

GELERT'S GRAVE.

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(From Harper's Young People.)

Those boys and girls who know the ballad of Llewellyn and his dog Gelert may be glad to believe that the story told in this poem is founded on fact. In the very heart of Snowdonia, among the Welsh mountains, the little village of Bethgelert shows not only the grave of the faithful hound, but the stone cottage where Llewellyn lived. 'Gelert's grave,' indeed, is the meaning of Bethgelert, or, as the poet puts it:

'And till great Snowdon's locks grow old,
And cease the storms to brave,
The consecrated spot shall hold
The name of Gelert's grave.'

Prince Llewellyn was a man of note in the time of King John of England. A leader among the Welsh princes, he occupied his Bethgelert house only in the hunting season. One year, while living there with his family, he returned from the chase to meet his hound Gelert running toward him with lips and fangs running blood. Reaching the house, and finding his child missing, and the child's cradle smeared with blood, he turned upon the dog and slew him. When he later discovered the child living and well, he saw that Gelert had really saved him from death by slaying a wolf that had stolen into the house. In remorse for his hasty deed, Llewellyn expressed his sorrow in the loudest terms, and ordered his servants to erect a monument over poor Gelert's grave:

'And now a gallant tomb they raise,
With costly sculpture decked,
And marbles storied with his praise
Poor Gelert's bones protect.'

I fear, however, that when the poet wrote these lines he had not visited Bethgelert. For Gelert's grave, although romantically situated, is decked with no costly sculpture. The gravestone itself is a slender upright rock, standing under a large spreading tree near the centre of a level field. Although undoubtedly placed in its present position by human hands, it is still in its rough state. No chisel has touched it. The grave is enclosed by an iron fence, and during the summer months hundreds of tourists on their way through Snowdonia make a point to visit it.

The village of Bethgelert is in a wide valley, through which run two little rivers, the Colwin and the Glaslyn. Near the middle of the village there is a bridge over the Colwyn, and near one end of the bridge stands Llewellyn's house. Like most Welsh cottages, built of stone, it looks so strong that one can readily believe it to be seven hundred years old. The roof, the windows, and the narrow stairway are probably modern. Ivy covers the front, and the rooms within are small and dark. One of these rooms is fitted up as a shop, and here photographs of the house and grave may be bought, as well as many other souvenirs of Wales.

Some learned people have no faith in the story of Gelert, believing the tale to have been invented to fit the name of the village. Yet as accurate history tells us

that Prince Llewellyn had his hunting-cottage in this valley, the rest of the story is not hard to believe.

Bethgelert itself, with its rivers, its distant mountains, its straggling streets, and tiny stone houses, is one of the most charming places in Wales. It has several hotels, bright little shops, and an ancient church standing where stood an old priory of the time of Edward I. From Bethgelert one can climb Snowdon to its very top in three hours, and on every side there are pleasant walks and drives. During a whole month in Wales it was only at Bethgelert that I saw a woman wearing the national dress—checked gingham gown and apron, long scarlet cloak, and high pointed beaver hat. As she sat by the road-side selling dolls dressed in the same fashion, it is to be feared that she wore this quaint dress only to attract customers.

Although the Welsh people have given up their old dress, they will not give up their old language; the children, to be sure, are taught to read English at school, but as they hear nothing at home but Welsh, even when they understand English they can seldom speak it. At Bethgelert, therefore, as in other parts of North Wales, one hears constantly that strange harsh language.

So writes one of our bright contributors, and it is easy to understand that, after one has travelled to far Snowdon, and looked upon the grave which is shown him as that of the faithful dog Gelert, he finds it difficult to doubt the truth of the sad and beautiful story.

Do people raise monuments to imaginary beings and name places after myths? This is a hard question to answer. All English-speaking children have learned to love this story, and we all like to believe our pet stories to be true. And yet—well, there are some strange things about the story of Gelert. It has a long, far-reaching pedigree, which is very hard to account for in a true story.

