

THE PIG-TAX.

We were sitting one summer evening in the window of our reading-room at Llanhowell, looking out rather sadly on the scene before us. The coach had just come in from Morvaen, and its passengers were dismounting, and its smoking horses were finding their own ways stablewards, whilst the stable-helpers were busy harnessing in the fresh team; and we looked at this rather sadly, because it was the last day of the old coach. The new station of Llynpenmaen was to be opened on the next day, and the coach was to cease running and be superseded by the railway bus, which was now standing in its brilliant new paint drawn up against the side of the hotel.

"Deed, it will be a fine thing for the town," said the doctor, who was of the party.

"Yes, my boy, indeed it will," cried Lawyer Evans. "I shall do all my business now in London. No use waiting for assizes and circuits now. I shall take you all up to Westminster now, my boys!"

"Devil doubt you," said the captain, making a face. "What! as if you didn't ruin us quick enough the old way! Ah, well, I liked the old times best. You'll be a shabby outskirts of Manchester by and by."

"O, but, captain, consider the motion of the times!" cried Jones Brynbella, who was a manufacturer and a radical; "consider the progress of the intellects."

"Pooh, intellects!" cried the captain contemptuously; "why, you aren't a patch upon what your fathers were. Why, Jones, I've seen your father drink forty glasses of ale, and then cheat a sober man in the bargain."

"Well, yes, he was a wonderful man, my father, wonderful!"

"And there was Lawyer Roberts, who robbed everybody right and left, and lived like a fighting cock for fifteen years; and wasn't found out till after the funeral, when all the parish followed him to the grave. O, don't talk about intellects!"

"Inteed, he was very clever, yes, sure."

"Well, now, and where can you show me a man like Sir John?" Do you remember what Sir John did at the time of the Crimean War?"

"No; inteed, I forgot."

"You'll remember, I daresay, that whilst the war was going on the government put on a shilling income-tax? 'Shilling in the pound?' cried Sir John—'shilling in the pound! Why, that'll be a pound a day out of my pocket. O tam! I can't stand that.' And he came down to the Plas from London, where he'd been attending Parliament, in a very bad temper. The rent-day was on just then, and the tenants' dinner; and at the dinner Sir John made a speech as usual. 'My friends,' he said, 'we are engaged in a tremendous struggle, in a very pig war. We must all put our shoulders to the wheel, for the sake of our Queen and country. If need is, you must rally round your old chief. You should have heard the roar there was, for they were all very fond of Sir John; and indeed his strong ale was something to be remembered. 'But,' he went on, when silence was restored, 'we must all make sacrifices—you, and I, and everybody—I have to make 'em first of all. Do you know what the war costs me, my friends and tenants? I'll tell you—more than a pound a day!—' *Deud anwyll!*' cried all the tenants; 'a pound a day! Think of that, David! Sir John paying a pound a day to the war. Dear me!—' And now, my friends and tenants, it follows that you'll have to make some little sacrifices too," went on Sir John; "but trifling—nothing to what I have to do. My friends and tenants, I've raised your rents five per cent all round. Now shout for your Queen and country, and for your landlords and protectors!"

"And they paid it?"

"Of course they did, and were thankful to get off so cheap. Wasn't Sir John paying a shilling in the pound for the country all the time? O, you're a very loyal race!"

"And so we are, captain, and very fond of Queen Victoria, and we don't mind paying for her too, captain—only what we've paid before: it's the new things we don't like, captain. And what did Sir John do when the war was over?"

"He forgot to take off the five per cent."

"Dear me! that was clever. Yes, I give in to you there, captain; Sir John was a very clever man. But we've got clever men in these days too, captain."

"But we were talking about intellect," said the captain after a pause, during which the coach had driven off, and the square in front of the hotel had resumed its normal quietude. Now, to my mind, as far as intellect went, I never knew anybody to beat old David Gaur of Penllyn."

"O, come, captain, now, that won't do; why, David was half an idiot."

"That may be," said the captain; "I don't say he was clever all round. The finest intellects have a flaw somewhere; but, in his particular way, David was the cleverest man I ever knew."

"But, inteed, what was his way, captain? I never knew him do anything but run about at fairs, and earn a sixpence where he could."

"What! did you never hear of David Gaur and the pig-tax?"

"No, inteed."

"Then you don't know half the traditions of your country. Why, Jones, I, who'm half an Englishman, and have followed the colors half over the world, I'm a better Welshman than

you are. Why, I thought everybody knew all about David Gaur and the pigs."

"Tell it to us, captain; tell us the story."

