

TALES FROM
WELSH WALES

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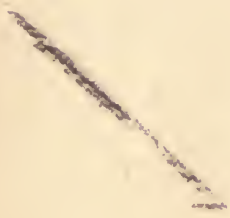
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TALES
FROM
WELSH WALES,

FOUNDED ON FACT AND CURRENT TRADITION.

BY
P. H. EMERSON.

"TRA MÔR-TRA BRYTHON."

LONDON:
D. NUTT, 270-271, STRAND.

1894.

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“The three things that will make a wise man:—The genius of a Cymri, the courtesy of a Frenchman, the industry of a Saxon.”—*Triads of the Four Nations*.

TO
MY FRIEND,
F. YORK-POWELL.

AUTHOR'S NOTE.

Many of these Stories—written in North Wales in the year 1892—are founded on fact; others are based on tradition. All the folk-lore contained in these Tales was gathered by me from the lips of the Welsh people themselves. The idiom used in the narratives is that now spoken by the Welsh “who have English,” except in the cases of sailors' stories, which are written in that strange polyglot medley—the *lingua franca* spoken by English seamen all the world over.

P. H. E.

CLARINGBOLD,

BROADSTAIRS,

June, 1894.

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“O'er the blue waters with his thousand oars ;
Through Mona's oaks he sent the wasting flame ;
The Druid shrines lay prostrate on our shores,
He gave their ashes to the wind and sea ;
Ring out, thou harp ; he could not silence thee.”

To the Harp.—HEMANS.

TALES FROM WELSH WALES.

I.

John Jones of Anglesea.

“The three things notable in a Cymro—genius, generosity and myrth.”—*Keltic Cockadoodledooism*, by the EARL OF PEMBROKE.

CHAPTER I.

AMID the bare, rolling hills of Anglesea lived John Jones, a wealthy man and well connected.

From a boy John Jones had been short in stature, with a round, protuberant belly, like that of a mush-fed negro child; nor did this stoutness decrease with age, on the contrary, at forty John Jones could only just span his belly with both his hands—for his limbs, like his torso, were short and stout.

John Jones was a dark-haired, explosive Welshman, but not quitesharp; his neighbours who “had English” called him “rather soft,” but that mattered little to him for he had much money, a fine house and a large garden; indeed, horticulture was his hobby, cock-fighting his serious occupation. He married young and was blessed with two daughters. Soon after marriage John Jones established an annual custom of showing his servants his wealth, the golden sovereigns tightly wedged into a stout, iron-bound, oaken chest, kept in a strong room. All his fortune was there, for in those days in remote rural districts everyone was his own banker. Upon such anniversary John Jones would

throw open the lid and say cheerily to his assembled household—

“Now, my children, you can have all that you can take with your finger and thumb, but mind you don’t use a knife,” and he chuckled, his fat sides shaking with laughter as the tender-nailed housemaid, Mary, tried without avail to extract a roll of sovereigns, so tightly were they packed. As no one else made an attempt, the lid of the great chest was shut down, bolted and padlocked, and the cheery John Jones returned to the kitchen, where he took a seat, cut a quid of twist and began to spit over the fireirons and fender as was his habit. Mary, who was new to the house, placed a burnished spittoon near her master, who, noticing the attention, remarked—

“What’s that for, my girl? If you don’t take that thing away I’ll spit into it.”

“That’s what it is for, master,” said Mary, demurely.

“Oh, indeed now, I thought it was kept too nice looking to dirty,” replied John Jones.

Soon after marriage, John Jones assumed the title of Captain, a rank as common in Wales as that of Colonel in the Western States, for everybody is a Captain in Wales, even unto the widows of old collier masters.

Well, Captain John Jones, as we shall hereafter call the subject of our memoir, was in need of a page to button his boots and go to the shop for his twist, so a smart lad of seven was found just suited to the work. Two weeks after this page entered into the service, his master called him by name, saying—

“Well, my boy, saddle the pony and go to Blumaris and get me a lot of twist at William Williams’.”

“Yes, master,” replied the page, and went on his errand.

Upon his return the Captain took a long roll of twist with which he measured the lad from top to toe, cutting off what was over and handing the boy the piece which measured his height, saying—

"There, my boy, I wanted to see how much you had grown—there, take that, it's your share—away you go."

So the lad soon learned to chew tobacco, a habit he never relinquished to the day of his death.

Soon after this episode the page ran away one day to attend a cock-fight at Llangefni. As it rained hard during his absence, Nellie, the cook, put the lad's coat in the yard on a hamper, and at eventide, before the boy returned, his master asked—

"Where's the boy?"

"Oh, master, he's dripping wet, just see his coat," and Nellie produced the sopping garment.

"Oh! bless you, Nellie, the boy will die, the boy will die. Give him something hot and send him to bed immediately."

Nellie took the something hot and the young rascal escaped.

A few days after this ruse the Captain received a note from a neighbour, telling him there was a pair of valuable pigeons—tumblers—for him if he would send over a messenger for them; whereupon the page was called and the Captain said—

"John, saddle the pony and go over to Llanfaes to Mr. Owen's, and take a hamper, for you must fetch a pair of rare pigeons, and be sure, my boy, and put a tally on their necks so you will know them again."

When the boy returned the Captain, who met him in the drive, said—

"Well, boy, have you got them?"

"Yes, master."

"Well, let me look at them now."

"Oh, master, if you open the hamper they'll fly away."

"Not a bit of it, boy; open the hamper at once."

The hamper was opened, the pigeons escaped, wheeled, got their bearings and flew off towards Llanfaes.

"Good God, what a stupid fool I am to be sure, but they

are sure to go home. Go back and fetch them," said the Captain.

"Well, master, if I do I can't get back till to-morrow."

"Why, boy?"

"Why, dear master, I can't catch them till they go to roost."

"Well, to be sure, my boy; well, stay there and bring them to-morrow."

So the boy got what he sought—leave to have a spree in the servants' hall at Llanfaes, for there was to be a jollification that night in honour of St. David. Indeed, he wore a leek in his cap on his return the next day with the rare and valuable pigeons, who were safely housed in a large box covered with wire netting. But the Captain never took much interest in them, he preferred his game-cocks—indeed, his greatest ambition was to win the first prize at Llangefni Cock Fair, so that his delight knew no bounds when his friend at Llanfaes, a great amateur of pigeons and poultry, wrote and offered him a splendid game-cock.

As the page was riding away to fetch the prize, the Captain cried after him—

"Mind you make them put a tally on his neck and don't you let him out of your hands, boy."

When the hamper arrived the Captain took it carefully into the tool-house and letting out the bird he examined it critically from comb to spur, muttering—

"Ah! he's a splendid bird, ah! he's a splendid bird," then turning to the page who stood by, he said, "Now go and ask Jane if she has any red morocco."

The lad returned and said Jane had plenty, whereupon the Captain replaced the cock in the hamper, fastened the lid, and waddled to Nellie in the kitchen and asked, "Who will be the best sewer in the house, Nellie?"

"Well, indeed, I don't know, master, but I think it will be Mary."

So the bonny Mary was called and ordered to sew a pair

of red morocco leggings on to the game-cock, leaving his formidable spurs free. When he was duly buskined, he was turned loose among the other fowls.

"Now you see I'll be sure to know the bird," said the Captain to his coachman; "he's a splendid bird, a splendid bird, he's sure to win at Llangefni."

"Yes indeed, sir, he looks it," said the coachman, who was a connoisseur in these matters; indeed, the men-servants of the establishment were as great cock-fighters as their master and they always clubbed in profit or loss.

As soon as the Captain had gone in, the coachman called his brother servants and showed them the cock, and this experienced trio soon decided that the handsome bird was good enough for the £20 prize at Llangefni Fair, so Mary, who was courting close with the footman, was bribed and the red leggings quickly transferred to the game-cock. Next morning immediately after breakfast the Captain went out and asked the coachman—

"How's the bird? How's the bird?"

"Oh! he's hopping about nicely, master."

"Oh! there he is, look at his red buskins, that's him; isn't he a splendid bird?"

"Yes, indeed, master."

"I'm sure to win the first prize with that."

"Indeed, I hope so, sir," and though the Captain had so poor an eye for the points of a good bird he thought himself a good judge, and yet any Spanish peasant would have a better idea of a prize gallo.

At length the great fair day came, three prizes being offered for the cock-fight—values £20, £10 and £5 each.

The Captain was there with his bird in a hamper and the servants were there with their bird and many another was there with his bird. Several fights were decided before the Captain's red-legged bird was matched against an old farmer's cock. The two birds sparred and soon began in good earnest, the farmer's bird winning, this success so

exciting his owner that he jumped into the cock-pit and trod accidentally on the Captain's bird's toes. The Captain was out of temper and he knocked the farmer down, after which there was much spitting and loud talking, when the Captain's butler went up behind the farmer and said quietly, "Toot, carrots, you'll get something to-night, dry up!" and the farmer took the hint.

Cock-fight after cock-fight was decided until, amid loud cheering and noisy betting, the servants' bird was declared the winner of the great prize, at which the irate Captain turned upon the farmer and swore:—

"'Twas all that man's treading on his foot."

"You struck me horrid and I am going to take the law of you," retorted the farmer as he left the booth, whereupon the butler went up to his master and said,

"You did strike him horrid, sir, and he'll be sure to take the law."

"Good God, where is he?" cried the Captain, whereupon the farmer was called.

"Well, Mr. Roberts, you see I'd have won the first prize only you trod on his foot; take care I don't catch you in the ring again. I know I've a hasty temper so here's £5 and forget the blow."

And thus ended the cock-fight at Llangefni Fair.

That night the Captain was missing from home, his wife and children being away at the time. His devoted page immediately took the pony and scoured the country in search of his master, returning at ten o'clock in bright moonlight without having found a trace of him. Truth to tell the Captain had walked towards home through a ravine with some soft places, his heavy body suddenly sinking up to his armpits. After struggling violently for several minutes, to his horror he saw the banshee or will o' the wisp hovering over the bog and laughing at him. Being a superstitious man he bellowed for help, and still the banshee danced and laughed at him.

Fortunately his cries were heard by two farmers who were driving home along the highway. When they found the poor Captain bogged they tried hard to pull him out, but in vain, so one sat down to keep him company whilst his companion drove to the Captain's house for servants, planks and ropes. The whole establishment turned out, and when they arrived at the ravine and saw their master in doleful dumps they began giggling. The Captain grew angry and turning to the farmer said:—

“Don't you see they are laughing at me? Oh the beggars! If I had them in a room I would horsewhip them one and all, girls and all. They are laughing just like the banshee; it was a woman banshee. Oh, oh!”

His servants with suppressed laughter pulled his huge bemired carcass on to the ground—when he began to swear and they to laugh.

“Toot,” said the Captain solemnly, “my own servants laughing at me, the same as that horrid banshee!” and then growing excited he shouted—

“Every one of you will leave the house to-morrow, every one! What, you laughing too, Nellie!”

“Oh, dear master,” said the favourite, “you look like a ghost and you are such a sight we can't help laughing.”

“Well, I must give in if I look like that,” said the poor Captain meekly, and the party returned to the house.

CHAPTER II.

AT that time the Island of Anglesea was infested by foxes, especially round about Penmon. In winter these animals got very bold, stealing fowls and geese from the neighbouring farmers and even visiting the Captain's hen-house.

“Oh, the fox must be shot, the fox must be shot,” said the Captain; “I will give £5 for his pelt.”

An old shepherd heard the offer and laid in ambush for three nights, discovering at last that reynard always passed through a narrow ravine on his way to the hen-house. The shepherd then said to himself—

“I’ll catch that fox to-night.”

So making a wicker basket big enough to hide in, he laid it close to the fox’s path and covered it over with litter. The moon was bright that night when the shepherd took up his ambush and presently he saw reynard, who trotted up to within a few yards of the basket, stopped, and then turned back and disappeared. Three nights did he repeat this manœuvre; but on the fourth night reynard ventured past the ambush, and on the fifth the shepherd was all ready for him, laid up in the basket, listening intently for his footsteps. Presently he saw him coming along like a dog, on he came in the moonlight towards the basket. Suddenly an arm was thrust from the straw and seized him by the fore leg, and a figure rose from the straw, caught the startled fox by the throat and dropped him into a sack. The next morning the old shepherd went to call on the Captain, who came out to see him.

“Well, master, I’ve got the fox,” said the shepherd.

“Have you, indeed?”

“Yes, here he is in this bag.”

“What, alive?”

“Yes, master.”

“Well, how did you catch him?”

The shepherd told his story, and when he had finished the Captain’s face grew grave, and he said—

“Well, by God, if you’re ’cute enough to catch a live fox, you’re too ’cute for me, so you must go,” and giving him his £5 and his wages he dismissed him on the spot.

The story travelled far and wide and came to Mrs. John Jones’ ears, who expostulated with the Captain.

“Well, I must get him back again,” said he; for like all Kelts he was amenable to reason could he but be got to listen to it. So the shepherd was duly reinstated in office.

CHAPTER III.

THE Captain, like most Welshmen, was absolutely devoid of humour, but a great practical joker. One day when visiting a menagerie at Blumaris, he was shown a dead monkey which he was told had died in consequence of having chewed tobacco. The Captain smiled, bought the dead monkey, took it to a stuffer, and gave directions that when set up it was to be packed in a case and sent to a friend, marked "With care." The friend suspected who had sent him the present and he bethought him of revenge. The Captain was very fond of otter hunting, and in those days otters were plentiful, and so vicious were they that one could manage an otter hound in the water. So the friend dropped a note to the Captain telling him that a great many otters had been seen about the White enclosures lately, and asking him to bring his pack over on a particular day, and they would have great sport.

The Captain then sent word to all his friends that his hounds would meet there at ten o'clock. At the meet everybody appeared except the gentleman to whom the property belonged. They waited and never an otter nor proprietor did they see.

After an hour's delay an old rat-catcher—and cat-catcher for that matter—came up and said—

"Well, indeed, master, isn't Mr. Owen playing you the fool for the monkey?"

"Gad! I never thought of that," said the Captain, amid the laughter of his friends.

The party then returned to the Captain's house, where a note was handed to him from Mr. Owen. It was this—"Well, indeed, and did you like the otters?"

The rat and cat-catcher had followed the party to the house, for in those days cat-baiting with terriers was considered a fine sport.

"Gad, Stonewall, get some cats and we'll have some sport," said the Captain.

"All right, sir, I have a fine big black tom. I left him in the hay-loft, I'll go and fetch him."

The groom, who was a practical joker, had, however, let the black tom loose and substituted a dead tabby.

Stonewall ran to the loft, seized the sack without examining it and returned to the party, where two lively terriers stood full of expectation.

"This is a fine cat, sir," said Stonewall, placing the sack on the ground.

"Turn him out, then," said the Captain.

Stonewall untied the mouth of the sack, while the terriers snuffed at the poke. After opening the sack he picked it up and shook the dead tabby on to the grass.

"What is this?" asked the Captain, angrily. "Are you making a fool of me?"

"No, indeed, master, some fool has taken my cat and put this old thing in instead."

"Well, find him and thrash him," said the Captain, half vexed and half laughing.

The guests murmured, but their disappointment was suddenly cut short by the appearance of the groom, who said—

"I took his cat, master, and I'll fight him before you all if he has any lip to give me."

Now old Stonewall fancied himself greatly at boxing, for he was a vain Kelt; moreover, Stonewall had never been beaten, for the very simple reason that he had never met a boxer. His style was to strike his chest and then whirl his arms round one another like mill sails, nor was he averse from kicking and biting, both common practices amongst the Welsh at country fairs. The groom on the other hand had some science.

A ring was formed among the delighted guests, the Captain backing Stonewall.

“Well, I can lick that boy,” said Stonewall, as the groom squared up to him.

“Well, do your best,” said the Captain, for the groom was a “foreigner,” from Bangor.

The fight began, Stonewall hitting wildly in the air and striking nothing, whilst the scientific groom kept getting in his right and left, punishing Stonewall badly. After a good round Stonewall stepped back aghast saying—

“Good God, I can do nothing with him.”

“Try him once more,” said the Captain, and poor Stonewall bravely hit the air and as bravely received his punishment.

At the finish Stonewall said—

“Well, who would have dreamt that a lad like that could beat me! Toot! Toot!”

And the company went laughing to the house, Stonewall saying he was so dry he could empty the Beth Gelert* pewter and so sore he was going to rub his aching limbs with paraffin, for he had had his rheumatics “knocked into his joints.”

CHAPTER IV.

A FEW weeks after these events the Captain was stopped on his way to a coursing meeting by a red-haired cripple with a club foot, who begged for alms.

“Well, John, what will it be for? Have you got another bastard to pay for?”

“Well, indeed, sir, that’s just it!”

“By God, all you cripples are the same, you can’t keep away from the women and you’re the smuttiest men alive!”

“Well, indeed, sir, that’s true, for what you lose in one leg goes to the other; but indeed, I’m not so bad as Tibly,

* Holds nearly two gallons, and whoever can drink it off at a draught has his drink free; only two are said to have accomplished this feat.

he's got no legs at all, yet he has got more bastards than Sir John himself!"

"Well, here's a sovereign for you, it's all I can do now, John."

"God bless you, master! God bless you!" said the cripple.

"And how's Eva Pritchard? I've not been up there lately."

"Well, indeed, sir, it's marvellous, but she has got her sight again!"

"Good God! Got her sight again! How?"

"Well, sir, it was this way—one day her mother was out, and a foreign sailor, a Bretoon, came along selling onions, and she was alone, and he heard her pattering along and feeling her way along the wainscoting; and when she came to the door he axed her if she'd hev any onions.

"'No,' she said.

"Then he axed if he might have some potatoes and buttermilk.

"'Yes and welcome,' she said.

"So just then her mother came in and got him a feed. Well, after he'd done he said, 'So your daughter is blind, poor girl.'

"'Yes, it's very sad indeed,' said her mother.

"'Let me look in her eye,' says the Bretoon, and he looked and looked and up and said 'I cure thee, I give back eye.'

"Well, he told her to get three lice off a child's head and put them into the eyes and bind the eyes over with a handkerchief and leave them for a few days. He said they'd make her eyes tickle, but the bandages weren't to be taken off until they got very sore, for he said the lice would eat the skin off her eyes and she'd regain her sight. Well, the mother tried it, and indeed the girl sees now as well as you or I, sir."

"By God! Wonderful! Wonderful! I must go up and see her soon, but I must be off or I'll be late for the fun."

So he spurred his horse and caught up the coursing party, when they had good sport.

As they returned in the evening an old gentleman pointed out the place where the hare-witch was burnt.

“By God, how was that?” asked the Captain.

“Well, many years ago, there was a white hare always seen here and the hounds could never catch her. ‘It must be a witch,’ said the people, so one day a big meeting was fixed on purpose to catch the hare. But the very same thing happened, the hare was started from her form, but no hound was fleet enough to catch her, and she always seemed to disappear in a white cottage where an old woman with a split lip lived. So they surrounded the house and found nothing.

“Well, the hare was seen several times afterwards and another big meeting was held; everyone being determined to catch the hare. She was started in the usual place and ran for the house, but one of the fleetest hounds managed to grip her by the buttock, but she escaped him leaving spots of blood on the grass, so the hunters surrounded the house and hunted high and low, finding nothing but the witch sitting on a chair. One man suspected her to be a witch-hare, so he made her get up and lo! the chair was all covered with blood, so they pulled off her clothes and found she had the hound’s teeth in her backside, so they cried, ‘The witch! The witch!’ and straightway drove a stake into the ground, and fastening her thereto, they built a fire all round her and burnt her, and that was the end of the hare-witch” finished the old gentleman.

“Most extraordinary! And now I’ll be sure to tell you of a miracle performed by a Bretoon,” and he told of the girl’s sight being restored, as they rode home to dinner.

CHAPTER V.

ONE Christmas the three cock-fighting menservants decided to play a joke on their master and his page.

In the stables were some open cracks, about four inches wide, between the plankings of the different stalls—one of these cracks was to be the scene of the hoax. The footman was a good violinist and he could produce long-drawn groans on one string of his instrument. The conspirators first got four large turnips, which they hollowed out, making lanterns of them; these were attached by strings so they could be worked along a grooved channel in the floor.

On the night of the hoax the page, now a lad of fourteen, was expected home upon the pony. Before his arrival the machinery for the *séance* was arranged. Directly he entered the dark stable to stall his pony he was greeted by the lugubrious groan of the fiddler lying in a bin, and the lanterns began to glide to and fro along the planks.

The lad did not stop, but bolted off to his master, the more sensible pony quietly going up to his manger, where he began munching his oats.

The page ran in to his master, crying—

“Oh! master! master! there’s something queer in the stable; you’d better come with me.”

The old butler (who was in the joke) was trying to suppress his laughter.

“By God, my boy, what will it be?”

“Oh, a banshee!”

“Good God! The butler must come too; come on, Owen,” said the Captain.

So the page and Owen took their master’s fat hands and they marched bravely to the stable—the Captain puffing and blowing. As they approached the stable door the butler cried—

“Good God! I hear something mournful; it’s horrid.”

“My God! it’s mournful, mournful, mournful,” cried the Captain. “What on earth can it be?”

As they got to the door they could see the candles moving about.

“Good God! it’s the corpse candles; don’t you see them moving? Someone is sure to die,” groaned the butler.

“O-o-o-o-h!” groaned the fiddle.

“Sure to get a death, sure to get a death,” groaned the Captain, as they walked quickly away from the terrible scene, when the coachman and footman began to laugh.

That night by chance a farmer’s daughter, Mary, died of consumption, and when they told the Captain the next morning, he said—

“Ah! didn’t I tell you. God is good; it is not in my family.”

CHAPTER VI.

TWELVE months after the event recorded in the last chapter the Captain’s wife was taken very ill, and the page was sent for the doctor one evening at dusk, the poor Captain being so anxious there should be no delay that he went himself in the trap. As they drove along home, the doctor and Captain sitting behind, the page suddenly saw the house and cried—

“My God! dear master, look!”

“What, boy?”

“Why, there is a coffin coming out of the house with three candles standing on it.”

The page told them that all the windows were lighted up with candles, for they would not look, that the candles kept skipping over each other, and the coffin was borne to a hearse standing in the drive and put inside, the candles jumping on to the top of the hearse. Then the funeral procession started off, a parson walking ahead of fifty or sixty mourners dressed in black, and they all moved off towards the churchyard.

“ Good God ! what’s the matter ? ” asked the Captain ; but when they got to the house all the lights in the windows were gone.

“ What’s this ? Who has been here ? ” asked the Captain of the footman.

“ Nobody, sir.”

“ Good God ! Nobody ! Don’t lie, man. The boy saw lights in all the windows and a hearse.”

“ My God, master, you must be mad ; there’s been nobody here.”

The page relates that after he had put the horse up in the stable, he went round and told the cook of what had happened.

“ Yes, there’ll be death in the house this night,” said Nellic, solemnly. “ I’m sure of it, for I heard three loud raps and saw the coffin-bird come rapping at the window.”

The Captain’s wife died before daybreak.

CHAPTER VII.

AFTER his loss the old man used to chew more tobacco and his servants tried no more for the game-cock prize so that he won the first prize at Llangefni Fair, which consoled him not a little. But he began to be full of whims and one day he ordered his daughters to dress in their best to go for a drive. When they came down dressed he sent the carriage away and ordered them to undress, for, said the broken-hearted man, “ You must learn to bear disappointment in this life.”

But, alas ! his cup of woe was not full, for he lost both his daughters within a short time of each other and was left an old widower, who no longer took interest in his game-cocks or garden. So the household was broken up and he went to live with his sisters until his death, when he was buried at Beaumaris with his head to the South-West, according to the Welsh fashion. There let him rest in peace.

II.

The Admiral's Wards.

“ In those days which now seem olden,
 Life was all a vision golden ;
 'Twas beside the moonlit river
 Where you vowed to love me ever.”
Long Ago (Old Welsh Song).

CHAPTER I.

GWILYM HARVEY was an intelligent little fellow, sturdy as a Welsh pony, with a rosy face from which two bold velvety black eyes looked out, eyes blacker than his hair, which seemed to have a tinge of blue. He was as intelligent as he was strong, and at five could give his answer to most of his companions, and more than held his own with his chubby little fists. Tradition says that he was not pure Welsh, but descended from some Spaniards who were wrecked on the Anglesea coast. You may see some of their descendants there to-day : the girls dark-eyed and graceful as any *señorita* of Seville. And truth to tell he was possessed of far more perseverance and resolution than the average Welshman, who is naturally lazy.

Little Gwilym's parents were poor, his father toiling in the slate works, squaring, splitting, and polishing the slates—countesses and ladies—over which the children of Beaumaris were destined to worry and scratch their little black oval-shaped heads as they ciphered.

But there was no compulsory education in those good days, so that many of the Anglesea boys never “got

English," but spoke ever in that soft guttural tongue of their own that makes the stranger to Beaumaris feel, as he lies abed in the summer with open windows, and hears the passers-by talking, that he is in some foreign town—Spanish for preference.

In those days at the beginning of the century, the chief magistrate of Beaumaris was a deaf old Admiral. The drums of both his ears had been broken in battle, yet he was a brave, jovial, white-haired old bachelor. He was a tall, thin, small-boned man, well over six feet. The Admiral lived in a large square house, the Ash Grove, on the island, within sight of the spot where the *Royal Charter* was wrecked. Round him towards Möelfre Bay stretched moors, good shooting grounds for snipe. But in summer the old warrior spent most of his time at a fort—the White Enclosures—he had built near Penmon, where he had mounted twenty-one brass six pounders. There the sea rolled in upon limestone rocks hard as steel and yet water-eaten and honeycombed, rocks full of little cañons and fantastic hollows. It was a terrible place in those days, between Black Point and Puffin Island, upon the ledges and in the holes of whose cliffs the auks, puffins, guillemots and greedy cormorants laid their eggs in the summer months, for in those days there was no red light to warn the tempest-tost mariner of the sharp iron rocks.

The Admiral's fort was near the Parsonage, the Birch Slope, where a jolly, stout, light-haired, blue-eyed, good-hearted, old-fashioned parson lived with his two daughters, for his wife had died at the birth of the younger daughter Eva, who was about the same age as young Gwilym. Old Daddy Parson, as he was familiarly and affectionately called, never forgot that he was a minister and not a priest, nor that religion is fundamentally merely an expression of love and not a question of rubric. Daddy Parson was a great favourite, for his sermons were few and short, but his personal interest in his parishioners was large-hearted and

constant ; he looked upon all as brothers and treated them as such, not contenting himself by pouring old biblical sayings into their ears, but doing real good with a cheery smiling face. Of course the Admiral and Daddy Parson were great friends.

On every 1st of May without fail the old Admiral used to hoist his flag above his fort, fire a salvo from his six pounder brass cannon and settle himself in his little quarters until the 1st of October. Then too would Daddy Parson's face brighten, for they spent the bright summer days together in fishing and swimming and sailing over the blue waters of the straits. Their fishing boat and yacht rode on the tide and their bathing house was on the pebbly beach just below the White Enclosures.

It so chanced that one summer the Admiral wanted a boy to help his factotum, an old seaman of war who had served under the Admiral himself in bygone days. Daddy Parson had seen young Gwilym once or twice, and though he was still very young, he remembered that the boy's independent ways and bright manly face had attracted him, as indeed, they did everyone, so he recommended him to his friend. The Admiral said he would try him, so Gwilym was installed at the fort, under old Bob.

Young Gwilym soon attracted the Admiral's attention by his cheery answers, quick perception and almost effeminate quickness of sympathy and delicacy of feeling, and the old fellow took to the boy as if he were his own son. Daddy Parson liked the lad, too, and between the two of them they determined to make a man of him. Daddy Parson taught four daily pupils, sons of the neighbouring gentry, and young Gwilym was educated with them, soon proving himself to be the brightest of all.

"He took to learning right off hand," old Bob would say ; and it was the same with his athletic practices. The old Admiral taught him to swim like a fish, to handle the yacht, to shoot snipe on the moor round the house where

Gwilym now lived with the Admiral in winter, for he seldom went home to his parents in Beaumaris; indeed, he called the Admiral "Father," and the white-haired old salt loved to hear him say it. But the old man took most pains to teach the boy to shoot the brass cannon; target practice with those guns was an everyday affair during the summer months at Penmon.

The boy grew up strong and powerful and proficient in all the arts and exercises taught him by his two friends, even becoming a dead shot at the target. He could "take the target" every time with any of those six pounders. Then was the Admiral delighted beyond measure, and he ran off to Daddy Parson, saying—

"Look at the child licking me at firing the gun! Look at the boy!" for the Admiral had been a crack shot in his day and realized how good a shot the boy was.

At sixteen the Admiral bought him a "man-of-war" suit of clothes, with crown and anchor buttons.

"He shall go into the navy, he shall go into the navy," he said, drawing himself up to his full height.

"No, I forbid that, it's so dangerous," said Daddy Parson; "the boy cares nothing about it."

So the parson persuaded young Gwilym against going into the navy, for he was much averse from war.

That summer the old Admiral noticed his adopted child was always after Daddy Parson's youngest daughter, Eva; for already his romantic love of girls began to show itself. So one day he said—

"When do you think that boy and girl will get married?"

"Well," said old Daddy, "they're taken up together—he is after her and she is after him, so we must leave that to the future."

The months slipped along and one day, after returning to winter quarters at the house, the Admiral and Gwilym were walking across a field, when an angry bull began pawing the ground and snorting. Young Gwilym had a stick with a

shot grummetted to the end, a present from old Bob, in whose leg the shot had once found its billet. The two stopped as the bull charged straight at them.

"Run, father, run, get behind the trees; I'll look after the bull," cried the lad.

"Boy! what are you talking of?" said the old man, at the same time edging off towards the trees.

"Run quick, father, or he'll kill you."

The old Admiral started off for a clump of elms and the boy stubbornly kept his ground, for his vanity was inflamed and he wished to do a brave deed before the old sailor, and the expansiveness of the Kelt was already showing itself. The bull rushed on with his head down, and the boy, who was nearly six feet high, stood perfectly still, as the Admiral said, looking like a lion, his eye gleaming like an eagle's, until the bull came within range, when the boy stepped aside and hit him a terrible blow on the snout with the weighted stick, stunning him. As he dropped Gwilym ran round and caught him by the tail and began to hammer him. The bull got up furious and began to run like a wild thing round the field, the youth beating him all the time and hanging on to his tail, and the Admiral calling out anxiously—

"Boy, he's sure to kill you, he's sure to kill you."

When the bull had pretty well spent himself, Gwilym made a spring and struck him again on the snout, once more dropping him; then the boy jumped on the animal's head and belaboured him unmercifully.

"Well, boy, you must be very venturesome to do the like," said the old man, coming up and regarding the youth with evident admiration.

"Phut! that's nothing, father," retorted the lad.

The bull never troubled them again, though they often crossed the field.

The Admiral was for long full of this incident, for, like all the Welsh, he was a lover of beauty and bravery.

The following summer he and Daddy Parson decided it was time for the boy to be doing something for himself, so one day in the fort the Admiral asked him—

“Well, my boy, what do you think of doing?”

“I haven’t made my mind up, but I don’t care for the navy, father, there’s too much discipline there,” said the boy; for, like all Kelts, he was averse from regular and hard work, nor would his vanity have been pleased by being lost in the crowd.

“Well, you’re right, boy, you’re right, boy,” said old Daddy Parson approvingly, and added, “Now I should like to make a proposal. Tommy Leeson—an old pupil of mine—is ship’s-husband of a West African fleet at Liverpool. I’d like to give him a chance there.”

The Admiral said never a word, but smoked silently; he was disappointed, for he wished the lad to fight the French. The lad after a time agreed to Daddy Parson’s proposals, for his Keltic cupidity was strong. Thus it happened that a letter was written on the spot to Mr. Leeson, stating Gwilym’s qualifications and asking if a supercargo’s berth could be obtained for him. In due time Leeson wrote back that it could be managed. So it came about that one September morning young Gwilym, now nearly nineteen years old, left Eva weeping and the old Admiral and Daddy Parson with moist eyes as he sailed for Liverpool in a slate-schooner from Beaumaris to join the African fleet. The three watched the vessel until she rounded the Orme’s Head, when they went sadly back to the fort and fired a salvo for good luck.

The captains and supercargoes of this fleet were allowed so many cubic feet in which to carry goods to trade upon their own account. They carried condemned flint guns, different coloured calicoes, beads and looking glasses, which they bartered for ivory and gold dust.

Young Gwilym’s ship, the *Phoenix* was absent for over three years trading along the West African coast, from

port to port. One October—three years afterwards—he arrived home with a nice little sum of money and considerable experience, for he was quick to learn and observant. As soon as he saw the undulating hills of Anglesea with their white houses and clumps of trees, he heard his parents had both died of smallpox and that the Admiral's nephew had come on a visit—the first he had made to the island. As they sailed up the blue straits old Bob, who had come off in a fishing boat, told him that the nephew was Commodore of the East India fleet of the tea-ships, for no others were allowed to carry tea in those days. These ships carried guns and a large crew of over two hundred men. They were disciplined just like a man-of-war and had eight middies and two lieutenants and regular grog hours. Their decks were all flush; there were no poops or houses. Everything was clear for the guns, except the bulwarks, and they unshipped or shipped as circumstances required.

As can be imagined, when Gwilym reached the Admiral's house there were great rejoicings. Eva with her bright blue eyes and yellow hair danced along by his side up the drive. The autumn was so fine that the white-haired old Admiral, his nephew and Daddy Parson spent the bright days fishing and sailing all the way from the frowning Orme's Head down to Bangor and back, the sea and the Carnarvon mountains at times looking as blue and beautiful as the waters and headlands of Italy. The Admiral's nephew took to Gwilym and finally he persuaded Gwilym to join his tea-ships as midshipman.

When the short holiday came to a close before Christmas, as they were standing by the waiting coach, the Admiral's last words, as he shook hands, were—

“Whatever you do, mind if you get into trouble, put the boy in charge of a gun—of the first gun for'ard or aft, according to circumstances; he's a dead shot—he takes the target every time.”

“I'll remember,” replied the nephew as they drove off amid cheers and farewell.

When they got to London they found the ship—*Euphrates*—ready to sail; so they started in a convoy (for the French War was raging at the time): they were eighteen merchant men in charge of men-of-war.

This fleet were three weeks in the downs, where they kept together by the help of signals, though the weather was calm and hazy. But one night it came on very thick, the sea and sky were one formless waste and they lost the lights and got separated from the convoy, for the lights were but poor in those days. Some of the officers aboard of the Indiaman were for putting back.

“Toot, toot,” said the Commander (the old Admiral’s nephew), “we’ll go on without them.”

So they were blown through the blue water safely till they got abreast of Vigo, when the masthead look-out sighted a sail. All was now excitement, men standing in the rigging with glasses hazarding guesses as to the newcomers’ nationality, for in war-time flags are not always shown. The day was clear and bright and there was a nice sailing breeze, but the *Euphrates* was heavy below with cargo, so the strange vessel gained on her, racing out of the deep like a great sea-swan.

The carpenters and crew were busy taking the bulwarks off and getting the guns ready in case of an emergency. As she got within two miles the stranger fired a shot from her chaser across the Indiaman’s bows and ran up the French colours.

“By God, it’s a French corvette with thirty-six guns,” said the Commander, and he had scarce finished when a second shot struck the Indiaman, doing but little damage, however, for the shot struck above water.

The men now beat to quarters and the kettledrum and boatswain’s whistle made pretty music and the fight began—the two vessels manœuvring, fighting about a mile apart with the thirty-six pounders, the Frenchmen yelling excitedly every time a shot told; but after nearly an hour’s

fighting only one shot had struck the Indiaman below the water line. The carpenter had his plugs all ready, and as the hull was English oak the shot hole was not so clean and dangerous as it would have been if she had been built of other wood. The English owed much of their success in those days to this peculiar quality of oak. As the corvette drew nearer the Commodore saw that in the end things must go against him, for the corvette had at least three hundred blue-jackets and thirty-six guns, whereas he had only four four-pound canonades and two long chasers, thirty-two pounds, forward; when suddenly he bethought him of the Admiral's ward. "Remember the boy, he's a dead shot," flashed through his mind, and instantly he sent for midshipman Harvey.

The two vessels were now within a hundred yards of one another.

"Midshipman Harvey," cried the Commodore, "take charge of this first gun and mind whatever you do try and strike the foretop mast spars off, for if we don't do that we are gone."

Young Harvey aimed the gun carefully at the French boat rocking on the calm sea, and fired a chain shot carrying her foretop mast off, amid ringing cheers from the *Euphrates*. The wrecked rigging fell among the Frenchman's chains and the excitement of the French who were thus disabled, for they could not bring her to the wind, or handle her, was absurd—they lost their heads and began shrieking—all discipline was gone.

"That's good," said the Commodore, as he gave order for backing the fore-yards, and let his ship drift astern, crossing the corvette athwart the hawse.

"Now boys for a broadside," sung out the Commodore. The cannons roared as they made one rake fore and aft killing crowds and unshipping guns—for they were now within eighty yards of the corvette. The Indiaman kept backing and filling, and the corvette was helpless, as in

addition her tiller ropes had been shot away in the rake. Seeing her disabled condition the Commodore shouted through his trumpet—

“If you don’t give in we’ll sink you.”

The tricolour ran down the blue sky.

“I haul my flag down, I give in,” yelled the French Captain in broken English, and the men on the *Euphrates* could see the men laying their arms on deck.

“Alright, I’ll send a boat to you and you must give up your arms, and if you touch the boat, by God, I’ll rake you till I sink you.”

The launch was lowered and twenty-five men armed to the teeth, boarded the corvette, where they saw an awful mess—brains and blood and mangled corpses. The Frenchmen had laid their arms on the deck and the English crew bound the survivors and took some back to the Indiaman prisoners of war, where they were carefully searched and confined. This work was continued until all the men and invalids were transshipped, then the dead on the Indiaman—four killed and four wounded, one of whom succumbed to his injuries—were buried, and the dead on board the corvette were thrown overboard. Then the carpenters were sent aboard the corvette to plug all holes and cut away the broken rigging and spars, when a hawser was put out and the corvette taken in tow, for the officers of the *Euphrates* had consulted and decided to tow the corvette into Gibraltar. When they had mended the tiller ropes they put eight of their crew on board to keep her straight and started off for Gibraltar, the crew of the Indiaman being all the while busily engaged in repairing the damage done to their vessel, which was considerable. As there was no chain work in those days the rope work, though much damaged, was soon repaired.

It was just coming on dark when they started, with a nice eight-knot breeze, and were blown over the dull waters under a violet star-sown sky. They saw nothing all night, but early next morning the man at the mast-head sang out—

“Vessel right ahead.”

“What can you make her out to be?”

“Nothing. I ken only jest see her royals; no hull.”

They held on their course, towing the corvette. On nearing the stranger they recognized her to be an English frigate-of-war, her ensign at the mizzen. Both vessels had their ensigns flying, the merchantman's at the gaff. When they got within hailing distance, at eight o'clock, they both backed their yards and a boat came off the man-of-war with the Admiral himself aboard. When he got aboard the *Euphrates* the Admiral said he had heard nothing of the convoy, and was surprised beyond measure when he heard of the fight. The Commodore generously explained—

“Midshipman Harvey's shooting did it all.”

“That boy deserves praise,” said the Admiral; “let me see him.”

So Gwilym was called.

“Ah!” said the Admiral admiringly, “he's a strong built man—a man of valour I can see by his face; let him go along with me.”

“No, I wouldn't lose him for the world,” answered the Commodore.

“Well,” said the Admiral, “you must promote him.”

Two of the killed in the Indiaman were the two Lieutenants, so there were two vacancies.

“Well, I must see into it,” said the Commodore.

“Well now, I'll take charge of the prisoners and corvette and tow them into Gibraltar and you'll get compensation and prize-money; and mind that boy must get a share of prize money equal to yours, because it was through him your vessel was saved.”

The prisoners were transshipped and the Admiral left with the corvette and the prisoners.

Immediately they were under way again the Commodore called the men together.

“Now boys, we've got to appoint two new Lieutenants,

and the Admiral wishes Midshipman Harvey to be first Lieutenant and I wish Midshipman Jones to be second. What do you say ? ”

The men cheered and shouted—

“Lootenant Harvey! Lootenant Harvey!”

So Midshipman Harvey became first Lieutenant on the spot, and the good ship went along without accident or adventure until they got three days off the Cape of Good Hope.

It was a fine day and the sea smooth—a rare occurrence in that part of the world. All round the sun sparkled on the blue sea to the rim of the horizon, while overhead a blue palpitating dome spread over the beautiful ship’s white sails. Lieutenant Harvey was coming out of his cabin in his shirt sleeves, about three o’clock in the afternoon, when he heard the cry of “Man overboard!”

A boy had fallen from the yard arm, and he could be seen swimming slowly astern. At the same moment Harvey saw a huge albatross, that seemed to drop from the sky, begin to wheel round and round the boy.

Harvey was afraid the bird would make a fatal strike at the boy’s head, for like the gannet, the albatross will strike down at anything floating in the water. The Licutenant watched the great bird for a moment, the bird the colour of a bald-headed eagle or like one of his own Anglesea kites, and then there was a splash by the vessel—he had dived overboard and was swimming strongly towards the boy. The ship’s yards were already backed and a skiff was being lowered. Harvey was a splendid swimmer, and reaching the boy, he swam with his legs alone and one hand, with the other raising his cap high above his head, for the boy was a good swimmer and swam strongly beside him. The huge bird wheeled and made a dart at the cap, sending Harvey under water, but he soon came up and found the boy safe alongside and going well. Seeing that the bird was again preparing to strike, Harvey once more raised his cap,

but deftly lowered it to the water's edge as the bird swooped upon it and the huge legs came almost into his face, so he seized them in one hand, and as the bird kept trying to strike with his beak, he kept beating it with his cap in the other hand, till the boat came up to them and they were picked up albatross and all.

The albatross was a remarkably large one, measuring sixteen feet from wing tip to wing tip. When he was put on deck he was quite helpless, for they rise by running along the surface of the water and gradually fill their wings very much as a tufted duck does; but strangest of all, round its neck was a small locket secured with a copper wire, nearly worn through. Everyone crowded round the Commodore as he opened the locket and took forth a stained bit of paper from which it was gathered that the bird had been caught forty years previously by the crew of a wrecked whaler named the *Union*. They had attached the locket and set the bird free. The date, latitude and longitude were given. Some of the sailors wished to liberate the bird, but a cockney bird stuffer on board bought the bird of them and skinned it, curing the skin and making tobacco pouches out of the webbed feet, and pipe stems out of the bones.

After this adventure they sailed fair as far as the straits of Sumatra—a very dangerous place for a lonely vessel in those days on account of the determined and desperate Malay pirates. The weather was delicious, the sea clear as crystal so that you could see the brightly coloured seaweeds and shells at the bottom. Still all hearts on board the *Euphrates* were anxious, for the genial trades were only blowing a four-knot breeze.

All the forward bulwarks were cleared, the four four-pounders were brought aft so they could sweep the decks. The breeze was so light they feared they would be becalmed and as it was they could only just work her.

On the second day of this placid tropical weather the look-out sighted a crowd of pirates coming off in boats and junks. Each junk had one mast and two sails.

The majority of the Malays were in rowing boats, with from thirty to sixty naked rowers with white waist-cloths, all armed with darts and boarding axes—weapons resembling ice axes and used in much the same way for clambering up a ship's side.

The four junks on the other hand were armed with cannon and the men with swords. The turquoise sea had become black with the flotilla, the naked bodies of the men gleaming in the sun and their oars flashing as they came out of the water with the regularity of machinery; their boat's heads, carved like elephants or horses, glided over the sub-aqueous gardens outstripping the slow heavy junks with their brown sails.

Lieutenant Harvey was in charge of the heaviest gun and when the junks got within range the Indiaman opened fire, and so deadly was the lieutenant's aim that three of them were sunk before the prahs could surround the ship, which they did as the fourth junk backed her sails and opened fire, but with no effect. The prahs were now too close to get the guns to bear upon them, so all hands went to quarters with boarding pikes, darts and cutlasses. The pirates in the prahs crowded round the ship.

But the crew kept the enemy off, killing hundreds, but at last several managed to climb up the bowsprit shrouds and quite a crowd collected for'ard coming to the top-gallant fo'castle when the gongs began to beat on the big junk and the kettledrum rattled on the *Euphrates*.

"All hands aft," roared the Commodore, and the four guns loaded with grape and canister responded, scooping lanes through the black pirates.

The crew then formed in line and advanced shoulder to shoulder against the pirates, ripping their bellies up and slashing their heads off at a stroke, saying never a word but keeping the line closed; for as a man fell his place was filled up. So they doggedly fought till they cleared the deck. The rest of the Malays, frightened, rowed off

in their prahs, but the big junk was still firing ineffectually when the Commodore roared—

“Lieutenant Harvey, shoot away the mast of the junk, and don't hit the hull. I think she's the king of the lot. I'd like to take her.”

“Yes, sir,” said Harvey, aiming his gun.

“Take good aim, my boy, we'll never catch her unless we dismast her, for her sweeps go nearly as fast as we do.”

Harvey aimed carefully and the gun roared, the two foot chain with its two fourteen pound shots whizzing round and round like a tornado through the clear air. Every eye watched the circling missile as it smashed the junk's mast and carried it overboard amid the cheers of the Indiaman's crew.

Immediately the sixty sweeps, thirty a side, began to quicken, but there was now breeze enough for the Indiaman to overhaul her, when the fifty pound grappling irons were thrown on to the junk, their ten teeth gripping the boat as a wild animal grips its prey.

The boatswain's whistle immediately shrieked and the Commodore cried “Boarders away,” and the cutlasses of the men gleamed in the sunlight as the boarding party under Harvey jumped on to the deck of the junk amidships, meeting a determined resistance from the crew; but they fought their way up hill to the high stern mid the din of gongs and kettledrums and yells of the slain, fighting for the vessel side by side. Every time an Englishman fell the rest closed up slashing more vigorously at the fierce yellow faces opposed to them, slipping in the blood, jumping away from a rolling grinning head, stopping to slit up a writhing enemy, on, ever on to the high poop where the last of the crew were making a stand; on, on, still dashing on amid death cries and yells; on, till the last man's head was sliced off at the seventh cervical vertebra by a stalwart, blue-eyed, Yarmouth man, who exclaimed grimly—

“That's rough on our choppers.”

Then they rested for a moment and counted their losses. Six Englishmen were lying among the slain. After taking breath they went below and secured the non-combatants—for these pirates carry a lot of wives and servants—and bound them. After this they searched the junk and found eight ships' chronometers, each telling a tale of murder, theft and scuttling, but they could not find the treasure they expected must be on board till one of the prisoners, a boy, who could not understand English, shewed them, by signs, that it was in the cabin. They tore up the boards and found a hoard of gold and silver bars. Everything valuable, together with the boy and a little girl prisoner, was taken aboard the Indiaman, and the junk, prisoners and all, was blown up.

“And an easy death too for the d——d cut-throats,” said the Commodore.

After this adventure they reached Calcutta in safety and made the return journey with a convoy and without adventure.

On arriving in London Gwilym took his prize money and returned to Beaumaris.

As the Commodore then left the East India Company's service to go as a volunteer in the navy, Gwilym returned to the African trade. He was a good navigator, so he got a berth as Captain and supercargo in one and made a “mint of money.” After the third voyage he married Eva, Daddy Parson heartily approving. Then he returned to his West African trade and made in all eight successful voyages with a small fortune to each. He was a wise man and would not tempt fortune too long, so he returned to Beaumaris where he settled with Eva and his son and two daughters.

CHAPTER II.

THE Admiral and Daddy Parson were still alive and not too old to continue spending their time in sailing and fishing and educating Gwilym the second, but he was never the man his father was. He was a much truer Kelt—without perseverance, lazy and fond of wine, women, and song. He did not care for the company of his father, nor yet for that of the old Admiral and Daddy Parson: they were too prosy for his sensuous nature. He seemed to be happiest when fishing with a mate for codlings, or lying off Puffin to catch congers with herring, or setting lobster or crab baskets. He loved the sea for its beauty and fickleness, for it was a true mirror in which he saw himself. His chief offence in the eyes of the Admiral was his distaste for gun practice, yet the old man tolerated him good-naturedly, for he was his “boy’s only son.”

Young Gwilym had a little cutter in which he went round the Anglesea coast trading, and thereby became acquainted with the smugglers, who made a good thing bringing spirits and tobacco from the Isle of Man, where goods were free of duty. Tea cost 8s. a pound in Anglesea and 3s. at the Isle of Man.

When young Gwilym reached man’s estate neither his father nor his grandfather knew what to do with him. He was of middle height and dark, but not richly dark in complexion; altogether in colouring, form and character he was a mean imitation of his father, and the Keltic greed of money was more highly developed in him. So they asked him what he wished to do.

“Well, father, buy me a vessel—a good-built smack, about eighty tons.”

“What are you going to do with it, boy?”

“I won’t tell you.”

“Well, boy, as it’s your wish, I’ll do it,” said the generous father.

A distant relative living in Glasgow was asked to order the smartest smack that could be built, to be furnished and delivered in the Menai Straits.

When she arrived the son took possession of her and made several trawling voyages as a blind. Upon one of these voyages he found himself off the Isle of Man, where he fell in with a schoolmate who had been educated by old Daddy Parson, and was now a revenue officer in charge of a portion of the coast lying between two revenue cutters. They went to drink and smoke at an hotel and were soon talking of the old days and old Daddy Parson and this and that. At last the revenue officer asked Gwilym what he was going to do.

“I’m thinking of going smuggling. I’ve done a bit in the stout line between Dublin and here, but that isn’t good enough.”

“It’s a dangerous job,” said the officer, looking him between the eyes.

“I must take the risk.”

Well, truth to tell, they “made it up,” and the officer explained that he had ten men under him and had sole charge of that bit of the coast. And thus they conspired to defraud the revenue.

After this compact the smack *Onward* put to sea, sailing up the Mersey to a shipwright’s yard frequented by doubtful-looking craft of various nations. First money first served seemed to be the law of that yard, so that young Gwilym had no difficulty in getting attended to at once. Two water-barrels were especially made for him with three compartments; these were lashed on either side of the wheel. Two large tanks, opening on deck and near the water line, were put beneath the grating. The deck openings were covered with brass caps, and when these were removed it was easy to place a good brass pump into the

pipe and pump forth the water or what not, or if wished the stuff could be let off into tubs in boats alongside by the water line openings, a hose aiding. They were ingenious and snug reservoirs supplied by the old shipwright but never patented.

Gwilym's mate was an old man who hailed from Carnarvon, none knew his origin further than that. But when the new enterprises were projected he required another hand, so a Beaumaris boy was engaged; and then business began. It must be remembered there were no coast-guards then, indeed, this part of Anglesea was singularly convenient for smuggling. Having completed the arrangements at Liverpool, the *Onward* started off to the Isle of Man, after herrings they said. Landing some fish at Douglas she took in a mixed cargo, the coast being remarkably clear of the old school-fellow's ten men, indeed they were busy in another part of the isle looking out for a supposed smuggler trying to land contraband goods. It was a still, calm evening, when the *Onward* hoisted her sails and set off for Puffin, about forty-eight miles away, with an eight-knot breeze. Arriving safely she dropped anchor in sight of Puffin and opposite to a little stone-built farm house.

The White Cliff farm house stood inland about a hundred yards—a pleasant, white-washed, clean little place with its stone walls parting the green farm land from the common, for there the farmer can enclose the moor provided the neighbours do not object. The moor was a suitable place for the peewits to nest upon in spring and the drier parts were beloved by the rabbits who delighted to sap there at all seasons. The grey cliffs thereabouts also were full of nesting gulls and rock birds in early summer, and the deep ledges formed delightful beds for the ferns that grow luxuriantly.

When Gwilym dropped anchor he looked anxiously at the left hand corner of the house and presently a light

burst through the night. Had you been ashore at the farm you would have seen old William Thomas light his lantern directly he sighted the *Onward* and place it in the old pigeon house hanging on the left corner of the house, placing long pieces of board on each side of the flame to prevent its rays from scattering.

"That's alright," said young Gwilym, and the old Carnarvon man with his grey whiskers and beard and little pig eyes chuckled. The boy had been sent below to get dinner—duff, beef and potatoes.

The water was high and the night air was full of the sounds of birds, a redshank piped, curlews whistled and flocks of dunlins and ringed dotterel flew through the night, whistling as they sought new feeding grounds, for these birds seem to feed all night long at the edge of the tide. Presently through the still air they could hear the curfew bell ringing at Beaumaris, for the wind was favourable. Directly it stopped a boat darted out from the cliff rowed swiftly and silently by two men. They came alongside. They were the farmer and his son. After hasty salutations young Gwilym dropped into the boat (filled with five-gallon kegs), and drew her alongside the vessel, feeling in the dark with his key for the delivery pipe, which he found and opened fitting the hose into the ship and whipping the brass nozzle into the bung-hole of one of the kegs. A faint odour of brandy pervaded the air. On deck the old Carnarvon man stood on watch by the cabin hoodway to prevent the boy coming up. Some of the kegs were quickly filled and the boat shifted to the port side for the rest to be filled. Then Gwilym went on deck and quickly fitted a neat brass pump to one of the compartments of the barrels, pumping liquor of a golden hue into the kegs below. They worked swiftly and were rid of all their liquor when Gwilym told the boy he was going ashore and not to keep dinner for him. Jumping into the boat they rowed to land, to the face of a rock,

once being startled by the falling of an immense piece of stone on to the stony beach. Lying flat as they approached the cliff, their oars were suddenly taken in and they pushed into a dark, low archway just high enough to admit the boat, the swell bumping her against the stony arch. Within was a cave some fifteen feet high, the floor sliding to the water. Thereon stood a dark buxom girl with a Welsh hat, on her head, fastened below her chin by blue ribbons. Her dress was made of gaily-striped fluff or linsey woolsey, carded and spun by her own hands, and a red cloak covered her shoulders. Her features were small but clearly cut and well formed.

