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HISTORY OF LLANGOLLEN AND ITS VICINITY;

INCLUDING A
CIRCUIT OF ABOUT SEVEN MILES.

BY W. T. SIMPSON.

Second Edition, with Marginal Notes.

LLANGOLLEN:
PUBLISHED BY DAVID ROBERTS, BRIDGE-STREET.
1853.

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LLANGOLLEN AND ITS VICINITY.

p. 1

“Here let me still with simple Nature live,
My lowly field-flowers on her altar lay;
Enjoy the blessings that she meant to give,
And calmly pass my inoffensive day.”

The attraction of North Wales, by its romantic scenery, the antiquity of its language, and the well authenticated records of its desperate struggle for independence, renders every part of the Principality interesting, and perhaps none more so than the beautifully picturesque town and neighbourhood of Llangollen, which have deservedly excited the attention and admiration of a vast number of strangers and antiquarians. Nor have the expectations of its numerous visitors been disappointed; for, though the Alps may raise their towering summits to a greater height—may embosom in their dark recesses more ample lakes, and give rise to more magnificent rivers—yet even they cannot present a more pleasing variety of scenery, or more picturesque views, than those with which Llangollen is surrounded.

This small market town is on the border of North Wales, and is situated in that part of the county of Denbigh which adjoins Shropshire. It is on the south ^[2a] bank of the river Dee, and the mail road from London to Holyhead passes through the town. The distance from London to Llangollen is about one hundred and ninety miles, and from the latter place to Holyhead seventy-seven miles.

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The town consists of one long badly paved street, and a short cross one, together with some courts and alleys, called squares, but which at present ill deserve an appellation generally conveying to the mind an idea of neatness, if not of superiority, as they are for the most part formed with obscure mean-looking houses, built of the dark-coloured silicious stone procured from the rocky bed of the river, and from the surrounding hills. The houses are seldom more than two stories high, and have a very sombre appearance, except where the owners have had the good taste to avail themselves of the lime which is near at hand, in rough-casting or plastering the fronts. The difference of the appearance of the buildings thus finished is so advantageous that it is to be hoped the plan will be generally adopted. ^[2b]

Increase of population has here the effect which is usually attributed to it, viz. a manifest improvement in the town. The last census states the number of houses at 289, and of the population at 1287; but the inhabitants may at this time (A.D. 1827) be fairly estimated at 1500, and habitations in proportion. ^[3a] Among the newly-erected houses are some very neat buildings, at which private lodgings may be obtained, with every requisite accommodation.

p. 3

Llangollen has a market on Saturday, and five ^[3b] fairs in the year, viz. on the last Friday in January, the 17th of March, the 31st of May, the 21st of August, and on the 22nd of November; at which, horses, horned cattle, pigs, butter, cheese, &c. are sold. A market house once stood where the Hand Gardens now are, and is a convenience much wanted. Besides the London Mail to Holyhead, which passes through Llangollen every afternoon at five o'clock, ^[3c] and leaves the letter bags, which it takes up again about eight o'clock every morning, there are regular stage coaches passing to and from London and Holyhead every day. Light vans, for the conveyance of luggage, &c. pass twice a week from Salop. ^[3d] There are also waggon conveyances, through Wrexham, to Chester; ^[3e] and boats on a collateral branch of the Ellesmere Canal, which start at stated periods for Liverpool, &c.

p. 4

There are twelve ^[4] licensed inns and public houses in this little town, all of them very

respectable; and whether it is owing to superior management, or to the excellence of the water, which is the most pure imaginable, and flows abundantly in every part of the town, the ale brewed in Llangollen is in great and deserved repute all over the kingdom.

Two principal inns and hotels adorn the town—the Hand inn, which is in the centre, near the church; and the King’s Head, at the west end, near the bridge. The excellent accommodations afforded in both of them are not surpassed; they are under the best regulations, and abound with elegance and convenience. Post carriages and horses are kept at both houses, and the harp resounds in their halls. The Viceroy of the sister kingdom, as well as the nobility, seem to regard Llangollen as a favourite resting-place, in passing from one country to the other.

Mountains and hills enclose the town on every side. On the south, the Berwyn Mountains raise their lofty heads. On the north, Castell Dinas Bran, vulgarly called Crow Castle, seated on its conical summit, frowns over the town in ruined grandeur, and is backed with the vast and wonderful range of lime-stone, which forms a ridge stratum super stratum, and called the Eglwyseg Rocks. A portion of these rocks, with the little tumulus-like hill of Pen y Coed, forms the eastern barrier. On the west, the lofty Gerant, ^[5] or Moel y Barbwr, with the Bwlch Coed Herddyn, and other distant mountains, close the scene.

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The sacred Dee, which here foams along its rocky bed, is crossed by a stone bridge at the western extremity of the town; the church stands in the centre; and at the east end is Plas Newydd, the residence of the two highly respected ladies whom Miss Seward has recorded in song.

Having thus given a brief sketch of Llangollen, embosomed as it is in a vale where all the beauties of nature seem to concentrate, I shall proceed to retrace and fill up the outline of the picture, by classing under the name of each remarkable place its description, and the particulars of its history, quoting from and referring to authorities as I proceed; but as, from the varied scenery and the romantic views with which this neighbourhood abounds, an attempt to do justice to its several beauties would be vain, I shall abstain from endeavouring fully to describe what requires a more nervous hand than mine to paint; leaving to the reader’s taste full scope to select the scenes most congenial to his disposition, assuring him, that whether the dreary waste, over whose vast plains sterility and barrenness hold eternal sway; or the luxuriance of verdant meads and shady groves—the sombre haunts of secluded retirement; or the soul-inspiring gaiety of nature in her most lightsome mood—be most in unison with his frame of mind, here may be found solace for the melancholy, amusement for the gay, exercise for the naturalist, and food for the antiquarian and philosopher.

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As a commencement of my proposed tour, I shall now beg my reader to accompany me on the north side of the Dee, to Clawdd Offa, or Offa’s Dyke, the ancient boundary of this part of the Principality.

CLAWDD OFFA.

“The best concerted schemes men lay for fame
Die fast away.”—

—“O lamentable sight! at once
The labours of whole ages lumber down,
A hideous and misshapen mass of ruin.”

Offa was the eleventh King of Mercia, and succeeded Ethelbald, A.D. 757. He was born deaf, lame, and blind. About the year 776, ^[6a] he caused a deep ditch and rampire to be made across the country, to curb the incursions of the Welch, beginning at the waters of the Dee, at Basingwerke Abbey, in Flintshire, to the river Wye, in Herefordshire; ^[6b] or, as some say, to the Severn sea. Like the famous wall of China, it is carried over rivers, rocks, valleys, and mountains, and extends nearly one hundred miles. ^[7a] I intend to commence my excursion with this ancient Dyke, and pursue it as far as is consistent with my plan. It runs through the parish of Ruabon, which is on the west side.

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RUABON, OR RHIWABON,

Is a neat pleasant village, about six miles east of Llangollen. It is surrounded by mines of coal, ironstone, &c. with which the neighbourhood abounds. One of the recently formed joint stock companies, denominated the British Iron Company, is said to have expended on two works in this neighbourhood £134,952. ^[7b] There are also other large ironworks, &c. within about two miles of the town.

The church is dedicated to St. Mary, and is a very respectable ancient structure. It has an excellent organ, and a pretty font of white marble, both given by the late Sir W. W. Wynn, Bart. who has left behind him a character for beneficence that has been rarely if ever equalled. This is the burial-place of the highly respected family of Wynnstay; and in the church are some ancient monumental remembrances, as well as some more recently erected ones, of Sir W. W. Wynn’s ancestors, well worthy inspection. Dr. Powel, from whose celebrated translation of the Chronicle of Caradoc of Llancarvan I have obtained much information, was Vicar of Ruabon in 1571, and was buried here. The monumental records of Sir W. W. Wynn’s family are highly panegyric; but

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I cannot in this small work give copies of the epitaphs, and to record the good deeds of this excellent family would fill a folio.

Adjoining the town of Ruabon, a road passes into the park, and to the mansion, of

WYNNSTAY.

The hereditary estate of the ancient and honourable family of Sir Watkyn Williams Wynn, Bart. A porter resides at a small house on the left side of the entrance to the park, who admits all strangers requesting it. A beautiful road leads to the mansion, and large herds of deer exhibit their graceful forms and agility among the surrounding trees. Offa's Dyke runs through the grounds, which are of very great extent, well wooded, tastefully laid out, and kept in nice order. The house is very extensive, and the stables also capacious. The premises have acquired their present magnitude by various additions made at different times by the possessors.

In the eleventh century it was the residence of Madog Gryffydd Mailor, [8a] Lord of Bromfield, and of Dinas Bran, near Llangollen. It was then called Wattstay, from another old dyke still visible, named Watt's Dyke; and the space between that and Offa's Dyke was a sort of neutral territory, on which the Welch and Saxons used to traffic with each other. [8b] When the noble family of the Wynns became its possessors, the original name was changed to Wynnstay. The house is replete with elegance and convenience, and is the seat of hospitality as unbounded as the benevolence of its owner's heart. Under the auspices of the late and present noble possessors, both the edifice and grounds have nearly attained the ne plus ultra of perfection; yet at this time a vast addition is making to the magnitude of the park, by changing the direction of the road to Oswestry. In short, Wynnstay is one of the most beautiful seats, not only in Wales, but even in the United Kingdom.

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In the park stands a fluted freestone column, erected to the memory of the late Sir W. W. Wynn, Bart. by his mother, who survived him. The elevation, after a design by Wyatt, is about one hundred feet, and is surmounted by a bronze urn. The base also is of bronze, decorated with eagles and oak leaves, and bears this inscription:—

"Filio optimo, mater, eheu! superstes."

Which may be thus translated:—

"A surviving mother, alas! to the best of sons."

A spiral staircase runs within the pillar to the top, from whence is a fine view of the park and grounds.

There are other recently erected decorative buildings on the domain; one of which, called Waterloo Tower, and built to commemorate the glorious victory obtained at Waterloo by the Duke of Wellington, commands a very extensive prospect; on it a flag is always displayed when Sir Watkyn is at Wynnstay. Another tower is built on a most beautiful spot on the bank of the Dee, called Nant y Bellan, i.e. the Dale of the Martin; and was erected, as I learn from the Oration in the Ellesmere Report, p. 24, to the memory of those ancient Britons who fell in quelling a dangerous rebellion in a neighbouring island, now more closely united to us. Near this place a boat is kept for the purpose of crossing the river.

p. 10

From the old house a road is continued on the rampire of Offa's Dyke for nearly two miles, and bears the whimsical title of Llwybr y Gath, i.e. Cat's Path, although it is wide enough for two carriages to pass abreast. The ardent and inquisitive traveller will find in the interesting domain of Wynnstay much to examine, much to amuse, and much to admire.

Returning through the park to the high road, I crossed the Dee over a recently erected iron bridge; and entering the parish of Chirk, I soon regained Offa's Dyke, the peculiar features of which plainly distinguish it. The Dyke crosses the road to London about two hundred yards to the west of Whitehurst's new toll gate, and about four miles and a half from Llangollen. Pursuing the line of the Dyke towards Chirk Castle, I found in it a number of large and long grey stones, mossed over, and lying confusedly at the bottom. They are very remarkable, as there are no quarries in the neighbourhood, from which such stones could be procured; and as they all lay in one spot, I conjecture that they have been used to mark the graves of the slain in the year 1165, when Henry II. made his first expedition against North Wales, by way of the Berwyn Mountains:—"He assembled a large army at Oswelt Tree, and detached a number of men to try the passes into Wales. There was a narrow way through the Dyke, near Castell Crogen, now Chirk Castle; they were set upon by a party of Welchmen, as they would have passed this strait, and many of them were there slain, and buried in that ditch; where (says my Author) their graves are now (i.e. 1697) to be seen." [11]

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The place was called Adwy'r Beddau, i.e. Pass of the Graves. There is a field or two near the place still called Tir y Beddau, i.e. Land, or Field of the Dead. I visited this place, and found the field under cultivation; and it is possible that the stones may have been removed out of the way of the plough, to the place where they now lie. On examining an old survey of Chirk Lordship, I found two or three parcels of land lying contiguous to each other, and on each side of the Dyke, at this place, bearing the same name, Tir y Beddau.

From this field of the dead I bent my way along the Dyke, through bramble, bush, and brier, to the no small disturbance of its numerous inhabitants, the nimble squirrels, the rabbits, and the pheasants, springing before me every thirty or forty yards. At length I arrived at the brink of a sheet of water called the pool, on which numbers of wild ducks, coots, and other aquatic birds were disporting. The ditch and rampire continued through the middle of that pool, and the rampire is still traceable from the boat house on the opposite side; and running along the ley in front of Chirk Castle to a wood yard on the west side of it, it again deepens, and assumes its form. As it approaches the Ceiriog river, which skirts the south side of the park, it appears indeed a barrier. I took the depth a little from the farm or wood yard, and found it about fifty feet, a little farther on sixty feet, and near its termination at Pont Melin y Castell, or the Castle Mill, it is about eighty feet. At this point there is a bridge over the river, up whose banks, at about half a mile distance, is a farm still retaining the name of Crogen Isaf, or Lower Crogen.

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In the bank of limestone rock below the bridge, and on the side of the river, is a cavern or subterraneous passage, of unknown extent, and which I have not had opportunity to explore. About Crogen Isaf, and near a bridge of very capacious span across the Ceiriog, called Pont Madoc, a powder mill was about to be erected; but when the work was nearly completed, the projector became unable to proceed, and it was discontinued.

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Thinking it best not to break the narrative of my progress along the ancient Dyke, by which I passed so near to the venerable Castle of Chirk, I have hitherto purposely omitted an account of that celebrated mansion. I shall now, however, return to it.

CHIRK CASTLE.

This noble and ancient pile was built on the site of Castell Crogen, about the year 1011. I must here hazard a conjecture concerning this Castle. I am of opinion that the old Castle of Crogen was then enlarged and repaired, not entirely rebuilt; as John Myddleton, who communicated a paper to the Society of Antiquarians on the subject, says it was begun A.D. 1011, and was finished in 1013, which makes it only about two years, probably too short a period for the total re-erection of so large an edifice.

The building is square, and is flanked by four massive bastions or rounders, one at each corner. There is a fifth in the centre of the front, of the same dimensions as the others. The length of the front is about two hundred and fifty feet; the square court or quadrangle within the walls is about one hundred and sixty-five feet, by one hundred. The grand entrance is under a lofty arched gateway; the side entrance is by a double flight of stone stairs, through a postern and colonnade, into the quadrangle. I measured the walls of the north-west bastion, and found them more than fourteen feet thick, and all apparently of solid masonry. The whole of this extensive and ponderous building is of hewn stone.

