunday afternoon in the church, but that few people attended, and those few were almost entirely from the country. He said that neither he nor the clergyman were natives of Wrexham. He showed me the Welsh Church Bible, and at my request read a few verses from the sacred volume. He seemed a highly intelligent man. I gave him something, which appeared to be more than he expected, and departed, after inquiring of him the road to Llangollen.

I crossed a bridge, for there is a bridge and a stream too at Wrexham. The road at first bore due west, but speedily took a southerly direction. I moved rapidly over an undulating country; a region of hills or rather of mountains lay on my right hand. At the entrance of a small village a poor sickly-looking woman asked me for charity.

"Are you Welsh or English?" said I.

"Welsh," she replied; "but I speak both languages, as do all the people here."

I gave her a halfpenny; she wished me luck, and I proceeded. I passed some huge black buildings which a man told me were collieries, and several carts laden with coal, and soon came to Rhiwabon, a large village about half way between Wrexham and Llangollen. I observed in this place nothing remarkable, but an ancient church. My way from hence lay nearly west. I ascended a hill, from the top of which I looked down into a smoky valley. I descended, passing by a great many collieries, in which I observed grimy men working amidst smoke and flame. At the bottom of the hill near a bridge I turned round. A ridge to the east particularly struck my attention; it was covered with dusky edifices, from which proceeded thundering sounds, and puffs of smoke. A woman passed me going towards Rhiwabon; I pointed to the ridge and asked its name; I spoke English. The woman shook her head and replied, "Dim Saesneg."

"This is as it should be," said I to myself; "I now feel I am in Wales." I repeated the question in Welsh.

"Cefn Bach," she replied – which signifies the little ridge.

"Diolch iti," I replied, and proceeded on my way.

I was now in a wide valley – enormous hills were on my right. The road was good; and above it, in the side of a steep bank, was a causeway intended for foot passengers. It was overhung with hazel bushes. I walked along it to its termination, which was at Llangollen. I found my wife and daughter at the principal inn. They had already taken a house. We dined together at the inn; during the dinner

we had music, for a Welsh harper stationed in the passage played upon his instrument “Codiad yr ehedydd.” “Of a surety,” said I, “I am in Wales!”

# CHAPTER VI

Llangollen – Wyn Ab Nudd – The Dee – Dinas Bran.

The northern side of the vale of Llangollen is formed by certain enormous rocks, called the Eglwysig rocks, which extend from east to west, a distance of about two miles. The southern side is formed by the Berwyn hills. The valley is intersected by the River Dee, the origin of which is a deep lake near Bala, about twenty miles to the west. Between the Dee and the Eglwysig rises a lofty hill, on the top of which are the ruins of Dinas Bran, which bear no slight resemblance to a crown. The upper part of the hill is bare with the exception of what is covered by the ruins; on the lower part there are inclosures and trees, with, here and there, a grove or farm-house. On the other side of the valley, to the east of Llangollen, is a hill called Pen y Coed, beautifully covered with trees of various kinds; it stands between the river and the Berwyn, even as the hill of Dinas Bran stands between the river and the Eglwysig rocks – it does not, however, confront Dinas Bran, which stands more to the west.

Llangollen is a small town or large village of white houses with slate roofs, it contains about two thousand inhabitants, and is situated principally on the southern side of the Dee. At its western end it has an ancient bridge and a modest unpretending church nearly in its centre, in the chancel of which rest the mortal remains of an old bard called Gryffydd Hiraethog. From some of the houses on the southern side there is a noble view – Dinas Bran and its mighty hill forming the principal objects. The view from the northern part of the town, which is indeed little more than a suburb, is not quite so grand, but is nevertheless highly interesting. The eastern entrance of the vale of Llangollen is much wider than the western, which is overhung by bulky hills. There are many pleasant villas on both sides of the river, some of which stand a considerable way up the hill; of the villas the most noted is Plas Newydd at the foot of the Berwyn, built by two Irish ladies of high rank, who resided in it for nearly half-a-century, and were celebrated throughout Europe by the name of the Ladies of Llangollen.

The view of the hill of Dinas Bran, from the southern side of Llangollen, would be much more complete were it not for a bulky excrescence, towards its base, which prevents the gazer from obtaining a complete view. The name of Llangollen signifies the church of Collen, and the vale and village take their name from the church, which was originally dedicated to Saint Collen, though some, especially the neighbouring peasantry, suppose that Llangollen is a compound of Llan a church and Collen a hazel-wood, and that the church was called the church of the hazel-wood from the number of hazels in the neighbourhood. Collen, according to a legendary life, which exists of him in Welsh, was a Briton by birth, and of illustrious ancestry. He served for some time abroad as a soldier against Julian the Apostate, and slew a Pagan champion who challenged the best man amongst the Christians. Returning to his own country, he devoted himself to religion, and became Abbot of Glastonbury, but subsequently retired to a cave on the side of a mountain, where he lived a life of great austerity. Once as he was lying in his cell he heard two men out abroad discoursing about Wyn Ab Nudd, and saying that he was king of the Tylwyth Teg or Fairies, and lord of Unknown, whereupon Collen thrusting his head out of his cave told them to hold their tongues, for that Wyn Ab Nudd and his host were merely devils. At dead of night he heard a knocking at the door, and on his asking who was there, a voice said: “I am a messenger from Wyn Ab Nudd, king of Unknown, and I am come to summon thee to appear before my master to-morrow, at midday, on the top of the hill.”

Collen did not go. The next night there was the same knocking and the same message. Still Collen did not go. The third night the messenger came again and repeated his summons, adding that if he did not go it would be the worse for him. The next day Collen made some holy water, put it into a pitcher and repaired to the top of the hill, where he saw a wonderfully fine castle, attendants in magnificent liveries, youths and damsels dancing with nimble feet, and a man of honourable presence before the gate, who told him that the king was expecting him to dinner. Collen followed the man

into the castle, and beheld the king on a throne of gold, and a table magnificently spread before him. The king welcomed Collen, and begged him to taste of the dainties on the table, adding that he hoped that in future he would reside with him. “I will not eat of the leaves of the forest,” said Collen.

“Did you ever see men better dressed?” said the king, “than my attendants here in red and blue?”

“Their dress is good enough,” said Collen, “considering what kind of dress it is.”

“What kind of dress is it?” said the king.

Collen replied: “The red on the one side denotes burning, and the blue on the other side denotes freezing.” Then drawing forth his sprinkler, he flung the holy water in the faces of the king and his people, whereupon the whole vision disappeared, so that there was neither castle nor attendants, nor youth nor damsel, nor musician with his music, nor banquet, nor anything to be seen save the green bushes.

The valley of the Dee, of which the Llangollen district forms part, is called in the British tongue Glyndyfrdwy – that is, the valley of the Dwy or Dee. The celebrated Welsh chieftain, generally known as Owen Glendower, was surnamed after the valley, the whole of which belonged to him, and in which he had two or three places of strength, though his general abode was a castle in Sycharth, a valley to the south-east of the Berwyn, and distant about twelve miles from Llangollen.

Connected with the Dee there is a wonderful Druidical legend to the following effect. The Dee springs from two fountains, high up in Merionethshire, called Dwy Fawr and Dwy Fach, or the great and little Dwy, whose waters pass through those of the lake of Bala without mingling with them, and come out at its northern extremity. These fountains had their names from two individuals, Dwy Fawr and Dwy Fach, who escaped from the Deluge, when all the rest of the human race were drowned, and the passing of the waters of the two fountains through the lake, without being confounded with its flood, is emblematic of the salvation of the two individuals from the Deluge, of which the lake is a type.

Dinas Bran, which crowns the top of the mighty hill on the northern side of the valley, is a ruined stronghold of unknown antiquity. The name is generally supposed to signify Crow Castle, bran being the British word for crow, and flocks of crows being frequently seen hovering over it. It may, however, mean the castle of Bran or Brennus, or the castle above the Bran, a brook which flows at its foot.

Dinas Bran was a place quite impregnable in the old time, and served as a retreat to Gruffydd, son of Madawg, from the rage of his countrymen, who were incensed against him because, having married Emma, the daughter of James Lord Audley, he had, at the instigation of his wife and father-in-law, sided with Edward the First against his own native sovereign. But though it could shield him from his foes, it could not preserve him from remorse and the stings of conscience, of which he speedily died.

At present the place consists only of a few ruined walls, and probably consisted of little more two or three hundred years ago: Roger Cyffyn, a Welsh bard who flourished at the beginning of the seventeenth century, wrote an englyn upon it, of which the following is a translation: —

“Gone, gone are thy gates, Dinas Bran on the height!
Thy warders are blood-crows and ravens, I trow;
Now no one will wend from the field of the fight
To the fortress on high, save the raven and crow.”

# CHAPTER VII

Poor Black Cat – Dissenters – Persecution – What Impudence!

The house or cottage, for it was called a cottage though it consisted of two stories, in which my wife had procured lodgings for us, was situated in the northern suburb. Its front was towards a large perllan or orchard, which sloped down gently to the banks of the Dee; its back was towards the road leading from Wrexham, behind which was a high bank, on the top of which was a canal called in Welsh the Camlas, whose commencement was up the valley about two miles west. A little way up the road, towards Wrexham, was the vicarage, and a little way down was a flannel factory, beyond which was a small inn, with pleasure grounds, kept by an individual who had once been a gentleman's servant. The mistress of the house was a highly respectable widow, who with a servant maid was to wait upon us. It was as agreeable a place in all respects as people like ourselves could desire.

As I and my family sat at tea in our parlour, an hour or two after we had taken possession of our lodgings, the door of the room and that of the entrance to the house being open, on account of the fineness of the weather, a poor black cat entered hastily, sat down on the carpet by the table, looked up towards us, and mewed piteously. I never had seen so wretched a looking creature. It was dreadfully attenuated, being little more than skin and bone, and was sorely afflicted with an eruptive malady. And here I may as well relate the history of this cat previous to our arrival, which I subsequently learned by bits and snatches. It had belonged to a previous vicar of Llangollen, and had been left behind at his departure. His successor brought with him dogs and cats, who conceiving that the late vicar's cat had no business at the vicarage, drove it forth to seek another home, which, however, it could not find. Almost all the people of the suburb were dissenters, as indeed were the generality of the people of Llangollen, and knowing the cat to be a church cat, not only would not harbour it, but did all they could to make it miserable; whilst the few who were not dissenters, would not receive it into their houses, either because they had cats of their own, or dogs, or did not want a cat, so that the cat had no home, and was dreadfully persecuted by nine-tenths of the suburb. O, there never was a cat so persecuted as that poor Church of England animal, and solely on account of the opinions which it was supposed to have imbibed in the house of its late master, for I never could learn that the dissenters of the suburb, nor indeed of Llangollen in general, were in the habit of persecuting other cats; the cat was a Church of England cat, and that was enough: stone it, hang it, drown it! were the cries of almost everybody. If the workmen of the flannel factory, all of whom were Calvinistic Methodists, chanced to get a glimpse of it in the road from the windows of the building, they would sally forth in a body, and with sticks, stones, or for want of other weapons, with clots of horse-dung, of which there was always plenty on the road, would chase it up the high bank or perhaps over the Camlas – the inhabitants of a small street between our house and the factory leading from the road to the river, all of whom were dissenters, if they saw it moving about the perllan, into which their back windows looked, would shriek and hoot at it, and fling anything of no value, which came easily to hand at the head or body of the ecclesiastical cat. The good woman of the house, who though a very excellent person, was a bitter dissenter, whenever she saw it upon her ground or heard it was there, would make after it, frequently attended by her maid Margaret, and her young son, a boy about nine years of age, both of whom hated the cat, and were always ready to attack it, either alone or in company, and no wonder, the maid being not only a dissenter, but a class teacher, and the boy not only a dissenter, but intended for the dissenting ministry. Where it got its food, and food it sometimes must have got, for even a cat, an animal known to have nine lives, cannot live without food, was only known to itself, as was the place where it lay, for even a cat must lie down sometimes; though a labouring man who occasionally dug in the garden told me he believed that in the springtime it ate freshets, and the woman of the house once said that she believed it sometimes slept in the hedge,

which hedge, by the bye, divided our perllan from the vicarage grounds, which were very extensive. Well might the cat after having led this kind of life for better than two years look mere skin and bone when it made its appearance in our apartment, and have an eruptive malady, and also a bronchitic cough, for I remember it had both. How it came to make its appearance there is a mystery, for it had never entered the house before, even when there were lodgers; that it should not visit the woman, who was its declared enemy, was natural enough, but why if it did not visit her other lodgers, did it visit us? Did instinct keep it aloof from them? Did instinct draw it towards us? We gave it some bread-and-butter, and a little tea with milk and sugar. It ate and drank and soon began to purr. The good woman of the house was horrified when on coming in to remove the things she saw the church cat on her carpet. “What impudence!” she exclaimed, and made towards it, but on our telling her that we did not expect that it should be disturbed, she let it alone. A very remarkable circumstance was, that though the cat had hitherto been in the habit of flying not only from her face, but the very echo of her voice, it now looked her in the face with perfect composure, as much as to say, “I don’t fear you, for I know that I am now safe and with my own people.” It stayed with us two hours and then went away. The next morning it returned. To be short, though it went away every night, it became our own cat, and one of our family. I gave it something which cured it of its eruption, and through good treatment it soon lost its other ailments and began to look sleek and bonny.

# CHAPTER VIII

The Mowers – Deep Welsh – Extensive View – Old Celtic Hatred – Fish-Preserving – Smollett's Morgan.

Next morning I set out to ascend Dinas Bran; a number of children, almost entirely girls, followed me. I asked them why they came after me. "In the hope that you will give us something," said one in very good English. I told them that I should give them nothing, but they still followed me. A little way up the hill I saw some men cutting hay. I made an observation to one of them respecting the fineness of the weather; he answered civilly, and rested on his scythe, whilst the others pursued their work. I asked him whether he was a farming man; he told me that he was not; that he generally worked at the flannel manufactory, but that for some days past he had not been employed there, work being slack, and had on that account joined the mowers in order to earn a few shillings. I asked him how it was he knew how to handle a scythe, not being bred up a farming man; he smiled, and said that, somehow or other, he had learnt to do so.

"You speak very good English," said I, "have you much Welsh?"

"Plenty," said he; "I am a real Welshman."

"Can you read Welsh?" said I.

"O, yes!" he replied.

"What books have you read?" said I.

"I have read the Bible, sir, and one or two other books."

"Did you ever read the *Bardd Cwsg*?" said I.

He looked at me with some surprise.

"No," said he, after a moment or two, "I have never read it. I have seen it, but it was far too deep Welsh for me."

"I have read it," said I.

"Are you a Welshman?" said he.

"No," said I; "I am an Englishman."

"And how is it," said he, "that you can read Welsh without being a Welshman?"

"I learned to do so," said I, "even as you learned to mow, without being bred up to farming work."

"Ah!" said he, "but it is easier to learn to mow than to read the *Bardd Cwsg*."

"I don't know that," said I; "I have taken up a scythe a hundred times, but I cannot mow."

"Will your honour take mine now, and try again?" said he.

"No," said I, "for if I take your scythe in hand I must give you a shilling, you know, by mowers' law."

He gave a broad grin, and I proceeded up the hill. When he rejoined his companions he said something to them in Welsh, at which they all laughed. I reached the top of the hill, the children still attending me.

The view over the vale is very beautiful; but on no side, except in the direction of the west, is it very extensive, Dinas Bran being on all other sides overtopped by other hills: in that direction, indeed, the view is extensive enough, reaching on a fine day even to the Wyddfa or peak of Snowdon, a distance of sixty miles, at least as some say, who perhaps ought to add, to very good eyes, which mine are not. The day that I made my first ascent of Dinas Bran was very clear, but I do not think I saw the Wyddfa then from the top of Dinas Bran. It is true I might see it without knowing it, being utterly unacquainted with it, except by name; but I repeat I do not think I saw it, and I am quite sure that I did not see it from the top of Dinas Bran on a subsequent ascent, on a day equally clear, when if I had seen the Wyddfa I must have recognized it, having been at its top. As I stood gazing around

the children danced about upon the grass, and sang a song. The song was English. I descended the hill; they followed me to its foot, and then left me. The children of the lower class of Llangollen are great pests to visitors. The best way to get rid of them is to give them nothing: I followed that plan, and was not long troubled with them.

Arrived at the foot of the hill, I walked along the bank of the canal to the west. Presently I came to a barge lying by the bank; the boatman was in it. I entered into conversation with him. He told me that the canal and its branches extended over a great part of England. That the boats carried slates – that he had frequently gone as far as Paddington by the canal – that he was generally three weeks on the journey – that the boatmen and their families lived in the little cabins aft – that the boatmen were all Welsh – that they could read English, but little or no Welsh – that English was a much more easy language to read than Welsh – that they passed by many towns, among others Northampton, and that he liked no place so much as Llangollen. I proceeded till I came to a place where some people were putting huge slates into a canal boat. It was near a bridge which crossed the Dee, which was on the left. I stopped and entered into conversation with one, who appeared to be the principal man. He told me amongst other things that he was a blacksmith from the neighbourhood of Rhiwabon, and that the flags were intended for the flooring of his premises. In the boat was an old bareheaded, bare-armed fellow, who presently joined in the conversation in very broken English. He told me that his name was Joseph Hughes, and that he was a real Welshman and was proud of being so; he expressed a great dislike for the English, who he said were in the habit of making fun of him and ridiculing his language; he said that all the fools that he had known were Englishmen. I told him that all Englishmen were not fools. “But the greater part are,” said he. “Look how they work,” said I. “Yes,” said he, “some of them are good at breaking stones for the road, but not more than one in a hundred.” “There seems to be something of the old Celtic hatred to the Saxon in this old fellow,” said I to myself, as I walked away.

I proceeded till I came to the head of the canal, where the navigation first commences. It is close to a weir, over which the Dee falls. Here there is a little floodgate, through which water rushes from an oblong pond or reservoir, fed by water from a corner of the upper part of the weir. On the left, or south-west side, is a mound of earth fenced with stones which is the commencement of the bank of the canal. The pond or reservoir above the floodgate is separated from the weir by a stone wall on the left, or south-west side. This pond has two floodgates, the one already mentioned, which opens into the canal, and another, on the other side of the stone mound, opening to the lower part of the weir. Whenever, as a man told me who was standing near, it is necessary to lay the bed of the canal dry in the immediate neighbourhood for the purpose of making repairs, the floodgate to the canal is closed, and the one to the lower part of the weir is opened, and then the water from the pond flows into the Dee, whilst a sluice, near the first lock, lets out the water of the canal into the river. The head of the canal is situated in a very beautiful spot. To the left or south is a lofty hill covered with wood. To the right is a beautiful slope or lawn, on the top of which is a pretty villa, to which you can get by a little wooden bridge over the floodgate of the canal, and indeed forming part of it. Few things are so beautiful in their origin as this canal, which, be it known, with its locks and its aqueducts, the grandest of which last is the stupendous erection near Stockport, which by the bye filled my mind when a boy with wonder, constitutes the grand work of England, and yields to nothing in the world of the kind, with the exception of the great canal of China.

Retracing my steps some way I got upon the river’s bank and then again proceeded in the direction of the west. I soon came to a cottage nearly opposite a bridge, which led over the river, not the bridge which I have already mentioned, but one much smaller, and considerably higher up the valley. The cottage had several dusky outbuildings attached to it, and a paling before it. Leaning over the paling in his shirt-sleeves was a dark-faced, short, thickset man, who saluted me in English. I returned his salutation, stopped, and was soon in conversation with him. I praised the beauty of the river and its banks: he said that both were beautiful and delightful in summer, but not at all in winter,

for then the trees and bushes on the banks were stripped of their leaves, and the river was a frightful torrent. He asked me if I had been to see the place called the Robber's Leap, as strangers generally went to see it. I inquired where it was.

"Yonder," said he, pointing to some distance down the river.

"Why is it called the Robber's Leap?" said I.

"It is called the Robber's Leap, or Llam y Lleidyr," said he, "because a thief pursued by justice once leaped across the river there and escaped. It was an awful leap, and he well deserved to escape after taking it." I told him that I should go and look at it on some future opportunity, and then asked if there were many fish in the river. He said there were plenty of salmon and trout, and that owing to the river being tolerably high, a good many had been caught during the last few days. I asked him who enjoyed the right of fishing in the river. He said that in these parts the fishing belonged to two or three proprietors, who either preserved the fishing for themselves, as they best could by means of keepers, or let it out to other people; and that many individuals came not only from England, but from France and Germany and even Russia for the purpose of fishing, and that the keepers of the proprietors from whom they purchased permission to fish went with them, to show them the best places, and to teach them how to fish. He added that there was a report that the river would shortly be rhydd, or free, and open to any one. I said that it would be a bad thing to fling the river open, as in that event the fish would be killed at all times and seasons, and eventually all destroyed. He replied that he questioned whether more fish would be taken then than now, and that I must not imagine that the fish were much protected by what was called preserving; that the people to whom the lands in the neighbourhood belonged, and those who paid for fishing did not catch a hundredth part of the fish which were caught in the river: that the proprietors went with their keepers, and perhaps caught two or three stone of fish, or that strangers went with the keepers, whom they paid for teaching them how to fish, and perhaps caught half-a-dozen fish, and that shortly after the keepers would return and catch on their own account sixty stone of fish from the very spot where the proprietors or strangers had great difficulty in catching two or three stone or the half-dozen fish, or the poachers would go and catch a yet greater quantity. He added that gentry did not understand how to catch fish, and that to attempt to preserve was nonsense. I told him that if the river was flung open everybody would fish; he said that I was much mistaken, that hundreds who were now poachers would then keep at home, mind their proper trades, and never use line or spear; that folks always longed to do what they were forbidden, and that Shimei would never have crossed the brook provided he had not been told he should be hanged if he did. That he himself had permission to fish in the river whenever he pleased, but never availed himself of it, though in his young time, when he had no leave, he had been an arrant poacher.

