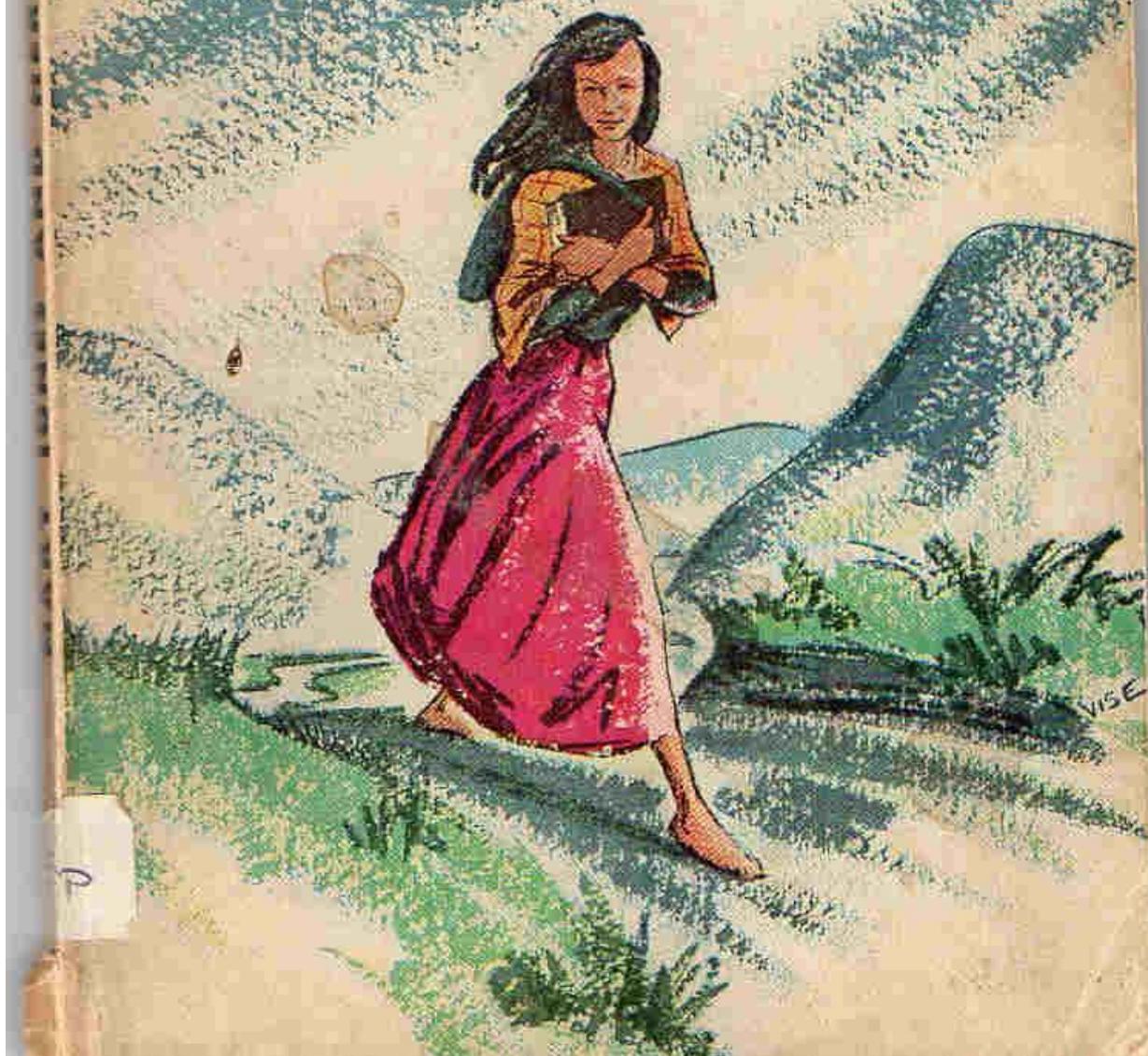


# MARY JONES AND HER BIBLE



MARY JONES  
AND HER BIBLE

*Revised and rewritten by* MARY CARTER

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## EDITOR'S NOTE

**I**T is a particular pleasure to be associated, as the new Editorial Secretary, with this reprint of a story which has been treasured by generations of Bible Society supporters, for during the past ten years it has been my privilege to tell the same story to many in the lands of North Africa and the Middle East who were hearing-it for the first time. I have also seen translations of the story in Arabic, Armenian and Greek, for sale in many distant places, and I remember with particular interest the little motor-launch at Port Said which bore the name *Mary Jones* and from which Bibles were sold to seafarers from every part of the world.

This reprint has been made from the edition of January 1950 without alteration in the text, and it is my hope that the story so charmingly told will continue to win supporters for the Bible Society, especially among the young people for whom it is principally intended.

**JAMES M. ROE,**

*Editorial Secretary.*

*June 1958.*

## PREFACE TO THE ORIGINAL EDITION

THIS little book tells how one of the least of seeds has grown to be the greatest of trees. It was the earnest desire of the late Mr. William Coles, of Dorking, who was through life a warm and liberal friend of the British and Foreign Bible Society, to learn all he could about its birth. At his suggestion the trustees of the College at Bala generously presented Mary Jones's Bible to the Library of the Bible House in London, where it may now be seen. He was very anxious that the story should be retold in a way likely to interest the young; and though he did not live to see this volume published he did from his deathbed see and approve the draft submitted to him. A few days before his death he wrote as follows: "The sketch came to me as a glorious finish to my aspirations. I may never see the book, but from the bright Happy Land—I shall be with Christ and know all."

It must not be forgotten that others besides Mr. Charles helped to found the Bible Society. The Rev. Thomas Jones, curate of Creaton, deserves specially to be mentioned. He was the "clergyman in Wales" who is referred to in Owen's "History of the Society" (vol. i, p. 3) as having interested himself for more than twelve years in calling attention to the dearth of the Word of God in Wales. Let due honour be done to him, and to others like him; but, above all, let Him be praised who disposed His servants to establish an organization for distributing the bread of life to the hungry multitudes of mankind.

THE BIBLE HOUSE,  
1<sup>ST</sup> December 1882

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## CHAPTER I

### MARY JONES AND HER BIBLE

IT was a gusty afternoon in late autumn in the year 1792. In those days the west coast of Wales was even wilder than it is to-day, and the mountains more rugged and uncultivated. Clouds swept about the craggy summit of Gader Idris, while the wind rushed down the valleys towards the sea.

A little girl, bare-footed, but with a shawl wrapped about her shoulders, ran out of a small cottage and crossed the plot of garden to the henhouse. She had fed the chickens some time earlier, and had now come to shut them in their house for the night.

Dusk was falling, and most of the hens had gone to roost, but one, of a perverse mood, still picked imaginary corn from the grass, and kept well away from the house.

"Now, Buffy," cried the little girl, "you know it's time to go to roost; and I am in a hurry. Shoo!"

With a squawk Buffy scuttled round to the back of the hen-house.

"Oh dear!" exclaimed the little girl. "Did you ever see anything so obstinate? Very well, stay there. I'll go and get the lantern while you make up your mind."

She went to a tiny tool-shed and unhooked a

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lantern from a peg. But as soon as she was out in the windy garden the door of the lantern blew open; and when fastened it blew open again.

"This catch is no good," murmured the child to herself. "Dear me, everything is going wrong. We shall be late, that is certain. Buffy, get inside, or I shall lock you out for the night. Shoo!"

The hen, with a cackle, now rushed into the hen-house as if pursued by some enemy, and she and her friends inside awoke the echoes with their cries.

The little girl shut and fastened the door, and then ran out of the gate and a little way down the road to a neighbour's cottage. She knocked, and then partly opened the door and called.

"Mr. Williams, would you kindly lend us your lantern to-night? The latch of ours won't keep fastened, and in this wind the light would soon blow out. Don't trouble to come out; I will get it."

A man came to the door.

"Why, I thought it was Mary Jones," he said. "Of course you can have the lantern, and welcome. You are going to the meeting with your mother, I suppose. Yes, yes; you will find it on its hook."

"Thank you, Mr. Williams," called Mary as she hurried to the lean-to beside the cottage. "It's getting so dark. We shall be late."

Mary ran home with the lantern, to find her mother waiting, dressed in her cloak and tall hat, ready to start for the meeting. It was a poor room in which she stood, for weavers in their time were

poor folk; but a cosy fire burned on the hearth, giving almost as much light as the rush candle that was stuck in a holder in the wall near to the loom. A cupboard, a table, a few chairs and stools, and a bed in the corner were the only furniture; unless a kind of open crate, hanging beneath the ceiling, in which the bread was kept could also be called furniture. The floor was of earth, but neatly swept.

"Where have you been, child?" asked the mother. "We shall certainly be late."

"I had to go to Air. Williams and ask for his lantern, Mother," answered Mary. "The latch of ours won't keep shut."

"Well, we could have done without a lantern," said her mother.

"Yes, but then I could not have come with you," Mary answered. "You know if I didn't come to light you on your way they would say at the meeting that I need not come."

While she was speaking Mary put on her shoes, lit the lantern, and threw her cloak around her shoulders.

"That would never do, would it, Mary?" said her father, who was sitting by his loom.

"I wish you could come, too, Father," said Mary. "But I suppose it would only make your cough worse, it is such a rough night."

"You must tell me all you have heard, and sing the hymns you have learnt, when you come back," answered the father.

"I will," said Mary.

She kissed him, and both mother and daughter called, "Good-bye, Father," as they went out into the blustering night.

The way to the mission hall was rough and rather long. Mary and her mother stumbled several times, but the light of the lantern saved them from falling.

"I am glad you brought the lantern, Mary," said Mrs. Jones. "It reminds me of the words of the Psalm, 'Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.' That means that God's Word shows us the way we should take in life."

"Yes," said Mary, and walked for some little while in silence. "What a lot of lovely thoughts there are in the Bible," she said at last. "I do wish we had one. But then I couldn't read it," she added with a sigh.

Mary was eight years old; but there were no schools anywhere near the village of Llanfihangel, where the Jones family lived.

"Well, you know a great deal of the Bible for all that," answered her mother cheerfully. "Think of the Bible stories your father has told you; David and Goliath, Daniel in the lions' den, Joseph and his wicked brothers."

"Yes," said Mary more brightly. "I used to cry when I was little, when Father told about the wicked brothers putting poor Joseph in the pit, and then selling him. But how wonderfully it all turned out! I wonder what the reading will be to-night. I hope it will be something I have not

heard before. The Bible has so much in it I don't know; I always want to hear more and more."

They were now in the village of Llanfihangel, and soon joined a group of people who were going into the little mission hall. Mary wiped her feet carefully at the door, put out the lantern light, and walked sedately into the room behind her mother. There was a look of interest and expectancy in her face, for these weekly gatherings for Bible reading, prayer, and hymn singing were her one great pleasure.

In spite of Mary's fears they were not late, and mother and daughter came in for many friendly greetings, and enquiries after Jacob Jones' health. There was Evan Evans the Shop asking if he should call as he passed to-morrow, and was glad to hear that Jacob was not so very ill. There was David Lewis Everything saying that he was coming up Mrs. Jones' way on Friday, and he would bring her groceries with him, to save her, or Mary, a journey.

Now it must be explained that "the Shop" was not part of Evan Evans' name, but tacked on in this way to distinguish him from Evan Evans the Farm. The first kept a shop, the second kept a farm. So also with David Lewis Everything, he kept a little general shop where he sold nearly everything one needed. These descriptive titles were common in Wales then, and where there were so many Evanses, Morgans, Lewises, Joneses, and so on, it must have been a splendid way of telling one from another. And this was not con-

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finned to the men only; if they had wives, they, too, carried the title, such as, Mrs. David Morgan the Blacksmith, Mrs. Williams the Butcher, and so on.

Amongst the company at the meeting that, evening was a visitor from Towyn, come with Mr. and Mrs. Evans the Farm. He noticed Mary's bright face, and her dark eyes shining with quiet excitement.

"Who is the little maid, then?" he asked. "She is young to be at a meeting like this."<sup>1</sup>

"Oh, that is Mary Jones. A dear child," said Mrs. Evans. "She is as interested in the hymns and reading as any grown person. She never misses a meeting. In fact, a meeting without our Mary would not be the same."

"Well, well," said the visitor, looking kindly at Mary. "Indeed! That is very good."

The Psalm was now given out, and after some "ahems" from a few of the elder ones, the company swung into the refrain of the metrical version of "The Lord is my Shepherd," sung, of course, in the native Welsh tongue. The little building rang with the tuneful voices, for what Welsh man or woman cannot sing? Mary's treble could be heard amongst the women's voices, for she sang with her whole heart.

The Bible reading was of the Lord's Transfiguration, and the healing of the epileptic boy. Mary had never heard this before, and sat enthralled. Neither she nor her mother spoke much on their way home; but before she went

up to the little loft that was her bedroom Mary recounted the whole story to her father, almost word for word as she had heard it.

"Yes," he said. "I remember it, but I had not thought of it for some time. How I wish we had a Bible of our own; but they are too dear for us to buy, and hard to get, too."

The next day the weather was calmer, and Mary went out to tidy the garden. With her usual energy she hoed and raked the weeds for some time, tossing back her thick curls when the light breeze blew them over her face; throwing odd pieces of cabbage to the fowls from time to time. Her thoughts were as busy as her hands, and after a while she stood still, leaning on her hoe, gazing up at the mountains. They were very lovely this morning, for sunshine and shadow floated over the rocky slopes as the little clouds chased each other across the sky.

Towards midday Mrs. Jones came out. She had been busy at her weaving all the morning.

"Well, well, Mary dear!" she cried. "Are you tired? You have been working too hard. Your father has been watching you from the window, and he says you have been standing for a long, long time as still as a statue."

