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HOW GREEN WAS MY VALLEY



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HOW GREEN WAS MY VALLEY

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Introduction

ABOUT EIGHTY YEARS AGO, coal-mine owners in Wales considered it cheaper to dump coal-mine refuse on the hillsides than to haul it back inside the earth. Some valleys in South Wales still have these unsightly slag heaps, and the result is cold and black ugliness.

How Green Was My Valley is a magnificent novel about life in such a mining community before it had become a "depressed area." It is the chronicle of the Morgans, a large family back in the 80's and 90's, whose living depended on coal mining. In those days, the Valley was still green and thriving and coal slag had only just begun to blacken the landscape.

In a mood of nostalgia, Huw, next-youngest of the Morgans, some fifty years afterward, recalls the lost, happy days of his youth. Now the slag pile has engulfed the village he knew as a child. An old man full of memories, he is about to leave the Valley forever. The novel is made up of Huw's rememberings. As the story unfolds, the reader feels—with Huw—that "there is no fence or hedge round Time that has gone. You can go back and have what you like if you remember it well enough."

They were a fine family, the Morgans, in the little house on the hillside. The father was a gentle, loving tyrant, one of the most upright and honored of all the men in the Valley; the mother, comely, impulsive, and shrewd, warmed the home with her spirit; and there were six sons and three daughters. Hardworking people they were, the Morgans, and their lives, though simple and primitive were full and rich with the things that money will not buy.

The time came, however, when change was at hand. The best veins of coal were worked out; cheap labor flooded the Valley; wages were cut. Huw's father, Gwilym Morgan, a leader in the Valley, had always put his trust in moral judgments and reasonable argument. But new factors now began to enter in, and arguments failed. Though weak in organization and lacking real conviction, the miners struck. They won the strike, but wages were lower than before. That was only the beginning. Other strikes followed; increasing bitterness and strife lay ahead; the village knew hunger. Davy

and Owen, Huw's older brothers, fought hard to build the union. They were struggling, however, with more powerful forces than they knew, which struck them down with the years. The pit closed, leaving 400 men idle—and outside men were flocking to work in the coal mines.

Times grew blacker as the slag pile rose higher and crept nearer. Strangers came to the Valley, and alien ideas finally prevailed over the moral principles of former times. At last there was open war in the Valley. All was chaos, and hope was gone. But that came after the Morgans had been scattered to remote parts of the world, and Gwilym himself didn't live to see much of it.

To many readers, the term *conflict* may seem too dramatic for the struggle that takes place within the heart and mind of young Huw. He manages quite well to take in his stride the slings and arrows that come his way, largely because he is a member of a family characterized both by mutual love and by respect for the individual. This does not mean that Huw leads a dull or placid life. On the contrary, he is often the central figure in events that are, by turn, comic, tragic, and even violent. Still, he seems to absorb the essence of each experience without undue inner turmoil or bitterness.

There is not a character or an incident in this remarkably beautiful story of the Morgan family which does not have some basis in fact. The Valley is not one valley, but a dozen, in South Wales. There were many Gwilym Morgans and Reverend Gruffydds. Conflicts went on, exactly as the author describes them, though Mr. Llewellyn used the writer's privilege of rearranging facts.

How Green Was My Valley has been justly acclaimed for its memorable characters, its intensity of emotion, and for the simplicity and poetic beauty of its language. Everything is here: comedy, tragedy, love, conflict, action, heroism, and sacrifice. Yet the crisp, salty Welsh humor serves as healthy proof against sentimentality.

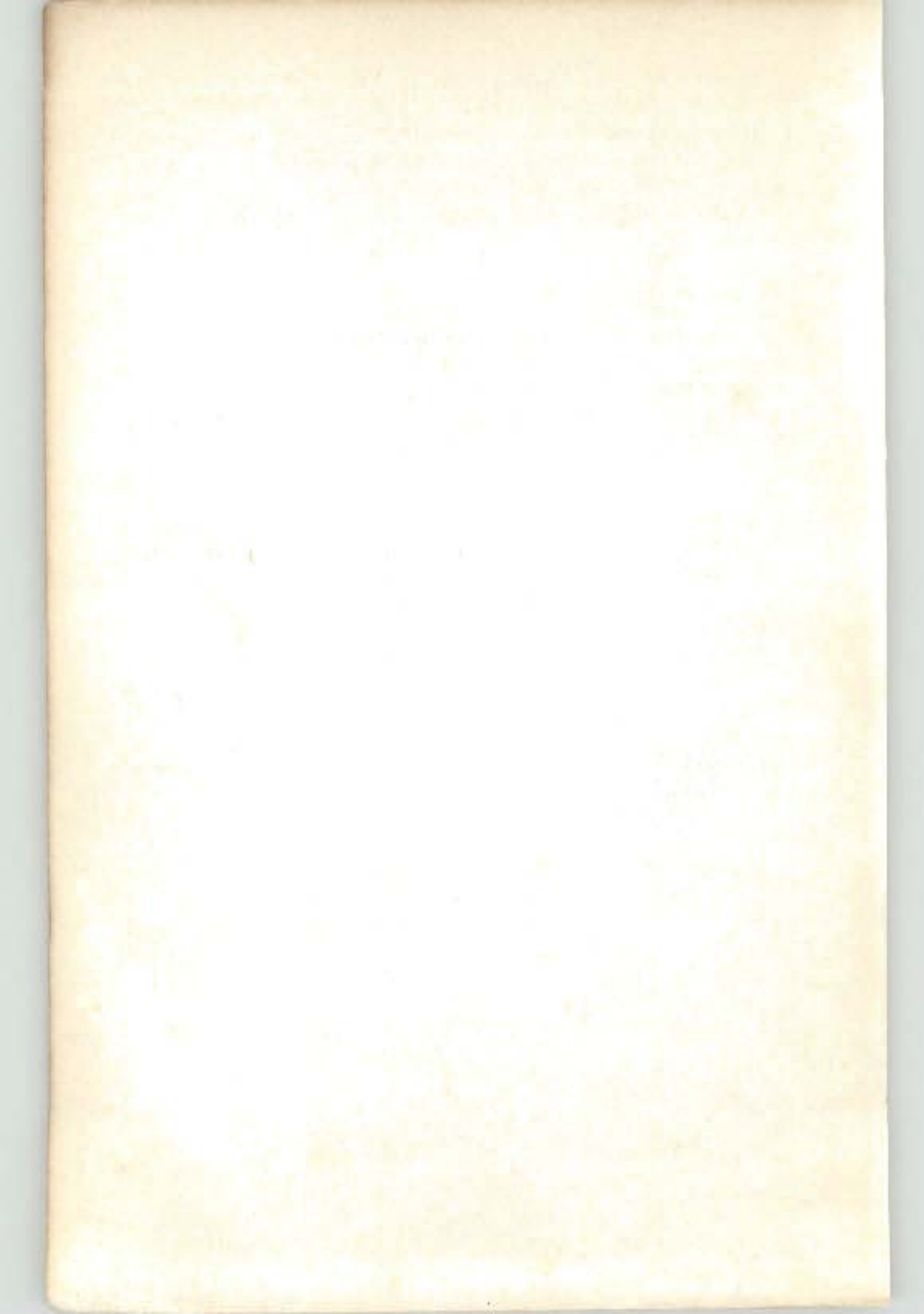
Published in Great Britain in 1939, *How Green Was My Valley* sold 50,000 copies in four months. It went far past 100,000 in the United States, when it was published here in 1940. Even now, its continued and steady sale shows its popular appeal. It won the National Book Award the year it was published. Filmed in 1941, it won an "Oscar" as the best picture of the year, and is still shown to delighted audiences on television.

It has been said that *How Green Was My Valley* has done more than all its predecessors to show the Welsh people as they really are. Written in the romantic tradition, yet resonant with realism and profound truth, it has been called the prose epic of the Welsh nation.

To the Teacher:

There are several ways in which you might approach the reading of this novel. One that has proved both fruitful and pleasurable is to allow students to complete a fairly rapid reading of the entire novel and then discuss the most significant ideas, events, and characters. (See "Viewing the Novel as a Whole," page 495.) As students differ in their interpretations and opinions, they recognize both the need and value of a more careful reading of a number of passages—perhaps entire chapters—and a closer examination of reasons and motives, of relationships, and of changes which occurred within the characters. This recognition provides excellent motivation for a systematic study of groups of chapters, followed by a discussion focused on the specific rather than the general. (See "Study Questions," page 498.)

Should you prefer another approach—perhaps beginning with a systematic study—you will find the study helps equally useful. As these helps were prepared, it was assumed that each teacher would not only select what served his purpose and the needs of his class but would also use them at such time and in such order as seemed most advisable.

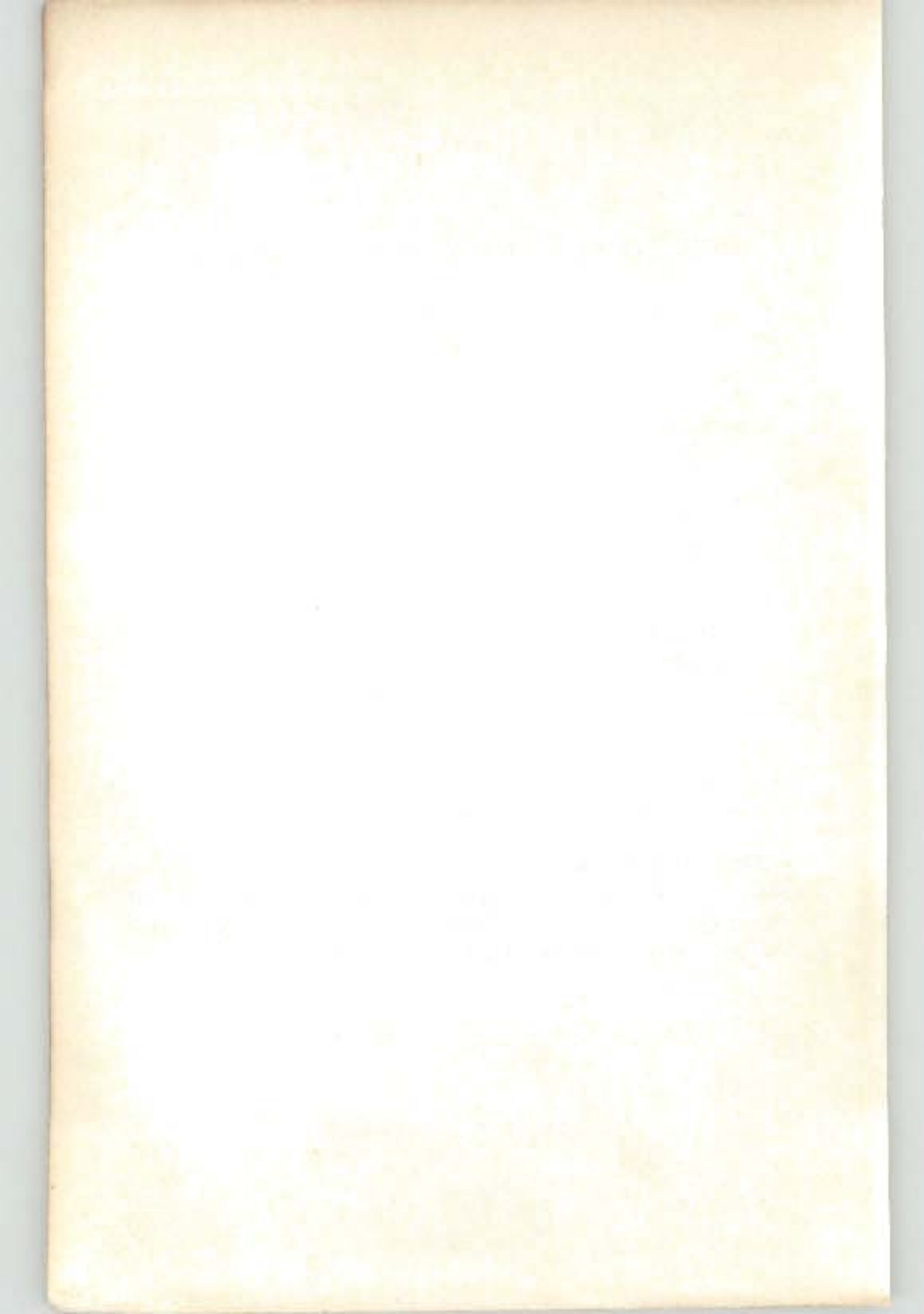


GUIDE TO PRONUNCIATION OF WELSH NAMES

GWILYM	GWIL-UM
CERIDWEN	KERR-ID-WEN
ANGHARAD	ANG-HAH-RAHD
IANTO	YAN-TOH
IESTYN	YES-TIN
MERDDYN GRUFFYDD	MERR-THIN GRIFFITH
CEINWEN	KINE-WEN
CYFARTHA	KUH-VARR-THA
DAI BANDO	DI BAHN-DOH ('Ah' short)
HWFA PRYSE	HIW-VAH PRICE
TWM	TUM
CYNLAIS	KUNN-LICE
MEIRDDYN	MIRE-RR-THIN
CLYDACH	KLUD-ACH
CEDRIC	KEDD-RICK
MARGED	MARR-GED
RHYS	REECE
GADWALLADR	KAD-WAL-ADDER

The exact pronunciation of Welsh words into English is made possible only by the use of many English words to show each shade of sound. I shall be forgiven for simplifying in the barest manner so that the names may have at least some semblance of their true sounds.

