



A SUBMERGED VILLAGE.

By GRANT ALLEN.

Illustrated by W. BISCOMBE GARDNER.



WHOEVER knows North Wales must know the Berwyns, that beautiful range of wooded green hills, one mass of pine from foot to crest, that borders the romantic road through Corwen Vale between Llangollen and Bala. As you go on foot or by rail up the valley of the sacred Dee, through Owen Glyndwr's country, *en route* for Barmouth, the Berwyns run ever on your left with a steep ascent; and from their sides a thousand foaming torrents tear down precipitate, in sheets of buttermilk, to flood the lake or swell the roaring river that carries off the rainfall from that great central block of Cambrian uplands. But though this north-western slope of the Berwyns is so familiar to the tourist bound for Dolgelley or Beddgelert, the south-eastern declivity on the other side of the ridge is as yet but little known either to artists or to the general public; and I even venture to say that until Llanwddyn village was unobtrusively swallowed up by the devouring waters of the Vyrnwy Lake, hardly anybody outside its own narrow dale had ever so much as heard of its very existence.

Nevertheless, these border hills of Merioneth and Montgomery, rearing masses of Caradoc sandstone, though they seldom rise much above 2,000 feet in height, might claim in one way to rank among the most distinguished mountains in Britain; for from their sides flow down in gorge-like channels many of the head waters of the Severn, the longest and largest among English rivers. The Berwyns, in fact, form the backbone chine and central dividing-ridge of this part of the country: for the rain that falls on their northern slope runs by Dee mouth into the Irish Sea; the rain that falls upon their western side flows by the Mawddach and the Dovey into Cardigan Bay; while the rain that falls upon their south-eastern shoulders discharges itself by the Severn into the Bristol Channel. At least that was the normal and natural distribution of the waters on the Berwyns before the Liverpool engineers, canny men of might at questions of waterworks, stepped in to improve the face of nature, and cause a great part of the supply to run across country by a main pipe line, regardless of catchment basins, watersheds, and the rest, into the tanks and cisterns of the population of Liverpool.

Chief among the Severn feeders that take their rise upon the Berwyn slopes is that beautiful torrent stream the Fyrnwy, whose ancient Cymric name I fear I must write for English eyes and ears in the vulgarized Saxon form of Vyrnwy, now sanctioned by usage and the Corporation of the City of Liverpool, who are, no doubt, "above orthography," as the Emperor Sigismund was "supra grammaticam," Whichever way you spell it, the pronunciation is the same; for in our Ancient British tongue a single *f* is pronounced like *v*, and two are needed to give the consonant its English value. The Fyrnwy or Vyrnwy, then, rises (or rose) in a most romantic glen, on the flanks of the great sandstone ridge, where it has cut itself a broad and deep valley at Llanwddyn, the lower end of which has a gorge-like character, immediately

suggesting to the restless engineering mind the practical notion of a possible reservoir. Your engineer, indeed, lives and moves and has his being in a constant attitude of regarding nature from this strictly professional point of view. "Hullo! here's a river running through a wide vale, with a narrow neck at its lower end," he says to himself joyfully, when he sees a beautiful bottle-shaped glen. "Hooray! I see a chance for a dam. Let's immediately dam it." And he proceeds forthwith to find somebody who will stand the expense of damming, and pay him by the way for his arduous labour of superintendence.

So, long ago, the wily engineer, on the hunt for an opening, fixed his eagle eye upon the Llanwddyn glen as just the very place for an enterprising soul to stick down a dam in. Mr. Bateman first proposed to turn the smiling valley into one of his suggested monster reservoirs for the supply of London. But as London, then innocent as yet of a County Council, preferred in its irresponsible way to go on imbibing the diluted sewage of the sparkling Thames for its principal support, the enter-



LLANWDDYN, VYRNWY VALLEY.