The manners and way of speaking of this old personage put me very much in mind of those of Morgan, described by Smollett in his immortal novel of *Roderick Random*. I had more discourse with him: I asked him in what line of business he was – he told me that he sold coals. From his complexion, and the hue of his shirt, I had already concluded that he was in some grimy trade. I then inquired of what religion he was, and received for answer that he was a Baptist. I thought that both himself and part of his apparel would look all the better for a good immersion. We talked of the war then raging – he said it was between the false prophet and the Dragon. I asked him who the Dragon was – he said the Turk. I told him that the Pope was far worse than either the Turk or the Russian, that his religion was the vilest idolatry, and that he would let no one alone. That it was the Pope who drove his fellow religionists the Anabaptists out of the Netherlands. He asked me how long ago that was. Between two and three hundred years, I replied. He asked me the meaning of the word Anabaptist; I told him; whereupon he expressed great admiration for my understanding, and said that he hoped he should see me again.

I inquired of him to what place the bridge led; he told me that if I passed over it, and ascended a high bank beyond, I should find myself on the road from Llangollen to Corwen, and that if I wanted

to go to Llangollen I must turn to the left. I thanked him, and passing over the bridge, and ascending the bank, found myself upon a broad road. I turned to the left, and walking briskly, in about half-an-hour reached our cottage in the northern suburb, where I found my family and dinner awaiting me.

# CHAPTER IX

The Dinner – English Foibles – Pengwern – The Yew-Tree – Carn-Lleidyr – Applications of a Term.

For dinner we had salmon and leg of mutton; the salmon from the Dee, the leg from the neighbouring Berwyn. The salmon was good enough, but I had eaten better; and here it will not be amiss to say, that the best salmon in the world is caught in the Suir, a river that flows past the beautiful town of Clonmel in Ireland. As for the leg of mutton, it was truly wonderful; nothing so good had I ever tasted in the shape of a leg of mutton. The leg of mutton of Wales beats the leg of mutton of any other country, and I had never tasted a Welsh leg of mutton before. Certainly I shall never forget the first Welsh leg of mutton which I tasted, rich but delicate, replete with juices derived from the aromatic herbs of the noble Berwyn, cooked to a turn, and weighing just four pounds.

"O its savoury smell was great,
Such as might well tempt, I trow,
One that's dead to lift his brow."

Let any one who wishes to eat leg of mutton in perfection go to Wales, but mind you to eat leg of mutton only. Welsh leg of mutton is superlative; but with the exception of the leg, the mutton of Wales is decidedly inferior to that of many other parts of Britain.

Here, perhaps, as I have told the reader what we ate for dinner, it will be as well to tell him what we drank at dinner. Let him know, then, that with our salmon we drank water, and with our mutton ale, even ale of Llangollen; but not the best ale of Llangollen; it was very fair; but I subsequently drank far better Llangollen ale than that which I drank at our first dinner in our cottage at Llangollen.

In the evening I went across the bridge and strolled along in a south-east direction. Just as I had cleared the suburb a man joined me from a cottage, on the top of a high bank, whom I recognized as the mower with whom I had held discourse in the morning. He saluted me and asked me if I were taking a walk. I told him I was, whereupon he said that if I were not too proud to wish to be seen walking with a poor man like himself, he should wish to join me. I told him I should be glad of his company, and that I was not ashamed to be seen walking with any person, however poor, who conducted himself with propriety. He replied that I must be very different from my countrymen in general, who were ashamed to be seen walking with any people who were not, at least, as well-dressed as themselves. I said that my country-folk in general had a great many admirable qualities, but at the same time a great many foibles, foremost amongst which last was a crazy admiration for what they called gentility, which made them sycophantic to their superiors in station, and extremely insolent to those whom they considered below them. He said that I had spoken his very thoughts, and then asked me whether I wished to be taken the most agreeable walk near Llangollen.

On my replying by all means, he led me along the road to the south-east. A pleasant road it proved: on our right at some distance was the mighty Berwyn; close on our left the hill called Pen y Coed. I asked him what was beyond the Berwyn?

"A very wild country, indeed," he replied, "consisting of wood, rock, and river; in fact, an anialwch."

He then asked if I knew the meaning of anialwch.

"A wilderness," I replied, "you will find the word in the Welsh Bible."

"Very true, sir," said he, "it was there I met it, but I did not know the meaning of it, till it was explained to me by one of our teachers."

On my inquiring of what religion he was, he told me he was a Calvinistic Methodist.

We passed an ancient building which stood on our right. I turned round to look at it. Its back was to the road: at its eastern end was a fine arched window like the oriel window of a church.

"That building," said my companion, "is called Pengwern Hall. It was once a convent of nuns; a little time ago a farm-house, but is now used as a barn, and a place of stowage. Till lately it belonged to the Mostyn family, but they disposed of it, with the farm on which it stood, together with several other farms, to certain people from Liverpool, who now live yonder," pointing to a house a little way farther on. I still looked at the edifice.

"You seem to admire the old building," said my companion.

"I was not admiring it," said I; "I was thinking of the difference between its present and former state. Formerly it was a place devoted to gorgeous idolatry and obscene lust; now it is a quiet old barn in which hay and straw are placed, and broken tumbrils stowed away: surely the hand of God is visible here?"

"It is so, sir," said the man in a respectful tone, "and so it is in another place in this neighbourhood. About three miles from here, in the north-west part of the valley, is an old edifice. It is now a farm-house, but was once a splendid abbey, and was called – "

"The abbey of the vale of the cross," said I; "I have read a deal about it. Iolo Goch, the bard of your celebrated hero, Owen Glendower, was buried somewhere in its precincts."

We went on: my companion took me over a stile behind the house which he had pointed out, and along a path through hazel coppices. After a little time I inquired whether there were any Papists in Llangollen.

"No," said he, "there is not one of that family at Llangollen, but I believe there are some in Flintshire, at a place called Holywell, where there is a pool or fountain, the waters of which it is said they worship."

"And so they do," said I, "true to the old Indian superstition, of which their religion is nothing but a modification. The Indians and sepoys worship stocks and stones, and the river Ganges, and our Papists worship stocks and stones, holy wells and fountains."

He put some questions to me about the origin of nuns and friars. I told him they originated in India, and made him laugh heartily by showing him the original identity of nuns and nautch-girls, begging priests and begging Brahmins. We passed by a small house with an enormous yew-tree before it; I asked him who lived there.

"No one," he replied, "it is to let. It was originally a cottage, but the proprietors have furbished it up a little, and call it yew-tree villa."

"I suppose they would let it cheap," said I.

"By no means," he replied, "they ask eighty pounds a year for it."

"What could have induced them to set such a rent upon it?" I demanded.

"The yew-tree, sir, which is said to be the largest in Wales. They hope that some of the grand gentry will take the house for the romance of the yew-tree, but somehow or other nobody has taken it, though it has been to let for three seasons."

We soon came to a road leading east and west.

"This way," said he, pointing in the direction of the west, "leads back to Llangollen, the other to Offa's Dyke and England."

We turned to the west. He inquired if I had ever heard before of Offa's Dyke.

"O yes," said I, "it was built by an old Saxon king called Offa, against the incursions of the Welsh."

"There was a time," said my companion, "when it was customary for the English to cut off the ears of every Welshman who was found to the east of the dyke, and for the Welsh to hang every Englishman whom they found to the west of it. Let us be thankful that we are now more humane to each other. We are now on the north side of Pen y Coed. Do you know the meaning of Pen y Coed, sir?"

"Pen y Coed," said I, "means the head of the wood. I suppose that in the old time the mountain looked over some extensive forest, even as the nunnery of Pengwern looked originally over an alder-swamp, for Pengwern means the head of the alder-swamp."

"So it does, sir; I shouldn't wonder if you could tell me the real meaning of a word, about which I have thought a good deal, and about which I was puzzling my head last night as I lay in bed."

"What may it be?" said I.

"Carn-lleidyr," he replied: "now, sir, do you know the meaning of that word?"

"I think I do," said I.

"What may it be, sir?"

"First let me hear what you conceive its meaning to be," said I.

"Why, sir, I should say that Carn-lleidyr is an out-and-out thief – one worse than a thief of the common sort. Now, if I steal a matrass I am a lleidyr, that is a thief of the common sort; but if I carry it to a person, and he buys it, knowing it to be stolen, I conceive he is a far worse thief than I; in fact, a carn-lleidyr."

"The word is a double word," said I, "compounded of carn and lleidyr. The original meaning of carn is a heap of stones, and carn-lleidyr means properly a thief without house or home, and with no place on which to rest his head, save the carn or heap of stones on the bleak top of the mountain. For a long time the word was only applied to a thief of that description, who, being without house and home, was more desperate than other thieves, and as savage and brutish as the wolves and foxes with whom he occasionally shared his pillow, the carn. In course of time, however, the original meaning was lost or disregarded, and the term carn-lleidyr was applied to any particular dishonest person. At present there can be no impropriety in calling a person who receives a matrass, knowing it to be stolen, a carn-lleidyr, seeing that he is worse than the thief who stole it, or in calling a knavish attorney a carn-lleidyr, seeing that he does far more harm than a common pick-pocket; or in calling the Pope so, seeing that he gets huge sums of money out of people by pretending to be able to admit their souls to heaven, or to hurl them to the other place, knowing all the time that he has no such power; perhaps, indeed, at the present day the term carn-lleidyr is more applicable to the Pope than to any one else, for he is certainly the arch-thief of the world. So much for Carn-lleidyr. But I must here tell you that the term carn may be applied to any one who is particularly bad or disagreeable in any respect, and now I remember, has been applied for centuries both in prose and poetry. One Lewis Glyn Cothi, a poet, who lived more than three hundred years ago, uses the word carn in the sense of arrant or exceedingly bad, for in his abusive ode to the town of Chester, he says that the women of London itself were never more carn strumpets than those of Chester, by which he means that there were never more arrant harlots in the world than those of the cheese capital. And the last of your great poets, Gronwy Owen, who flourished about the middle of the last century, complains in a letter to a friend, whilst living in a village of Lancashire, that he was amongst Carn Saeson. He found all English disagreeable enough, but those of Lancashire particularly so – savage, brutish louts, out-and-out John Bulls, and therefore he called them Carn Saeson."

"Thank you, sir," said my companion; "I now thoroughly understand the meaning of carn. Whenever I go to Chester, and a dressed-up madam jostles against me, I shall call her carn-butein. The Pope of Rome I shall in future term carn-lleidyr y byd, or the arch-thief of the world. And whenever I see a stupid, brutal Englishman swaggering about Llangollen, and looking down upon us poor Welsh, I shall say to myself, Get home, you carn Sais! Well, sir, we are now near Llangollen; I must turn to the left. You go straight forward. I never had such an agreeable walk in my life. May I ask your name?"

I told him my name, and asked him for his.

"Edward Jones," he replied.

# CHAPTER X

The Berwyn – Mountain Cottage – The Barber's Pole.

On the following morning I strolled up the Berwyn on the south-west of the town, by a broad winding path, which was at first very steep, but by degrees became less so. When I had accomplished about three parts of the ascent I came to a place where the road, or path, divided into two. I took the one to the left, which seemingly led to the top of the mountain, and presently came to a cottage from which a dog rushed barking towards me; an old woman, however, coming to the door, called him back. I said a few words to her in Welsh, whereupon in broken English she asked me to enter the cottage and take a glass of milk. I went in and sat down on a chair which a sickly-looking young woman handed to me. I asked her in English who she was, but she made no answer, whereupon the old woman told me that she was her daughter and had no English. I then asked her in Welsh what was the matter with her; she replied that she had the cryd or ague. The old woman now brought me a glass of milk, and said in the Welsh language that she hoped that I should like it. What further conversation we had was in the Cambrian tongue. I asked the name of the dog, who was now fondling upon me, and was told that his name was Pharaoh. I inquired if they had any books, and was shown two, one a common Bible printed by the Bible Society, and the other a volume in which the Book of Prayer of the Church of England was bound up with the Bible, both printed at Oxford, about the middle of the last century. I found that both mother and daughter were Calvinistic Methodists. After a little further discourse I got up and gave the old woman twopence for the milk; she accepted it, but with great reluctance. I inquired whether by following the road I could get to the Pen y bryn or the top of the hill. They shook their heads and the young woman said that I could not, as the road presently took a turn and went down. I asked her how I could get to the top of the hill. "Which part of the top?" said she. "I'r gor-uchaf," I replied. "That must be where the barber's pole stands," said she. "Why does the barber's pole stand there?" said I. "A barber was hanged there a long time ago," said she, "and the pole was placed to show the spot." "Why was he hanged?" said I. "For murdering his wife," said she. I asked her some questions about the murder, but the only information she could give me was, that it was a very bad murder and occurred a long time ago. I had observed the pole from our garden at Llangollen, but had concluded that it was a common flagstaff. I inquired the way to it. It was not visible from the cottage, but they gave me directions how to reach it. I bade them farewell, and in about a quarter of an hour reached the pole on the top of the hill. I imagined that I should have a glorious view of the vale of Llangollen from the spot where it stood; the view, however, did not answer my expectations. I returned to Llangollen by nearly the same way by which I had come.

The remainder of the day I spent entirely with my family, whom at their particular request I took in the evening to see Plas Newydd, once the villa of the two ladies of Llangollen. It lies on the farther side of the bridge, at a little distance from the back part of the church. There is a thoroughfare through the grounds, which are not extensive. Plas Newydd, or the New Place, is a small, gloomy mansion, with a curious dairy on the right-hand side, as you go up to it, and a remarkable stone pump. An old man whom we met in the grounds, and with whom I entered into conversation, said that he remembered the building of the house, and that the place where it now stands was called before its erection Pen y maes, or the head of the field.

# CHAPTER XI

Welsh Farm-house – A Poet's Grandson – Hospitality – Mountain Village – Madoc – The Native Valley – Corpse Candles – The Midnight Call.

My curiosity having been rather excited with respect to the country beyond the Berwyn, by what my friend, the intelligent flannel-worker, had told me about it, I determined to go and see it. Accordingly on Friday morning I set out. Having passed by Pengwern Hall I turned up a lane in the direction of the south, with a brook on the right running amongst hazels. I presently arrived at a small farm-house standing on the left with a little yard before it. Seeing a woman at the door I asked her in English if the road in which I was would take me across the mountain. She said it would, and forthwith cried to a man working in a field, who left his work and came towards us. "That is my husband," said she; "he has more English than I."

The man came up and addressed me in very good English: he had a brisk, intelligent look, and was about sixty. I repeated the question which I had put to his wife, and he also said that by following the road I could get across the mountain. We soon got into conversation. He told me that the little farm in which he lived belonged to the person who had bought Pengwern Hall. He said that he was a good kind of gentleman, but did not like the Welsh. I asked him if the gentleman in question did not like the Welsh why he came to live among them. He smiled, and I then said that I liked the Welsh very much, and was particularly fond of their language. He asked me whether I could read Welsh, and on my telling him I could, he said that if I would walk in he would show me a Welsh book. I went with him and his wife into a neat kind of kitchen, flagged with stone, where were several young people, their children. I spoke some Welsh to them which appeared to give them great satisfaction. The man went to a shelf and taking down a book put it into my hand. It was a Welsh book, and the title of it in English was *Evening Work of the Welsh*. It contained the lives of illustrious Welshmen, commencing with that of Cadwalader. I read a page of it aloud, while the family stood round and wondered to hear a Saxon read their language. I entered into discourse with the man about Welsh poetry, and repeated the famous prophecy of Taliesin about the Coiling Serpent. I asked him if the Welsh had any poets at the present day. "Plenty," said he, "and good ones – Wales can never be without a poet." Then after a pause he said that he was the grandson of a great poet.

"Do you bear his name?" said I.

"I do," he replied.

"What may it be?"

"Hughes," he answered.

"Two of the name of Hughes have been poets," said I – "one was Huw Hughes, generally termed the Bardd Coch, or red bard; he was an Anglesea man, and the friend of Lewis Morris and Gronwy Owen – the other was Jonathan Hughes, where he lived I know not."

"He lived here, in this very house," said the man; "Jonathan Hughes was my grandfather!" and as he spoke his eyes flashed fire.

"Dear me!" said I; "I read some of his pieces thirty-two years ago when I was a lad in England. I think I can repeat some of the lines." I then repeated a quartet which I chanced to remember.

"Ah!" said the man, "I see you know his poetry. Come into the next room and I will show you his chair." He led me into a sleeping-room on the right hand, where in a corner he showed me an antique three-cornered arm-chair. "That chair," said he, "my grandsire won at Llangollen, at an Eisteddfod of Bards. Various bards recited their poetry, but my grandfather won the prize. Ah, he was a good poet. He also won a prize of fifteen guineas at a meeting of bards in London."

We returned to the kitchen, where I found the good woman of the house waiting with a plate of bread-and-butter in one hand, and a glass of buttermilk in the other – she pressed me to partake of

both – I drank some of the buttermilk, which was excellent, and after a little more discourse shook the kind people by the hand and thanked them for their hospitality. As I was about to depart the man said that I should find the lane farther up very wet, and that I had better mount through a field at the back of the house. He took me to a gate, which he opened, and then pointed out the way which I must pursue. As I went away he said that both he and his family should be always happy to see me at Ty yn y Pistyll, which words, interpreted, are the house by the spout of water.

I went up the field with the lane on my right, down which ran a runnel of water, from which doubtless the house derived its name. I soon came to an unenclosed part of the mountain covered with gorse and whin, and still proceeding upward reached a road, which I subsequently learned was the main road from Llangollen over the hill. I was not long in gaining the top, which was nearly level. Here I stood for some time looking about me, having the vale of Llangollen to the north of me, and a deep valley abounding with woods and rocks to the south.

Following the road to the south, which gradually descended, I soon came to a place where a road diverged from the straight one to the left. As the left-hand road appeared to lead down a romantic valley I followed it. The scenery was beautiful – steep hills on each side. On the right was a deep ravine, down which ran a brook; the hill beyond it was covered towards the top with a wood, apparently of oak, between which and the ravine were small green fields. Both sides of the ravine were fringed with trees, chiefly ash. I descended the road which was zig-zag and steep, and at last arrived at the bottom of the valley, where there was a small hamlet. On the farther side of the valley to the east was a steep hill on which were a few houses – at the foot of the hill was a brook crossed by an antique bridge of a single arch. I directed my course to the bridge, and after looking over the parapet, for a minute or two, upon the water below, which was shallow and noisy, ascended a road which led up the hill: a few scattered houses were on each side. I soon reached the top of the hill, where were some more houses, those which I had seen from the valley below. I was in a Welsh mountain village, which put me much in mind of the villages which I had strolled through of old in Castile and La Mancha; there were the same silence and desolation here as yonder away – the houses were built of the same material, namely stone. I should perhaps have fancied myself for a moment in a Castilian or Manchegan mountain pueblicito, but for the abundance of trees which met my eyes on every side.

In walking up this mountain village I saw no one, and heard no sound but the echo of my steps amongst the houses. As I returned, however, I saw a man standing at a door – he was a short figure, about fifty. He had an old hat on his head, a stick in his hand, and was dressed in a duffel great coat.

"Good day, friend," said I; "what may be the name of this place?"

"Pont Fadog, sir, is its name, for want of a better."

"That's a fine name," said I; "it signifies in English the bridge of Madoc."

"Just so, sir; I see you know Welsh."

"And I see you know English," said I.

"Very little, sir; I can read English much better than I can speak it."

"So can I Welsh," said I. "I suppose the village is named after the bridge."

"No doubt it is, sir."

"And why was the bridge called the bridge of Madoc?" said I.

"Because one Madoc built it, sir."

"Was he the son of Owain Gwynedd?" said I.

"Ah, I see you know all about Wales, sir. Yes, sir; he built it, or I dare say he built it, Madawg ap Owain Gwynedd. I have read much about him – he was a great sailor, sir, and was the first to discover Tir y Gorllewin, or America. Not many years ago his tomb was discovered there with an inscription in old Welsh – saying who he was, and how he loved the sea. I have seen the lines which were found on the tomb."

"So have I," said I; "or at least those which were said to be found on a tomb: they run thus in English: —

"'Here, after sailing far, I, Madoc, lie,
Of Owain Gwynedd lawful progeny:
The verdant land had little charms for me;
From earliest youth I loved the dark-blue sea.'"

"Ah, sir," said the man, "I see you know all about the son of Owain Gwynedd. Well, sir, those lines, or something like them, were found upon the tomb of Madoc in America."

"That I doubt," said I.

"Do you doubt, sir, that Madoc discovered America?"

"Not in the least," said I; "but I doubt very much that his tomb was ever discovered with the inscription which you allude to upon it."

"But it was, sir, I do assure you, and the descendants of Madoc and his people are still to be found in a part of America speaking the pure iaith Cymraeg better Welsh than we of Wales do."

"That I doubt," said I. "However, the idea is a pretty one; therefore cherish it. This is a beautiful country."

"A very beautiful country, sir; there is none more beautiful in all Wales."

"What is the name of the river, which runs beneath the bridge?"

"The Ceiriog, sir."

"The Ceiriog," said I; "the Ceiriog!"

"Did you ever hear the name before, sir?"

"I have heard of the Eos Ceiriog," said I; "the Nightingale of Ceiriog."

"That was Huw Morris, sir; he was called the Nightingale of Ceiriog."

"Did he live hereabout?"

"O no, sir; he lived far away up towards the head of the valley, at a place called Pont y Meibion."

"Are you acquainted with his works?" said I.

"O yes, sir, at least with some of them. I have read the Marwnad on Barbara Middleton; and likewise the piece on Oliver and his men. Ah, it is a funny piece that – he did not like Oliver nor his men."

"Of what profession are you?" said I; "are you a schoolmaster or apothecary?"

"Neither, sir, neither; I am merely a poor shoemaker."

"You know a great deal for a shoemaker," said I.

"Ah, sir; there are many shoemakers in Wales who know much more than I."

"But not in England," said I. "Well, farewell."

"Farewell, sir. When you have any boots to mend, or shoes, sir – I shall be happy to serve you."

"I do not live in these parts," said I.

"No, sir; but you are coming to live here."

"How do you know that?" said I.

"I know it very well, sir; you left these parts very young, and went far away – to the East Indies, sir, where you made a large fortune in the medical line, sir; you are now coming back to your own valley, where you will buy a property, and settle down, and try to recover your language, sir, and your health, sir; for you are not the person you pretend to be, sir; I know you very well, and shall be happy to work for you."

"Well," said I, "if I ever settle down here, I shall be happy to employ you. Farewell."

I went back the way I had come, till I reached the little hamlet. Seeing a small public-house, I entered it – a good-looking woman, who met me in the passage, ushered me into a neat sanded kitchen, handed me a chair and inquired my commands; I sat down, and told her to bring me some ale; she brought it, and then seated herself by a bench close by the door.

