

Y DDAU DELYNWR, THE KING HARPISTS

The Boy Plays a Hornpipe, for the Good Old Vicar of Llangynydd.

JOHN WINS THE COMPETITIVE HARP

His Father Buys Him the Harp of Thomas Evans, of Newtown, the Maid of Sker's Lover--He Enters the Royal Academy and Becomes One of Its Professors.

Cadrawd, of the South Wales Daily News, writes as follows concerning the Thomas family, the king harpists: At the request of that patriotic Welshman and collector of the noteworthy literature and traditions of our beloved country, namely, Mr. N. Bennett, Glangravon, North Wales, I interviewed the genial old patriarch, Mr. John Thomas, the father of the warm-hearted Welshmen and world-renowned musicians, Pencroft Gwallia and Ap. Thomas. My remembrance of Mr. Thomas extends as far back as the time he first came to Maesteg to follow his trade as a tailor. At this place he spent the last thirty-two years of his life, figuring as one of the most active and well-known characters among the inhabitants of "Yr Hen Blwyf."

My first recollection of him is at a kind of a club feast held at the Old House, Llangynydd, on an Easter Monday, many years ago, where he was accompanied by his son, Llewelyn. The father played a clarinet, while the son, a pretty little boy, who was stationed on the table of the "long" or club room, of the Old House, played the harp. Their playing gave great pleasure to the large number of persons who had gathered together to spend a merry day. I was a very young lad then, but I have a clear recollection of many things that took place that day. The performance of John Thomas fixed itself on my mind, since it was, I thought, far above the average. Whenever I met him afterwards the opinion I had formed of him the first time I saw him was strengthened. He was of patriarchal aspect, careful of his appearance, and one of the merriest of mortals a person could meet in a days journey.

Before I commence narrating what I gathered from him during my last few interviews with him I feel I must relate an incident which occurred at Llangynydd on the feast day referred to sometime in the afternoon. It so happened that the vicar, the late Rev. H. P. Llewelyn, M. A., chanced to drop in amongst the pleasure-seekers in the long room. He called Mr. Thomas to him and, after the usual salutations had passed, said he understood that he was the master of ceremonies for that day, and asked if there was anyone present that could dance a hornpipe to the music of the harp. Mr. Thomas told the vicar that his wish could be granted as there was present one of the best dancers in Glamorgan in the person of Bethyn Jones, of Aberavon, and he was sure that Mr. Jones would do all in his power to please Mr. Llewelyn.

Mr. Thomas told his son Llewelyn, to play the "Swansea Hornpipe," and Mr. Jones jumping upon the table went through his paces with the utmost precision and neatness; in fact, as one of the bystanders remarked, his feet went as if they were playing a kettle drum. The vicar then asked Mr. Thomas to play some Welsh airs on the harp for him, which he did. Mr. Llewelyn said he was very pleased, and thanked them for their kindness.

During my last visit to Mr. Thomas I asked the old gentleman if he remembered the above incident. He laughed heartily, and said that he re-

membered it quite well. "In my opinion," he said further, "Mr. Llewelyn was the right man in the right place. He could be merry with those who were merry and still be able to sympathize truly with those in sorrow and trouble. He was not like the majority of ministers of the present day, too holy to look at anyone enjoying himself with a little harmless pleasure. I often feel an inclination to break out into a jig myself, but my old legs fail me, though my arms are like whalebone still," at the same time tapping the table with his fingers as if to give force to his words. "I could still sew as well as ever," he continued, "but I have no need to, as my son John keeps me like a lord."

