

craft ain't no stranger,' I says, 'to venture into this dangerous channel. The skipper,' I says, 'what has passed safely through the Krapdag Shallow, the Ketterang Shallow, and the Gobstad Shallow must a' been here a good many times afore,' I says. Howsomever, I asks pardon, and wishes yer good-mornin'."

There was a look of intense surprise on the face of the mariner, and he let his pipe fall from his lips; the lanky youth at the tiller stared in open-mouthed astonishment, and over the moon face of the Jutland skipper stole an expression of ludicrous bewilderment as he heard of the dreadful perils he had so luckily escaped, and which he had not observed as marked on the chart—for the very good reason that they were the invention of the one-armed man.

Hans pulled away in the direction the sloop was steering, and easily out-distanced her, the wind being, as has been said, but light. When he had got some way off, but well within sight, he proceeded to strategic operations.

His boat contained a quantity of mussel bait for the purpose of fishing; he now put a lot of these bivalves on his mussel-fork, and thrusting it over the side of the boat furthest from the sloop, so as to be unseen by the Jutland skipper, pretended to scrape the rocks for mussels. By-and-by he made an ostentatious display of his supposed haul, well knowing that he was intently watched by the inmates of the sloop.

"What are you doing?" shouted the Dane.

"Oh," returned Hans, "just fishing for mussels. This is a first-rate ground, as the rocks are so near to the surface, though not so good as the Scandinavibod Shallow"—and he pointed with his hook to a spot about twenty yards in front of the sloop; "but then," he added apologetically, "of course you know that: you who have been here so many times before."

The skipper, whose anxiety had been momentarily increasing in intensity, was now quite alarmed at the dangers that apparently environed him.

"Slack away the main sheet, and look lively!" he bellowed to the mariner on the windlass in a voice that made him jump, and hastened to exert himself in assisting the operation. Then, mopping his brow, he called to Hans, who was chuckling in his sleeve: "Hi, you sir! come aboard at once!"

He of the hook pulled quickly to the sloop, and

soon stood upon the deck. Giving a rapid glance ahead, he yelled to the youth:

"Starboard! hard-a-starboard!"

And the order not being instantly obeyed, he put his own hand to the tiller. As the sloop's bows moved round he gave a sigh of intense relief.

"It was a near squeak!" he remarked, as he took a chew of tobacco, and added, as if to himself: "Seafaring captains as thinks they knows, and don't, run all manner of risks to save a blooming dollar!" And then he continued in a warning voice: "Port yer 'el'm, my kiddy, if you don't want to go to kingdom come afore yer time!"

And so Hans kept steering a zigzag course from right to left and from left to right, and captain and crew were actively employed in hoisting the main sail and jib up and down as the exigencies of the occasion seemed to require.

Now and then the anxious Dane found a spare moment to gaze over the bulwarks, and vainly strained his sight to catch a glimpse of the perilous rocks and shoals. Good eyes, however, are required to see the bottom through eighty fathoms of water! And once the skipper ventured to remark that he couldn't see anything of the hidden dangers.

"Of course not," said Hans. "The river Dramm empties itself into the fjord just here; don't you notice how black the water is? Ye can't see for the muddiness. Hist that there jib!"

Altogether, the crew of that Danish sloop had a lively time of it for several hours, when at last Hans condescended to inform them that they were now out of danger, thanks to his skilful manœuvring. As he shook hands with the skipper at parting:

"You may thank your lucky stars that you fell in with me," he said, "or you might all of you have supped to-night in Davy Jones's locker!"

Then, with the air of an autocrat, he slowly descended the rope-ladder, got into his old boat, and pulled back the way he had come, every now and again pausing to give an inward chuckle, and jingle the silver in his pocket as he thought of the "missis and the kids."

Clever, shrewd Mr. Hans, one day you will over-reach yourself, my friend; for be very sure that all the world over, from the beginning to the end of time, "Honesty is the best policy," and "Ill-gotten gains seldom prosper!"