“Nosdawch,” said she, softly, as Gwilym got out of the boat.

“Nosdawch, Elen Bäch, sut yr ydych?” said he, saluting her with mock gravity as he proceeded to help pull the boat up the ledge.

Elen held the lantern whilst her father and brother and Gwilym unloaded the tubs of spirit. Scarce a word was spoken in the hollow cave, the only sound besides the workers being the ripple of the tide on the black dark shore. When the kegs were all unshipped, the old father shouldered a keg, as did the others, and Elen went ahead disappearing in the blackness at the back of the cave, where she showed a rope ladder up which the buxom girl climbed. Through a narrow archway at the top a larger cave was entered where were stored all manner of goods, contraband and legal, kegs of spirit, boxes, sea-chests, oars, nets, and I know not what. The men had followed her up the ladder and they deposited their kegs. Then the old man took the lantern and hung it on a hook at the top of the rope ladder as they returned.

Elen meanwhile disappeared up a dark subterranean, moist, green passage, and was already in the bright, warm farm kitchen hanging the rabbit stew in the iron pot on to the great hook in the fireplace.

The smugglers worked hard till every keg was stored and chalk-marked "y." They then returned to the ship and brought off a boat load of tobacco done up in tins to preserve it from the salt water, the Carnarvon man coming with them this journey, with a basket under his arm. The boat was left aground in the lower cave, the ladder pulled up and the four men felt their way along the passage which emerged in the cellar under the farm kitchen, where they left the lantern and appeared in the kitchen before the eyes of the buxom, red-lipped, sloe-eyed Elen, who sat before a ready-spread table. The Carnarvon man took forth a bottle of best cognac, a box of cigars and a red silk handkerchief for Elen, placing them silently on the table. But the father snatched them up, looking suspiciously at the door, and hid them in a cupboard, all except the brandy from which he cleaned the label at once. They had a hearty supper, and after Elen went to bed she could hear the chink of money; business was going forward, for the farmer was the middle-man. They sold direct to him and he drove the smuggle about to different public-houses under loads of hay, supplying four or five regular customers.

After a good glass Gwilym and his mate wandered down to the beach at two o'clock and whistled to the boy who came off in the little boat for them. They hoisted sail and beat down the Straits to Beaumaris where the next morning they paid duty on a cargo of salt for fish curing—they were allowed to bring in so much duty free, but that was not sufficient for them they said.

Thus Gwilym smuggled successfully for six years, confining his operations, however, to the winter months; indeed, he could not, with ordinary precautions, be caught. and might have grown very rich in this illegal trade, had not his old school-fellow died in the seventh year of partnership. They ran one or two cargoes after this death, but their doings soon aroused the new officials'

suspicious and setting a watch they discovered, one night, that he was shipping liquor at the end of Douglas pier. They sent a message to Beaumaris to notify the customs to have the ship searched when she arrived in port. No sooner did the *Onward* heave in sight off Puffin than the custom's boat boarded her and brought her down to Garth Ferry. Among the searchers was a friend.

"Go on, escape," he found opportunity to whisper, and Gwilym and his mate dropped into the customs boat at dusk and cast off, landing near Llanfaes. They sent the boat back by two boys whom they paid well.

The boy on board the *Onward* was threatened with gaol if he did not divulge the hidden store, so he showed the casks and the tanks.

The Carnarvon man walked home that night and was heard of no more, but Gwilym ran to the farm and told them the game was up and to clear the cave as soon as possible and to leave one or two kegs in the outer cave so that the inner cave and subterranean passage might remain undiscovered, as they did till the farm was pulled down, when they were discovered and can be seen to-day. Then he ran and told Daddy Parson everything.

"Stop here, I'll do for you," said the kind-hearted old man. Then he in his turn set out to tell the old Admiral who listened excitedly until he had finished, when he said—

"We must send the boy to London."

Gwilym was shipped aboard a slate schooner the next morning and when the officers came for him they found their prey had escaped.

CHAPTER III.

THE Admiral had given Gwilym a letter to his nephew, who since the war had returned to the East India trade. He took Gwilym as a midshipman, but he never saw the

Admiral or old Daddy Parson again, for on returning to London he wished to go in his father's old trade and the Commodore was starting at once, so he sailed instead of coming home. The old Commodore got him a Captain's berth on one of Green and Wigram's boats. As she was on her way home, William Pritchard, a seaman, started for London and Gwilym the first gave him a letter for his son. On his arrival in London, Pritchard went to Green's Sailors' Home and sent the letter on to Green and Wigram's office, for Pritchard was looking for a berth. One evening on his return to the home the steward said—

“Is your name William Pritchard?”

“Yes.”

“Someone has been here for you and he says you are to wait here till he comes.”

“Alright,” said Pritchard, wondering who was after him.

At nine he was in the big room where they played billiards and cards, and the steward came in and called out—

“William Pritchard.”

The seamen stopped and looked at each other.

“Yes, I am William Pritchard,” answered a middle-aged man.

“Gent here for you, come with me,” said the steward.

He followed the steward out into the visitors' room and saw Gwilym.

“Is your name William Pritchard?” he asked.

“Yes, sir.”

“Where from?”

“Beaumaris.”

“Come with me.”

On the way he said—

“I've got a letter from my father and I want you to join me for Calcutta and China. How long have you been at sea?”

"Six years, sir."

"Can you take a boatswain's place?"

"I know seamanship, but I'm no scholar, sir."

"Alright, you'll do. Come to this office at ten, we're signing articles," and he gave Pritchard a card.

The *Asia* started all right and Gwilym received a letter in the Downs and wrote one that they had taken Pritchard as boatswain. The passage was successful until one day in the Indian Ocean, when it was Pritchard's watch below from twelve to four. About two o'clock he felt dizzy and went and lay down in his berth and dreamt he got out of his berth without his cap and slippers and walked on deck. He dreamt that someone came and took his slippers and threw them overboard and someone was trying to take his cap off and pitch it overboard, and that he was looking over the side after his slippers when he dreamt he said—"Good God, that will do," and turned back to his cabin where he said he saw his father as white as a ghost coming after him, and the ghost tried to catch him when he fell on his knees and screamed and awoke, for he had been walking on deck doing all these things, followed by a crowd of superstitious sailors.

The men carried him aft and he cried like a child. The Captain (Gwilym) gave him a glass of brandy and he gradually recovered and felt himself in an hour, though he still felt cold in spite of the weather being very hot.

"There must be something wrong with him," said the mate.

"Somnambulism," said the Captain. "What was ailing you, Bill?" he asked, turning to the seaman.

"I can't tell you, sir, I would like to know myself; but I had a dream."

"What! does a dream get hold of a man like that?"

So Pritchard "upped" and told him his dream.

"What's Greenwich time?" asked Gwilym.

The mate reckoned it up and told him and Gwilym put it down in his note-book with the date.

The incident was soon forgotten.

On this ship the boatswain seldom took the wheel, but occasionally at the last grog time he relieved the man at the wheel, for Pritchard was a teetotaller.

It was the third day after Pritchard's "walking" and he had relieved the man at the wheel and was steering the ship over the blue waters, her sails filled by the trades. On the horizon a few clouds floated peacefully, the ship was silent and seemed deserted, save for a voice singing forward and, as it were, coming out of the sea. It was a sweet-voiced Welshman singing a Welsh song, "Mall-dreath." The masts, yards and sails projected their rigid outlines against the starry southern sky, where the blue nebulous star masses burnt round the southern cross.

The Captain in his cabin had got tired of the monotonous noises of the rolling ship and the sad music of the waves as they beat against his thick bull's-eyes and swashed away along the deep. The night was very close, too. So he came on deck and walked over to Pritchard, saying, with melancholy voice,—

"I feel so very dizzy, there's something come over me, Bill."

There was a long skylight with a bench on either side close by them, so Pritchard said—

"Take a lie down, sir. I'll rouse you up before it's your watch."

"Yes, I'll go below for a pillow."

The rigging creaked and the great ship rolled on. The captain reappeared with his pillow and lay down, remarking—

"I'm very funny, very funny."

He soon fell into a restless sleep and the sweet voice for'ard began to sing again a snatch of *Dewis Meinwen*, when Pritchard saw a flash like lightning come over his shoulder from the purple void and strike the Captain.

"Look out," roared Pritchard through the silent night.

There was a light scampering of feet and two men ran up and asked Pritchard excitedly—

“Was you struck by lightning?”

“Lightning?”

“Yes, lightning just in the shape of a man.”

As they were talking in low tones the Captain turned over on to the deck as if he were dead. The boatswain piped the starboard watch and they took the Captain below, but he did not recover for three days.

The third morning was a lovely calm and soft day, with scarce a breath of air, when the Captain called Pritchard aft and said, with a sad voice—

“Bill, there’s something in your dream. I dreamt that night I went home. I was going through the air and nothing could hold me. About a field from the house I stopped going and I saw my mother in the well with a pail of water. I looked at her and she looked at me but we never spoke. Then I went on to the house and I could see my father catching hold of the mantel-shelf, with his pipe in his mouth. I looked at him and he turned his head and looked at me, and I could see a stream of blood coming from his nose and mouth, and when I got outside of the door I woke up.”

The boatswain said—

“Have you put down the time and date, sir?”

“Oh, yes; I believe there is something in dreams.”

* * * * *

The ship reached Calcutta, discharged and returned to London without accident or adventure. The captain had dreamt thrice afterwards of an ebony piece of furniture standing in the kitchen at home, and there was a rapping every time he dreamt this dream and after the rapping he went on dreaming he must look in the bottom drawer of the cabinet.

After discharging, the Captain and boatswain hastened home by coach to Beaumaris and each found that his

father had died upon the day he had dreamt. Old Gwilym had died of the bursting of an aneurism whilst his wife was at the well drawing water.

Then young Gwilym's mother persuaded him to give up the sea and live with her.

"There's plenty of riches for you now."

"Where?"

"Oh, you know," his mother answered curtly. Then his dream came to him and he went to the ebony cabinet to the bottom drawer and found in a secret drawer fifteen hundred pounds, and a letter written by his father; it ran—

"Seek old Gabriel the plasterer and ask him about the bricks on each side of the fireplace.

Gwilym, Kelt that he was, was cunning, so he invited old Gabriel up to smoke and drink and when they were right jolly he asked—

"What are those bricks put up on each side of the fireplace for?"

"You'll have to use your judgment on that. They're put there for ventilation, your father was always studying something of that kind." That was all he would say.

It was an old-fashioned chimney with a chain and hook. So Gwilym began to take the bricks down himself, for all old Gabriel would say was—

"As one wind struck down, t'other struck up. There's five bricks loose."

Gwilym thought (and correctly) that Gabriel knew nothing beyond the secret of making a good ventilator, and he wasn't going to divulge that—it was against trade principles. So he pulled the bricks down and found behind a lot of gold coins in ten copper kettles. There was a little brass box too, wrapped in canvas, but no key. His mother polished the box and the kettles and put them on the chimney piece as ornaments, and the box was not thought of for eight years, when one day when cleaning

the chimney, Gwilym found a wire protruding between two bricks ; Gwilym took the brick out and found a little key at the end of the wire.

" Did you know of it," he asked his mother, showing her the key.

" No, boy."

" Well, my God, there's something in that brass box. Take it down."

He opened it, but was disappointed to find nothing.

" Look again," said his mother.

And looking again he found a buff leather envelope in the bottom and so exactly fitting the box as to be not easily distinguished at first. On opening it he found a piece of paper and on it written, in a round hand, these words—

" Seek under the hearthstone."

They prized up the hearthstone and found three copper kettles full of doubloons—money earned by his father in his West African trade.

And the mother and son lived many a year to enjoy it together, for it must be remembered there were neither private banks nor outside brokers in those good old days.

III.

The Almshouse Ghost.

“Breathes the soul of a Goronwy through Mona’s fair isle?”—

H. JONES.

DAVID HUGHES, an enterprising Welshman, left “Bleumaris” to seek his fortune, and like the few Welshmen who can overcome their Keltic inertia, he succeeded and grew rich.

In his old days he built the almshouses at Beaumaris, his native town, leaving an eccentric will for their government; the clauses that interest us in this document being those in which he ordained that the twelve almshouses should be occupied by the six oldest spinsters and six oldest bachelors of the parish; each occupant to receive ten shillings a week, and the six old maids being required to look after the six old bachelors; and that the parson appointed to the almshouse chapel should preach therein once a week, either upon a Wednesday or Thursday, his service to begin at six and terminate at eight o’clock.

When the eleemosynary machinery was got into working order the rector of Llanfaes Church was duly appointed chaplain to the almshouses. This parson was a tall, lanky, timid man, with red hair, a freckled face and a very large nose.

The twelve elect paupers were duly installed in the little houses, that opened into a bright little quadrangle, gay with flowers. Like all almshouses the buildings had a prim, respectable air, suited to the vegetable-like lives of the unsuccessful in life’s battle. The quadrangle was entered under a simple archway devised by the town architect.

In the house next the chapel lived an old dame with her half-witted nephew, a boy of fifteen years of age and a "natural"—for the habit of inter-breeding amongst the Welsh poor produces many of these unfortunate degenerates. Georgie was full of low cunning and possessed of a kind of instinctive sharpness. Your pure Kelt is seldom original and always intellectually superficial and imitative, being possessed of a sort of facility for expressing pleasantly what the giants of the intellectual world have created—his ear for what is good is responsible for the characteristic; and his poetry and music—his greatest intellectual achievements—are typical of his nature; they are facile, pleasant, superficial, but seldom original; never great.

Now Georgie was pleasantly and superficially ingenious and "clever," like the majority of the half-witted, and being not altogether ungrateful to his old aunt, for he was allowed to live with her in the almshouse, he listened with his stupid face when she expressed a wish, three years after her admission, to leave the "house" and live in the town on her ten shillings. He stuttered and glucked and jerked out, "He'd fix it so she might go." And the monkey-like brain of Georgie worked as hard as it could over the problem whilst sweeping up the dung-strewn roads and piling the manure in a corner of the almshouse garden, for such was his task: and his "thought" bore fruit.

One afternoon when his old aunt was sunning herself with the other decayed pensioners, sitting upon a bench by the gate, the ingenious Georgie took a stretcher from the bed and fastened thereto a piece of string, upon the near end of which he made a running bowline. At tea that night he secretly put his foot into the bowline and pulled the stretcher to and fro, making a curious rattling noise beneath the old woman's bed.

She started up, exclaiming, "Ein Tad!"

"The ghost! the ghost!" yelled the boy. "You soon have to leave house."

The old woman understood and looked with gratitude at the boy's wistful face, with its shifty black eyes and tremulous lips; but for a moment only, for she ran out into the courtyard, screaming, "The ghost! the ghost!" The almshouses doors flew open and the eleven old people tottered forth and ran to her, speaking with their low, resigned voices, asking—

"Where is the ghost?"

"In my house. Listen! listen!" and she drew them to the door, where they heard the rattling of the stretcher, but never a soul would enter in.

The report spread the next day through the town that a ghost had been heard in the almshouses, and curious friends drew up of a night to hear the spirit's manifestations, but the majority of the inhabitants, who were well accustomed to ghosts, pooh-poohed the story.

Meanwhile the monkey-brained boy had been busy boring a hole through his aunt's wall, the hole opening into a dark cupboard in the room. The hole he left unplugged, for he had found a stone that just stopped the passage when required. Next he made a windmill with large tin wings, to which were attached loose nails and pieces of tin that made a hideous and sharp jangling when the wind whirred the arms round. This machine he placed one stormy night outside the building against the hole, removed the stone and left the cupboard door ajar, and sat down amid the howling of the wind and rattling windows to listen. The machine was a success, for a more unearthly noise was never heard. The old aunt understood and went out into the storm shrieking, "The ghost! the ghost!" but never a pensioner would come into the house.

From that night the more primitive contrivance of the bed-stretcher was abandoned and the windmill—which was hidden under the manure heap by day—so effectually did the business that the ghost reputation spread far and wide, and crowds came by night to the almshouses to hear

the ghost. And so serious did the matter become that old Robert Roberts and William Williams, Methodist deacons, came to "allay" the ghost, and a prayer meeting was held in the old woman's house; but as the storm got up and the windmill flew round, the noise became so unearthly that one of the timid congregation arose, shrieking, "The ghost! the ghost!" Then all arose, shrieking, "The ghost! the ghost!" and made a rush from the house into the stormy night—deacons and all. The chaplain was told of the ghostly visitor, but he pooh-poohed the idea—though he believed in his Bible.

Time went on and the almshouse ghost was quite an institution, crowds collecting on a stormy night to hear him, but the parson would take no notice of the ghost, until one Wednesday night, during service, when the hands of the big subscription clock hanging in the corner pointed to thirty minutes past seven. At that moment there was a loud and solemn thumping right under his feet, for he was in his half-pulpit with a sermon before him and a candle on either side.

"Lord preserve us," gasped the white-faced parson; and the pensioners cried, "The ghost! the ghost!" and tottered out of the chapel as fast as their legs could carry them, the parson following.

The report soon spread that the ghost had visited the chapel now, and the hysterical portion of the community grew wild with excitement. The almshouse ghost was the talk of the town, and people gave the haunted buildings a wide berth at night.

In the town lived an astute tradesman, John Evans, one who attended divine service at Llanfaes Church regularly and was considered very good by the red-haired rector. But he was what the Welsh call "wide-awake," for his church attendance was done "for his trade." He supplied all the "big-wigs," and the church and trade are intimately connected in country districts. But John Evans was a free-thinker in his heart and a first-rate business man, and he

had been in his youth a great athlete, having been the champion runner in all Wales; he was, too, as brave as intelligent.

This man decided to solve the mystery of the ghost and he confided his decision to his two friends, a lawyer's articled clerk and a doctor's apprentice.

Upon the following Wednesday the three sceptics lay in ambush round the chapel whilst the curious from the town flocked in to hear the ghost. The parson began at the usual hour, with nervous voice and white face, and the three in ambush watched outside in the dark. At seven o'clock Evans saw a figure pass swiftly across the almshouse yard and go out at the gate and disappear towards the chapel. So he followed stealthily and the figure hurried on to the back of the chapel and suddenly stopped close to the wall and began to pull about as if doing something; then the figure dropped on its knees and stopped and put his ear (for he could now see the person was a man or a boy) to the wall and listened patiently for a long time. John heard the big church bell strike half-past seven, when suddenly the figure raised his head and began to jerk something violently. And all of a sudden he heard shrieks from the chapel and the slamming of doors and the congregation rushed into the night, shrieking, "The ghost! the ghost!" scattering right and left, many running into the town.

John smiled grimly, saw the figure pull for a minute at the wall and glide off. He followed and in the uproar was unnoticed as he tracked the figure to the old woman's almshouse next the chapel, when he whistled softly to himself.

The three ghost-hunters met afterwards at the "White Horses" and John told them he'd have some news for them to-morrow, but no more would he say.

The next morning at daybreak Evans arose and walked off to the spot where he had seen the boy; there were the prints of his hob-nails, and on closely examining the stone wall he found a loose stone, which he removed with the

point of his jack-knife, discovering a black hole into which he thrust his hand and found a rope, which he pulled vigorously, whereupon he heard a loud thumping in the building. He smiled to himself, hastily replaced the loose stone and went home.

That same afternoon he loafed about the almshouses, watching the boy sweeping up the horse-droppings until he reached a secluded part of the road on Red hill, then he came up to him and said—

“Well, boy, you make a capital ghost.”

The boy turned white and said—

“What’s that, indeed?”

“I say you make a capital ghost. I know all—the loose stone, the rope and all.”

The boy was dumb-founded, but lied on unblushingly.

“Now, boy,” said Evans, “it’s no good. I watched you and I’m not going to say anything. Why did you do it?”

“I didn’t do it.”

Evans felt in his pocket and found half-a-sovereign.

“Do you see that?”

“Yes.”

“You shall have it if you tell me why you did it, and what’s more I’ll promise no harm shall come to you and you shall play the ghost again, half-a-sovereign every night, if you’ll tell me everything, but if you don’t tell me I’ll go and tell the magistrate now.”

“I’ll tell you, then; give me the money first,” replied the boy.

Evans gave him the half-sovereign and the boy beckoned him to follow, leading the way to the house where he showed him his first ghost, the stretcher; then he showed him the hole in the wall, and going to the muck-heap exposed the mysterious-voiced windmill; and then he took the chapel key, for his mother was its appointed custodian, and led the way into the chapel, where he explained how he had bored a hole through the wall and carried a clothes-line through

it under the floor to the pulpit. He explained how he had taken up a plank, made a rude pulley with a pew stool and stole an eight-pound weight from the almshouse weighing machine, which was attached as the clapper to his novel rapping machine.

Evans smiled, and then the boy explained he had done it because his aunt wished to go and live outside, and he thought if the house was haunted they'd let her turn out. So Evans bribed the boy to keep the secret and told him he'd help him in his design and pay him as well, and they parted well pleased with each other, Evans going off to tell his two friends of his discoveries.

Well, reports began to come in from the country lanes and roads that a ghost had been seen, with a white dress and a white cap, and some old market women were nearly frightened to death.

Still the noise continued at the house on stormy nights, but ceased for a time in the chapel, but the boy seemed happy enough; he had taken up with "bandy-legs," or stilts, practising so diligently that he became quite a proficient "bandy-leg" walker.

The ghost so took hold of the imagination of the religious hysterics that the deacons were again persuaded by the old aunt to come and have prayers and try and "allay" him. They agreed and whilst the mill was going they bravely prayed amid a crowd of persons in the little room by the light of one candle that stood on the table.

As they prayed young Evans climbed up by means of a hen-house and a ladder to the roof, carrying a black tom-cat with him in a basket, whilst the boy stood on stilts, dressed in the parson's surplice and his aunt's frilled cap, at the road, and the two pupils mixed with the crowd gathered outside the haunted house.

Climbing on to the roof Evans dropped the cat down the chimney—black tom appearing among the praying congregation like the devil, made a leap for the light and over-

turned it. The deacons shrieked, "The ghost! the ghost!" and ran from the house bare-headed, everybody following, and the pupils calling, "The ghost! the ghost!" the whole crowd scattered helter-skelter into the road where the tall ghost appeared. The shrieking was renewed—"The ghost! the ghost!" they cried and ran like mad things down the steep road pell-mell; some bare-headed and all shrieking and breathing hard when they reached the town, where they rushed indoors, telling everybody of the ghost—they had seen the ghost, a big, tall, white thing—ever so high, who came tip-toeing along after them. Nothing would persuade the deacons to go near the house again—they said it had an evil spirit.

Upon the following Wednesday the parson had to hold his service, but he had not got far before thump, thump, thump the ghost rapped under his feet.

"Lord preserve us from evil spirits," said the parson, solemnly.

Thump, thump, thump.

"Lord preserve us from evil spirits."

Thump, thump, thump, and suddenly the big clock spring broke and went off with a hellish noise.

The parson made one leap from the pulpit, shrieked, "The ghost! the ghost!" and ran for his life, the crowded congregation following. Someone had placed a pile of firewood in the passage, and the parson in his headlong flight fell over it, bursting his big nose, which streamed with blood. On came the panic-stricken crowd, some falling flat on the parson. Then followed such a shouting and struggling and shrieking—the two pupils shrieking "The ghost! the ghost!" while the crowd rushed from the chapel, but only to meet the ghost in the road, with a flaring torch in its hand.

"Oh! the ghost! the ghost!" they shrieked.

"Oh! the ghost! the ghost!" shrieked the bare-headed parson, with streaming nose, as he headed the flight of the

terror-stricken crowd; young Evans bringing up the rear, crying—

“Oh! the ghost! the ghost is coming!”

“Good Lord deliver us,” groaned the parson at the head of his affrighted regiment, as they ran helter-skelter down Red Hill.

Then Evans blew three blasts on a horn purchased for the occasion.

“There’s the angel Gabriel’s trumpet,” Evans called solemnly, and the ghost with the flaring torch kept on in hot pursuit.

“Good Lord deliver us,” groaned the breathless parson, his face and surplice covered with blood.

They tore like mad things into the town, meeting the usual crowd assembled at the arch-like structure; a policeman crying, “The ghost! the ghost!” directly he saw the tall parson, whom he took to be the ghost. On ran the parson to the “Buckley Arms;” the crowd after him, shouting, “The ghost! the ghost!” and scattering the barmaids and visitors, who ran off to the top of the house, deserting the bar. In flew the parson and sank into a chair in the deserted bar.

The scattered crowd had begun to collect again, asking eagerly—

“Where did the ghost go? Where did the ghost go?”

“Well, we must go and see,” said the policeman.

“To the ‘Buckley Arms,’” said one.

“To the ‘Buckley Arms,’” said another.

So the crowd ran to the “Buckley Arms” and burst into the bar, where they saw the parson in a swoon, but he was not to be recognized, for his face was covered with blood, blown by the wind and clotted by the running.

“Oh! the ghost! the ghost!” they called, and ran off as quickly as they had come.

However, some of the more courageous visitors soon ventured down to the bar and found the object in the chair

was a real man, when they sent for a doctor who washed his face, discovering the parson, who was sent home in a carriage when he had sufficiently recovered.

This circumstance created such an uproar in the town that one of the magistrates, the policeman, and the two constables, with a crowd of persons, went up to the almshouses and chapel to search the place, but nothing did they find.

The parson was laid up for three weeks, when at last he appeared, though looking rather shaky.

On the Sunday after his re-appearance he was to hold the evening service at Llanfaes Church as usual, walking to service along the church path (which a landlord had once or twice tried in vain to close) and climbing over three stiles before he arrived safely at church.

The service began at six and there was a goodly congregation, including most of the visitors from the "Buckley Arms." But before the service began the religious and regular attendant, Mr. Evans, arose and solemnly said—

"Well, Mr. Jones, before we commence the service there are some gentlemen present who would like to know about the ghost."

"Good Lord deliver us!" groaned the parson. "I can't tell much."

"Well, indeed, what is your opinion on the subject?"

"Lord deliver us! I'm quaking to think of the ghost," said the parson.

"But you must explain yourself so as to satisfy these gentlemen," persisted Mr. Evans.

"Well, gentlemen all, I believe it is an evil spirit. I believe someone has been murdered about those almshouses."

Scarce had the last word left his mouth when a loud blast from a horn sounded without.

"Good God Almighty! the ghost can't be far off," said the parson.

Another blast followed.

“Good God Almighty! that’s the blast we heard when we saw the ghost running from the almshouses and ——”

Another blast sounded nearer the church.

“What in the name of God has he to do with us in church. He must be an evil spirit as I told you before,” said the parson, solemnly.

Suddenly the parson’s eyes were glued to the door, for the ghost entered the church, bearing a flaming torch.

“The ghost! the ghost!” shrieked everyone, rushing madly for the doors, parson and all.

“Everyone for himself and God for us all,” shrieked the parson, and leaping the pulpit and bursting out of the church into the night, he ran like a madman down the church path, Evans following, crying, “The ghost! the ghost!” The parson leapt the first stile in his flight, but at the second he fell and caught his surplice on a thorn hedge.

“The ghost! the ghost!” roared Evans behind him.

The terrified parson burst away leaving part of his surplice on the hedge. On went the parson, chased by Evans shrieking, “The ghost! the ghost!” till he reached his front door, when he fell flat in a fit, bursting his big nose on the floor.

Evans then returned to the church, but not a soul was to be seen on the way except his two pupils, who met him at the first stile, when they had a good laugh and Evans gave them the account of the parson’s flight.

“Well, we must go now and see how the parson is,” proposed Evans.

So they went down to his house and found the manservant putting in the trap.

“What’s the matter, William? Where are you going?”

“For the doctor, master is nearly dead.”

“Good God!” they cried in astonishment, and ran indoors and found the old parson sitting on the floor, his face and surplice covered with blood and his eyes staring about him wildly, but he couldn’t speak.

When the doctor came and gave him a stimulus he revived. Then Evans asked him what was the matter.

"The ghost! the ghost!" then recognizing his parishioner he said—

"Well, Mr. Evans, how are you?"

"Right well. But where have you been, sir?"

"Good God! the ghost! the ghost! He followed me right to this house and was just going to catch me by the shoulder when I fell flat on my face and fainted. He very near had me. Oh! I can recollect when he was just going to catch hold of my shoulder and I fell and knew no more."

The doctor and the visitors sympathized deeply with the old parson, and the three young men offered to stay all night, which the parson joyfully agreed to, giving them the best of everything to eat and drink. And whilst he slept restlessly they laughed and emptied the decanters.

But events had gone further than the three young men intended, so from that day no ghost has ever been heard at the almshouses or seen in Llanfaes Church; but the parson soon left the district.

The old pensioner died just as her wish was to be granted, but her ingenious nephew still lives in the island, for these events happened six and twenty years ago, in this enlightened age of which we have heard so much.

IV.

The Wreck of the "Royal Charter."

The Tradition of To-day.

"A death shriek is gone through the Isles.

* * * *

Fiercely in his circles did the sun of Mona set this night,
 The birds of prey are hovering over the Isles,
 And the moon of Mona beams dimly this night ;
 A mournful shriek is heard in the blast,
 And wrathful beat the waves of Mona this night :
 Cold and death-like will be the smile of his mother."

Death Shriek in the Yns.

CHAPTER I.

THE steam clipper *Royal Charter*, 2710 tons burden, set sail from Melbourne, on August 26th, 1859, with a crew of 103 persons to work the vessel and wait upon 324 rich passengers, chiefly gold diggers, bound for Liverpool.

They were a hard-faced, long-bearded set of men, the heads of these families. For many a year they had toiled in the drougthy gold diggings, for many a moon had they hazarded their health and lives in the sheep farms up country through which the bush-whackers of the Morgan and Kelly type plundered and murdered, and savage natives avenged their wrongs, as many a mouldering skeleton found in some wild silently certified. But for a great number these trials were past and forgotten and they chatted and smoked gaily, laughed with the free and easy ladies and played with the children whilst the great steamer

puffed out of Melbourne Harbour, carrying them and their hard-earned wealth, which they bore, some in body belts, others, among the women, sewn into their corsets, others again in their old-fashioned chests or trunks, or again left in charge of the Captain, who put it safely with the great cargo of specie, some golden £300,000 of coins and ingots.

By steaming and sailing the *Royal Charter* beat the blue seas with her fore-foot and the bells rang merrily their musical notes, and the flashing sea-gulls and stormy petrels followed the ship to be caught by the children with pieces of fish oil trolled by black threads in which they entangled their wings. Then they spread them on the clean decks as they were hauled in and decorated them with red and yellow ribbons from cigar bundles, to be set loose again. In this way with festivities and the shrill pipings of the boatswain's whistle, and songs and dances under the cool airy awnings to music accompanied by the monotonous wish and roll of the sea on the weather bow, and the gurgling of the steam below the water-line and the hoarse rush of the cinders down the shoot into the blue depths, the smart clipper laid her course for Liverpool, coming on grandly by steam and belling canvases, beautiful as the ladies' dresses.

CHAPTER II.

ON Sunday, the 20th of October, in the same year but two months afterwards, the peasants living in their crofts round Moëlfre finished their bowls of potatoes and buttermilk and dressed in their best blue slops and corduroys, walked heavily to Llanallgo Church on the north coast of Anglesea. The picturesque little belfry was resounding that morning with the clang of its single bell, and before service several peasants and fishermen had gathered on a large open space of grass as yet not hummocked by graves and were chatting in musical Welsh, hailing their friends

who arrived breathing hard from their walk up the hill from the irregular little village of Moëlfre, the houses of which lay scattered up and down the limestone cliffs on either side of the little inn named Tenyfron, in whose tap-room they drank a glass of beer or smuggled spirits on Saturday nights and sang the chorus of "Lili-lon-bravi-bron" to the fiddle and three-stringed harp of a local musician who had come down from Cæmmaes to see a friend, for the men of that village are famous harpists and *improvisatori*. The inn was perched on the lips of a hollow eaten out of the limestone by the waves that rolled and broke heavily on this coast when a nor'-easter raged, bringing snow squalls from the besmirched horizon. At the bottom of this hollow was a sea-pool in which the young Moëlfre boys sailed their model yachts and where the fishermen stowed their great fishing boats before the doors of their white stone cottages safe from the nor'-eastern breakers. But not only did people come from Moëlfre, but from the cottages dotted about over the bare rolling hills now prickly with stubble and frequented by flocks of sparrows, starlings and sea-gulls, for the winter had begun sharply.

About the crofts the low limestone walls turned and twisted like snakes, and sheep fed on the sparse herbage growing between the polished out-cropping boulders, many of the flock being hobbled with a piece of rope from the right fore leg to the left hind leg so that they should not escape into a neighbour's pasture through breaches in the badly kept stone walls. Only the walls along the edge of the cliff were kept in good order, for if a sheep fell over there on to the rocks below he never recovered.

Quite a crowd had gathered on the green open space below the belfry—a sward surrounded by graves marked off by slate headstones—ere the bell of Llanallgo Church stopped jangling.

"There's a change of wind coming," said an old fisherman as the bell stopped. "I saw a jack-a-lantern last night."

"Ay! last night was the new moon, and a Saturday moon is sure to bring bad weather."

"Yes, I saw the old crows close to the beach this morning taking in ballast; it's sure to blow," added a young, black-eyed sailor.

"Well, indeed, now it will, and young Jones will have a rough time up the Channel, for surely he must be coming up by this time in the *Royal Charter*," said the first speaker.

"Yes, he told his mother he'd be home about the beginning of November," retorted an old, white-bearded salt.

A few extra strokes of the old bell sent the gossiping crowd of sailors and ploughmen stumping shyly into the church, when the clergyman began the morning service. Two hours afterwards the congregation scattered to the white-washed crofts on the hill sides, or walked down to the squalid huts of Moëlfre.

CHAPTER III.

THAT night the wind changed suddenly to the north-east, and on Monday morning in the bright, clear atmosphere the sailors of Moëlfre saw the distant Carnarvonshire hills whitewith powdered snow. Even Puffin wore a white cap and all around the sea was breaking on to the rocky coast, lapping and dashing round the rock by Jugs Moëlfre and thundering on to the little beach abreast of Moëlfre Cove. The sheep felt the cold, biting wind and fed close under the lee of the stone walls that stretched all along the whole expanse of Moëlfre Bay over the bare rolling hills away to Jus Moëlfre. The fishermen drew their boats high up along the narrow, rough, stony riverside opposite their homes and leaned against them with their hands thrust into their duffel trousers, as they chewed tobacco and watched the children sailing their craft on the rippled pool, to the music of the seas thundering on the stony beach and fantastically crenellated limestone rocks.

All day Monday and Tuesday the storm raged with snow and hail squalls, and icy winds that parched the sailors' foreheads and dried their nostrils and lips as they faced it when walking up the boulder-paved streets to the tight closed houses. Some who lived across the fields hurried home, startling the keen set blackbirds, starlings and rooks, which had drawn up to the crofts and into the stubble for food. Over the hills the gulls hunted like harriers. Others went to the Tenyfron and drank rum, as they smoked twist and looked out on to the bottom of the hollow, where some men and boys were gathered, regardless of the day and the snow-flakes that the north-easter brings from over the sea.

The snow had fallen for three days and on Wednesday morning the pine woods on the slopes of the Carnarvonshire hills looked like thin hairs springing from a shining crown, for after the first day's snow the pines had looked like tufts of black hair on the Carnarvon head, on the second day like brindled locks, but to-day they looked like sparse hair on a bald summit. But the storm did little harm on the hills, for the faithful collies had been out scouring the dales for the sheep and now all were housed, safe from the cold, in the sheds by the farmers.

When the old sailors looked forth from the cliffs on Moëlfre on that Wednesday morning the white-capped Puffin and the white brine seemed to draw up closer in the clear biting air and the sheep looked a peculiar green colour like the grass, as the neutral-tinted snow-clouds sped overhead, attracted to the hills, and the sun's rays fell on the sheep; for the snow in Anglesea was so light that neither sheep nor the hardy buffalo-like black cattle were penned.

CHAPTER IV.

ON the Tuesday of that week the *Royal Charter* was steaming proudly up St. George's Channel in the teeth of the gale; she had never made so good a passage from Melbourne. On board the shivering passengers, unaccustomed to cold, were sitting below in the saloon or in the smoking rooms on deck playing cards and drinking; all cheerful and jovial notwithstanding the icy snow squalls that made the sea and sky at a little distance look as one. The watches, too, bore their frigid tasks cheerfully, for they knew they would soon be ashore and able to go on the spree; but some remarked that the few passengers they had put out at Queenstown were well out of it.

CHAPTER V.

TOWARDS night on Tuesday the wind rose to a hurricane and the Moëlfre men went to bed with rattling windows, saying they had never seen such a storm since the far-famed January gale. Whilst they were getting into their warm coverlets, the watch on the *Royal Charter* reported the Skerries Light, one of the few lighthouses then standing on that coast, and the vessel's course was laid for Liverpool—the *Royal Charter* coasting along about two miles from land through the white snow squall, the icy water breaking over her port bow, and drenching the look-out, who could hardly make himself heard through the roar of the seas and whistling of the wind through the rigging, deck-house and lumber. Towards midnight the storm increased and the women aboard—of whom there were sixty—began to grow anxious, for they could not walk about the saloon, nor, indeed, sit on the cushions, but had to sit on the floor and even then slid to and fro across the saloon. At length the waves began to break heavily over the decks, the water rapidly finding its

way down the companion way and into the saloon cabin, where it swished and swirled to and fro with the rolling of the ship. Through the storm the passengers could hear the trampling of heavy feet on deck, the shrill whistle of the boatswain's pipe and the churning of the screw. Sometimes there would be the horrid whirling of the screw, sounding like a huge broken watch spring running down, as the fans were tossed out of the water and whizzed round in empty space before the next wave carried them back into the sea.

Soon after midnight the saloon door was hurriedly opened and slammed to with a loud report as a tall, weather-beaten, long-bearded Australian entered, with snow-powdered overcoat and cap. Immediately he was surrounded by anxious men and women, asking for news.

"An awful gale, awful; and what makes it worse, the snow prevents the men from seeing ahead. They are shooting the anchors, for the screw will scarce keep her off the land, the wind is so powerful."

"Where are we, then?"

"The Captain thinks we've cleared the north side of the Anglesea coast, but there are no lights there; it is so thick that he don't know for certain."

"God help us; it looks bad," said another grey beard.

The news spread through the ship's passengers, none of whom had undressed though some tried to wedge themselves into their berths with pillows. At one o'clock a big sea struck the vessel and one of the oil lamps fell from its bracket. There was a rush by some of the passengers and the lamp was extinguished before the oil caught fire, but the accident, the water in the cabin and the rattling of the donkey-engine as the cable was paid out, quite upset the women who began shrieking and moaning and praying, the long grey-bearded man trying hard to comfort and quiet them. The children, ignorant of the danger, sat looking on in the darkened cabin, for the rolling and pitching had

broken off another lamp and the passengers thought it advisable to put out all the lights to avoid the risk of fire, and to burn some candles. In one corner a lovely girl, the bride of a rich digger, was lying on her back moaning, looking like a corpse by the dim light. Her husband sat by her trying to soothe her, her hands clasped in his. In some of the cabins the jingle of money could be heard as the buff leather belts were packed tightly, or belts were hastily made from the ship's towels—preparations indicating the beginning of the end. But the creaking of the panelling and the roar of the storm drowned all words so that the silent, blue-eyed boy, who was quietly drinking in the sad scene, was disappointed.

The crew of the *Royal Charter*, in their sou'-westers and oilies, were standing by ready for any emergency, all holding on to something as every wave struck the ship.

Next to the Captain stood Jones, the Welshman, now so near yet so far from his home, when—

"She's dragging her anchors!" the boatswain cried.

"Full steam ahead," signalled the Captain from the bridge as the vessel went head to wind against the heavy seas and blinding snow squalls.

"Where do you think we are?" he asked, turning to Jones.

"Well, indeed, sir, I think we will have passed Llanelian and the tide must be getting us down towards Dulas Bay. If so we will be about two miles from the land with shoaly water betwixt us and the shore. It's a bad look-out, Captain, with the tide running hot as it is."

"Is it so?"

"By God, it is. God help us all!"

About two o'clock the Captain gave the order for the foremast to be cut away, as the vessel was drifting slowly but surely towards the shore, dragging her two anchors, though her engines were at full steam and she was head to wind. It was a foolish order, for directly the mast and rigging were

cut loose the spars and ropes drifted aft and wound about the fans of the propeller, completely binding her and rendering her useless.

The engineer came running up to see what was amiss with the screw, and when the heated, perspiring man from the dark, hot furnaces away in the heart of the ship stepped into the icy snow-laden storm and heard the news, he exclaimed—

“ Good God ! we are done for then.”

The storm increased in force and all the crew were on the slippery decks working by the dim lanterns all bespattered with sea water that encrusted the hot smoke stacks with salt and left icicles in the rigging. The few passengers on deck lurked in dark alleys by the smoke stacks.

Ere long the look-out suddenly cried out—

“ Land ho ! ”

And John Jones exclaimed—

“ Good God ! we’re in by Moëlfre, I know by the shoals. God help us all this night.”

And ere his speech was finished the vessel struck hard on a rock, the shock sending the men passengers streaming on deck, when the women shrieked and sobbed hysterically, the affrighted children joining in the clamour.

“ Good God ! Jones, is there a lifeboat or aught near ? ”

“ None, sir, none, God help us ; and it’s only half-tide, for in such a tide as this this rock we’ve struck will be all under water.”

“ Where are we ? ”

“ In Moëlfre Bay, sir. There’s the village round the point,” said Jones, pointing to a dark mass just visible through the flying snow.

The Captain ordered the brass cannon to be fired and had rockets sent up and blue lights burned, outlining the gaunt-looking men as they moved about pushing the boats out on the davits and aimlessly doing nothing, as always happens in a wreck. The rockets shot up into the snowy

black night and presently, above the roar of the waves and the whistling of the wind in the rigging, they heard yells from a bluff on the shore on which the breakers thundered. Through the spray they saw moving lights.

The Captain now grew excited and drawing his revolver ordered every passenger to go below, which they did reluctantly.

It was about three o'clock in the morning and the tide would be full at six, so that if something were not done immediately all hands would be lost, for no boat could live in that broken water.

"Who'll volunteer to swim ashore with a line? The man who gets there shall have £10," bawled the Captain through the storm.

"Me'll go," said a Maltese, Joe Rogers, as he stripped to his shirt.

The Captain now had great hopes, for he knew well the wonderful swimming powers of the Maltese.

Fastening a small line round himself, Joe Rogers plunged into the icy frothy sea mid the cheers of the crew, who never heeded the cutting snow squall as they watched him, their lanterns gleaming over the dark frothy waves that surged round the rocks. They saw him rise and go under and presently they heard a cheer on the dark shore as the Moëlfre fishermen rushed down into the surf and drew him on to the shingly little beach ere the back tide sucked him down into the deep.

Joe Rogers was carried exhausted to a cottage on the hill near, but the men took the line up to a rock, now called the Royal Charter rock, and began to haul a hawser ashore making it fast to the rock, whilst the crew of the ill-fated vessel made it fast to the mast on their side and hastily improvised a cradle that could carry seven.

Then the Captain went below and said to the passengers—

"We have a hawser ashore and I have sent to Liverpool for a tug; there is no immediate danger, so please keep quiet and you shall all be in Liverpool to-morrow morning."

Then the cradle was set to work and thirty-eight passengers and fifteen of the crew were landed safely, when the cradle came back and filled up with seven more, among whom was John Jones of Moëlfre. They left their ship and began their perilous journey over the black, gloomy waters, when a huge sea struck the ill-fated vessel, driving the weather boat from her davits and striking the Captain to the deck, *killing him on the spot, his revolver still in hand. As the vessel lurched the hawser snapped and with a shriek the cradle with its living freight fell into the broken, icy seas.

The gale only increased in violence as the tide rose, and immediately after this terrible catastrophe the passengers swarmed on deck and all discipline was at an end. It was everyone for himself, some with lifebelts, some without; but the fearful scene on the broken decks was brief, for the shrieking, sobbing family groups, and wistful men and women running hither and thither, some jumping into the boiling water in their despair, were soon relieved from their sufferings, for a mighty sea broke over the vessel, driving her still further on to the rocks and breaking her in three pieces—her stern splitting in two and dropping into deep water. Every living being was washed into the frothy sea. One sailor only ran up the mast for safety. In less than the time I take to describe it nearly four hundred hopeful, loving men, women and children were corpses, being washed to and fro among the sharp limestone rocks, shingle and sea-weed, no better than food for the shrimps and lobsters; whilst the fifty-three rescued men crowded before the slender peat fires in the whitewashed cottages over the hills, or ate potatoes and butter-milk with the Moëlfre peasants. One of the rescued had had his leg broken on the rocks and he lay groaning in a little stone house, which is to be seen to this day.

When day broke the men of Moëlfre lined the shores

* There is a tradition that the Captain came ashore in the cradle and still lives under another name.

above the village, though the cutting north-easter was still blowing, and still the poor fellow in the rigging was alive; but soon after high water a big sea broke the vessel up and the mast fell with its speck of life into the frothy sea, and then the waters broke over the rocks and none might have known that any vessel had ever been there. As the tide receded the storm abated, and the sea began to give up her dead to the rapacious fishermen, who soon discovered the money belts and sovereign-padded stays, so that before the chief of customs and their coastguards heard of the wreck, or could start for the scene, many a Moëlfre man had gathered enough wealth to set him up for life. One man got over £800 in notes and several purses of gold, and was so overjoyed at his luck that he started on his voyages at once, but on nearing Bangor discretion and valour both failed him, he bragged of his find, was arrested and relieved of the notes. With the purses he escaped and got away to America and has not been heard of since.

As the news spread of this gold mine cast upon Moëlfre shore all the men and women of predatory instincts collected there, but by the next low tide custom house officers and police formed a sort of guard, so that when a sharp lad picked up a purse and ran with it to his mother's cottage, he was promptly followed by a policeman. The astounded and quick-witted mother hastily emptied the eighteen Australian sovereigns into the teapot standing on the table and threw down the purse. The constable, fussy and important, came in to find nothing but the empty purse.

The corpses kept coming ashore to be stripped of their valuables and piles of the specie were collected, whilst the fishermen grappled with conger hooks for the dead, bringing them ashore one by one. Poor John Jones was dragged on to the beach within ten yards of his mother's cottage, and the poor sailor from the mast came ashore headless.

CHAPTER VI.

A FEW days after the bell of Llanallgo church was again ringing, but the square plot of green where the sailors had grouped the Sunday before was now a freshly dug pit into which one hundred and forty bodies of men, women and children were packed as the Moëlfre sailors brought them up the winding road, past the bubbling brook over which hung brambles and undergrowth, quaintly decorated with flower-like icicles, resembling giant campanulæ. With these corpses, many unknown and unmourned, the big grave was filled in and an obelisk now stands where that cheery party gossiped on that October Sunday morning.

* * * * *

As the search continued money and corpses were found daily and buried, many in the neighbouring churchyards, whilst many a mean official and wrecker was growing daily richer from the spoil cast up by the sea. So common a practice had the search for corpses and coin become in a few days that a practical joker hid a friend under some sea-weed, and when a corpse searcher came along and began to look for the well-known buff leather belt, the corpse sat bolt upright and the thief ran away, never to search more for *Royal Charter* money.

CHAPTER VII.

WELL, many grew rich on *Royal Charter* money before the last corpse was found, but tradition says the money never did any of the finders any good.

They say the chief of the customs in whose charge the treasure was given by the honest, left the service very soon after the wreck and built a large hotel in Holyhead, but his feet rotted off before he died. They say the policeman bought land and built houses in Beaumaris, but they got

into Chancery. They say several Moëlfre fishermen built schooners and fishing boats, but none of them did much good and many found their coffins in them. They say a poor Penmon quarryman, earning fifteen shillings a week, found two bags of gold in the sea-weed and gave up work, beginning farming in a small way and going on till he grew a rich farmer, but his children never prospered.

They say years afterwards an old boatman who took passengers to the scene of the wreck was one day waiting for his party, and beginning to prod about idly in a cleft of the rock he found six sovereigns, so he swept the sea-weed off with his conger hook and found an old buff belt with £100 therein. He bought a sailing boat, a new gig and a punt, but even he died soon afterwards. They say a labourer and his wife got a lot of the spoil, but they both took to drink and were buried in three years. Decidedly the *Royal Charter* money brought no luck.

So a wholesome tradition says that none of the wreckers were benefited by the treasure, but the acute and intelligent native, who knows most about this subject, he has another tale to tell. What is true is that though the brave Joe Rogers, the Maltese, received many presents, he did not fare nearly so well as the wreckers, who many of them became quite rich. One native of Moëlfre was pointed out to me as worth his hundreds, and though most of them live on potatoes and butter-milk, they have plenty of Australian sovereigns stowed away upstairs—so said my Welsh friend. They never put themselves out for work, and lots of the Moëlfre men were doing nothing when I visited the village, although to all appearances paupers.

CHAPTER VIII.

IF you be magpie or jackdaw brained you may to this day buy pieces of the *Royal Charter*, and if of an avaricious

nature you may perchance find an Australian sovereign or two among the rocks at low water, for some were found there as lately as two years ago, and if you should find a few of these Australian sovereigns under a bunch of seaweed, what would *you*, rich and affable as you are, or poor and penurious, do with them? Would you defy the voice of tradition and pocket them? or would you give them up to Government? When judging the Moëlfre men, make answer to yourself first and then judge the Moëlfre fishermen according to your decision.

1892.

V.

The Sons of Anak.

“ Away, away with clouded brow,
 Who thinks of bygone troubles now?
 With laughing eye and laughing lip
 The sparkling goblet let us sip.”

Better days have come at last (Old Welsh Song).

CHAPTER I.

NEAR the picturesque town of Portree, in the Isle of Skye, there lived a jolly, red-faced old Laird—Rothsay of Duncombe—who was as fine a man as his breed of celebrated Highland cattle, that always took the first prize at the cattle shows on the mainland. He was a strong man of strong appetites, as his fierce blue eyes and firm mouth showed. Indeed, the story goes that once as he came stumping down the sloping street of Portree he met a bright-haired laddie crying, so stopping he patted the little head and said kindly—

“ What’s the matter, laddie? Who’s thy father, for thou art a bonny lad?”

“ Roth-say o-of Duncombe,” sobbed the lad.

“ Ah, well! here’s a shilling for thee,” said the Laird, feeling in his spencer for a coin.

Rothsay had a fine manly son who disdained to wear aught beneath his kilts, and was always afloat coasting amongst the isles in a yacht—going to stony Iona and the

dark cave of Fingal. Near Rothesay lived a younger brother on a smaller estate, who was blessed with two sons.

On one of the hills overlooking the picturesque slope lived an old Colonel with his only daughter—a rich, dark-haired, full-lipped, black-eyed girl—and she, like Helen, was the cause of war between the two cousins—the only son of Rothesay of Duncombe and the elder son of his brother. They both loved the lass, and love bred jealousy and jealousy bred quarrels, and one day they decided to fight in a sequestered vale near the sharp and fantastic wild peaks of Slickhigan. The fight was with pistols and brief, Rothesay's only son shot his cousin dead before he was able to fire. Leaving the wild scene of the duel he hastened home and told his father. Rothesay was a man of nerve and decision, so he quickly disguised his son in sailor's clothes, stained his face with walnut juice and took him down to one of the squalid crofts by the bay side, where his bed was a rude wooden berth, his food potatoes and skim milk and his fire smoking turves.

He was told to wait there till Captain Owen of the *Mona* arrived from Anglesea, for in those days several schooners used to go to Scotland and buy dairy produce and poultry cheap at the isles and carry them down to Port of Glasgow and Greenock and sell them at a good profit, returning home before the equinoctials broke the roaring surf over the adamantine Skerries. Rothesay was friendly with the Captain of one of the trading schooners, and many was the glass of rich milk drawn from his Highland cows mixed with the finest mountain dew they had drunk together, whilst Rothesay's daughter played superficial Highland airs on the old spinnet. In those days the *Mona* dropped anchor abreast of Portree and young Rothesay, who was really a first-rate sailor, was shipped as a hand, the *Mona* putting to sea directly and sailing for the Orkneys.

Young Rothesay worked and lived like one of the ordinary crew, and in the autumn he returned to Amlwch in Anglesea with the ship.

CHAPTER II.

AT Amlwch there was an empty house reported to be haunted, so Rothesay took it; for his father kept him supplied with money and they corresponded through a mutual friend at Glasgow.

Young Rothesay had not been at Amlwch long before he made friends with the three Comminod's—three brothers called the sons of Anak, for they were the most powerful men in Anglesea; Hugh, the eldest, was the strongest of the three, as young Rothesay saw for himself at the May-day sports. Amlwch was crowded that day with girls and young men, and many a fight was there, the countrymen kicking and biting their opponents mercilessly, whilst others made up to the girls and treated them to wine and cake, the usual way of introducing themselves before they began courting close. But the centre of interest was the wrestling matches and heaving of stones, which were great sports in those days; but these have since died away and now the young man's choice begins at the chapel instead.

The Comminods won everything, the wrestling matches and the stone throwing from the arm, an exercise like putting the shot, and such as is practised in Switzerland to-day. But the greatest feat of all was heaving the big stone. This was done by stooping down with legs wide apart, when the athlete lifted the big white stone with both hands and threw it as far between his legs behind him as possible. Six competitors entered for this crowning test of strength, but Hugh Comminod mastered all and received the prize. Indeed, he was so strong he could lift a cart with a ton of coals, crush a turnip in his right hand, lay a filbert on a forge and break it by pulling back his middle finger and letting it fall upon the nut like a hammer. The big, light-haired, blue-eyed Hugh—probably the descendant of some Danish "Ganger"—then went off to drink.

After that day young Rothesay soon gained his friendship and through him that of his brothers, and though they were desperate poachers he was constantly in their company. But young Rothesay had to learn Welsh before they could converse, for the sons of Anak had no English, nor had any of the poorer class Welsh in those days. However, Rothesay had a Welsh friend who spoke English as well as his native tongue and he acted interpreter in all business dealings.

CHAPTER III.

