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Title: A Record of St. Cybi's Church, Holyhead

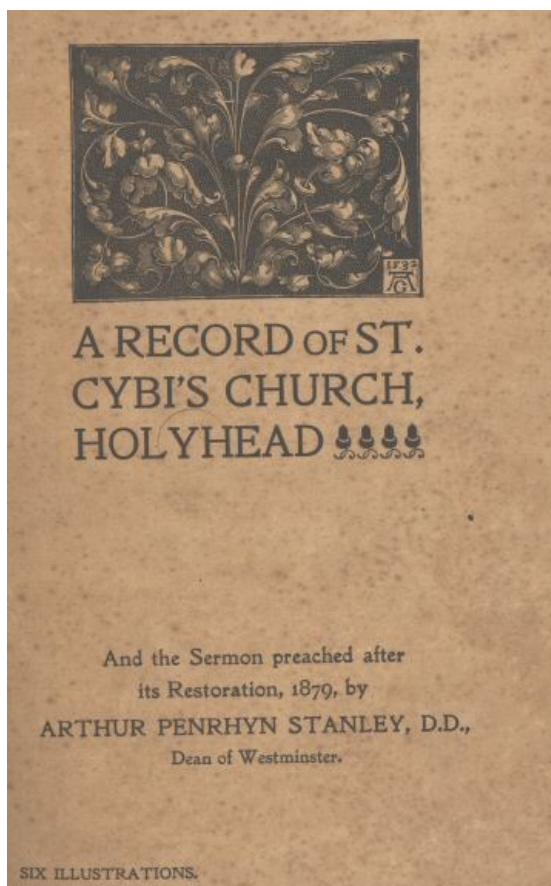
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Release date: June 7, 2016 [EBook #52261]

Language: English

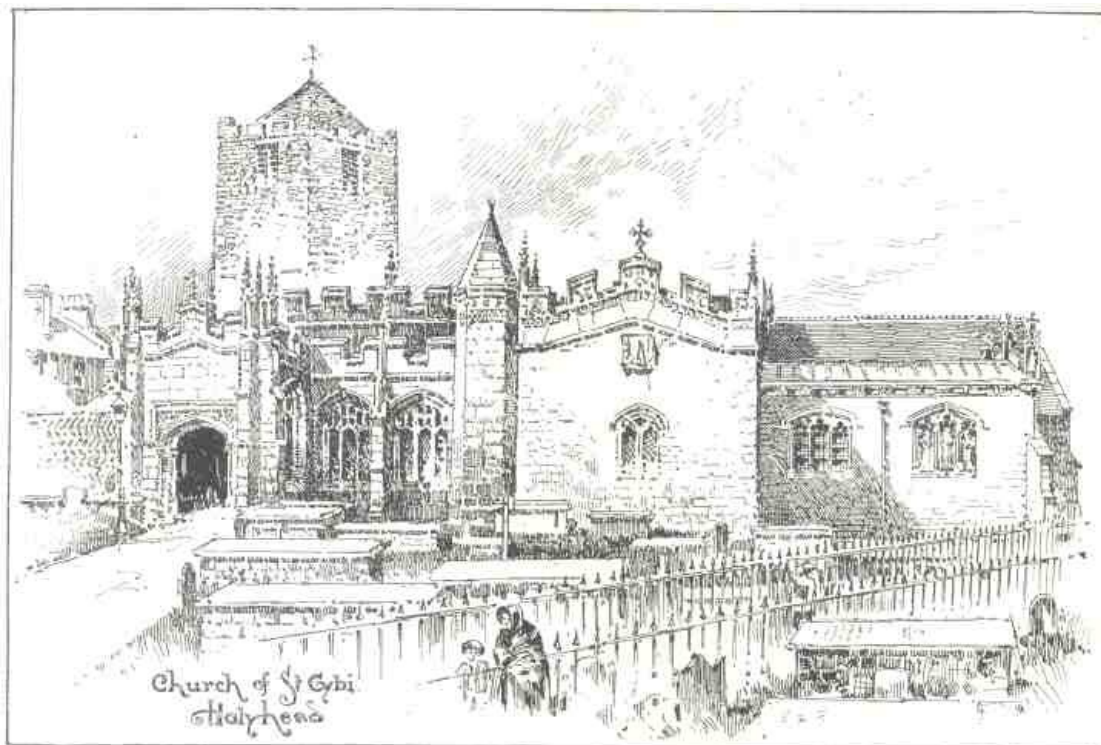
*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK A RECORD OF ST. CYBI'S CHURCH,
HOLYHEAD ***

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A RECORD OF ST. CYBI'S CHURCH, HOLYHEAD

And the Sermon preached after
its Restoration, 1879, by
ARTHUR PENRHYN STANLEY, D.D.,
Dean of Westminster.



A Record of St. Cybi's Church

p. 1

THE old Church of St. Cybi, at Holyhead, which contains so many memorials of the devotion and piety of former generations, has been in this Jubilee year of the reign of Queen Victoria enriched by many precious gifts. A new South Aisle, capable of containing 50 or 60 worshippers, has been added to the Church as a memorial to Mr. and Mrs. W. O. Stanley of Penrhos; and the beautiful window at the east end has been placed there in memory of Mr. Watson, Chairman and Managing Director of the City of Dublin Co., by his sons.

The connection of Mr. Stanley's forefathers, the Owens of Penrhos, with the Church of St. Cybi, has been a very close one, and we are indebted to the archaeological lore and love of the locality which distinguished his family and himself, for the preservation of many beautiful traditions and interesting remains of long past ages.

Holyhead Island is rich in old-world treasures which appeal not only to the archaeologist and the historian, but to the artistic mind and eye of men like Matthew Arnold and the author of "The Stones of Venice."

p. 2

"Just on the other side of the Mersey," Ruskin writes, "you have your Snowdon and your Menai Straits and that mighty granite rock beyond the moors of Anglesea, splendid in its heathery crest, and footplanted in the deep sea, once thought of as sacred—a divine promontory, looking westward; the Holy Head or Head Land, still not without awe when its red light glares first through storm."

On that same mountain of Holyhead are the circular hive-shaped dwellings, of unknown antiquity, called locally "Cyttiau Gwyddelod," or "Irishmen's Huts." These are excavated to a depth of some feet below the surface, 15 feet to 20 feet in diameter inside, the sides of the interior being lined with stones to prevent the earth from falling, and the dome-shaped roof only being apparent above the surface of the ground. In addition to the above are the curiously shaped querns, mullers, and other stone implements indicating the past life of the dwellers in these rude huts.