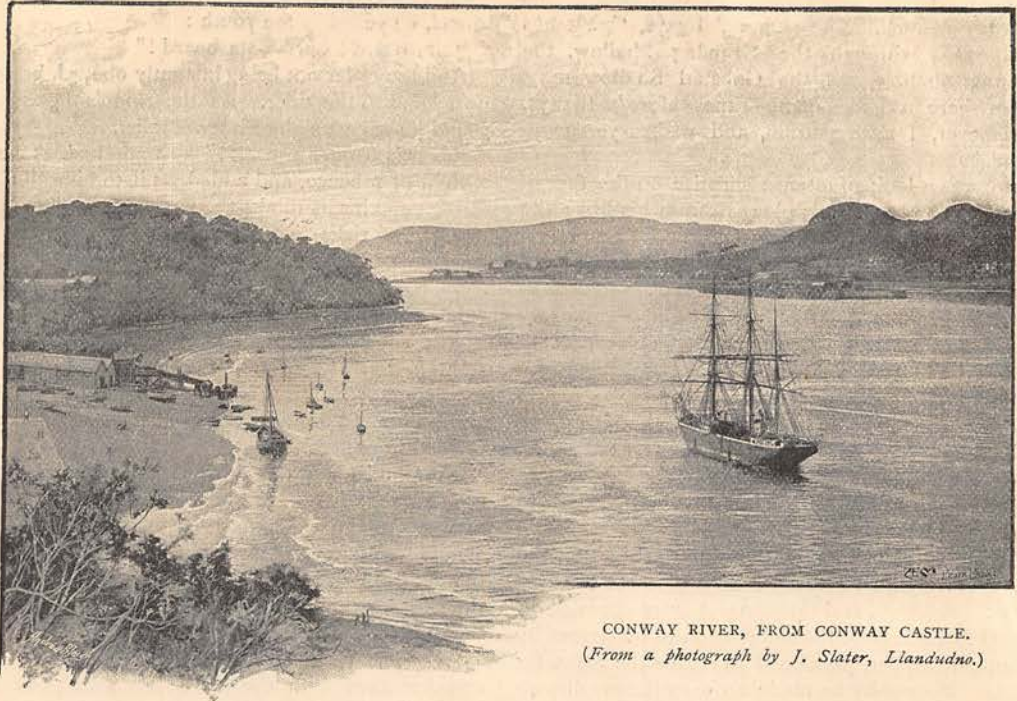
A. E. BONSER.

AN OLD WALLED TOWN.

THE visitor at Llandudno, when he has sufficiently "done" the parade, and has made the circuit of the Great Orme's Head, perhaps a little wearied of the attractions of this well-known seaside resort, and wishes to explore this part of Wales a little further. Should that be the case, he cannot do better than cross the broad estuary of the Conway and visit the town of the

same name, one of the most interesting—perhaps the most interesting—of all old Welsh towns. If he pleases, he can make the run thither from Llandudno by rail in a few minutes, and spend a delightful afternoon amidst scenes far different from those of a new and fashionable watering-place.

Mrs. Hemans, when visiting Conway in the early part of this century, lamented the construction of the



CONWAY RIVER, FROM CONWAY CASTLE.
(From a photograph by J. Slater, Llandudno.)

mail-coach road, and the arrival and departure of mail-coaches, as something which destroyed, or at any rate interfered with, the seclusion of the quaint old walled town and the solemnity of its grand old castle. What the good lady would have said to the "Wild Irishman" thundering and screaming along the iron road close by, four times in the twenty-four hours, we cannot say.

