VARIOUS

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Содержание

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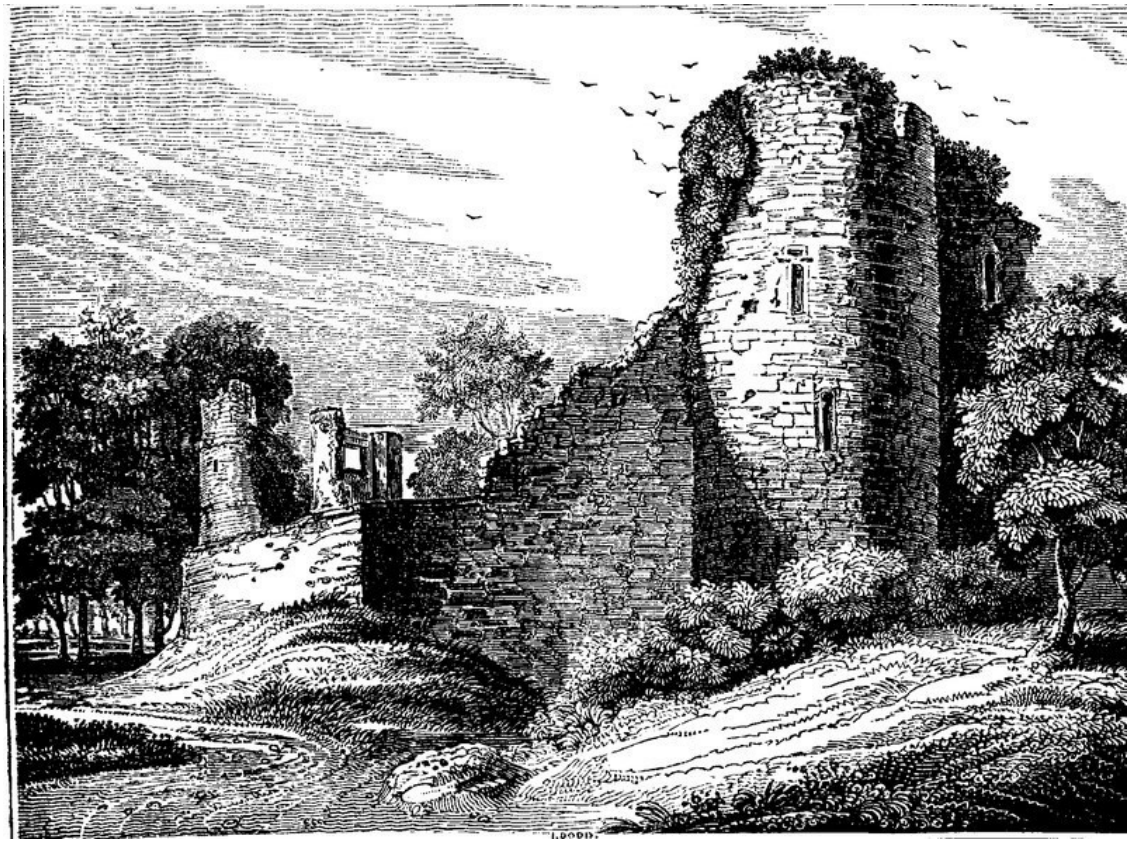
WILTON CASTLE



Wilton Castle.

Here is one of the ivy-mantled relics that lend even a charm to romantic nature on the banks of the Wye. Its shattered tower and crumbling wall, combine with her wild luxuriance, to form a scene of great picturesque beauty, though, as Gilpin observes, "the scene wants accompaniments to give it grandeur."

These ruins stand opposite to Ross, on the western bank of the Wye. The Castle was for several centuries the baronial residence of the Greys of the south, who derived from it their first title, and who became owners in the time of Edward the First. It may therefore be presumed to have been one of the strongholds, in the great struggles for feudal superiority with Wales, which were commenced by Edward, whose "active and splendid reign may be considered as an attempt to subject the whole island of Great Britain to his sway."[1] Or, in earlier times, being situated on the ancient barrier between England and Wales, it may have been a station of some importance, from its contiguity to Hereford, which city was destroyed by the Welsh, but rebuilt and fortified by Harold, who also strengthened the castle. The whole district is of antiquarian interest, since, at the period of the Roman invasion,

[1] Mackintosh's Hist. England, vol. i, p. 247.

