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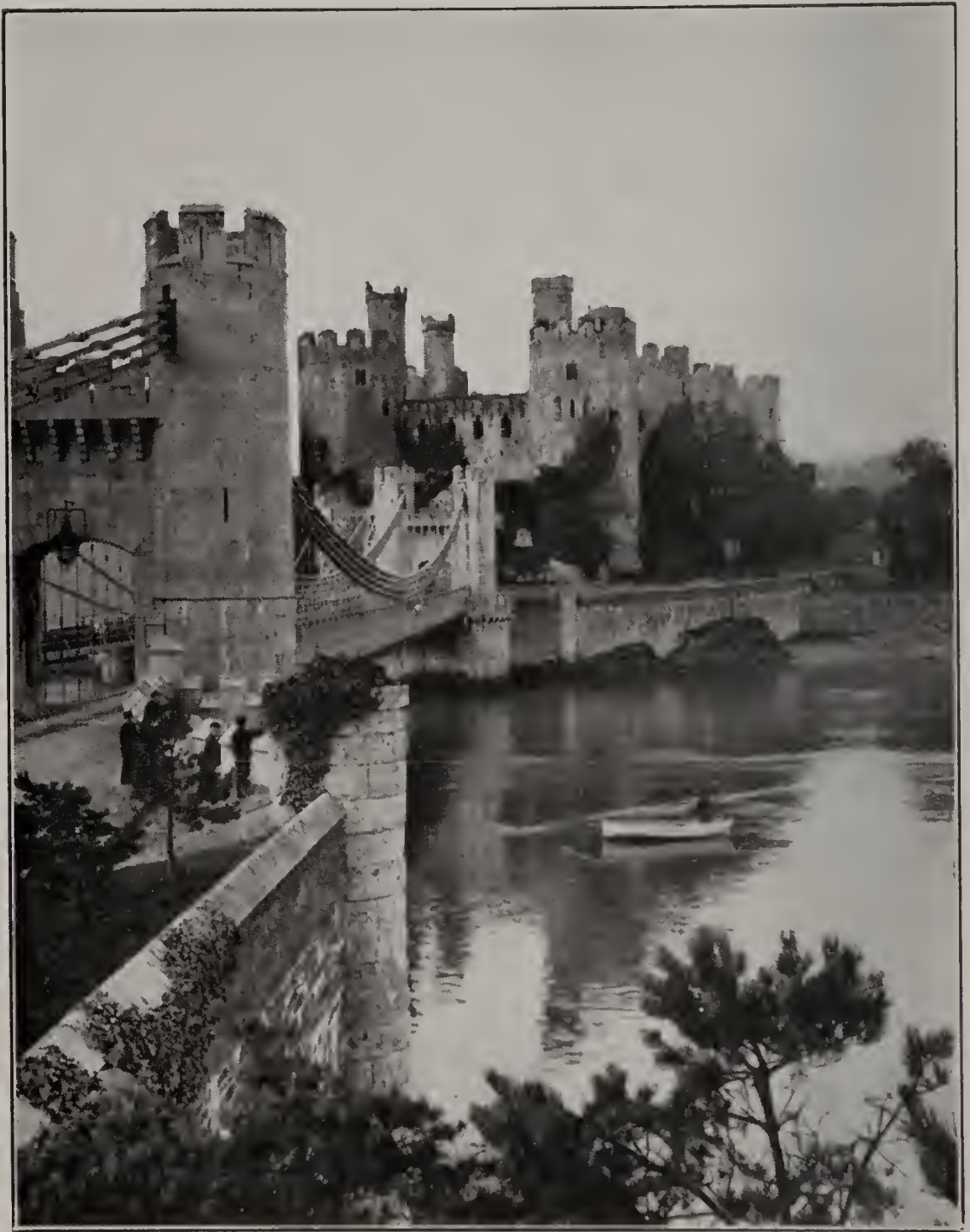
WHEN I WAS A GIRL  
IN WALES

## CHILDREN OF OTHER LANDS BOOKS

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WHEN I WAS A GIRL IN ITALY  
WHEN I WAS A BOY IN JAPAN  
WHEN I WAS A BOY IN GREECE  
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WHEN I WAS A GIRL IN HOLLAND  
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WHEN I WAS A GIRL IN SWEDEN  
WHEN I WAS A BOY IN KOREA  
WHEN I WAS A GIRL IN HUNGARY  
WHEN I WAS A GIRL IN WALES  
WHEN I WAS A BOY IN IRELAND







CONWAY CASTLE



WHEN  
I WAS A GIRL  
IN WALES



MAUDE MORGAN THOMAS

"

*New York*

LOTHROP, LEE AND SHEPARD CO.

1936

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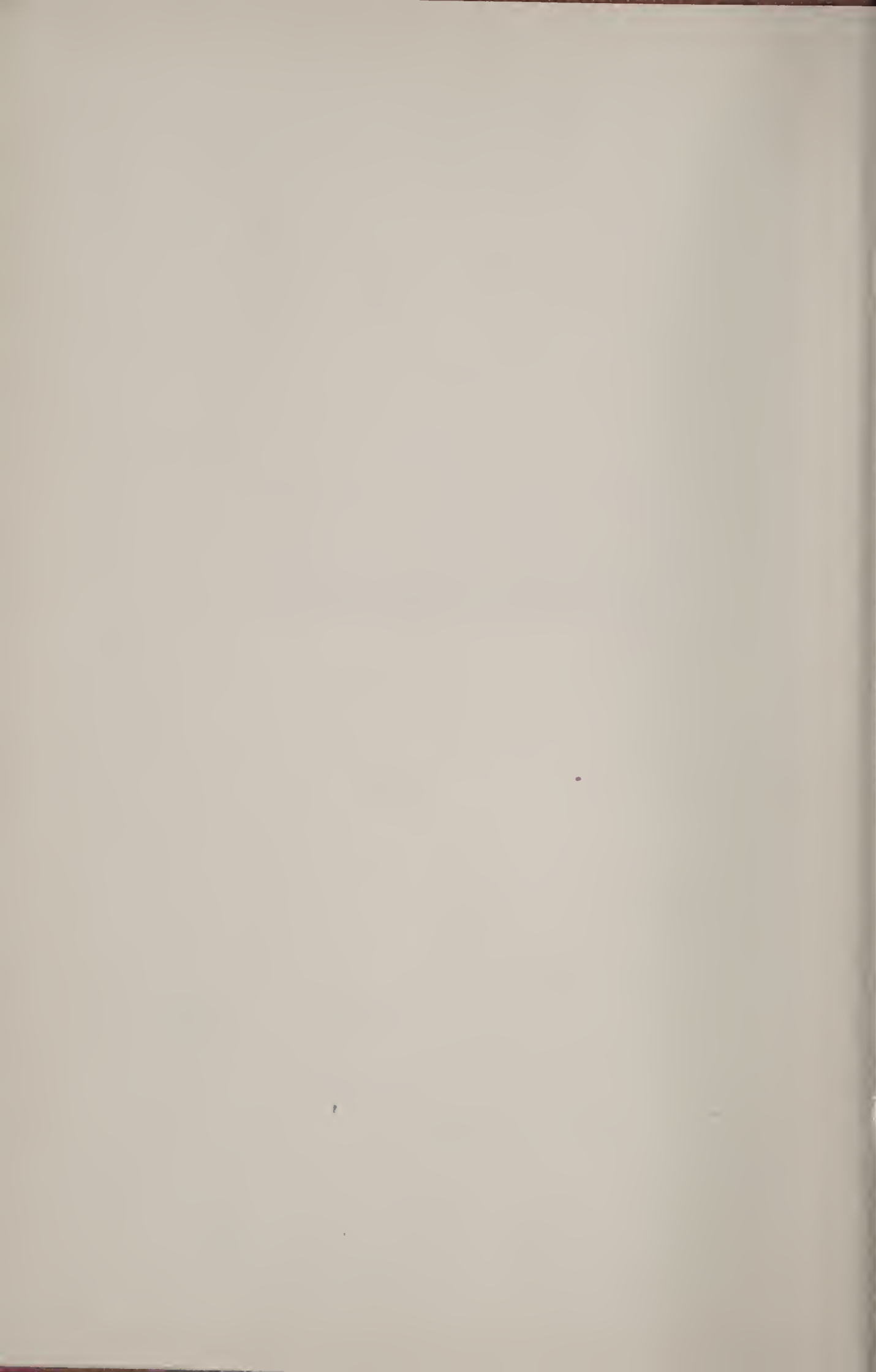
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TO

*Hugh, David and Roger*



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# When I Was A Girl in Wales

## CHAPTER I

### IN PONTYPOOL

WALES is a land of rugged mountains and torrential streams; of churches and castles; and of a people who are often as reserved and aloof as the hills, yet mainly as musical and vivacious as the tumbling waters. And history affirms that they are as fiery and religious as their fortresses and churches suggest.

The poet Ruskin once referred to Wales as possessing the loveliest rock and glen scenery in the world, and its mountain views have been judged the finest in Europe. It divides itself into two dis-



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tinct sections: the North and the South, with so great a difference that sometimes Welshmen from the South find it difficult to understand the dialect of the Northerners, and vice versa. There is a mild feeling of antagonism between the people of the sections. The North Welsh regard the South Welsh with a cold reserve. The attitude of the Southerners can best be expressed in the words of an old lady of the South who had stopped to gossip with her neighbor.

“Dear, dear,” she exclaimed. “Did you hear about Deacon Jones’ son?”

“No, indeed,” replied her neighbor. “What is it, whatever?”

“Tut, tut! Such a pity! He’s gone and married a ‘Northus’!”

Yet all this mild antagonism, this divergence of language, the furious history and fervid religion compress themselves into an area smaller than that of the State of New Jersey.

That part of Wales which is not hill nor valley is given over to rock and sand and pebbles, over which the sea rushes and recedes. The little Principality on the western edge of England is very friendly with the ocean, which forms its boundary on three sides, and the Welsh love the sea.

In the North, the mountains are as beautiful as they were two thousand years ago when the original inhabitants of England, now called the Welsh, sought refuge in them from the invasion of the Romans. Quaint towns and farms nestle in the valleys, and in the summertime its sea-side resorts attract many Welsh and English vacationists.

North Wales is famous for its mountains of slate, the largest quarry in the world being Slate Mountain, which is over 1400 feet high, and from which some of the best roofs in the world have been taken. And because the slate is quarried

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in terraces, many of them fifty feet high, the mountain presents the appearance of a huge amphitheatre. It is said that there is still enough slate left to roof the world for untold centuries.

In the South of Wales the mountains are lovely, but some of the valleys are scarred by coal pits and waste piles, and the air of the hills is sometimes blackened by the smoke of the copper and tin mills and the iron works, for the South is the industrial section.

More than fifty million tons of coal are produced annually in South Wales. The iron works produce cables of iron as thick as a man's arm, and these are welded into chains for warship and ocean liner anchors, some of which cost more than \$50,000. Tons of Welsh chain lie at the bottom of the ocean with the rest of the ill-fated *Lusitania*, the palatial British liner that was sunk during the World War.

I was born in Pontypool, Monmouth-

shire, South Wales, a small town near the sea. My birthplace was a little stone house with a slate roof that nestled in the center of a long row of identical houses, all joined together. A bay window and a door met the sidewalk in front; in the back was a small garden. There were no porches.

The houses across the street were not on the same level as those on our side. A stone wall rose from the sidewalk to a height of about ten feet, and atop this was another sidewalk parallel to which a row of stone houses stretched out in a long row. They were reached by means of stone steps at the ends of the block, and the whole thing was called a terrace.

The houses showed trim faces to the street. Slate roofs gleamed, windows glistened and a general air of neatness and a well-scrubbed look attested to the Welsh passion for cleanliness.

Housewives were especially proud of

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the appearance of their front doors. Brass knockers and letter slots were always gleaming, and the doorsteps were always immaculately white. Chalking the doorstep was the first duty of the morning, many housewives believing that evil spirits would not enter a house thus protected. And certainly no caller, no matter how early he came, could complain of her untidiness.

Most of my childhood was spent in Granville House, a large stone villa near the center of the town. It was completely enclosed by a high stone wall. Opening to the sidewalk was a heavy oaken door, and above it was a stone arch in which was chiseled the name of the house.

Within the walls were lawns and a flower garden, and over in a corner was my special place, where ivy and Virginia creeper scrambled over the wall, and velvety wallflowers, stocks and tiny daisies grew happily in the moist earth. My





A LAND OF MOUNTAINS AND STREAMS



THE BIRTHPLACE OF DAVID LLOYD GEORGE



favorite play was building stone houses for our baby chicks, that always rebelled at being dressed in the clothes of my smallest dolls, and never would stay in the little houses. Dogs and cats were just as stubborn, always clawing off carefully tied bonnets and dragging in the mud the hems of my best doll dresses.

Cuckoos would visit our garden in the spring, and to hear their first call was to know that winter was gone. Pert little robins, which in Wales are as small as sparrows, would line up on the wall at tea time, waiting for the crumbs we would throw out to them.

Tea time seemed to me the happiest time of the day. It meant a cozy hour before the fireplace, with the kettle steaming on the hob and the smell of buttered toast adding glamor to the flickering firelight. The teapot would be sitting, squat and brown, on its corkwork pad on the table. Mother's favorite tea cozy would

be over it, keeping the tea hot and steaming. The cozy was made of lace, lined with silk and filled with cotton batting, making a warm coat for the teapot.

Because so many of the rooms had been closed off, Granville House always seemed to me a very mysterious place. Going to bed was a ghostly adventure, especially the walk down the long dark passage of the third floor, past doors that had not been opened for years.

One room I particularly avoided, because the man who had lived in the house immediately before us, "old Mr. Probyn," had died there. Over the door hung a heavy curtain, which, when I passed at night, would move slightly with the current of air. Then I would race down the long passage to my room, afraid to look back for fear something was following me.

The kitchen was really the most interesting room. The large fireplace, with

its boiler, oven, and cupboards, took up an entire side of the room. It was like a built-in range, the oven on one side, and on the other a large sunken boiler for boiling clothes on washday and plum puddings for Christmas. Hanging near by was the bakestone, or griddle, on which Mother made Welsh cookies and froise, and, on every Saturday, bakestone bread.

On each side of the fireplace were strips of black slate, reaching from the floor to the ceiling. Welsh children used to chalk their homework on these slates.

Off the kitchen was the "scullery," a place containing a sink in which the dishes were washed. Both the scullery and kitchen were floored in large slabs of slate. There were no cellars to our houses.

Open fireplaces were an important part of a Welsh household. There was no central heating in most homes, heat being furnished by small fires in each room.

The winters in Wales were not severe, so the fireplaces were quite adequate.

The fireplace in the living room was very handsome with its white mantelpiece and ornate fire grate. Around it on the floor was an oblong brass fender, of three sides and about a foot high. This was to keep the hot coals off the carpet and the children out of the fire. Unfortunately, there was nothing to keep the children off the fender, and it shared with the rocking-chair the distinction of causing most of the head cuts of our childhood.

Inside this railing were kept the tongs, long-handled shovel, poker, and coal scuttle, all made of brass which was kept brightly shined. The tongs were used for lifting the large lumps of soft coal into the fire, and the shovel was used for removing ashes from beneath the grate. We bought our wood for starting the fires already cut, and tied in small bundles. We called it "stick." Resting near the

grate was the bellows, used for quickening a lagging flame.

