

**GERALD
THE WELSHMAN**

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Gerald the Welshman by Henry Owen

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HENRY OWEN

**GERALD
THE WELSHMAN**

GERALD
THE WELSHMAN.

UNIV. OF
CALIFORNIA

BY
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1889.

I HAVE thought that it might be useful to Welsh students if I published in a more extended form the Lecture on "Giraldus Cambrensis" which I delivered before the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion on *Nos-wyl Dewi Sant* in this year. The works of Gerald are but little known. The Rolls Edition, on which my Lecture was founded, is not accessible to all, and seven ponderous volumes of mediæval Latin are deterrent to many. I have added some notes—as Gerald would say, for learners, not for the learned. I have to express my acknowledgments to Mr. Vincent Evans, the Secretary of the Honourable Society, for much valuable aid in seeing this essay through the press.

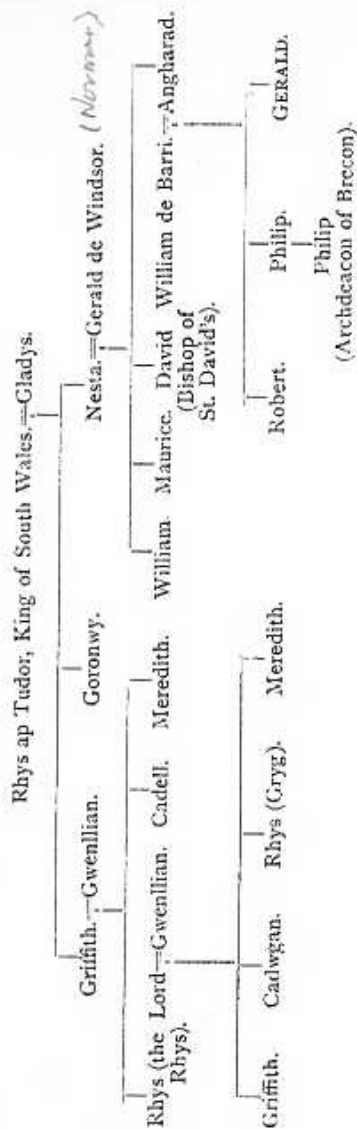
H. O.

Withy Bush, Haverfordwest, 1889.

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PEDIGREE SHOWING GERALD'S CONNECTION WITH THE ROYAL
HOUSE OF WALES.



NOTE.—Gerald had a half-brother, Walter, who was killed in Wales.



CHAPTER I.

BIRTH AND EDUCATION.

1147—1172.



GERALD THE WELSHMAN, famous in literature under the Latinised form of his name, Giraldus Cambrensis, was born at Manorbier Castle, in the county of Pembroke. Of his birthplace he says, in the *Itinerary*¹: "As Demetia (Dyved), with its seven cantreds, is the fairest of all the lands of Wales, as Pembroke is the fairest part of Demetia, and this spot the fairest of Pembroke, it follows that Manorbier is the sweetest spot in Wales." He is often spoken of, even by Dr. Powel, as Sylvester Giraldus, as if Sylvester were part of his name; but it was evidently a term of reproach applied to him as a Welshman.² His father was William de Barri, a member of a noble Norman family, who, according to Gerald, derived their name from Barry Island, on the coast of Gla-

¹ i, 12.

² In a letter to Geoffrey Fitz-Peter, in the third book of the *De Jure et Statu*, he says: "Non tam sylvester sum sicut adversarii mentiuntur."

morgan: his mother was Angharad (William de Barri's second wife), the daughter of Gerald de Windsor, castellan of Pembroke, and of the famous Nesta. This Nesta, the so-called Helen of Wales, was the daughter of Rhys ap Tudor, the last of the Welsh kings; by King Henry I, she was the mother of the Fitz-Henries; by Gerald de Windsor of the Fitz-Geralds; and by Stephen, castellan of Aberteivi, of the Fitz-Stephens. Nesta took an active share in the politics of her time. Her capture from Gerald de Windsor, by Owen ap Cadwgan of Powys (as told in the *Brut*, anno 1106), reads like a chapter of romance. It was to celebrate the achievements of her descendants that Gerald wrote the history of the conquest of Ireland. Gerald inherited in no small degree the personal beauty of his famous grandmother. He frequently alludes, not without satisfaction, to the compliments which were paid to his commanding form and to his handsome face.¹

Gerald was born, according to the most probable calculation, in 1147.² He lived over the threescore years and ten, and therefore died in the early years of the reign of Henry III, but his active life was spent under the first three Plantagenet kings, Henry II, Richard I, and John.

Within a few years after the battle of Hastings, Norman adventurers had spread into Wales—first

¹ "Is it possible so fair a youth can die?" asked Baldwin, then Bishop of Worcester, when he saw him in his student days. (*Speculum Eccl.*, ii, 33.)

² Gerald's own dates are, as a rule, entirely untrustworthy.

to take part in the never-ending feuds between the native princes, and then to take, under grant from the English crown, such part of their lands as they could reduce into their own possession.¹ The tide of invasion had been rolled back during the English troubles in the reign of Stephen, but in 1154 appeared a strong man on the throne, by whom the subjection of Wales was carried on in a more systematic fashion than under his grandfather, Henry I, and who made use of Norman prelates and Norman barons to further his policy in church and state. It must, however, be borne in mind that, on the high authority of Mr. Freeman, the English and Norman nations are stated, by the time of Henry II, to have become blended into one.²

Gerald's early education was undertaken by his uncle, David Fitz-Gerald, Bishop of St. David's (called by him David II, to distinguish him from the patron saint). The state of learning in Wales in those days was at the lowest ebb; and the Rolls editor argues, from the absence of all notice of any place of learning in Wales in all Gerald's writings, the dearth of Welsh names of literary

¹ The Welsh chronicler, speaking of the settlements of the Flemings in Roose (in the county of Pembroke) by Henry I, observes that the king was very liberal of that which was not his own.

² *Norman Conquest*, v, 655. He, however, admits that Gerald is an authority to the contrary. Gervase of Tilbury, who wrote early in the thirteenth century, says that you could not then tell the difference between a Norman and an Englishman—but this only applied to the free men.