YOUNG Rothesay used to get the three Comminods to come and smoke with him in the winter evenings and there was nearly always some adventure to tell.

One day it was of a practical joker who filled a large sack with sand and took it in a cart past Hugh Comminod's house, dropping it before his door. After many ineffectual attempts to raise it he walked up to the door and knocked and asked the mighty Hugh to lift a sack of wheat that had fallen into the road out of the cart. Hugh came out, looked at the sack, detected the imposture, seized it in both arms and thumped the crushing weight on to the poor horse's back, breaking his spinal column then and there. And that was all the practical joker got for his pains.

Another night the younger son told how he was driving home from Llangefni Fair and he saw a woman crying beside her cottage door and on enquiring what was the matter she said a "bum" was in possession.

"I'll bum him," says young Owen Comminod, and alighting he nearly pounded the life from the bum, leaving him senseless, whilst the old woman borrowed a neighbour's pony and cart and took away her chattels.

But their most remarkable adventure with bumbailiffs was upon the occasion when their friend Farmer Roberts

broke and his home was taken possession of by two bums until his property should be put up to auction the following fair day. The bums had been in the house but two days when Hugh called in one night to smoke a pipe with his friend Farmer Roberts.

“Here, Roberts, I’ve brought a bottle of stuff with me, and we and the bums can have a jolly night.”

Nothing loth the bums joined and Hugh found an opportunity to dose their glasses, so that before midnight they were in a deep sleep. Then Hugh arose and went for his two brothers. When they returned they sewed sacks tightly round the body and arms and round the legs of the two bums, and gagging them they placed them in an empty upper room.

The next morning the four began carting off the furniture: wheat, hay and agricultural implements, and they drove the cattle and horses to a neighbour’s farm. Next fair day all the farmer’s property was sold amongst his friend’s lots and he received the money.

But others were after it and the day before the fair the lawyer and bailiffs drove over to the farm to check the bums’ inventories. When they arrived at the farm the place looked deserted and strange.

“By God! there’s something up here,” said the lawyer, excitedly.

“Yes, so there is,” said the bailiff.

They went to the sheds, the plough and carts were gone, the cow-house was empty and the stables silent. On going into the house they found the place stripped, so they hunted high and low until at last they came across the two bailiffs in a dreadful plight, for they had been lying bound for over two days. After cutting off their bonds the lawyer asked angrily for an explanation.

“They gave us a glass and we fell asleep and didn’t know nothing afterwards until we found ourselves up here.”

“By God, a pretty story; you’ll both go to gaol for this,” sneered the lawyer.

Howbeit they proved themselves innocent, but the farmer had gone and Hugh had shipped in the *Mona* for a winter cruise when they came to look for him.

CHAPTER IV.

ROTHESAY heard at times from Scotland that his uncle was dead and his surviving cousin, said to be his double, had gone to the Peninsular War. Next he heard of his death, and the letter contained a suggestion which Rothesay followed, namely, to go to Spain at once and buy a commission in his cousin's old regiment and return home after the war as his cousin.

Rothesay was enterprising and adventurous and he started off for the seat of war, with a letter of introduction, and soon found himself a subaltern in his cousin's old regiment. But he saw little fighting before the war ended and he found himself again in England, when he immediately sold out and returning to Scotland laid claim to his cousin's estates. After some formalities he was given possession and entered upon his property, but he returned to Anglesea and spent the following summer at his old house, renewing his friendship with the Comminods. At the beginning of the autumn he returned to Scotland, leaving an English-speaking Welshman in possession of his Anglesea home.

CHAPTER V.

THE following spring the three Comminods got into a terrible poaching affray. They were surprised in a wood gathering pheasants' eggs by six keepers and a desperate fight ensued, in which the three giants left two keepers for dead and put the rest to flight. Thinking they had killed

the two men they ran down to the harbour, and begged Captain Owen, who was upon the point of sailing for Greenock, to take them. They explained the circumstances and he took them right away, weighing anchor as soon as ever the tide and wind were favourable.

At Greenock they went to an inn and whilst at supper were surprised by a press-gang. There was a desperate fight, but Hugh and Owen, the youngest, managed to fight their way to the street and escape, but unfortunately Robert, the second brother, was stunned by a chair and captured and carried aboard a man-of-war, where he found himself when he came to.

In a few weeks he fell into his place and found some Welshmen amongst the crew, to whom he complained of the insufficiency of the food, begging them to tell the midshipman, for he had no English. One of the English-speaking Welshmen did as he was bid and the middy told the Captain, who laughed at this strange demand. His curiosity was, however, aroused, and next day he sent for Robert Comminod to come aft with an interpreter. When the light-haired, blue-eyed giant stood before him, the Captain asked—

“Why are you not content with your allowance? Everybody gets the same. Can you do more work than another man?”

“Yes, I can do two or three men’s work,” replied Robert, hotly.

“How’s that?”

Robert looked round the deck and picking up a small saluting gun he carried it for’ard and back again, and replacing it on the deck, he said—

“Now let me see four men do it.”

The Captain and officers were interested and astonished at this feat of strength, so they called four picked men, but they could not manage it, and it was all six men could do to carry the gun for’ard and bring it back.

“By God! he must require more food, a man with that strength.”

“Yes, four meals a day,” said Robert, when the interpreter told him what the Captain had said.

“Well, men, he shall have it,” and orders were given accordingly.

CHAPTER VI.

Now we must return to the brothers, Hugh and Owen. After they escaped from the press-gang they started off to find Rothsay's place, for they'd his address in their pocket. But they had not got clear of Greenock before they were attacked by four thieves, who sprang upon them from two passages in a narrow lane. But the grips of the Comminods were like vices, they could squeeze blood from a man's finger tips when they shook hands. Instead of shaking hands, however with the thieves they strangled two, and their companions fled.

As they tramped along towards Oban they found a dead man in the road and were stooping over him, examining his pockets, when a gentleman rode up.

“Who killed that man?” he asked, reining his horse.

“We three Welshmen.”

“What for?”

“For money.”

“Indeed, you'll be hanged.”

“We don't care a d——n.”

Upon receiving this extraordinary reply the gentleman spurred on to the nearest town and told the watch some Welshmen had murdered a man on the road and were robbing him. The watch set off on horses and overtook the two Comminods walking along, and after a brief struggle secured them, for they did not resist upon seeing the watch so well armed. When they were brought into the gaol they were examined and asked—

“Who killed that man?”

“ We three Welshmen.”

“ Where’s the other ? ”

“ Money.”

“ I didn’t ask that.”

“ We don’t care a d——n.”

And nothing more would they say. Some thought them mad, others thought them shamming. However, they were brought up before the magistrate for examination the following day and an interpreter stood by them.

“ Did you kill the man ? ” asked the chief magistrate through the interpreter.

“ No, indeed, kill the man, no ! We found him lying dead.”

“ Well, why did you say when you were asked yesterday who killed him that you three Welshmen did it ? ”

“ We never said that. We were asking for work.”

“ For work ; what do you mean ? ”

“ What I mean is this,” said Hugh, hotly, to the interpreter ; “ as we were crossing from Anglesea an Englishman on that ship who had the Welsh said he’d teach us a little English so we could get work ; so he said, ‘ We three Welshmen ’ was English for ‘ we want work.’ And then he said they’d say, ‘ How much do you want for your work ? ’ and we were to say, ‘ Money,’ which he said was ten shillings a day. And he said then the’d say, ‘ I’ll take you, when can you begin ? ’ and we were to say, ‘ We don’t care a d——n.’ ”

The interpreter explained the case and it was found the man had died of heart disease, so they were set free. But they decided not to talk English any more.

When released they found their way to Rothesay’s house and he was delighted to see them, and highly amused with the adventure.

“ But, by God, our English near hung us,” said Hugh.

Rothesay made Hugh his chief keeper and Owen became his cattle man. Rothesay picked out two of the bravest Scotch lasses for their wives, hoping to breed men such as their fathers, but the experiment failed for their sons were no more than ordinary.

VI.

Kaddy.

“ Woe to him who doth not keep
From Romish wolves his flock of sheep,
With staff and weapon strong.”

Welsh Chronicles.

OLD MOTHER KADDY sat in her cottage in Love Lane in an old Welsh town, cutting the cards, for she was a witch they said; certainly she had a black cat and a jackdaw who could talk better than a parrot, but the jackdaw spoke only in Welsh. Kaddy was a tall, thin, black-eyed, yellow-skinned woman, with the curious furtive and cunning eyes of all the old beldames who affect magic.

It was September and Kaddy knew her practice would be good during that month, for in April and September the Welsh maidens are particularly sensitive to the influence of magic. Indeed, you may see them upon the full moon night of these months going up to the old sexton in a body at midnight, each giving him a sixpence to allow them to have the key of the church door. He hands the key to one and she unlocks the door at the stroke of twelve, and placing the key on her right finger she walks inside, followed by her friends, who produce wedding rings, borrowed from their married friends, and place them on their middle fingers, when they form in line and proceed round the church, turning the ring at the finish of every round and wishing. After having marched thrice round the church, they come forth, having spoken never a word, lock the door and go home, the leader of the girls taking the key with her and sleeping with it under her pillow, when she dreams of her future love. The next morning she returns the key to the sexton.

That season of full moon was drawing near, and Kaddy sat in her cottage reading an old Welsh book, when a dark-eyed, slim girl, Isabella, knocked at the door.

"Come in, dear," said Kaddy softly, and the girl entered timidly.

"Be seated, dear," said Kaddy, without moving. "Well, dear, what can I do for you?"

"Well, indeed, mother, please to tell me how I'm to know if the young man I'm courting close with loves me."

"What, young Robert Roberts, dear?"

"Yes to be sure, Kaddy, but who will have told you?"

"I know, dear, I know; the cards tell me and so does the bird; he goes everywhere and is sure to see everything. Well, dear, I'll tell you, but you must pay half-a-crown first."

Isabella placed the money on the table.

"Well, dear, do you on Michaelmas night, when you go to bed, get a threepenny ball of yarn, and after you have opened your bedroom window throw the ball as far as you can, but keep hold of one end of the yarn. Then you must say out loud, 'Whoever comes to catch this ball and tugs at it, let him be my sweetheart.' Then you must begin to reel it up, dear, and if young Robert Roberts loves you he'll come and tug at it, or if anybody else comes, they'll tug at it."

"Oh, thank you, Kaddy."

"Well now, child, go, for I've some friends coming."

Isabella had scarce got down the street before four laughing, black-eyed girls burst in and began chattering in Welsh, the jackdaw joining in the babel.

"See, Kaddy, there's two shillings—sixpence from each of us," said one.

"And, Kaddy, here's a paper of buns."

"And here's a quarter of a pound of fine tea."

"And see, Kaddy, here will be the sugar," said the fourth. "We want the tea fortune."

“ Well, well, girls, I suppose I shall have to please you. Sit down and make yourselves comfortable whilst I brew the tea.”

Old Kaddy raised her long lank body and busied herself making the tea and setting the table. When everything was ready they drank their tea with much fun and chaff and after the meal was finished at a signal from Kaddy each girl turned her cup upside down upon her saucer. Kaddy then drew the nearest cup towards her, and raising it she looked at the careless arrangement of tea leaves to try and see what figure they suggested, for this is the practice of the tea fortune.

“ There’s a letter coming for you, Eva ; I see a postman,” said Kaddy.

Then she took the second cup.

“ You will have money, Nellie ; I see gold.”

And to the third, “ I see a black man with a beard ; you’ll go foreign, Jennie.”

And to the fourth, “ You’ll marry a light-haired man and he will treat you well.”

Then the girls babbled and old Kaddy silently rocked herself to and fro until they left, chattering like starlings, when Kaddy put the dirty shillings in a box.

The evening was cool and she had piled on more coals, for Kaddy lived well : her practice was lucrative.

“ Ay, ay, there is a stranger coming,” said Kaddy, for a thin bit of burnt coal sticking to the bars was waving towards her—a bit of cinder resembling a slip of silk.

It was now dusk, and Kaddy knew well that all the graver persons and more serious cases came to her at that hour, so she did not light her lamp.

Presently there was a knock at the door, and in response to Kaddy’s invitation a fat woman, breathing hard, entered and sat herself down uninvited.

“ Well, Mrs. Williams, what’s the matter ? ”

“ Oh, I’m bewitched, Kaddy.”

"Toots! how is that, Lizzie?"

"Yes, I'm bewitched, everything goes wrong with me, and I want you to take off the spell."

"Well, Lizzie, to be sure I will, but you must pay five shillings first."

"Well, Kaddy, I will," and she threw the shillings on the table.

"Well now, have you got any enemies?"

"I don't know of nobody, and yet I think I do."

"Well, who is it?"

"Well to be sure, it might be Nellie Brag, she's envious."

"Well, Lizzie, do you look at her to-morrow. If it should be her I'll put a mark on her, and I'll find out to-night by the cards; but if it isn't her, and you'll know by her having no mark, it must be old Shan Jones with the evil eye. Now mind next time you pass old Shan, don't look her in the face, but look down at her feet till you are past. When you've seen her, go home and put seven pins in a cork, and get up the next morning early before the crows go over to Carnarvon, and stay till they have gone over, but don't look at them as they go over; and when you think they have all gone, go home, and do the same thing in the evening and do it for three days; and on the third day at dusk go round to Shan's house and hide close by and watch till you see somebody go in or come out, and directly you see the door open throw the cork with the pins into the passage, and then you'll be cured and you won't feel any more of the evil eye."

"Well, God is good, Kaddy; I hope it will be sure to come true."

"Do as I tell you, Lizzie, do as I tell you. Good-night."

When Lizzie had gone, old Kaddy's lean, yellow features lighted up, and smiling to herself she said, patting her cat—

"Nine and six, nine and six. Whatever!"

VII.

The Story of the Four Shoemakers.

“The past with its glory, its love, and its danger,
Lives still in thy thrillingly beautiful songs.

* * * * *

But thy fame shall endure through the long flight of ages,
Eternally shrined in the music of Wales,

The music of Wales.”

Old Welsh Song.

OLD Robert Roberts, a short, wiry, grey-haired man, was a reticent, vehement old shoemaker, and like all village shoemakers he was the thinking element in the village life—the intellectual leaven to the rustic dough.

Shoemakers are great readers and thinkers and hence their “intellectuality.” Their occupation, too, prevents them from becoming mere paper worms and reflectors of other people’s ideas, for when one clumps a sole one must work as well as think, and every tap of the hammer may hoist one on a new intellectual level in his ascent of the acclivity of thought, and so through sole leather and pegs one may rise to flights of philosophy. But Roberts was a Kelt, too, and therefore money-grasping, and though he would give the boys pieces of leather for their catapults, rude vacuum experiments with suckers, or pegs for their cricket bats, still never a halfpenny would he part with. Stock was not equivalent to cash as the Sassenach believeth.

Robert Roberts came of wise stock, for his father was a shoemaker before him and had been blind; but his other senses were perhaps all the acuter on that account. The

old man had saved some £1500 amassed whilst acting as illicit agent to smugglers, for everyone knows that sum was not to be acquired by patching hobnailed boots. As the old shoemaker lived before the days of banks, when the wise hid their shekels in a hole in the wall by the chimney side or underneath the hearthstone, therefore the old man kept his money bags in a hole in the shop wall. He was a lonely man, for his only companion was his daughter, who lived with him, for his only son, the hero of our story, was spirited and adventurous and lived afar off, learning his trade in London, whither he had worked his way in a slate vessel.

The old man lived on in Anglesea examining his hoard every now and then with a miser's joy and at the same time arousing the curiosity of a neighbour who lived in a little house overlooking his shop. The neighbour was a shoemaker, who preferred to cobble in an upper room. This brother-craftsman had eyes and was meditative, as well as Robert Roberts, so that whenever he beat a piece of leather upon his apron he would glance up and across the little cobbled yard where he kept his pigs, to watch how his neighbour got on, for though blind Robert Roberts still got odd jobs to do. The observant neighbour pondered on the frequent visits to the hole in the wall, and being a deductive logician he muttered:—

“He's got something there.”

After this idea had entered his mind he became enamoured of it, curiosity finally prompting him to visit the hole one Sunday when old Robert Roberts and his daughter were at chapel. He admitted himself unceremoniously through the low window and removing the stone in the wall exclaimed, “By God!” as his eyes feasted on the bags of gold. But his logic soon whispered, “They are yours, you found them,” so he took them; 'twas better than clumping soles and cutting out “uppers” for the rest of his days.

That night after supper, Robert Roberts went to gloat over his hoard after his daughter had gone to bed, and found nothing. He sat down on his brightly polished leathern stool, his face between his hands, and thought for two whole hours—then he went to bed.

The next day after breakfast he said to his daughter—

“Annie, watch old Williams, and when you see him come to feed his pigs, tell me.”

Annie, obedient in all things, watched and at seven o'clock that evening told her father Williams was in the yard feeding the pigs.

The old man felt his way to the yard and leant over the low partition wall.

“Well,” said the long-featured, solemn, black-eyed Williams, cheerily, “how are you, Robert Roberts?”

“Oh, I'm alright; how's yourself, William Williams?”

“Oh, I'm well enough.”

“How's trade?” asked old Roberts.

“So, so.”

“Well, it don't matter to me how trade goes, I've got fifteen hundred pounds stored up indoors for a rainy day.”

“Fifteen hundred! Well now, indeed,” said Williams, throwing a pail of sour milk into the pigs' trough as the old man added between their grunts—

“Yes, and I'm going to add eighteen hundred more to it this very night. Annie and I are going to fetch it now in half an hour.”

“Why, you must be made of money!” said William Williams aghast.

“Toot!” retorted Roberts, going indoors.

About a quarter of an hour afterwards—accompanied by Annie—he went for a walk by the ruins of the old castle, his stick tapping along the stone-paved, irregular streets.

When William Williams saw the empty house his cupidity was aroused, so he said to himself—

“Well, indeed, if he finds that fifteen hundred pounds gone he won't put any more there.”

Wherewith his mind was made up, he was so logical. Entering the house as before he deposited the bags once more in the old hole in the wall. A little more than half an hour afterwards Robert Roberts and his daughter returned.

After supper Annie retired and her father chuckled to himself, as he went to his hiding place, took forth his fifteen hundred pounds and deposited it in a new *cache* by the fire-place.

Old Roberts often said he would have given a pound for a picture of William Williams' face when he found the hole empty, and old Roberts gave him the chance of this surprise—for he took his money out with him the next day and left the house empty.

But our hero, young Robert, his son, inherited all his father's astuteness and two sharp eyes to boot, and when old Robert died the son returned to Anglesea from London by the old Welsh *Fanny* that used to trade in those days between Beaumaris and London, carrying slates on her voyage out and groceries and stout on her return. She was the biggest coaster about Wales in those days, being 150 tons register. When the son reached Beaumaris he bought six ounces of the *Fanny*, nor was this surprising for he had inherited the hoard of old Roberts, the hoard that excited the cupidity of William Williams, himself now also dead.

The following year young Roberts went off to London again in the *Fanny*, and upon his return he bought six more ounces of the ship, so she was nearly his own, for he possessed twelve out of the sixteen shares.

On his return Annie got married to a young farmer and young Roberts lived on alone in his father's house cobbling the shoes of a younger generation than did his father.

The third year he went off as usual to London in the *Fanny*, mooring at Pickle Herring wharf. He called, as was his custom, on his old master whilst the ship was un-

loading. They passed a pleasant and amusing evening together, after which young Roberts returned to his ship. The next evening he went ashore and made his way to London Bridge, where he walked up and down and as if expecting someone.

He had walked up and down some minutes when he said to himself, "I believe in it, I always did believe in a dream. I'll go up and down three times more." At the third turn he felt a pluck at his sleeve; turning he beheld his old master, the London shoemaker.

"Hullo! You?" stammered the old man.

"You? Who would have thought it?" answered Robert.

"Well, indeed," asked the old man, "what brings you here?"

"I dreamt three times running and for three years that if I went on to London Bridge to-day that it would be to my advantage."

The old man, also a Welshman, looked him between the eyes and said—

"You have wisdom, but I doubt me—come home."

When they reached the dark little shop in Whitechapel the old man gave young Roberts a seat on the box beside him and sitting down upon his highly polished leather seat he muttered—

"Yes. you have wisdom; you've seen the fairies when you were young."

"No, father, no. I used to go in under an ash tree where they frequented, nothing grew there—and I often heard them, but I never saw them."

The old man's dark eyes gleamed and his small, wrinkled face, set in some straggly grey hair, scanned young Roberts.

"Yes, my boy, you have the two things—wisdom and knowledge, but you have not understanding."

Young Robert took this criticism solemnly and silently.

“Well, I too have dreamed,” continued the old man. “Listen! I dreamt I was walking on London Bridge; three times have I dreamt this, and I dreamt if I walked there to-day that would be to my advantage. And I dreamt I went in a ship by sea and we came to a big island where there were flocks of sea birds. It was summer-time like this, and there was a big rock standing out from the land on our left, and we went sailing up a strait between another big island and some mountains. I can see it all,” said the old man. “The channel was about three miles wide and we passed white houses, weirs, where they catch salmon, and low cliffs on the island. Then we came to a place where we cast anchor; the water was deep and a swift tide running. We went ashore in the little boat and there was a little town at the bottom of some low hills, beside an old castle, a kind of moorish castle, what I had read about in books. It was covered with ivy and trees grew out of the holes and the jackdaws and hawks and kites were making their nests there. And we went into the castle and turned to the right to the third tower and then turned to our left until we came to a little willow tree growing out of the stones about two feet above the ground. Then we dug, by lantern light, a foot below the willow tree, taking out a lot of big stones, when we came to a big stone slab with a copper ring in it. We prized that out and found pots of double-headed golden coins. I dreamt I didn’t know what they were, but an old pirate, living in the town, he knew—‘doubloons’ he called them.”

When he finished recounting his dream he looked at young Robert Roberts steadfastly.

“Father,” said the young man, “I believe in dreams and fairies and always did as a boy, and I don’t know what to say. If you had been home along with me I’d think you were making fun; but you have often told me you have never been out of London except as a babe when your mother brought you from Swansea. Is that not true?”

"I don't tell lies, Robert Roberts, and you know it," replied the old man, haughtily.

"Well, well, no harm meant, but it is so strange, I don't know what to say. You've described Bewmaris and the castle exact."

The old man rose slowly from his seat and coming over to young Roberts placed his hands upon the young fellow's head and said solemnly—

"Is that so? Is that so, my boy?"

"That's God's truth," said the young man, the stuffed birds round the shop seeming to nod as witnesses to the truth—for the old man was one of the cleverest bird-stuffers in London in those days.

"Well, my boy, has there ever been talk of hidden treasure in the castle?"

"Yes, that's always been the talk, but no one pays any attention to it."

"We will then."

* * * * *

When the *Fanny* returned to Bewmaris the tide was full in the straits, and a stranger stood beside young Roberts as they landed in the small boat, a thin bent old man with piercing black eyes. He stayed with the young bachelor a week and returned by stage coach—that set people's tongues going, for it was rather an expensive journey and the poor generally waited for a coaster. Within a few days of his departure Robert Roberts bought the remaining four ounces of the brig *Fanny* and placed an old ship mate aboard as skipper. The ship gave up carrying slate, but carried instead building material for Robert Roberts, for he began extensive building operations in what is now known as Wexham Street. He seemed to be made of money; he bought up land about the town; and every year the strange old man came to visit him for a fortnight in the summer, taking Robert's nephew back with him as an apprentice upon one occasion. Robert

Roberts gave up cobbling, of course, as his business cares increased, and he took to supplying beer, for none was sold at Beaumaris at that time—only London and Dublin stout. He built a large malthouse and turned malster and brewer both, supplying Bangor with beer. After that he built a small, four-roomed house behind the malthouse, where he lived a bachelor to the end of his days.

When he died he was reputed to be very rich, but as no one received any money, the nephew inheriting only the house property and brewery, people thought that after all his wealth had been exaggerated and the nephew gave up all hopes of ever finding it: nor did he.

* * * * *

Years rolled on; new conditions of trade killed the brewery, and the malthouse became an airy ruin, so that at last it was put up to auction to be pulled down, and was bought by an old shoemaker, so tradition has it. The purchaser had heard of Robert Roberts' wealth and suspected there was hidden treasure buried somewhere about the little four-roomed house which was sold with the ruined malthouse. Tradition says farther that his supposition proved correct and he found kegs of gold pieces in a vault beneath the kitchen hearthstone, and in testimony the old natives of Beaumaris will to this day show you the streets he built with the treasure.

VIII.

Old Billy's Yarn.

“We met the *Flying Dutchman*,
To winnard he came,
His hull was all hell-fire,
His sails were all aflame.
Fire in the maintop,
Fire in the bow,
Fire on the gun-lock,
Fire down below.”—*Old Pirate Song*.

“Ay, sir!” said Old Billy, taking his black cutty-pipe from his mouth as he turned his scarred face and single eye upon me, “I will be sure to tell you a few things that have happened to me, for I have been to sea all my life, and indeed it’s a poor trade, more kicks than half-pence; and the dodges they have to tame you—look at that lime juice now, and they say they give it to you to stop the scurvy, and they give it you so you won’t want to go after the girls—that destroys your manhood—although lemons are good for the health. I saw an old gent in Florida once who was ninety-four, and he said he only ate a raw lemon every morning; but that don’t suit everybody. No! But the gentleman said he’d never been ill, and that used to be an awful place for dysentery and ague. I got both there and was cured right off. I’ll tell you how. I was in a tramp a-coasting round the gulf and I stopped for a time on land round Mobile and got the ague, and they gave me quinine and coffee, and one morning I spat the ague up, that was just like a jelly all quivering; and after that I had no more fever, but I got the dysentery, that’s an awful complaint;

so I went into a hospital and there was a man nurse who looked after us. When he saw I had dysentery and kicked at what the doctor gave me, he said, 'I'll cure you, Billy, but you musn't tell the doctor.' So I agreed and he gave me raw flour, and that cured me right off; I only took it for three days and the last day I had to take it with water.

"I remember when I got back to the ship I was put to sleep on a bed which I soon found began to get very lumpy; and then I had a look into it, and found that it was a bed of tobacco; someone had smuggled it from Havana, and the crew had found it out, and was all helping themselves to it, so the bed kept going. After that I had plenty of baccy, but when we got to port my bed was all gone.

"Well, then I came home here to Bangor, and started off again in the *Ocean Pet*, a schooner of 175 tons. We stopped at Swansea, and loaded with coal for Oporto. We had splendid weather at first, but we got into a strong, southerly cyclo, and was in it three days and three nights, and we washed everything away, though she was a new ship. But I'll tell you. We started in fine weather, and took our departure 18 miles from Scilly and bore S.S.E., and got the log out at 4 p.m., and found at 8 we had gone 33 miles; so we went till we got 250 miles to windward of Scilly, when we were caught in that cyclo. The skipper was boozed, and we was clean swept; but we managed to pull up off the Saltee Islands, on the south coast of Ireland, on the third day, when we had to make sail to keep clear of the rocks, so we worked down to Falmouth and repaired. Well, we took our departure from the Lizard and sailed for Cape Clear—a revolving red light which we see, and we had to get the Captain up on deck and held him with the glasses to his eyes, but he couldn't see the light; so we hove to till next morning and showed it to him, and he squared for Oporto, where we discharged, and going down the coast we took in copper ore, the worst cargo a ship can carry.

“ All this time the Captain was boozing, and he got the bad disorder frightful bad, so he was unfit to go on deck when we started home ; and we had frightful weather—March Ekenotions, so the Captain shut himself in his cabin for 22 days out of the 33 we took to get home, so we made no observations, only ran by dead reckoning, and we were glad to get home, when we all left the ship.

“ You will not be surprised to hear that the Captain lost his ship and all the crew seven months afterwards, and that’s how half the vessels is lost and accidents happen at sea, all along of the booze. I thought we’d have bad luck soon, for the voyage before that I’d seen the corposants and they kept very low all the time ; but we didn’t get any storm that voyage, but I knew we’d get it sooner or later, we’d an easterly wind too, and that’s bad, especially for fishermen. Well, when I came ashore I soon spent all my money, and so I shipped again in a flat, and the first thing we did was to go up to a Frenchman what had a cork fender over her cat-eyes, and we bought a lot of baccy and brandy cheap from him. Well, we went to Liverpool and I lost her and went to a lodging house, that we sailors frequented. Just behind us was a house where a respectable woman lived. One of the chaps belonging to our lot got drunk and was coming home late. He went up the wrong street to the back of our house, when the woman was going to bed. A policeman saw him and come up and began to search him ; the woman heard the noise, for the policeman was going to take him, so she peeked out of the blind and saw the policeman take a purse from him and hide it under a stone and then marched him off to the station. So she dressed and ran out and got the purse and put the stone back. There was thirty-five pounds in it. Then she watched, and back came the policeman and went to the stone, but the purse was gone.

“ So the next morning the man was pulled up before the magistrate, and he then told of the purse being taken.

“‘How much had you in it?’ asked the magistrate.

“‘Thirty-five pounds.’

“‘Have you any witnesses?’

“‘Yes,’ said the woman from the body of the court, ‘here is the purse and thirty-five pounds in it; I saw the policeman take it and hide it and then come back for it.’

“So the policeman got two years.

“Well, I fell in with some old ship mates there and shipped for Melbourne. We had thirty cabin passengers, fifty second class, and three hundred young women emigrants sent out by government under charge of a doctor, and a matron and two assistants. Well, I was told off to help mend the sails with the sail-maker. We used to work in the main hatch all day, and was allowed to sleep in at night. There was a doorway from us to the lazarette and the steward had the key, for they used to keep stores there; but the carpenter had another key, that nobody knew nothing about, so he and I and the sail-maker used to have the run of the place and helped ourselves to stout and beer and whatever we wanted.

“The three hundred girls lived near us and we could hear all they said, for they were only grated off with bars, so we got the carpenter to loose the nuts off the bars and grease them well, so we could screw them up and unscrew them as we liked. So one night we got the screws off, and three of the girls came out to us and was there amongst the sails all night with plenty to eat and drink, and we kept that up all the voyage and were never caught; but others were. The Captain and mate had made up with some of the girls when they were on deck—they went up twice a day for a breathing, and there were two planks raised for ventilation, and the girls used to get out there and go to their cabins; and the doctor found it out, and there was a hullabaloo, and the planks were nailed up; but lor, they burst them open again and told the doctor to mind his own business, after they failed to bribe him.

“ Well, we had a good voyage till we got to the line ; we had been getting ready for King Neptune for a week. When the day came we was in the doldrums, between the trades, and only going about a knot an hour ; so at six o’clock, before the passengers got up, we lowered a big sailor, dressed up in canvas, with a canvas helmet and wooden horn and rope-yarn hair and whiskers, and the boatswain and carpenter, rigged up with oilies, into the gig, and Neptune had a brass trumpet. They made away ahead of the ship for six miles, and kept that distance till about eight o’clock, when they came rowing towards us, Neptune blowing his horn. The passengers and emigrants ran out, and the girls were gaping with open mouths, for they didn’t know, they thought he was really King Neptune. When we got near, the Captain sang out—

“ ‘ All hands up to meet Neptune, king of the sea, who is coming to shave and baptize his children.’ ”

“ Then Neptune stood up and shouted—

“ ‘ Ship ahoy ! ’ ”

“ And the ladder and man-ropes were lowered, and he came up, followed by his assistants, and walked to the poop, saying,

“ ‘ Well, Captain, what ship is this ? ’ ”

“ ‘ The *Ocean Wave*.’ ”

“ ‘ Where from ? ’ ”

“ ‘ Liverpool.’ ”

“ ‘ Where to ? ’ ”

“ ‘ Melbourne.’ ”

“ ‘ Have you any of my children here to be shaved and baptized ? ’ ”

“ ‘ Yes.’ ”

“ Then we took the gun off its carriage, and Neptune sat on it, and we drew him round the deck as king of the sea. Then six of the crew were told off as his policemen, and a big sail was lashed up by its four corners and filled with water, and the lather and tar and grease tubs mixed

and put by his throne. Then all the names were taken of those who had never crossed the line; women were free, but all sailors had to be shaved and baptized, but the passengers could get off by giving a bottle of whiskey or five shillings; and all the cabin passengers except one bought off, but he was a big, pig-headed chap, a regular conceited chap. So they began on him; the policemen seized him and put him in irons and carried him before Neptune, who asked his name. 'None of your rot—' but the brushful of tar and grease was shoved into his mouth, and then he was lathered and shaved with the hoop-iron and thrown into the bath and pulled out half drowned, so the doctor had to see to him. Well, the rest was done, and everybody was roaring and frolicking; and then the Captain brought some liquor for Neptune and his assistants, and they went down into the boat and pulled away. They came aboard again when the passengers were at lunch; and we had a jubilee in the evening, dancing hornpipes and waltzing away with the girls and singing.

"Well, we had a spin and fine times all through the south-east trades until we got to Melbourne when the Captain and first mate gathered up their things and ran away, for the doctor swore he'd kick up a row about the girls. We were paid off, so the sail-maker and I went off to a boarding house, in Melbourne, kept by a woman, and a lot of miners used to go there. The husband of the woman was a contractor for loading lighters with coal, so we got a job to discharge a coal lighter and we did it in two hours and got ten shillings. After that we went in a liner—a fifty ton vessel—to Geelong after lime. We used to get three pounds the trip in her and made two or three trips a week. We saved up, for we had a mind to go and try our luck at the mines. There was no railway then to Ballarat, so we went in a coach and went straight to Dalesford, Old Jim Crow as they called it, and there I found a Welshwoman I knew, who was married to a man—a shareholder in a mine—so

we got a job right off. I worked at the fires and the sail-maker was a washer on the top, but the reef was getting weaker and weaker and it was soon done, so we left and went looking about and found some shallow sinkings. One was deserted, but there was a shaft and rope and windlass and all, so we thought we'd try our luck and set to work. We'd got out a few buckets of stuff, we'd dug about three foot down when we came to a skeleton. We told a quartz digger and he said the two chaps what worked the shaft had left suddenly one day and never been heard of since. Well, we left there, but blow me if some years after I didn't see in the paper how a chap had given himself up for killing his pal in a shaft, and from the description of the place, I knew that was our shaft. He said they had quarrelled and he had killed his mate with a pick and run away, but he couldn't get no rest. Well, all the shafts seemed played out, so we started back for Melbourne and shipped in a vessel for Calcutta. She was loading with horses when we got there. Somehow she got afire that night and it was a splendid sight. All Melbourne came down to see her. They saved the horses though. So that was off! Well, we happened in with a Welshman, the Captain of a splendid new brig, the *Cardigan Castle*. This was to be her maiden voyage. She was going in light ballast to Newcastle for coals and bring them back to Melbourne, that's Newcastle in Australia of course. So he asked us to ship and we agreed.

“‘Well, be at the office punctually to-morrow at ten, I shan't wait five minutes, you sailor chaps are so uncertain.’

“‘We'll be there,’ we said.

“We were staying at the Sailors' Home then, and next morning just before ten, the sail-maker says—

“‘Let's have a pint,’ and the steward kept us a long time getting it, so we swore awful when we got to the office at seven minutes past ten and found she was full.

“ ‘ You’re late by seven minutes, don’t blame me,’ said the Captain.

“ Well, we heard six months after that as she was crossing Botany Bay, a southerly buster came up and capsized her, and all hands were lost and nobody would ever have known it only a schooner saw her go down, so we blessed that steward who kept us waiting for our beer.

“ We’d shipped for Calcutta before we heard of that, of course. Well, there was a lot of Irish, half Spanish half Irish blokes from the south of Ireland, and they got quarrelling one day and bragging as how they had built the railways and the docks and the penitentiaries.

“ ‘ Yes,’ says an English chap, ‘ and you fill ’em too.’

“ And Paddy was up like the hot-headed fool he was, and made at the Englishman with an iron belaying-pin, and then one joined in and another and presently there was a regular melée between the wild Irishmen and the rest, for you must always show a Paddy you are his master or he’ll bully you awful. Well, I broke one of their legs and had my head cut open. The Captain signalled for police and a lot came off and took us up to their garrison. That was near the Sailors’ Home, and me and the man with the broken leg was taken to the Cottage Hospital. So they all got one month in gaol. There was over three hundred sailors in gaol at that time and they was all making beds and gunny bags for linseed, but my pals messed in a separate room.

“ The ship took a fresh crew and went to Bombay, but they sent our chests ashore to the Sailors’ Home and our wages to the shipping office, but I never saw the gaol, I was in the hospital all the time.

“ I shipped in an Oriental boat then ; she was bringing a lot of invalids home. I went as fireman. The crew had nothing to do till she got to Sand, for that was too hot ; then we took her on and the coolies was sent back. My God, that was awful down in the engine-room ; we were

all stripped except a pair of drawers, and wheeling the coal between the great, hot boilers, and shovelling it into the red-hot holes, with the machinery rattling all round us, was awful, for I wasn't used to it. They told me if the crown of the boiler was to burst I must run into a coal bunker, or else I should be scalded to death. It was rum seeing all that fire and machinery, and only a thin, iron plate betwixt you and the water.

“ Well, we stopped at Mauritius, and took in fresh tack, when we down steam and up sails. We had to put up st. sails, but, lor, there wasn't none of the officers knew how to rig them—those steamboat officers don't know much seamanship—so the boatswain rigged booms and spread the sails outside of the others.

“ We fed in messes, three in a mess, and each mess chose its own cook; and we were lucky, for there was a German that had been a pastry-cook, and we lived well, what with stealing a few geese from the coops.

“ Well, one night the second engineer, who was boozed with square face, left some valve open, and in the morning the ship was getting full; all the furnaces were covered, so we couldn't light up and get the steam pumps to work, and there was a hullabaloo. But everybody set to work with buckets, passengers and all, and what pumps there were, and we gained on the water till we could light the fires, and there was we feeding the fires with water up to our waists, passing the coal from hand to hand. It was a rum sight and beastly work; but the steam pumps soon cleared her, and we was all right before we got to St. Helena, but we didn't stop there.

“ One night we were over in the fo'castle spinning up yarns, when a chap I knew at home told how his people got a house for nothing. I know the house at Carnarvon right well, it has got three garrets. Well, this chap had been a shoemaker and plasterer before he took to sail-making; and he said one day his father was in a pub near

the house, and everyone was talking of the haunted house, and how it was offered rent free, but no one could stop in it, when the owner of the house came in himself.

“‘That’s true,’ says he, ‘I’ll give it rent free for seven years to anyone who will live in it.’

“‘I will,’ says the shoemaker, directly; so it was agreed on, and in he went, and he heard awful noises. So he got a lot of sand and put it on the stairs, and finding rat-prints he looked about, and found a big drain where they came up and a lot of nests in the garret where they bred. So he broke up a lot of bottle glass, and filled the drain and the holes, and plastered up all the holes and kept two cats about the place, and soon there wasn’t a rat to be heard.

“‘Well, now,’ he said to his son, the sail-maker, ‘we must make a real ghost, or they’ll take the house from us.’ So he got a tin tube and took up the floors and laid that to the cellar, and in the garret he built up the corner with wood, and plastered and papered it all over, and he fixed a little block and rope leading through the tin pipes right up to the corner in the garret, and then he bent a weight on to the rope, so that struck the floor whenever he pulled the rope; and he used to pull the rope, and then there was an awful rapping, and the tin pipes had holes in, so that the rappings sounded all over the house.

“So lots came to hear the ghost, but all of them ran when they heard the rappings; but some got brave or used to the noises, so the old man dressed in white, and got a white mask, and walked, and whenever he walked he rolled a big cannon ball down the stairs, and everybody was too frightened to go near the house after that; so they kept the house for twenty-one years, and the owner died, and that’s how they got their house for nothing.

“Well, after leaving Madeira we steamed with fore and after sails in case of a side wind to steady her; and when we got within three days of port, I see the boatswain

cutting up new hawsers, and chucking overboard balls of new marline and twine and hair mattresses. I kept one of these and I've got it now. Well, I couldn't make it out, but it turned out the cooks and boatswains used to rob the vessels, and take all those things ashore and sell 'em, so they got more than their wages; but that was found out, so the boatswains were riled, and they wouldn't take nothing home, but chucked everything overboard so they'd have to fit out afresh. One cook had saved eighteen barrels of grease meant for the machinery like that. We were six months and eight days arriving home, and then we were paid off, and I came home to Beaumaris and got married.

“ Well, in those days the bride and bridesmaids used to go round the night before the wedding from house to house, and invite their friends to come up to church. Then the next day we went to church, and after church I was sharp and kissed my wife first before any of the rest, or I'd have to pay a fine. Then away went the chaps, racing to the bride's house to see who should win the cake, for the first to get there got the cake. Then we had dinner, and my wife wore a blue dress and a lot of blue ribbons, for I was a sailor, but them as married men off the land wore white dresses. And after dinner the wedding cake was divided, and all the young men and women kept borrowing the wedding rings from the married people and passing their bits of cake through them, and then they'd wrap the cake up in paper and take it home and sleep on it for three nights, and they'd be sure to dream of their future husbands or wives.

“ Well, there was a great barn in those days, and we used to hire that for our jubilees. We'd bought two barrels of beer and hidden up there, and away we all went; and there was a fiddler and clarinet player and a concertina, and we had step dancing, and after every dance my pals went round with the hat to collect for us, and we

sold the beer at threepence a glass, so we got over £10 that night to start housekeeping on. One chap up in the country, who was married about the same time, kept his wedding up for a fortnight, and got money enough to start a pub, and my brother was planting potatoes at the time, so he buried them all into a hole, and went to the wedding instead of planting them.

“ Well, we were married, and we all went and carried a blessing into the house; there was a large mantelshelf there, and we put two cups and saucers and a flour-box full of salt on it. Then we put 'em away, for you only use those cups once a year, and tied a paper over the flour-box so none could spill, or the luck would go.

“ I went on a yacht when that was all over, for I didn't care to go from home, so I yachted and did odd jobs, catching and pickling puffins and samphire, and getting oysters at low tide and a bit of fishing. I often used to get congers in hard weather on the beach, they come to land; the old people say they swallow ice at the bottom and die, but I don't know.

“ Well, I was working then for a gentleman who had a house and kept a little yacht, and he'd a fine dog, and so had my brother, a big bull-dog. Well, one day I happened to go to his house, and there was this big dog laid before the fire. ‘Hullo, Bully,’ says I. He got up and barked at me, and I patted him, and blow me if he didn't follow me right home, and wouldn't go back to my brother at all. Well, I used to make a bed for the dog in the fore-peak when we went sailing, and he always came, though the gentleman didn't much care for him, for he'd had a terrible fight with his dog and nigh killed it. One day my master came down and wanted to go prawning. It was a beautiful day in July, and there was no wind, and the sky and water was as blue as you like, so there was plenty of prawns to be got, for the warmer it is the closer they come in. Well, I looked round for Bully, and

couldn't see him nowhere, so we got in, shoved off, and went as far as the oyster grounds. I was sailing her, just drawing over the water, when my master, a big, stout gentleman, said, 'Look, look, Billy!' And, indeed, there was the two dogs—Bully and Rover, a half sheep-dog and setter—walking together; that was strange, for we had never seen them together since the fight. They came down to the water and walked in as far as they could, and both of them set up a dreadful moaning. 'What a strange sight,' said my master; but we soon forgot that, for when we got off the ground we out with our shrimp net and began to work, and got fifty or sixty quarts; there was a pile about that day, for it was a beautiful warm day.

"We went home as the crows were coming back from the Carnarvonshire hills where they had been feeding on blue berries. I thought the master looked queer as I left him and went home to supper. Whilst we were at supper, a girl came running in and said—

"'Poor Mr. Davis, he's had a stroke, they're carrying him home in an arm-chair.'

"I run up to his house and found he had bursted a blood-vessel. So they asked me to stop and I sat down in the dining room, and Mrs. Davis opposite to me. Between twelve and one o'clock, we heard a clap in the cupboard behind my back, and that sounded to me as if it had been knocked to smithereens, and she was staring with her eyes fixed on me.

"'It must be blowing hard,' I said, getting up to look out, for I thought it was a window. I went out, but it was a right still summer night, so I came back, and Mrs. Davis had gone up to her husband, so I lay down. I must have been asleep a few minutes, when the housemaid ran in, with a white face, and said—

"'Master is just dead.'

"'Good God,' I said, and went off home.

"The next day I was sitting at tea with my wife and

a noise come, the same as if the whole house was falling down.

“‘Oh! it's next door,’ says I, for I saw her start and get white.

“Well, we went and laid the old master on the shelf, for he was buried in a tomb above ground, and the church was crowded, and a man came in and sat next to me, and his hat was in the way, so I placed it betwixt my wife and me, and she got the hat and threw it out into the gangway and looked awful at the man, but she never spoke of it, and I forgot all about it, for as I was coming out of church there was Bob Jones asking me—

“‘If God made man perfect, why couldn't he keep him perfect?’

“Well, my master was buried on a Friday and nothing happened till the following Tuesday. I was going to bed, I hadn't turned the lamp out and I see a bird right at the window. It seemed to be on the middle pane and to turn round and round like a wheel. It looked like an horned owl. I opened the window to try and catch it, but it flew off. The next night it came again, so I said—‘I'll have the window open next time,’ and I did the next night, and it came and I stood and looked at it for five minutes and put my hand out to catch it, when it made a noise as if it had struck the window and flew away.

“On Thursday morning my wife was taken ill at ten o'clock, but she didn't seem to be very bad either. I went and got Nellie Jones to come in and look after her, and about dark I was going out to saw some wood, when I could see a light like a candle travelling back and forward against the wall. I got near it, for I wasn't frightened at all. It kept going backwards and forwards until I got close, when I made a grab at it, but it jumped away. My wife died before morning and here have I been a sheer hulk ever since,” finished old Billy, after which he drained his glass, grasped me by the hand, and was gone in the night.

IX.

The Welsh Wandering Jew.

“A teetotaler is like a potato-house, without a door at the other end.”

**Dick of Aberdaron.*

As the world has aged, various educational machines, called schools, colleges, universities, have been invented for the apotheosis of mediocrity, for as regards the education of genius, they are all—aye all—elaborate machines for defeating their own ends. And their real functions, the refining of manners and teaching the humanizing arts, they long ago began to neglect when their fellows were elected from the hordes of needy and ill-bred Scots and others, who swooped down, after taking degrees in their own universities, to compete against the sons of English *gentlemen* fresh from school.

The genius requires no prescribed classes or lectures, but loving and sympathising masters. However, the elaborate educational machinery serves its purpose—the surly cub is chastened, the fool is stuffed with empty formulæ, which make him pass as good coin in the commerce of life, and the professional “pedagogue,” or “scientist,” or “artist,” is turned out on pattern, with labelled packets of other people’s ideas up to date; and they all serve a use in the body politic no doubt, but the genius is hated by complacent academical inaptitude, and he, in turn, reciprocates the hatred, for if he be sent to those portals, he generally breaks from the common ruck and turns out a failure, or

* Based on notes collected from those who knew him personally.

his name is found at the tail-end of some class or other, for he has been nursing his own ideals instead of absorbing doses of other people. And so to my story, the hero of which fulfils the law that genius is rarely to be found amongst senior wranglers, prize men, or any senior busy-bodies of any kind, and that the majority of the "educated" had far better have stopped at the three R's, and taken to manual labour.

In the year 1780, at a small cottage, called Carnoes, near Aberdaron, whose folk are proverbially accounted idiotic, lived a Welsh farmer and carpenter, who tilled his field, reared his two goats, planed his deals, and occasionally traded to Liverpool in a small vessel, and attended chapel with noise and devotion. He was an exemplary man of his kind, and a useful citizen was Robert Jones. He married, and had three sons and one daughter; the youngest of these sons was known in later life as Dick Aberdaron.

As Dick's long, thin body, fed on butter-milk, herring, potatoes and bread, grew up, his thick bushy hair grew long, but he would never cut it, and his dark eyes seemed to be looking into space beyond the farm, beyond the island of Bardgee, right away into eternity. They were dreamy eyes when in repose, but when Dick's explosive temperament was fired they blazed a bluish black, sparkling like a sunlit sea in autumn. When the emotional storm had passed the dreamy look returned to them, just as when a bright sparkling landscape is veiled in a calm south-west mist.

A learned old parson lived near the farm, and, at a very young age, Dick found his way to the parson, and, to his father's astonishment, the parson took amazingly to the great, gawky, shy, silly-looking boy, with his big ears and long face and high forehead.

This member of the "Black Army," as Dick called all parsons, was held to be a very learned man; he knew Gronwyn Owen by heart, was learned in old Welsh traditions and history, and spoke seven languages—spoke them, mind you.

In those days boys of Dick's class got no learning, nor English either, unless they became pupils of these old parsons, who were the centres of village light and learning, and often of bigotry.

The silly boy, Dick, the lanky, black-locked youth, who never cut his hair all his life, did not seem to exist to the Aberdaron boys. He never played with the boys, and to avoid his next door neighbour's children he always slipped over a hedge and round a field. He would not go to church, and no one could understand the parson keeping up a friendship with such a heathen—yes, that's what they called him, a heathen. But no one ever knew what passed between Dick and the parson in the study, except the parson's servants—he was an old bachelor. They said when asked—

“Well, indeed, they're always poring over books; they don't talk much.”

The parson was himself a great recluse; he was rarely seen except in church, where he preached his Welsh sermons with regularity, and occasionally went out of his way to christen, marry or bury a parishioner; but these were rare occasions, for his parish was small.

Meanwhile, Dick had learnt to read Welsh, and knew something of English. At thirteen Dick's father decided that the boy had got schooling enough, that the old parson was spoiling him, and that it was time to put him to work. The silent and slender creature, Dick, listened to this decision in silence, indeed, he was thinking of other matters of a philological nature, could his father have seen into his brain. But his father, good man and honest citizen as he was, could not see below the surface of anything, in which he was only like the “cultured,” but he was unlike them in that the few ideas he possessed were his own, his very own, not borrowed nor stolen.

“Boy, indeed you must begin to work this very day,” said he, in Welsh, as they rose from breakfast. “Come, now, get the spade; I want some potatoes dug up.”

The thin-limbed lad took the spade dreamily, and followed his father to the green potato field, sprinkled with white blossoms, and sere in places by ominous black patches.

"Now, boy, look," said the father, as he bent his sturdy old frame to the work, turning up the light soil, in which could be seen the round, earth-coloured potatoes with rootlets and strings of potato beads. When the old fellow arose, the boy was looking dreamily at the horizon.

"What ails thee?" he said. "Boy, art crazy? Come, dig."

Dick blushed, and recalling himself began to dig clumsily, cutting many a tuber a terrible gash with his spade.

"No, boy; keep further this way, further this way; you'll spoil all," said the vexed and disappointed father, for how could such a boy earn his living.

The boy went on silently with his work, and his heart sank as he looked over the wide, green field before him, but his father was standing overseer.

In half an hour the old man threw down his spade and returned to the house. Directly he was gone, Dick sank on to the ground, his arms, back and legs aching and trembling. He sank on to the potato plants, and a sigh of pleasure escaped his lips, and taking his spade on his knees he looked about for a chalky flint, and forthwith began to write in curious characters upon his spade, drawing his letters with the chalk. I know not how long he would have kept at this work had not a sudden slap on his back from his father's spade startled him.

"Dreaming again! Let me look what you've been marking there on that spade with that flint."

The old farmer took the spade from the yielding hands and examined the letters.

"Indeed, boy, what's this stuff? It's not even a picture; it's like the stuff in the almanacs. You're dealing with the devil," said the old man, severely.

Dick rose slowly from the rank and crushed potato

plants and stalked off to the house, his father holding the spade and looking after him in vain; and well he might, for those marks were a peculiar writing of his own, which he afterwards applied to all languages.

The farmer persevered for a few days longer, but whenever he went to look at Dick he was either sitting in the hedge marking on the spade, or looking dreamily at the sea; moreover, he seldom went home for his food. The old man was heart-broken that he, practical, clear-headed man that he was, should have so shiftless and foolish a boy; oh, it was a terrible grief to him.

A few weeks after the scene in the potato field, Dick's father drove over to Robert Owen, his great and intimate friend. When they were seated before jugs of ale, Dick's father said sadly—

“ Robert, I'm worried about that fool of a Dick of mine. If I give him a spade to dig potatoes, he does nothing, only sit in the hedge all day, and won't come home for his food.”

“ Indeed, that's bad,” sympathised Robert.

“ He's always running to the parson, too, always has been.”

“ What for? What does he do there? ”

“ Oh, I don't know. The parson is a great scholar, knows all about the prydydds and pernillions, and he knows several tongues, though he isn't much of a parson. I'm afraid the parson spoils the boy.”

“ Well, it's hard if the parson spoils the boy,” said his friend.

“ Yes; he's always in and out there borrowing books; the old parson told me one day he understood languages, ‘ they come to him immediately,’ he said, and that he knew Sasnaech, Latin, Greek and Hebrew, and that he could learn as much of languages in one month as any other boy in six.”

“ Well, indeed, now, wouldn't it be well to ask the parson what to do with him? ”

“It might; he’ll never make a farmer, he’s too much of a fool for that, he can do nothing with his hands.”

Whilst they were thus discussing his future, Dick had settled it for himself, and was at that very minute with the parson, telling him of a dream he had had, in which he saw a man singing Hebrew psalms on a hill opposite to his house, and after that he asked—

“Will you lend me twelve books?”

“Yes, but mind you bring them back.”

“I’ll bring them back, trust me,” said the youth, dreamily selecting twelve volumes, no more, no less, and strapping them together, he slung them across his back and walked off without saying a word. As usual, the parson hardly knew he was gone, for he was himself deeply absorbed in the “Black Book of Carmarthen.”