Mary turned to her mother with a quiet smile on her face.

"No, Mother, I am not tired a bit; but I was thinking of what we heard read last night, about Jesus up on the mountain, and being all changed, even His clothes, white and glistening. How

beautiful it must have been! No wonder Peter didn't know what to say. And I was thinking that those mountains there must be like the mountains where Jesus went; and as the sun shone in bright patches on the rocks and the grass I could almost picture it all happening there." Mary's eyes kindled and her face shone as she spoke. "Oh, I am so glad I heard that reading last night I And then once a little mist came," she went on, "right at the top of the mountain, that was like the mist that covered them as they heard the voice from Heaven. It was wonderful!"

"The Lord has blessed thee, Mary dear," said Mrs. Jones, much moved. "And while you keep His words in your heart you will never lack for happiness."

The next day was market day at Abergynolwyn, a village two miles away from Llanfihangel. Mary was out feeding the fowls. She always liked to be in the garden early that day, to see the folk going to market; and many had a pleasant word for her as they passed. Down the hilly road they would come; farmers' wives, in tall black hats and red cloaks, sitting firmly on their stout farm ponies; baskets of eggs or butter in their laps; and perhaps a daughter or small son behind them. They feared neither wind nor weather. And it would be, "Good day to you, Mary child," or "Are your parents well, Mary?" as they trotted by. Or it might be a youth driving some pigs or trying to do so, and Mary would laugh at the creatures' antics.

To-day, Mrs. Evan Evans the Farm reined in her pony at the Jones' gate, and Mary ran to open it.

"Good morning, Mary," said Mrs. Evans. "Thank you, yes, I will come in for a moment. There, the pony will be all right with the bridle over the gate post. I'll just have a word with your mother and father. Good morning, Jacob. How is the cough? Better I hope. Good morning, Molly. You and Mary look none the worse for your rough walk last Monday night. Wasn't the singing fine? And I could hear Mary's little voice taking her part famously. Our good friend from Towyn, Ivor Jones, was quite taken with the little maid. He said he never saw anyone, young or old, listen to the Gospel so attentively."

Mary flushed with shy pleasure.

"I had never heard it before, Mrs. Evans," she said, "I thought it was the grandest story about Jesus I had ever heard."

"We do so wish that we had a Bible of our own," said Mrs. Jones, whose name, also, was Mary, though she was always known as Molly. "And now that Mary is getting bigger, and loves God's Word so much—she can repeat many texts that she has heard at the meetings, and some she has learnt from us—we feel the miss more and more every day. Though Jacob and I do not read very well ourselves."

"So there is another hard thing poor Mary has to face," said Jacob. "Do you know, Mrs. Evans, she is eight years old, but she cannot read. How can she learn, with no school anywhere in these parts?"

Mary flushed again, but not with pleasure this time. "I wish I could learn," she said. "I do so want to read."

"Do not be downcast, Mary," said kind Mrs. Evans. "God has given you the wish to learn and to know more of His ways, and He will make a way for you, be sure of that. But I must be getting on or I shall be late in the market. I need more eggs. Our hens are laying badly, and I haven't enough for a customer that I have promised. Can you let me have some?"

"Oh, Mary is our hen wife," said Mrs. Jones, smiling. "Mary dear, run and get what you can for Mrs. Evans."

Mary hurried out, and soon returned with about a dozen eggs, which Mrs. Evans paid for, and then rose to go. Mary went with her to the gate to hold her basket while she mounted the pony.

"Cheer up, Mary," said Mrs. Evans. "God will open a way for you. And listen, child, when you can read, and want to read the Bible, you are welcome to come to us and use our Bible whenever you wish. That is, if you like to walk two miles to do so."

"Oh, thank you, thank you, Mrs. Evans," cried Mary. "Two miles is nothing. I would walk twice as far."

"That is a promise then," called Mrs. Evans, "Don't forget. God will make your way plain in His good time."

Mrs. Evans the Farm shook the reins, and the pony trotted off. Mary stood looking after her. Then, with her good friend's words still ringing in her ears, clasped her hands together.

"Oh, God!" she whispered. "Please make a way for me to learn, and to know more of the Bible."

She turned and went back into the cottage feeling a kind of sure hopefulness that made her happy for the rest of the day. She trusted, and that was enough; and how surely God can be trusted by those who believe, and wait upon His will.

Far away from Mary's home, more than twenty-five miles away, there lies among the eastern hills of Wales the small town of Bala, a quiet little place. Its great attraction is the beautiful lake that stretches away amongst the hills. Bala stands on its shore.

In a street in this town there is a pleasant house, the front level with the pavement. In a room in that house a clergyman sits at a desk, writing. The walls are lined with books, the desk is covered with neat piles of letters and other papers; for a busy man must be tidy, or time will be wasted.

It may have been on the very day that Mary offered her little prayer at the gate, or not long afterwards, that this busy minister was writing to a friend.

"I am troubled about the district of Abergynolwyn," he wrote. "There is much ignorance

and bad behaviour amongst the children; to say nothing of their elders. It is too far from Towyn for them to attend school there; the village must have a school of its own. But how to find a true and godly man for its master? That village and district will weigh on my heart until something is done."

The Rev. Thomas Charles rested his head on his hand, deep in thought.

"It must be done," he murmured to himself.

In those days most of the people of the villages in Wales were unable to read. They toiled hard for their living, children as well as grown-up folk, and their Sundays were visually spent in gambling at some sport, drinking and often fighting. The boys of a village were hardened roughs, or, as we would call them now, "toughs," who were a constant nuisance and danger to the neighbourhood.

The Rev. Thomas Charles spent his life in founding schools in these villages; and where they had been opened for some little time a great change came over the people. The children were glad to learn. The "Welsh are naturally intelligent, and only needed something to occupy their minds. But funds and teachers were hard to get. That was the burden on Mr. Charles' heart.

## CHAPTER II

### THE ONE GREAT NEED

"MARY," called Mrs. Jones. "Have you finished, dear? I can see your father coming up the road now."

"Yes, Mother, just finished," Mary answered from the little outhouse where she was folding some clean clothes that she had taken from the line. "I will leave them in the basket until tomorrow," she said as she came into the living-room. "We mustn't have washing about when Father comes home."

Mary was now ten years old. Two years had passed since Mrs. Evans the Farm had made her promise, a promise that was still waiting to be fulfilled, for no school had yet been opened in the district, and Mary was still unable to read.

But there were not many things in the way of household work that she could not do, and while her mother and father worked at their looms, Mary washed, cooked, cleaned, and, for recreation, sowed and hoed in the garden. She went to the window to look for her father.

"Oh, he is still a long way off," she cried, "I shall just have time to cover over the clothes to keep out the dust before he gets here."

She ran out again to the outhouse, then skipped back to welcome her father.

Jacob Jones walked briskly up the garden path to the cottage and came in, cheerily greeting Mary and his wife.

"How have you got on, Jacob?" asked Mrs. Jones. "You don't seem tired."

Jacob had been to sell their cloth at Abergynolwyn, two miles away, and had been out nearly all day.

"No," said Jacob, sitting down in his chair by the fire. "I am not a bit tired. I have sold all the cloth."

Mary now spoke.

"You look as if something pleasant has happened, Father. What is it?"

"Isn't it pleasant that I have sold all the cloth that your mother and I have worked at so long, Mary?" asked her father, his eyes twinkling. "And that I have come home with a pocket full of money, or half-full, which is nearly as good?"

Mary's dark eyes sparkled, for she and her father often had fun together. She planted herself before him now.

"You expected to sell the cloth, so that is nothing," she said. "But something else, something very nice, has happened. And I believe," she went on, wagging her finger at her father, "that it is something about me. Now *what* is it?"

"Isn't our Mary a sharp lass?" said Jacob to his wife, delight beaming in his face. "Yes, child, it *is* about you; but it is a pleasure for us all."

"Oh, come, Jacob," cried Mrs. Jones, "If you

have got something good to tell us let us hear it; we want to know."

Mary was by this time leaning against her father's knee, holding the lapels of his coat.

"Why, yes, wife," said Jacob. "Isn't it pleasure for us all to know that Mary may soon be able to read and write and cipher, and do all the things that you and I cannot do?"

Mary sprang up and stood, her hands clasped, gazing into her father's face.

"Oh, Father!" she said.

"Well, well," cried her mother. "Is there really going to be a school opened in the district?"

"There is, in Abergynolwyn," answered Jacob.

"Oh, Father!" said Mary again, her voice hushed with the intensity of her feeling.

Jacob drew her to his side again.

"I knew you would be pleased, dear," he said tenderly.

"Pleased," repeated Mary. "To go to school! To learn to read! To be able to read the Bible for myself! Oh, Father!"

"When is the school to be opened?" asked Mrs. Jones.

"In about three weeks' time," answered Jacob.

"Only three weeks!" exclaimed Mary in an ecstasy.

Then suddenly she turned to her mother.

"Oh, Mother, I was forgetting," she said. "How can you do without me? I should be away all day. It would be leaving you all the work to do."

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"Don't worry about that, dear," answered her mother. "I would not for the world keep you from school now the chance has come at last. We'll manage, never fear."

"I will get up very early," said Mary, the almost stricken look that had come into her face clearing as she spoke, "I will do everything I can do before I go in the morning."

"Well, now," said her father, his eyes twinkling again, "if you can bring yourself from Abergynolwyn School down to Llannhangel for a little while, your poor father would like a bit of supper. There have I been, tramping Abergynolwyn all day, planning your schooling, not tasting food since noon, and not a thought has been given to my supper here."

"Ah!" laughed Mary, her usual spirits reviving after the first overwhelming joy at her hopes for the future. "You are quite wrong, Father. I have been all the afternoon making a great dish of oat cakes for you to eat with your cheese for supper; and I will have them on the table in one minute."

They were soon, if not quite so soon as Mary had promised, sitting at the supper table; the new school being the absorbing topic of conversation.

"Did you see the school?" asked Mrs. Jones.

"Yes," answered Jacob. "But it is not yet ready, of course. I did not see the master. John Ellis his name is, and they say he is a good man and a good teacher. But I saw someone more important still and I was glad, for I have heard so much of

his good work in opening schools for poor folk like us. When I was in the school, who should come in but Mr. Charles, of Bala."

"Oh, yes indeed," said Mrs. Jones. "He is a friend of the Welsh people. What is he like?"

"Well," answered Jacob, "I am not very good at describing people. He is tall and slender. He has a good broad forehead, and I should think he has plenty of sound knowledge behind it. There is a sort of *quietness* in his manner, not exactly serious, for when he smiles his whole face changes and you see a beaming brightness, such as I have never seen in any other face, shining out. Yes, I was very glad to have had the honour of speaking to him."

"Now, before we go to bed," said Mrs. Jones, when supper was cleared away, "let us all kneel down and thank God for this wonderful blessing that has come for Mary, and pray that she may do her best with His help."

"Yes," said Mr. Jones, "but before we pray I would like Mary to repeat some verses of the Bible that she has learned at meeting. Can you remember any of special thanksgiving, Mary dear?"

Mary thought for a little while.

"I think I could repeat that piece from St. Paul's letter to the Philippians," she said at last. "And I would like to say it, because I have prayed so long and so hard that I might go to school; but I am afraid I have been very impatient at times, and I am sorry."

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She then repeated the verses beginning, "Be careful for nothing, but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God," and finishing with St. Paul's wonderful exhortation to think only upon all things that are good.

Afterwards they all knelt to give thanks, and to pray for Mary in her new life; for they knew that Mary's whole life would be changed by her school.

Mary went up to her little bedroom in the loft like one in a dream. Could it be possible that in three short weeks she would be going to school, learning to read and write? She remembered Mrs. Evans' promise. She would be able to read the Bible for herself. She sat on the edge of her bed trying to realize that it was really true.

Then her usual good sense asserted itself, and she jumped up and began to undress.

"I must get up early every morning," she thought. "There is such a lot to do to get ready before I go to school. Before I go to school," she repeated with a blissful smile.

She knelt down beside her bed to say her own private prayers.

"There are some words in one of the psalms about the Jews being so glad of something that their mouths were filled with laughter. I wish I could remember them properly," she thought, "My mouth seems full of laughter for joy. O loving Heavenly Father. I do thank Thee; I do thank Thee, Help me to learn."

But after all, the three weeks seemed as if they would never come to an end. Jacob Jones would look up from his weaving sometimes to see why Mary had stopped her sweeping of the floor before it was finished, and would see her standing, leaning on her broom, gazing out of the window.

"Looking towards Abergynolwyn, Mary?" he would say, smiling tenderly. "It's a good two miles to the school."

"As if that matters," Mary would answer briskly, and would ply her broom again.

She spent a good deal of time mending and tidying her clothes.

"I must go to school neat," she said.

One evening she was busy at this needlework when her mother spoke.

"Mary dear, have you fed the fowls? They are all standing by the hen-house looking as miserable as can be."

"Oh, those tiresome hens!" exclaimed Mary. "They always seem to want feeding."

She jumped up and ran out to throw some hasty handfuls of corn to the poor creatures; then soon hustled them into their house.

"Jacob," said Mrs. Jones, "I don't know what to think about Mary. Ever since she knew about going to school she seems to have changed. She goes about the place as if in a dream; or else, as it was just now, she grudges a moment of time taken away from her preparing for school. She doesn't help me near as much as she used to do; she says she forgets. I don't know what is going to happen,

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I am sure, when school is really started. I am almost sorry we ever heard about it."

"Nonsense, Molly," answered Jacob Jones. "Think what a great thing this is that has come into her life, after all the long time of wishing and waiting. It is almost pitiful to think about it. After all, she is only a child; I am glad to see that she *is* still a child. I had almost thought she was too serious; a little woman before her time. Never fear, Molly, I can trust her that when she is settled at school she will be the same sweet helpful Mary as ever. She is all up in the clouds just now."

