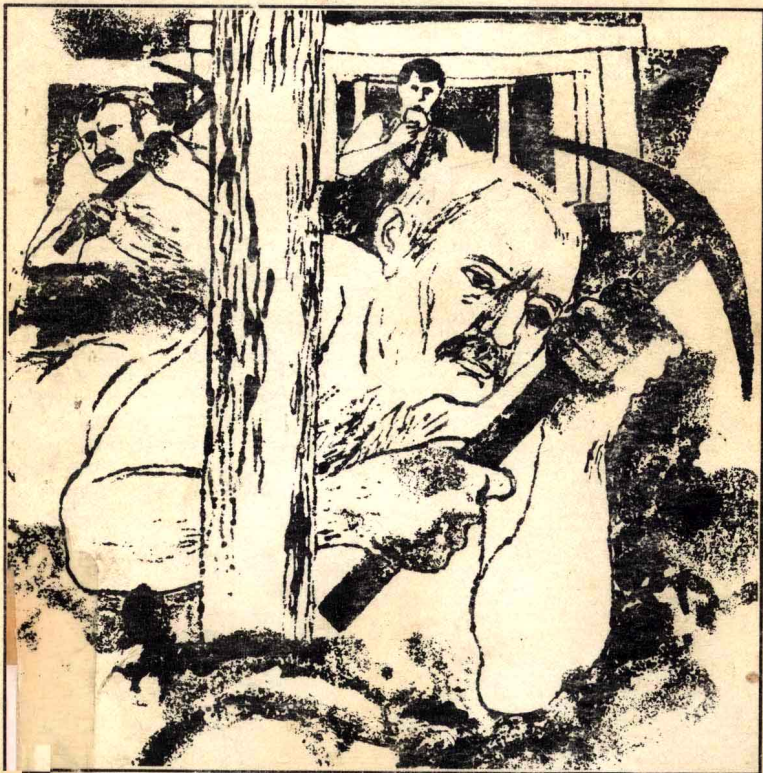


The Stars Look Down

Longman Simplified English Series



The Stars Look Down

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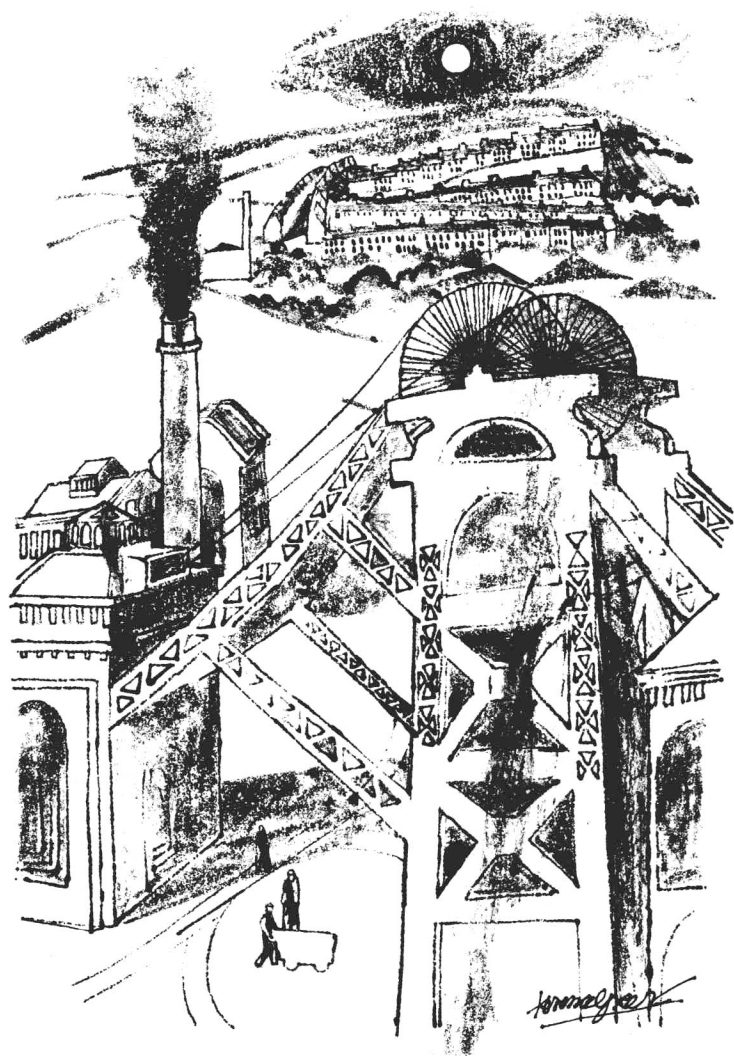
This book has been specially prepared to make enjoyable reading for people to whom English is a second or a foreign language. An English writer never thinks of avoiding unusual words, so that the learner, trying to read the book in its original form, has to turn frequently to the dictionary and so loses much of the pleasure that the book ought to give.

