

# CORNCRAKE



SEPT 2025  
ISSUE 19

TDJ Snelling  
Mark Twain  
Blamblas

Robert Story  
Liam QD Hall  
Nathan CJ Hood  
John Atkinson Grimshaw

NESTING IN THE OAK OF  
ENGLISH LITERATURE




# Nathan Hood hosts The Merry Corncrakes Podcast

Treat yourself to interviews with feature authors and audiobooks of stories appearing in the Corncrake, together with sophisticated discussions on writing and story creation. Watch it now!







# CONTENTS

## ISSUE 18

Editor's Note	04
Dates of Importance	05
Hampshire	07
Watercolours of Hampshire	08
Nature as a Source of Spiritual Renewal	10
The Poetry of Liam QD Hall	16
2272011	17
Your Nations Calling	21
The McWilliamsons and the Burglar	22
Hunting the Deceitful Turkey	25
Poetry of Robert Story	26
Featured Artist: John Atkinson Grimshaw	28
The Man the Martians Made	32
Prometheus	39
The Lion	42
The End of the Young Family Feud	47



Fantasy is escapist, and that is its glory. If a soldier is imprisoned by the enemy, don't we consider it his duty to escape?... If we value the freedom of mind and soul, if we're partisans of liberty, then it's our plain duty to escape, and to take as many people with us as we can!  
JRR Tolkien

# Editor's Note



How the months fly by! Here we are in September already! The summer heat is fading and the chill of autumn is fast approaching. Watercolours of the historic county Hampshire, are here to be enjoyed.

TDJ Snelling is back with a marvelous look at Tintern Abbey. He explores *Nature As a Source of Spiritual Renewal*, and concludes with Wordsworth's *Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey*, a place from which your editor is proud to have gazed upon the ancient ruins of the house of men who avoided women at all costs.

Liam QD Hall has favoured us with lots of good poetry. New guy Blamblas has written *Your Nation is Calling*, and some lines by a Northumberland man, Robert Story, round off this issue's .

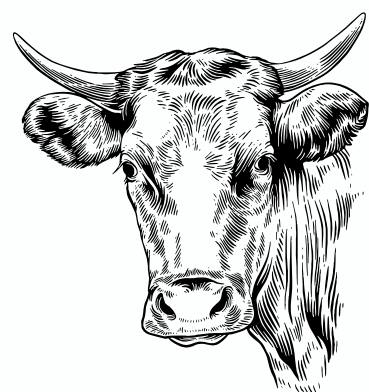
*2272011*, by Adam, is unnerving. Mark Twain, the famous author, has contributed, against his will, *Hunting the Deceitful Turkey* and *The McWilliamsons and the Burglar*. It's rare that we feature sci-fi in the Corncrake, but *The Man the Maritans Made*, by Frank Belknap Long, was just too good to pass up. Lucy Maud Montgomery, of Anne of Green Gables fame, is included in *The End of the Young Family Feud*.

Featured artist is John Atkinson Grimshaw. Faeries and landscapes, what more could you want?

Well, *Prometheus*, by Nathan CJ Hood of course! And some Tarzan in *The Lion* by Edgar Rice Burroughs.

## Call of the Shieldmaiden

Editor-in-Chief





# Dates of Importance

Saint Gregory the Great, (**3 September**) born around 540 AD in Rome, was the 64th Bishop of Rome, serving as Pope from 590 until his death in 604 AD. He is renowned for being the first monk elected to the papacy and is considered a pivotal figure in the development of the medieval papacy, known for reforming church administration and promoting liturgical practices. He is credited with founding the Gregorian mission, a large-scale effort to convert non-Christian peoples in northern Europe to Christianity. His most significant and lasting impact on England stems from his decision to send a mission led by Saint Augustine of Canterbury to evangelize the pagan Anglo-Saxons in Britain. This mission, which began in 597 AD, was highly successful and laid the foundation for the Christianization of England, making Gregory the Great known as the "Apostle of England". The story of his inspiration is often linked to encountering Anglo-Saxon slave boys in the Roman Forum, where he reportedly exclaimed, "Non Angli, sed angeli" ("They are not Angles, but angels, if they were Christian"), which sparked his resolve to send missionaries to convert the English.

The Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary is a feast day celebrated on **September 8th**, commemorating the birth of Mary, the mother of Jesus. It is one of only three birthdays recognized on the Church's liturgical calendar, alongside the births of Jesus and John the Baptist, and is seen as a pivotal moment in salvation history, marking the beginning of the era of grace. In England, the Church of England observes this feast day on September 8th, along with other Marian feasts like the Annunciation and the Visitation, although the Assumption of Mary is not officially celebrated as a feast in the Church of England due to historical theological disagreements. The feast is celebrated on September 8th, nine months after the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception on December 8th. In the Church of England, the Nativity of Mary is observed on September 8th, a date that has been part of the liturgical calendar since the 1561 revision, which restored several Marian feasts after their removal during the Reformation. The celebration emphasizes Mary's unique role as the Mother of God and the "Cause of our joy," with traditions including attending Mass, praying the Rosary, and reflecting on her life and mission.

The Exaltation of the Holy Cross, (**14th September**) also known as the Feast of the Holy Cross, is a Christian feast day commemorating the cross used in the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. It celebrates the cross not only as the instrument of Christ's passion but also as a symbol of salvation and triumph over death. The feast day is observed on September 14 in churches that use the Gregorian calendar, marking the dedication of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem in 335 AD, the discovery of the True Cross by Saint Helena, and its restoration to Jerusalem after being captured by the Persians. In England, the CofE celebrates the Feast of the Holy Cross on September 14 according to its Common Worship calendar. The liturgical color for the day is red, symbolizing the blood of Christ and the fire of the Holy Spirit. Services on this day include special readings and hymns that focus on the significance of the cross as the central symbol of Christian faith. The cross is venerated during the service, reflecting the deep reverence for the instrument of salvation. The celebration is also known as Holy Cross Day in the Anglican tradition.

**19<sup>th</sup> of September** Saint Theodore of Canterbury, also known as Theodore of Tarsus, was the seventh Archbishop of Canterbury and the first archbishop to rule the entire English Church, serving from 668 until his death in 690. Born around 602 in Tarsus, Cilicia (modern-day Turkey), a city also associated with Saint Paul the Apostle, he was a highly educated Greek monk who studied in Athens and later lived in Rome, where he gained a reputation for his wisdom and piety. He was appointed by Pope Saint Vitalian and consecrated as Archbishop of Canterbury in 668, arriving in England in 669 at the age of nearly seventy.

Upon his arrival, Theodore undertook extensive travels throughout England, consecrating bishops, establishing new dioceses, and revitalizing the Church, which had been weakened by plague and lacked a unified structure. His most significant achievement was convening the first national Council of Hertford in 672, which addressed discipline, affirmed the Roman date for Easter, and established obedience within the clergy, helping to unify the English Church under the authority of Canterbury. He also played a key role in resolving conflicts, such as the dispute with Bishop Wilfrid, whom he initially deposed but later reconciled with and restored to his see in 686. He further promoted orthodoxy by presiding over the Synod of Hatfield in 679, which rejected the heresy of Monothelitism. Theodore was instrumental in advancing education and scholarship. He established a renowned school at Canterbury, which became a center of learning and produced notable figures like the historian Saint Bede the Venerable and the architect Saint Aldhelm. He and his companion, Saint Adrian of Canterbury, taught subjects including theology, Latin and Greek literature, music, mathematics, and ecclesiastical astronomy, essential for calculating the date of Easter. His Penitential, a collection of disciplinary rulings compiled by his disciples, became influential throughout England and on the Continent.

Saint Theodore is celebrated on 19 September, his feast day, in the Catholic Church, the Orthodox Church, and Anglican churches, and is also commemorated in the Roman Martyrology. His body, re-interred in Canterbury Cathedral in 1091, was found to be incorrupt, a sign of his holiness. He is remembered as the "Second Founder of Canterbury" and a pivotal figure in shaping the English Church, unifying it under a centralized structure aligned with Rome and the secular authorities. His legacy is honored in England through his feast day, the continued veneration of his contributions to ecclesiastical organization and education, and the enduring presence of the school he founded.

St. Matthew was a first-century tax collector from Capernaum who became one of the twelve apostles of Jesus Christ after being called by Him to follow, an event described in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke. He is traditionally recognized as the author of the first Gospel in the New Testament, which is of immense value to the Church for its account of Christ's life and ministry, particularly in affirming Jesus as the Messiah. His calling was significant as it demonstrated Jesus' mission to call sinners, a point highlighted by Jesus' response to criticism: "I did not come to call the righteous but sinners".



St. Matthew is also believed to have been a martyr, with traditions placing his death in a region near present-day Egypt, and he is venerated as a saint in the Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, Lutheran, and Anglican churches. In England, the Roman Catholic Church and the Church of England celebrate the feast day of St. Matthew, Apostle and Evangelist, on **September 21**. This date is observed with reverence for his role as an apostle, his Gospel writings, and his work in evangelization. While the primary celebration is on September 21, some Eastern Catholic and Orthodox traditions observe St. Matthew on November 16, often alongside St. Fulvianus.

**22<sup>nd</sup> September.** Mabon is a pagan harvest festival celebrated in England and other parts of the world, marking the Autumnal Equinox, which typically occurs between September 21st and 24th. It signifies the midpoint of the harvest cycle, when day and night are of equal length, symbolizing balance between light and dark. Although the festival is associated with the Welsh god Mabon ap Modron, who represents youth and renewal, the name "Mabon" for this equinox was not used in ancient times and was adopted by modern pagans in the 1970s. It is considered the second of three harvest festivals in the Wheel of the Year, following Lammass and preceding Samhain. In England, Mabon is celebrated through various traditions that honor the earth's bounty and the transition into autumn. Common practices include hosting a harvest feast featuring seasonal foods like apples, pumpkins, squash, root vegetables, and cider, which symbolize the abundance of the season. Creating a home altar with autumnal items such as leaves, nuts, berries, and candles is another popular ritual. People often reflect on the year's achievements, express gratitude for blessings, and prepare mentally and practically for the winter months ahead. This can involve writing a list of accomplishments, a practice known as an "I've done it list". Outdoor activities are also central to the celebration, such as taking nature walks, visiting sacred sites like Tintern Abbey or the Kennet and Avon Canal, or embarking on pilgrimages through autumn landscapes to connect with the changing seasons. Some communities may hold rituals to honor the Dark Mother archetype or include a place setting for ancestors, acknowledging the cycle of life and death. Acts of charity, such as donating to food banks, are also encouraged, reflecting the spirit of sharing the harvest. The festival is also linked to the Druidic name Alban Elfed, meaning "The Light of the Water," highlighting the importance of nature and water in ancient traditions.

**24<sup>th</sup> September.** Our Lady of Walsingham is a title given to the Virgin Mary, venerated by Catholics and high-church Anglicans, associated with a Marian vision reportedly experienced in 1061 by Lady Richeldis de Faverches, an Anglo-Saxon noblewoman, in the village of Walsingham, Norfolk, England. According to tradition, the Virgin Mary appeared to her, showing her the Holy House in Nazareth where the Annunciation occurred, and commissioned her to build a replica in Walsingham as a perpetual memorial of the Annunciation. This structure, known as the 'Holy House,' became a major pilgrimage site during the Middle Ages, attracting royalty and commoners alike, and was considered one of the most important religious centers in England and Europe, alongside Glastonbury and Canterbury. The original shrine was destroyed during the English Reformation in 1538 when King Henry VIII suppressed the monasteries, and the statue of Our Lady of Walsingham was reportedly taken to London and burned. However, the tradition of pilgrimage was revived in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. In 1897, Pope Leo XIII blessed a venerated image for the restored sanctuary, and the Catholic National Shrine was established at the Slipper Chapel, which was later elevated to a Basilica by Pope Francis in 2015. The Anglican Shrine of Our Lady of Walsingham was founded in 1931, with a statue moved to a new chapel on October 15, 1931, a date now commemorated as a feast of translation by Anglicans. In England, Our Lady of Walsingham is celebrated on September 24th by both the Catholic and Anglican churches as a feast day. The Catholic Church in England and Wales now observes this day as a mandatory feast, a significant recognition of the shrine's historic importance and growing devotion. Anglicans also celebrate an additional feast on October 15th, marking the translation of the statue to the Anglican shrine in 1931. The shrine remains a significant center for ecumenical pilgrimage, with annual events like the Student Cross pilgrimage during Holy Week and Easter.

Michaelmas is a Christian feast day celebrated on **September 29th**, commemorating the victory of St. Michael the Archangel over Satan and the other fallen angels, as described in the Bible. It is also known as the Feast of St. Michael and All Angels and falls near the autumn equinox, marking the beginning of autumn and the shortening of days in the northern hemisphere. Historically, it was one of the four traditional "quarter days" in England, alongside Lady Day, Midsummer, and Christmas, which were significant dates for legal and financial matters such as the beginning of leases, payment of rents, hiring of servants, and the start of legal and university terms. In England, a key tradition associated with Michaelmas is the consumption of a roast goose, a practice believed to bring good fortune and protect against financial hardship in the coming year, encapsulated in the saying "Eat a goose on Michaelmas Day, want not for money all the year". This custom stems from the fact that geese were fattened on leftover grain after the harvest, making them ready for slaughter and consumption around this time. Other traditions include the making of Michaelmas pies, often using the last of the season's blackberries, which folklore claims were cursed by the devil after he fell from heaven and landed on a blackberry bush, rendering the fruit inedible after Michaelmas. The Michaelmas daisy is also a symbolic flower associated with the day, representing the last bloom before winter. While the religious observance has diminished, the day's legacy persists in academic terms (Michaelmas term) and legal calendars in the UK and Ireland, and in cultural events like the Lord Mayor's Show in London.





# Hampshire



This was once the heart of the new-born Kingdom of England.

