

## GLAMORGAN AND PEMBROKE.<sup>1</sup>

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It would be difficult to find any two places of greater historic interest in the principality of Wales than those which the Institute has chosen for its visit this year. The only possible objection that can be raised is that the programme is too ambitious. To visit Glamorganshire properly would occupy more than a week, and at the week's end its interest would be far from being exhausted, to say nothing of Pembrokeshire, "Little England beyond Wales," the due exploration of which would fill up far more time than it is proposed to devote to it. Still, in a way, the combination is a happy one, as it will enable us to make a comparison of two great Norman colonising experiments and to study the modifications produced both on the system and its results in accordance with the different circumstances encountered. It would however give an entirely wrong impression if the matter was considered solely in the light of the Norman settlement. A consideration of the earlier history is necessary to realise the different conditions which prevailed in the two localities.

I. The first condition is common to both. As far back as history extends until it is lost in the dim light of Celtic legend the west coast of Wales and the shores of the Severn sea were subject to frequent raids of pirates from Ireland, from Cornwall, from France and from the north. The raiders are usually called Danes, but from whatever country they came, if the line may be adapted, Wales could say they were "All of them Danes in plundering me." Raiding expeditions to carry off plunder or to capture slaves were frequent and extended from the earliest times until the Norman conquest. The Welsh were not above having expeditions of their own: plunder and slaves

<sup>1</sup> Read before the Institute at Cardiff, 25th July, 1911.

were equally an attraction to them as to their plunderers. An account of one of their expeditions to Ireland has survived. A Welsh prince, Caroticus, made an expedition to Ireland and doubtless his followers considered themselves fortunate in finding a number of persons assembled for the baptism of some native Irish who had been converted to christianity. While still in their white baptismal robes the Welsh swooped down on them, killing some, carrying off others as slaves. It was a successful foray, so much so that St. Patrick, hearing of it, sent the next day to ask if the Welsh would restore some of the plunder and the baptised captives, but the Welsh merely laughed at the saint's request. Patrick's only weapon was to resort to strong language, which he did, and wound up by asking "Where will Caroticus be with his wicked rebels who distribute among their followers baptised women and the spoils of orphans?"<sup>1</sup>

Another Welsh raiding expedition is preserved in the legend of the landing of the ship-load of holy virgins at Llanguyrion in Cardiganshire. These were doubtless the result of a slaving raid, and on landing they were distributed among the Welsh, a fate which the Church would consider as a spiritual death, and so records the story that on landing all the young women were massacred.

In the Severn sea these slave-hunting raids from abroad were frequent, but gradually, possibly from the influence of the church, the raids from Wales appear to have decreased but the piratical visits to Wales continued, or possibly it might be said that the Welsh gained all the fruits of plundering "in a more excellent way," that is, by plundering the plunderers.

If anyone looks from the hills above Cardiff out to the Severn he may see two islands known as the Steep Holme and Flat Holme; these became the abode of saints of the greatest sanctity. Legends of considerable beauty exist as to these saints and their deeds. Saints were not confined to those on the Holmes. Most of the islands and rocks in the Severn sea had their saint, venerated for his piety, who died in the odour of sanctity. How did they pass their time on the lonely rocks? This they kept a profound secret; it was said to be in praying and

<sup>1</sup> Haddan and Stubbs, ii, pt. 2, 319.