prising engineers turned their wandering thoughts to the sister port of Liverpool, which thirsty town was just then beginning to find itself very short of drinkable water for boiling its tea-kettle and other domestic purposes. Liverpool promptly admitted that it wanted washing—as a matter of fact, its water-supply was then one of the worst, and is now one of the best in all England. For, hi, presto! the word was given, and straightway the quiet valley, whose lonely heather had never yet felt the heel of the cheap tripper, was invaded all at once by stone and mortar and navvies innumerable, and the work of building a great dam across its lower end was set about in real earnest. This dam and the lake which it has formed may fairly rank among the greatest engineering triumphs of the present century. To say the truth, Liverpool is a trifle proud of its new reservoir, and not without reason; for instead of draining and disfiguring a natural lake, as that Vandal Manchester intends to do with Thirlmere, she has added an artificial one of rare and singular beauty to the scenery of the most delightful part of all Great Britain. The Vyrnwy Lake, in place of being what the Mock Turtle would call an Uglification, adds much to the charms of the district in whose bosom it reposes; and there can be little doubt that in years to come (partly by the aid of the valuable advertisement Mr. Gardner is now bestowing upon it gratis) it will rank as one of the most frequented tourist resorts in all North Wales.

For except at the lower end, by the dam itself, there is nothing of the artificial reservoir in any way about the new sheet of water with which the genius of its engineers

hasendowed Liverpool. The outline of the glen along the level of the lake runs broken and sinuous ; and the water, rising to the top of the dam, fills in the natural contour, winding in and out, round cape and headland, past bay and inlet, with the gracious broken variety of a native mountain tarn. A viaduct carries the new road of circumvallation for the use of tourists across the massive block of masonry at the foot of the dale ; and thence a carriage-drive, twelve miles in length, follows the shore in gentle bends, past mimic capes and tiny wooded islets, to the point of departure. The hills rise steep on either hand with their pine-clad or heathery heights ; and in the background, the summits of Aran Mowddwy and Aran Benllyn show their bald heads above the lower and greener mountains of the middle distance.

That is what the visitor who goes to the Vyrnwy Lake to-day in clear sunny weather sees before his eyes as he looks up from the Straining Tower at the lower end or from the huge bank of stone that hems in and restrains the enormous mass of water, five miles long by half a mile broad, the largest artificial mere, I suppose, now any-



LLANWDDYN CHURCH (FROM PONT CEDIG).

where existing behind a masonry embankment. But only two years ago, when Mr. Gardner went down to that remote Llanwddyn that is now no more, to sketch the illustrations that accompany this paper, there was no lake at all where the water now stands, but in its place a deep and peaceful Welsh glen, in whose centre lay the picturesque old-world village, with its mouldering church and sleepy inn, while further up the valley, on the slopes of Moel Eunant, the smiling manor-house of Eunant Hall overlooked from its broad windows the pastoral district. The dam, to be sure, was already built, as the sketches show, but the water had not yet begun to be impounded ; the village life went on much as usual in farm or public house, and the villagers eat and drank, married and were given in marriage, just as if no deluge of more than forty days' duration had been decreed against them by the Corporation of Liverpool.

In course of time, however, the preparations were complete. The villagers, whose rights had all been bought out by anticipation, emigrated elsewhere. The dam was closed with a screen of masonry so thick and solid that no Johnstown disaster need ever be contemplated in the Shrewsbury valley. The waters of the five principal tributary torrents, which flowed before through the Vyrnwy to join the Severn a little above the county town of Shropshire, collected slowly above the submerged site of all that smiling loveliness. Church and churchyard were covered bit by bit by the new lake, which rose, an inch at a time, along the sides of the hills ; and when the final level has been reached (for so big a dish fills very gradually) the Straining Tower which, when I write, still bases itself on dry ground, will stand out like some old Rhenish castle, isolated

from the shore, with a pretty bridge of four arches' span just uniting it gracefully to the bank opposite. Altogether, the authorities are to be congratulated in this instance on their generous care for the picturesqueness of the final effect. Engineering and beauty go so rarely hand in hand in these practical times that when the unusual conjunction does now and again occur it deserves to meet with hearty recognition. So, well done, Liverpool.

