WELSH STUDIES
By T. J. MORGAN

We are now in a better position to view the scholarship of the medieval bardic schools, as the texts of their grammars have been critically edited and published by G. J. Williams and E. J. Jones. (It would be well to note that the 1856 edition by John Williams ab Ithel bearing the title *Dosparth Edeyrn Dafod Eur* in which two texts were published is very unsatisfactory and misleading.) The editing of the Welsh texts is the work of G. J. Williams, and altogether he describes in his introduction seventy-nine versions (including Balliol College Library, 352, discovered when the book was in press and described in the postscript), whose dates range from c. 1400 to the early seventeenth century. These versions vary considerably, as would be expected, in length and in detail, but broadly speaking, they divide themselves into two periods, (a) before 1450, the versions which discuss the metrics and prosody of the earlier school of poetry before *cynganedd* became systematized and to be applied universally, (b) the later versions which include some new metres and the rules of *cynganedd*. The versions of the two periods constitute two main sections, the first parts contain what we would call phonology and syntax, and in these there is essentially very little difference in treatment in the two periods. It is in the latter part devoted to the details of metrics, *cynganedd* and the list of 'forbidden mistakes', that we find the differences which mark off the two periods.

The pure grammar of the first parts is not based on Welsh, although in most cases Welsh examples are used, but derived from medieval Latin primers, with the result that rules and definitions peculiar to Latin are absurdly wrapped around Welsh. The aim of the grammar is not the teaching of Welsh nor even Latin, but to define the principles of the science of grammar in the abstract. The selections made by E. J. Jones from the texts assembled in Kiel’s *Grammatici Latini*, which are contained in Appendix D, are intended to show the possible sources of the pure grammar portions of the Welsh texts.

Three copies of the earlier period are printed in full, a fourth (Bangor MS. 1) having already been published in BBCS 11, 186–200; followed by a portion of a fifth version which deals with the 'forbidden errors'. Then midway between the versions of the two periods, a text which is purely and simply a Latin grammar translated into Welsh. Then comes the standard text of the second period, Simwnt Vychan’s ‘Five Books of Poesy’, in which the pure grammar portions are fuller and the method of definition is more developed although still strained to fit Latin rules. Also the great changes in poetic style which took place early in the fifteenth century and established by the bardic sessions of the sixteenth are reflected in the sections on prosody. In addition to this, several extracts from various other texts are printed where they show a difference in subject-matter or bring out some point with greater clarity. In the appendices there are other texts which belong to the domain of bardic studies, e.g. the classifications of the spiritual and earthly orders, the seven arts and instructions on accuracy in reading.

In his introduction (pp. cvii), G. J. Williams, together with describing and comparing the many texts, discusses the scanty information that exists concerning the two figures whose names are associated with the composition of these grammars, Einion Offeiriad and Dafydd Ddu o Hiraddug. He gives a detailed analysis and criticism of the contents and principles of the grammars and an account of the method and nature of the instruction in the medieval bardic schools.

In YWML, iv, 171, a sketch was given of Professor Ifor Williams’s theory (in PBA, 1932) concerning the poems associated with the name of Llywarch Hen. Professor Williams has now brought together into one volume all the poems and fragments which belong to this particular style of lyric poetry, and which were, according to the theory, the lyrics of early sagas, the prose parts of which were completely lost when the oral tradition came to an end. The poems are first of all divided into two main themes, those which belong to Llywarch Hen proper and were at one time fitted into a saga which told the exploits and wanderings of the ill-fated sixth century chieftain; and the poems which

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2 Ifor Williams, Canu Llywarch Hen, gyda Rhagymadrodd a Nodiadau, Caerdydd, Gwasg Prifysgol Cymru, 1935.