As Dick was leaving the house his father caught him, and gave him a fresh trial, taking him off in his little vessel to Liverpool. They were wrecked on the return voyage, and Dick lost some of his books; but he proved so useless, that his father decided to let him go his own gait, but not till he had thrashed him with a poker. This beating decided Dick, for he shouldered his bundle of books and walked to Carnarvon, where he had arrived before his father got home to find no trace of Dick, but his spade stuck in the potato field with some half-erased words upon it, which he could make nothing of. When night came and Dick did not return, the old man got frightened, and made enquiries for the yellow-haired man—for he was twenty-five now—and found that he had gone to Carnarvon. When he did not return, the old father hurried up to the parson’s house, his heart full of anger, but when the parson told him his son was a very learned man, and knew more of languages than most parsons, and could make pennillions as fast as he could talk, and might be a great prydydd and get the silver harp at the Eisteddfod, the old man was calmed and proud, for your Welshman reveres his

bards above all others. His son a prydydd! He hastened home to tell the delighted mother. She was happy, but anxious for his safety, but the old father soon talked her fear away, telling her how prydydds and clerwrs were always made welcome at the inns, and given the best of everything free of cost.

At Carnarvon Dick had to pawn most of his books, and as he had nothing to do there he went on to Bangor, where he was lucky enough to attract the Bishop's attention, who was very kind to him, giving him good clothes and books; but he wanted Richard to work in the garden, so Dick soon left him and went across to Mona, where he wandered for years from village to village. In Anglesea he learnt Greek, French and Italian from some refugees, but he dreamed a dream, which made him go over to Liverpool, where he lived free of cost at the Welsh inns, and spent his days amongst the foreign sailors, with whom he used to hold conversations in their own tongues. His extraordinary appearance and ragged clothes, whose pockets were stuffed full of old books, attracted the attention of some gentlemen, and they tried to get him some work. He chose a sawyer's trade; but he gave that work up the first day—indeed, he was in most matters an idiot. But he did not stay at Liverpool long, but returned to his home. He had reached his full height, five feet nine inches, and had developed a very squeaky voice. He was now a full grown man, but he never thought of a woman, and he never spoke to one if he could help it. His father was glad to see him, and his fame as a linguist had travelled before him; but he only stayed a short time, spending most of the time with the old parson, who lived at Pwllheli. But he managed at this time to translate a book from English into Welsh, which he afterwards published.

When he next left his home he made several rules of life, which he, however, managed to break, as all good rules are broken. One of these was never to stay more than

three nights in the same house; another was never to drink more than two glasses of beer in the same house of a night, and another never to drink spirits.

He went back to Liverpool, but his irritable and passionate temper and polyglot oaths got him disliked and feared, so that he determined to go to London. Before starting he got a long pole, round which he rolled his road-map, and filled his filthy pockets with Greek, Hebrew and Latin books. He arrived safely in London, and from there went to Dover, where he was lucky enough to get work sifting ashes, working for the pittance which kept him alive whilst he studied languages. As usual, when he wished to move he had a dream, after which he left Dover, and going to London got back to Bangor, and from there he went to Liverpool, where he was robbed of his Chaldee grammar. Being in distress he returned to Mona, and bought a ram's horn, upon which he played when he approached (the villages followed by his favourite cat), where he was received with great joy. Directly he arrived the cry went round, "Dick Aberdaron has come! Dick Aberdaron has come!" and all the village flocked to hear him improvise his songs, which he droned in a most monotonous voice.

At that time he used to eke out his precarious existence by poaching, for he was a dead shot with a smooth stone, as many a pheasant might have testified.

In his wanderings he was given a French horn, which he tried hard to learn to play, but though a great linguist, he was a perfect fool at music, and he ended by voluntarily joining in the music of a band playing at Chester, and, needless to say, his blasts upset the musicians. Still, he used to fancy himself a born musician, and used to present souvenirs—the drawing of a harp—to his friends, as Millet gave his friends a pair of sabots. But his madness was not confined to music; he thought himself an optician, and made a crude form of telescope; also he was, as I have said, a lover of cats—certain sign of mental

aberration. But later on he really got to work, and began a Welsh-Greek-Hebrew dictionary; but his wandering habits soon got the better of him, and he arrived at Beau-maris in 1838, and put up at the "White Horse."

His fame had grown so great that he was looked upon as the greatest linguist in Wales.

Directly this sallow-faced man came with long white hair and beard, both plaited and tied with green ribbon, his beard reaching to his waist, his hare-skin cap decorated with Greek and Hebrew letters, and his horn, telescope and cat, the cry got about, "Dick Aberdaron! Dick Aberdaron has come!" and the crowd scrambled into the bar, and gathered outside to see the great linguist as he sat drinking beer all dressed in his ragged coats, one worn over the other, his bundle of books lying by his side, and his horn and his old staff on the ground, *Mew* sitting on his shoulder purring. An old man, who sat by him on this occasion, told me of this scene, for Dick Aberdaron, or the Welsh Wandering Jew, as he was called, was now at the height of his glory.

When the crowd in the inn had greeted him, he asked a well-to-do shopkeeper for sixpence.

"And you are welcome," said the shopkeeper in Welsh.

"I am not worthy," said Dick, "but, thank you, I want to buy some shoe laces."

Rising and making his way through the crowd to the cobbler's shop, he bought threepenny-worth of laces, and returned to his seat, which had been kept empty, for Dick was looked upon as a wizard, and none wished to arouse his passion and hear his malediction, "May the cats of Cornelius scratch you:" though there was scarce standing room in the bar.

When he returned he handed threepence back to the shopkeeper.

"Tut, tut, Dick, keep it," said he.

But Dick would not. He never asked for money unless

he wished to buy something, and then he asked for the exact amount, and if anyone gave more than he asked for he always went and got change, returning the change to the uttermost farthing. Nothing would prevail upon him to keep a penny more than he had begged for.

After this Dick had his first glass of beer and ate a good meal, for Dick loved a good dinner. The crowd drank and joked as he ate, and his old friend, Gwilym, the harper, approached and began to play upon the national instrument, the two-stringed harp, which tradition says no one but a Welshman can play. The old harper played, and the sweet-voiced Welshmen sang the songs, Dick joining in at times, but he was, as I have said, no musician, and his droning made the nice-eared Welsh laugh. "His singing was more like talking," said those who knew him.

After his dinner-things were cleared off, his second glass of ale was brought him, and then the fun began, for Dick never smoked. The evening was spent in song and poetry, Dick making up verses upon any conceivable subject his friends asked for; whether religious, romantic or lewd, it was all the same to Dick Aberdaron. He would think for a moment, and then the poem would roll forth as fluently as if he were repeating poetry learned by heart, and the men stood amazed at his faculty, for no women ever came to see Dick—he thought nothing about women or religion. He called all religious houses "grave-houses," and of the ministers and preachers he said, "They're like butchers' dogs, always shouting *death*, for they are fond of the carcases got by the butcher's killing."

Upon this occasion, an Englishman, who always spoke Welsh, was present, Dick detecting him by his speech.

"It's no use," said Dick, proudly. "A Scotchman, an Irishman, a Manxman, a Cornishman, a Biscayan and a Breton are the only Europeans that can have Welsh. No Englishman can ever pronounce the ll, the pp, and the ch, and you always put the cart before the horse."

"Well, how many languages do you know then?"

“Only one at a time,” replied Dick, whereat the Englishman and everybody laughed.

“No use,” said Dick. “Bring a Sasnaech here as a baby and bring him up, and he’ll never pronounce ch right, or speak Welsh, so that a Welshman would not know him.”

But the Englishman was free with his money and liked by the Welsh, though Dick was always prejudiced against the Sasnaech.

After going the round of the houses in Beaumaris, Dick worked on to Liverpool, where he had a strange adventure. He was walking down Castle Street one day, when he stopped to look at a large Greek book that lay open in a shop window. As he peered at the Greek characters, his nose flattened against the glass, the shopman, who was standing in the door, was struck by his uncouth appearance, and the strange sight of such a man staring at a Greek book, so he said, chaffingly—

“Hullo, my man, what are you doing there?”

“Only looking at that book,” said Dick.

“Well, you can’t read that.”

“I dunno that.”

“Bosh! If you can read that I’ll give it to you free.”

“Let me have a look at it then.”

“Come inside,” and Dick followed him into the shop, where the shop assistant was selling some books to a gentleman.

The shopman took the big book from the window and placed it on the counter, saying, as he looked round with a twinkle in his eye—

“Well, if you can read this I’ll give it to you.”

The other customer’s attention was attracted to this unusual proceeding, and he watched the business curiously.

Dick drew the book towards him, looked at it for a while, and suddenly shutting it to with a bang, put it under his arm and walked out of the shop.

“Here, come back,” roared the amazed shopman, following him with cries of “Police—here—stop thief!”

Dick ran into the arms of a policeman, who brought him back to the shop, where he was given in charge and taken to the lock-up.

"A new kind of book-thief," said the knowing shopman.

"I shall go and hear the case, it's most extraordinary," said the gentleman; "there must be more than meets the eye here."

The shopman shrugged his shoulders.

The next day Dick was brought before the magistrate on the charge of stealing a book, value £5.

"I didn't steal it," said Dick, doggedly, "the shopkeeper said he'd give it to me if I could read it."

"Did anyone hear him say that?" asked the magistrate.

"Yes, there were two other persons in the shop," said Dick.

"I was there," said the gentleman, from the body of the court. "It's quite true what he says."

"Oh well, can you read the book?"

"Yes."

"What language is it?"

"Greek."

There was a flutter in the court. This uncouth man read Greek—impossible!

An interpreter was sent for, and the book was produced, the interpreter and the accused going to the clerk's table, where Dick began translating.

In a few minutes the interpreter arose saying—

"Your worship, the accused knows more than I do myself."

"He does?"

"Yes."

The magistrate dismissed the case, and the accused carried off the book amid loud cheers.

The interpreter then persuaded Dick to go up to the council-house, where fifteen interpreters were kept. Dick went, and could talk to all of them, each in his own tongue, whereupon he was offered £500 a year at once to stay there.

“No, no!” he said, “I must go now,” and he started off to a favourite inn, but a Greek merchant followed him, and offered him splendid terms to teach six of his clerks Greek—six young men destined to the Mediterranean.

Dick hesitated, the offer attracted him. The wily Greek soon found his weak spot, and offered him all the luxuries of the land, good rooms and clothes, and Dick accepted, going to his new quarters. New clothes were bought for him—a black suit, boots, an overcoat, black hat and silk umbrella, and a watch.

For three weeks Dick lived on the fat of the land, and taught Greek to the commonplace young men, who came to his room.

At the end of the three weeks, Dick arose early one Sunday morning, hurled his clothes and watch into the garden, put on his old clothes, shouldered his pack of books, and with his old staff he crept downstairs and off to the quays, where he got on board a flat bound for “Blewmaris,” singing the while softly to himself, as the flat anchored before the white houses of Bangor, and a couple of fishing boats stranded on the pink Weeping sands, for the tide was low in the Straits.

But Dick would not go back to Carnarvon, for he always held that place in abhorrence, saying the bigots would like to burn him for not believing in their “grave-houses,” and he left in writing—“I rejoice in that I am counted worthy to suffer in that just cause, for which I am willing to lay down my life, if my body should be exposed to be burnt, or condemned to the most cruel torments.” So that he was brave, as a man should be.

Two years afterwards, in December, 1843, Dick Aberdaron died at St. Asaph, and little remains of his learning and “poetry.” I don’t think the “dictionary” was ever published. It is said he could speak fourteen languages fluently, and knew many more. He followed philology for its own sake, and he made verses to please his tavern friends. And this was the end of the Welsh Wandering

Jew, whose body is mouldering in St. Asaph, but whose spirit and character live among the people a standing protest against the benefit of academies for genius, and a healthy tradition of work done for its own sake; work untarnished with vanity, and done with no hope of pecuniary reward, but merely for pure love. It is said this remarkable man cared not for the artistry of the books read by him, but merely for the philology, and it is related, that when asked by a linguist, Dr. Parr, what he thought of the character of Andromache, he answered—

“Andro-mache? It is a fight of men (*Ανδρων μάχη*).”

“But what do you think of her character?” persisted the interrogator.

“I know nothing of that,” said Dick; thus showing that a man may read a book and yet know nothing of its *life*, which, after all, is only felt by the artist, though philologists and musical, metrical pedants have tried to argue otherwise. What sort of an artist Dick Aberdaron was is shown to us by his music and appreciation of the Iliad. In sooth, one must be very richly endowed to be an artist; but one can be very *intellectual* on one gift. The artist is a richer, higher creature than the merely *intellectual* person. The artist has all the gifts, which is at times bewildering for him, whilst the Aberdarons and Inaudis have a clear and simple path before them.

There are those who will doubtless say that had Dick been sent to some labelling shop he would have turned out a useful philologist. I doubt it, for it is neither colleges nor examinations that make useful philologists, but *character* and genius, and though Dick had both in a way, he, like his brother Kelts, had no steadiness, foresight and the unconquerable application that triumphs always. Though we hear much of Welsh bards and Scotch and Welsh music and the “innate artistic nature of the Kelt,” yet first-rate *purely* Kelt artists, poets and musicians are hard to find, if any such ever existed. But when the Saxon dough has the Keltic leaven you may look for your first-rate artists.

X.

Old Anglesea Days.

“Bells of Beaumaris! I hear your soft pealing,
 As evening's dark wing o'er the waters is stealing;
 The breath of your music still lingering tarries,
 While all else is silent, sweet bells of Beaumaris!”

Bells of Beaumaris.

“WELL, indeed, it's many years ago,” said Harry Owen, stroking his long beard and fixing his blue eyes upon me—for there are light-haired Welshmen as well as red-haired men—“but I remember Stone Village, the great poacher, as well as if I had seen him yesterday; he was up to every devilment under the sun, and I wasn't much better, for I was always with him. I remember the first to-do we had together—it was one fine summer day; there was a great yacht race going on in the Straits. There were ten yachts and they had to sail twice round Puffin. There was a nice south-west breeze, and they were on the second round when the wind fell light and the ebb tide was making, so they all came together, except the *Mona*, she was left behind near Puffin, but she kept coming up, and when she got near up to the others the wind shifted and away she struck across the sands; it was a bold action. She got across and when she tacked back she got fast aft. There were ten hands aft, so they all ran for'ard; some got on to the jib-boom, and she just scraped over and got past the buoy first. As she passed Stone Village's grandfather fired the gun, and it burst and blew his hand off. He was an

awful sight—all blood; but they took him up to a house and the doctor took off the arm, and he got all right. Stone Village's father was dead then, and so was his brother, and there was no one but this grandfather to look after him; so when he was carried in to have his arm cut off, we must get into a boat on the beach and go for a row. When we were rowing about we heard old Tom Boatswain hollering after us, for it was his boat.

“‘Come in, my boys, I want the boat,’ he cried. So we rowed in, never thinking he'd say anything; but, by Jove, when he caught us he nigh drowned both of us—he held our heads under water. He was a rough old chap, an old man-of-warsman.

“‘By God!’ says Stone Village, ‘we'll steal his boat again for that,’ and so we did the next night; and he came down to the beach swearing, but we wouldn't come ashore. When the coast was clear we got out at the Point and left her.

“Well, Stone Village was like Dic Aberdaron, the deadliest shot with a stone I ever saw; he never missed. We used to get a lot of old hares and pheasants that way, though we were only lads about twelve years old. One day, we'd been in the woods by the Point looking for anything we could get, when we thought we'd go and steal Tom Boatswain's boat and go for a row. But when we came to look for it we found it was gone, and old Harry Parry told us Tom had gone after cockles on to the Wailing Sands, or else for mussels and winkles over the other side. Whilst we was talking a thick sea-fog came up so we couldn't see the Carnarvonshire side at all. We was loafing about looking for oysters and clams when we heard a lot of yelling in the Straits. So we got a boat and rowed over to where the noise was, and we were lucky, for we came to Tom Boatswain standing in the water nigh up to his armpits. When we got him aboard he told us he'd been cockling, and the thick weather came up and he

couldn't find his boat again; so if it hadn't been for us he'd been drowned. So we heaved an anchor to see how the tide was and then we found our way back; and he blessed us and said he'd lend us his fish-lines and boat whenever we liked.

"So of course we must go in a day or two after big cod round Puffin. Stone Village was always up to knowing everything that the birds did, so we stopped on the way and watched those cunning oyster catchers. They break the rotton-shelled oysters with a stone, and I have seen them put a stone in between the oysters when they open of a hot day when the tide has run off. There was some of the great northern divers feeding there too, and we saw one catch a little conger and that came out of his vent. Whilst we was watching them we saw some sick plaice swimming on the top; they always swim on the top when they're sick, and sometimes the fishermen catch them in the mackerel nets, for mackerel swim at the top too.

"Well, we got off Puffin and began fishing, and we'd good luck. We kept working the cod up and catching them as fast as we liked. I have done that with a line many a time since at sea. I have worked cod up from thirty-five fathom right underneath the boat, by just shortening the line a bit every time I threw in the bait. Whilst we was catching the cod we see some fish spawn, for fish mostly spawn at the top and the heat sends it down.

"Well, it came on to blow from the south-west, and we couldn't do nothing, so we drifted towards Puffin, and we passed a lot of mussels floating, shifting their ground, for they can swim when they like, like a whelk. I've met millions of them floating in my time; they float till they drink, then they fill and go down.

"Well, the wind shifted to south and the sea got up awful, and we thought we were done for, but the lighthouse keepers came off in a boat and pulled us ashore on Puffin, but not before we were swamped, but she had no

ballast, so she floated. We had to stay two days at Puffin, and our people thought we was lost, and Tom Boatswain thought his boat was gone, so everybody was right glad to see us back.

“But that didn’t stop us; we used to go after congers when the herring was about, for the conger is one of the cleanest feeders there is in the sea—they won’t touch carrion, as some people say; but lobsters, shrimps and whelks again is the dirtiest feeders—they’ll eat any stinking stuff, but a lobster will catch fish for himself too—he’s very quick in the water, is a lobster. Then there’s a crab again, he’s a clean feeder unless hard put to it, then he’ll eat anything; but you mustn’t put stinking bait in a crab-pot if you want to catch them. We used to get cockles, too, off the Wailing Sands, for there’s no mud there and the grass won’t grow, and that’s the place for cockles. Of a winter time we used to go along the beach, when the weather was very hard, and pick up congers—they come ashore then; I don’t know why, but some say they swallow ice at the bottom and that kills them. Their spawn is pretty, just like fine lace.

“I mind me one day I was down looking for congers when I met a lot of chaps just come from rifle-shooting, and they said they’d seen a mermaid sitting on the rocks, and one of them had fired at it, but they said it slipped off into the water. ‘It was an old seal,’ says I. ‘No, ’twas a mermaid; four of us saw it. It had hair like a girl’s.’ Well, I never seed one, but lots of ’em believe in ’em about here.

“Well, when we got a bit bigger Stone Village must begin poaching for pheasants. He’d a big fishing rod that took to pieces, and we used to go into the plantings and put a bit of brimstone in a little brass thimble nailed on to the end of one of the joints, and put it right underneath their noses, and down they’d tumble—flop. Stone Village must have got hundreds that way in his time, for

he never would use a dog nor gun, nor any other way. Sometimes when we were poaching we'd hear the Bird of the Boom* making an awful noise, but they're all gone now.

"Then Stone Village took up with salmon poaching. We used to go over to Lord Penrhyn's place when the salmon was coming up to spawn, and there was a leap there where they used to jump. Stone Village had a big landing net, and he used to watch the waterfall, and directly he see one jump he'd have him in the net sure and throw him on to the bank. But they put on a lot of keepers, so we had to stop that, but we got many a good salmon that way.

"When times was slack we'd go ferreting up by the windmill; there were a lot of rabbits, and weasels, too, there. After all they're the same species; I have seen a ferret and weasel playing together. There were stoats about, too, and they go in gangs; they'll attack a man in a minute, and master him if they are in a gang.

"One day we was going rabbiting and Stone Village was going to get his three ferrets out and they were all dead—they'd got smothered on the way in the sack.

"Ay, Stone Village was up to every move. The greatest trouble he had was to get a ferret out of a burrow if he wanted him. When that happened he used to gut a rabbit and put the guts at each end of the burrow and on the winward side; they'd be bound to come to it. I used to lay with my ear to the burrows when the ferrets was put in, and my heart! what a noise they did kick up, thundering about inside like a lot of horses.

"But Stone Village was nigh caught one night. Old Davies, a keeper, set a hare in a wire in the woods by the Point, and Stone Village was there, for the hares come down to the Point of a night, what for I never could make

* Bittern.

out. He saw this hare, so he climbs up into the woods after it, and old Davies jumped on to him, yelling, 'I've got you now.' 'No, you haven't,' says Stone Village, and drops him one betwixt the eyes and ran for it. Old Davies never peached on him. I reckon he thought he'd got away fair.

"Soon after that we must go to Caragonan after them chough's eggs; six of us used to go. We'd fix two crow-bars in the cliff and put a board again it, and then the four chaps would put their feet again that and let us over by ropes. We sat in a boatswain's chair and had a two-flapped basket. We got down to the first ledge all right, and got some chough's eggs and two hatchlings. We'd sent them up and was lowered to the second ledge, when Stone Village hollered out, for a fox got hold of his hand; she was there with two cubs living on the birds, for all manner of birds used to nest there then. The fox got him by the wrist and I thought he'd bleed to death; so I cut my basket loose and made a running bowline and put it round her neck, and they hauled her up—dead. But we got the two cubs and sold them to a gentleman who kept a monkey and a squirrel.

"One day, I mind, the squirrel got loose and ran up a tall elm tree, and so he sent the monkey up. It made one dash for the squirrel, but he got on a dead branch and fell thud. We thought he was dead, but no, he sat up, gave one look at the squirrel and off he dashed up the tree again, and caught him this time, and held him in his left hand, and every now and again he'd stop and hammer him with the right to keep him quiet. He brought him down all right.

"That time I used to keep a jack-a-daw. He was a splendid talker; but the strangest part is every breeding season he'd go and get a mate and go nesting; whilst he was nesting he would come regularly for his food, but he would never stop at night; but directly the nesting season was

over he'd come back at night. Talking of nesting, that reminds me, I once see a swallow build her nest under the maintruck, and she hatched off there too, and came across the Atlantic with us, but they all left us at Liverpool. I was always fond of birds. I once had a thrush that would follow me for miles, flying from tree to tree. I had him for six years; he never went off and mated like the jack-a-daw. A jack-a-daw can talk better than a parrot, ay, better than a green parrot, and they're better talkers than those grey birds. I mind once a parrot in Liverpool backed a horse and cart into the dock, but they managed to save the horse.

“ Well, I went to sea and left Stone Village when I was sixteen. He was sure to do something fierce some day, for he was like a lot of Welshmen, very hot-tempered and pig-headed and jealous of everybody, not only foreigners, but his own countrymen. Then he was like a Jew; he always reckoned it lucky to get a hare or pheasant first thing on Monday morning. That's like a Jew, for they will sell you anything you like cheap if you are the first customer of a Monday morning, for it's unlucky to let the first customer go away. Howsomever, he never got caught poaching, and he wasn't like the gulls neither, for he never put up sentries, nor yet did he sham like the little owls and water-hens.

“ I remember on my first voyage I thought how Stone Village would have liked to have been there; for one day the sailors got at a barrel of liquor and got drunk. So the Captain ordered them to knock all the heads out of all the liquor barrels, and upset them. But the chaps wouldn't be done, so they put a lot of tubs and cleared out the pigs' trough—for we kept pigs aboard—and filled them all before they threw the rest away. So everyone got drunk, pigs and all, and there was a rare to-do.

“ When I came home I heard Stone Village had got into amess along with a girl, so he'd gone over to Carnarvonshire

to look after goats; for they used to keep a lot there in those days, for they're hardy animals; they'll stop out all winter and feed on moss when they can't get heath nor furze tops. They don't keep many now, but I can't make out why not, for though they do nibble at the hedges and that, they're not so hurtful as sheep, for they will nibble the bark and their wool twists round the trees and harms them. I remember in my young days they used to keep goats here, but they stripped a lot of young willows some gent had planted, so they got a bad name. But they only want gorse to feed on—that's their proper food, and they give the best tallow out. We used to sell their skins, too; but there's very few goats now.

“Well, after a bit Stone Village came back and got a job along with a farmer, gardening; but he took to the drink and got into bad ways, and was caught stealing the new potato seed. That was very expensive then, and Stone Village used to scatter a little, and steal the rest and sell it for drink. Then the farmer would say, ‘What's the matter with the potatoes—they're very thin?’ ‘I think you planted them too early,’ says Stone Village. But that didn't suit the farmer, so he watched Stone Village and caught him. Then he came and got a berth at the ‘Liverpool Arms,’ and he used to steal the booze and take it into the stable and booze the ostler and stable boy; and then he'd steal the corn, and put it into a barrow and cover it with muck, and take it off and sell it. Indeed, he became a thief, for he had given up poaching after the drink got hold of him. Well, they put the policeman on to watch, and he cotched him; but the policeman was a thief himself, for he got cotched soon after breaking into a shop, and they found all manner of things stored up at his house. But the quality got him off quietly, but Stone Village was run in, you may be sure, and got it hot because he'd been a poacher. That's the way with the quality—if you touch their pockets they're

down on you like a thousand of bricks, whilst that policeman who robbed a shopkeeper got nothing, but had his passage paid away. I see him in Liverpool afterwards.

“Well, I heard afterwards that Stone Village joined the Welsh Fusileers; but he was never heard of after. Knocked on the head somewhere, I’ve no doubt.”

XI.

An Old Salt's Yarn.

“The sea beats waves of tears!
 Black is the sea, and terrible to behold!
 O, sea! thy rocking cradle is the nursing mother of death,
 And many a brave man has found his grave on thy bosom.”
Death Shriek in the Inys.

It was long before old William Evans would open his soul to me. Welsh-like and peasant-like, he was suspicious of “foreigners.” This suspicion you shall find on both the east and west coast, be he either Kelt or Sassenach. Indeed, there are many similarities between your extreme east Suffolker and your western Welshman; both are superstitious, both are avaricious, both are Methodistical, both are innately cruel, suspicious of foreigners, beer drinkers, and both are clannish, and intermarry, and neither have moral courage, being very much afraid of public opinion. Indeed, I think the happy blend of Kelt and Sassenach is best. But your pure bred Kelt is more hospitable, more polite, more explosive, and has much more aesthetic sensibility. He is, undoubtedly, more romantic and adventurous too.

William Evans was old, being past seventy, very weather-beaten, of middle height, small boned, dignified and polite, though devoid of humour. His black eyes looked you steadily in the face, though he had sent many a soul to Davy Jones, but always in a fair fight. I cannot tell you in what ships he had not sailed—man-of-

war, privateer, blockade-runner, Mississippi steamboat, and it was whispered pirate vessels. Indeed, I think he had sailed in every conceivable craft and on every bay, gulf or sea.

As I listened to his strange and varied experiences to the accompaniment of a badly drawing pipe, I could not but feel how much more life this poor man had seen than those who were called rich and thought fortune had favoured them. To my mind old William Evans had had a better time of it than many a city merchant with his carriage, town house, and shooting box. There is no need for any man with a heart in his chest and a head on his shoulders to despair, for adventures and experiences are to be had for crossing the ocean. I shall give you a few of his experiences as he told them—disjointedly, perhaps, from one point of view, but in birthday order.

“Well, indeed, I always thought as a boy I wouldn’t be like the rest. With them it was always ‘after my grandfather’—I won’t do this because it is not ‘after my grandfather,’ I will do this because it is ‘after my grandfather.’ My people have no initiative. They always remind me of the old Welsh story of the women who saw a French corvette off their coast, and went running round a hill with their hats and red cloaks; round and round they went, so that the Frenchmen thought they were soldiers defiling round a hill, and they left. Well, my countrymen are like these women—they are still running round and round the hill.

“Well, my first trip I was wrecked on the Great Berman. There were two Bahama Channels, you know, an outer and an inner one. I was only a lad then, about fifteen. It was fine weather, too, and we’d a fine whole sail breeze, but there was a haze on—couldn’t see a mile ahead of us. The channel was only ten or twelve miles

wide, and of course they were too lazy to take soundings ; we ought to have sounded every ten or fifteen minutes. Well, we cracked on to her ; she was a schooner, and struck the coral. The water was as clear as crystal, you could see the sea-weed and big shells on the bottom plain as daylight. As I said, the weather was fine, so we discharged all our cargo and went ashore. A gale came a week afterwards and broke her up. One day when we were getting the cargo off, the pilot's hat blew off ; he was a big nigger, a splendid man, so in he dived after it. Phoot ! he could swim like a fish ; he seemed to delight in diving. One day, the last he was unloading, he dived several times right to the bottom, and got me some king conchs and queen conchs.

“The governor of the island was very good to us, and gave us plenty to eat and drink. We put up in a large house, we had no bedding and slept on the bare boards, but it was warm.

“ I soon got friendly along with the governor's son, and he would have me go up to the house and stay, so I did, and used to sleep along with my chummy. His sister—ah ! she was a nice girl ; she got very fond of me, and used to spank me every morning when she pulled the clothes off us. Oh, I could have married that girl, then I should have been set up for life ; but I was young and didn't know anything.

“ There were seven of us besides the Captain, and they got tired of waiting for the steamer, so they took a boat and started off for another island, but they all got massacrated ; a pirate caught them, and took them aboard and made 'em all walk blindfolded off a spring plank tackled to the yard. That's done so they can say no one killed them—they walked overboard themselves.

“ Well, I stopped there along with the governor until the steamer came, and home I go to Southampton. I was lucky to start with, 'cause if I hadn't got friendly

with the governor's son I'd have been with 'em and got massacrated too.

“Well, I went in several vessels after that, all foreign, but nothing much happened, till I shipped for St. John's, Newfoundland. It was winter time; we'd a good stove aboard and were anchored off ready to unload the next morning. That evening a blizzard came down on us, and mercy! we were perished with cold. We made the old stove roar, we were burning in the after part of the ship by the steering apparatus. We were moored fore and aft, and we turned in early. We all slept of a heap to try and keep the warmth in us. The carpenter was sleeping next to me; he seemed restless and kept saying, ‘God! Bill, it's very cold, very cold, very cold.’ And he got up and went out. Then he came back and kept moving about restlessly and going out. Every time he came in he said, ‘Awful bad, awful bad, awful bad!’ I began to get cross with him. Presently he got up again and went outside; and all of a sudden I heard something heavy fall on deck and heard the carpenter shout out, ‘Oh, he's fell down dead! Oh, he's fell down dead!’ I ran out and then I saw the carpenter's mate lying all of a heap in the snow and a block alongside of him. The watch took him down to the fo'castle.

“After he was gone and I came aft, I saw a spirit of a man hanging from the fore mainyard; I saw it as plain as daylight—it was the carpenter's spirit. I got right frightened and began to think the carpenter had something to do with killing him; so when I went into the cabin I said—

“‘My God! how did he fall?’

“‘Went up to mainyard, to put a block up for unloading to-morrow. Awful bad, awful bad, awful bad,’ he said.

“I didn't like sleeping against him at all, and I was afraid of him all the voyage.

“We'd unloaded and were going to discharge ballast next morning. That night the Captain said—

“‘Bill, you must stop here to-night. Sit in my cabin; there's everything for you there, stove and all.’

“‘All right, sir,’ I said, and he went ashore.

“I sat there all snug, and at supper-time thinks I, ‘I'll have some biscuits and treacle.’ So there I sat dipping the biscuits into the treacle and eating and dipping into the treacle. All of a sudden the light went out, and I heard a soft step. I dropped my biscuit.

“‘Good God! what's that?’ I said.

“And the step got nearer and nearer, and I jumped up and yelled, for there was the carpenter's mate with the block in his hand, and he went tip-toeing past.

“The mate heard me yelling, and he came in and asked sharply—

“‘What's up, Bill?’

“‘I see evil spirits,’ I answered.

“‘Where's the light?’

“‘Out.’

“He never said nothing, only took me to his cabin and gave me a drain of rum—for I scarce drank anything those days.

“I'm fully persuaded that carpenter's mate met his death by foul play, and the carpenter done it. I was right glad to leave that ship.

“Next I went down to the West Indies trading, and there I saw some sights. Them niggers were bold; they'd go into the water with a big sheath knife, and a rope with a big hook bent to the end; and they would slit the sharks right up in the water, and stick the hook into them, and their mates in the boats would pull them up as fast as they killed them. There was a British man-of-war there that fed a big shark on purpose to keep about the ship, so the sailors shouldn't swim ashore and desert. The niggers used to come down and bathe their children; they chucked

them into the water like a dog. One day this here big shark took one of their piccaninnies, and the father was so mad he went off and killed it; and the Admiral was so mad the nigger had killed the shark, he hung him up to the yard-arm. We used to play a rare game, we'd throw food down in the water—it's like crystal there—and watch the sharks fighting for it.

“From there I went up to Boston, and from there up the St. Lawrence. It was a fine moonlight night. We were taking the main-st'y gallant-st'y sail, when our ship gave a thump. We were going nine or ten knots, with a fair wind. I was sent out on the jib-boom, and there was a line down, so I dropped on to a rock. We found the rock had gone through her forepart, and she hung there. Her cabin was soon full of water. We put a casing round her, pumped her out and got her off. Next day a violent snow storm came on suddenly as we were making up the river. We were within three miles of a lighthouse, but we couldn't see it, the snow was blinding. So six of us got frightened, and we stole a boat and a compass, and left the ship. That was wild, and some in the boat began praying, and one of us was baling out with a sou'wester and two pulling. Presently we see the light through the snow and made for it, and as we came agin the rocks where the lighthouse was, our boat was knocked to splinters, but we just had time to scramble ashore. When the storm cleared next day, we see the steamer on a rock; the pilot had run her on. We got a boat and got the people off. We ran away because we thought the pilot had been paid to sink her. They told us he got a hundred and thirty pounds for doing on it; and that was very strange they never said nothing to us about stealing the boat and running away.

“I went up country then, but couldn't get nothing to do, so I stole a dug-out, with two more chaps, and started down river. We came to a cataract, but I kept her head on and she got through, though they are very timid boats.

She was nigh full of water when I got through, but I managed to get to shore.

“After that I shipped on a schooner for Valparaiso. One day, as we got short of water, we were sent off in a boat. A German was our officer. I don't like neither German officers nor sailors; they are as big sneaks as you can find. If anything is going forward amongst the crew, the Captain is sure to know it all as sure as it's done. Those Germans always tell, they hope to get on like that; I don't like their ways at all. Well, we went ashore. They gave me a gun and a cutlass; well, I didn't know nothing about a gun. We landed; the German went on ahead into the bush, and presently he came running back saying there was a tiger. ‘Go on, you coward!’ I said, and I went up and see something move, and I aimed my blunderbuss and fired, and that blacked my eye, curse the things! I haven't fired one since, except at Calcutta—I went shooting pigeons, and they put a double load in, and that knocked me backwards. I got my cutlass and went up to the bush and started out a deer. But we found no water.

“After that job I got to Havre, and there I fell in with a lot of Jersey smuggling chaps and joined 'em. The farmers were in it and all. It was twenty-one miles across to France from an island near Jersey, five mile off. We used to have all our baccy done up in tins. They used to press it tight with screw-jacks so each tin held a hundredweight, and the tins weren't no bigger than a big biscuit tin. The farmers had built three houses on the island for collecting sea-weed for manure, they said, but they were really for smuggling. We used to run our cargo over at high water and pitch the tins overboard—there was always a buoy-mark. Then the Frenchmen used to come down with carts and get the sea-weed, baccy and all. But that game was risky and didn't pay too well, so I left it and went to America.

“I got down to New Orleans, and then I shipped on a schooner to go up the Mississippi. I didn't know nothing about river navigation. I was on the look-out first night and it was thick. Presently I heard a devil of a noise and see a great fire. I ran to the Captain and said—

“‘Good God, the devil is coming! He's making an awful noise and you can see the fire.’

“He began laughing, so I got vexed and said—

“‘What are you laughing at?’

“So he came for'ard and had a look and he said—

“‘Go and call the mate, and tell him to rouse all hands.’

“So I ran to the mate.

“‘What's the matter?’ he asked.

“‘The devil is coming! He's all afire!’ I said.

“So he began laughing. I couldn't make out what they were all laughing at, and on the devil came.

“‘'Tain't a ship,’ I said to myself, because I couldn't see no masthead light, for it was thick.

“When she got nigh they fired off a little brass cannon two or three times, and then I saw what it was. That was one of the big river steamers. The noise I heard was the big walking-beam—you can hear them ten miles off of a still night; and the fire was the furnaces, for they have them all four on deck. We could see the stokers throwing on wood as she went by, towing six vessels, taking them to Belize. They have high pressure engines, so she was going as fast with the vessels as she would have done without them.

“Well, then I went to Sydney, to the diggings. I and my mate made a little pile there, so away we come back to Sydney, and whilst we was lying there a big sort of a gentleman came aboard and wanted us to go with him and see some beautiful girls that lived in a house up the country, he said.

“‘They are rather expensive, but you got plenty of money from the diggings.’

“Well, I didn’t like the look of it, so I wouldn’t go, but my chummy was a bit on, and he said he’d go along with him if it wasn’t far. So he got a bag of gold and axed him if that would do.

“‘Yes,’ he says, ‘you’ll have some fun for that.’

“So they drove off in a kind of cart, the big gentleman driving.

“My partner never came back till six o’clock next morning and he was all of a shake. After he got some grub he told me as how they got more drink till he was half on, and then off they go into the country, this big gentleman telling him about those beautiful girls all the time. That seemed to my mate as though he was never going to stop, and he kept axing him how much longer it was. Presently they got to some bushes and got down, and he fastened the horse to a tree.

“‘This way,’ says he.

“When they got on a bit my partner began to feel queer, so he says—

“‘Where is the girls?’

“Then this big gentleman sort of a chap drew a big sheath knife and says—

“‘There ain’t no girls; it’s your money I want.’”

“My partner didn’t think a minute; he hit him fair betwixt the eyes and knocked him down and took his knife and ripped him up before he could wink. When he’d done that he said he shook like a leaf and trembled all over. He said he was silenced in a minute. After a bit he started off and found the road and walked back.

“Well, after that I went on a Cunard boat. I was captain of the fore-hold and the boatswain was captain of the after-hold. So one day, when we was loading, I thought I’d go and have a yarn with the boatswain in the after-hold. I went down and I see the boatswain and his mate tapping the cargo. They was after silk. I watched ’em, but I didn’t say nothing, that

was no business of mine. They took the silk out and put iron hoops inside in its place and hauled the bales up with a Spanish windlass. Ay, them Spaniards was very clever in those days with all manner of tackle. They got some of 'em to help lift the *Royal George*. The tackle they used was one single rope rove through sixteen single blocks. That was the greatest purchase they had at that time. I could do that once. Well, the boatswain and his mate got hitched at last at Boston.

“After that I went to India, and there I saw a man-of-war in a gale. It took seventeen of 'em to stow the foretop-sail! They was good, them man-of-warsmen, in fine weather; six of us could have stowed that sail. A lot of 'em was afraid to go aloft; they are like monkeys in fine weather though.

“Well, that India was a rum place in those days. There was a mill there, where they used to throw themselves in and be ground up, all on account of their religion. I was there in Hobson-Jobson days. That lasted for twenty-one days. They used to make a dreadful noise. They'd come down before sunrise and sunset, thousands of 'em, and go into the river, and stand up knee-deep in the water, looking like black statues, and when they catched sight of the sun they'd begin waving their hands and singing, 'Bel, bel, bel. Bel, bel, bel.' Directly the sun got up, or was gone, away they'd go. On the twenty-first day they used to bring Hobson-Jobson down to the river and chuck him in, and keep a sharp look-out in boats none of the ships didn't pick him up.

“From there I got to China—Hong Kong. Them Chinamen are a lot of skunks—one Englishman could whip a dozen of 'em with a stick. They was all about in their sampans all painted the same colour, each one with an eye. That's a remarkable thing—they turn their fowls off on to the land of a day, and they always come back to their right boats to roost, though they're all painted one colour and as like as a lot of peas.

“ Well, I saw an old half-starved dog there, and I took a fancy to him, so I chummed with him. When I shipped aboard of a vessel I brought him and he turned out useful. We had to keep a sharp look-out, for them Chinamen are the biggest thieves unhung; they'd come at night and steal the copper off her bottom and the brass pins round the mizzen-mast. Well, one night my old dog caught a couple of them; he'd bit one by the calf and got t'other by the neck. The boatswain rope's ended 'em both next day and nigh killed them. They kept clear of us after that.

“ Well, our skipper was a bad 'un. He began by selling all the old copper he could lay hands on to the Chinese; we agreed to share all alike. The cook, a Frenchman, a nice fellow, fell ill and left us.

“ We had two bow guns, like old blunderbusses, and two stern guns, for there was lots of pirates about; and we had two thousand pounds aboard carrying, but, lucky for the Captain, we didn't know it.

“ Well, we started, and they said how a mail steamer had just saved a ship from 'em, and killed and hanged three hundred Chinamen. There was a light breeze, and away we go; but we hadn't been gone long before up come some junks—pirates. They live aboard, the women, dogs, fowls and all. Some have five hundred men. They are high at the bow and starn, and have three sails. When they got nigh we fired it into 'em. I kept heating the pokers red hot, and firing the guns. They didn't get nigh enough to chuck their stink-pots aboard, or that would have been all up with us, for directly that strikes the deck the fumes choke you, like chloroform. The Captain and mate got the lead-line and lowered the money over the side; we never knew it till the end of the voyage. Luckily for us a man-of-war hove in sight, and off they went. We'd killed a lot, for we see 'em chucked overboard.

“Then off we go to Shanghai. There we got leaky, and everybody turned to caulking and pitching and pumping; she'd sprung a bad leak. The ship was full of rats; we had to keep all our things on hooks, or else they'd have eaten the lot. After we pumped her out we found the leak—that was in the hole for a pump pipe; a rat had eaten through to the water, they can't live without water. So we smoked the ship, and found over fifteen hundred rats round the fires, some of the Chinese sailors aboard fighting for 'em. The smoke goes up, so the last place they get to is round the fires, because there is more air there.

“At Shanghai the French cook turned up. The Captain sold the ship, though it wasn't his, to the Chinese for a man-of-war, an old tub like that. He got us all berths aboard another ship, and gave us thirty pounds apiece, paying us in Shanghai dollars (6s. 8d.). When we left he said, ‘Well, boys, good-bye, God bless you. I'm going to take a little farm in the States. I've had enough of the sea.’ I gave the old skipper the dog.

“I found myself in Liverpool after that, where I joined the Navy. I was glad to see no more of the chinkies. They're vermin, for though they're clever at slight work, they set down to plane and saw, they're only like women. They're so cruel, too; they smother their girl children, and all children born of sailors or soldiers. The opium clippers had brass cannons. They are fast schooners and had to look after themselves. What makes them pirates so dangerous is there is so many of them; they have regular cities inside of passages through great high cliffs. When I was there they paid one hundred dollars for every pirate's head.

“Well, I didn't mind the Navy. We had a good time in harbour those days. You could bring your lass off and keep her a week if you liked; they was coming and going all day.

“We went down cruising on the coast of Cuba, after

slavers. My, they was pretty craft, they was mostly clippers built at Baltimore, schooner rig fore and aft. All the clippers were built in America then; David Mackay built the best at Boston—four deckers, bigger than the East Indiamen. That was about 1842 to 1844, as far as I can recollect. The slavers had sweeps as well, eighty on each side. They could go about five miles an hour with them and outsail anything afloat; for steam wasn't much when it did come in, not at first, and not for a long time; you could only steam seven to eight knots. Well, we had a heavy fight with them; the Captain was a Scotchman and the men Portuguese and Spanish; but we kept our lines, and as soon as a man dropped we closed the line. They got too excited. We killed a lot, but I was used to fighting then and I was very quick. We hanged the prisoners and set the niggers free.

“I left the Navy then and went smuggling, and was chased by one of our cruisers. Well, we started on for the coast of Cuba and run them on to a coral reef, and they had to take to the boats, and we all met ashore and chaffed 'em; they couldn't touch us for we were on neutral ground. That was a barney.

“I did several voyages after that all about, till the Crimea War broke out; then I joined a vessel to go up the Black Sea. I was there when Sebastopol fell, and saw six fellows blown up by a shell that hadn't burst. I did some good there and then went back to the West Indies.

“Then the American War broke out. I was sick in Mobile when war was declared. All the river passages were stopped. One day I saw an old river boat; she was afraid to go out to the Yankees, and they were afraid to come nigh to her on account of the forts. The Yankees had heavier shot and kept blazing at her, one shot took her funnel clean out; then the forts began and the Yankees moved out of range.

“I had a lot of money in Confederate notes. I went to the Consul to send me to Charlestown. So we went to Montgomery by train. There was a lot of soldiers; I got my breakfast with them; they was very kind and civil, and I bought a bottle of old rye whisky. At the stations, when dinner was ready, I went out and followed the soldiers and helped myself; that was all paid for by Government. That night we slept at an hotel, and next morning I found all my money gone and the whisky too. Howsumever, I got to Charlestown, and they thought I was a spy there. I was there three weeks. The English Consul said, ‘I must send you off in an English man-of-war.’ They were allowed to run the blockade, with despatches, once a month. But I was offered a rare good berth on a schooner to run a load of cotton to Nassau. I hadn’t a farthing, so I shipped. The cotton was piled on the deck as well as in the holds. Well, directly we came under the guns they began firing, and the agent went and got to the lee of the cotton. ‘But,’ says I, ‘if they knock the cotton over, they will fall on you and crush you.’ But he wouldn’t budge. They shot the boom and topmast off another boat what was very close to us and caught her; there was a whole fleet there; but we escaped and was very fleet, so away we go with a main cutter close at our heels, till we got within the three mile limit.

“After that I went back to the Cunard line, and had my revenge out of a policeman at Liverpool. I smuggled eight pounds of baccy for myself, and got three months for it. Since I was in prison I was thinking how I could get my changes out of the fine gentleman. So I shipped to New York after I came out, and I got eight pounds of baccy and put it in a belt, each plug in ounces. Well, I came ashore. I see my gentleman; so I’d a five dollar gold piece—I’d marked it. He came up.

“‘I say, I’ve got eight pounds of baccy; don’t say nothing, here’s five dollars for you.’

“I noticed his number—713, and went straight up to the police-station, and told them I’d got eight pounds of baccy and I’d given the policeman five dollars to pass it. They sent for No. 713 and brought him up and searched him and found the gold piece. When we came before the magistrate, he said—

“‘Can you swear to the five dollar piece?’

“‘Yes, I’ve got a private mark on it?’

“‘Tell me the mark.’

“‘A cross under the chin.’

“He looked.

“‘You put your glasses on,’ I said.

“‘Yes, it’s so, quite true,’ he replied.

“Policeman got three years and the magistrate gave me back my tobacco.

“‘You were so clever as that ; take your baccy away free of duty for catching the policeman,’ said he.

“So off I went, baccy, five dollars and all.

“Well, then I came here, and I’d got a little money, so I bought an annuity worth £20 a year so I shouldn’t spend it, and here I’ve been doing odd jobs ever since ; but I’m nigh a sheer hulk now.”

XII.

Waterlogged : The Story of the "Courtenay."

"The waves, when winter flees away,
Shall smile through many a summer day;
But ah! no summer sun shall shine
Upon this wintry heart of mine."

Musing by the Winter Sea.

"I WAS an apprentice in those days," said old William Powell, filling his pipe with shag; "we had to serve four years, and I was doing my time on the full-rigged ship *Courtenay*, eight hundred tons burthen, a big ship for those days. We had a complement of twenty-eight, for in those days we had no donkey engines to hoist our sails and bouse in our anchors; all that had to be done by manual labour. We went from Carnarvon and squared for Dalhousie, a light in New Brunswick, where we were going to load up with timber. Before we got there, we had to go through a passage between an island and the mainland; there were two passages, one for deep draughted ships, and one for flats and the like.

"As we were going in, I had my straw brab hat. I plaited the brab myself, and my brother sewed it. We used to get the brab from the West Indies, and strip it from the midrib ourselves. Everyone wore brab hats in those days, all the Navy as well, only they used to put cotton on and paint them black and then put a polish on

with blacklead; then they were called tarpaulin-brabs. But mine was a proper straw brab, lined with blue satin. I was very proud of it.

"Well, I'd got this on when we got there, and there was a chap from Beaumaris, called John Thomas; he had to make two voyages before he could join the Liverpool pilots; and he was going ashore, so he wanted me to lend him my new, smart brab, and I did. He put it on and we stood waiting for our boat to come from the shore, when my hat blew overboard. I couldn't stand that, so I stripped and dived in after the hat. The tide was making out all the time, and there's a tremendous tide out; and when I got the hat I couldn't make the land, and I was getting very exhausted when, luckily for me, the ship's boat came off and took me aboard, where I soon got all right.

"Well, there was a farm about half-a-mile from the shore where we used to get all our milk and fresh vegetables and meat and all that, and I was told off to go every morning to get the prog in the pair oared punt—I was market boy. The old Captain, an American, was one of the jolliest chaps alive, and he used to come over very often, for he was chummy along with the farmer, and used to go shooting wild fowl with him. Well, I got chummy with his son, a lad about my own age, and with his sister, about a year younger, a rare handsome girl, with an eye like a sloe. She was dairy-maid, so I always had to go to her for the milk. The dairy was right at the end of the buildings, for the house and stables and cattle sheds came first and last of all the dairy.

"Well, I used to spend a lot of time along with them, so one day the boy said there were plenty of lobsters to be had and he axed me to get some twine; so next time I came ashore I stole a ball of marline, and I knocked a hoop off a water puncheon and took them ashore, and we rigged up a net to the hoop. Then we got a big line with a bit of meat hanging to it and tied a line fast by the centre and slung it so the net would go up and down. No sooner did

we put him in than we got a lobster, a beauty. Well, we got some hundred lobsters in a little over half-an-hour, they were so plentiful. I took 'em aboard and kept getting them whenever we wanted them, so there were lobsters fore and aft until everybody got right sick of them. When the Captain saw me keep bringing them he said,

“‘Good God, Bill, if we'd only got those lobsters in England, wouldn't we make a fortune.’

“One morning the old woman was from home, and I went to the dairy and saw my girl to get the milk, and as no one was nigh I fell to kissing and hugging her, and we made it all right. I think we loved each other, for we were both virgins till we met; but there ain't nothing to tell about that, it was like all the rest of those things. You may be sure I was often ashore then and in the dairy along with her.

“Well, after a bit they got tired of shooting, so they made up to have a bear hunt, and I was excited and no mistake. We went, the farmer, the Captain, a regular hunter, and me, and his son, into the wilds; there were a lot of trees there, chiefly birch. It was the middle of summer, when the bears won't trouble you if you don't disturb them; but in the spring look out; in winter they lie and sleep and suck their paws. These were the brown bears. Presently the dogs—we'd got three—began to yelp and holler, and they started a big brute, and he sat up on his starn and kept knocking the dogs off, cuffing them if they came too close. When they had fairly tormented him the hunter showed himself and told me to hide up in the stuff. Directly the bear saw him he made for him, but he ran light as a kitten and got behind a middle-sized pine tree and pulled himself right tight together, leaning his right side down so the bear couldn't claw it, and he kept his hand with the knife between his fork, so the bear shouldn't see his knife, for they are very cunning, and you mustn't let them see the blade of the knife. Well,

presently he saw his chance, and ripped the brute right up to his ribs, sticking the knife right up into his heart; but he had dug his claws into the tree so tight he didn't fall back, so I ran up and hit him with a club. 'For God's sake, Bill, be cautious,' hollered the old Captain, for I was young and foolish and didn't know what danger was in those days. Then we skinned him and cut him up and took him home; the skins are very valuable, and they cured the hams, boiling down the rest of the carcase to make bear's-grease with. I liked that sport. We went four times during our three weeks' stay and got three bears the last time.

"Then I had to say good-bye to my girl, and we started home with a load of timber, reaching Carnarvon in twenty-eight days, a good voyage for those days.

"Well, we unloaded and went back to St. John's, on the Bay of Fundy, for another cargo of timber. There is a tremendous tide there, one of the highest in the world, higher than Chepstow. Winter had set in, and it was terrible cold work loading the timber. We had three winches in the hold and tackle to our t'gallant fo'castle. There was a tent rigged up there and we boys had to take turns. We was wrapped in a blanket or quilt so you could only see our mouths as we kept in the tent and hollered 'Heave up,' as the logs were hoisted up to the bow portholes made on purpose for the work. Then we sung out 'Stop her,' and then 'Lower away.' My, that was cold work and I was right glad when I saw them caulking the portholes; they fasten them inside and caulk them outside when you've done loading.

"Our rigging was all bright with icicles and our sails frozen, so we went out of harbour with no topsails hoisted. We'd a fair wind, so next day it got a bit warmer, and the sails thawed a bit and we hoisted them a bit further, and so we kept going and the sails kept thawing and we kept hoisting, till on the fifth day we were thawed and all our canvas was set.

“ Whilst we were in port a bad easterly gale blew and thumped the loose timber about so we sprung a little leak, but nothing to speak of, we could easily keep it down. On the eighth day out, howsumever, another gale came from the eastward and the leak began to gain on us, the carpenter, when he sounded that morning, reporting five feet of water in the hold. Here was a black look-out. We took to the pumps, but still the water kept gaining on us and the storm raged, washing away everything on deck except the after cabin, and one boat slung to it on a kind of gallows; there were thirty plucked geese buried under the snow in that boat. The Captain had bought them for our Christmas dinner, for we left port on December 25th, but we'd had beef and plum duff instead, and were keeping the geese for old New Year's Day. That's all was left on the third day of the storm except three stanchions on one side and two on the other, and we'd seven feet of water in the hold. All our deck water casks had been washed away and all the bulwarks and everything.

“ On the third day of the gale the Captain ordered ropes to be lashed so we could walk along the decks, and then he ordered us to get up all the provisions we could into the after cabin; but it was too late, and we were only able to save sixty pieces of pork, fifty pieces of beef and some barrels of biscuits, and a few barrels of apples the Captain had bought to take home as presents.