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On the west side of the quadrangle is the door of the dungeon, which in feudal times has been the melancholy abode of many hapless victims, who fell under their Lord's displeasure. There is at the entrance a case or hollow in the thickness of the wall, for a portcullis; and there are two places of confinement, one below the other. The first is not formed so far below the surface of the earth as totally to exclude the light of day; it being admitted obliquely from above. There is also a fire-place; so that it is probable this might be a prison for less serious crimes, or for delinquents of noble quality. The deep dungeon is far below the first, the descent to it being by forty-two steps; and is said to be as deep as the walls are high. It is small and circular, and about twelve or fourteen yards in circumference. The iron doors are now taken away, and one of oak is substituted, which bears upon it numberless notches, not, like those of Sterne's captive, made to mark the days of misery, but the number of horns of strong ale drank at one sitting by a party assembled in this place to drink to the health of the Lord of the Castle. It is a record of the strength of their heads, if not of their attachment to their Lord. High up in the wall are two iron hooks, fixed to support a large cheese, which was formerly kept here for the entertainment of those who choose to visit this gloomy place. The sides of the dungeon are partly formed of the rock on which the Castle is founded, as is also the floor.

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Returning to the light of the sun, on the adjoining south side of the quadrangle is the servants' hall, in which are deposited various ancient and family relics. The walls are hung round with boar spears, pikes, and halberts; arquebuses, matchlocks, and other old fire-arms; saddles, spurs, and various pieces of armour; enormous and curious spoils of the chace, &c.

Among a variety of deer antlers, is the head of a stag, of which the following curious story is told:—A young woman, crossing the Black Park at the early dawn of morning, was assailed by this furious animal. Her cries for assistance were heard by one of the numerous retainers of the Castle, whose dwelling was nigh, and he promptly ran to her aid. The stag, no way intimidated, made fiercely at the man, and gored him to death. The Black Park is now converted into a colliery.

Opposite to the servants' hall is the main entrance into the Castle from the quadrangle. In the large and lofty entrance hall are some fine paintings, and a superb billiard table. The grand stairs front the entrance, and lead to the stately apartments of the Castle, which have been lately renovated in a superior style of elegance by Mrs. Biddulph, ^[15] the present inheritor. A saloon, a gallery, and a drawing-room, in particular, are beautifully finished, and banish from the mind the idea of a gloomy Castle, which its exterior seems to promise.

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The rooms are enriched with some good paintings; and in the saloon are some finely executed portraits of the family. In this room there is a cabinet of most exquisite workmanship. The views from the different windows are inexpressibly beautiful, and are said to embrace a prospect extending into seventeen counties.

In the civil wars this Castle was besieged by Cromwell's adherents, and one of its sides, with three of its towers, overthrown. It is mentioned as a prodigious exertion of labour, and in which no cost was spared, that the wing was rebuilt in one year, at the expense of eighty thousand pounds; which I think strengthens my idea of the present Castle being only an enlargement and repair of the more ancient Castell Crogen.

About a mile and a half from the Castle stands the pleasant little village of

CHIRK.

It is an example of simple neatness and good taste. The cottages are built in the Swiss style, with singular rustic elegance, and have the appearance of comfort and quiet. The inhabitants are mainly indebted for the beauty of their rustic cottages to the Countess Dungannon of Brynkinallt, and for the uniformity and useful convenience of water in every house, which is conveyed by leaden pipes, to the exertions and influence of Mrs. Myddelton Biddulph, the owner of the Castle, and the elder branch of the much-respected family of the Myddeltons. She is Lady of the Manor of Chirk, and has built and endowed a school for the education of the village children. Her exertions to promote the comfort and interest of her tenantry are worthy imitation.

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Near the church, and now enclosed in a garden, stands an artificial mount, which Mr. Pennant conjectures to be coeval with Offa's Dyke. ^[17] A similar one stood on the opposite side, where now the road runs. These mounts were probably Saxon stations, and curbs to the Welch, to prevent them from violating the line of demarcation which Offa had formed.

The church is a capacious old structure, dedicated to St. Mary, and was formerly an impropriation belonging to the Abbey of Valle Crucis. It has a tower steeple, containing six bells. All the east side of the church wall within is nearly covered with marble monuments of the Chirk Castle family. A bust of Sir Thomas Myddelton, and another of his Lady, are well executed. There are also many other remarkable *memento mori's* within the church, well worth the attention of those who love to muse on

"Names once famed, now dubious or forgot,
And buried midst the wreck of things which were."

I believe there are not standing within the same compass of ground in the kingdom of Great Britain, three mansions so eminently deserving admiration for magnificence, grandeur, and beauty, as Wynnstay, Chirk Castle, and Brynkinallt; the latter of which I shall now proceed to describe.

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BRYNKINALLT

Is about one mile from the village of Chirk, and is the ancient seat of the noble family of the Trevors, as I find in an authentic genealogical table, of which the following is a short extract:—"In the reign of King Richard II. there was a noble peer, by name Geofry Lord Trevor, and also John Trevor, Bishop of St. Asaph, and Chancellor of Chester. He continued in the bishoprick to the sixth year of King Henry IV. And in the reign of King Henry VI. (1421) lived two brothers descended of this honourable family, namely, John and Richard. John, the eldest brother, was seated at Brynkinallt. He married Agnes, daughter and heiress of Peter Chambre, of Pool, Esq. by whom he had issue five sons, who laid the foundation of many noble branches. Robert, the eldest, succeeded his father at Brynkinallt. He married Catherine, daughter and heiress of Llewellen Ap Howel De Mould, and had issue. From Edward, the second son, by Amy, daughter of James Ryffin, Esq. descended Mark Trevor, from whom descended the Viscount Dungannon in Ireland." From him the nobleman who at present inherits the title, and the residence of Brynkinallt, is a lineal descendant; and under his auspices, aided by the exquisite taste of his Countess, this superb edifice has attained the acme of beauty.

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To rush at once into this charming labyrinth of delight would fill the mind with confusion; and the beholder would be at a loss in what direction to commence his observations, where every part claims his admiration. I therefore beg my readers will accompany me about two miles on the Oswestry road, to Bryn y Gwyla Lodge, a beautiful triumphal arch-like entrance into Bryn y Gwyla Park, through which a new road is now forming to Brynkinallt. This part of the domain is in Shropshire; the interesting stream of the Ceiriog dividing Shropshire from Denbighshire at this place.

As you proceed towards the river, whose sides are charmingly clothed with forest trees, and whose banks are fringed with shrubs to the water edge, the eye is caught by some of the pinnacles of Brynkinallt, and by the blue smoke arising from the mansion, which seems playfully to linger among the lofty summits of the luxuriant trees that adorn it. Proceeding on the highest road, called the Green Drive, which runs along the top of the Hanging Wood, whose majestic and venerable timber seems to continue the luxuriant line of wavy branches to the very mansion, through one of the natural vistas which here and there present themselves, Brynkinallt bursts upon the sight in all its beauty, embosomed in the softened and variously tinted foliage of the

plantations which surround it. From this spot the most interesting and picturesque view of the place is obtained; and I believe it is the point from whence an artist of some celebrity has designed a picture of the mansion.

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At the termination of this drive the murmuring Ceiriog is crossed by an ornamental stone bridge, at the foot of which, on the bank of the river, stands a simple rustic cottage, richly clothed with ivy, and formed of unhewn pebble stones. At this lodge is kept a key of the bridge gate; and a bell attached to the gate procures attendance. Crossing the bridge into Denbighshire, the elegant taste of the inheritor of the place begins to display itself. New beauties appear at every step, as you approach the house; pheasants feed in numbers on the smooth verdant lawn before the windows, and seem to give an earnest of the quiet and security of the domain.

This beautiful place is thus mentioned by Mr. Pennant:—"From Chirk (he says) I made an excursion to Brynkinallt about a mile below the village: this had been the seat of the Trevors. The house is of brick, built in 1619." [20] Nor can I find more attention bestowed on this charming place by any of the numerous tourists who have given an account of their excursions to the public; and I am at a loss to account why this, the most unique and beautiful spot in the neighbourhood, should thus long have escaped attention.

The house is undoubtedly the work of Inigo Jones, and was built on the site of a former mansion of brick, either in the latter part of the reign of Queen Elizabeth, or early in the reign of James I. The additions made by the present worthy possessor are ornamental and useful, and are formed so judiciously, and so strictly in character with the old part, as not to be distinguished from the original design. I should call the style demi-gothic; it is now cased over with mastic or Roman cement, and has all the appearance of well hewn stone; and some think it will have equal durability.

p. 21

The house is formed with a noble mansion-like centre, decorated with minarets and pinnacles, and flanked by two low retiring wings, making altogether a very beautiful and ornamental front. The grand entrance is through a conservatory and viranda, elegantly decorated with choice flowers and exotic plants. Over the inner entrance door are the arms of the Marquis of Wellesley, Viceroy of Ireland, emblazoned upon glass, occupying the whole width of the doorway, and bearing an inscription, likewise painted on the glass, signifying that the Marquis presented this painted glass as a mark of his esteem to his dear friend and relation, Lord Viscount Dungannon. The execution is good, and does great credit to the Irish artist.

Advancing a few steps into the interior, the eye is arrested by the brilliancy of the scene which breaks upon the sight. Immediately in front, through the spacious hall, is a grand flight of stairs, terminated by a richly stained glass window, and leading to a gallery that surrounds the hall, and which is decorated with the busts of much distinguished and eminent persons, as the King, the Duke of York, the Duke of Wellington, &c. Up the passage to the left hand, the view is bounded by the superb dining room; and on the right it terminates in a charming conservatory, through which is a way to the pleasure grounds and gardens. From the dining room on the extreme left, to the conservatory on the right, it is about one hundred and sixty feet.

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To particularize or to give an adequate idea of the superb and very tasteful decorations of every room in this elegant mansion is far beyond my power of description; and therefore I dare not make the attempt. Suffice it to say, that every nook seems decorated by the hand of taste, guided by the most correct judgment; all is elegantly superb, and chastely grand. In some of the windows is much old painted glass, particularly in the library, where there are some very excellent specimens.

Here is also a valuable collection of china; and in one of the rooms are some beautiful vases of that fragile material.

The mansion is adorned throughout with valuable pictures by the old masters, some of which his Lordship selected in Italy. There is a landscape near the fire-place, in the same room where the china vases stand, painted by Claude Lorraine, which is a most beautiful production of that great master. In short,

"Whatever in this worldly state
Is sweet and pleasing unto living sense,
Or that may daintiest fantasie aggrate,
Is poured forth with plentiful dispense,
And made there to abound with lavish affluence."

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SPENCER.

The beauty and elegance abounding in this place must be seen to be justly appreciated; and the urbanity and gentlemanly condescension of the noble owner, in affording me the means of gratifying my inquiries and curiosity, will never be effaced from my memory.

In the adjoining shrubbery is an ornamental building called the china room, fitted up (it would be superfluous to say elegantly) by Lady Dungannon. Within the room are deposited the most valuable and beautiful specimens of old china. The walls are covered with plates, dishes, &c. in many various figures and forms. There is a fire-place in the room, and a small portable collection of books for the amusement of a passing hour. In a room adjoining is an assemblage of cream-coloured pottery, in its greatest variety; and behind all, is a cool, well arranged dairy.

To some, and to ladies in particular, the examination of the china room will afford the highest gratification. For myself, I must confess, the exquisite specimens of art I had just been viewing in the mansion so entirely engrossed my mind, that I could not look on these later morceaus with the attention they merited.

I have before stated that the river Ceiriog runs through part of the domain; and it is made to contribute much to its beauty. It passes through a deep and thickly wooded dingle, and a rural and shady walk winds along the glen to another entrance lodge, about half a mile from Chirk. The way is enlivened by game springing before you at every step, and rousing the attention from that soothing melancholy which the umbrageous solemnity of the walk is calculated to inspire.

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There are four lodges, or gates of entrance into the domain, inhabited by some of his Lordship's dependents. They are all built in an ornamental and romantic style; but about them, though so varied in design, there are no disjointed or distorted features to offend the most fastidious.

“And that which all fair work doth much aggrace,
The art which wrought it all appeareth in no place.”

SPENCER.

Brynkinallt, as well as Chirk, is on the English side of Offa's Dyke, to which I shall now return on my way to the Berwyn Mountains; observing by the bye, that although this part of the country is called Wales, yet that Offa's Dyke, made in the year 776, cut it off from the Principality, and John of Salisbury, in his Polycraticon, writeth thus:—“Harold ordained a law, that what Welchman soever should be found with a weapon on this side the limit which he had set them (that is to say, Offa's Dyke,) he should have his right hand cut off by the King's officers.” [24] So, as Harold II. reigned nearly three hundred years after the Dyke was cut, it is plain, by this law, that it continued to be considered the line of demarcation at that time; and even to this day the bell of vassalage, the curfew, is rung every night at Chirk, that is, on the English side the Dyke; but is never heard at Llangollen, which is on the Welch side. This goes far to prove that William's English law reached Chirk, and no farther. Leaving the Dyke, I now return to the Berwyn Mountains.

p. 25

BERWYN MOUNTAINS.

“Clouds rest on the hills: spirits fly, and travellers fear.

“Where are our chiefs of old? Where our Kings of mighty name? The fields of their battle are silent: scarce their mossy tombs remain.”

Returning towards Llangollen by the old road near Chirk Castle, called Oswestry way, the Berwyn Mountains begin to raise their lofty summits. [25] These Mountains occupy the eastern side of Merionethshire, and branch into the counties of Denbigh and Montgomery. Their southern boundary is the river Tannant; their northern the Dee. Their length from north to south is about sixteen miles; their breadth from east to west varying from five to ten miles. [26a] Their highest tops are Cader Fronwen, or the Whitebreast, and Cader Ferwyn. On the summit of the former a large quantity of stones, collected from a distance, and brought here with much labour and difficulty, are cast round a stone pillar, marking the burial-place of some chief, whose very name is now forgotten.

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These Mountains, as I have before said, form the southern side of the vale of Llangollen; and forming a frontier barrier for this part of North Wales, they have been the scene of many a bloody contest, and on these hills the hardy sons of Cambria have successfully opposed the encroaching armies of their Saxon neighbours. I trust my readers will excuse me if I relate one of the most interesting events of that kind which took place on this part of the Berwyn Mountains, and within my prescribed limits.

Henry II. King of England, being exasperated by the repeated predatory incursions of the Welch, [26b] and by the advantage they took of ravaging the English territories in his frequent absence, and finding that no treaties could bind them, resolved on his return from Normandy to lead an army against Wales; and having assembled a strong body of veteran troops, selected from all parts of his very extensive dominions in Normandy, Flanders, Anjou, Gascoine, and England, [27a] and hearing of some daring inroads made by the North Wales men, he early in the year 1165, put himself at the head of this chosen army, and set forward for North Wales, resolving to destroy without mercy every living thing he could meet with. Having advanced to Croesoswallt, now Oswestry, he encamped there, and sent forward a body of men to try the passes of the Dyke and Ceiriog, who being met near Castell Crogen, as has been before stated, were there defeated, and buried in the Dyke.

