

THE FLEMINGS IN PEMBROKESHIRE.

BY HENKY OWEN, F.S.A.

The curious story of the settlement of the Flemings in West Wales in the twelfth century, the last body of settlers who went to make up the English nation, has received scant notice from historians. The Norman invaders became, after a short time, absorbed in the conquered race ; but the Flemish colony remained for centuries a separate people, and took no small share in making the history of South Wales. The subject has been treated in an earlier number^ of this Journal, and was discussed at the Meeting of the Association at Tenby in 1851,^ in which discussion Bishop Thirlwall and Mr. E. A. Freeman took part Fen ton, when he came to treat of this matter, '* found the materials so scanty as to be compressed into the compass of a dozen lines V but Mr. Laws has found material for an interesting chapter in his History.*

Mr. Freeman speaks^ of the " legendary story" told in the Bruts^ of the Flemings having been driven out of their own country by an inundation. The story appears also in various English chronicles. Orderic Vitalis, a contemporary writer, who, although born in England, passed his life in Normandy, and may, therefore, be presumed to have had means of knowledge, tells the same story, but places the inundation at the end, and not at the beginning, of the reign of Henry I. But Orderic's dates are not always trustworthy. He says, in his Ecclesiastical History^ (1134), - " In Flan-
dria mare noctu redundavit et per vii milia repente

1 Arch. Camb,, II, i, 138. « /^^^ jj^ -^ 3^5

* Fen ton's Pembrokeshire^ p. 202.

* Law's Little England , p. 107.

* Freeman's Norman Conqtest, v, p. 854, note c. c.

^ Ed. Le PrevoBt, y, p. 42.

i

THE FLEMtKOS tH PiJfifitROKBSHtRE. 97

diffusum basilicas et turres et tuguria pariter operuit et innumera hominum milia pan periculo absorbuit. Sic mare miserorum punitonem in puncto peregit et coDfestim ad locum suum jussu Dei remeavit." In this Orderic is followed by the Flemish historian, De Let-
tenhove,^ who fixes the date immediately before the coming of William of Ypres to England to the assist-
ance of King Stephen.

But whether this story of the tidal wave be legend-

ary or not, the settlement of the Flemings in this country seems to have been due rather to political troubles in their own land and to the outlet required by the vigorous race to whom Gerald (who did not love them*) pays so high a compliment.^

There is evidence of intimate relations between England and Flanders during Anglo-Saxon times. As Mr. Freeman, in the note above referred to points out, the languages of the two nations were then much more alike than after they became fixed in their present form ;* and to explain how the modern Fleming of Roose speaks the English tongue it is not necessary to believe the fable of the Gwentian Brut that Henry I placed English among them to teach them the language.^

Tostig brought Flemings to England in 1066 to win the crown from his brother Harold.^ William the Conqueror married a daughter of the Count of Flanders,

^ I, p. 431. * See Gerald the Welshman, p. 158.

3 Rolls Edition, vi, p. 83.

* Matthew Paris (Hist. Angl., E. E., i, 381) has left us a picture of the Earl of Leicester's Flemish mercenaries in 1173, in their premature delight in having conquered the country, "choreas ducentes patna lingua saltitando cantabant

" Hoppe, hoppe, Wilekin, hoppe Wilekin, Engeland is min ant tin."

* Arch, Camh., Ill, x, App., p. 101. The chronicler gives it for his opinion that these Flemings were the plague of Djved and Deheubarth because of their deceits and lies, in which they excelled all who held sway in the Isle of Britain. But this compilation is only of interest as embodying later traditions.

@ Gaimar, Le\$tor%e des Engles, R. E., ii, p. 163. 5th sib., vol. zii. 7

98 THE f^LEMtNGS

and there were doubtless Flemings among the motley host which followed him to Hastings. Many of Matilda's countrymen soon followed to share in the spoils of the conquest. In 1067 we find William sending Flemish masons to build a Castle at Durham.^

William Rufus had Flemish mercenaries in his army in Normandy in his war against his brother Robert;* and Stephen employed them in large numbers,^ and his bodyguard, under William of Ypres, were as hateful to the Normans as to the Saxons.*

Gervase of Canterbury, a twelfth century writer, gives forcible expression to his hatred of the Flemings.