meditating. They must have belonged to the second order of saints<sup>1</sup> for they declined to allow women to land, possibly because they feared their curiosity and dreaded what they might find out. For if they are not maligned they had a practice that some would call patriotic but to which others would apply a worse word, tending to put an end to the raiders in the Severn sea. The legend of the saint who lived on the solitary rock at the junction of the Wye with the Severn is probably but a specimen of all the others. The saint was named Tecla. She was said to have been a lady of wondrous beauty who had been disappointed in love, and gave up the world and its vanities: as Jephtha's daughter of old retired to the mountains, so she, for a like reason, retired to the rock. Her solitude was unbroken save by the sea-birds and one other animal, a cow which had some very remarkable points about it. Like the celebrated three-acre cow this one yielded an unfailing supply of milk year in and year out. Possibly this may be due to the fact that every day as soon as the tide had sufficiently ebbed the cow walked to the mainland and fed, returning before the flood-tide had flowed sufficiently to make the passage difficult. It was a lovely and instructive legend, but a local antiquary published a paper in which he shed a new light upon it. He began by proving that Tecla was a man, that the cow was not required for milking purposes but was used only at intervals in accordance with a custom that prevailed in Pembrokeshire and Cardiganshire down to the nineteenth century although along the shores of the Severn sea it ceased earlier. No notice was taken of ships passing up on plundering expeditions, or if any notice was taken, a red light was shown to guide them on their way. But on their return laden with spoil, the services of the cow were called into use. To her horns was attached a lantern, moving with every step, which at night a sailor would take for the light of a ship riding at anchor, thus showing that if he steered for it he would be in his course, while in fact the "kindly light" led him straight on to the rocks and "a rich shipwreck blessed the lucky shore." How far this is strictly accurate it is not for me to say. Ships sailed up the

<sup>1</sup> Haddan and Stubbs, ii, pt. 2, 292.

Severn in safety and ships were shipwrecked in descending. Saints inhabited the islands.

Some of the raiders were so pleased with the shore of the Severn sea that they remained there for life, among them one named Harding, whose descendants, the great house of Berkeley, have still an abiding place there. One point of importance should be remembered in connexion with these raiders. We know little about them, we might and ought to know more: many of them were buried by the shores of the Severn sea, and whenever either by opening a tumulus or in any other way relics of the past, bones, pottery or weapons are uncovered, they should be religiously preserved. They may tend to throw light on the history of the raiders. Some of the pottery found in Glamorganshire, figured in *Archaeologia*, is of an Irish, others of an unknown type.<sup>1</sup> It is from such specimens and the bones and weapons so found that the history of these men has to be built up. One reads with dismay not merely the statements in Fenton's *Pembrokeshire*<sup>2</sup> that a barrow was opened, the usual pottery found, but nothing of interest, and the notices in the early number of *Archaeologia Cambrensis* to the same effect of discoveries being made and no care taken of the finds. How much of the history of these early raiders has thus been lost?

II. Part of the raiding period, certainly so far as Glamorganshire and possibly also as Pembrokeshire are concerned, was covered by the Roman occupation. The great Roman road, the Via Julia, ran along the coast lines of Glamorganshire and Carmarthenshire, and connected with it are traces of Roman occupation. The Roman towns of Caerwent, Caerleon and Cardiff all mark points on the road, and the fact that these stations are nearer together than is the case on most of the Roman roads may be a testimony to the peril of the position and the fighting powers of the Silures. As the road proceeds from Cardiff westward traces of Roman occupation are still to be met with; between Pyle and Neath a Roman military stone, now in the Swansea museum, was found, said to bear the name of Victorinus.<sup>3</sup> Two other military

<sup>1</sup> *Archaeologia*, xliii, 352, 371.

<sup>2</sup> Reprint, pp. 279 and 317.

<sup>3</sup> Westwood's *Lapidarium Wallia*, 40.

stones were found near Aberavon (Port Talbot).<sup>1</sup> Still further along the road at Loughor, on the river of that name, where the road crosses into Carmarthenshire, traces of a Roman station were found, among them a Roman altar,<sup>2</sup> while at Carmarthen a Roman stone and two small Roman altars have been unearthed.<sup>3</sup> It will thus be seen that along the whole length of the *Via Julia*, from the Wye to the Towy, clear traces of Roman occupation exist. No inscribed Roman stones as far as I am aware have been found west of Carmarthen in the direction of Pembrokeshire. This points to the fact that there is not sufficient evidence to justify the opinion of the eighteenth-century antiquaries that the Roman road went on from Carmarthen to St. Davids.