Every fireplace had its "hob," a round piece of iron like a plate, which was attached to the side of the grate, and which, turning on a pivot, could be moved over the fire, or off, as necessary. On this was kept the ever-present teakettle, for the Welsh must always have hot water ready for a cup of tea, "cupanaid o' de." I remember Mother drinking a cup of tea in bed every morning, and I have since discovered that even in America a native-born Welshman will sometimes shy like a frightened horse at the thought of coffee for breakfast.

We had no relatives in Pontypool. Most of our people lived in Brecon, South Wales, where they had been living and dying for hundreds of years. The town nestled in a lovely valley, near the spot where the poet Shelley spent many happy days, and not far from the Welsh home



of Adelina Patti, the celebrated singer.

In Llangorse Pool, a few miles away, an ancient city was said to lie buried. It was flooded over when the valley was dammed up to form a reservoir to hold the rushing waters of the mountain streams. And it was believed that on a calm day you could hear the mournful chiming of the cathedral bells coming from the depths of the lake.

It was in Brecon that I first learned of men who climbed trees to catch fish. Father and I were standing on a stone bridge, watching the river come tumbling down to a still, deep pool beneath us. Suddenly we were startled to see a man's arm thrust from an overhanging tree and then a small harpoon hurtle down into the water. The man jumped from the tree into the pool and presently emerged with a two-foot salmon neatly impaled on the point of the harpoon. He then thrust the fish, wet and wiggling, under his coat and

quietly disappeared into the adjoining woods. Father said that he was a poacher, fishing on private property without permission, and had resorted to this means of fishing to evade the law.

Farther on down the stream the regular fishermen were catching salmon from coracles, tiny canoes similar to those used by the Britons two thousand years ago. In those days the boats were covered with skins, but our fishermen used a framework of beech and ash twigs covered over with a strong canvas sheet soaked in tar and pitch. In leather pockets on the tiny seats were heavy clubs which were used for killing the salmon when caught.

The boats were so tiny that they could be easily upset, and small boys, until they learned to navigate them properly, were tied to them with ropes, so that if the boats should overturn, they could hang on until help arrived.

The coracles, being light in weight, were



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strapped to the fishermen's backs when the day's work was done, and thus carried home, the men and boys looking for all the world like huge turtles walking on their hind legs.

## CHAPTER II

### A VISITOR FROM AMERICA

ONE day Mother announced that a little American cousin was coming to visit us, and in a few weeks Janet arrived at Granville House.

Naturally, we were very curious about each other. She wanted to know what Welsh girls wore and how they talked, and I was very eager to learn about America.

There were many differences in our appearance, the first being that I had two black eyes,—a result of watching a cricket match, although I hastened to assure Janet that this was not a characteristic common to the Welsh.

A cricket ball, which is hard like a base-

ball, had struck me between the eyes as I stood on the sidelines, and immediately I became down and out. I had a lump the size of an egg on my forehead, and, next day, two black eyes, of which I was extremely proud. But I was sorry that the ball hadn't broken my leg. That was the trouble with accidents when I was small. They were never serious enough to keep me out of school, and never gave me a chance to use crutches or have my arm in a sling.

Janet, accustomed to short dresses and bobbed hair, thought Welsh girls very strange in their longer dresses and uncut hair. If you have seen pictures of Alice in Wonderland, who was herself a girl in Wales, you have a rather good idea of how we appeared to Janet.

We wore pinafores with ruffles over the shoulders, black stockings, and red flannel petticoats. Long semicircular combs held the hair back from our faces,

although sometimes we used narrow ribbons for the purpose.

Mothers were very careful about keeping us warm in winter, for the Welsh climate is quite damp. We were seldom without the reassuring warmth of our red flannel petticoats, and the boys, even when they graduated from skirts, did not escape the red flannel, which, made into chest and back protectors, was slipped on over their heads and fastened down at the waist. When, in spite of the flannel, we caught cold, a piece of camphor was sewed into a little bag and hung on a string around our necks.

Farm women, working in the fields, often pinned up their outer skirts for added warmth, thus exposing the bright petticoat and producing a colorful costume. Welsh babies were rocked to sleep in red flannel shawls, and yards of flannel were wound about their middles to keep them warm.

As you might have surmised, the Welsh are very fond of red flannel. Red is the color of Wales. A red dragon breathes defiance from against the green and white background of our flag. The Welsh coat of arms, which bears the words "Cymru am Byth," "Wales F'orever," is of red dragons rampant, and is said to be the oldest in Europe.

Wales is a great country for wool. Her mountain sheep produce the raw material that is woven in the villages into a very fine product.

It was not only in dress that Janet and I differed. Although we both spoke English, it was almost as if we were conversing in different languages. So many things she said I couldn't understand, while I was often at a loss to explain my expressions to her. Even my tone of voice confused her. I would talk for a few minutes in English, completely absorbed in my story, until, looking up, I would find her face

completely blank. She hadn't understood a word!

She used expressions, too, that held no meaning for me. I asked her once how much she weighed, and she said "Fifty-five pounds." But this had to be changed into "stone" before I could compare my weight with hers, for that was the standard of weight we used when we spoke in English.

Her pronunciation of "twopence" seemed amusing to us. She sounded it exactly as it is spelled, "two-pence," but we always slurred the word into "tup-pence." "Threepence" was likewise "thruppence," and "halfpenny," "haý-punny."

And how Janet struggled with the Welsh words! After a few like "anam-ghyffredadwg" and "gwrthwynebrwydd" she was ready to give up any idea of mastering the language.

Because of the scarcity of vowels, the



language of Wales is difficult to learn, many of the words and sounds being almost beyond pronunciation by a foreigner. There is, for instance, the double "l," "Ll," for the sound of which there is no description other than that you make it by placing the tongue against the roof of the mouth and blowing hard around the sides.

In spite of the bristling consonants, it is conceded that the Lord's prayer in Welsh has a softer sound than in any other language. The Welsh are deeply religious, and so I suppose it is natural that our language assumes its softest cadence for the word of God.

Although we usually spoke English at home, we could, like most Welsh, express ourselves equally well in both English and Welsh. The older folks would usually begin a conversation in English, which was all right for the preliminaries, but as the subject became more interest-



ing, they would abandon the English and lapse into their beloved Welsh, which has a fiery, excitable sound, well suited to dramatic discussions.

David Lloyd George says it is a splendid language for an orator, and I am sure that this is true. Added to the power of a Welshman's argument is the hypnotizing effect of the music of his voice, the rolling of his r-r-r-r's and the contagious enthusiasm that causes his eyes to shine like stars and his arms to wave like signal flags.

It is said that, in days gone by, an English king, believing that the conquest of Wales could never be accomplished while the bards, or poets, remained to stir up the people, ordered them all to be massacred as they assembled on the banks of the River Conway in Wales.

Janet and I discovered that there was very little difference between American and Welsh children at play. Many of our

games were similar, but there were many, too, that were different, and these were the ones that interested Janet most.

She liked our tops, and our manner of driving them. We would color the tops with rings of different-colored chalk, and then set them spinning with a twist of the wrists. Immediately we would begin whipping them with a strong piece of string tied to a stick, driving the spinning tops up and down the road, being careful all the time to see that they struck no obstacle, nor were allowed to die down from lack of whipping.

Janet soon learned to roll hoops the way we did, and became quite adept at starting the roll of the large wooden circle and then whacking at it with a short stick as it bounded away. Neither of us was very successful with the steel hoops of the boys. These had iron rods attached for the purpose of driving, and if they were not handled skillfully enough they would

catch in the motion of the hoop and almost break our arms.

We found diabolos a challenge to our skill as well as a lot of fun. A string about two feet long was attached at both ends to two sticks. The diabolo itself, bright-colored and resembling an hour-glass in shape, would rest on the string and be set spinning. We would then toss it into the air and try to catch it on the string and send it spinning again.

We played with dolls, teddy bears, and golliwogs, made tents, played theatre and circus, skipped rope, and played marbles and hopscotch, which are, I suppose, the universal games of childhood.

Before Janet returned to "the States," we visited friends in an obscure little village where many of the inhabitants could neither speak nor understand English, a rather rare circumstance in Wales.

Mother presented us to Mrs. Sarah Jones, a very lovely old lady who, while

having been married for nearly fifty years to a man named Thomas Evans, still retained her maiden name of Jones.

It was the custom, she explained, for women of her day to keep their own names when they married.

“What the younger generation’s coming to, I don’t know!” she said, with a hint of mischief in her shoe-button eyes. “No backbone, no independence!”

We settled ourselves on little three-legged stools outside the whitewashed cottage, where Mrs. Jones joined us after having “put the kettle on” for a cup of tea.

“Mr. Evans and I,” she resumed, “often laugh at our courtship troubles, and wonder how we ever had courage enough to get married. You see, I was brought up in England, and when I met him after coming to this country to live, I couldn’t speak a word of Welsh. And he couldn’t speak a word of English! But

we got along, and finally married. He taught me Welsh, and I taught him English, but for a long time he had trouble, especially with his pronouns.”

She paused to laugh reflectively.

“A neighbor would sometimes pass the house, and not seeing me, would ask Tom, in English, where I was. And he would reply, ‘Oh, *he’s* just gone down the road. *He’ll* be back soon.’ It took him a long time to get his pronouns straight.”

We sat sipping our tea and nibbling on Welsh cookies, when Mrs. Jones suddenly jumped up and asked if we would like to see the sheep, who were on their way in from the hills where they had been grazing all day. Of course, we said “yes,” and climbed a little path in back of the house to meet the flock.

The first thing we saw was a large sheep dog bounding towards us, dragging a little puppy chained to his collar.

I was sorry for the little dog, for he



stumbled, and didn't want to get up. But the big dog dragged him on, nipping at his ears to keep him going.

Then the son, Ivor, explained:

“We train our puppies this way, and it is a very kind way. The big dog is the father, and he is teaching his son to be a good sheep dog. Where he goes, the pup goes, too, and in this way he soon learns to obey the different signals. His father, you know, is an expert, trained to travel miles at the wave of an arm or to pick, at a whistle, a single sheep from the flock.”

The two dogs, having been given the order, were resting now. They were sitting a few feet away from us, two tongues, a large one and a small one, hanging from the corners of two panting mouths, four eyes watching us attentively. The little fellow was sweet. He looked so bewildered, yet so eager to learn.

Ivor suddenly gave a low whistle, and immediately the big dog jumped up, and in a moment was racing off, dragging his son with him. The little pup was soon on his feet, however, and in no time at all was keeping up with his dad, but taking twice as many steps to do so. He would know next time what that low whistle meant!

Janet and I agreed that it was a beautiful way to train the puppies, and we understood, then, the love that exists between a Welsh shepherd and his dog.

On the way home I told her the story that every Welsh child knows, of Llewellyn, a Welsh hero, and his dog Gelert.

The dog was his constant companion, and accompanied his master on many hunting trips. One day, however, Llewellyn went off alone, leaving Gelert to guard his infant son, ordering him to

stand by the cradle and see that no harm came to the child.

When Llewellyn returned, the dog came running toward him, wagging his tail happily, and tugging at him to enter the house. Then Llewellyn noticed that Gelert's mouth and paws were stained with blood, and he rushed in, to find the cradle overturned in a pool of blood, and the baby missing.

The dog turned his face up as if expecting praise, but his master, crazed by the thought that Gelert had devoured his child, drew his sword and thrust it through the upturned throat. Gelert sank to the floor, dead.

Then a muffled cry from behind the cradle caused Llewellyn to rush across the room, to where, hidden by the overturned crib, lay his baby, safe and sound. By his side was stretched the body of a dead wolf, and then Llewellyn realized, too late, that his beloved dog was a hero.

He buried Gelert with a heavy heart, and the grave stone still stands in Wales to-day, a constant tribute to the memory of the martyred dog.

## CHAPTER III

### AN OLD ROMAN ROAD

FATHER was a business man, and owned a large sporting goods and music store in Pontypool. On one side were pianos, gramophones, tin whistles, violins, and countless other musical instruments and their accessories. On the other side were bicycles, tennis rackets, fishing rods, guns, and other supplies.

In the back Father had made a shooting gallery where his friends could have rifle practice. They made a terrific din all day, and when the town band met for rehearsal in the showroom on the second floor, I would sit on the flagstone terrace in back of the store and imagine they were marching to war and being fired on by the enemy. Sometimes when some one



in the band would strike a sour note, especially a cornetist, I would tremble for fear that one of the marksmen on the floor below actually would shoot at the ceiling, for the Welsh are very fastidious about their music.

A great many bicycles were sold in the store, for there were no automobiles in Pontypool, and bicycles provided us with transportation as well as sport. Welsh children learned to ride when they were very young, and I was seven when I was given my first big "bike." I learned to ride in the arcade adjoining Father's store. This was a large stone building lined with shops, and having a flagstone floor that was excellent for riding, but rather hard and cold when you fell.

When I had learned to ride well, we began taking long rides before breakfast, and I became acquainted with the beautiful Welsh countryside. In the spring-time we would get up very early. Mother

would dress Millicent, my sister, who couldn't walk yet; Father would place her in the package carrier in front of his bike in such a way that she could rest against him as he rode; I'd mount my bike, and with many wavings and good-byes to Mother we would join the milkmen and street cleaners who were beginning to make their rounds. We kept to the left side of the road, for that is the custom in Wales.

Father's straw hat would be attached to a long black cord, clipped to his lapel so that it would not blow away. His trouser cuffs were tucked in place with bicycle clips so that they would not catch in the gears of his bike.

Our favorite spot was a stone bridge that spanned a lovely canal about five miles away. Snowdrops grew there in the spring, even before the snow was off the ground. We would rest our bikes on the banks of the canal and look about in tiny crevices for the dainty white

blossoms with their shyly drooping heads.

When summer came we would ride past fields sprinkled with tiny daisies and buttercups. These flowers do not grow tall in Wales. They are little single stems about two inches high. Scattered among the closely cropped green grasses of the meadows they look as if God had taken great handfuls of them and scattered them about like chicken feed.

Later, the wheat fields would be lush and green, and then we could find blue cornflowers and red poppies growing with the grain.

On our way back we usually stopped at the Horse and Jockey Inn, under the sign of the horse and jockey, where we drank milk and ate thick slices of bread and cheese. We always rode slower going home, for Millicent would be asleep and resting against Father's shoulder, and I would be wobbling about, beginning to feel very sleepy myself.

Our way would sometimes be obstructed

by a flock of sheep coming in from the hills to the market place. It was very sad to see the little lambs running along the side of the road trying to catch up with the others and crying for their mothers.

We often rode out to a hillside spot where a river tumbled noisily and where tall foxgloves grew in wild profusion. I would scramble up the bank and press the velvety lavender, rose, and crimson bells against my face. On the top of the hill I could see a tall mountain ash, looking like a brightly trimmed Christmas tree with its red berries.

Summer Saturdays were usually picnic days, when three or four of us would set out for a walk. Our destination was usually the "tump," where we picked daisies and buttercups and wove them into chains, rolled down the grassy slopes of the little hill, and later ate lunch from a large tea basket. We had Welsh

cookies, pomegranates, and tiger nuts, and in a corner of the basket we usually found some "Turkish Delight" and a large bottle of soda pop.