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It is probable that the victorious Welchmen were a party detached from the Welch army; for Owen Gwynedd, then Prince of Wales, having heard of the great preparations made by the King, had very prudently confederated all the power of the country, and had assembled his forces at Corwen, a very strong country in Edernion, and there awaited the King's approach. He had with him, besides his brother Cadwalader, and all the power of North Wales, Prince Rhys, with those of South Wales, Owen Cyfeeliog and Madog Meredith, with the strength of Powis; in short, all the forces the Welch could muster. [27b]

The King, finding the Welch so strong, and knowing their fickleness, stayed some time at Oswestry, in expectation that a confederacy so hastily formed would as suddenly dissolve; but finding them firm and determined in their adherence, and that his enemies were so near, he became desirous to bring on an engagement. He therefore moved towards the Dyke with his whole army, and pushed on a party to the Ceiriog river, which washes the foot of the Berwyn; giving orders that the banks should be cleared of the woods, which at that time formed a complete jungle, to prevent his troops falling into the ambuscade of the enemy.

p. 28

It would seem the Welch had taken the precaution to guard the passes of the river; for the King in person, in an attempt to get possession of a bridge, experienced one of those hair-breadth escapes which some times decide the fate of kingdoms: [28]—A Welch archer, having marked the personal exertions of the King, and fired with the hope of freeing his country, chose a place of concealment, from whence, watching his opportunity, he discharged an arrow with such deadly aim, that it must inevitably have slain the King, had not Hubert De St. Clair, Constable of Colchester, who was in close attendance, and whose name is deservedly recorded for his devotion to his monarch, seeing the danger, rushed into the course of the fatal shaft, and received it in his heart; thus terminating his attachment with his life.

Whilst Henry was thus employing his forces in clearing the banks of Ceiriog, a party of Welchmen, relying on their knowledge of the country, and prompted by patriotic zeal, attempted to surprise his vanguard, consisting chiefly of pikemen, and the flower of the King's army. This brought on a very bloody engagement, although not general, which cost the lives of many brave men on both sides; but the attack having been commenced without any preconceived plan, and merely from a sudden ebullition of desperate daring, Henry's veterans were victorious, and making good the passage of the river, advanced up the Berwyn.

p. 29

In the mean time, the Welch Princes had advanced with their army from Corwen, and had taken a strong position on the frontier ridge. A fieldwork and entrenchment are still visible on the Mountain, over Llangollen, and was probably the station of part of the Welch forces, under Owen Gwynedd and his allies. Henry, finding his formidable enemy thus advantageously posted on the crown of the hill, did not deem it prudent to attack him in this position, and therefore encamped his forces on the lower part of the Mountain. [29]

In this manner the two armies lay menacing each other; the Welch carefully improving every opportunity of annoyance, and from their lofty and advantageous situation watching every movement of the King's forces. Henry used every means in his power to induce them to quit their camp, and attack him, but in vain: while the Welch, by means of their irregular adherents, cut off all supplies from the English, and reduced them to the greatest straits and distress; added to which, the rain now fell in torrents, and pouring down the sides of the Mountain, rendered the English station so soft and slippery that they were obliged to retreat, with great loss in men, horses, and warlike stores, leaving the Welch masters of the field.

p. 30

The Welchmen, as might naturally be expected, exultingly celebrated this triumph; while Henry, baffled and disgraced, and with all his threats unperformed, gave way to rage, and added savage cruelty to his disgrace. He at this time held as hostages Rhys and Cadwallon, the two sons of Owen Gwynedd; and also Cynric and Meredith, the two sons of Rhys Ap Gryffyth, of South Wales; as likewise the sons and daughters of other Welch Lords. [30] In the savage fierceness of his rage, he ordered the eyes of these innocent victims to be pulled out, and the ears of the young gentlewomen to be stuffed.

From this digression, for which, as pointing out the places where these historical facts happened, I hope my readers will pardon me, I now return to the Oswestry old way, which runs near Chirk Castle.

Not more than sixty years ago, this used to be the public high road to Oswestry, although the capacious and excellent road which now skirts the Mountains' base would almost induce one to think it impossible. A very respectable and old inhabitant of Llangollen informs me, that before the road was altered and improved, some of the family from Chirk Castle used to visit Llangollen once a year in the family coach. On the appointed day, which was generally known beforehand, all the inhabitants were on the alert; and no sooner was the rumble of the ponderous wheels heard on the stones, than young and old, sick and lame, poured out of their dwellings to see the wonderful phenomenon; and during the few hours of its stay in the town, it attracted as much attention as a show of wild beasts at a country fair. On its return to the Castle, the young men of the village contended for the honour of assisting it to get up the hill again; and this was the only vehicle of the kind seen once a year in Llangollen, where now the most splendid and elegant carriages, from the gig to the state-coach, roll along, amid these stupendous rocks and mountains, upon roads as smooth, as level, and as good, as any in the kingdom.

p. 31

The Oswestry old way is not now much frequented, but it continues from Chirk Castle along the top of the Mountain. Many roads intersect it, but the old road is very distinguishable. By the side of the way, rise two copious springs, called Ffynnon Arthur.

From the eminence the view is most extensively delightful, and amply repays the trouble and fatigue of the walk up the Mountain. The curious Aqueduct of Pontcysyllte forms a very pleasing and prominent feature in the foreground of the landscape.

p. 32

As you approach the descent on the side of the hill, the stone pedestal of a cross or pillar stands among the gorse on the left hand side of the road, but the shaft is not to be found. Trees, planted

three in a clump, mark the road at short distances, and lead to the cultivated and inhabited part of the declivity. [32a] Proceeding to the extreme foot of the Mountain, on the junction of the Oswestry road stood, until these few months, another stone pillar, or cross, [32b] called Croes y Beddau; and upon it was rudely cut "*Oswestry Way.*" This inscription is of more recent execution than the pillar, although it is also very antique.

I conjecture these stones were erected as land-marks, and guides to the traveller. An ancient way from this point proceeded to the river Dee, which was then crossed by a wooden bridge. On the north side of the river, nearly opposite the place where the wooden bridge stood, was another similar pillar, called Croes Gwen Hwyr. It stood on the road to Wrexham, and has been removed only a few years. From Croes Gwen Hwyr, an old road proceeds to Castell Dinas Bran, by the Llanddyn, once the residence of the Owens of Porkington, but now converted into a farm-house. Through that farm the road passed in a zigzag direction to Castell Dinas Bran, and the old road is still traceable, although in some places quite lost.

p. 33

Before I attempt to give an account of the ancient castle, I must beg my reader's attendance to the Aqueduct, which claimed notice in the view from the top of the Berwyn Mountains.

THE AQUEDUCT.

"Telford, who o'er the vale of Cambrian Dee,
Aloft in air, at giddy height upborne,
Carried his navigable road, and hung
High o'er Menai's Straits and bending bridge:
Structures of more ambitious enterprise
Than minstrels, in the age of old romance,
To their own Merlin's magic lore ascribed.

The Aqueduct of Pontcysyllte is so called from a bridge of three arches over the river Dee, and situated a little higher up the river. This is the most stupendous work of the kind in the kingdom. It was designed and executed by and under the inspection of that British Archimedes, Mr. Thomas Telford, to carry a stream of water for the supply of the Ellesmere Canal; to the proprietors of which, in the year 1804, Sir W. W. Wynn, Bart. in the most liberal manner made an important donation of the waters of Bala pool, as far as wanted; and to obtain that essential advantage the Aqueduct was projected. [34] The level of the canal is taken at a place in the river a little below the church of Llantysilio, and about two miles, on the west of Llangollen.

p. 34

The bank of the canal forms a charming promenade of about six miles from its junction with the Dee to the Aqueduct, abounding with interesting and picturesque scenery. Here and there snug little white cottages, peeping from among the surrounding trees, decorate and embellish the sides and recesses of some of the eminences; while the tops are dotted with the little mountain sheep, scarcely distinguishable from the white stones that are scattered upon their summits. The banks of the canal are ornamented with trees, and embellished with bridges, &c.

This Aqueduct, the most extraordinary structure of its kind in the world, was begun on the twenty-fifth day of July, 1795, and was finished on the twenty-sixth day of November, 1805; having been ten years and five months in building. It is one thousand and seven feet in length, and one hundred and twenty-six feet eight inches in height from the surface of the flat rock on the south side of the river Dee, to the top of the iron side plates of the water way; and there are nineteen arches of forty-five feet span each. The piers, eighteen in number, are constructed of square masonry, and the arches and water way are composed of cast-iron.

p. 35

At the south end of the Aqueduct there is an embankment of earth, fifteen hundred feet in length, and seventy-five feet high. The water way is eleven feet ten inches broad, and five feet three inches deep. There is a broad towing-path on the east side, guarded by a strong iron palisade, running the whole length of the Aqueduct; from the north end of which the canal is continued for a distance of about three hundred yards, and there terminates in an extensive basin, which affords a double wharfage, with iron railways.

I have heard of only one fatal accident occurring during the progress of this arduous undertaking; when a poor labourer employed on the work fell from the top of one of the piers, and was dashed to pieces on the rock below. His suffering was of short duration, as the tremendous height from which he fell caused instant dissolution.

The Aqueduct crosses the entrance of the vale of Llangollen from north to south, and the walks under and about it are really charming. The view along the beautiful vale of the Dee from the top, in the centre of the towing-path, is delightful, and to look down tremendous; and the river,

"That on the unnumber'd pebbles idly chafes,
Cannot be heard so high."

p. 36

Indeed, it requires a steady head, and a stout heart, to walk over the Aqueduct, especially when the wind is high.

On the twenty-sixth day of November, 1805, the canal was opened in the following manner, as described by one of the acting Committee. He says—[36]

"In going over the Aqueduct and returning, the sensations varied. As the procession of boats advanced towards the noble structure now first commencing its public utility, the complete sense of security in which we floated one hundred and twenty-six feet above the river Dee, and a just acknowledgment to Mr. Telford, to whom it was deservedly a proud day, and who had most happily arranged the whole of our accommodation, as well as constructed the wonderful edifice that supported us, naturally united.

"On our arrival at the eastern bank, we entered the canal port. Lady Bridgewater, the ladies of Colonel Kynaston Powell, and William Lloyd Ashton, Esq. and some others, as connected with the Committee, now attended Lady Eleanor Butler, Lady W. W. Wynn and her family, the Hon. Miss Ponsonby, Miss Ormsby, and many other respectable visitors, to a repast which had been provided; soon after which an Oration was delivered.

"On a signal being given, the cannon, which had been advantageously posted on the platform below the rocks, and nearly on a level with the Aqueduct, fired a royal salute. The guns were manned by the Artillery Company, and were some of those brought from the capture of Seringapatam, now belonging to the Shropshire Volunteers, whose skill and martial appearance added much to the brilliancy of the day: they saluted the Committee on their passage and return with fifteen rounds each. After the repast and Oration, the whole company prepared to return.

p. 37

"The procession of boats was as follows:—In the first and second boats, the Committee; in the third, the band of the Shropshire Volunteers, in full uniform; the fourth was occupied by the engineers, the occupiers of mines and founderies, &c. with their families. I was invited to take my passage with them, having been engaged when the Committee set out, and could from this boat, as a centre, better judge of the whole. The fifth and sixth boats closed the procession, gaily ornamented with flags, and loaded with the first commercial product of coal that had ever passed over the valley on this noble bridge of union. The carriages, which conveyed the rest of the company, formed a curved and continued line over the bridge of the Dee (Pontcysyllte) and on both its banks.

"The evening was calm, and the favourite tunes of '*God save the King*' and '*Rule Britannia*' floated in the air, amongst the echoes of the vale. Many (probably more than eight thousand) people were stationed all around us, from the tops of the mountains to the banks of the Dee, and were cheering and exulting, with intervals of silent astonishment. All within sight or hearing were expressing their sense of the general happiness. The whole valley of Llangollen might be said to laugh and sing."

p. 38

The following inscription is on the Aqueduct upon the side of the pier next to the south side of the river:—

The Nobility and Gentry of
The adjacent Counties,
Having united their Efforts with
The great commercial Interests of this Country,
In creating an intercourse and union between
ENGLAND AND NORTH WALES,
By a navigable communication of the three Rivers,
Severn, Dee, and Mersey,
For the mutual benefit of Agriculture and Trade,
Caused the first Stone of this Aqueduct of
PONTCYSYLLTE
To be laid on the 25th day of July, 1795,
When Richard Myddelton, of Chirk, Esq. M.P.
One of the original patrons of the
ELLESMERE CANAL,
Was Lord of this Manor,
And in the reign of our Sovereign
GEORGE THE THIRD;
When the Equity of the Laws and
The security of Property
Promoted the general Welfare of the Nation;
While the Arts and Sciences flourished
By his Patronage, and
The Conduct of civil Life was improved
By his Example.

Returning from this stupendous work of human ingenuity and exertion, towards the Castell Dinas Bran,

p. 39

TREVOR HALL,

A large brick mansion, presents itself. It is situated on a rising ground, on the north side of the Wrexham road; and was once the residence of John Trevor, Bishop of St. Asaph, who in the year

1346, caused a stone bridge to be built over the Dee, at Llangollen, which is accounted one of the wonders of Wales.

Mr. Pennant says ^[39] "Trevor Hall passed into the family of the Lloyds, and has continued in that family to the present time." The last possessor was a lady of the name of Thomas, deceased in the year 1826, and leaving a son to inherit, although at present he does not occupy the premises. The house is roomy and substantial, and is pleasantly situated; but has no pretensions to elegance or beauty. Near the house is a church, or rather chapel, of ease, enjoying Queen Anne's bounty, in which English service is performed on the first Sunday in every month.

In a rocky cliff in the neighbourhood of the Hall, is a cavern of some extent, in which I was informed there were to be found the petrified bones of wolves, foxes, and other wild animals. Resolving to ascertain the fact, I explored the place, but, whatever there may have been, I could not discover the vestiges of any such relics. I brought away some specimens of stalactites, of curious forms and various incrustations, with which the roof of the cavern abounds, and which may by some have been mistaken for petrified bony substances. This craggy ridge seems to be the commencement of that wonderful range of limestone called the Eglwyseg Rocks.

p. 40

Near to the river is the ancient house of Plas yn Pentre, now inhabited by Mr. Thomas Rogers; and between Trevor Hall and the Dee is one of the most beautifully clear springs of cold water imaginable. It is called Ffynnon Yryrog, and is in very great repute as a bath for the cure of rheumatic affections; and if Saint Collen with a long name ^[40] had thought proper to have bestowed his benediction, it might perhaps have rivalled its prototype at Holywell. Its issue is very abundant, and its coldness exceeds belief: persons bathing cannot continue in the water a minute. Many wonderful accounts are told of its efficacy in chronic disorders. In its passage to the Dee, it formerly turned a water mill, now in ruins. The spring rises in a field belonging to Plas yn Pentre.

On the road side, between Trevor Hall and Bron Heulog, is a small farm house, called Plas Eva or Evan. I notice it only as marking the spot where formerly was a cemetery, retaining the appellation of Mynwent y Quacer, or Quaker's Burying Ground. It is on the south side of the house; and in cutting the canal, the earth from the excavation was thrown upon the old graves and the inscribed stones that lay upon the surface.

p. 41

Opposite the north side of the same house, a few years ago, as some labourers were working in the limestone rock, they discovered a pot, filled with gold coin. The men, afraid of losing their booty, kept the affair secret, and deputed one of their party to dispose of the treasure at Chester, as old gold. A rumour of the circumstance having got afloat, an inquiry was instituted; but the secret was so well kept on all hands, that only one piece, which a labourer had kept as a curiosity, with a part of the earthen vessel that contained them, were recovered, both of which I am informed are now in the possession of Lady Clive. The name, date, or nominal value of the coin, I cannot ascertain; but a person who saw one of the pieces describes it as being about the size of a half crown, and very thin, with an impression on each side.