"Well, I hope you are right, Jacob," said Mrs. Jones. "I only wish the best for the dear child, that you well know,"

The three weeks did at last come to an end, and on Monday morning, after doing everything that could be done before breakfast, Mary set out—bare-footed, with a shawl over her head and shoulders, and carrying a little packet of food for her midday meal—on her two-mile walk to school. As she had said, two miles was nothing to her lithe, active body. She swung along, singing one of the old metrical psalms she had learned at meeting, her shawl slipping unheeded from her dark hair, her feet racing the little clouds that sped across the sky above her.

Mary had been with her parents to the school before to be registered as a pupil, and she went straight to it now. Boys and girls of all ages from all the district around were gathering outside

her curiously, but some of the girls spoke to her. They liked her happy, friendly manner.

Presently a dark-faced, healthy-looking boy came up.

"What's your name?" he asked Mary.

"Mary Jones," answered Mary.

"Mary Jones," he repeated after her jeeringly, "Mary Patch."

He had noticed a neat patch on the hem of Mary's dress.

"Oh, Ivor, how rude!" exclaimed one of the other girls.

Mary flushed and looked down at her dress.

"I put that patch on myself," she then said pleasantly.

The boy, who had wanted to irritate Mary "just for fun" was surprised out of his intention by her good humour.

"Did you?" he cried. "My sister can't sew as well as that, and she is nearly fourteen."

The school bell rang at that moment, and the children all trooped into the schoolroom. Then followed the joy of new slates and pencils, and learning how to use them; the first grappling with the letters of the alphabet, hard, but lovely, because they were the stepping stones to real reading. Mary almost ran home, she was so eager to tell her parents all that had happened during the day, and to show that she could write 'a, b, c,' and 'd' already.

"Oh, Mother!" she said after tea. "You have done the ironing! I said I would do it when I came home."

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"Well, well," said her mother. "You did nearly all the washing before you left home. I think my part of the bargain should be to finish it."

The next morning, as Mary drew near to the schoolhouse, she heard a great noise amongst the children; loud shouts and laughter from the boys, and girls' voices too.

"Oh, those boys!" exclaimed Mary to herself.

They were rough and wild mostly, and Mary secretly feared them, or she thought she did. At that moment a great dog scurried round the street corner and raced past her. It was clutching something in its mouth. Several boys followed, the boy Ivor leading, supposedly chasing the dog, but really only heading it this way and that, for the sake of a little sport. They were all shouting and laughing,

Mary hurried on to the school, where she found a group of girls round one of the smallest, who was crying.

"What's the matter?" asked Mary. "What are you crying for, Rachel dear?"

"That dog snatched her bag that held her dinner," answered one of the girls.

"Oh, poor little Rachel!" cried Mary.

The boys began to straggle back to the school now, still laughing at the "fun" they had had,

"Why didn't you catch that dog?" demanded Mary. "You know you didn't try."

She was vexed to see how unfeeling they were, and it made her brave.

"Pooh!" retorted Ivor. "Of course we couldn't

catch it. Rachel shouldn't be such a little silly as to let it snatch the bag."

"It was such a big dog," whimpered Rachel, "I was frightened."

"Big dog!" jeered one of the boys.

"Little stupid!" said another.

The school bell was being rung, and the children went in. Mary put her arm round little Rachel's shoulders, whispered something in her ear and kissed her, at which the child's face brightened, and she went to her class quite happily.

Several of the children, like Mary and little Rachel, came to school from a distance and brought their midday meal with them.

"Come and sit by me, Rachel," said Mary. "See, I have plenty; we can share nicely."

She gave half her bread and hard-boiled egg to Rachel, and they ate happily together.

"I've got two Welsh cakes too," she said. "I told Mother one would be enough, but she put both in; wasn't it a good thing?"

They laughed, and munched the little round scones, sweet and spicy, that are baked on a hot pan, with the utmost enjoyment.

"Mary Jones is giving half her dinner to Rachel," whispered one of the group of girls and boys at the other end of the schoolroom.

"Yes, I saw her," said another.

They drifted down the schoolroom, and soon all had joined Mary and Rachel. Mary's action had quieted them; they had been talking noisily

before. One of the boys took a great red apple out of his pocket.

"Like an apple?" he said casually, and handed it to Mary.

"Oh, thank you, Mansel," said Mary. "That makes a lovely finish to our dinner, doesn't it, Rachel?"

They all finished their meal sociably together, and got to know each other better than they had done before. Mary did not realize the reason, but from that day onward she was liked, and, in their rough way, admired by the village children. She reached the top of the class, and remained there; for what the others called hard work was nothing but a delight to her, she loved it so. There was no jealousy; it seemed the right place for her. Mary Jones was "different."

One afternoon at the end of school, Mary was tidying away books and slates into the cupboard. She had a headache that day and she looked forward to the walk home in the clear winter air. Presently she became aware of a subdued sniffing at the far end of the room. She had thought that all the children had gone, so she walked down the dim schoolroom to see what was the matter. A small boy was sitting at his desk, an arithmetic book open before him, and a very much smudged slate at his elbow. He was rubbing his tears away with the sleeve of his coat.

"Why, Robbie dear," said Mary, "what is the matter? Can't you do your sum?"

"Mr. Ellis said I wasted my time in school,"

sobbed Robbie, "and that I must stay in and do my sum before I go home. I don't know how to do it."

"I expect you didn't listen carefully enough when Mr. Ellis explained it," answered Mary gently. "Never mind. Let me see if I can help you. I mustn't do it for you, that would be like cheating."

She fetched a damp rag and washed the slate, rubbed the pencil to a point, and took up the book. By this time Robbie had left off crying; hope was dawning.

"Now," said Mary cheerfully. "I will copy out the sum again." She did so in plain, if not very elegant, figures. "And I will show you what to do."

Robbie really worked now, and in a few minutes the sum was done. Mary and Robbie parted at the school door.

"Good-bye, Mary, and thank you," the little boy said shyly. "And I hope your headache will be better to-morrow."

"How did you know I had a headache?" asked Mary in surprise.

"Because you held your head once when you thought I wasn't looking," said Robbie smiling knowingly.

"Oh, it will be all right to-morrow, thank you, Robbie," said Mary. "Good night."

The little boy's sympathy cheered Mary, and she sped blithely home through the frosty air. It was lovely not only to learn for oneself, but to be able to help others. And how different the

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boys were since the school had been opened; so much quieter and better behaved. They needed teaching, that was all.

It was about this time that one afternoon, just before school was closed, the schoolmaster told the scholars to put aside their books, for he had something important to tell them.

"You are all doing well with your lessons," he said, "and I wish to open a Sunday School for you. Kind friends here have promised to help me in the classes. Ask your parents' permission, and, God willing, we will have a morning Sunday School every week, beginning next Sunday."

Mary went home in delight.

"Won't it be lovely!" she said. "Just Bible lessons only. I am longing for next Sunday."

### CHAPTER III

#### TWO MILES TO A BIBLE

THE next Sunday Mary was up betimes, though not so early, of course, as on a week day.

"I must put on my shoes for Sunday School, Mother," she said. "For it is like a Service, isn't it?"

"Yes," answered Mrs. Jones, "but with more Bible reading, I think."

"It will be lovely I know," said Mary, and kissed her parents good-bye, waving to her mother as she walked away down the long mountain road.

"Bless her," said Mrs. Jones, "she is ever eager to learn God's Word."

"Aye, that is so, wife," replied Jacob. "The Lord has laid His hand on her for blessing, I am sure; and I feel she will go far in His service."

Nearly the whole day-school came to this first Sunday school. The keen, active minds of these Welsh children revelled in any new outlet for their energy. The classes were held in small groups, for several good Abergynolwyn folk had volunteered to help in the teaching. Mary was in a senior class, taken by a deacon of the chapel.

"We shall be studying the Gospel of St. Matthew," he told his pupils; and, as many of

them could not, even yet, read very well, he read and explained the first chapter. He noticed Mary's engrossed attention; her face alight with the questions she longed to ask.

"Yes, my dear child?" said the deacon. "Did you wish to ask anything?"

"I thought the other part was the first chapter," answered Mary. "I did not know of this first one."

"What is the 'other part' that you speak of?" questioned the deacon.

Mary hesitated.

"Shall I repeat it?" she then asked.

"Yes indeed, do," the deacon answered.

Mary stood up and repeated the first twelve verses of the second chapter of St. Matthew's Gospel without a fault. So vivid and so simple is the narrative that she had learned them without effort through hearing them read at Christmas time services.

"That is very good," said the deacon with great satisfaction. "That is the beginning of the second chapter, which we shall take next Sunday. You have a Bible in your home. That will be a very great help in these lessons."

"No, sir," answered Mary, flushing a little. "We have no Bible in our house."

"They are very expensive, and, what is worse, very scarce," replied the deacon. "We cannot get any Welsh Bibles for this Sunday School. But there is a society, the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, that publishes Bibles in English. We hope that our good friend, the Rev.

Thomas Charles, will be able to move this Society to print some in Welsh for us. We shall be reading the second chapter next Sunday. If any of you boys and girls can get to a Bible during the week, study that chapter. It will help in next Sunday's lesson. How did you learn that portion of Scripture so well if you have no Bible, my child?" the deacon then asked, turning to Mary.

"I learned it by hearing it read in chapel, sir," answered Mary.

"Well, well! Indeed!" said the deacon. "You have done well."

A quiet, restful afternoon was followed by a mild evening and all the Jones family went down to service in Llanfihangel village. After the service Mary followed Mrs. Evans the Farm out to the chapel porch.

"May I speak to you a moment, Mrs. Evans, ma'am?" she asked, touching Mrs. Evans softly on the arm.

"Why yes, of course, Mary," answered Mrs. Evans. "What is it?"

"Please, ma'am," said Mary, "two years ago you promised me that, if I ever went to school and learned to read, I might come to your house and use your Bible for study."

"Well," said Mrs. Evans, "I know you go to school, but can you read already?"

"Yes, ma'am," Mary answered. "And now a Sunday School is opened; it began to-day, and I would like so much to come and prepare the

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lesson for next Sunday if I may. It would be such a help."

"Of course you may," Mrs. Evans replied heartily. "When I made that promise I meant it. When will you come?"

"Saturday afternoon would be best," said Mary, "when I have finished my work."

"Very well," said Mrs. Evans. "Next Saturday afternoon I shall look out for you; and tell your mother you will be staying with us to tea,"

"Oh, thank you, Mrs. Evans," cried Mary, "thank you."

Mrs. Evans climbed into the pony trap beside her husband.

"You know you are welcome, dear," she called.

So the following Saturday Mary climbed the mountain road to the Evans' farm. It was a beautiful day, clear and still. The distant sea was blue and calm; touches of yellow gorse bloom brightened the near surroundings. Mary paused and looked across the rough slopes towards the shore; she felt, rather than thought of, the beauty that lay around her, for her mind was absorbed by a deep content for all that had happened in the last few months and the sure hope of what the future held.

"What was that in the reading in chapel last Sunday?" she thought. "There failed not ought of any good thing which the Lord had spoken unto the house of Israel; all came to pass.' That is like me," she commented.

She walked on, full of confidence, and soon

reached the farm. It was a typical old Welsh house of grey stone, with tall chimneys, and picturesque stepped gables, that is, with the slopes rising in notches, or steps, to their peaks. Though it was now winter time the flower beds and lawn in front of the house were trimmed and neat.

As Mary walked up the path to the side door Farmer Evans came into the garden from the farmyard.

"Ah, Mary, my little lass," he called, "that's right, you are up in good time. You will have two hours or more of daylight. Would you like to take a look at the farm just for a moment?"

Farmer Evans was proud of his farm, and with good reason. He paused with Mary just inside the yard gate.

"We won't cross the yard," he said. "It would make your feet dirty. Those are a fine lot of cows, don't you think? But I expect you are more interested in the poultry. Mrs. Evans looks after them, as you do yours."

"I see the field where the sheep used to graze is being ploughed," remarked Mary. "Why is that?"

"They didn't do well there," answered Farmer Evans, "I lost a lot of lambs last year; too exposed, I think. So I am putting them down in the hollow—and putting *up* with the loss," he added with a smile. "I am like Job, Mary; I say 'Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?'"

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"We could see the sheep from our garden when they were in the high field," said Mary. "And once, when I was little, there was a reading in chapel about God washing us from our sins, and we should become white like wool; and I thought, how strange! Farmer Evans' are quite dark, not a bit white. Then one day I was in Llanfihangel with Father, and I saw some fleeces, and underneath the dark, dirty outside part I saw the wool as it really was, clean and white, nothing else could be so beautifully white, and I understood what the Bible meant then."

"Yes, they are lovely," agreed Farmer Evans, "and it shows that the more we know of the truth of things the better we understand the Scriptures and also see how right the Scriptures are. You will be wanting to go in to your Bible study, but I must show you something that we think is a good idea. See that little paddock, where the pony is? We call it Hospital Meadow, for there we put the sick animals to rest and get better."

"What a grand idea!" exclaimed Mary. "I do think that is lovely for the animals. And thank you, Mr. Evans, for showing me the farm."

"Come in, my dear," called Mrs. Evans, in answer to Mary's knock. "Saturday afternoon is my baking time, so you have come on a good day. But come straight into the parlour; unless you would like to warm yourself by the fire first. No?"

Well, you don't look cold. Have you got paper and pencil to note your texts?"

"Yes, thank you," said Mary, "I brought some with me."

"Then you can set to work at once," answered Mrs. Evans as she led the way into the parlour. "Here is the Bible, covered with a cloth. I don't need to tell you to be careful how you turn the pages."