Still, there is something to my mind inexpressibly pathetic in the bare notion that so much hidden loveliness lies to-day, by man's deliberate design, buried fathoms deep beneath the calm clear water, where no human eye will ever again see it. Look at Mr. Gardner's beautiful and touching pictures, and then reflect for a moment that all they represent is now as utterly swept away as Thebes or Babylon or the land of Lyonesse. The pretty gable-ends of Eunant Hall are gone for all time: the torrents that rushed under the Cedig bridge are stilled below many feet of calm lake: no wife will lie beside her husband in Llanwddyn churchyard; no son will visit his mother's grave beneath the dark shadow of that heavy little Cambrian church. How curious to look at the care-less folk who hang at leisure outside the village post-office, and to think that on the roadway where they stand in the sketch, the trout are now playing hide and seek among the dismantled walls: how strange to glance at the low roofs of Tyucha Farm, and then to remember that waving pond-weeds and long tresses of chara are beginning now to supersede the house-leeks and stonecrops upon those discoloured tiles. Of course everything possible was demolished before the waters were let in, for health's sake as well as for decency's: and even the bones of the dead were reverently removed as far as practicable to a new resting place. But even so, the pathos of such a general uprooting of human ties remains for us still, almost as when Evangeline's Acadians were turned loose upon the world, or when the Highland cottagers of a far northern shire were dispossessed *en bloc* to make room for a few head of antlered deer among thousands of broad acres of lonely heather.

And yet, this constant disturbance of the Celt from his ancestral dwelling-places in every part of Britain has its compensating side—for the rest of the world at least—in the wide diffusion at the present day of Celtic enterprise and Celtic energy through the whole of our islands. The short squat men are the making of Britain. Indomitable in their pluck, inexhaustible in their nerve and muscle, invaluable in their steady working power of brain and limb, they have shown the world already a thousand times over that "it's dogged that does it." Dr Beddoe, who has probably studied race-questions in Britain far more closely than any other observer, says, without any hesitation, "In opposition to the current opinion it would seem that the Welsh rise most in commerce, the Scotch coming after them, and the Irish nowhere. The people of Welsh descent and name hold their own fairly in science, the Scotch do more, the Irish less." But there is one exception—the Welshman is no fighter: a peaceable animal by nature, he finds the peaceful methods of arbitration and argument lie more in his line than bodily warfare. Consequently, as military commanders, "the Scotchmen, and especially the Highlanders, bear away the palm, the Irish retrieve their position, and the Welsh are little heard of." In other words, much as it may surprise many people to learn it, the Welsh, among their rugged hills, are the most civilized and civilizable people in all Britain: their merits and their defects are both those which high civilization develops and fosters. In commerce, science, art, they thrive; in war, they fail. Could one put more briefly the civilized temperament?

From this point of view, too, there is a certain natural fitness of things in the fact that the water impounded in the Vyrnwy Lake goes in the end to supply Liverpool. For Liverpool, as everybody knows, is the "Capital of Wales." There are said to be more Welshmen in Liverpool city, and more Welsh spoken in Liverpool streets daily, than in any one town in the Principality, not even excluding Cardiff. The fact is, Wales is a teeming mother of men; and though South Wales finds employment for most of her spare hands in the great manufacturing and seaport towns of the Glamorganshire district, North Wales has little or nothing for them to do on the spot (bar slate quarrying), so that they almost necessarily overflow into Liverpool and other parts of Lancashire. For many many years this constant return-wave of the fruitful Celt upon the Teutonized regions has been going on uninterruptedly, so that now an enormous proportion of the population of England has a more or less distinct tinge of Celtic blood in its veins, however unsuspected. The return-wave seems to have begun as



EUNANT HALL (FROM N.E.).

early as the days of the Tudors—themselves Welsh by origin and Welsh in sympathies—under whose dynasty Welshmen felt themselves no longer aliens in the English portion of Britain, so that numerous families of Lloyds, Joneses, Griffiths, and Prices

then settled in London or other large towns, where their descendants nowadays have often not the slightest notion they are not of purely English ancestry.