“ The sea looked wild, the waves running very high and washing in fore and aft. It was no use pumping any more, so we threw our pump handles overboard, and the Captain gave the order to unshackle the anchor cables—they are always shackled below round the foremast. We did that and let go both anchors, the right bower and left bower, and they dived into the sea like fish, the chain flying out and the windlass all afire, the chain was going so quick. Down they went, straight to the bottom, so we were a bit lighter; but that was not much help, so the

Captain ordered us to knock the upper bow portholes out, so the water could get in or out. Then we cut the fore-t'gallant mast off, and it sprung our foretop sail yard going down, and after that we cut the main-t'gallant mast down, and it went down all clear, doing no damage; but still she was heavy in the sea, labouring tremendously, so the Captain ordered us to cut the jib-boom off, and that went down all clear, and the mizzen-top-mast, leaving the crojack* yard. We cut all these off to keep the vessel from opening when she rolled, for the water was swelling the wood and we were afraid she'd burst open. We were wet through and some began to get water boils; and there we were, the gale still blowing bitterly cold, and we rolling and getting all the seas over us.

"On the ninth day of the gale we made a sea-anchor with a spare foreyard we always kept on deck and a hawser, bridling it with a chain. Well, that acted splendidly, keeping our head at it, and we lay beautifully for three weeks like that, hoping a ship would come, but being anxious, for we were drifting to the nor'ard.

"The water kept up for nigh three weeks, and we were a pretty sight at the end of it—all the fo'castle decks torn out and all the decks sprung from the wood swelling. You could put your foot down between a lot of the planks, and what's more, the seas got washing over the deck all the time, and everything got covered with green weed. She looked like an old wreck fished up from the bottom more than a ship; and the weeds and holes made the decks very dangerous to walk upon, but the ropes saved us from being washed overboard.

"At the end of four weeks we got two fine days, so we got two stream cables and bent a rope to them and passed both underneath the ship and round her, tackle upon tackle, buff upon buff, till they were right tight; then we made the

* Cross jack.

tackles fast and left them. That was to keep our ship from bursting open from the swelling of the wood, for her decks were level with the water.

“Still we kept drifting to the nor’ard, getting further and further out of the track of ships; so on the second fine day the Captain called all hands aft.

“‘Well, boys, what will we do? We keep drifting nor’ard and nor’ard; we’ll soon be altogether out of the track of all ships.’

“‘Try and run her and see if she’ll act,’ said the boatswain, and we all agreed.

“‘All right,’ said the Captain.

“So we cut the hawser and dropped the sea-anchor. We’d the mainsail and foresail whole, so we lashed a spar to the strained foretop sail yard to strengthen it, and set the topsail and the foresail to cant her before the wind, which was blowing a fair west-north-west. The old Captain was a splendid seaman, no mistake. After she canted over we set the mainsail and the main topsail, and hove the log and found we were making six knots an hour that way. So we went for a bit and our spirits rose, though provisions were short and we’d had only a wineglassful of water a man a day, as all the water casks not washed away were stove in by the timber; but we rigged up a sail and caught all the water we could when it rained, keeping it in vinegar kegs in the main-top and mizzen-top so the sea shouldn’t wash them overboard.

“Presently, one day we got becalmed and sighted the royals and t’gallant sails of a vessel. We were wild with excitement, so the Captain lowered our only boat and six of us went off in her to try and signal this strange vessel. The second mate was in charge; the first mate was an old Scotchman, too old to be at sea, and as timid as a woman, he wouldn’t come off in the boat. We pulled three or four miles towards the ship, but it was coming on dark, so perhaps they didn’t see us; but strange things happen at sea.

"Well, all of a sudden we saw a fire in the foretop; they had made a fire with old pieces of tarred rope cut from the jib-boom so we shouldn't lose the ship. So we rowed back, the ship looking all afire on the still sea. When we got aboard the old mate was crying out—

"'They'll burn us! They'll burn us! I'd sooner be drowned than burnt!'

"When we got aboard we put the fire out, and only just in time, for the mast was catching fire and we might have lost some sails.

"Well, a breeze sprang up that night and we went along wonderfully well, considering we were waterlogged. You see she was so broad and shallow. The holes in the deck got worse, and it was a good job we had the chains round her, no mistake, or she would have burst and scattered everything in the water.

"We slept in the after cabin all of a heap to keep warm. One night a big sea struck us and split the hawser, and everybody rushed out; but it was dark, and you could only see the great black sea and sky full of stars and hear the wind whistling through the rigging. Some of them rushed out without part of their clothes, and kept in the main-top and mizzen-top till daylight, but the rest of us turned in again. When the day came we found there was not so much damage done; a plank had split; we stopped it up with canvas and stuff.

"By this time—that was the end of the second month—provisions began to get very short; the geese, pork, beef and biscuits were all gone, though the Captain had been very careful, sharing all round alike, but very scanty rations at that. There were only three sacks of flour left and the apples. So the cook made a sort of gruel with the flour and water, and we had an apple apiece and a wineglass of water for each meal.

"One day it was rough and the sea breaking over us, when the cook was coming along the green holey deck

with a big tin saucepan with a tight fitting lid full of this gruel, two of the chaps steadying him so he shouldn't slip and spill it, when the ship gave a big lurch, and overboard they went all three. 'Hold on to the pot! Hold on to the pot!' cried everybody, thinking only of the gruel, and blow me if the next lurch didn't bring them back, and the gruel wasn't spilt. I never could have dreamt of such a thing if I hadn't seen it.

"We had been out two months and nine days when the last apple was eaten, and there was nothing left but flour and water aboard. Well, all the men suffered badly from water boils, and the curious thing is none of us boys got a boil at all. Well, when provisions began to get short some of the chaps got very bad, and when we came to the gruel two of them died. They were Frenchmen and couldn't stand to it like the hardier British seamen at all. The Captain buried them, and we all began to feel bad, thinking we would meet the same fate. So I thought I'd go and rummage the pantries to see if I couldn't find anything, overhauling every corner. And I did, and found a lump of dried peas that had got washed together in a lump by the water. The lump was about as big as my two fists and all green and mouldy, but I sat down in the dark and began to eat it, watching all the time for fear someone should come and take it from me, and that was one of the sweetest morsels I ever ate.

"That night I was seized with a burning thirst. I felt that if I'd got the world I'd give it for a bucket of drinking water. I couldn't stand it, so I crept up and stole out to the pantry, and got an old tin pepper pot and weighted it with a spoon and fixed on a bit of marline, and up I stole to the maintop and kept dipping my pepper pot through the bung hole and drinking it. I dunno how much I drank, but it didn't seem to quench my thirst at all. At last I got so I couldn't drink more, though I was still thirsty. So I stole down and crept back to bed.

"So we went on, this awful life, for nigh three weeks more, when we got a breeze and sighted land. We stood in for the place and found afterwards it was Sligo; but the wind suddenly canted, and we ran before it, bringing up in Killybegs, when fifty or sixty fishing boats came out, for no ships hardly ever went there then, and we were a curio, no mistake. They got ropes out and all of them towed us right on to the shore; it was nearly high water when we struck the beach, after having left it three months and two days.

"Well, they all came aboard and was slipping on the green weed, for that had grown to be nigh six inches long, and cursing and swearing at the stuff, and there was a rare hullabaloo amongst these Irish fishermen. We went ashore to an Insurance Company's agent and told him we were starving, and he got us a bun apiece. We ate that and another on the top of it. Whilst we were eating the second bun a doctor came up and told us we'd all die if we didn't stop eating and overloading our stomach. So the agent made some soup and we had a little every half-hour, then a little more every hour, until in two days we ate a square meal.

"Then they all went home excepting me, the other apprentice and the second mate. The agent had four jolly daughters and we had a good time, for we lived with him and had the best of everything to eat and drink; and I began learning Irish and teaching them Welsh. There are many words alike, only they pronounce them differently; for instance, we call a bull—tarŭ, short, they say tarōō; we say shibbĕr, a barn, they say shibbōōr; the Welsh cut the words shorter.

"Presently the Captain came with forty men and they bored holes in her and let the water out at a low spring tide and then plugged the holes, and made a new port bow and patched her decks up with canvas. They brought a patent pump with them and took her to Carnarvon when they made a new ship of her.

“When they started back to Carnarvon they told the mate and we two boys to go home. The weather was terribly cold, in March; we had to drive the first ten miles in a one-horse post car, and then we picked up the coach with two horses. The mate had a bottle of whisky and I asked him what it was. ‘Oh! you young rascal, you want a drop,’ he said. So he gave us boys a drop and a drop, and we kept as lively as we could, but we were nigh frozen when we got to Dublin at seven o’clock on Sunday morning, for we’d been on the road twenty-five hours altogether. The mate was well acquainted at Dublin, so he took us to an hotel, where we had a big fire and plenty to eat and drink, so we got all right by night.

“Next morning we started in the mail boat to go to Holyhead; they’d only just put on steamers then, they used to have smacks before to go across in. The steamers hadn’t much power in those days and we took ten hours. My chummy belonged to Holyhead and we had to spend three or four hours there before the coach started for Menai. That was the only time I was ever in Holyhead, but it was only a village then, not half as big as Beaumaris; the railway made that place; there wasn’t a hotel there in those days. When the omnibus came, that carried the mail there, so you may guess it was small.

“We started, stopping at the houses on the road, so when we got to Penybont, old Humphries enquired who I was, and I told him, so he kept me till the next morning, giving me the best of everything to eat, and next morning he had a cab coming to Beaumaris, so I came along in it, right glad to get home after that voyage. But phoot! I soon forgot all about my troubles on that voyage and was off again.”

XIII.

William Jenson: Smuggler.

“ Musing by the winter sea,
Sorrow clouds my memory ;
The waters shaken by the blast
Seem a picture of the past.”

Music of the Winter Sea.

WILLIAM JENSON was one of the finest and biggest men of his day. He stood six feet four on his naked feet, always went clean shaven, and had light brown hair and curious dreamy-looking blue eyes that flashed like sapphires when he was enraged and looked a yellowish green, like the winter sea, in a calm. Jenson was a thorough seaman and knew something of navigation ; like most sailors, too, he was superstitious.

He began life on his own account in an oyster smack, a thirty-ton boat, the *Onward*. He was successful at once, and always kept so, for there is no luck in these matters ; success is due to brains, and not chance, as the incompetent would have us believe. On his first voyage, he beat all the other dredgers. He had foresight, the essential of success, and so he carried eight or ten dredges, although only four were used at a time, the majority of dredgers being content to trust to chance that their dredges would not get lost or disabled.

It was October when the *Onward* started on her first voyage with six hands to try their luck in the Menai Straits, that narrow tideway cut by the fierce currents through the north of Wales. But they were unsuccessful in the

Straits, so one Monday morning they started with a south-west wind and steered north by east after passing Puffin Island, sailing fifteen miles, when they hove their four dredges at three p.m. Four of the crew stood watching the dredges, whilst the boy cooked the dinner and the master steered. There were about sixteen fathoms where they hove the dredges and drifted for an hour when they hauled in the eight foot dredges with their hand-windlasses, singing—

“ In 1841 my corduroy breeches I put on,
 My corduroy breeches I put on
 To work on the railway,
 Railway, railway;
 Poor Paddy works on the railway.”

The six foot nets, with their four inch meshes, were hauled in and the rigging got up, and the nets emptied on the decks, oysters, stones, shells, rubbish and all. The boy in the cabin was boiling the beef and duff, singing—

“ In 1843 thinks I to myself,
 It's now I'll see
 Thinks I to myself
 It's now I'll see
 To work no more on the railway.”

The great smack gliding on through the fine hazy afternoon over the still ocean, as the four men re-shot their dredges.

They dined and kept working till ten on Monday night, but got few oysters—as their tallies showed; for they had two pieces of marline made fast to the share-pole, every thousand was marked by a knot on one piece, and every basket-load (or hundred) upon the other. There were only three knots on the hundred marline at ten, so Jenson sailed towards the north-west lightship till break of day, working all the time without much success. The *Onward* kept cracking to eastward, and got five hundred on the last of the flood. When they reached the Bar lightship, which was bearing east-south-east, they struck

the oysters, at one o'clock in the afternoon, and got over ten basketsful in the four dredges. Jenson's eyes flashed, and he steered through the fine, misty afternoon regardless of all "ekinocions," singing—

"Bonny laddy, Highland laddy,
Where have you been all this day,
My bonny Highland laddy?
I've been all this day
Courting of a lady gay.
Oh, ho! my hearties, oh!"

At five o'clock Jenson anchored his small boat, with a lantern in the stern to serve as a mark, and so they sailed to and fro over the oyster bed, and as the mist got up on the calm ocean you might have heard, faintly—

"The railway, the railway,
It's now I'll see,
Thinks I to myself,
It's now I'll see ——"

as the windlass clanked, or the dredges splashed into the sea, or the oysters clattered into the dark hold; for no one slept and everybody sang, for before midnight they had got fifteen thousand oysters aboard. At daybreak on Wednesday morning the lamp in the little boat was left burning, and it burned dimly all day and was trimmed at eventide. So they kept at work, singing and eating and dozing at their stations, the boy alone sleeping; Jenson and the crew didn't want to sleep after the third night, they say. On Thursday at noon they got fast to a wreck and lost two dredges, and had to work for three hours with two dredges, whilst two others were being got ready.

On Friday night at eight, they picked up the little boat and started, deep-loaded with sixty-eight thousand two hundred oysters, for Liverpool, where they discharged the oysters on the Saturday; for oysters will keep for three weeks on board in winter if watered occasionally.

That was the sort of man Jenson was, and that is why he was *lucky*; he never slept for a week. But he was

enterprising as well, and brave. In those days the Manxmen got everything duty free. Tea was to be bought for three shillings a pound there, and sold in Wales for eight.

Jenson prospered and became a ship's husband at Liverpool; you might in those days have seen the Herculean form going about the ships in the harbour with a safety light, for no naked lights were allowed. But the life was too respectable and tame for the brave-hearted Jenson, so he moved to Holyhead and began fishing, running to the Isle of Man for herring.

At that time of day the revenue cutters kept a sharp look-out between the Island and Holyhead, and Jenson's frequent voyages at last attracted attention, and one day the Captain of the revenue cutter challenged Jenson—

“What have you got aboard?”

“Salt,” roared Jenson, his hands placed trumpetwise, for fishermen were allowed to carry a quantity of salt free of duty in those days.

Well, Jenson passed to and fro, and was often hailed with—

“What have you got aboard?”

“Rum and salt,” Jenson would answer, or “Baccy and rum,” laughing as he put his hands down from his mouth.

“Oh,” said the Captain, “the d—d old fool is making a fool of us; he's got nothing.”

Jenson had made some forty voyages when the Captain of the cutter grew restless, and said one day to himself as they had just passed the fishing boat—

“My God, we must look what he has got next time.”

The next time Jenson's sail hove in sight the Captain of the cutter said—

“Boat ahoy! What have you got?”

“Salt, rum and brandy,” roared Jenson.

“Oh, good God, we must take you,” roared the Captain.

The long boat was lowered and the Captain boarded Jenson, and found rum and brandy.

“ Good God, we must take you,” he said, “ you’ve got smuggle aboard.”

Jenson said, “ Will you come to the cabin, sir ? ”

The old Captain hesitated and followed the smuggler.

When they reached the little dark room below decks, Jenson stood up straight, his arms crossed, and said—

“ Captain Lloyd, I have passed you twenty-two times and been hailed every time, and I always told you the truth every time. Now I defy you to take me.”

The Captain turned white when he saw how the tables were turned, and said—

“ Well, will you promise me you’ll never do it again ? ”

“ Yes,” answered Jenson, “ I’ve made my fortune.”

“ Well, you’ve made your fortune and you deserve it, but it’s no go any longer ; get rid of the old vessel,” said the Captain, rising and going back to his boat.

Jenson turned his prow and steered for the coast of France and sold his cargo ; but he couldn’t give the “ trade ” up, he returned again with Jersey tobacco, forty tons, and was caught off Holyhead. The vessel was taken into Holyhead and two officers placed in charge of her. During the night Jenson and his two sons surprised the officers, gagged and bound and placed them on the quay, and quietly slipped off to sea without a compass: They steered by the stars to Newfoundland, where he sold his tobacco and filled up with dried cod, which he took to London, where he sold up the lot, vessel and all, retiring on the proceeds.

XIV.

Old Mother Brown's Christmas Eve.

“Where the waters unwearied
Round dark Malltreath rave,
Shines the moon cold and dreary.

* * * *

And ghostly sea birds lonely sailing
On the far glimmering tide,
A mournful dirge are wailing
O'er my dear dead bride.”

My Dead Bride.

ON the afternoon of Christmas Eve the landscape was white, and the water grey, and over all hung a low, leaden sky; the earth smiled a ghastly, sickly smile, the smile of a dead corpse whose lips are retracted and whose teeth gleam in the twilight.

Old Mother Brown came to her cottage door and looked up and down the beach and across to the white gleaming hills of Carnarvon patched with patches of fir and snow.

“Yes,” she said to herself, “there’s a little bit of breeze, but I will be sure to go in for the drink for the Christmas, for I haven’t lived here seventy-one year and going to miss my Christmas liquor for a storm.”

She turned the chickens, feeding round on the dry barren soil, into their pens, went and saw the pig was all right, and got her nephew, Willy, a lad of fourteen, who was cutting out a model cutter, to get Nany from the high old brick kiln wall, where she fed on the grass that grew richer there than on the barren shore. Nany was made

fast to an old boat that lay before the door, its side full of holes and rents, and William was warned to tell his father she'd be back for tea.

Old Mrs. Brown put her silver into her dirty purse, put on her dingy old bonnet, and went off down the beach to Beaumaris, regardless of the red-legs, oxbirds, ringed plover and curlews feeding on the flat left bare by the ebbing tide. She passed the stakes of the weir.

"Ay, that's where poor Billy was drowned Christmas night ten year ago. Poor Billy! The drink got to him and he went," she muttered, a flock of fine oyster catchers, who had been breaking open the few remaining rotten oyster shells in the weir, rising and flying with wild calls across the Straits.

When she got into Beaumaris, a great black cloud with quivering flounces was hovering over the Carnarvon hills.

"More snow," she muttered, "more snow; but it is sure not to be much," and she tottered into the "Red Queen" and ordered her gin.

The wind rose and the black cloud began to quiver and move from the south-west up the Straits, wrapping the hills in grey, so that a long, low, white line gleamed across the Straits, warning the ocean tramps to anchor in security. Something was wrong, for the yachts hung out their lanterns, and the fishermen hastened home, after having pulled their boats high and dry on to the beach. The snow fell in a powdery shower at first and gradually the hills were buried, and all round was a grey world divided by a thin line; above the line the colour was of a lighter, more living grey than below, for white hills were behind the one and water behind the other. The wind began to sing, too, with the voice of the storm, as the clouds came up the Straits lightly, like battalions of fairy horsemen. Already the steamers were buried in the snow squalls, and only the light of a little yacht rising and falling in the grey formless world showed that something

lived beyond the shore, for the sailors and fishermen on the beach had long since run home with fast whitening coats.

As the wintry night closed in the wind sang a sad monotonous song, like unto the rushing of the sea on a beach, and the snowflakes rattled crisply upon the window panes of the "Red Queen" like frozen lace. As the landlord looked out upon the scene at closing in time, he saw a white foreground, with a leaden background, across which the snow squalls fled like wraiths in the evening light, as he watched Mrs. Brown trudge off across the white "green" towards the beach with her three bottles of gin, the wind driving her before it, as she stumbled along with her two full gin bottles in a basket and one partly emptied in her hand. The white wraiths seemed to follow her mockingly; but business was flourishing, and he turned into his warm bar to respond to the clamorous calls of his red-faced, merry customers.

Old Mother Brown struggled on, the soft snow wreaths caressing her with cold fingers, and the eager alcohol working on her old brain till the white world seemed to dance up and down, and her head was full of great projects; that was life, the poor old woman felt, as she trudged over the snow-covered pebbles homewards, the yacht's light in the Straits seeming to follow her like a great planet flickering up and down in the wild world through which she struggled. But the sense of exhilarance gave way to one of stupor, and her only wish was to lie down and sleep with a head full of these delightful dreams; so she dropped all of a heap in a sitting posture on the snow—below the tide mark, her face flushed with the exercise and gin, her eyes flashing, and her lungs panting forth ethereal vapours. Her head was full of confused and soothing visions, and her ears full of the music of the storm. She could not see far, for the night had closed down, and only the yacht's light danced up and down fascinatingly. The

poor thing thought it was her cottage light, and that, on getting her breath, she would just get up and be in the warm room with her brother and grandchild soon enough. Remembering the black bottle in her hand, she uncorked it and sniffed at it and took a long, long drink. "Ah!" she sighed, "that puts warm life into me." And the quick spirit sought the dying corners of her old frame and made the blood flow briskly and merrily, as in the young days—alas! never to come again—when she walked in the evenings with the gentlemen, the visitors who came to Beaumaris in the summer time.

"Ah! what a good old world it was," she thought, as she lay the bottle down recklessly and looked upon the rising and falling light blurred by the snow squalls; "oh, how sweet was life!" and suddenly a great desire to sleep overcoming her, she dropped like a stone on to her side and lay snoring, happy as a child; and the fierce sea water blew over her, the snow clouds tearing through the night like sheeted dead. She saw nothing, heard nothing—not the anxious calls of her brother, who had come with a lantern to look for her; not the wash of the sea, which had already flowed over her boots.

All that night the snow squall raged and the yacht's light danced up and down. But next morning, as the tide left the black weedy beach between the white shore and the grey sea, they found the old woman's dead body, rolled round and round in her clothes. She lay smiling as a child, her eyes closed, for she had died in sleep; and beside her were two bottles of gin and a third bottle filled by the sea.

XV.

The Legend of Penmon House.

“ While Cambria shrinks, with boding fear,
 And dreads the tale she's doomed to hear,
 Affliction wild with piercing cry,
 And dark despair with downcast eye,
 Misfortune throngs on every side.
 Fallen is Mona's strength and pride,
 And Britain's sons in vain are brave.”

Llwyd's Poems.

I.

PENMON HOUSE was a lonely old stone house roofed with slate, standing in a deserted garden, whence you could see Black Point, Puffin Island and the Atlantic beyond, whilst on the right frowning Orme's Head and the Menai Straits glittered in the sunlight at high water, whilst at low water the Dutchman lay exposed—a long sweep of sands.

Penmon House was a very old structure and had for long been unoccupied, the last inhabitants having been three strangers, a man, his wife and daughter, who came from nobody knew where and lived an exclusive life, spoke to none, and suddenly disappeared, the owner of the house never coming to search for them. Indeed, very little was known of the owner. It was said vaguely that he lived at Liverpool.

Not far from Penmon House was a little croft where an old fisherman lived, a curious old man with flowing white hair and long beard—Daddy Granby by name. He farmed his little croft, living all alone and minding his own business. Still, he was a matter of frequent discussion at the little beer

house, nestling on the edge of the cliff, where he was often overhauled by the quarrymen as they drank their porter and sung "Lili-y lou bravi bron" to the music of fiddle and accordion; and splendid singers they were, those quarrymen, with their musical language and feeling. However, try as they might, they could never pick acquaintance with old Daddy Granby, and he lived out his life a mystery to the frequenters of the *Pontydon*. But Owen Williams, the landlord of the inn, might have told something an he would.

II.

DADDY GRANBY lived in the old days when spirits and tobacco went on to the Isle of Man duty free. The people of Anglesea were sorely tempted to smuggle, and many a quiet Welsh fisherman made his pile in the contraband trade. Amongst these contrabandists was this same Owen Williams, who owned a smack, the *King Llewlyn*, in which his sons fished as a blind and smuggled for a living. Their practice was to anchor off Penmon Point, where a milk cart met them, for Penmon was a wild and lonely spot in those days, not even a lighthouse stood there to warn mariners off the rocks. But I must tell you of the milk cart, for this milk cart was of peculiar construction; it was simply a tank on wheels, the tank resting in a wooden casing which looked like a car with two seats before and two seats behind. This car belonged to an hotel at Beaumaris, and used to go back and forward to Daddy Granby's at Penmon for milk and often for spirits, for the two milk cans always carried in front were as often full of spirits as milk, for the casual observer could not tell the real and spirituous milk cans apart, but they were different—the spirituous cans being fitted with a pipe down the middle leading to the tap. That pipe alone was filled with milk, in case of an emergency. The smugglers always filled the tank full, so the spirit should not gurgle and slap about when driving over the hills to Beaumaris. So altogether there were six in the

secret and they kept the business very close. The six were old Daddy Granby, the three Williamses, the innkeeper at Beaumaris and his brother—ostler and milk-cart driver.

III.

WHEN the sons had been for some years at the work, an artist, a middle-aged, dark-haired man, appeared at the *Pontydon* and took up permanent quarters there, keeping a yacht moored off the shore, for he was very fond of sailing up and down the Straits as far as Menai, painting the islands, wooded shores and villages from his yacht. Especially fond was he of the two best views to be found in the Straits, Bangor from near Beaumaris, with Penrhyn Castle, and the view from Menai looking up the Straits on a fine summer's day. He painted these two lovely landscapes under different atmospheric effects, being especially fond of swiftly putting down evening and night effects of Bangor as seen from his yacht when moored off Beaumaris—and lovely is the scene when the lights twinkle through a light mist.

During his wanderings up and down the Straits he fell in with the Williamses and got very friendly, for Mr. George Harris, a Cornishman, was a good fellow. By degrees old Owen let him into the secret of the smuggling, and Mr. Harris being of a romantic nature begged to be taken on some of those risky voyages to the Man. Owen and his sons trusted and took him, so that when Daddy Granby died two years after Mr. Harris' coming to the inn he was quite friendly with the three Williamses, and full of sympathy for their great loss sustained by the death of their confederate, Daddy Granby, for the croft was let to a stranger, which was a bad look-out for their smuggling.

Soon after Daddy Granby's death, the news went round the village that an old man had hired old Penmon House and gone there to live, and that Mr. Harris had left, having sold his yacht for a song to the three Williamses. It was

also remarked old Owen must be getting rich as he kept on the smack in addition to the yacht.

When the quarrymen and rustics had imbibed these pieces of news, they settled down to sing, only regretting Mr. Harris' departure, for he was very free-handed with beer.

IV.

It was a Tuesday night in the following October, when all the usual frequenters of the *Pontydon* were assembling, when Robert Roberts, a slate cutter, burst into the room, breathing hard, his face white as a sheet and his dark eyes staring wildly about him, saying excitedly, "The ghost, the ghost!" and dropped into a seat.

There was a hobble-bobble amongst the quarrymen, for they are very superstitious—the Welsh. And when Robert Roberts got composed he told them he was coming down the lane, a steep bit of road, when he saw a hearse and four horses coming up from the sea, and he drew back and saw them go by. "They came up rightly slow. There were four horses with white heads and white fore-legs, white as a sheet, and two postillions all dressed in white on the fore-horses, and their faces burning like fire, and then came a hearse, all the wheels burning like fire, and behind was a big ghost, about eight feet high, with a glassy face, all burning like fire, and they went by and never made no noise at all."

The quarrymen looked at each other and kept questioning poor Robert Roberts, so that there was no music that night, and they went in a body to the village—to find all their doors locked and the women in terror for a ghost; a big tall man all in white, with a face like fire, had been walking through the village that evening.

The inhabitants of the village had a sleepless time that watch, and for many a night afterwards, for many saw the ghostly hearse and tall spirit with the flaming face. The hearse always drove to old Penmon House and was never

seen only between the sea and the old house, so that Penmon House soon got the reputation of being haunted, and no one ever went near it. But the old hermit did not seem to mind, though like Daddy Granby he would speak to no one.

V.

WE must now leave the Williamses ostensibly engaged in fishing, and turn to their two cousins, by name George and William Harris, both brought up as fishermen, and smart lads they were, having been educated by an old parson who took a fancy to them.

They got tired of fishing, and the smuggling they had no share in, so they went off to Portsmouth and went into the Navy, entering as first-class boys. At that time the China seas were infested with pirates, so that about the time the Harrises had finished their training they were told off to the *Revenge*, one of the three ships of war commissioned to go to the China seas with the Admiral's frigate for seven years.

Curiously enough, one of the midshipmen aboard of the *Revenge* was named George Harris, and was much like George Harris, the sailor, in appearance and build, and of the same age.

The *Revenge* sailed for China and fell in with a lot of pirate's junks about thirty miles to the nor'ard of Hong Kong. She was alone at the time, so she had to keep these junks at long range, for they were very numerous. And there they were, firing at each other, sinking some junks and getting badly used themselves. The big junk of the fleet kept out of range, and it was the Captain's desire to capture her and so demoralize the fleet, for the big junk is always the chief boat.

After much heavy firing at long range the junks drew off, and entered into a harbour, the big junk going in last. The Captain of the ship then told his two best gunners to try their best and cut away her mast. They tried their best

and at the third shot the junk's mast was taken clean off by a chain-shot amid a babel of yells and deafening drum-beats, some of the pirates getting clear in sampans, others jumping overboard and swimming ashore.

The *Revenge* drew alongside with great difficulty, for they were nearly done for by the heavy cannonade—ten of her men being killed as well—and ransacked the junk, taking the treasure and stolen chronometers aboard of the *Revenge*, scuttling the junk and afterwards going into the harbour. Directly the *Revenge* showed her fore-leg in the closely locked harbour, all the pirates ran like rats from their junks and bamboo houses ashore to the mountains, but the Englishmen did not follow, merely firing a few shots at intervals to keep the Chinamen off.

The next morning the look-out kept in the small boat outside the harbour sighted the Admiral's frigate from Hong Kong, so they hoisted a signal—Union-Jack downwards. The water was bold there, so that the frigate could keep close in shore, and she bore down for them, stopping opposite the entrance to the bay. The *Revenge* sent off the boats with the first and second lieutenants to report what they had done, and to tell how they had suffered in their fight with the pirates. In reply the Admiral sent fifty armed men to give assistance, and said he would proceed to Hong Kong and send carpenters and material to refit the ship.

Next morning as soon as it got broad daylight the Captain gave the order—"All hands to pillage!"

The men turned out with expectation and began ransacking the junks, keeping what they liked, except money or treasure, which had to be given over to the Government.

About noon the pillagers returned to the ship, and after dinner the order was given—"All hands to rummage the village and fire it!"

The brothers Harris had picked on the biggest bamboo house, determined to go thither, believing that the chief

treasure and valuables would be there. So directly the men got ashore they made a rush for the houses, and the two Harrises ran for the big house, rushing in with drawn cutlasses to find the first room empty with the exception of three joshes—the centre one made of brass, the other two being china. As they were overhauling the joshes for jewels the head of the brass josh moved, and George Harris found on trying it that the head unscrewed, so he quietly took it off, and found a bundle of papers done up with red silk. Hastily pocketing them, he screwed back the head and they went to the other rooms. This house proved to belong to the head mandarin—who is the biggest rogue in China—though he is governor and judge of each port—for he is generally connected with the pirates.

After sacking the village they set it afire and burnt every house and junk down; after which the carpenters came from Hong Kong and repaired the ship, when she went to Calcutta with despatches.

When they reached Calcutta—"the city of stinks"—there was much sickness, so that before long twenty of the ship's crew were in the College Hospital—two of them being midshipman George Harris and A.B. George Harris.

The midshipman died and the A.B. was convalescent when a letter came for George Harris. The nurse brought it to the convalescent. "What is your Christian name?"

"George."

"Where from?"

"Beaumaris."

"All right. That's for you," and she gave him the letter. Upon opening it he read a letter begging him to leave the service and return to Anglesea, where his father had just bought him an estate for £10,000. The letter was signed, "Your affectionate father, George Harris."

George Harris, A.B., knew very well this letter was not from his father, yet he was puzzled to know who this George Harris was, for he had never heard of such a one at

Beumaris. However, he determined to keep the letter and say nothing.

After he finished his service the ship returned to Portsmouth and was paid off, the sailors receiving their shares of prize-money three months afterwards.

VI.

“Now we’ll go to London and be gentlemen,” said the two Harrises, for the “papers” found in the josh proved to be £10,000 in English bank notes—money stolen from English vessels no doubt.

So they sold all their sailors’ things and went to the best outfitters and tailors, where they were supplied with fashionable clothes. Then they returned to Beaumaris to find their father dead; so they called on the old parson, who had educated them, and his two handsome daughters.

The parson received them kindly and told them of the ghost, and that a horn always blew three blasts before the hearse appeared. “The village daren’t go about at night,” said the old parson.

“By God, we’ll find the ghost out,” said George.

And so they did. They got two clubs, and found out the hearse always ascended the steep lane leading to Penmon House; so they hid in the hedge one dark night—for the ghost never appeared on moonlit nights—and they agreed to take a postillion apiece. They heard the far-away sounds of the horn through the still night, and presently saw the ghostly cortége appearing as described. On it came silently up the road, and when it reached them they jumped out, and each one struck a postillion off his seat with his club, but the tall ghost ran away before they could get at him. They felt the horses and hearse and found them to be very real, and then they went to the back of the hearse and tried to open it, but that was impossible. Whilst they were doing this the postillions, whom they thought stunned, rose up and ran for their lives, being lost in the night. They merely

ran on to Penmon House and changed their things, and went on to Beaumaris.

The two Harrises took the hearse back to the village and broke the door open, and there was a hobble-bobble—they rolling the kegs on to the street and the men helping themselves and laughing and singing now the ghost was found.

They found the wheels and horses' hoofs were all most carefully and deftly muffled, the horses having white woolly head-covers and stockings.

Whilst this festivity was going on in the village a revenue cutter's yacht came ashore and heard of the capture of the hearse, so they determined to go straight to Penmon House and search that, but found nothing worth having.

VII.

THE story of the hermit, who had died a few months before, was found out, and it leaked out that he was none other than the painter who had so suddenly disappeared. It was found he was in league with Owen Williams and his sons in the smuggling. No sooner did George Harris find this out than he told his brother to go to Liverpool for a while and he would make him rich—for no one knew these strangers to be the Harrises except the old parson. So George Harris went to old Owen and said—

“I hear you were a great friend of my father's.”

“Your father,” said old Owen, suspiciously. “Who?”

“George Harris.”

“You George Harris's son? No, he's dead! It's all fush.”

“Is he though? That's a false report.”

“Yes, he is. He died at Calcutta.”

“Not me. A sailor of that name died there. I was in hospital with him.”

“Indeed!”

“Would you know his writing?”

“Yes.”

“Well, here’s a letter where he asks me to leave the service and come home to live on a £10,000 estate he has bought for me.”

Old Owen took the letter and recognized the writing, and said—

“Well, that’s right; and so you are the son of my old friend. Well, well! I shouldn’t have dreamed of such a thing. You’ve come into a nice property. This estate and Penmon House are his. Your father has been dead six months, and he left no will, so it’s all yours.”

No questions were asked, and George Harris took possession of the properties, and Daddy Parson wondered, but kept silent, for both brothers were affianced to his daughters.

VIII.

WHEN George got possession he went over Penmon House to search it, overhauling every part, going last into the cellar, but he could find nothing, so he had to go and beg old Owen to show him. So Owen and he went up one day, and Owen showed him how by pressing a stone a door opened into a big cellar, where the smuggle used to be hid, and where the white ghost’s dress with the fiery face was kept—an ingenious machine devised by the artist, who had it made so that the cape and head could be lowered or raised at will. Then old Owen proceeded to show him a panelled room decorated with brass studs—his father’s old living room, with a book-case and writing table still standing there. They examined the writing table and found George Harris’ diary completely kept till the day of his death. The sailor pocketed that, and then by pressing a square in the floor another door flew open, and they entered a cellar in which lay three skeletons, and an old clothes press and rudely carved bin—all cobweby.

“There’s nothing here, except them,” said old Owen. “The book will tell you, perhaps, how they came here.

I can't read, so I dunno, but if the book don't tell you I can."

Then they returned from the secret rooms and George Harris returned to the parsonage, telling the old parson of everything.

The old man was eager to see the diary, so he sat up all that night reading it, and here are the extracts he marked.

IX.

"JAN. 1st. This diary was begun by me, George Harris, to-day, for the use of my son, George Harris, after my death.

"I am the only son of the Rev. George Harris, of Bodmin, Cornwall, and shall be fifty-four the 13th of May this year.

"There were two servant girls at the parsonage, one a handsome, bewitching Cornish girl, when I came home from London whilst studying art. I immediately fell in love with her, and we went one day to Bodmin and got married. I managed it. I was only twenty-two then. When she got enceinte my father found it out and sent her to a cottage four miles off and made me go into the Civil Service, for he said he would cut me off with a shilling, and it was therefore useless for me to go on with art. So I went to London, and my wife had a son, George Harris. I used to write to her, and was making arrangements for her to come and live with me in London, when she was suddenly taken ill with inflammation of the lungs, and died. But before she died she sent for my father and showed him her marriage lines and begged him to take the child.

"'Yes, I will, I will,' said my father. And he took the child, and wrote to me he would forgive me if I worked off my sin, and never came near him for seven years. He said he didn't know I had really married the girl, and that was why he would forgive me at all, and why he would take charge of the child.

“Well, I wrote and promised I would do as he desired. So I lived a wretched seven years as a poor clerk, and never heard a word from home.

“At the end of the time I hurried off to Bodmin, to find my old father dead and the solicitors looking for me; for my old father had left me all he had.

“My cousin was still living at the parsonage. She had married the new incumbent and they had my boy—a bright lad of seven.

“So I took my small legacy—enough, however, for we two to live upon—and my boy, George Harris, and settled in Kent, where I spent all my time educating him for the Navy, finally getting him a nomination, and he was sent to China in a war-ship.

“Soon after I went to live at Penmon, spending my time sketching, boating and fishing.

“Whilst at Penmon I saw a good opportunity of getting rich by smuggling, and I wanted money for my boy George. So I joined Owen Williams, and by making a common ghost story a living reality we carried on a famous and paying trade. But though poor men like the Williamses thought themselves rich on a few thousands, I wanted more for George. I wished him to come home from the Navy and be a country gentleman.

“My wishes were fulfilled in this strange and unexpected manner.

“One day a black-whiskered Spaniard called upon me, and asked if he might see the house.

“‘Yes,’ I said.

“He looked over the empty rooms without interest, and then, looking at me curiously, asked if he might go to the cellar.

“‘No!’ I said, ‘there’s nothing there,’ for Owen and I had arranged that for our smuggling.

“When I said ‘No,’ he got most excited and drew a knife.

“A hermit who lived as I did, was never unprepared, so I drew a pistol. He immediately threw his knife on the floor with a *carajo*.

“‘This is a pretty way to repay my hospitality,’ I said.

“‘*Mil bendiciones*,’ he said; ‘but I must see the cellar.’

“‘You cannot,’ I said.

“‘Ah! Señor, will this do?’ and he pulled forth a bag of gold.

“That was another matter, so I said, ‘Señor is a good Catholic?’

“Whereupon he crossed himself. So I made him swear, by crossing his fingers, Spanish fashion, that he would divulge nothing; for it was not risky. I could see he was not connected with the revenue, and I told him I was a smuggler and that was my reason for refusing.

“He immediately became most apologetic, and said of course he ought to have known I could know nothing of the *Quinteros*, the people who lived here years ago and suddenly disappeared.

“I answered, ‘No, not I.’

“His face cleared, and he became most friendly, and we went to the cellars, I making him go on before. When we reached the cellar with the three skeletons, he swore a deep low oath, and ran to the bed-furniture and began overhauling it, holding the lantern in and out and all about. He was about this business for half an hour, when he gave it up with a most disappointed look, and we went to my private room, where I gave him cold meat and wine and cigars.

“During lunch he told me (after making me swear in my turn) what he wanted. He said the *Quinteros* belonged to a gang of Spanish coiners, and the work was done at Penmon House, gold coins being brought from Spain and adulterated to a large percentage, being re-minted at Penmon. He went on to tell me that the *Quinteros* were all very clever at the work—the daughter as well as the

others. But the Company found they were defrauding them, keeping back gold for themselves.

“‘They were cautioned,’ he said, ‘and when they saw the game was up—for they didn’t care to get rich by the slower and surer method of small adulteration—they wrote that they would do no more. Now old Quintero was a very clever coinist and metal worker, so it would have been difficult, if not impossible, to replace him; so three of our men were sent over to parley with him, but he grew angry and refused to go on unless better paid, so they quarrelled, and alas! knives were drawn and he was killed, his wife and daughter being killed afterwards to keep the secret. The men destroyed all signs of the works, but they could never find some £40,000 of gold that belonged to the Society. They thought Quintero had deposited it elsewhere. However, the Society was broken up, and I, an old member, came over hoping to find the money.’

“‘And the skeletons?’ I asked.

“‘The Quinteros, cleaned up by the rats.’

“I felt sure Quintero had got rid of the money, so I gave the Spaniard leave to search where he liked. He was delighted, and stayed for three days, looking high and low in vain. He went away very disappointed. Then I set to work and found £30,000 in good Spanish money, and, remarkable to relate, in a double bottom to the old clothes press. The Spaniard must have had his hands within an inch of the money.

“With that sum I bought an estate for my son George—a middy in the ship *Revenge* serving in the China seas.”

* * * * *

Then followed minute entries of receipts and sales of spirit and tobacco, and various commonplace entries of feelings, states of heart and such minor matters as can interest nobody except a jackdaw-brained “psychological” novelist.

The next entry of interest relates to the produce of the estate, and the last entry of interest was the receipt of the news of his son's death at Calcutta. After that the entries ceased for several days, the final one being—

“I saw a young fellow to-day extraordinarily like George—the same who attacked the hearse, if I mistake not. I will see him to-morrow.”

But the old hermit never saw the morrow. He died that night of the bursting of an aneurism.

X.

NEXT day Mr. Harris went up to old Penmon House and hunted high and low for the remaining store of coins, finding the treasure in six new canvas bags hidden in a hole in the ground beneath the skeletons.

XI.

A MONTH afterwards Mr. George Harris was married, with great rejoicings, to the parson's eldest daughter, and they went to live at Caeffyn Hall.

XII.

A LITTLE while after this wedding the brother returned and told how he had lost his brother in Calcutta Hospital, but that he had found a lot of treasure in a Chinese josh; and his marriage with the parson's second daughter was announced.

There were great rejoicings. All the children were invited, and booths set up, and teas given to all the villagers.

This happened one night in June. Everybody was making merry, when cries arose of “The ghost, the ghost.” And sure enough the old ghost like Daddy Granby, about seven feet high, came stalking from a planting and entered the ball room, going straight up to the young couple, and saying—

“Husband, be good to thy wife; wife, be good to thy husband, and God will love you both.”

The people drew back along the walls in fear, when the ghost turned and went to Daddy Parson, saying—

“Father, be good to thy children; children, be good to thy father, and God will love you both.”

And the dreadful creature stalked back to the planting, and was never seen again in those parts.

“Well, let’s begin dancing,” said old Daddy Parson, “for that must be a heavenly ghost. It’s a good ghost, a good ghost.”

And so it was, for the ghost was George Harris.

So the fiddle and piccolo and clarionet struck up, and the old-fashioned dances began, and were kept up till daylight.

But Penmon House is gone now, and the ghost has been laid, and all the people who took their part in that dance are dead, and yet the story lives, and was entrusted to me to write down for others to read.

XVI.

Robin Dhu: the Welsh Prophet.

“ In the morning in Anglesea I arose,
 And straight for my journey prepared ;
 In Chester I first broke my fast,
 At noon in green Erin I dined,
 And evening beheld me in Mona,
 Enjoying my own turf fireside.”

The real Robin Dhu's Prophecy, 1340.

At the beginning of this century there lived at the farm—the Rushy Vale, in North Wales, a flock-master, whose sheep and goats wandered over the Rocks of the Eagles, tended only by a bare-footed boy. In those days the hills were free and unclaimed.

This farmer was a very religious man, and in due time became a local preacher, a more lucrative office than now ; for then there were no established preachers, but all the ministrants were local preachers—the congregations subscribing for the maintenance of chapel and preacher.

The farmers were only too glad to carry the preachers from chapel to chapel, entertaining them during their stay in the neighbourhood with wheaten, barley, or oaten bread, butter milk, cheese, potatoes, and, in season, trout and the red upon the withe or smoked rock venison hung on a willow withe.

This old farmer kept a youth to tend the sheep—a bright, intelligent boy, named Black Robin—a lad of sixteen, with jet black hair, sallow skin and dark eyes ; altogether Black

Robin looked more like an Asiatic, and some said he had come from the East.

One Saturday night, soon after Black Robin came to the farm, his master, who was feeling ill, told him to saddle the black mare on the morrow and go over early in the morning to the deacon and tell him his master was too poorly to come and preach, asking him to get a substitute.

"Indeed, I will," said Black Robin.

So early the next morning, Robin saddled the black mare and rode over to the deacon's farm—the Bog inclosure—arriving before the family sat down to breakfast. When the deacon came out to receive his message, Robin said—"How is thy heart?"

"Well, my son, and how is thy master, his good wife, and the rest at home?"

"My master has sent me here to preach to-day, he is ill."

The deacon looked with amazement into the boy's face, and exclaimed—

"Ië!"

"Yes, my heart," said Robin.

"Well, put the mare into the stable and come in and get your breakfast before we go to chapel. It's only just nine and we don't begin till ten."

So they breakfasted on butter milk and potatoes and went into the chapel, and in due time Black Robin mounted the pulpit and began to preach.

Such a sermon was never heard before: his fiery eloquence, sensuous allusions, and profound sympathy touched all hearts, so that thirty new members joined the chapel immediately after the service.

The deacon was delighted, and before night the boy's reputation had spread far and wide along the country-side so that at six that evening the chapel was crowded with devout and expectant faces.

Again Robin preached, his personal magnetism holding

the congregation spellbound. The sermon was pronounced to be even better than his morning effort. After the service a buzz of conversation sounded through the cold, drear-looking chapel, and so powerful are eloquent and heartfelt words that sixty more persons joined the chapel that night, whilst Black Robin was jogging home on the mare, the delicious words, "Well, I hope your master will send you here often," sounding in his ears and half of the collection jingling musically in his pocket.

When he had stalled the mare he went indoors and found the farmer and his wife sitting before the peat, smouldering in the big fire-place, over which a kettle hung from an iron hook at the end of a chain.

"Well, how did you get on, Robin?" asked the farmer.

"Well, I didn't like to come after the morning service."

"Well, was there a sermon?"

"Yes, there was somebody said a little;" and Robin had his supper and went to bed happy between two blankets in a box of soft hay.

On the following Saturday Robin was sent to say the farmer himself would preach on the morrow.

On the Sunday morning the farmer rode off, and Robin settled down for a read, for he was not over religious—in fact he confessed afterwards he did not believe a word of the Bible, but he was a born Ananias, like most of his countrymen, this fault arising out of a native delicacy of mind that prompted him to disguise the truth rather than offend, for your Kelt has more politeness than moral courage.

The farmer meanwhile preached to a disappointed congregation, in a mechanical ranting voice, and went home to dinner with the deacon. After dinner, as they sipped their smuggled brandy and peaty water and smoked, the deacon asked—

"Who is the youth you sent down yonder to preach? He was a splendid preacher; we'd thirty joined after the morning service and sixty more that same night."

“What! I sent nobody. What, did the boy preach to you?”

“Yes! he must be the best preacher in the world.”

“Iē, Iē,” said the farmer, and preached his last sermon that night; for he was like his countrymen, extraordinarily amenable to reason.

On reaching home he examined the boy and found him a lad of remarkable intelligence, so he wisely retired from his office and let the boy take his place; and whenever Robin preached the chapels were full to overflowing, and his pockets filled proportionately—that, was what he cared for, the shekels.

At length, at the height of his ecclesiastical glory, he said one day to a large congregation—

“I am going to prophesy to you; listen! There shall be carriages running without horses, even unto the utmost parts of the world.”

The congregation murmured admiringly, but doubtfully, and some saw in his words merely Black Robin’s prophecy repeated, but Robin only acted truly to the native character, for so quickly does the Kelt assimilate new ideas and simplify them by his innate sense of method that he will automatically give forth the ideas of others as his own. They are born plagiarists.

“I’ll tell you another thing,” said the lad. “There shall be a bridge over the Menai Straits three years after the twenty-one years’ warfare;” and again they murmured, and their hearts were touched, for they love mystery; and from that day Black Robin was titled “the Welsh Prophet.”

When he reached man’s estate the old farmer died, and Robin thought it high time to “do for himself,” so he hired the old man’s farm. He was persuaded thereto by his neighbour and friend, another sheep farmer. The two entered into partnership and fed their sheep and goats over six miles of stony red loam upland. Soon after he set up in business a wealthy family came to reside for the summer

in the neighbourhood, for they liked the greatly exaggerated beauties of the scenery, and it was a novelty to buy mountain sheep for five shillings and butter for fourpence a pound. The gentleman, whilst sketching about the waterfalls and hills, fell in with Black Robin and his partner and they became friends, and the visitor's wife took a great fancy to one of the daughters of Robin's partner, so that she was persuaded to go to their London suburban house as under-nurse.

When she first went to London the girl wrote frequently to her sister, but as she made new friends, her letters became fewer and colder; for the Kelt is not deeply affectionate, his whole nature is too impressionable for that; his affections are emotional, and so he may love a cat to childishness, and yet go against a poor neighbour. Nor did she hear much of her home for some time, till one day a very valuable ring disappeared from her master's dressing case. There was a great search, high and low, for the ring, a much-valued heirloom, but the trinket was not to be found. It was thought one of the servants had stolen it, and the Welsh girl did not like this; for *Taffy* is *not* naturally so great a thief as other races; he is naturally too dignified and self-respecting to permit himself to thieve.

"Why don't you send for Black Robin, our Welsh prophet? He is sure to find it," suggested the superstitious under-nurse.

At first her master laughed at the idea, but finally agreed that Black Robin should be written to, expense being to him no consideration.

The prophet found his way to London and to the house, where he knocked.

When the footman saw this black-haired, swarthy man, he was about to shut the door in his face, but something in the tone, intelligent face and independence of the man magnetised him into civility.

"Is your master within?"

"Yes," answered the footman.

"Well, indeed, I must see him."

"What for?"

"I've important business with him,—let me in, man."

"What name?"

"Black Robin, the Welsh prophet."

So Black Robin was ushered in to the study, and announced to the master of the house. When they were both seated, the master said—"Well, I have lost a beautiful and very valuable diamond ring. I want you to find it for me. Can you?"

"Oh, I daresay, but I must have two or three days," said the crafty prophet.

"Oh, take a week if you like, so long as it is found."

"Well, I must employ magic, and for that I shall want a room to myself. I must have the key of the room, and no one must enter it at any time."

The master, somewhat incredulous, smiled, but said—

"Oh yes, you shall have what you like."

So Robin was installed as magician in a dismantled bedroom, where he spent most of his time, even eating his meals there and sleeping on the floor.

Smells the most horrible, and fumes the most penetrating and pungent, stole from the room, and it was evident the magician was at work.

Every morning Robin used to walk in the garden for an hour, and every evening the master of the house asked him—

"Well, have you succeeded yet?"

"No, I haven't succeeded yet," replied Robin for three days, but on the fourth he said—

"I want all the servants to come before me one by one, and I wish it arranged so that those who have passed before me shall not be able to communicate with the others."

"Oh yes, do as you like," said the master.

That afternoon the servants passed before Black Robin,

as he sat before three simmering three-cornered pots from which horrible smells issued. Robin scanned each face—he was a judge of character; from the fat butler to the scullery-maid they came in order of precedence, except the house-maid, who came last.

Black Robin looked at her and said suddenly—

“You stole the diamond ring.”

The girl stoutly denied.

“Go and fetch it and give it to me, and your master shall never know who stole it,” continued the magician.

The girl burst out crying.

“Go now or I’ll expose you; bring it to me on the sly in an hour or two. Give three raps at the door when you bring it.”

Two hours later Black Robin held the ring in his hand, and it is said he comforted the girl; he was partial to the sex, and liked *caru yu y Gwely* better than *caru ar y Gwely*, and she was comely.

That evening the magician’s pots fumed more malodourously assertive than ever. The next morning he walked abroad as usual, and the master noticed that he watched the turkeys with great attention.

“Well, Robin,” said he, “have you found the ring?”

“No, not yet; I think I’ll find it to-morrow. I’m coming on wonderful well.”

“Indeed, I’m delighted to hear it.”

Robin walked in the garden longer than usual that morning; indeed he did not return to his room till lunch time. He spent a good hour talking to the cook, a Welsh woman, who was making pastry. Once, when her broad back was turned, you might have seen him steal a handful of dough, and returning to the garden and the gobblers, select one with peculiar markings.

“You’ll do for me nicely,” said he gently, and wrapping up the ring in dough, he threw the morsel to the bird, who speedily swallowed it.

Robin knew turkeys digested their food quickly, so in a few minutes he went gravely indoors and informed the master—

“The ring is found.”

“Where, where?” he cried, and all the family rushed in, wife, children and all.

“Follow me,” said Robin, solemnly, and headed a procession to the yard where the turkeys lived.

When they reached the yard they all called out—

“Where is the ring, where is the ring?”

“In that turkey gobbler’s belly,” said he, pointing to the ill-fated and unconscious bird.

“Oh, nonsense!” exclaimed one.

“Good Heavens!” said another.

“Well, inteed now, whateffer!” said the cook.

“The ring will be found in that turkey gobbler’s belly,” repeated the prophet.

“Catch him! Kill him!” resounded on all sides.

The innocent turkey was caught, killed and opened by the cook, and there was the ring as predicted.

“Good God, how ever did you know?” asked the master, delighted and astounded.

Robin smiled and replied, “Magic!”

The owner was so delighted that he forthwith ran over to a neighbour’s house to tell him of the wonderful recovery. The neighbour laughed the whole story to scorn. Now he had a robin in a cage. It had grown tame by being constantly fed with the fowls, and even roosted with them, till one day the gardener was able to capture the bird, and it became the pet of the house.

“Well, now,” said he whose ring had been found, “I’ll have a bet with you, you doubting Thomas; we will put the robin’s cage on the table and cover it up, and I’ll bet you a pony Robin tells us what kind of bird is in the cage.”

“Done,” said the owner of the robin, “that’s a square test.”