This series is planned for such readers. There are very few words used which are outside the learner's vocabulary¹. These few extra words are needed for the story and are explained when they appear. Long sentences and difficult sentence patterns have been simplified. The resulting language is good and useful English, and the simplified book keeps much of the charm and flavour of the original.

At a rather more difficult level there is *The Bridge Series*, which helps the reader to cross the gap between the limited vocabulary and structures of the *Simplified English Series* and full English.

It is the aim of these two series to enable thousands of readers to enjoy without great difficulty some of the best books written in the English language, and in doing so, to equip themselves in the pleasantest possible way, to understand and appreciate any work written in English.

¹The 2,000 root words of the *General Service List of English Words of the Interim Report on Vocabulary Selection*.



Chapter 1

When Martha woke, it was still dark and very cold. The wind, which was sweeping across the North Sea, blew through the cracked walls of the old two-room house.

Martha lay quite still in the kitchen bed and kept herself away from Robert, whose coughing had disturbed her sleep. She tried to control the bitterness that she felt against him. She thought for a minute and then with an effort she got up.

The stone floor felt like ice to her bare feet. Martha struggled to put on her clothes and dragged herself across the room to get some water. There was no water; the pipe was frozen up.

Martha Fenwick stood and looked out of the window. Rows of miners' houses stretched out before her. To the right, lay the black town of Sleescale, with the harbour beyond and then the cold open sea. To the left, the great Neptune coal-mine workings stood out against the sky.

A look of misery spread over Martha's face. The miners had been on strike for three months now. Martha moved quickly away from the window and began to light the fire. She had only some damp wood and coal dust but at last she managed to get the fire lit. She went through the back door, broke the ice on a water barrel with an angry blow and got some rain water. She came back and boiled it, filled a cup, and sat in front of the fire and slowly drank. The hot water was not as good as tea but it warmed her and gave a little life to her cold body.

Suddenly she turned. Her husband was awake. He was lying on his side watching her. He began to cough again. He raised himself and spat on to a piece of newspaper. Martha felt a sudden hatred of Robert and his cough; but she rose, filled

another cup with hot water and gave it to him. He took it in silence.

It was lighter. The clock had been sold and so Martha had to guess the time. She thought that it must be about seven o'clock. She wrapped one of David's stockings round her neck, put on a man's cloth cap and got into her old, worn-out black coat. Without a word to Robert, she went out and walked down to the town.

Martha had only two pennies to spend. She saw a boy sweeping outside a meat shop. "Have you got anything for me this morning?" she asked him. She hoped that he would give her some bits of meat that would be thrown away, or perhaps a bone to make soup.

The boy shook his head. "I'm afraid not—nothing this morning. Ramage won't let me give away anything. He was very angry when I gave you bones last time."

Martha walked away and went along to the harbour. She hoped to get some fish there, but none of the boats had been to sea.

She turned slowly and began to go back. Outside a baker's shop, Dan Teasdale was loading loaves of bread into a cart for delivery. Martha smelt the hot new bread and paused. Dan turned and saw the hungry look on her face and immediately he was filled with sympathy for her. He quickly took a loaf out of his basket and put it into her hands.

Martha said nothing. She was so grateful that she was almost in tears. She climbed slowly up the hill and went home.

