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THE WYE AND ITS ASSOCIATIONS

A PICTURESQUE RAMBLE.

By LEITCH RITCHIE, Esq.

AUTHOR OF "WANDERINGS BY THE LOIRE," "WANDERINGS BY THE SEINE,"
"THE MAGICIAN," ETC.

LONDON:

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1841.

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ADVERTISEMENT,

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A portion of the lower part of the Wye has been described by Gilpin, Archdeacon Coxe, and some others; and the same portion has been touched upon, with greater or less minuteness, by Prince Puckler Muscau, and various Welsh tourists, as well as by Whateley in his Essay on Modern Gardening. It seemed, however, to the writer of the present sketch, that something more was due to the most celebrated river in England; and that another book (not too large for the pocket, and yet aspiring to a place in the library) which should point out the beauties of the Wye, and connect them with their historical and romantic associations—beginning at the source of the stream on Plinlimmon, and ending only at its confluence with the Severn—might still be reckoned an acceptable service by the lovers of the picturesque. Hence this little work, which may be consulted at will either as a finger-post by the traveller, or as a companion by the reading loungee at home.

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London, November 28th, 1840.

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CHAPTER I.

p. 1

Philosophy of the picturesque—Peculiarities of English scenery—Worcester—Immigration of peasant girls—The Devils' Garden—The Rest on the Stones—Plinlimmon—Inhabitants of the summit—The Inn—Source of the Wye.

Foreigners have often expressed their surprise that the English should travel so far in search of picturesque scenery, when they have abundance at home: but the remark is conceived in an unphilosophical spirit. We do not travel for the mere scenery. We do not leave the Wye unexplored, and go abroad in search of some other river of its own identical character. What we gaze at in strange lands is not wood, and water, and rock, but all these seen through a new medium—accompanied by adjuncts which array universal nature herself in a foreign costume. A tree peculiar to the country—a peasant in an un-English garb—a cottage of unaccustomed form—the slightest peculiarity in national manners—even the traces of a different system of agriculture—all contribute to the impression of novelty in which consists the excitement of foreign travel.

p. 2

The proof of this is our keener perception of the beauties of English scenery after returning from abroad. We are then capable of instituting a comparison; and our national manners are no longer the sole medium, but one of various media through which nature is viewed. An untravelled Englishman is ignorant of his own country. He must cross the seas before he can become acquainted with home. He must admire the romance of the Rhine—the sublimity of the (mountain) Rhone—the beauty of the Seine and the Loire—before he can tell what is the rank of the Wye, in picturesque character, among the rivers of Europe.

The journey from London to Worcester, which is the direct route to the Upper part of the Wye, discloses many of the peculiarities of English scenery and character—peculiarities which to the natives are of so every day a kind, that it is only by reflection and comparison they learn to appreciate them. The country seats of the great land proprietors, with their accompaniments of lawn and plantation, extending as far as the eye can reach, form a part of the picture; and so do the cottages of the village peasantry, with their little gardens before the door, admitting a peep into the interior of the humble abode. In the aristocratical dwellings, half hidden in that paradise of groves and glades, we find every refinement that gold can purchase, or taste produce: in the huts, comfort, and its inseparable adjunct cleanliness, are the most striking characteristics.

p. 3

The former speak of wealth, and the happiness that depends on wealth; the latter of comparative poverty, and the home pleasures that are compatible with poverty. On the continent, there is always something out of keeping in the picture. In the great chateaux and their grounds, there is always some meanness, some make-shift observable; while in the great country seats of England, on the contrary, all is uniform. In the cottages abroad, even those of a higher order, there are always dirt and slovenliness—inattention to the minute comforts of humble life—meals snatched anyhow and anywhere—sleep taken without an idea of the luxuries of sleep. In England, on the other hand, notwithstanding the irregularities of fortune, we find an absolute identity in the various classes of the population. The labourer—returned, perhaps, from mending the highway, sits down in state to dinner, with a clean white table-cloth, and the coarse ware nicely arranged before him. The floor is swept, perhaps washed, to do honour to the occasion; and his wife, who is at once the mistress and the servant of the feast, prides herself on making her husband (whom she calls her “master”)—*comfortable*.

p. 4

We need not be told that this is not a universal picture. We need not be reminded of the want and misery which exist in numerous parts of the country, for with these we are well acquainted. The *foreigner*, however, to whom such scenes are new, will meet with them frequently enough, and especially on the road we are now travelling, to induce him to set them down as one of the grand characteristics of England.

p. 5

The road presents, also, at various turnings, that truly English scene, a well-known specimen of which is viewed from Richmond Hill. A level country lies a few hundred feet below us, and extends in front, and on either side, till it is lost in the distance, or bound in by low and filmy hills which just mark the horizon with their waving line of shadow. This expanse is studded with towns, and villages, and seats, and cottages, and square towers, and tapering spires, rising amidst woods and groves, and surrounded by green fields and meadows. A great part of the peculiar character of the landscape is due to the enclosures of various kinds of foliage which separate one field from another. In most parts of the continent—and more especially in France—these are of very rare occurrence; and thus the beauty of the picture, when it has any beauty at all, depends upon the colours of the different kinds of grain or other productions, which make the vast expanse of vegetation resemble an immense and richly variegated carpet. In spring, therefore, before these colours have been fairly brought out, it may easily be conceived that France is one of the least interesting countries in Europe. With us, on the other hand, the face of the earth resembles a garden, and more especially in one of those flat landscapes we have alluded to. The changes of the seasons diversify without diminishing the beauty; and even winter presents, instead of a uniform and dreary waste, a varied picture executed in hoar frost and snow.

p. 6

Worcester is one of the most aristocratic looking towns in England, and presents every token of being a wealthy and flourishing place. Its cathedral, an edifice of the beginning of the thirteenth century, has drawn hither many a pilgrim foot even from foreign countries. Our present business, however, is with the works of nature, or with those of art fallen into decay, and their fragments standing amidst the eternal youth of the hills and rivers, like monuments of the insignificance of man.

Worcester is famous for its manufactures of porcelain and gloves; but our attention was more strongly attracted to exports of another kind, of which it appeared to be at least the entrepôt, if it was not the original market. At a little distance from the town, several waggons had halted near a public house, and their freight, a numerous party of peasant girls, were breakfasting by the road side. They were eating and drinking as joyously as if their laps had been filled with far more enticing food than bread and ale. They were on their way to some greater mart—perhaps to the all-devouring metropolis; and when breakfast was over, they resumed their slow journey, some few who had mounted the waggons singing in parts, and the rest, walking by the side, joining in the chorus. They had no fears, poor girls, of the result of their adventure—or rather, no forethought.

p. 7

But it is not till after we pass the little town of Kington, on the eastern borders of Herefordshire, that the picturesque commences, and we must hasten on to our more immediate task. Between Kington and New Radnor, are the Stanner Rocks, with the Devil’s Garden on their summit,

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luxuriously planted—of course by no human hand—with wild flowers. Beyond New Radnor (formerly the county town, but now a paltry village,) opens the Vale of Radnor on one side, and on the other, a rude mountain scene, distinguished by a waterfall of some celebrity, called Water-break-its-neck. The stream rushes down a precipitous descent of seventy feet, into a hollow with craggy and unequal sides. The spot of the cascade is marked by an insulated rock, eighteen or twenty feet high, standing erect above it like a monument.

After passing the village of Penybont, the Llanbadarn Vawr, or great church of Badarn, is to the left of the road, an edifice which dates from the time of the Conqueror; and nothing else of interest is observable till we reach Rhaiadyr, on the Banks of the Wye. As it will be more convenient, however, to examine the river in descending with the stream, we shall only say here, that the journey from Rhaiadyr to the summit of Plinlimmon lies through woods, and hill passes, becoming ruder and wilder at every step we advance. The character of the population seems to change in conformity with their physical circumstances. The want of tidiness which marks the British mountaineer is the more conspicuous from the contrast it presents to the opposite quality we have admired in the plains; and already the women have assumed the round hat of the ruder sex, and destroyed with its masculine associations the charms peculiar to their own. Against this absurdity we must protest, whether we meet with it in the Welsh girl, or the fair equestrian of Hyde Park. It betrays not only the most pitiful taste, but the most profound ignorance of nature, on which is founded the theory of female beauty.

p. 9

Stedva Gerrig, or “the Rest on the Stones” now commonly called by the name of the mountain, is a hamlet of three or four houses situated on a stream which separates the counties of Montgomeryshire and Cardiganshire, in a nook of comparatively level land, into which abut several of the lower ridges of Plinlimmon. The spot has little of the wildness of mountain scenery, but its extreme solitude; for being here near the top of the mountainous group, and surrounded by its remaining elevations, we are insensible of our real altitude above the level of the country. These elevations, besides, have none of the ruggedness of character we usually find in such places. They are, in general, smoothly-swelling eminences, which if rising from the plain would receive the name of hills; they are wholly naked of trees, or even brushwood; and being covered with green herbage, they at first sight give one the idea of an extensive grass farm, rather than a sterile mountain. It is the altitude of the spot, however, and the nipping blasts to which it is exposed, that render it naked of the larger kinds of vegetation; and there is only a nook here and there capable of bearing even a scanty crop of oats. This region, therefore, excepting a few fields around Stedva Gerrig, supplies subsistence only to sheep; and the greater number even of these we found had been withdrawn to situations less exposed to the Welsh winds.

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Of the few inhabitants of the hamlet, the principal man of course is the innkeeper; and the other fathers of families are shepherds. The latter class of men have wages amounting to twelve pounds a year, and enjoy their houses and little fields of corn and potatoes, with as much pasturage as they have use for free of rent. The husband, assisted by his sons, when young, tends the sheep on the mountain; the wife makes flannel, and knits stockings; and the daughters go out to service at an early age. Their little menage is comfortable. Their bread is barley cakes; they sometimes salt a pig; they provide themselves with a quarter of beef at one time, and, like their betters, “live at home, and kill their own mutton.” Nay, one of these flourishing shepherds is a rival of *the* innkeeper; his hut being duly licensed to sell ale, cyder, &c., and the sign-board having the following intimation:—“The notorious hill of Plinlimmon is on these premises, and it will be shown with pleasure to any gentlemen travellers who wishes to see it.” And this intimation (letting grammar alone) is correct; for although the notorious article in question, viz., the loftiest part of Plinlimmon is not entirely in the garden, curtained off, like the balloon at the Yorkshire Stingo, from the gaze of all who do not pay a shilling to see it, yet it is actually on the premises, about three or four miles—only a sheep walk—distant.

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The Plinlimmon inn, undoubtedly, is the place for our money. It is now—although its character was very different only two years ago—neat, clean, and comfortable. We do not say that it affords the accommodation of a city on the top of a Welsh mountain, but yet to the traveller who has seen more of the world than the plains of England, it will make a very desirable resting-place. Such traveller, on dismounting from the Aberystwith mail, will be right glad to sit down by a clean and bright fire-side, and if the turf should not be lighted in the parlour, he will be proud of the privilege of the kitchen. There, if he has our own good fortune, he will find the landlady, a frank, cheerful, and kindly woman, with the table drawn in quite to the hearth, and reading “Elegant Extracts.” Materials of another kind will speedily grace the board, viz., bread, butter, cheese, eggs, and excellent home-brewed ale. Do you sneer at this bill of fare? A fico for thy travellership! Then will mine host enter in the midst, a bold, intelligent, yet modest fellow; and, bustling through the various parts of the scene, will “come, like a shadow, so depart” the substantial form of the serving maiden, her cheeks round, and flushed, her eye beaming with innocent gaiety, and her full and swelling chest seeming as if it were with difficulty withheld from bursting the corsage. These three, by the way, are the only inhabitants of the hamlet who speak English.

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After supper, the traveller, if he be not of the heathen sect of Tee-totallers, takes a glass of brandy and water, for the reason assigned by St. Paul in his Epistle to Timothy, or any other orthodox reason; and finally, he will enter into a clean and comfortable bed, and sleep, not the less soundly it is to be presumed, that his meal had not involved the murder of a chicken, or of any other of his fellow creatures of the earth.

The next morning the landlord walked with us to the source of the Wye, about three miles distant. We ascended and descended several of the rounded summits already mentioned; and upon the whole, the little excursion is somewhat trying to the lungs. A rill flowed between every two eminences, destined soon or late to unite with the Wye, and at length the latter stream appeared, bubbling down the side of a slope in a volume which might be comprised in the circumference of a teacup. Higher up, a few rushes seem to hide the fountain from which it springs; but following for a brief space a line of damp, plashy earth above, we reach a tiny pool, little more than a hand-breadth across, supplied by droppings rather than gushes from a bank of black earth—and this is the source of the Wye. Looking down its tortuous valley, the view is majestic from the massive forms of the objects which surround it; but the solitude, the dreariness, the utter desolation of the scene, form the distinctive features of the picture.

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Plinlimmon, or Pumlumon, is not, correctly speaking, a single mountain, but several distinct mountains rising from one base. Each of these distinct mountains, again, is subdivided into several others; but in the aggregate, there is little of the variety which might be expected from so extraordinary an assemblage. It is entirely destitute of wood. There are none of the craggy peaks and precipices which usually form the picturesque of mountain scenery. All is smooth but blackened turf, frequently undulating over fathomless bogs, the mysteries of which the traveller who ventures into this desolate region without a guide has a fair chance of exploring. The summit, of which the highest point is two thousand four hundred and sixty-three feet above the level of the sea, forms a plateau of several miles; whence the hills of Cardiganshire are seen to the south; Cardigan bay and Saint George's channel to the west; to the north, the perpendicular brow of Cader Idris; to the north-west, the three-peaked Breidden hills; and to the east, the fertile plains of Herefordshire and Shropshire.

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Besides the Wye, there are several other rivers which have their source on Plinlimmon, the most distinguished of which is the Severn. About two miles distant from where we now stand, this stream issues from a little bog-hole, in a volume which might be stepped across by a child. The whole mountain, in fact, seems a reservoir of water; and it is not surprising that Owen Glendwr should have been able to maintain himself here, as he did in 1401, even with so small a force as a hundred and twenty men. The entrenchments made by the hero may still be traced; and brazen spearheads, and other instruments of war, have been found within them in our own day.

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CHAPTER II.

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Descent of Plinlimmon—Singular illusion—Llangerrig—Commencement of the Picturesque—The Fall of the Wye—Black Mountain—Course of the river—Builth—Peculiarity of the scenery—Approach to the English border—Castle of the Hay—First series of the beauties of the Wye.

Leaving Stedva Gerrig, the road runs by the side of the stream before mentioned, through a succession of mountain valleys, which, being without the grandiose forms of the view from Plinlimmon, are uninteresting from the want of trees. On the left there was a wreath of grey smoke flying backward on the wind, from the brow of the steep which forms the side of the valley; and we speculated within ourselves as to whether this was the ensign of some unlawful still. It proved, however, to be the foam of a little mountain torrent, caught suddenly by the gust ere it reached the edge of the precipice; and so complete was the illusion, that it was not till we had climbed to the spot, that we were convinced of the phenomenon being the production of water instead of fire.

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The valley here was wide, and the vista backwards towards Stedva Gerrig of considerable length. A very remarkable effect was produced by the light of the early sun streaming through masses of grey clouds, and flashed back again not only by the stream, but by the entire surface of the soil which was completely saturated by torrents of rain that had fallen during the night. Just after this, and nearly three miles from the inn, the Wye suddenly burst into the valley from the left, and rushing beneath a bridge, flung itself into the little river. The latter, conscious that although its volume was greater, its strength and impetuosity were less than those of the marauder, quietly resigned itself to its fate, receiving the name and acknowledging the authority of its lord and spouse; and thenceforth, we found ourselves wandering along the banks, less known than those less renowned, of the classic Vaga.

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The sameness of the scenery continued for five miles further, till on entering the hamlet of Llangerrig, consisting of a few huts of the meanest description, and an old church, of which a view is annexed, trees began to add their interest to the picture. The valley, however, was wide, the trees small, and the river, notwithstanding its receiving here another accession, was still insignificant. By degrees, however, as we proceeded, the hills became closer, and the massiveness of their forms lent a certain degree of grandeur to the scene. These again disappeared; and the hills returned: and the Wye as before ran brawling through a commonplace valley. A series of vicissitudes went on till the hills, assuming the character without the magnitude of mountains, threw themselves wildly together, and we found ourselves in a savage pass, the steep abutting masses of which were in some cases formed of grey and naked rock.

The river here is occasionally almost choked up with stones and fragments of rocks, which must either have rolled from the heights into the bottom of the valley, or been uncovered in their original beds by the action of the water. Here opens (in our judgment) the first of the numerous picturesque views presented by the Wye. The spot is marked by the accession of a tributary stream, which is crossed by means of a bridge.

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After getting out of this gorge, the scenery becomes softer and more commonplace; and at three miles nearer, the vista is terminated by the little church tower of Rhaiadyr, painted against a misty hill at some distance beyond.

In the time of the Welsh princes, there was here a fortress of some importance, of which no vestiges remain. It was erected, we are told, by Rhys, prince of South Wales, in the time of Richard II., and burnt down in 1231, by Llewellyn ap Iorwerth. The little town itself is modern, and consists principally of two streets intersecting each other at right angles. The name, which is in full *Rhaiadyr Pwy*, means the Fall of the Wye, but is no longer applicable, the cataract having been almost levelled in 1780, when the bridge was erected. From this bridge the view of the river is exceedingly fine, as will be seen by the annexed engraving; although all the remnant of the waterfall is the plunging of the stream over a low ledge of rocks. The town itself has a good deal of character. It is decidedly a Welsh town; and notwithstanding the commingling that must have taken place in the races, it possesses that foreign aspect which is so exciting to the curiosity.

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This appearance, however, is still more evident in the next place at which we arrive, Builth; but the traveller must not be in a hurry to get there. The valley of the Wye, during the fourteen miles which intervene, presents a continuous series of picturesque views, sufficient of themselves to make the reputation of the river. The stream rushes the whole way through a singularly rocky and winding bed, bound in by lofty and fantastic banks, and these by hills, naked or wooded, barren or fertile, of every variety of form. One of the most remarkable of the latter is the Black Mountain, which is posted directly in front, and fills up the valley, as if to guard the pass from the further progress of the Wye: but our wandering stream sweeps abruptly round its base, and escaping by a narrow defile, pursues its triumphant way towards Builth. One of those pictures is imitated in the annexed engraving, and it will not be difficult to find the identical spot chosen by the artist.

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For more than half the distance the road runs close by the side of the river; but on reaching a few houses called Newbridge, we diverge a little, and do not come near again till we have travelled a distance of nearly five miles and approached the town of Builth. The pedestrian, however, cares little for roads; and, rejoining the river at will, he finds the series of views continued—sometimes grand, sometimes beautiful, sometimes picturesque, sometimes absolute gems of pastoral repose. The river increases visibly before our eyes; and at length, when near Builth, it rolls along, still foaming, still brawling, but in a stream of considerable volume. Its principal tributaries between Rhaiadyr and this place, are the Elian, the Ithon, and the Yrfon; the last of which is celebrated by the defeat of Llewelin in 1282, which took place at the spot where the little river is crossed by a bridge, just before it falls into the Wye, above Builth.

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This part of the country, however, is completely secluded. There never was, so far as we know, a public conveyance between Rhaiadyr and Builth; and at the latter town, at this season of the year

—although it is still early in October—the traveller will find no means of communication with the rest of the world, except for those who journey with post horses, and those who make use of the locomotive powers of their own limbs.

Builth is finely situated, its narrow streets rising in irregular terraces on the side of a hill on the right bank of the Wye. The houses are as Welsh as can be, and have a primitive, old world look, that has a great charm in our eyes. The town is approached by a stone bridge of considerable length; at the end of which, on the left hand, are some mounds of grass and ivy, which conceal the remains of a castle supposed to date from the eleventh century. All, however, is conjecture as regards this castle, which was a small fortress, with a keep of forty yards in circumference, surrounded by a ditch, and defended towards the south by two trenches. It was repaired in 1209, by Gilbert, Earl of Gloucester; after the death of Llewelin, it became an English fortress; and in 1690, was accidentally destroyed by a fire, which at the same time consumed the greater part of the town. Builth, however, is older than its castle. It is set down by the learned as the Bullæum Silurum of the Romans; and various druidical remains in the neighbourhood carry back the ken of the antiquarian to a still more remote epoch, which is lost in shadows.

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It was in this neighbourhood, as we have said, that Llewelin, the last of the Welsh princes, was defeated and slain in 1282. Tradition relates, that while at Aberedw, a short distance down the river, on the opposite bank, he was surprised by the English, and escaped so narrowly, that he had only just time to pass the drawbridge of Builth, before his pursuers came up. The English, however, succeeded in cutting him off from his army, by getting between the town and a village on the right bank of the Wye where it was posted. Llewelin, upon this, attempted to conceal himself in the woods, but he was discovered, and beheaded, and his body buried at a place called Cern y Bedd.

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The air of Builth is supposed to be very salubrious, and for this reason many respectable families have chosen it for their residence. The abundance of game in its woods and hills, and of trout, salmon, and grayling in its streams is another inducement, and probably the *cause* of the good health of its visitors. In this neighbourhood are mineral springs of three kinds,—saline, sulphurous, and chalybeate,—and a pump-room, frequently attended by a numerous company.

From a hill above the town is obtained a fine view of the Llynsyraddon, the largest lake in Wales except Bala. The country people believe that its bed was formerly the site of a city; and, as in Ireland, Brittany, and other places where a similar tradition prevails, they still see the towers of old “neath the calm, cold wave reclining.” Giraldus calls the lake *Clamosam*, from the “terrible thundering noise it makes upon the breaking up of the ice in winter.”

The valley of the Wye is less wild after passing Builth, but more beautiful. After the fourth milestone, there is a magnificent specimen of a formation of the hills which may be said to be the grand peculiarity of this district. It consists of a massive range on the opposite bank, laid out in square terraces, such as Martin delights to heap on each other in his pictures. But here, where Nature is the builder, these masses of architecture are of rough, disjointed stones, hoary with age, and sometimes overgrown with moss and lichens. On the right bank where we stood, a small house is built just above the road, as if to enjoy the picture; and, a little further on, another of more aristocratic pretensions. A view, including a portion of the latter—the green, smooth-shaven pastures which answer for a lawn and extend to the water’s edge—the Wye foaming and brawling at the bottom, half hidden by trees of the deepest shadow—with the castellated mount beyond, and the sweep of the valley closed in by hills to the left—would form a whole, which Gilpin, with the dogmatism of art, might call “correctly picturesque.”

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A little further on, we had an opportunity of inspecting these rocks more closely, which are only remarkable from the forms they assume. In the instance before us, they were two immense cubes of stone, as precise as if ruled by the square, and cut with the chisel. They stood exactly horizontal with the ground, and the upper was of smaller proportions than the lower. No other rock or even stone was near. At some distance another entirely insulated mass presented itself, as large as a cottage of two stories, with walls as perpendicular, and secluded like a cottage by trees.

