

The Making of Modern Wales.

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NO nation presents a permanent picture; this is eminently true of Wales. Old Wales has practically disappeared. Traces of ancient local usages, customs, and traditions are becoming fainter as the years pass; most of them have perished unrecorded. Since the country—thanks to the Act of Union—has become a cosmos in itself, the people have been brought into correspondence with new environmental conditions. The change has produced a new type of civilization and a new type of Welshman. Not that there is, or likely to be, a total reversion in mind and in temperament; for the Welshman, under certain circumstances, will always reveal, more or less, the impetuosity and lack of the sense of responsibility so characteristic of his nature, and he may, when really tested, exhibit his traditional dislike of constituted authority. But the troublesome special tendencies and angularities of the typical Welshman are being toned down and modified. If I were asked to explain the traditional backwardness of the people in material civilization, I would attribute it to the lack of educational facilities; the want of contact with other nations, with whom they might have shared the qualities they have not; the exaggeration of their religious consciousness; the undue dominance of the emotive element; the self-centred disposition of the people, and their language, which has withheld them from contributing to, and benefiting by, British life and thought.

It is sometimes assumed—erroneously assumed—that the fundamental character of a people is of itself a sufficient guarantee of their ultimate development. Environment is of equal, often of greater, importance. For centuries Wales was but another name for obscurity; nowhere on the map of Europe could there be found a duskier community. It was like a candle, consuming its own wick, a light only to itself, and poor light at

that. The dreary period coincided with the period of its sullen exclusiveness and morbid introspectiveness, when it fed itself on its own local prejudices, and lived on the limited reserve of its own blood and intellect. How could a people existing under such conditions produce anything of real merit? Ignorant, morose, and unpractical. What they needed was an environment that would divert the current of their life, change their outlook, and modify their ancient characteristics. Something, though very little, was done in that direction through the liberalizing influences of a few of the more advanced Welshmen who had travelled abroad. The renaissance of the Tudor period marked a new epoch. So did the religious awakening of the eighteenth century. The rise of industrial Wales, the introduction of modern English journalism, the influence of the new learning and of British life and thought, touched the whole strata of Welsh society. Among none of the smaller nationalities has there been such a transformation in the life of the people, and in their social and political prospects, in so short a time. Many of the better qualities of the people are coming to the front, and their power illumines more and more as it is manifested in the corporate life of the community, and in the career of those Welshmen who are distinguishing themselves in the various branches of industry and learning. Indeed, Wales just now is receiving a measure of attention which is out of all proportion to what its size, its population, its contribution to general culture, or the capacity of the people for political administration would warrant.

In analyzing the forces that have operated in the making of this modern life of Wales, through the education of the moral and mental capabilities of the people, there are two factors that must be taken into account—viz., Anglicanism and Nonconformity. Their mutual activities embrace all that is best and highest in the ethical, religious, and educational development of the nation. True, it has become the fashion in some quarters to deny to Welsh Anglicanism any real share or lot in the work of social and spiritual regeneration. Heroic attempts are being

made through the Radical Press, on Radical platforms, and even in the House of Commons, to associate this Welsh awakening, and even the preservation of the language, and of the traditions of the race, almost entirely with the rise and influence of Nonconformity. The matter has assumed considerable political significance. It is one of the stock arguments advanced in favour of Welsh Disestablishment and Disendowment. Mr. Lloyd George has gone farther than that ; he told a convention of Nonconformists that "if we have any freedom in this land to enter any place of worship, it is because its doorstep and lintel are sprinkled with the blood of Nonconformists." The statement was vociferously applauded by ministers and laymen, whose political passion was as violent, and their reading of history as perverted, as his own. That branch of Protestantism—to exclude altogether the Church of England—from which Nonconformity descends, was Puritanism. What Puritanism, in its most militant form, did, is known to all who are conversant with general history. The story is told in the penal laws imposed by Cromwell's Puritans, in the commission issued by the Long Parliament to deal with witches in Suffolk, and which hanged no less than sixty persons. Baxter quoted it with approval. In Sweden all who dissented from the Articles of the Augsburg Confession were at once banished. In Protestant Switzerland many Anabaptists perished by drowning. It may be that Mr. Lloyd George never read the story of Servetus, or the books written by Luther, Calvin, Beza, and Melancthon on the lawfulness of persecutions. Does this champion of liberty, and the proclaimer of Nonconformity as the sole purveyor of toleration, know, or has he conveniently forgotten, the distress and the wanton cruelty which prevailed even in Wales, the land which he says he so dearly loves, under the Commonwealth? Every clergyman known to be a loyalist came under the ban of the Parliamentary men. The use of the Book of Common Prayer was regarded as an indictable offence. Churches were turned into stables for the convenience of soldiers ; they drank the whole of the communion wine one Easter Day in

Llandaff Cathedral, the contents of the library were burnt publicly in Cardiff, and the wives of the ejected clergy were invited to witness the deed.

