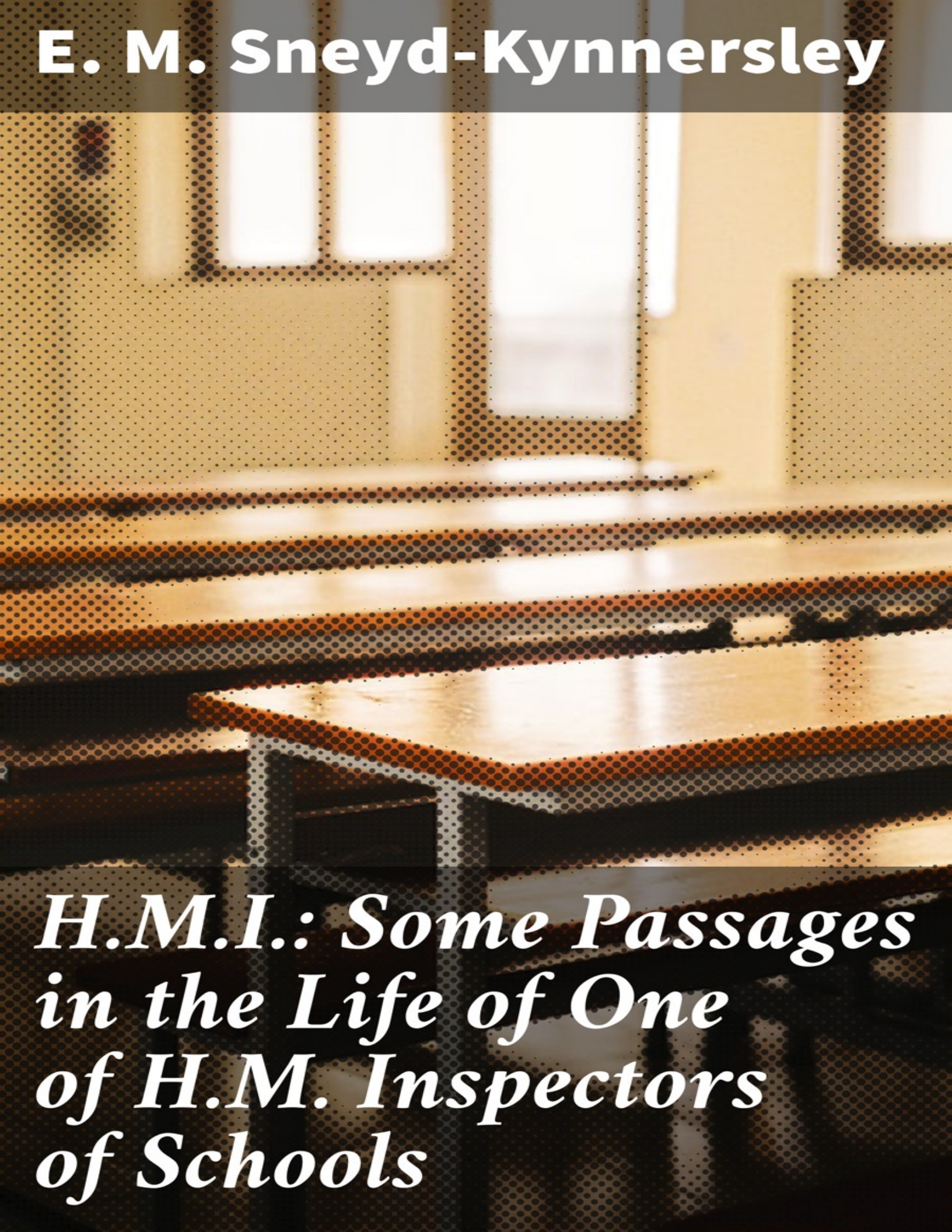
E. M. Sneyd-Kynnersley



H.M.I.: Some Passages in the Life of One of H.M. Inspectors of Schools

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CHAPTER I
THE BEGINNING

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"The Man seems following still the funeral of the Boy."

J. KEBLE.

My first acquaintance with the office of H.M. Inspector of Schools dates as far back as 1854. I was then twelve years old. At breakfast we were informed that the Reverend Henry Sandford was coming on a visit. "Who, and what is he?" I asked. "Firstly, he was the son of our neighbour, Archdeacon Sandford: secondly, he was 'H.M.I.': that is to say, one of Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools."

"What do they do?"

"Oh, they travel about the country, and examine the school-children in the National Schools."

"Travel about?" I said wistfully: "I should like to be an Inspector."

It was pointed out to me, with that frankness which is necessary in dealing with the inquisitive boy, that if I wanted travelling I had better be an engine-driver. But I replied, with unconscious sarcasm, that there were certain qualifications needed for the post of engine-driver.