Herefordshire was inhabited by the Silures, who also occupied the adjacent counties of Radnor, Monmouth, and Glamorgan, together with that part of Gloucestershire which lies westward of the Severn. The Silures, in conjunction with the Ordovices, or inhabitants of North Wales, retarded, for a considerable period, the progress of the Roman victors, whose grand object seems to have been the conquest of these nations, who had chosen the gallant Caractacus as their chieftain, and resolutely exhausted every effort in defence of the independence of their country.

The present demolished state of the Castle is referred to the Royalist Governors of Hereford, by whose orders it was burnt to the bare walls during the reign of Charles I. in the absence of its then possessor, Sir J. Brydges.

The scenery of the WYE, at this point is thus described by tourists: "From Hereford to Ross, its features occasionally assume greater boldness; though more frequently their aspect is placid; but at the latter town wholly emerging from its state of repose," it resumes the brightness and rapidity of its primitive character, as it forms the admired curve which the churchyard of Ross commands. The celebrated spire of Ross church, peeping over a noble row of elms, here fronts the ruined Castle of Wilton, beneath the arches of whose bridge, the Wye flows through a charming succession of meadows, encircling at last the lofty and well-wooded hill, crowned with the majestic fragments of Gooderich Castle, and opposed by the waving eminences of the forest of Dean. The mighty pile, or peninsula, of Symonds' Rock succeeds, round which the river flows in a circuit of seven miles, though the opposite points of the isthmus are only one mile asunder. Shortly afterwards, the Wye quits the county, and enters Monmouthshire at the New Wear.

The Rev. Mr. Gilpin, in his charming little volume on Picturesque Beauty,[2] has a few appropriate observations: after passing Wilton—

"We met with nothing for some time during our voyage but grand, woody banks, one rising behind another; appearing and vanishing by turns, as we doubled the several capes. But though no particular objects characterized these different scenes, yet they afforded great variety of pleasing views, both as we wound round the several promontories, which discovered new beauties as each scene opened, and when we kept the same scene a longer time in view, stretching along some lengthened reach, where the river is formed into an irregular vista by hills shooting out beyond each other and going off in perspective."

We ought not to forget to mention Ross, and its association with one of the noblest works of GOD—honest John Kyrle, celebrated as the Man of Ross. Pope, during his visits at Holm-Lacey, in the vicinity, obtained sufficient knowledge of his beneficence, to render due homage to his worth in one of the brightest pages of the records of human character.

[2] Observations on the River Wye, &c. By William Gilpin, M.A.—Fifth Edition.

"MOTHER CAREY'S CHICKENS"—EGGS

(For the Mirror.)

In a paper on the *Superstitions of the Sea*, a few years ago,[3] I slightly alluded to the nautical belief that the appearance of the Stormy Petrel, and other marine birds at sea, was often considered to be the forerunner of peril and disaster; and as your excellent correspondent, *M.L.B.*, in a recent number, expresses a wish to know the origin of the *soubriquet* of *Mother Carey's Chickens*, which the former birds have obtained, I now give it with all the brevity which is consistent with so important a narration. It appears that a certain outward-bound Indiaman, called the *Tiger*, (but in what year I am unable to state,) had encountered one continued series of storms, during her whole passage; till on nearing the Cape of Good Hope, she was almost reduced to a wreck. Here, however, the winds and waves seemed bent on her destruction; in the midst of the storm, flocks of strange looking birds were seen hovering and wheeling in the air around the devoted ship, and one of the passengers, a woman called "Mother Carey," was observed by the glare of the lightning to laugh and smile when she looked at these foul-weather visitants; on which she was not only set down as a witch, but it was also thought that they were her familiars, whom she had invoked from the *Red Sea*; and "all hands" were seriously considering on the propriety of getting rid of the old beldam, (as is usual in such cases,) by setting her afloat, when she saved them the trouble, and at that moment jumped overboard, surrounded by flames; on which the birds vanished, the storm cleared away, and the tempest-tossed *Tiger* went peacefully on her course! Ever since the occurrence of this "astounding yarn," the birds have been called "Mother Carey's Chickens," and are considered by our sailors to be the most unlucky of all the feathered visitants at sea.

