

One of the many undecided questions likely to remain unsolved for some years to come is the opposite query as to the best way of reaching Epsom Downs on the Derby Day, viz., whether by road or rail? In my own mind, I should solve the question, and express my opinion; but if I gave public opinion a view, I might be met with a hundred arguments in favour of the method I had by inference condemned. Likewise, if I ventured to express my idea as to the most suitable day for visiting St. Mary-hill, it would be to the utter destruction of the commercial prospects of Ffair-y-Mynydd, and would be completely scouted by buyers and sellers and those who make a profit out of the frequenters to the noted fair. This year the fair happening to fall on Monday, I determined to look upon the scene the day preceding, and to contrast the sober quietude of the Sabbath day with the noisy clamouring and chaffering of the following day. I made a circuitous journey to St. Mary-hill, the summit of which was, however, always kept well in view. Passing through the ziz-zag lane leading to Watertown-hall, a place brought into notice by its being the temporary residence of a famous songstress; and inhaling the perfume from the still-blooming honeysuckle, peering from hedge-rows green.

"And with a thankful heart and sense beguiled,
We look upon the fields of ripening grain."

In passing on to a more open landscape, leaving the lead works at Llangan on the right I mount the hill leading to the snug nestling church almost hidden by foliage, and the comfortable manse of the rector. The founder of this church is supposed to be Canna, a daughter of Tewdr Mawr ab Emyr Llydaw, and the wife of Sadwrn, after whose death she married Gallgu Reiddog, by whom she became the mother of Elian Geiniad. She was also the parent of Crallo, the founder of Coychurch. The "wake" of Elian used to be held in the month of August, but whether that gave rise to the holding of the great fair, I cannot say. Turning from the direction of Pentre-meyrick after a glance at the tower of Penllyne Castle, I push on towards the Down, and, skirting Fferm Goch, soon reach the object of my journey. Here, on either side, a beautiful panorama is unfolded; fields in cultivation or pasture; golden corn crops ready for the reaper; nodding woods; and the golden orb above smiling with warmth upon the beauteous scene, lighting up the verdant valleys and sober hills, and picking out the various tints that deck the surface of the earth. There is a freshness in the prospect, which seems heightened by the gentle breeze, and we halt to gaze upon the view from Penllyne to Wick, and far beyond the Ogmore's Mouth, belted by the waters of the Channel; and on the other side of the hill the eye picks out Cefnhirgoed, and wanders o'er its plain past Penylan; spanning in fancy the various hills—Capel-Llanilterne, Capel-Llambad, &c.—describing the barrows at Llanbarranwell, and in the far distance Mynydd-y-gaer, and the village of Pentyrech. Looking at the mountain tops, peeping down the slopes, the eye takes in a scene which for variety and beauty will vie with many. A calm and stillness reigns around the "day of rest," and there are but few indications of the impending change to busy life which a few hours will bring about. 'Tis true there are tents erected on the Down, but they are untenanted, the nomads are few, and consist of the attendants of a couple of shooting stalls, and the proprietor of a photographic van. A few curious people, who, like myself, were drawn to the spot, did not turn away uncompensated. Returning by another route I noticed that the bell of St. Mary's Church was slung up to a tree near the entrance gate, instead of being erected in the accustomed place. Journeying down the hill I indulged in wandering thoughts as to the motive which prompted the erection of a church in so singular a spot; of the census of the congregation, until I found that I had reached the foot of the hill, and was travelling on an ill-kempt road, over which I shook myself, inwardly desiring to complete the penitential and rugged journey over the Coychurch-flats. This in time was accomplished, and Bridgend being once more reached I found stronger indications of the coming fair than were to be seen on St. Mary-hill.

The above fair was held on Monday, when the general attendance was very large, although many of the district agriculturists were absent on account of harvest operations. There was a large number of horses sent, and a great many changed hands; the fair was, however, pronounced slow. But if we estimate the relative standpoints of buyer and seller, and note the large number of horses trucked after the fair, we may conclude that the business done was an average one, at ruling prices; which, however, have a downward tendency.

The show of cattle and sheep was, of course, a subordinate one, the fair being essentially one for the disposal of horseflesh. The following figures indicate the prices:—Hunters and carriage horses, from £80 to £120; cart horses, from £50 to £60; three-year-old colts, from £42 to £53; yearling ponies, £6 to £12; two-year-old ponies, £8 to £14; hacks, from £25 to £32; cow with calf at her side, £12 to £18; Irish yearling heifers, £6 10s; lambs varying from 2s to 4s each.

The real business of the fair was over at a comparatively early hour, and the general public wandered up and down the hill in vain search of amusement, and finding none had to resort to the booths for rest and refreshment. The publicans no doubt reaped a good harvest; there was, however, but little drunkenness. The hurdle-racing, usually a feature towards the end of the fair, was this year abandoned, as being a dangerous pastime. There was no accident worth recording, and the police had no charge on their list of theft. Superintendent Thomas had a number of police on the ground, but there was no occasion for bringing their services into active exercise, except in one case of attempted robbery; but the fellow was let off, as a constable did not appear. The amusements provided were not of an attractive kind, consisting of shooting galleries, rifle grounds, "Aunt Sally," and roulette tables. There was not a single show on the ground, a fact the oldest frequenter of the fair has not had occasion to note in previous years. In the evening the annual shower of rain fell, and quickly dispersed the loitering crowd.