This pop had a special attraction. The bottle was sealed by a glass marble, which presented both a mystery and a problem. The mystery was how the marble got there, and the problem was how to take it out. Of course, it was pushed in when we drank the pop, but that only left the marble farther from our reach. We usually solved the problem by breaking the bottle.

On the way home from our Saturday walks we would stop by the river edge to make baskets and birds' nests from the rubbery white centers of long reed stems. We had to be very careful in peeling them so that the strand wouldn't break.

As a very special picnic, Mother, Father, Millicent and I sometimes walked



to the old Roman road and tower about four miles out of town. It was not unusual that we should walk this far. Every one walked in Wales, even those who didn't have to. Lords and ladies thought nothing of walking six miles to church and back. Walking was regarded as a pleasure, as it really was in the moist, dustless climate, beneath the great trees that overhung the country lanes and between the bright hedges that bordered them.

For our walk to the Roman tower we started early in the morning and carried a lunch, for we should not be back before noon. After crossing the town we came to one of the gates that opened into Squire Hanley's estate, through which we were going to take a short cut to the Roman road. There were nearly a thousand acres to the estate, and the ten-foot brick wall that enclosed the park was several miles long.

Our path led down a ravine where the rhododendron was in bloom and rabbits and pheasants scurried away at our approach. In a few minutes we were skirting the lawns of the place, beautiful emerald carpets that, having been cultivated for centuries, were now incredibly green and smooth.

Mother explained that the lawns of the great landowners were their especial pride. That they would spend hours walking over them and admiring them, stopping to pick up the tiniest weed or pebble that would mar the surface.

The grass was cut regularly twice a week, usually with lawnmowers, although Mother could remember when scythes and sickles were used. Those were the days when real skill was required. The work had to be done at dawn when the dew was on the grass, for it could not be cut precisely enough unless it were wet.

A man spent a lifetime learning the art

of lawn-cutting with a scythe, and only when he was old was he considered expert at the work. A gardener's boy began his apprenticeship cutting hay, in with older men who would show him how to wield the scythe. From them he learned the most important secret of mowing,—always to have the edge of the scythe razor-sharp. An old man with a sharp scythe could cut circles around a strong young one with a dull blade.

Mother said it was a picture to see the men cutting the hay on the big estates. People would come from the near-by villages early in the morning to stand around and watch them. Sometimes as many as thirty-five men would get out on the field in oblique formation, each man a step ahead of the other, so that they formed a large V. They would mow the hay in rhythm, singing at the work so that they would swing in time.

“And at the end of the day,” Mother

laughed, "the young men would be tired out, but the old fellows would be almost as fresh and strong as when they began."

Before we left the estate we visited for a while with the head gardener, who was a friend of Father's, and who, with great pride, showed us some of his work.

There were gardens of different nations, where flowers peculiar to their lands were cultivated, and we saw the large flower beds, each about thirty feet square, with about fifty varieties of flowers arranged in stars, diamonds, and triangles. Most of the flowers were low-growing so that the garden would look like a bright-colored rug, the colors of the flowers being skillfully arranged to harmonize with each other.

The gardener was very proud of his fruit trees. They were so trained that they grew flat against a brick wall, the branches arranged in different lines,—fan-shaped, oblique, horizontal, and up-

right, from which the fruit hung like jewels on a pendant.

As we left the estate Father said:

“It takes a great many gardeners to keep up a place like this. A head gardener is a very important person, and often has a dozen or more men working under him. And he doesn't dress like a working man. He wears a frock coat and top hat, and is really a professional gentleman. Head gardeners have been knighted and have become members of Parliament while still continuing their duties on the estates of their employers.”

We were climbing a grassy hill that was golden with wild daffodils and narcissus, and when we reached the top Millicent and I rolled all the way down again, being very careful, though, to dodge the flowers.

Presently we came to the Roman road, and I walked carefully on the flat, evenly spaced stones, thinking of the Romans who had set them there, and wondering what sandaled feet had traveled it nearly



two thousand years ago, when Rome drove the Britons westward to the hills and built stone roads and forts in their occupation of the land.

The road climbed steadily upward. Scarlet flowers called "ragged robins" grew between the stones. Cowslips and primroses lined the banks. Then around a bend appeared a field of solid blue, rippling in the breeze like a lovely lake. It was a field of bluebells, a common sight in rural Wales. Each stem drooped with the weight of a dozen or more blue bells, all moving and nodding as the breeze caressed them, so closely growing that the blue of the flowers completely hid the green of the leaves.

Cowslips in an adjoining field pressed their bright gold against the blue, and primroses added a paler yellow to the symphony of color.

As the road curved around the slope, we saw the Roman tower standing proud and solitary against the sky. Soon from

our perch on the ruined stones we saw the valley spread out before us. A little river that finally flowed into the broad Severn dodged around the stone farmhouses huddled below. On the farther slope was a man-made patchwork quilt, a hodgepodge of different-colored fields, so tiny from the height of the fort that they resembled patches in a quilt. A wisp of smoke in the distance was coming from an ocean liner steaming up the river into Newport, ten miles away.

Between us and Newport, but hidden by the surrounding hills, was the town of Caerleon, which was said to have been at one time the capital of Wales. According to tradition, King Arthur had his most dazzling court in Caerleon, when with his Knights of the Round Table he ruled and loved the land of Wales. Many legends of his life have come down through history, the most beautiful of which are those written by the poet Tennyson. Because

of him, almost every child knows the stories of Sir Galahad and the Holy Grail, Queen Guinevere, and Lancelot and Elaine.

“Caerleon,” Father explained, “was one of the oldest Roman stations in Briton. Roman Princes built luxurious palaces there, and tried to make of the town another Rome. In Caerleon to-day are many relics of those days. Ruins of an amphitheatre, of baths, temples and a fortress have been unearthed. Many of the houses in the village are partly built with Roman bricks, and the market place is supported by four Tuscan pillars. All are reminders of ancient conquerors who did not remain to enjoy their triumph.”

I strained my eyes, but much as I wanted to, could not see Caerleon. So I turned again to the patchwork quilt across the valley. The numerous small fields stood out so clearly because they were divided by hedgerows, which are

barriers of soil about five feet wide on the bottom, narrowing to three feet at the top, and about four to five feet high.

On the way home we encountered many of these rows, and found them covered with blackberry brambles, and hazelnut bushes. We crossed them by means of stiles, rough wooden or stone steps ascending and descending the rows. They were constructed to allow people to cross while still barring the sheep and the cows.

The lane that took us home was lined with holly, which grows in profusion in some parts of Wales. Father said the leaves were prickly so that the donkeys wouldn't eat them as they passed. There were a lot of wild roses, too, sweet-smelling and dainty.

Hawthorn bushes, dressed in tiny blossoms of pink and white, followed us right into town, sending, as we touched them, a shower of scented petals on our heads.

## CHAPTER IV

### SCHOOL DAYS

SCHOOL days in Wales were rather more uncomfortable than happy for me. There were always so many rattan canes lashing about, so much writing and arithmetic. Copy books had to be neatly filled with carefully written words, evenly spaced and shaded properly on each down stroke. One blot or one imperfect letter would bring the rattan cane stinging down on laboring knuckles.

“ Look at that ‘ r ’,” the mistress would say. “ That is not an ‘ r ’. It needs only a dot to be an ‘ i ’.”

Swish! Down would come the cane, and I would add tears to the ink, which only made matters worse.

We never could decide whether a thin



cane or a thick one caused the more damage. Some thought the thinner one hurt worse, because it could cut deeper, while others thought the thicker one the more deadly, since it was heavier. I was inclined to the latter belief, since the headmaster, principal of the school, carried the thickest cane, and I was sure he'd have the best.

He was the one who punished the worst offenders,—and the late ones. Promptly at nine o'clock, when the last bell had rung, the doors would be locked, and we unfortunates who had lingered too long over our breakfasts or stockings would have to line up and await our punishment outside the door.

Soon we would hear the fall of the master's footsteps as he strode down the hall, and then the sound of the key turning in the lock. And as the door would open we would simultaneously hold out our hands as if elbows and door were on

the same hinge. One by one we took our punishment and filed in, until the late ones were all in school and could spend the rest of the day comparing welts to see whose was the largest, and who, therefore, was the hero of the morning.

We thought it appropriate if, in punishing a child for a mistake in writing, the mistress should raise such a welt on his hand that it could not be used for writing. We always contrived, therefore, to put the right hand forward, and, of course, for the first few lashes we'd always pull away, for hadn't one of the boys said that the headmaster, on missing a hand, had once stung himself on the knee instead?

We had, though, a tremendous respect for our teachers. We always answered "Yes, miss," or "No, sir," and the boys never failed to tip their hats on meeting a teacher on the street. Deportment and manners were important branches of our

training. We also had a natural reverence for learning that was a heritage, no doubt, from years gone by when our forefathers had to sacrifice so much and fight so hard that their children might be educated.

The history of the splendid universities that now dot Wales is a comparatively recent one. The first Welsh University was established in Aberystwyth in 1872, a product of the zeal and sacrifice of farmers and miners, who painfully saved their pennies that their children might know the privilege of a higher education in their own land.

It is an interesting fact that the family of Elihu Yale, who was one of the founders of Yale University two hundred years ago, were natives of Bryn-Eglwys, a town in North Wales that is often referred to as the cradle of Yale. Elihu Yale himself is buried in a church in Wrexham, ten miles away. Near Snowdon is the ancestral home of Thomas Jefferson, and the Welsh

insist that from the foothills of Mount Snowdon came Madoc, son of the Prince of Gwynedd, to discover America three centuries before Columbus was born!

As I look back now, kindergarten days were very pleasant. Welsh children usually began school at a very early age, many of them as young as three years. So school days were play days for the beginners. I remember being placed in a swing that was enclosed in a fish net as a protection against falling out, and being swung high over the heads of the other children. This was a reward for having properly recognized (or guessed) the identity of a large printed letter held up by the mistress. Sometimes the reward would be to play in a game of "ring around the rosy" by the teacher's desk. Later we modeled in plasticine, making birds' nests and filling them with eggs, and rolling endless snakes.

Several of my friends in Pontypool



went to boarding school. Many mothers and fathers in Wales considered it wise to send their boys and girls into the world, as it were, at a very early age, believing that they could become better men and women by learning when very young to adapt themselves to the ways of others. For the same reason many of our children were sent to live for awhile with English or French families, who in turn sent their children to us, that they might learn the customs and language of a new land.

It was always a welcome change in our daily school program when we (the girls) would lay aside our books and take up our sewing. First we learned to do plain running stitches on tiny pieces of lawn. When we had mastered these, we graduated to hemming, then backstitching, feather-stitching, and smocking. We were given red thread as a start, but as our work improved we were allowed to use pale blue. This was an honor, but not



so great as being allowed to sew with white thread. That was a sign of almost perfect work, and we really worked hard to be put in the white-thread class.

A Welsh school would consider itself derelict in its duty to Wales if the girls were not taught to knit. In the third standard we began to spend a portion of the day over our knitting needles, painfully reciting to ourselves, "two plain,—two purl. Two plain,—two purl." We began on small samples of plain knitting with bone needles. Then we "two plain'd and two purl'd," and were extremely proud of the tight little pieces of ribbed knitting that would, when pulled, stretch out like an accordion.

Besides the knitting, there were preparations that were always delightful. Skeins of wool had to be formed into balls, one of us holding the skein over outstretched hands, the other winding the ball. The yarn would unwind from the

skein like a tiny locomotive going around a track, and would tickle as it tugged at our thumbs and signaled us to pull them out of the way.

As we reached the higher grades, we learned to use steel needles, and then the classroom seemed to bristle like an angry porcupine as we plied them through the maze of a stocking or a glove. The intricate turning of a heel or the beginning of a finger was an affair of great fascination.

It was a real disappointment that on coming to America I had to leave my Welsh school before I entered the last standard, when I should have joined the domestic science class which met in a little house at the end of the playground. There I would have had a real house to help take care of, with dishes to wash, floors to scrub, and dinners to cook.

The most interesting part was that at a certain time each day a real live baby

was brought in, a laughing, crying, howling person on whom the girls learned the proper care of an infant. There were, you see, to be no details lacking in equipping us as future Welsh housewives. The girls learned to wash the baby, to dress him, to know about his various ills, and to turn him over to his mother at the proper times.

I was terribly disappointed about that infant. I would, I was sure, never in my life have another chance to wash a real baby.

While we were learning to be good mothers, our cultural education was not neglected. We spent many hours over our drawing and water colors. We drew holly, snowdrops, school bags, mistletoe, and apples from models placed on our desks. We liked to draw apples, because when we finished the drawing we ate the model.

Almost every child took piano lessons after school, and here, again, that old

spectre of corporal punishment arose to haunt us. The piano teacher had a ruler which worked very efficiently. Whenever a sour note was struck, the sound would travel direct from her ears to her arm, and down to the ruler, which would immediately descend on the knuckles of the offending hand. This was always a nervous strain, for even though you seldom got struck, there was always the fear that you might at any time set that terrifying machinery in motion. I never learned to play the piano, but found, instead, real joy in learning to dance.

School life was not without its drama. Our heads were always buzzing with the harrowing stories of Welsh history. Every page was red with blood. We saw our beloved heroes hunger in their mountain retreats; triumphantly hold a besieged castle with only a handful of men while hordes of English stormed about the walls; reach the heights of glory and

bravery, only finally to lose their heads to the enemy, who would callously stick them on the points of spears and parade them through the streets of London while the mob jeered.

Prince Llewellyn, the last of the real Welsh Princes, suffered this fate. He was cut down and badly wounded by an English soldier who chanced to meet him in a wooded glen, and who had not recognized him. When the soldier returned, however, to plunder the still breathing form, he became aware of his victim's identity. He therefore immediately cut off the Prince's head and sent it to King Edward at Conway. From there it was carried to London, where, as a mockery of the old Welsh prophecy that a Welsh Prince should yet ride crowned through London, it was crowned with ivy and paraded on a spear-head to the Tower of London.

Much less harrowing were the legends



of Wales, and particularly interesting were the stories relating to the leek and the daffodil, national emblems of Wales.

Their origin goes back to the time of Henry VII, who, in the days before he became King of England, wandered secretly through his native Wales, meeting and planning with his people. Because he was being closely watched by the English, it was necessary that he make himself known by some sign, and for this he used the colors of his coat of arms, green and white. Thus, meeting his partisans in a field, he would identify himself by pulling up anything that showed a green top and white root, such as a blade of grass or a wild daffodil. If they met in a house, a leek or an onion would be held up as a sign. From this beginning, the leek and then the daffodil came to be the national Welsh emblems.

An amusing tale tells of how a Welsh leader captured his English rival, and,

because he had made fun of the leeks, made him eat bunches of them as punishment.

At any rate, on March 1, the day of St. David, our patron saint, we wore leeks pinned to our dresses if we were very conscientious, but daffodils if we were more fastidious. The day was also celebrated with a great deal of singing, every town holding annual songfests, or *Gymanfau Ganu*, on that day.

In many parts of Wales, St. Patrick's day, March 17, was celebrated with as much enthusiasm as it was in Ireland. We regarded St. Patrick as our own, for according to legend he was born in *Llandeilo Talybont*, in South Wales. With the coming of St. David, he was supposed to have left Wales to do missionary work in Ireland.