R. L.



*HOW
GREEN
WAS MY
VALLEY*

THE
LIBRARY
OF THE
MUSEUM OF
COMPARATIVE ZOOLOGY
AT HARVARD UNIVERSITY
CAMBRIDGE, MASS.

Chapter One

I AM going to pack my two shirts with my other socks and my best suit in the little blue cloth my mother used to tie round her hair when she did the house, and I am going from the Valley.

This cloth is much too good to pack things in and I would keep it in my pocket only there is nothing else in the house that will serve, and the lace straw basket is over at Mr. Tom Harries', over the mountain. If I went down to Tossall the Shop for a cardboard box I would have to tell him why I wanted it, then everybody would know I was going. That is not what I want, so it is the old blue cloth, and I have promised it a good wash and iron when I have settled down, wherever that is going to be.

It has always seemed to me that there is something big to be felt by a man who has made up his mind to leave the things he knows and go off to strange places. I felt the same for the rose cuttings I took from the garden down to the cemetery. But men are different from flowers for they are able to make up their own minds about things. And that should make the feeling bigger, I think.

But all I have felt this past hour since I made up my mind is an itch between my shoulders where a piece of wood got threaded in my shirt while it was blowing on the fence to dry. I felt very badly just now, mind, when I said good-bye to Olwen, but since I did not actually say good-bye to her, and she has no notion I am going, it does not seem the same as saying good-bye properly, so I am feeling perhaps better than I should in false pretences.

This old blue cloth is a worry to me now, for I keep having thoughts that it might be torn or lost and I would have it on my conscience for the rest of my life. Even when I was very small I can remember my mother wearing it. Her hair was fair and curly, thick to choke the teeth of the comb and always very pretty even when it turned white.

My father met her when she was sixteen and he was twenty. He

came off a farm to make his way in the iron works here, and as he came singing up the street one night he saw my mother drawing the curtains upstairs in the house where she was working. He stopped singing and looked up at her, and I suppose she looked down to see why he had stopped. Well, they looked and fell in love.

Mind, if you had said that to my mother she would have laughed it off and told you to go on with you, but I know because I had it from my father. They were married in six weeks after that in the worst winter for years. We have had terrible winters since, but my father always said there would never be another winter like that one when my mother and him were married. They used to get up in the morning and find their breath had frozen to thin ice on the bedclothes.

Things were very rough in those days. There were no houses built for the men and married people were forced to live in barns and old sheds until enough houses were built. There was a lot of money made over houses, too. My father was paying rent on this one for more than twenty years before he bought it outright. I am glad that he did, because if he had not, my mother would have had nowhere to go these past few years.

But in those days money was easily earnt and plenty of it. And not in pieces of paper either. Solid gold sovereigns^o like my grandfather wore on his watch-chain. Little round pieces, yellow as summer daffodils, and wrinkled round the edges like shillings, with a head cut off in front, and a dragon and a man with a pole on the back. And they rang when he hit them on something solid. It must be a fine feeling to put your hand in your pocket and shake together ten or fifteen of them, not that it will ever happen to anybody again, in my time, anyway. But I wonder did the last man, the very last man who had a pocketful of them, stop to think that he was the last man to be able to jingle sovereigns.

There is a record for you.

It is nothing to fly at hundreds of miles an hour, for indeed I think there is something to laugh about when a fuss is made of such nonsense. But only let me see a man with a pocketful of sovereigns to spend. And yet everybody had them here once.

When the men finished working on Saturday dinner-time, my

^o For all words followed by this symbol, see Glossary, page 511.

mother would hear the whistle and run to put the old stool outside the front door to wait for my father and my brothers coming up the Hill.

I have often stood outside the door looking down the Valley, seeing in my mind all the men coming up black with dust, and laughing in groups, walking bent-backed because the street is steep and in those days it was not cobbled.^o

The houses, of course, are the same now as they were then, made of stone from the quarries. There is a job they must have had carting all those blocks all those miles in carts and wains^o and not one road that you could call really good, because the land was all farms, then.

All the women used to dress up specially in their second best with starched stiff aprons on a Saturday morning, for then the men were paid when they came off the midday shift.

As soon as the whistle went they put chairs outside their front doors and sat there waiting till the men came up the Hill and home. Then as the men came up to their front doors they threw their wages, sovereign by sovereign, into the shining laps, fathers first and sons or lodgers in a line behind. My mother often had forty of them, with my father and five brothers working. And up and down the street you would hear them singing and laughing and in among it all the pelting jingle of gold. A good day was Saturday, then, indeed.

My father and my brothers used to go out in the back to the shed to bathe in summer, but in winter they came into the kitchen. My mother filled the casks with hot water and left wooden buckets full of hot and cold for sluicing^o. When they had finished and put on their best clothes they came in the kitchen for the Saturday dinner, which was always special.

Sunday, of course, there was no cooking allowed unless my father was going down to the pit to see into some matter or other, and even then my mother was very careful.

But Saturday was always good with us. Even I can remember that, but only when I was small, mind.

We always had hams in the kitchen to start with, all the year round, and not just one ham, but a dozen at a time. Two whole pigs hang-

ing up in one kitchen, ready to be sliced for anybody who walked through the door, known or stranger. We had a hen house for years in the back yard, here. Fine white and brown hens, and you should have seen the eggs they laid. Brown, and dark speckly brown, and some almost pink, and all as big as your fist. I can just remember going out and crawling in the straw to the nests while the hen was shouting and flapping her old wings at me, and laying hold of one, very warm, and so big for my little hands that I had to hold it to my chest to carry it back to Mama in the kitchen. Hens have got a funny smell with them, one that comes, I think, from their feathers, just as a man will have his own smell about him. That smell of hens is one of the homeliest smells it is possible to put your nose to. It makes you think of so much that was good that has gone.

But when we used to sit down to dinner on Saturday, it was lovely to look at the table. Mind, in those days, nobody thought of looking at the table to keep the memory of it living in their minds.

There was always a baron^o of beef and a shoulder or leg of lamb on the dishes by my father. In front of him were the chickens, either boiled or roast, or ducks, or turkey or goose, whatever was the time of the year. Then potatoes, mashed, boiled and roast, and cabbage and cauliflower, or peas or beans and sometimes when the weather was good, all of them together.

We used to start with Grace, all standing up and Mama holding me in the crook of her arm. My father used to close his eyes tight and look up at the stain on the ceiling, holding his hands out across the table. Sometimes when he opened his eyes he would catch me looking at him and shake his fist at me and say I would come to a bad end, in play, of course. Then Mama would tell him to go on with him and leave me alone.

But indeed, so far my poor old father has been so right I have long thought he must have been a prophet.

When we sat down, with me in Mama's lap, my father would ladle out of the cauldron thin leek^o soup with a big lump of ham in it, that showed its rind as it turned over through the steam when the ladle came out brimming over. There was a smell with that soup. It is in my nostrils now. There was everything in it that was good, and

because of that the smell alone was enough to make you feel so warm and comfortable it was pleasure to be sitting there, for you knew of the pleasure to come.

It comes to me now, round and gracious and vital with herbs fresh from the untroubled ground, a peaceful smell of home and happy people. Indeed, if happiness has a smell, I know it well, for our kitchen has always had it faintly, but in those days it was all over the house.

After my mother had taken out the plates with my eldest sister, my father carved the chickens or whatever was there. My mother was always on the run from the table to the stove to cover the plates with gravy and she was always the last to start her dinner.

"Eat plenty, now," my father used to say, "eat plenty, my sons. Your mother is an awful cook, indeed, but no matter. Eat."

There was never any talk while we were eating. Even I was told to hush if I made a noise. And that way, I think, you will get more from your food, for I never met anybody whose talk was better than good food.

After the plates had been polished clean with bread that my mother used to cut holding the flat, four-pound loaf against her chest, the pudding came out, and let me tell you my mother's puddings would make you hold your breath to eat. Sometimes it was a pie or stewed fruit with thick cream from the farm that morning, but whatever it was, it was always good.

And after that, then, a good cup of tea.

My father never smoked his pipe at table, so while my sister was washing in the back, he and my brothers went in the next room, and sometimes I was allowed to sit on his knee.

If he and the boys were going in to Town to buy something, there was a wait while my mother got ready to share out the spending money.

My mother kept all the money in the tin box on the mantelpiece over the fire-place in the kitchen. Every Saturday for years she put her little pile of sovereigns in with the others, until the box was so heavy they had jokes helping her to carry it, and sometimes my biggest brother, Ivor, carried her and the box and all.

When she had it on the table, she would open the lid and sit back, looking at my father.

"Well, Gwilym?" she would say, in her deep voice.

"Well," my father would say, and take the pipe out of his mouth to sit up and blow his nose. That was always how it was when there was money to be spent over the usual housekeeping.

My father always said that money was made to be spent just as men spend their strength and brains in earning it and as willingly. But just as they work with a purpose, so the results of that work should be spent with a purpose and not wasted. So in our family, since all the grown-ups were earning except my sisters and my mother and me, there was always thought before the tin was taken out of the kitchen.

If my father and the boys were going over the Mountain to see a rugby match, they would want a few shillings extra between them and my father would take half a sovereign and share it out. Their spending money was fixed because there was little to spend money on.

They had their beer down at the Three Bells at the bottom of the Hill, and my father paid all the dues once a fortnight. Sometimes there were outings with the choir and now and again a visit to a match over in the next valley or an International in Town. But when that happened the whole Valley, you might say, except those in bed or on crutches, would be going. Very few of them ever saw the match, mind, but they would all go to Town, and that was the main thing. They would know about the match from their friends on the way home, so they could argue as well as the next. So what was the odds if they saw the match or not.

I had my Saturday penny when I was quite small, and I used to buy toffee with it from Mrs. Rhys the Glasfryn. She made the toffee in pans and then rolled it all up and threw it soft at a nail behind the door, where it stuck. Then she took a handful with both hands and pulled it towards her, then threw the slack back on the nail again. That went on for half an hour or more until she was satisfied it was hard enough, and then she let it lie to flatten out. Hours I have waited in her front room with my penny in my hand, and my mouth full of spit, thinking of the toffee, and sniffing the smell of sugar and cream

and eggs. You could chew that toffee for hours, it seems to me now, and never lose the taste of it, and even after it had gone down, you could swallow and still find the taste hiding behind your tongue.

