THE EARLY LIFE OF ST. SAMSON OF DOL.

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475.—Birth of St. Dubric.
491.—Birth of King Arthur.
517.—St. Dubric crowns King Arthur.
525.—Birth of St. Samson and St. Teilo.
530.—St. Samson goes to Llantwit.
550.—St. Samson goes to Caldey Island.
552.—St. Samson leaves Caldey Island.
555.—St. Samson crosses to Brittany.
557.[1]—St. Samson at the Council of Paris.
560.—Death of St. Dubric.
580.—Death of St. Teilo.
593.—Death of St. Samson.

RANGED round the centre of the great reading-room in Russell Square is what is perhaps the largest book in the world. At all events the British Museum has no other which can rival it. It is not yet complete, but it consists already of some seventy folio volumes, each containing six or seven hundred closely-printed pages. It is the *Acta Sanctorum*, the Lives of the Saints, the tales, that is, which once upon a time were told by many a Calefactory fire, as

> "Each in turn essayed to paint
> The rival merits of their saint,"

or which were read in the Refectory, what time the silent monks consumed their frugal meal. A treasure indeed, if it were but authentic history! We find, however, that in almost every case some centuries elapsed between the death of the saint and the compiling of the legends of his life; so that although the *Acta* show us what was thought about these holy men in later days, and therefore have in any case their value, yet they in general show us little more. There

[1] This date only is trustworthy. The others are merely conjectural, and, at best, approximate.

is however for the most part an historical substratum, much as it may have been idealised, and there are just a few of the Lives, some five or six, perhaps, although, alas! no more, which are in the main trustworthy narratives.

And such a one is the life of St. Samson, Prior of Caldey, Abbot of Llantwit, and in later life Archbishop of Dol. It is true that it was not compiled, as we now have it, for many years after the Archbishop's death; it however follows very closely a much older life, written by one Enoch, whose uncle was a kinsman of the saint, and who had conversed with Anne, St. Samson's mother. And of this life there are happily three texts, the French, the Breton, and the English, as they have been called, which are represented by the *Acta*, by a life which has been edited by one Dom Plaine in the *Analecta Bollandiana*, and by the *Liber Landavensis;* and all alike are founded upon Enoch's Life, and follow it very closely, so that it is possible to reconstruct the original account with very considerable success.

In dealing, therefore, with St. Samson's life we are on historic ground. There may, indeed, be miracles recorded which are only due to the devout imagination of the writer; but they are few, and they are not grotesque, as when we read elsewhere of some decapitated Cornish saint, who carries his own head under his arm, or crosses from Armorica upon a paving-stone. They are rather, when they do occur, devout imaginings of pious souls, to whom the eternal world seemed very near, and angel ministry a fact of everyday occurrence.

The life of St. Samson will divide itself most readily into two parts, the first extending from his birth, about the year 525, to the year 555, when at the age of thirty he crossed to Brittany, the second covering the remainder of his life. It is with the first part only I propose to deal; the years, that is, which Samson spent at Llantwit and on Caldey Island, and in the neighbouring districts of South Wales.

Not far from Cowbridge, in that fertile tract of land which separates the uplands of Glamorgan from the sea, there lies a little village known to-day as Llantwit Major. It lies to the south of the great coal-basin of South Wales. The Vale of Glamorgan, which is the name the district bears, has little in common with the hill country to the north. The one is agricultural and peaceful, and the other mercantile and busy. The northern carboniferous districts tell of modern life; the Vale suggests the spirit of an older world, ecclesiastical and feudal, which indeed has long since passed away, but which is represented there by many a ruined castle, many an ancient church or desecrated priory, and, in the little village of Llantwit, by the remains of what was fourteen hundred years ago, and for many centuries to follow, a thriving University. And though the sympathies of some may rather turn to the teeming valleys full of hope and industry, the sources as they are of that sea power on which the Empire must depend, yet there are others to be found who take a very different view; the Abbé Duine, for example, who has done so much for the saints of Brittany, writes as follows: "When I had thus," he says, "seen Cardiff, the modern town, the material town; when I had breathed the fog of the coal-carrying city, it was delicious to escape to Llantwit, village of peace, with air so pure, so mild, where life itself is hushed to silence, motionless, and lulled to sleep by the magic rays of the bright August sun! Place," he goes on to say, "before your eyes a very modest row of houses, small, with old thatched roofs, walls red or yellow, or white with lime, the doors bright green; within the windows, flowers; upon the window-sill a cat, her paws tucked in, as solemn as a sphinx! All that one saw was smiling, child-like, primitive."