## CHAPTER V

### PAGEANTS AND PLAYS

WE were going to Cardiff to see a great pageant, and I was so excited. Myfanwy Beynon, one of my friends, was to take part, and this was a great honor for her, since people from all over Wales were going to participate in the affair, which was to be held in the spacious grounds of Cardiff Castle.

I visited with Myfanwy the day before we were to leave for Cardiff, and she tried on the Welsh costume she was going to wear. She belted the striped woolen skirt about her waist, tied on a large woolen apron, and fitted a shawl of the same material neatly on her shoulders. On her head she placed a white frilled cap, and then the tall beaver hat that is

the outstanding characteristic of the Welsh costume.

Myfanwy was a little disappointed in her part. She wanted to wear a costume of other days, something "foreign," not one which many Welsh women were still wearing. I pointed out that the beaver hat was distinctive, but Myfanwy said that a number of women still wore them. "Hatters still make them by the hundreds," she said, "for the old-fashioned ones who like to cling to the old styles."

"And everybody wears shawls," she pouted. "Mother wears one to go shopping, and in the house when the weather is chilly. And always to carry the baby around."

I didn't mention it, but I thought then how nice it was to carry a baby in a shawl, "Welsh fashion." You took the shawl, —a very large one with fringe on the edges, folded it in a triangle, and placed it over your shoulders. Then you took

the baby and, holding him on your left arm, tucked one of the corners around him. Then you brought the other corner around and held that in the hand that was holding the baby. And there you had him, warm, snug and well supported, while still leaving your right hand free for other things.

Myfanwy and I had never seen a pageant, and we wondered if it would be much fun.

“It can’t be much nicer than the garden parties Squire Hanley gives us,” Myfanwy said.

I agreed. Every year the Hanley estate was thrown open to the people of Pontypool for a masquerade in which every one took part. We played games,—Maypole dances and races,—competed for prizes, scrambled for pennies in the grass, and consumed a lot of tea and cake. I still have the little Dutch-girl dress I wore to my last garden party in Wales, and a



vivid recollection of Father's antics on that day.

He was dressed up as the leader of a very strange band, the members of which were all disguised as tramps. They rode around the town playing beautiful music, for they were real musicians. But Father would tap them on the heads with the ten-foot bamboo pole he used as a baton, and then they would play false notes, while he would pretend to be angrier than ever. The long black hair of the wig he wore kept getting in his eyes and his high silk hat kept falling off. Mother watched it worriedly, for it was the one he wore to church, and she would have to brush the shine back for next Sunday.

The band entered the carnival lawns in an old haywagon, and won first prize as the funniest outfit.

“Remember the Fair?” Myfanwy asked suddenly. “I wonder if the pageant will be as nice as that?”

The Fair was wonderful, I admitted, especially the ride to the Fair grounds. We always went in brakes, which were high wagons holding rows of benches. That was great adventure, sitting high above the horses and riding importantly through the town.

At the Fair we saw the usual things that Fairs offer,—puppets, fireworks, balloon ascensions, colored pop, tight-rope walkers, games of chance, and horse races. And there were gypsies, at whom we gazed in awe,—from a safe distance. Gypsies, we knew, stole little children and brought them up in wagons that roamed all over the country. We regarded them a little wistfully. If only they would take mothers and fathers along, too!

There was always plenty of amusement in Pontypool. We had a nice theatre, trimmed inside in gold and red plush. New players came to town every week. Sometimes we had pantomimes and

musical plays, and at other times more serious plays such as "The Sign of the Cross," "The Christian," and "The Silver King."

The movies hadn't reached us yet, although I had been to a "cinematograph" at the seaside and had there seen my first moving picture, an ocean scene. The orchestra played "Over the Waves," while the sea swished in a most realistic manner, the effect produced, I later learned, by the rubbing together of two pieces of sandpaper behind the screen.

After the performance we had tea in the lounge of the theatre. A Welshman cannot very well miss his tea, no matter in what situation he finds himself. A rather exaggerated story insists that our firemen, engaged in putting out a blaze, will drop hose and hatchet at tea time, so strong is the urge for a cup of tea.

Welsh people like to act almost as much as they like to sing, and the Sunday

School room of the church was usually the scene of some sort of performance. It seemed to me that Father and Mother were always acting, and that I was usually spoiling the scene.

Father took the part of a dying king in one play, and as the curtain went up and I saw him lying there pale and lifeless I broke away from Mother in the audience, ran crying down the aisle, and tried to climb up over the footlights. Father relinquished his part long enough to sit up in bed and tell me that everything was all right, that he was only fooling. I stopped crying then, and the play went on, but it was hard for Father to die convincingly after that.

I took my drama much too seriously. At another church performance Mother and Father were singing a love duet dressed in gypsy costumes, and just as I recognized them, Father sang at the top of his voice:

“ Oh, marry me, beloved! Let us fly away to-night.”

I could see that they had forgotten all about me, so I screamed as loud as I could, “ Mama! Daddy! Take *me!* ”

Mother said afterwards that I had destroyed the illusion of the song, for the audience, whenever Father repeated, “ Oh, marry me, beloved,” just laughed and grinned.

The pageant turned out to be all we expected, and more. The well preserved walls of Cardiff Castle formed a perfect background for the historical scenes that were presented. The grounds were bright with colorful costumes. Druids and Romans, Welsh peasants and soldiers mingled on the lawns as they prepared to enact their individual performances.

As the pageant began, I tried to find Myfanwy in the throng of players that moved below our platform, but she was dressed so much like the hundreds about



her that it was impossible to single her out of the crowd.

As spears and lances of uniformed soldiers glittered in the sun, and banners floated high as horses and soldiers lunged about, Father leaned closer to me and quietly began explaining the action.

“It is the story of one of the most important and thrilling battles in Welsh history, the battle that in 1485 placed Henry Tudor on the throne of England and thus fulfilled the ancient prophesy and bitterly-fought-for desire of the Welsh to be ruled by a King of their own blood.

“Henry has been marching through Wales, gathering an army. The people are afire with the enterprise. And now he is to meet King Richard III on Bosworth Field outside of Leicester. The small Welsh army three times resists Richard’s advance, and after terrific fighting Richard rushes forward for personal combat with Henry Tudor. Rich-

ard is cut down, and his crown placed on the head of the Tudor, who is thereby announced King Henry VII of England,—and Wales.”

I tried hard to follow the unfolding of the drama as it was presented, but still all I could see were horses, soldiers, uniforms, and flags. I was glad Father knew what it was all about.

“Henry,” Father concluded, “entered London in triumph, surrounded by Welshmen and flying the Red Dragon of Wales. Thus began the reign of the Tudors and the beginning of the modern world. Under the reign of the Welsh Henry VIII and then of his daughter, Queen Elizabeth, Wales came into her own, and the great esteem in which the Welsh were held is clearly reflected in the plays of Shakespeare, which were written during the Tudor reign.”

I reached for Father’s hand and found that it was trembling. His face was pale,

his eyes glowing, and suddenly I realized that it was a serious matter, this pride of nationality. As I see it now, it is a tremendous, poignant thing, this fervor of a sensitive, indomitable people, striving furiously through the ages only to defend their beloved home in the hills.

## CHAPTER VI

### CHURCHES AND CASTLES

WALES is a land of castles. Welshmen built them to defend their country against invasion. Then as the invaders gained footholds in the country they, too, built castles to maintain their hold on the land. And as the Welsh built castles they erected churches, too, that rivaled them in the strength and luxury of their construction. But strength and luxury have their day, and many beautiful cathedrals and castles are now crumbling ruins through which cows wander in search of food.

Thoughts of church in Wales always bring to my mind memories of Sunday School excursions to beautiful Raglan Castle. It stood, as castles usually do,

high above the countryside, and although it was a roofless ruin, it was at one time both a luxurious home and a stronghold in time of war.

There had been many beautiful stained glass windows, great beams of carved oak, towers, galleries, marble fireplaces, libraries of rare books, and cellars of still rarer wines. They all went to make it home.

As a fortress, it had walls that were in some places over ten feet thick, and tower windows that were mere slits on the outside, but wide within so that a number of bowmen could stand at a window and shoot many arrows at one time without much danger of being struck themselves. Stairways were built in spiral fashion so that the man above had the advantage over the one below in that his sword arm was free to slash downwards. Entrances were built very narrow so that ten men on the inside could



defend them against a hundred invaders.

Centuries later, we were playing games and eating lunches within walls that had seen men fight and die, and which were now dying themselves. But although the walls were crumbling, the lawns and grounds were still kept in excellent condition. Peacocks strutted about, and squirrels chattered in the ancient trees.

On one of the lawns was a marble pool which had once been a beautiful fountain. Little mounds of shoes and stockings now circled its rim as the younger children splashed and paddled in the water.

During the morning of our picnic we devoted ourselves to the more strenuous of our activities. We swung around a Maypole set up in the castle court in a way the originators of the custom could hardly have anticipated. The Maypole began as a center for a ceremonial May Day dance, with little girls daintily holding the ends of long ribbons attached to

the top of the pole, and skipping lightly around.

At some time or another a few of the more tomboyish girls must have taken a fancy to leaning too heavily on the ribbons, and dancing a little too fast. At any rate, the Maypole we used was a very strong pole with a revolving top to which heavy ropes were attached, with iron rings at the ends for our hands. We would swing furiously until a slight feeling of nausea warned us that if we expected to enjoy lunch we had better get two feet on the ground.

Then we would swarm up the winding stairway that led to the top of the tower, five stories above. The crumbling steps were steep and uneven. Dainty flowers and ferns led a precarious existence between the stones. We became slightly dizzy before we reached the top, and breathless, too. But the view was worth the climb. We could look over the ruins



LOW TIDE AT ILFRACOMBE





THE ROCKS OF ILFRACOMBE

at our feet, and then over the rolling hills and imagine we were soldiers besieged in the castle and watching for the enemy.

Perhaps up there we gave a thought to the other castles in Wales, and the stirring stories they tell. Of Harlech Castle in the North, the gallant defense of which in 1468 inspired the stirring words of the now famous "March of the Men of Harlech."

We might have thought of Caernarvon Castle, where stone men still stood guard in the turrets where the English placed them centuries ago to deceive the Welsh into thinking the castle was always guarded.

It was here that the first Prince of Wales was presented to the Welsh, who had long begged King Edward I of England to appoint a Prince to rule over them in his name, a man who could speak neither French nor English, a true Welshman.



King Edward acceded to their wishes and thereupon presented them with his infant son Edward. He was, the King said, born in Wales, of blameless character, knew no French nor English, and his first words should be Welsh.

The Welsh chieftains, while knowing they had been tricked, nevertheless accepted with good grace, and solemnly came forward and kissed the child's hand as a sign of their approval.

A moment later the baby was placed on his father's shield and borne to the gates of Caernarvon Castle, where he was proclaimed Edward, Prince of Wales. Ever since then the first-born son of the King of England has been proclaimed the Prince of Wales.

We usually descended the tower in a subdued mood, and very hungry. Lunch would be set out on long tables in the great hall of the castle. And where lords of Wales once ate venison and drank

huge goblets of wine, where dogs rested on the rushes that were strewn on the floor and gnawed at the bones and scraps thrown from the tables, we discreetly sat on wooden benches and daintily ate our boiled ham and tomatoes, being careful that no crumbs fell for the ladies to sweep up.

Beneath us as we ate were the dungeons of the castle, ominous and dark. We should have been impressed, perhaps, thinking of the dark deeds that had been done below. But as they probably did in the olden days, we ate heartily, without a single disquieting thought. How could it be otherwise, with our mothers sitting next to us, the Ladies' Aid brewing tea at the end of the table, and the minister laughing in the corner with his mouth full of ham?

When lunch was over we walked quietly about the grounds, scaling fallen walls and reaching for flowers. We explored

the ancient kitchen with its remarkable fireplace, which was large enough, we could see, to roast an ox whole. We crossed the bridge over the moat, an encircling depth of water which in days gone by had made of the castle a virtual island, impenetrable from without and difficult of escape from within.

The day was rounded out by a scramble on the old bowling green for the bright-colored candies that were scattered among us on the grass, on the same lawn where in the 17th century Charles I had often stood and admired the view.

If in the ensuing struggle we obtained no candies, at least we never came away empty-handed. There would usually be the imprint of some one's heel on the backs of our reaching hands. The one who found the most candies was given a prize, which I thought was richly deserved.

Those visits to Raglan Castle were

among the happiest times in my life, and when twilight began to fall it was with real regret that I said good-bye to the crumbling walls, so kindly-looking in the waning light, like a tired veteran who has lived long, fought hard, and found life just a little wearisome. And as the castle faded into the darkness, the ivy seemed to close in tighter against the tired stones, as if to console them for their departed youth.

Every Sunday Mother took our best clothes from the drawer where they had lain since the Sunday before, Father waxed his mustache and twirled the ends into bristling points, brushed his frock coat, and polished up his top hat and walking stick, and presently we were walking down the quiet street to church, urged to hasten by the chiming of the church bells.

The town was very still. There was a special air about Sunday that no other

day possessed. Everything was so quiet that the roosters always seemed to crow more shrilly and the dogs bark louder, so that even now I never hear a rooster crow but that I think of Sunday in Wales.

When church was over we went to Sunday School. Our religious education was a very serious matter, and the rules were as strict as those in public school. We had to take frequent tests, and it was necessary that we pass a formal examination before being admitted into a higher grade.

Of the special services in the church, Harvest Home, our service of thanksgiving, was the most colorful. Fruits and vegetables were lavishly banked near the altar and choir loft, wheat was stacked at the entrance to the pews, and huge loaves of bread were placed in the front of the church. After the service, the food was sent to the hospitals and the poor.

Good Friday was observed with much



solemnity, and many superstitious customs were connected with the day. The birth of a child on that day was considered very unlucky, and any work begun on this Friday was regarded as doomed to certain failure. Housewives arranged to do all their work the day before, many feeling that even the act of discarding dishwater was a sacrilege. "It's like throwing out the Savior's blood," one of our neighbors asserted.

We ate hot cross buns religiously on that day. In olden times we would have saved a few to be placed in a bag and hung up for use as a medicine. A nibble of one of these in time of sickness was held to be a sure cure, and had, furthermore, the very enviable power of being able to frighten away evil spirits.

Easter was celebrated with the conventional happiness, and we were always careful to wear some new article of dress on that day, many of the superstitious be-

lieving that dire things would happen to those who didn't wear at least a new ribbon.

Easter Monday was once the occasion for a peculiar custom. Bands of young men would go about carrying a chair, and on meeting a young woman would compel her to sit in it. She would then be lifted three times in the air, while everybody cheered. The lady would take the ceremony with good grace, while mentally noting the identity of her captors. Next night, when the ladies took their turns at the custom, she would be sure to see that these particular young men would not escape the "lifting."

On Whitsunday many Welsh families, particularly in the farming regions, maintained the custom of adorning the dinner table with a whole roasted lamb, just as we in America have turkeys on Christmas and Thanksgiving. (Roast lamb with mint sauce is a favorite food among the Welsh; the sauce is made of mint

leaves chopped fine and stirred into a mixture of vinegar, water, sugar and salt.)