Robert and her three sons, all of whom worked in the mine, were sitting by the fire. Her eldest son, Sammy, who was nineteen, cried out: "Look! Mother has got a loaf!"

David gave a little smile. He was only fourteen—a thin, quiet boy with a white face and a serious, rather determined expression.

"Isn't it wonderful, boys?" Sammy went on. "We're all hungry and getting thinner and thinner. Now mother walks in with a feast!"

"You're lucky to get this," said Martha.

She began to cut the loaf.

They all watched her with excitement. Even Hugh looked up and stopped repairing his football boots. Hughie never said much; but he looked at the loaf.

Sammy jumped up and handed the plate of bread to his father.

Robert took a piece and quickly looked at Martha. "Where did this come from?" he asked.

Martha did not answer.

Robert repeated the question. "If you were given the bread, I don't want it," he said.

Sammy called out cheerfully: "It doesn't matter where it came from. We're all going to eat it." He caught his father's eye. "Oh, cheer up, dad. Forget about the strike," he said. "This strike must end. You may want it, but I want to work again. We can't go on standing idle and wait for mother to get us food."

Martha took back the plate and she and her sons ate their bread in silence.

Chapter 2

Ten o'clock. David picked up his cap and went out. He was on his way to Joe's home.

The wind had suddenly dropped and the sun was shining. The bright sunlight seemed beautiful to David. In winter he often did not see the sun for several days. It was dark in the morning when he went down the mine; and it was dark in the evening when he came up again.

David walked up the street where Joe lived. Small groups of miners were standing idly outside their old and dirty houses. They looked at David with angry eyes, because his father had started the strike. David felt awkward. He hurried along to Joe's house and went inside.

Joe and his father, Charley Gowlan, were having breakfast. The room was dirty and very untidy. The table was piled with

food and dirty plates and dishes, and the room smelt of drink, grease and sweat.

"Hullo, lad!" said Charley Gowlan, whose fat stomach was resting against the edge of the table. He pushed a big piece of meat into his big mouth, waved his knife, and gave David a smile. Charley was a friendly man. He tried to be popular with the miners and he was also anxious to please Barras, the owner of the Neptune coal mine.

David sat down and watched Joe and Charley eat. They ate with great enjoyment. Joe's young jaws opened and shut like a machine. David watched with envy.

Suddenly Charley looked up and said: "Would you like to scrape out the pot, boy?"

David was too proud to accept. "No, thank you—I've had my breakfast."

Charley smiled. "And how does your father feel now that we're likely to be beaten?" he asked.

"I don't know."

Charley sucked his knife. "The strike has caused a lot of misery," he said. "None of us wanted it. We're striking about nothing."

David said fiercely: "There's a lot of water in Scupper Flats. It may flood the mine."

"Water!" Charley cried. He worked on the surface and never went down the mine and so the water did not worry him. "Your father's not afraid of a drop of water, is he?" he said.

David felt angry. "He's worked in water for twenty-five years. So he oughtn't to be afraid of it."

"That's right, boy. Stand up for your dad. If you don't defend him, nobody else will." Charley got up, stretched himself, and went over to the fire.

Joe and David went out.

"He doesn't have to work in the wet places like I do!" Joe said as soon as the door was shut.

"The wet isn't the only trouble," said David. "My dad says—"

"I know—I know. Your dad thinks Scupper Flats is dangerous. I'm tired of hearing about it. Your father thinks he knows

everything," said Joe.

David answered hotly: "He didn't start the strike for fun."

"Some of the men think that he did. They want to start working again."

"Well, let them start!"

"They will," said Joe. "They're going to meet this afternoon and they'll decide to go back to work." He looked at David. "Oh, I'm tired of working in a coal mine," he went on. "I'm going to leave as soon as I get a chance. I want to make money and have a good time."

David was silent. He wanted to leave the Neptune, too, for a different reason.

