

St Quintins castle show 1866 article.

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Cottagers' Exhibition at St Quintin's Castle

An exhibition of this kind was held yesterday (Tuesday) in the grand old ruins of St Quintin's castle, and we can scarcely conceive a more romantic spot for the holding of a floral fete than the rich urban district of Llanblethian. The place itself, independent of Nature's adornments, which are fully developed here, is rich in historic association, and the surrounding district is full of interest to the antiquarian. The castellated ruins, the farm homestead, have some affinity to past history, and the intelligent inhabitants are as well versed in the pedigree of defunct knights as the local politician is with the sayings and acts of his pet statesman.

The charmingly picturesque village of Llanblethian (or Llan Bledian) is situated in the "cwmwdd" of Maenor Glyn Ogwr, which is now called the hundred of Ogmor, and runs down the side and to the foot of the hill; the cleanly cottages and garden plots are well surrounded with trees, which imparts to the whole a scarcely unequalled rural and picturesque effect. The village is included in the chapelry of Cowbridge and its religious wants are ministered by the Rev. Thomas Edmondes, vicar, who is also one of the magisterial magistrates of the Borough of Cowbridge. The living of Llanblethian in days long past was valued in the king's books at £10.13s.4d, how far the stipend of the present day hold comparison, or otherwise, with the past it is no business of ours to enquire.

St. Quintin's Castle is commandingly situated on the steep of a hill, and evidently was once a structure of very considerable magnitude; it was built upon the site of a baronial dwelling in existence at some remotely superior date. The entrance to the castle is still imposing in its appearance, but, alas! for the grandeur of baronial halls; the ante-chamber is now used as an outhouse. *Tempora mutantur*. The castle is said to have been built prior to the incursory visit of Robert Fitzhamon, and his spoiliative band; but upon this point some difference exists; it being stated that the castle was raised by one of his knights. Be that as it may, the place fell to the lot of Robert St. Quintin, and we feel sure that veritable knight must have been envied in the possession of such a noble domain. This occurred on the division of the county, but it passed from Sir Robert's lineal successors in the reign of Henry 111. Llewellyn, son of Howell Vawr, Lord of Llanilary (St. Hilary) and Llanblethian Major, was one of those who were dispossessed of lands and chattels owing to the proclivities of Fitzhamon and his marauding retainers.

The view from the castle grounds is exceedingly picturesque; at one point, the village in its pretty dell is perceivable, with the church on an opposite acclivity, near where is the village hostelry, "the Picton", kept by Mrs. Williams, a neat and affable dame. Titus Lewis Esq. has a charming residence here, beneath which the Tawe meanders, that is after a succession of rains, just now it winds sluggishly past, perhaps the weather has something to do with it. Taking up another position, we look upon

Cowbridge, called by the ancient Britons, Pont Van, and as an instance of Fitzhamon's good choice in selecting a pleasant spot, we may observe that the "fair village" was one of the three towns which he kept unto himself. Looking to the west part of the town, we observe the Verlands, the residence of Jas. Ballard Esq., and on an opposite height, in its richly wooded midst, is Penllyne Castle, the seat of J. Homfray Esq., which calls to us the words of a celebrated English poetess :

The stately homes of England,
How beautiful they stand,
Amidst their tall ancestral trees
O'er all the pleasant land.

Boverton Place, where those much respected farmers, the Messrs. Smith, reside, is associated with "the memory of the past". In 1216, Lewis, son of Philip, was made king of England, and King John wandered into Wales to see his wife and sister-in-law. In his days of kingly magnificence and prosperity, it would seem that he obtained a divorce from his wife, but when deposed from his high position and deprived of his sceptre, he sought for comfort in connubial enjoyments, which he had failed to obtain while in the possession of regal splendour. His wife was named Isabella, and was the daughter of William, Earl of Gloucester, the lord of Glamorgan, and from her sympathetic character must have been a thorough Welsh woman. When she saw the distress and danger of her royal lord, she forgot all the neglect which he had shown her, and she kept him in disguise for half a year at Boverton place under the *nomme du plumme* of General Fitzalan; and at the expiration of that period he was enabled to return to England, King Lewis being compelled (we use a Yankee phrase) to "skeddadle".

