

On the Course of the River Dee.

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**I**F I have erred in selecting a subject which some may think not sufficiently within the scope of an Archæological and Historical Society, I have only to crave your pardon for the offence, and to make the only amends in my power by detaining you as short a time as possible from more congenial subjects.

The name of the Dee is borne by a small stream which runs into the great Lake at Bala, in Merionethshire, at its western extremity; but the river assumes so different a character on its emerging from the Lake at its eastern end, that it is ordinarily considered to take its rise there. The Lake derives its waters from the lofty hills which surround it, but its surface is so extensive that it takes many hours of heavy rain to raise its level a few inches and to swell the *tide* of the Dee. This occasionally causes a somewhat curious state of things. Half a mile below the Lake the Dee is joined in the meadows by the Treweryn, that beautiful stream which those who have visited Bala must have noticed, as they cross it emerging from Mr. Price's grounds at the entrance into the town. The Treweryn running rapidly down steep channels from precipitous mountains becomes swollen immediately after a fall of rain, and when it joins the Dee in the meadows so swells the waters of the latter as to turn them for some hours reflux into the Lake.

We must not quit the Lake without a word as to its name, or rather its names. In Welsh it is called Tegid Lake, a name probably as ancient as its waters, and no less difficult to trace to its origin. Its English appellation, Pimblemere, admits of an easier solution. The Lake being the great feature of the country gives names to every thing around it. The hundred in which it is situated is called Penllyn (the head of the Lake), and the five parishes of which it is composed take their names from the top, the side, the margin of the Lake, &c., and taken collectively they are called the "five parishes of Penllyn;" in Welsh, with its characteristic alliteration, "pum plwy Penllyn." Some ingenious Saxon admiring the

euphony of the sobriquet, converted it into a name for the Lake. and called it Pimblemere—the Lake of five parishes.

The Dee having passed along the beautiful Vale of Edernion, enters a little below Corwen a bolder and more glen-like valley, called Glyndwrdu, once the domain of the hero immortalized in story as Owain Glyndwr. Here we must pause for a while. You will I fear think that, like Mr. Shandy, I have been somewhat long in naming my child, but I wanted the water of Glyndwrdu before I could do this.

Welsh names of places are almost universally descriptions rather than arbitrary names, and such is peculiarly the case in this instance. Whoever has travelled the road between Corwen and Llangollen, cannot have failed to remark, as he looked down on the wizard stream, the very peculiar blackness of its waters. This appearance may be owing partly to the water deriving a dark tinge from the extensive mountain turbaries which supply it, but it is chiefly to be attributed to the steepness and height of the adjacent mountains, which prevent us from seeing the sky reflected in the surface of the river. Hence the very natural and simple name of the river—*Afon dwr du*—river, water, black. The abode of Owain is *Glyn dwr du*—the glen of the black water. As we come down the river, the glen expands into a valley or a *nant*, and here it is called *Nant wy du*, the valley of the black water—*wy* or *gwy* being another word for water, very common in the names of places. I could give scores of instances, but we need not go far from Chester for one. The brook at Stamford Bridge, a favourite meeting-place of the fox-hunters, is by them very aptly called the *Goey*; but it was called *Gwy* by my countrymen long before Nimrod got his pack together.

Thus it is that, whether in glen or valley, the waters of our river retain their distinctive name of *du* (black). Modern nomenclators translate old names as in the case of a cousin german of our river, the *Dulas*, near *Abergele*, which they have called “black and blue.” The Romans, like sensible men, handed the name down as they found it—the *Du*—with the digamma *Deva*. Had they adopted the translating system, we should have been at this moment, *horresco referens*, establishing an Archaeological Society on the banks, not of the *Dee*, but of the *Niger*.

Black as our stream is, it receives in its course the waters of two white ones. The *Alwen* (*wen* or *wyn* meaning white) runs into it near *Rug*, and derives its whiteness from the rapidity of its course through a rocky district. The name of the other, the *Alyn*, seems to be a corruption of the same word, and is descriptive of the very peculiarly thick and milky appearance of the water of that river.