The south coast of Hampshire, on the English Channel, looks to the sea. Southampton is Britain's greatest commercial seaport and eastward of it Portsmouth is the home of the Royal Navy. Across the Solent is the Isle of Wight, a self-reliant island (and once a separate Jutish kingdom). Queen Victoria fell in love with the island and stayed frequently at Osborne House. The Island is famous for its Victorian resort towns (e.g. Sandown, Ryde, Ventnor), its dramatic coastline (e.g. the Needles, Tennyson Down) and peace of its unspoiled interior. Inland Hampshire is a county of farms. The county town at its heart is Winchester. Winchester's Norman cathedral, the seat of one of the land's most senior bishoprics, dominates the centre of the mediæval city, while a Victorian statue of King Alfred reminds us that Winchester was the capital of Wessex and Anglo-Saxon England. Almost like an annex in the southwest of the county is the New Forest. The New Forest was laid out as a hunting reserve by William the Conqueror, but as broad woodland and heath it is far older. It is a timeworn place which appeals to one's ancestral longings. Along the coast west of Southampton is a string of sandy resort towns, culminating in the Victorian splendour of Bournemouth.

Towns: Winchester, Aldershot, Basingstoke, Bournemouth, Christchurch, Cowes, Newport, Petersfield, Portsmouth, Ringwood, Ryde, Southampton, Winchester, Ventnor. Rivers: Meon, Test, Itchen, Hamble, Beaulieu, Avon. Highlights: Beaulieu; Osborne House; HMS Victory & Portsmouth Harbour; The New Forest; The Needles.

The flag of Hampshire retains the rose and crown pattern used in the county for several centuries in various guises. In 1992 the local county council received a formal grant of arms that included a gold royal crown on a red field, over a red rose on a gold field. Wishing to avoid using the restricted royal symbol of the crown on the council flag, Jason Saber replaced the "royal crown" with a specifically Saxon crown. This is also a reference to the county's association with the era of Alfred the Great and his capital of Winchester. The red and white double Tudor rose is inspired by the double rose on the "Arthurian" table in the Great Hall in Winchester.

Notably, the bottom sepal of the rose on the Hampshire flag points down, the same way round as the Yorkshire Rose. This represents it being Southampton's shire, in contrast to the rose on the flag of Northamptonshire which points up, the same way as the Lancashire Rose does.

As well as the red-yellow bicolour flag flown on formal occasions, the council also flies a blue banner with the council logo as "daily" flag. The county day is 15 July, which is St Swithin's Day. St Swithin was an Anglo-Saxon bishop of Winchester.





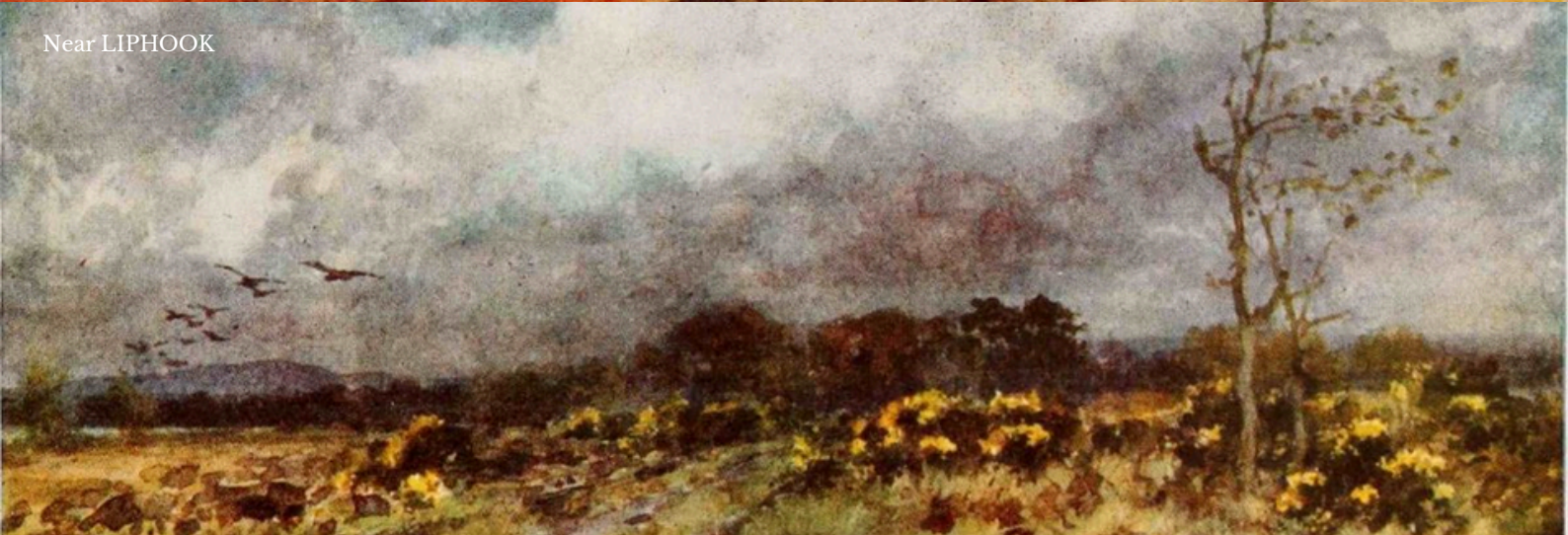
Lymington.



PORTSMOUTH FROM GOSPORT



Near LIPHOOK

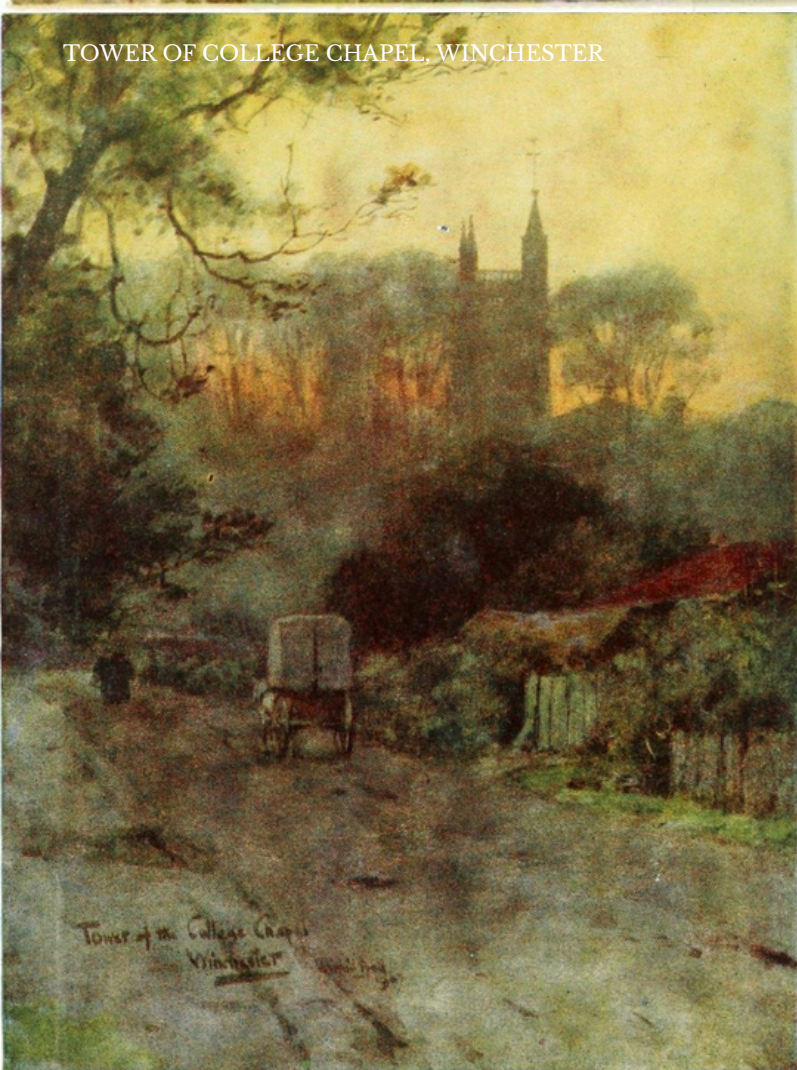




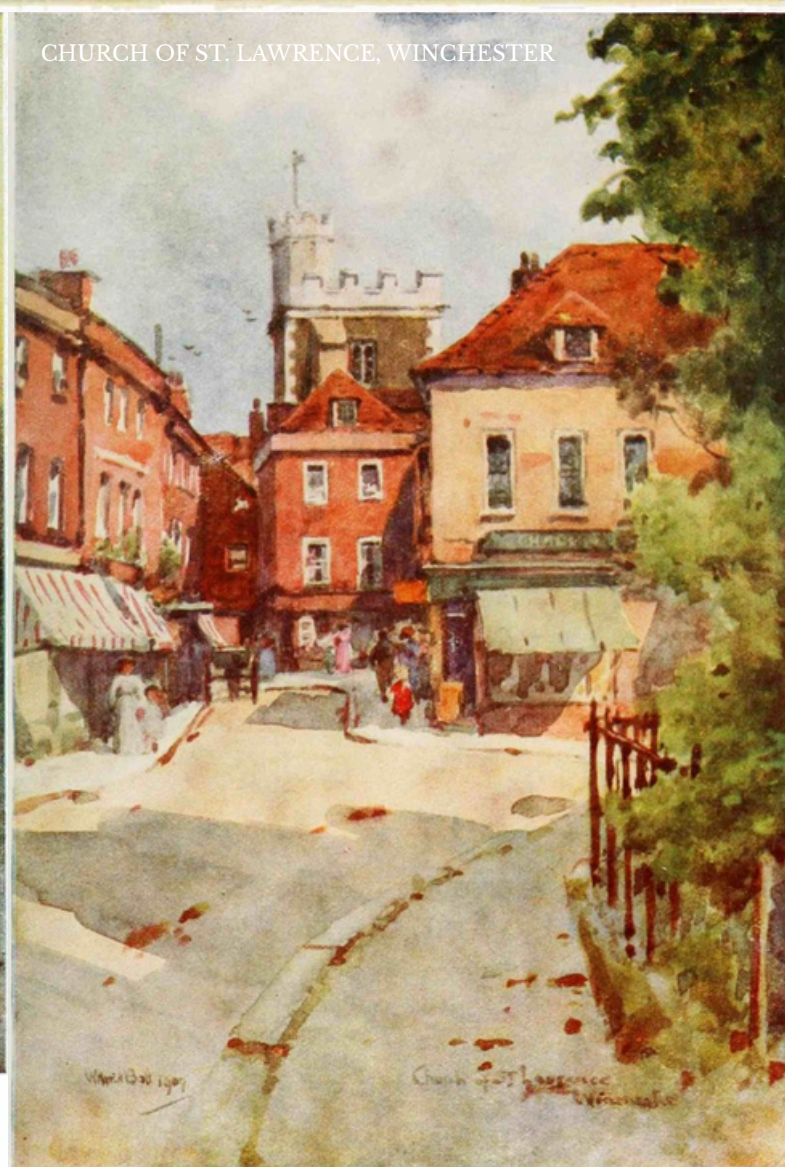
CHILBOLTON, TEST VALLEY



TOWER OF COLLEGE CHAPEL, WINCHESTER



CHURCH OF ST. LAWRENCE, WINCHESTER





# Nature as a Source of Spiritual Renewal

In Wordsworth's "Lines Composed a  
Few Miles above Tintern Abbey"

TDJ Snelling





We have all in our lives felt the healing power of nature. The warm glow of evening sun falling on emerald leaves, the rich smells of a damp wood, the soft sounds of a running stream or of singing birds – these simple things have the power to transform our outlook on life entirely, even in our darkest moments. Nature helps us find peace, and restores balance to an overwhelmed soul. Nowhere is this idea better portrayed in verse than in William Wordsworth's 1798 poem *Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey*.

The poem concerns the River Wye and its banks, a particularly picturesque corner of Great Britain, that in its lower reaches forms the border between England and Wales in the incredible Wye Valley. It was written following a walking tour of the surrounding area that Wordsworth and his sister embarked upon during the summer of 1798, when he was 28. However, this is not the first time Wordsworth had visited this part of the country – the poem begins:

Five years have past; five summers, with the length  
Of five long winters! and again I hear  
These waters, rolling from their mountain-springs  
With a soft inland murmur.—Once again  
Do I behold these steep and lofty cliffs,  
That on a wild secluded scene impress  
Thoughts of more deep seclusion; and connect  
The landscape with the quiet of the sky.

On his return, after five years' absence, he is enamoured with what he finds; so much so that Wordsworth claimed to have composed this entire poem in his head as soon as he left Tintern, not putting a single line down on paper until his journey was over.

In these beautifully descriptive lines, he tells the reader that the sights and sounds of the valley are familiar to him, yet do not fail to impress. The ever-flowing river still follows its meandering path (the Romans called this river Vaga 'winding'), and the age-old cliffs still reach from the banks into the empty skies. He continues to paint the scene for the reader:

These plots of cottage-ground, these orchard-tufts,  
Which at this season, with their unripe fruits,  
Are clad in one green hue, and lose themselves  
'Mid groves and copses [...]

[...] hedge-rows, hardly hedge-rows, little lines  
Of sportive wood run wild: these pastoral farms,  
Green to the very door; and wreaths of smoke  
Sent up, in silence, from among the trees!

Even those who have not had the pleasure of visiting the countryside of England and Wales will surely recognise this scene: quiet homesteads sit nestled in an idyllic landscape of greens, and the smell of grasses and fruits hang in the summer air. The world is quiet and peaceful, but for the songs of the birds. Despite this, the 'English-ness' of this picture should not be the focus of the reader as the poem moves into the next paragraph. The experience and feelings that follow could just as well apply to any person deeply in love and in tune with his own environment – no matter where in the world he has grown up.