The great Cromlech at Trefignedd and the fine Monoliths at Plas Meilw also bear silent record to the existence of men, who, but for this lasting evidence might well be deemed mythical. At that great Cromlech, overlooking many miles of country, horrible scenes were enacted, according to tradition, scenes too ghastly for description; and now, cattle graze and children play in the sunshine among those giant stones.

p. 3

Holyhead mountain has repeatedly been a witness to fierce struggles for mastery between the natives and invaders, who from time to time landed, and tried to make good their footing, on that wild picturesque coast, guarded as it is to the west by jagged rocks, and with only here and there a creek into which a boat might be pushed in calm weather. Even now, with all the help that modern invention and careful thought can give, there are tragic tales of shipwreck and loss of life on those cruel rocks; and what must it have been in ancient times, when there was nothing

between daring men and death but their rough boats, which it would take little to dash into a thousand atoms?

Doubtless in those early days the island was wooded, as trunks of trees are found at low tide, half buried in the sand in Towyn-y-Capel Bay, on the west coast. Possibly, under cover of these trees, marauders were able to effect a landing unseen; but at present, when there is not a single stick or shrub of any kind, this is difficult to realise. Still, though the trees have perished, there remain the silent monuments of that great race, which are found in almost every land; the same cromlechs, the same monoliths, as exist in our own island, are traceable on the Continent of Europe, especially in Brittany, and even in remotest India.

p. 4

If to searchers after Druidical and Ante-Druidical remains Holyhead affords such rich results, yet higher interest still attaches to its early Christian records. In it, and in its neighbour Anglesey, are traced some of the earliest evidences of the foundation of the Christian Church, its collegiate bodies and its organization; and from this cradle of the Church proceeded the men whose teaching appears to have effectually superseded the dying religion of the Sun and the Serpent; for we have evidence that a number of Druid priests were converted, and we have no record of any bitter animosity against the preachers of the Gospel.

Early legends affirm that James, the son of Zebedee, came with his mother Salome into Britain, six years after our Lord's Ascension, and preached the Gospel to willing ears; others say St. Paul himself visited these Islands after his imprisonment by Nero.

How far these legends are literally true is not of great consequence; the certainty remains that the Gospel was preached throughout the country, and that the fabric of the holy Church was raised and organized here after the same manner as the Eastern Churches.

As a proof of Christians having visited the Island, a medal was found in one of the Druid Mounds in Anglesey bearing the inscription, "This is Jesus Christ the Mediator," and as the Romans had routed the Druids, this medal must have been there before the demolishing of the mound by Suetonius Paulinus, thus verifying in part the words of Tertullian an age later, who relates the sudden progress of the Christian Faith, which anticipated the Roman sword in the celerity of its conquests.

p. 5

The first school of "Christian learning" to supply the province with clergy was apparently founded at Bangor, Anno Domini 182, and it is supposed that according to the usual plan of organization there were seven bishops under an archbishop in this province of Britain. Some of these were bishops of endowed sees, others were consecrated "Sine Titulo."

The clergy in general appear to have lived with their bishops, forming collegiate bodies, and they were sent out by their superiors into various districts allotted to them as occasion required.

It does not appear that they had any settled parishes in Mona for many years after this period nor were there many churches; but they "assembled the people together to hear the Word of God preached in some convenient place, either at oratories or at the manor-houses of their respective Lords and Masters, who probably had their own chapels for sacred use and service. Most of these churches and chapels were dedicated to such early Christian names as St. Mary, St. Peter, St. Michael, &c." (see "Mona Antiqua.")

p. 6

After the departure of the Romans in A.D. 390 the Picts tried to regain their former possessions, and the country was sorely ravaged by them until there stood up two families of eminent rank who laid claim to the British Sceptre. The one was headed by Octavius, grandson of the Duke of Cornwall; the other was descended from Cynetha Weledig, and nearly related to Constantine the Great.

For many years struggles continued between these rival Princes; but at length the descendant of the Cornwall family gave up the contest and retired to the Duchy of Cornwall. Cynetha's descendants having routed the Picts who had invaded Mona, made head also against the Saxons. For a long time they withstood them victoriously, having secured all the ancient "Brittannia Secunda" (now called Wales) from the ravages of these invaders, and to them the poor Britons, and more especially the clergy, fled for protection.

It is difficult to trace the exact date of the foundation of the church of St. Cybi at Holyhead, but it appears to have been founded by Cybi the son of Selyt, or Solomon, about 550 A.D. He afterwards, according to tradition, became Bishop of Anglesey.

p. 7

Sir John Stanley upheld the theory that a Roman Temple originally existed within the present churchyard walls, and that on the departure of the Romans it was occupied or used as a church. Whether this were so or not, it is clear that in the days of Caswallan Llaw Hir, Son of Cynetha, there was a burial-place within the fort at Holyhead, inside the present walls encircling the churchyard.

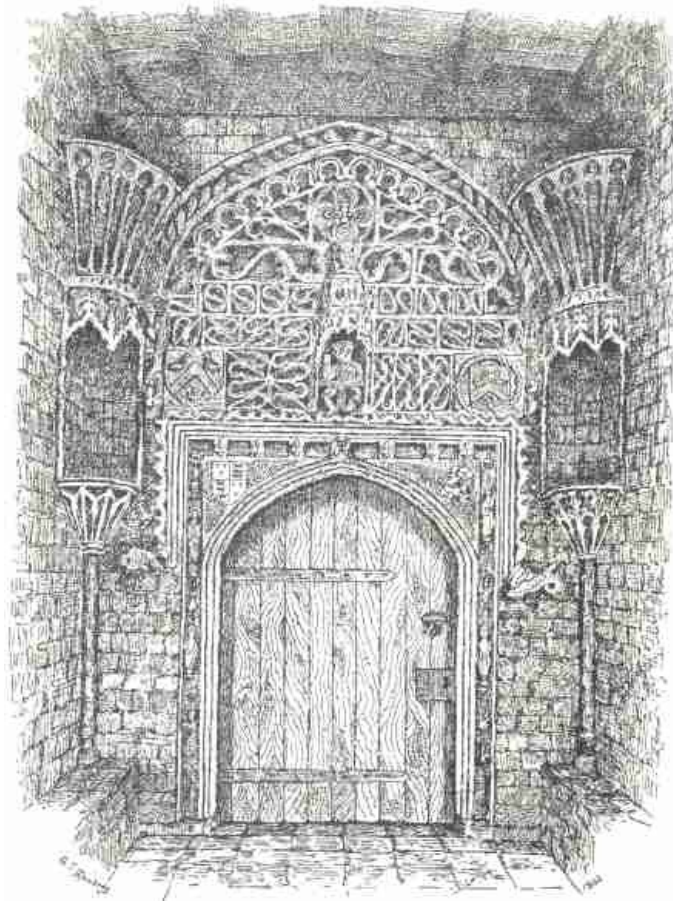
Here Caswallan routed and slew with his own hand Sirigi, the Irish giant, who, with a following of Irish Picts, had a short time before forced a landing and had built a place or town called first Llan-y-Gwyddel, then Caer Gybi, and now in English, Holyhead. Within the enclosure where Sirigi was slain stood a chapel, on the south side of the church, some remains of which (conspicuous among them a Gothic arch) are still extant, and here, it is affirmed, the Irish giant was buried. This was called Eglwys-y-Bedd, the Church of the Grave, and Capel Llan-y-Gwyddel, or the Chapel of the Irishman.

