GERALD OF WALES.¹

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THE career of Gerald of Wales suggests some striking reflections
to the student of our early history. He lives, and lives
vigorously, only in his own writings, some of which survive
only in one manuscript. If these works had been lost, as so much
mediaeval literature has been lost, we should know almost nothing
about him. A troublesome archdeacon, chosen by his fellow-canons
as bishop of St. David's, a man whose 'rebel cleverness' caused much
trouble at the papal court to a hard-worked Archbishop of Canterbury
—that is about all: he would have been one among many troublesome
archdeacons, and claimants to bishoprics and persistent suitors at Rome.
Scholars, I imagine, would have speculated mildly about the identity
of the 'Gerald the archdeacon' who attested here and there an Anglo-
Irish charter; they could never have felt the pleasant thrill of recogni-
tion, as they note the presence of the vivacious ecclesiastic who wrote
the most famous of all the famous books about Ireland.

Of course, there is nothing new, though there is always something
strange, in this. If Pepys had never written a diary or if his diary
had been lost, he would have been known to us only as a very
intelligent and reasonably hard-working official of the Admiralty. If
Greville had not written a diary he would not be known at all except
as Clerk to the Privy Council; and, as you are aware, some extremely
interesting and spicy diaries, published for the first time in recent years,
were written by persons so unknown to history that their authenticity
has been doubted, just as the authenticity of the Paston Letters was
long discussed until their consistency with other historical evidence was
established. Yet there is something peculiarly suggestive about the

¹ A lecture delivered in the John Rylands Library, the 11th of January,
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nature of our knowledge of Gerald. Whatever value we attach to his statements, there is no doubt that he was in his way a very important man, a man who could not fail to attract attention and arouse comment. He did not live obscurely; he was not one of those people whose personality seems only to be revealed in their writings; he was not, like Hobbes, a retiring and rather timid soul, who could show an unexpected, devastating courage on paper, or, like Sir Isaac Newton, a man whose commonplace life was but the tabernacle of a mind really at home with the infinite. His writings are not like the writings of Dante and Shakespeare, so packed with the experience and strivings of humanity that contact with the daily lives of the writers is lost or becomes a trivial impertinence. Gerald lived in the open. His life was full of public activity, his interests were those of everyday. He was familiar with kings and could banter with popes. He was an autocrat inordinately proud of his lineage, a self-important gossip whom nothing escaped. He was a scholar who could only do lip-service to the charms of retirement, a man with intense curiosity and uncannily observant, ever ready to speculate about the origin of things, the peculiarities of custom or the meaning of words. He loved preaching and lecturing, and he revelled in controversy. He had unbounded courage, preferred to fight with the great, and his self-esteem was never disturbed by the frustrations of what we call self-consciousness. He knew everybody and went everywhere. Yet, if it were not for his writings, we should know next to nothing about him. The significance of a fact such as this should never be forgotten by students of early history, embarrassed though they may be by the wealth of the scattered and scrappy material at their disposal. It reminds us very forcibly that the growth of English law and society, the development of our ecclesiastical and political institutions, were not supervised by mechanical despots ruling over a crowd of dummies, but were the living expressions of living people, far too much interested in what they and others were doing to trouble much about where they were going or to trouble at all about us.

Gerald's writings have been edited by three well-known scholars, Brewer, Dimock, and Warner. They fill eight volumes of the Rolls Series. The editorial work is of varying merit, that of Dr. Brewer—to whom we owe much as a pioneer—being especially defective. Brewer's edition of the autobiography and of parts of the Invectives
appeared so long ago as 1861. It was a considerable achievement and that his reconstruction of Gerald’s life and his annotations of the text contain some errors and misconceptions is neither surprising nor discreditable. A recent edition of the Invectives, issued by Mr. W. S. Davies in a volume of *Y Cymrodo* (1920), has done a good deal to fill the gaps in Brewer’s work. It is unlikely that much more can be done with profitable results until the intensive studies, now in full progress, in the literary, social and ecclesiastical history of the twelfth century can be brought to bear upon Gerald’s multifarious writings.

A strong autobiographical interest inspired all the best work of Gerald. He could never get away from himself for very long, and he is always most amusing and most helpful when he is writing from his own experience. He is induced, for example, or perhaps commissioned to write the lives of Remigius, the first Norman bishop of Lincoln, and of his great contemporary, St. Hugh of Lincoln; he cannot resist the temptation to add little sketches, full of personal reminiscence, of other contemporary prelates. He writes a letter of encouragement to Archbishop Stephen Langton; but he goes off at a tangent to rail against a Canterbury monk who has attacked one of his books. Hence it is impossible to separate his writings from the incidents of his life.