The composition of this poem comes at a difficult time in Wordsworth's life, and it is important to understand the wider context in which it is set. In 1790 and 1791, Wordsworth visited and became entangled with revolutionary France. On his second visit he formed a passionate attachment to a Frenchwoman named Annette Vallon – but before he could see the birth of their daughter in 1792, Wordsworth had travelled back to England and found himself cut off from returning to France by the outbreak

of the War of the First Coalition. Nine years would pass before he would meet his daughter for the first time. If he tells us at the time of writing that five years have passed since his previous visit, that would put his first trip to the Wye in 1793 – soon after he found himself in this painful situation.

During his five year absence, despite the torment that he was undoubtedly feeling, the beauty of the present scene on the banks of the Wye remained with Wordsworth. He tells us how his memories of this place have served to maintain him during unhappy moments, of which there must have been a great many:

These beauteous forms,  
Through a long absence, have not been to me  
As is a landscape to a blind man's eye:  
But oft, in lonely rooms, and 'mid the din  
Of towns and cities, I have owed to them,  
In hours of weariness, sensations sweet,  
Felt in the blood, and felt along the heart;

In his mind's eye, 'mid the din of towns and cities, he has recalled the memory of this particular place and taken the same pleasure in the beauty of nature as he did when he last stood upon these banks. His fond memories have provided sustenance for his soul in difficult times. But what Wordsworth relays to us next is much more powerful:

[...] passing even into my purer mind  
With tranquil restoration: [...]

To them I may have owed another gift,  
Of aspect more sublime; that blessed mood,  
In which the burthen of the mystery,  
In which the heavy and the weary weight  
Of all this unintelligible world,  
Is lightened:—that serene and blessed mood,  
In which the affections gently lead us on,—  
Until, the breath of this corporeal frame  
And even the motion of our human blood  
Almost suspended, we are laid asleep  
In body, and become a living soul:  
While with an eye made quiet by the power  
Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,  
We see into the life of things.

Through peaceful contemplation of this scene of natural beauty in moments of pain, Wordsworth has learned to appreciate not just the superficial aesthetics of nature, but also the Form, the ideal essence, of a more universal beauty. In this moment of reflection, his mind is freed of the weight of the material world, his eyes made quiet by the power of harmony – and without the use of quieted eyes he is able to see into the life of things.

Even those who have not had the pleasure of visiting the countryside of England and Wales will surely recognise this scene: quiet homesteads sit nestled in an idyllic landscape of greens, and the smell of grasses and fruits hang in the summer air. The world is quiet and peaceful, but for the songs of the birds. Despite this, the 'English-ness' of this picture should not be the focus of the reader as the poem moves into the next paragraph. The experience and feelings that follow could just as well apply to any person deeply in love and in tune with his own environment – no matter where in the world he has grown up.

The composition of this poem comes at a difficult time in Wordsworth's life, and it is important to understand the wider context in which it is set. In 1790 and 1791, Wordsworth visited and became entangled with revolutionary France. On his second visit he formed a passionate attachment to a Frenchwoman named Annette Vallon – but before he could see the birth of their daughter in 1792, Wordsworth had travelled back to England and

found himself cut off from returning to France by the outbreak of the War of the First Coalition. Nine years would pass before he would meet his daughter for the first time. If he tells us at the time of writing that five years have passed since his previous visit, that would put his first trip to the Wye in 1793 – soon after he found himself in this painful situation.

During his five year absence, despite the torment that he was undoubtedly feeling, the beauty of the present scene on the banks of the Wye remained with Wordsworth. He tells us how his memories of this place have served to maintain him during unhappy moments, of which there must have been a great many:

These beauteous forms,  
Through a long absence, have not been to me  
As is a landscape to a blind man's eye:  
But oft, in lonely rooms, and 'mid the din  
Of towns and cities, I have owed to them,  
In hours of weariness, sensations sweet,  
Felt in the blood, and felt along the heart;

In his mind's eye, 'mid the din of towns and cities, he has recalled the memory of this particular place and taken the same pleasure in the beauty of nature as he did when he last stood upon these banks. His fond memories have provided sustenance for his soul in difficult times. But what Wordsworth relays to us next is much more powerful:

[...] passing even into my purer mind  
With tranquil restoration: [...]

To them I may have owed another gift,  
Of aspect more sublime; that blessed mood,  
In which the burthen of the mystery,  
In which the heavy and the weary weight  
Of all this unintelligible world,  
Is lightened:—that serene and blessed mood,  
In which the affections gently lead us on,—  
Until, the breath of this corporeal frame  
And even the motion of our human blood  
Almost suspended, we are laid asleep  
In body, and become a living soul:  
While with an eye made quiet by the power  
Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,  
We see into the life of things.

Through peaceful contemplation of this scene of natural beauty in moments of pain, Wordsworth has learned to appreciate not just the superficial aesthetics of nature, but also the Form, the ideal essence, of a more universal beauty. In this moment of reflection, his mind is freed of the weight of the material world, his eyes made quiet by the power of harmony – and without the use of quieted eyes he is able to see into the life of things.

In this transition he has become Plato's philosopher—his appreciation has ascended—moving from individual beauties to an encounter with Beauty itself, the Form that underlies all instances of beauty in nature. From *The Republic*, Book V 476b-d:

Those who love looking and listening are delighted by beautiful sounds and colours and shapes, and the works of art which make use of them, but their minds are incapable of seeing and delighting in the essential nature of beauty itself. Then what about the man who, contrariwise, believes in beauty itself and can see both it and the particular things which share in it, and does not confuse particular things and that in which they share? Do you think he is awake or dreaming? He is very much awake.

Dwelling on the beauty of nature in his own memory, even while distant from it, and subsequently contemplating more deeply the Form, have nourished and uplifted Wordsworth's soul in his moments of despair. And have we not all felt this way?

Oftentimes a walk outdoors in a place that we love is all that it takes to lift our spirits or make us forget our troubles. Looking upon and admiring the work of the creator can be more powerful than any man-made medicine.

In darkness and amid the many shapes  
Of joyless daylight; when the fretful stir  
Unprofitable, and the fever of the world,  
Have hung upon the beatings of my heart—  
How oft, in spirit, have I turned to thee,  
O sylvan Wye! thou wanderer thro' the woods,  
How often has my spirit turned to thee!

Wordsworth reinforces the idea that this memory has more than once served to aid him and heal his soul of the pains of the fever of the world. And as he takes in the scene for the second time, he knows that which he sees before him now will continue to act as life and food in the years to come:

While here I stand, not only with the sense  
Of present pleasure, but with pleasing thoughts  
That in this moment there is life and food  
For future years. [...]

Here, Wordsworth finds himself renewed once again, his spirit replenished and his inner strength fortified, as if he has tapped a spring of resilience in preparation for the uncertainties and challenges that his future may hold.

In the five years that have passed, Wordsworth's philosophy has matured and changed through this ascended appreciation for the ideal. Speaking to his former visit, he says:

[...] I cannot paint  
What then I was. The sounding cataract  
Haunted me like a passion: [...]

Their colours and their forms, were then to me  
An appetite; a feeling and a love,  
That had no need of a remoter charm,

As a young man of 23, he enjoyed nature's aesthetic in a superficial sense, but without contemplating any higher concept or remoter charm. That is not to say he did not benefit at that time – for he has told us that many joyless times since he has dwelled on and turned to the sylvan Wye. He continues:

[...] That time is past,  
And all its aching joys are now no more,  
And all its dizzy raptures. Not for this  
Faint I, nor mourn nor murmur; other gifts  
Have followed; for such loss, I would believe,  
Abundant recompense. [...]

The joys of boyhood are now long left behind. But Wordsworth does not lament this fact—he does not mourn the loss—as through his experience of the healing power of nature through difficult times, his love for its beauty has matured as he himself has; the gift of this higher appreciation and understanding has been well worth the loss of that child-like wonder he used to know.

From here the poem moves into what I believe to be its most powerful lines:



[...] And I have felt  
 A presence that disturbs me with the joy  
 Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime  
 Of something far more deeply interfused,  
 Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,  
 And the round ocean and the living air,  
 And the blue sky, and in the mind of man:  
 A motion and a spirit, that impels  
 All thinking things, all objects of all thought,  
 And rolls through all things.

Through this evolution of his understanding toward the ideal, Wordsworth has arrived at something much more profound. He has come to know the divine – God, the Creator, the One, the thing that lives in all things – through this lens of natural beauty his soul is elevated, and he has felt that relationship with a higher power.

Wordsworth's vision of this divine presence reflects the Romantic ideal of nature as a manifestation of the sublime. For Wordsworth, nature is not merely a backdrop for human experience but is itself infused with a power that elevates and enlightens. He perceives a unity in all of existence, where the material and spiritual realms are not separate but intrinsically connected. Nature, therefore, becomes a bridge between the human and the divine, granting access to a higher understanding that words alone cannot fully capture.

This belief in a unifying spirit within nature draws too from Neoplatonic philosophies. With motion and spirit, Wordsworth implies that all natural beauty originates from a divine essence. Nature, in this view, acts as a reflection of this divine beauty, allowing those who are receptive to see into the life of things. Through this lens, Wordsworth's experience on the Wye becomes not just a personal moment of peace but a profound communion with a greater spiritual reality. He perceives all beautiful forms as reflections of a divine essence that rolls through all things, lifting his mind from individual sights to an eternal presence that binds him to all life.

Throughout this maturing process, he has held onto his love for the superficial that overwhelmed him as a boy, but he now understands it in a different light.

[...] Therefore am I still  
 A lover of the meadows and the woods  
 And mountains; and of all that we behold  
 From this green earth; of all the mighty world  
 Of eye, and ear,—both what they half create,  
 And what perceive; well pleased to recognise  
 In nature and the language of the sense  
 The anchor of my purest thoughts, the nurse,  
 The guide, the guardian of my heart, and soul  
 Of all my moral being.

The knowledge of the language or the Form of beauty has become the core of his very being. It nurses, guides, and guards his soul – serving to renew and revitalise his spirit whenever he should find himself facing difficult times.

Wordsworth's vision of nature as a source of spiritual renewal is deeply rooted in the Romantic philosophy of the sublime, a concept that underscores much of Romantic literature and thought. Wordsworth's experience of the sublime is not merely about being overwhelmed by nature's grandeur; it is an active, transformative encounter that enhances his spiritual insight and sense of self. The intense emotions he feels in nature—his elevated thoughts—are a result of this sublimity. They propel him beyond superficiality and allow him to access a higher understanding of the essence of beauty itself.

And so, Wordsworth's meditation on the beauty of nature becomes a gift not only for his sister but for any who seek renewal, reminding us that within the quiet of nature lies a profound and lasting healer, ready to sustain us through life's seasons of joy and sorrow alike. Just as Wordsworth returned to this landscape for solace and perspective, we too can find, in our favourite places, a space to reconnect with something greater than ourselves.

In the final paragraph of the poem, Wordsworth shares this realised wisdom with his younger sister, Dorothy, who is this time on the banks of the Wye with him. He sees in her the child-like wonder that he had known five years prior:

For thou art with me here upon the banks  
 Of this fair river; thou my dearest Friend,  
 [...] May I behold in thee what I was once,  
 My dear, dear Sister! and this prayer I make,  
 Knowing that Nature never did betray  
 The heart that loved her; 'tis her privilege,  
 Through all the years of this our life, to lead  
 From joy to joy: [...]

To her he extols nature's power over the soul, hoping that she too can experience the same joy and wonder that he has. He offers to her a philosophy of resilience and peace to lean on as she grows older, that he hopes may help her in times of need, as it has done him.

[...] and, in after years,  
 When these wild ecstasies shall be matured  
 Into a sober pleasure; when thy mind  
 Shall be a mansion for all lovely forms,  
 [...] If solitude, or fear, or pain, or grief,  
 Should be thy portion, with what healing thoughts  
 Of tender joy wilt thou remember me,  
 And these my exhortations!

And most importantly, he hopes that she may also experience the same ascent from appreciating nature's superficial appeal to understanding and taking sober pleasure in the Form itself.

Through *Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey*, Wordsworth lays bare a truth that resonates deeply with any soul in tune with nature's quiet power. He shows us that nature's beauty is far more than an escape, and far more than a superficial quality of the world around us; it is a constant source of renewal and the very foundation of his spirit. It guards, guides, and heals him, bringing him closer to the divine and shaping his being.

**Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey, On Revisiting the Banks of the Wye during a Tour. July 13, 1798**  
 By William Wordsworth

Five years have past; five summers, with the length  
 Of five long winters! and again I hear  
 These waters, rolling from their mountain-springs  
 With a soft inland murmur.—Once again  
 Do I behold these steep and lofty cliffs,  
 That on a wild secluded scene impress  
 Thoughts of more deep seclusion; and connect  
 The landscape with the quiet of the sky.  
 The day is come when I again repose  
 Here, under this dark sycamore, and view  
 These plots of cottage-ground, these orchard-tufts,  
 Which at this season, with their unripe fruits,  
 Are clad in one green hue, and lose themselves  
 'Mid groves and copses. Once again I see  
 These hedge-rows, hardly hedge-rows, little lines  
 Of sportive wood run wild: these pastoral farms,

Green to the very door; and wreaths of smoke  
Sent up, in silence, from among the trees!  
With some uncertain notice, as might seem  
Of vagrant dwellers in the houseless woods,  
Or of some Hermit's cave, where by his fire

The Hermit sits alone.