"You know," said the captain, hemming and stroking his moustache meditatively, "that David had a peculiar gift. How he acquired it, nobody ever knew; it was said he was taught it by old Morris Morris, who lived to be a hundred-and-twenty, and that Morris's father had it from the fairies. But how ever he got it doesn't matter—he had it; and as he never imparted the secret, it died with him. I offered him a sovereign once to show me how he did it, and swore most solemnly I'd keep it a profound secret. But no. I wish I'd bid higher now; it would have been something to fall back upon in one's old age—something that Lawyer Jones couldn't lay his claw upon."

"But what was it, captain? What was the secret he had?"

"It was the art of frightening pigs," said the captain solemnly. "Ah, now don't go away with the idea that that's nothing. I don't mean startling 'em; any fool with an umbrella can cry *Shoo! shoo!* and do that. But what I mean is downright frightening them, infecting their very souls with fear, making them mad, so that they'll jump out of their very skins with terror. Now, you know, they're very imaginative beasts, are pigs, and at the same time they're very cunning. They're not to be taken in; and if you were to make all the horrible noises you could put your tongue to, they'd quietly whisk their tails and cock their eyes, and think you a fool for your pains. But this was how David went to work. You know that Penllyn May fair is a tremendous fair for pigs; they all come from the north side of the county, and must cross the bridge over the Dulas to get there at all; and when they've crossed the river, there's a long straight piece of road, with grass on each side of it, and high stone walls beyond the grass. Well, here it was David would take his stand, or seat rather, for he squatted himself down in the grass; and then he made himself a round hole like a basin, a foot deep, at the side of the road; and there he'd sit from early daylight collecting his tax on the pigs. If there were less than ten, he charged a penny, and so on, a penny for every half score. That was David's tax; and a very good tax-gatherer he made; he wasn't always altering it, shoving it up and pulling it down; but he put on a reasonable figure, and stuck to it."

"But suppose the people wouldn't pay it?"

"That was just what they made up their minds to, one fair-day. The principal pig proprietors held a meeting on Llanfer Green, and came to a resolution that they wouldn't pay David Gaur any more. You see, his reputation was traditional only; they'd none of them seen his powers exercised; and these modern views of yours, Jones, had got into their heads, I suppose. Anyhow, they came to the resolution, and stuck to it, with fear and trembling. Everybody remarked how beautifully the pigs marched that day from Llanfer Green. There was a good body of them together, and you'd have expected they'd have given some trouble; but no, they walked as orderly as so many Christians, as if they'd made up their minds to show how pigs could behave for once. Well, the bridge was crossed, and the advanced guard of pigs came in front of David's redoubt—the hole he'd dug in the ground. David held out his hat as usual for the toll. The master of the pigs shook his head. *'Dim tatty!'* No pay to-day for pig. David understood the thing in a moment, saw through the plan of the revolt. Down went his head into the hole. Gentlemen, it's impossible to describe a noise. If you can imagine the most diabolical din in nature, and then make it twice as bad, you'll have a faint idea of the roar that came out of the hole in the ground."

"Where were the pigs? You must imagine a whirlwind of pigs, a simoon of pigs, a tornado of pigs! Little pigs, big pigs, blue pigs, white pigs, flying about like sky-rockets in every direction. They flew over the stone walls, they dashed over the parapet of the bridge; away they went—away east, west, north, south. In a few moments the country about for miles was spotted with flying pigs. And their masters, David and Morris, and Richard and John, and all the rest of them, where were they? Flying, too, across the country; bursting out their best trousers, barking their shins, and spoiling their gaiters over the stone walls. And what was the use of it? Did you ever try to catch a couple of hundred mad pigs careering across country? The fair was pretty near a failure, I can tell you; only the few people who'd stopped behind, and paid David his toll, and brought their pigs in quietly, they had the pick of the buyers; and through there being so few pigs in the market, they got pretty high what prices they liked."

"And then the poor fellows who'd lost their pigs came to David, and begged and besought him, with tears in their eyes, to call the piggies back again; and gave him double toll to do it. But I fancy he wasn't as successful at that as he'd been at sending them adrift. Anyhow, after that, he always got his taxes paid in peace and quietness."

"Ah, don't tell me," said the captain, getting up and putting on his hat, "of your railroads and nonsense. Where will you find another chap like David Gaur?"

A GLIMPSE AT GREYNA GREEN.