III. Whatever vices the Roman soldiers possessed and brought with them to Britain, it is fairly certain they brought over one great virtue, for it was to them, not to any of the apostles, nor to Joseph of Arimathea, nor to Pudens or Claudia that we are indebted for christianity. At some spot along the *Via Julia*, most probably Caerleon, the headquarters of the second legion, which garrisoned the district, was the place where christianity first made its appearance in Wales. Thence it spread, probably along the line of the road; this would account for the number of christian schools that sprang up near it. All these early Celtic schools in Glamorganshire gradually disappeared as other influences arose, but not the least interesting among the many interesting points relating to the Welsh church is the comparison between the histories of the two great south Wales monasteries, the one of Llandaff and the other of St. Davids. At the former will be seen a great religious establishment almost within bow-shot of the castle of the feudal lord, under his influence to a considerable extent; while at St. Davids will be seen a great independent religious establishment, the feudal lord of which is the head of the monastery and where it was his interest to maintain his feudal rights, and not unnecessarily to interfere with the existing state of things.

We need not go into the story of the two dioceses

<sup>1</sup> Westwood's *Lapidarium Wallia*, 41 and 38.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* 39

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* 98.

of Llandaff and St. Davids nor show how the Llandaff bishopric suffered from its proximity to England. It was almost impossible for it to have preserved its national independence surrounded as it was by castles of Norman lords, each of whom wanted to annex some part of the episcopal possessions. That Llandaff was spoiled by the Norman settlers is abundantly proved by documentary evidence. St. Davids retained her independence from various causes, not the least being her remoteness. As the members of the Institute travel round the country they will observe how castle after castle is to be found in Glamorganshire, while when they reach St. Davids they will see the great church alone in its desolation, and will begin to understand how differently the church worked in the two districts, owing to the different character of the districts on which it had to work. It is true that Urban at Llandaff kept up a steady contest with Bernard at St. Davids, but the victory was a foregone conclusion. A protected prelate had no chance against a man who combined in himself the offices of feudal lord and Norman bishop.

IV. The conquest of Glamorganshire is a matter upon which so much has been written and where it is so difficult to separate history and legend that it would be idle to enter upon it here. Fitzhamon and his twelve knights (the number sounds as if legend had come in) is a very fascinating subject but one that has to be passed by for the present. Let us assume for the moment that he had twelve followers, that he gave them all grants of land, and that they all built castles. A certain number certainly did; the exact number is of little importance. What is of importance is, taking Fitzhamon as an average specimen of the Norman colonist, to see the way in which he carried out his work. Whatever else he may have been he was a strong and able man: otherwise he would never have received the lands that the crown gave him. He combined the two qualities that all the prominent Normans appear to have possessed, great personal courage and great superstition. His courage was proved in many a fight, finishing at Tenchebrai where he received severe wounds from which he never recovered. His superstition or piety is proved by his gifts to various

religious houses, but above all by that noble pile of which he was the founder, and in which he is buried, the abbey church of Tewkesbury. The massive pillars of the nave may be taken as typical of the man and his work, crushing out all resistance to his rule both ecclesiastical and civil. First came the castles, Cardiff, Caerphilly, Coity and a number of others in Glamorganshire, and continuing along the old line of the Roman road, at Loughor, Kidwelly, Llanstephan. This was the civil side, one of the pillars on which Norman rule rested; the other, the ecclesiastical, the pillar of which was the monastery. This pillar was raised in two ways, by making gifts to existing religious houses both in England and on the continent, but mainly on the continent. Between 1066 and 1100 six religious houses were founded in South Wales: all were Benedictine, four were cells to Norman abbeys abroad, and, of the two English, one was a cell to the Conqueror's abbey of Battle, the other to St. Peter's at Gloucester. If anyone will take the trouble to look over a map of Glamorganshire they will see that along the Via Julia and the adjacent lands the castles and the abbeys go hand in hand. Where there is a castle, near to it is a religious house of some kind, usually a Benedictine house, thus showing the deliberate intent of the Norman settler to establish Norman rule in all matters as well ecclesiastical as civil, or, to use the words of a great writer on the monastic system, "The monastic orders were but one branch of that great christian society ruled by the church and feudalism."<sup>1</sup> From the Wye to the Towy the country was governed by this combination and, although there was doubtless tyranny and violence, yet it was successful, and the country became one of the most prosperous parts of Wales.