The books on Wales and Ireland are connected with Gerald’s early life. They are the works by which he was best known in his own day and is best known to-day; for they broke new ground and are still alive as historical material. Indeed, the Topography of Ireland has been for centuries one of the storm centres in the disputes about the nature and value of early Irish society. One of the most solid productions of the literary activity which accompanied the nationalist movements in Ireland in the seventeenth century was the *Cambrensis Eversus* of the Roman Catholic refugee, John Lynch (1662). If Irish history was to be properly understood, the authority of the Welshman must be overthrown. The controversy has not yet ceased. Now Gerald’s work was due to the fact that he was closely related to a Norman family, settled in Pembrokeshire, which took a large share in the conquest of Southern Ireland. He was a Pembrokeshire man, and on his father’s side he was a Norman, on his mother’s side half a Norman. Hence, although at times Gerald liked to boast of his Welsh ancestry, it is more correct to describe him as Gerald de Barri,
son of William de Barri, or as Gerald of Wales than as Gerald the Welshman. His grandfather Odo was one of the foreign settlers who (in the reign of King Henry I.) occupied the district known as Southern Dyfed. He was succeeded about 1130 by his son William, Gerald’s father. The family seat was the castle of Manorbier (Maenor Pŷr or Bŷr), the ruins of which still remain, looking out over the Bristol Channel, a few miles to the south-east of Pembroke. It is a very pleasant place, and in Gerald’s eyes it was the most beautiful place in Wales. He wrote in later years of the park and fishpond, and the lovely orchard, and the rivulet of never-failing water which flowed down between the castle and the church. As a boy he had watched the ships being driven by an east wind to Ireland. ‘Demetia is the fairest district in Wales, and Pembroke the fairest part of it, and this the fairest spot in Pembroke, it follows that Maenor Pyr is the most pleasant spot in Wales. Let the writer be excused for saying so much in praise of his birthplace.’

William, the lord of Manorbier, married the daughter of a local magnate, an important man in himself, and still more important as the ancestor of one of the greatest of the Anglo-Irish families. This was Gerald of Windsor, constable of Pembroke, and through his son, the famous Maurice fitz Gerald, the ancestor of the Geraldines, Earls of Kildare. Gerald of Windsor had married a Welsh princess, and it was through their daughter Angharad, the wife of William de Barri, that Gerald of Wales was able to claim descent from the Kings of South Wales. The princess, Nest or Nesta, daughter of King Rhys ap Tewdwr, had an exciting matrimonial career. She was first the mistress of King Henry I., then wife of Gerald of Windsor, then of the Constable of another royal stronghold, Cardigan. She had children by all three, and nearly all her sons or grandsons were destined to have a share in the booty of Ireland. King Henry’s

1 It is hard to find a translation for maenor, which usually means an administrative sub-district. Here it may mean the chieftain’s vill. The courthouse or mansio was generally in the lord’s bond-vill in the commote or wider district (Rees, South Wales and the March, p. 303). Maenor Pyr is said to be the maenor of the lords, pŷr being the plural of the old Welsh word por, a lord; but Mr. W. Rees, who has kindly sent me notes on this paper, thinks that there is a good deal to be said for Gerald’s derivation ‘mansio Pirri’ (vi. 92), i.e. that Pyr is a personal name, possibly the equivalent of Porius.
grandson, Meiler fitz Henry, a strong little man with stern black eyes, was one of the first group of invaders, and in King John's reign became justiciar of Ireland. Of the three sons of Nesta and Gerald of Windsor, one was the founder of the Carews and two other Irish families; one as we have seen, the ancestor of the Geraldines, a third, David, was bishop of the Welsh see of St. David's. They were the maternal uncles of Gerald of Wales. Robert fitz Stephen, the son of Nesta and the Constable of Cardigan, described by Gerald as a burly, healthy, jovial and generous man, too fond of women and wine, and like a second Marius, the sport of Fortune, was the leader of the first invaders and was granted the half of Cork. So we see that Gerald, who was a young man of twenty-three or twenty-four when his kinsmen made their bold expedition (1169), had access to the very heart of the turbulent politics of S. Wales and S. Ireland. In 1183 he accompanied his brother Philip to Ireland. In 1184 he was called to the court of King Henry II. and was sent to Ireland in the following year in the company of the young John, the 'lord of Ireland.' The failure of John's expedition is well known. Gerald, whose sympathies would naturally lie with his kinsmen, the earliest invaders and settlers, ascribed it to the neglect of their advice and position and the presumptuous pressing forward of courtiers and new men who had no experience of the country. It is a cry often heard in the later history of Ireland. Gerald had no desire to settle. He refused the offer of several bishoprics, and stayed only long enough to collect the materials for his works on the conquest and on the topography of Ireland, which it appears were written before he left.

The main preoccupation of his life was found in Wales, and especially in the bishopric of St. Davids, where his home and connexions were. He had made a reputation for himself in Wales long before he became a royal chaplain and accompanied the irresponsible young John to Ireland; and his interests were ecclesiastical. He tells in his autobiography how as a child he always played at churches while his brothers played at battles and castles; but these prophetic infantile preferences come in other people's lives, and Gerald saw his childhood through literary spectacles. He wanted to be a churchman and his uncle was the bishop of St. Davids. After some years of study at the cathedral schools in Paris, he was ready for employment. In the year 1175 the new archbishop, Richard, sent him on a disciplin-
ary mission to S. Wales. He was so effective that he was made archdeacon of Brecknock and helped his old uncle the bishop to rule his diocese. Gerald was, as the Irish say, 'a bit of a lad'; he thoroughly enjoyed his work as archdeacon, and was especially proud of an encounter which he had with an old fellow-student of his at Paris, the bishop of St. Asaph. The story is worth telling. Gerald had just returned home from a visitation of his mountainous and widespread district when he heard that the bishop proposed to dedicate a church at Kerry, on the border between the dioceses of St. Asaph and St. Davids, but hitherto administered as part of the latter. He rushed off at once, and arrived in the neighbourhood on Saturday night, the eve of the ceremony. He had a number of clergy with him and had sent others for help in various directions. Like a good many Welsh churches in this period the church of St. Michael at Kerry was held jointly by more than one clerk, in this case by two, who had—against their will, they afterwards said—acquiesced in the invasion of episcopal authority from St. Asaph. They hid the keys of the church; but Gerald, arriving on Sunday morning, soon found them. The bells were rung in sign of possession and mass was said. In the meanwhile some of the bishop’s clerks arrived (cum persona ecclesiae) to see that the church was ready for the dedication. Gerald sent off some of his clerks, together with the rural dean, to learn the bishop’s intentions and to offer him an honourable reception if he came in peace. The bishop was firm, and in spite of the dean’s protest and appeal to the Pope, insisted on his right to perform the ceremony. Messengers were sent back to Gerald on swift horses, and the archdeacon took up a position to meet the usurper at the entrance to the cemetery. The bishop arrived and a long altercation began. Gerald, whose uncle the bishop of St. Davids had recently died (1176),

