

Tucholsky Wagner Zola Scott
Turgenev Wallace Fonatne Sydon Freud Schlegel
Twain Walther von der Vogelweide Fouqué Friedrich II. von Preußen
Weber Freiligrath Frey
Fechner Fichte Weiße Rose von Fallersleben Kant Ernst Richthofen Frommel
Engels Fielding Hölderlin Eichendorff Tacitus Dumas
Fehrs Faber Flaubert Eliasberg Eliot Zweig Ebner Eschenbach
Feuerbach Maximilian I. von Habsburg Fock Ewald Vergil
Goethe Elisabeth von Österreich London
Mendelssohn Balzac Shakespeare Rathenau Dostojewski Ganghofer
Trackl Stevenson Lichtenberg Doyle Gjellerup
Mommsen Thoma Tolstoi Lenz Hambruch Droste-Hülshoff
Dach Thoma von Arnim Hägele Hanrieder Hauptmann Humboldt
Karrillon Reuter Verne Rousseau Hagen Hauff Baudelaire Gautier
Garschin Defoe Hebbel Hegel Kussmaul Herder
Damaschke Descartes Schopenhauer George
Wolfram von Eschenbach Darwin Dickens Grimm Jerome Rilke Bebel Proust
Bronner Campe Horváth Aristoteles Voltaire Federer Herodot
Bismarck Vigny Gengenbach Barlach Heine Grillparzer Georgy
Storm Casanova Lessing Tersteegen Gilm Gryphius
Chamberlain Langbein Lafontaine Iffland Sokrates
Brentano Strachwitz Claudius Schiller Bellamy Schilling Kralik Gibbon Tschchow
Katharina II. von Rußland Gerstäcker Raabe Gleim Vulpius
Löns Hesse Hoffmann Gogol Morgenstern Goedicke
Luther Heym Hofmannsthal Klee Hölty Kleist
Roth Heyse Klopstock Puschkin Homer Mörike Musil
Luxemburg La Roche Horaz Kraus
Machiavelli Kierkegaard Kraft Kraus
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Nietzsche Nansen Laotse Ipsen Liebknecht
Marx Lassalle Gorki Klett Ringelnatz
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The Description of Wales

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FIRST PREFACE to Stephen Langton, Archbishop of Canterbury

I, who, at the expense of three years' labour, arranged, a short time ago, in three parts, the Topography of Ireland, with a description of its natural curiosities, and who afterwards, by two years' study, completed in two parts the Vaticinal History of its Conquest; and who, by publishing the Itinerary of the Holy Man (Baldwin) through Cambria, prevented his laborious mission from perishing in obscurity, do now propose, in the present little work, to give some account of this my native country, and to describe the genius of its inhabitants, so entirely distinct from that of other nations. And this production of my industry I have determined to dedicate to you, illustrious Stephen, archbishop of Canterbury, as I before ascribed to you my Itinerary; considering you as a man no less distinguished by your piety, than conspicuous for your learning; though so humble an offering may possibly be unworthy the acceptance of a personage who, from his eminence, deserves to be presented with works of the greatest merit.

Some, indeed, object to this my undertaking, and, apparently from motives of affection, compare me to a painter, who, rich in colours, and like another Zeuxis, eminent in his art, is endeavouring with all his skill and industry to give celebrity to a cottage, or to some other contemptible object, whilst the world is anxiously expecting from his hand a temple or a palace. Thus they wonder that I, amidst the many great and striking subjects which the world presents, should choose to describe and to adorn, with all the graces of composition, such remote corners of the earth as Ireland and Wales.

Others again, reproaching me with greater severity, say, that the gifts which have been bestowed upon me from above, ought not to be wasted upon these insignificant objects, nor lavished in a vain display of learning on the commendation of princes, who, from

their ignorance and want of liberality, have neither taste to appreciate, nor hearts to remunerate literary excellence. And they further add, that every faculty which emanates from the Deity, ought rather to be applied to the illustration of celestial objects, and to the exultation of his glory, from whose abundance all our talents have been received; every faculty (say they) ought to be employed in praising him from whom, as from a perennial source, every perfect gift is derived, and from whose bounty everything which is offered with sincerity obtains an ample reward. But since excellent histories of other countries have been composed and published by writers of eminence, I have been induced, by the love I bear to my country and to posterity, to believe that I should perform neither an useless nor an unacceptable service, were I to unfold the hidden merits of my native land; to rescue from obscurity those glorious actions which have been hitherto imperfectly described, and to bring into repute, by my method of treating it, a subject till now regarded as contemptible.

