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BYE-GONES,

RELATING TO

WALES AND THE BORDER COUNTIES.

1880-1.

MRS. HARDCASTLE.—Ay, *your* times were fine times, indeed. . . I hate such ~~old~~-fashioned trumpery.

MR. HARDCASTLE.—And I love it. I love everything that's old : old friends, old times, old manners, old books, old wine.

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SOUTHEY AND HEBER AT LLANGEDWYN.

In a very interesting paper contributed to the *Montgomeryshire Collections* the Vicar of Meifod describes a "Visit of Southey and Heber to Powysland." The two poets were guests at Llangedwyn Hall, when it was occupied by the Member for Montgomeryshire, the Rt. Hon. C. W. Williams Wynn. Mr. Thomas says that at the time Mr. Wynn was in the Cabinet, and suggests that the visit, as far as Heber was concerned, was not unconnected with his nomination to the See of Calcutta. As we shall see further on, the facts are against this statement. Southey and Mr. Wynn were intimate and life-long friends. They were schoolfellows together at Westminster, and in the poet's earlier years it was Mr. Wynn's generous aid which enabled him to pursue his literary career. For some time he received from Mr. Wynn an annuity of £160, which he relinquished on receiving a pension from the Crown. Their long and honourable connection with one another is recorded by Southey in the lines—

My earliest friend, whom I
Have ever, through all changes, found the same,
From boyhood to grey hairs,
In goodness, and in worth, and warmth of heart.

At the delightful retreat at Llangedwyn Southey and Heber, Mr. Thomas says, made their first acquaintance with Powysland; but here again we see some reason to differ with Mr. Thomas, as we shall show. In "An Ode on Bishop Heber's Portrait" (again quoted from below three or four times), the laureate refers to the visit:—

Ten years have held their course
Since last I looked upon
That living countenance,
When on Llangedwyn's terraces we paced
Together to and fro;
Partaking there its hospitality,
We with its honoured master spent,
Well pleased, the social hours.

Mr. Thomas mentions two interesting incidents which he learnt from "the honoured master's" son, the present Mr. Charles Williams-Wynn.

"It was during this visit that Heber, after hearing the old Welsh air of 'Ar hyd y nos' played upon the harp, and while the tune was still ringing in his ears, composed to its music his well-known Evening Hymn.

God, that madest earth and heaven,
Darkness and light;
Who the day for toil has given,
For rest the night,
May Thine angel guards defend us,
Slumber sweet Thy mercy send us,
Holy dreams and hopes attend us,
This livelong night.
Guard us waking, guard us sleeping,
And when we die,
May we in Thy mighty keeping,
All peaceful lie;
When the last dread call shall wake us,
Do not Thou, our God, forsake us,
But to reign in glory take us
With Thee on high.

And it was when accompanying Mr. Wynn to Meifod, when the latter was about to purchase the Humphreys property in that parish, that Southey extended his expedition to the ruins of Mathraval, and there, after careful investigation into the stories and legends of the place, collected (says Mr. Thomas) the materials for one of the chief scenes, if not for the whole scheme of his poem, entitled "Madoc in Wales":—

He came
Where Warnway rolls its waters underneath
Ancient Mathraval's venerable walls,
Cyveilioc's princely and paternal seat.

Few are the vestiges that remain of this once famous palace of the Princes of Powys—nothing to betoken its royal splendour. The lofty mound, first raised to guard the river ford, and afterwards converted into a keep, when the castle was erected on its bank; the broken ground which shows roughly where the foundations of the buildings ran; an angle of the walling upon which it is probable that a wooden superstructure was raised, and the deep foss which enclosed the whole space: these are all that remain, perhaps all that ever survived the disastrous fire on the 2nd of August, 1212, when King John set it ablaze, in order to check the victorious rising of Llewelyn ap Iorwerth, and the chieftains of Powys. Decay and silence have been its after portion, a strange contrast to that life and splendour of its earlier days, which the poet has re-awakened in those vivid lines:—

From Cyveilioc's hall
The voice of harp and song commingled came;
It was that day the feast of victory there;
Around the Chieftain's board the warriors sate;
The sword and shield and helmet, on the wall
And round the pillars, were in peace hung up;
And, as the flashes of the central fire
At fits arose, a dance of wavy light
Played o'er the reddening steel. The Chiefs, who late
So well had wielded in the work of war
Those weapons, sate around the board, to quaff
The beverage of the brave, and hear their fame.
Mathraval's Lord, the Poet and the Prince,
Cyveilioc stood before them, in his pride;
His hands were on the harp, his eyes were clos'd,
His head, as if in reverence to receive
The inspiration, bent; anon, he raised
His glowing countenance and brighter eye,
And swept with passionate hand the ringing harp.
Fill high the Hirlas Horn."