The chronology of Gerald’s life, as told by himself, is characteristically inaccurate. Thus he says that he was present at the first public celebration of the feast of St. Thomas of Canterbury, celebrated two years after the martyrdom (vii. 69). This would be 29 Dec., 1172. But he also says that the archbishop, Richard, was present. There was no archbishop in Dec. 1172, and the first possible date is Dec. 1174, shortly after the archbishop’s return from his consecration in Italy and also shortly after the destruction of the choir of the cathedral by fire. Gerald probably mixed up times, places and persons. On the date of his mission to Wales see Lloyd, History of Wales, ii. p. 556 note.
reminded his old friend and fellow-student that the diocese was now in the custody of the king: the whole strength of the church and king in England was at his back. The bishop read out the letters received from the archbishop on his appointment to the see of St. Asaph, confirming him in his rights. The church of Kerry, he added, and all the churches between Wye and Severn in central Wales were within his jurisdiction. Literary evidence was also produced. Gerald retorted that anybody could write anything in a book. Where were the charters? Threats of excommunication were exchanged. The bishop said that an archdeacon could not excommunicate a bishop. Neither can a bishop, Gerald retorted, excommunicate an archdeacon who is not in his diocese.

"Hearing this, the bishop drew back a little, and on a sudden slipped from his horse and clapped on his mitre. Then mitre on head and staff in hand he advanced with his following, so that his sentence might be of greater effect. But the archdeacon knew the headstrong nature of the man. He had taken advantage of his garrulity to make his preparations and now ordered the clergy forward from the church. They wore white stoles and other ecclesiastical vestments and came in procession, with lighted candles and the cross borne in front of them."

The bishop was taken aback, but announced that at least he would proceed to a general excommunication of all who resisted the rights of St. Asaph. Gerald pointed to the hills: 'Excommunicate on these mountains from dawn to dusk if you will—it will not hurt me,' but forbear, he added, lest you alarm and perplex the folk who have gathered about us. The bishop in a loud voice began to excommunicate; the archdeacon in a louder voice did the same. Then his eyes caught sight of the bells hanging behind him. He ordered a peal with triple interval to be rung in confirmation of his sentence. The bishop's assurance was broken—he rode away in confusion, and the people who had gathered raised a great shout against him and his companions, and pursued them with volleys of clods and missiles of wood and stone.

The whole of Gerald is in this story, told with his natural vigour and naivety. The bishop was no less a person than Adam of Bangor, Adam of the Petit Pont, who had won fame as a teacher in his school on the bridge over the Seine at Paris. Gerald, a younger and less
learned man, characteristically refers to him as a fellow-student, and casts ridicule on his verbosity, his rashness, his humiliation. At no time was this son of Welsh kings and Norman barons a respecter of persons. We see his eye for detail, even in the absorption of a dispute on a solemn occasion: he suggests all the organisation of the Church: pope, bishop, archdeacon, rural dean, parson, incumbents, clerks; he glances into the background of English power, vested in king and archbishop. He knows the effect of every detail in ritual, so that we see the lighted candles and hear the bells. He is in his wild Wales and his imagination turns instinctively to the neighbouring hills. Above all, he is after his rights, not so much his own as those of the office entrusted to him. Everything else is subsidiary to this. He is priest and scholar, but first and foremost he is the archdeacon, sure of his case, thorough, set on victory, disinterested yet fully aware of the fine impression which he, Gerald de Barri, is making. The story reached the ear of the king and caused much amusement at court, to Gerald's intense gratification. Disputes of this kind, grave or trivial, were occurring all over Europe. The record of them fills pages of papal registers and chronicles, and are in general very wearisome. The settlement of them helped to formulate the canon law or to define the relations between lay and clerical authority. Only now and then is the story given life. But Gerald lived every day an existence of dramatic egotism: and he wrote this and many more stories down, sometimes twenty years later, with the same zest as he had felt on the actual occasion. His memory was often at fault, but it never lacked colour.