e calls them ***lupi Flandrenses*,^{^^} and states that "deposito, quod illi populo familiare et quasi proprium est, texendi officio catervatim in Angliam conflunt et famelicorum more luporum terram Anglicanam ad nichilum redigere studuerunt."[®] He accused them "qui Duci et paci invidebant" of attempting to murder Henry, Duke of Normandy,[^] which may account for an expression of opinion of the Duke when he had become King of England, "quia eo iudice inter omnes populos gens sunt detestabilis."[®]

It may safely be argued that during the first three Norman reigns large bodies of Flemings, industrial as well as military, settled in different parts of England.

It is related in the chronicles that Henry I, who had strengthened and settled the Scottish frontier, and in whose reign the first border castles were built, collected the Flemings and planted them first in the waste lands upon the Tweed, and afterwards[®] removed them to what is now the Hundred of Roose, in the county of Pembroke.

[^] Gaimar, ii, 172. * Orderic, iv, 45.

³ 76trf., V, 81, 127. See also Gervase of CaDterbnrj, HUt. AngL Script. X, 1346, 6, and William of MalmesbnTj, Bistoria Novella[^] R. E., ii, 540. * Orderic, v, 84.

⁵ Gervase, 1426, 341. « Ibid,, 1349, 65. [^] /j[^]-[^], 1376, 11.

⁸ Matthew Paris, Hist AngL, R. E., i, 300.

[^] HoliDshed, anno 1107, says that they were settled on the Tweed for four years (see p. 100 below).

IN i>fmbrok:eshire. 99

The principal authorities are : - Florence of Worcester ;* " Rex Anglorum Henricus (I) Flandrenses qui Northimbriam incolebunt cum tota supellectili sua (bag and baggage) in Waloniam transtulit et terram quosB Ros nominatur incolere prsecepit." Orderic,[^] who was born on the Welsh borders: "Tunc (1134) Guali Britones a cunctis gentibus quae sub regis Henrici ditione consistunt vehementer afflicti sunt et plurimae regiones eorum Flandrensibus datae sunt/' Alfred of Beverley.[^] "Additur hiis et nostro tempore sexta nacio; i.e., Flandrenses, qui de patria sua venientes in regione Mailros in confinio Gualiarum jubente rege Henrico habitationem acceperunt. Qui hue usque in insulam cater vatim confluentes, nee minus quam indigen« armis et milicia potentes. magnam sibi terram in ea parte sub Normannis militantes acquisierunt. Quorum crebra in insulam confluentia et inter Normannos cohabitatio, quousque procedat, sequens aetas videbit." William of Malmsbury :[^] " Walenses rex Henricus (J) semper in rebellion em surgentes crebris expeditionibus in deditionem premebat : consilioque salubri nixus ut

eorum tumorem extenuaret, Flandrenses omnes Angliae accolas eo traduxit. Plures enim, qui tempore patris pro materna cognatione confluerant, occultabat Anglia adeo ut ipsi regno pro multitudine onerosi viderentur : qua propter cum substantiis et necessitudinibus apud Ros provinciam Walliarum, velutin sentinam conpressit, ut et regnum defsecaret et hostium brutam temeritatem retunderet." And again : ** Porro rex Henricus (I) excellentis ingenii vir, qui modo regnat, invenit qua commenta illorum [the projects of the Welsh] labefactaret arte, Flandritis in patria illorum convocatis qui eis pro claustro sint et eos perpetuo coerceant.^ Brompton: **Hiis temporibus (7th Hen. I) gens Flandrise propter desolationem

^ Chron. ex Ohron., Anno nil, Eng. Hist. Soc., ii, 64. See also Alfred of Beverley, ed. Heame, ix, 78. * V, 43.

' T, 4. Observe the prophecy, at the end of this passage, of the future excellence of the people in whom the blood of the Normans and Flemings is mixed.

* De Gest. Reg. Angl., R. E., ii, 477. * Ibid., ii, 365.

