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CARDIGANSHIRE POLITICS :

THE LIBERAL ASCENDANCY, 1885—1923*

‘ THERE is a spirit of vassalage among the tillers of the soil, begotten by the tyranny of the past. The shadows of the oppression and evictions of 1868 have not lifted from among the people.’¹ This evidence, given before the Welsh Land Commissioners at Aberaeron in April 1894, evokes the spirit of the modern phase of Cardiganshire politics—the politics of nostalgia. It found a fitting spokesman in 1894—John Morgan Howell, ironmonger, of Portland House, Aberaeron ; alderman on the new county council (and soon to be its chairman for 1895-6) ; prominent Calvinistic Methodist and Oddfellow ; and, above all, active Liberal politician. Howell and many others like him were the residuary legatees of this political nostalgia that characterised their native county. They had come to form a new ruling élite, progressive in political ideals, yet essentially drawing on the memories of the *gorthrymedigion*, the martyrs of Liberalism evicted for having voted according to their convictions at the great election of 1868. For men like Howell, indeed (he was born in 1855), the events of 1868 constituted the dominant impression of their formative years. It was memories such as these, kept vivid by the oral tradition of the countryside, which served to make Cardiganshire subsequently the most impregnable of all Liberal strongholds in Wales. In 1909, in one of those truisms that only he could make arresting, Lloyd George declared that if all constituencies were like Cardiganshire, there would not be a single Tory surviving on the Opposition benches in the House of Commons.²

*This article is based on a lecture given to the Cardiganshire Antiquarian Society on 1 April 1967. The author is grateful to many people who were most helpful in helping him to uncover material on this topic, in particular Mr. B. G. Owens of the National Library of Wales ; Dr. J. F. A. Mason of Christ Church Library, Oxford ; Mr. A. J. P. Taylor and the staff of the Beaverbrook Library ; Mr. S. G. Chapman, secretary of the Cardiganshire Liberal Association ; Mr. David Howell of the London School of Economics ; Mrs. Hasiett of Aberystwyth ; and, above all others, his father, Mr. D. J. Morgan.

At first sight, Cardiganshire politics in this period appear uneventful, featureless, as placid and unchanging as the beautiful Cardiganshire countryside. The county produced no major political figure, none with the charismatic appeal of an Ellis, a Lloyd George, or a Keir Hardie. Its life went on undisturbed by any profound clash of ideologies, or by conflict between capital and labour. Its parliamentary representation seemed to follow an inexorable and pre-determined course. The county seat went Liberal at the election of 1880, and the Liberals easily maintained their ascendancy for the next three generations, until final defeat at the hands of Labour in 1966. And yet this appearance of outward calm is utterly deceptive. On two crucial occasions, first in the years 1885-6, and again, a generation later, in 1921-3, Cardiganshire was the scene of intensely bitter political controversy, a battle-ground for the Liberal conscience and the Liberal soul. During these periods of crisis, the politics of the county were marked not by consensus but by conflict. The causes for this are profound, and extend far into the social fabric of the county. For there are important reasons why these conflicts should have taken place at those precise occasions, and why Cardiganshire, rather than other counties in rural Wales, should have been the arena in which they were fought out to the end.

These two periods of crisis, indeed, provide the focal points of the political history of Cardiganshire, in its modern, democratic phase. They implied separately, and in conjunction, an upheaval even more momentous and sweeping than the 'cracking of the ice'³ that was heralded by the election of 1868 and the evictions that followed. These two crises, in 1885-6 and 1921-3, have, indeed, many points of resemblance. Both were essentially civil wars between rival Liberal factions. Both were dominated by an overpowering national personality—Gladstone in 1885, Lloyd George in 1921. Both essentially posed the conflict between prescription and patronage on the one hand and local independence on the other. Taken together, these two crises lend to Cardiganshire politics in the period a unity all its own. In 1885-6, the character of the Liberal ascendancy in the county was firmly established. In 1921-3, its values were re-defined. As a result of that later re-appraisal, Liberalism in Cardiganshire gained a new vitality which enabled it to prosper for almost half a century more. At a time when, in rural and industrial areas alike, observers detected irrefutable evidence of 'the strange death of Liberal Wales', these crises, and the new energy that was released by them, were to give the Liberal ascendancy in Cardiganshire a life and a momentum of its own.

* * * *

In the early 1880s, the political structure of Cardiganshire was being transformed by a dynamism and an excitement that had not been known for centuries. The immediate cause of this lay in the effects of the process of franchise reform. The Reform Act of 1867, concerned mainly with extending household suffrage in the boroughs, had had only a relatively modest effect on a rural county such as Cardiganshire.⁴ However, Gladstone's new Reform Act in 1884, together with the Redistribution Act passed a year later, introduced a radically different kind of politics into the county. The 1884 Reform Act added between five and six thousand new voters to the register by extending household suffrage to the counties. There is not much doubt who these new voters were : tenant farmers, some more substantial agricultural labourers, householders in small towns such as Tregaron, Aberaeron, Tal-y-bont, or Borth, which had not been part of the old Cardigan Boroughs constituency. Equally crucial was the Redistribution Act of 1885. It abolished the Boroughs seat and merged the four contributory boroughs, Aberystwyth, Cardigan, Lampeter, and Adpar, with over 2,500 voters, into the county division.⁵ Thus the more static politics of the county were injected with the more complex tensions and the more radical passions of urban voters. The joint effect of these two measures was that Cardiganshire's registered electorate rose from 5,026 in 1883 to 12,308 by 1886, an increase of almost 150 per cent.⁶

Even in such a socially static county as Cardiganshire had been, this revolution in the location of political power could not fail to have a dramatic effect. It meant, first of all, a much larger electorate, more geographically dispersed and harder to control. Indeed, there had been complaints by Morgan Lloyd (Liberal, Beaumaris District), while the Reform Bill was before the Commons, that the Cardiganshire electorate was now too large, and that, with only one member representing 73,000 people, the county was the victim of unfair discrimination.⁷ The average for Welsh county seats as a whole, indeed, was one member per 58,000 people.⁸ The electorate was not only larger, it was also far more secure. It was protected, not only by the secret ballot (which had been on the statute book since 1872) but by the Corrupt Practices Act of 1883. In many ways, this was a measure of even greater significance, with its drastic limits upon campaign expenditure and more effective curbs upon bribery.⁹ As a result, Cardiganshire passed quite suddenly from the politics of deference to the politics of democracy, with consequences that were to determine almost every facet of its future development. Even in 1868, Cardiganshire politics had been essentially deferential in tone. Evan Matthew Richards, the victorious Liberal candidate in the county seat, had owed his return in

large measure to the patronage of the Pryses of Gogerddan.¹⁰ In the Boroughs, the member returned here was Sir Thomas Lloyd of Bronwydd, a Whig landowner, who owned over 2,000 acres in the county and over 5,700 in neighbouring counties.¹¹ Such inroads as democracy made in 1868 seemed to be transient ones. Cardiganshire politics were still, in the vivid phrases of Henry Richard, 'feudal' politics, a system in which 'clansmen struggled for their chieftains'.¹² In the next general election, that of 1874, the Tory squirearchy was powerful enough to exact revenge for the defeat of 1868. Pressure was widespread, and E. M. Richards met defeat at the hands of T. E. Lloyd of Coedmore, the last Conservative returned for the county. But the franchise reforms of 1884-5 totally transformed this pattern. Henceforth, the old style of politics, based on the subtle permeations of 'influence' and 'interest', and on implicit Burkeian assumptions about the organic unity of rural society, would be unrecognisable. Seldom would anything resembling them ever be seen again.

The political upheavals of Cardiganshire in the 1880s had their roots, however, in forces more profound even than the legislative enactment of electoral reform, important though that was. In a far wider context, they reflected the economic depression that deeply affected every segment of society. In the early 1880s, Cardiganshire, like every other county in rural Wales, was in the grip of a prolonged recession. This was intensified by the collapse in the price of foodstuffs that afflicted the farming community from 1879 onwards as the effects of American and Russian competition came to be felt. But its roots really went far deeper. Indeed, in some respects, the impact of the agricultural depression on such a county as Cardiganshire can be exaggerated. Stock and dairy farmers in the Welsh hills suffered far less from foreign imports than did wheat-growing farmers in the south and east of England. In some ways, pastoral farmers even benefitted from the depression, for instance in the fall in the price of animal feeding stuffs, which reduced production costs. The economic decline of Cardiganshire was far more deep-seated in origin than a mere down-turn in the level of prices.¹³

The most obvious index of this decline was to be seen in mass emigration from the county; even in the 1880s rural depopulation was already the most fundamental of all the social and economic problems confronting Cardiganshire, and mid-Wales in general. Between 1881 and 1891, the registration county of Cardiganshire showed a fall in its population of 9.2 per cent. Only Montgomeryshire of all the Welsh counties showed a more sweeping decline in that decade.¹⁴ Indeed, over a much longer time-span, the population of Cardiganshire fell persistently, from over 73,000 in 1871 to only 59,000 in 1911. This

process continued, more gradually, after the First World War, with the result that in 1967 there were 20,000 fewer people living in this county than there had been a hundred years earlier. A steady stream of emigration more than nullified the spectacularly high rate of natural increase. The reasons for this are transparently clear. There was little enough to retain able-bodied young men in the county, especially at a time of economic boom elsewhere. Old hopes, kindled anew by the election of E. M. Richards, a Swansea industrialist, in 1868, that Cardiganshire's destiny lay in an expansion of its industry, had by the 1880s been proved to be hopelessly illusory. In the face of powerful competition elsewhere, and a sharp decline in the price of lead, those small communities set up to extract the lead and silver ores from the hills of the southern and eastern fringes of the county were in rapid decay. Overcapitalisation in company mining and inefficient management practices accelerated this decline. The 1881 census recorded only 1,824 leadminers, male and female, in the county ; a decade later, the total had fallen to a mere 781, and communities such as Ysbyty Ystwyth were on the way to becoming ghost villages.¹⁵ The election of a mining agent, Captain Brown, to represent Cwm-rheidol on the new county council in 1889 was only a faint echo of the glowing hopes of industrial prosperity that had so recently been entertained. Mining and manufacturing industry, therefore, figures only in a minor way in the occupational statistics recorded in the census returns of these years. A more revealing fact shown in the 1881 census was that 489 blacksmiths were resident in Cardiganshire—one being a woman (and another the present writer's great-grandfather). Cardiganshire in the 1880s may hardly have witnessed a halcyon period for mortal man, but, as Dr. Richard Phillips recently reminded the members of the Antiquarian Society, it was indeed 'the golden age of the horse'.¹⁶

Given the collapse of leadmining and other industry, the great mass of the population was, of course, engaged directly or indirectly in the pursuit of agriculture. Indeed, with almost 20 per cent of its adult population engaged directly on the land, as farmers or as labourers, Cardiganshire had in 1891 the fifth highest proportion in England and Wales.¹⁷ Furthermore, it was agriculture of a notoriously precarious kind. The most numerous class in the social hierarchy consisted of those small tenant farmers whose holdings ranged in size between one and a hundred acres ; Bateman recorded over 1,500 of them in 1883, farming 61,290 acres between them.¹⁸ This precarious and depressed class was the subject of immense economic pressures in the 1880s. In part, this was the chain-reaction released by the agricultural depression, which led to the vacation of many holdings in the marginal uplands areas. More crucial, though, was the powerful counter-attraction of the

expanding coalfield of South Wales, where the mines of the Rhondda and elsewhere were approaching their peak in the production of sale-coal. This inspired a vast emigration from counties like Cardiganshire, especially of agricultural labourers of whom there was a large surplus. This movement, already considerable, was stimulated anew when the railway was extended to Llandysul in the south of the county, which made the Glamorgan coalfield far more accessible to migrants from the rural hinterland. The Welsh Land Commissioners in 1894 were to be treated to a chorus of complaints about the effects of this constant migration of young men to the coalfield, and the consequences of this in a shortage of labour and other respects. Thomas Davies, building contractor of Aberaeron, combining inaccuracy with racial prejudice, complained that the flight of young Welshmen opened up Cardiganshire to 'the scum of England and Ireland', the 'Smiths and O'Briens'.¹⁹ The results of this emigration can be traced precisely. While the population of Cardiganshire fell so alarmingly in the eighties, the 1891 census also recorded that in the Rhondda valleys the population now included nearly 6,000 men born in Cardiganshire.²⁰ Other young 'Cardis' had ventured still further afield; some were beginning to establish that stranglehold over the milk distributive and retail trade of London which has become such a familiar feature since.