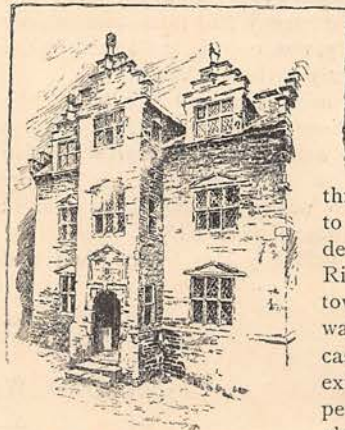
Nowhere else do we find the walls of a town—at least, in England—left so completely in their original state. At Canterbury, York, Chester, and elsewhere, the walls exist, but they have been re-built and altered until their interest is nearly gone. At Conway, however, this is not the case. Here we have the walls and gates pretty nearly—wear and tear, of course, excepted—in the state in which they were left by their original mediæval builders. And there is also another striking point about Conway: the walls contain, or nearly so, the town itself. Other cities and towns, the walls of which still remain, have stretched out far beyond their original limits, and the extra-mural suburbs have become part of the town. Conway—happily for the archæologist—is not a growing place, and so we have the harp-shaped town, for it has been often compared to a Welsh harp, still contained within its old boundaries. All its public buildings are inside the walls. The church and the chapels, the schools and the market-house, the town-hall and the police-station, and even the railway-station, are all to be found, though many of them are buildings of the present day, surrounded by the ancient fortifications.

The castle itself, as is almost always the case in a fortified town, occupies an angle. In this instance it

becomes the upper angle of the harp, and the walls stretch away from this apex in an irregular triangle. The entrances to the town still preserve the Latin name of *porta*, continued in the Welsh *porth*; and of the five gateways which still exist, one at least is almost in its original state. The gates still keep their Welsh designations. The most inland one is *Porth Uschaf*, the *Highest Gate*, from which Upper Gate

Street leads to the market-place. Then from the farther side of this centre the High Street leads to the *Porth Isaf*, or *Town Gate*,

through which we pass to the little quay bordering the Conway River between the town wall and the water. Underneath the castle walls a modern exit leads to the suspension bridge, but the old *Porth Vastell* is only a few yards to the north.



PLAS MAWR, CONWAY.
(From a photograph by J. Slater, Llandudno.)

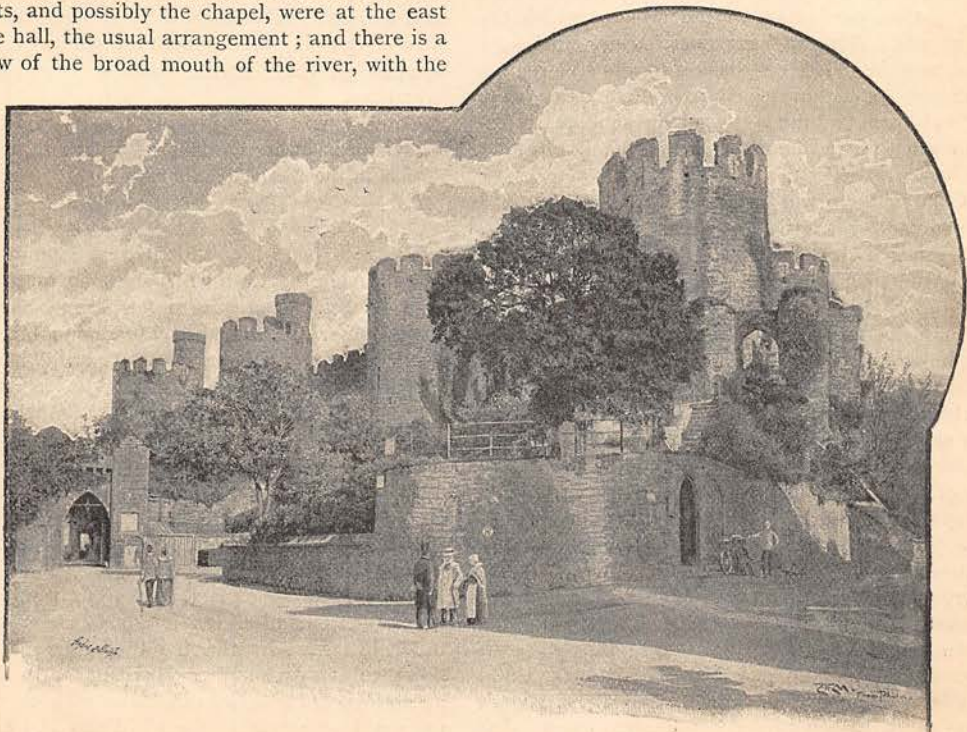
long Conway may have been a fortified position, but the site of the castle—a rock, protected on one side by a broad estuary and on the other by marshes and by a smaller stream—must have, even in the earliest days, been seized upon as a splendid situation for a work of

