

#### FOREWORD

These stories have been written at the request of the Montgomeryshire Teachers' History Committee, and the volume is the first which the Committee have published since the issue, in 1941, of the Local History Syllabus. It is presented to the Schools in the hope that it will be a stimulas to the study of the Children's cultural background, now receiving greater attention in the schools.

The Committee desires to acknowledge its indebtedness to the author for her labour of love, and to the Education Authority for its encouragement.

DAVID ROWLANDS,
Secretary to the History Committee.

Secondary Modern School, Newtown, August, 1947.

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# THE ENCHANTED WOOD

AND OTHER STORIES

BY

A. J. BAILEY WILLIAMS



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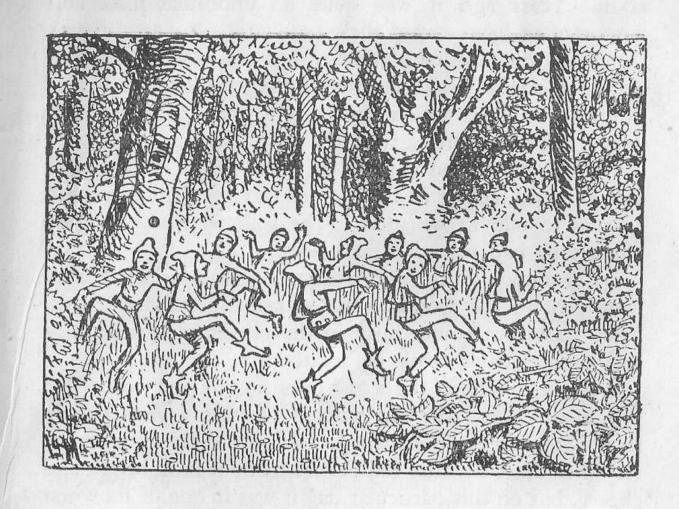
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## DEDICATED

TO

THE CHILDREN OF MONTGOMERYSHIRE



T

## THE ENCHANTED WOOD

LESS than a hundred years ago people believed in fairies and goblins. They called them "the little people." If they happened to be very lucky in their business they said, "The little people are with us." On the other hand, if things went badly with them, for instance, if they had much illness in the family, or many of their animals fell sick and died, they believed they had offended the "little people." Then they would do all in their power to appease them, that is, to please them and win back their favour.

Not far from Machynlleth there is a place called Mathafarn. Years ago it was quite an important place and famous men have stayed there.

Near this farm of Mathafarn is a wood which the old people thought was enchanted. They believed this, for in the wood there were several bright green patches which people felt sure were fairy rings.

Moreover, when you passed these magic circles there was an eerie feeling in the air—in fact everything around seemed to talk in whispers. The folk were always glad

when they had passed these places.

Once upon a time two workmen from Mathafarn farm were sent to the wood to cut stakes for making fences. They started off quite early in the morning because they had a good day's work before them.

In the middle of the wood grew an old yew tree. The people called it "the old witch." It was a very moody tree. Sometimes it frowned, looking dark and angry. At other times its little red berries made it look bright and cheery, but on this particular day it was in one of its worst moods.

"What ails old yew tree today?" said one of the workmen as they passed, "She looks as dark as thunder."

"One of her bad days no doubt," said the other and

they moved on very quickly.

At last they came to the part of the wood where they were going to work. They began to cut down the young trees and worked with a will.

Suddenly the wood became dark, so dark that they could hardly see one another.

"Surely this is not nightfall," said one to the other. "Most likely 'tis a storm," replied his friend. "We must hurry home; this is no place for us in a storm." So together they wended their way through the wood towards home. When they reached the old yew tree she had completely changed. Her red berries sparkled with mischief,

and as if by magic the darkness suddenly changed to brilliant sunshine.

"What freak of nature is this?" asked one of the men.
"Do you think it might be the little people whom we have displeased?" said the other in a low whisper, lest they should hear him.

"Let us hope not," said his friend. "Suppose we rest awhile," he suggested, and they both lay down on the soft green grass. In an instant a deep sleep fell upon them. They slept for many hours, and then one of the men awoke. Looking around sleepily, he was surprised to find that his companion was nowhere to be seen. Thinking he might be playing a joke on him, he began looking for his friend, calling him by his name. There was no answer, except an empty echo, which seemed to mock him.

Greatly annoyed at his friend's behaviour he made for home, wondering meanwhile how he could account for his friend's absence. Suddenly he recollected that Ianto, for that was his friend's name, had spoken of taking his shoes to the cobbler to be repaired. Perhaps he had done so, and he would be at the farm when he returned. When he reached the farm there was no sign of him anywhere. On entering the house the mistress asked.

"Where is Ianto, you are very late?"

"He has taken his shoes to the cobbler's," said Harri feeling rather shamefaced, for he could think of no other excuse.

"Then come and have your supper," said the Mistress. Harri ate his supper in silence, and when the meal was over, instead of sitting around the old farm-house fire to spin yarns with the family, he went to bed, but not to sleep. All night he tossed from side to side. He was feeling very uneasy about Ianto. Supposing the little people had spirited him away? There really had been some eerie happenings in the wood that day.

How glad he was to see the first streak of dawn in the sky. When he came down to breakfast his mistress eyed him curiously and said "Ianto has not returned. What did you do to him Harri?" Feeling very unhappy about it Harri confessed to his mistrees how mysteriously Ianto had disappeared the day before. He related all that had happened in the enchanted wood on the previous day. "Spect it's the 'little people,'" she whispered. "Shan Morgan called here last night and said she failed to churn her butter yesterday because the little people were up to their pranks."

A week passed by with still no news of Ianto, so Harri made up his mind to visit the "wise man" of the neighbourhood known as the conjuror. He told him all that

had happened to them on that ill-fated day.

The wise man, looking very clever and knowing, consulted his books on magic. After repeating some queer, unintelligible words, he turned to Harri and said "Yes, your friend has been spirited away by the 'little people.' Go to the same place where you and the lad slept; go there exactly a year after the boy was lost. Let it be on the same day of the year, and at the same time of the day, but take care that you do not step inside the fairy ring. The boy will come out with many of the goblins to dance. Take hold of him and snatch him out of the ring as quickly as you can."

A year to the day Harri went to the wood and stood near the spot where they had previously slept. He did not have to wait long before scores of little elves dressed in the loveliest of blues, came prancing and dancing in to the fairy ring. They seemed to come from everywhere. Round and round they skipped until Harri felt quite dizzy. He closed his eyes for a moment and when he opened them, to his surprise he saw Ianto, as thin as a rake, dancing as if he could never stop. Harri waited until he came near him, then with a grab snatched him out of the ring and dragged

him along the path. When he had recovered his breath, he asked Ianto what had happened to him, but he could remember nothing.

When they reached the house they were given a great welcome by the people of the farm. The mistress hurried to prepare a meal—whilst the other members questioned lanto about his experiences—but nothing would he say—he appeared to be dazed.

Harri took him upstairs to bed, and decided to go to bed with him in case he should need his help, for Ianto looked so queer. Soon they were both fast asleep. Next morning when Harri awoke, he was surprised to find that Ianto had again disappeared. Probably the little people wanted him back in the "Ffridd yr Ywen" (The Yew Meadow). Harri had heard nothing during the night, but the people of the house said they had heard a rustling of the leaves about midnight. Perhaps it was the fairies whispering to one another.



II

## THE CHANGELINGS.

DO you believe in Fairies?

Many years ago, grown-up people, too, believed in fairies. If they were lucky in some task they would say "The good fairies helped me." On the other hand, if things went all wrong, "The fairies hindered me, did all they could to stop me," it was said.

In fact the fairies were held responsible for all that was wrong.

Folks even said that the fairies changed their children for their own.

This story is about babies who were changed. Up in the hills above Trefeglwys, not far from Llanidloes, was a shepherd's cottage known as Twt y Cwmrws (The House of Strife.) It was a small, lonely house, which seemed to be hidden away in the folds of the hillside. In this house lived a shepherd and his wife, and to them were born twins; the prettiest ever seen. The shepherd and his wife loved their babies dearly. Each morning as the shepherd left the cottage to go to his work on the hills, he would say, "Take care of the babies, wife, the blue goblins are never far away." "That indeed I will," replied the good wife, looking fondly at her children.

Day by day she busied herself with the work of the house and the care of the children whom she loved so much. When she had to leave home to go to market or to visit her family, she always took the twins with her or left them in

charge of a neighbour.

One day, however, she had run short of something she needed badly and made up her mind to run along to her neighbour while the babies slept peacefully in their cradle. The mother took great care to see that the windows were properly latched and the fire low in the grate. Locking the doors carefully she put the key in her pocket and hurried as fast as her legs would carry her to her neighbour's house to borrow what she needed.

She was no sooner gone than she was seen again hurrying along the rocky path that led to her home. Suddenly she stopped. Was it just fancy or did she really see the tails of a little blue coat dash to hide under a gorse bush nearby?

Quick as a wink she ran to the gorsebush, looking first underneath it, then around and about. But nothing

could she see.

"How foolish of me to waste my time hunting goblins," the mother said loudly, as if trying to push out the fear that crept into her heart. Hurrying along faster than ever, she could not help, now and again, looking back to make sure that nothing was following her. Sometimes she thought she saw a little blue petticoat behind one of the bushes. Indeed, by the time she reached the cottage she felt that the whole place was full of goblins.

How pleased she was to find everything as she had left it. The doors were locked, the windows latched, the fire low, and the two babies sleeping peacefully in their cradle.

cradle.

When her husband came home, she did not tell him what had happened that day. "Why worry him," she said, "since all is well with the children?"

Winter passed, Springtime came and the shepherd was busy with the lambs on the hillside. Little cade lambs were brought to the house to be fed out of a horn by the wife. This kept her busy and she had little time to brood and think over things. However, her heart was heavy and weary. Since that day when she left her children alone in the house, a change had come over them. They were no longer pretty babies. Their little faces had become queer, and old and wrinkled. They were just like little old people. Neither did they grow.

As spring changed into summer, the shepherd had more time at home. One day he asked his wife, "What is wrong

with the children, wife?"

Turning her face away she answered, "Wrong, husband? Why, there is nothing wrong, surely." "They do not grow like other children, and they do not thrive; in fact they are just like the blue goblins I often see on the hillside," said the father.

The poor mother could stand it no longer. Bursting into tears she fell at her husband's feet, and told him all that had happened on that fateful day.

The husband, instead of helping his poor wife, began to scold her and blame her for what had happened. "This is all your fault, woman. Now I see what you do. When I leave the house to go to my work, you go gossiping with the neighbours."

Try as she would, he would not believe her story. From that day onwards, that house became a house of strife; the husband scolding, and the woman crying, when-

ever they met.

At last she could stand it no longer. Leaving the children alone in the house, she went to the Wise Man's house over the hill. How happy she was to unburden her heart to someone. She told him the whole story, and how her husband refused to believe her.

The wise man, looking very solemn, peered into his big book, mumbling strange words which the woman could not understand. Then, turning to her he said, "Aye, truly, the blue goblins have changed your babies for their own. Follow carefully what I tell you, and if my books tell me rightly, you will get your babies back again."

"I will do anything you bid me," said the woman "if only it will end this strife between my husband and

me."

"Soon the harvest will be ready," said the Wise Man. "When you are preparing food for the reapers, fill empty egg shells with pottage (porridge), and when ready, take it out, as if for the reapers' dinner. If the twins speak above the understanding of children, return to the house, take the children, and throw them into the waves of Llyn Ebyr (Ebyr Pool). But if the children make no remark, do them no injury."

The woman walked home happier than she had been for a long time. Now, at last, there was a chance that something would happen to banish the unhappiness from

her home.

When she entered the house, everything was exactly as she had left it, and the children sleeping soundly as before.

Not long after this, the reapers came to prepare for the harvest. Never before had she been so glad to see them. Going into the dairy she brought away six empty egg shells which she had kept carefully. Into these shells she emptied some of the pottage, then took them out through the door.

The twins had watched all she had been doing with great, wide-awake eyes, and as she went outside she heard one of the children say.

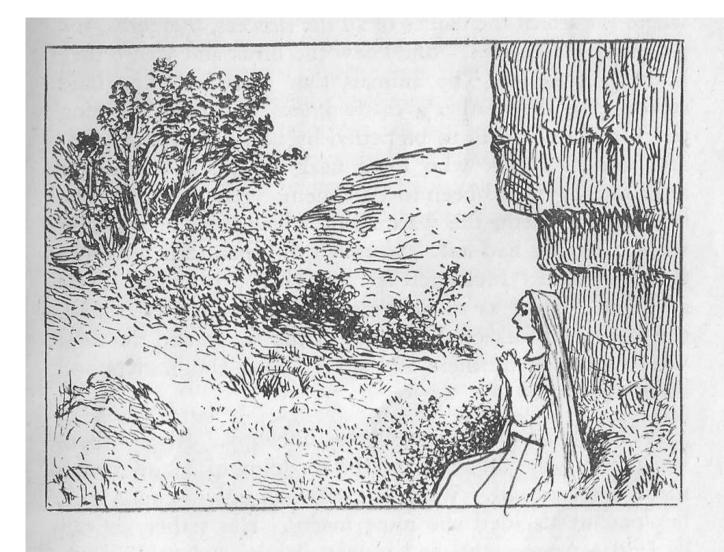
"Acorns before oak I knew, An egg before a hen, Never one hen's egg shall stew, Enough for harvest men."

Hearing this she quickly dropped the pottage and returned into the house. Picking up the children and placing one under each arm, she hurried up the hillside until she reached the pool of water.

Into the middle of the pool she threw first one, then the other. What a splash they made! Suddenly, as if from nowhere, appeared a host of blue-trousered, blue-petticoated little goblins. They rushed into the pool to save their children and carried them to safety, disappearing as suddenly as they had appeared. When the woman turned round, what did she see? Her own pretty children lying happily on the grass by her feet. Snatching them up quickly, lest harm should come to them again, she rushed home. The mother washed them and fed them and put them in the cradle.