In 1176, when his uncle died and these things happened, he was about thirty years of age, at the beginning of what seemed a brilliant career. In a later work he says that he was a very handsome young man. Once he visited two learned prelates and found them sitting together. One of them looked at Gerald and exclaimed 'Can such beauty die?' (iv. 104). Yet throughout his long life he never got further. He refused bishoprics in Wales and Ireland, and at his death was still an archdeacon in his native diocese of St. David’s. It was in part his own fault, for he never made upon others the kind of impression which he made upon himself; but in part it was to his honour, for he was too big a man to have a merely vulgar ambition. You will have noticed that, at Kerry, he took the authority of king
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and archbishop in Wales for granted. He was at this time in the Anglo-Norman tradition. Archbishop Richard of Canterbury had sent him back to South Wales. But a new issue arose—a perplexing controversy which was to shape his later life, so that it obsessed his mind. This issue was the claim of the church of St. David’s to archiepiscopal status, independent of the primacy of Canterbury. It had been raised in Henry I.’s reign, and on the death of bishop David, was revived in 1176. How Gerald regarded it at this time is uncertain. He was put forward precipitately by the canons as their chief candidate for the bishopric, and says that the archbishop wanted him; but the king refused, and the canons were told to elect a Cluniac, the prior of Wenlock in Shropshire. The election illustrates the attitude of Gerald at this time to the custom of England as described in the Constitutions of Clarendon, but his attitude to the problem of St. David’s claims is not clear. He refused to be regarded as bishop-elect until the king’s licence to elect had been given, and he acquiesced in his defeat with a good grace. If his later memory was sound, he was more concerned by the deplorable practice of electing a bishop in the king’s private chamber than by any national feeling. St. Thomas had fought against this practice, but in vain. Gerald wanted to see things done in order: first, the king’s licence, then a free election in the chapter. First by haste, in not waiting for the licence, then by fear, in choosing the royal nominee in the king’s bedroom, the canon of St. David’s had muddled matters. Yet the issue of St. David’s status had been raised and was not forgotten, and it is quite probable that King Henry, in spite of his liking for Gerald and his pro-Welsh policy at this time, rejected him because he saw in him a possible danger as a protagonist of the local ambition. It was not only a racial ambition. It was indeed mainly ecclesiastical, based on a misunderstanding of documents and on memories of the independence of the old Celtic Church. A Norman ecclesiastic could share it as well as canons of Welsh blood; and Gerald, though I do not think that at this time he felt very strongly in the matter, was the sort of man to further it. At all events, the rebuff chafed him, and gradually he came to regard himself as a champion not only of canonical order but also of Welsh rights in the church. The crisis came more than twenty years later. In 1177 Gerald went back to Paris; between 1180 and 1184 he was for some time engaged on work in the diocese of St,
David's as the bishop's commissary; between 1189 and 1194 he was attached to the royal service and, in addition to his visit to Ireland in 1185-86, was constantly engaged during the troubled years after Henry II.'s death in delicate missions to the Welsh princes. He then withdrew from court to study at Lincoln under a famous scholar, William of Leicester, then chancellor of Lincoln in the charge of the theological schools. In 1199 he was again put forward by the canons of St. David's, and in the long dispute which followed at the papal court his claim to the bishopric was inextricably connected with his assertion of the rights of the see to archiepiscopal dignity.

Nearly a quarter of a century (1176-1199) had passed since Gerald had first been suggested as bishop. During the long interval Gerald's outlook on life had changed, I think, very considerably, and, quite apart from this—a matter of somewhat slight psychological interest—these were the most varied and interesting years in his life. His powers were developed and under control, and his best work belongs to this period. In his writings and later reminiscences we get a vivid picture of a busy-minded cleric, moving in the highest circles, political, ecclesiastical, literary, and ever at the heart of affairs.

Welsh problems engaged most of his attention. We may pass over his vain attempts to establish peace in the diocese of St. David's under the weak and querulous rule of its Cluniac bishop. The great event of the time was the fall of Jerusalem and the wave of indignant enthusiasm which led to the third crusade—the epic contest of Saladin and Richard of the Lion Heart. In 1188 Baldwin, archbishop of Canterbury, a Cistercian and a friend of Gerald's, planned a preaching tour in Wales on behalf of the crusade and took Gerald with him. Just as the visits to Ireland prompted his books on that country, so this tour hastened, if it did not prompt, his famous 'Itinerary' and his Description of Wales. He had apparently planned his Description some time before, for referring to its temporary loss during a journey from Normandy to England a year or so later he describes it as the labour of many years and as yet existing in only one manuscript. It was actually finished and circulated when he was in Lincoln (c. 1195). The Itinerary is his account of the preaching tour, of which he speaks also in his reminiscences. The archbishop's oratory was not effectual, but his own, he says, had a wonderful result. He did not speak Welsh—a point worth noting—and preached to the Welsh in French.
and Latin. Yet, just as St. Bernard, during his great Rhenish tour before the second crusade, had collected a host of German crusaders by his Latin sermons, so Gerald's threatened to depopulate Wales, so great was the enthusiasm which they aroused for emigration to the East. One would like to know the facts behind this remarkable testimony. Gerald reports a conversation which he had later with John, to whom his father King Henry had given temporary control of the Earldom of Pembroke before the succession of the young heiress. John, we are told, reproached Gerald, not for convincing Welshmen, but for depopulating Pembrokeshire of Normans, and grumbled that the archdeacon was plotting the return of the district to native rule. John had a strong sense of humour and, I suspect, was pulling Gerald's leg. But Gerald took the accusation seriously and repudiated it. Here, at any rate, is a man of Welsh extraction, but not of Welsh race, who does not know Welsh, and is at the same time supposed to be infected by Welsh national sympathies. This sums up the position in 1188. Gerald at this time had obviously lost practical interest in the question of ecclesiastical independence, for he traversed Wales in the company of the Archbishop of Canterbury and raised no objection to Baldwin's insistence on the recognition of his supremacy by the Welsh chapters. During King Richard's absence in the East, he accepted commissions from John, from the queen mother and the temporary justiciar, Walter, Archbishop of Rouen, in furtherance of English policy in Wales. The power of the great king of South Wales, Rhys ap Gruffydd—Gerald's distant kinsman—was advancing during these years; the influence of the English government and of the Welsh Marcher lords steadily waned; but Gerald was in the service of the English. On the other hand he felt all the time, if his later testimony can be accepted, that he was kept back from the preferment due to him by his Welsh connections. King Henry and the later government in England would not do anything to help a kinsman of the great Rhys, however worthy and loyal he was. It is hard to see where the truth lay. For Gerald himself tells us that he was offered two Welsh bishoprics, Bangor and Llandaff. Does this mean that he would only take St. David's or does it not mean that at this time his main preoccupations and ambitions were not Welsh at all, that he did not wish to be put away in a corner? And later, when hope of real eminence had gone, did his
thoughts turn to St. David's again, and all his latent patriotism awake at the thought that he might rule his native land as an archbishop?

