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► To cite this version:

Mary-Ann Constantine, Fañch Postic. ‘C’est mon journal de voyage’ : La Villemarqué’s Letters from Wales, 1838-1839.. 2019. hal-02350747

HAL Id: hal-02350747

<https://hal.univ-brest.fr/hal-02350747v1>

Preprint submitted on 6 Nov 2019

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‘C’est mon journal de voyage’: La Villemarqué’s letters from Wales 1838-1839

Mary-Ann Constantine¹

At the beginning of October 1838 a delegation of Bretons led by Théodore Hersart de La Villemarqué arrived in Abergavenny in south Wales. They had been officially invited to take part in the Eisteddfod, the Welsh festival of literature and music revived at the end of the C18th. Organized by the Society of Cymreigyddion and centred on the social circle of Augusta Hall, Lady Llanover, this occasion also saw the first self-consciously ‘inter-Celtic’ exchange between Wales and Brittany—the fruition of many years correspondence and collaboration between scholars on both sides of the Channel, such as the historian Thomas Price ‘Carnhuanawc’, the lexicographer J.F. Le Gonidec, and La Villemarqué’s friend the writer Alexis-François Rio, who had married Apollonia Jones of Llanarth Court and become an influential and energetic member of the Llanover Circle.

The letters written and received by La Villemarqué during his five-month stay in Britain provide a vivid account not only of the lavish celebrations of October 1838, but of the world which produced them. Staying at the homes of many of the most influential figures in the Welsh Revival, he offers unique and often striking insights into the lives of his hosts and their guests, capturing the ornate interiors of their grand houses, many of which no longer exist. The correspondence also allows us to understand some of La Villemarqué’s scholarly preoccupations just before the publication of the first edition of the Barzaz-Breiz, and sheds more light on his researches into the Celtic origins of medieval Arthurian literature.

The letters by La Villemarqué and a number of other correspondents, along with various documents relating to his visit to Wales and England, can be found in the La Villemarqué family archives, held at the Archives Départementales in Quimper (fonds 263 J). They can be viewed under the heading ‘Fonds La Villemarqué’ in the digitised catalogue at the Centre de Recherche Bretonne et Celtique: bibnumcrbc.huma-num.fr.

¹ This introductory article draws on a long-standing collaboration with Fañch Postic, and owes a great deal to his work on the La Villemarqué archive over many years. I am extremely grateful to him and to Nelly Blanchard for their encouragement and support, and to David Parsons for his comments and corrections to this piece and to the letters. Further details about this collaborative edition, and plans for a fully bilingual version, can be found below.

‘C’est mon journal de voyage...’

‘mais rendez-moi un service, c’est de garder cette lettre et celles que je vous écrirai encore. c’est mon journal de voyage ; un jour, j’aurai du plaisir à le relire’

Abercarn, 28 October 1838²

Concluding a long and amusing letter to his sister Camille, written a fortnight after the exhausting festivities of the Abergavenny Eisteddfod, Théodore Hersart de La Villemarqué asks her to *keep this letter*, and all those he intends to write. They will form a kind of travel journal, he says, a record and a reminder of his time in Wales; he will, one day, enjoy re-reading them. The same request went to his father, and to another sister, Justine; many other letters, notes and documents relating to this journey were preserved besides. As a result, the family archive offers detailed insights into an intensive five-month period of encounters with Welsh and British culture which would influence La Villemarqué for the rest of his life.

The forty or so letters presented here begin with a vivid account of the departure of the ‘Breton delegation’ from St Malo at the end of September 1838, and their journey via Jersey, Southampton and Bristol to a warm welcome in south Wales. They finish with La Villemarqué’s return to Paris in early March 1839, and with one or two letters from British contacts sent after his departure. There would be further correspondence into the 1840s, continuing some of the conversations begun in Wales, but the aim in this edition has been to focus on the letters most pertinent to the journey itself. The preparations for the Bretons’ attendance at the Abergavenny Eisteddfod of 1838 and the years of scholarly contact between Wales and Brittany which lay behind it have been recently examined by Fañch Postic in his introductory article to the correspondence between La Villemarqué and Thomas Price.³ The ‘journal de voyage’ continues the story of this ‘inter-Celtic exchange’, revealing how the realities of the place the young student had envisaged from Paris as ‘la sainte terre de Cambria’⁴ corresponded to his romantic ideal.

² See Letter VII.

³ Fañch Postic, ‘La correspondance de Théodore Hersart de La Villemarqué avec Thomas Price (‘Carnhuanawc’), <https://hal.univ-brest.fr/hal-02316005/document> (2019). See also Prys Morgan, ‘Thomas Price “Carnhuanawc” (1747-1848) et les Bretons,’ *Triade, n°1 : Galles, Écosse, Irlande* (CRBC, 1995) 5-13.

⁴ Letter to Thomas Price [April] 1837 in Postic (2019), ‘La correspondance de Théodore Hersart de la Villemarqué’.

The visit to Wales in the autumn of 1838 has interested Celticists and those in the field of European Romanticism for some time, and the earlier letters in this edition, describing the intense week of celebration and ceremony in Abergavenny, have often been excerpted and discussed. La Villemarqué's son Pierre, his first biographer, included lengthy extracts in his account, recognising the formative nature of the journey, made when La Villemarqué was a student in his early twenties, on his later life.⁵ The self-consciously 'Celtic' nature of the exchange, and the rhetoric of a Brythonic brotherhood which enveloped it on both sides, was first examined by Francis Gourvil in a detailed account produced to coincide with the centenary of the Abergavenny Eisteddfod, and developed in his subsequent study of La Villemarqué's life and work.⁶ It has since been considered in relation to numerous broader topics, including the development of Breton nationalism, the second Welsh cultural revival focused on the Llanover Circle in south Wales and the growth of the Eisteddfod movement;⁷ the study of Arthurian literature;⁸ the concept of 'invented traditions' and the development of European nationalisms; and as an unusually interior-focused 'Welsh tour'.⁹ The web of connections, ideas, and ideologies embodied by the arrival of La Villemarqué and his friends in south Wales early in October 1838 constitute precisely the kind of 'Celticism' defined by Joep Leerssen: 'more than the sum of the peripheries' relations with their respective centres: it is also the story of these regions' sense of ethnic interrelatedness as 'Celts', and of the contacts between these peripheries mutually.'¹⁰

The letters published here extend and amplify these earlier discussions, permitting new shifts in focus, and bringing new insights. They are given in full, in transcripts which keep as close as possible to the originals – at times erratic, self-dramatizing and self-absorbed, they are also affectionate and playful, as well as witty and observant. The passage

⁵ Pierre Hersart de La Villemarqué, *La Villemarqué, sa Vie et ses Œuvres*, 2nd ed. (Paris, Champion, 1926).

⁶ Francis Gourvil, *Un centenaire : L'Eisteddfod d'Abergavenny (Septembre 1838) et les relations spirituelles Bretagne-Galles*, (Morlaix, 1938); idem, *Théodore-Claude-Henri Hersart de La Villemarqué (1815-1895) et le "Barzaz-Breiz" (1839-1845-1867)* (Rennes, Oberthur, 1960). See also Fañch Postic, 'Premiers échanges inter-celtiques: Le voyage de La Villemarqué au pays de Galles', *Armen*, n° 125, nov. 2001, 34-43.

⁷ Mair Elvet Thomas, *Afiaith yng Ngwent* (Caerdydd, 1978).

⁸ Hélène Bouget, 'La matière médiévale et la littérature française de La Villemarqué', in Nelly Blanchard et Fañch Postic (eds), *Au-delà du Barzaz-Breiz, Théodore Hersart de la Villemarqué* (Brest: CRBC, 2016), 107-34; Fañch Postic and Hélène Bouget, 'Popular Traditions and the Work of Hersart de la Villemarqué' in Ceridwen Lloyd-Morgan and Erich Poppe (eds), *Arthur in the Celtic Languages: The Arthurian Legend in Celtic Literatures and Traditions*, Arthurian Literature in the Middle Ages, IX (Cardiff, 2019), 304-19.

⁹ Nelly Blanchard, *Le Barzaz-Breiz: Une fiction pour s'inventer*, (Rennes, 2006); Mary-Ann Constantine, *The Truth Against the World: Iolo Morganwg and Romantic Forgery* (Cardiff, 2007) 145-98; eadem, 'La sainte terre de Cambrie: La Villemarqué et le romantisme gallois' in Blanchard and Postic (eds) *Au-delà du Barzaz-Breiz* 209-26, and 'Impertinent Structures: A Breton's Adventures in neo-Gothic Wales', *Studies in Travel Writing*, n°18.2 (2014), 134-47.

¹⁰ Joep Leerssen, 'Celticism', in Terence Brown (ed.) *Celticism* (Amsterdam, 1990), 18.

of time and events has largely neutralized the more sensitive aspects of the material, and the reader has the historical privilege of eavesdropping on accounts of minor social improprieties and marital unhappiness, of broken hearts and wounded pride (not to mention a sore thumb)¹¹ in some of the wealthiest and most influential families in south Wales, Oxford and London. La Villemarqué is almost novelistically interested in character, producing lively sketches of Augusta Hall and her family, and a remarkable pen portrait of Charlotte Guest, who seems to have fascinated and daunted him in equal measure. Paying little attention to the wilder land- and seascapes of other travellers in Wales (who usually visited in the summer), he delights instead in describing the lavish interiors and managed grounds of the great houses he visited, many of which (Llanover Court, Singleton Manor) had been recently remodelled in the latest neo-Gothic style by their wealthy industrialist owners. Dining to the strains of the harp, surrounded by suits of armour, waited on by velvet-clad servants—who spoke, apparently, both Welsh and French¹²—La Villemarqué surrenders completely to the heavy medievalism of this brand-new Victorian era (the coronation of the young queen had taken place only a few months earlier), and to a style of Welsh cultural nationalism which embraced the monarchy and opposed neither church nor state. ‘La sainte terre de Cambria’ delivers, on the face of it, something remarkably close to the ideal born of his studies in French romance and the medieval Welsh poetry of the *Myvyrian Archaology*.¹³

That ideal took on its most spectacular and compelling form during the Gorsedd ceremony of bardic initiation held during the celebrations. Summoned in his stockinged feet into a circle of stones,

j'ai été reçu selon les anciens rites des V^e et VI^e siècles, qui se sont transmis jusqu'à nous. on m'a fait jurer sur l'épée nue, et on m'a attaché au bras droit le ruban bleu de l'initiation, qui est la couleur des bardes.¹⁴

I was sworn in according to the ancient rites of the Vth and VIth centuries, which have been handed down to our own time. I was made to swear an oath on a naked sword, and they attached to my right arm the blue ribbon of initiation, which is the colour of the bards

¹¹ See Letter VIII.

¹² See Letter III.

¹³ For the compilation of this key edition of medieval Welsh texts see Mary-Ann Constantine, ‘Welsh Literary History and the Making of “The Myvyrian Archaology of Wales”’, in Dirk Van Hulle and Joep Leerssen (eds), *Editing the Nation's Memory : Textual Scholarship and Nation-Building in Nineteenth- Century Europe* (Amsterdam, 2008), 109-28.

¹⁴ See Letter VIII.

‘Je suis barde maintenant’, wrote La Villemarqué to his father, ‘vraiment barde! barde-titré!!’ Of all the many honours he received during his visit this touched him most deeply, and carried the most significance. As is clear from articles he had already published in *L’Echo de Jeune France*, and from the lengthy introduction to his collection of Breton ballads, the *Barzaz-Breiz* (which was well in hand before his visit to Wales, and would be published very soon after his return to France), he was already fully committed to the concept of a native ‘bardic’ tradition—by then a powerful component of many European Romantic nationalisms, derived via *Ossian* and Herder out of earlier eighteenth-century antiquarian interest in historic ‘primitive’ societies, and heavily blended with elements of imagined and invented pasts. The Gorsedd ceremony itself, created in the early 1790s by the Glamorgan stonemason Edward Williams (Iolo Morganwg), was one such invented tradition, by now firmly embedded in the proceedings of the competitive literary and musical *eisteddfodau* which were flourishing at local and national level. There is no hint in La Villemarqué’s letters that he had any doubts about its ancient pedigree; he would have been hard pressed at this point to find any sceptical voices in the Welsh scholarly and social circles in which he moved. Indeed, Iolo Morganwg’s son, the schoolmaster Taliesin Williams, continued to channel his father’s bardic vision in all good faith, preparing key texts from the voluminous and chaotic manuscript collection for publication. In his role as President of the Merthyr Tydfil Cymreigyddion, Taliesin Williams brought his own ‘delegation’ to Lady Charlotte Guest’s house in Dowlais, bearing an elaborately-worded letter ‘to announce to M. de la Villemarqué’ (as Guest noted wryly in her private journal) ‘that he was elected a member of the same’.¹⁵

For La Villemarqué the scholar a crucial problem, however, was how to define a ‘native’ Breton tradition: after all, the further back in time one went, the more closely the Brythonic languages and cultures appeared to merge. In many ways this proved useful, in that early Welsh texts could be co-opted as ‘Breton’ to fill gaps in a relatively poor written literary inheritance,¹⁶ but it did pose difficulties for anyone attempting to define a specifically Armorican bardic tradition. The question gains added urgency when set in the context of one of the major scholarly debates of the period, the ultimate origins of the various narratives in the sprawling, Europe-wide, endlessly inventive Arthurian cycle, whose major texts were gradually being transcribed and edited in ways which would allow for a comparative

¹⁵ See Letter XXI.

¹⁶ See, for example, La Villemarqué’s later publications, *Les Contes populaires des anciens Bretons* (1841) and *Les Bardes Bretons, poèmes du VIème siècle* (1850), both of which play on the ambiguity of the term Breton/British.

approach. It is a question, as H el ene Bouget has shown, to which La Villemarqu e would often return, beginning with the essay submitted for one of the competitions at the 1838 eisteddfod and pursued over decades in various subsequent publications, the *Barzaz-Breiz* amongst them.¹⁷

Shortly before his visit to Wales he had himself been involved in providing comparative material for Lady Charlotte Guest’s translation and edition of the Welsh tales of the *Mabinogion*, transcribing part of Chr etien de Troyes’ *Yvain, ou Le Chevalier au Lion* for her edition of the cognate Welsh romance *Owain*.¹⁸ That text went to press during his visit, and as four surviving letters from Guest’s publisher William Rees reveal, the form of words acknowledging the Breton’s contribution to her work became a source of tension between them: La Villemarqu e seems to have asked to have the words ‘published by the Comte de La Villemarqu e’ inserted after the *Chevalier* section, a suggestion Rees turns down on the grounds that the words ‘convey to an English person an idea of your being the printer or bookseller & not you having revised or edited the work.’¹⁹ But Guest herself was also clearly unhappy with the notion of La Villemarqu e claiming some kind of joint authorship: ‘I cannot consent to any one’s name being introduced into the body of a work entirely published by myself and at my sole risk & expense such a course you are well aware would be contrary to all established customs and opinions in this country’.²⁰ A note scribbled on this letter offers some explanation for the Breton’s insistence: ‘I had replied to the bookseller [Rees] that I was obliged as a student of the  cole des Chartes to have my name placed at the end of the Chev. au Lion and my note.’²¹ As a compromise Rees offered to produce three offprints of the *Chevalier* text alone, with the wording he desired. The episode (variously interpreted as a genuine *malentendu* or as an act of hubris on the part of the young Viscount) left relations strained.²² Although his Christmas visit to the Guests at Dowlais was full of gratifyingly dramatic moments—dinner with the exotically-clad Turkish minister for Education, a night-

¹⁷ See Bouget, ‘La mati re m di vale’, for what appears to be a draft of La Villemarqu e’s submission for the 1838 prize ‘For the Best Essay on the influence which the Welsh Traditions have had on European Literature’; the topic would be reprised in 1840, when La Villemarqu e competed again. See Gourvil, *Th odore-Claude-Henri Hersart de La Villemarqu e*, 95-96.

¹⁸ For a useful historical survey of the perceived relationship of the Welsh and French Arthurian texts, and for Guest’s role in starting this debate, see Ceridwen Lloyd-Morgan and Erich Poppe, ‘The First Adaptations from French: History and Context of a Debate’, in Lloyd-Morgan and Poppe (eds), *Arthur in the Celtic Languages*, 110-16. This volume also contains helpful in-depth studies of the three Welsh tales (*Owain*, *Geraint* and *Peredur*) traditionally classified as ‘romances’.

¹⁹ See Letter XXIII.

²⁰ See Letter XXVI.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² See, for example Revel Guest and Angela V. John, *Lady Charlotte Guest: An Extraordinary Life*, 2nd ed (Tempus, 2007) 109; Bouget, ‘La mati re de Bretagne’, 129.

view of the blazing furnaces—Charlotte Guest, who was much the same age as La Villemarqué, was clearly less inclined to make a fuss of him than Augusta Hall had been at Llanover, or Mary Jones at Llanarth Court. He would vividly capture his perception of her *froidueur*—‘as if there were an invisible wall between us’—in a long letter to his closest confidante, his sister Camille, written after his visit to Dowlais.²³ Matters were not improved when, just before leaving for France, he commissioned one of her closest scholarly advisors, the poet John Jones (Tegid), to transcribe the Welsh text of *Peredur* from the Red Book of Hergest in Oxford—thereby sparking a race with Guest (who, as he well knew, was working her way through all the Welsh romances) to produce the first published edition.²⁴

La Villemarqué’s relationship with John Jones also emerges in more detail in these letters. In spite of the dazzle surrounding the young Breton ‘Comte’, which ensured his popularity wherever he went, it does appear to be based on genuine affection and regard, as well as a shared commitment to the idea of the mutual comprehensibility of their respective languages. ‘We have spent entire delightful days speaking Breton’, La Villemarqué told Camille on 28 October: ‘We understand each other perfectly, this Welshman and I.’²⁵ Tegid, for his part, wrote at least one letter to La Villemarqué entirely in Welsh, and sprinkled his English with Welsh phrases in others: it is, intriguingly, a rather stilted kind of Welsh, which seems to be straining both syntactically and orthographically to appear more Breton.²⁶ He addresses poems to him, and also seems (although in the flurry of letters surrounding this last-minute request it is hard to be quite certain) to have taken on the onerous task of transcribing *Peredur*, at the risk of offending Charlotte Guest, in all good faith and as an act of friendship.²⁷ The idea of mutual understanding had already proved a powerful strand in the discourse of fraternity generated on both sides during the celebrations at Abergavenny. Speeches, poems, and most memorably La Villemarqué’s performance of his *Kan Aouen Eisteddvod* (‘the effects of which astonished even myself; the applause was deafening’) all invoked the concept of an instinctive and natural ability to communicate, derived from their

²³ See Letter LXXIX, which shows that Guest had other, more pressing, concerns during the Breton’s visit.

²⁴ Rachel Bromwich, ‘The Mabinogion and Lady Charlotte Guest’, *Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion* (1986) 127–41; Sioned Davies, ‘A Charming Guest: Translating the Mabinogion’, *Studia Celtica* 38 (2004), 157–78.

²⁵ Letter VII.

²⁶ Letter XVII.

²⁷ Letter XXXIII (Letter to La Villemarqué. 22 February 1839); but see also the later letters copied by Molly Hanbury Leigh, Letter XXXVIII.

shared ‘blood’, their shared ‘roots’.²⁸ Although Thomas Price, after many conscientious experiments made while travelling in Brittany some ten years earlier, had concluded ‘that the thing is utterly *impossible*’, Tegid and La Villemarqué appear to have found ways to sustain the illusion of ‘mutual intelligibility’.²⁹

At Christmas, through his contacts with the family in Christ Church, Oxford, Tegid engineered an invitation for them both to the north Welsh residence of the powerful landowner Sir Watkin Williams Wynn at Wynnstay, near Wrexham, and was clearly distressed when La Villemarqué (already booked at the Guests) turned it down, regretting the lost opportunity to examine the nearby Brogyntyn manuscripts, and noting rather poignantly that ‘Syr Watkin’s son had prepared two bedrooms, one for you, and one for me.’³⁰ A north Welsh tour would have made an interesting extension to these letters, and it is a matter of some regret that this Breton traveller, with his eye for ornate interiors, did not get the opportunity to describe the house at Wynnstay. There were other near misses. While most of the Welsh gentry were falling over themselves to play host to the Breton Viscount, the Vaughans of Nannau, responding to a request from Molly Anne Hanbury-Leigh in January, sounded decidedly cautious: ‘We shall be at home some time and if your Friend comes shall do all we can to make him comfortable but as we do not speak any French I fear we shall not be able to give him any information.’ And the famous Hengwrt manuscripts, notoriously difficult of access to scholars throughout the eighteenth century, would not be available to him either: ‘As to my Brother’s Welch MSS at Hengwrt they were packed up two years ago when the House was repairing and have not yet been unpacked so your Friend could not see any of them.’³¹

The question of manuscripts is pertinent. Shortly before his departure for Wales La Villemarqué had been awarded a grant of six hundred francs by the French government ‘pour étudier la langue et la littérature galloise, dans ses rapports avec la langue et la littérature bretonne, et pour consulter les mss Gallois de la Bibliothèque du collège de Jesus à Oxford’.³² This ‘mission’ was his reason for remaining after the other Bretons had returned

²⁸ Letter VI. Gourvil, ‘Un centenaire’, describes some of the poems and speeches declaimed, but the discourse of mutual intelligibility in this textual group as a whole, French, English, Breton and Welsh, would merit further study.

²⁹ Jane Williams (ed.), *Literary Remains of the Rev. Thomas Price*, 2 vols (Llandoverly: William Rees, 1854-55), I, 35. Also discussed in Constantine, *The Truth Against the World*, 157-58.

³⁰ Letter XXII.

³¹ Archives La Villemarqué 27.024.

³² ‘to study the Welsh language and literature and its relations to the language and literature of Brittany; and also to consult the Welsh manuscripts in the library of Jesus College, Oxford’. Archives La Villemarqué LV02.040. Fañch

home, and would result in an official report to the Ministry submitted on 10 May 1839.³³ It is an assured, well-written piece, offering an overview of the manuscript sources for early Welsh literature and giving French readers a flavour of the poetry of Taliesin, Aneirin, and Llywarch Hen, as well as of the later prose tales, particularly the Arthurian romances. Referring deftly to a range of named manuscripts and their current owners, La Villemarqué does not often specify which of these he has actually seen; this can be misleading, as when he describes the manuscripts at Hengwrt (which we now know were ‘all packed up’ and not available to view) in the same breath as those he did examine at Jesus College; it does not therefore seem likely that he actually saw the Black Book of Carmarthen, which remained at Hengwrt until the death of Sir Robert Williams Vaughan in 1859.³⁴ Recent work on the La Villemarqué archives is beginning to offer more clues as to which manuscripts he did manage to see,³⁵ but in truth there is little in the report that could not have been taken from the summary of main Welsh manuscripts in the *Myvyrian Archaiology* (1801-07) and the discussion of the early Welsh texts in Sharon Turner’s *Vindication of the Genuineness of the Ancient British Poems of Aneurin, Taliesin, Llywarch Hen and Merdhin* (1803).³⁶ The most striking find to emerge from La Villemarqué’s research, however, was entirely his own:

la langue de Taliesin est exactement celle que parlent aujourd’hui les paysans de Basse-Bretagne; nous leur avons lu des fragments de ces chants, et ils les ont compris, tandis que les savants gallois ne les entendent qu’avec peine³⁷

the language of Taliesin is exactly the same as that spoken by the peasants of Lower Brittany; we have read them fragments of these songs, and they have understood them, where scholars of Welsh struggle to make sense of them.

Further on in the report he notes that the three Arthurian Welsh romances are so ‘riddled with Bretonisms’ and with references to ‘customs and traditions still practised by the

Postic notes that only two years earlier the same ministry had refused a similar request from the lexicographer Le Gonidec on the grounds that Celtic was merely ‘un patois moderne’ and could have no early manuscripts. ‘La correspondance de Théodore Hersart de La Villemarqué avec Thomas Price’ <https://hal.univ-brest.fr/hal-02316005/document>.

³³ ‘Un rapport de M. de La Villemarqué’, *Le Clocher Breton*, 128 (February, 1906), 1096-99 and 129 (March, 1906), 1109-12.

³⁴ ‘Un rapport de M. de la Villemarqué’, 1098.

³⁵ See Postic and Bouget, ‘Popular Traditions and the Work of Hersart de La Villemarqué’, 310. Their analysis of a 342-page notebook dated 1839 includes the Red Book of Hergest at Jesus, the Black Book of Carmarthen and Norfolk MS 220 from the Royal Society. It is difficult to see how he could have viewed the Black Book, but the Norfolk MS may have been made available in London through Hudson Gurney of Norwich (1775-1864), Fellow of the Royal Society and of the Society of Antiquaries (see Letter XXXI).

³⁶ Sharon Turner (1768-1847) was a pioneer historian of Anglo-Saxon England; when his use of Welsh sources was criticized he produced his *Vindication of the Genuineness of the Ancient British Poems of Aneurin, Taliesin, Llywarch Hen and Merdhin* (London, 1803).

³⁷ ‘Un rapport de M. La Villemarqué’, 1098.

Breton peasantry’, that there can be little doubt of their original Armorican provenance.³⁸ The ease with which the modern Breton speaker can penetrate texts grown strange and difficult to the Welsh underscores again the notion of mutual intelligibility, but also goes beyond it. If Breton culture has remained unchanged, and true to its origins, where Welsh (particularly after the Reformation)³⁹ has grown away and become distanced, then the genuine Brythonic tradition rests in Brittany, on the lips of the peasantry; this theme, and much of the report itself, would be reprised at length in the Introduction to the *Barzaz-Breiz*, which came out at the end of August 1839. La Villemarqué completed the official account of his mission to Wales with a vivid description of the bardic ceremony, and the ‘electric’ effect of his song on an audience who, after a gap of ‘thirteen hundred years’ had recognized and understood his Breton.⁴⁰

The amount of first-hand research La Villemarqué actually managed to undertake during his stay remains a matter of debate, but the letters do tend to support Francis Gourvil’s rather severe assessment of the situation.⁴¹ From the middle of October until at least the middle of January, La Villemarqué was socially very much in demand, to the inevitable detriment of his work. There were visits to Bristol, Stonehenge and Glastonbury, to Samuel Meyrick’s extraordinary faux-medieval castle at Goodrich Court, to the Guests at Dowlais and to the new Gothic mansion at Singleton in Swansea: ‘Much of my time is spent visiting. I am drowning in invitations. Nevertheless, I work in the gaps between comings and goings; yes indeed, I have a book to write.’⁴² Gourvil argues that La Villemarqué’s time in Oxford, perhaps not more than three or four days, was not long enough for him to do any serious work on the medieval Welsh texts preserved in Llyfr Coch Hergest.⁴³ A letter from Augusta Hall to Tegid allows us to extend that period to a full week between the fifth and twelfth of February, when he arrived in London, but it is still doubtful whether, even with the help of John Jones, this could have given him much more than a passing knowledge of the material, especially as Oxford proved almost as demanding socially. Hall’s note, moreover, does not conceal her frustration at the various opportunities lost:

³⁸ Ibid, 1109.

³⁹ The *Barzaz-Breiz* would include a scathing attack on the ‘sectes protestantes qui déchirent et dépoétisent ce malheureux pays’ (the Protestant sects which tear apart and depoeticize this unhappy country’ (*BB* 1839, I, lxxiii). Religious difference is a complicating strand running through these letters, and acquires a particular poignancy in the wake of events at the Vivians’ New Years’ festivities in Singleton (See Letter XXIV).

⁴⁰ Ibid, 1112.

⁴¹ Gourvil, *Théodore-Claude-Henri Hersart de La Villemarqué*, 71-72.

⁴² Letter XIV.

⁴³ Gourvil clearly underestimates the number of days La Villemarqué spent in Oxford, implying that may not have been longer than 9-11 February.

Pray stir V.M. up not to fritter away his time but to pursue one object steadily & above all not to think that he can write a History of Wales with¹ moveing from his chair at Llanarth or PontyPool. He has great talents, good feelings – a real sincerity in the cause – his Fault is unsteadiness of purpose – when surrounded by people who care nothing about his objects – especially when those persons are ladies⁴⁴

There is a subtext here, since Augusta Hall had been the first to give him a lodging in Wales, nursing him through a fever to which he succumbed almost immediately after arriving, and delighting in looking after him and, one suspects, showing him off at dinners and soirées. Reluctant to ‘lend’ him even to close friends such as the Jones’s of Llanarth Court (‘I scarcely get to spend a few days here before Lady Hall sends for me on the slightest of pretexts’)⁴⁵ she was doubtless more put out by his stay at Pontypool House, where he was a guest of the Lord Lieutenant of Monmouthshire, Capel Hanbury-Leigh, and his wife Molly Anne. This latter, after an unpromising *entrée* earlier in the correspondence (La Villemarqué entertainingly mimics her stageiness, and likens her to a famous comic actress) becomes a powerful organising presence during the second half of his stay, working tirelessly to fix him up with invitations to the great and the good in Oxford and London and distracting him after a brief but heart-breaking love-affair at Singleton in Swansea. Mrs Hanbury Leigh, he tells his sister:

is extremely fond of me and calls me ‘her son!’; she often says to me: while you are over here, you have *two* mothers, my friend Madame Jones and myself! This from the wife of the Lord Lieutenant, one of the most highly regarded women in this country, and worth a million a year!⁴⁶

Indeed, important as these letters are for establishing biographical and ideological contexts for the *Barzaz-Breiz*—a book which had a profound effect on the course of Breton scholarship, and helped to shape Breton nationalist discourse into the twentieth century—it is sometimes hard not to be distracted by the thought that La Villemarqué (who cites several contemporary writers, including George Sand and Madame de Stael) might have made a better novelist than Celticist. He is especially keen, especially when writing to his sister, to capture the characters and mannerisms of the women

⁴⁴ Letter XXVII.

⁴⁵ Letter XI.

⁴⁶ Molly Anne Hanbury-Leigh, née Molly Anne Myers (1768-1846), had been previously married to Sir Robert Humphrey Mackworth of the Gnoll estate near Swansea; widowed in her twenties, she married Capel Hanbury-Leigh in 1797. In 1842 La Villemarqué dedicated his *Contes Populaires des Anciens Bretons* to her, evoking a magical visit they had made to the Arthurian site of Caerleon, and thanking her for enabling his studies in the libraries holding the manuscripts of the three Welsh romances presented in his publication. In the Introduction these texts are described as ‘d’origine armorique’, and Charlotte Guest’s translations from the Welsh (on which his own translations into French appear to have relied) are credited rather ambiguously (xiv-xv).

he meets—their varying types of beauty, their moral qualities, their intelligence.⁴⁷ Between the unaffected warmth and liveliness of Augusta Hall at Llanover and the compelling piety of Mary Jones at Llanarth there are many entertaining vignettes: of the pretty Miss ‘Sharley’ (Shirley), courted by the vulgar ironmaster, who ends up developing a crush on Sir Benjamin Hall and spends hours weeping in her room; of Mme Berrington, Augusta Hall’s sister-in-law, unhappily married to a man who abuses her; of a friend of the family whom he visits, stuck with her uncle’s family in a decaying country house just outside Banbury, whose letter to him, poignantly full of detailed travel advice about coaches and trains, speaks volumes about her isolation. The best and most ambitious ‘portrait’ of all is that of Guest, whose ‘mind fulfils the functions of the heart, and replaces it’, and whose brusque and often unconventional comments clearly floored him on more than one occasion. His warmest relationships are, undoubtedly, with older, motherly women, and he remains relatively detached from the British belles—until the night of a New Year masked ball at Singleton House, Swansea, the recently-refurbished home of the copper-master, John Henry Vivian. Here, in an impeccable romance setting—suits of armour, rich furnishings, marble and mirrors—he comes across a young woman playing the harp. She is ‘Miss Betsy’, the Vivians’ eldest daughter, and it does not take long before the pair fall in love. An anguished letter to Camille (a fortunate survival in the archive, since other letters on this subject, as one might expect, have not survived) explains why the alliance is doomed, and the tragic episode is even transmuted into a traditional tale: ‘There was once a young Breton prince who loved a Welsh princess, and who wished to marry her; but this princess had been transformed into a swan...’⁴⁸ La Villemarqué is left to the orchestrated distractions of Molly Hanbury Leigh at Pontypool House, and the preparations for his trip to Oxford. In this society which is not only heavily medievalist in taste, but also deeply invested in recovering its ‘ancient’ national literature, songs, and costumes in the face of a rapidly modernizing and industrializing world, La Villemarqué’s ‘journal de voyage’ becomes in itself a kind of romance-quest—a courtly meta-text of a young man’s adventures amidst fashionable fair ladies in neo-Gothic chateaux.

La Villemarqué’s letters from Wales, Oxford and London flicker continually between the ideal and the real, assessing the similarities and differences—social, political, religious, linguistic, culinary, gendered—between the Brittany he has come from, and the Wales he

⁴⁷ The rather enigmatic notes to Letter XXIX, for example, look like an attempt to classify some of the women he met into types.

⁴⁸ Letter XXIII. La Villemarqué’s father, in a letter which has not survived, appears to have been firmly against the match, presumably on religious grounds.

encounters. At the social level the transition is relatively smooth, moving as he does amongst the educated upper classes, many of them well-travelled and conversant in other languages, and sharing more, no doubt, with their European counterparts at the top of the social scale than any of them did with their labouring-class compatriots. Ideologically too, as we have seen, the notion of a seamless Celtic cultural continuum, a shared language, shapes his perception of the society he encounters and helps him to feel that he understands it. Some of the tangled ironies this generated are perhaps easier to see with hindsight. The perceived rifts between a Catholic Celtic culture which has remained true to the ancient ways, and a Protestant Celtic culture which has rejected them, can already be traced as hairline cracks in several letters here.⁴⁹ And La Villemarqué's rose-tinted evocation of a society united by its respect for the Welsh language, evoked in his report to the ministry of Education as 'une heureuse harmonie entre pauvre et riche', looks rather different when set in its actual political context, namely the rapid growth of Chartism amongst the workers in the coal and iron industries owned by many of his hosts, whose wealth underpinned a cultural revival promoting a rather different vision of the 'people'.⁵⁰ A year after the celebrations at Abergavenny, in November 1839, an armed uprising took place in Newport, barely twenty miles away; around 22 of the protestors were killed. In a rather grotesque twist, some of the weapons used by the Chartists would end up in Samuel Meyrick's magnificent collection in Goodrich Court: another strange meeting of the medieval and the modern in 'la sainte terre de Cambria'.⁵¹

Class, money and social status offer continual scope for comparison, and form another leitmotif in these letters. La Villemarqué's admiration for the poet John Jones (Tegid), is bound up with a rather romanticized sense of him as a man of the people, and hence a 'proper' bard. In his report to the Ministry, for example, Tegid is referred as the 'fils d'un paysan de Bala' and (rightly) credited with playing an important role in the publication of Guest's *Mabinogion*: yet in claiming that 'the people' are in some sense thus responsible for the great merits of Guest's work, he does not reveal that this 'son of a peasant' is a highly educated scholar and clergyman, and Precentor of Christ Church, Oxford.⁵² At the other end

⁴⁹ See Yann Celton, 'La Villemarqué, un catholique dans son siècle', in Blanchard and Postic (eds) *Au-delà du Barzaz-Breiz*, 83-103.

⁵⁰ 'Un rapport de M. de la Villemarqué', 1111. See Constantine, 'Impertinent Structures', for a more detailed discussion.

⁵¹ Rosalind Lowe, *Sir Samuel Meyrick and Goodrich Court* (Almeley, 2004), 194.

⁵² 'au peuple encore, aux bardes, reviendra en partie le mérite de l'importante publication qu'a entreprise lady Charlotte Guest'. 'Un rapport de M. de la Villemarqué', 1112. For John Jones (Tegid) see <https://biography.wales/article/s-JONE-JOH-1792>.

of the scale, while La Villemarqué is often open-mouthed at the displays of wealth he encounters, he is not unaware of the value British society places on his own status as nobility (and indeed of the general perception that he was a special envoy from King Louis Philippe): ‘Heavens’, he writes to his sister Justine after his trip to Bristol, ‘what it means to have a title in this country of England—never, without a doubt, no never again will I be welcomed, celebrated, and honoured as I am here every single day and have been up to now’.⁵³ La Villemarqué arrived in Wales as one of a delegation, but he was also, from the outset, very much *the* one (‘M. de La Villemarqué’, his friend Rio had teased him earlier, ‘est attendu comme le Messie’).⁵⁴ And it was a truly auspicious arrival: reaching the border at Chepstow, as many tourists had done before him, he was thrilled by the dramatic, and promisingly medieval, view of the river and castle ‘in the loveliest sunshine in the world: sparkling water running at its feet, the sky trailing a few scattered clouds, but otherwise pure blue: it was a stunning picture’.⁵⁵ These letters tell the story of what happened when he crossed through that picture’s frame.

⁵³ Letter X.

⁵⁴ Cited in Postic, ‘La correspondance de Théodore Hersart de La Villemarqué avec Thomas Price’ <https://hal.univ-brest.fr/hal-02316005/document>.

⁵⁵ Letter III.

**Letters written and received by Théodore Hersart de la Villemarqué
during his visit to Wales and England (1838–1839)**

An edition and translation by Mary-Ann Constantine and Fañch Postic

About this edition

The letters sent by Théodore Hersart de La Villemarqué to his family during his stay in Wales and England form a kind of travel journal. They are held in the La Villemarqué Archive at the Archives Départementales at Quimper (fonds 263 J) and can be viewed under the heading ‘Fonds La Villemarqué’ in the digital catalogue at the Centre de Recherche Bretonne et Celtique: bibnumcrbc.huma-num.fr. This edition also includes letters from a range of other correspondents received by La Villemarqué during his stay in Britain, with one or two letters included which were sent after his return to Paris.

This selection of correspondence is the result of a long-standing collaboration between the two editors, one in Brittany, and one in Wales, and draws on work completed by both of them over many years. The challenging task of transcribing La Villemarqué’s letters to his family was undertaken by Fañch Postic; translations of Welsh and French are by Mary-Ann Constantine, and the notes to the letters are by both editors.⁵⁶ Unclear or illegible words and sections are indicated in the original French texts, which also adhere to the original punctuation and orthography. The English translation, aiming for readability as well as accuracy, has been a little freer with punctuation, and while attempting to preserve the distinctive feel of different voices has not attempted to mimic all their idiosyncrasies of style. This English-language edition of La Villemarqué’s letters from Wales, will, we hope, eventually appear in a fully bilingual format, illustrated with contemporary images of some of the extraordinary places and people he visited and described.

⁵⁶ We are also grateful to David Parsons for comments and corrections to the texts.

Lettre I

**De Théodore Hersart de La Villemarqué à son père Pierre Hersart de La
Villemarqué⁵⁷**

S^t malo Vendredi [28 septembre 1838]

J'ai voyagé de Kemperlé, ici, avec Antoine maudit, mon cher papa. à Vannes nous avons pris Francheville, sans nous en douter, ce n'est que plus loin, bien avant dans la nuit qu'il a reconnu ma voix, et qu'il est venu nous rejoindre dans le coupé. nous n'avons point trouvé de place dans la diligence de Rennes à S^t malo ; il nous a fallu prendre une voiture de louage, qui nous a conduit ici hier au soir, pas trop incommodément. Dumarchalla et L. Jacquilot y étaient déjà depuis le matin. m^f Rio, n'était pas encore arrivé.

nous avons passé la journée d'aujourd'hui à parcourir la ville et les remparts, d'où l'on jouit d'une vue magnifique. nous avons vu le tombeau de m^f de Chateaubriant [sic], dans la petite île du grand bey ; c'est une excavation faite dans le rocher, avec une pierre pour couverture, et surmontée d'une croix de fer.

Je viens d'aller prendre la lettre de ma tante Sophie que je croyais ne pas recevoir de sitôt ; elle m'y donne des détails sur la santé de mon oncle. Il a eu ces jours derniers la fièvre quarte « qui a été très difficile à couper, dit ma tante, l'irritation de la poitrine et des entrailles ne permettant pas de faire usage de quinine à l'intérieur, enfin, appliquée sur un vésicatoire, on a fini par réussir à lui enlever le surcroît de maux. mais il a produit un autre, actuellement il ne peut plus remuer la jambe sur laquelle on a posé le vésicatoire, et est dans un état épouvantable. en outre les quintes de toux sont encore plus fatigantes que jamais. » C'est fort triste comme vous voyez. Charles a aussi une gastrite.

Quant à moi j'ai supporté le voyage à merveille ; et grâce au bouillon, et aux poulets que je me suis fait servir sur toute la route, je suis arrivé ici sans avoir le moins du monde souffert

⁵⁷ Archives La Villemarqué LV 02.022. Lettre adressée à : Monsieur De la Villemarqué au Plessix Nizon près Kemperlé ». Ajout manuscrit : au haut de la lettre : « répondu le 3 octobre ». Cachets postaux : Saint-Malo, 30 septembre, Rennes, 30 septembre et Quimperlé, 1^{er} octobre 1838. Lettre partiellement publiée dans P. La Villemarqué, *La Villemarqué, sa Vie et ses Œuvres*, 2^{ème} ed. (Paris, 1926), 49.

de l'estomac ; ma fièvre est aussi tout a fait passée. je souhaite bien que votre première lettre m'en apprenne autant de vous.

Notre paquebot appareille ; le tems est superbe ; la mer est belle ; pas une houle ! nous partons demain avec le jour. notre traversée promet d'être charmante ; – sauf le mal de mer ! – mais nous nous remettrons à Jersey et puis voici une chose qui finira de vous rassurer sur mon sort et vous fera plaisir j'en suis sûr, c'est que j'ai fait mes dévotions mercredi matin à Lorient avant mon départ. Cela ne contribue pas peu à me donner du courage à moi-même, et je m'en sens un très grand.

adieu, mon cher papa, je vous souhaite un prompt rétablissement ; et je suis en vous embrassant de tout mon cœur, votre fils

Th. De la Villemarqué

J'embrasse aussi maman et mes sœurs. Ermine plus particulièrement, qui doit nous quitter bientôt et que je ne reverrai pas de longtems.

mon adresse est

Mr Théodore Hersart De la Villemarqué, chez m^{me} Jones

Llanarth-Court

Montmouthshire

Angleterre.

Letter I

Théodore Hersart de La Villemarqué to his father Pierre de la Villemarqué⁵⁸

S^t Malo, Friday [28th September 1838]

I travelled here from Kemperlé [Quimperlé] with Antoine Mauduit,⁵⁹ dear Papa. We picked up Francheville⁶⁰ at Vannes without realizing it; it was only further on, much later in the night, that he recognized my voice and came to join us in the coupé,⁶¹ we couldn't get a place in the stage-coach from Rennes to S^t Malo, we had to rent a carriage, which got us here by evening without too much discomfort. Dumarchalla⁶² and L. Jacquelot⁶³ had been here since the morning. M^r Rio had not yet arrived.⁶⁴

⁵⁸ Archives La Villemarqué LV 02.022. Letter addressed to 'Monsieur De la Villemarqué au Plessix Nizon près Kemperlé'. Annotations: 'replied 3 October'. Postmarks: Saint-Malo, 30 Sept.; Rennes, 30 Sept.; Quimperlé, 1st October 1838. Partially published in P. La Villemarqué, *La Villemarqué, sa Vie et ses Œuvres*, 2nd ed. (Paris, 1926), 49. Pierre Hersart de La Villemarqué (1775–1843) had a political career, serving as Deputé during the Bourbon Restoration.

⁵⁹ Antoine Thomas Marie Joseph de Mauduit (1816–1868).

⁶⁰ From a family of possibly Scottish origin which settled in the Château du Truscat ar Sarzeau (Morbihan), Jules de Francheville (1813–1866) met La Villemarqué at the junior seminary in Sainte-Anne d'Auray. He studied in Paris at the Collège de Juilly and attended Frédéric Ozanam's lectures on history at the Pension Bailly; he introduced La Villemarqué to these on his arrival in Paris at the end of 1833. La Villemarqué would write his obituary in *Le Monde*, 17 February 1866.

⁶¹ A coupé was a small covered carriage.

⁶² Auguste-François-Félix du Marc'hallac'h, (1808–1891) would publish an account of this journey to Wales in the *Journal des Débats* (19–22 October 1838). In June 1839 he married the 22 year-old Mélanie Harrington; two children died in infancy and his wife died after giving birth to a daughter in 1844. Du Marc'hallac'h entered the Seminary at Quimper and was ordained as a priest in 1854, becoming canon and vicar-general of Quimper. His sister married Louis-Joseph-Marie de Marcein-Carné (1804–1876) who had himself spent a few days in Wales before the arrival of the 'delegation'.

⁶³ Louis Charles Marie de Jacquelot du Boisrouvray (1798–1881) was a friend of the poet Lamartine, whom he met in Florence in 1825 and with whom he was in correspondence. In a letter dated 18 September 1838, he passed on an invitation from Thomas Price to take part in the Abergavenny eisteddfod, telling him he would take the boat from St Malo on 28 September in order to attend the 'banquet' planned for early October. There was not enough time for Lamartine to make arrangements, but he did send a poem which was read aloud during the dinner (see Letter VIII below). It is dedicated to de Jacquelot. See William Fortescue and Fernand Letessier, 'Lamartine et le comte Louis de Jacquelot du Boisrouvray. Documents inédits', *Revue d'histoire littéraire de la France*, n°1 (janvier-février 1987), 132–45.

⁶⁴ Alexis-François Rio (1797–1874), writer and philosopher, spent much of his childhood on the île d'Arz; his family had been closely involved in the Chouan uprisings. A school friend of the poet Auguste Brizeux, he travelled extensively in Europe. His marriage to Apollonia Jones of Llanarth Court in 1833 brought him into the cultural circle of Lady Llanover; he was a key figure in organizing the 'Breton delegation' of 1838.

We spent today exploring the town and the ramparts, from which there are magnificent views. We saw the grave of M. de Chateaubriant on the little island of the Grand Bey; excavated out of the rock, it is covered with a stone and topped with an iron cross.⁶⁵

I have just been to collect the letter from Aunt Sophie.⁶⁶ I didn't think it would arrive so soon; she gives details of my uncle's health. He has had an ague for the last few days 'which', says my aunt, 'has been very difficult to control, since the irritation to the chest and the stomach did not allow him to take quinine internally; at length, by applying a vesicatory,⁶⁷ we succeeded in relieving him of the worst excesses of the pain. But it has brought on another: at present he can no longer move the leg to which the plaster was applied, and is in a terrible way. Added to which the coughing bouts are more exhausting than ever.' It is as you see extremely distressing. And Charles⁶⁸ has gastritis.