They arranged the cage and sent a servant to call Black Robin, who appeared almost as soon as they had made their preparations.

"Now," said one of them, "there is a bird in that cage, we wish to test your wonderful power further; tell us what sort of bird it is."

"That's difficult," said the prophet, "but I'll consider. May I walk up and down out there?" pointing to the hall.

"Oh, yes, but leave the door open, so we can hear if you converse with anyone, for that must not be."

The magician thought he was caught at last, but he paced the hall trying to find some artifice by which he could escape from discomfiture; but nothing could he devise, and at last in desperation he ejaculated—

"By God, Robin is caught at last."

"How did you know it was a robin?" shouted the bird-owner from the room.

"Oh, I knew very well it was a robin you had there," said the astute prophet; "take the cloth off," added the alert and quick-witted Welshman.

The owner of the bird took the cloth off and discovered the robin.

"By God, it is marvellous! Who told you we caught the bird?"

"Oh, I knew."

"Well, I would never have thought such a thing. I have lost a great many things—a diamond necklace, two bracelets, and lots of other jewellery, and nobody has been able to find them. I wonder if you could?"

"I daresay," said Robin.

"Well, I daresay. There seems to be something in you."

So Robin was duly installed at this house also under the same conditions, and there was much burning of chemicals and noxious fumes floated through the house, and on the fourth day Robin wished to see the servants as before.

They all passed in review, and then he said, "None of these know anything of your jewellery. Has there been another servant here?"

"Yes, I suspected him, he was my valet, and I sent him away."

"Do you know where he is?"

"Yes, near here."

"Come and show me where he lives, but go away directly you have pointed out the house."

So they went forth, and turning into another road Mr. Edmonson showed Robin a brick villa and then went back to his house.

Robin examined the house, and seeing a policeman near he went up to him and said—

"Look here, there's a man in that house that has stolen a lot of jewellery from his master. His master will forgive him if he confesses, but if he does not you are to take him in charge. Here's a sovereign for you if you'll help me."

"That's all right," said the policeman pocketing the coin; "what shall I do?"

"Come and stand outside the house, directly you see me go in, that's all."

"All right."

Robin went to the house, rang, and was admitted by an old woman.

When he got into the room he found the valet lying on a sofa reading a book.

"Well, Mr. Brown, you've stolen the jewels from Holmes House."

"Damn it, who are you?" asked the valet.

"It's no good, I'm Black Robin, the Welsh prophet, and I know everything. I found the ring Mr. Elton lost, and I know you have stolen the jewellery from Holmes House. Now, come, no nonsense; look out, see that policeman, he is to take you if you don't confess, but if you confess and give the things up, you are free, and your master shall never know you took them."

“Is that so?”

“On Black Robin’s word.”

“Well, I’ll confess. I took them, but I have been unable to sell them, so they are still where I hid them. All are there. You must go back to the house and go to the stable, and up in the hay-loft you’ll find an old carved chest which was used as a corn bin before they got the new tin-lined one; but when that one came they turned the old one up into the loft, and there it has been ever since. I made a false bottom to it, and you will find a hole in the middle board; if you pull that up with a nail and put your hand in to the left, you’ll come to some hay; pull that out and you’ll find all the jewellery in an old handkerchief.”

“Is that true?” asked Black Robin solemnly.

“On God’s oath that’s true.”

“If you are true I’ll keep my word,” said Black Robin, going out and dismissing the policeman.

When he got to the stable the prophet said to himself—

“This is a case if he has been lying to do me, which is very likely;” but on climbing up into the loft the sight of the old carved chest reassured him, and he said to himself, “Well, there’s the chest any way,” and on turning it over his quick eye detected the false bottom. So he sought for the hole and withdrew the plank, which fitted very tightly, and felt as directed, discovering the handkerchief full of jewels.

He smiled to himself, replaced the board, locked the loft carefully and went to his room, whence fumes more noxious than ever spread through the house.

After lunch he called all the family together in the drawing-room and said—

“I have found the lost jewels; there are many more than you said.”

“Is the diamond necklace safe?” asked the wife.

“Yes, all—follow me,” said Robin, and the family and servants followed, crowding into the hay-loft. When they

were all squeezed into the low dark place, he opened the secret bottom and drew forth the trinkets one by one.

"Oh, that's my necklace," said one; "that's my bracelet," said another, and so on, till all the jewels were taken from the chest, and they all returned with much rejoicing to the house, for the servants were as much delighted as the master and mistress, for it was very unpleasant to serve in a house where jewellery was continually lost.

So Robin was paid big fees, and he left for his native hills, loaded with honour and wealth. But on his return home Robin used to appear in the villages, having powdered himself with some white crystals, and say he'd been round the world, and it soon got noised about that Robin could go round the world in a night, and that he always rode a black stallion, which was the devil himself. It is said an unwary villager offered to go with him, and Robin provided him with wings, cautioning him not to say "God." But alas! he cried, "My God!" when rushing through the air, and so fell on to an island seven thousand miles from home.

When he got back he continued his preaching with all his former success, but it was observed that he was growing fond of his glass, though he was a great teetotal advocate, for he never drank anything but "ginger beer," and this is how he reconciled his theory and practice. He carried a piece of ginger and a little nutmeg grater in his pocket, and whenever he entered a house he called for a pot of ginger ale. The inns never kept such drink in those days, so when the big cornucopia-like drinking-vessels, so common then, were brought in, he said solemnly—

"Oh, it's all right; I can make ginger beer myself—a true teetotal drink," and he grated the ginger into the beer and drank it.

"Oh, the prophet can turn beer into ginger beer himself," said the superstitious country folk.

He practised this duplicity for years, being known all

the time as the greatest advocate of teetotalism in Wales. With his ginger beer, however, came inspiration, and he improvised many a pennillion in the inns, some of which are handed down to this day.

At this time he used to go round the country preaching and making obscene verses by turns, and in his journeys he called at Baron Hill, and because they would not give all the beer he required, he cursed the house, saying, "This place shall be a sheep-walk one day."

There is a tradition that he went to America, and no sooner got there than he wished to return, and having no means he got some handbills printed in which he described himself, and added that he was wanted. Tradition says that the police arrested him and brought him over, and so he got his passage free; but I suspect that, like all prophets, he invented his mysterious journeyings into the unknown.

Gradually the "ginger beer" mastered him, and after several scandalous scenes when he came drunk to chapel he was dismissed by the flock and became a drunken clerwr, going from bad to worse very quickly, and dying from the results of drink. Upon his deathbed he left his poor property to his bare-footed shepherd boy, the lad who afterwards told Robert Roberts the secret of the black ram, for, said Robin, "He has nothing, whereas my son is well off and able to look after himself;" but it is thought he loved the boy for his intelligence.

And so the Welsh prophet was laid with his fathers, but the tradition of him still lives.

XVII.

A Welsh Sailor's Yarn.

“A blessing on Cambria! her sons and her daughters,
 May Heaven protect them, the brave and the fair.
 As long as her green shores are lashed by the waters,
 May happiness, honour and freedom dwell there.”

A Blessing on Cambria.

“WELL, indeed, sir,” said old Bobby, knocking his pipe out, and fixing his black eyes upon me as he began his story,

‘I had taken the key of the house out that night, for I expected to see the new moon. You know, sir, we Welsh believe that if you see the new moon over your right shoulder it’s good luck, and if over your left shoulder it’s bad luck. Well, I was lucky; for when I saw her it was over my right shoulder, so I put the key on my middle finger and spun it round for luck. A chap near me was spinning his round his left finger; for if you see the new moon over your left shoulder first and spin the key round your left middle finger, you will only have bad luck half the moon. It was a beautiful midnight, indeed that always is when the new moon rises between twelve and two at night. If any quarter rise between those hours it’s sure to be a fine quarter—excepting it be on Saturday, for we say in Welsh, ‘A Saturday moon is a hatred to a sailór.’

“‘Well, that’s all lucky,’ says I. So I shipped in a vessel, the *Sarah E. Pettigrew*, for Boston. We went across all right till we got to the southern edge of the

banks, when we signalled a vessel, who told us they'd saved two waterlogged crews. We went on, and about noon we sighted a waterlogged vessel. Her decks were swept clear; all her bulwarks were washed to pieces. We kept a look-out for the other waterlogged vessel, but saw nothing all night. The next morning at daylight the masthead look-out called—

“‘Sail ho!’

“‘Where away?’

“‘Two points on the lee-bow.’

“The mate went up to the fore-t'gallant mast and reported a waterlogged vessel.

“‘Good God, waterlogs all the time,’ says the Captain.

“When we got near we could see people on her poop, so we kept under her bow and lowered two boats, for a heavy sea was running. We picked them off. They'd been waterlogged for three days, and washed away everything, and had only had a bit of biscuit and no water. We put the rescued crew aboard and one boat was hauled up. I was standing in the other with three mates. The falls and tackle were all ready for them to hoist up quickly directly we got on the top of a sea, which they did, and we got aboard all safe.

“We were paid off at Boston, and I was down looking for a run; for they used to send new ships home and give you twenty pounds for the run. But I couldn't find one going home, so I shipped to St. John's by the run and got seventeen dollars, and as we did it in three days I was satisfied.

“Well, the last of the vessels had been sent home from there too, so I couldn't get a run home from there either, so I shipped in a fine schooner to Charlotte Town, Prince Edward's Isle. When I got there there was no chance of a run home from there either, so I shipped in the same schooner to go sealing. She was a fore-and-after, two hundred tons burthen, Captain Magrath.

“We got all our stores in and started for the Labrador coast, where we anchored about three miles off. But we couldn't do much, for you can't get many seals till the ice sets in. But the Captain and mate shot a few on the rocks, but they were mighty shy, and dropped into the deep water at once. We'd been on the coast one morning, and a big white bear started off over a rock with a lump of seal in his mouth. The Captain and mate both fired on him and killed him, so we took him aboard and skinned him and fried him down for bear's grease, excepting his two hams—those we salted. We were glad to get him because all bears, sea-otters and that fell to the crew to be shared equally. The seals only were for the owners. There were sixteen hands aboard, so we hoped to make a nice thing before spring.

“The winter set in soon after we saw this bear, with heavy gales of wind and freezing weather. After the gales went there followed very heavy frost, and the sea was soon full of floating ice. We worked out to win'ward twenty miles clear of the shore, and two days afterwards we were froze right up, but there were several other sealers froze up in sight—the nearest being two miles off.

“Next we set about making things tidy for the winter. We'd an ice-axe, and we cut two square holes, one north and one south of her and put thick balks into them, and we made fast to them with the hawsers and tightened them by heaving on the capstan. Then we put a lot of bagging round the ropes, so that they shouldn't chafe. After that we cut a lot of holes all round for the seals to come up, some as far as three miles off.

“The weather was beautiful—no wind and bright and warm.

“We used to get breakfast about eight o'clock, and then about nine we'd go, with clubs like a big base-ball bat, covered with copper or leather at the end so they wouldn't split, after the seals. We'd take the small boat. She

was like the Prince Edward's Isle mail-boat, she could go on ice or water. But we'd an ice-boat too; she was always kept handy on the ice. These clubs were fixed to our wrists by buckles and straps, for them old dog seals are very vicious. Well, we got some seals, and each man had a coil of rope with a hook, and when he got a seal he'd drag it back to the ship, where some were skinning and salting the skins and others were trying the blubber. Sometimes we had to spear the big seals and kill them.

"Sometimes, if there was a nice breeze, we'd take the ice-boat and sail off to where the old fogies did the trying and wedged up the tiers of barrels as they got filled. Then we'd come back about dusk—half-past three—and get dinner, and after dinner we had grog, and there were two big stoves to keep us warm, so we had rare good evenings spinning up yarns.

"All round the ship was alive of a night with sea-otters and foxes and sometimes bears, after the carcasses and that. Of a moonlight night we'd shoot them, for the otter-skins are worth something.

"We'd plenty to eat, and one day a lot of wild geese fetched down on the ice. They were tired out, so we got them easy with the sailing boat, and put them in the boat full of snow, and we had roast goose whenever we wanted it.

"The ice kept piling up under us, and we kept getting higher and higher from the field, so we were sixteen feet off the flat field by Christmas.

"We used to see the Northern Lights wonderfully clear. The sky looked as though it was full of crystals like those hanging on to gas-lamps, all a-turning round and shining. That was the time to shoot the otters.

"One day at the end of the winter we saw a rum sight. All the ships round us was up in the air, and all seemed to be turned upside down.

"Well, we got full before the ice broke up, and when

that began the noise was something dreadful. Directly we heard the big cracking begin we began to fetch our ship down to the flat ice. We cut the ice away on a slant, and kept lowering her down by the capstan, till we got her on to the flat.

“The next one to us was in a bad way, blocked up on her broadside. We lent them a hand and wedged her up on the leese side so she couldn't go lower; then we got tackles to each mast and cut two holes in the ice to put toggles through. We cut the ice so she could come over, then we hove on the capstan, and up she came upright and was all right.

“When the ice broke up we were hard at it for three weeks breaking out. We had big wooden fenders a foot thick. We made all the way we could and got to Havre-de-Grace in Newfoundland. When we got there we found a lot of ships outside, and we spoke a brig, and she told us the harbour was all on fire, the oil stores had caught fire, and when the casks got burnt the oil ran into the water and got afire and began to set the pitch in the ships afire; so they slipped their cables and marked their anchors with buoys and went outside, all but one, and she kept inside because there was nobody aboard, and the fire crept up by the pitch in her seams, and burnt her level with the water.

“We got in three days after, and discharged our cargo, and then we went back to Prince Edward's Isle.

“From there I got a passage to Boston, when I went to the Mariner's Home in New Square. There I got a berth for New Orleans. I was glad to get away, for the small-pox was raging frightful, but I'd had that at home.

“We got as far as Cape Cod when the mate came to me, seeing I was pock-marked, and axed—

“‘Do you know if a person has got small-pox?’

“‘I think so.’

“‘Well, come aft. I'm afraid the Captain's son has got it.’

“So I went and looked at him, and he'd pimples like shot on his face, so I said, ‘Yes, I am sure he's got it.’

“My God! they were all scared; so the boy was put in a berth on deck, and I was told off to look after him, and told to order what I liked, and no one would come near us. The steward used to put the grub down by the door and run, and I had to write up on a slate what I wanted and hang it outside. I had to wash all our plates and smoke the cabin out with tarry ropians.

“Well, I never had such a voyage. I had all of the best to eat and drink and no one durst come nigh me.

“One day when he was getting better I went to haul in a rope, and they all ran like mad when I came near.

“‘Good God, don't touch a rope or they'll mutiny,’ said the Captain.

“I was master of the ship, and I laughed and ate and drank wine like a gentleman.

“I tied the boy's hands when he was getting better, and he got well, and when I got to New Orleans the Captain gave me fifty dollars above my wages. I never had a voyage like that.

“I ate some flying fish on the voyage down. They were good. They do fly a long way on a damp day, when their gills don't get dry so quick; but the dolphin will go under water as quickly as they and get them directly they drop.

“From New Orleans I went to Mobile and got a job discharging cotton. That's all knack. A weak man who knows how will beat a strong man all to bits at that game. You've got to balance it right, and catch it just on the turn.

“I was walking down one day from my boarding house, with my hook behind my back. When I came to the main street I saw a great crowd, and there were two gents in a carriage, and the horse wouldn't start. Presently a chap came up and said, ‘What's up here?’

“I was standing close, so I said, ‘The horse won’t go.’

“‘I guess I’ll soon settle that,’ he said, and up he goes and says—

“‘Hullo! what’s wrong?’

“They told him the same thing.

“‘I guess I’ll do it then. Hold on tight.’

“The crowd began to laugh and jeer him, but I saw him pick up a small pebble and slip it into the horse’s ear, and, my God! it started off as if it had been shot, and the crowd cheered.

“I remembered that, and once some years after when I was in Shanghai there were a lot of us ashore in the American town, so we must have a race. I had last choice too, and got a skinny old bay; but I got a pebble ready, and when we started I put it in his ear, and I won the race; but it wasn’t no good, I had to spend it all on them.

“After I’d been working there five weeks a heavy norther came and the rain flooded the place, for Mobile is half a swamp. Hands were scarce, and they wanted them badly to move the provisions in the stores from the basement up to the higher stories. First one dollar an hour was offered; then five, and it soon got to fifteen.

“There were three other Welshmen there, and we got tired after the floods, so we shipped home to Liverpool in a cotton ship; and the English fellows called us those d—d Yankees. They were jealous of us, for we’d only shipped by the run, and we had no cleaning or painting to do, only to make sail, stow sail and steer.

“Before we started we’d a bet with another ship we’d get home first.

“One of us ‘Yankees’ was a ventriloquist. I knew that in Mobile, but he axed me to keep it dark, and we’d have some fun. So one night on the fo’c’stle he made a noise like a lot of bees, and there they were all jumping up and striking at them with their caps; a lot swore they could see them.

“One night we shipped two or three heavy seas, and we four ‘Yankees’ wouldn’t come out to make fast the boat, because it wasn’t our work, and we wanted a grog if we were to come out. After a time he sent us a bottle of wine, and axed, ‘Will you come out now?’

“‘Yes, we’ll come;’ and we did, and made the boat fast, but the deck was in an awful mess with coal-tar and varnish, for they had been keeping the tar and varnish casks and other stores in the boat, for we were full up everywhere below with cargo.

“It came on to blow a terrible gale, so we made two bags out of canvas and filled them with oil and made them fast, and then punched them full of holes with an awl, and cast them out behind the vessel. There was no danger of pooping then, and never a sea broke over her afterwards.

“The next night the wind had gone down but it looked like more, and Jack (the man who could throw his voice) and I were at the wheel, and he said, ‘Now we’ll have some fun.’

“He could imitate everyone’s voice. Suddenly he sung out—

“‘Take the three royals in and fore-t’gallant and mizzen-t’gallant.’

“The old Captain and mate were on the poop, a man in the look-out and everything else pretty quiet.

“‘Sheet home the fore-t’gallant sail,’ sang out Jack.

“‘Good God! what are you doing? We’ve only just taken them in,’ said the Captain, turning to the mate.

“‘Good God! I gave no orders,’ said the mate.

“Then Jack hove his voice over the side as if someone was drowning, calling ‘Help, help.’

“‘By God, did you hear that?’ asked the Captain.

“‘No, sir,’ said the mate.

“The voice cried again over the side.

“‘By God, it’s something; I heard it,’ said the mate.

“‘By God! there’s somebody overboard. Count all hands,’ said the Captain, ‘and see who’s missing.’

“So the mate called ‘All hands ahoy,’ and the men were counted, but no one was missing.

“‘By God! there’s a ghost then,’ said the Captain.

“Suddenly the voice called clearly, ‘Sheet home the fore-t’gallant sail.’

“‘Call that boy down. Good God! what do you mean, Mr. Brown?’

“That was the second mate, who had taken the first mate’s place.

“‘Clew up the main-t’gallant sail,’ said the voice.

“The crew were all on deck now, and they rushed to obey the order.

“‘Stow it good,’ cried the voice.

“The Captain was perfectly furious, and he turned on the second mate, shrieking, ‘What are you doing, sir?’

“‘Nothing, sir.’

“‘How is the glass?’

“‘The glass is lowering, sir.’

“‘Oh! well, your order is right.’

“‘I never gave an order, sir.’

“‘Good God! then it’s the ghost.’

“‘Loose the main-t’gallant sail,’ cried the voice: then—

“‘Sheet it home.’

“‘How *dare* you set the main-t’gallant sail, sir?’

“‘I gave no order, sir. Please believe me,’ said the mate, hotly.

“‘Who did then?’

“‘I dunno.’

“‘Clew up the main-t’gallant sail and stow it,’ cried the voice, as the Captain and second mate looked each other in the face.

“‘I mean that,’ said Jack, ‘for I believe we are going to get another gale, and we had better not fool round any more.’

“‘Lower the three topsails on the cap, and close reef the three topsails,’ cried the voice.

“‘Good God!’ cried the poor Captain, ‘there’s a ghost, or else its those d—d Yankees; they’ll lead us to destruction.’

“We kept this up all our watch, and altogether undisciplined the ship, and we went below fit to split.

“‘D—n those Yankees,’ said the Captain, as we went below; ‘they’ll destroy us, and they’re sharp too; the first to lay out on the arms.’

“When we got to the Channel, Jack made a flock of bees come off the land again, and there was everybody trying to catch them with their caps, and some swearing they could see them, as they did before.

“As we were going into Liverpool Jack got a canvas jumper and began speaking to it, and it answered him, and then the cat was out, and everybody laughed, and the old Captain said—

“‘Ah! it’s those d—d Yankees; I knew it.’

“‘Ah! Yankees from Wales,’ Jack said, right in the Captain’s ears, and ran into his cabin.”

XVIII.

The Crag-y-don Blacksmith.

“I met the Queen of Fays,
 When the pale moon’s silver rays
 In solemn beauty rose
 O’er Carnedd Dafydd’s snows.
 She piped a song to me
 Of pleasant gramarye.
 She was the fairest of the band
 Who dwell in Fairyland.”

I met the Queen of Fays (Old Song).

I.

IN the last century there lived in Anglesea a dissipated blacksmith, at Crag-y-don—a great lover of strong drink and music, but withal a good workman.

In his boyhood, as he walked to a smithy to learn his trade, to which he was early apprenticed, he used to stop by an oak tree in the corner of a bare field girt with stone walls to hear the fairies sing and dance. After a time his silent admiration was rewarded, for he used to find a sixpence beneath the oak every morning.

Young Hussey of Crag-y-don kept bringing home these sixpences until at last his father’s mind was troubled, and he demanded an explanation, which the boy willingly gave; but from that day he found nothing but a cockle-shell in the place of the sixpence. He was deeply grieved, but the fairies never deserted him, for they took to coming through the keyhole of his bedroom, and he could hear the singing one night every year, and they always left him some gold coins when they went.

Still the young blacksmith paid regular pilgrimages to the oak tree, but never saw anything but the cockle-shell, though by putting his ear to the ground he could hear the fairies working in their golden palace, as they are heard to-day by the people of Llangona.

Hussey attended the fairs regularly, for he knew the fairies frequent all fairs; and he soon found others there that knew them. These friends of the fairies used to stand apart from the others, and suddenly they would hear a soft, rushing sound, like the wind, as the fairies approached, when the fairies' friends would clear off with them; but none, not even Hussey, would breathe a word of what they did.

When Hussey was twenty-one years of age he quarrelled with the newly-married landlord of the Min-y-don.

"I'll get the fairies to spite you," said Hussey, reeling off drunk.

The landlord was a fine, tall man, as was his wife, and they had just been blessed with a bonny, buxom girl.

Some days after Hussey's threat, the wife awoke one morning and shrieked out, "Robert, Robert, the fairies have been here! Look, Norah has grown so small."

The child had been changed, and the changeling always remained a dwarf. Hussey's fairy friends had practised a not uncommon art of theirs.

Well, Hussey, the young blacksmith—for his father had died—worked on at his smithy at Crag-y-don three days out of the week to earn money enough to drink on the remaining four.

One night he had been drinking hard out Mœlfre way, and was staggering home determined to walk it off. He had got as far as the river between Mœlfre and Crag-y-don, when a lot of little old men began to follow him. He got frightened when he saw them, and hastened on as well as he was able, but the leader overtook him and said—

"Owen Hussey, of Crag-y-don, if you don't alter your

ways, you'll die soon ; but if you will be a better man you'll find it will be to your benefit." And they disappeared.

When he got home he brooded on this vision, and thenceforth reformed, giving up drink altogether and marrying.

About three years afterwards he was working one morning in his forge when a man came up and wanted his horse shod. Both master and animal were perfect strangers to the neighbourhood.

Built into some masonry by the wall was a large cauldron kept full of water for cooling his hot iron when required. The cauldron was supported on two lips, one of which projected into the smithy. The smith had bored a hole in this lip, and there he tied his horses whilst shoeing them.

When Owen had tied up the spirited horse he looked hard at the stranger, and suddenly he bethought him that the night before he had seen some of the little men whom he had met by the river that night he walked home from Möelfre, swinging on the chains of his kitchen fireplace: for in those days the pots were hung on to chains provided with large hooks.

"I wonder now who this will be," he said to himself, for the Welsh are suspicious of all foreigners, thinking they want to get something out of them.

As he was getting his tools ready the horse grew restless and reared back, pulling the cauldron from its bearings, snapped its rope and disappeared down the road, the stranger running after it. But the blacksmith never saw either of them again. However, he was satisfied, for in the broken masonwork he found several iron pots full of gold.

Owen Hussey hired a man to work his smithy, and went off to the Parys Mountain, where there were copper mines, and invested his gold, buying all the shares he could; for in those days the mines paid well—that was before mountains of copper and coal-quarries were discovered in America.

Soon after he became a shareholder in the mountain he

moved with his wife and only son near to the mines, for there was plenty of company there, five hundred miners and children being engaged there at the time. He took a great interest in the mines and miners, so that he was called Tom Playfair.

By degrees he bought up most of the shares, and added to his income by a secret process he had of depositing copper on old tin pots and pans. Vessels used to come from Liverpool laden with old tin to be put into the copper water of the copper pools at the Parys Mountain, and every coaster at that time used "copper" funnels made in this way, for they lasted treble the time of an iron funnel.

II.

FINALLY, Owen Hussey died worth nobody knew what, and his son, who had been educated at the old Grammar School of Beaumaris, took to farming and built "Red Bank," a large house with a hundred acres of ground. The farming succeeded, and the monthly dividends from the Parys Mountain made the blacksmith's son a well-to-do gentleman farmer. The son got married and had one son like the father.

At that time there lived an old woman near Beaumaris; but now the very foundations of her house are gone. In the same house lived her two nieces, who were always walking the town and keeping her constantly well posted with the names of all who were courting close or merely flirting, with their descriptions and all the gossip they could gather up in their wanderings.

To this old woman's house an old witch came twice a week from Llandona to tell fortunes, her name being Jenny Friars Bach. This old beldame did a roaring trade by extracting bits of stone from the quarryman's eyes, and telling the women and girls of their loves and fortunes—for the men went only for surgery. Whenever a quarryman arrived at her house with a red and watery eye she would produce her eye-stone.

“Good God!” they said, “are you going to put that into my eye? It’s bigger than the piece what’s in.”

But the old lady persisted, and put in the eye-stone and extracted the irritating chip.

Jenny had no trouble in telling the girls what they wanted, and her reputation spread, so that even ladies consulted her. She made it a law that all consultants should give their names and addresses in full, and if a lady came Jenny said it was a difficult case, and put them off for a week whilst her emissaries found out all that was required.

Old Jenny too was often to be seen prowling over the country-side stealing and begging from the farmers. They being afraid of her always gave her what she asked for, such as milk, eggs and flour.

Owen Hussey, the prosperous farmer, always gave like the rest. But on one occasion a new dairymaid, who had recently come from England, refused Jenny Friars Bach some milk, and told her to be off. The old woman scowled at her with her sallow face and smoke-bleared eyes, and hobbled off. But that evening Mary was amazed when at milking time she found the cows gave no milk. She ran in and told her master, who had just come home.

“Good God!” he said, “has Jenny Bach been here?”

“Who’s that, sir?”

“A little, old woman.”

“Yes, sir, she wanted some milk and eggs, and I sent her about her business.”

“Good God! girl, that’s it. She’s witched the cows.”

“Witched them, sir?” said the staring maid.

“Yes.” And he went out and found them all lying down and looking ill.

Owen told his neighbours that night, and the next day they assembled and marched off to Jenny’s house, where they found her boiling some mess in a kettle.

“You’ve witched my cows, Jenny Bach. Come and take off the spell, or we’ll burn you,” said the enraged farmer.

So they brought Jenny to the farm, and showed her the cows, bidding her to take the spell off or be burnt.

She objected she could not do anything without returning to her house to fetch the magic, and that if she was to succeed she must be left alone in the shed with the cows. This was agreed upon, and in a couple of hours Jenny returned. Meanwhile the farmer's son had hidden himself in a hay-loft in the cowshed, where he could see everything going on below, for he was too well educated to believe in witchcraft, though he believed in Usher's chronology.

The cows were turned in and the door locked, when the boy saw the old woman take a cork studded with pins-heads from her pocket. She began to milk some cows and drew the pins from the cork, taking one out at a time. When this was done she took a bottle from her pocket and pouring some of the contents on to the palm of her hand she rubbed every cow's bag over with the liniment. Then she called for the door to be opened. The milkmaid was standing ready with her pail, and she went round from cow to cow, squeezing a few squirts into her pail. All were now milch again.

"Now," said the farmer, "you can go, but if you ever trouble my cows again, I'm sure to get a stake and burn you."

III.

WHEN the son, the third Owen Hussey, got to be twenty-five years of age he found himself childless, and possessed of great wealth, much land and many mine shares. In him a passion for the sea and yachting had early shown itself, so that now the builders of the fortune became the wreckers, for such is the law of development and decay of all things.

The third Owen gave over work, and became what is called by some a "gentleman." He rebuilt "Crag-y-don," overlooking the Menai Straits, and bought an old Baltimore clipper schooner, the *Hussar*, which he refitted, and raced successfully, winning many prizes, always winning in a

leading wind. But his hobby led him into deeper expense, and he built a little brig, the *Pandora*; a schooner, the *Gazelle*; and a little cutter, the *Nimble*. He engaged such a number of men and boys that he built barracks for them, and the boys were trained on the brig just as was done on a man-of-war.

But still he kept an eye for business, and bought up all the land he could, even going as far afield as Bangor; for the feudal idea that land and church-going make a gentleman had not been then exploded, and indeed it survives, like all old "truths," as a superstition to-day, as you may see by the land-hunger developed in every rich plutocrat, and the hypocritical church reverence of every rich upstart. For either of these roads still leads to the society of the *degenerate* aristocrat—such aristocrats as have not brains to attain distinction by politics, nor courage to win glory by fighting. But the world has begun to smile upon such, and when the smile is aroused the end is not far off.

It is needless to say that this member of the family was a Colonel in the Volunteers—an officer as much to be respected as the "Colonel" of a Salvation Army.

The farmer father had willed it that the old house at Crag-y-don was not to be demolished, but might be added to, and the son carried out his parent's wishes. His yachting still further absorbed him, so that a dock and weir were built, and instead of paying attention to the welfare of his tenants, he thought of nothing but his toys, and was never so pleased as when the people of Beaumaris flocked down to see the smart little brig come in from some regatta or other.

In the midst of these arduous employments his two sisters died, so he took unto himself a wife, and had one son and two daughters, who proved to be the best riders in the country. The son was well educated and sent into the army, becoming in the fulness of time a real Colonel. In the fulness of time the farmer too died, and the real officer inherited the estates.

But now "Crag-y-don" belongs to another, and no more fairies are seen there. Perhaps they are ashamed that such poor use should have been made of the benefits conferred upon the blacksmith. To my thinking he was the best man of them all.

XIX.

The Love that Loveth Always.

“ I was blithe and happy once,
 In the sweet days of childhood ;
 Blithe and happy as the birds which warbled in the wildwood.
 Ah ! roving through the summer,
 Alone o’er dell and mountain,
 Life seemed bright as were the showers that sparkled in the fountain.”
I was blithe and happy once (Old Welsh Song).

OLD black-haired, black-bearded, black-eyed, wrinkled and scarred Gwilym Roberts sat back in his chair smoking his pipe, taking it away from his mouth now and then with his delicate-looking hand. Gwilym had been a great man in his day, man-of-war’s man, smuggler, slaver, blockade runner, even pirate. He was of middle height and small boned like most of the Welsh, and like them he had good manners, was of an explosive temperament, stubborn to a degree, without humour and perfectly merciless when his cupidity was aroused ; but unlike the Irish Kelt he would have despised moonlighting and shooting men from behind stone-walls. Such was Gwilym, a typical Welshman—even to his sentimentality and superstitious beliefs. That he had been through the wars his scarred face showed, his face that always reminded me of Black Beard, as Captain Teach was called in old pirate days. It is a most remarkable thing how many of Gwilym’s countrymen have been pirates in the days of the infamous L’Olonois and the famous Captain Morgan—himself a Taffy of yeoman descent ; and it is remarkable that whilst the majority of pirates were

Kelts, the majority of disinterested filibusters, a far nobler class, were Americans and Englishmen, Captain Morgan, a Welshman, being the type of the one, and brave Captain Walker of the other.

But my story is about my friend Gwilym, he shall tell it himself, for no one is more sympathetic with a woman than a Kelt, and his love of her springs from romance and not mere sensuality—he is naturally too refined for that. His pleasure is as much in the chase as in the possession.

“Well, indeed, sir, I was travelling in Nova Scotia—they used to build all vessels for England there in those days. And I came to Halifax and took a berth aboard of the mail boat for Boston. Well, sir, we had awful weather and were five weeks a-going. When we got in I left the vessel, we was clear in America. Well, I went round Boston, but there was nothing for me to do there; they was too smart ashore for a seaman, so I go back and shipped aboard of a steamer back for New Brunswick. The mate promised us £5 10s. for the voyage to St. Johns, we were lucky and only took thirty-six hours a-going. When we got to St. Johns, I heard of a good job up at the head of the Miramichi river, so I got my duds in a bundle and I cut a stick and went and got my money from a Scotchman, and off I go at four o’clock in the morning to walk to the head of the river; but a chap told me if I was a sailor-man I’d be certain to get a berth on a steam-boat that started up the river at half-past six o’clock. So I went down to the boat and went aboard and saw the skipper.

“‘Halloa,’ said he. ‘What, are you a sailor-man?’

“‘I believe I am,’ I said.

“‘Do you want a job?’

“‘Yes.’

“‘Well, I’ll try you; we give free fares to all sailor-men.’

“Then he went and got a rope as thick as your thigh and cracked it down before me, saying—

“‘There now, splice an eye.’

So I set to work, and that took me about half an hour ; I had to use the fid—there was no marling spike big enough aboard. I tucked it in three times, the whole strand, mind you, and when I'd done, he said—

“ ‘Oh, I see you're a sailor, I'll give you a free passage.’

“The passage only cost fifty cents, so I thought, ‘Well, that's a poor lot, but we'll wait, Gwilym, and see what turns up.’ Well, that was all right, the skipper took to me, and I got the best of living and drinking and plenty of 'baccy, and that was a regular picnic up the river. We were four days going and I landed at Frederickstown on the fourth night. I took my money and bid the skipper good-bye ; he would have had me stop along with him, but I wouldn't, I was after this job I had heard on. So I never stopped, but I began to walk off to the head of the river, directly I got ashore. The road was not so bad, it led through a pine forest and I could see the road all hollow—for mind you, there were no banks or trees—between the big dark pine trees and the stars sparkling overhead and all around as quiet as death, for it was all soft with old fir needles in under the pines. I went along sniffing the air, for it smelt spicy at night. Presently as I was drawing to the top of a hill, I saw a big black dog in the road.

“ ‘I'll coax that fellow along with me,’ I said, so I drew near to have a good look. My God ! when I came up to him, saying, ‘Here, old man,’ holding out the back of my hand, my cap began to lift up, I could feel it as I took stock of him, for it was a great brown bear. He growled and jumped to the wood ; like a fool I wasn't satisfied, but must go peaking into the wood after him. It was cool and dark in under the pines, but presently I saw him. He growled and came right for me. So all of a sudden it came to me how the Indians work these bears, so I ran up to a sapling and he after me, and he grappled me and the tree and all. I've got the marks of his claws on my left shoulder now. But I drew my body up tight and kept my right hand clear. I

had kept my right arm straight down with the knife between my legs, so he couldn't see the knife, and when I saw a chance I ripped him right up and stuck the knife up into his heart, there was only one catch about the middle of his belly, and he fell over backwards, groaned and kicked. I had a look at him, but I wouldn't go too close to him; he smelt strong and I thought he might be shamming. Then I went back to the road to look after my bundle and stick and see if I could see anyone coming, and a car came along.

"'Holloa,' says I.

"'Holloa,' says he, 'what are you doing there? Come here,' and I saw him draw his revolver.

"'It's all right,' I said, and I went up and found the man had got his wife and two children in the cart, they were coming home from a party.

"'Stop,' said he, as I got nigh the cart; 'now, what's the matter?'

"Then I told him about the bear. He kept repeating what I said as though he didn't believe it.

"'Come and look,' says I, 'he's dead.'

"So he gave the reins to his wife and I could hear him cock his revolver, and he jumped down into the road and said, 'Go ahead.'

"I knew he was kind of suspicious, so on I went till we come to the bear, and when he saw it, he said—

"'Good God, it's a wonder he didn't kill you.'

"'So it would,' I said, 'if it hadn't come to me what them Indians do, when I found it wasn't no dog.'

"'Well, my God, it's a fine bear, we'll take it home,' he said.

"We got the bear on to the cart and we went driving home eight miles and got there in time for breakfast. He was going on twenty miles further at ten o'clock. He was a collector—quite a respectable man. So he said good-bye before he started, and I went to bed and slept four hours and then had another breakfast along with his missus, and she told me:

“ ‘ If you’d let him alone, he wouldn’t have troubled you ; but in the spring of the year, look out, for then they’ll tackle anything—but when they’ve got their belly full, they don’t trouble people.’

“ So I left the bear with them for the accommodation, it wasn’t no good to me, and the missus said his hind legs would make splendid hams, and she’d get a lot of bear’s grease and a fine skin for a rug from his carcase. So I walked on to Stanley and the people gave me plenty to eat and drink along the route and they wouldn’t take anything. But when I got to the head of the river, I found the job taken, so I went down the Miramichi part way and on to Richabuctoo. When I got there I shipped in a vessel and got £25 for the run home. They paid us part the day before sailing, so we signed for the new vessel at 10 a.m.; there were six of us did the same, two Englishmen, two Irish and two Welshmen, me and another. So we were all aboard ready to start early the next day and they’d paid us the rest of our money, they did in those days, so we made up our minds to do a bounty jump.

So that night we stole the yawl, a good boat fifteen feet on the keel, she was neither a punt nor a gig. There was five of us, the other Welshman wouldn’t come. So we dropped down on the water; it was still, and just a mist. We rowed along for six miles at least, and we saw a fishing boat, about six ton, moored off shore. As we drew up we hailed her—

“ ‘ Ship ahoy.’

“ No one answered, so we drew up softly and got aboard and let the ship’s boat go adrift. The fishing boat was decked for’ard, but there were no sails, only a mast and a pair of swipes. We overhauled her and there wasn’t so much as a mouse alive aboard, so we got two blankets from the cabin and made sprit sails of them with the oars, for we had about a hundred and eighty miles to go to the east end of Prince Edward’s Island, for that’s where we wanted to

strike. In those days Princee Edward's Island was only a big ship yard.

There wasn't much tide nor wind when we started, so we only made about six knots an hour. At last we finished our voyage on the second evening and struck the shore by a farmhouse, where we hauled her up and got plenty to eat and drink. They wanted to know where we'd come from.

"'Charlottetown,' we said, for we were within a few miles of that port. So after we'd got a belly-full we consulted together; we were all tired of our trip, so we ran our ship to a cove where they were building two or three vessels and sold her for £15. After we'd made a dole of that we walked on a post road to Charlottetown about six miles off. We had none of us been there before, though most of our English and Welsh coasters were built there in those days. They were weak built, but we strengthened them with iron ribs from beam to kelson when they got home.

"We all went and put up at a little public house, then the two Irishmen went off and we never saw nor yet heard of them again. Well, how young life seemed then. We soon spent our money on the lasses and drink. Ay, some of the finest lasses in the world grow in Princee Edward's Isle, don't you make no mistake. Then we must go and ship on a vessel for Belfast and we got £30 down. So we went on the drink and got along with the gals again and away we did another bounty jump. We hired a coach and drove to Georgetown and then went on the tramp, for it cost nothing for living, the people were so good-hearted. Well, after a bit, we wanted to see our gals in Charlottetown, so back we go, though that was risky, but the vessel had sailed; but I forgot to tell you, we never paid the bill at the boarding house, so no sooner did they get sight of us than we was taken up for debt, and put in gaol. We were in the debtor's part of the gaol and hadn't anything to

do with the thieves nor them. There were five debtors' rooms and a skittle alley and ball and quoiting, in a kind of open yard, where the gaoler kept five cows grazing. The yard was fenced with a wood fence ten feet high and the top had planks round that slid down so you'd slip if you tried to climb over. Well, I got to be captain of a room, I had to look after the cooking and that, and you may be sure I had the best of everything, for we had fine times—we was allowed biscuit and treacle; and the prisoners' friends used to bring legs of mutton and all manner of things, so we got the best there we ever got. And the gaoler was a kind-hearted man and I got into his confidence; he'd been a school master first and then got head of a gaol, but he was suspected of letting some prisoners out what was condemned to death, so they took him away from head of the gaol and made him an ordinary gaoler in this prison.

“There was an awful man close to us. The kitchen was in front of the cells and next to the kitchen was the condemned cell. There was a man that had murdered in there; he was the biggest man I ever saw; he was chained so he could walk three yards each way back and for'ard. As I went in to see him, Henry hollered out—‘Good God, don't go in there, he's sure to kill you.’ But I took care of that, I was as active as a weasel. And they didn't hang him after all, that was turned from death to imprisonment for life—they made him to be insane.

“Well, you may be sure I kept watching and looking at those planks on the wall, and I couldn't make out what they were for, but I found out they was fixed so if you'd go and climb they'd tinkle and kick up a hell of a row.

“‘So ho,' thinks I.

“Well, I made a lot of friends, for people would come and see us, from ten to four, and bring everything except liquor. Well, I got thickest with the gaoler's daughter, she used to come and see me every day. She was a handsome girl,

middle height, with a beautiful figure, and brown skin all over—I could see that for she kept her dress open at the neck—and right dark hair, and such a lot of it, and such greenish black eyes, how they seemed to look you through and through, and heavy eye-brows and eye-lashes, thick jet black, and such a rich big rosy-lipped mouth! Ah! she was made to be loved. My God, I shan't ever forget the first day I kissed that girl. I'd have killed anybody if she'd wanted it. I'd have done anything for her if she'd be mine. But, phut! I never thought that would ever be. She had learning and dressed stylishly too, but women is rum folk. If they once love a man he can do what he likes with 'em, else he's a fool; but if they don't love, no money won't buy: leastwise some on 'em.

“ Well, that girl (she was about eighteen) loved me.

“ Well, we kept kissing. My God! life was young then. I remember those warm, full lips of hers now. To look at her seemed to fill all the empty corners in your body right full, but to touch her—my God! to get her soft bosom agin you—oh, I'd have cut fifty throats to please her!

“ One day I was hugging her and she looking at me with blazing eyes and red cheeks, and her chest coming and going like a steam engine, and all of a sudden she said, right low and clear—

“ ‘ Come out of this; come home and I'll hide you.’

“ I looked at her for a minute, and my heart was wild with love.

“ ‘ I'll come to-morrow night,’ I said, and she hugged me right tight. I never knew what strength a girl had till she hugged me. We heard Harry coming along, so I went back to my cooking and she skipped off. Then I thought the rest of the afternoon how I'd keep my appointment. That was a rum job. But I made my plan, and that night after lock up, at nine o'clock, I said to Harry, ‘ I'm going to leave you to-morrow, I've planned it all.’

“ He laughed and wouldn't take no notice. I told the

Englishmen my plan, for I'd spied all round, but they wouldn't risk it. Harry opened the doors at six in the morning. Well, I'd a pair of sea-boots I'd bought in Halifax for a sovereign; I didn't want to lose them, so I heaved them over the wall directly the doors was opened. Then I took off my belt and fastened it to the bars of the lowest window. There was three stories and up I climbed—I was like a cat in those days—and so I got up to the water spout that was almost forty feet above the ground, and I went for ten yards along the water spout, hand across hand, and reached the corner of the roof like that, and slid down on the gable end to the top of the roofing, and then I dropped at least fifteen feet, and as I turned my face, my God! who was there but the gaoler, Harry.

“‘I was expecting something,’ he said, coolly, ‘when I saw those boots come over and heard the dog bark.’

“Well, I think he knew how it stood between me and his daughter, so he said—

“‘Well, I would never dream of such a thing. Come in, my boy, come in, my boy,’ and he took me to his house close by and gave me bread and meat, and told me to run right off to St. John's Wood and I'd get clear. Well, as I was going out, I picked up two small decanters of wine, or something, and slipped one into my pocket, but the other wouldn't go, so I shut my jacket on it and away I went to the woods, and never a glimpse had I seen of my lass. I felt bad, but it was no good stopping, for I knew he'd have to send after me at once, and them as would come wouldn't show no mercy. There was another wood called the Government Wood, so when I'd left he said—

“‘Well, my boy, I'll try and lead them from your track.’

“So he sent them to look after me in the Government Wood, whilst there was I in the St. John's Woods—a dense pine forest. I couldn't see no one. It was right dark in there, for that was getting the end of summer. I was in some stew and wished myself back. There was I strutting

to and fro in the dark, drinking sherry out of the decanter, and wishing to God I was back in the gaol and near my girl.

“When it come dusk I ventured out of the wood and drew nigh the house to see if I could see my darling, when all of a sudden someone shot out from behind a rock—it was Harry’s daughter, and she come up and took my arm and pressed it hard, and I nearly squeezed her flat agin me. I could see her big dark eyes and brown skin and big lips in the dusk, and her face looked a bit swollen. She took me back to the house, and there was her brother, a tailor. He’d a big Rooshian cap there and I put that on and a cloak, and my lass made me eat a bit of meat, and stuffed my pocket full, and, my God, I thought she would die of crying, when the brother said we must start.

I tore myself off and we started, and walked forty-two miles before we stopped—in fourteen hours. We parted, and he told me to get away in a ship quick as I could. Well, I stopped at that village three days, but I could see nothing but Lizzie’s face everywhere; all around me, in my sleep, I saw it in everything, and on the third day I made up my mind. I put on my Rooshian cap and cloak again, and back I walked, thinking only of the green-black eyes and red lips. It was dark when I come across the ferry and got up to the house, and I sneaked round by the kitchen and see her with her dress sleeves turned up—my God, what arms they were!—and I tapped. She started at first, and come out crying—

“‘Who’s there?’

“‘Billy,’ says I.

“And she run to me like a child. Then she took me in-doors and up to her bedroom, and locked the door.

“My God, sir, I never have known love before nor yet since.

“I stayed there three weeks, and we were like man and wife. She locked me in every day, and old Harry pretended not to see it.

“ But at the end of the three weeks she said one night, crying fit to kill herself—

“ ‘ Billy, you must go and get a ship. The ice will be here soon, and the river be closed up, if you don’t.’

“ Well, I had to go. I bid them all good-bye, and poor Lizzie—but, sir, no one can tell what we felt at parting. Them that feels much don’t speak much. I went and got a ship—a schooner for Boston—and four days after we started the ice come and froze the river up for the winter.

“ But I could never rub Lizzie’s face out of my head, and wherever I went there it was always. So I saved up all the money I got for two years and I left the drink and the girls; I only wanted Lizzie; and then I thought I’d go back with my savings and see if I couldn’t get old Harry to let us marry—for I loved that woman, I loved that woman.

“ Well, sir, I could scarce stop my heart beating when I crossed the ferry and drew nigh the house, so up I go to the door and knocked.

“ A strange fat old woman opened the door, and my heart turned to water.

“ ‘ Where’s Harry?’ I axed.

“ ‘ Dead—died a year ago of the typeus.’

“ My mouth got dry and my heart hurt me.

“ ‘ And Lizzie?’ I asked.

“ ‘ Dead, too; she caught it nursing her father. She wouldn’t leave him to the regular nurses; she was too warm-hearted for that.’

I thanked the woman, and, my God, I walked away from the house as though I’d had all the life took out of me; and I went to the prison burying-ground and found out her grave, and, my God, sir, I lay down on those sods and cried till I thought my heart would break, for I loved that woman, I loved that woman. I tried to dig her up in my passion, breaking my finger nails all to bits. My God, how I loved that woman; and I’m wondering if I shall ever see her face again.”

XX.

The Wreck of the "Rothsay Castle."

(FOUNDED ON CURRENT TRADITION.)

"While watching the waves glistening round Maltreath alone,
In silent grief listening, the sea-birds hollow moan ;
I wish I was sleeping in the dark heaving tide,
Whose solemn depths are keeping my darling dead bride."

My dead Bride (Old Welsh Song).

"My left eye itches badly this morning," said Welsh Billy to his compatriot Owen on the fo'castle of the *Rothsay Castle*, as she lay against the dock gangway taking in passengers at Liverpool for Bangor on the 17th of August, 1831.

"Well then, that's bad luck for certain," said Owen ; "but bad luck or not I care nothing, for my nose bled like a pig this morning, and that shows I'm going to live a long life."

"Ay," said black-eyed Billy, "some people is always lucky and others again are always unlucky. I broke three tea-cups running last time I was at home, and Kaddy said, 'Your bad luck in again.' Yes, and last night when I was at the Welsh Sailors' Dancing Saloon a big glass mirror fell and broke all to bits.

"Somebody is sure to die to-morrow of the company," said old Isabella."

"Toot, man," said Owen ; "come on below and have a dram. I've got a bottle of spirit."

And they descended to the fo'castle to drink, whilst a trampa steamed past them on the way to Bangor.

When they returned on deck the wind had shifted a bit to the nor'ard.

"It's going to blow a bit outside," said Billy, "but it ain't time for them ekenocsions yet."

"Ay, but a gale can come any time," said Owen, "but I don't think there'll be much wind;" and he began to sing to himself the *Shan voen Shan* as the merry passengers chattered and trooped aboard with parcels, baskets, provisions and luggage.

But Billy was sad and wouldn't be comforted, so Owen at length said, irritably—

"Toot, Billy, give over. Do you remember when we were at Bleumaris you swore you heard the coffin bird, and it turned out to be old Jones' windmill what he had put up for his boy?"

"Yes, yes, I mind; but something is sure to happen to-day," said Billy, gloomily.

"Ay, Billy, always something going to happen. Do you remember the night when we were gathering oysters and that Irishman was along with us, and an old horned owl began to holler in the wood and he run like the devil, and said the banshee was after him, and I went up and see the owl?"

"Yes, Owen, I remember; but some things are very mysterious. Now, do you mind how you laughed when Kaddy told me to steal into the blacksmith's shop and wash my hands in his trough for fourteen days and never dry them, and all my warts would go? Well, you laughed, but they all went and I have never had a wart since."

"Yes, Billy, I mind it, and I did laugh; but there was more sense in that, for the iron in the water may have been good and dried them up."

But the bustle on deck stopped this ill-omened dialogue between the two Welsh sailors, for they had to join their mates and draw in the gangway, warp in the hawsers, and make the ship generally smart as they steamed down

the Mersey to the sea—a crowded boat, one hundred and fifty men all told; making lively company, for a band played on deck and the northerly wind freshened the faces of the girls and blew crests from the gathering waves.

On the crowded deck an old butler, with big coat and big buttons, with white vest and nankeen trousers, was stuffing his two little boys with oranges; indeed, their little pockets were bulged with the fruit. Near them a young wife was leaning affectionately upon her middle-aged husband's shoulder looking dreamily out to sea; and a little to the left an old couple sat under the lee of the smoke stack munching biscuits which the old lady produced from a reticule. A tall young gentleman was walking the deck smoking a cigar, and several pairs were sitting close together talking earnestly, for the northerly wind blew cold, though it was August.

As they steamed past the floating light, the wind began to raise the sea, and many of the passengers went below, for the waves began to break over the vessel. The cabin was soon crowded, some drinking champagne, others sipping tea and coffee, whilst a little negro boy, who had been brought from the west coast of Africa, amused the company by his antics as he played with some other boys in the cushioned saloon.

Still the wind rose and the vessel pitched, upsetting the glass set on the dinner-table, for the dinner hour came, though few had any stomach for the meal, for the sea was rough and many were sick.

The gale increased, and towards evening they sighted the Great Orme's Head. For three hours they beat about between Puffin and the Great Orme's Head, for the sea was so rough that the vessel became unmanageable. This delay and the approaching night frightened some of the passengers, and a body of them went to the Captain and begged him to put back to Liverpool.

"Oh, no, we'll be all right once we get well into the Straits," he said.

The tide began to ebb furiously, as it does through the narrow strait, and the northerly wind against it raised a very high sea, so that it was midnight before they entered the mouth of the Menai Straits, and the night was as dark as pitch. They had got abreast of Puffin when the engines lost power, for the coal had been failing for some time; and the tide and sea mastered the machine and carried her in the pitchy darkness on to the spit of the Dutchman Bank, which many a good ship has struck before and since.

The passengers felt the thud as she went on to the bank, and ran shrieking on deck, some wringing their hands and crying, "Oh, shall we be saved?" and others shouting, "Where are we?" and "Where are the boats?" All discipline was gone; men were running to and fro, and one or two cool heads were trying to quiet the passengers, who looked with white faces into the black, seething water, and across to the lights in the pilot house by Penmon, or towards towns on the Carnarvonshire coast. The Captain persuaded them that she would be all right, and when the sea went down they would all be taken off safely; but the wind shrieking and whistling through the rigging and the roar of the waves drowned his voice.

Never a rocket was sent up, never a blue light burnt, so that the pilots on Penmon Point went to bed all unconscious of the terrible tragedy going on near by.

When the tide was nearly full, the sea began to break furiously on the old craft, some of the sailors taking to the rigging, and some of the passengers crowding in the smoking-room on deck, whilst others got hold of oars and pieces of wood. Just before daybreak a tremendous sea struck the ship and carried away the deck house, sweeping everything clear off the decks, and carrying the majority of the passengers and crew into the swift, rough waters of the Straits, where they were speedily drowned.

At daybreak the Penmon pilots saw the wreck on the spit, and they put off at once in their boats, taking several persons from the foremast—one man clad in a lady's seal-skin coat—and fifteen from the deck house which floated astern of the hulk. They then began to pick up a few others clinging to pieces of wood—one, the tall gentleman who had smoked his cigar whilst walking the decks in the morning, and a lady who was clinging to a piece of wood with one hand and holding her husband's head above water with the other. They got both of them into the boat and picked up an old man clinging to an oar; he said his wife was on the ship and she had fifty pounds on her; where-upon the crew persuaded him to go back and search for her, but he never saw her face again, for her body was never picked up. Thirty-seven in all were picked up alive, one hundred and thirty having been washed off by the sea and drowned.