Doubtless the Abbé Duine has his share of the romantic spirit of his race. His words are those of sentiment; but a more balanced and prosaic writer

bears a similar witness: the late Professor Freeman writes as follows;

"The whole series of buildings at Llantwit Major is one of the most striking in the kingdom. Through a succession of civil and domestic structures of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the traveller gradually approaches the grand group composed of the church and the buildings attached to it; lying as they do in a deep valley below the town, they present a miniature representation of the unequalled assemblage at St David's."

And no doubt the Professor is quite justified in what he says. The church itself is most remarkable, and in the churchyard there are relics witnessing to a far distant past. There is a cylindrical pillar, described by Mr. J. Romilly Allen in the *Archæologia Cambrensis* for 1899; there is a fragment of a cross, erected, as its legend tells us, by one Abbot Samson—not our saint—for his soul's weal, and for the souls of King Juthael, and Arthmael the Dean; there is a cross, long buried out of sight, but found and re-erected in 1793; and there is yet another monument, which bears the inscription: "Samson placed this cross for his soul."

There was also an ancient tithe-barn to be seen until quite recently. It was a structure of huge size, which dated from the thirteenth century. And there were other buildings which have disappeared. And we still have a fragment of the mediæval monastery, and a dove-cot of the thirteenth century, cylindrical in shape, and covered by a domical vault, such as we find at Angle and at Manorbier in Pembrokeshire.

And to this secluded spot there came, in the sixth century, one Iltyd, called the Knight. He was a native of Armorica, which we to-day call Brittany, and was great-nephew of Germanus of Auxerre, who had in his time, with his companion Lupus, come to Wales to combat the Pelagian heresy; and he was also pupil of St. Cadoc, Cadoc-Doeth, the famous Abbot of Llancarvan, five miles north of Cowbridge, who, with a more than princely hospitality, was wont, it is said, to feed

each day one hundred clergy, and one hundred workmen, and one hundred men-at-arms, as well as one hundred widows and one hundred poor, together with servants, squires, and guests almost innumerable.

But Iltyd, Iltyd "Farchog," or the "Knight," preferring poverty and self-denial to a rough soldier's life, established in this sequestered spot a monastic College, erecting, not of course a noble pile of buildings such as we find to-day at Oxford or at Cambridge, but, as the manner was, a square enclosure with a mound and palisades, and in the enclosure bee-hive huts for his monks, and seven churches, which are said to have been built of stone, though this, in the sixth century, appears incredible.

And by degrees this quiet and remote community became a school for learning, nay, a University, which lasted, little as men now remember it, for certainly not less than a thousand years. And amongst St. Iltyd's early pupils were David, patron saint of Wales, Paulinus, Gildas, Padern, Teilo and Oudoceus, famous men each one of them, and last, not least, St. Paul de Léon, whose tapering spire is now the glory of the north of Brittany.

And to this seat of learning and of prayer there was attached an island known as Ynys-y-pyr,[1] an island to whose shores, the wind being fair, one tide would take

[1] This island must be certainly identified with Caldey. Archbishop Usher did indeed suggest that it coincided with a part of the present town of Llanelly, called Machynnis, formerly an island; and, as the matter seemed of little importance, the suggestion was, until quite recently, accepted without question. It was, however, only an *obiter dictum*, resting on no evidence; whilst, on the other hand, not only do we find in Caldey Island a site more easy of access for the Llantwit monks, and with clear evidence upon it of early ecclesiastical occupation, but, in the Life of St. Paul de Léon, written by one Wromac "moine de l'Abbaye de Landavensis," in the year 884, we are expressly told that there was a certain island, *Pyr by name*, within, it is said, the border of Demetia, in which St. Iltyd spent much of his time, and where he was associated with, amongst others, St. Paul de Léon, St. David, St. Gildas, and St. Samson. And this decides the matter, for Pyr (see Dugdale's *Monasticon*, Camden, Leland, and others) was most indubitably the former name of Caldey.

the hardy and fearless sailor monks from their own little harbour.

