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Turgenev Wallace Fonatne Sydon Freud Schlegel
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Weber Freiligrath Frey
Fechner Fichte Weiße Rose von Fallersleben Kant Ernst Richthofen Frommel
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Fehrs Faber Flaubert Eliasberg Eliot Zweig Ebner Eschenbach
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Trackl Stevenson Lenz Hambrecht Doyle Gjellerup
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Karrillon Reuter Rousseau Hagen Hauff Baudelaire Gautier
Garschin Defoe Hebbel Hegel Kussmaul Herder
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Wolfram von Eschenbach Darwin Dickens Grimm Jerome Rilke George
Bronner Campe Horváth Aristoteles Voltaire Federer Herodot
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The Poetry of Wales

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p. iii PREFACE.

The Editor of this little Collection ventures to think it may in some measure supply a want which he has heard mentioned, not only in the Principality, but in England also. Some of the Editor's English friends—themselves being eminent in literature—have said to him, "We have often heard that there is much of value in your literature and of beauty in your poetry. Why does not some one of your literati translate them into English, and furnish us with the means of judging for ourselves? We possess translated specimens of the literature, and especially the poetry of almost every other nation and people, and should feel greater interest in reading those of the aborigines of this country, with whom we have so much in common." It was to gratify this wish that the Editor was induced to give his services in the present undertaking, from which he has received and will receive no pecuniary benefit; and his sole recompense will be the satisfaction of having attempted to extend and perpetuate some of the treasures and beauties of the literature of his native country.

p. 9INTRODUCTION.

The literature of a people always reflects their character. You may discover in the prose and poetry of a nation its social condition, and in their different phases its political progress. The age of Homer was the heroic, in which the Greeks excelled in martial exploits; that of Virgil found the Romans an intellectual and gallant race; the genius of Chaucer, Spenser and Sidney revelled in the feudal halls and enchanted vistas of the middle ages; Shakespeare delineated the British mind in its grave and comic moods; Milton reflected the sober aspect and spiritual aspirations of the Puritanical era; while at later periods Pope, Goldsmith and Cowper pourtrayed the softer features of an advanced civilization and milder times.

Following the same rule, the history of Wales is its literature. First came the odes and triads, in which the bards recited the valour, conquests and hospitality of their chieftains, and the gentleness, beauty and virtue of their brides. This was the age of Aneurin, of Taliesin and Llywarch Hen. Next came the period of love and romance, wherein were celebrated the refined courtship and gay bridal of gallant knights and lovely maids. p. 10This was the age of Dafydd ap Gwilym, of Hywel ap Einion and Rhys Goch. In later times appeared the moral songs and religious hymns of the Welsh Puritans, wherein was conspicuous above all others William Williams of Pantycelyn, aptly denominated "The Sweet Psalmist of Wales."

The Principality, like every other country, has had and has its orators, its philosophers and historians; and, much as they are prized by its native race, we venture to predict that the productions of none will outlive the language in which their prose is spoken and writ. Not that there is wanting either eloquence or grandeur or force in their orations and essays, depth or originality in their philosophical theories, or truthfulness, research or learning in their historic lore; but that neither the graces of the first, the novelty of the next, or the fidelity of the last will in our opinion justify a translation into more widely spoken tongues, and be read with profit and interest by a people whose libraries are filled with all that is most charming

in literature, most profound in philosophy and most new and advanced in science and art.

Our evil prophecy of its prose does not however extend to the poetry of Wales, for like all other branches of the Celtic race, the ancient Britons have cultivated national song and music with a love, skill and devotion which have produced poems and airs well deserving of extensive circulation, long life and lasting fame. The poetic fire has inspired the nation from the most primitive times, for we find that an order of the Druidical priests were bards who composed their metres among aboriginal temples and p. 11spreading groves of oak. The bard was an important member of the royal household, for the court was not complete without the Bard President, the Chief of Song, and the Domestic Bard. The laws of Hywel the Good, King or Prince of Wales in the tenth century, enact:—

“If there should be fighting, the bard shall sing ‘The Monarchy of Britain’ in front of the battle.”

“The Bard President shall sit at the Royal Table.”

“When a bard shall ask a gift of a prince, let him sing one piece; when he asks of a baron, let him sing three pieces.”

“His land shall be free, and he shall have a horse in attendance from the king.”

“The Chief of Song shall begin the singing in the common hall.”

“He shall be next but one to the patron of the family.”

“He shall have a harp from the king, and a gold ring from the queen when his office is secured to him. The harp he shall never part with.”

“When a song is called for, the Bard President should begin; the first song shall be addressed to God, the next to the king. The Domestic Bard shall sing to the queen and royal household.”