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The small village of Glasbury presents a view well worth notice. This is particularly the case at Maeslough Hall, where Gilpin characterises the scenery as “wonderfully amusing,” declaring that the situation is one of the finest in Wales. On passing the seventh milestone, the valley spreads out into a wide plain bounded by an amphitheatre of hills; and as we proceed, numerous villas peeping through the trees, show that we have now left entirely behind us the peculiarities of Welsh scenery, and are again on the borders of merry England. As we approach the Hay, the aristocratical buildings become more numerous, and the romance of the scene diminishes, till at length we enter a small, but neat and comfortable-looking town.

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The Hay has some historical associations of the doings of Llewelin and King John, by the latter of whom its castle was destroyed in 1216; but with the exception of a Gothic gateway there are no remains to interest the antiquarian. There are said, indeed, to be the fragments of some Roman fortifications; but we are something like Sir Walter Scott in this respect, who had seen so many ghosts, that at last he found it difficult to believe in them. Tradition relates that the castle was built in one night by the celebrated Maud de Saint Wallery, alias Maud de Hain, alias Moll Walbee. “She built (say the gossips),” as we find in Jones’s Brecknock, “the castle of Hay in one night: the stones for which she carried in her apron. While she was thus employed, a small pebble, of about nine feet long, and one foot thick, dropped into her shoe. This she did not at first regard; but in a short time, finding it troublesome, she indignantly threw it over the river

Wye into Llowes churchyard in Radnorshire (about three miles off), where it remains to this day, precisely in the position it fell, a stubborn memorial of the historical fact, to the utter confusion of all sceptics and unbelievers.”

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Between Builth and the Hay ends one series of the beauties of the Wye. The stream hitherto is a mountain rivulet, sometimes almost a torrent, and its characteristics are wildness and simplicity. Its course is impeded by rocks, amidst which it runs brawling and foaming; and, generally speaking, it depends upon itself, and upon the nature of its own bed for the picturesque, the hills around forming only the back ground. We shall see, as we get on, the manner in which this will change, till the banks become the objects of admiration, and the stream itself, although much increased in volume, is considered a mere adjunct, and its bosom a convenient site from which to view them.

Gilpin's observations on this point are very judicious, although he had not the advantage of seeing with his own eyes the upper part of the Wye. "It is possible, I think," says he, "the Wye may in this place (alluding to the country between Builth and the Hay) be more beautiful than in any other part of its course. Between Ross and Chepstow, the grandeur and beauty of its banks are its chief praise. The river itself has no other merit than that of a winding surface of smooth water. But here, added to the same decoration from its banks, the Wye itself assumes a more beautiful character; pouring over shelving rocks, and forming itself into eddies and cascades, which a solemn parading stream through a flat channel cannot exhibit. An additional merit also accrues to such a river from the different forms it assumes according to the fulness or emptiness of the stream. There are rocks of all shapes and sizes, which continually vary the appearance of the water, as it rushes over or plays among them; so that such a river, to a picturesque eye, is a continued fund of new entertainment."

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CHAPTER III.

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Clifford Castle—Lords-marchers—Fair Rosamond—Ruins of the Castle—The silent cottage—Approach to Hereford—Castle—Cathedral—Nell Gwynn—Cider—Salmon—Wolves.

Leaving Hay, the valley widens, the background softens, and the whole scene assumes the character of an English vale, where the hills on each side are cultivated to the summit. On the right, as we proceed, a deep umbrageous wood comes in to give effect, just where effect was wanting; and, surmounting a conical eminence above the road, near the second milestone, the hoary ruins of Clifford Castle intermix with the monotony of modern life the associations of the olden time.

Clifford Castle was built by William Fitzosborne, earl of Hereford, but was held at the time of the Domesday Survey by Rudolphus de Totenie. It was obtained by the Cliffords by the marriage of Walter Fitz-Richard with Margaret, daughter of Ralph de Cundy. Walter Fitz-Richard—a descendant of Richard II., duke of Normandy—whose father accompanied the Conqueror into England, having married the heiress of Ralph de Cundy, of Clifford Castle, took the name of De Clifford, and the place remained the baronial seat of the family for two centuries.

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The nobles of that age were not merely required to do military service for their lands, but other imposts were laid upon them by the feudal custom, which had the effect of a true property tax. At the marriage of Matilda, daughter of Henry I., with Charles V. of Germany, the king collected a sum equal to about £135,000 of our money from the land, at a fixed rate per hide; and the returns (*certificationes*) show very clearly the distribution of property at the time. We find Walter de Clifford set down for one hide in Herefordshire in Wales. It may be noted, in passing, that Henry was not only generous in granting lands to his own and his father's followers, but the same request being made to him by some Flemings, whose share of terra firma had been wrested from them by an incursion of the sea, he made no scruple to comply. "Being very liberall," say the Welsh chronicles, "of that which was not his owne, he gave them the land of *Ros*, in West Wales, or Dynet, where Pembroke, Haverford, and Tenby are now built; and they there remain to this day, as may well be perceived by their speech and conditions being farre differing from the rest of the countrye."

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The Norman knights who settled on the Welsh borders acquired the name of Lords Marchers, being styled *Marchiones Walliæ* in the Red Book of the Exchequer; although the title of nobility derived from this, *Marquis*, was not introduced till the reign of Richard II. These lords marchers, of whom were the Cliffords and other families in Hereford, had each a law for his own barony, and determined of their own authority all suits between their tenants. They were entitled to the goods and chattels of such of their tenants as died intestate. This power, in fact, was such as could only be continued by violence; and hence the coolness or treachery of some of them when any serious attempt was made by the sovereign to introduce the laws and customs of the English into Wales. After the death of Llewellyn, the last prince of Wales, this was at length effected by Edward I.; but still, the Marches, not being included in the division of the land into counties became a scene of such anarchy, that it was found necessary to institute a court of judicature for that district alone. This court continued till the first year of William and Mary, when it was dissolved by an act of Parliament, in consequence, as the preamble states, of its having become "a great grievance to the subject." Previous to this, however, in the time of Henry VIII., the

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Marches of Wales were definitely united to England; when Clifford and other places, which were before a debatable land of bloodshed and confusion, became a part of Herefordshire.

But Clifford Castle is not associated merely with ideas of war and rapine, but with those of love and beauty. Here was born that too celebrated lady, of whom Dryden says—

“Jane Clifford was her name, as books aver,
Fair Rosamond was but her *nom de guerre*.”

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She was the daughter of one of the earls of Clifford, and became celebrated for her amour with Henry II.; who built her a bower in Woodstock Park, which he defended from his jealous wife by the classical device of a labyrinth. Queen Eleanor, however, who was as well read in ancient history as her spouse, was not slow in hitting upon the expedient of the clue of thread; and, on reaching her rival, the historical romancers add, she compelled her to swallow poison. Whatever may have been her fate, Fair Rosamond was buried at Godstow, and a Latin epitaph inscribed on her tomb to this effect:

“Here lies not Rose the Chaste, but Rose the Fair,
Whose breath perfumes no more, but taints the air.”

The ruins of the castle, completely covered with ivy, look down solemn and sad upon the Wye:

“Clifford has fallen—howe’er sublime,
Mere fragments wrestle still with time;
Yet as they perish, sure and slow,
And rolling dash the stream below,
They raise tradition’s glowing scene,—
The clue of silk, the wrathful queen;
And link in memory’s firmest bond
The love-lorn tale of Rosamond.”

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We carried away with us for a considerable distance the dreamy repose of Clifford Castle; but this was at length broken by repose of another character. The scene was a little wayside hut, purporting to be an inn, where the weary pedestrian might obtain shade or shelter, if no refreshment. An old man, and an old woman, occupied the two fireside corners, the one reading, the other sewing, in profound silence. Around the hearth, there was a semi-circle of five cats, in various attitudes of rest, but not one breaking the stillness of the place even by a pur. A dog, apparently kept in proper order by his feline associates, lay outside the semicircle, and shared in the tranquillity of the scene. We paused for a moment at the door, feeling that our presence was an intrusion; but, after a brief question, and a brief reply, the good wife dropped her eyes again upon her work, and the dog, who had himself raised his head, returned to his slumber with a sigh. As for the other inhabitants, our presence had produced no effect upon them at all, and we withdrew to proceed upon our wanderings, unconsciously taking care to tread without noise.

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From this place to Hereford, the road runs through a rich and well cultivated country, dotted here and there with houses and villages, but not thickly enough to disturb the idea of pastoral repose. Approaching Bradwardine, where the old castle said to have been the residence of the family of that name is *not*, the soil swells into wooded eminences, one of which is called Mirebeck Hill; and Brobury’s Scar, a picturesque cliff rising from the bank of the river, adds still further to the diversity of the prospect. Then came the various villas which usually adorn the neighbourhood of a large town—and which here are true embellishments to the landscape; and finally we enter the ancient, sober, quiet cathedral city of Hereford.

Hereford was a principal town of Mercia under the Heptarchy, the palace of Offa, the most powerful of the Mercian princes, being within three miles of it on the north-eastern side. Its church, in the time of Offa, was probably nothing more than a wooden building; but to the rise of

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that church in wealth and reputation was owing, according to the usual sequence of events at the period, the prosperity of the town. Offa had treacherously inveigled to his court Ethelbert, prince of the East Angles, when he murdered him, and usurped his crown. The body of the victim was buried in the church, where by working of miracles it attracted so much attention to the spot, that a new church of stone was constructed on the site of the wooden edifice, and dedicated to *Saint Ethelbert*. Multitudes of course flocked to visit the martyr's tomb; the church was richly endowed by the remorse or hypocrisy of the assassin; and Hereford speedily rose from its comparative obscurity.

About the year 939, the city was first enclosed by walls, the fragments of which now existing are supposed to stand upon the original foundations. They were eighteen hundred yards in extent, enclosing the town on all sides except towards the south, where it has the defence of the Wye. There were six gates, and fifteen embattled watch-towers. The castle, concerning the date of which antiquarians are not agreed, stood on the south and east sides of the city, with the Wye on the south and the cathedral on the west. Leland describes the keep as having been "high and very strong, having in the outer wall ten semicircular towers, and one great tower within." He adds, that "it hath been one of the largest, fayrest, and strongest castels in England." In the time of the civil wars, Hereford was the scene of some strife, but since then nothing has occurred—not even the introduction of manufactures—to disturb its repose.

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With the exception of the cathedral, a grand view of which is to be had from the Castle Green Promenade—a fine public walk on a small scale—there is nothing to detain the traveller. Some fragments of the city walls, however, and of an old priory, may be visited by the antiquary; together with an old house, a "brotherless hermit," the last of a race demolished for the purpose of widening the street where the town hall stands—or rather sits—resting uneasily on some thin columns. The house, adorned with grotesque faces, bears its date, 1621.

The traveller may also go, if he will, to Pipe Lane, formerly called Pipe Well Street, leading from the bridge to the cathedral, to see the house where Nell Gwynn was not born, and the bedchamber where she did not sleep. These curiosities will be shown for a trifle, and they must now suffice: the dwelling which really had the distinction of giving birth to Mistress Eleanor having been pulled down more than twenty years ago.

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After the removal of this celebrated lady to London, she made her first appearance in Drury Lane Theatre, in the character of a fruit-girl, not on the stage, but in the lobby. Mr. Hart, the manager, however, was induced to notice her by her natural humour and vivacity, and he produced her upon the boards about the year 1667. Here she became a favorite of Dryden, who wrote some of his prologues and epilogues expressly for her. "The immediate cause of her becoming the object of the king's affection is thus represented. At the duke's theatre, under Killegrew's patent, the celebrated Nokes appeared in a hat larger than that usually assigned to Pistol, which diverted the audience so much as to help off a bad play. Dryden, in return, caused a hat to be made of the circumference of a large coach wheel, and made Mrs. Gwynn speak an epilogue under the umbrella of it, with the brim stretched out in its utmost horizontal extension, not unlike a mushroom of that size. No sooner did she appear in this strange dress, than the house was in convulsions of laughter. Amongst the rest, the king gave the fullest marks of approbation, by going behind the scenes after the play, and taking her home in his own coach to sup with him." [41] Her son, born in 1670, was afterwards created duke of St. Albans; and her grandson became a prelate of the church, and the denizen of the episcopal palace nearly adjoining the humble house in Pipe Lane, where his maternal ancestor was born. Mrs. Gwynne was one of the few royal favorites who have not abused their power, otherwise than in spending money which should have been under the control of the nation. She was munificent in her charities, and may be considered, if not the founder of Chelsea Hospital, the cause of its having been founded. "Her stature was short, her hair inclined to red; her eyes were small and lively, and she possessed what the French term *embonpoint*. Her feet were of the most diminutive size, and as such were the subject of frequent mirth to the merry monarch."

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The staple commodity of Hereford is cider; but the reputation of the county for this production dates backward only to the reign of Charles I., when, according to Evelyn, it became "in a manner one entire orchard." The apples are merely a variety of the crab, as the pears are descended from the common wild pear. The plantations are found in every aspect, and on every soil; but in general the west winds, so much praised by the Roman poets, and after them by Philips the bard of cider, are unwholesome to the plant, from the circumstance of their blowing over the Welsh mountains, which are capped with snow even in the spring. The best colours for cider fruits are red and yellow, the juice of the green being harsh and poor. The pulp should be yellow, but this part of the apple is not so important as the rind and kernel, in which the strength and flavour of the liquid reside; and for this reason the smaller the apple is the better. From twenty-four to thirty gallons are required to fill the provincial hogshead of one hundred and ten gallons.

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The cider-mill used even at this moment is a rude and imperfect contrivance, consisting of a circular stone, about twelve hundred weight, set on its edge in a shallow circular trough, and drawn round by a horse. The apples are gradually introduced into the trough, and a quantity may be thus mashed equal to a hogshead of cider in the day. The expressed juice is put into casks, not quite filled, and in the open air; and as soon as the vinous fermentation takes place, it is racked. When two years old it may be bottled, after which it will become rich and sparkling, and so remain for twenty or thirty years. Perry is made with pears pretty nearly in the same way.

The salmon is still the principal fish taken in the Wye, though far less plentiful than formerly. It was at one time a common clause in the indentures of apprentices that they should not be compelled to live on salmon more than two days in the week. Wolves were formerly so numerous in this district, that in 1234 a proclamation was issued commanding them to be destroyed, and calling upon "all the king's liege people to assist therein." A wolf would now be an extraordinary spectacle indeed on the sunny slopes, or prowling among the apple orchards of Hereford! But the Wye has seen changes more remarkable than this.

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CHAPTER IV

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Beauty and tameness—The travelling hill—Ross—The silver tankard—The Man of Ross—The sympathetic trees—Penyard Castle—Vicissitudes of the river—Wilton Castle—A voyage to sea in a basket—Pencraig Hill.

Comparatively speaking, there is little worthy of remark between Hereford and Ross; and yet Gilpin's charge of *tameness* is unjust. What it wants is excitement. The valley of the Wye is here beautiful—neither more, nor less; but its beauty is similar to that of the portion we have just traversed between the Hay and Hereford, and we therefore call it tame. Why did we not apply the word before? Because the contrast presented by the valley after leaving Hay with the wilder or grander features we had passed formed one of the *vicissitudes* of the river. This will be understood by a traveller who journeys up the stream. On reaching Ross, after emerging from the tumult, or sublimity, of the lower passage, he will gaze with delight on one of the most quietly beautiful landscapes in England—whose smooth green eminences, gentle groves, orchards and hop plantations (the latter far finer objects than the vineyards of the continent), white cottages, villages, and village spires, give an endless and yet simple variety to the picture. After passing Hereford, in quest of new excitement, the scene-hunter will pronounce a similar character of landscape *tame*.

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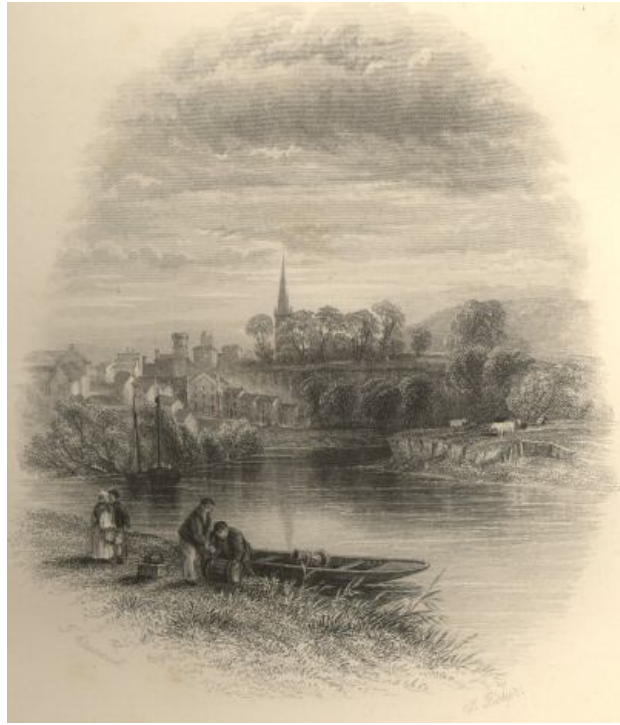
Six miles from Hereford, the Lay adds its waters to the Wye, and near the confluence we remark an abrupt elevation, which being wholly different in character from the rest of the soil conveys the idea of an accident of nature. And such it actually is.

Marclay Hill—for so the elevation is called—in the time of Elizabeth, according to Camden, "rose as it were from sleep, and for three days moved on its vast body with an horrible noise, driving everything before it to an higher ground." Fuller states that the ascent gained by the surprising traveller was eleven fathoms, that its bulk was twenty acres, and that the time it took to perform the feat was fourteen hours. Sir Richard Baker, in the "Chronicles of England," is still more minute. "In the thirteenth year of Queen Elizabeth," says he, "a prodigious earthquake happened in the east parts of Herefordshire, at a little town called Kinnaston. On the seventeenth of February, at six o'clock in the evening, the earth began to open, and a hill, with a rock under it, making at first a great hollowing noise, which was heard a great way off, lifted itself up, and began to travel, bearing along with it the trees that grew upon it, the sheepfolds and flocks of sheep abiding there at the same time. In the place from whence it was first moved it left a gaping distance forty foot broad, and fourscore ells long: the whole field was about twenty acres. Passing along it overthrew a chapel standing in the way, removed a yew tree planted in the churchyard from the west to the east: with the like force it thrust before it highways, sheepfolds, hedges, and trees; made tilled ground pasture, and again turned pasture into tillage. Having

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walked in this sort from Saturday evening till Monday noon, it then stood still." The yew tree still exists as a witness of the fact, and the church bell was dug up not many years ago.



The traces of a Roman camp on Woldbury Hill, and on Eaton Hill those of an ancient fortification, forming a link in the chain of defences which formerly ran along this part of the country, may be inspected with advantage by the pedestrian who is read in antiquarian lore; but to others there will appear nothing which should detain their steps before the little town of Ross. Here commences the tour of the lower Wye—of that part of the river which is known to fame as *the* Wye. As for the town itself, it is neat and prim-looking, sitting quietly upon an eminence above the river. It is full of memories of the Man of Ross, which sanctify it from the boisterous vulgarities of a town. The “heaven-directed spire” which he taught to rise is its prominent feature; and this object keeps the lines of Pope ringing in our ears like the church bell, and with a little of its monotony.

This bell, by the way, is something more than an ordinary bell. It bears the name of John Kyrle, and was cast at Gloucester, in 1695, at his own expense. Nay, it possesses a relic more valuable than his name, for there is incorporated with its substance his favorite silver tankard. He attended himself at the casting, and, drinking solemnly the orthodox toast of “Church and King,” he threw the cup into the molten mass. In a local guide-book, we find several little particulars of this fine old fellow, which are interesting from their naïveté.

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It appears he was entered a gentleman commoner, of Baliol College, Oxford, in 1654, and that he was intended for the bar but soon relinquished all thoughts of that profession, and returning to Ross gave himself up to agriculture and building, and the improvement of his native town.

An old maiden cousin, of the euphonous name of Bubb, kept house for him many years. In his person, John was tall, thin, and well-shaped; his health was remarkably good, and he scarcely knew any of the frailties of old age until within a very short time of his death. His usual dress was a suit of brown *dittos*, and a king William’s wig, all in the costume of his day. He disliked crowds and routs, but was exceedingly fond of snug, social parties, and “of dinnering his friends upon the market and fair days.” He was also exceedingly pleased with his neighbours dropping in without ceremony, loved to make a good long evening of it, enjoyed a merry story, and always seemed sorry when it was time to break up. His dishes were generally plain and according to the season, but he dearly loved a goose, and was vain of his dexterity in carving it. During the operation, which he invariably took upon himself, he always repeated one of those old sayings and standing witticisms that seem to attach themselves with peculiar preference to the cooked goose. He never had roast beef on his table save and except on Christmas day; and malt liquor and good Herefordshire cider were the only beverages ever introduced. At his kitchen fire there was a large block of wood, in lieu of a bench, for poor people to sit upon; and a piece of boiled beef, and three pecks of flower, made into loaves, were given to the poor every Sunday. The number he chose at his “invitation dinners,” were nine, eleven, or *thirteen*, including himself and his kinswoman, Miss Bubb; and he never cared to sit down to table until he had as many as made one of these numbers. He not only superintended the labours of the road makers, planters, and gardeners, but commonly took an active part in them himself, delighting above all things to carry a huge watering-pot to water the trees he had newly set in the earth. “With a spade on his shoulder and a glass bottle of liquor in his hand, he used to walk from his house to the fields and back again several times during the day.”

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Without the trees planted by John Kyrle, Ross would be nothing, so far as the picturesque is concerned; and a delightful tradition, the truth of which is vouched by undeniable evidence, proves that the trees were not ungrateful to their founder. A rector, as the story goes, had the

impiety to cut down some of these living monuments of the taste of John Kyrle, which shaded the wall of the church beside his own pew; but the roots threw out fresh shoots, and these, penetrating into the interior, grew into two graceful elms, that occupied his seat with their foliage. If any one doubt the fact, let him go and see. The trees are still there; their branches curtain the tall window that opens upon the pew; and their beautiful leaves cluster above the seat,

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“And still keep his memory green in our souls.”

Besides the elms in the churchyard and neighbourhood, there is a fine avenue, planted by John Kyrle, called the Prospect, or the Man of Ross’s Walk. It is on the ridge of a hill behind the church, and commands a view of the valley of the Wye, about which there is some difference of opinion. In King’s anecdotes the planter’s taste for prospects is commended; and it is said that “by a vast plantation of elms, which he disposed of in a fine manner, he has made one of the most *entertaining* scenes the county of Hereford affords.” Gilpin, on the other hand, who travelled with an easel before his mind’s eye, cannot make a picture of it; and Gray the poet asserts, in reference to the spot in question, that “all points that are much elevated spoil the beauty of the valley, and make its parts, which are not large, look poor and diminutive.”