"Rather a quiet place this," said I. "I have seen but two faces since I came over the hill, and yours is one."

"Rather too quiet, sir," said the good woman; "one would wish to have more visitors."

"I suppose," said I, "people from Llangollen occasionally come to visit you."

"Sometimes, sir, for curiosity's sake; but very rarely – the way is very steep."

"Do the Tylwyth Teg ever pay you visits?"

"The Tylwyth Teg, sir?"

"Yes; the fairies. Do they never come to have a dance on the green sward in this neighbourhood?"

"Very rarely, sir; indeed, I do not know how long it is since they have been seen."

"You have never seen them?"

"I have not, sir; but I believe there are people living who have."

"Are corpse candles ever seen on the bank of that river?"

"I have never heard of more than one being seen, sir, and that was at a place where a tinker was drowned a few nights after – there came down a flood, and the tinker in trying to cross by the usual ford was drowned."

"And did the candle prognosticate, I mean foreshow his death?"

"It did, sir. When a person is to die, his candle is seen a few nights before the time of his death."

"Have you ever seen a corpse candle?"

"I have, sir; and as you seem to be a respectable gentleman, I will tell you all about it. When I was a girl, I lived with my parents, a little way from here. I had a cousin, a very good young man, who lived with his parents in the neighbourhood of our house. He was an exemplary young man, sir, and having a considerable gift of prayer, was intended for the ministry; but he fell sick, and shortly became very ill indeed. One evening when he was lying in this state, as I was returning home from milking, I saw a candle proceeding from my cousin's house. I stood still and looked at it. It moved slowly forward for a little way, and then mounted high in the air above the wood, which stood not far in front of the house, and disappeared. Just three nights after that my cousin died."

"And you think that what you saw was his corpse candle?"

"I do, sir! what else should it be?"

"Are deaths prognosticated by any other means than corpse candles?"

"They are, sir; by the knockers, and by a supernatural voice heard at night."

"Have you ever heard the knockers, or the supernatural voice?"

"I have not, sir; but my father and mother, who are now dead, heard once a supernatural voice, and knocking. My mother had a sister who was married like herself, and expected to be confined. Day after day, however, passed away, without her confinement taking place. My mother expected every moment to be summoned to her assistance, and was so anxious about her that she could not rest at night. One night, as she lay in bed, by the side of her husband, between sleeping and waking, she heard of a sudden, a horse coming stump, stump, up to the door. Then there was a pause – she expected every moment to hear some one cry out, and tell her to come to her sister, but she heard no farther sound, neither voice nor stump of horse. She thought she had been deceived, so, without awakening her husband, she tried to go to sleep, but sleep she could not. The next night, at about the same time, she again heard a horse's feet coming stump, stump, up to the door. She now waked her husband and told him to listen. He did so, and both heard the stumping. Presently, the stumping ceased, and then there was a loud "Hey!" as if somebody wished to wake them. "Hey!" said my father, and they both lay for a minute, expecting to hear something more, but they heard nothing. My father then sprang out of bed, and looked out of the window; it was bright moonlight, but he saw nothing. The next night, as they lay in bed both asleep, they were suddenly aroused by a loud and terrible knocking. Out sprang my father from the bed, flung open the window, and looked out, but there was

no one at the door. The next morning, however, a messenger arrived with the intelligence that my aunt had had a dreadful confinement with twins in the night, and that both she and the babes were dead."

"Thank you," said I; and paying for my ale. I returned to Llangollen.

# CHAPTER XII

A Calvinistic Methodist – Turn for Saxon – Our Congregation – Pont y Cyssylltau – Catherine Lingo.

I had inquired of the good woman of the house in which we lived whether she could not procure a person to accompany me occasionally in my walks, who was well acquainted with the strange nooks and corners of the country, and who could speak no language but Welsh; as I wished to increase my knowledge of colloquial Welsh by having a companion, who would be obliged, in all he had to say to me, to address me in Welsh, and to whom I should perforce have to reply in that tongue. The good lady had told me that there was a tenant of hers who lived in one of the cottages, which looked into the perllan, who, she believed, would be glad to go with me, and was just the kind of man I was in quest of. The day after I had met with the adventures which I have related in the preceding chapter, she informed me that the person in question was awaiting my orders in the kitchen. I told her to let me see him. He presently made his appearance. He was about forty-five years of age, of middle stature, and had a good-natured open countenance. His dress was poor, but clean.

"Well," said I to him in Welsh, "are you the Cumro who can speak no Saxon?"

"In truth, sir, I am."

"Are you sure that you know no Saxon?"

"Sir! I may know a few words, but I cannot converse in Saxon, nor understand a conversation in that tongue."

"Can you read Cumraeg?"

"In truth, sir, I can."

"What have you read in it?"

"I have read, sir, the Ysgrythyr-lan, till I have it nearly at the ends of my fingers."

"Have you read anything else besides the Holy Scripture?"

"I read the newspaper, sir, when kind friends lend it to me."

"In Cumraeg?"

"Yes, sir, in Cumraeg. I can read Saxon a little, but not sufficient to understand a Saxon newspaper."

"What newspaper do you read?"

"I read, sir, *Yr Amserau*."

"Is that a good newspaper?"

"Very good, sir; it is written by good men."

"Who are they?"

"They are our ministers, sir."

"Of what religion are you?"

"A Calvinistic Methodist, sir."

"Why are you of the Methodist religion?"

"Because it is the true religion, sir."

"You should not be bigoted. If I had more Cumraeg than I have, I would prove to you that the only true religion is that of the Lloegrian Church."

"In truth, sir, you could not do that; had you all the Cumraeg in Cumru you could not do that."

"What are you by trade?"

"I am a gwehydd, sir."

"What do you earn by weaving?"

"About five shillings a week, sir."

"Have you a wife?"

"I have, sir."

"Does she earn anything?"

"Very seldom, sir; she is a good wife, but is generally sick."

"Have you children?"

"I have three, sir."

"Do they earn anything?"

"My eldest son, sir, sometimes earns a few pence, the others are very small."

"Will you sometimes walk with me, if I pay you?"

"I shall be always glad to walk with you, sir, whether you pay me or not."

"Do you think it lawful to walk with one of the Lloegrian Church?"

"Perhaps, sir, I ought to ask the gentleman of the Lloegrian Church whether he thinks it lawful to walk with the poor Methodist weaver."

"Well, I think we may venture to walk with one another. What is your name?"

"John Jones, sir."

"Jones! Jones! I was walking with a man of that name the other night."

"The man with whom you walked the other night is my brother, sir, and what he said to me about you made me wish to walk with you also."

"But he spoke very good English."

"My brother had a turn for Saxon, sir; I had not. Some people have a turn for the Saxon, others have not. I have no Saxon, sir, my wife has digon iawn – my two youngest children speak good Saxon, sir, my eldest son not a word."

"Well, shall we set out?"

"If you please, sir."

"To what place shall we go?"

"Shall we go to the Pont y Cyssylltau, sir?"

"What is that?"

"A mighty bridge, sir, which carries the Camlas over a valley on its back."

"Good! let us go and see the bridge of the junction, for that I think is the meaning in Saxon of Pont y Cyssylltau."

We set out; my guide conducted me along the bank of the Camlas in the direction of Rhiwabon, that is towards the east. On the way we discoursed on various subjects, and understood each other tolerably well. I asked if he had ever been anything besides a weaver. He told me that when a boy he kept sheep on the mountain. "Why did you not go on keeping sheep?" said I; "I would rather keep sheep than weave."

"My parents wanted me at home, sir," said he; "and I was not sorry to go home; I earned little, and lived badly."

"A shepherd," said I, "can earn more than five shillings a week."

"I was never a regular shepherd, sir," said he. "But, sir, I would rather be a weaver with five shillings a week in Llangollen, than a shepherd with fifteen on the mountain. The life of a shepherd, sir, is perhaps not exactly what you and some other gentlefolks think. The shepherd bears much cold and wet, sir, and he is very lonely; no society save his sheep and dog. Then, sir, he has no privileges. I mean gospel privileges. He does not look forward to Dydd Sul, as a day of llawenydd, of joy and triumph, as the weaver does; that is if he is religiously disposed. The shepherd has no chapel, sir, like the weaver. Oh, sir, I say again that I would rather be a weaver in Llangollen with five shillings a week, than a shepherd on the hill with fifteen."

"Do you mean to say," said I, "that you live with your family on five shillings a week?"

"No, sir. I frequently do little commissions by which I earn something. Then, sir, I have friends, very good friends. A good lady of our congregation sent me this morning half-a-pound of butter. The people of our congregation are very kind to each other, sir."

"That is more," thought I to myself, "than the people of my congregation are; they are always cutting each other's throats." I next asked if he had been much about Wales.

"Not much, sir. However, I have been to Pen Caer Gybi, which you call Holy Head, and to Bethgelert, sir."

"What took you to those places?"

"I was sent to those places on business, sir; as I told you before, sir, I sometimes execute commissions. At Bethgelert I stayed some time. It was there I married, sir; my wife comes from a place called Dol Gellyn near Bethgelert."

"What was her name?"

"Her name was Jones, sir."

"What, before she married?"

"Yes, sir, before she married. You need not be surprised, sir; there are plenty of the name of Jones in Wales. The name of my brother's wife, before she married, was also Jones."

"Your brother is a clever man," said I.

"Yes, sir, for a Cumro he is clebber enough."

"For a Cumro?"

"Yes, sir, he is not a Saxon, you know."

"Are Saxons then so very clever?"

"O yes, sir; who so clebber? The clebberest people in Llangollen are Saxons; that is, at carnal things – for at spiritual things I do not think them at all clebber. Look at Mr. A., sir."

"Who is he?"

"Do you not know him, sir? I thought everybody knew Mr. A. He is a Saxon, sir, and keeps the inn on the road a little way below where you live. He is the clebberest man in Llangollen, sir. He can do everything. He is a great cook, and can wash clothes better than any woman. O, sir, for carnal things, who so clebber as your Countrymen!"

After walking about four miles by the side of the canal we left it, and bearing to the right presently came to the aqueduct, which strode over a deep and narrow valley, at the bottom of which ran the Dee. "This is the Pont y Cysswllt, sir," said my guide; "it's the finest bridge in the world, and no wonder, if what the common people say be true, namely that every stone cost a golden sovereign." We went along it; the height was awful. My guide, though he had been a mountain shepherd, confessed that he was somewhat afraid. "It gives me the pendro, sir," said he, "to look down." I too felt somewhat dizzy, as I looked over the parapet into the glen. The canal which this mighty bridge carries across the gulf is about nine feet wide, and occupies about two-thirds of the width of the bridge and the entire western side. The footway is towards the east. From about the middle of the bridge there is a fine view of the forges on the Cefn Bach and also of a huge hill near it called the Cefn Mawr. We reached the termination, and presently crossing the canal by a little wooden bridge we came to a village. My guide then said, "If you please, sir, we will return by the old bridge, which leads across the Dee in the bottom of the vale." He then led me by a romantic road to a bridge on the west of the aqueduct, and far below. It seemed very ancient. "This is the old bridge, sir," said my guide; "it was built a hundred years before the Pont y Cysswllt was dreamt of." We now walked to the west, in the direction of Llangollen, along the bank of the river. Presently we arrived where the river, after making a bend, formed a pool. It was shaded by lofty trees, and to all appearance was exceedingly deep. I stopped to look at it, for I was struck with its gloomy horror. "That pool, sir," said John Jones, "is called Llyn y Meddwyn, the drunkard's pool. It is called so, sir, because a drunken man once fell into it, and was drowned. There is no deeper pool in the Dee, sir, save one, a little below Llangollen, which is called the pool of Catherine Lingo. A girl of that name fell into it, whilst gathering sticks on the high bank above it. She was drowned, and the pool was named after her. I never look at either without shuddering, thinking how certainly I should be drowned if I fell in, for I cannot swim, sir."

"You should have learnt to swim when you were young," said I, "and to dive too. I know one who has brought up stones from the bottom, I dare say, of deeper pools than either, but he was a Saxon, and at carnal things, you know, none so clebber as the Saxons."

I found my guide a first-rate walker, and a good botanist, knowing the names of all the plants and trees in Welsh. By the time we returned to Llangollen I had formed a very high opinion of him, in which I was subsequently confirmed by what I saw of him during the period of our acquaintance, which was of some duration. He was very honest, disinterested, and exceedingly good-humoured. It is true, he had his little skits occasionally at the Church, and showed some marks of hostility to the church cat, more especially when he saw it mounted on my shoulders; for the creature soon began to take liberties, and in less than a week after my arrival at the cottage, generally mounted on my back, when it saw me reading or writing, for the sake of the warmth. But setting aside those same skits at the Church and that dislike of the church cat, venial trifles after all, and easily to be accounted for, on the score of his religious education, I found nothing to blame and much to admire in John Jones the Calvinistic Methodist of Llangollen.

# CHAPTER XIII

Divine Service – Llangollen Bells – Iolo Goch – The Abbey – Twm o'r Nant – Holy Well – Thomas Edwards.

Sunday arrived – a Sunday of unclouded sunshine. We attended Divine service at church in the morning. The congregation was very numerous, but to all appearance consisted almost entirely of English visitors, like ourselves. There were two officiating clergymen, father and son. They both sat in a kind of oblong pulpit on the southern side of the church, at a little distance below the altar. The service was in English, and the elder gentleman preached; there was good singing and chanting.

After dinner I sat in an arbour in the perllan thinking of many things, amongst others, spiritual. Whilst thus engaged the sound of the church bells calling people to afternoon service, came upon my ears. I listened and thought I had never heard bells with so sweet a sound. I had heard them in the morning, but without paying much attention to them, but as I now sat in the umbrageous arbour I was particularly struck with them. O, how sweetly their voice mingled with the low rush of the river, at the bottom of the perllan. I subsequently found that the bells of Llangollen were celebrated for their sweetness. Their merit indeed has even been admitted by an enemy; for a poet of the Calvinistic-Methodist persuasion, one who calls himself Einion Du, in a very beautiful ode, commencing with —

"Tangnefedd i Llangollen,"

says that in no part of the world do bells call people so sweetly to church as those of Llangollen town.

In the evening, at about half-past six, I attended service again, but without my family. This time the congregation was not numerous, and was composed principally of poor people. The service and sermon were now in Welsh, the sermon was preached by the younger gentleman, and was on the building of the second temple, and, as far as I understood it, appeared to me to be exceedingly good.

On the Monday evening myself and family took a walk to the abbey. My wife and daughter, who are fond of architecture and ruins, were very anxious to see the old place. I too was anxious enough to see it, less from love of ruins and ancient architecture, than from knowing that a certain illustrious bard was buried in its precincts, of whom perhaps a short account will not be unacceptable to the reader.

This man, whose poetical appellation was Iolo Goch, but whose real name was Llwyd, was of a distinguished family, and Lord of Llechryd. He was born and generally resided at a place called Coed y Pantwn, in the upper part of the Vale of Clwyd. He was a warm friend and partisan of Owen Glendower, with whom he lived, at Sycharth, for some years before the great Welsh insurrection, and whom he survived, dying at an extreme old age beneath his own roof-tree at Coed y Pantwn. He composed pieces of great excellence on various subjects; but the most remarkable of his compositions are decidedly certain ones connected with Owen Glendower. Amongst these is one in which he describes the Welsh chieftain's mansion at Sycharth, and his hospitable way of living at that his favourite residence; and another in which he hails the advent of the comet, which made its appearance in the month of March, fourteen hundred and two, as of good augury to his darling hero.

It was from knowing that this distinguished man lay buried in the precincts of the old edifice that I felt so anxious to see it. After walking about two miles we perceived it on our right hand.

The abbey of the vale of the cross stands in a green meadow, in a corner near the north-west end of the valley of Llangollen. The vale or glen, in which the abbey stands, takes its name from a certain ancient pillar or cross, called the pillar of Eliseg, and which is believed to have been raised over the body of an ancient British chieftain of that name, who perished in battle against the Saxons, about the middle of the tenth century. In the Papist times the abbey was a place of great pseudo-sanctity,

wealth and consequence. The territory belonging to it was very extensive, comprising, amongst other districts, the vale of Llangollen and the mountain region to the north of it, called the Eglwysig Rocks, which region derived its name Eglwysig, or ecclesiastical, from the circumstance of its pertaining to the abbey of the vale of the cross.

We first reached that part of the building which had once been the church, having previously to pass through a farm-yard, in which was abundance of dirt and mire.

The church fronts the west and contains the remains of a noble window, beneath which is a gate, which we found locked. Passing on we came to that part where the monks had lived, but which now served as a farmhouse; an open door-way exhibited to us an ancient gloomy hall, where was some curious old-fashioned furniture, particularly an ancient rack, in which stood a goodly range of pewter trenchers. A respectable dame kindly welcomed us and invited us to sit down. We entered into conversation with her, and asked her name, which she said was Evans. I spoke some Welsh to her, which pleased her. She said that Welsh people at the present day were so full of fine airs that they were above speaking the old language – but that such was not the case formerly, and that she had known a Mrs. Price, who was housekeeper to the Countess of Mornington, who lived in London upwards of forty years, and at the end of that time prided herself upon speaking as good Welsh as she did when a girl. I spoke to her about the abbey, and asked if she had ever heard of Iolo Goch. She inquired who he was. I told her he was a great bard, and was buried in the abbey. She said she had never heard of him, but that she could show me the portrait of a great poet, and going away, presently returned with a print in a frame.

"There," said she, "is the portrait of Twm o'r Nant, generally called the Welsh Shakespear."

I looked at it. The Welsh Shakespear was represented sitting at a table with a pen in his hand; a cottage-latticed window was behind him, on his left hand; a shelf with plates and trenchers behind him, on his right. His features were rude, but full of wild, strange expression; below the picture was the following couplet: —

"Llun Gwr yw llawn gwir Awen;
Y Byd a lanwodd o'i Ben."

"Did you ever hear of Twm o'r Nant?" said the old dame.

"I never heard of him by word of mouth," said I; "but I know all about him – I have read his life in Welsh, written by himself, and a curious life it is. His name was Thomas Edwards, but he generally called himself Twm o'r Nant, or Tom of the Dingle, because he was born in a dingle, at a place called Pen Porchell in the vale of Clwyd – which, by the bye, was on the estate which once belonged to Iolo Goch, the poet I was speaking to you about just now. Tom was a carter by trade, but once kept a toll-bar in South Wales, which, however, he was obliged to leave at the end of two years, owing to the annoyance which he experienced from ghosts and goblins, and unearthly things, particularly phantom hearses, which used to pass through his gate at midnight without paying, when the gate was shut."

"Ah," said the Dame, "you know more about Twm o'r Nant than I do; and was he not a great poet?"

"I dare say he was," said I, "for the pieces which he wrote, and which he called Interludes, had a great run, and he got a great deal of money by them, but I should say the lines beneath the portrait are more applicable to the real Shakespear than to him."

"What do the lines mean?" said the old lady; "they are Welsh, I know, but they are far beyond my understanding."

"They may be thus translated," said I:

"God in his head the Muse instill'd,
And from his head the world he fill'd."

"Thank you, sir," said the old lady; "I never found any one before who could translate them." She then said she would show me some English lines written on the daughter of a friend of hers who was lately dead, and put some printed lines in a frame into my hand. They were an Elegy to Mary, and were very beautiful. I read them aloud, and when I had finished she thanked me and said she had no doubt that if I pleased I could put them into Welsh. She then sighed and wiped her eyes.

On our inquiring whether we could see the interior of the abbey she said we could, and that if we rang a bell at the gate a woman would come to us, who was in the habit of showing the place. We then got up and bade her farewell – but she begged that we would stay and taste the dwr santaidd of the holy well.

"What holy well is that?" said I.

"A well," said she, "by the road's side, which in the time of the popes was said to perform wonderful cures."

"Let us taste it by all means," said I; whereupon she went out, and presently returned with a tray on which were a jug and tumbler, the jug filled with the water of the holy well; we drank some of the dwr santaidd, which tasted like any other water, and then after shaking her by the hand, we went to the gate, and rang at the bell.

Presently a woman made her appearance at the gate; she was genteelly drest, about the middle age, rather tall, and bearing in her countenance the traces of beauty. When we told her the object of our coming she admitted us, and after locking the gate conducted us into the church. It was roofless, and had nothing remarkable about it, save the western window, which we had seen from without. Our attendant pointed out to us some tombs, and told us the names of certain great people whose dust they contained. "Can you tell us where Iolo Goch lies interred?" said I.

"No," said she; "indeed I never heard of such a person."

"He was the bard of Owen Glendower," said I, "and assisted his cause wonderfully by the fiery odes, in which he incited the Welsh to rise against the English."

"Indeed!" said she; "well, I am sorry to say that I never heard of him."

"Are you Welsh?" said I.

"I am," she replied.

"Did you ever hear of Thomas Edwards?"

"O, yes," said she; "I have frequently heard of him."

"How odd," said I, "that the name of a great poet should be unknown in the very place where he is buried, whilst that of one certainly not his superior, should be well known in that same place, though he is not buried there."

"Perhaps," said she, "the reason is that the poet, whom you mentioned, wrote in the old measures and language which few people now understand, whilst Thomas Edwards wrote in common verse and in the language of the present day."

"I dare say it is so," said I.

From the church she led us to other parts of the ruin – at first she had spoken to us rather cross and loftily, but she now became kind and communicative. She said that she resided near the ruins, which she was permitted to show; that she lived alone, and wished to be alone – there was something singular about her, and I believe that she had a history of her own. After showing us the ruins she conducted us to a cottage in which she lived; it stood behind the ruins by a fishpond, in a beautiful and romantic place enough – she said that in the winter she went away, but to what place she did not say. She asked us whether we came walking, and on our telling her that we did, she said that she would point out to us a near way home. She then pointed to a path up a hill, telling us we must follow it. After making her a present we bade her farewell, and passing through a meadow crossed a brook by a rustic bridge, formed of the stem of a tree, and ascending the hill by a path which she

had pointed out, we went through a corn field or two on its top, and at last found ourselves on the Llangollen road, after a most beautiful walk.

# CHAPTER XIV

Expedition to Ruthyn – The Column – Slate Quarries – The Gwyddelod – Nocturnal Adventure.

