

# CORNCRAKE

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ISSUE 4



NESTING IN THE OAK OF  
ENGLISH LITERATURE

19 Hast thou given the horse strength? hast thou clothed his neck with thunder?

20 Canst thou make him afraid as a grasshopper? the glory of his nostrils is terrible.

21 He paweth in the valley, and rejoiceth in his strength: he goeth on to meet the armed men.

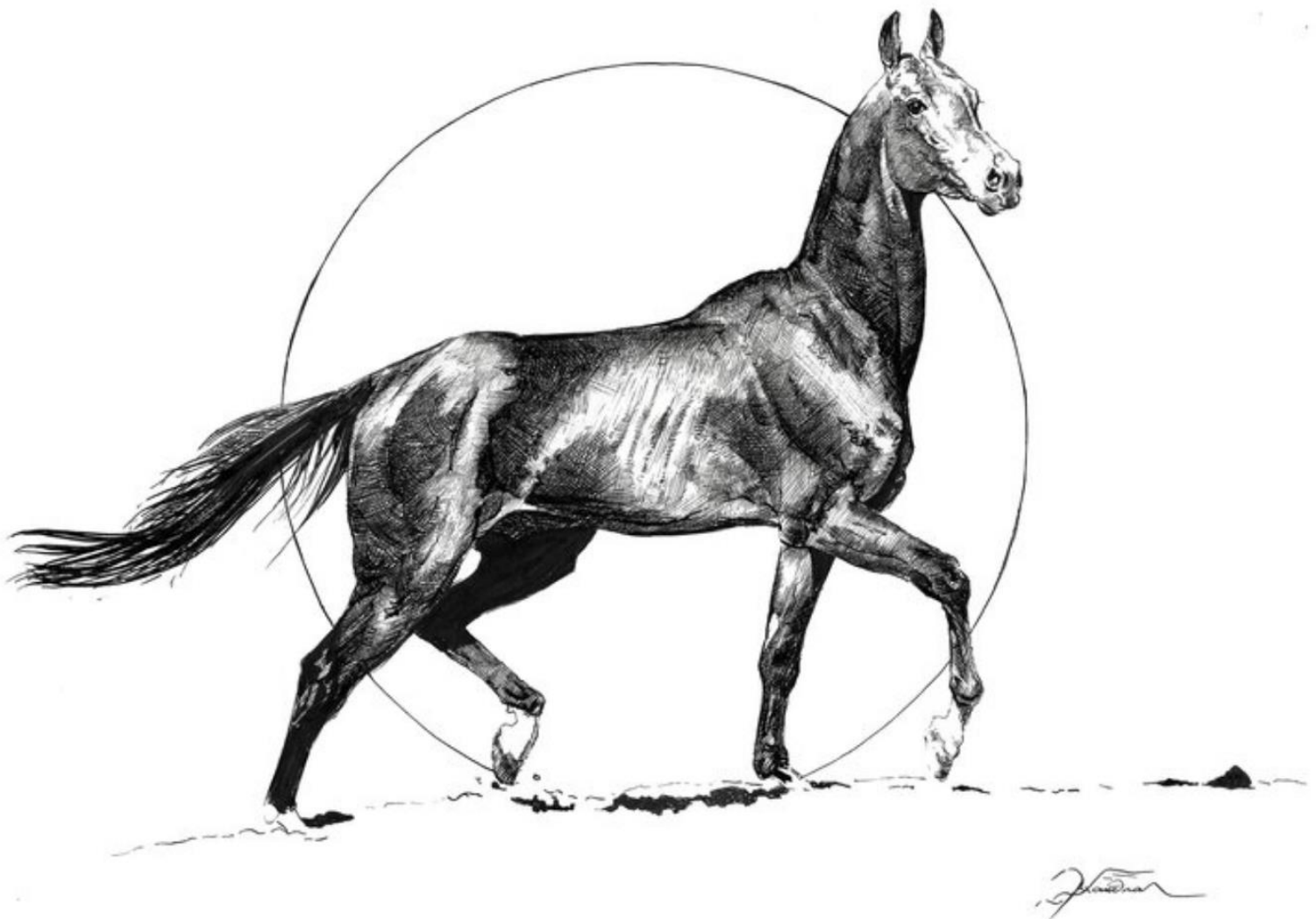
22 He mocketh at fear, and is not affrighted; neither turneth he back from the sword.

23 The quiver rattleth against him, the glittering spear and the shield.

24 He swalloweth the ground with fierceness and rage: neither believeth he that it is the sound of the trumpet.

25 He saith among the trumpets, Ha, ha; and he smelleth the battle afar off, the thunder of the captains, and the shouting.

Job 39:19-25





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*A man who writes a book,  
thinks himself wiser or wittier  
than the rest of mankind; he  
supposes that he can instruct or  
amuse them, and the publick to  
whom he appeals, must, after  
all, be the judges of his  
pretensions. - Dr Johnson*

# Editor's Note



Lads and Lasses! Once again, the Corncrake is out! And we have lots of great stories for you to enjoy!

Have you ever wondered what would happen if you were to build a lawn mower engine powered glider and attempt a solo flight to Dallas? Find out in ND Wallace Swan's first fun piece, *Flight of the Charlie!* Humour from Charles Dickens selected from the archives in *The "Good" Hippopotamus*, a tale of the efforts to raise up a statue to HRH (His Rolling Hulk). This tale is not well known and hard to find, so enjoy!

A new contributor has laid out for us the origins of fairies in accordance with English myths in *Adam and Eve: A Fairy Tale*. Look out for the story by renowned explorer Sir Walter Raleigh of *The Last Fight of the Revenge*, the first instalment of a story of a group of convicts set in Australia *The Bullet of the Fated Ten*, and for this month's horror, *Facts Concerning the Late Arthur Jermyn and his Family*. And, of course, the next instalment of *Druid without a Home*.

We are honoured to publish the work of Nathan Hood, well known now for his enthusiastic and well researched presentation of King Arthur Day, now joining us with *Darklands*. Inspired in part by the writing style of William Morris, this is really a great piece of literary work.

**Call of the Shieldmaiden**  
Editor-in-Chief



# Flight of the Charlie

N D Wallace Swan



“With a lawn mower engine powered paraglider, you can go anywhere you want,” said Charlie, out loud. “You’re lookin’ pretty good right about now, heh heh...” he stood staring at the recreational home-made paraglider.

Walking across the dirt track beside his corn field, he took a swig of the moonshine he had clutched under his wing. He looked left and right with squinting eyes that peered through big flying goggles, and downed the remainder of the bottle, tossing it with some others from earlier.

Stumbling, Charlie saw his dusty right foot.

“You LIAR! I only have one right foot!” Charlie shouted at his eyes. His eyes cowered inwards, fearful of more inebriated beration.

“Ah hell, you’re all right.” And then he patted an invisible shoulder, his wing waving in the air to his right.

“Fine then! If you don’t wanna talk about it, that’s fine enough to me, bud *hiccup*.”

“Oh yeah, that glider, *hiccup* I’m gonna bust it out and spit on the sky. YEEEEEE!” Charlie ran towards the glider, falling down several times, smearing dirt all over his sweaty face.

“Who *hiccup* put that there?” Charlie hollered, pointing to nothing in particular after tripping over the starboard wing. He got up and dragged himself up and into the glider.

“Buckle up cowboy...” Charlie struggled for a while but soon gave up on the fiddly clasps. He leaned over the side of the craft and vomited.

“Tell momma that one is for the dogs.” But no one was there to hear him.

Charlie yanked on the starter cord and the engine rumbled into life. The parachute dragged behind as it started to take form. Charlie moved forward down the dirt lane.

“I can’t breathe,” he muttered out loud, as the dust kicked up in his face. But, as he accelerated, the dust abated, and he was soon out of the dirt cloud.

As he accelerated the throttle, he began to rise up into the sky.

“I am a bird,” Charlie thought. “I am free.”

As he accelerated and rose above his farm, he saw the world below him, his ramshackle home, his red barn and silo, his family cemetery, and miles of fields. “God,” he thought, “I hate working in those damn fields. I hate that leaky barn, and the damn raccoons scurrying

around below my house...the only thing worth a damn is the bloody cemetery!”

“Imma fly me to Dallas.” He thought, and headed there, still climbing in altitude.

Charlie had some fireworks - M80s - tucked up in his armpits, deep in the feathers.

“I’ll light these when I’m over Dallas and drop them from up high and people won’t know what’s going on - haha, it’ll be funny to watch the news later.”

He flew on for some time and, upon reaching Dallas, was quite high, appearing more as a bird from below. He could see the winding Trinity River wrapping its way through the city. He could also see train tracks and highways slicing the city up, like a concrete butcher shop laden in steel, glass, and bricks.

“I can’t see any people, only cars...ooh I’ll throw them on that parade,” Charlie drunkenly muttered to himself as he started lighting all 16 of his M80s.

The first few exploded well above the ground. Adjusting for the second volley, the remaining explosives made it to the ground. The parade seemed to stop; and then the cars drove away quickly after the explosions in a panic.

“Mission success *hiccup*.” He said, and turned his paraglider around to head back towards the farm. He had almost reached home when the motor started to sputter.

“Ah, no more gas,” he said. “Hopefully I can glide down someplace safe.”

As he glided lower, aiming for a field that ran beside a stretch of river. Charlie, a bit more sober now, braced himself in for a rough landing.

As he approached the field, he was pushed by a sudden strong breeze. Charlie and his glider crashed into a rocky section of the river and, hitting his head on a rock as he was tumbling along, he fell unconscious, and drowned.

A few days later another farmer came across Charlie’s body and glider, and called the authorities to remove him. His family was saddened by his demise, but nobody was surprised. Charlie had been a drunk for years and his farm had suffered. No one wanted to take on the challenge anymore, and the property was soon in disrepair. He was later buried at his own cemetery on his farm. His brother Colton had his tombstone inscribed:

“Colonel Charles Angus: Farmer, Brother, Son. He flew with the Birds but Death came from Above 1907-1963.”

# Darklands

Nathan C J Hood



**The men gazed out into the valley.** Before them was darkness. What they beheld was not the shadow of night. No moon shone; no star twinkled, there was not even a cloud in the sky. There was only black tar in the air. It was the air. Thick and heavy, it clung to the body like liquid tar. Wind did not disrupt the inky stillness, for its breath never blew in that vale. Nor did rain ever fall in that land. On this side of the mountain, there was only the deepness of the dark. Yet within its depths everything lived, moved and had its being.

Punctuating the darkness that enveloped the valley was the river. Its waters gave off a cold, jade light. From the west, the channel snaked its way across the valley towards the eastern end of the dale, where it disappeared into the bowels of the mountain. Its northern shore bled into a desolate marsh, clumps of grassland pierced by luminescent pools; and to its south lay a woodland of withered beech trees. Their branches bore no leaves, and many trunks had been uprooted and left to lie

where they fell. Dimly lit by the glow of the river, the forest steadily rose into the hills that ringed the southern perimeter of the valley.

Two thirds of the way up the hillside was a clearing in the trees that opened onto a shelf of rock. There the Company of Dawn watched in silence. To their fore stood a large man grizzled by time and war. Over his left eye was a black patch; to his right he held a spyglass. As he surveyed the dark, he could see white forms scattered across the forest and the swamp beyond. They wandered the wastes alone, loping through the blackness blindly. Now and then a shriek would echo up the valley, interrupting the murmur of guttural hisses issuing from the mysterious white men of the dark.

The warrior raised his spyglass towards the mountains. His hair fell upon broad shoulders, his beard resting short of his large chest. He was clad in worn brown and black leathers, with a mottled grey cloak reaching to the midpoint of his calves, held in place by brooches in the shape of a five pointed-star on each shoulder. Upon his feet were battered boots smothered in mud. His footwear matched the grey beard's belt. To the left of his battered belt hung a scabbard, four feet in length, sheathing a sword with a large cross guard and rounded pommel. On his right side a black metal stave, some three feet in length, was attached to his belt. At its end protruded three metal prongs, held together by two circular bands that proceeded out from the pole. Their points could be construed as the corners of an equilateral triangle.

Scanning the darkness, the man's attention was drawn to a spot of white. As it began to grow, he watched with increasing anticipation. Faster

and faster, it increased in size. Then suddenly the orb began to course its way down the river, heading from the western ridge towards the centre of the valley. As it did so, a stream of white, like a comet's tail, followed the spot.

"It's here", grunted the man.

The other members of the Company of Dawn turned to look as the light began to splinter the black ink of the valley. Including the greybeard they were seven in number. Next to the old warrior was a black-haired man wearing a cloak made of raven feathers, a gold ring in his left ear and a strung bow in his hands. Immediately behind them sat two others, short and stocky, perched on rocks. Dressed in leather overalls, they carried giant backpacks.

To their left a young man knelt, clad in a red robe that reached to his ankles, his tonsured scalp covered by a raised hood. On their right was an athletic youth wearing clothes similar to the greybeard's. A scar ran across his left cheek, which was beardless. His fingers fidgeted with the buckle of his belt. At the very rear stood a large fair-haired warrior, naked to the waist. Bushy was his beard, merging into one with his hairy and muscular torso. He carried only an axe by his side.

The white spot was travelling quicker than when the old warrior had first noticed the blot. He no longer needed his spyglass, for with every second the ball of white grew larger. As it came closer, the light arced in a downward motion. The earth began to shake. Across the forest trees fell. Far below the watching Company, panicked screams filled the dark. The ball of white exploded in size as it hurtled through the dark sky. The Company could now see the spot for what it was: a silver rock surrounded and followed by white flame. Before them it plunged, crashing into the centre of the marsh. A chorus of howls greeted the intrusive visitor. Then all fell silent once more.

"It is time. Our task is at hand. We must go at once." Without a word, the Company of Dawn obeyed the old man's command. Forming into single file, the seven men left the platform and made their way down the hillside towards the river. At their helm was the raven-cloaked man. Silently he led them through the leafless trees - tall, spindly giants clothed with pallid grey bark. Every so often he brought the column to a halt with a raise of his clenched fist. As they waited, the Company could hear gurgles, groans and the snap of branches around them. But they never saw what made these sounds.

Towards the bottom of the hill, they were halted once more. The hissing and shambling were more persistent in this part of the wood. After crouching for several minutes, their legs began to tire. The young man with the scarred



face struggled to keep his balance; his sinews were stretched, his concentration pushed to the edge. He could remain still no longer; he had to ease the tension in his muscles. With a slight movement the beardless soldier shifted the weight of his feet. As he did so, there was a large crack. He looked down.

A branch was broken in twain.

A screeching howl pierced the silent blackness. Bounding towards them came a white figure, its skeletal, humanoid form accentuated by its gangly limbs. The creature's hands and feet ended in chiselled claws and it wore around its waist a tattered cloth. It came to a sudden stop before the trees hiding the Company. Sticking a forked tongue out in several directions, it began moving its head in a jerking, mechanical motion, as it began to search for that which had disrupted the constant thrum of gurgled hisses. Its large dark green eyes, which were fixed on the sides of its head, did not move. The black slits stared with animal cunning as the creature's red tongue flicked in and out between rows of razor teeth.

More of the white creatures bounded towards the sound of the snap. They lurched from tree to tree, groping on the trunks to propel themselves in the direction of their target. The Company held their breath. They could hear the creatures sniffing; in place of noses, they had two small holes for nostrils. Five of the creatures had been drawn forth.

The grey beard turned and motioned to the large fair-headed man. The old warrior pointed ahead. Without a noise, the blonde leapt forward. Raising his axe with one hand, he came about the tree. The foremost creature turned with excitement towards the sudden movement. As it raised its head, the man brought down his axe, cleaving its skull in two.

The commotion drew the attention of the pale creatures. With shrieks of surprise and fury, they rushed towards the axeman. Turning to the five at his front, he charged forward, swinging his axe in the air above his head. A long arm reached from his left and was met by the razor edge of the axeblade; it fell limply to the ground, severed from its owner. The axeman twirled the weapon round to his right as a row of teeth lunged towards his back. The axe sliced through the creature's face, sending the beast's jaw sailing into the empty canopy of the forest.

Two more pale beasts pounced upon their foe, and they used their combined weight to drive him to the ground. Pinning the bare-chested warrior on his back with their powerful limbs, the creatures plunged their fangs towards the man's flesh. The man raised his axe-arm to meet the throats of his attackers, holding the frenzied beasts at bay. His free hand searched the ground for a rock or branch to hit his foes,

but none was forthcoming. As man and beast struggled, the creatures were beginning to force the man's axe-arm downwards. He could not hold out much longer. Soon, they would overpower him.

With a sudden jolt, the creature on his left went limp. It rolled off his body, dislodged by an arrow - trimmed with raven feathers - lodged in its eye. The other wretch threw itself more fully onto the axeman's chest. But without its companion, the pale creature could not contain the strength of its foe. Together they rolled across the forest floor, claw and axeblade locked in a frenetic duel. With a powerful swipe the creature caught the man's chest. Using its momentum, it swung its body around and straightened its arm, hurling him several feet high. As the warrior flew up, he raised the axe above his head. Then he crashed into the creature below, bringing the weapon down with both hands into its belly. With a squeal of pain, its body violently shook. Then it froze.

Stepping out from behind the trees, the greybeard approached the axeman. Offering a hand, he asked, "Are you wounded?" The warrior grinned, grasping the old man's arm and rising to his feet. "Those boys gave me a fair beating. A few cracked ribs, a tear of the flesh here or there. A good warm-up, I'm ready for more!"