The only other relic shown at Ross is a fragment of an oak bedstead, on which Charles I. slept, on his way from Ragland Castle. A house in Church Lane, called Gabriel Hill’s Great Inn, contains the chamber so distinguished.

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Here the traveller may hire a boat, if he choose, for the remainder of his journey. The Wye, however, is navigable to Hereford in barges of from eighteen to forty tons; and sometimes in lighter boats even to the Hay, but the shoals in summer and the floods in winter frequently interrupt the navigation. In 1795 the river rose fifteen feet at the former place within twenty-four hours, and carried away bridges, cattle, sheep, timber, and everything that stood in its way.

But even if he determine afterwards to proceed by the river, the traveller will do well to walk from Ross to the ruins of Penyard Castle; not that these ruins are in themselves worthy of his attention, but the road is beautiful throughout, and from the summit, Penyard Chace, he will see the little town he has left, and our wandering Wye in a new phasis. The country is diversified with hills and valleys, and wooded spaces between; and more especially when the shadows of evening are stealing over the landscape, the whole is a scene of enchantment.

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Although the lower passage of the river commences at Ross, we do not, for two or three miles further, get fairly into its peculiarities. From the gentle, the graceful, the gay, it glides almost insensibly into the picturesque, the bold, and the grand. The tranquillity of its course from the Hay—a tranquillity dearly purchased by the labours of its wild career during the upper passage—has prepared it for new vicissitudes, and new struggles. The following description, by archdeacon Coxe, applies to a great part of the portion we are now entering upon, and cannot be improved either in fidelity or style.

“The effects of these numerous windings are various and striking; the same objects present themselves, are lost and recovered with different accompaniments, and in different points of view: thus the ruins of a castle, hamlets embosomed in trees, the spire of a church bursting from the wood, figures impending over the water, and broken masses of rock fringed with herbage, sometimes are seen on one side, sometimes on the other, and form the fore-ground or background of a landscape. Thus also the river itself here stretches in a continuous line, there moves in a curve, between gentle slopes and fertile meadows, or is suddenly concealed in a deep abyss, under the gloom of impending woods.” “The banks for the most part rise abruptly from the edge of the water, and are clothed with forests, or are broken into cliffs. In some places they approach so near that the river occupies the whole intermediate space, and nothing is seen but woods, rocks, and water; in others, they alternately recede, and the eye catches an occasional glimpse of hamlets, ruins, and detached buildings, partly seated on the margin of the stream, and partly scattered on the rising grounds. The general character of the scenery, however, is wildness and solitude; and if we except the populous district of Monmouth, no river perhaps flows for so long a course in a well cultivated country, the banks of which exhibit so few habitations.”

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A little below Ross, on the right bank of the river, are the ruins of Wilton Castle, which was for several centuries the baronial residence of the Greys of the south, and was destroyed by the Hereford royalists in the time of Charles I. Let us relate, however, as a circumstance of still more interest, that it was left, with the adjoining lands, by Thomas Guy, to the admirable charity in London which he founded, known by the name of Guy’s Hospital.

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The Wye here passes under Wilton bridge, a construction of rather a curious kind, which dates from the close of the sixteenth century. Coracles are seldom seen so high up the river as this; but we mention them here because the hero of Gilpin’s often repeated anecdote was an inhabitant of Wilton. This man, it seems, ventured into the British Channel in a coracle, as far as the isle of Lundy; a very remarkable voyage to be made in a canvass tub, the navigation of the estuary of the Severn being quite as trying as that of any part of the British seas. Previously, however, to this exploit, the very same feat was performed by an itinerant stage-doctor of Mitchel Dean in the Forest. The coracles are a sort of basket made of willow twigs, covered with pitched canvass or raw hide, and resembling in form the section of a walnut-shell. Similar rude

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contrivances are in use among the Esquimaux and other savage tribes, and were employed by the ancient Britons for the navigation of rivers. They are now the fishing-boats of the rivers of South Wales; and when the day's work is done are carried home on the shoulders of their owners, disposed in such a way as to serve for a hood in case of rain. The early ships of Britain are described by Cæsar and Pliny as being merely larger coracles—clumsy frames of rough timber, ribbed with hurdles and lined with hides. According to Claudian they had masts and sails, although they were generally rowed, the rowers singing to the harp.

At the farm of Weir End, the river takes a sudden bend, and rolls along the steep sides of Pencraig Hill, which are clothed with wood to the water's edge. Soon the ruined turrets of Goodrich Castle present themselves, crowning the summit of a wooded eminence on the right bank, and as they vanish and reappear with the turnings of the river the effect is magnificent.

CHAPTER V.

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Roman passes of the Wye—Goodrich Castle—Keep—Fortifications—Apartments—Its history—Goodrich Court—Forest of Dean—Laws of the Miners—Military exploit—Wines of Gloucestershire.

If the conjecture of antiquaries be correct, that the great Roman road from Blestium to Gloucester, by Ariconium, proceeded by the ford of the Wye at Goodrich Castle, it is possible that this spot may have been of some consequence before the period when history takes any cognizance of the fortress. Blestium is supposed to be Monmouth, from which the road probably led along the line of the present turnpike, between an entrenchment to the left, opposite Dixon Church, and an encampment on the Little Doward, to the right, supposed by some to be Roman, but usually described in the road books as British. The name of Whitchurch Street, applied to a portion of this route further on, favours the supposition of a Roman origin. Ariconium, the next station from Blestium, is Rosebury Hill, near Ross, according to those who identify Monmouth with Blestium. There was another Roman way which led from Blestium to Glevum (Gloucester) by a more direct route; crossing the Wye at the former place, and leading up the Kymin from the left bank of the river. At Stanton, a little further on, the vestiges of a Roman settlement are indubitable, not only in the name of the place itself, but in the entrenchments that may be observed near the church, and the Roman cinders scattered about the fields. At Monmouth and Goodrich Castle, therefore, were the two great passes of the Wye used by the Romans. At the latter the river is crossed by a ferry.

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"The awe and admiration could not be enhanced with which I wandered through the dark passages and the spacious courts, and climbed the crumbling staircase of Goodrich Castle." So says the German prince: although the time of his visit was winter, when the Wye and its ruins are stripped of the adjunct of foliage, which in the imagination of common travellers is inseparably connected with ideas of the picturesque or beautiful in natural scenery.

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Goodrich Castle forms a parallelogram, with a round tower at each angle, and a square keep in the south-west part of the enclosure. A minute account of this remarkable ruin is given in the "Antiqua Monumenta;" and Mr. Bonner introduces his brief description, in illustration of his perspective views, with the remark that "the fortification (although not of large dimensions) contains all the different works which constitute a complete ancient baronial castle." For this reason, if for no other, it would demand special observation; but the tourist of the Wye, even if ignorant of the interest which thus attaches to Goodrich Castle, will acknowledge that it forms one of the finest objects hitherto presented by the banks of the river. It stands on the summit of a wooded hill, in the position of one of the castles of the Rhine, and in the midst of a scene of solemn grandeur which Mason may have had in view when he wrote his spirited description of the sacred grove of Mona, in "Caractacus."

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"Here, Romans, pause, and let the eye of wonder
Gaze on the solemn scene: behold yon oak
How stem it frowns, and with its broad brown arms
Chills the pale plains beneath him: mark yon altar,
The dark stream brawling round its rugged base,
These cliffs, these yawning caverns, this wide circus,
Skirted with unhewn stone: they awe my soul
As if the very genius of the place
Himself appeared, and with terrific tread
Stalked through his drear domain."

"Yonder grots,
Are tenanted by bards, who nightly thence,
Robed in their flowing vests of innocent white,
Descend, with harps that glitter to the moon,
Hymning immortal strains. The spirits of the air,
Of earth, of water, nay of heav'n itself,
Do listen to their lay: and oft, 'tis said,
In visible shapes dance they a magic round

The keep is the most ancient remains of the castle, and presents, on a small scale, all the usual features of this part of a fortification of the olden times. It was composed of three stories, being intended to overlook the works, and had no windows on the landward side. Each of these stories consisted of a single small room, the lowest being the prison, without even a loophole to admit air or light. "The original windows," says King, "are the most truly Saxon that can be." This applies more particularly to the one in the middle of the upper story, which appears to have remained without any alteration; while, in the one beneath, a stone frame for glass seems to have been inserted. The style of this addition points to the time of Henry VI., and we may believe that it was made by the celebrated Earl Talbot, who tenanted one of these small chambers. Besides the glass window, this apartment boasts a hearth for fire; and, as is usual in such buildings, the communication with the floor above is by a circular staircase in an angle of the massive wall. "To this staircase is a most remarkable door-way; it was one large transom-stone, as if to aid the arch to support the wall above, and in this respect resembles several other Saxon structures, in which this strange kind of fashion seems to have been uniformly adopted; until it became gradually altered by the introduction of a flattish *under-arch*, instituted in the room of the transom-stone."

The entrance to the keep was by a flight of steps, leading to the above apartment; but the dungeon had an entrance of its own, of a construction which leads antiquarians to conjecture, that it was added in the reign of Edward III., when Richard Talbot obtained the royal license for making his dungeon a state prison.

The fortifications to be surmounted before an enemy could arrive at the keep, were numerous and complete. Independently of the fosse, there was a deep pit, hewn out of the solid rock, to be crossed by a drawbridge, and then commenced a dark vaulted passage between two semicircular towers. Eleven feet within the passage was a massive gate, defended (as likewise the drawbridge) by loopholes in the sides of the vault, and machicolations in the roof, for pouring down molten lead or boiling water on the assailants. A few feet farther on was a portcullis, and then a second, the space between protected by loopholes and machicolations. Presently there was another strong gate, and finally a stone projection on both sides, intended for the insertion of beams of timber, to act as a barricade. If we add that the passage thus defended was less than ten feet wide, and that the exterior walls of the whole building were in general seven feet thick, an idea may be formed of the strength of Goodrich Castle.

Within the ballium, or enclosed space, entered with such difficulty, were the keep here described, the state apartments, chapel, &c.; but the whole of these are in so ruinous a state, as to be nearly unintelligible except to antiquaries. The great hall was sixty-five feet long and twenty-eight broad, and appears to have been a magnificent apartment of the time of Edward I., as its windows indicate. The fire-place is still distinguishable in the great kitchen. Communicating with the hall is a smaller room, from which a passage led into another room of state, fifty-five feet by twenty; and this opened into the ladies' tower, standing upon the brow of a lofty precipice, and commanding a delightful view over the country.

It is curious that so remarkable a structure should be almost destitute of authentic history, till the very period when it ceased to exist but as a ruin. All that is known of its origin is, that a fort, held by a doomsday proprietor, of the name of Godric, commanded the ford of the river at this place before the Conquest. The fort consisted, in all probability, of little more than the keep; to which, at later periods, additions were made, cognisable by their style, till Goodrich Castle became a regular fortress. In 1165 it was the property of the earl of Pembroke, then lord of the whole district from Ross to Chepstow; and, subsequently, it was a seat of the Talbot family, who, in 1347, founded a priory of black canons at Flanesford, which is now a barn, about a quarter of a mile below the castle. During the civil wars this fortress played a conspicuous part, being taken and retaken by the opposing parties. In the first instance it held for the parliament; but was afterwards seized by Sir Richard Lingen, who, in 1646, defended it with great gallantry against Colonel Birch for nearly five months, and thus conferred upon it the distinction of being the last castle in England, excepting Pendennis, which held out for the king. In the following year it was ordered by the parliament to be "totally disgarrisoned and *slighted*," which sentence was just sufficiently carried into effect to give the Wye a magnificent ruin at the very spot where taste would have placed it. "Here," says Mr. Gilpin, "a grand view presented itself, and we rested on our oars to examine it. A reach of the river, forming a noble bay, is spread before the eye. The bank on the right is steep, and covered with wood, beyond which a bold promontory shoots out, crowned with a castle rising among trees. This view, which is one of the grandest on the river, I should not scruple to call correctly picturesque."

Near the spot where Mr. Gilpin must have been is the ferry where Henry IV., who was waiting to be taken across, received intelligence of his queen's being delivered of a prince at Monmouth Castle. The king, according to tradition, was so overjoyed at the news, that he presented the ferry and boat, which at this time belonged to the crown, to the ferryman. On the left bank, nearly opposite, are the church and village of Walford, in the former of which is buried Colonel Kyrle, who deserted the service of Charles I. for that of the parliament.

Goodrich Court, to which a winding path leads from the castle, is somewhat nearer Ross. It is the seat of Sir Samuel Meyrick, the well known antiquary, and presents, in the architecture, an exact imitation of a mansion of the middle of the fourteenth century. In this respect, as well as in the arrangement of its proprietor's valuable collection of old armour, the house may be said to be

absolutely perfect. It forms in itself and its contents, one of the most interesting museums in Europe; and it is open, with very little ceremony, to the inspection of the traveller, as all such things are, when they do not happen to be the property of persons unworthy to possess them.

The river sweeps boldly round the wooded headland on which Goodrich Castle stands; and the ruin is thus presented again and again, in new phases (but none so interesting as the first), to the voyager, as he glides down the now varied and romantic river. A steep ridge on the right bank is called Coppet, or Copped Wood Hill, where the stream makes a sweep of five miles, to perform the actual advance of one. The mass of foliage on the opposite bank is a part of the Forest of Dean, variegated, by rocks, hamlets, and village spires. Bishop's Brook here enters the Wye, and serves as a boundary between the counties of Hereford and Gloucester, and between the parishes of Walford and Ruerdean. "The view at Ruerdean church," says Mr. Gilpin, "is a scene of great grandeur. Here both sides of the river are steep, and both woody; but on one (meaning the left bank), the woods are interspersed with rocks. The deep umbrage of the Forest of Dean occupies the front, and the spire of the church rises among the trees. The reach of the river which exhibits this scene is long; and of course the view, which is a noble piece of natural perspective, continues some time before the eye; but when the spire comes directly in front, the grandeur of the landscape is gone."

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The famous Forest of Dean is in the space which here lies between the Severn and the Wye. "In former ages," as Camden tells us, "by the irregular tracks and horrid shades," it was so dark and dreary as to render its inhabitants more audacious in robberies. In the time of Edward I. there were seventy-two furnaces here for melting iron; and it is related, that the miners of those days were very industrious in seeking after the beds of cinders, where the Romans of Britain had been at work before them, which remains, when burnt over again, were supposed to make the best iron. The privileges of these miners were, no doubt, for the most part assumed, but some granted by law are highly curious. The following are specimens:—

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"Also, if any smith holder, or any other be debtor, for mine to a miner, the which smith holder or other be within, then the miner is bailiff in every place (except his own close), to take the horse of the debtor, if he be saddled with a work saddle, and with no other saddle; and be it that the horse be half within the door of the smith, so that the miner may take the tail of the horse, the debtor shall deliver the horse to the miner. And if he so do not, the miner shall make and levy hue and cry upon the said horse, and then the horse shall be forfeit to the king for the hue and cry made and levied, and yet the miner shall present the debtor in the Mind Law, which is the court for the mine."

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"And the debtor before the constable and his clerk, the gaveler and the miners, and none other folk to plead the right, only the ministers shall be there, and hold a stick of holly, and the said miner demanding the debt, shall put his hand upon the said stick, and none other with him, and he shall swear by his faith, that the said debt is to him due; and the prove made, the debtor, in the same place, shall pay the miner all the debt proved, or else he shall be brought to the castle of St. Briavells till grace be made, and also he shall be amerced to the king in two shillings.

"Also the miner hath such franchises to inquire the mine in every soil of the king's of which it may be named, and also of all other folk, without withsaying of any man.

"And also if any be that denieth any soil, whatsoever it be, be it sound or no, or of what degree it may be named, then the gaveler, by the strength of the king, shall deliver the soil to the miners, with a convenient way, next stretching to the king's highway, by the which mine may be carried to all places and waters that lean convenient to the said mine, without withsaying of any man."

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The Forest of Dean plays a conspicuous part in the wars of Monmouthshire, serving as a natural outwork for the county. The following transaction is described by Sanderson, the historian of Charles I.:—"After Sir William Waller," says he, "had refreshed his men, he advanced towards Monmouthshire, invited by some gentlemen to reduce these parts. At his coming to the town of Monmouth, the garrison of the lord Herbert retired, leaving a naked place to Sir William; where he found small success of his parties, sent abroad for supplies of money. He marches to Usk, and spending some time to no purpose in that county, he returns, the stream of the people affording him no welcome, being all universal tenants of that county to the earl of Worcester.

"In this time Prince Maurice enters Teuxbury, with a brigade of horse and foot added to the lord Grandeson, resolving to make after Waller, or to meet his return out of Wales. A bridge of boats wafts him over the Severn, with a body of two thousand horse and foot. Waller was nimble in his retreat, not to be caught in a noose or neck of Wales; but, by a bridge of boats, came back at Chepstow, with his foot and artillery, and himself, with his horse and dragoons, passed through the lowest part of the Forest of Dean, near the river side of Severn; and ere the prince had notice, sends forth two parties to fall upon two of the Prince's quarters, which was performed, while Waller's main body slipped between both, and a party was left also to face them, and make good the retreat, which came off but disorderly, with loss of some soldiers. It was held a handsome conveyance, and unexpected, to bring himself out of the snare by uncouth ways."

p. 72

Gloucestershire, of which the Forest of Dean forms a part, although still boasting one of the richest soils in England, is no longer a *wine country*. "The ground," according to William of Malmesbury, "spontaneously produces fruit in taste and colour far exceeding others, many of

which will keep the year round, so as to serve their owners till others come in again. No county in England has more or richer vineyards, or which yield greater plenty of grapes, and of a more agreeable flavour. The wine has not a disagreeable sharpness to the taste, as it is little inferior to that of France in sweetness." On this Camden remarks, that it is more owing to "the indolence of the inhabitants than to the alteration in the climate," that in his time wine was no longer a production of the county.

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Vines were introduced into Britain by the Romans, and the hills of South Wales became more especially famous for their vineyards. They were mentioned in the Domesday Book, before the time of William of Malmesbury; and tithes of wines are frequently alluded to in the records of cathedrals.

CHAPTER VI.

p. 74

Iron furnaces of the Wye—Lidbroke—Nurse of Henry V.—Coldwell Rocks—Symond's Yat—New Weir—Monmouth.

The woods rising amphitheatrically on the left bank, just before reaching Ruerdean, are called Bishop's Wood; and there will be observed, for the first time of their presenting themselves conspicuously, the iron furnaces, which form a very striking characteristic of the river.

The iron furnaces on the Wye rather add to than diminish the effect of the scenery. This is caused by the abundance of wood in the furnace districts, which conceals the details, while it permits the smoke to ascend in wreaths through the trees, and float like a veil around the hills. These works, however, are merely a modern revival of a species of industry which extends backwards beyond the reach of history. The heaps of cinders which are discovered on the hills of Monmouthshire are the production either of bloomeries, the most ancient mode of fusing iron, or of furnaces of a very antique construction. The operation of smelting was performed in both of these by means of charcoal; and after the lands were cleared, the want of fuel led to the decline of the iron works. About eighty years ago, in consequence of the discovery of the mode of making pig iron, and subsequently even bar iron, with coal instead of charcoal, this branch of industry suddenly revived; although on the Wye charcoal is still burnt, and made upon the spot, where, instead of vulgarising the district, it adds a very remarkable feature to the picturesque.

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At Lidbroke, on the same side, the commoner sympathies of life come into play, and the vulgar occupations of men serve at once to diversify the scene, and even to give it a new character of the picturesque. The lower passage has hitherto been chiefly distinguished by a romantic grandeur, both in the forms of nature, and the associations of history; and even the iron furnaces, from the circumstances we have mentioned, have added a charm congenial to the character of the picture. At Lidbroke, the new adjunct is nothing more than a *wharf*, with little vessels lying near it,—boats passing and repassing,—horses, carts, men, women, and children stirring along the banks: but the whole, in such a spot, forms an assemblage which adds, by contrast, to the general effect.

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On the opposite bank the district of Monmouthshire, called Welsh Bicknor, commences—for we have hitherto been in Hereford—and Courtfield claims our attention for a moment, as the place where Henry V. is said to have been nursed, under the care of the countess of Salisbury. The remains of a bed, and an old cradle, were formerly shown as relics of the Monmouth hero. Half a mile further down the river is Welsh Bicknor Church, which has puzzled the antiquarians by its sepulchral effigy, representing a recumbent female figure in stone, not ungracefully dressed in a loose robe, but without inscription or coat of arms. Tradition will have it that this is *the* countess of Salisbury; and it is perhaps correct in the person, though wrong in the name, for the lady who nursed Henry at Courtfield (supposing him to have been there at all) was, in all probability, Lady Montacute, who married a second son of the first earl of Salisbury, but was no countess herself. Her son, however, Sir John de Montacute, who possessed the manor of Welsh Bicknor, succeeded to the earldom, and became earl-marshal of England. It was he who was chief of the Lollards, and was murdered in 1400 by the populace of Cirencester. The manor, although falling to the crown on account of his supposed treason, was afterwards restored to the family, and became the property of his descendant Richard, the great earl of Warwick and Salisbury. Dugdale traces this ominous heirloom to Margaret, grand-daughter of the great earl, daughter of the duke of Clarence, and wife of Lord Montague. This lady, after witnessing the execution of her brother Edward, earl of Warwick, and her son Henry Lord Montague, was herself beheaded in 1541. The manor of Welsh Bicknor, and the mansion of Courtfield, passed subsequently into the ancient family of Vaughan. We may mention here, however, although the circumstance is of no great consequence, that Sir Samuel Meyrick assigns the costume of the figure in Welsh Bicknor Church to the era of Edward I., about a century before that of Henry V.

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A short distance below the church this abutment of Monmouthshire terminates, and the right bank of the river lies as before in Hereford, the left in Gloucester. At Coldwell, the view is closed in by a magnificent rock scene, differing entirely in character from any yet afforded by the Wye. To suffer this to appear—supposing the traveller to be descending the river—a wooded hill, called Rosemary Topping, one of the common features of the stream, shifts like a scene in a theatre, and becomes a side-screen; so that the almost naked cliff remains the principal object, and confers its

character upon the view, to which the river and its banks to the right and left are only adjuncts.

The first grand mass of rock is nearly insulated, and reminds one at first sight of the keep of some ruined castle. But the Coldwell rocks want no associations of the kind: they are fragments of the temples of nature, and have nothing to do with the history of man. To our judgment, the shadowy hollows scooped out of the sides of the precipices, and overhung by foliage, which are nothing more than the sites of *lime kilns*, are more advantageous to the picture than the finest ruins imaginable. They come in without pretence; they make no effort at rivalry; but present the idea of human nature in an attitude of befitting humility and simplicity. "These," says the German prince, "are craggy and weatherbeaten walls of sandstone, of gigantic dimension, perpendicular or overhanging, projecting abruptly from amid oaks, and hung with rich festoons of ivy. The rain and storms of ages have beaten and washed them into such fantastic forms, that they appear like some caprice of human art. Castles and towers, amphitheatres and fortifications, battlements and obelisks mock the wanderer, who fancies himself transported into the ruins of a city of some extinct race. Some of these picturesque masses are at times loosened by the action of the weather, and fall thundering from rock to rock, with a terrific plunge into the river."