These beauteous forms,  
Through a long absence, have not been to me  
As is a landscape to a blind man's eye:  
But oft, in lonely rooms, and 'mid the din  
Of towns and cities, I have owed to them,  
In hours of weariness, sensations sweet,  
Felt in the blood, and felt along the heart;  
And passing even into my purer mind  
With tranquil restoration:—feelings too  
Of unremembered pleasure: such, perhaps,  
As have no slight or trivial influence  
On that best portion of a good man's life,  
His little, nameless, unremembered, acts  
Of kindness and of love. Nor less, I trust,  
To them I may have owed another gift,  
Of aspect more sublime; that blessed mood,  
In which the burthen of the mystery,  
In which the heavy and the weary weight  
Of all this unintelligible world,  
Is lightened:—that serene and blessed mood,  
In which the affections gently lead us on,—  
Until, the breath of this corporeal frame  
And even the motion of our human blood  
Almost suspended, we are laid asleep  
In body, and become a living soul:  
While with an eye made quiet by the power  
Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,  
We see into the life of things.

If this  
Be but a vain belief, yet, oh! how oft—  
In darkness and amid the many shapes  
Of joyless daylight; when the fretful stir  
Unprofitable, and the fever of the world,  
Have hung upon the beatings of my heart—  
How oft, in spirit, have I turned to thee,  
O sylvan Wye! thou wanderer thro' the woods,  
How often has my spirit turned to thee!  
And now, with gleams of half-extinguished thought,  
With many recognitions dim and faint,  
And somewhat of a sad perplexity,  
The picture of the mind revives again:  
While here I stand, not only with the sense  
Of present pleasure, but with pleasing thoughts  
That in this moment there is life and food  
For future years. And so I dare to hope,  
Though changed, no doubt, from what I was when first  
I came among these hills; when like a roe  
I bounded o'er the mountains, by the sides  
Of the deep rivers, and the lonely streams,  
Wherever nature led: more like a man  
Flying from something that he dreads, than one  
Who sought the thing he loved. For nature then  
(The coarser pleasures of my boyish days  
And their glad animal movements all gone by)  
To me was all in all.—I cannot paint  
What then I was. The sounding cataract  
Haunted me like a passion: the tall rock,  
The mountain, and the deep and gloomy wood,  
Their colours and their forms, were then to me  
An appetite; a feeling and a love,  
That had no need of a remoter charm,

By thought supplied, nor any interest  
Unborrowed from the eye.—That time is past,  
And all its aching joys are now no more,  
And all its dizzy raptures. Not for this  
Faint I, nor mourn nor murmur; other gifts  
Have followed; for such loss, I would believe,  
Abundant recompense. For I have learned  
To look on nature, not as in the hour  
Of thoughtless youth; but hearing oftentimes  
The still sad music of humanity,  
Nor harsh nor grating, though of ample power  
To chasten and subdue.—And I have felt  
A presence that disturbs me with the joy  
Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime  
Of something far more deeply interfused,  
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,  
And the round ocean and the living air,  
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man:  
A motion and a spirit, that impels  
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,  
And rolls through all things. Therefore am I still  
A lover of the meadows and the woods  
And mountains; and of all that we behold  
From this green earth; of all the mighty world  
Of eye, and ear,—both what they half create,  
And what perceive; well pleased to recognise  
In nature and the language of the sense  
The anchor of my purest thoughts, the nurse,  
The guide, the guardian of my heart, and soul  
Of all my moral being.

Nor perchance,  
If I were not thus taught, should I the more  
Suffer my genial spirits to decay:  
For thou art with me here upon the banks  
Of this fair river; thou my dearest Friend,  
My dear, dear Friend; and in thy voice I catch  
The language of my former heart, and read  
My former pleasures in the shooting lights  
Of thy wild eyes. Oh! yet a little while  
May I behold in thee what I was once,  
My dear, dear Sister! and this prayer I make,  
Knowing that Nature never did betray  
The heart that loved her; 'tis her privilege,  
Through all the years of this our life, to lead  
From joy to joy: for she can so inform  
The mind that is within us, so impress  
With quietness and beauty, and so feed  
With lofty thoughts, that neither evil tongues,  
Rash judgments, nor the sneers of selfish men,  
Nor greetings where no kindness is, nor all  
The dreary intercourse of daily life,  
Shall e'er prevail against us, or disturb  
Our cheerful faith, that all which we behold  
Is full of blessings. Therefore let the moon  
Shine on thee in thy solitary walk;  
And let the misty mountain-winds be free  
To blow against thee: and, in after years,  
When these wild ecstasies shall be matured  
Into a sober pleasure; when thy mind  
Shall be a mansion for all lovely forms,  
Thy memory be as a dwelling-place  
For all sweet sounds and harmonies; oh! then,  
If solitude, or fear, or pain, or grief,  
Should be thy portion, with what healing thoughts  
Of tender joy wilt thou remember me,  
And these my exhortations! Nor, perchance—  
If I should be where I no more can hear  
Thy voice, nor catch from thy wild eyes these gleams  
Of past existence—wilt thou then forget  
That on the banks of this delightful stream



We stood together; and that I, so long  
A worshipper of Nature, hither came  
Unwearied in that service: rather say  
With warmer love—oh! with far deeper zeal  
Of holier love. Nor wilt thou then forget,  
That after many wanderings, many years  
Of absence, these steep woods and lofty cliffs,  
And this green pastoral landscape, were to me  
More dear, both for themselves and for thy sake!





# The Poetry of Liam Q. D. Hall

## Ides

Thence she stood, Oliver's bright sword aloft.  
A figurehead in amber clad and doffed,  
Halo limns her crowning treasure-tresses,  
Some ancient autumn pillar which blesses;  
Facing forward unto dawn and toward  
Infinity. In her wings, time; hymn chords  
her poise; Her proud eyes, memory. And on  
Her lips and brow something words lack, though drawn,  
And cannot express, though we try anon.

## Eudaimonia

When I have wepted for my ill lot in life,  
The failings and the lack I'm wont to feel;  
When I have feared of the turmoil and strife,  
Proud hate, leasings, and wickedness of weal;  
When I have seen malignant love--oft feigned:  
Cry within and look whither done once deigned.

When I have wepted for my wretched soul bought,  
And the fee paid in blood by the most meek;  
When I have feared my God and Him besought  
Mine forgiveness, and succor did I seek;  
When I have seen the bounteous display  
Of blessings now and those rewards which may;

Invoke thus: Death be mortal, great Thou art;  
Ever keep Thee my Soul from old foe's dart.

## Dragon Hoard

This treasure was hoarded and died upon  
It is cursed to any who gaze thereon.  
For the worm's cunning doth bestir and wake  
The ill of our heart greedy to partake,  
Of any esurience or mistrust we bare  
That we have not enfettered or in snare.  
For weak will be any who seek or find  
The gold, gem, and jewel of the dragonkind.

## Falcon and Raven

Pluck out mine eye so I can see  
The things that will sooth come to be:  
In the dry desert, slashed by blue,  
I do this to help those of you;  
In the frore fjords of the old north,  
From my doom I try to fight forth.

## Surreal

Harry the coast;  
Reach for the sky  
Haunted the ghosts  
That do not die;  
Heart in a chest;  
Touched eidolon;  
Give it some rest,  
Let it be gone.





# 2272011

Adam



Cataclysmic explosion reverberates like a powerful earthquake  
 Vibrations so violent human bodies and souls are eviscerated  
 Metals of all alloys are twisted and snapped like twigs  
 Solid concrete is pulverized, settling down like mist  
 Windows shattered: sending shards down at terminal velocity  
 The shockwave begins deafening an entire city  
 The structures disintegrate: crumbling quickly and collapsing  
 A plume of cancerous particles envelopes the blast radius  
 Too thick to conceive or witness the devastation  
 Wood splinters and shrapnel impalements are widespread  
 Unbeknownst to all the affected human pincushions  
 Small streams of crimson liquid trickle down the pedestrian walkways  
 Open your eyes and view this explicit nightmare  
 Vision is punctuated with monochrome shapes  
 Regurgitating blood and your last meal, you slowly start to rise  
 Grasp your chest: concave with a massive contusion and shattered bones  
 Your lungs are filling slowly with mucus and blood  
 You cough only to make your wheezing worse and heavier  
 Choking and disgustingly dizzy, you can now lay your eyes on the rest  
 A thin film of an unknown fine powder has covered your world  
 Desperately struggling to breathe you take in a mouthful of dust and more blood  
 Violent seizures wrack and twist your body from the initial shock  
 Absolute feelings of nausea and numbing unbearable pain shoot up your spine  
 As needles are driven deeper and deeper you shriek with a slight gurgle  
 Your body spasm sending your arms and head flying backwards  
 Situated in front of you, something truly horrifying sends you reeling  
 A decapitated child: silent and saturated by a massive blood loss  
 Its overalls tell the story of the previous family outing  
 The maroon coating now tells another  
 Now just a mangled corpse with every last shred of life removed  
 The head placed behind it, its eyes, now devoid of life just stare right through you  
 Just another lifeless doll: another trophy for this megalomaniac  
 A solitary tear begins to slowly descend down the front of your warm bloodied cheek  
 A lone memory of your former life flashes inside your mind  
 Smiling face and close embrace, your lover bringing you flowers  
 You shake your head as much as your splitting headache will allow  
 Trying to focus there is an eerie silence  
 You feel your head swell and contract bits at a time  
 The view is unlike anything you could ever conceive  
 An arm torn from its shoulder socket sits a meter away from you  
 The flannel sleeve torn from the base of the shoulder  
 It twitches still: fading as its life force hastily evacuates  
 3 seconds of life now irreversibly gone  
 A fresh kill  
 You can smell the metallic scent of the warm blood pumping out  
 Through the haze is a very faint outline of ruins  
 Your first auditory experience comes:  
 A few car alarms and wails in the immediate distance  
 This moment everlasting as you silently hope for an end  
 As the wails and screams advance closer, a woman grabs you  
 Her face like a china doll splattered with maroon and black substance  
 She shakes you violently and yells something indistinct

Her hair is also blood stained and caked with dust  
 Her brunette color barely showing through the mess  
 Realizing there is a piece of re-bar sticking out from her solar plexus  
 You struggle to make sense of it all  
 Mouthing words to her: she sobs loudly and continues to shake you  
 Her dark eyes are almost hollow now almost drained of desperation  
 Only a profound panic has kept her heart beating and her blood pumping  
 The striped pantsuit she wears is shredded heavily from the blast  
 You cannot quite make out the colors but the pattern looks somewhat familiar  
 The woman starts to grip you tighter and starts to break down  
 Reading what you can of her lips: it suggests she is seeking her husband  
 She repeats a name you cannot quite piece together from your current state  
 Bending at the middle to embrace you closer, she is oblivious to her injuries  
 She is bound to the blindness of her desperation  
 Her lower jaw ceases to gape as she has noticed the carnage encompassing her world  
 The shock has set and an agonizing distress has consumed her  
 The horror has resonated inside her and razed her foundations  
 While she begins to scream again, you look to a distance of 10 meters  
 The outlines of the ruins of the former shopping district have been drastically altered  
 The current state would easily echo a vision of the direct aftermath of Hiroshima  
 Pillars have been torn in half, floors of buildings have been erased in seconds.  
 The sky is still grey filled with particles of flesh, dust and smoke  
 Infinite mounds of debris obscure all roadways and pedestrian walkways  
 Your voice begins to come around and become somewhat usable  
 "Wh- Wh What the fuck has happened?" you slowly sputter  
 The woman who has been with you now for what seems like an eternity, speaks  
 Shocked at your speech and coherency she begs "Help me, help me please!!!"  
 A slight loosening of her posture suggests she has found partial relief in your speech  
 Turning to you with a gaze of profound momentary clarity she speaks  
 "We have to get the fuck out of here." She says hastily with a shallow breath  
 Taking a quick self-evaluation of yourself you notice your left wrist is broken  
 However other than the pain that courses through your body in searing hot waves  
 There is no other grave injuries and you are mainly intact.  
 You stand up while anchoring your right side to her body  
 The pain of now being on your legs has brought you to another level  
 The endorphins and adrenaline from your panic restarts  
 Pain has temporarily ceased for the moment  
 A new feeling of intent to flee surges inside of you  
 "Anywhere but here, anywhere but here." is what you tell yourself  
 The woman with you has ceased her urge to find her husband  
 Her survival instincts in tandem with your own have kicked in  
 Slowly limping and breathing heavily in excruciating pain  
 The numbness starts to take absolute effect and shut down nerves  
 She makes a recollection of a bus station 1000 meters to the east  
 "If we can make it there without dying." You add  
 "We c-c-can get help there." She wheezes  
 This could be hours to your destination and your blood loss



increases with movement  
 Suddenly a familiar city melody catches your ear  
 That undeniable noise means Emergency Response has been dispatched  
 However, to make it there through the carnage and debris, it could be many hours  
 Hobbling, the first 100 meters, you regurgitate some down the front of your shirt  
 Spackled by your last meal, it almost brings a creature comfort  
 A small token of a once benign and modest life  
 The bodies are truly everywhere, like a massive mannequin factory had exploded  
 You try and calculate how many kilograms of explosives were used  
 It must have been in the thousands if not more  
 Staggering past all those who did not survive this, you imagine they are all asleep  
 Viewing them out of your peripherals, too frightened and bewildered to look  
 Some who have survived are writhing in different degrees of pain  
 You dare not concern yourself with trivial matters now  
 There is no room between your new friend and your own escalating blood loss  
 Your survival is paramount to this day  
 Live or die trying to live  
 A true exercise in your own will to cling to this life  
 Defying the obstacles ahead of you  
 You take a quick survey of your new found difficulties  
 The terrain is quite uneven due to the debris, the wood, the concrete, the metal  
 Your companion kicks a severed leg out of your way  
 "How could this be happening?"  
 "Who did this?"  
 "Why am I a victim?"  
 Typical questions you ask yourself after such an event  
 The dark shapes no longer cloud your vision so much  
 Colors are becoming more vivid, but the smell of charred and torn flesh bothers you  
 200 hundred meters pass and your companion and you carry on  
 A cold sweat has trickled down your forehead and begins to burn your eyes  
 You wipe your brow slowly and carefully knowing of your head traumas  
 Still caressing your glass addled scalp, debris comes down like a mist in front of you  
 The sounds of gritting stones suggest an old building is shedding some weight  
 Taking a fleeting limp ahead at quicker pace saves the both of you  
 A man comes racing across the street wailing of "this impending apocalypse and how we are all a part!"  
 He trips over an upturned pavement stone and eats it hard with a thud  
 You let out a snicker as his once pristine suit is now totally ruined  
 At that same moment a chunk of the building behind you had collapsed  
 Collapsed and sent debris crashing down were you had been previously  
 "It happens to old structures." You tell yourself nervously  
 It could have also been a direct cause due to the magnitude of the blast  
 Realizing that you had just cheated death another time  
 A small smile develops across your face unavoidably  
 At least your central nervous system still recognizes feelings other than pain  
 Silly Christians and their always saying how their god has forsaken them  
 You start to examine the edifices of all the buildings around you  
 Looking for snipers but seeing no glimmers from their scopes.  
 Obviously this man has rattled your mind a bit  
 This is not a war zone but an isolated incident  
 You must absolutely be able to differentiate from the two

