

## 'A Welshman Now!'

*'The Child is father of the Man.'*  
[WILLIAM WORDSWORTH, from  
My heart leaps up]

*'The fundamental elements in our personality and temperament are not changed by conversion and by re-birth. The 'new man' means the new disposition, the new understanding, the new orientation, but the man himself, psychologically, is essentially what he was before.'*

M. L.-J.

In the spring of the year 1905 a pony and trap brought a family to their new home in the village of Llangeitho, Cardiganshire. They were, Henry Lloyd-Jones, then in his early forties, his wife, Magdalene, and their three boys, Harold, Martyn, and Vincent. Martyn, separated by some two years in each case from his older and younger brothers, was aged five years and three months. He was to remember little of the life which they had left behind in Donald Street, Cardiff, where he had been born on December 20, 1899. A flag hung from one of their windows to celebrate some victory in the Second Boer War, a fall downstairs from top to bottom, and a dancing lesson which he suffered at a small private school in Connaught Road – these things were almost all that he was to recall in later life from the days before he reached Llangeitho.

The Lloyd-Joneses felt no grief in exchanging Wales's largest city and port for the sixty or so houses which made up this village in the upper valley of the Aeron. Both parents were native to Cardiganshire. After only indifferent success with his Cardiff grocery shop, and a growing impression that town life did not suit his health, Henry had determined to move back to the country. When, therefore, a favourable opportunity arose, he sold his business, together with the home that went with it, and removed his family to a near-by boarding house until the general store at Llangeitho came on the market. His offer for the store was accepted and a new chapter in their lives began.

By temperament Henry Lloyd-Jones was an optimist and the soul of honour and uprightness. He was once called 'a proper Mr Micawber', ever waiting for something advantageous to turn up, and undoubtedly he felt that there were reasons for hopefulness in the spring of 1906. Wales herself, it seemed to him and to many others, was awakening after a long winter. Certainly times had changed

since the days of his own childhood, spent at Cefn-Ceirw, his parents' farm in the Rhydlewys district of Cardiganshire, where Elizabeth, his strong-minded mother, better known as Betty-Cefn, had been famous for her participation in the 'tithe-wars'. Now, as the landslide victory for the Liberals in the General Election of that same year 1906 demonstrated, the Established Church and the landowners could no longer quieten the people with admonitions to 'know their betters'. New political thinking was stirring, the days of privilege were over and reforms certain. With brilliant eloquence, David Lloyd George, Liberal MP for Caernarvon Boroughs, chastised the forces of tradition which had long ruled Wales on behalf of England, and shortly, as Chancellor of the Exchequer, he was even to turn 11 Downing Street into a kind of Welsh embassy. These were heart-stirring events for such a Liberal and a radical as Henry Lloyd-Jones. Patriot though he was in his allegiance to Britain, both conviction and sturdy Welsh independence led him to endorse his mother's belief that the interests of the common man have precedence over those of his superiors. With just such views the Liberals in Wales assisted their fellows in England to sweep into power.

No doubt comparatively little of the change was being registered in Llangeitho in 1906. As a local centre of the Welsh-speaking farming community, it had long stood aloof from much that was going on elsewhere. Its very name was a reminder of how tradition lingered in inland Cardiganshire for, in truth, it ought not to have been called Llangeitho at all, but Capel Gwynfil. Llangeitho parish actually lay on the other side of the river Aeron. The explanation of the anomaly lay in an occurrence two centuries back. Llangeitho ('church of Ceitho') had no fame in the annals of Welsh history until a certain Daniel Rowland became curate there in the 1730's. Thereafter it was to become the centre of a series of evangelical revivals which transformed large areas of the Principality and brought Calvinistic Methodism to birth. At an open-air communion service in Rowland's remote parish in 1742, George Whitefield believed that he saw 'perhaps ten thousand from different parts'. When the authorities of the Church of England, in an attempt to suppress Calvinistic Methodism, ejected Rowland from the parish church in 1763 a 'new church' (*Yr Eglwys Newydd*) was built for him in Capel Gwynfil and the village, considering itself honoured by such a change, was equally pleased to adopt the name of the old parish itself!