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From Symond's Yat to the New Weir, this *kind* of scenery continues; although the masses of cliff of course change their form and situation. The river, in a portion of its course, washes their base, at one time an almost perpendicular wall, at another clothed in woods till near the summit, which is seen rising out of the foliage, and tracing its battlemented outline upon the sky. From these two points the distance is only six hundred yards by land, and not less than four miles by water; and the shorter route is in this case the better. On the river, we soon lose the magnificence of the picture; while on shore, there is superadded to this a view of the extravagant mazes of the Wye on either side of the neck of land on which the spectator stands. If it be added that the point of view, Symond's Yat, appeared to Mr. Coxe to be two thousand feet high (although this is an evident mistake), it will readily be imagined that this scene is of itself worth a pilgrimage to the Wye. The prospect, comprehending portions of Herefordshire, Gloucestershire, and Monmouthshire, embraces the following objects, according to those who are versed in the local names. To the north is seen Coppet Wood Hill, interspersed with rock and common;—to the north-west appear the spire and village of Goodrich, and, at the foot of the hill, Rocklands and Huntsholm Ferry;—to the west, Huntholm, behind which is Whitchurch, and, in the distance, the Welsh hills;—to the south-west, the mountainous side of the Great Doward;—to the south, Staunton Church, and the Buck-stone, upon a promontory; and below, Highmeadow Woods and the river; on the left, the rock of the New Weir, and on the right, the rocky wall of the east side of the Doward;—to the south-east, the village of English Bicknor, a side view of Coldwell Rocks, and Rosemary Topping;—and, to the east, Ruerdean Wood, with the church in the distance, Bishop's Wood, and Courtfield, with the woody ridges of Hawkwood and Puckwood completing the panorama.

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Gilpin calls the New Weir the second grand scene on the Wye.

"The river," says he, "is wider than usual in this part, and takes a sweep round a towering promontory of rock, which forms the side-screen on the left, and is the grand feature of the view. It is not a broad, fractured piece of rock, but rather a woody hill, from which large projections in two or three places burst out, rudely hung with twisting branches, and shaggy furniture; which, like the mane round the lion's head, gives a more savage air to these wild exhibitions of nature. Near the top a pointed fragment of solitary rock, rising above the rest, has rather a fantastic appearance—but it is not without its effect in marking the scene . . . On the right side of the river, the bank forms a woody amphitheatre, following the course of the stream round the promontory. Its lower skirts are adorned with a hamlet, in the midst of which volumes of thick smoke, thrown up at intervals from an iron forge, as its fires receive fresh fuel, add double grandeur to the scene. . . ."

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“But what peculiarly marks this view, is a circumstance on the water. The whole river at this place makes a precipitate fall—of no great height indeed, but enough to merit the name of a cascade, though to the eye above the stream it is an object of no consequence. In all the scenes we had yet passed, the water moving with a slow and solemn pace, the objects around kept time, as it were, with it; and every steep, and every rock which hung over the river, was solemn, tranquil, and majestic. But here the violence of the stream, and the roaring of the waters, impressed a new character on the scene: all was agitation and uproar, and every steep and every rock stared with wildness and terror.”

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Let us add the testimony of another great authority on the picturesque; more especially as his remarks serve to corroborate our own on the effect received by the river from objects which elsewhere are mean and common.

“A scene at the New Weir on the Wye, which in itself is truly great and awful, so far from being disturbed, becomes more interesting and important by the business to which it is destined. It is a chasm between two high ranges of hills, that rise almost perpendicularly from the water: the rocks on the sides are mostly heavy masses, and their colour is generally brown; but here and there a pale craggy shape starts up to a vast height above the rest, unconnected, broken, and bare: large trees frequently force out their way amongst them; and many of these stand far back in the covert, where their natural dusky hue is heightened by the shadow that overhangs them. The river too, as it retires, loses itself in the woods, which close immediately above, then rise thick and high, and darken the water. In the midst of all this gloom is an *iron forge*, covered with a black cloud of smoke, and surrounded with half-burnt ore, with coal, and with cinders: the fuel for it is brought down a path, worn into steps narrow and steep, and winding among precipices; and near it is an open space of barren moor, about which are scattered the huts of the workmen. It stands close to the cascade of the Weir, where the agitation of the current is increased by large fragments of rocks, which have been swept down by floods from the banks, or shivered by tempests from the brow; and the sullen sound, at stated intervals, of the strokes from the great hammer in the forge, deadens the roar of the waterfall. Just below it, while the rapidity of the stream still continues, a ferry is carried across it; and lower down the fishermen use little round boats called truckles (coracles), the remains perhaps of the ancient British navigation, which the least motion will upset, and the slightest touch may destroy. All the employments of the people seem to require either exertion or caution; and the ideas of fear or danger which attend them give to the scene an animation unknown to the solitary, though perfectly compatible with the wildest romantic situation.” [85]

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To this, however, we must add as a note, that both Weir and forge have now vanished. The more headlong rush and louder roar of the river mark the place where the former stood; and some limekilns contribute the smoke of the latter without its noise.

During the whole of this part of the passage, the stream is interrupted by fragments of rock, around which the water rushes tumultuously; but at the New Weir these interruptions, above noticed, acquire a character of sublimity, when taken in conjunction with the rest of the picture. The river, roaring and foaming, is in haste to escape, and at length is lost to the eye, as it seems to plunge for ever into sepulchral woods.

Beyond this, there are several other rock scenes, but none that will bear description after the foregoing; although to the traveller wearied with excitement, they come in with good effect. Below New Weir, the river stretches with a curve between Highmeadows Wood on the left bank, and the precipitous cliffs of the Great Doward on the right. Then the Little Doward peeps over a screen of rocks and shrubs. These two hills are called King Arthur’s Plain, and between these is King Arthur’s Hall, the level of an exhausted iron mine. Then we pass a cluster of rocks called St. Martin’s or the Three Sisters, and a pool of the river named St. Martin’s Well, where the water is said to be seventy feet deep. Various seats and cottages give variety to the picture, situated in the midst of rich woods and undulating eminences; and at length the landscape sinks calmly down, and Monmouth—“delightful Monmouth”—is seen in long perspective, terminating a reach of the river.

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CHAPTER VII.

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Monmouth—History of the Castle—Apartment of Henry of Monmouth—Ecclesiastical remains—Benedictine priory—Church of St. Mary—Church of St. Thomas—Monnow Bridge—Modern town—Monmouth caps—The beneficent parvenu.

Monmouth lies embowered among gentle hills, only diversified by wood, corn, and pasture; but to view it either from the Wye, or any of the neighbouring eminences, one would be far from supposing it to have so tame, or at least so quiet a site. From one point, its spire is seen passing through a deep and mysterious wood; from another, it hangs perched on a precipitous ridge; and from the Wye it rises with considerable stateliness in the form of an amphitheatre. It stands at

A royal fortress existed here before the conquest, a circumstance which renders its early history full of fearful vicissitudes, although these are but very imperfectly traced. In the time of Henry III., the castle, after changing hands repeatedly, was taken and rased to the ground. "Thus the glorie of Monmouth," says Lambarde, "had clean perished, ne had it pleased God longe after in that place to give life to the noble King Henry V., who of the same is called Henry of Monmouth." It was a favourite residence of the father of this prince, King Henry IV., and also of his father, John of Gaunt, "time honoured Lancaster," to whom it came by his marriage with Blanch, daughter and heiress of Henry, duke of Lancaster, whose title he was afterwards granted. Henry V. was born here in 1387, and from this circumstance is styled Henry of Monmouth. This prince enlarged the duchy of Lancaster with his maternal inheritance, and obtained an act of parliament that all grants of offices and estates should pass under the seal of the duchy. Henry VI. and VII. possessed the castle of Monmouth, as part of the duchy, by right of inheritance; but between these reigns it was given by Edward IV. to Lord Herbert, afterwards earl of Pembroke. Although the duchy, however, continued in the crown, the castle, together with other possessions in Monmouthshire, was alienated, and became private property, but at what period does not clearly appear. In the reign of Elizabeth, it is ascertained, by different grants, to have been still parcel of the duchy, and also in that of James I., by the following presentment made under a commission: "Item, wee present that his majestie hath one ancient castell, called Monmouth Castell, situated within the liberties of the said towne, which is nowe, and hath been for a long time, ruinous and in decaye, but by whom it hath byn decayed wee knowe not, nor to what value, in regarde it was before our rememberment, savinge one greate hall which is covered and mayntayned for the judges of the assise to sitt in. And for and concerning any demean lands belonginge to the same castell, wee knowe not of any more save only the castell hill, wherein divers have gardens, and the castell green, which is inclosed within the walls of the said castell."

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Before the end of the seventeenth century, we find the castle in the hands of the first duke of Beaufort, if the following anecdote, indicative either of an ambitious or a fantastic spirit, can be believed. "The marchioness of Worcester," says the author of the Secret Memoirs of Monmouthshire, "was ordered by her grandfather, the late duke of Beaufort, to lie in of her first child in a house lately built within the castle of Monmouth, near that spot of ground and space of air, where our great hero Henry V. was born."

Whatever mutilations this castle may have undergone since the days of its royal magnificence, by whomever it may have been at length "decayed," or at whatever period it came into the hands of the Beauforts, this at least is certain, that there is now not more than enough left to indicate its site. "The transmutations of time," says Gilpin, "are often ludicrous. Monmouth Castle was formerly the palace of a king, and the birthplace of a mighty prince; it is now converted into a yard for fattening ducks." The ruins, however, must have been concealed from his view by the stables and other outhouses that had risen from the fragments, so as completely to hide them from the townward side. Coxe, a much more correct observer, although less learned in the laws of the picturesque, describes them in 1800 as presenting, when viewed from the right bank of the Monnow, "an appearance of dilapidated grandeur which recalls to memory the times of feudal magnificence."

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Although the roof and great part of the walls had already fallen, the site of two remarkable apartments could be traced distinctly; that in which Henry was born, and another adjoining which had been used, even within the memory of some of the inhabitants, for the assizes. The latter was sixty-three feet in length and forty-six in breadth, and was no doubt the "greate hall" mentioned in the presentment quoted above as being "mayntayned for the judges of the assise to sitt in."

The apartment of Henry of Monmouth is thus described by the archdeacon:

"The apartment which gave birth to the Gwentonian hero was an upper story, and the beams that supported the floor still project from the side walls; it was fifty-eight feet long, and twenty-four broad, and was decorated with gothic windows, of which some are still remaining, and seem to be of the age of Henry III. The walls of this part are not less than ten feet in thickness. About fifty years ago, a considerable part of the southern wall fell down with a tremendous crash, which alarmed the whole town, leaving a breach not less than forty feet in length. On the ground floor beneath are three circular arches terminating in chinks, which have a very ancient appearance; at the north-eastern angle, within a stable, may be seen a round tower six feet in diameter, which was once a staircase leading to the grand apartment."

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To the right of this apartment, the same author traced the vestige of the original walls in a private house built within the ancient site. They were from six to ten feet, formed of pebbles and mortar, and is so compact a mass as not to yield in hardness to solid stone.

Next to the ruined castle of an ancient town, come the ecclesiastical remains; for the stronghold of the chief, and the cell of the monk, were usually the nucleus round which the town was gathered. The principal relics of the latter kind in Monmouth are those of a benedictine priory of black monks, dedicated to St. Mary, which was founded as a cell to the monastery of St. Florence, near Saumur in Anjou, by Wikenoc, lord of Monmouth in the reign of Henry I. The ruins are small, but interesting; and not the less so from containing an apartment distinguished by a rich gothic bay window, pointed out by tradition as the study of that mysterious personage,

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Geoffry of Monmouth. The church of the priory stood on the site of the present parish church of St. Mary, of which the tower and the lower part of the spire are the only remains of the original. This spire, which is "lofty, and light, and small," is the grand scenic feature of the town when viewed from a distance; and in return, it affords to the traveller who will take the trouble to ascend it a point from which to view the country to most advantage. The beautiful vale in which the town stands, with its undulating eminences, among which wander the Wye, the Monnow, and the Trothy, is seen in an almost circular form, enclosed from the vulgar world, by a line of hills mantled with woods and forests.

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The ancient church of St. Thomas stands near the bridge of the Monnow, and from its circular arches, and extreme simplicity of appearance, is probably older than the conquest. This does not apply, however, to the entire building, the western window, and some other *morçeaux*, displaying the ornamented Gothic of a late period. The antiquity of the building, it should be said, is rendered the more probable by its standing beyond the bridge, where the suburbs of the modern town are supposed to occupy the site of the British town during the Saxon era.

The bridge, of which a view is given in Grose's *Antiquities*, is itself an object of interest, containing, on its centre, the Monnow Gate, the only one of the four original gates, mentioned by Leland, that remains entire. Both bridge and gate bear evidence of very high antiquity, and were probably erected by the Saxons as a barrier against the Welsh. The town was farther fortified by a wall and moat, of which the latter was entire in the time of Leland, and some fragments of the former remaining. But all vestiges of those defences have now vanished, with the exception of the Monnow Gate, and some pieces of a tower.

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Of the modern town, it can be said that it is neat and clean, with one broad and well-built street. It is neither mean nor elegant, and presents no offensive contrast to the beautiful scenery by which it is surrounded. The navigation of the Wye is its principal support, for at the present day at least it has no manufactories, although celebrated in that of its own Henry for *caps*. "If your majestie is remembered of it, the Welchmen did goot service in a garden where leeks did grow, wearing leeks in their Monmouth caps." The account given of this staple article by Fuller, in his *Worthies*, is worth quoting.

"These," says he, "were the most ancient, general, warm, and profitable coverings of men's heads in this island. It is worth our pains to observe the tenderness of our kings to preserve the trade of cap-making, and what long and strong struggling our state had to keep up the using thereof, so many thousands of people being thereby maintained in the land, especially before the invention of fulling-mills, all caps before that time being wrought, beaten, and thickened, by the hands and feet of men, till those mills, as they eased many of their labour, outed more of their livelihood. Capping anciently set fifteen distinct callings on work, as they are reckoned up in the statute: 1. carders; 2. spinners; 3. knitters; 4. parters of wool; 5. forfers; 6. thickeners; 7. dressers; 8. walkers; 9. dyers; 10. battelers; 11. shearers; 12. pressers; 13. edgers; 14. liners; 15. band-makers, and other exercises. No wonder then that so many statutes were enacted in parliament to encourage this handicraft." * * * * "Lastly; to keep up the usage of caps, it was enacted, in the 13th of Queen Eliz. cap. 19, that they should be worne by all persons (some of worship and quality excepted) on sabbath and holy days, on the pain of forfeiting ten groats for the omission thereof.

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"But it seems that nothing but hats would fit the heads (or humours rather) of the English, as fancied by them fitter to fence their fair faces from the injury of wind and weather, so that the 39th of Queen Elizabeth this statute was repealed; yea, the cap, accounted by the Romans an emblem of liberty, is esteemed by the English (falconers and hunters excepted) a badge of servitude, though very useful in themselves, and the ensign of constancy, because not discomposed, but retaining their fashion, in what form soever they may be crouded.

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"The best caps were formerly made at Monmouth, where the capper's chapel doth still remain, being better carved and gilded than any other part of the church. But on the occasion of a great plague happening in this town, the trade was some years since removed hence to Beaudley, in Worcestershire, yet so that they are called Monmouth caps unto this day. Thus this town retains, though not the profit, the credit of capping, and seeing the child keeps the mother's name, there is some hope in due time she may return to her."

Monmouth appears also to have dealt largely in ale, if we may judge by a grant of Henry IV. as lord of the manor, to its burgesses. "That the brewers of ale there, who were anciently held to pay the king's ancestors and progenitors eight gallons of ale at every brewing, in the name of Castlecoule, during the time the king, or his heirs, were dwelling in the said town, should now pay in lieu thereof 10d. each brewing, except when the king, his heirs or his councils, holding his sessions there, were present in the said town, in which case the ancient custom of Castlecoules should be observed."

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We must not omit an anecdote connected with the history of a free-school, founded here in the reign of James I. William Jones, born at Monmouth, as Burton tells us in his *History of Wales*, was forced to quit the place for not being able to pay ten groats. He removed to the great field for adventurers, London, and became first a porter, then a factor, and afterwards went over to Hamburg, where he found such sale for his Welsh cottons, that in a very short time he realised a

handsome fortune. He founded a school in his native place, allowing fifty pounds a year to the master, and a hundred pounds salary to a lecturer, together with an almshouse for twenty poor people, each having two rooms and a garden, and two shillings and sixpence a week. It is said, however, by other authorities, that Jones was a native of Newland, in Gloucestershire; and after having made his fortune in London, that he returned thither in the assumed character of a beggar, to try the liberality of his townsmen. In this he found them wanting, for they tauntingly told him to go and ask relief at Monmouth, where he had lived at service. He took their advice, and being better received there, founded the above charities in token of his gratitude.

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CHAPTER VIII.

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Welsh pedigree of queen Victoria—A poet's flattery—Castles of Monmouthshire—Geoffrey of Monmouth—Henry of Monmouth—The Kymin—Subsidiary tour—Sir David Gam—White Castle—Scenfrith—The Castle spectres—Grosmont—Lanthony Abbey.

"Monmouthshire," as has been well observed, "though now an English county, may be justly considered the connecting link between England and Wales, as it unites the scenery, manners, and language of both." In ancient times, it was a debatable land of another kind, when Romans, Saxons, and Normans, strove by turns against the aboriginal Britons. During the Roman invasion it was a part of the territory of the Silures, who inhabited the eastern division of South Wales, and were one of the three great Welsh tribes; but in the conflict of the Saxons, Gwent (its British name) played the most distinguished part of all, under its sovereign Utha Pendragon and the renowned king Arthur. To Gwent, moreover, if chronicles say true, we are indebted for our present sovereign lady, who is descended collaterally from its princes. Merrich, the son of Ithel, king or prince of Gwent, died without issue male, leaving one daughter, Morvyth, who espoused Gwno, great grandson to Rees ap Theodore, prince of South Wales, and lineal ancestor of Sir Owen Tudor, grandfather of Henry VII. "So that it appears," say the Secret Memoirs of Monmouthshire, "that the kings of Scotland and England are originally descended from Morvyth, this Gwentonian prince's daughter, and heir to Meyrick, last king of Gwent, who, according to several authentic British pedigrees, was lineally descended from Cadwalladar, the last king of Britain, and as our historians do testify, did prognosticate, fifteen hundred years past, that the heirs descended of his loins should be restored again to the kingdom of Britain, which was partly accomplished in king Henry VII., and more by the accession of James I. to the British throne, but wholly fulfilled in the happy union of all Britain by the glorious queen Anne; whom God long preserved of his great goodness, and the succession of the Protestant line."

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We know not what value may be attached to this illustrious ancestry by Queen Victoria; but her predecessor, Queen Elizabeth, was fond of tracing her descent from the ancient kings of her country—a predilection which the courtly Spenser does not omit to flatter in his *Faerie Queene*.

"Thy name, O sovaine Queene, thy realme and race,
From this renowned prince derived arre,
Who mightily upheld that royal mace
Which thou now bear'st, to thee descended farre
From mighty kings and couquerors in warre,
Thy fathers and thy grandfathers of old,
Whose noble deeds above the northern starre,
Immortall fame for ever hath enrold;
As in that *old man's booke* they were in order told."

The *old man* here referred to is Geoffrey of Monmouth, of whom more anon.

It is to the Norman invasion that Monmouthshire owes its castles; for the great barons were not employed by the state, as had been the case with the Saxons, to conquer the territory, but were invited to enter upon adventures at their own cost, and for their own gain. The lands they subdued became their own; they were created lords-barons over them; and castles speedily bristled up all over the territory to maintain the authority so acquired. Pennant states the number for Wales at a hundred and forty-three, of which Monmouthshire, as the frontier region between the belligerents, had of course the greatest proportion, amounting, it is said, to at least twenty-five. In these baronial lands, the writs of ordinary justices of the royal courts were not current. The barons marchers, as they were called, had recourse to their feudal lord the king in person; and the same abuses and confusion were the result which we have noticed in Herefordshire, till Henry VIII. abolished this anomalous government, divided Wales into twelve shires, and withdrew Monmouthshire into the list of the English counties. It is interesting to trace the chain of fortresses thus destined to become, still earlier than in the natural course of time, a series of ruins. They extend, in this county, along the banks of the Monnow, the Wye, and the Severn, and from Grosmont, diagonally, to the banks of the Rumney; while castellated mansions, such as Raglan, which we shall notice presently (at first only a rude fortress), arose in all quarters to keep the natives in due respect.

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King Arthur, mentioned above as prince of Gwent, did not reign at Monmouth, but at Caerleon; although he is closely associated with the former place, inasmuch as the gothic room in the priory which we have pointed out, on the authority of tradition, as the study of Geoffrey of

Monmouth, was in all probability the birthplace of his most heroic achievements. Geoffrey, in fact, for it is needless to attempt to conceal the fact from our readers, was an historical romancer rather than an historian. The groundwork of his celebrated performance was *Brut y Breninodd*, or the *Chronicle of the Kings of Britain*, written by Tyssilio, or St. Telian, bishop of St. Asaph, in the seventh century; but Geoffrey owns himself, that he made various additions to his original, particularly of Merlin's prophecies. After all, however, if we may venture to express our private opinion on so recondite a subject, it seems to us that a monkish history, of the seventh century, must have been reasonably fertile in itself in wonderful incidents and legendary tales, and that in all probability Geoffrey of Monmouth deserves less credit as a romancer than he has received from one party, as well as less credit as an historian than he has received from the other.

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However this may be, the work has served as a valuable storehouse for our poets and romancers. It has even supplied the story of King Lear to Shakspeare, who deepened the pathos by making Cordelia die before her father; whereas, in the original story, Lear is restored to his kingdom, and Cordelia to life. Milton drew from it his fiction of Sabrina in the *Mask of Comus*; and in early life he had formed the design of writing an epic poem on the subject taken up from Geoffrey by Spenser, in the second book of the *Faerie Queene*—

“A chronicle of Briton kings,
From Brute to Arthur's reign.”

Dryden, also, intended to produce an epic poem on the subject of king Arthur, but he contented himself with an opera, in which he has sublimely described the British worthy

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“in battle brave,
But still serene in all the stormy war,
Like heaven above the clouds; and after fight
As merciful and kind to vanquished foe
As a forgiving God.”

