

*Through Welsh Doorways*, by Jeanette Marks, is a collection of brief character studies of Welsh life, too quiet and sombre perhaps to exert a wide appeal, yet unmistakably the product of a rare and finished art. Indeed, the very truthfulness with which the secluded and monotone lives of those simple, rather primitive people are depicted, makes the quietness and the sombreness of the pictures inevitable. Nevertheless, within the simple range of their experiences, there is no dearth of poignant emotions, of heartfelt joy and tender pathos; and while they are all of the same careful quality, one does

not need to go beyond the opening story, "The Merry, Merry Cuckoo," in order to understand just what that quality is. After fifty years of married life, old David is dying; the old wife, Annie, sees him day by day slipping away from her, and day by day she tries to hide her own heartbreak, and smile and encourage him, because he has one last great longing—to live long enough to hear once more the song of the cuckoo, as they have heard it together for fifty springs. But finally, when she knows that he has but a day or two more to live, and the spring is backward, and the cuckoos have not come, she makes up her mind that even though she must deceive him, for the first time in her life, he shall have this last joy before he dies. So, she goes out into the garden, and with her quavering broken old voice, she practices the cuckoo's song over and over until she gets it true enough to deceive even David's keen ear. But while she is practicing, one of her neighbours overhears her, marvels at her singing in the garden, with David dying; and then, guessing the deception that she is practicing for David's sake, reports her to the church, with the result that the very next day a committee calls at her house, "to wrestle with her," and urge her to repent. When they are done, Annie has but a word to say:

I've no mind to your salvation, no, nor to Heaven, if the Lord makes this singing a lie. I'm a-thinkin' of David as I've thought of him those fifty years, an' if a lie will make him happy, when he's dyin' then I'm willin' to lie, an' do it every minute of the day.

And although the discomfited committee send young Pastor Morris to argue further with her, the steadfast old woman has her way, and sees her husband's life ebb peacefully, his face radiant with the last joyful conviction that he has been spared long enough to listen once again to the song of the cuckoo.