What indeed could my feeble and unexercised efforts add to the histories of the destruction of Troy, Thebes, or Athens, or to the conquest of the shores of Latium? Besides, to do what has been already done, is, in fact, to be doing nothing; I have, therefore, thought it more eligible to apply my industry to the arrangement of the history of my native country, hitherto almost wholly overlooked by strangers; but interesting to my relations and countrymen; and from these small beginnings to aspire by degrees to works of a nobler cast. From these inconsiderable attempts, some idea may be formed with what success, should Fortune afford an opportunity, I am likely to treat matters of greater importance. For although some things should be made our principal objects, whilst others ought not to be wholly neglected, I may surely be allowed to exercise the powers of my youth, as yet untaught and unexperienced, in pursuits of this latter nature, lest by habit I should feel a pleasure in indolence and in sloth, the parent of vice.

I have therefore employed these studies as a kind of introduction to the glorious treasures of that most excellent of the sciences, which alone deserves the name of science; which alone can render us wise to rule and to instruct mankind; which alone the other sciences follow, as attendants do their queen. Laying therefore in my youth the

foundations of so noble a structure, it is my intention, if God will assist me and prolong my life, to reserve my maturer years for composing a treatise upon so perfect, so sacred a subject: for according to the poet,

"*Ardua quippe fides robustos exigit annos;*" "The important concerns of faith require a mind in its full vigour;"

I may be permitted to indulge myself for a short time in other pursuits; but in this I should wish not only to continue, but to die.

But before I enter on this important subject, I demand a short interval, to enable me to lay before the public my Treatise on the Instruction of a Prince, which has been so frequently promised, as well as the Description of Wales, which is now before me, and the Topography of Britain.

Of all the British writers, Gildas alone appears to me (as often as the course of my subject leads me to consult him) worthy of imitation; for by committing to paper the things which he himself saw and knew, and by declaring rather than describing the desolation of his country, he has compiled a history more remarkable for its truth than for its elegance.

Giraldus therefore follows Gildas, whom he wishes he could copy in his life and manners; becoming an imitator of his wisdom rather than of his eloquence - of his mind rather than of his writings - of his zeal rather than of his style - of his life rather than of his language.

SECOND PREFACE to the same

When, amidst various literary pursuits, I first applied my mind to the compilation of history, I determined, lest I should appear ungrateful to my native land, to describe, to the best of my abilities, my own country and its adjoining regions; and afterwards, under God's guidance, to proceed to a description of more distant territories. But since some leading men (whom we have both seen and known) show so great a contempt for literature, that they immediately shut up within their book-cases the excellent works with which they are presented, and thus doom them, as it were, to a perpetual imprisonment; I entreat you, illustrious Prelate, to prevent the present little work, which will shortly be delivered to you, from perishing in obscurity. And because this, as well as my former productions, though of no transcendent merit, may hereafter prove to many a source of entertainment and instruction, I entreat you generously to order it to be made public, by which it will acquire reputation. And I shall consider myself sufficiently rewarded for my trouble, if, withdrawing for a while from your religious and secular occupations, you would kindly condescend to peruse this book, or, at least, give it an attentive hearing; for in times like these, when no one remunerates literary productions, I neither desire nor expect any other recompense. Not that it would appear in any way inconsistent, however there exists among men of rank a kind of conspiracy against authors, if a prelate so eminently conspicuous for his virtues, for his abilities, both natural and acquired, for irreproachable morals, and for munificence, should distinguish himself likewise by becoming the generous and sole patron of literature. To comprise your merits in a few words, the lines of Martial addressed to Trajan, whilst serving under Dioclesian, may be deservedly applied to you:

"Laudari debes quoniam sub principe duro,
Temporibusque malis, ausus es esse bonus."