On all sides, therefore, Cardiganshire manifested the grim symbols of a depressed area—the loss of young males, the high prevalence of idiocy and deaf-mutes in the county, the preponderance in its age-structure of the 45-65 and over-65 age groups, and a truly staggering surplus of unmarried females. The proportion of females to males was the highest for England and Wales recorded in six successive censuses: in 1891, there were 1,274 females for every 1,000 males. The census commissioners quaintly attributed this phenomenon to the difficulty that monoglot Welsh women from Cardiganshire found in gaining employment in domestic service outside the county.²¹ It is clear, however, that this, like so much else in the demographic structure of Cardiganshire, really rested in the long-term pressures of economic decline. Even matrimony followed the census returns.

The influence of this decline on the social character of the county was profound. In particular, it had a shattering effect on the fortunes of the landed gentry, who had ruled over the countryside for three centuries and more. Of the three major families in the county, all of whom owned estates comprising more than 20,000 acres, the Lisburne family of Trawscoed, the Pryses of Gogerddan, and the Powells of Nanteos, all were in severe financial difficulties by the 1880s. All three were deep in debt, partly as a result of their own extravagance and mismanagement, but more from the effect of severe terms for mortgages

and marriage annuities with which all three estates were encumbered. All were seriously affected, in addition, by the drastic loss of income that resulted from the closing down of the lead mines, the failure of mineral leases, and the loss of royalties on production. Mr. John Howells has shown, for instance, that the output of the lead mines on the Trawscoed estate fell in value from £32,339 in 1871 to only £3,249 in 1891.²² These large estates also suffered from the fall in the level of rents that accompanied the agricultural depression after 1879, although rents on Welsh estates had generally been kept below an economic level for decades on grounds of custom.²³ Throughout the 1880s, landowners, great and small, decided to cut their losses and to sell off outlying holdings. They resolved to concentrate on the home demesne, even at the cost of breaking up the unity of their estate. Thus in 1887, at a time when the land market in England was stagnant, the *Estates Gazette* could report activity in land sales in Wales, thousands of holdings being sold, many of them to the sitting tenants for as much as thirty years' purchase.²⁴

All these factors tended to depress the fortunes of the great landowners of Cardiganshire. However, the statistics of the fortunes of an estate do not tell the whole story. They conceal the way in which purely personal or fortuitous factors could assist in undermining the position of landed families. Statistics, for instance, cannot make explicit the effect of extravagance at race-meetings of the fifth and sixth earls upon the Lisburne estate, or the pre-occupation of Sir Pryse Pryse with the Gogerddan hunt at Bow Street, or with female companionship on the French Riviera.²⁵ The fortunes of Nanteos never really recovered from the eccentric career of George Edward Powell, who inherited the estate in 1878. Powell was bored by the *minutiae* of estate management, and turned instead for solace to the poet Swinburne, who visited him frequently. Edmund Gosse sentimentally describes Powell and Swinburne 'gazing over the bay of Cardigan to the tender west'. This is a geographical impossibility at Nanteos, and, in any event, it appears that a more regular form of entertainment for the two old Oxford friends consisted of visits to dubious taverns in Aberystwyth, to enjoy the Rabelaisian conversation of the barmaids.²⁶ This factor alone would assist materially in explaining why the 'influence' of Nanteos, so powerful down to the 1865 election, was quite negligible in Cardiganshire politics from the 1880s onwards. Throughout the county, indeed, the landed gentry were in full retreat. The only signs of a more hopeful future on the land were to be found in the fertile country in the vale of Aeron and parts of southern Cardiganshire, with their more mixed farming and profitable by-products such as butter and cheese. It is not, perhaps, accidental that the most politically active landowner

between 1880 and 1914 resided in this area. This was J. C. Harford, of Falcondale near Lampeter, who had married into the powerful Conservative family of Raikes and who was to contest the seat in 1895 and 1900.²⁷ For the rest, throughout the county, the gentry, whose 'rise' had been so absorbing a passion for Welsh and English historians for many years past, were firmly and irretrievably in decline.

The social pattern of Cardiganshire in the 1880s, however, was not entirely one of decline and depression. There was some real compensation in the rise of new urban centres; especially was this true of Aberystwyth, whose population rose steadily, if slowly, and almost doubled between 1871 and 1921, reaching over 11,000 by the latter date. Here was a more complex society, with a far more varied range of social relationships, and marked by a less respectful and instinctive attitude towards the traditional bases of authority. Mr. Ieuan Gwynedd Jones, whose researches have so notably adorned recent Welsh historiography, has brilliantly analysed the distinction between 'the closed society of the rural areas and the relatively open society of the towns'.²⁸ In the 1880s, the countryside was to become increasingly 'open' also, but it was the towns who largely provided the stimulus. In particular, Aberystwyth, and to a lesser extent Cardigan, was experiencing the rise of a powerful new force within its society, namely, the emergence of an urban and commercial middle class. Its spokesmen were men like Peter Jones, coal merchant, D. C. Roberts, timber merchant, C. M. Williams, draper (all from Aberystwyth), and J. M. Howell, the Aberaeron ironmonger to whom reference has already been made.²⁹

Associated with them were influential Nonconformist ministers such as the Reverend Job Miles and the Reverend Thomas Levi. These were in real sense new men, newly emancipated. Those fables of the rise of *y werin* in Wales are (or ought to be) largely the story of their ascent to social power, and that of many others like them. They were men with their own values and their own institutions—commercial institutions like the Aberystwyth Chamber of Trade, and, above all, their own religious institutions in the Nonconformist chapels. They were almost invariably Nonconformists to a man: Peter Jones, Roberts, and Howell were Calvinistic Methodists, C. M. Williams an Independent. In 1905, the Welsh Church Commissioners were to find that the Methodist and Independent denominations claimed over 24,000 members in Cardiganshire between them, as contrasted with a mere 9,169 for the Anglican Church.³⁰ These new men had also their own organs of communication. The most influential of these was the Aberystwyth *Cambrian News*, edited by the Lancastrian John Gibson, whose vitriolic attacks on privilege and vested interests

chimed in with the mood of the urban bourgeoisie.³¹ Finally, these were men with their own, self-generating channels of opportunity. No section of the community benefitted more from the expansion of elementary education after the Forster Act of 1870, particularly from the non-denominational Board Schools ; among the most notable of these was T. H. Kemp's famous school at Tal-y-bont, founded by an Englishman who learnt Welsh and left an indelible mark on a small community. These men were to benefit still further from the six 'county' schools set up under the Welsh Intermediate Education Act of 1889, a great charter of freedom for Welsh boys and girls, especially in rural areas with a traditionally low rate of upward mobility. These men felt, then, a sense of optimism and of dawning hope. In a county so largely paralysed by economic backwardness and shackled by the depressing legacy of the past, they felt that the future belonged to them.

* * * *

Now the political consequences of these social changes were many and profound. They served to colour the pattern of Cardiganshire politics for the next fifty years. First, and perhaps most crucial, they meant the capitulation of the gentry as, in any real sense, political leaders. The impact of the economic depression, added to the political blows undergone since 1872, proved decisive in their effects on the influence of the landed families, great and small. The very concept of 'influence' in this period requires a more sensitive and many-sided gauge than that provided by the formal statistics of acreage and rental returns. It does not lend itself to precise quantitative assessment. The façade of influence survived, but its significance was essentially symbolic, a ritual deference which masked a profound decline in real authority. Among the Liberals, the old Whig landlords ceased to play any major part in the councils of their traditional party after 1886. In that year, the Pryses of Gogerddan were rebuffed, along with David Davies of Llandinam, and not until a dramatic re-emergence by Sir Loveden Pryse in the 1921 by-election did the Pryses play more than a passive role in political affairs.³² On the Conservative side, the effect on the party of 'church and squire' was even more profound. The misfortunes of Trawscoed and Nanteos left them largely leaderless. It was significant that in 1885 they had to turn for direction to such a minor and (before his marriage) impoverished squireen as Matthew Vaughan Davies. (The 'new Domesday Book' of 1873 showed that his Tan-y-bwlch estate of 3,674 acres yielded a mere £974 in rental.) Writing to Lord Salisbury immediately after the election, Vaughan Davies rightly drew the Prime Minister's attention to his own gallant

labours :

' We have no Leader, being all ' esquires ' with the exception of Lord Lisburne who will do nothing. He does not even subscribe to the Registration Fund, which at great trouble and expense I do my best to keep going.'³³

Salisbury was further reminded of the feeble condition of the Tory gentry in Cardiganshire in June 1888, when a vacancy occurred in the Lord-Lieutenancy of the county on the death of Colonel Pryse. The Prime Minister was in a quandary, and Viscount Emlyn, writing from Golden Grove in Carmarthenshire, gave him gloomy advice :

' There are very few men of marked light and leading [*sic*] there. Lord Lisburne is the only peer. He is young, and, I am told, a nice fellow, but his father had one dreadful failing and I am not sure the son is entirely free from it. His appointment would be a great risk . . . Sir Pryse Pryse does not attend to public business at all, is abroad a great deal and gives himself no trouble about anything . . . Sir Martine Lloyd I should say was quite out of the question.'³⁴

It was a significant commentary on the situation that Salisbury had to choose Herbert Davies-Evans of Highmead, near Llanybyther, whose estate lay almost entirely in Carmarthenshire. Emlyn had said that ' Davies-Evans has done more for the Conservative cause in Cardiganshire and Carmarthenshire than any one I know'.³⁵

Cardiganshire, indeed, provides an interesting case study in the history of Conservatism in modern Wales, still largely unwritten. Even though the Conservative Party could poll over 10,000 votes there in such a catastrophic year as 1906, its fortunes have been largely ignored by Welsh historians hitherto. It is interesting to speculate on the causes of this neglect. Perhaps it reflects the mountains of manuscript material left by Liberal politicians, many of whom were notably archivally-minded. Perhaps it is because so many professional historians in Wales, even the medievalists, tend to be men of the Left. Wherever the truth may lie, there are some crucial themes here still awaiting examination—the tension between gentry and clergy over such issues as the tithe-rent-charge (the gentry wanting a quiet life, the clergy demanding their rights) ; the political consequences of the growing anglicization of Wales ; the implications for Welsh Conservatism of such phenomena as the growth of suburbia in Swansea, Newport, and Cardiff. On all these questions research has scarcely begun. In the rural areas, Cardiganshire presents a contrast with almost every other county. Elsewhere, Conservatives could rally round a leader, a dominant family still strong enough to provide patronage and inspiration : the Cawdors in Carmarthenshire, the Powys family in Montgomeryshire, the Penrhyn family in Caernarvonshire, and, of course, the Wynns in so much of north and mid-Wales. Elsewhere there was a focus of command. In Cardiganshire, there was

none. Deprived of support from their natural patrons, the squires were in full and disorganized retreat. They left behind them a social and political vacuum which had the most profound of consequences.

Secondly, the new urban middle class formed a powerful élite poised to fill that vacuum. These men, shopkeepers, tradesmen, solicitors, ministers, doctors, were anxious for position and status—for magistracies and for other local honours. They resented the fact that (in 1893) 105 magistrates in Cardiganshire were Conservatives, and only 17 Liberals. They hastened to fill the gap left by the retreating gentry. So also did wealthier tenant farmers : it is worth noting that in 1880 over 20 per cent of the land in Cardiganshire was owned by occupying freeholders and that, in the first instance at least, they were able to raise the purchase capital.³⁶ These men found their voice in John Gibson of the *Cambrian News*. Truly a self-made man, Gibson's own dramatic Odyssey from being a poor paper-boy on the streets of Lancashire cotton towns, through journalism in Shrewsbury and Oswestry, to become editor of the *Cambrian News* in 1873 (and chief proprietor in 1880) symbolized the aspirations of the new middle class. In some ways, perhaps, Gibson was an unlikely champion for them. He was an Englishman. He was not a chapel-goer, having left the Baptists in his youth. He was outstandingly ignorant of the Welsh language ; he once apologised to E. W. Evans of *Y Goleuad* : ' I know a little girl whose name is Mefanwy [*sic*], so I thought Goronwy must be also.'³⁷ Gibson was a prickly and intractable individual who found friendships hard to sustain. And yet, his fearless attacks on tradition and his committed radicalism captured the mood of the emergent class for whom he spoke. Along Cardigan Bay and in mid-Wales no voice was more influential than that of John Gibson ; Lloyd George continued to pay it heed even when he became Chancellor of the Exchequer. By the beginning of 1904, the weekly circulation of his *Cambrian News* had risen to over 7,000.^{37a} Significantly also, the Conservative newspaper in Aberystwyth, the *Aberystwyth Observer*, which lasted until 1914, was far less squirearchical in tone than was usually the case with Tory journals in Wales. Its editor, John Morgan, was an ardent disciple of Joseph Chamberlain, and openly advocated Welsh disestablishment and disendowment.³⁸ In the face of the challenge of these aggressive and self-confident men, the gentry in large measure subsided without a fight.

