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 ETYMOLOGY.

 ABER—CYMMERAU—ABERTH—ANVERTH—
 CUALL, &c.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE CAMBRO-BRITON.

MR. EDITOR,—Whenever I have the opportunity of travelling in the Principality, I derive great pleasure from observing the different dialects of the Welsh language, and also from noting down, in a common place-book, any peculiar expression I may chance to hear in going through the several counties. In my tour, which I make once or twice a-year, I meet generally with pleasant and intelligent companions, who feel great pleasure in conversing on the old Cymraeg, or, in giving me some account of old castles, ghosts, &c. I shall, therefore, with your permission, give a short narrative of what past between a learned friend and myself in going from Carmarthen on a visit to Cardiganshire.

We went on for several miles before we could fix on a subject for discussion, till, at last, the different names of places, as we passed along, afforded us some amusement, and gave rise to a long conversation on etymology. The first word, that suggested itself to us, was ABER, as *Aber Gwili*, &c. &c., which we derived from A, affirmative, and BER, a leg, a branch, which exactly agrees with Mr. Owen Pughe's definition of the word. For instance, ABER he explains as a confluence of water, the junction of rivers, the fall of a lesser river into a greater, or into the sea. See his Dictionary, under the word ABER. He derives the word, however, from AB. *Mi a dorav dy* VERAU,—I will break thy legs,—is a common expression*.

* We are far from thinking our correspondent's etymology as decisive as he conceives it to be. The prefix A, we believe, when used in an affirmative or augmentative sense, generally causes the first letter, if a labial, of the following syllable to assume its soft mutation, as in the words *avan* (*a-ban*), *avar* (*a-bar*), *avall* (*a-ball*), *avach* (*a-mach*), *avaddgu* (*a-maddgu*), *avaeth* (*a-maeth*), *aball* (*a-pall*), *abo* (*a-po*), *abwy* (*a-pwy*).—There are, indeed, instances of the contrary, as *abwysg* (*a-brwysg*), *abwyd* (*a-bwyd*), *abraidd* (*a-braidd*), in which the aspirate sound is assumed; but these are so rare with respect to the labial radicals, that they may be regarded as exceptions rather than as coming within the general rule. Indeed it appears to be the letter B only, of the three we have

Having settled this point, we arrived at a place called *Cymmerau*, which we also derived from CYD together, and BER. *Cymmer* signifies "a junction, a confluence." Mr. O. Pughe derives the word from CYD and MER*.

Thus we went on jogging and etymologizing all the way, till we arrived at a small village in Cardiganshire, where we met with an old patriarch, who had been keeping a classical school there for the last sixty years, and, after communicating to him the result of our labour, the following words came on the carpet, viz. *aberth*, *anverth*, *cuall*, &c.

Aberth, a sacrifice, we derived from A, aff; and BERTH,

above adduced, that admits of these exceptions; for we can, at this moment, think of no compounds, wherein M or P are so affected by the augmentative prefix A, as to adopt the aspirate mutation. *Afan* and *afwys* may, indeed, be regarded by some as of this nature; but they appear to us exceedingly doubtful, as we cannot discover any reasonable analogy between these words and their presumed roots, *pan* and *pwys*, especially in the augmentative sense of which we are speaking. Nor is it to the labial letters only that this peculiarity of taking the *soft* sound after the affirmative A is confined: the dental letters, D and T, almost invariably adopt it, as in the words *addysg* (*a-dysg*), *adrev* (*a-trev*). The rule with the palatal letters, we admit, is different, and especially with the letter C, which, we believe, with two exceptions only (*agalen* and *agaws*), is always aspirated after the augmentative A. Now, the result of all this seems to be, as it affects our correspondent's etymology, that it is not founded on a general principle, but that the word, as he derives it, ought rather to have been *acer* than *aber*; and we must add, that we cannot discover the applicability of a *leg* to a *conflux*, which is the received meaning of *aber*. We are, therefore, rather disposed to consider the word, with Mr. Owen Pughe in his Grammar, as one of a primitive character, not now resolvable into its component parts. A writer in the first volume of the Cambrian Register, p. 240, in an "Account of the Parish of Fishguard," derives it, rather idly, from the Latin *aperio*; but it is unnecessary to dwell on the absurdity of this etymology. The word, be its origin what it may, is of great antiquity, and purely Welsh, as is to be proved by the names of so many places in Scotland, beginning with *Aber*, while the word is not to be found in the Gaelic or Irish tongues.—Ed.

