

Mary Jones & Her Bible

The Original Story
by
Mary Ropes (M.E.R.)

Presented Here in a New Version
Edited and Revised by
Chris Wright



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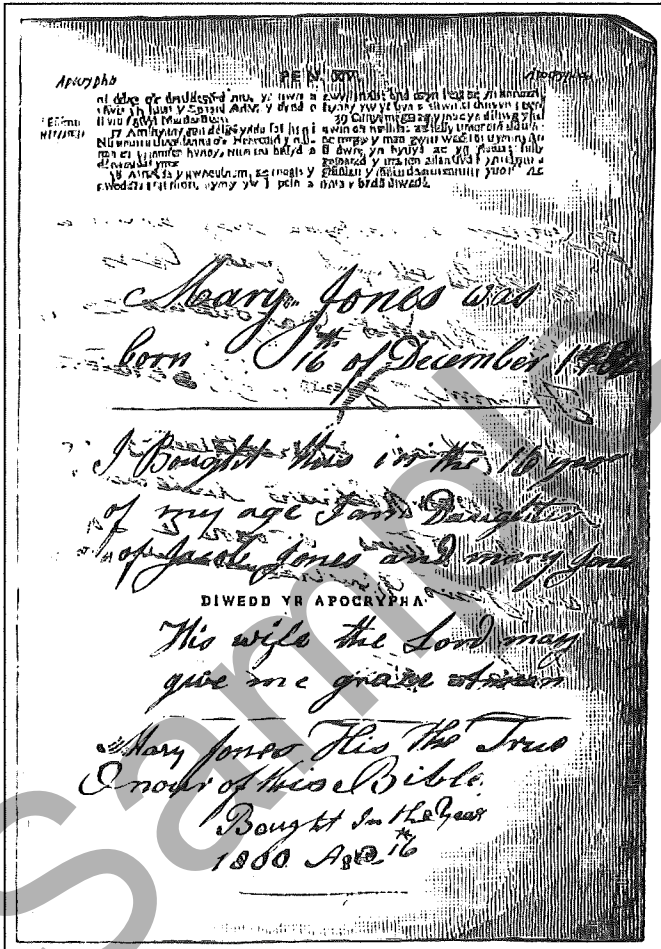
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MARY JONES AND HER BIBLE

Introduction	1
1. At the Foot of the Mountains	5
2. Mrs. Evans' Promise	11
3. A Surprise	18
4. Two Miles to a Bible	26
5. The Mysterious Teacher	36
6. On the Way	45
7. Tears	54
8. The Work Begun	65
9. The Work Goes On	69
Mary Jones' Cottage.....	78
Where to Find Things	79
Some Notes	80



Mary Jones' handwriting in her Bible

Mary Jones was born 16th of December 1784.
 I bought this in the 16th year of my age. I am Daughter of
 Jacob Jones and Mary Jones His wife.
 the Lord may give me grace. Amen
 Mary Jones His the True Onour [is the true owner] of this
 Bible. Bought in the Year 1800 Aged 16th

CHAPTER 1

At the Foot of the Mountains

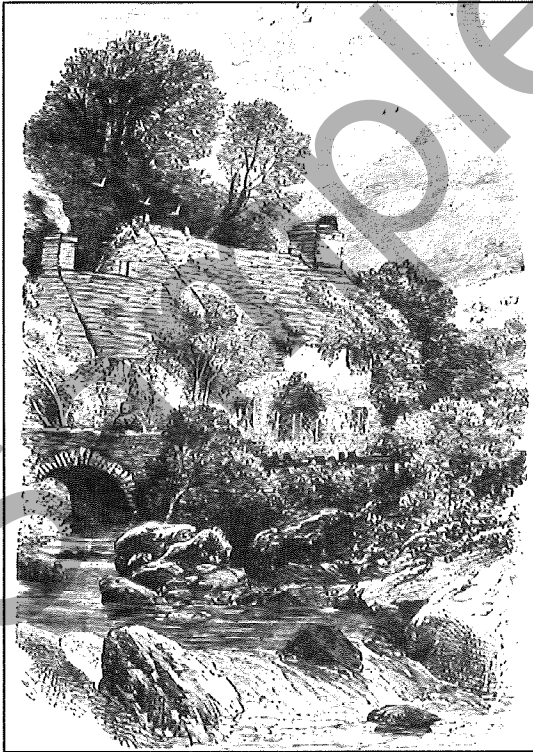
Mary Jones pulled her shawl tightly around her shoulders, and darted across the lane. There was no one to see her as she ran.