Nothing worthy of commemoration took place during the two following days, save that myself and family took an evening walk on the Wednesday up the side of the Berwyn, for the purpose of botanizing, in which we were attended by John Jones. There, amongst other plants, we found a curious moss which our good friend said was called in Welsh Corn Carw, or deer's horn, and which he said the deer were very fond of. On the Thursday he and I started on an expedition on foot to Ruthyn, distant about fourteen miles, proposing to return in the evening.

The town and castle of Ruthyn possessed great interest for me from being connected with the affairs of Owen Glendower. It was at Ruthyn that the first and not the least remarkable scene of the Welsh insurrection took place by Owen making his appearance at the fair held there in fourteen hundred, plundering the English who had come with their goods, slaying many of them, sacking the town and concluding his day's work by firing it; and it was at the castle of Ruthyn that Lord Grey dwelt, a minion of Henry the Fourth and Glendower's deadliest enemy, and who was the principal cause of the chieftain's entering into rebellion, having in the hope of obtaining his estates in the vale of Clwyd poisoned the mind of Henry against him, who proclaimed him a traitor, before he had committed any act of treason, and confiscated his estates, bestowing that part of them upon his favourite, which the latter was desirous of obtaining.

We started on our expedition at about seven o'clock of a brilliant morning. We passed by the abbey and presently came to a small fountain with a little stone edifice, with a sharp top above it. "That is the holy well," said my guide: "Llawer iawn o barch yn yr amser yr Pabyddion yr oedd i'r fynnon hwn – much respect in the times of the Papists there was to this fountain."

"I heard of it," said I, "and tasted of its water the other evening at the abbey." Shortly after we saw a tall stone standing in a field on our right hand at about a hundred yards distance from the road. "That is the pillar of Eliseg, sir," said my guide. "Let us go and see it," said I. We soon reached the stone. It is a fine upright column about seven feet high, and stands on a quadrate base. "Sir," said my guide, "a dead king lies buried beneath this stone. He was a mighty man of valour and founded the abbey. He was called Eliseg." "Perhaps Ellis," said I, "and if his name was Ellis his stone was very properly called Colofn Eliseg, in Saxon the Ellisian column." The view from the column is very beautiful, below on the south-east is the venerable abbey, slumbering in its green meadow. Beyond it runs a stream, descending from the top of a glen, at the bottom of which the old pile is situated; beyond the stream is a lofty hill. The glen on the north is bounded by a noble mountain, covered with wood. Struck with its beauty I inquired its name. "Moel Eglwysig, sir," said my guide. "The Moel of the Church," said I. "That is hardly a good name for it, for the hill is not bald (moel)." "True, sir," said John Jones. "At present its name is good for nothing, but estalom (of old) before the hill was planted with trees its name was good enough. Our fathers were not fools when they named their hills." "I dare say not," said I, "nor in many other things which they did, for which we laugh at them, because we do not know the reasons they had for doing them." We regained the road; the road tended to the north up a steep ascent. I asked John Jones the name of a beautiful village, which lay far away on our right, over the glen, and near its top. "Pentref y dwr, sir" (the village of the water). It is called the village of the water, because the river below comes down through part of it. I next asked the name of the hill up which we were going, and he told me Allt Bwlch; that is, the high place of the hollow road.

This bwlch, or hollow way, was a regular pass, which put me wonderfully in mind of the passes of Spain. It took us a long time to get to the top. After resting a minute on the summit we began to descend. My guide pointed out to me some slate-works, at some distance on our left. "There is

a great deal of work going on there, sir," said he: "all the slates that you see descending the canal at Llangollen come from there." The next moment we heard a blast, and then a thundering sound: "Llais craig yn syrthiaw; the voice of the rock in falling, sir," said John Jones; "blasting is dangerous and awful work." We reached the bottom of the descent, and proceeded for two or three miles up and down a rough and narrow road; I then turned round and looked at the hills which we had passed over. They looked bulky and huge.

We continued our way, and presently saw marks of a fire in some grass by the side of the road. "Have the Gipsiaid been there?" said I to my guide.

"Hardly, sir; I should rather think that the Gwyddeliad (Irish) have been camping there lately."

"The Gwyddeliad?"

"Yes, sir, the vagabond Gwyddeliad, who at present infest these parts much, and do much more harm than the Gipsiaid ever did."

"What do you mean by the Gipsiaid?"

"Dark, handsome people, sir, who occasionally used to come about in vans and carts, the men buying and selling horses, and sometimes tinkering, whilst the women told fortunes."

"And they have ceased to come about?"

"Nearly so, sir; I believe they have been frightened away by the Gwyddelod."

"What kind of people are these Gwyddelod?"

"Savage, brutish people, sir; in general without shoes and stockings, with coarse features and heads of hair like mops."

"How do they live?"

"The men tinker a little, sir, but more frequently plunder. The women tell fortunes, and steal whenever they can."

"They live something like the Gipsiaid."

"Something, sir; but the hen Gipsiaid were gentlefolks in comparison."

"You think the Gipsiaid have been frightened away by the Gwyddelians?"

"I do, sir; the Gwyddelod made their appearance in these parts about twenty years ago, and since then the Gipsiaid have been rarely seen."

"Are these Gwyddelod poor?"

"By no means, sir; they make large sums by plundering and other means, with which, 'tis said, they retire at last to their own country or America, where they buy land and settle down."

"What language do they speak?"

"English, sir; they pride themselves on speaking good English, that is to the Welsh. Amongst themselves they discourse in their own Paddy Gwyddel."

"Have they no Welsh?"

"Only a few words, sir; I never heard of one of them speaking Welsh, save a young girl – she fell sick by the roadside, as she was wandering by herself – some people at a farm-house took her in, and tended her till she was well. During her sickness she took a fancy to their quiet way of life, and when she was recovered she begged to stay with them and serve them. They consented; she became a very good servant, and hearing nothing but Welsh spoken, soon picked up the tongue."

"Do you know what became of her?"

"I do, sir; her own people found her out, and wished to take her away with them, but she refused to let them, for by that time she was perfectly reclaimed, had been to chapel, renounced her heathen crefydd, and formed an acquaintance with a young Methodist who had a great gift of prayer, whom she afterwards married – she and her husband live at present not far from Mineira."

"I almost wonder that her own people did not kill her."

"They threatened to do so, sir, and would doubtless have put their threat into execution, had they not been prevented by the Man on High."

And here my guide pointed with his finger reverently upward.

"Is it a long time since you have seen any of these Gwyddeliaid?"

"About two months, sir, and then a terrible fright they caused me."

"How was that?"

"I will tell you, sir; I had been across the Berwyn to carry home a piece of weaving work to a person who employs me. It was night as I returned, and when I was about half-way down the hill, at a place which is called Allt Paddy, because the Gwyddelod are in the habit of taking up their quarters there, I came upon a gang of them, who had come there and camped and lighted their fire, whilst I was on the other side of the hill. There were nearly twenty of them, men and women, and amongst the rest was a man standing naked in a tub of water with two women stroking him down with clouts. He was a large fierce-looking fellow, and his body, on which the flame of the fire glittered, was nearly covered with red hair. I never saw such a sight. As I passed they glared at me and talked violently in their Paddy Gwyddel, but did not offer to molest me. I hastened down the hill, and right glad I was when I found myself safe and sound at my house in Llangollen, with my money in my pocket, for I had several shillings there, which the man across the hill had paid me for the work which I had done."

# CHAPTER XV

The Turf Tavern – Don't Understand – The Best Welsh – The Maids of Merion – Old and New – Ruthyn – The Ash Yggdrasill.

We now emerged from the rough and narrow way which we had followed for some miles, upon one much wider, and more commodious, which my guide told me was the coach road from Wrexham to Ruthyn, and going on a little farther we came to an avenue of trees which shaded the road. It was chiefly composed of ash, sycamore, and birch, and looked delightfully cool and shady. I asked my guide if it belonged to any gentleman's house. He told me that it did not, but to a public-house, called Tafarn Tywarch, which stood near the end, a little way off the road. "Why is it called Tafarn Tywarch?" said I, struck by the name, which signifies "the tavern of turf."

"It was called so, sir," said John, "because it was originally merely a turf hovel, though at present it consists of good brick and mortar."

"Can we breakfast there," said I, "for I feel both hungry and thirsty?"

"O, yes, sir," said John, "I have heard there is good cheese and cwrw there."

We turned off to the "tafarn," which was a decent public-house of rather an antiquated appearance. We entered a sanded kitchen, and sat down by a large oaken table. "Please to bring us some bread, cheese and ale," said I in Welsh to an elderly woman, who was moving about.

"Sar?" said she.

"Bring us some bread, cheese and ale," I repeated in Welsh.

"I do not understand you, sar," said she in English.

"Are you Welsh?" said I in English.

"Yes, I am Welsh!"

"And can you speak Welsh?"

"O, yes, and the best."

"Then why did you not bring what I asked for?"

"Because I did not understand you."

"Tell her," said I to John Jones, "to bring us some bread, cheese and ale."

"Come, aunt," said John, "bring us bread and cheese and a quart of the best ale."

The woman looked as if she was going to reply in the tongue in which he addressed her, then faltered, and at last said in English that she did not understand.

"Now," said I, "you are fairly caught: this man is a Welshman, and moreover understands no language but Welsh."

"Then how can he understand you?" said she.

"Because I speak Welsh," said I.

"Then you are a Welshman?" said she.

"No I am not," said I, "I am English."

"So I thought," said she, "and on that account I could not understand you."

"You mean that you would not," said I. "Now do you choose to bring what you are bidden?"

"Come, aunt," said John, "don't be silly and cenfigenus, but bring the breakfast."

The woman stood still for a moment or two, and then biting her lips went away.

"What made the woman behave in this manner?" said I to my companion.

"O, she was cenfigenus, sir," he replied; "she did not like that an English gentleman should understand Welsh; she was envious; you will find a dozen or two like her in Wales; but let us hope not more."

Presently the woman returned with the bread, cheese and ale, which she placed on the table.

"Oh," said I, "you have brought what was bidden, though it was never mentioned to you in English, which shows that your pretending not to understand was all a sham. What made you behave so?"

"Why I thought," said the woman, "that no Englishman could speak Welsh, that his tongue was too short."

"Your having thought so," said I, "should not have made you tell a falsehood, saying that you did not understand, when you knew that you understood very well. See what a disgraceful figure you cut."

"I cut no disgraced figure," said the woman: "after all, what right have the English to come here speaking Welsh, which belongs to the Welsh alone, who in fact are the only people that understand it."

"Are you sure that you understand Welsh?" said I.

"I should think so," said the woman, "for I come from the vale of Clwyd, where they speak the best Welsh in the world, the Welsh of the Bible."

"What do they call a salmon in the vale of Clwyd?" said I.

"What do they call a salmon?" said the woman.

"Yes," said I, "when they speak Welsh."

"They call it – they call it – why a salmon."

"Pretty Welsh!" said I. "I thought you did not understand Welsh."

"Well, what do you call it?" said the woman.

"Eawg," said I, "that is the word for a salmon in general – but there are words also to show the sex – when you speak of a male salmon you should say cemyw, when of a female hwyfell."

"I never heard the words before," said the woman, "nor do I believe them to be Welsh."

"You say so," said I, "because you do not understand Welsh."

"I not understand Welsh!" said she. "I'll soon show you that I do. Come, you have asked me the word for salmon in Welsh, I will now ask you the word for salmon-trout. Now tell me that, and I will say you know something of the matter."

"A tinker of my country can tell you that," said I. "The word for salmon-trout is gleisiad."

The countenance of the woman fell.

"I see you know something about the matter," said she; "there are very few hereabouts, though so near to the vale of Clwyd, who know the word for salmon-trout in Welsh. I shouldn't have known the word myself, but for the song which says:

"'Glân yw'r gleisiad yn y llyn.'"

"And who wrote that song?" said I.

"I don't know," said the woman.

"But I do," said I; "one Lewis Morris wrote it."

"Oh," said she, "I have heard all about Huw Morris."

"I was not talking of Huw Morris," said I, "but Lewis Morris, who lived long after Huw Morris. He was a native of Anglesea, but resided for some time in Merionethshire, and whilst there composed a song about the Morwynion bro Meirionydd, or the lasses of County Merion, of a great many stanzas, in one of which the gleisiad is mentioned. Here it is in English:

"'Full fair the gleisiad in the flood,
  Which sparkles 'neath the summer's sun,
And fair the thrush in green abode
  Spreading his wings in sportive fun,
But fairer look if truth be spoke,
The maids of County Merion.'"

The woman was about to reply, but I interrupted her.

"There," said I, "pray leave us to our breakfast, and the next time you feel inclined to talk nonsense about no Englishman's understanding Welsh, or knowing anything of Welsh matters, remember that it was an Englishman who told you the Welsh word for salmon, and likewise the name of the Welshman who wrote the song in which the gleisiad is mentioned."

The ale was very good, and so were the bread and cheese. The ale indeed was so good that I ordered a second jug. Observing a large antique portrait over the mantel-piece I got up to examine it. It was that of a gentleman in a long wig, and underneath it was painted in red letters "Sir Watkin Wynn 1742." It was doubtless the portrait of the Sir Watkin who in 1745 was committed to the Tower under suspicion of being suspected of holding Jacobite opinions, and favouring the Pretender. The portrait was a very poor daub, but I looked at it long and attentively as a memorial of Wales at a critical and long past time.

When we had dispatched the second jug of ale, and I had paid the reckoning, we departed and soon came to where stood a turnpike house at a junction of two roads, to each of which was a gate.

"Now, sir," said John Jones, "the way straight forward is the ffordd newydd and the one on our right hand, is the hen ffordd. Which shall we follow, the new or the old?"

"There is a proverb in the Gerniweg," said I, "which was the language of my forefathers, saying, 'ne'er leave the old way for the new,' we will therefore go by the hen ffordd."

"Very good, sir," said my guide, "that is the path I always go, for it is the shortest." So we turned to the right and followed the old road. Perhaps, however, it would have been well had we gone by the new, for the hen ffordd was a very dull and uninteresting road, whereas the ffordd newydd, as I long subsequently found, is one of the grandest passes in Wales. After we had walked a short distance my guide said, "Now, sir, if you will turn a little way to the left hand I will show you a house built in the old style, such a house, sir, as I dare say the original turf tavern was." Then leading me a little way from the road he showed me, under a hollow bank, a small cottage covered with flags.

"That is a house, sir, built yn yr hen dull in the old fashion, of earth, flags and wattles, and in one night. It was the custom of old when a house was to be built, for the people to assemble, and to build it in one night of common materials, close at hand. The custom is not quite dead. I was at the building of this myself, and a merry building it was. The cwrw da passed quickly about among the builders, I assure you." We returned to the road, and when we had ascended a hill my companion told me that if I looked to the left I should see the vale of Clwyd.

I looked and perceived an extensive valley pleasantly dotted with trees and farm-houses, and bounded on the west by a range of hills.

"It is a fine valley, sir," said my guide, "four miles wide and twenty long, and contains the richest land in all Wales. Cheese made in that valley, sir, fetches a penny a pound more than cheese made in any other valley."

"And who owns it?" said I.

"Various are the people who own it, sir, but Sir Watkin owns the greater part."

We went on, passed by a village called Craig Vychan, where we saw a number of women washing at a fountain, and by a gentle descent soon reached the vale of Clwyd.

After walking about a mile we left the road and proceeded by a footpath across some meadows. The meadows were green and delightful, and were intersected by a beautiful stream. Trees in abundance were growing about, some of which were oaks. We passed by a little white chapel with a small graveyard before it, which my guide told me belonged to the Baptists, and shortly afterwards reached Ruthyn.

We went to an inn called the Crossed Foxes, where we refreshed ourselves with ale. We then sallied forth to look about, after I had ordered a duck to be got ready for dinner, at three o'clock. Ruthyn stands on a hill above the Clwyd, which in the summer is a mere brook, but in the winter a considerable stream, being then fed with the watery tribute of a hundred hills. About three miles to the north is a range of lofty mountains, dividing the shire of Denbigh from that of Flint, amongst which,

almost parallel with the town, and lifting its head high above the rest, is the mighty Moel Vamagh, the mother heap, which I had seen from Chester. Ruthyn is a dull town, but it possessed plenty of interest for me, for as I strolled with my guide about the streets I remembered that I was treading the ground which the wild bands of Glendower had trod, and where the great struggle commenced, which for fourteen years convulsed Wales, and for some time shook England to its centre. After I had satisfied myself with wandering about the town we proceeded to the castle.

The original castle suffered terribly in the civil wars; it was held for wretched Charles, and was nearly demolished by the cannon of Cromwell, which were planted on a hill about half-a-mile distant. The present castle is partly modern and partly ancient. It belongs to a family of the name of W – , who reside in the modern part, and who have the character of being kind, hospitable, and intellectual people. We only visited the ancient part, over which we were shown by a woman, who hearing us speaking Welsh, spoke Welsh herself during the whole time she was showing us about. She showed us dark passages, a gloomy apartment in which Welsh kings and great people had been occasionally confined, that strange memorial of the good old times, a drowning pit, and a large prison room, in the middle of which stood a singular looking column, scrawled with odd characters, which had of yore been used for a whipping-post, another memorial of the good old baronial times, so dear to romance readers and minds of sensibility. Amongst other things which our conductor showed us, was an immense onen or ash; it stood in one of the courts, and measured, as she said, pedwar y haner o ladd yn ei gwmpas, or four yards and a half in girth. As I gazed on the mighty tree I thought of the Ash Yggdrasill mentioned in the Voluspa, or prophecy of Vola, that venerable poem which contains so much relating to the mythology of the ancient Norse.

We returned to the inn and dined. The duck was capital, and I asked John Jones if he had ever tasted a better. “Never, sir,” said he, “for to tell you the truth, I never tasted a duck before.” “Rather singular,” said I. “What that I should not have tasted duck? O, sir, the singularity is, that I should now be tasting duck. Duck in Wales, sir, is not fare for poor weavers. This is the first duck I ever tasted, and though I never taste another, as I probably never shall, I may consider myself a fortunate weaver, for I can now say I have tasted duck once in my life. Few weavers in Wales are ever able to say as much.”

# CHAPTER XVI

Baptist Tomb-Stone – The Toll-Bar – Rebecca – The Guitar.

The sun was fast declining as we left Ruthyn. We retraced our steps across the fields. When we came to the Baptist chapel I got over the wall of the little yard to look at the gravestones. There were only three. The inscriptions upon them were all in Welsh. The following stanza was on the stone of Jane, the daughter of Elizabeth Williams, who died on the second of May, 1843: —

"Er myn'd i'r oerllyd annedd
Dros dymher hir i orwedd,
Cwyd i'r lan o'r gwely bridd
Ac hyfryd fydd ei hagwedd,"

which is

"Though thou art gone to dwelling cold,
To lie in mould for many a year,
Thou shalt, at length, from earthy bed,
Uplift thy head to blissful sphere."

As we went along I stopped to gaze at a singular-looking hill forming part of the mountain range on the east. I asked John Jones what its name was, but he did not know. As we were standing talking about it, a lady came up from the direction in which our course lay. John Jones, touching his hat to her, said:

"Madam, this gwr boneddig wishes to know the name of that moel; perhaps you can tell him."

"Its name is Moel Agrik," said the lady, addressing me in English.

"Does that mean Agricola's hill?" said I.

"It does," said she; "and there is a tradition that the Roman general Agricola, when he invaded these parts, pitched his camp on that moel. The hill is spoken of by Pennant."

"Thank you, madam," said I; "perhaps you can tell me the name of the delightful grounds in which we stand, supposing they have a name."

"They are called Oaklands," said the lady.

"A very proper name," said I, "for there are plenty of oaks growing about. But why are they called by a Saxon name, for Oaklands is Saxon."

"Because," said the lady, "when the grounds were first planted with trees they belonged to an English family."

"Thank you," said I, and, taking off my hat, I departed with my guide. I asked him her name, but he could not tell me. Before she was out of sight, however, we met a labourer, of whom John Jones inquired her name.

"Her name is W – s," said the man, "and a good lady she is."

"Is she Welsh?" said I.

"Pure Welsh, master," said the man. "Purer Welsh flesh and blood need not be."

Nothing farther worth relating occurred till we reached the toll-bar at the head of the hen ffordd, by which time the sun was almost gone down. We found the master of the gate, his wife, and son seated on a bench before the door. The woman had a large book on her lap, in which she was reading by the last light of the departing orb. I gave the group the seal of the evening in English, which they all returned, the woman looking up from her book.

"Is that volume the Bible?" said I.

"It is, sir," said the woman.

"May I look at it?" said I.

"Certainly," said the woman, and placed the book in my hand. It was a magnificent Welsh Bible, but without the title-page.

"That book must be a great comfort to you," said I to her.

"Very great," said she. "I know not what we should do without it in the long winter evenings."

"Of what faith are you?" said I.

"We are Methodists," she replied.

"Then you are of the same faith as my friend here," said I.

"Yes, yes," said she, "we are aware of that. We all know honest John Jones."

After we had left the gate I asked John Jones whether he had ever heard of Rebecca of the toll-gates.

"O, yes," said he; "I have heard of that chieftainess."

"And who was she?" said I.

"I cannot say, sir: I never saw her, nor any one who had seen her. Some say that there were a hundred Rebeccas, and all of them men dressed in women's clothes, who went about at night, at the head of bands to break the gates. Ah, sir, something of the kind was almost necessary at that time. I am a friend of peace, sir; no head-breaker, house-breaker, nor gate-breaker, but I can hardly blame what was done at that time, under the name of Rebecca. You have no idea how the poor Welsh were oppressed by those gates, aye, and the rich too. The little people and farmers could not carry their produce to market owing to the exactions at the gates, which devoured all the profit and sometimes more. So that the markets were not half supplied, and people with money could frequently not get what they wanted. Complaints were made to government, which not being attended to, Rebecca and her byddinion made their appearance at night, and broke the gates to pieces with sledge-hammers, and everybody said it was gallant work, everybody save the keepers of the gates and the proprietors. Not only the poor, but the rich said so. Aye, and I have heard that many a fine young gentleman had a hand in the work, and went about at night at the head of a band dressed as Rebecca. Well, sir, those breakings were acts of violence, I don't deny, but they did good, for the system is altered; such impositions are no longer practised at gates as were before the time of Rebecca."

