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# Tour through North Wales,

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## CHAPTER I.

*Chester. — Liverpool. — Saltney. — Buckley-Mountain. — Carregcarn-March Arthur. — Loggerheads. — Wilson. — Vale of Clwyd. — Moel Famma. — Moel Enlly-Llanrhyadr Church. — Denbigh. — Henllan. — Bettws. — Coed Coch. — Teyrden. — Llanelian-Well. — Bryn Euryn. — Great Ormeshead. — Gloddaeth. — Maniac-Conway. — Peniarth. — Conovium. — Graig Wyllt. — Sorbus Aucuparia. — Rocking Stone. — Great Flood at Roe. — Bwlch y Ddeu-faen. — Hermit of Penmaenmawr. — De Breos. — Aber-Inn. — Lavan-Sands. — Osmund's-Air. — Beaumaris. — Feudal Oppression. — Joan's Coffin. — Lleiniog-Castle. — Llanvaes-Monastery. — Bishop's-Throne. — Arthur's Round Table. — Priestholm-Island. — Heligob-Glanog. — Penmon-Priory. — Jane Williams, a Dwarf. — Red-Wharf-Sands. — Penllech. — An Odd Meeting.*

AS Chester, to which city I proceeded directly from the capital, stands immediately connected with North Wales, of which it forms one of the eastern avenues, it would be unpardonable in me to pass it over without that full and circumstantial description, to which it is on every account entitled.

Within and without the walls of this ancient city, the artist

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will find many objects to solicit and engage his attention ; the streets, from the singularity and the great diversity of the houses (some referable to the age of Elizabeth, some of a still earlier origin, and some the productions of modern times), will present him with subjects, in a grotesque group, which he cannot any where else expect to find in such a striking combination. I have seen some of these subjects treated in a manner that does great credit to that able artist, Mr. John Varley.

Here strangers must be highly entertained. The elevation of the walls, which environ the city in a uniform quadrangular figure, offers, in the views on all sides, a most delicious feast to the eye. The eastern gate is the best and most gratifying entrance ; for, whether you turn to the right or to the left, you are for a short space enclosed with houses, and it is only by degrees, that the beautiful prospects open upon the sight. Turning northwards, your first object is the cathedral, the venerable sides of which are rapidly mouldering to decay. It is a heavy mass, without elegance, and destitute of all those pleasing Gothic ornaments, which generally accompany our antique episcopal buildings. With the exception of the windows, the structure bears the semblance of the old Gothic architecture of the fifth century. From no near point will it arrest the attention of the artist ; but from many situations without the walls, I have seen it, when half buried among trees and ruined cottages, or from the side of the water, assume an appearance sufficiently grand to challenge the pencil of an adept in art.

The next object on the right is the Chester canal, now united to the Ellesmere ; which, having been an unfortunate speculation, remained unused and unproductive for many years ; of late, however, the spirited exertions of a Mr. Fletcher, the worthy pro-

prietor of the Chester Chronicle, has rendered it, in some degree, productive. On the side of this water was lately erected a very extensive shot-manufactory, by Messrs. Walker, Maltbee, and Co.; the tower of which, carried up to the great height of one hundred and fifty feet, is an object pleasing enough to the sight. The eye perceives, in the same direction, a fine, flat, well-wooded country, terminated by gently rising hills, adorned with gentlemen's seats. You now come to the Phœnix-tower, called also King Charles's tower, from the circumstance of Charles I. having, from the roof of this building, viewed the defeat of his army, upon Rawton-heath, under Sir Marmaduke Langdale, on the 24th of September, 1645, by the parliament forces, under the command of the more fortunate General, Pointz.

From this tower you proceed, in a right line, to the north gate, and pass in the way a perpendicular precipice of great depth, the terror of which is considerably increased by the canal which traverses its foot. The excavated rock, with the bridge thrown over it, has a good effect: and here the artist should descend, to view each side of it. Over this bridge is the north gate, an elegant arch, erected on the site of the old one.

The large trilateral brick building on the right is the Blue-coat school. On the left, after passing a few houses, are seen, close to the walls, a rope-walk and some good houses, receding a little from these parapets. On the right is the canal, descending, by locks, into the Ellesmere. Here is a good inn, built with a view to the accommodation of passengers, by the Ellesmere canal; which, at the distance of nine miles, unites with the Mersey\*. From hence is seen a fine range of Welsh mountains,

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\* The passage-boats, drawn by two horses, are very handsome, spacious, and convenient; being covered and divided into three apartments; those for the passengers are fore and aft,

running north and south, which make a conspicuous figure in the landscape. Turning the angle here, you come to the Infirmary, a very handsome brick building, with a proper establishment, conducted upon a plan that brings down the blessings of Heaven upon the institution. Near it is the newly-raised City-jail. You now reach Stanley-place, at the furthest end of which is the great Irish-linen hall, enclosing a large area. The Water-gate, at which you next arrive, is a handsome arch, from whence you look down towards the harbour. On leaving it, the race-course, called the Rood-eye, comes full in view : a fine piece of pasture land, secured (about the year 1587) from the arbitrary encroachments of the tide, by an embankment on the south-west side. On this piece of land, in former times, the youths used to amuse themselves in the sports of wrestling, leaping, running, archery, mock-fights, and other manly exercises. After passing some handsome well-cultivated gardens, on the left, the old Castle appears, with its new companion, the County-jail. This latter building impresses the mind with the notion of impenetrable strength : *aux*, when viewed in front, it presents another character, that of strength combined with elegance. The exterior is of the Doric order : in the centre is a handsome entrance, with a portico and columns, the shaft of each of which is made of a single