Mr. Thomas, singularly enough, gives no date to this memorable visit to Llangedwyn, but it is fixed by a letter in Southey's own hand as having taken place early in 1820. The letter is written from Shrewsbury, on the 25th of April and Southey says Mr. Wynn had kept him at Llangedwyn until that day that they might visit Pennant Melangell. Now Madoc was published in 1805; so that Southey could not have collected his materials in 1820, and his first visit must have been paid many years earlier, if, as seems almost certain, he saw the scenes he describes. Indeed we know from his own pen that he had travelled in Wales more than once, and the evidence that he visited Powysland is almost overwhelming. In the Preface to the Fifth Volume of his poems he says, "It was my wish, before Madoc could be considered as completed, to see more of Wales than I had yet seen. This I had some opportunity of doing in the summer of 1801, with my old friends and schoolfellows, Charles Wynn and Peter Elmsley." Can any of our readers give us any account of this early visit to Wales and probably to Llangedwyn? Turning now to Heber and the See of Calcutta, it must be remembered that Mr. Wynn did not enter the Cabinet until 1822, and it was in the following year that Heber accepted the bishopric. Indeed, in the life of Heber we read that the See fell vacant towards the end of 1822, and that Mr. Wynn, then at the head of the Board of Control for India, wrote to Heber, who, after some hesitation, accepted the appointment. To return to Mr. Thomas's paper. One of the excursions from Llangedwyn was to Sycharth, in the adjoining parish of Llansilin—

Together then we traced
The grass-grown site, where armed feet once trod
The threshold of Glendower's embattled hall.

Of the ancient palace no traces are left, but the site is marked out by the enclosing foss, the outer ward, and the inner keep, and Iolo Goch, Glyndwr's domestic bard, gives a minute description of it.

"The palace, he tells us, was surrounded by a well filled moat, and was entered through a spacious gate, standing on a bridge. It had a tower of Irish type, that reminded him of the Cloisters at Westminster, with their vaults and arches, and gilded chancel. The basement (apparently of stone) comprised eighteen compartments, and above were four stories, raised on four firm and richly-carved pillars, each story being subdivided into eight sleeping chambers. The whole was covered with a shingle roof, and there were chimney stacks to carry off the smoke. In the rooms were wardrobes, stored with apparel, not unlike the shops in London. It had a church, too, quadrangular in form, with chapels richly glazed. Around the palace he enumerates an orchard and a vineyard, a park with deer, a rabbit warren, meadows, and cornfields, a mill, a pigeon-house, and a fish-pond, stocked with pike and gwyniaid, and here, in the poet's trysting-place,

Yn Sycharth, buarth y beirdd,

was abundance of Shropshire ale and malt liquor."

The nearest house is still called Parc Sycharth, probably the old deer park, and not far off is Pentref-y-Cwn, which tells of the pack of staghounds. The present Pandy was in earlier times a corn mill, and the Rev. Walter Davies has identified the site of the fish ponds. Here, fifty years after Southey, came George Borrow, who has given us a spirited translation of Iolo Goch's poem, which Mr. Thomas re-produces.

Another excursion, in which Southey and Heber joined, was to the secluded but wildly beautiful valley of Pennant (thus described in 'Madoc'):

Melangel's lonely church—
Amid a grove of evergreens it stood,
A garden and a grove, where every grave
Was deck'd with flowers, or with unfading plants
O'ergrown, sad rue and funeral rosemary.

There they

Saw the dark yews, majestic in decay,
Which in their flourishing strength
Cyveilioc might have seen—
Letter by letter traced the lines
On Iorwerth's fabled tomb:
And curiously observed what vestiges
Mouldering and mutilate
Of Monacella's legend there are left."