As for me I have coped with the journey exceptionally well, and thanks to the chicken broth which I ordered the whole way I have got this far without the slightest stomach trouble; and my fever has quite gone. I hope that the first letter I receive from you will give me similar news.

Our steamboat is being fitted out; the weather is superb; the sea is calm; no swell at all! we leave tomorrow at first light. Our crossing promises to be delightful – bar sea-sickness! – but we shall have time to recover in any case in Jersey – and finally here is something which should reassure you as to my fate and which I am sure will please you; it is that I made my devotions at Lorient on Wednesday morning before leaving. The thought gives me courage, which sustains me.

Farewell, my dear papa, I wish you a speedy recovery; and I am, with warmest regards,
your son,

Th. de la Villemarqué

⁶⁵ The influential Romantic poet François-René Chateaubriand (1768–1848) would be buried in a tomb of his own design on the tidal island of Grand Bé near his native Saint Malo. A simple granite structure topped by a cross, it had been recently completed at the time of La Villemarqué's visit, when the writer himself was still very much alive.

⁶⁶ Sophie Henriette Marie du Breil du Buron (1788–1841) married Jean-Baptiste Hersart Marie de la Villemarqué, one of Théodore's uncles, in 1806; she was also Théodore's godmother.

⁶⁷ OED: 'A sharp irritating ointment, plaster, or other application for causing the formation of a blister or blisters on the skin'.

⁶⁸ Charles Henri Hersart de la Villemarqué (1814–1881) was Théodore's first cousin, the son of his uncle Charles Hersart de la Villemarqué (1777–1853) who, in 1819, had married Henriette Françoise Marie du Breil du Buron (1790–1826), the sister of 'Aunt Sophie'.

My love, too, to Maman and my sisters. Especially Ermine, who will be leaving us soon and whom I will not see for a long time.⁶⁹

my address is

Mr Théodore Hersart De la Villemarqué, chez m^{me} Jones

Llanarth-Court

Montmouthshire

Angleterre.

⁶⁹ La Villemarqué's sister, Ermine Sainte Renée, was born in 1805, the fourth of the six daughters of Pierre Hersart de La Villemarqué and Ursule Feydeau de Vaugien. She entered the Dominican convent at the Abbaye Blanche in Quimperlé as a 'dame de la retraite'. She died in October 1839.

Lettre II

**De Théodore Hersart de la Villemarqué à son père Pierre Hersart de La
Villemarqué⁷⁰**

Jersey, dimanche 30 7^{bre} 1838

notre traversée de s^t malo, ici, a été charmante, mon cher papa ; nous sommes partis plus tard que nous ne pensions, vers onze heures, à cause des brouillards qui enveloppaient l'horizon, et à quatre heures nous entrions dans le port de Jersey. La mer était unie comme un lac, aussi personne n'a souffert du mal de mer.

La vue de Jersey m'a frappé ; c'est une rade immense, défendue par d'énormes rochers, sur lesquels apparaissent des forts, et dont le fond, dominé par des montagnes couvertes de verdure, et qui s'élèvent en amphithéâtre, est bati de maisons aux toitures en zing, en ardoises, et surtout en tuiles. on ne se fait pas d'idée de la propreté des villes d'angleterre, et en particulier de celle-ci ; Paris n'en approche pas. les rues, l'extérieur des maisons, l'intérieur, tout y est d'une netteté et d'un entretien exquis. Par exemple l'hôtel, où nous sommes descendus, est tendu de tapis depuis le haut jusqu'en bas. tous les meubles ont l'air d'être d'ébène, tant ils sont luisants. les cheminées sont de fer fondu ; toutes les serrures sont dorées, toutes les boiseries ont l'air d'avoir été peintes hier ; les parquets d'être neufs ; au milieu de la chambre que j'occupe, s'élève un lit a colonnes, un de ces anciens lits, que l'on a conservé en Angleterre ; à voir ces colonnes on dirait de l'acajou, et cependant ce n'est que du sapin verni ; les rideaux paraissent de soie, et ne sont qu'en coton damassé. La table sur laquel [sic] je vous écris est si bien peinte qu'on la prendrait pour de la laque, et cependant c'est du bois blanc. il n'est pas jusqu'à ce meuble infâme et qu'on n'ose nommer, qui est, tout bonnement comme mon pot à eau, et ma cuvette, de terre de pipe, qu'on ne jugerait de porcelaine du japon. – aussi, je vous laisse à juger de mon étonnement, en voyant tout cela. cette élégance, cette coqueterie [sic], existe dans les plus petites chose ; ainsi, la cheminée de

⁷⁰ Archives La Villemarqué LV 02.024 et LV 02.023. Lettre adressée à « Monsieur Hersart De la Villemarqué à Kemperlé. France Bretagne finistère ». Cachets postaux : Saint-Malo, 4 Oct.; Rennes et Quimperlé [?]. Mention : « en route pour Jersey ». Partiellement publiée dans P. La Villemarqué, *La Villemarqué, sa Vie et ses Œuvres*, 49–50.

notre salle à manger, est remplie, en attendant l'hiver, de rubans roses, verts, rouges, blancs, de toutes les couleurs.

Voilà ce qui a été la matière de mes émotions d'hier ; ce matin je devais en avoir une d'un autre genre – en ouvrant les rideaux de mon lit, comme par un coup de théâtre qui tient du prodige, j'ai aperçu sous mes fenêtres, le magnifique spectacle que j'avais admiré, la veille : la rade et ses mille vaisseaux, la Ville, les montagnes, au loin les rochers et leurs forts, et à l'horizon, la pleine mer éclairées des feux du soleil levant. non, je n'oublierai jamais cette admirable vue. m^f Rio nous en avait ménagé la surprise, à tous, car toutes nos chambres donnent sur le port.

je ne vous parlerai pas de la cuisine anglaise. il y règne la même propreté, le même luxe apparent, que dans l'ameublement. même dans les auberges on change de couvert à chaque plat ; les cuillères, les fourchettes, les assiettes, les couteaux mêmes, tout à l'air d'argent et tout est en métal d'alger. je n'ai vu nulle part en France, autant de somptuosité. quant à la salubrité de cette cuisine, je la crois tout aussi grande que celle de la nôtre ; c'est une erreur de croire le contraire. pour moi je m'en trouve fort bien ; mon estomac se porte à merveille. nous venons de la messe à la chapelle des islandais ; on n'y [sic] a fait un prône en anglais, auquel je n'ai pas compris grand chose. toute la messe a été en musique. Ce qui m'y a le plus frappé c'est le recueillement des soldats, qui chacun avait son petit livre, où il suivait l'office avec une attention vraiment édifiante – le calme de la ville, après le tumulte de la veille, ne m'étonne pas moins ; on se croirait dans un désert ; c'est que c'est aujourd'hui dimanche.

Lundi

nous sommes allé hier soir visiter prince's tower (la tour du prince) d'où l'on jouit de la vue la plus belle qui se puisse voir. elle domine l'île toute entière et l'on en aperçoit les cotes de Bretagne – on dit que c'est un français, exilé à Jersey, qui la [sic] fait bâtir, afin de revoir sa patrie. les fenêtres ont des vitraux colorés ; elles ont la forme ogivale, et sont encadrées dans des guirlandes de lierre, du plus gracieux et poétique effet — l'omnibus nous y a conduit et ramené, pour un shilling. au retour un certain malotru d'anglais a voulu nous usurper une de nos places ; il était d'une fureur vraiment divertissante ; il frappait du pied, il s'écriait : « goddam ! goddam ! un anglais ne reculera jamais devant un coquin de Français ! » ce monsieur n'était sans doute pas un gentleman. j'aime à le croire pour l'honneur de l'Angleterre.

m^f de la Houssaye, le frère de celui qui a été tué en Espagne, nous est venu voir, et nous a raconté de la manière la plus intéressante, et en même tems la plus simple, ses aventures de chouannerie – il a fait ici un superbe mariage. nous avons diné, aussi à S^t Malo, avec m^f le Beschou, le monsieur qui vint vous voir à Kemperlé. en débarquant ici, par le hazard le plus singulier, la première personne que nous ayons rencontrée était un Breton de S^t pol, ne sachant pas un mot d'anglais, et le français pas plus, qui nous a reconnu à notre langue (car nous parlons souvent breton entre nous) et a lié avec nous conversation.

nous partirons à 2 heures ; nous passerons la nuit en mer ; nos lits sont [arrêtés]⁷¹ et bons ; demain matin nous serons à Southampton. adieu mon cher papa, m^f et m^{me} Rio se rappellent à votre souvenir. moi, je vous embrasse, et maman, et mes sœurs, et suis votre affectionné fils

Th. De la Villemarqué

Je vous écrirai ainsi jour par jour, pendant tout le temps que je passerai en Angleterre ; ce sera pour moi une manière charmante de faire mon journal de voyage. mais je vous prie d'avoir la bonté de conserver mes lettres, afin que je les retro[uve] à mon retour.

m^f Rio s'est décidé à me placer chez lady Whole femme du Baro[ne]t de ce nom, qui est la maison la plus distinguée et la plus somptueuse du pays de galles, la maison d'honneur. L. Jacquelot y viendra avec moi ; après les fêtes j'irai chez les Jones, qui ne demeurent qu'à six miles des Whole, qui sont intimement liés avec la famille de m^f Rio, et qui les voyent tous les jours. Francheville, Dumarchalla et Mauduit resteront avec m^f Rio.

nous nous félicitons mutuellement chaque jour d'avoir fait notre voyage ensemble ; il est difficile d'être plus unis et plus liés, d'une cordialité, d'une sympathie plus entière⁸ que nous ne sommes. Je n'ai appris que ces jours derniers à connaître du marchallah ; c'est que c'est un homme du plus grand mérite, et mieux que cela, un cœur parfait, et un parfait chrétien. Jacquelot est aussi un garçon très distingué. nous les appelons tous deux, en riant, les vieux. leurs âges mis bout à bout, font juste le notre à nous trois, Francheville, maudit et moi. 75 ans !

adieu encore mon cher papa

⁷¹ Lecture incertaine.

Letter II

Théodore Hersart de la Villemarqué to his father Pierre Hersart de La Villemarqué⁷²

Jersey, Sunday 30 Sept 1838

Our crossing here from St Malo was delightful, my dear papa; we left somewhat later than expected, towards eleven o' clock, because of the fog covering the horizon, and at four o'clock we came into the port of Jersey. The sea was as still as a lake, so no one suffered from seasickness.

The first view of Jersey was striking; a huge natural harbour, guarded by gigantic rocks dotted with fortresses, at the back of which, dominated by an amphitheatre of green hills, are houses with roofs of zinc or slate or, predominantly, tiles. We have very little idea of the cleanliness of the towns of England, and of this one in particular; Paris doesn't come close. The streets, the houses, both outside and inside, everything is exquisitely neat and well maintained. For example the hotel where we are staying is carpeted from top to bottom. All the furniture seems to be made of ebony, it shines so much. The fireplaces are cast iron, all the keyholes are gilded, all the woodwork appears to have been painted yesterday; the parquet looks new; in the middle of the room I am staying in is a four-poster bed, one of those old-fashioned beds that the English have preserved; from the colour, you'd say the posts were mahogany, and yet they are only varnished pine. The curtains look like silk, but are only damask cotton. The table from which I write to you is so beautifully painted you would think it was lacquered, but it is in fact deal. Such, indeed, is the case right down to that despised vessel which dare not speak its name; it is made of clay like my water jug and basin, but you would think had been made out of Japanese porcelain. You can imagine my amazement at all this. The same care for elegance and stylishness is visible in the tiniest details: in preparation for winter the fireplace in our dining room is covered in ribbons – pink, green, red, white, all different colours.

⁷² Archives La Villemarqué LV 02.024 et LV 02.023. Letter addressed to 'Monsieur Hersart De la Villemarqué à Kemperlé'. Postmarks: Saint-Malo, 4 Oct.; Rennes and Quimperlé [?] Annotation: 'on the way to Jersey'. Partially published in P. La Villemarqué, *La Villemarqué, sa Vie et ses Œuvres*, 49–50.

There you have the subject of yesterday's emotions; this morning I experienced quite another kind – opening the curtains around my bed, like some miraculous *coup-de-théâtre* – there through my windows lay the magnificent spectacle I had admired the previous evening: the harbour and its thousand ships, the town, the hills, with the rocks and fortresses further off, and on the horizon the open sea catching fire with rising sun. Never, never will I forget this astonishing view. M. Rio had arranged the same surprise for all of us, as all our rooms faced the port.

I won't tell you about English cooking, but it displays the same cleanliness and the same air of luxury as the furnishings. Even in inns they change cutlery with every course; spoons, forks, plates, even the knives, they all look like silver and are in fact Algiers metal.⁷³ Nowhere in France have I seen such lavishness. As for the healthiness of this cuisine, I consider it quite on a par with our own; it is a mistake to believe otherwise. For my own part, I feel extremely well; my stomach is absolutely fine.

We have just come from mass at the island chapel; the sermon was in English, of which I understood very little. The whole mass was accompanied by music. What struck me most was the reverence of the soldiers, each with their little book, in which they followed the service with a truly edifying attention – the peace and quiet of the town, after all the bustle yesterday, is nonetheless surprising; like being in a desert. It is because today is Sunday.

Monday

Yesterday evening we visited the Prince's Tower;⁷⁴ the view from it is the most beautiful imaginable. It dominates the whole island and from it you can even see the Breton coast – they say it was a Frenchman, exiled on Jersey, who had it built so he could see his native land. The windows are of coloured glass set in Gothic arches and garlanded with ivy in the most graceful and poetic manner – an omnibus took us and brought us back for a shilling. On the way back a particularly uncouth specimen of an Englishman tried to take one of our seats; his rage was positively entertaining; he stamped his foot and shouted 'goddam! goddam! an Englishman will never give way to a rascal Frenchman!' This man was doubtless not a *gentleman*, at least I hope not, for the honour of England.

⁷³ An alloy of pewter, lead and antimony, which has a particular shine.

⁷⁴ The Prince's Tower at La Hougue Bie was a flamboyant Gothic building with a turret designed to give wide panoramic views. Designed for Philippe D'Auvergne, it was one of Jersey's earliest tourist attractions; it fell into decay and was demolished in 1924.

M. de la Houssaye, whose brother was killed in Spain, came to see us and related his adventures in *chouannerie* in a manner as interesting as it was unpretentious – he has made an excellent marriage over here.⁷⁵ In St Malo we dined with M. Le Besch, ⁷⁶ the gentleman who came to see you at Quimperlé. As we disembarked here, by a strange chance, the first person we met was a Breton from St Pol unable to speak a word of English or of French who recognized us by our language (for we often speak Breton amongst ourselves) and joined us in conversation.

We leave at two; we will spend the night at sea; our beds are [...] and comfortable; tomorrow morning we shall be at Southampton. Farewell, my dear papa; M. and Mme Rio beg to be remembered to you. My love to you, and Maman and my sisters; I am your affectionate son

Th. de la Villemarqué.

I shall write to you thus day by day during the whole of my time in England; it will be a pleasant way for me to keep a journal of my travels. But I do ask you to be so kind as to keep my letters, so that I may find them when I return.

M. Rio has decided to place me with lady Whole,⁷⁷ wife of the Baronet of that name, in the most distinguished and magnificent house in Wales, the house of honour. L. Jacquelot will come with me; after the festivities I shall go to the Joneses, who live only six miles from the Wholes, are intimately connected with M. Rio's family and see them every day.⁷⁸ Francheville, Dumarchalla and Mauduit will stay with M. Rio.

We congratulate ourselves every day on having undertaken this journey together; it would be difficult for us to be closer or more completely bound by ties of friendship and sympathy than we are. It is only in the last few days that I have got to know Dumarchallah [sic]; he is an extremely worthy man, and what is more, pure-hearted and a perfect Christian. Jacquelot

⁷⁵ Auguste Mathurin Guerin de la Houssaye du Castelet (1809–1869). His brother, Adrien Fulgence, died in 1835 at Santander in Spain. The Chouans were a counter-revolutionary force, particularly strong in Brittany and the west of France.

⁷⁶ This may be a son of Louis Joseph Le Besch de Champsavin (1755–1836) who served as *Député* in 1815, at the same time as La Villemarqué's father.

⁷⁷ This is evidently La Villemarqué's aural interpretation of 'Hall'; he would shortly be received by Lady Augusta and Sir Benjamin Hall at Llanover, near Abergavenny.

⁷⁸ The Joneses of Llanarth Court. Alexis-François Rio had married a daughter of the family, Apollonia (1804–1890), in Paris in 1834.

is another very refined character. We teasingly call them the *oldies*. Their ages put together make exactly the same as us three, Francheville, Mauduit and myself. 75 years !

Farewell once more my dear papa.

Lettre III

De Théodore Hersart de la Villemarqué à son père Pierre Hersart de La
Villemarqué⁷⁹

Bristol le 3 octobre [1838]

De Jersey à Southampton, nous avons eu une mer superbe, pendant tout le jour, mon cher papa ; mais vers le soir en quittant Guernesey, une des villes les plus pittoresques que j'aie vue, avec un château tout neuf et immense sur la hauteur, dominé par un rideau de grands arbres verts, deux clochers gothiques admirables, un mélange, comme à Jersey de maisons rouges, blanches et bleues, qui se reflètent dans les eaux, – vers le soir, le vent a soufflé de terre, et la mer s'est gonflée ; cependant, et c'est assez extraordinaire, m'étant mis au lit, j'ai fort bien dormi, et n'ai pas souffert du tout. au moment où je vous écris, nous venons d'arriver à Bristol ; après avoir traversé les plaines ondulées et verdoyantes et sans fin de Salisbury, où de la route nous avons aperçu le fameux Stone henge, qui est loin d'être aussi important que Karnac, mais cependant fort curieux ; nous nous sommes aussi arrêté pour visiter la cathédrale de cette ville ; c'est le morceau le plus complet que nous possédions de l'architecture gothique pure ; elle est admirable de grâce et de majesté. De Southampton à Salisbury, ce ne sont que gazons immenses et d'un velouté dont rien ne peut donner idée, que châteaux perdus dans des touffes d'arbres, que parcs bordés de haies vives, que cottages, ou chaumières avec un jardinet au devant tout remplis de fleurs et d'arbustes grimpants qui montent le long des murs de la maison, festonnent les portes et les fenêtres et se jouent en mille façons charmantes à l'entour. dans l'intérieur, on aperçoit des meubles clairs et luisants et un vessailier [sic] qu'on dirait tout neuf tant il est propre ; et on est tout étonné d'apprendre que ces cottages appartiennent à des paysans. au reste ces paysans ont autant de luxe ou plus que nos bourgeois. nous avons vu des bergères garder non pas des moutons mais des porcs, en tablier et en chapeau.

⁷⁹ Archives La Villemarqué LV 02.025. Lettre adressée à : « Monsieur H. De la Villemarqué au château du Plessix-Nizon près Kemperlé finistère France » Cachets postaux : Abergavenny, 14 octobre 1838, London, 15 octobre, Quimperlé, 19 octobre. Partiellement publiée dans P. La Villemarqué, *La Villemarqué, sa Vie et ses Œuvres* (2ème ed., Paris, 1926), 50–51.

Au château de Llanover près d'Abergavenny le 5

nous voici enfin arrivés ; nous avons passé la Severne ce matin et mis le pied sur le sol du pays de galles ; oh ! le beau pays, mon cher papa ! ce sont, comme en Bretagne, des montagnes, des prairies, des vallées coupées de ruisseaux, de bois, de champs en culture ; mais le paysage est plus grand, plus aéré, plus mouvant aussi ; rien d'admirable comme le vieux château en ruines de chepstow, qui domine et surveille le pays de galles. nous l'avons vu par le plus beau soleil du monde, les eaux qui coulent à ses pieds étincelaient, le ciel était chargé de quelques nuages épars, mais bleu et pur en général ; c'était un tableau superbe. nous avons laissé m^f et m^{mc} Rio à Lannarth avec francheville, Dumarchalla & Mauduit ; en arrivant à Abergavenny la première chose qui m'ait frappé les yeux, est une affiche de la fête à laquelle nous venions avec ces mots bretons-gallois pour épigraphe : oed er bed ar iais Cymreg. la langue galloise est de l'âge du monde. Lady Hall avait envoyé dès la veille une voiture pour nous chercher. C'est une femme d'une taille moyenne, à figure en amande, à cheveux blonds foncés, aux couleurs fraîches, gaie, vive, simple, aimable, bonne ; elle nous a fait un accueil charmant, tout cordial, tout breton ; on eut dit qu'elle nous connaissait depuis un siècle. nous nous attendions à tout autre chose ; elle nous a mis tout de suite à l'aise. Ses allures simples et sans-gêne contrastent singulièrement avec ce qui l'entoure ; c'est un palais que son château [...] ⁸⁰ une demi lieue, avant d'arriver, on trouve un pont-levis, surmonté [d'un] drapeau aux armes de Sir Benjamin Hall. le sallon [sic] est [...] ⁸¹ d'un drap vert, à feuilles de chêne d'or ; les panneaux du [parquet ?] ⁸² sont vernis et dorés. tout autour courent des sculptures festonnées aussi dorées ; les draperies, les rideaux, les meubles sont de la plus grande richesse. l'ameublement est tout en ébène, et comme le château, dans le goût du règne d'Elisabeth. Tout est or, velours, et marbre dans la salle, l'antichambre et le salon ; on dirait un palais d'un petit roi d'Allemagne. Sir Benjamin est plus grave, mais non moins affable que sa femme. Leur mère lady wadington dont je vous parlerai une autre fois est une femme du plus grand mérite. elle a été célébrée en Angleterre pour sa beauté ; elle adore les français et nous a fait le même accueil que sa fille. Elle habite une charmante maisonnette dans le parc ; un sentier sablé conduit de chez elle chez lady hall ; les autres membres de la famille sont

⁸⁰ Manque.

⁸¹ Manque.

⁸² Manque.

lady Berrington, une jeune femme charmante d'une grâce et d'une bonté parfaite ; elle a quelque chose plutôt anglais que gallois dans la figure et les manières ; mais elle a toute la gaieté de lady hall sa belle-sœur, sinon toute sa vivacité extraordinaire. elle est depuis quelques temps ici et doit nous quitter après les fêtes pour lesquelles on attend ici 30 personnes ! M^f Bunsen ex ministre plénipotentiaire du roi de prusse et son ambassadeur près de la cour de rome, celui-là même dont on a tant parlé à propos de l'évêque de Cologne, est gendre de lady wadington, et habite avec elle ici avec sa femme et ses 12 enfans, momentanément. C'est un homme très-remarquable, il fait apprendre par un maître d'école, le gallois à tous ses enfans.

adieu, voici mon papier rempli. Comment êtes-vous. je m'attends a recevoir de vous une lettre un de ces jours. Et Ermine ? je vous embrasse et maman de tout mon cœur

Th De la Villemarqué

m^f Rio vient de nous venir voir. Les gallois sont enchantés des députés bretons ; nous ne le sommes pas moins d'eux. nous nous fesos [sic] comprendre a merveille pour une bonne raison, tout le monde jusqu'aux domestiques, parlent français. des bardes nous ont donné un concert de harpes, hier soir, pour notre bienvenue.

Letter III

Théodore Hersart de la Villemarqué to his father, Pierre Hersart de La Villemarqué⁸³

Bristol, 3 October [1838]

From Jersey to Southampton we had a glorious sea, my dear papa, the whole day long; but towards evening as we left Guernsey (one of the most picturesque towns I have ever seen, with a huge, brand-new castle built on a height,⁸⁴ overshadowed by a screen of tall green trees, with two fine Gothic bell-towers and as in Jersey a jumble of red, white and blue houses reflected in the water) – towards the evening the wind blew from landward and there was quite a swell; yet, rather surprisingly, once in bed I slept extremely well and did not suffer in the slightest; at the moment I write now we have just arrived in Bristol, having crossed the endless green undulations of Salisbury plain, where from the road we caught sight of the famous Stonehenge, which is far from being as impressive as Karnac, but a curiosity nonetheless. We also stopped to visit the cathedral of this town; it is the most complete piece of pure Gothic architecture in existence, and full of a wonderful grace and majesty.⁸⁵ From Southampton to Salisbury it is all vast lawns of unimaginable velvet smoothness, manor houses lost in thickets of trees, parkland bordered with verdant hedges, thatched cottages with little front gardens filled with flowers, and climbing shrubs which trail up the walls of the house, festoon the doors and windows and disport themselves all over in a thousand delightful ways; with glimpses, inside, of bright, shining furniture and a dresser that you would have thought, from its cleanliness, to be quite new. And one learns with astonishment that these *cottages* belong to *paysans*. Indeed these peasants have as much wealth as our bourgeois, and more. We have seen shepherdesses looking after not sheep but *pigs*, wearing aprons and bonnets!

⁸³ Archives La Villemarqué LV 02.025. Letter addressed to ‘Monsieur H. De la Villemarqué au château du Plessix-Nizon près Kemperlé finistere France’ Postmarks: Abergavenny, 14 Oct 1838; London, 15 Oct.; Quimperlé, 19 Oct. Partially published in P. La Villemarqué, *La Villemarqué, sa Vie et ses Œuvres*, 50–51.

⁸⁴ Assuming the boat called at St Peter Port, this must be Castle Cornet. It was not ‘tout neuf’, having been established in the thirteenth century, but underwent many modifications over the centuries.

⁸⁵ Salisbury Cathedral, one of the best preserved examples of Early English architecture, was mainly constructed between 1220 and 1258. Its distinctive spire, completed in 1320, is the tallest in Britain.

At Llanover Castle near Abergavenny the 5th

We have arrived at last; we crossed the Severn this morning and set foot on Welsh soil; oh! dearest father, what a beautiful country! It is very like Brittany – hills and meadows, valleys intersected by streams, woods, cultivated fields; but the landscape is larger, more open, more changeable; nothing could be more marvellous than the old ruined castle at Chepstow, standing guard over the whole of Wales. We saw it in the loveliest sunshine in the world, sparkling water running at its feet, the sky trailing a few scattered clouds, but otherwise pure blue: it was a stunning picture.⁸⁶

We left M and Mme Rio at Lannarth with Francheville, Dumarchalla and Mauduit; on arriving in Abergavenny the first thing I noticed was a poster for the celebrations we are to attend, with the following epigraph in Breton-Welsh: *oed er bed ar iaïs Cymreg*: ‘the Welsh language is the age of the world’.⁸⁷ A carriage sent by Lady Hall the previous evening was waiting for us.

She is a woman of medium build, with an oval face and dark blonde hair; a fresh complexion, gay, lively, simple, kind and good-hearted; she gave us a delightful welcome, warm and wholly Breton; you would think she had known us for a century.⁸⁸ We had been expecting something quite different; she put us straight away at our ease. Her simple and easy manners are in marked contrast to her surroundings; her chateau is a positive palace [...] some half a league before you reach the house there is a drawbridge with a flag bearing the arms of Sir Benjamin Hall.⁸⁹

The salon is [...] in a green drapery with oak leaves picked out in gold; the panels of the [parquet] are varnished and gilded; around the walls run scalloped carvings, also gilded; the

⁸⁶ Chepstow castle was founded in 1067; situated on cliffs overlooking the tidal lower reaches of the river Wye, it became a highlight of the picturesque Wye Tour, and was much described and painted. See, for example, Paul Sandby’s watercolour of 1775: <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O224749/chepstow-castle-watercolour-sandby-paul/>.

⁸⁷ ‘Oes y byd i’r iaith Gymraeg’ (Long live the Welsh language) is the motto of the Abergavenny Cymreigyddion Society (Cymreigyddion y Fenni).

⁸⁸ Augusta Hall (1802–1896), née Waddington, also known as Lady Llanover, was a passionate advocate for Welsh literature and popular culture, including dance, music and costume; she was a close friend of Thomas Price and an early member of Cymreigyddion y Fenni, who organized the Eisteddfod at Abergavenny. Her influence, and La Villemarqué’s impressions of her, are discussed in the Introduction above. See the *Dictionary of Welsh Biography*: <https://biography.wales/article/s10-HALL-AUG-1802>.

⁸⁹ Sir Benjamin Hall (1802–1867) married Augusta Waddington in 1823. He was a wealthy industrialist and a reforming M.P., and an advocate of the right to religious services in Welsh. See the *Dictionary of Welsh Biography*: <https://biography.wales/article/s11-HALL-BEN-1802>.

hangings, the curtains, the pieces of furniture are all of the highest opulence; all the furniture is ebony and, like the chateau itself, in Elizabethan style. Everything is gold, velvet and marble, in the hall, the anteroom and the salon; you would think it the palace of some petty German king. Sir Benjamin is more serious, but no less friendly than his wife. Their mother Lady Waddington, of whom I shall write more another time, is a woman of the highest quality.⁹⁰ She was famous in England for her beauty; she loves the French and gave us the same welcome as her daughter. She lives in a delightful little house in the park; a sanded path leads from her place to Lady Hall's. The other members of the family are Lady Berrington,⁹¹ a charming young woman of considerable grace and good-nature; there is something more English than Welsh in her face and manners; but she has all the cheerfulness of her sister-in-law Lady Hall, if not all of her extraordinary vivacity. She has been here for a while and will leave after the festival – during which they expect some 30 people here! Mr Bunsen, plenipotentiary minister of the King of Prussia and his ambassador at the court of Rome – the man about whom there was so much talk concerning the Bishop of Cologne – is the son-in-law of Lady Waddington [sic], and is staying with her here for a short time with his wife and 12 children.⁹² He is a truly remarkable man; all his children are being taught Welsh here by a schoolmaster.

Farewell, my paper is full. How are you? I look forward to receiving a letter from you one of these days. And Ermine? All my love to you and Maman

Th De la Villemarqué

M. Rio has just been to see us. The Welsh are delighted by the Breton delegation; and we are no less pleased with them. We understand each other perfectly for the very simple reason

⁹⁰ Georgina Mary Ann Waddington (née Port) (1771–1850). The British Museum has a portrait of her aged sixteen:

https://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details/collection_image_gallery.aspx?assetId=1613042612&objectId=3681314&partId=1.

⁹¹ Benjamin Hall's youngest sister Charlotte married J. D. Berrington of Swansea; the pair lived for a while in Clyne Castle.

⁹² Christian-Charles-Josias von Bunsen (Chevalier de Bunsen, 1791–1860). A German diplomat, linguist and archaeologist, he founded the Archaeological Institute at Rome. In 1817 he had married Augusta's elder sister, Frances Waddington, who was a talented watercolourist. The family lived and travelled widely around Europe, and were exceptionally well-connected; Bunsen was an intimate friend of Frederick William IV, King of Prussia.

that everyone, right down to the servants, speaks French. Last night, to welcome us, we were given a harp concert performed by bards.

Lettre IV

De l'abbé Pierre-Xavier Le Gonidec à Théodore Hersart de la Villemarqué⁹³

[Paris le 13 octobre 1838]

Monsieur

Veillez avoir l'extrême bonté de lire les lignes suivantes dans une de vos doctes réunions ; J'espère que cette lettre arrivera encore à temps pour trouver les savans d'Abergavenny rassemblés.

Messieurs

Tandis que vous célébrez avec joie et noblesse l'institution de votre glorieuse société, celui que vous teniez surtout à posséder au milieu de vous, celui que vous considérez comme le restaurateur et le conservateur de la langue bretonne Monsieur Le Gonidec terminait ses jours dans l'obscurité ; mais cependant dans les bras⁹⁴ de la plus cordiale affection. Sa gloire ses travaux mourront-ils avec lui. Non du milieu de vous partira une impulsion qui se fera vivement sentir dans sa terre natale. Il sera plus vénéré après sa mort que pendant sa vie, on sentira sa perte et l'on voudra réparer l'injustice avec laquelle il a été traité.

Un premier moyen que proposent ses fils, qui n'héritent de leur père que son nom et sa gloire serait de faire élever à sa mémoire un monument qui [redirait]⁹⁵ aux âges futurs que les savans de son temps n'ont pas méprisé ses travaux. Une souscription commencée par vous Messieurs serait continuée en Bretagne et réaliserait le projet que doivent concevoir tous les

⁹³ Archives La Villemarqué LV 02.017. Lettre adressée à : « Monsieur le Docteur Price ou à son défaut à Monsieur de la Villemarqué. Abergavenny ou à Llannarth chez Lady Charlotte Guest Angleterre ». Cachets postaux : Paris, 13 octobre 1838 et Londres, 15 octobre 1838. N'ayant pas eu de réponse, le fils Le Gonidec écrit une nouvelle fois à Thomas Price le 30 septembre. La lettre a été publiée par Jane Williams (ed.), *Literary Remains of the Rev. Thomas Price*, 2 vols (Llandovery: William Rees, 1854–55), II, 178.

⁹⁴ Lecture incertaine.

⁹⁵ Lecture incertaine.

amateurs de la langue bretonne. Un second serait de s'intéresser vivement à l'impression des ouvrages inédits que sa famille ne peut pas faire imprimer avec ses modiques ressources.

Ses fils ne ~~sollicitent~~ demandent aucune preuve de générosité envers eux -mêmes, mais ils sollicitent en faveur de sa veuve désolée une consolation dans la vue d'un avenir moins précaire.

Il a bien souvent pensé à vous monsieur et c'est le 12 à 2 ^{heures} au moment peut-être où vous parliez de lui qu'il a cessé d'exister.

Son fils aîné qui aime à se reconnaître votre humble serviteur.

Le 13 8^{bre}

Le Gonidec

Paris rue neuve S^t Roch 8.

Letter IV

L'abbé Pierre-Xavier Le Gonidec to Théodore Hersart de la Villemarqué⁹⁶

[Paris 13 October 1838]

Monsieur

Would you have the great kindness to read the following lines at one of your learned meetings? I hope that this letter will arrive in time to find the scholars of Abergavenny still gathered together.

Messieurs

While you were celebrating with joy and dignity the foundation of your glorious Society, Monsieur Le Gonidec – whom you had so much wished to have amongst you, and whom you saw as the restorer and preserver of the Breton language – reached the end of his life in obscurity, though surrounded by the deepest affection. Will his honour and his works perish with him? No, from your midst will come a powerful force, which will make itself felt in his native land. He will be more respected after his death than he was during his life; his loss will be deeply felt, and all will yearn to make amends for the injustices he suffered.

His sons,⁹⁷ who inherit from their father only his name and his renown, suggest that one way to achieve this would be to raise a monument⁹⁸ in memory of him, to [remind]⁹⁹ future ages that the scholars of his time did not despise his works. Were you to start a subscription,

⁹⁶ Archives La Villemarqué LV 02.017 Letter addressed to ‘Monsieur le Docteur Price or in his absence to Monsieur de la Villemarqué. Abergavenny or at Llannarth chez Lady Charlotte Guest Angleterre’. Postmarks: Paris, 13 October 1838 and London 15 October 1838. Not receiving a reply, Le Gonidec’s son wrote again to Thomas Price on the 30 October; that letter was published by Jane Williams, (ed.) *Literary Remains of the Rev. Thomas Price*, 2 vols (Llandoverly: William Rees, 1854–55) II, 178. The lexicographer’s eldest son from his first marriage, Pierre-Xavier Le Gonidec (1808–1858), was at this period curate at Saint-Roch in Paris; in 1845 he became the parish priest at Auteuil. For Le Gonidec’s pivotal role in strengthening the scholarly contacts between Brittany and Wales see Fañch Postic, ‘La correspondance de Théodore Hersart de La Villemarqué avec Thomas Price (‘Carnhuanawc’), <https://hal.univ-brest.fr/hal-02316005/document> (2019).

⁹⁷ In 1816 J.F Le Gonidec married Jeanne Maljean (1783–1851), born in Luxembourg, and they would have another son, Robert Charles (1818–1874). See Louis Dujardin, *La vie et les oeuvres de Jean-François-Marie-Maurice-Agathe Le Gonidec, Grammairien et Lexicologue breton 1775–1838* (Brest, 1949).

⁹⁸ In 1845 a monument was inaugurated to Le Gonidec in his native town of Le Conquet, near Brest.

⁹⁹ Reading uncertain.

Messieurs, it could be carried on in Brittany, thus turning an idea – which must be approved by all those who love the Breton tongue – into a reality. A second way would be to make strenuous efforts to have his unpublished works printed, something his family, with their modest resources, cannot do.

His sons are not ~~begging~~ asking for any gesture of generosity on their own behalf, but they do beg some consolation for his distressed widow in the hope of a less uncertain future.

He thought frequently of you, monsieur, and it was on the 12th at 2 o'clock – perhaps at the very moment you were speaking of him – that he passed away.

His eldest son, who is proud to acknowledge himself your humble servant,

The 13th October.

Le Gonidec

Paris rue neuve S^t Roch 8.

Letter V

William Rees to Théodore Hersart de La Villemarqué¹⁰⁰Llandovery October 15th 1838

Sir,

Herewith I have taken the liberty of forwarding to you a proof of the Chevalier au Lion which you kindly promised to correct.¹⁰¹ As I have no doubt several errors have already crept into the sheets which are appended to the Mabinogion Pt I. principally owing to the u and the n being written indistinctly also the mi & nu are often confounded, you would take upon yourself the trouble of marking those letters more distinct in the remainder of the Manuscript which is also sent herewith; my very imperfect knowledge of French prevents my being enabled even with the most careful attention, to give a verbatim copy of the original, therefore I must rely upon the kind assistance of the only person in this country who is perfectly capable of undertaking the work. When you have finished the Proof please to return it directed to me, to the care of M^r Watkins, Post Office, Abergavenny, the other portions of the MS you can return until another Proof is sent you.

Perhaps you could inform me who is the founder of the best formed Black Letter Types in France & the easiest method of procuring specimens &c as I must confess that the Black Letters cast by English Types Founders are wretchedly defective in form & have no claim to be compared with those of the French for beauty of form & elegance of shape.

Waiting a return of the Proof, believe me to remain,

Sir,

your most obedient & humble servant

¹⁰⁰ Archives La Villemarqué LV 27.026 Letter addressed to 'M. le Comte de la Villemarqué Llanarth Abergavenny'. William Rees (1808–1873) was a printer and publisher based in Llandovery in mid-Wales. He published many high-quality volumes for the Welsh MSS Society, and from 1838 was closely involved with the production of Lady Charlotte Guest's translations of the middle Welsh tales now known as the *Mabinogion*. See: <https://biography.wales/article/s-REES-WIL-1808>.

¹⁰¹ Before his visit to Wales, through the offices of Thomas Price, La Villemarqué had transcribed the medieval French Arthurian text, *Yvain: le Chevalier au Lion*, so that Charlotte Guest could compare it with the Welsh prose tale, *Iarllles y Ffynnon*. As discussed above in the Introduction, La Villemarqué's claims about his role in the production of this text would later cause some friction between them.

Lettre VI

**De Théodore Hersart de la Villemarqué à son père Pierre Hersart de La
Villemarqué¹⁰²**

Llanover le 20 [octobre 1838]

Le lendemain de mon arrivée ici, mon cher papa, une assez vilaine compagne m'y est venu rejoindre, que je croyais avoir laissée en Bretagne – la fièvre. oui, vraiment, je m'en moquais en route, et j'avais, dans ma présomption, jeté à la mer la fiole de quinine qui me devait sauver en cas de danger. elle est revenue me chercher ; mais si elle m'a été bien pénible, ici et en ce moment surtout, où la santé m'était plus nécessaire qu'en tout autre elle m'a fourni l'occasion de juger de toute la bonté de mes hôtes. je ne saurais vous dire quels soins, quels égards, quelles attentions, ils ont eu pour moi. on n'en aurait pas eu davantage à la maison. j'en étais confus ; non contente de mettre tous ses domestiques à mes ordres lady Hall venait elle même dans ma chambre, (et c'est inouï en Angleterre !) savoir de mes nouvelles, me porter des tisanes, me donner du courage, car j'étais bien abattu. Sa sœur M^{me} Berrington, y venait aussi quelquefois avec elle ; sa mère M^{me} Waddington, cette excellente femme qui me rappelle M^{me} de Maintenon, pour la figure, la noblesse et la grâce toute royale, et surtout la bonté, – dès qu'elle me sut malade, m'envoya son valet de chambre et son médecin, et voulut avoir par jour un bulletin de ma santé. le lendemain de mon premier accès j'allais la voir ; elle me prit la main. oh ! mon dieu, s'écria-t-elle, – vos mains sont brûlantes, vous avez de la fièvre et elle me fit porter aussitôt un bouillon. Je ne saurais vous dire tout ce que l'on a fait d'aimable pour moi. Du Jacquilot, mon compagnon ici, a été admirable aussi : il est venu dès mon premier accès de fièvre s'établir dans ma chambre, et il y a fait son lit, il ne m'a pas quitté d'un moment ; il m'a donné des soins que l'on n'oserait pas exiger d'un valet ; il a aussi lui une part bien grande à ma reconnaissance, et je n'oublierai jamais sa conduite à mon égard. Dumarchallah y a également des droits, il venait tous les matins de Lannarth ici et il y

¹⁰² Archives La Villemarqué LV 02.026. Lettre adressée à « Monsieur Hersart De la Villemarqué à Kemperlé finistère France ». cachets postaux: Monmouth, 21 Oct 1838; London 22 Oct 1838; Quimperlé, 26 Oct 1838.

a trois lieues, pour donner des consultations, car vous savez qu'il est médecin, qu'il a fait un cours de médecine pour soigner les pauvres, – enfin grâce a Dieu, aux pilules [sic] et à la S^{te} Vierge surtout que j'ai bien priée, j'étais guéri le jour de la fête, qui devait être mon jour de fièvre et j'ai pu y assister. on m'a fait beaucoup d'honneurs : j'étais placé sur un siège élevé, à la droite du président ; on m'a prié de couronner des bardes vainqueurs. le soir au dîner, j'ai chanté ma chanson, dont l'effet m'a étonné moi-même, j'ai été étourdi d'applaudissements. le lendemain, on m'a fait cadeau d'une coupe d'argent orné de dessins en corne, et lamée d'or à l'intérieur, avec un diamant du pays de galles au fond, et des inscriptions tirées des poètes gallois à l'entour. et le lendemain les bardes ont voulu m'admettre dans leur Société. je ne vous dis rien d'un bal magnifique, où mon costume breton a obtenu un grand succès ; j'envoie à m^r Kergos, des journaux où toute la fête est décrite en long et où tout cela se trouve. priez-le de vous en traduire des morceaux. au reste s'il y a là des choses qui ont chatouillé ma petite vanité, il en est d'autres qui m'ont bien fait rire quand ce ne serait que mes titres et qualités – je passe la plume a mr Rio. Je ne vous dis rien de ma santé, elle est parfaite.

[mot de A. – F. Rio]

J'ai vu plusieurs fois la famille Jones, qui est excellente et pleine de bonté pour nous. m^{me} Rio, me charge de la rappeler au souvenir de maman et au vôtre : j'espère que comme moi vous etes en ce moment parfaitement retabli. Savez-vous la mort de ce pauvre Gonidec ? il est mort le 12 à 2h. de l'après midi.

Nous avons eu ici, tout ce que le pays de galles et même une partie de l'angleterre a de plus distingué en fait d'aristocratie. en ce moment Lanover se vide, il n'y reste plus que quelques personnes, avec lesquelles nous allons à Aberdaron, autre château dans les montagnes de Sir Benjamin hall. Ce sera de là que je vous adresserai ma première lettre. Adieu mon cher papa ; je vous embrasse et maman et mes sœurs

Votre fils respectueux Th De la Villemarqué

De Alexis-François Rio à Pierre Hersart de la Villemarqué¹⁰³

¹⁰³ Archives La Villemarqué LV 02.026. Sur la lettre précédente.

[Llanover, le 20 octobre 1838]

je me sens presque coupable, Monsieur, de n'avoir pas répondu plutôt à votre dernière lettre ; mais en vérité je n'ai pas eu le tems. J'ai été tellement occupé avant, durant et après la fête, qu'il m'a fallu suspendre toute ma correspondance. Le compte rendu des succès de M. votre fils demanderait un volume. je ne crois pas qu'on se souvienne d'avoir jamais vu pareille chose dans ce pays-ci. Son séjour à Lanover a été on ne peut plus agréable, on l'y a tant fêté que nous craignons l'effet du contraste quand il viendra chez nous. aussitôt que nous avons su que la fièvre l'avait repris ma belle-mère l'a envoyé chercher pour calmer les inquiétudes de ma femme qui voulait le soigner elle-même. Mais on n'a pas voulu nous le céder. maintenant il paraît assez bien rétabli. nous comptons bien que dans 10 ou 12 jours il viendra s'installer chez nous, et pour long tems. Madame Rio se rappelle à votre bon souvenir ainsi qu'à celui de M^{de} de la Villemarqué à laquelle je vous prie aussi moi de vouloir bien offrir mon respectueux hommage.

Votre dévoué serviteur

Rio

Letter VI

Théodore Hersart de la Villemarqué to his father, Pierre de la Villemarqué¹⁰⁴

Llanover 20 [October 1838]

The day after my arrival here, my dear papa, an evil companion came to rejoin me, one I thought I had left behind in Brittany – the fever. Yes indeed, I had mocked it on the journey over and had even, presumptuously, thrown into the sea the little bottle of quinine which was supposed to save me from danger. It came to reclaim me: but although it has proved extremely disagreeable, here and at precisely the moment when health was most necessary to me, it has at least given me the chance to appreciate the great kindness of my hosts. I can hardly describe to you what care, what consideration, what attentiveness they have shown towards me. I would not have been better looked after at home. I was quite overwhelmed: not content with placing all her servants at my disposition, Lady Hall herself came into my room (quite unheard of in England!) to find out how I was doing, to bring me *tisanes*, and to rally me – for I was quite done in.

Her sister Mme Berrington also occasionally came with her; her mother Mme Waddington, that excellent woman who reminds me of Mme de Maintenon¹⁰⁵ in her countenance, her nobility, her thoroughly royal grace and above all in her kindness, – as soon as she heard of my illness she sent me her *valet de chambre* and her doctor, and every day demanded a bulletin of my health. The day after my first attack I went to see her; she took my hand. Oh! gracious, she exclaimed, your hands are burning, you have the fever – and she had a broth brought to me at once. I cannot begin to describe all the kindness that has been shown towards me.