It is by their names indeed that you can oftenest trace in other districts such Cambrian settlers as those who have lately been turned out of their old home at Llanwddyn to make way for the needs of parched and panting Liverpool. From farmhouses like Tyuchaf, a swarm of hearty and lusty young Welshmen, pullulating by thousands in the upland dales, have poured down upon the adjacent parts of England. Dr. Beddoe thinks at least a third of the population of the border counties must be of directly Welsh parentage. The outward migration follows the run of the rivers, which rise in the Welsh hills and flow down towards the plain to join at last the Severn or the Mersey. Fortunately, the name-test is simpler in the case of Welsh families than in that of almost any other component element of the British population. For Welsh surnames are few and markedly distinctive: most of them are derived from familiar Cymric Christian names, and many of them have three or four well-



THE DAM OF VYRNWY LAKE (FROM LLANWDDYN).

known alternative forms, all strikingly Welsh in sound and meaning. Evans and Bevan, Owen and Bowen, Griffith and Griffiths, Price and Preece, Hughes and Pugh, are the principal among these; and after them come Jones, Lloyd, Meredith, Craddock, Rhys, Howell, Powell, Pritchard, Richards, Parry, Gwynne, and Williams. Any persons bearing any of these, or of some dozen other equally Cymric names, in whatever part of the country he may be born, is undeniably Welsh by descent, on the father's side at least, as one can see at a glance by the evidence of his surname. Yet I have known Powells who pretended to be pure-blooded Englishmen, and Lloyds who fairly lost their tempers if anybody talked about their Cymric ancestry.

Tried by this test, it is surprising how many unsuspected Welshmen turn up everywhere in every grade and stratum of English society. The fact is, such sleepy villages as Llanwddyn have long fed London and Liverpool with men and women, just as truly as the Vyrnwy Lake now feeds one of those towns with pure water. These breezy uplands of the Berwyns, the Arans, and the Carneddau are the true nurseries of our urban population, as the Scotch Highlands are of our army, and the Connemara bogs of our colonial agriculture. Slowly and steadily, by a peaceful process of natural selection, the Celt is swamping the Teuton in Britain. More than any other British type, he retains unimpaired the reproductive faculty of early and vigorous races. Already he possesses nearly half the voting power of the United Kingdom; and he must needs increase while the so-called Saxon decreases, because all the great feeding-beds of towns, the nurseries of men, are situated in the Celtic half of Britain, while

in the Teutonic half the population, being largely urban and therefore decadent, can only be kept up at its full level by continuous importation from these more wholesome breeding-places. Those who fear such a change however fall into a grave error as to the nature of race distinctions. They are in most cases themselves quite half Celtic by birth; and there is no real danger of the Celtic element making any change for the worse in the state of Britain, because, as a matter of fact, a very great proportion of what is best in our mixed population is and has always been of largely Celtic origin.

It is with some degree of consolation therefore that one can stand on the dam of Vyrnwy Lake and gaze up to the beautiful green hills beyond it which have seen so many revolutions of human occupation. How strange are the historical changes in this respect that that calm barrier ridge has looked down upon serenely! Its sides are studded indeed with the grass-grown mementoes of that most ancient race who piled up the long barrows and the cromlechs of Britain, and some of whose descendants



LLANWDDYN POST-OFFICE AND CROSS GUNS INN.

may still be recognized by their long oval skulls among the folk that flock on Thursdays to Llanfyllin market. These were the people of the Neolithic age; the small long-skulled race of whom legendary memories still remain in the popular mind as "the fairies;" and so persistent is the recollection of their subjection and enslavement by the Celtic invaders that Professor Rhys has heard a man taunted in Carnarvon town at the present day with being of fairy ancestry. Then come the relics of that second immigration, the later people who raised the round barrows, who burned their dead and buried their ashes in urns, and who possessed a knowledge of bronze and of metallurgy in general. Both these prehistoric types have left memorials of their presence thickly scattered on the Welsh hill-sides, the cromlechs which result from the denudation of chambered tumuli being especially numerous throughout the Principality. After them the Roman ran his roads in long straight lines through the land; and the conquered Briton, driven from the Severn valley at last by the fall of Uriconium, took refuge from the Saxon in those impregnable fastnesses of his rugged Powysland.

There for a long time the Briton held out among the hills against the intrusive Teuton; but after the Norman Conquest, the Montgomeries built their castle at Trefaldwyn and called the Principality they carved for themselves out of vanquished Powys after their own name, Montgomeryshire. Mementoes of all these peoples, and of the resulting intermixture, may be found to this day among the villages of the Berwyns. The truth is, we talk glibly enough in our hasty way about Celts and

Saxons, but who is Celt and who is Saxon, it would puzzle the best ethnographer among us all to determine with the slightest approach to accuracy.