The first time I had real spending money was when Ivor got married. Bronwen came from over the mountain where her father was a grocer. Ivor met her when he went over there to a choir competition and went in the shop for some eggs for his voice. Bronwen served him and I suppose they started talking about one thing and another, but whatever it was, it must have been very interesting because he missed the competition by hours, and he was well cursed for it. A grand tenor he had from my father, see, and trained beautiful. So he was a sad loss.

Dai Ellis the Stable, who took the choir over and back in the brake,^o told my father about it. Ivor must have walked every step of the way over the mountain home because he only got in about an hour before my mother got up to get the breakfasts. My father only laughed.

"Beth," he said, "we will be losing Ivor before long now, you will see. He will be the first."

"Well," my mother said, and she was not exactly smiling, but as though she was wrapping a smile inside a thought, "it is quite time, indeed. I wondered how long. Who is she?"

Nobody knew, then. And nobody would dare to ask, even my father. He said everybody had their own thoughts and likings, and it was the business of nobody else to go about asking questions and poking their snouts. He never did.

Poor Ivor had it very badly too. He was off his food for days. Coming in after the shift, he had his bath and went up on the mountain-side to lie in the grass and think. At least, he said he was thinking, when I went up there one day to him.

"Thinking," he said to me. "Go from here, now, before I will sling you head first in the river."

He used to go over the mountain twice a week after that, week in and week out, in snow and all, and if he missed Dai Ellis, he walked back all those miles over the mountain in the pitch black. It must be real love that will have a man like Ivor doing all that just to see a girl for a few minutes with her father and mother in the room.

One Saturday afternoon after dinner when Ivor had almost driven my father silly with walking up and down and sighing and going out to the door to look down the Hill, and coming back to pick up the *Christian Herald* and give it a shaking and put it down, we heard a trap pull up outside the door.

My father got up knowing he had a visitor, and my brothers stood up too. Ivor was at the door being very polite to the father of Bronwen who had come over to see the family. My father sent me from the room as they passed in.

"Dada," said Ivor, as white as lilies, "this is Bronwen's father."

"O," said my father. "How are you, sir?"

"I am very well, indeed," Bronwen's father said, looking at all of them and the room too in one single look. "There is cold it is."

From then, of course, they got on fine, and by the time my mother had made the tea, they were like old friends indeed, and Bronwen's father got drunk as a lord down in the Three Bells before he went home that night. My father had had a couple, too, mind, but he always knew when enough was going to be too much, and you could not get him near another pint after that.

Then my father took my mother over the mountain to meet Bronwen's mother.

But one Saturday before that, Bronwen came over by herself before the men came up the Hill.

I will never forget Bronwen as she was when I saw her coming up the Hill with the double basket held on her hip.

She had on a straw bonnet with flowers down by her cheeks, and broad green ribbons tied under her chin and blowing about her face. A big dark green cloak was curling all round her as she walked, opening to show her dress and white apron that reached below the ankles of her button boots. Even though the Hill was steep and the basket big and heavy she made no nonsense of it. Up she came, looking at the houses on our side till she saw me peeping at her from our doorway, and she smiled.

Indeed her eyes did go so bright as raindrops on the sill when the sun comes out and her little nose did wrinkle up with her, and her

mouth was red round her long white teeth, and everything was held tight by the green whipping ribbons.

"Hullo, Huw," she said.

But I was so shy I ran in to Mama and hid behind the wall bed.

"What is the matter with you?" my mother asked me, but I only pushed my face in the blankets.

And then Bronwen called softly from the front.

Mind, my mother had never seen Bronwen or heard her voice, but I am sure she knew who it was. She put her head on one side, and put down the fork she had been cooking with, and went to the little looking-glass to take off this old blue cloth and do something to her hair.

"Is that you, Bronwen?" she asked, while she was still looking at herself.

"Yes," Bronwen said, though indeed you could hardly hear.

"Come in, my child," my mother said, and went out to meet her. They looked at each other for a little time without speaking, and then my mother kissed her.

In five minutes my mother knew all there was to be known, and Bronwen had been told most of the little tricks Ivor had got up to when he was small, and what sort of things he liked to eat, and how he would never drink his tea hot and things like that. Indeed, talk got so warm that Mama nearly missed sitting outside and my father was shouting a chorus with my brothers almost at the door when she screamed, and ran to push out the stool, sitting down quick, and putting her hands tidy to wait.

"There is something radically wrong here," said my father, coming in. "You have never been late before, my girl."

Then he saw Bronwen behind the door and he laughed.

"Wrong?" he said. "No, indeed. Right, that is what it is. Ivor."

My father put his fingers down the back of my neck and pulled me out of the kitchen just when Ivor, coal and dirt and all, was going to kiss Bronwen.

"Those things are not for you, my son," he said, "you will have your turn to come."

My sisters came back from the farm just then and my brothers were bathing out in the back, so the house was full of noise and laughing, and the smell of the cooking made you so hungry you would have pains inside.

Bronwen came over plenty of Saturdays after that, but I was always shy of her. I think I must have fallen in love with Bronwen even then and I must have been in love with her all my life since. It is silly to think a child could fall in love. If you think about it like that, mind. But I am the child that was, and nobody knows how I feel, except only me. And I think I fell in love with Bronwen that Saturday on the Hill.

Still, that is past.

Chapter Two

A GRAND time we had at Ivor's wedding. There was nearly a fight about where the wedding was going to be. Bronwen's father wanted it done in the Zion chapel over the mountain, but my father was sure our chapel would be ready in time.

Every man in our village had been helping for months in the evenings to build our chapel. I used to play in the bricks and blocks and plaster with the other boys while the men were working, and fine times we did have.

Indeed, the Chapel looks the same now as the day it was opened by some preacher from Town. We had no preacher of our own for a long time because the village was not rich enough to pay one, so the grown-ups took turns to preach and pray, and of course the choir was always there.

Ivor got married to Bronwen in our new chapel as my father wanted, and you should have seen the fun after.

For a miracle, it was a fine day. My father wore his top-hat, my mother had a new grey dress and bonnet, all the boys had new black suits and bowlers, and I was in a new black overcoat with a velvet collar. There is a swell I was.

But you should have seen Ivor and Bronwen. He had a new black suit too, but my father lent him his white waistcoat, and it looked a real treat on him, with a bunch of pinks in his buttonhole.

But Bronwen.

Everybody said how beautiful she was. She had her great-grandmother's dress on, so her mother said, and indeed even though it had been washed special, the lace was still looking a bit brownish, or so I thought and no wonder being that old.

There was my mother and Bronwen's crying down in the front, and my father and Bronwen's standing next to them, and then my older brothers, Ianto, Davy, and Owen.

I was down farther with my sisters and my other brother, standing with my aunts and uncles. The Chapel was packed so full there was no room to lift your arms, and opening a hymn book was out of the question. It is a good job they all knew the words of the hymns backwards.

The preacher gave a fine sermon. He used some big English words I had never heard before because our meetings were taken by the grown-ups in our language. But I remembered the tunes of some of them and asked my father afterwards. I suppose I must have got the tunes wrong because although my father tried and said them over again, we never found out what they were and I am still in ignorance to this day.

But everybody there listened very close, some leaning forward holding their ears, and some leaning back with their eyes shut, and some just sitting down.

Whenever he said something extra, some of the men hummed to themselves and you could see all the older women's bonnets nodding like the wind passing over a field.

I hummed myself, once, when nobody else did, and of course it was in the wrong place, and my uncle gave me a push with his elbow that sent me flying in the aisle with a bump. I got up trying to wipe the dust off my new coat and the preacher stopped what he was saying to look down at me, and everybody turned round to look at me, and you could hear them clucking their tongues all over the Chapel. I wished I could have dropped through a crack, and indeed I often dream of it, and I can still feel how I felt, as though I was still small, and all those people were still alive.

It is very strange to think back like this, although come to think of it, there is no fence or hedge round Time that has gone. You can go back and have what you like if you remember it well enough.

I will never forget the party after the wedding when Ivor and Bronwen had gone up to the house to go away. They went in Dai Ellis' best trap^o with the white mare that used to take the Post.

In the big tent they had the food and in the small one the drink. There were tables for the grown-ups under the trees by the Chapel

garden, but the children had theirs in their hands on the grass by the baptism tank.

The big tent was a picture inside with all the food laid out on tables running round the sides, and the women in their best dresses and bonnets, and flowers in jugs and buckets.

Bronwen's father had baked till all hours and you should have seen the stuff he brought over. There were pies so heavy that two men had to lift them, and the crust on top so pretty with patterns it was a shame to cut. The wedding cake was out under the trees, white and going up in three rounds, every bit of it made by Bronwen's father, with horse-shoes and little balls of silver spelling out Ivor and Bronwen's names and the date.

And, of course, everybody in the village and from all the farms, and the friends of Bronwen's family had brought something made special, because everybody knew everybody else would be looking to see what had been brought, so by the time it was all on the tables, it looked as though it could never all be eaten, and in any case, it would be a shame to start and spoil the show.

But when my mother clapped her hands at the crowd and told them to eat, you would be surprised how quick it went. Indeed if me and Cedric Griffiths had not found a hole in the back of the big tent we would have been empty. Not, mind you, that anybody rushed with their plates, but they were all so busy talking and eating, and the grown girls were full of small children to be fed, and the grown-ups were serving other grown-ups, and Cedric and me were the wrong size, too big to be fed by girls, and too small to be with the other boys, that we had to make the best of it, and indeed we did very well for ourselves under the long table.

The women were walking right by us, but all we could see was their boots and the bottom of their dresses, and the table cloth covered the rest. When we wanted more, we crawled out, and one would kneel while the other worked whatever came handy. Every time Cedric got up to get more he chose jelly or blancmange, but I took cakes or a pie.

"Go on, boy," Cedric whispered, "there is soft you are to eat old cake when you can have jelly with you."

I think perhaps he kept to that way of thinking all his life because he always did very well. Last time I heard, he was running a boarding house on the coast and doing splendid.

Still, we had to suffer for being pigs later on when they started the races for all of us. My brothers had been looking for me to go in the little boys' race and never mind how I shouted and struggled, I had to go in too. I always hated people in crowds, and it was that and the thought of being beaten in front of them all that made me kick and shout.

But in the end I started because Davy threatened to take off my trows in front of the girls and smack my bottom.

That was enough for me. Davy was never one to promise and not keep his word. So I went in the race with about a dozen other boys and I won and I was sick.

Davy thought I was dying and indeed I was so giddy I kept falling over, till Dr. Richards gave me a glass of cold water, and that did it. Then Davy and Ianto gave me a whole sixpence each and I won the prize too, and my father gave me a shilling for that. Mama called me in the tent and took all my money away for the box, and gave me three pennies to spend instead, and put a chair to the table for me to sit on for more jelly and cake.

In the evening after we had finished tea we all sat on the grass on horse cloths and sang hymns and songs, and we had prizes for the best. Indeed if I was not chosen again for the best voice among the small boys. There is pleased my father was. I will never forget the way he looked when Mr. Prosser, St. Bedwas, gave me the sweets.

Singing was in my father as sight is in the eye. Always after that he called me the family soloist. That night he held my hand tight all the way home, with my mother on his other side, and my sisters behind us.

There is strange how things come back if you start to think of one thing and become tangled up in memory. Because sometimes you think of a thing, and it reminds you of something else, but nearly always you forget why it should remind you, and you find you have forgotten the link between them.

Ianto was married after that to a girl in the village who was staying

with relations. I never saw much of her because her father invited Ianto to go and work with him after they were married, and go he did, and got married up there. I was out of that picture because I had the mumps, but my mother and sisters went, and they were sorry for Ianto when they came back. He had got in with the wrong lot, my mother said, and we heard nothing from him after that for years.

Mama always worried after him but it was no use.

Davy was the brain of the family. He always wanted to go in for doctoring, but Dr. Richards said he was too old. Whenever there was an accident in the pit you would know Davy was about with the bandage box, and if anybody was hurt in the village Davy was always sent for. He never charged anybody only for what bandage and ointment he used, and he was very well thought of all over the district.

