Notes on the Bibliography of Monmouthshire.¹

WHEN I began to put together a few remarks on the Bibliography of Monmouthshire I felt confident that the subject to be dealt with would leave me much to say. I felt so because I knew the county to be rich in books and publications. I will not say that more books were written, published, or printed in Monmouthshire than in any of the neighbouring counties, because that may be inaccurate; but I am referring to books about Monmouthshire—books which deal with its antiquities, its customs, its historical associations, and which describe its beautiful scenery. So far as this class of books is concerned, I venture to believe that no county in Wales has induced so many to take up pen and pencil to describe its charms. Feeling this, and that most of the books referred to were written by men well qualified by their learning, local knowledge, and other circumstances to do justice to their subjects, I set about my paper with some hope of success, but as I proceeded a difficulty presented itself, viz., that of being able to condense the treatment within limited space.

I need not tell anyone here that by bibliography is meant the description of books; but to attempt at describing all the books relating to Monmouthshire or to any part of it by reading title-pages and losing myself among quartos, octavos, and duodecimos, with the minutiae of pagination and signatures, would be an exceedingly dry and tedious work.

However, for the purpose of affording myself a general view of the subject, I prepared a list of all the books in my own collection, together with a few others recorded in bibliographies, especially Rowlands' *Cambrian Bibliography*, from my own notes of others, and other sources. I do not claim to think that my list is by any means complete, but incomplete as it may be, it contains 180 or more entries; I trust you will kindly take it as read. In the meantime I purpose offering a few remarks, confining myself to the main features of its contents.

¹ Read before the Eighteenth Annual Meeting of the Library Association, Cardiff, September, 1895.

The first entry given by Rowlands in his *Bibliography* which in any way relates to Monmouthshire, comes under the year 1597, being an *Acte for the repairing of the Bridges of New Port and Carlion*. So far as I know, there is no evidence of an earlier publication referring to any part of the county; but strictly perhaps it may be said, this hardly comes under the definition of bibliography proper, as it is part and parcel of the statutes at large—even this item is fifty-one years later than the first Welsh book recorded by the same bibliographer. *The Theatre of the Empire of Great Britaine*, published by Speed, in 1614, deals with Monmouthshire, together with other Welsh counties, as an integral part of the kingdom of England. His notes are necessarily brief; but as they are the earliest we have, they are by no means uninteresting.

An important factor in the literature of our country are the pamphlets issued during the Civil War, in which Monmouthshire played a prominent part. No doubt many of those pamphlets have been irrevocably lost and destroyed; fortunately, however, some few survived those turbulent times, and are to be found in public as well as private collections; and many of them relate to Monmouthshire. Although most of them bear the impress of that extreme bias—characteristic of the opinions entertained by their authors—a complete collection of them, if that were possible, would be invaluable.

During the Commonwealth, as may be seen in the list, political tracts and broadsides were issued, which, though little valued then, would now fetch their weight in gold. Some of them may be justly classed as jest-books, written in a most humorous style, wherein it seems the English spoken by the Welshmen of the period is highly caricatured; I say caricatured, because I scarcely think a Welshman *poem* in Monmouthshire, if he spoke English at all, spoke it in the manner suggested in such tracts as the *Welshman's Warning-Piece* and the *Welch-man's Prave Resolution*.

With the exception of such political and politico-religious pamphlets as are mentioned in my list, I do not find any books relating to Monmouthshire printed in the seventeenth century; and indeed, with the exception of two—*The Memoirs of Monmouthshire*, by Rogers, 1708, and the *Two very interesting and Full Papers relating to the Property of Sir William Morgan*—both of private and local character, none were published until we reach the latter half of the eighteenth century. The author of the first named was the Rev. Nathan Rogers, Incumbent of the

Parish of Llanvair Discoed, a rural parish within the precincts of the chase of Wentwood, and after describing briefly the county he gives vent to what he evidently deems a grievance, in which he strongly resented the interference by his Grace, the then Duke of Beaufort, with the supposed title of squatters and others claiming certain rights and privileges in the ancient chase of Wentwood by enclosure and otherwise. This book went through a second and posthumous edition, which was printed and published in the year 1826, by Etheridge, printer, Newport, who was also the printer and publisher of the Chartist literature of that period; this second edition contained foot notes strongly impregnated with Chartism, and in which was assailed the ancestry of the noble family before referred to in a most violent and unwarrantable manner, but it does not appear whether Etheridge or who was the author of those notes.