About a mile nearer to the Castle, stands a recently erected mansion, called Bron Heulog. It is only remarkable for the narrowness of its windows and the nakedness of its appearance. Nearing the town on the bank of the river,

THE VICARAGE,

A neat pretty edifice, claims notice. It was built in the year 1817, under the direction of the present vicar, the Rev. R. W. Eyton, who resides here, and is an able conscientious minister.

p. 42

Having thus given an account of some of the most remarkable features of the country within my limits on the north side of the river, and on the east end of the town, I beg my readers to cross the river with me to Pengwern Hall, situated on the south of the Dee, with which I shall conclude my account of residences on the east of the town, as it is not in my plan to notice the many pretty snug and pleasant looking retreats with which the delightful landscape is studded, the beauty and comfort of which the traveller of taste will not fail fully to appreciate. Nor have I much to say of

LLYS PENGWERN;

For mouldering time hath swept away much of its grandeur and its form.

Llys, i.e. Palace or Prince's Court, of Pengwern, is situated at the foot of Pen y Coed, a tumulus-like hill on the east side of Llangollen, in a well cultivated and fruitful valley, formed between, or rather of, the bases of Pen y Coed, and the Berwyn. Little remains of the old house. There are two vaulted rooms (the use of which I cannot conjecture) standing at the end of the present house; and they are, I think, part of the old palace. The roofs are formed with nine stone ribs, which support a stone floor; for the rooms are one above the other, and the little light admitted is through narrow loop-hole windows. There is no vault or cellar beneath them. The site is extensive, and many old pointed gothic windows appear about the dilapidated walls.

p. 43

The place is now in the occupation of a very respectable farmer. Sir Thomas Mostyn, Bart. is the proprietor, in whose family it has been a great many years. I find that "Tudor Trevor, ^[43] who in the British genealogies is reckoned to be lineally descended from Vortigern, that unfortunate

King of the Britons, who first invited the Saxons over into his country, married Gwladis (some call her Anghariad,) daughter of Howell Dda, King of all Wales, by whom he had issue three sons; from the eldest of whom, Llwydocca, this family of Mostyn is descended in a direct male line. Tudor Trevor lived about A.D. 924, and his usual residence was at Llys Pengwern, in Chirkland, in Denbighshire; which site, and lands about it (though the house has been long destroyed,) is in the possession of the family to this day."

There is a stone which seems to have belonged to the old Llys, wrought up in the door-way, with an inscription which I cannot decipher. The design seems a rude figure of a sword, with an obtuse point, and the letters cut in relief on the blade. They are many of them unlike the characters I have seen, although some of them bear a strong resemblance to the Roman, and some few to the Saxon. The hilt of the sword, on which was the beginning of the inscription, is wanting. This is the only inscribed stone I could discover on the premises, although I was civilly assisted in my researches by the occupier of the house. From the appearance of many of the windows, &c. I should almost suppose it the remains of a religious sanctuary.

p. 44

Returning to the north side of the Dee, I must notice a small factory, where cotton [44a] is spun and manufactured into cloth by machinery. It was erected by a Mr. Turner. The main wheel is worked by a partial diversion of the river. It has also a claim upon the Ellesmere Canal for a supply of water, and affords employment for many of the inhabitants. The builder and his partner unfortunately proving insolvent, the concern was for a while stopped, and the factory stood unoccupied about five years. It is now carried on by a very respectable firm from Manchester, [44b] and is a great benefit to the town. The factory was destroyed by fire in 1814, but being fully insured it was soon rebuilt. By means of an outlet from the mill dam, a great quantity of fine trout and salmon are caught here in the season.

I shall now proceed to give some account of Castell Dinas Bran, to which I had before conducted my reader by the ancient road from the Berwyn Mountains, &c.

CASTELL DINAS BRAN.

p. 45

"Desolate is the dwelling of Morna: silence is in the house of her fathers. The voice of the people is heard no more. The stream of Cultha is removed from its place by the fall of its walls. Raise the song of mourning, O bards."

The Castell Dinas Bran, vulgarly called Crow Castle, is one of the primitive Welch Castles. I shall but bewilder myself or my readers, by seeking for the origin of its name, which so many learned men have sought in vain; all their researches ending in conjecture: nor can I find any account to be relied upon, when or by whom it was erected.

The Castle stands, as hath before been shown, immediately above and on the north side of Llangollen, on a conical mountain, about six hundred yards above the level of the river Dee; [45] and is built on the summit of the hill, which probably was leveled to procure materials, as the building occupies the whole flat. It seems to have been about one hundred yards in length, by fifty yards wide. The present remains are almost without form: they are built of the silicious stone of the mountain, set in a coarse mortar or grout, which is grown as hard as the stone itself. There are here and there scattered remains of hewn stone for facings, &c. some vestiges of a small round tower and a vaulted passage, and also a very limpid stream, now almost choked with ruins.

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A room [46a] has been built within these few years, for the shelter and convenience of visitors to the Castle; the key of which may be obtained at a little white cottage half way up the hill, inhabited by a very civil woman of the name of Parry, who conducts the visitants, and provides them with tea if required.

The Castle is conjectured to have been built by the Britons before the Roman invasion; and was probably the residence of Eliseg in the year 600. [46b] In the absence of all authentic accounts, I present my readers with a free translation of what I conceive to be a legendary tale, hoping it will at least amuse.

I find in the fragment of an old Welch book (from which the title-page is lost,) obligingly lent to me by Mr. Edward Morris, of Rhisgog, to whom I am indebted for much valuable information, the following account of the building of Castell Dinas Bran:—

"The Duke of Difnal, or Cornwall, having conquered all his enemies, was crowned King, and reigned in peace forty years, leaving at his death his kingdom to his two sons, who were twins; Beli was the firstborn, Bran was the youngest. They began to reign Anno Mundi 3600, but contentions soon arising between them, they appealed to arms, and called their friends and adherents to the field; and, notwithstanding the persuasions and remonstrances of the chiefs and great men of the country, a day was appointed for the decision of their claims by arms.

p. 47

"In the meanwhile, their mother, the old Queen Corwena, obtained an interview with her sons in her own apartments; when, placing herself between them, she fell on her knees, her grey hair disheveled, and her bosom bare, and thus addressed them:—'O! my dear sons, look on your mother, and for her sake forbear to shed the blood of your friends; remember, it is the Queen who solicits you to peace and unity; and remember

also that the blood of those brave men who fall in this quarrel will cry for vengeance, and a life for a life, and a tooth for a tooth, will be required. Consider, you once lived together in peace upon this bosom, and now this great kingdom is too small for you. For God's sake, and as you value my blessing, cast away this fierce wrath; be not more cruel than the wolves of your forests, and the bears of your woods. See how my tears fall upon those breasts where you were wont to be cherished together. Do not let me go to my dark house in sorrow. Throw down your arms, and embrace each other as brothers, that God may bless the end of your days with peace and prosperity, and crown your wives and your children with comfort and joy. Amen.'

"The two brothers were so affected by this address from their mother, that they both assisted to raise her from her knees, and intreated her blessing. They then embraced, and drinking to their mother and to each other, dismissed their armies. Beli went to New Troy, ^[48a] and Bran took up his residence at a strong fortress, which he had built near Llan-collen, ^[48b] and called Dinas Bran, after his own name.

p. 48

"The Queen, returning to the portion of land which had been given to her as a jointure, there built a small town, which she named after herself, Corwen."

The following seems to be another version of the same story; and as the Brut from which it is taken is by the learned translator supposed to be the real Book of Gildas, ^[48c] I hope the antiquity and rarity of the account will be a sufficient excuse to my general readers:—

"Beli and Bran were the sons of Dyfnwal, and began to reign 667 years before Christ. ^[48d] A violent struggle arose for the sovereignty of the kingdom, which ended in it being divided between them: however, in process of time, ambition again prompted the two brothers to collect their respective forces, in order to obtain supremacy; but when the two armies were about to engage, their mother the old Queen Torwen, or Tarevin, rushed between the lines, and hastening to her son Bran, who had long been absent from her, she tenderly embraced him, and with many sighs and tears intreated him to be reconciled to his brother Beli. Her intreaties so wrought upon Bran that he turned all his thoughts to peace, and laying aside his helmet, he went unarmed to meet his brother. A reconciliation then took place, the forces on each side throwing down their arms, and approving the peace; and both parties went together to London, at that time called Troia Newydd." ^[49]

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As Eliseg's Pillar has given a name to a fertile valley, to a township, and to the wonderful and stupendous Eglwyseg Rocks, and which they all retain to this day, I presume to ask, is it not as reasonable to suppose, since we find it recorded that there was a British King of the name of Bran, that the name of the Castle I am describing should have been derived from him, rather than from a paltry stream bearing the name of Bran, or from an insignificant bird; for Bran in the Welch language signifies Crow. Might not, also, the streamlet of the Bran take its name from the city of Bran? for I find in Richards's Welch Dictionary, "Dinas," English "City;" therefore, "Castell Dinas Bran," i.e. "The Castle of the City of Bran;" "Din," "a fortified city or mount," as Dinbren, which adjoins the Castle Hill. Should these hints, which with all deference I venture to suggest, invite others to a deeper and more successful research, I shall be happy; and I sincerely wish some one may prosecute further inquiry, furnished with more ample materials, and endowed with a superior degree of antiquarian knowledge.

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Leaving apocryphal accounts, I find that Madog Ap Gryffydd Maelor, who founded the Abbey Crucis A.D. 1200, and who was by his mother's side the grandson of Gwen Gwynedd, Prince of North Wales, resided at Castell Dinas Bran. ^[50a] He inherited Powis Madoc, and was Lord of the second Bromfeild and Mochnant Is Rhauader. ^[50b]

In the year 1209, Madog, forgetting his duty to his country and to his prince, led his vassals and adherents to join the English army under King John, then lying at Oswestry ^[50c] (Wynne says at Chester ^[50d]); where he had assembled a great force, and with his usual violence and passion had resolved to execute the severest vengeance on the inhabitants of North Wales, and not to suffer a person to remain alive in the country. But such resolves are sooner made than executed; and Llewellyn, Prince of Wales, no sooner heard of these mighty preparations, and of the disaffection of some of his own countrymen, particularly of the Lord of Dinas Bran, than he issued his orders to his subjects in the counties of Denbigh and Flint, to remove all their cattle and moveable substance for a season, to the mountains of Snowdon; by which means, and by getting into the rear of the King's army, now advanced as far as the Castle of Treganwy, he so straitened and harassed the English forces, that, after eating their horses, and being reduced to the greatest extremity, they were obliged to retrace their steps at that time in disgrace, and breathing revenge, which the King in some measure executed the next year. ^[51a] But as I mean to confine myself to the history of the Lords of Dinas Bran, I will not deviate from my plan, by noticing matter which may be deemed extraneous.

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When John by his maladministration had quarrelled with his great Barons, and thrown England into confusion, the vacillating Madog, Lord of Dinas Bran, again swore fealty to his lawful Prince, Llewellyn, who politically overlooked his disaffection, and accepted his submission. This and some other accession of force enabled the Welch Prince successfully to assail the English, from whom he took all the castles the King had garrisoned, and most cruelly and unjustly put to

death all their defenders in cold blood. This happened A.D. 1213. [51b] The remainder of the time of this factious man, Madog, was occupied in rapine, war, and slaughter; and he closed his turbulent life in Castell Dinas Bran, and was buried at his Abbey of Llan Egwest, or Valle Crucis, A.D. 1236, [51c] leaving his son Lord of Powis Fadog, Lord of Dinas Bran, and all his other signiorities.

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Gryffydd Ap Madog, like his father, partook of the character of the times, and was fickle and turbulent. His father, Madog Ap Gryffydd Maelor, had generally resided at Wattstay, now Wynnstay; but Gryffydd Ap Madog made the Castell Dinas Bran his chief residence, and it is probable that his confidence in this almost inaccessible retreat might strengthen and encourage him in his waywardness.

I find him joining Prince Edward, the son of Henry III. then King of England, with all his forces, in the year 1257; and his disaffection is thus stigmatized by the old writers: [52a]—"But Gryffydd Ap Madog Maelor, Lord of Dinas Bran, a person of notorious reputation for injustice and oppression, basely forsook the Welch, his countrymen, and with all his forces went over to the Earl of Chester." [52b]

The following year, Llewellyn the Prince, returning from an expedition into South Wales, met the Earl, and forced him to retreat with great precipitation, leaving the possessions of his unnatural allies at the mercy of the conqueror, who now resolved to be revenged on that ungrateful fugitive, the Lord of Dinas Bran. He therefore passed through Bromfeild, and miserably laid waste the whole country, and obliged Gryffydd to keep close in his Castle of Dinas Bran, which, being situated on the summit of a very steep hill, seemed impregnable to all the daring efforts that could be used against it. [53]

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King Henry, being now much incensed against the Welch Prince Llewellyn, on account of the obstinate resistance he experienced, and having drawn together the whole strength of England, even from St. Michael's Mount, in Cornwall, to the river Tweed, marched with his son Edward in great rage to North Wales, and without any opposition advanced as far as Treganwy; but Llewellyn having taken precaution, as was the practice of the Welch in cases of invasion, to have all manner of provision and forage carried over the river, and having secured the strait and narrow passages whereby the English might advance into the country, the King's troops were in a short time so mortally harassed and fatigued, that they were obliged to return to England in haste, and with great loss.

Gryffydd Ap Madog, finding King Henry unable to protect his estate, submitted to his rightful Prince; and Llewellyn then passed to Powis, and banished Gryffydd Ap Gwenwynwyn, who had also joined the English, and took all the lands in the country of Powis into his own hands.

Llewellyn, who was a politic prince, received the submission of the Lord of Dinas Bran, because he knew that inaccessible fortress could not be forced from him, and that it would not be safe to have an avowed enemy, with so strong a refuge for his disaffected subjects, in the rear of his operations; otherwise Gryffydd Ap Madog had merited banishment as much as his namesake of Powisland: nay, Gryffydd, Lord of Dinas Bran, married an English lady, [54a] Emma, daughter of Lord Audley, whose father did much mischief and hurt to the Welch, by bringing from Germany a body of horsemen, who, by the uncommon size of their horses, with their unusual manner of fighting, terrified and easily defeated the Welchmen at the first; but when they had become more familiarized with their mode, they took their revenge upon them, even on Lord Audley's own land. [54b]

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All the nobility of Wales had solemnly sworn to defend their country till death against the invasion of the English, and not to relinquish or forsake one another; and the return of Gryffydd Ap Madog to his allegiance diffused through every breast the hope of better days. [54c]

From this time to the day of his death, I do not find that he again deserted his Prince, but attached himself to the fortunes of his country, although fears of the resentment of his countrymen for his former conduct made him keep close to his Castle of Dinas Bran, where he died in 1270, [54d] and was buried by the side of his father in the Abbey Church of Valle Crucis; leaving his country in the enjoyment of freedom and peace; the Welch having, by innate bravery and constancy, aided by the fastnesses of their country, and the good policy of their Prince, freed themselves for a time from the thralldom of their potent enemy.

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Mr. Pennant gives a different account of his end. [55a] He says that "his wife Emma, having alienated his affection from his own country, made him an instrument of its subjection, and of the destruction of his own family; for, as he took part with Henry III. and Edward I. against his natural Prince, the resentment of his countrymen was excited against him, and he was obliged to shelter himself from their rage in his Castle of Dinas Bran, where probably shame and grief put an end to his life."