Du Jacquelot, my companion here, has also been admirable: from the moment of my first attack of fever he came and set himself up in my room; he made up his bed there and did not leave me for an instant. He tended to me in ways one would scarcely dare ask of a servant; my gratitude to him is enormous, and I will never forget his conduct towards me.

¹⁰⁴ Archives La Villemarqué LV 02.026. Letter addressed to ‘Monsieur Hersart De la Villemarqué à Kemperlé finistère France’. Postmarks: Monmouth, 21 Oct 1838; London 22 Oct 1838; Quimperlé, 26 Oct 1838.

¹⁰⁵ Noted for her beauty, Françoise d'Aubigné (1635–1715), marquise de Maintenon, became the secret wife of Louis XIV in 1683.

Dumarchallah [sic] may also lay claim to my thanks, coming every morning from Lannarth [sic], three leagues away, to offer advice, for you know he is a doctor, that he completed a medical course in order to tend to the poor, – at any rate, by the grace of God, the pills, and above all the Holy Virgin to whom I prayed constantly, I was cured on the day of the celebrations, on what should have been the day of highest fever, and I was able to attend.¹⁰⁶

I was exceedingly honoured; they placed me on a raised seat to the right of the president; I was asked to crown the victorious bards. In the evening during the dinner I sang my song, the effects of which astonished even myself; the applause was deafening.¹⁰⁷ The following day they presented me with a silver cup decorated with designs in horn, with gold-leaf on the inside, a Welsh diamond at the base, and inscriptions from the Welsh poets around the edge.¹⁰⁸ And the next day the bards were kind enough to accept me into their society. I won't go into details about a magnificent ball, at which my Breton costume was a great success; I am sending M. Kergos¹⁰⁹ the newspapers describing the festival at great length in which all of this can be found. Ask him to translate you some parts of it. For the rest, if there are in them some things which did indeed tickle my vanity, there are others – my title and my qualities amongst them – which have made me laugh out loud. I am passing the pen to M. Rio. I need say nothing of my health, which is excellent.

I have seen the Jones family¹¹⁰ on several occasions; they are excellent and full of kindness towards us. Mme Rio begs to be remembered to Maman and yourself. I hope that, like me,

¹⁰⁶ For a detailed account of these celebrations see Francis Gourvil, *Un centenaire: L'Eisteddfod d'Abergavenny (Septembre 1838) et les relations spirituelles Bretagne-Galles* (Morlaix, 1938); Fañch Postic 'Premiers échanges interceltiques: Le voyage de La Villemarqué au pays de Galles', *Armen*, n° 125, nov. 2001, 34–43; Mary-Ann Constantine, *The Truth Against the World: Iolo Morganwg and Romantic Forgery* (Cardiff, 2007), 145–98. Several contemporary newspaper accounts, British and French, are preserved in the La Villemarqué archive.

¹⁰⁷ La Villemarqué's *Kan Aouen Eisteddfod* ('Inspiration-Song of the Eisteddfod') was printed by Thomas Williams, with translations in Welsh and English: *Can-aouen Eisteddfod, written in the Breton language, for the Abergavenny Cymreigyddion Anniversary October 10th 1838* (Crickhowell, 1838); copies survive in the collections of the National Library of Wales and in the La Villemarqué archive (MS copy, LV 02.015; printed copy, LV 02.016). For a discussion of its curious hybrid Breton-Welsh see Gourvil, *Un centenaire*.

¹⁰⁸ The drinking horn, *hanap* or *hirlas* remained in the family and is vividly described by La Villemarqué's son Pierre in *La Villemarqué sa Vie et ses Œuvres*, 49. It contains a crystal from the mountains of Snowdonia and, alongside various dedications from the Abergavenny Cymreigyddion, has an inscription in the 'Bardic' alphabet invented by Iolo Morganwg in the 1790s: 'Cymru Fu Cymru Fydd' (Wales has been; Wales will be). See also Barthélemy Amédée Pocquet du Haut-Jussé, *Le hanap offert par les Gallois à La Villemarqué en 1838, suivi d'une lettre de M. E. Bachellery* (Rennes, 1956).

¹⁰⁹ La Villemarqué's sister, Justine Thérèse Marie (1810–1871) married Théodore Hervé de Kernafflen de Kergos (1779–1852), Frigate Captain in the French navy, in 1832.

¹¹⁰ A more detailed account of the Joneses of Llanarth Court appears in Letter XI.

you are now perfectly recovered. Did you hear of the death of poor Gonidec?¹¹¹ He died the 12th, at two in the afternoon.

We have had staying here all that Wales and even a part of England has to offer in the way of the most distinguished aristocracy. Llanover is now emptying, there are only a few people left, and we shall be accompanying them to Aberdaron [sic],¹¹² another chateau belonging to Sir Benjamin Hall in the hills. I will write my first letter to you from there. Farewell my dear papa; my love to you and Maman and my sisters

Your respectful son

Th de La Villemarqué

From Alexis-François Rio to Pierre Hersart de la Villemarqué¹¹³

[Llanover, 20 October 1838]

I feel somewhat guilty, Monsieur, not to have replied sooner to your last letter; but truly I have not had the time. I was so busy before, during and after the celebrations, that I was obliged to stop all my correspondence. An account of the successes of Monsieur your son would require an entire volume. I do not think that anyone in this part of the world can remember seeing anything like it. His stay at Llanover could not have been more pleasant; he was so much feted that we rather fear the contrast when he comes to us. As soon as we heard that his fever had returned my mother-in-law sent for him to calm the anxieties of my wife, who wanted to look after him herself. But they would not give him up. He seems now to be pretty well recovered. We are hoping that in 10 or 12 days he will come and make himself at

¹¹¹ For the death of Le Gonidec see Letter IV above.

¹¹² Benjamin Hall spent much of his childhood at Abercarn, about twenty miles south of Abergavenny and in a productive mining area. The estate had been purchased by Benjamin Hall's maternal grandfather, the wealthy ironmaster Richard Crawshay, and given to his father (Benjamin Hall Senior) in 1808.

¹¹³ Archives La Villemarqué LV 02.026. Enclosure with letter above. For Rio's role in the Abergavenny Eisteddfod, see. For Rio's role in the Abergavenny Eisteddfod, see Postic, 'La correspondance de Théodore Hersart de La Villemarqué avec Thomas Price' <https://hal.univ-brest.fr/hal-02316005/document>.

home with us, and for a good while. Madame Rio asks to be remembered to you and to Mme de la Villemarqué, to whom I beg you will also offer my own deepest respects,

Your devoted servant

Rio

Lettre VII

De Théodore Hersart de la Villemarqué à sa sœur Camille du Laz¹¹⁴

Abercarn, le 28 [octobre 1838] au soir

Cette lettre sera pour vous ma chère Camille. Vous aurez sans doute lu celles que j'ai écrites à papa ; ainsi je ne vous répéterai pas ce que j'y ai mis ; maintenant toutes les fêtes sont finies, et les fumées des honneurs que l'on m'a prodigués à me confondre, je dois le dire, surtout [...];¹¹⁵ et je suis avec lady Hall et Sir Benjamin son mari et quelques amis, plusieurs hôtes de la haute société qui étaient réunis à Lanover, la principale propriété de mes hôtes – à la ferme¹¹⁶ dont vous lisez le nom en tête de cette lettre, qui est le plus délicieux cottage des montagnes que l'on puisse voir, nous avons passé la journée d'hier et celle d'aujourd'hui ; dans une voiture découverte sur des chemins de fer on a admiré les magnifiques paysages dont le pays abonde ; en ce moment, nous venons de dîner ; chacun cause sans gêne ni façon ; autour de moi on lit, on fait ce que l'on veut ; moi, je vous écris, tel est mon vouloir, mais que vous dirai-je ? j'ai tant de choses à vous dire. voyons il faut que je vous fasse passer sous les yeux une galerie de portraits des femmes qui se trouvaient à Lanover pendant les fêtes.

Je commence par la châtelaine – mais auparavant il me paraît nécessaire de vous dire ce qu'est le château. la scène avant les acteurs, c'est la règle – Lanover est un petit palais ; on dirait de la demeure d'un prince d'Allemagne. des statues, des tableaux, des appartements immenses et magnifiques, et vingt valets en livrée, – à table, tous les jours, de la vaisselle plate ; partout des armes, un parc, d'une demi lieue de large, entouré d'une grille de fer à hauteur d'appui, d'une lieue de tour, et au milieu de tout cela, des lords, de ravissantes ladies, des descendants des anciens princes gallois, des représentants des plus nobles familles d'Angleterre, et une châtelaine faisant [sic] les honneurs de son château avec une grâce, une

¹¹⁴ Archives La Villemarqué LV 02.028. Cachets postaux : Newport, 28 Oct 1838; London, 29 Oct 1838; Hennebont, 2 novembre 1838.

¹¹⁵ Mot illisible.

¹¹⁶ Lecture incertaine.

dignité et une affabilité parfaite, – voilà Lanover ces jours derniers. – lady hall a quelque chose de la figure de Pauline, seulement les yeux plus grands et la taille un peu plus élevée peut-être ; elle est d'une vivacité extraordinaire ; on la surnomme l'abeille de Gwent, en gallois Gwenanen Gwent, et ce nom lui va à ravir. Elle est simple, très-simple, spirituelle, gaie, bonne surtout. J'en ai eu bien des preuves pendant ma fièvre ; elle m'a soigné comme une mère malgré son immense fortune (elle a 500.000 francs de rentes !). elle n'est ni dédaigneuse, ni petite maîtresse¹¹⁷ ; elle aborde les pauvres gens, et cause et rit avec eux sans façon ; elle ne craint ni la pluie, ni le vent ; avant hier nous avons fait, elle et moi, un quart de lieue dans la boue ; tout cela me charme, mais surtout son enthousiasme pour son pays, sa langue et ses mœurs. elle parle gallois à merveille et le fait apprendre à ses enfants, elle porte le costume des Galloises, enfin c'est une vraie galloise. quel dommage que des femmes pareilles ne soient pas catholiques ; il ne lui manque que cela pour ressembler tout à fait à nos Bretonnes ; elle est pieuse, dévote même ; pendant les fêtes nous avons un évêque et un prêtre protestant à Lanover ; depuis nous en avons assez souvent vu beaucoup d'autres ; ce sont eux qui disent les grâces à table, ce à quoi on ne manque jamais ici. mais pendant que je vous parlais, voilà précisément qu'une ministre vient de m'interrompre ; c'est l'oncle de lady hall, m^r Porth, un facétieux révérend, s'il en fût, trop même parfois ; il a en lui quelque chose de nos bons curés : il a remarqué que je tourne le dos, à ma voisine qui me le tourne pareillement, et il me dit en mauvais français que je la boude ! et moi de me récrier ! – elle est si jolie ma voisine ! elle se nomme miss Sharley, elle a 20 ans, mais toute la naïveté d'une jeune fille de 15. Ses cheveux sont noirs comme du jay, ses yeux d'un bleu sombre, ses dents blanches comme de l'ivoire, l'expression de sa physionomie est charmante ; elle est orpheline ; son père, le vicomte de Tamoeth-Sharley [sic], était d'une haute maisonnée. tout le monde lui fait des déclarations (excepté moi pourtant), tout le monde à marier même un gros vieux, laid, bavard, rouge et bouffi de maître de forges. il faut, puisque j'y suis, que je vous conte ceci surtout : – ce brave homme croit toutes les femmes amoureuses de lui ; il n'est pas beau, n'importe ; il n'est pas jeune, n'importe, il a un grand garçon, il est veuf, il sent mauvais, n'importe, il gagera par an [... liv]res Sterling (7 mille louis) et pense que le pauvre sexe ne peut [tenir]¹¹⁸ contre un tel appas. or, étant allés l'autre jour pour visiter [des forges et]¹¹⁹ des mines, à quatre milles d'ici, les forges de mon personnage, nous avons vu venir à nous, un homme de cinq pieds à peine et d'à peu près autant de circonférence (je

¹¹⁷ Lecture incertaine.

¹¹⁸ Lecture incertaine.

¹¹⁹ Lecture incertaine.

prends le milieu), à bonne face réjouie et pleine, ayant de la crotte jusqu'où vous savez, et sur les mollets surtout une couche à faire croire qu'il avait de guêtres de cuir ; et d'un air ! oh ! d'un air ! bon dieu si vous l'aviez vu ! – cet homme était mon digne maître des forges ; il nous a invité à l'aller voir, nous faisant savoir que nous trouverions chez lui du pain, de la viande, du vin, de l'hydromel, de l'eau galloise, et même des champagnes. force a été à Sir Benjamin d'accepter et au bout de deux heures d'attente, on nous a servi un repas digne d'un presbytère de Bretagne. notre hôte, tout en ne perdant ni un coup de dent, ni une parole (il tenait à la fois et le dé de la conversation d'une voix éclatante, et le couteau à découper), notre hôte avait quelques distractions. nous nous en aperçûmes tous, et en prévînmes les suites – effectivement hier soir m^{elle} Sharley a reçu un charmant billet, où on lui dit qu'encouragé par un serrement de main plus marqué que d'ordinaire qu'on a reçu d'elle au départ, comme aussi par une grande fortune que l'on veut mettre à ses pieds, on a osé lui écrire et lui dire, comme Lord Byron : je vous aime et voilà pourquoi mon cher révérend prétend que je boude miss Sharley. la jalousie, oh ciel ! il faut avouer que nous lui faisons [sic] une guerre¹²⁰ bien cruelle à cette pauvre miss Charley : mais ce n'est pas tout, figurez-vous que le bon maître de forges annonçait dans sa lettre qu'il viendrait aujourd'hui lui rendre ses devoirs et qu'avant l'aurore, l'avons vu paraître ! – aussi pourquoi Lady Hall lui a-t-elle dit que je serais ravi de voir une noce galloise ! je suppose qu'elle n'aura pas lieu et j'en suis désolé.

il n'y avait parmi toutes nos jolies femmes (et puisque toutes l'estiment¹²¹) que trois qui puissent entrer en lutte avec miss Sharley : mississ Marzin, miss Davenport-Bromley et m^{me} Berrington. les uns préféreraient la taille gracieuse et noble, la peau blanche et satinée, et comme je n'en ai jamais vu de miss^s Marzin ; et il faut avouer qu'elle est bien belle, mais je lui trouve peu d'esprit et l'air un peu commun. miss Bromley elle a de l'esprit, surtout de l'esprit des autres. elle parle le français sans accent, l'allemand, l'italien, l'anglais. elle a beaucoup lu dans toutes ces langues ; elle peint. elle est assez bonne musicienne, elle est poète même, mais elle m'a semblé superficielle et n'avoir que des connaissances mal digérées. quant à la figure elle est bien ; elle a de beaux yeux noirs, qui lorsqu'elle parle s'animent et parlent aussi, mais qui lorsqu'elle rêve prennent une expression étrange et [...] je ne dirai pas niaise, je suis trop galant pour cela, mais fixe et morte. Ce n'est donc [pour]¹²² elle que je me fais le chevalier, ce n'est pas de m^{me} Martin, ce n'est pas de miss [Bromley, ce]

¹²⁰ Lecture incertaine.

¹²¹ Lecture incertaine.

¹²² Lecture incertaine.

n'est pas de miss Sharley, comme je vous l'ai dit. de qui est-ce donc ? devinez ! bien facile, je vous l'ai nommée. c'est de la troisième ! Hé bien, madame Berrington est bien maigre, la pauvre femme. Sa figure est bien décharnée. Elle a besoin pour en remplir les creux de rouler en nattes ses cheveux contre ses tempes ; Ses yeux sont entourés d'un cercle noir ; on voit qu'elle pleure souvent. enfin, si elle n'a l'air de n'avoir que 25 ans, elle est de votre âge. – il est vrai qu'elle a des yeux bleus d'une douceur charmante, qu'elle a une taille, une démarche pleine de grâce et de dignité, qu'elle a aussi un cœur excellent (elle est venue me voir dans ma chambre avec lady Hall sa belle sœur, pendant ma fièvre), qu'elle est simplement spirituelle, qu'elle a toutes les manières distinguées d'une certaine femme que vous connaissez bien, et qu'elle me rappelle beaucoup, enfin, qu'elle est malheureuse ! malgré ma dévotion à votre beau sexe, mesdames, je ne défendrai jamais celles d'entre vous qui par leur propre faute auront à se plaindre de leur sort mais lorsque je vous verrai souffrir gaiment et sans murmurer les sentiments les plus injustes et les plus durs, oh ! alors, je prendrai parti avec chaleur pour la tristesse contre le bonheur et je m'écrierai !

Miss Hall (m^{me} Berrington) avait vingt ans. Elle vivait retirée avec sa mère, femme à tête éventée et idée romanesque, dans une terre des montagnes ; les seuls voisins qu'ils eussent étaient quelques gentilshommes campagnards, tous plus grossiers les uns que les autres. m^r Berrington était le moins déplaisant, il faisait [sic] des vers de société, M^{elle} Hall en faisait [sic] aussi ; il peignait, m^{elle} Hall peignait elle-même – ils étaient l'un pour l'autre une ressource. bref le monsieur en devint amoureux, ou feint de le devenir ; la mère de la demoiselle le pousse à demander sa main ; la demande est faite ; mais Sir Benjamin Hall qui connaissait le caractère détestable, les hallucinations fréquentes (car il est un peu fou), et les mauvais penchants de Sir Berrington s'opposa franchement au mariage, comme chef de famille et écrivit même au prétendant une lettre à déconcerter à jamais tout [?]¹²³ Cette lettre tomba entre les mains de sa sœur, elle eut pitié de sir Berrington, son intérêt pour lui devint plus grand ; elle ne s'opposa pas aux démarches qu'il fit près du chancelier pour le mariage et l'épousa – elle l'épousa, cet homme, et vit avec lui depuis treize ans ; et tout ce qu'on peut éprouver de chagrin, de traitements indignes et de privations, elle l'a éprouvé sans se plaindre une seule fois. Elle se console avec son fils, Arthur Benniget, *Arthur le béni*, que dieu lui a envoyé, comme un ange, dans sa douleur.

¹²³ Mot illisible.

L'abbé de la Jarre qui a été émigré en Angleterre et que l'on cite souvent ici disait qu'il n'y a rien de pis au monde qu'un mari jaloux sans amour. c'est précisément le cas de Sir Berrington. il était jaloux de Jacquilot, il l'était de moi, il l'était de ce pauvre vieux révérend, m^f Port ! de qui ne l'était-il pas ? il grondait sa femme tous les soirs. la pauvre femme, elle porte encore au cou des traces de ses mauvais traitements, il y a deux ans, il lui a jeté à la tête un tison enflammé. il m'a bien prouvé à moi, du moins, qu'il ne m'aimait pas : nous jouions au wistel [sic], c'est un jeu, où on bande les yeux à quelqu'un et à qui pendant cette opération, on met un manteau auquel est attaché un sifflet. on lui ôte le bandeau, on lui dit de chercher le sifflet qui est censé passer de main en main, et qu'il ne sait pas attaché à son manteau, à son dos. il se tourne et retourne en entendant chacun souffler dans le sifflet ; il prend les mains de tout le monde et reste dans le cercle jusqu'à ce qu'il ait découvert la ruse. m^f Berrington, à ce jeu, me prit le pouce et me le serra avec une telle force, que je me roulai convulsivement, croyant avoir le poignet démis. – Lady hall et m^{me} Berrington et toutes ces dames me firent mille excuses, il m'en fit lui-même, mais je ne fus pas dupe. personne ne l'aime ici. Il est détesté de tout le monde. Sa femme seule le défend... c'est mme Waddington qui m'a raconté son histoire. Il nous a quitté il y a cinq jours ; il emmène sa femme passer l'hiver dans son château à demi ruiné, et glacial, au bord de la mer où il va l'enfermer six mois pour la punir d'avoir été trop aimable et nous avoir trop plu. du reste le même reproche aurait pu être fait à toutes les dames que nous avons vues ici, car en vérité elles ont été toutes plus charmantes pour nous les unes que les autres, et pour moi, en particulier, député du roi de France, dont elles ont fait quatre portraits ! ! – Je n'aurais pas dû omettre de vous parler de M^{me} Waddington, la mère de lady Hall, dont j'ai déjà entretenu papa : une femme qui a été la plus belle de l'Angleterre, qui a passé plusieurs années à la cour, qui en a toutes les manières et la distinction et qui, avec sa guimpe noire autour de la tête, ses vêtements noirs a l'air d'une supérieure d'une communauté, et me rappelle M^{de} de Maintenon. J'aime beaucoup à causer avec elle ; elle me parle toujours de la France, où elle a passé quelque temps, de l'abbé de la Jarre, de m^{me} Récamier, sa rivale en beauté (mais elle ne le dit pas) ; elle aime nos manières ; elle a fait mettre dans les journaux qu'on reconnaît le noble sang des députés Bretons, à la fête galloise, à la « distinction et à l'élégance de leurs manières ». – aussi allez-vous croire mon éloge intéressé ; il n'est que mérité.

Je ne vous ai entretenu que des femmes, c'est que les hommes du monde que j'ai vus ici, sont assez insignifiants, en général ; j'en excepte pourtant trois hommes : l'un qui est m^f Bunsen, ministre du roi de Prusse, un des hommes les plus extraordinaires, les plus savants et

les plus aimables à la fois que je connaisse ; un véritable allemand. l'autre son ami le d^r leipsius, professeur d'antiquité à Rome, un jeune homme de 27 ans qui a fait dans la [?]¹²⁴ des découvertes qui passionnent¹²⁵ nos vieillards, qui parle hiéroglyphes [sic] en même tems qu'il danse, joue du piano et chante à ravir ; enfin un 3^e qui a nom Tegid qui est Barde gallois et barde excessivement remarquable par ses poésies et son esprit (avec lequel j'ai passé des journées délicieuses à parler Breton : car nous nous entendons à merveille ce Gallois et moi.

Adieu, car voilà bien long, et nous allons nous coucher car il est près de minuit. j'ai pensé tout ce que je vous ai dit ainsi, un peu en courant¹²⁶ sera de nature à vous intéresser. mais rendez-moi un service, c'est de garder cette lettre et celles que je vous écrirai encore. c'est mon journal de voyage ; un jour, j'aurai du plaisir à le relire. mille choses à votre mari, j'embrasse vos enfans et vous. de tout mon cœur.

Th De la Villemarqué

¹²⁴ Mot illisible.

¹²⁵ Lecture incertaine.

¹²⁶ Lecture incertaine.

Letter VII

Théodore Hersart de la Villemarqué to his sister Camille Jégou du Laz¹²⁷

Abercarn, 28 [October 1838] evening

This letter, my dear Camille, will be for you. You will no doubt have read the ones I wrote to Papa; in which case I won't repeat everything in them; now the celebrations are all over, and with them the headiness of the honours which were showered upon me to the point of embarrassment, I must say [...] and now I am with Lady Hall and her husband Sir Benjamin and a few friends, high society guests who met at Llanover, the main residence of my hosts – at the [farm] whose name you read at the top of my letter, which is the most delectable *cottage* in the hills you can imagine, we spend the day [here] yesterday and today; in an open carriage on rail tracks admiring the magnificent views so plentiful in this country;¹²⁸ we have just dined; people chat informally, relaxed; all around me people read or do as they please; I, for my part, have chosen to write to you, but what shall I tell you? There is so much to say. Let me see: I must present you with a gallery of portraits of the women who stayed at Llanover during the festivities.

I start with the mistress of the house – but first I should really tell you about the Hall. One should set the scene before introducing the actors. Llanover is a little palace: something like the residence of a German prince. Statues, pictures, vast, magnificent rooms and twenty servants in livery – silver plate at table every day, weaponry everywhere, a park half a league across, surrounded by an iron fence at waist height¹²⁹ about a league all round – and in the midst of all this, lords and ravishing ladies, descendants of the old Welsh princes, representatives of the most noble English families, and a *chatelaine* doing the honours of her castle with perfect grace, dignity and warmth – such has been Llanover these last few days.

¹²⁷ Archives La Villemarqué LV 02.028. Postmarks: Newport, 28 Oct 1838; London, 29 Oct 1838; Hennebont, 2 November 1838. Camille Hersart de La Villemarqué (1803–1853) married Eugène Jégou du Laz (1788–1874) in 1826.

¹²⁸ The Abercarn estate. The Halls owned a manor house by the River Ebbw, but this is probably High Meadow, a 'small but charming Georgian house set in the wooded hill above the river'. See Maxwell Fraser, 'Benjamin Hall's Youth', *National Library of Wales Journal* XII (1961–2), 1–17, 250–87 [at 250]. 'Hall's Road', the tram-line built by Benjamin's father, was used for transporting coal.

¹²⁹ Literally 'at a height for leaning on'.

Lady Hall is something like Pauline¹³⁰ but with larger eyes and perhaps a little taller; she is extremely vivacious; they call her The Bee of Gwent, in Welsh, Gwenanen Gwent, and the name suits her perfectly.¹³¹ She is uncomplicated, spiritual, cheerful and full of kindness. I had much proof of it during my fever; she tended to me like a mother in spite of her immense fortune (she has an income of 500,000 francs!). She is neither snobbish nor [...] she will accost poor folk, and chat and laugh with them without any affectation; she fears neither rain nor wind; yesterday she and I walked a quarter of a league in the mud: all of which I find utterly charming, but I admire most of all her enthusiasm for her country, its language and customs. She speaks Welsh perfectly and is teaching it to her children; she wears Welsh costume, and is, in short, a real Welshwoman. What a shame that such women are not Catholics – it is all they lack to be just like our *Bretonnes*. She is pious, even devout; during the celebrations we had a bishop and a protestant minister at Llanover; and we have seen plenty others since; they say the grace at table; something one is never short of here. And there, even as I was writing to you I was interrupted by a minister; he is Lady Hall's uncle, Mr Porth,¹³² a comical reverend if ever there was one, rather too much sometimes; he has something of the *bon curé* about him. He remarked that I was turning my back on my neighbour, who had done likewise, and told me in bad French that I was 'sulking' her! I was quite indignant: she is so pretty, my neighbour! She is called Miss Sharley [sic], is twenty years old but has the innocence of a fifteen-year-old. Her hair is black as jet, her eyes a dark blue, her teeth as white as ivory, her face charmingly expressive; she is an orphan; her father the Viscount of Tamoeth-Sharley was of noble lineage.¹³³ Everyone has been declaring their love for her (except, however, for me), everyone who needs a wife, including even a fat, old, ugly, loquacious, red-faced, bloated ironmaster.

Since I'm at it I really must tell you all about him – this fine gentleman believes all the ladies are in love with him; he is not handsome, but never mind; he is not young, but never mind that either; he has a grown up son, is a widower, he smells horrible, but no matter; he has an income of some [...] pounds sterling per annum (7 thousand louis), and is convinced that the weaker sex cannot hold out against such charms. Now, we were all out one day visiting various furnaces and mines, about four miles from here, the forge belonging to my

¹³⁰ Pauline (b. 1799) was La Villemarqué's eldest sister.

¹³¹ Augusta Hall adopted the bardic name Gwenynen Gwent ('Bee of Gwent').

¹³² The Reverend Port, a brother of Augusta Hall's mother Lady Waddington, who was born Georgina Port.

¹³³ 'Miss Shirley': Lady Rosamond Anne Myrtle Shirley (1818–1865) would have been twenty at the time of La Villemarqué's visit; in 1841 she married the M.P. Henry Hanbury-Tracy, nephew of the Hanbury Leighs with whom La Villemarqué would stay. Her father was Robert William Shirley (1783–1830), Viscount Tamworth; her mother died in 1839.

Character¹³⁴ – when we saw, heading towards us, a man barely five feet in height and about the same in circumference (measured around the middle), his face glowing with bonhomie, covered in muck up to parts I cannot mention, but particularly around the calves, thereby creating the effect of leather gaiters, and with such an air ! such an air ! good lord if you could only have seen him ! Such was our honourable Ironmaster. He invited us to come and visit him, letting it be known that we would be treated to bread, meat, wine, mead, Welsh water, even champagne. Sir Benjamin was obliged to accept, and after two hours' wait we were served a meal worthy of a Breton presbytery. Our host, without missing out on a morsel of food nor a single word (he controlled simultaneously both the conversation, in a deafeningly loud voice, and the carving knife), was nevertheless somewhat distracted.

We noticed everything, and foresaw what would happen next – and sure enough, yesterday evening Mlle Sharley received a charming note telling her that, encouraged by a squeeze of the hand more marked than usual on her part on saying goodbye, as well as by the huge fortune one wished to pile at her feet, one dared to write to her and say, like Lord Byron: I love you. And that is why my dear Reverend claims that I 'sulk' Miss Sharley. Jealousy, good heavens! It must be said that we have been waging a cruel war against poor Miss Sharley: and that is not all, imagine, the good ironmaster announced in his letter that he would come today to pay her his respects, and we saw him appear before dawn! – Lady Hall has told her that I would be delighted to see a Welsh wedding! I doubt that it will happen and am of course devastated...

Amongst all our beautiful ladies, since all [hold them in high regard],¹³⁵ there were only three who could really hold a candle to Miss Sharley: Mrs Marzin,¹³⁶ Miss Davenport-Bromley,¹³⁷ and Mme Berrington. Some preferred the graceful and noble figure, with a white satin skin such as I have never seen, of Mrs Marzin; and I must admit she is extremely beautiful, only I find her rather lacking in sparkle, and with a slightly common air. Miss Bromley on the hand has plenty of sparkle, and is very witty about other people. She speaks French without an accent, German, Italian, English. She has read a great deal in all these languages. She is quite a good musician, she has even written poetry, but she seemed to me superficial, her knowledge poorly assimilated. Her face is nice ; she has lovely dark eyes,

¹³⁴ As yet unidentified.

¹³⁵ Reading uncertain

¹³⁶ Unidentified: possibly Martin or Myrddin.

¹³⁷ Presumably a relation of the Davenport-Bromley family who owned Capesthorne Hall near Macclesfield in Cheshire.

which brighten expressively when she talks, but which, when she is thinking, take on a strange look [...] I won't say simple (I'm far too polite for that), but fixed, dead.

And so I have not made myself her knight: not Mme Martin's, not Miss [Bromley's] and nor, as I have told you, Miss Sharley's. Whose, then? Guess! Easy enough, I have already named her, the third one. Well, Mme Berrington is very thin, poor woman. Her face is emaciated. To hide the hollows she has to roll up her hair in tresses around her temples; her eyes are circled with darkness; it is obvious that she cries a great deal. Although she appears to be only about 25, she is your age¹³⁸ – she has blue eyes and is charmingly gentle, her figure and gait are full of grace and dignity, she has a heart of gold (she came to visit me in my room with her sister-in-law Lady Hall when I had the fever), she is unaffectedly religious, she has all the refined manners of a certain woman whom you know very well and of whom she reminds me a lot – and she is unhappy! Despite my devotion to your beautiful sex, mesdames, I will never defend those amongst you who by their own actions find themselves complaining of their fate – but when I see you, contentedly and without complaining, suffer the most harsh and unjust insults oh ! then I will take up arms with vigour in the cause of sadness over gaiety, and I will protest !

Miss Hall (Mme Berrington) was twenty years old. She lived a sheltered life with her mother, a woman with an empty head and a romantic imagination, on an estate in the hills;¹³⁹ the only neighbours they had were some country gentlemen, each more unrefined than the last. Mr Berrington was the least unpromising:¹⁴⁰ he wrote a little occasional verse, Mlle Hall did likewise; he painted, Mlle Hall painted too – they became, for each other, a kind of support. In short, the gentleman fell in love, or claimed to do so; the young lady's mother urged him to ask for her hand; the request was made; but Sir Benjamin Hall, who was aware of Sir Berrington's deeply unpleasant character, his frequent hallucinations (he has a tendency to insanity) and his baser instincts, boldly opposed the marriage. As head of the household he even wrote a letter to the suitor to put a stop for ever to all [...] This letter fell into the hands of his sister; she took pity on Sir Berrington, and developed an interest in him; she did not oppose the moves he made to have the marriage agreed by the Chancellor, and she married him – married him, this man, with whom she has lived for thirteen years; and all

¹³⁸ Charlotte Berrington (née Hall, younger sister of Benjamin Hall of Llanover) was born in 1807, so would have been thirty.

¹³⁹ Charlotte Crawshay (1784–1839) was the daughter of the powerful ironmaster Richard Crawshay (1739–1810), who ran the works at Cyfarthfa, near Merthyr Tydfil.

¹⁴⁰ Jenkin Davies Berrington Esq, b. 1802 in Swansea, lived in Pant-y-Goetre, Monmouthshire after his marriage to Charlotte Hall. He was not titled, in spite of La Villemarqué's 'Sir'.

the sorrow, all the shameful treatment and deprivations that one could suffer, she has borne them without a single complaint. She consoles herself with her son, Arthur Benniget, Arthur the blessed, whom God has sent her like an angel in her misery.¹⁴¹

The Abbé de la Jarre,¹⁴² who emigrated to England and is often quoted over here said that there is nothing in the world worse than a jealous but unloving husband. This is precisely the case with Sir Berrington. He was jealous of Jacquelot; he was jealous of me, of our poor old Reverend, Mr Port; of whom was he not jealous? He scolded his wife every evening. The poor woman, she still bears on her neck the signs of his ill treatment; two years ago he threw a lighted brand at her head. He has certainly proved to me, at any rate, that he does not like me: we were playing *wistel*, a game which involves blindfolding someone and dressing them in a coat which has a whistle attached to it.¹⁴³ You take off the person's blindfold, and tell him to hunt for the whistle, which is supposedly being passed from hand to hand, and which he does not realize is attached to the back of his coat. Hearing the others blowing the whistle he twists and turns; he takes everyone's hands and is stuck in the circle until he has worked out the trick. During this game Mr Berrington took my thumb and squeezed it so hard that I practically went into convulsions, convinced he had dislocated my wrist. Lady Hall and Mme Berrington and all the other ladies made a thousand apologies – he even apologized himself – but I was not deceived. Nobody here likes him. He is despised by everyone. Only his wife defends him.... Mme Waddington told me his story. He left us five days ago; he is taking his wife to spend the winter in his half-ruined, freezing cold chateau on the coast, where he will keep her prisoner for six months to punish her for having been too kind, and for having pleased us too much. One could, as a matter of fact, offer a similar reproach to all the ladies we have seen here, for to tell the truth they have all of them been utterly delightful towards us, and to me in particular, *representative of the King of France*, of whom they have drawn four portraits!! – But I should not have omitted to tell you about Mme Waddington, Lady Hall's mother, whom I have already described to Papa:¹⁴⁴ she was once the most beautiful woman in England, spent several years at Court and has all the resulting refinement of manners; her black wimple and dress give her the air of a Mother Superior – she rather reminds me of Mme de Maintenon. I thoroughly enjoy conversations with her; she always

¹⁴¹ Arthur Vendigaid Davies-Berrington (b.1833).

¹⁴² Lajarre, abbé de Cherval, worked in the foreign office under Napoleon; he was a former lover of the countess of Saint Martin, and was accused of passing information to the English.

¹⁴³ For a similar description of 'Hunt the Whistle' see *Cassell's Book of in-door amusements, card games and fireside fun*, 3rd ed. (London: Cassell, Petter, Galpin and Co., 1881), 30–31.

¹⁴⁴ For Augusta Hall's mother, Mrs Waddington, née Georgina Port (1771–1850) see Letter III above.

talks about France, where she spent some time, and of the Abbé de la Jarre, of Mme Récamier, her rival in beauty (not that she mentions it);¹⁴⁵ she likes our manners ; she had it put in the newspapers that one could recognize the noble blood of the Breton delegates at the eisteddfod by their refinement and their elegant manners. – you will now think my eulogy of her the product of self-interest, when in fact it is nothing but deserved.

I have only told you about the women; the truth is that the men of society whom I have met here are, in general, fairly insignificant; I make exception for three of them: one is Mr Bunsen,¹⁴⁶ envoy of the King of Prussia, one of the most extraordinary, the most learned and the most amiable men I know; a true German. The other is his friend Dr Leipsius, a professor of Roman antiquities, a young man of 27 who has made in [...] discoveries which have set our old fogeys alight, who can talk hieroglyphs while dancing, playing the piano and singing beautifully;¹⁴⁷ and the third who is called Tegid,¹⁴⁸ a Welsh bard and a poet exceptionally noted for both his poetry and his wit (and with whom I have spent entire delightful days speaking Breton – we understand each other perfectly, this Welshman and I).

Adieu, for this is very long, and we are all going to bed, it being nearly midnight. I hope that you will find something of interest in everything I have told you like this, more or less as it happens. But do me a favour and keep this letter and any others I write you. They are my travel journal; one day I shall take pleasure in re-reading them. A thousand greetings to your husband, my love to your children and to you with all my heart.

Th De la Villemarqué

¹⁴⁵ Juliette Récamier (1777–1849) was a famous beauty and socialite whose Paris salons attracted artists and intellectuals.

¹⁴⁶ For Bunsen see Letter III above.

¹⁴⁷ Karl Richard Lepsius (1810–1884), German archaeologist, Egyptologist and linguist, led an expedition to Egypt in 1842, examining and recording the pyramids and other key sites. Bunsen was responsible for bringing Lepsius to Rome in the 1830s. See Jean Leclant, ‘Aux sources de l'égyptologie européenne: Champollion, Young, Rosellini, Lepsius’, *Comptes rendus des séances de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres* (1991), 743–62.

¹⁴⁸ John Jones, ‘Tegid’ (1792–1852) was a clergyman and poet from Bala, educated at Oxford and later a canon of St David’s Cathedral. He was a key figure in the Llanover Circle and the Cymreigyddion, and worked closely with Charlotte Guest on her translations of the *Mabinogion* texts. See: <https://biography.wales/article/s-JONE-JOH-1792>.

Lettre VIII

**De Théodore Hersart de la Villemarqué à son père Pierre Hersart de La
Villemarqué¹⁴⁹**

A Lannarth-Court. Le 5 9bre [1838]

Je profite, pour vous écrire, du départ de nos amis ; ce sera sans doute Mauduit qui vous portera cette lettre. il quitte, comme les autres, avec le regret ce bon pays où on nous a si bien reçus, et où on nous a fait et fait encore tous les jours des invitations auxquelles nous ne pourrions faire droit. pour moi qui reste, je tâcherai d'accepter les plus agréables.

Votre lettre du 23, que je viens de recevoir m'affecte beaucoup ; je vous croyais hors de presse, et je vois avec peine qu'il n'en est rien. croyez-vous que quimperlé vous soit plus favorable que le plessix ? au moins vous y aurez les soins de Camille, qui je suppose, viendra s'y établir, près de vous. je lui ai écrit, l'autre jour, à Camille, de la terre que lady Hall a dans les montagnes, où nous avons passé une semaine charmante. je ne lui ai parlé, non plus qu'à vous, je crois, des fêtes du Cymrygiddion, j'ai supposé que vous en aviez vu la description dans les journaux français. Les débats du moins et l'Armoricain, l'ont donnée, car nous l'y avons lue. La gazette n'en aurait-elle rien dit ? les vers que m^f de la Martine a fait à ce sujet, contribue singulièrement à donner du retentissement à cette réunions de bardes, en france ; et l'on nous mande qu'il n'est bruit que d'elle partout ; j'aurais peine à concevoir en vérité, (si Dieu n'aidait à comprendre bien des choses), que j'aie pu y assister après cinq accès de fièvre : passer deux journées entières en public, être à un grand diner pendant plusieurs heures, chanter, faible comme j'étais, danser toute une nuit, sans être le lendemain fatigué le moins du monde ! mon médecin n'en revenait pas, ni toutes les personnes de ce château, qui me croyaient mourant. Le journal l'hereford lui-même en a parlé à propos de mon admission dans l'ordre des bardes de l'île de Bretagne, comme m^f de Kergos l'a pu voir dans le n° que je lui ai adressé, car je suis barde maintenant, vraiment barde ! barde-titré !! et j'ai été reçu selon les anciens rites des V^e et VI^e siècles, qui se sont transmis jusqu'à nous. on m'a fait jurer sur l'épée nue, et on m'a attaché au bras droit le ruban bleu de l'initiation, qui est la couleur des bardes. C'est mon chant qui m'a valu cet honneur, dont je suis tout fier. La réception a lieu, en

¹⁴⁹ Archives La Villemarqué LV 02.029. Cachets postaux : London, 6 Nov. 1838; Quimperlé, 10 Nov. 1838.

général, sur une montagne, au milieu d'un cercle de pierre, devant un dolmen, le matin avant que le soleil soit au milieu de sa courbe. c'est très-curieux à voir. l'installation bardique se nomme Gorsez. en sortant du cercle de pierres, on vous fait asseoir sur un fauteuil de velours cramoisi, a boiseries dorées, et toutes les harpes des Bardes retentissent en votre honneur.

J'ai quitté mes excellents hôtes pour venir m'établir ici, mais non sans leur promettre de les revenir voir ; et pour commencer dimanche après la messe, je partirai pour Lannover où je coucherai et le lendemain, m^f Bunsen, Sir Benjamin Hall et moi, nous partirons pour Bristol par le bateau à vapeur de Newport. nous y passerons la nuit chez le savant D^f Pritchard, et le jour d'après nous nous rendrons tous ensemble à Bath, d'où nous irons visiter le fameux Stone-henge ; c'est une partie dont je me félicite singulièrement ; je suis surtout enchanté de la faire en si belle compagnie : un ministre du roi de Prusse, un savant dont les travaux honorent l'Angleterre et un membre de la chambre des communes ! – qu'en dites-vous ?

Il s'est trouvé que par le plus étrange hasard, que non seulement les paroles de mon chant breton composé pour la fête ont été parfaitement entendu de tous les Gallois, qui y ont trouvé tous les mots de leur langue, mais encore que l'air breton est populaire dans le pays de Galles : cela a beaucoup contribué à son immense succès. en ce moment on le réimprime ; la première édition est épuisée. – mon breton est entendu de tout le monde, les gens auxquels je ne puis parler français, je parle en breton ; j'ai eu des conversations dans cette langue, qui ont duré des heures. je n'ai pas d'autre moyen de me faire entendre des bardes, qui pour la plupart ne savent ni français ni même anglais. mon discours de réception le jour du Gorsez, je l'ai prononcé en breton et si on n'a pas applaudi l'auteur, on a du moins applaudi le langage dont il s'est servi, à faire résonner les échos des montagnes. – Si vous saviez quels efforts font ici et le peuple et l'aristocratie galloise pour conserver la vieille langue et les vieilles mœurs ! c'est admirable ! – fait-on une quête pour les pauvres bardes pour leur acheter des harpes ? – tout de suite, en une heure, sept mille 500 francs ! – 300 liv. sterling ! on est bien loin de là en Bretagne. il est vrai que nous sommes moins riches, mais on pourrait du moins ne pas travailler à détruire les usages, les costumes et la langue !

adieu, mon cher papa, mes respects à maman; dites-lui qu'après toutes mes petites misères, je me porte à merveille. pour vous, je vous souhaite de tout mon cœur, une meilleure santé

votre fils

Th. De la Villemarqué

Letter VIII

Théodore Hersart de la Villemarqué to his father Pierre Hersart de La Villemarqué¹⁵⁰

Lannarth-Court. 5 November [1838]

I take advantage of our friends' departure to write to you; I expect Mauduit will be the one to bring you this letter. Like the others, he is very sorry to be leaving this fine country where we have been made so welcome, and where we have been (and continue to be) sent more invitations than we know what to do with. For myself, since I am to remain here, I shall do my best to accept the more pleasant among them.

Your letter of the 23, which I have just received, has made me anxious; I thought you were out of danger¹⁵¹ and I am sorry to see that this is not the case. Don't you think that Quimperlé might be better than le Plessix? At least there you would have Camille to look after you; I'm sure she would move in to be closer to you. I wrote to her, to Camille, the other day, from the place Lady Hall has up in the hills where we spent a delightful week.¹⁵² I don't think I told her, or you either for that matter, about the festivities of the Cymrygiddion: I presumed that you would have seen the description in the French press. The Debats,¹⁵³ at least, and the Armoricain,¹⁵⁴ – both had reports, because we have seen them. Did the Gazette¹⁵⁵ not say anything? The lines composed by Mr de la Martine on the subject certainly enhanced the whole occasion of this meeting of the bards in France; and we are told that it is much talked about.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁰ Archives La Villemarqué LV 02.029. Postmarks: London, 6 Nov. 1838; Quimperlé, 10 Nov. 1838.

¹⁵¹ Literally 'hors de presse', an expression referring to methods of lowering blood pressure involving the letting of blood.

¹⁵² The estate at Abercarn; see Letter VII above.

¹⁵³ *Le Journal des Débats* (19 October 1838) published an account of the festivities based on a report by Du Marc'hallac'h, 'Fête Galloise d'Abergavenny' (Archives La Villemarqué LV 02.059).

¹⁵⁴ *L'Armorican*, was founded in 1833 by Alexandre Bouët and printed at Brest.

¹⁵⁵ *La Gazette de France* (22 October, 1838) also gave an account of the occasion based on Du Marc'hallac'h's report: 'Fête nationale d'Abergavenny, dans le pays de Galles'. (Archives La Villemarqué LV 02.013).

¹⁵⁶ The poet and Academician Alphonse de Lamartine (1790–1869) was unable to join the delegation to Abergavenny, but wrote a poem which was read aloud during the festivities: 'Un toast des Bretons et des Gallois réunis dans le pays de Galles en commémoration de l'unité de la race octobre 1838' is centred on the image of

I still have great difficulty in actually believing (did God not serve to help understand many things), that I managed to take part in the event after five bouts of fever: to spend two whole days in public, including a grand dinner lasting several hours, to sing, feeble as I was, to dance for a whole night, without feeling the slightest bit fatigued in the morning! My doctor could not believe it, nor anyone here at the Hall – they had practically given me up for dead. Even the Hereford newspaper¹⁵⁷ mentioned it in relation to my admission into the Order of the Bards of the Island of Britain, as Mr Kergos will see in the copy I sent him, for I am now a bard, a true bard! a ‘titled bard’, and I was sworn in according to the ancient rites of the V and VI centuries, handed down to the present time. I was made to swear an oath on a naked sword, and they attached to my right arm the blue ribbon of initiation, which is the colour of the bards. It was my song which won me this honour, of which I am extremely proud.¹⁵⁸

The inauguration generally takes place on a hill, facing a dolmen, in the middle of a stone circle in the morning, before the sun has reached the mid-point of its trajectory. It is very curious to behold. The bardic ceremony is known as ‘Gorsez’. Leaving the stone circle, you are placed on a gilded wooden chair draped in scarlet velvet, and all the bardic harps resound in your honour.