Pope followed, in like manner, with plentiful materials for the pavement of a certain place—good intentions; but after all, our national history has been left to the muse of Blackmore. ^[106]

Geoffrey was born in Monmouth, and is supposed to have been educated in the monastery, although the room pointed out as his study is evidently of a more modern date. He became archdeacon of his native town, and in 1152 was consecrated bishop of St. Asaph. This is all that is known of his history; and his works, with the exception of his great romance adverted to above, are confined to a treatise on the Holy Sacraments, and some verses on the enchanter Merlin.

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Perhaps a word may not be amiss on the other worthy connected by birth with the fame and the ruins of Monmouth. Henry V. passed some of his earliest years in this county; but in his youth was transferred to Oxford, where he studied under his uncle Cardinal Beaufort, then chancellor of the university, and where, as Stowe relates, he “delighted in songs, meeters, and musical instruments.” He is thus described by the chronicler, on the authority of John of Elmham:

“This prince exceeded the meane stature of men, he was beautiful of visage, his necke long, body long and leane, and his bones small; neverthelesse he was of great marvellous strength, and passing swift in running, insomuch that he with two other of his lords, without hounds, bow, or other engine, would take a wild buck or doe in a large parke.”

Henry is usually treated as a mere warrior; and it is the custom to sneer at him as such, by those who are unable to judge of the minds of men by the spirit of the age in which they live. He was remarkable, however, for more than his military prowess, and exhibited many traits of a truly great character. Some of these are very agreeably detailed by Mr. Coxe, who relates also, from Speed, that “every day after dinner, for the space of an hour, his custom was to lean on a cushion set by his cupboard, and there he himselfe received petitions of the oppressed, which with great equitie he did redresse.” His sudden change from the wild licentiousness of his youth is described by his contemporary, Thomas de Elmham, as having taken place at the bedside of his dying father; and we need not remark that in that age, the religious feeling he exhibited on the occasion was not inconsistent with the ferocity of the hero.

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“The courses of his youth promis'd it not;
The breath no sooner left his father's body,
But that his wildness, mortified in him,
Seem'd to die too: yea, at that very moment,
Consideration like an angel came,
And whipped the offending Adam out of him;
Leaving his body as a paradise,
To envelop, and contain celestial spirits.
Never was such a sudden scholar made;
Never came reformation in a flood,
With such a heady current, scouring faults;
Nor ever hydra-headed wilfulness,
So soon did lose his seat, and all at once,
As in this king.”

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Monmouth, as the half-way station between Ross and Chepstow for the tourists of the Wye, usually claims a large portion of their attention; and, independently of its historical associations, the delightful walks in the neighbourhood abundantly repay it. The views from numerous points are very beautiful; and one more especially, independently of the nearer parts of the picture, commands on all sides an expanse of country which seems absolutely unlimited.

"If among these views," says the historical tourist, "one can be selected surpassing the rest, it is perhaps that from the summit of the Kymin, which rises from the left bank of the Wye, and is situated partly in Monmouthshire, and partly in Gloucestershire. On the centre of this eminence overhanging the river and town, a pavilion has been lately erected by subscription, to which is carried a walk, gently winding up the acclivity. . . ."

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"I shall not attempt to describe the unbounded expanse of country around and beneath, which embraces an extent of nearly three hundred miles. The eye, satiated with the distant prospect, reposes at length on the near views, dwells on the country immediately beneath and around, is attracted with the pleasing position of Monmouth, here seen to singular advantage, admires the elegant bend and silvery current of the Monnow, glistening through meads, in its way to the Wye, and the junction of the two rivers, which forms an assemblage of beautiful objects.

"The level summit of the Kymin is crowned with a beautiful wood, called Beaulieu Grove, through which walks are made, terminating in seats, placed at the edge of abrupt declivities, and presenting in perspective, through openings in the trees, portions of the unbounded expanse seen from the pavilion. There are six of these openings, three of which comprehend perspective views of Monmouth, stretching between the Wye and the Monnow, in different positions. At one of these seats, placed on a ledge of impending rocks, I looked down on a hanging wood, clothing the sides of the declivities, and sloping gradually to the Wye, which sweeps in a beautiful curve, from Dixon Church to the mouth of the Monnow; the town appears seated on its banks, and beyond the luxuriant and undulating swells of Monmouthshire, terminated by the Great and Little Skyrrid, the Black Mountains, and the Sugar Loaf, in all the variety of sublime and contrasted forms."

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It is not our intention to notice any of the numerous seats and mansions with which this delightful region abounds; but, leaving the tourist to make such easy discoveries for himself, we would hint to him that, while at Monmouth, he has an opportunity, without great expense of time or labour, of making himself acquainted with many interesting objects which ought to be considered as adjuncts of the tour of the Wye. Between this place and the Hay the river describes an irregular semicircle, of which the Monnow, for about half way, may be said to be the cord; and this latter stream, as the most important and beautiful tributary of the Wye, has a claim upon the pilgrim which should not be set aside.

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This minor excursion, however, will not be complete without diverging a little to the left at the outset for the purpose of visiting White Castle; for this ruin is inseparably associated with the other reliques of baronial power presented by the route. It is within a short distance of Landeilo Cresseney on the Abergavenny road, where a farm will be pointed out to the traveller, called the Park, belonging to the duke of Beaufort, as the site of Old Court, formerly the residence of the valiant Sir David Gam, who, before the battle of Agincourt, reported to Henry V. that there were "enough of the enemy to be killed, enough to run away, and enough to be taken prisoners." It is said that the children of this Welsh worthy were so numerous as to form a line extending from his house to the church. From Gladys, one of these children, the dukes of Beaufort and earls of Pembroke are descended. The farm alluded to was formerly the red deer park of Raglan Castle.

White Castle must have been constructed in the earliest period of the Norman era, if not before the conquest; and the massive ruins that still remain attest that it must have kept the country side in awe, as the abode of one of those fierce barons who were the prototypes of the giants and dragons of the romancers. This fortress, with those of Scenfrith and Grosmont on the banks of the Monnow, belonged to Brien Fitz Count, the Norman conqueror of the tract called Overwent, stretching from the Wye to Abergavenny; and they were afterwards seized by Henry III., and given by him to the celebrated Herbert de Burgh. Herbert resigned them anew to the crown, after being imprisoned and almost famished to death. Henry granted them to his son Edward Crouchback, and they afterwards fell to John of Gaunt, in the way we have related of Monmouth Castle, and became parcel of the duchy of Lancaster.

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The ruins stand on the ridge of an eminence, surrounded by a moat. The walls, which are very massive, describe nearly an oval, and are defended by six round towers, not dividing the courtine in the usual way, but altogether extramural, and capable, therefore, of acting as independent fortresses, even after the inner court had been taken. The principal entrance was protected by a portcullis and drawbridge, and by an immense barbican, greatly disproportioned to the size of the castle, on the opposite site of the moat. The name of the place was Castell Gwyn, White Castle, or Castell Blanch, all which mean the same thing in British, Saxon, and Norman.

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In the time of James I., it is presented as "ruinous and in decay time out of mind," and yet, during the reign of his immediate predecessor Elizabeth, it is described in the Worthines of Wales as "a loftie princely place."

"Three castles fayre are in a goodly ground,
Grosmont is one, on hill it builded was;
Skenfrith the next, in valley it is found,
The soyle about for pleasure there doth passe;

Whit Castle is the third of worthy fame,
The county there doth bear Whit Castle's name,
A stately seate, a loftie princely place,
Whose beauties give the simple soyle some grace."

Scenfrith is not more than five miles from White Castle, but the access to it is only fit for pedestrians. The ruin stands on a secluded spot in the midst of hills, and overlooks the placid Monnow, the passage of which it was no doubt its duty to guard. It is a small fortress severely simple, and exhibiting all the marks of high antiquity. There are no traces of outworks; but the walls are flanked by five circular towers. About the middle of the area is a round tower, which was the keep or citadel. Scenfrith seems to have no history peculiarly its own; it was one of "the three castles," changing hands with them apparently as a matter of course, and that was enough for its ambition.

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The road from Scenfrith to Grosmont leads through Newcastle; but the remains of the fortress, from which this place derived its name, are barely discernible, and its history has for ever perished. In the absence of human associations, however, it is well provided with those of another kind. The mount, or barrow, under which its fragments are hidden, is the haunt of spirits; and an oak tree in the neighbourhood is so completely protected by such means, that an attempt even to lop a branch is sure to be punished by supernatural power.

The ruins of Grosmont Castle stand on an eminence near the Monnow, surrounded by a dry moat, with barbican and other outworks. Its pointed arches declare it by far the youngest of the three sisters. The remains now left enclose only a small area; but walls and foundations may be traced, which show that its original size was really considerable, and this is confirmed by the presence of a spacious apartment, which no doubt formed the great baronial hall. In the reign of Henry III. it was invested by Llewelin, and the siege raised by the king; and, on another occasion, Henry retreated to Grosmont, where his troops were surprised by the Welsh as they slept in the trenches, and lost five hundred horses, besides baggage and treasure. The banks of the Monnow, from which the ruins rise, are precipitous, and tufted with oaks, and the whole scene is singularly picturesque. The hero of the village tradition is here John of Kent, or Guent, who built a bridge over the Monnow in a single night, by means of one of his familiar spirits. Many other stories as wonderful are related of him by the inhabitants; some say he was a monk, versed in the black art; others that he was a disciple of Owen Glendowr; and others that he was the great magician himself.

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At Grosmont the line of the Monnow turns away to the west, towards its source among the Black Mountains; but the traveller who eschews more fatigue than is necessary will take the route by Craig-gate and Crickhowell, and so get into a road which will lead him along the Honddy, a tributary of the Monnow, to the magnificent ruins of Lanthony Abbey, the furthest object we propose to him in this subsidiary tour.

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"Here it was, stranger, that the patron saint
Of Cambria passed his age of penitence—
A solitary man; and here he made
His hermitage; the roots his food, his drink
Of Honddy's mountain-stream. Perchance thy youth
Has read with eager wonder how the knight
Of Wales, in Ormandine's enchanted bowers,
Slept the long sleep: and if that in thy veins
Flows the pure blood of Britain, sure that blood
Has flowed with quicker impulse at the tale
Of Dafydd's deeds, when through the press of war
His gallant comrades followed his green crest
To conquests. Stranger! Hatterel's mountain heights,
And this fair vale of Cwias, and the stream
Of Honddy, to thine after thoughts will rise
More grateful, thus associate with the name
Of Dafydd and the deeds of other days."

"After catching a transient view of the Honddy," says archdeacon Coxe, "winding through a deep glen, at the foot of hills overspread with wood and sprinkled with white cottages, we proceeded along a hollow way, which deepened as we advanced, and was scarcely broad enough to admit the carriage. In this road, which, with more propriety might be termed a ditch, we heard the roar of the torrent beneath, but seldom enjoyed a view of the circumjacent scenery. We passed under a bridge thrown across the chasm, to preserve the communication with the fields on each side: this bridge was framed of the trunks of trees, and secured with side rails, to prevent the tottering passenger from falling in the abyss beneath. It brought to my recollection several bridges of similar construction, which I observed in Norway, which are likewise occasionally used as aqueducts, for the purposes of irrigation. Emerging from this gloomy way, we were struck with the romantic village of Cwnyoy, on the opposite bank of the Honddy, hanging on the sides of the abrupt cliff, under a perpendicular rock, broken into enormous fissures. We continued for some way between the torrent and the Gaer, and again plunged into a hollow road, where we were enclosed, and saw nothing but the overhanging hedgerows. . . . The abbey was built like a cathedral, in the shape of Roman crosses, and though of small dimensions, was well proportioned. The length, from the western door to the eastern extremity, is 210 feet; and the

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breadth, including two aisles, 50; the length of the transept, from north to south, 100. It was constructed soon after the introduction of the Gothic architecture, and before the disuse of the Norman, and is a regular composition of both styles. The whole roof, excepting a small fragment of the north aisle, is fallen down, and the building is extremely dilapidated. The nave alone exhibits a complete specimen of the original plan, and is separated on each side by the two aisles, by eight pointed arches, resting on piers of the simplest construction, which are divided from the upper tier of Norman arches by a straight band of *fascia*. From the small fragment in the northern aisle, the roofs seem to have been vaulted and engroined, and the springing columns, by which it was supported, are still visible on the wall. Four bold arches, in the centre of the church, supported a square tower, two sides of which only remain. The ornamental arch in the eastern window, which appears in the engraving of Mr. Wyndham's Tour, and in that published by Hearne, has now fallen. The only vestiges of the choir are a part of the south wall, with a Norman door, that led into the side aisle, and the east end of the south wall; a bold Norman arch, leading from the transept into the southern aisle of the choir, still exists. The walls of the southern aisle are wholly dilapidated; and the side view of the two ranges of Gothic arches, stretching along the nave, is singularly picturesque; the outside wall of the northern aisle is entire, excepting a small portion of the western extremity; the windows of this part are wholly Norman, and make a grand appearance. In a word, the western side is most elegant; the northern side is most entire; the southern the most picturesque; the eastern the most magnificent."

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The abbey originated in a small chapel, built here as a hermitage by St. David, the titular saint of Wales; but for the account of its foundation and history, we must refer the reader to Mr. Coxe's Tour, Dugdale's Monasticon, or the History of Gloucestershire.

CHAPTER IX.

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Raglan Castle—Description of the ruins—History of the Castle—The old lord of Raglan—Surrender of the fortress—Charles I. and his host—Royal weakness—The pigeons of Raglan—Death of the old lord—Origin of the steam Engine.

That magnificent specimen of what is called a castellated mansion, Raglan castle, is so interesting in itself, and at so convenient a distance from the river, that it forms an indispensable part of the tour of the Wye. The ruins stand upon an eminence, near the village of the same name, eight miles from Monmouth, and cover, with their massive forms, an area of one-third part of a mile in circumference. This includes the citadel, which was not contained within the fortress as usual, but formed a separate building, connected with it by a drawbridge. It was called Melyn y Gwent, or the Yellow Tower of Gwent. It was of a hexagon form, five stories high, defended by bastions and a moat, and surrounded with raised walks or terraces. The building was faced with hewn stone, of a greyish colour, and from its smoothness resembling polished marble.

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The earliest style of this edifice dates only from the reign of Henry V.; but the greater part was probably added afterwards, when, by the marriage of Sir Charles Somerset into the house of Herbert, and the acquisition then of the lordships of Raglan, Chepstow, and Gower, the house of Beaufort became one of the greatest in the county. The building is of a description peculiar to that period in the history of Monmouthshire, when the barons had superadded to their warlike habits those of modern luxury and magnificence. Externally, the place has evidently been a strong fortress; internally a splendid mansion. The ascent to the state apartment is both noble and well contrived; while the circular staircase in the hexagon citadel, the windows of the great hall, and the chimney-pieces, with their light and elegant cornices, are in the style of modern edifices. The kitchen and butlery were connected with the hall, and indicate, by their construction, the princely hospitality of the lords of Raglan. All the rooms had chimneys, those of each floor distinct from the rest. The cellars were extensive—so were the subterranean passages and dungeons. The architecture is various, some parts of the most elegant gothic, some heavy and unwieldy, representing at once the two distinct characters of luxury and war. The southern declivity, towards the village, was laid out in fish-ponds; three parks of considerable extent supplied game and recreation; and the proprietor of this unique mansion was able, through the fertility of his surrounding estates, to maintain a garrison of eight hundred men.

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"Of these noble ruins," says Mr. Coxe, "the grand entrance is the most magnificent; it is formed by a gothic portal, flanked by two massive towers: the one beautifully tufted with ivy, the second so entirely covered, that not a single stone is visible. At a small distance, on the right, appears a third tower, lower in height, almost wholly ivyless, and with its machicolated summit, presenting a highly picturesque appearance. The porch, which still contains the grooves for two portcullises, leads into the first court, once paved, but now covered with turf, and sprinkled with shrubs. The eastern and northern sides contained a range of culinary offices, of which the kitchen is remarkable for the size of the fire-place; the southern side seems to have formed a grand suite of apartments, and the great bow window of the hall, at the south-western extremity of the court, is finely canopied with ivy. The stately hall which divides the two courts, and seems to have been built in the days of queen Elizabeth, contains the vestiges of ancient hospitality and splendour: the ceiling is fallen down, but the walls still remain; it is sixty feet in length, twenty-seven in breadth, and was the great banqueting-room of the castle. At the extremity are placed the arms of the first marquis of Worcester, sculptured in stone, and surrounded with the garter: underneath is the family motto, which fully marks the character of the noble proprietor, who defended the castle with

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such spirit from the parliamentary army: 'Mutare vel timere sperno;' 'I scorn either to change or to fear.' The fire-place deserves to be noticed for its remarkable size, and the singular structure of the chimney. The hall is occasionally used as a fives court.

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"To the north of the hall are ranges of offices, which appear to have been butteries; beyond are the traces of splendid apartments. In the walls above I observed two chimney-pieces, in high preservation, neatly ornamented with a light frieze and cornice: the stone frames of the windows are likewise in many parts, particularly in the south front, distinguished with mouldings and other decorations, which Mr. Windham justly observes, would not be considered inelegant, even at present.

"The western door of the hall led into the chapel, which is now dilapidated; but its situation is marked by some of the flying columns, rising from grotesque heads, which supported the roof. At the upper end are two rude whole-length figures, in stone, several yards above the ground, recently discovered by Mr. Heath, under the thick clusters of ivy. Beyond the foundations of the chapel is the area of the second court, skirted with a range of buildings, which, at the time of the siege, formed the barracks of the garrison. Not the smallest traces remain of the marble fountain, which once occupied the centre of the area, and was ornamented with the statue of a white horse.

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"Most of the apartments of this splendid abode were of grand dimensions, and the communications easy and convenient. The strength of the walls is still so great, that if the parts still standing were roofed and floored, it might even now be formed into a magnificent and commodious habitation."

The fountain mentioned above was called the White Horse, from the figure from which the water played. In a note supplied by Dr. Griffin to Williams's History of Monmouthshire, it is said that the people who showed the ruins used to exhibit part of the body of a *black* horse which stood in the middle of the water which supplied the castle. The cause of the change of colour was that during the siege the parliamentarians poisoned the fountain! The horse, it seems, absorbed the fatal drug, and not only became black, but when struck by any hard substance, emitted a fetid smell. It is difficult to trace the early history of the castle, from the contradictory accounts given of it by Dugdale; but in the time of Henry V. the proprietor was Sir William ap Thomas, second son of Sir Thomas ap Guillim, from whom the earls of Pembroke, Powis, and Caernarvon are descended in the male, and the dukes of Beaufort in the female line. William, the eldest son of this Sir William, was created by Edward IV. lord of Raglan, Chepstow, and Gower; and, in obedience to the royal command, he discontinued the Welsh custom of changing the surname at every descent, and took Herbert as his family name, in honour of his ancestor Herbert Fitzhenry, chamberlain to Henry I. Richard was for some time detained at Raglan in the custody of lord Herbert, who was a distinguished partisan of the house of York, and who at length died on the scaffold, at Banbury, in this cause, having previously been created earl of Pembroke. His son, by the desire of Edward IV., yielded this title to the Prince of Wales; and, dying without male issue, the castle of Raglan, and many other noble possessions devolved upon his daughter Elizabeth. The heiress married Sir Charles Somerset, natural son of the duke of Somerset, who lost his head in 1463 for his devotion to the house of Lancaster; and he, a brave soldier, a prudent statesman, and an accomplished courtier, was created by Henry VIII., for his services, earl of Worcester.

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It is probable that the castle of Raglan, owed a great part of its magnificence to him. In the following reign, it is thus mentioned in the Worthines of Wales.

"Not far from thence, a famous castle fine,
That Ragglan hight, stands moted almost round,
Made of freestone, upright, straight as line,
Whose workmanship in beauty doth abound.

"The curious knots, wrought all with edged toole,
The stately tower that looks ore pond and poole,
The fountain trim, that runs both day and night,
Doth yield in showe a rare and noble sight."

Four earls of Worcester held almost royal state in this princely abode; but the fifth earl and first marquis was destined to witness its fall. He was one of the most devoted friends of Charles I.; and may be said to have defended not only his own mansion but all Monmouthshire from the parliamentary arms.

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The defeat of the royal army at Marston Moor was the signal for the fall of Monmouth and of Raglan Castle. Prince Rupert immediately directed his attention to the marches of Wales, and ordered colonel Gerard to force his way through Gloucestershire by the Aust passage: but the latter was opposed by Massey, and defeated. Monmouth soon after fell into the hands of Massey by the treachery of Kirle, lieutenant-colonel to Holtby, governor of the town for Charles; and lord Worcester at Raglan, in great alarm, demanded the assistance of prince Rupert's cavalry.

Throgmorton, on whom the command of Monmouth devolved, set out with a party of three hundred horse to surprise the castle of Chepstow, and in his absence the following brilliant exploit was performed by the royalists, which we give in the words of Sanderson. "The cavaliers from Ragland and Godridg, about break of day, lodg themselves undiscovered behind a rising ground near Monmouth, and viewing all advantages, forty of them come up to the higher side of the town towards Hereford, having a sloping bank cast up of good height, with a ditch, over

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which they pass, mount the bank, and climbed over, and so got to the next part, fell upon the guard, some killed, other fled, and with an iron bar break the post chain, force the gate, and open it to the horse, who ride up with full career to the main guard, seized them, and took the rest in their beds, with colonel Broughton, four captains, as many lieutenants and ensigns, the committee, all the common souldiers, two hundred prisoners, two sakers, a drake, nine hammerguns, ammuniton and provision, and five hundred muskets."

But the fate of the war was now determined, and after the battle of Naseby Charles was unable to meet the parliamentarians in a general engagement, and retired to the castle of Raglan. Thence he secretly departed to commit himself to the Scottish army; and the marquis of Worcester was besieged at Raglan for six months. The old lord, who was then eighty-four years of age, on hearing of the landing of his son lord Glamorgan with some Irish forces, sent the following bold letter to the parliamentarian committee at Chepstow.

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"Having notice that you are not ignorant of my son's landing with the Irish forces, I am so much of a father, and tender of the whole country's ruin, that if this coming to this place be hastened by the occasion of your answer, you and not I will be the occasion of the country's curse. You have taken from me my rents and livelihood, for which if you give unbelied reparations, I shall be glad to live a quiet neighbour amongst you; if otherwise, you will force me to what my own nature hath no liking of, and yet justifiable by the word of God, and law of nature. I expect your answer by the messenger, as you give occasion.

"H. WORCESTER.

"Raglan, May 29, 1646."

This brought on a long and fruitless negotiation. The old lord saw that even the master of Raglan was not the master of circumstances; and, at length, it was agreed that the castle should be delivered up. "Nobly done," says Sanderson, "to hold out the last garrison for the king in England or Wales." In the articles of surrender, however, the soldierly honour of the marquis was spared as much as possible, it being agreed "that all the officers, gentlemen, and soldiers, with all other persons there, should march out with their horses and arms, colours flying, drums beating, trumpets sounding, matches lighted at both ends, bullets in mouth, each soldier twelve charges of powder, matches and bullets proportionable, bag and baggage, to any place within two miles of any garrison where the marquis shall mention."