"You will get your desire for battle fulfilled soon, Ecgbert, of that I have no doubt," chuckled the greybeard. "But we must not linger here any longer. Huginn," the raven cloaked man looked to attention, "lead us forth once more." Like a coiled spring Huginn leapt to his feet and, with bow and arrow in hand, started towards the river, the rest of the Company following close behind.

It was not long before they reached the banks of the river. Before them lay an emerald grassy verge which gave way to deep waters some sixty yards wide. A small jetty, to which a weathered rowing boat was tied, jutted into the river. The skiff was fitted with three benches and six oars. In twos the men took their positions, with the old warrior taking hold of the tiller. The sheer strength of the current left the crew hard pressed to stay on course. Arriving at the other side without incident, much to the Company's relief, they disembarked onto a landing stage similar to the one they had left. As the young man with the scarred cheek made his way off the quayside, the greybeard addressed him.

"Sister-son, stay here with the boat. Have it ready for our return. We will need to depart with haste."

With a sigh, the beardless youth turned back to the boat, while the rest of the Company made their way northwards towards their prize. Once more the Huginn man led the way, steering the

Company at a fast pace on a course through the marshes. Running over wet grass and leaping over pools, they managed to traverse the swamp without entering its still, luminescent waters. Not a sound could be heard save the splash of footsteps. The hissing and snarling of the woods had evaporated into an unnatural silence that hovered over the fens.

As they approached the centre of the marsh, they spied a small island within the waters. It was barren of all but the short, yellow grass that marked its surface. The isle gently rose to a raised circle at its midpoint. They could see a fresh hollow plunged into the raised plateau. Above the lip of the crater a large rock, diamond in shape, was releasing white smoke from its body. It gave off an intense heat, disrupting the cold of the dark. Beads of sweat trickled down the necks and backs of the men. It was a furnace.

When they reached the smouldering stone, the greybeard spoke.

“Ecgbert, take your axe to the south of the island. Huginn, march your bow towards the north. Keep a watch on the perimeter. Bryhtwold and Eadmund, get to work. Stay by my side, Alcuin.”

At that, the Company split. The two stocky men, Bryhtwold and Eadmund, went towards the rock. They set their packs on the ground and began emptying their contents. Donning leather gloves and metal masks, they began to assemble a contraption, slotting many mechanical parts together. In a few minutes they had assembled the device.

A great chisel, several feet in length, protruded from its end and was joined near its base by a set of rotating handles. These sat on top of a solid metal block. Eadmund placed the point of the chisel against the rock. He held the instrument in place while Bryhtwold twisted the handles in a circular motion. Each turn increased the tension of the device, as its base began to rise upwards - away from the chisel. With a last twist the steel hammer was fully raised, held to the handles by a tight, thick rope. With a sudden motion Bryhtwold let go. The metal block rammed into the chisel, driving it into the surface of the rock. With a resounding crack the metal struck the stone, driving into its surface by several inches.

As Bryhtwold and Eadmund reset the contraption, Ecgbert and Huginn patrolled the boundaries of the island. The clattering of the hammering device began to attract unwanted attention. Where once there was silence, now a faint hiss could be heard, and the waters of the swamp were shifting. Small ripples started to travel in strange directions.

Huginn was the first to see the cause of the disturbance; a head with eyes dark and green floated noiselessly towards him, lined with rows

of sharp teeth. Its gangly arms and pale torso began to rise gently from the greasy waters. Steadily, it made its way towards him, emerging from the languid pool.

Unlike the creatures of the forest, this pale beast wore armour. Its clothing was not dissimilar to those worn by the greybeard, though they were marked by the emblem of a green snake. Swishing his feathers aside, Huginn notched his bow with a raven feathered arrow and, with a quick draw, aimed at the white creature. With a thwack the arrow hit the wretch's forehead, sending it once more into the waters from whence it came.

As the pale figure was felled, more creatures were rising from the water, drawn towards the sound of the hammering that rang out across the marshes. Some donned war gear emblazoned with the sigil of the snake. Others were dressed in robes of purple and gold, carrying serpent-shaped staffs. A few of the pale creatures were of great size, standing some eighteen feet above the ground. They were accompanied by smaller beasts who crawled on all fours. Some were misshapen abominations, with tentacles and bulbous sores protruding from their backs and necks. As they made their way towards the island, those in the north were met by arrow after arrow. Ecgbert greeted those who reached the southern shore with his axeblade.

Bryhtwold and Eadmund continued to chisel deeper into the rock. The greybeard stood by, unbuckling the pronged stave from his waist. Alcuin dropped to his knees, muddying his red robe. Clasping his hands before him, he began to breathe deep, slow breaths.

“How much longer?” asked the old warrior.

“Two more turns and we will have it open,” answered Bryhtwold.

The greybeard looked to the north. The white creatures were beginning to swarm Huginn, who had been forced to discard his bow in favour of a curved black sword. Leaping between blows, the raven cloaked man performed an elegant dance, carving his foes with ruthless precision. Turning to the south, the old warrior saw Ecgbert. The axeman seemed to have grown in stature. His arms and chest were hairier; he growled like a bear. With forceful strokes he crushed the skulls of the wretches. With a roar he threw himself at two giants, thrusting them beneath the dark green waters. He alone emerged, hurling himself at more pale men.

But the dread horde of wretches kept coming. Several pushed their way past the warriors towards the hammering at the rock. Clunk went the machine, striking once more into the hot stone. Onrushing creatures howled at the sound of the blow and, with manic ferocity, began to converge upon the Company, hurtling towards

their prey with leaps and bounds. But this time the contraption had done its work. The boulder began to crack all along its spine, and with a mighty tear it rent in two. Eadmund and Bryhtwold pulled back just as a crackling white flame exploded up from the rock.

Swirling, it began to rise from the stone, forming an ethereal sphere. It hovered above the hollow, casting a searing light. The warriors stood transfixed by the beauty of the flame, its brightness pushing back the darkness. The pale creatures reeled, falling to the ground. The fire burned their eyes; they only knew the blackness of the valley.

A voice, emanating from the star, began to speak. It blended two pitches within itself: a deep, masculine thunder and a higher, feminine birdsong. The words it spoke were from a strange language, unlike anything spoken in the lands ruled by the greybeard and guarded by the Company of Dawn. But Alcuin, sitting in a state of meditation, began to translate.

“Hail, men from beyond the mountain! The Lord of Stars greets thee. You wander in a land of night. Many have become blind. They have abandoned the ways of your ancestors and have embraced the deepness of the dark. Their punishment is evident: they have become less than men, grasping after shadows. But to you who have remained faithful, I give this great light. May it shine for you where there is only the deepness of the dark. As your forefathers have done before you, receive this gift and rekindle the Hearth. Stay true to my light, for I will come and set the stars in the sky once more.”

With that, the voice ceased. The greybeard raised the pronged stave in his left hand, and the flame drew towards the staff. With a soft movement it slid into the banded points, transforming the stave into a blazing torch. As it did so, the words spoken by the voice materialised on the staff in the runic letters known to the people beyond the mountains. In wonder the old man regarded the dancing brightness of the flaming star. As he held the light, the years of care fell from his face and youthfulness returned to his aged form.

Coming to himself, he looked around. Alcuin had left his trance and was getting to his feet. Eadmund and Byrhtwold had drawn their swords and shields. The white creatures were beginning to stir.

“Everyone, to the boat!” the greybeard cried. Drawing his sword, he sprang towards Ecgbert, followed by the rest of the Company. In the rear came Huginn, darting past the stunned bodies of the white men.

As they reached the southern tip of the island the creatures, shaken from their confusion, began to recover. The flame had left them dazed

and afraid, but now they had become accustomed to its brightness. Rising to their feet, they rushed towards the Company. Huginn, though fleet of foot, could not outrun his doom.

As he hurdled a rising pale form, a tentacle burst from its neck and wrapped around the raven cloaked man’s foot. Twisting in the air, he brought his thin black blade down upon the limb, shearing through the mangled protrusion. As he landed on his back, several pale figures pounced. Huginn was engulfed under a writhing mass that screamed with delight.

The Company did not look back. Onwards they ran, leaping across the sinister pools. Behind them came the horde. From the waters hands reached up to pull the warriors into the depths. Each man felt his heart pounding within him; a blend of fear, resolve and mad delight powered him on. The monsters were gaining on the band; first fell Eadwine. He was dragged back into the crowd by cruel claws lodged in his spine. The second was Byrthold. As he leapt between two mounds of grass a hand reached up from the water and grabbed his ankle. With a mighty effort he broke free of the manacle around his foot. The momentum took him forward and, landing on the verge, he stumbled, tripping into the dark green water. There was much thrashing, then stillness.

The old man - now red-haired and in the prime of youth - with Alcuin and Ecgbert continued on through the swamp. They could see the river ahead of them, the way illuminated by the brightness of the flaming star. Before their destination lay a series of grassy paths, five men abreast, flanked on either side by stagnant water. Along the track they sprinted, with more white creatures rising from pools to try to pull them under. The horde raced on behind them, eager to catch their prey. As they were coming round the final bend in the path, they saw the young man waiting by the boat.

“Push off, Wiglaf!” bellowed the red-haired man. At once, the beardless warrior set to untying the boat from the dock. As what remained of the Company entered the straight before the boat, Ecgbert turned to face the swarm.

“What are you doing!?” cried Alcuin.

“You won’t make it unless I buy you time,” roared Ecgbert.

“But you’ll die!” screamed the sage.

“All that matters is the flame. Go! I will hold them off with what strength is mine.”

The red-haired man and Ecgbert locked eyes. The old warrior gave a nod. Then, grabbing Alcuin by his cloak, ran onwards. Brandishing his axe, he began to chant:

“As strength weakens, courage must be stronger; as limbs fail, the heart stouter; as life fades, the spirit sterner.” With a howl, Ecgbert

plunged into the oncoming storm crying "For glory! For the flame!" He held the tide for a moment as the greybeard and Alcuin sped towards the skiff. Yet even his strength could not defy fate. As the axe came down upon a disfigured creature the blade splintered in two. Throwing the shaft away, Ecgbert threw his fists into the wretches. He was dragged to the floor by the weight of the crowd, roaring and cursing as he fell.

Though Ecgbert Bearson, son of Hraki, Slayer of Ritho the Giant had fallen, he had halted the swarm's advance. Thirty yards now separated them from the greybeard and the sage, who were themselves halfway to the boat. Pushing his tree-like legs as hard as they would go, the old red-haired warrior barrelled towards the dock, Alcuin in tow. But the horde was gaining on them, those on all fours galloping towards the beleaguered men.

Ahead of them was Wiglaf, who had begun to row into the river. As he reached the edge, the red-haired man sprung forward, leaping high into the air. With a thud he landed in the stern. He turned to see Alcuin about to leap from the dock. The old man watched in horror as the priest's robe was caught by vicious hands. A hooked fish, Alcuin was reeled back onto the bank. He screamed as white faces bit into his flesh. The old warrior stared on as his comrade's guts spilled into the river.

As several wretches feasted on the sage's corpse, others flung themselves with wild abandon after the boat. Wiglaf shouted to his leader.

"What are your orders, my lord?"

"Take the tiller sister-son. Follow the stream down river towards the mountain."

"But my lord, the tunnel is treacherous."

"Do as I say! In that cavern we may hope to lose our pursuers."

"But at what cost?" murmured Wiglaf, as he steered the boat due east. The river was strong, its waters plunging forward with reckless abandon. The skiff surged forth with the current. It wheeled round the bending river. White creatures chased them along the bank, hurling themselves towards the boat with a wild rage. Most could not catch the hurtling craft. Those who came close to the boat lost their limbs to the greybeard's sword. Onwards they sped towards the mountain. As they approached the cliff face the river straightened as it sped into the mouth of a high but narrow tunnel, no more than nine yards wide and twenty tall. Like an arrow the vessel shot through the entrance, leaving the valley behind. No pale men dared to follow.

Under the mountain they raced, following the perfectly straight course of the tunnel. The cavern was as black as pitch; only the star-flame revealed the way, its rays illuminating the rough

bricks of the passageway's walls. After several minutes the river suddenly deepened, the tunnel floor descending at a rapid incline, slowing the flow of the stream down to a gentle speed.

As the two survivors followed the course of the river, they began to hear a periodic rumbling. At first faint, the sound became louder the further they drew towards the mountain's core. It was deep and beautiful. Soon it was apparent that its source was close at hand. As the pair drifted along the river, a smooth, low voice spoke in the darkness.

"Seven there were who entered the vale; now only two remain. Where are they, Thiodolf son of Theodoric? For what cause will they no longer feel the warmth of a woman? Warrior after warrior has made this journey, and yet the Light continues to fade. All this pain for nought.

"This is my age, the time of the Dark. I am the ruler of this land. My reign will have no end. The Lord of Stars has been banished. The endless night has come, and all things will turn to black. Many are my servants; they wear my sigil in battle. More will join, until all the world is under my domain. Even the Lord of Stars will be dragged into my domain, at the end of all things. This doom has been foretold. It was woven in the weave of the three sisters."

Unmoved, the greybeard and Wiglaf carried on. Ahead, the waters began to churn.

"Why prolong the suffering? Is there anything to be gained? Let go. Surrender the flame. Embrace the darkness and be freed from your chains. Struggle will cease. I shall grant you rest."

"You lie," hissed Thiodolf, lifting the torch with his left hand. Before the skiff the waters started to bubble. The boat began to violently rock, Wiglaf grabbing the sides of the craft to stay steady. The tunnel started to shake. The waters were parting. A serpent's head, twice the size of a man, rose from the depths. Its long neck rose through the foam until the dark green scales of its gigantic face towered over the boat. Wiglaf gasped; Thiodolf maintained his steely gaze. The humongous snake turned an emerald eye towards the red-haired man.

"Will he ever come? How much misery must your children endure before you see that the world has turned? That the Age of Light will not return? Give up the fire, Thiodolf."

Thiodolf stood frozen. He stared into the great snake's eye. He tried to move his arm, but his muscles would not respond. He attempted to speak, but his lips could not move. Seized as he was, the fingers on the torch began to relax. The stave started to slip towards the waters.

Thiodolf felt a hand clasp around his loosening grip.

"Remember yourself, my Lord. Look at the inscription!"

At the voice's command, Thiodolf gazed down at the words on the torch.

Receive this gift and rekindle the Hearth. Stay true to my light, for I will come and set the stars in the sky once more.

With a sudden flush of power, he was aware of himself once more. He clasped the torch tightly; Wiglaf let go. Drawing his sword, he addressed the brute before him.

"The Fates may have doomed the crashing of the world. Perhaps the flame will perish and all will be shrouded in darkness. So be it! With what strength is left in me, I will fight for the Hearth. I will fight for the Dawn. Never let it be said that Thiodolf, son of Theodoric, gave up the life of the Stars for the death of the Dark."

With these words, the mighty Thiodolf leapt towards the great serpent, blade pointed at the foe of all men. In a swift motion, the snake's coils burst from the river, slamming the warrior against the tunnel wall. Landing prone in the boat, he rolled onto his back just as the serpent's jaws came rushing down towards him. Rolling forward, he jumped onto the stern, narrowly avoiding the monster's jaws... exposing the creature's neck.

Thiodolf jumped onto his assailant. He was greeted by the foul stench of its slime ridden body. Grappling with the beast's immense power, he began to strike with his sword, but the creature's scales repelled the blows. Roaring in wrath, the serpent's coils started to wrap around the large man's waist. Tightening, the loops wrenched him free. Thiodolf struggled, bringing his sword down upon the trunk around him. It had no effect; he could not cut the snake's scales. As the monster crushed his bones, the breath escaped his lungs. Pain shot through his body and the edges of his vision began fading into blackness.

Running along the skiff, Wiglaf soared from the prow. He arced towards the creature's face. In a downwards motion, he thrust his blade into the serpent's left eye. Steel penetrated deep into the soft globe, bursting the organ. The snake roared in pain and loosened its stranglehold on Thiodolf, who slumped onto the boat. The serpent tossed its head around, with Wiglaf clinging to the blade lodged in its skull. From side to side he flew, smashing against the roof of the tunnel. With a sudden thrash the beast dove down into the water, arising once more without the beardless Wiglaf. Before him was Thiodolf, poised on one knee. He looked into the snake's eyes.

"Devourer of worlds! If you want the flame, come and get it!"

With jaw open wide, the serpent's head hurtled down. At the same moment, Thiodolf stood up and raised the torch. He thrust the flame within the beast's maw. The snake bit

down, wrenching Thiodolf's arm clean off. Blood spurted forth and, with a cry, the old warrior fell back in pain. The serpent, with a great gulp, consumed the torch, then hovered over the wounded man as a ball of light descended inside of its body.

A horrible laughter erupted from the serpent that bounced off the walls of the tunnel in a dreadful cacophony. Thiodolf moaned. But the white ball was growing inside the serpent, spreading throughout its body. Smoke started to pour from its mouth. Laughter turned to screams. Writhing in agony, the snake repeatedly plunged itself into the water. Flames leapt from the monster's nostrils and eye sockets, teeth and scales shot out. The serpent rose straight out of the river tall and stiff. Then it exploded.

Thereafter, there was stillness; only the gentle lapping of the waters could be heard. The stench of guts littered the tunnel. Floating above the dark green waters was the torch, still held by Thiodolf's severed arm.

