

**PICTURE TALES
FROM WELSH HILLS**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649671519

Picture Tales from Welsh Hills by Bertha Thomas

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilisation of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 1576 Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia.

All rights reserved.

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form or binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

www.triestepublishing.com

BERTHA THOMAS

**PICTURE TALES
FROM WELSH HILLS**

o

Picture Tales
from Welsh Hills

By
Bertha Thomas

Author of "The Violin Player," "In a Cathedral City,"
"The Son of the House," etc., etc.



CHICAGO
F. G. BROWNE & CO.
LONDON: T. FISHER UNWIN
1913

*"Taffy was a Weibman, and a thief was he;
Taffy came to my house, and stole my heart from me.
I went to Taffy's house, as one goes from home . . .
There I set my own house, and seek no more to roam."*

(An Old Rhyme re-written.)

CONTENTS

	PAGE
I	
<i>The Madness of Winifred Owen</i>	9
II	
<i>The Only Girl</i>	34
III	
<i>The Way He Went</i>	52
IV	
<i>An Undesirable Alien</i>	147
V	
<i>Comic Objects of the Country (The Impres- sion of an Industrial School Boy)</i>	162

	PAGE
	<i>VI</i>
<i>A House that Was</i>	175
	<i>VII</i>
<i>The Courtship of Ragged Robin</i>	193
	<i>VIII</i>
<i>The Castle of Sleep</i>	208
	<i>IX</i>
<i>Zebedee—a Latter-day Prophet</i>	231

The Madness of Winifred Owen

The Old Face

"NOT from an old face will you ever get the same fine effect as from an old house."

The old saying was brought to my mind by the sudden sight of an exception to the truth of it in the person of Mrs. Trinaman, landlady of the "Ivybush," at Pontycyler, in the heart of South Wales.

It was in the summer of 1899, when the cycling fever was at its height in all spinsters of spirit. I and my "Featherweight" had come three hundred miles from our London home, nominally to look up the tombs of forgotten Welsh ancestors in undiscoverable churchyards; more truly for the treat of free roving among strangers in a strange land. So much I knew of the country I was in—that Wales, the stranger within England's gates, remains a stranger still.

At Pontycyler, a score or so of cottages dumped down round a cross-roads tavern in a broad green upland valley, I thought to halt for the night, but was met by

objections. The accommodation at the "Ivybush" was not for such as myself. So the striking-looking woman above named plainly intimated.

A woman well on in the fifties, stout and grey, form and features thickened by years and the wear of life; a woman substantially and spotlessly clad in black stuff skirt, white apron and cross-over, and crowned by a frilled cap as awe-instilling as a justice's wig. Yet, to look at her was to feel that there, once, stood a beautiful girl. There was power in the face, there was mind; but it held you fast in girl's fashion by some indefinably agreeable attraction.

"Board and lodging that are good enough for you are good enough for me," I thought, and said so.

At that she fairly laughed, and agreed to house me, for one night only.

The Old House

While the room was preparing I strolled out on foot. Led by a habit of avoiding the beaten track, I presently left the road for a lesser lane; the lane for an approach to a farm; the farmyard for a rough upward track between pastures screened from view by hedgerows so tall as nearly to meet overhead.

On a sudden break in the left bank I saw, close by, on higher ground, an old house looking down on me as it were in surprise at the intrusion. A small, grey-stone, slate-roofed house, in a curious stage of dilapidation. The sash windows, carved wooden porch, broad grass-plat in front shaded by a lofty ilex and dense foliage