From that day onwards they never looked back. Day by day they grew and thrived into well-formed, beautiful children, and became very dear to their father and mother.

The House of Strife now became the House of Joy filled with the laughter of happy children.



## III

## MELANGELL AND HER LAMBS.

NOT very far from the village of Llangynog lies an enchanting valley and hamlet called Pennant Melangell. It would be difficult to find a more peaceful and a quieter spot. Indeed it seems to be tucked right away, with high hills all round as if to protect it from harm. Many years ago this valley did protect a beautiful lady and this is the story.

In the land of Powys there lived a very beautiful princess named Melangell. She was both beautiful and good and much loved by all who knew her.

As a child most of her time was spent out of doors where she learnt the names of all the flowers, the herbs, the grasses and the trees. She knew the birds and where they built their nests. The animals that grazed on the land surrounding her father's castle knew Melangell's loving touch and stood still to be petted by her. The poor peasants and sick folk who lived near the castle felt better after Melangell had been to visit them. Her smile was like sunshine to them, the warmth of which remained a long while after she had left. So much did these folk love her that they said "Melangell is more than a princess, she is an angel." Just as to St. Francis of Asissi, or Hiawatha, the wee, wild folk of the wood, of the hedge and the field were to her as brothers and sisters, and she understood their language.

Despite all this Melangell was unhappy. Always there was talk of war and strife and the shedding of blood which made her very sad. While she was still only a young girl, her parents decided she must marry. Her father set out to find a prince who had money, lands, and soldiers, so that he could get help to fight his enemies. One day he returned and with him was a prince who had all these things which her father desired. When this prince saw Melangell, he was so struck by her beauty that he knelt at her feet and kissed her hand.

But Melangell had no wish to marry. She hated war, riches, and gluttonous living. "Leave me alone with my little brothers and sisters of the glade and wood," was her constant cry. But her father would listen to none of this, and the day of the wedding was fixed. You can well imagine the hurry and bustle this would mean at the castle. Melangell took no interest at all in the preparations. Indeed, so much did it worry her, that she could not sleep at nights. When all the household was fast asleep, she would get up very quietly and walk out of her father's castle into

the night. There she would commune with God, asking Him to guide her. "O God, show me what I should do," was her unceasing prayer, while the little animals of the wood watched carefully over her.

One day whilst out walking, being deep in thought she wandered far away from her home. Night was beginning to fall before she realised the lateness of the hour. Rising quickly, to her dismay she found that if she ran all the way she would not reach home before dark. Noticing a little bower under a bush of wild roses, she decided to spend the night there. Early next morning, warm beams of sunshine and the song of many birds awakened her, and a wonderful peace seemed to pervade the whole place. She rose happily, ran to the little stream that wended its way down the valley, and lapped and dappled in the cool crystal waters. Her heart was so full of happiness and peace that she fell on her knees and uttered a prayer of thanksgiving to God. Whilst on her knees, a thought came to her mind. "Why should I return to the castle, to hear of war and strife? This is the life for me, in God's open spaces." There and then Melangell decided never to return to her people, but to dedicate her life to the service of God, in God's wild places. Turning her back on home, she set forward on her journey whithersoever God would lead her. For many days she walked up hill and down dale, resting at night under a friendly bush, lapping the the water of a sparkling spring to quench her thirst, eating of the wild fruit to satisfy her hunger. By and by she reached a lovely green valley hemmed in by towering hills, and as one Welsh poet describes it "with no apparent outlet except to Paradise." Here Melangell espied a cosy cave formed by two huge overhanging rocks. As soon as she saw it she knew God had intended it for her as a retreat. "Thank God for His goodness to me," she prayed. Gathering moss and fern, she strewed them in the cave to make for herself a bed.

It was not long before all the animals and the birds knew that a good and beautiful lady had come to live amongst them. Many times a day they watched her clasped hands and moving lips, as she prayed to God. Shyly they would peep from their hiding-places, to hear Melangell say, "Good day, little woodland folk; God bless you." Day by day they grew to love her more, until at last they would sit by her side, perch on her hand or shoulder and chatter and laugh as happy as the livelong day.

People in the valley got to know about this wonderful woman who lived all alone save for the birds and the hares and the rabbits who followed her wherever she went. At first they thought she must be some sort of goddess. Really, in truth, they were rather afraid of her. The little children, however, soon made friends with her, and before long Melangell was loved by all who dwelt in that valley. "She is so gentle and holy," they said, "everybody loves

her."

One bright spring morning, the hares and the rabbits seemed sprightlier than ever. They leaped and looped, and called, "Look at us Melangell." She chuckled at their silly ways. They chased one another in and out of the bushes, then scampered off in search of new adventures.

Suddenly a loud cry rent the whole valley. Even the leaves seemed to stop quivering. Every being knew what that cry meant to the wee woodland folk. Instantly the world seemed to have gone mad. There was a barking of dogs, the blast of horn, the screeching of animals, the trampling of hoofs, the crackling of branches,—a fearful, frightening cry of pain.

Melangell sitting on her rock, heard this cry too, and clasping her hands tightly, with face upturned, she prayed, "O God, save the beasts of the wood. Save the innocent hare," whilst nearer and nearer came the sound of the hounds barking in the crisp morning air fast on the scent of the little frightened hare. "Melangell, save me! Melangell

save me!" cried the frantic hare rushing towards the rock. A few minutes later, Prince Brochwel pushing his way through the branches beheld a wonderful sight, a beautiful lady sitting on a rock praying, whilst in the folds of her skirt a hare nestled softly, and sitting on their haunches in half-circle were his hounds, spellbound.

The Prince could not utter a word. He, too, had come under this strange spell. Presently this beautiful lady opened her eyes and looked at the Prince with so gentle and kind a glance that he jumped off his horse and went down on his knees. "Who are you, kind lady, that even the animals love you?" he asked. Melangell replied, "I love the animals too; that is why this poor helpless little creature ran to me for help. God bless them all!"

"God bless you too," said Prince Brochwel, "and this land will I give you as a Sanctuary, and never again shall a hare be hunted in this valley." "Thank you, kind Sir," said Melangell, "and may God bless you for this deed."

Prince Brochwel called his hounds. They slunk away one by one. The little hare licked Melangell's hand, saying, "Thank you" then scampered away to tell her friends of her wonderful adventure.

After that all the animals in the valley had peace and quietness. Even to this day there is a tradition in this valley that no one dare kill a hare there: they are called "wyn Melangell" (Melangell's Lambs).

In the gallery of the Church of St Melangell the story of Melangell and her Lambs is carved in oak. For many years people used to come on pilgrimages to this valley to pray at the shrine of St Melangell. Where this shrine once stood a church was built, dedicated to the memory of St. Melangell.



### IV

## THE MAGIC CAULDRON

THE Mabinogion, a collection of old Welsh tales, has at least two stories relating to Powysland.

This is one of the stories, and it tells us about a goddess who married a mortal. The name of this goddess was Ceridwen, and she was known as the Goddess of the Muses. She had three children, two boys and a girl. The elder boy was tall, handsome and clever, while the daughter was the most beautiful girl in the world.

What about the other boy? You may well ask, for he was the ugliest boy in the whole world. This made the mother very sad. One day she said to her husband, "What shall we do for our ugly boy?" "Let him be," said her husband crossly, "he has been born that way, and there is nothing we can do." "That is not so," said Ceridwen. "His brother, because he is handsome and clever, will be allowed in the Court of the great King Arthur. His sister for her beauty will be sought by men of noble birth, but poor Avagddu will be an object of scorn to all people." "Let him be; let him be" repeated her husband "the boy is happy and contented, so why trouble about it?." "Nay, I will make him the wisest man in the land. I will give him power to see into the future. Then his ugliness will pass unnoticed, and his presence will be welcome in every court in Britain," declared his mother proudly.

Ceridwen knew all the plants and herbs, the planets which ruled them, and the strange babble of words which changed them into wonderful magic. But she could not do it alone.

The charm-bearing herbs were to be gathered freshly every day, put into a special kind of cauldron, and stirred for a year and a day without stopping. She searched far and wide for a suitable person to do this work.

At last she heard of Little Gwion of Llanfair Caereinion in Powys. He was one of the Knights of the Court of King Arthur. Ceridwen sent for him and told him what she wanted him to do.

"That I will gladly," said Little Gwion, knowing full well that to stir a charm in a magic cauldron for a year and a day would be a task of great endurance, and worthy even of one of the Knights of King Arthur. So he set about his task. An old blind man kept the fire burning, Ceridwen gathered the herbs every day and said her magic words, while Little Gwion stirred the potion.

One day, when the year was nearly at an end, three drops of the magic mixture flew out of the cauldron on to

Little Gwion's finger. He at once put the finger in his mouth to cool, when, lo and behold, he saw all the future before him clearly.

"Now for some trouble," he said, and dropping the ladle, he ran as fast as his legs could carry him towards his

home.

Ceridwen, who was busy gathering herbs in the meadows, knew immediately that something had happened. She hurried back to where the cauldron stood, found that it had burst into two and that there was no trace of Little Gwion.

Seeing all the year's work to be in vain, Ceridwen became very angry. She ran after him, determined to kill him. Little Gwion having now all the wisdom in the world, knew that he was being chased.

He tried to outwit her by changing himself into a hare dodging in and out of the bushes. "Ah, my little man, you are not too clever for me!" she cried, and changing herself into a greyhound she followed him in and out of his

hiding places.

Now he was getting quite out of breath, and when he came to a river he changed himself into a fish and jumped into the stream. Quick as a wink, Ceridwen changed herself into an otter bitch. What a chase it was, down to the bed of the river, in and out of the rocks, up to the surface again, until Little Gwion was tired out.

"I'll catch you and eat you," she screamed at him, making a dash for his tail, but he was too clever for her.

"I'll change myself into a bird," he thought, and into the air he flew, changed into a fast flying bird.

But he could not outwit her. She became a hawk and shadowed him wherever he went.

"I'll soar as high as an eagle, then she cannot follow me," he said, as up into the clouds he flew. Looking downwards, he saw her coming towards him, bent on destroying him. Down he swooped, but she was hard on his tail, and he knew not whither to turn. Just then he noticed a large heap of winnowed wheat. Into the middle of the heap he dived, changing himself into a grain of wheat.

"There," he said to himself, "I am safe at last," and he breathed a sigh of relief.

But Ceridwen was not so easily outwitted. Changing herself into a high-crested black hen she began to scratch in the winnowed wheat, Steadily and surely she delved right into the middle of the heap. Presently she found him and swallowed him, giving a big gulp of satisfaction as she did so.

"There," she said, "that is the end of Little Gwion of Llanfair Caereinion."

However, that was not so. For nine months she kept that grain of wheat inside her, and she had no rest from it. At the end of that time she made up her mind to give it up again, and when she did so Little Gwion had transformed himself into a beautiful baby boy.

"Now, what shall I do?" said Ceridwen "I cannot kill this beautiful baby boy, yet I must get rid of Little Gwion with his powers of magic. I will make a little leathern bag to put him in," she said, "Then I'll throw him into

the sea and leave him to the mercy of God."

When the little leathern bag was finished, she put him in. After she had fastened him up safely she took it to the place where the River Dovey empties itself into the sea. With a mighty effort she threw the little bundle right into the middle of the sea. It disappeared and with a sigh of relief she turned towards home.

That night a big storm arose, and Little Gwion, lying snugly in his leathern bag, was carried on the crest of a big wave and thrown into a weir, not far from the spot where he was thrown into the sea.

Next day a prince came to fish in those parts. He caught nothing but the leathern bag. Thinking there might

be something of value inside, he opened it. Imagine his surprise and disappointment when he saw what was in it.

One of his friends said, "What a lovely boy, and what

a radiant brow!"

"Henceforth shall his name be Taliesin," said the

prince, "because of his radiant brow."

He fastened the little bundle safely on to his saddle and let the horse amble towards home. Feeling sad and disappointed that he had caught no fish he sang a doleful song on his journey.

"Cheer up, Prince Elphin, I am of more value to you than a hundred pounds worth of fish," came a voice out

of the bag.

The frightened prince nearly jumped out of his saddle. Then he realised he had found something of value. "Who are you," he cried, "and where did you get such wisdom?"

"Keep me with you, Prince Elphin, and no harm will ever befall you. In my tongue lies virtue which will

serve you well all the days of your life."

When they reached the courtyard of the palace the prince unfastened the precious little bundle, and carrying it carefully, presented it to his wife. She nursed him tenderly and lovingly, as day by day, he grew in love and favour with the King and all his court.

You will find the story of Taliesin and his many

adventures in the Mabinogion.



V

## THE OGRESS.

HAS it ever occurred to you how many interesting things lie at the bottom of a deep pool? An old legend says that at the bottom of Llynclys Pool, not far from Oswestry, lies a palace with its entire population. This is the story of how it came to be there.

Once upon a time there lived in a palace near Oswestry a king named Alaric. He was very fond of hunting, and he was often seen with his hounds along the countryside. One day he chanced to espy a fox, and setting up a hue and cry spurred his horse in pursuit of the animal with the hounds

in hot scent, too. By and by the fox was brought to earth under the rock called Giant's Head on Llanymynech Hill. The hounds descended upon it and soon it was killed. Satisfied with his day's sport King Alaric mounted his horse and rode towards home.

Suddenly there appeared before him the most beautiful lady he had ever seen. For the moment her beauty dazzled him. She dropped him a curtsy, smiled, then passed on. The king wishing to speak to her jumped off his horse.

She took no notice of him but sped on her way. Mounting his horse he followed her up and down the winding pathways, but not a trace of her could he find. The next day, and for many days afterwards, he came to that same spot, hoping to see the beautiful lady again.