As Greyna Green is but thirteen miles from Carlisle, a recent morning of leisure at the "merry" town offered a fair opportunity for a visit to its neighboring village of matrimonial celebrity. On alighting at Greyna station, five minutes' walk brings the visitor to the little border river Sark, which gives rise to the fame of the locality. Two bridges cross it within a quarter of a mile; and these, in olden days, were the strongholds of their respective "priests." Once safely over either of these, runaway couples could be speedily united, by simple exchange of troth and consent, according to the spirit of the law of Scotland. Taking the road to the left, we soon arrived at the toll-bar, which every one has heard of. It is called Allison Bank; and there a man of the name of Morier was hierophant. The business of Allison Bank, however, seems to have died out; so we walked a mile onwards to its more celebrated rival, Lang, at Spring Field.

An old crone directed us to Lang's cottage, and took the opportunity to discourse on the faded splendor of the place. "I mind the time well when there was be two post-chaises tearing oop together, w' gentlemen shouting frae the windows, and the drivers lashing their horses like mad, and the first uns wad jist leap oot and rin into the hotel or to the priest's, and be made man and wife or iver the others could coom at 'em! Ay, them was the days! Plenty of guineas and plenty of drink for every one," &c., &c. We walked down the centre of the village, but no one showed any curiosity at the strangers. "Why should they?" said Lang to us afterwards; "fathers, mothers, and a' have seen many weddings i' their time." Evidently weddings were the be-all and end-all of Spring Field. Having seen plenty of them, what more could the most active curiosity find in the universe?

The priest's door was opened by a little sharp-eyed, keen-looking man in shirt-sleeves, with a slightly suspicious manner. We had no ladies with us, and might be detectives, lawyers, or, still worse, lawyers' clerks, coming to bother him. Having done our best to disarm his fears, he somewhat reluctantly admitted us to a plain North-country kitchen, cumbered with a large oak cupboard on one side. We could not help being a little disappointed. There was nothing imposing here—no sign of awe, no token that despairing lovers could here, as by magic, be made happy for ever in a trice. The Temple of Mystery was after all something like a Freemason's secret. It had nothing in it. We, too, were somewhat disconcerted on our side when the priest asked our business. It was really as landlouping "chiefs makin' notes" that we had come. After a moment's hesitation, one of us, putting a bold face on it, declared "we had come to be married." Imperturbable and "canny," not to say matter-of-fact to the last degree, was the priest. He answered gravely—thereby showing us we were, though only just over the Sark, actually amongst the people who require a surgical operation to understand a joke—"Ay, but ye maun hae twa wimmen!" Nor was he much reassured at our laughter, or at hearing that we had already wives and children.

On our informing him that we had come in order to see his celebrated marriage registers, the canny Scot put on a business-like face. "There's naething done here without payment," he said. This little difficulty having also been satisfactorily adjusted, he produced from the afore-mentioned cupboard three square memorandum-books about half an inch in thickness, much thumbed and blotted, and with many scraps of paper sticking out of them or pinned in. These he placed on the table, and suffered us to inspect. The scraps were "marriage lines," some of which seemed to have been entered, others to have been preserved as evidence of marriage without the formality of entering having been gone through. Nothing struck us so much as the air of irregularity and carelessness which these books wore. Book A was confessedly neither regularly kept nor indexed, though there was an imperfect attempt at an index. This book commenced in 1771. The second and third books, it was avowed, were regularly kept, beginning from 1829 or 1830 to the date when we saw them. It was curious to turn over these yellow time-worn pages, and reflect what a romance slept in each entry; with what anxious persuasions and maidenly apprehensions many a fair and wealthy lady had at length consented to resort to the "priest's" services, whereof the record lay before us; what flutterings of heart hovered round each page; what passion and devotion, long since burned out and laid in ashes, flickered round these prosaic books! The entries were all made by the priest, and were of the briefest and most business-like character. On such a day and year, A. B. of such a place, in such an English county, married C. D. of this and that. A great element of romance, indeed, in English register-books of marriage was here wholly wanting—the principals never signed; the whole affair took the form of a short memorandum by the priest. Many a marriage was never entered, and many were the tales of rewards which made his mouth water, offered by parties for copies of supposed entries, but which could never be found, told us by Lang. Often and often had detectives, lawyers, and eyes rendered keen with anticipations of property searched these musty paper books (they were not even composed of parchment), only to be disappointed. We slowly turned over page after page, and almost every entry contained names famous in the different English county histories. Lords and honorables were far from uncommon. The gem of the collection, how-

ever, in the "priest's" eyes was the entry of Lord Erskine's marriage. This, he informed us, the Lord Chancellor had condescended to enter in his own handwriting. It was as brief as the rest, telling that Lord Erskine had on such a day married Sarah Buck; witnesses Elizabeth Johnston, John Johnston, of the Queen's Head, next door. To our critical eyes, however, the priest's story seemed improbable. The entry immediately before it was in precisely the same handwriting, and the word "John" had been altered, without any notification to that effect, from "Jno. Johnston," which it had originally been. Tradition told that Lord Erskine had driven up with the lady and five children of his first wife's, and had paid a fee of £30.