Thirty years later bitter experience wrested from me the frequent remark that I did not find my work hard or disagreeable when I was once in school: all that I complained of was the travelling.

And there came another curious reminder of the conversation of 1854. One day, in the 'eighties, I was lunching with a Roman Catholic priest, and among my

fellow-guests was a much-loved Canon, who apologized for having omitted his morning shave because he was suffering from neuralgia: “and,” he added, “I have often thought I should like to be a Capuchin Monk, so that I might be at liberty to grow a beard.”

Being myself a hairy man, I pointed out that Inspectors of Schools had the same privilege. But the Canon promptly retorted that he believed there were certain qualifications necessary for the office of inspector, and he had never heard that there were any required for being a Capuchin.

This would seem to point to a classification:

1. Engine-drivers.
2. Inspectors of Schools.
3. Capuchins.

From 1854 to 1871 I was not interested in Elementary Education, though after leaving Oxford I took some part in Classical teaching. The storms of Mr. Lowe’s Revised Code passed over my head: and the Elementary Education Bill of 1870 was fought in Parliament while I was sailing home from Australia. The School Board elections of November, 1870, caused some excitement in the large towns, but the Franco-German war was raging, and the siege of Paris was of more general interest. To the supporters of the Government the New Education Act appeared to be an admirable measure; the Opposition maintained the contrary opinion; but, as is usually the case, the great majority of the people adopted one or the other side without tedious enquiry into details. I think that was my case.

In the following year without any warning my destiny began to be shaped. About Easter there came a letter to my

father from our old friend of 1854, H. Sandford, who was a cousin of Sir Francis Sandford, Secretary of the Education Department, and had become a Senior Inspector. He premised that certain officers were to be appointed to make enquiries under the new Education Act—men who had graduated with honours at Oxford or Cambridge—and that the nomination of these was in the hands of the District Inspectors. He went on to enquire whether my father had a son with the necessary qualifications.

Now at that time I was a briefless barrister of something less than two years' standing, nearly one of which I had spent in the aforesaid visit to Australia; and the prospect of work with a living wage was alluring. I was assured by my briefless brethren that the solicitors would not miss me, and that they themselves were able and willing to fill the gap. The offer of the appointment was accepted for me, and at the end of April I found myself an "Inspector of Returns." To my extreme delight I received notice that my work lay in North Wales: Anglesey, Carnarvonshire, Merioneth, and about a third of Denbighshire formed the district of my Chief, whom I was to assist. I was to begin in May; the pay was good; I was twenty-nine, and in robust health. With such a country what could a man wish for more? The nature of the work was obscure, but presumably explanations would follow, and credit might be given to the Government that the task would be neither dishonourable nor onerous.

On an appointed day we were to attend at the Education Department at 11 A.M. to meet Sir F. Sandford, and to receive further instructions. I went accordingly, starting, as I thought, in good time, so that I might not begin with a

reputation for unpunctuality. But at Charing Cross I found that there were but three minutes left, and I nervously hailed a hansom to complete the journey. With admirable exactness I reached the office door at 10.59, and enquired for the Secretary.

“Not come down yet, sir,” said the porter: “he don’t generally get here till half-past.”

I felt that I had found a profession after my own heart. Judges sat at 10; Quarter Sessions’ Chairmen at 9; and nasty remarks were made, if counsel by the merest chance in the world happened to be a quarter of an hour late. The cases in which I held briefs (with a fee of £1 3*s.* 6*d.*) could not contemplate a delay of half an hour; they were not on that scale.

Eventually the great man arrived, and pleasantly greeted the roomful of novices. We got our instructions, and were promised further information. In the following week I began work at Carnarvon. There, and in other schools in the district, we spent a few days, partly to teach me the rudiments of school work, partly to arrange a plan of campaign for my special work. It was all new to me, and I could offer no suggestions.

But I thought of the poor briefless ones whom I had left behind me in London: Westminster or Guildhall from 10 to 4; Temple Chambers for an hour or so; smoking-room at the club at night, with some remarks on the Tichborne case, then superseding the Franco-German war as a topic of conversation; and I was more than content with my lot.

CHAPTER II
ANGLESEY

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"You do yet taste
Some subtilties of the isle, that will not let you
Believe things certain."—*Tempest.*

It next became necessary to find out what an "Inspector of Returns" had to do. What were these "Returns"? There was the Elementary Education Act, 1870, to study, and there were Instructions of the vaguest kind. In after years I became familiar with many dozens of such documents; and I used to associate them with the words which ("with that universal applicability which characterizes the bard of Avon"—to quote Mr. Micawber) Shakespeare puts into the mouth of Macbeth:

But in these cases
We still have judgment here; that we but teach
Bloody instructions, which, being taught, return
To plague the inventor.