But we must leave antiquarian lore for the more immediate object of that which occasioned our visit to the interesting castle of St. Quintin.

Yesterday, the seventh annual exhibition of the cottagers of the parishes of Llanblethian, Llandough, St. Hilary, St. Mary Church, St. Athans, Cowbridge, Llantwit, Llysworney, and Penlline was celebrated. The committee of management consists of twenty-two gentlemen, and the honorary secretary is the Rev. Lewis Morgan of St. Hilary. The competition is limited to the labouring class, and no obstacle is placed in the way of the humblest cottager if he feels disposed to make an exertion in the cultivation of flowers and vegetables. That it is a highly remunerative recreation is obvious to any reflective mind. Who can look upon a well-kept garden without experiencing a degree of pleasure and delight. Who can gaze upon the cottager's bonnie rose, his fuschias and lilies, and lilacs, and geraniums, and tulips, and sunflowers, and crocuses, and last, though not least, the towering hollyhock, and not applaud him for these products? And for these productions pecuniary reward is given to those who compete successfully, in recognition of their industry; and the pretty and neatly kept gardens in addition, speak well for the agricultural labourer's love of home.

The weather seemed to have put on its best attire for the occasion, and gusty winds and drenching showers gave way to bright sunshine and zephyr breezes. The change in the weather was very fortuitous, for more reasons than one. The tent which had

been engaged for the occasion arrived on the morning of the show minus its canvas walls, proving useless, and the turfed terraces of the castle were thus not only found pretty but useful in the display of flowers, as also the verdure-clad shelvings which enriches the open spaces. From the castle keep the royal standard floated, and many-coloured flags and pennants floated gaily in the breeze.

The doors were thrown open at half-past three o'clock, and we would venture just to suggest to the committee that they might with advantage commence somewhat earlier. It would certainly present the floral specimens to much greater perfection before the public gaze, for picked at an early hour, they fade to some extent before the visitors are admitted. But at this show the vegetable kingdom gets more attention than flowers. The potatoes were so good that that the judges themselves experienced some difficulty, and it required the nicest discrimination to justly award the prizes, and to the unprofessional eye all seemed to merit a prize, whether kidneys, Oxford blues, or fortyfolds. The onions could scarcely have been better; some measured 15 inches in circumference, and were "as sound as a bell". Parsnips, carrots and turnips were all of good quality. Cucumbers looked "seedy"; peas rather faded, and what wonder when they have been in such request by voracious ducks; broad beans were fine, ditto French beans, and the same remark applies to cabbages. There was, indeed, but little exception to be taken to the vegetable classes. The dishes of fruit looked quite luscious for the late period of the season. The floral products reflected great credit on the persons who sent them, more especially when taken as the unaided industry of the poorer classes of this neighbourhood; but it was evident that the vegetables were the distinctive features of the show; for, though the floral specimens were good, there was nothing remarkable, and no attempt seemed to be made to indulge in design. We do not think it wise at the late hour at which we collate this report to particularise one more than the other; indeed the task would be invidious, and probably would create a jealousy among the exhibitors, where all should be good feeling, and a fair emulative spirit alone exist. Those who failed to get prizes this year will not, we hope, despair, but at future exhibitions "try, try again". The amateur class was well supported, and very tastefully arranged around the terraces, and among the windings of the ruins. Among the honorary exhibitions were some rich specimens of greenhouse plants, inclusive of the quaint egg plant; fuchsias, geraniums, petunias, dahlias, etc. A remarkably fine lot of fuchsias were sent by Fred Vachell Esq. of High Mead, near Cardiff, who also sent a richly adorned contribution to the aquarium. As we append the prize list, we need scarcely dwell longer upon the subject than to remark that the castle had a very animated appearance during the afternoon, there being a very fair attendance. At intervals the band of the 18th G.R.V., under the leadership of Sergeant Williams, played selections of music. Each district had its stall, indicated by a gaily-printed bannerette. In prominent positions, the following mottoes were disposed – "Success to the Cottage Garden Exhibition", "The hand of the diligent maketh rich".

Typed by B Alden