There is one further point that needs to be made about the effect of social and economic change upon Cardiganshire politics. Obvious though it may seem, it is often forgotten. It is that the very lack of economic growth in the county made the pattern established in the 1880s a permanent one. There was a classic picture of economic

stagnation—steady emigration out of the county ; the isolation of geography reinforced by the preponderance of a monoglot Welsh-speaking population (over 70 per cent in 1891 when the first language census was taken) ; an ageing population, over 90 per cent of whom were born in the county.³⁹ Finally, and of crucial importance, there was no major immigrant group to introduce a clash of values as occurred in the South Wales coalfield ; the Irish population, for instance, totalled a mere 103 in 1881, and only 98 a decade later.⁴⁰ In the absence of any fundamental disturbance in the social and economic structure, the pattern imposed by the changes of the 1880s upon the form of Cardiganshire politics was to endure, and to dominate the collective memory and experience of the county for generations to come.

* * * *

The subsequent course of politics in Cardiganshire can be seen as being shaped in three distinct periods. The first was that of 1885-6, when the Liberal ascendancy was established and its character laid down. The member first returned for the newly-enlarged county division in the 1885 general election was David Davies of Llandinam, who had been member for the old Cardigan Boroughs seat from 1874. He triumphed over the Conservative, Vaughan Davies, by over 2,000 votes. David Davies, the railway king of Wales, pioneer of the Rhondda coal mines and shortly of Barry Docks, seemed the prototype, almost the parody, of the self-made man.⁴¹ He never ceased to glory in his origins in egotistic public speeches ; Disraeli once sarcastically remarked in the Commons that 'it was good to hear the honourable member praising his creator'. Davies was an ineffective and incoherent public speaker, but his support in Cardiganshire was immense. Not least was this because he had been a generous patron of local causes, notably the college on the sea-front at Aberystwyth. But his main asset was not his money (which was largely invested outside the country) but his Methodism ; with over 13,000 members, the Methodists were clearly the most numerous and influential denomination in the county. In the 1885 election Davies drew support from many sources, including the Pryses of Gogerddan, but the basis of his triumph lay indisputably in the chapels.

Closely linked with them was the newly-formed Liberal Association, whose activity in 1885 demonstrated in the clearest possible way how the style of politics had changed since 1868. Under the Liberal registration agent, H. C. Fryer, an Aberystwyth solicitor who was later to become the first clerk to the county council, the Association maintained a complex and sophisticated machinery to register voters

and bring them to the poll on time.⁴² Excursion trains were arranged to bring emigré voters back from Merthyr Tydfil to vote for 'David Davies, the working man's friend'⁴³—an instance of one of the loopholes in the Corrupt Practices Act. Careful attention was paid to the special characteristics of individual areas; 'Lampeter, being a collegiate town, is not to be considered an ordinary place. Consequently some special efforts ought to be made to send a professional Welsh spouter there.'⁴⁴ The campaign was also notable for the varied apprehensions expressed by Liberal party workers at the alleged machinations of their opponents. Landlord pressure and intimidation were a general fear, particularly in the Tregaron area 'which has been a very conservative one owing to the influence of the late Powells of Nanteos had [*sic*] over their tenants'.⁴⁵ Among the other stratagems of which Conservatives were accused were tampering with the register and polling under-age or dead voters, while Tory interference with the mail was suspected by one angry partisan in Devil's Bridge.⁴⁶ More formidably, H. Tobit Evans (at that time a Liberal organiser in the Aberaeron region) reported: 'Very quiet ladies are out with the Tories and are very busy'.⁴⁷ However, the electors were proof against all these blandishments or menaces, real or imaginary, and the Tory challenge proved a weak one. Vaughan Davies had stood mainly in the hope of receiving a baronetcy from the Conservative patronage secretary, Akers-Douglas.⁴⁸ He had the backing of none of the leading county families in his campaign, his meetings were badly reported, and he was heavily defeated.

However, doubts soon began to multiply about the victor of the election. David Davies was increasingly coming under fire as an unsuitable representative for a self-styled radical constituency like Cardiganshire. Tom Ellis, writing to his friend D. R. Daniel, probably spoke for many nationally-minded young Welshmen when he condemned Davies for 'buying landed estates and sinking deeper into Whiggism after each transaction'.⁴⁹ The main charge against Davies, indeed, was that he was a Whig, a social conservative, for all his Methodism and his alleged sympathy with the working man. It was noted that when Henry Broadhurst had introduced the first of many leasehold enfranchisement bills in 1884, Davies failed to support it, or even to attend the debate.⁵⁰ In towns such as New Quay and Aberaeron, leasehold reform was even then a critical issue, though over eighty years more were to elapse before the grievances of leaseholders were redressed. Again, when Jesse Collings threw out the Conservative government on his 'three acres and a cow' amendment in February 1886, Davies actually voted against it. More and more in early 1886 he was under fire from constituents; on 11 March he felt constrained to

intervene in debate in the Commons to explain that his reason for sitting on the Tory benches was the shortage of accommodation on the government side.⁵¹ Davies was, in fact, a reversion to an older type of Liberal member, the self-made industrial patron who entered politics as a reflection of his industrial or commercial position, in the mould of Guest in the 1830s or Fothergill in the 1860s. In the new political context, dominated by political parties rather than by economic 'interests', Davies was simply out of date. Suspicions of his conservatism reached a climax when he joined six other Welsh Liberals in voting against the second reading of Gladstone's Irish Home Rule Bill in June 1886. Davies enlisted in the 'Loyal and Patriotic Union', a body dedicated to maintaining the integrity of the empire against Celtic separatism, and, after some confusion, announced his intention of standing as a Liberal Unionist candidate at the next election.⁵²

The result was a campaign fought with fierce intensity. Davies was backed by almost all the squires of both parties. He also received the support of several prominent Liberals, especially from his own Methodist church. One notable supporter was the eminent preacher and theologian, the Reverend J. Cynddylan Jones; when he preached a sermon on the hymn *Dewch hen ac ieuainc, dewch* during the campaign, he was attacked for introducing politics into the pulpit—as though that were a novelty.⁵³ But the great mass of Cardiganshire Liberals stayed faithful to Gladstone, whom they regarded as the symbol of their claim to civil and national equality. C. R. M. Talbot, another Liberal Unionist, writing to Sir Hussey Vivian, wrote scornfully of the 'infatuation' of the Welsh for the Grand Old Man⁵⁴; by comparison, the issue of Irish Home Rule was for them a secondary issue. That formidable Gladstonian, John Gibson, came out strongly against David Davies in the *Cambrian News*.⁵⁵ So, too, did most of the Nonconformist ministry. After the poll, one of Davies's supporters, D. J. Jones of Lampeter, was to reflect:

'I never thought that the "bugeiliaid Methodistiaid" would have been guilty of such base conduct. To see Williams the bugail at Lampeter, in conjunction with the Independent Ministers, on the same platform with Michael Davitt, was what I did not expect would ever take place.'⁵⁶

He complained that the people of Lampeter were 'Gladstonians to the core'.⁵⁷

The Liberal candidate, W. Bowen Rowlands, a lawyer from Haverfordwest, was almost unknown in the county. His knowledge of Welsh was negligible. Far from being a Nonconformist, he was actually a high Anglican who was shortly to become a prominent Roman Catholic. He made little effort to conceal his sympathy for the Irish



PL. V. 17 DAVID DAVIES, LLANDINAM

cause ; Michael Davitt came to speak on his behalf at Lampeter and Aberystwyth, having already established contact with Welsh electors among the quarrymen of Ffestiniog.⁵⁸ His opponent, David Davies, conducted a vigorous and resourceful campaign ; electors were even brought up from the Rhondda to vote for him (although Davies's son was later told that in fact they nearly all voted for Rowlands).⁵⁹ Even so, despite all the apparent disadvantages he faced, Bowen Rowlands scored a remarkable triumph over the money and the Methodism of David Davies by the margin of just nine votes. The *Aberystwyth Observer* rightly attributed the result to the influence of the Nonconformist ministers over their congregations.⁶⁰ For David Davies, disappearing from politics after serving in three parliaments, the result was hard to bear, and harder to understand. Characteristically, he retaliated by withdrawing his support from the college at Aberystwyth. He deeply resented the failure of Principal Thomas Charles Edwards of Aberystwyth to vote for (or, indeed, against) him, while he had been the victim of hooligan behaviour in the town. 'I cannot therefore support a College in a place where I cannot go to see it.'⁶¹

Narrow though Bowen Rowlands's triumph had been, it was decisive. Patronage, even hyphenated patronage in the form of 'Liberal-Unionism', had been rejected, and Cardiganshire Liberalism stayed firmly committed to the values of the Nonconformist middle class. Liberal Unionism was henceforth redundant, as it was to be in Britain as a whole, once hopes of a reunion faded in 1887. This was emphatically confirmed at the next general election, in July 1892. Joseph Chamberlain ran a string of Nonconformist Unionist candidates in several Welsh constituencies, with the aim of appealing to local prejudice against Irish Catholicism. In Cardiganshire, his nominee was William Jones, a Birmingham draper who hailed from the county and a Welsh-speaking Methodist.⁶² Jones campaigned vigorously against Irish aspirations. He spent the large sum of £1,258 8s. od., almost twice that of Rowlands ; each of Jones's votes cost 7s. 8d., compared with 2s. 8d. for each of his opponent's. To prove his true Liberal antecedents, he produced a farmer evicted after the 1868 election, James Jones of Tŷllwyd, on his platforms.⁶³ Even so, Jones lost overwhelmingly by almost 2,000 votes. Whatever his religion or his origins, Jones's association with the gentry and the eternal memories of past oppression ensured a heavy defeat.

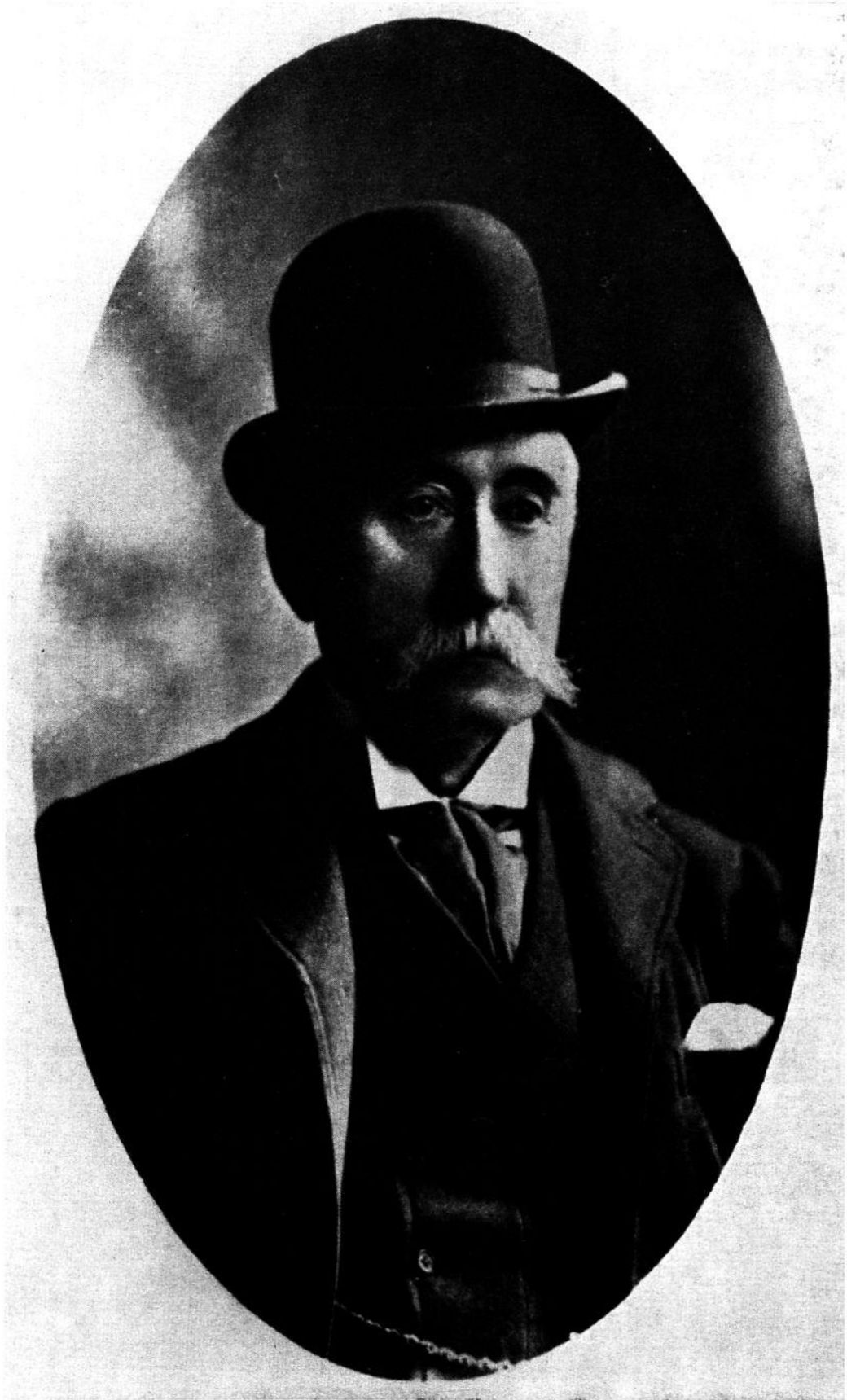
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The second period, from the mid-1880s down to the end of the First World War, was a period of consolidation for the Liberal ascendancy. The pattern of parliamentary representation in this period was uneventful. Bowen Rowlands seldom visited his constituency, despite