"No, indeed, ma'am," Mary answered, as she seated herself in the chair that Mrs. Evans pulled forward.

Mrs. Evans returned to her baking, and Mary turned back the covering cloth from the Bible. There it lay, a massive volume, with embossed binding and a brass clasp. For the first time in her life Mary was alone with a Bible, and she paused, looking at it with reverence. Then she opened the Book and turned the leaves. It was difficult to find her way amongst the various books. The leaders in chapel seemed to find their places so easily, but Mary spent some little time, and a good deal of thought, over the Old Testament, meeting the books of which she knew the titles as with friends. At last she reached the New Testament and St. Matthew's Gospel.

She was still busy making notes when Mrs. Evans' little boy called her to tea. Carefully she covered the Bible again, put back her chair, and then joined the Evans family in the kitchen. It was a merry meal, for the Evans' children were overjoyed at having a young visitor up at their quiet

home. There were two boys, their elder sister already being grown up; and as they attended the grammar school a few miles away they knew very little of village school life and were highly interested in Mary's account of hers.

Though Mary came from a poor cottage home, and the farm kitchen seemed to her quite a grand place, she conducted herself naturally and easily with her hosts, both young and old. The Welsh people have this gift; they are never awkward in their manner towards strangers, no matter what their position may be. Rank simply does not seem to count with them, which shows, perhaps, that the Welsh have always been a free people.

"Come again," shouted the boys after her as she went down the mountain path.

"Of course she is coming again," said their mother. "She is coming every Saturday, for I am sure she will not miss one week."

As Mary walked through the darkening winter evening she thought of the kindness of these friends at the farm; she thought of what she had read that afternoon and what a help it had been. But, after all, it had been hurried; she had wanted more time.

"I shall have spent an hour in coming and going that I might have had at home with the Bible if I had one," she thought.

A sense of tremendous need rose up within her.

"I *must* have a Bible of my own," she murmured. And with the sense of need came a

great resolve like an overmastering force. "I *will* have a Bible; I will work and save, even if it is for ten years, and buy one for myself."

She walked on swiftly, thinking of ways and means. What could she do to earn money?

"Perhaps I could have a swarm of bees of my very own and sell the honey," she thought. "They won't take up my time very much."

She had not finished working out this first scheme when she reached the cottage.

"Father," she said when they were all sitting by the fire, "could you make me a little box, please?"

"What?" answered her father, smiling. "Are you going to leave us and go travelling, that you need a box?"

"Oh, no," laughed Mary, "I don't mean that kind of box. I want a little box to put money in, with a hole in the top."

"Oh, a money-box! I think I can manage that. And where is the money coming from?"

"Father, Mother," said Mary earnestly, "I have made up my mind. I am going to earn money as I can, and save up to buy myself a Bible for my very own. Then I can read it properly," she went on, "and we can have readings every night when we have prayers all together." Her face glowed with the thought.

"You have a very busy life already, dear," said her mother doubtfully, "but I will help you all I can. You are beginning to sew very nicely, and you ought to be able to get a little needlework to do sometimes."

"And do you think I could have a swarm of bees of my own?" said Mary. "I thought of that as I was coming home from the farm this evening."

"Yes," said Jacob, "they ought to pay well. There is that old hive in the outhouse. I will mend it for you. David Lewis Everything will let me have a bit of paint, and it will be as good as new, ready for a swarm in May. He will let you have a swarm, too; he is a rare beekeeper."

"Thank you, Father," said Mary gratefully.

She sat quiet for a while, gazing into the fire; but her face showed how busy her thoughts were.

"I am thinking of all the promises in the Bible that I can remember," she said at last. "Promises that God makes to people who try hard to learn about Him, and to those who work and pray hard for some good thing."

"'Be strong and of a good courage,' "quoted her mother softly. "That was Joshua, wasn't it?"

"I have always remembered those words, out of the Prophet Isaiah, I think," said Jacob. "I learned them when I was a boy. They went like this: 'For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee.' I thought it was so wonderful. The mountains seem so sure and unmovable, yet even they might be brought down before God's kindness failed us."

"Then Jesus has given us so many beautiful promises," said Mary. " 'I will not leave you comfortless; I will come to you'; and 'Lo, I am

with you always, even unto the end of the world'; and 'Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, He will give it you'."

"So you can go on with your plans in sure hope, Mary dear," said Mrs. Jones, "for the Bible says somewhere 'He is faithful that promised', and 'I will trust, and not be afraid'."

So Mary continued her trips up to the farm every Saturday, and with her day-school, Sunday School, housework, and homework in the evenings, her life was a full one. But above it all, her one great purpose, that she would buy a Bible for herself, stood out in her mind; for the more she studied the Bible the more she longed to possess one of her own.

One Saturday evening her parents were working at their looms as usual and listening for Mary's return from the farm. At length the clock struck eight. Mrs. Jones rose, and going to the window she pulled aside the curtain and looked out.

"How late Mary is," she said. "It is gone eight o'clock. She has never been so late before, and it is so dark; not even any starlight. I hope she has come to no harm."

"Never fear, Molly," answered Jacob. "She is on the Lord's business, and the Lord will take care of her. She is not thoughtless like some children."

"But the short way is so rough and dangerous," said Mrs. Jones, "and she always goes that way, but in the dark it is not really safe. I wish she would come."

"Well, I will go and meet her if you wish," said Jacob, "but I know what she would say: 'Oh, Father! I can't have you coming out in the cold nights. I shall feel as if I must not go to the farm, and then what shall I do.' No, Molly, I should feel that I was a hindrance to her, and I am certain that God is watching over her every step of the way. Hark! There she is."

Mary's quick step could be heard on the garden path and she came in looking flushed and animated.

"Why are you so late, Mary dear?" asked Mrs. Jones.

"Were you anxious, Mother?" Mary said. "You need not have been. I have had such a wonderful time at the farm this evening. I had just finished studying to-morrow's lesson—it is the seventh chapter of St. Matthew, the first twelve verses—and the whole was so easy, and so beautiful that I read on and on, and learned the whole chapter. I had just finished when Farmer Evans came in, and he asked me if I understood what I had read, and I said that some of it was rather difficult. So he sat down and we went through the chapter together, and he explained the hard parts so clearly and nicely—and I know the chapter perfectly now. After supper, would you like me, Father and Mother, to repeat it all through to you?"

"We should indeed like to hear it, dear child," answered Jacob Jones.

When supper was finished, Jacob sat in his

chair by the chimney, Mrs. Jones took some knitting in her hands, and Mary seated herself on a stool and recited the chapter. Her parents listened, deeply moved, for she spoke the sacred words with an emphasis and earnestness that showed her complete understanding. When she came to the words, "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you," her voice lifted, and her eyes kindled, and they knew that she was thinking of her great desire, and was taking the assurance of that promise to her heart.

## CHAPTER IV

### EARNING FOR THE BIBLE

"LOOK in the cupboard, lass, and you will see something you will like," said Jacob Jones one afternoon when Mary returned from school. Mary ran to the cupboard.

"Oh, my money-box!" she exclaimed. "How pretty!" Thank you, Father dear! Now I can begin to save. Oh, it rattles; there is something in it already!"

"Only two halfpennies, dear, one each from your mother and me," said Jacob, "but we felt we must be the first to put something in, to make a start."

"They sound grand," answered Mary, shaking the bright blue-painted box. "Thank you, Mother and Father. I feel rich already."

She went out to the outhouse for some wood, and came back with a few sticks.

"The sticks are all finished," she said, "but it is still light enough; I will run out and gather a few."

She hurried over to a heathy place where pieces of dead furze-wood and such like lay scattered around. She soon got a good bundle, and was thinking of home when she heard an old woman's voice, querulous and doleful, not far away.

"Old Mrs. Rees," thought Mary, and walked in the direction of the voice.

"Good evening, Mrs. Rees," she called. "Is anything the matter? Can I help you?"

An old woman who had been stooping, also to pick up sticks, straightened herself and looked at Mary.

"Oh, it's Mary Jones," she said. "It's my rheumatism, my dear. It is so hard for me to stoop about on this rough ground to pick up sticks. Now you have a nice bundle. Could you spare half of it? I would give you a halfpenny for it if you would.<sup>3</sup>"

Mary's first impulse was to give the old woman half her wood out of kindness; but she thought of her money-box.

"That I will," she answered, and separated a generous half of the wood from the bundle.

"Thank ye," said Mrs. Rees. "That will save me a lot of pain and trouble; and here is the halfpenny. If you like to bring me a bundle like this sometimes on your way to school I will gladly give you the same for it."

"Oh, thank you, Mrs. Rees!" cried Mary, "I will. It will be no trouble. I will always do it for you."

The old woman hobbled off and Mary almost danced back to her home.

"Look, Father! Look, Mother!" she cried, "I have been *earning money* since I went out."

She took down the money-box and dropped the halfpenny into it with a satisfying clank.

"Poor old Mrs. Rees is going to pay me a halfpenny for every bundle of wood I get her. She is so rheumaticky that she asked me for some of mine just now. I don't suppose she will be able to afford it very often, but it will be a halfpenny every now and again. What a splendid start I have made!"

Soon after this happened Mary was at the farm as usual one Saturday afternoon preparing the Sunday-school lesson. On this day, before tea, Mrs. Evans invited her to come out to the farmyard.

"I want to show you my chickens, Mary," she said. "We have a fine lot this year."

The fowls all gathered round Mrs. Evans as she picked her way into the yard.

"No, no, you greedy creatures," she cried, "you know you have been fed."

"What a grand lot of fowls!" exclaimed Mary. "And such a lot of chicks!"

"Yes," said Mrs. Evans. "You see that big speckled cock, and that hen, and that hen," pointing them out as she spoke. "I am going to give you those for your very own. The hens will be laying soon, and you can sell the eggs and do what you wish with the money. I can guess what you *will* do with the money, now that you have set yourself the task of earning enough to buy a Bible. It will be a great bit of work, and I like to be able to help you."

"Oh, Mrs. Evans, ma'am! I can't think what to say to thank you enough."

"Don't worry about that," replied Mrs. Evans. "I admire you, child, for your brave spirit, and wish you all success. The farm boy will bring the fowls over when he goes to market next week. Now it is getting late, and you must have some tea before you go home. Never mind about thanking me. May God bless and prosper you, my dear."

Mary sped down the dusky road that evening, her feet not carrying her fast enough, she was so eager to tell her parents of this new piece of good fortune. Great was the rejoicing in the cottage that night; not only for the money value of Mrs. Evans' gift, but for her kindness in thinking of it.

"Everybody is so kind," said Mary. "Do you know, Mother, I seem to have made a lot of friends since I started to earn for my Bible. People I used to know only just a little I know quite well now, and they are so friendly. The other day I was passing Mrs. Davies' cottage—that Mrs. Davies who is always scolding and shouting at her children. I always hurry past if I can, but that day the smallest child was out in the road; it had got through the gate somehow, and it might have been hurt or lost. So I took it in to its mother, and Mrs. Davies was ever so kind and friendly. She said that she is nearly always feeling ill, and she worries because if she should be so ill that she had to be in bed, what would become of the children? She asked if I would come and help her sometimes. She said she would pay me. Mr. Davies is not poor. Do you think I could, Mother?"

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"You don't seem to have much time to spare, Mary dear," said Mrs. Jones, "but you might give the poor woman a little help now and again, just to give her a rest."

So sometimes Mary would stop at the Davies' cottage on her way home from school and do a little washing or ironing, or bath the children, or any other little thing to ease Mrs. Davies of her burden, and she would bring home a halfpenny and drop the coin hopefully in her box.

Spring was coming, and the evenings were drawing out. "Now that the evenings are light, Mary," said Jacob one morning, "I should like you to go to Towyn this evening for me, to take an order for some yarn."

"Yes, Father," answered Mary. "I will come back as early as I can. It will be a nice walk. I will go on from Abergynolwyn, and walk back through Llanegryn."

"Don't go too far out of your way, dear," said Mrs. Jones anxiously. "It is a long walk."

"No, Mother, I will be careful," Mary assured her mother.

Mary loved to get down to the sea sometimes and she enjoyed the expedition. But it was a long walk back to Llanfihangel, especially as she frequently stopped and looked back at the broad sweep of Cardigan Bay that lay still and dusky beneath her.

She was not far from home, and was plodding up the road when her foot kicked something heavy, yet soft, that was lying in the dust. Mary

stooped and looked, wondering what it was, and picked up a leather purse, heavy and bulky.

"I wonder who has lost it," thought Mary as she walked on. "It feels as if it is full of money. Father will know what I had better do with it."

She walked on for half a mile or so, and then saw a man coming slowly towards her. He was searching every inch of the road as he walked. Then she recognized him, he was Farmer Greaves, a brother-in-law of Mrs. Evans.

"Good evening, Mary Jones," he said. "I have lost my purse. You don't happen by any chance——?"

"A purse!" exclaimed Mary. "I have just found a purse. It was lying in the road."

She held the purse for Farmer Greaves to see.

"Oh, that is my purse!" he said. "How fortunate that you found it. It is getting so dark that I might not have seen it."

"No, indeed," answered Mary as she moved on. "I should not have seen it myself, but I kicked it as I was walking."

"Wait, Mary Jones," called the farmer. "I would like to give you something as a little reward or acknowledgement of your help."

He fingered a shilling in his pocket, but he was not generous like his sister-in-law, Mrs. Evans. He found a sixpence, and gave it to Mary.

"There, a little gift," he said awkwardly. "Thank you. Good night."

Mary had not expected any reward, so a whole

silver sixpence seemed like treasure. It certainly lightened the last half-mile of her homeward way, and as she dropped the coin into her box she felt quite a thrill.

"A whole sixpence, half a shilling!" she murmured. "My little box hasn't got only coppers in it now."