Gerald, you must remember, was not a saint and was too much concerned with the interests of every day to be an idealist or a dreamer. It would be foolish to look for consistency in such a man, and even in Wales at this time patriotism was not a burning consistent flame, least of all in the perplexing south, with its mixture of races, its family feuds, and political incoherence. When Gerald boasted of being a Welshman, or complained that his Welsh ancestry barred his way to preferment, he meant that his dignified Norman-Welsh origin put him above the ordinary man, and quite apart from the Englishman, whom he despised. And he also meant that he was regarded as peculiar and, perhaps, dangerous. Such a man, in a strange court with his way to make, is almost forced into opportunism, and the wonder is that Gerald was as consistent as he was. He responded very easily to his surroundings, yet he was always himself. He threw himself wholly into the duty or interest of the moment, yet he was always the detached critic of everything and everybody but himself. He had the detachment of the aristocrat and also of the littérateur, and this quality, and also his freedom of speech, his incisive tongue and vanity, while they doubtless prevented advancement, always made him a centre of interest. He got his full share of attention, and while men laughed at him or played up to him, they could not fail to respect him or afford to disregard him. In short, he was a conspicuous person, though not so important as he imagined himself to be.

During these years he moved freely among the great. Some of the most interesting of his recollections are the records of conversations with the famous justiciar, Ranulf Glanville, who chatted to him about politics. One memorable talk was on the causes of the growing weakness in the Angevin empire, of the steady development of French power. Gerald was increasingly impressed by the French; and in later life his sympathies were with the King of France rather than with the King of England. He was intimate, so far as was possible, with Henry II. and his sons, but he was never captivated or overwhelmed by them; his heroes were Philip Augustus of France and his son Louis. This change of mind began during the last years of Henry, when Gerald was in touch with all parties during the dreadful quarrels between the old king and his sons, and his story is to be found
in the late treatise on the education of a prince, in reality a desultory history of the West, based largely upon Hugh of Fleury, and passing into recollections of his own time. The book is an important authority for the history of Henry II., but its interest to the biographer of Gerald lies in its attitude to the French king. He was in Paris, a young student of 20, when the future Philip Augustus was born and recalls how he went out into the streets and saw excited women rushing about with torches and prophesying a great future for the child. He had been told how, in his early days as king, when he was 15 or 16 years of age, Philip was one day seen to be lost in thought, idly twisting a stick with his fingers. One of the barons said he would give a good horse to know what the king was thinking about; another dared to ask him, and learned that Philip was wondering whether God would ever restore the kingdom to the greatness it had in the days of Charlemagne. The treatise, if dedicated at all, would, says Gerald in his preface, be dedicated to the young Louis, Philip's son. The preface must, I think, have been written while Louis was in England, seeking to conquer the realm in alliance with the rebellious barons (1216-17). And there is some evidence which suggests that Gerald was possibly in London while it was occupied by the French prince. Certainly in his eyes the Angevin kings deserved all their trouble and suffering.