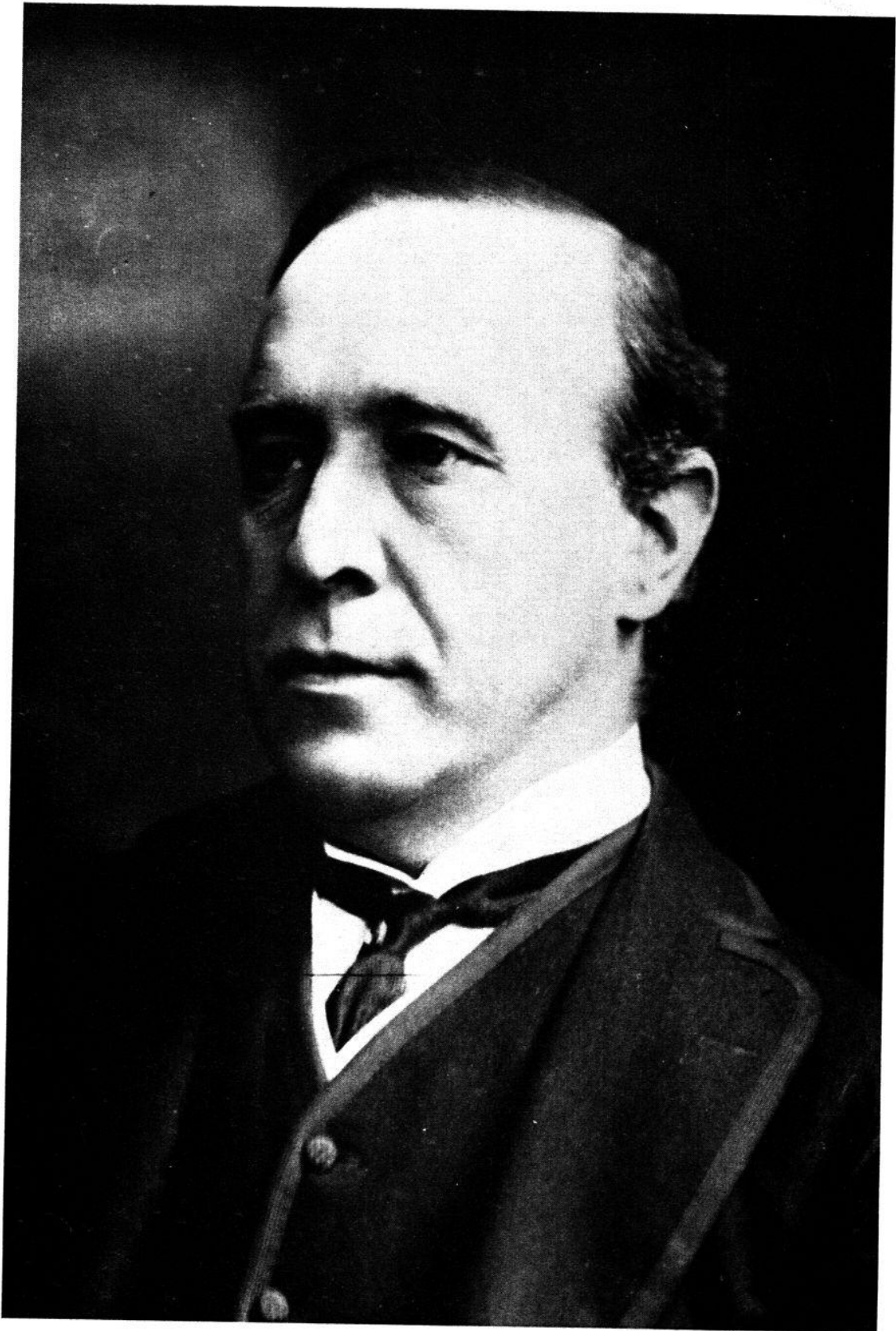
his victories at the polls, and it was little surprise when he gave up his seat for an impending county court judgeship in 1895. Some interest, however, attaches to the nomination of his successor. The candidate eventually selected by the Liberal Association was none other than Matthew Vaughan Davies of Tan-y-bwlch, just south of Aberystwyth, who, as has been seen, actually fought the seat as a Conservative in 1885.

Vaughan Davies seemed in all respects to be an extraordinary choice.⁶⁴ He had long been a pillar of Conservatism in the county, and remained prominent in Unionist circles until his marriage to Mrs. Mary Jenkins, a wealthy widow from Swansea, in 1889.⁶⁵ She was a pronounced Liberal (shortly to be elected president of the Aberystwyth Women's Liberal Association)⁶⁶ and the effect on Vaughan Davies's political principles was marvellous to behold. His first public emergence as a Liberal came in the 1892 election when he lent his carriage to Bowen Rowlands's supporters.⁶⁷ Thereafter, it became known that he was ambitious for the Liberal nomination. Chairman of the Llanilar bench and master of foxhounds, Vaughan Davies seemed the very archetype of those small backwoods squires who sustained the tattered flag of Welsh Toryism in successive disasters—ill-educated (though he claimed to be a Harrovian on the basis of having spent a year in that eminent school), uncultured, ill-informed. His political views were unsophisticated to the point of absurdity ; he once explained that he was in favour of women's suffrage, but for widows and spinsters only !⁶⁸ He spoke no Welsh, and was an Anglican, the patron to a living in Llanychaiarn. He appeared before the Welsh Land Commissioners in 1894 as a spokesman for the local farmers, to uphold their demand for a Land Court to provide fair rents and security of tenure. Unfortunately, the sittings of the Commission brought to light his own malpractices as a landlord towards his own tenants, one of whom he had deceived over repairs to property on his holding. The Commission, when its report was eventually published in 1896, roundly censured him on these points.⁶⁹

When it became known early in 1895 that Vaughan Davies was seeking to follow Bowen Rowlands as Liberal member, many local Liberals were up in arms. Gibson thundered away in the *Cambrian News* : ' Mr. Vaughan Davies has changed not only in his political opinions, but in his views as to honesty and dishonesty.' ' His candidature is being urged on the low and demoralising ground that money can be got out of him.'⁷⁰ He sourly wrote to D. A. Thomas that the one benefit to emerge from the inquiries of the Land Commission was that it had ruined Vaughan Davies's chances of the nomination.⁷¹ J. M. Howell urged : ' We want a Welsh speaking man and better



PL. V. 18 MATTHEW VAUGHAN DAVIES, BARON YSTWYTH



PL. V. 19 WILLIAM LLEWELYN WILLIAMS

still a Welsh patriot. Vaughan Davies is an apostate, and flexile [*sic*] feeble and flabby'.⁷²

Nevertheless, Vaughan Davies's chances were by no means hopeless. There was no overwhelmingly strong opponent. Llewelyn Williams, the apostle of *Cymru Fydd* nationalism, was backed by J. H. Davies of Cwrtmawr ; but he was little known in the county (since he was born in Llansadwrn, a full twelve miles from the Cardiganshire border) and retired at an early stage.⁷³ Not until 1921, near the end of his life, did Williams intervene decisively in the politics of Cardiganshire. Another outside candidate was J. Wynford Philipps, another Pembrokeshire barrister, who had sat in the Commons as member for mid-Lanark from 1888 to 1894 (defeating Keir Hardie in the famous 1888 by-election) ; but he proved a half-hearted campaigner.⁷⁴ Some favoured the youthful squire of Cwrtmawr, J. H. Davies, one of the very few Nonconformist squires in the county. Davies was later to demonstrate in full his prowess in electoral intrigue, but as a young man of barely 24 was still, at this stage, an unknown quantity.⁷⁵ More remarkable was the fact that many local Liberals actually backed Vaughan Davies, despite his Tory antecedents. Many farmers favoured a landowner who could at least express their own standpoint.⁷⁶ In the southern parts of the county, tenant farmers and occupying freeholders rebelled at having an outsider foisted on them by the 'shopocracy' of Aberystwyth—a sentiment that was to re-emerge in 1921 when the nomination came up again. Vaughan Davies in this sense had some positive virtues. He was unquestionably a local man, a nephew of Col. Morris Davies of Penpompren, Tal-y-bont, and of the Reverend Charles Davies of Ynys-hir, Glandyfi. His very roughness of manner, his dedication to the foxhounds, his crude, even profane, language (which led a heckler at Tal-y-bont, Dafydd Edwards of Felin-fach, to ask him whether he would favour an act of parliament to prevent swearing in public places)⁷⁷—these qualities probably endeared him to those earthy electors who resented the social climbing of the Aberystwyth bourgeoisie. In the event, when the Liberal delegates met at Lampeter on 4 July, Wynford Philipps withdrew his name, amid allegations that Unionists had been attempting to sway district associations, and Vaughan Davies was nominated unopposed. The *Cambrian News* commented : 'The Old Liberal Gang, considered to be identified with Aberystwyth, has been annihilated.'⁷⁸ Vaughan Davies now had to win the seat—no easy task against the lively challenge of J. C. Harford, the young squire of Falcondale. In that year of disaster for Liberalism all over the country, Vaughan Davies's majority fell by over 800 votes, compared with 1892. Even so, his position was obviously beyond challenge. Although he was nearly

55 years of age, he was to retain his seat comfortably enough for over a quarter of a century more. Even when he departed from parliament, it was Lloyd George rather than his Creator who was responsible. Vaughan Davies eventually died in 1935 at a vigorous and profane 94. His house at Tan-y-bwlch, appropriately, was turned into a convalescent home.

With Vaughan Davies in the House, a silent backbencher, interest in parliamentary politics in Cardiganshire was largely suppressed for a generation. At the next general election, the 'khaki election' held during the South African War in the autumn of 1900, Vaughan Davies had again a hard battle against Harford's eager challenge. Handicapped by weak organization and a partially-deserved reputation for a 'pro-Boer' voting record in the House, Vaughan Davies's majority slumped to a mere 781, the worst Liberal performance against a Conservative in the entire period 1880—1966.⁷⁹ However, in later contests the Liberal majority soared upwards once again. In 1906, the *annus mirabilis* of the Liberal Party, Vaughan Davies scored a record majority of 2,869 over C. Morgan-Richardson, a Cardigan solicitor who had once been a Liberal.⁸⁰ In the next general election, in January 1910, Vaughan Davies achieved a further record majority—3,405 this time—and gained over 70 per cent of the poll. His opponent in this contest, dominated by Lloyd George's 'People's Budget', was G. Fossett Roberts, an able young Aberystwyth man with connections with the brewing trade. The *Cambrian News* assailed 'the peer, the priest and the publican' with immense gusto. Towards Vaughan Davies, however, Gibson was unforgiving: 'We do not think the people will presume that Mr. Vaughan Davies won any considerable portion of his majority by his individual attraction and influence . . . If anything, Mr. Vaughan Davies's personality would lose him votes'.⁸¹ At the next contest, in December 1910, fought on the issue of the Parliament Bill, as again in the 'coupon election' of December 1918 after the war, Vaughan Davies was returned unopposed.