Considerable remains of this system are to be seen, two things may be brought under notice. At Ewenny there is a fortified priory which shows the system at work from one side, a priory which was a cell to St. Peter's, Gloucester, fortified to protect the Gloucester abbey's possessions. At Cardiff there is the chapel in the castle which was given to the abbey of Tewkesbury. Thus both these houses secured, if occasion arose, the lives

<sup>1</sup> Montalembert, *Moines d'occident*, i, ccxxiii.

of their servants and the property of their houses. But they did not rest here. Such of the churches as have escaped the obliterating hand of the restorer show that they were mostly fortified, at least sufficiently so as to enable the settlers to hold out until help should come from the castle. Many of the churches are large enough to hold all the inhabitants of the place and much of their property, including the sheep and cattle, which would give a supply of food, and although we might not care to drink from a churchyard well, yet in case of an attack the early inhabitants during a siege would not be so particular.

The line of castles continued either on the road or on the approaches to it until Carmarthen was reached; here they practically stopped. This is further evidence that the road did not continue beyond Carmarthen. It will be noticed that while some of the other approaches to the road are guarded by castles, each of the mouths of the rivers has its castle as a matter of course: Neath, Swansea, Loughor, Kidwelly, Llanstephan, so if the worst came to the worst there was always an escape or a relief by sea. The Welsh did not possess ships, they had been cut off from the seaboard.

The position may be thus summed up: (a) The piratical raiders had taught the importance of the sea; that lesson had been learned, and the sea was well guarded. (b) The Romans, by making the great road, had taught the importance of keeping open a direct means of communication; that lesson had also been learnt and not forgotten. (c) The Normans had felt the importance of having a body on whom they could rely for defence if their retainers were absent; that body were the monks, and so the castle and the convent were combined. (d) The Norman system applied and enforced by the castle and the convent gradually effaced the local customs and ideas, so that along the tract of country within the influence of the Normans a state of society grew up which differed but little from that of England. Local customs, ideas, superstitions and language prevailed, it is true, but there was no idea of a separate country or a separate nationality. What the Pale was to Ireland the settled part of Glamorgan was to Wales. So it may be



said that, given the proper circumstances, the Norman system of colonising proved a success, or, as a modern French statesman once said, "France had never been so successful in her colonies as she was with her earliest."

Turning to Pembrokeshire we are met with a different state of things. Here there was no one who occupied such a position as Fitzhamon did in Glamorganshire, and the Norman influence was confined to particular defined parts of the county.

As in Glamorganshire they were raiders, and the old legends point to rather an active intercourse between that district and Ireland, an intercourse which was continued after raiding had practically ceased. This intercourse tended to keep up the local and national customs by securing a constant immigration of Celts into the country, a state of things practically unknown in Glamorganshire.

Probably the fact that there was no real Roman occupation, even if the Romans ever reached the further side of Pembrokeshire, tended to foster native ideas. Had the Via Julia extended with a line of forts beyond Carmarthen, a very different state of things would have arisen. As it was West Carmarthenshire and Pembrokeshire were cut off, isolated, and thrown largely on their own resource.

In Pembrokeshire the church had an isolating influence and was able to gain an authority and position quite exceptional. A large and powerful monastery receiving constant grants of land in all the counties of South Wales was in a very different position from a monastery which had all its lands around it and powerful neighbours always ready to plunder it. At the Norman conquest the monastery of St. Davids had gained such a grip on South Wales that it would have been very difficult, even if possible, to relax it.

All the history of the district before the conquest tended to consolidation, and this process had gone too far for the Normans to change by ordinary means. South Pembrokeshire with the strong fortress of Pembroke had been settled precisely as Fitzhamon had settled Glamorganshire, a castle with a religious house under its shelter. So also the castles of Carew and Manorbier were built

like some of the Glamorganshire castles, and this part of the country was gradually becoming settled in the same way as Glamorganshire.