On a hill overlooking Pontypool was Trefethin Church, which was over five hundred years old. It was covered with ivy, and nestling close to the ground looked like part of the soil itself.

The people of the church still cherished a pair of ancient dog tongs, "gefail gwn," an implement like a coal tongs in appearance and common in old Welsh country churches. In the olden days the sheep dogs used to follow their masters to church, and, being well trained and kindly, were allowed to sleep under the pews.

Sometimes, however, dog tempers would clash, and there would be a fight. The church service would then be suspended until the dogs could be separated. Some one would come running up with the dog tongs, which, when clasped about a furry form, made a powerful puller, and a protection against stray bites.

It is said that a minister's dog,

“Taffy,” one Sunday got into a fight with another which was so exciting that the congregation and even the minister forgot they were in church, and gathered about to watch. But when one of the deacons suddenly shouted “Three to one on Taffy!” the minister recovered his propriety and quickly called for the dog tongs.

I think the most dramatic of our church services was the one which accompanied a Welshman to his grave. On this sad occasion relatives and friends found solace in song, and formed a very impressive procession as they carried and followed the bier to the graveyard, all singing as they trudged along the old Welsh hymns they loved. At the cemetery they grouped around the grave and continued to sing, drowning out the mournful sounds incident to the covering of the coffin.

## CHAPTER VII

### A VISIT TO ABERNANT

THE brass knocker on the door of Aunt Blodwyn's house in Abernant was gleaming like gold. The doorstep was white with chalk, as were all the steps of the little stone houses in the row. They stood shoulder to shoulder like a line of soldiers at attention, neat and trim and clean.

Across the way was a deep gully, and then a field, and then the gaunt, blackened structure of a coal pit. At the end of the row of houses was a tall, black culm pile, made of waste from the mines, and which, next day, I was to use as a slide, only to discover that it was not at all suited to that purpose, especially when one's costume was a white knitted suit.

We knocked on the door, and presently



we were in Aunt Blodwyn's kitchen, and I was saying good-bye to Mother and Father, who were going to an Eisteddfod in North Wales.

When they had left, I sat on a kitchen chair while Aunt finished up her morning's work. She had already polished the brass knocker and letter slot in the front door, and scrubbed and chalked the doorstep. The hearth of the kitchen fireplace had also been whitened. Now she was sweeping the sand off the stone slabs of the kitchen floor.

"Why do you put sand down, Aunt Blodwyn?" I asked.

"Well, you see, dear, it makes the work a lot easier, for when milk and grease spill to the floor, the sand soaks them up, and so they do not stain the stones. And it's a lot nicer to sweep sand out every morning than to have to scrub the stones. Of course," she added hastily, "I scrub the floor every Friday night. I take a nice

flat stone and rub the floor with it, sand and all, until the sand is nearly white. I leave it like that until morning, then I sweep out the sand, and scrub the stones with soap and water.”

She began taking fresh sand out of the oven and scattering it about.

“It must be very slippery,” I said.

“It is, if you’re not used to it. And,” she added with twinkling eyes, “mind you don’t go sliding around and pushing it under the tables and chairs.”

It would be a shame to do that, I agreed, because Aunt had scattered the sand so evenly that it looked like a golden carpet on the floor.

When the kitchen was done, we went outside and sprinkled more sand on the flagstone garden path and in the outside kitchen. It was wonderful how neat it made things look.

I spent the rest of the morning sliding down the path, having promised to replace

the sand when I was through. At the end of the path was Aunt's flower garden. She had lovely flowers. Velvety wall-flowers, sweet William, canterbury bells and hollyhocks were against the wall, with mignonette along the borders, which were bounded by rows of tiny cockle shells. The fresh, moist scent of the flowers was delightful.

In the afternoon the men began coming home from the mines, tired and dirty from their day underground. Uncle Samuel and my cousin Cledwyn came into the kitchen, their faces black with coal dust, white only in rims around their eyes.

Uncle said, "So this is my little niece from Pontypool. Come, give us a kiss," and he held out his arms.

"Go along with you, Sam," Aunt said as I backed against her. "The child doesn't know you're fooling. Go in the front room, darling, while they wash up."

There was a great bustling in the kitchen as water was poured into tubs from the kettles that had been hanging over the open fire. And when, presently, we all sat down to tea, Uncle Sam and Cledwyn looked very different. Their faces were pink and shiny from the soap, and they had changed their clothes. Their mining suits had been put in the outside kitchen, where Aunt would wash them for the next day. It must have been very hard work getting them clean, for they had to be rubbed over a washboard, and all the water had to be carried in from the well.

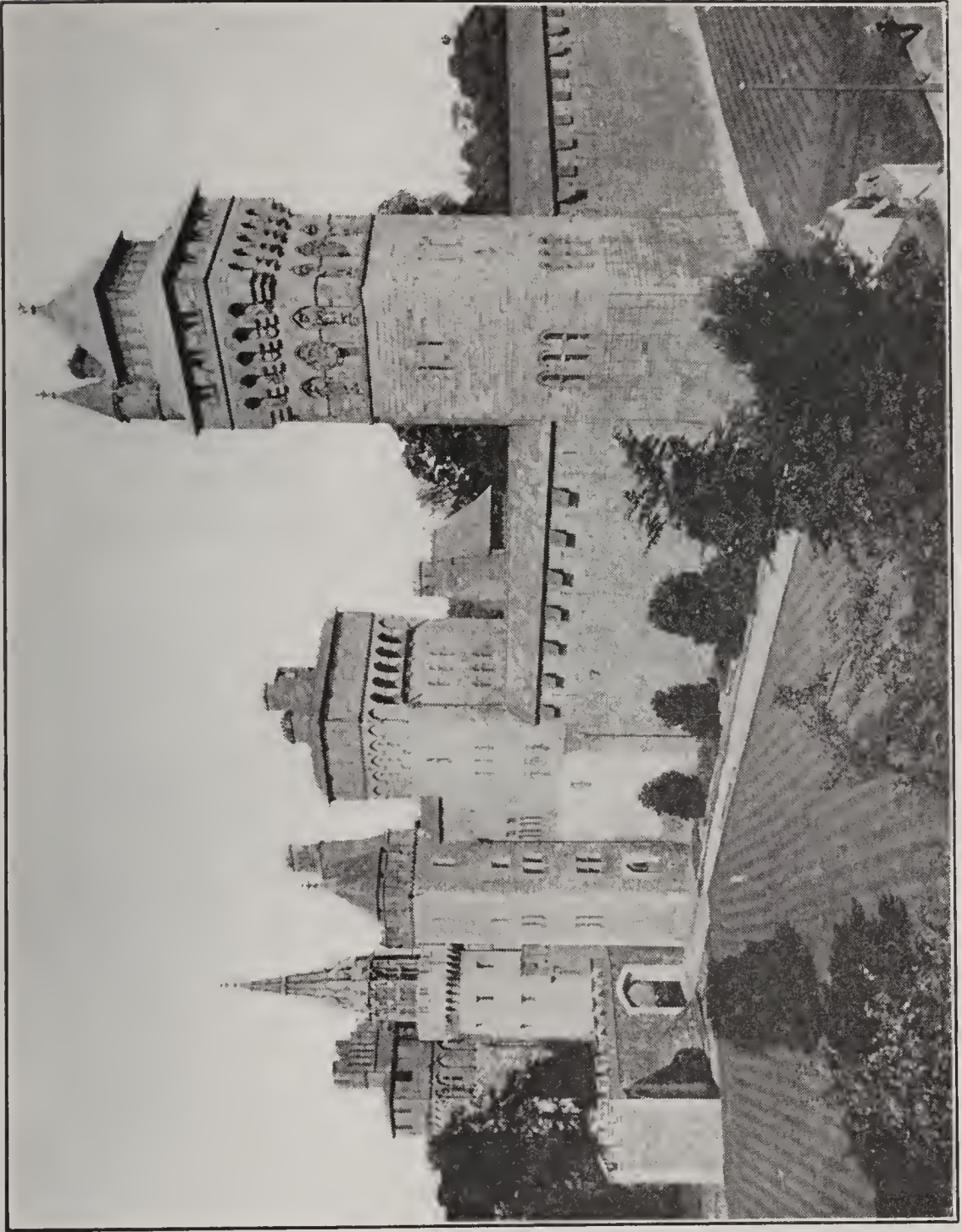
Cledwyn was quiet while he was eating, for he was tired. He was only fourteen years old, yet he had worked like a man in the pit. But he never complained. He wanted to be regarded as a man, to load as much coal as his father, to bring home as much wages. He was proud to be doing a man's work. But Aunt sometimes

watched him wistfully. She had wanted him to be a musician.

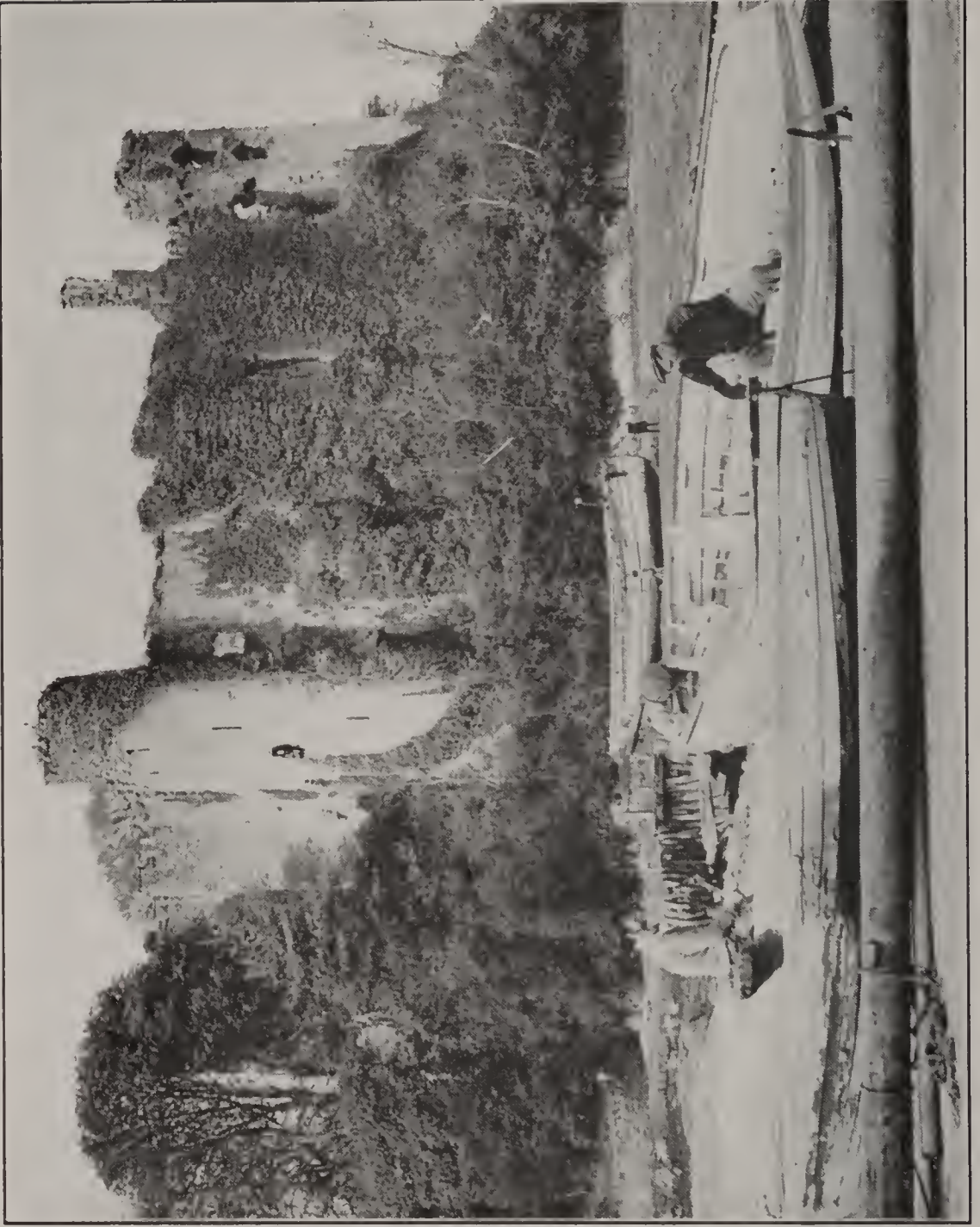
She was proud, though, that he had not been brought up in the mines, as had some of the neighboring children. It was the custom not long ago for miners to take their small boys with them into the pit, where they would be counted as "helpers," thus enabling the father to take out and be credited with so many more loads of coal than he could if he were alone. Of course, the children didn't really work in the mines. They played around in the gloomy caverns and probably had a fine time, although not getting their proper share of sunlight and schooling.

When we had finished our tea,—the tiny sausages and pickled red cabbage, the large slices of home-made bread and Welsh cookies strongly flavored with nutmeg, Aunt got up to light the lamps. She took a "spill" from a brass vase on the





CARDIFF CASTLE



A WELSH CASTLE AND WELSH FISHERMEN



mantelpiece, and after lighting it at the coals, applied it to the oil lamp, which had previously been filled with paraffin oil. Earlier in the day she had shown me how the "spills" were made. How you took square pieces of newspaper and rolled them into tight, bias cylinders, turning back the ends to keep them from unrolling. These saved matches, which were not so common then as they are now.

After tea, Uncle Sam and Cledwyn went off to singing school. They were rehearsing strenuously those days, for the chorus to which they belonged was soon to compete in a local Eisteddfod.

"They've got their hearts set on winning the prize this year," Aunt explained. "Cledwyn tells me that they're even practising down in the pit, and if that's so, I don't know how they get any work done, for when they start singing—!"

"Is it very dangerous, working in the pit?" I asked.

“Bad enough, although the mines in Abernant are not so dangerous as in some places. There’s no gas underground here, and the colliers can light their candles without much danger of an explosion. In most mines there is that awful black damp, which has cost so many men their lives. Hundreds have been trapped underground by explosions and have died there because of it.”

Aunt Blodwyn took the lamp and carried it to the outside kitchen, and I followed her and sat on a bench while she washed out the mine clothes.

“And that is why,” she continued, “so many miners are superstitious. They go down into the pit every day not knowing but that it will be their last. There is danger everywhere. I remember your uncle telling of the time he was deep down in the pit far from the other workers, when suddenly he had a premonition of danger, and immediately crouched

down to avoid it, whatever it was. As he peered into the darkness he saw that he was balanced over a winze, a sort of precipice, and there was the next level, sixty feet below. He had been about to step off, to his death, probably.”

“And so,” I suggested, “the miners are always watching for signs that might warn them of danger.”

“Yes, indeed,” said Aunt. We were now back in the kitchen, and she was laying the wet clothes over the fender so that they would be dry for the morning. She had also brought in a pan of damp sand to put in the oven so that it, also, would be dry for the morning. She never rested a minute, for when the sand was in the oven she began scrubbing the floor with a large stone so that it would be ready for the soap and water in the morning.

“Most of the men will not go into the pit on Christmas Day nor on Good Fri-



day, believing that if they do, an accident is bound to happen. A terrible disaster occurred on Ascension Day some time ago, and since then that day, too, has been regarded as very unlucky for miners. One time the men refused to go down because they heard ominous noises the night before, and were sure that they were warning them of impending danger. And so it goes. It is a hard and dangerous work. How the women could stand it, I don't know."

