ON THE NORMAN CONQUEST OF SOUTH WALES.

By WILLIAM FLOYD.

THE Normans in A.D. 1093 conquered South Wales, where, although the Welsh subsequently recovered the whole of Cardigan and most of the mountainous districts, they permanently maintained themselves in the most fertile portions of Brecknock and of the three southern counties of Glamorgan, Carmarthen, and Cardigan.

According to historians, this conquest was effected by several expeditions, made at different times, under different leaders, acting without any concert. The then King of England, it is said, countenanced, or at least allowed, these attacks, but was no further a party to them ; and to each leader was left the right of apportioning the conquered lands among the followers who had taken part in his adventure ; and hence arose the Lordships-Marchers of South Wales.

For this account, the only authority, such as it is, is tradition, the earliest notice of which that I have met with, though it no doubt was current long before, is of the second quarter of the sixteenth century. The above account is, in my opinion, erroneous, and I shall endeavour to show that the war in which South Wales was conquered was a national war, and the great probability that William Rufus personally took part in it.

Before doing so, it will, however, be desirable to notice the previous proceedings of the Normans in the neighbourhood.

After the conquest of England in A.D. 1066, the three great earldoms of Chester, Shrewsbury, and Hereford were established upon the borders of Wales ; the last, which, besides Herefordshire, comprised all, or nearly all, of the county of Gloucester west of the Severn, was granted to William FitzOsborn, to whom, as Ordericus Vitalis says

(book 4, c. vii. vol. ii. p. 47, Bohn's edition), "Was given the charge, in conjunction with Walter de Lacy and other tried soldiers, of defending the frontier against the Welsh, who were breathing defiance."

The condition of South Wales was then one of anarchy; there being, besides the actual possessor, one native pretender, or more, to every little principality into which it was divided. FitzOsborn entered into an alliance with one of the princes who held the western part of Monmouthshire, a Caradoc ap Griffith ap Rydderch, the same who is mentioned, in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle as the destroyer, in A.D. 1065, of Harold's buildings at Portskewett, and who is spoken of in Domesday as King Caradoc. With this aid, FitzOsborn, who died in February A.D. 1071, had won, as is shown by his donations to various religious houses, all the eastern part of Monmouthshire, extending westward at least to Raglan, as a charter of Walter Bloet (O. Mon. vol. ii. p. 989, line 50), confirming grants made by him in that place, makes manifest.

Such was the result: of the occurrences that led to it we have no details. The Brut, it is true, does state that, A.D. 1070, Caradoc, son of Griffith, son of Rhydderch, and the French, defeated Meredith,[1] son of Owen, on the banks of the river Rhymney, but the date given is probably incorrect; both it and the Welsh Annals saying the event happened in the same year as that in which, according to the Brut, Macmael Munbo, King of the Gwyddeliang, according to the Annals, Diermed, King of the Scots, was slain. The person referred to is Diarmaid, son of Mael-na-enbó, but his death is placed, not in A.D. 1070, but in A.D. 1072 by the Annals of Loch Cé. If A.D. 1072 be, as I believe, the correct date, it is so far of importance as showing that Roger, son of William FitzOsborn, and his successor in his English honours, continued in alliance with Caradoc ap Griffith.

In A.D. 1075 Earl Roger took part in an unsuccessful conspiracy against the Conqueror, and thereby lost all his

[1] The Meredith here spoken of was grandson of the Meredith ap Rydderch, who (Brut, p. 125) was one of the Welsh allied to the Normans. The Meredith living in A. D. 1116, was nephew of Rhys ap Tewdwr, but as his father Rhydderch married a daughter of Bloddyn ap Cynoyn, whose sons were adversaries of Rhys, he may have sided with them. If it were otherwise, it would show either that all the lands of the adherents of Rhys were not confiscated, or that some were subsequently restored.

lands. A portion of them, that which constituted what was subsequently called the Honour of Monmouth, were given, immediately after the Earl's fall, to a certain Wihenoc, who —not William FitzBaderon, as Dugdale says—was the first lord of that honour when held in capite of the Crown.[2]