And, one day, in the early part of the sixth century, there came to the monastery gates a certain Amon, with Anna his wife, a daughter of King Meurig of Glamorgan, bringing with them a little lad of five years old, as Hannah and Elkanah brought of old the infant Samuel to Shiloh. Like Samuel, he was also a child of miracle. With prayer and fasting Amon and Anna had asked a child of God. No child, however, had been vouchsafed to them until, at the advice of St. Dubricius—"Dubric the high saint"—they resorted to a certain wise and holy man, who instructed Amon to make a silver rod, whose height should equal that of his wife, and give it to the poor. He, nothing loth, made three rods, not one only as prescribed, and with the desired effect; for on the following night an angel came to Anna in a dream, and said; "Thou shalt bear a son, and call his name Samson, and he shall be seven times whiter than that silver which thy husband gave for thee to God." And so, obedient to the heavenly messenger, St. Iltyd at the sacred font gave to the child the name of Samson.

And now five years have passed away, and Amon, resolutely putting from him what must certainly have been the very strong temptation to retain his son, and make of him a leader of men, brings him to Llantwit, and he is made a neophyte; and in due time becomes a student and a monk, a priest, an abbot, an archbishop. He was, it is said, instructed in the Old and the New Testaments, and in all manner of philosophy, to wit, geometry, and rhetoric, and grammar, and arithmetic, and all the arts then known in Britain. Indeed, so apt a scholar was he, that on one and the same day he learnt the alphabet,[1] and also the digits such as were then in use, and in a single week the mysteries of syntax; whilst in the interpretation of the Holy Scriptures he surpassed his master.

[1] *Sub uno eodemque die vicenas eleas, tessarasque agnovit totas.—Acta SS. Julii*, vi, 576.

And there are charming legends told of him, which possibly may not be true, but which at least bear witness, and with no uncertain voice, to the simple healthful lives lived by these monks, their fondness for the animals of whom they saw so much, and for the open air in which their lives were spent. Indeed, in reading of the Celtic monks, we seem to live beneath the open sky; we breathe the air of the Book of Ruth; we are with David on the hillside, or with Abraham at his tent door; nay, even with One Greater, as He walks and teaches amidst the wayside flowers of Galilee.

For instance, all the boys are one day in a field engaged in winnowing corn, when suddenly an adder darts out of a bush and strikes one of the monks. "Run, one of you boys, tell Father Iltyd," cries the steward. And Samson runs, and asks with tears for leave to attempt the cure himself. And, Iltyd having given him leave, he runs back quickly, rubs the bite with oil, and by God's blessing cures the monk.

Again, we read how the boys would take it in turn to scare the sparrows from the barley, and how, when it came to Samson's turn, he gathered them all together like a flock of sheep and drove them into a barn, and then lay down himself in the field and went to sleep; and how the other boys, who had little love for him, surprised him in his sleep, and, being glad that they had found him thus neglectful of his duty, went to the master, saying: "Master, him whom thou lovest we have found sleeping, disobedient, lazy"; and how, when Iltyd came, the boy said quietly, "I found the plunderers in the corn, and, with the aid of God, I keep them in prison for the common weal." And this appears to have been St. Samson's way, for, when an old man, and Archbishop of Dol, he treated[1] in like manner the wild birds of Brittany, collecting them

[1] This is, of course, a very common monastic legend. A similar tale is told, for example, of the hermit Sigar, of Northaw, near St. Albans (*Gesta Abbatum*, vol. i, 97-105), and of many more.

together in the monastery court, and there imposing silence on them till the morning, lest they should disturb the prayers of the monks.

Of course we need not take these legends for more than they are worth; but when we find such tales told over and over again, as of St. Jerome and his lion, or St. Hugh of Lincoln and his swan, and very many others, we understand that they imply a simple, quiet mode of living on the part of the monks, which did not scare, still less do any harm to the timid denizens of wood and mere. Their dumb companions recognised the saints and hermits for their friends, and kindness generated trust. In fact, the old monk understood, as the modern tripper now seems powerless to understand, the sanctity of animal life, and of them the words of Coleridge had come true a thousand years and more before the *Ancient Mariner* was penned;

> "He prayeth best who loveth best
> All things both great and small."

But now the time had come for Samson to be made a deacon; and the Archbishop Dubric coming one day unexpectedly to Llantwit, Iltyd and the brethren prayed him that he would confer this dignity upon the youthful scholar. Their prayer was granted; and to the eyes of the Archbishop and the Abbot, and of the Deacon who was serving at the Holy Sacrifice, the eyes perchance of the soul to which the things of the spirit are more real than those of which the senses may take cognizance, it seemed as though a dove descended visibly and rested on his shoulder, there remaining till the mass was at an end.