During these years Cardiganshire Liberalism fell into steady decay. A *Cambrian News* correspondent lamented that 'the most enervating torpor has seized the Liberal Party from Cardigan to Ynyslas. The enemy blustered about, but the Liberals only snoozed'.⁸² Once-vigorous bodies such as the Aberystwyth Women's Association and the Junior Radical Club in that town fell into decline in the later 1890s, and their purpose seems to have become largely social (though teetotal).⁸³ Above all, the Cardiganshire Liberal Association, so vigorous a decade earlier, had by the later nineties become something of a national scandal. At the annual meetings of 1897 and 1898, it was found that most of the local districts were totally moribund, registration

had been ignored by the agent, and debts had accumulated. The total reserves in the Association's account stood at £11 2s. 6d. There was further criticism when Vaughan Davies, as Treasurer, personally assumed responsibility for the Association's debts—a generous offer, but an exercise of patronage by the local member that many found hard to accept.⁸⁴ The vitality of the great days of *Cymru Fydd* seemed to have drained away ; the Cardiganshire Liberal Association wasted away like the South Wales Liberal Federation to which it was nominally affiliated. Many Cardiganshire men indeed deplored the enervated condition of their party and their nation. J. M. Howell, writing in a mood of depression induced by attending Tom Ellis's funeral at Bala in April 1899, wrote : ' Wales is paltry, petty and mean ; with its little sectisms [*sic*] like vermin eating into its vitals and consuming its sap and vigour. Our political and religious and even our commercial interests are blasted by self-seeking, hypocrisy and cant'.⁸⁵

This decay of politics, indeed, reflected the mood of the time. The fierce social conflicts of the past were dying away and old issues losing their relevance. There were some echoes of the old bitterness in the early 1890s. There were violent incidents at tithe-distrain sales in Cardiganshire, notably at the ' Plevna ' of Penllwyn.⁸⁶ Again, the scheme introduced for the county's intermediate education system, under the Act of 1889, provoked some predictable clerical opposition from St. David's College, Lampeter. The county scheme, in fact, was voted down by the House of Lords, on a motion by Bishop Jayne of Chester, but the Rosebery government decided to ignore it.⁸⁷ Thereafter, the tensions of the past seemed increasingly out of date. Disestablishment of the church seemed by the turn of the century to have lost its urgency ; it now aroused the interest mainly of an older generation of ministers and publicists, weaned on the sectarian passions of ' S.R ' and Thomas Gee.⁸⁸ The land question also aroused far less controversy than before. The very publication of the Land Commission's report in 1896, even though it was not implemented, had a therapeutic effect on the countryside. In fact, the Cardiganshire landowners, so long the hapless victims of radical abuse, came comparatively well out of the Commission's findings. The charge of political intimidation or eviction was shown to be obsolete ; the only instances brought up before the Commission related to 1869 and earlier. Neither was the charge of extorting excessive rental sustained by Liberal spokesmen in any very convincing way. Cardiganshire landlords, backed by their ever-vigilant lawyer, J. E. Vincent, were able to produce clear documentary evidence of abatements or reductions in rental during the past ten years.⁸⁹ In any event, rents had been kept below an economic level for decades on customary grounds,

or simply to avert discontent, and not until the 1870s was any general effort made to raise them. The case of the tenant farmers, as advocated before the Commission, seemed somewhat less plausible when subjected to critical scrutiny. The panacea of a Land Court was less convincing when even a businessman like J. M. Howell could not offer any suggestion as to how it might arrive at a definition of a 'fair rent'.⁹⁰ Many of the complaints brought forward turned out to be unsubstantiated gossip.

There was undoubtedly poverty on the land, but the Commission seemed to suggest that many popular diagnoses were based on faulty premises. The real problem lay less in ownership than in capital. One aspect of the Cardiganshire land question vividly underlined in the report in 1896 was the financial hardship of many small freeholders, having to mortgage their holdings at crippling rates of interest.⁹¹ They were hardly a promising model for the kind of peasant proprietorship that Tom Ellis and other Liberals wished to create. Meanwhile, the immediate crisis on the land passed away from the mid-1890s onwards; prices of farm products improved, and capital became more freely available. Indeed, the flight from the land was temporarily checked, and in the decade 1901—1911 the agricultural population actually rose in rural Wales, the only increase recorded in the century from 1851 to 1951. Cardiganshire landlords took the opportunity to sell up more and more of their outlying holdings, while some estates (for instance Alltyrodyn and Llaethlliw) were sold up completely. Much of the old social division had disappeared, as the nomination of Vaughan Davies in 1895 indicated. A radical like J. M. Howell could support the claims of Herbert Davies-Evans, the Lord-Lieutenant, for a baronetcy or a peerage in the Jubilee honours list in 1897.⁹² The gentry, responding to the changing structure of rural society, attempted to integrate themselves more intimately in the community—for example, by helping to found the Cardiganshire Antiquarian Society in 1909.⁹³ An interesting phenomenon was the rise of a small class of Nonconformist gentry, such as J. H. Davies, the young squire of Cwrtmawr. His election in 1919 as principal of the University College of Wales, in the face of the dominant influence of Lord Davies of Llandinam on behalf of Thomas Jones, was a remarkable testimony to the success of the Liberals of Cardiganshire in attaining social equality and social power.⁹⁴

Even during this period of quiescence, however, the ascendancy of Liberalism was fully maintained. The most dramatic evidence of this was provided by the election of the first county council in January 1889.⁹⁵ The Liberals triumphed by 37 to 10, while the squires were humiliated. Against only three major landowners to be returned

(Lord Lisburne, Colonel Davies-Evans, and Major Lewes of Tŷ-glyn Aeron) there were thirteen tenant farmers, eleven small businessmen (ironmongers, drapers, and so on), and four Nonconformist ministers. Peter Jones, a Methodist coal merchant from Aberystwyth, was elected first chairman of the county council, over the head of Lord Lisburne. There were some impressive indications of the revolution that had taken place—Sir Marteine Lloyd of Bronwydd losing to an unknown farmer at Troed-yr-aur ; Henry Bonsall of Cwm, Clarach, beaten by William Morgan, coal merchant (and grand-father of the first Labour member for Cardiganshire, Elystan Morgan) at Bow Street ; T. J. Waddingham of Hafod meeting defeat at the hands of the local postmaster at Devil's Bridge. Despite some half-hearted protests by the *Cambrian News* that the elections ought to be 'non-political', the political implications of the new Liberal majority were made very plain from the outset. In its early years, the council passed overtly political resolutions, in favour of disestablishment of the Church, or affiliation to the *Cymru Fydd* league.⁹⁶ Its Liberal members caucused to secure aldermanships, coronerships, and chairmanships of committees for themselves : thus Morgan Jones of Oakford, Aberaeron, was appointed chairman of the council for 1892-3.⁹⁷ The revolution in local government in 1889 illustrated vividly the extent of the advance of democracy in rural Cardiganshire. No longer would the gentry reign over the countryside from the eminence of the quarter sessions ; like the Church, the justices of the peace were to be disestablished too. By comparison, the events of 1868, in reality though not in mythology, were, as Mr. Ieuan Gwynedd Jones has explained, merely 'the cracking of the ice'.⁹⁸ But 1889 was the year of the flood.

* * * *

The third and final phase of Cardiganshire's Liberal years came with the period between the end of the First World War in 1918 and the general election of 1923. This was a period of re-definition and of renewed conflict. Cardiganshire, like other rural areas, was profoundly affected by the advent of total war. The war brought new prosperity to the farming community through such measures as the Corn Production Act of 1917.⁹⁹ Indeed, the population of Cardiganshire actually rose slightly, from 59,000 in 1911 to 61,000 in 1921, due largely to an increase in the Aberystwyth district.¹⁰⁰ More profoundly, the war brought about a crisis of values. Amid the pressures of world war, the old certainty attaching to Nonconformist Liberalism was severely shaken. Episodes such as the persecution of Dr. Hermann Ethé, the eminent Aberystwyth linguist, on purely racialist grounds made some wonder what had happened to the old humane, civilized principles of the radical tradition.¹⁰¹ Young Cardiganshire men back

from the front, after surviving the slaughter in the trenches or Allenby's campaigns in Palestine, returned with a more detached and critical attitude towards the society from which they had sprung. The young Caradoc Evans of Rhyd Lewis, indeed, rebelled totally against the hypocrisy and cant he saw permeating 'my people'.¹⁰² Old institutions and values were now under fire, and in this atmosphere the Liberal ascendancy could not hope to escape.

Even in the uncontested 'coupon' election of December 1918 there was criticism of Vaughan Davies for supporting the coalition government of Lloyd George, and accepting the 'coupon' in return. Professor T. A. Levi spoke out belligerently to this effect at the adoption meeting on 21 November. Vaughan Davies, indeed, had been listed as a recipient of the 'coupon' as early as 20 July.¹⁰³ The following year, the local Liberal Association, with J. M. Howell presiding, welcomed Asquith to Aberystwyth.¹⁰⁴ A new element was also heard for the first time, the Cardiganshire Labour Party. Its most prominent spokesman was John Davies of Llangeitho, organiser of the Agricultural Labourers' Union, a man uprooted from his background who had been profoundly stirred by the dual impact of the 1898 coal stoppage in South Wales and the religious revival of 1904.¹⁰⁵ Labour did not fight the seat in 1918, although there was some scope for its energies in Aberystwyth in the candidature of Mrs. Millicent Mackenzie for the newly-created University of Wales seat. The rise of Labour in rural Wales, in an election which saw the party gain striking success in Anglesey and Caernarvonshire, was a major portent for the future.

The growing mood of dissatisfaction with the time-worn Liberal ascendancy resulted in the startling outcome of the by-election of February 1921. Its prologue came in January when it was suddenly announced that Vaughan Davies had been given a peerage.¹⁰⁶ It was an announcement that greatly embarrassed Sir George Younger, the Coalition Unionist Chief Whip, since it complicated the agreement between the two main government parties about the lists of honours.¹⁰⁷ After an unsuccessful effort to obtain the title of Lord Ceredigion (his photograph actually appeared in the *Cambrian News* bearing this title), Vaughan Davies went to the Lords as Baron Ystwyth: 'he sought a county but had to be content with a river.' It soon became clear that this was a device by Lloyd George to leave the seat open for his private secretary, Captain Ernest Evans, an Aberystwyth man. However, the local Liberal Association seethed with resentment at being made a 'hand-maiden' for a government composed largely of Unionists and already tainted with the atrocities of the Black and Tans in Ireland.¹⁰⁸ Efforts were made to get either J. M. Howell or D. C. Roberts to stand, but it transpired that they both supported Lloyd George.

Finally, at an immensely stormy meeting of the Liberal Association at Lampeter on 25 January, in which charges of corruption were hurled by both sides and Vaughan Davies was shouted down, Evans was rejected. By 206 votes to 127 the Association chose instead the Recorder of Cardiff, Llewelyn Williams, a veteran Radical, now a leading Asquithian and a violent opponent of Lloyd George ever since the introduction of conscription in 1916.¹⁰⁹ Evans then announced, at a rival convention, his intention of standing as a Coalition Liberal, and the succeeding contest between him and Llewelyn Williams, the 'Independent Liberal', ushered in a new crisis of conscience for Cardiganshire Liberals which caught the attention of the whole political world.

Llewelyn Williams and Ernest Evans were an interestingly matched pair. They were respectively symbols of first- and second-generation Liberalism in Wales. Williams, born in 1867, the son of a Carmarthenshire tenant farmer, was a survivor of the national emotions of the great years of *Cymru Fydd* in the 1880s and early '90s.¹¹⁰ In 1885, the year that Ernest Evans was born, Llewelyn Williams was assisting in founding the Dafydd ap Gwilym Society at Oxford, with important consequences for the Welsh national movement. Williams dealt mainly with the issues of the past, so far as he concentrated on issues at all : the 'betrayal' over the disendowment settlement in 1919, the killing of the Welsh Licensing Bill in 1920, the failure to grant Welsh Home Rule after the Speakers' Conference. His appeal was essentially nostalgic. Ernest Evans represented a younger generation. Born in 1885, he also came from impeccable Liberal antecedents. Like Llewelyn Williams, he was a pupil at Llandovery College ; he also was a barrister. A Calvinistic Methodist where Williams was an Independent, Evans was well-known in Aberystwyth as son to the clerk of the county council ; he was a member of Tabernacle church, the minister of which was the formidable Reverend R. J. Rees. However, to one of Evans's age group, the national emotions of *Cymru Fydd*, of the *jeunesse dorée* of Tom Ellis, were remote from his experience.¹¹¹ Evans was a Liberal of the silver age. The difference between him and Llewelyn Williams lay not in their philosophies but in the generations they represented.