For the most part, by 1906, religion existed in Llangeitho in tradition only, and though the population continued to clean the road in front of their homes and to scrub the front-door step every Saturday night in preparation for Sunday when all went to the chapel, it was hard indeed to imagine how Calvinistic Methodism had ever given such alarm to the bishops. In some parts of Wales the denomination had been touched afresh by a breath of true revival as recently as 1904-05, but in Llangeitho chapel all was as motionless as the statue of Daniel Rowland which the Lloyd-Jones boys passed each morning on their way to school. Martyn's memories of that state of lifelessness were to remain vivid in later years:

'Our minister was a moral, legalistic man — an old schoolmaster. I do not remember that he ever preached the Gospel, and none of us had any idea of the Gospel. He and the head deacon, John Rowlands, looked upon themselves as scholars. Neither had any sympathy for the Revival of 1904-05, and both of them were not only opposed to any spiritual stress or emphasis, but were equally opposed to every popular innovation. Those who came home for their holidays from Glamorganshire, who spoke of their having been "saved", were regarded as hot-heads and madmen from the South. We did not have annual preaching meetings in our chapel, and the eminent preachers of the day were never invited. We would not have heard Dr John Williams and T. C. Williams of Menai Bridge [two leading Calvinistic Methodists of the time] if it were not for the Association Meeting which was held at Llangeitho in June 1913. The only reason for its coming was that the Association itself had asked to come to Llangeitho to celebrate the bicentenary of the birth of Daniel Rowland. Although there is a statue of Daniel Rowland in the village, his influence had long since disappeared from the place, and "Ichabod" had been written across everything. While large congregations still met to worship on Sundays, morning and evening, it was the strong sense of tradition which accounted for it. Llangeitho had lost the fire and the rejoicing of the Methodist Revival to the same extent as Westminster Abbey had lost the life and vitality of the Early Church — "The glory had departed from Israel."

It was certainly not the Calvinistic Methodist chapel which drew Henry Lloyd-Jones to Llangeitho. Hitherto his attachment had been with the Congregationalists: he now joined the Calvinistic Metho-

dists because there was no real alternative and it was to suffer rather than to sympathise with what Rowland's old congregation had become. Among the Congregationalists in Rhydlewis he had learned to think that such dullness arose from the dead hand of outworn creeds, and he was a warm advocate of the so-called 'New Theology' of R. J. Campbell (Congregational minister of the City Temple in London) which raised a storm among the orthodox in Wales in 1907. Henry Lloyd-Jones had encountered nothing which led him to question whether the 'new' was better than the old. Rather, like so many others, he had been misled into identifying the lifeless traditionalism of Calvinistic Methodism with the real Christianity which it had once represented, and in his reaction to that kind of formal religion he had come to imagine that Christianity's best work lay in achieving social change through education and political action. He was as committed as was his favourite religious weekly, *The Christian Commonwealth*, to an alliance between Liberal politics and religious Nonconformity. At Westminster, Lloyd George gloried in the claim that one had to go back to Cromwell's day to find a Parliament composed of so many Nonconformists. But Lloyd George knew no more than did Henry Lloyd-Jones about what Nonconformity had once been.

At this point 'Maggie' Lloyd-Jones – as everyone called Henry's wife – was in no position to help her husband. Her step-mother had given her an attachment to the Church of England, but there had been little religion of any kind in her parents' home. In fact, David Evans, Martyn's maternal grandfather, was a thorough pagan who made no secret of his indifference to both church and chapel. In many respects David Evans was a remarkable man, not least in his powers of memory: in any market-day debate among his fellow-farmers none was his equal in recalling with effortless accuracy the details of sales of cattle and horses which others had long-since forgotten. With rising prosperity, he had moved from his farm near Aberystwyth to a rather grander establishment, Llwynadfor, near the border of south Cardiganshire. In his grandson's first memories of the place, Llwynadfor, with its big house standing at the junction of three roads, and called after the name of an ancient Welsh prince (*Cadifor*), was virtually a village: four uncles helped to direct the many grooms and farm-hands, while the house itself bustled with aunts, servants and maids.

But to return to Llangeitho, an initial problem for the Lloyd-Jones boys on their arrival was the language. Although their parents spoke

nothing but Welsh to each other they had used English only in bringing up the children. The explanation for this lay in their mother's own experience. Magdalene was still a child when her mother died and fourteen when her father, David Evans, married again. His second wife was English and so, thereafter, English was the language which the children of the home always heard from their step-mother. When Maggie later had her own children she simply carried on what she had known at Llwynadfor. Martyn felt his lack of Welsh keenly and determined to remedy it:

'I well remember, about a year after we moved to Llangeitho, as I was playing with a number of children outside the school, that I begged them not to speak English to me any more, "Speak Welsh to me – I'm a Welshman now!"'