7«

100 THE FLEMINGS

patriae sub per jactantiam sequorae arensis diu vagabunda, locum a rege Henrico expetit, qui orientalem plagam Anglise juxta fluvium Tywys prirao eis concessit, quos tandem postea sub anno regni sui xi in Westwaloniam apud Ros et Haverford transduxit."^ In David Powel's Historie of Cambria the account of the chroniclers is Englished thus (the quaint language is spoilt in the later editions): *'The yeare 1108 the rage of the sea did overflow and drowne a great part of the lowe countrie of Flanders, in such sort that the inhabitants were driven to seeke themselves other dwelling places, now came to King Henrie and desired him to give them some void place to remaine in : who being verie liberall of that which was not his owne, gave them the land of Ros in Dyvet, or West Wales, and there they remaine to this dale, as may well be perceived by their speach and conditions, farre different from the rest of the countrie."^ In the translation of Sir John Prise's Description of Camhriay prefixed to the same work, it is said that the " Normans and Flemings who doe remaine and inhabit about Tenbie, Penbrooke, and in Ros to this dale, can neither Welsh nor good English as yet."5

The above chroniclers are all contemporary writers, but a passage in Higden,^ who wrote in the early part of the fourteenth century, is worth citing : " Flandrenses tempore regis Henrici (I) in magna copia juxta Mailros ad orientalem (?) Anglise plagam habitationem pro tempore accipientes . . . jubente eodem rege ad occidentalem Wallise partem apud Haverford sunt translati." Mailros is the ancient name of both Melrose in

the county of Roxburgh and of Marloes in the county of Pembroke if it would appear that Higden alludes to the former and Alfred of feeverley to the latter place, where, according to Fenton,* was one of the few strongholds of a Flemish chieftain in Roose.

1 Hist. AngL Scrip. X, 1003,21. 2 ej. 1584, p. 163.

* P. 18. 4 Polychromcon, R. E., ii, 162.

5 See Owen's Femhrokeshire, p. 292. • Pembrokeshire, p. 163.

IN PEMBROKESHIRE. 101

Of the Welsh chronicles, the Annales Camhrice merely state " Annus MCVIII. Flandreuses ad Kos veneiTint".^ The Brut y Tywysogion places the invasion in the year

1105 ; it relates the story of the encroachment of the sea in Flanders, and says that the Flemings, who had been concealed somewhere in Britain for a number of years, seized the whole cantred of Roose and entirely expelled the inhabitants.* Both chronicles have numerous allusions to the subsequent actions of the Welsh Flemings. How completely the inhabitants were driven out may be seen at this day by the absence of Welsh place-names in Roose. In Castle-martin, the other purely English hundred of the county, in which there were Flemish colonies, numerous Welsh place-names are still left. In the Gwentian Brut^ we have accounts of two settlements in Roose, one in

1106 and the other in 1113, in either case preceded by an inundation in Flanders ; but the acquaintance of the chronicler with the subject may be gathered from his statement that the first settlers remained for a few years and then disappeared.

It is probable that the Flemings came by sea, and their traditional landing-place is Sandy Haven, a creek on the north of Milford Haven.^ Verstigan, who improves on the story of the inundation by telling us that there were divers steeples which still appeared at low water to testify to it, follows another and later account that the Flemings were first settled by Henry I at Carlisle, but this may merely have been their point of departure for South Wales. ^

Henry II immediately after his accession expelled Stephen's Flemish mercenaries (whom, as appears above, he had good cause for hating) from England. Brompton^ says that he sent to uieir own countries all the foreign soldiers : '* et maxime Flandrenses quorum

1 B. E., p. 34. « R. E., p. 81.

* Arch. Camb.y III, x, App., pp. 89, 101.

* Fen ton '8 Pembrokeshire, p. 178. ^ Restitution, p. 100.

« Ui sup., 1043, 55.

102 THE FLEMINGS

tunc in Anglia magna fuit multitudo." Matthew Paris[^] gives the same account, but Trevet[^] adds : " Quorum nonnuUos ad marchiam transtulit Walliae occidentalis/'

That some came to Dyved is probable, even if there were no better authority for the statement than the Gwentian compiler,[^] who also asserts that a large body of English marauders joined the Flemings there at the end of Henry's reign.* If the story is of any value it goes to show that the languages of the two peoples could not have been very dissimilar.