Joe was very good-looking and proud of the fact. As they walked along the street together, he talked in a grand manner. "You've got to have money to enjoy yourself. I'm going to make a lot of money. I'll beat everyone and come out on top. One day I'll be a rich man, you'll see!" Suddenly Joe stopped his boasting and hit David on the back. "Come on, Davey," he said. "Let's get a boat and row out to sea."

They went down to the harbour. There, in the dirty water, some youths were looking for bits of coal. Joe looked at them with scorn. In his home there was plenty of coal; he had stolen it from the mine himself.

Suddenly one of the youths, Ned Softley, gave a loud shout. After three hours in the bitter cold, he had filled his bag with coal. He was just going to put it on his shoulder and take it home. But Jake Wicks quickly picked up the bag and walked away with it.

Joe laughed loudly. "That was clever—very clever!" he cried.

David ran up to Wicks. "That belongs to Ned," he shouted. "You can't take it away from him!"

Jake looked at David. "Oh? And who will stop me?"

"I will."

Everybody stopped laughing.

Jake put down the bag. "You will?"

David was so angry that he could not speak. Wicks was older, taller and heavier than David. But David did not care.

He looked at Jake's dirty spotted face. In a flash, he struck him a fierce blow on the nose.

Jake shook his head like a dog and rushed at David. At that moment someone shouted: "Take care! Wept is coming!" David turned round. Jake seized his opportunity and struck him on the ear. David, blinded by the blow, fainted.

The youths quickly scattered, leaving David lying on the ground.

Wept was a miner—a kind and very religious man. He looked at David with an expression of sorrow. He took the boy to his home and gave him a good meal. Wept's kindness touched David deeply. He thought of the poverty and troubles in his own home and of the bitterness between his parents. He felt a sudden desire to do something to make life easier for people. "I must and will do something," he said to himself, and a tear ran down his face.

Chapter 3

Half past one. Lunch at "The Law" was just ending. Arthur watched his father with loving, troubled eyes. He knew that the men who were employed at his father's mine were going to meet in the afternoon. "Will the men decide to go back to work?" he wondered. "Or will they continue this terrible strike?" Arthur was trembling with anxiety.

Richard Barras sat proudly at the head of the table; he was very calm. He never mentioned the strike; he behaved as if it were just a small unimportant quarrel. Suddenly he rose from his chair and said: "I'm going to Tynecastle on some private business."

"Will you be home for tea, Richard?" Aunt Carrie asked.

Richard's wife, Harriet, had been ill in bed for five years, and so his sister Caroline kept house. She was a little frightened of Richard and always treated him with great respect.

"Yes. At five o'clock," Barras replied in a severe voice, and

left the room.

Arthur almost burst into tears. He wanted to go with his father and keep him company during his troubles. His elder sister, Hilda, went to her bedroom to read. His younger sister, Grace, tried to persuade Arthur to play, but Arthur felt too unhappy. Although he was only twelve he could think of nothing but the strike. He went into the garden and wandered miserably around the grounds alone. Then he wandered back into the house, locked himself in a room, and prayed to God to end the strike.

Richard Barras returned at five o'clock and found that Armstrong and Hudspeth were waiting for him. Richard looked at them coldly. "Well?" he said.

"The strike is over," they told him.

Richard received the news without any change of expression on his face. "How did it end?" he asked.

"The miners held their meeting," said Armstrong. "Fenwick spoke first, but nobody listened to him. Next, Charley Gowlan got up and tried to persuade the men to start working again. Then Heddon spoke—and he really lost his temper. He told the men that they had no right to strike without the support of the union. He swore at them and used some very bad language! The men voted. About eight hundred voted to return to work. Only seven men wanted to continue to strike."

"So they want to start work again. I see," Barras said.

"Shall we put up the notices, Mr. Barras?" Armstrong asked.

Richard looked at him with displeasure. "Yes," he said coldly. "Let the men start work tomorrow."

Barras said no more, and Armstrong and Hudspeth left the house.

Richard stood for a moment and examined his clean, white hands. Then he opened the door and slowly went up the stairs. He did not see Arthur standing in the dark hall, watching him with an anxious face.

Richard entered his wife's bedroom. "Well, how are you?" he asked.