The summer of that year was a very happy one. Mary was full of confidence that she would soon get her Bible. Often many weeks passed without a penny going into the box, but now that she had really started to save, her determination grew stronger. The money already saved made the longed-for possession more real. It was what the gipsies call a "hansel," a beginning. The little helps that she sometimes gave sick Mrs. Davies became known to other hard-worked mothers. Soon it was a custom for Mary to collect the small children on her way from school on fine days from a group of cottages that she passed, and to sit with them amongst the heather and bracken, keeping them amused with stories from the Bible. It gave the mothers freedom to prepare their husband's evening meal in peace, and the children loved that hour with Mary more than their play. They would listen as she told and re-told the stories with never-failing interest; and Mary, who knew so much more, now that she attended Sunday School and could read the Bible at the farm, never tired of telling what she had learned.

"Tell us that story about the little boy who had

the five loaves and two fishes," a small boy would say.

And Mary would liken the scene at Bethsaida to the one the children were looking upon from their grassy height, the rugged slopes down to the sea and the wide bay, so like the Sea of Galilee glistening in the sun. She would tell the story in the simple way that her little hearers could understand.

Or a little girl would make her request: "Tell us about the little girl whom Jesus made alive again."

There was often much discussion after the telling of that miracle.

"They were very rude people for laughing at Jesus, and they were wrong, too."

"How kind He was to think of the little girl needing something to eat!"

"Of course, He was *always* thoughtful."

But people, young or old, like to do something besides listen, and Mary would teach the children a metrical psalm, the only kind of hymn that was commonly sung in those days, and the brae would ring with the children's shrill voices.

Then Mary would shepherd her flock back to their homes, and the mothers would thank her and tell her what a help this free hour had been, and would say, "There, Mary dear, there is a little for your money-box," and give her a halfpenny, or perhaps only a farthing if the woman was poor.

So the box grew heavy, and Mary wondered how much she really had by now.

"I will wait until I have had it a year," she said to her mother, "Then I will open the box and count my money."

It was a great moment when Mary, her mother and father sitting with her at the table, cut the paper that closed the little trap-door at the bottom of the box and shook the money out. She placed the halfpennies and farthings in piles, and, with the sixpence from Farmer Greaves, she reckoned her year's savings.

"Elevenpence three farthings," she said at last, and sat looking solemnly at the little heaps of money.

For the first time in that whole year her heart failed her. Her mind went back over all the work and stinting and denial that the money meant; and it was less than a shilling!

"Not quite a shilling," she said aloud, her voice trembling a little.

Jacob rose from the table and went to his coat that hung on the door. He came back and put a shilling on the table and drew the odd change towards him.

"It *is* a shilling now, Mary," he said quietly. "I think you have done wonderfully, Mary dear," said Mrs. Jones comfortingly, "and you will do better still this next year, for you will be able to sell some chicks when the hens sit; and I think you might get a little needlework, too, for you sew quite nicely now."

"Yes," said Mary, her spirit quickly reviving after the first downcast moment. "I shall do things

that pay better; but I shall do all the same old things, too," she added, laughing. She picked up the box. "It is lighter, and yet it is worth more," she said. "Thank you, Father dear."

She ran round the table and flung her arms round her father's neck and kissed him. Jacob put an arm round her and patted her affectionately.

"If you have faith as a grain of mustard seed it can remove mountains," he said. "That cost of the Bible seemed like a mountain before you just now, didn't it, lass? But you will remove it, never fear."

"Yes, Father," said Mary, "*I know I shall*, for Jesus has promised it."

She went quietly up to her bedroom and, before undressing, she knelt by her bed and the Holy Spirit grew strong in her as she prayed.

"Lord Jesus," she whispered, and she felt that she was speaking to an ever-present ally by her side, "I know Thou wilt give me strength and help. Please show me what I can do to earn my Bible soon."

When she lay down at last she was full of confidence and strong resolution; a quiet strength seemed to possess her, and she fell asleep quite happy.

Earnest and faithful prayer is *always* answered. Only those who pray with a wavering belief doubt this, for they have no experience of true, confident prayer. The next morning Mary went to school as usual. She expected to do the usual

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things, and to return at the end of the day to the work that Mrs. Jones was forced to leave for her to do. Mr. Ellis, the schoolmaster, was entering the school as Mary arrived at the door.

"Good morning, Mary," he said. "In good time as usual."

In that first year of school life the master had grown to look upon Mary as one almost apart from the other children. Her unfailing attention to her lessons, her quick, thoughtful answers when all the others sat dumb, gave him the joy that all good teachers feel over an intelligent, interested pupil. Mary on her part admired and respected her master; so there was a bond of quiet friendship between them.

"I am glad you are early, Mary," said Mr. Ellis, "for I wanted to ask you if you know of any woman who could do some needlework for my wife. I suppose your mother is too busy at her weaving. But Mrs. Ellis would be glad of some help, just with plain work. I believe she has some curtains that need hemming and such like from time to time."

It came just like that, God's answer, quietly and naturally!

"My mother will be too busy to do the work," answered Mary, "but I can do it. I will gladly do it." Her eyes shone at the wonderful opportunity. "Mother was saying only last evening that I ought to be able to get some needlework to do. She says I do it quite nicely enough."

Then, the way opened, Mary told her master of

her one great desire to have a Bible of her own, of the year's work of earning and saving, of her determination, and now the joyful hope that this offer of work would bring.

"Well, well!" exclaimed Mr. Ellis. "This is indeed interesting; in fact it is wonderful! How old do you say you are? Eleven! We must surely give you all the help and encouragement we can. Come round to our house in the dinner hour, Mary, and Mrs. Ellis will give you some work to take home. God bless and prosper you, Mary."

The children were going into school, and Mr. Ellis went in. Mary walked to her desk in a happy dream. God had answered her prayer, and so soon! It was wonderful!

That afternoon Mary walked home with a large bundle in her arms.

"Dear me, child!" cried her mother when she saw her come in. "What have you got there? You seem to have got some work to do at last."

"Yes, Mother," answered Mary with a blissful smile. "What do you think? This very morning Mr. Ellis told me that Mrs. Ellis needed someone to do some plain needlework and asked if I knew of anyone who could do it. I said *I* could do it. Oh, Mother! I prayed last night that God would show me the way to earn more, and the answer came this very morning. I am so happy. I feel so close to God when He answers me like this."

"Indeed yes, dear," replied Mrs. Jones, much

moved. "It is hard for us always to remember that He is so near; but He is."

"And I shall love the work," Mary went on, as she unrolled the curtain cloth for her mother to see. "Are not the roses pretty? And Mrs. Ellis was so kind. She said it would take at least a day to hem all these pieces, and her mother used to pay her old sewing woman sixpence a day, and give her her meals. So Mrs. Ellis said that she would pay me sixpence just the same, though I am so young. A whole sixpence, Mother! Isn't that grand?"

Jacob Jones came in just then.

"Eh, lass!" he cried, "are you going to make yourself a new dress? You will look as fine as a butterfly."<sup>3</sup>

So Jacob had to hear the whole story again, and then Mary sat down with a light heart to do her first piece of paid sewing.

## CHAPTER V

### FAITHFUL IN THAT WHICH WAS LEAST

"It is a good thing it is winter time, with not much to do in the garden," said Mary one evening a few days after she had brought home her first piece of needlework, "and too cold for the children to be taken out. I am going to have some really cosy evenings."

She glanced brightly round the room as she sat on her stool by the fire, with a gay curtain over her knees.

"You put your lazy old father to shame, Mary," said Jacob. "Here am I—"

A long fit of coughing interrupted what he was about to say.

"Oh, Father! You, lazy!" cried Mary. "Why, you work from morning till night when you are well. Oh, that dreadful cough!"

Jacob Jones was sitting in his chair by the fire, for he had an attack of asthma that was worse than usual, and he looked wizened and old with the strain.

The attack over, he sank back in his chair almost exhausted.

"I know what has made him worse," said Mrs. Jones. "He would go out and take up the last of the potatoes this afternoon, in spite of the damp."

"I was going to do that to-morrow morning

before I went to school," protested Mary. "Oh, Father! Why did you do it?"

"Oh, yes, Mary/" said Jacob, teasingly, "You don't need any rest. You can work all day, and all night too."

"This isn't work," answered Mary, sewing away for dear life. "For every length of hemming I do means another penny for the box."

The next Saturday Mary went as usual to the farm.

"You look very bright to-day, Mary," said Mrs. Evans. "Has anything specially good happened?"

Mary told her of her new work, and Mrs. Evans was very interested.

"I need some help with my sewing," she said. "The boys wear out everything. When you have finished Mrs. Ellis's work, I will give you some mending to do if you like."

"Of course I will," cried Mary. And when she reached home she met her mother in triumph. "I have got another order," she said, "from Mrs. Evans,"

So the year wore on. Mary still gathered sticks for old Mrs. Rees and still took the children out on the hillside in the summer days. That was a pleasure always, for the children were a year older and could understand and respond to her teaching better, and the group of little ones became a class.

"They will soon be going to Sunday School," Mary said, "and they will be able to understand the lessons."

Another year had gone its round, and Mary and her father and mother sat at the table again to count out the contents of the blue money-box. Mary first put aside the shilling from last year, then, as before, placed the money in piles.

"There is more silver this year, lass," said Jacob,

"Yes, the hens laid well," answered Mary, "and there was the needlework."

She counted round the heaps of coins, and placed the shilling with them.

"Two shillings and sevenpence," she said. "Oh, how lovely! More than two and sixpence! I shall get my Bible soon! I shall get my Bible soon!" She clasped her hands at her breast in delight.

"Thanks be to God!" cried Mrs. Jones. "And bravo, Mary dear. You have worked wonderfully. I felt sure you had done better this last year. But we will not work any more to-night. Put your precious money away, for I have prepared a little special supper to-night for the occasion."

"I thought I smelt something good, Molly," said Jacob as Mrs. Jones began to put out a savoury mutton stew.

That was a joyful supper, for there was a feeling of thankfulness amongst the three who partook of it that made it almost a sacred feast. They sang the doxology, and then sang a special grace, for Mary said she felt as if she could not stop singing, her heart was so glad and full of hope.

That winter was cold and wet. Many a time Mary came home from school soaked with rain, her hair tossed with the rough winds. One afternoon Mrs. Jones met Mary at the door when she arrived.

"I am sorry, dear," she said. "But do you think you could go down into Llanfihangel for some medicine for your father? His cough has been very bad all day."

"I thought he coughed a great deal before I left home this morning," said Mary in anxious tones. "Yes, Mother, I will run down at once."

Mary was soon back again with the medicine, and much of the evening was taken up with attending to the poor sufferer. Jacob was no better in the morning. He had had a bad night, and was really ill. Mary offered to stay from school to help her mother, but Mrs. Jones would not agree.

"Go to school, dear," she said. "He may be better during the day."

But the next day, and for many days after, Mary had to stay at home and nurse her father, while her mother toiled at her weaving.

"I must earn what I can," she said, "or we shall have no money for food."

Instead of putting the money in her box Mary brought what she got for her eggs to her mother, or used the eggs for her father's nourishment. She was distressed at her father's state, for he had never been so ill before. Her mother, too, was worried and anxious.

February came in, clear and warm, and Jacob revived, but he was thin and weak for a long time. Still, he was better, and Mary and her mother rejoiced. Mary had done a little needlework at odd moments for Mrs. Evans, and apologized for its long delay. Now the neglected garden must be dug and planted and she had not a minute to spare for anything that might add to her money in the box.

She worked most of the evening at her school books, for her long absence from school had put her back.

"Oh, Mother!" she said on the first day of her return to school, "I am right down at the bottom of my class! Even below Ivor Thomas, and he is . . . not very clever."

"Never mind, dear," said her mother. "You will soon catch up again. Give up the needlework for a while."

"I really like the lessons best," Mary confessed smiling. "They are so interesting."

So the store in the money-box only increased a penny that year, but Mary, knowing the reason, was not disappointed.

"If Father keeps well I will do better next year," she said.

But Jacob was weakened by his malady, and left the little gardening jobs he used to do to Mary. Mrs. Jones had to work longer hours at her loom to make up for Jacob's feeble efforts. The sum of money in the box mounted very slowly in those days.

One day, when Mary was nearly fifteen, she came back from school with some news.

"Mr. Ellis is leaving Abergynolwyn," she said sadly. "We shall miss him so much. He is taking charge of a school in Barmouth."

"Well, well," said Jacob Jones. "Yes, you will miss him. What a lot you have learned under his teaching, Mary. If you look back over the last four years or so, and remember what you were when the school first opened, you must feel you are not the same Mary Jones."

"But I am the same Mary Jones," Mary answered quietly. "I have learned from Mr. Ellis, but I have learned much more from the Bible. Every week I find more and more lovely teaching in it. I shall *never* be really happy until I can read my own Bible every day."

"Do you know who is taking Mr. Ellis' place?" asked Mrs. Jones.

"A Mr. Lewis Williams," said Mary, "but I don't know anything about him. Only I think he is younger than Mr. Ellis."

Not long after this the new master of Abergynolwyn School arrived and took up his duties. He was a short, dark young man, with a quiet, serious manner. A few of the more unruly boys eyed him curiously, and thought they might be able to have some "fun" with this quiet young man.

But they soon found out their mistake. Mr. Ellis had been a good disciplinarian, but the new master proved himself more than equal to any

plot the Abergynolwyn boys might hatch. He had an iron discipline that soon quelled any riotous behaviour.

That quiet, dark young man who stood at the master's desk had, during the past six years, overcome difficulties that would seem to most people to be impossible. Determination and faith in God had raised him from ignorance and sin to the position he now held.