It appears, from leases of the collegiate church, that this chapel was endowed with distinct revenues in the reign of Edward III. Some of the ruins were removed in the last century to render the entrance to the present church more convenient, and in digging, a stone coffin was found under an arch, on the north side of the chancel, containing bones of a large size, and this probably was the shrine of Sirigi, who was canonized by the Irish. According to an old chronicle, they carried off his body and deposited it in their cathedral in Dublin; but the finding of the coffin with the gigantic bones seems to render this part of the story improbable.

p. 8

Caswallon had apparently a very fierce conflict with the Irish Picts before he gained his victory, and moreover could not have had much confidence in his own men, for we read that he tied them together in couples, with horse fetters, to prevent their breaking their ranks when fighting with Sirigi. This prince settled himself after his victories at Llaneillan, and was submitted to as Chief or King of Anglesey. There are remains of a strongly fortified camp near the summit of Holyhead mountain, still called Mur Caswallon or Caer-y-Twr.

Caswallon's son was the famous Maelgwyn Gwynedd, the hero of many battles and the terror of the Saxons. He erected the See of Bangor about the year 550, where, a short time before, Daniel, the son of Dionothus, Abbot of Bangor-is-Coed, had built a college for North Wales clergy. Maelgwyn Gwynedd founded the college and the three canonries of Bangor, Penmon and Caer Gybi. Others say that Llywarch-ap-Bran founded the Prebendaries. His arms, the three crows, are in the porch of St. Cybi's Church, at Holyhead.



Tradition makes St. Cybi a contemporary of St. Seiriol, who lived at Penmon, while St. Cybi lived at Holyhead. These saints met frequently in the centre of the island to hold holy converse together. They left their homes early and parted at mid-day, so that the rising sun always shone on the face of St. Cybi as he travelled eastwards in the morning, and he met the rays of the setting sun as he journeyed homeward in the evening, while on St. Seiriol's face the sun never shone, hence St. Seiriol is represented as fair and white, while St. Cybi is depicted as dark and sunburnt. ("Gybi Felyn.")

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This legend has been commemorated in the following verses by Mr. Matthew Arnold:—

EAST AND WEST.

In the bare midst of Anglesea they show
Two springs which close by one another play,
And "Thirteen hundred years ago," they say,
Two saints met often where those waters flow.

One came from Penmon westward, and a glow
Whiten'd his face from the sun's fronting ray;
Eastward the other, from the dying day,
And he with unsunn'd face did always go.

"Seiriol the bright, Cybi the dark!" men said;
The seer from the east was then in light,

The seer from the west was then in shade.
Ah! now 'tis changed. In conquering sunshine bright
The man of the bold west now comes array'd;
He of the mystic east is touched with night.

It is highly probable that St. Cybi did found the church that bears his name, though the structure as it stands is no doubt of later date. The original fabric was probably used as a school or college as well as for public worship. St. Cybi also founded other chapels: Capel-y-Llochwydd (meaning a desolate place), on the mountain, and Capel-y-Golles, at the east end of which there was a spring; and another at Towyn-y-Capel, on an artificial tumulus or mound by the sea-shore, about two and a half miles from Holyhead, called St. Fraid (or Capel Bridget). The legend states that St. Bridget, escaping from her persecutors, floated across from Ireland on a green sod which, on her landing, became a firm hillock, on which the chapel was built. Traces of a chapel can still be remembered, but these have now disappeared, owing to the encroachment of the sea, together with the mound on which they were discernible. There was also a fourth chapel in the hamlet of Criccist.

p. 10

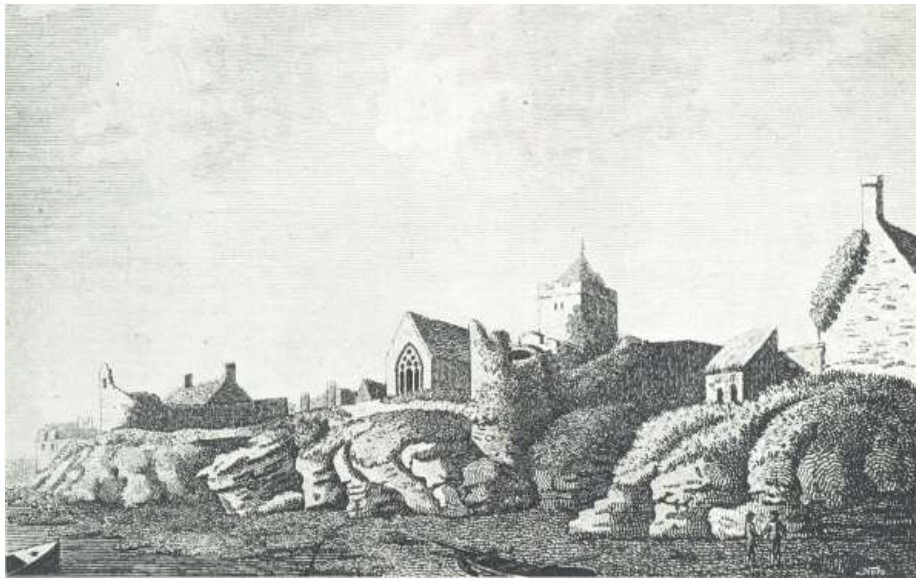
The following account of Capel-y-Llochwydd, from the pen of the late Bishop Stanley, will be of interest. ("Blackwood's Magazine," 1830.)