As the pilots rowed away from the ship the foremast toppled over and fell with a crash into the channel. When they got to their cottages the pilots and their wives were busy in trying to restore the tall gentleman, who had stripped his outer clothing, and the middle-aged gentleman whose young wife had been supporting his head on a piece of wood. After an hour's rubbing the tall gentleman came back to life, but the middle-aged husband never breathed again.

Some of the passengers were delirious and others cold and hungry, so they were driven into the "George and Dragon" at Beaumaris as soon as might be, one man and a boy being put in the same bed. When the names of the rescued were taken, all but one—the sailor who had worn the sealskin—were in the hotel; that man had hobbled off to Bangor, where he sold the sealskin for half-a-crown, and made his way home to Cardiganshire.

Owen was saved and poor old Billy was drowned, so his evil omens at last came true.

"Ay," said Owen, "I saw a rare sight. I saw two gents get hold of a piece of wood, and one says, 'Oh, you got it, I'll let go;' and the other said, 'Oh, no; take it,' and so they were as polite as you please; and people drowning all round them! then one let go and swam for another piece, and blow me, if they warn't both saved; I see them in the hotel."

Long before all the rescued were safely housed in Beaumaris, the searchers were busy looking for corpses and property, all the bodies being taken to the Town Hall at Beaumaris and laid out for identification, for already cabs were rattling in from Bangor with anxious friends and relations.

Towards night the landlady of the "George and Dragon" came down and told the people in the crowded bar that there was such a scene going on upstairs.

The man and boy that had been put in one bed awoke and began to talk in the darkened room towards night, the man saying—

"Oh, this time yesterday I had a son, good God! and now he must be drowned."

The boy began to cry, but the demented parent took no notice of him, until he began to cry, "Father, father! come back!"

"Father! Who's your father, boy?" asked the man hastily, for he did not recognise his voice.

"John Mason. Oh, father, father!"

"Oh, my boy, my boy! It's Jack, and you're saved, thank God!" and they jumped into each other's arms, and then the father rang for a light, to make sure it was his son.

"And you should have seen how they looked at one another when I took the lamp in; it would have done your heart good," said Miss Williams.

The next day Owen went into the Town Hall to see the corpses, and a crowd with dim, moist eyes stood round

the dead bodies of two little boys, their pockets bulging with oranges; when, beside them was placed the corpse of a big man in a coat with big buttons, a white vest and nankeen trousers. As the crowd looked sadly on at the sorrowful group, a woman burst through them and shrieked—

“Oh, my God! My poor John, and my poor dear boys!”

XXI.

At the Sign of the "Ring & the Raven."

" Ah! night and day that strain,
 Lives in my heart and brain,
 It haunts me in my sleep,
 And when I wake I weep.
 I wish that I had gone
 With that bright and regal one,
 The Queen of all the mystic band
 Who dwell in Faery Land."

I met the Queen of Fays (Old Welsh Song).

I.

POOR Hugh Owen, a widower, lived in a small croft on the bare hills of Anglesea, facing the sea. He had a hard struggle to support his wife and six children upon the limestone bossed, grass-covered hollow with his small flock of sheep; for in addition to poverty he suffered tortures from rheumatism, a common complaint in the damp atmosphere of that island. Moreover he had a very hard and exacting landlord over him.

In the springtime, after the cuckoos awoke from their long sleep, and the rooks assembled in a field to pair and hang the odd bird by the bill to a fork of a tree, killing him, Hugh's face brightened a little, for he eked out a precarious existence by nesting on the stony ledges and moors as the eggs fell in season—first for lapwings' eggs and later for puffins' eggs, which are nearly as good to eat: the gulls' eggs he used for cooking.

Upon one of these expeditions he found a raven's nest with four hatchlings, which he took home and tried

to rear; but all died save the cock bird, which was brought up as a great family pet. But the bird had to be watched, for whenever opportunity offered he stole off with all bright objects and hid them underneath the old dresser; but these petty larcenies were forgiven him, for he would follow old Hugh like a dog, from tree to tree.

One day, Hugh was down in Beaumaris, and he found a piece of coal on the pavement. Picking it up he put it carefully in his pocket and took it home, afterwards always carrying it with him; for no Anglesea man must ever pass a piece of coal, but must carry it secretly till luck comes.

When he got home his wife ran out joyfully and said—

“Hugh, we are sure to have good luck—I dropped a fork on the floor at noon to-day.”

“Ië,” said Hugh, “so did I drop a knife on the floor down at the ‘White Lion’ at Beaumaris; but we’ll see, for if good luck doesn’t come, I must sell up everything to pay the rent,” finished Hugh, sitting down.

“Well indeed, what’s the news, Hugh?”

“Oh, bad, bad, Kaddy. A lot of them cocklers have been over to the Wailing Sands yesterday gathering cockles; there were fifteen of them, and old Owen Owens and his son were running them home. They’d filled the boat with cockles and shiels* and she was low in the water, and a bit of breeze came up, and old Owen Owens would have them throw the cockles out, but Isabella Roberts wouldn’t—you know she’s a divil of a woman—so the boat was capsized and everyone was drowned except old Owen’s son, though Isabella got hold of him in the water, but he dived and got loose of her.”

“Dear, dear! that’s a bad job.”

As they were talking there was a tapping at the window, and the pet raven appeared.

“Hullo! here’s our pet raven come back,” shouted the eldest boy, jumping up and opening the window.

* Sprats.

The black bird flew in and alighting on the table dropped something glistening thereupon. The boy snatched it up and shouted—

"Why, it's a ring!"

Old Hugh arose quickly and took it from him, and looking at it carefully he saw arms cut in a bloodstone set in a large signet ring, but he was ignorant of heraldry. Replacing the ring on the table he went to the fireplace and threw the piece of coal slyly into the fire—the luck had come.

After having done this he put the ring in a place of safety and went to bed perplexed; for he was battling with his conscience whether he should take it to Bangor to sell or try and find the owner.

But the morning brought counsel, and he arose early and took the ring to the parson and told him the circumstances. The parson examined it carefully and said—

"Oh, yes, the arms are those of Lord Möelfre; he's sure to value the ring. If you leave it with me, I will restore it to him, and no doubt he will reward you for your honesty."

Owen blushed at his thoughts of the previous night and went home.

The parson that very afternoon had his strong little Welsh pony put into his trap and drove over to Lord Möelfre's house, where he was admitted into his presence.

"Have you lost a ring, sir?" asked the parson.

"Why, bless my soul, yes! Do you know anything about it?"

"Yes, I've got it."

"Have you indeed? Well, you've saved my life. Do you know I have to wear that ring once a year, and if I lose it I am doomed to die within the twelvemonth, and to show you how anxious I have been to find the ring, I have offered one hundred pounds reward for it; and the whole

country-side have been in my covers hunting high and low, and even draining the ditches dry, for I suspect I lost it in the Green Willows cover last week when I was shooting pheasants."

"Well, indeed, I'm glad you've got it, but you owe Hugh Owen thanks, not me."

Whereupon the parson told the story of the raven. Lord Möelfre was interested in the story of the raven, but he merely enquired Hugh Owen's address and circumstances, and, thanking the parson, they parted.

Next morning, as Hugh's family were at breakfast, old Owen dropped his knife and Mrs. Owen let her fork slip from her hand to the floor.

"We are sure to have strangers before noon," they both agreed.

In the morning, sure enough, a liveried servant called at the croft on horseback leading a second saddled horse by the bridle. When the door was opened to him he asked to see Hugh Owen and the raven.

Hugh was called from the back where he was sawing wood, and meanwhile the groom got off his horse and came indoors. After Hugh came the raven and alighted on the table. When the groom saw him he threw down a guinea piece, which the raven seized immediately, and began to turn over and dancing with it in his strong bill.

"By God, he's a queer bird; but that guinea is not for him, but for the children, whilst Hugh Owen comes with me, and he must bring the bird for my lord to see."

So they rode off to Möelfre Place, the raven perched upon Owen's shoulder.

When they arrived at the house the groom led the way to the study where his master was sitting at a table writing. When Hugh Owen and his bird were ushered in, Lord Möelfre arose and thanked Hugh for his honesty and patted the bird.

The groom then told him of his behaviour with the

guinea, so Lord Möelfre pulled out a guinea, and tossed it on to the writing-table. Immediately the raven dashed at it, and picking it up turned it over and over and began dancing with delight.

"Well now," said Lord Möelfre, "here's a purse with the hundred pounds I promised as a reward for the finder of the ring; but on May 13th next I will have something more for you, so look out for my groom on that day."

Old Hugh went home delighted, and on November 13th, three weeks afterwards, he drove off to pay his rent with a light heart.

In the olden days all rents were paid yearly on November 13th, and afterwards the farmers and crofters collected at one of the inns for a jollification. On that night all were chaffing a hanger-on at the inn, one John Jones, who had been detected that day stealing a long string of tobacco. He possessed a large metal tobacco box into which he had put the end of the string of tobacco shutting the lid down tightly upon it, forgetting to cut off the long tail; so that when he went out of the shop the tobacco tail dragged after him, and before he turned the corner the shopkeeper detected the theft and running after him caught the tobacco string and jerked the box from his pocket. Whereupon John Jones got wrath, and there was a fight, in which John Jones lost his red metal tobacco box and all. John Jones would do anything for tobacco. He used to go and dig up potatoes at night in his neighbours' gardens and sell them for tobacco to the sailors on the foreign ships. He would collect snails, limpets, sweet clams and Pary's clams and cockles for the foreign sailors in exchange for tobacco. The farmers made high game of him and kept asking him how he'd liked the English Chapel service; for John had turned religious, and though he had never a word of English he attended the service regularly, saying they were "very nice and mild."

But John Jones was to have his revenge that night;

for he had hung a straw man with a hollow turnip head in which burnt a candle, on the haunted crooked oak, leaning over the road above the China Rock. As the first trap with six farmers, all fresh, drove home, they lowered their voices as they approached the haunted tree—where a man is said to have hung himself—but the horse saw the ghost and shied and bolted, capsizing the trap and breaking the legs of one of the passengers. There was a great to-do that night and the straw man was cut down; but John Jones only grinned to himself.

When Hugh Owen got home from the feasting he found his boy had brought in a lot of dead robins.

“What are they for?” asked Hugh of his wife.

“Why, Hugh, Tommy says old Pat at Möelfre says they kill all the robins every year upon the day of the battle of the Boyne; because the Irish were creeping up to the Saxons, who were asleep, but a divil of a robin began pecking at a Saxon drummer’s drum and awoke him, and he saw the enemy and gave the alarm, so they were beaten.”

“Toot, toot; it’s the young birds killing the old ones,” said Hugh.

II.

THE following spring Hugh was delighted when the cuckoos awoke, like all the seven sleepers.

“Ië, he’s hoarse,” he said, as he heard the first cuckoo; “but he’ll soon get a lot of eggs and then his voice will be clear.”

All that spring Hugh was happy, for he knew something good was coming, and even if a knife had fallen from the table at night I do not believe he would have been uneasy and kept a sharp look-out for the deadly enemy the omen warned him against; but no such thing happened, and the morning of the 13th of May broke brightly.

When Hugh got up he caught his cat and looked at her

eyes to tell the size of the moon, but he waited till noon to verify his observation, when he found the irides were round, and the moon therefore full; for this lunar observance was believed in by the Welsh as well as the Chinese.

In the afternoon the groom appeared, leading a saddled horse as before, and amid great excitement took Hugh to the new inn, the "Ring and the Raven," that Hugh heard had been refitted and done up by Lord Möelfre. The "Ring and the Raven" was a comfortable wayside inn, standing in thirty acres of ground, the property of Lord Möelfre; for in those days the landlords had to keep houses at certain places for the convenience of travellers, just as is the custom in Norway to-day. The inn was formerly called the "Wayfarer," but since its restoration it had been renamed and a beautiful sign hung over the door, a raven with a ring in its bill.

Upon arriving at the inn Lord Möelfre came forth, and when Hugh had alighted and made his obeisance, Lord Möelfre said—

"Hugh Owen, for your honesty I give you this inn and the land belonging to it, as a freehold property, and here are your deeds. Your eldest son I wish to work under you, but your second son I wish to take in my service; send him to me as soon as you can arrange to come here, which I wish to be this week."

Hugh was overwhelmed, but Lord Möelfre mounted the vacant saddle and rode off immediately with his groom—he hated scenes.

Hugh fairly ran home with his news, and there was such excitement, and so busy were they that Owen's family were installed at the sign of the "Ring and the Raven" before the end of the week, raven and all.

On the Monday the second son, William, went up to the house, and was dressed as a page and put to play with Lord Möelfre's two sons; but he was charged when the

proper season came to get two raven's hatchlings. Old Hugh was fortunate enough to find a nest of four the following summer, two of which William successfully reared, when they became the boys' constant playmates. Lord Möelfre took to young William, and had him educated with his sons by the tutor, and he was soon treated as a brother; indeed, he finally became Lord Möelfre's steward.

Once or twice old Hugh went over to Möelfre, followed by the old raven, but he quarrelled with the younger birds, and growing jealous of them would never go near the house afterwards, but lived contentedly at the inn, where he used to amuse and plague the travellers.

One of these old farmers, a crusty old bachelor, who wore spectacles, was reading one day in the bar, when the raven hopped on to his shoulder and stole his spectacles from his very nose. The old man swore horrible Welsh oaths, but the wily bird had flown. When old Hugh heard of the loss, he watched his pet and traced him to his *cache* in a hollow tree, where he found a lot of bright objects hidden in as purposeless a way as a miser hides his useless hoard. When the raven's store was rifled he died; of grief, Hugh said; of shame, said his wife.

XXII.

Old Dicky's Pony.

“The flowing bowl then let us quaff,
 And gaily at misfortune laugh;
 A cynic and a fool is he
 Who cannot wise and merry be.”

Better days have come at last.
 (Old Welsh Song.)

At the “Bridge Arms” at Menai, a party of pedlars and hawkers were sitting round a table drinking beer. They were all heavy drinkers and superstitious men, and beer was plentiful. The landlord was ordered to refill the tankards and to get a new candle, for one had burnt low in its socket. As he placed the jugs of ale on the table and thumped down the heavy brass candlestick, a spark flew towards old Dicky.

“That will be a letter for you,” said old Evan Evans.

“Yes,” said Dicky, “a letter about the Bleumaris pony races; old Robin will do them again.”

“Ay! he’ll be sure to win, he’ll be sure to win,” said Evan Evans.

“Yes, he has always won, though he does look a rough one,” said his master. “Yes, he’ll win, but I never have luck. Look at old Evans there; he’s a gentleman now, all owing to his luck.”

“Ay! and how did you get rich?” asked Robert Roberts, a young Penrhyn quarryman.

“Well, indeed, I will tell you. When I was young I used to go with Betty, my wife, to Carnarvon fair; it lasted

a week. They sold butter and pigs and all. Well, we bought two store pigs, and as we were driving them home one got adrift, and a farmer was coming along in his cart and the pig ran right in underneath the shafts and frightened the horse, and he kicked it and killed it. So he gave us a lift home, and then I bled the pig and cut him up, and as I was cleaning his guts I felt something hard, and Betty got a lantern, and, indeed, there was a purse and five golden sovereigns and a ring with a big white stone in it.

“So the next day—that was the third day of the fair—I went back again with Betty and I bought three more store pigs and a tub of butter. I paid him with the gold and axed him to wrap the change in paper, and he did. And indeed, when I got home I found he had wrapped the change in an old five-pound note.

“‘Well, Betty,’ says I, ‘this is luck! We’ll go in again and buy a milk cow.’

“And we did, and there was a reward out for the purse and ring—ten pounds. So I went to the merchant where I’d bought the store pig and axed him where he got his swill, and he told me, for I knew him. So I see it was not one of the houses where the reward was offered, so I went and they said it was the ring and axed me how I got it, and I told them, and they didn’t want the money and gave me the ten pounds and said never a word. So when I got a good start I took it, and that’s how I began,” said Evan Evans.

“And a good beginning too; but some people are lucky, and some are unlucky,” said Old Dicky. “There, look at John Owens of Port di Norwig; I know the man right well. He was a fisherman; and one day he was off in the channel fishing for codling, when a sou’-wester came up and blew him right into the channel, and he’d lost oars and everything. Well, a big foreign ship out of Liverpool picked him up and left his boat to drift, so everybody thought he was lost, his wife and all. He wrote two letters when he got foreign but the chap, Billy Williams, who was

after his wife, stopped them, and they got married, and had two children together. Well, after seven years John Owens came home, and he went up to the house and knocked, and his wife came out.

“ ‘ Well, Jane, don't you know me ? I'm your husband,' he said.

“ ‘ Well, my God ! I didn't know you at first.'

“ ‘ No ; I see you're married again' (for the children were about).

“ ‘ Yes, John ; my God ! we all thought you dead. I married Billy Williams.'

“ ‘ Well,' says John, right off, ‘ which of us two are you going to live with, Jane ?' ”

“ And Jane threw herself into his arms and said—

“ ‘ John, you were my first love ; I'd sooner live with you.' ”

“ So John and Billy shook hands and Billy cleared out and killed himself.”

“ That was bad luck all round,” said Roberts. “ Well to be sure, I believe in luck too. Look at young Pool ; he's now Captain of one of them big passenger ships out of Liverpool. Well, he shipped in a vessel from Carnarvon for South America, and when they got two days' sail from Rio, they fell in with a Pampero. They had taken in some sail, but not enough, and what they'd left was blown to ribbons. Well, young Pool has told me himself it came to him all of a sudden to go to the water barrel. The full barrels have plugs in with a hole in the middle, so the sea-water can't get in. Well, he took the plug out of a full one and put it into one of the empty barrels, and he'd no sooner finished than a tremendous puff came and capsized her, and threw them all into the water. When he came up, he saw his cask and made for it, and got on it, and there he was till morning, when a ship from Rio picked him up ; and that boy—he wasn't sixteen then—on his first voyage was saved and everybody else was lost.”

“ Yes, I believe in luck,” said Dicky.

It was getting late, so the party broke up, and Dicky gave his pony a quart of beer as was his custom, and he was soon trotting merrily home to Bangor, for Robin was a flier.

When he got home sure enough there was a note from the landlord of the "White Horse," telling Dick that the Bleumaris pony races were coming off on Saturday next, and he hoped to see old Robin there, for he'd backed him.

Next day Dick rode over to the "White Horse," and was talking to the landlord when old Robin came up and grabbed him by the shoulder with his teeth.

"Good God! give the pony a quart, or he'll never let me alone," said Dicky.

Robin had his quart in a dish and walked off to the stable yard; he was as tame as a donkey.

Dick drank heavily, and by night he was quite in humour for spinning a yarn, for Dick had seen much and done much, and could talk for hours.

"Well, old Robin will be sure to win," said the landlord.

"Who is there?"

"Well, Dr. Jones' 'Merican trotting mare, but she's done, she's too old; and Lord Slough has two fine full-bred Irish ponies, and Sir Richard has a good goer; that's all I know."

"Well, well," said Dick, "perhaps I will give them a surprise, like young Billy Pritchard did to the road robbers."

"Well, how was that?"

"Why, indeed, I'll tell you; for I knew Billy, he was quite an old man when I was a young one. He said there used to be a good many road robbers like Dick Turpin in his day. Well, Billy was stable boy to a big farmer, and the farmer had to send for money to pay his men every Saturday, and nobody only Billy durst go, on account of the robberies. Well, indeed, one day there was a lot of money wanted.

"Now, Billy, take the best horse," said his master.

"No, master, I'll take the worst."

“ ‘ Why, Billy ? ’ ”

“ ‘ I’ve a plan. Do you give me a letter too, so they’ll give me two bags, one full of farthings and half-pence and the other full of gold.’ ”

“ ‘ Well, Billy, what for ? ’ ”

“ ‘ Well, I’ve a scheme.’ ”

“ So Billy rode over the hills to Carnarvon and got his money, and he put the gold bag inside his shirt and the copper outside, and he looked to his pistol.

“ As he was coming along whistling, a robber came from the back of a hill.

“ ‘ Well, where are you going ? ’ ”

“ ‘ To my master.’ ”

“ ‘ What for ? ’ ”

“ ‘ To pay him his money.’ ”

“ ‘ Well, indeed, do you know who I am ? ’ ”

“ ‘ No.’ ”

“ ‘ I’m Black Dwyll, the road robber.’ ”

“ ‘ Oho ! Is it ? Well, well, this is bad. But I’ll heave the bag of money over the hills, so you can say you didn’t rob me, if you’ll give me some for myself.’ ”

“ ‘ Yes, I’ll do that.’ ”

“ ‘ Well, jump down and hold my horse, whilst I get the bag out.’ ”

“ The robber jumped down and held the rein whilst Billy got out the bag and threw it over the cliff.

“ ‘ Now then, I’ll stand by your horse whilst you get the money,’ said Billy, jumping down and taking the highwayman’s reins.

“ The robber climbed down the low cliff. Billy gave his mare a cut and told her to go home, and jumping on the highwayman’s horse he galloped off, leaving the robber hunting for the bag of copper. But before he got home he met a second bandit, who cried fiercely—

“ ‘ That’s Dwyll’s horse ! Stop, or I’ll kill you ! ’ he said, brandishing a richly engraved pistol.

“ ‘ Well, indeed,’ said Billy, ‘ I’ll stop ; but look here, my master will kill me if I go home without the money. Do save a poor boy. I’ll give you the money and say Dwyl took it, if you’ll put a couple of bullet holes through my hat, so I can show it and say I fought for it.’

“ ‘ Well, well, hold it up.’

“ So Billy held his hat up on the end of his crop, and Black Dwyl emptied one pistol and then the other into it.

“ ‘ Now put one through my coat, do.’

“ ‘ I’ve got no more ; wait till I load.’

“ ‘ Haven’t you ? then I have,’ said Billy, and he drew his pistol and shot Black Dwyl dead and took his horse and led him home, when they found over five hundred pounds in the saddle-bags of the road robbers. And the farmer gave the two horses and the money to the boy and he’s a big farmer now.”

“ Well indeed,” said the company.

“ Those road robbers were Sasnaeches, I expect,” said Dick.

“ Yes, Sasnaech fools,” said another black-haired Welshman.

“ Ay, Billy Owens showed ’em what fools they were. He went to London once and see a big shop full of gold and silver things, and he’d spent all his money, and was looking about to see how he could do the Sasnaechis, when a big Sasnaech came up and said—

“ ‘ How do you live, mate ? ’

“ ‘ I can’t live, mate. How do you ? ’

“ ‘ Will you go shares with me, and I’ll show you ? ’ he says.

“ ‘ Yes,’ says Billy Owens.

“ ‘ Well, I’ll go in and get some watches and we’ll share, and do you stop here ; then to-morrow night it’s your turn.’

“ So Billy stopped outside, and the big Sasnaech went in, and presently he came out all of a hurry and said, ‘ I’ve got

'em,' and he'd got six watches; so they ran off and sold them and had a big drink.

"The next night the Sasnaech says—

"'It's your turn to go in; I'll stand here.'"

"'All right,' says Billy; but he didn't like it, he was timid. He got a big bag and in he goes; and there was a man in the shop, and he looked at him hard.

"'Say, did you lose any watches last night?' asked Billy.

"'Yes, yes,' says the shopkeeper, excited.

"'Well, hist! the man who took them is standing outside now—a big man.'

"'By God!' said the shopkeeper, and ran out, yelling, 'Police! police!' after the Sasnaech; and Billy filled his bag with rings and gold watches and came out as bold as brass, and the Sasnaech was caught."

"Ha! ha!" said Dicky, "we'll see what the little Sasnaech pony will do on Saturday."

Well, Dicky drank so much that he fell off his pony, and the old pony drew him with his bite to the grass on the roadside and lay down beside him, as he had often done before; and so they slept till daylight.

* * * * *

On the following Saturday the castle meadows were bright with flags and gay with the dresses of girls, for the great pony races were to be held over the undulating turf below the commonplace-looking house on Baron Hill, a tasteless Hanoverian pile. In one corner of the meadow were the ponies—the Doctor's old American mare, the winner of several cups in the heyday of youth; Lord Slough's two full-blooded Irish ponies; Sir Richard's thoroughbred—all dressed in costly blankets; and there was Dick's large-sized, shaggy, uncropped, broad-breasted, tame Robin; besides these heroes were one or two untried competitors—all coddled in blankets, except Dick's Robin, who stood like an old donkey by his master with never a rag on

him. All the jockeys were dressed in many-coloured silks, all except Dick, who wore a moleskin cap and waistcoat and corduroys.

Before the races the competing ponies had preliminary gallops, all but Robin; he drank a quart of ale from a dish instead.

Lord Slough came along and saw Robin drinking his beer.

“What’s that brute doing here?” he asked.

“He’s going to run a race,” answered Dick.

“A donkey like that run a race!”

“Yes, and he’ll show his tail to them all.”

“Good God, man, that’s ridiculous!”

Lord Slough went off and told Sir Richard, and they came back to Robin, who eyed them quietly.

“What, is this donkey going to run against our ponies?” asked Lord Slough.

“I dunno whether he’s a donkey or not, he does look a queer object; but I’d sooner bet on him than any of the others. I’ve heard of his merit, but I’ve never seen him run,” said Sir Richard.

“Scandalous!” said Lord Slough.

“Well, I’ll bet you twenty pounds he wins,” said Sir Richard.

“And so will I,” added Dick.

“Good God, man! Good God, Sir Richard! Are you making a fool of me?”

“No, no!”

“Well, I’ll take your bets for fun; but the cheek of bringing donkeys to run race-ponies—scandalous!”

It was arranged that the races should be run off in heats, the first two in each heat to run in the final race.

Dick had saddled Robin and was up to the post with three others, for he had drawn to run in the first heat. Dick looked at the heavy ground and then at the light ponies and smiled. There were four ponies in his heat—the old

champion American trotter, one of Lord Slough's Irish ponies, and two others. The flag was put down and off they started, Robin and Dick taking it easily at the start; but the crowd yelled with excitement when the old shaggy pony with the moleskin clad jockey passed the others and won by three lengths, the old American coming in second and Lord Slough's third. Lord Slough was wild and furious, swearing and calling old Robin all the names under the sun.

In the second heat Sir Richard's pony won, and Lord Slough's was a bad second.

Robin drank another quart of ale, and the four ponies were drawn up in the bright sunshine for the final race—old Dick in his moleskin and corduroys, the old American trotter and her jockey in black and cerise silk, Lord Slough in green silk, and Sir Richard's jockey in blue and white hoops.

The crowd lined the course, and all were chaffing old Dick in Welsh; but at the signal the ponies dashed off and old Robin laid himself out and drew clear in the first quarter of a mile, maintaining his lead to the end, and winning the race by three lengths, the Doctor's aged American trotter being second, Sir Richard's third, and Lord Slough last.

The crowd yelled and cheered old Dick and Robin, and Lord Slough was dancing about like a maniac, for he could never forgive the unkempt pony and ill-dressed man beating his well-groomed, full-blooded, expensive Irish race-ponies. And old Robin and Dick had several quarts of beer that night.

XXIII.

Harry's Yarn.

“ Land of the Cymry! mighty in story,
 Dear to my soul is thy time-honoured name;
 Bright and unclouded the star of thy glory
 For ever shall shine in the temple of fame.”
The Music of Wales (Old Welsh Song).

HE was a tall, silent man, with dark, piercing eyes, a big nose, and a long, patriarchal beard. He'd a curious hesitancy of speech, and was apt to gesticulate and eke out his halting speech with sweeping motions of his arm. He may have been a Dissenting preacher at one time, for he had much of their manner, and there was that in his eye which to the initiated is the danger signal of religious hysteria—you will find what I mean in the eye of every Salvationist. Still, he had been a great fighter in his day, having on two occasions won prize-fights. He began:—

“ Well, when I was fourteen, isn't it? I joined the *Star* as apprentice, and we sailed for St. John's, New Brunswick. We started on a Thursday in the month of March, isn't it? On the following Sunday it came on to blow, and a heavy sea soon rose that washed the galley over. It fell on the top of the cook and smashed him, and when I ran up on deck with the rest and saw the blood running in the scuppers I was frightened, for that was the first time I ever saw blood.

“ Well, howsumever, we got to St. John's and loaded of timber all right and came back, but the master was such a tyrant I ran away at Liverpool and shipped aboard a full-

rigged vessel for Calcutta. There was a lot of sickness there at the time; there were plenty of ships in harbour without a hand aboard—all dead; and the carpenter was taken ill with the cholera and died. His son was my fellow-apprentice, and he was terribly cut up, isn't it? Well, they sewed him up, and I was sitting on the rail watching the funeral, and when they launched the body into the sea and the boy saw his father going down, he made one leap and got hold of the hammock; and then we saw a lot of sharks round him, like a lot of little fish round a hook, and there was some blood come up, and then we saw them tearing the boy to bits. 'Twas an awful sight.

“ Well, we got home all right, and one day they was plaguing me in a Welsh public in Liverpool to spin them a yarn, so I up and gave them this—

“ Come, landsmen, listen unto me;
 I'll tell you the truth I'm bound
 What happened to me by going to sea,
 And the wonders what I found.
 Shipwrecked was I upon Vera Cruz,
 And cast upon a shore,
 And I resolved to take a cruise
 My country to explore.
 I had scarcely travelled far
 Before I saw something moving,
 Which first I thought it was
 All the earth in motion.
 But heaving-up close alongside
 I found it was a crocodile;
 From the tip of his nose to the end of his tail,
 He reached five hundred mile.
 Now this crocodile was none of the common race,
 That I could plainly see,
 For I had to climb a very high tree
 Before I see his face.
 Whilst up aloft the wind blew high,
 It blowed a gale from the south;
 I lost my hold and away I fell
 Right down the crocodile's mouth.
 He quickly closed his jaws on me,
 He thought to get a victim;
 But damn him, that we'll see,
 And this is the way I tricked him.

I travelled there for a month or two,
 Till I got into his maw ;
 It's there I found rum cakes a few
 And one thousand bullocks in store.
 Then I banished all my care,
 For grub I was not stinted ;
 For in this crocodile I lived ten year,
 So happy and contented.
 Now the crocodile was growing old,
 So one day he died ;
 He was six months getting cold,
 He was so long and wide.
 For I was for six months and more
 A-digging my way out.
 So, landsmen, listen unto me ;
 If ever you travel the Nile,
 It's there you'll find the shell
 Of that wonderful crocodile.'

“ Well, they all gaped, for landsmen knew nothing in those days.

“ Well, I kept on till my time was up, and then I went A.B. in the *Euphrates* for Sydney, where I stopped coaling for a couple of years. Then I must go to New Zealand with a load of cattle. We went all right and the master said he'd land the cattle in Manukan Bay and drive them over to Auckland, for we were getting short of water and fodder. Well, we got the boat out and took soundings ; but Manukan is a bar harbour, and the bar is right across the bay, so you must go round it to get into it. There were we sounding, when all of a sudden he let her go to starboard a bit too much, and she struck the bank, and the tide began to come in just then, and the water was all of a boil about her at once ; I never saw such a thing, and yet it was quite fine, no wind. We had just time to get the boat away and get into her before the ship began to break up ; and the bullocks were bellowing awful ; but we soon got ashore and heard no more of them, they were all drowned, and we were all wet through. But one should know a harbour before one goes into it, isn't it ?

“ When we got ashore there were eleven in all, including

the Captain and supercargo. Six of us went up the river in a boat, about two miles, to the English Consul's house. He came out, a nasty, black-haired, smooth-faced chap, soft spoke; I knew his breed directly I clapped eyes on to him—I'd seen the like before. Well, he took the Captain and supercargo indoors, and told us to go to an open cart-shed. That was about ten o'clock of the morning. After we had been there a bit he came out and said—

“‘All right, my men; I'll send you some food soon, but don't use this kindling,’ and he pointed to a pile of split wood in a corner.

“Well, we stopped and stopped and nobody came, and we could see it was noon-tide by the sun. So I say—

“‘D—n it, lads, let's have some fire; I'm near perished of cold.’

“So we got some of the wood and made a fire and began to dry our clothes, when out he came and brought a bag of taters about as big as chestnuts. 'Twas nigh one o'clock then. We sat for a bit looking at these miserable pig-taters, and presently I says—

“‘Let's go and ax for food.’

“‘No, no,’ they say.

“‘Let's go; we'll draw lots who goes.’

“Well, after a bit of palavering we drew lots and it fell on me. So up I went and knocked, and he came out smiling, the deceitful cur. I said—

“‘Can't you give us anything to eat, sir?’

“‘Why, I've given you something,’ he said.

“‘What, the potatoes?’ I said.

“‘Yes, my man,’ he said, kind of condescending; ‘it's all I can give you.’

“‘Thank you,’ says I, and turned off on my heel and went back and told my pals.

“So four of us went down the river a mile to a hut we'd seen, and I knocked.

“‘Ah, shure, who's there?’ said an Irishman.

“ ‘Some castaway sailors,’ says I.

“ ‘Och, shure,’ says he, opening the door and coming out and staring at the four of us wet through and with no boots on, for we’d left them off on the vessel.

“ ‘Come in, my bhoys, come in ; and I’ll be shure to do what I can.’

“ So he put his kettle on the fire, and he got a lot of big kidney taters from a box and roasted them in the wood ashes of the fire ; and when the kettle boiled he made some green herb tea and he gave us some biscuits, and we drank the tea and dried our clothes and was very snug ; but we wondered what our five pals would be doing on the beach.

“ Then the Irishman told us he worked for this here Consul, and he said he was very close and give him nothing only biscuits and pig-taters ; but then he had to dig up the taters, so he took care of himself.

“ Well, we stopped there all night and had more tea and taters and biscuit in the morning, and then we went up the river five miles where the Irishman told us a lot of woodcutters were living. He said they’d give us plenty of pork, for there were a lot of wild pigs about. So we walked up and found them at breakfast in front of their huts, and we had another breakfast along with them, pork and corn cakes ; and they gave us half a pig and a lot of potatoes and Indian meal, and we walked down to take our pals a feed. As we came by the Consul’s house, the Consul and Captain and supercargo came out, and they saw the grub, and the Consul opened his eyes ; and as we were loading up the boat he brought his dirty bag of pig-taters and said soft and smiling—

“ ‘You’d better take these.’

“ ‘To hell with you and your potatoes,’ says I, giving the bag a kick.

“ So the Captain and supercargo got in and we rowed down to our pals, and they were swearing awful ; and the Captain

and supercargo swore they had eaten nothing, but I could see they had, for they were in no hurry to cook the wittles we had brought—I could see that. Well, we made a fire and cooked a big feed for our pals, who were nigh starved; and they wanted to go and kick up a shindy at the soft-spoken b——r's house; but I was agin that, for I knew the oily warmint would get to win'ward of us by the law.

“Well, as we was eating our breakfast a yacht came over and a gentleman came ashore; and when we told him we were castaway mariners he said he'd take us up the bay to his hotel. And he did, he was a good sort of man; we all went aboard and he took us across the bay and up to his hotel, and he gave us plenty to eat and drink. There were a lot of old army men—pensioners—living there, they'd nice houses and gardens and all; and nothing must do but we must go and drink with them, so we stopped along with them all day and that night too; and they gave us lots of grub and collected a few shillings, and next day we all walked across to Auckland, that wasn't so far.

“Well, I've been about the world and in a good many places since, and met a heap of men; but that black-haired, smooth-spoken English Consul was the meanest man I ever clapped eyes on to.

“Well, from Auckland I went to New Holland, and I fell in with some of the natives, and I kind of took to them; so I ran away from my ship and lived with them for a year. I'd a mind once to learn their ways of living, for they're the sharpest-sighted people alive, and I had heard a lot about savages, and I wanted to see if they were as mean as that soft-spoken Consul. So I lived along with them, and used to go hunting with one of them. I never see such eyes and ears. There'd be a lot of kangaroos feeding, and we'd draw up and he'd put me in a place where I could see him, and then he'd stand still as death, and then he'd make a move and draw closer. I could see him draw closer, but I couldn't see him *move*; it was like

watching the hands of a clock—you know they move, but if you don't look right hard you don't see them do it. I watched him, and though I never saw him move he'd moved fifty yards in no time; and presently he up with my gun and shot one feeding. He could shoot anything setting right off, without any practice. But the boomerang was his tool; it was made of iron-wood and shaped like the new moon, and it was thick outside and thinned inside like a sickle. It was wonderful how he'd make that circle back to him. I tried hard to learn to see things like he did and to use the boomerang and creep up to the kangaroos, but it wasn't no use, it wasn't born in me.

“But to show you the difference between him and the Consul. He was very fond of a big white worm he found in rotten trees. He used to climb up the tree and keep tapping it, and he knew by the sound if there was a worm inside, then he'd cut it out. Well, he'd always give me half of these worms, though he liked them better than I liked bacca; but he'd never seen a missionary, nor yet a Consul.

“When I see I couldn't get as clever as he was at woodcraft I went off and joined some shore whalers, after those hump-backs. They had a lot of houses and big works and a look-out on shore; and when we see any whales spouting we used to get into the boats and away we'd go after those shovel-nosed hump-backs. We'd get up and get hold with the irons and kill him with the lance; directly he began to blow thick blood it was all up. Sometimes we'd tow him ashore, but if we left him he was sure to work his way to win'ward by his fins. They usually have six to eight inches of blubber, but I have seen a right whale with sixteen inches of blubber round him.

“Well, I stopped there for a while, till a vessel came and I shipped for Sydney, where I took to boating; I was a regular waterman there. Whilst I was there I heard how the California diggings were coming on, so I shipped to

California; there were only a few huts then where the big city is now; but you could leave your jacket on the grass and nobody would touch it, for revolvers were quick and Judge Lynch was quicker than all. I began boating there and six of us lived on Clarke's point. I was one of the first boatmen of California. We used to carry passengers up to Sacramento, too, in a long boat, and charge them a doubloon apiece. Then I went up to Hampton and tried the diggings, but I got the ague and had to come back; so I shipped in a vessel for Aranco, the seaport for Concepcion, and from there I went down to Valparaiso. That's where I had those two fights I told you about. Whilst I was there a Dutch whaler was taking on passengers for California and they were eight hands short, so the Captain came ashore and persuaded me and some other chaps to go along with him. We consented, but we kept him running the rag down the Bland, for there were drinking and dancing shanties each side of the road; and the Chilalean girls are fine; they're all right as long as you stick to them, but if you go with another, look out! they're sure to stab you. Towards evening we got into the Maintop, a big dancing room; there were three—the Foretop, Maintop, and Mizzentop. Well, the Captain persuaded us to come aboard, but we said no, we must have the night ashore, and we'd be sure to come aboard the first thing in the morning. So he left us outside the Maintop, and we started to go in. My mate had a large sheath knife at his waist and the vigilante saw it and drew it, for nobody was allowed to carry knives in there in case of a row. I was fresh, so I called him a *sinverguenza*, and he rapped me over the knuckles with the edge of the knife and drew a bit of blood. I said nothing and we went in, and I got hold of a fine Chilalean girl and began dancing, but I kept my eye on the vigilante. Presently I saw a chance, so I left my girl and ran up and dropped him one on the side of the leg and knocked him down a lot of stone steps; and I ran for it, and went to a grog shop and put on a false beard and came back and went on dancing, and there was he looking for me, but he never found me.

“Next morning we all went on board and got under weigh. There were nearly four hundred passengers. The skipper was a jolly fellow, and there was plenty of grog and every evening between six and eight we had music and dancing on the quarter-deck. The weather was so hot and still that I and another chap made a tent on the maintop and slept there.

“When we came to the line I was picked on to act old Neptune. The night before we reached the line we dropped half a cask of pitch over and lighted it, and I jumped over with a line and shouted—

“‘Ship ahoy! What ship is that?’

“‘The *Zealand*, from Valparaiso for California!’

“‘Ay, ay! I’ll be aboard to-morrow about noon; have all my men ready. Good-night!’ and I climbed up the chains on to the fo’castle again.

“The next day I put on my hair and beard made of this here manilla rope, and a big sailcloth slop, and took a pair of ‘grain’ irons what we spear bonitos with, and I went overboard, and they pulled me up, and there was my barber and guard, they had sluiced them with water. Directly I got aboard I ordered all hands to have a glass of grog and then I axed for my children. The new men had to pay a fine, two bottles of rum, and then they were let off with a bucket of water; but if they didn’t pay they were shaved and ducked in the sail. It was quite still, there was no wind, and we’d our topsails close reefed; so we had a spin and dancing afterwards and grog and songs till nigh the next morning.

“Next day we fell in with a bit of a breeze and we squared away for Frisco. We’d a long voyage, we were nearly two months and a half, and we ran short of water; though there was plenty of salt grub we daresn’t eat it. At the last we were reduced to a pint of water a day. But we got to Frisco all right, and I took to boating again for a bit.

“Then I shipped as mate on a Yankee schooner running to Shoalwater Bay, the other side of the Columbia River, for oysters. The Indians used to gather the oysters for us to

trade with us for bad whiskey—'earthquake' we called it; they couldn't drink good whiskey, it must be fiery. We used to get some splendid salmon there too, those king salmon; the Indians cured them splendid.

"Well, after a few voyages I came home here and got married and went yachting. I was on the *Deerhound*, and we were lying in Cherbourg Harbour when the *Alabama* came in; she was a fine vessel, just like a big yacht. The *Kearsage* was outside, and every night she'd come in shore and challenge the *Alabama* to fight, but Captain Sims wouldn't go for a long time. What he was doing I dunno—unloading treasure or plunder or something, I reckon. One day he fixed to go out, so we followed after him to see the fun. They were both wooden ships, but the Captain of the *Kearsage* was a 'cute Yankee, and he'd wrapped chain cables all round his ship and made her iron-plated, and then he covered these cables over with canvas so no one should know. I think Captain Sims' idea was to get alongside and board her, for he'd a terrible desperate lot of fellows aboard. Well, they drawed outside the three-mile limit and we kept clear of them, and presently they got closer together. I think the *Alabama* fired first, but the *Kearsage* soon hit her tiller and then she was useless, and the *Kearsage* just ran round her and peppered her as she liked, and soon she began to sink and down she went starn first. The *Kearsage* lowered their boats and picked up all they could, and we went up and axed if we should help, and the Captain of the *Kearsage* said 'yes'; so we picked up Sims and a lot more in our boat, and Sims lay down in the bottom of the boat under our feet; and they came round and looked for him but they didn't find him, so we took our lot aboard of the yacht and landed them at Southampton, and a nice mess there was about that job.

"Well, that's the last exciting thing I see at sea, and I mustn't say too much, or they'll be having an *Alabama* claim agin me; for I saw her building at Liverpool, and everybody knew what she was for before she started."

XXIV.

The Boss-fire's Yarn.

“ Home of my childhood, ever dear,
O many a dark and stormy year
Over this weary heart has passed
Since I beheld its threshold last.”
Home of my Childhood (Old Welsh Song).

OLD WILLIAM PRITCHARD had been knocked about the oceanic currents like a bit of gulf weed or drift-wood, being cast up here and there on strange shores all over the world, merely to be dragged back into the formless void of the deep sea. These journeyings to and fro had left their scars on the small-featured Welsh face with the black, spirited eyes, and this thin, short piece of human drift sighed aloud with pleasure when, after years of wandering, he got appointed as one of the “boss-fires” to the Sacramento Mine with a wage of twelve shillings a day; but Pritchard only held this post for two years when the sea claimed her own again.

The landscape features of a great continent like that of North America are necessarily on a grand scale, and the dry electrical condition of the atmosphere seems to give the great nation living thereon a mighty energy that quails not before the most formidable and stupendous engineering feats. It was therefore nothing for the engineers of the Sacramento Mine to conceive the idea of boring six miles into a granite mountain in which lay hidden outcrop seams of coal all lying more or less parallel with the slope of the mountain-side. No sooner was the scheme conceived

than it was done, and the ordinary road that led to the foot of the mountain, was merely carried straight on, *on the same level*, into the bowels of the earth for six miles, a lantern marking the terminus. After the gallery was cut the six hundred miners of all nationalities began cutting on either side into the soft coal so vigorously that the best cutters could earn \$7.50 a day and the more sluggish labourers \$4.00, for the devilish socialistic device now practised by the "unions," that prevents a good man from surpassing the weak and the fool, was as yet not thought of, and yet all lived socially in a town of wooden huts close by, the Irish gangers agreeing with the Welsh cutters and buckers in perfect harmony, the North Welshman even fraternising with his Southern brother, a thing impossible in Wales.

This mine was ventilated by three huge shafts, each shaft placed two miles apart; and since the mountain-side sloped the engineers had only to bore through two hundred feet of mountain at right angles to the road for the first shaft, through three hundred and six hundred of crust to sink the second and third shafts. A great furnace was placed at the foot of each shaft and the fires kept constantly burning for ventilation, for fire-damp spurted at times from the coal seams and choke-damp lurked on the low levels. Each furnace was worked by two boss-fires, taking the watches in turn by day and night, month and month about, their immediate superior being the "air-manager," one John Owen, whose duty it was to visit the mine every morning before any workmen entered and test the condition of the air, issuing orders accordingly.

William Pritchard was appointed one of the boss-fires of the second furnace, that one with the three hundred yard shaft. The first night he entered the mine, John Owen, a loquacious Denbighshire man, came up and said—

"Now, my boy, the weather is heavy and the wind southerly to-night; the air will be bad to-night, so pile the wood on and, whatever you do, don't fall asleep or you'll never wake."

“Thank you, Mr. Owen,” said Pritchard, “Mrs. Williams, where I lodge, told me of that, and she gave me this little bitch here; she said it would be sure to wake me if I fell asleep, and never leave me if I once took it into the mine.”

“Well, those dogs has saved some of the boss-fires’ lives before now; but are you ready? If so, come on.”

Pritchard had meanwhile stuck a candle into the leather stock in his cap, and taking up a lantern they walked along the dark, desert gallery; nothing but the roar of the fires could be heard, and they sounded more like the roar of trains or the thunder of water falling in the distance. Away ahead could be seen the bright star at the end of the mine and on either hand the dark galleries, before which their box-like trucks stood like silent sentinels. As they passed the first furnace they saw the boss-fire, a half-naked figure clad only in drawers, standing by the fire; he was raking out the ashes before piling on more wood—wood was preferred as it gave a better draught and wood fire is fiercer and quicker.

“Good-evening, Job,” said old Owen, as they passed.

“Good-evening,” growled the grimy, perspiring figure, as his swelled muscles were lit up and defined by the fire-light, just as a statue is seen best when lighted properly. It was a magnificent sight, this boss-fire’s naked form struggling with the foul air that lurked in the cold, silent, black hollows.

At the second furnace they stopped and found the boss-fire dressing himself, his fire piled high with wood and roaring like a blast furnace.

“Good-evening, John Jones; this is your new mate, William Pritchard.”

John Jones chuckled and said—

“I am glad to see you. Where are you from? Carnarvon?”

“No, I’m from Anglesea.”

“That will be good; so am I—from Moëlfre; but I

mustn't stay now, for I'm going to Paddy Flanagan's wake to-night; he was killed yesterday—a stone fell on his head."

"Ay, poor Flanagan, the Lord be with him," said old Owen.

And John Jones pointed out where the shovels and rakes were and turned down the mine with Owen. As they passed the big boulder overhanging the gallery, some three miles from the mouth, they were still talking of poor Flanagan's death when Owen looked up and said—

"That would be a pretty little stone to drop on one, eh?"

"Yes, it would," said John Jones looking at the huge rock that hung ominously like a thunder cloud over the black gallery.

"It's bound to kill someone some day," said Owen.

"Ay, there may be more than one under it," said John Jones.

* * * * *

William Pritchard found the work easy but the keeping awake difficult, especially just before daybreak. Once indeed he dozed off, but the faithful little dog plucked at his drawers and he awoke with a start like a sentry on duty who has dozed after a hard day's fight. By smoking and reading and thinking, Pritchard got through the night, and as he went out at seven o'clock the next morning, he heard Owen had been round, and found the air so very bad on account of the heavy weather, that the men were forbidden to work beyond the second furnace. After breakfast Pritchard was curious to see the working of the mine and to know the ropes, so he got Owen to take him round where the men were cutting coal, two men in a cell all grimy and wearing only thin drawers cut short at the knees. As the miners cut the coal the "boss-buckers" loaded the sheets or buckers—rivetted iron boxes six feet square just fitting the gallery—till they had a five or six ton load. Then the great strong "buck-ganger," clad in a leathern girdle with leather

bands over his upper arms and thighs, took the two buck sticks in his hand and pushed the load down the smooth incline to the bottom, where a trap door opened into the trucks below—a man standing at each trap door to see that the holes did not get choked with large lumps of coal. These boss-buckers were magnificent men and moved up and down the softened light of the galleries with their leather armatures like Greek statues, stopping to load from the cells on either side where the nude cutters work in pairs like bees in a hive digging out the soft coal. The manager came on Saturday nights and measured up the size of the hole they had eaten into the black vein and saw the props were secure, so that the roof would not fall in upon the sappers when they recommenced work on the Monday.

The air-manager next took Pritchard below to the gangways, where a powerful horse, "Jack," was pulling eight waggons—each waggon holding eight tons of coals; and after that he went home to meditate on the big work he was engaged upon.

* * * * *

When Pritchard's month of night duty was up he went on day work, and as the wind was blowing from the north-west the furnaces burnt coal; for there was sufficient draught, with the wind in that direction, for the coal to keep up the circulation of the air; the night boss-fire had to burn coal too—a ton a night.

At meal times many of the men collected at the mouth of the mine to eat their dinner and get a breath of fresh air at the same time. The dinner hour therefore was the time when the news of the mine spread from mouth to mouth—then some first heard how poor Paddy was killed in such and such a gallery, how the air was good or bad, how buck-ganger Owen Owen had broken his leg, and so on.

It was March when Pritchard first joined these men, and

on the first day as he sat eating with them, the story spread like wild fire that Paddy McGheen and Robert P. Mason, a down East Yankee, had been attacked in the straight gallery by a couple of wolves, that they had killed both and never got a scratch, braining the brutes with their picks.

A few days after the report came that another wolf had killed and eaten young Murphy's child in its cradle, whilst its mother, young Biddy, had run over to borrow a neighbour's washing board. The new hands were not a little frightened at the possibility of meeting wolves in those gloomy caverns, but the old miners laughed them out of their fears and told them the wolves rarely came down from the mountains and then only at the end of winter—so they were reassured.

* * * * *

Two weeks after this visit of the wolves old Pritchard's bitch was followed as he walked to the mine one morning by every dog in the village, and like the Pied Piper of Hamelin, Pritchard entered the hillside heading a string of dogs with tails erect and gleaming eyes. He walked on up the dark road cut in the granite when suddenly he saw a moving light ahead stop and disappear. Pritchard could scarcely walk on account of the dogs and he thought the light he had seen must be Owen's, for none but the air-manager and the boss-fires were allowed to go into the mine before working hours, so he cried—

“Owen, Owen, come here!”

“Good God, I'm glad to hear your voice; what's the matter?” the invisible Owen called out.

“Come and help me turn these dogs out.”

“Good God, I thought they would be wolves,” said Owen, lighting his candle and coming forward from a crevice where he had concealed himself. Together they drove the dogs out of the mine with sticks and pieces of coal.

When the men came into work that morning they began to feed the favourite horse Jack with buns and sweets as usual, for Jack would eat anything and come when called like a dog. Apples, cakes—Jack liked all of them like the spoilt horse he was ; but he always did his work well notwithstanding those delicacies.

That same evening the manager came up as Pritchard was dressing in readiness to give up his watch, and asked—

“ John Jones here ? ”

“ No, sir, not yet ! it isn't seven o'clock yet.”

“ Well, when he comes tell him to rake the fires out—in fact you may begin to do so now.”

“ But the mine will go bad, sir.”

“ Do you hear what I've told you ? ”

“ Yes, sir.”

“ Well, do it.”

So Pritchard began to rake the fire out when John Jones came up amazed.

“ What is the matter ? ” he asked, as he saw the manager standing there.

“ Finish raking the fires out, Jones, and you can lie in to-night ; you and your mate come at nine o'clock to-morrow and make up the fires again.”

So they raked the fires out and the manager led the way out of the mine, locking the folding doors.

Pritchard and Jones couldn't understand it at all, but as they were sitting drinking in the Lager Beer Saloon they heard a man had stolen \$4000 in gold and run away up the coal mountain, and being hard pressed, he had dropped the gold down the flue of the second furnace. They understood then, and when they went to the cold furnace the next morning they saw footprints in the ashes and cinders and knew the furnace had been examined, but nothing did they ever hear or see of the \$4000.

Things went well in the mine for the next four months, though the rats did come and eat the candles in the boss-

fires' hats when they dozed off, as sometimes happened, but they soon grew accustomed to that.

Old Owen was a great favourite with all six boss-fires, for he visited the day boss-fires thrice each day, talking and chatting cheerfully, for he was a great fellow for a yarn, trying in his elementary way to think out the great problems of life.

"True religion is only love," he said, and he often repeated this to the boss-fires; "and the three great attributes of God are the spirit of life, the spirit of light, and the spirit of love."

It was in the following September, Pritchard was day boss-fire for that month, when the miners had a great discussion upon the merits of a well-known American popular preacher.

"Oh, he will be a humbug—he has lain with the deacon's wife," said Owen, with righteous indignation.

This started a heated controversy on religion, which waxed fiercely until the men had to return to work, when Owen buttonholed Pritchard and kept him for two hours longer, holding forth on the folly of all sectarian religion.

"Well," said the patient boss-fire after the sermon and exposition, "I must go and look at my fire."

"Toot, toot, your air is good," said Owen.

"Well, but I must go see."

"Well, well, I must let you go, I suppose, and put a good fire on," said Owen, reluctantly.

So Pritchard returned to his fire, leaping the twelve foot space underneath the ominous boulder, as was his habit, for the boss-fire was cautious. He got to his furnace and piled on coal, and then sat down for a smoke.