Some two years later the point was well proved when Martyn spoke for the first time in public. One of the old Calvinistic Methodist practices which survived in Llangeitho down to the time of the First World War, was the exercise of catechising on the Sunday School lesson in the chapel. At one such catechising in 1909 the minister, with reference to the resurrection of Lazarus, asked, 'Why did Jesus say, "*Lazarus*, come forth"?' Silence followed until there burst out a reply in Welsh from the second Lloyd-Jones boy which was to be repeated around Cardiganshire. 'In case,' Martyn declared, 'they all came forth!'

Another of Martyn's childhood memories of chapel occurred the next year, on the death of King Edward VII in May 1910. The monarch who was head of the world's greatest Empire possessed no mystic aura in the eyes of the tenant farmers of Cardiganshire. As a service was being held in Llangeitho on the day of the King's funeral it was, however, felt that at least something should be said relative to that event and the duty was left to a ministerial catechist who introduced his remarks – in Welsh – with the words, 'I've been asked to say something about this little king who is being buried today.' Such a comment produced no disturbance in the Aeron valley!

It is interesting at this point to remember that the members of the Chapel at Llangeitho were unanimous in prophesying that Vincent would surely be a minister one day – yes, Vincent! This youngest of the Lloyd-Jones boys loved going to meetings. He never missed one – three on Sunday, with the prayer meeting on one week night and the

'Seiat' on another. Vincent attended each one, sitting and absorbing everything, and they all called him *y blaenor bach* – the little deacon. If his place was ever empty, there would be anxious enquiries made to make sure that no illness or accident had kept him away from his usual seat in the front row. At this time, Martyn was more interested in playing football with the village boys than in anything else!

Under Henry Lloyd-Jones, the General Store at Llangeitho soon developed a retail business with surrounding farms and there was nothing which Martyn enjoyed more in his childhood than to accompany his father on such journeys in the trap, pulled by one of the two horses which they owned. Henry Lloyd-Jones was a cheerful man. As a youth he had competed for the bass solo prize at singing festivals and singing was still one of his favourite recreations. His neighbours knew him as a busy, inventive and honest figure. Many years later Martyn was to speak of his father as 'the best natural man I've ever known and the kindest character I've ever met'. His first memories of his mother were of her charm, her activity and her friendliness. In character she was 'very impulsive, generous, and open-hearted'. She delighted in entertaining visitors, whether invited or uninvited. On some points her judgment was fixed; she remained a churchwoman and a Tory; on others she relied on her not inconsiderable intuition. 'I would say that my mother was highly intelligent but not intellectual, she did not read; she was a very quick thinker and could take up a point at once. She was more intelligent than my father.'

Henry Lloyd-Jones showed great wisdom in bringing up the boys. Martyn's greatest desire in life was to be a man, to be grown-up, and, as one sign of manhood was to smoke, he longed for the day when he could join the older lads in this so manly custom.

One day, his father and mother were to be away for the day, and to Martyn's pride and great delight his father entrusted him with all the keys of the house and business – after all he was the practical one, Harold was always reading, and Vincent was too young. So the honour fell to him and the keys were safe in his pocket. But this temporary freedom from the presence of authority gave him an idea. He would buy a packet of cigarettes! Away he went to the appropriate shop and bought a packet of Woodbines. They were not his first smoke but they were the first packet he ever had of his own and he was full of pride and joy. With the responsibility of the keys and the packet of cigarettes, he had arrived!

The boys were asleep when their parents returned, but their father needed the keys and went to get them from Martyn's pocket where he found the packet of cigarettes with them! Whatever else Martyn might forget, he would never forget his father's arrival in his bedroom the next morning. It was the weight of his words rather than his hand which hurt him. He had, his father said, felt he could trust him. He had thought that he was old enough to take responsibility, that he could be relied upon, and he went on to speak of his own deep hurt and disappointment in such a manner that Martyn could bear no more and wept. 'Now get up and get dressed,' said his father. 'We are going down to the shop.' Down to the cigarette shop they went, where Henry Lloyd-Jones announced his displeasure that the shopkeeper had sold the cigarettes to a young boy, and Martyn handed the packet back!

There was another indelible memory of those early days in Llangeitho. Christmas was coming with all its delights and surprises. The carol-singers were out every night, but the Lloyd-Jones boys were not encouraged in that money-raising activity. One night, however, Martyn could resist the temptation no longer and he attached himself to a group of children on their rounds – singing at one door after the other and collecting and sharing the odd pennies which they received right through the village. He never forgot – not to old age – his feelings, when at the end of the round, he learnt that these poor children were collecting money for their mother's funeral. The wound to his conscience was deep and lasting and meant many sleepless hours until the shock faded somewhat, though never the memory.