"A singular fissure, cleaved in a direct line from the summit to the base, forms, or rather did form, a passage of communication, of no small celebrity in ancient days, and retaining its odour of sanctity till a very recent date. It is known by the name of Ogof Llochwyd, 'Ogof' signifying a cave. A spring of crystal water, filtering through the deep strata, formed a deep well at the bottom of this chasm. Situated just at the higher opening of the gorge was a chapel for the accommodation of pilgrims, called Capel-y-Llochwyd, which name a considerable remnant of ruins at the head of the gorge still retains. Till within 60 years the lonely chapel and its well were from time unknown the resort of the lads and lassies of the island, who, at a certain annual festival called 'Suliau-y-Creiriau', or 'The Sundays of the relics,' corresponding to the wakes of the northern counties of England, and held during three successive Sundays in July, assembled in troops to ascertain the contingencies awaiting them. Each diviner into futurity descended the chasm to the well, and there, if after having taken a mouthful of holy water and grasped two handfuls of sand from the charmed font, he or she could accomplish the re-ascent with them safely, each would obtain the wish of their heart before the close of the year. About 60 years ago (1770) the chapel was reduced to ruins, and the well was concealed by filling it up with rubbish, but till twenty years ago (1810) the walls to the height of seven or eight feet remained sufficiently entire to convey a tolerable idea of the perfect building, which is represented to have been a substantial though rude and simple edifice, composed of unhewn stones, cemented with mortar, the windows and door-frames excepted, which were well wrought by the chisel, with considerable labour, from some very obdurate material, the whole apparently consisting of one chamber of oblong form not exceeding a few yards in length. Of the well, however, not a trace was left, though its existence was proved beyond a shadow of doubt, a few years ago, by a party who landed and at length succeeded in detecting the spot from which, after removing a quantity of sand and loose stones, again gushed the fountain of pure water in its pristine vigour and doubtless inherent virtues!"

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Holyhead or St. Cybi became the centre for all these chapels, and there priests and holy men could assemble in conference and also preach the Word of God. "Most of these saints had their Nauddvan or Sanctuaries, in ancient times supported by certain tenures and lands which were held of neither Prince nor Lord, but of certain saints or patrons of churches calling themselves abbots. Of these there were seven in Anglesey that were entitled (*in capite*) to several tenures, viz.: St. Beuno, St. Cybi, St. Cadwallader, St. Peirio, St. Cyngar, St. Marcutus or Mechell, St. Elian, this last being largely endowed in land. These tenures were so bestowed in order that places of refuge or sanctuaries might be provided, and that the persons taking refuge therein might have their privileges and rights preserved and kept inviolate." (See "Mona Antiqua.")



After the dissolution of the monasteries the revenues of Holyhead, Bodedern, Llandrygarn, and Bodwrog parishes came to Dr. Thomas Gwynn, whose heir, about A.D. 1648, gave them to Jesus College, Oxford.

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Grose, in his "Antiquities of England and Wales," in 1786, writes:

"St. Cybi, the Collegiate Church of Holyhead, stands at the extreme western corner of Holyhead Island, in a quadrangle measuring 220 feet by 130 feet, three sides of which are enclosed by strong walls, seventeen feet high and six thick. The fourth side is open to the sea, having only a parapet, but is defended by steep rocks. At each corner of the wall is an oval tower (two of which are seen in the accompanying view). The entrance to this area is through a rude stone gate, the masonry of which, and also of the walls and towers, is said by Mr. Pennant to be 'evidently Roman.' 'Along the walls,' he adds 'are two rows of round holes, about four inches in diameter, which penetrate them. They are like those of Segontium (Caernarvon), and nicely plastered within.' The church is dedicated to St. Cybi. It is a handsome embattled edifice, built in the form of a cross. The inside of the porch and the outside part of the transept are rudely ornamented with grotesque figures. On the outside of the last are dragons, and a man leading a bear with a rope, or as some suppose it, Balaam and his Ass, with other now shapeless sculptures."

"Maelgwyn Gwynedd, who lived about A.D. 580, is said to have founded a college here. This Prince was styled 'Draco Insularis.' Perhaps the dragon engraven on the church may allude to him. Others assert that the founder of this college was Hwfa Cynddelew, Lord of Llys Lliven in this island, and of one of the fifteen tribes who lived in the time of Griffith-ap-Conan, Prince of North Wales, and Owen, his son, about the former part of the twelfth century. It certainly was in being before the year 1291, because it was rated in the Lincoln taxation."

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"The head of the college was called Penclos, or Pencolas, and was one of the three spiritual Lords of Anglesey. The Archdeacon of the Isle, and the Abbot of Penmon were the two others."

"The Latin title of the superior of this college was Rector, as appears by an ancient seal inscribed 'Sigillum Rectoris et capituli ecclesia de Caer Gybi.' The number of prebendaries of which this college consisted is not known; but it is certain there were twelve at least, that number being found in the Pension List in 1553 at £1 each. Before the dissolution, the Rector, or Provost, for so he is also styled, had thirty-nine marks; one chaplain had eleven, and the other two the same between them. At the dissolution (26 Henry VIII.) the whole revenues were valued at no more than £24, as stated by both Dugdale and Speed."

"The King had the gift of the Provostship, which Edward III. bestowed on his chaplain, Thomas de London, under the denomination of the 'Provostship of his free chapel of Caer Cybe,' for which the King, in 1351, dispensed with him for services to himself. This college was granted, 7 James I., by that King to Francis Morris and Francis Phillips. It became afterwards the property of Rice Gwynn, Esquire, who, in 1648, bestowed it on Jesus College, Oxford, the great tithes for the maintenance of two fellows and as many scholars; and since that time the parish has been served by a curate nominated by the college. The living is a donative, not in charge, the certified value £35."

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Since Mr. Grose described the Church of St. Cybi with pen and pencil 111 years ago many changes have taken place. The shore below the church has been reclaimed from the sea, the lower churchyard has been added to the original enclosure, a broad road separates it from the present harbour, and where the tide once flowed, under the old churchyard wall, the extensive

buildings of the London and North Western Railway Company now stand. Steamers and trains laden with passengers and merchandise passing to and from Ireland and America crowd the once lonely shore; and the town and its population have grown with the growth of trade. The very aspect and dress of the people have changed, the picturesque high-crowned hats and long cloaks have disappeared, only the Welsh language remains, "Yr hen iaith Gymraig," nor does it diminish its hold on the affections of the people.

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The successive changes which the country has undergone have left their mark on St. Cybi's Church, the most enduring of all the buildings in Caer Gybi. It was rebuilt during the 14th century, during the reign of Edward III., as appears by the arms of England and France cut out in a stone near the porch, and stones are in the walls worked as if belonging to a former building. The east window is of that date. The church was practically rebuilt again in the time of Henry VII., though the beautiful plan then conceived was not fully carried out. The Tudor cognizances are carved on the frieze of the church, under the battlements, with St. Cybi's name, and the inscription on the north side is still quite legible, "Sanctus Kebius ora pro nobis." The steeple was rebuilt in the 17th century. The choir in 1713, when the tomb of Roderic ap Owen was discovered, and on the coffin a small brass bell curiously wrought through network; the date of his death was 1175. ^[16]

The ruins of the chapel (Capel Llan-y-Gwyddel) mentioned as standing south of St. Cybi's Church, within the enclosure, were converted into a public school by Chancellor Edward Wynn, LL.D., of Bodewryd in Anglesey, who by bond, bearing date November 25th, 1748, endowed it with a capital of £120; "the interest whereof is to be paid annually on the 24th November to a schoolmaster, who is to teach six poor boys of the town to read and write."