He began to get very moody when I was going to school, and soon I stopped asking him questions about sums because he would never answer. My father asked him after supper one night what was the matter.

Davy was a long time answering. Such a long time I was afraid my father would take his mind off him and think of sending me to bed. He was always strict that I should be in bed by eight at night.

"Dada," Davy said, and he was staring into his empty cup, "I am not a bit happy."

"I am sorry to hear that, my son," my father said.

"What is wrong here, Davy?" my mother asked.

"Everything," Davy said. "Everything. And yet nobody seems to notice. And if they do, nothing is done."

"Let me hear you," my father said, "and if it is something a man can do, you shall have it done."

"No, Dada," Davy said, "there is nothing you can do. It is something for all of us. It is this. Next week our wages are going to be cut. Why? Just as much coal is coming up, in fact, more than last year. Why should wages be cut? And then, look, the ironworks are closing and going over to Dowlais and they are calling for men for Middlesbrough. Are the men from the ironworks going to follow iron to Dowlais, or to Middlesbrough, or are they going to the pit for work?"

Davy was staring hard at my father, and his eyes were shadowed by his hair which was long and fell down over his forehead.

"Well," my father said, moving his pipe as he always did when he was worried, "wherever they will find work, I suppose."

"To the pit," said Davy, nodding, "and the pit is well supplied with men. The Owain boys have had to go over the mountain for work. So what chance have others, when their uncles and fathers have been here years? I will tell you what will happen, Dada," said Davy, and he got up to go to the mantelpiece and tap the box, "you will soon have this as empty as my pipe."

"Nonsense, my son," my father said, very surprised and looking at my mother. "Goodness gracious alive, that will never happen while there is coal."

"We will see, now," said Davy. "When those ironworkers gather round the pit for work, you will have some of them offering to work for less, and the manager will agree. You will see, now, and the older men and them with more pay will be put outside, too. And you will be one if you are not careful."

"There is silly you are, boy," my father said and laughing. "Come on, Beth," he said to my mother, "give us a good cup of tea, will you. And you," he said, catching sight of me, "off up to bed. Quick."

As Davy said, so it happened. The ironworkers started to work in the pit for not much more than some of the boys. Some of them even started pulling the trams in place of the ponies. A lot of the older and better-paid men got discharged without being told why, although it was put out that they were too old and could not work as well as they ought. But that was nonsense, because Dai Griffiths, one of them, was one of the best in the Valley and known for it.

My father had been working for some time on the surface as checker. When the coal came up, he put down how much coal was in the tram and who had worked it. On that figure, the men were paid. So he was a kind of leader, and indeed the men looked to him to settle most of the troubles that arose among them. And there were often plenty.

One night he came home from a meeting at the Three Bells, and

very glum he was. Davy was sitting at the table reading and I was doing a bit of drawing in the bed corner.

"Davy," my father said, "we are going to strike."

"All right, Dada," Davy said, with quiet. "Have you decided what you will do when you have had your discharge?"

"I will have no discharge," said my father, angrily. "That is what the fight is for. Proper wages, and no terms that are not agreeable to us all."

Davy looked up at the box and smiled. That only made my father angrier, although he kept it to himself.

"Why were you up here when you should have been at the meeting?" he asked Davy.

"Because I wanted to see what they would do, first," said Davy. "Now I know, I can do something. And the first is, you keep out of it, Dada, and let me do the talking."

"No," my father said, "I will not. They have asked me to put the case, and put it I will."

"Then," Davy said, "Gwilym and Owen and me will soon be keeping this house going. You will join Dai Griffiths and the rest of them."

"We will see about that," my father said.

And indeed Davy was right again.

My father and two other men went to see the manager and came back quiet and cheerless. There was nothing to be done, they said, only strike work.

So strike work they did.

For five weeks the strike lasted, the first time, and the men were only back two days when they came out again because a dozen of them were discharged, my father among them.

The second time they were out for twenty-two weeks.

Pits were working all round the Valley, but nobody outside our village seemed to care. So on it went, right into winter. Then some men came down from Town with somebody from London, and my father went to see them by himself.

By that time people were feeling the pinch. Food was scarce and so was money, and if the women had not been good savers in better times, things would have gone very hard. As it was, savings were

almost at an end, and my mother was dipping into our box to help women down the Hill who had big families still growing. Poor Mrs. Morris by the Chapel, who had fourteen, and not one older than twelve, had to go about begging food, and her husband was so ashamed he threw himself over the pit mouth.

My father came back worried but steady after speaking to the men. My mother asked him no questions.

"We have finished the strike, Beth," he said. "But our wages must come down. They are not getting the price for coal that they used to, so they cannot afford to pay the wages they did. We must be fair, too."

"Are you having your job back, Gwilym?" my mother asked.

"Yes, my girl," he said. But I thought he looked queer at my mother when he said it.

I found out why a couple of mornings later.

The men went back the morning after my father had spoken to the owners, and you should have seen the Hill as they went down.

It was early morning and cold, and the moon had not yet gone down. White frost was hard and thick on the roadway and roofs, and all the lit windows threw orange patches all the way down.

As the doors opened and the men came out, their wives and children followed them into the road and stood to watch them go. My father was one of the first, with Davy, and as soon as the men saw him they started to cheer, for they all thought he was the saviour of the village. But my father was not a vain man, and he disliked any show about him. So he waved them all quiet and started to sing.

As soon as they heard his voice, tenors and altos waited for their turn, then the baritones and basses, and then the women and children.

As soon as the singing started, all the doors opened all the way down the Hill, and men and women and children came out to fill the road.

I looked at the smooth blue sky and the glowing white roofs, the black road, choked with blacker figures of waving men passing down the Hill between groups of women with children clustered about their skirts, all of them flushed by flickering orange lamplight flooding out from open doorways, and heard the rich voices rising in many har-

monies, borne upward upon the mists which flew from singing mouths, veiling cold-pinched faces, magnifying the brilliance of hoping eyes, and my heart went tight inside me.

And round about us the Valley echoed with the hymn, and lights came out in the farms up on the dark mountain, and down at the pit, the men were waving their lamps, hundreds of tiny sparks keeping time to the beat of the music.

Everybody was singing.

Peace there was again, see.

Chapter Three

I WENT to school with Mrs. Tom Jenkins in a little house not far from the village. Tom had been burnt by molten iron at the Works and had done nothing for years only lie in a chair, and his wife had started a school to keep things going. She had two little girls of her own, and while she was teaching they used to sit on stools by the board, separate from the payers. Tom was always in pain, so lessons were often broken off when she went out to see if she could do anything for him.

We learnt sums and letters, some history and the names of towns and rivers and where they were. Mrs. Tom Jenkins had come from Caernarvon where her father had been a book seller, so, of course, she knew a lot.

Indeed I will give her what she is due, for she gave us more than our fourpennyworth a week. That was when I was taught to think, but I was never aware of it until I started to work. The other boys and girls who were there with me have all done well, though I am not certain they would say the same for her.

We used to sit in her front room on stools and rest our slates on our knees. Mrs. Tom stood in front of a blackboard nailed on the wall and wrote with knobs of chalk.

First thing when we got in, she made us hang up our hats and coats tidy, and then walk into the front room and say good morning to her, and to the little girls. Then we turned about, and the boys set stools for the girls, and the girls got the slates and pencils for the boys.

When we were all ready, we stood to sing the morning hymn, and Mrs. Tom said a little prayer, asking a blessing on us all, and strength of mind and will to live and learn for the benefit of mankind.

I remember well trying to think about mankind. I used to try to build up something that would look like mankind because the word

Man I knew, and Kind I knew. And I thought at last, that mankind was a very tall man with a beard who was very kind and always bending over people and being good and polite.

I told that to Mrs. Tom one evening when the others had gone and I was helping her to put Tom right for the night.

"That is a good picture of Jesus, Huw," she said.

"Is Jesus mankind, then?" I asked her, and very surprised I was.

"Well, indeed," she said, and she was folding Tom in a blanket, "He did suffer enough to be mankind, whatever."

"Well, what is mankind, then, Mrs. Jenkins?" I asked her, for I was sure to have an answer because I had puzzled long enough.

"Mankind is all of us," Mrs. Tom said, "you and me and Tom and everybody you can think of all over the world. That is mankind, Huw."

"Thank you, Mrs. Jenkins," I said, "but how is it you ask every morning for us to help mankind, then?"

"Because," she said, "I want you all to think not only of yourselves and your families but everybody else who is alive. We are all equal, and all of us need helping and there is nobody to help mankind except mankind."

"But why do we pray to God if there is only mankind to help?" I asked, because my father was always saying that God was the only help a man could put his trust in, and what Mrs. Tom was saying was new to me.

"Only God will tell you that, Huw," she said, and she was looking at Tom. But Mrs. Tom never knew I heard what she said under her breath. "If there is a God," she said to herself.

She was looking at Tom just before she slipped his night-cap on. He had caught the iron over his head and shoulders. He was blind, of course, and his nose was burnt off, and his mouth was like a button-hole with his teeth all black inside, and his head was naked and a purplish colour. He would have been about thirty, then, and my father said he had been a well-favoured man and the finest tenor in the Valley. Now he could only make funny noises in his throat, and I am not sure he knew Mrs. Tom or his little girls. So looking back I am not sure I can blame her for saying what she did.

That was when I started to think for myself, and perhaps that was what made me come down to this.

Not that I am not satisfied with what I have become, or that I am where I am. Only that if I had not started to think things for myself and find things for myself, I might have had a happier life judged by ordinary standards, and perhaps I might have been more respected.

Though neither happiness nor respect are worth anything, because unless both are coming from the truest motives, they are simply deceptions. A successful man earns the respect of the world never mind what is the state of his mind, or his manner of earning. So what is the good of such respect, and how happy will such a man be in himself? And if he is what passes for happy, such a state is lower than the self-content of the meanest animal.

Yet, looking round this little room, such thinking is poor comfort indeed, and strangely empty of satisfaction, too. There must be some way to live your life in a decent manner, thinking and acting decently, and yet manage to make a good living.

My father was a great one for honest dealing, but he never had his reward down here, and neither did my mother. I am not bitter about anything, and I have no feeling left inside me to be scornful. I am only saying what is in my mind.

The first time I saw my father as a man, and not as a man who was my father, was when I was coming home from school to my dinner the day the men went back to work after the strike.

We were all running through winter rain, cold and grey and stinging like needles, splashing in the ruts and puddles, with the hedges whispering aloud as the bare twigs whipped at the drops, and the ditches bubbling and frothing on either side, feeling our feet freezing as the water went over the tops of our boots, and our chests growing cold and sticky as the wet coats got wetter, when we came up the rise where the lane joined the colliery road. Just over the low hedge we could see the cage and power house, and nearer still the place where the checkers stood to rate the trams.

The checkers had their own little huts to stand in when it was raining or cold, and ever since I could remember there had always been

three huts, one for each checker, and the one used by my father was the green one in the middle.

I stood still as the others raced on, looking at the gap between the other two huts. My father was standing in the rain, checking a tram into his book held under the fold of his sopping coat. He was standing in a puddle made by the drips that fell from his coat, and his hair was plastered down his face.

His hut had been taken away.

Whether my staring eyes made him look up or not, I do not know to this day, but when he saw me he moved his pencil from his mouth and put his finger up as though to say I was not to tell my mother, and then waved me to go on home.

That night I was in bed in this room when I woke up and heard my father talking to Davy, and my mother crying.

"You will get nothing without a fight," Davy was shouting. "Do you think I will allow my father to stand like a dog in the rain and not raise my hands to stop it?"

"Look after yourself," my father said. "You shall not make my case a plank for your politics. Leave me out of it. I can take care of myself."

"Yes, by God you can," Davy said, "and drown like a rat."

"Hold your tongue this minute," my father said. "You shall use no blasphemy in this house."

"But, Dada," Davy said, "what are you going to do? You will die of cold when it starts to snow. Let us all stand together and you will see how they will act, then. It is no use one pit coming out. It must be all the pits at once."