The by-election revealed immense latent tensions which had lain dormant for years. Llewelyn Williams was able to exploit residual tensions between the upland areas of the south and east, and the middle class of the seaside towns. Here, in the rural heartland, in places like Tregaron, Lampeter, Llandysul, Llangeitho, and Tal-y-bont, Williams found his main political base.¹¹² The religious composition of his support also reflected a wider sociological cleavage ; behind him were

the Independents and Baptists of the 'older dissent' and the Unitarians of the Teifi valley.¹¹³ Other groups also flocked to the Independent Liberal banner. Several prominent University figures campaigned hard for Williams, notably the controversial professor of law, Thomas Arthur Levi, whose father had fought side by side with Bowen Rowlands in 1886.¹¹⁴ Williams also gained the implicit, though not, as he had hoped, the explicit support of the Labour Party. On the other extreme, the blue ribbon of the Pryses of Gogerddan was again paraded before the radical voters of Bow Street, Llandre, and Dol-y-bont for the first time since 1886. Indeed, Sir Lewes Loveden Pryse had himself threatened to come out as an 'Independent Liberal' candidate on the anti-waste programme popular in the period before the Geddes 'axe' descended.¹¹⁵

Ernest Evans's supporters were more concentrated. They lay essentially in the coastal towns—Cardigan, New Quay, Aberystwyth, and Borth, places with middle classes, seaside landladies, and golf-courses, some of the last-named admittedly only of nine holes.¹¹⁶ Evans had the vehement support of the *Cambrian News* (though the other local Liberal journal, the *Welsh Gazette*, was very hostile to him). Many leading members of his own Methodist denomination were behind Evans, notably the Reverend R. J. Rees, though other prominent Methodists (for instance, Levi) came out for Williams. Finally, and crucially, Evans had the scarcely-veiled support of Cardiganshire Conservatives (estimated to number at least 7,000), and as the campaign went on it was clear that it was on these that he had increasingly to rely. For over three weeks, in glorious, spring-like weather, the campaign was fought out with tremendous bitterness. Families and churches were divided, and there were occasions of physical violence. Windows were broken, posters mutilated, car tyres slashed. Llewelyn Williams added to the general acrimony by personal abuse of Lloyd George, the 'tawdry rhetorician' of Downing Street.¹¹⁷ Much debated was the issue of whether Lloyd George or Asquith was the true author of Old Age Pensions back in 1908.¹¹⁸ Ernest Evans had a rough handling in Llandysul; Puleston Jones, the blind preacher, was shouted down by Coalitionists in New Quay; while Sir John Simon, speaking for Williams, failed even to gain a hearing from the angry voters of Borth.¹¹⁹ Many outside celebrities were brought in. The Asquithians, scenting perhaps their most hopeful contest since Asquith's own triumph at Paisley, brought in Simon, Runciman, Maclean, Wedgwood Benn, and Lady Violet Bonham-Carter, among others. Williams received messages of support from such varied sources as the veteran Dr. Clifford, T. P. O'Connor, A. G. Gardiner, and Mrs. Jones-Davies, sister of the late Tom Ellis. The last-named proclaimed that Cardigan-

shire, having yielded to military conscription, would never submit to political conscription by Lloyd George. The Coalition Liberals relied mainly on Welsh political eminences such as Sir Herbert Lewis, Sir Edgar Jones, and J. Hugh Edwards. The outcome, indeed, was hard to predict. Few local observers shared the confidence of Lord Reading who forecast an easy victory for Evans.¹²⁰ The 1918 Representation of the People Act had increased the electorate from 13,000 to over 32,000, and there had been no contest in 1918 to test feeling.¹²¹ Over 14,000 of the electors now were women, and a shrewd move by the Coalition Liberals was to bring in Mrs. Lloyd George. In a fortnight she delivered fifty-eight speeches, and her appeals of loyalty to Cardiganshire women to vote for *Dafydd yr Hwsmon* won much acclaim. Her husband, a connoisseur of such matters, said 'that Mrs. L.G. had displayed remarkable skill, and had said some very shrewd things, particularly on the drink question'.¹²² In a record poll of over 78 per cent, Ernest Evans triumphed by 14,111 to 10,521, a majority of a little over 3,500 votes. It was clear, however, that the bulk of Liberal votes had gone to his opponent. Evans had got home with the aid of Tory votes and of over 250 Tory-owned motor cars. The night was lit up by flaming beacons on hilltops from Aberystwyth to Cardigan, the work of joyful Coalitionists. The overjoyed Prime Minister responded in more characteristic fashion: 'He warmly embraced Mrs. L. G. bestowing several hearty kisses upon her and telling her that she had won the election.' But for the Independents, in the words of a saddened *Welsh Gazette* columnist, Lilian Winstanley, a university lecturer, 'it was a victory for material power over spiritual power'.¹²³

However, 'spiritual power', in the persons of the Asquithians, kept up the fight in the general election which followed the downfall of the Lloyd George coalition government in October 1922. One of the conspicuous weaknesses of Lloyd George's Liberals was their lack of effective local organisation. In Cardiganshire, as in many other constituencies, the Independent 'Wee Frees' maintained firm control of the party machine. Llewelyn Williams had died early in 1922, after despatching a pathetic letter to Lloyd George from his death-bed.¹²⁴ At the general election Ernest Evans was opposed now by Rhys Hopkin Morris, another barrister, and the son of an Independent minister from Maesteg. In some ways Morris was a more positive candidate than Llewelyn Williams had been. Instead of harping on the past, his speeches dealt with the whole range of domestic issues, as well as with problems of international reconstruction in Europe. He probably attracted a greater share of the Labour vote.¹²⁵ Evans now faced the erosion of further Liberal support, now that Lloyd George

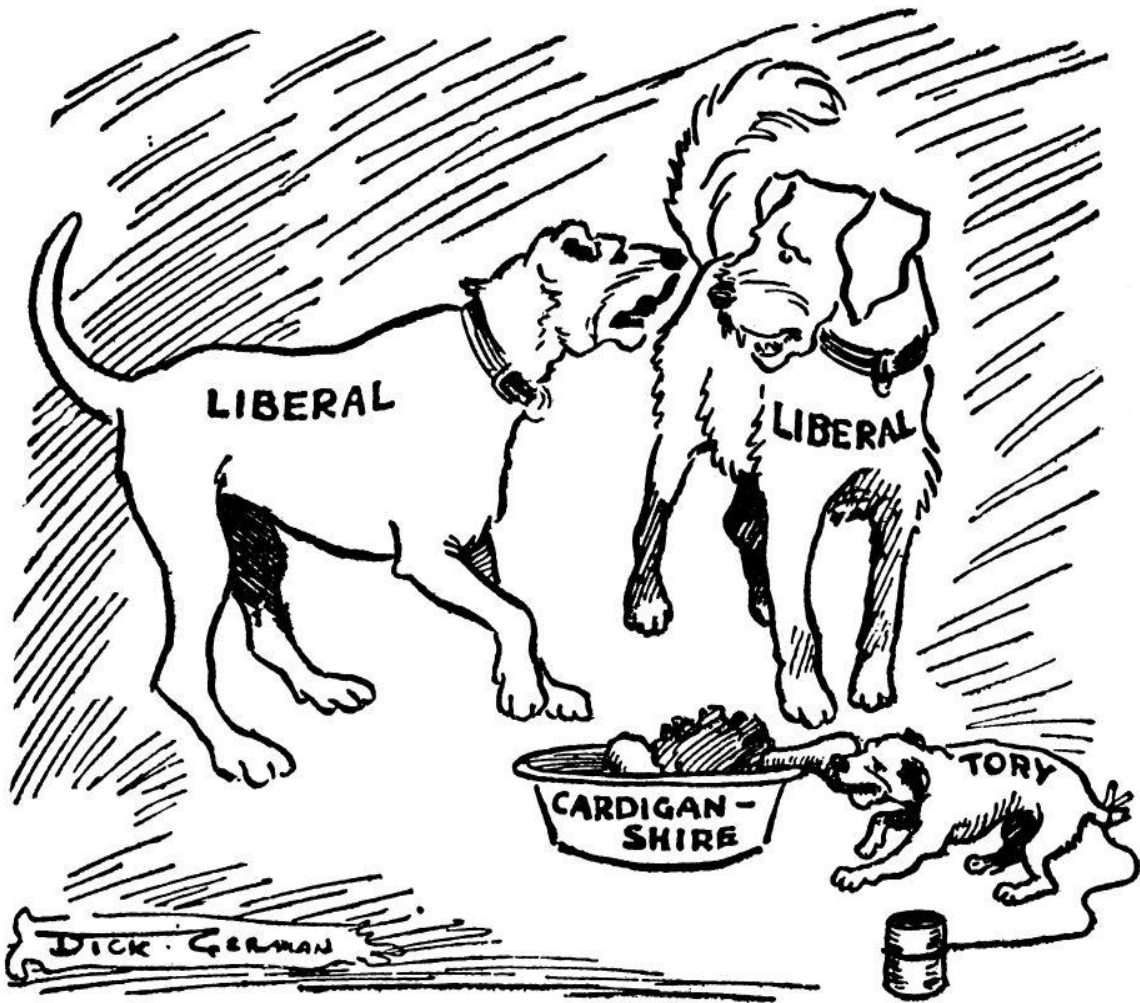


FIG. V. 4. CARDIGANSHIRE BY-ELECTION BROADSIDE, 1923

was out of office, and his majority over Hopkin Morris (who added nearly 2,000 to Llewelyn Williams's poll) fell to a mere 515. Without Tory support, Evans would never have been returned at all. Trevor Wilson's verdict on Coalition Liberalism in this election is particularly apposite in Cardiganshire : ' they survived, where they survived at all, as a kept party.'¹²⁶

The internecine warfare between the two Liberal factions went on remorselessly in 1923. Yet another general election was held in December of that year. This was occasioned by Baldwin's speech at Plymouth (25 October) which, by calling for the return of protection, openly challenged the old Liberal shibboleth of Free Trade. Faced with this threat, Asquith and Lloyd George arranged an immediate reunion. All over the country their supporters forsook their past differences and agreed on a common candidate. In only two constituencies in the British Isles, indeed, was harmony not restored in the

Liberal ranks. One was Camborne in Cornwall, where the Welsh Asquithian, Leif Jones, was to fight, and defeat, the Coalitionist, Captain Moreing, who was backed by Cornish Conservatives.¹²⁷ The other was Cardiganshire. The Liberal Association here totally refused all offers from London to come up to Abingdon Street and patch up differences, and so the battle of 1922 was fought again.¹²⁸ However, this time the Conservatives felt emboldened to intervene. The Earl of Lisburne came out as the first candidate of his party in the county since January 1910 ; his programme was strongly protectionist. In the event, he was to poll over 6,000 votes, and this doomed whatever chance Ernest Evans may have had. Again there was intense personal bitterness throughout. Evans denounced the 'Mussolinis of North Parade' (a reference to the existence of two Liberal clubs in Aberystwyth) and the Asquithians replied in kind.¹²⁹ It was noticeable, however, that even in his old strongholds, such as New Quay and Borth, Evans had a less enthusiastic reception than before. The outcome was pre-ordained. Hopkin Morris triumphed easily by over 5,000 while Evans only narrowly beat Lisburne for second place. Evans's brief and unhappy tenure of the seat had come to its end, and in the following year he had to seek refuge in the presumably more tranquil atmosphere of the University of Wales.

* * * *

The crisis years 1921-3 were crucial for the Liberal ascendancy. The values of Cardiganshire Liberalism, its rigid independence, its contempt for patronage, whether stemming from the gentry or from the party whips, had been confirmed. Hopkin Morris's victory in 1923 served to revitalize the Liberal ascendancy and to restore some of the crusading idealism that it had lost. It helped to keep the middle class élite of the coastal towns firm to the old cause ; 1923 was, above all, a victory for the countryside, for the 'older dissent', and for the most Welsh parts of the county. The wheel had indeed come full circle since the days of 1868 when these areas were the most static and quiescent. The 1921-3 crisis served to underline the continuity of tradition in Cardiganshire politics ; active in these campaigns were men like Peter Jones, J. M. Howell, D. C. Roberts (all Coalitionists), and C. M. Williams and Sir John Williams (both Asquithians), veterans of 1886, and, in some cases, of the earlier evictions of 1868, memories of which they frequently invoked.¹³⁰ However, the victory of 1923 had implications for the future also. In lending new life to Liberalism in the county, it helped to delay the rise of Labour. While Labour polled strongly in many Welsh rural constituencies in 1922 and 1923, in Cardiganshire no Labour candidate was to appear until the 'doctors' mandate' election of 1931—when John Lloyd-Jones

(Labour) lost to Hopkin Morris by over 13,000 votes. The Liberal ascendancy was preserved by the two following members, both Nonconformist barristers, D. Owen Evans (1932-45) and E. Roderic Bowen (1945-66). Not until Bowen's majority shrank alarmingly at the 1964 election did it appear that Labour might repeat in Cardiganshire the success it had gained in so much of the rest of Wales.¹³¹

In some ways, the Liberal ascendancy in Cardiganshire might be seen as a negative, backward-looking movement. Certainly it was in large measure the product of a society that was largely passing away. After 1920, the old tirades against the bishop and the squire had little meaning. Once disestablishment was attained, political nonconformity lost much of its impetus, and became increasingly enervated. The rule of the gentry was also now a thing of the past. After the end of the First World War, with the new buoyancy in the land market induced by heavier death duties and inflated land values, the sale of estates went on apace. After 1945, even the great houses of Trawscoed and Gogerddan were to pass out of the hands of those families which had maintained them for so many centuries. In 1967, it was announced that Nanteos was to be sold also.¹³² A new generation of tenant farmers, newly settled in their freeholds, found themselves, in the inter-war years, far more oppressed by the banks and high interest rates than they had been by the rents of private landowners in the years before 1914. The price of social emancipation had been financial distress, and not until the Agriculture Act of 1947 did more stable conditions return for the farming community. The announcement by the Labour government in May 1967 that they would apply for membership of the European Common Market threatened hill farmers with the possibility of a return to the old insecurity.