Lewis Williams was born in 1774 of very humble parents. As was usual in those days he grew up entirely untaught. He lived a wild, lawless life with the other boys of the town. He drank and gambled, jeered at anyone who tried to persuade him to mend his ways, and scorned the good folk who kept the Sabbath and went to church.

When he was about eighteen, perhaps only looking for some amusement, he attended a prayer meeting one evening. A Mr. Jones, of Mathafarn, was reading and expounding the fifth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans. He spoke with a fire and conviction that impressed even Lewis Williams, who sat in a corner of the mission room and listened.

The preacher first read the chapter through, and to Lewis Williams, unused to the words of Scripture, they fell on his ears with strange force. "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men; for that all have sinned." And again, "That as sin hath reigned unto death,

even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord."

Sin and death! Sin and death! These two dreadful thoughts gripped Lewis Williams' mind. He sat staring at the preacher. All thought of "fun" had gone and he hung on every word spoken. The preacher changed his note of stern warning to one of hope and peace.

"Let us go back to the first words of this chapter, my friends," he said. "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.' Lay hold on eternal life by faith in the Lord Jesus, my brothers and sisters, and you will be saved from death! Cling to Him, and He will draw you up out of the mire of sin. Cling to Him and He will bear you up as on the wings of an eagle."

Lewis Williams felt as if something had struck at his heart. The worshippers sang a hymn, but he hardly heard, and when all was over he stumbled out into the darkened street. He had gone into the mission room a hardened sinner; he came out a Christian.

His former friends made his life difficult in that town, and in a short time he took up some work on a farm at a place called Llanegryn. He soon joined the chapel and entered into the Christian life there. But as he went about his work he noticed that the boys of the place were ignorant, wild, and lawless. The memory of his own boyhood rose up in his mind. He wished that he could do something for these poor, neglected lads.

"They only need teaching," he thought. "But who is to teach them?"

The answer came like an actual voice.

"You must do it yourself, Lewis Williams."

But he could not read himself. How could he teach others? For days he thought and planned.

"I will do it," he said at last to himself. "I am a man, and can learn more easily than these boys."

He went to an old woman whom he knew, Mrs. Betty Evans, who could read and write, and told her of his great desire to open a Sunday School and also a night-school for the boys of the town.

"That would be a grand work," Betty Evans said. "What can I do to help you?"

She had expected Lewis to ask, perhaps, for some money towards any expenses of his project.

"I want you to help me to learn to read," was his astonishing answer.

So Mrs. Betty gave Lewis Williams his first lesson in reading.

The Sunday School was easy, for Lewis only needed to tell the boys Bible stories and to teach them Psalms, and the scholars responded to his teaching. But the night-school was another matter. There they were to learn to read. On the day before the evening class Lewis would, under Betty Evans' tuition, commit to memory so much of the alphabet, so many words as were necessary for the next lesson. The boys were entirely ignorant, but they came willingly to the class.

On the first evening they were all gathered in

the room that had been lent for the purpose, a crowd of unruly, laughing boys. Lewis Williams had resolved that every class should begin with prayer. How could he do it, with the boys excited, joking, pushing one another? Very soon there would be a rowdy scene. Lewis Williams had served his time in the Militia, and to a person determined to put everything to God's service every piece of knowledge can be used in that service.

"Line up, boys," Lewis ordered. "We will have some drill."

Interested at once, the boys marched round and round the room, enjoying the quick commands. Then came the "Stand at ease," and before any disorder could break out again, Williams offered a short, powerful prayer. The lesson followed, and that, at first, was the learning of the alphabet. The undisciplined boys would never have applied themselves to the dull work of learning their letters in the ordinary way, so Williams taught them to the time of the March of the Men of Harlech, and a very excellent way too, for a tune always helps the memory. The tables used to be taught in the same way in the old days.

The older boys soon learned their letters, and then Lewis Williams, with Betty Evans' help, plodded on before them. They little dreamed that what he taught them each evening he himself had learned only the day before, or even perhaps that same afternoon. But how difficult it was!

Even with all his work and care, words confronted him that he could not pronounce. So he thought of another plan. He made the acquaintance of some boys who attended a good local school. As the master of a night-school and a Sunday School superintendent, he had gained a good deal of respect in the town by this time. No one dreamed how poorly equipped he was for such a position. "I have a very nice room that I use for my evening class," he said to the school boys. "Would you like to meet there on some evenings for reading and discussion together? You are very welcome."

The boys were delighted to have a warm room in which to sit for reading and debate. Lewis Williams was naturally appointed leader, and he, with pardonable acuteness, always introduced the reading that he was to give at his next lesson in evening class. He then left the reading and discussion to the boys, listening with painful attention, so that he could memorize the meaning of the words, their pronunciation, and so on.

So this man learnt and taught and laboured. He longed to become a preacher, and would go out on Sundays to the churches in the district to listen to the sermons, still learning pronunciation, words, and anything that would educate him for his Master's service.

It was about this time that the Rev. Thomas Charles of Bala came to Bryn-crug, near Llanegryn, on a tour of inspection of his schools. He

stayed with the schoolmaster, Mr, John Jones. Mr. Charles asked Mr. Jones if he knew of anyone who could teach in a school he wished to open in another town.

"There is a young man named Lewis Williams in Llanegryn who holds evening classes for boys, and a Sunday School, too," answered Mr. Jones. "I know nothing of him myself, but I have heard it said that he cannot read properly himself."

"Impossible!" exclaimed Mr. Charles. "How can he teach if he cannot read?"

"Well, sir, I have wondered about that myself," said Mr. Jones, "but he is well spoken of. He is a devout Christian. If you wish, I will send a message over to Llanegryn and ask him to come and see you."

"Yes, do," answered Mr. Charles. "I must see this young teacher."

Lewis Williams came for the interview. Roughly dressed and very diffident in his manner, he looked anything but a successful schoolmaster. But Mr. Charles never allowed people to feel uneasy in his presence.

"I was anxious to meet you, Mr. Williams," he said, "as I hear that you hold evening classes in Llanegryn. Have you many boys?"

"Yes, sir, a good number; too many for one to teach, in fact."

"I hear that you have never had any schooling. Is that so?" queried Mr. Charles.

"No, sir, I have never been to school."

"Did your parents teach you at home?"

"No, sir, they could not read or write."

"How, then, do you manage to teach? Tell me how you do this most excellent work, for I am interested in schools, and am anxious to get more good teachers," said Mr. Charles.

Lewis Williams hesitated. He was ashamed of his poor efforts at his night-school, yet Mr. Charles was kind and sympathetic. Lewis told him of his laborious learning, his help from Betty Evans and the grammar school boys, and of the success, in spite of his difficulties, of his class. Mr. Charles was deeply touched.

"I see that with a little assistance," he said, "you might be able to do much good work. In fact, you have already done good, useful work. I will speak to Mr. Jones, the master here, and I advise you to get some tuition from him. He will help you to learn more thoroughly, and in a year or so I trust that I may be able to engage you as a master in one of my schools. But I would like to hear you read. You say you cannot read well. I am curious to know how well you can really read."

Mr. Charles, took out a small New Testament from his pocket and gave it to Williams open at the Epistle to the Hebrews. Williams slowly and stumbingly read a few verses from the first chapter.

"That will do, thank you," said Mr. Charles. "I see you have overcome obstacles that would have baffled most men. Follow my advice, study under Mr. Jones, and I have great hopes of you."

Cheered by this half promise of future employment, Lewis Williams studied for three or four months under Mr. Jones, then continued by himself until he was fit to be engaged as a paid teacher in a small school. A year later he came to be master of Abergynolwyn School.

## CHAPTER VI ON THE WAY

ONE Sunday, some months after Lewis Williams had come to Abergynolwyn, Mary noticed that he used a new Bible in class at the Sunday School. Mary eyed it longingly; longing, that is, to have a closer look at the fresh white pages, to touch the smooth new covers. Williams noticed her look.

"This is my new Bible," he said with quiet pride.

He had known for some time of Mary's love of the Bible, and after the lesson was over, and the other scholars were moving away, he held out his Bible to her.

"Look at it," he said. "It is quite new. Mr. Charles kept it for me when he got a new consignment. I saved for two years to get it," he added. "Welsh Bibles are so expensive."

Mary passed her hand lovingly over the binding; but when Lewis Williams spoke of saving up for his Bible for two years she gave a little exclamation.

"*I* have been saving for nearly six years," she said, "and still I have not enough."

"Six years!" repeated Williams.

"Yes," Mary answered, "little by little; and I shall go on until I *have* saved enough," she added with cheerful determination.

She then told Williams of a few of her ways and means of saving, and he listened, profoundly interested. Any tale of resolute effort roused an answering enthusiasm in him.

"You will not be long now," he said encouragingly. "Keep up your heart. God will provide."

A few months later, when Mary took some needlework up to Mrs. Evans the Farm, she was paid by that good friend twice what she had expected. Secretly, Mrs. Evans thought it was time to hasten the fulfilment of Mary's hope, and when Mary exclaimed that this money would finish the long years of saving, Mrs. Evans was highly pleased.

"Have you really got enough for your Bible at last, Mary child!" she cried. "Well, I am glad I was the one to give the finishing touch, so to speak. For I have been wishing, yes, and saying a little prayer for you too, that the day would come at last."

"Thank you, thank you, ma'am," said Mary. "And now I must run home and tell Father and Mother."

Mary skimmed rather than ran down the mountain path to her home. The joy in her face made any whom she met, even strangers, look and smile, and speak a word of greeting to her. At last she lifted the latch of the door and darted into the cottage.

"Oh, Mother! Father! I have enough money at last! Mrs. Evans paid me much more than I

expected, and I have all the money I need." Mary's voice was tense with excitement.

"Thanks be to God!" said Mrs. Jones.

Jacob pushed back his chair and stretched out his arms, and Mary ran to him.

"Oh, Father, I am so glad, so very glad."

"And it has really come at last," said Jacob, "after six years of working and waiting. God be praised! My brave little lass!"

Mary sat with her head against her father's shoulder for a while. Though the long years of effort had never seemed a burden to her, now that they were ended she experienced a feeling of lightness and freedom. But her mind soon set to work again.

"Now that I have the money, Father," she said, "where shall I get my Bible? There is none to be had here in Llanfihangel or at Abergynolwyn."

"We must think about that," said Jacob, "and enquire. I think our pastor, William Huw, would know best what you should do. Go and ask him tomorrow."

So the next day Mary went to the nearby village where their pastor lived and asked his advice.

"No," he said, "there are no Welsh Bibles to be had in this district. They seem to be getting more and more scarce. I doubt, Mary child, if you will get one from anyone but the Rev. Thomas Charles, right away in Bala, and even he may not have any. It is getting to be a

shame in the country that we Welsh people cannot get a Bible in our own language."

Mary went away feeling very downcast. On the way she met Lewis Williams.

"Good evening, Mary Jones," he said.

She was no longer a pupil at the school, but he was still interested in her; her intelligence and steadfastness appealed to him strongly.

"You look as if something unpleasant has happened," he added. "Nothing wrong at home I hope?"

"Oh no, Mr. Williams," answered Mary. "Nothing unpleasant has happened. Rather the other way. I have saved enough for my Bible."

"Good!" cried Williams. "Bravo!"

"But now I am puzzled," Mary went on. "I have the money, and now I do not know how I can get my Bible. Mr. Huw, whom I have just been to see, says that he does not think I will get one anywhere nearer than Bala, from Mr. Charles."

"Then go to Bala and get one," urged Lewis Williams. "Lose no time, Mary, for they are in such demand. It is some months since I got mine from Mr. Charles."

"Bala is a long way away, isn't it?" asked Mary. "How did you get your Bible?"

"I walked there," Williams answered. "It is only twenty-five miles. I went on a Saturday, and came back very early on Sunday morning, in time for the Sunday School."

"Thank you, Mr. Williams," said Mary. "I

will talk about it with my Father and mother."

Mary went home with her mind excited over this new plan.

"I must go to Bala," she told her parents. "Surely Mr. Charles will have a Bible left, and if so, that one shall be mine."

"Walk to Bala!" exclaimed Mrs. Jones. "Oh, Mary dear, it is so far, and a strange wild road. I am afraid for you to go alone."

"I shall not be alone," Mary answered, "for Jesus says 'I am with you always.' He will be walking with me all the way. Mother, Father," she went on earnestly, "I *know* I am doing right."

"Yes, Mary dear," answered Jacob solemnly, "you have been guided all these years, and I feel that this is the Lord's will and He will take care of you. We must let her go, Molly," he said, turning to Mrs. Jones, "or we may be found lighting against God, and that would be a poor thing after all that has passed."

So Mary prepared for her journey. Her heart beat fast at the thought of the long walk alone to a place she had never seen and of the ordeal of meeting the famous Mr. Charles, who was, to her, a great personage. But her purpose never wavered. She had made up her mind, she would do it.

The day before she had fixed for her expedition she ran down to old Mrs. Rees' cottage and told her of the great plan.

"I want to know if you will kindly lend me that nice wallet that you have," Mary said. "I

must carry some food for the day, and my mother's purse with my precious money in it. I must also carry my shoes for they would be worn out if I wore them all that long way."

"That I certainly will," cried the old woman. "You have saved me many a backache by gathering my sticks. There it is and you are welcome. God bless and prosper you until you return."

"With my Bible," said Mary, her eyes shining with hope.

The next morning Mary left her bed at dawn, washed and dressed and combed her thick, glossy hair with the greatest care. Was not this to be the most important day in her life? Her parents were already preparing a meal for her in the living-room below, and after they had eaten and drunk together they all knelt and prayed for blessing and protection for Mary on her great adventure. Then, quietly kissing her parents, and slinging the wallet and her boots over her shoulder, she went out bare-footed into the sweet early spring morning.