King Henry II. especially paid the penalty of his sins, his scandalous life and his refusal to abide by the lesson taught by the death of St. Thomas of Canterbury. Gerald's interest in St. Thomas may best be described as that of an ecclesiastical man of the world, by which term I mean something different from a worldly ecclesiastic. He is the well-informed churchman, acquainted with the canon law and versed in ecclesiastical administration, who thought that Thomas was in the right and had behaved admirably. He had upheld the claim of the sacerdotium against insular tyranny (viii. 71-2). Gerald shows very little passion, takes the unity of the Church for granted, and is mainly concerned to point out what fools the other people were and how badly Thomas's successors let the cause down. He quotes with some appreciation the remark of Richard of Ilchester, Bishop of Winchester (1174-83), one of the most distinguished administrators of his day, who had as a royal minister been opposed to St. Thomas. 'We were much deceived in that man. He was very different inside from his external appearance of display.' Some one observed 'It is very
remarkable that the church has not been able to secure a single one of the principles for which the martyr fell.' The bishop, more practised in affairs than in letters, replied, 'So far as he was able, the martyr secured everything. If his successor had had a tenth part of his goodness and honesty, the church would not have lost one of those principles.' Gerald was not an indiscriminate champion of these principles. He was a man of his day, and did his work under the conditions which he found, but in general Gerald was on the side of St. Thomas. Every ecclesiastic engaged in a conflict for rights could now feel that he had a great example; and we can see from the allusions to the martyr, scattered about Gerald's writings, how spontaneous and universal the interest in him was. When Gerald came back from Paris in 1180 he passed through Canterbury and visited the shrine. He tells how he and his companions came into an ecclesiastical council at Southwark 'cum signaculis B. Thome a collo suspensis,' a reference to the thin, flat, purse-like little bottles of lead or pewter, in which pilgrims to the shrine carried away a tiny drop of the martyr's blood mixed with water (i. 55). Thirty years later on one of his journeys to Rome he heard an old friend of St. Thomas, John, Archbishop of Lyons, tell at Clairvaux of King Henry's indignant remark when Thomas insisted on giving up the chancellorship—'If an Archbishop of Mainz or Cologne can be the emperor's chancellor, why should an Archbishop of Canterbury refuse to be chancellor to the King of England?' (‘De Invect.,’ ed. Davies 97). Elsewhere he draws a pleasant picture of Thomas in exile at Pontigny, how when tired of study he would wander about from one of his companions to another, asking what they were reading. He gave currency—to too maliciously, I think—to the story that one of the murderers had asserted the king's full connivance: Henry had not uttered wild unreflecting words, he had deliberately ordered the deed. He shows us the archbishop looking out of a window into the night, the eve of his martyrdom, and asking whether he could reach the coast by daybreak, and then deciding to see his ordeal through, and he tells how, when the murderers came after their crime to the archbishop's house at Malling, and leaving their cloaks and weapons on the heavy dining-table, sat round the fire, the great table suddenly heaved and cast its unholy burden on the floor.

I come to Gerald of Wales as a man of letters. Apart from
some Latin poems, his first works were the books on Ireland, the fruits of his visits (1183-86). Everyone has heard the story, told by himself, of his triumph at Oxford—how, on his return from Ireland, he came to Oxford, gathered the learned clerks and others together, feasted them and read his Topography to them. It was a curious exhibition: a mixture of Celtic practice and literary sophistication. The Topography certainly had a good reception. Archbishop Baldwin was so struck by it that he wanted Gerald not only to preach the Crusade but also to go on the crusade as its historiographer. The books on Wales followed. The ‘Descriptio Cambriae,’ so nearly lost, and the outcome of much labour, was finished at Lincoln, after Gerald’s withdrawal from court. It is a more sympathetic and better informed book, as one would expect, than the Topography of Ireland. As I said at the beginning of the lecture, these works have given Gerald his place in history. They were his special contribution to the encyclopedia of information which the wonderful twelfth century produced—that mass of learning which included the scientific work and travels of Adelard of Bath, the geography of the Arabic scholar Edrisi, the translation of the Koran, the theological method of Abelard and Peter the Lombard, the extensive translations from Greek and Arabic, of Aristotle and the Greek scientists. Gerald was for the most part profoundly ignorant of the contents of the new learning. He was anything but methodical as a thinker, he had heard vaguely that a number of books ascribed to Aristotle had been discovered at Toledo, and he welcomed the ecclesiastical ban imposed upon them in 1210. He was apparently unaware of the development in mathematical science; but he was very sensitive to prevalent fashions of thought, and he had doubtless caught something of the spirit of the new age. I do not know if he had read much of contemporary English history, such as the important investigations of William of Malmesbury, but he was interested in the growth of Arthurian lore, and in one of his books tells the story of the discovery of King Arthur’s body at Glastonbury. A faculty for gossipy vivacious description of peoples and customs, an uncritical historical sense, an interest in philological speculations of quite an arbitrary kind—these were his qualities as a historian and they found their best expression in his books on Wales and Ireland.