"Were any people ever taken up and punished for those nocturnal breakings?" said I.

"No, sir; and I have heard say that nobody's being taken up was a proof that the rich approved of the work and had a hand in it."

Night had come on by the time we reached the foot of the huge hills we had crossed in the morning. We toiled up the ascent, and after crossing the level ground on the top, plunged down the bwlch between walking and running, occasionally stumbling, for we were nearly in complete darkness, and the bwlch was steep and stony. We more than once passed people who gave us the n's da, the hissing night salutation of the Welsh. At length I saw the abbey looming amidst the darkness, and John Jones said that we were just above the fountain. We descended, and putting my head down, I drank greedily of the dwr santaidd, my guide following my example. We then proceeded on our way, and in about half-an-hour reached Llangollen. I took John Jones home with me. We had a cheerful cup of tea. Henrietta played on the guitar, and sang a Spanish song, to the great delight of John Jones, who at about ten o'clock departed contented and happy to his own dwelling.

# CHAPTER XVII

John Jones and his Bundle – A Good Lady – The Irishman's Dingle – Ab Gwilym and the Mist – The Kitchen – The Two Individuals – The Horse-Dealer – I can manage him – The Mist again.

The following day was gloomy. In the evening John Jones made his appearance with a bundle under his arm, and an umbrella in his hand.

"Sir," said he, "I am going across the mountain with a piece of weaving work, for the man on the other side, who employs me. Perhaps you would like to go with me, as you are fond of walking."

"I suppose," said I, "you wish to have my company for fear of meeting Gwyddelians on the hill."

John smiled.

"Well, sir," said he, "if I do meet them I would sooner be with company than without. But I dare venture by myself, trusting in the Man on High, and perhaps I do wrong to ask you to go, as you must be tired with your walk of yesterday."

"Hardly more than yourself," said I. "Come; I shall be glad to go. What I said about the Gwyddelians was only in jest."

As we were about to depart John said,

"It does not rain at present, sir, but I think it will. You had better take an umbrella."

I did so, and away we went. We passed over the bridge, and turning to the right went by the back of the town through a field. As we passed by the Plas Newydd John Jones said:

"No one lives there now, sir; all dark and dreary; very different from the state of things when the ladies lived there – all gay then and cheerful. I remember the ladies, sir, particularly the last, who lived by herself after her companion died. She was a good lady, and very kind to the poor; when they came to her gate they were never sent away without something to cheer them. She was a grand lady too – kept grand company, and used to be drawn about in a coach by four horses. But she too is gone, and the house is cold and empty; no fire in it, sir; no furniture. There was an auction after her death; and a grand auction it was and lasted four days. O, what a throng of people there was, some of whom came from a great distance, to buy the curious things, of which there were plenty."

We passed over a bridge, which crosses a torrent, which descends from the mountain on the south side of Llangollen, which bridge John Jones told me was called the bridge of the Melin Bac, or mill of the nook, from a mill of that name close by. Continuing our way we came to a glen, down which the torrent comes which passes under the bridge. There was little water in the bed of the torrent, and we crossed easily enough by stepping-stones. I looked up the glen; a wild place enough, its sides overgrown with trees. Dreary and dismal it looked in the gloom of the closing evening. John Jones said that there was no regular path up it, and that one could only get along by jumping from stone to stone, at the hazard of breaking one's legs. Having passed over the bed of the torrent, we came to a path, which led up the mountain. The path was very steep and stony; the glen with its trees and darkness on our right. We proceeded some way. At length John Jones pointed to a hollow lane on our right, seemingly leading into the glen.

"That place, sir," said he, "is called Pant y Gwyddel – the Irishman's dingle, and sometimes Pant Paddy, from the Irish being fond of taking up their quarters there. It was just here, at the entrance of the pant, that the tribe were encamped, when I passed two months ago at night, in returning from the other side of the hill with ten shillings in my pocket, which I had been paid for a piece of my work, which I had carried over the mountain to the very place where I am now carrying this. I shall never forget the fright I was in, both on account of my life, and my ten shillings. I ran down what remained of the hill as fast as I could, not minding the stones. Should I meet a tribe now on my return

I shall not run; you will be with me, and I shall not fear for my life nor for my money, which will be now more than ten shillings, provided the man over the hill pays me, as I have no doubt he will."

As we ascended higher we gradually diverged from the glen, though we did not lose sight of it till we reached the top of the mountain. The top was nearly level. On our right were a few fields enclosed with stone walls. On our left was an open space where whin, furze and heath were growing. We passed over the summit, and began to descend by a tolerably good, though steep road. But for the darkness of evening and a drizzling mist, which, for some time past, had been coming on, we should have enjoyed a glorious prospect down into the valley, or perhaps I should say that I should have enjoyed a glorious prospect, for John Jones, like a true mountaineer, cared not a brass farthing for prospects. Even as it was, noble glimpses of wood and rock were occasionally to be obtained. The mist soon wetted us to the skin, notwithstanding that we put up our umbrellas. It was a regular Welsh mist, a niwl, like that in which the great poet Ab Gwilym lost his way, whilst trying to keep an assignation with his beloved Morfydd, and which he abuses in the following manner: —

"O ho! thou villain mist, O ho!
What plea hast thou to plague me so!
I scarcely know a scurril name,
But dearly thou deserv'st the same;
Thou exhalation from the deep
Unknown, where ugly spirits keep!
Thou smoke from hellish stews uphurl'd
To mock and mortify the world!
Thou spider-web of giant race,
Spun out and spread through airy space!
Avaunt, thou filthy, clammy thing,
Of sorry rain the source and spring!
Moist blanket dripping misery down,
Loathed alike by land and town!
Thou watery monster, wan to see,
Intruding 'twixt the sun and me,
To rob me of my blessed right,
To turn my day to dismal night.
Parent of thieves and patron best,
They brave pursuit within thy breast!
Mostly from thee its merciless snow
Grim January doth glean, I trow.
Pass off with speed, thou prowler pale,
Holding along o'er hill and dale,
Spilling a noxious spittle round,
Spoiling the fairies' sporting ground!
Move off to hell, mysterious haze;
Wherein deceitful meteors blaze;
Thou wild of vapour, vast, o'ergrown,
Huge as the ocean of unknown."

As we descended the path became more steep; it was particularly so at a part where it was overshadowed with trees on both sides. Here finding walking very uncomfortable, my knees suffering much, I determined to run. So shouting to John Jones, "Nis gallav gerdded rhaid rhedeg," I set off running down the pass. My companion followed close behind, and luckily meeting no mischance, we

presently found ourselves on level ground, amongst a collection of small houses. On our turning a corner a church appeared on our left hand on the slope of the hill. In the churchyard, and close to the road, grew a large yew-tree which flung its boughs far on every side. John Jones stopping by the tree said, that if I looked over the wall of the yard I should see the tomb of a Lord Dungannon, who had been a great benefactor to the village. I looked, and through the lower branches of the yew, which hung over part of the churchyard, I saw what appeared to be a mausoleum. Jones told me that in the church also there was the tomb of a great person of the name of Tyrwhitt.

We passed on by various houses till we came nearly to the bottom of the valley. Jones then pointing to a large house, at a little distance on the right, told me that it was a good gwesty, and advised me to go and refresh myself in it, whilst he went and carried home his work to the man who employed him, who he said lived in a farm-house a few hundred yards off. I asked him where we were.

"At Llyn Ceiriog," he replied.

I then asked if we were near Pont Fadog; and received for answer that Pont Fadog was a good way down the valley, to the north-east, and that we could not see it owing to a hill which intervened.

Jones went his way and I proceeded to the gwestfa, the door of which stood invitingly open. I entered a large kitchen, at one end of which a good fire was burning in a grate, in front of which was a long table, and a high settle on either side. Everything looked very comfortable. There was nobody in the kitchen: on my calling, however, a girl came whom I bade in Welsh to bring me a pint of the best ale. The girl stared, but went away apparently to fetch it. Presently came the landlady, a good-looking middle-aged woman. I saluted her in Welsh and then asked her if she could speak English. She replied "Tipyn bach," which interpreted, is, a little bit. I soon, however, found that she could speak it very passably, for two men coming in from the rear of the house she conversed with them in English. These two individuals seated themselves on chairs near the door, and called for beer. The girl brought in the ale, and I sat down by the fire, poured myself out a glass, and made myself comfortable. Presently a gig drove up to the door, and in came a couple of dogs, one a tall black greyhound, the other a large female setter, the coat of the latter dripping with rain, and shortly after two men from the gig entered, one who appeared to be the principal was a stout bluff-looking person between fifty and sixty dressed in a grey stuff coat and with a slouched hat on his head. This man bustled much about, and in a broad Yorkshire dialect ordered a fire to be lighted in another room, and a chamber to be prepared for him and his companion; the landlady, who appeared to know him, and to treat him with a kind of deference, asked if she should prepare two beds; whereupon he answered "No! As we came together, and shall start together, so shall we sleep together; it will not be for the first time."

His companion was a small mean-looking man dressed in a black coat, and behaved to him with no little respect. Not only the landlady but the two men, of whom I have previously spoken, appeared to know him and to treat him with deference. He and his companion presently went out to see after the horse. After a little time they returned, and the stout man called lustily for two fourpennyworths of brandy and water – "Take it into the other room!" said he, and went into a side room with his companion, but almost immediately came out saying that the room smoked and was cold, and that he preferred sitting in the kitchen. He then took his seat near me, and when the brandy was brought drank to my health. I said thank you: but nothing farther. He then began talking to the men and his companion upon indifferent subjects. After a little time John Jones came in, called for a glass of ale, and at my invitation seated himself between me and the stout personage. The latter addressed him roughly in English, but receiving no answer said, "Ah, you no understand. You have no English and I no Welsh."

"You have not mastered Welsh yet, Mr. – " said one of the men to him.

"No!" said he: "I have been doing business with the Welsh forty years, but can't speak a word of their language. I sometimes guess at a word, spoken in the course of business, but am never sure."

Presently John Jones began talking to me, saying that he had been to the river, that the water was very low, and that there was little but stones in the bed of the stream.

I told him if its name was Ceiriog no wonder there were plenty of stones in it, Ceiriog being derived from Cerrig, a rock. The men stared to hear me speak Welsh.

"Is the gentleman a Welshman?" said one of the men, near the door, to his companion; "he seems to speak Welsh very well."

"How should I know?" said the other, who appeared to be a low working man.

"Who are those people?" said I to John Jones.

"The smaller man is a workman at a flannel manufactory," said Jones. "The other I do not exactly know."

"And who is the man on the other side of you?" said I.

"I believe he is an English dealer in gigs and horses," replied Jones, "and that he is come here either to buy or sell."

The man, however, soon put me out of all doubt with respect to his profession.

"I was at Chirk," said he, "and Mr. So-and-so asked me to have a look at his new gig and horse, and have a ride. I consented. They were both brought out – everything new: gig new, harness new, and horse new. Mr. So-and-so asked me what I thought of his turn-out. I gave a look and said, 'I like the car very well, harness very well, but I don't like the horse at all: a regular bolter, rearer, and kicker, or I'm no judge; moreover, he's pigeon-toed.' However, we all got on the car – four of us, and I was of course complimented with the ribbons. Well, we hadn't gone fifty yards before the horse, to make my words partly good, began to kick like a new 'un. However, I managed him, and he went on for a couple of miles till we got to the top of the hill, just above the descent with the precipice on the right hand. Here he began to rear like a very devil.

"'O dear me!' says Mr. So-and-so; 'let me get out!'

"'Keep where you are,' says I, 'I can manage him.'

"However, Mr. So-and-so would not be ruled, and got out; coming down, not on his legs, but his hands and knees. And then the two others said —

"'Let us get out!'

"'Keep where you are,' said I, 'I can manage him.'

"But they must needs get out, or rather tumble out, for they both came down on the road hard on their backs.

"'Get out yourself,' said they all, 'and let the devil go, or you are a done man.'

"'Getting out may do for you young hands,' says I, 'but it won't do for I; neither my back nor bones will stand the hard road.'

"Mr. So-and-so ran to the horse's head.

"'Are you mad?' says I, 'if you try to hold him he'll be over the pree-si-pice in a twinkling, and then where am I? Give him head; I can manage him.'

"So Mr. So-and-so got out of the way, and down flew the horse right down the descent, as fast as he could gallop. I tell you what, I didn't half like it! A pree-si-pice on my right, the rock on my left, and a devil before me, going, like a cannon-ball, right down the hill. However, I contrived, as I said I would, to manage him; kept the car from the rock and from the edge of the gulf too. Well, just when we had come to the bottom of the hill out comes the people running from the inn, almost covering the road.

"'Now get out of the way,' I shouts, 'if you don't wish to see your brains knocked out, and what would be worse, mine too.'

"So they gets out of the way, and on I spun, I and my devil. But by this time I had nearly taken the devil out of him. Well, he hadn't gone fifty yards on the level ground, when, what do you think he did? why, went regularly over, tumbled down regularly on the road, even as I knew he would some time or other, because why? he was pigeon-toed. Well, I gets out of the gig, and no sooner did Mr. So-and-so come up than I says —

"'I likes your car very well, and I likes your harness, but – me if I likes your horse, and it will be some time before you persuade me to drive him again.'"

I am a great lover of horses, and an admirer of good driving, and should have wished to have some conversation with this worthy person about horses and their management. I should also have wished to ask him some questions about Wales and the Welsh, as he must have picked up a great deal of curious information about both in his forty years' traffic, notwithstanding he did not know a word of Welsh, but John Jones prevented my farther tarrying by saying that it would be as well to get over the mountain before it was entirely dark. So I got up, paid for my ale, vainly endeavoured to pay for that of my companion, who insisted upon paying for what he had ordered, made a general bow, and departed from the house, leaving the horse-dealer and the rest staring at each other and wondering who we were, or at least who I was. We were about to ascend the hill when John Jones asked me whether I should not like to see the bridge and the river. I told him I should. The bridge and the river presented nothing remarkable. The former was of a single arch; and the latter anything but abundant in its flow.

We now began to retrace our steps over the mountain. At first the mist appeared to be nearly cleared away. As we proceeded, however, large sheets began to roll up the mountain sides, and by the time we reached the summit we were completely shrouded in vapour. The night, however, was not very dark, and we found our way tolerably well, though once in descending I had nearly tumbled into the nant or dingle, now on our left hand. The bushes and trees, seen indistinctly through the mist, had something the look of goblins, and brought to my mind the elves, which Ab Gwilym of old saw, or thought he saw, in a somewhat similar situation: —

"In every hollow dingle stood
Of wry-mouth'd elves a wrathful brood."

Drenched to the skin, but uninjured in body and limb, we at length reached Llangollen.

# CHAPTER XVIII

Venerable Old Gentleman – Surnames in Wales – Russia and Britain – Church of England – Yriarte – The Eagle and his Young – Poets of the Gael – The Oxonian – Master Salisburie.

My wife had told me that she had had some conversation upon the Welsh language and literature with a venerable old man, who kept a shop in the town, that she had informed him that I was very fond of both, and that he had expressed a great desire to see me. One afternoon I said: "Let us go and pay a visit to your old friend of the shop. I think from two or three things which you have told me about him, that he must be worth knowing." We set out. She conducted me across the bridge a little way; then presently turning to the left into the principal street, she entered the door of a shop on the left-hand side, over the top of which was written: "Jones; provision dealer and general merchant." The shop was small, with two little counters, one on each side. Behind one was a young woman, and behind the other a venerable-looking old man.

"I have brought my husband to visit you," said my wife, addressing herself to him.

"I am most happy to see him," said the old gentleman, making me a polite bow.

He then begged that we would do him the honour to walk into his parlour, and led us into a little back room, the window of which looked out upon the Dee a few yards below the bridge. On the left side of the room was a large case, well stored with books. He offered us chairs, and we all sat down. I was much struck with the old man. He was rather tall, and somewhat inclined to corpulency. His hair was grey; his forehead high; his nose aquiline; his eyes full of intelligence; whilst his manners were those of a perfect gentleman. I entered into conversation by saying that I supposed his name was Jones, as I had observed that name over the door.

"Jones is the name I bear at your service, sir," he replied.

I said that it was a very common name in Wales, as I knew several people who bore it, and observed that most of the surnames in Wales appeared to be modifications of Christian names; for example Jones, Roberts, Edwards, Humphreys, and likewise Pugh, Powel, and Probert, which were nothing more than the son of Hugh, the son of Howel, and the son of Robert. He said I was right, that there were very few real surnames in Wales; that the three great families, however, had real surnames; for that Wynn, Morgan, and Bulkley were all real surnames. I asked him whether the Bulkleys of Anglesea were not originally an English family. He said they were, and that they settled down in Anglesea in the time of Elizabeth.

After some minutes my wife got up and left us. The old gentleman and I had then some discourse in Welsh; we soon, however, resumed speaking English. We got on the subject of Welsh bards, and after a good deal of discourse the old gentleman said:

"You seem to know something about Welsh poetry; can you tell me who wrote the following line?

"'There will be great doings in Britain, and I shall have no concern in them.'"

"I will not be positive," said I, "but I think from its tone and tenor that it was composed by Merddyn, whom my countrymen call Merlin."

"I believe you are right," said the old gentleman, "I see you know something of Welsh poetry. I met the line, a long time ago, in a Welsh grammar. It then made a great impression upon me and of late it has always been ringing in my ears. I love Britain. Britain has just engaged in a war with a mighty country, and I am apprehensive of the consequences. I am old, upwards of fourscore, and shall probably not live to see the evil, if evil happens, as I fear it will – 'There will be strange doings in Britain, but they will not concern me.' I cannot get the line out of my head."

I told him that the line probably related to the progress of the Saxons in Britain, but that I did not wonder that it made an impression upon him at the present moment. I said, however, that we ran no risk from Russia; that the only power at all dangerous to Britain was France, which though at present leagued with her against Russia, would eventually go to war with and strive to subdue her, and then of course Britain could expect no help from Russia, her old friend and ally, who, if Britain had not outraged her, would have assisted her, in any quarrel or danger, with four or five hundred thousand men. I said that I hoped neither he nor I should see a French invasion, but I had no doubt one would eventually take place, and that then Britain must fight stoutly, as she had no one to expect help from but herself; that I wished she might be able to hold her own, but —

"Strange things will happen in Britain, though they will concern me nothing," said the old gentleman with a sigh.

On my expressing a desire to know something of his history, he told me that he was the son of a small farmer, who resided at some distance from Llangollen; that he lost his father at an early age, and was obliged to work hard, even when a child, in order to assist his mother who had some difficulty, after the death of his father, in keeping things together; that though he was obliged to work hard he had been fond of study, and used to pore over Welsh and English books by the glimmering light of the turf fire at night, for that his mother could not afford to allow him anything in the shape of a candle to read by; that at his mother's death he left rural labour, and coming to Llangollen, commenced business in the little shop in which he was at present; that he had been married and had children, but that his wife and family were dead; that the young woman whom I had seen in the shop, and who took care of his house, was a relation of his wife; that though he had always been attentive to business, he had never abandoned study; that he had mastered his own language, of which he was passionately fond, and had acquired a good knowledge of English and of some other languages. That his fondness for literature had shortly after his arrival at Llangollen attracted the notice of some of the people, who encouraged him in his studies, and assisted him by giving him books; that the two celebrated ladies of Llangollen had particularly noticed him; that he held the situation of church clerk for upwards of forty years, and that it was chiefly owing to the recommendation of the "great ladies" that he had obtained it. He then added with a sigh, that about ten years ago he was obliged to give it up, owing to something the matter with his eyesight, which prevented him from reading, and that his being obliged to give it up was a source of bitter grief to him, as he had always considered it a high honour to be permitted to assist in the service of the Church of England, in the principles of which he had been bred, and in whose doctrines he firmly believed.

Here shaking him by the hand I said that I too had been bred up in the principles of the Church of England; that I too firmly believed in its doctrines, and would maintain with my blood, if necessary, that there was not such another church in the world.

"So would I," said the old gentleman; "where is there a church in whose liturgy there is so much Scripture as in that of the Church of England?"

"Pity," said I, "that so many traitors have lately sprung up in its ministry."

"If it be so," said the old church clerk, "they have not yet shown themselves in the pulpit at Llangollen. All the clergymen who have held the living in my time have been excellent. The present incumbent is a model of a Church-of-England clergyman. O, how I regret that the state of my eyes prevents me from officiating as clerk beneath him."

I told him that I should never from the appearance of his eyes have imagined that they were not excellent ones.

"I can see to walk about with them, and to distinguish objects," said the old gentleman; "but see to read with them I cannot. Even with the help of the most powerful glasses I cannot distinguish a letter. I believe I strained my eyes at a very early age, when striving to read at night by the glimmer of the turf fire in my poor mother's chimney corner. O what an affliction is this state of my eyes!

I can't turn my books to any account, nor read the newspapers; but I repeat that I chiefly lament it because it prevents me from officiating as under preacher."

He showed me his books. Seeing amongst them *The Fables of Yriarte* in Spanish, I asked how they came into his possession.

"They were presented to me," said he, "by one of the ladies of Llangollen, Lady Eleanor Butler."

"Have you ever read them?" said I.

"No," he replied; "I do not understand a word of Spanish; but I suppose her ladyship, knowing I was fond of languages, thought that I might one day set about learning Spanish, and that then they might be useful to me."

He then asked me if I knew Spanish, and on my telling him that I had some knowledge of that language he asked me to translate some of the fables. I translated two of them, which pleased him much.

I then asked if he had ever heard of a collection of Welsh fables compiled about the year thirteen hundred. He said that he had not, and inquired whether they had ever been printed. I told him that some had appeared in the old Welsh magazine called *The Greal*.

"I wish you would repeat one of them," said the old clerk.

"Here is one," said I, "which particularly struck me: —

"It is the custom of the eagle, when his young are sufficiently old, to raise them up above his nest in the direction of the sun; and the bird which has strength enough of eye to look right in the direction of the sun, he keeps and nourishes, but the one which has not, he casts down into the gulf to its destruction. So does the Lord deal with His children, in the Catholic Church Militant: those whom He sees worthy to serve Him in godliness and spiritual goodness He keeps with Him and nourishes, but those who are not worthy from being addicted to earthly things He casts out into utter darkness, where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth."