As Mary walked lightly on the soft turf by the wayside she could hear a song thrush fluting in a tree. Rabbits, not expecting human folk to be abroad so early, sat up and looked at her, then lopped away into their burrows. The mountains looked soft and friendly in the sunshine. Mary looked up at their broad slopes and rocky crags.

"They look sort of protecting to-day," she thought, "as if they know that I am going all by myself on a long journey, and are taking care of me."

The words of the 121st Psalm came into her mind.

" 'I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help,'" she sang. "That will be my Psalm for to-day. It so suits me. 'My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth. He will not suffer thy foot to be moved; he that keepeth thee will not slumber.' How safe and happy I feel when I think of those words. 'The Lord is thy keeper: the Lord is thy shade upon thy right hand. The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night. The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil; he shall preserve thy soul. The Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth, and even for evermore.'"

Mary quickened her step.

"'The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil,'" she repeated, "and I am going for my Bible! I am really, really on my way to get my Bible! I can hardly believe it, even yet."

At first the way lay over familiar enough ground and she had a sense of being near to her home, but soon she passed into unknown country, where there was little sign of habitation. Here and there, tucked into a fold in the hills, she saw a lonely farmhouse, or caught sight of a shepherd and his dog high up on the slopes of Gader Idris; but for the rest she was the only moving figure in the whole vast empty landscape. The track grew wilder as she climbed the shoulder of the mountain, and Mary had to scramble over boulders

and sometimes make quite long detours where the path was blocked by a fall of rock. She stuck to it gamely, and at last was rewarded. She came to the brow of a hill and looked down on the valley beneath.

It had been a stiff climb and, as she stood gazing round her, she seemed utterly alone on the bare shoulder of the mountain. Fold after fold of lesser hills rolled away under her feet on every side. The world looked very big and she was very small. Suddenly, her enterprise loomed up before her as something beyond her strength, and she felt the clutch of panic at her heart. Somewhere in the distance lay Bala, but she had already walked a long way. How much farther must she go, and what would be her fate at the end of the journey?

She stood poised, unable to move, a prey for the first time to doubt. Then she looked again at the hills and at Cader Idris stretching up behind and beyond her. "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills. . . . My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth." Slowly courage flowed back into her. The hills seemed indeed to give her the help she had prayed for, and she stepped forward down into the valley with a good courage.

It was easier going now, and a track wound down the mountain side into the trees of a wood. Presently, the trees gave place to cultivated land again and farms began to appear more frequently. Away to her right lay a tiny hamlet, and Mary's spirits rose as she came again within sight of the dwellings of men.

The miles slipped past her now more easily, and as the morning wore on a town of some size came in view. An old man was trimming a hedge by the roadside, and wished Mary a good morning. Mary returned the greeting.

"What is that town, please?" she then asked.

"That is Dolgelley," answered the old farmer.

"Oh," said Mary. "Is Dolgelley very far from Bala?"

"Yes," said the old man, with a little laugh. "A very long way. Are you going to Bala?"

"Yes," said Mary.

"Then you had better slip along," advised the old man. "You have got a good many miles to go yet."

Mary thanked him and went on, and presently saw a gate leading into a grassy field.

"I will go in and sit on the grass," she thought, "and have some dinner."

She climbed the gate and found a sheltered place by the hedge. On every side the lovely hills surrounded her.

"I can lift up mine eyes unto the hills while I eat," she thought.

So she rested and enjoyed the lovely scene while she ate her dinner. Then she found a little wayside stream, rippling over the clean, washed stones, and drank, and laved her face and hands. Then, rested and refreshed, she went on her way.

It was now afternoon, and the sun was hot. The way, too, lay along a dusty road, and Mary felt her bare feet grow sore and tired as she plodded on. Once she saw a woman standing in

a cottage garden, who looked kindly over the hedge at her.

"Is it very far to Bala, ma'am?" Mary asked.

"Oh, a long way," the woman answered. "Oh, many miles. Are you going to Bala? You look hot and tired, child. Sit on that bench and rest a minute, and I will bring you out some buttermilk."

"Thank you, ma'am," said Mary gratefully, and rested while the good woman went and fetched the buttermilk in a gaily painted jug, with a mug to drink from. That drink of buttermilk was the most delicious that Mary had ever tasted, for she had never been so tired and thirsty in her life before.

"Have you come from far, child?" asked the kindly woman. "I don't seem to know you."

"I have come from Llannhangel," answered Mary. "A long way away, near Abergynolwyn; and as you say that Bala is many miles farther on I think I must hurry on, thanking you very kindly for the buttermilk."

"Yes," agreed the woman, "you must get there before dark."

Mary walked quickly on again. The woman's remark about getting to Bala before dark rather alarmed her. To be benighted in this strange place was different from running about the familiar paths in the dark at home. The shadows were growing long when Mary saw a young girl sitting at the door of a little farm eating her supper.

"Is it very far to Bala?" Mary asked her.

"No, not far," the girl answered. "It is just down the hill. Have you walked far? I am having my supper out here because it is so hot in the kitchen. Come and have supper with me. I am sure you must be hungry."

"Thank you," said Mary. "Yes, I am hungry, and tired. I have come right over from near Abergynolwyn to-day."

"All that way!" exclaimed the farmer's daughter. "You must be a good walker. Here, take a piece more cheese."

"Yes, I am a good walker," said Mary. "And it has been a lovely walk."

But she did not say what had chiefly made it such a lovely walk.

"We never go out for walks," said the girl. "It is all work, work, work on the farm here."

"Oh, I work very hard, too," Mary answered quietly.

"Megan," called a voice from the kitchen. "Haven't you finished your supper yet? Or are you going to sit out there all night?"

"There, Mother is calling," exclaimed the girl, "I must go in. It is not far to Bala now. Good night."

"Good night, and thank you very much," said Mary, and went on her way with a good heart.

Lights were shining from some of the windows of Bala as Mary walked down the hill. She could see the great lake gleaming softly in the dim light. It all seemed very beautiful. Mary's first care when she entered the little town was to find

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the house of the Methodist preacher to whom her pastor in Llanfihangel had directed her as someone who would be sure to give her all the help that he could.

"Can you tell me where Pastor David Edwards lives?" Mary asked of a woman who was coming out of a house.

"Yes," answered the woman. "I am going that way. I will show you."

The Welsh people are ever willing to direct a stranger, even if it means going out of their way to do so. Mary and her new friend chatted as they walked along the street, and soon the woman pointed to a house across the way.

"That is where Pastor Edwards lives," she said, "Oh, that is nothing, you are welcome," in answer to Mary's thanks. "Good evening."

Mary knocked at Pastor Edwards' door, and the Pastor himself answered. He looked a little puzzled at his late visitor, until Mary told him that Pastor Huw had recommended her to come to him. Then he invited her in, and listened with the kindest interest to her story.

"You must certainly see Mr Charles," he said, "but not to-night; it is too late. But I will take you to him early to-morrow morning He rises early for he is such a busy gentleman, and I am sure he will gladly do what he can for you You will sleep here; my wife will prepare the guest's bed for you. You must have some food and then I am sure you need rest badly."

Mary was soon shown to her room, and after a

short prayer of thanksgiving for her safe journey, she stretched her weary limbs in the bed. The Psalm that had been her companion all the day returned to her mind again and she repeated it as she rested.

"He that keepeth . . . me . . . will not slumber," she thought. "No, I am safe. And I am going to get my Bible to-morrow."  
And with that she fell happily asleep.

CHAPTER V11  
THE WAY TRIUMPHANT

ONLY a dusky light was showing at Mary's bedroom window when Pastor Edwards knocked at her door.

"Mary Jones," he called, "are you awake? I can see a light in Mr. Charles' window. He is busy at his desk already I expect, so we can go over and see him."

"Thank you, Mr. Edwards, I will come at once," answered Mary, and she hurriedly, but carefully, washed and dressed, knelt for a few minutes in prayer, and came down to the Edwards' sitting-room, where Pastor Edwards and his wife were waiting for her.

"Take a drink of hot milk, child," said kind Mrs. Edwards.

She could see that Mary was trembling, though calm. The milk strengthened her, and she and the pastor went out and crossed the street to the house where Mr. Charles lived. Pastor Edwards knocked softly at the door and presently they heard a footstep in the hall, and Mr. Charles himself opened the door.

"Ah, good morning, friend Edwards," said Mr. Charles. "This is an early visit indeed. Nothing wrong has happened I hope."

"No, sir," answered Pastor Edwards, "nothing

wrong, but a very important matter. I saw the light in your window and ventured to come over, as this young girl has come far to make a request."

"Come in, come in," said Mr. Charles.

The pastor and Mary followed him into his study. Mary was nervous and trembling, feeling strange and unreal in the presence of Mr. Charles. Now that she was actually face to face with him her confidence faded.

"Sit down, Mr. Edwards," said Mr. Charles, "and tell me what has happened."

He had noted Mary's poor clothing and roughened hands, and was expecting to hear a petition for work or other help of some kind.

"Nothing wrong has happened, Mr. Charles," repeated the pastor gravely, "but this young girl, Mary Jones, has walked all the way from Llanfihangel, near Abergynolwyn, to ask if you have a Bible you can spare for her."

"A Bible!" said Mr. Charles, interested at once. "Tell me, child, can you read?"

"Oh yes, sir," answered Mary. "I have not long left Abergynolwyn School."

"Then you learnt under Mr. Ellis," said Mr. Charles.

"Yes, sir," Mary replied, "and Mr. Lewis Williams."

"That is very good," said Mr. Charles. "I am interested in Abergynolwyn. And you come from Llanfihangel. Do you live with your parents?"

"Yes, sir," answered Mary, feeling much more

at ease now that she was speaking of her own home and the places that Mr. Charles also knew. "My father and mother are weavers."

"Now tell me," said Mr. Charles, "how is it that you have made this long journey in order to buy a Bible? Do you know anything of the Scriptures?"

"Yes, sir," answered Mary, her eyes kindling. "I love the Bible. I have loved it ever since I was a little girl and heard it read at meeting when I went with my mother and father. Then the school opened, when I was ten, and I learned to read; and a Sunday School started too, and I went. But I needed a Bible more than ever then, and a kind friend, Mrs. Evans the Farm, promised that when I could read I could go and study her Bible at the farm. So I went, every Saturday, to study my Sunday-school lesson."

"Does Mrs. Evans live in Llanfihangel?" asked Mr. Charles.

"No," Mary answered. "The farm is up the mountain, two miles away."

"And you walked two miles every Saturday to study the Scriptures," said Mr. Charles, "Indeed! And what do you remember of the Scriptures now? Can you repeat a Psalm?"

"Yes, sir," said Mary, "I know many Psalms: 'The Lord is my shepherd'; and I love the 104th Psalm, 'Praise the Lord, O my soul', all about the rocky hills, and the birds; but coming up from Llanfihangel yesterday the Psalm 'I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills', was in my

mind all the time. It seemed to be my Psalm, specially for me,"

Mary's face glowed, and her dark eyes shone as she spoke, and the pastor, as well as Mr. Charles, were touched at her deep, unaffected feeling.

"Do you know any part of the Gospels?" asked Mr. Charles.

"Oh, yes, sir," Mary answered. "I can tell most of the parables. I used to teach the neighbours' children when I took them out on the moor. And I know most of the Sermon on the Mount. The seventh chapter was the first part I ever learnt at the farm."

"And you have come all the way from Llanfihangel to buy a Bible," said Mr. Charles.

"Yes, if you please sir," Mary answered quietly. "I have the money here in this purse."

"But, if your parents are weavers, and not, I suppose, very rich, how could you have got so much money as a Bible now, alas, costs?" asked Mr. Charles.

"I worked and saved for six years," Mary answered. "I minded children. I did mending for neighbours. I picked sticks. I kept chickens— oh, I did everything I could to save enough."

Mr. Charles sat in silence for a time; then he turned to the pastor.

"Oh, friend Edwards!" he exclaimed. "Is not this too unutterably sad? To see this young girl, so brave, so intelligent, so consistent a Christian, coming all this long twenty-five miles to me for a Bible, and I have none to spare for her, not one."

And there is no hope of getting one, for the Society has refused to print any more for Wales!"

"And have you nothing for this poor child, Mr. Charles?" faltered Pastor Edwards.

"I have not one," answered Mr. Charles. "There are two or three Bibles in that bookcase that are promised to others. I have none to spare."

As Mr. Charles spoke, his words fell like stones on Mary's ears. She gave a low cry and stretched out her hands as if she were about to fall. A black despair seemed to envelop her like a cloud. All the years of working, waiting, and hoping seemed to rise up like a great wave that would sink and crush her. It had all been no use! The long weary walk yesterday had been but a fool's errand. How happy she had been yesterday! So full of hope, and all for nothing. At this last thought her feelings gave way, and she burst into wild, uncontrollable weeping. Burying her face in her hands, the tears gushing through her fingers, she sank into a chair, for her frame shook so much that she could not stand. Her surroundings, the two ministers sitting in grave silence, were forgotten in the overwhelming sorrow that engulfed her. She must go back *without* her Bible!

Suddenly Mr. Charles rose from his chair and laid his hand on Mary's head.

"My child," he said. "You *shall* have your Bible. I cannot send you away empty, no matter who else goes short. Calm yourself, my child."

He went to the bookcase and, opening a door, brought out a Bible and returned to Mary's side.

"Take it, Mary," he said, putting it into her hands. Mary held the Bible in her hands. Her eyes, still brimming with tears, looked up at him, the light of hope shining in her face,

"Is it really for me?" she whispered.

"It is for you, my child," said Mr. Charles. "A just reward for all your earnest work, and trust. May God bless you in your reading of it and may it be the comfort you deserve. Oh, friend Edwards!" he went on, turning to the pastor, "and this is only one illustration of the terrible need for the Bible in Wales. I will never rest until I get something done to relieve this want."

