Review

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p. 163, where a figure of the Bachuill of Saint Moloc will be found. The original is there said to be in the possession of the Livingstones of Bachuill, whose representatives still have the Charter, but the Staff has been acquired by the Duke of Argyll.

BOOK REVIEWS

Cywyddau Cymru—wedi eu dethol a'u golygu gan ARTHUR HUGHES, ynghyda Rhagdraeth gan yr Athro EDWARD ANWYL. Bangor: Jarvis and Foster. 3s. 6d. net.

Probably many readers of Professor Lewis Jones's excellent *Caniadau Cymru* must have hoped for the fulfilment of the desire he there expresses that somebody would do for the *Cywydd* what his own collection does for lyrics in 'free metre.' Mr. Arthur Hughes in the present work, which is of similar format to the *Caniadau*, has done it admirably, and produced a volume for which all lovers of Welsh literature will feel that they owe him a debt of gratitude. This anthology of passages in the *cywydd* metre, a selection of three hundred and thirty-seven pieces from seventy-five authors, made with fine taste and critically edited, is a perfect treasure-house of beautiful verse, and gives to every Welshman the opportunity of acquainting himself with many of the chief poets of his country. One sighs for an inspired translator to interpret the poems for English readers; but alas! such an one has yet to be found, and indeed it may be doubted whether any translator, however inspired, could ever render in a non-Celtic tongue the finest effects of *cynganedd*. To the Welsh reader the book will give unalloyed pleasure, and we may echo the hope expressed by Professor Anwyl in his preface that it may be 'a means of education to generation after generation of the sons and daughters of Wales in the gems of their country's poetry.'

The principle of selection followed by Mr. Hughes is, quite rightly, somewhat different from that adopted in *Caniadau Cymru*. In an anthology of lyrics like the latter book it is far better, except in special cases where a portion of a poem can be readily detached from the rest or where a poem is of very unequal merit, to give only complete lyrics; but in dealing with a metre like the *cywydd*, which has been used for poems of every length, from a dozen lines to the epical proportions of Dafydd Ionawr's *Cywydd y Drindod*, and which, moreover, is found along with other metres in the *awdl*, such a principle could be carried out only by excluding from the selection some of the finest passages in the language. Mr. Hughes was therefore well advised in selecting freely from various *cywyddau*. Individual selections are of course, as in all anthologies, open to question, and it is perhaps to be wished that in some cases, for example in that of Dafydd ab Gwilym, more

complete specimens of the *cywydd* had been given; but there can hardly be a question as to the rightness of Mr. Hughes's general principle. Thus the book is less an anthology of *cywyddau* than one of passages in the *cywydd* metre. One improvement might indeed be suggested, with a view to a possible second edition—that the poem from which each selection is taken should be indicated at the foot. In many cases, after the longer selections, are collected a number of couplets; not a few of these 'jewels five words long' would be an ornament to any literature.

The book being intended for the general reader, Mr. Hughes very properly gives the poems in modern spelling, and he further smooths the path of the student by a short commentary, grammatical, metrical, and general, and by a glossary. There is also at the end of the book a biographical index like that in *Caniadau Cymru*, from which the notices of most of the later authors in the book are drawn. In addition to the biographical details a short critical appreciation is usually given; those of Dafydd ab Gwilym and Tudur Aled are deserving of special mention. It is scarcely necessary to add, to those who know Jarvis and Foster's publications, that the book is admirably printed and is, at the price, a marvel of cheapness.

In turning over the pages of this anthology, which, chronologically arranged, shows us the development of the *cywydd* metre for five hundred years, from its origin in the fourteenth century to modern times, two general reflections suggest themselves. The first is the beauty and consonance with the Welsh genius of *cynghanedd*, the basis of the *cywydd* as of all the strict metres. It has often been attacked both by Welsh and by foreign critics, and it has no doubt sometimes exercised a hampering influence on the genius of poets (though probably the Eisteddfodic system, with its set themes, is more really to blame); but how consistent it is in the hands of a master with freedom and flexibility is triumphantly shown by Dafydd ab Gwilym on every page. And of what exquisite effects it is capable when rightly handled! How indissolubly, for example, the beauty, both of thought and phrase, of the following passages is bound up with their *cynghanedd* :—

'Lle mae'r dyn a'r lliw mor deg
A'r wennol ar y waneg.'¹

'Y gŵr marw, 'e gâr morwyn
Ddaear dy fedd er dy fwyn.'²

'Ymaros di ym mrest hedd,
O ymaros daw mawredd :

¹ 'Where she abides, the maid whose hue is fair as the swallow on the wave.' Note, in the second line, how the *cynghanedd* reproduces the heaving motion of the waves.

² 'O dead man, the maiden loves the earth of thy grave for thy sake.'