Keep walking and ignore those continually asinine thoughts  
 If you were meant to be dead by now you would have already been long deceased  
 However this is not a time to count your supposed blessings  
 Once your ocular scan has revealed nothing but raw paranoia  
 Another 100 meters has passed witnessing your still beating heart pumping with blood  
 The blood leaving your body is cause for alarm as well  
 300 meters down and 700 to go apparently  
 Still feeling the heat of 1.000 more fires all around and ash clouds slowly descending with embers  
 If someone took a snapshot now it would seem as if a volcano had erupted in an urban setting  
 Except without that strong haunting memory of so many innocent people snuffed out  
 There has been a tactically facilitated multiple bombing  
 No other way to be able to rationalize the destruction this far out  
 Repetitive screams catch your ear despite your partner's lack of sudden incoherency  
 "Hjelp oss!!!" screams a person coming from you right 10 meters away  
 Slowly tilting your neck you see a woman cradling a child  
 In a fit of desperation this woman strikes the child on the face  
 More slaps reveal this certain child's mortality  
 No response except a dull thud from the blood saturated light-haired child  
 Who glows almost bright red amongst the crimson and the encompassing fires  
 Lying lifeless and limp, she pounds on the child's breast  
 "Prata Prata PRATA!!!!" she desperately pounds until her anger gives way to despair  
 This scene has you finding yourself in a conundrum again  
 Do you press on with your new confidant or possibly die trying to save this shattered soul?  
 You stop and stare starting to drool from your aching and broken mouth  
 Will you take on another passenger on your already damaged lifeboat?  
 It may take hours more to reach safety, in which you bleed out  
 Or will you try and escort another to safety and slowly die trying to accomplish such?  
 This is not game so all options spared: you will die  
 Or will you?  
 A snap and albeit strange epiphany comes and you find strength to move on  
 You turn your head and look at your mate  
 Staring into her eyes there is a tacit and yet tearful agreement to forge this path  
 One that will be forever locked in your mind as neither something good or bad  
 Just purely a moment captured of understood solidarity  
 Before your eyes close to blink a thought crosses your mind  
 What is this if not a charade to blind and confuse?  
 Your wrist trembles with excitement and the rebar continues to damage further  
 The rebar stays within your mind a source of tetanus  
 "Hva heter du?" you mumble as the omnipotent fires rage.  
 "Brenda med tre barna." She gasps  
 Her lung is punctured and slowly filling with blood, expressing urgency  
 Her right knee begins to give out more and more as you slough through  
 "Medical attention will heal you Brenda." You gasp as the wheezing becomes heavier  
 She has shuddered in the rejection and her former faith  
 "Okej, Vi må gå på veiens."  
 "Gjennom helvete vi gå." You slowly tag out with  
 Dazed and wary the odd couple staggers towards oblivion  
 10 more meters....  
 500 meters and closing in on possible relief  
 Pulses are slowing to 100 bpm

So urgency is of absolute top priority  
 The sidewalk ahead reveals some undamaged areas  
 Finding solace in the areas untouched by this overall insanity  
 Even if the is a fissure in the pavement  
 It resembles some piece of normalcy and peace  
 Inspiration came come sometimes from the most mundane of places  
 Finding and sustaining a will to live takes all the inspiration you can find  
 Pressing on now stepping carefully over piles of rubbish  
 In a brief reflection it seems as if the genesis of this journey was weeks ago  
 You imagine if you will be having a day off work tomorrow  
 You snicker a bit to yourself quietly  
 The shops all around you are empty but their fronts are lightly damaged  
 Only a few windows have been shattered  
 Some are only spider webbed with a few holes  
 Posters in the windows of a bank with a smiling family outside having dinner  
 Telling tales of special offers of savings and low mortgage rates  
 You stop and look at the mixed race couple and their beautiful daughter  
 She is grinning as they are having pasta for dinner  
 As you examine the sheer joy on their faces  
 You note your own reality and it angers you  
 "FAEN TA DEG!!!" you shout from your diaphragm  
 Tears are cascading down your face as you cannot suppress your emotions  
 You seethe with jealousy and you feel ashamed at the same moment  
 Brenda still clinging to you tightly but growing pale slowly moans angrily  
 "NNNEEEIHHH!!!" "NNNEEEIHHH!!!" "FAEN TA DEG! FAEN TA DEG!"  
 "VI DØ. Vi døøøø...." The trilling fades as she falls unconscious and flaccid  
 In your arms she manages to spark back snapping back into the world  
 You cannot really argue with that retort  
 Both of you are bound to this cruel twist of fate  
 All is lost from this day but construction must arrive from this destruction  
 As if this sudden burst had given her surge she begins to support herself more  
 No longer so tightly bound she loosens her tight grip on your arm  
 Her new inertia influences you to move at a quicker pace  
 Hearts now synchronized, this compels both of you  
 You will not die together, you will live to see your families  
 Moving now at twice the speed albeit while limping  
 A south-western wind howls ushering in a front of deep grey clouds  
 In your mind the beauty and the chaos coalesce into a new beast  
 Adversity: If you are already fucked, fuck it back  
 Make it wish it never was invited to this party  
 The rain starts gradually with a fine mist carried in from the sea  
 Salty but cold from the icy waters around the city  
 But then the skies open without unleashing a punishing torrent  
 Coming down in huge drops it is as if it has reversed coming from underneath you  
 This effect generates smoke from the area from around you  
 It curtails the flames but only slightly  
 Precipitation hits your skin revealing the sources of your contusions and secondary pain  
 Daring not to look down because there are too many to count  
 The sensations evokes certain memories caught in the rain  
 With lovers of days past, with friends, with the family you love  
 As you trudge through the downpour  
 The wind has kicked up a bit  
 Sending the rubbish flailing in the breeze before the weight of

the rain suppresses it  
 One man across the street stares at you  
 While the pavement heaves rain from its underbelly  
 Your eyes meet and reveal another truly tortured soul  
 Complete with the 1.000 meter stare  
 His eyes are hollow but alas he has no reason to disrupt your personal quest  
 The face is rugged telling of better days at work  
 Longing for a better situation induces a quick nod of empathy  
 A quick and brief connection that lasts for just a moment  
 Meaningful in ways unlike those you have in your everyday life  
 However powerful in ways that are bred upon the day  
 As if it were a hurricane the excitement of the rush has broken him in  
 With an absolute quickness  
 His eyes dance with a glimmer  
 In a last minute reflection, he jerks forward  
 Without caring about the repercussions  
 Feeling a moment of solitude, his head creaks to your direction  
 A toothy grin with wrinkled and dust covered face abounds  
 A momentary glimpse into an unfortalt solidarity  
 As soon as it can be reciprocated, it falls  
 His grin and his pale dusted face go back to their respectful place  
 A slight nod is your chance to exit  
 The blood loss still affects you greatly  
 It directs your attention to the matters at hand  
 Brenda's solar plexus has begun to spurt blood.  
 With a jazz-like rhythm it pulses and pumps out blood  
 Not so much as a spurt, but the tourniquet is leaking  
 Leaking not so much as to necessitate first aid  
 But it leaking like a slightly cauterized wound  
 Seeping as it will not stop  
 Blood loss is minimal at this point  
 Compared to the rest of these few moments  
 400 meters as she lifts her unbroken arm into the direction of the storm  
 2 fingers are erect as the other 3 just stay down  
 Like an obligatory gun they shoot out  
 No god to give any strength  
 Only left to survive in this fall out  
 400 meters means you can almost smell the sanitization of  
 Pouring over scenarios again and again  
 You have survived thus far, and that is what matters  
 Although the pain again builds with lactic acids  
 Your joints feel tampered, but it is no cause for alarm  
 Not so much as a time for reflection  
 Brenda seems beguiled, as her stamina has increased  
 Under the guise of hope, it's fateful way begins to shine  
 Pale as much as you and her are, danger has come full force  
 The fate you share is another beast  
 Her solar plexus is almost bringing her to convulsions  
 The improvised bandage has begun to leak  
 Leaking slowly as you have done a solid job  
 It seeps a rather crimson liquid, something fierce  
 Not so alarming as the pulse of it's shareholder  
 Brenda speaks as if she were flushing her soul  
 "Nesten til? Er vi....? She lazily resigns  
 The crossroads you spy is only 10 meters  
 Without immediate obstacle or reverence  
 Her eyes gravitate towards a new horizon of which cannot be understood  
 Fluctuating as if a seizure were present  
 Although no evidence reveals such activities  
 Reaching a perpendicular crossroads  
 Another pint of blood has been shed  
 200 meters without an incident  
 You have succeeded at the lottery it seems  
 A stray dog runs perpendicular to you 10 meters ahead  
 Running with only 3 legs  
 Clearly one of the legs has been a sacrifice  
 But the pace of its impaired owner suggests it was lost many



minutes previous  
 Now the carnage has left you and your partner  
 A sublime tranquility has befallen  
 Pale with beads of sweat you try and focus  
 Looking at Brenda you see she is hanging on by a thread  
 All the damage and distress  
 It begins to very slowly fade  
 A sharp headache gives you a stabbing sensation behind your left eye  
 Examining yourself you find a new beauty in your disheveled self  
 Your clothing exists in fringe like bloodstained tatters  
 Like a vision from Aleppo  
 Dust and caked blood stained fabric  
 Although your observations confirm you pain  
 Still hobbling amongst the store fronts  
 Brenda's weight has increased due to her dependency  
 She slumps like a cadaver  
 Knowing neither if she has passed or alive  
 Your head raises forward  
 As if it was an act of defiance  
 So long it has been since your day began  
 Shaking your head to free yourself of the unnecessary  
 Readjusting your focus  
 Your gaze redirects to the heavens  
 Looking to the sky the rain has come to drizzle  
 An uneasy calm has been reached however,  
 Reminders of the past linger and still present themselves proudly  
 A puff of smoke here  
 Distant screams in the distance  
 The violence has even travelled as far this  
 Shrapnel damage exists but is no longer a credible threat  
 Structures with pock-marked facades  
 The car alarms that tend to sing for anyone have begun to fade  
 This is still difficult as you have wholly accepted the chaos  
 Like one who has hallucinated for far too long  
 You feel as your life had been usurped and permanently altered  
 As your acceptance nears a completion  
 A sight you have never dreamt of confronts you in the distance  
 Clear as the rays emanating from the clouds  
 A vision of nirvana  
 Pulsing with the last burst of energy you can muster  
 Will it be worth it?  
 Brenda hangs like ragdoll sewn to your side  
 Limping terribly from your counter ballast  
 Giving no more fucks as your field is barren  
 This is the final stretch  
 Gladly pissing yourself with excitement  
 Your immediate world is rocked  
 Before a shockwave can occur  
 Vision goes white with an earth shattering reverberation  
 Half way to the ground  
 A grin spreads across your face  
 "Fuck det hele."  
 Sove bra nå.

## Your Nation's Calling

Blamblas

Take up your nation's calling,  
 Come forth, ye mighty men.  
 Arise from your suppression,  
 To build thy lands again.  
 An evil force doth grip you –  
 The liberal merchant's veil –  
 But men like thee are mighty,  
 Whilst men like they are frail.

Take up your nation's calling,  
 Endure the modern ills,  
 Fill full your heart with purpose,  
 Reject the phoney skills.  
 Fall not for false consensus,  
 Fall not for current things,  
 But champion the eternal –  
 The truth tradition brings.

Take up your nation's calling,  
 Bring venerable return –  
 To greater times before you,  
 Whose embers yet still burn.  
 Thy nation's in its winter,  
 Decay infects all things,  
 But through the Kali Yuga,  
 Shall arise the light of spring.

Take up your nation's calling,  
 Have done with modern frame.  
 The pantomime of politics,  
 That veils true power's aim.  
 Move past the rife delusion,  
 Have done with childish play –  
 The futile shows of protest,  
 Are nought but infant's way.

Take up your nation's calling,  
 Though times look ever bleak,  
 And England's rightful sovereigns,  
 Are these days ever meek.  
 But when the liberal bugman,  
 With cold and beady eyes,  
 Commands your tame compliance,  
 Deny him compromise.

Take up your nation's calling,  
 Put end to England's rape,  
 Or pall of smothered virtue,  
 Shall atop her coffin drape.  
 These times aren't everlasting,  
 No land is truly lost,  
 But each moon's craven passing,  
 Doth swell the bitter cost.

Take up your nation's calling,  
 Reject thy docile ways.  
 The time has come for Caesar,  
 To forge a better day.  
 The night is at its darkest,  
 But this, like all, shall pass.  
 Beget the age of warriors,  
 Beget a noble caste.

Take up your nation's calling,  
 And strive to build anew,  
 Oh, men among the ruins,  
 Come show thy valour true.  
 And when the time is ready,  
 For blood and soil to fight,  
 Vow to thee, thy nation,  
 You'd die for England's light.