In A.D. 1081 the Conqueror himself led an army into South Wales, of which we have the following notices. The Brut, "that he came for prayer on a pilgrimage to Menevia." The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, "that he lead an army into Wales, and there he set free many hundred persons." Henry of Huntington, "that he lead an army into Wales, and reduced it to submission;" which Wendover, who places it in A.D. 1079, explains by saying, "he received the homage and fealty of the petty princes." In Domesday we find some statement which explains and illustrates these quotations. At fol. 162, col. 1, it is said, "that several vills in Monmouthshire were wasted by King Caraduech;" and at fol. 185 b. col. 1, "that William de Schoies held eight ploughlands in the Castelry of Carlion."

Caerleon was a portion of Caradog's territory, and its possession was, for nearly two centuries after the taking of the Domesday survey, a subject of continual contention between his descendants and various Lord-Marchers. It is also to be noticed, that whilst all the other part of Monmouthshire in Norman possession was surveyed with the County of Gloucester, and administered by its Vice-count, Caerleon was surveyed with Herefordshire. The explanation of which I take to be, that it was not held by the Normans when Roger, Earl of Hereford, forfeited his lands.

Coupling these circumstances with what is said of the Conqueror's having set free many hundred persons, we may suppose that Caradog, in his warfare with the Normans, had obtained some notable advantage; but, unable to oppose a Royal army, had, on his submission, in A.D. 1081, been deprived of Caerleon.

The above is a supposition, and may be erroneous; but there can be no question of the confirmation which an entry in

[2] There can be no doubt Wihenoc was the predecessor of William FitzBaderon. The Book of Landaff (p. 266) expressly states that the Conqueror after the treason of Roger, Earl of Hereford, gave him the Castle of Monmouth. In the translation, the editor of that work has mistaken his name, there spelt Guerthenane, for that of a place. Moreover, in the Domesday account of the lands of William FitzBaderon, in Gloucestershire, it is mentioned of one of the manors that Wihenoc, his ancestor, held it. Wihenoc was, I believe, his uncle.

Domesday (fol. 179, col. 2), saying "Riset of Wales renders to King William £40," gives to what is said by Henry of Huntingdon. According to the Brut in A.D. 1077 (really 1079), Rhys ap Tewdwr began to reign. He is the Riset spoken of; and if there were any doubt that the sum named was paid as tribute for South Wales, it would be removed by another entry in the same book (fol. 269, col. 2), where Robert of Rhuddlan is stated to hold North Wales at farm for a like amount.

A difference in the chronology of the Welsh and Irish chronicles has been previously noticed. I am not competent to say which is correct, but believe that, from A.D. 1068 till some years after A.D. 1100, the marginal dates in the former are erroneous. That they are so from A.D. 1079 is certain: they place in that year the Conqueror's expedition into Wales; his death in A.D. 1085; the death of Rhys ap Tewdwr and Malcolm King of Scotland in A.D. 1091, and that of William Rufus in A.D. 1098. These events follow in the same order, and with like intervals, as in the English chronicles, but two years earlier; which is palpably a mistake, as there can be no doubt of the years in which the Conqueror, his son, or Malcolm, died.

The special reason for noticing this is, that writers of Welsh history and topography state that the conquest of Glamorgan and Brecknock occurred after the death of Rhys ap Tewdwr, but in A.D. 1091; but such death, being by both Welsh and English chronicles ascribed to the same year as that of Malcolm King of Scotland, it clearly did not happen till A.D. 1093.

Both South Wales and England were, after the death of the Conqueror, in A.D. 1087, torn by internal dissensions. Rufus had to contend against the claims of his brother and the revolt of his barons, and Rhys ap Tewdwr was, for a time, driven from his country by his opponents. Eventually both overcame their difficulties, but it was not till A.D. 1093 that Rufus was able to turn his attention to Wales. Whether he had any just grounds for war cannot be said, but it is possible, and far from improbable, that Rhys, flushed by his successes over his rivals, may have refused, or, being impoverished by his struggles, may have been unable to pay the tribute due from his dominions. However that may be, in A.D. 1093, the Normans invaded South Wales,

and, meagre though our information be, it is yet less so than of any previous contest.

