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POWYS BROTHERS.

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"From the Same Nest," etc.*

CHAPTER I.

A DISPUTE SETTLED.

THE present century was barely twelve years old when Rachel Powys was left a widow with a large family of boys and girls, and but a small farm on which to rear and support them. Her husband, a man with strong religious convictions, had ruled his family with a firm hand, his wife yielding the same unquestioning obedience he exacted from his children. And so long as he lived did harmony reign under their roof, along with a sufficiency of food and clothing to supply their moderate needs.

But no sooner was he laid in the ground than the different wills and dispositions of her children, especially her elder boys, began to assert themselves, to the destruction of the peace and love she was so anxious to maintain.

At that time Llantyst was but a small fishing village on the western bank of a tidal river. What it had been when the great castle on the bold promontory—washed on contrary sides by two opposing rivers as they debouched into the sea—what it had been when the castle was the stronghold of a powerful Norman baron, history sayeth not. Doubtless then, and long after its conquest by Prince Llewellyn, it was but a collection of rude mud huts, with pointed doorways, thatched roofs, earthen floors, and neither windows nor chimneys, a hole in the middle of the roof serving to

let out the stifling smoke from the fire of gorse or peat, a fire kept in place by a circle of stones, over which the iron or copper pot was slung, gipsy-fashion, on a triplet of sticks.

The dwellers in these doorless and windowless huts, where pigs and poultry were as free as their owners, would be the mere serfs or slaves of the castle's lord, subject to his will, even for life or death. And such as were fishers would brave the waters of river or bay in the ancient British coracle, a boat a man could carry on his own shoulders, just a light frame of wicker-work covered with hide, the shape of half a walnut, having a single seat across, and a single paddle to navigate it. Yet rude as were the huts, and frail as were the fishers' coracles, they held stout-hearted men; and neither had disappeared from Wales when this century was young.

But then, Llantyst Castle was merely a picturesque ruin, a landmark it might be to mariners afloat, an object for artist or tourist to sketch, or antiquaries to cavil over, and the village was of somewhat better order.

Fishermen, no longer slaves to a feudal lord, had their cottages at the entrance of a pleasant vale close under the last cliff of the long ridge following the river line, and well cut of reach of the insweeping tide. They were cottages of one floor, perhaps of one room, with