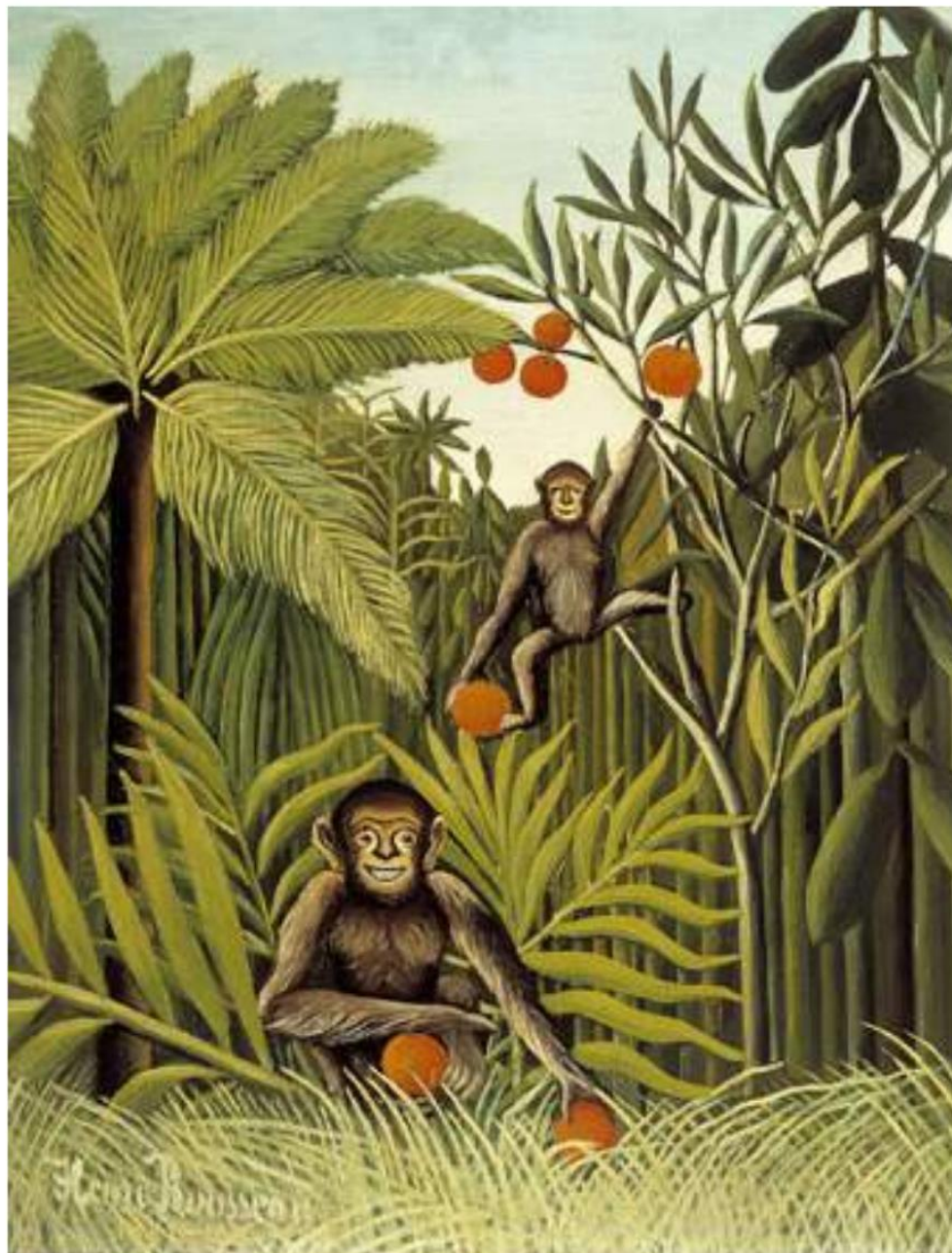
As the serpent's corpse sank beneath the current, Wiglaf surfaced. Spluttering, he pulled himself towards the skiff. He saw Thiodolf lying still. Next to him floated the torch, held in place by the severed arm. A small white flame flickered at its summit.

Closing his master's eyes, Wiglaf sat himself at the tiller. Grabbing the torch in his right hand, he lifted the star to light the way ahead. He steered the boat forward, alone in the dark.



# Facts Concerning the Late Arthur Jermyn and His Family

H P Lovecraft



LIFE is a hideous thing, and from the background behind what we know of it peer daemonic hints of truth which make it sometimes a thousandfold more hideous. Science, already oppressive with its shocking revelations, will perhaps be the ultimate exterminator of our human species—if separate species we be—for its reserve of unguessed horrors could never be borne by mortal brains if loosed upon the world. If we knew what we are, we should do as Sir Arthur Jermyn did; and Arthur Jermyn soaked himself in oil and set fire to his clothing one night. No one placed the charred fragments in an urn or set a memorial to him who had been; for certain papers and a certain boxed object were found which made men wish to forget. Some who knew him do not admit that he ever existed.

Arthur Jermyn went out on the moor and burned himself after seeing the boxed object which had come from Africa. It was this object, and not his peculiar personal appearance, which made him end his life. Many would have disliked to live if possessed of the peculiar features of Arthur Jermyn, but he had been a poet and scholar and had not minded. Learning was in his blood, for his great-grandfather, Sir Robert Jermyn, Bt., had been an anthropologist of note, whilst his great-great-grandfather, Sir Wade Jermyn, was one of the earliest explorers of the Congo region, and had written eruditely of its tribes, animals, and supposed antiquities. Indeed, old Sir Wade had possessed an intellectual zeal amounting almost to a mania; his bizarre conjectures on a prehistoric white Congolese civilisation earning him much ridicule when his book, *Observation on the Several Parts of Africa*, was published. In 1765 this fearless explorer had been placed in a madhouse at Huntingdon.

Madness was in all the Jermyns, and people were glad there were not many of them. The line put forth no branches, and Arthur was the last of it. If he had not been, one can not say what he would have done when the object came. The Jermyns never seemed to look quite right—something was amiss, though Arthur was the worst, and the old family portraits in Jermyn House showed fine faces enough before Sir Wade's time. Certainly, the madness began with Sir Wade, whose wild stories of Africa were at once the delight and terror of his few friends. It showed in his collection of trophies and specimens, which were not such as a normal man would accumulate and preserve, and appeared strikingly in the Oriental seclusion in which he kept his wife. The latter, he had said, was the daughter of a

Portuguese trader whom he had met in Africa; and did not like English ways. She, with an infant son born in Africa, had accompanied him back from the second and longest of his trips, and had gone with him on the third and last, never returning. No one had ever seen her closely, not even the servants; for her disposition had been violent and singular. During her brief stay at Jermyn House she occupied a remote wing, and was waited on by her husband alone. Sir Wade was, indeed, most peculiar in his solicitude for his family; for when he returned to Africa he would permit no one to care for his young son save a loathsome black woman from Guinea. Upon coming back, after the death of Lady Jermyn, he himself assumed complete care of the boy.

But it was the talk of Sir Wade, especially when in his cups, which chiefly led his friends to deem him mad. In a rational age like the eighteenth century it was unwise for a man of learning to talk about wild sights and strange scenes under a Congo moon; of the gigantic walls and pillars of a forgotten city, crumbling and vine-grown, and of damp, silent, stone steps leading interminably down into the darkness of abysmal treasure-vaults and inconceivable catacombs. Especially was it unwise to rave of the living things that might haunt such a place; of creatures half of the jungle and half of the impiously aged city—fabulous creatures which even a Pliny might describe with scepticism; things that might have sprung up after the great apes had overrun the dying city with the walls and the pillars, the vaults and the weird carvings. Yet after he came home for the last time Sir Wade would speak of such matters with a shudderingly uncanny zest, mostly after his third glass at the Knight's Head; boasting of what he had found in the jungle and of how he had dwelt among terrible ruins known only to him. And finally he had spoken of the living things in such a manner that he was taken to the madhouse. He had shown little regret when shut into the barred room at Huntingdon, for his mind moved curiously. Ever since his son had commenced to grow out of infancy, he had liked his home less and less, till at last he had seemed to dread it. The Knight's Head had been his headquarters, and when he was confined he expressed some vague gratitude as if for protection. Three years later he died.

Wade Jermyn's son Philip was a highly peculiar person. Despite a strong physical resemblance to his father, his appearance and conduct were in many particulars so coarse that he was universally shunned. Though he did not

inherit the madness which was feared by some, he was densely stupid and given to brief periods of uncontrollable violence. In frame he was small, but intensely powerful, and was of incredible agility. Twelve years after succeeding to his title he married the daughter of his gamekeeper, a person said to be of gypsy extraction, but before his son was born joined the navy as a common sailor, completing the general disgust which his habits and misalliance had begun. After the close of the American war he was heard of as sailor on a merchantman in the African trade, having a kind of reputation for feats of strength and climbing, but finally disappearing one night as his ship lay off the Congo coast.

In the son of Sir Philip Jermyn the now accepted family peculiarity took a strange and fatal turn. Tall and fairly handsome, with a sort of weird Eastern grace despite certain slight oddities of proportion, Robert Jermyn began life as a scholar and investigator. It was he who first studied scientifically the vast collection of relics which his mad grandfather had brought from Africa, and who made the family name as celebrated in ethnology as in exploration. In 1815 Sir Robert married a daughter of the seventh Viscount Brightholme and was subsequently blessed with three children, the eldest and youngest of whom were never publicly seen on account of deformities in mind and body. Saddened by these family misfortunes, the scientist sought relief in work, and made two long expeditions in the interior of Africa. In 1849 his second son, Nevil, a singularly repellent person who seemed to combine the surliness of Philip Jermyn with the hauteur of the Brightholmes, ran away with a vulgar dancer, but was pardoned upon his return in the following year. He came back to Jermyn House a widower with an infant son, Alfred, who was one day to be the father of Arthur Jermyn.

Friends said that it was this series of griefs which unhinged the mind of Sir Robert Jermyn, yet it was probably merely a bit of African folklore which caused the disaster. The elderly scholar had been collecting legends of the Onga tribes near the field of his grandfather's and his own explorations, hoping in some way to account for Sir Wade's wild tales of a lost city peopled by strange hybrid creatures. A certain consistency in the strange papers of his ancestor suggested that the madman's imagination might have been stimulated by native myths. On October 19, 1852, the explorer Samuel Seaton called at Jermyn House with a manuscript of notes collected among the Ongas, believing that certain legends of a gray

city of white apes ruled by a white god might prove valuable to the ethnologist. In his conversation he probably supplied many additional details; the nature of which will never be known, since a hideous series of tragedies suddenly burst into being. When Sir Robert Jermyn emerged from his library he left behind the strangled corpse of the explorer, and before he could be restrained, had put an end to all three of his children; the two who were never seen, and the son who had run away. Nevil Jermyn died in the successful defence of his own two-year-old son, who had apparently been included in the old man's madly murderous scheme. Sir Robert himself, after repeated attempts at suicide and a stubborn refusal to utter an articulate sound, died of apoplexy in the second year of his confinement.

Sir Alfred Jermyn was a baronet before his fourth birthday, but his tastes never matched his title. At twenty he had joined a band of music-hall performers, and at thirty-six had deserted his wife and child to travel with an itinerant American circus. His end was very revolting. Among the animals in the exhibition with which he travelled was a huge bull gorilla of lighter colour than the average; a surprisingly tractable beast of much popularity with the performers. With this gorilla Alfred Jermyn was singularly fascinated, and on many occasions the two would eye each other for long periods through the intervening bars. Eventually Jermyn asked and obtained permission to train the animal, astonishing audiences and fellow performers alike with his success. One morning in Chicago, as the gorilla and Alfred Jermyn were rehearsing an exceedingly clever boxing match, the former delivered a blow of more than the usual force, hurting both the body and the dignity of the amateur trainer. Of what followed, members of "The Greatest Show On Earth" do not like to speak. They did not expect to hear Sir Alfred Jermyn emit a shrill, inhuman scream, or to see him seize his clumsy antagonist with both hands, dash it to the floor of the cage, and bite fiendishly at its hairy throat. The gorilla was off its guard, but not for long, and before anything could be done by the regular trainer, the body which had belonged to a baronet was past recognition.

ARTHUR Jermyn was the son of Sir Alfred Jermyn and a music-hall singer of unknown origin. When the husband and father deserted his family, the mother took the child to Jermyn House; where there was none left to object to her presence. She was not without notions of what a nobleman's dignity should be, and saw to it that



her son received the best education which limited money could provide. The family resources were now sadly slender, and Jermyn House had fallen into woeful disrepair, but young Arthur loved the old edifice and all its contents. He was not like any other Jermyn who had ever lived, for he was a poet and a dreamer. Some of the neighbouring families who had heard tales of old Sir Wade Jermyn's unseen Portuguese wife declared that her Latin blood must be showing itself; but most persons merely sneered at his sensitiveness to beauty, attributing it to his music-hall mother, who was socially unrecognised. The poetic delicacy of Arthur Jermyn was the more remarkable because of his uncouth personal appearance. Most of the Jermyns had possessed a subtly odd and repellent cast, but Arthur's case was very striking. It is hard to say just what he resembled, but his expression, his facial angle, and the length of his arms gave a thrill of repulsion to those who met him for the first time.

It was the mind and character of Arthur Jermyn which atoned for his aspect. Gifted and learned, he took highest honours at Oxford and seemed likely to redeem the intellectual fame of his family. Though of poetic rather than scientific temperament, he planned to continue the work of his forefathers in African ethnology and antiquities, utilising the truly wonderful though strange collection of Sir Wade. With his fanciful mind he thought often of the prehistoric civilisation in which the mad explorer had so implicitly believed, and would weave tale after tale about the silent jungle city mentioned in the latter's wilder notes and paragraphs. For the nebulous utterances concerning a nameless, unsuspected race of jungle hybrids he had a peculiar feeling of mingled terror and attraction, speculating on the possible basis of such a fancy, and seeking to obtain light among the more recent data gleaned by his great-grandfather and Samuel Seaton amongst the Ongas.

In 1911, after the death of his mother, Sir Arthur Jermyn determined to pursue his investigations to the utmost extent. Selling a portion of his estate to obtain the requisite money, he outfitted an expedition and sailed for the Congo. Arranging with the Belgian authorities for a party of guides, he spent a year in the Onga and Kahn country, finding data beyond the highest of his expectations. Among the Kaliris was an aged chief called Mwanu, who possessed not only a highly retentive memory, but a singular degree of intelligence and interest in old legends. This ancient confirmed every tale which Jermyn had

heard, adding his own account of the stone city and the white apes as it had been told to him.

According to Mwanu, the gray city and the hybrid creatures were no more, having been annihilated by the warlike N'bangus many years ago. This tribe, after destroying most of the edifices and killing the live beings, had carried off the stuffed goddess which had been the object of their quest; the white ape-goddess which the strange beings worshipped, and which was held by Congo tradition to be the form of one who had reigned as a princess among these beings. Just what the white apelike creatures could have been, Mwanu had no idea, but he thought they were the builders of the ruined city. Jermyn could form no conjecture, but by close questioning obtained a very picturesque legend of the stuffed goddess.

The ape-princess, it was said, became the consort of a great white god who had come out of the West. For a long time they had reigned over the city together, but when they had a son, all three went away. Later the god and princess had returned, and upon the death of the princess her divine husband had mummified the body and enshrined it in a vast house of stone, where it was worshipped. Then he departed alone. The legend here seemed to present three variants. According to one story, nothing further happened save that the stuffed goddess became a symbol of supremacy for whatever tribe might possess it. It was for this reason that the N'bangus carried it off. A second story told of a god's return and death at the feet of his enshrined wife. A third told of the return of the son, grown to manhood—or apehood or godhood, as the case might be—yet unconscious of his identity. Surely the imaginative blacks had made the most of whatever events might lie behind the extravagant legendry.

Of the reality of the jungle city described by old Sir Wade, Arthur Jermyn had no further doubt; and was hardly astonished when early in 1912 he came upon what was left of it. Its size must have been exaggerated, yet the stones lying about proved that it was no mere Negro village. Unfortunately no carvings could be found, and the small size of the expedition prevented operations toward clearing the one visible passageway that seemed to lead down into the system of vaults which Sir Wade had mentioned. The white apes and the stuffed goddess were discussed with all the native chiefs of the region, but it remained for a European to improve on the data offered by old Mwanu. M. Verhaeren, Belgian agent at a trading-post on the Congo, believed that he could not only locate but obtain the stuffed goddess, of which he

had vaguely heard; since the once mighty N'bangus were now the submissive servants of King Albert's government, and with but little persuasion could be induced to part with the gruesome deity they had carried off. When Jermyn sailed for England, therefore, it was with the exultant probability that he would within a few months receive a priceless ethnological relic confirming the wildest of his great-great-great-grandfather's narratives—that is, the wildest which he had ever heard. Countrymen near Jermyn House had perhaps heard wilder tales handed down from ancestors who had listened to Sir Wade around the tables of the Knight's Head.

Arthur Jermyn waited very patiently for the expected box from M. Verhaeren, meanwhile studying with increased diligence the manuscripts left by his mad ancestor. He began to feel closely akin to Sir Wade, and to seek relics of the latter's personal life in England as well as of his African exploits. Oral accounts of the mysterious and secluded wife had been numerous, but no tangible relic of her stay at Jermyn House remained. Jermyn wondered what circumstance had prompted or permitted such an effacement, and decided that the husband's insanity was the prime cause. His great-great-great-grandmother, he recalled, was said to have been the daughter of a Portuguese trader in Africa. No doubt her practical heritage and superficial knowledge of the Dark Continent had caused her to flout Sir Wade's tales of the interior, a thing which such a man would not be likely to forgive. She had died in Africa, perhaps dragged thither by a husband determined to prove what he had told. But as Jermyn indulged in these reflections he could not but smile at their futility, a century and a half after the death of both his strange progenitors.