The bard therefore in ancient times performed important functions. In peace he delighted his lord with songs of chivalry, love and

friendship. In war he accompanied his prince to battle, and recited the might and prowess of his leader and the martial virtue of his hosts. No court or hall was complete without the presence of the bard, who enlivened the feast with his minstrelsy and song. We also see that the Welsh bard, like the primitive poets of Greece, and the troubadours of southern France, sang his verses to the harp, whose dulcet strings have always sent forth the national melodies. The chief bards were attached to the courts and castles of their princes and chieftains; p. 12but a multitude of inferior minstrels wandered the country singing to their harps, and were in those primitive times received with open arms and welcome hospitality in the houses of the gentry, and whither soever they went. Even within living memory the English tourist has often met in the lonely dells and among the mountain passes of Wales the wayworn minstrel, with harp strung to his shoulders, ever ready to delight the traveller with the bewitching notes of his lyre and song. But the modern bard of Wales is the counterpart of his Scottish brother, of whom Scott wrote:—

“The way was long, the wind was cold,
The minstrel was infirm and old;
His withered cheeks and tresses gray
Seemed to have known a better day;
The harp, his sole remaining joy,
Was carried by an orphan boy.

* * * * *

No more on prancing palfry borne,
He carolled light as lark at morn;
No longer courted and caress'd,
High placed in hall, a welcome guest,
He poured to lord and lady gay
The unpremeditated lay.”

Nor will the modern visitor to the castles and halls of the Principality, not to mention its principal hotels, often miss the dulcet strains of the national lyre.

The song and minstrelsy of Wales have from the earliest period of its history been nurtured by its eisteddfodau. It is ascertained that the Prince Bleddyn ap Kynfyn held an eisteddfod in A.D. 1070,

which was attended by the bards and chief literati of the time. This eisteddfod made rules p. 13 for the better government of the bardic order. This annual assemblage of princes, bards and literati has been regularly held through the intervening centuries to the present time. Within living memory royalty has graced this national gathering of the ancient British race.

The ceremonies attendant upon this national institution are well known. The president or chief, followed by the various grades of the bardic order, walk in procession (*gorymdaith*) to the place appointed, where twelve stones are laid in a circle, with one in the centre, to form a *gorsedd* or throne. When the whole order is assembled, the chief of bards ascends the *gorsedd*, and from his laurel and flower-bedecked chair opens the session, by repeating aloud the mottoes of the order, viz.: "*Y gwir yn erbyn y byd, yn ngwyneb haul a llygad goleuni,*" or "The truth against the world, in the face of the sun and the eye of light," meaning that the proceedings, judgments and awards of the order are guided by unswerving truth, and conducted in an open forum beneath the eyes of the public. Then follow verses laudatory of the president. Poetical compositions, some of a very high order, are then rehearsed or read, interspersed with singing and lyric music. The greater part of the poets and musical performers compete for prizes on given subjects, which are announced beforehand on large placards throughout the Principality. The subjects for competition are for the most part patriotic, but religion and loyalty are supreme throughout the eisteddfod. The successful competitors are crowned or decorated by the fair hands of lady patronesses, who distribute the prizes. This yearly gathering of the rank, beauty, wealth p. 14 and talent of the Principality, to commemorate their nationality and foster native genius, edified and delighted by the gems of Welsh oratory, music and song, cannot but be a laudable institution as well as pleasant recreation. Some of the foremost English journals, who devote columns of their best narrative talent to record a horse race, a Scottish highland wrestle, or hideous prize fight with all their accompaniments of vice and brutality, may surely well spare the ridicule and contempt with which they visit the pleasant Welsh eisteddfod. Their shafts, howsoever they may irritate for the time, ought surely not to lower the Welshman's estimate of his eisteddfod, seeing the antiquity of its origin, the praisewor-

thiness of its objects, the good it has done, the talent it has developed,—as witness, a Brinley Richards and Edith Wynne,—and the delight it affords to his country people. Enveloped in the panoply of patriotism, truth and goodness, he may well defy the harmless darts of angry criticism and invective, emanating from writers who are foreign in blood, language, sympathy and taste. When the Greeks delighted in their olympic games of running for a laurel crown, the Romans witnessed with savage pleasure the deadly contentions of their gladiators, the Spaniards gazed with joy on their bloody bull fights, and the English crowded to look at the horse race or prize fight, the Cymry met peaceably in the recesses of their beautiful valleys and mountains to rehearse the praises of religion and virtue, to sing the merits of beauty, truth and goodness, and all heightened by the melodious strains of their national lyre.

