

UNDER THE ENGLISH CROWN

century had become simply a political machine ; it had never possessed, at any rate in Wales, the least spiritual vitality.

Taken as a whole, one can say, therefore, that during the first half of the eighteenth century the population of Wales was the most primitive in the kingdom. It seemed like a body in which the soul was dead, and which continued to exist merely through the force of mechanical habit. What had become of the heroic spirit which for ten centuries had made such brave struggles ? The climax was near—a climax which it is only reasonable to expect would have proved a dire calamity. It was, however, to show itself the absolutely unexpected. Persecuted and exhausted, the soul of Wales was spent. To save itself, it crept back into the secret recesses of the national character, and in an impassivity which had every appearance of death waited for the awakening which was to be at the same time a complete resurrection.