In June, 1913, a letter arrived from M. Verhaeren, telling of the finding of the stuffed goddess. It was, the Belgian averred, a most extraordinary object; an object quite beyond the power of a layman to classify. Whether it was human or simian only a scientist could determine, and the process of determination would be greatly hampered by its imperfect condition. Time and the Congo climate are not kind to mummies; especially when their preparation is as amateurish as seemed to be the case here. Around the creature's neck had been found a golden chain bearing an empty locket on which were armorial designs; no doubt some hapless traveller's keepsake, taken by the N'bangus and hung upon the goddess as a charm. In commenting on the contour of the mummy's face, M. Verhaeren

suggested a whimsical comparison; or rather, expressed a humorous wonder just how it would strike his corespondent, but was too much interested scientifically to waste many words in levity. The stuffed goddess, he wrote, would arrive duly packed about a month after receipt of the letter.

The boxed object was delivered at Jermyn House on the afternoon of August 3, 1913, being conveyed immediately to the large chamber which housed the collection of African specimens as arranged by Sir Robert and Arthur. What ensued can best be gathered from the tales of servants and from things and papers later examined. Of the various tales, that of aged Soames, the family butler, is most ample and coherent. According to this trustworthy man, Sir Arthur Jermyn dismissed everyone from the room before opening the box, though the instant sound of hammer and chisel showed that he did not delay the operation. Nothing was heard for some time; just how long Soames cannot exactly estimate, but it was certainly less than a quarter of an hour later that the horrible scream, undoubtedly in Jermyn's voice, was heard. Immediately afterward Jermyn emerged from the room, rushing frantically toward the front of the house as if pursued by some hideous enemy. The expression on his face, a face ghastly enough in repose, was beyond description. When near the front door he seemed to think of something, and turned back in his flight, finally disappearing down the stairs to the cellar. The servants were utterly dumbfounded, and watched at the head of the stairs, but their master did not return. A smell of oil was all that came up from the regions below. After dark a rattling was heard at the door leading from the cellar into the courtyard; and a stable-boy saw Arthur Jermyn, glistening from head to foot with oil and redolent of that fluid, steal furtively out and vanish on the black moor surrounding the house. Then, in an exaltation of supreme horror, everyone saw the end. A spark appeared on the moor, a flame arose, and a pillar of human fire reached to the heavens. The house of Jermyn no longer existed.

The reason why Arthur Jermyn's charred fragments were not collected and buried lies in what was found afterward, principally the thing in the box. The stuffed goddess was a nauseous sight, withered and eaten away, but it was clearly a mummified white ape of some unknown species, less hairy than any recorded variety, and infinitely nearer mankind—quite shockingly so. Detailed description would be rather unpleasant, but two

salient particulars must be told, for they fit in revoltingly with certain notes of Sir Wade Jermyn's African expeditions and with the Congolese legends of the white god and the ape-princess. The two particulars in question are these: the arms on the golden locket about the creature's neck were the Jermyn arms, and the jocose suggestion of M. Verhaeren about certain

resemblance as connected with the shrivelled face applied with vivid, ghastly, and unnatural horror to none other than the sensitive Arthur Jermyn, great-great-great-grandson of Sir Wade Jermyn and an unknown wife. Members of the Royal Anthropological Institute burned the thing and threw the locket into a well, and some of them do not admit that Arthur Jermyn ever existed.



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# The Last Fight of the Revenge

Sir Walter Raleigh



The Lord Thomas Howard, with six of her Majesty's ships, six victuallers of London, the bark *Raleigh* and two or three pinnaces riding at anchor near unto Flores, one of the westerly islands of the Azores, the last of August in the afternoon, had intelligence by one Captain Middleton, of the approach of the Spanish armada. Which Middleton, being in a very good sailer, had kept them company three days before, of good purpose, both to discover their forces the more, as also to give advice to my Lord Thomas of their approach. He had no sooner delivered the news but the fleet was in sight: many of our ships' companies were on shore in the island; some providing ballast for their ships; others filling of water and refreshing themselves from the land with such things as they could either for money, or by force recover. By reason whereof, our ships being all pestered and rummaging, everything [was] out of order [and] very light for want of ballast, and that which was most to our disadvantage, the one-half part of the men of every ship sick and utterly unserviceable. For in the *Revenge* there were ninety diseased: in the *Bonaventure*, not so many in health as could handle her main sail. For had not twenty men been taken out of a bark of Sir George Carey's, his being commanded to be sunk, and those appointed to her, she had hardly ever recovered England. The rest for the most part, were in little better state. The names of her Majesty's ships were these as followeth: the *Defiance*, which was admiral, the *Revenge* vice-admiral, the *Bonaventure* commanded by Captain Cross, the *Lion* by George Fenner, the *Foresight* by Mr Thomas Vavasour, and the *Crane* by Duffield. The *Foresight* and the *Crane* being but small ships, only the other were of the middle size; the rest, besides the bark *Raleigh* commanded by Captain Thin, were victuallers, and of small force or none. The Spanish fleet, having shrouded their approach by reason of the island, were now so soon at hand, as our ships had scarce time to weigh in their anchors, but some of them were driven to let slip their cables and set sail. Sir Richard Grenville was the last weighed, to recover the men that were upon the island, which otherwise had been lost. The Lord Thomas with the rest very hardly recovered the wind, which Sir Richard Grenville not being able to do, was persuaded by the master and others to cut his main sail and cast about, and to trust to the sailing of his ship: for the squadron of Seville were on his weather bow. But Sir Richard utterly refused to turn from the enemy, alleging that he would rather choose to die, than to dishonour himself, his country and her Majesty's

ship, persuading his company that he would pass through the two squadrons, in despite of them: and enforce those of Seville to give him way. Which he performed upon divers of the foremost, who, as the mariners term it, sprang their luff and fell under the lee of the *Revenge*. But the other course had been the better, and might right well have been answered in so great an impossibility of prevailing. Notwithstanding out of the greatness of his mind, he could not be persuaded. In the meanwhile as he attended those which were nearest him, the great *San Philip* being in the wind of him, and coming towards him, becalmed his sails in such sort, as the ship could neither make way nor feel the helm: so huge and high charged was the Spanish ship, being of a thousand and five hundred tons, who after laid the *Revenge* aboard. When he was thus bereft of his sails, the ships that were under his lee luffing up also laid him aboard: of which the next was the *Admiral of the Biscaines*, a very mighty and puissant ship commanded by Brittan Dona. The said *Philip* carried three tier of ordnance on a side, and eleven pieces in every tier. She shot eight forth right out of her chase, besides those of her stern ports.

After the *Revenge* was entangled with this *Philip*, four other boarded her; two on her larboard, and two on her starboard. The fight thus beginning at three of the clock in the afternoon, continued very terrible all that evening. But the great *San Philip* having received the lower tier of the *Revenge*, discharged with cross-bar shot, shifted herself with all diligence from her sides, utterly misliking her first entertainment. Some say that the ship foundered, but we cannot report it for truth, unless we were assured. The Spanish ships were filled with companies of soldiers, in some two hundred besides the mariners, in some five, in others eight hundred. In ours there were none at all, besides the mariners, but the servants of the commanders and some few voluntary gentlemen only. After many interchanged volleys of great ordnance, and small shot, the Spaniards deliberated to enter the *Revenge*, and made divers attempts, hoping to force her by the multitudes of their armed soldiers and musketeers, but were still repulsed again and again, and at all times beaten back into their own ships, or into the seas. In the beginning of the fight, the *George Noble* of London, having received some shot through her by the armados, fell under the lee of the *Revenge*, and asked Sir Richard what he would command him, being but one of the victuallers and of small force. Sir Richard bid him save himself, and leave him to his fortune. After the fight had

thus without intermission continued while the day lasted and some hours of the night, many of our men were slain and hurt, and one of the great galleons of the armada and the *Admiral of the Hulks* both sunk, and in many other of the Spanish ships great slaughter was made. Some write that Sir Richard was very dangerously hurt almost in the beginning of the fight, and lay speechless for a time ere he recovered. But two of the *Revenge's* own company, brought home in a ship of Lima from the islands, examined by some of the Lords and others, affirmed that he was never so wounded as that he forsook the upper deck, till an hour before midnight; and then being shot into the body with a musket as he was a dressing, was again shot into the head, and withal his chirurgeon wounded to death. This agreeth also with an examination, taken by Sir Francis Godolphin, of four other mariners of the same ship being returned, which examination, the said Sir Francis sent unto Master William Killigrew, of her Majesty's privy chamber.

But to return to the fight, the Spanish ships which attempted to board the *Revenge*, as they were wounded and beaten off, so always others came in their places, she having never less than two mighty galleons by her sides, and aboard her. So that ere the morning, from three of the clock the day before, there had fifteen several armados assailed her; and all so ill approved for their entertainment, as they were by the break of day, far more willing to hearken to a composition, than hastily to make any more assaults or entries. But as the day increased, so our men decreased: and as the light grew more and more, by so much more grew our discomforts. For none appeared in sight but enemies, saving one small ship called the *Pilgrim*, commanded by Jacob Whiddon, who hovered all night to see the success: but in the morning bearing with the *Revenge*, was hunted like a hare amongst many ravenous hounds, but escaped.

All the powder of the *Revenge* to the last barrel was now spent, all her pikes broken, forty of her best men slain, and the most part of the rest hurt. In the beginning of the fight she had but one hundred free from sickness, and fourscore and ten sick, laid in hold upon the ballast: a small troop to man such a ship, and a weak garrison to resist so mighty an army. By those hundred all was sustained, the volleys, boardings and enterings of fifteen ships of war, besides those which beat her at large. On the contrary, the Spanish were always supplied with soldiers brought from every squadron: all manner of arms and powder at will. Unto ours there remained no comfort at all, no hope, no supply

either of ships, men or weapons; the masts all beaten overboard, all her tackle cut asunder, her upper work altogether razed, and in effect evened she was with the water, but the very foundation or bottom of a ship, nothing being left overhead either for flight or defence. Sir Richard finding himself in this distress, and unable any longer to make resistance, having endured in this fifteen hours' fight, the assault of fifteen several armados, all by turns aboard him, and by estimation eight hundred shot of great artillery, besides many assaults and entries; and that himself and the ship must needs be possessed by the enemy, who were now all cast in a ring round about him; the *Revenge* not able to move one way or other, but as she was moved with the waves and billows of the sea; commanded the master gunner, whom he knew to be a most resolute man, to split and sink the ship; that thereby nothing might remain of glory or victory to the Spaniards: seeing in so many hours' fight, and with so great a navy they were not able to take her, having had fifteen hours' time, fifteen thousand men, and fifty and three sail of men-of-war to perform it withal. And persuaded the company, or as many as he could induce, to yield themselves unto God, and to the mercy of none else; but, as they had like valiant resolute men repulsed so many enemies, they should not now shorten the honour of their nation by prolonging their own lives for a few hours or a few days. The master gunner readily condescended and divers others; but the captain and the master were of another opinion, and besought Sir Richard to have care of them: alleging that the Spaniards would be as ready to entertain a composition, as they were willing to offer the same: and that there being divers sufficient and valiant men yet living, and whose wounds were not mortal, they might do their country and prince acceptable service hereafter. And (that where Sir Richard had alleged that the Spaniards should never glory to have taken one ship of her Majesty's, seeing that they had so long and so notably defended themselves) they answered, that the ship had six foot water in hold, three shot under water, which were so weakly stopped, as with the first working of the sea, she must needs sink, and was besides so crushed and bruised, as she could never be removed out of the place.

And as the matter was thus in dispute, and Sir Richard refusing to hearken to any of those reasons: the master of the *Revenge* (while the captain won unto him the greater party) was conveyed aboard the *General Don Alfonso Bassan*.

# Featured Artist Ruxandra from the Classical Odyssey





**Tell us a little bit about yourself.** I grew up in Romania, and I currently live in Denmark together with my husband. My professional background is Geography-Geoscience so my day-to-day work revolves mostly around research. I have always loved art but I never studied it in a formal environment. I try to dedicate my free time to studying Classical arts, especially focusing on the Russian Academic approach. Since I was a small, I remember looking through Russian art albums of the greatest painters of the late 19th and early 20th century. This has greatly impacted my inner visual world. I feel like it is easier for me to relate to the logic of the Russian method.

**What makes the Russian method so relatable to you?** The Russian academic method attracted me because of the great artists such as Repin, Levitan,

Serov. I perceived the Russian style to be very mature and monumental even children's book illustrations looked very convincing and well done. It is a conservative method, now taught at the Imperial Academy of Art in Saint Petersburg. It is rooted in the old European tradition, focusing on 'constructing' the figure: the artists start by learning how to draw basic geometric shapes (3D) from different angles, and how they respond to light, which serves as a foundation for everything else. It focuses on learning and visualising anatomy in space so that when you draw the subject, you combine your already acquired knowledge with observation- you 'construct' the figure. I am in no way an expert, but by learning about this method I felt like I had a clear, understandable learning path ahead.



**What do you find so fascinating about horses?**

I would probably be capable of carrying a never-ending conversation on this topic. There is a saying that history was made from the saddle of a horse. This is something very natural to me, I did not have to 'grow into it'- in fact, the word 'horse' (in Romanian) was the third word I ever uttered. When I look at a beautiful Arabian or an Akhal-teke horse I can't help but feel they exist on this Earth to remind us of perfection.

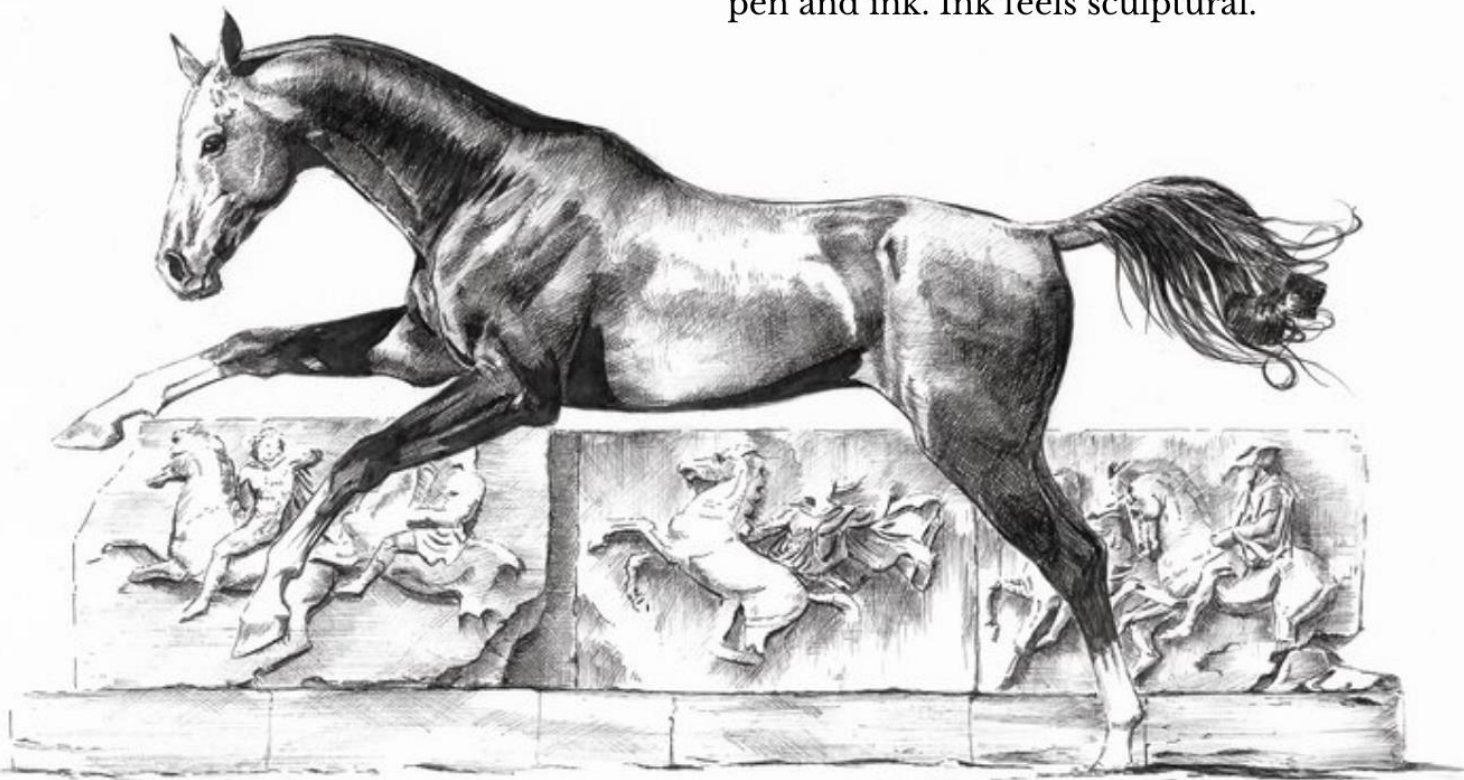
They are a very difficult subject to draw and paint; to do so, one requires quite a bit of practice and spending time around them. I feel like horses ennoble any composition; they can symbolise almost everything aspirational and beautiful- glory, power, elegance, wisdom. In a poetic way, I feel like the universal aspirations of humanity converged into one beautiful Mediterranean legend, giving the horse the wings it deserves.

One of the most beautiful words ever written about the horse are from the Bible, in Job 39:19-25

**What attracts you to ink and watercolour?**

I chose watercolours for two main reasons: one is very pragmatic, the other purely aesthetic. I wanted to be able to paint in a medium that would require little preparation, cleaning, and space to set it up- I wanted to have something within reach, so that once I was done with my work and daily responsibilities, I could quickly start a project. Aesthetically, I always loved the effects one can obtain through the process of glazing ceramic pottery (I have collected ceramic pieces since probably 5th grade!). Watercolours seemed to produce the same effect, which was so appealing to me.