One day he found her seated on a crag on the hillside. He was afraid to call out to her lest she might disappear as suddenly as the first time he met her. Instead, he crept stealthily towards her until he was within speaking distance.

"Good day, fair maid," he addressed her.

"Good day, King Alaric," she answered, showing not the least surprise.

"Since I last met you, fair lady," continued the king, "I have not had a moment's peace of mind. I have sought for you every day, but nowhere could I find you."

"That I know full well, kind king, for I have followed

you each day," replied the maid.

"That is impossible," quoth the king, "for I have scanned the countryside looking for you."

"It is true, nevertheless, O king," she answered, "and

I knew too, that you were searching for me."

"With your great wisdom, fair maid, do you know that I have come to ask you to be my wife and queen?", asked the king. "The greatest honour that I desire is, that your beauty should grace my palace."

"If you wish to preserve your peace of mind, O king,

you would go your way and think of me no more."

"That I cannot do," the king replied, "for you have captured my heart, and I cannot be happy until you promise to become my wife."

"If I consent to marry you," she said, "you must

accept any terms I wish to impose upon you."

"I will gladly agree to any conditions you lay on me," said the king, "for I desire nothing more than to feast my eyes on your beauty."

"Then, O king, I accept your offer, and consent to

become your wife."

"Now all is well," he replied bowing to her and kissing her hand.

"Pray sweet maid," he asked, "what are the conditions

you impose upon me?"

"That one night in every seven, I have permission to leave your palace. Furthermore you must not ask where I go, neither attempt to follow me."

"If I may have you for six nights out of seven, then your request is easily granted," replied the king, smiling.

And so it was arranged that in due course they should

be married.

First of all the king would have to get rid of his queen. In those far off days this was an easy matter. The king had only to say that the queen was too old to attend to her duties of state, and she could be sent away, and a new queen installed in her place.

Shortly the wedding took place, and the new queen ruled over the palace. The palace now became a very gay place and the queen's beauty was talked about through

the length and breadth of the land.

Although the king appeared to have all his wishes granted, he was very unhappy. The mysterious disappearances of his wife and her strange behaviour caused him much anxiety. Moreover, at times, when the moon was at its full, something akin to madness blazed in her eyes. On these occasions the king and all his servants kept out of

her way. One day the king decided to give a banquet which was to last several days. All the distinguished people of the land were invited, and very many accepted the invitation, for the gaiety of the palace and the queen's beauty were special attractions. Among the guests present was one named Willin, a priest of Oxford. He was also a magician, he could read people's thoughts and peer into the future. The king noticed that Willin took no part in the festivities. Each night when the carousal was at its height, he would sit in the window seat looking in the direction of Llanymynech Hill.

One night the king addressed him, "My friend, does not the entertainment of my palace please your refined taste?"

"My pleasure, O king, is to watch the star that shines on yonder hill. Soon the star and the sharp horned moon will set in the eastern sky."

The Queen heard what he said, and knew that the priest had found out her secret. Rising in great anger, she scowled at Willin, and abruptly left the room. Sadness now fell upon the whole company, and the king, taking the priest aside, confided in him the story of his great unhappiness.

Willin replied, "There is no need for this great distress, O king. With my gifts of magic I can restore to this palace the peace of former years." "I will give you anthing you ask if you can bring back my peace of mind," said the king,

"All will be restored to you," said the priest, "and in return, I ask for the queen as my bride. In addition to this I request you to give annually to the monks of the monastery near Oswestry ten beeves and a tithe of your supply of wine."

The king was so glad to get rid of the queen that he

readily agreed to anything the priest requested.

Willin then took his book of magic and went on to the hill. He stood in the bright moonlight near Bedd y Cawr (the Giant's Grave). Here he commenced reciting his incantations for the restoration of peace to King Alaric, asking also that the queen should become his wife. He then proceeded to the Ogof, and repeated his incantations down in the dark cavern. Presently his request was granted. Following instructions he went to Blanchminster Cross (Oswestry), to be married to his fair lady. When he reached the place to his horror and amazement, he found waiting, not the beautiful queen, but a hideous ogress.

"What is the meaning of this?" he demanded crossly.

"You have brought this calamity on yourself, O priest," she declared. "I was granted a charm by the spirits, to become a beautiful girl, if for one night in seven I would repair to the Ogof and take the form of an ogress. If anyone found out my secret place the spell would be broken. You followed me to my retreat, and now your punishment will be, that for the rest of your life you will be wedded to an ogress."

That night a violent noise was heard. When morning broke, there was no sign of the palace of King Alaric. It had completely disappeared. In its place was a large pool of water, with water lilies floating peacefully on its surface.

Birds darted to and fro, their bright wings skimming the water.

The lake became known as the Llynclys Pool, which means, according to some people, "the devoured palace."



## VI

## THE ESCAPE.

DO you like to receive a letter?

Letters can sometimes be very interesting, and often-

times they may be very unpleasant, too.

In the year 1716 Lady Lucy Herbert, Abbess of the Convent at Bruges, in Belgium, received a most interesting letter from her sister, the Countess of Nithsdale. It told how she had succeeded in setting free her husband, the Earl of Nithsdale who was a prisoner in the Tower of London. Both these ladies were daughters of the Duke of Powys, and their home was Powys Castle.

It is a well known fact that the Tower of London is a very safe place, so much so that the crown jewels used to be kept there for safety. Its high walls and well guarded entrances make it well nigh impossible for anyone to get in or come out without being seen. Yet the Earl of Nithsdale escaped and this is how it was brought about.

The Earl was a well known Jacobite leader. He was arrested and kept as a prisoner in the Tower of London to await his trial. The condition of the rooms in the Tower was really appalling. The lighting was bad, the sanitary arrangements poor, and the food very unsatisfactory. In these circumstances it was not to be wondered that the Earl was miserable and depressed. He succeeded in getting a message to his wife, Lady Winifred, asking her to come to see him as he had no one to console him. She (his wife) was in Scotland, and in those days, the journey from Scotland to London took a long time.

As soon as she received the message, she set off for Newcastle. From there she travelled in a stage coach to York. When she reached York she was told, "Sorry lady, but the coach can travel no further."

"But I must get to London, and that as soon as possible," she declared.

"The weather is so severe, madam, and the roads so extremely bad that even the mail itself has been stopped," and with that the driver went towards the inn.

Lady Winifred called him back, beseeching him, "Kind sir, is there no way I can travel? My journey is urgent, for my husband's life is in great danger."

"You may try to hire a horse, madam. You do so,

of course, at your own risk."

In those days the highways were infested with robbers, and travelling alone was perilous. But Lady Winifred took the risk and borrowed a horse. The snow was so deep that in some places it reached above the horse's girth. From York to London she had to change horses five times.

After a most difficult journey, she reached London safely. During the journey she prayed fervently to God to give her help and guidance in her trouble, and she made plans how to set free her husband.

When she reached London she hurried to the house of Grace Evans, an old family servant. "Grace," she said, "I am in great distress. My husband, the Earl, is a prisoner in the Tower of London, and I want you to help me to set him free."

"My dear ladyship, come in, and be seated. You look quite worn out with anxiety."

"There is no time to rest, Grace. I will not sit until I have seen my husband."

So to the Tower she proceeded and was allowed to see the Earl. He was greatly comforted by her presence, although he told her that he would never be pardoned by the King.

"We do not need his pardon," said Lady Winifred.
"We will disguise you in a woman's garments and smuggle you out of this dungeon."

But the Earl would hear of no such scheme.

"It is far too risky," he said, "and if it should fail, not one, but perhaps all of us, may die."

Lady Winifred did not rest. She visited friends, entreating their help to frame a petition to be presented to the King asking pardon for the Earl and his friends. Day after day she went to the Tower, taking with her food and drink, and furnishing her husband with all the news of the day. After a great deal of pressure, pardon was granted to a few, but not to the Earl of Nithsdale because he had been an active leader of the movement. When the petition failed Lady Winifred began to plan how to get her husband out of the Tower. She confided her plan to Grace Evans, who promised to give every help within her power.

In order to carry out the plot other people would have to be brought in to help. Mrs. Mills, with whom Lady Winifred stayed, was entrusted with the secret, and another friend, Mrs. Morgan, was also persuaded to assist in the plan. A few days previous to the attempt to smuggle him out, Lady Winifred and her friends paid several visits to the Tower, until the guards had become used to the number of visitors the Earl received.

On the night planned for the escape, Mr. Mills accompanied the three ladies in the coach to the Tower. During the journey, Lady Winifred unfolded every detail of her arrangements, and requested Mr. Mills to wait outside to be in readiness to receive the Earl, and take him away to safety. The sentries readily admitted Lady Nithsdale and her maids. She was very popular with the sentries for she used to tip them well. Moreover, pardon was due for some of the prisoners, so there was no need to be too strict since they would soon be free.

Lord Nithsdale was quickly dressed in the clothing which had been smuggled in for him, and in these he passed out as one of the waiting maids. The last to leave the the cell was Lady Nithsdale. She spoke loudly, pretending he was there, bade him an affectionate goodbye, and shut the door with a bang, thereby fouling the lock. Saying goodnight to the guards, she hurried out into the approaching darkness.

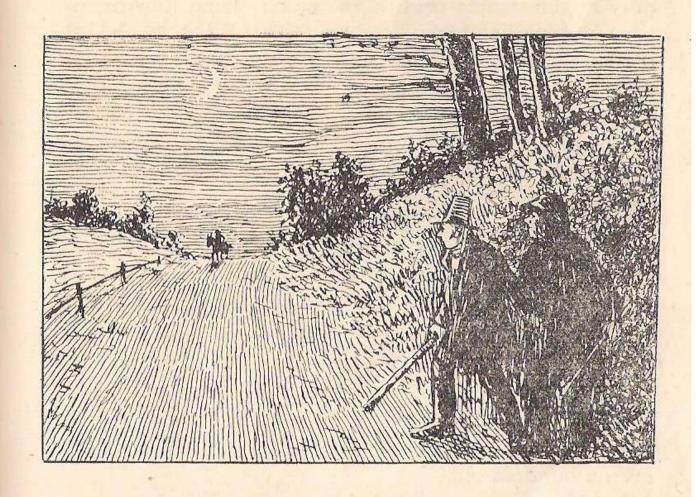
They reached the gates and passed out into the roadway. Here they beckoned to Mr. Mills, who, on hearing that the escape had really been achieved became too frightened to move. The women took the situation in hand. Calling a chaise they pushed the Earl and one of the women inside, and he was taken to the house of some friends for safety.

About that time a certain lord and his retinue were travelling by road to Dover to catch a boat crossing over to France. Disguised as one of the servants, the Earl travelled in this retinue. When they reached Dover, the

boat was at the quayside awaiting them. They got quickly aboard and were soon on their way. A light breeze arose, driving the little boat swiftly over the waves, and the coast of France was soon in sight. The skipper remarked jocularly, "We might have had a fugitive on board, so quickly has our journey been accomplished."

As soon as Lady Nithsdale was assured of his safe arrival in France, she again petitioned the King for a pardon. but he would not hear of it. Finding all her efforts to be of no avail, she joined her husband in France. Later they went to live in Rome, where they remained for twenty eight years. They were never allowed to return to their own country.

In recognition of the great services rendered by Grace Evans, the Duke of Powys gave her a cottage on his estate in Welshpool. This cottage is situated near St. Mary's Church, and is be to seen even to this day.



## VII

#### THE ROBBER'S GRAVE.

IN the corner of the churchyard in the town of Montgomery lies a grave known as the Robber's Grave. The story of this grave is strange and sad, showing how, little more than a hundred years ago, an innocent man met a very tragic end.

Near the town of Montgomery was an old manor house, known by the name of Oakfield. It was a stately old house, with queer shaped chimneys and many gables all covered with ivy.

In the year 1821 when our story begins, the old manor house of Oakfield was occupied by a widow named Mrs.

Morris and her daughter Jane. They were in rather poor circumstances because the father, James Morris, had been a wastrel and neglected his farm. When he died the mother and daughter thought they would have to sell their home to pay the bills which came in day after day.

One day when things seemed darker than usual, Jane had a bright idea. "Mother," she said, "why do you not ask uncle to help us? He is a very successful farmer, and would surely advise us for the best."

"I have thought of that, too, Jane. It will break my heart to leave this old house, yet we have not the means to keep it up," said the mother.

After this conversation they decided to write to the uncle, and shortly afterwards he came to see them.

He was very much encouraged by what he saw. "Sister," he said, "you must keep this farm at all costs. It has great possibilities. With hard work and a bit of good luck we can hope to restore this soil to bear fruit even a hundredfold."

"How can I possibly hold it, brother? It is too great a task for a woman to undertake."

"You must hire a bailiff, sister. Moreover, I have in mind the very man who can help you. If he cannot change the fortunes of this old farm I doubt if anyone else can, for he is not only capable, but an honest, Christian gentleman."

Shortly afterwards John Newton arrived at Oakfield. From the outset he set about putting things in order. He hired new menservants, dismissing any who proved unworthy of their hire, and within a very short time it was seen that Oakfield was being managed by an efficient and honest man. John Newton was a stranger to the district, and a stranger he wished to remain. He made no friends, and did nothing more than pass the time of the day with them all. This, of course, did not please the country people, who were accustomed to knowing all about their neighbours.

Coming out of church on a Sunday they would stand in little groups talking about the weather, the crops, and any other news of local interest. John Newton, alone or with his mistress, would pass them by unheedingly.

"Queer fellow, Newton, as dry as dust", one of them would say. "Aye, as gloomy as a week of rainy weather," said another. "He's shaping things at Oakfield, anyway," said a wise old farmer who preferred deeds to words.

"It inna natural to be dumb like," quoth another. "Nobody knows where he comes from, keeps it all to hisself." "Perhaps it wunna stand the light o' day." This was the talk that could be heard as John Newton, thinking about the sermon he had just been listening to, walked back to the farm.