It is often asked, what is poetry? Prose, we assume to be a simple or connected narrative of ordinary facts or p. 15common circumstances. Poetry, on the other hand, is a grouping of great, grand or beautiful objects in nature, or of fierce, fine or lofty passions, or beautiful sentiments, or pretty ideas of the human heart or mind, and all these premises expressed in suitable or becoming language. Poetry is most indulged in the infancy of society when nature is a sealed book, and the uneducated mind fills creation with all sorts of beings and phantoms. There is then wide scope for the rude imagination to wander at will through the unknown universe, and to people it with every description of mythical beings and superstitious objects. Poetry is most powerful in the infancy of civilization, and enjoys a license of idea and language which would shock the taste of more advanced times. The Hindustani poetry as furnished by Sir William Jones, that of the Persian Hafiz, the early ballads of the Arabians, Moors and Spaniards, the poems of Ossian, besides the primitive Saxon ballads, and the triads of Wales, all indicate the extravagant imagery and rude license of poetry in the early ages of society. The history of those several nations also attests the magical influence of their early poetry upon the peoples. We find that Tallifer the Norman trouvère, who accompanied William to the invasion of England, went before his hosts at Hastings, reciting the Norman prowess and might, and flung himself upon the Saxon phalanx where he met his doom. We read that the example of the trouvère

aroused the Norman hosts to an enthusiasm which precipitated them upon the Saxon ranks with unwonted courage and frenzy. We also find that the Welsh bard always accompanied his prince to battle, and rehearsed in song the ancient valour and conquests of the chieftain and army in front of the enemy.

p. 16The progress of philosophy and science dissipates the myths and spectres of the poetical creation, just as the advance of a July sun dispels the mist and cloud which hung over the earlier hours of day and veiled the mountains and valleys from the eye of man. Poetry becomes now shorn of its greatest extravagancies and wildest flights, instead of soaring with the eagle to the extremities of space, it flies like the falcon within human sight. In lieu of a Homer, a Shakespeare and a Milton, we have a Pope, a Thomson and a Campbell.

The poetry of Wales may be classified into six parts, viz.: the sublime, the beautiful, the patriotic, the humourous, the sentimental and religious. Much of the poetry of the Principality consists of the first class, and is specially dedicated to description and praise of the Supreme Being, the universe and man. As the great objects of creation, like the sun and moon, the planetary world and stars first attract the attention of man and always enlist his deepest feelings, so they furnish the great themes for the poetry of all nations, more especially in its ruder stages. The Welsh poet is no exception to the rule. On the contrary, he indulges in the highest flights of imagination, and borrows the grandest imagery and choicest description to set forth the Most High and his wonderful works. No translation can convey to the English reader the interest and effect which this class of poetry has and produces upon the Welsh mind, simply because their trains of thought are so entirely different. The power and expressiveness of the Welsh language, which cannot be transferred into any English words, also add materially to the effect of this class of poetry upon the native mind. The Cymric is p. 17unquestionably an original language, and possesses a force and expression entirely unknown to any of the derivative tongues. The finer parts of scripture, as the Book of Job and the Psalms, are immeasurably more impressive in the Welsh than English language. The native of the Principality, who from a long residence in the metropolis or other parts of England, and extensive acquaintance

with its people, followed often by mercantile success, so as almost to become Anglicised, no sooner returns to his native hills, either for a visit or residence, and upon the Sabbath morn enters the old parish church or chapel to hear the bible read in the native tongue, than he feels a transport of delight and joy, to which his heart has been foreign since he crossed the border, mayhap in youth. Much of this may be owing to a cause similar to that which fires the Swiss soldier on foreign service when he hears the chant of his own mountain "*Rans des vaches.*" Something may doubtless be laid to the account of early association; but, we think, more is justly due to the great impressiveness and power of his native tongue. The poems, original and translated, contained in the first part of the ensuing collection, may convey to the English reader some idea of this class of Welsh poetry.

The love of the beautiful is natural to man, but of all nations the Greeks entertained the best ideals and cultivated the faculty to the highest perfection. Their temples have formed models of architectural beauty for all nations, and the grace and elegance of their statuary have found students among every people. Much of this taste for the beautiful mingled with their poetry, which is kin sister to the imitative arts. In recent times the Italians have inherited p. 18the faculty of beauty, and introduced it into their fine cathedrals and capitols, as well as their statuary. The French also have displayed the highest ideals of beauty in their manufactures and fine arts. The Spaniards have introduced into their poetry some of the inimitable grace and beauty of their Alhambra. The Latin races appear in modern times to have been pre-distinguished in the fine arts. Much of the taste for beauty is inherent in the Celtic races, and this element is very perceptible in the poetry of the Cymric branch, as will appear from the illustrations contained in the second part of this collection.