But a new feature was introduced to a large extent, how large is a matter on which people differ: the Welsh inhabitants were cleared out, and a number of Flemings settled in the district. North Pembrokeshire, that is, the lordship of Kemmes, was settled by a Norman, Martin of Tours, but separating him from south Pembroke was the jurisdiction of the house of St. Davids, the hundred of Dewisland. So the lord of Kemmes was to some extent isolated. South Pembrokeshire stood by itself, an expropriated county. The real power in the district was in the house of St. Davids. As soon as this fell under the rule of a Norman bishop, and such an able bishop as Barnard, it might be thought that the Normanising of the country would go on. It was not so. What time Barnard could give from his other duties to his diocese was mainly occupied in fighting Urban, the bishop of Llandaff, as to the boundaries of their respective dioceses, and whether certain churches dedicated to St. Teilo could really be the property of St. Davids. The officials of the diocese were, it is believed, mainly Welshmen. As long as Welsh law and custom were carried out no difficulties arose. So while nominally the bishop of St. Davids was a Norman bishop assisting in the Norman settlement, in fact he was keeping things as they were. So much was this the case that even in the fourteenth century Welsh customs prevailed on some of the estates of the see.<sup>1</sup>

For some reason the Normans did not introduce Benedictine monks into Pembrokeshire in anything like the same way they had done in Glamorganshire. About 1125, Robert FitzMartin, then the lord of Kemmes, founded at St. Dogmaels on the Teifi a house of reformed Benedictines known as Tironian from the great house of the order, the abbey of Tiron. It prospered and sent out two cells, one at Pill and the other on the island of Caldey. Except Monkton, Pill, Caldey and the northern house St. Dogmaels there was no other Benedictine foundations in Pembrokeshire. When this is compared

<sup>1</sup> *The Black Book of St. Davids*, 201 and 254.

with the number in Glamorganshire the difference between the two settlements will be realised.

It might be thought that the Norman colony in Pembrokeshire was a failure. This can hardly be said to be the case in the area to which it extended. The very drastic measure of clearing the country and establishing the Flemings made a success of what might otherwise have been a failure. Although the Normans in Cardiganshire, the Clares, were only separated by the river, yet the lord of Kemmes never became the power that the other lords marchers were. Yet the descendants of the lords of Kemmes are the only survivors of the settlers who are still in possession of the lands and rights. It was the house of St. Davids that was the real power in the country and in spite of all that happened it was that house that remained the great power.

This anyone can see for himself. Pembroke stands on a site predestined for a fortress. Carew, as it now exists, is a fortified house. As to Manorbier, it will perhaps be best to give its description in the words of one who was born there and to whom we owe so much for our knowledge of mediaeval Welsh history, Giraldus. "As Demetia," he says, "is the fairest of all the seven counties of Wales, and Pembroke the fairest of Demetia, and this spot the fairest of all Pembroke, it follows that Manor Pyrr is the fairest spot in all Wales."<sup>1</sup>

This may be so, but St. Davids is unique. Possibly the view even in its decay of the place where the Welsh bishops dwelt in all their glory will bring home more forcibly than anything else the power and authority of the see, which was to a great extent maintained by its great inaccessibility. "Roma debet quantum bis dat Menevia tantum" can now hardly hold good. It is possibly fortunate that the members of the Institute who visit the shrine of the great saint in motor-cars are not going to remain at St. Davids for the night. For the saint might not be content with turning in his coffin, if he has one, but might appear to the sacrilegious intruders.

It is very tempting to say something of the legends which surround the foundation of the monastery of

<sup>1</sup> *Iter. Camb.* 551.

St. David and his miracles, but space does not permit. In conclusion I will only ask the members of the Institute not to go away with the idea that they have explored Pembrokeshire; there are plenty of objects of interest left for a future visit. To say nothing about Welsh history, there is the important part that Pembrokeshire has played in English history. The last successful attempt to take forcible possession of the crown of England started in Pembrokeshire. Two French invasions have been made from it, one to terminate at Worcester, the other, the last in our history, to end in the surrender of the invaders to a man. One of the Pembrokeshire peers gained his earldom, not as peerages are proposed to be gained now, but for the part he played in that invasion.