"Do women work in the mines?" I asked in surprise.

"They don't now, but they used to when I was a girl. Although some actually dug in the pit, most of them worked on the top, tipping the cars as they came out of the mines. They would come home with the men at night, just as tired and just as black."

Before Uncle Sam and Cledwyn came home, Aunt had scrubbed the kitchen

chairs and had placed them in "the other room," the parlor, which was used only on special occasions, such as a marriage or a death or for very special visitors.

"Some of the women leave the chairs there until Sunday," Aunt said, "so they won't get dirty for the Sabbath. But I don't believe in standing up to eat all day Saturday. I bring them back when I'm through scrubbing in the morning."

I couldn't understand why Aunt Blodwyn had to work so hard on Friday night.

"Couldn't you do some of it to-morrow?" I asked.

"Indeed, no. To-morrow's baking day, when all the food's got to be made ready for Sunday. You see, it is not right to work on the Lord's day, and I do everything I can the day before, even to peeling potatoes, although I remember one time breaking the Sabbath, and being punished for it, too."

Her eyes twinkled as she remembered.

“Your uncle had gone to church alone. I wasn’t feeling well, so I stayed home. And then I remembered that I had neglected to bake a pie for dinner. So I got to work quickly, and in no time at all the pie was in and out of the oven,—a nice rhubarb it was, too. I felt very guilty about baking it on Sunday, but I knew that your uncle would miss his pie. Well, I set it out on the garden bench to cool off, but when I went to get it for dinner, the chickens had eaten every speck! I have always thought that was my punishment for baking on Sunday.”

By the time I was ready for bed the brass candlesticks on the kitchen mantelpiece had been polished, and so had the Welsh dresser that Aunt Blodwyn called her shelf and dresser. It occupied one entire wall of the kitchen, and the best plates and cups were arranged neatly on the shelf. It was so shiny when Aunt was through polishing it with beeswax and

turpentine that I could see my face in the wood.

After I had gone to bed, to sink deep into a feather mattress, Uncle Sam and Cledwyn came home, and they all had a late supper, in which I was too young to share. Uncle Sam had stopped at the fish and chip shop and had bought a bag of hot French fried potatoes and pieces of whitefish that had been dipped in batter and cooked to a golden brown in vats of hot fat.

Sometimes they had small pork pies, tiny pickled onions, and jam tarts for supper,—things that were not good for children, although sometimes when I would stay awake and creep downstairs I would be allowed to nibble at the forbidden food before being sent off to bed again.

For breakfast next morning we had bakestone bread, which had been baked on a griddle placed over the coals, then

split and eaten hot, with the butter melting into it. The rest of the bread dough was standing in the pans, ready to be taken to the bakehouse at the end of the road.

Almost every town in Wales had several bakehouses where the housewives could take their food to be baked in the large ovens. The baker usually charged twopence a loaf for baking the bread and about sixpence for a Sunday roast.

“That is how the whole neighborhood came to know that I was going to be married,” said Aunt with a reminiscent twinkle, as she placed the loaves on a little wagon and covered them with a clean cloth. “Mother had taken the meat and the cakes for the wedding supper down to the bakehouse, and in no time at all everybody knew that there was to be a wedding at our house next day.”

“Did you have a nice wedding?” I asked quickly, for like most girls I liked to hear about weddings.



“Yes, indeed. We had a carriage to take us to the station, and two black horses. The driver wore a high silk hat, and the horses had white ears.”

“Real white ears?” I asked in surprise.

“No, silly. They were white canvas tabs tied over the horses ears. That is the custom for weddings, and it was the first thing I looked for when the horses pranced up to the house.”

We were walking down the road to the bakehouse, and I was pulling the little wagonload of bread dough. Several women passed us on the way, their wooden shoes making a great clatter on the sidewalk. Some wore shawls held closely over their shoulders and heads, for the air was quite chilly.

The wooden shoes were called clogs, and were fastened on by means of brass bands buckled across the instep. Brass protectors in the front saved them from wear at the toes. They seemed clumsy

and heavy, but Aunt Blodwyn explained that Welsh women liked them because they were so clean.

“They don’t carry a bit of dirt into the house,” she said.

The clatter of clogs gave way to the clop, clop of a donkey’s hoofs as a two-wheeled coal cart went by. Presently its half-ton of coal would be dumped in front of some little house where later the mother and the children would carry it in baskets to the coal house in the rear.

An onion man passed us, with long strings of onions hanging around his neck and looking like garlands of flowers. But there, of course, the resemblance ceased. The onion men were Bretons from France, a branch of the original Britons, and traveled from town to town with carts full of onions.

Aunt was still thinking about her wedding, for she said:

“Dear me, and the time we had get-

ting to the station after the ceremony. The neighbors had stretched a rope across the road, and we had to throw out money before they would let us by. I didn't mind that, for it was the custom, but this time they had put tar on the rope. If any of that tar—”

She shook her head, but didn't finish the sentence, for we had reached the bakehouse, and soon the baker was putting the loaves in the oven with a long-handled shovel, and Aunt Blodwyn was saying that she would be back for them when they were done.

Before I went to bed that Saturday night, a final bit of excitement came to cap a busy day. A bell began ringing some distance away, and as the sound came closer the people came out of the houses in our row and stood around chatting excitedly until finally a man came in view. He was ringing a large bell and demanding in a loud voice:

“Take notice! Take notice!”

And then he went on to shout a lot of things in Welsh that I could scarcely understand. He was the town crier, calling out the special news of the day, and people listened attentively, for he usually had some important message to announce, such as the news of a lost child, or some disaster in the mines.

The nature of his calling was somewhat similar to that of a wandering poet who sometimes came to town. This man would sing the story of a recent dramatic occurrence, a casualty at sea or some other harrowing disaster. He would stop at the inns and sing his song, and when it was finished he would pass around pamphlets on which were printed the words he had just sung. Then he would pass his hat around, and when it was jingling with coins he would quietly take his leave, pausing at the door to clear his throat for the next stop.

## CHAPTER VIII

### IN BEAUMARIS

OUR summer holidays were usually spent at some seaside resort, and because Wales possesses so much seacoast, we had a wide assortment of places from which to choose. There were the pebbly beaches of Ilfracombe, the sand dunes at Porthcawl and the smooth, golden sand of Llandudno. There were rocky beaches where we could wander among the rocks and find little crabs left stranded in shallow pools by the retreating waves. There were overhanging cliffs shading stretches of beach so narrow that there was no room for our bathing machines, which had to be lowered to the beach from the top of the cliff by means of wind-



lasses, and raised in the same way when the tide came in.

Our favorite resort was the seaport town of Beaumaris on the island of Anglesea in North Wales. It could be entered in two ways: by boat from Liverpool, or by carriage over the Menai Bridge, one of the finest suspension bridges in the world at the time it was built, about one hundred years ago. There were no trains on the island, but four boats a day from Liverpool furnished plenty of excitement.

Most of the town was at the pier to see our boat come in. Cabbies wearing high silk hats with jaunty feathers at the sides were lined up with their horses and carriages, ready to convey the visitors to their rooms or boarding houses.

Our lodgings were in the home of a private family, in a large stone house of twenty rooms that had been a government hospital in the time of Edward V of

England. Now the house was occupied by the Thomas family, a few summer visitors, and twenty-five soldiers who were billeted there. They belonged to the Welsh Militia, which had headquarters in Beaumaris. Every Sunday morning the soldiers would have full-dress review, marching from the barracks to the church in little pill-box hats, blue trousers, and bright red coats, and led by their own brass band. It was very exciting and impressive to watch them.

The Thomas home held another guest besides the soldiers and our family. In a large front room was a lady of the English nobility, a very peculiar lady, for she had a trunk full of white mice which she allowed to run all over the room. They were discovered one day by the little maid who had been sent to clean the room and who immediately ran screaming down the passageway, followed by several of the mice, that were

no doubt as panic-stricken as she was.

Down the street was the Post Office, which also served as the bank, and not far from there was the ancient Court House, where you could still see, jutting from a high tower, the old execution drop that was used for hanging criminals in olden times. It had long since ceased to function, for it was seldom necessary to inflict capital punishment in the new Wales.

The dignity of the law was upheld with much pomp and ceremony in Beaumaris. During the week of court the judge, two barristers and a court crier would march twice a day in a little procession from Headquarters to the court room, the judge and the lawyers looking very impressive in their long black robes and curly white wigs.

Beaumaris had a town green of twelve acres where the men and boys played cricket, soccer, and rugby. Then there

was "Happy Valley," the ravine surrounding the ruins of Beaumaris Castle, where the children of the town had happy times. In the grounds of the castle were lawn tennis courts.

Visitors were not encouraged to enter the castle. So many people had begun falling on the crumbling walls and into the dungeons that the practice of admitting sight-seers was stopped, and when we were there the only visitors allowed were the birds that had built their nests in the ivy-covered towers.

We soon settled into the routine of the resort. We spent the mornings and afternoons on the sands, making castles and windmills, while mothers and nurses sat on beach chairs near the sea wall, occupied with the inevitable knitting or crocheting.

There were no boardwalks in our sea-side resorts. Wide promenades built of large blocks of stone or concrete skirted

the coast, against which the sea at night lashed and growled, as if angry at the restraining walls.

On our way back to our lodgings at tea time we usually stopped at the shrimp shop, where from a window of freshly caught, newly boiled shrimps, the man would ladle us a bagful to take home.

We would stop at another shop for strawberries and clotted cream, and thus we prepared for tea. Mother would spread butter heavily on a large loaf of bread, then cut off slices wafer thin. Then she would brew a pot of tea over the open fireplace of our room, and we would all begin to feel very cozy and very much at home.

At eight o'clock every night the fish and chip man "Johnny 'chip-potato,'" came around with his two-wheeled cart containing the vats of fish and potatoes. The ice-cream wagon, too, would make its rounds, and for a penny we could buy a



tiny glass dish of frozen milk in different flavors.

The beach itself presented many diversions. It was always great fun to watch the bathing machines play tag with the waves, especially when the tide began coming in. These one-man bathhouses were kept right at the edge of the sea so that the bather could step from the surf to his dressing room without the inconvenience of becoming entangled in a lot of clinging sand. When the waves began pounding in, the bathing machines had to be hauled back one by one by the strong little ponies hitched to them, until finally, as the surf began lashing in in real earnest, the retreat would take the form of a rout, and bathers dressing in the little cabins would be treated to the thrill of a precipitous ride while oncoming waves splashed against the doors.

Riding the donkeys was our most popular sport. It was such fun to race down

a smooth stretch of sand, or recline in a carriage and pretend you were big.

Every afternoon the pierrots gave performances on the stands. They were traveling players who set up their stage right on the beach close to the promenade wall. You could lean on the wall and watch the show, or go down the steps to the sands and sit on a little chair, for which privilege you paid twopence. A hat would be passed around among those standing on the promenade, and no one allowed it to go by without adding a coin.

Twice a week, on Wednesday and Friday nights, the Beaumaris tin-whistle band paraded through the streets. It was composed of men of the town who were skilled in the playing of the whistle, which was quite an accomplishment, since the instruments were made in different keys, and each man had his own part to play in the musical score. It was quite thrilling to hear fifty men march down

the street playing "Onward, Christian Soldiers" on tin whistles in different keys!

Beaumaris was a great fishing town. The fishermen would go out in their boats early in the morning, returning with their catch about eleven o'clock. Then they would peddle the fish through the town, carrying them in baskets hanging on their backs and suspended by straps from the tops of their heads. The two men who sold us fish were known as the Perch Brothers, and I never knew whether they acquired their name because of their business, or their business because of their name, or if the whole thing were merely a coincidence.

Cockle women would come in from the sands with large baskets or bags of cockles fastened on the backs of their donkeys. On their heads they carried the big round sieves they used for washing the shellfish.

Cockles are tiny fish similar to clams, but much smaller, and were usually gathered by women. They would ride out to the cockle beds on donkeys, with heavy shawls tied about their heads to protect them from the stinging wind of early morning. They would dig for the fish in the sand, where they had been deposited by the tide, and then scoop them into sieves and carefully wash them off with sea water.

We often had cockles for tea. Mother would boil them in the shells and then place them on the table in a large bowl. Steam would arise from them, carrying a delicious odor, which we took as the usual invitation to begin. Some served the cockles without the shells, chopped up with little green onions. Then, too, they could be bought in the market places, where they were ladled out of big baskets and served on a saucer with a bottle of vinegar having a hole in the cork.

A lot of people liked periwinkles, but they were too much like garden snails for my liking.

The beaches near Beaumaris were extremely picturesque. Streets in some places were built so close to the sea that houses having their front doors on the road opened in the back onto the ocean itself, the back steps often leading down to a little boat moored to the kitchen door. Sea gulls would fly down to eat the crumbs when the housewife shook out the tablecloths.

Not far from Beaumaris was the town of Llanfairpwllgwyngyllgogerychwyrndrobwlllandysiliogogoch, the name meaning "The Church of St. Mary in a wood of white hazel near a rapid whirlpool and near St. Tysilio's cave, close to a red cave."

It just about defies pronunciation, but a Welshman can sing it without much trouble. Happily, it is shortened for



everyday use to Llan P. G., or Llanfair P. G.

On one very happy day I went with the Thomas children to the farm where they regularly bought buttermilk. We started early in the morning so that we could go by way of the sea, a longer but much more interesting route.

There were five of us on the trip,—myself and four of the eight Thomas children. Their father was a business man in Beaumaris, and because he sold shoes he was known as Hugh Thomas, Shoeman, and his boys were called Hugh Thomas, Shoeman's, sons. It was the custom in Wales, where so many have identical names, to distinguish one from the other by the use of nicknames, or of names describing the person's business. And usually the wife, too, took her husband's added name, the wife of Trevor Price the "lampworks" being known as Mrs. Trevor Price the "lampworks."

Sometimes Welshmen were labeled by their neighbors in a rather uncomplimentary manner, according to their popularity, or lack of it. One man, being asked what he would like to be known as, crossly replied:

“Call me ‘bara caws’ (bread and cheese) for all I care.”

So ever after that they called him Johnnie Bara Caws.

The Thomas children called their teacher “Betsy Bump” because of her habit of picking up offending pupils and then bumping them back in their seats. A little friend was called Georgie Ginger Beer because of his fondness for the beverage.

It was quite usual to see letters addressed to such names as William Mine Boss Williams, or to Thomas “Telynwr” Thomas if the latter happened to be a harpist of local note.

As we raced across the sands and

clambered over many large rocks, Sadie told us of the many ships that had been wrecked on this very beach.

“It is a very thrilling and terrible thing when a ship founders near the shore. The people of the village rush down to the beach, and the men risk their lives in launching and setting out in lifeboats to go to the rescue of the sailors on the doomed vessel.

“Of course,” she added, “there is profit, too, when a ship wrecks near a village. Valuable cargo is washed ashore, and the wood from a wreck keeps many families warm all winter. There is a funny story about a minister who was preaching one Sunday from his pulpit, which looked out to the sea. Glancing through the window while he was in the middle of his sermon, he suddenly saw a ship going to pieces on the rocks. He stopped, pulled off his surplice and walked down the aisle to the door. Then he

turned to the much surprised congregation.