Patriotism, or love of country, is characteristic of all nations, and manifests itself in their poetical effusions, more especially of the earlier date. It is but natural that man should feel a profound attachment to the land of his fathers, to the valley where he spent the early and happier years of his life, to the hills which bounded that plain, to the church or chapel where he worshipped in youth, and in whose cemetery rest the ashes of his kin, to the language of his

childhood, its literature, history and traditions, and more especially to the kind family, neighbours and friends who watched over his infancy, and entertained his maturer years. This attachment, which is no other than patriotism, is only deepened by his removal into a distant land, and among a strange people. Perhaps no people in modern times have cultivated their patriotic songs more ardently or even more successfully than the Scotch; though probably most of this may be owing to their great minstrel Scott, who transformed their rude ballads into immortal song. Moore did a similar, though smaller, service p. 19 for the Irish branch of the Celtic race. And we most truly think that a Welsh Scott or Moore is only wanting to marry the lays of Wales to undying verse. The third part of this collection will contain some of the most spirited of the patriotic poems of Wales.

Humour is inherent in every people, and is more or less characteristic of every nation. Cervantes among the Spaniards, the Abbate Casti among the Italians, Jean Paul Richter among the Germans, Voltaire among the French, Samuel Butler, the author of Hudibras, and Dr. John Wolcot among the English, Jonathan Swift among the Irish, and Robert Burns among the Scotch, have introduced humorous writing into the literature of their respective countries with more or less of success. Nor was it possible that a people so lively, so susceptible of contrast, and possessed of so keen a sense of the ridiculous in manners and conversation as the Welsh, should not spice their literature with examples of humorous writing. We shall furnish in the fourth part of this collection a few specimens from the writings of some of the humorists of Wales.

Sentiment, which may be defined as the emotion of the human heart, mixes freely in verse and sentimental poetry, forms a considerable portion of the lays of every country. There is in this particular no distinction between the early and modern history of nations, for sentiment enters the metrical effusions of every period alike. Pathos and taste appear to be the foster mothers of this quality, which is a distinguishing trait of the poetry of Wales, as shown by the examples furnished in the fifth part of this collection.

p. 20 If any trait be more distinctive of the Welshman than another, it is his love for his bible, his chapel and church, and this has

furnished the richest store of spiritual song. The hymnists of Wales are many; but distinguished beyond and above every other, is the celebrated Williams of Pantycelyn, whose hymns are sung in every chapel and cottage throughout the Principality, and are now as refreshing to the religious tastes and emotions of the people as at their first appearance; and, from their intrinsic beauty and warmth, they are not likely to be lost so long as the Welsh language remains a spoken or written tongue. The sixth part of this collection will furnish the reader with an insight into the transcendent merit and fervour of this prince of religious song.

p. 23PART I. THE SUBLIME.

SNOWDON.

King of the mighty hills! thy crown of snow
Thou rearest in the clouds, as if to mock
The littleness of human things below;
The tempest cannot harm thee, and the shock
Of the deep thunder falls upon thy head
As the light footfalls of an infant's tread.
The livid lightning's all destroying flame
Has flashed upon thee harmlessly, the rage
Of savage storms have left thee still the same;
Thou art imperishable! Age after age
Thou hast endured; aye, and for evermore
Thy form shall be as changeless as before.
The works of man shall perish and decay,
Cities shall crumble down to dust, and all
Their "gorgeous palaces" shall pass away;
Even their lofty monuments shall fall;
And a few scattered stones be all to tell
The place where once they stood, — where since they fell!
Yet, even time has not the power to shiver
One single fragment from thee; thou shalt be
A monument that shall exist for ever!
While the vast world endures in its immensity,
The eternal snows that gather on thy brow
Shall diadem thy crest, as they do now.
Thy head is wrapt in mists, yet still thou gleam'st,
At intervals, from out the clouds, that are
A glorious canopy, in which thou seem'st
To shroud thy many beauties; now afar
Thou glitterest in the sun, and dost unfold
Thy giant form, in robes of burning gold.

p. 24And, when the red day dawned upon thee, oh! how bright
Thy mighty form appeared! a thousand dies
Shed o'er thee all the brilliance of their light,
Catching their hues from the o'er-arching skies,