To turn by a not unnatural transition from *birds* to *eggs*, permit me to inform your Scottish correspondent, *S.S.* (see No. 536,) where he asserts that the plan of rubbing eggs with grease in order to preserve them, "is not so much as known in our own boasted land of stale eggs and bundlewood;" that the said *discovery* has long been known and practised in many parts of old England; and that the repeated experience of several friends warrants me in giving a decided negative to his assertion that eggs so prepared "*will keep any length of time perfectly fresh*." If kept for a considerable period, though they do not become absolutely bad, yet they turn *very stale*. I happen to know something of Scotland, and was never before aware that the raw clime of our northern neighbours was so celebrated for its poultry. *M.L.B.* is certainly misinformed in speaking of the trade in *Scotch* eggs to *America*. The importation of eggs from the continent into England is very extensive: the duty in 1827 amounted at the rate of 10*d*. per 120, to 23,062*l*. 19*s*. 1*d*.; since which period there has, we believe, been an increase. The importation of eggs from Ireland is also very large. If *S.S.* resides in London, he may have occasion to sneer at "our boasted land of stale eggs;" but he should rather sneer at the preserved French eggs, with which the London dealers are principally supplied.

VYVYAN.

[3] See Mirror, No. 205, vol. xi.

THE CURFEW BELL

(To the Editor.)

In addition to the remarks made by *Reginald*, in No. 543, and by *M.D.*, and *G.C.*, in No. 545 of *The Mirror*, let me add that the Curfew is rung every night at eight, in my native town, (Winchester,) and the bell, a large one, weighing 12 cwt., is appropriated for the purpose, (not belonging to a church) but affixed in the tower of the Guildhall, and used only for this occasion, or on an alarm of fire.

In that city the Curfew was first established under the command of the Conqueror, and the practice has continued to the present day. I have been assured by many old residents, that it formerly was the custom to ring the bell every morning at four o'clock, but the practice being found annoying to persons living near, the Corporation ordered it to be discontinued.

To such of your readers who, like myself, are fond of a solitary ramble along the sea shore by moonlight, I would say, go to Southampton or the Isle of Wight; take an evening walk from Itchen through the fields to Netley, thence to the Abbey and Fort ruins, under woods that for a considerable distance skirt the coast; or on the opposite side, through the Forest of Oaks, from Eling to Dibden, and onwards over the meadows to Hythe: there they may, in either, find ample food for reflection, connected with the Curfew Bell.

Seated on a fragment of the towers of Netley Abbey, whose pinnacles were so often hailed by seamen as well known landmarks, but whose Curfew has for centuries been quiet, the spectator may see before him the crumbling remains of a fort, erected hundreds of years ago. On the left is an expanse of water as far as the eye can reach, and in his front the celebrated New Forest,—

> Majestic woods of ever vigorous green,
> Stage above stage, high waving o'er the bills;
> Or to the far horizon wide diffus'd,
> A boundless deep immensity of shade—

the scene of William's tyranny and atrocity, the spot where his children met their untimely end, and where may be seen the *tumuli* erected over the remains of the Britons who fell in defence of their country.

In the deep recesses of a wood in the south-east prospect, the eye may faintly distinguish the mouldering remains of the Abbey of Beaulieu, famed in days of yore for its Sanctuary, the name of which is now only recorded in history. Even the site of the tower is unknown, whose Curfew has long ceased to warn the seamen, or draw the deep curse from the forester.

There they may

> "On a plat of rising ground,
> Hear the far off Curfew sound,
> Over the wide watered shore,
> Swinging slow with sullen roar."

The Curfew is rung at Southampton, Downton, Ringwood, and many other towns in the west, every night at eight.

P.Q.

THE SELECTOR; AND LITERARY NOTICES OF *NEW WORKS*

SPANISH SCENERY

The following is from the delightful pencil of Washington Irving: it will be seen to bear all the polish of his best style:—

"Many are apt to picture Spain to their imaginations as a soft southern region, decked out with all the luxuriant charms of voluptuous Italy. On the contrary, though there are exceptions in some of the maritime provinces, yet, for the greater part, it is a stern, melancholy country, with rugged mountains, and long sweeping plains, destitute of trees, and indescribably silent and lonesome, partaking of the savage and solitary character of Africa. What adds to this silence and loneliness, is the absence of singing-birds, a natural consequence of the want of groves and hedges. The vulture and the eagle are seen wheeling about the mountain-cliffs, and soaring over the plains, and groups of shy bustards stalk about the heaths; but the myriads of smaller birds, which animate the whole face of other countries are met with in but few provinces in Spain, and in those chiefly among the orchards and gardens which surround the habitations of man.

"In the interior provinces the traveller occasionally traverses great tracts cultivated with grain as far as the eye can reach, waving at times with verdure, at other times naked and sunburnt, but he looks round in vain for the hand that has tilled the soil. At length, he perceives some village on a steep hill, or rugged crag, with mouldering battlements and ruined watch tower; a stronghold, in old times, against civil war, or Moorish inroad; for the custom among the peasantry of congregating together for mutual protection, is still kept up in most parts of Spain, in consequence of the maraudings of roving freebooters.