“‘My friends,’ he said, ‘we can now start fair. A wreck! A wreck!’”

“Of course,” Sadie hastily explained, “that is just a story the villagers tell. I am sure no minister would really do that.”

We soon came to the farmhouse, a whitewashed stone dwelling with a thatched roof. Chicken coops and pig stys were whitewashed, too, and as we got closer we saw that they were made of the overturned halves of small boats!

No one answered when we knocked at the door, and we discovered that the entire family was in the fields cutting hay. The father and his oldest son were mowing with scythes, and the mother was following them, raking up the hay. On her back was the baby, securely held by a woolen shawl tied about the mother’s waist. Two little boys were following

her, picking up the wisps of hay she missed. The father and son were singing a duet as they worked, the mother was humming quietly, and even the baby was occasionally adding some contented "a-da's" to the symphony.

We got our buttermilk and left. It was nearly lunch time, and we would have to hurry home. The mother returned to the haying, and the quiet singing from the field sounded pleasantly in our ears as we hastened away. But suddenly the drowsy harmony was blasted by the baby's abrupt change from his contented cooing to a series of shrieks that sounded for all the world like a noon whistle. And noon it was, for immediately the church bells began tolling the news that the baby, inspired by his noontime hunger, had already so urgently announced.

We found it necessary to leave Beaumaris on a Sunday, when the entire town, piers, shops, and streets, were as quiet as



death, and the only activity of the day was that involved in going to church.

In order to leave Beaumaris on Sabbath we had to send our baggage out the day before, and now we were crossing by foot over the Menai Bridge to the mainland. As we left we waved good-bye to the Thomases, who were going to church. They formed quite a procession. The mother and father were in front, very dignified in their Sunday clothes. The children followed in two's, all scrupulously clean in their Sunday suits. The boys wore Eton suits and starched collars, and the girls were all in white. Shoes had been blacked the night before and clothes laid out, so that on Sunday morning nothing remained but to put them on and then sit very quietly on a chair until the entire family was dressed.

After church they would have dinner, and then prepare for Sunday School at half past two in the afternoon. After

Sunday School they would return home for a period of scripture study and absolute quiet. At six o'clock they would again go out to church.

This was the Sabbath routine shared by nearly all Welsh children, and we found charm and interest in the pleasant order of the day.

Before we left North Wales we visited Llandudno, a famous Welsh watering place which was for many years the summer home of several Moroccan merchant Princes and their entourages. This neighborhood was also the home of the little girl who was the "Alice in Wonderland" of Lewis Carroll, who found his inspiration for the story in the glens and dells of the surrounding countryside, as well as in the life of the little girl he loved.

An interesting discovery was that in this part of Wales the evenings were so long that in July one could read out of

doors as late as ten-thirty. It reminded us of the beautiful summer nights we had spent in Brecon, where, when the moon was full, night merged into day with no intervening darkness, and but four hours of moonlight, the sun setting at ten o'clock at night and rising at two in the morning.

We stopped also in Chester, an ancient city, now the gateway to Wales, enclosed by Fourteenth-Century walls following the lines of the old Roman foundations. These walls were topped by a paved path four to six feet wide, affording a delightful promenade around the town.

Chester was noted for its second-story sidewalks, which were built directly over the stores on the first floor, and directly under the third and fourth floors of the building. Along these walks shoppers could stroll and window shop. There were four streets of these second-story stores. When the shopper on the terrace

reached the end of the block, he descended by a stairway to the street, and, if he so desired, crossed the intersection and ascended to the next row.

## CHAPTER IX

### CHRISTMAS AND OTHER HOLIDAYS

CHRISTMAS was a very merry time with us. We began our celebration fully two weeks ahead of Christmas Day itself, and often continued the festival for as many weeks after. In some places the Christmas tree would have been set up and divested of its toys as early as December 19.

During the weeks before Christmas the waits would begin patrolling the streets, singing their Christmas carols, and the church bell ringers would begin vying with each other to produce the most lovely music with their steeple bells. Ringers from neighboring towns would gather and fill the air with chimes, and when the competition was over, would sit down together to a jolly Christmas dinner.



The making of the holiday plum puddings was begun many weeks before Christmas, and the day on which the ingredients were assembled and stirred was regarded as especially important. On that day every one in the house took a "stir" at the pudding. Father, before leaving for business, would drop in a sixpence or so, for good luck to the one in whose portion it would eventually be found. He would stir the mixture once or twice, then depart. Other members of the family then took their turns, the children with a great deal of enthusiasm. This was so much more fun than making mud pies.

Visitors would also be required to wield the wooden spoon, and a conscientious minister, after many calls on this day, would sometimes feel that a sum of all the "stirs" he had made would have produced a good-sized batch of holiday plum pudding.

The thick batter was eventually bound up in cloths in the shape of a ball and dropped into the steaming boiler built into the kitchen range, and there cooked to a luscious nicety.

It was at Christmas time that the Welsh love of music would best assert itself. The town bands would hold concerts, trained choirs would traverse the countryside chanting their beautiful carols, and even the children would add their voices to the music in the air.

Days before Christmas we would go around singing our favorite carols and hymns. We would also sing:

“Christmas is coming, the goose is getting fat;  
Please put a penny in the old man’s hat.  
If you haven’t got a penny, a halfpenny  
will do.  
If you haven’t got a halfpenny, God bless  
you.”

If no response was forthcoming after that verse, we’d add more:

“If you haven’t got a halfpenny, a piece of cake will do.

If you haven’t got a piece of cake, an orange will do,—”

And on and on as long as necessary.

The Welsh inns would be gay with music. Not the rambling tunes that might be expected, but time-honored, beautiful songs, such as “Cwm Rhondda” and “Aberystwyth,” sung with a serious respect for music. A blind harpist would stroll in, set up his harp, and begin a concert that would last far into the night. The men would listen most respectfully and happily, for his music was of the best, and would do credit to the concert stage.

Christmas Day itself was the occasion for many concerts and Eisteddfods. Concert halls and churches would be elaborately decorated in evergreens, holly, mistletoe, and bright flowers. In Glamorganshire, the county next to ours, the

climate was so warm at Christmas time that roses and hawthorn would sometimes be in full bloom for the occasion.

In some parts of Wales a custom called "Plygin," or watching for the dawn, was observed at this time. It consisted of proceeding to the church at three o'clock on Christmas morning and uniting in a service held by the light of small green candles made for the occasion. Sometimes the ceremony was held at home, as a sequel to a Christmas Eve jollification, when the merrymakers would sit up all night to greet the dawn.

Miners sometimes followed an old Christmas Eve custom of carrying a board full of lighted candles from house to house, or wheeling a wheelbarrow containing a bed of clay in which the candles were held. They were arranged to form a "Star of Bethlehem," and the men would stop before a house and sing their carols around the star.

The day after Christmas was called Boxing Day, when it was the custom for tradespeople to hang a Christmas box in a prominent place, as a reminder for customers to deposit the usual Yuletide gift. These boxes were seen mostly in barber shops, standing suggestively among the brushes and razors. Customers seldom forgot to tip the box.

A neighbor used to tell us of a peculiar Christmas Eve custom in which his father used to participate when he was a boy. Men dressed in Druidic robes, followed by those who would witness the ceremony, would climb the local Druidic Hill. There thirteen Druidic fires were lighted, twelve of them in a circle around a central fire higher than the rest. A cow was then led out from a near-by shed, and a plum cake adjusted between her horns. Immediately afterwards, a pail of cider was impolitely dashed into her face, upon which she naturally tossed her horns, thus



throwing off the plum cake. The purpose of all this ceremony was to see which way the cake would fall. If it fell forward, good harvests were predicted; if backward, the omen was bad. In either case, a feast followed, which every one enjoyed, even if the plum cake had fallen the wrong way.

The excitement of the weeks preceding Christmas was to the children merely a preamble to the real thrill of Christmas Eve, when we would hang our stockings on the mantelpiece and hasten off to bed, there to close our eyes very tight so that Father Christmas could get busy without delay.

In the morning we awoke to the miracle of Christmas, to find our stockings filled, and to rush breathless to Mother and Father, who were never so surprised at what Father Christmas had brought us as we thought they should be. There seemed to be an artificial note to

their amazement, though we couldn't understand why they should have to pretend.

There were other things, too, that puzzled us. We could not see how Father Christmas could come down the sooty chimney and still remain clean. We worried especially about the fur on his coat and his nice white beard. Then there was always that mental measuring of the chimney stack and the resulting mystery of how a two-foot midsection could squeeze itself into a one-and-one-half-foot space. Of course, there came a time when we no longer wondered, but became very indulgent with those who did.

On one Christmas I presented Father with a mustache cup, so called because it had a special lip on one side to hold the mustache and keep it out of the tea. Father laughed a lot, and so I felt happy, but when he bent to kiss me I wished some one would invent a guard for the faces of

little girls whose fathers waxed their mustaches.

We did not have a large Christmas tree at home. Fir trees were too scarce in Wales for general use. I usually had a small artificial tree, a very glamorous affair with bright red berries and in a green wooden pot.

The absence of a tree at home heightened the interest we took in the large tree that held the center of the stage at our Sunday-school Christmas parties. It was laden with packages in all shapes and sizes, which we eagerly watched, wondering which ones were ours.

There was no way of telling until one of the teachers began taking them off and calling the names. It was an exciting time. When your name was called you advanced quietly to the front, trying to put into your walk enough speed to show your gratitude and to avoid slowing up the proceedings, yet enough hesitancy to

refute any suggestion of greediness. You took your gift, said "Thank you," and, back in your seat, opened it up to find a Japanese doll or a lace handkerchief or a diablo. With it would be a tinsel Christmas card on which plump little robins caroled gaily. You sighed, deeply. It was the happiest Christmas.

The grown-ups had happy times, too, in which we often shared. They had parties in the church and at home. At the church they would have an enviable time eating "trifle," a delicious concoction of cake, custard and sherry wine which I was always only allowed to taste, since it was not very good for children. I have since thought that it was probably *too* good for the children, especially when there was only enough to go around twice for the grown-ups.

There were many parties, though, in which we were allowed to participate fully. One happy time at our friends, the Haywoods, I shall never forget.

While the grown-ups played games around the fireplace, we children played tiddledywinks at the other end of the large room or roamed about the house as we pleased. I liked to sit in the shadows near Mother and Father. Parents always seemed to be having a so much nicer time than the children!

When the games were over, we all gathered in the dining room and sat about a long table that sagged with the weight of the roast beef, oranges, nuts, and plum pudding. The roast beef was cold, and marvelously pink and succulent. The plum pudding was the center of attraction with its sprightly sprig of holly. Just before it was served, brandy was poured around it and then set afire.

When the flames had died down and the pudding cut and served, we found that there was a little favor in nearly every piece. One of the guests found a thimble in her pudding, and she looked quickly at the young man next to her; a



thimble meant you were sure to be an old maid.

I looked at Mother, who was laughing quietly as she tried to slip a tiny doll under the rim of her plate. But when my sister was born a few months later I remembered the doll and thought it all very wonderful.

During the first twelve nights after Christmas we celebrated the Mari Llwyd, an old-time observance which was so ancient that no one knew how it had started, but which was such a lot of fun that every one observed it with enthusiasm.

Groups of people would get together and dress up in funny clothes. Then they would produce the skeleton of a horse's head, which had been saved from months back. This would be decorated with ribbons and rosettes and thrust over the head of the person delegated to be the horse. Then they would go around from

house to house, making a lot of noise and rapping on the doors.

They would say, "Open the door and let us in. Our feet are frozen."

On being invited in they would prance about the rooms, the one impersonating the horse shaking his head and trying to put on a lifelike performance. The "horse-play" would usually end in a happy time, and after the host's cakes and candies had been gratefully eaten, the players would depart, pausing outside the door to sing a song of thanks and good wishes.

We celebrated the beginning of the New Year much as people do in America,—trying to make as much noise as possible. When for a brief period we lived in Cardiff, we would stay up until midnight to hear the steam whistles blow and the bells ring. In Pontypool, however, tin whistles took the place of the steam sirens, and the tin whistle bands would

parade the streets at midnight, making as much noise as a Welshman's love of harmony will allow.

On New Year's day in olden times children paraded from house to house bearing the "apple gift," which was a very elaborate piece of work. First there was the apple, which according to Druidic lore represented the sun. In it were inserted three sticks in the form of a tripod, and these made a pedestal and suggested the rays of the sun. The sides of the apple were covered with flowers and stuck with oats or wheat, which were supposed to suggest the spears of Satan. Those who couldn't find oats or wheat used pieces of broken match-sticks. Sprays of thyme or some other sweet evergreen were thrust into the top of the apple to represent everlasting life. Finally a stick was inserted in the side to serve as a handle, and the child would then set out on his rounds, hoping to be rewarded with

enough coppers to make it all worth while.

Some of our neighbors had peculiar superstitions in regard to New Year's Day. A plentiful supply of bread during the year was felt to be an assured thing if a fresh loaf were brought into the house early in the morning. And doors were carefully guarded the first thing on New Year's Day, to be sure that no woman entered the house first. To insure good luck, the first visitor had to be a man.

A very entertaining custom, not observed in our town but practised in many of the country villages, was one which allowed the children to go about sprinkling water from a cup with a sprig of evergreen into the faces of passersby, while they recited a verse wishing them good luck for the New Year. It was great fun for the children.

Hallowe'en festivities were very jolly and amusing. We called the holiday "Nos Calan Gauaf," which means "the

first night of winter," and we regarded it as one of the three nights for spirits, when ghosts walk and witches wander. The other two were May Day Eve and Midsummer Eve, which were also observed with appropriate ceremonies.

Favorite fun on Hallowe'en was trying to bite an apple stuck on one end of a suspended horizontal stick. This was not an easy accomplishment, because on the other end of the stick was a lighted candle which would come around and catch in your hair as the apple eluded you.

Some had a lot of fun with a puzzling jug, from which visitors were invited to drink. Tiny holes were concealed in the decorations around the brim, and those not acquainted with the arrangement would be treated to a shower bath as they attempted to drink.



## CHAPTER X

### EISTEDDFODAU

FATHER had been practising for months,— “Ma-a-a-a-a, me-e-e-e-e,” until the house resounded with his notes. He would stop in the middle of breakfast, lay down his fork, clear his throat and suddenly cry, “Love sounds an alarm!” He would cup one hand behind his ear, and if the notes were to his liking, would continue with the song. If not, he would abandon it for more of the “me-e-e.” His breakfast never would be finished, for in a moment he was at the piano, lost in the realms of song.

The crack of rifles in the shooting gallery of the store gave way to bursts of song, and business was brisk with the violins, tuning-forks and sheet music, but

falling off on the bicycle and bullet side. Customers no longer thought of shooting pheasants and rabbits. They were more interested in the bigger game to be lured by silver notes from throat or string.

In other words, an Eisteddfod time was approaching, when those talented in music and poetry would gather together to test the supremacy of their song.

The Eisteddfod, which means a "sitting" or a "session," is an ancient institution peculiar to the Welsh, and the oldest ceremony of its kind in the world. Its primary object was to select and enthrone the best Welsh poet of the year, but it came to be a contest of worth for many other of the arts, notably the playing of the flute, violin, and harp, until today it is a ceremony of tremendous importance to the Welsh, a typical program including contests in individual and group singing, poetry, dramatic recitation, and the playing of almost every important

instrument. It serves now to perpetuate the Welsh language, popularize Welsh literature, and stress the cultural advantages of good music.