At Oakfield he was much esteemed. He was not only an honest, capable manager, he was also a charming companion in the house. The long winter evenings spent around the huge log fires were now pleasant and happy. At the close of the day, when work outside was no longer possible, John Newton would join his mistress and Jane beside their cosy fireside to discuss the farm or any other matter of interest, "The black cattle fetched a good price today, mistress." "Yes, so I hear, John. The cowman tells me they were the pick of the fair. Everyone praised them." John Newton's face lit up with pleasure when he heard these words from his mistress. What gave him still greater pleasure was to see the warm glow of happiness spread over Jane's face, as she bent over her spinning wheel, intent on her work. For John Newton had become very fond of Jane, and one day, when he had restored the old farm to prosperity, he hoped to ask for her hand in marriage.

"Read to us, John, we enjoy it so much," asked the mistress. John rose, fetched the book and began reading where he had left off the night before.

What happy evenings this little family enjoyed; what contentment filled their hearts.

This state of bliss was not to remain for long. While the stock at Oakfield thrived well, and the fields yielded big crops, two men watched this success with envy in their hearts. The one man was called Thomas Pearse. His ancestors had at one time owned Oakfield. It was his one aim and ambition to own it once again. When James Morris died, it became known that he had left no money, and it was more than likely that the place would be put up for sale.

"Now is my chance," he said, "when it is put up for auction I will buy it, whatever the price." Great was his disappointment when John Newton took charge of the farm. Every success at the farm meant a greater

hatred towards Newton.

The other man was Robert Parker, a handsome young man. He disliked John Newton for quite another reason. Before Newton's arrival Robert Parker was a frequent visitor at Oakfield, the attraction being Jane, whom he hoped to make his wife. With the coming of Newton he gradually noticed a change in Jane. He saw, too, that his visits to Oakfield were not always welcome.

One day, returning from market, Thomas Pearse and Robert Parker happened to travel together. As they stood overlooking the rich green pastures of the old manor farm of Oakfield they talked about John Newton, who had brought about such a change there. They soon found that he was their common enemy. If they could only get red rid of this undesirable man they might have a chance to fulfil their wishes.

"I was within a stone's throw of buying the old manor house, the home of the Pearse's for generations," said Pearse with bitterness in his voice. "Aye, and I was within an ace of winning the beautiful Jane. Now she has eyes and ears for none but that interloper." "Aye,

and who is he, I ask?" said Pearse clenching his fists in the air. "We be not good enough for him to speak to

us, seemingly" replied Parker.

From this time onwards these two men watched for an opportunity to trap their common enemy. Not being able to get into touch with John Newton they found it difficult to bring a charge against him. Moreover, John Newton's made of living was beyond reproach, consequently no real complaint against him could be made.

"You cannot charge a man for not speaking to you," said Pearse one day when he met Parker. "Nay, but we must make him speak," replied Parker. Returning from market they chanced to see their enemy who was later than usual, hurrying to saddle his horse. This was their chance. They hurried out of town, intent on a place to waylay him. On a dark, lonely part of the road, they lay in wait. When he reached the place where they were waiting they sprang on him, pulled him off his horse, and began to beat him. In self-defence John Newton struck out with the heavily knobbed stick which he carried, giving them the thrashing they deserved. Next morning the constables visited Oakfield, arrested John Newton on the charge of having assaulted with intent of robbery two of the most respectable farmers of the district.

At the trial the Judge asked the two farmers to give account of what happened. Pearse said "My friend Parker and I were returning from market, when we were attacked

and robbed by an unknown man."

"As he tried to get away" continued Parker "we caught him, and found him to be no other than the prisoner in the dock." Other witnesses gave evidence, how Newton had always been queer, shunning the company of all men.

There was no one to defend John Newton, and when the Judge pronounced sentence of death on him, an eerie silence fell on the court. Much as Pearse and Parker

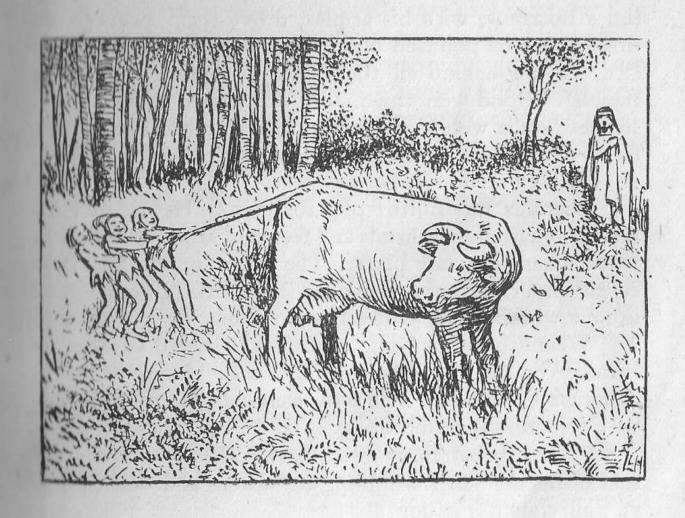
had disliked him, they did not expect this punishment, and they were very unhappy indeed.

The Judge asked the condemmed man if he had any-

thing to say.

John Newton made a long speech, saying he was innocent of the charge made against him. Furthermore, his innocence would be proved by the fact that no grass would grow on his grave for at least one generation.

This became true. For more than fifty years not a blade of grass grew on his grave. Today, only a small heartshaped patch of earth, remains bare. Even to this day it is called "the Robber's Grave."



#### VIII

#### HAFREN.

HOW many of you boys and girls know that the River Severn which flows so smoothly and beautifully through the County of Montgomeryshire is known by three names, Sabrina, Hafren, and Severn?

There is a very beautiful legend that tells us how the river got one of its names.

Long, long ago, when this land of ours was ruled by several kings, there was one named Locrinus who was young, handsome, and daring. In those days pirates from across

the sea came in their ships to plunder our coasts. Many times Locrinus, with his armies, drove them away. One time, Locrinus pounced upon them so suddenly that they fled, leaving behind all their booty. Among the things they left behind were three ships abandoned on the coast. In these ships were three pretty girls who had been stolen from their homes. Their hands and feet had been tied, so that they could not get away.

Locrinus was full of pity for them. He ordered his men to unfasten their hands and feet, and arranged for them to be taken to a safe place. The oldest of the girls was called Esyllt, and she was very beautiful. Locrinus fell

in love with her and wished to marry her.

When Corineus, King of Cornwall, heard of this he became very angry, for he wished to marry Locrinus to his daughter Gwendolen He sent a messenger to Locrinus, with a summons to meet him.

"Send this stranger away, back to her own country," said Corineus, "or I will bring my armies and destroy you and all your possessions."

"I do not wish to send her back," said Locrinus, "I

want to make her my wife."

"Never, never shall she be your wife, "replied Corineus. "You were betrothed, when a baby, to my daughter Gwendolen, and she alone shall be your wife."

To prevent war between the two kingdoms Locrinus promised to send Esyllt away. With a heavy heart he went back to his castle to tell Esyllt the sad news. When he told her, she cried bitterly.

"Do not send me away, Locrinus" she begged, "let

me stay, even if it be only as your servant."

Locrinus knew that would not be possible, for Gwendolen and her father would hear of it. But Esyllt begged so hard to stay that Locrinus gave in. They decided to build a hiding place, where she could live in safety, and where Locrinus could visit her without being seen.

45

Soon after, Gwendolen and Locrinus were married. There were great rejoicings in the two kingdoms, because together they would be powerful against all their enemies. In the midst of all the revelry at the wedding Locrinus was sad. He was thinking of the beautiful girl, Esyllt, who was most likely weeping in her underground home.

"'Tis not the face of a happy bridegroom," the people

said.

"Methinks he loved Esyllt too much," said his servants.

"He is young and will soon forget her," replied another, "Corineus and Gwendolen are happy enough, and

now there will be peace in the two kingdoms."

Sometime afterwards a baby son was born to Gwendolen. He was named Madog. About the same time a baby daughter was born to Esyllt, and she called her Hafren. Locrinus went often to visit Esyllt and her baby girl in their underground home. He would take precious gifts for little baby Hafren, for he loved her dearly

One day the news came that Corineus was dead. Locrinus made up his mind to tell Gwendolen about Esyllt and her baby in their hiding place. As was to be

expected, Gwendolen was very angry.

"You must send this woman and her child away. Send her out of the country for I will not suffer her to be in the same land as I."

"Do not upset yourself," said Locrinus, "you have everything. You are the Queen Gwendolen herself, the highest lady in the land. You have riches and power. What more do you want?"

"I want your love," said the queen. "It is true that I have riches, power, servants, and fine clothes, but these

bring me no pleasure, since I have not your love."

"My love I cannot give you," said Locrinus, "for I love Esyllt and her daughter Hafren more than anyone else."

"You must choose between that woman and me," she cried angrily...

"Then I choose Esyllt," he answered defiantly.

Gwendolen left him, and summoning her servants bade them get ready to travel with her to Cornwall. There she told all her relations the insult she had suffered at the hands of Locrinus. They gathered together a large army and went out to destroy Locrinus and all he possessed. The news spready quickly that the armies from Cornwall were marching to battle against Locrinus. He assembled his men to meet them. A fierce battle took place in which Locrinus was killed by an arrow.

Gwendolen now became ruler. She seized Esyllt and her beautiful daughter Hafren, and carried them away as prisoners. She planned how to make them suffer for the wrongdoings of Locrinus. At length she made up her mind to drown them in the river Severn, or Sabrina as the Romans called it.

Here they were brought, their hands and feet tied so that they could not move. Gwendolen, with a wicked gleam in her eye, laughed as with a big splash they were thrown into the swirling waters. "There," she said, "henceforth shall this river be called Hafren, so that people in generations to come may know my story."

The legend tells us that the nymphs who played at the bottom of the river heard all that was happening on the bank of the river, and put up their pearly wrists to receive Hafren. Very gently they carried her to the place where

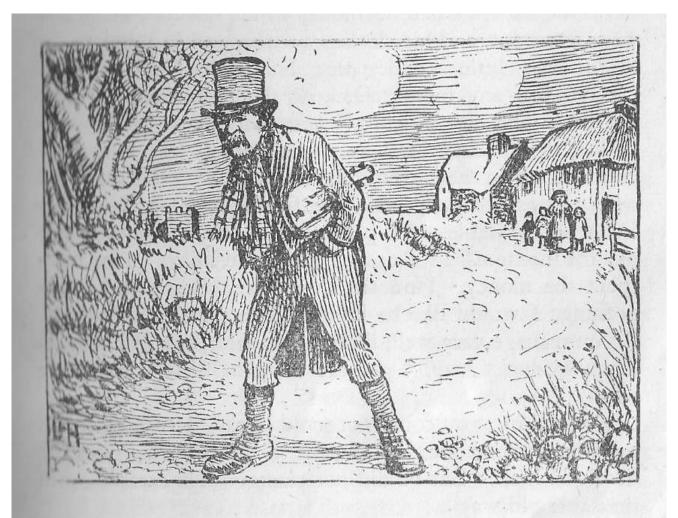
their chief nymph was seated on a rock.

"What a beautiful maiden," she exclaimed, as they lay Hafren gently on the bed of the river. "Give her some of our magic cures to revive her."

Hither and thither they sped, bringing all the spells and charms at their command to help her. Presently she opened her eyes, and looking straight at the Queen of the Nymphs, smiled at her trustingly.

"She is the loveliest maiden I have set eyes on" the said, "we will make her goddess of this river."

The nymphs were delighted that this beautiful maiden should be their goddess. She was given magical power to help anyone who needed it. People used to say that if you walked along the river side at twilight, you might see her roaming the meadows, chasing the elves who were up to mischief. Once a year people who lived near the river used to throw garlands of pretty flowers into the river to win the favour of the goddess Hafren. It is said that Dolforwyn (Maid's Meadow) has been so named, because tradition states that it was the place where Hafren was drowned by the avenging fury of Queen Gwendolen.



#### IX

## DICK THE FIDDLER.

DID you know that fairies had their own money? Well they have, but I doubt when you have heard this story, whether you would like to have any of it.

Dick the Fiddler lived at a place called Llwybr Scriw Rhiw (the Twisty Twirly Path). He had a wife and a

family of several small children.

Now Dick loved his fiddle better than anything else in the world. But sad to say, he did not like work. This was a very bad thing, especially for his wife and children. He would go off to play his fiddle at the fairs and markets and not return for days or sometimes weeks. When he did come back, he had no money in his pockets, his shoes were worn out, and his clothes were ragged and dirty.

It was little wonder that his wife nagged at him. "Have you any money Dick?" she would ask. "No, no, little wife, not a penny" answered Dick. "The rent is due, the children have no shoes to their feet, and there is little food in the house," she continued. "Well! well! wife, things are bad," said the fiddler putting down his fiddle on the table. "I played my fiddle, but they didn't pay for the tune." "I don't believe you Dick. You have spent the money. How am I and the children to live on nothing, I would like to know?" asked his wife crossly. "You manage very well, little wife," said Dick in his usual happy-go-lucky way, "you are the best little wife in the world."

Somehow, you could not scold Dick. However much his wife scolded him, he took it in good part, saying he deserved it all. But he did not change. He carried on in the same old way.

For a short while after a rebuke he would stay at home doing a little work, and trying to be helpful. His wife, would wash and mend his clothes, cut his hair and trim his beard, and do everything to try to make him contented at home.

In spite of all this, Dick would become restless again. "Wife, I must go. The road calls me," he said, taking up his fiddle again. Nothing she did or said would make him stay, and away he would go. Then his wife would have to go from house to house begging food, clothing and money. These she would put into a bag which she carried on her back. The neighbours were very kind to her, because they knew only too well how hard she had to work to keep herself and family from starving.