“With easy pains you may distinguish
Your Saxon, Norman, Danish, English,”

says Defoe, satirically; for even in his day, men of sense perceived the folly of the

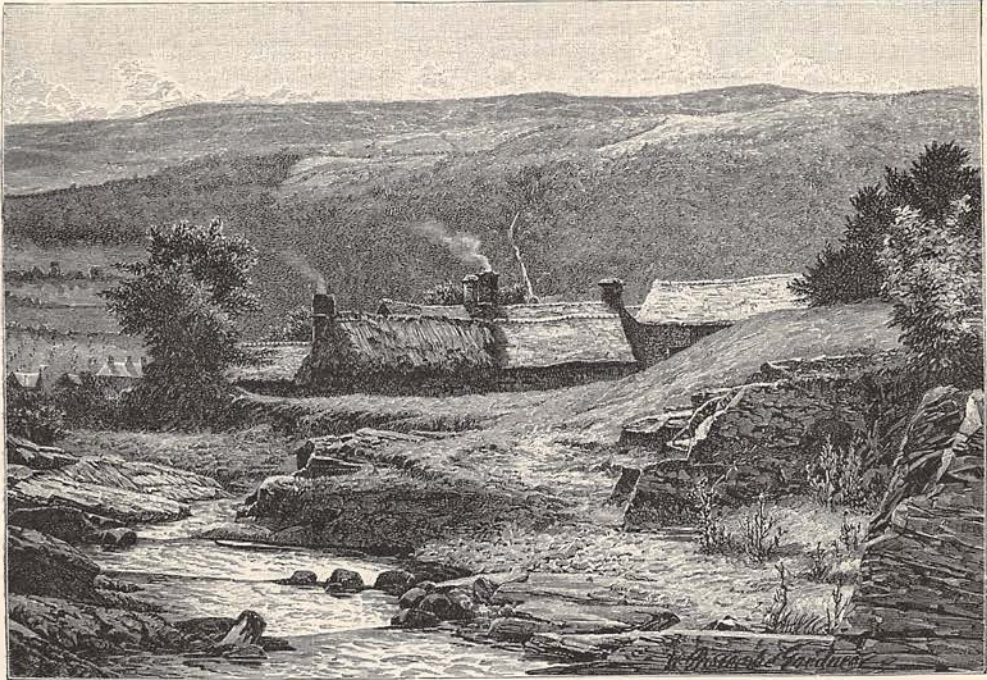


ON THE CEDIG (ABOVE LLANWDDYN).

ordinary hard and fast lines of popular ethnology. And modern historical criticism has but emphasized and strengthened Defoe's conclusions. Hampshire and Wiltshire, for example, the kernel of Wessex, are usually regarded as among the most Saxon shires in England; but the best living authority upon British anthropology would be amply satisfied, he says, if it were admitted as probable that at least half the blood in Hants and Wilts was of Teutonic origin. The remainder may be Celtic or præ-Celtic in character; for no race that ever once appeared on British soil has yet died out leaving no trace of its presence on the population behind it. There are men still living in many parts of Britain whose skulls exactly resemble in every measurable particular the skulls of the very earliest præ-glacial inhabitants.

These facts, I hold, which are forced upon us so vividly among the cradles of men here in the remote Welsh uplands, are not without their moral and social significance. The great lesson driven in upon us by the irrefragable conclusions of modern ethnography is the lesson of the folly and futility of all race rivalries and race animosities. Not only is it true that God has made of one blood all the nations upon earth, but it is also true that the blood of all nations is so mixed and so blended that no pure race now exists anywhere in civilized Europe, Asia, or America. Nor has it ever been clearly shown that any one stock, in Europe at least, is intellectually or morally superior to any other. For years, for example, it has been usual to regard

the fair-haired and blue-eyed type as the true Aryans, and as the highest embodiment of European culture. But the most recent historian of the Aryans, Canon Isaac Taylor, has shown grave reasons for doubting this supposed pedigree, and has pointed out that culture belongs historically rather to the smaller and darker people of Central Europe than to the big-bodied and fair-haired Scandinavian mountaineers. The tall blue-eyed race has everywhere in Europe formed, by conquest, for several centuries, the dominant aristocracy; but the men of thought, the men of art, the men of leading, and the men of letters, have belonged, if anything, rather to the smaller and conquered than to the larger, fairer, and conquering type. On a balance of all good qualities, mental and bodily, I believe no one race can be shown to possess any marked superiority, all round, to another; but if in energy and activity of a military sort the so-called Teutonic type has the best of it, in brain and eye the so-



TYUCHA FARM, LLANWDDYN, VYRNWY VALLEY.

called Celt seems on the other hand to have somewhat the advantage. It has been shown pretty conclusively that English poetry and English art have been mainly Celtic, while English engineering and English politics have been mainly Teutonic.