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one called the best, the other the inferior; both calculated to make each party happy. In the centre of the vessel is a small kitchen, where are prepared dinners and breakfasts in good style, and at a very moderate charge. At the entrance into the Mersey, the passengers proceed in another boat, conducted by able and experienced sailors, ten miles along the broad bosom of the Mersey; they have at first but a partial view of Liverpool, but by degrees the stranger is delighted with the prospect. Merchant-ships and men-of-war at anchor, the noble docks filled with shipping, warehouses excelling those of the metropolis, the lofty spires and the swelling town, the hills behind overspread with fine houses, &c., give an idea of immense wealth and commerce, exceeded only by the British emporium itself.

stone, forming the portal of the court, in which the sessions are held. This hall is extremely elegant, of a semi-circular figure, and of the Ionic order. The auditory stand upon steps, a disposition which is thought to be peculiarly adapted to the purposes of seeing and hearing. The expense of this noble building is defrayed by the county, from the profits arising from the tonnage of vessels sailing on the river Weever. Though the building is not yet finished, it has already cost upwards of one hundred thousand pounds. The architect is Mr. Thomas Harrison.

You now proceed, and soon come to the bridge, coeval with some of the oldest buildings in the city. Adjoining the bridge are the city mills, lately rebuilt, the old ones having, a few years ago, been demolished by fire. At low water, the fall of the Dee here is rather a curiosity, and causes a loud stunning noise. You now ascend two flights of steps, from whence the Dee is seen stealing along the beautiful meadows. The distant country, and the uplifted and isolated castle of Beeston, towering above all other objects, form an interesting picture.

St. John's church is a good old building: its tower is extremely grand and lofty, not in any other way inferior to that of Wrexham, but deficient in Gothic ornament. After passing a few houses and gardens, you arrive at the east gate, from whence you set out, having traversed a distance of two miles.

When the stranger has thus walked round the city, he may amuse himself in the interior; where the rows will afford him entertainment, from the singularity of their structure. The churches, the castle, and jail, the shot-manufactory, and the shipping at the Crane, are all well worthy of his attention; at the latter place, ships take in their freight of cheese for London, &c. Every body knows, that of all cheeses made in England, the preference

is justly given to those manufactured in Cheshire. It is somewhat remarkable, that the inhabitants were taught the art of making it by the Romans: but they have since improved upon their method, and people of *good taste* will readily allow that Cheshire still keeps the lead of all other cheese counties in Britain.

From hence there is a delightful walk of three miles, by the side of the Dee, on the embankment called the Cop; upon which the natives frequently take a salutary ramble, to meet the spring-tides. I once went, with some gentlemen, on the river in a small boat at low water; and at the distance of two miles we saw an amazing surge rolling on to meet us, which to me, who had never seen it before, appeared tremendous, as threatening to overwhelm us all in an instant. It rushed on us with such velocity, that had we been inclined to escape it, we could not have succeeded; and if my friends had not possessed some knowledge of naval tactics, we might have been swallowed up by it\*. I am told, however, that it is by no means dangerous, if proper attention is paid to the boat. By keeping the boat's head right to the surge, we were lifted up on high, the elevation producing at the same time a most pleasing sensation. Now another sight was presented to us; a fleet of market-boats, that had been fairly outrun by the tide, bringing with them the luxuries of the table, in exchange for the one thing so universally needful, cash.

Another charming walk there is, for three miles, by the side of the Dee to Eaton-hall, the seat of Lord Grosvenor; a most superb mansion, now building under the direction of Mr. Porden, who furnished the design. It is of the light modern Gothic, and

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\* In the East Indies, the flood-tide sets in with great fury. The head of the tide is frequently ten or twelve yards in height. It is called a *Boar*, and sometimes forces vessels from the strongest anchorage.

evinces his lordship's good taste. It commands with one front the soft-flowing Dee, and some beautiful meadow grounds; whilst with the other it looks westward, over an agreeable prospect. A public road, to vary the walk, will bring you back; and you may find refreshment at, and, at the same time, be pleased with the rusticity of, the little public-house, called the Iron-bridge, situated nearly in the half way.

The commerce of Chester is not so great as it was before its neighbour, Liverpool, became so powerful a rival. It is chiefly confined to the Baltic, for timber, besides some little coasting-trade; but many vessels are built here, of from fifty to five hundred tons burden, and disposed of to the Liverpool merchants. The tanning and glove trades are carried on here to some extent. Chester is supposed to contain near twenty thousand inhabitants. It has two fairs in the year, one in July, and the other in October; each of which continues nearly three weeks. The goods sold are Irish linen, Welsh flannels, webs, yarn, coarse linen cloths, Manchester goods, Yorkshire cloths, Birmingham hardware, Coventry ribands, horses, and horned cattle, &c.

