

AN OLD CIRCUIT LEADER.

Circuit itself, though only abolished in 1830, has so nearly fallen into oblivion that it may be expedient to make some mention of it before introducing its hero.

It was formed of the three Welsh counties of Carmarthen, Cardigan, and Pembroke, and the judges of it had exclusive jurisdiction in all matters both of law and equity arising within those counties. It was usually arranged that the Carmarthen Circuit should not begin till the Oxford had nearly closed; and thus the Oxford Circuit men were enabled to join it. The old Brecon circuit stood on a similar footing, being held before its own Judges for the counties of Brecon, Glamorgan, and Radnor. It was the etiquette of the Bar that silk gowns should not go the Welsh circuits. Nevertheless a very eminent set of counsel used to frequent them. On the Carmarthen Circuit Serjeant Williams was the leader for many years. He was followed by Taunton, afterwards a Judge of the Court of Queen's Bench, and Oldnall Russell, afterwards Chief Justice of Bengal. On the Brecon Circuit, Knight Bruce, afterwards Lord Justice, and Maule, afterwards a Judge of the Common Pleas, were well known for many years. The judges of the old Carmarthen Circuit for nearly a quarter of a century were Serjeant Heywood and Mr. Balguy. They were highly respectable gentlemen, and not without a considerable reputation as lawyers. But they each had the misfortune to be lame, so that, in the lapse of years, the inhabitants got to consider lameness as necessarily incidental to the judicial office, and when at length, on the deaths of these Judges they were succeeded by Mr. N. Clarke, who held the office provisionally during the interval between their decease and the abolition of the Welsh Judicature, a native of Carmarthen was overheard inquiring of a friend whether he had seen the new Judge, and he added, "God bless me, he can *walk* as well as you or I."

The Chief Justice of the Brecon Circuit, for many years, was Mr. Nolan, the King's Counsel, who was eminent for having written a treatise on the Poor Laws, which was, for many years, the standard work on that subject. He dined, during one of his circuits, with Lord Bute, who at the time was entertaining the Duke of Gloucester at Cardiff Castle; His Royal Highness, on learning that the Chief Justice was expected as a guest at dinner, expressed a wish to Lord Bute that he would give him some information about the Judge that he might have something to say to him. Lord Bute said that he knew nothing about Chief Justice Nolan, except that he was the author of a work on the Poor Laws. Accordingly when the Judge was presented to His Royal Highness, the Duke said, with an affable smile, "Oh! my lord, although I have never yet made your acquaintance, I know you well by your valuable book on the poor, and a very charming book it is."

To return to John Jones, the renowned leader of the "Old Carmarthen." He was born at Carmarthen in the year 1777, and very well born both on his father's and his mother's side. He was the only son of Mr. Thomas Jones of Carmarthen, who died in the year 1790, leaving a considerable landed estate to his son, and having appointed for his guardian, his kinsman, Mr. Serjeant Williams, who afterwards became celebrated as the editor of *Saunders's Reports*.

Mr. Serjeant Williams was desirous that his ward should have a first-rate education, and accordingly John Jones was sent to Eton where he remained for some years, and thence he was transferred to Christ Church, Oxford. After quitting Christ Church he proceeded to the Inner Temple, and commenced the study of the law, and shortly after became the pupil of his guardian. But there is reason to believe that he was not a very diligent student of the law. For his cheerful temper and keen enjoyment of intellectual amusements rather led him to the course of life pursued by the Templars in the days of Addison, and he perhaps somewhat answered the description of a "gentleman of wit and pleasure about town."

In 1805, having been called to the Bar, he joined the Oxford Circuit in conjunction with the "Old Carmarthen." As to the Oxford Circuit he neither had, nor desired to have, any business on it. His easy fortune at that time required no addition. But he went regularly to most of the assize towns, enjoying the diversions incidental to a life on circuit, and the society of the agreeable and well-educated companions whom he met with there.

On the Oxford Circuit of that day there was a class of men, which it is to be feared has now ceased to exist, who, like himself, were in opulent circumstances, and went the circuit with no wish to share the emoluments, but merely for its amusements and the pleasant society it afforded. To this class, in John Jones' time, belonged Sir Charles Saxton, Mr. Thompson of Paper Buildings—whose valuable library, enriched by his erudite and accomplished annotations in the margin of his favourite authors, was unfortunately burnt in the fire which commenced in Mr. (afterwards Judge) Maule's chambers. Another member of the same class was Mr. Garland, who used to drive round the circuit in a well-appointed curriole. Those were pleasant days, and John Jones in after years used to narrate very agreeably his recollection of them. But with respect to the "Old Carmarthen," his course was very different. By reason of his family connections he very soon got into business on that circuit, and applied himself to it in earnest. His talents were here speedily recognized, and he continued to rise rapidly till he became in extent of business one of the leaders of the circuit, brilliantly maintaining his position against Taunton and Oldnall Russell in many a hard fought contest. He was not a very learned man, but he had a legal capacity which