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Light is thrown upon the wants and difficulties of the last century, in matters of education, by some letters from the Rev. T. Ellis, Rector of Holyhead, to Chancellor Wynn's sister, Madame Owen of Penrhos.

In January, 1745, he writes:—"There's nothing my heart is so much set upon as seeing ye Chancellor's school brought to perfection, which I hope in God, it will be soon, thro' yr means, and I really believe it would be ye best work that has been done in ys county for perhaps three hundred years past . . .

"The following old proverbs will be admitted for my excuse,—'Ple caffo y Cymro, y cais.' 'Y neb a fo ddi gwlyydd, a fydd ddi gollod.' My humble request is that you'll be so kind as to send orders pr bearer to finish ye floor of the School, and to plaster and whitewash ye walls, (which look exceeding ugly at present) and to make a large oak table for writing, wch will make ye place quite compleat to the Chancellor's liking, wn he comes to view it (as I hope he will) after his return from Hereford. I'd not be so bold a beggar and put on ye Irishman in this manner, but for my real concern for ye swarm of children, wch grow in a manner wild for want of schooling, who I hope will thro' yr means be put in a way of serving God and man. . . ."

p. 18

January, 1746:—"As the school is always uppermost in my head and heart, I can't forbear mentioning it to you, who are so good as to sympathise wth ye Parish and me on its account. I fear the Chancellor thinks me troublesome and is offended at my frequent applications, else I would have been wth you long agoe. What to do I don't know, I must not speak to him about it, it seems, tho' as it were ready to burst, in spite of all the patience I preach to myself and others. . . . It is time to give an account of my stewardship of yr four guineas you entrusted to my care for the benefit of this Parish. Out of the first two guineas there went for the Bible £1 4 0, for the folio Common Prayer-book 13s."

Later, Mr. Ellis writes to Madam Owen thus:—"I shew'd T. Edwards yr memorandum of yr Brother's promising the sum of two hundred pounds to ye School dated May ye 1st, 1745. . . . Please to present my respects to ye Chancellor and to ask him if he would be offended at a

". . . I've sent the Chancellor herewith a present of 2 London discourses. I'm employed by ye Society for promoting Xtian Knowledge to procure subscriptions towds printing ye 15,000 Welch Bibles, wch are now in ye Press. As Anglesey is call'd of old "Mam Cymru" or Mother of Wales, she'll set her daughters (viz. ye other Counties) a good example on ys excellent occasion, wch will otherwise be a great reproach to ye Welch, who but for ye charity of ye English wd in a few years have scarce any such things as a Welch Bible among them."

January, 1747:—"Please tell the Chancellor that I acquainted the Society with his £10 subscription and communicate to him the following good news, wch will give him pleasure, viz.: that the Society has at last got in benefactions enough to defray the whole expence of the impression of the Welch Bibles (except ye binding), and yt is expected it will be finished before Lady Day next. According to ye good old custom I heartily wish you all a happy new year and many. Your obliged servant to command, Thos. Ellis."

The successive owners of Penrhos were closely connected with the fortunes of Holyhead. Sir John Stanley, afterwards first Lord Stanley of Alderley, his brother, the accomplished Bishop of Norwich and their sons, the Honorable W. O. Stanley, and Arthur Penrhyn Stanley, Dean of Westminster, took the keenest interest in chronicling the facts and legends connected with the venerable church, and in the preservation of its fabric.

During the last months of Mrs. Stanley's life it was her great interest to plan a complete restoration of the church, to complete the clerestory left unfinished in Tudor times, and to render the dilapidated building once more a worthy sanctuary for the prayers and praises which had echoed within its walls for over thirteen centuries. Mrs. Stanley's plan included the erection of a monument to the husband she had loved so well, and whose life had been devoted to the welfare of Holyhead.

The restoration of the church was carried out after her death from the plans of Sir Gilbert Scott, mainly at the expense of Mr. Stanley, in 1879. By the removal of the earth accumulated within the building, the bases of the pillars long buried were brought to light, and the church revealed once more in the beauty of its original proportions. And now Mrs. Stanley's last wish has been fully carried out, as regards her husband's monument, by its erection in a fitting shrine by one who, having filled a daughter's place in the home at Penrhos, has put her whole heart into the perfecting of a work which she regarded as a sacred trust bequeathed to her.



The south chancel aisle was completed and unveiled on Sunday, the 20th June, 1897, the 60th anniversary of the Queen's Accession. The carved figures on the outside representing St. Seiriol and St. Cybi, are from the designs of Mr. Hamo Thornycroft; the steps, of green serpentine marble, are taken from the Rhoscolyn Quarry, Holyhead Island, by the kindness of Colonel Hampton Lewis of Bodior.

Mr. Arthur Baker, who carried out the restoration of 1877 under Sir Gilbert Scott, has been the architect of the present addition; but to the deep regret of all who knew him, he has passed away this year, and we owe the perfecting and completion of the work to the devoted personal superintendance of his partner, and son-in-law, Mr. Harold Hughes, of Bangor.

The monument itself is of Carrara marble, designed by Hamo Thornycroft, R.A. It consists of a life-size recumbent figure with watching angels at the head and the feet. With the help of Mr. Watts, R.A., and his knowledge of the original, the sculptor has produced a wonderful likeness, recalling to all who knew him the characteristics of Mr. Stanley's fine head and impressive features. Mr. Watts, who has himself followed the progress of the memorial for many years with keen interest, considers it one of the finest works of art of modern times.

William Owen Stanley of Penrhos, Lord Lieutenant of Anglesey, for 34 years a Member of the House of Commons, twin son of the 1st Lord Stanley of Alderley and his wife Lady Maria Josepha Holroyd. Born 1802, Married 1832, Ellin, daughter of Sir John Williams, Baronet, of Bodelwyddan. Died 1884, and buried in this Church, whereof he restored the fabric. A scholar and an antiquary, he dwelt among his own people in the Island of Holyhead, and gave a long life to their welfare.

Erected by the desire of Ellin, for 44 years his devoted wife.

Over the arch of the recess behind the tomb are engraved these words: "Till the day dawn and the shadows flee away."