It appeared that the Returns were answers to questions sent by the Department to every parish in the country; What was the population? What schools had they in the parish? What schools outside the parish did they use? and so on. When we had verified the answers, we were to recommend recognition of such schools as we found to be efficient, and to state what further provision was required, with detailed suggestions. For Parliament had decreed that every child should have an efficient school within reasonable distance of his home.

This seemed simple. But the word “parish” gave us endless trouble. When we speak of a parish, we think of an ecclesiastical district; and we picture to ourselves a cluster of houses, a long street, and an old church, with the village inn and a butcher’s shop in the background. But Parliament meant, or defined, a *civil* parish; that is, a finite area in which a separate rate can be collected. In most parts of England the difference is immaterial; but in Anglesey, and sometimes in other places, we were baffled at the outset. The people had long ago left the old centres, and had settled down where four cross-roads met, or near the railway station, or near a quarry, or a mine. There they had put up two chapels, three beer-shops, and a general store: they had called the place after the bigger chapel, Moriah, or Carmel, or Bethesda; and, except for a wedding or a funeral, they ceased to go up to Jerusalem.[1] Now Moriah was nearly always on the edge of two or more civil parishes, and if it wanted a school, the two or three parishes would have to pay for it, though they might have perfectly efficient schools of their own in the old centres. This of course roused protests.

Then there came another stumbling-block. If a school were ordered, it would probably be built and managed by a School Board; and in Anglesey the members of the Board would be five men whose opinion on a pig might be accepted, if the pig belonged to a perfect stranger, but on school matters the pig’s opinion would be equally valuable.

A third trouble. These parishes were often so small that one could not hope to see a competent Board, unless several parishes were united. But the parishes would often

rather die single than live united to their next-door neighbours. I cannot forget the fury of the Rector of Llantwyddeldwm, when it was proposed to yoke him unequally with Llantwyddeldy, and to build a joint school for the two parishes.

Lastly came the great question of rates. All the Dissenters were determined to have School Boards elected everywhere; and, to calm the minds of the small-souled brethren who feared for their pockets, word had been passed round that the rate could not exceed 3*d.* in the pound. To prove this they appealed to the declarations of Mr. Gladstone and Mr. Forster, and to Section 97 of the Education Act. That Section is nineteen lines long in the official copy, and there is nothing bigger than a comma by way of relief from beginning to end. In the seventh line occur the words "3*d.* in the pound." Who can blame a Welshman imperfectly acquainted with English, if after diving into this sea of troubles he came up gasping for breath, but firmly clutching the comfortable words THREEPENCE IN THE POUND? Finding that I was a barrister, and supposing in the innocence of their hearts that this implied some knowledge of the law, the combatants frequently appealed to me; and I assured them, with all the self-assurance of the briefless, that the Section did not limit the rate: it merely provided an aid-grant for poor parishes. And it happened that I was right. When, in the 'nineties, they came to pay rates of from one to three shillings in the pound, they must have said a good deal.[2]

Our instructions said no word about any of these special difficulties. But the difficulties faced us everywhere we went,

and caused us no little perplexity. At the same time the discussion roused much interest among the leaders of the contending parties, as we moved about from centre to centre. I think it was the most stormy month of my official life.

There were few compensating pleasures. Anglesey is not a good county for an uncommercial traveller. In 1871 it was almost wholly unknown to the ordinary Briton. Travellers to Ireland were whirled through twenty miles of desolation between the Straits and Holyhead. Yachting men knew the beautiful coast facing the Straits. Occasionally a Liverpool steamer full of sea-sick tourists called at Beaumaris. Once John Bright visited that dreary capital, admired the fine view of the Snowdon range, and deplored the deadness of the town. Finding that the landlord was a Baronet, he snorted, and described it as “withering in the cold shade of aristocracy.”

Also, of course, thousands of trippers visited the great bridges. But the interior was, and is, wholly uninteresting, and the fine sea-coast was at that time almost inaccessible by land, and had no accommodation for summer visitors. The roads, except the great London and Holyhead road, were generally atrocious, and there were only three or four places where a carriage could be hired. Trees, even hedges, were rare, and there was no shelter from the frequent gales. Marshes and moorland divided villages apparently connected. Who could ask a child to go to school across a mile of wind-swept “morfa” or “rhos”? I was told the current, and recurrent, anecdote of the Tutor of Jesus College, the Welsh College of Oxford. Jones, of Jesus, asked how it was

that Tacitus spoke of Anglesey as “insula umbrosa,”[3] whereas nowadays there is hardly a tree to be seen inland. And the Tutor replied deprecatingly, “Well, you know, Mr. Jones, it’s rather a *shady* island still.” Also William Williams, Ysgol-feistr, had said that in most parishes there was “not a stick in the place except the parson.”