* If our correspondent wished to make BER the radix of *cymmerau*, he should not have joined it with CYD, which would make the word *cydeerau*, as might be proved by abundance of instances, if it were not obvious from the general principle of the language. CYM and BER, indeed, would form *cymmerau*, and this, we presume, would answer our correspondent's purpose as well, CYM and CYD being synonymous prefixes. However, from what we have observed in the preceding note, it may be supposed that we cannot assent to the adoption of BER in this etymology. We should rather agree with Mr. Owen Pughe, (who, by the bye, says nothing of CYD, as above stated by our correspondent) that the word is de-

beautiful; pleasing, or acceptable*. *Anverth*, ugly, from AN, not, and BERTH, beautiful†. *Cuall*—this word baffled our etymological efforts, though in common use in and about Llwyn-rydowen. It is used there in the same sense as *angall*. When I requested the old patriarch to derive the word, he, being a poet, thus expressed himself—

“*Cuall yw deall y dyn—*”

pointing to a *stupid*, but conceited, man that was close by. “*Garw mor guall yw y dyn*”—See how stupid, or dull, the man is.

rived from MER, which there is good reason for presuming, had, originally, the general sense of water. Hence such words as *goter* (*go-mer*), a small brook, *merlys* (*mer-llys*), a water-plant, and *merllyd* (*mer-llyd*), abounding with water, as used by Aneurin, who says—

“*Mis Tachwedd moch mehinawr,
Llyvyn mor, merllyd pob callawr.*”

In the month of November the swine are fat,
Smooth is the ocean, and every cauldron is full of water.

The French, it is known, employ this very word, MER, to denote the sea, and it is not at all improbable, that the English *mere* may be traced to the same source. The Latin *mare* too, as formed of the cognate vowel, has a nearer affinity with MER than with *mor*, the Welsh word for sea. And it would not be too much, perhaps, to trace a resemblance in the Hebrew and Arabic word, *mar*, which signifies a dropping or effusion, as does *meris* in Welsh; and hence *diveru*, in our language, and *divera*, in Armoric, both signify to distil. Such are our grounds for believing, that *cymmerau* must be derived from MER, with the prefix CYM, and not from BER, meaning, as it does, a conflux of waters, and not a junction of legs or arms. In a word, we think, our worthy correspondent, on reconsidering these two etymologies, will find that he has “not a leg to stand upon.”—ED.

* For the reasons, assigned in the first note, we cannot concur in this etymology; since we think, that the word, thus composed, would be, more properly, *averth*. And, where does our correspondent find “acceptable” as the sense of *berth*? We fear it is one adopted for the occasion; and, without it, the proposed derivation has little or no allusion to a sacrifice. Nor, on the other hand, can we, at this moment, see the propriety of *a-perth*, adopted by Mr. Owen Pughe, though, from the general analogy of the language, we conceive that to be the true etymology. Dr. Davies, without any apparent reason, derives the word from the Hebrew *zebach*. We take this opportunity of remarking, that the prefix, A, has a *privative*, as well as an *augmentative*, power in the formation of words; as, for instance, in *avrys*, slow, from *a-brys*, and *atarn*, a denial of justice, from *a-barn*. Yet, strange to say, none of our dictionaries notice this quality.—ED.

† We are not aware that this etymology was ever doubted. It may be found, at least, in Mr. Owen Pughe’s Dictionary.—ED.

Dr. Davies, in his Dictionary, under the word *cuell* or *cuall*, has the following couplet:—

“ Cyllell hir *cuall* a llem
“ Callestrvin, holldrin, hylldrem.” Iolo.

The Doctor confesses himself ignorant of the meaning of *cuell*. After reading the lines to our worthy host, the patriarch, he gave us the following anecdote in explanation of it. “ There was,” said he, “ a noted *bully* in Carmarthen some time ago, who used to say in Welsh—“ Am ddyd, nid oes arnav ovd dyn yn y byd, ond, am *fwled*, mae arnav ovd hono, canys *dwl* yw y *fwled*, ni waeth ganddi yn y byd i ba le yr eif.” So, “ cyllell hir *cuell* a llem” may signify “ a long sharp knife that will go in any direction it is guided—being, as it were, blind *.”

Lest I should appear tedious, I shall close this letter with another remark of the old gentleman, which is, that the compounds of *facio* are Welsh, e. g. *perficere*, perfaith; *efficere*, efaith; *deficere*, difaith.

Your's, &c.

J. J.

Oxon.

WELSH MUSIC.—No. XV.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE CAMBRO-BRITON.

SIR,—“ Gogerddan ” is a most beautiful air, truly Welsh, and highly characteristic. It has its name from a mansion in the neighbourhood of Llanbadarn, in Cardiganshire, which was the residence of the famous bard Rhydderch ab Ieuan Llwyd, about the year 1394, (vide Jones, vol. i. p. 127.)

“ Mwynen Cynwyd,”—*The Melody of Cynwyd*.—This tune might pass very well for an Irish air: it has all the character of that country, and, if I mistake not, Mr. Moore has written words to it in a slightly altered manner.

* It appears to us, that our correspondent's “ patriarchal ” friend took a vast deal of pains to prove what nobody ever disputed—that *cuall* means a stupid dolt, or an idiot, particularly in South Wales. Of the etymology, however, we are unable at present to form any opinion. Mr. Owen Pughe derives it from *cu-all*, and gives it the sense of “ a stranger at home,” in addition to the one above noticed.—ED.