"If I freeze to death, no matter," my father said. "You shall not make me an excuse for more striking. I will not have people going without just because I am standing in the cold, and if I did, I would deserve a worse death than that."

"But if they find they can do things like that to the spokesman," Davy said, "what will they try and do to the men?"

"We will see," said my father. "I will have no more talk on it. Be silent, now, and go to your bed."

Gwilym was lying in the next bed and I could hear from his breath that he was awake and listening.

"Gwil," I whispered, "what does Davy want to do?"

"Shut your mouth, boy," Gwilym whispered. "Do you want Dada up here with the strap?"

"But what is it Davy wants?" I whispered, so low I am sure only a mouse and Gwilym could have heard.

"Fight against the bloody English," Gwilym whispered, and got up on his elbow.

A cold tickle went down the bones of my back, and the hair on my neck came up like a brush.

Gwilym was only fourteen then and just started work on the coal face, although he had been working the ponies for nearly a year. And here he was, the quietest of us all, swearing, and not only that, saying something that was so wicked it made my body ice.

Davy came up to bed then, and stopped us talking. He slept in my bed, so that I could see when he put the candle down and sat looking at it, that his eyes were open wide and staring black and his face was white and covered with sweat that winked in the light. I shut my eyes in fear and kept them shut a trembling long time, and then I must have gone to sleep.

Ivor and Bronwen had their own house further down the Hill, so Bronwen was often in with my mother, although my mother never went down there unless she was asked. On Saturday they came in to dinner with us, but nearly always on a Sunday they went over the mountain to see Bronwen's father and mother and go to the Zion there.

Ivor felt just as badly about my father as Davy did, but he held his tongue where Davy either would not or could not. He told my father that Davy would have himself known for a rebel and get himself put on the black list at the pit if he was not very careful, but my father said it was no use to talk. The boy had the blood in him and there it was.

"Then what is it he wants?" Ivor asked, with impatience. "He would never stand to talk two minutes together with me."

I could have told him the reason, for I heard Davy call him an old

stick in the mud before that, and say that married men were useless in any cause because of their dependents.

"Davy wants socialism," my father said. "And he wants a union with everybody in it, all over the world I think he said."

"There is nonsense for you," Ivor said. "Now if he said the colliers, I would be with him."

"You can call it what you like, Ivor Morgan," my brother Gwilym said. "But this I will tell you. There is more sense in Davy's big toes than you have got all over you."

There is surprised my father was, and how angry was Ivor. My father was out of his chair for the strap in a moment, but Gwilym was flying from the house and running down the hill like the spirit of the wind before my father reached the nail, even.

"There is more Davy in him," my father said. "I can see trouble coming in this family before long. It seems to me there is a nest of hornets growing in the back bedroom here."

My father was looking absently at me. I was in the back bedroom with the others and I felt bound to speak up even though I knew it was wrong.

"I will be one, too, Dada," I said, "if it will have you out of the cold."

"Go from here, now," my father said, "before you will have a couple."

But his eyes were full of laugh, so I walked out of the house instead of running, and went down to Bronwen.

I had stopped being shy with her. She had a way of looking at you that had a smile in it, and yet she never properly smiled, so you never knew whether to smile back or keep a straight face. She started to call me The Old Man just after she had set up house, and whenever I went down to her she stopped whatever she was doing and gave me that look till I had sat in Ivor's big chair.

"And what is the matter with the old man this time?" she would say. And I would tell her what it was, if it was anything. Else I kept my peace. That afternoon I said nothing to her till she had made a cup of tea.

"Davy is going to fight the English," I said to her.

"Go on, boy," she said, and laughed.

"He is," I said, "I had it from Gwilym."

"Gwilym is too young to have sense," she said.

"Davy has, though," I said. "And he is the one."

"And what is the old man going to do?" Bronwen asked, and knelt down by me.

"I am going to fight with them," I said. "I will have them for making my Dada stand in the rain."

Bronwen put her arms round me so quickly she knocked over the tea, but she seemed to care nothing for the broken cup.

"Well said, Huw," she whispered. "Fight you, now. That is why there are men and women. Men to fight, women to help."

"Are you a rebel, Bron?" I asked her.

"If that is a rebel," she said, "indeed, yes."

"Good," I said, "now I am a rebel properly. What is Davy going to do, Bron? Nobody will tell me."

Bronwen started to collect the pieces of cup, and she was frowning as she bent.

"Look, Huw," she said, "you are too small to know about such things. You go and call Ivor for me."

But I asked her again, and I felt angry that she should know as a woman, and yet I was a boy and ignorant. It is funny the ideas a small boy will have.

"Well, old man," she said, "if you will have it, Davy is trying to make things better his own way. That is all I know, so let it rest now. Go and call Ivor for me, will you?"

Chapter Four

I ASKED my father about Davy.

"And what do you want to know for, my son?" my father asked me.

"All the other boys know, Dada," I said, "and I should know, too, so that I can help them."

"You mind your own business," my father said, "you have your sums to learn and your own work to do. Do that and do it properly and that is all. Mind what I say, now."

I am sorry in a way I disobeyed my father after that because it was always a worry to me, and I knew I would never meet his eye if he caught me, to say nothing of the strap.

But the truth is I found out about Davy in the usual way a small boy finds out things he is denied to know by older people, and that is through other small boys.

Mervyn Ellis, son of Dai Ellis the Stable, was one of my best friends then, and was still till a week ago. To him I went next day coming from school, and told him there was some plot or other with my brother at the head. It sounded very noble and desperate, I must say, and I remember I could do nothing with my lower lip when I was telling him. It seemed to go stiff with me, and instead of natural talking, my mouth was going all shapes as though it was feeling proud of itself.

There is silly you feel when you find yourself unable to control even your own mouth.

"I know, boy, I know," Mervyn said. "There is a meeting on the mountain to-night."

"For who?" I asked.

"Davy and the men, of course," Mervyn said, "there is dull you are. Your own brother and you never knew that."

He told me, then, of all the other meetings that had been going on

for months, and of the men who had come over from the other valleys round about. They were going to have a union, Mervyn said, although he had no notion what he meant. So we both said we would go up on the mountain that night and see what there was to be seen.

Then I knew why Gwilym was never in bed till late, always coming in just before Davy, not through the door, but climbing up the shed to get in this little window. I knew that because the cold draught often woke me up, though I said nothing. I would never split^o on Gwilym, because he was always in trouble, and if my father had known he was coming in so late through the window, there would have been ructions.^o

That night, after I had kissed Mama and Dada good night, I went up with the candle and got under the blanket with all my clothes on.

"Are you in bed, Huw?" my mother called up, after enough time.

"Yes, Mama," I said.

"Good boy," my mother said. "Candle."

I blew out the candle and lay there looking at the blue criss-crossed square where the window was. I was not exactly afraid now that the time had come, but my heart was beating so loud I was sure they would hear downstairs. It is strange how loud little sounds become when you are in the dark and doing something wrong.

When I got up the old bed creaked so much I could have given it a good kick for its trouble, but at last, and inch by inch, I was out of it, and even then the bedclothes breathed so loud it was like putting back some old man.

The floor, then.

Each plank had something to say, scolding and moaning when I put down a foot and picked it up, and the carpet, too, was stretching and grieving all the way to the chest of drawers by the window.

To push up that window was to suffer for years, it seemed to me. I held my breath and pulled all sorts of faces as I raised the little sash, ready at the slightest movement from downstairs to leap for the bedclothes. Bit by bit it went up, and the more it went, the colder blew the draught and the more shivery I got, and what between listening for noise downstairs and squeaks in the window, and sounds of somebody coming outside, I got a sort of squint in my ears, until at last

I could easily have shouted downstairs that I was going out and I could have taken the strapping without a murmur in pure relief.

But at last the sash was up enough for me to climb through, and that was when the real trouble started. The tiles outside the window sloped down to the guttering and from there you had to be made of putty. First I got one leg out in the cold, resting on the frozen sill, then I had to pull up the rest of me to get the other leg through, and that is where the fight started between my chin and my knees. There was one time there, when I thought I would stick there all night unless my head would be squashed through the wall, and my foot outside the window kept slipping on the tiles and making a shocking noise, indeed.

It was my father's chair scraping on the stones downstairs that got me through. I heard it as I was trying to force my head through the space between my bent knee and the top of the window.

It frightened me so much that I must have gone smaller or something, and the next thing I knew I was through the window and slipping on my front down the cold tiles feet first toward the guttering and a five-foot drop.

I was not sure whether to start shouting then or wait until I landed on the ground. I remember thinking that if I shouted on the ground, and I was hurt, I would get nothing from my father until I was well, but if I shouted now he would run out and catch me and perhaps skin me alive. I was saved all that trouble by catching the toes of my boots in the gutter edge and that brought me to a stop.

Sliding down and gripping the edge, and swinging for a bit before I dropped down, was so easy that I was calling myself all sorts for being such a cry-baby less than a minute afterward. As I ran down toward Dai Ellis the Stable, I remembered Dada saying that too many people shout before they are hurt, and there is a fine contempt I was feeling for myself as I climbed through the hole in the fence.

So contemptuous I felt, indeed, that I was ready to brave anything just to show myself I was not the coward I thought I was.

But Dai Ellis happened then to open the stable door where he was sitting up with Bess, the black mare who was sick, and the very sight

of him framed in the light stuck my feet to my boots, and nothing would move me.

Good for me that he went back in, or I would have had it for sure. But when he went in, I crept double round the back of the house to the pigsty where Mervyn was meeting me, and there I found him, nearly dead with fright. He would not let on, of course, that he was ready to give up and go back to bed, but I knew how he felt because I was the same.

So we both pretended we liked coming out like this, and what sport it was, and how we would swank with the other boys in the morning, and have the girls looking at us the way girls do, when a boy has done something special.

We went over the pigsty and climbed the stone wall that led to the river, crossing the stepping-stones very carefully because it was dark and the trees shut out the light, so that we could see the stones only because of the white whiskers the running stream put round them.

On the other side of the river we started to run up the path up the mountain-side through the trees, and run we did till we were almost dropping. Now we were out, we kept thinking of the witches that lived up in the caves, and although Mervyn said nothing to me, and I said nothing to Mervyn, I know he was thinking the same as me because I saw him looking round once or twice and then go on faster when he found me watching him.

Out of the trees and in the fields we felt better off because the moon was giving a bit of light, though moonlight is something I can do without at any time for comfort. Nothing is so creepy as that pale light splashing over everything that makes white look shining and everything else greyish blue and soft black. Even the grass goes grey, and a boy's face is like death indeed, with black shadows in the cheeks and under the eyes, and silver points in the eyes themselves.

We were so busy being frightened we almost forgot what we were up there for, until we saw the light of lamps shining on the leaves of a may tree growing on a hedge in front of us.

I pulled Mervyn's arm just in time to stop him running full-tilt through Jones the Chapel's field. We stopped dead and crawled to

the hedge, lying there looking both ways to see if we had been seen, and while we were waiting there holding our breath we heard a lot of low voices over on the other side as though a crowd of men had all agreed about something.

Standing, we climbed up the stones and looked over the hedge. I for one nearly fell backwards with surprise.

There were crowds of men there, hundreds easily, all in their overcoats with caps pulled down, standing in ranks, listening to Davy.

He was standing on a piece of rock, and although I could hear nothing only very faint, I could tell by his hands how his voice would be sounding, and I knew what his face would be like without looking. It was knowing that that made me more afraid than being caught up there.

I gave Mervyn a jog and climbed down.

"Back, me," I said, "quick, too."

"Not yet, boy," Mervyn said, "I want to hear what they are going to do."

"Stay you, then," I said, "but I am going from by here now."

And I went, and before long Mervyn came running behind me. We went down the mountain double fast, never mind the moon or the witches, and crossed the river, and I left Mervyn by the sty to go through the lane to our back way. But when I got underneath our window I found there was no way for me to get in.