I persuaded Mr. Thomas to give me his life's history, which I believe will greatly interest the reader. I give the narrative almost in his own words. "My father's name was Thomas Thomas, a dapper little man of about five feet in height, who was by trade a shoemaker. He was a native of Llanelli, Carmarthenshire. When quite young he went to work to a place called Felin Ivan Ddu, in the Okmore Valley. While at this place he met Miss Cecil Bevan, Hendre Fasset, whom he eventually married. They went to live at Swansea, at which place I was born. Here my father worked hard for several years. While at Swansea my parents became members in the chapel at which Joseph Harris (Gomer) was minister. When he was 8 years old my parents moved to Bridgend. We were twelve children, but their lives now only one besides myself, namely, William, a tailor by trade, who never left Neath. My father failed to continue working at the trade, as his eyesight failed, being naturally of bad eyesight. When his eyes failed he was engaged by Mr. Harris (Gomer) to canvass the county with his books, which occupation he was engaged in for years. It was during this period we moved to Bridgend. I had received a good education, and had intended being a printer, but Mr. Harris died when I was 15 years old, and that scheme fell to the ground. I then hoped to become a tailor, and was apprenticed to a man who was a tailor of some note in the town, and succeeded in becoming an adept at my trade. I was very fond of music, and could play the clarinet when very young, and for some time I led a band in the town. I married when rather young Miss Catherine Jones, the daughter of Llewelyn Jones the saddler, a highly respectable family in the town. We had seven children, of which John is the eldest, and is only some 20 years younger than I am. When John was very young I had bought him a violin, hoping that he would learn to play it, but I soon found out that he had no great inclination for that instrument. By some means or other a harp found its way into our house, and after a short time I found John was fond of playing it, and soon he made it burst forth into song. I came to know that Thomas Evans' harp, of Newtown, the Maid of Sker's love, was for sale, and I went to Newtown and bought it. It was on this harp that John commenced learning to play in earnest. It was rather a poor harp, but it did very well under the circumstances, and the boy learned to play Welsh airs on it. Before he was 15 years old I determined that he should compete for the Welsh harp that was offered to the best player on the tripple harp at the Aberavenny establisment.

In order to prepare him for this competition I tried to get the son of Mr. Zephaniah Williams, of Tredegar (who was a well-known player on the tripple harp) to coach him for a few weeks, so that they should get used to that kind of harp. Mr. Williams I found had undertaken to tutor another person for this competition, but he allowed John and I to obtain every advantage he could by letting him have the use of a tripple harp and also by showing him a few things. The great day came, and John and I journeyed to the establisment. Before the competition came on I took John to an hotel that was close by and ordered sixpenny worth of "cherub" and made him drink it every drop. As he went up the stairs he turned to me and

said, "Father, I am going to win. The time came and the competition began. John's turn came to play. He caught in the harp and drew his fingers over the strings, and said that it was out of tune. "Well, tune it, sir," said the adjudicator. He did so and commenced to play. He played to the satisfaction of all present, and was adjudged the winner of the harp. After the adjudication, Sir Charles Morgan, asked him how a little fellow like himself was going to take such a big thing as the harp was home. "I have my father with me," he said. "Where is your father, I want to see him?" said Sir Charles. When I presented myself the baronet asked, "And are you the father of this clever little fellow?" "Yes, Sir Charles, I am proud to say I am."

"And what are you going to do with him?" was the next question. "I hope you are not going to let him play about the public houses in Wales," I begged my pardon, sir, said I. "I should like if I could get him into the Royal Academy, but as I am only a journeyman tailor, having a large family to support, I am going to let him be done for him." "Thank you, Sir Charles," said I. "Well, how do we go with the harp, John and I from Aberavenny establisment, but I did not feel much at rest until I had determined to go to London, taking with me my wife and children. So one day, trusting that Providence would assist us, we went up to take our chance. We took the coach at Bridgend, and took with us as many articles of domestic use as we could. We reached London, and were lucky in securing good lodgings. Next morning I went to look for Sir Charles Morgan, and managed to find him at home. As soon as he saw me he exclaimed, "I am glad to see you, Mr. Thomas, you have come at the right time. There is going to be a party tonight at Lady Llanover's house, and the lad must go there in the evening and take the harp with you."