This habit of reviling the Welsh clergy, and the Welsh Church, has become offensive to cultivated men. That the Church in Wales has not always been equal to its opportunity is a mere truism. One could pull down the Monarchy for similar reasons. The Church is not the only institution or organization against which the historical argument could be used with deadly effect. The one supreme fact in the history of present-day Wales is that the Church of England in Wales has within it all the elements that are essential for a great moral and intellectual expansion. Sixty years ago the Church was not in a well-organized condition, at present it is the only progressive religious force in Wales; foremost amongst the various religious bodies in numbers, foremost in all humanitarian work, and foremost in the creation of a spiritual atmosphere in every department of Welsh activity. To write the history of Welsh elementary education, without taking into account the heavy part played by the clergy and the Church, would be like writing "Hamlet" with the Prince of Denmark left out. Long before the State, in 1870, began to interest itself in the matter of Welsh education, the Church had planted her National Schools, where all children, without distinction of creed or class, could be trained and educated. Griffith Jones (1683-1761), around whose honoured name the history of Welsh elementary education so thickly clusters, and who was the one landmark in the Principality during the Georgian period, was a clergyman, and the Rector of Llanddowror. The landmarks of the Victorian era were Bishop Short and Dean Cotton; the former in the Diocese of St. Asaph, and the latter in the Diocese of Bangor. Dean Cotton established schools all over the diocese by means of private subscription, discovered and instructed teachers; he himself acted the part of teacher and inspector. He was the prime mover in the founding of the Training College at Carnarvon in 1846. Since the date of its foundation to the present

day the number of teachers trained in this college is over 1,100. Many of his pupils became distinguished clergymen. How his heart would have rejoiced had he been permitted to live to see the magnificent block of buildings standing on rocky eminence overlooking the city of Bangor, and in which he toiled for upwards of half a century in the work of elementary education!

One of Dean Cotton's most distinguished scholars—or "Old Boys," as he used to call them—was the late Rev. Owen Thomas, D.D., of Liverpool, the eminent Welsh Methodist minister. Mr. Lloyd George himself was brought up in one of these Church schools. Dr. Thomas publicly acknowledged his obligation.

By the year 1847 the Church had 279 schools in North Wales, where 18,732 children were trained; and in South Wales 312 schools, with 16,868 children. The increase was such that by 1902 they numbered 677, in which 91,603 children were being educated. Under the Act of 1902 the managers of the Church, or National, Schools were relieved from the cost of secular education, the Church lending its buildings to the education authorities for secular education, the Church being granted permission to impart religious instruction in them during school hours. No attempt was made in Wales to found any institution which could be considered of University rank until the year 1827, when St. David's College, Lampeter, associated with the Church of England, was established by Bishop Burgess.

It would be more than difficult, with the space at our disposal, to give an adequate idea of what the Church in Wales has done for Welsh education or to show the many-sided religious, ethical, and philanthropic work which has been accomplished through her agency before and after the great religious Revival. The fame of the celebrated school at Llandovery has gone far and wide, and to every student in Wales one need only mention the grammar schools, ancient and modern, erected under the patronage of the Church in Wales, and the training colleges of Carmarthen and Carnarvon, now

removed to Bangor, and later in her history the establishment of St. Michael's College, Aberdare.

The oldest and most distinguished patriotic institutions Welshmen can boast of are the Society of Ancient Britons, established in 1715; the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion, 1751; the Eisteddfod, 1819; and the Cambrian Archæological Association, 1845; and it was by the efforts of Welsh Churchmen all four were started, and at a time when the Church in Wales is said to have been at its lowest ebb.

It is one of the stock arguments of the Liberationists that the Church has done nothing to foster the Welsh language or to preserve it. On the contrary, the Church, before and after the Reformation, was *the* means of preserving the native language from extinction. Welsh lost considerable ground in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, but it obtained a new lease of life through the use of the Prayer-Book, the Metrical Psalms of William Middleton and Edmund Prys. After its expulsion from the monasteries it was fostered afresh in the service of the Church, and at the beginning of the eighteenth century it was in a flourishing condition. It is true that the Church has provided English services for non-speaking Welshmen and for English residents in Wales, and especially for the thousands of workmen who came into Wales after the opening of the coal-pits in the south. This Nonconformity neglected to do, and charged the Church with being an Anglicizing institution.

The greatest lexicographer Wales ever produced was a Churchman in the person of Chancellor Silvan Evans. The Church gave Wales one of the most masculine, powerful, and luminous intellects that had for generations been known among the Bishops of England — that is, Bishop Thirlwall. Archdeacon Prys, of Merioneth, gave the Church her rhymed version of the Psalms. The renowned Vicar of Llandovery gave her his moral aphorisms and sermons in verse. Bishop Morgan gave Wales her Welsh translation of the Bible, the greatest gift, next to the gift of the Cross, ever bestowed upon the Welsh nation. It need hardly be said that it has

profoundly affected the whole course of the nation's life. It preserved the Welsh language from extinction and gave impetus to the literature of the people. It proved a restraining force upon the vicious and lawless, and acted as a bond of union between the respective communities. In brief, the translation of the Bible into Welsh paved the way for the nationalization of the nation. As it is the inherent necessity of evil to breed evil, so it is the inherent necessity of goodness to spread goodness, and the Church at this hour is producing and distributing that which is the inherent quality of her character. Her moral tone is excellent. She is daily coming into closer touch with the people, and making herself more and more a necessity to the social and spiritual well-being of the community. She is daily teaching the high principles of life and religion, and her clergy are the most excellent examples of those principles. Some of the most beautiful hymns sung to-day in the Nonconformist chapels of Wales, as well as in the Church, were composed by Churchmen like Vicar Prichard of Llanymdyri, Edmund Prys, and William Williams of Pantycelyn. It was in the Church that the great Welsh Revival began. Her fine comprehensiveness, her tolerant spirit, her wealth of learning, the activity of the Welsh clergy in all humanitarian work, and their devotion to their high calling, appeal more and more both to the native Welsh, and to those from across the border who have made their home in the Principality.