The inhabitants of this *terra incognita* were themselves incognitiores; for even the travellers who knew the railway and the coastline had no dealings with the people. In those days Anglesey was almost wholly ignorant of English. Our dealings lay, of course, chiefly with the clergy and the parish overseers; but the latter usually brought their own ministers and elders to support them. Then the proceedings raged lengthily in the vernacular: my chief, or his assistant, conducted the enquiries: “Druidaeque circum, preces diras sublatis ad caelum manibus fundentes” (as Tacitus said of their ancestors) denounced the Catechism, while I looked on and yawned.

Thanks to the freehold tenure of Church Benefices, the island was in the hands of the Chapel. There were practically only two Dissenting bodies in Anglesey; the Calvinistic Methodists and the Congregationalists. The Wesleyans locally were a small body. The Calvinists, like the Wesleyans, were an offshoot from the Church, forced out by the folly of its rulers. They held all the vital doctrines of the Church, and, even now, could accept the Thirty-nine Articles and the Liturgy as freely and with the same mental reservations as an orthodox Low Churchman. An intelligent Calvinist told me that “Calvinistic” had ceased to be anything but an *epitheton ornans*: but that may have been

merely his own position. I imagine there is no difference in doctrine between the Calvinists, the Congregationalists, the Presbyterians, and the Wesleyans; but their views on Church government vary.

However this may be, and my ideas on the subject are very hazy, there is no doubt that the Chapel forms part of the Anglesey life, as the Kirk (of whatever sort) does of the Scottish life. But it does not produce the Scottish virtues, and the ministers of that date, 1871, were not morally, intellectually, or educationally of the Scottish type. Certainly Truth and Honesty were not well cultivated, or else the soil was bad.

> “The Chapel has stood between Wales and Heathenism.”
>
> “The Chapel stands between Wales and Religion.”

These are the rival cries, and the reader may choose which he prefers.

There is no freehold in the Chapel pulpit: a minister who was carried out of the “King’s Arms” would have short shrift. And morality is not the only rock on which the preacher may strike. During the South African War I was spending a Sunday at a Welsh watering place, and after lunch I was talking to the landlord at the door of the hotel.

“See that chapel?” he said: “they had a new minister this morning; preached his first sermon; turned out to be a pro-Boer, and preached against the war. They had a meeting in the vestry after service, and gave him the sack before dinner. Smart work, wasn’t it?”

Wales is chapel-ridden, but it is not priest-ridden: the wary minister adopts the platform of The Cause: and there is a tendency to put The Cause above the Great First Cause. Certainly there was a lamentable want of truth and honesty in the “Returns” investigated by us in 1871, and made by, and under the influence of, these ministers and elders: and also in their ordinary school statistics.

These schools were always known as British Schools; and in theory they were carried on in connexion with the British and Foreign School Society, one guiding principle of which was that the children should have plain, undenominational Bible teaching. Up to 1871 the inspection of Elementary schools was carried on by three sorts of H.M. Inspectors. The Church schools were inspected by clergymen; the Roman Catholic schools by Roman Catholic laymen; and the other schools by laymen, of whom the best known was Matthew Arnold. In Wales the British Schools in receipt of Government grant were not numerous; and North Wales was grouped with Lancashire and Cheshire. As a rule their inspector lived in London, and, except when he paid his annual visit, they saw nothing of him. Nor indeed had he, I believe, before May, 1871, the right to enter the doors without due notice. And as the managers were for the most part unlearned men, whose interest lay chiefly in the balance sheet, the schoolmaster farmed the whole concern —that is, he took the children’s school pence, the annual grant, and the subscriptions, and paid the expenses, retaining the remainder for his salary—or, alternatively, he had a salary varying with the grant. In either case his income depended on the regular attendance of the children:

for the grant was paid in part on the unit of average attendance, and in part on the success in examination of each child who had attended 250 times.

All these statistics were recorded in registers, and it is easy to see that there were many temptations to fraud and few checks. In one case the master of a large British school confessed to me that he had had no registers for three months: he had recorded the attendance in copybooks and he was “going to transcribe them.”

The religious instruction which these worthies were supposed to give—and I believe that up to 1871 it was a condition precedent of the Code grant in all schools, as it certainly was an essential feature of British schools—often seemed to have been dropped. In one case I asked casually and unofficially what the arrangements were, and the master told me he read a chapter of the Bible every morning.