Although not a topographical book the *Century of Inventions*, published in 1663 by the second Marquis of Worcester, claims more than a passing reference; its noble author was a Monmouthshire man, born at Raglan Castle, and lies buried at Raglan Church. This remarkable book has gone through seven editions; the last with a Memoir of the Author, was published by Quaritch, 1865. It is also reprinted in vol. xviii. of the *Gentleman's Magazine*. In 1767 the Rev. Edmund Jones, familiarly known in after life as *The Prophet of the Tranch*, then a Nonconformist minister to a small Congregational body at Pontypool, published a volume containing *A Relation of Apparitions of Spirits in the County of Monmouth and the Principality of Wales*. Mr. Jones was neither young nor inexperienced in life when he published it, as he was born at Penyllwyn, in the parish of Aberystroth, Monmouthshire, April 18th, 1702, and had been a minister since 1740, therefore he was 65 years of age—the age of discretion and experience. His object in publishing it also differed considerably from that which induced Mr. Wirt Sykes and other modern folk-lorists to circulate the result of their labours. Mr. Jones did not consider the tales that were related about the apparition of spirits by any means as a species of folk-lore; to him, as to many of his superstitious countrymen, they were of almost equal authority to the Gospel he preached, and he sent forth his copy to the printer with the design, as he tells us, “to confute and prevent the infidelity of denying the being and apparition of Spirits which tends to irreligion and atheism.” This book, which has gone through three editions,

1767, 1780, and 1813,¹ the last of which even is now very scarce, is the first of its kind relating to Wales. I have the two last editions. Mr. Jones also, in 1779, published an account of his native parish, *A Geographical, Historical, and Religious Account of the Parish of Aberystwith*, which he was induced to write, as he tells us, in consequence of an article which he had read in the *Gentleman's Magazine* of that date, wherein the writer urged persons having a particular knowledge of a particular place to write its history. This book may be regarded as the first parochial history in Wales. He also wrote and published several other books, chiefly sermons, which were printed and published at Trevecka, and also wrote a Diary which contained, it is believed, his autobiography, but which with a great quantity of his papers were sold by his nephew legatee to a grocer at Trosnant, Pontypool, for the wrapping up of his commodities, and for which they were accordingly used, with the exception of a very small portion of the diary referred to, which was fortunately secured by a bard named Nefydd. Notwithstanding his extraordinary views, Mr. Jones was certainly more advanced in general knowledge than the majority of his contemporaries; he and his wife (to whom he always referred as his "dear spouse") lived on terms of the greatest felicity, and it is said the celebrated Rev. George Whitfield, who slept one night under their roof, was so impressed by their harmony that he determined to marry, and it may be remembered that he married a Mrs. James, of Abergavenny, a widow, but which marriage turned out unhappily. Dr. Rees, in his *History of Nonconformity*, in referring to this incident, pithily remarks—"But, alas! Mrs. James was not a Mrs. Jones." He died in the year 1793.

Again, in the year 1775, two books appeared, both important in their way; one was an *Account of Roman Antiquities in Monmouthshire*, by John Strange; and the other being a relation of *A Gentleman's Tour through Monmouthshire*, 8vo; a third edition of this book in 4to passed through the press in the year 1781, with illustrations of a very fine and bold character and which delineated some ancient buildings, no longer existing, consequently this book is at the present time valuable as well as rare.

In the present century several books were published giving an account of *Tours throughout South Wales and Monmouthshire*, of

¹ The two last only are known to me, neither of which contains any reference to an earlier edition.

more or less merit, many of which are beautifully illustrated. In some instances, as in the one by *Barber*, 1803, as well as the *Descriptive Excursions throughout South Wales and Monmouthshire*, by *Donovan*, 1805, the fine coloured engravings are perhaps their leading feature; often the topographical information is found to be inaccurate and the inaccuracies are perpetuated by successive writers.