"Thank you, Sir Charles," said I. "That evening I took the lad to the house the gentleman informed me of, and left him there with the information that I would call for him later. I called at the stated time and found awaiting me a lady dressed in silk. She asked me what I intended doing with the clever little boy I had left there that evening. "Well," I replied, "as best I could, I should like to put him in the Royal Academy of Music." "Where do you live?" she then asked. "In St. Paul's street," was the reply. "Well," she said, "I will call at your house tomorrow afternoon at 3 o'clock." "Thank you, my lady," said I, and bowed myself out. At 3 o'clock exactly on the following day her carriage rolled up and stopped at our door. In came the lady and delighted me with the information that I would endeavor to find £20 a year for seven years towards the lad's education, which was required to give him a thorough education. "I am only a poor journeyman tailor, my lady," said I, "but I will do my best." "Very well," said she, "I will write to my husband's tailor, asking him to give you employment."

"By this means I obtained continuous employment and received good wages. I lived in St. Paul's Churchyard for nearly twenty years, and there I buried a little girl of four years of age. Thus John went into the academy, where he studied hard. By night he taught Ap. Thomas what he had learnt during the day, so both lads made up the rest, which was required to play at parties all over the city. I played the clarinet and William the violin. It was to my advantage to live in the city, as I could call on my father and promptly obey every call, no matter from what direction it came. I suc-

ceeded in earning enough to pay the £20 towards John's education (which, by the way, he has repaid a hundredfold), while the lady paid the remainder. "During the last few years of my residence in London my wife's health was very poor, and the doctor advised me to take her back to Wales. That is why I left London. My wife died soon after our return to our native land and was buried at Old Castle, Bridgend. After my wife's death I came to live at Maesteg, at which place I followed my trade until very recently.

"My son, Llewelyn, when he grew into manhood journeyed to Australia, where he married. Some few years back he buried his wife and four children under a week of each other. The glow was too much for him and he sank under it and died within a year, leaving behind him one little child, a girl, to mourn his death. As soon as John heard of Llewelyn's death, he sent at once for his little girl, and she is still with him in London, brought up as one of his own children. Ap. Thomas also went to America, where he remained for several years, but he has returned to live in Scotland. William went to China, but I have not heard from him since he left the country. Ap. Thomas says him in New York, where they spent some little time together. He was a splendid player on the violin, and I dare say he earns his living by that means. I have a daughter, who was married to Mr. Thomas Miles, son of the late Mr. Thomas Miles, of Maesteg. She played the harp tolerably well, and I dare say, so do most of her children, who by the way are nearly all married."

So ended the old gentleman's narrative as given almost in his own words. About 12 years ago Mr. Thomas married the second time to a Miss Roberts, of Maesteg. The day following this second marriage Ap. Thomas paid a visit to Maesteg to see his father. He knew nothing of the previous day's ceremony, and came in upon the happy pair unexpectedly. His first remark to his father was, "Father, you look better today than I ever saw you before." "A good reason why, my son," was his reply. "I only got married yesterday." Ap. Thomas sprang upon his feet in surprise and exclaimed, "I am very glad to see you, Mr. Thomas, but I lose my wife I would do the same thing." I understood that since Ap. Thomas had done "the same thing" and had married to his second wife, he had now some years since the genial old Welshman was laid to rest beside his first wife, but he is still remembered with respect by the many natives of "Yr Hen Blwyf."

LITTLE PATIENCE LEFT.

From the Philadelphia Press. One can hardly read with patience the account of how the Scranton faith cureists let a little boy die of diphtheria because their fanaticism saw no necessity for the resort to medical remedies. There is a disposition among many people to be indulgent with these poor people, but a should be remembered that the dense ignorance is a menace to any community, since they will not only not save an individual stricken with such a malignant and contagious disease as diphtheria, but will also do nothing to prevent its spread. Their views on disease are opposed to the experience of mankind, and are absolutely contrary to the splendid discoveries of medical science which have made the last fifty years illustrious. So long as the laws of Pennsylvania prevent all but graduates of reputable schools of medicine from practicing local authorities should make short shrift with the faith cureists, who have not even the doubtful skill of herb doctors, and to whom even this competition is a prohibition.

The faith of "Faith Cure" is fatuity, and the science of "Christian Science" is as false as its trust on Christianity. "By jove, I'm in hard luck!" "How so?" "I've ordered a money order I've got for \$20, and the only man in town that can identify me to the money-order clerk is one that I owe \$20 to."--Somerville Journal.