Little Russian children have been told the same story of a certain Czar, and German children know it, or stories so nearly like it, that they amount to about the same thing.

One of the German versions is of a dog called Sultan, who, having discovered that his master intended to kill him, asked a wolf to advise him what to do. The wolf, pleased at being consulted, no doubt, proposed that he should himself try to steal one of the children, and that the dog should come and rescue the child, hoping that the master might be so grateful as to spare him. The plan was a success, and saved the dog's life. But this is not nearly so much like the Welsh story as some others which we find in other countries.

In an old book published by some monks about five hundred years ago we find this version of the tale: There was once a young knight called Follicus, who had an only son, whom he loved better than anything else in the world; but he had also two pets of which he was very fond, a greyhound and a falcon.

Now he happened one day to leave home, taking his wife and servants with him to a grand tournament. The little babe was left asleep in his cradle, with the greyhound and falcon on guard beside him. Probably bird and dog both went to sleep, for presently a great serpent, seeing that everything was quiet, crept into the room, and was about to devour the sleeping child, when the falcon made a noise, which attracted the dog, who, realizing the child's danger, made quick work of the snake. The rest of the story is exactly like the tragic story of Gelert.

The father coming in, and seeing the poor wounded dog beside the blood-stained cradle, plunges a sword into him. An examination of the cradle reveals the little one, smiling, unhurt, while the dead body of the serpent lying near explains the whole sad story.

This story of Follicus is found in several

older books than the monk's book of stories—which, indeed, were all translations—and learned scholars have traced it through several tongues until as far back as the early part of the sixth century.

In an old Indian book of this date we find the following story: A mother, going out to the well for water, leaves her twin babies—who, by the way, are a boy and an ichneumon—and when she comes back she finds the ichneumon advancing to meet her, covered with blood. Supposing that he has killed his brother, she throws her water-jar at him, killing him instantly. On going in to the cradle, she finds the babe asleep, with a dead serpent beside him. The faithful ichneumon had loyally defended his brother's life and lost his own, as did the brave dog Gelert, through a misunderstanding of his deed.

The Chinese have a similar story, in which the hero is also an ichneumon. In Arabia a weasel, which is a little animal very much like the ichneumon, takes his place. In Persia a cat becomes the hero. And so the story goes.

In all these stories, excepting the one quoted from the German, which has a strong family resemblance in other respects, an animal or bird loses his life through a misunderstanding of some act of devotion.

And now, to come back to the story of Gelert, if it be true, we find that it has a host of fictitious relations.

However, the gravestone certainly stands in the little enclosure at Bethgelert, and is a very substantial argument on the other side of the question.

TOD'S HALF-DOLLAR.

Tod was curled in a heap on the back kitchen stairs, studying his spelling lesson.

He heard the washerwoman talking to Mary, the cook, but he was too absorbed to hear what they were saying. Gradually Bridget stopped her rubbing, and began to tell Mary how her little sick Nora had lost her one treasure, an old wooden doll, which had accidentally fallen from the window ledge into the cistern and was quite ruined.

Nora's mother had a soft, Irish voice, and when she told how her little one grieved for her lost baby, while she herself could not get her another, having scarcely enough money to pay the rent, a surprised expression crept into Tod's round face. He had been listening several minutes without really intending it.

He closed his speller, and dropping his chin into his hands had a long, still talk with Toddy Benton.

The result was that he walked into mamma's room and asked, soberly, "Mamma, can I spend the fifty cents uncle gave me for anything I want?"

"Certainly, dear."

He slipped quietly behind the curtains in the bay-window and had another argument with Toddy, while mamma, who understood that some sort of a struggle was going on, watched him silently.

At length he remarked, "Well, mamma, I'm going to spend my silver piece right straight away," and crossing to the mantel he slipped the hoarded half-dollar into his pocket.