The old gentleman after a moment's reflection said it was a clever fable, but an unpleasant one. It was hard for poor birds to be flung into a gulf for not having power of eye sufficient to look full in the face of the sun, and likewise hard that poor human creatures should be lost for ever, for not doing that which they had no power to do.

"Perhaps," said I, "the eagle does not deal with his chicks, or the Lord with His creatures as the fable represents."

"Let us hope at any rate," said the old gentleman, "that the Lord does not."

"Have you ever seen this book?" said he, and put Smith's *Sean Dana* into my hand.

"O yes," said I, "and have gone through it. It contains poems in the Gaelic language by Oisin and others, collected in the Highlands. I went through it a long time ago with great attention. Some of the poems are wonderfully beautiful."

"They are so," said the old clerk. "I too have gone through the book; it was presented to me a great many years ago by a lady to whom I gave some lessons in the Welsh language. I went through it with the assistance of a Gaelic grammar and dictionary which she also presented to me, and I was struck with the high tone of the poetry."

"This collection is valuable indeed," said I; "it contains poems, which not only possess the highest merit, but serve to confirm the authenticity of the poems of Ossian, published by Macpherson, so often called in question. All the pieces here attributed to Ossian are written in the same metre, tone, and spirit as those attributed to him in the other collection, so if Macpherson's Ossianic poems, which he said were collected by him in the Highlands, are forgeries, Smith's Ossianic poems, which according to his account, were also collected in the Highlands, must be also forged, and have been imitated from those published by the other. Now as it is well known that Smith did not possess sufficient poetic power to produce any imitation of Macpherson's Ossian with a tenth part the merit which the *Sean Dana* possess, and that even if he had possessed it his principles would not have allowed him to attempt to deceive the world by imposing forgeries upon it, as the authentic poems of

another, he being a highly respectable clergyman, the necessary conclusion is that the Ossianic poems which both published are genuine and collected in the manner in which both stated they were."

After a little more discourse about Ossian the old gentleman asked me if there was any good modern Gaelic poetry. "None very modern," said I: "the last great poets of the Gael were Macintyre and Buchanan, who flourished about the middle of the last century. The first sang of love and of Highland scenery; the latter was a religious poet. The best piece of Macintyre is an ode to Ben Dourain, or the Hill of the Water-dogs – a mountain in the Highlands. The masterpiece of Buchanan is his La Breitheanas or Day of Judgment, which is equal in merit, or nearly so, to the Cywydd y Farn or Judgment Day of your own immortal Gronwy Owen. Singular that the two best pieces on the Day of Judgment should have been written in two Celtic dialects, and much about the same time; but such is the fact."

"Really," said the old church clerk, "you seem to know something of Celtic literature."

"A little," said I; "I am a bit of a philologist; and when studying languages dip a little into the literature which they contain."

As I had heard him say that he had occasionally given lessons in the Welsh language, I inquired whether any of his pupils had made much progress in it. "The generality," said he, "soon became tired of its difficulties, and gave it up without making any progress at all. Two or three got on tolerably well. One however acquired it in a time so short that it might be deemed marvellous. He was an Oxonian, and came down with another in the vacation in order to study hard against the yearly collegiate examination. He and his friend took lodgings at Pengwern Hall, then a farm-house, and studied and walked about for some time, as other young men from college, who come down here, are in the habit of doing. One day he and his friend came to me who was then clerk, and desired to see the interior of the church. So I took the key and went with them into the church. When he came to the altar he took up the large Welsh Common Prayer Book which was lying there and looked into it.

"'A curious language this Welsh,' said he; 'I should like to learn it.'

"'Many have wished to learn it, without being able,' said I; 'it is no easy language.'

"'I should like to try,' he replied; 'I wish I could find some one who would give me a few lessons.'

"'I have occasionally given instructions in Welsh,' said I, 'and shall be happy to oblige you.'

"Well, it was agreed that he should take lessons of me; and to my house he came every evening, and I gave him what instructions I could. I was astonished at his progress. He acquired the pronunciation in a lesson, and within a week was able to construe and converse. By the time he left Llangollen, and he was not here in all more than two months, he understood the Welsh Bible as well as I did, and could speak Welsh so well that the Welsh, who did not know him, took him to be one of themselves, for he spoke the language with the very tone and manner of a native. O, he was the cleverest man for language that I ever knew; not a word that he heard did he ever forget."

"Just like Mezzofanti," said I, "the great cardinal philologist. But whilst learning Welsh, did he not neglect his collegiate studies?"

"Well, I was rather apprehensive on that point," said the old gentleman, "but mark the event. At the examination he came off most brilliantly in Latin, Greek, mathematics, and other things too; in fact, a double first class man, as I think they call it."

"I have never heard of so extraordinary an individual," said I. "I could no more have done what you say he did, than I could have taken wings and flown. Pray what was his name?"

"His name," said the old gentleman, "was Earl."

I was much delighted with my new acquaintance, and paid him frequent visits; the more I saw him the more he interested me. He was kind and benevolent, a good old Church of England Christian, was well versed in several dialects of the Celtic, and possessed an astonishing deal of Welsh heraldic and antiquarian lore. Often whilst discoursing with him I almost fancied that I was with Master Salisburie, Vaughan of Hengwrt, or some other worthy of old, deeply skilled in everything remarkable connected with wild "Camber's Lande."

# CHAPTER XIX

The Vicar and his Family – Evan Evans – Foaming Ale – Llam y Lleidyr – Baptism – Joost Van Vondel – Over to Rome – The Miller's Man – Welsh and English.

We had received a call from the Vicar of Llangollen and his lady; we had returned it, and they had done us the kindness to invite us to take tea with them. On the appointed evening we went, myself, wife, and Henrietta, and took tea with the vicar and his wife, their sons and daughters, all delightful and amiable beings – the eldest son a fine intelligent young man from Oxford, lately admitted into the Church, and now assisting his father in his sacred office. A delightful residence was the vicarage, situated amongst trees in the neighbourhood of the Dee. A large open window in the room, in which our party sat, afforded us a view of a green plat on the top of a bank running down to the Dee, part of the river, the steep farther bank covered with umbrageous trees, and a high mountain beyond, even that of Pen y Coed clad with wood. During tea Mr. E. and I had a great deal of discourse. I found him to be a first-rate Greek and Latin scholar, and also a proficient in the poetical literature of his own country. In the course of discourse he repeated some noble lines of Evan Evans, the unfortunate and eccentric Prydydd Hir, or tall poet, the friend and correspondent of Gray, for whom he made literal translations from the Welsh, which the great English genius afterwards wrought into immortal verse.

"I have a great regard for poor Evan Evans," said Mr. E., after he had finished repeating the lines, "for two reasons: first, because he was an illustrious genius, and second, because he was a South-Wallian like myself."

"And I," I replied, "because he was a great poet, and like myself fond of a glass of cwrw da."

Some time after tea the younger Mr. E. and myself took a walk in an eastern direction along a path cut in the bank, just above the stream. After proceeding a little way amongst most romantic scenery I asked my companion if he had ever heard of the pool of Catherine Lingo – the deep pool, as the reader will please to remember, of which John Jones had spoken.

"O yes," said young Mr. E.: "my brothers and myself are in the habit of bathing there almost every morning. We will go to it if you please."

We proceeded, and soon came to the pool. The pool is a beautiful sheet of water, seemingly about one hundred and fifty yards in length, by about seventy in width. It is bounded on the east by a low ridge of rocks forming a weir. The banks on both sides are high and precipitous, and covered with trees, some of which shoot their arms for some way above the face of the pool. This is said to be the deepest pool in the whole course of the Dee, varying in depth from twenty to thirty feet. Enormous pike, called in Welsh penhwiaid, or ducks'-heads, from the similarity which the head of a pike bears to that of a duck, are said to be tenants of this pool.

We returned to the vicarage and at about ten we all sat down to supper. On the supper-table was a mighty pitcher full of foaming ale.

"There," said my excellent host, as he poured me out a glass, "there is a glass of cwrw, which Evan Evans himself might have drunk."

One evening my wife, Henrietta, and myself, attended by John Jones, went upon the Berwyn a little to the east of the Geraint or Barber's Hill to botanize. Here we found a fern which John Jones called Coed llus y Brân, or the plant of the Crow's berry. There was a hard kind of berry upon it, of which he said the crows were exceedingly fond. We also discovered two or three other strange plants, the Welsh names of which our guide told us, and which were curious and descriptive enough. He took us home by a romantic path which we had never before seen, and on our way pointed out to us a small house in which he said he was born.

The day after, finding myself on the banks of the Dee in the upper part of the valley, I determined to examine the Llam Lleidyr or Robber's Leap, which I had heard spoken of on a former occasion. A man passing near me with a cart, I asked him where the Robber's Leap was. I spoke in English, and with a shake of his head he replied, "Dim Saesneg." On my putting the question to him in Welsh, however, his countenance brightened up.

"Dyna Llam Lleidyr, sir!" said he, pointing to a very narrow part of the stream a little way down.

"And did the thief take it from this side?" I demanded.

"Yes, sir, from this side," replied the man.

I thanked him, and passing over the dry part of the river's bed, came to the Llam Lleidyr. The whole water of the Dee in the dry season gurgles here through a passage not more than four feet across, which, however, is evidently profoundly deep, as the water is as dark as pitch. If the thief ever took the leap he must have taken it in the dry season, for in the wet the Dee is a wide and roaring torrent. Yet even in the dry season it is difficult to conceive how anybody could take this leap, for on the other side is a rock rising high above the dark gurgling stream. On observing the opposite side, however, narrowly, I perceived that there was a small hole a little way up the rock, in which it seemed possible to rest one's foot for a moment. So I supposed that if the leap was ever taken, the individual who took it darted the tip of his foot into the hole, then springing up seized the top of the rock with his hands, and scrambled up. From either side the leap must have been a highly dangerous one – from the farther side the leaper would incur the almost certain risk of breaking his legs on a ledge of hard rock, from this of falling back into the deep, horrible stream, which would probably suck him down in a moment.

From the Llam y Lleidyr I went to the canal and walked along it till I came to the house of the old man who sold coals, and who had put me in mind of Smollett's Morgan; he was now standing in his little coal yard, leaning over the pales. I had spoken to him on two or three occasions subsequent to the one on which I made his acquaintance, and had been every time more and more struck with the resemblance which his ways and manners bore to those of Smollett's character, on which account I shall call him Morgan, though such was not his name. He now told me that he expected that I should build a villa and settle down in the neighbourhood, as I seemed so fond of it. After a little discourse, induced either by my questions or from a desire to talk about himself, he related to me his history, which though not one of the most wonderful I shall repeat. He was born near Aberdarron, in Caernarvonshire, and in order to make me understand the position of the place, and its bearing with regard to some other places, he drew marks in the coal-dust on the earth. His father was a Baptist minister, who when Morgan was about six years of age went to live at Canol Lyn, a place at some little distance from Port Heli. With his father he continued till he was old enough to gain his own maintenance, when he went to serve a farmer in the neighbourhood. Having saved some money, young Morgan departed to the foundries at Cefn Mawr, at which he worked thirty years, with an interval of four, which he had passed partly working in slate quarries, and partly upon the canal. About four years before the present time he came to where he now lived, where he commenced selling coals, at first on his own account, and subsequently for some other person. He concluded his narration by saying that he was now sixty-two years of age, was afflicted with various disorders, and believed that he was breaking up.

Such was Morgan's history; certainly not a very remarkable one. Yet Morgan was a most remarkable individual, as I shall presently make appear.

Rather affected at the bad account he gave me of his health, I asked him if he felt easy in his mind. He replied perfectly so, and when I inquired how he came to feel so comfortable, he said that his feeling so was owing to his baptism into the faith of Christ Jesus. On my telling him that I too had been baptized, he asked me if I had been dipped; and on learning that I had not, but only been sprinkled, according to the practice of my church, he gave me to understand that my baptism was not worth three-halfpence. Feeling rather nettled at hearing the baptism of my church so undervalued, I stood

up for it, and we were soon in a dispute, in which I got rather the worst, for though he spuffled and sputtered in a most extraordinary manner, and spoke in a dialect which was neither Welsh, English, nor Cheshire, but a mixture of all three, he said two or three things rather difficult to be got over. Finding that he had nearly silenced me, he observed that he did not deny that I had a good deal of book learning, but that in matters of baptism I was as ignorant as the rest of the people of the church were, and had always been. He then said that many church people had entered into argument with him on the subject of baptism, but that he had got the better of them all; that Mr. P., the minister of the parish of L., in which we then were, had frequently entered into argument with him, but quite unsuccessfully, and had at last given up the matter as a bad job. He added that a little time before, as Mr. P. was walking close to the canal with his wife and daughter and a spaniel dog, Mr. P. suddenly took up the dog and flung it in, giving it a good ducking, whereupon he, Morgan, cried out: "Dyna y gwir vedydd! That is the right baptism, sir! I thought I should bring you to it at last!" at which words Mr. P. laughed heartily, but made no particular reply.

After a little time he began to talk about the great men who had risen up amongst the Baptists, and mentioned two or three distinguished individuals.

I said that he had not mentioned the greatest man who had been born amongst the Baptists.

"What was his name?" said he.

"His name was Joost Van Vondel," I replied.

"I never heard of him before," said Morgan.

"Very probably," said I; "he was born, bred, and died in Holland."

"Has he been dead long?" said Morgan.

"About two hundred years," said I.

"That's a long time," said Morgan, "and maybe is the reason that I never heard of him. So he was a great man?"

"He was indeed," said I. "He was not only the greatest man that ever sprang up amongst the Baptists, but the greatest, and by far the greatest, that Holland ever produced, though Holland has produced a great many illustrious men."

"O, I dare say he was a great man if he was a Baptist," said Morgan. "Well, it's strange I never read of him. I thought I had read the lives of all the eminent people who lived and died in our communion."

"He did not die in the Baptist communion," said I.

"Oh, he didn't die in it," said Morgan. "What, did he go over to the Church of England? a pretty fellow!"

"He did not go over to the Church of England," said I, "for the Church of England does not exist in Holland; he went over to the Church of Rome."

"Well, that's not quite so bad," said Morgan; "however, it's bad enough. I dare say he was a pretty blackguard."

"No," said I; "he was a pure, virtuous character, and perhaps the only pure and virtuous character that ever went over to Rome. The only wonder is that so good a man could ever have gone over to so detestable a church; but he appears to have been deluded."

"Deluded indeed!" said Morgan. "However, I suppose he went over for advancement's sake."

"No," said I; "he lost every prospect of advancement by going over to Rome: nine-tenths of his countrymen were of the reformed religion, and he endured much poverty and contempt by the step he took."

"How did he support himself?" said Morgan.

"He obtained a livelihood," said I, "by writing poems and plays, some of which are wonderfully fine."

"What," said Morgan, "a writer of Interludes? One of Twm o'r Nant's gang! I thought he would turn out a pretty fellow." I told him that the person in question certainly did write Interludes, for example Noah, and Joseph at Goshen, but that he was a highly respectable, nay venerable character.

"If he was a writer of Interludes," said Morgan, "he was a blackguard; there never yet was a writer of Interludes, or a person who went about playing them, that was not a scamp. He might be a clever man, I don't say he was not. Who was a cleverer man than Twm o'r Nant with his Pleasure and Care, and Riches and Poverty, but where was there a greater blackguard? Why, not in all Wales. And if you knew this other fellow – what's his name – Fondle's history, you would find that he was not a bit more respectable than Twm o'r Nant, and not half so clever. As for his leaving the Baptists I don't believe a word of it; he was turned out of the connection, and then went about the country saying he left it. No Baptist connection would ever have a writer of Interludes in it, not Twm o'r Nant himself, unless he left his ales and Interludes and wanton hussies, for the three things are sure to go together. You say he went over to the Church of Rome; of course he did, if the Church of England were not at hand to receive him, where should he go but to Rome? No respectable church like the Methodist or the Independent would have received him. There are only two churches in the world that will take in anybody without asking questions, and will never turn them out however bad they may behave; the one is the Church of Rome, and the other the Church of Canterbury; and if you look into the matter you will find that every rogue, rascal, and hanged person since the world began has belonged to one or other of those communions."

In the evening I took a walk with my wife and daughter past the Plas Newydd. Coming to the little mill called the Melyn Bac, at the bottom of the gorge, we went into the yard to observe the water-wheel. We found that it was turned by a very little water, which was conveyed to it by artificial means. Seeing the miller's man, a short dusty figure, standing in the yard, I entered into conversation with him, and found to my great surprise that he had a considerable acquaintance with the ancient language. On my repeating to him verses from Taliesin he understood them, and to show me that he did translated some of the lines into English. Two or three respectable-looking lads, probably the miller's sons, came out, and listened to us. One of them said we were both good Welshmen. After a little time the man asked me if I had heard of Huw Morris. I told him that I was well acquainted with his writings, and inquired whether the place in which he had lived was not somewhere in the neighbourhood. He said it was; and that it was over the mountains not far from Llan Sanfraid. I asked whether it was not called Pont y Meibion. He answered in the affirmative, and added that he had himself been there, and had sat in Huw Morris's stone chair, which was still to be seen by the road's side. I told him that I hoped to visit the place in a few days. He replied that I should be quite right in doing so, and that no one should come to these parts without visiting Pont y Meibion, for that Huw Morris was one of the columns of the Cumry.

"What a difference," said I to my wife, after we had departed, "between a Welshman and an Englishman of the lower class. What would a Suffolk miller's swain have said if I had repeated to him verses out of Beowulf or even Chaucer, and had asked him about the residence of Skelton?"

# CHAPTER XX

Huw Morris – Immortal Elegy – The Valley of Ceiriog – Tangled Wilderness – Perplexity – Chair of Huw Morris – The Walking-stick – Huw's Descendant – Pont y Meibion.

Two days after the last adventure I set off, over the Berwyn, to visit the birth-place of Huw Morris under the guidance of John Jones, who was well acquainted with the spot.

Huw Morus or Morris, was born in the year 1622 on the banks of the Ceiriog. His life was a long one, for he died at the age of eighty-four, after living in six reigns. He was the second son of a farmer, and was apprenticed to a tanner, with whom, however, he did not stay till the expiration of the term of his apprenticeship, for not liking the tanning art, he speedily returned to the house of his father, whom he assisted in husbandry till death called the old man away. He then assisted his elder brother, and on his elder brother's death, lived with his son. He did not distinguish himself as a husbandman, and appears never to have been fond of manual labour. At an early period, however, he applied himself most assiduously to poetry, and before he had attained the age of thirty was celebrated, throughout Wales, as the best poet of his time. When the war broke out between Charles and his parliament, Huw espoused the part of the king, not as a soldier, for he appears to have liked fighting little better than tanning or husbandry, but as a poet, and probably did the king more service in that capacity, than he would if he had raised him a troop of horse, or a regiment of foot, for he wrote songs breathing loyalty to Charles, and fraught with pungent satire against his foes, which ran like wild fire through Wales, and had a great influence on the minds of the people. Even when the royal cause was lost in the field, he still carried on a poetical war against the successful party, but not so openly as before, dealing chiefly in allegories, which, however, were easy to be understood. Strange to say the Independents, when they had the upper hand, never interfered with him, though they persecuted certain Royalist poets of far inferior note. On the accession of Charles the Second he celebrated the event by a most singular piece called the Lamentation of Oliver's men, in which he assails the Roundheads with the most bitter irony. He was loyal to James the Second, till that monarch attempted to overthrow the Church of England, when Huw, much to his credit, turned against him, and wrote songs in the interest of the glorious Prince of Orange. He died in the reign of good Queen Anne. In his youth his conduct was rather dissolute, but irreproachable and almost holy in his latter days – a kind of halo surrounded his old brow. It was the custom in those days in North Wales for the congregation to leave the church in a row with the clergyman at their head, but so great was the estimation in which old Huw was universally held, for the purity of his life and his poetical gift, that the clergyman of the parish abandoning his claim to precedence, always insisted on the good and inspired old man's leading the file, himself following immediately in his rear. Huw wrote on various subjects, mostly in common and easily understood measures. He was great in satire, great in humour, but when he pleased could be greater in pathos than in either; for his best piece is an elegy on Barbara Middleton, the sweetest song of the kind ever written. From his being born on the banks of the brook Ceiriog, and from the flowing melody of his awen or muse, his countrymen were in the habit of calling him Eos Ceiriog, or the Ceiriog Nightingale.

So John Jones and myself set off across the Berwyn to visit the birth-place of the great poet Huw Morris. We ascended the mountain by Allt Paddy. The morning was lowering, and before we had half got to the top it began to rain. John Jones was in his usual good spirits. Suddenly taking me by the arm he told me to look to the right across the gorge to a white house, which he pointed out.

"What is there in that house?" said I.

"An aunt of mine lives there," said he.

Having frequently heard him call old women his aunts, I said, “Every poor old woman in the neighbourhood seems to be your aunt.”

“This is no poor old woman,” said he, “she is cyfoethawg iawn, and only last week she sent me and my family a pound of bacon, which would have cost me sixpence-halfpenny, and about a month ago a measure of wheat.”

We passed over the top of the mountain, and descending the other side, reached Llansanfraid, and stopped at the public-house where we had been before, and called for two glasses of ale. Whilst drinking our ale Jones asked some questions about Huw Morris of the woman who served us; she said that he was a famous poet, and that people of his blood were yet living upon the lands which had belonged to him at Pont y Meibion. Jones told her that his companion, the gwr boneddig, meaning myself, had come in order to see the birthplace of Huw Morris, and that I was well acquainted with his works, having gotten them by heart in Lloegr, when a boy. The woman said that nothing would give her greater pleasure than to hear a Sais recite poetry of Huw Morris, whereupon I recited a number of his lines addressed to the Gôf Du, or blacksmith. The woman held up her hands, and a carter who was in the kitchen, somewhat the worse for liquor, shouted applause. After asking a few questions as to the road we were to take, we left the house, and in a little time entered the valley of Ceiriog. The valley is very narrow, huge hills overhanging it on both sides, those on the east side lumpy and bare, those on the west precipitous, and partially clad with wood; the torrent Ceiriog runs down it, clinging to the east side; the road is tolerably good, and is to the west of the stream. Shortly after we had entered the gorge, we passed by a small farm-house on our right hand, with a hawthorn hedge before it, upon which seems to stand a peacock, curiously cut out of thorn. Passing on we came to a place called Pandy uchaf, or the higher Fulling mill. The place so called is a collection of ruinous houses, which put me in mind of the Fulling mills mentioned in Don Quixote. It is called the Pandy because there was formerly a fulling mill here, said to have been the first established in Wales; which is still to be seen, but which is no longer worked. Just above the old mill there is a meeting of streams: the Tarw from the west rolls down a dark valley into the Ceiriog.