The fiddler had been away from home for some time. He had been playing at fairs, markets, and 'merry evenings' at farm houses near Machynlleth. Suddenly he had a fit

of home sickness; he wanted to see his wife and children. So he set off towards home. To reach his home he had to walk over very lonely roads, and through Fairy Green Lane. It was well known that this green lane was the haunt of the "little people." or fairies who were always up to some mischief.

As the fiddler walked home over these lonely roads he became very much afraid. There was something eerie about the night. To drive away his fears he began humming a song to himself. Then he tried whistling to which the owls answered, "Tu-whit, tu-whoo."

When he reached Fairy Green Lane he was so frightened that big beads of sweat stood on his brow. Indeed he was too frightened to hum or whistle. Taking out his fiddle from the skirt pocket of his tailed great coat he began to play his favourite song about the "Black Crow's Wing." Louder and louder he played, until his old fiddle almost shrieked under the strain.

At last he had passed the green patch where the fairies were supposed to hold their revelries. Seeing nothing of them and hearing no sound he heaved a great sign of relief. "There, that's over," he said to himself, at the same time packing away his fiddle into his tail coat pocket.

Suddenly he heard something rattle in his fiddle. "Tinkle, tinkle, tinkle" it sounded.

"Whatever can it be"? thought the Fiddler.

Taking out the fiddle he tried to see what was making this unusual noise, but nothing could he find. "I must wait until I get home," he said. Then he began to wonder what his wife would say. Would she be very cross with him?

On and on he went, and the noise in his fiddle never ceased for one minute. It almost drove him crazy. Never had the way seemed so long and dreary. Just as dawn broke, he reached home. How glad he was to sit down, and now that it was daylight he thought how foolish he had

behaved during the night. "Why," he said, "I must have been afraid of my shadow."

When his wife heard him enter the house, she came into the kitchen, and as usual began to scold him and asked him where he had been this time.

"Hush, hush, my good woman," said Dick, "some-

thing has happened to my fiddle."

"I hope so," said his wife, "then perhaps you will stay at home. That old fiddle is the curse of your life."

The fiddler shook his fiddle and on the floor rolled a shining new five shilling piece or crown piece as it was then called.

"Oh! so you have brought something home," said his wife, almost kindly. Looking up at him she was surprised to see how pale he was, and how his hands trembled. Thinking he must be ill she said," You take it, Dick you need new shirts."

"No, indeed wife," said her husband, "take it to

buy something for yourself and the children."

"Good man, go to Llanidloes tomorrow, 'tis Market day, and buy some shirting for yourself, for it may never be your good fortune to have so much money again."

The old fiddler did not need to be told twice. He was only too glad of the chance to go to Llanidloes Market and what was still more important, to get rid of the crown piece, for he was not at all happy about it.

Next day off he went to Llanidloes market. When he reached the town he went straight to the shop to buy the shirting, as his wife had told him. He was also anxious to get rid of the crown piece which jingled in his pocket.

The shopkeeper, knowing the old fiddler to be a wastrel, looked carefully at the silver piece to make sure it might not be a bad coin. Finding it was all right, he measured out the shirting, wrapped it up and gave Dick the change. Feeling very pleased with his good luck

the fiddler put the shirting into his coat tail pocket, and went to celebrate his good fortune at Betty Brunt's public-house (now known as the Unicorn). Here he made merry with his friends who asked him to play his fiddle while they danced to the tune.

There never was such merriment as there was that

day at the inn.

"Your old fiddle plays like a new one," said one of his friends.

"Aye, and the old fiddler plays better than ever," said another. Indeed Dick played as he had never played before. He said nothing, but thought to himself, "perhaps the fairies were in Fairy Green Lane that night, and

they charmed my dear old fiddle."

Just then there was a loud knock at the door, and somebody cried out, "Dick the Fiddler, you are wanted. Come out at once." He put down his fiddle and went out to see who was there. To his surprise he saw it was the shopkeeper who had sold him the shirting. The scowl on his face showed he was very angry.

"Tell me, you rascal, where did you have that crown

piece to pay for the shirting?"

Dick muttered and mumbled. "It's honest money, sir, quite honest I tell you."

"That is not my question." said the shopkeeper sternly,

"tell me at once where you had the money."

Seeing it was of no use trying to hide the fact Dick told him the whole story of how the money came into his fiddle as he was passing Fairy Green Lane.

"I thought so," said the shopkeeper, "fairy money."

"Fairy money!" said the Fiddler looking aghast.

"Yes, fairy money," he answered, "for when I went into my drawer for change the crown piece had gone, and in its place there was only a heap of dust."

"Well! well! I am surprised," said the fiddler turning

to go into the inn.

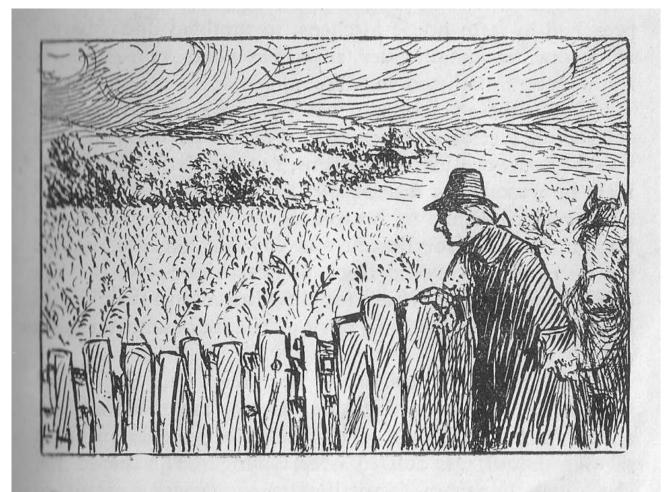
"Wait," said the shopkeeper sharply, "not so fast, my man. Give me back the shirting; that belongs to me now."

Sadly old Dick gave back the shirting, then turning on his heel returned into the inn.

But now there was no charm in his fiddle. Picking it up and putting it under his arm he went out into the street, feeling very miserable indeed and angry with the fairies for the trick they had played on him.

That night on his way home, he thought he could hear a whisper and a rustle. Was it the fairies after him again. Anyway, he was not afraid this time, so perhaps they left him alone to go home in peace.

What did his wife say I wonder?



#### X

#### THE FIELD OF BLESSING.

WHEN we go to church or chapel on a Sunday little do we realize how much we owe to our forefathers for these rights which we enjoy.

Round about the year 1640, both the people and clergy in our country led careless lives thinking very little about spiritual things. When they were not working they spent their time in dance, merriment or sport, and among the things they liked best were cock fights, bear baiting, and other cruel sports.

A few young educated Welshmen became very alarmed about it, and they went up and down the country preaching

and begging of the people to change their ways. They preached in farm house kitchens, in tumbled down barns, or on open mountain sides, anywhere where they could get

a few people to listen to them

One of these young men was Vavasor Powell, who lived at Goetre, Kerry, and one of the places he liked to visit was the house of Richard Williams, Ysgafell Farm, Newtown. Here he was always sure of a welcome and of a big crowd of people to listen to his preaching. Whenever it was known that Vavasor Powell was to visit Ysgafell, people for miles around would flock to hear him preach. Very often there were too many for the kitchen and they would have to go into the parlour, or sit on the stairs, or even listen outside the house.

Soon it came to the ears of the clergy that the people were going in crowds to Ysgafell to sing and pray and talk about spiritual matters. The churches were empty, yet the farmhouse was full to overflowing. This made the clergy very angry and they thought of ways and means to stop it. They sent out a proclamation that anyone staying away from church other than for sickness must pay a fine of sixpence. But the people still stayed away and did not pay the fine. Then they had a law declaring that a number of people meeting together to listen to the "new" preachers was an "unlawful gathering," and law officers could go there to stop them. And so soldiers were sent to watch Ysgafell. The people got to know about this and met secretly in different houses in the neighbourhood.

One night when they met at Ysgafell the soldiers rushed in upon them. They beat many of the people with sticks and took Richard Williams to gaol. How sad they all were, and particularly so was his old father, a kindly, peace-loving man. "Why did they not take me?" he said. "I am an old man and would not be missed the same."

"Richard is young, grand-dad, he can stand it better than you could," said his brave little wife. "We will pray for him," said his friends, "that is about all we can do."

When Richard Williams was set free, many of his friends went to meet him. How glad they were to have him with them again.

"Have you met together while I was away?" asked

Richard Williams.

"Nay, brother, but we prayed for thee."

"Ah, friends, we must never give up. Take no heed of yourselves, even if you are beaten, or stoned, yea even killed, the good work must go on."

So these people met again and again in the old farm

house kitchen.

One night there was a large gathering at the farm house and when the meeting was at its best, a man ran into the house shouting, "Master! Master! the soldiers are coming, run for your dear life."

'Nay, John, I stay here. What care I if my body is bruised or wounded, it is all for the work of the Lord." "Richard, my son," said his old father, "go for your wife's sake, go for your children's sake; go for the sake of the cause you love so well."

"Nay, father, I must stay," replied Richard Williams. His wife implored him, his friends, too, urged him, to go to safety, and at last, very unwillingly, he gave in to

their wishes.

Soon the soldiers rushed into the house, making a big clatter with their stout boots and jangling swords.

"In the name of the King, we arrest you, Richard

Williams," they shouted.

"He is not here," said his old father proudly. "You lie," said the soldiers, "get out of the way or we will

strike you."

"I tell you he is not here, and you must believe what I tell you," said the old man firmly. But the soldiers paid no heed to what he said. Pushing him aside roughly, they

searched every room in the house but they did not find Richard Williams.

After the soldiers had left, the people returned to the house, and there they found the old father lying dead on the kitchen floor.

A short while afterwards Richard Williams was arrested, and a gloom seemed to fall over the countryside. His sorrowing friends were too much afraid to meet at his house to worship. Then one of them said, "This is not what our suffering brother would wish us to do. Did he not tell us to carry on the good work!" "That he did," said the others, "and we can do him no greater service than to keep things going while he is away."

They set to it at once to put their words into action. The farmers took it in turns to help work the farm, while their wives did all they could to help Richard Williams' wife. Often they met at the farm to pray for their leader. This went on for some time, and no one came to stop them. It seemed as if, at last, they would be left to worship in peace. Suddenly, one night, there was a loud noise, smoke filled the kitchen, flames were seen, and to the horror of all, they found that the soldiers had set fire to the house. They rushed for the door, knocking one another over in their effort to escape. The poor wife dashed to save her two children who were lying asleep in their cradle. When she reached the door, the soldiers tried to stop her, and would have struck her with their swords had the officer in charge not called out, "Halt there, let the woman pass."

For many weeks, she lived in a neighbour's house. When Richard Williams was once more set free he returned to his farm, gathered together a few belongings and set up another little home for his family. As soon as it was finished, he invited his friends to come to worship there. The soldiers were lying in wait for them. Hitting out right and left, they hurt many of the worshippers and Richard

Williams was left as dead on the farmyard. They burnt the new little home down to the ground. The animals were killed or stolen, and the crops of corn, which were stacked in the barns, were all destroyed. Everything they could lay hands on was plundered. They left nothing but a field of newly sown wheat.

"There is nothing left," said his sorrowing wife,

"the Lord hath forsaken us."

"Nay, wife, nay; we have not lost all. We have still one another, and many friends. Nay, wife, the Lord never deserts his people."

Spring came, and then summer, and a wonderful miracle happened. In the field of wheat, which had been left untouched by the spoilers, each stalk had as many as nine heads of wheat on it, and the yield from that one field was so rich as to make up for all the other losses on the farm. It became the wonder-field and the talk of the whole countryside. People came from far and near to see it; but the soldiers did not come. They were too much afraid. Everyone said, "The Lord hath blessed this farm."

From that day the field is called Cae'r Fendith (The Field of Blessing).



#### XI

# LITTLE JACK RED CAP.

Penthryn family. Their home was a beautiful mansion called Rhysnant, which stands mid-way between Oswestry and Welshpool. The Penthryn family were very proud of their lineage, for were they not descendants of the famous House of Brochwel, Princes of Powys? One day Jack would be master of this large estate. To befit him for this responsibility his education was carefully planned. At an early age a tutor was engaged to teach him how to read, write and work at figures, but most important of all he was taught the rules of good behaviour and deportment. These were considered essential to the upbringing of a gentleman.

While he was yet very young, he was sent to the Deutheur Grammar School, not very far from his home. Here he would learn more difficult tasks, such as Latin, geometry, and even knowledge of the planets in the heavens. Little Jack was a familiar figure as each day he trudged through mud and mire, heat or cold, on his way to school. On his head he wore a long peaked red cap, and his short fat legs were clad in red hose. In these bright colours he was easily noticed, and people often set their clocks right when he passed, knowing the time of day at which he returned from school.

When he was eight years old, his father made him a present of a little Welsh pony. Often times Jack rode on it to school. What happy times they had together. Jack's bright cheery smile and pleasing behaviour endeared him to all, and he was very popular with everybody.

"The young squire will make a good master one day," said one of the servants. "Aye, and no one bears him a grudge," said the other servant. "Good landlords are rare these days," quoth another; "let's hope the little lad be spared to take his rightful place." "There is no reason why he shouldn't, he has the making of a good man in him, and he has no enemies," replied another.

Unfortunately someone nursed a secret hatred towards Jack, although he had done nothing to deserve it. If Little Jack could be got rid of, the large estate of Rhysnant would fall to other hands. And this is how they

planned to do it.

"Little Jack Red Cap can be seen a long way off," they said. "We will lay in wait for him, jump on him suddenly, and carry him away." They hired two roughlooking men to do the work and promised them a handsome reward. So one day when Jack was returning home from school, whistling happily on his way, two men, armed with heavy sticks, lay in wait for him.

"Here he comes," whispered the one.

"Lie quiet till he has passed us," said his companion. Suddenly the pony stopped, and no coaxing could urge her on.