I have left my excellent hosts to spend some time here, but not without promising to come back and see them; for a start, this Sunday, after mass, I set out for Llanover where I shall spend the night; the following day Mr Bunsen, Sir Benjamin Hall and myself will head for Bristol by the Newport steamer. We will spend the night at the house of the erudite Dr Pritchard,¹⁵⁹ and the following day we will all go to Bath – and from thence visit the famous Stone Henge; I am immensely excited about this trip, particularly as I am to have such fine company: a minister of the King of Prussia, a scholar whose works are an honour to England, and a member of Parliament!¹⁶⁰ – What do you say to that?!

an ancient broken sword, whose fractured halves are joined together in a ritual of recognition whenever Bretons and Welsh meet. This imagined ceremony would itself become part of the Gorsedd ritual with the second wave of cross-Channel relations at the end of the nineteenth century. (Fonds LV 28.138). Lamartine’s wife Mary Ann Birch was (contrary to some sources) not of Welsh origin, but her father was English.

¹⁵⁷ *The Hereford Times*, 20 October 1838. (Archives La Villemarqué LV 47.248).

¹⁵⁸ The pseudo-archaic Gorsedd ceremony was largely invented in the early 1790s by the Glamorgan poet and stonemason Edward Williams (‘Iolo Morganwg’, 1757–1826). For a fuller account of La Villemarqué’s bardic initiation and his role in the celebrations see Constantine, *The Truth Against the World*, 151–58.

¹⁵⁹ For Dr Prichard see below Letter X.

¹⁶⁰ For a lively account of this journey and La Villemarqué’s travelling companions see Letter X.

By the strangest chance it turned out that not only were the words of the Breton song I composed for the occasion perfectly understood by the Welsh, who recognized in it the words of their own language, but that even the Breton tune is popular in Wales: this played a large part in its immense success.¹⁶¹ They are reprinting it as I write: the first edition sold out. Everyone understands my Breton; anyone I can't speak to in French, I speak to in Breton; I have had conversations in the language that lasted hours.

I have no other way of making myself understood to the bards, who for the most part speak neither French nor even English.¹⁶² The speech I gave on the day of my inauguration at the Gorsedd was in Breton; and if they did not applaud the author, they certainly applauded the language he used, till the mountains echoed with it – If you could only see what efforts are made here by the common people and the aristocracy to preserve the ancient language and traditions! it is admirable! If there is a subscription to buy harps for the poorer bards – immediately, in an hour, seven thousand 500 francs – three hundred pounds sterling! We are a long way from this in Brittany. It's true that we are not as well off, but we could at the very least *not* collude in the destruction of our old ways, our costumes and our language!

Farewell Father dear – my respects to mother; do tell her that after all my misfortunes I am now completely well – and for yourself, I wish you better health, with all my heart.

Your son

Th. De la Villemarqué

¹⁶¹ The tune has not been identified.

¹⁶² The tricky question of mutual comprehension in Breton and Welsh is discussed in the Introduction and explored further in Constantine, *The Truth Against the World*, and 'La "sainte terre de Cambria"'. Many of these Welsh bards were educated ministers of religion, who are very likely to have spoken French.

Lettre IX

De Camille Jégou du Laz à son frère Théodore Hersart de la Villemarqué¹⁶³

7 9bre [1838]

Votre lettre m'a fait grand plaisir mon cher théodore, quand vous aurez un peu de loisir écrivez m'en de même, mais avant vous feriez bien d'en adresser une à ma tante Sophie, qui est très bonne pour vous. je crains qu'elle ne soit sensible à votre oubli. je crois que ma mère a été un peu mécontente que j'eusse une lettre avant elle ; car malheureusement j'étais au plessix lorsque je l'ai reçue. réparez tout cela mon cher frère, en lui écrivant une lettre bien aimable. La votre m'a fait beaucoup rire. votre forgeron a amusé toute la famille. ne le laissez pas vous enlever la petite orpheline si elle est jolie, bonne et riche, et qu'on puisse en faire une bonne catholique. condition première. ne vous laissez pas emporter par l'amour qui vous serait un bien mauvais conseiller. consulté [sic] M ou M^{me} rio ; je voudrais bien qu'ils pussent vous procurer de faire un bon mariage : mon père ne serait pas du tout fâché de vous voir épouser une anglaise mais ma mère serait plus difficile à séduire ; j'ai été bien contente de l'accueil que vous avez reçu là bas ; les journaux français ont répété la chose comme s'ils étaient de nos amis. pas un mot de trop et vous n'étiez pas l'envoyé de philippe comme dans votre gazette anglaise celle des villes et des campagnes vous a gardé une dent, elle a réduit à sa plus simple expression tout ce qui vous regarde. nous recevons à votre sujet beaucoup de compliments, tous nos parens, nos amis eugène la gournerie, les habitans de pratulo, mes voisins et mr de missery qui veut que je vous parle de lui. je crois qu'il a une passion malheureuse. ne prenez pas trop d'orgueil de tout ceci. je vous le dis pour que vous continuiez a bien faire plutôt qu'à vous reposer. n'oubliez pas votre mission au milieu de tous vos plaisirs car ces derniers ne vous enrichiront guère.

J'ai fait plusieurs voyages au plessix ; mon père ne souffre pas, mais il est faible et le sera tout l'hiver ; j'ai grand hâte de le voir à quimperlé, pour être plus à porté [sic] de le soigner. il doit y venir cette semaine ; il est étonné que vous ne lui accusiez pas réception de ses lettres ; – nous espérons cependant que vous les avez reçues. que je vous ai plaint d'être malade, que vous deviez être gêné d'être soigné par un inconnu. vous devez vous trouver bien jeune au

¹⁶³ Archives La Villemarqué LV 02.012 Cachets postaux : Hennebont, 13 Nov. 1838; London, 17 Nov. 1838.

milieu de toute ces immenses fortunes. Sentez la, mais ne la laissez pas apercevoir ou vous ne trouverez pas de femme. nous n'avons eu encore aucune réponse au sujet de St Maurice, dites le à M^r Rio pour qu'il sache que nous n'avons pas oublié son affaire, on me promet une réponse dans quelques jours ; je crains qu'il n'y ait encor du retard quand [on a]¹⁶⁴ affaire a tant de têtes disloquées [on a de]¹⁶⁵ la peine à terminer une affaire. qu'avez vous fait des mouchoirs de [...] ¹⁶⁶ ces dames sont à londres. mais faite [sic] toujours remettre la commission où elle est adressée,¹⁶⁷ nous sommes tous bien Ermine se trouve mieux de l'air de Lanion, dieu veuille que cela continue. adieu mon cher théodore croyez à la bien tendre amitié que je vous ai voué et donnez moi de vos nouvelles rien ne me fait plus de plaisir

m^r dulaz vous dit mille amitiés et nos enfans vous embrassent

Camille

¹⁶⁴ Lecture incertaine.

¹⁶⁵ Lecture incertaine.

¹⁶⁶ Mot illisible.

¹⁶⁷ Des manques dans le papier de la lettre rendent ce passage quelque peu obscur.

Letter IX

Camille Jégou du Laz to her brother Théodore Hersart de la Villemarqué¹⁶⁸

7 November [1838]

Your letter gave me much pleasure my dear Théodore, write me more like it when you have the time; but before that you would be advised to write to my aunt Sophie, who has been so good to you.¹⁶⁹ I fear she is somewhat hurt at your neglect. I think mother was rather cross that I had a letter before she did, as unfortunately I was at Plessix when it came. Make amends for all this, my dear brother, by writing her a thoroughly charming letter. Yours made me laugh so much. Your ironmaster has entertained the whole family. Don't let him make off with the little orphan if she is pretty, good-natured and rich, and if we can make a good Catholic of her.¹⁷⁰ A fundamental rule: do not allow yourself to be swept away by love as it will be a poor counsellor to you. Ask Mr or Mme Rio for their advice; it would be an excellent thing if they could help you to a good marriage: my father would not be at all put out to see you wedded to an 'Anglaise'. Mother, on the hand, would be far harder to persuade.

I was delighted to hear of the welcome you received over there; the French newspapers have written it up as if they were our dearest friends. Indeed, you were very near to being the 'special envoy of King Louis-Philippe' as reported in the English gazette. The town and country journal holds a grudge against you; it has reduced everything concerning you to a bare minimum. We have been receiving many compliments on your behalf – all our relatives, our friends Eugène la Gournerie,¹⁷¹ the people at Pratulo,¹⁷² my neighbours and M. de

¹⁶⁸ Archives La Villemarqué LV 02.012. Postmarks: Hennebont, 13 Nov. 1838; London, 17 Nov. 1838.

¹⁶⁹ Sophie Henriette Marie du Breil du Buron (1788–1841). See Letter I.

¹⁷⁰ See the account of Miss Shirley and the ironmaster in Letter VII.

¹⁷¹ Eugène Maillard de la Gournerie (1807–1887). Related to La Villemarqué on his mother's side, he was the author of several historical works.

¹⁷² The château of Pratulo at Cléden-Poher, near Carhaix, was owned by the Jégou du Laz family. Théodore's sister Camille moved there after her marriage to François Eugène Jégou du Laz (1788–1874).

Missery who insists that I mention him to you.¹⁷³ I suspect him of being unfortunate in love. Do not let all this go to your head. I say this so that you will continue to strive to do well and not rest on your laurels. Do not forget your mission in the midst of all these pleasures, for the latter will do nothing to improve you.

I have been over to Plessix several times; father is in no pain, but he is weak and will remain so for the rest of the winter; I am keen to see him move to Quimperlé, so that I will be closer to help look after him. He should come this week; he is surprised that you have not acknowledged receipt of his letters; we hope nevertheless that you have received them. How I pitied you being ill like that; it must have been disconcerting to be looked after by strangers. You must feel very inexperienced¹⁷⁴ in the midst of all this wealth and grandeur. Feel it by all means, but do not let it show, or you will never find yourself a wife.

We have not yet heard anything about Saint Maurice – tell M. Rio so that he knows we haven't forgotten – I am promised a reply in the next few days; though I fear that there will be further delay when [...] ¹⁷⁵ difficulty completing the business. What have you done with the handkerchiefs [...] these ladies are at London. But do convey the commission to where it is addressed¹⁷⁶

We are all well; Ermine is better for the air at Lannion, pray god that it continues thus. Adieu my dear Théodore, with my very tenderest affection, and do send me your news, nothing gives me greater pleasure. M Dulaz¹⁷⁷ sends a thousand friendly greetings and our children send kisses

Camille

¹⁷³ Edmé Suremain de Missery (1806–1896) had a career in forest administration.

¹⁷⁴ Literally 'young'.

¹⁷⁵ This line is unclear, as is the nature of the business with Rio. It may be something to do with their search for a property in Brittany: Rio and his Welsh wife were there in early September, looking to buy land near Auray or a property at Concarneau on the coast. They stayed with the La Villemarqué family at Plessix-Nizon. (Lettre de Rio à La Villemarqué, 4 juillet 1838, Archives La Villemarqué LV 02.019).

¹⁷⁶ This section is also unclear.

¹⁷⁷ Camille's husband, Eugène Jégou du Laz.

Lettre X

De Théodore Hersart de la Villemarqué à sa soeur Justine de Kergos¹⁷⁸

Lannarth-Court. Le 28 9^{bre} 1838

Monmouth

South-wales England

Voilà deux mois que je suis en Angleterre et je ne vous ai pas encore écrit ma chère Justine. je veux profiter pour le faire de ce moment de loisir que me laissent mes courses continuelles de château en château, et mes occupations littéraires.

J'arrive du plus charmant voyage que j'ai fait de ma vie ; j'avais pour compagnon un membre des communes et un ministre plénipotentiaire ; rien que cela – sir Benjamin Hall et le M^rBunsen qui a tant occupé la renommée européenne l'année dernière le but de notre voyage était Stone-henge. Nous nous sommes embarqués par un tems charmant à Newport sur un élégant bateau à vapeur. nous avions à bord un barde gallois qui a joué sur sa harpe pendant toute la route ses plus beaux airs nationaux – (Aucuns disent qu'il avait reconnu parmi les passagers le passager royal, venu de france pour assister à la grande fête qui avait eu lieu un mois auparavant et qu'il voulait lui faire honneur). quoiqu'il en soit il m'a enchanté, et comme les chants d'orphée qui enchaînaient dit-on le chien chargé de tourmenter et d'effrayer les morts et les vivants aux portes de l'enfer antique, le barde cambrien a charmé aux accords de sa harpe un certain monstre de la mer qui s'apprêtait à me dévorer, et qui a nom en gallois droug-ar-vor et sea-sicknes [sic], en anglais. Après une navigation de deux heures sur la Severne dont les bords sont inhabités et sauvages, les eaux couleur de sang et sur la quelle [sic] nous voyons fuir devant nous des barques de cuir et d'osier dont il tiendrait trois dans une de nos plus petites barques, qu'un poisson ferait chavirer d'un coup de queue

¹⁷⁸ Archives La Villemarqué LV 02.021. Adressée à “Madame De Kergos au château de Toulgoat Kemper”. Cachets de la poste : Londres 29 novembre et 30 novembre, Paris ? , Quimper ?. Cachets de la poste : Monmouth 9 Nov, London 30 Nov, Quimper 2 (?) Dec. Note manuscrite de La Villemarqué : « voyage de Stonehenge / Bath / mr Bedford /BleisKastel ».

et qu'eux portent sur les épaules, les [...] ¹⁷⁹ une fois à terre. nous sommes entrés dans le canal de bristol, que votre mari pourra vous décrire ; la voiture du d^e Pritchard nous attendait au port de Clifton ; Sir thomas Hakland le prime orator de la chambre des communes, ayant appris notre prochaine arrivée, s'y était aussi rendu avec un de ses amis M^e Harford qui habite une propriété délicieuse à la porte de bristol, Bleis castel, où il nous fit promettre d'aller déjeuner le lendemain. le soir nous dinâmes et couchâmes chez le docteur Pritchard. C'est un des hommes les plus savants de l'Angleterre et un des savants les plus excellents que j'ai vus de ma vie. Sa famille est bien excellente aussi : j'y trouvai un ministre qui a voyagé en bretagne et m'a montré un dessin de Karnak qu'il a fait sur les lieux. la maison est une vieille abbaye ; la salle où nous avons dîné est toute chargée d'antiques sculptures très curieuses ; le soir les dames ont fait de la musique, et l'on m'a prié de chanter ma chanson de fête qui m'a value [sic] cette belle coupe dont ont parlé les journaux ; puis il m'a fallu mettre mon nom sur l'album de M^{elle} Pritchard. heureusement j'ai trouvé dans ma mémoire, des vers qui ont eu le mérite d'avoir été improvisés pour elle. le lendemain nous avons déjeuné à Bleis Castel. C'est un château, au milieu des bois et des montagnes, qui domine une vallée profonde on ne peut plus pittoresque et plus admirable. M^{me} Harford est une femme bien aimable et bien distinguée. elle nous a fait parcourir la galerie de tableaux du château, qu'elle a achetés et choisis elle même en italie. Il y a des titien, un raphaël, deux michel-Ange ; puis nous a menés à la tour du château, sur le sommet de la montagne, d'en haut de laquelle on voit les montagnes du pays de galles, la pleine mer et l'on jouit de la vue la plus belle. les appartements de la tour sont décorés à la manière du 14^e siècle. il y a une chambre où d'élégants trophées d'armes se détachent sur les murailles, dont les panneaux sont chargés des écussons de la famille depuis Guillaume le Conquérant. Celui du roi Georges III s'y trouve. C'est le roi lui-même qui l'a envoyé à M^{me} Harford. de là nous sommes descendus vers un petit hameau au flanc de la colline ; il n'y a que douze maisonnettes ; elles sont bâtie en losange ; l'espace intermédiaire est un gazon vert, au milieu duquel s'élève un grand pin, un de ces pins au feuillage si beau ¹⁸⁰ que je n'ai vus qu'en Angleterre, sous lequel surgit une fontaine, où viennent puiser les familles qui habitent ces maisonnettes ; nous y sommes entrés ; c'est une proprété, ¹⁸¹ [?] ¹⁸² je dirais une élégance ! il n'y manque rien ; il s'y trouve jusqu'à une petite bibliothèque, composée de livres pieux ; le plancher est couvert de nattes ;

¹⁷⁹ Mot illisible.

¹⁸⁰ Lecture incertaine.

¹⁸¹ Ou « propriété » ?

¹⁸² Mot illisible.

des violiers et d'autres plantes grimpantes aux fleurs rouges, gravissent les murailles blanches ; c'est un petit paradis ; M^r Harford nous dit : mon père a fait bâtir ces chaumières pour nos vieux serviteurs. – cela m'a paru charmant. Le soir nous dînions chez le frère du ministre des colonies, chez m^r Hobhouse, près de Bath ; c'était l'ami intime de Lord byron ; je ne vous dirai pas quel accueil on m'a fait là ; ça été [sic] comme ailleurs partout à me confondre. – Dieu, qu'un titre a de valeur dans ce pays de l'Angleterre. – jamais, sans doute, non jamais, je ne serai reçu, fêté, honoré comme je l'y suis chaque jour, et l'ai été déjà. partout la voiture et les chevaux à mes ordres ; partout servi par le premier valet [sic] de chambre, partout assis à table à la droite de la maîtresse de maison ; puis des invitations de tous côtés aux quelles je ne puis faire honneur toujours, tant elles sont multipliées – c'est un enivrement qui date depuis deux mois. – hé bien le croiriez-vous, mon succès le plus doux a été de voir les femmes les plus charmantes sensibles à mes attentions et jalouses de les obtenir. – (je vous parle ainsi, à cœur ouvert, sans orgueil comme sans fausse modestie, en pleine simplicité ; après tout je ne me fais pas illusion et je crois ne pas donner aux choses plus de valeur qu'elle n'en ont) – nous avons été visité à Bath le curieux cabinet de mr Bekford ce mons^r (vous le savez peut-être car il a une réputation d'originalité européenne) ; c'est celui qui s'est enfermé pendant dix huit ans avec des salons de peintures, de sculptures, des curiosités de tout genre dans un palais magnifique qu'il a fait bâtir pour lui seul. Chaque jour il avait un diner de 12 couverts, était servi par dix valets en grande tenue, et dînait seul. depuis que son palais a été brûlé, il n'a plus que 4 couverts, et permet au public de visiter son musée ; mais il ne veut voir personne et dîne toujours seul. il a les tableaux, les gravures, les manuscrits, les meubles, les cristaux, les vases les plus curieux et les plus rares de l'Angleterre ; nous avons vu sa table mise ; il n'y avait que des plats, des couteaux et des fourchettes et des coupes d'or ; les 4 couverts y étaient ; avec cela il couche dans un lit en sapin, sans rideaux ! et pourtant c'est un homme d'un esprit tout à fait supérieur. il a fait un roman français si beau qu'il nous a trompés tous ; en France, il vient de le traduire en Anglais et son livre a un grand succès –

quelques jours après nous admirions le fameux Stonehenge. rien n'en saurait donner idée. C'était un temple dédié au soleil ; il est formé de quatre cercle concentriques de gigantesques colonnes de granit, groupés [sic] deux par deux et surmontés par une troisième, posée en linteau ; au milieu il y a un autel et une douve immense à l'entour. trois avenues y conduisent dont on voit encore les traces. je joins à cette lettre un plan dressé par un de mes compagnons de voyage. ce sera pour vous un autographe de Stone–henge. Nous nous sommes rendus à

Salisbury, et de là à Glastonbury ; le cimetière des anciens rois et saints bretons. la première église bretonne élevée au bord d'une fontaine druidique que l'on voit encore dans la crypte souterraine dédiée à Joseph d'Armathie, qui passe pour le 1^{er} apôtre des Bretons. l'île tout entière d'Avalon était l'Élysée des Druides ; l'île du bonheur ; l'île des génies ; et au moyen âge des fées. C'est à Glastonbury que le roi Arthur a été enterré – j'ai vu son sarcophage en pierre, que l'on conserve encore et qui a été découvert au XII^e siècle. j'emporte de la terre, prise sous l'autel de Stone-henge, j'en emporte du cimetière de Glastonbury, j'emporte une fiole d'eau de la fontaine sainte – je veux que mon fils aîné se nomme Arthur, et soit baptisé avec cette eau – n'oubliez pas que j'ai été fait barde selon les rites antiques, conservés jusqu'à ce jour.

Parlez-moi un peu de l'effet que produit notre belle fête ; je n'ai rien lu de très positif à cet égard ; nous n'avons reçu ici aucun journal. vous avez dû recevoir deux d'ici ; bien diffus et bien remplis et bien enthousiaste : trop sans doute.

Adieu, ma chère Justine. voilà mon papier tout rempli : que mon bavardage ne vous ennuye pas trop – mes amitiés à M^r Kergos et embrassez pour moi vos enfants

Th. De la Villemarqué

Madame Rio vous fait ses amitiés ; M^r Rio vous présente ses hommages et se rappelle au souvenir de mon frère. il me parle souvent de vous. je suis dans la famille adoptive ou on me traite comme un fils. – je vous prie de garder ma lettre. un jour, en relisant toutes celles que j'ai écrites du pays de Galles, je revivrai en souvenir. – j'écirai à votre mari en anglais une autre fois.

– on trouve que je fais des progrès. je ne sais –

Letter X

Théodore Hersart de la Villemarqué to his sister Justine de Kergos¹⁸³

Lannarth-Court. 28 November 1838

Monmouth

South-wales England

I have been in England for two whole months without writing to you my dear Justine. So I am making the most of this moment of leisure snatched from my endless round of visits to grand houses, and from my literary occupations. I am just returned from the most delightful journey I have ever made; my companions were a member of parliament and a plenipotentiary Minister, no less – Sir Benjamin Hall and the Mr Bunsen whose fame spread throughout Europe last year.¹⁸⁴

The object of our journey was Stone-henge. We embarked at Newport in lovely weather on an elegant steamer. A Welsh bard played his most beautiful national airs on the harp for the entire crossing (some said that he recognized amongst the travellers a royal passenger, come over from France to take part in the great celebration which had taken place several months earlier, and that he wished to honour him).¹⁸⁵ Whatever the reason I found him enchanting, and just as the songs of Orpheus are said to have subdued the hound who tormented and terrified the living and the dead at the gates of hell in ancient times, so our Cambrian bard, with his harmonious harp, charmed a certain sea-monster which threatened to devour me, named in Welsh droug-ar-vor and in English, sea-sicknes [sic].¹⁸⁶ We were two

¹⁸³ Archives La Villemarqué LV 02.021. Letter addressed to ‘Madame De Kergos / au château de Toulgoat / Kemper / finistère / Bretagne / France’. Postmarks : Monmouth 9 Nov, London 30 Nov, Quimper 2 (?) Dec. Note in La Villemarqué’s hand: ‘voyage de Stonehenge / Bath / mr Bedford /BleisKastel’. La Villemarqué’s sister, Justine de La Villemarqué (b.1810) married Théodore Hervé De Kernafflen de Kergos in 1832.

¹⁸⁴ For Bunsen see Letter III above.

¹⁸⁵ Steam packets had been running between Newport and Bristol since 1822. Harpers were a prominent feature of the Welsh tourist scene, particularly in North Wales. See Michael Freeman, ‘Early tourists in Wales’: <https://sublimewales.wordpress.com/material-culture/harpers/>.

¹⁸⁶ This appears to be a Bretonism: the Welsh for seasickness is ‘sâl y mor’. In Breton, ‘drouk’ is a common word for an illness, whereas ‘drwg’ in Welsh is a more general word for ‘bad’.

hours crossing the Severn, the banks of which are wild and uninhabited, and the waters of which are the colour of blood; we saw fleeing ahead of us several little boats made of leather and willow – you could fit three of them into one of our smallest *barques* – a fish could upset one with a flick of its tail – they carry them on their shoulders [...] once on land.¹⁸⁷

We entered the Bristol Channel, which your husband can describe to you; Dr Pritchard's carriage was waiting for us at the port of Clifton;¹⁸⁸ Sir Thomas Hakland,¹⁸⁹ the principal speaker of the House of Commons, had news of our arrival and was also there with a friend of his, Mr Harford,¹⁹⁰ who has a delightful property just outside Bristol, Bleis Castel, which he made us promise to visit for lunch the following day. That evening we dined and slept at Dr Pritchard's. He is one of the greatest scholars in England and among the most excellent I have ever met. His family is also excellent: amongst them I met a minister who had travelled in Brittany and who showed me a sketch of Karnak¹⁹¹ he had made on the spot. The house is an old abbey; the room where we dined is full of curious ancient sculptures; in the evening the ladies played some music, and I was begged to perform my *chanson de fête*, the one which earned me that beautiful cup mentioned in the papers; then I had to add my name to Mlle Pritchard's album. Luckily I was able to summon up some verses, which had the merit of having been composed especially for her.¹⁹²

The next day we had lunch at Bleis Castel. It is a castle in the midst of woodland and hills, looking down over a steep valley that could not be more admirably picturesque. Mme Harford is a most amiable and distinguished lady.¹⁹³ She gave us a tour of the gallery,

¹⁸⁷ These were the fishing coracles (*cwryglau*) which attracted the attention of many tourists to Wales: made of split willow and animal skin, they were very light and could be easily transported on land. See Freeman, 'Early tourists': <https://sublimewales.wordpress.com/material-culture/fishing/coracles/>.

¹⁸⁸ James Cowles Prichard (1786–1848) was a prominent Bristol doctor specialising in psychiatry and with an interest in ethnology and Egyptology. He published important treatises on the nervous system and on insanity. He married Anne Maria Estlin, daughter of a well-known Unitarian minister.

¹⁸⁹ This is probably Sir Thomas Dyke Acland, 10th Baronet (1787–1871), who sat as a Tory MP for Devonshire; he did not, however hold the position of 'Speaker' in Parliament. His son Thomas Dyke Acland (1809–1898) had also been elected to Parliament (for Somerset West) in 1837, but would not have been a Baronet at this time.

¹⁹⁰ The Bristol banker and abolitionist John Scandrett Harford (1785–1866) inherited Blaise Castle House from his father in 1815. In the grounds stood an earlier building, Blaise Castle, a mock-medieval tower begun in 1766, commanding superb views and lavishly decorated inside. Harford was also the donor of the site for St David's College in Lampeter, mid-Wales: his portrait hangs in the college: <https://artuk.org/discover/artworks/john-scandrett-harford-ii-17851866-donor-of-the-site-for-st-davids-college-benefactor-and-sub-visitor-224460>.

¹⁹¹ Carnac is the largest megalith site in Brittany, and an appropriate topic of conversation for a party headed for Stonehenge.

¹⁹² Prichard had ten children, eight of whom survived infancy.

¹⁹³ Louisa Hart Davies (1796–1892) was the daughter of Bristol M.P. Richard Hart-Davies.

pictures she herself chose and bought in Italy. There are Titians, a Raphaël, two Michaelangelos; and then we visited the Tower, up on the hill, from the top of which are the most beautiful views of the Welsh mountains and the open sea. The rooms in the Tower are furnished in the style of the fourteenth century. There is one room where elegant weapons and trophies stand out on the walls, with panels emblazoned with various coats-of-arms going back to William the Conqueror. That of King George III is there; the king himself sent it to Mme Harford. From there we walked down towards a little village on the slopes of the hill. There are only twelve cottages, built in the form of a square; the space between is a green lawn, from the midst of which rises a great pine – one of those pines with [beautiful]¹⁹⁴ foliage of a type I have only seen in England, beneath which is a spring, where the families who live in these cottages come for water. We entered one; it was a property of [...], indeed of elegance!¹⁹⁵ Nothing was lacking; there was even a little library, stocked with religious books; the floor is covered with matting; wallflowers¹⁹⁶ and some other climbing plants with red blossoms climb up the whitewashed walls; a little paradise; Mr Harford told us: ‘my father had these houses built for elderly servants’ which I thought quite charming.¹⁹⁷ That evening we dined at the residence of Mr Hobhouse, brother of the Minister for the Colonies, near Bath.¹⁹⁸ He was the intimate friend of Lord Byron; I won’t tell you what kind of a welcome we received there; once again, it was overwhelming. Heavens, what it means to have a title in this country of England – never, without a doubt, no never again will I be welcomed, celebrated, and honoured as I am here every single day and have been up to now. Wherever I go, a coach and horses at my command; everywhere waited on by the first *valet de chambre*, everywhere sat at the right hand of the lady of the house; and then, on all sides, invitations which I cannot always honour, there are so many of them. This intoxication has lasted two months.

¹⁹⁴ Reading uncertain.

¹⁹⁵ Reading uncertain: alternatively, ‘it was so neat, indeed so elegant!’

¹⁹⁶ *Cheiranthus cheiri* (also *Erismum cheiri*): the wallflower.

¹⁹⁷ John Scandrett Harford Senior (d. 1815), banker, merchant and Quaker, developed Blaise Hamlet for his retired servants. It can still be visited today: <https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/blaise-hamlet/features/the-history-of-blaise-hamlet>.

¹⁹⁸ ‘Mr Hobhouse’ must be one of the many siblings of the reformist politician John Cam Hobhouse (1786–1859): their father, Sir Benjamin Hobhouse, had nineteen children by two wives. J.C Hobhouse was taught by John Prior Estlin in Bristol, and became a close friend of Byron’s while they were students at Cambridge. He was President of the Board of Control, with responsibility for India, between 1835–1841.

And as you can imagine the sweetest part of my success has been to see the most charming women responsive to my compliments and vying for my attention. – (I feel I can tell you this, with my heart laid bare, without either pride or false modesty, in all simplicity; after all, I'm under no great illusions, and don't think I'm exaggerating its importance) – At Bath we visited the curious cabinet belonging to Mr Bekford the gentleman (you perhaps know of him – he is noted throughout Europe for his eccentricity) – the one who locked himself away for eighteen years with rooms full of paintings and sculptures and all manner of curiosities in a magnificent palace which he had built entirely for his own use.¹⁹⁹ Every day he had a twelve-course meal served by ten valets in full livery, and ate alone. Since his palace burnt down he only has four courses, and allows the public to visit his museum; but he will see nobody and still dines alone. He has pictures and engravings, manuscripts, furniture, crystals, and vases that are among the most curious and rare in all of England. We saw his table set; there were only plates, knives and forks and gold cups; the four courses were all there. What is more, he sleeps in a pine bed, without curtains! and yet he is a man of highly superior intelligence. He wrote a novel in French so fine it fooled us all in France; he has just translated it into English, and it is a great success.²⁰⁰

A few days later we went to admire the famous Stonehenge. It is beyond description. It was a temple dedicated to the sun, made up of four concentric circles of granite pillars, grouped in pairs with a third on top like a lintel; in the middle is an altar with a vast ditch around it. Three avenues lead up to it; their traces are still visible. I enclose with this letter a sketch made by one of my travelling companions; it will serve you as an 'autograph' of Stonehenge. We visited Salysbury and from thence Glastonbury: the burial place of the ancient British kings and saints.²⁰¹ The first Breton²⁰² church [was] founded here next to a druidic spring, which can still be seen in the crypt dedicated to Joseph of Arimathea, who is supposed to have been the first apostle to the Britons. The whole Isle of Avalon was the Elysium of the Druids: the island of happiness: the island of spirits, in the magical Middle

¹⁹⁹ William Thomas Beckford (1760–1844), writer, aesthete and collector of art-works, built a neo-Gothic mansion on his estate at Fonthill, near Salisbury; his fabulous wealth derived from his father's slave plantations in Jamaica. Beckford spent his later years in Lansdown Crescent, Bath, where he constructed an elaborate folly, Lansdown Tower, to display some of his internationally renowned collection.

²⁰⁰ The Gothic novel *Vathek*, ('An Arabian Tale') was originally composed by Beckford in French in 1782; this version and an English translation by Samuel Henley both appeared in 1786.

²⁰¹ Glastonbury Abbey was founded in the seventh century and became one of the most influential religious centres in Britain. Its legendary association with the Biblical Joseph of Arimathea and the Christianisation of Britain developed in various late medieval sources; the claim that the legendary King Arthur is buried there dates from the twelfth century.

²⁰² As often, La Villemarqué here blurs the distinction between British (britannique) and Breton (breton).

Ages. King Arthur himself was buried at Glastonbury – I saw his stone tomb, still preserved, which was discovered in the 12th century. I have some earth taken from beneath the altar stone at Stonehenge; I have some from the cemetery at Glastonbury; and I have a vial of water from the holy well – I want my eldest son to be called Arthur, and to be baptised with this water²⁰³ – don't forget that I have been made a bard according to the ancient rites, handed down to this very day...

Do tell me what effect our splendid celebration has had – I haven't read anything very definite about it; we haven't had a single newspaper here. You will have received the two from here; widely circulated and very detailed and enthusiastic; too much so, perhaps.

Goodbye, my dear Justine. My paper is quite covered: I do hope my ramblings have not annoyed you too much – my greetings to Mr Kergos and love to the children

Th. De la Villemarqué

Madame Rio sends her good wishes; Mr Rio presents his compliments and wishes to be remembered to my brother. He often speaks of you. I have been adopted by the family who treat me like a son – do please keep my letter – One day, rereading everything I have written from Wales, I will relive it all in my memory. – I will write to your husband in English next time.

– they say I'm making progress. I don't know –

²⁰³ La Villemarqué's sons would be called Geoffroy and Pierre.

Lettre XI

De Théodore Hersart de la Villemarqué à sa mère Ursule Feydeau de Vaugien²⁰⁴

[28 novembre 1838]

Je vous ai longuement parlé, ma chère maman de la famille dans laquelle j'étais avant de venir ici. Il faut que je vous fasse maintenant connaître celle où je suis.

Les Jones descendent par les hommes des Herbert, compagnons de Guillaume le conquérant et ne portent que depuis quelques générations le nom actuel qui est un nom de baptême ; et par les femmes ils remontent, aux anciens rois du pays. M^{me} Jones a cinq garçons et trois filles, dont vous connaissez une, l'autre probablement ne se mariera jamais, la troisième (et c'est bien malheureusement commun dans la famille) est affectée d'une maladie mentale comme l'est un de ses frères ; le seul qui soit marié comme l'était son grand-père, comme l'était son bisaïeul. M^f Jones est mort depuis quelques années, et sa veuve continue à porter son deuil. C'est une grande femme, à figure noble, à manières tout à fait distinguées, un peu comme M^{me} de Fournas, mais plus brusquement vive, et sans façon pour elle même et pour les autres ; du reste bonne, affable, s'oubliant pour penser à vous. pieuse et ardente catholique comme au tems des premiers chrétiens, et charitable comme vous. Ce petit troupeau de fidèles, au milieu duquel je la vois tous les dimanches, et qui me rappelle la primitive église, par sa ferveur et son nombre, semble admirer en elle, une de ces saintes femmes des anciens jours. Ses serviteurs et ses enfans, quelques amis voisins, en composent le noyau. l'aumônier du château est un vieux prêtre respectable, qui appartient à l'ordre des moines franciscains. il dit la messe trois fois la semaine. M^{me} Jones fait la prière en commun tous les matins et tous les soirs. C'est une vie tout à fait sainte, mais non pas grave ni sans gaieté. Au contraire, très amusante. les jeunes gens qui sont des modèles de piété, n'en sont pas moins très de leur âge ; M^{me} Rio, comme vous avez pu en juger n'est pas triste, sa mère et sa sœur ne le sont pas davantage, ni M^f Rio non plus. ses deux petites filles, qui sont charmantes, dérideraient le front le plus sombre.

²⁰⁴ Archives La Villemarqué LV 02.030. Cachets postaux : Abergavenny 28 Nov. 1838; London [29 ?]. Lettre adressée à "Madame De la Villemarqué à quimperlé finistère".

Lannarth est loin d'être aussi splendide que Lanover. là c'était tout à fait le luxe anglais moderne dans tout son éclat. ici c'est la simplicité galloise, grande encore et belle sans doute, et qui pour la Bretagne, serait magnifique, mais qui en Angleterre n'a rien d'extraordinaire. ce ne sont plus les laquais à culottes de velours rouge et poudrés, et fringants de lady Hall. nous sommes servis par de bons vieux valets en perruque, qui sont depuis bien longtemps dans la famille. la table comme le reste est à l'avenant : grande profusion, mais ni une richesse extrême, ni un grand luxe de couvert. Ainsi, selon l'antique usage, nous n'avons pas de serviettes à table ; la nappe en sert à chacun. à Lanover c'était un étalage éblouissant de vaisselle d'argent et d'or, presque tous les jours, même en famille. mais après tout la confortabilité existe tout aussi bien ici que là et l'une de ces vies me convient tout autant que l'autre. je goûte du reste alternativement des deux, car à peine ai-je passé quelques jours ici que lady Hall m'envoie chercher pour le moindre prétexte. Car depuis que par la méthode homéopathique, (à laquelle je me suis assigné, sans y croire, pour lui plaire), elle m'a guéri de ma fièvre sans quinine et sans médecine, elle m'a pris en grande amitié et je suis chez elle aussi à l'aise que je pourrais l'être au Plessix. – mais comme position, je préfère Lannarth à Lanover ; j'ai au moment où je vous écris, sous les yeux, un parc charmant au milieu duquel coule une rivière, entre de grands chênes épars çà et là, que n'émonde jamais la hache sans pitié, comme chez nous, et qui étendent librement leurs grands rameaux en s'élevant majestueusement vers le ciel. hier toute la terre était couverte de neige. C'était de l'effet le plus beau. on eut dit que pendant la nuit les lauriers et les pins s'étaient couverts de fleurs blanches.

Je suis arrivé depuis huit jours de mon voyage au Stone-henge. il est impossible de se faire une idée de ce monument extraordinaire. C'est évidemment un temple druidique. imaginez-vous une église immense avec la figure²⁰⁵ d'une rotonde, formée d'énormes rochers, ainsi disposé II comme des portes, avec un dolmen ruiné pour autel, trois avenues immenses et une vaste douve à l'entour. Si je n'en avais envoyé à Justine un plan dressé par M^E Bunsen lui-même et une description détaillée, je vous en parlerais plus longuement ; de Stone henge, nous sommes allés visiter les ruines d'un autre monument dont l'enceinte était aussi, jadis, un lieu consacré par la religion druidique, et où l'on a bâti une église magnifique, la plus belle et la plus ancienne Abbaye d'Angleterre : Glastonbury. j'emporte de l'eau de la fontaine druidique qui coule dans la chapelle souterraine et de la terre du cimetière où ont été enterrés

²⁰⁵ Lecture incertaine.

S^t Iltud, saint [...],²⁰⁶ et St David, St Patrice, et le roi Arthur, dont on m'a montré la tombe de pierre trouvée dans le 12^e siècle à 7 pieds de profondeur. – L'île où est situé glastonbury se nommait jadis, et se nomme encore l'île d'Avalon, ou l'île des pommes. c'était l'elysée des druides et je ne m'en étonne pas ; c'est un immense verger, vert, frais, à l'abri des vents et où le climat est charmant. -

adieu ma chère maman, je vous aime et vous embrasse de tout mon cœur

Th. De la Villemarqué

Envoyez-moi je vous prie une gazette de france ou le journal des débats où on a parlé de notre fête – nous n'avons rien vu, et nos hôtes désirent les voir.

Mon adresse est maintenant

Lannarth-court

Monmouth

Sans cela vos lettres iraient à Aberganny, et malheureusement 2 jours plus tard

²⁰⁶ Lecture incertaine.

Letter XI

Théodore Hersart de la Villemarqué to his mother Ursule Feydeau de Vaugien²⁰⁷

[28 novembre 1838]

I have told you at length, my dear Maman, about the family I stayed with before coming here.²⁰⁸ Now I must introduce you to the one I am with now.

The Joneses are descended in the male line from the Herberts, companions of William the Conqueror; they have only used their current name, which is a Christian name, for a few generations.²⁰⁹ Through the female line they go all the way back to the ancient kings of this country. Mme Jones has five boys and three girls, of whom you know one;²¹⁰ the second will probably never marry, and the third (and this is unfortunately all too frequent in the family) is afflicted with a mental illness, as is one of her brothers; the only one to be married; as was his grandfather, and his great-grandfather.²¹¹ Mr Jones died several years ago, and his widow continues to wear mourning for him. She is tall, with a noble face, and extremely distinguished manners, a little like Mme de Fournas²¹² but more quickly animated, and without affectation in her own manner or her dealings with others; she is also kind-hearted and affectionate, always putting others first. A Catholic pious and devout as in the time of the early Christians, and as charitable as you are. I see her every Sunday surrounded by a small

²⁰⁷ Archives La Villemarqué LV 02.030. Postmarks: Abergavenny 28 Nov. 1838; London [29] Nov. Letter addressed to ‘Madame De la Villemarqué à quimperlé finistère’. Marie-Ursule-Claude-Henriette Feydeau de Vaugien (1776–1847) married Pierre Hersart de La Villemarqué in 1798. She was an important influence on La Villemarqué, who in his *Barzaz-Breiz* credits her collections of Breton song with awakening his own interest in the subject.

²⁰⁸ No earlier letter to his mother survives in the correspondence from Wales; La Villemarqué may be referring to letters addressed to his father.

²⁰⁹ Llanarth Court (formerly Hendre-obaith) had been in the possession of the Jones family since 1599 and was rebuilt as ‘a monster Neo-classical house’ sometime before 1793. See John Newman, *The Buildings of Wales: Gwent and Monmouthshire* (Cardiff, 2000), 264. In 1848 the family would be granted royal permission to revive the medieval name Herbert as their surname.

²¹⁰ Mary Lee of Llanfoist, Abergavenny had married John Jones (d. 1828) in 1780. They had thirteen children in all, but by the time of La Villemarqué’s visit only nine were still alive. These were John (b. 1818), the heir of Llanarth Court, who would marry the Halls’ only surviving child Augusta in 1846, Philip, William (who built a mansion and park at Clytha), Edward-Basil, Henry-Wyborne, Richard, Elizabeth, Jane-Mary and Apollonia (who had married Rio).

²¹¹ Presumably coincidentally, Llanarth Court today is a specialist institution for mental health.

²¹² Françoise or Elisabeth du Botdéro, born in 1777 at Hennebont, married Antoine Fournas de la Brosse.

band of faithful followers, who remind me, in their number and fervour, of the early church, and who seem to admire her as one of the holy women of ancient times.²¹³ Her servants and her children, with a few close neighbours, form the core of this group. The chaplain is an aged and respectable priest belonging to the Franciscan order. He says mass three times a week. Mme Jones holds communal prayers morning and evening. It is a thoroughly pious life, but not overly serious or without amusement. On the contrary, they are quite entertaining; these young people, who are models of piety, nonetheless act very much their age; Mme Rio, as you know for yourself, is not melancholy; nor are her mother and sister, and neither is Mr Rio. Their two little girls, who are delightful, would lighten the most furrowed of brows.²¹⁴

Lannarth has none of the splendour of Lanover. The latter was modern English luxury in all its brilliance. Here, all is Welsh simplicity; also large, and undoubtedly fine – for Brittany it would be quite magnificent, but it is nothing out of the ordinary in England. No more of Lady Hall's dashing powdered lackeys in their red velvet breeches. We are served instead by honest old retainers in wigs, long in the family's service. The food is in keeping with everything else. Plenty of it, but neither excessively rich in itself nor luxuriously presented. Thus, according to ancient tradition, we do not have napkins at table; the tablecloth does duty for all. At Lanover it was one long dazzling array of silver and gold tableware nearly every day, even amongst the family. But in the end there is comfort here as well as there, and either mode of living suits me very well.

I sample, in any case, the different delights of both, and scarcely get to spend a few days here before Lady Hall sends for me on the slightest of pretexts. Since her homeopathic method (to which I assented to please her, without having any great faith in it) cured me of my fever without quinine or other medication she has become very fond of me, and I feel as comfortable in her home as if I were back at Plessix.

For location, though, I prefer Lannarth to Lanover; as I write to you now I am looking across a charming park with a river running through it; it passes here and there between large oaks which have never suffered, as at home, the pitiless pruning of the axe, stretching out their great branches and reaching majestically for the sky. Yesterday the ground was covered

²¹³ The Joneses were prominent and long-standing Monmouthshire Catholics; the 'semi-disguised' Catholic chapel at Llanarth was probably built in the 1790s. Newman, *The Buildings of Wales: Gwent and Monmouthshire*, 55.

²¹⁴ Elizabeth and Mary Anne Rio would have been aged three and one.

in snow. The effect was so beautiful. As if, overnight, the laurels and the pines had blossomed white.

Eight days ago I returned from my tour to Stone-henge. The mind can scarcely encompass the idea of this extraordinary monument. It is clearly a druidic temple. Picture to yourself a huge church shaped like a rotunda, formed of giant rocks set up like this Π as gateways, a collapsed dolmen for an altar, three great avenues encircled by a huge ditch. If I hadn't already sent Justine a plan drawn up by Mr Bunsen himself, along with a detailed description, I would tell you more about it; from Stone henge, we went to visit the ruins of another monument whose precinct was also, long ago, a place sacred to the druidic religion, where a truly magnificent church was built, the most beautiful and ancient abbey in England: Glastonbury. I collected some water from the druidic spring which runs in the underground chapel, and some soil from the graveyard where St Iltud, saint [...],²¹⁵ St David, St Patrick, and king Arthur lie buried – I was shown the latter's tombstone, discovered in the 12th century some seven feet underground. The island of Glastonbury was once known – and is still – as the Island of Avalon, or the Island of Apples.²¹⁶ It was the Elysium of the druids, which does not surprise me: it is one vast orchard, green, cool, sheltered from the winds and with a delightful climate.

Farewell my dear Maman, I send you my love with all my heart,

Th. De la Villemarqué

Do pray send me a Gazette de France or the Journal des Débats where our festivities are described – we have seen nothing, and our hosts are keen to see them.

My address is currently

Monmouth:

Lannarth-court

Otherwise your letters would go to Aberganny [sic] and unfortunately 2 days later.

²¹⁵ Word unclear but possibly 'Gildas': claims that Glastonbury served as the resting place for all four of these saints, as well as King Arthur, date back to medieval sources.

²¹⁶ Afal/Aval (Welsh/Breton) means 'apple'.