Easter Sunday that year fell on the 17th of April, and in Easter week a battle was fought near where Brecknock Castle was afterwards built, in which Rhys was defeated and slain. The importance of the event is marked both by the English and the Welsh chroniclers in almost similar words. Florence of Worcester adding, "From that day kings ceased to reign in Wales;" and the Brut, "that then fell the kingdom of the Britons." Nothing can better show the distracted state of Wales than that within a fortnight after this action Cadwgan ap Bleddyn, one of the former adversaries of Rhys, made a raid into and ravaged Dyved.

The Normans, their purposes being different, were more deliberate, and it was not till the 1st of July that they entered Cardigan and Dyved, "which," says the Brut, "they have still retained, and fortified castles, and seized upon all the lands of the Britons." This, there being no mention of any attack on either Wentlooge or Glamorgan, is all that either Welsh or English chroniclers directly tell us of the conquest of South Wales; but, incidentally, from the former we learn some circumstances of importance, which will be hereafter noticed.

It not being my intention to enter into the history of South Wales, my subsequent remarks will be confined to two questions; one as to the mutual bearings of the Normans and Welsh on the conquest, the other as to whether the war in which the conquest was effected was a national war.

Assuming, for the present, the latter to have been the case, there is nothing surprising in the rapidity with which South Wales was overrun. To a royal army the chief difficulties would have consisted in the nature of the country and in the conveyance of stores. But as the army, by the condition of its services, must necessarily be withdrawn, even if, which is improbable, it could have been provisioned had it remained; the difficulty was in holding the country after it was won. This could not have been accomplished by those who had accepted the task but with the goodwill of a considerable portion of the Welsh; such they would not have had if, as the Brut says, the Normans seized on all the lands of the Britons; and that they had not only

their good-will, but also their active assistance is shown by the Brut itself (pages 125 and 127).

That no universal confiscation followed upon the conquest is proved by the Pipe Roll of Henry I., and by two early documents in the Cartulary of Carmarthen, the latter of which also show that some Welshmen, and those of the best birth, retained extensive possessions.[3] In addition to this, the distribution of property, such as we find from records existed in Carmarthen during the reigns of Henry III. and Edward I., is totally inconsistent not only with a universal but even with a general confiscation of lands.

My opinion, therefore, in itself a reasonable one, and which besides is in accordance with the few facts with which we are acquainted, is, that the Normans took for themselves all the lands of Rhys ap Tewdwr and his adherents, whilst his opponents were left in possession of theirs, rendering the military service due for them.

The next subject for consideration is, whether the war was a national war; of which, were Rufus personally engaged in it, there can be no doubt. It will be advisable to commence by showing the reasons there are for believing that he was. According to Florence of Worcester and others, William, being seized with severe illness, removed to the neighbouring town of Gloucester, where he lay in a languishing condition during the whole of Lent. He was again at the same place, on the 24th of August, to meet Malcolm, King of the Scots, pursuant to a previous arrangement.

As in the interval South Wales was conquered—and there is no mention of his being elsewhere during that period—any one previously unacquainted with the subject would so

[3] The two documents referred to are, first, a notification of David, Bishop of St. David's (Carty. of Carmarthen, p. 10) that Griffin, son of Bledric, confirmed to the Priory of Carmarthen four carucates of land at Eglusneweth given by his father. The following notices in the "Brut" explain who the Bledric was: (p. 139) it states that Cedivor, son of Collwyn, was prince of Dyved. At page 54, A. D. 1091 (1089), it says Cedivor, son of Collwyn, died; and his son Llewellyn and his brothers fought against Rhys ap Tewdwr, and were defeated. Again, page 127, A. D. 1116 (1113), it mentions that Bledri, son of Cedivor, was appointed, on the part of Henry I. to keep the castle of Langharne. Here we find one of the opponents of Rhys ap Tewdwr assisting the Normans, and, evidently, from the largeness of his gift to the Priory, having extensive estates. The second is a charter of William de Braos (page 12 in the same cartulary), saying that he, as Custos of Carmarthen, had given the church of Abernant, forfeited by the treason of Meredith FitzRichard, to the Priory. This charter is probably of the year A.D. 1196.