But Gerald during the years before his retirement to Lincoln had
lived in a wider world than Wales or Ireland. Scattered throughout his writings—and he never hesitated to repeat himself and to copy passages from earlier works—are numerous anecdotes and recollections of the days when he moved among statesmen and in high ecclesiastical circles. He was also a scholar and, absentee though he was, responsible for the administration of an archdeaconry. It was impossible for any writer who had studied in the schools of Paris, to consider a problem of politics or church discipline uninfluenced by what he had heard there, and Gerald in particular was the last man to forget his Paris days. He had attended the lectures of the great Peter Comestor and frequently cites him. He had heard Peter the Chanter, or at least knew something of his writing, and Maurice the bishop and many more. He liked to consider himself as one of the scholars of the day and he 'fancied himself' as a lecturer no less than as a preacher. Naturally his administrative and practical interests drew him to the study of law, and in addition to the Scriptures and the more accessible fathers, St. Jerome, St. Augustine, and soon, the great textbooks of canon law—Burchard, Gratian and compilations of papal decretals were obviously familiar to him. One of the most delightful specimens of his naïve self-glorification is the account of his lectures on canon law during his second period of study in Paris (1177-80). When he began to lecture on the decretals, the crowd of doctors and students were so great that the largest school could scarce contain it. He treated his scientific theme with such beauty and colour of diction, such apt quotations, that the more learned his hearers were, the better they were pleased. Such sweetness and grace of speech drove away tedium, and the students rivalled each other in the eagerness with which they took down all he said, word for word. One hightborn and intelligent canon of Paris asked Gerald privately how long he had studied civil and canon law at Bologna, and when Gerald informed him that he had never been at Bologna, inquired where he had studied. Gerald replied that he had studied at Paris only for three years, and the canon departed in amazement. After breakfast Gerald visited his own master and had the gratification of hearing him say, 'Your splendid utterance to-day before that great audience pleased me more than a hundred shilling brief.' And Gerald adds, 'As Jerome says, the success of his pupils is a teacher's glory.'
With however much salt we season this narrative, there is no doubt that Gerald’s legal studies were of much service to him, both in his writings on the church and in his suit at Rome. One of these books—in some ways the best he ever wrote—was written at Lincoln: the ‘Gemma Ecclesiastica.’ Of this jewel Gerald says that he took it to Rome with him and presented it with other writings of his to the great pope Innocent III. The pope kept the books by his bedside for a month, until he was persuaded to allow the cardinals to take them away to read—all except the Jewel—with that he would not part. It is worth noting, perhaps, that the only existing copy of the book is a finely executed manuscript which seems to have suffered from seawater. One would like to think that it is Innocent’s copy. The book apparently was not circulated; but it was written primarily for the clergy of Gerald’s Welsh archdeaconry, and for this reason, he says, its style is simple and unadorned. He had put together useful information—by way of precept and example—from many authors, as a guide to the clergy in the discharge of their duties. He has dealt with the problems which he used to discuss with them when he was living among them. A more lively work on pastoral theology can never have been written. It deals mainly with two matters—the eucharist and the morality of the clergy. The treatment is practical rather than doctrinal, the problems those difficulties of every day which a clergyman has to face and are none the less difficulties because many of them are trivial. The book is professional, not popular, and we can realise from it how the principles of the canon law and the doctrines of the church fared in the test of experience in the twelfth century. We should remember that in those days many things which seem to us, as we look back through the centuries, to have been fundamental in the life of the church were still new or awaiting more precise definition. Men were discussing them very much as they discuss to-day the issues raised by ‘modernism’ or by the proposed revision of the Prayer Book; they were discussed in the schools, and were finding somewhat puzzled or unwilling acceptance in the parishes. Gerald deals with the celibacy of the clergy, for example, with what at first sight strikes the reader as astonishing freedom. He says that he remembered a remark made by the great Paris teacher, Peter Comestor, to the effect that the greatest mistake ever made by the Church was its decision to impose clerical celibacy,
and Gerald is clearly disposed to agree with his old master. Sometimes I wonder whether this freedom of speech may not have prevented the circulation of the book even in the limited circle for whom it was intended. Innocent III., when he refused to part with it, may possibly have deemed it unsuitable reading even for cardinals. Another feature of the book is common to all Gerald's writings—he can never resist a good story. One feels, indeed, that he would make a point in order to bring in a story rather than use a story to illustrate his point. It was rather unwise of him, an archdeacon, to go out of his way to attack the bishop's officials (the official, I should say, was the chief administrative and judicial officer in a diocese), but he had to tell the story of the clerk who was driven to blaspheme by losing all his money at dice. The clerk begged to know how best he could show his feeling about the Almighty by doing what was most abominable in His sight; and a friend advised him to become a bishop's official.

There are many stories, however, in the Jewel which illustrate in a very touching and wistful way the struggle between the pagan and the holy, or between reason and faith in a man. One of them is about an Englishman whom Gerald had seen in his Paris days, a master Richard (Albericanus) who had lectured with great success upon the eucharist, and by his self-discipline and austerities and alms-giving had striven in all ways to live a holy life; but on his death-bed he turned his face away from the body of Christ, because he had never been able to believe in his heart and had incurred the judgment of God. I cannot forbear to give another story, for it can never be told too often. A priest in the diocese of Worcester had been kept awake at night by the villagers singing and dancing about his house and in the churchyard. We can imagine the scene: a merry-making on a saint's day, the sound of voices in chorus through a summer night, perhaps the flicker of torchlight and shadows on the good man's wall. He rose in the morning to say mass, but when he began the salutation, Dominus vobiscum, he found himself, to his confusion, reciting in a loud voice the refrain of the love song which still rang in his ears—'Swete lamman dhin are'—sweet mistress, thine aid (ii. 120).

I must say very little about the third period of Gerald's life, covered by the reign of John and the early years of Henry III.'s minority. Gerald was about 54 years of age when he was elected a
second time the bishop of St. David's, and a second time he was disappointed. He had accepted the offer of the canons with hesitation, but he would not give in again. Times had changed since 1176. Not only was Gerald no longer bound to the court, the spirit of the church was different, more assured, and a great man was on the papal throne. The adversary was not the new king, for John had been willing to accept him, but the redoubtable Hubert Walter, Archbishop of Canterbury, and for this very reason the issue was badly chosen, for Gerald was not able to say that he was fighting against secular interference. He could only maintain the right of the canons of St. David's to choose whom they willed by denying the archiepiscopal authority in Wales: and as events showed he had no chance of winning papal support for this position. However, he was determined. He disliked Hubert Walter, and in his advancing years his thoughts settled again upon his home and family. He went over to Ireland to discuss the position with his numerous relatives there and then set off for Rome. The story of the appeal, which lasted four years, and involved three distinct journeys to the papal court—so that the vigorous old fellow crossed the Alps six times—is told with a wealth of discourse in the last book of his Autobiography and the six parts of the book incorrectly entitled the 'De Inventionibus.' Documents were discovered in the archives of St. David's, and by Gerald himself (to his immense pride) in the papal registers at Rome. Pope Innocent was obviously attracted by the archdeacon. He liked his courage and vivacity, and the ingenuity with which he met the archbishop's arguments and faced his proctors. He wrote about him to the archbishop in a friendly way and begged that everything possible should be done to respect his feelings. But he could not give his countenance to the historical claim of St. David's to be the mother church of an independent province. A settlement was ultimately reached. Gerald of course did not become bishop and was formally reconciled to Hubert Walter. In his 'Retractations,' written after the manner of St. Augustine's, he withdrew his more outrageous charges against him. On the other hand the bishops of St. David's were not to be required in future to make a definite oath of obedience to their metropolitan.