'Gwell doniau na gwyllt ennyn,
Gwell yw Duw na gallu dyn.'¹

'Mae'r gerdd annwyl yn wylo,
A'r llaw wen dan grawen gro.'²

'Dros loywlas deyrnas y dydd
Hi daena ei hadenydd.'³

Secondly the collection well illustrates the extraordinary range and adaptability of the *cywydd*. We find this one metre used by Dafydd for his exquisite pastorals, playful, tender, or plaintive, by Goronwy Owen to describe, with almost Miltonic sublimity, the singing of the morning-stars and the fall of the heavens, by Islwyn for his brooding and melancholy mysticism, by Lewis Glyn Cothi to ridicule the Saxons of Flint and their piper, and by Nicander to sing the praises of cheese!

The subjects of these selections are various, but the majority relate, like the greater number in any collection, to one or other of the five subjects, love, nature, death, religion, and the love of country. In the first two Dafydd ab Gwilym stands alone. There are strings in the lyre of love which he never touched, and to apprehend the deeper spiritual significance of Nature as Islwyn for example did was of course impossible to any poet of Dafydd's age; but within his own realm he is unequalled. The extracts from his works, placed as they are at the beginning of the book, show his greatness more clearly than ever. It does not seem likely that he originated the *cywydd*, but as no earlier instance of it than his time is known he must at least have been one of the first to use it; yet he writes with an ease and mastery which later poets can at best only imitate. Of his professed disciples—most of the later poets have felt his influence directly or indirectly—the most worthy of mention is perhaps Bedo Brwynllys, from whom some beautiful extracts are given. Three strikingly imaginative couplets may be quoted: 'The sound of my sighing for my darling, my fair one, beats upon the east.' 'Thy love, O thou sun of the south, pours in rivers on my face.' 'My spirit will call unto thy life from wood to wood.'

The *marwnad* or elegy has always occupied an important place in Welsh literature, ever since the day when Llywarch Hên lamented over 'the white town in the valley,' and there are many beautiful examples in this collection. Two stand out with a more intimate appeal than the rest. One is the elegy (No. 32) of the fourteenth-century poet Llywelyn Goch over Lleueu Llwyd, who, tradition relates, had died of grief for a false report of his death. Is it possible anywhere in literature to find lines more moving

¹ 'Tarry thou in the bosom of peace; from tarrying comes might. Better are Nature's gifts than wild ardours, better is God than the strength of man.'

² 'The dear song weeps, and the pebbles cover the white hand.'

³ 'Over the bright realm of day she (night) spreads her wings.' Note here again how the *cynganedd* gives the effect of the beating of great wings.

in their intensity of passion than these !—‘Rise up, sweet soul, and open the dark earthen door ; put from thee thy long bed of sand, and meet my face, O beloved. See here, O thou whose gay life was so quickly spent, above thy grave the sun’s gay dwelling ; and one heavy of aspect for thy going, Llywelyn Goch, a bell to ring thy praise, who ranges wild with anguish about the door of thy house, Lleueu Llwyd. . . . Rise up to end the banquet ; then see if thou wilt choose the grave. Come, with the fox-glove in thy cheeks, up from the sad house of clay.’

The other is the elegy of Lewis Glyn Cothi on his five-year-old son with its passionate farewell : ‘John sends to his father a pang of longing and love : farewell to the smile in my mouth, farewell to laughter from my lips ; and farewell now to the ball, and farewell to loud singing ; and farewell to my merry friend, here in my life on the earth, to John my son !’ From that century of savage war and monstrous crimes this lament of the Lancastrian soldier over his child comes with an almost startling pathos.

Of the religious poems of the fourteenth century those quoted from Siôn Cent are the most interesting. Religion has occupied a larger place in Welsh poetry since the eighteenth century, and there are several fine specimens of modern religious poetry. There is none more noble than the lines (No. 327) from Islwyn’s *awdl* to the night, surely one of the great masterpieces of the nineteenth century.

Among poems which sing the love of country may be mentioned the fine lines of Iolo Goch to Owain Glyndwr (No. 38) ; but the finest is Goronwy Owen’s wonderful ode to Anglesey, the poem of which Mr. W. J. Gruffydd has said that it is ‘the most inspired and inspiring poem of all the poetry of the eighteenth century.’

Among poems not strictly falling under any of the above heads may be mentioned specially the well-known *cywydd* (No. 40) of Iolo Goch on the labourer, a poem which from the contemporary of Owain Glyndwr gives a wonderfully modern impression with its praise of the labourer as ‘Emperor of earth and seas and of all the life of the world.’

Enough has been said to show the value and interest of this delightful collection. It is impossible to conclude without a reference to the serious illness which has so unhappily fallen upon the compiler almost at the outset of his life’s work. The lovers of Wales will hope for him a speedy recovery, and that he may long be spared to devote his powers to the service of his country.

H. IDRIS BELL.

Songs of the Hebrides. Some collected and all arranged by M. KENNEDY FRASER. Edinburgh. 2s. net.

We have received further numbers of Mrs. Kennedy Fraser’s *Songs of the Hebrides*. The complete work will shortly be issued by Messrs. Boosey,