And those also of Virgil to Mecaenas, which extol the humanity of that great man:

"Omnia cum possis tanto tam clarus amico,
Te sensit nemo posse nocere tamen."

Many indeed remonstrate against my proceedings, and those particularly who call themselves my friends insist that, in consequence of my violent attachment to study, I pay no attention to the concerns of the world, or to the interests of my family; and that, on this account, I shall experience a delay in my promotion to worldly dignities; that the influence of authors, both poets and historians, has long since ceased; that the respect paid to literature vanished with literary princes; and that in these degenerate days very different paths lead to honours and opulence. I allow all this, I readily allow it, and acquiesce in the truth. For the unprincipled and covetous attach themselves to the court, the churchmen to their books, and the ambitious to the public offices, but as every man is under the influence of some darling passion, so the love of letters and the study of eloquence have from my infancy had for me peculiar charms of attraction. Impelled by this thirst for knowledge, I have carried my researches into the mysterious works of nature farther than the generality of my contemporaries, and for the benefit of posterity have rescued from oblivion the remarkable events of my own times. But this object was not to be secured without an indefatigable, though at the same time an agreeable, exertion; for an accurate investigation of every particular is attended with much difficulty. It is difficult to produce an orderly account of the investigation and discovery of truth; it is difficult to preserve from the beginning to the end a connected relation unbroken by irrelevant matter; and it is difficult to render the narration no less elegant in the diction,

than instructive in its matter, for in prosecuting the series of events, the choice of happy expressions is equally perplexing, as the search after them painful. Whatever is written requires the most intense thought, and every expression should be carefully polished before it be submitted to the public eye; for, by exposing itself to the examination of the present and of future ages, it must necessarily undergo the criticism not only of the acute, but also of the dissatisfied, reader. Words merely uttered are soon forgotten, and the admiration or disgust which they occasioned is no more; but writings once published are never lost, and remain as lasting memorials either of the glory or of the disgrace of the author. Hence the observation of Seneca, that the malicious attention of the envious reader dwells with no less satisfaction on a faulty than on an elegant expression, and is as anxious to discover what it may ridicule, as what it may commend; as the poet also observes:

"Discit enim citius meminitque libentius illud
Quod quis deridet, quam quod probat et veneratur."

Among the pursuits, therefore, most worthy of commendation, this holds by no means the lowest rank; for history, as the moral philosopher declares, "is the record of antiquity, the testimony of ages, the light of truth, the soul of memory, the mistress of conduct, and the herald of ancient times."

This study is the more delightful, as it is more honourable to produce works worthy of being quoted than to quote the works of others; as it is more desirable to be the author of compositions which deserve to be admired than to be esteemed a good judge of the writings of other men; as it is more meritorious to be the just object of other men's commendations than to be considered an adept in pointing out the merits of others. On these pleasing reflections I feed and regale myself; for I would rather resemble Jerome than Croesus, and I prefer to riches themselves the man who is capable of despising them. With these gratifying ideas I rest contented and delighted, valuing moderation more than intemperance, and an

honourable sufficiency more than superfluity; for intemperance and superfluity produce their own destruction, but their opposite virtues never perish; the former vanish, but the latter, like eternity, remain for ever; in short, I prefer praise to lucre, and reputation to riches.

BOOK I

CHAPTER I

Of the length and breadth of Wales, the nature of its soil, and the three remaining tribes of Britons

Cambria, which, by a corrupt and common term, though less proper, is in modern times called Wales, is about two hundred miles long and one hundred broad. The length from Port Gordber (1) in Anglesey to Port Eskewin (2) in Monmouthshire is eight days' journey in extent; the breadth from Porth Mawr, (3) or the great Port of St. David's, to Ryd-helic, (4) which in Latin means VADUM SALICIS, or the Ford of the Willow, and in English is called Willow-forde, is four days' journey. It is a country very strongly defended by high mountains, deep valleys, extensive woods, rivers, and marshes; insomuch that from the time the Saxons took possession of the island the remnants of the Britons, retiring into these regions, could never be entirely subdued either by the English or by the Normans. Those who inhabited the southern angle of the island, which took its name from the chieftain Corinaeus, (5) made less resistance, as their country was more defenceless. The third division of the Britons, who obtained a part of Britany in Gaul, were transported thither, not after the defeat of their nation, but long before, by king Maximus, and, in consequence of the hard and continued warfare which they underwent with him, were rewarded by the royal munificence with those districts in France.