Gerald lost nothing by his defeat. His English preferments and revenues were probably increased, and the king was friendly. He
was able to maintain and add to his self-esteem. He had fought a good fight, and laid the foundations for success, he hoped, to be won by others in the future. Yet I fancy that he never recovered from the effects of these years. He could not forgive the canons of St. David's who had deserted and betrayed him; and St. David's meant a great deal to him. He lived for another fifteen or sixteen years, but gradually we lose sight of him. His later books—the 'Speculum Ecclesiæ' and the 'De principis eruditione,' though very amusing and interesting, are not his best. They are informed by prejudice and violence unusual even in him. The one is mainly a diatribe against the monastic orders, the Cluniac especially and later the Cistercian. Gerald had suffered from monks, for all his successful rivals at St. David's were monks, and he was always opposed to monastic chapters in cathedrals and to the promotion of monks to bishoprics; but his unbalanced diatribe seems to be due to more than this. He had been the close friend of Cistercians in the past, and had written the life of that great monk, Carthusian it is true, St. Hugh of Lincoln. The other book shows that he had broken away from his old moorings in England, and yet he had nowhere else to go. Hence I will say no more on these works, but call attention to a feature of his controversy with Hubert Walter.

The archbishop had begun his defence against Gerald by sending a rather unwise personal attack upon him to Rome. The pope invited him to reply, and the reply—the real 'libellus invectionis'—is given in the first part of his book about the case. Hubert and his agents had ventured to reflect upon Gerald's Latinity. They could not have done worse, though they rightly guessed, no doubt, that they could not annoy him more. Gerald had very definite views about Latinity. Like his contemporaries John of Salisbury and Peter of Blois, he wrote with bitter sarcasm about the young men of his day, who rushed on to engage in fashionable speculations and disputes before they had learned their grammar. And he also believed very strongly in the value of a literate clergy and a learned episcopate. He particularly objected to the practice, so common in England, of electing as bishops clerks who had got their experience in the exchequer and the royal service. This reprehensible practice was one of the reasons why chapters should be allowed to elect canonically without interference. And here was an archbishop, who had no learning, and had spent
his life among financial agents, daring to sneer at his, Gerald's, Latin, the Latin of a gentleman and a scholar. Gerald went back to one of his own books, the Gemma, for his retort and improved upon it. In the Gemma he had given many examples of the bad Latinity, the grammatical blunders and the appalling ignorance of the clergy. There was the priest who said that St. Barnabas was a good and holy man, though he was a robber, and quoted in support of this last statement, 'Now Barrabas was a robber'; and the priest who explained the meaning of the feast of St. John before the Latin Gate (ante portam Latinam) by the assertion that 'this St. John was the first man who brought the Latin tongue into England.' And there was even an archbishop who made incredible howlers. Now this archbishop was Archbishop Hubert Walter, and in his address to the pope during the suit at Rome, Gerald did not hesitate to say so. 'Oh if you could only hear the beast bellowing out his words. You would hear tropes and figures which even Donatus in his Barbarismus and Priscian himself do not mention. He is especially good at putting the accusative for the nominative; and how often he mixes up his numbers and genders.' Gerald proceeds to give examples, the third and last of which is as follows: 'On one occasion Richard, King of the English, used the Latin phrase "Volumus quod istud fiat coram nobis," and the archbishop, who was standing by him with many other important people, wishing to correct the king, said, 'Coram nos, coram nos, my lord!' The king looked towards that learned and witty man, Hugh, Bishop of Coventry, who said, "Stick to your own grammar, my lord, it is better," and so convulsed the assembly.'

Gerald, I said, is known to us only by his writings—and these show us that he is well worth knowing. It is equally true that we can only appreciate his writings to the full if we know something of the times in which he wrote, for he is by no means a reliable guide, and he never troubled to speak of things in which he was not interested or concerned. We should never know from him that the reign of Henry II. is one of the most splendid periods in English history. And how gladly would one have had in addition to his description of Wales, a description of Paris, with its schools and teachers, of Henry's court, of the living instead of the dead Rome, of Lincoln and St. Hugh's new cathedral. Mediaeval writers, and especially writers like Gerald, did not consider that the life about them would pass away.
They lived in the present. And few of them lived so intensely as Gerald of Wales. He had, I suppose, an ineffectual, in some ways a disappointing life. He was often very irritable and touchy and unfair. But he was essentially a happy man, attractive to us by his faults even more than by his merits. He enjoyed as much as he could in life, and if he could not enjoy some of it, he took his revenge later and enjoyed writing about it.