And, after this, St. Samson seems to have redoubled those austerities which had already evoked his master's protest. We are told of abstinence in food and drink, of fasting, cold, and nakedness; how in the summer-time he avoided shade, and in the winter-time declined to use the second garment which was customary in the monastery; how his one garment served him night

and day; how he refused to eat all flesh; and how, it is quaintly added—and what a flood of light this throws upon the habits of the Celtic monks!—no one ever saw him tipsy, or unable to speak plain.

But all were not as Samson was. There was at Llantwit no immunity from jealousy and bickerings, or from that struggle for preferment which, from the time when the mother of James and John asked that her sons might sit on the Saviour's right hand and his left, has never left the Church, still less the world: and certain nephews of St. Iltyd, who were afraid that Samson's merits might secure for him the post of Abbot, which in the Celtic church was more or less hereditary, and might therefore be expected to descend at St. Iltyd's death to one of them, were not content with ordinary measures, but even tried to remove their rival by the use of poison. Their agent was the monastery baker. He was forgiven by Samson; but he did not repent, and, on presuming to receive the consecrated cup at Samson's hand, was seized and torn by the evil spirit, and only rescued by the prayers of the saint.

And now St. Samson had been made a priest, the Heavenly Dove appearing at his ordination as before, and by this time he must have become of some importance in the Brotherhood. He probably, however, felt that such an atmosphere of strife and jealousy was bad for all concerned; and it was therefore no doubt much to his satisfaction that he received one day an intimation from his master, Iltyd, that in the night the Abbot had seen a vision, and had been bidden to ask him whither he desired to go, and to speed him on his way. St. Samson felt but little hesitation as to what reply to make. There was, as we have seen, not far from Llantwit an island monastery, lately founded by an "excellent and holy priest" called Pyro, and it appears that Samson had long wished to join him there, but had refrained from taking any action in the matter lest he should offend St. Iltyd. His opportunity had now, however, come. He told the Abbot of his wish, and

Iltyd, though in great distress, and beating, it is said, upon his breast, and counting it as though his very soul were being torn from him, was yet obedient to the heavenly vision, and forwarded the youthful Samson on his way.

And so St. Samson came to Caldey, then called Inys-y-Pyr, Pyr's Island. There is a neighbouring village on the mainland, which is now called Manorbier, but which was probably then known as Maen-y-Pyr, Pyr's Stone; the stone, a cromlech, is there still. These two names have been not improbably derived from Peredur, of whom the *Mabinogion* has so much to say, but possibly were due to this same Pyro, "excellent and holy priest." But, be this as it may, upon this island he renewed, and certainly with better opportunity than he had hitherto enjoyed at Llantwit, his accustomed life of quietness and prayer, and even something more than his old austerities; though whether more were possible we may well doubt; for, in addition to what has been above recorded, we are told that from the time of his diaconate he had never used a bed, but, when compelled by natural weariness, had learned to lean himself against the wall,[1] and so to snatch a little sleep. To some of us such stories seem, perhaps, to be alike unedifying and incredible; but we must not forget that Samson, whether in Ireland or in Wales, in Cornwall or in Brittany, did, under these austere conditions, missionary work which might have taxed the powers of a Selwyn or a Patterson; and not, I think, incredible; for those who have seen the little chapel of St. Gowan, planted in its rocky gorge, on the wild coast of Pembrokeshire, will not forget a sort of niche in the rock, of which foolish things are said by August trippers, but which is probably the place where one of these old hermit monks was wont, instead of lying down, to take, as Samson did, the little rest which he

[1] "Quod si, ut homo, opus haberet pro carnali fragilitate quiescendi, seipsum parieti, aut alicujus rei durae firmamento inclinans, nunquam in lecto dormitabat."—*Acta SS. Julii*, vi, 579.

allowed himself; believing, as did Samson, that the sufferings of this present time were not worthy to be compared with the glory which should be revealed in him; and that through suffering came detachment from things earthly, and through detachment knowledge of God.