The night shadows had fallen around the little Welsh village of Llanfihangel-y-Pennant. It was late autumn in 1792, and a cold wind moaned and sighed among the trees, stripping them of their leaves – now no longer bright green – whirling them round, and laying them in shivering heaps along the narrow lane.

The few stone cottages in the valley seemed to be hiding below the mountain of Cadair Idris, with its dark crags and rocky precipices. Far away in the distance lay Cardigan Bay, with white breakers rolling in to dash into foam. The pale moon lit up peaked masses of cloud that looked like another ghostly Cadair Idris in the sky.

Mary Jones looked back over her shoulder. A warm light shone through the window of one of the cottages.

The light came from the blaze of a fire of dried driftwood in the stone hearth, and also from a rush light, throwing its somewhat uncertain brightness upon a weaver's loom. A bench, two or three stools, a cupboard, and a kitchen table – these, with the loom, were the only pieces of furniture. The cottage was Mary's home, where she lived with her mother.



A Welsh cottage from Mary Ropes' book, but much larger than the one in which Mary Jones was brought up. Turn to the end of the book to see what Mary's cottage probably looked like.

Standing in the center of the room was a woman dressed in a cloak and a black hat. "It's not like you to be late for the meeting, Mary," she said, when Mary hurried back inside. "It must be gone six o'clock. You've been a long time getting that lantern."

Mary raised a pair of bright eyes to her mother's face. "Yes, mother," she replied, "I was so long because I ran to borrow neighbor Williams' lantern. The latch of ours won't hold, and there's such a wind tonight that I knew we should have the light blown out."

"There's a moon," Mrs. Jones said, "and I could have done without a lantern."

"Yes, but then I should have had to stay at home," Mary replied, for she knew that it would not be safe for her to go without a light. Then she added, "And I do so love to go."

"You needn't tell me that, child," Molly laughed. "I don't think there's anyone as willing as you. You already know all I can teach you of the Bible, as I learnt it."

The cottage was called Ty'n-y-Ddôl. Mary opened the door, and she and her mother sallied out into the cold windy night.

The moon had disappeared now behind the thick dark cloud, and Mary's borrowed lantern was very useful. Carefully she held it, so that the light fell upon the way they had to go, a way that would have been difficult if not dangerous without its friendly aid. "Llusern *yw* dy air i'm traed, a llewyrch i'm llwybr," Mrs. Jones said quietly,

remembering the words from Psalm 119 in the Welsh Bible as she took her daughter's hand. "Your word is a lamp to guide me and a light for my path."

"Yes, mother, that's what I was just thinking," Mary replied, holding on tightly. "I wish I knew more verses like that."

Mrs. Jones sighed. "How glad I should be if I could teach you more. But it is many years since I learned, and we have no Bible, and my memory is not as good and it used to be."

A walk of some length along a rough road brought them at last to the little meeting-house at the farm in Llechwedd, where the members belonging to the Methodists were gathered.

Mary and her mother were rather late, and the mid-week service had begun, but farmer Evans made room for them on his bench.

Mary was the only child there, but she was so willing to listen and to learn that no one looking at her could have felt that she was out of place. Indeed, the members who met there had come to look upon Mary as one of their number, and made her very welcome.

When the meeting was over, Mary relit the lantern and was ready to accompany her mother home. But Farmer Evans put his great broad hand on Mary's shoulder, saying, "Well, my little maid, you're rather young for these meetings, though the Lord has need of lambs as well as sheep. And He is well pleased when the

lambs learn to hear His voice early, even in their tender years.”

Then with a gentle smile the old man released the girl, and turned away. He knew that in Mary’s face there was a promise of power for good.

“Why *don’t* we a Bible of our own, mother?” Mary asked as she trotted homeward, lantern in hand.

“Because Bibles are scarce, child, and we’re too poor to pay the price for one. A weaver’s is an honest trade, but we don’t get rich by it. With your father now dead, we must think ourselves happy if we can keep the wolf from the door, and have clothes to cover us. Still, precious as the Word of God would be in our hands, it is more important that its teachings and its truths find a place in our hearts. I tell you, my girl, they who come to know the love of God, have discovered the greatest truth that the Bible can teach them. And those who are trusting Jesus for their pardon and peace, and for eternal life, can wait patiently to find out more of His word and will.”

“I suppose *you* can wait, mother, because you’ve waited so long that you’re used to it,” Mary replied. “But it’s harder for me. Every time I hear something read out of the Bible, I long to hear more. But if I could *read*, it would be harder still not to have a Bible of our own.”

Mrs. Jones was about to answer, when she stumbled over a large stone and fell, though fortunately without hurting herself. Mary’s thoughts were so full of what she