Lettre XII**De Samuel Meyrick à Théodore Hersart de la Villemarqué²¹⁷**

Goodrich Court

près de Ross

Comté de Hereford

Le 30 de Novembre 1838

Mon cher Monsieur,

Je serai chez moi lundi prochain et j'aurai beaucoup de plaisir vous montrer les curiosités de ce séjour.

Esperant que vous êtes à present en bonne santé, et avec les meilleurs complimens à l'aimable famille à Llanover

Je me souscris,

Vôtre dévoué

Sam. R Meyrick

²¹⁷ Archives La Villemarqué LV 27.052. Cachets postaux, Ross 30 Nov 1838.

Letter XII**From Samuel Meyrick to Théodore Hersart de la Villemarqué²¹⁸**

Goodrich Court
near Ross
County of Hereford
30 November 1838

My dear Monsieur,

I will be at home next Monday, and will have great pleasure in showing you the curiosities of this place.

Hoping this finds you in good health, and with my best compliments to the good family at Llanover.

I am your devoted servant,

Sam. R Meyrick

²¹⁸ Archives La Villemarqué LV 27.052. Postmark: Ross, 30 Nov 1838. Samuel Rush Meyrick (1783–1848) was an internationally-renowned collector of medieval armoury. In 1828 he built Goodrich Court, a neo-Gothic fantasy castle, on the banks of the River Wye to house his collection; in 1832 he was knighted for his services to the royal family in organising and displaying the collections in the Tower of London. La Villemarqué gives a vivid description of his visit to Goodrich in Letter XIV below.

Letter XIII**Letter from Samuel Rush Meyrick to unknown recipient in Oxford²¹⁹**

Goodrich Court 4 Dec 1838

My dear Sir,

Aware of your enthusiasm for literature I take the liberty of introducing my friend the Comte de La Villemarquée [sic] who is highly talented and a distinguished author. He wishes to examine some MSS in the Bodleian, and your assistance will greatly oblige

Yours very truly,

Sam R. Meyrick

²¹⁹ Archives La Villemarqué LV 27.068. La Villemarqué would visit Oxford on his research trip some weeks later.

Lettre XIV

De Théodore Hersart de la Villemarqué à sa sœur Camille Jégou du Laz²²⁰

7 Xbre

Llanarth-Court, près Monmouth

Si je vous disais : je sors d'un château du treizième siècle où j'ai passé une nuit charmante dans une chambre à tapisserie à grands personnages, aux meubles gothiques, à fenêtres à petits carreaux aux vitraux coloriés où les rêves les plus poétiques sont venus voltiger autour de mon lit, vous me répondrez sans doute : vous rêvez encore mon cher frère – hé bien pas du tout ; c'est une réalité.

Près de Monmouth, de l'autre côté dans l'ancien pays des Silures-, on aperçoit au sommet d'une colline qui domine une rivière, un château flanqué de quatre tours, avec créneaux, mangonaux²²¹ et mâchicoulis, et pont-levis, et tout ce qui constituait il y a six cents ans un édifice de cette nature, que l'on pourrait prendre de très loin pour un château tant il est antique et qui ne date pourtant que d'hier. tenez, pour en avoir une idée, figurez-vous une position identique même semblable à celle de Keblin. Seulement au lieu de la montagne qui borne l'horizon en face, une immense étendue de collines, gracieusement groupées ; au lieu d'une misérable gentilhommière, la magnifique demeure que je vous ai décrite, et à droite, à distance, les ruines couvertes de lierre d'un vieux château gothique qui se réfléchit dans les eaux. Il se nomme Godrich-Court et a été bâti il y a douze ans par le célèbre Sir Samuel Merrick qui l'habite dix mois de l'année. M^f Merrick, que je connaissais déjà de réputation, a eu la bonté de m'engager à l'aller voir, et à visiter son château. il faut que vous sachiez que c'est l'une des choses les plus curieuses de l'Angleterre, mais que pas seulement l'extérieur en est remarquable, mais que l'intérieur y répond, qu'il est tout meublé comme au treizième siècle, qu'il contient une foule de choses intéressantes et que c'est une faveur spéciale d'y être admis.

j'arrivai à Godrich-Court dans le tilbury de M^f Philip Jones qu'il avait bien voulu mettre à ma disposition ; je franchis le pont-levis ; j'entrai dans la cour du château, puis dans un

²²⁰ Archives La Villemarqué LV 02.020. Cachets postaux : London, 8 Dec; Paris, 10 Dec; Hennebont, 12 Dec.

²²¹ Lecture incertaine.

vestibule orné de trophées d'armes antiques, et à vitrages coloriés, puis après avoir traversé un long couloir, dans un cabinet, où travaillait le châtelain. Il était seul ; il me propose tout de suite de visiter la maison : d'abord la salle, sur les murs de la gauche sont peints divers tableaux tirés de Mss antiques, et dont un représente un épisode du roman de Trystan, un autre l'histoire de la châtelaine de Vergy, un troisième S^t Georges et le dragon. point de fauteuils, des banquettes de velours accolées aux murailles, des fenêtres, une cheminée à ogives, comme partout des vitraux gothiques. sur une table qui a appartenu au fils de Guillaume le Conquérant, une bible, mss à vignettes charmantes, un clavecin, et vue sur la rivière, la plus belle vue du monde. – le sallon [sic] à manger ordinaire est contigu à la salle. il est tapissé de velours cramoisi à fleurs de lys d'or et est orné de tableaux d'un grand prix ; aux quatre coins s'élèvent d'élégantes colonnes – de là, nous passâmes dans la salle d'honneur, la salle du festin. au fond une grande table un peu au-dessus du sol, où s'assoit le seigneur et sa famille, plus bas étaient dressées celles des valets, qui demeurent en partie pendant le dîner du maître, et en partie après, au milieu une immense cheminée, tout autour des tablettes chargées de livres et une charpente visible en bois vernis au lieu de plafond. – le seigneur des lieux avait tout ménagé pour graduer ma surprise ; il ouvrit ensuite une porte et nous nous trouvâmes à la cour d'un prince indien ; un guerrier tout armé veille à cheval à la porte ; le prince est assis sur un tapis de prix. Sa garde l'entoure les uns à genoux, les autres à cheval ; tous les costumes sont historiques ; je me détournai et je vis à mon grand étonnement que les glaces représentaient un tournoi et effectivement dans la salle voisine, deux chevaliers de hauteur²²² naturelle, la lance à la main, joutaient dans le costume du XIII^e siècle ; en face est une longue galerie, où il y a 28 autres chevaliers, aussi à cheval, avec les écuyers et dans tous les costumes depuis le 12 jusqu'au 16^e siècle ; au fond est Charles I^{er} entouré de sa garde qui semble les passer en revue. C'est magnifique à voir. la petite chapelle qui touche cette galerie et qui est aussi dans le gout du 13^e siècle, est aussi très agréable²²³ tout est singulièrement curieux. je ne vous parlerais pas des chambres, ni de la galerie de tableaux, ni des collections de lances, de casques, de boucliers historiques, d'armes de toute espèce, d'antiquités de tout genre que l'on trouve là. Je me contenterai de vous dire, si cela peut vous rassurer, que j'ai bu à diner dans la coupe d'un des plus fameux antiquaires des royaumes unis et me voici de retour. Je devais aller par le coche, mais M^{me} Lie, une dame qui est ici, ne l'a pas souffert, – « le représentant du gouvern^t français aller en coche ! » Good gracious ! et c'est là dessus que M^f philippe a mis a ma disposition sa voiture et son groom. Cela me

²²² Lecture incertaine.

²²³ Lecture incertaine.

donnait bon genre. C'est une assez singulière femme que cette M^{me} lie ; c'est la femme du Lord Lieutenant du comté ; elle a seulement un million de rentes et n'a pas d'enfant ; elle m'a pris en grande amitié ; la nuit il lui faut toujours quatre lampes, oui en vérité quatre lampes, je n'en ajoute pas une, et quelqu'un qui couche dans sa chambre, car elle a peur de rester seule, et non seulement la nuit, mais encore le jour même pour monter ou descendre. – Voilà un trait qui la peint à merveille : l'autre jour M^f Edouard Jones tomba de cheval et se démit l'épaule. elle entre dans la salle, elle voit M^{me} Jones pâle comme un suaire. elle s'arrête sur le seuil de la porte, et demande ce que c'est. on le lui dit ; elle fait deux pas en arrière, lève les mains au ciel, pousse un soupir, et se laisse tomber sur un canapé près d'un monsieur qui venait d'arriver. – je m'imaginai voir M^{elle} Mars. elle ne pouvait mieux jouer son rôle, mais ce n'est pas tout, elle m'aperçoit, « m^f dit-elle à son voisin, voilà M^f le Comte de la Villemarquais ! » l'autre n'en tient nul compte, aussi elle reprend en me désignant à lui : « m^f le comte de la Villemarquais. » (ce monsieur était le chirurgien, il causait avec M^{me} Jones) il ne fit pas attention. – aussi elle reprit plus haut : « m^f le comte... » je me levai pour sortir ; cette fois il me remarqua et comme j'allai franchir le seuil de la porte il me fit une profonde révérence – la bonne dame, qui un moment auparavant semblait consternée avait tout à fait oublié m^f Jones et son épaule démise.

Avec cela c'est une excellente personne, quoiqu'un tantinet ennuyeuse. elle m'a pris comme je vous disais en grande affection. elle m'a donné les poésies complètes de Thomas More. elle m'a invité à aller passer à sa campagne autant de temps que je voudrais. enfin (c'était drôle) elle veut me marier à une jeune lady galloise, qui est fille unique, avec quatre vingt mille livres de rentes, une figure comme Grisi et un des plus anciens noms du pays. il n'y a qu'un petit malheur, c'est que la belle est protestante et qu'il est à parier cent contre un qu'elle ne voudra pas de moi. – je crois en vérité qu'elle compte l'engager à venir passer du tems à sa campagne, pendant que j'y serai pour me faire faire amplement sa connaissance. comme vous voyez c'est on ne peut plus aimable.

Je passe la plus grande partie de mon tems en visite. j'ai des invitations par dessus la tête. Je travaille pourtant dans les intervalles de mes allées et venues ; oui j'ai un livre à faire sur le pays, et après tout ce qu'ont dit les journaux français, il faut que je réponde à l'attente qu'ils ont fait concevoir j'ai écrit l'autre jour à maman ; mais je lui avais déjà écrit ; j'avais aussi depuis un mois envoyé son paquet à M^{elle} Nympe quand j'ai reçu votre billet. glissez en

aussi dans les lettres à papa,²²⁴ elles n'en paient pas un centime de plus. je vous disais que j'ai écrit à maman. J'ai aussi écrit à Justine ; mais à l'une ni à l'autre je n'ai dit que j'avais pensé faire naufrage. C'est en revenant de ma charmante visite à Stone-henge et à l'abbaye de Glastonbury. le temps fut sympathique toute la semaine jusqu'au samedi et ce jour-là précisément je m'embarquais sur la Severne pour revenir ici. et vous dis en deux mots que la tempête fut si forte, les vents si furieux, et les flots si gonflés, que nous pensâmes trois fois couler bas, que par comble de malheur, nous sommes allés, en abordant, nous fracasser entre deux roches et que les marins²²⁵ ont été obligés de se jeter à l'eau pour nous tirer de là. j'en ai été quitte pour la peur et une égratignure à la main.

Je savais que les hommes s'éprennent facilement ; hélas nos pauvres cœurs sont si faibles, mesdames ! mais je viens d'avoir la preuve qu'en Angleterre, au moins, les femmes s'éprennent aussi aisément. vous savez cette jolie Miss Sharley, dont je vous parlai, l'autre fois, celle que Jacquelot nommait une [?]²²⁶ anglaise et dont je crois il a emporté autre chose que le souvenir, eh bien, la pauvre fille ! elle s'est enamouré pour Sir Benjamin Hall, mon hôte et le sien, à pâlir, à sécher, à perdre l'appétit et le sommeil sans doute. il est vrai que Sir Benjamin est un des beaux hommes du pays ; il est grand, bien fait, il a les favoris d'un blond vif qui plaisent tant ici ; et puis il est calme, insoucieux, assez indifférent, quoique poli pour les dames, mais rien de plus, et avec cela il lui fait tourner la tête. si vous aviez entendu Lady Hall, qui depuis plusieurs jours me demandait pourquoi pâlisait Miss Sharley. Si c'était à cause du départ de Jacquelot, si vous l'aviez entendue me parler de l'influence extraordinaire qu'exerce son mari sur l'esprit des femmes, et cela non sans un peu de jalousie peut-être et d'orgueil aussi quelque peu, je pense, vous auriez été bien surprise de la franche naïveté anglaise. Ce diable de Sir Benjamin (croirez-vous que deux femmes sont déjà mortes d'amour pour lui me disait Lady Hall.) elle ne disait pas diable, c'est moi qui dis cela, voilà pourquoi je mets cela entre parenthèses) il a beaucoup de vanité et croit que je le crois²²⁷ bien sûr, enfin les hommes sont hommes. – son fils est comme lui, quoiqu'il n'ait encore que 15 ans, il charme tout le monde avec son flegme plein de grâce. après tout cette petite Miss Sharley n'a pas d'esprit, Sir Benjamin le voit bien, et peut-être est vulgaire et n'a que sa beauté pour elle, mais cependant voilà huit jours qu'elle devait être partie et elle est restée toujours. elle pleure beaucoup seule dans sa chambre. enfin Sir Benjamin lui porte de l'intérêt

²²⁴ Lecture incertaine.

²²⁵ Surajouté à « matelots ».

²²⁶ Mot illisible.

²²⁷ Lecture incertaine.

et moi (oh !flatteurs oh !flatteurs) je lui répondais à cela en la regardant avec une sorte d'admiration (sincère du reste, car elle est charmante) – oh ! non ! madame, soyez en sûre, il ne peut pas l'aimer ! Souvent, dans le salon elle me frappe légèrement sur l'épaule pour me faire remarquer les deux grands yeux bleus de miss Sharley, fixés sur Sir benjamin. – enfin, miss Sharley a quitté Lanover et il faut espérer qu'elle ne mourra pas comme les autres.

mais voici mes trois doubles pages remplies. adieu, je vous aime et vous embrasse de tout mon cœur. Mes amitiés à m^eDulaz

Theodore De la Villemarqué

Letter XIV

Théodore Hersart de la Villemarqué to his sister Camille du Laz²²⁸

7 Dec [1838]

Llanarth-Court, near Monmouth

If I were to say: I have just left a thirteenth-century castle where I spent a delightful night in a room hung with tapestries depicting famous characters, with gothic furniture and small-paned stained-glass windows, where the most poetical dreams came to flutter around my bed, you would, perhaps, reply – you are daydreaming again, dear brother – but no, not at all! it is all real. Not far from Monmouth, over in the ancient country of the Silures,²²⁹ on the brow of a hill looking down over a river, you catch a glimpse of a castle flanked by four towers, with crenellations, trebuchets, machicolations and drawbridges and everything which six hundred years ago would have been part of such a building, which one might take at a distance for a real castle so ancient does it appear – and yet it dates from yesterday.

So – to give you an idea, imagine a situation very like or identical to Keblin.²³⁰ Only instead of the mountain enclosing the horizon opposite, a great sweep of hills, pleasingly arranged; instead of the pitiful manor house, the magnificent dwelling I have described to you; and to the right, a little distance away, the ivy-covered ruins of the old gothic castle reflected in the waters.²³¹

It is called Godrich Court and was built a dozen years ago by the celebrated Sir Samuel Merrick who lives there ten months of the year. Mr Merrick, whom I already knew by reputation, was kind enough to invite me to see him and visit his chateau. You should know that it is one of the most extraordinary places in England; that not only is it very striking from

²²⁸ Archives La Villemarqué LV 02.20. Postmarks: London, 8 Dec; Paris, 10 Dec; Hennebont, 12 Dec.

²²⁹ The Silures were a confederation of ancient British tribes covering much of what is now south-east Wales and the borders during the Roman period.

²³⁰ The Manoir de Québlen is situated on a bend in the river Laïta, not far from Quimperlé.

²³¹ The picturesque ruin of Goodrich Castle, a Norman fortification, stood a stone's throw from Goodrich Court, and was one of the key sights on the Wye Valley tour; Merrick had initially attempted to purchase it for renovation, but was refused, and bought the land adjacent instead. Goodrich Court itself was demolished in the 1950s. See Rosalind Lowe, *Sir Samuel Merrick and Goodrich Court* (Almeley, 2003).

the outside, but the interior is equally so: that it is all furnished in the style of the thirteenth century, is crammed with fascinating objects, and that it is a special favour to be admitted.²³²

I arrived at Godrich-Court in Mr Philip Jones' Tilbury, which he insisted on putting at my disposal;²³³ I crossed the drawbridge, I entered the castle court-yard, and then went into a hall decorated with trophies of ancient armour and windows of stained glass; then, making my way down a long corridor, I entered a study where the master of the house was at work. He was alone, and immediately offered to take me on a tour of the castle: first of all the hall, the left-hand side walls are decorated with images taken from medieval manuscripts, one representing an episode from the Roman de Trystan, another the story of the Châtelaine de Vergy;²³⁴ a third, St George and the dragon.

No chairs, but velvet-covered benches up against the walls, windows, a vaulted hearth, and as elsewhere, medieval stained glass. On a table which once belonged to William the Conqueror, a bible; manuscripts with delightful illustrations, a harpsichord, and a view over the river, the most beautiful view in the world – the common dining room is next to the hall. It is carpeted with scarlet velvet flecked with gold fleur-de-lys and decorated with expensive pictures: at the four corners stand elegant pillars – from there we passed through into the *salle d'honneur*, the feasting hall. At the far end, a large table raised slightly off the ground, where the lord and his family would sit; lower down are the tables for the servants, who stay partly during their master's dinner, and partly afterwards; in the middle a vast fireplace; all around are shelves covered in books, and open varnished beams instead of a ceiling.

The lord of the castle had arranged everything in such a way as to gradually increase my surprise: he opened another door and we found ourselves in the court of an Indian Prince; an armed and mounted warrior watches at the door; the prince is seated on an expensive carpet. His guards surround him, some kneeling, some mounted; all the costumes are historically accurate; then I turned my head to see with astonishment that the mirrors reflected a tournament, and sure enough, in the next room, lance in hand, two life-sized knights were jousting in thirteenth-century costume; opposite this is a long gallery housing twenty-eight other knights, also on horseback, with their riders all arrayed in costumes from the twelfth to

²³² La Villemarqué's overnight stay was certainly a privileged one, but tourists were regularly offered guided visits to Goodrich Court, and it became a popular stopping place on the Wye Tour, with groups queueing patiently in the court-yard waiting to be shown around.

²³³ Philip Jones was one of the sons of Llanarth Court. The Tilbury was a light, open and speedy two-wheeled carriage.

²³⁴ The *Châtelaine de Vergi* is a popular, anonymously-authored romance of courtly love, dating to the thirteenth century.

the sixteenth centuries; right at the back is Charles I, apparently reviewing his guards. It is a magnificent sight.

The little chapel which adjoins this gallery and which is likewise in the style of the thirteenth century is also very charming: everything is exceptionally curious. I will not tell you about the bedrooms, or the picture gallery, or the collection of authentic lances, helmets, and shields, the many other kinds of weapons and the antiquities of every variety to be found there. I will simply content myself by telling you – as if that would reassure you – that at dinner I drank from the goblet of one of the most renowned antiquaries in the United Kingdom, and here I am back home again. I should have taken the coach but Mme Lie, one of the ladies here, would not hear of it – ‘the representative of the French government travelling by coach! Good gracious!’ and that was when Mr Philippe put his vehicle and his groom at my disposal. Which gave me a touch of class.

This Mme Lie is a very singular woman,²³⁵ she is the wife of the Lord Lieutenant of the county; she has an annuity of a million and no children; she has taken a quite a fancy to me; at night she must always have four lamps, yes indeed four lamps, I’m not exaggerating the number, and someone to sleep in her room for she dreads being alone, and not only at night, but even during the day for coming up or down stairs – Here is an episode which captures her to perfection: the other day Mr Edouard Jones fell from his horse and dislocated his shoulder.²³⁶ She enters the room and sees Mrs Jones, pale as a ghost. She stops in the doorway, asks what has happened. They tell her: she takes two steps backwards, raises her hands to heaven, emits a sigh, and collapses on a sofa next to a gentleman who had just arrived – it was like watching Mlle Mars.²³⁷ She could scarcely have performed her role better, but that was not all – spotting me she said to her neighbour, ‘Sir, this is Monsieur Mr le Comte de la Ville-mar-quais!’ The man took no notice, so she tried again, pointing me out to him: ‘Mr le comte de la Villemarquis.’ (This gentleman was in fact the doctor and was talking to Mme Jones) he still took no notice – so she tried again, even louder ‘Mr le comte...’ I got up to leave; this time he noticed me and as I was about to go through the door

²³⁵ Molly Anne Hanbury-Leigh (1768–1846) would offer a great deal of practical support to La Villemarqué later in his tour. Her husband Capel Hanbury-Leigh was the Lord Lieutenant of Monmouthshire from 1835–1861. His family, the Hanburys of Pontypool, owned the local ironworks and built Pontypool Park House, which he inherited at the death of his elder brother John in 1795. In 1797 he married Lady Mackworth (née Molly Anne Myers, 1768–1846), the young and wealthy widow of Sir Robert Humphrey Mackworth of the Gnoll estate near Swansea. La Villemarqué’s ‘Miss Shirley’ would marry into another branch of the Hanbury family in 1841. See Letter VII above.

²³⁶ Edward-Basil Jones was one of the sons of Llanarth Court.

²³⁷ Anne-Françoise-Hippolyte Boutet (1779–1847), known as ‘Mademoiselle Mars’, was a well-known French actress.

he made me a deep bow – the good lady, who only a moment before had been quite overwhelmed with dismay, had forgotten all about Mr Jones and his dislocated shoulder.

In spite of all that she is a good person, though somewhat annoying. She has, as I told you, taken a great liking to me. She has given me the complete poems of Thomas More. She has invited me to spend time as much time at her country residence as I like. And finally (this is very amusing) she wants to marry me off to a young Welsh lady, an only child, with eighty thousand a year, a face like Grisi²³⁸ and from one of the most ancient families in the country. The only snag is that this beauty is Protestant, and it is a hundred to one that she would have none of me. I suspect in fact that she is planning to invite her to pass some time at her place in the country when I am there, so that I may make her acquaintance more fully. You see how thoughtful she is!

Much of my time is spent visiting. I am drowning in invitations. Nevertheless, I work in the gaps between comings and goings; yes indeed, I have a book to write about this country, and after all that has been said in the French newspapers I must meet the expectations they have raised. I wrote only the other day to Maman; but I had already written to her; and her package was sent to Mlle Nympe a good month before I received your letter a month ago.²³⁹ So slip another one into Papa's letters; don't pay another centime. I told you I have written to Maman. I have also written to Justine; but I told neither of them that I thought I was going to be shipwrecked. It happened in fact on the way back from my delightful visit to Stone-henge and Glastonbury Abbey. The weather was fine all that week up until Saturday, and that was the day I crossed the Severn to return here. To cut a long story short, the tempest was so strong, the winds so fierce, the waves so vast, that three times we all thought we were about to go down, and to make matters worse on embarking the boat had crashed up between two rocks and the sailors were forced to leap into the water to pull us away. I escaped with a fright and a scratch on my hand.

I knew that men fell in love easily; alas our poor hearts are so weak, mesdames! but I have just had proof that in England, at least, women are equally susceptible. You know the pretty Miss Sharley I mentioned before, the one Jacquelot called a [...] *anglaise* (and from whom I suspect him of taking home more than just a memory) well the poor girl, she has fallen for Sir Benjamin Hall, my host and hers, growing pale and languishing, losing her appetite and doubtless her sleep. It is true that sir Benjamin is one of the handsomest men in these parts;

²³⁸ Carlotta Grisi (1819–1899) was an Italian dancer; the 'young Welsh lady' in question has not been identified, but may be a 'Miss Madoc' mentioned in Letter XXIII.

²³⁹ For Mademoiselle Nympe, a friend of the family staying in England, see Letters XXXIV–XXXVI.

he is tall, well proportioned, with the advantage of that bright blond which people here find so attractive; and then he is calm, inattentive and rather indifferent, though polite to the ladies – nothing more – and with all that he has turned her head. I wish you could have heard Lady Hall, who for several days now has been asking why Miss Sharley keeps turning pale. Was it because Jacquelot had left? And then you should hear her talking about the extraordinary power her husband has over women's minds – all that not without a perhaps touch of jealousy and a little pride on her part, I think – you would be really very surprised at the frank innocence of the English. This devil of a sir Benjamin (believe me, two women have already died of love for him, so lady Hall tells me) – she didn't call him a devil, that was me, which is why the last part was in parentheses – has a great deal of vanity and thinks I believe him²⁴⁰ of course, men will be men. – his son is like him, though not yet fifteen years old: he charms everyone with his gracious composure. After all, this little miss Sharley has not much spirit, Sir Benjamin can see that well enough, and she is perhaps rather vulgar, and only has her beauty in her favour, but in any case she should have left eight days ago and she is here still. She weeps a great deal, alone in her room.

So then does Sir Benjamin show any interest in her²⁴¹ and I (oh flattery, oh flattery!) replied gazing at her with a kind of admiration (perfectly sincere, since she is very charming) oh ! No ! Madame, be assured, he cannot be in love with her! Sometimes in the salon she taps me gently on the shoulder to point out the big blue eyes of miss Sharley fixed on Sir Benjamin – now finally, Miss Sharley has left Lanover and one can only hope that she will not die like the others.

But here are my three double pages completely filled. Farewell, I send all my love and warm embraces. My best wishes to mr Dulaz

Theodore de la Villemarqué

²⁴⁰ Reading unclear.

²⁴¹ Given the rest of this sentence, the phrase 'enfin Sir Benjamin lui porte de l'intérêt' has been translated as though it were a question in reported speech in the voice of Augusta Hall (i.e. 'is my husband interested in Miss Shirley?'). Another reading might be 'Finally Sir Benjamin shows some interest in her'.

Lettre XV**De Lady Charlotte Guest²⁴²**

Dowlais

Abergavenny

Le 7 Dec. 1838

Encore une fois de retour dans mon pays et chez moi (ou je viens d'arriver ce soir même) je m'empresse d'écrire à M le Comte de la Villemarqué pour lui témoigner le désir que j'éprouve, aussi bien que mon mari, de l'accueillir ici, et pour le prier de bien vouloir me dire si le dix sept de ce mois, Lundi, lui conviendra pour sa visite qu'il a voulu bien promettre de nous faire et sur laquelle nous comptons avec tant de plaisir.

Depuis notre arrivée en Angleterre nous avons été presque continuellement en voyage et des affaires pressantes nous ont empêchés de savoir de jour en jour quand nous nous trouverons encore dans le pays de Galles. C'est pourquoi je n'ai pas pu écrire plutôt à M Le Comte sur ce sujet – J'espère que si quelque autre jour lui sera plus agréable qu'il ne manquera pas de me le faire savoir – Ma seule raison pour nommer le 17 est qu'avant ce lundi je crains ne pas pouvoir rassembler ceux de mes amis (entre autres M. Jones – Tegid) qui voudront avoir le plaisir de jouir de sa société pendant son séjour avec nous, que je desire aussi rendre aussi agréable qu'il me sera possible.

²⁴² Archives La Villemarqué LV 27.053.

Letter XV

Lady Charlotte Guest to [Théodore Hersart De La Villemarqué]²⁴³

Dowlais Abergavenny

7 Dec. 1838

Once more returned to my own country and back at home (where I arrived this very evening) I make haste to write to M Comte de la Villemarqué to express the desire of both myself and my husband to receive him here, and to beg him to let me know if the seventeenth of this month, Monday, will be convenient for the visit he was kind enough to offer to pay us, and to which we look forward with a great deal of pleasure.²⁴⁴

Since returning to England we have been almost continually on the road, and matters of urgent business prevented us from knowing from one day to the next when we would once more find ourselves in Wales. This is why I have not been able to write to M Le Comte on this matter. I hope that if there is another day which would be better for him he will not hesitate to let me know of it – My only reason for suggesting the 17 is that before that Monday I fear I may not be able to gather together those of my friends (among them M. Jones – Tegid) who wish to have the pleasure of enjoying his company during his visit to us, which I also hope to make as agreeable as I am able.

C. Guest

²⁴³ Archives La Villemarqué LV 27.053. Lady Charlotte Guest (née Bertie, 1812–1895) married the south Wales ironmaster Josiah John Guest in 1833. They would have ten children, and after her husband's death she managed the ironworks herself. Guest was a talented linguist with a circle of erudite friends; at the time of La Villemarqué's visit she was engaged in translating and publishing the medieval Welsh texts that would form her successful *Mabinogion* (1838–1845). La Villemarqué's letters describing the ambiguous fascination she exerted on him are remarkable pen-portraits of a remarkable woman: see Revel Guest and Angela V. John, *Lady Charlotte Guest: An Extraordinary Life*, 2nd ed. (Stroud, 2007). The rather stiff style of this translation reflects Guest's formal French.

²⁴⁴ Guest's manuscript Journal confirms that La Villemarqué arrived on the 17th: 'Mr. Price and Mons. De la Villemarqué came to-day. The latter is a Breton, and came over to attend the Abergavenny Cymreigyddion. He has also a Commission from the French Ecole des Chartes to investigate Welsh literature, and write a report upon it. He is a clever and agreeable young man. He it is who made me the transcript of the Chevalier au Lion, which I have printed at the end of the first number of the Mabinogion. He is well versed in these matters.' 'The Journals of Lady Charlotte Guest', Vol. XI (1837–1841), National Library of Wales MS W8/6/5.

Lettre XVI

De Charles Magnin à Théodore Hersart de La Villemarqué²⁴⁵

Bibliothèque Royale
Département des Livres Imprimés

Paris, le 5 10^{bre} 1838

Monsieur,

Si j'ai différé quelques jours à répondre à votre lettre, c'est que nous avons donné commission à Londres pour acheter les deux ouvrages que vous venez de rencontrer, Archaeology of Wales et le Dict^{re} d'Owen. Il a donc fallu que je m'assurasse que l'un et l'autre n'avait été acquis – A présent que j'ai reçu des réponses négatives, je puis vous autoriser, Monsieur, à acheter pour nous ces deux ouvrages aux prix proposés, c'est-à-dire, le 1^{er} à 270f et le 2^d à 60f. je vous prie en même tems, Monsieur de recevoir tous mes remercîmens pour la bienveillante sollicitude que vous avez apportée dans cette recherche.

Recevez, je vous prie, l'assurance de ma considération la plus distinguée

Votre humble et très obéissant serviteur

Ch. Magnin

²⁴⁵ Archives La Villemarqué LV 31.101.

Letter XVI

Charles Magnin to Théodore Hersart de La Villemarqué

Bibliothèque Royale

Department of Printed Books.

Paris, 5 October 1838²⁴⁶

Monsieur,

I have delayed for several days before replying to your letter because we had already granted a commission in London to buy the two works you have come across: Archaeology of Wales²⁴⁷ and the Dict d'Owen.²⁴⁸ I was therefore obliged to ascertain that neither the one nor the other had already been procured. Now that I have received a reply in the negative I am able to authorize you, monsieur, to purchase on our behalf the two works at the offered prices, that is: the first at 270f and the second at 60f. I beg you at the same time, monsieur, to accept my sincerest thanks for the kind consideration you have shown in undertaking this research. Please believe me most sincerely

Your humble and obedient servant

Ch. Magnin

²⁴⁶ Archives La Villemarqué LV 31.101. Charles Magnin (1793–1862), writer and journalist, was appointed curator of the department of printed books at the Bibliothèque Royale, Paris, in 1832. He was elected to the Academy of Inscriptions and Belles-lettres on 30 November 1838. Cf. <http://cths.fr/an/savant.php?id=509#>.

²⁴⁷ Owen Jones, William Owen, Edward Williams (eds), *The Myvyrian Archaiology of Wales: Collected out of ancient manuscripts*, 3 vols (London: Cymdeithas y Gwyneddigion, 1801–1807). This was a foundational text for nineteenth century Welsh and Celtic studies, collecting for the first time in printed form many of the earliest texts in Welsh (though also containing forgeries by Williams, aka Iolo Morganwg, in the third volume). La Villemarqué drew heavily on this work for his own *Barzaz-Breiz* and *Les Bardes Bretons du VIème Siècle* (1850). For his idiosyncratic use of Welsh sources in these volumes see Constantine, *The Truth Against the World*, 169–82.

²⁴⁸ William Owen, *A Dictionary of the Welsh Language, Explained in English: With Numerous Illustrations, from the Literary Remains and from the Living Speech of the Cymry*, 2 vols (London: E. Williams, 1803).

Letter XVII

**John Jones (Tegid) and Watkin Williams Wynn to Théodore Hersart de La
Villemarqué²⁴⁹**

Ch. Ch. Oxford

Dec^r 10 1838

My dear Sir,

~~L~~wa Mad war gennyf clywed oddi wrthyt. Y llythyr hwn a ysgrifennodd mab [bugel] Syr Watkyn atoch yr hwn sydd yma yn Rhydychain.²⁵⁰ He says that he will be very glad to see you at Wynstay,²⁵¹ and that he will take you about to shew you the different views in the neighbourhood. I should be able to accompany you the next day after Christmas. I wish it had been in my power to leave Oxford earlier. I know Colonel Vaughan who owns the MSS at Hengwrt. – I have written to him on your account. I write this letter in Mr Wynn's room and at his request.

Yours very truly,

Tegid

Ch. Ch. Dec 10 1838

²⁴⁹ Archives La Villemarqué LV 38.024. Letter originally addressed to 'Comte de La Villemarqué, Llanarth', but re-addressed 'At Sir John Guest's, Dowlais', with a marginal note: 'This letter was set to Llanarth today by Mr Watkin W. Apollonia Rio. Monday.' Postmark: Abergavenny Dec 18 1838.

²⁵⁰ 'I was glad to hear from you. Syr Watkyn's son (child), who is here in Oxford, wrote this letter'. True to form, Tegid is mixing the two languages here: the opening words 'Mad war' are presumably Breton 'mad oa' (it was good); 'bugel' (child) is also Breton, and the syntax is rather odd.

²⁵¹ The Williams Wynn family were extremely powerful landowners whose properties covered vast areas of north Wales. Sir Watkin Williams Wynn, 5th Baronet (1772–1840), by now very ill, was the Tory M.P for Denbighshire, who had inherited the famous and much-visited landscaped estate of Wynnstay, near Wrexham in north-east Wales and liked to be known as the 'Prince in Wales'. It is to be regretted that La Villemarqué, with his gift for describing lavish interiors, was not to be one of their guests. The writer of the invitation is his eldest son and namesake, Watkin Williams Wynn, then studying at Oxford.

My Dear Compte De La Villemarqué,

I am sure my Father will be very happy to see you at Wynnstay to see the manuscripts any time between the 20th of Dec and the beginning of January or any other time that is convenient to you. I hope Mr Jones (Tegid) will be induced to accompany you as he will best be able to explain the manuscripts to you. I have named that time as my Uncle²⁵² will be at Wynnstay then, but I am sure any other time convenient to you will suit my Father equally well,

I remain

Yr Obed^t Servant,

WW^{ms} Wynn

²⁵² Charles Williams Wynn (1775–1850) was M. P. for Montgomeryshire, and a school friend of the poet Robert Southey.

Lettre XV

De Augustin Thierry à Théodore Hersart de La Villemarqué²⁵³

[12 décembre 1838]

Monsieur

J'ai été doublement charmé de recevoir une lettre de vous et de faire la connaissance de votre ami M. de Francheville J'avais lu avec bien de l'intérêt tout ce que les journaux nous ont dit des solennités historiques et poétiques d'Abergavenny. Je vous félicite de vos succès comme barde de l'île de Bretagne ; ma femme a le plus grand désir de voir cette belle coupe d'or qui est le prix de l'inspiration. M. Buloz m'a promis positivement d'insérer un fragment de votre rapport au Ministre ; mais il demande que ce soit vous même qui fassiez la coupure et que le morceau lui parvienne tout prêt pour la publication. Quant à vos chants bretons, les nouvelles sont peu satisfaisantes ; le comité, contre l'avis de M. Fauriel, a décidé que sa compétence se bornait aux écrits en langue française et je doute qu'il soit possible de le faire revenir là-dessus. La publication de votre rapport, votre présence à Paris et l'insertion de quelques pièces avec un préambule dans la revue des deux mondes vous rendraient peut-être quelques chances en faisant comprendre à ces messieurs de quoi il s'agit ; car je crois qu'ils ne s'en doutent pas. Je suis heureux d'apprendre que j'ai des amis dans le pays de Galles, dites leur que je suis toujours patriote cambrien et que ma 5^e édition le prouvera. J'y ai fait quelques additions au chapitre des Gallois dans le 4^e volume des chartes de Lewellyn, d'Yvain de Galles et d'Owen Glendowe trouvées aux archives du royaume.

Agréez de nouveau, Monsieur, l'assurance de mon bien sincère attachement

p. Augustin Thierry

12 décembre 1838.

²⁵³ Archives La Villemarqué LV 10.046. Cachets postaux : Paris 15 Dec ; London 17 Dec. La lettre est adressée à « Th. de la Villemarqué Esq Lannarth near Abergavenny Southwales England ».

Letter XV

From Augustin Thierry²⁵⁴

[12 December 1838]

Monsieur

I was delighted twice over upon receiving a letter from you and making the acquaintance of your friend M. de Francheville.²⁵⁵ I have been reading with great interest everything the newspapers had to say about the historical and poetical ceremonies at Abergavenny. Many congratulations on your success as a Bard of the Island of Britain; my wife²⁵⁶ is extremely keen to see that beautiful golden cup, the reward for inspiration. M. Buloz²⁵⁷ has given me firm assurances that he will include part of your report to the Minister, but asks that you make the selection yourself and that you send it to him ready for publication. As to your Breton songs, the news is less encouraging; the committee, against the advice of M. Fauriel,²⁵⁸ has decided that it is only competent to judge works in the French language and I doubt it will be possible to get the decision overturned. The publication of your report, your presence in Paris and the publication of some of the songs with an introduction in the *Revue des deux mondes* might improve your chances by demonstrating to these gentlemen exactly what you intend; for I am not certain that they fully understand. I am happy to learn that I have friends in

²⁵⁴ Archives La Villemarqué LV 10.046. Addressed to 'Th. de la Villemarqué Esq Lannarth near Abergavenny Southwales England'. Postmarks: Paris 15 Dec ; London 17 Dec. Augustin Thierry (1795–1856) was a historian of the middle ages, best known for his dramatic and highly readable *Histoire de la Conquête de l'Angleterre par les Normands* (1825). Some of his work drew on Breton songs which La Villemarqué sent him.

²⁵⁵ Jules de Francheville (1816–1866), one of the original delegation to Abergavenny, had by now returned to France.

²⁵⁶ Julie de Querangal (1802–1844) came from a Breton family (her father was a Vice-Admiral). She married Augustin Thierry in November 1831. La Villemarqué was invited to dine with the Thierrys in April 1839 in the company of Claude Fauriel and François Villemain.

²⁵⁷ François Buloz (1804–1877), had been the principal editor at the highly influential *Revue des Deux Mondes* since 1831.

²⁵⁸ Claude Fauriel (1772–1844), held the Chair in European languages and literature at the Faculty of Letters in Paris, and published a volume of *Chants populaires de la Grèce moderne* (1824–25) which would be influential in inspiring La Villemarqué's work on the *Barzaz-Breiz*. Fauriel became a member of the Académie des Inscriptions in 1836, and took over the presidency of the newly-formed *Comité de la Langue et de la Littérature françaises* in 1837. Despite Fauriel's personal support for the project, the Committee meetings held on 7 April and 26 May 1838 refused to back La Villemarqué's proposed publication of Breton songs; Charles Nodier was a notable critic.

Wales, tell them I am still a Cambrian patriot and that my fifth edition will prove it.²⁵⁹ I have added a few things to the Welsh chapter in the fourth volume: charters relating to Lewellyn, Yvain de Galles and Owen Glendowe found in the Archives du Royaume.²⁶⁰

I remain, Monsieur, your most sincere friend,

P. Augustin Thierry

12 Dec 1838.

²⁵⁹ The fifth edition of the *Histoire de la Conquête de l'Angleterre par les Normands* would come out at the very end of the year (1838).

²⁶⁰ Thierry's book includes a highly sympathetic overview of Welsh history with accounts of national heroes including the last native prince of Wales, Llywelyn ap Gruffydd (1223–1282); Owain Lawgoch (1330–1378) and Owain Glyndŵr (1359–1450); additional documents included a transcript of the famous Pennal Letter of 1406 in which Glyndŵr asks the king of France for support against Henry IV.

Lettre XIX

De Justine de Kergos à son frère Théodore Hersart de La Villemarqué²⁶¹

Toulgoat, le 13 xbre [1838]

Savez-vous mon cher théodore que j'ai été toute fière de recevoir votre lettre. les honneurs changent les mœurs me disais-je et je pense qu'à présent qu'on le traite presque comme un prince il ne pensera plus à nous. vraiment mon cher frère je comprend tout votre bonheur et m'en réjouis de tout mon cœur. nous avons vraiment mille et mille remerciemens à faire à mr Rio et à la famille de sa femme car c'est à eux que nous devons tout cela. j'ai lu toutes les lettres que vous avez écrit au plessix et mr Kergos nous a traduit le journal que vous lui aviez envoyé. nous en avons encore vu un autre que mr dumarhallac avait envoyé à sa fille famille. dans tous on parle vraiment de vous d'une manière tout à fait honorable [sic] et qui nous a fait grand plaisir. il paraît que les anglais sont grands dans leur réception car je vois que vous avez été on ne peut mieux traité chez mr hall et dans votre voyage toutes [sic] les détails que vous nous [avez] donné a fait regretter [sic] bien vivement à mr Kergos de n'être pas plus jeune. il eut été trop heureux d'être de ce joli voyage et de se revoir en angleterre. dès qu'on veut citer quelque chose il dit laissé [sic] revenir théodore et il vous dira ce que sont les anglais la politesse et le bon ton qu'ils ont la grande propreté et le luxe qu'ils ont. votre fils aîné sera donc artur prenez garde de jeter votre bouteille a la mer en revenant comme vous y avez jetté [sic] votre fiole de quinine votre fièvre est elle toute [sic] a fait passé [sic] papa est on ne peut plus occupé de votre santé dont vous parlé peu dit il quant a lui il est beaucoup mieux il a eu la messe d'icy²⁶² dimanche on ira a qlé Camille n'y est pas encore car son fils a la rougeole mais je pense que ce ne sera rien elle est si belle cette année. Anatole la [sic] aussi mais est fort peu malade il est seulement très fâché de rester au lit ma petite pauline a toujours un peu de fièvre et sort les dents je pense et moi je vous eus écrit de suite dès que je reçu [sic] votre lettre mais depuis 8 jours je suis au lit ayant la migraine quant à mr Kergos il se porte bien fait replanter la moitié de son maille qu'il a abatu [sic] et attend votre lettre en

²⁶¹ Archives La Villemarqué LV 02.011, adressée à « M^r Th^e De La Villemarqué, Lannarth-Court – Monmouth – South-Wales England. » cachets postaux: Quimper, 14 Dec 1838; Paris, 17 Dec 1838; London 19 Dec 1838.

²⁶² Lecture incertaine.

anglais a laquelle il repondra de suite dans la même langue. grande nouvelle a quimper mr arsene Kerguélen épouse mlle pauline le vicomte la noce sera le mois prochain les madec sont dans la joie on faisait hier part du mariage ce ne sera pas un beau couple mais mr Kerguélen fait là un riche mariage car l'autre [fille de] mr le vicomte est allée au calvairiennes²⁶³ pour être religieuse le frère est diacre aussi elle aura toute la fortune. on parlait du mariage de mr de [sic] louis du jacquelot avec la sœur de mme rio en ce [moment]²⁶⁴ il n'est pas encore arrivé lui mr du marh [est]²⁶⁵ ici depuis 15 jours mr Kergos doit aller le voir un de ces jours.

Que deviendrez vous a présent un barde [?]²⁶⁶ - mon cher théodore je me le demande ! toutes les fois que je relis votre lettre et que je [vous] vois dans de tels honneurs et lié avec de tels [sic] grandeurs que pourrons nous faire maintenant pour vous distraire pauvres gens que nous sommes nous qui ne sommes pas aussi logé que les vieux domestiques de ce seigneur dont vous parlé [sic] – ce petit village doit être un bijou vous trouverez ce pays bien affreux cependant quelques anglais paraissent s'y plaire est ce que ce n'est que par politesse je conçois que mme rio ne trouve ici rien d'assez bien pour habiter présentez lui bien nos respects ainsi qu'a mme sa mère. dites lui que je vous charge de mille et mille remerciements pour toutes les bontés qu'on a pour vous – vous ne nous oublierez pas près de monsieur rio je serai trop heureuse s'il [sic] reviennent dans ce pays de le recevoir chez moi eux ou leurs parents si ce n'est pas avec tout le luxe qu'ils ont chez eux ce sera du moins avec une grande joie de les recevoir et le plus grand désir qu'il soient le mieux possible et qu'ils s'y trouvent assez passablement pour nous rester long-tems. Vous avez dû avoir une lettre de sidonie. elle est très occupée de la santé de votre âme et de votre corps elle est aussi bien nous avons eu aussi une lettre dernièrement elle continue a être mieux. elle est cependant un peu dans le chagrin car sa mère Kertanguy a donné sa démission de supérieure [sic] générale. elle voulait faire faire des vœux²⁶⁷ et l'éveque ne la [sic] pas voulu et a fait nommer une autre.

votre demande vient je pense de ce que camille a crains [sic] que la pompe avec laquelle le journal rendait compte de la fête fut blâmée mais cela n'est pas. je garde votre lettre et vous la donnerai plus tard. je désire de tout mon cœur que vous²⁶⁸ voyage vous soit bien profitable

²⁶³ Lecture incertaine.

²⁶⁴ Manque dû à un trou dans le papier.

²⁶⁵ Manque dû à un trou dans le papier.

²⁶⁶ Mot illisible.

²⁶⁷ Lecture incertaine.