Ink is very special - it is a medium I am grateful to have had the inspiration to choose early in my study journey. It helped me learn much faster because it forced me to commit to every mark I put on the paper. I have to think the movement of my hand and the shapes I am drawing in a much deeper way, had I used an erasable tool. It is also because I very much love old book illustrations in pen and ink. Ink feels sculptural.



**What have you been reading lately?**

I love to read histories and biographies I find myself at the moment immensely fascinated with the sophisticated elegance and sensibility of ancient writers. I try to give my paintings a sense of 'archaism' and so I am always trying to better understand how people lived and related to each other in an unfiltered, undistracted world. I am now rereading Octavius by Minucius Felix and The Dream of Scipio by Cicero. I would love to illustrate them!

**Do you have any other passions outside of your art?**

I'm always looking forward to being outside: I love cycling and running, and I am very happy to be able to do these things almost daily where I live. I try to be as physically active as I can- this helps me with everything else in my life and I cannot encourage the reader enough on this topic. I also enjoy teaching and I would love to be able to do more of it in the future.

Page 2: monograph of the Akahal Teke

Page 23: Panta rhei

Page 24: winged lion

Page 25: Youth Renewed

Page 26: Dracian Warrior holding a Draco

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of the master of the *Revenge* his dangerous disposition, yielded that all their lives should be saved, the company sent for England, and the better sort to pay such reasonable ransom as their estate would bear, and in the mean season to be free from galley or imprisonment. To this he so much the rather condescended as well as I have said, for fear of further loss and mischief to themselves, as also for the desire he had to recover Sir Richard Grenville whom for his notable valour he seemed to greatly honour and admire.

When this answer was returned, and that safety of life was promised, the common sort being now at the end of their peril, the most drew back from Sir Richard and the master gunner, being no hard matter to dissuade men from death to life. The master gunner finding himself and Sir Richard thus prevented and mastered by the greater number, would have slain himself with a sword, had he not been by force withheld and locked into his cabin. Then the *General* sent many boats aboard the *Revenge*, and divers of our men fearing Sir Richard's disposition, stole away aboard the *General* and other ships. Sir Richard thus overmatched, was sent unto by Alfonso Bassan to remove out of the *Revenge*, the ship being marvellous unsavoury, filled with blood and bodies of dead and wounded men like a slaughter house. Sir Richard answered that he might do with his body what he list, for he esteemed it not, and as he was carried out of the ship he swooned, and reviving again desired the company to pray for him. The *General* used Sir Richard with all humanity, and left nothing unattempted that tended to his recovery, highly commending his valour and worthiness, and greatly bewailed the danger wherein he was, being unto them a rare spectacle, and a resolution seldom approved, to see one ship turn toward so many enemies, to endure the charge and boarding of so many huge armados, and to resist and repel the assaults and entries of so many soldiers. All which and more is confirmed by a Spanish captain of the same armada, and a present actor in the fight, who being severed from the rest in a storm, was by the *Lion* of London, a small ship, taken, and is now prisoner in London.

The general commander of the armada was Don Alfonso Bassan, brother to the Marquis of Santa Cruce. The admiral of the Biscaine squadron was Britan Dona, of the squadron of Seville Marquis of Arumburch. The hulks and flyboats were commanded by Luis Cutino. There were slain and drowned in this fight, well near two thousand of the enemies, and two especial

commanders Don Luis de Sant John, and Don George de Prunaria de Mallaga, as the Spanish captain confesseth, besides divers others of special account, whereof as yet report is not made.

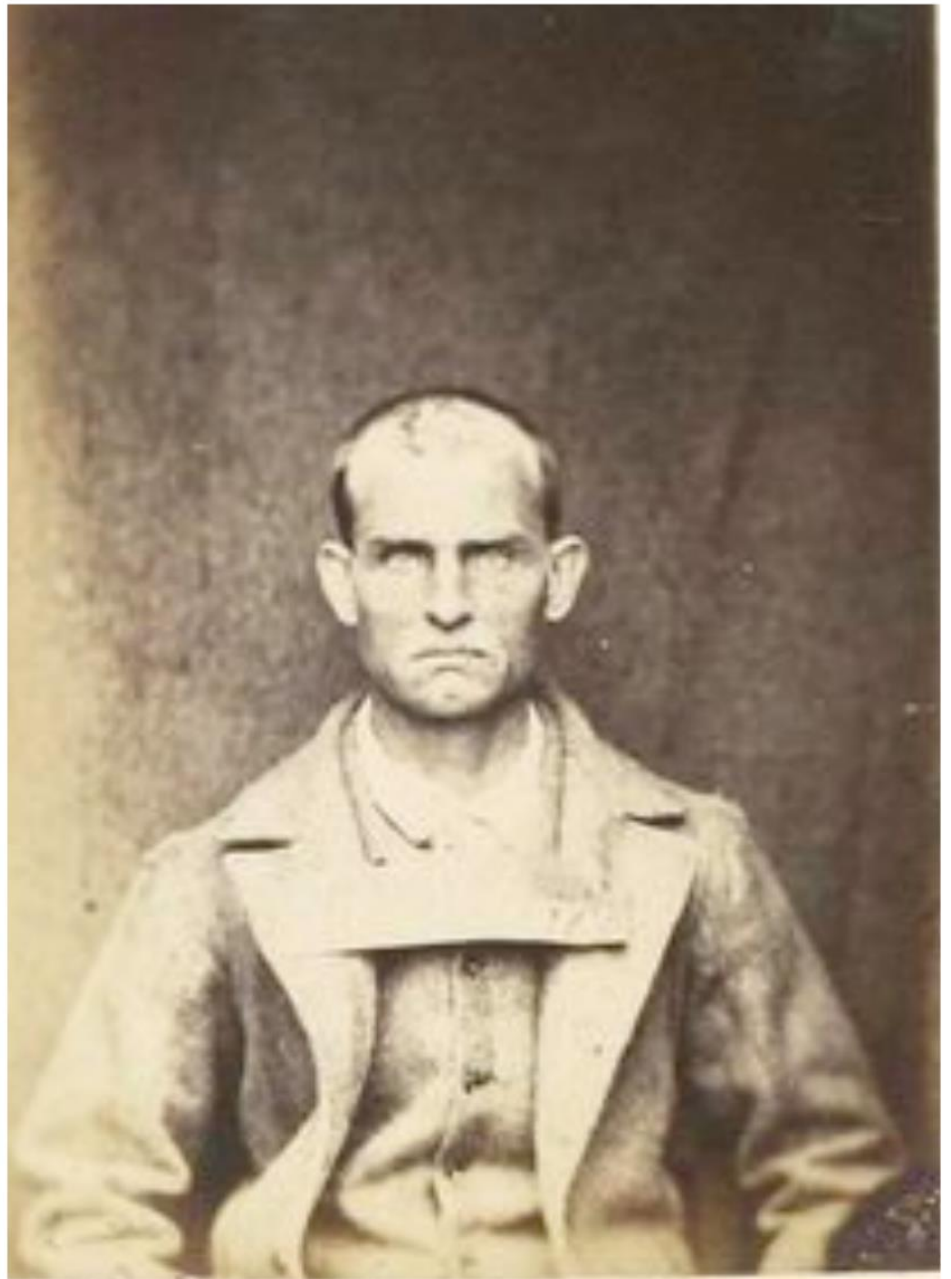
The *Admiral of the Hulks* and the *Ascention* of Seville were both sunk by the side of the *Revenge*; one other recovered the road of Saint Michels, and sunk also there; a fourth ran herself with the shore to save her men. Sir Richard died as it is said, the second or third day aboard the *General*, and was by them greatly bewailed. What became of his body, whether it were buried in the sea or on the land we know not: the comfort that remained to his friends is, that he hath ended his life honourably in respect of the reputation won to his nation and country, and of the same to his posterity, and that being dead, he hath not outlived his own honour.



# The Bullet of the Fated Ten

A Tale of the Ring  
Part 1

Price Warung



### I.—AT THREE O'CLOCK P.M.

THIRTY-TWO feet by twenty-two feet. And one hundred and ten men in the room.

This was cell No. 1.

Thirty-two feet by twenty-two feet. And one hundred and twelve men herded therein. This was cell No. 2.

There were two other "cells" in the old Sydney gaol, but in point of accommodation they were luxury itself compared with Nos. 1 and 2.

They were respectively, the "Fines" ward, where the detainees who declined to recognise the right of His Majesty's magistracy to impound their cash, numbered on the average about thirty, which thirty revelled in the ample space of 27 by 20 feet ; and the women's ward.

This last was of the spacious capacity of 27 by 22 feet, and at the time of our story accommodated forty women and five children.

There had been occasions when it had sheltered sixty adults, but times, in the criminal business of the day, were slack in feminine offences, and the human contents only equalled forty-two. (*Five children under twelve counted, in the matter of rations and allowances, for clothing and coffins, as two adults*)

To keep the inhabitants of this populous centre in order five soldiers garrisoned it in the day, and six at night. And all the available space being taken up by the " cells " and yards, it necessarily followed that there was no guard- room attached to the structure. " Main guard " contributed the gaol garrison.

Now these things are necessary to be remembered, else our story would require a preliminary dissertation which should incorporate a whole code of regulations.

Let the size of the gaol, its populousness and the paucity of its garrison speak, and nothing further is necessary to show that that dreadful ballot, in the casting of which ten condemned used the silver bullet of "The Ring," need not have taken place at all.

That was the sting of the episode to the survivor of the group. The whole of the dread business was needless. Why, what use to ballot so that one should escape when the Ten together could have conquered the guard and freed the men of No. 1 and the "Fines"? That was the problem that vexed him. You see that none of the Ten knew it would have been so easy to take the gaol. It was only a stone's throw from the guard-house on Charlotte Place, but still the assault, if successful for five minutes, would have been successful all through. The pity o' it! To think of nine lives

dropped through the gallows door, when no greater expense need have been gone to than the sacrifice of half a dozen soldiers Why, 'twas cruelly absurd to keep the Ten in ignorance of the possibilities! At best this is what the survivor reflects, years after, when he was a man of wealth and position, and when he told this story.

It was just after three o'clock when the Ten came into the yard, and that accounted for it all—for all the ignorance, all the muddle, and the loss of all nine lives.

At three o'clock all the male prisoners were locked up till six the next day, so that the women and children, who had been immured in their " black hole " all the livelong day, could take a brief two hours of exercise in the yard. There was but the one yard—when it was not the men's exercise yard, it was the women's and when it was neither, it was the playground of the condemned. And there were ten condemned.

The Fates were against them. They had landed from the Norfolk Island brig the last thing the previous day, and it was not thought necessary to take them to the gaol, but they had been confined to the cells in the new court- house. Then the sessions had opened that morning, and by 2.15 the court had sympathetically postponed its luncheon, so as not to embarrass the military jury of five officers by too long a detention in the jury-room. His Honour, the Judge, had duly received the jury's pronouncement, had duly donned the skull-cap, had duly admonished them for their crime, and had duly ordered them to be hanged. And at 3.30 they were installed in His Majesty's gaol, with the knowledge that on the following 203 Monday the law's doom would be executed upon them. And this was Friday.

There had been no unseemliness of haste about the routine. But still it has to be said that the Fates were against the Ten. Could they have been polished off a little earlier, they would have been delivered at the gaol before the other business had left the yard, and they doubtless would have learnt all about the characteristics of the institution. Or had they been, as the custom usually was, deposited at the gaol for a few days pending trial, in like manner they would have mastered all the excellencies of the establishment. As it was, they knew nothing, or next to nothing, of the routine and local system. It was many years since the youngest in criminality had been in Sydney, and things had changed much in that time. They had had nothing to guide them as to their treatment, save what they knew of the Norfolk routine, and that was rigour itself. They could not conceive that

so ill-arranged and so ill-disciplined was the Sydney Penitentiary that it would have been the easiest thing in the world for them to subjugate the establishment, and effect their escape. And, owing to the hour and manner of their arrival, there was no one to tell them. This was, in the survivor's judgment, the most piteous thing of all. Could they but have known!

These were the names and the descriptions, and the ships of the Ten.

Michael Pedder, *Asia* (1), 2506, aged 32, 5 ft. 4 in., dark ruddy complexion, light brown hair, grey eyes, scar across nose, scar (new and fresh) on left side of forehead. (This is his description on the Norfolk Island cargo manifest.)

Jabez Blake, *Java*, 817, aged 25, 5 ft. 6 in., dark and freckled complexion, B J and cross on right arm, indistinct mark (something like a horse's head on his left), dark brown hair, light blue eyes, rather emaciated.

William Andrew Drummer, *Hercules* (2), 2278, age 55, 5 ft. 9 in., grey hair, two women, bird and barge inside lower left arm, woman, anchor and laurel inside lower right arm, bright hazel eyes, florid complexion.

Thomas Short, *Dungarvan Castle*, 244, age 19, 5 ft. 6 in., pale, sallow complexion, brown hair, blue eyes, mermaid with comb and glass inside of left arm, fourth finger of left hand missing, old scar left side of neck.

Patrick McCarthy, *Isabella*, 1420, aged 24, 5 ft. 1 in., pock-pitted complexion, small scar under left collar-bone, mark of a burn on right jaw, black hair, hazel eyes, seven stars and anchor on lower left arm, P.M. on right wrist.

Thomas Lewis, *Eliza*, age 35, 5 ft. 3 in., C. W. A., and woman's bust, stag and mermaid on chest, ring on left little finger, sallow complexion, chestnut eyes, brown hair.

John Hanlay, *Roslyn*, age 40, 5 ft. 6 in., freckled complexion, brown hair, dark brown eyes, nail of little finger disfigured.

John Clyde, 5156, *Marquis Hastings*, age 24, 4 ft. 1 in., L. W. on left arm above crucifix, L. W. on right arm below crucifix, fair hair, fair, florid, pock-pitted complexion.

Edmund Entmorth, *Phoenix*, 1431, 5 ft. 7 in., age 41, W M W M W M on each arm, dark ruddy complexion, brown hair, brown eyes, ankles iron chafed.

John Donnell, "Mangles," 777, age 32, 6 ft., brown complexion, dark eyes, dark hair, whited raised spot on lower part of right eye.

These were 'the Ten who went into the "Condemned" yard shortly after three of the clock on the Friday, and who came out—as we shall see. II.—AS THE NIGHT FELL

One and each of the Ten was a mutineer, a mutineer of "The Hundred," the famous hundred, that had riven the authority of the Commandant (afterwards to be known as one of the most dashing settlers of Port Phillip) for the time being, as the sudden stroke of lightning rives the victimized tree.

Pedder was the ringleader, and the scar on his forehead, freshly healed, was his trophy from the fight. His description above given did not represent him with accuracy. He had much of the born leader in his features and in his gait. An intrepid brow and fearless eyes surmounted lineaments indicating powers of organization and command, but a defiance of society could be read in their lower contour. The soldiers had surrounded him, and it was in his pursuit that they had shot two of their own number. He had turned quickly; the two close upon his heels doubled with him, and the three at an angle to their former line of route, attracted the fire of the rear guard of his pursuers. While Pedder escaped, the two received the bullets intended for himself. He was dreaded by the populace of the island, both feared and hated, for his very dauntlessness made him a greater devil than the rest. For him and such as he was the System had little responsibility. It had either to subjugate, or be subjugated, and as he had begun his career with crime, so he would end it with crime. The humaner instincts nearly always to be found, even in the twenty-fold perjurer and the thrice condemned murderer, were absent from his very nature, and even Maconochie would have found it impossible to have opened up a door to his heart save through a bullet.

Blake was a man of a different stamp; one of the weaklings of the island, who suffered agonies from the physical confinement, and greater agonies from the incessant whippings of conscience. He was one of those in whom the conscience never slept.

Drummer was the *doyen* of the group; but compared with others of the Ten he was an innocent. He was an early arrival at the island away back in the 'Nineties, and now that the 'Thirties were looming close ahead he was still an islander in thought, in fancy, and in feeling. Thirty-six years, save for an interregnum when the island was depopulated, were the years which he had lived on the island (if his existence could be termed life). Transported as a boy, the deadening routine of island life have overlain all his impressions of an

existence outside of the surf-bound "Paradise." And now here he was, once again in Sydney, no more a boy, but a man, aged in suffering and experience of the vilest sort, and he was in Sydney to be hanged.

"Mangles" Donnell was the giant of the party, of great strength physically, but as fickle as a child, save when subject to the stronger will of another. There was no crime to which he could not be forced, and there was no kindly deed which he would not do, give him but the means and the power, when influenced by men who knew him and who knew themselves.

As to the others, we are concerned with Short directly, and let the story tell something more of him than his description sheet.

It was half-past three o'clock when the Ten were hustled into the yard. Because they were condemned, and not merely committed or sentenced to imprisonment or transportation, they would be granted the superior distinction of isolation from the occupants of Nos. 1 and 2 cells. As there was no other place for them to be confined, necessarily they had to deprive the women of those precious moments when they might breathe the air and see the sky, save through barred windows; and when the news went into the women's ward that there was to be no exercise that day, Saturday, or Sunday, there was shriekings of rage and grief. Few privileges indeed had the women, and to be deprived of their exercise-time added fresh pangs to the punishment of the virtuous—for there were virtuous among their number—and a new fury to the rebellion of the others.