In some respects, then, the victories won by Cardiganshire Liberals after 1885 proved to be somewhat empty ones—but that is often the way of victories. The forces against which the Liberals girded, though intangible, were not unreal. The Liberal ascendancy in Cardiganshire was part of an infinitely more complex process in British society, the ramifications of which were to prove ever more extensive. It was part of a changing attitude towards authority, a release from the old deference towards prescriptive rights and ancient tradition, an awareness that authority and power were things that were created rather than revealed. It was part of a process which brought new mobility to a poor, remote county, and new opportunities to the poorest of its people. The Liberal ascendancy in Cardiganshire was thus the spearhead of a far wider social revolution. It was symbolized, in an institution, by the new county council elected in 1889, and, in an individual, by the life of Dr. Tom Richards, as shown in his incom-

parable *Atgofion Cardi* which traces the progress of a poor farmer's boy to the heights of scholarly distinction. Through the revolution in which Tom Richards and many others of his generation shared, the 'spirit of vassalage', the 'feudal' spirit of 1868, had finally been exorcised. The people of Cardiganshire today are the heirs to that revolution. We can pay tribute to its architects, to our parents and grand-parents, that they forced it through, and that they bequeathed to us a more secure, a more satisfying, and a more hopeful future.

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APPENDIX : CARDIGANSHIRE ELECTION RESULTS, 1885-1923*

1885	(Popn. 70,270 ; reg. electorate 10,123)	David Davies (Lib.) M. Vaughan Davies (Con.)	5,967 3,644
1886	(Popn. 70,270 ; reg. electorate 12,308)	W. Bowen Rowlands (Lib.) David Davies (Lib. Un.)	4,252 4,243
1892	(Popn. 62,596 ; reg. electorate 13,155)	W. Bowen Rowlands (Lib.) William Jones (Lib. Un.)	5,233 3,270
‡1893	By-election : (July)	W. Bowen Rowlands (Lib.) unopposed	
1895	(Popn. 62,630 ; reg. electorate 12,994)	M. Vaughan Davies (Lib.) J. C. Harford (Un.)	4,927 3,748
1900	(Popn. 62,630 ; reg. electorate 13,300)	M. Vaughan Davies (Lib.) J. C. Harford (Un.)	4,568 3,787
1906	(Popn. 60,240 ; reg. electorate 13,215)	M. Vaughan Davies (Lib.) C. Morgan Richardson (Un.)	5,829 2,960
1910	(Jan.) (Popn. 60,240 ; reg. electorate 13,333)	M. Vaughan Davies (Lib.) G. F. Roberts (Un.)	6,348 2,943
1910	(Dec.)	M. Vaughan Davies (Lib.) unopposed	
1918	(Popn. 59,578 ; reg. electorate 30,368)	M. Vaughan Davies (Lib.) unopposed	
1921	By-election : (21 Feb.)	Capt. Ernest Evans (Co. Lib.) W. Llewelyn Williams (Ind Lib.)	14,111 10,521
1922	(Popn. 61,292 ; reg. electorate 32,695)	Capt. Ernest Evans (Co. Lib.) R. Hopkin Morris (Ind. Lib.)	12,825 12,310
1923	(Popn. 61,292 ; reg. electorate 32,881)	R. Hopkin Morris (Ind. Lib.) Capt. Ernest Evans (Lib.) Lord Lisburne (Con.)	12,469 7,391 6,776

*Sources : *The Times* surveys of elections; *Dod's Parliamentary Companion*; *Cambrian News*.

‡By-election necessary on Bowen Rowlands being appointed Recorder of Swansea.

NOTES

1. *Royal Commission on Land in Wales and Monmouthshire, Evidence*, Vol. III (P.P., 1895, XL), qu. 47,489 (J. M. Howell).
2. *Cambrian News*, 31 December 1909.
3. Ieuan Gwynedd Jones, 'Cardiganshire Politics in the Mid-Nineteenth Century', *Ceredigion*, V (1964), p. 15.
4. The main effect of the 1867 Act on the county franchise was the enfranchisement of the £12 occupation voter, this being based on the rateable value.
5. 'Return showing County and County Borough Constituencies and Constituencies as constituted by the "Redistribution of Seats Act, 1885"' (P.P., 1884-5, LXII, 271). Cardiganshire had sent two representatives to Westminster, one for the County and one for the Boroughs, since the Act of Union in 1536. The Boroughs constituency formerly consisted of five contributory boroughs, Aberystwyth, Cardigan, Lampeter, Adpar, and Tregaron, but Tregaron was disfranchised in 1730. Adpar had been disfranchised also in 1742, but its privilege was restored by the Reform Act of 1832.
6. Electoral statistics given in P.P., 1883, LIV, 369 ; and in P.P., 1888, LXXIX, 919. In 1888, the ownership voters numbered 2,516 and the occupation voters 9,786.
7. *Parl. Deb.*, 3rd ser., CCXCIV, 1953ff.
8. P.P., 1884-5, LXII, 271.
9. For the best discussion of this question see Cornelius O'Leary, *The Elimination of Corrupt Practices in British Elections, 1868-1911* (Oxford, 1962). On this, as on all aspects of the politics of the period, H. J. Hanham, *Elections and Party Management* (London, 1959) is an admirable guide. The same theme is discussed in Henry Pelling's invaluable *Social Geography of British Elections, 1895-1910* (London, 1967), pp. 11-13, 429-30.
10. For a magisterial discussion of this point see Ieuan Gwynedd Jones, loc. cit., pp. 31-6.
11. John Bateman, *The Great Landowners of Great Britain and Ireland* (4th edn., 1883), s.n. 'Lloyd'.
12. Henry Richard, *Letters on the Social and Political Condition of Wales* (London, 1867), p. 80.
13. For a discussion of the agricultural depression see F. M. L. Thompson, *English Landed Society in the Nineteenth Century* (London, 1963), pp. 308ff. The effect on Cardiganshire is discussed by many of the witnesses before the Welsh Land Commissioners in April 1894 (*Land Commission, Evidence*, Vol. III, P.P., 1895, XL, 338-752).
14. *Census of England and Wales, 1891 : General Report* (P.P., 1893-4, CVI, 642).
15. *Census of England and Wales, 1881* (P.P., 1883, LXXX, 511) ; *ibid.*, 1891 (P.P., 1893-4, CVI, 303). The definitive study of the leadmining industry is W. J. Lewis, *Leadmining in Wales* (Cardiff, 1967) ; see particularly pp. 170-201.
16. Richard Phillips, 'Oes Aur y Ceffylau', *Ceredigion*, V (1965), pp. 125ff.
17. *Census, 1891 : General Report* (P.P., 1893-4, CVI, 677).
18. Bateman, op. cit., p. 512.
19. *Land Commission, Evidence*, Vol. III (P.P., 1895, XL), qu. 47,822.
20. E. D. Lewis, *The Rhondda Valleys* (London, 1959), p. 236. This figure refers to the Ystradyfodwg Sanitary District.
21. *Census, 1891 : General Report* (P.P., 1893-4, CVI, 661).

22. J. M. Howells, 'The Crosswood Estate and its Growth and Economic Development, 1547—1899' (University of Wales unpublished M.A. thesis, 1956). This thesis is in all respects an admirable survey of its subject.
23. See H. A. Rhee, *The Rent of Agricultural Land in England and Wales, 1870—1943* (London, 1949). This bases its findings largely on Schedule A assessments of income tax (on income arising from the ownership of land). I have benefitted from conversation with Mr. David Howell, of the London School of Economics, whose researches into Welsh land problems in the nineteenth century will undoubtedly prove to be of fundamental importance.
24. F. M. L. Thompson, *op. cit.*, p. 318, citing *Estates Gazette*, 7 January 1888.
25. For the Lisburnes, see J. M. Howells, *op. cit.* On the Pryses, see David Jenkins, 'The Pryse Family of Gogerddan', *National Library of Wales Journal*, III (1953-4). There is an engaging and informative account in H. M. Vaughan, *The South Wales Squires* (London, 1926). Also helpful is Francis Jones, 'The Old Families of South-West Wales', *Ceredigion*, IV (1960), pp. 1ff.
26. Edmund Gosse, *Algernon Charles Swinburne* (London, 1917), p. 158. Also see H. M. Vaughan, *op. cit.*, pp. 82ff. There are some restricted, but unremarkable, letters from Swinburne in the Nanteos Papers, National Library of Wales.
27. J. C. Harford (1860—1934) married the second daughter of the Rt. Hon. H. C. Raikes in 1893. Bateman gives Harford's holdings as 5,782 acres, making him the fourth biggest landowner in the county.
28. Ieuan Gwynedd Jones, *loc. cit.*, p. 22.
29. All are included in *Who's Who in Wales*, 1920. Further details may be found in the local press, especially the *Cambrian News* and the *Welsh Gazette*. For Howell, the J. M. Howell Collection in N.L.W. contains some political material.
30. *Royal Commission on the Church and other Religious Bodies : Nonconformist Statistics* (P.P., 1910, XIX, 9, 18). The Methodist membership is given as 13,014, and that of the Independents as 11,465.
31. There is no good account of John Gibson and few letters from him have survived. There is much useful material in *Cambrian News : Jubilee Supplement*, 1880—1930, 16 January 1931. I am also grateful for the loan of the papers of J. H. Richards, a *Cambrian News* journalist, from Mrs. Haslett, Aberystwyth. The other major Liberal organ, *Welsh Gazette*, first appeared in 1899.
32. In 1886, Colonel Pryse was rejected by the Liberal Association because of his opposition to Gladstone's Irish home rule programme (*Cambrian News*, 2 July 1886). The family supported David Davies in the election but continued to regard themselves as Liberal. Lewis Pugh-Pugh of Abermâd, the Whig who sat as Liberal member for the county from 1880 to 1885, turned Unionist and campaigned for Davies in 1886 and William Jones in 1892.
33. M. Vaughan Davies to Lord Salisbury, 11 February 1886 (Christ Church Library, Oxford, Salisbury Papers, class E ; I am grateful to the present Lord Salisbury for permission to quote from these papers).
34. Viscount Emlyn to Lord Salisbury, 1 June 1888 (Salisbury Papers, class E) 'Private'. Emlyn's father, the second Earl of Cawdor, wrote to Salisbury in similar vein (31 May 1888).
35. Viscount Emlyn to Lord Salisbury, 1 June 1888. Davies-Evans, vice-chairman of the Carmarthenshire Quarter Sessions in 1888, owned no land in Cardiganshire at all.
36. *Royal Commissioner on Land in Wales, Report* (P.P., 1896, XXXIII, 277).
37. John Gibson to E. W. Evans, 13 March 1907 (N.L.W., Frondirion MSS., 10,851B).