But Samson was not destined long to enjoy the quiet and secluded life which was so dear to him. One day, as the monks were going forth to their daily labour in the fields, they found at the monastery gate some strangers who had spent the night in the Guest-house, and who asked to see St. Samson. St. Samson's many austerities do not seem to have deprived him of some sense of humour, so he asked them what their business was, and when they said it was for Samson's private ear, "Unless," he said, "you state here in my presence what is the object of your journey, you shall not see Samson as you desire to do." And Pyro seems to have been mightily amused,—perhaps it did not take much to amuse a monk,—but, thinking that the joke had been carried far enough, explained to the strangers who the young man was; on which, we are told, they fell on his neck, and told him of their errand. That errand was a sad one: Amon, Samson's father, was very ill, and he desired to see his son once more before his death. And here we find an instance of that strange detachment, as it seems to us, from the relationships of human life, which was and is so characteristic of monastic life. Christ had said, "He that loveth father or mother more than Me, is not worthy of Me;" and this St. Samson characteristically held to mean that it was wrong for him to go to his father's bedside even at such a time. "I have come out of Egypt," he said, "and it is not for me to return to it, for God is able Himself to heal the sick;" and, saying this, he turned away, and went off swiftly to his work. But Pyro seems to have had more of the milk of human kindness, or, as the biographer very justly says, a truer guidance of the Holy Spirit. He laid no

stress, indeed, upon the duty of a son; but he recalled St. Samson, and he gently urged him not to neglect his duty to a departing soul. "It might be God would grant to him to sow the seeds of spiritual life." He clearly knew what arguments were likely to prevail. And he was right. St. Samson says at once: "May such indeed be the will of God! I am prepared to suffer all things for His sake, and that I may win souls;" and, turning to the messengers, he adds: "Go back, and on the morrow I will follow." So in the in the morning he commenced his journey, in company with a young man who was a deacon, and on the third day came to Amon. Yet not without adventure by the way. The Celtic monks were sailors, and the dense and awful forests which then clothed the land were to them full of witchcraft, and of evil powers, of serpents, and of unclean things. They passed into the sombre depths, as Stanley did into the forests of the Pigmies, and the oppression and the gloom weighed hard upon them. So we are not surprised to find that Samson found "a horned and hairy witch," who, with eight sisters and a mother, dwelt in the darkness of the forest, and whom he slew in the name of Jesus Christ; or that, on his return, in company with Amon, whom he had healed of his disease, and with his uncle Umbrafel, he met and slew a serpent of prodigious size.

He left behind, apparently upon the western border of Glamorgan, his mother Anna and her sister Afrella, well and carefully provided for; and, with his father and his uncle and the deacon, came back to the island, where they again found Dubric the high Saint, whose custom[1] it was to spend his Lents upon it.

St. Samson's troubles were, however, not yet at an end. It is said, in the life of St. Dubricius, in the *Liber Landavensis*, that he was wont[2] to visit in the

[1] "Mos erat illi episcopo totam pene paschae quadragesimam in eadem ducere insula."—*Acta SS. Julii*, vi, 581.

[2] "Vir beatæ memoriae Dubricius visitavit locum beati Ilduti, tempore quadragesimali, ut quae emendanda erant corrigeret, et

season of Lent a place belonging to St. Iltyd—which was no doubt Caldey Island—"that he might correct what wanted amendment, and might confirm such practices as might deserve to be retained; for," it is added, "there lived there many very holy men, but also many who were led astray by jealousy." This estimate of the community on Inys-y-pyr is certainly abundantly confirmed by what is found in St. Samson's life. St. Dubric had received, we are told, from the deacon who accompanied St. Samson, a full account of the journey. He had told the Archbishop of the witch and of the serpent, and of Amon's cure, of all, in fact, that had befallen, not concealing his own cowardice; and Dubric had, in consequence, promoted Samson to the post of cellarer, an office of much importance in a monastery, but one whose duties were, we should have supposed, not much in accordance with the young monk's austerity and other-worldliness. And so it proved to be the case. Complaint was made by the disappointed candidate that the new cellarer wasted the mead; and the Archbishop and St. Samson went together to the cellar to investigate. Nor does it appear that Samson was absolved from the charge of over-liberality; though, as it was believed, the miracle of Cana was repeated,[1] and the cellarer's bounty thus received Divine approval.