In the middle of the afternoon Pritchard came down the mine to get his tea at the entrance. He found the passage blocked—the great boulder had fallen; however, there was sufficient room to squeeze through between one side of the gallery and the rock. At the entrance of the mine the boss-fire met a boss-car, who said—

"Well, Billy, do you know the news? Have you heard of poor Owen's death?"

"Owen killed?" said Billy, gasping.

"Yes, poor chap," said the boss-car, disappearing in the gloom with the rattling trucks.

Pritchard would not believe it, so he went into his boarding-house, when Mrs. Williams asked—

"Have you heard of poor Owen's death?"

"Owen killed? Why, I only left him about two hours ago—not that. I don't believe it."

"Well, it's true, you must believe it."

"How did it happen then?"

"Well, some of them were propping up a gangway, four or five yards from the boulder, for they noticed it had fallen in a bit last night, when they wanted a wedge for something. 'Hold on,' said Owen, 'I'll make you a wedge,' and he went straight under the boulder and placing a wedge against the rock, began cutting it with a hatchet, when down fell the boulder and squashed him flat as a pancake."

"Good God! My poor friend, my poor friend! He always said that boulder would kill someone."

"Yes, and that's a bad job; there's sure to be two more deaths in less than three days—it's always so in that mine."

"Is that so?" asked Pritchard.

"Yes, you mark my words; it's now the last day of September; before the sun rises on the third day of October there will be two more fatal accidents in the mine."

Owen's death sobered the miners, and even the wild, reckless Paddy McGhu, who never stayed home of a night, or took any notice of his wife or children, but spent his leisure at the Lager Beer Saloon, joking and drinking, even he stayed at home and dandled his baby upon his knee, much to Mrs. McGhu's astonishment. Paddy was so loving that night that the ill-treated, neglected wife felt all her early love and devotion for the man returning. He kissed his

wife and children before going to work in the morning, but when he got amongst his comrades he was as lively and full of jokes as ever. They were all going along in the empty waggons, joking and laughing, when suddenly a part of the roof dropped—five of the men escaped with bruises, but Paddy McGhu was a corpse. His companions stopped the horse, returned to the entrance with his body, and took it home to the wretched widow, whose life had, for a brief moment that morning, been brighter than for many a long day.

That night the new month began, and Pritchard went on night duty. The wind had shifted to the south, and it was foggy and heavy weather. So the boss-fires stoked sedulously with wood, and the furnaces roared up the shaft each time they stirred the fires; but in spite of this the air was very foul, and Pritchard kept wide awake for fear of suffocation. When the new air-manager, William Morgan, came along in the morning, Pritchard remarked—

“The air is very bad.”

“Yes, very bad, very bad indeed.”

Then John Jones came on duty.

“John, the air is very bad, very bad.”

“Yes, I can feel it. Old Morgan has posted a notice, no one is to work beyond our furnace, no one is to go in the last two miles.”

At eleven a pig-headed and greedy German would go into the forbidden workings with a naked candle in his hand. A fearful explosion followed this rash act. John Jones heard it ahead of his fire, and in an instant he snatched the candle from his hat, extinguished it, and threw himself flat upon his face, covering his head with his coat. The whole mine seemed to be exploding and on fire, but John Jones lay perfectly still till everything was silent except the groans and screams of the burnt and ying.

Pritchard was awakened from his sleep in his boarding-

house by the noise of the explosion, and dressing in a minute he ran with the women and children to the mouth of the mine whence smoke was belching.

A rescue party was hastily formed amid the lamentations of the women, Pritchard joining the men. They entered the mine to find five men killed and thirty badly burnt, besides Jack, the horse, who was singed as completely as if a burning torch had been passed over his body. The burnt were brought out and taken home amid the cries and shrieks of the women. When Pritchard reached his furnace he found John Jones safe and sound.

“Why, good God, John, how did you escape?”

“By wrapping my head up and lying flat, so then I couldn't breathe the fire. If those men had put their hands to their mouths, half of 'em would have been saved; but from what I saw of 'em they are all bound to die, for they have breathed the fire, and once you breathe the fire it is all up. They may take oil, but that won't save 'em—they've swallowed the fire, poor chaps.”

The burnt men all died, thirty in all; and Jack, the horse, recovered, but nothing would induce him to work again in that part of the mine where the explosion had occurred—he had to be taken to other galleries.

“I told you, William Pritchard, we should have three accidents within three days. My words came true. It's always like this,” said the Welsh prophetess, Mrs. Williams.

XXV.

Dick Canoe.

“ Where Rhuddlan’s mighty dead
 Have found a grave,
 Soon, soon above his head
 The grass shall wave.”

By Rhuddlan’s Ruined Towers.

DICK CANOE was an excitable, thieving Welshman, an extraordinary creature, with a big nose, black mane and grizzly beard and dark, restless eyes. Whenever he spoke it was quickly and with jerks and rubbing his hands excitedly at the same time. He was a monomaniac, in that he always wanted to know the exact date when any event referred to occurred. His nickname was won by a youthful, thieving exploit, whereby he became possessed of a gentleman’s canoe, that had been left by some incautious Saxon upon Dick’s Celtic shore; but Dick had to give up his spoil, but the name Canoe ever stuck to him till his death.

His youth was spent in acquiring the arts of setting a wire for hares and manipulating nets for partridges and pheasants, and one of his first adventures upon his own responsibility was the following. Dick was in a plantation overlooking the Menai Straits angling for pheasants on a clear, moonlit night, when a keeper, called Robin Poacher, burst through the undergrowth, shouting in Welsh, “I’ll be sure to have you.” Dick stepped back and raised a big oaken stick he always carried. As Robin approached Dick caught him a terrible blow on the head, felling him to the

ground. As the keeper rolled senseless into a clump of bracken, Dick seized his bag and ran as fast as he could for Bangor, stopping at a public-house on the way for a pint of beer. Whilst he was drinking his beer a pedler from Beaumaris walked in and said—

“Have you heard Robin Poacher is kilt?”

“Kilt! Dear me! Kilt, did you say?” asked Dick.

“Yes, he’s kilt.”

“Dear me, at exactly what hour?” said the excitable man, rubbing his hands, and then burying his face in his beer jug.

A few minutes after a carter came in.

“Have you heard the news? Robin Poacher has been nearly kilt!”

“Dear me, I never heard of such a thing! And he’s not dead?” said Dick.

“No, but they thought he was when they found him.”

“Dear me!” replied Dick, getting up and rubbing his hands, and going on his way to Bangor.

When he returned to town the policeman took him in charge for assaulting Robin Poacher, and though the keeper swore to Dick’s identity, the cunning Dick brought the pedler as a witness that he had been quietly sitting at the Craig-y-don Arms whilst the assault took place, which he said was exactly thirty-two minutes after he got to the public house.

But Dick was luckier in his next poaching venture. One night he was, like a hyena, loafing round the graveyard setting wires for hares, for these animals love a graveyard by night as dearly as any spook, when he saw two brother poachers approaching. Dick laid flat between turfed graves and watched, remarking that one of the men carried a sack which Dick knew held rabbits or pheasants. When they began to set a wire Dick sat up between the graves uttering a terrible groan. The two poachers turned and saw in the dim light the sitting figure,

when they dropped everything they had and ran for their lives, never stopping till they reached their home. When their footsteps could no longer be heard echoing from the China Hill, Dick arose, took their implements and sack full of rabbits, drew his wires and walked leisurely home.

About eighteen months after this a steamer anchored off the Gallows Point one March morning and began to throw barrels of oysters overboard, for she had but just arrived from America with a cargo of all sorts of oysters to lay down. Dick's mouth watered as he saw the barrels thrown into the water, for the tide was full. When the ship had delivered her cargo and the tide had ebbed, leaving the storing beds, several men were hired to break open the barrels and spread and rake the oysters over the beds, for they were generally kept three months in the water to fatten, but truth to tell they were never as good as when first laid down, and if left a year in the beds they became mere bladders: some said because the water was salt and not brackish. Dick was hired as an extra hand, and he worked hard, but never a chance could he get to pocket a few prime blue points, for the lynx-eyed keeper was on the look-out. So anxious were they to spread them that they worked far into the night in the rising tide, the water reaching to their waists, as they raked by the light of a burning brazier placed upon a high tripod, its rays streaming over the black tideway; but even then Dick Canoe was carefully watched. But Dick kept those oysters in mind, and some three months after Harry and Bob, the two expert oyster-pickers, went down at dawn, whilst it was still dark, to gather two sacks full. They worked in the dark, their experienced and trained fingers telling them when a shell was empty or a clapper or when the oyster was dead and full of mud, for then 'twas heavier than a full shell; so by the sense of touch alone they filled their sacks, and had taken them into a shed and were doing them up when they saw someone coming from Beaumaris.

“By God, it’s Dick Canoe!” said Harry; “let’s hide.” So the two oyster-pickers concealed themselves in some empty barrels, and left the door on the latch.

Dick came straight up to the door and cried loudly—

“Well, lads, how are you?”

No answer.

“Hullo, lads!”

No answer.

Dick opened the door and looked in, and saw an empty hut, whereupon he shut the door and went straight off to the beds and began to fill his sack from the primest bed.

It was still dark as Harry burst out and began yelling loudly.

Dick left his sack and ran through the mud wildly for the Garth, escaping because he was not followed.

A few days after Harry accused Dick of the theft.

“Harry Bar! Harry Bar! I was nearly starving or I would never have done such a thing. I never stole anything before,” said the accomplished liar, righteously.

Soon after this adventure Dick managed to pick up some stray oysters at a low spring-tide, and he took them to a house to sell. He knocked at the door and asked the girl—

“Do you want any oysters?”

“I’ll go in and see,” replied the girl.

On the kitchen table stood a dish full of a yellow and inviting food, so Dick thought, and since he could never keep his fingers from pilfering and stealing he made a dash at the dish directly the girl’s back was turned, and grabbing a handful of the sticky sweet, he dropped it into his great mouth.

“Good God!” he said, and began spitting and sputtering, for the inviting, yellow dish was full of soft soap.

But when the girl returned no Dick Canoe was visible, but his track in the dish.

After this adventure Dick sought work in a boatwright's saw-pit at the Point, thinking to be near the oyster-beds, and to have an excuse for loafing round his prey at any hour of the day or night. But his heart was more in his oysters than the sawing, so one day he ran his saw from one line to the other, thus spoiling two or three planks. Calling to his mate to stop he quickly told him of the misfortune, and climbing out of the pit walked to the good-natured boatwright, who was seated on his work bench chatting to a number of sailors and lads. Dick walked in and said quickly—

“Well, Hugh Owen, who would be to blame supposing a steamer was in a great fog and ran on to the rocks? Would it be the Captain's fault?”

Everyone turned and stared at Dick, wondering what he was up to now.

“Well, I don't know,” answered the shipwright, “the Captain should go slow and take soundings.”

“But suppose he had lost his reckoning, who would be to blame, Hugh Owen?”

“Well, I don't think it would be the Captain's fault then.”

“Well, my dear Hugh Owen, it's just been the same with me. I was sawing in the pit, and it was rather dark, and I ran the saw from one line to another.”

“And spoilt my timber,” laughed Hugh Owen good-naturedly.

By this manœuvre Dick escaped a scolding.

Dick had a boat in which he used to take visitors to Beaumaris out for a row in the Straits in fine weather. One night a heavy storm came from the south-west, and blew the waves so high that they washed over the green and filled the cellars of the houses in the town. Dick was drinking at the timè, so that his boat got driven ashore and had two of her planks driven in by her bilge. With Dick lodged a broken-down schoolmaster, and him he per-

sueded to write a petition paper, which he took off to the mayor, who was kind enough to head the subscription list with ten shillings. Dick went round to the "gentry," as he called the bourgeoisie, and got enough money to buy two boats, which he did not do, merely mending his old boat and drinking the rest.

It was remarked afterwards that whenever it blew Dick Canoe used to exclaim, excitedly, "It's blowing, isn't it?" and start off at a run towards the big houses. What this extraordinary conduct meant never transpired to the general public, but Dick said to a friend, "Good God! isn't that Colonel Lewis a fool? He didn't *give no date* to that paper. So whenever that wind blows Robert Roberts writes me a new paper—he's been a scholar once—and I go around and collect for my broken boat."

Somebody gave Dick a pair of sea-boots when his boat was stove in, and he put them away in a box. One morning he arose at three to go a-fishing and bethought him of those sea-boots, and he got them out and began to tug at them, but they wouldn't go on.

"By God! boot-shoes won't do for a poor man," he exclaimed, casting them aside ere he ran with a can full of long worms to the beach, crying excitedly—

"Will you come fishing, lads? Will you come fishing, lads?"

A few agreed, and when they set off he said, "This reminds me of the day after the *Royal Charter* went down. What date was it? 1856?"

"No, '59," said one of the lads.

"Ah! yes, to be sure, 1859; dates is most important."

As they got into the boat and shoved into midstream to fish for codling, one of the lads said, "Caddy Williams will be after you, Dick!"

"And what for?"

"She says you took threepence from her little boy."

"Did she indeed! Well, well, can she prove it? At what hour was it exactly?"

"Oh, you'll hear in time, Dick."

"Well, well, I'll prove an *alibi*," and he rubbed his great hands and shook his unkempt hair and beard.

When they got to fishing, Dick said, loudly, "We'll share, lads; we'll share, lads."

"All right, Dick," they replied.

They sat quietly fishing for some twenty minutes, when one of the lads felt a bite.

"We'll share, lads; we'll share," said Dick, rising, excitedly, and taking Harry's line, and exclaiming as he felt the tug—

"It's here, lads, four pounds, as big as the ones I caught in 1843 and 1846."

Immediately he began to pull in, dragging in by head and tail a large bishop cod—a "starch," all head and no body.

The fish, had he shown any spirit, must have escaped, but being sluggish he now lay in the bottom of the boat, Dick's great mane and beard bending over him.

"Throw it over, it's no good," exclaimed the lad who had caught it.

"No. I know what I'll do with it, as I did in '43." And he took out his knife, scaled the fish and cut the body into steaks. When he had finished he said, "I think there is no more fish, we'd better pull to the shore."

The lads never gainsaid him, so they pulled to shore, and then Dick said, "No sharing, you wanted me to chuck him over."

Dick was greedy after money, so he jumped ashore, and left the lads staring after him, as he went off to sell his "bishop cod."

In the evening he met the lad who had hooked the fish.

"Come here, come here," he called, excitedly. "Look, look," he said, showing four shillings and sixpence. "I

got that at Baron Hill for him. In 1843 I got five shillings and threepence for the other."

"Well, aren't you going to share, Dick?"

"Toot! toot! If I shared you wouldn't have nothing."

One day later on Dick was standing below the archway talking when a sailor was telling of the large Sequoia trees in California.

"Toot! toot! There'll be no such thing," said Dick.

Another old sailor was drawing up, when the narrator said, "Come here, Billy, isn't there trees in California big enough so they can drive a coach and horses through them?"

"True, to be sure!" said Billy, turning on Dick. "They've built a hotel in one."

"Good God! you're the biggest liars in the world," said Dick, and he ran full speed up the street, as if to flee such fables (as he thought them).

Whenever Dick earned any money, he hid it so that his wife should not get hold of it and keep him from the beer shops. One day she knew he was to receive eight shillings for a job, so she awaited his return home with anxiety. He had been searching the beach, and was lucky enough to find a ham that had been cast ashore from a yacht. It was a little mouldy. When he reached the house he pulled forth the ham.

"Well, Bella, what do you think of this?"

"Very good indeed. Where did you get it?"

"I bought it at Staple's shop. What do you think I gave for it?"

"I guess, eight shillings."

"You're a witch, Bella; you're a witch! That's just what I gave."

One foggy day soon after this find a lot of tourists came from Manchester by steamer, intending to walk to Bangor and catch the train home. A short time after they landed a thick sea fog came on and hid the Carnarvonshire hills,

but gave Dick an opportunity to plunder. Going down in his boat to the beach he said, "Here, quick, for Bangor. Take you for fourpence each! Take you for fourpence each!"

They scrambled for places into his boat, and Dick rowed the heavily laden craft slowly against the tide, taking nearly half-an-hour to reach the point some three miles from Bangor and a few hundred yards from his starting-place. Running ashore, he cried, rubbing his hands—

"Jump ashore, jump ashore. Bangor's just round the corner. Three minutes before the train starts. Look sharp!"

The panting tourists paid and ran blindly about the shingly path, until meeting a man loading a cart with sand they asked—

"Where's Bangor Station? Where's Bangor Station?"

"Bangor Station!" said the man. "You must go on two miles and cross by the ferry and then it's a long walk."

"Why, a boatman told us it was just round the corner!"

"Indeed, that will be Dick Canoe then. He is a big rogue," replied the carter.

The following autumn Dick was setting wires for hares in the Mill Dingle one night when he heard some men approaching, so he arose quickly and hid in a bed of bracken. As he watched he saw two keepers laden with rabbits come up and hide them in some bracken opposite to his bed.

"This would be a good haul for old Dick Canoe," said one of them as they dropped the bag.

They went off, and Dick crept out and shouldered the bag and sold them in Bangor before breakfast.

The keepers were very sharp after him for some time to come, and one night they nearly captured him. He was poaching pheasants on the hill when he heard two keepers breaking through the undergrowth. Dick immediately

bolted up the hill, they following. Suddenly he stopped and rolled a great stone down the hill, the boulder crashing through the saplings. Immediately the keepers stopped and turned after the stone, and Dick escaped in the dark along the crest of the hill.

After this adventure Dick had to lie quiet for a bit, and as luck had it he soon got a new employment. He was standing under the archway one day, when a man came up and said—

“Come along with me if you are out of work. I’ll give you a good job.”

“Very good, sir” said Dick. “As in ’49—I’d the same luck then,” rubbing his hands.

He followed the stranger to a house at Menai Bridge, which he was going to take in possession as bum-bailiff.

“Now I’ll give you ten shillings a day. Go into that house and stay there.”

“Very good, sir; very good,” said Dick, rubbing his hands.

When Dick got inside, the debtor said, “What do you want, my man?”

“I’ve come here to watch the house.”

“Oh! you have, have you? Sit down. Let’s have something to drink.”

So they drank and supped and Dick was put to bed mellow.

The next morning the debtor asked, “What do you get a day?”

“Ten shillings.”

“I’ll give you twenty.”

“Very good, sir. Very good, sir. Pay down for five days.”

Dick was paid and went for a walk, whilst the debtor removed various goods and chattels. The creditor returned after the things were removed and upbraided Dick, so that they fought, and Dick nearly thrashed the life out of him.

The following summer the *Rothesay Castle* was wrecked, and Dick was amongst the keenest of corpse-finders, for every corpse meant a reward.

One day after the wreck, he and two others went in a boat and Dick found a dead negro boy amongst the rocks and shouldering him he was bringing him to the boat, but when his mates saw the dead negro they got frightened and began to row away from the shore.

"You shan't share. You shan't share," said Dick excitedly. And then were their scruples overcome.

The following morning Dick thought he'd go alone before daybreak, and he was searching amongst the rocks for corpses when he saw two fishermen coming from Beaumaris towards him, so he lay down and drew some seaweed over his body. They came along searching in the rocks.

"By God! here's one," one cried, and stooping down he put his hand into Dick's trousers pocket to search for money. When the hand was well in Dick sat up and sighed piteously. The man shrieked, and both ran off to Beaumaris as fast as their legs would carry them.

"That's good," said Dick, arising: and he soon found two corpses to rifle.

After the pier was built at Beaumaris Dick and his mate did a good thing in the summer by taking persons out for a row or sail.

Dick was in the street one day touting for passengers when he saw two ladies and a gentleman coming along. The ladies went into a shop, leaving the gentleman outside.

"Do you want a boat, sir?" asked Dick, touching his cap.

"Yes."

"Come on, sir; come on," said Dick, tapping the gentleman on the shoulder. He led him on to the pier and began shouting to Perty his partner—

"Here *he* is! Here *he* is! Bring the boat alongside, Perty."

The boat was brought alongside and the gentleman with his big stick stepped aboard.

"Where do you wish to go?" asked Perty.

"Penmon," said the gentleman, pointing towards Puffin.

Dick looked on, leaning over the pier rails, his big nose between his two first fingers.

"What's the b— old fool saying?" asked Dick in Welsh.

"What does that man say?" asked the gentleman of Perty.

Perty had looked hard at the gentleman and seen he was strange, and he did not like his company, so he answered—

"He's calling you a d—d fool."

"Do you think he'll come down the steps?" asked the gentleman.

"Oh! yes, if we pull to the steps."

"What's the b— old fool saying now?" asked Dick.

Perty never answered, but rowed to the landing steps, when Dick came down, and asked in Welsh—"What's the matter with the old fool now?"

The gentleman arose quietly and suddenly struck Dick a fearful blow on the head with his heavy stick.

"For God's sake, jump to him, somebody!" cried Dick.

But the gentleman still belaboured Dick unmercifully, until Perty and the sailors stopped him. A crowd had quickly gathered and Dick was nursing a bloody head when the two ladies ran up, excitedly, and took the gentleman aside.

Dick was squared and the gentleman got off, for he had been freshly discharged from a lunatic asylum.

From that time Dick's heart was hardened against all tourists, so that he cared little what became of them, and he would do whatever they asked, no matter how dangerous to themselves. Once he nearly drowned a foolish

gentleman, who gave him a sovereign not to tell of the misadventure; but it was too good a story, so Dick told his mates that very night whilst they were drinking out of his sovereign in the vaults.

“Well, lads,” said Dick, “some gentleman was on the pier this afternoon, a big, big man. So he asked, had I a boat.

“‘Yes, yes, I’ve a boat. Take you anywhere?’ I said.

“‘Well, I want to go and bathe.’

“‘This way, sir,’ says I. And I took him out into the stream, and he asked me, lads, ‘Where can I bathe?’

“‘Anywhere about here,’ says I.

“So he stripped his clothes and jumped into the water. I thought he was never coming up again, and I kept looking, lads, and presently I said—‘Good God, he’s a d—d long time under the water.’ Well, lads, just as I said this I saw something come to the top, a head or something, so I got hold of it; but you know, lads, he was a big, big man, and as soon as I got his head above water he shouted, ‘Save me! save me!’

“Well, lads, I’d thought he was a first-class swimmer, so I’d taken him into the deepest part of the channel to try. But when he began shouting, lads, I tried to drag him into the boat, but he was too heavy, so I told him to take hold of the boat for a minute and I’d soon fetch him ashore; so I went to the bows and fetched the rope off the anchor and lashed him to the seat, and then, lads, I pulled him ashore and the man gave me a sovereign to tell nothing about it. Ha! Ha! those tourists! But I’ve forgotten the date.”

As Dick got older his thieving propensities grew upon him, and his strangeness of manner together with his appetite for dates increased. One day he set the chemist’s shop to laughing. He and several other persons were waiting their turn to be served with pills and salves when a youth stammered—

“ Please g-g-g-give me a p-p-pennyworth of p-p-p-p-p-p-pills.”

“ Hoorah ! ” shouted Dick, and the people in the shop were convulsed with laughter.

But Dick's thieving brought him to his end. One spring night after the wood pigeons had left the cabbage fields with their crops full of greenstuff, Dick, armed with a large sack, took their place and began to fill his bag, when an irate bull, who grazed in an uncultivated corner of the field saw Dick and made a bolt for him, head down. Dick cried “ My God ! ” deserted his sack and ran in the dark for the nearest wall and jumped over, falling down a well—the beam placed across the well breaking his fall and saving him from drowning. Dick was found on the beam in the morning quite mad. He could only mumble and mutter and knew nothing that was said to him. He was taken to Bangor Workhouse, where he shortly died, a victim of his sins.

XXVI.

A Story of the Olden Time.

“Snow of the mountain,
 The bird is ravenous for food,
 The wind whistles on the headland;
 In distress a relation is the most valuable.”
Druidical “Warrior Song.”

I.

THE heavy and strongly-built ruins of old Beaumaris Castle stand at the foot of some low, wooded hills and beside the commonplace cluster of houses forming the town. The castle has no very honourable history, having been surrendered once by its defender, a pusillanimous act when one looks at the strong walls and old moats where the thrushes and blackbirds hunt for snails and worms. But the witless still make a fuss over its rococco “Moorish” towers and the indiscriminating guide books still make much ado about the low, rather commonplace ruin, whose chief service is to afford roosting and nesting places for thrushes, jackdaws, hawks and owls: although the foolish keepers have shot nearly all the owls and vermin killers.

Some years ago there was much to do in the little town of the “beautiful marsh,” for many of the wealthier bourgeoisie began to miss trinkets and gimcracks of all descriptions; indeed to such a pitch had these petty larcenies spread that every black-haired, dark-eyed Welsh servant-maid was suspected of theft, and the poor girls had

a miserable time, many of them being forbidden to go into their mistresses' bedrooms at all. People stood at the street corners complaining of the disappearance of their thimbles, scissors, rings, earrings, brooches, etc.

Some said 'twas the work of Shan Boot, the witch who lived in a little stone cottage on a bare hill near the town, and indeed some made a pilgrimage to the witch's house. But Shan Boot stoutly denied having had any hand in the matter, and said, mysteriously—

“Search the old castle! Search the old castle!”

Some of the more superstitious followed the witch's advice, and one of the searchers espied some blue ribbon fluttering from a hole in the old castle wall. He called his fellows and they borrowed a ladder, and far back in the hole they found a large collection of gay ribbons such as the girls wore in those days, also scissors, spectacles, rolls of tobacco wrapped in paper, thimbles, a rattle, rings and ear-rings, and other articles, sufficient to stock a small shop.

The men took the articles to a cottage and the crier was sent round telling the people to call and claim their lost property. In the afternoon the cottage was crowded and the claimants began chattering. One stout woman said she remembered now that she had seen a jackdaw hop out of her bedroom with a thimble in its bill. Another told of Shan Boot's advice.

“Of course the jack-a-daw is a witch; it's Shan Boot herself,” said a superstitious old dame, hugging her newly-found thimble. And I am afraid Shan Boot was cursed and blessed by turns on that eventful day. And the maid-servants of Beaumaris recovered their appetites and rosy cheeks.

II.

At the time when the discovery of the lost property was the subject of conversation a woman, one Isabella Owen, who lived with her five young children in a cottage

near Shan Boot, and opposite to the parson's house, received news that her husband had fallen overboard from a slate schooner and been drowned. 'Twas a terrible blow to Isabella Owen, and it went hard with the poor children, for though Isabella took in washing, she could not earn enough to feed her growing family.

Many of the kind-hearted farmers readily helped her at first, but they grew tired of giving at last, and one of them one morning roughly told her to be off to the parson, for he was the proper person to feed the poor.

Now the Rev. Hugh Hughes was a jovial, sporting bachelor, who lived well, was one of the best shots in the island, and was considered the best rider and whist-player about; but he thought little of his duties beyond preaching his sermon once a week, for he was a pluralist, and farmed his three livings by half-starved curates. But if he did little good neither did he much harm; for he was too manly to be a gossip or backbiter. In short he was a good fellow, but not fit for a parson.

Isabella screwed her courage to the sticking-point one day, and went up to his front door and rapped. The jovial parson himself answered the knock, and asked—

“Well, my good woman, what is it?”

“Well, I'm a poor widow woman with five children, and it's very hard to get a crust for them,” said Isabella, with whimpering voice, for your Kelt is a born beggar.

“Hum! Stop, and I'll see what is to be got,” said “his reverence,” going off to the kitchen to consult with Kaddy, the buxom and good-looking cook. But Kaddy disliked beggars and would only give him a dry crust of bread, which he took back to Isabella.

“Oh! thank you, sir, thank you very much,” said the beggar.

“Do you know your prayers?” asked the jovial parson, feeling, no doubt, he must do something more for the poor woman.

“No, sir, I don’t know none.”

“Toot, toot! Come in, come in, and I’ll teach you the Lord’s prayer.”

So the Rev. Hugh Hughes led the way to his study decorated with stags’ horns and fishing rods and sporting prints, and making the old woman kneel before a chair, he knelt before his soft cushioned easy chair, and said to her, with solemn voice—

“Now you must say everything after me—‘Our Father, which art in heaven.’”

“‘My Father, which art in heaven,’” said Isabella, slowly and solemnly.

“No! No! not that way. Now listen to me. ‘Our Father which art in heaven.’”

“‘Our Father, which art in heaven,’” repeated the woman, and so on she followed him to the end of the prayer.

When they arose she said—

“Well, sir, is He your Father and my Father?”

“Yes, yes, the Father of both of us.”

“Well, then, if He is your Father and my Father, we must be brother and sister.”

“Yes, yes,” said the Rev. Hugh Hughes, hurriedly, making a movement of impatience.

“Well,” said Isabella, “it’s very hard for a brother to give a sister a dry crust like this,” and she held out the dry bread.

“Toot! Come, my good woman, I’ve a lot to do,” said “his reverence,” and showed her hurriedly out.

Towards evening Isabella returned home, and as she passed her window, happening to look in, she saw a handsome, well-dressed lady washing her children in front of the peat fire. Stopping, she stared in, and being persuaded a fairy was in the house, she went away and did not return for nearly an hour, going off to a neighbouring farm to beg for some skim milk and potatoes. Upon her return she saw the house empty and entered.

“Oh! mother, mother, a lady came in here and washed us, and she’s left something on the mantelpiece,” cried the eldest child, gleefully.

Isabella went to the mantelpiece and saw six golden guineas.

Turning to her children she said—

“Now, Nellie, and you, Jack, and you, Hugh, and all of you, listen. That was a good fairy came to you, and you must never speak of her or tell anybody what you’ve seen, or she’ll be sure never to come again.”

The children looked at their mother with awe, and said nothing.

After the children were all asleep Isabella sat by the fire wondering how she should change her money without arousing suspicion. At length she hit upon a plan, so the next day she begged a farmer to give her a lift to Beaumaris. When she got to the town she went into one shop and bought a few things, saying they were for Farmer Owen, and giving a guinea, pocketed the change. By this device she managed to change all six guineas, and carried home her provisions and clothes and the silver.

The following week she left the washing tub before the fire and went forth on her begging rambles. Upon her return the fairy had visited the house again and left another six guineas. These welcome visits continued for weeks until Isabella was quite rich; so she bought two cows, saying her brother-in-law had just died in Liverpool and left her a lot of money.

Isabella’s prosperity made old Shan Boot jealous, for notwithstanding her black art she remained poor. Isabella soon perceived the old witch’s jealousy by her altered demeanour, and she knew Shan Boot would be up to some mischief before long, and Isabella knew it was bad to have the enmity of the Church and the witch. Whilst she was considering how she could regain the goodwill of both, events happened which aided her wishes.

III.

THIRTY years ago it was customary in North Wales on November 13th (the old rent day), to put a straw man at the house of every bachelor and spinster in the parish, and all the richer people gave a party, when the children bobbed for apples in water, their arms tied behind them, or bobbed for apples suspended on strings, the lucky ones receiving a sixpence for each apple secured in this manner. The jovial old parson always invited several friends and his parishioners' children upon this day for a jollification. Upon this occasion Robert Roberts, who was courting *on* the bed, with Nellie, the good-looking housemaid, intended to have a great spree on his own account. So he prepared a straw man with a large, hollowed out turnip head in which was placed a candle, and stood it after dark on a portico before the parson's bedroom window, the figure leaning on the window-sill looking into the bedroom. Then he emptied the pigs' swill tub and filled it with rain water. After these preparations he went in to his sweetheart, where the children were making merry bobbing for apples, whilst the parents drank beer and ate buns. The evening passed in jollity, and all the parents with children went home, leaving the parson and three gentlemen, who sat down to supper. Whilst they were at supper young Roberts placed the water barrel, raised upon a large stool leaning against the front door, and climbing up to the portico he lit the candle in the turnip. After these preparations he tapped thrice at the front door. There was no answer so he tapped again. The parson rose hastily from the table and going to the kitchen he found it empty, so he went to the door himself. Directly he opened it the barrel of water fell over and nearly drowned him as he yelled with fear.

“Good God! there must be thieves about.” Then he ran to his bedroom for his gun; upon returning he saw the straw man leaning over the window-sill looking at him.

“By God! it must be a ghost; but ghost or no ghost, I’ll fire,” he said, taking down his gun, and, aiming at the turnip, he fired; but the shot merely passed through the lifeless thing and never budged it.

“My God, it’s a ghost!” he shouted, and flinging the gun down he ran downstairs where the affrighted guests were talking nervously; and shrieking, “A ghost! A ghost!” he ran from the house, followed by the friends, and they all ran to Isabella’s cottage, the nearest habitation, except Shan Boot’s house. They knocked Isabella up.

“For God’s sake, let us in, Mrs. Owen, there’s a ghost at my house.” And all four entered with white faces.

Isabella was secretly delighted, and putting some turf on the fire, she made them some tea, and they stayed with her till morning.

Meanwhile Robert and Rory and Nellie came laughing from the stable and hastily put the barrel and stool away and got rid of the straw man. They locked the house up and went to bed—Robert going to Nellie’s room and taking off his coat and boots, whilst Nellie only took off her boots, when they lay *upon* the bed, and drawing a couple of blankets over themselves they chatted and kissed till morning, when Robert slipped off, for such was the courting custom.

Next morning the four returned to the house, and Nellie was asked—

“Did you hear the ghost?”

“Oh! yes, sir, we heard him thumping at the door all night and didn’t sleep a wink.”

IV.

WELL, this vision so upset the parson that he took to drinking heavily, and the following Sunday he appeared drunk at service, whereupon some kind friend wrote to the bishop, informing him that the Rev. Hugh Hughes had appeared drunk in the pulpit, and worst of all he had left

a pack of cards there—for some evil person had left a pack below the chained Bible.

The bishop wrote to the parson and told him of the serious charges brought against him, and that he must explain himself the following Sunday before the congregation, when the bishop would attend; indeed he told him he would come on the Saturday and stay with him till the Monday.

Upon receipt of this letter the jovial old parson was in a great state of mind, so he went off to Isabella, for they had become great friends since the ghostly night, and told her his trouble. Isabella, whose cows had been bewitched that morning by Shan Boot, so that they gave no milk, was in great trouble herself and therefore sympathetic.

“Well, indeed, my cows are all ill too, and they won’t give milk; they’re all lying down. Can’t you cure them, sir, just by reading a verse or two out of the Holy Book?”

“Well, yes, Isabella, I’ll go and say a few verses over them,” said the parson.

And he did, but they did not get up nor yet give milk.

“Well, indeed, sir, magic is more powerful than the Bible, and now the only way I see is for me to go to Shan Boot and tell her of your trouble and mine and offer her some money to help us.”

“Oh! I’ll pay anything in reason. She must be a clever woman,” said the parson.

“Well, sir, do you wait here and I’ll go to her, and she’s sure to help you if she is well paid.”

So Isabella got up and went to Shan Boot’s cottage, and explained matters. Shan Boot thought, and said shortly—

“I’ll clear you both for fifty pounds.”

“He is sure to pay it,” said Isabella, and she returned and told the parson the price required.

“Oh! yes, I’ll pay that,” he said, eagerly; “go and tell her.”

So Isabella walked back to Shan Boot and told her she should have the fifty pounds.

“Well, then, Isabella bach, do you get a black tom-cat, and kill it and save the blood, and dip a piece of flannel in it and rub the cows’ purses with it, and they will be well again and give milk; and now be sure to tell no one, and send the parson to me and I’ll tell him what to do.”

Isabella returned and sent the parson back to Shan Boot, and proceeded to cure her cows, which she did successfully, for the next morning they gave milk as before.

V.

UPON the Saturday night following the fat bishop arrived, and they had a jovial dinner together.

On the following morning the church was crowded, the bishop sitting in the pew below the parson.

When the parson entered the bishop arose and said the parson would explain his conduct before them all, and they should be his judges. A murmur of curiosity and assent rippled round the congregation as the parson took a pack of cards from his pocket and laid them upon the Bible.

“Now, beloved brethren,” he began, “I have been accused by some malicious person of intemperance and leaving a pack of cards here. I will explain my conduct to you and rely upon your justice. I was not intemperate last Sunday, but my nerves were much shaken by seeing a ghost the night before.”

And he told them the story of the ghost in every detail, and a murmur of approval passed round the church.

“And now for the playing cards. I did leave a pack here. They are my prayer book.”

“Oh! Oh! Oh!” cried several old members of the church.

“Wait, my beloved brethren, wait, and I will explain all to you, and then you shall judge me. First we’ll go

to the ace. That puts me in mind of the first day of the week, and of the first commandment, and of the one living God."

The congregation held their breath. You could have heard a pin drop, as they bent with open, eager eyes towards their parson.

"This two puts me in mind of the second day of the week and of the second commandment and of the Son of God. This three puts me in mind of the third day of the week and of the third commandment and of the Holy Ghost, three in one and one in three. These four spots put me in mind of the fourth day of the week and of the fourth commandment and of the four evangelists, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. These five spots put me in mind of the fifth day of the week and of the fifth commandment and of the great St. Peter. These six spots put me in mind of the sixth day of the week and of the sixth commandment and of the great St. Paul. These seven spots put me in mind of the seventh day of the week, the day upon which God rested from his labour, and of the seventh commandment, and of the day God set apart for men to rest upon. These eight spots put me in mind of the eighth commandment and of the passover of the Israelites. These nine spots put me in mind of the ninth commandment and of the day upon which the Israelites crossed the Red Sea and went into the Wilderness of Zin, and there they murmured against Moses because there was no water, and God caused him to strike the rock and water flowed forth. These ten spots remind me of the tenth commandment and of the ten tribes of Israel. This king card reminds me of the King of Kings sitting upon His throne. This queen card reminds me of the Holy Ghost going about seeking in love to bring all children into the right path. And the knave card reminds me of the Son of God sitting on His throne as a Prince ruling the world."

Then the bishop got up and said—

“That is well, my son.” And turning to the congregation he said—

“He has explained all to you. Have you, my children, anything further to say?”

“Not in the least! Not in the least!” answered many voices.

And the service was continued and finished and so the parson escaped.

VI.

AFTER this service Shan Boot used to blackmail the parson, and he grew tired of it and confided his troubles to Isabella.

“I’ll see my good fairy,” said Isabella, and she kept her promise, for the fairy seeing that she made good use of her money had visited her in person.

The next time she came Isabella told her of the parson’s trouble.

“Well, well,” said the fairy, “poor man, witchcraft has conquered religion, but the fairy shall master witchcraft. Take this silver ball and tell him that next time he goes hunting he must take his gun and load it with this ball, and he must not run with the hounds, but must stop by the hole of the witch-fox. He will know where it is for they have often flushed it, but they’ve never been able to catch it yet. It always avoids the hounds and disappears in a hole by the rocks at Penmon.”

So Isabella did as she was bid, and she told the parson to be careful and do as he was told.

At the next meet the parson rode off to the hole with his gun. The fox-hunters met and wondered where he was, for he was always the first to arrive. However, as he did not appear they started off without him and killed two foxes when they sighted the witch-fox, known by a white ring round its neck. They gave chase, and presently the parson heard the hounds’ music and he got his gun steady on a rock, covering the fox’s hole, and in a few minutes

he heard the pat, pat of the fox's pads and he saw the witch-fox making for the hole in the rocks. When the fox got near he fired and heard a groan. On running up to the spot he saw Shan Boot lying dead, shot through the heart, for his silver bullet had killed all enchantments, and the fox in death became Shan Boot. He had re-mounted his horse when the hunting party came up, and he hastily explained how he had shot the witch-fox. Amongst the company was a young lady who was an accomplished horse-woman, and when she came up her spirited horse took fright at the corpse and bolted. The parson seeing her danger, for her horse was galloping towards the cliffs, dropped his gun and galloped off to head her off, and was fortunately able to catch and turn her horse before they dashed over the cliffs. From that moment he fell in love with her and they were married two months afterwards, and Isabella's fairy never appeared again. "But I often think of her, for the parson's wife is the image of her," Isabella often said to her children.

XXVII.

The Almanac Maker.

“The first day of winter,—severe is the weather,
 Unlike the first summer,
 None but God can foresee what is to come.”
Druidical “Warrior Song.”

I.

ROBERT ROBERTS lived on a small farm, the Conspicuous Place, near Holyhead, in the old days when smacks used to cross to Dublin, when the Irish mail was carried in a coach and four horses, and there was not an hotel in the little village. In those days, too, there was no science of meteorology, no stations of the first and second order, no station where hung the long, business-like Fortin barometers with their precise verniers, no latticed screens holding the delicate glass-stemmed maxima and minima and wet bulb thermometers, and no strange and uncanny anemometers wheeling round the house-tops whenever a gale blew across over the Atlantic; but though there were none of these things, there were born meteorologists. I have once before told of such an one in Silly Suffolk, now it shall be my task to tell of another—Robert Roberts of Welsh Wales.

Robert Roberts was a versatile man. He succeeded in whatever he undertook. This was not owing to luck, but to brains, for Robert Roberts thought night and day of each *métier* he adopted, turning it about this way and that; and since he was shrewd and sagacious, this mental

overhauling of his new occupation bore fruit. He was a good farmer, he turned his elementary meteorology to account, and was respected as a local preacher, because he knew the secret of speaking from the heart to the heart. At twenty-eight years of age he had broken the back of farming lore, and mastered all the agricultural knowledge required to conduct his business without much mental effort; his agricultural knowledge was so complete and thorough, that his farming had become a series of mere reflex actions. Robert Roberts had the wit to perceive that in these islands to farm successfully is to be wise in the capriciousness of the weather, and a prophet of those rain storms that come from the other side, for he understood the Welsh proverb, "The first his harrow, the first his sickle;" so, like the good yeoman he was, he studied the face of the sky, learnt all he could from the far-travelled sailors, got a retired Admiral to teach him much lore about tides and lunar observations, and finally became a regular subscriber to the "Nautical Almanac," and the possessor of a good spy-glass, a present from the Admiral, or, rather, an exchange for many an offering of Christmas geese and turkeys. To the Saxon these friendships between Welshmen of different classes may seem surprising, but, as I have said, the lowly Welshman has such naturally delicate perceptions and refined feelings, that he is companionable in a way a Suffolk peasant could never be; he is, whatever his faults, altogether more humane and gentlemanly, more intelligent and gay; but his is not the stuff to found colonies and build up great nations.

In time his study bore fruit, and Robert Roberts had a brilliant idea as he tossed to and fro one starry night upon his bed. Why shouldn't he publish an almanac for the people, an almanac after the manner of "Old Moore," but in Welsh? There were both money and immortality in that dream, though little originality; still, he went to sleep dreaming of his almanac and next day he set to work

to write his almanac, for with him to think was to act, in which he differed from most of his countrymen.

By the help of "Old Moore," the "Nautical Almanac" and his agricultural knowledge he soon had a rough draft of "Robert Roberts' Holyhead Almanac" before him; there was nothing left but to fill in the "fines," "wet," "cold," "clouds," etc., after each date, and that was easily done. Robert Roberts, though devoid of humour, could not suppress a chuckle as he settled all those prophetic details in a day, and then the work was ready for the printer: writing was nothing new to Robert Roberts, he had for years been a local preacher and written his own sermons. Altogether this 'literary' work was a huge practical joke, a form of amusement so dear to the Welshman.

There was no printer nearer than Carnarvon, so Robert Roberts took his MS., careful as an author with his first love, and toiled away across the island to Garth Ferry, where row-boats carried the passengers and scows took over the horses and carriages. After having been ferried across the Straits he walked to Carnarvon by way of Port Di Norwig, a mere cluster of farmhouses in those days. He entered the printing office timidly, for your Welshman in his cool moments is shy and diffident, but he is a good beggar; and as the printer was a far-seeing man, who thought the idea capital, they entered into partnership, and Robert Roberts left the printer's shop with an elation only felt once by any man—the elation on having his first work accepted by a publisher. He walked with light feet, with head erect, snuffing the sea-air as visions of wealth and fame—I know not which he valued most—rose before his eyes. How cheerful the world seemed to him; the grey stones of his croft seemed to smile upon him as he returned from his successful mission, and indeed the Conspicuous Place and family had reason to be proud of him. He was a man with eyes in his head and fingers to his

hands; an imposing figure, too, was this tall, stout, black-haired, pig-eyed yeoman—the pig is proverbial for wisdom in Wales—in his black beaver hat, blue cloth tail-coat decorated with brass buttons as large as half-crowns, yellow corded breeches, and yellow buskins, as he walked up to his front door.

That night Robert Roberts felt, after his successful journey, that an outward and visible sign of his astronomical knowledge should be given to the world; so he at once consulted the village carpenter, and a tall wooden tower was erected, whereon was fixed the first-rate telescope given him by the Admiral, an instrument capable of discovering any ship, but hardly powerful enough to detect the ring of Saturn or the moons of Jupiter, nor yet the continent and oceans of Mars; but superficial knowledge has its uses and Robert Roberts did not hanker after a magnificent equatorial moved by clock-work, an astronomical clock and all the machinery of the astronomer: he knew only of the “spy-glass” and was content, undisturbed by profound knowledge. But perhaps he was a bit of a humbug too, but who shall judge another. All that we know is that he was a very diligent stargazer. By day and at times by night the portly figure of Robert Roberts was to be seen in the tower conning the blue sea to its rim or gazing at the gleaming stars on a clear night, for though Robert Roberts may not have known that there are but two or three mist-clear nights fit for perfect observation in our latitudes, still his common-sense told him that he couldn't see stars through a fog.

But Robert Roberts did not stop at the telescope, he bought one of those useless weather glasses—wheel barometers and thermometers complete—and he went on tapping it regularly, as did his brother farmers, and believing implicitly its unscientific indications. The same faith too was placed in the unscientific and uncorrected

thermometer, but perhaps Robert Roberts may be forgiven, for wiser heads than his had believed in these useless toys for many a generation.

His observatory was completely equipped before he crossed the Straits upon his second journey and received five hundred of his almanacs warm and moist from the press. His eyes danced with delight as he turned over the coarse paper leaves upon which his handiwork was impressed by the rigid type; he had achieved a true Keltic success—achievement by appropriating the ideas of others and re-issuing them as his own in a pleasant manner.

That was a merry day as he trudged through Port Di Norwig with his bundle of almanacs, hiding them under the great cloak he wore upon these journeys. When he reached home he presented several copies of his handiwork to his delighted spouse and neighbours; for many of the poorest in Wales keep books and are fond of reading, though they prefer some empty musical bard to Swinburne.

II.

TEN years had elapsed since that day, and “Robert Robert’s Holyhead Almanac” was a household companion; everybody in North Wales bought it, for it gave the lists of fairs, directions for gardening, seed planting and manuring, the tides and eclipses of the sun and moon, and prophetic forecasts of the weather. And so Robert Roberts’ fame as preacher and almanac maker spread far and wide; and his farm prospered; but he had to learn some things yet.

One summer, eleven years after his first journey to Carnarvon, he was crossing the Straits, carrying the MS. of his forthcoming almanac, dressed as usual and wearing his cape, though it was a blazing hot July day without a cloud in the sky, and the sun looking like a ball of fire. As he tramped along between Port Di Norwig and Carnarvon he grew hot, and began to look for a shady nook wherein to rest and

smoke a quiet pipe, for Robert Roberts was a great smoker. He trudged on looking for a bosky dell, when he came upon a bare-footed shepherd boy about sixteen years of age, sitting in a little stone hut called "The door of the woods," whistling to himself as he ate his dinner of bread and cold pork, his sheep dog lying by his side looking longingly at the food. Round the hut the little Welsh sheep and goats fed upon the choice mountain pasture.

"That's the spot," said Robert Roberts to himself. Approaching "The door of the woods," and standing in the doorway, he addressed the lad—

"Well, my boy, what are you doing here?"

"I'm a shepherd keeping my father's sheep," replied the bright, black-eyed boy in Welsh without moving, yet ordering the growling dog to be quiet.

"I feel very tired; may I stop and take a smoke?"

"Yes; you've got nearly four miles to go to Carnarvon in this hot weather," and thereupon the boy made a place by his side on the dry heather tops, as he told the surly-looking dog to get up and go out of the hut, throwing a rib bone out of the door to hasten his departure.

Robert Roberts sat down against the moss-stuffed walls of the hut and lit his pipe, asking—

"How long do you stop here?"

"When I see that ball of fire going out of sight behind the Goat's Precipice, I'll get another here to take my place for the night," said the boy.

"You're poetical."

"Yes, I like poetry," said the boy. "I can sing pernillion: listen"—and he sang in a sweet, clear alto voice some sentimental, melancholy Welsh songs.

"Did you make those indeed?" asked the man of science, touched.

"I did," answered the bright-eyed lad; "whatever indeed should I be doing up here on the Sheep's Hill all day? I learnt that from the fairies."

“Indeed! you surprise me.”

“Well, I did; and I’ve seen them dancing on the green plain by the White Fall, and heard them singing in the Groves of the Magician and by the bright Salmon River.”

“Well, boy, what are they like?”

“The biggest are about two feet high, and they wear their hair all plaited, and have no hats, and they all dress in a kind of petticoat.”

“And when do you see them?”

“Oh, only once a year, I only see them on Midsummer Day; indeed, they’re only allowed to come up from the bowels of the earth once a year and play their pranks upon the earth; but I often hear their music, ay, and sweet music it is, too. I wish I could sing like them; there was no one at Carnarvon Eisteddfodd could sing like them, indeed there wasn’t.”

“Well, you do surprise me altogether. I never would have dreamt of such a thing, though I’ve heard of such, of course, from people; but I’m a man of science, my lad.”

“Iē! What’s that?”

“Well, indeed, I can hardly explain it to you—I study the stars.”

“So do I,” said the boy; “I make songs about them. Listen what I made up about those white stars—those they call the Milky Way—

“A shepherd was minding his sheep,
All feeding across the bright blue,
When drowsy he fell into sleep,
And lost every lamb with its ewe.”

“Well, indeed, you are prydydd; you must have slept on the black stone of Ardu,”* said the man of science, interrupting the song, “and I should like to listen to

* A person who sleeps for a night on this stone is said to become either a lunatic or a poet.

your songs longer, but I must go on to Carnarvon. Will you mind my cloak, it is so heavy? I should like to leave it here till I come back."

"No," said the boy.

"Not mind the cloak? Why not?"

"Well, indeed, you'd better carry it with you, you'll want it before you come back here."

"Indeed! whatever for?" said Roberts.

"You'll have rain in abundance before you come back here."

"Bup, bup, bup, bup, boy! What, will it rain in abundance? Can you see a cloud in the heavens?"

"No, I can't see."

"Look at the sky, is it threatening or lowering?"

"No, it's not, but you'll get it in abundance before you reach here."

"Bup, bup, bup, boy!" said Roberts, going out of the hut; then turning, he asked suddenly—

"How do you know it is going to rain?"

"Well, that Robert Roberts of Holyhead he makes almanacs, and when he gives us a fine day or two it's sure to rain."

The old man laughed, and strode off across the hills towards Carnarvon, where he left his manuscript almanac for the coming year, bringing back a small parcel of the current issue. When he got two miles away from Carnarvon, the sky quickly became overcast, and within five minutes big drops of rain began to splash down, running down his cloak, and a bright flash of lightning seemed to play round him and draw all his hair up to a point; he felt that he was becoming a living lightning rod, so he ran down the hill.

"Well, well!" said this old almanac maker, running towards the hut, "it's a good job I brought my cloak, or all my almanacs would have been spoiled; but I would never have dreamt of such a thing. There's something

mysterious about that boy; I'll give him a shilling to find it out."

When he approached the hut the rain got worse, and Roberts drew the cloak around him, walking fast through the pouring rain storms that were flying across the landscape in clouds of thin, diaphanous silver. When he reached the hut the dog began to growl, and he heard the lad's musical voice call, "Come into the hut out of the heavy rain." Roberts entered the hut and took off his hat and cloak, shaking them and hanging them up to a fork projecting from the roof. Lighting his pipe he sat down beside one of the dogs.

"Well," said the boy, "you wouldn't believe me it was going to rain, but now you can see."

"Yes, my dear boy, you're right; I see it is raining heavy. And how did you know it was going to rain?"

"Well, I knew very well."

"Well, you know more than the old prophet, Robert Roberts."

"Yes, yes," said the boy aloud, and to himself he said, "this will be the man that makes the almanacs, this will be the prophet Roberts, so, ho!" Then he continued aloud, "The shower will soon be over."

"Well, boy, how did you know it was going to rain? I will give you a shilling if you will tell me."

"Well, give me the shilling, and I will tell you."

So old Roberts pulled a shilling from his pocket and gave it to the boy.

"Well, now you've given me the shilling I must tell you. Do you see that black ram there?" pointing through the doorway.

"Yes."

"When that ram waggles his tail and screams and skips about, it won't last four hours before it rains."

"Well, now," said the old man, open-mouthed; "I have heard the old proverb that there is no herbalist like the

goat, but I never heard before that a black ram was a weather glass."

"Well, mark my words, and since you're dealing in almanacs, Robert Roberts, let me give you some advice."

"Well, indeed, who told you I was Robert Roberts?" asked the old man, aghast.

"Well, I know," said the boy; "since you're dealing in almanacs buy a black ram."

"What will I have to pay?"

"Get yourself a ram kid; you can buy him for five shillings."

"Where can I buy him?"

"Well, if there's a black ram born here I'll save him for you."

"Well, well," said Roberts, meditatively, "I never would have dreamed of such a thing."

The storm was soon over, and the old prophet left the boy, ashamed to give him an almanac as was his first intention.



The boy kept his promise and a black ram was kept at the Conspicuous Place in Holyhead, and Robert Roberts was so assiduous in his attention to the animal, which he praised as "the finest little ram that ever fed on hay," that himself got known as the Black Ram. It was soon remarked that his daily forecasts were often correct, but still he was always studying and observing the black ram's freaks, so that at last it was remarked his yearly forecasts were truer also, and it was finally noticed by the curious that his old rainy days turned into sunshiny ones, and so the reputation of his almanac was saved, for they are to be bought to this day—but the forecasts have disappeared.

FINIS.

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