I had forgotten there was five feet of brick to be climbed before reaching the gutter.

Here was something to cry for, indeed.

Then I thought of the water butt.^o It was much bigger than me, and stood under the spout by the kitchen door. So I started to wheel it inch by inch nearest to the place under the guttering where I could climb up. Never have I heard such a noise as that old barrel made.

First it scratched its old rim on the cobbles, then it splashed and slopped its water. Then it pulled itself out of my grip because it was so heavy, and bumped down with a boom like a drum, and more splash and slop. Indeed I have never made more faces at anything, as though the act of making a face would excuse the noise to the listening quiet.

And under my breath I was telling it to hisht and for shame, and if I had known any swearing I would have had that in, too.

And then, when I had it under the place I wanted and I had got up on the edge of the rim, I slipped on the sticky moss, and fell inside in the water with such a noise that the hens woke up and screeched to make your eyes cross.

For minutes I must have stood there dribbling wet and up to my knees in water that froze my legs and feet through to the bones. The dark old barrel covered me right up, smelling of old earth and moss and everything that is bent and cracked. So when I found nobody was rising, I was at pains to be out of it sharp and lively, indeed.

I pulled myself up over the edge and balanced there to let the water drip off me and the wind blew so cold where I was wet it was like razors cutting at me. Up I got, and cocked up my leg to get over the gutter, with my teeth gnashing so much they nearly shook my head off. So cold I was that the slates felt quite warm as I lay on them to slide up, and nothing felt better than to catch hold of the sill and rest there to breathe and feel I was up at last. Quietly I got my legs through, and carefully I went in a little bit at a time until I was all in and standing on the carpet.

Then, it was, that my father lit the candle.

"Where have you been, my son?" he said.

I was colder with fear than the wind or wet. My tongue was like a piece of steel in my mouth, and if you had seen my father's face you would have known why, too.

He was not tall or very broad, but tidy in size and always carried his head well back. His head looked to be the biggest part of him, broad across the front and back. His eyes were grey, and sometimes when he was laughing they were almost blue. He had a small nose, scarred by a coal fall across the bridge, and a good mouth. His moustache was long and almost the same colour as his hair, black and going white, but his eyebrows were jet, and stood out from his pale face, especially when he stood near a light or if you saw him in the day-time with his cap off.

In this light his eyes were almost white, shining at me like jewels and so stern that I wanted to die.

"Where have you been?" he asked again, and shaded his eyes with his hand. He was still dressed, and sitting on my bed.

"Up the mountain, Dada," I said, though it is a mystery to me to this day how I got it out.

"Did I tell you about minding your own business?" he said.

"Yes, Dada," I said.

"Do you expect your mother to clean that mess you are in?" he asked me.

"No, Dada," I said.

"Go downstairs and clean yourself and be sharp about it," he said.

Off I went like a black-beetle, dripping all over the floor, expecting a clout that would stretch me senseless. But nothing happened.

The kitchen fire was banked all night, so I had no trouble drying my clothes. But blacking and polishing my boots was another matter. For minutes I stood there rubbing and brushing my boots, naked in front of the fire, knowing my father was still sitting upstairs, wondering what I was going to get from him, and what Mama would say in the morning, and if Gwilym would come in before I could give him a sign to wait on.

When I went upstairs again I carried my dry clothes and my polished boots to show my father. He looked at them all very carefully one by one, nodding.

"Look," he said, when he had finished, pointing to the puddles on the floor. "Look at the mess Mama will have with her in the morning. Go you and get a cloth."

Down I went again and up I came with a cloth and rubbed all the puddles dry, and very careful I was to look along the floor to see if I could find any more wet places, knowing all the time that those grey eyes were upon me, and on that account being so careful in my work, and so vigorous when I found some to do, that my father got impatient.

It is strange how you will do a job with more than ordinary care when you have a fault upon your conscience. It is almost as though you thought to make your industry a form of penitence.

"Come here, Huw," my father said at last.

I put down the cloth and stood in front of him, hanging my head.

"Why did you go up the mountain when I told you not?" my father asked, and to my surprise his voice was quite ordinary, and not angry a bit.

"I wanted to help Davy, Dada," I said.

"Help Davy?" my father said. "And how about your poor Mama? What would have happened to her if you had come to harm? Did you stop to think?"

"No, Dada," I said.

"Think in future," he said. "Now go to bed and sleep. And mind you, no more of this Davy nonsense out of you."

"No, Dada," I said.

My father lifted me into bed and put the clothes over me, and patted me on the head.

"You will be a man soon, my son," he said, "and you will find all the troubles you are wanting in plenty. Plenty, indeed. I am afraid you will have it more than us, now. So till then, be a good boy and think of your Mama. She is the one to help. Good night, my son. God watch over you."

"Good night, Dada," I said.

I was so glad he had gone before Gwilym came in through the window. I fell off to sleep at once then.

But thinking back now, I hear my father's voice as he spoke then, so sad and soft, as though he had known and seen.

Chapter Five

IT WOULD take a lot to upset my mother, but she was quiet and worried when I came back from school at dinner-time next day. Gwilym told me that my father had given Davy a talking to that morning, and Davy was off down the Hill to live with Mrs. Beynon, who had four lodgers already, all of them Davy's friends.

My mother never said a word about it, but it showed the first Saturday when Davy came up to put his money in the box and have his dinner. She was not crying, but the tears were rolling down her cheeks when he kissed her. Davy and my father acted as though nothing had happened and were talking quietly as they had always done. It was Owen who caused the trouble.

Owen was a quiet boy then. He had nothing to say to anybody, and of course everybody thought he was a fool. He would stay quiet for hours by himself, reading, or out in the tool-shed putting iron together. I was a nuisance to him because I stole his tools or lost the place in his books, so of course I was always due for a clip in the ear whenever he saw me.

Owen had the voice of my mother, deep and from the chest, and to hear him read in chapel was a shock, so good it sounded, echoing up in the gallery and under the rafters. My father had a notion to put him up as a preacher, but Owen was not yet old enough, and in any case he liked better to use tools than study, though even then he knew almost any part of the Bible by heart.

I forget what exactly Davy and my father were talking about. I think it was about coal raising and the way the seam ran down the Valley.

"They are all fools," Owen said.

Davy was so surprised that he put down his knife and fork.

"Hisht, Owen," my mother said, and looked at my father with wide

eyes. None of us were allowed to speak unless my father spoke to us first.

My father chewed what was in his mouth as though he had not heard, but as soon as he had swallowed he turned to look at Owen as though he had never seen him before.

"And what," he said, "do you know about the subject?"

"I am very sorry I was rude, Dada," Owen said, but with no fear in his eyes or voice. "But the way they are working the coal now is not only stupid but criminal."

"As it happens, my son," my father said, "you are right. But who gave you permission to speak? And where did you have your knowledge?"

"I said without thinking, Dada," Owen said. "I must have been dreaming or something. I got my knowledge from Dai Griffiths."

"Good," my father said. "There is no man knows more than Dai. But learn manners, too. Speak when you are asked and not before."

"I will speak against anything I know to be wrong," said Owen.

"Not in this house," my father said. "And that is enough from you."

"In this house and outside," Owen said. "Wherever there is wrong I will speak against it."

"Leave the table," my father said.

"I will leave the house," said Owen.

"Gwilym," my mother said, reaching out a hand to my father. "Owen," she said, turning to him, "tell Dada you are sorry."

"I am not sorry," said Owen, "except to lose my dinner. I am going down to live with Davy."

"So am I," said Gwilym, putting his knife and fork down and pushing back his chair.

"If you two leave this house," said my father, "you will never come inside again."

"Good," said Gwilym, nearly crying.

"Oh, Gwilym," my mother said, staring at my father.

"We are together, Gwil," said Owen.

"Davy," said my mother, "tell them to say they are sorry to Dada. They are following your example."

"Yes, Mama," Davy said, and got up. "But they are men, working for their living. I cannot stop them."

"I will give you two," said my father, looking at Owen and Gwilym, "one more chance. Behave yourselves, and we will say no more."

"We have done nothing," said Owen, "and if table manners prevent the speaking of the truth, I will be a pig."

"So will I," said Gwilym.

"Boys," said Davy, "there is no need for this."

"There is, Davy," said Owen, and white passion was in his eyes.

"I am going, whether you will have me or not."

"So am I," said Gwilym.

"Get your clothes and go," said my father, and started to eat again.

"Oh, Gwilym," my mother said, in a whisper.

My father did not answer, but went on chewing, though his body was trembling and there was water in his eyes.

Nobody moved for a time. Then Davy sighed, and bent to kiss the top of my mother's head, here on this blue cloth.

"Good-bye Mama," he said, and walked from the room.

"Good-bye Mama," Owen said, waiting for Gwilym.

"Good-bye, Mama," said Gwilym, and went out with Owen.

It was quiet in the kitchen when they had gone, and the sound of their footsteps had gone down the Hill with them. My mother was looking at my father all the time as if she was sure he would call them back.

But he went on eating his dinner, looking up through the kitchen window at the rock-face outside. I was trying to be as quiet as I could while I was having my dinner, but then my spoon grated on the plate and brought his eyes to me.

"Yes, my son," my father said, "I know you are there. It do seem I will have only Ivor and you, now then."

"Gwilym," my mother said, in her ordinary voice, "how long, now, will those boys be from home?"

"The only boys I have got, my girl," my father said, "are twenty-three years of age and six. That is Ivor and Huw. Those are the only

two, and Ianto is away. I have no other sons, and there is nobody else entitled to call himself my son unless I own to him."

"Oh, Gwilym," my mother said, and started to cry. I had never before seen my mother cry really and properly as I had cried and had seen others cry.

I wish now I had not. There is supposed to be something noble about the tears of a mother, but it is a pity that real, well-meant tears cannot come without the sounds that go with them. The scrapings in the throat, the fullness of spittle, the heavy breaths and halting, gulping sighs, are not fitted to be the servants of heartfelt grief, so there is that about them making for laughter and contempt, especially in the mind of a child.

There is first of all surprise that a grown-up can cry properly, and then curiosity to see how they cry, and that causes a cold scrutiny in which all feeling is lost, even when it is realised that this is your own mother who is crying.

You are intent upon the details.

The shaking hands, swollen blue veins, smeared cheeks, hair coming loose under the stress of an almost rhythmic sobbing, of points of light flicking from brimming lashes, and you are amazed at the growing wetness of the handkerchief and the never-ending flow of big tears.

This is your mother, you think.

This poor, huddled woman over there, is your mother, who has told you so many times not to cry. After that, her red face and swollen, wet eyes, so miserable and helpless, come as a shock to make you laugh, and although you know it is wrong, you feel you must laugh outright, or go under the table.

And when that is past, you will want to cry because your mother is still crying to herself, and cannot find comfort.

It will seem shame to me, now, but my mother never meant the same to me after that. I could always hear her crying and see her face, though when I grew up, of course, I learnt better. But there it is.

My father took no notice. I know now how he saw the matter. He was the father and head over all the house, and what came in and

went out. His authority had been defied and he had taken the course he saw to be most fitting. For that reason he was clear in his conscience, and he said nothing to my mother for crying, because he knew tears to be a woman's last refuge. She can go no further, especially if she is a good woman. And I will swear with my blood that my mother was good.

My sisters were crying with my mother. Ceridwen was looking from the plates to my mother and then to my younger sister who was standing by the fire waiting for the kettle to boil. Angharad was about ten, then, and Ceridwen five years older. I was sure Angharad would say something from the look on her face. If you have never seen the look in the eyes of a cat when you have made a noise to frighten it out of sleep you will not know what was alive in the eyes of Angharad.

She was as tall as my mother, then, and very fair with grey eyes lighter than a snow sky, and so big and clear you would think it not possible. So when they were full of her spirit, and she looked straight at you, you would feel yourself going small inside yourself.

"Mama," Angharad said, loud and clear and in the voice of my mother. "I am going down with the boys to look after them."

My mother stopped crying, and turned so quickly she made my father jump.