²⁶⁸ Sans doute à la place de « votre ».

je prie dieu pour vous et pour que les avances des dames ne vous fassent qu'un plaisir ordinaire et ne vous fasse pas chercher a leur plaire a leur tour d'autant plus que dans ce pays on n'entend pas pas raillerie sur cet article

je crois que tous les détails de la fête a [sic] fait un bien bon effet quoi que cela fut dit dans le premier journal avec un peu de pompe ce n'était pas trop cependant pensez aussi qu'ici les premières familles avait [sic] intérêt a soutenir cette fete puisque leurs fils en étaient toutes les personnes que j'ai vues répétaient le joli voyage que ce messieurs font quelle belle fete ils ont vécue plusieurs personnes m'ont écrits [sic] la dessus toutes dans ce sens mme Kergariou, les Kergos, aimé du fretay je vois que chacun connaît²⁶⁹ votre sort et personne n'y trouve rien a redire

je ne sais plus ou vous dire que je vous aime et vous embrasse que mr Kergos vous fait mille et mille amitiés que nos enfants vous offrent leurs respects mr Kergos pense que suivant ma louable coutume ma lettre n'est pas écrite en français et pour finir il m'engage par malice a croiser pour que vous ne puissiez pas lire j'ai parfaitement lu la votre adieu votre sœur justine

²⁶⁹ Lecture incertaine.

Letter XIX

Justine de Kergos to her brother Théodore Hersart de la Villemarqué²⁷⁰

Toulgoat, 13 Dec [1838]

you know my dear théodore I was so proud to get your letter. honours change manners I said to myself and I expect now that he's being treated almost like a prince he won't remember us any more. but really my dear brother I quite understand your delight and I rejoice for you with all my heart. we really do owe M. Rio and his wife's family a thousand thousand thanks since it is because of them that all this has happened. I have read all the letters you sent to plessix and mr Kergos translated for us the newspaper that you sent him. and we saw another one that m. dumarchallac sent to his ~~daughter~~ family. in all of them you are spoken of in terms which do you honour and which have brought us great pleasure. The english it appears are lavish in their welcome for I see you could not have been better treated at mr hall's and in your tour all the details you gave us have made mr Kergos regret that he is not younger. he would have been so happy to be part of this lovely trip and be back in england. whenever anyone tries to mention anything he says wait for théodore to come home and he will tell you what these english are like their manners and their class their high standards of cleanliness their wealth. So your firstborn son will be artur take care you don't throw that bottle overboard on your return like that little vial of quinine is your fever completely cured papa could not be more anxious about your health you say so very little about it he says as for him he is much better he managed to get to mass here Sunday we go to qlé [Quimperlé] Camille is not there yet as her boy has the measles but I think it will be fine she is in such good form this year. Anatole has it too but is not very ill just fed up that he has to stay in bed my little Pauline still has some fever and is cutting teeth I think and as for me I would have written straight away after getting your letter but I've been in bed for the last 8 days with a migraine as for M. Kergos he is fine and has just replanted half his avenue that he cut down he is waiting for that letter from you in English and will reply to it in the same language. The big news from Quimper mr arsène Kerguélien is to marry mlle pauline le

²⁷⁰ Archives La Villemarqué LV 02.011, addressed to 'M^r Th^{rs} De La Villemarqué, Lannarth-Court – Monmouth – South-Wales England'. Postmarks: Quimper, 14 December 1838; Paris, 17 December 1838; London 19 December 1838. This translation tries to capture Justine's breathless style but cannot do justice to her spelling or grammar.

vicomte²⁷¹ the wedding will be next month the madecs²⁷² are overjoyed they [announced the banns yesterday] they won't be a pretty couple but mr Kerguélen is making a good match there because the other [daughter of] m le vicomte has gone to the calvairienne²⁷³ to be a nun the brother is a deacon²⁷⁴ so she will have the whole fortune. There was some talk of the marriage of mr de louis du jacquelot with mme rio's sister²⁷⁵ at the [moment]²⁷⁶ he is not yet arrived mr du marh²⁷⁷ [has been]²⁷⁸ home a fortnight mr Kergos intends to go and see him soon.

What will become of you now you are a bard [...] ²⁷⁹ – my dear théodore I ask myself! every time I read your letter and picture you amidst such honours and such greatness what hope have we of entertaining you poor folks that we are we who are not even as well housed as the old servants of the gentleman you mentioned – that little hamlet must be a real treasure you will find our country just dreadful still some English people seem to enjoy it even if they are only being polite I have an idea that mme rio cannot find anything good enough here to live in do give her my regards as well as mme her mother. tell her I have asked you to pass on a thousand thanks for all the many kindnesses you have received – and remember us to monsieur rio I would be so delighted if they came back to this country to welcome him here or any of their relations even if it isn't with all the luxury they have at home it would at least be with great delight at receiving them and with the greatest possible wish that they might be as comfortable as possible and that they will find us acceptable enough to stay with us for a good while. You should have had a letter from sidonie.²⁸⁰ she is most concerned with the well-being of your soul and your body she is also well we have also had a letter from ermine she continues to make progress. she is however rather unhappy as her mother Kertanguy has

²⁷¹ Pierre Marie Arsène de Kerguelen (1804–1887), grandson of the famous admiral who gave his name to the Iles Kerguelen, married Pauline Marie Vicomte de la Houssaye (1812–1887) on 19 January 1839 in Quimper. He was an early member of the charitable Saint-Vincent-de-Paul Society, established by Frederic Ozanam in 1833, and helped to set up a branch in Quimper. Pauline's parents were the uncle and aunt of Félix Dumarc'hallac'h.

²⁷² Arsène de Kerguelen's sister, Marie Adélaïde (1808–1856) married Balthazar François Marie Madec (1803–1853).

²⁷³ Arsène Le Vicomte de la Houssaye took the veil at the convent of Le Calvaire in Quimper in February 1838, becoming Sister Arsène.

²⁷⁴ Paul Le Vicomte de la Houssaye (1815–1884) was ordained as a priest in December 1839.

²⁷⁵ Louis de Jacquelot in fact never married.

²⁷⁶ Missing due to a tear in the paper.

²⁷⁷ Félix du Marc'hallac'h.

²⁷⁸ Missing due to a tear in the paper.

²⁷⁹ Illegible.

²⁸⁰ Sidonie (born 1801) was another of Théodore Hersart de La Villemarqué's sisters; she became a nun at the Sacré Coeur.

resigned as mother superior. she had wanted to have certain [prayers]²⁸¹ said and the bishop did not want it and appointed someone else.²⁸²

your question comes I imagine from the fact that Camille was worried that all the pomp and circumstance in the newspaper reports of the celebrations might be viewed critically but it is not so. I am keeping your letter and I will give it to you later. I hope with all my heart that you[r] voyage may be of benefit to you I pray to god for you and that the attention of the ladies brings you only a normal kind of pleasure and does not tempt you to please them in their turn particularly as in this country this is not something to make a mockery of. I think that all the details about the celebrations have made a very good impression even if the first newspaper put it rather grandly but still it was not too much remember too that it was in the interests of the very best families to support this event since their sons were there all the people I have seen said over and over what a lovely journey these young men have made and what a wonderful celebration they experienced lots of people have written to me about it all saying the same thing mme Kergarious,²⁸³ the Kergos family, aimé du fretay²⁸⁴ I see they all [know]²⁸⁵ your lot and no-one has anything bad to say

I don't know what else to say except that I send you all my love and that mr Kergos sends a thousand warm wishes that our children send you their respects mr Kergos thinks that following my usual commendable fashion my letter is not written in french and to finish he is wickedly trying to get me to cross things out so that you cannot read I read yours perfectly farewell

your sister Justine

²⁸¹ Reading uncertain.

²⁸² This refers to a disagreement between Jeanne de Kertanguy, mother superior of the Abbaye Blanche at Quimper, and Monseigneur de Poulpiquet de Brescanvel, Bishop of Quimper. La Villemarqué's sister Ermine, who had recently entered the convent (see Letter II), took the side of her mother superior, who resigned on 28 October 1838. A new superior was appointed on 17 November. See Mgr du Bois de Villerabel, *Mère de Kertanguy (1796–1870)* (Paris, 1925).

²⁸³ The de Kergariou family had many branches in Brittany and it is not clear which 'Mme Kergariou' is referred to here. She may be Méliite Jeanne Marie Chrestien de Tréveneuc (1781–1853), the mother of Henri de Kergariou, who was originally asked to be part of the Breton delegation to Abergavenny.

²⁸⁴ Aimé François Marie Halna du Fretay (1774–1845) was the captain of a frigate.

²⁸⁵ Reading uncertain.

Lettre XX

De Théodore Hersart de la Villemarqué à son père Pierre Hersart de La
Villemarqué²⁸⁶

Daoulais, le 22 Xbre [1838]

J'ai reçu votre lettre, et celle de maman, qui m'ont fait bien plaisir, mon cher papa, car il y avait longtemps que je n'en avais reçues. Si je ne vous parle pas de ma santé c'est que je me porte à merveille. non seulement, je n'ai plus de maux d'estomac, mais, ce qui vous étonnera, j'engraisse à vue d'oeil c'est sans doute le rosbif anglais...

Comme vous le voyez par le lieu dont je date cette lettre, je ne suis plus à Llanarth, en ce moment, je fais un petit voyage de quelques jours dans le Gladmorgan. C'est maintenant Lady Charlotte Guest qui me donne l'hospitalité. elle habite bien le plus affreux pays du monde! nous n'avons devant les yeux que d'épouvantables montagnes de charbon et de cendre, que les travaux de fer ont minées. l'air est chargé de brouillards et des nuages de fumée que les tuyaux des forges de Sir John Guest vomissent de toute parts. Son usine est la plus belle de l'Europe ; il a quarante machines à vapeur, quatorze fournaies, et plus de cinq mille ouvriers. elle lui rapporte communément deux millions de notre monnaie, par année. La nuit toutes ces fournaies allumées, à la ronde, sont du plus magnifique effet; on dirait quatorze maisons en flammes. J'ai passé, hier soir, une heure à ma fenêtre, jouissant de ce spectacle extraordinaire et quand vous êtes couché, que les doubles contours de vos rideaux vous rendent les ombres que les fournaies dissipent à plusieurs miles d'elles, au bruit sourd et grinçant des machines, qui par moment semble s'éloigner et s'éteindre, puis se rapproche, gronde et mugit dans le flanc des montagnes, vous croiriez entendre les flots de la mer.

Le bisaïeul de celui qui se nomme maintenant Sir John Guest Baronet n'était (il y a deux siècles) qu'un petit fermier.. la fortune et les titres n'ont pas fait perdre au fils la simplicité du grand père. « lorsqu'il acheta la place où vous voyez maintenant ces forges, me disait Sir John, il ne se doutait pas, qu'il achetait un trésor. un vieillard m'a souvent conté que ce fut

²⁸⁶ Archives La Villemarqué LV 02.034. Adressée à: « Monsieur Hersart De la Villemarqué à Kemperlé Bretagne Finistère ». Postmarks: Abergavenny, 25 De1838; London, 26 Dec 1838; Quimperlé [?].

une grande désolation pour tous les enfans du petit village de Daoulas, quand ils virent creuser la première fournaise, au lieu ordinaire de leurs jeux. » le village est devenu une ville qui nourrit plus de 20 mille âmes, et Sir John Guest en est le maître et Roi.

Lady Charlotte au contraire, appartient à une des plus nobles familles d'Angleterre, les Lintzey. Son trisaïeul était un des généraux du malheureux Charles I^{er} elle est beaucoup plus jeune que son mari qui a soixante ans et qui l'épousa en secondes noces. elle ne reste pas du tout étrangère, malgré sa jeunesse, et ses goûts de femme, à tout ce qui intéresse son mari; elle visite les travaux avec lui, lui donne des conseils, l'aide même, car elle a traduit, du français en anglais, sans lui rien dire et pour lui faire plaisir, un ouvrage sur les mines de fer. au reste, tout ce qu'elle entreprend elle le fait bien. c'est une femme extraordinaire; elle parle et écrit le français comme nous; elle sait l'italien, elle connaît même les langues orientales, et je pourrai vous en montrer un autographe en cette langue qu'elle a bien voulu me donner. mais ce qui m'intéresse surtout en elle, ce sont ses travaux sur la littérature galloise; elle publie en ce moment des romans gallois avec une traduction anglaise charmante, qui ont un grand succès. elle a des connaissances, non seulement en Europe, mais en orient. Le docteur Borings nous est arrivé ce matin avec le Muphir ou ministre de l'instruction publique du Pacha d'Egypte. c'est assez drôle n'est ce pas, de se trouver avec un tel personnage dans les montagnes du pays de Galles. à table il était placé à la droite de la dame de céans, et l'envoyé du gouv^t français, à sa gauche. Marmont en parle dans ses voyages. il s'appelle Edhem-Bey. il m'a donné sa signature en arabe, et sa carte pour quand je l'irai visiter. il ne sait que le français; il a traduit en persan plusieurs ouvrages de Legendre et de Lacroix [avant]²⁸⁷ d'être ministre il était directeur général du matériel de l'armée d'[Egypte]²⁸⁸ [En plus de]²⁸⁹ cela, il est poète ; il m'a fait une très poétique description de [...] ²⁹⁰ de la lune et des étoiles, sur les eaux et des maisons flottantes pendant le débordement du Nil, et des bois d'orangers d'Egypte, et des chasses,²⁹¹ et des pyramides. nous étions assis, tous deux, sur un sofa oriental. Je me croyais en orient déjà. il porte le costume national et un croissant de diamants sur la poitrine. il est gros et d'une taille moyenne. sa figure est ronde, rouge, et réjouie; une épaisse moustache noire lui couvre la lèvre; il louche un peu, ce qui lui donne, une assez comique expression quand il veut faire l'aimable près des dames – le Barbare a été très bien

²⁸⁷ Tache d'encre masquant le mot.

²⁸⁸ Manque dans le papier.

²⁸⁹ Tache d'encre masquant le mot.

²⁹⁰ Tache d'encre masquant le mot.

²⁹¹ Lecture incertaine.

reçu. – je vous envoie son portrait fait à la plume par mon ami le rev. m. Price; il est flatté, je vous le déclare. nous n'avons pas encore reçu la gazette nous n'avons vu que les débats. mes respects à maman, et recevez aussi les miens, mon cher papa.

voire fils Th. De la Villemarqué.

Letter XX

Théodore Hersart de la Villemarqué to his father Pierre Hersart de La Villemarqué²⁹²

Daoulais, 22 December [1838]

I received your letter, my dear papa, and maman's too, and was very happy to have them as I hadn't received any for a long time. If I don't mention my health it is because I am exceptionally well, not only am I free of stomach pains, but – this will amaze you – I am visibly putting on weight. it must be the English *rosbif*.

As you will see from the date and place above I am no longer at Llanarth; at present I am taking a few days to visit Gladmorgan.²⁹³ Lady Charlotte Guest is now my host. She lives in the most dreadful place in the world! All we can see are awful mountains of coal and ash thrown up by the mines of the iron-works. The air is thick with fog and clouds of smoke vomited out by the pipes from Sir John Guest's forges. His factory is the finest in all Europe; he has forty steam engines, fourteen furnaces and over five thousand workers. It brings in approximately 2 million a year in our money. At night all these furnaces lit up in a circle create the most magnificent effect; like fourteen houses all ablaze. Yesterday evening I spent an hour at my window, enthralled by this extraordinary spectacle, and when you lie down, with the double contours of the curtains throwing out shadows which are dissolved by the light of the furnaces several miles distant, and with the dull grinding of the machines now far away and quieter, now closer, growling and roaring against the slopes of the hills, you would think you were listening to the waves of the sea.

²⁹² Archives La Villemarqué LV 02.034. Addressed to 'Monsieur Hersart De la Villemarqué à Kemperlé Bretagne Finistère'. Postmarks: Abergavenny, 25 Dec 1838; London, 26 Dec 1838; Quimperlé [?]. 'Daoulais' is Dowlais, near Merthyr Tydfil, the home of the Guests.

²⁹³ Glamorgan (usually Bro Morgannwg in Welsh) was often referred to at this period as Gwladmorgan – the land of the Morgans.

Two centuries ago the ancestors of the current Sir John Guest Baronet were no more than modest farmers.²⁹⁴ Wealth and titles have not caused the son to abandon the simplicity of his grand-father: when he bought the place where you now see the forges, Sir John told me, he had no idea he was buying a treasure. One old man told me how upsetting it had been for the children of the little village of Daoulas to see them digging the first furnace in the middle of their usual playground. That village is now a town supporting twenty thousand souls, and Sir John Guest is both its master and King.

Lady Charlotte, on the other hand, belongs to one of the noblest families in England, the Linseys.²⁹⁵ Her ancestor was general to the unfortunate Charles I. She is much younger than her husband, who is sixty years of age; this is his second marriage.²⁹⁶ Despite her youth and her femininity she is no stranger to matters close to her husband's heart. She visits the works with him, advises him, and even assists him: to please him, and without telling him she was doing so, she translated a work about mining iron ore from French to English. Everything she undertakes she does well. She is an extraordinary woman; she speaks and writes French as well as we do; she knows Italian, and even the Oriental languages, and I could show you a piece of writing in the latter which she wanted me to have.²⁹⁷ But what interests me most of all about her are her studies in Welsh literature; she is at present engaged in publishing the Welsh romances with delightful English translations which are very well received. Her circle of acquaintances extends across Europe to the East. Dr Borings²⁹⁸ arrived this morning with the Murphir or minister of Education of the Egyptian Pasha.²⁹⁹ Isn't it amusing to find oneself with such a character in the Welsh hills? At dinner he was placed on the right-hand side of

²⁹⁴ Josiah John Guest (1785–1852) was an iron-master, colliery proprietor and M.P.; his grandfather John Guest had moved from Shropshire to manage the small iron-works at Dowlais in 1759, and the company developed rapidly over three generations. See <https://biography.wales/article/s-GUES-DOW-1722>.

²⁹⁵ Charlotte Guest's father was Lieutenant General Albemarle Bertie, 9th Earl of Lindsey (1744–1818). Their ancestor, Montagu Bertie, 2nd Earl of Lindsey, fought for the Royalists in the Civil War.

²⁹⁶ Maria Rankin had died in 1818, only a few months after her marriage to J. J. Guest; he married Charlotte Bertie in 1833.

²⁹⁷ For Guest's impressive linguistic ability and her early, largely self-taught, education, see Guest and John, *Lady Charlotte Guest: An Extraordinary Life*.

²⁹⁸ 'Dr Borings' is John Bowring (1792–1872), politician, economist, linguist, writer, traveller and radical reformer (he spoke in favour of abolition and women's rights). He had just returned from the Middle East and would shortly publish his *Report on Egypt 1823–1838 and Candia: Addressed to the Privy Council on Trade* (London, 1840). In the early 1840s Bowring would invest heavily in the south Wales iron industry at nearby Maesteg. Given that he also published several volumes of poems and folk-songs translated from Russian, Spanish, Serbian, Hungarian and Czech, amongst others, it is a pity that La Villemarqué does not write more about him.

²⁹⁹ Edhem Bey was Minister for Public Instruction under Muhammad Ali Pasha al-Mas'ud ibn Agha (1769–1849), considered one of the founders of modern Egypt. In a meeting with Bowring the Pasha said he was sending Edhem Bey 'with fifteen young men to learn what your country can teach'. Bowring, *Report on Egypt*, 148.

the lady of the house, and the representative of the French govt. on her left. Marmont mentions him in his *Voyages*.³⁰⁰ He is called Edhem-Bey. He has given me his autograph in Arabic, and his card, for when I come to visit him. French is his only foreign language; he has translated several works by Legendre and Lacroix into Persian;³⁰¹ [before] he was made minister he was Director General of Equipment in the [Egyptian] Army [and to top it all],³⁰² he is a poet; he gave me a wonderfully poetical description of [...] ³⁰³ of the moon and the stars over the waters and the houses which float during the overflowing of the Nile, and the orange groves of Egypt, and the [...] and the pyramids. We were both of us sitting on an oriental sofa. I imagined myself there already. He dresses in national costume and has a crescent of diamonds on his chest. He is plump and of medium height, his face is round, red and cheerful; a thick black moustache covers his mouth; he squints a little, which gives him a fairly comical expression when he wants to be agreeable to the ladies – the Barbarian (everything not Greek or Roman is described as ‘Barbarian’) has been a great success – I’m sending you his portrait done in pen and ink by my friend the Rev Mr Price; it flatters him, believe me. We haven’t seen the Gazette yet we have only seen the Debats. My respects to Maman, and to yourself, my dear Papa,

Your son,

Th. De la Villemarqué.

³⁰⁰ Auguste de Marmont, Duc de Raguse (1774–1842) became Marshal of France and fought against Wellington in Spain. He travelled widely, accompanying Napoleon in Egypt in the 1790s, and returning there in the 1830s, and had recently published a travel memoir, *Voyage du Maréchal Duc de Raguse en Hongrie, en Transylvanie... à Constantinople... et en Égypte*, 4 vols (Paris, 1839).

³⁰¹ Adrien-Marie Legendre (1752–1833) was a French mathematician, author of *Exercices de Calcul Intégral* (3 vols, 1811–19). In 1837, Edhem-Bey translated his *Traité de géométrie* into Turkish, as well as *La Théorie des parallèles* by Sylvestre-François Lacroix (1765–1843). The text in question may be a chapter of *Éléments de géométrie, à l’usage de l’Ecole Centrale des Quatre Nations*, published in 1806 and regularly reprinted.

³⁰² Ink blot covering the word.

³⁰³ Ink blot covering the word.

Letter XXI

**Letter from the Merthyr Tydfil Cymreigyddion Society to Théodore Hersart de La
Villemarqué³⁰⁴**

[24 Rhagfyr 1838]

Iddei Fawrhydi Comte de La Villemarquè [sic]

Bendefig urddasol,

Yr ydym ni, Aelodau Cymdeithas Cymreigyddion yr Alarch, ym Merthyr Tudfyl, mewn cyfarfod neillduol, y Dydd heddyw, sef y 24^{ain} o Rhagfyr 1838, wedi ceisio ymestyn at arddercheuogrwydd trwy eich ethol, ag unfryd, yn aelod o'n Cymdeithas – gann obeithio y canniatewch inni yr anrhydedd o gadw eich enw derchafedy ar ein Cofrestr.

Gann roddi ein diolchgarwch gostyngedig ichwi am barchu ein gwlad ein Hiaith a'n Hen lenyddiaeth mor fawr ag ymweled a ni, yr ydym, Bendefig urddasol

Eich ufuddaf wasanaethyddion (dros y Gymdeithas)

Taliesin ab Iolo Morganwg (Llywydd)

Iolo Mynwy (Ysgrifennydd)

³⁰⁴ Archives La Villemarqué LV 38.030. Letter addressed to 'Comte de la Villemarqué'.

Letter XXI

Letter from the Merthyr Tydfil Cymreigyddion Society to Théodore Hersart de La Villemarqué³⁰⁵

[24 December 1838]

To his Excellency³⁰⁶ the Comte de La Villemarqué

Noble Lord,

We, Members of the Society of Cymreigyddion of the Swan, in Merthyr Tydfil, have in an extraordinary meeting this Day, the 24th December 1838, attempted to reach towards excellence by unanimously electing you a member of our Society – in the hope that you will permit us the honour of allowing your name to enhance our Register.

In thanking you most humbly for respecting our country, our Language and our Ancient literature to such an extent that you have come to visit us, we are, noble Lord,

Your most obedient servants (on behalf of the Society)

Taliesin ab Iolo Morganwg (President)³⁰⁷

Iolo Mynwy (Secretary)³⁰⁸

³⁰⁵ Archives La Villemarqué LV 38.030. Letter addressed to ‘Comte de la Villemarqué’. Charlotte Guest’s journal entry for 24 December reads: ‘I employed myself in receiving a deputation consisting of Mr Henry Jones, Taliesin Williams & others, which came from the Merthyr Cymreigyddion Soc. to announce to M. de la Villemarqué that he was elected a member of the same – There was a great deal of Breton and Welsh talked which I think was but little understood de part et d’autre, and at the period of about half an hour they took their leave. – I went to bed tired and weary’. ‘The Journals of Lady Charlotte Guest’, XI (1837–1841), 105.

³⁰⁶ ‘Mawrhydi’ is now the usual word for ‘Majesty’, but presumably even the Cymreigyddion did not intend to go that far.

³⁰⁷ Taliesin Williams (1787–1847), son of the poet and ‘inventor’ of Bardism, Edward Williams (Iolo Morganwg), was a school-teacher in Merthyr Tydfil and a prominent player in the Welsh cultural revival of the 1830s.

³⁰⁸ Iolo Mynwy (Edward Williams), was an innkeeper from Merthyr Tydfil, and a poet.

Letter XXII

John Jones (Tegid) to Théodore Hersart de La Villemarqué³⁰⁹

Christ Church Oxford

28 Rhagfyr 1838

Llawen galon oeddwn i gael llythyr oddi wrthy chwi, anwyl Comte; ond drwg oedd genyf glywed na allech fyned i Wynnstay. Yr oedd mab Syr Watkin wedi darparu dwy ystavell wely, un i chwi, ac un i minneu. Drwg iawn gan vrawd Syr Watkin (yr Anrhydeddus Charles Watkin Williams Wynn) am na buasec'h chwi yn mynd yno. Digon o MSS yno; a gweled Mss Brogyntyn (Porkington) hevyd. Rhaid bellach aros tan yr hav, pryd y cewch dderbyniad llawen gan Syr Watkin; a bydd llawen genyv fynd gyda chwi yno, a thrwy vynyddoedd Caernarvon. Mae Syr Watkin yn hen, ac heb vedru clywed braidd ddim (ket); a'r mab sydd yn edrych ar ol y tŷ; ac yn gwahawdd cyveillion yno.

Ysgrivenwc'h atav vi eto yn Gymraeg; canys medrav ddeall eich iaith yn dda. A vuoch chwi yn Aberpergwm? A welsoch chwi MSS Taliesin Williams? Yr oedd yn ddrwg gennyv nad allaswn eich cyvarvod yn y Dowlais. Yr oedd genyv lawer iawn o waith i'w wneuthur cyn dydd Nadolig. Gobeithiav y medrwch ddeall fy llythyr; os medrwch, ysgrivenav atoch eto yn Gymraeg. Please to write to me soon.

Ydyw, anwyl Comte,

Eich kâr dros byth,

Tegid

Bardd Nizon

³⁰⁹ Archives La Villemarqué LV 30.020. Letter addressed to 'Comte de la Villemarqué'.

Derwyddon

Un Duw Iôn a adwaenynt,
Glyw! Ior gwiw! yn y gwlaw a'r gwynt;
Un Duw yn y vellten dân,
Duw Iôr yn llais y daran;
Un Bod yn yr haul uwch ben,
A'r lleuad, a'r ser llawen
Gwelent, caent bob argoelion
Drwy'r byd hanvodiad yr Iôn
Mewn llwyn, ar y twyn, un Tad
Un 'Ydyw' dinewidiad
Un Rhên, un Dovydd, un Rhi
A ddalient i'w addoli.

Tegid

Letter XXII

John Jones (Tegid) to Théodore Hersart de La Villemarqué³¹⁰

Christ Church Oxford

28 December 1838

My heart rejoiced to have a letter from you, dear Comte; but I was sorry to hear you could not go to Wynnstay.³¹¹ Syr Watkin's son had prepared two bedrooms, one for you, and one for me. Sir Watkin's brother (the Honorable Charles Watkins Williams Wynn) was very sorry that you were not coming there. Plenty of MSS there, and a sight of the Brogyntyn (Porkington) MSS as well.³¹² Now you must wait till the summer, when you will be warmly welcomed by Sir Watkin: and I will be happy to take you there, and through the mountains of Caernarvon. Sir Watkin is old, and virtually unable to hear anything; and it is the son who takes care of the house, and invites friends there.

Write to me again in Welsh,³¹³ for I can understand your language very well. Did you go to Aberpergwm?³¹⁴ Have you seen the MSS of Taliesin Williams?³¹⁵ I was sorry that I could not meet you in Dowlais. I had a great deal of work to do before Christmas Day. I hope you are able to understand my letter; if so, I will write to you again in Welsh. Please to write to me soon.

I am, dear Comte,

Your friend for ever,

³¹⁰ Archives La Villemarqué LV 30.020. Letter addressed to 'Comte de la Villemarqué'. As before, although several features of his spelling follow a version of the orthography proposed by his friend William Owen Pughe, Tegid seems to be lightly Bretonizing his Welsh for La Villemarqué's benefit (the use of c'h for ch, and v for f; the unusual construction 'llawen galon oeddwn' – 'a joyful heart I was').

³¹¹ See Letter XVII.

³¹² Brogyntyn Hall, near Oswestry, was renowned for a fine collection of early Welsh manuscripts, now in the possession of the National Library of Wales.

³¹³ It seems likely that Tegid intended to write 'Breton' here ('your language').

³¹⁴ Aberpergwm House at Glynneath in south Wales was owned by the Williams family: the folklorist and singer Maria Jane Williams (1795–1873) lived there. She had won the 1837 prize at the Abergavenny eisteddfod for an unpublished collection of songs, which would appear as *Ancient and National Airs of Gwent and Morgannwg* in 1844.

³¹⁵ Taliesin Williams (see Letter XXI above) was the keeper of his father's copious manuscripts, a selection of which would be published as *The Iolo Manuscripts* in 1848.

Tegid

Bardd Nizon.

Druids³¹⁶

One Lord God they acknowledge
Hark! Worthy Lord! in the rain and the wind
 One God in the lightning fire
Lord God in the thunder's voice;
 One Being in the sun above
 And the moon, and the joyful stars,
 They see, they find the portents
 Of God's existence throughout the world
 In grove and hill, one Father,
 One unchanging 'I am'
 One Lord, one Ruler, one King,
 They continue to worship him.

Tegid

³¹⁶ One of central tenets of Iolo Morganwg's Druidism was an emphasis on their worship of a single God, a doctrine which supported his own Unitarian beliefs.

Letter XXIII

William Rees to Théodore Hersart de La Villemarqué³¹⁷

Llandovery, Jan 21. 1839

Sir,

Herewith I have sent you a Large Paper Copy of the 1st part of the Mabinogion, the reason of its not having been presented you ere this, was that Lady Charlotte Guest inadvertently omitted your name in the list of presentation copies she sent me. I was, I must confess equally surprized with Lady Charlotte when I found that you had not a copy given you. I am truly sorry for the omissions or errata which occurred in printing the 1st sheets of the Chevalier, the fault of which cannot injure your reputation as you did not revise those sheets which were printed before you reached this country.³¹⁸

I will endeavour to make up three copies of the Chevalier alone, after I have printed off the whole of it, and if you wish to have a title page for those copies I will print one, provided you will send me a copy of it. You will please to excuse me for suggesting that the words ‘Published by the C^{te} De la Villemarqué’ at the close of the work, convey to an English person an idea of your being the printer or bookseller & not you having revised or edited the work, which is really the case & which I think ought to be in French & not in English.

³¹⁷ Archives La Villemarqué LV 27.043. Addressed to “Mr Le Comte De la Villemarqué”. For William Rees, see Letter V above.

³¹⁸ For a detailed account of the rather fraught nature of La Villemarqué’s contribution to Guest’s *Mabinogion* see Rachel Bromwich, ‘The Mabinogion and Lady Charlotte Guest’, *Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion* (1986), 127–41. The text under discussion in this letter is a medieval Welsh prose romance known as *Owain* or *Iarlles y Ffynnon*, now generally accepted as a Welsh adaptation based on Chrétien de Troye’s *Yvain, ou le Chevalier au Lion* (at the time the Welsh sources were often assumed to be earlier). Before his journey to Wales, La Villemarqué had copied some sections of the 12th-century French Romance for comparative purposes; it is clear from this and succeeding letters from Rees that La Villemarqué (for reasons possibly explained in Letter XXVI) was keen to have his name added prominently to Guest’s publication. For the current scholarly thinking on all three of the Welsh ‘romance’ texts translated by Guest see the relevant essays in Ceridwen Lloyd-Morgan and Erich Poppe (eds), *Arthur in the Celtic Languages: The Arthurian Legend in Celtic Literatures and Traditions*, Arthurian Literature in the Middle Ages (Cardiff, 2019).

You promised Lady Hall that you would furnish some account of 'Llandaff' in Brittany, to be inserted in the Liber Landavensis,³¹⁹ which my Brother has promised to be its editor; if you have not already written the information and given it to Lady Hall, my Brother would feel much obliged by your sending it her before you leave this country together with any other information connected with the subject & he will feel great pleasure in acknowledging the source from whence the information was derived in the Work when printed.

Can you inform me whether the S^t Graal in France has ever been published & if so the size & price of the work & where it can be obtained?

By so doing and returning me the Proof through Guard of the mail coach & not the Post you would greatly oblige, your most obedient servant

Will^m Rees

³¹⁹ *Liber Landavensis*, or the book of Llandaff, is a 12th-century compendium of documents relating to the diocese of Llandaff near Cardiff. When William's brother Rice Rees died in 1839, his uncle William Jenkins Rees took on the edition, which was published in 1840 for the Welsh Manuscripts Society. By 'Llandaff' in Brittany Rees may mean Landevennec, a powerful monastery in Brittany from at least the 9th century.

Lettre XXIV

De Théodore Hersart de la Villemarqué à sa soeur Camille du Jégou du Laz³²⁰

Pont-y-Pool chez le Lord Lieutenant

Le 22 janvier 1839

(A vous seule)

Vous me disiez ma chère Camille : « si elle est riche, jolie et bonne, ne la laissez pas échapper. » Vous en souvenez vous ? et vous me parliez selon votre cœur. Hé bien votre cœur avait tort de me parler ainsi, très grand tort ; mais ce n'est pas moi qui vous en blâmerais ; je serais coupable moi même. – voici des paroles qui vous paraîtront bien obscures et peut être bien étonnantes. que voulez vous ? Quand la seule personne qui me semble avant toutes mériter ma confiance ne la justifie qu'à demi et n'y répond que durement, je dois m'ouvrir à l'une de celles qui en sont les plus dignes, après qui, si elles n'approuvent pas mes idées les comprendront du moins, qui réfléchiront qu'à vingt ans on ne sent pas comme à cinquante et que les blessures du cœur alors même qu'elles sont sur le point de se fermer demandent une main douce et tendre : la main d'un père, d'un ami, ou d'une sœur. La première ne l'a pas été et la seconde me manque ; la troisième m'est bien connue, c'est pourquoi j'ai recours à elle. –

Quelle charmante campagne que Singleton ! un parc de trois milles de tour, avec des pièces d'eau, des bosquets d'arbres verts et des cabanes rustiques ; un château dans le goût du XVIe siècle, avec des tourelles ; au devant, sur la plate-forme, trois pièces de canon, tout autour des terrasses couvertes de fleurs, en face, à peu de distance une baie aussi belle que celle de Naples et où l'on voit quelques vaisseaux à l'ancre. Pour horizon les grandes

³²⁰ Archives La Villemarqué LV 02.033. Cachets postaux: Abergavenny, 21 Jan 1839; London, 23 Jan 1839; Quimperlé, 27 Jan 1839.

montagnes du Glamorgan ; pour voisinage la ville de Swansea (la mer du Cygne) – retenez cette étymologie. – la plus grande ville du Pays de Galles dont la société est charmante ; enfin un air pur, un ciel doux, même en hiver, – le paradis des Cambriens, comme les bardes appelaient cette partie du Comté. – L’intérieur des châteaux répond à l’extérieur. Vous entrez et vous êtes salué en entrant par un chevalier qui veille sous les armes ; vous traversez un premier vestibule orné d’antiques trophées de guerre, puis un second, où il y a des statues de marbre des meilleurs maîtres d’Italie, des tableaux de Corregio, [de Comarosa],³²¹ de Paul Véronèse et de plusieurs autres grands peintres ; enfin la salle s’ouvre, et tout ce que vous pouvez imaginer de plus somptueux, de plus élégant, du meilleur goût : – des sofas de satin verts à fleurs, des fauteuils de même, des meubles en bois des îles, une table en acajou, et sur cette table des éditions de luxe, des gravures, des ouvrages d’ivoire, de porcelaine de Sèvres, un vase de marbre blanc où des colombes boivent, des glaces peintes et dorées comme les glaces chinoises ; contigüe à la salle, dont elle n’est séparée que par une porte vitrée, une serre pleine de plantes rares qui fleurissent en toute saison et dont la glace de la cheminée reproduisent l’effet délicieux, sans parler des tapis de prix qui couvrent le parquet, des draperies, des tentures, des rideaux de satin, de la même couleur que les fauteuils ; au fond de la salle se trouve un piano et une harpe. Une femme d’environ quarante ans était assise près du piano, belle encore, non plus comme l’est la jeunesse, mais comme l’est une mère. Deux petites filles montées sur des chaises avaient les bras passés autour de son cou. Elle souriait courbée sous ce charmant fardeau, comme un oranger sous le poids de ses fruits ; un troisième enfant, un petit garçon de cinq ans, le menton dans la main s’accoudait nonchalamment sur ses genoux, dans l’attitude où Le Titien en un de ses tableaux a représenté le petit Jean-Baptiste ; une jeune fille qui jouait de la harpe, et que nous venions d’entendre en traversant le vestibule, s’était arrêtée et semblait en extase devant ce ravissant spectacle. – je ne pus d’abord cachée à demi qu’elle était son visage par les boucles de ses cheveux et les cordes de sa harpe, distinguer parfaitement ses traits et, du reste, sa mère et ses petits frères fixèrent un premier moment mes regards. – Une heure après ou deux, puis au bal je la revis, et pus la juger. Sans être parfaitement belle, elle a une taille élégante, des traits charmants et surtout un ~~expression~~ jeu de physionomie d’une douceur aussi maligne que son âme. Le lendemain, je la revis, sans être parée et cependant, quoiqu’avec une autre expression, non moins séduisante que la veille, je l’ai revue ainsi huit jours, et chaque jour,

³²¹ Lecture incertaine.

son âme vraiment belle s'est révélée de plus en plus à moi. – Je ne vous dirai pas le reste. – Oh ! oui c'est bien le Cygne de la mer. –

J'ai quitté Swansea ; j'ai écrit à papa ; je lui ai tout dit ; je lui ai demandé conseil. – La fortune du père est immense ; il est membre du parlement ; il appartient à une ancienne famille bretonne, de la Cornouaille anglaise ; la fille est l'ainée ; elle a un frère, mais son père l'adore ; elle est l'enfant chérie. Elle sera très riche : – d'obstacle il n'y en avait qu'un, que vous devinez – aurait-on pu le vaincre ? – Je n'en sais rien. Mais c'était à examiner. (*)

(*) Après une seconde lettre écrite en Bretagne sur le même sujet, et d'après de nouvelles informations, je l'eusse fait. Cela n'a pas même été jugé digne d'examen, aussi je n'ai pas examiné, je n'examinerai pas, c'est une affaire finie. Je me soumetts. Mais il y aura à cause de ceci, ~~deux êtres~~ deux âmes bien malheureuses en ce monde et peut être dans l'autre ! – la blessure saigne encore. Je n'y veux plus toucher. – Mais je veux vous conter une légende que j'ai recueillie ici dans la campagne.

Il y avait un jeune prince breton qui aimait une princesse galloise, et qui aurait voulu l'épouser ; mais cette princesse avait été changée en cygne, et devait rester cygne jusqu'au moment où le son de la première cloche chrétienne eût annoncé au monde la venue du messie. Or, la cloche n'a sonné que bien longtemps après leur mort. – On dit qu'autrefois, la nuit, on voyait le cygne flotter dans la baie de Swansea, et qu'il lui a donné son nom. – Voilà de la poésie, cependant j'ai le cœur navré. – Que vous dirais-je que vous ne devinez ? – Vous parlerai-je maintenant d'autre chose ? Du bal costumé de Swansea, ou Miss Bethsy était si belle, et où je dansais avec elle dans mon habit de Breton ? De celui du château de Duffren où nous dansâmes ensemble encore, où j'oubliais et les autres femmes et les décorations charmantes de la salle, et le vieux barde même à longue barbe blanche, qui jouait de la harpe dans une grotte de feuillage au fond de la serre illuminée, et tout, autour de moi, pour ne penser qu'à elle. A elle que Dieu m'a fait trouver pour mon bonheur et ma perte, à elle que j'aime, d'un amour sans bornes et qui en est digne, et que j'ai juré de ne l'oublier jamais. Oh ! non je ne crains pas de vous ouvrir mon cœur, à vous, je ne crains pas que vous me répondiez durement, car vous m'aimez comme je vous aime, et vous savez comment est fait mon pauvre cœur.

J'avais besoin de distractions. Je suis venu ici, où je suis comme un enfant de la maison. Dans une lettre que je vous écrivais, je riais un peu des bontés que la femme du Lord Lieutenant a pour moi. J'étais un ingrat ; il est vrai que je ne la connaissais pas assez. Oh !

comme elles sont rares les femmes qui lui ressemblent, qui s'oublie pour penser à vous, qui vous comblent, qui vous fatiguent de soins, d'attentions et de prévenances. Elle a invité pour moi tout ce qu'il y a de femmes aimables ou jolies dans le canton ; elle me fait savoir par son propre valet de chambre, l'envoyait souvent savoir si je n'avais besoin de rien, me porter le soir, pour le matin, toutes sortes de friandises – que sais-je ? Quand elle promène, c'est toujours moi qu'elle place auprès d'elle, dans sa voiture attelée de quatre chevaux. Partout elle me fait les honneurs. Enfin à mon départ, il faudra que je lui promette, elle le veut, de revenir passer chez elle autant de temps que je voudrai, lorsque je serai en Bretagne, d'emmener même, avec moi un de mes amis, si je le veux, et qu'elle me promènera elle-même dans le nord du pays de Galles, et ce ne sont point des paroles en l'air ; elle m'affectionne singulièrement et m'appelle « son fils ! » elle me dit souvent : je veux que vous ayez ici deux mères ; madame Jones, mon amie, et moi ! et c'est la femme du Lord Lieutenant du Comté qui me parle ainsi ; une femme qui est la plus haut placée en ce pays, et qui a un million de revenu. Qu'ai-je fait pour mériter tout cela. Je me le demande souvent ; je n'ai été que poli ; le premier soir que je la vis, elle témoigna un léger désir de voir mon costume breton et je courus le revêtir. – Je ne vous dirai rien de Miss Madoc ; vous savez ? dont je vous parlais. Je n'y puis plus penser.

Adieu ; je vous embrasse et je vous aime. Ne montrez cette lettre à personne ; j'y compte en vous écrivant.

Je pars pour Londres (le 23), d'où je descendrai à Paris. A partir du mois prochain mon adresse à Londres sera 48 Duke Street (St James). Tout à vous

Th. De la Villemarqué

Faites mes amitiés à ce bon Missery quand vous lui écrirez. Son souvenir est un de ceux qui me sont le plus chers, et je ne me souviens jamais sans plaisir des heures que nous passions à rêver ensemble, au brun de la nuit, au coin du feu – Nous parlions de vous bien souvent, toujours pour témoigner, l'un et l'autre notre parfaite admiration.

Letter XXIII

Théodore Hersart de la Villemarqué to his sister Camille Jégou du Laz³²²

Pont-y-Pool at the Lord Lieutenant's house

22 January 1839

(For you alone)

You said to me, my dear Camille, ‘if she is rich, pretty and good-natured, do not let her escape’. Do you remember? And you wrote from the heart. Well your heart was wrong to tell me such things, very wrong; but I am not the person to blame you for that, since I am myself equally guilty – these words will all seem very mysterious to you and perhaps astonish you too. But what can I do? When the only person whom I felt deserved my trust above all others hardly seems to merit it and answers me harshly, I must share my feelings with someone who does deserve it and who will, if they do not entirely condone my thoughts, at least understand them, who will realize that one feels things very differently at twenty than at fifty, and that wounded hearts, even as they are healing, require a gentle and tender touch: the touch of a father, a friend or a sister. The first has failed me, the second is lacking; the third is well-known to me, and that is why I now turn to her.

Singleton is such a delightful spot! a park three miles round, with lakes and ponds, clusters of green trees and rustic cabins; a turreted castle in the style of the 16th century with three cannons on the pavement out front; terraces everywhere covered with flowers and a view across a bay as beautiful as that of Naples, with various vessels at anchor.³²³ The horizon is bounded by the great hills of Glamorgan, and just below is the town of Swansea (the sea of the Swan – keep that etymology in mind) – which is the largest town in Wales and full of

³²² Archives La Villemarqué LV 02.033. Postmarks: Abergavenny, 21 Jan 1839; London, 23 Jan 1839; Quimperlé, 27 Jan 1839. La Villemarqué is writing from the Hanbury-Leighs' residence, Park House, Pontypool. For Molly Anne Hanbury-Leigh see Letter XIV.

³²³ At the time of La Villemarqué's visit the Vivians' mansion at Singleton had recently undergone a fifteen-year transformation from a small neo-Classical villa to an elaborate neo-Gothic abbey. See Newman, *The Buildings of Wales: Gwent/Monmouthshire*, 596–600; and for a view of the building: <https://www.peoplescollection.wales/items/22069>

delightful society; finally, pure air, gentle skies, even in winter, – a Cambrian paradise, as the bards once called this part of the county. – The interior of the castle quite matches the exterior. On entering, you are greeted by knight who mounts guard; you pass through the first hallway, decorated with ancient trophies of war; then a second, where there are marble statues made by the finest Italian masters, and paintings by Correggio, [...] Paul Veronese and many other great artists;³²⁴ then the room opens out, with everything imaginable in the most sumptuous, the most elegant, the best possible taste: – sofas of green satin picked out with flowers, armchairs in the same material, furniture made of exotic wood, a mahogany table covered in beautiful books, engravings, carved ivories, Sèvres china, a white marble vase with drinking doves, mirrors painted and gilded in the Chinese manner; next to this room, and separated only by a glass door, is a glasshouse full of rare plants which flower all year round – the whole effect is wonderfully reflected in the mirror over the mantelpiece, not to mention the expensive rugs covering the parquet, drapes and hangings, and curtains of satin to match the chairs. At the far end of this room stands a piano, with a harp. A woman of about forty was sitting by the piano, still lovely, not with the beauty of youth, but of motherhood.³²⁵ Two little girls on chairs had their arms around her neck. She smiled, bending under this delightful weight, like an orange tree weighed down with fruit; a third child, a little boy about five years old, sat in her lap with his chin in his hand, in the same pose as Titian has the infant John the Baptist in one of his paintings; a young girl who was playing the harp, and whom we had heard as we crossed the hall, had ceased playing and seemed transfixed by this beautiful scene. I could not at first make out her features, as her face was hidden by her curls and by the strings of her harp; and besides, her mother and her little siblings had all my attention at first – An hour or so later, and then at the ball, I saw her again, and could form a judgement. Though not classically beautiful, she has an elegant figure, lovely features and above a play of expressions as gentle and as shrewd as her soul. I saw her again the following day, without all her finery and expressive in a different way, yet just as entrancing as she had been the day before, I saw her for eight consecutive days, and each day her truly beautiful soul revealed itself to me a little more. – I will not tell you the rest – Oh! She really is the Swan of the Sea.