Be that as it may, Gryffydd Ap Madog, by his wife Emma, daughter of John, Lord Audley, left issue four sons, viz. Madog, Llewellyn, Gryffydd, and Owen. [55b] Madog, the eldest, became Lord of Dinas Bran, &c. He died, it is supposed, not long after his father, leaving two sons to inherit his property. [55c] The eldest, called Madog, had, by his father's will, Bromfeild and Yale, the Castell Dinas Bran, &c.; the second son, Llewellyn, the Lordship of Chirk, &c. It should seem these children were not of age when their father died; for Edward I. King of England, took on him

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to appoint guardians to them both, and committed Madog, the elder, to the care of John, Earl of Warren, one of his favorites; and Llewellyn he intrusted to Roger Mortimer, son of Lord Mortimer, of Wigmore. [56a] These men well understood the nature of the appointment; and it is probable that Edward had maturely weighed in his mind the potency of their enmity, who could be such powerful friends, and having then but recently subjugated the country, he might wish out of his way two scions of a stock which had proved so stubborn and so valiant. It was well known that Warren and Mortimer had rid themselves of their respective charges, and had possessed themselves of their estates, which they were suffered to enjoy without an inquiry being instituted respecting them, or about the disappearance of their wards; but the manner of the murder of these two unfortunate children has but lately been discovered, in a manuscript in the Bodleian Library. [56b] The guardian of the two boys caused them to be drowned under Holt Bridge; and no doubt from hence arose the origin of a fable which was long current in the country, of two fairies having been drowned in that place.

From the Earls of Warren the Castell Dinas Bran passed to the Arundel [56c] and other families. In 1390, Myfanwy Fechan, a descendant of the house of Tudor, resided there, and was celebrated for her beauty in a long ode by Howel Ap Einion Lygliw, a celebrated bard of that time. The Castle was probably then held under the Earls of Arundel. It is now the property of Mrs. Myddelton Biddulph, of Chirk Castle. The period of its destruction is as completely unknown as the time of its foundation. Eagles and hawks in abundance used to breed, as some now do, in the neighbouring rocky ridge of the Eglwyseg, and

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“Along the narrow valley you might see
The wild deer sporting on the meadow ground,
And here and there a solitary tree,
Or mossy stone, or rock with woodbine crown'd.
Oft did the cliffs reverberate the sound
Of parted fragments tumbling from on high,
And from the summit of that craggy mound
The perching eagle oft was heard to cry,
Or on resounding wing to shoot athwart the sky.”

The view from the Castle is not so extensive as might be expected from its elevation, being bounded, except towards the east, by more lofty mountains; yet the scenery is most truly grand and magnificent. According to the plan laid down in the beginning of this work, I leave my readers to their own observations; only informing them that the house which makes a distinguished figure to the westward is Dinbren Hall, the residence of Richard Jones, Esq.

Descending on the west side of the hill, and proceeding on the old way to the Abbey Crucis, stands a neat house, called the Tŵr, i.e. Tower, which I conjecture, for I can obtain no written document on the subject, to have been a look-out or watch-tower belonging to the Castle; especially as it is placed on the side most easy of access. Some additions have been made to the Tower, and it is now a comfortable farm-house, inhabited by a very respectable lady, of the name of Price. It has been a square building, built of hewn stone, as evinced by the massive walls which now surround the old part converted into a parlour, and by an old spiral stone stair at the back of the room.

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The old way from the Castle to the Abbey has been much intersected and crossed, especially by the branch of the Ellesmere Canal, and by roads made to recently erected retreats and farms; among which I must not, however, reckon the road to

LLANTYSILIO,

Which is a place of great antiquity. It belonged of old time to the ancient family of the Cuppers of the North, [58a] so called even in the time of King Henry II.; and by the marriage of a daughter of that family with a Mr. Jones, of Llanbothian, in Montgomeryshire, it became the heritage of the late possessor of that name, and is now inhabited by Major Harrison, [58b] who resides in the Hall, a large brick building, bearing a strong affinity to Trevor Hall in antiquity of erection. It is situated in a pleasant valley, watered by the river Dee, over which it enjoys a fine prospect.

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The Church of Llantysilio is dedicated to a Welch saint, from whom the township takes its name. He was Prince of Powis, and was called St. Tysilio. It is a neat little edifice, with a very pleasant church-yard, and contains nothing very ancient in the monumental way; but there are around it many very venerable yew trees, with their, wide spreading sombre foliage. I had the curiosity to measure one, and found it above twenty feet in girth. The inside of the Church is, like its neighbour at Llangollen, indebted for some of its decorations to the Abbey Crucis, which seems after its dissolution to have been considered as lawful plunder; and this circumstance in some measure accounts for its so speedy dilapidation.

VALLE CRUCIS ABBEY.

“How many hearts have here grown cold,
That sleep these mouldering stones among!
How many beads have here been told!
How many matins here been sung!

But here no more soft music floats,
No holy anthems chanted now;
All hush'd, except the ring-dove's notes,
Low murmuring from yon beachen bough."

The Abbey of Llan Egwest, or Valle Crucis, so called from a very ancient inscribed pillar or cross, the mutilated remains of which stand in an adjacent field, and will next come under consideration, was built and founded by Madog Ap Gryffydd Maelor, Lord of Dinas Bran, as before related under the head of Dinas Bran.

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This Abbey was built in the year of our Lord 1200, was dedicated to the Virgin Mary, and belonged to a community of Cistercian Monks, an order founded in France in the year 1098. The remains of the Abbey Church are the most picturesque and entire part. It was built in the form of a cross, which was contrary to the form in common use before the twelfth century. [60a]

This proves that Madog availed himself of the aid of skilful workmen, and it is probable that the fraternity called Free Masons were employed, as they were incorporated about this time, and were the chief undertakers of such works. Their government was regular, and they were wont to make an encampment of huts. A surveyor governed in chief; every tenth man being called a warden, and overlooking nine. They ranged from one country to another, as they found churches to be built. [60b]

The Church is built in different styles of architecture. The east end seems the most ancient, and the three lancet-like arched windows have a very peculiar effect. It is situated at the foot of a lofty hill, called Fron Fawr, and a little stream runs at the back of the Abbey, skirting its gardens, and turning a corn-mill in its passage to the Dee. The view from the high bank beyond the rivulet (which is crossed by a rustic plank bridge) of the east end of the Church and Abbey, is particularly beautiful.

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On its front or west side rise the Berwyn Mountains; on the east, the Fron Fawr; and the whole is so enveloped in beautiful foliage that it is perhaps one of the most enchantingly secluded places in the kingdom. The west front of the Church affords some admirable specimens of ancient gothic architecture. The grand entrance has been through the ornamented pointed arch gateway at the west end; over which is a fine gothic window, consisting of three lancet-shaped arches, surmounted by a circular or rose window, of eight divisions; but it is too lofty to admit of close inspection, as is also the following mutilated inscription, which is above it:—

AD—ADAM—DMS fecit hoc opus. Pace beata quiescat. Amen.

MD—

The rest of the last line is obliterated. The following translation may not be unacceptable:—

AD—ADAM—DMS built (or rebuilt) this work. May he rest in happy peace.

Amen. MD—

The letters MD seem to have been meant as part of the date marking the time when the Church was repaired, and go far to prove the little veneration shown to this once elegant structure by the neighbouring people, and that its dilapidation was unusually rapid. Now, we will suppose that the inscription MD means 1500, and allow that it was then in complete repair, and that it was one of the first Abbeys dissolved, say in 1538; for I do not read that Henry VIII. began his reformation among the religious houses before that time; I find in Camden's *Britannia*, speaking of this place, the following passage:—"Save onely a little Abbey, now wholly decayed, but standing most richly and pleasantly in a vale, which among the woody hills cutteth itself overthwart in manner of a crosse, whereupon it was called in Latin Vallis Crucis, that is, the Vale of the Crosse, and in British, Lhane Gwest." [62a]

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Camden's great work, *Britannia*, was published in 1586; and from these facts I draw my conclusion that it was ransacked and destroyed soon after its dissolution, as I suppose it was—

In complete repair, A.D. 1500;

Dissolved by order of Henry VIII. A.D. 1538; [62b]

Wholly decayed, as by Camden, 1586. [62c]

Of the magnificence of this ancient Monastery no adequate description can now be given, and scarcely an idea formed of what it has been. The body and nave of the Church are disfigured, and nearly choked up with masses of ruins, and large and luxuriant forest trees, among which the ash and sycamore are most predominant. The length of the Church is about one hundred and eighty feet; the width I can only guess at, as the north side is wholly gone. An author before me says the nave was thirty-one feet broad, and the side aisle thirteen feet.

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In the north transept are the remains of a chapel, said by some to have contained the tomb of the founder. In a wall in the cloister stands a double benetoir, or vessel for holy water. The cloister is small and gloomy, whose

"Storied windows, richly dight,

Have shed a dim religions light.”

The solemnity of the place, and the stillness that reigns, aided by the subdued light of the moon, and by a vivid fancy, may conjure up strange ideas, and

“Still may imagination’s ardent eye
In the tall grove the sage’s form espy;
See him intent with sacred zeal to plan
Some moral lesson for ungrateful man.”

The part of the Abbey now remaining is inhabited by a farmer, who will show the premises on proper application. There is a Saxon or semicircular arched gateway in the farm-yard, adjoining a very curious gothic window, well worthy attention. The dormitory or sleeping cells were formerly entered by stone stairs from the outside, which have been removed some years ago. The floor of the dormitory is supported by low massive pillars; and the arches which spring from their capitals form vaulted rooms, in which the family reside. There are many beautiful features in this interesting ruin, to amply repay the attention of the curious, and the research of the antiquarian. The front seems to have been extensive, and before it gurgles up a very pure spring of water. The Abbot’s apartments were contiguous to the church, and there opened from one of them a small space, where he might stand, and hear the holy services performed below.

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The venerable ruin is lessened by every succeeding tenant, and some of the recently erected buildings exhibit stones with mutilated devices and inscriptions worked up in the walls. In one of the farmer’s bedchambers a stone forms part of a chimney-piece, which is carved with running foliage, and contains this imperfect inscription:—

“Hic jacet Arvrret.”

This is the only remain of any tomb discovered. In digging a few months ago in the farm-yard, to make a drain, at a short distance from the surface were dug up the remains of eleven men, in a very small compass of ground, which goes far to prove that this was the common cemetery of the Abbey; and also a wedge-like stone, having carved on its front a hand, holding a vine or olive branch, bearing fruit. The stone is now at Plas Newydd.

I have in my account of Castell Dinas Bran recorded that Madog Ap Gryffydd Maelor was buried in this Abbey, A.D. 1236; and his son, Gryffydd Ap Madog Maelor, Lord of Dinas Bran, A.D. 1270.

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Having thus given the best account I can of the present state of this once noble Abbey, I now proceed to state what I can collect from authentic sources of its Abbots and its endowments.

Reyner, Bishop of St. Asaph, who died in 1224, bestowed on this Abbey half the tithes of Wrexham. Abraham, his brother, succeeded him in the Bishoprick in 1227, and gave the remaining half. [65a]

Howel Ap Ednyfed, successor to Abraham, gave to it the Church of Llangollen. [65b] The monks also obtained, besides these endowments, the patronage of several other livings, as Wrexham, Ruabon, Chirk, Llansantffraid, and Llandegla.

The freemen of Llangollen made a grant in part of the river near their town of a fishery to the monks of Valle Crucis; and, for want of a seal of their own, affixed the seal of the founder of the Abbey to the grant. [65c]

The landed endowments were, in the year 1291, near the Abbey, a grange, with three ploughlands, [65d] a mill, and other conveniences, probably the donations of the founder Madog; the granges of Bodhange, Tregam, Rudryn, and Baketon. I have no means of ascertaining who were the donors of the farms, but I find they had also the dairy farm of Nante; the grange of Nostroyz, Convenet, and Grennychamt; also the grange of Wyrcessam, consisting of one ploughland and some pasture, with thirty cows, valued in those days at only thirty shillings.

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All these estates were vested in the Abbot for the time being, and formed no inconsiderable revenue; but the title of the monks to several of the livings was disputed by a succeeding Bishop of St. Asaph, called Y Brawd Du O Nannau, or the Black Brother of Nanny, who obtained a decision in his favour. The third of the tithes of Bryn Eglwys, or Egwestl, was, however, allotted to them, in lieu of the patronage of Llandegla.

The monks had also a dispute with the freemen of Llangollen respecting the fishery, the former having erected works on the river, whereby they caught more fish than the Llangollen folks thought came to their share, or than abstemious monks could require. However, the affair was referred to the Prince of Wales, and the fishery was confirmed to the Abbey in 1234.

I will now lay before my readers a short account of some of the Abbots.

Dafydd Ap Ivan Iorwerth is highly celebrated by a bard in the year 1480, who says of him, and of his successor, Ivan, or John, that they lived in great splendour, that they had four courses every day served on bright silver dishes, and they drank claret, &c. He also commends the piety of the house, and says that he was so happy as to be blessed by Abbot John, who had three of his fingers covered with rings. The last Abbot was John Herne, who received an annuity of 23*l.* per annum on his surrender. In 1553 this annuity, and others to some of the surviving monks, to the amount

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of 10l. 13s. 4d. were the whole of the remaining charges. [67]

This is said to be the first Abbey that was dissolved in Wales, and it remained in the crown until the ninth of James I. who then granted it to Edward Wotton, created Lord Wotton. In 1654, Margaret Wotton was in possession. She was a recusant, and Cromwell then put it under sequestration to Edward Davies, the Cneifwr Glâs of Eglwyseg.

The last possessor, Mrs. Thomas, of Trevor Hall, built a kind of summer-house at the back of the Abbey, adjoining to a pond abounding with trout. Here was a charming field for the display of taste; but, as in the hut at the top of Dinas Bran, the opportunity has been lost.

Leaving the Abbey, let us now proceed through the adjoining meadow to the Pillar of Eliseg, from which the valley takes its name.

**LA CRUCIS;
OR
THE PILLAR OF ELISEG.**

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—“The time draws on
When not a single spot of burial earth,
Whether on land, or in the spacious sea,
But must give back its long committed dust
Inviolate.”

The Pillar of Eliseg is supposed to be one of the oldest inscribed British columns now existing, and is erected in a field about three furlongs from the Abbey, standing in a delightful valley, to which it gives the name of Valle Crucis, or the Vale of the Cross. The spot on which it stands is a gentle elevation, and is called Llwyn y Groes, i.e. the Grove of the Cross. The pillar was twelve feet high, and inscribed all round with letters. It stood in its place until some of Cromwell’s fanatical soldiers overthrew and broke it.

The pillar remained cast down many years, until Trevor Lloyd, Esq. of Trevor Hall, reared its mutilated remains again into its base, which had not been removed, and placed upon it this Latin inscription:—

QUOD HUIUS VETERIS MONUMENTI
SUPEREST
DIU EX OCULIS REMOTUM
ET NEGLECTUM
TANDEM RESTITUIT
T. LLOYD,
TREVOR HALL,
MDCCLXXIX.

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Translated as follows:—

“T. LLOYD, of Trevor Hall, at length, in the year 1779, restored what remains of this ancient Monument, which had been a long time removed from sight, and neglected.”