Nor is that all. Even this mild form of dogmatizing on race-superiorities is itself deceptive; for there are no pure Celts, and there are no pure Teutons. All over Britain, the intermixture is so intricate and so nice that one can hardly do more than say roughly of such and such a given large area that it is on the whole a trifle more Celtic or a trifle more Teutonic than such and such another. Here in the immediate neighbourhood of Llanwddyn (to take a crucial instance) we have traces of palæolithic and neolithic types in the village population: traces of the Bronze Age and the Iron Age Celt in the farmers and shopkeepers: traces of Mercian English and pure Saxons from Wessex in the townfolk and yeomanry; traces of intrusive Norman and recent mongrel industrial settlers from the manufacturing shires, in the Montgomery element and the navvies of the works. Yet when the Llanwddyn villager, or the Llanfyllin townsman betakes him, with his Cymric speech and faith, to London or Liverpool, he is simply a Welshman; no distinction is made in those great absorbing and assimilating centres between the Silurian from Glamorganshire and the Cymry from Snowdonia, between the tall and long-faced representative of the Aryan conquerors and the short, squat, dark-complexioned descendant of the Turanian substratum. Language and locality alone are taken into account; and so every Welshman is Welsh alike, whether

he belongs to the Mongoloid or the Siluroid type, to the once dominant Cymry or the long conquered Gael, to the Norman conquerors or to the Mercian capitalist class.

And the moral of this is, as the Duchess would have said to Alice, let us not be excessively puffed up with personal pride because we think ourselves, on one side out of a hundred, of pure Norman origin; and let us not despise our fellow-subjects anywhere because we imagine they have a smaller fraction of the blue Aryan blood, whatever that may be (a most doubtful point), than some of the rest of us. Everybody is a bit of a Norman and a bit of a chimney-sweep. So far as history teaches us anything it teaches us this: that occasion, not race, makes aristocracies and *canaille*. The very same people who are noble here are *roturier* there; the very same physical characteristics that mark in one place the haughty ruling caste mark in another the crouching pariah or the leper whom his neighbours shun with religious awe for fear of ceremonial contamination. In Spain, the Hidalgo is the Hi-d'-al-go, the son of the Goth, the representative of the conquering Teutonic overlords; but just north of the Pyrenees his brother, the Cagot, is the dog of a Goth, the heretical Arian refugee, who refused to conform to Catholic usage, and whose descendants therefore till lately entered the church, like accursed beings, by a separate doorway. It is the same everywhere. The race that for the time being has the upper hand anywhere prides itself largely upon its noble and masterful manly qualities: it despises with all its heart the servile characteristics of the servile race. Change their places and you change their natures. The servile race becomes in broader circumstances generous and wide-minded; the degraded overlords sink forthwith into ignoble serfs. So the Saxon went down before the Dane, and the Dane before the Norman; and in the second generation after the Conquest the English-born gentleman of Frisian blood degenerated into farmer Godric, the illiterate churl whom the mailed Norman knight despised as a vulgar boor. No race of slaves was ever yet anything on earth but slavish; no race of nobles ever failed to develop the chivalrous qualities of courtly life. Even the unspeakable Turk himself is "at least a gentleman," say his friendly apologists; and the Southern slaveholder, whatever might be the vices of his private life, had usually the dignified and complacent manners of a Louis Quinze nobleman.

These are the thoughts—I confess somewhat rambling—that first casually suggest themselves to me as I gaze once more at Mr. Gardner's exquisite sketches of a vanished village. Let us be thankful at least that, if Old Wales is to disappear thus piecemeal, so tender and sympathetic a pencil as his was at hand before it sank to preserve to us the memory of so much ruined beauty.