"Come, come little one," said Jack, patting the pony's neck. But the pony refused to move, it seemed rooted to

the spot.

The two men became worried, fearing that Jack might turn back and travel along the highway, and that they be foiled. They rushed out of their hiding and sprang upon Jack, pinning his hands behind him. Like a shot the pony leaped past them and made for home. When the servants saw the pony cantering into the yard, without its young rider, they became alarmed, and reported the incident to their master and mistress.

"He has met with an accident," said his anxious mother.

"Saddle my horse," commanded the father, "and two of you come with me. We will search for him."

Whilst they were away, the mother paced up and down the room, unable to settle down to any task. Some time later they returned, not having found the missing boy. Search parties were organised and they scoured the country-side looking for him. In a wood, not very far from the house, they found the mutilated body of Little Jack. The parents were heartbroken and would not be comforted.

As if to console them, Little Jack's ghost came to

haunt Rhysnant.

For years he perched himself on the weathercock

that stood on one of the barns near the house.

When he was first seen, a ladder was procured to fetch him down, but before they could reach him he disappeared as mysteriously as he had come there. He was most often seen in the early morning or at dusk. He would sit astride the weathercock spinning flax with his little spinning wheel which he carried with him everywhere. People passing that way, would look up nervously at this phantom with its little red cap swaying in the breeze.

Oftentimes a shrill laugh could be heard, as he threw down some refuse on the heads of the passers by.

This went on for many years, until it really began to frighten people. Servants refused to stay at the Hall

and visitors began to shun it.

At last it was decided to seek means of removing this source of annoyance. All the conjurors for many miles round were consulted, and they held a meeting to discuss it. The consultation took place at the house of Morgan Shon, the chief conjuror, and no less than forty sooth-sayers attended. They locked themselves in the room, and the greatest secrecy was maintained.

After several hours' sitting, they came out full of plans for the capture of the little ghost. Each evening armed with bells, books, and bottles, these conjurors surrounded the barn, and tried to capture the elusive sprite. For a long time they failed, and it looked as if the attempt must be given up. Stronger incantations were tried, and at last the little ghost was caught. In the struggle that followed, the strange being became changed into a huge moth.

"Now quickly boys," shouted one of the conjurors, "into the bottle with him."

So with many charms and spells, the ghost of Little Jack was enticed into the bottle. Then with great pomp and ceremony they carried the bottle with its precious content to the Hall to display before the family

content to the Hall to display before the family.

Further consultations were then necessary as to how best to dispose of the bottle. The mother wished to have it buried within the grounds of Rhysnant. After much discussion it was dropped into a deep well situated in the grounds of the Hall. Here the ghost found its resting place, and as far as it is known, it never again troubled any one.



## XII

#### MAC THE PACKMAN.

NOT far from Llanfair Caereinion, on the steep, winding road that leads to Newtown, there is a farmhouse known by the name of Wtra Wen (White Lane). It is an old fashioned white washed house, and no one would suspect by looking at it, nestling quietly under the hillside, that strange and exciting things had happened there.

Many years ago this lonely farmhouse was a busy wayside inn. Travellers on their way to and from the various fairs and markets often spent the night there.

A frequent visitor was old Mac, the Scottish packman, who went from place to place selling his wares. He was a familiar figure at every fair and market. The children

followed him, teasing him, because they loved to hear him speak in his broad Scotch. The womenfolk looked forward to his coming, for was not his pack full of beautiful things; shawls, scarves, laces, kerchiefs, and all manner of dainties and furbelows. The men, too, were interested in old Mac for he was an excellent story teller, and brought news of happenings from neighbouring towns and villages. There were no newspapers, wireless, or telephone in those days. The only way people got news was through these travellers, hence Mac, as you may imagine, being a good traveller and story teller was welcome wherever he went.

At the time when this story begins, Evan Hugh Shôn and his wife Marged Shôn lived at Wtra Wen inn. As far as we know they were hard working, clean, pleasant people, serving their travellers and customers well. Still they were not good people for their hearts and minds were full of evil. Perhaps Evan Hugh Shôn and his wife were poor. The years in which they lived were lean years for many people. The cattle died, pigs had swine fever, sheep had fluke, and serious epidemics of small pox and typhoid fever for which no cure was known, spread among children and grown up people. All we know is that these two people used sometimes to rob the travellers that stayed in their inn.

Bad news travels quickly, and before long it was whispered from one person to another, "Have you heard the news?" "What news?" the friend asked. "About the young wench at the inn." "Nay, tell us man." "A young wench from a distance, travelling alone on horse-back, put up at the inn for the night. Leaving her horse with Evan Hugh Shôn, she went into the inn to dry her sodden clothes. Later, when she went to the stable to collect her belongings which were safely packed away in the panniers on the horse's back, she found that everything of value had disappeared. The wench looked everywhere for old Evan, but nowhere could he be found. Marged

Shôn appeared as innocent as a baby, avowing that Evan was honest, and that her things were probably stolen before she reached the inn."

"The same old tale," said the listener, "no smoke without a fire, to be sure."

"Feeling very angry and disturbed," continued the the man," the wench untethered her horse, mounted, and galloped away, vowing never to visit the inn again." "Well, well," said the other, "another of old Evan's tricks. He'll go one too many one day, and be caught as sure as life."

"Aye that he will, serve him right I say."

These tales were carried from one to another until at last the inn had a very bad name, and few travellers went there to stay.

Among the few who continued to go there was old Mac the packman. He was too poor to be robbed: at least that is what the old Scotsman thought, but Evan and Marged Hugh Shôn were desperate. When Mac, on his way to the fair, called at the inn, displaying his goods before Marged's hungry eyes, an evil thought came to her mind. She fancied the beautiful paisley shawl and the fine soft shirting he showed her, for which, alas! she had no money to pay. Later that night, when the old Scotsman lay fast asleep, Marged told her husband of the lovely things stored away in the old man's pack.

After that night old Mac was seen no more. He was missed from fair and market. "Hast seen owl'd Mac the packman?" asked many a wife and maid. "Aye, not more than a week ago travelling to Llanfair fair."

"He was not at the fair. Did he not promise a special paisley shawl for my wedding?" quoth a maid, "Aye, and some shirting for my man," said another.

Enquiries were made far and wide without success. Evan Hugh Shôn and Marged his wife swore on their oath that the old packman had not been to the inn on his way to the fair. Time and again people came to the inn to ask if there was any news of old Mac. His disappearance was as mysterious as a fairy tale. Some even hinted that he might have been carried away by the "little people" who were frequently up to some pranks. Weeks, and even months, passed by with still no news of the old packman, until at last he was almost forgotten.

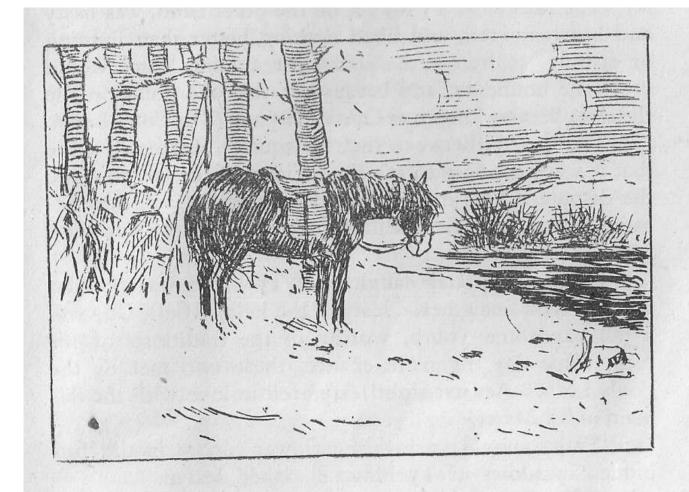
There is an old saying that "Satan never finishes his work successfully" and this was certainly true now. Some time after the mysterious disappearance of Mac, Marged Shôn was going to Llanfair fair with some of her neighbours. In those days road were bad, men and women having to trudge, often bare footed or badly shod, in ruts filled with water.

On this particular day the roads were worse than usual. In some places they were knee deep in mud. The women tucked up their wide home spun petticoats, the men their tight fitting cloth breeches, as they trudged through the mud. One of the women being very shrewd noticed that the inside of Marged's petticoat was lined with the paisley shawl which was in the Scotchman's pack a few days before he disappeared. Pulling her friend aside she said ," Hast seen Marged Shôn's petticoat?" "Aye, to be sure, and seeing is believing," answered her friend. Before they reached the fair the news had spread like wildfire, and later that day Marged Shôn was arrested, and put in gaol. By nightfall Evan Hugh Shôn, too, had been charged with his wife, and both were placed in gaol to await their trial. Shortly afterwards they were tried at a Court meeting at Welshpool, Many people attended the trial, for Old Mac had been a favourite character. When the innkeeper and his wife confessed that they had killed . the old packman and had buried him in the garden—where later his body was found—the people booed and shouted, throwing things at them, and it was with the greatest

difficulty that the law officers (policemen of the time) were able to keep them at bay.

According to the custom of the times, Evan Hugh Shôn was hanged on a tree. This punishment was known as "gibbetting." Some people say it was done on a tree outside Welshpool, others say on top of the bank leading down to the old inn, still known locally as Gibbet Hill.

Marged Shôn lived only a short time after this event. The ballad tells us that while she lived her punishment was two "bad legs." When she died she was buried under the gibbet tree, close to her husband, Evan Hugh Shôn.



#### XIII

## THE FOX'S LEAP.

THE name Mathrafal is famous in history as the ancestral home of many of the Princes of Powys. Not far from Mathrafal runs the river Banw wending its way through narrow courses till it empties itself into the Vyrnwy.

Many years ago this river was the boundary between two large estates, Cefn Du and Tŷ Mawr. The owners of these estates were powerful men, descendants of two ancient clans of Powys. Unfortunately they were enemies, too, and at the time when our story begins the Master of Cefn Du was a highly respected man, a good landlord, but a stern and stubborn neighbour.

The Master of Tŷ Mawr, on the other hand, was hasty and hot tempered, and liked nothing better than hunting or fishing. Often in the course of a hunt, game would cross the boundary, and because of this one point on the the river became known as Cam y Llwynog (The Fox's Leap).

The quarrel between the two squires became so acute that it was necessary to ask the officers of the law to settle the dispute. This did not mend matters, in fact, they became worse, and the families were not even on speaking terms.

Gwen, the pretty daughter of Tŷ Mawr was popular with all who knew her. Iestyn, the heir of Cefn Du, was a tall handsome youth, worthy of the traditions of his race. One day, by mere chance, these two met by the Fox's Leap. At first sight Iestyn fell in love with the fair maid of Tŷ Mawr.

"Why should so lovely a flower bloom in the forbidden meadows of Tŷ Mawr?" asked Iestyn.

"The flower blooms where it gets peace," replied Gwen.

"Is not this the spot where the fox of Tŷ Mawr leaps into the preserves of Cefn Du?" asked Iestyn.

"But fleet of foot knows no obstacle," replied Gwen

gently.

The young man needed no more encouragement; with one flying leap he was across the river and by Gwen's side. Along the river bank they strolled, their laughter ringing through the evening air. They had forgotten all about their family quarrel and nothing mattered except enjoyment of being with each other.

Often after that day the two lovers met by the Fox's Leap, knowing only too well that if their meeting became known it would be forbidden for ever. Months went by, and even years, when their love for each other became stronger, but the hopes of their being married grew dimmer and dimmer.

One day Iestyn paid a secret visit to the priest who held the living of Llangyniew. He told him how Gwen and he wished to be married and how impossible it would be to obtain the consent of their parents. The old priest was a kindly man, and he said to Iestyn, "Bring the damsel hither, and I will join you together by the holy tie of marriage."

Shortly afterwards Gwen was seen crossing the fields from her home to the seclusion of the little church, followed later by Iestyn, who had come on horesback. At the altar they both made their confessions to the old priest who afterwards married them, having as witnesses two

strangers.

Now their happiness was complete, and when they parted at the church door, Iestyn rode away brightly, happy in the thought that Gwen and he were man and wife. For many months they kept their secret, meeting often at a sheltered place far from the haunts of man.

Whilst out hunting one day Iestyn caught a fox that had crossed from Tŷ Mawr. Having killed it he took off the skin which was of unusual beauty, and sent it to the curriers to be cured and specially treated as a fur for his dear Gwen.

Meanwhile, one of the servants of Tŷ Mawr chanced to see Gwen stealing stealthily along the bank of the river. Following her he saw her wait expectantly by the Fox's Leap, and in a few moments Iestyn joined her. The servant noted by the warmth of their greeting that it was not the first time they had met there. Thinking it his duty to warn his master he said, "Master, the Fox of Cefn Du casts his eyes on the preserves of Tŷ Mawr."

- "What is this you say?" he questioned angrily.
- "The Fox of Cefn Du, master."
- "Say what you mean, man, and be quick about it," was his angry retort.

The servant then explained all he had seen, and as was to be expected the squire was filled with rage. Gwen was summoned to her father's presence where she was severely cross-examined. At length she confessed to her father that Iestyn and she had been meeting secretly for a long time, and that now they were married. He became very angry, and it was only with the greatest difficulty that he was prevented from striking his daughter.

"Take her away out of my sight," he commanded, "lock her in her room, and see to it that the swine of Cefn Du puts not his foot on Tŷ Mawr land."

And so, Gwen was taken away and kept a prisoner in her father's house. Night after night Iestyn waited by their trysting place, but no Gwen appeared. Driven to despair by his anxiety, he sought the help of the old priest who had married them.

Little by little he was able to discover the whereabouts of the unhappy girl. Iestyn now began to think of ways and means whereby he could get a message to his poor wife. At last the fox's skin was ready. It was a very beautiful present, pleasing even Iestyn, who wanted the best possible for his beloved. That night he made up his mind to go to Tŷ Mawr and give the fur to Gwen.