The Cross, or Pillar, for it seems never to have had the form of a Cross, is now little more than eight feet high. The old inscription, which time has rendered illegible, has been carefully copied by that great antiquarian, Mr. Edward Lloyd, [69a] and informs us nearly of the time of its erection, as under:—

“Concenn filius Cateli—Cateli [69b] filius Brockmail
Brochmail filius Eliseg—Eliseg filius Cnoillaine
Concenn itaque pronepos Eliseg edificavit hunc
Lapidem proavo suo Eliseg.”

Of which the following seems to be an exact translation:—

“Concenn, the son of Cateli; Cateli the son of Brochmail;
Brochmail, the son of Eliseg; Eliseg, the son of Cnoillaine;
Concenn, therefore the great-grandson of Eliseg, erected
This stone to his great-grandfather Eliseg.”

The characters resemble one of the alphabets in use about the sixth century, at which time this sepulchral pillar was erected. Concenn and Eliseg probably resided at Castell Dinas Bran; and a township adjacent bears the name of Eglwyseg, as well as the stupendous and picturesque mass of rocks that range along the vale, called the Eglwyseg Rocks, from Eliseg. Brochmail, another of the persons mentioned, deserted the protection of the Monks of Bangor at the battle of West Chester, when twelve hundred of those unfortunate unarmed religious were cut to pieces by the forces of Athelfrid or Edilfred, King of Northumberland, A.D. 607. [70a]

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Brochmail, whom I suppose to be the same the Latins called Brochmailus, was a great prince in that part of Britain called Powisland, which was then very extensive, stretching from the Severn

to the Dee in a right line, from the end of Broxon Hills to Salop, and comprehending all the country between the Wye and Severn. He resided at Pengwern Powis, now Shrewsbury, [70b] in a house situated where the College of St. Chad now stands. He was a great friend and favourer of the Monks of Bangor, and took part with them against the Saxons, instigated by Augustine the Monk to prosecute them with fire and sword, because they would not agree to the forms and ceremonies of the Church of Rome, and forsake their own established customs. [70c]

I was so fortunate as to meet with two persons who assisted in opening the tumulus before the pillar was re-erected; and they gave me the following accounts:—On digging below the flat pedestal in which the base of the Pillar had been inserted, they came to a layer of pebble stones; and after having removed them, to a large flat slab, on which it seems the body had been laid, as they now found the remains of it, guarded round with large flat blue stones, and covered at the top with the same; the whole forming a sort of stone box or coffin. The bones were entire, and of very large dimensions. The skull and teeth, which were very white and perfect, were particularly sound. My informants said they believed the skull was sent to Trevor Hall, but it was returned, and again deposited, with the rest of the bones, in its former sepulchre. By this it should seem that Eliseg was not an old man when he was buried here, and it is wonderful that greater decomposition had not taken place in twelve hundred years.

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One of the persons who assisted at the exhumation is now a very old man, and was huntsman to Mr. Lloyd when the tumulus was opened. He says there was a large piece of silver coin found in the coffin, which was kept; but that the skull was gilded to preserve it, and was then again deposited with its kindred bones. I asked if the bones were sound; and he answered (I give his own words,) "O, no, sir; they broke like gingerbread."

I have now reached the limits I prescribed for myself on the north side of the Dee, and trust I have noticed every thing most worthy of attention. I purpose next to give a short account of the river, and passing Llangollen Bridge, continue my route to Glyndyfrdwy and Sycharth, once the residence of Owen Glyndwr.

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THE RIVER DEE.

"On scenes like these the eye delights to dwell,
Here loud cascades, and there the silent dell;
The lofty mountains, bleak and barren, rise,
And spread their ample bosoms to the skies;
While still the rushing river rolls along,
The theme of many a humble shepherd's song,
And as it rolls, the trout, in speckled pride,
Springs playful in the smooth translucent tide."

The river Dee forms a beautiful and interesting feature in all the most picturesque views around Llangollen. Passing from Glyndyfrdwy down the river, it successively assumes the appearance of the brawling brook over beds of pebbles; the deep tranquil character of the gliding lake, reflecting on its pure bosom the woods and mountains that surrounded it; the rushing cascade or rapids, over beds of rocks, or through chasms of stone.

"The current that with gentle murmur glides,
Opposed by rocks impatiently doth rage;
But when his fair course is not hindered,
He makes sweet music with the enamelled stones,
Giving a gentle kiss to every sedge
He overtaketh in his pilgrimage;
And so by many winding nooks he strays
With willing sport to the wild ocean."

p. 73

It rises a few miles beyond Bala, a town about twenty miles from Llangollen, on the west, and runs through a pool now called Bala pool, some say without mingling its stream. [73a] There is no river in England which has been so much celebrated by our poets for its sanctity as the Dee; and Camden describes it as "rising on the east side of Merionethshire, and forthwith passeth entire and whole through Llyntegid, in English, Pimble Meare, or Plenlin Meare, [73b] a lake spreading far in length and breadth; and so runneth out of it with as great a streame as it entred in; for neither shal a man see in the Dee the fishes called guiniad, which are peculiar to the Meare, nor yet Salmons in the Meare, which neverthesse are commonly taken in the river." [73c]

The mazy windings of the Dee, embellished as its banks are with the fresh green shrubs and plants, which flourish there in great luxuriance, afford a very delightful walk, independent of the great amusement to anglers for which this river has ever been so famous. The trout are as fine as any in the kingdom, and are very plentiful. Many men obtain a livelihood during the season, by fishing in this beautiful river, which they contrive to manage in their little coracles; a large kind of round basket, covered with skins or tarpawling, and with a board across the centre for a seat. It is amusing to see them waft themselves where they please, with a little paddle in one hand, and a fly-rod in the other, fishing every corner of the deep pool; and when tired, rowing to land, throwing their boats on their shoulders, and walking with them to another deep pool, where they again commence operations.

p. 74

Salmon come up the river to spawn; and although so many do not reach Llangollen as in former times, owing to the new inventions erected on the river to entrap them in their way from the sea, yet many of them overcome all impediments, and reach their usual haunts. I saw last summer, at the season when the salmon fray, or fry, seek their way to the sea from the river where they have been bred, large shoals of these fish, and at one time more than 40 fishing rods successfully employed in a small space of water near the water-mill just above the bridge. This fishery continued in great activity for many days; the bait used being a common ground-worm, here called corbet. A little fresh in the river at length came, of which the fish took advantage, and proceeded on their way, after having lost some thousands of their numbers at Llangollen.

The otter is found in this river, and, owing to the many fastnesses, can seldom be destroyed. There are also numerous and various aquatic birds. The rock-ousel, the kingfisher, the sand-piper, the crane, and a duck-like bird, with black and white plumage, which the inhabitants term a cormorant, are very common.

p. 75

About a mile above the bridge is a deep chasm in the rocky bed, through which the whole river, when not swollen, rushes. It is six yards across, and bears the name of Llam y Lleidr, i.e. Thief's Leap, from the circumstance of a robber, who was pursued closely, having possessed sufficient agility to clear this space, while his unfortunate pursuer fell short, and was engulfed in the roaring torrent, narrowly escaping the loss of life, as well as of property. There is another chasm nearer the bridge, still deeper and narrower, called the Cow's Leap.

The river runs over a bed of dark-coloured silicious rock, which is sometimes got by the inhabitants for the use of building. The bed of the river is consequently very uneven, which causes it to foam and rush very impetuously along.

THE BRIDGE

Is a plain gothic structure at the west end of Llangollen, and consists of four irregularly formed pointed arches, with projecting angular buttresses. The bridge was built across the Dee by John Trevor, Bishop of St. Asaph, and Chancellor of Chester, A.D. 1346, and was accounted one of the wonders of Wales. The arches are of various dimensions; but the only wonder I can discover seems to be the foundation, which is laid upon the rock that forms the bed of the river, and is fastened thereto with iron clamps. The bridge is built of hewn stone, and is like most other old bridges, very narrow and ill-paved.

p. 76

Many wonderful tales are related of the sudden rise of this river, and it certainly is a very inconstant stream; but I cannot conceive it possible that the water should ever have risen, as reported, so high as the base of the parapet. There is another little bridge called the Chain Bridge, about two miles up the river.

I will now cross the bridge to the south side of the river.

GLYN DYFRDWY.

"They look'd a manly, generous generation,
Beards, shoulders, eyebrows, broad and square and thick;
Their accents firm, and loud in conversation;
Their eyes and gestures eager, sharp, and quick."

About five miles west of Llangollen, upon the road to Corwen, and on the south side of the Dee, the way being enriched by such varied and enchanting scenery as will amply repay the traveller of taste for the fatigue of the excursion, is Glyn Dyfrdwy, once the property and residence of that famous chieftain Owen Glyndwr, whose birth Shakspeare says marked him extraordinary. I will, however, here give a short account of his life, which I trust will prove entertaining to many of my readers, and plainly show that "he was not in the roll of common men."

p. 77

Owen Ap Gruffydd Fychan, better known by the name of Owen Glyndwr, ^[77a] was descended from a younger son of Gruffydd Ap Madog, Lord of Powis Bromfield, and of Dinas Bran. He received his education in one of the inns of court, and became a barrister-at-law.

It seems that about the year of our Lord 1395, he came into great favour with King Richard II. who made him his scutifer, or shield-bearer; ^[77b] and Owen was with the King when he was surrendered to Henry, Duke of Lancaster, together with the Castle of Flint. ^[77c]

Betwixt Owen and Reginald, Lord Grey, of Ruthin there arose a fierce dispute, about a common lying between the Lordship of Ruthin and Glyndyfrdwy, and belonging to Owen, who now assumed the name of

Glyndwr; and who was held in great respect by his countrymen, having artfully induced them to believe that he could "call spirits from the vasty deep." Reginald was at first conquered, and Owen possessed the disputed land; but after the deposal and murder of King Richard in Pomfrest Castle, and Henry had mounted the throne, ^[77d] the scene was changed; as Henry aided Lord Grey, who with his own vassals, and assisted by some of the King's forces, again dispossessed Owen of the land. Several severe encounters took place between the rival chieftains; and although Reginald's adherents were more numerous, the wily lawyer was more fertile in expedients.

p. 78

Owen, being apprised of an attack intended to be made upon him by Lord Grey, here practised a successful ruse de guerre. He erected a number of stakes in a bottom still called Dôl Benig, [78a] and having clad them in jackets and Welch Caps, so alarmed Reginald by their appearance, that he gave up the expedition.

At length Owen's good fortune and perseverance brought his enemy into his power. [78b] Having artfully drawn Reginald from his strong hold of Ruthin, he caused his horses to be shod backwards, which induced Reginald to advance, supposing he was pursuing a flying enemy, when he fell into an ambuscade, and was suddenly surrounded by Owen's forces, and made prisoner. Owen then marched to Ruthin, burnt the castle, destroyed the town, and despoiled the country. [78c]

Prior to this success, Owen had laid his complaints before the King's Parliament, and John Trevor, Bishop of St. Asaph, and Chancellor of Chester, seeing that no attention was paid to his petition, after a long delay, ventured to expostulate with the Lords, and to caution them that they did not, by slighting or neglecting Owen's complaint, provoke the Welch to insurrection. The reply of the Lords was full of contempt, saying, "They did not fear those rascally bare-footed people." [79a] It was subsequent to this time that Glyndwr, finding his suit neglected, resolved to endeavour to redress his own wrongs, which terminated in the capture of Reginald, as before related.

p. 79

This signal success drew to Owen many of his countrymen from all parts of the principality, who urged him on, asserting that the period was now arrived in which the prophecies of Merlin would be fulfilled; and that he was the man through whose valour the lost honour and liberties of their native country were to be recovered.

Owen Glyndwr, smarting with resentment, and impelled by his ambition, suffered himself to be persuaded to undertake the emancipation of the principality; and in the mean time kept Reginald Lord Grey a close prisoner; demanding ten thousand marks for his ransom; six thousand to be paid on the feast of St. Martin, in the fourth year of the King's reign, and Reginald to deliver up his eldest son, with other persons of quality, as hostages for the due performance. [79b]

The King, at the humble suit of Lord Grey (he finding no other means for his enlargement,) appointed a council to treat with Glyndwr, who stoutly refusing to recede from his terms, they agreed to give him the sum demanded. It is also said that Owen obliged Reginald to marry one of his daughters. [80a]

p. 80

Owen, being thus amply provided with money, and joined by numbers of his countrymen, now flew at higher game, and boldly attacked the Earl of March, who met him with a numerous body of Herefordshire men. They came to close action, when the Welchmen under Owen proved victorious, and the Earl of March was taken prisoner, some accounts say by Owen himself in single combat. [80b] With his freedom he lost above 1,000 men, who were most savagely abused after they were dead.

Edmund, Earl of March, whom Owen Glyndwr now held in thralldom, was next in blood to Richard II. and therefore it was not displeasing to King Henry that he should be thus kept out of the way: nay, Camden says—"He (Edmund) stood greatly suspected to Henrie the Fourth, who had usurped the kingdome; and by him was first exposed unto danger, insomuch as he was taken by Owen Glyndwr, a rebell." [80c] King Henry, therefore, as might be supposed, turned a deaf ear to every solicitation made on the Earl's behalf.

Now it was that Glyndwr, flushed with success, resolved to assume the title of Prince of Wales; and treating the King as a usurper of the crown, and simply as Duke of Lancaster, he caused himself to be proclaimed throughout the Principality. The better to grace the matter, he feigned himself descended in the female line from Llewellyn Ap Gruffyth, the last Prince.

p. 81

His ambition now knew no bounds; and, by virtue of his new title, he summoned a parliament at Machynlleth, in Montgomeryshire, whither all the nobility and gentry of Wales resorted. He kept his court at Sychnant, about seven miles from Llangollen, on the road to Corwen. It is now distinguished by a grove of firs, situated in a beautifully fertile country, and overlooking the Dee. A few scattered stones are all that remain to mark the side where the palace of Owen Glyndwr once stood, which his bard, Iolo Goch, sung was as large as Westminster Abbey. [81]

About the middle of August, 1402, Henry, finding the power of Owen Glyndwr increasing, and the turbulence of the Welch breaking all bounds, resolved to crush their rebellion, and putting himself at the head of a powerful army, marched into Wales. But the very elements seemed to fight against him, the weather proving so extraordinarily inclement that the King was obliged to make a precipitate retreat, without accomplishing his intentions. [82a] The people attributed the dreadful tempests which at that season occurred to the magic power of Owen, who found it his interest to encourage their credulity.

p. 82

Edward Mortimer, perceiving the King had no intention of opening his prison doors, and Glyndwr treating him with increased gentleness and respect, fell into the scheme this artful and politic man had devised. Owen Glyndwr [82b] was married to Margaret, the only daughter of Sir David Hanmer, of Hanmer, in Flintshire (who was one of the Justices of the King's Bench, and was knighted by King Richard II.) by whom he had many children; and at this time three of his

daughters were unmarried, on one of whom the captive Earl cast an eye of affection. Glyndwr at once saw the advantage of this predilection, and proposed to league with him against the King, and to cement this union by the marriage of his daughter to the Earl.