"Angharad," my mother said, and indeed her voice made me all cold, "close your mouth this moment."

"Mama," Angharad said, "I am going down with the boys."

"This moment," my mother said, and stood up. "Outside in the wash-house and get your work finished. Not another sound. If I will hear another word, you shall have a smacking, my lady. Go you, now."

My father pushed back his chair and looked at me.

"Come on, my son," he said, "we will go up on the mountain and find peace. Beth," he said to my mother, "I will leave Angharad to you. But I hope she knows how far she can go. I have still got a strap. Come, my son."

I got down from the table very thankful, and ran to get my cap and my father's stick. I loved walking with my father. I have often

wondered whether the trouble in our family could have happened if my father had gone walking with the other boys as he did with me. If I had only known my father in the house, perhaps I could have spoken to him as the others had done, but knowing him as he was up on the mountains, I was never able to speak to him other than with respect and with love.

He never once as far as I remember talked to me as though I were a child. I was always a man when I was with him, so no wonder Bron called me The Old Man. Everything I ever learnt as a small boy came from my father, and I never found anything he ever told me to be wrong or worthless.

But perhaps the things that he held to be good and right to do, were not the good and right things for our time, or if they were, then perhaps he carried them out with too much force or with too straight a tongue and through that, put men against him.

That afternoon we walked for miles along the river, first, and then up the mountain.

Our village, then, was one of the loveliest you could see. I will say it was lovely, because it was so green and fresh and clean, with wind from off the fields and dews from the mountain. The river was not very wide, only about twenty feet, but so clear you would see every inch of rock through the bubbling water, and so full of fish that nobody thought of using a rod. My father taught me to tickle trout up on the flat rock down by Mrs. Tom Jenkins'.

Hour after hour we have sat there, dropping stones to frighten little ones away, and then watching a big one come up and making plans to have him.

First you would have to roll back your sleeve sometimes up to your muscle, and put your arm right in the water, holding your hand open and steady. Of course, the river would be so cold sometimes, it would almost make you shout to have it in, but no matter, if you wanted a fish you would have to suffer.

Then the old fish would come along very soft and quiet, and you would almost feel inside you that he was thinking to himself, watching your hand, and knowing that something was the matter and not sure what. Of course, you would not move a fraction, even your

eyes, while all this was going on, because a good and sensible trout will swim back out of reach and stay there to laugh at you. Indeed, that is true, for I have seen them do it.

Well, then, if he was so silly, he would come up to see your fingers and nose round them, and rub himself against them. Then it would be your turn. Quietly, you would bend your fingers to smooth him under his stomach and tickle his ribs. Sometimes he would flash away and you would lose him, but oftener he would stay on. Then you would work your fingers along him until your little finger was inside his gill.

That was enough.

Give him a jerk and pull out your arm, and there he would be, flapping on the rock.

And there is good fresh trout is for supper.

My mother used to put them on a hot stone over the fire, wrapped in breadcrumbs, butter, parsley and lemon rind, all bound about with the fresh green leaves of leeks. If there is better food in heaven, I am in a hurry to be there, if I will not be thought wicked for saying so.

But there I am again, see.

The quiet troubling of the river, and the clean, washed stones, and the green all about, and the trees trying to drown their shadows, and the mountain going up and up behind, there is beautiful it was.

When birds were nesting we often went out to find the nests and look in at the eggs, though we never took any, mind. My father would never allow me to collect them, and he would stop the other boys, too. I think because of that, our Valley was never quiet of birds. There is strange you will never notice birds till they are gone.

We caught two trout that afternoon and I put them in leaves in my cap to carry them on up the mountain. There used to be a scent that the wind pushed in front of it in those days, which must have come from all the wild flowers and the sweet grasses that grew up there then. This scent was strong that afternoon, and my father often stopped to breathe in, for he had told me time and time again that trouble will not stop in a man whose lungs are filled with fresh air. He always said that God sent the water to wash our bodies and air to wash our minds. So you would often see us two stop and breathe

in and out, and go on walking up the mountain, perhaps pointing at a small bush we had seen coming up last spring, or looking to see if anybody had been at the primrose bed up by Davies the Woodyard's field.

We had gone a little way when I started to feel cold inside me, for we were walking across the mountain toward the field where I had seen Davy talking to the men. It was a Saturday and the men would be off, so I thought they were bound to be up here.

"Dada," I said, "could we walk into the other valley?"

"No, indeed, my son," my father said, "I am only going to the top. I have got some writing for the Chapel to do. Gracious, what would we do over there?"

"See Ivor and Bron," I said, "it will be a nice surprise, Dada."

"Yes," my father said. "If I find myself over by there this afternoon I will have the surprise indeed. To the top, and then home, us."

I was trying to think of something to keep my father from that field, even to rolling down the mountain. I would have done that, but the hedges would have stopped me.

Sure enough, as we climbed the hedge by Meredith the Shop's field, there we could see the heads of a big crowd of men two fields away higher up. We were getting higher here, and the wind was blowing away from us, so that we could hear nothing of their voices.

My father stopped at once.

"Is this where you came?" he asked me.

"Yes, Dada," I said.

"Oh," he said, looking down at me. "So this is why you wanted to go to the other valley, eh? I will give you credit, my son."

The look-outs must have seen my father because one of them came running over, jumping the hedge as though it was only a foot high.

"Mr. Morgan," he shouted, "Davy wants you to come over if you will be so kind."

"What does Davy want with me?" my father asked back.

"The men are over from all the other valleys," Mog said, walking up, "and a lot of places. There are big things going on, sir."

"Big things, indeed," my father said, "and empty as drums. Not even fit to put a cap on. Where is Davy?"

"Over by there, Mr. Morgan," Mog pointed. "He is going to address the meeting in a minute."

"There is lucky the meeting is," my father said. "Very well, Mog. I will go. Take care of Huw for me, will you?"

I knew it was no good to say anything, so I stood by Mog as my father went through the other gate into the pasture land where the men were crowded.

But when he had gone, I told Mog I wanted to go to the back, so he told me to run over to a pile of stones behind some blackberry bushes, and be sure to come back to him in case my father would have his ears for supper.

Good. So off I went, but as soon as I was behind those blackberries and out of sight, I ran off again through the sheep-gap and into the crowd of men, working my way through carefully up toward the front. As soon as I could see my father through a little space in the men, I stopped where I was.

There was a lot of talking in whispers going on round about me, as though they had all decided on something serious. Up in front, on a sloping slab of rock, Davy, Dai Griffiths, and a lot of men I had never seen before, were all talking to my father. He was listening to them with his hands folded in front and his eyes shut, so I knew they were talking for the wind to make fun with, and it did make me laugh indeed.

One by one they set on him, and one by one they gave up. At last Dai came forward to the edge of the rock and held up his hands.

Everyone became still.

Only the wind moved the ferns above us, saying shish to everything except itself.

"Boys," Dai shouted, "before you make up your minds properly to do what we think is right and best, it is certain you should have a word from Gwilym Morgan. Fair play, now."

The men moved about and a deep murmur started, which became a big cheer as my father stepped out and stood on the edge, looking all round, and down at the village, and up at the sky. I knew he was praying, and the others must have known, for there was a low rustle and then every cap was off, and every head was bent.

"Boys," my father said, "if you were clear in your conscience about what you want to do, you would not be up here out of the way, but down in the village for everybody to be listening. Wait. I am here by some happening which I will call the Will of God. I did not want to come, but now I am here I will give you what has been in my mind these months. You are right in what you want, but you are wrong in your ways of getting it. Force is no good to you until you have tried reason. And reason wants patience. And if patience wants a tight belt, then tight belt it should have. You cannot ask the help of God with hate in your hearts, and without that help you will get nothing. It is no use to say you will all go together in a Union if you have no notion what that Union is to do. Get better wages? You will have better wages or as good as can be got without a Union. The owners are not all savages, but they will not give you whatever you want just because there are a lot of you and you use threats. Reason and civilised dealing are your best weapons. And if your cause is just, and your consciences are clear, God is always with you. And no man will go far without Him."

But the men were becoming restless, and I could hear shouts from all round, though I was so low in the crowd I could hear nothing of the words. I saw my father try to go on, but then a man standing behind me took me by the shoulders and pulled me round.

"You are Huw Morgan," he said, bending down to me, "the youngest of them. Can you hear your old man?"

"My father is not an old man," I said, "and if he heard you, you would have it."

"O," said another man, laughing, "the old man is in him for sure. Morgan, him, indeed."

Before I could run, the man who had me had picked me up and was holding me above his head.

"Morgan," he shouted, "here is one who will go without when you tighten your belt. And there are five of mine."

A roar cut my father's voice in half. All round me I could see men shouting before I was put down and forgotten. As quick as I could, I wound in and out of the crowd until I reached the sheep-gap and looked back.

My father was talking to Dai Griffiths up on the rock, and Davy was trying to get the crowd to settle down again. I saw my father shake his head and start to walk down the rock, so I ran back to Mog.

"Deuce," he said, "I did think you had taken lodgings, boy. Here is your father, now."

One look at my father was enough for me, and Mog was going to say something, but he stopped and began whistling under his breath instead.

My father was so white there were blue patches under his eyes, and the whites of his eyes were pink, so that his eyes scalded you to look at them.

And yet he was smiling.

"Come on, my son," he said. "Thank you, Mog."

"You are welcome, sir," said Mog, and pulled off his cap.

Nothing was said until we got to the top of the mountain, though all the way up the men were plain to be heard, and if we had looked back we could have seen them every step of the way. Over hedges and through gates, across fields and pasture, climbing rock outcrop, brushing through gorse and bramble, every second I tried to keep my eyes on my father, watching for some change in him, but even after all that climbing, he had not altered.

He sat up on the rock at the top of the mountain facing into the other valley, and leaned back on his elbow.

"Come and sit over here, my son," he called, for I had gone off a little way to leave him be. "Not afraid of your father, are you?"

"No, Dada," I said, "but I thought you would want to think."

"I have finished thinking, Huw," my father said. "My sort of thinking has no place now. Awful, indeed it is."

We sat in quiet for a time, looking down into the valley. The wind blew up here as though he had wet his lips to bring them smaller to whistle with more pointed music, but his tune was cold, and before long I was shaking. My father stared down at the Valley, but I did not put my eyes on him for long because I was afraid of waking him.

I remember how cold was the green down there, and how like a patchwork counterpane with all the browns of the ploughing and the squares of the curving hedges. The farms were small as white match-

boxes and sheep were like little kittens. Indeed, if they kept still they would look like little rocks.

Only in our Valley was there a colliery to poke its skinny black fingers out of the bright green. Over in here was all peace and quiet content, and even the wind sounded happier to be working down there, coming up from our Valley with a joyful rush and pouring down here, passing us sharp and bitter cold, eager to lie along the warm fields below and tease the manes of the horses browsing in the sun.

"Sad it is, Huw, my son," my father said, after a long while. "Sad, indeed. Here is everything beautiful by here, nothing out of place, all in order. And over with us nothing but ugliness and hate and foolishness."

"How is that, then, Dada?" I asked him.

"Bad thoughts and greediness, Huw," my father said. "Want all, take all, and give nothing. The world was made on a different notion. You will have everything from the ground if you will ask the right way. But you will have nothing if not. Those poor men down there are all after something they will never get. They will never get it because their way of asking is wrong. All things come from God, my son. All things are given by God, and to God you must look for what you will have. God gave us time to get His work done, and patience to support us while it is being done. There is your rod and staff. No matter what others may say to you, my son, look to God in your troubles. And I am afraid what is starting down by there, now this moment, is going to give you plenty of troubles in times to come."

My father spoke with his eyes in the sky, and I was glad he was looking so much better. He had a terrible temper indeed, but none of us ever saw it except me, and that only once and outside the house.

"Let us go home," he said. "Say nothing to Mama unless she asks. She has had enough for one day without more to weigh her down."

Back down the pasture we went, but not toward where the men were still standing. Perhaps it was through looking at the other valley so long that I got such a worrying shock when I looked again at ours.