I left Swansea; I wrote to papa; I told him everything; I begged for his advice. – The father's fortune is vast; he is an M.P; he comes from an old Breton family, from the English

³²⁴ Antonio da Correggio (1489–1534) was of the Renaissance Parma school; Paolo Veronese (1528–1588) was admired for his large history paintings. The middle name (?Comarosa?) is difficult to decipher and we can find no likely candidates.

³²⁵ Sarah Vivian (née Jones) married John Henry in 1816; they would have eight children.

Cornwall;³²⁶ this girl is the eldest child; she has a brother but her father adores her; she is the favourite. She will be very rich: – there could be no obstacle but one, which you will guess³²⁷ – could it have been overcome? I don't know, but it would have been worth consideration.(*)

(*) Had I³²⁸ had another letter in Brittany on the subject, with more information, I would have done so. But it was not even judged worthy of consideration, so I have not considered it, I will not consider it, the matter is closed. I obey. Yet there will be, as a result, two deeply unhappy beings souls in this world and perhaps the next! – the wound still bleeds. I do not want to touch it. – But I will tell you a story which I collected in the countryside out here.

There was once a young Breton prince who loved a Welsh princess, and who wished to marry her; but this princess had been transformed into a swan, and was fated to remain a swan until the ringing of the first Christian bell announced the coming of the Messiah. But that bell did not ring until long after both of them had died. – They say that in the old days, at night, the swan could be seen swimming in the bay at Swansea, and that she gave the place its name. – There's poetry for you, but my heart is in shreds – What else can I tell you that you could not guess at? Shall I talk of other things? Of the masked ball at Swansea, where Miss Bethsy [sic] was so beautiful, and where I danced with her in my Breton costume? Of the ball at the chateau in Duffren where we danced together again, where I was oblivious to all the other women, and to the fine decorations, and even to the old white-bearded bard who played the harp in a leafy grotto at the far end of the glass-house – to everything around me, thinking only of her. Of her, whom God allowed me to find, to my joy, and lose; of her whom I love with an unbounded love and who is in every way worthy; whom I have vowed never to forget. Oh! I am not afraid to open my heart to *you*; I am not afraid that *you* will reply harshly, for you love me as I love you, and you understand the workings of my poor heart.³²⁹

I needed distraction. I have come here, where I am treated like family. In a letter I wrote to you I made fun of the fuss the Lord Lieutenant's wife was making of me.³³⁰ It was ungrateful of me; the truth is, I did not know her well enough. Oh! Women like her are very hard to find;

³²⁶ John Vivian (1750–1826) moved from Truro in Cornwall and became a managing partner in the Swansea copperworks; his son, John Henry Vivian (1785–1855), the father of Elizabeth Sarah ('Miss Betsy') greatly expanded the business, became an M.P., and made a lasting impact on the economy and landscape of Swansea. See Hughes, *Copperopolis: Landscapes of the early Industrial period in Swansea*, (RCAHMW, 2005), 221–24.

³²⁷ The Vivians were not Catholic.

³²⁸ The sense here is presumably: 'Had I, *in my father's position*, received a second letter on the subject...'

³²⁹ Neither died of grief nor remained celibate for long. In 1840 Elizabeth Sarah ('Miss Betsy') married the Scottish M.P. William Gibson-Craig (1797–1878); they would have six children. In 1846 La Villemarqué would marry Sébastienne-Marie-Anne-Clémence Tarbé des Sablons (1827–1870), and they would have four children.

³³⁰ See Letter XIV.

who forget themselves in thinking of you, who seek to please you and overwhelm you with their care, their kindness and thoughtfulness. She has invited all the nicest and prettiest girls in the area over for my sake; she sent her own personal servant over several times to see if there was anything I needed, or to bring me in the evening all sorts of delicacies for the morning – what can I say! When she goes out, I am always placed next to her in her four-horse carriage. She makes sure that I am honoured wherever we go. And when I leave, she insists, that I must promise to come back and spend as much time as I like with her, and when I am back in Brittany she will even fetch me, and a friend, if I like, to take a tour with her in north Wales; and none of this is just empty talk, she is extremely fond of me and calls me ‘her son!’. She often says to me: while you are over here, you have *two* mothers, my friend Madame Jones and myself! This from the wife of the Lord Lieutenant, one of the most highly regarded in this country, and with a million a year! What have I done to deserve all this? I ask myself frequently. I was simply polite; the first evening I met her she expressed a mild desire to see my Breton costume, and I rushed off to put it on. – I will say no more about Miss Madoc; you know, the one I told you about.³³¹ I cannot bear to think about it.

Adieu; with all my love. Don’t show anyone this letter; I write this knowing that you won’t.

I leave for London on the 23rd, and from there will make my way to Paris. From next month my address will be 48 Duke Street (St James)

Yours as ever,

Th. De la Villemarqué

Please give Missery³³² my best when you next write to him. My memories of him are among those I treasure most, and I will never think without pleasure of the hours we have spent together dreaming at twilight by the fireside – we would often speak of you – always to express our complete admiration.

³³¹ Unidentified, but possibly the girl mentioned in Letter XIV.

³³² Edmé Suremain de Missery (1806–1896), a friend of the family.

Letter XXV

William Rees to Théodore Hersart de La Villemarqué³³³

Llandovery, Jan. 23 1839

Sir

Yesterday morning I sent a proof of the *Chevalier au Lion* addressed to you at Llanarth which I hope has been received. Since I wrote the letter which accompanied the proof, I have thought not a little respecting the words ‘published by the C^{te} Vi’ at the end of the *Chevalier* & have arrived at the conclusion that it would be far better your not inserting your name in any way at the end of the work, otherwise you would make yourself responsible for all the errata you say are contained therein.

It has already been stated in the preface that you furnished the transcript from which the French had been printed, which statement does not in any manner implicate you respecting the accuracy or inaccuracy of the printed work, therefore it would be worse than useless your having the words, alluded to above, placed at the end of the work, as such a course would be so entirely unusual & so much at variance with all established customs in this Country; besides which your reputation which now stands so high, might possibly be injured by your taking upon yourself the responsibility of the work, which otherwise would rest with others.

Trusting that you will perceive the correctness of my views, in omitting the words

I remain

Sir,

³³³ Archives La Villemarqué LV 27.036. Addressed to: ‘Mons Le Comte De la Villemarqué Capel Hanbury Leigh Esq Pontypool Park Pontypool’. Postmark: Llandovery 24 Jan 1839. For William Rees, printer and editor, see Letter V above. This letter continues the debate about how La Villemarqué’s assistance with the French text of the *Le Chevalier au Lion* should be formally acknowledged in Charlotte Guest’s published volume.

Your most obedient servant

Will^m Rees

P. S. The revised Proof had better be returned me by Post, there is not any necessity of your returning the 1st proof – the Revise alone being sufficient.

Letter XXVI

William Rees to Théodore Hersart de La Villemarqué³³⁴

Llandovery, Feb 4th 1839

Sir

I communicated the substance of your last letters to Lady Charlotte Guest & last night I received the following reply: ‘I regret exceedingly that my having been very much engaged this week and somewhat indisposed, has occasioned your not receiving an earlier reply to your letter. – I can now only say that of course I cannot consent to any one’s name being introduced into the body of a work entirely published by myself and at my sole risk & expense such a course you are well aware would be contrary to all established customs and opinions in this country. As for the note concerning the errors of the press of the 1st part of the Chevalier au Lion, I have written one myself which cannot fail to be agreeable to the Comte De la Villemarqué and which I shall insert in its proper place.’

Trusting the above will prove satisfactory & that you will coincide with her Ladyship’s opinion.

I remain

Sir

Your most obedient servant

Will^m Rees

³³⁴ Archives La Villemarqué LV 27.017. No postmarks. The letter is addressed to ‘Le Comte De la Villemarqué 48 Duke Street St James London’. La Villemarqué has added a note to the page with the address ‘I had replied to the bookseller [Rees] that I was obliged as a student of the École des Chartes to have my name placed at the end of the Chev. au Lion and my note.’

Letter XXVII

Augusta Hall to John Jones (Tegid)³³⁵

Monday [5 Feb 1839]

My dear Sir,

The Count de la V. Marqué actually went to meet the Coach on his road to Oxford from here yesterday. I therefore suppose you will see him there. He is to be at Jesus Coll with the Principal (as he understands from M^{rs} Leigh) from whom I believe he takes a letter of introduction. What sort of Man is this Principal?³³⁶ Pray stir V.M. up not to fritter away his time but to pursue one object steadily & above all not to think that he can write a History of Wales with^t moveing from his chair at Llanarth or PontyPool. He has great talents, good feelings – a real sincerity in the cause – his Fault is unsteadiness of purpose – when surrounded by people who care nothing about his objects – especially when those persons are ladies – he never stops to enquire whether their advice is good or bad – or whether his time will be lost or not by following their directions – there in the multitude of his friends he is ruined by well meaning – but ill-judged kindness.

Please to deliver enclosed which arrived from Rees last night for the Count: as I am afraid to direct to Jesus Coll till I know he is there.

Truly yrs,

Aug: Hall.

³³⁵ Archives La Villemarqué LV 27.041. Addressed to ‘Revd J Jones (Tegid) Ch.Ch. Oxford’. Additional notes: ‘Abergavenny Feb^{ry} five 1839. A.Hall’. Postmark: Abergavenny Feb 5 1839.

³³⁶ For Dr Henry Foulkes, Principal of Jesus College, see Letter XXVIII.

Lettre XXVIII

**De Théodore Hersart de la Villemarqué à son père Pierre Hersart de La
Villemarqué³³⁷**

Oxford, 9 février 1939

Je profite pour vous écrire d'un moment libre, mon cher papa, car je n'ai pas un instant à moi ; j'ai des Mss à consulter & à dépouiller, je n'ai que peu de jours à passer ici et n'ai pas un moment à perdre.

J'habite chez le Rev. M^{re} Foulkes, directeur du collège gallois, un vénérable et bon vieillard qui est pour moi plein d'attention. Le lord Lieutenant ou plutôt sa femme lui avait écrit pour qu'il m'engageât à loger chez lui. Ce qu'il a fait ; comme je descendais de la voiture publique je l'ai trouvé qui m'attendait. le soir il a donné en mon honneur un grand diner auquel il a engagé les savants les plus distingués d'oxford, ceux surtout dont les travaux ont le plus de rapport avec les miens. le lendemain, j'ai encore diné en grande et savante compagnie, chez le docteur Davies proviseur de ce collège ; Samedi, je dine, au collège de l'université avec tous les professeurs & directeurs. Je trouverai le fameux professeur Wilson, que je me fais fête de connaître. comme vous voyez on me traite en prince. C'est cette excellente M^{me} Leigh, la femme du Lord lieutenant du comté de monmouth qui me vaut tout cela ; elle a écrit pour m'annoncer, dix lettres, toutes plus flatteuses les unes que les autres. Je n'ai jamais vu une telle bonté, elle l'a poussée envers moi au-delà de toute expression. non contente de me donner pour Londres des lettres de recommandation pour plusieurs personnes, et pour Cheltenham, ou j'ai couché l'autre jour chez le d^e Baron, et pour ici enfin, et mille adresses, et mille notes par écrit sur ma route, et mille conseils, vraiment maternels sur tout ce que j'avais à faire, craignant malgré tout cela que je n'éprouve des embarras en voyage, elle a profité de mon départ pour envoyer à Londres, dans sa famille, une de ses demoiselles de compagnie, qui doit rester ici jusqu'à mon départ pour Londres, et partir dans la même voiture que moi. je pensais d'abord qu'elle m'eut beaucoup gêné, j'ai vu au contraire qu'elle m'a été

³³⁷ Archives La Villemarqué LV 02.031. Adressée à « France MonsieurDe la Villemarqué à Kemperlé Bretagne Finistère ». Cachets postaux : London, 12 Feb 1839; Angl. Calais, 14 Feb 1839; Paris, 14 Feb 1839.

fort utile. Elle pourra même me l'être à Londres car voilà m^f Rio, qui y était qui en revient, malade et renonçant, pour le moment à son voyage de Paris, si bien que je m'y trouverai seul. heureusement, il m'a retenu une chambre, chez de braves gens, dans la même maison qu'il habitait, et j'y serai bien. – Je quitterai Londres le 17, pour me rendre à Paris. Il m'écrit à l'instant qu'il reste déterminé à rester encore quelques temps.

Cet Oxford est une singulière ville ; elle a vingt quatre collèges. on ne rencontre dans les rues que des étudiants, en robe noire et en toques ; on vit comme dans une atmosphère de science. on vit comme au moyen âge. les édifices où ils habitent datent de cette époque, et leurs cours immenses, leurs cloîtres, leurs parcs plantés d'arbres séculaires, aussi bien que les costumes de la population d'écoliers de cette ville.

Chacun a sa chambre, en son collège, d'où il sort quand bon lui semble, mais où il est obligé d'être rentré au moment où le beffroi du collège du Christ sonne son cent-unième coup, (nombre juste de ses écoliers, précisément 9 H. du soir, sous peine de pensum. tous sont de grands jeunes gens ; j'ai visité plusieurs de leurs établissements ; leurs réfectoires sont ornés des portraits de tous les grands hommes, qui y ont autrefois diné. celui du collège du Christ m'a surtout frappé par son antiquité ; c'est le même qu'au XIII^e siècle ; rien n'y a été changé ; les décorations sont restées les mêmes. Seulement de nouveaux portraits couvrent les boiseries ; parmi ceux-ci j'ai remarqué celui de Canning les fils des Lords, mangent à une table plus élevée que les autres au fond de l'appartement, les maîtres plus bas, et enfin les autres élèves. ici l'aristocratie règne [sur]³³⁸ tout même au collège ; personne ne s'en choque pourtant. Ces réfectoires sont éclairés par des fenêtres à vitraux coloriés, comme celles de la chambre d'où je vous écris cette lettre ; ils ont plusieurs cheminées, tout y est d'une propreté charmante, et même confortable. – je reçois en ce moment une invitation à dîner chez m^f Breek. c'est un des gentilshommes les plus distingués d'oxford, ami de Louis XVIII, et de m^m de la Rochejaquelin, un vieux jacobite, plein de feu encore, de cœur et d'enthousiasme pour tout ce qui est beau et bien. Je l'ai vu hier, il m'a charmé. Camille se trompait, comme vous le voyez en me supposant à Londres depuis le 23. c'est ici où votre lettre du 2 février m'est venu trouver. vous avez dû en recevoir une de moi du 28. – adieu, mes respects à maman & à vous.

Th. de la villemarqué

³³⁸ Manque.

On m'a fait l'honneur de me recevoir au nombre des membres [de la]³³⁹ Société généalogique et héraldique d'oxford. bien des honneurs comme vous voyez.

Londres le 12. j'arrive et avant de jeter ma lettre à la poste j'y mets un mot de la part de m^e Rio. votre lettre l'a désappointé [sic]. il désirerait savoir si les anglais de Kerbastide consentiraient à louer pour un bon prix leur maison pendant 6 mois d'été ? je quitterai Londres le 25 de ce mois – M^e Rio avec qui j'habite a loué pour 15 jours. il ne se rendra pas en Bretagne avant l'été.

M^e Sebastiany que je viens de voir me présentera le 20 à la reine

³³⁹ Manque dû à une déchirure de la feuille.

Letter XXVIII

Théodore Hersart de la Villemarqué to his father Pierre Hersart de La Villemarqué³⁴⁰

Oxford, 9 February 1839

I am making the most of a free moment to write to you, my dear Papa, for I scarcely have a minute to myself; I have manuscripts to consult and study, and with only a few days here I have no time to lose.

I am staying with the Reverend Mr Foulkes, Principal of the Welsh college, an esteemed and good-hearted old man who has been very kind to me.³⁴¹ The Lord Lieutenant or rather his wife wrote to ask if I might stay with him. And he agreed; as I climbed out of the coach there he was waiting for me. That evening he held a grand dinner in my honour, and invited all the most distinguished scholars in Oxford, especially those whose works were most relevant to my own. The next day I dined again in fine and learned company, with Dr Davies, Senior Fellow of this college;³⁴² Saturday I dine at University College with all the professors and masters. I will meet the famous Professor Wilson, whose acquaintance I will be delighted to make.³⁴³ As you can see, I am being treated like a prince. And it is all thanks to the excellent Madame Leigh, the wife of the Lord Lieutenant of the county of Monmouth; she wrote letters of introduction, ten of them, each one more flattering than the last. Never have I witnessed such generosity; in my case, she has taken it to extremes.³⁴⁴ Not content with writing letters of recommendation for me to several people in London, and Cheltenham, where I stayed overnight with Dr Baron,³⁴⁵ and also for here; and thousands of addresses and handwritten

³⁴⁰ Archives La Villemarqué LV 02.031. Addressed to ‘France Monsieur De la Villemarqué à Kemperlé Bretagne Finistère’. Postmarks: London, 12 Feb 1839; Angl. Calais, 14 Feb 1839; Paris, 14 Feb 1839.

³⁴¹ Henry Foulkes (1773–1857) was the longest-serving Principal of Jesus College, Oxford, holding the position from 1817 until his death.

³⁴² This may be the Rev. Thomas Davies (1780–1844), designated in his obituary in the *Annual Register* (1844) as Senior Fellow and Bursar. La Villemarqué’s ‘proviseur’ could cover a variety of senior positions.

³⁴³ Horace Hayman Wilson (1786–1860) was elected as the first Boden Professor of Sanskrit at Oxford in 1832.

³⁴⁴ One of these lists of addresses, with Mrs Hanbury-Leigh’s solicitous notes, is transcribed below.

³⁴⁵ Dr John Baron (1786–1851) was a physician of Scottish origin who lived and worked in the Gloucester area. An advocate of Edward Jenner’s theories of vaccination, he published a biography of Jenner in 1838.

notes on my itinerary, and truly maternal advice about all the things I had to do; and worrying, in spite of all this, that I might encounter difficulties en route, she took advantage of my departure to send one of her lady companions over to her family in London, and she will be here with me until I leave for London and will take the same coach as me. I thought at first that she might be rather a nuisance; I find in fact she has been extremely useful. She may well be so in London too because I have just heard that M Rio, who was there is coming home ill and giving up the idea of travelling to Paris – which means that I'll be there on my own. Fortunately, he has fixed up a room for me with some decent people in the house where he was staying, and I will be fine. He has just written to tell me that he has decided to stay for a good while yet. Oxford is a curious town; it has twenty-four colleges. The only people you see in the streets are students, dressed in black gowns and caps; everyone lives and breathes learning. They live as though in the Middle Ages. Their accommodation all dates from that period, as do their great courtyards and cloisters, their grounds planted with ancient trees, and the costumes of the town's population of students.

Each student has his own room in college, which he may leave whenever he likes, but to which he must return the moment that Christ's college bell strikes one hundred and one (the exact number of students) at precisely nine o'clock at night, or else he must pay a fine. They are all splendid young people; I have visited several of their establishments; their refectories are embellished with portraits of all the great men who have dined there in the past. The hall at Christ's made a particular impression on me; nothing had changed there since the thirteenth century, all the decorations were the same, except that new portraits cover the panelling. Amongst them I noticed that of Canning.³⁴⁶

The sons of Lords eat at a table raised higher than the others at the far end of the dining hall, the lecturers are below them, and then the other students. Aristocracy reigns supreme even in the colleges; no-one seems shocked by this. The refectories are lit by stained glass windows, as is this bedroom from which I write to you now; they have several fireplaces, everything is very clean and indeed quite comfortable. – I have just this moment received an invitation to dine with Mr [Breek].³⁴⁷ He is one of the most distinguished gentlemen in

³⁴⁶ George Canning (1770–1827) was a Tory politician who became Britain's shortest serving Prime Minister, dying four months after taking office in April 1827. The portrait was acquired by Christ Church College in 1810.

³⁴⁷ Unidentified; reading uncertain.

Oxford, a friend of Louis XVIII, and of Mme de la Rochejaquelin,³⁴⁸ an elderly Jacobite, full of fire and passion and enthusiasm for everything that is good and beautiful. I met him yesterday and was completely charmed. Camille was wrong, as you can see, in thinking I would be in London from the 23rd. Your letter from 2nd February reached me here. You should have received one from me from the 28th.

Adieu, my respects to Maman and to yourself,

Th. de la Villemarqué

I have been honoured with admission as a Member [of the]³⁴⁹ Genealogical and Heraldic Society of Oxford.³⁵⁰ So many honours as you can see.

London the 12th. Have just arrived and before posting this letter am adding a word on behalf of Mr Rio. Your letter disappointed him. He wishes to know if the English people at Kerbastide³⁵¹ might agree to rent their house for a good price for six months over the summer? I will leave London on the 25th of this month – Mr Rio with whom I am staying has rented the place for a fortnight. He won't be in Brittany before the summer.

Mr Sebastiany whom I have just met will present me to the Queen on the 20th.³⁵²

³⁴⁸ Marie Louise Victoire de Donnissan, Marquise de La Rochejacquelin (1772–1857) was the author of a vivid memoir describing her sufferings in the Royalist cause during the wars of the Vendée.

³⁴⁹ Missing due to a tear in the page.

³⁵⁰ The Oxford University Genealogical and Heraldic Society had been established in 1835; by 1839 it had over sixty members and also dealt with archaeological matters.

³⁵¹ Perhaps Kerbastic en Guidel (Morbihan), the property of Jules Auguste Armand Marie de Polignac (1780–1847) ambassador to London 1823–29, and subsequently Minister for Foreign Affairs.

³⁵² Horace François Bastien Sébastiani de La Porta (1771–1851) was French Ambassador to the United Kingdom from 1835–1840.

Molly Hanbury Leigh: A List of Addresses in London³⁵³

Sir John and Lady Charlotte Guest, No 13, Grosvenor Square, London.

Count Sebastiani, French Ambassador, No 20, Manchester Square, London.

Mr & Mrs Vivian, No 24, St James's Place, London.

Sir Benjamin & Lady Hall, No 65, Wimpole Street, Cavendish Square, London.

Mr & Mrs Taddy, No 4, Old Palace Yard, Westminster, London.³⁵⁴

Sir John & Lady Edwards³⁵⁵: Enquire for Sir John Edwards M.P. for Montgomeryshire Boroughs at the House of Commons, because he does not always take the same House to reside in every year. You can hear where he now lives at the House of Commons.

Mr W. Adams Williams, M.P. for Monmouthshire.³⁵⁶

Mr & Mrs Gurney, No 9, St James's Square, London.³⁵⁷

Lord & Lady Sudeley, No 35 Dover Street, Piccadilly, London.³⁵⁸

Ask M. Rio to introduce you to the Marquis of Lansdowne.³⁵⁹ – also to his friend Mr Mills,³⁶⁰ and to Lord Holland,³⁶¹ and to Mr Rogers³⁶² and to Mrs Norton³⁶³

³⁵³ Archives La Villemarqué 27.031. This is not an enclosure but a separate list in the hand of Molly Hanbury-Leigh, included here to illustrate the useful connections mentioned by La Villemarqué to his father in the letter above. It is folded into a small booklet; the order of pages has been slightly rearranged in this transcription to make better sense.

³⁵⁴ William Taddy was appointed King's Serjeant-at-law in 1827; he died in March 1845.

³⁵⁵ Sir John Edwards of Garth (1770–1850), was M.P. for Montgomery 1833–1841.

³⁵⁶ William Addams Williams (1787–1861), landowner and politician, served as M.P. for Monmouthshire 1831–1841.

³⁵⁷ Hudson Gurney (1775–1864), from Norwich, was a politician and a Fellow of the Royal Society and of the Society of Antiquaries. He married Margaret Barclay in 1809.

³⁵⁸ Charles Hanbury-Tracy (1778–1858), was the brother of Molly's husband, Capel Hanbury-Leigh of Pontypool. He inherited Toddington Manor, Gloucester, after his marriage to his cousin Henrietta Susanna Tracy in 1798, and became Baron Sudeley in 1838.

³⁵⁹ Henry Petty-Fitzmaurice, 3rd Marquis of Lansdowne (1780–1863) was a highly influential Whig politician and a champion of Catholic emancipation. From 1830–1841 he served as Lord President of the Council.

³⁶⁰ Unidentified.

³⁶¹ Henry Vassal Fox, 3rd Baron Holland (1773–1840), was a Whig politician who held the role of Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster between 1835 and 1840. He visited Paris in the early 1790s, and met Talleyrand and Lafayette.

³⁶² Samuel Rogers (1763–1855) was a banker and a poet, well-connected in literary and political circles. The La Villemarqué Archives contain a cheerful note from Rogers to Rio inviting him to bring 'his friend' to St James's Place for breakfast (undated, LV 27.020).

And do pray be presented by the French Ambassador to the Queen at the First Levee. You should make such a point of it that nothing ought to prevent it: it is the best time possible – and do beg Count ~~XXXX~~ Sebastiani to Present you. You should speak to him immediately on your getting to London for you must have Things made perhaps if you have not a Dress ready, but the [...] ³⁶⁴

Sir Watkin Williams Wynn, No 18 St James's Square, London.

You must be sure to call and leave your Card and address on all these Persons, and Enquire if they are at home, and pray thank Sir Watkin Williams Wynn for his invitation & that you were sorry you could not then accept it, but you hope to do so when you come again to Wales. ³⁶⁵

³⁶³ Likely to be the writer Caroline Norton (1808–1877), grand-daughter of the playwright Richard Brinsley Sheridan. Denied access to her three sons and financial security after a brutal divorce case, she became a powerful advocate for women's rights.

³⁶⁴ Page very probably missing here.

³⁶⁵ See Letter XXII from John Jones (Tegid).

Lettre XXIX

De Théodore Hersart de la Villemarqué à sa sœur Camille Jégou du Laz³⁶⁶

Londres le 12 février 1839

J'ai lu je ne sais où qu'un peintre célèbre dont j'ai oublié le nom, jeta deux fois de dépit son pinceau et brisa sa palette, de dépit de ne pouvoir saisir la physionomie de sa maîtresse ; sans être célèbre, mais peintre aussi, car on dit que les poètes le sont, je lui ressemble un peu, à cela près que ce n'est pas le portrait de ma maîtresse que j'ai voulu peindre, à moins que vous ne preniez ce mot maîtresse dans son acception naturelle, auquel cas, vous pouvez toutes mesdames, vous donner ce titre ; je vous en reconnais le droit sur moi, lors même que vous en abusez. une femme de beaucoup d'esprit a découvert en moi cette faiblesse ou cette vertu, comme vous voudrez l'appeler. Elle qui est Anglaise disait faiblesse car elle m'a à peu près comparé à la girouette, quant à moi je suis trop galant pour vous comparer au vent, mes aimables maîtresses. mais voilà que vous m'entraînez bien loin de mon sujet, et je veux revenir à celle de vous que je veux peindre, en particulier, et dont deux fois déjà j'ai taché vainement de saisir les traits ; mon premier portrait était trop laid, mon second trop beau. voyons ce que sera mon troisième. mais d'abord, il faut que vous sachiez le nom de mon modèle. oh ! ce n'est point une femme ordinaire ; c'est une des femmes les plus distinguées d'Angleterre, enfin, c'est lady Charlotte Guest.

Lady Charlotte a 27 ans ; elle est grande ; elle a les yeux et les cheveux noirs, un beau teint, de belles dents ; si elle avait la bouche moins saillante et plus petite, je dirais qu'elle est jolie ; d'autres la trouvent affreuse, mais ce sont des gentilhommes anglais, et je vous les dénonce tous, comme des barbares ; je vais plus loin ; si sa physionomie n'était pas presque toujours impassible et calme, si son visage était moins régulier, moins uni, s'il s'animait au

³⁶⁶ Archives La Villemarqué LV 02.035. Adressée à: « Madame la Vicomtesse Du Laz au château de Kerdudo en Guidel par Pont Scorff près Hennebont Morbihan ». Notes manuscrites de La Villemarqué en marge de la page portant l'adresse: "L'anglaise en galles, 3° type / les anglaises se sont muées en galloises mais non les anglaises / Portrait de Lady Charlotte Guest / l'anglaise de race opposée à la galloise de race (lady Hall) / Les deux races en présence dans le pays de galles / 1° la noblesse galloise et anglaise 2° la gentry -id- 3° les bourgeois -id- 4° les paysans gallois actuels sont en majorité les anciens nobles. – la réforme a contribué à les ruiner".

gré des émotions de son âme, je la trouverais charmante. mais son âme est un lac, dont on ne peut voir le fond ; je me trompe, il survient par moment des tourbillons, qui en mettent à nu les vases.

Le soir où j'arrivai chez elle, elle fut polie, mais froide et réservée, et elle le fut plusieurs jours. Cependant je m'ingéniais à lui être agréable ; il y avait entre elle et moi, comme une muraille invisible. j'eus beau l'aider en ses travaux littéraires, faire venir de Lannarth un de mes Mss, le lui transcrire, corriger ses épreuves, lui promettre que je traduirais en français ses romans gallois, que je parlerais d'elle, et longuement, dans mon livre sur le pays de Galles, que sais-je ? toutes mes peines furent perdues. Lorsqu'enfin elle devint aimable et qu'elle me mit à l'aise, moi, je lui dis tout franchement, combien j'avais été gêné pendant les premiers jours après mon arrivée... « mon dieu, me répondit-elle, tout simplement aussi, on avait tant parlé de vous que je vous jugeais différemment ; maintenant je vois que vous êtes comme tout le monde. » Voilà toute lady charlotte. Voilà la vase du fond du lac ; et les tourbillons sont fréquents. Je suis étonné qu'elle – qui calcule tant ses discours, qui semble compter ses mots, qui avoue n'avoir jamais rien écrit que d'indispensable à personne, qui est si concentrée en tout point soit par instants si brusquement si ouverte. le jour où elle me fit cette réponse que vous venez de lire je la connus. l'Esprit remplit chez elle les fonctions du cœur et le remplace. Elle en a assez pour qu'il puisse servir à ces deux fins ; l'Esprit chez elle est superbe, entier, despotique, démesurément orgueilleux, mais sans vanité. Elle ressemble sous beaucoup de rapport à M^{me} de Vernon, comme le faisait observer, avec justesse, cette autre femme d'esprit, mais aussi de cœur dont je vous parlais au commencement de cette lettre et dont je vous ai souvent parlé : M^{me} Waddington. Elle sacrifie tout à son idole même : la reconnaissance. j'en suis la preuve. je vous ferai voir une certaine lettre qu'elle a dictée sinon écrite que je garde comme un document précieux pour servir son histoire. Mais elle est trop prudente³⁶⁷ pour sacrifier ses intérêts à sa vengeance. comme quelqu'un lui parlait d'un homme qui a tenu à son égard et précisément dans des choses qui blessait au vif son amour-propre, une conduite à la vérité peu honorable, le feu lui monta³⁶⁸ au visage, puis après un moment de silence, elle dit avec calme : hé bien, je ne lui en dirai rien, je ne me brouille pas avec les gens dont j'ai besoin. » une heure après, comme si la blessure se fut rouverte subitement, elle me disait : je ne peux haïr personne, (car je n'aime personne) ; il n'y a qu'un homme que je pourrais haïr de toute la puissance de mon âme, car il n'y a que lui que j'aime :

³⁶⁷ Lecture incertaine.

³⁶⁸ Lecture incertaine.

c'est Merthyr ». Merthyr c'est le surnom qu'elle donne à son mari ; c'est le nom de la ville voisine. Ce trait semblerait n'est ce pas démontrer de la bonhomie ? mais si vous souvenez Jean Jacques était bonhomme, en ce sens là, ce qui ne l'empêchait pas de mettre ses enfans à l'hôpital.

Elle est toute dévouée à son mari. elle affecte même de l'être. ainsi elle dit toujours quand on lui parle d'un projet qu'elle lui demandera son avis. est ce sincère, ou est ce feint, ou est ce la mode en ce pays. mais je crois qu'elle l'aime réellement. elle tient ses comptes et marque chaque soir les recettes et les dépenses, de la même main, elle fait des additions, elle traduit des traités sur les mécaniques, elle en grave elle-même les modèles ; elle peut écrire en français, en Anglais, en ytalien & en arabe et en Persan ; elle compose des ouvrages charmants dans sa propre langue. – un soir en prenant son livre de compte elle me disait insolemment : je suis une marchande. – le marchand son époux a un million de revenu ! Quelquefois ses aveux naïfs, ou ses écarts, comme vous voudrez les appeler prennent une tournure ingénue, infiniment amusante, et que le contraste de sa nature reposée fait ressortir merveilleusement ; la réflexion surtout qui voudrait réparer, ne répare rien, et au contraire explique tout. – elle a un magnifique bracelet, avec un médaillon sur lequel se trouve en miniature le portrait de son mari. : m^{me} Rio a comme vous, lui fais je observer le portrait de m^e Rio sur le médaillon de son bracelet. Oh ! oui reprit elle étourdiment, mais si vous aviez vu mon mari, quand il était jeune. monsieur Rio n'est pas si beau ! et puis bien vite, comme si elle eut voulu ravalier sa naïveté : je viens de dire une bêtise, n'est-ce pas monsieur ? c'est toujours l'amour propre qui lui rend la vue trouble, et la fait tomber dans de misérables pièges, que sa prudence naturelle aurait du lui faire éviter. voilà bien des preuves en voici un autre : j'étais resté tout seul avec elle et son mari ; celui-ci avait des affaires qui l'appelaient pour deux jours à quarante milles de là. il fallait, ou qu'il me laissât seul au logis avec sa femme, ou qu'il m'emmenât avec lui ; mais d'une part je n'avais rien à faire où il allait, et de l'autre il ne pouvait se décider, connaissant surtout l'histoire de mon pouce, à prendre le premier parti : il y eut de longues tergiversations, à la suite desquelles, il fut résolu qu'ils me laisseraient tous deux à la maison. Mais le tems était affreux ; il glaçait à pierre fendre, il neigeait à flocons : il fait bien froid pour voyager n'est ce pas, me disait lady Charlotte, et Cardiff est bien loin ; mais reprit elle après un moment de silence, j'aime beaucoup a voir par moi-même les affaires de mon mari ! toujours l'amour propre, je citerais vingt traits. telle est a peu près lady Charlotte Guest ; c'est le plus singulier caractère que j'aie vu de ma vie. à peu près car en vérité, je ne me flatte pas de l'avoir peinte en pied. on peut saisir la nuance

générale de la gorge du pigeon mais il est impossible d'en distinguer les couleurs particulières, tant la lumière leur donne des teintes diverses.

Elle a ici de grands succès : l'autre soir quelqu'un s'approche d'elle au moment où elle jetait les yeux sur de magnifiques portraits des plus belles ladies de Londres du Book of beauty de 1839 et voyant qu'elle y manquait il lui dit : toutes les fées n'y sont pas ; olwen la fée galloise y manque. olwen est le nom d'une fée dont lady Charlotte a traduit l'histoire et un poète le lui a donné. Ce n'était pas une fée reprit elle, c'était une Déesse. Si je n'avais pas été français j'aurais reculé de trois pas !

Londres est comme paris ; mais plus grand et plus sombre. C'est la ville des brouillards. Ses rues sont d'une longueur extraordinaire, et fort belle. mais je n'en suis pas émerveillé. L'ambassadeur de france doit le 20 de ce mois me présenter à la reine. je viens de le voir & n'ai encore vu que lui. mais je dois aller dans le grand monde ces jours-ci j'ai déjà des invitations. ce soir je vais a la Chambre des Communes. adieu, j'étais si pressé que je n'ai pu aller voir M^{elle} Nymphé, ce que j'ai beaucoup regretté.

Je vous aime. adieu.

Th. De la Villemarqué.

Letter XXIX

Théodore Hersart de la Villemarqué to his sister Camille du Laz³⁶⁹

London 12 February 1839

I once read somewhere that a famous painter whose name escapes me twice threw down his brush and broke his palette in despair at not being able to capture the features of his mistress; without being famous, but nonetheless a painter, for poets are said to be such, I am not unlike him, except that I am not trying to paint a portrait of my mistress, unless you understand the word mistress in its natural sense, in which case you may all of you, Mesdames, give yourselves the title; I recognize your rights over me, even when you abuse them.

An intelligent woman has discovered in me this weakness, or virtue, however you wish to describe it.³⁷⁰ Being English, she considered it a weakness, for she more or less compared me to a weather-vane; I on the other hand am far too courteous to compare you to the wind, my dear *maîtresses*. But see how far you have distracted me from my subject; now I want to return to the one amongst you whom I particularly wish to paint, and whose character I have twice already tried to capture; my first portrait was too ugly, my second too beautiful. Let us see how the third one works out. But first, you must know the name of my model. oh! this is no ordinary woman; she is one of the most distinguished in all England. She is Lady Charlotte Guest.

Lady Charlotte is twenty seven years old; she is tall; she has dark eyes and hair, a fine complexion, good teeth; if her mouth were smaller and less pronounced, I would say that she was pretty; some find her dreadful, but they are English gentlemen, and I denounce them all

³⁶⁹ Archives La Villemarqué LV 02.035. Addressed to ‘Madame la Vicomtesse Du Laz au chateau de Kerdudo en Guidel par Pont Scorff près Hennebont Morbihan’. Notes in La Villemarqué’s hand in the margins of the address page: ‘The Englishwoman in Wales, Type 3 / Englishwomen transformed into Welshwomen but not the Englishwomen / Portrait of Lady Charlotte Guest / the Englishwoman by descent opposed to the Welshwoman by descent (lady Hall) / Both races evident in Wales / 1st: Welsh and English nobility; 2nd the gentry; 3rd – id – the bourgeois – id – 4th Welsh peasants today a majority of them former nobles – the Reformation has helped to ruin them.’

³⁷⁰ This speaker is revealed below as ‘that other intelligent woman whom I mentioned at the start of this letter, and whom I have often mentioned to you – Mme Waddington’, Augusta Hall’s mother. A later letter from Hall to La Villemarqué (Letter XXVII) reprises the image, suggesting that she was part of this conversation too.

as barbarians; I would go further; if her expression were not almost always imperturbably calm, if her face were a little less regular, less uniform, if it came to life with the feelings of her soul, I would find her charming. But her soul is a lake, and its depths cannot be seen; no, I am wrong, every so often there are disturbances, eddies, which expose the silt at the bottom

The evening I arrived at her house she was polite, but cold and reserved, and she remained that way for several days. I nonetheless did everything I could to please her; it was as if there were an invisible wall between us. In vain I helped her with her literary work, had one of my manuscripts sent over from Lannarth to transcribe it for her, to correct her proofs, promised to translate her Welsh romances into French, and to write at length about her in my book about Wales, what could I say? All my efforts were wasted. When finally she became more friendly and put me more at my ease I told her quite plainly how awkward I had felt in the first few days after my arrival “good lord,” she said simply, “you had been so much spoken of that I judged you rather differently; now I see that you are just like everyone else.” That is Lady Charlotte. That is the silt from the bottom of the lake; and the disturbances are frequent.³⁷¹

I am amazed that this woman who is so calculated in her conversation, who measures every word, who claims never to have written anything to anyone that was not strictly necessary, and who is so completely focused, should at times be so abruptly revealing. The day she replied to me with the words you have just read I understood her. For her, the mind fulfils the functions of the heart, and replaces it. She has enough of it to serve both uses: her mind is magnificent, complete, despotic, and boundlessly arrogant – but not vain. In many respects she is like Mme de Vernon,³⁷² as that other intelligent woman whom I mentioned at the start of this letter, and of whom I have often mentioned to you – Mme Waddington – very justly observed. She sacrifices everything to her idol, even gratitude. I am the proof.

³⁷¹ It is instructive to compare this account – written from London several weeks after the visit to Dowlais – with Charlotte Guest’s diary for the period of his stay. Over Christmas, a significant number of workers at the Dowlais forges planned to hold Chartist demonstrations; fearing riots, the Guests attempted to dissolve tensions by laying on rival entertainments: ‘it was rather a nervous thing, considering all the horrors which had taken place here once before, and we occupied ourselves in inventing what diversions were in our power in order to keep as many of our population away from the Meeting as we could without appearing to do so.’ (‘The Journals of Lady Charlotte Guest’, XI, 104–05). Guest was also tired and ill with her pregnancy, and occupied with her translations; La Villemarqué in fact registers very little in her journal. This renewed attempt on his part to ‘capture’ her character may indicate that he also stayed with the Guests in London – he clearly encountered them socially there.

³⁷² Madame de Vernon is a character from *Delphine*, Madame de Staël’s first novel (1802). She is good-looking but contriving and self-interested.

I can show you a letter that she dictated if not wrote which I am keeping as a precious document towards a future account of her character. But she is too [prudent³⁷³] to sacrifice her own interests for the purposes of revenge. As someone was telling her about a man who had behaved towards her in a less than honourable fashion, and in a way most calculated to wound her pride, her face flushed, and then after a moment of silence she said calmly: ‘ah well, I won’t say anything, I do not quarrel with people whom I need’. An hour later, as if the wound had suddenly re-opened, she said to me: ‘I can hate no-one, for I love no-one; the only man I could ever hate to the depths of my soul is Merthyr.’ Merthyr is the name she uses for her husband; it is the name of the town close by. You might think this quality would appear to demonstrate a sort of good-heartedness. But if you remember, Jean Jacques was similarly good-hearted, and it didn’t stop him sending his children to the institution.³⁷⁴

She is completely devoted to her husband, almost to the point of affectation. In any discussion of some proposed plan she says she will ask his advice. It may be sincere, it may be put on; it may be the way things are in this country. But I do believe she truly loves him. She keeps his accounts and every night makes a note of receipts and expenses; she also does calculations, translates mechanical treatises, and even copies pictures of models; she can write in French, English, Italian, Arabic and Persian; she composes lovely pieces in her native language. One evening picking up an account book she said to me unashamedly ‘I am a shopkeeper’ – her husband the ‘shopkeeper’ has a million a year! Sometimes her innocent admissions – her lapses, you might say – take on an artlessness which is infinitely entertaining and contrasts wonderfully with her usual deep calm; little comments designed to smooth things over do quite the reverse, and reveal everything... She has this beautiful bracelet, with a locket containing a miniature of her husband: m^{me} rio has one like that, I told her, with a portrait of Monsieur Rio – in the bracelet locket. Oh! She says, without thinking, but if you had seen my husband when he was young; monsieur Rio is not so handsome! And then very quickly, as if trying to cover up her naiveté; ah, that was a foolish thing to say wasn’t it, monsieur? Her self-esteem is what blinds her, makes her fall into all kinds of unfortunate traps which her instinct for caution should really have helped her avoid! There’s proof for you and here is more: I was alone with her and her husband; he had business which would take him from home for two days, about forty miles away. He was obliged either to

³⁷³ Reading unclear.

³⁷⁴ The Genevan writer and philosopher J.J. Rousseau (1712–1778) persuaded his lover Thérèse Lavoisier to give up each of their four new-born children to a foundling hospital. His writings on the innocence and freedom of childhood were hugely influential on European Romanticism.

leave me alone with his wife at home, or take me with him; on the one hand I had no particular reason to be where he was going, but nor, knowing the story about my thumb, could he quite make his mind up to the former.³⁷⁵ Many long deliberations followed, at the end of which it was decided that I should be left at home. But the weather was atrocious; it was bitter cold, and the snow fell thick: ‘it is cold weather for travelling, isn’t it?’ Lady Charlotte said to me, ‘and Cardiff is quite a distance’; but then, after a minute or two of silence: ‘I do so like to see my husband’s business affairs for myself!’ It always comes back to her, to her own self-worth – I could give you twenty more examples. So that, more or less, is Lady Charlotte Guest: quite the most curious character I have ever encountered. I say more or less because in all honesty I cannot flatter myself that I have really painted her portrait from head to toe. You can capture the general effect of the pigeon’s breast, but it is impossible to pick out all the particular colours, the light alters them so much.

She is a great success here: the other evening someone came up to her as she was glancing over the magnificent portraits of the finest London ladies in the *Book of Beauty* for 1839,³⁷⁶ and, seeing that she was not amongst them, said: ‘Not all the fairies are present: the Welsh fairy Olwen is missing’. Olwen is the name of a fairy in one of the tales Lady Charlotte has translated, and a Welsh poet has given her the name. ‘She was not a fairy’, she replied, ‘she was a Goddess.’ Had I not been French I would have taken three steps back!

London is like Paris, but bigger and darker: the city of fog. The streets are extraordinarily long, and very fine. And yet I am not particularly impressed. The French ambassador intends to present to me to the Queen on the 20th of this month. I have just met him, and so far he is the only person I have met. But I am supposed to go out into society one day soon, and have already some invitations. This evening I am going to see the House of Commons. Adieu – I was so busy I did not have time to see Mlle Nymphe,³⁷⁷ which I am very sorry about.

All my love. Good-bye.

Th. De la Villemarqué.

³⁷⁵ This appears to be a reference to the incident involving Mrs Berrington’s jealous husband (see Letter VII).

³⁷⁶ *Heath’s Book of Beauty*, edited by the Countess of Blessington, was published annually from about 1833 (London: Longman; Rees &c); this must be an early 1839 publication.

³⁷⁷ For the family friend Mlle Nymphe see Letters XXXIV-XXXVI.

Letter XXX

Henry Foulkes to Théodore Hersart de la Villemarqué³⁷⁸

Dear Sir,

On the receipt of your letter I sent for Tegid and asked him whether he would take a perfect Copy of the 43 pages of Llyfr Coch you mentioned. He consented to do it for five Sovereigns but as he said you offered him one Sovereign, I would not therefore employ him until I had your consent.³⁷⁹

Mrs Foulkes writes with me in kind regards to you,

Believe me dear Sir,

Yours truly,

Henry Foulkes

³⁷⁸ Archives La Villemarqué LV 27.034. Addressed to Comte de La Villemarqué, 37 Golden Square, London. Postmark: Oxford Feb 20 1839.