naturally assume that he was taking part in the conquest as to require, from those who maintained a contrary opinion, evidence to support their view. None such, as far as I know, could be produced, but much to support my position, for Gerald de Barri, in his "Itinerary" (book ii. chap. i.; Hoare's edition, vol. ii. p. 9), speaking of St. David's, says, "In clear weather the mountains of Ireland are visible from hence; on which account William, the son of William the Bastard, and the second of the Norman kings in England, who was called Rufus, and who had penetrated far into Wales, on seeing Ireland from these rocks, is reported to have said, 'I will summon hither all the ships of my realm, and with them make a bridge to attack that country.'"

Gerald was born about fifty years after the death of William Rufus, but, as his family were resident in Pembroke, his grandfather for some time custos of that Honour, and his uncle Bishop of St. David's, his testimony, so far as relates to William having been at St. David's, is almost as strong as would be that of a contemporary. This visit was made, I believe, in A.D. 1093.

The Welsh and Anglo-Saxon chronicles mention two expeditions of Rufus into Wales, one in A.D. 1095, the other in A.D. 1097. In the former, the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle informs us that he led his troops to Snowdon; it therefore could not have been in that year he went to St. David's. Of the latter our information is less definite. "William," we are told, "marched into Wales with a large army, and his troops penetrated far into the country by means of some Welshmen who had come over to him, and were his guides. He remained there from midsummer till August, but, failing to effect his purpose, returned into England, and forthwith caused castles to be built on the marches."

The circumstances of William needing guides and causing castles to be built on the marches, show that this expedition was into North Wales. In the south, of which the Normans had retained possession for four years, even though it may have been a disputed possession, guides could scarcely have been needed; still less were castles on its marches when the Welsh had failed to drive their invaders from Pembroke. Florence of Worcester and Simeon of Durham mention, in similar words, an expedition of William into Wales in A.D. 1095, earlier than that before spoken of, which took place in the summer, but it

being in the winter season, there is no probability that he then went to St. David's. My opinion, it will be seen, is, that at no other time than A.D. 1093 could William have been at St. David's, but as the point admits of doubt, I shall proceed to other evidence. It has been previously mentioned that the Welsh chronicles notice incidentally, in connection with subsequent events circumstances that occurred in the war of A.D. 1093, and which bear also upon the present question.

In A.D. 1094 (1092) the Annals tell us that "William, King of the English, went to Normandy, and he there tarrying, and fighting against his brother, the Britons hurled away the yoke of the French, and purged North Wales, Cardigan and Dyved from them, and their castles, two excepted, namely, Pembroke and Rhyd y Gors." The Brut, more explicit, says "demolished all the castles of Cardigan and Dyved," except those named. For the present there is only one point in this sentence to which I wish to draw attention, namely, what was the writer's meaning in the words "and he there tarrying" (ipsoque ibi morante). It might be only meant to fix the date of the events; but for that it seems too indefinite, and rather, therefore, to imply that the Britons were availing themselves of William's absence in Normandy. If this latter meaning be accepted, it follows, that William, even if not himself present, yet rendered assistance to the conquest of South Wales, or his absence from or presence in England would be alike indifferent.