Neither is ours the only river that continues to bear the Celtic name which denotes its blackness. There are in Scotland at least two *Dees*, one in the North and one in *Kirkcudbright*. The name of a third

requires some explanation. I have stated that the Vale of Llangollen is called from our river the Valley of Black Water—Nant gwy du—and I believe that Gwy du was the ancient name of what is now called the Tweed. I am led to this opinion from having been informed by an old gentleman whom I knew in early life, and who was a native of the region of the Tweed, that when he was a boy the lower classes in that country used to call the river, not the Tweed but the Queed, which is evidently the same as the Celtic Gwy du, or black water.

But we have left the sable nymph of our river in the dark shades of Glyndwrdu, and it is time to conduct her towards Chester. I leave it to others to treat in detail of the numberless objects of nature and of art, physical and moral, ancient and modern, which are connected with the Dee and its valley, The genius of the times has, however, brought about one or two contrasts to which I cannot help drawing your attention. Compare, for instance, old Glyndwr and his daughter, Lady Mortimer, with the modern heroines of the Valley, Lady Eleanor Butler and Miss Ponsonby. Here behold the Abbey of Valle Crucis—founded for the calm repose of holy men having renounced the world with its cares and toils—there a cotton-twist factory. Among the works of art we have Castell Dinas Bran, built with inconceivable labour, and reminding us of the toil of Sisypus,—

With many a weary step, and many a groan,  
Up a high hill he heaves a huge round stone.

Its object was to defend the pass, and keep the hated Saxon at a distance. Near it there is a work of yesterday, Robertson's stupendous Viaduct, built to improve and facilitate the intercourse between Wales and the same Saxons; and so ingeniously did the designer of this vast work apply the powers of mechanism to the laws of nature, that every stone was made to travel by its own weight from the quarry whence it was dug to the spot it now occupies in the building; so much more consonant to the laws of nature is the peaceful Viaduct than the frowning Castle.

On quitting its rocky channel through the valleys of Wales, the Dee becomes a sluggish and often a muddy stream from washing its own clayey banks, and receiving the turbid waters of cultivated fields. At Trefalyn, or Saxonice Allington, it is joined by the Alyn. It is probable that at a period, the remoteness of which I will not pretend to estimate, the waters of the Alyn found their way to the sea, or perhaps found the sea itself in the low plain between Broughton (Brow-town), on the one side, and Eaton (Eye or Island-town), on the other. As soon as this space was freed from the overflowings of the Alyn, the tidal waters coming over it charged with sand from the ocean, and in times of flood with mud and silt from the Dee would, like those of the Humber, at each tide deposit

some portion of what they thus held in suspense. It is thus that what was anciently called the *Lac* by the Welsh, and the Lache with its eyes by the English on its border, was raised by degrees into the fertile plain which we now behold it.

When first I proposed it to myself to write a paper on the Dee, I intended continuing my remarks on its course from Chester to the sea. The subject has, however, become at the present moment practically too important to deal with as a matter of mere speculation. I must therefore forbear, and bring my observations to a close; and while I thank you for the patience with which you have borne with me, let me express a hope that the interesting discussions on this subject, which are agitating the public mind, may issue in the permanent advantage of all the parties so deeply engaged in them.

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### Christian Monuments.

BY JOHN HICKLIN.

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**I**T has been most justly remarked, that a very interesting volume might be written on Christian Monuments, not considering them, as Bloxam does, in the light of specimens of art; so much as tracing in them the feelings of successive centuries as to the state of the departed. Funeral rites have formed a part of the religious service of all ages and nations. The Jews paid the most solemn respect to the departed, committing the body to the tomb with long processions and every display of sorrow. To be deprived of sepulture was regarded as the height of misfortune, a calamity and an indignity. Thus in Psalm lxxix.—“O God! the heathen are come into Thine inheritance: Thy holy temple have they defiled, and made Jerusalem an heap of stones. The dead bodies of Thy servants have they given to be meat unto the fowls of the air: and the flesh of Thy servants unto the beasts of the land. Their blood have they shed like water on every side of Jerusalem: and there was no man to bury them.” And again in Jeremiah xxxvi. 30—“Therefore thus saith the Lord God of Jehoiakim, king of Judah; He shall have none to sit upon