# The McWilliamses and the Burglar Alarm

Mark Twain





The conversation drifted smoothly and pleasantly along from weather to crops, from crops to literature, from literature to scandal, from scandal to religion; then took a random jump, and landed on the subject of burglar alarms. And now for the first time Mr. McWilliams showed feeling. Whenever I perceive this sign on this man's dial, I comprehend it, and lapse into silence, and give him opportunity to unload his heart. Said he, with but ill-controlled emotion:

"I do not go one single cent on burglar alarms, Mr. Twain—not a single cent—and I will tell you why. When we were finishing our house, we found we had a little cash left over, on account of the plumber not knowing it. I was for enlightening the heathen with it, for I was always unaccountably down on the heathen somehow; but Mrs. McWilliams said no, let's have a burglar alarm. I agreed to this compromise. I will explain that whenever I want a thing, and Mrs. McWilliams wants another thing, and we decide upon the thing that Mrs. McWilliams wants—as we always do—she calls that a compromise. Very well: the man came up from New York and put in the alarm, and charged three hundred and twenty-five dollars for it, and said we could sleep without uneasiness now. So we did for awhile—say a month. Then one night we smelled smoke, and I was advised to get up and see what the matter was. I lit a candle, and started toward the stairs, and met a burglar coming out of a room with a basket of tinware, which he had mistaken for solid silver in the dark. He was smoking a pipe. I said, 'My friend, we do not allow smoking in this room.' He said he was a stranger, and could not be expected to know the rules of the house: said he had been in many houses just as good as this one, and it had never been objected to before. He added that as far as his experience went, such rules had never been considered to apply to burglars, anyway.

"I said: 'Smoke along, then, if it is the custom, though I think that the conceding of a privilege to a burglar which is denied to a bishop is a conspicuous sign of the looseness of the times. But waiving all that, what business have you to be entering this house in this furtive and clandestine way, without ringing the burglar alarm?'

"He looked confused and ashamed, and said, with embarrassment: 'I beg a thousand pardons. I did not know you had a burglar alarm, else I would have rung it. I beg you will not mention it where my parents may hear of it, for they are old and feeble, and such a seemingly wanton breach of the hallowed conventionalities of our Christian civilization might all too rudely sunder the frail bridge which hangs darkling between the pale and evanescent present and the solemn great deeps of the eternities. May I trouble you for a match?'

"I said: 'Your sentiments do you honor, but if you will allow me to say it, metaphor is not your best hold. Spare your thigh; this kind light only on the box, and seldom there, in fact, if my experience may be trusted. But to return to business: how did you get in here?'

"Through a second-story window.'

"It was even so. I redeemed the tinware at pawnbroker's rates, less cost of advertising, bade the burglar good-night, closed the window after him, and retired to headquarters to report. Next morning we sent for the burglar-alarm man, and he came up and explained that the reason the alarm did not 'go off' was that no part of the house but the first floor was attached to the alarm. This was simply idiotic; one might as well have no armor on at all in battle as to have it only on his legs. The expert now put the whole second story on the alarm, charged three hundred dollars for it, and went his way. By and by, one night, I found a burglar in the third story, about to start down a ladder with a lot of miscellaneous property. My first impulse was to crack his head with a billiard cue; but my second was to refrain from this

attention, because he was between me and the cue rack. The second impulse was plainly the soundest, so I refrained, and proceeded to compromise. I redeemed the property at former rates, after deducting ten per cent. for use of ladder, it being my ladder, and, next day we sent down for the expert once more, and had the third story attached to the alarm, for three hundred dollars.

"By this time the 'annunciator' had grown to formidable dimensions. It had forty-seven tags on it, marked with the names of the various rooms and chimneys, and it occupied the space of an ordinary wardrobe. The gong was the size of a wash-bowl, and was placed above the head of our bed. There was a wire from the house to the coachman's quarters in the stable, and a noble gong alongside his pillow.

"We should have been comfortable now but for one defect. Every morning at five the cook opened the kitchen door, in the way of business, and rip went that gong! The first time this happened I thought the last day was come sure. I didn't think it in bed—no, but out of it—for the first effect of that frightful gong is to hurl you across the house, and slam you against the wall, and then curl you up, and squirm you like a spider on a stove lid, till somebody shuts the kitchen door. In solid fact, there is no clamor that is even remotely comparable to the dire clamor which that gong makes. Well, this catastrophe happened every morning regularly at five o'clock, and lost us three hours sleep; for, mind you, when that thing wakes you, it doesn't merely wake you in spots; it wakes you all over, conscience and all, and you are good for eighteen hours of wide-awakeness subsequently—eighteen hours of the very most inconceivable wide-awakeness that you ever experienced in your life. A stranger died on our hands one time, and we vacated and left him in our room overnight. Did that stranger wait for the general judgment? No, sir; he got up at five the next morning in the most prompt and unostentatious way. I knew he would; I knew it mighty well. He collected his life-insurance, and lived happy ever after, for there was plenty of proof as to the perfect squareness of his death. "Well, we were gradually fading toward a better land, on account of the daily loss of sleep; so we finally had the expert up again, and he ran a wire to the outside of the door, and placed a switch there, whereby Thomas, the butler, always made one little mistake—he switched the alarm off at night when he went to bed, and switched it on again at daybreak in the morning, just in time for the cook to open the kitchen door, and enable that gong to slam us across the house, sometimes breaking a window with one or the other of us. At the end of a week we recognized that this switch business was a delusion and a snare. We also discovered that a band of burglars had been lodging in the house the whole time—not exactly to steal, for there wasn't much left now, but to hide from the police, for they were hot pressed, and they shrewdly judged that the detectives would never think of a tribe of burglars taking sanctuary in a house notoriously protected by the most imposing and elaborate burglar alarm in America.

"Sent down for the expert again, and this time he struck a most dazzling idea—he fixed the thing so that opening the kitchen door would take off the alarm. It was a noble idea, and he charged accordingly. But you already foresee the result. I switched on the alarm every night at bed-time, no longer trusting on Thomas's frail memory; and as soon as the lights were out the burglars walked in at the kitchen door, thus taking the alarm off without waiting for the cook to do it in the morning. You see how aggravatingly we were situated. For months we couldn't have any company. Not a spare bed in the house; all occupied by burglars.

"Finally, I got up a cure of my own. The expert answered the call, and ran another ground wire to the stable, and established a switch there, so that the coachman could put on and take off the



alarm. That worked first rate, and a season of peace ensued, during which we got to inviting company once more and enjoying life.

"But by and by the irrepressible alarm invented a new kink. One winter's night we were flung out of bed by the sudden music of that awful gong, and when we hobbled to the annunciator, turned up the gas, and saw the word 'Nursery' exposed, Mrs. McWilliams fainted dead away, and I came precious near doing the same thing myself. I seized my shotgun, and stood timing the coachman whilst that appalling buzzing went on. I knew that his gong had flung him out, too, and that he would be along with his gun as soon as he could jump into his clothes. When I judged that the time was ripe, I crept to the room next the nursery, glanced through the window, and saw the dim outline of the coachman in the yard below, standing at present-arms and waiting for a chance. Then I hopped into the nursery and fired, and in the same instant the coachman fired at the red flash of my gun. Both of us were successful; I crippled a nurse, and he shot off all my back hair. We turned up the gas, and telephoned for a surgeon. There was not a sign of a burglar, and no window had been raised. One glass was absent, but that was where the coachman's charge had come through. Here was a fine mystery—a burglar alarm 'going off' at midnight of its own accord, and not a burglar in the neighborhood!

"The expert answered the usual call, and explained that it was a 'False alarm.' Said it was easily fixed. So he overhauled the nursery window, charged a remunerative figure for it, and departed. "What we suffered from false alarms for the next three years no stylographic pen can describe. During the next three months I always flew with my gun to the room indicated, and the coachman always sallied forth with his battery to support me. But there was never anything to shoot at—windows all tight and secure. We always sent down for the expert next day, and he fixed those particular windows so they would keep quiet a week or so, and always remembered to send us a bill about like this:

Wire \$2.15  
Nipple .75  
Two hours' labor 1.50  
Wax .47  
Tape .34  
Screws .15  
Recharging battery .98  
Three hours' labor 2.25  
String .02  
Lard .66  
Pond's Extract 1.25  
Springs at 50 2.00  
Railroad fares 7.25  
———  
19.77

"At length a perfectly natural thing came about—after we had answered three or four hundred false alarms—to wit, we stopped answering them. Yes, I simply rose up calmly, when slammed across the house by the alarm, calmly inspected the annunciator, took note of the room indicated; and then calmly disconnected that room from the alarm, and went back to bed as if nothing had happened. Moreover, I left that room off permanently, and did not send for the expert. Well, it goes without saying that in the course of time all the rooms were taken off, and the entire machine was out of service.

"It was at this unprotected time that the heaviest calamity of all happened. The burglars walked in one night and carried off the burglar alarm! yes, sir, every hide and hair of it: ripped it out, tooth and nail; springs, bells, gongs, battery, and all; they took a hundred and fifty miles of copper wire; they just cleaned her out, bag and baggage, and never left us a vestige of her to swear at—

Swear by, I mean.

"We had a time of it to get her back; but we accomplished it finally, for money. The alarm firm said that what we needed now was to have her put in right—with their new patent springs in the windows to make false alarms impossible, and their new patent clock attached to take off and put on the alarm morning and night without human assistance. That seemed a good scheme. They promised to have the whole thing finished in ten days. They began work, and we left for the summer. They worked a couple of days; then they left for the summer. After which the burglars moved in, and began their summer vacation. When we returned in the fall, the house was as empty as a beer closet in premises where painters have been at work. We refurnished, and then sent down to hurry up the expert. He came up and finished the job, and said: 'Now this clock is set to put on the alarm every night at 10, and take it off every morning at 5:45. All you've got to do is to wind her up every week, and then leave her alone—she will take care of the alarm herself.'

"After that we had a most tranquil season during three months. The bill was prodigious, of course, and I had said I would not pay it until the new machinery had proved itself to be flawless. The time stipulated was three months. So I paid the bill, and the very next day the alarm went to buzzing like ten thousand bee swarms at ten o'clock in the morning. I turned the hands around twelve hours, according to instructions, and this took off the alarm; but there was another hitch at night, and I had to set her ahead twelve hours once more to get her to put the alarm on again. That sort of nonsense went on a week or two, then the expert came up and put in a new clock. He came up every three months during the next three years, and put in a new clock. But it was always a failure. His clocks all had the same perverse defect: they would put the alarm on in the daytime, and they would not put it on at night; and if you forced it on yourself, they would take it off again the minute your back was turned. "Now there is the history of that burglar alarm—everything just as it happened; nothing extenuated, and naught set down in malice. Yes, sir,—and when I had slept nine years with burglars, and maintained an expensive burglar alarm the whole time, for their protection, not mine, and at my sole cost—for not a d—d cent could I ever get THEM to contribute—I just said to Mrs. McWilliams that I had had enough of that kind of pie; so with her full consent I took the whole thing out and traded it off for a dog, and shot the dog. I don't know what you think about it, Mr. Twain; but I think those things are made solely in the interest of the burglars. Yes, sir, a burglar alarm combines in its person all that is objectionable about a fire, a riot, and a harem, and at the same time had none of the compensating advantages, of one sort or another, that customarily belong with that combination. Good-by: I get off here."





# HUNTING THE DECEITFUL TURKEY

Mark Twain

When I was a boy my uncle and his big boys hunted with the rifle, the youngest boy Fred and I with a shotgun—a small single-barrelled shotgun which was properly suited to our size and strength; it was not much heavier than a broom. We carried it turn about, half an hour at a time. I was not able to hit anything with it, but I liked to try. Fred and I hunted feathered small game, the others hunted deer, squirrels, wild turkeys, and such things. My uncle and the big boys were good shots. They killed hawks and wild geese and such like on the wing; and they didn't wound or kill squirrels, they stunned them. When the dogs treed a squirrel, the squirrel would scamper aloft and run out on a limb and flatten himself along it, hoping to make himself invisible in that way—and not quite succeeding. You could see his wee little ears sticking up. You couldn't see his nose, but you knew where it was. Then the hunter, despising a “rest” for his rifle, stood up and took offhand aim at the limb and sent a bullet into it immediately under the squirrel's nose, and down tumbled the animal, unwounded, but unconscious; the dogs gave him a shake and he was dead. Sometimes when the distance was great and the wind not accurately allowed for, the bullet would hit the squirrel's head; the dogs could do as they pleased with that one—the hunter's pride was hurt, and he wouldn't allow it to go into the gamebag.

In the first faint gray of the dawn the stately wild turkeys would be stalking around in great flocks, and ready to be sociable and answer invitations to come and converse with other excursionists of their kind. The hunter concealed himself and imitated the turkey-call by sucking the air through the leg-bone of a turkey which had previously answered a call like that and lived only just long enough to regret it. There is nothing that furnishes a perfect turkey-call except that bone. Another of Nature's treacheries, you see. She is full of them; half the time she doesn't know which she likes best—to betray her child or protect it. In the case of the turkey she is badly mixed: she gives it a bone to be used in getting it into trouble, and she also furnishes it with a trick for getting itself out of the trouble again. When a mamma-turkey answers an invitation and finds she has made a mistake in accepting it, she does as the mamma-partridge does—remembers a previous engagement—and goes limping and scrambling away, pretending to be very lame; and at the same time she is saying to her not-visible children, “Lie low, keep still, don't expose yourselves; I shall be back as soon as I have beguiled this shabby swindler out of the country.”