³⁷⁹ This refers to La Villemarqué's decision to attempt a French translation and edition of *Peredur*, another of the Mabinogion romances preserved in Llyfr Coch Hergest. Further correspondence below indicates some of the difficulties his request for a transcript caused, including some confusion about whether or not John Jones (Tegid) was to be paid. The fact that Charlotte Guest was planning an English transcription and translation for her ongoing publication also contributed to the tension.

Letter XXXI

From Molly Anne Hanbury Leigh to Théodore Hersart de La Villemarqué³⁸⁰

Ponty Pool Park

Thursday 21 Feb^{ry} 1839

Your kind & agreeable letter my dear Comte De la Villemarqué I received yesterday on M^{rs} Booth's arrival.³⁸¹ It gave to the Lord Lieutenant and myself most sincere pleasure and as the weather proved so tremendously cold with snow on the ground I am glad you did not risk an illness by attending the Queen's first Levee as I hope there will be many within your reach persuaded as I am that you like England well enough to return to it when you find your engagements answer your wishes.

I shall readily fulfill your commission and take charge of your Parcel when I get it from Dr Foulkes³⁸² and I will with alacrity discharge every possible claim for the transcribing [of] the manuscript in question. Mrs Foulkes wrote to me on your quitting them to regret your departure.

I cannot tell you half the kind & handsome just things she said. You have left a most pleasing and lasting impression on Dr & Mrs Foulkes who have much thanked us for the introduction.

Mr Gurney is not in town.³⁸³ I have had a letter from him regretting much his and Mrs Gurney's absence from London as he should have had the greatest pleasure in making your acquaintance and will hope to do so whenever you next visit England. His brother is very ill which keeps him in Norfolk. Their houses are near each other. I will not longer detain you to

³⁸⁰ Archives La Villemarqué LV 27.37. Addressed to 'Comte de La Villemarqué, 37 Golden Square, London'. Postmark: Oxford Feb.

³⁸¹ Mrs Booth may be the useful female companion mentioned by La Villemarqué in Letter XXVIII.

³⁸² Henry Foulkes, Principal of Jesus College, Oxford.

³⁸³ Hudson Gurney (1775–1864) of Norwich, politician and antiquary. The Gurneys were on Mrs Hanbury-Leigh's list of addresses in London (see Letter XXVIII), and an enthusiastic letter of introduction from her to Mrs Gurney is preserved in the archive: 'any attentions you and Mr Gurney shall pay to the Comte Hersart De La Villemarqué we shall consider as shewn to ourselves and feel ourselves flattered by' (LV 27.046).

read this dull scrawl [...] but I thought it would be satisfactory to you to know that M^{rs} Booth was punctual in delivering your letter at Dr Foulkes's as she passed through Oxford. The principal of Jesus College & Mrs Foulkes had walked out so she did not see them. I shall avail myself of Mr W^m Jones³⁸⁴ return to Paris as you mention & I hope to get from Miss Jane Williams³⁸⁵ the words of her song to send you by him. The Lord Lieutenant begs kind regards to you and I assure you dear Monsieur Le Comte I am truly your obliged friend

M A Hanbury Leigh

³⁸⁴ William Jones of Clytha House, one of the sons of Llanarth Court, born in 1798 and later married to Frances Huddleston.

³⁸⁵ Maria Jane Williams ('Llinos', 1795–1873) of Aberpergwm was closely connected with the Llanover Circle at Abergavenny. She published *Ancient National Airs of Gwent and Morgannwg* in 1844.

Letter XXXII

Augusta Hall à Théodore Hersart de La Villemarqué³⁸⁶

[Llanover, Thursday Feb^{ry} 21st 1839]

comme les girouettes, avec chaque vent qui souffle de Paris ! on dit que c'est un homme bien fortuné qui trouve six amis dans sa vie. Sous quel Astre étiez vous néé, d'avoir trouvé quatre en six mois – et de ces quatres, trois était femmes (qui ne changent pas). ^ . J'envoie ce paquet a Sir Benj. en lui priant de l'envoyer tout de suite. Mme Berrington a mis la sienne à la poste, pour qu'un vous parviendra, par un moyen ou l'autre, de peur que vous partiez sans penser que de la Sainte Cecile de Dowlais!

Eich gwir Cyfaill,

Gwenynen Gwent

Dowla[~~is~~]s in English is a coarse sort of Torchon cloth

C'est Madame Charlotte qui a écrit cette notte

A.H. Elle est très impertinente !

³⁸⁶ Archives La Villemarqué LV 27.045. Addressé à 'Monsieur, A Monsieur le Comte T. Hersart de la Villemarqué, 37 Golden Sq^{re} ; To be forwarded immediately.'

Letter XXXII

Augusta Hall to Théodore Hersart de La Villemarqué³⁸⁷

[like weather-vanes, with every breeze that blows from Paris !]³⁸⁸ They say that it is a lucky man who finds six friends in a lifetime. Under what Star were you born, to have found four in six months – and of those four, three were women (who do not change) . ^ .) I am sending this packet to Sir Benj. and begging him to send it immediately. Mme Berrington has put hers in the post, so that one at least will reach you, one way or another, in case you should leave without thinking of anyone but Saint Cecilia of Dowlais!³⁸⁹

Your true friend,

Gwenynen Gwent

Dowla[î]s in English is a coarse sort of Torchon cloth³⁹⁰

Madame Charlotte wrote that note.

A.H. She is very impertinent !

³⁸⁷ Archives La Villemarqué LV 27.045. Addressed to ‘Monsieur, A Monsieur le Comte T. Hersart de la Villemarqué, 37 Golden Sq^{re} ; To be forwarded immediately.’

³⁸⁸ This teasing note from Augusta Hall (with an even more teasing addition by Charlotte Guest) makes more sense if the first phrase follows on from ‘who do not change’: a small mark in the text seems to confirm this. The image of the inconstant ‘girouette’ or weather-vane picks up on an earlier conversation with Mrs Berrington mentioned in Letter XXIX. One suspects Augusta Hall is here having another dig at Mrs Hanbury-Leigh, who effectively took over the ‘management’ of La Villemarqué for the second half of his stay.

³⁸⁹ Saint Cecilia is the patron of musicians, perhaps a reference to Guest’s role hosting dinner parties.

³⁹⁰ Dowlas linen was a coarse cloth used for aprons and work clothes; Guest may be teasing La Villemarqué here for his habit of Bretonizing the name ‘Dowlais’ to Daoulas.

Letter XXXIII

From John Jones (Tegid) to Théodore Hersart de La Villemarqué³⁹¹

Christ Church, Oxford

Feb^y 22^d 1839

Bardd Nizon du,³⁹²

If you had let me to begin transcribing *Peredur* at the time you left Oxford it would have been done by this time.³⁹³ When I called on the Principal of Jesus College (Dr Foulkes) he said that he had received a letter from you expressing a wish to have *Peredur* copied and he asked me if I would do it. My answer to him was that I would with great pleasure. He then asked me if I was to do it for nothing – I said – I will do it for nothing for the Comte & mentioned at the same time, your offer to me of one sovereign. Dr Foulkes then said that he would write to Mrs Leigh, or to you, stating that five pounds was the sum he would have for me; for that one sovereign would not repay me for my time for copying it literatim et verbatim. He stated, at the same time, that Mrs Leigh would do any thing to promote your interest and that of welsh literature. The sovereign that you left with me I said should go towards building a Parochial School for the instruction of boys in my Parish ; and so I rapt it up in a piece of paper, as you know, for that purpose.

The above statement will, I hope, remove from your mind every bad impression with respect to me; for I love your friendship above money.

You will, however, be sorry to hear what I am now about to say; namely, that I shall leave Oxford on Thursday next for Cheltenham to be present there on the first of March, St David's Day. I must go there; for Sir Samuel R. Meyrick will preside & that on condition of my

³⁹¹ Archives La Villemarqué LV 27.66.

³⁹² La Villemarqué had taken 'Bardd Nizon' (The Bard of Nizon) as his bardic title in the Eisteddfod ceremony. 'Du' means 'black' in both Breton and Welsh.

³⁹³ 'Peredur mab Efracw' is one of the three Welsh medieval romances associated with the *Mabinogion* collection, and corresponds loosely to Chrétien de Troyes' unfinished *Perceval*. The Welsh text would shortly become the object of a fierce dispute between La Villemarqué and Lady Charlotte Guest, as both rushed to publish the first translations. See Letter XXX above.

meeting him there.³⁹⁴ It is likely that I shall be absent from Oxford for a fortnight. If I can do any thing for you after my return I will do it with pleasure. But never for money. You had better let me collate, or compare, your copy of Peredur with that in the Llyfyr Coch,³⁹⁵ and note down the various readings; and send it after you to Paris.

Believe me, Villemarquè, that I will at all times do every thing in my power to serve you and your country; and that without fee, or reward.

It is to be hoped that you will again, and that shortly, visit England when I shall be but too proud to accompany you to North Wales. When you next write to me let me have a portion of your letter in the language of your country.

Believe me, dear Bardd Nizon

Very truly your

Tegid

³⁹⁴ For Samuel Rush Meyrick see Letters XII and XIII above.

³⁹⁵ Llyfr Coch Hergest (The Red Book of Hergest) is an important fourteenth-century Welsh manuscript containing versions of the Mabinogion texts. It was donated to Jesus College in the early eighteenth century, and is now held at the Bodleian Library, Oxford (MS 111).

Lettre XXXIV

De Nymphé [Sevenoute] à Théodore Hersart de la Villemarqué³⁹⁶

Tusmore

Feb. 26th [1839]

Enfin, Monsieur Théodore je sais où vous trouver grâce à l'aimable petite lettre de votre sœur qui m'anote³⁹⁷ votre adresse à Londres. Mon oncle M^r Ramsay s'y rend demain, il compte avoir le plaisir de vous voir pour vous témoigner le désir que nous éprouvons tous, de vous retenir quelques jours ici, mais en cas que vous fussiez absent, j'ai voulu vous écrire quelques mots pour vous dire bien positivement qu'il faut que vous vous décidiez à venir. Tusmore n'a rien de bien gai ni de bien tentant à vous offrir, mais au moins vous trouverez des personnes bien désireuses de faire votre connaissance et une demi-Bretonne qui se fait une véritable fête de revoir quelqu'un du pays. Venez, je vous en prie. Mon oncle revient Lundi ou Mardi, et me dit avoir l'intention de vous offrir une place dans sa voiture mais si cette époque ne vous convenait pas, il vous reste deux moyens de vous transporter ici. L'un est par the Leamington Coach, the Sobereign qui passe tous les jours, et vous déposera à un mille d'ici où nous enverrions [sic] quelqu'un vous attendre. Il faudrait dire au cocher d'arrêter le plus près possible de Tusmore house (T s'il vous plaît et non pas J). L'autre moyen est par le Londres & Birmingham Railway, qu'il faut quitter à Wolverton. Là vous trouverez une voiture qui vous mènera jusqu'à Brackeley à 4 miles d'ici où nous irons vous chercher. Mais en cas que vous ne vinssiez pas avec mon oncle, je vous conseille de prendre The Leamington Coach, rappelez-vous bien que nous sommes à 5 miles au-delà de Bicester, et que par le Coach il ne s'agit pas du tout de Brackeley dont vous n'approchez pas. Aussi n'allez pas vous tromper. Je vous dis tout cela de crainte que vous n'éprouviez quelque difficulté à vous rendre ici, et surtout pour vous ôter jusqu'à l'ombre d'une excuse de ne pas venir. Je réserve jusqu'à votre arrivée mes félicitations sur vos brillantes succès en

³⁹⁶ Archives La Villemarqué LV 27.051. Lettre adressée à : « Mons^r T. de la Villemarqué / Duke S^t / S^t James / 48.) »

³⁹⁷ Lecture incertaine.

Angleterre. Savez-vous que je vais devenir fière d'être une de vos anciennes connaissances. N'oubliez pas de m'apporter tout ce que le pittoresque pays dont vous venez, vous aura inspiré de douces et gracieuses poésies. J'oubliais de vous prier, si vous ne venez pas Lundi de nous écrire la veille de votre départ afin que nous puissions envoyer quelqu'un vous attendre.

Kénavo, à bientôt

Nymphe Sevenoute

Letter XXXIV

From Nymphé [Sevenoute] to Théodore Hersart de la Villemarqué³⁹⁸

Tusmore

Feb. 26th [1839]

At last, Monsieur Théodore I know where to find you thanks to the kind little letter from your sister who [...] me your address in London. My uncle M^r Ramsay³⁹⁹ will be there tomorrow, he hopes to have the chance to see you and communicate the desire we all share to have you over here for a few days, but in case you are not at home I wanted to write a few words to tell you that you must positively make up your mind to come. There is nothing particularly gay or tempting about Tusmore, but you will at least meet some people very keen to make your acquaintance, and a *demi-Bretonne* who would be completely overjoyed to see someone from the old country. Do come, I beg you. My uncle will be returning Monday or Tuesday, and tells me he plans to offer you a place in his coach but if the timing does not suit you, you still have two ways of getting yourself here. One is by the Leamington Coach, the Sovereign,⁴⁰⁰ which runs every day and will drop you a mile from here, where we will send someone to pick you up. You must tell the coachman to stop as close as possible to Tusmore House (note that's a T, not a J). The other way is by the London & Birmingham Railway,⁴⁰¹ which you must leave at Wolverton, and from there catch a coach which will take you as far as Brackeley [Brackley], 4 miles from here, where we will come and fetch you. But if you do not come with my uncle I would recommend you take the Leamington Coach, remembering that we are 5 miles beyond Bicester and that by Coach you will not need to bother with Brackeley, which you won't go near. So don't get it wrong. I'm telling you all this for fear

³⁹⁸ Archives La Villemarqué LV 27.051. Letter addressed to 'Mons^r T. de la Villemarqué / Duke S^t / S^t James / 48.)'. 'Mlle Nymphé Sevenoute' remains somewhat elusive but was a friend of the family and a niece of John Ramsay of Tusmore House.

³⁹⁹ John Ramsay (d. 1840) inherited Tusmore House, near Bicester in Oxfordshire, through his marriage to Maria Turner, adopted daughter of William Fermor, who died without issue in 1828.

⁴⁰⁰ The *Sovereign* stage-coach ran from Leamington to London, and was part owned by John Russell of the Bath Hotel, Leamington.

⁴⁰¹ The London to Birmingham Railway had only recently been completed, with the first full journey between the two cities on 17 September 1838.

you may encounter some difficulty in getting here, but above all to remove even the shadow of an excuse for not coming. I am saving my congratulations on your dazzling successes in England until you arrive. Do you know, I shall be quite proud to be one of your former acquaintances. Don't forget to bring any charming and elegant poems inspired by the picturesque country you have visited. I forgot to ask you, if you don't come on Monday, to write to us the day before your departure so that we can send someone to wait for you.

Kénavo, à bientôt

Nymphe Sevenoute

Lettre XXXV

De Théodore Hersart de la Villemarqué à son père Pierre Hersart de La
Villemarqué⁴⁰²

Tusmore House.

Londres le 6 mars 1839

Je vous écris de chez les Ramsay où je suis depuis avant hier, à vingt lieues de Londres, mon cher papa, & que je vais quitter ce soir. M^{lle} Nympe m'ayant écrit une lettre si pressante, et son oncle m'ayant obligeamment offert une place dans sa voiture, enfin, vous même m'ayant engagé à faire cette connaissance, je suis venu. Ce sont de bien bonnes gens & bien simples que ces Ramsay. la famille se compose de m^r, de ses deux sœurs, & de ses six petits enfants, sa femme est malade à Londres depuis un an. Ce château qui lui appartient est un des beaux que j'ai vus en Angleterre. C'est tout à fait seigneurial ; des appartements immenses ; des plafonds chargés de peintures et d'ornements, des glaces, des tableaux, une chapelle joignant la maison (le beau père était catholique) des colonnes à l'extérieur ; enfin un étang et un parc magnifique entouré d'une ceinture de pins & de mélèzes. mais une partie du parc est en friche ; & dans la maison, les portes ferment mal, les tableaux, (quelques uns du moins) sont moisissés & il y a çà & là des carreaux brisés tout cela m'a paru attester une grandeur en ruines. à la mort du père & de la mère, (telles sont les volontés de l'ancien propriétaire) le château sera vendu, & le produit de la vente partagé entre les enfants. je m'étonnais de voir la loi française régir des anglais ; mais c'est que M^r Farmer avait été élevé en France et qu'il en avait rapporté les idées dans sa patrie.

Londres

Je finis ma lettre ici au moment de m'embarquer pour la France. je devais avoir pour compagnon de voyage m^r De Montalembert que le mauvais état de santé de sa mère a appelé

⁴⁰² Archives La Villemarqué LV 02.038. Cette lettre et la suivante (à sa soeur Camille) se trouvaient sans doute dans un même et seul courrier, posté à Londres avant le départ de La Villemarqué pour la France. Au dos de la lettre à Camille figure en effet l'adresse : « Monsieur De la Villemarqué à Quimperlé Finistère ». Cachet postal : Quimperlé 12 mars.

ici. mais après l'avoir vue se rétablir presque, il vient de la perdre subitement & de repartir précipitamment pour Paris. je regrette beaucoup sa compagnie, c'est un très aimable jeune homme. il habitait en cet hôtel avec Rio & moi, & j'ai fait a fond sa connaissance. j'en ai fait de même aussi une autre, il n'y a rien de tel que l'exil, ou l'éloignement de la patrie (ce qui est tout un) pour rapprocher les gens ; c'est celle de m^f A. De Vigny que j'avais déjà vu plusieurs fois, mais sans qu'il parut me remarquer beaucoup. enfin, puisque je suis sur le chapitre des connaissances, il faut que je vous dise que j'ai faite celle d'un personnage très important : le prince Louis Bonaparte avec lequel j'ai passé une matinée chez un ami de monsieur Rio, M^f Milnes, membre du parlement.

Je suis allé hier soir, en arrivant de Tusmore, pour me distraire voir le célèbre Van Hambury & ses bêtes, dont tout Londres s'occupe. il joue avec les lyons & les tigres comme avec de petits chiens; renfermé avec eux dans leur cage, il les frappe, il les irrite, il les fait rugir à faire trembler la salle, il les caresse, il met son bras ou sa tête dans leur gueule ; il se couche au milieu d'eux. rien qu'a le voir entrer dans leur cage & les fixer ils se cachent dans un coin en serrant la queue. il les a domptés par la fascination. Peut être aussi que la musique qui ne cesse de jouer pendant ses tours extraordinaires, n'est pas sans action sur eux.

Il y avait hier sur la route d'oxford un pied de neige, et il faisait bien froid.

j'ai reçu votre lettre du 22. m^f Rio préfère vous laisser jusqu'à ce qu'il aille en bretagne ce que vous lui devez, voulant y trouver de l'argent.

adieu mon cher papa, je vous embrasse avec tout mon cœur. demain matin je serai en France.

Th. De la Villemarqué

P.S. voulez vous, s'il vous plait m'adresser vos lettres jusqu'à nouvel ordre chez les dames d'acosta ?

M^{me} Rio me charge expressement de vous demander sur soa tous les renseignements possibles. vous l'obligerez en lui adressant le plutôt que vous pourrez, car elle a grand peur de voir cette propriété vendue.

Le 9 j'arrive à Paris & en bonne santé.

Letter XXXV

**Théodore Hersart de la Villemarqué to his father Pierre Hersart de La
Villemarqué⁴⁰³**

Tusmore House.

London 6 March 1839

I write to you from the Ramsays where I arrived the day before yesterday, about twenty leagues from London, my dear Papa, and which I leave this evening. Mlle Nympe wrote me such a pleading letter, and her uncle having kindly offered me a place in his carriage, and indeed you yourself having urged me to make their acquaintance, I came. The Ramsays are fine honest people. The family is made up of Mr [R], his two sisters, and their six small children, his wife has spent the last year in London as she is unwell.⁴⁰⁴ This manor house, which is hers, is one of the finest I have seen in England.⁴⁰⁵ It has a truly seigneurial feel: huge rooms, ceilings richly covered with paintings and decorations, mirrors, paintings, a chapel attached to the house (the father-in-law was Catholic), exterior columns; and then a lake and a magnificent park encircled with pines and larches; although part of the park has run wild and inside the house doors don't close properly, and the paintings (some of them at any rate) are mouldy and there are broken tiles here and there, all evoking a vision of decaying grandeur. When the father and mother die (such were the wishes of the former owner) the manor will be sold and the profit shared between the children. I was surprised to see English people applying a French law; but Mr Farmer⁴⁰⁶ had been brought up in France and brought the idea back to his own country.

⁴⁰³ Archives La Villemarqué LV 02.038. This and the following letter (to his sister Camille) may have been posted together from London just before La Villemarqué's departure for France; or even from Paris on his arrival on 9 March. The address on the back of the letter to Camille is 'Monsieur De la Villemarqué à Quimperlé Finistère'. Postmark: Quimperlé, 12 March.

⁴⁰⁴ Maria Turner Ramsay.

⁴⁰⁵ Tusmore was an ancient manor house, remodelled several times: La Villemarqué saw the house and extensive grounds as it had been completed for the Fermor family in 1779, albeit in a rather dilapidated condition. The building included ornate ceilings designed by Robert Adams.

⁴⁰⁶ William Fermor (d. 1828).

London

I finish my letter just as I am about to set off for France. I should have had Mr De Montalembert accompanying me on the journey – the poor state of his mother’s health brought him over here, but now, after having watched her make a good recovery, he has suddenly lost her and has returned in a hurry to Paris.⁴⁰⁷ I do regret not having him as a companion, he is very likeable young man. He was staying at the same guest-house as Rio and myself, and I got to know him extremely well. Someone else I got to know well – there is nothing like exile, or distance from one’s homeland (which comes to the same thing) to bring people close – is A. De Vigny, whom I had already encountered a few times but without him ever taking much notice of me.⁴⁰⁸ And while we are on the subject of making new acquaintances, I must tell you about my meeting with an extremely well-known character – Louis Bonaparte,⁴⁰⁹ with whom I spent a morning at the house of one of Monsieur Rio’s friends, Mr Milnes, a Member of Parliament.⁴¹⁰

Yesterday evening when I got back from Tusmore I went out, by way of distraction, to see the famous Van Hambury and his animals – all London is talking about them.⁴¹¹ He plays with lions and tigers as you might with little dogs – shut in their cage with them, he hits them, he annoys them, he makes them growl till the whole place shivers with fear, he caresses them, he puts his arm or his head in their mouths; he lies down amongst them. The moment he enters their cage and glares at them they run to the corners, tails flattened. He has bewitched them into tameness; though it is also possible that they are affected by the music which plays continually during his extraordinary tricks.

⁴⁰⁷ Charles Forbes René de Montalembert (1810–1870) was an advocate of Liberal Catholicism and supportive of Irish and Polish causes in the 1820s and 1830s. He was born and raised largely in London, but studied in Paris. His mother, Eliza Rosée Forbes, was from a prominent Scottish Protestant family and converted to Catholicism; she died in London on 4 March 1839.

⁴⁰⁸ The poet, dramatist and novelist Alfred de Vigny (1797–1863) was an influential figure in French Romanticism; his play about the young Bristol poet Thomas Chatterton had recently brought him considerable success.

⁴⁰⁹ Charles-Louis Napoléon Bonaparte (1808 –1873) was the nephew of Napoléon Bonaparte, who spent much of his early life in exile in Switzerland and Italy; from October 1838, after the death of his mother, he spend a period of exile in London moving in genteel social circles and making many contacts. In the national elections organized in the wake of the 1848 Revolution he was elected first President of France.

⁴¹⁰ Richard Monckton Milnes (1809–1885) was a writer and Conservative M.P.

⁴¹¹ Isaac A. Van Amburgh (1808–1865) was an American animal trainer who made his name with an act involving lions and tigers. He travelled widely in Europe, and the National Portrait Gallery in London has a striking image of him almost contemporary with La Villemarqué’s vivid description. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Isaac_A._Van_Amburgh#/media/File:Menagerie.amburgh.1838.jpg).

On the Oxford Rd yesterday there was a foot of snow, and it was very cold.

I received your letter of the 22. Mr Rio would rather wait for what you owe him until he gets to Brittany, since he wishes to have money over there.

Farewell my dear Papa, I send you my love. Tomorrow morning I will be in France.

Th. De la Villemarqué

P.S. please could you address your letters until further notice chez les dames d'acosta?⁴¹²

Mme Rio asks me especially to ask you to send all possible information about [soa]⁴¹³. You would do her a great service by telling her as much as you can, for she is very worried that the property might be sold.

The 9 I arrive in Paris, in good health.

⁴¹² This guesthouse was La Villemarqué's usual lodging in Paris.

⁴¹³ Possibly Soye, in Guidel (Morbihan).

Lettre XXXVI

De Théodore Hersart de la Villemarqué à sa sœur Camille Jégou du Laz⁴¹⁴

Tusmore House.

Londres le 6 [mars 1839]

A Camille

Ma chère Camille, figurez vous qu'il y a une de vos lettres que je n'ai pas reçu & il est probable qu'elle sera retournée en Bretagne. j'en ai été bien contrarié. Je suis venu ici voir cette pauvre Nymphé ! qu'elle triste vie ! ses voisins sont des loups-cerviers qui passent leur temps dans les bois. Son oncle est une sorte de joyeux butor, moulé sur le type le plus pur anglais. Cela se sert le premier à table, monte le premier en voiture, sait apprécier un bon diner, vante surtout en ce point le bouilli français avec sa coene grasse & sa litière de pommes de terre & de carottes ; & se rappelle avec volupté une certaine soupe aux citrouilles du collège de Coutances ; en un mot cela est aussi sec, aussi raide, aussi flegmatique que John Bull, dans ses plus beaux jours. Nymphé prétend qu'il y a du feu sous cette glace, je le souhaite, mais ne l'ai point senti. de ses tantes (toutes deux sur le retour) l'une est grise et grande et entêtée & intolérante, l'autre est petite, blonde, et rit toujours. Nymphé n'a pas avec qui causer, quand un certain petit cousin, autre ours, qu'elle a apprivoisé, – comme Edmée, Bernard, – est à son université de Cambridge. Elle n'a pas maigri, elle est au contraire engraisée, elle est plus grande, plus forte que l'an passé, mais elle n'est plus aussi fraîche – elle perd ses belles couleurs, – elle est encore bien, certainement, mais non pas aussi bien que devant. elle m'a fait peine à voir, triste comme elle est, elle autrefois si gaie. Nous avons parlé de la Bretagne, de nos enfants, de vous surtout, & j'ai vu deux ou trois fois des larmes lui venir aux yeux. elle vous aime bien, je vous assure, et est bien impatiente de vous revoir. Comme elle a un bon cœur & un esprit distingué. Je vous aime beaucoup toutes deux, et

⁴¹⁴ Archives La Villemarqué LV 02.032. Adressée à « Monsieur De la Villemarqué à Quimperlé Finistère », elle est certainement la suite de la précédente. La mention « A Camille » indiquant la partie de la lettre qui lui est destinée. Cachet postal: Quimperlé 12 mars.

regrette que vous ne m'ayez pas chargé d'une certaine commission pour elle que j'aurais faite avec un grand contentement. j'avais envie de me dire votre mandataire, mais je n'ai pas osé ! quoique française elle se fut récrié : « ô shoking ! shoking ! » & l'on m'eut chassé comme un galant très maladroit. adieu, je vous embrasse, vous n'ayant pu qui j'aurai bien voulu. Mais me voici n'est il pas vrai d'une licence impardonnable.

théodore

Missery est-il fou ? C'est Nympe qui m'a appris cela ; épouser une femme vieille & laide parce qu'elle a des écus ! oh ! l'indignité. & oser [?] ⁴¹⁵ cela en bretagne & prendre mr Dulaz pou confident. ah ! ce dernier trait est charmant. je le veux mettre en comédie ! je croyais pourtant que le futur avait du cran vous devez être furieuse n'est il pas vrai ? moi & Nympe dans vos intérêts nous le sommes.

⁴¹⁵ Mot illisible.

Letter XXXVI

From Théodore Hersart de la Villemarqué to his sister Camille du Laz⁴¹⁶

Tusmore House.

London 6 March [1839]

To Camille

My dear Camille, it turns out that I have not received one of your letters and it is likely it will be sent back to Brittany. I was very much put out. I have come here to see poor Nymphé! What a melancholy life! Her neighbours are wild beasts who spend their time in the forest. Her uncle is a kind of cheerful boor, in the most English manner imaginable.⁴¹⁷ He serves himself first at dinner, is first into the coach, sings the praises of French stew with its thick layer of fat and its base of potatoes and carrots; and remembers with great fondness a particular kind of pumpkin soup he had at the college at Coutances; he is, in other words, as rough, inflexible and stolid as John Bull himself in his all his glory. Nymphé claims there is a fire under all this ice, which I sincerely hope, though I have seen no sign. Of the two aunts (both over the hill) one is tall, grey, stubborn and intolerant; the other is small and blonde and laughs all the time. Nymphé has no one to talk to, especially when one of the cousins (another bear but one she has tamed, as Edmée did Bernard)⁴¹⁸ is at university in Cambridge. She has not lost weight, indeed she has got plumper; she looks bigger and stronger than last year, but has lost her freshness, her lovely colour. She is well enough, to be sure, but not the way she was before. It hurts me to see her like that, she who was always so merry. We talked about Brittany, the children, about yourself above all, and tears started into her eyes more

⁴¹⁶ Archives La Villemarqué LV 02.032. Addressed to ‘Monsieur De la Villemarqué à Quimperlé Finistère’ and included with the preceding letter (this part is marked ‘For Camille’). Postmark: Quimperlé 12 March 1839.

⁴¹⁷ *The Gentleman’s Magazine* for 1840 announced the death, aged 50, of Captain John Turner Ramsay, of Tusmore House and Capé Curé (Boulogne-sur-Mer) France. Both the Fermors and the Ramsays had strong connections with France.

⁴¹⁸ Cousins Edmée and Bernard are the main characters in George Sand’s novel *Mauprat* (1837), which explores Rousseauvian concepts of education.

than once. She loves you dearly, I tell you, and longs to see you again. What a good heart she has, and a fine mind. I am deeply fond of you both, and regret that you did not entrust me with a particular commission for her, which I would have carried out with great satisfaction. I wanted to appoint myself your proxy, but did not dare! French as she is, she would have recoiled ‘O Shoking ! shoking!’ and I would have been chased out of the house as a very awkward lover. Farewell, I kiss you, since you could not do that which I would have done willingly. But listen to me, forsooth, being outrageous!

théodore

Is Missery mad ? Nymphé told me all about it; marrying an ugly old woman because she has money!⁴¹⁹ The indignity of it! And to dare to do that [...] in Brittany and to take M Dulaz into his confidence. Ah! That part is truly charming. I should put it in a play! I really thought the future had more spirit – you must be furious am I right? Nymphé and I are furious here on your behalf.

⁴¹⁹ Edme Marie Louis Suremain de Missery (1806–1896) married Claire Charlotte Eugénie de Framery (1817–1912) on 7 January 1839 (ten years younger than her husband, she would have been twenty-two, so hardly ‘vieille’!).

Letter XXXVII

Lady Charlotte Guest to Théodore Hersart de la Villemarqué⁴²⁰

13 Grosvenor Sq.

14 March 1839

My dear Sir,

In forwarding to your address in town a Letter from Miss Angharad Lhwyd,⁴²¹ I wrote you a few lines to apologize for my husband not having been able to do himself the pleasure of calling upon you in consequence of his having been summoned somewhat suddenly into Wales – Not having since heard from you I think it probable you may have returned to Paris.

Availing myself of your kind permission to trouble you on the subject I venture to write to remind of your promise of sending me a description of the Latin Book about Sir Ywain (I believe a printed one) which you mentioned to me, as being preserved in the Library of the Arsenal.⁴²² Will you at the same time give me the reference to the MS from which your extracts from Erec and Enide were taken⁴²³ – and also the proper orthography of the Breton medicinal plant Morgantut?⁴²⁴

I hope we shall soon hear that you have been able to make the arrangements for your summer visit to our country, and that you will find Wales as beautiful as to her scenery as she is interesting in respect to her literature.

Sir John desires his best compliments & I remain

Yours very faithfully

C. Guest

Letter XXXVIII

⁴²⁰ Archives La Villemarqué LV 27.69. No post mark or address.

⁴²¹ Angharad Llwyd (1780–1866) was a prominent antiquarian and historian from north Wales. Her work on Anglesey, *The History of the Island of Mona*, won the essay prize at the Beaumaris eisteddfod in 1832.

⁴²² This text has not yet been identified.

⁴²³ *Érec et Enide* is the earliest of the romances written by Chrétien de Troyes; its equivalent tale in the three romances of the Welsh Mabinogion is *Geraint ab Erbin*.

⁴²⁴ In Guest's notes to *Geraint* she writes of Arthur's chief physician Morgan Tud that 'His reputation appears to have extended to Brittany, where the inhabitants still call by the name of Morgan Tut an herb, to which they ascribe the most universal healing properties' (Guest, *The Mabinogion*, II (1849) 163–64). Revisiting this in his *Contes populaires des anciens bretons* (1842) La Villemarqué changes the name of the plant to 'Morgan Hud' (magic Morgan) and links it to Morgan la Fée (p. 129).

Molly Anne Hanbury Leigh to Théodore Hersart de La Villemarqué⁴²⁵

(This is my own letter to you requiring an answer)

Ponty Pool Park

19 March 1839

My dear Count Hersart De la Villemarqué

The original Letter from Mr Jones (Tegid) who is quite a stranger to me I gave for your perusal to Mr W^m Jones of Clytha when here to take to you to Paris.⁴²⁶ But, as it often happens that letters by private hands are not so quick in travelling as by the Post, I shall send you **the two** (Copies) Letters I have received on your subject which will at once show you how impossible it is to get the manuscript transcribed so soon as you hoped and as the good Dr Foulkes wished.⁴²⁷ Indeed both Dr and Mrs Foulkes are most kind and most sincere friends of yours; so pray pray [sic] write whenever you have an opportunity to them to prove your remembrance of them, and they will be flattered.

All you now have to do is to write a line to me to tell me **where** you wish the manuscript that will be transcribed for you shall be sent: whether to Mr William Jones's care in Paris, for it will be a Month or six weeks perhaps before it can reach Paris. We hope you are quite well. The Lord Lieutenant joins me in kindest wishes to you. Pray believe me my dear Count Hersart de la Villemarqué your sincere friend

M A Hanbury Leigh

⁴²⁵ Archives La Villemarqué LV 27.060. No postmark or address. Enclosed are copies of letters from John Jones (Tegid) to Mrs Hanbury Leigh of 9 March 1839, and from Mrs Foulkes to Mrs Hanbury Leigh of 16 March 1839; both are transcribed here.

⁴²⁶ William Jones of Clytha House was one of the sons of Llanarth Court. See Letter XXXIII for the involvement of Mrs Hanbury Leigh and John Jones Tegid in procuring a transcription of the Welsh romance *Peredur*.

⁴²⁷ Dr Henry Foulkes, Principal of Jesus College, Oxford.

(Copy of Mr Jones's Letter to Mrs Hanbury Leigh)

Christ Church Oxford

March 9th 1839

Dear Mrs Leigh,

Last night I returned from Cheltenham where I had been celebrating St David's Day; & on my return here I found a letter from Comte de La Villemarqué wishing me to transcribe the Mabinogi of Peredur from Llyvyr Coch at Jesus College Library. If I remember rightly it occupies twenty Folio Leaves, the same size as the one prefixed to Lady Charlotte's 'Countess of the Well'. In each page there are two columns, and each column will take me half an hour, or thereabouts, to transcribe; it will therefore be next to impossible to copy the entire of Peredur under a month at least, for I have two Sermons to propose for every Sunday & besides I am occupied in preparing for the Press my Welsh version of Isaiah with notes. However I will begin on Monday, with transcribing, & proceed with it as speedily as I can, lamenting at the same time that there is no other individual in Oxford capable of undertaking the task. I wish there had been one; for I would rather pay the sum of £5 from my own Pocket to any one that could transcribe it, rather than to do it myself for that sum. Had my time been at my own command I would then set to work with pleasure; but my time is not my own. The present time is the most busy part of the year for me; for I am engaged, in addition to what I mentioned above, in preparing for the Press my Introduction to the Works of Lewis Glyn Cothi, giving an account of the Wars between the rival Roses & which must be ready before the Month of May. About three weeks ago I was requested by Lady Charlotte Guest to collect the third Mabinogi, but which I declined doing until after Easter.

All this I mention, not with a view of showing any reluctance to assist the Comte, but with the sole view of stating clearly how my time is taken up. Had the Comte allowed me to commence transcribing when he was at Oxford, the work would have been finished by this time. I assure you that it takes more time than anyone can imagine to transcribe or copy an Ancient Manuscript word for word, & letter for letter. I saw the Principal of Jesus College this morning & agreed with him to commence working on Monday. And during my absence at Cheltenham, he sent his servant every day to enquire whether I had returned or not. This circumstance will account for his not answering your letter on the subject of the Manuscript.

I have the honour to be

Yr most humble & obd^t serv^t

John Jones Tegid

(To Mrs Hanbury Leigh)

(Copy of Mrs Foulkes's Letter to Mrs Hanbury Leigh)

Jes— Coll

March 16th

I have been so great an invalid since I had the pleasure of receiving your letter that I have been unable to reply to it sooner, which I regret extremely [sic] for I have been anxious to tell you how we are situated with respect to Comte de La Villemarqué's affairs. As soon as Dr Foulkes received his Note about the Manuscript, he sent to Ch—Ch— to desire Mr Jones would come to him immediately, intending to set him to work directly. Unfortunately he was from home, but expected daily. This continued the case for nearly a week. When he made his Appearance we lost no time in communicating the Comte's wishes to him, he was willing to undertake it, but said it would take a much longer time than the Comte anticipated. He is now engaged upon it in Dr Foulkes's Library & we shall try to keep him to it as steadily as possible. But from his position here he has necessarily many interruptions. You may depend upon our forwarding it to you as soon as we can possibly get him to complete it, the interest I take in the Comte made me quite regret that there has been this delay I am quite fearful that it may be disadvantageous to his work and as your friend Dr Foulkes was particularly anxious to forward all his Views.

Dr Foulkes desires to present all his kind regards to Mr Hanbury Leigh and yourself with,
Dear Madam,

Yours most truly,

Mary Foulkes

Letter XXXIX

From John Jones (Tegid) to Théodore Hersart de la Villemarqué⁴²⁸

Christ Church Oxford March 28th 1839

My dear Comte

Herewith you will receive the transcript of Mabinogi Peredur from the Llyvyr Coch o Hergest which is in the archives of Jesus College, Oxford's Library. I took pains to make my letters clear so that the printer will find no difficulty in decyphering them. The transcript would have been completed much earlier had I time to apply more closely to the Manuscript. It will however, I trust, arrive in time. In a book entitled 'Druopaedia' by Jonathan William A. M. printed at Leominster in 1823.⁴²⁹ there occurs the following passage which if true would be interesting. See p. 84. notes. 'On a market day, in Algiers and also in the interior of the country, the Welsh language is spoken. See Greathead's letter to the Ant. Soc. in London.' At present I can hardly believe the above statement; but I think you could make some enquiries as the French are occupying Algiers.⁴³⁰ No harm can result from such an enquiry; and the ancient Welsh & the Phenician trafficked together – there may remain, in Africa, a tribe of Welsh origin.⁴³¹

Many thanks to you for the kind & friendly expressions contained in your last letter to me; and I trust the friendship that has commenced between us will ever remain unbroken; and uninterrupted. The transcript of Liber Landavensis has been completed, and will be very shortly in the press.⁴³² I find by the 'Standard' of to-day that Sir Watkin William Wynn continues to be very infirm; and unable to walk about.⁴³³ Young Watkin has made me a

⁴²⁸ Archives La Villemarqué LV 27.021. Addressed to 'Le Comte Hersart de La Villemarqué, Chez les Dames d'Acosta, Rue Garancière, No 12, Paris'.

⁴²⁹ Rev. Jonathan Williams, *Druopaedia; Or, a New and Interesting View of the Druidical System of Education* (Leominster, F. Went, 1823).

⁴³⁰ France had annexed the occupied territories of Algiers as a colony in 1834.

⁴³¹ The search for mythical Welsh-speaking tribes had been mostly focused on Native American groups (The Padoucas, or Madogwys) in north America. See Gwyn Williams, *Madoc, the Making of a Myth* (1979).

⁴³² For the publication of the *Book of Llandaff* see Letter XXIII from William Rees above.

⁴³³ For Sir Watkin Williams Wynn of Wynnstay (5th Baronet: 1772–1840) see Letter XVII above.

present of his father's likeness which you saw in his room & it is now hanging over my fireplace.

So far in English.

Yr wyv vi yn clywed yn vynyth oddi wrth Lady Hall. Y mae genthi barch mawr ichwi, ac y mae yn son llawer am danoch yn ei llythyrau. Dymunaf vinnau ichwi iechyd hir a llwyddiant ar eich gwaith.⁴³⁴

Should you think it necessary to collate the printed copy with the Llyvyr coch⁴³⁵ – please to send it to me here; and I will collate it with pleasure.

Wyv eich cyvaill⁴³⁶

Tegid

P.S. I met with the following book in the Bodleian Library 8vo 3.21 Th. Seld (it is in poetry)

a man es dezvou an Passion, ha he goude an Resurrection gan Tremenvan an Ytron Maria, ha he pemzec leuenez, hac en diwez ezedy buhez mab Den

Es Melo

Gant Pierre Marigay, imprimer & librer 1699⁴³⁷

To / Bardd Nizon

Please to accept two copies of Dr Davies's Grammar.⁴³⁸

Letter XL

⁴³⁴ 'I hear frequently from Lady Hall. She holds you in the highest respect and mentions you often in her letters. I wish you good health and success with your work'.

⁴³⁵ For Llyfr Coch Hergest (The Red Book of Hergest) see Letter XXXIII.

⁴³⁶ 'I am your friend'.

⁴³⁷ Pierre Marcigay, printer and bookseller at Saint-Malo at the end of the 16th century, published *Aman ez dezrou an Passion, ha he goude an Resurrection, gant Tremenvan an ytron Maria, ha he Pemzec leuenez, hac en diwez ezedy Buhez mab den* (1609).

⁴³⁸ The important Renaissance scholar Dr John Davies, Mallwyd (1567–1644) compiled a Welsh grammar in Latin, *Antiquae linguae Britannicae*, in 1621, and a Welsh-Latin/Latin-Welsh Dictionary in 1632.

John Jones (Tegid) to Molly Anne Hanbury-Leigh⁴³⁹Christ Church Oxford April 2nd 1839

Dear Mrs Leigh,

According to Mrs Foulkes' directions I forward you the transcript from the Llyvyr Coch for Comte de La Villemarquè. I have not nailed the Box down – thinking that you or M^r Jones of Llanarth may have something to send. You will find the nails inside.

I have the honor to be

Your most humble & Obed^t Sev^t

John Jones

Mrs Hanbury Leigh

⁴³⁹ Archives La Villemarquè LV 27.040. This is the transcription of *Peredur* which La Villemarquè had requested.

Letter XLI

From Sir H. Salusbury to Théodore Hersart de La Villemarqué⁴⁴⁰

Ponty Pool Park

Apr. 23 1839

Sir,

My kind friend Mrs Hanbury Leigh had requested me to write a few lines for her to you as since her bad cold she suffers more pain in her eyes than usual after writing ; but she feels anxious to acknowledge the receipt of both your kind letters and requests me to tell you that altho she is much flattered at the honor you intend her of dedicating one of the productions of your pen to her, in the English fashion, she would be much better pleased & is sure it would be more advantageous & forward the object of your wishes much more if you dedicated it in the English fashion to Dr Foulkes, Principal of Jesus College; as he is the head of the Welsh College at Oxford, she thinks the dedication of your work on Wales to him would be peculiarly appropriate.⁴⁴¹ Nevertheless should Dr Foulkes decline it, on your asking him, Mrs Hanbury Leigh would not then oppose your wish to dedicate it to her. As your kind intention is to benefit the noble Breton family fallen into distress,⁴⁴² Mr & Mrs Hanbury Leigh will have much pleasure in subscribing each 5£ to your work, and when it comes out will be glad to know where you would like them to transmit the money.

⁴⁴⁰ Archives La Villemarqué LV 27.038. Addressed to 'Monsieur Cte Hersart De la Villemarqué chez les Dames D'Acosta Rue Garanciere. N°- 12. Paris ou Rue et Hotel S^t-Germain desprès à Paris'. Postmarks: London 27 April 1839; Calais, 29 April 1839. Manuscript note in La Villemarqué's hand: "Inscrip. pour 10 exemplaires". The Salusbury family were a long-established and influential Welsh family mostly based in north Wales; the branch represented here had married into a family at Llanwern, Monmouthshire in the mid eighteenth century. Henry Vanne Salusbury was the younger brother of Charles (see note below).

⁴⁴¹ La Villemarqué never wrote a book entirely focused on Wales, but this must refer to his *Contes populaires des anciens Bretons précédés d'un essai sur l'origine des épopées chevaleresques de la Table-Ronde*, 2 vols (Paris: Coquebert, 1842). The work opens with a dedicatory letter to Mrs Hanbury Leigh, and in the introduction La Villemarqué writes about the Eisteddfod and his visit to Wales.

⁴⁴² The family has not yet been identified.

They are both much concerned to find you have been so unwell since your arrival in Paris, but hope before this reaches you, that you will be no longer on the invalid list, which it will give them great pleasure to hear by a few lines from your pen.

Mrs Hanbury Leigh trusts she will by that time be well enough to write to you herself, which she will have much pleasure in doing, therefore the sooner you write to her after receiving this letter the sooner you will receive her acknowledgement.

The Lord Lieutenant joins Mrs Hanbury Leigh in kind regards to you. Miss Nicholl and my brother Sir Charles Salusbury⁴⁴³ are here & desire their compliments, pray accept mine and I remain Sir Y^r ob^t S^t

Mrs Hanbury Leigh begs whenever you write that you will give full directive, your last was dated only Paris, therefore she is rather at a loss where to address.

⁴⁴³ Rev Sir Charles John Salusbury (b.1792) was well-known as an antiquarian of Monmouthshire.