There was a young mother there, nursing an infant at the breast. She had a toddler pulling at her gown, and the little thing, ill with the squalor and noisomeness of the place, had learned to look with instinctive pleasure at the prospect of the day's "outing." She had seen the locking up of the ordinary prisoners, and knew that the hour had arrived at which the women usually rushed pell-mell into the vacated yard. To-day, however, the little one saw instead of the wonted rush, a grouping of the women in angry knots, rapid and passionate gesticulation, and the making of a noise which terrified her.

"Mother, mother," it cried, burying its face in the mother's gown, "let me out; let me out."

"Not to-day, dearie," said the mother, a quiet Hawkesbury lass, incarcerated on a charge of petty theft, "Not to-day, dearie."

"Let me out, let me out," shrieked the child and the other children—there were, as we have

said, five in all the ward—took up the cry, "Let us out, let us out."

A virago who had by force of muscularity and temper risen to the proud position of monitress, and whose emoluments consisted in being allowed sugar in her tea, and two ounces of tobacco weekly, bade the mothers stop their youngsters' clatter, and shook one of the elder children. As might have been expected, this but increased the turmoil, and before many minutes had elapsed the melee became general. The mother of the child who had been shaken, whirled round and round in the scuffle, saved herself at last from falling by claspings the bar of a window looking upon the yard. She held herself up by it, the while the monitress was showering blows upon her, and shrieked out between the interstices of the bars to the doomed men.

"They say as ye're black Norfolkers. By God, if yer was ye'd pull the whole gaol down. If yer was like some Norfolkers as I knows, ye wud I know. Ye deserve to be 'anged, 'cos yer keeps the women and kids from gettin' a mouthful of fresh air."

A further verbal onslaught was prevented by the monitress putting her hand before the woman's mouth.

"No, yer don't, my fine hussy. None o' that, or I'll get yer inter the stocks." The woman's voice was stilled and there was a lull in the storm, the scores of turbulent women waiting to see what would be the result of the monitress' assault upon the other.

The lull permitted to be heard another child's pleading. "I wish I could get out, mummy; I wish I could get out." These words were distinctly heard by some of the condemned, who, curious at the disturbance, had clanked their iron legs and taken up a position beneath the window. "Why don't yer let the kinchins out. If we are black Norfolkers, what's the row?"

The monitress, now eager for something like change herself, bettered the example of the woman she had chastised. "Oh, my Jack Ketch beauties, ye're going to be turned off are ye. Well, I don't care how soon. Don't yer know as we women can't get out 'o here till Monday. That's what you fellows do for us, is it? We's as lief be hanged ourselves as be kept in here for three days. An' if I were black Norfolkers I wouldn't stop here longer than it suited me."

Some faint glimpse of the truth was perceived by Pedder. He came from the centre of the yard to the wall and said, "What's that, missus? What do yer mean by that?"

"But the monitress now bethought herself. Was she not after all something of an official, and as such shared in official emoluments and privileges? Why should she risk the loss of sugar in her tea and her two ounces of tobacco by her precipitate desire to confide the fact of the insecurity of the gaol to some fellows who might, for all she knew, contain a likely informer or two among them?"

"Oh," she said, " nothing. I don't mean nothing."

Pedder thought for a moment, and in that moment was convinced that the woman had in her first remarks said something which was not without importance to him and his mates. Very keen were the susceptibilities of men such as this ringleader, when they had been sharpened upon the grindstone of necessity and the whetstone of deception. With a flash of intuition, he felt that if he could induce some woman to give him the hint, there was something to be done and something to be discovered. With a stroke of policy that amounted almost to inspiration, he felt that to get at the woman he must use the children.

"What's that about the kinchins ? " he said. " Can't they get out?"

"No," growled the monitress, known as Slippy Sal. " We're all a-stuffed in 'ere till the scragger comes along for you fellows, and, please God, that won't be long."

"Ain't there any other yard?" asked Pedder.

"Only the stores, and we can't get in there. Until you fellers are topped off we've got to stay here, and the kiddies too."

"Well, that's 'ard," broke in Blake, "for the kiddies. Chuck 'em out 'ere, and we'll amoose em."

There was a laugh at this both inside the wall and outside. The soldier on guard at the gate of the condemned cell, and whose " go " had turned him from the enclosure, put his head into the trap-door, or spy hole, and interjected "Silence!"

Pedder clanked with his double irons towards the gates. " I say, Lobster," wheedlingly, " the wimmin in there are cussin' 'cos their kids can't git out. You ask the Governor to send them in here. Let the youngsters have the fresh air. We won't interfere."

The soldier looked wonderingly at Pedder, but he had little ones of his own, and again he had felt for the shrivelled little brats whose pallid faces and withered limbs had touched him to sympathy. So he deviated from the strict path of duty, and ringing his musket stock upon the stone flagging of the corridor, sent the convict lad who acted as messenger, and whom the signal

had brought to the spot, to the office of the guard with a message.

Lieutenant Courtney appeared.

"What is it, Private Smith?" he questioned. Smith saluted and conveyed what he thought was the women's wish. He did not know, of course, that the women had expressed no specific wish, that he in reality was simply moving to carry out the idea that had framed itself in the, cunning brain of Pedder. Courtney laughed and went to the Governor, and as a consequence? within ten minutes the Hawkesbury girl, braced with her couple of children and the other kinchins, were sent into the yard.

It was certainly an act of thoughtlessness to send in the woman, but the rigid system was often relaxed in little points such as that, without rhyme or reason. One injunction was laid upon her. She was not to speak to the men, but to keep herself in one corner, whilst the men were motioned by the officer to the opposite corner. Sentry Smith, moreover, was ordered to shorten his walk so that his eye might always be on the condemned group. If the gaoler gave a second thought to the matter at all, it was not to consider the possibilities of communication through the medium of the woman, but simply for her temporary protection.

The children with little nervous shrieks rushed about between the men's legs. In a minute or two the men had squatted in a semicircle on the stone floor by the further wall, and the children were leaping over their irons, being tossed pleasantly from one to another. The women who were in the ward crowded to the window to look at this pleasant sight, for it was pleasant, as it was unusual, this mateship. The grim faces of the men relaxed, and no one would have thought that one and all were under sentence of a dreadful death. The children plucked the men's hair, tossed the caps of those who had head gear, and dangled and played with the chains that linked ankle and ankle. And the mother of the five-year-old toddler in the opposite corner stood and gazed. But while the children played, and the men smiled, Pedder was plotting, and he still was plotting as the night fell.

### III.—AS THE MORNING ROSE

Pedder plotted to such purpose, that when night fell, and Sentry Smith before being relieved, ordered the Hawkesbury woman and the children back, the little child took with her a bit of slate. It was a toy, she thought; it was a toy her mother thought; it was a toy the sentry thought. The child held it gleefully aloft so that all might see as she went through the doorway into the corridor. It was a bit of slate which had fallen from the



overhanging roof of No. i cell. With the fragment of a bit which he had snapped off, Pedder had drawn a gallows and a man dangling from it. The whole he had encircled within a ring that seemed a frame. Some of Pedder's colleagues looked upon the thing as rather a good joke; so did the Hawkesbury lass ; so did Sentry Smith ; but condemned man Blake, condemned man Drummer, and condemned man Clyde exchanged glances with one another and with Pedder, and the hearts of each leapt within them. Surely that would bring a "Ringer" to their aid. Some blankets were thrown into them by the soldier who relieved Smith, at 6 o'clock, their food was given to them at 6.30, and at 7 o'clock the officer of the night guard came in and tapped their irons, and wished them as he went out a good night and a happy hanging.

Now the mutiny had been a "slant." The dashing Victorian squatter that was to be, had not been altogether a success as a Commandant, and it was felt both by himself and " others," the convicts being chief among the " others," that things under his rule would soon come to an end. He doubled guard, displayed keener activity in visiting the outlying posts, and in other ways prepared for an *emeute*. Pedder had got tired of things in general, and had organized that movement which was popularly known in Norfolk Island and Port Arthur as a " slant," that is, he had planned a murder or a mutiny on purpose to obtain a trial in Hobart or Sydney. The mutiny of The Hundred had resulted, and the "slant" had come off with promptitude. Half a dozen convicts had been killed and wounded, two soldiers had been killed by the soldiers themselves, two by the convicts, and several wounded. Altogether it was a great success, and now here there were waiting ten to be hanged.

And now the ten were woke up on the Saturday morning by a gentleman who had profited by the " slant " to come to Sydney as a witness. He had heard of the Slate, and knew thereby that some at least would escape if they could.

There were always witnesses required and oftentimes a "slant" was arranged as much as anything else to give the witness a trip as well as the actual offender.

It was still dark, at four o'clock, when the witness appeared. With comparative noiselessness the door swung back, and the sentry let him in. Quietly, with cloth slippers on his feet, he went from one to another of the sleeping men and touched them. He named them all in turn, and bade each arise. The men were accustomed by long years of discipline and by special training for revolt

and rebellion, for at the Island they had again and again gone through the trial of waking quickly and getting up noiselessly, so close was the possibility of escape always to their imagination. Each accordingly got up as his name was called, and wondered and waited. Only Pedder and Blake did not wonder. They had felt quite sure, instinctively as it were, that the bit of slate sent by the child's hand would spread rumour throughout the gaol, and in the indefinable and inexplicable way in which news circulated (even in the iron cells of Norfolk Island) would reach someone.

Now the man who had come into that yard at four o'clock in the morning was a " ringer," and several of the others were " ringers." He was a "fiver," the highest grade of any one present. Pedder was a " sevens," Blake was a " niner," Drummer and Donnell (enlisted for his great strength) were in the "novices." The others knew the " Ring " simply as every Norfolk Islander knew it—a terrible institution to be dreaded and to be obeyed. The man who entered from the outside held a strap in his hand, and by a movement scarcely to be detected, but rather imagined, he separated Pedder, Blake, Drummer, and Donnell from the others. Then each feeling his way in the blackness, grasped the strap, and they stood there with the link of union between them.

Drilled, as the others were, with as little noise as possible, each stooping as he revolved, so as to clasp his irons and prevent them from clanking, they turned their faces to the wall and waited, for what—they knew not.

In the *argot* of the " Ring " these fellows exchanged whispers. The "Outside" said, " Pedder, you are a ' sevens ' ? "

"Yes."

"Blake, you are a 'niner'?"

"Yes."

"Drummer, you are a ' novice'?"

"Yes."

"Donnell, you are a ' novice' ? "

"Yes."

"Then in the name of ' the One ' I bid you hold a session to decide which of you shall escape. Only the one can escape, and my orders are that the six who are not in the ' Ring ' must be in the ' ballot.'

Pedder murmured, "Where are your other credentials?"

"Right," said the "Outsider," the "Fiver."

"Right."

He passed the strap which he was holding from his right hand into his left, and produced something from his pocket. He pressed it into

Pedder's hand. Pedder acknowledged its receipt by an exclamation which called forth a sharp "Hush!" from the "Outsider," for Pedder had uttered the words, "The Silver Bullet."

#### IV.—THE ANSWER TO THE SLATE

Blake shivered as he caught Pedder's whisper, "The Silver Bullet." Drummer and Donnell did not know the full significance of the words, but they were impressed at once, for now that their eyes had become used to the darkness, they saw that Pedder and Blake had bowed over the bullet. Nothing was a more singular weapon against the System than the employment the "Ring" gave to the capacity for reverence and obedience, which are inherent in almost every man, and nothing proved the "Ring's" diabolical character more clearly than the fact that the perverted moral sense of the society's founders did not seek to obliterate reverence and obedience but to distort them to vile objects. But this is by the way. To the "Ring" the silver bullet was a message from the dreaded chief of the "Ring," "The One."

For all they knew, this man, who avowed himself as a "Fiver," might be "The One" himself. It had been suspected that "The One" had on occasions, in order to test the fidelity and veracity of the men in the lower circles, even included himself in the ranks of the "novices," and had worked his way up again to the eminence (but one degree short of his own dreadful pre-eminence) of "The Three."

Pedder and Blake stood silent, waiting for the next command. The "Outsider" took the bullet back and re-pocketed it. They knew, then, that they must obey him; listened eagerly for his next words.

"Brothers," he said, "I found it impossible to communicate with you from the outside, until the bit of slate came to-night. I was in. Court."

"Yes," interjected Blake, "and gave evidence against us."

"Of course. I could not do otherwise. But I am here now to save one o' yeh. The slate was passed round the women's ward, and then into the men's cells, as a good joke. That was clever of you, Pedder for of course you did it."

"Yes," said Pedder.

"And the men told the night-soldier of their cell, and I heard them telling; and then I knew that if that thing could come out, something could go in."

"I have been ordered to save one of you, and one only, because the opportunity is not good enough to save more of you."

"Which is it to be? Men out of the 'Ring' or in it?"

"The other six are to be in the ballot. Those are 'The One's' orders."

Each man drew a deep breath, but was silent. The greatness of the hope had arisen in each heart, for each knew thoroughly that could the one but be rescued, it would mean ultimate escape from the colony.

"Brothers," went on the "Fiver," "you must take the oath."

And the dread ceremony was gone through, so far as could be done in the brief space of time. Foot to foot, and forming a cross, with clasped hands, each whispered the oath, and each felt under that weird incantation that while he would be true to his brothers, he would dare much to win the freedom which never seemed so sweet as when it was contrasted with the appalling tyranny that the "Ring" exercised over even the most elevated of its members.

Foot to foot they chanted the oath, and then the "Fiver" released his hold on the strap and moved in circles round the others.

"You swear you'll be true men to the 'Ring' and your brothers and the Devil—the 'Ring's' lord and master—and that the ballot of the silver bullet shall be a true ballot, and not worked (*faked or manipulated unfairly*), so the Devil keep you all."

And the four muttered, "The Devil keep us!" in response.

This was all that passed then. Long pencils of light were already streaking the sky eastwards as the "Fiver" withdrew.

The door was opened noiselessly and closed as quietly.

By whom? Ah, that cannot be told now.

The four were left to hint to their colleagues of the condemned all they dared.

They had not asked when the ballot should be, or in what form it would take place. But those of the "Ring" knew that the traditions would be held sacred—if the term is not misused in this connection. They realized fully that when the hour came that the ballot should be, it would be; and they could occupy themselves till then in dreaming, each for himself, of the ballot's result.

\* \* \*

About nine that morning the Hawkesbury lass was sent in again, with her children and the other "kinchins." And the youngsters gambolled as they had done the previous afternoon; gambolled and played merrily in and out of the condemned group. But the condemned were only playmates at intervals, and one and all were discussing the problem, "Would the bullet fall to him?"

## V.—THE SUNDAY VIGIL

Saturday passed, and Sunday also, towards night. From all the cells, male and female, stories of blasphemy had arisen; for the condemned could not be removed, of course, and the cells were stifling. Executions were frequent enough in old Sydney, but not for years had there been so heavy a batch of condemned, and usually those destined for the gallows were left in the yard with the other prisoners, who however were separated from them by a convict guard. The Ten were thus equally honoured by their isolation, could they but have appreciated it.

They heard the yelling and the cries, and had no hesitation in ascribing it to the true reason. But they did not bother much as to how the others they had inconvenienced felt. Each was pondering as to the ballot.

The Protestant chaplain in the pastorage, St. Philip's, had called in on the Sunday, but he was over-worked and ill. The Ten were of two faiths, and the Roman Catholic priest would be with his people on the Monday early. Before that he could not come, because of the services which he had to hold twenty or thirty miles away. So, save for good Chaplain Couper's call, the Ten had been officially left to themselves, or, what to. "nine" would be their last Sunday on earth. They had plain duff for dinner, however, and that was a consolation not without its sweetness: often of exquisite graciousness to *condemns* in their last hours were the offices of the State!

One other break the Ten had. The children were clean-bibbed and petticoated, and had come up to the men with peculiar delight to sport their hebdomadal finery. The wearing' of clean frocks and pinafores was one of kindly Mrs. Macquarie's regulations, and the means for obeying being provided with the need for obedience, it had more than once kept the heart of a sainted mother sweet to give her child in what, in that squalid atmosphere, was a distinguished appearance.

The five-year-old daughter of the Cornstalker had touched Short on the arm to draw his attention to herself.

The man was sitting on the ground with his head bent between his knees, and almost to his chains. He was not brooding so much as dreaming of what the future might be supposing—but why suppose? Had he ever been lucky in life that luck should fall upon him now and he be cast for freedom by the ballot? He and the -others not in

the " Ring" knew the method of selection was by ballot, but how— they knew not that.

He shivered as the child touched him. Was it the message?

Looking up he saw the gleeful little face peering into his, and the heart within him throbbled painfully. If he could but be free if the bullet would fall into his hand—ought he not, away in the newer scenes, be able to make a new home, even have children—such a child as that whose orbs, tiny balls of light, looked steadily into his own gloomy eyes, curiously scanning the image therein represented.

"Look, Mis-ter Short," she said, in her piping treble—the Hawkesbury lass was not forgetful of her child's manners, even in her incarceration—" Mis-ter Short, look!

"The child held out her frock, with its frill of coarse embroidery. "I'se a clean f'ock!" and carolled lightly as she met an answering smile upon his face.

Then she turned her head, and he followed her movement, to catch her mother's eye by the corner near the gate. The mother, meeting his gaze, cast a suspicious glance towards the window, where half a dozen faces of the stronger women (they had beaten down their weaker sisters) were clustered. Watching carefully that she was not observed, she motioned with her head to Short, as though to direct him to look more closely at the child's frock. He did so, but did not at the instant perceive to what she referred. Then she called the child to her, and putting her baby for an instant (she had been walking up and down with it) on the ground, she placed the edges of the frock in such a manner that the little child held it as if about to make a curtsey. Then a whispered injunction sent the child back.

