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Lectures on Welsh Philology

‘The substance of these lectures’, John Rhys states in his preface, ‘was delivered at Aberystwyth College in 1874 ... but it is hoped that they will also be found intelligible to other than Welsh readers.’ Rhys (originally Rees, 1840–1915) had been a student of Jesus College, Oxford, and his interest in linguistics was fired by attending the lectures of German philologists while studying abroad in summer vacations. This 1877 work established him as a scholar, and led to his election as the first professor of Celtic languages at Oxford, and later as principal of Jesus College. Systematic research on Celtic languages using the methods of comparative philology was in its infancy when Rhys was writing, and he emphasises that the new discipline was in a state of flux, but this pioneering work still repays study today. His two-volume Celtic Folklore and his historical work Celtic Britain are also reissued in this series.

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Lectures on Welsh Philology

JOHN RHYS



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John Rhys
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1877.
TURNER & CO., LUDGATE HILL.
LONDON:

JOHN RHY'S, M.A.,
LATE FELLOW OF MERTON COLLEGE, OXFORD,
PERPETUAL MEMBER OF THE PARIS PHILOLOGICAL SOCIETY.

BY

WELSH PHILOLOGY.

NO

LECTURES

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THE WRITER.

BY

DEDICATED

IS WITH DEFERENCE

This Volume

MEMBER OF THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL OF INDIA,

WHITLEY STOKES,

AND TO

PROFESSOR OF COMPARATIVE PHILOLOGY AT OXFORD,

F. MAX MÜLLER,

TO

Cambridge University Press
978-1-108-07917-4 — Lectures on Welsh Philology
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THE substance of these lectures was delivered at Aberystwyth College in 1874, so that they were intended to appeal, in the first instance, to Welsh students of Celtic Philology; but it is hoped that they will also be found intelligible to other than Welsh readers, and with a view to this the Welsh instances have been rendered into English throughout. Since they were first delivered they have been re-written almost entirely, and the author could have desired to repeat the process; but at that rate publication would have been out of the question, as his views are constantly undergoing modification, which will surprise no one aware how recently the systematic application of the comparative method of study to the Celtic languages began. His excuse for publishing at all,

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PREFACE.

under the circumstances, must be the fact that, although the highest effort of one student may result only in giving him a glimpse of half the truth, even that may enable another to discover the whole truth, and to secure for both a more advanced point of view. The chances of his doing this appear to outweigh the probability of the crudeness of his theories leading others astray who are not in the habit of trying to think for themselves, persuaded as he is, that, if they do not derive wrong ideas of Celtic questions from these pages, there are plenty of others from which they will. Besides, it would require a livelier imagination, and more ingenuity than he could boast of, to originate, with regard to the history of the Celtic languages or nations, any theories which could vie in absurdity and distorted vision with many of those still obtaining among people of the class mentioned.

The reader will have already surmised that the Lectures do not form a harmonious whole: one reason for this was the gradual coming in of more accurate knowledge about some of the most important of our Early Inscriptions after the MS. had been in the printer's hands. The

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study of the former cannot fail to form an era in Welsh Philology, and no inference warranted by them could safely be overlooked. To a student of Greek or Roman epigraphy they might, it is true, appear of little importance both in point of meaning and of number, but meagre as they are, to those who are desirous of understanding the history of the Welsh language, they are simply invaluable. The author has the satisfaction of having, in the course of the last four summers, inspected nearly all of those still preserved, together with others of a somewhat later period, of which it was not thought necessary to submit a detailed account, seeing that they mostly belong to the time of the Old Welsh Glosses, and form accordingly a part only, and that the less important one, of the available materials for the study of Old Welsh.

As to the meaning attached here and elsewhere in this volume to the terms *Early*, *Old*, *Medieval*, and *Modern Welsh*, the reader is referred to the beginning of the Fourth Lecture, page 143. And by the frequently recurring words, *our Early Inscriptions*, are briefly meant the old inscriptions, not of Roman or English?

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origin, which have been found in Wales, Devon-
shire, and Cornwall, together with one or two
in Scotland that appear to belong to the same
class.
RHYS, *January 1, 1877.*

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