Mrs. Stanley's wish that there should be no monument to herself has been respected, but the effigy of her husband has been encircled with wrought ironwork, entirely formed of her initials E and S intertwined, an idea suggested by St. Anselm's Chapel in Canterbury Cathedral. The stained glass windows were designed by Sir E. Burne Jones and executed by William Morris, and one of them bears the inscription: "To the dear memory of Ellin Stanley, died at Penrhos, November, 1876."

This aisle, as a tribute to their joint memories, is now dedicated to the glory of God, and given by Jane H. Adeane to that church which has, on its rock beside the sea, stood firm for over thirteen centuries.

"The foundation of God standeth sure."

Outside the aisle is carved the following Welsh inscription:—

CHWANEGWYD YR CAPEL NEWYDD YMA
AT HEN EGLWYS GYBI SANT (SEILWYD
ODDEUTU Y FLWYDDYN O.C. 550) YN Y
DRIUGEINFED FLWYDDYN O DEYRNASIAD
Y FRENHINES VICTORIA O.C. 1897.

DY ORSEDD DI O DDUW SYDD BYTH AC
YN DRAGYWYDD.

Of which the following is an English translation:—

To this Ancient Church, founded by St. Cybi about A.D. 550, this Chapel was added in the 60th year of the reign of Queen Victoria, A.D. 1897.

"Thy throne, O Lord, is for ever and ever."

Church of St. Cybi. SERMON

Preached on the Reopening of St. Cybi's Church, Holyhead,
after Restoration, 1879, by
ARTHUR PENRHYN STANLEY, D.D.,
Dean of Westminster.

"Look unto the rock whence ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence ye are digged.

"Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah that bare you."

Isaiah li. 1, 2.

WE have been reading for several Sundays in church the history of the Patriarchs. The words of the Prophet which I have taken for my text give us the key to that history. We all know the value of the graces and gifts we derive from our families. Who is there that does not recognise in himself or in those about him what has come to him and them from father, mother—nay, it may even be grandfather or great-grandfather, uncle and aunt—or what may be breathed again into him by brother, sister, cousin. These, if anything in the world, are gifts to us from without. These, if anything, are gifts from God. What we drink in, as we say, with our mother's milk our mother's tongue, our mother's faith and prayers, it may be, our mother's character; what we have had impressed upon us of our father's spirit, of our "fatherland," of our father's blood—the innocent joys, the tragical sorrows of home and household;—these are the materials out of which our souls and spirits are fashioned. We may have our own personal character besides, but without these our characters would not be what they are.



Now, what is thus true of the family in respect of individuals, is true of races of men in respect both of nations and individuals; and this is one lesson which those early chapters in the Book of Genesis impress upon us. They tell us of the family. But, over and above this, they tell us of the race; they tell us of the immense importance to the Israelites, and through them to us, of the fact that they sprang from no ignoble or commonplace nation, but from those whom God had specially selected for His work on earth—from the tribe of Jacob, from the seed of Abraham, from the race of Shem. This is the true “predestination” of God’s counsels; this is the true “election” of the chosen vessels. Race and nationality, as well as family, are the precious gifts of God, to be used and recognised and taken account of as amongst the mighty moving powers of the world. If we wish to see what work we or others are called to do, we must not forget to look back to the ancient rock from whence we are hewn, and the deep pit from whence we are digged.

There is also the lesson which all such inquiries bring before us, and which is specially impressed upon us by these early records of the Bible—the advantage of being transported to remote ages and scenes wholly unlike our own. In those stories of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob there is a freshness as of the dew of the womb of the morning. We feel younger as we read; they refresh us in the weary pilgrimage of life; we catch the early fragrance of the first dawn of the human race. There had been many great epochs and many great men in Israel since the time of Abraham and Sarah: there had been Jacob, or Israel, from whom they derived their name and some of the chief elements of their character; there had been Moses, under whom they had won their freedom and their laws, and Joshua, by whose prowess they had conquered the Promised Land, and David, with all the line of kings and prophets that followed. But still there was a charm about their first ancestor, Abraham, and their first mother, Sarah, which they could find in no later times. There was a delight in seeing the peculiar blessings which they had gained from those old primitive patriarchs, and for which they were to be ever thankful to God, through whom these and all other gifts had come.

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I. May I take up the Prophet’s words and the lessons of the Book of Genesis, and give them a special application which this day suggests. We are met to celebrate the reopening of one of the most ancient churches of the Welsh people. Most of the building has stood for five hundred years—one aged arch, we are told, for a thousand years.^[27] Let us then, Englishmen or Welshmen, who are assembled here, ask, in no spirit of boastfulness or rivalry, but of thankfulness to God, what are the special gifts for good which the British Celtic race has contributed to our common country? As the Israelites had for their ancestors Abraham and Sarah, before their own special patriarch Israel or Jacob—ancestors by whom they were connected with other races besides their own, Edomite, Arabian, Mesopotamian—so we were Britons before we were Englishmen; and we by that Celtic parentage are made one in blood with that old original people which is parent alike to the Welsh, the Irish, the Scottish, and the French nations.

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What, then, are the best peculiarities of the Welsh people?

(1) To the ancient Cambrian British race we owe that distant atmosphere of romance, of sentiment, of poetry, which neither Saxon nor Norman have given or could have given us.

These mountains and vales and creeks and bays, the refuge of the ancient inhabitants retreating before the invader, have retained, even in their very names and forms, a poetic inspiration which has elsewhere passed away.

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The four Welsh dioceses each of them speak of this poetic, mystic past. That marvellous cathedral of St. David’s, in its secluded basin at the very extremity of the land, shut out from the world and enclosed as within a natural sanctuary, with its craggy coast and headland and island and glistening shore and purple cliff, every spring and bay and inlet teeming with some strange legend of those primitive days of David and Nun and Lily; or, again, that lovely cathedral of St. Teilo, on the banks of the Taff, in its green vale, with its crystal stream and its solemn yews; or, again, that lesser cathedral of St. Asaph, founded by the most romantic of all the saints of the Celtic race of the north—the darling Mungo of the Scottish nation—founded as he wandered to

and from his own Glasgow on the Clyde; or, again, this diocese in which we are now assembled, with Snowdon as the guardian mount that stands round about its small Jerusalem, this ancient refuge of the Druids and Bards of old from the Roman conqueror, this Holy Mount of the Holy Island of Mona, stretching out its arms to the neighbouring shore of Ireland, another Isle of Saints:—Look at all these ancient sanctuaries, east and west, north and south. Look at the rock from which we were hewn and the deep pit from which we were digged. Despise not these feelings which God by a thousand marks has stamped with His own peculiar approval. Cherish these venerable ruins and monuments of early times.