During the race week, Chester is the centre of fashion and gaiety. The races commence the first Monday in May, and are attended by the first people in the country, when the theatre royal is open for the week.

The higher ranks of the society, though in general not very opulent, are accomplished; the ladies are handsome, open, and unreserved in their conversation; the gentlemen free and communicative, and generally disposed to be friendly to the arts. The tradesmen are ready and active. The large towns that are in the immediate neighbourhood of Chester, prevent it from enjoying much commerce on the English side; and the inhabit-

ants acknowledge the benefit they derive from their intercourse with Wales. The working part of the community are sober and industrious.

Chester has always been noted for its loyalty to the sovereign ; nor is that loyalty in the least diminished. It has a fine regiment of well-disciplined defenders of their country, consisting of about fourteen hundred men. I saw them returning from three weeks' permanent duty at Ellesmere. Their appearance was truly martial ; and, by their expertness in the manual and platoon exercise, it was evident that they must have been under excellent military tuition : they were commanded by Colonel Barnston.

This city, as is asserted by the historian Bradshaw\*, was founded by "King *Leir*, a *Brittain* fine, and valiant," who called it Guerleer ; a name somewhat like the proper one, still retained by the Welsh, *Caer Lleon*, the Camp, or City of the Legion, being the station of the twentieth legion, which came into Britain prior to the year 61, as this legion is ascertained, by Suetonius, to have been engaged in the defeat of Boadicea. The plan of the city is precisely the same as that of the Roman camps, which evinces it to have derived its origin from them. There are four principal streets, stretching towards the four cardinal points, and many smaller ones crossing them at right angles. The present walls stand upon the site of the Roman, and mark their limits ; but not a vestige of them remains. The streets were sunk by excavations, many feet below the present surface of the ground, so that the kitchens are now as many feet above them.

On the departure of the Roman legions from Britain, in 448, this city fell under the government of the natives, who, however,

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\* Life of St. Werburg.



were soon obliged to give way to another, more barbarous, enemy, the Saxons.

In the year 607, Ethelfrid king of Northumbria, determining to add this tract of country to his dominions, was opposed by Brochmail Yscithrve, king of Powys, who, like the Britons under St. Germanus, at the Hallelujah victory, near Mold, relying on divine interposition, brought with him from Bangor twelve hundred of the religious of that convent, to pray for his success. Ethelfrid perceiving these enthusiasts collected upon the hill, and understanding their business, instantly put them all to the sword. Brochmail, who was soon afterwards easily routed, escaped with not more than fifty men\*. Ethelfrid having pillaged the city, left it to the former possessors, reserving to himself the territory; which he possessed, till it was wrested from him by the King of Mercia. The city, after this, seems to have been held by the Britons, and to have been considered by them as the capital of North Wales, till it passed under the dominion of Egbert, about the year 828. During a series of years, it appears subsequently to have undergone many changes, and to have experienced some calamities, in consequence of the incursions of the Saxons, Danes, &c.

William the Conqueror appointed Hugh Lupus the first (Norman) Earl of Chester, with the possession of the county; which was then erected into a county palatine, and indulged with a sovereign jurisdiction; the earls being allowed their distinct parliaments and their courts of law.

The sword, by which Lupus was invested with his dignity, is still kept as a relic in the British Museum, and has this inscription, *Hugo comes cestræ*. By virtue of this sword, the Earl of Chester

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\* Saxon Chron. 25.

was created sword-bearer of England, and as such he was accustomed to officiate at the coronation of the kings.

From the conquest to the reign of Henry III., a period of one hundred and seventy-four years, this sort of government continued without interruption. Henry himself became the Earl of Chester, and this earldom has ever since remained in the royal family. The city then assumed a new form of government, by a mayor and sheriffs. Henry first granted it a charter, and his successors, the Edwards, augmented, in various ways, the privileges of the corporation. In consequence of some distresses which it experienced, about 1506, Henry VII. remitted eighty pounds of its annual rent, and granted it a fresh charter, by which the city was separated from the county; a privilege which Chester still enjoys.

Having taken leave of Chester, I began my tour on foot, and with no other companion than a very pretty little dog, presented to me by a very pretty young lady, whose injunctions respecting it I regarded with the most scrupulous observance.

Two miles from Chester, on my way to Ruthin, I entered the principality of Wales on a very extensive flat, called Saltney, many years ago a salt-marsh, but of late so well cultivated and improved, that it has now the appearance of a rich valley. Passing Broughton-hall, on my left, I ascended a rising ground, called the Warren, lately a park for rabbits, and a waste, but recently enclosed for the better use of man. Descending on the other side, I came to what the Welsh justly call Milltir Fudyr, or the Dirty Mile; at the conclusion of which, I passed the extensive pottery and colliery on Buckley-mountain, belonging to Mr. Rigby, of Hawarden; and soon arrived at Mold, a description of which is reserved for another place. Leaving Mold on my