military defence. The smaller stream, the Gyffin, which borders it on the south, itself forms a small estuary, and the far-stretching Aber-Conway, or mouth of the Conway, protected on the east by the promontory which terminates in Great Orme's Head, forms a sheltered harbour, which, though somewhat shallow, would allow the small ships of former days to lie safe from attack immediately under the castle walls.

Here, then, in this strong position, men of old built a fortress, which gradually increased in size and strength, so that we have in Conway Castle, decayed and ruined though it is, one of the most magnificent secular buildings of former days which we possess in this island. The walls are from twelve to fifteen feet thick, and eight huge circular towers, each forty feet in diameter, guard its sides and angles. The entrance, which has been much altered and modernised, is on the west side, and is protected by a deep moat. Within, the castle area is divided into two large courts, the first and largest of which contains the magnificent building known as Llewlyn's Hall. This hall is one hundred and thirty-two feet long, thirty-two feet wide, and thirty-eight feet high. The first thing which strikes one on entering is its strange shape. It follows the line of the castle wall, which at this spot is that of an obtuse angle, and the hall is consequently of a bow shape. Eight arches, some of which still exist, supported the roof. Light was given by six tall windows looking into the court, and by another large one at the end. Beneath the hall were large vaults for stores, now open to the sky. The other apartments are much ruined and difficult to trace. The private apartments, and possibly the chapel, were at the east end of the hall, the usual arrangement; and there is a pretty view of the broad mouth of the river, with the

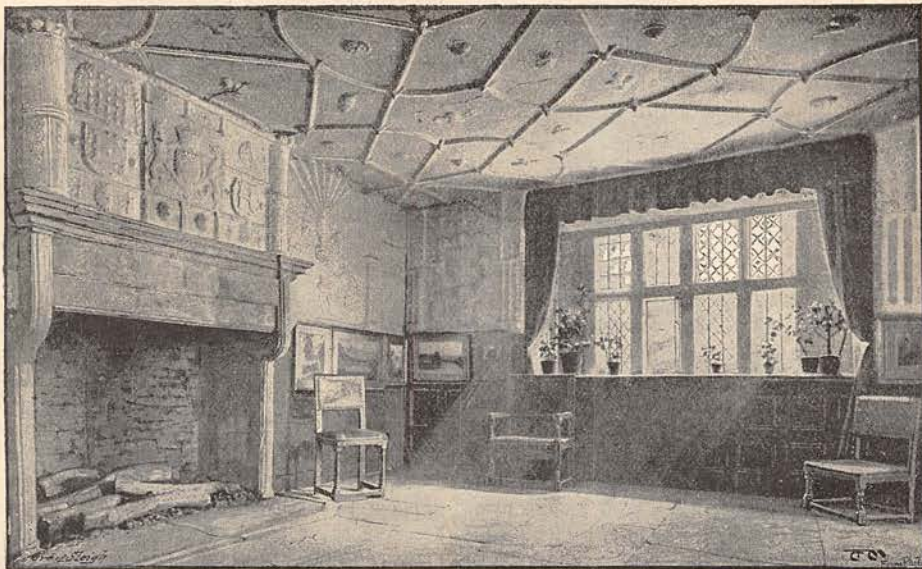
high ground about Llandudno beyond, to be had through the ruined windows of this portion of the buildings. Probably few of the ladies' chambers of a mediæval fortress, or *bowers*, as they were called, had such a charming outlook.