Perhaps no river in the Principality has received more or earlier tributes from literary men and poets than the Wye. The picturesque country through which it winds its way attracted the genius of *William Gilpin*, who was born at Carlisle in the year 1724, and who took orders and lived for a time on a curacy, but which he relinquished and successfully conducted a School at Cheam, in Surrey, whereby he realised a fortune of some £10,000. He subsequently accepted the living of Boldre, on the borders of the New Forest, Hampshire, where he died April 5th, 1804. Mr. Gilpin, who wrote several works on picturesque and forest scenery, published in 1782, his *Observations on the River Wye, and several parts of South Wales*, which went through its fourth edition during the author's life; those volumes are now exceedingly rare and are seldom found except in the collections of the tasteful and curious. But probably the correspondence of the poet Gray attracted more tourists to the River Wye than Gilpin's Tour. They visited it in the same year, and the immortal poet, in one of his letters, says:—"My last summer's tour was through Worcestershire, Gloucestershire, Monmouthshire, Herefordshire and Shropshire, five of the most beautiful counties in the kingdom. The very principal light and capital feature of my journey was the river Wye, which I descended in a boat for nearly forty miles from Ross to Chepstow. Its banks are a succession of nameless beauties." Probably almost the last happy moments the poet had in this world were those spent on the Wye, for in a few months, ill-health and despondency seized him and he died during the following summer.

Since his time, however, the Wye has been the theme of many a handsome volume, by such writers as Ireland, Heath, Fosbroke, Willett, Louisa Anne Twamley, Thomas, Taylor, Bevan, Newman, Freeman, Warner, as well as several anonymous authors which space forbids me but to name; whilst the muse has been evoked in its praises by Robert Bloomfield and "Wiomi."

Nothing approaching a general history of the county

appeared until the year 1796, when the *History of Monmouthshire* was published in a 4to volume. The author was the Rev. David Williams, a native of Cardigan¹ and a Nonconformist minister, first at Frome, in Somersetshire, and successively at Exeter, Highgate, Cavendish Square, and other places in, or about, London. The book is not a happy attempt at a County History, and judging from the author's sentiments, he seemed to have received less help from the sources he most expected than he got; perhaps the most valuable part of the book is the appendix, in which is set out *in extenso* the correspondence of the author with literary persons connected with the county. He was the author of some other books, but his theological views were considered anything but orthodox. He died June 22nd, 1816, aged 78, and was buried at St. Ann's Church, Soho, London.

Allied to the same class of book is *An Historical Tour in Monmouthshire*, by Archdeacon Coxe, in two 4to volumes, which was illustrated by his contemporary and friend, Sir Richard Colt Hoare; this is the most exhaustive and most interesting book yet published on the county. Its author was born in 1747, and after receiving a University education, he successfully accompanied several young noblemen to the continent in the capacity of tutor, and on his return obtained various preferments in the Church till he became Canon residentiary of Salisbury, and Archdeacon of Wilts. He was the author also of *Travels in Switzerland, Travels in Poland, Russia, Sweden, and Denmark, History of the House of Austria, Historical Memoirs of the Kings of Spain, Memoirs of Sir Robert Walpole*, and many others equally interesting and valuable, and had in contemplation a second edition of his *Tour through Monmouthshire*. I once saw an interleaved copy of the latter with numerous MSS. notes made by him with that view. He died in 1828.

Then we have a very good book by the Rev. John Evans, 1810, 8vo, and another by George Alexander Cooke. I should by no means forget the Caxton of Monmouthshire, Mr. Charles Heath, of Monmouth, author, printer and publisher. Perhaps Heath was not the first printer in Monmouthshire, because I find that some Welsh books were printed in 1740 at the *Argraphwasg-Newydd*, the new printing press at Pontypool, but the name

¹ *Williams' Eminent Welshmen*. The Rev. John Davies, F.S.A., of Llandudwy (himself a native of Cardiganshire), informs me, however, that Williams was a native of Caerphilly, Glamorganshire.

of the printer is not given. Again, in 1741, a small Welsh hymn book appeared at Pontypool, printed by S. Mason, but what became of him afterwards I do not know.

However, Charles Heath was the first Monmouthshire printer who associated himself with the literature of the county. He was born at Hurcott, near Kidderminster, Worcestershire, about the year 1761, and settled in the town of Monmouth as a printer about 1788, when his antiquarian taste soon developed itself, and the result of his researches in that direction he published in several volumes, which ran through several editions. His account of *Tintern Abbey* appeared in 1793, *The Excursions down the Wye*, in 1799; *Descriptive Account of the Kymin Summer House*, in 1801; *Chepstow Castle*, in 1801; *Raglan Castle*, the same year; *History of the Town of Monmouth*, in 1804; and a reprint of the *Lamentable News out of Monmouthshire* in 1829.