At the entrance of this valley and just before you reach the Pandy, which it nearly overhangs, is an enormous crag. After I had looked at the place for some time with considerable interest we proceeded towards the south, and in about twenty minutes reached a neat kind of house, on our right hand, which John Jones told me stood on the ground of Huw Morris. Telling me to wait, he went to the house, and asked some questions. After a little time I followed him and found him discoursing at the door with a stout dame about fifty-five years of age, and a stout buxom damsel of about seventeen, very short of stature.

“This is the gentleman,” said he, “who wishes to see anything there may be here connected with Huw Morris.”

The old dame made me a curtsey and said in very distinct Welsh, “We have some things in the house which belonged to him, and we will show them to the gentleman willingly.”

“We first of all wish to see his chair,” said John Jones.

“The chair is in a wall in what is called the hen ffordd (old road),” said the old gentlewoman; “it is cut out of the stone wall; you will have maybe some difficulty in getting to it, but the girl shall show it to you.” The girl now motioned to us to follow her, and conducted us across the road to some stone steps, over a wall to a place which looked like a plantation.

“This was the old road,” said Jones; “but the place has been enclosed. The new road is above us on our right hand beyond the wall.”

We were in a maze of tangled shrubs, the boughs of which, very wet from the rain which was still falling, struck our faces, as we attempted to make our way between them; the girl led the way, bare-headed and bare-armed, and soon brought us to the wall, the boundary of the new road. Along this she went with considerable difficulty, owing to the tangled shrubs, and the nature of the ground, which was very precipitous, shelving down to the other side of the enclosure. In a little time we were

wet to the skin, and covered with the dirt of birds, which they had left whilst roosting in the trees; on went the girl, sometimes creeping, and trying to keep herself from falling by holding against the young trees; once or twice she fell and we after her, for there was no path, and the ground, as I have said before, very shelvy; still as she went her eyes were directed towards the wall, which was not always very easy to be seen, for thorns, tall nettles, and shrubs were growing up against it. Here and there she stopped, and said something, which I could not always make out, for her Welsh was anything but clear; at length I heard her say that she was afraid we had passed the chair, and indeed presently we came to a place where the enclosure terminated in a sharp corner.

"Let us go back," said I; "we must have passed it."

I now went first, breaking down with my weight the shrubs nearest to the wall.

"Is not this the place?" said I, pointing to a kind of hollow in the wall, which looked something like the shape of a chair.

"Hardly," said the girl, "for there should be a slab, on the back, with letters, but there's neither slab nor letters here."

The girl now again went forward, and we retraced our way, doing the best we could to discover the chair, but all to no purpose; no chair was to be found. We had now been, as I imagined, half-an-hour in the enclosure, and had nearly got back to the place from which we had set out, when we suddenly heard the voice of the old lady exclaiming, "What are ye doing there? – the chair is on the other side of the field; wait a bit, and I will come and show it you." Getting over the stone stile, which led into the wilderness, she came to us, and we now went along the wall at the lower end; we had quite as much difficulty here, as on the other side, and in some places more, for the nettles were higher, the shrubs more tangled, and the thorns more terrible. The ground, however, was rather more level. I pitied the poor girl who led the way and whose fat naked arms were both stung and torn. She at last stopped amidst a huge grove of nettles, doing the best she could to shelter her arms from the stinging leaves.

"I never was in such a wilderness in my life," said I to John Jones, "is it possible that the chair of the mighty Huw is in a place like this; which seems never to have been trodden by human foot. Well does the Scripture say 'Dim prophwyd yw yn cael barch yn ei dir ei hunan.'"

This last sentence tickled the fancy of my worthy friend, the Calvinistic Methodist; he laughed aloud and repeated it over and over again to the females with amplifications.

"Is the chair really here," said I, "or has it been destroyed? if such a thing has been done it is a disgrace to Wales."

"The chair is really here," said the old lady, "and though Huw Morus was no prophet, we love and reverence everything belonging to him. Get on, Llances, the chair can't be far off;" the girl moved on, and presently the old lady exclaimed "There's the chair, Diolch i Duw!"

I was the last of the file, but I now rushed past John Jones, who was before me, and next to the old lady, and sure enough there was the chair, in the wall, of him who was called in his day, and still is called by the mountaineers of Wales, though his body has been below the earth in the quiet church-yard, one hundred and forty years, Eos Ceiriog, the Nightingale of Ceiriog, the sweet caroller Huw Morus, the enthusiastic partizan of Charles, and the Church of England, and the never-tiring lampooner of Oliver and the Independents, there it was, a kind of hollow in the stone wall, in the hen ffordd, fronting to the west, just above the gorge at the bottom of which murmurs the brook Ceiriog, there it was, something like a half-barrel chair in a garden, a mouldering stone slab forming the seat, and a large slate stone, the back, on which were cut these letters —

**H. M. B**

signifying Huw Morus Bard.

"Sit down in the chair, Gwr Boneddig," said John Jones, "you have taken trouble enough to get to it."

"Do, gentleman," said the old lady; "but first let me wipe it with my apron, for it is very wet and dirty."

"Let it be," said I; then taking off my hat I stood uncovered before the chair, and said in the best Welsh I could command, "Shade of Huw Morus, supposing your shade haunts the place which you loved so well when alive – a Saxon, one of the seed of the Coiling Serpent, has come to this place to pay that respect to true genius, the Dawn Duw, which he is ever ready to pay. He read the songs of the Nightingale of Ceiriog in the most distant part of Lloegr, when he was a brown-haired boy, and now that he is a grey-haired man he is come to say in this place that they frequently made his eyes overflow with tears of rapture."

I then sat down in the chair, and commenced repeating verses of Huw Morris. All which I did in the presence of the stout old lady, the short, buxom, and bare-armed damsel, and of John Jones, the Calvinistic weaver of Llangollen, all of whom listened patiently and approvingly though the rain was pouring down upon them, and the branches of the trees and the tops of the tall nettles, agitated by the gusts from the mountain hollows, were beating in their faces, for enthusiasm is never scoffed at by the noble, simple-minded, genuine Welsh, whatever treatment it may receive from the coarse-hearted, sensual, selfish Saxon.

After some time our party returned to the house – which put me very much in mind of the farm-houses of the substantial yeomen of Cornwall, particularly that of my friends at Penquite; a comfortable fire blazed in the kitchen grate, the floor was composed of large flags of slate. In the kitchen the old lady pointed to me the ffon, or walking-stick, of Huw Morris; it was supported against a beam by three hooks. I took it down and walked about the kitchen with it; it was a thin polished black stick, with a crome cut in the shape of an eagle's head; at the end was a brass fence. The kind creature then produced a sword without a scabbard; this sword was found by Huw Morris on the mountain – it belonged to one of Oliver's officers who was killed there. I took the sword, which was a thin two-edged one, and seemed to be made of very good steel. It put me in mind of the blades which I had seen at Toledo – the guard was very slight like those of all rapiers, and the hilt the common old-fashioned English officer's hilt; there was no rust on the blade, and it still looked a dangerous sword. A man like Thistlewood would have whipped it through his adversary in a twinkling. I asked the old lady if Huw Morris was born in this house; she said no, but a little farther on at Pont y Meibion; she said, however, that the ground had belonged to him, and that they had some of his blood in their veins. I shook her by the hand, and gave the chubby bare-armed damsel a shilling, pointing to the marks of the nettle stings on her fat bacon-like arms; she laughed, made me a curtsey and said, "Llawer iawn o diolch."

John Jones and I then proceeded to the house at Pont y Meibion, where we saw two men, one turning a grindstone, and the other holding an adze to it. We asked if we were at the house of Huw Morris, and whether they could tell us anything about him; they made us no answer but proceeded with their occupation; John Jones then said that the Gwr Boneddig was very fond of the verses of Huw Morris, and had come a great way to see the place where he was born – the wheel now ceased turning, and the man with the adze turned his face full upon me – he was a stern-looking, dark man, with black hair, of about forty; after a moment or two he said, that if I chose to walk into the house, I should be welcome. He then conducted us into the house, a common-looking stone tenement, and bade us be seated. I asked him if he was a descendant of Huw Morus; he said he was; I asked him his name, which he said was Huw – . "Have you any of the manuscripts of Huw Morus?" said I.

"None," said he; "but I have one of the printed copies of his works."

He then went to a drawer, and taking out a book, put it into my hand, and seated himself in a blunt, careless manner. The book was the first volume of the common Wrexham edition of Huw's works; it was much thumbed – I commenced reading aloud a piece which I had much admired in my

boyhood. I went on for some time, my mind quite occupied with my reading; at last lifting up my eyes, I saw the man standing bolt upright before me, like a soldier of the days of my childhood, during the time that the adjutant read prayers; his hat was no longer upon his head, but on the ground, and his eyes were reverently inclined to the book. After all, what a beautiful thing it is, not to be, but to have been a genius. Closing the book, I asked him whether Huw Morris was born in the house where we were, and received for answer that he was born about where we stood, but that the old house had been pulled down, and that of all the premises only a small outhouse was coeval with Huw Morris. I asked him the name of the house, and he said Pont y Meibion. "But where is the bridge?" said I.

"The bridge," he replied, "is close by, over the Ceiriog. If you wish to see it, you must go down yon field; the house is called after the bridge."

Bidding him farewell, we crossed the road, and going down the field speedily arrived at Pont y Meibion. The bridge is a small bridge of one arch which crosses the brook Ceiriog; it is built of rough moor stone; it is mossy, broken, and looks almost inconceivably old; there is a little parapet to it about two feet high. On the right-hand side it is shaded by an ash. The brook, when we viewed it, though at times a roaring torrent, was stealing along gently. On both sides it is overgrown with alders; noble hills rise above it to the east and west; John Jones told me that it abounded with trout. I asked him why the bridge was called Pont y Meibion, which signifies the bridge of the children. "It was built originally by children," said he, "for the purpose of crossing the brook."

"That bridge," said I, "was never built by children."

"The first bridge," said he, "was of wood, and was built by the children of the houses above."

Not quite satisfied with his explanation, I asked him to what place the road across the little bridge led, and was told that he believed it led to an upland farm. After taking a long and wistful view of the bridge and the scenery around it, I turned my head in the direction of Llangollen. The adventures of the day were, however, not finished.

# CHAPTER XXI

The Gloomy Valley – The Lonely Cottage – Happy Comparison – Clogs – the Alder Swamp – The Wooden Leg – The Militiaman – Death-bed Verses.

On reaching the ruined village where the Pandy stood I stopped, and looked up the gloomy valley to the west, down which the brook which joins the Ceiriog at this place descends, whereupon John Jones said, that if I wished to go up it a little way he should have great pleasure in attending me, and that he would show me a cottage built in the hen ddull, or old fashion, to which he frequently went to ask for the rent; he being employed by various individuals in the capacity of rent-gatherer. I said that I was afraid that if he was a rent-collector, both he and I should have a sorry welcome. "No fear," he replied, "the people are very good people, and pay their rent very regularly," and without saying another word he led the way up the valley. At the end of the village, seeing a woman standing at the door of one of the ruinous cottages, I asked her the name of the brook, or torrent, which came down the valley. "The Tarw," said she, "and this village is called Pandy Teirw."

"Why is the streamlet called the bull?" said I. "Is it because it comes in winter weather roaring down the glen and butting at the Ceiriog?"

The woman laughed, and replied that perhaps it was. The valley was wild and solitary to an extraordinary degree, the brook or torrent running in the middle of it covered with alder trees. After we had proceeded about a furlong we reached the house of the old fashion. It was a rude stone cottage standing a little above the road on a kind of platform on the right-hand side of the glen; there was a paling before it with a gate, at which a pig was screaming, as if anxious to get in. "It wants its dinner," said John Jones, and opened the gate for me to pass, taking precautions that the screamer did not enter at the same time. We entered the cottage, very glad to get into it, a storm of wind and rain having just come on. Nobody was in the kitchen when we entered. It looked comfortable enough, however; there was an excellent fire of wood and coals, and a very snug chimney-corner. John Jones called aloud, but for some time no one answered; at last a rather good-looking woman, seemingly about thirty, made her appearance at a door at the farther end of the kitchen. "Is the mistress at home," said Jones, "or the master?"

"They are neither at home," said the woman; "the master is abroad at his work, and the mistress is at the farm-house of – three miles off, to pick feathers (trwsio plu)." She asked us to sit down.

"And who are you?" said I.

"I am only a lodger," said she; "I lodge here with my husband, who is a clog-maker."

"Can you speak English?" said I.

"O yes," said she, "I lived eleven years in England, at a place called Bolton, where I married my husband, who is an Englishman."

"Can he speak Welsh?" said I.

"Not a word," said she. "We always speak English together."

John Jones sat down, and I looked about the room. It exhibited no appearance of poverty; there was plenty of rude but good furniture in it; several pewter plates and trenchers in a rack, two or three prints in frames against the wall, one of which was the likeness of no less a person than the Rev. Joseph Sanders; on the table was a newspaper. "Is that in Welsh?" said I.

"No," replied the woman, "it is the *Bolton Chronicle*; my husband reads it."

I sat down in the chimney-corner. The wind was now howling abroad, and the rain was beating against the cottage panes – presently a gust of wind came down the chimney, scattering sparks all about. "A cataract of sparks!" said I, using the word Rhaiadr.

"What is Rhaiadr?" said the woman; "I never heard the word before."

"Rhaiadr means water tumbling over a rock," said John Jones – "did you never see water tumble over the top of a rock?"

"Frequently," said she.

"Well," said he, "even as the water with its froth tumbles over the rock, so did sparks and fire tumble over the front of that grate when the wind blew down the chimney. It was a happy comparison of the Gwr Boneddig, and with respect to Rhaiadr it is a good old word, though not a common one; some of the Saxons who have read the old writings, though they cannot speak the language as fast as we, understand many words and things which we do not."

"I forgot much of my Welsh, in the land of the Saxons," said the woman, "and so have many others; there are plenty of Welsh at Bolton, but their Welsh is sadly corrupted."

She then went out and presently returned with an infant in her arms and sat down. "Was that child born in Wales?" I demanded.

"No," said she, "he was born at Bolton about eighteen months ago – we have been here only a year."

"Do many English," said I, "marry Welsh wives?"

"A great many," said she. "Plenty of Welsh girls are married to Englishmen at Bolton."

"Do the Englishmen make good husbands?" said I.

The woman smiled and presently sighed.

"Her husband," said Jones, "is fond of a glass of ale and is often at the public-house."

"I make no complaint," said the woman, looking somewhat angrily at John Jones.

"Is your husband a tall bulky man?" said I.

"Just so," said the woman.

"The largest of the two men we saw the other night at the public-house at Llansanfraid," said I to John Jones.

"I don't know him," said Jones, "though I have heard of him, but I have no doubt that was he."

I asked the woman how her husband could carry on the trade of a clog-maker in such a remote place – and also whether he hawked his clogs about the country.

"We call him a clog-maker," said the woman, "but the truth is that he merely cuts down the wood and fashions it into squares; these are taken by an under-master who sends them to the manufacturer at Bolton, who employs hands, who make them into clogs."

"Some of the English," said Jones, "are so poor that they cannot afford to buy shoes; a pair of shoes cost ten or twelve shillings, whereas a pair of clogs cost only two."

"I suppose," said I, "that what you call clogs are wooden shoes."

"Just so," said Jones – "they are principally used in the neighbourhood of Manchester."

"I have seen them at Huddersfield," said I, "when I was a boy at school there; of what wood are they made?"

"Of the gwern, or alder tree," said the woman, "of which there is plenty on both sides of the brook."

John Jones now asked her if she could give him a tamaid of bread; she said she could, "and some butter with it."

She then went out, and presently returned with a loaf and some butter.

"Had you not better wait," said I, "till we get to the inn at Llansanfraid?"

The woman, however, begged him to eat some bread and butter where he was, and cutting a plateful, placed it before him, having first offered me some, which I declined.

"But you have nothing to drink with it," said I to him.

"If you please," said the woman, "I will go for a pint of ale to the public-house at the Pandy; there is better ale there than at the inn at Llansanfraid. When my husband goes to Llansanfraid he goes less for the ale than for the conversation, because there is little English spoken at the Pandy, however good the ale."

John Jones said he wanted no ale – and attacking the bread and butter speedily made an end of it; by the time he had done the storm was over, and getting up I gave the child twopence, and left the cottage with Jones. We proceeded some way farther up the valley, till we came to a place where the ground descended a little. Here Jones, touching me on the shoulder, pointed across the stream. Following with my eye the direction of his finger, I saw two or three small sheds with a number of small reddish blocks, in regular piles beneath them. Several trees felled from the side of the torrent were lying near, some of them stripped of their arms and bark. A small tree formed a bridge across the brook to the sheds.

"It is there," said John Jones, "that the husband of the woman with whom we have been speaking works, felling trees from the alder swamp and cutting them up into blocks. I see there is no work going on at present or we would go over – the woman told me that her husband was at Llangollen."

"What a strange place to come to work at," said I, "out of crowded England. Here is nothing to be heard but the murmuring of waters and the rushing of wind down the gulleys. If the man's head is not full of poetical fancies, which I suppose it is not, as in that case he would be unfit for any useful employment, I don't wonder at his occasionally going to the public-house."

After going a little farther up the glen and observing nothing more remarkable than we had seen already, we turned back. Being overtaken by another violent shower just as we reached the Pandy I thought that we could do no better than shelter ourselves within the public-house, and taste the ale, which the wife of the clog-maker had praised. We entered the little hostelry which was one of two or three shabby-looking houses, standing in contact, close by the Ceiriog. In a kind of little back room, lighted by a good fire and a window, which looked up the Ceiriog valley, we found the landlady, a gentlewoman with a wooden leg, who on perceiving me got up from a chair, and made me the best curtsey that I ever saw made by a female with such a substitute for a leg of flesh and bone. There were three men, sitting with jugs of ale near them on a table by the fire, two were seated on a bench by the wall, and the other on a settle with a high back, which ran from the wall just by the door, and shielded those by the fire from the draughts of the doorway. He of the settle no sooner beheld me than he sprang up and placing a chair for me by the fire bade me in English be seated, and then resumed his own seat. John Jones soon finding a chair came and sat down by me, when I forthwith called for a quart of cwrw da. The landlady bustled about on her wooden leg and presently brought us the ale with two glasses, which I filled, and taking one, drank to the health of the company, who returned us thanks, the man of the settle in English rather broken. Presently one of his companions, getting up, paid his reckoning and departed, the other remained, a stout young fellow dressed something like a stone-mason, which indeed I soon discovered that he was – he was far advanced towards a state of intoxication and talked very incoherently about the war, saying that he hoped it would soon terminate for that if it continued he was afraid he might stand a chance of being shot, as he was a private in the Denbighshire Militia. I told him that it was the duty of every gentleman in the militia, to be willing at all times to lay down his life in the service of the Queen. The answer which he made I could not exactly understand, his utterance being very indistinct, and broken; it was, however, made with some degree of violence, with two or three Myn Diawls, and a blow on the table with his clenched fist. He then asked me whether I thought the militia would be again called out. "Nothing more probable," said I.

"And where would they be sent to?"

"Perhaps to Ireland," was my answer, whereupon he started up with another Myn Diawl, expressing the greatest dread of being sent to Iwerddon.

"You ought to rejoice in your chance of going there," said I, "Iwerddon is a beautiful country, and abounds with whiskey."

"And the Irish?" said he.

"Hearty, jolly fellows," said I, "if you know how to manage them, and all gentlemen."

Here he became very violent, saying that I did not speak truth, for that he had seen plenty of Irish camping amidst the hills, that the men were half naked and the women were three parts so, and

that they carried their children on their backs. He then said that he hoped somebody would speedily kill Nicholas, in order that the war might be at an end and himself not sent to Iwerddon. He then asked if I thought Cronstadt could be taken. I said I believed it could, provided the hearts of those who were sent to take it were in the right place.

"Where do you think the hearts of those are who are gone against it?" said he – speaking with great vehemence.

I made no other answer than by taking my glass and drinking.

His companion now looking at our habiliments, which were in rather a dripping condition, asked John Jones if he had come from far.

"We have been to Pont y Meibion," said Jones, "to see the chair of Huw Morris," adding that the Gwr Boneddig was a great admirer of the songs of the Eos Ceiriog.

He had no sooner said these words than the intoxicated militiaman started up, and striking the table with his fist, said: "I am a poor stone-cutter – this is a rainy day and I have come here to pass it in the best way I can. I am somewhat drunk, but though I am a poor stone-mason, a private in the militia, and not so sober as I should be, I can repeat more of the songs of the Eos than any man alive, however great a gentleman, however sober – more than Sir Watkin, more than Colonel Biddulph himself."

He then began to repeat what appeared to be poetry, for I could distinguish the rhymes occasionally, though owing to his broken utterance it was impossible for me to make out the sense of the words. Feeling a great desire to know what verses of Huw Morris the intoxicated youth would repeat I took out my pocket-book and requested Jones, who was much better acquainted with Welsh pronunciation, under any circumstances, than myself, to endeavour to write down from the mouth of the young fellow any verses uppermost in his mind. Jones took the pocket-book and pencil and went to the window, followed by the young man scarcely able to support himself. Here a curious scene took place, the drinker hiccuping up verses, and Jones dotting them down, in the best manner he could, though he had evidently great difficulty to distinguish what was said to him. At last, methought, the young man said – "There they are, the verses of the Nightingale, on his death-bed."

I took the book and read aloud the following lines beautifully descriptive of the eagerness of a Christian soul to leave its perishing tabernacle, and get to Paradise and its Creator: —

"Myn'd i'r wyl ar redeg,
I'r byd a beryi chwaneg,
I Beradwys, y ber wiw deg,
Yn Enw Duw yn union deg."

"Do you understand those verses?" said the man on the settle, a dark swarthy fellow with an oblique kind of vision, and dressed in a pepper-and-salt coat.

