

THE LAST OF THE DRUIDS

Thomas Hughes, Made at Cardiff, Wales, December 29, 1896.

[The following story by John A. Foote, of Archbold, is the one which won The Tribune prize of \$25 at the recent Robert Morris lodge eisteddfod. It is a striking production for a young man of 26 years of age who is not Welsh in antecedents or surroundings.]

"Was it murder? An English tourist, who gave his name as Thomas Hughes, while hunting in the woods near Marshtown, Pa., last Wednesday, sought shelter from the cold in a cabin which he found in a clearing. On entering he found it occupied by an aged man, lying dead upon a mattress. The cabin was in disorder, but no marks of violence were visible on the old man's body. Hughes notified the authorities and the case was investigated. In the hut was found a quantity of old gold and silver coins—some of them dating back many centuries. Some rare old manuscripts and antique armor were found in the cellar.

"At the inquest held yesterday afternoon the coroner stated that the condition of the internal organs had convinced him that the old man had died of heart failure. The heart showed no lesions, and this fact substantiated his theory that death was not caused by organic cardiac weakness, but that heart paralysis had been induced by means of some drug—probably chloroform. The jury having viewed the body, and carefully examined the premises, suspected foul play and brought in a verdict of death by violence at the hands of person or persons unknown.

"Two suspicious characters who were seen in the neighborhood have been placed under arrest. The police expect to have a clear case in a few days. Their prompt action is praiseworthy, and it is to be hoped that the miscreants who are guilty of the foul outrage will receive their deserts."

The article just quoted, which I found in a leading New York daily a few days ago, is a rather good statement I now make. There are those who will censure me for the abbreviated and incomplete statement I made when I notified the authorities, but I feel that my reasons for such action were good and sufficient, and I now submit them to the public in the interest of justice.

I had secured passage on a steamer which was to leave New York for Liverpool the day following the discovery of the body of the old man. Herbert, whose name I have known, for I had been called home on urgent business. I told the authorities then all that at that time there was no suspicion of foul play. Besides, what had seen was so strange, and I felt that it was so incomprehensible, that though I was convinced of its reality, I feared that its relation would serve no good end, and might entail upon myself endless annoyances, delay and, perhaps, suspicion. Even if the authorities had been able to assert that the events which I describe as having occurred in the old man's hut were only a dream produced by an over-wrought imagination and the draught which I had taken from Herbert's hand, by the time that I had returned from the events, which I describe in relation to the old man, actually occurred, and as evidence of both my honesty and mental soundness, I am ready to affirm in any way the law may require to clear my name from the charge I accused of the murder of Herbert, the truthfulness of the events set forth in the subjoined description:

My name is Thomas Hughes; my permanent residence is Cardiff, Wales. I am not an English tourist, as I am a New York citizen, and I am a tourist at all. My father and mother died when I was very young and left me a comfortable competence. My early training was attended to by a maternal uncle, who possessed of fine literary tastes, and who had also had the best educational advantages. During my college course I became deeply interested in Philology and particularly in the history and origin of the Celtic languages. Two months ago I went to New York to visit Professor Mc... a man who had devoted his life to research in the studies which I am pursuing. When about to return I remembered that some distant relatives of mine resided at Scranton, Pa., and I concluded to visit them and see the attractive coal fields before sailing for home. At Scranton I met many congenial spirits and, in talking of my hobby, I learned of the existence at Marshtown (a small mining village a few miles distant from Scranton) of an old hermit's cabin, which had a sort of hermit, who was said to be a master of all the Gaelic tongues. I decided to visit this strange personage, but the hospitality of the Scrantonians pressed upon me so many social obligations that I postponed my visit from day to day. On the morning of December 10th I received a cablegram from my attorneys at Cardiff requesting me to return as soon as possible to complete some business in relation to a transfer of my property to my son. I was obliged to start at once, and I took the train to Marshtown and after receiving some very complicated questions there, and after waiting the limits of the village to find the mysterious hermit's cabin. It was about 3 o'clock when I started. I tramped through the woods for nearly two hours when, not finding the object of my search, I began to think that I had lost my way, or had been deceived. The ground was covered with eldritch snow and walking was extremely difficult. Darkness began to set in and I was on the point of abandoning my search, when my eye caught a glimmer of light down in a valley only a short distance from the spot where I was standing. I pressed forward to the locality in which I saw the light and found that it came from a cabin in which I saw the old man, who was lying dead upon a mattress in a small clearing in a pine forest at the foot of the mountains. To reach it I would have to cross a half-dozen streams of water. The ice would not bear my weight, consequently I must leap the stream, as there was no bridge crossing it. I was not very athletic, yet I considered the leap not beyond my powers and essayed it. I succeeded in reaching the opposite bank; but one of my feet slipped on the icy ground and I fell heavily, wrenching my ankle so severely that I could hardly rise from the path of it. With some difficulty I succeeded in reaching the hut and knocked at the door. "Enter," said a voice, and I pushed the door open.