Through the outings with their father and sometimes through holiday visits to Aberystwyth and other parts by steam train, the Lloyd-Jones boys soon came to know much of Cardiganshire, from its rugged coast on the west to where its eastern boundaries are lost in the mountains and moors of central Wales. They noted the line, north of Llangeitho, where a difference could still be traced between the districts affected by Calvinistic Methodism and those where the Vikings had once settled, where the Welsh dialect changed, and where superstition and folk-lore remained a force even at the beginning of the twentieth century. People in those parts, for instance, spoke with reverence of a 'seer' or 'wise man' at Llangurig who could remove spells or cast spells of his own, turning cream sour at his will! The story was told of a blacksmith in North Cardigan-

shire who had to make frequent visits to his medical doctor on account of his health until he was 'cured' by this seer. The seer diagnosed that a spell had been cast on the blacksmith, even describing the person responsible for casting it. His promise was that if the suffering blacksmith wore some signs of the Zodiac stitched in his shirt he would have deliverance. And so it proved. But when the displeased doctor subsequently met his former patient and heard his description of the spell-caster, it was at once apparent to him that the clever seer had merely described the blacksmith himself!

At about the age of eight Martyn made his longest journey with his father on what was to be his first visit to London. In December, every year, there was an agricultural show at the Agricultural Hall, London. When Henry Lloyd-Jones decided to go in 1908 it was only possible for him to take one of his sons with him and yet both Martyn and Harold, his elder brother, were anxious to go. No discussion could settle the problem, so lots had to be drawn and it fell to Martyn to accompany his father. This, his first visit to London, was expected to last from a Monday to a Saturday but in the event its excitement continued longer than was anticipated. On the Friday evening in London, as Mr Lloyd-Jones and his second son prepared to return by train the following day, a local squire from the Llangeitho area called where they were staying to say that he was buying a car the next morning and they would be welcome to return with him. The offer was accepted, but finding a suitable car on the Saturday did not prove a straightforward matter. It was mid-afternoon, at a garage near King's Cross, when the squire became interested in an Italian model, a Darracq, built by Alfa Romeo. To say that it was second-hand would be an understatement; Martyn even heard one onlooker remark, 'I would not go fifty miles into the country in that if you paid me £50.' But the deal was done and the journey home of some 300 miles began at last about 5.30 p.m. Scarcely out of the suburbs of London they were stopped by a puncture and, there being no spare wheel, the youngest passenger was left in front of a blazing fire in a hotel in Uxbridge while it was repaired. After the journey was resumed later in the evening, it was soon realised that punctures were likely to be so frequent that they would have to be ignored, and when the next halt was called in the High Street of Oxford at 7 a.m. on the Sunday morning all four tyres were flat and in need of replacement! There was no alternative but to awaken the young owner of a cycle and tyre shop in High Street by the name of W. R. Morris, an action

which he did not appear to resent as business had not been good. Here they bought new tyres and tubes, and then, after breakfast at the Randolph Hotel, set off west on the road through Gloucester.

The main problem of the day was the December cold, for the car was entirely open to the elements. Only Martyn, huddled on the floor behind the driver's seat, could find any shelter. Assisting the squire in the front was Idris Jones, a cycle dealer from Lampeter, whose mechanical knowledge had caused the squire to take him with him to London. Abergavenny was reached in time for supper but once more the party decided to press on. Not far behind, at Bwlch, where the Brecon road climbs a high hill, Henry Lloyd-Jones and Martyn had to walk behind to ease the load. While doing so they were startled to see sparks and flames at the rear of their vehicle. A warning shout brought it to a halt and Idris had to attend to a badly over-heated engine. Lampeter was reached on the Monday morning and, although repairs were made during the day, the problem soon recurred when the journey was resumed after tea and Martyn was required to run back for the help of Idris Jones who had left them at his home town!

Meanwhile regular telegrams had kept Mrs Lloyd-Jones informed of their progress and when, at length, they arrived at Llangeitho about 9 p.m. on the Monday, the three weary travellers were met by a crowd of villagers. They had driven without rest for two days, yet only once – when Idris Jones was at the wheel and fell asleep – had the vehicle left the road!<sup>1</sup>

Here, in his own words, are some of Martyn's own memories of his Llangeitho childhood:<sup>2</sup>

'Our family life was extremely happy. The clearest recollection I

<sup>1</sup> A sequel to the story occurred in August 1947. At the close of a horse-show, which Martyn Lloyd-Jones had attended in Aberystwyth, he happened to meet Idris Jones who told him that he was the West-Wales agent for the former tyre dealer in Oxford, W. R. Morris, now become Lord Nuffield! At business banquets Idris Jones would be called upon by Nuffield to relate the story of one of his first successes – four tyres and inner tubes sold early one morning in Oxford, 'his biggest single order up-to-date'!