“In English or in Welsh?”

“Oh, in English,” he replied eagerly; for Welsh was discouraged by My Lords.

“And do the children understand it?”

“Well, no, indeed; but it is just while they are coming in, and it doesn’t matter.”

I made no remark. We were forbidden to make any enquiry.

A charge freely brought against these schools was that when the British school inspector came down from London, capable children likely to earn a grant were passed on from school to school to be examined under the names of less capable children on the books of the recipient school. The

story was generally believed, and special precautions were taken to thwart the conspirators. Detection would be almost impossible, for children in the bulk are much alike, and in North Wales few are so eccentric as not to be called by one of the six names, Jones, Evans, Hughes, Davies, Williams, Roberts. Also the inspector would be always in a hurry, and always ignorant of Welsh, and enquiries could hardly be made. But I am bound to say that I never came across an instance of this particular fraud. The only authentic case within my knowledge occurred in a Church school in Liverpool, where an inspector who had the royal gift of remembering faces, recognized a number of children whom he had seen in another school. Let it be said for the manager's sake that he was asking for recognition only, not for grant. Recognition, quotha! Well, he got that.

I believe the trick is more common in flower shows.

It will be gathered from the foregoing account that I was not favourably impressed by the islanders, though in many cases "the barbarous people showed me no little kindness." This opinion was not confined to visitors. I received a letter from a resident, who gave me much help in my work, speaking doubtfully of the chances of success in dealing "with these Cretan people."

"Cretan"? or was it "crétin"? No: clearly C-r-e-t-a-n. Crete is an island—ah, I have it—

Κρῆτες ἀεὶ ψεῦσται, κακὰ θηρία, γαστέρες ἀργαὶ.

I might add "Cretensis incidit in Cretenses"; the Anglesey man is down on the Anglesey men. But I would rather not

translate the Greek. You will find it in St. Paul's letter to the first bishop of Crete, Chapter I.

This, of course, is all ancient history. More than a generation of men has passed, and the new generation may be vastly different. Moreover, there was a revival in the island not long since. The people are changed in heart.

"Do you think a Tory candidate will be returned at the next election, Mr. Jones, Ynys Fôn?" (Mona's Isle).

"'Deed, I don't know; yes, perhaps, I think."

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[1] Thus, to take a few prominent cases, Colwyn Bay, Bethesda, Portmadoc, Barmouth, Bala were known officially as parts of the civil parishes of Eirias, Llandegai—Llanllechid, Ynyscynhaiarn, Llanbedr, Llanycil respectively.

[2] The Blue Book of 1902 gives the following returns:—

County	Boards	Rates over 9*d.*	Highest	Lowest (school owning)
Anglesey	34	20	23*d.*	4·4*d.*
Carnarvon	30	20	25·5	1·5
Merioneth	20	15	26·8	5·9

In Anglesey the expenses of administration were £850 11*s.* 2*d.*

In 1882 two parishes in Carnarvonshire, Criccieth, and Llanllyfni, levied rates of 39·4 and 44 pence respectively. (See Blue Book, 1883.)

[3] But I cannot find the phrase in the *Annals* xiv. 29; or in the *Agricola*.

CHAPTER III
VAGRANT

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“Sports like these
In sweet succession taught e’en toil to please.”

GOLDSMITH.

So we fought a hard fight for two months or more, and began to see our way more clearly. It was then that I learned a lesson, which lasted me through my official life and did me much good service: the advisability of taking the public into one’s confidence. People like to know what is going on; and, if there is to be disagreement, it is better to have it early, when explanation will generally put matters right or effect a compromise. At that time this was a hateful doctrine in the eyes of Whitehall officials: they said it “led to correspondence.” My experience is in the opposite direction: why should men write letters if they know the facts? If official inference from the facts is wrong, they ought to write. I lived to see the “free and open” policy generally adopted, and commended by My Lords.

For this reason in our enquiry we[4] took the local magnates into counsel. Choosing some place central for two or more parishes, we invited the incumbent and the overseers to meet us. The incumbent brought the landowners, and the overseers brought the chapel dignitaries. From this collected wisdom we got all the information we wanted, and sometimes good advice. Above all, we got confidence; for those present saw and heard all

the information that was given us: they learned the requirements of the Act, and were told exactly how far their district went towards satisfying the law. Confidence is a plant that for special reasons grows slowly in that land; and occasionally there were outbursts of fury; but, as we shall see later, the result was that our recommendations were received with hardly a single murmur.

Through these meetings sometimes one made friendships which lasted for years: less often one met men, whom, it was a consolation to think, one would never meet again in this world, or (with good fortune) in any other world. Sometimes in out of the way corners of the earth there were odd incidents which abide in the memory and after all the long interval blossom into mirth.