CHAPTER II

Of the ancient division of Wales into three parts

Wales was in ancient times divided into three parts nearly equal, consideration having been paid, in this division, more to the value than to the just quantity or proportion of territory. They were Venedotia, now called North Wales; Demetia, or South Wales, which in British is called Deheubarth, that is, the southern part; and Powys, the middle or eastern district. Roderic the Great, or Rhodri Mawr, who was king over all Wales, was the cause of this division. He had three sons, Mervin, Anarawt, and Cadell, amongst whom he partitioned the whole principality. North Wales fell to the lot of Mervin; Powys to Anarawt; and Cadell received the portion of South Wales, together with the general good wishes of his brothers and the people; for although this district greatly exceeded the others in quantity, it was the least desirable from the number of noble chiefs, or Uchelwyr, (6) men of a superior rank, who inhabited it, and were often rebellious to their lords, and impatient of control. But Cadell, on the death of his brothers, obtained the entire dominion of Wales, (7) as did his successors till the time of Tewdwr, whose descendants, Rhys, son of Tewdwr, Gruffydd, son of Rhys, and Rhys, son of Gruffydd, the ruling prince in our time, enjoyed only (like the father) the sovereignty over South Wales.

CHAPTER III

Genealogy of the Princes of Wales

The following is the generation of princes of South Wales: Rhys, son of Gruffydd; Gruffydd, son of Rhys; Rhys, son of Tewdwr; Tewdwr, son of Eineon; Eineon, son of Owen; Owen, son of Howel Dda, or Howel the Good; Howel, son of Cadell, son of Roderic the Great. Thus the princes of South Wales derived their origin from Cadell, son of Roderic the Great. The princes of North Wales descended from Mervin in this manner: Llewelyn, son of Iorwerth; Iorwerth, son of Owen; Owen, son of Gruffydd; Gruffydd, son of Conan; Conan, son of Iago; Iago, son of Edoual; Edoual, son of Meyric; Meyric, son of Anarawt (Anandhrec); Anarawt, son of Mervin, son of Roderic the Great. Anarawt leaving no issue, the princes of Powys have their own particular descent.

It is worthy of remark, that the Welsh bards and singers, or reciters, have the genealogies of the aforesaid princes, written in the Welsh language, in their ancient and authentic books; and also retain them in their memory from Roderic the Great to B.M.; (8) and from thence to Sylvius, Ascanius, and Aeneas; and from the latter produce the genealogical series in a lineal descent, even to Adam.

But as an account of such long and remote genealogies may appear to many persons trifling rather than historical, we have purposely omitted them in our compendium.

CHAPTER IV

How many cantreds, royal palaces, and cathedrals there are in Wales

South Wales contains twenty-nine cantreds; North Wales, twelve; Powys, six: many of which are at this time in the possession of the English and Franks. For the country now called Shropshire formerly belonged to Powys, and the place where the castle of Shrewsbury stands bore the name of Pengwern, or the head of the Alder Grove. There were three royal seats in South Wales:

Dinevor, in South Wales, removed from Caerleon; Aberfraw, (9) in North Wales; and Pengwern, in Powys.

Wales contains in all fifty-four cantreds. The word CANTREF is derived from CANT, a hundred, and TREF, a village; and means in the British and Irish languages such a portion of land as contains a hundred vills.