That seemed to play around thee, like a dress
 Sporting around some form of loveliness.
 And when the silver moonbeams on thee threw
 Their calm and tranquil light, thou seem'st to be
 A thing so wildly beautiful to view,
 So wrapt in strange unearthly mystery,
 That the mind feels an awful sense of fear
 When gazing on thy form, so wild and drear.
 The poet loves to gaze upon thee when
 No living soul is near, and all are gone
 Wooing their couches for soft sleep; for then
 The poet feels that he is *least* alone, —
 Holding communion with the mighty dead,
 Whose viewless shadows flit around thy head.
 Say, does the spirit of some warrior bard,
 With unseen form, float on the misty air,
 As if intent thy sacred heights to guard?
 Or does he breathe his mournful murmurs there,
 As if returned to earth, once more to dwell
 On the dear spot he ever lov'd so well.
 Perhaps some Druid form, in awful guise,
 With words of wond'rous import, there may range,
 Making aloud mysterious sacrifice,
 With gestures incommunicably strange,
 Praying to the gods he worshipped, to restore
 His dear lov'd Cymru to her days of yore.
 Or does thy harp, oh, Hoel! sound its strings,
 With chords of fire proclaim thy country's praise;
 And he of "Flowing Song's" wild murmurings
 Breathe forth the music of his warrior lays;
 And Davydd, Caradoc — a glorious band —
 Tune their wild harps to praise their mountain land?
 p. 25 Thou stand'st immovable, and firmly fixed
 As Cambria's sons in battle, when they met
 The Roman legions, and their weapons mixed,
 And clash'd as bravely as they can do yet.
 The Saxon, Dane, and Norman, knew them well,
 And found them — as they are — invincible!

Majestic Snowdon! proudly dost thou stand,
 Like a tall giant ready for the fray,
 The guardian bulwark of thy mountain land;
 Old as the world thou art! As I survey
 Thy lofty altitude, strange feelings rise,
 Of the unutterable mind's wild sympathies.
 Thou hast seen many changes, yet hast stood
 Unaltered to the last, remained the same
 Even in the wildness of thy solitude,
 Even in thy savage grandeur; and thy name
 Acts as a spell on Cambria's sons, that brings
 Their heart's best blood to flow in rapid springs.
 And must I be the only one to sing
 Thy dear loved name? and must the task be mine,
 To the insensate mind thy name to bring?
 Oh! how I grieve to think, when songs divine
 Have echoed to thy praises night and day,
 I can but offer thee so poor a lay.

p. 26 THE DAY OF JUDGMENT.

By Goronwy Owain.

[This poet, who was born in 1722, obtained great celebrity in Wales; he was a native of Anglesea, and entered the Welsh Church, but removed to Donington in Shropshire, where he officiated as Curate for several years. There the following poem was composed and afterwards translated by the poet. The poem has been copied from a MS of the poet, and is now, it is believed, published for the first time.]

Almighty God thy heavenly aid bestow,
 O'er my rapt soul bid inspiration flow;
 Let voice seraphic, mighty Lord, be mine,
 Whilst I unfold this awful bold design.
 No less a theme my lab'ring breast inspires,
 Than earth's last throes and overwhelming fires,
 Than man arising from his dark abode
 To meet the final sentence of his God!
 The voice of ages, yea of every clime,

The hoary records of primeval time;
The saints of Christ in glowing words display,
The dread appearance of that fateful day!
Oh! may the world for that great day prepare
With ceaseless diligence and solemn care,
No human wisdom knows, no human power
Can tell the coming of that fatal hour.
No warning sign shall point out nature's doom;
Resistless, noiseless it shall surely come,
Like a fierce giant rushing to the fight,
Or silent robber in the shades of night.
What heart unblenched can dare to meet this day,
A day of darkness and of dire dismay?
What sinner's eye can fearless then — behold
The day of horrors on his sight unfold,
But to the good a day of glorious light,
A day for chasing all the glooms of night.
For then shall burst on man's astonished eyes
The Christian banner waving in the skies,
p. 27 Borne by angelic bands supremely fair,
By countless seraphs through the pathless air.
The heavenly sky shall Christ's proud banner form,
A sky unruffled by a cloud or storm;
The bloody cross aloft in awful pride
Shall float triumphant o'er the airy tide.
Then shall the King with splendour cloth'd on high
Ride through the glories of the golden sky,
With power resistless guide his awful course,
And curb the whirlwinds in their wildest force.
The white robed angels shall resound the praise,
Ten thousand saints their choral songs shall raise
Now through the void a louder shout shall roar
Than surges dashing on a rocky shore.
An awful silence reigns! — the angels sound
The final sentence to the worlds around;
Loud through the heavens the echoing blast shall roll,
And nature, startled, shake from Pole to Pole.
All flesh shall tremble at the fearful sign,
And dread to approach the judgment seat divine;