In A.D. 1096 (1094), the Welsh chroniclers say, "William FitzBaldwin died, who founded the castle of Rhyd y Gors, by the command of the King of England, and he being dead, the castle was deserted." This William FitzBaldwin was son of Baldwin the Vice-count of Domesday, and hereditary Vice-count of Devon. Rhyd y Gors was, I believe, old Carmarthen, but its exact position is of little moment so far as the present inquiry is concerned, that it was in the neighbourhood is clear from a passage in the Brut (p. 77): "Then Richard FitzBaldwin stored the castle of Rhyd y Gors, and Howel son of Goronwy was driven from his dominion—the man to whom King Henry had deputed the conservancy of the Vale of Tywi and Rhyd y Gors." This explanation was necessary, a recent writer of a history of Wales having asserted that Rhyd y Gors was in Powis.

The two quotations given from the Welsh chronicles establish the following facts: 1st. The castle of Rhyd y Gors, being one of the two which the Welsh were unable to capture in A.D. 1094, must have been built either early in that or in the previous year. 2nd. That before its building William FitzBaldwin was acting in Carmarthen as an officer of the crown. 3rd. That notwithstanding his public duties, as Vice-count of Devon, he continued so acting till his death in A.D. 1096. This, though not expressly stated, is implied, and was so understood (vol. i. p. 93) by the historian of Brecknockshire.

These facts seem to me totally inconsistent with any other opinion than that the conquest of South Wales was the result of a national war. It was not till July A.D. 1093 that the Normans enter Dyved; and in the same, or early in the following year, we find an officer of the crown by the king's command had built a castle there, and further that the same officer till his death, some two or three years later, remained there in command. Nor is this all. Had there not been several other castles erected by the Normans, the order of Rufus to build the castle of Rhyd y Gors might have been taken as merely a general one to build a castle, as it is none other than their special signification can be attributed to them, namely, that the site of Rhyd y Gors was expressly chosen; and for such to have been the case, Rufus must have had of it a personal knowledge.

What has been said renders, I think, the probabilities, both that South Wales was conquered in a national war, and that Rufus took in it a personal part, so strong, that the few other circumstances to be noted may be done so briefly. In the first place, the attacks on South Wales are said to have been made by bands whose leaders acted without any combination. Thus Jones (Hist. of Breck. v. i. p. 88) tells us, "In the following year, allured by the success of Robert FitzHamon and his accomplices, and perhaps invited by them to compleat the conquest of the principality, another swarm of freebooters entered into Brecknockshire, headed by Bernard de Newmarch." To this mode of action the Brut gives both a general and a specific denial: a general, where it states that the French, from Brecknock, as I understand it, went into Dyved and Ceredigion; a specific, when it says (p. 67) "that Ernulf, brother of the Earl of Shrews-

bury, had obtained Dyved for his share by ballot, and who magnificently built the castle of Pembroke." What the translator means by ballot I do not know; the word used by the Brut, "o goelbren," according to the Welsh dictionaries, is by lot. But whatever may be the interpretation, the expression implies there was a division, however made, and in that division Dyved was allotted to Arnulph. Such there would not have been had each leader acted solely for himself; consequently the war, if a private war, was undertaken by different bands, under allied leaders. Of these leaders, Arnulf de Montgomery, son of Roger Earl of Shrewsbury, was one of the chief conspirators against Rufus, and Bernard de Newmarch (Ord. Vit. b. viii. c. 2) was actually in arms against him; even then though they had submitted to the king, it is little likely he would have permitted the mustering of a large force in Herefordshire, under their command, when all the leading men of that county, as the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle mentions, had been in rebellion against him.

The weightiest reason, however, for believing the war to have been a national one, is the cost it must have entailed. Of what that actually was, nor of the revenue of England at the period, have we any trustworthy evidence; but we cannot be much deceived in estimating that they bore the same proportion to each other, as they did in subsequent wars in Wales. Of the former we can speak with certainty, for among the foreign accounts of the Chancellor's Roll, 17 Edward I., is that of William de Luda, of the receipts and expenditure of the king's expedition to Wales, against Lewellin, son of Griffin, Prince of Wales, and David his brother, from Palm Sunday A° 10 (22nd March 1282), to the feast of S. Edmund's A° 13 (20th November 1284), by which it appears his receipts were £102,621, and his expenditure £90,248. Of the revenue I do not pretend to speak positively, but compute it to have been between one hundred and twenty and one hundred and eighty thousand pounds a year; and accepting this as nearly correct, consider that the cost of a war with Wales to have equalled two-thirds of a year's revenue.