But Samson soon received promotion. The Abbot, Pyro, "excellent and holy priest," was himself perhaps not always sober; and one dark night, returning to the monastery, he fell headlong into a well, which, from the permanence of geological conditions, could not be far from that which still supplies the island with its pure and abundant streams.[2] His cry—he only uttered

servanda consolidaret. Ibidem enim multi sanctissimi viri conversabantur, multi quadam livore decepti, inter quos frater Samson morabatur filius Amon."—*Lib. Lan. Vita s. Dubric*, p. 78.

[1] "Lanternis signum crucis imposuit; et dum episcopus venit plena omnia et perfecta reperta sunt."—*Acta SS. Julii*, vi, 582.

[2] "Idem Piro in tenebrosa nocta, et, quod est gravius, ut aiunt, per ineptam ebrietatem in claustra monasterii deambulans, solus in

one—was heard by the brothers, who drew him from the water in an almost dying state. Their help, however, had come too late. Poor Pyro died in the course of the night. The Archbishop held a chapter after matins; and the monks with one accord elected Samson as their Abbot. He ruled his little flock for a year and a half, and set to the brothers—some of whom perhaps had walked in Pyro's footsteps—an example of moderation, and something more, in food and drink and sleep. And such an example was perhaps much needed, for we must not think of these Celtic monks as being strict ascetics. On Caldey, at least, the food was plentiful, the cups were overflowing with mead. But hunger and thirst, not meat and drink, rejoiced the Abbot's heart; nor, as we have said, did he ever rest upon a couch. He lived, whatever others round about him may have done, the spiritual life; and we are therefore not surprised to read that as from time to time he offered the Holy Sacrifice his eyes were opened, and he saw the angels worshipping the Sacred Presence.

But, at the end of the year and a half, there came to Caldey certain Irishmen on their way home from Rome; and, for some reason, Samson, with the leave of the Archbishop, went with them; and as he went from place to place, the blind, we are told, received their sight, the lepers were cleansed, the evil spirits were cast out, and many were converted from the error of their ways. How long he remained in Ireland does not appear; but in those days, although all journeying by land was difficult and perilous, yet was the sea as easily sailed as it is now; and so we find St. Samson now in Wales, and now in Ireland; now giving a name to a Cornish church, or to an island in the far-off Scillies; now ruling as Archbishop of Dol, and now awaiting in the Channel Islands opportunity for a successful expedition. The fact is, Ireland, Wales, Corn-

puteum valde vastum se præcipitavit, atque unum clamorem ululatus emittens, a fratribus fere mortuus a lacu abstractus est, et ob hoc ea nocte obiit."—*Acta SS. Julii*, vi, 582.

wall and Armorica were nearer to each other than St. Davids, for example, was to Lichfield. So, when the time was come, St. Samson—not, however, without something like a mutiny on the part of his crew, which he quelled easily enough with the Divine assistance—came back to the island, reaching it, as it is said, the wind being favourable, upon the second day.

On Caldey he finds his father, Amon, and also his uncle, Umbrafel, whom he sends back to Ireland, there to fill the place of an Abbot, from whom he had cast out a devil. But he has convinced himself, and he is probably right, that God is calling him to live a life of more austerity than can be lived amidst his monks. And so he "passes into the silent life." He takes with him his father, Amon, and the aforesaid Abbot, and a brother who was a priest, and, crossing to the main land, goes out into the "wilderness," not far away, however, from the sea. They probably went westwards into the peninsula which lies between the "Severn Sea" and Milford Haven, now called Castle Martin Hundred; and, as it happens, there is still to be seen near Stackpole, at Rock Point, a cave which satisfies the main conditions of the narrative, whilst in the immediate neighbourhood there is a farm, which, for whatever reason, bears the name of Sampson's Farm. But, whether at Stackpole or elsewhere, he found an appropriate place, where, in an enclosure, was a fountain of delicious water; and there he left the three who were with him, left them, if we may dare to parallel the solemn scene within the Garden of Gethsemane, to watch, whilst he went on to pray. For himself he found a cave "whose mouth was towards the east." We all have read of the cave in Shakespeare's *Cymbeline*, six miles from Milford Haven, where the lowness of the roof compelled the old Belarius and the two sons of Cymbeline to stoop and say their morning orisons; and it was in some such cave, at Rock Point or elsewhere, that Samson spent his quiet days, accustomed, it is said, to the discourse of angels, through whom he

commended himself to the Most High. The brethren brought to him one loaf every month, a large one, we may hope, and every Sabbath day he went to commune with them, and they joined together in the breaking of the Holy Bread.