<sup>2</sup> In the pages which follow most of his own recollections of childhood are taken from an account he once gave on Welsh radio and published in Welsh under the title 'Martin Lloyd-Jones' in *Y Llwybrau Gynt*, ed. Alun Oldfield-Davies, vol. II (Llandyssul: Gwasg Gomer, 1972), pp. 26–56. Other memories were given personally to the author.

have is that of always having a houseful of people. The main reason for this – apart from the fact that my father and mother were very pleased to welcome friends and others to the house for a meal and a chat – was that our house was also a business establishment. Like other shops in the country areas we used to sell all sorts of goods and my father was also a pioneer in selling machines such as ploughs, separators, haymaking machines and binders for the hay. And quite soon he also began a sort of creamery – a dairy. We had two manservants who toured the surrounding countryside to collect unsalted butter. Then it was all mixed together, salt was added, and finally the butter was placed in boxes and sent to various shops and co-operatives in Glamorganshire. The butter was sold as “Vale of Aeron Blend”.

I say this to explain why there were always so many people in our house. We dealt not only with the farmers of the Llangeitho district but also with those of Tregaron, Llanddewi Brefi, Penuwch, Bwlchyllan, Abermeurig, Llwynygroes, and even further. Travellers selling various goods would also call regularly and everyone who came had to have tea or supper. There is no need to say that such a life was exceptionally interesting for children. We took great interest in the different characters and their peculiarities. I remember how we looked forward to some of them coming because of their remarkable sayings. For example, whatever was said, one of these characters would always reply, “*Be chi'n siarad*” (“You don’t say”). Another one, “*Cerwch ona*” (“Get away with you”). And yet another, “*Fo’lon marw nawr*” (“I’m willing to die now”) as a protestation of the truth of what he was saying.

There is nothing more interesting than natural, original characters; unfortunately education has almost wiped them out. One afternoon I remember being with my father in the pony and trap on our way to attempt to sell a separator at a farm some six miles from Llangeitho, in the direction of Mynydd Bach. The two farmers were bachelors and the elder, naturally, was the master. The master was more conservative than his brother and was very much opposed to the new machine, but the other was anxious to obtain it. As we were leaving the road and turning into the lane which led to the farm, the younger brother greeted us. He had been expecting us: “Mr Jones,” he said, “there’s only one way in which you’ll sell that separator here, and that is for me to talk strongly against it. I was anxious for you not to misunderstand me when I start to object.” Then, he disappeared and

we went on towards the house. The elder brother came out and my father began his business. In about ten minutes’ time, when everything appeared hopeless, the other brother came forward with a rather grim look on his face, and his brother asked him, “What do you think of this separator?” And he, according to the plan, started objecting strongly. Needless to say, we sold the separator.

‘A subject which was often discussed at home was “politics”. My father was a staunch Liberal and in those days he was an avid admirer of Lloyd George, although he turned against him from 1915 onwards. It wasn’t often that a Tory would call in, but my mother supported that dogma. When she had some measure of support from a visitor there would be a heated argument. Today it is difficult to realise the faith that our fathers had in politicians. I remember one afternoon immediately after the 1909 Budget when I was in the trap with my father and one of our neighbours. This man had been brought up in central Cardiganshire and was therefore a Unitarian. I still remember the shock that I had when I heard him tell my father that he was certain that Lloyd George would do more good than Jesus Christ, because he had a better chance. I pity them! I have a vivid memory of the two elections in 1910. In one of them – if not both – the man who later became Sir George Fossett Roberts stood for election for the Tories against Mr Vaughan Davies [Lord Ystwyth], our M.P. Mr Roberts was a brewer from Aberystwyth. I remember nothing of the speeches but I remember well that Mr Fossett Roberts was not allowed to speak at all when he came to address the meeting held one evening in the day school. The moment he opened his lips some of the Liberal boys started to sing – and many joined in with them.

Vaughan Davies is the man, Vaughan Davies is the man,  
Farewell to the man of the barrel,  
Vaughan Davies is the man.

Mr Roberts persevered in his attempt to speak for some twenty minutes and then gave up. I am afraid that I was one of those that followed him, still singing the rhyme until he left the village in his car. I must confess that even the Cardi,<sup>1</sup> undoubtedly the most intelligent of Welsh men, sometimes lapses.