Some historians refer the real origin of the Eisteddfod back to the days of King Arthur, when he would call his knights together for contests in various branches of physical skill. The first recognized Eisteddfod, however, was held in Caerwys, Wales, in 1100, and with but few lapses when Wales was busy fighting off her enemies or suffering from her losses, a national competition has been held every year since.

It is the custom to begin this Eisteddfod on Bank Holiday, which is the first of August, and observed as the first day of the official holiday season. Welshmen from all over the world return to Wales at Eisteddfod time.

Although the national contest I once attended in Colwyn Bay, North Wales,

was the more important, the one I remember more clearly was held in Chepstow Castle, which is not far from Pontypool. The castle itself, although in ruins, was very interesting and lovely. It stood on top of a high cliff rising from the River Wye, and with centuries of stirring history to its credit, was a very inspiring place in which to hold an Eisteddfod.

Father was entered in the tenor solo competition, and many of our friends were competing in other numbers. There was a feeling of excitement about our town. For weeks before the Eisteddfod men went around with an air of listening for stray sounds. "Is Billy Williams singing better this year? But no, he is not a very dangerous enemy. His instructor is not teaching him the correct method. He sings too much in his throat. Now, to sing well, one must go like this, 'Ma-a-a-a-a,' the notes resounding from

nature's sounding board, the bone cavities of the nose and head."

That was Father's method of voice culture, used, of course, by all good singers, and he found it most successful. But some of the other singers would differ with him, and soon there would be gathered in Father's store a group of prospective rivals, each trying to win the other over to his method of voice production.

"Listen to this," a short, slim basso would demand, and from his slender body would come the deepest, richest tones. Soon the store would be filled with a discordant medley of sounds as scales were sung and fragments of songs thrown into the air as proof of the argument.

Then a miraculous thing would happen. All those jarring notes would suddenly blend into the most exquisite music, and the singers, forgetting that they had but a moment before been wrangling over



their voices, would be singing together, each man to his own part, "Aberystwyth" and "The Bells of Aberdovy," capping the unexpected performance with:

"Ah, ha ha! You and me,  
Little brown jug, don't I love thee!"

Customers would listen attentively, but without much surprise. Welshmen, they knew, were like that.

Chepstow Castle, on the day of the Eisteddfod, was alive again with hordes of fighters. But its falling walls gathered them in loving embrace, for these fighters used the weapons of their poetry and song, not spears and swords as in the days of the old castle's prime, and their only battle cries were musical remembrances of wars long dead.

And yet, the walls seemed to tremble slightly when a chorus of two hundred men stood on the Eisteddfod platform and sang as only Welshmen can:

- “ Men of Harlech, in the hollow,  
Do you hear like rushing billow,  
Wave on wave that surging follow,  
Battle’s distant sound?
- “ ’Tis the tramp of Saxon foemen,  
Saxon spearmen, Saxon bowmen.  
Be they knights or hinds or yoemen,  
They shall bite the ground.
- “ Loose the folds asunder,  
Flag we conquer under,  
The placid sky, now bright on high,  
Shall launch its bolts in thunder!
- “ Onward! ’Tis our country needs us,  
He is bravest, he who leads us,  
Fight for home, for life, for glory,  
Freedom, God, and Wales!”

Did the old castle remember those bloody days? Was it, I wondered, alarmed? These Welshmen looked warlike enough. Would they violate these trusting stones, now settled into the dreamy days of a peaceful old age?

But when the song was over, the singers filed down from the stage peacefully

enough, the glow of battle completely gone. In its place was an anxious expression, which seemed to ask, "How did we sing? Shall we win?"

Then another male chorus sang. It was wonderful how the men watched their leader. Every movement of his hands was significant. The singers sang softly, raised their voices to a crescendo and subsided again at the command of those expressive hands. Their very breathing seemed to be under the conductor's control. I even began to think, sitting there shaken with emotion, that they might hold a note at his command until one by one they would collapse and sink breathless to the floor. My regret when the music ceased was overshadowed by a great relief.

This was the afternoon of the Eisteddfod. Preliminary contests had been held during the morning, until in every group, sometimes of twenty competitors, only

three remained to be tried in the main contest of the afternoon and evening. Those who judged them (the adjudicators) sometimes sat on the stage with the contestants, but usually were seated in the audience, that they might hear the musicians to best advantage.

Father was one of the three tenors selected during the preliminaries, and now it was his turn to sing in the finals. The test piece was "Love Sounds an Alarm!", from the opera "Aïda," a very difficult aria.

Thousands of people were by this time filling the benches and standing around. Mother was sitting with me, and she seemed very nervous. I wondered why she was not competing, for she had a beautiful voice. She could always make me cry by holding me in her arms at bedtime and singing:

"Lay your head on my shoulder, Daddy;  
Turn your face to West."

Father was coming to the front of the stage, opening his music copy with hands that trembled slightly. The adjudicators consulted their lists. This was entry Number One in the tenor solo competition. Father nodded to the pianist, and then there was that dreaded moment when I wondered if he would begin at the right place. Surely he had passed the note. The pianist had been playing at least a minute. But then his voice came strong and clear, "Love Sounds an Alarm!" He sang without a tremor, but I was pressing my handkerchief into a tight wet ball.

Two other singers followed, and I wondered how the adjudicators could ever decide which one was best. It mattered not if the singer were short or tall, thin or rotund, that same amazing richness of tone came from his being, that same soft lyric quality so pleasing to Welsh ears.



Father had returned to his seat with us, and was intently listening to his competitors. He seemed very happy.

“They are not giving it the correct interpretation,” he said, as tenor Number Three began to sing. “They are wrong, and I’m going to win.”

One of Father’s friends who was sitting near by leaned over and said:

“Looks like Offie’s going to win, Griff.” “Offie” was tenor Number Three, and quite a celebrated local singer.

But Father shook his head. He seemed quite confident of what the decision would be.

Number 3 concluded his song and returned to the audience. Presently one of the adjudicators stepped up on the stage, rustled his notes and looked over the assembly. The silence was intense.

“In this competition,” he said, “I am surprised at this fact. Of the three contestants, only one has given the right in-

terpretation to this beautiful solo, 'Love Sounds an Alarm!'. Two sang it as though it were a love song, which it is not. The words alone would intimate it was never intended so. They call for dramatic singing.

"Furthermore, I can't understand why two of the singers sang in such slow tempo. Much too slow. The time is marked on the copy.

"Therefore I have no hesitation in awarding the prize to—Number One."

And then amid the applause of the audience, Father was walking up the aisle to the stage, where an exquisite little bag dangling from a long loop of ribbon was hung about his neck. In it was the prize money.

The bag itself had won a prize earlier in the day, in a competition to select the best prize bags for the Eisteddfod. Women of Wales fashioned them, and were real artists at the work. Fine stitches joined

together exquisitely blended pieces of colored silk, and the linings and drawstrings were as carefully chosen as the outside. Sometimes the bags were embroidered, sometimes their beauty was left to the excellent quality of the silk and its blending of colors. But always they were wrought with artistry and care.

The three best bags received prizes, and these and as many others as were needed were used to hold the prize money for the tenors and basses and pianists and poets.

The Chepstow Eisteddfod was concluded with a tenor and bass duet competition. Evening shadows had begun to fall before it was finished, and candles were hastily brought in from the town. And while stars added their glimmering to the flickering light, the blended voices of competing singers sent their songs into the air. Every one seemed subdued and happy. Millionaires and miners, farmers

and lords, seemed to need no greater joy than to sit together in the starlight and be part of an Eisteddfod.

On Bank Holiday we went to the National Eisteddfod in Colwyn Bay, and on the morning of the first day followed a group of men dressed in the long flowing robes of the ancient Druids, high priests of Wales, to the top of a mountain, where the Gorsedd ceremony was observed, as the customary opening of a national Eisteddfod. Spread before us hundreds of feet below was an amazing view. We could follow the curve of the bay for miles. Tiny waves teased the golden sand, and the grass of the adjoining fields was as green as emeralds. The *London Daily Mail*, in reporting the ceremony next day, praised the view as the finest in Europe.

A huge wooden building had been erected for the duration of the Eisteddfod. It would hold twenty thousand people,

and five hundred singers could stand on the stage at one time. Even at that, the place wasn't large enough, for on the opening day people not only filled the building, but nearly as many sat around on the grass outside.

During the first day the premier poet of Wales was enthroned in a high Bardic chair; choruses collected, sang, then dissolved in the crowd; little girls recited, and singers from Europe competed with the Welsh; and there were contests in playing on the harp, which is the national instrument of Wales. [In the early days there was a harp in every home, and children were taught to play from childhood.]

On the second day the ladies' choruses competed. The prize was awarded to a chorus of one hundred and fifty young women from a girls' school in North Wales. They were led by the headmistress of the school, a bent little woman



over seventy years old. She seemed frail until she stood in front of her chorus. Then she seemed to become powerful and strong, for at her command voices blended, whispered, and soared. She moved her arms quietly, but the girls didn't take their eyes from her until the song was ended.

Later in the day we saw the girls assembled at the railway station waiting for their train home. And because they were happy at having won the prize, they were singing. There was no audience and no piano, but their voices were flawlessly in tune and perfectly blended. And the little lady who had so earnestly led their singing on the Eisteddfod platform was now just as earnestly pleading with them to stop.

But they couldn't. They were happy, and they were Welsh, so they must sing.

## CHAPTER XI

### GOOD-BYE TO WALES

WE were going to live in America, a land across the "pond," where people ate strange food; peanuts, peaches and sweet corn; where girls wore silk stockings and white shoes, even white buttoned shoes, and rolled around on roller skates; where people put screens in the windows to keep out mosquitoes and flies.

Father prepared to sell his business, while Mother sent away for several American fashion magazines and engaged the services of a dressmaker. We wanted to be sure that our clothes would be in the American style so that we would not be too conspicuous in the new land.

Millicent's dresses were of fine cashmere, handmade and embroidered. Being allowed to choose the material and pattern

for my traveling suit, I picked a navy blue serge with glass buttons on the coat and skirt. It was not a very attractive pattern, but the girl who was wearing the suit in the magazine was also wearing a pair of roller skates, for which I would at that time gladly have exchanged my beloved bicycle.

We sailed from Liverpool, Mother, Millicent, and I. Father was with us at the dock, but he was remaining in Wales a few months longer to complete his business arrangements.

It was very exciting, boarding the ship. But when the gangplank was raised my happiness vanished. There was a crush of people about us on the deck. Another crowd waved and shouted at us from the pier. In that other crowd was Father.

He looked tiny and forlorn down there. I suddenly wanted to kiss him and say good-bye again, but there was no way I could get to him. He waved at us and

we waved back. He tried to tell us something, but we couldn't hear him.

Then a group of men on the pier called out:

“Are we downhearted?”

And the people on the boat answered in chorus:

“No-o-o-o-o!”

But Mother and I didn't join in the reply. The boat pulled slowly out and Father waved until we could no longer see him.

As the land faded into the distance and the world became nothing but ocean, sky and ship, things began to look better. There was so much to see that was new and startling, among them a shop where one could buy chewing gum, which I had never tasted nor seen before. However, during the days we were on board, I managed to make up for many chewing-gum-less years.

The ocean itself was very interesting.

Sea gulls followed us for a day or so, swooping down to the waves when we would throw crumbs to them, and sometimes stopping to rest on the waves. Then schools of porpoise began jumping in the wake of the ship, a long line of them leaping into the air and making graceful curves as they dived back into the water. Sunsets and sunrises were beautiful. Our world, at night and in the morning, was filled with color, the sky and sea looking like a glass of cloudy water into which red ink is being slowly spilled.

On the ship, waves began splashing over the lower decks and rushing into the stairways and lower cabins. People were becoming seasick in the most unbecoming places, and stewards were kept busy rushing around with mops and pails.

One day I met Eleanor, an American girl, and we became friends, soon finding that we had many interests in common. We both liked the evening concerts, and



we usually spent all the afternoon preparing for them. Our preparations consisted of collecting pieces of string and tying them into long strands.

We took this string with us to the concert, and while people were standing close together listening to the music we would tie the feet of some of them to other feet, or to near-by pillars. We were terribly frightened, and hardly ever stopped to see what happened when our victims attempted to move away. But I am sure nothing serious happened, because the string wasn't very strong.

One evening, though, we had only one rather heavy string to work with, and this we stretched with some apprehension from the ankle of a pretty young lady to the foot of a man some distance away. We got far away as soon as possible, but next day I noticed that the young man and the young lady hadn't been hurt at all, for they were walking together around

the deck and laughing and talking like old friends. Eleanor suggested that perhaps they had "fallen for each other," but I was sure the string hadn't been strong enough for that.

A few days later we docked in Philadelphia, where we were met by Mother's brothers. On the long ride to their home I caught unforgettable glimpses of my new country.

Girls seemed very pale. Streets were crowded and rather noisy, but still of an astonishing spaciousness. The laughter and cries of the children seemed very loud. Later some of them were to call me "greenhorn" and say, "Hello, English, how's your heart?" while I would draw myself up proudly and reply, "I am not English, I am Welsh."

It was faintly reminiscent of an occasion in an Eisteddfod in Cardiff Castle, when a distinguished musician, Dr. Lloyd of London, was about to make an adjudi-

cation. He prefaced the announcement of his decision in this manner:

“ I notice that the morning papers refer to me as the English adjudicator. I want to say most emphatically that I am Welsh, not English. It is true that I was born in London. But if a man happened to be born in a stable, surely you wouldn't call him a horse! ”

He was proud of his nationality, but had no bitterness toward England. It is of the Welsh that a famous poet once truly wrote:

“ Yet in whose fiery love of their own land,  
No hatred of another finds a place.”

When Father joined us in this country we left Philadelphia to take up our residence in Scranton, Pennsylvania, which has the largest Welsh population of any city in the United States, and among many relatives, and such names as William Williams, David Davis, Evan

Evans, and Griffith Griffiths, we found comfort in a new land.

Scranton was a haven where we found fish and chip shops, Welsh churches and societies, Eisteddfods, and coal mines from which Welsh miners came home to wash up and go out to choir practice. We learned of Scranton choruses that had crossed the ocean many times to compete in homeland Eisteddfods, listened to their music and felt a deep yearning for Wales.

We joined the church, and Father became the choir master. I went to school and tried to catch up on American history, while struggling not to roll my r's and to keep my voice from going up and down in the characteristic way of the native Welsh.

I wore a red flannel petticoat which caused me inexpressible embarrassment by coming down one day in the school yard. A short time later, in the same playground, I saw a boy experience a

similar embarrassment when his shirt was pulled loose in a fight, revealing a bright red chest protector which he desperately tried to hide while the others, taking advantage of his lowered arms, pummeled him about the face.

Years later I met a young man who seemed to be an especially nice person, and subsequently discovered that besides being the boy of the red-flannel undershirt, he was also one of the Thomases with whom I had raced across the sands of Beaumaris when I was a girl in Wales. So we were married, in spite of the fact that he was a "Northus," while I was from the South.

Three young American boys are now growing up in our home, and we are very earnestly trying to deserve the full measure of happiness that has come to us in America.

THE END





















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