There are four cathedral churches in Wales: St. David's, upon the Irish sea, David the archbishop being its patron: it was in ancient times the metropolitan church, and the district only contained twenty-four cantreds, though at this time only twenty-three; for Ergengl, in English called Urchenfeld, (10) is said to have been formerly within the diocese of St. David's, and sometimes was placed within that of Landaff. The see of St. David's had twenty-five successive archbishops; and from the time of the removal of the pall into France, to this day, twenty-two bishops; whose names and series, as well as the cause of the removal of the archiepiscopal pall, may be seen in our Itinerary. (11)

In South Wales also is situated the bishopric of Landaff, near the Severn sea, and near the noble castle of Caerdyf; bishop Teilo being its patron. It contains five cantreds, and the fourth part of another, namely, Senghennyd.

In North Wales, between Anglesey and the Eryri mountains, is the see of Bangor, under the patronage of Daniel, the abbot; it contains about nine cantreds.

In North Wales also is the poor little cathedral of Llan-Elwy, or St. Asaph, containing about six cantreds, to which Powys is subject.

CHAPTER V

Of the two mountains from which the noble rivers which divide Wales spring

Wales is divided and distinguished by noble rivers, which derive their source from two ranges of mountains, the Ellennith, in South Wales, which the English call Moruge, as being the heads of moors, or bogs; and Eryri, in North Wales, which they call Snowdon, or mountains of snow; the latter of which are said to be of so great an extent, that if all the herds in Wales were collected together, they would supply them with pasture for a considerable time. Upon them are two lakes, one of which has a floating island; and the other contains fish having only one eye, as we have related in our Itinerary.

We must also here remark, that at two places in Scotland, one on the eastern, and the other on the western ocean, the sea-fish called mulvelli (mulletts) have only the right eye.

The noble river Severn takes its rise from the Ellennith mountains, and flowing by the castles of Shrewsbury and Bridgenorth, through the city of Worcester, and that of Gloucester, celebrated for its iron manufactories, falls into the sea a few miles from the latter place, and gives its name to the Severn Sea. This river was for many years the boundary between Cambria and Loegria, or Wales and England; it was called in British Hafren, from the daughter of Locrinus, who was drowned in it by her step-mother; the aspirate being changed, according to the Latin idiom, into S, as is usual in words derived from the Greek, it was termed Sarina, as hal becomes SAL; hemi, SEMI; hepta, SEPTEM.

The river Wye rises in the same mountains of Ellennith, and flows by the castles of Hay and Clifford, through the city of Hereford, by the castles of Wilton and Goodrich, through the forest of Dean, abounding with iron and deer, and proceeds to Strigul castle, below which it empties itself into the sea, and forms in modern times the boundary between England and Wales. The Usk does not derive its origin from these mountains, but from those of Cantref Bachan; it flows by the castle of Brecheinoc, or Aberhodni, that is, the fall of the river Hodni into the Usk (for Aber, in the British language, signifies every place where two rivers unite their streams); by the castles of Abergevenni and Usk, through the ancient city of Legions, and discharges itself into the Severn Sea, not far from Newport.

The river Remni flows towards the sea from the mountains of Brecheinoc, having passed the castle and bridge of Remni. From the same range of mountains springs the Taf, which pursues its course to the episcopal see of Landaf (to which it gives its name), and falls into the sea below the castle of Caerdyf. The river Avon rushes impetuously from the mountains of Glamorgan, between the celebrated Cistercian monasteries of Margan and Neth; and the river Neth, descending from the mountains of Brecheinoc, unites itself with the sea, at no great distance from the castle of Neth; each of these rivers forming a long tract of dangerous quicksands. From the same mountains of Brecheinoc the river Tawe flows down to Abertawe, called in English Swainsey. The Lochor joins the sea near the castle of the same name; and the Wendraeth has its confluence near Cydweli. The Tywy, another noble river, rises in the Ellennith mountains, and separating the Cantref Mawr from the Cantref Bachan, passes by the castle of Llanymddyfri, and the royal palace and castle of Dinevor, strongly situated in the deep recesses of its woods, by the noble castle of Caermarddin, where Merlin was found, and from whom the city received its name, and runs into the sea near the castle of Lhanstephan. The river Taf rises in the Presseleu mountains, not far from the monastery of Whitland, and passing by the castle of St. Clare, falls into the sea near Abercorran and Talacharn. From the same mountains flow the rivers Cleddeu, encompassing the province of Daugleddeu, and giving it their name one passes by the castle of Lahaden, and the other by Haverford, to the sea; and in the British language they bear the name of Daugleddeu, or two swords.