Harriet was sitting up in bed, sewing. She raised her eyes

and smiled sadly. "I have a bad headache, Richard," she said.

She suffered from terrible headaches, pains in her back and pains in her stomach. She had seen several doctors, but none of them had been able to discover the cause of her troubles. In all corners of the bedroom there were bottles of medicines which the various doctors had given her—and they were all useless.

Barras looked at his wife across the room. "I'm sorry," he said. "I meant to buy you some fruit today but I forgot." Richard always seemed to forget, but Harriet was grateful for the thought.

"Thank you, Richard."

Barras paused by the open door. "I'll come and see you again tonight," he said and went out.

Meanwhile, Armstrong and Hudspeth were walking in silence to the mine.

Suddenly Hudspeth said fiercely: "Barras makes a man feel like dirt. He's a cold devil. He doesn't care about us. He only wants to make money."

"You mustn't talk like that, man!" said Armstrong.

The men spoke no more. They reached the Neptune and put up their notices.

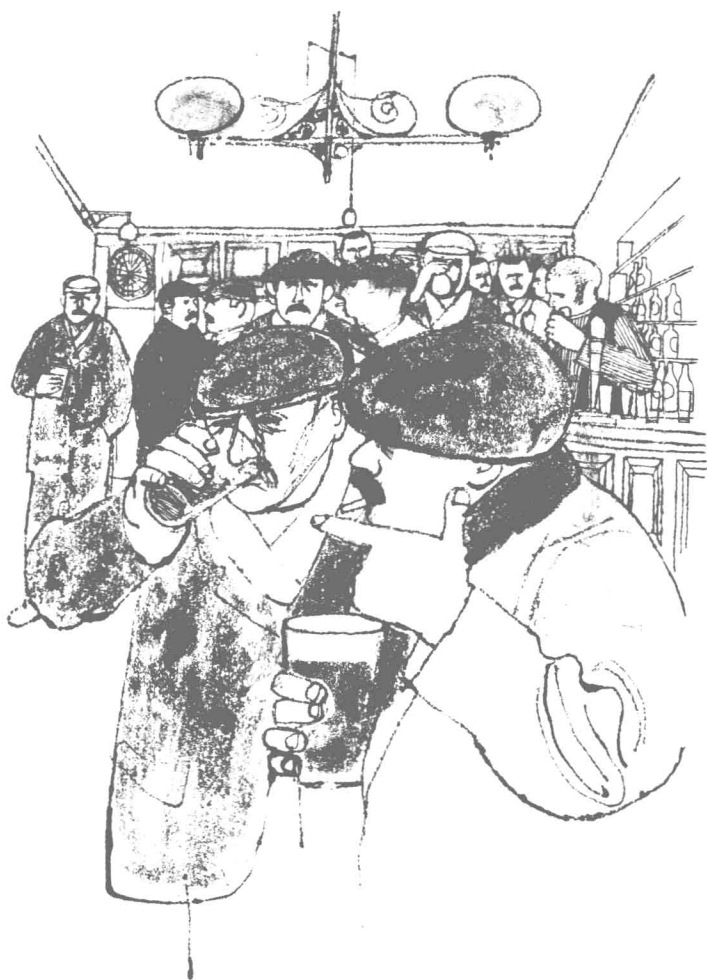
Chapter 4

The Salutation Inn was crowded with miners. The men were drinking, smoking and making a great noise.

"Fill up the glasses, Bert," Charley Gowlan called out to the landlord. "We've had a bad time during the last three months. Let us now drink and make merry."

He looked round and caught Robert Fenwick's eye. Robert was standing in a corner of the room and he seemed to have no interest in anything.

Gowlan lifted his glass. "Drink up, Robert. You might as well get wet inside tonight. You'll be wet outside tomorrow."



Robert looked at Gowlan. "We'll all be wet one day," he said.

The men shouted: "Hold your tongue, Robert! We've heard enough from you!"

A sad expression spread over Robert's face. "All right, boys, I'll say no more."

Gowlan smiled. "If you're afraid to go down the mine, why don't you say so?"