Before an open fire of pine knots sat an old man of gigantic stature. His hair and beard were long and white as snow, and his face, though aged-looking, was unwrinkled and al-

most wonderful simplicity of life, of most extraordinary attractiveness of speech, manifesting a power over nature itself, had risen up, and was hailed by the populace as the Redeemer who had been sent from God to restore them to their ancient glory and deliver them from bondage. The Jews had long stood under the Roman yoke, and when I heard of this wonderful personage I decided that from Judea, the weakest point, should come the first trumpet blast that would herald the destruction of Rome's empire. The army would follow wherever led—the Jews would follow their young prophet; let our forces be combined and we would be irresistible. For the first time in my twenty years of Roman servitude I asked the Emperor for freedom of all my Roman subjects with much favor, and I embarked for Jerusalem with all the pomp and pageantry that the empire could bestow upon a favorite, and on my arrival at Jerusalem I was received with equal honors.

"Truly, rumor had spoken aright, for from all Gallilee and Judea came throngs to see and hear the wonderful speaker. When I saw that I excelled within myself and blessed my talismans for having brought me power, in the person of such an ally, my success I considered already assured, for there remained only the easiest part of my scheme—the winning to my side of the young Jewish leader. To accomplish this purpose I followed the throng one morning out of the city, to the mountain, whither He had gone for rest with a few of His chosen followers. The people followed Him everywhere; and when I reached the place, I found Him addressing a multitude so vast that I marvelled how He could reach Him, but His voice had a soft, vibrant quality that floated into one's ears like music, and though I stood afar off, I lost none of the discourse. He spoke as I had never heard man speak. As I listened, my passion and hatred melted away.

"No words of mine can describe the sweetness and love that shone in that visage, and my soul was satisfied, for the words of wisdom that fell from His lips, the doctrine of universal love, when I thought of the Jews and their Druid religion. The Jews were mistaken in this man. Were these the words of an earthly conqueror? Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you: For if you will not forgive, neither will your Father that is in heaven, forgive your offenses. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy. At the sound of these words, so simple, yet so sublime, I felt a horror of my mission. To speak to Him of temporal conquest or revenge would be to my sacrilege. His teaching would prevail throughout the earth, for had not the stars foretold it? This light had come to my mind and I was about to throw myself at His feet and asked to be taken as one of His disciples, when I thought of my promise to Divitiacus, and I could not cease to love wisdom, wealth and power. I was fated to roam the earth, faddened at heart I turned away, comforting myself with this reflection: It will not be long, for He teaches men to be not solicitous for the things of life.