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There is a legend which tells us that if we take a clod of turf from St. David's churchyard, and stand upon it by the shore of that western sea, we shall see rising in the distant waters the green islands of the fairies, the vision of a land, not indeed of heaven, but still not of this earth. It is by taking our stand on that old British soil that we can catch for ourselves a glimpse of a higher, more romantic, ideal world than any other part of English history can show. The Bards, indeed, themselves have perished—

Cold is Cadwallo's tongue
That hush'd the stormy main;
Brave Urien sleeps upon his craggy bed;
Mountains, ye mourn in vain
Modred, whose magic song
Made huge Plinlimmon bow his cloud-topt head.

But the world which they created still lives in that marvellous cycle of legends which gather round the name of King Arthur, and which, in our own day, has given to the first of our living poets the worthiest subject which our island could furnish—the career of the stainless king and his gallant knights, which our children and our children's children will read with their souls more and more raised to nobler and higher thoughts. The rocks and seas on which we look from Holyhead—"the shaggy top of Mona high,"—the wide bay "where Deva spreads her wizard stream," inspired in Milton some of his wildest and most pathetic strains in speaking of his loved companion Lycidas, who was lost off these very coasts. The solid prosaic sense of the Saxon is necessary; the energy and enterprise of the Norman is useful; have been indispensable to the greatness of Britain; but do not forget the romance and the song and the sentiment of the mountains and the minstrels of Wales. Leave a corner in your minds for the visions of other days. Remember that there are things in heaven and earth more than our plain homely English philosophy has dreamed of. Such innocent, beautiful stories and thoughts, from whatever quarter they come, though not in themselves religious, yet smooth and purify the course of life. They prepare us for the poetry of parables like the Pilgrim's Progress—they prepare us for the poetry of the Psalms and of the Prophets of the Bible. As these mountains, these bays, these rocks, which gave to us in their early days our poetic and romantic thoughts, have, in these later days, given to us our quarries and our harbours and our lighthouses and our piers, so it is that out of every generous and inspiring thought there may come at last the most solid, the most useful, the most comprehensive materials of God's glory and man's usefulness.

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(2) There is another aspect of this element in the national character of the old Celtic races.

p. 31

I have said that the names of the old Welsh saints remind us of the antique poetic phase of the national British Church. But they also remind us of its devotional emotions and fervent enthusiasm. We know but little of St. Cybi or St. Seiriol—those gaunt hermits, wrapped up in shaggy goat-skins, with their sacred bells and their favourite animals. But we know thus much—that they were amongst the enthusiastic spirits who appeared in those dark times to keep up by a strange unearthly presence the sense of things unseen. And such as they were, with their childish visions and their solitary musings, such was the old British Church altogether—hardly ever leaving a permanent impression on the great practical world without, though producing now and then a holy prelate like St. David, now and then a holy anchorite like St. Cybi, now and then a holy heresiarch like Pelagius. And so in later times, the same passionate religious sentiment has shown itself in the fervour with which the Welsh people received the ministrations and the influence of John Wesley and George Whitefield, and the affection with which they clung to the hymns of their own rude Methodist poets. Amidst much folly and much obstinacy and much waywardness, all honour to those old saints who achieved what the Norman prelates could not achieve,—to those Methodist teachers who reached classes which perhaps could not have been reached by better and wiser men.

p. 32

Such enthusiasm is not sufficient by itself to produce true religion; it is compatible with a very imperfect morality and a very low stage of Christianity. Still it belongs to the great central fires which keep the human soul alive, and it has in various forms been God's special gift to the Celtic races of mankind, especially in this country. If we were to remove it out of our national existence England would not be the great nation that she now is, and the English Church would lose one powerful means of raising the spiritual energies of the people. "Prove all things," says the Apostle, and "hold fast that which is good"; but in the same breath, he says, "Quench not the spirit," "Despise not prophesyings." Quench not enthusiasm, despise not strong emotions: labour only to turn them into proper channels, so that they may help to make men more pure and more truthful—more near to God, more like to Christ. It is not only in the worship and teaching of our country that this enthusiasm shows itself. Listen to the account of the gallant deeds of Welsh soldiers, in the letter of an English officer writing to a friend, ^[32] describing the defence of Rorke's Drift:—

“Private John Williams was posted, together with Private Joseph Williams and Private William Harrison, in a further ward of the hospital. They held it for more than an hour—so long as they had a round of ammunition left.

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“When communication was for a time cut off, the Zulus were enabled to advance and burst open the door. A hand-to-hand conflict then ensued, during which Private Joseph Williams and two of the patients were dragged out and assegaid.

“Whilst the Zulus were occupied with the slaughter of those unfortunate men, a lull took place, which enabled Private John Williams (who with two of the patients were the only men left alive in the ward) to succeed in knocking a hole in the partition and taking the two patients with him into the next ward, where he found Private Henry Hook.

“These two men together, one man working whilst the other fought and held the enemy at bay with his bayonet, broke through three more partitions, and were thus enabled to bring eight more patients through a small window into the inner line of defence.

“In another ward facing the hill Private William Jones and Private Robert Jones had been placed. They defended their post to the last, and till six out of seven patients had been removed.

“Corporal William Allen and Frederick Hitch must also be mentioned. It was chiefly due to their courageous conduct that communication with the hospital was kept up at all, holding together at all costs a most dangerous post, raked in reverse by the enemy’s fire from the hill. They were both severely wounded, but their determined conduct enabled the patients to be withdrawn from the hospital, and when incapacitated by their wounds from fighting, they continued, as soon as their wounds were dressed, to serve out ammunition to their comrades through the night.”

Welshmen all of them.

That is the determined enthusiasm which all Welshmen ought to show not only in the battlefield, but against our worst foes at home—the foes of intemperance and dishonesty and hypocrisy and deceitfulness.

p. 34

(3) There is one more addition which the Welsh people, the British element of our race, has made to the course of English history. There is something in the Celtic blood, something in the Cambrian stock, which, mingling with the Saxon and Norman races, has unquestionably produced a larger result, such as without it would, humanly speaking, have been difficult or impossible. That poetic refinement, that spiritual fervour, of which I have already spoken, has, for the most part, been nourished by seclusion from the active world. Yet there was one channel in which the old British character displayed itself that directly bore on practical life—namely, the quick temper, the vivacious intelligence, which impart to other useful qualities exactly the stimulus they most need. Not seldom can we trace in families the sudden turn given to a sluggish, steady, stagnant stock of purely English extraction by contact with the imaginative, lively, mercurial character of Welsh or Celtic parentage. And what is thus seen in private life may be also faintly traced in the great course of our national history.