There was a further expulsion of Flemish mercenaries from England in the time of John. Matthew Paris, in his version of Magna Charta,[@] mentions the Flemings by name among the foreigners to be expelled, and states that the Flemings in John's army " nee Deum timebant nee homines reverebantur."[@] The later importations of Flemings were probably of the military type, but hemmed in, as the colony was, between the deep sea and the Welsh, they must all have learnt the use of arms.

Mr. Freeman (loc. cit) argues that Roose must have had a wider meaning than the modern hundred, as he states that the settlement included the whole of the south of the county. But it would seem that the Flemings from Koose had only isolated bodies in Castlemartin, as they had in other parts of the county, and, indeed, along the whole coast of South Wales as far as Gower. There are Flemingstons in Castlemartin. Such a name would have no meaning in Roose, where every ton was a Flemingston. Gerald, who knew his native country well, evidently looks upon Roose as the head quarters of the race, whence they spread elsewhere. He speaks of the

1 HisL AngL, R. E., i, p. 300. Chron, Maj,, R. E., ii, p. 205.

* Triveti Annates[^] Enpf. Hist. Soc, p. 36.

» Ut supra, p. 127. * Ut supra, p. 141.

6 CAron. MaJ., R. E., ii, p. 604. « Jind., ii, p. 636.

IN PEMBROKESHIRE. 105

" Flandrenses de Ros "[^] and of the " Flandrenses tam extra Ros quam intra. "[^] He mentions Flemish colonies in Dungleddy (it is obvious that they were strong in the parts of that lordship near Haveiford) and in the old Norse settlement at Angle.' That the Flemings soon spread over to the south of Milford Haven is evident from the return of the Sheriff of Pembroke-

shire in the Pipe Roll of the Exchequer, now attributed to the twenty-first year of Henry I, in which Godebert **Flandrensis de Ros", and two other Flemings, Walin and Witson, are mentioned.* It would be interesting to know how far the Norse, who had left so strong a mark in the map of Pembrokeshire, had survived to Gerald's time. They then still held the opposite coast of Ireland, and the old Norse crossinor to Druston Chins in Roose was in use in the time of Henry 11.^ The connection between Wexford and Roose was maintained to the time of Queen Elizabeth, when the Irish (whose descendants can still be traced) swarmed over with their bad manners and their whiskey, as George Owen so plaintively laments.*

Gerald says of the Flemings : " Gens haec originem a Flandria ducens, ab Anglorum rege Henrico prime ad hos fines habitandum transmissa. Gens fortis et robusta, gens lanificiis usitatissima, nunc ad aratrum nunc ad arma gens promptissima."'' The Pembrokeshire farmer still calls a furrow a vooVy in the language of the men who taught him the use of the plough; and the Flemish Way remains as a memorial, not of those who made it, but, as George Owen points out,® of the race who were so prompt in arms in their forays on the Welsh of Northern Pembrokeshire. Of their "lanificia", their hereditary craft, the tucking and carding mills (in modern Flemish di^kkend and haerdend) bear witness.

1 R. E., i, p. 24 2 7^j^^ p^ 28. » Ibid.

- Htinter's editiou, Record Commission, p. 136.
- See The Song of Dermot and the Earl (Orpen), p. 215.
- Owen's Pembrokeshire, p. 40. ^ R. E., vi, p. 83.
- ® Owen's Pembrokeshire, p. 104.

104 . THE FLEMINGS

Higderiy writing in the first half of the fourteenth century, says : ** Flandrenses qui occidua Walliee incolunt, dimissa jam barbarie, Saxonice satis proloquuntur.^ But, as Mr. Freeman has shown, they probably from the first spoke Saxonice. Humfrey lAuyd merely states that they did not speak Welsh : " Flandrenses in hunc diem utque moribus et lingua a Cambris diversis cognoscuntur ' ; * and (in Twynes's translation) : " The Flemmings being driven out of their country by breaking in of the sea tooke upon them the possession of Rosse, a province of Demetia. Who, in many warres were provoked by the Princes of Wales, but always valiantly defended them selves and theirs and at this day differing from the Welshmen in tongue and manners, are yet in the same place recompted for Flemmynges."'