Llangeitho, like many other villages, was rich in characters. Time will only allow me to mention three of them. One of the most original

<sup>1</sup> Natives of Cardiganshire.

was a shoemaker – or Ianto Crydd (“the boot”) as he was known by some. His workshop was always full and that was for several reasons. One reason was that he talked so much that he tended to neglect his work, and the only way to make sure of retrieving one’s shoes was to stay in the workshop until he finished the work! The shoemaker was a heavy smoker, and for some reason he had a meerschaum pipe. One of his peculiarities was that he was an artistic spitter. I never saw anyone spit so much – not only the number of spits, but the range of each spit. He used to sit on his bench in the morning – not very early – and light his pipe immediately, then suddenly, a huge spit would fall from the left side of his mouth to the floor on his left. The next would fall a little to the right of the first, and so on, until the last at nightfall would land from the right corner of his mouth, with a perfect pattern of spits on the floor! His main feature as a character was his mischievousness and his sparse, dry humour. He was an ardent speaker and had great pleasure from teasing certain simple country folk – but without one degree of cruelty ever.

‘He was a kind creature and dear to many. Here is one sample of his ability. One day a farmer went to the shoemaker in great distress. His eldest daughter had failed an examination at the Tregaron Intermediate School and the poor girl was nearly heart-broken. This wasn’t the first time for her to fail, and every time she failed in the same subject, namely, algebra. He, the father, did not understand, and he came to the shoemaker and asked, “What is this algebra that this lass always fails in? What is it?” Immediately the shoemaker began to explain and said, “Oh! algebra! Think now of a train leaving Aberystwyth with thirty passengers on it. It comes to Llanrhystyd Road and two get out and one steps in. On arriving at Llanilar, three get out and no one enters. Tregaron, five get off and six enter. Then from station to station until they arrive at Bronwydd Arms where twelve enter. At last the train reaches Carmarthen. Now this is the problem, this is the question – What was the guard’s name?” “Dear me,” said the farmer, “no wonder the poor lass fails.” And he went home to sympathise with his daughter. The shoemaker was very discerning and he knew his customers inside out.

“Stifin y Fro” was a totally different man. A quiet man, a little eccentric and subdued, but at the same time he was a bit of a genius. He seldom greeted you if you passed him on the road, but he was a great reader, and when other people failed to give a satisfactory answer in the question time at the end of Sunday School, he always

knew the correct answer. When he spoke he could say sharp and catchy things. At one time Stifin had devised that which he called “a kicking crank” – an invention to turn with his feet the circular stone for sharpening knives, so that he could use his two hands to hold the knife or whatever else was being sharpened. Everyone in the village was calling to see the invention and among them was a young man, twenty years of age, a youth very fond of provoking Stifin. This fellow began to deride the invention and the inventor. Old Stifin suffered for some time, but at last he became so agitated that he kicked the derider with his right foot saying, “I’m not a prophet, nor the son of a prophet, but I do have authority to cast out demons – get out.”

‘But the most likeable character, as far as we boys were concerned, was Rhys Rowlands. He was a bachelor, about sixty years old when we knew him, and lived with his brother John who was a little older. They were farmers, but by our time Rhys was a relieving officer and a registrar. He had left the farm and was living in a house in the village. He was a short man, bald, with a full moustache – one which was longer than average. He was an extremely fast talker and he had the most charming and magical smile. He was the best story-teller that I ever knew. He had perfected his craft over the years and like every true story-teller he had an exceptional memory for detail. Usually there was no point to the story, nor any lesson, he just told of some happening from his past. But his gift was such that he held us mesmerised. Rhys Rowlands would call at our house every Sunday evening except during the month when it was our turn to lodge the visiting preachers (*cadw’r mis*). I can see him now coming in with his hymn-book under his arm and placing his hat – always a bowler hat – on the floor beside him. He was in a hurry, he had no time to stay – just call. I don’t remember his ever drinking a cup of tea in our house, not to mention having a meal. He was always a heavy smoker – and an artist in that pastime. His favourite tobacco was “Royal Seal” and after lighting up he would draw the smoke into his mouth with such force that his cheeks nearly burst. Then he would exhale the smoke with the same gusto, waving the pipe in the air at the same time. My father knew very well how to draw him into story-telling and we boys would eagerly await this. It is well nigh impossible to give an idea of his magical gift but let me try: my father would mention someone and ask him if he knew of him. “Yes, wait a minute,” Rhys would say, “there must be fifteen years since then, but I remember