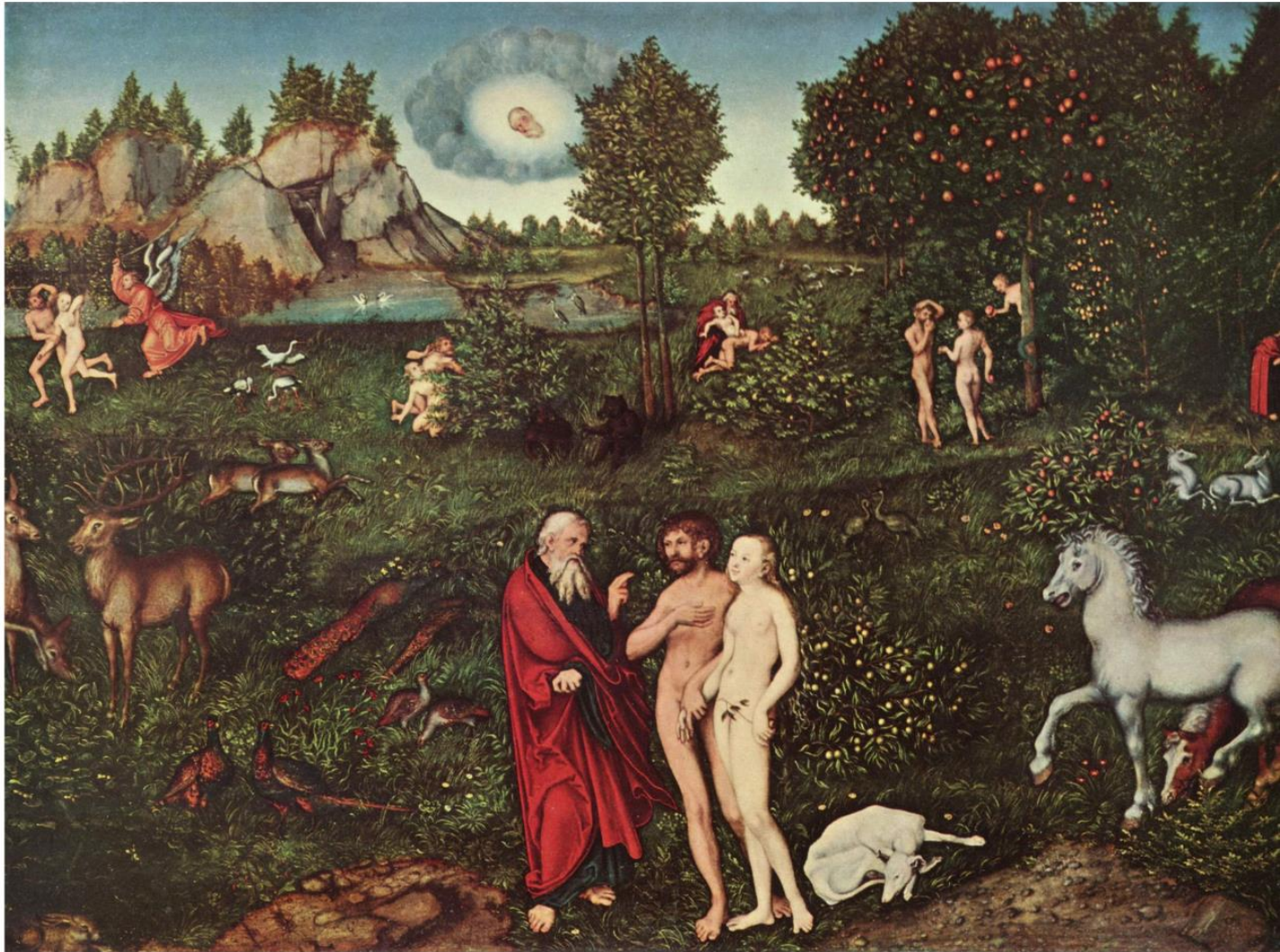
Pedder's attention had by this time been drawn to this little bit of by-play, and with his wonted keenness saw in it more than lay on the surface. He closely followed the child's movements with his eyes, and saw almost as soon as Short himself did, to whom she had gone, that some letters or words were roughly marked out in sewing cotton upon the frock.

Rising slowly from his recumbent position, he put down another child which had come to him and took the little five-year-old in his arms, but, frightened at the repulsiveness of his face, she cried to go to Short, and would not remain still while Pedder examined the dress.

. *To be continued*

# Adam and Eve: The Fairy Tale

Alexander



**Adam and Eve received the news** the Angel of the Lord was coming to their house at midday. He wanted to bless all the children.

On that morning, Adam woke early. He forgot about the esteemed visitor and went straight out to the fields to work. Eve was left alone with all the children.

Standing with her hands on her hips, she looked hopelessly at how grubby her children appeared. She was upset, as Adam wasn't there to help to get them ready.

She saw the Sun rising in the sky and began the mammoth task of cleaning them all.

Soap suds, steam and water filled the house. Soapy streams flowed out of the doors and the windows, in all the four directions. The grime and dirt were washed away down the hill, into valley below.

Eve kept looking at the position of the Sun, increasingly becoming more worried. 'He would not be long', she thought to herself.

She had just got to clean half them, when she saw the Angel of the Lord walking towards the house. In a panic, she scooped up all the remaining unwashed children, and pushed them out the back door.

"Stay there", she said, pointing at them sternly.

There was a knock at the door. Eve ran and opened it. "Welcome, my Lord", she said, encouraging the Angel of the Lord to enter the house. He greeted Eve and walked into the kitchen. The children stood aloof on the other side of the room, nervously looking at the ground.

He beckoned them to Himself and they crowded around Him. He knelt down and smiled.

He enquired, "Where's Adam?"

"He's working", Eve replied quickly

He turned to Eve, "That isn't good. I will speak with him. Today is a day of rest."

Eve said nothing and nodded.

The Angel of the Lord stood up, opened His arms wide and gave a blessing over the children. They all stood still, with eyes closed.

He then looked directly into Eve's eyes and asked whether she had any other children. Eve laughed, "No, no, I've not got anymore".

Silence descended. He looked deeply at her, as though peering in through the windows of her

heart. He moved towards the closed back door, opened it and saw a myriad of grubby-faced children.

He smiled at the children, but as He turned to look at Eve, the smile slowly vanished. "Why did you deceive me? Why did you try to hide them?" Eve, with a downcast face, said "I was ashamed. I thought you'd think I was a bad mother. That I was not good enough to look after my children." The Angel of the Lord said, "Because of your dishonesty, I will give a different blessing, I will take the children you hid away, and I will give them a home. They shall live forever as children, and play, and have fun and enjoy my presence."

In an instance, the dirty-faced children outside the house disappeared. "Where have they gone?", Eve said crying through the tears.

"Tonight, go to the woods at the bottom of the hill. Take a story with you to read. Read it aloud, and they will come to you", explained the Angel of the Lord.

That evening, as Adam returned and discovered all that had happened. His heart felt low. He had failed his children and he failed his wife. He should have stayed to help Eve.

After dinner, he helped Eve to think of a story, they collected some toys and she made her way to the wood at the bottom of the hill.

She placed the lantern next to her and sat on the grass. She began to read a children's story and out of the woods flew a myriad of fairies. They hovered listening to the tale. And when she finished the fairies thanked their mother with broad smiles. She gave them the toys and kissed them good night.

As they flew back into the woods, they sang the bedtime lullaby their mother had sung to them. The song they had heard every night since they were born. A tear gathered in the corner of Eve's eye, and it gently trickled down her face. "At least, they were safe", she said to herself.

From that night onwards, just after sunset, she would go back to the Fairy Wood, read her grubby children a bedtime story and kiss all of them goodnight.

(This is based upon a popular medieval story which told the origin of fairies.)

# The “Good” Hippopotamus

Charles Dickens



**OUR correspondent, the Raven in the Happy Family**, suggested in these pages, not long ago, the propriety of a meeting being held, to settle the preliminary arrangements for erecting an equestrian statue to the Hippopotamus. We are happy to have received some exclusive information on this interesting subject, and to be authorised to lay it before our readers.

It appears that Mr. Hamet Safi Cannana, the Arabian gentleman who acts as Secretary to H. R. H. (His Rolling Hulk) the Hippopotamus, has been, for some time, reflecting that he is under great obligations to that distinguished creature. Mr. Hamet Safi Cannana (who is remarkable for candour) has not hesitated to say that, but for his accidental public connexion with H. E. H., he Mr. Cannana would no doubt have remained to the end of his days an obscure individual, perfectly unknown to fame, and possessing no sort of claim on the public attention. H. E. H. having been the means of getting Mr. Cannana's name into print on several occasions, and having afforded Mr. Cannana various opportunities of plunging into the newspapers, Mr. Cannana has felt himself under a debt of gratitude to H. R. H., requiring some public acknowledgment and return. MR. Cannana, after much consideration, has been able to think of no return, at once so notorious and so cheap, as a monument to H. R. H., to be erected at the public expense. "We cannot positively state that Mr. Cannana founded this idea on our Correspondent's suggestion for, indeed, we have reason to believe that he promulgated it before our Correspondent's essay appeared but, we trust it is not claiming too much for the authority of our Correspondent to hope that it may have confirmed Mr. Cannana in a very noble, a very sensible, a very spirited, undertaking.

We proceed to record its history, as far as it has yet gone.

Mr. Hamet Safi Cannana, having conceived the vast original idea of erecting a Public Monument to H. R. H., set himself to consider next, by what adjective H. R. H. could be most attractively distinguished in the advertisements of that Monument. After much painful and profound cogitation, Mr. Cannana was suddenly inspired with the wonderful thought of calling him the "Good" Hippopotamus!

This is so obviously an inspiration, a fancy reserved, through all the previous ages of the world, for this extraordinary genius, that we have been at some pains to trace it, if possible, to its source. But, as usually happens in such cases, Mr.

Cannana can give no account of the process by which he arrived at the result. Mr. Cannana's description of himself, rendered into English, would be, that he was "bothered;" that he had thought of a number of adjectives, as, the oily Hippopotamus, the bland Hippopotamus, the bathing Hippopotamus, the expensive Hippopotamus, the valiant Hippopotamus, the sleepy Hippopotamus, when, in a moment, as it were in the space of a flash of lightning, he found he had written down, without knowing why or wherefore, and without being at all able to account for it, those enduring words, the "Good" Hippopotamus.

Having got the phrase down, in black and white, for speedy publication, the next step was to explain it to an unimaginative public. This process, Mr. Cannana can describe. He relates, that when he came to consider the vast quantities of milk of which the Hippopotamus partook, his amazing consumption on meal, his unctuous appetite for dates, his jog-trot manner of going, his majestic power of sleep, he felt that all these qualities pointed him out emphatically, as the "Good" Hippopotamus. He never howled, like the Hyena; he never roared, like the Lion; he never screeched, like the Parrot; he never damaged the tops of high trees, like the Girae; he never put a trunk in people's way, like the Elephant; he never hugged anybody, like the Bear; he never projected a forked tongue, like the Serpent. He was an easy, basking, jolly, slow, inoffensive, eating and drinking Hippopotamus. Therefore, he was, supremely, the "Good" Hippopotamus.

When Mr. Cannana observed the subject from a closer point of view, he began to find that H. E. H. was not only the "Good," but a Benefactor to the whole human race. He toiled not, neither did he spin, truly but he bathed in cool water when the weather was hot, he slept when he came out of the bath; and he bathed and slept, serenely, for the public gratification. People, of all ages and conditions, rushed to see him bathe, and sleep, and feed; and H. R. H. had no objection. As H. R. H. lay luxuriously winking at the striving public, one warm summer day, Mr. Cannana distinctly perceived that the whole of H. R. H.'s time and energy was devoted to the service of that public. Mr. Cannana's eye, wandering round the hall, and observing, there assembled, a number of persons labouring under the terrible disorder of having nothing particular to do, and too much time to do it in, moistened, as he reflected that the whole of H. R. H.'s life, 'in giving them some temporary excitement, was an act of charity; was "devoted"

(Mr. Cannana has since printed these words) "to the protection and affectionate care of the sick and the afflicted." He perceived, upon the instant, that H. R. H. was a Hippopotamus of "unsurpassed worth," and he drew up an advertisement so describing him.

Mr. Cannana, having brought his project thus far on its road to posterity, without stumbling over any obstacle in the way, now considered it expedient to impart the great design to some other person or persons who would go hand in hand with him. He concluded (having some knowledge of the world) that those who had lifted themselves into any degree of notoriety by means of H. R. H., would be the most likely (but only as best knowing him) to possess a knowledge of his unsurpassed worth. It is an instance of Mr. Cannana's sagacity, that he communicated with the Milkman who supplies the Zoological Gardens.

The Milkman immediately put down his name for ten pounds, his wife's for five pounds, and each of their twin children for two pounds ten. He added, in a spirited letter, addressed to Mr. Cannana, and a copy of which is now before us, "You may rely on my assistance in any way, or in every way, that may be useful to your patriotic project, of erecting a Monument to the 'Good' Hippopotamus. We have not Monuments enough. We want more. H. R. H.'s consumption of milk has far exceeded, from the first moment of his unwearied devotion of himself to the happiness of Mankind, any animal's with which I am acquainted; and that nature must be base indeed, that would not vibrate to your appeal." Emboldened by this sympathy, Mr. Cannana next addressed himself to the Mealman, who replied, "This is as it should be," and enclosed a subscription of seven pounds ten with a request that it might be stated in the published list that the number of his house was ONE HUNDRED AND SEVENTY-FOUR B, at the right-hand corner of High Street and Blue Lion Street, and that it had no connexion with any similar establishments in the same neighbourhood, which were all impositions.

Mr. Cannana now proceeded to form a Committee. The Milkman and the Mealman both consented to serve. Also the two Policemen usually on duty (under Mr. Cannana's auspices), in H. R. H's den; the principal Money-taker at the gardens; the Monkey who, early in the season, was appointed (by Mr. Cannana) to a post on H. R. H's grounds; and all the artificers employed (under Mr. Cannana's directions), in constructing the

existing accommodation for H. R. H's entire dedication of his life and means to the consolation of the afflicted. Still, Mr. Cannana deemed it necessary to his project to unite in one solid phalanx all the leading professional keepers of Show Animals in and near London; and this extensive enterprise he immediately pursued, by circular-letter signed Hamet Safi Cannana, setting forth the absolute and indispensable necessity of "raising a permanent monument in honour of the Good Hippopotamus, which, while it becomes a record of gratitude for his self-sacrifices in the cause of charity, shall serve as a guide and example to all who wish to become the benefactors of mankind."

The response to this letter, was of the most gratifying nature. Mr. Wombwell's keepers joined the committee; all the, keepers at the Surrey Zoological, enrolled themselves without loss of time; the exhibitor of the dancing dogs, came forward with alacrity; the proprietor of "Punch's Opera, containing the only singing dogs in Europe," became a Committee-man; and the hoarse gentleman who trains the birds to draw carriages, and the white mice to climb the tight rope and go up ladders, gave in his adhesion, in a manner that did equal honour to his head and heart. The Italian boys were once thought of, but these Mr. Cannana rejected as low; for all Mr. Cannana's proceedings are characterised by a delicate gentility.

The Committee, having been thus constituted, and being reinforced by the purveyors to the different animals (who are observed to be very strong in the cause) held a meeting of their body, at which Mr. Cannana explained his general views. Mr. Cannana said; that he had proposed to the various keepers of Show Animals then present, to form themselves into that union for the erection of a Monument to the "Good" Hippopotamus, because, laying aside individual jealousies, it appeared to him that the cause of that animal of "unsurpassed worth," was, in fact, the common cause of all Show Animals. There was one point of view (Mr. Cannana said) in which the design they had met to advance, appeared to him to be exceedingly important. Some Show Animals had not done well of late. Pathetic appeals had been made to the Public on their behalf; but the Public had appeared a little to mistrust the Animals why, he could not imagine and their funds did not bear that proportion to their expenditure, which was to be desired; Now, here were they, the Representatives of those Show Animals, about, one and all, to address the Public



on the subject of the "Good" Hippopotamus. If they took the solid ground they ought to take; if they united in telling the Public without any misgiving that he was a creature "of unsurpassed worth," that "his whole life was devoted to the protection and affectionate care of the sick and the afflicted;" that his self-sacrifices demanded the public admiration and gratitude;" and that he was "a guide and example to all who wished to become the benefactors of Mankind: "if they did this, what he Mr. Cannana said, was, that the Public would judge of their representations of their Show Animals generally, by the self-evident nature of these statements; and their Show Animals, whatever they had been in the past, could not fail to be handsomely supported by the Public in future, and to win their utmost confidence.

This position was universally applauded, but it was reduced to still plainer terms, by the straight-forward gentleman with the hoarse voice who trains the bird and mice.

"In short," said that gentleman, addressing Mr. Cannana, "if we puts out this here 'Tizement, the Public will know in a minute that there isn't a morsel of Humbug about us?"

Mr. Cannana replied, with earnestness, "Exactly so! My honourable friend has stated precisely what I mean!"

This distinct statement of the case was much applauded, and gave the greatest satisfaction to he assembled company.

It was then suggested by the Secretary, to Mr. Tyler's tiger, that several thousand circulars, embodying these statements (with a promise that the collector should shortly call for a subscription) ought to be immediately signed by Mr. Hamet Safi Cannana, addressed, and posted. This work, Mr. Cannana undertook to superintend, and we understand that some ten thousand of these letters have since been delivered. The gentleman in waiting on Mr. Wombwell's Sloth (who is of an ardent temperament) was of opinion that the company should instantly vote subscriptions towards the Monument from the funds of their respective establishments: considering the fact, that the funds did not belong to them, of secondary importance to the erection of a Monument to the "Good" Hippopotamus. But, it was resolved to defer this point until the public feeling on the undertaking should have had an opportunity of expressing itself.