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Soon after this surrender, the castle was demolished, and the timber cut down in the parks, the loss to the family, in personal property, without including the forfeiture and an estate of twenty thousand pounds a year, being estimated at upwards of a hundred thousand pounds. The Chase of Wentwood, including Chepstow Castle and Park, was immediately bestowed upon Oliver Cromwell; who appears also to refer, in the settlements upon his family to other estates in Monmouthshire, parcels of the noble property of the marquis of Worcester.

In a publication of that day, entitled "Witty Apothegms delivered at several times, and on several occasions, by king James I., king Charles I., and the marquis of Worcester," several anecdotes are given which throw a strong light upon the character of this fine old lord of Raglan.

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"In the midst of the civil commotions, Charles I. made several visits to Raglan Castle, and was entertained with becoming magnificence. The marquis not only declined all offers of remuneration, but also advanced large sums; and when the king thanked him for the loans, replied, Sir, I had your word for the money, but I never thought I should be so soon repayed; for now you have given me thanks, I have all I looked for." At another time, the king, apprehensive lest the stores of the garrison should be consumed by his suite, empowered him to exact from the country such provisions as were necessary for his maintainance and recruit, "I humbly thank your majesty," he said, "but my castle will not stand long if it leans on the country; I had rather be brought to a morsel of bread, than any morsels of bread should be brought me to entertain your majesty."

The following conversation shows the amiable weakness of Charles's humanity.

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Sir Trevor Williams, and four other principal gentlemen of Monmouthshire, being arrested for disloyalty, and conducted to Abergavenny, the king was advised to order them to an immediate trial, which must have ended in their conviction; but Charles, moved by the tears and protestations of Trevor Williams, suffered him to be released, on bail, and committed the others only to a temporary confinement. "The king told the marquess what he had done, and that when he saw them speak so honestly, he could not but give some credit to their words, so seconded by tears, and withal told the marquess that he had onely sent them to prison; whereupon the marquess said, what to do? to poyson that garrison? Sir, you should have done well to have heard their accusations, and then to have shewn what mercy you pleased. The king told him, that he heard that they were accused by some contrary faction, as to themselves, who, out of distaste they bore to one another on old grudges, would be apt to charge them more home than the nature of their offences had deserved; to whom the marquess made this return, Well, Sir, you may chance to gain the kingdom of heaven by such doings as these, but if you ever get the kingdom of England by such ways, I will be your bondman."

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Another conversation between the marquis and Sir Thomas Fairfax is worth relating.

"After much conference between the marquess and General Fairfax, wherein many things were

requested of the general by the marquess, and being, as he thought himself, happy in the attainment, his lordship was pleased to make a merry petition to the general as he was taking his leave, viz. in behalf of a couple of pigeons, who were wont to come to his hand, and feed out of it constantly, in whose behalf he desired the general that he would be pleased to give him his protection for them, fearing the little command that he should have over his soldiers in that behalf. To which the general said, I am glad to see your lordship so merry. Oh, said the marquess, you have given me no other cause, and hasty as you are, you shall not go until I have told you a story.

“There were two men going up Holborn in a cart to be hanged; one of them being very merry and jocund, gave offence to the other who was sad and dejected, insomuch that the downcast man said unto the other, I wonder, brother, that you can be so frolic, considering the business we are going about. Tush, answered the other, thou art a fool; thou wentest a thieving, and never thought what would become of thee, wherefore being on a sudden surprised, thou fallest into such a shaking fit, that I am ashamed to see thee in that condition: whereas I was resolved to be hanged, before ever I fell to stealing, which is the reason nothing happening strange or unexpected, I go so composed unto my death. So, said the marquess, I resolved to undergo whatsoever, even the worst of evils that you are able to lay upon me, before I took up arms for my sovereign, and therefore wonder not that I am so merry.”

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“In the correspondence with Fairfax,” says the author of the Historical Tour, “which preceded the capitulation, the marquis of Worcester seems to have strongly suspected that the parliament would not adhere to the conditions. His apprehensions were not groundless, for on his arrival in London he was committed to the custody of the Black Rod. He bitterly complained of this cruel usage, and deeply regretted that he had trusted himself to the mercy of the parliament. A few hours before his death, he said to Dr. Bayley, If to seize upon all my goods, to pull down my house, to fell my estate, and send up for such a weak body as mine was, so enfeebled by disease, in the dead of winter, in the winter of mine age, be merciful, what are they whose mercies are so cruel? Neither do I expect that they should stop at all this, for I fear they will persecute me after death.”

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“Being informed, however, that parliament would permit him to be buried in his family vault, in Windsor Chapel; he cried out, with great sprightliness of manner, Why, God bless us all, why then I shall have a better castle when I am dead, than they took from me whilst I was alive. With so much cheerfulness and resignation did this hero expire, in the eighty-fifth year of his age.”

The second marquis was the author of that puzzling “Century of the Names and Scantlings of such Inventions as I can at present call to mind to have tried and perfected.”

“It appears,” we are told, “from a passage in the Experimental Philosophy of Dr. Desaguliers, that Captain Savary derived his invention of the fire engine, since called the steam engine, from the 68th article in the Century of Scantlings; and that to conceal his original he bought up all the marquis’s books, and burnt them.” The following is the “scantling.”

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“An admirable and most forcible way to drive up water by fire, not by drawing or sucking it upwards, for that must be, as the philosopher calleth it, *intra sphæram activitatis*, which is at but such a distance. But this way hath no bounder, if the vessels be strong enough; for I have taken a piece of a whole cannon, whereof the end was burst, and filled it three quarters full of water, stopping and screwing up the broken end, as also the touch-hole, and making a constant fire under it, within twenty-four hours it burst, and made a great crack; so that having a way to make my vessels that they are strengthened by the force within them, and the one to fill after the other, I have seen the water run like a constant fountain stream forty feet high; one vessel of water, rarified by fire, drives up forty feet of cold water. And a man that attends the work has but to turn two cocks, that one vessel of water being consumed, another begins to force and refill with cold water, and so successfully, the fire being tended and kept constant, with the self-same person may likewise abundantly perform in the interim between the necessity of turning the said cocks.”

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We now renew our onward course, but with many a lingering look at “delightful Monmouth.”

CHAPTER X.

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Troy House—Anecdote—Antique custom—Village Churches of Monmouthshire—White-washing—The bard—Strewing graves with flowers—St. Briavels’ Castle—Llandogo—Change in the character of the river—The Druid of the Wye—Wordsworth’s “Lines composed above Tintern Abbey.”

Just below Monmouth the Wye forms a sharp curve, the apex of which is met by the Monnow and the Trothy, in such a way that these two streams, tending to nearly the same point, but coming from different directions, and the two sides of the Wye curve, make the place resemble the meeting of four roads. We have already seen how interesting the Monnow is; the Trothy, which passes White Castle, and has its source in the mountains near the Great Skyrrid, is hardly less so; the Wye we have followed from the summit of Plinlimmon, through a tract of mingled beauty and

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grandeur, unrivalled in England; and we are now about to trace its course to the monastic ruins of Tintern, and through the fairy land of Piercefield to its destined bourne, the Severn.

The banks are at first low, and the country laid out in level meadows, framed in at a short distance by swelling hills. Troy House is the first object that arrests our attention in front by its sombre woods. In the reign of James I. it was the property of Sir Charles Somerset, the brother of the gallant defender of Raglan Castle, between whom and Charles I. a conversation relating to Troy House took place, which is thus reported in the "Apothegms."

"Sir Thomas Somerset, brother to the marquis of Worcester, had a house which was called Troy, five miles from Ragland Castle. This Sir Thomas, being a complete gentleman, delighted much in fine gardens and orchards, where, by the benefit of art, the earth was made so gratefull to him at the same time that the king (Charles the first) happened to be at his brother's house, that it yielded him wherewithal to send him a present; and such a one as (the times and seasons considered) was able to make the king believe that the sovereign of the planets had now changed the poles, and that Wales (the refuse and outcast of the fair garden of England) had fairer and riper fruit than England's bowels had on all her beds. This present, given to the marquis, he would not suffer to be presented to the king by any other hand than his own. 'Here I present you, sir,' said the marquis, (placing his dishes on the table) 'with that which came not from Lincoln that was, nor from London that is, nor from York that is to be, but from Troy.' Whereupon the king smiled, and answered the marquis, 'Truly, my lord, I have heard that corn grows where Troy town stood, but I never thought there had grown any apricots before.'"

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Some articles said to be relics of Henry V. are preserved here: the bed in which he was born, the cradle in which he was rocked, and the armour in which he fought at Agincourt. There is also a carved oak chimney-piece from Raglan Castle.

Soon the hills approach nearer, and, covered with rich foliage, sweep down more suddenly towards the river. On the right bank is Penalt church, standing on a wooded eminence; and behind it, an extensive common distinguished for a superstitious custom, derived, as is supposed, from the days of the druids. When a funeral passed that way, the cortege stopped at an oak tree, and placed the corpse on a stone seat at its foot. The company then sang a psalm, and resumed their procession. It may be remarked that wherever an old oak tree is found in this part of the country, in an insulated or otherwise remarkable situation, there is sure to be connected with it some religious tradition, or some observance whose origin is lost in antiquity. The churches are usually an interesting feature in the landscape, for it would seem as if their founders had sought purposely out for them solitary places, by the banks of rivers or in the midst of groves or fields. In general they are exceedingly simple in appearance, many having the marks of great antiquity, and almost all being whitewashed from top to bottom. An antiquary has ingeniously accounted for this peculiarity, by the custom the Normans had of constructing even large buildings of pebbles and rag-stone, which obliged them to cover the inequalities, outside and inside, by a coat of lime and sand. However this may be, the effect is not unpleasing; more especially when the rural temple, as is frequently the case, is shaped like a barn, and without a belfry. Such churches, more especially in the mountainous districts, still present the rounded arches, and other peculiarities, which denote that their rude walls were raised by our Saxon ancestors, if not by the ancient Britons themselves.

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We find the white walls, so common in Wales, alluded to as a poetical circumstance by one of the bards of the fourteenth century, in a piece of considerable beauty; and in the succeeding paragraph there is an allusion to another Welsh custom, of more classical authority, that of strewing the graves of the dead with flowers. The poem is an invocation to summer, to shed its blessings over the country of Gwent. The following is the paragraph referred to, with the second allusion, terminating the ode by an abrupt and pathetic transition.

"If I obtain thee, O summer, in thy splendid hour, with thy fair growth and thy sporting gems; thy serenity pleasantly bear, thou golden messenger, to Morganoc. With sunshine morn gladden thou the place, and greet the whitened houses; give growth, give the first fruits of the spring, and collect thou blossoms to the bushes; shine proudly on the wall of lime, full as light and gaily bright; leave there in the vale thy footsteps in juicy herbage, in fresh attire; diffuse a load of delicious fruits, in bounteous course among its woods; give thy crop like a stream over every lawn, the meadows, and the land of wheat; clothe the orchard, the vineyard, and the garden, with thy abundance and thy teeming harvest; and scatter over its fair soil the lovely marks of thy glorious course!

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"And oh! whilst thy season of flowers, and thy tender sprays thick of leaves remain; I will pluck the roses from the branches; the flowerets of the meads, and gems of the woods; the vivid trefoils, beauties of the ground, and the gaily smiling bloom of the verdant herbs, to be offered to the memory of a chief of favorite fame: Humbly I will lay them on the grave of Ivor!"

The Ivor here alluded to was Ivor Hael, or the Generons, an ancestor of the Tredgear family of Morgans, whose pedigree is traced, by the Welsh bards from the third son of Noah. The poet David, ap Gwillim, styled the Welsh Ovid, loved a lady of the name of Morvid, in whose praise his prolific muse produced no fewer than a hundred and forty-seven poems. A rich rival, however, gained the unwilling prize; and the son of song consoled himself by carrying off his lost mistress on two several occasions, when her husband, Rhys Gwgan, was with the army in France, where

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he served in the rank of captain at the battle of Crecy. For both these offences he was fined and imprisoned, and in both instances liberated by the gentlemen of Gwent, who came forward in a body in favour of their darling bard. The above extract is taken from one of two poems which he wrote in testimony of his gratitude. It may be added, that when flowers are planted on graves, it was, and we believe is the custom to surround the area with stones, which are periodically *whitewashed*.

On the bank opposite Penalt, or a little further down, is Redbrook, upper and lower, the one standing above the other on the hill side. The stream from which they derive this name separates Monmouthshire from Gloucestershire, and the Wye then continues the boundary. The brook, also, serves the purpose of turning the wheels of some iron and tin works; but without vulgarising any more than such accidents have done heretofore, the scenic romance of the river. Wye Seal House comes next, on the same side of the river, with the hamlet of Whitebrook and its paper-mills on the opposite bank. Then Pan-y-van hill, and the ruins of the old manor-house of Pilton—then an iron bridge over the Wye, and then Big's-weir House, and its surrounding grove, with Hudknolls behind, and the ruins of St. Briavels' Castle on their summit. p. 147

This fortress stands in the forest of Dean, and dates from the reign of Henry I., when it was founded by Milo, earl of Hereford, for the residence and defence of some of the lords-marchers. St. Briavels, formerly a place of some importance, is now a village. Its inhabitants enjoyed several singular immunities which are now obsolete; but they have still a right of common in Hudknolls wood, a tract of land on the banks of the Wye seven miles long. They are supposed to enjoy the privilege through the performance of a strange ceremony on Whit-sunday. Each inhabitant pays twopence to the churchwardens, who buy bread and cheese with the fund, which they cut into small pieces, and distribute to the congregation immediately after the service is ended, in the midst of a general scramble. They are also allowed to cut wood, but not timber, in any part of the forest. It is said that a countess of Hereford procured for them their privileges by the performance of a feat similar to that of the Lady Godiva. p. 148

St. Briavels' Castle was erected by Milo St. Walter, earl of Hereford, in the time of Henry I., as a barrier against the Welsh. Two circular towers alone remain entire with a narrow gateway between, composing the north-west front. They contain several apartments, the walls of which are eight feet thick. One is used as a prison for the hundred. In the interior are two other similar gateways, on the right and left of which are the remains of spacious rooms.

The governor of St. Briavels—for it became a royal fortress after the Hereford family had possessed it for about a century—had formerly jurisdiction over the forest of Dean; and it is recorded, that in his court the miners were sworn upon a branch of holly instead of the testament, lest the holy book should be defiled by their fingers. p. 149

We now enter a long reach of the river, with Tiddenham Chase Hill rising boldly in front; till Llandogo appears, a beautiful little village on the right bank, seated on a hill side in the midst of gardens and orchards, and with its small church near the edge of the water, peeping through the trees. This is a scene of quiet beauty, which after the massive forms we have passed, we term *prettyness*. Whatever be its proper name, however, in the pedantry of taste, it is not surpassed on the Wye in its own kind. It is unfortunate, nevertheless, that at this spot an unfavourable change should be observed in the river—although only in the river considered as a volume of water, and not taken in conjunction with its scenery. Here the Wye becomes a tide stream, acted upon by the ebb and flow of the Severn sea; and in consequence, it is henceforward habitually turbid, and no longer a current of pure element, subject only to the influence of rains and freshes. p. 150

This circumstance has also its effect upon the moral character of the river. Large barges are floated up by the tide to Brook Weir, a little lower down, which is midway between Monmouth and Chepstow, or nine miles from each; and there they receive the merchandise brought thither in small inland vessels from the upper part of the Wye. Our romantic stream, therefore, whose outlines hitherto have been broken only by the smokes of furnaces hidden among the trees, and whose still life has been varied only by the coracles of the ancient Britons, and other inland craft that never dreamt of the breezes of the salt sea, becomes now a small highway of trade, a sort of water lane by which the corn, and hoops, and fagots, and other productions of the interior are conveyed to Bristol. But even the coasting barge, with her blackened sails, and sixty tons of cargo, is not here "a jarring and a dissonant thing." Creeping with the tide along those solemn banks, she acquires a portion of their solemnity; floating silently through those pastoral vales, she is invested, for the time being, with their simplicity. Her characteristics are swallowed up in the character of the river—the spell of the Wye is upon her! p. 151

If you doubt the fact, let us wander on but a little further; let us turn the point of Lyn Weir, and, looking along the reach beyond, inquire with what vulgarised ideas, with what broken associations, we find ourselves gliding into the region of Tintern! Near this spot, the great Druid of the Wye, the poet of nature internal and external, produced a poem which in all probability will be read, either with tears or smiles of delight, long after the works of man shall have completely obliterated those features of the grand, the beautiful, the simple, and sublime, to which it is our humble task to point the finger.

"Five years have past, five summers, with the length
Of five long winters! and again I hear
These waters, rolling from their mountain-springs

With a sweet inland murmur.—Once again
Do I behold these steep and lofty cliffs,
That on a wild secluded scene impress
Thoughts of more deep seclusion; and connect
The landscape with the quiet of the sky.
The day is come when I again repose
Here, under this dark sycamore, and view
These plots of cottage ground, these orchard tufts,
Which, at this season, with their unripe fruits,
Are clad in one green hue, and lose themselves
Among the woods and copses, nor disturb
The wild green landscape. Once again I see
These hedgerows, hardly hedgerows, little lines
Of sportive wood run wild: these pastoral farms,
Green to the very doors, and wreaths of smoke
Sent up, in silence, from among the trees;
With some uncertain notice, as might seem
Of vagrant dwellers in the houseless woods,
Or of some hermit's cave, where, by his fire,
The hermit sits alone.

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“These beauteous forms,
Through a long absence, have not been to me
As is a landscape to a blind man's eye:
But oft, in lonely rooms, and 'mid the din
Of towns and cities, I have owed to them,
In hours of weariness, sensations sweet,
Felt in the blood, and felt along the heart;
And passing even into my purer mind,
With tranquil restoration:—feelings too
Of unremembered pleasure: such, perhaps,
As have no slight or trivial influence
On that best portion of a good man's life,
His little, nameless, unremembered acts
Of kindness and of love. Nor less, I trust,
To them I may have owed another gift,
Of aspect more sublime; that blessed mood
In which the burden of the mystery
In which the heavy and the weary weight
Of all this unintelligible world
Is lightened:—that serene and blessed mood,
In which the affections gently lead us on,
Until, the breath of this corporeal frame
And even the motion of our human blood
Almost suspended, we are laid asleep
In body, and become a living soul:
While with an eye made quiet by the power
Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,
We see into the life of things.

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“If this
Be but a vain belief, yet, oh! how oft,
In darkness and amid the many shapes
Of joyless daylight, when the fretful stir
Unprofitable, and the fever of the world
Have hung upon the beatings of my heart;
How oft, in spirit, have I turned to thee,
O sylvan Wye! Thou wanderer through the woods,
How often has my spirit turned to thee.

“And now with gleams of half extinguished thought,
With many recognitions dim and faint,
And somewhat of a sad perplexity,
The picture of the mind revives again,
While here I stand, not only with the sense
Of present pleasure, but with pleasing thoughts
That in this moment, there is life and food
For future years, and so I dare to hope,
Though changed, no doubt, from what I was when first
I came among these hills; when like a roe
I bounded o'er the mountains, by the sides
Of the deep rivers, and the lonely streams,
Wherever nature led: more like a man
Flying from something that he dreads, than one
Who sought the thing he loved. For nature then
(The coarser pleasures of my boyish days,

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And their glad animal movements all gone by)
 To me was all in all.—I cannot paint
 What then I was. The sounding cataract
 Haunted me like a passion: the tall rock,
 The mountain, and the deep and gloomy wood,
 Their colours and their forms, were then to me
 An appetite; a feeling and a love
 That had no need of a remoter charm,
 By thought supplied, nor any interest
 Unborrowed from the eye.—That time is past,
 And all its aching joys are now no more,
 And all its dizzy raptures. Not for this
 Faint I, nor mourn nor murmur; other gifts
 Have followed; for such loss, I would believe,
 Abundant recompense. For I have learned
 To look on nature, not as in the hour
 Of thoughtless youth; but hearing oftentimes
 The still, sad music of humanity
 Nor harsh nor grating, though of ample power
 To chasten and subdue. And I have felt
 A presence that disturbs me with the joy
 Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime
 Of something far more deeply interfused,
 Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
 And the round ocean and the living air,
 And the blue sky, and in the mind of man:
 A motion and a spirit, that impels
 All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
 And rolls through all things. Therefore am I still
 A lover of the meadows, and the woods,
 And mountains; and of all that we behold
 From this green earth; of all the mighty world
 Of eye, and ear,—both what they half create,
 And what perceive; well pleased to recognise,
 In nature and the language of the sense,
 The anchor of my purest thoughts, the nurse,
 The guide, the guardian of my heart, and soul
 Of all my moral being.”

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CHAPTER XI.

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Vales of the Wye—Valley of Tintern—Tintern Abbey—History—Church—Character of the ruin—Site—Coxe’s description—Monuments—Insecurity of sepulchral fame—Churchyard on tombs—Opinions on Tintern—Battle of Tintern.

The “Lines composed a few miles above Tintern Abbey, on revisiting the banks of the Wye during a tour,” are justly esteemed one of the masterpieces of modern poetry; but independently of this, they belong so peculiarly to the river we are attempting to illustrate, and are associated so intimately with the character of its scenery, and its reputation as a fountain of high thoughts and beautiful feelings, that our volume would have been incomplete without them. It is curious that this piece, which is dated in the concluding years of the last century, should be the only fruits as yet given to the world of the poetical inspiration of the Wye—for the effusions of Bloomfield are not to be named with those of Wordsworth.

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We have seen that where the picturesque character of the Wye is chiefly formed by its banks, which is the case from Goodrich Castle downwards, these embrace the stream with more or less straitness, rising in naked crags from the water’s edge, or throwing their waving woods over the current. At intervals, however, they recede to some little distance from either side; picturesque hills forming the side-screens, and hills, rocks, and trees terminating the perspective in front, and enclosing the river like a lake. In such cases, the bottom is formed by a green pastoral meadow, through which the stream wanders leisurely, as if reposing after former struggles, and preparing for new ones. These lonely vales are not merely secluded from “the hum, the crowd, the shock of men,” but from all turbulent thoughts and unholy desires. The world lives in them only in the recollections of dead things, and feelings, and persons. They are spots, to use the fine but unappreciated image of Maturin,

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“Where memory lingers o’er the grave of passion,
 Watching its tranced sleep!”

The admirable taste so unequivocally displayed by the monks of old, in the selection of sites for their ascetic retreats, could not have overlooked this characteristic of the Wye; and accordingly we find, in the most beautiful of these delightful nooks, standing on a gently swelling meadow, by

the banks of the lake-like river, the finest conventual ruins in England.