A dull June day, with cold rain hanging about: a mediæval gig, and an indigenous driver, lineally descended from Caliban, and all but monoglott. We meet an aged clergyman, and Caliban touches his hat.

“Who is that?” I ask, to make conversation.

“Well, they call him Menander.”

“Menander? What does that mean?”

“’Deed, I don’t know,” was the natural and national answer.

Menander—Greek poet—never read a word of him—must have been dead 2,000 years: perhaps he came to North Wales. Wasn’t there an Early Father of that name? I think I confused him with Neander,[5] though I could give no account of Neander then or now. But why? And who? A parson; perhaps an officer of the Church. Thus I mused.

Then I put it to the driver: did he think it was the Welsh for a rural dean?

“Well, yes, I think,” said he, obviously having no idea what I meant.

On arriving at our meeting-place I told my chief that I had met Menander, and that I had ascertained that he was so called in virtue of the office of rural dean. He roared. I suppose the story is told of me to this day in Ruridecanal chapters. The holy man was a bard, and Menander was his bardic name; when he wrote poetry for an Eisteddfod, he took that for a pen-name.

Another dull cold day in September. We had assembled at a spot convenient for several parishes, and many local heads had been summoned. But the district was not interested in schools, and only one incumbent and two or three farmers met us on the top of a low hill overlooking the affected area. We soon settled our business, and were about to return, when the Major appeared. He was the squire, and his interest in schools was not his ruling passion. We explained matters, and it became apparent that the Major was not a total abstainer: he had been shooting, and seemed to have found it thirsty work. The question with him was, Would we come to lunch? We accepted with qualms. It was most unfortunate, the Rector said, but he had another engagement, and he fled.

We went to the Hall, and the Major joined us in some trifling alcoholic refreshment as a stop-gap, for it was still early. We surveyed the grounds, and enjoyed the Major’s conversation. It appeared that he was a many-sided man. Ares, Dionysus, and Aphrodite were among his idols, and

(like Paris) he preferred the last-named to Athene. Eventually we lunched, and to our alarm the Major began with champagne, and finished up with port. I say advisedly “finished,” for during dessert, with a hasty apology, he retired; and after an awkward interval the butler appeared with a timid suggestion that we should go away, as “we had sewn the Major up.” We stopped only to disclaim the plain sewing: there were many stitches put in before we took the garment in hand. We learned afterwards that the unfortunate man had received some injury to the head in active service, and that his brain could stand no unusual pressure. I never saw him again: the inevitable end came within twelve months.

Another September day. The school-room where we met was rather full, and I gathered that there was a special grievance. The parishioners disclaimed any knowledge of English, and a brisk conversation in Welsh followed, while I filled up forms. After some time I asked my colleague what it was all about.

“Oh, the usual thing: the Conscience Clause, and the Catechism, and they want a School Board.”

“Tell them the usual thing: must adopt the method prescribed by the Act.”

But a more animated discussion ensued: what was the matter?

“They say the Rector lives in the school-house, and keeps his pig in the girls’ playground.”

I turned on the Rector, who was listening with some alarm, and asked him whether this were true. He admitted

it. Where else was he to live? There was no parsonage. A man must live somewhere.

“Je n’en vois pas la nécessité,” I quote to myself. “And the pig?”

Well, yes, sure; there was the pig there; but where else was he to put it?

I was wroth, and told him emphatically that he might keep it in the church for anything I cared. The monoglott meeting roared with laughter. They had followed the conversation with some ease—for monoglotts. I fully expected a formal complaint to the Office from the aggrieved Rector. But he was too much frightened.

Another autumn visit brought me to the parish of Llandudwal. The Chapel party were aggrieved, and unfolded their piteous tale. Weeks ago they had brought over the Clerk to the Guardians, and had had a statutory meeting, at which they had passed a resolution in favour of a School Board, and had written to the Education Department: and yet there was no Board ordered.

I explained that my functions were limited to enquiry: I had no executive powers: they should “call him louder.” Then the story went out of my front brain to that dark chamber at the back, where so much lumber lies unsuspected. But in the course of the next year I happened to be studying the Educational affairs of Llandudwal, and sent for the file containing its annals. A flash of light lit up the lumber. There are two Llandudwals; one in A. shire, the other in B. shire. Llandudwal A, which I had visited, had voted for a Board, and the application was filed with the papers of Llandudwal B. The latter had not asked for a

Board; but when they were informed that their prayer was granted, and that they were to elect a Board on the 25th prox., they thanked Heaven for a Liberal Government, and like

Obedient Yemen,
Answered Amen,
And did
As they were bid.