There may have been circumstances, though unknown to me, which might cause the proportionate cost to be less in the reign of Rufus than in that of Edward I., but there were certainly some which would have a contrary effect. The

expedition of A.D. 1093 took place at that season when the harvest of the preceding year would be nearly consumed, whilst that of the year itself was unfit for use; and Wales being then, as William of Neuburgh says (book ii. chap. 5), "barren of corn, and incapable of supplying its inhabitants with food without importation from England," all the corn food must necessarily have been brought from thence. Moreover, it would have to be conveyed and guarded during its conveyance from the borders of Herefordshire to Pembroke, a distance of more than one hundred miles. On the other hand, Edward, with his fleet and fortresses, would never have been more than twenty-five miles from his magazines. But even if the comparative cost of the earlier were much less than that of the later, the actual cost would yet have been far more than could have been defrayed save by the royal revenue; and the war, therefore, must have been national, and not private.

Had this been a history, and not an essay, giving the result of my conclusions, and not the reasons on which they were founded, it is thus that I should have narrated them.

In A.D. 1093, William Rufus, having overcome the difficulties with which, since his accession to the throne, he had been contending, resolved to invade South Wales. In the absence of any information no judgment as to the justice of this enterprise can be formed, but he was not improbably incited to it by the defeated opponents of Rhys ap Tewdwr. Accordingly, in the early part of the year, he went to Alveston, a royal demesne near Gloucester, to superintend the necessary preparations; but a severe illness and the affairs of the see of Canterbury, prevented him, when these were completed, from taking part in the first operations of his troops. These commenced in the middle of April with the invasion of Brecknockshire; and Rhys ap Tewdwr, in Easter week (April 17 to 24), rashly giving battle to his enemies, was defeated and slain near Brecknock. After this success, the victors, engaged, no doubt, in fortifying ports to secure their communications, and in bringing up provisions, previously stored, from the borders of England, remained inactive till the first of July, when, joined by William, they advanced into Cardigan and Pembroke, which they occupied without opposition. Whilst these events were in progress, an expedition from Devon,

under the command of its Vice-count, William FitzBaldwin, had taken possession of the southern parts of Carmarthenshire; passing through which country, on his return, Rufus fixed upon a site for, and directed the building of, the Castle of Rhyd y Gors. Thence he went on to Gloucester, for the meeting which had been arranged to take place there between him and Malcolm, King of Scotland, on the 24th of August. Whilst the heavy armour of the Normans was an immense advantage to them during the engagement, it would necessarily be very detrimental in the pursuit; it is not, therefore, at all likely that the number of Welsh slain in the battle at Brecknock was so large as to paralyse further opposition. We must look, then, for some other cause to account for the rapidity with which the conquest of South Wales was effected; nor is this far to be sought, since the opponents of Rhys ap Tewdwr would welcome the Normans as deliverers. In this there is nothing to create surprise; at all times the domestic enemy has been hated more bitterly than the foreign foe, and such feeling, if ever justifiable, was so at this time in South Wales; for Rhys ap Tewdwr, whose reign commenced in A.D. 1079 (1077), having been in A.D. 1089 (1087) expelled by his countrymen, returned the same year, and recovered his power by the aid of heathen and Scottish mercenaries, to whom he gave an immense sum of money, as the Brut says, but, according to the Annals, an immense tribute of captives ("Ingentem censum captivorum gentilibus et Scotis, Res filius Tewdwr, tradidit"). If this latter account be true, it cannot be a subject of surprise that the Normans, who, though foreigners, were at least Christians, should find allies amongst those whose fellow-countrymen had been given as slaves to heathens. Such are the conclusions at which I have arrived, but the information is so scanty that they cannot be put forward as certain, and it is only as being probable that they are advanced.