Literature is but seldom a paying concern, and Charles Heath died, it is lamentable to say, not in affluent circumstances, at Monmouth, January 7th, 1831. A tombstone was subsequently erected over his remains by his fellow townsmen.

The topographical themes so well treated by Heath were subsequently taken up by other writers. Tintern has been handled by Thomas and Taylor, with a poem by Edward Collins, and Tintern and Raglan Castle have been amply noticed by Fosbroke, Clark and Waugh, whilst Chepstow Castle has had several authors, anonymous and otherwise, to defend it. Abergavenny has found two or more champions, but perhaps the principal historian of Abergavenny is John White. When the first edition of his *Guide to the Town and Neighbourhood of Abergavenny* appeared in 1845, its author was working as a compositor with the late Mr. James Hiley Morgan at Abergavenny. He afterwards went to Hereford and joined the staff of the *Hereford Times*, and from thence to America.

Perhaps no native of Monmouthshire has done more than Mr. J. H. Clark, of Usk, as a topographical writer; in 1869 he issued from his own press at Usk a most interesting illustrated *History of Monmouthshire*, 8vo; he is the Historian of Usk; the Castles of Monmouthshire have received very creditable treatment at his hands; his *Sketches of Monmouthshire* (in which he has reprinted Rogers' Memoirs before referred to), his *Flora of the County*, and his *Songs of the Seasons*, are all full of interest, in fact, with no less than seven volumes has he enriched the literature of Monmouthshire; Mr. Clark is now an octogenarian and still

active. Except Mr. Clark and Mr. Hillman, of Chepstow (who has written a very good guide book, viz., *Illustrated Historical Handbook for Tourists*), I know of no one who has attempted to give the Flora of Monmouthshire.

Objects antiquarian have received the most able treatment at the hands of the late Mr. Thos. Wakeman, of the Graig, and Mr. Octavius Morgan, of the Friars, who singly and in conjunction with each other have contributed papers of particular interest on subjects ever dear to antiquaries: these papers are well illustrated, and comprise objects of architecture and the history of several castles and abbeys, ancient domestic residences and Roman remains. Mr. Octavius Morgan was the fourth son of the late Sir Charles Morgan of Tredegar Park, and was born in the year 1803. Educated at Westminster School and Christ College, Oxford, where he took his M.A. in 1832. A staunch Conservative in politics, he sat in the House of Commons for his native county from 1841 to 1874. He resided at the Friars, Newport, where he died August 5th, 1888, and was buried at Bassaleg Churchyard.

Mr. Wakeman predeceased Mr. Morgan, and bequeathed to him all his papers and MSS., and the latter in turn bequeathed his (which, of course, included the former) to the Society of Antiquaries, at Burlington House, London: these have been recently partially catalogued by Mr. Mitchell, of Llanvrechva Grange, and consist of a great number of volumes on the several Manors with their boundaries and parochial and family history of Monmouthshire. Some idea of their magnitude may be imagined when I state that there are eight volumes, in folio, of accounts of parishes, seven volumes of pedigrees, &c., sundry portfolios and note-books, and a large quantity of MSS.

In addition to Morgan and Wakeman, honourable distinction should also be given to the names of the late Mr. John Edward Lee, Mr. and Mrs. Bagnall-Oakley, Mr. and Mrs. Mitchell, Mr. W. H. Greene, and Mr. W. N. Johns. We are indebted to each and all of these ladies and gentlemen for much painstaking and useful work.

Time will not allow me to notice the different works enumerated in my list, but I would just call attention to the flood of pamphlets which were scattered over the country during the Chartist agitation in the fourth decade of this century. John Frost himself—the leading agitator—wrote no less than seventeen pamphlets, and I believe that the two strong

letters sent by Peter Saunders to Mr. Mogridge may be classed in the same category.

The Frost's pamphlets, being relics of those troubled times, written by a man who possessed a great force of mind and energy, are now exceedingly scarce and valuable, but I believe a complete set is to be found in the Cardiff Free Library.

In conclusion, I sincerely wish that some means were taken to collect all the literature pertaining to each county in Wales, with the view of depositing the same in a suitable building in our county towns for reference, and it is, I venture to say, a subject well worth the attention of our Parochial and County Councils.

A good collection of historical books, maps and enclosure acts relating to each county would prove a valuable acquisition.

W. HAINES.

Y Bryn,

September 11th, 1895.