Tintern Abbey, though one of the oldest of the Cistercian communities in this country, was never famous either for its wealth, or the number of its brethren; and at the dissolution it contained only thirteen monks, supported by a rental of between two and three hundred pounds at the highest calculation. [158] It was founded in 1131 by Walter de Clare, and dedicated to the Virgin Mary; but the endowments were greatly increased by Gilbert de Strongbow, lord of Striguil and Chepstow, and afterwards earl of Pembroke. The religious colony consisted of Cistercians, otherwise called White Monks, introduced into England only three years before, where they formed an establishment at Waverley in Surrey. These brethren spread so luxuriantly, however, that in the reign of Henry VIII. there were thirty-six greater, and thirty-nine lesser monasteries, and twenty-six nunneries, of their rule.

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The founder of the church was Roger Bigod, earl of Norfolk; and it would appear that the choir was finished and consecrated before the rest of the building was complete, a circumstance not unusual at that time. The consecration took place in 1268; and in the body of the church the architecture is of a style long subsequent. The remains of the church are now the only interesting parts of the ruin, at least as a picture: and they are in fact what is called "Tintern Abbey;" although there are still fragments remaining here and there of the other parts of the pile. The church was built in the regular cathedral form; with a nave, north and south aisles, transept and choir, and a tower which stood in the centre.

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Complete as the demolition is, there are at least vestiges, even in the most ruinous parts, which explain the original form, and even most of the details of the edifice. The very effects of time, as may be well supposed, are here among the principal advantages. The broken outlines, the isolated columns, the roofless walls, are all adjuncts of the picturesque; but added to these, there are the curtains, the canopies, the chaplets, coronals, festoons, of ivy, mosses and lichens, which give as much effect to a ruin, as rich draperies do to naked walls.



The tiles which formed the flooring have been removed; and a carpet of smooth turf laid down, on which fragments of columns, monuments, statues, and sculptures are scattered. This of course is not entirely the doing of time; but art is not displayed obtrusively enough to offend. A ruined edifice, it should be observed, although this is frequently forgotten by critics, is a work of man and nature *conjointly*; and the traces, therefore, of taste or ingenuity are not to be condemned, as if these were exercised in shaping a cliff or amending a cataract. p. 161

Gilpin describes Tintern Abbey as occupying "a great eminence, in the middle of a circular valley;" and another author declares its site, somewhat tautologically, to be a *flat plain*; to which some idle person has taken the liberty of appending this marginal note, in the copy of the work in the British Museum—"Flat plain indeed! It is situated just at the brow of a richly wooded hill!" The truth is, that the ruin itself is not to be entirely depended upon, as it contrives to assume a different appearance even in respect of position, at every turn. Viewed from a short distance down the river, it actually looks as if standing on an eminence; but on a nearer approach, we find it in reality not greatly elevated above line of the water. It is in fact built at the bottom of the valley, in a spot chosen apparently for solitude and meditation. The solitude, however, it must be confessed is not now so complete as one would wish. The inhabitants of the monastery, it is true, have vanished, but their places have been supplied by poor cottagers, who hide their misery in the very cells of the monks; and, if this were not enough, fragments of the ruin have been broken up, or unearthed, for the construction of other hovels. In the following description will be found the opinions on this remarkable scene of archdeacon Coxe, who, together with the less correct, but more *artistical* Gilpin, have been hitherto the only recognised authorities of the Wye. p. 162

"We disembarked about half a mile above the village of Tintern, and followed the sinuous course of the Wye. As we advanced to the village, we passed some picturesque ruins hanging over the edge of the water, which are supposed to have formed part of the abbot's villa, and other buildings occupied by the monks; some of these remains are converted into dwellings and cottages, others are interspersed among the iron founderies and habitations.

"The first appearance of the celebrated remains of the abbey church did not equal my expectations, as they are half-concealed by mean buildings, and the triangular shape of the gable ends has a formal appearance.

"After passing a miserable row of cottages, and forcing our way through a crowd of importunate beggars, we stopped to examine the rich architecture of the west front; but the door being suddenly opened, the inside perspective of the church called forth an instantaneous burst of admiration, and filled me with delight, such as I scarcely ever before experienced on a similar occasion. The eye passes rapidly along a range of elegant gothic pillars, and, glancing under the sublime arches which supported the tower, fixes itself on the splendid relics of the eastern window, the grand termination of the choir. p. 163

"From the length of the nave, the height of the walls, the aspiring form of the pointed arches, and the size of the east window, which closes the perspective, the first impressions are those of grandeur and sublimity. But as these emotions subside, and we descend from the contemplation of the whole to the examination of the parts, we are no less struck with the regularity of the plan, the lightness of the architecture, and the delicacy of the ornaments; we feel that elegance is its characteristic no less than grandeur, and that the whole is a combination of the beautiful and the sublime.

"The church was constructed in the shape of a cathedral, and is an excellent specimen of gothic architecture in its greatest purity. The roof is fallen in, and the whole ruin open to the sky, but the shell is entire; all the pillars are standing, except those which divided the nave from the northern aisle, and their situation is marked by the remains of the bases. The four lofty arches which supported the tower spring high in the air, reduced to narrow rims of stone, yet still preserving their original form. The arched pillars of the choir and transept are complete; the shapes of all the windows may be still discriminated, and the frame of the west window is in perfect preservation; the design of the tracery is extremely elegant, and when decorated with painted glass must have produced a fine effect. Critics who censure this window as too broad for its height, do not consider that it was not intended for a particular object, but to harmonise with the general plan; and had the architect diminished the breadth, in proportion to the height, the grand effect of the perspective would have been considerably lessened.

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"The general form of the east window is entire, but the frame is much dilapidated; it occupies the whole breadth of the choir, and is divided into two large and equal compartments, by a slender shaft, not less than fifty feet in height, which has an appearance of singular lightness, and in particular points of view seems suspended in the air.

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"Nature has added her ornaments to the decorations of art; some of the windows are wholly obscured, others partially shaded with tufts of ivy, or edged with lighter foliage; the tendrils creep along the walls, wind round the pillars, wreath the capitals, or, hanging down in clusters, obscure the space beneath.

"Instead of dilapidated fragments overspread with weeds and choked with brambles, the floor is covered with a smooth turf, which, by keeping the original level of the church, exhibits the beauty of its proportions, heightens the effect of the gray stone, gives a relief to the clustered pillars, and affords an easy access to every part. Ornamented fragments of the roof, remains of cornices and columns, rich pieces of sculpture, sepulchral stones, and mutilated figures of monks and heroes, whose ashes repose within these walls, are scattered on the green sward, and contrast present desolation with former splendour.

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"Although the exterior appearance of the ruins is not equal to the inside view, yet in some positions, particularly to the east, they present themselves with considerable effect. While Sir Richard Hoare was employed in sketching the north-western side, I crossed the ferry, and walked down the stream about half a mile. From this point, the ruins, assuming a new character, seem to occupy a gentle eminence, and impend over the river without the intervention of a single cottage to obstruct the view. The grand east window, wholly covered with shrubs, and half mantled with ivy, rises like the portal of a majestic edifice embowered in wood. Through this opening and along the vista of the church, the clusters of ivy, which twine round the pillars or hang suspended from the arches, resemble tufts of trees; while the thick mantle of foliage, seen through the tracery of the west window, forms a continuation of the perspective, and appears like an interminable forest."

The reputation of Tintern Abbey depends upon no historical associations. The romance of its situation is heightened by no romance of incident. It is simply a part of a picture, and might be entitled in the catalogue of a gallery "an abbey." The sepulchral remains it holds retain neither name nor date; and one of the most entire of the figures (supposed to be the effigies of the founder of the monastery, which, however, must be looked for at Gloucester, where according to Leland he was buried) is disputed the possession of the usual number of fingers on the right hand; one antiquary, hesitating between four and five, and another according to it, more generously, five fingers—and a thumb! In no part of the country has this means of prolonging fame been more constantly resorted to than in Monmouthshire; but unfortunately, owing to its geographical position as a frontier district, in no part of the country has the object been more frequently defeated. As a solitary instance of this among thousands, we are tempted to quote a fragment which just now catches our eye, from the rhymes of *Churchyard* (a most suitable name), and the rather that it exhibits the poet of the "Worthines of Wales" in a more poetical light than usual. He is describing the tombs in the church of Abergavenny; and after noting the arms and other particulars, proceeds—

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"But note a greater matter now,
Upon his tomb in stone,
Were fourteene lords that knees did bow
Unto this lord alone.
Of this rare work a porch is made,
The barrons there remaine
In good old stone, and auncient trade,
To show all ages plaine,
What honour wass to Hastings due,
What honour he did win:
What armes he gave, and so to blaze
What lord had Hastings bin."

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But alas for the frailty of fame even so secured! The dilapidated monument laughed in the unconscious rhymers' face through the rents of time; the principal effigies had been removed to a window, and several of the "fourteene lords" placed in a porch; and the very name of him whose memory the whole had been intended to perpetuate, had become a matter of doubt and controversy! "Some say this great lord was called Bruce and not Hastings, but most do hold opinion he was called Hastings!"

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It may seem almost superfluous to give any further evidence respecting the picturesque character of Tintern Abbey; but as we design this volume not merely to act the part of a sign-post, but to save the common reader the trouble of reference, we shall add two other quotations.

"It would be difficult to imagine a more favourable situation, or a more sublime ruin. The entrance to it seems as if contrived by the hand of some skilful scene-painter to produce the most striking effect. The church, which is large, is still almost perfect; the roof alone, and a few of the pillars, are wanting. The ruins have received just that degree of care which is consistent with the full preservation of their character; all unpicturesque rubbish which could obstruct the view is removed, without any attempt at repair or embellishment. A beautiful smooth turf covers the ground, and luxuriant creeping plants grow amid the stones. The fallen ornaments are laid in picturesque confusion, and a perfect avenue of thick ivy-stems climb up the pillars, and form a roof over head. The better to secure the ruin, a new gate of antique workmanship, with iron ornaments, is put up. When this is suddenly opened, the effect is most striking and surprising. You suddenly look down the avenue of ivy-clad pillars, and see their grand perspective lines closed, at a distance of three hundred feet, by a magnificent window eighty feet high and thirty broad: through its intricate and beautiful tracery you see a wooded mountain, from whose side project abrupt masses of rock. Over head the wind plays in the garlands of ivy, and the clouds pass swiftly across the deep blue sky. When you reach the centre of the church, whence you look to the four extremities of its cross, you see the two transept windows nearly as large and beautiful as the principal one; through each you command a picture totally different, but each in the wild and sublime style which harmonises so perfectly with the building. Immediately round the ruin is a luxuriant orchard. In spring, how exquisite must be the effect of these grey venerable walls rising out of that sea of fragrance and beauty!"

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The other extract belongs to the class sentimental, and is not a description of Tintern Abbey, but of the mood of mind to which it disposes.

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"The great tree, or vegetable rock, or emperor of the oaks (if you please), before which I bowed with a sort of reverence in the fields of Tintern, and which for so many ages has borne all the blasts and bolts of heaven, I should deem it a gratification of a superior kind, to approach again with 'unsandaled feet' to pay the same homage, and to kindle with the same devotion. But I should find amidst the magnificent ruins of the adjoining abbey, something of a sublime cast, to give poignancy to my feelings. I must be alone. My mind must be calm and pensive. It must be midnight. The moon, half veiled in clouds, must be just emerging from behind the neighbouring hills. All must be silent, except the winds gently rushing among the ivy of the ruins. I should then invoke the ghosts of the abbey; and fancy, with one stroke of her magic wand, would rouse them from their dusty beds, and lead them into the centre of the ruin. I should approach their shadowy existences with reverence, make inquiries respecting the manners and customs, and genius and fate of antiquity, desire to have a glimpse of the destiny of future ages, and enter in conversations which would be too sacred, and even dangerous to communicate."

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The only event unconnected with the monastery which is assigned to this locality is a *battle*. Whether it was fought on the hills above, or whether the demon of war actually intruded within the charmed circle of Tintern—or whether the whole is a fable, invented for the express purpose of desecrating the very idea of the place—we cannot tell. But however this may be, the fact, or the falsehood, is commemorated in the following epitaph, which is placed on the north side of the chancel of the church of Mathern.

Here lyeth entombed the body of
Frederic, King of Morganoch or
Glamorgan, commonly called
St. Thewdrick, and accounted a martyr,
because he was slain in a battle against
the Saxons, being then Pagans, and in
defence of the Christian religion. The
battle was fought at Tintern, when he
obtained a great victory. He died here
being in his way homeward, three
days after the battle, having taken
order with Maurice his son, who suc-
ceeded him in the kingdom, that in the
same place he should happen to decease, a
church should be built, and his body buri-
ed in y^e same, which was accordingly performed

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CHAPTER XII.

The Wye below Tintern—Banagor Crags—Lancaut—Piercefield Bay—Chepstow—Ancient and modern bridge—Chepstow Castle—Roger de Britolio—Romance of history—Chepstow in the civil wars—Marten the regicide.

The Wye being now a tide river, time requires to be studied by the traveller who would see it in its beauty or grandeur. The shores must be hidden by the full stream, and the overhanging woods fling their shadow as before over the glancing waters. Some bargain for the moon, to silver the tree tops, and send her angel-visitations through the vistas of foliage. But the truth is, before reaching this point we have become the spoiled children of nature; we have grown fastidious in our admiration, and would criticise perfection itself.

With the one drawback of the sludginess of the shores at ebb water, the Wye below Tintern is as worthy of our homage as ever. But it may be, that the romance of its rocks and woods impending over the current, and the deep stillness of the scene, broken only by the rippling sound of its flow, may harmonize *too* closely with the holy solitude we have left. Our sensations are uninterrupted; we carry with us the ruins and their associations; the mouldering abbey glides upon the stream before us; and the recesses of the rocks, and deep paths of the woods, are peopled with the spectres of the monastery. Thus we have no new impressions to mark our progress, and one of the finest parts of the river escapes almost without notice.

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There is notwithstanding much variety in this part of our course. The reaches are short; the banks steep, sometimes overhanging in naked precipices, sometimes waving with romantic woods; while numerous narrow promontories intercept the view, and cut the scene into separate pictures. Banagor Crags, on the left, form a stupendous wall of cliff, extending for a considerable distance, without presenting anything in themselves to relieve the eye, except here and there some recesses or small shrubs, painting their interstices. But, as if aware of the disadvantage even of a sublime uniformity, nature has spread upon the opposite side a scene incomparable for richness and variety. A bright green sward, broken into narrow patches, swells upwards from the water's edge, till it is lost in acclivities mantled with woods; and rising from the ridge of these, a mass of perpendicular rock towers aloft to the height, as it is computed, of eight hundred feet, overhung with shaggy thickets.

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We now turn the peninsula of Lancaut, which comes sloping down from Tiddenham Chase, till it terminates in fertile meadows; and, on the right, rise from the water's edge, with a kind of fantastic majesty, the Piercefield cliffs, capped with magnificent woods. Twelve projecting masses of these rocks have received the names of the twelve apostles, and a thirteenth is called St. Peter's Thumb. While wondering where this will end, we sweep round another point, and find ourselves in Piercefield Bay. To the right a line of perpendicular cliffs is still seen, but crowned instead of trees with an embattled fortress; which, for a moment, might seem to have been cut out of the rock. The view is closed by a range of red cliffs, with the magnificent iron bridge of Chepstow spanning the river. This is the last of the great views *on* the Wye; and if seen under favorable circumstances of time and tide, it is one of the finest.

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Chepstow stands on the side of an acclivity, overlooked itself on all sides by loftier hills, so that from every part of the town a different view is obtained. Approaching it from the road which leads from the New Passage, this position, owing to the singularity of a part of the higher ground, gives the scene a very peculiar appearance. Nothing is seen but the red cliffs of the Wye, and the tall masts of the shipping rising among them; and it is not till close at hand that the houses appear, shelving down to the river. Archdeacon Coxe observes, that he has seldom visited any town whose picturesque situation surpassed that of Chepstow; and according to Mr. Wyndham,

another traveller in this district, "the beauties are so uncommonly excellent, that the most exact critic in landscape would scarcely wish to alter a position in the assemblage of woods, cliffs, ruins, and water." Among these features, the Wye and its banks are conspicuous. The ridge of cliff on the left bank below the bridge is remarkable both for its form and variety of colouring; while, on the opposite bank above, the gigantic remains of the castle, stretching along the brink of the precipice, give an air of romance to the picture, not frequently found in one of the crowded haunts of men.

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The bridge is of cast iron, and was completed only in 1816. There are five arches, resting on stone piers; but although in reality a massive structure, it has the air of lightness, when viewed from the river, which iron bridges usually possess. The old bridge was formerly composed of a level floor, carried along wooden piers, except in the centre, where a massive pillar of stone, dividing Gloucester and Monmouth, was the support. Afterwards, however, stone piers were substituted for those on the Monmouth side, before the two counties joined in the erection of the present noble structure.

"According to tradition," says Mr. Coxe, "the bridge of the Wye was formerly half a mile above the present bridge, at a place called Eddis, nearly opposite to the alcove in Piercefield grounds, and seemingly in a direction leading towards an ancient encampment which encircles the grotto. The remains of the abutments are said to have been visible in the memory of some of the present generation; and the vestiges of a pitched road were recently found in digging near the spot. I walked to the spot, but could not discern the smallest traces of the ancient bridge, and the ground on which the pitched road was discovered was planted with potatoes. I was, however, amply gratified for my disappointment by the pleasantness of the walk by the side of the river, the beauty of the hanging woods of Piercefield, and the picturesque appearance of the castle."

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The castle of Chepstow is said by some antiquaries, to have been built originally by Julius Cæsar; which is denied by others, on the reasonable grounds, that Julius Cæsar never was there, and that Roman reliques, although abundant in the neighbourhood, have never been discovered in the town. However this may be, the name by which it is at present known, is Saxon, and denotes a place of traffic; and Leland traces at least its prosperity to its situation being favourable for commerce. "The towne of Chepstowe," says he, "hath been very strongly walled, as yet well doth appere. The walles began at the grete bridge, over the Wy, and so came to the castel; the which yet standeth fayer and strong, not far from the ruin of the bridge. A grete lykelyhood ys, that when Carguen began to decay, then began Chepstow to flourish, for yt standeth far better, as upon Wy there ebbing and flowing, by the Rage coming out of the Severn, so that to Chepstowe may come grete shippes."

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The castle, as we have said, crowns the brow of a precipice, forming here the right bank of the Wye; and its walls, on the northern side, are so close to the edge as to seem nothing more than a prolongation of the rock. The rest of the fortress was defended by a moat and its own lofty towers.

The area was divided into four courts. The first, which is entered by a Norman gateway, contained the grand hall, the kitchen, and other apartments, on a scale of considerable grandeur. At the south-eastern angle of this court is the keep, or citadel, now called Harry Marten's Tower. The second court contains no architectural remains, except the walls; but in the third is a remarkable building, usually designated as the chapel. It seems to have formed one magnificent apartment, probably with a gallery running along the sides. The fourth court was separated from the rest by a moat, which was crossed by a drawbridge. Whether a former building stood here or not, William Fitzosborn, earl of Hereford, is said in Domesday Book to have built the castle of Chepstow. It was inherited by his third son Roger de Britolio, who was deprived of his estates, and condemned to perpetual imprisonment for rebellion. The fierce character of this Norman baron is well illustrated in the following anecdote preserved by Dugdale.

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"Though he frequently used many scornful and contumelious expressions towards the king, yet he was pleased, at the celebration of the feast of Easter in a solemn manner (as was then used), to send to this earl Rodger, at that time in prison, his royal robes, who so disdained the favour, that he forthwith caused a great fire to be made, and the mantle, the inner surcoat of silk, and the upper garment, lined with precious furs, to be suddenly burnt. Which being made known to the king, he became not a little displeased, and said, '*Certainly he is a very proud man who has thus abused me; but, by the brightness of God, he shall never come out of prison as long as I live.*' Which expression was fulfilled to the utmost, for he never was released during the king's life, nor after, but died in prison."

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In the reign of Henry I., we find Chepstow in the possession of the Clare family; of whom Richard de Clare, surnamed, like his father, Strongbow, is famous for his Irish adventures. 'At the solicitation of Dermot Macnagh, king of Leinster, who had been dethroned by his rival Roderic the Great, king of Connaught (for there were then five kings in Ireland), he proceeded to that country with twelve hundred men, to espouse the cause of the unfortunate potentate: being offered, in the spirit of the age, his daughter for a wife, and his kingdom for an inheritance. Strongbow landed at Waterford in 1171; married the princess; and his father-in-law dying at the very moment demanded by poetical justice, conquered his promised kingdom, and took possession of Dublin the capital. The romance, however, was spoiled by Henry II., who, in high dudgeon at this presumption of a subject, confiscated his estates, and carried an army over to

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Ireland, with the purpose of annexing Leinster to the English crown. Strongbow submitted; abandoned Waterford and Dublin to his feudal master; was restored to his estates, and made constable of Ireland. His character is thus described by Giraldus Cambrensis:

“This earle was somewhat ruddie and of sanguine complexion and freckle face, his eyes greie, his face feminine, his voice small, and his necke little, but somewhat of high stature: he was verie liberall, corteous, and gentle; what he could not compass or bring to passe in deed, he would win by good word and gentle speeches. In time of peace he was more redie to yield and obeie than rule and beare swaie. Out of the campe he was more like to a souldier companion than a captaine or ruler; but in the camp and in the warres he carried with him the state and countenance of a valiante captaine. Of himselfe he would not adventure anie thing; but being advised and set on, he refused no attempts; but for himselfe he would not rashlie adventure or presumptuouslie take anie thing in hand. In the fighte and battell he was a most assured token and signe to the whole companie, either to stand valiante to the fight, or for policie to retire. In all chances of warre he was still one and the same manner of man, being neither dismaied with adversitie, or puffed up with prosperitie.”

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By the marriage of a daughter of Richard Strongbow (who had no male issue) our castle next came into the hands of one of the greatest men of his time, William, marshal of England, lord protector of the kingdom; and by the marriage of his daughter (for although he had five sons they all died without issue), it fell to Hugh Bigod, earl of Norfolk. This daughter was Maud, remarkable for having been in her widowhood created *marshal* in virtue of her descent, the king himself, Henry III., solemnly giving the truncheon into her hands. She was buried in Tintern Abbey in 1248, her body being carried into the choir by her four sons.

After changing hands several times, Chepstow Castle appears to have been *sold* to the earl of Pembroke; whose heiress Elizabeth conveyed it by marriage, as we have already had occasion to relate, to Sir Charles Somerset, afterwards earl of Worcester. Churchyarde mentions the fact of the sale in his uncouth rhymes.