This, as far as it has yet reached, is the history of the monument to the "Good" Hippopotamus. The collector has called, we

understand, at a great many houses, but has not yet succeeded in getting into several, in consequence of the entrance being previously occupied by the collector of the Queen's Taxes, going his rounds for the annuity to the young Duke of Cambridge. Whom Heaven preserve!

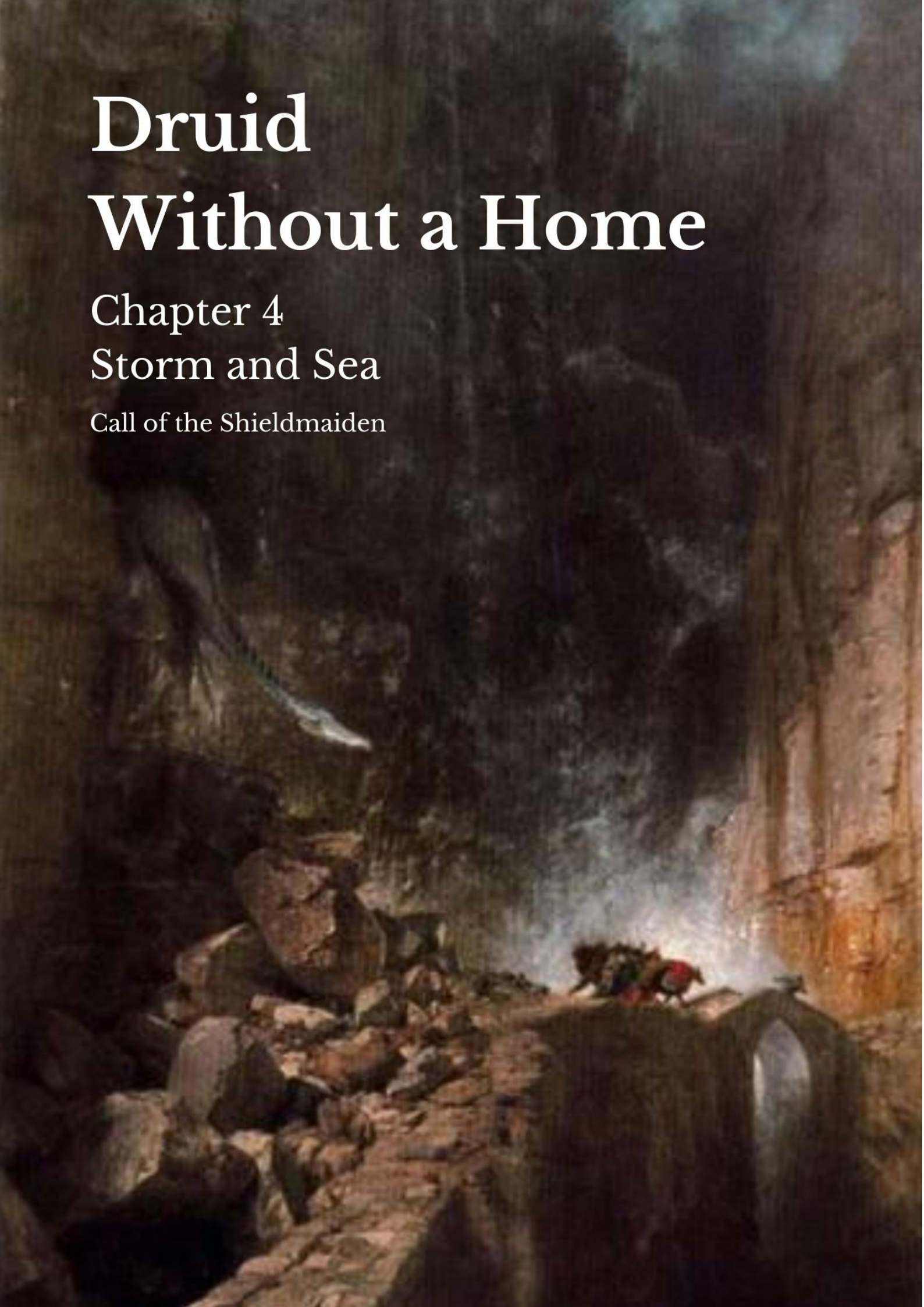


# Druid

# Without a Home

Chapter 4  
Storm and Sea

Call of the Shieldmaiden



“So are the buildings in Wraithall massive, then?” Clancy asked, his forehead wrinkled into puzzlement as he stared at the spot where his fishing line entered the water. “To fit a whole dragon through the door you’d need it to be the size of a barn at LEAST.” The faint mark on the distant cliff face that had started the conversation had been made by a dragon’s claw as it had struggled out of the sea, or so the legend went. But the boys were not satisfied with a mere legend. They needed more.

“Are all of dragonkind allowed there? What about wyverns?” Degore wondered. The little sail boat bobbed gently on the bay. It was a nice afternoon for their fishing trip. “Let us go there,” he suggested. The fishing trip was fun but less exciting than excursions to lands full of dragons.

Clancy nodded enthusiastically. “We can go next week—the harvest is almost over; we could leave early after service.”

Uhtred laughed. “Wraithall is many miles away. We are not going there any time soon. What’s more, if you wish to leave, you may only enter with the permission of the dragons themselves.”

“But surely if the doors are large the ceilings must be the size of the cathedral, unless dragons are into low roofs,” Clancy mused. “What sound do they make when they hit their heads?”

“I do not know the size of the buildings, very few who go there live to tell the tale. And that goes for wyverns, too—as far as I know they live outside the city in caves.” Uhtred baited his hook and threw it back into the water.

“But you are friends with dragons, you can take us,” Degore insisted. He glanced into the distance where the tall spires of Ritherhithe commanded the edge of the cliffs.

“I have duties and responsibilities at the abbey,” Uhtred replied quickly. “Now, boys, I will tell you how you may visit the Dragon’s Barren and Wraithall when you are older.”

“Yes! Yes!” the boys chorused.

“Firstly, you both need a few more years on you—” Uhtred began. “Wait, wait!” he said as he saw them sigh and their faces fall. “You will then depart the abbey under guidance of a druid, who will lead you far and wide into the great unknown.”

Degore listened with fascination.

Clancy’s mind was full of maths. “So, what age exactly do we need to be to do all this?”

“Ask me in about three- or four-years’ time,” Uhtred said, glancing up at the canvas sail wrapped neatly around the mast, “when you do

not need your mothers to tuck you into bed at night.”

Degore thought of Freyja’s warm kiss on his forehead, and Clancy remembered the recent dream that had frightened him into asking his parents if he could sleep in their bed, something that had not happened for years.

“Why do we travel away, then?” Degore asked.

“It is usual for a boy to take up his father’s profession. This is how things are and have been for generations. But to be a part of our religious order you must be dedicated and led to the cause.” Uhtred paused to reel in what turned out to be a very small fish.

After the exclamations and disappointment were passed, Uhtred went on, “You go out on your journey to experience the world. Once you have returned, you will decide if you wish to stay or not. My son did not choose the religious life, and lives peacefully at the foot of the plateau, in Midlacken village. We encourage those who don’t want to dedicate their lives fully to the Abbey to leave, but they are always welcome and Gwendoline comes to visit us often.” Uhtred was proud of his granddaughter.

Clancy blushed, he looked hard at the water. Fortunately Degore was too busy dreaming of adventure to notice.

“I will become a druid,” Degore announced.

Uhtred smiled. “You could convert the dragons themselves with your enthusiasm.”

The waves lapped gently up against the sides of the boat. The sun had gone behind the cliff face, and a chill set over the water.

“Well, boys,” said Uhtred, “time we started back for the shore. Are you happy with your catch?”

They had not caught much. But they did have one giant fish that it had taken all three of them to reel in on Clancy’s rod.

“How will we all eat the fish, as there is only one, and I want to eat all of it?” asked Clancy.

“You can share,” said Uhtred, “add some roast potatoes and you will have a good feed there.” He raised the sail of the little boat as he spoke.

Degore stared out over the water towards the east. Dark clouds were gathering fast, and the towers of Ritherhithe were almost shrouded in a black mist. “It will storm soon,” he announced absently, as his eyes caught a dragon gliding through the mist.

“We should be safe back at the abbey by then,” said Uhtred. The stiff breeze that had been blowing all day had stopped and the boat was not moving. “Well, boys, I think we will need to row.”

Degore grabbed an oar and paddled furiously. The boat began to go slowly around in a circle.

Uhtred sat down at the other oar and grasped the smooth wood, worn to a polish by multitudes of hands, “Come on now, let’s coordinate this.”

Clancy sat at the end of the boat clutching the giant fish. “I feel drops of rain,” he said.

Uhtred looked nervously at the sky. “Pull the oars now, Degore,” he said calmly, but with an undertone of urgency, “we need to get moving.”

The two coordinated their paddling and the boat headed for the shore. But they had not gone far when the dark clouds, boiling and contorting, were almost upon them, and lightning snapped and dazzled, illuminating the darkening sky above the towers in the distance, of which all but the largest were concealed.

They paddled faster as the rain began to fall, but they had made little distance before the rain was roaring down upon them. They were making good headway in spite of the downpour, and would make it to the shore very soon. Suddenly the wind was back, filling the sail with a sudden snap that sent the little boat careening over the water. Uhtred jumped up and grabbed the halyard, but the wind tore the sail from the bottom of the mast and it began to flap loudly in the wind above their heads.

Clancy clung tighter to the fish, making its eyes bulge alarmingly, and Degore paddled his oar helplessly in the frothing water which boiled unpredictably. Bits of foam smacked them in the face and filled the boat.

Uhtred strained his eyes to see the shore. A stiff grey wall was getting closer and closer. The sheer cliffs loomed out from the mists and Uhtred yelled something, but the wind tore it from his mouth. With a sudden lurch, a wave drove the boat straight up onto the rocks.

Degore was thrown from the thwart he was sitting on and into the sea. He struggled as the waves washed over him, but swimming was impossible in the thrashing water. With a rush, he was washed up onto the rocks and he clung to them for dear life. After he adjusted to the stability, he began to drag himself up to a higher rock. The waves immersed him again and again as he struggled up. He crawled over the sail, all torn and tangled on

the rocks. Upon reaching the top he looked around for his companions.

Clancy stood almost beside him, still clinging to the giant fish. He was wet but did not look otherwise affected. Degore stared at him, open-mouthed.

“When the boat came near the rocks it was higher on my end so I just stepped off. Then the boat caught on something and another wave tipped it over,” he explained as Degore dragged himself up, avoiding sharp pointed rocks.

“Where is Uhtred?” asked Degore.

Clancy suddenly looked frightened. “I don’t know.”

The light was quite gone and the wind had abated slightly. Degore stood carefully gathering his senses for a moment, then he pulled Clancy back towards the cliff, which was rapidly merging with the blackness of the night.

A narrow path ran along the base of the cliff, just above the raging water. “We need to go,” he said to Clancy. “The waves might get higher and cover the path.”

Clancy stood rooted to the ground. “But it looks dangerous and we cannot leave without Uhtred.”

Both boys looked back towards the remains of the boat. A huge movement looming in the dark grabbed their attention. The mist swirled as something huge moved towards them at a fast and smooth pace. A huge creature with enormous bared teeth emerged from the gloom. The boys screamed and Degore grabbed Clancy in fright and pulled him away. Off down the path they rushed, slipping occasionally, sending pebbles spraying into the raging water below. They panted on for a few minutes before they slowed down. Degore swung his face back, trembling at what he might see, but there was nothing but the grey cliffs to one side, the thrashing water to the other, and all around a thick fog.

“What was that?” Clancy’s eyes were wide with horror.

“I am not sure. Maybe just the storm playing tricks on us.” Degore looked down at him and realised he was clutching the fish and not Clancy’s arm. He let go. “Why do you still have the fish?” he asked.

“I do not want to be cold and hungry, when I could just be cold,” Clancy responded.

Degore shook his head. “Come on, we must hurry.” He brushed his drenched hair from his face.

They soon came to the end of the slippery stone path and hurried up the wide smooth one

towards the plateau. Years of hoofbeats and footfalls had worn it so hard that even the rain did not soften it much. The rain buffeted down upon them, a cold, heavy avalanche. They found their horse hiding in the cave they had tied it up nearby. The boys huddled in the cave with the horse, and pressed themselves onto her. She searched them for food, before recoiling at the fish cradled in Clancy's loving arms. The three watched the rain beat down just in front of them. The warmth of the horse calmed them somewhat and Degore tried to gather his thoughts.

"We cannot stay here and freeze to death," said Degore. "When the rain eases a bit, we will set off."

It seemed like forever till there was a lull in the rain, and even then, it only lightened to a severe shower. Degore put Clancy on the horse, for despite their similar ages, Degore had put on a growth spurt lately and was shaping up to be a large lad. They fought their way forwards through the downpour. It was less ferocious than before, but Degore knew that they had to keep moving.

It was fortunate for the boys that the people from the Abbey travelled to the ocean often, as the well-trodden path under their feet was the only thing keeping Degore on track to the Abbey. It was broad and smooth, and even the horse seemed to know where they were.

Degore felt he couldn't go on any more, it seemed it must be morning and his feet were falling off. Fortunately, after a few more stumbling steps, the stables appeared right in front of him out of the gloom. He stumbled in the door and collapsed down onto the straw. Bruce was up to watch a mare who was about to foal. The burly priest carried him into Freyja's house, and Clancy followed. He was so tired that he was almost ready to drop the fish.

Freyja was anxiously pacing the room when they stumbled in, all soaked through, chilled like fresh butter from the icehouse and numb all over.

"There you are!" she exclaimed, "I've been worried sick! Set him by the fire," she told Bruce. "Cancel the search party, the boys are safe and we don't want to risk anyone else in this storm."

The warmth roused Degore and he sat beside Clancy and soaked in the heat. It was comforting to have Freyja fuss over them. She brought them blankets and dried their hair with towels, then handed them some soup in a mug.

"Why did you have a fish with you?" she asked, looking down at where it lay beside Clancy as a third companion at the fireplace.

"We caught it," said Clancy, straightening up proudly. "I did not want it to go to waste, me and Degore still need to eat it."

Freyja laughed and patted his damp hair. "I am glad you are all safe," she said.

"But Uhtred," Degore gulped, "we don't know where he is."

"He is here," said Freyja, and she motioned over to the bed in the corner of the room where Uhtred lay. He weakly raised his hand in a wave to the boys but it dropped back onto his chest. His head was wrapped in a bandage.

Freyja pre-empted the question: "A dragon was waiting out the storm down in some cases by the water. He saw what happened and took Uhtred back here to us; he arrived shortly before you boys did. He said he tried to rescue you as well but you ran away. We were going to send a search party."

"We just saw big teeth," said Clancy. Just then, the door flew open and his parents rushed in.

His mother hugged him. Freyja told them how Degore had brought Clancy back through the storm.

Clancy's father shook his hand. "Thank you for this, you are growing into a fine young man." He turned to Freyja. "I will come by tomorrow morning to see how Uhtred is."

Clancy went over and looked at his fish, which lay on the table. "When can we share this?"

Freyja cut the fish in half. "There you go," she wrapped the head half in a cloth and handed it to Clancy's mother.

They left and Freyja began to cut up the rest of the fish. Her sharp knife flashed in the lamplight and sounded dully against the smooth, well used wooden cutting board.

Degore wrapped himself tighter in his blanket and perched on a stool next to Uhtred's bed. "Will he be, okay?"

"He should be," said Freyja. "He only hit his head, and if he is a bit better tomorrow morning, we will know he will be okay. Though I think it may take him some time to get completely back on his feet."

The next morning Uhtred was awake when Degore came down for breakfast. He was sitting up in his bed patting Pawdraig and reading a book.

"I am proud of you," he said to Degore, as he set his book down. "Storms can disorient people and they can get lost, but you saved yourself and Clancy."

Degore sat beside the bed. “I thought I needed to protect Clancy. He just held his fish the whole time and I felt the need to take charge.”

“You did well,” he said. “I hope to be up on my feet in a week or so. Then we will go down and see what we can salvage from the boat.”

Degore sighed in mild relief. All would end well, and while his love of dragons had not abated, and he was grateful for their rescue of Uhtred, he wondered about their dark side. What they were capable of. What they could do if they so chose to do evil.





## A Reply to the Longhouse Hen

*by Goose Howard*

I began a small, bold action and an  
Old hen craned around who noticed me.  
A vocal proponent of the longhouse;  
A lover of long and incessant chats;  
A waif armed in knitted knight's armour  
Whose quest was for universal safety.  
In one sudden shrill did she rebuke me  
For my swimming in the lakes and tarns,  
For my climbing trees and hills of rock,  
For my walking with feet unshod and bare  
'For my own good and life and health', she claimed  
Her melody of shrills and screeches aid.  
Out of care did this hen peck me thoroughly.  
Each word and every peck did this corn take,  
Till my sheath and mind were fully withered  
And my patience was as thin as this waif.  
As the Word gives a season for caution,  
So too is there time to be bold and risk.  
And he who loses his life will find it.  
To her that would cling to life I say this:  
I will abide the longhouse no longer,  
Whether I be at the hearth or waters,  
For you try to bar the door to danger  
As the great threat comes from within.  
The den mother shall smother her litter,  
But for the others who linger within:  
Just as the heat, with light and air shut out,  
In men sheltered from fear, fight, burn, and scar  
Does black mold rot the ceiling, walls, and heart.



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