For twelve months they had lived, though not yet born, and had, no doubt, levied a rate to pay for their illegal election.

Full of horror I broke it gently to a magnate at Whitehall. He laughed consumedly, and said Wales was a strange country. A general Act of 1873 cured this and all other similar irregularities. But think of the humour of it!

Time would fail me to tell of other journeys: bright May days with the fresh green of the larch on the hillside, and the glories of the chestnut and the wild flowers in the valleys. Hot June sunshine with azalea, and honeysuckle, and rhododendron; and the cool sea-breeze at night. July and August with the tripper in the land; crowded hotels, and noisy table d’hôte dinners; the grass is brown, and the trees have taken a uniform tint, and the rivers are low; except when torrential rains have fallen for three days, and made the Swallow Falls to rival Niagara. September comes, and the tripper ceases from tripping; the trees begin to put on their own colours again, and their autumn robes are magnificent: by the middle of October they are blazing in red and yellow; and towards the end of the month there is

often snow on the hills, and below the snow the bracken is red.

Then came wild drives in Welsh cars—a sort of clumsy “governess-cart,” now almost extinct—through rain and storm to remote villages in Merioneth, and Denbighshire valleys; and then frost and snow; and all travelling became a burden. Trains were very few on the Cambrian line in winter. The hotels were empty, but how glad the proprietors were to see any one! How amiable was the ever amiable landlady! Could I have a sitting-room? Yes, sure, there was No. 1. And a car to-morrow? Yes, indeed, to go anywhere. And Dobbin was reclaimed from the agricultural operations to which he had been devoted since the fall of the tripper.

There was one journey from which I confess I shrank, and I regret it to this day. Off the far west coast of the Carnarvonshire peninsula called Lleyn, beyond the cape called Braich-y-Pwll, lies Bardsey Island. It is approachable by sailing-boat, if wind and tide are favourable; the distance from Aberdaron is about four miles, and one might choose one’s day. But, I was warned, if anything went wrong with the wind, I might be kept on the island for a week: Baedeker did not mark the principal hotel with a star of approval. The population was about fifty-two; there should be eight children of school age. There was a king; the queen was dead. Say one king, no queen, eight knaves, the rest plain; a strange pack. If I went there, and was detained for a week, I should have to charge the Treasury something over £16 for wages, railways, carriages, and boats; there would be reams of letters about it, and a Radical M.P. might bring it up in the House. “Can’t you let it alone?” said Lord Melbourne: so I

did. But the next year I reported the facts to Whitehall. Meanwhile the Vice President had ruled that if the number of children anywhere, for whom no school accommodation was or could conveniently be provided, were less than twenty it was negligible. And it was agreed that the Bardsey King should take the trick, and the Deuce might take the Eight. Q.E.F.

Even on dry land travelling was not always simple. One day a kind-hearted Rector, hearing that my intended route was more than usually difficult, offered to mount me and personally conduct me next day. To my dismay he arrived after breakfast with a horse for himself, and a Shetland pony for me. As I am, like Rosalind, “more than common tall,” it was like riding a safety bicycle, the stirrups taking the place of pedals for my feet. It was a wet morning, and the road was very hilly; my mackintosh covered my steed, and nearly touched the ground. The Rector rode behind me, convulsed with laughter, and commenting on my appearance. But one must not look a gift Shetland pony in the mouth. We were due at Tyn ddingwmbob at 10 A.M., and we arrived at 12.15. The school which I was to inspect had adjourned to dinner, and there was only a fat Vicar waving a large gold watch at me.

“Pray, sir, is this official punctuality?”

But I threw the blame on my guide, and when my steed had been surveyed, and measured, the excuse was admitted: peace was made, and we lunched at the Vicarage.

Everywhere hospitality was abundant. The clergy fed me on old port: the dissenting ministers on their choicest butter-milk. The squires offered me cigars: the elders an orthodox

brand of Anglesey tobacco, which would have soon repelled Suetonius, if the Druids had been in a position to try it on him; and which was called “tobacco yr achos,” or “tobacco of The Cause.”

Here I should not omit to say that the port wine was a serious question to a moderate man. Especially in Anglesey there lurked danger in the bowl. Some of the College incumbents had so far profited by a University education as to have acquired a pretty taste in vintages. One of these excellent men, having feasted me royally, after dinner brought out a bottle of port that remembered Tract 90. We finished the bottle: if I drank my share, and I feel sure I did my best, I must have had five glasses. The Rector rose to ring for another bottle. I implored him to have mercy: I had to get back to my hotel, and my appointment was tenable only during good behaviour: what if I were found in the gutter? The good man looked at me more in anger than in sorrow: “Well,” he said, “you are the first man ever dined here that didn’t like my port.”