When a person is ignorant and confiding, this immoral device can have tiresome results. I followed an ostensibly lame turkey over a considerable part of the United States one morning, because I believed in her and could not think she would deceive a mere boy, and one who was trusting her and considering her honest. I had the single-barrelled shotgun, but my idea was to catch her alive. I often got within rushing distance of her, and then made my rush; but always, just as I made my final plunge and put my hand down where her back had been, it wasn't there; it was only two or three inches from there and I brushed the tail-

feathers as I landed on my stomach—a very close call, but still not quite close enough; that is, not close enough for success, but just close enough to convince me that I could do it next time. She always waited for me, a little piece away, and let on to be resting and greatly fatigued; which was a lie, but I believed it, for I still thought her honest long after I ought to have begun to doubt her, suspecting that this was no way for a high-minded bird to be acting. I followed, and followed, and followed, making my periodical rushes, and getting up and brushing the dust off, and resuming the voyage with patient confidence; indeed, with a confidence which grew, for I could see by the change of climate and vegetation that we were getting up into the high latitudes, and as she always looked a little tired and a little more discouraged after each rush, I judged that I was safe to win, in the end, the competition being purely a matter of staying power and the advantage lying with me from the start because she was lame. Along in the afternoon I began to feel fatigued myself. Neither of us had had any rest since we first started on the excursion, which was upwards of ten hours before, though latterly we had paused awhile after rushes, I letting on to be thinking about something else; but neither of us sincere, and both of us waiting for the other to call game but in no real hurry about it, for indeed those little evanescent snatches of rest were very grateful to the feelings of us both; it would naturally be so, skirmishing along like that ever since dawn and not a bite in the meantime; at least for me, though sometimes as she lay on her side fanning herself with a wing and praying for strength to get out of this difficulty a grasshopper happened along whose time had come, and that was well for her, and fortunate, but I had nothing—nothing the whole day.

More than once, after I was very tired, I gave up taking her alive, and was going to shoot her, but I never did it, although it was my right, for I did not believe I could hit her; and besides, she always stopped and posed, when I raised the gun, and this made me suspicious that she knew about me and my marksmanship, and so I did not care to expose myself to remarks.

I did not get her, at all. When she got tired of the game at last, she rose from almost under my hand and flew aloft with the rush and whirl of a shell and lit on the highest limb of a great tree and sat down and crossed her legs and smiled down at me, and seemed gratified to see me so astonished.

I was ashamed, and also lost; and it was while wandering the woods hunting for myself that I found a deserted log cabin and had one of the best meals there that in my life-days I have eaten. The weed-grown garden was full of ripe tomatoes, and I ate them ravenously, though I had never liked them before. Not more than two or three times since have I tasted anything that was so delicious as those tomatoes. I surfeited myself with them, and did not taste another one until I was in middle life. I can eat them now, but I do not like the look of them. I suppose we have all experienced a surfeit at one time or another. Once, in stress of circumstances, I ate part of a barrel of sardines, there being nothing else at hand, but since then I have always been able to get along without sardines.



# An Autumnal Thought

Robert Story

It is most meet and natural the sigh  
Man heaves, when autumn's winds come wild and drear,  
When the last lingering blossoms droop and die,  
And whirl the shrivelled blossoms red and sear.  
Returning spring, indeed, shall deck the year  
With flowers and foliage rich as e'er she gave;  
But these shall never, never re-appear!  
These never more in gales of summer wave,  
Adorn the woodland path, or scent the mountain cave.

All things are mutable. The strain we heard  
In yon deep dell, is silent now — and May  
Shall wake another strain, another bird;  
Dead is the former tenant of the spray—  
Gone with the leaves and flowers that green and gay  
Concealed their songster! Yet fond man believes  
The world of yesterday the same to-day;  
And when he grieves at all, he only grieves  
That in their blight his own he feelingly perceives.

Yet their blight is not his. They rise no more:  
But man shall rise triumphant from the tomb!  
The judgment-morn shall once again restore  
The human-flowers death blighted — to resume  
In fairer climes far more than former bloom!  
And that high bloom no future blight shall fear,  
But flourish still where heaven's own beams illumine,  
And dews supernal water it! No tear  
Shall stain the happy cheek in that eternal year!



## To Spring

Robert Story

O what a bloom, a freshness — as of flowers  
And verdure bathed in dew — comes o'er the heart,  
Sweet Spring, when thou art named;  
Or when thy softened breeze,

Pure from reviving nature, fans the cheek!  
The languid spirit feels, through all its depths,  
The genial warmth, and pours  
Profuse its flowers of thought!

Who can thy charms enumerate? The dell,  
Where the rathe primrose peeps; the living wood,  
Where the green bud just bursts,  
And the deep blackbird sings;

The plain, where smiles the daisy, where its gold  
The gorgeous king-cup shows, and where the stream  
Rolls in blue windings on;  
The freshened mountain, gay

With springing heath and blooming gorse, o'er which  
The plover screams; and over all, the sky  
Blue, lofty fine, where laughs  
The joyous sun, and where

Sails the light snowy cloud, or — if the shower  
Thin-glancing falls — perchance the rainbow bends  
Its scarcely visible arch,  
Whence rings the sky-lark's song!

The eye looks round delighted, the heart beats  
With rapture! — And do I experience now  
That rapture, that delight?  
Then, shall my song confine

Its praise to Earth's enchantments, nor ascend  
In grateful adoration, God! to thee —  
The source of all that's fair,  
The bounteous source of Spring!



# Lines on seeing a favourite Tree felled and lopped.

Robert Story

The mood is on my soul! the mood which bards  
Call inspiration — when some fancy bright,  
Or feeling strong, compared—  
And not inaptly so—

To breeze and sunshine, strikes the frozen mind,  
And melts it to its fount, until it flows,  
O'ergushing from its depth,  
In measure and in song!

The mood is on my soul! But not for this  
Expect heroic strain, or aught that tells  
Of danger or of death  
From steel or woman's eye;

The muse shall stoop — and haply not in vain—  
To humble theme. Empowered to climb the stars,  
She yet will pluck a flower  
From Earth's most lowly vale.

Here lies a stately Tree! The axe and saw  
Have done their work on what full many a Spring  
Hath shed its rains and dews—  
Full many a Summer found

In all its green magnificence of shade—  
Full many an Autumn hang with glowing gold—  
And many a Winter shook  
With blast and roaring storm.

The woodbine, whose slight tendrils clung so fast  
Around its base, and rendered by its blooms  
Beauty for aid received,  
All torn and trampled now,

Shall never more — or sickly — give to Spring  
Its clustered flowers — like Bard, unblest by wealth,  
When falls the patron-lord  
His grateful verse repaid!

Where shall the blackbird now, the speckled thrush,  
Or throstle sweet repair? When May returns,  
And in the snow-white thorn  
The female warms her young,

Where shall the partner of her care and joy  
Find his accustomed bough, from which to pour  
The melody he means  
Shall thrill his feathered love?

For them new thorns will blossom — other trees  
Wave greenly for endearment or for song,  
And this by me alone  
Perchance be mourned and missed—

A Dreamer whose fine joys and sorrows spring  
From fountains to the worldling all unknown,  
And which, if now exposed,  
He could not, would not prize.

Aye, there thou liest! branchless — bare — amid  
The thin and skeleton leaves, stripped from thy boughs  
By last December's winds—  
And to that fibrous heap

No winter shall behold thee add again.  
Spring, that was wont to wake thee, shall but clothe  
With verdure thy dead roots,  
And hide the ruin there!

Ah! is it not e'en thus the grave conceals  
HER who but lately wandered in thy shade,  
And in these verdant fields—  
These verdant fields her own?

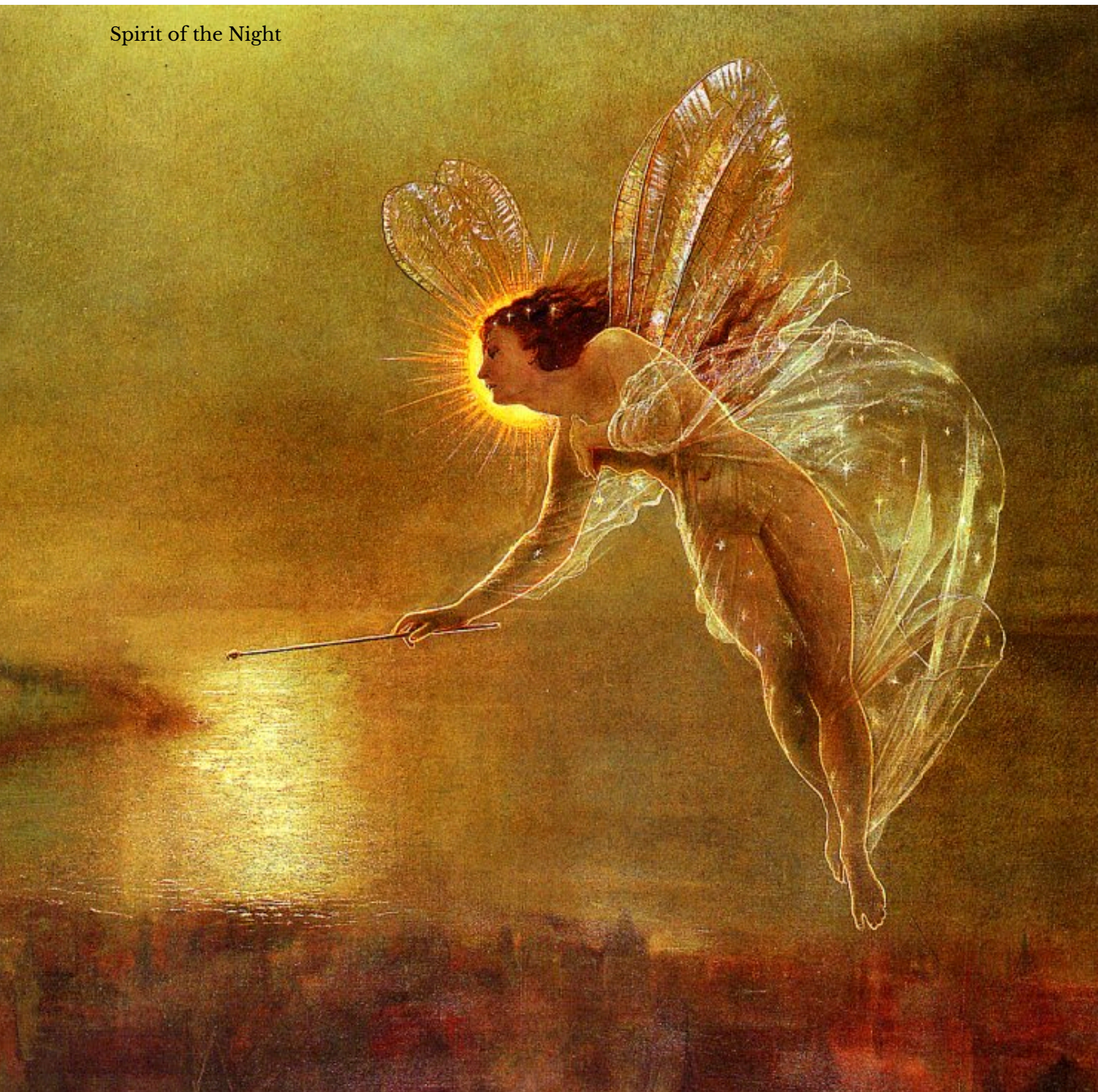
Good without pride, and generous without show,  
To her th' unsheltered flew — as birds to thee—  
And in her kindness found  
A shade from sun and storm!





# Featured Artist John Atkinson Grimshaw

Spirit of the Night



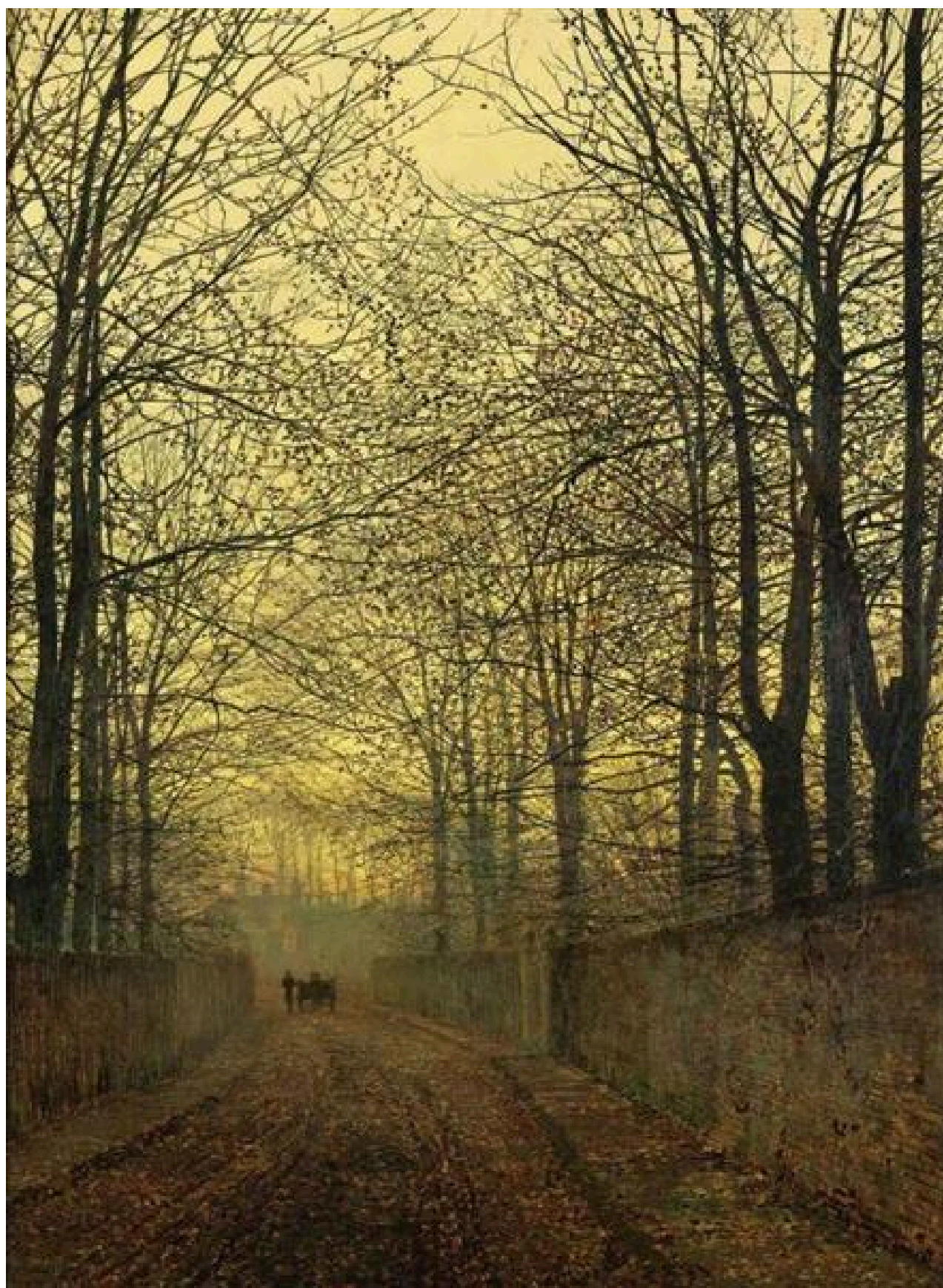




John Atkinson Grimshaw (6 September 1836 – 13 October 1893) was an English Victorian-era artist known for his breathtaking city night-scenes and landscapes. He is considered one of the most renowned painters of the Victorian era, as well as one of the best and most accomplished nightscape, and townscape, artists of all time.