This led us to talk of fees. In old days they were supposed to vary with the station and wealth of the parties. Fifty pounds was a common fee, according to Mr. Lang. Even at present the lowest terms for making a couple happy are 12s. 6d. Payment is made when the rite is three parts concluded. Is this an imitation of the English-church rubric, or a needful security lest the pair should be less accessible to generous motives when the knot is once fairly tied? Very little ceremony is observed; the parties join hands and make a verbal declaration to each other, and the marriage knot is tied, only to be undone by death or—the Divorce Court. It used to be a common practice to go through the formula, in order to avoid notice, on one or other of the bridges over the Sark instead of at the priest's house. Mr. Lang informed us he had often so officiated.

Though the old runaway matches from England are now illegal, a fair business in the matrimonial line seems to be done with lovers of the neighborhood. "We ask no questions," said Mr. Lang; "simply caution all comers and throw the responsibility of their act on themselves." In his own words, "I marry all kinds; lame, dumb, maimed, even wooden legs—all come." All natives of Scotland, without residence, and by mere affirmation and consent, can be married at once. An English man can also marry a Scotch woman at once. All others must reside twenty-one days in the parish. Entries appear now to be regularly kept, and for the most part farm-servants and country folk seemed to be those who availed themselves most largely of Mr. Lang's services. We took the exact statistics of the last three years from his register, with the following results: In 1870, there were 57 marriages; in 1871, 49; and in 1872 up to September 28, 32; so that it is possible to earn a fair livelihood in the position of priest. These registers have often been produced in court, and held legal evidence. Many were the curious stories we heard from Mr. Lang bearing on this point. Recently, he told us, one A. B., as we will call her, a widow, but who used her maiden name at this marriage, was united by him to her coachman; to use his own words—"I saw her hand shake, and said, 'Are you not doing something wrong?' She looked up sarcastically, and asked, 'Are you a bachelor?' Then I said nothing more, and married them." Again, he mentioned the case of a farmer, worth £30,000, who was by his services united to his servant. His mother, being naturally indignant, spent £100 trying to upset the marriage, and the case was tried at Edinburgh before Lord Jerviswood, the registers and Lang himself appearing against her. She lost her cause, Mr. Lang triumphantly informed us, for he produced seventeen witnesses to prove that the farmer was perfectly sober at the time the contract was entered into before him.

Such is Greyna Green at present. Its future may be briefly sketched without much need of prophecy. When the marriage laws of the United Kingdom are codified, the Greyna use will be assimilated to the general rule; and but too probably Lang will find his vocation gone. He is a phlegmatic individual, however, and only shrugged his shoulders and smiled when we informed him of his fate, and asked how he would like disestablishment. Probably he consoled himself by the thought that his calling would last his time; and it may be hoped for his sake that it will, as it is not very likely that Government would allow him a compensation. So much has been written on the past glories of Greyna—those palmy days when the crop of heiresses seemed as thick as blackberries, and guineas flew about for priest, witnesses, innkeepers, postboys, and well-wishers, like snowflakes on an April day—that it is only needful here to add a few words on the commencement of Greyna Green marriages.

When the infamous system of Fleet marriages in London was stopped in 1754, the current of runaway and clandestine marriages turned to Greyna. The traffic had indeed begun there about 1733; but now it assumed much larger proportions, from the ease with which the Scotch marriage law lent itself to hasty marriages. A man named Scott opened a place at Greyna, for uniting runaway couples, in 1755, and was accounted a sharp practitioner. It is on record that his rival, one Gordon, an old soldier, invariably married couples dressed in complete military costume, generally wearing a ponderous sword dangling by his side. Even in comparatively late years Lang has had his competitors. Thus in a recent report of a trial in the Probate Court at Westminster, the following evidence was given: "Thomas Blythe stated that in May, 1853, he was living at Spring Field, Greyna Green, in Scotland. Witness was in the agricultural line, but did a small stroke of business in the 'joining' line as well." Our friend Lang, however, can claim supremacy by prescription. His grandfather David was priest in his day; and was succeeded by Simon, who died in April, 1872. From the son's account of

NANTASKET SPONGE CAKE:—6 eggs, beaten together; 3 cups white sugar, beat the eggs and sugar 5 minutes; 5 cups flour, with 2 teaspoons cream tartar, beat 2 minutes; a cup of water with 1 teaspoon soda, beat 1 minute; 2 cups more of flour, 1 teaspoon essence lemon.