And here at last he had found seclusion and repose. But he could not long be hid. St. Iltyd had apparently retired from Llantwit. The mother-house was in want of an Abbot; and the retreat of Samson having been betrayed to the sacred synod, they came and lovingly compelled him, much against his will, to undertake the duties of Abbot of the 'Monastery founded by St. Germanus.'[1]

It was the custom in the Celtic Church, not only that three Bishops should unite in ordination, but also that three Bishops should be ordained together; and Dubric, coming one day to the "Monastery of St. Germanus,"—Llantwit, as we may presume—brought with him but two candidates for the episcopate, and therefore needs must have a third. Why not St. Samson? Others, however, greater than St. Dubric had preceded the Archbishop, for, as St. Samson waited his arrival, he had seen in a vision three Bishops crowned with golden crowns, who told him that they were Peter the Apostle of Christ, and James, the brother of the Lord, and John the Evangelist. And so St. Dubric, knowing of the vision by the revelation of an angel, doubted much if he might dare to consecrate again a Bishop who had thus been consecrated by the Chief Apostles; his doubts, however, were overruled, the sacred number three being thus completed to the honour of the Holy Trinity. And at this time not only Dubric, Iltyd, and the Deacon, as before, but all who stood by saw the Heavenly Dove, which rested on St. Samson's shoulder; and to St. Dubric and the monks, who, like Sir Galahad or Sir Percival had power to gaze on heavenly things, there seemed to flow from

[1] "Abbatem eum nolentem in monasterium quod ut aiunt a Sancto Germano fuerat constructum constituerunt."—*Acta SS. Julii*, vi, 583.

St. Samson's mouth a stream of fire as he rehearsed the sacred canon of the Mass.

But we are near the end. St. Samson's work was henceforth to be done in Brittany, and not in Wales; and on a certain Easter Eve, when, as his manner was, he had prayed all night before the altar, there stood by him a man in shining raiment, who admonished him to play the man, and to depart out of his native land and from his kinsfolk, and to serve God beyond the seas. Nor was he disobedient to the heavenly vision. He put the matter before St. Dubric, who could not resist the will of God, but, with St. Iltyd, gave to him his blessing. And when he had ended the solemnities of Easter he set sail, and coasted, eastwards as it would appear, along the shore of what is now the Bristol Channel, until he came to a monastery called Docunni, or Dochor;[1] visiting by the way his mother, who was, as we may remember, daughter of the King of Glamorgan.

Arrived at Dochor, he was induced by a certain monk called Winnian to travel on by land, that on his way "he might destroy the works of the devil." And so, by way apparently of Gwent, Morganwg and Demetia, or what is now South Wales, he passes on to the 'Auferrean Sea,' which washes the south-west coast of Pembrokeshire, that, in obedience to the heavenly voice, he may cross to Brittany. And legend gathers thickly round his retreating steps.[2] He overthrows an

[1] Clark, in his *Charters*, Dowlais, 1885, identifies this Dochor, or Docunni, with Llandough, called also Llan Dôch, or Llan-Dôch-Penarth, near Cardiff. To many of the charters in the *Liber Landavensis* we find appended the names of the Abbots of Lancarvan, Llantwit, and Docunni. They were clearly the three leading abbots of the diocese. Docwin, who gave his name to the Abbey of Docunni, was the same as Cyngar of Somerset, son of Geraint, who, after founding Badgworth and Congresbury, returned to Wales, and founded there the Abbey of Llangenys and "Llandoc." (See Capgrave, *Vita Cungari*, and Usher's *Ant.*, pp. 473, 1117, 4th ed.).

[2] These miracles are usually located in Cornwall. If, however, Dochor was Llandough, and it is difficult to resist the identification,

idol, slays a serpent, raises a dead man to life, brings water out of the living rock. And it is said that as he went a company of monks preceded him with psalms and hymns; then came the Saint alone, engaged in constant prayer by night and day, and then another company of monks sang their recessional. These are of course but legends, but they are legends which were written down, unlike most legends of the saints, almost within the lifetime of the holy man, and therefore show to us at least the estimate then entertained of him. Nor are they indeed, in the highest sense, untrue, for they are but the expression in material terms of heavenly things. There were spiritual giants in those days: a Boniface, an Aidan, a Columba, would go forth in prayer, and in their inmost selves alone with God, and kingdom after kingdom would be won for Christ; whilst meaner men would be companions of these master spirits, near to and yet apart from them; and so it was the victories of Christianity were won. But here we end. Of Samson's work in Brittany we may not speak; but here in Wales, at Llantwit, on the Isle of Caldey, and in the Cave at Rock Point or elsewhere, his character was formed; and it is pleasant to remember that, some thirteen centuries ago, there went out from amongst us one whose life indeed was moulded in a very different form from what to-day is possible, or even much to be desired, but who had surely a sevenfold measure of that spirit of self-surrender which is the only force by which great things are done.