"I could not wait, so I sailed back to Rome and tendered my resignation as commander, urging age and ill health as my reason for quitting the army. Alas! the hopes that I had built on my own change of sentiment were shattered by the news that the Redeemer had been put to death by the Jews whom he had come to save. Soul-sick and disheartened through the long years that I had spent in the fields to different men in different climes, and none refused to barter their souls for them. Strange! that in all these years never did I meet, on that fateful Night of Sacrifice, a follower of His, whose disciple I wished to proclaim myself to be. Was it the avenging spirit of Divitiacus that placed in my path only those who would accept my gifts, knowing that the followers of the Christ would refuse, and by refusing end the power of Efus on earth?

"One who has passed only a fraction of the average human life, cannot understand what an awful experience it is to live on with no hope of rest. I lived in the broad light of ancient civilization, I saw it fade until its faint gleam shone only through the monasteries of the Middle Ages, and I watched its flickering rays grow brighter until it outshone its former radiance. I sickened of fame, I tired of wealth, and wisdom only taught me the hollowness of my earthly possessions. I who have lived while nations have been born and have passed into history—while history itself of the world's greatest ages has been made—know all too well that the God, who allotted man a certain time to live, did not do so for the mere purpose of a mere life. I travelled among all nations, I learned all tongues—many of them are dead while I still survive—but everywhere I found men the same. My time is short and you need rest, I will not wear you further. This, then, I said to myself. Yet it was then that no one has refused my gifts, and you know what cause I have to be joyful. To you I owe much. May the God who does all things well reward you. I can say no more—I am thankful, farewell. At last, O Efus, thy power is at an end. O Divitiacus, my uncle, my protector, my friend! shall we ever meet again?"

The luminous halo grew fainter and fainter, until at last the figure of the old man had faded away in the gloom. My mind was in a perfect turmoil with the marvellous things I had witnessed and the weird tale I had listened to. For several hours I lay awake waiting for the dawn, but tired nature, overtaken by the strain of the evening of the night, claimed its due and day dawned before I realized that I had slept.

When I stepped out of my bed I found that I could use my injured feet as well as ever. "It must have been a dream," I said to myself. Yet it was with no small anxiety that I opened the door leading to the adjoining chamber. It was a small, rough room. In the corner on a rude couch lay the old man covered with a sheepskin—a striking contrast to the white robe I had half expected to find. He appeared to be sleeping, and I smiled at my belief in what must have been a hallucination; but as I advanced toward the bed the smile died on my face. His eyes were closed, a look of peace composed his peaceful features, and amongst his snowy locks rested a few faded oak leaves.

The old man was dead.

Note.—Many of the statements made by Herbert are substantiated by history.

No Ruffles on Sunshades.
This season's parasols are noticeable for the absence of the hanging ruffles. The ruffles are fastened, in fact, and flowers are on the smartest ones, but the wide ruffle

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What Uncle Sam Is Doing for the Farmer.

Points in a Recent Talk with Secretary of Agriculture Wilson.

Special to The Scranton Tribune.
Washington, May 14.
A map of the United States with a broad red stripe running across it from the Atlantic to the Pacific will soon ornament the walls of the office of the secretary of agriculture. This map and particularly this stripe will interest especially two great classes of citizens in the United States, the farmers and the capitalists.

"Having distributed sugar beet seeds to about twenty thousand farmers," said Secretary Wilson, "I want to take up the practical end of this subject now and show to the capitalists as well as to the farmers where they can afford to make such business investments as are likely to be a success financially and otherwise."

"You still have faith, then, in the beet sugar enterprise from a practical standpoint?"

"Undoubtedly; and it is evident that the people of the United States have faith in it. We have supplied in the last four weeks twenty thousand farmers of the country with sugar beet seeds for experiments during the coming season. They are scattered through practically every state north of the extreme southern line of states. The people as far south as the Carolinas, Tennessee and Texas believe that they can grow sugar beets successfully. And we are quite willing to give them a full opportunity to make that test everywhere. If they succeed in extending the beet sugar territory down to the very line of the cane sugar area there ought to be no difficulty in producing in the United States at a net profit of million dollars worth of sugar for which we are now going abroad annually.

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