He was quite prepared for the risk the undertaking would involve. Mounting his horse he rode towards the Fox's Leap, the spot where so many happy meetings had taken place. When he reached the river he was surprised to find it higher than he expected. The heavy rains of the last few hours had filled the watercourse to its utmost capacity.

Undismayed Iestyn made up his mind to jump the swollen stream. Tethering his horse to a tree he then wrapped the fur round his body for safety. With a leap and a bound he attempted to cross the flood, but alas! fell headlong into the swirling waters.

When Iestyn did not return home, his servants were sent in search of him. During the previous evening snow had fallen, and following footmarks across the white fields they reached the Fox's Leap. Here the tracks of feet was lost from sight. Nearby they saw the faithful horse fastened to the tree waiting patiently for his master's return.

Following the course of the river the servants, with long poles and grappling irons searched for the body of Iestyn. Mile after mile, hour after hour, they scoured the river bed, until at last they reached the Castle Pool near Mathrafal. Here in the eddy of the stream, they recovered the body of their beloved master, entangled in some undergrowth. Around his body, securely fastened, was the fox fur.

On examination, it was found that his back had been broken by the fall. When the news was conveyed to Gwen she was crushed with grief and sorrow. Her father, who was now distressed at his daughter's affliction, ordered her to be released from her captivity, but she refused to be consoled.

Some time afterwards a baby son was born to Gwen, and she named him Iestyn. On nim she bestowed all the love and attention that she was able to give, and he became to her as the apple of her eye.

When he grew up he became the Master of Cefn Du and Tŷ Mawr, and thus were united the rival houses.



#### XIV

## PRINCE VOEL AND GWENDOLEN.

LONG, long ago the people of our land lived in great fear of a cruel enemy, the Saxons. Singing bards or minstrels travelling from place to place brought news that these cruel foes were burning homes, stealing cattle, and killing anyone who dared to cross their path. Soon it was learnt that the Saxons had over-run Pengwern (Shrewsbury) and were pushing their way up the valley of the Severn.

The men of Powys took down from the walls of their homes their swords, spears, and bows and arrows, for they would need these to defend their land. One night the call came. The whole countryside was lit up by bonfires, called beacons, which were lighted on the sur-

rounding hilltops. This was a sign for the people to get ready to meet the foe.

Prince Voel was one of the chieftains of Powys who would lead his men against the invader. Before joining his men he went to bid farewell to Princess Gwendolen to whom he was betrothed. He found her sad and her cheeks wet with tears, for she had just bidden farewell to her father and brothers, who also were going to fight. There were many sad hearts that day as the womenfolk bid the men farewell.

"Be brave my sweet maid," said Prince Voel, "the day will soon dawn when we shall return, having driven the enemy into the swollen floods of the Vyrnwy and Severn."

"I will try to be brave, dear Prince," said Gwendolen, wiping away her tears. "God speed to you, my dear one, and may heaven protect you from all harm."

Before bidding her goodbye Prince Voel took off a ring from his finger and gave it to Gwendolen. "Wear this ring, Gwendolen, as a token of my love for you, and when I return from the wars we shall be wed."

"That I will, dear Prince, and may the war soon end and our dreams come true."

After this they parted, the Prince to join his men and Gwendolen to her home, for now the women would have to carry on the work of the homes.

Prince Voel led his men up the slopes of Llanymynech Hill. Here he placed them in positions overlooking the Severn valley, where they could watch the enemy's movements and pounce upon him unawares. The men were charged to guard their posts dutifully, their chieftain telling them that anyone failing to carry out his duty would have to die. "Beware," said he, "that you do not fall asleep whilst waiting for the foe."

From one watching place to another went Prince Voel encouraging his men, and warning them to carry out their duties faithfully. Then he would rest awhile in his tent made of turf, and meditate on plans to beat the foe. Time and again he thought of Gwendolen, and try as he would he could not forget the sad look on her face as he bade her farewell.

At home Gwendolen went about her work with a sad and weary heart. She longed to go to Prince Voel to cheer him and even to fight at his side. So much did she dwell on this idea that a plan began to take shape in her mind.

In one of her father's chests lay some soldiers' clothes. These she decided to wear, and taking down one of her father's swords she went out of the house secretly, moving quickly from bush to bush until she was out of sight of her home. The guards watching at their posts saw a youthful soldier moving swiftly up the slippery slopes of the hill. They were not surprised, for Prince Voel was a leader who was much beloved by his men, and many were they who flocked to join his ranks.

After walking for some time the youthful soldier who was none other than Gwendolen, came up to one of the sentinels, imploring him, saying, "Will you direct me to the tent of Prince Voel, for I wish to join his ranks?"

The guard replied, "No man, be he friend or foe,

may pass within this place."

"Pray, guard, if you will take this ring to Prince Voel I will watch this post," pleaded the young soldier. Seeing how young and earnest the youth appeared to be the guard consented to bear the message and charged him to guard the post until his return. For a long time the young soldier kept watch dutifully. Presently he became weary, and his eyes heavy with sleep. Soon he had fallen into a deep sleep.

Prince Voel from anxiety unable to sleep got up and went to challenge his guards to see whether they were at their posts. Passing by the post that needed guarding

most he found the soldier fast asleep.

This made the chieftain very angry, to think that the most important place should be left unguarded. Drawing his sword he thrust in into the youth, saying angrily, "Take that you traitor." The young soldier jumped up with a cry of pain. Thinking it was the guard who had returned he said "Why do you strike me, guard, do you not remember I am your friend?"

The pain from his wounded side caused him to swoon, falling heavily to the ground. In the fading light of dusk Prince Voel gave him water from his own leathern bottle. With this the youth opened his eyes, and said feebly, "Guard, hasten to tell Voel that I wanted to fight by his side. I wish him to know this before I die."

Prince Voel rose with a start, the voice and face seemed familiar to him. They reminded him of Gwendolen. But that must be his fancy. He had been thinking too much about her and was seeing her everywhere. This was one of his soldiers, who had forgotten the warning and failed in his duty.

"Who are you?" he asked sternly, "and what is this tale you tell?"

"My name is Gwendolen, and I seek Voel to whom I am betrothed," she said in a weak voice.

"Gwendolen" gasped Prince Voel, "and I have killed you with my own sword."

Giving three short blasts on his bugle he summoned his bodyguard to the scene.

"Carry this wounded youth to my tent," he said wearily All that was possible was done to restore Gwendolen, without avail. On the slopes of the hill there is much loose stone, known locally as the "raffle." Here a grave was dug for Gwendolen, and over this grave the Prince planted a hawthorn tree to mark the place.

According to tradition it flourishes there, even to this day.



### XV

#### EINION'S HARP.

MOST of you will have heard of the Crusades in the Middle Ages, when the men of Britain and many other countries rallied to the banner of their kings, to go out to free the Holy Land from the heathens who threatened to destroy it. Nearly nine hundred years ago the clarion call for the Third Crusade was heard throughout the land.

Einion of Plas Rhiwhiraeth near Llanfair Caereinion, heard the call, and with others of his own age set out on the perilous journey to the Holy Land. His family ties were difficult to sever, for was not Eva his wife, a beautiful and loveable woman. Moreover, his baby son was

barely one year old and needed all the care and protection of a father. But he was a trained soldier, and when the call came he could not resist it.

"Eva, my love," he said one day, "it is unfortunate that you married a soldier. The call to duty has come, and I must answer it."

Eva turned very pale, and a heavy ache came into her heart. Their happiness had been so perfect and now they were to be parted, oh! so soon. Being the daughter and wife of a soldier she knew where her duty lay.

"Our little son and I shall miss you. Our life hitherto has been full of bliss. The parting will be very bitter, but I cannot keep you against your will, neither would I wish it."

"May Heaven protect you both," said Einion, "and pray that the war may soon end, and we shall resume our happy life."

"David and I will be waiting for you," sobbed Eva, "and we shall be proud of our father and husband."

Bidding them an affectionate farewell Einion, clad in his coat of mail, went off to battle. Each night the baby David was rocked to sleep to the strains of his mother's lullaby. As he grew older he learnt to sing the war songs of his country, and to feel proud of the valour of her sons.

"When will my father come back?" was his constant cry, as the months of waiting turned into years.

"Soon, my son, soon," replied the distressed mother, although her heart was sad and heavy with long waiting.

One day the old minstrel brought news that men were returning from the war. Day after day Eva and her little son went out on the hillock behind their home, watching with strained eyes for the man whom they longed to see.

"Where is father?" asked the boy. "Why does he not come home to us?"

"He will soon be here," was her constant reply, although in her heart hope flickered very dimly.

The old minstrel sang songs of mirth to banish away her melancholy, but of no avail. Tying his harp on his back, he set forth to seek news of Einion. Up and down the country he strolled questioning one and another of the men who had returned, but no news could he get.

Seven long years had passed away and Einion had not returned.

The boy had now ceased to talk about his father, and Eva had given up the practice of going to her look out post, although her heart still ached.

One day a suitor came to Rhiwhiraeth. He was tall, handsome, and gay, and reminded her of her soldier husband. His presence helped to banish her heartache, and to make life less weary. David, also, was happy in the company of this friend, for he, too, had been fighting to free the Holy Land from its oppressors, and many and exciting were his adventures.

Finding Eva alone one day, he asked for her hand in marriage.

"Nay, my good man," she replied, "I cannot marry you, for my heart belongs to Einion." He turned away sadly, but not without hope. Months passed by before he asked her again. "Nay, nay" she replied "Einion still lives in my heart, and I cannot be disloyal to his memory."

Pitying her loneliness Eva's friends urged her to accept the young squire, for had not his faithfulness been outstanding. "Moreover, Einion will never return," they told her. "He must have fallen in battle or died of fever." At last she gave in and the day of the wedding was fixed.

Great preparations were put in hand, and on the eve of the wedding a vast company was assembled at the Plas to celebrate the event. An ox was roasted for the tenants, and wine was drunk to toast the happy pair.

When the festivity was at its height a stranger entered the hall. Hiding behind one of the pillars, he watched all that was taking place. Louder and louder played the musicians in their gallery, louder and gayer became the laughter of the company. "Pray what is the cause of this merriment?" asked the stranger to one who stood near him.

"You are a stranger indeed, if you know not the reason for this merry-making."

"You speak the truth, I am a stranger."

"Then you would not know our young mistress, whose husband did not return from the Crusade? To-morrow she is to be wed to the young squire who stands by ther side"

Presently the stranger asked to be allowed to play

a tune on the harp.

"A harpist is always welcome in this house," was the

reply. "Come stranger, show your skill."

Taking up his position by the harp he began to play a lively tune, the company taking up the refrain. Eva felt sad, for the music reminded her of Einion when he used to play the harp in the winter evenings. The party began to be merry again, and forgot the harpist who went on playing to a now disinterested audience, but Eva listened to the plaintive strains.

Suddenly, he began to play a low mournful tune which made Eva turn pale. Rising she crossed over to the harpist, and addressing him said, "Stranger, where did you learn that tune?" for it was no other than Eva's favourite tune,

specially composed for her by Einion.

The stranger lifted his eyes to meet Eva's gaze, and through the tanned, pinched features she recognised Einion her husband. "Einion, my true love," she screamed aloud, and the merry making stopped abruptly as if by magic. The company crowded around Einion, anxious to make sure that they had heard aright.

"It is Einion, our young squire," they cried, forgetting altogether the occasion for which they had gathered to-

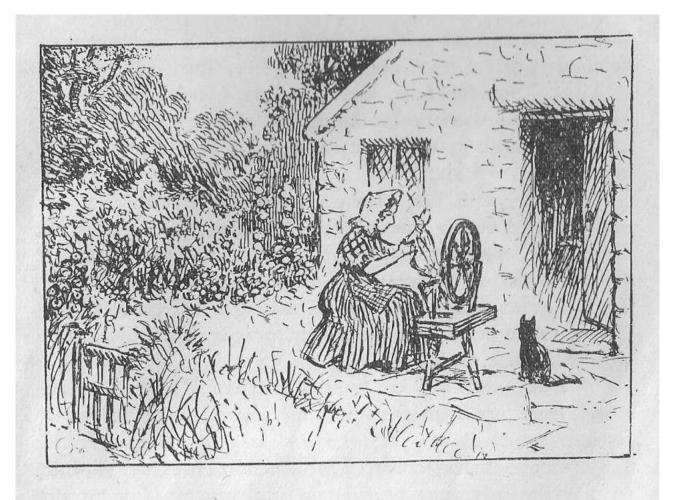
gether. Very quietly the suitor and his friends left the hall, knowing that now their presence would be no longer welcome. Soon the guests had all departed, and in the dim shadows of the firelight Einion related to his wife the misfortunes that had befallen him.

Wounded in battle he had been carried away by the enemy, left unattended for days, and this had brought on fever, loss of memory, and great discomfort. When he had partly recovered he began the long trek across continents. which took years before he finally reached home.

"Never for one moment, Eva, did I forget you and my little David," said Einion.

"The waiting has been long" said Eva, "nearly too long, but by the grace of Heaven the future, with all its hopes and possibilities lies before us."

Dawn appeared on the horizon, and standing hand in hand by the open window they faced together, not only a new day, but a new life.



### XVI

### THE HIDDEN TREASURE.

DO you like stories about ghosts? Most children do. There are no ghosts about nowadays, perhaps that is why we like to hear about them. Ghosts used to haunt lonely places. They liked the long, dark passages in old halls and mansions, where they made all sorts of weird noises such as dragging chains, banging doors, and even smashing crockery.

It is most fitting, therefore, that Powys Castle should

have its own particular ghost.

About two hundred years ago a poor Welshwoman named Mary Jones used to go around the houses in the neighbourhood of Welshpool, spinning flax for linen cloth. She was probably very good at the work for we are told that she had visited Powys Castle regularly for

many years. On one occasion, however, the servants decided to pay a hoax on her.