clearly that I had to go to Tregaron, on a Tuesday in February I think it was. Anyway, I decided to put the little yellow mare that we had at the time in the trap – the foal of the old chestnut mare that we had for years and sired by the hackney stallion that Dafydd had [my grandfather who lived at Llwyncadfor at the time]. What was his name? . . . Anyway, I put her in the trap; and I remember when I was riding up this hill that it was raining a cold drizzle.” He would say something like this with such emphasis and feeling that we nearly began to tremble with cold. Then he would go on to mention that he had passed such and such a man. He would describe the pony, or the cob, or the horse that he had, and quite often details as to the creature’s pedigree. Following this he would give a quick review of the man’s financial situation or would relate a story about his friendship with some girl or other, or something of that sort. This would go on and on literally for an hour or two – and sometimes longer – until at last he had reached Tregaron and met the man mentioned by my father at the start. Then he would describe this man – his looks and his clothes, etc.

‘Rhys Rowlands saw everything as being either black or white, especially people. Everyone was either perfect or totally unimportant and worthless. He used to voice his opinion of people in a very extreme way. A man was either one of the greatest or the most insignificant creature that Wales had ever bred. Sometimes, after he had been belittling someone in strong terms, a smile would cover his face and he would look like a guilty child.

‘I must relate one story about him because it is literally true. He had been to the Wells, i.e. Llanwrtyd Wells, on holiday one year, and had fallen in love with a girl who lived there. He had been in her company quite a lot and felt sure that she should be his wife. As well as being attractive, she also had a “small pocket” (a wealthy background) as was said. But after returning home Rhys had one difficulty – the question was, how was he to write to her and prolong the friendship. He was not enough of a scholar to write on his own behalf or to do that without estranging the young lady. There was only one thing to be done, and that was to ask his minister and friend to write to her on his behalf and in his name. The minister did so; but after some time, and without Rhys’s knowledge, he began writing on his own behalf. The story ends with the minister marrying the girl. By our time, she was a minister’s respectable and loving wife. What of poor Rhys? He forgave both of them, and no one in the chapel

thought more highly of the minister than he did. The wife died about 1909, and when it was time for the minister to leave this world about 1919, he died in the arms of Rhys Rowlands.

‘I must speak of another place which plays a big part in my childhood memories, until I reached my thirteenth birthday – and that is Llwyncadfor. This was the name of my grandfather’s home on my mother’s side. That is where I would spend all my holidays apart from Christmastime, and nothing gave me greater pleasure than this. Llwyncadfor is a fairly large farm not far from Newcastle Emlyn, but in those days it was not only a farm; Llwyncadfor was a stud farm, i.e. a farm for breeding horses. My grandfather was an expert in this matter, and after starting with the Welsh cob, he began to keep both heavy, or shire, horses and the light, or hackney horses. It was he who was responsible for bringing these two latter breeds into Cardiganshire. There were a number of horses of different breeds at Llwyncadfor, and individual stables called boxes had been built for them here and there along the farmyard and also in the fields near the house. He had bred many horses which were shown in the different shows, some in harness and others under saddle or in hand. By my time there were three or four uncles and four or five aunts too, as well as five or six grooms to care for the horses, not to mention the farm hands who worked on the land. Llwyncadfor indeed looked more like a small village than a farm. I can see the servants sitting round the table in the living room – a whole tableful of them, with the family eating in another dining room and my grandfather eating by himself in the best living room. My inclination and ambition in those days was to become a groom and I spent my time carrying buckets of water and horsemeal. Sometimes I would have the extraordinary pleasure of sitting in the four-wheeler with my uncle Tom as he was training one of the best horses for the big show – the Welsh National or the United Counties in Carmarthen, or the Bath and West of England. I remember often leading some of the quietest horses to Henllan station and putting them in a horsebox to go by rail to one of the larger shows. Llwyncadfor farm staff would hire a train for themselves – because they had so many horses in the competition. And almost without exception they would take the chief prizes in all classes and many other prizes as well.

‘At night after supper most of the Llwyncadfor family used to sit in the living room around the open-hearth fire, with the chimney open to the sky. This is when they would tell stories and recount



happenings, and often they would sing and entertain themselves in various ways. Then, again, there would always be a number of strangers in the company, because the stallions would travel each year throughout the counties of South Wales, apart from Brecknock and Radnor. The place would be ablaze with interest and to be part of it all was a great experience for a little boy. I remember my breast swelling with pride in shows, say at Aberystwyth or Carmarthen or Newcastle Emlyn, when I saw Llwyncadfor horses win cups and medals, and rosettes being placed on their necks. I remember particularly one hackney stallion which was bred at Llwyncadfor and was called "Emlyn Model", the stud name being "Emlyn". When this foal was born, my grandfather saw, with his usual astuteness, that it had something special about it. The first morning, when he saw it, he said to his son Tom, "We shall call this one 'Model', because we won't get a better one than this." And that's how it was. "Model" never had any prize but a first, not only in Wales, but for two or three consecutive years in the Hackney Society Show in London at the Agricultural Hall. After that they sold it to the Spanish Government for 800 guineas – an exceptionally high price in those days!