Mr. Thomas gathers from the epithet "fabled" that Southey was misled by the legendary tradition (as given in Pennant's *Tours*) that it was the tomb of Iorwerth Drwyndwn, with whom he connects it in his *Madoc*:

His glancing eye fell on a monument
Around whose base the rosemary droop'd down
As yet not rooted well. Sculptured above
A warrior lay; the shield was on his arm,
Madoc approach'd and saw the blazonry...
A sudden chill ran through him—as he read—
"Here Yorworth lies"...it was his brother's grave.

Mr. Thomas says the legend on the effigy "Hic Jacet Edwart," and the local tradition that the neighbouring Bwlch Croes Iorwerth took its name from a memorial cross marking the scene of Iorwerth Drwyndwn's fall, harmonize well with this idea. The blazonry on the shield, however, connects the tomb with another Iorwerth, Edward ap Madoc ap Rhirid Flaidd, lord of Penllyn; and it is probable that what is called "the rude image of St. Monacel," is that of Gladus, his wife. But we find the following note to 'Madoc' correcting Gough's 'Camden,' where the tradition of Bwlch Croes Iorwerth is given:—"Mr. Gough has certainly been mistaken concerning one of these monuments, if not both. What he supposed to be the Image of St. Monacel is the monumental stone of some female of distinction, the figure being recumbent, with the hands joined, and the feet resting upon some ani-

mal. And the letters which he read for Etward are plainly Et Mado." Mr. Thomas remarks "that no notice is recorded of the giant rib" still preserved within the porch; but in the letter we have already mentioned—a rhyming one the poet addressed to Edith Mary Southey, he says—"They show a mammoth rib (was there ever such a fib?) as belonging to the Saint Melangel. It was no use to wrangle, and tell the simple people, that if this had been her bone she must certainly have grown, to be three times as tall as the steeple." The Paper concludes with a legend mentioned by Southey, and never met with before by Mr. Thomas:—

"The old house alluded to is evidently, from his account of it, 'Llechweddgarth,' an ancient mansion of the Thomases, from whom it passed by marriage to the late Mr. Griffiths of Caerhun:—

We 'together visited the ancient house
Which from the hill-top takes
Its Cymric name euphonious: there to view,
Though drawn by some rude limner inexpert,
The faded portrait of that lady fair,
Beside whose corpse her husband watched,
And with perverted faith,
Preposterously placed,
Thought, obstinate in hopeless hope, to see
The beautiful dead, by miracle, revive."

The legend is not mentioned in Mr. Hancock's parochial account in the *Montgomeryshire Collections*, 1878-9; and though I have made inquiries, I can hear of no such tradition now surviving in the parish. It does not, indeed, follow that the lady was an actual resident here; and a similar story exists relating to a former lady at Newtown Hall. Perhaps the inquiry may lead to further information relative to the Pennant legend and clear up the mystery."

LOCAL LITERATURE.

Mr. Alexander Ellis, President of the Philological Society, who was recently elected an honorary member of the Cymmrodorion Council has sent the latter a copy of a curious old hymn, "To the Virgin," written in the sixteenth century, with Welsh phonetic notes.

If anyone has a right to speak with authority on matters connected with Archery, it is Mr. J. Sharp, of the *Shrewsbury Journal*. He was the man of all England selected by Professor Baynes to write on the subject in the new edition of the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, and by the honorary secretaries of some thirty or forty Toxophilite Societies (from the "Royal" downwards) he is acknowledged as the authorized recorder of their proceedings. With such credentials to back our opinion, we have much confidence, as well as much pleasure, in recommending to the notice of our readers Mr. Sharp's *Archer's Register* for 1881, a "year book of facts" and fancies connected with the pastime. The book is full of archery news, and also contains much that is interesting in archery literature. Messrs. Adnitt and Naunton of Shrewsbury are the publishers.

Mr. Edwin Poole, of the *Brecon County Times*, has reprinted, from the columns of that paper, a "History of the Breconshire Charities," which he has compiled from official returns, and other sources. In his preface the compiler states his belief that he has given "all that is known" on the subject; but he is evidently open to conviction, for he adds that he "will be glad to receive further communications;" but these, he expects to partake of details in connection with the charities he has catalogued rather than the record of any he has omitted. There is