Then he trudged down town to the doll counter in a large store. The array of dollies confused him a little, but the kind-hearted shop-girl helped him select a blushing, blue-eyed baby with a mop of tight, flaxen curls, for which, after one last glance, Tod parted with his shining silver wheel.

He ran straight home and into the kitchen, where Bridget was pinning on her shawl.

"Here, Bridget," he said, "here's a doll for Nora. I heard what you said about hers, so I bought her this one all myself."

He grew suddenly shy, and ran upstairs to his own room.

Bridget kissed the doll and Tod's seal-skin cap which had fallen on the floor, and finally went home leaving fervent messages of thanks and blessing with Mary.

Mamma kissed Tod tenderly as she tucked him into bed that night.

"I am glad you bought Nora a doll, my boy," she said, smiling down at him.

"Was it hard to give up the knife, Tod?"

"Awful hard, mamma," sighed Tod, wistfully. "I did want that white-handled one."

"But aren't you happier?"

"Yes, I am," he declared, thumping his pillow into a great dent, and nestling his head in it. "Yes, mamma."

And ten minutes later he was having a beautiful dream.—*Youth's Companion.*

THE POOR LITTLE TOE.

BY ELLA WHEELER WILCOX.

'I am all tired out,' said the mouth with a pout;

'I am all tired out with talk.'

'Just wait,' said the knee, 'till you're as lame as you can be,

And then have to walk—walk—walk.'

'My work,' said the hand, 'is the hardest in the land.'

'Nay, mine is harder yet,' said the brain.

'When you toil,' said the eye, 'as steadily as I,

Why, then you'll have reason to complain.'

Then a voice, faint and low, of the poor little toe

Spoke out in the dark with a wail:—

'It is seldom I complain, but you all will bear your pain

With more patience if you hearken to my tale.

I'm the youngest of five, and the others live and thrive.

They are cared for and considered and admired.

I am overlooked and snubbed, I am pushed and rubbed,

I am always sick and ailing, sore and tired,

'Tis I carry all the weight of the body, small and great,

But no one ever praises what I do.

I am always in the way, and 'tis I who have to pay

For the folly and the pride of all of you.'

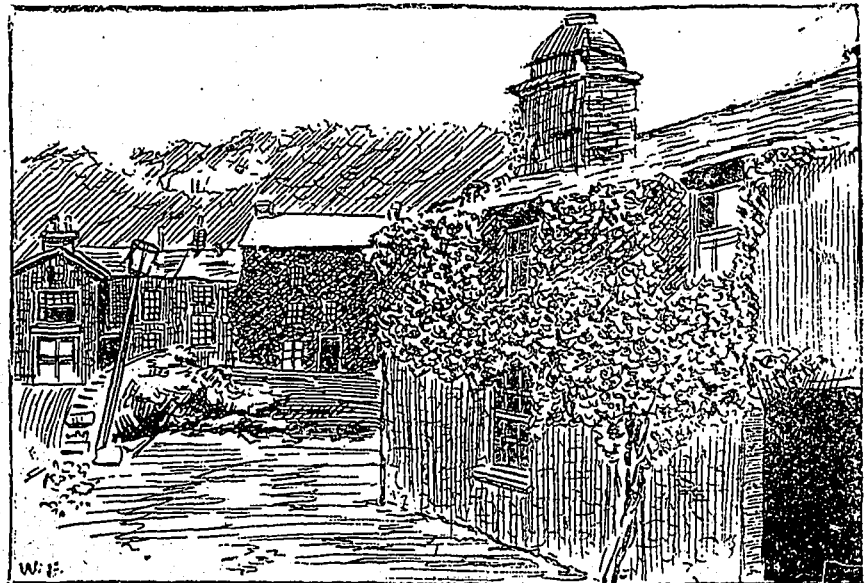
Then the mouth, and the brain, and the hand said:—

'Tis plain,

Though troubled be our lives with woe,
The hardest lot of all does certainly befall

The poor little, humble little toe—

The rubbed little snubbed little toe.'



LLEWELLYN'S HOME.