But a better authority, the Elizabethan historian of

the county, speaking of the banishment by Henry II of the Flemings whom Stephen had brought to England, when *' he sent some of them to their cozens in Penbrokeshire", tells us that there was no difference, in his day, between the Flemings and the other English inhabitants,^ although in his praise of the people of the county for their gentleness, industry, and " true and plaine dealinge", he admits that they were the true " heires of those ancient Ffleminges'* Yet early in the previous century they seem to have maintained their distinctive character as a race, when they nearly succeeded in putting an end to the career of Owen Glyndwr.®

Fenton, following (as ever) George Owen,*^ says that the Flemish settlers included few men of rank, but were mainly soldiers and artificers.® It is probable

^ Polychromcon^ R. E., ii, p. 158.

^ Comm, Brit, descfrag.^ ed. 1572, p. 64.

* The Breviary of Britayne, ed. 1573, p. 58.

* Owen's Pembrokeshire^ p. 17. ^ Ibid,^ p. 43.

^ See Arch. Camb,, II, ii, 30.

"^ Owen's Pembrokeshire^ p. 17.

* Fentoi's Pembrokeshire^ pp. 203, 429.

IN Pembrokeshire. 105

that many of the castles in which Pembrokeshire is so rich were due to Flemish builders, and that we owe to them the church towers which are a distinctive feature of the district ; hut as early as the time of Gerald, a Fleming, Rickert, the son of Tankard, held the important post of Castellan of Haverford.^

It is not easy to appropriate among the various Teutonic races the place-names of Little England. The adventurers of Western Europe, who followed the standard of the Conqueror, are roughly spoken of as Normans ; and the settlers in the county in Norman times were probably of a mixed origin, as (jeorge Owen^ says, Normans, Flemings, and English were for many years sent down to maintain the garrisons. There was also a continuous stream of people from the opposite coast of Devon and Somerset. Many local words are still in use on both sides of the Channel. Gerald'^ speaks of the "publicus transfretantium transitus" between Milford and the opposite coast, which proved such a source of perplexity to brother Philip of Manorbier.

There is reason to believe that among the homesteads founded by persons of the Flemish race are Herbrandston, Harmeston {Harmerston% Hubberston

Huhertstan)^ Jordanston, Lambston {Lamhertsto7i)y Loveston (Luelston), Rogerston, Ripperston, Tankardston, Walterston, JJ zmsiston (Osmondston) , and probably some of the numerous Williamstons. Frowlynchirch (mentioned in the Black Book of St David! s) has been identified with the Church of Our Lady at Spital.^

The interesting vocabulary of the dialect of English Pembrokeshire has not yet been treated upon scientific principles, and to do so would require a more extended

^ R. E., vi, p, 85.

^ Owen's Fembrokeshirey p. 17. ' R. E., i, p. 189.

^ Tlie names given in brackets are the forms under which they appear in Latin records.

* See Owen's Pembrokeshire^ p. 342.

106 THE FLEMINGS IN PEMBROKESHIRE.

knowledge of the early form of the various languages than the writer can lay claim to. The following specimen words, with their equivalents in modern Flemish,^ are given, although for the reasons above stated as to the place-names, it is not possible to speak with confidence : -

Bully ho, a bogey, buUehak ; blinch, a glance, blik ; clapSy idle tales. Happen ; coglins, little balls, kogden ; dysd, a thistle, distd ; erger, to wrangle, ergeren ; JiUy, tawdry, jveltery ; hattrick, charlock, hadik ; maund, a basket, mand ; nesh, feeble, nesch ; pilk, to butt, pihken ; scadly, evil, schadelyk; slinky poor, slinksch. While those staunch conservatives, the children, in their sports, when they push a swing, say that they are playing Sitjingel offen (schongel aqffen).

If it be true that a nation, as a language, is the stronger in proportion to the diversity of the materials which make up its component parts, the loyal old county historian may. have had some ground for the belief which he sets forth in his eloquent chapter on the " Worthynes of Penbrokshire." The different races have in the course of centuries been welded together, - Welsh, Norse, Norman, Fleming or Saxon, they are all Pembrokeshire men.

^ See Olinger's Vlaemsd^Fransch Woordenboek, 1839. Some Pembrokeshire words have been attributed to the Walloons ; but there is no evidence that thej accompanied their Flemish neighbours, and the words might equally be derived from some other Romance source.