Mary rose now, and, after faltering her thanks to Mr. Charles, walked to the door, her Bible clasped in her arms. Her one desire now was to return to her parents to show them her new treasure. After a hasty meal with her good friends, Pastor and Mrs. Edwards, she set out on her walk home.

It was later in the morning than the hour at which she had started the day before, but it was a cool, blustering day, and pleasanter for walking. Mary passed over mile after mile of road as one in a dream. Holding her Bible clasped to her breast, head erect and a smile on her face, she went on, unconscious of everything around her. She had her Bible, her *own* Bible, and she was on her way home! Weariness, hunger and thirst did not touch her.

She did notice the girl who had shared her

supper with her the evening before, and they waved to each other, for the farm girl was going across a field to the cows. Mary also remembered the cottage and the kind old lady who gave her the buttermilk, but the door was shut. The weather was too rough for the old woman to be gardening to-day. But casual passers-by on the road, though they would see the happy look on Mary's face and would wish her good day, were unheeded by her; her thoughts were too full. Some would turn and look after her, murmuring "I wonder what makes her look so happy."

Once, Mary sat for half an hour or so and rested while she ate some food that Mrs. Edwards had given her. Then she was up and away again. So much had happened since yesterday that it seemed wonderful to find the old farmer still working at his hedge, only just a little farther along the road. Mary greeted him as an old friend.

"Aye, did you get to Bala then?" he asked.

"Yes, I am going home now," Mary answered.

"That's a brave lass," cried the old man. "A good journey to you."

Mary thanked him, and sped on. Dolgelley was already passed. She felt that she was well on her way home. Already dear, familiar Cader Idris was in view. As the road wound between the hills, the great mountain showed her its varying shape and it was some hours before she climbed its foothills. After a last scramble over the shoulder of the friendly hill, she reached home ground.

Dusk was falling and Mr. and Mrs. Jones sat in the cottage listening, their looms silent.

"It will be getting dark soon," said Mrs. Jones.

"Aye," returned Jacob quietly. "Mary knows her way in the dark." Then almost under his breath, "Twenty-five miles in one day."

Mrs. Jones went, for the twentieth time, and looked out of the window, then turned to the fire and stirred some soup on the hob.

"Hark!" exclaimed Jacob.

They listened. The gate-latch clicked and a quick, light footstep came up the path. The door opened and Mary came in. Mrs. Jones stood, trembling, unable to speak; but Jacob stretched out his arms to Mary and in a voice deep with emotion, almost unconsciously spoke in the words of the prophet.

"Is it well with the child?" he said.

And Mary went straight to him.

"It is well," she replied in unutterable content.

"My dear," said Mrs. Jones now. "You have your Bible?"

For answer Mary turned to her mother with a soft radiance in her face and laid the Bible in her hands.

"Thanks be to God!" the mother breathed.

She gazed at the Bible for a few moments, then, giving it to Jacob, turned towards the fire again.

"Come, my dear," she said, "you must be worn out. Come and have some food; that must be the first thing. Jacob, we will let Mary eat and rest first, then she can tell us how every-

thing went and what has happened in these two long days; and we can see the Bible properly."

When Mary had had some food and rest there seemed no end to the story she had to tell her parents, and, of course, the smallest happening was important in their eyes. At last, though it was late at night, she brought the Bible to the table and they all looked at it with reverent love. Mary's Bible! It seemed too good to be true. Mary felt as if she had suddenly acquired an extensive library, so scarce were books in those days, and this was the Book of Books!

"How lovely to have the Bible itself," Mary said.

"Yes," agreed Jacob, "and now you are needing a long rest, Mary. But I don't think we could go to bed satisfied if we did not have a few words from the Holy Book, Read something, Mary, and then let us thank God for all His mercies."

Mary opened her Bible and turned the pages for a few moments. Then, with a thrill in her voice, she read the 150th Psalm.

"Praise ye the Lord. Praise God in his holiness; praise him in the firmament of his power." And when she came to the last verse, "Let every thing that hath breath praise the Lord. Praise ye the Lord," her voice rose in triumph.

Rising from their seats with one accord, the family knelt together and gave thanks to God. Then, with deep joy and peace in her heart, Mary wished her parents goodnight and went up to her little room.

## CHAPTER V111

### THE WORK BEGUN

A QUIET peace now settled on Mary's soul. Morning and evening she read aloud from her Bible to her parents, intending to read from the beginning to the end. For the first time she realized that the books were a continuous history, that followed the Israelites from their glorious escape from slavery in Egypt to their captivity in Babylon. She found new stories of people and places which she had never heard read in chapel or Sunday School. By reading through each complete book she grasped for the first time the real meaning of the extracts that she had until now only partly understood. Many were the quiet discussions that Mary and her parents had in those days.

Mary still did odd bits of sewing for her neighbours and was getting quite skilled in dressmaking. Now that she had left school she found she could do even more work than her commissions brought her. So she learned to take her turn at her mother's loom, and still found time to attend to needlework, as well as her bees, chickens and garden—a busy, happy life. The church services and Sunday School served as a meeting-place for friends. She was utterly unconscious that her past struggle to save enough money for a

Bible, her walk to Bala and the bitter tears shed there were to play a momentous part in forming a great Society. To her, all that was a thing of the past; but not so with the Rev. Thomas Charles. Mary's story and her despairing tears clung to his memory. They brought into dark relief the bitter need of his country's people, for Mary's need was the need of Wales.

He visited the villages of North Wales even more widely and became more and more convinced of that need. Being in the Towyn district one day he called at the Jones' cottage. He found Mary deep in the mysteries of weaving, her mother patiently instructing her.

"Oh, Mr. Charles!" cried Mary, when she had pulled forward her father's armchair for their visitor. "I am going to be a weaver, like Mother and Father."

"And I expect you are getting on famously," replied Mr. Charles.

"Yes, sir," said Mrs. Jones, answering for Mary, who looked a little self-conscious, "but she wants to get on too quickly. She was ever one to want to get things done."

Mr. Charles picked up the end of the piece of cloth that Mary's efforts had produced, and even his unprofessional eye could see that it was not perfect, though creditable enough for a beginner.

"You will make a good weaver in time, Mary," he said quietly. "Have you ever thought," he went on, addressing her parents now, as well as Mary, "that we are all weavers in life's fabric,

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that is, in God's creation and kingdom; weavers of good or evil? Look back at the earliest pages of Bible history, how solemn a thought it is to see what a weaving of sorrow Eve made in the world by her disobedience. On the other hand, how happy Ruth would have been if she had been told even a part of the wonderful influence her life and conduct would have upon countless generations to come."

"Yes, sir," broke in Jacob Jones, "and I have often said here in this room that our dear Mary is a very Ruth to her parents."

"Yes, indeed," answered Mr. Charles, "we little know what a rich thread she has woven into the pattern of life."

"Oh, sir," shyly stammered Mary, surprised and overcome by this remark, "what have I done?"

"We shall see, Mary," answered Mr. Charles. "God has all our efforts for good in His keeping, and His Word shall not return unto Him void.<sup>1</sup>"

They talked for a while of other matters; the Sunday School and the improvement in the children in the district. As he turned to leave he said:

"I am going to London, Mary, to plead for more Bibles. Pray for me."

In the December of 1802 Mr. Charles went to London, and at a meeting of the Religious Tract Society he told the story of Mary Jones, pointing out that she was but one example of the dire need of the Welsh people for Bibles in their own tongue.

Mary's story made a deep impression. When Mr. Charles had finished his appeal he sat down, a prayer in his heart that his hearers would be moved to do something towards his scheme. This, in his mind, had now become the only way to relieve the spiritual destitution of his people. There was a silence in the room as he sat, his eyes cast down on the table, waiting. Then a Rev. Joseph Hughes rose from his chair.

"Mr. Charles," he said. "Your appeal has moved us all very much. The story of that young girl is truly heart-rending and hers is the story of the world. You speak of your hope of forming a society for printing and distributing Bibles in Wales; but I say, if for Wales, why not for the world?"

A deep murmur of agreement ran round the table, and then members of the Committee began to bring forward different suggestions. They were unanimous that a new society should be formed. The Secretary was there and then instructed to write a letter inviting all Christians of all Churches to unite in supporting the work. The enthusiasm was tremendous and Mr. Charles could hardly believe that his great hope had become a reality.

So it happened that on December 7th, 1802, the British and Foreign Bible Society was conceived, and on March the 7th, 1804, when the initial arrangements had been completed, the first meeting was held and £700 was subscribed. Mr. Charles had returned to Wales, but how he

rejoiced to hear that the work of the Bible Society had really begun!

He soon made excuse to visit the Abergynolwyn district and walked up to Llanfihangel. He found Mary in the cottage garden.

"Mary Jones," he said. "I have something to tell you, and as I am sure your parents will be glad to hear it, too, we will go into the house."

They went into the cottage, and Mr. and Mrs. Jones stilled their looms to welcome their visitor. After enquiries about the health of the family Mr. Charles told the great news.

"A society has been founded," he said, "that will devote itself to printing and distributing the Scriptures throughout the world."

"The world!" Mary softly exclaimed.

"Yes, it is wonderful," replied Mr. Charles. "No more begging and praying for a few Bibles. We shall have all we need. As it grows in strength, this society will supply the world with Scriptures."

"Well, sir," said Jacob, "that is grand news indeed. When I think of our little Mary striving on, as she did, until she could buy that expensive Bible, I do rejoice that it may become easier for the poorer folk in Wales and in the rest of the world to get one."

"Oh, it is wonderful!" cried Mary, "but I am not sorry that I had to work so hard for my Bible. It only makes it more precious to me."

"And now we are hoping that good Christian folk will be generous in their giving for this great

work," said Mr. Charles. "We have had a splendid start. Seven hundred pounds were subscribed at the first meeting."

"I am sure the money will come," said Mrs. Jones. "Why, when they hear about it *everyone* will want to help."

And so it was As the news of the Bible Society spread throughout Wales subscriptions poured into its Head Office and nearly £1900 was raised, mostly from the poorer people of the country.

When Mr. Charles had gone Mary threw a shawl over her head.

"I must run up and tell Mrs. Evans the Farm at once," she said and, ran out of the cottage.

She arrived breathless at the farm, and found Farmer Evans in the house as well as Mrs. Evans.

"Oh, Mr. Evans! Oh, Mrs. Evans! There has been started a most wonderful society in London that is going to provide Bibles for the Welsh people, and for all the world. Isn't it splendid?"

"Well, well!" cried Mrs. Evans. "That will mean cheaper Bibles, and a chance to get one, too, which the people have never had, whether they were rich or poor. Who told you about it, Mary?"

"Mr. Charles," Mary answered. "He has just now been to our cottage. He was so pleased that he could hardly tell us."

"It will be a grand work," said Farmer Evans. "I must see about it being made known in our chapel, and get a collection going. We must support that society with all we can give."

"Aye, that we must," agreed Mrs. Evans heartily.

And that was the spirit all up and down the country. The talk was all of "this new society" and everyone gave, like the first Christians, as they were able. Those were happy days in Wales. Enthusiasm for this new enterprise ran like a fire through the whole nation. A sense of religion and worship awoke in the country even before the Scriptures actually came to hand, and when the first consignment of Bibles in the Welsh language for Sunday Schools arrived in Bala in 1806 a great song of thanksgiving went up from all the churches. The movement was wholeheartedly supported by everyone: William Wilberforce and others in London who were interested in all Christian effort, and in Wales, Dr. Warren, Bishop of Bangor, and Dr. Burgess, Bishop of St. David's, all joined with Mr. Charles in the work of distributing Bibles to the many Sunday Schools so much in need of them.

Mary Jones followed the progress of the work with the keenest interest. By this time she was a teacher in the Sunday School and she always remembered the strange thrill of joy that she felt on the first Sunday when Bibles were handed to the children to read and study in their class. She knew now that the story of her own struggle had played its part in the foundation of the Bible Society, and without a thought of pride or self-congratulation, she rejoiced to see this day.

## EPILOGUE

### WHAT CAME OF IT

When the Bible Society was founded, in 1804, the Bible, or parts of the Bible, had already been translated into 72 languages. These included most European languages, and about 16 tongues spoken in Ethiopia, Arabia, Iceland, Iran, Armenia (Asia Minor), Malaya, Turkey, Formosa (an island off the coast of China), India, Ceylon, Labrador, West Africa, British Guiana and North America (the Mohawk Indians).

One of the first things the Bible Society did was, of course, to see that Wales got the Bible in Welsh. It also published the Gospel of St. John in the Mohawk language, which had just been completed. After that the first six new versions published by the Society were these:

1806—Marathi (spoken in Bombay).

1808—Sanskrit (spoken, or written, in most parts of India).

1809—Gujarati (another Indian language).

1809—Oriya (spoken in Orissa).

1810—Chinese. 1810—Eskimo (spoken in Labrador).

Samples of these and other languages are given on pages 98 to 102.

Since then the work has gone steadily on.

It is a piece of co-operation in which many people take part. Missionaries go out to foreign lands, they learn the language and begin to translate the Scriptures into it. Sometimes the Bible Society helps in this work of translation by making grants of money to enable one or two people to give their whole time to the work. When the translation is finished it must be checked and approved by the Bible Society Committee in London and finally it is printed and made available to the people it is intended for.

The British and Foreign Bible Society is not now the only Bible Society in the world. Other great Societies came into existence to help with the work—the National Bible Society of Scotland (1826), the American Bible Society (1816), the Bible Society of the Netherlands (1814) and so on. These all form now a great worldwide family, "The United Bible Societies," with the one aim: to make the Bible available to everybody in the common languages of mankind. The people of Wales, in the person of Mary Jones, planted a tree which now has many branches and spreads throughout the world.