AN AWFUL CURSE FOLLOWED HIM

Fulfillment of Prediction Made by Murdered Man's Brother.

THE STORY OF A GEORGIA MURDER

The Brother Said the Assassin Would Never Sleep Again, and for Two Years the Criminal Had Nothing to Do with Morpheus.

An interesting story of how the curse of an injured man was fulfilled on the murderer of his brother is told in his autobiography by Sol Smith, now deceased, one of the oldest American actors, and a chronicler of authentic and important theatrical events. "Often--very often," writes Mr. Smith, in a book published several years ago, "I have attempted to write of my brother Lemuel's murder in Georgia, but I could not. Thirty years have elapsed since that terrible event, and yet whenever I put pen to paper with the intention of recording the circumstances attending it, I was unable to do so.

About eleven years ago I went to Montgomery, Ala., with the intention of visiting my murdered brother's grave at Milledgeville, but, in the middle of the night, as the train was passing through the old 'Indian Nation,' a chill came over me warning me to return and I did. I could not go on. Returning by the morning train, I determined to write a history of that horrible scene in Georgia, in 1822, and give some account of the circumstances that attended it.

My brother, Lemuel (the youngest of eleven of us), was 27 years of age at the time he was cruelly cut off from life. He is still remembered by many Georgians as an actor of great promise. How and where he became acquainted with William Flournoy, his slayer, I have never learned. They were together at a drinking saloon at the capital of Georgia on the night of the 12th of November, 1822. Words passed between them on a trifling subject. Although my brother had been warned against Flournoy as a dangerous man, he paid no heed to the warning. He remarked to his friend that if Flournoy wanted anything of him he might come on, at the same time pointing to a handful of a pistol, loaded only with powder, as it was found afterwards. This remark was communicated to Flournoy and saved his life from the halter. At the time, and until the trial of the murderer, two years afterwards, I knew nothing of these particulars, and had only learned the actual facts of the killing. Flournoy came up to my brother apparently in a friendly manner, and after inviting him to drink with him, remarked: "This is the d--d rascal who insulted me at Etonton." With these words he drew a pistol from his bosom and fired two shots through the body of my brother, mortally wounding him.

"No one to my knowledge, has ever been able to solve the meaning of the words, 'You are the d--d rascal who insulted me at Etonton.' My brother had never been in Etonton, and had never met Flournoy there. "When informed of my brother's murder I rushed to the fatal spot, and found him weltering in his blood. The murderer had fled. The victim retained his senses to the last, and informed me and the bystanders that William Flournoy had fired the fatal shots. A few hours afterwards he placed his hands in my hands, and said: 'The coroner's jury brought in a verdict of 'willful murder' against Flour-

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"Yes," he answered feebly and attempted to come near me. "I am Flournoy; and I have long been seeking you. I heard you were here, and I have come from my place on purpose to see you. Do not refuse what I have to ask."

"I want nothing to say to you," I answered, conquering my first impulse of pity for this miserable wretch. Brushing past him, I walked away. But he followed me, and catching up with me, he cried: "I want you, the brother of the man I slew, to shoot me--here--right here. "It is not punishment I ask you to inflict, but vengeance. I want you to avenge your brother's murder!" "Yes, his murder," he continued, for I remained silent. "I murdered him! I know it now! You said at the trial I would never sleep more, and I never have!" "What?" I exclaimed, "not sleep in two years?" "It is true," said he. "I have not slept since that terrible day you spoke to me in the courtroom. I have closed my eyes at night, stooped my senses in brandy, but the blessed sleep you drove away from me that night has never returned. My life is a burden. I pray you to take it--take it!" "I could endure the scene no longer and walking away left him standing in the middle of the street. "I will die tonight!" were the last words I heard him utter. "Not having been able to make arrangements to reach Elliot with a private conveyance I took the stage for home that night, and got safely past an Indian camp. "About a month after the events I have been relating my friend James Kevelin, of Columbus, wrote me at Mobile as follows: "The very next morning after you left Columbus, the body of your brother's murderer was found at his country place, pierced by a dozen rifle bullets and scathed--the first victim of our little Indian war."

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