To strengthen this league, and make the proposed insurrection irresistible, the Earls of Worcester and Northumberland, two of the most powerful Nobles in England, together with the Scottish Chief Douglas, and Northumberland's valiant son of Henry Percy, better known by the name of Hotspur, were invited to join their standards; and these rebellious Lords met at the house of Dafydd Daran, the Archdeacon of Bangor, [83a] and there signed an indenture, sealing it with their own seals, to bind themselves to assemble their forces, and join in putting down the King, and for dividing the kingdom, vainly relying upon a foolish prediction of Merlin, in which the King was depicted as an execrable moldwarp, and Glyndwr and his colleagues as the wolf, the lion, and the dragon, that were to pull the moldwarp down. [83b]

p. 83

This treaty, made with so much secrecy, and executed in the recesses of Glyndwr's dominions, was soon communicated to King Henry. Sir David Gam, so called because he had a crooked eye, or squinted, or, as some say, had but one eye, was a strong and faithful partizan of the Duke of Lancaster, now King Henry IV. and consequently the inveterate enemy of Owen Glyndwr, now Prince of Wales, at whose Parliament he attended, together with the chief of the Welch nobles and gentry, but with very different intentions; he having determined to put an end to Glyndwr's rebellion with his life. [83c]

David Gam was the son of Llewellyn Ap Howel Vaughn, a gentleman of Brecknock. His scheme and his purpose were, however, unfortunately for him, discovered and frustrated, and he was immediately secured, and ordered by Owen for execution; [83d] but many of his greatest friends and adherents pleading for Gam's life, Owen thought it politic then to stifle his resentment, and to grant him both life and liberty, on his solemnly promising to continue in future true and faithfully loyal to Glyndwr.

p. 84

The promises of men in those days were frequently regarded only so long as it suited their interests or convenience. Such was the case with David Gam, who no sooner found himself among his own friends, and in his own country, than he began to assail and annoy all the favourers and adherents of Glyndwr, who being soon apprised of the practices against him, and of the use Sir David made of his liberty, marched with all expedition at the head of a small body of his retainers, intending to make him prisoner; [84] but Sir David had the good fortune to elude his vigilance, and escaped into England, where he lived for the most part at court, not daring to visit his native country until after the death of Owen Glyndwr.

Having thus missed his prey, Owen set no bounds to his resentment. He burnt Gam's house to the ground, wasted his substance, despoiled his tenants and friends, and by the rigor of his proceedings so estranged the hearts of all, and created so many enemies, that it was reasonable to expect that through Sir David's means, or some of his emissaries, the King would have information of what was plotting against him in Wales.

Henry at this time, fortunately, had a small army assembled for another purpose; and no sooner was he apprised of this conspiracy against him, than, placing himself at the head of his troops, he marched them for Wales, to attack the confederates before they had time to conjoin their forces. [85a] Owen had not collected all his strength, [85b] and the Earl of Northumberland, who was considered generalissimo, being seized with a sudden illness, and confined to his bed at Berwick-upon-Tweed, the King found the rebels under the command of Hotspur at Shrewsbury.

p. 85

The insurgent chiefs, seeing a battle inevitable, and knowing that Glyndwr, with his hardy Welchmen, was in full march to join them (in fact, he reached Oswestry at the head of 12,000 men on the very day the battle was fought,) to gain time proposed a conference, and drew up a list of grievances to be redressed; but the matter ended in mutual recrimination, and both sides prepared for battle. The numbers were nearly equal, about 12,000 on each side, and the two armies were inflamed by the most dreadful animosity.

The battle began with the most determined courage. The King was seen every where animating his troops in the post of danger, and he was most nobly seconded by his son, afterwards the renowned Henry V. the conqueror of France. On the other side the chieftains fought like men accustomed to the bloody business of war; and the battle was fierce, obstinate, and doubtful; when the daring Hotspur, supporting the high character which he had purchased by so many victories, and seeking a personal encounter with the King, fell by an unknown hand.

p. 86

The loss of their gallant leader was the loss of the battle. The fortune of the King prevailed; and although on that day no less than two thousand six hundred gentlemen, and six thousand common men were slain, this victory served to confirm Henry on his usurped throne, humbled the great Barons, and restored peace to England. Had Owen Glyndwr at this juncture pressed forward from Oswestry, where it has been before said he was lying with a fresh army, and as numerous as the English were before they had sustained so severe a loss, he might have changed the aspect of affairs; but at this distance of time a proper judgment cannot be formed. Some historians blame him for his precipitate retreat into Wales, whither he was followed by a part of the English army, under young Henry, who made himself master of the Castle of Aberystwyth, which Owen afterwards recaptured.

After this time Owen's fortunes appeared to decline, [86] and the fatal battle of Husk, fought on

the 15th of March, in which Glyndwr's son was taken, and more than fifteen hundred of his men slain, seems to have sealed his doom. But Glyndwr, although reduced, was not subdued, and he continued a predatory and harassing warfare, most annoying and destructive; sometimes making a sudden eruption into the marches, and sometimes into the heart of the country; for now, the Welch having submitted to the King, and being reconciled, Glyndwr considered his countrymen his enemies. His skill in devices, together with his local knowledge of the country, kept the Principality in a dreadful state of fear and fermentation; and although he eluded every effort made to entrap him, yet his turbulent spirit drew upon his country the vengeance of the King, in the most severe laws that were ever enacted against a civilised people. [87]

p. 87

Owen Glyndwr, once Prince of Wales, was now reduced to hide himself in the caves and fastnesses of the country, to avoid the pursuit of his enemies. He was concealed and supported for some time by Ednyfed Ap Aron, in a cave near the sea-side, at Llangelynin, in Merionethshire, still called Ogof Owain. [88a] The danger past, he again blazed forth in the destruction of a territory he had once aspired to govern; sometimes a fugitive, enduring hunger, thirst, and every privation; at others revelling as a conqueror, on the spoils of his countrymen and former friends. At last his depredations became so general and so indiscriminate that he feared every one, and became as "a wild man, and his hand was against every man, and every man's hand was against him." Being thus driven by his fears from solitary places, and at length died for lack of sustenance. [88b]

p. 88

Thus ignobly perished Owen Ap Gryffydd Fychan, commonly known by the name of Owen Glyndwr—a man who, from trifling causes, had conceived more determined hostility against the English, and had conducted that hostility with more consummate skill, than any other general the Welch had ever produced. In his early career he was uniformly victorious: he was proclaimed Prince of Wales with the sanction of the chief men of the country, made alliances with princes, and exercised his authority with becoming dignity; but now—

"Mighty victor, mighty Lord,
Low on his funeral couch he lies;
No pitying heart, no eye t' afford
A tear to grace his obsequies."

Owen Glyndwr was one of those fiery meteors which Providence sometimes permits to visit the earth, for the instruction of mankind, and to show us the vanity of all sublunary things: astonishing the world with their splendour, they blaze for a short time; and as suddenly decline, and sink into obscurity. Such, in our own horizon, have been Glyndwr and Cromwell, and in later times Bonaparte. Their course was brilliant, but short; and as their greatness grew, so did their suspicions and their fears; until, at last, life itself became burdensome, and the end of their career was clouded by disappointment, misery, and despair.

p. 89

But Owen Glyndwr had more legitimate reasons to plead than either of his compeers. Deprived of a part of his patrimony by power, and unable to obtain redress by law, he took the law into his own hands, and had recourse to force. Success produced ambition, which proved his overthrow.

Owen was bold, wary, and revengeful: he set no bounds to his resentment. He made a smoking ruin of the dwelling of his countryman, Sir David Gam, and thereby made him an implacable enemy. He was the cause of the loss of one hundred thousand lives, [89] and of the destruction of immense property. Many houses and other buildings were burnt and destroyed by him; among which I find enumerated the Castle of Ruthin, the Cathedral of St. Asaph, the Cathedral of Bangor, the Bishop's Palace, &c. at Llantaff, the towns of Leominster and Old Radnor, besides the house of Sir David Gam, &c.

p. 90

It will be right to notice that Mr. Pennant gives the following account of the death of Owen Glyndwr; but as he states there is nothing confirmatory of Owen's interment at Monnington, I have thought it right to adhere to the older authorities:—"He matched his daughters," says Mr. Pennant, "into considerable families: his eldest, Isabel, to Adam Ap Iorwerth Ddu; his second, Elizabeth, or as some say, Alicia, to Sir John Scudamore, of Ewyas, and Home Lacy, in Herefordshire; Jane he forced upon Lord Grey De Ruthin; and his youngest daughter, Margaret, to Roger Monnington, of Monnington, in Herefordshire, at whose house some accounts say he died, and was buried in the church-yard there." [90]

The prison where Owen confined his captives, and of which some remains may still be seen, was near the church at Llansantffraid Glyndyfrdwy; and the place is still called Carchardy Owen Glyndwr. He is said to have died in the sixty-first year of his age.

I trust it will be deemed a pardonable digression, if I now give the sequel of the military career of that loyal and truly brave Welchman, Sir David Gam. I have before recounted that Glyndwr forced him to fly for protection to the court of England, where he continued in favour with King Henry IV. until the death of that monarch. I then find him accompanying his son, King Henry V. on his expedition into France, in the year of our Lord 1415, at the head and in the command of a numerous body of stout and valiant Welchmen, who on all occasions distinguished themselves by their courage and conduct. [91]

p. 91

To Sir David Gam was assigned the important office of reconnoitring the French army, on the approach of the famous battle of Agincourt. Finding the French nearly ten times more numerous than the English army, he replied to the King's question as to the enemy's strength—"An't please

you, my Liege, they are enough to be killed, enough to run away, and enough to be taken prisoners." The King was well pleased with such an answer from a man of Sir David's valour.

In the battle which followed, and which was fought on the 25th of October, 1415, the King alighted from his horse to head his footmen, and to encourage them to resist the charge of the second line of the French army, then advancing; when eighteen French cavaliers, who had bound themselves by an oath to kill King Henry, or perish, rushed upon him in a body, and one of them with a blow of his battle-axe so stunned the King that he would have fallen an easy victim, had not Sir David Gam, with his son-in-law, Roger Vaughn, and his kinsman, Walter Llwyd, of Brecknock, seasonably sprung to his rescue. They slew fourteen of the assailants, and delivered the King, when they fell at his feet, covered with wounds. In the heat of the battle, Henry was separated from his brave defenders; but being soon afterwards informed that their wounds were mortal, he immediately repaired to the spot where Sir David and his faithful companions lay; and, as the only recompense in his power then to bestow, he knighted them all three upon the field, where they soon after died. [92]

p. 92

Thus ended the life of Sir David Gam; but the remembrance of his loyalty, and the fame of his valour, will live, and perpetuate his memory.

"So sleep the brave, who sink to rest,
By all their country's wishes bless'd,
When Spring, with dewy fingers cold,
Returns to deck their hallow'd mould,
She there shall dress a sweeter sod
Than Fancy's feet have ever trod.
By fairy hands their knell is rung,
By forms unseen their dirge is sung.
There Honour comes, a pilgrim grey,
To bless the turf that wraps their clay;
And Freedom shall awhile repair,
To dwell a weeping hermit there."

It is conjectured that Shakspeare took Sir David as a specimen, when he wrote the character of Captain Fluellen, in Henry V.

Returning towards Llangollen from Glyndyfrdwy, along a beautiful level road, made at the expense of Government, with the Berwyn Mountains rising abruptly on the right hand, and the murmuring Dee pursuing its devious course on the left, I pass a small brook, which divides the counties of Merioneth and Denbigh. A pillar on the top of the mountain above is for the same purpose. The views over the Dee are incomparably charming.

p. 93

LLANGOLLEN CHURCH.

"Hail, ancient edifice; thine aisle along,
In contemplation wrapt, now let me stray;
And stealing from the idly busy throng,
Devoutly meditate the moral lay."

Llangollen Church, which stands in the middle of the town, is a low gothic structure; and the south side appears the most ancient part of the edifice. At the east end, on the outside wall, are two knees, which seem to have been intended as the spring of an arch, for an enlargement of the building. The roof is slated, and there is a tower steeple at the west end, containing four bells and a clock, with quarter chimes.

The Church is dedicated to Saint Collen Ap Gwynnawg, Ap Clydawg, Ap Cowdra, Ap Caradog Freichfras, Ap Lleyr Merim, Ap Einion Yrth, Ap Cunedda Wledig, by Ethni Wyddeles, daughter of Matholwch, Lord of Cwl, in the kingdom of Ireland; [94] which saint was buried here. In the Church was formerly a recumbent figure in alabaster, vulgarly called Saint Collen. The unshapely remains of this monument are still to be seen in the belfry, where it has been thrown.

p. 94

The roof of the Church is supported with three massive stone octagon Doric pillars, of great antiquity, and two heavy abutments. The roof itself is very curiously enriched with carved compartments, in old oak, supported by figures of angels, in various attitudes, also of solid oak. These figures and the roof I suspect to be spoils of the Abbey Crucis, to which the Church of Llangollen was incumbent. The transom beams that support the roof are indented with tracery; and on the north side of the beam over the north aisle, is the following very curious inscription cut in old letter. It is so lofty that it can scarcely be made out distinctly, but I have taken some pains to give it correctly:—

"Y nav i ti, Mair, vydd barod bob awr."

Which may be thus translated:—

"Heaven for thee, Mary, will be open every hour."

I have little doubt that this beam, as well as the other decorations of the roof of the Church, was brought from Llan Egwest, which it will be recollected was dedicated to the Virgin Mary.

p. 95

There is a beautiful half-length of our Saviour in the window over the altar, painted upon glass by Eginton, of Birmingham, with this inscription under it:—

“Nid fy ewyllys i, ond yr eiddo ti a wneler.”

S. Lau pen. 22, ad. 42.

“Not my will, but thine be done.”

I believe there are no other Welch inscriptions in the Church, among the many grave stones, tablets, &c. which abound; and yet service is performed in no other language, except on the second sabbath in every month, and on Good Friday. There are many English families now resident in Llangollen and its neighbourhood; and to those that are seriously disposed this is a great privation.

The Church is well served by the very worthy and pious Vicar, who resides at the Vicarage; yet, notwithstanding, there are four dissenting congregations in the town, viz.—Wesleyan Methodists, Whitfield or Calvinistic Methodists, Independents, and Baptists.

In the church-yard is a school, under which is a vestry-room, bearing this inscription:—“This school-house was built at the expense of the parishioners, having obtained the ordinary license, with consent of the Rev. R. Price, vicar, 1773.”

The customs of the orthodox Welch Church are similar to those in England, except in the following, viz.—that of bedecking the graves of the dead with shrubs and flowers; of singing before the corpse to the church; and the very annoying one of ringing a passing bell in the following manner:—On the day prior to the funeral the bells are tolled in a very quick succession of strokes; that is to say, twelve quick strokes on the first bell, and after a short pause, twelve on the second; and so on once round, the number of strokes on each bell, denoting the condition of the deceased. Thus, twelve strokes on each bell denotes the death of a married master of a family; eleven strokes the mother or mistress of a family; ten strokes an unmarried or young man; nine a young woman unmarried; six a boy; and five a girl. Then begins an incessant monotonous toll of the great bell, in minute time, which generally continues all that day until eight o'clock at night: it commences again at eight o'clock on the following morning, and does not cease until eight o'clock at night, except during the time of interment. The usage at the burial is also novel to an English observer. When the service in the church is concluded, the officiating minister goes to the steps of the altar, whereon a sort of wooden plate is previously placed; and the attendants and friends of the deceased immediately proceed to deposit money thereon in his presence, which is instead of dues. When the corpse is consigned to the earth, the clerk receives the donations of the people that are around the grave, upon the spade with which he is throwing the earth upon the coffin; and this is his share of the fees.