The noble river Teivi springs from the Ellennith mountains, in the upper part of the Cantref Mawr and Caerdigan, not far from the pastures and excellent monastery of Stratflur, forming a boundary between Demetia and Caerdigan down to the Irish channel; this is the only river in Wales that produces beavers, an account of which is given in our Itinerary; and also exceeds every other river in the abundance and delicacy of its salmon. But as this book may fall into the hands of many persons who will not meet with the other, I have thought it right here to insert many curious and particular qualities relating to the nature of these animals, how they convey their materials from the woods to the river, with what skill they employ these

materials in constructing places of safety in the middle of the stream, how artfully they defend themselves against the attack of the hunters on the eastern and how on the western side; the singularity of their tails, which partake more of the nature of fish than flesh. For further particulars see the Itinerary. (12)

From the same mountains issues the Ystuyth, and flowing through the upper parts of Penwedic, in Cardiganshire, falls into the sea near the castle of Aberystuyth. From the snowy mountains of Eryri flows the noble river Devi, (13) dividing for a great distance North and South Wales; and from the same mountains also the large river Maw, (14) forming by its course the greater and smaller tract of sands called the Traeth Mawr and the Traeth Bachan. The Dissennith also, and the Arthro, flow through Merionethshire and the land of Conan. The Conwy, springing from the northern side of the Eryri mountains, unites its waters with the sea under the noble castle of Deganwy. The Cloyd rises from another side of the same mountain, and passes by the castle of Ruthlan to the sea. The Doverdwy, called by the English Dee, draws its source from the lake of Penmelesmere, and runs through Chester, leaving the wood of Coleshulle, Basinwerk, and a rich vein of silver in its neighbourhood, far to the right, and by the influx of the sea forming a very dangerous quicksand; thus the Dee makes the northern, and the river Wye the southern boundary of Wales.

CHAPTER VI

Concerning the pleasantness and fertility of Wales

As the southern part of Wales near Cardiganshire, but particularly Pembrokeshire, is much pleasanter, on account of its plains and sea-coast, so North Wales is better defended by nature, is more productive of men distinguished for bodily strength, and more fertile in the nature of its soil; for, as the mountains of Eryri (Snow-

don) could supply pasturage for all the herds of cattle in Wales, if collected together, so could the Isle of Mona (Anglesey) provide a requisite quantity of corn for all the inhabitants: on which account there is an old British proverb, "MON MAM CYMBRY," that is, "Mona is the mother of Wales." Merionyth, and the land of Conan, is the rudest and least cultivated region, and the least accessible. The natives of that part of Wales excel in the use of long lances, as those of Monmouthshire are distinguished for their management of the bow. It is to be observed, that the British language is more delicate and richer in North Wales, that country being less intermixed with foreigners. Many, however, assert that the language of Cardiganshire, in South Wales, placed as it were in the middle and heart of Cambria, is the most refined.

The people of Cornwall and the Armoricans speak a language similar to that of the Britons; and from its origin and near resemblance, it is intelligible to the Welsh in many instances, and almost in all; and although less delicate and methodical, yet it approaches, as I judge, more to the ancient British idiom. As in the southern parts of England, and particularly in Devonshire, the English language seems less agreeable, yet it bears more marks of antiquity (the northern parts being much corrupted by the irruptions of the Danes and Norwegians), and adheres more strictly to the original language and ancient mode of speaking; a positive proof of which may be deduced from all the English works of Bede, Rhabanus, and king Alfred, being written according to this idiom.

CHAPTER VII

Origin of the names Cambria and Wales

Cambria was so called from Camber, son of Brutus, for Brutus, descending from the Trojans, by his grandfather, Ascanius, and father, Silvius, led the remnant of the Trojans, who had long been