I will not speak of individuals, though I might mention that two of the most stirring characters who ever filled the office of Dean of Westminster were Welshmen: one was Gabriel Goodman, one of the translators of the Bible, friend of Lord Burleigh; the other was John Williams, who in his earlier days was twice committed to the Tower, once by the King, and once by the Parliament, who defended the Castle of Conway against the army of the Commonwealth, and who now after his stormy life reposes in the lovely church of Llandegai, the last ecclesiastical Lord Keeper of Great Britain.

p. 35

But there is a more general influence which has left its permanent mark on England. Within that old cathedral of St. David, of which I just now spoke, the most conspicuous tomb which rises in the midst of it, and which, according to the tradition of the place, saved the cathedral itself from destruction, is that of Edmund Tudor, father of Henry VII. and grandfather of Henry VIII., who, for its sake, spared the venerable church where it stands. This very church of Holyhead was in great part rebuilt in the time of Henry VII. son of that Edmund Tudor. The rose of the Tudor family is visible to this day on its walls. Owen Tudor, the ancestor of them all, was a native of this island of Anglesey. We are thus reminded of the fact, which we sometimes forget, that, after Saxon and Norman and Plantagenet had done their best and passed away, a Welsh and British dynasty at last was seated once more on the throne of Britain, and swayed the destinies of the whole empire.

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When in Westminster Abbey we pass from the tombs of the earlier kings to the magnificent chapel of King Henry VII., it is a striking thought to any one, especially to any one who has a drop of the ancient Welsh blood in his veins, that he enters there on a new field of the history of England, inaugurated by a succession of princes whose boast it was to be descended, not from Edward the Confessor or William the Conqueror, but from Arthur and Llewellyn, and that about the tomb of the first Tudor sovereign, intertwined with the emblems of his English descent, is to be seen the Red Dragon of Cadwallader.

That Tudor race, in their quick understanding, in their fiery temper, the true representatives of their ancient Celtic lineage, were the instruments raised up by God’s providence at the critical

season of the new birth of England in the Reformation, for guiding, stimulating, freshening the Church and the nation to the performance of new duties, the fulfilment of new hopes, the application of new truths.

The sharpness of wit and liveliness of mind which were amongst the precocious gifts of Henry and Edward and Elizabeth, were common to them with their Welsh ancestors, and contributed in no small degree to the fresh start which England then made in the movements of that moving age. These qualities, whenever found, though they are not the highest of gifts, are inestimable for enlivening, cheering, enkindling the more powerful and the more highly civilised to action and to enquiry. Cherish them, even if they sometimes outrun discretion; correct them, if so be, not by repressing them, but by striving to develop the opposite gifts which are needed to balance and to chasten them.

p. 37

II. And this leads us to two general remarks in conclusion.

(1) First let us remember that these graces of the Cambrian or Celtic character, which our Heavenly Father has thus vouchsafed to us, are also by His good providence blended in the English race with exactly those qualities which furnish their counterpoise—with that self-control, that moral discipline, that solid steadiness of purpose, without which poetic sentiment, religious fervour, mental vivacity are often useless, or worse than useless.

The old hermit in his solitude, the preacher in his fervid appeal, was good; but the honest, manly Christian, doing his duty faithfully and truthfully in his own station of life, is better. The sailor who remembers on the broad sea that God's eye is always upon him; the workman or tradesman who endeavours to render to his Maker the best of all services, the offering of honest labour, the offering of unadulterated food, the offering of an upright conscientious traffic; the railway official or partner who cheers and encourages friendless travellers by a kindly word or by a helping hand, not for reward, but for love of his fellow creatures,—these are the modes by which, far more than by sudden conversion or enthusiastic hymns, we can fulfil God's goodwill towards us.

p. 38

(2) Another remark, still more obvious, but one of which we sometimes lose sight in speaking of the good influences of race and nationality, is that the power of religion, of the Christian religion, though coloured by these several influences, is yet above and beyond and independent of them all. I spoke before of the old story which tells how he who stands on the turf from St. David's churchyard and looks out on the western sea was believed to see in the distance the green island of the fairies. But there is a still better thing that can be done by each one of us, Saxon or Celt, Englishman or Briton, old and young, rich and poor. Take your stand on any good religious lesson, learnt from whatever quarter—any piece of fresh fragment of knowledge, cut out of your inner experience—a good text from your Bible, a good prayer from your prayer-book, a good hymn from your hymn-book, a good counsel, or example of friend or teacher anywhere, which has enabled you better to know yourself, and better to know what God is,—stand fast upon it, and look out over the wide sea of your future years, and the still wider ocean of eternity beyond, and from that green turf of duty or of knowledge you will see in the distance the islands, not of the fairies, but something far better—the islands of the blessed, of the eternal shores across the stormy waves of this troublesome world.

p. 39

Such an example, such a memory, such a life ^[39] you have had in the recollection of her who devoted her life to the welfare of the people of Holyhead, who loved the Welsh nation with a constant love, who spoke their tongue as her own, who cherished all their traditions, who longed for the restoration of this venerable church, whose heart's desire has been on this day fulfilled by its reproduction in all its antique simplicity, in all its gracious adaptation to our living needs. She was a Welshwoman to the heart's core; but she was also a generous, loving, wise, Christian spirit; and when we stand round her grave, and in this church which is the monument of her goodness, we stand as it were on the fragment of St. David's turf, and we look out beyond a wider than any earthly sea to those islands of the better land where she and the great family of God's servants have gone before; the islands of eternal rest—the islands where truth and holiness have "room and verge enough" to flourish undisturbed by earthly tempests, unwarped by the winds of earthly cares—in the haven where they and we would all be, through the grace of God and the power of His Spirit in our Lord Jesus Christ.

On a granite cross standing upon rocky ground near Llanfawr, is engraven the following inscription by Dean Stanley.

p. 40

To the dear memory of Ellin, forty-four years the beloved and loving wife of the Honble. William Owen Stanley of Penrhos, Lord Lieutenant of Anglesey. The constant friend of the poor and afflicted of her native Wales, with which, from youth to age, she was one in heart and speech, in word and deed. Born Nov. 9th, 1809. Died Nov. 24th, 1876. This was erected by her sorrowing husband.

FOOTNOTES.

[16] Within the last half century, the old church of St. Cybi proved no longer sufficient for the needs of the parish; a second church was therefore built in 1857, dedicated to St. Seiriol, so that the memory of both Saints still survives in the minds of their people.

[27] The Saxon Arch opening into the Belfry at west end of the Nave of St. Cybi's Church.

[32] This Sermon was preached in the Spring of 1879, during the Zulu war.

[39] The Honble. Mrs. W. O. Stanley.

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