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There is also an old and curious custom observed at Christmas, called Plygan, or Plygain, that is, “the time of night when the cock croweth; the morning twilight.”—On the morning of Christmas Day, the bells are rung as is usual to assemble to church, about four o'clock; and on their ringing about six o'clock, most of the parishioners assemble, some bringing candles, and the church is also lighted up. After the prayers (morning service for the day) are read, the congregation continue, and the minister also, hearing original carols in the Welch language, on our Saviour's nativity. This time and custom were formerly much more seriously observed, when men believed

“That ever 'gainst that season comes
Wherein our Saviour's birth is celebrated,
The bird of dawning singeth all night long;
And then they say no spirit walks abroad;
The nights are wholesome, then no planets strike;
No fairy takes, no witch hath power to charm;
So hallowed and so gracious is the time.”

Except two or three marble monuments in the Church, there are no other remarkable objects; but in the church-yard are many very neat and handsome freestone tombs. Some of those recently erected are in the sarcophagus form, and are very nicely executed.

Nearly opposite the south door of the Church stands a triangular gothic column of freestone, surrounded by a light iron railing, erected over the grave of a highly respected domestic of the Right Hon. Lady E. Butler, and the Hon. Miss Ponsonby. The pillar is executed in good taste, and on one of the three facades are the following lines, doing much honour to the heart as well as to the head of the composer:—

p. 98

In Memory of
Mrs. MARY CAROL,
Deceased the 22nd of November, 1809,
This Monument is erected,
By Eleanor Butler and Sarah Ponsonby,
Of Plas Newydd, in this Parish.

Released from earth, and all its transient woes,
She whose remains beneath this stone repose,
Steadfast in faith, resign'd her parting breath,

Look'd up with Christian zeal, and smiled in death;
Patient, industrious, faithful, gen'rous, kind,
Her conduct left the proudest far behind;
Her virtues dignified her humble birth,
And raised her mind beyond this sordid earth.
Attachment, sacred bond of grateful breasts,
Extinguish'd but with life this tomb attests,
Rear'd by two friends, who will her loss bemoan,
Till with her ashes here shall rest their own.

The poor of Llangollen have much reason to pray that period may be far distant; for the benevolence of these retired ladies is extensive and discriminate; and it may justly be said there is not a poor deserving object in this little town, who does not participate in their bounty. I shall conclude with a brief notice of their residence.

PLAS NEWYDD.

p. 99

“’Tis pleasant through the loopholes of retreat
To peep at the great world—to see the stir
Of the great Babel, and not feel the crowd.”

Plas Newydd, situated at the east end of the town of Llangollen, has long been the residence of two eminently distinguished ladies, the Right Hon. Lady Eleanor Butler and the Hon. Miss Ponsonby, [99] who came to Llangollen, and after a time purchased the domain, and planted and decorated the grounds. It has attained its present beauty under their own superintendence.

Many years have elapsed since these ladies withdrew from the world, to which, from their rank and accomplishments, they would have been distinguished ornaments, and secluded themselves in this beautiful retreat, where they have uniformly been the benefactresses of the poor, the encouragers of the industrious, and the friends of all in their neighbourhood. The peculiar taste and beauty with which these noble and highly distinguished ladies have decorated and adorned both the exterior and the interior of their far-famed retreat, excites universal admiration from the first characters and families, who are continually visiting them.

p. 100

A palisade, ornamented with antique and grotesque figures, carved in oak, encloses the front, before which a profusion of the choicest flowers and shrubs is tastefully arranged. The entrance and the windows, which are formed after the manner of ancient religious houses, are decorated with carving in the same material. The entrance-door is unique, and a great curiosity, being beautifully ornamented with well polished carved figures; the whole of which are of black oak, and kept particularly bright, giving the retreat a very uncommon appearance. The entrance-hall, stairs, and passages, are chastely in character; and the windows are ornamented with painted glass in the most appropriate manner.

The gardens, in which nature and art are judiciously united, are extensive, and display much taste. The thick and umbrageous foliage of the lofty forest trees, that occupy a part of the lawn and gardens, is the safe asylum of numerous birds, which in this calm seclusion revel unmolested. A pair of beautiful wood-owls have found a safe and quiet shelter in the trunk of an old ivy-covered tree; and on a lawn a little further, is erected a pretty moss-covered alcove, furnished with a few well-selected books: it is nearly in the centre of the garden, and is open in front. The confidence of the birds is shown by some of them every year building their nests in this recess: indeed, these airy inhabitants appear to be quite tame and familiarized by the kindness of their amiable protectors. I believe the birds have much the larger portion of the produce of these beautiful gardens, as none of them are suffered to be molested.

p. 101

Through the lower part of the shrubbery, a brook, called Cyflymen, i.e. Speedy, murmurs over its pebbly bed, and is crossed by a rustic bridge, which leads to a bank covered with lichens, and furnished with appropriate seats, near which rises a pure fountain, whose waters are as clear as the crystal glasses which ornament its margin: in short, the beauty of the scenery, aided by a little enthusiasm, might inspire the idea that

“Here in cool grot and mossy cell,
The rural fays and fairies dwell:
Though rarely seen by mortal eye,
When the pale moon, ascending high,
Darts through yon limes her quiv’ring beams,
They frisk it near these crystal streams.”

The carved stone brought from the Abbey Crucis, and mentioned as being dug up at the time the bodies were discovered, stands near the entrance.

I have thus completed the circuit I proposed at the commencement of my labours. To hope the attainment of perfection in a work of this nature would with justice be deemed presumptuous; but I trust any inaccuracy will be treated with lenity, and that due allowance will be made for the disadvantage under which verbal information is at all times collected by a person who does not understand the native language. Thus far I can with truth say, that, from a desire to combine correctness with intelligence, I have in no case given that on heresay, which might be readily ascertained by ocular demonstration.

p. 102

With regard to the quotations which I have thought proper to introduce, I must here again draw upon the kind indulgence of my readers. Not having an extensive library at my command, I have sometimes been obliged to quote from memory. This will also, in some degree, account for omissions of which I may in places be deemed guilty.

I will now take leave of my friends, assuring them that, if I have not done all I might for their information and amusement, it must be attributed to any other cause rather than a want of desire and endeavour on my part. It would, indeed, be unpardonable in me to deserve such an imputation, after having received so many marks of attention from friends whom I have had occasion more than once to consult in the progress of my researches, and being furnished with information from quarters where I had not the least claim.

LLANGOLLEN: PRINTED BY H. JONES.

FOOTNOTES.

[2a] The north side of the river is called "*Trevor Ucha*," i.e. "*Upper Trevor*."

[2b] Since the year 1827 great many new and elegant brick-houses were built, which add much to the neatness of the town.

[3a] According to the census of 1841, the number of houses were 884, and inhabitants 4,498.

[3b] There are now seven fairs kept every year, viz. last Friday in January, March 17, April 22, May 31, August 21, October 15, November 22.

[3c] The Mail comes through from London at present 55 minutes past nine o'clock in the morning, and returns through from Holyhead at half past two in the afternoon.

[3d] The above stage coaches have ceased running since few years ago; and instead of the Vans there is a Waggon now passing once a week to Shrewsbury.

[3e] There are coaches also going regularly to meet the trains at Chester.

[4] Twenty two at present.

[5] The Welch have a great readiness in attaching names to record occurrences: thus, the Gerant, which is a part of the Berwyn Mountains, is called by them *Moel y Barbwr*, i.e. Barber Hill, and obtained this appellation from the circumstance of a barber, who was an associate of a desperate gang of ruffians, having been hanged on the summit, for the murder of his wife in the last century.

[6a] Welch Chron. p. 3.

[6b] Camden's Britan. p. 623.

[7a] Warrington, p. 102.

[7b] Cort's Letter.

[8a] Camb. Itin. p. 342.

[8b] Pennant, vol. 1, p. 275.

[11] Wynne's Caradoc, p. 223.

[15] She expired in 1843.

[17] Pennant, vol. 1, 282.

[20] Pennant, vol. 1, p. 293.

[24] Camden, p. 623.

[25] Cambr. Trav. Guide, p. 327.

[26a] Pennant, vol. 2, p. 77.

[26b] Warrington, p. 325.

[27a] Wynne, p. 190.

[27b] Warrington, p. 326.

[28] Wynne, p. 191.

[29] Warrington, p. 327.

[30] Warrington, p. 328. Hollins's Chron. p. 73.

[32a] These trees were planted immediately after the great election for the boroughs of Holt, Ruthin, and Denbigh, in which Mr. Myddelton was chosen, to mark the way to the Castle of Chirk, for the convenience of his constituents coming to share its hospitalities.

[32b] The ancient pillar and its pedestal now lie by the side of the road, near a place called Pen y Beddau, about a quarter of a mile from the toll-gate at the east end of the town.

[34] Hunt's Letter to the Earl of Bridgewater, in the Ellesmere Report.

[36] Hunt's Letter to the Earl of Bridgewater, p. 7.

[39] Pennant, vol. 1, p. 294.

[40] See "Llangollen Church," in this book.

[43] English Baronetage, vol. 2, p. 114, printed 1727.

[44a] It is now a Flannel Factory.

[44b] At present by the firm of Messrs. Hughes & Co. of this town. There is another Factory where flannel is manufactured on the south side of the river, carried on by Messrs. Jones & Son, of this town.

[45] Cooke's Brit. Trav. p. 111.

[46a] The above room referred to is in ruins since some years ago.

[46b] Pennant, vol. 1, p. 401.

[48a] London, so called by Camden and the Brut.

[48b] See Llangollen Church, dedicated to St. Collen.

[48c] See the Brut, or Chronicle of the Kings of Britain, in vol. 1 of Collectanea Cambrica, by the Rev. P. Roberts, A.M.

[48d] Chron. of the Kings of Britain, p. 49.

[49] Brut, p. 30. Camden. Gildas wrote A.D. 560; Geoffrey of Monmouth, 1070.

[50a] Pennant, vol. 1, p. 395.

[50b] Warrington, p. 345.

[50c] Warrington, p. 359.

[50d] Wynne, p. 229.

[51a] Wynne, p. 230.

[51b] Warrington, p. 363.

[51c] Wynne, p. 257. Warrington, p. 398.

[52a] Wynne, p. 273.

[52b] Wynne, p. 274.

[53] Wynne, p. 180.

[54a] Pennant, vol. 1, p. 216.

[54b] Wynne, p. 275.

[54c] Warrington, p. 440.

[54d] Warrington, p. 458.

[55a] Pennant, vol. 1, p. 216.

[55b] Pennant, vol. 1, p. 217.

[55c] Wynne, p. 181.

[56a] Pennant, vol. 1, p. 217.

[56b] Pennant, vol. 1, p. 217.

[56c] Camden's Brit. p. 304.

[58a] Pennant, vol. 1, p. 324. A gentleman who knows the fact says, however, that it came to the Cuppers recently, through an intermarriage with a Miss Davies; and that Mr. Pennant was wrong informed.

[58b] At present Mr. E. Wynne.

[60a] Whittington on Gothic Architecture. Dr. Milner's History of Winchester.

[60b] Sir Christopher Wren's Parentalia.

[62a] Camden's Britan. p. 677.

[62b] These dates may have been some years later. In a MS. obligingly lent to me, it is stated, "Dissolved by statute of Henry VIII. 1561, at which time it was rated in the King's Books at 214*l.* 3*s.* 3*d.*:" so that it was wholly decayed, as Camden has it, in twenty-five years.

[62c] This is the year in which Camden's Latin Edition appeared; consequently, this survey must have been made before.

[65a] Pennant, vol. 1.

[65b] Pennant, vol. 1, p. 395.

[65c] Pennant, vol. 1, p. 397.

[65d] A ploughland is nearly one hundred acres.

[67] Pennant, vol. 1, p. 398.

[69a] Pennant, vol. 1, p. 399.

[69b] Although Pennant spells the second Cateli with two letters of τ, yet it has been published by others with only one; and as the name in both instances refers to the same person, I have adopted the latter course.

[70a] Warrington, p. 87.

[70b] Camden, p. 595.

[70c] Wynne, p. 23.

[73a] Pennant, vol. 2, p. 80.

[73b] Bala Pool.

[73c] Camden's Brit. p. 666.

[77a] Wynne, p. 315.

[77b] Wynne, p. 320.

[77c] Pennant, vol. 1, p. 327.

[77d] Wynne, p. 315.

[78a] About seven miles from Llangollen, and not far from Glyndyfrdwy, on the Corwen road, there is a meadow called "Dôl Benig," or Head Meadow, where this scheme was practised.

[78b] Camb. Trav. Guide p. 324.

[78c] Wynne, p. 316.

[79a] Wynne, p. 316.

[79b] Wynne, p. 316.

[80a] Pennant, vol. 1, p. 331.

[80b] Wynne, p. 317.

[80c] Camden, p. 625.

[81] Pennant, vol. 1, p. 328. Iolo Goch says—"Owen's Palace had a gate-house; was surrounded with a moat; had nine halls, furnished with the wardrobes of his retainers; had a house adjoining, built of wood, and covered with tiles, designed for his guests. The office of porter was useless; locks and bolts were unknown; and no one could be hungry or dry at Sycharth." So Mr. Pennant spells it.

[82a] Wynne, p. 317. Pennant, vol. 1, p. 355.

[82b] English Baronetage, vol. 1, p. 167.

[83a] Wynne, p. 317.

[83b] Wynne, p. 318. Pennant, vol. 1, p. 321.

[83c] Wynne, p. 320.

[83d] Pennant, vol. 1, p. 360.

[84] Wynne, p. 321.

[85a] Rapin's England.

[85b] Pennant.

[86] Wynne, p. 319.

[87] Wynne, p. 319. These rebellious practices of Glyndwr so exasperated King Henry against

the Welch people, that he enacted laws which in effect took away all their liberties. They were rendered incapable of purchasing any lands, or of being elected Members of any county or borough; or of undertaking any office civil or military in any town incorporate. No Englishman could be convicted of any crime against a Welchman, but by an English judge and jury. An Englishman, by marrying a Welch woman, was deprived of all his privileges as an English subject. No Welchman could possess any castle or place of defence, or be supplied with victuals or armour, without a warrant from the King or from his Common Council. And further it was enacted that no Welchman should be capable of undertaking the office of Justice, Chamberlain, Sheriff, or other place of trust, in any part of Wales; notwithstanding any patent or license heretofore given to the contrary. With other rigorous and unjust laws, forbidding any Welchman from bringing up his children to learning, or binding them to any trade or occupation. Henry V. at his succession repealed these abominable laws.

[88a] Pennant, vol. p. 371.

[88b] Hollinshead. Wynne, p. 319.

[89] Cambr. Trav. Guide, p. 324.

[90] Pennant, vol. 1, p. 331.

[91] Wynne, p. 322.

[92] Wynne, p. 322.

[94] Pennant, vol. 1, p. 296.

[99] The above ladies referred to by the author are dead some years ago, and Plas Newydd is now inhabited by two other ladies of high connections and respectability, Miss Andrew, and Miss Lolly.

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