All along the river, banks were showing scum from the colliery

sump^o, and the buildings, all black and flat, were ugly to make a hurt in your chest. The two lines of cottages creeping up the mountain-side like a couple of mournful stone snakes looked as though they might rise up and spit rocks grey as themselves. You would never think that warm fires and good food would come from them, so dead and unhappy they were looking.

Our valley was going black, and the slag^o heap had grown so much it was half-way along to our house. Young I was and small I was, but young or small I knew it was wrong, and I said so to my father.

"Yes, Huw," he said, and stopped to look. "I told them years ago to start underground,^o but nobody would listen. Now, there are more important things to think about. That is something that will have to be done when you are grown up. There will be plenty for you to do, indeed."

When we passed through the village nearly all the women were outside waiting to hear what the men were doing up on the mountain. My father took his cap off to wish the time of day down by the Chapel to old Mrs. Rhys the Mill, and he held it in his hand all the way up to the house, because all that way he was wished by everybody.

My mother was sitting alone when we came in, and she seemed to have got over her distress, but the house was quiet, with that sort of stillness that a cat will have when it is waiting to jump with its back in a curl.

My father looked at my mother and said nothing, knowing her, but he made a sign to me to be silent before he went to change his boots. I went to the cupboard to get my slate, and while I was rubbing it clean my father came in.

Then my mother moved, and my father faced her.

"Gwilym," she said, "Angharad has gone."

"O," my father said. "Where is she?"

"Down with the Beynons, I think," my mother said.

"Wait you," said my father. "I will have a word with her."

When he had gone, my mother asked me to fill the kettle and give the fire a couple of shovels of coal, and when I had done, she called me.

"Huw," she said, "how are you going to grow up, I wonder?"

"Well," I said, "however it is, I will never leave this house for one, unless you send me from here, Mama."

"I hope that will be the truth, Huw," my mother said, looking right through me. "If any more of my family go from me, I will be sorry I ever had babies."

"Well," I said, "why did you have them, Mama?"

"Gracious goodness me, boy," my mother laughed. "Go from here, now. Why, indeed. To keep my hands in water and my face to the fire, perhaps."

But that question started me asking questions about babies, and nobody seemed to know, and if they did, they kept it to themselves. There is strange that a man will act as though money was being lost to tell the truth in such a matter. But that came after.

You should have seen my mother when my father came back with Angharad. There is pleased she was, and so gentle to put her in the corner chair and take her coat from her. Angharad was quiet and still full of thought, but she was clear in her mind and it was certain she had not been forced to come back. My father went straight out to the back to wash, and came in to shut the door of the next room to do his writing. During that time nothing was said, but I had toasted four rounds of bread which my mother put on the end of the fork as piece after piece was browned.

There is good dripping toast is by the fire in the evening. Good jelly dripping and crusty, home-baked bread, with the mealy savour of ripe wheat roundly in your mouth and under your teeth, roasted sweet and crisp and deep brown, and covered with little pockets where the dripping will hide and melt and shine in the light, deep down inside, ready to run when your teeth bite in. Butter is good, too, mind. But I will have my butter with plain bread and butter, cut in the long slice, and I will say of its kind, there is nothing you will have better, especially if the butter is an hour out of the churn and spread tidy.

"Angharad," my mother said, "what did Dada say?"

"He said he was sorry if he had done anything wrong, Mama," Angharad said, "and to tell him why I wanted to leave him."

"Well?" my mother asked, and very surprised she was.

"I said I wanted to look after the boys because Mrs. Beynon is too fond of her bottle," said Angharad.

"Angharad," my mother said, holding up her hands. "What next then?"

"It is true, Mama," Angharad said, and tears coming to sparkle in the fire-light. "Did you see our Davy with a big hole in his stocking here to-day?"

"Yes, my girl," my mother said, "I did. And Gwilym is bringing them all up here to-night for me to mend."

"I brought them with me," said Angharad, "and I brought a couple of shirts, too. If you will want rags for the boots, Mama, go you and see the sheets on Davy's bed."

My mother was still and so quiet, with her plate on her knee and her eyes big and staring into the fire.

"Oh, God," she said, "I will have my boys from there to-night if I will leave this house myself."

She put her plate down on the fender^o and got up to go to the door of the next room.

"Give Huw his tea, Angharad," she said, in a high voice.

Then she opened the door and went in.

It was quiet in the kitchen, so that we could hear my father talking low to my mother, and her saying back to him, but the door was so thick we could hear nothing of the words.

"Did you go up the mountain, now just?" Angharad asked me.

"Yes," I said, "and Dada tried to tell the men, but they shouted at him."

"Were the boys up there?" she asked.

"All of them," I said, "but nobody was for Dada."

"Right too," said Angharad.

"Are you against Dada, too?" I asked her.

"Yes, indeed I am," Angharad said, "though not him, but what he is trying to make them do."

"What is that, then?" I asked her.

"Well, if it will have you any wiser," said Angharad, with impatience, "he is trying to make them pray for what they want instead of going together and making the old owners give them it."

"Why is Dada wrong, then?" I asked her, after I had thought about it.

"Be quiet, boy, and eat your toast," Angharad said. "You are making enough noise with your old teeth to have the house down."

"But why is Dada wrong?" I asked her.

"Because you will have nothing through prayer, boy," Angharad said. "I have had nothing yet, and nobody else has, either. Look at Mrs. Mostyn the Grove. Everybody did pray for her and yet she went with her baby as well."

My mother came out just then, and started to pour tea for my father.

"Angharad," she said, and taking the cup in the next room, "go down to Mrs. Beynon's and get the boys' things, will you? Tell her I will pay my owings on Monday morning myself."

"Yes, Mama," said Angharad, and ran out through the back, clapping her hands and singing.

When my mother came out she pointed to the wall bed.

"You will sleep down here in the future, Huw," she said, "and the boys shall have the back room to themselves. You are too small to be up there now they are all men, with them."

And from that day to last night I have never slept anywhere else, except for the time when I lived in Bron's.

When the boys came home that night I was in bed with the curtains drawn, so I could hear all that was said, though I was so sleepy I kept falling off and waking up with a jump.

They all came in together as though they had feared to come in one by one. There is funny it is to lie in the dark listening to people you know, talking and moving, making the little sounds you know, doing the little actions you know, all of it happening in the dark and yet so clear in your mind that you could laugh, and you ask yourself what is the need of people themselves when only their voices and little sounds are enough.

I could hear Davy throwing back his hair before he spoke, because his hair made a soft wish and his chair creaked. Gwilym I knew because his throat made a bumpy sound when he swallowed. Owen

always rubbed his forehead and pulled his ear. I suppose there is no sound for that, yet I heard it and knew what he was doing.

But though I knew my father was there, I heard nothing from him, although I knew his sounds well. Yet I knew he was there, and even though Davy and Owen had made no sounds at all, I would have known they were there. There is a sort of hot stillness which you can feel, and yet it is not hot, nor is it still, but it will have you on edge and make you hot if you think about it. This feeling I always had for my father, and it was in my brothers, too.

This feeling it was that made the wall bed like an oven to me, and started me sweating till the drops were running down my cheeks into my ears.

They had broth for supper, but I suppose I slept through that, though I was sure I could hear all they said in a sort of underneath manner, like the sheets underneath me, that I never felt unless I thought of them.

My father it was who woke me up properly, even though he spoke very quietly, as though Mama had made a sign to the bed that I was in there and sleeping. Several ways he had of clearing his throat, and well I knew them. He had one way for singing, one way for speaking in Chapel, one way for reading the Bible, and another for reading anything else, except a story book, and that was different again. But he had a special way of doing it when he had something to say that was serious.

That was how he woke me up.

"Davy," he said, "you are the eldest here, and to you I will talk."

"Yes, Dada," said Davy, and I knew his eyes would be watching my father in the shadow of his hair.

"I asked you to leave this house," my father said, "because I thought I was doing the best. I thought you were a bad influence on the other boys. But I found that the others were as bad as you, and even a baby like Huw was going out of the house at night. That is not the way a house should live, and I said so. I have that authority because I am your father."

"I will never question that, Dada," said Davy.

"Good," said my father. "It was hurting me to have to do it. I am proud of my family, and I am proud to think that you are prepared to make sacrifice for what you think is right. It is good to suffer in order that men shall be better off, but take care that what you are doing is right and not half-right. My sense is against what you are doing. If you were right, you would not have had such a disgraceful meeting up there to-day. There would have been a different spirit. But that is not what I want to say. I would not have asked you in the house again if your mother had not begged me, and I only said I would because she told me you were living with pigs. I will have you make a sacrifice and I will have you suffer. It will do you good. But no man ever made himself more useful to himself or his fellow men by living in filth and dirt, and I am surprised that a son of mine would allow it."

"They were lodgings, Dada," said Davy, moving in his chair, "and we could get nowhere else. By the time we had finished work and collected the men, there was little time."

"Where there is little time," my father said, "there is little use. Leave it, now. I will have Mrs. Beynon spoken to. As for you, as I said, your mother told me about it, and I said I would have you back. But only on one condition."

There was quietness for a time.

That hot, still feeling grew and grew till I thought I would burst.

"What is that, Dada?" asked Davy.

"We are all to be lodgers here," said my father.

I could hear from the sounds that my brothers were all sitting up and staring at my father, and I could feel the pale straining.

"But, Dada," said Davy, "how are you a lodger?"

"Because I am staying here," said my father. "But I am not a father because I have no authority. No man shall say he is father of a house unless his word is to be obeyed. Mine is not, so I am not a father, but somebody paying for his keep. I am a lodger, and so are you and the boys, and your mother will look after you and me. That is all."

"Dada," Davy said, "I am sorry for this. I wish I could make you think as I do, only to understand."

"It is too late to-night even to wish, Davy," said my father. "Tomorrow is Sunday and early Chapel. Good night all."

"Good night, Dada," said Davy, and the other boys said with him, but quiet, as though they were so surprised they had lost their tongues.

"So now then, Davy," said my mother, after my father had gone up.

"Yes, Mama," said Davy, "I know."

"Good," said my mother, "and when you go up, throw that old shirt down. You, Owen and Gwilym, too."

"Yes, Mama," said the boys.

"And no words round the table," said my mother. "If I am the boarding-house keeper I will have things my way."

"O, Mama," Davy said, and I am sure he kissed her. "I am for early Chapel, too. Good night, Mama."

"Good night, Mama," said the boys.

"Good night," said my mother. "One more day in that sock, Davy, and you would be showing your legs. There is disgrace."

"You should see Owen's, Mama," said Gwilym. "One more step and you would see the back of his neck, indeed."

"Shut up, man," said Owen.

I am glad my mother was so happy going up to bed.

Chapter Six

AFTER that there was peace in the house for a time, though I was too small to have the whole picture. I only know what I saw and heard, and I have often wished I had seen and heard more than I did. But there is nothing worse than a small boy with a sharp nose and a loose tongue, and thank goodness I was never that.

The family sat down to meals just the same, but there was a different feeling in the room always. Even when Bronwen came in it was not quite what it had been. We all seemed afraid to say what was in our minds, I suppose for fear it might start trouble. So instead of the laughing and joking there had been, you would have thought there was a preacher at the table with us.

Davy was still going up on the mountain and the boys were going with him, and coming back with him, openly now, not through the window but in and out of the front door. At that time Davy was meeting men of other valleys and coming to an agreement about forming a union of them all, so that if one lot came out on a complaint, they would all come out and put the coalfield at a standstill.

Just as it happens now, so they were planning then. And after weeks of work, Davy got what he wanted. After that it spread like fire over all the valleys. All the younger men were in, but the older men like my father would have nothing to do with it.

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Davy argued with my father for hours, but he had to give up in the end. He knew he would have won most of the older men if my father had given way, and that is why he tried so hard.

"No, Davy," my father said one night. "Never will I put pen to it. I am a man and I will deal with my own problems my way. I want no help from anybody."