"But though a great part of Spain is deficient in the garniture of groves and forests, and the softer charms of ornamental cultivation, yet its scenery has something of a high and lofty character to compensate the want. It partakes something of the attributes of its people; and I think that I better understand the proud, hardy, frugal, and abstemious Spaniard, his manly defiance of hardships, and contempt of effeminate indulgences, since I have seen the country he inhabits.

"There is something, too, in the sternly simple features of the Spanish landscape, that impresses on the soul a feeling of sublimity. The immense plains of the Castiles and of La Mancha, extending as far as the eye can reach, derive an interest from their very nakedness and immensity, and have something of the solemn grandeur of the ocean. In ranging over these boundless wastes, the eye catches sight here and there of a straggling herd of cattle attended by a lonely herdsman, motionless as a statue, with his long, slender pike tapering up like a lance into the air; or, beholds a long train of mules slowly moving along the waste like a train of camels in the desert; or, a single herdsman, armed with blunderbuss and stiletto, and prowling over the plain. Thus the country, the habits, the very looks of the people, have something of the Arabian character. The general insecurity of the country is evinced in the universal use of weapons. The herdsman in the field, the shepherd in the plain, has his musket and his knife. The wealthy villager rarely ventures to the market-town without his trabuco, and, perhaps, a servant on foot with a blunderbuss on his shoulder; and the most petty journey is undertaken with the preparation of a warlike enterprise.

"The dangers of the road produce also a mode of travelling, resembling, on a diminutive scale, the caravans of the east. The arrieros, or carriers, congregate in convoys, and set off in large and well-armed trains on appointed days; while additional travellers swell their number, and contribute to their strength. In this primitive way is the commerce of the country carried on. The muleteer is the general

medium of traffic, and the legitimate traverser of the land, crossing the peninsula from the Pyrenees and the Asturias to the Alpuxarras, the Serrania de Ronda, and even to the gates of Gibraltar. He lives frugally and hardily: his alforjas of coarse cloth hold his scanty stock of provisions; a leathern bottle, hanging at his saddle-bow, contains wine or water, for a supply across barren mountains and thirsty plains. A mule-cloth spread upon the ground, is his bed at night, and his pack-saddle is his pillow. His low, but clean-limbed and sinewy form betokens strength; his complexion is dark and sunburnt; his eye resolute, but quiet in its expression, except when kindled by sudden emotion; his demeanour is frank, manly, and courteous, and he never passes you without a grave salutation: 'Dios guarde à usted!' 'Va usted con Dios, Caballero!' 'God guard you! God be with you, Cavalier!'

"As these men have often their whole fortune at stake upon the burthen of their mule, they have their weapons at hand, slung to their saddles, and ready to be snatched out for desperate defence. But their united numbers render them secure against petty bands of marauders, and the solitary bandolero, armed to the teeth, and mounted on his Andalusian steed, hovers about them, like a pirate about a merchant convoy, without daring to make an assault.

"The Spanish muleteer has an inexhaustible stock of songs and ballads, with which to beguile his incessant wayfaring. The airs are rude and simple, consisting of but few inflexions. These he chants forth with a loud voice, and long, drawling cadence, seated sideways on his mule, who seems to listen with infinite gravity, and to keep time, with his paces, to the tune. The couplets thus chanted, are often old traditional romances about the Moors, or some legend of a saint, or some love-ditty; or what is still more frequent, some ballad about a bold contrabandista, or hardy bandolero, for the smuggler and the robber are poetical heroes among the common people of Spain. Often the song of the muleteer is composed at the instant, and relates to some local scenes or some incident of the journey. This talent of singing and improvising is frequent in Spain, and is said to have been inherited from the Moors. There is something wildly pleasing in listening to these ditties among the rude and lonely scenes that they illustrate; accompanied, as they are, by the occasional jingle of the mule-bell.

"It has a most picturesque effect also to meet a train of muleteers in some mountain-pass. First you hear the bells of the leading mules, breaking with their simple melody the stillness of the airy height; or, perhaps, the voice of the muleteer admonishing some tardy or wandering animal, or chanting, at the full stretch of his lungs, some traditionary ballad. At length you see the mules slowly winding along the cragged defile, sometimes descending precipitous cliffs, so as to present themselves in full relief against the sky, sometimes toiling up the deep arid chasms below you. As they approach, you descry their gay decorations of worsted tufts, tassels, and saddle-cloths, while, as they pass by, the ever-ready trabuco slung behind the packs and saddles, gives a hint of the insecurity of the road.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.