"I will translate them," said I; and forthwith put them into English – first into prose and then into rhyme, the rhymed version running thus: —

"'Now to my rest I hurry away,
To the world which lasts for ever and aye,
To Paradise, the beautiful place,
Trusting alone in the Lord of Grace.'"

"Well," said he of the pepper-and-salt, "if that isn't capital I don't know what is."

A scene in a public-house, yes! but in a Welsh public-house. Only think of a Suffolk toper repeating the death-bed verses of a poet; surely there is a considerable difference between the Celt and the Saxon.

# CHAPTER XXII

Llangollen Fair – Buyers and Sellers – The Jockey – The Greek Cap.

On the twenty-first was held Llangollen Fair. The day was dull with occasional showers. I went to see the fair about noon. It was held in and near a little square in the south-east quarter of the town, of which square the police-station is the principal feature on the side of the west, and an inn, bearing the sign of the Grapes, on the east. The fair was a little bustling fair, attended by plenty of people from the country, and from the English border, and by some who appeared to come from a greater distance than the border. A dense row of carts extended from the police-station, half across the space. These carts were filled with pigs, and had stout cord nettings drawn over them, to prevent the animals escaping. By the sides of these carts the principal business of the fair appeared to be going on – there stood the owners male and female, higgling with Llangollen men and women, who came to buy. The pigs were all small, and the price given seemed to vary from eighteen to twenty-five shillings. Those who bought pigs generally carried them away in their arms; and then there was no little diversion; dire was the screaming of the porkers, yet the purchaser invariably appeared to know how to manage his bargain, keeping the left arm round the body of the swine and with the right hand fast griping the ear – some few were led away by strings. There were some Welsh cattle, small of course, and the purchasers of these seemed to be Englishmen, tall burly fellows in general, far exceeding the Welsh in height and size.

Much business in the cattle-line did not seem, however, to be going on. Now and then a big fellow made an offer, and held out his hand for a little Pictish grazier to give it a slap – a cattle bargain being concluded by a slap of the hand – but the Welshman generally turned away, with a half-resentful exclamation. There were a few horses and ponies in a street leading into the fair from the south.

I saw none sold, however. A tall athletic figure was striding amongst them, evidently a jockey and a stranger, looking at them and occasionally asking a slight question of one or another of their proprietors, but he did not buy. He might in age be about eight-and-twenty, and about six feet and three-quarters of an inch in height; in build he was perfection itself – a better-built man I never saw. He wore a cap and a brown jockey coat, trowsers, leggings and highlows, and sported a single spur. He had whiskers – all jockeys should have whiskers – but he had what I did not like, and what no genuine jockey should have, a moustache, which looks coxcombical and Frenchified – but most things have terribly changed since I was young. Three or four hardy-looking fellows, policemen, were gliding about in their blue coats and leather hats, holding their thin walking-sticks behind them; conspicuous amongst whom was the leader, a tall lathy North Briton with a keen eye and hard features. Now if I add there was much gabbling of Welsh round about, and here and there some slight sawing of English – that in the street leading from the north there were some stalls of gingerbread and a table at which a queer-looking being with a red Greek-looking cap on his head, sold rhubarb, herbs, and phials containing the Lord knows what, and who spoke a low vulgar English dialect, – I repeat, if I add this, I think I have said all that is necessary about Llangollen Fair.

# CHAPTER XXIII

An Expedition – Pont y Pandy – The Sabbath – Glendower's Mount – Burial-place of Old – Corwen – The Deep Glen – The Grandmother – The Roadside Chapel.

I was now about to leave Llangollen, for a short time, and to set out on an expedition to Bangor, Snowdon, and one or two places in Anglesea. I had determined to make the journey on foot, in order that I might have perfect liberty of action, and enjoy the best opportunities of seeing the country. My wife and daughter were to meet me at Bangor, to which place they would repair by the railroad, and from which, after seeing some of the mountain districts, they would return to Llangollen by the way they came, where I proposed to rejoin them, returning, however, by a different way from the one I went, that I might traverse new districts. About eleven o'clock of a brilliant Sunday morning I left Llangollen, after reading the morning-service of the Church to my family. I set out on a Sunday because I was anxious to observe the general demeanour of the people, in the interior of the country, on the Sabbath.

I directed my course towards the west, to the head of the valley. My wife and daughter after walking with me about a mile bade me farewell, and returned. Quickening my pace I soon left Llangollen valley behind me and entered another vale, along which the road which I was following, and which led to Corwen and other places, might be seen extending for miles. Lumpy hills were close upon my left, the Dee running noisily between steep banks, fringed with trees, was on my right; beyond it rose hills which form part of the wall of the vale of Clwyd; their tops bare, but their sides pleasantly coloured with yellow corn-fields and woods of dark verdure. About an hour's walking, from the time when I entered the valley, brought me to a bridge over a gorge, down which water ran to the Dee. I stopped and looked over the side of the bridge nearest to the hill. A huge rock about forty feet long, by twenty broad, occupied the entire bed of the gorge, just above the bridge, with the exception of a little gullet to the right, down which between the rock and a high bank, on which stood a cottage, a run of water purled and brawled. The rock looked exactly like a huge whale lying on its side, with its back turned towards the runnel. Above it was a glen with trees. After I had been gazing a little time a man making his appearance at the door of the cottage just beyond the bridge, I passed on, and drawing nigh to him, after a slight salutation, asked him in English the name of the bridge.

"The name of the bridge, sir," said the man, in very good English, "is Pont y Pandy."

"Does not that mean the bridge of the fulling mill?"

"I believe it does, sir," said the man.

"Is there a fulling mill near?"

"No, sir, there was one some time ago, but it is now a sawing mill."

Here a woman, coming out, looked at me steadfastly.

"Is that gentlewoman your wife?"

"She is no gentlewoman, sir, but she is my wife."

"Of what religion are you?"

"We are Calvinistic Methodists, sir."

"Have you been to chapel?"

"We are just returned, sir."

Here the woman said something to her husband, which I did not hear, but the purport of which I guessed from the following question which he immediately put.

"Have you been to chapel, sir?"

"I do not go to chapel; I belong to the Church."

"Have you been to church, sir?"

"I have not – I said my prayers at home, and then walked out."

"It is not right to walk out on the Sabbath day, except to go to church or chapel."

"Who told you so?"

"The law of God, which says you shall keep holy the Sabbath day."

"I am not keeping it unholy."

"You are walking about, and in Wales when we see a person walking idly about, on the Sabbath day, we are in the habit of saying Sabbath breaker; where are you going?"

"The Son of Man walked through the fields on the Sabbath day, why should I not walk along the roads?"

"He who called Himself the Son of Man was God, and could do what He pleased, but you are not God."

"But He came in the shape of a man to set an example. Had there been anything wrong in walking about on the Sabbath day, He would not have done it."

Here the wife exclaimed, "How worldly-wise these English are!"

"You do not like the English," said I.

"We do not dislike them," said the woman; "at present they do us no harm, whatever they did of old."

"But you still consider them," said I, "the seed of Y Sarfes cadwynog, the coiling serpent."

"I should be loth to call any people the seed of the serpent," said the woman.

"But one of your great bards did," said I.

"He must have belonged to the Church, and not to the chapel then," said the woman. "No person who went to chapel would have used such bad words."

"He lived," said I, "before people were separated into those of the Church, and the chapel; did you ever hear of Taliesin Ben Beirdd?"

"I never did," said the woman.

"But I have," said the man; "and of Owain Glendower too."

"Do people talk much of Owen Glendower in these parts?" said I.

"Plenty," said the man, "and no wonder, for when he was alive he was much about here – some way farther on there is a mount, on the bank of the Dee, called the mount of Owen Glendower, where it is said he used to stand and look out after his enemies."

"Is it easy to find?" said I.

"Very easy," said the man, "it stands right upon the Dee and is covered with trees; there is no mistaking it."

I bade the man and his wife farewell, and proceeded on my way. After walking about a mile, I perceived a kind of elevation which answered to the description of Glendower's mount, which the man by the bridge had given me. It stood on the right hand, at some distance from the road, across a field. As I was standing looking at it a man came up from the direction in which I myself had come. He was a middle-aged man plainly but decently dressed, and had something of the appearance of a farmer.

"What hill may that be?" said I in English, pointing to the elevation.

"Dim Saesneg, sir," said the man, looking rather sheepish, "Dim gair o Saesneg."

Rather surprised that a person of his appearance should not have a word of English I repeated my question in Welsh.

"Ah, you speak Cumraeg, sir," said the man, evidently surprised that a person of my English appearance should speak Welsh. "I am glad of it! What hill is that, you ask – Dyna Mont Owain Glyndwr, sir."

"Is it easy to get to?" said I.

"Quite easy, sir," said the man. "If you please I will go with you."

I thanked him, and opening a gate he conducted me across the field to the mount of the Welsh hero.

The mount of Owen Glendower stands close upon the southern bank of the Dee, and is nearly covered with trees of various kinds. It is about thirty feet high from the plain, and about the same diameter at the top. A deep black pool of the river, which here runs far beneath the surface of the field, purls and twists under the northern side, which is very steep, though several large oaks spring out of it. The hill is evidently the work of art, and appeared to me to be some burying-place of old.

"And this is the hill of Owain Glyndwr?" said I.

"Dyma Mont Owain Glyndwr, sir, lle yr oedd yn sefyll i edrych am ei elynion yn dyfod o Gaer Lleon. This is the hill of Owen Glendower, sir, where he was in the habit of standing to look out for his enemies coming from Chester."

"I suppose it was not covered with trees then?" said I.

"No, sir; it has not been long planted with trees. They say, however, that the oaks which hang over the river are very old."

"Do they say who raised this hill?"

"Some say that God raised it, sir; others that Owain Glendower raised it. Who do you think raised it?"

"I believe that it was raised by man, but not by Owen Glendower. He may have stood upon it, to watch for the coming of his enemies, but I believe it was here long before his time, and that it was raised over some old dead king by the people whom he had governed."

"Do they bury kings by the side of rivers, sir?"

"In the old time they did, and on the tops of mountains; they burnt their bodies to ashes, placed them in pots and raised heaps of earth or stones over them. Heaps like this have frequently been opened, and found to contain pots with ashes and bones."

"I wish all English could speak Welsh, sir."

"Why?"

"Because then we poor Welsh who can speak no English could learn much which we do not know."

Descending the monticle, we walked along the road together. After a little time I asked my companion of what occupation he was and where he lived.

"I am a small farmer, sir," said he, "and live at Llansanfraid Glyn Dyfrdwy across the river."

"How comes it," said I, "that you do not know English?"

"When I was young," said he, "and could have easily learnt it, I cared nothing about it, and now that I am old and see its use, it is too late to acquire it."

"Of what religion are you?" said I.

"I am of the Church," he replied.

I was about to ask him if there were many people of his persuasion in these parts; before, however, I could do so he turned down a road to the right which led towards a small bridge, and saying that was his way home, bade me farewell and departed.

I arrived at Corwen, which is just ten miles from Llangollen and which stands beneath a vast range of rocks at the head of the valley up which I had been coming, and which is called Glyndyfrdwy, or the Valley of the Dee water. It was now about two o'clock, and feeling rather thirsty I went to an inn very appropriately called the Owen Glendower, being the principal inn in the principal town of what was once the domain of the great Owen. Here I stopped for about an hour refreshing myself and occasionally looking into a newspaper in which was an excellent article on the case of poor Lieutenant P. I then started for Cerrig y Drudion, distant about ten miles, where I proposed to pass the night. Directing my course to the north-west, I crossed a bridge over the Dee water and then proceeded rapidly along the road, which for some way lay between cornfields, in many of which sheaves were piled up, showing that the Welsh harvest was begun. I soon passed over a little stream the name of which I was told was Alowan. "O, what a blessing it is to be able to speak Welsh!" said I, finding that not a person to whom I addressed myself had a word of English to bestow upon me. After walking

for about five miles I came to a beautiful but wild country of mountain and wood with here and there a few cottages. The road at length making an abrupt turn to the north I found myself with a low stone wall on my left on the verge of a profound ravine, and a high bank covered with trees on my right. Projecting out over the ravine was a kind of looking-place, protected by a wall, forming a half-circle, doubtless made by the proprietor of the domain for the use of the admirers of scenery. There I stationed myself, and for some time enjoyed one of the wildest and most beautiful scenes imaginable. Below me was the deep narrow glen or ravine down which a mountain torrent roared and foamed. Beyond it was a mountain rising steeply, its nearer side, which was in deep shade, the sun having long sunk below its top, hirsute with all kinds of trees, from the highest pinnacle down to the torrent's brink. Cut on the top surface of the wall, which was of slate and therefore easily impressible by the knife, were several names, doubtless those of tourists, who had gazed from the look-out on the prospect, amongst which I observed in remarkably bold letters that of T..

"Eager for immortality, Mr. T.," said I; "but you are no H. M., no Huw Morris."

Leaving the looking-place I proceeded, and after one or two turnings, came to another, which afforded a view if possible yet more grand, beautiful and wild, the most prominent objects of which were a kind of devil's bridge flung over the deep glen and its foaming water, and a strange-looking hill beyond it, below which, with a wood on either side, stood a white farmhouse – sending from a tall chimney a thin misty reek up to the sky. I crossed the bridge, which however diabolically fantastical it looked at a distance, seemed when one was upon it capable of bearing any weight, and soon found myself by the farm-house past which the way led. An aged woman sat on a stool by the door.

"A fine evening," said I in English. "Dim Saesneg," said the aged woman.

"O, the blessing of being able to speak Welsh," said I; and then repeated in that language what I had said to her in the other tongue.

"I dare say," said the aged woman, "to those who can see."

"Can you not see?"

"Very little. I am almost blind."

"Can you not see me?"

"I can see something tall and dark before me; that is all."

"Can you tell me the name of the bridge?"

"Pont y Glyn blin – the bridge of the glen of trouble."

"And what is the name of this place?"

"Pen y bont – the head of the bridge."

"What is your own name?"

"Catherine Hughes."

"How old are you?"

"Fifteen after three twenties."

"I have a mother three after four twenties; that is eight years older than yourself."

"Can she see?"

"Better than I – she can read the smallest letters."

"May she long be a comfort to you!"

"Thank you – are you the mistress of the house?"

"I am the grandmother."

"Are the people in the house?"

"They are not – they are at the chapel."

"And they left you alone?"

"They left me with my God."

"Is the chapel far from here?"

"About a mile."

"On the road to Cerrig y Drudion?"

"On the road to Cerrig y Drudion."

I bade her farewell and pushed on – the road was good, with high rocky banks on each side. After walking about the distance indicated by the old lady, I reached a building, which stood on the right-hand side of the road, and which I had no doubt was the chapel from a half-groaning, half-singing noise, which proceeded from it. The door being open I entered, and stood just within it, bare-headed. A rather singular scene presented itself. Within a large dimly-lighted room a number of people were assembled, partly seated in rude pews, and partly on benches. Beneath a kind of altar, a few yards from the door, stood three men – the middlemost was praying in Welsh in a singular kind of chant, with his arms stretched out. I could distinguish the words, "Jesus descend among us! sweet Jesus descend among us – quickly." He spoke very slowly, and towards the end of every sentence dropped his voice, so that what he said was anything but distinct. As I stood within the door a man dressed in coarse garments came up to me from the interior of the building, and courteously and in excellent Welsh asked me to come with him and take a seat. With equal courtesy but far inferior Welsh, I assured him that I meant no harm, but wished to be permitted to remain near the door, whereupon with a low bow he left me. When the man had concluded his prayer the whole of the congregation began singing a hymn; many of the voices were gruff and discordant, two or three, however, were of great power, and some of the female ones of surprising sweetness – at the conclusion of the hymn another of the three men by the altar began to pray, just in the same manner as his comrade had done, and seemingly using much the same words. When he had done there was another hymn, after which seeing that the congregation was about to break up I bowed my head towards the interior of the building, and departed.

Emerging from the hollow way I found myself on a moor over which the road lay in the direction of the north. Towards the west at an immense distance rose a range of stupendous hills, which I subsequently learned were those of Snowdon – about ten minutes' walking brought me to Cerrig y Drudion, a small village near a rocky elevation, from which, no doubt, the place takes its name, which interpreted, is the Rock of Heroes.

# CHAPTER XXIV

Cerrig y Drudion – The Landlady – Doctor Jones – "Coll Gwynfa" – The Italian – Men of Como – Disappointment – Weather-Glasses – Filicaia.

The inn at Cerrig y Drudion was called the Lion – whether the white, black, red or green Lion I do not know, though I am certain that it was a lion of some colour or other. It seemed as decent and respectable a hostelry as any traveller could wish to refresh and repose himself in, after a walk of twenty miles. I entered a well-lighted passage and from thence a well-lighted bar room, on the right hand, in which sat a stout, comely, elderly lady dressed in silks and satins, with a cambric coif on her head, in company with a thin, elderly man with a hat on his head, dressed in a rather prim and precise manner. "Madam!" said I, bowing to the lady, "as I suppose you are the mistress of this establishment, I beg leave to inform you that I am an Englishman walking through these regions in order fully to enjoy their beauties and wonders. I have this day come from Llangollen, and being somewhat hungry and fatigued hope I can be accommodated, here with a dinner and a bed."

"Sir!" said the lady, getting up and making me a profound curtsey, "I am as you suppose the mistress of this establishment, and am happy to say that I shall be able to accommodate you – pray sit down, sir;" she, continued handing me a chair, "you must indeed be tired, for Llangollen is a great way from here."

I took the seat with thanks, and she resumed her own.

"Rather hot weather for walking, sir!" said the precise-looking gentleman.

"It is," said I; "but as I can't observe the country well without walking through it I put up with the heat."

"You exhibit a philosophic mind, sir," said the precise-looking gentleman – "and a philosophic mind I hold in reverence."

"Pray, sir," said I, "have I the honour of addressing a member of the medical profession?"

"Sir," said the precise-looking gentleman, getting up and making me a bow, "your question does honour to your powers of discrimination – a member of the medical profession I am, though an unworthy one."

"Nay, nay, doctor," said the landlady briskly; "say not so – every one knows that you are a credit to your profession – well would it be if there were many in it like you – unworthy? marry come up! I won't hear such an expression."

"I see," said I, "that I have not only the honour of addressing a medical gentleman, but a doctor of medicine – however, I might have known as much by your language and deportment."

With a yet lower bow than, before he replied, with something of a sigh, "No, sir, no, our kind landlady and the neighbourhood are in the habit of placing doctor before my name, but I have no title to it – I am not Doctor Jones, sir, but plain Geffery Jones at your service," and thereupon with another bow he sat down.

"Do you reside here?" said I.

"Yes, sir, I reside here in the place of my birth – I have not always resided here – and I did not always expect to spend my latter days in a place of such obscurity, but, sir, misfortunes – misfortunes."

"Ah," said I, "misfortunes! they pursue every one, more especially those whose virtues should exempt them from them. Well, sir, the consciousness of not having deserved them should be your consolation."

"Sir," said the doctor, taking off his hat, "you are infinitely kind."

"You call this an obscure place," said I – "can that be an obscure place that has produced a poet? I have long had a respect for Cerrig y Drudion because it gave birth to, and was the residence of a poet of considerable merit."

"I was not aware of that fact," said the doctor, "pray what was his name?"

"Peter Lewis," said I; "he was a clergyman of Cerrig y Drudion about the middle of the last century, and amongst other things wrote a beautiful song called 'Cathl y Gair Mwys,' or the melody of the ambiguous word."

"Surely you do not understand Welsh?" said the doctor.

"I understand a little of it," I replied.

"Will you allow me to speak to you in Welsh?" said the doctor.

"Certainly," said I.

He spoke to me in Welsh and I replied.

"Ha, ha," said the landlady in English; "only think, doctor, of the gentleman understanding Welsh – we must mind what we say before him."

"And are you an Englishman?" said the doctor.

"I am," I replied.

"And how came you to learn it?"

"I am fond of languages," said I, "and studied Welsh at an early period."

"And you read Welsh poetry?"

"O yes."

"How were you enabled to master its difficulties?"

"Chiefly by going through Owen Pugh's version of 'Paradise Lost' twice, with the original by my side. He has introduced into that translation so many of the poetic terms of the old bards that after twice going through it; there was little in Welsh poetry that I could not make out with a little pondering."

"You pursued a very excellent plan," said the doctor, "a very excellent plan indeed. Owen Pugh!"

"Owen Pugh! The last of your very great men," said I.

"You say right, sir," said the doctor. "He was indeed our last great man – Ultimus Romanorum. I have myself read his work, which he called 'Coll Gwynfa,' the 'Loss of the Place of Bliss' – an admirable translation, sir; highly poetical, and at the same time correct."

"Did you know him?" said I.

"I had not the honour of his acquaintance," said the doctor – "but, sir, I am happy to say that I have made yours."

The landlady now began to talk to me about dinner, and presently went out to make preparations for that very important meal. I had a great, deal of conversation with the doctor, whom I found a person of great and varied information, and one who had seen a vast deal of the world. He was giving me an account of an island in the West Indies, which he had visited, when a boy coming in whispered into his ear; whereupon, getting up he said: "Sir, I am called away. I am a country surgeon, and of course an accoucheur. There is a lady who lives at some distance, requiring my assistance. It is with grief I leave you so abruptly, but I hope that some time or other we shall meet again." Then making me an exceedingly profound bow, he left the room, followed by the boy.

I dined upstairs in a very handsome drawing-room communicating with a sleeping apartment. During dinner I was waited upon by the daughter of the landlady, a good-looking merry girl of twenty. After dinner I sat for some time thinking over the adventures of the day, then feeling rather lonely and not inclined to retire to rest, I went down to the bar, where I found the landlady seated with her daughter. I sat down with them and we were soon in conversation. We spoke of Doctor Jones – the landlady said that he had his little eccentricities, but was an excellent and learned man. Speaking of herself, she said that she had three daughters, that the youngest was with her and that the two eldest kept the principal inn at Ruthyn. We occasionally spoke a little Welsh. At length the landlady said, "There is an Italian in the kitchen who can speak Welsh too. It's odd the only two people not Welshmen I have ever known who could speak Welsh, for such you and he are, should be in my house at the same time."

"Dear me," said I, "I should like to see him."

"That you can easily do," said the girl; "I dare say he will be glad enough to come in if you invite him."

"Pray take my compliments to him," said I, "and tell him that I shall be glad of his company."

# Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.