- 37a. John Gibson to Lord Rendel, 8 January 1904 (N.L.W. Rendel MSS., 195). This followed a reduction of the journal's price to 1d.
38. *Royal Commission on Land in Wales, Evidence*, Vol. III (P.P., 1895, XL), qu. 9,493 (John Morgan's evidence). Morgan came under fire in 1895 for supporting Joseph Chamberlain's view that Unionists should concede disestablishment in Wales; see his letter to *The Times*, 1 March 1895, and *Liberal Magazine*, March 1895. For an exposition of Morgan's views at more length, see *Aberystwyth Observer*, 18 October 1900, in which he stressed the need for more self-government in the Church and for a limited measure of disendowment.
39. These figures are taken from the 1891 Census. In the registration district, out of a population of 86,383 (deducting infants), 61,624 were Welsh monoglot, and a further 17,111 bi-lingual. In the age structure, 177 per 1,000 were in the 45—65 age group and 88 per 1,000 over 65. Both these figures were the highest in Wales.
40. *Census of England and Wales*, 1881 and 1891.
41. There is an excellent biography of David Davies in Ivor Thomas, *Top Sawyer* (London, 1938). See particularly chapters XX—XXII.
42. This account of the 1885 election is based mainly on the *Cambrian News*, *Aberystwyth Observer*, and *South Wales Daily News*. There is important material in N.L.W. MS. 19,643B, the papers of H. C. Fryer, dealing with the 1885 election.
43. N.L.W. MS. 19,643B.
44. D. J. Jones to H. C. Fryer, 'Wednesday noon' (N.L.W., *ibid.*).
45. J. Davies to H. C. Fryer, 20 October 1885 (N.L.W., *ibid.*).
46. E. Thomas to H. C. Fryer, 23 November 1885 (N.L.W., *ibid.*).
47. H. Tobit Evans to H. C. Fryer, 18 November 1885 (N.L.W., *ibid.*). Another Liberal suspected, however, that Evans's efforts on behalf of David Davies were at best equivocal (N.L.W., Davies of Llandinam Papers, 301; D. J. Jones to Edward Davies, 6 March 1886).
48. Sir Stafford Northcote to M. Vaughan Davies, 23 April 1885 (*copy*); M. Vaughan Davies to A. Akers Douglas, 14 October 1885 (*copy*); M. Vaughan Davies to Lord Salisbury, 11 February 1886 (Salisbury Papers, class E).
49. T. E. Ellis to D. R. Daniel, cited in T. I. Ellis, *Cofiant Thomas Edward Ellis* (Liverpool, 1944), Vol. I, p. 194.
50. *Parl. Deb.*, 3rd ser., CCLXXXVI, 212ff. Leaseholders (Facilities of Purchase of Fee Simple) Bill. Also Thomas Evans to Edward Davies, 28 June 1886 (N.L.W., Davies of Llandinam Papers, 302).
51. *Parl. Deb.*, 3rd ser., CCCIII, 516.
52. *Cambrian News*, 9 July 1886. Davies decided to stand when the Liberal Association turned down Col. Pryse.
53. Ivor Thomas, *op. cit.*, p. 249n.
54. C. R. M. Talbot to Sir H. Hussey Vivian, 18 June 1886 (N.L.W., Vivian Papers). For a discussion of Welsh attitudes to Irish home rule, see Kenneth O. Morgan, *Wales in British Politics, 1868-1922* (Cardiff, 1963), pp. 68-75.
55. Although Gibson seems to have remained on cordial personal terms with the Davies family. See Gibson to Edward Davies, 1 and 7 May 1886 (N.L.W., Davies of Llandinam Papers, 303).
56. D. J. Jones to Edward Davies, 14 September 1886 (N.L.W., *ibid.*).
57. D. J. Jones to Edward Davies, 'Sunday Noon' (N.L.W., *ibid.*).
58. *Cambrian News*, 9 July 1886; *Aberystwyth Observer*, 10 July 1886. For a sketch of Bowen Rowlands see T. R. Roberts, *Eminent Welshmen* (Cardiff, 1908).

59. T. Davies to Edward Davies, 16 July 1886 (N.L.W., Davies of Llandinam Papers, 302).
60. *Aberystwyth Observer*, 17 July 1886.
61. David Davies to Lewis Edwards, 19 October 1886 (T. I. Ellis, ed., *Letters of Thomas Charles Edwards*, Aberystwyth, 1953, pp. 261-2).
62. *Cambrian News*, 3 June 1892. Jones's nomination brought many protests from orthodox Conservatives: see letter by G. Marshall Griffith in *The Times*, 26 August 1892.
63. *Aberystwyth Observer*, 16 June 1892. This meeting (at Aberystwyth) was largely disrupted by organized Liberal heckling.
64. No papers of Vaughan Davies survive. For character sketches of him see Ivor Thomas, *op. cit.*, pp. 231-2, 251-2, and Thomas Richards, *Atgofion Cardi* (Aberystwyth, 1960), ch. 6.
65. Vaughan Davies attended the Welsh Union of Conservative Associations on 29 July 1887 (W. H. Meredyth to Lord Salisbury, 2 August 1887, Salisbury Papers, class E).
66. N.L.W. MS. 19,658C (Minutes of Aberystwyth Women's Liberal Association). Mrs. Vaughan Davies was elected its first president in 1893. It put pressure on her husband to vote for women's suffrage (which he did).
67. *Aberystwyth Observer*, 21 July 1892.
68. *Cambrian News*, 24 October 1885, reporting a speech at Zoar Chapel, Borth (though cf. note 66 above).
69. *Land Commission, Report* (P.P., 1896, XXXIII, 307). See Vaughan Davies's evidence before the Land Commissioners, *Evidence*, Vol. III, qu. 47,068ff. and qu. 49,006ff.
70. *Cambrian News*, 15 February, 24 May 1895.
71. John Gibson to D. A. Thomas, 3 April 1894 (N.L.W., D. A. Thomas Papers). This must be an error for 3 May as the Land Commission did not reach Cardiganshire until 23 April.
72. J. M. Howell to J. H. Davies, 31 January 1895 (N.L.W., Cwrtmawr Collection).
73. J. H. Davies to J. M. Howell, 4 February 1895 (N.L.W., *ibid.*) ; *Cambrian News*, 5 April 1895.
74. *Cambrian News*, 24 May 1895. Philipps was created Viscount St. Davids in 1908.
75. There is a useful biography of Davies in T. I. Ellis, *John Humphreys Davies* (Liverpool, 1963).
76. J. M. Howell to J. H. Davies, 9 February 1895 (N.L.W., Cwrtmawr Collection).
77. Thomas Richards, *Atgofion Cardi*, p. 56.
78. *Cambrian News*, 5, 12 July 1895.
79. *Aberystwyth Observer*, 18 October 1900.
80. *Cambrian News*, 26 January 1906. Morgan-Richardson was treasurer of the Welsh Liberal Unionist Association. Rather surprisingly, he supported Joseph Chamberlain's proposals for tariff reform.
81. *Cambrian News*, 4 February 1910. The *Welsh Gazette* announced that the contest was one of 'beer against bread'.
82. *Cambrian News*, 19 October 1900 ; a comment by 'our Aberayron Correspondent' (? J. M. Howell).
83. N.L.W. MS. 19,658C ; N.L.W. MSS. 5425A and 5426C (Minute book of the Aberystwyth Junior Radical Club). Its chairman in 1888-9 was D. C. Roberts, and one of its leading members, J. Hugh Edwards, a student at the time and later to be M.P. for Mid-Glamorgan, 1910-22, and biographer of David Lloyd George.

84. *South Wales Daily News*, 8 January 1897 ; 10, 13 June 1898.
85. J. M. Howell to Thomas Jones, 11 April 1899 (N.L.W., Howell Collection, 27).
86. N.L.W. MS. 15,321 (Reminiscences of the Reverend Robert Lewis, tithe collector in southern Cardiganshire and northern Carmarthenshire).
87. *Parl. Deb.*, 4th ser., XVI, 1841ff. The protest concerned the failure to provide a 'county' school in the Lampeter area.
88. For a more extended discussion of this point see Kenneth O. Morgan, *Freedom or Sacrilege?* (Penarth, 1966), pp. 20ff.
89. *Land Commission, Evidence*, Vol. III, *passim*. See also J. E. Vincent, *The Land Question in South Wales* (1897).
90. *Land Commission, Evidence*, Vol. III, qu. 47,579—47,588.
91. *Land Commission, Report*, pp. 54-5.
92. J. M. Howell to Viscount Emlyn, 28 April 1897 ; Viscount Emlyn to Lord Salisbury, 6 June 1897 (Salisbury Papers, class E). The appeal failed.
93. See E. G. Bowen, 'From Antiquarianism to Archaeology, 1909—1959', *Ceredigion*, III (1959), especially pp. 260-1.
94. On this controversial election see T. I. Ellis, *John Humphreys Davies*, pp. 127-31, and Thomas Jones, *Welsh Broth* (London, 1951), pp. 156-61. When the Thomas Jones Papers in N.L.W. are made available to historians they will be seen to contain some intriguing information on this episode.
95. *Cambrian News*, 25 January 1889. See also H. M. Vaughan, *op. cit.*, p. 172.
96. N.L.W., Cardiganshire County Council Minute Book, 1889—1902.
97. N.L.W., Howell Collection : Minute Book of Liberal caucus on Cardiganshire County Council, 1892—4.
98. Ieuan Gwynedd Jones, *loc. cit.*, p. 15.
99. Arthur Marwick, *The Deluge* (London, 1965), p. 248.
100. *Census of England and Wales, 1921 : Preliminary Report* (P.P., 1921, XVI, 315—16). Aberystwyth municipal borough's population rose from 8,794 to 11,220 during these years.
101. For this episode see David Williams, *Thomas Francis Roberts* (Cardiff, 1960), pp. 44-5. Several prominent Aberystwyth academics took an anti-war position in journals such as *Y Wawr* and *Y Deyrnas*.
102. Evans's best-known works are *My People* (1915), *Capel Sion* (1917), and *My Neighbours* (1920). He eventually settled down in Aberystwyth.
103. *Cambrian News*, 29 November 1918 ; F. E. Guest to David Lloyd George, 20 July 1918 (Beaverbrook Library, Lloyd George Papers, F/21/2/56 : I am indebted to Mr. A. J. P. Taylor and the Beaverbrook Foundation for permission to work on these papers).
104. H. H. Asquith to J. M. Howell, 14 November 1919 (N.L.W., Howell Collection, 28). I have discussed Welsh politics at this period at greater length in 'Twilight of Welsh Liberalism : Lloyd George and the Wee Frees' (to be published in the *Bull. Bd. Celtic Studies* in May, 1968).
105. *John Davies* (Gregynog Press, privately printed, n.d. [1937]). From 1920 to his death he was secretary of the South Wales W.E.A.
106. *Cambrian News*, 7 January 1921. Vaughan Davies had latterly been chairman of the Welsh parliamentary party.
107. Sir George Younger to Bonar Law, 2 January 1921, quoted in Lord Beaverbrook, *Decline and Fall of Lloyd George* (London, 1963), p. 241.
108. J. Puleston Jones to J. M. Howell, 3 February 1921 (N.L.W., Howell Collection, 27).

109. *Welsh Gazette*, 27 January 1921 ; Kenneth O. Morgan, *Wales in British Politics*, pp. 277, 295.
110. There is, as yet, no satisfactory study of Llewelyn Williams. For instances of his earlier nationalist fervour see Kenneth O. Morgan, *ibid.*, pp. 70, 105-6, 110.
111. For the past few years Ernest Evans had served as one of Lloyd George's private secretaries in the ' Garden Suburb '.
112. For an analysis of local district associations, see *Welsh Gazette*, 20 January 1921. Also N.L.W., Herbert Lewis Papers, Lewis's diary *sub* 18 February 1921.
113. The account that follows is based largely on *Cambrian News*, *Welsh Gazette*, *South Wales News*, *Liverpool Daily Post*, *Manchester Guardian*, *The Times*, *Western Mail*. There is scattered MS. material in N.L.W. in the Herbert Lewis Papers and the J. M. Howell Collection, and in the Lloyd George Papers in the Beaverbrook Library.
114. *Welsh Gazette*, 3, 10 February 1921.
115. *Cambrian News*, 7 January 1921. Sir Lewes Pryse announced his withdrawal on 1 February (*Welsh Gazette*, 3 February 1921) ; thereafter he campaigned for Llewelyn Williams.
116. *Ibid.*, 11 February 1921.
117. Kenneth O. Morgan, *ibid.*, p. 295.
118. The answer is both.
119. *Cambrian News*, 18 February 1921 ; *Welsh Gazette*, 17 February 1921 ; *South Wales News*, February 1921 *passim*.
120. Marquess of Reading to David Lloyd George, 13 February 1921 (Lloyd George Papers, F/43/1/57).
121. The electorate in 1919 was 30,751 (17,075 men and 13,676 women) : P.P., 1919, XL, 797.
122. *Cambrian News*, 18 February 1921 (' David the Husbandman ') ; Lord Riddell, *Intimate Diary of the Peace Conference and After, 1918-23* (London, 1933), p. 279.
123. *Welsh Gazette*, 24 February 1921 ; Lord Riddell, *ibid.*, p. 279.
124. Lord Riddell, *ibid.*, p. 373.
125. This account of the 1922 general election is based on the *Cambrian News* and *Welsh Gazette*. The papers of Rhys Hopkin Morris in N.L.W. contain nothing on Cardiganshire politics.
126. Trevor Wilson, *The Downfall of the Liberal Party, 1914-35* (London, 1965), p. 237.
127. *The Times*, 23 November 1923, includes Captain Moreing among the Unionist candidates.
128. *Cambrian News*, 23 November 1923. Evans was technically the ' official Liberal ' candidate and exploited the fact in his election literature.
129. *Cambrian News*, 30 November 1923.
130. See speeches of Peter Jones (for the Coalitionists) and T. A. Levi (for the Independents).
131. Labour eventually captured the seat in 1966 on a 3 per cent. swing. A major factor in this victory seems to have been the record of Elystan Morgan as a former member (and vice-president) of Plaid Cymru. He continued to take a strongly nationalistic position in the Commons on such issues as an elected council for Wales and the status of the Welsh language.
132. Gogerddan was taken over by the U.C.W.'s Welsh Plant Breeding Station and Trawscoed by the Ministry of Agriculture. In April 1967 it was announced that Nanteos would have to be sold (*Cambrian News*, 21 April 1967).