The castle as we have it now was built by Edward the First to overawe the recently conquered Welsh, and was finished in 1284. But the tables were soon turned on the conqueror, for the king himself was besieged here only four years afterwards by Madoc, an illegitimate son of Llewlyn, and almost starved into surrender before ships and provisions could reach him. Another English monarch, Edward's great-great-grandson, the unfortunate Richard the Second, was here a short time before he was seized by his rebellious barons and carried off to Flint Castle, which is not far distant. In the civil wars between Royalists and Roundheads the battle of Conway occupied an important position. Williams, the Welsh Archbishop of York, held the fortress for the king, and appointed his nephew governor. The archbishop's relative was, however, superseded in his command by the appointment of Prince Rupert as Governor of North Wales, whereupon he (the archbishop) changed sides and joined the Parliamentarians, who forthwith besieged the castle. Their commander in this district, Mytton, with the archbishop's help, took the town by assault in August, 1646, and the castle surrendered to him in November. All the Irish in the garrison who were taken prisoners were tied back to back and flung into the river. The castle itself, however, seems to have



CONWAY CASTLE, FROM THE ROAD.

(From a photograph by J. Slater, Llandudno.)



PLAS MAWR, QUEEN ELIZABETH'S ROOM.

(From a photograph by J. Slater, Llandudno.)

escaped dismantlement at the time, and it was not until after the Restoration that the Earl of Conway, to whom it had been granted, took away the floors and roofs, and the buildings in consequence soon became wrecks. To add to its destruction, slate quarries were for a long time carried on in the rock on which the castle stands. Happily these quarries are no longer worked, and the massive walls and towers still remain firm, though six centuries have passed since they were built, and form a grand and picturesque mass, especially when viewed from the further bank of either of the bordering rivers.

At Conway there was a Cistercian Abbey founded by Llewelyn-ap-Iorwerth, Prince of Wales, in 1185. The present parish church, which stands nearly in the centre of the town, was the conventual church of this abbey, and is therefore in part probably of that date, and about one hundred years older than the castle. It has, however, been much altered at different periods. It is said that in Conway Churchyard the poet Wordsworth had the conversation with the little girl seated on her sister's grave, which was the origin of his verses, "We are Seven." The church, although it is in the midst of the town, stands well opened out. Indeed, open spaces abound in Conway, for its population of only a little over two thousand persons is easily contained within the walls.

There is one more interesting architectural antiquity in Conway. This is the remarkable Elizabethan mansion known as *Plas Mawr*—that is, the *Great House*. It is a building of about the date 1576, and sometimes goes by the name of Queen Elizabeth's Palace: for what reason is not known, except that initials said to be those of the queen and of the Earl

of Leicester are to be found on some of the interior decorations. This fine old house should be converted into a local museum. It has already been used several times for an art exhibition, and it is to be hoped that antiquities from the neighbourhood will gradually find a home within its walls. It possesses a quaint pillared porch, large mullioned windows, and high-stepped gables. Inside there is much of the old ornament.

Conway was once famous for its pearl fisheries. They flourished in the days of Elizabeth, for Spenser speaks in the *Faërie Queen* of—

"Conway, which out of his stream doth send
Plenty of pearls to deck his dames withal."

There is but little trade left at Conway, and the quay outside the town walls does not present a very busy aspect. There are a few fishing-boats, and in the summer visitors from Llandudno hire pleasure-boats for excursions up the river. There is also a little—a very little—export trade in slates, and a little timber comes in. Even the life which revived in the coaching days, when the mails, to the disgust of Mrs. Hemans, crossed the Telford Bridge, has died away again, now that Conway is only a minor railway station, through which the express trains of the present day rush without stopping. But we may be glad of this. Should Conway ever become a flourishing and increasing place, its charm would be gone. May it long continue as it is, its castle and its walls untouched save by the hand of time: a delightful object to many a summer tourist in North Wales, and an antiquarian treasure to all who wish to examine a town still so much in the condition in which it was left by its mediæval builders.