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“To Chepstowe yet, my pen agayne must passe,
When Strongbow once (an earl of rare renown),
A long time since, the lord and maister was
(In princly sort) of casle and of towne.
Then after that, to Mowbray it befell,
Of Norfolke duke, a worthie known full well;
Who sold the same to William Harbert, knight,
That was the earle of Pembroke then by right.”

During the civil wars, this place was considered of great importance.

“At first, Chepstow was garrisoned for the king, until in 1645, Colonel Morgan, governor of Gloucester, at the head of three hundred horse and four hundred foot, and assisted by the mountaineers, with little difficulty made himself master of the town, and in a few days compelled the governor, Colonel Fitzmorris, to surrender the castle. But the castle was afterwards surprised by the loyalists, under Sir Nicholas Hemeys, who, in the absence of the governor, by means of a secret correspondence, obtained possession of the western gate, and made the garrison prisoners of war. On this event Cromwell marched against it in person, took possession of the town, but assailed the castle without success, though garrisoned only by a hundred and sixty men. He then left Colonel Ewer, with a train of artillery, seven companies of foot, and four troops of horse, to prosecute the siege. But the garrison defended themselves valiantly, until the provisions were exhausted, and even then refused to surrender under promise of quarter, hoping to escape by means of a boat, which they had provided for that purpose. A soldier of the parliamentary army, however, swam across the river, with a knife between his teeth, cut the cable of the boat, and brought it away; the castle was at length forced, and Sir Nicholas Hemys and forty slain in the assault. This event was considered by the parliament so important, that the captain who brought the news was rewarded with fifty pounds, and a letter of thanks was sent to Colonel Ewer and the officers and soldiers engaged in that service.”

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In 1645, the castle, with the other estates belonging to the marquis of Worcester, were settled upon Oliver Cromwell, but were given back to the family at the restoration.

“For thirty years secluded from mankind,
Here Marten lingered. Often have these walls
Echoed his footsteps, as with even tread
He paced around his prison. Not to him
Did nature’s fair varieties exist:
He never saw the sun’s delightful beams,
Save when thro’ yon high bars he pour’d a sad
And broken splendor.”

All this, it now appears, is a poetical exaggeration, and the thirty years’ captivity (diminished to twenty years) passed away as easily as the sense of captivity would permit. The regicide was

permitted to spend his property as he pleased, to enjoy the association of his wife, to receive visits, and even to return them in the neighbourhood, accompanied by a guard.

Marten was one of the most zealous of those men who cast down the statue of royalty from a pedestal, upon which, although re-erected, it can never again stand securely of its own strength unsupported by public opinion. He does not appear to have been himself of irreproachable character, but he was honest at least in theory, and true to his principles, such as they were.

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“Being authorised,” says Anthony Wood, “by parliament, about 1642, he forced open a great iron chest, within the college of Westminster, and thence took the crown, robes, sword, and sceptre belonging anciently to king Edward the Confessor, and used by all our kings at their inaugurations; and with a scorn greater than his lusts and the rest of his vices, he openly declared that there should be no farther use of those toys and trifles, and in the jolity of that humour he invested George Wither (an old puritan satyrist) in the royal habiliments; who being crowned and royally arrayed (as well right became him) did first march about the room, with a stately garb, and afterwards with a thousand apish and ridiculous actions exposed those sacred ornaments to contempt and laughter.”

Marten was a member of the high court of justice, regularly attended the trial, was present when sentence was pronounced, and signed the warrant of death. It is added, that when Cromwell took up the pen to sign, he spattered some ink upon Marten; and Marten, when his turn came, returned the frolic! The two friends, however, were enemies at last. Cromwell would have made himself king if he had been able, but Marten said, “If they must have a king, he had rather have had the last than any gentleman in England; he found no fault in his person, but in his office.” When the regicides who surrendered to the king’s proclamation were condemned, they claimed mercy on the score of having given themselves up in order to save their lives; and Marten, always forward and fearless, added, “that he had never obeyed any proclamation before this, and hoped that he should not be hanged for taking the king’s word now.” He was at length condemned to perpetual imprisonment, but both in the Tower and in Chepstow Castle he was treated with great lenity. He died of apoplexy in the twentieth year of his confinement, and seventy-eighth of his age. He was buried in the chancel of the parish church at Chepstow, and a stone, with an inscription written by himself placed over his body. This was removed, however, to another part of the church, by the pious loyalty of a succeeding vicar; but the stone being defaced, a new one was substituted, by order of the churchwardens, in 1812, with the original epitaph.

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Here,
September the 9, in the year of our Lord 1680,
Was buried a true Englishman,
Who in Berkshire was well known
To love his country’s freedom ’bove his own,
But living immured full twenty year,
Had time to write, as does appear,

HIS EPITAPH.

H ere, or elsewhere (all’s one to you, to me),
E arth, air, or water, gripes my ghostly dust;
N o one knows how soon to be by fire set free.
R eader, if you an oft-tried rule will trust,
Y ou will gladly do and suffer what you must.

M y life was spent in serving you,
A nd death’s my pay (it seems), and welcome too;
R evenge destroying but itself, while I
T o birds of prey leave my old cage and fly.
E xamples preach to th’ eye, care then (mine says)
N ot how you end, but how you spend your days.

The church was part of the chapel of a priory of Benedictine monks, founded here soon after the Conquest; and is interesting from its architecture, being for the greater part in the early Norman style, but with ornamented gothic windows—and a tower adorned by the taste of the present age with Greek pilasters!

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CHAPTER XIII.

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Piercefield—Points of view—Curious appearance—Scenic character of the place—View from Wyndcliff—Account of Valentine Morris—Anecdotes—The Wye below Chepstow—Aust Ferry—Black Rock Ferry—St. Theodric—Conclusion.

The romantic region of Piercefield, extending from Chepstow to Wyndcliff—a distance of about three miles by the sinuous walk, is one of the grand attractions of this place. It is nothing more, it is true, than a gentleman’s park; but then the landscape gardener by whom this park was laid out is Nature herself, who has lavished here her beauty, her grandeur, and her romance, in the wildest profusion. Art is entirely subservient to her purposes, opening the view where it was shut

in, and forming paths for the pilgrim foot that would approach to worship.

"In the composition of the scenery," says the historical tourist, "the meandering Wye, the steep cliffs, and the fertile peninsula of Lancaut, form the striking characteristics." p. 193

"The Wye, which is everywhere seen from a great elevation, passes between Wyndcliff and the Bangor rocks, winds round the peninsula of Lancaut, under a semicircular chain of stupendous cliffs, is lost in its sinuous course, and again appears in a straight line at the foot of the Lancaut rocks, and flows under the majestic ruins of Chepstow Castle towards the Severn.

"The rocks are broken into a variety of fantastic shapes, and scattered at different heights and different positions: they start abruptly from the river, swell into gentle acclivities, or hang on the summits of the hills; here they form a perpendicular rampart, these jet into enormous projections, and impend over the water.

"But their dizzy heights and abrupt precipices are softened by the woods which form a no less conspicuous feature in the romantic scenery; they are not meagre plantations placed by art, but a tract of forests scattered by the hand of nature. In one place they expand into open groves of large oak, elm, and beech; in another form a shade of timber trees, copses, and underwood, hiding all external objects, and wholly impervious to the rays of the sun, they start from the crevices of the rocks, feather their edges, crown their summits, clothe their sides, and fill the intermediate hollows with a luxuriant mass of foliage, bring to recollection of the border p. 194

"Of Eden, where delicious paradise,
Now nearer, crowns with her enclosure green,
As with a rural mound, the champaign head
Of a steep wilderness, whose hairy sides,
With thicket o'ergrown, grotesque and wild,
Access denied, and over head up grew
Insuperable height of loftiest shade,

* * * * *

A sylvan scene and as the banks ascend
Shade above shade, a woody theatre
Of stateliest view."

And this grandeur is heightened, not diminished, by the view presented in the midst of fertile fields, and the simple details of rural occupation. The peninsula of Lancaut, on the opposite bank of the Wye, is a comparatively extensive farm, cultivated to the highest perfection, and rich with the gifts of Ceres. It is dotted with trees, and a range of elms fringes it on the side of the river. Towards the middle of its pear-shaped area, or rather approaching the isthmus, stands the farm house, with rocks and woods behind. The principal points of view are the following: p. 195

1. The Lover's Leap.
2. A seat near two beeches on the edge of the precipice.
3. The Giant's Cave, which occupies the centre of the amphitheatre and overlooks Lancaut peninsula.
4. The halfway seat under a large beech tree.
5. The double view.
6. Above Piercewood.
7. The grotto.
8. The platform.
9. The alcove.

But other portions of the grounds not so frequently visited are noticed by an observant traveller. "From the Giant's cave, a road winds beautifully along the brow of the cliff to a grove of lofty oak, beech, and sycamore, which is cleared from underwood, in the centre of the extensive forest which spreads beneath the Lover's Leap. In this charming and sequestered spot is a cold bath supplied by a copious and transparent rill, which springs at the foot of the winding cliff, and ripples down the side of the declivity. The road then descends to Malridge meadow, on the bank of the Wye, where the river appears like a lake, and the fertile peninsula of Lancaut rises in a gentle declivity from the margin of the stream to the isthmus." p. 196

"A beautiful walk, two miles in length, skirts this meadow, at the foot of the stupendous range of Piercefield cliffs, and then mounts to the house by steps, cut in a steep rock. As the house stands several hundred feet above the river, the ascent is long and difficult, but the toil is amply repaid by the beauty and sublimity of the scene."

From some of these points, it may be observed, the Severn, seen *beyond* the Wye, appears to be considerably *above* it; and, however easily explained the phenomenon may be, an indescribably puzzling effect is produced by the idea that the latter river, a few miles lower down, runs into the former. The fact is noticed by Mr. Coxe, whose description is truly excellent.

"From the Lover's Leap the walk is carried through a thick mantle of forests, with occasional openings, which seem not the result of art or design, but the effect of chance or nature, and seats placed where the spectator may repose and view at leisure the scenery above, beneath, and around. This p. 197

Bowery walk
Of covert close, where scarce a speck of day
Falls on the lengthened gloom,

is conformant to the genius of Piercefield; the screen of wood prevents the uniformity of a bird's eye view, and the imperceptible bend of the amphitheatre conveys the spectator from one part of

the fairy region to the other without perceiving the gradation. Hence the Wye is sometimes concealed or half-observed by overhanging foliage, at others, wholly expanding to view, is seen sweeping beneath in a broad and circuitous channel; hence in one place the Severn spreads in the midst of a boundless expanse of country, and on the opposite side to the Wye; at another both rivers appear on the same side, and the Severn seems supported on the summit of the cliffs which form the bank of the Wye. Hence the same objects present themselves in different aspects, with varied accompaniments; hence the magic transition from the impervious gloom of the forest to open groves; from meadows and lawns, to rocks and precipices, and from the beauties of English landscape, to the wildness of Alpine scenery.

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“The summit of Wind Cliff, which towers above the northern extremity of the grounds, commands, in one point of view, the whole extent of this interesting scenery: as I stood on the brow of this precipice, I looked down on the fertile peninsula of Lancaut, surrounded with rocks and forests, contemplated the hanging wood, rich lawns, and romantic cliffs of Piercefield, the castle and town of Chepstow, and traced the Wye, sweeping in the true outline of beauty, from the Bangor crags to its junction with the Severn, which spreads into an estuary, and is lost in the distant ocean.

“A boundless extent of country is seen in every direction from this commanding eminence, comprehending not less than nine counties. In the midst of this expanse, I principally directed my attention to the subject of my tour, which now drew to a conclusion. I traced, with pleasing satisfaction, not unmixed with regret, the luxuriant vallies and romantic hills of this interesting country, which I had traversed in various directions, but I dwelt with peculiar admiration on the majestic rampart which forms its boundary to the west, and extends in one grand and unbroken outline, from the banks of the Severn to the Black Mountains,

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“Where the broken landscape, by degrees
Ascending, roughens into rigid hills;
O'er which the Cambrian mountains, like far clouds
That skirt the blue horizon, dusky rise.”

Till Piercefield was inherited by Valentine Morris, whose father had obtained it by purchase, the capabilities of the place were unknown, principally, we should think, from the view being hidden by a deep veil of forest. Morris saw everything, however, with the eye of taste; and without officiously intermeddling with nature, he contrived, by merely displaying the treasures that before were concealed, and by opening out paths through the woods to enable visitors to enjoy them, to render Piercefield the fairy-land it now appears. He seems to have been a man of a princely mind, but a thoughtless, unreflecting disposition. His beautiful property was nothing to him without admirers; and he was so grateful for admiration, that he caused his servants to wait upon and feast, gratuitously, even the vagrant stranger, as soon as his foot had entered the magic circle. It is hardly necessary to add, therefore, that by the time the beauties of Piercefield had become extensively known, their master was ruined. Various other circumstances, however, concurred to dissipate a large fortune, and at length he retired to the West Indies, where he had inherited considerable property. The following anecdote is told of his adieu to Piercefield:—

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“Before his final departure from England, he indulged himself with bidding adieu to Piercefield. In company with a friend he surveyed his own creation, for the last time, with apparent composure and manly resignation. On his return to Chepstow he was surrounded by the poor; who, throwing themselves on their knees, thanked him for the numerous instances of his bounty, and implored the blessing of Heaven on their generous benefactor. Even this affecting spectacle he bore with silent fortitude, and entered the chaise which conveyed him to London. But he no sooner reached the Gloucestershire side of the bridge, than his ear was struck with the mournful peal of bells, muffled, as is usual on the loss of departed friends; deeply affected with this mark of esteem and regret, he could no longer control his emotions, and burst into tears.”

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He was made lieutenant-governor, and afterwards governor in chief, of St. Vincent's; where his affairs prospered so much that he had almost recovered his fortune, when the island was attacked by the French. With his usual nobility of spirit, he advanced large sums out of his

private funds towards the defence, but all in vain: St. Vincent's was taken, and Morris Piercefield never could obtain from government either his outlay or arrears. He returned to England to seek redress; was arrested by his creditors, and himself a creditor of the country to a large extent, languished in a debtor's prison for seven years. His books, movables, trifles, everything were sold for bread; and his wife sunk under the horrors of their situation, and became insane. Morris at length recovered his liberty, and Lord North determined to shame his predecessors in the ministry, by performing an act of common honesty. A minister, however, is seldom honest from choice, because the outlay of money curtails his resources, and because the wilful withholding, even of a just debt, does not involve his character in society as a man of honour. Lord North accordingly delayed the restitution as long as he could; and poor Valentine Morris in 1789, was indebted to his brother-in-law for a bed on which to die.

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We cannot refrain from adding an anecdote relating to one of the family of Walters, to whom the estate of Piercefield formerly belonged.

"Holding one day a conversation with Mr. Knowles, whom he employed in building the alcove, he made inquiries concerning the family of Walters, and asked if any of them were yet living. Knowles replied that William, the brother of John who sold the estate, was still alive and in great distress. 'Bring him to Piercefield,' said Morris, 'and I will make him welcome.' 'If you would give him your whole estate he could not walk, he is so much affected with the gout in his feet, and earns a precarious livelihood by fishing.' 'If he then cannot come to me, I will take the first opportunity of calling on him.' Being some time afterwards engaged with Knowles in forming an opening in the wood, he saw two men in a boat; 'Stay here,' he said to Knowles, 'I will cross the river in that boat, and examine whether the objects I want to show can be seen from hence.' Descending hastily he hailed the watermen, leaped into the boat, was ferried over, and on his return entered into conversation with the men, and inquired their names and condition. 'My name,' said one of them, 'is * * * * *, I am a native of Chepstow; and that man, pointing to his companion, is William Walters.' 'What, Walters of Piercefield!' exclaimed Morris. 'Yes, please your honour, I am the brother of John, who sold the estate that you now enjoy.' Morris made no reply; but giving a gratuity to each of the men, leaped on shore, rapidly ascended the hill, and rejoining Knowles, cried, 'I have been talking with Walters:' taking out several guineas, he added, 'carry these to him, and tell him that he shall never want while it is in my power to assist him.' Knowles suggested, that as the man was much addicted to liquor, he would render him more service by a weekly allowance. The next market-day one of Morris's servants carried to Walters a joint of meat, and a small sum of money, which was continued weekly until his death. Morris defrayed the expenses of his funeral, and his carriage conveyed the corpse to St. Arvans, where it was interred in the family vault." [204]

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From Chepstow to the confluence of the Wye with the Severn, the distance is three miles; but although the banks are in general lofty, they possess no features of interest to the descending traveller. It may be sufficient merely to name the Red Rocks, the Hardwick Cliffs, and Thornwell Woods. After these St. Ewan's Rocks appear on the left bank; and we glide gradually into the wide expanse of the Severn. A prolongation, however, of the left bank continues for some time after we are fairly out of the Wye; the peninsula of Beachley, extending almost half way across the Severn. From this is the ferry of the Aust Passage, supposed to have been named after one of the Roman generals. A steam-packet now plies instead of an open boat, and lands passengers at a handsome pier at all hours of the tide.

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On the Monmouthshire coast, a little way beyond the mouth of the Wye, is the Black Rock Inn of the New Passage ferry, supposed, notwithstanding its name, to be as ancient as the other. This ferry was suppressed by Oliver Cromwell, on account of a catastrophe which took place here of a very interesting description. When the king was pursued by his enemies, he crossed the Severn to Chiswell Pill on the opposite side; but when the boatmen returned to the Black Rock, they found a party of sixty armed republicans, waiting to follow the royal fugitive. The ferrymen were royalists, but there was no resisting commands enforced by so many drawn swords, and reluctantly they took the enemies of their prince on board, and pulled across the Severn. They landed their unwelcome freight upon the English Stones, which appeared to be a part of the shore, but was in reality separated by water, fordable only at low tide. The tide had just turned. Some moments, no doubt, were lost in dismay, and some in shouting to the treacherous boatmen, who lay upon their oars to watch the event. The English Stones disappeared with a suddenness customary in the flow of that river; and the cries of sixty drowning men were lost in the rush of the wild waters of the Severn.

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Before the Black Rock Inn, and near the mouth of the Wye, is Mathern, formerly the episcopal residence of the bishops of Llandaff. The church close by is the one pointed to by tradition as having been raised over the ashes of Theodoric, the hermit-king, who desecrated the holy solitude of Tintern with the sounds of battle.

"The manor of Matherne, where there is now a palace, was given to the bishops of Llandaff by Maurice, king of Glamorganshire, about the year 560, on the following occasion:—His father, St. Theodoric, as he is usually called, having resigned his crown to this son, embraced the life of a hermit. The Saxons invading the country, Theodoric was reluctantly called from his hermitage to take the command of the army; he defeated them near Tintern upon the Wye. Being mortally wounded in the engagement,

he precipitated his return, that he might die among his friends, and desired his son to erect a church, and bury him on the spot where he breathed his last: but scarcely had he proceeded five miles, when he expired at a place near the conflux of the Wye and Severn. Hence, according to his desire, a chapel being erected, his body was placed in a stone coffin. As I was giving orders to repair this coffin, which was either broken by chance or decayed by age, I discovered his bones, not in the smallest degree changed, though after a period of a thousand years, the skull retaining the aperture of a large wound, which appeared as if it had been recently inflicted. Maurice gave the contiguous estate to the church, and assigned to the place the name of Merthur Tewdrick, or *the martyrdom of Theodorick*; who, because he perished in battle against the enemies of the christian name, is esteemed a martyr."

Our task is now finished: we turn away to seek "fresh fields and pastures new," but the murmur of the Wye will remain long in our ear.

DISTANCES IN THE TOUR OF THE WYE.

From the source of the Wye to	miles.
Stedva Gerrig	2½
Rhaiader	17½
Builth	14
Hay	15¼
Clifford Castle	2½
Hereford	16½
Ross	14¼

FROM ROSS TO MONMOTH AND CHEPSTOW.

<i>By Land.</i>			
	<i>m.</i>	<i>f.</i>	<i>p.</i>
From Ross by the turnpike to Monmouth	10	0	0
In a straight line, or as the crow flies	9	0	10
From Ross to Chepstow by the turnpike	24	0	0
By Coleford	21	0	0
In a straight line	16	4	0

The base or supposed tunnel of the hill, between Coldwell and the New Weir, is six hundred yards; the circuit of the river is four miles two furlongs.

<i>By Water.</i>			
	<i>m.</i>	<i>f.</i>	<i>p.</i>
From Ross to Goodrich Castle	4	4	0
To Coldwell	7	0	0
To New Weir	4	2	0
To Monmouth	5	1	0
From Ross to Monmouth	20	7	0
To Tintern	10	4	0
To Chepstow	6	4	60
From Ross to Chepstow	37	7	60

NAMES OF PLACES AS THEY OCCUR IN DESCENDING THE RIVER FROM ROSS.

RIGHT BANK.	LEFT BANK.
Wilton Bridge and Castle	
Weir End	Hill or New Hill Court
Penraig House and Wood	

GOODRICH Court	
Castle	
Priory or Haverford	Walford Church
North side of Coppet Wood Hill	Lays Hill
	Bishop's Wood
	Ruerdean Church
Court Field	Lidbrook
Welsh Bicknor	Rosemary Topping
Mr. Warren's Monument	COLDWELL ROCKS
South side of Coppet Wood Hill	SYMOND'S YAT
Goodrich Church	
Whitchurch	NEW WEIR
Great Doward	Highmeadow Woods
Arthur's Vale	
Little Doward and Lays House	Table Mount
Dixton Church	
MONMOUTH	
Troy House	Halfway House
Penalt	Redbrook
Whitebrook	
Pen-y-van Hill and Maypole	Wye Seal-house
Paper Mills	
Pilstone House	Big's Weir House
LLANDOGO	St. Briavels
Coedithal Weir	Hudknolls
Llyn Weir	Brook Weir
Tintern	
Fielding's House	
TINTERN ABBEY	
	Bennagor Crags
WYNDCLIFF and Moss Cottage	Fryer's Rocks
Lover's Leap	Lancaut
PIERCEFIELD	Piercefield Bay
Twelve Apostles	Tiddenham Rocks
CHEPSTOW	Tutshill

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FROM MONMOUTH TO CHEPSTOW BY THE NEW ROAD.

Upper Redbrook	2¼ miles.
Lower Redbrook	¼
Florence College	3
Big's Weir	½
Llandogo	1
Tintern	2¾
Tintern Abbey	¾
Wyndcliff and Moss Cottage	2
St. Arvans	1
Crossway Green	1½
Chepstow	½
	15½

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Footnotes

[41] Duncomb's Collections.

[63] Monumenta Antiqua.

[85] Whateley's Observations on Modern Gardening.

[106] Of late years, Mr. Pennie attempted to revive a taste for such subjects in his "Britain's Historical Drama," but without effect. It a work, however, of considerable merit. Southey's Madoc has only a slender groundwork in British history.

[158] According to Dugdale, £132. 1s. 4d.; and Speed, £256. 11s. 6d.

[204] Historical Tour.

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