The Lord and Lady were away in London, and when Mary arrived with her spinning wheel the servants made up their minds to put her to sleep in the haunted bed chamber.

"Mary, with her Methodism is so religious that no ghost would dare go near her," they said. When bedtime came Mary was surprised to find herself being led along the passages to the rooms where the family usually slept. The servants carried tall candles in long silver candlesticks. "You are to be treated like a lady tonight, Mary," said the steward's wife.

"I am only a poor humble woman," replied Mary, "and have no wish for anything above my own lowly station."

"Come, Mary, come, you talk nonsense, we all like to play the lady at some time in our lives. How proud you will feel telling your friends that you have slept in the guest chamber at the castle."

"Nay, ma'am, Mary Jones, the spinster, born in a humble home, wants nothing more than to live a Christian

life in a simple way."

"We will talk to you in the morning, Mary, and see whether you have changed your views," and with that she shut the door with a bang, thus locking the door from the outside.

When Mary recovered from her surprise she found herself in a large room, in which a fire shone brightly. Before the fireplace stood a chair and table, on which was a lighted candle in a tall silver candlestick. In the far corner of the room was a four poster bed draped with magnificent tapestry. Poor Mary was awed by the splend-our of the room and its furnishings.

As was her custom before going to bed she began reading aloud from her little pocket Testament. Someone

opened the door, and looknig up she she saw a tall man dressed in velvet trimmed with gold lace. She rose from her chair, curtsied to the gentleman, and waited for him to speak. But not one word did he say. Instead, he walked straight to the window and stared out into the darkness. Soon afterwards he left the room, having said not one word.

Mary now became very alarmed. The man's manner had been so mysterious that she began to wonder if this might not be the ghost that haunted the castle. The more she thought of it. the more sure she became that it was, and she became frightened. Kneeling beside the table she began to pray fervently for strength to face any ordeal that might beset her.

Whilst she was still praying, the strange figure came into the room again and walked straight towards the window. Rising to her feet Mary spoke to him, "Pray, sir, are you looking for anyone, and can I help you?"

To which the ghostly figure replied, "Yes, you can help me, take up that candle and follow me." Mary was too frightened to refuse, and taking up the candle she followed him along the dark passage until they came to another large room. When she reached the door she hesitated. "Come in," said her companion, "I will do you no harm. Within this room is a treasure that has lain hid for many years."

Trembling she followed him into the room. Here he stooped and began to pull up one of the boards from the floor. "Do you see this box?" he asked, pointing to a large box with an iron handle, which lay hidden in a recess in the floor. "Yes, I do," she replied. "The key in this crevice opens the box," he continued, "and both box and key must be taken out and sent to the Duke in London." "Yes," she answered timidly, not knowing what to say. "See that this is done and I will trouble this house no more."

With that he disappeared out of the room. Mary looked around and finding herself alone became frightened, and screamed at the top of her voice. This brought the servants running along the passage to help her. When they reached her she had fainted and lay unconscious on the floor.

Presently she revived, and looked wildly about her. "What is it, Mary? Whom do you seek?" asked the steward's wife.

"The box, the box," cried Mary excitedly.

"What box?" asked the surprised servants.

"The treasure box," replied Mary, jumping to her feet and looking around for it.

"You have had a bad dream, Mary. Do you know that you have been walking in your sleep? We did not put you in this room," said one of the servants, laughing.

"Well you may smile," said Mary, "to me has been revealed a mystery that has for many years troubled this house. Beneath this board lies a box which contains the lost treasure of this family. It must be removed at once, and sent to the owner to London."

The steward was afraid to touch it, but his wife, with more courage, asked the servants to help her. After much effort they removed the box and put it in safe keeping. Shortly afterwards, the box was sent by a special messenger to London to the Duke of Powys. When it was opened, there was great rejoicing for the recovery of a long lost family treasure.

In due course the family returned from London. They immediately sent for Mary Jones, who related the whole story of the mysterious visitor and the hidden box. The Duke ordered that a cottage be found for Mary on his estate, and here she lived in peace and comfort to the end of her days.

From that time the ghost vanished from the Castle and nothing more was seen of him.



#### XVII

### THE MASTER SHOEMAKER.

IF you lived about a hundred and fifty years ago, very few of the things you now wear would be bought from a shop. You would buy them direct from the

people who made them.

For instance, your clothes would be made by a tailor, who would stay at your house until he had fitted all the members of your family with new garments, the cloth for which had very likely been woven by your mother or sisters during the long winter evenings. In the same way the boots you wore would be made all by hand, by the town or

village shoemaker. They were not, of course, dainty shoes such as you wear today, but strong, tough boots suitable for the bad roads of those times.

The people who made these articles by hand were called craftsmen. Some of their work was very beautiful and artistic, and may still be seen in some of our homes today. Sometimes a town or village became noted for a special kind of craft. The towns of Llanfyllin and Oswestry were both renowned for their good shoemakers.

So keen was the rivalry between the two places that the shoemakers of Oswestry sent this challenge to the shoemakers at Llanfyllin. "We, the master shoemakers of the town of Oswestry, send to you, our brother craftsmen of the town of Llanfyllin, our greetings and good will and challenge you to a match that will determine which town possesses the best craftsman."

Llanfyllin shoemakers accepted the challenge and set about to choose the man best suited to represent them. The choice fell on a man named Edward Wynn. He was a master shoemaker, that is, he hadserved his full apprenticeship and his work was always good and reliable. They drew lots as to where the match should take place, and Llanfyllin was chosen. In order that both shoemakers should have fair play, a master shoemaker from Shrewsbury was asked to act as a referee, and to judge who made the better pair of boots.

Great interest was taken in the competition, and as the time drew near excitement ran high. At last the great day arrived. The shoemakers in both towns declared it a general holiday.

Before daybreak the Oswestrians started on their journey. Some travelled on horseback, some in low uncomfortable carts, most of them went on Shank's pony, which means that they walked all the way. As they approached Llanfyllin, men, women and children came out to meet them, waving their arms, giving the visitors a

warm and hearty welcome. They were escorted to the workshop of Edward Wynn, which had been decorated

for the occasion with greenery and flowers.

Crowds of people followed hoping to see the shoemakers at their work. They were, however, sent away by the referee who said to them "Kind people, give these two craftsmen the quietness and peace they need to perform their tasks. This evening you shall see their work, and praise them for it, meanwhile go and make merry, and join in the fun of the fair which the town has prepared for your entertainment."

Quietly the people went away and the two shoemakers were left in peace to do their work. They were each given enough leather to make one shoe and one pump,

which was a kind of heel-less slipper.

In and out, in and out flew their needles. Tap, tap, tap went their hammers. All day long they worked, hardly stopping to eat their food. At length the work was finished and given to the referee to decide on the winner. "Very fine work," he declared as he examined the shape, the stitches, and the finish of each article. He found it very difficult to decide who deserved the prize for they had both done very good work. Counting up the points, however, the honour went to Edward Wynn, the Llanfyllin shoemaker.

"Hip, hip, hurrah! Hip, hip, hurrah!" shouted the people. They shouted and seized Edward Wynn and carried him on their shoulders, singing lustily, "for he's a jolly good fellow."

Sad and disappointed the Oswestrians started for home, while the children drummed them out to the noise of tins and kettles. The next day they discussed all that happened on the previous day. Being disappointed with the result of the competition they began to find fault with various things.

"Edward Wynn had a better piece of leather than

you," said one comforter.

"He sat in a better light," claimed another. "I did not like the Llanfyllin nails," quoth another, and so they went on, until at last they were quite sure they had not had fair play.

They demanded a return match, to take place this time at Oswestry. "We'll show them who's the better crafts-

man," they said.

Edward Wynn once more accepted the challenge, and the great return match was arranged. Crowds of people accompanied them to Oswestry. The town was gay and beflagged for the occasion. All day the two men stitched and tapped, tapped and stitched, until at length the work was finished. The two men, who were now very tired, went out into the open air to chat with their friends while the referee judged their work.

Some time later he appeared in the doorway, "Brother craftsmen," he began, "I have examined the work done by these two workers, and I have no hesitation in awarding the prize to Edward Wynn of Llanfyllin." He went on praising the work, but not a word could be heard, for the Llanfyllin friends had captured their champion and carried him through the streets shouting, "Wynn for ever! Wynn for ever!"

Good news travels quickly. When Edward Wynn and his supporters neared the town of Llanfyllin the people came out to meet them. The town was decorated for the occasion, bells were ringing wildly, and amid scenes of great rejoicing Edward Wynn was carried into the town.

Poetry was written in his praise and many fine tributes

paid to his skill and craftsmanship.



# XVIII.

# THE MAGIC CARPET.

ONCE upon a time there was a Prince whose name was Madog, and he had a younger brother named Iorwerth. This Iorwerth was very jealous of his brother, because he succeeded his father as heir to the land of Powys. "Why should my brother have all this land, while I have none," said Iorwerth to his friends. So he sent messengers to his brother the Prince, asking him for a portion of his kingdom. Prince Madog was sorry to hear that his brother was discontented, and replied:

"Tell my brother I cannot give him a part of my kingdom, but I will make him Master of the Household, that being the highest rank in the land next to the Prince himself. Moreover he shall have horses, and arms, and honour, even as I have myself."

When the messengers returned with this reply, Ior-

werth was very angry, and said,

"If my brother will not give me a part of his kingdom then I will take it."

He began to plunder, burning houses, killing people, and taking away their lands. This news was hurried to Prince Madog who called together his chief men to decide what they could do with the unruly brother. They summoned three hundred men well trained in the art of war, and sent them out to seek him. About a hundred of these were on the watch for him on a ford of the River Vyrnwy, near Llanymynech. Near by was the hall of Heilyn Coch (now known as Pentre Heilyn, in the parish of Llandysilio).

Rhonabwy, one of the chieftains, and two friends went to the hall to present the compliments of Prince Madog and beg hospitality for the night. When they came near the house they saw that it was old and black, with clouds of smoke coming to meet them through the open door. To reach the door they had to wade, ankle deep, through mud and water.

Rhonabwy made for the open door, calling out greetings to its inhabitants. He turned back quickly, choking from the smoke that met him.

"What manner of a place is this?" he said to his friends, who were also choking from the fumes.

Presently the smoke cleared, and in the shadows they could see an old woman making up the fire. "Greetings to the people of this house," said Rhonabwy hoping to get the attention of the old hag, who continued to throw rubbish on to the fire. Still there was no reply.

"Where are the good people of this house?" repeated Rhonabwy. The old woman muttered some unintelligible

words, which none of the men could understand.

Just then the people of the house came in, a man and a woman, each carrying a bundle of sticks. "Peace be to this house," said Rhonabwy bowing. The man nodded in reply but did not appear too glad to see the strangers.

"We bring greetings from our Prince Madog," said Rhonabwy, "and seek permission to rest here awhile." The man put his bundle of sticks on the fire, and in a short time the fire was burning brightly. His wife bustled about preparing them a meal, which consisted of barley, bread and cheese, with milk and water to drink. When the meal was over, the men got ready to depart. Just then a great storm arose, and Rhonabwy and his friends decided to stay the night there. Their bed was so uncomfortable and dirty that they could not sleep. After a great deal of tossing and turning, Rhonabwy's friends fell into a deep sleep but he could neither sleep nor rest. He got up, and seeing a calf skin mat spread on the floor he made up his mind to lie on this. Within a few minutes he was fast asleep.

All of a sudden a wonderful thing happened. He and his two companions were journeying up the valley of the Severn across the plains of Gungrog (near Welshpool) until they reached the great ford across the River Severn known as Rhyd-y-groes (Ford of the Cross). Suddenly there was a terrifying noise like thunder behind them. Looking back they saw a man riding on a very fine horse. He was dressed in a suit of yellow satin, trimmed with green, as also was the covering on the horse's back. So fierce did the man look that Rhonabwy fled from him in great fear, but the man followed him. When the horse breathed out, it blew the men like leaves on a windy day, and when it breathed in it drew the men towards him, even to its mouth. They became really alarmed, and began to cry out, "Have mercy on us, O knight, have mercy."

"That I give you gladly," replied the knight. "Who are you and whence do you come?" and very soon they were

the best of friends.

"Follow me," said the knight, as he led Rhonabwy

and his companions to the ford,

There they beheld a wonderful sight. King Arthur was sitting on a flat island, just below the ford, and around him a mighty host of men under arms. Near by were hundreds of tents and encampments where the soldiers slept by night. The knight saluted King Arthur, and Rhonabwy and his companions did the same.

"Heaven grant thee good," said King Arthur, "and

where did you find these little men?"

"I found them, my lord, up yonder road."

At this King Arthur smiled, and the knight asked him, "My Lord, what causeth thee to smile?" "To think that this island of ours is being guarded by these little men. Where are the mighty men of yore?"

Then the knight turned to Rhonabwy and said "Do you see the ring set with a stone on King Arthur's finger?"

"That I do," replied Rhonabwy.

"That ring has magical powers. By looking at that stone set in it you will remember all the wonderful things you have seen here," said the knight.

"I am truly favoured," said Rhonabwy.

"If you had not seen that ring you would remember nothing you had seen here."

After that began a great movement of armies coming and going along the banks of the river. Such a wonderful sight Rhonabwy and his friends had never seen before.

But that is another story and you may read it for yourself in "The Mabinogion," where it is called "Breuddwyd Rhonabwy" (The Dream of Rhonabwy). The Author desires to acknowledge her indebtedness to Mr. Robert Owen, F.R. Hist.S., for "In the heart of Powysland," the Rev. Elias Owen for "Welsh Folk Lore," Lady Charlotte Guest's translation of the "Mabinogion," and "The Montgomeryshire Collections."

The Illustrations are by Mr. J. R. Lloyd Hughes.

befor Du Hen en a fever.
Ty man Sestyn.

27.