\* \* \*

Martyn's childhood in Llangeitho was comparatively uneventful until a night in January 1910 which was to influence the life of the whole family. Early in that month Henry Lloyd-Jones had sent out bills to a number of farmers who came to pay them – in old sovereigns and half-sovereigns – on the evening of Wednesday, January 19. The business was done in the clothing section of the shop where the men stood, talking and smoking. Mrs Lloyd-Jones and the eldest boy, Harold, happened to be away from home. About 1 a.m. the next morning, long after everyone had retired for the night, Martyn and Vincent, who shared a room, were half-aroused from their sleep by the smell of fumes, but sensing no danger they merely pulled the blankets higher over their heads. It seems that tobacco ash which had fallen to the floor of the store below, amidst millinery goods, had smouldered and then ignited. Once the building itself caught alight, the wind blowing that winter's night fanned the fire almost immediately into a terrific blaze. Just in time, the cries of the

family's maid and the milliner, and their banging fists, awakened the father – a heavy sleeper – who was able to reach the boys' bedroom. 'I was thrown,' recalled Martyn, 'by my father from one of the upstairs windows into the arms of three men who were standing in their nightshirts in the road. Then they got hold of a ladder so that my father and brother could climb down.' They were scarcely out when the floor collapsed behind them and everything went up in flames.

Speaking of that early morning of January 20, 1910, Martyn Lloyd-Jones was later to comment in the memories which he gave on radio:

'Somehow things at Llangeitho were never the same after the fire. Although we built a new home and started living in it within the year [1910] things were different. Certainly as a building the new house was a great improvement on our former home, but there was something missing, and more than anything the feeling of home was lacking. I felt as if I were in a strange house and that living there was a temporary matter. I always prefer old houses, although I appreciate many of the modern amenities.'

In fact the effects of the fire went deeper than those few remarks reveal. For one thing, on the material level it brought his father into great difficulties. When they had gone through the ruin the next morning, Martyn had discovered a cracked and discoloured mug<sup>1</sup> and his father the sovereigns – melted into a solid mass of gold – but otherwise the loss was virtually complete. Thereafter Henry Lloyd-Jones was rarely free of financial problems. These were carefully hidden from the boys until David Evans of Llwyncadfor broke the secret to Martyn in 1911. Well able to rule a farm, under the influence of drink the old man could not always rule himself and there were times when as he drove his gig back to Llwyncadfor, after a convivial meeting, at the end of a market day perhaps, the safest thing to do was to hand the reins over to Martyn. On one such occasion David Evans told his grandson of his father's financial distress and though, when sober the next morning, he sought to whittle down what he had said, the damage was done in the boy's mind: 'It left a deep impression upon me. Before then I used to buy a pennyworth of sweets every week, now I reduced it to a half-penny.

<sup>1</sup> In later years this memento always stood on the mantelpiece of his study.

It was my contribution to the family problem.' For the next three years Martyn was not to share with anyone the burden which this news had laid upon him.

It may well have been the case that the fire of January 1910, and its consequences, also influenced Martyn's attitude to school. Probably Llangeitho school was typical of many a Welsh village school in days before rural depopulation emptied many parts of the countryside. With a headmaster and three lady teachers, education was carried up to grade six. For many it would be all the education they were likely to have and for a while it seemed possible that Martyn would fall into that group. Harold was quiet and studious, but Martyn seemed of a more practical and businesslike bent. Until the age of eleven he had no interest in books. Football and other pursuits possessed far more attraction.

About the year 1910 one of the lady teachers at Llangeitho retired, and her place was taken by a man, and it was this assistant schoolmaster who one day interrupted a game of football in the village square to express his serious concern at Martyn's inattention to his work. Unless he settled down, the teacher warned him, he would never get a scholarship to the County Intermediate School at Tregaron. Knowing his father's financial position, Martyn did not need telling that, if he failed to get a scholarship place in 1911, it might well mean an end to his further education. The warning was heeded and in the scholarship examination of 1911 Martyn Lloyd-Jones took second place, close behind the boy who stood first. This convinced him, for the first time, that he could do something with his mind and securing a place at Tregaron County School also opened the way to a new chapter in his life.