Slogger Leeming said fiercely: "Be quiet, Gowlan. You're behaving like a fool. Robert's a better man than you. He knows more about the mine than you know about anything."

There was immediate silence. The crowd hoped that there would be a fight. But Charley never fought. He merely smiled.

Suddenly the door opened, and Will Kinch came into the inn. He pushed through the crowd and said to the landlord: "Give me a drink, Bert. I need it."

The men at once turned their attention to Will. "What's happened? What's the matter, Will?"

Will picked up his glass with a shaking hand and spat on the floor in disgust. "I'll tell you," he said. "My little girl, Alice, is ill—very ill. My wife wanted to make some soup to give the child strength. I went to Ramage's shop and I asked Ramage if he would let me have some bits of meat. I had no money but I promised to pay him as soon as I get my next wages. Ramage looked me up and down and spoke to me as if I were a dog. 'I'll give you nothing—not even a bone!' he said. 'You miners have brought shame to the town. You went on strike for no reason. Now you come and beg for help. Get out of my shop!'"

For a moment there was silence.

Then Slogger jumped up and shouted: "By heaven! He can't behave like that!"

Everybody started to talk at the same time, and there was confusion.

Slogger pushed his way through the crowd. "I'll punish Ramage!" he cried. "Come on, Will. You shall have the *best* meat for your little girl." He dragged Will out of the inn. All the men followed.

Outside, some young men joined the crowd. One of them

was young Joe Gowlan.

The angry men marched to Ramage's shop. They found that the shop was shut and the door and windows were barred. Slogger gave a loud shout of anger. But he refused to be defeated. He decided to attack another food shop instead. "Come on, boys, we'll not be beaten!" he cried. He ran at the door and kicked it with his heavy boot.

The men had drunk too much and were mad with anger. They broke down the door, ran into the shop and began to steal the food.

Joe Gowlan was not in need of food. He was greedy for money. He got down on to his hands and knees, crept quietly to the back of the shop and found the drawer in which the money was kept. He took out all the shining silver coins, looked at them with loving eyes, and put them into his pocket. He crept back, and quickly ran out of the shop.

A moment later, Robert Fenwick entered the shop. When he saw the destruction, he was filled with anxiety. "What are you doing, boys? You'll get into trouble for this," he said.

Nobody took any notice of him.

Robert raised his voice. "Stop, you fools! You're making matters worse for us. Nobody will have any pity on us now. Stop! Stop!"

Nobody stopped.

Robert started to push forward, but two policemen were standing behind him and one of them seized him by the arm.

Someone shouted: "Police!" The men took fright and rushed out of the shop.

The policemen found Slogger sitting on a barrel. They looked at Slogger, the shop, and then at Robert. "This is serious," one of them said. "You're Fenwick—the man who started the strike."

Robert opened his mouth to explain but he said nothing. The policemen took Robert and Slogger to the police station and locked them up.

Chapter 5

Five days later, Joe Gowlan ran away from home and went to Tynecastle. He believed that in this big city he would be able to make money and have a good time.

He was walking along the street, looking for a room, when a pretty girl of about sixteen walked past him. Joe's eyes brightened. The girl crossed the road and went into a house that had a notice in the window which said **LODGINGS**. "What luck!" Joe said to himself. He went straight to the house and rang the bell.

The girl opened the door. "Well?" she said sharply.

Joe smiled. "Oh, excuse me," he said politely, "I'm looking for a room."

Jenny Sunley did not approve of her mother letting rooms; she considered it "low". "I suppose you had better come in," she said.

She led Joe into the untidy living-room, which was furnished with cheap furniture. "Somebody has come to see about the room," she told her mother. She sat down and began to read the newspaper.

Mrs. Sunley, a fat and lazy woman, looked at Joe. "So you're looking for a room, are you? What's your name and where do you come from?" she asked.

"I've run away from home," Joe told her.

Jenny put down her newspaper and looked at him with new interest.

Joe continued: "I had a terrible time. My mother died, and my father used to beat me. We had a strike at the coal mine. I—I didn't have enough to eat."