

**SONGS OF  
A MINER**

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Songs of a miner by James C. Welsh

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BY  
JAMES C. WELSH



G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS  
NEW YORK AND LONDON  
The Knickerbocker Press  
1918

PR6045  
EG 57  
1918  
MAIN

DEDICATION TO MY WIFE

I HAVE sung my songs as the throstle sings,  
They came as the roses come,  
In mines where deepest darkness clings,  
Or safe in the ease of home.

I've strung them out in threads of pain,  
Or in webs of joy and mirth,  
Because I have felt the sun and rain,  
And the great glad urge of earth.

And so, having known the gold and grey,  
And tasted the false and true,  
I send this volume in love away  
And dedicate it to you.





## INTRODUCTION

**M**R. GEORGE BERNARD SHAW, when asked by a friend of mine to write an introduction to this volume, said: "Mr. Welsh will be quite able to stand on his own legs: and he had better start on them from the beginning and write his own introduction—say a bit of autobiography." Whether Mr. Shaw is right or wrong I adopt his suggestion, though there is little to record that seems to me interesting.

I was born on June 2, 1880, in the mining village of Haywood in the Upper Ward of Lanarkshire, and went through all the vicissitudes of the life of the miner's child.

I was the fourth of a fairly large family, and we were hardily though honestly brought up. We knew hunger often in the early days—with poverty

I have always had a more or less nodding acquaintance; it has always been to me a marvel how my mother managed her part of the business.

By the time I went to school at the age of five our home struggle was keenest, and perhaps only God and my mother know what that struggle meant for her. I have tried to get her to talk about it many times since, but she does not care even to dwell upon it in thought. Still, a retentive memory and fairly average powers of observation tell me many things at which in certain moods I grow angry, and I never cease to feel that there is an insane ordering of temporal things, which condemns the women of the class to which I belong to unreasonable and unnecessary suffering. Faults our women-folk certainly have; but what magnificent virtues they possess. And we must also remember that these working-class women of a generation ago have given us the present-day miners—a set of men than whom (I speak here of my own particular district) there is no finer in the industrial world today. Women who can give the

world sons like these have virtues worth immortalising.

I left school when I was somewhere between the age of eleven and twelve years, the custom at that time being that if you passed the Fifth Standard you were considered to be efficient enough to start work. Being still a few months too young to be allowed by the law to work in the pit, I was given a job on the pit-head, and was sacked the first day.

The job I was given was to sit at a little engine, which worked the conveyors that carried the slack coal, or dross from one pit to another, where it was washed, and sometimes, when the washer was chocked out, they whistled to the washer who stopped the engine. When the obstruction was got over the whistle was again blown and the engine started. A man stood beside me for the first hour that day to initiate me into the turning off and on of the steam, and when he saw that I understood what was required he left me.

Matters went on all right till midday, when I wandered out and began to explore a hedge that