The laity were not behindhand. Arriving at one village where I had hoped to meet the usual incumbent and overseers, I found the squire only. He told me that no one else was coming; and that I was to come at once to the Hall to discuss the school supply, and to dine and sleep. It was some one’s birthday and relations were there to honour the occasion. The subsequent proceedings reminded me of Dean Ramsay’s Scotch stories. We had much port; many bottles: and we wound up with Family Prayers. I forget who read them: “it wasn’t me.” I only remember the Squire throwing in ‘Amens’ far more frequently than had been

contemplated by the compiler. We all got safely to bed, and as I was not offered the chance of smoking, and did not expect another invitation to the Hall, I had a final pipe out of my bedroom window, risking detection, as I feasted my eyes on the beauty of the June night. Did my host glare at me in the morning, or was it my guilty conscience? Tobacco was often glared at in those days.

With one possible exception all that festive party has passed away, and the tale may be told.

These were oases in the desert of a life spent in hotels. And yet there is much fun in the desert, when there are good fellow-travellers. In those days at hotel dinners we sat at long tables, instead of the “separate tables” now general in this country: and at dinner, or in the smoking-room, one picked up many pleasant acquaintances. It was not always hotels; sometimes it was inns, and the inns gave one more insight into the life of the country. There after dinner we usually adjourned to the bar-parlour as a smoking-room, where the local chief citizens would assemble to discuss the affairs of their neighbours.

It was in such assemblies that I learned how little importance is attached to a surname in Wales. We all know that hundreds of years ago people in England acquired surnames by adding to their Christian name the name of their house, or of their town, or of their trade, or what not. Thus John of Chester became John Chester, and William the Miller became William Miller, thereby being differentiated from William Tailor. In Wales, the process was on other lines. John, son of William, was William’s John, or John Williams. But the next generation reverted: William, son of John

Williams, became William Jones, because he was John's William. This may still be the custom in remote parts of Wales. It was not extinct in West Carnarvonshire in 1871, where an incumbent told me of the difficulty he had in explaining the method to the Admiralty, or the Board of Trade, when his seafaring parishioners got drowned. "If William Jones was the son of this John Williams, who claims to be next of kin to the deceased, how is it that he was called Jones, and not Williams? I am to request that a declaration may be filed."

I can imagine the annoyance of a Government Office at this departure from the normal.

But as the possible Welsh surnames were limited to the derivatives from possible Christian names, it followed that they ceased to be sufficiently distinctive, and the local habitation, or the trade had to be appended to the surname, as in England it was once appended to the Christian name. I once asked a friend whether John Davies, whom we had just left, was any relation to William Davies, whom we had seen a week ago.

"None whatever," he said; "what makes you ask?"

"Chiefly the name being the same."

"Ah," he replied, "I suppose in England you would draw that inference: in Wales it would never occur to a man to do so."

In a country inn you might hear, "Have you heard that John Jones, Ty Gwyn, is dead? I met William Roberts, the Gas, and he told me. John Jones' daughter, you know, married the son of Evan Davies, the Bank, that used to live at Tyn-y-mynydd, and they built a house at Cwm-tir-Mynach,

which used to belong to Mrs. Captain Roberts, Garth; and William Roberts, the Gas, is her son."

Then the company identified John Jones.

Once, when I was inspecting a Welsh school, being disturbed by the hum of conversation, I called out to a ringleader, "John Jones, don't make such a noise." The master looked up in surprise; pondered, and then sidled up to me: how did I know that the boy's name was John Jones?

I retorted that I didn't know, but that it seemed likely. It turned out that John Jones was the boy's name, and that there were seventeen John Jones' on the list. I was firing into the brown.

In one part of the district there were seven clergymen bearing the same name, incumbents of seven consecutive parishes. But each had an agnomen, and no one ever confused Mr. Davies, Llanfihangel, with Dr. Davies, Llanfairfechan, or either with John Davies, Llanfor, who wrote indifferent poetry under the bardic name of Job.

In these inns we varied gossip with occasional gambling. Once to oblige three hungry players I took a hand at whist. We played long whist for penny points, and we counted "honours, spots, and corners." Honours were honours: spots, I think, meant the ace of spades; and I am inclined to believe that corners denoted the "Jack of trumph" (knave of trumps); but I plead the Statute of Limitations on behalf of my memory. I know we played till closing time, and I won tenpence. An ardent gambler with a slender purse and a weak heart might try North Wales.

At another such inn I gathered that gambling is a perilous pastime, when you do not know your fellow gamblers.