the land journey must almost of necessity have been from thence to Pembrokeshire; a journey undertaken possibly with the aid of St. Samson's Irish horses, which we afterwards find in Armorica, and which would have joined him from Llantwit. From Pembrokeshire he would have crossed the "Auferrean Sea" to Padstow, on his way to Brittany.

Suggested Identification of St. Samson's Cave.

On leaving Caldey with his four companions, St. Samson made his way, as his biographer informs us, to a most lonely desert (*vastissimam eremum*).[1] Now, a glance at the map will show that on crossing to the mainland he had two lines of country, and two only, open to him, one towards the north, and the other towards the west. But towards the north he would soon have come to Narberth and the important Abbey of Whitland; whilst on the other hand, towards the west there lies a district, now the Castle Martin Hundred, which has, even at this day, comparatively few inhabitants, and which in St. Samson's time was probably a very lonely desert indeed. It is to the west, then, that we may assume him to have bent his steps. And presently he finds a "fort," and in it a spring of water, near the River Severn, which was the name then borne by the whole of the Bristol Channel, and further on a cave,[2] which is described as being underground and facing to the east, and which is said to be *planissimus* and *secretissimus*. And there soon afterwards he brings to light a pleasant spring, *fons dulcis aquae*.

Now what *planissimus* may mean is doubtful; but all the other conditions of the problem are sufficiently well satisfied by a cave, which is sometimes called "Rock-shelter," and which is to be found near Bosheston, in the immediate neighbourhood of Stackpole Court. It does not face, indeed, directly to the east, but rather somewhat east of south. The biographer, however, was not writing for an Ordnance Survey, and doubtless

[1] Vastissimam eremum (*sic*) adire fecit, ac juxta Abrinum (sc. Sabrinum) flumen castellum admodum delicatum reperiens, atque in eo fontem dulcissimum inveniens, habitaculum suis fratribus in eo facere cogitavit.—*Acta SS. Julii*, vi, 582.

[2] Quodam die silvam perambulans, reperit planissimum atque secretissimum specum, ostiumque ejus ad Orientem situm.—*Acta SS. Julii*, vi, 582.

south-south-east, is near enough. And it is a cave which very properly would be described as "most secluded," and, as Plaine's biographer puts it, "underground" (*sub terra*). It is situated on a tongue of elevated land known as Rock Point; and on another hill which faces it towards the west, but which is separated from it by the Bosheston Mere, are traces of an ancient camp, at a distance from the "Severn Sea" of something over a mile. The country also in the immediate neighbourhood is exceptionally well-watered and well-wooded. The cave and camp are at no great distance from each other as the crow flies, but it requires a very considerable détour to cross the Mere, which lies between them. The cave, which is not a large one, was explored some years ago by Mr. Laws and others, and there were found in it some unburnt human bones, and a portion of the handle of a sword. These objects are now in the Tenby Museum.

A mile to the north of the camp and cave we find "Sampson's Farm," "Sampson's Cross," and "Sampson's Bridge," but no tradition of St. Samson now remains upon the country-side. The farm (*see* Fenton) has been Sampson's Farm for at least one century, and probably for many more. Again, a mile to the north of Sampson's Farm we have St. Petrox Church, which bears the name of St. Petroc, Samson's contemporary. The cave is now both small and low, but the configuration of the ground suggests that it may at one time have been larger. There are in the immediate neighbourhood menhirs and other primitive remains, but they are of no great size or importance.

The Caldey Stone.

It has been suggested that having regard to the close connection of Dubricius (*Dyfrig*) with the island, the Ogam inscription "Mail Dubr" on the well-known Caldey Stone may possibly refer to him, and be taken to mean "The (tonsured) servant of Dubricius."