October Gold



Battersea Bridge

Blea tarn at first light, Langdale pikes in the distance





# The Man the Martians Made

Frank Belknap Long



No mortal had ever seen the Martians, but they had heard their whisperings—without knowing the terrible secret they kept hidden.

There was death in the camp.

I knew when I awoke that it had come to stand with us in the night and was waiting now for the day to break and flood the desert with light. There was a prickling at the base of my scalp and I was drenched with cold sweat.

I had an impulse to leap up and go stumbling about in the darkness. But I disciplined myself. I crossed my arms and waited for the sky to grow bright.

Daybreak on Mars is like nothing you've ever dreamed about. You wake up in the morning, and there it is—bright and clear and shining. You pinch yourself, you sit up straight, but it doesn't vanish.

Then you stare at your hands with the big callouses. You reach for a mirror to take a look at your face. That's not so good. That's where ugliness enters the picture. You look around and you see Ralph. You see Harry. You see the women.

On Earth a woman may not look her glamorous best in the harsh light of early dawn, but if she's really beautiful she doesn't look too bad. On Mars even the most beautiful woman looks angry on arising, too weary and tormented by human shortcomings to take a prefabricated metal shack and turn it into a real home for a man.

You have to make allowances for a lot of things on Mars. You have to start right off by accepting hardship and privation as your daily lot. You have to get accustomed to living in construction camps in the desert, with the red dust making you feel all hollow and dried up inside. Making you feel like a drum, a shriveled pea pod, a salted fish hung up to dry. Dust inside of you, rattling around, canal water seepage rotting the soles of your boots.

So you wake up and you stare. The night before you'd collected driftwood and stacked it by the fire. The driftwood has disappeared. Someone has stolen your very precious driftwood. The Martians? Guess again.

You get up and you walk straight up to Ralph with your shoulders squared. You say, "Ralph, why in hell did you have to steal my driftwood?"

In your mind you say that. You say it to Dick, you say it to Harry. But what you really say is, "Larsen was here again last night!"

You say, I put a fish on to boil and Larsen ate it. I had a nice deck of cards, all shiny and new, and Larsen marked them up. It wasn't me cheating. It was Larsen hoping I'd win so that he could waylay me in the desert and get all of the money away from me.

You have a girl. There aren't too many girls in the camps with laughter and light and fire in them. But there are a few, and if you're lucky you take a fancy to one particular girl—her full red lips and her spun gold hair. All of a sudden she disappears.

Somebody runs off with her. It's Larsen.

In every man there is a slumbering giant. When life roars about you on a world that's rugged and new you've got to go on respecting the lads who have thrown in their lot with you, even when their impulses are as harsh as the glint of sunlight on a desert-polished tombstone.

You think of a name—Larsen. You start from scratch and you build Larsen up until you have a clear picture of him in your mind. You build him up until he's a great shouting, brawling, golden man like Paul Bunyon.

Even a wicked legend can seem golden on Mars. Larsen wasn't just my slumbering giant—or Dick's, or Harry's. He was the slumbering giant in all of us, and that's what made him so tremendous. Anything gigantic has beauty and power and drive to it.

Alone we couldn't do anything with Larsen's gusto, so when some great act of wickedness was done with gusto how could it be us? Here comes Larsen! He'll shoulder all the guilt, but he won't feel guilty because he's the first man in Eden, the child who never grew up, the laughing boy, Hercules balancing the world on his shoulders and looking for a woman with long shining tresses and eyes like the stars of heaven to bend to his will.

If such a woman came to life in Hercules' arms would you like the job of stopping him from sending the world crashing? Would

you care to try?

Don't you see? Larsen was closer to us than breathing and as necessary as food and drink and our dreams of a brighter tomorrow. Don't think we didn't hate him at times. Don't think we didn't curse and revile him. You may glorify a legend from here to eternity, but the luster never remains completely untarnished.

Larsen wouldn't have seemed completely real to us if we hadn't given him muscles that could tire and eyes that could blink shut in weariness. Larsen had to sleep, just as we did. He'd disappear for days.

We'd wink and say, "Larsen's getting a good long rest this time. But he'll be back with something new up his sleeve, don't you worry!"

We could joke about it, sure. When Larsen stole or cheated we could pretend we were playing a game with loaded dice—not really a deadly game, but a game full of sound and fury with a great rousing outburst of merriment at the end of it.

But there are deadlier games by far. I lay motionless, my arms locked across my chest, sweating from every pore. I stared at Harry. We'd been working all night digging a well, and in a few days water would be bubbling up sweet and cool and we wouldn't have to go to the canal to fill our cooking utensils. Harry was blinking and stirring and I could tell just by looking at him that he was uneasy too. I looked beyond him at the circle of shacks.

Most of us were sleeping in the open, but there were a few youngsters in the shacks and women too worn out with drudgery to care much whether they slept in smothering darkness or under the clear cold light of the stars.

I got slowly to my knees, scooped up a handful of sand, and let it dribble slowly through my fingers. Harry looked straight at me and his eyes

widened in alarm. It must have been the look on my face. He arose and crossed to where I was sitting, his mouth twitching slightly. There was nothing very reassuring about Harry. Life had not been kind to him and he had resigned himself to accepting the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune without protest. He had one of those emaciated, almost skull-like faces which terrify children, and make women want to cry.

"You don't look well, Tom," he said. "You've been driving yourself too hard."

I looked away quickly. I had to tell him, but anything terrifying could demoralize Harry and make him throw his arm before his face in blind panic. But I couldn't keep it locked up inside me an instant longer.

"Sit down, Harry," I whispered. "I want to talk to you. No sense in waking the others."

"Oh," he said.

He squatted beside me on the sand, his eyes searching my face.

"What is it, Tom?"

"I heard a scream," I said. "It was pretty awful. Somebody has been hurt—bad. It woke me up, and that takes some doing."

Harry nodded. "You sleep like a log," he said.

"I just lay still and listened," I said, "with my eyes wide open."

Something moved out from the well—a two-legged something. It didn't make a sound. It was big, Harry, and it seemed to melt into the shadows. I don't know what kept me from leaping up and going after it. It had something to do with the way I felt. All frozen up inside."

Harry appeared to understand. He nodded, his eyes darting toward the well. "How long ago was that?"

"Ten—fifteen minutes."

"You just waited for me to wake up?"

"That's right," I said. "There was something about the scream that made me want to put off finding out. Two's company—and when you're alone with something like that it's best to talk it over before you act."

I could see that Harry was pleased. Unnerved too, and horribly shaken. But he was pleased that I had turned to him as a friend I could trust. When you can't depend on life for anything else it's good to know you have a friend.



I brushed sand from my trousers and got up. "Come on," I said. "We'll take a look."

It was an ordeal for him. His face twitched and his eyes wavered. He knew I hadn't lied about the scream. If a single scream could unnerve me that much it had to be bad.

We walked to the well in complete silence. There were shadows everywhere, chill and forbidding. Almost like people they seemed, whispering together, huddling close in ominous gossipy silence, aware of what we would find.

It was a sixty-foot walk from the fire to the well. A walk in the sun—a walk in the bright hot sun of Mars, with utter horror perhaps at the end of it.

The horror was there. Harry made a little choking noise deep in his throat, and my heart started pounding like a bass drum.

I

The man on the sand had no top to his head. His skull had been crushed and flattened so hideously that he seemed like a wooden figure resting there—an anatomical dummy with its skull-case lifted off.

We looked around for the skull-case, hoping we'd find it, hoping we'd made a mistake and stumbled by accident into an open-air dissecting laboratory and were looking at ghastly props made of plastic and glittering metal instead of bone and muscle and flesh. But the man on the sand had a name. We'd known him for weeks and talked to him. He wasn't a medical dummy, but a corpse. His limbs were hideously convulsed, his eyes wide and staring. The sand beneath his head was clotted with dried blood. We looked for the weapon which had crushed his skull but couldn't find it. We looked for the weapon before we saw the footprints in the sand. Big they were—incredibly large and massive. A man with a size-twelve shoe might have left such prints if the leather had become a little soggy and spread out around the soles.

"The poor guy," Harry whispered.

I knew how he felt. We had all liked Ned. A harmless little guy with a great love of solitude, a guy who hadn't a malicious hair in his head. A happy little guy who liked to sing and dance in the light of a high-leaping fire. He had a banjo and was good at music making. Who could have hated Ned with a rage so primitive and savage? I looked at Harry and saw that he was wondering the same thing.

Harry looked pretty bad, about ready to cave in. He was leaning against the well, a tormented fury in his eyes.

"The murderous bastard," he muttered. "I'd like to get him by the throat and choke the breath out of him. Who'd want to do a thing like that to Ned?"

"I can't figure it either," I said.

Then I remembered. I don't think Molly Egan really could have loved Ned. The curious thing about it was that Ned didn't even need the kind of love she could have given him. He was a self-sufficient little guy despite his frailness and didn't really need a woman to look after him. But Molly must have seen something pathetic in him.

Molly was a beautiful woman in her own right, and there wasn't a man in the camp who hadn't envied Ned. It was puzzling, but it could have explained why Ned was lying slumped on the sand with a bashed-in skull. It could have explained why someone had hated him enough to kill him.

Without lifting a finger Ned had won Molly's love. That could make some other guy as mad as a caged hyena—the wrong sort of other guy. Even a small man could have shattered Ned's skull, but the prints on the sand were big.

How many men in the camp wore size-twelve shoes? That was the sixty-four dollar question, and it hung in the shimmering air between Harry and myself like an unspoken challenge. We could almost see the curve of the big question mark suspended in the dazzle.

I thought awhile, looking at Harry. Then I took a long, deep breath and said, "We'd better talk it over with Bill Seaton first. If it gets around too fast those footprints will be trampled flat. And if tempers start rising anything could happen."

Harry nodded. Bill was the kind of guy you could depend on in an emergency. Cool, poised, efficient, with an air of authority that commanded respect. He could be pigheaded at times, but his sense of justice was as keen as a whip.

Harry and I walked very quietly across a stretch of tumbled sand and halted at the door to Bill's shack. Bill was a bachelor and we knew there'd be no woman inside to put her foot down and tell him he'd be a fool to act as a lawman. Or would there be? We had to chance it.

Law-enforcement is a thankless job whether on Earth or on Mars. That's why it attracts the worst—and the best. If you're a power-drunk sadist you'll take the job just for the pleasure it gives you. But if you're really interested in keeping violence within bounds so that fairly decent lads get a fighting chance to build for the future, you'll take the job with no thought of reward beyond the simple satisfaction of lending a helping hand.

Bill Seaton was such a man, even if he did enjoy the limelight and liked to be in a position of command.

"Come on, Harry," I said. "We may as well wake him up and get it over with."

We went into the shack. Bill was sleeping on the floor with his long legs drawn up. His mouth was open and he was snoring lustily. I couldn't help thinking how much he looked like an overgrown grasshopper. But that was just a first impression springing from overwrought nerves.

I bent down and shook Bill awake. I grabbed his arm and shook him until his jaw snapped shut and he shot up straight, suddenly galvanized. Instantly the grotesque aspect fell from him. Dignity came upon him and enveloped him like a cloak.

"Ned, you say? The poor little cuss! So help me—if I get my hands on the rat who did it I'll roast him over a slow fire!"

He got up, staggered to an equipment locker, and took out a sun helmet and a pair of shorts. He dressed quickly, swearing constantly and staring out the door at the bright dawn glow as if he wanted to send both of his fists crashing into the first suspicious guy to cross his path.

"We can't have those footprints trampled," he muttered. "There are a lot of dumb bastards here who don't know the first thing about keeping pointers intact. Those prints may be the only thing we'll have to go on."

"Just the three of us can handle it, Bill," I said. "When you decide what should be done we can wake the others."

Bill nodded. "Keeping it quiet is the important thing. We'll carry him back here. When we break the news I want that body out of sight."

Harry and Bill and I—we took another walk in the sun. I looked at Harry, and the greenish tinge which had crept into his face gave me a jolt. He's taking this pretty hard, I thought. If I hadn't known him so well I might have jumped to an ugly conclusion. But I just couldn't imagine Harry quarreling with Ned over Molly.

How was I taking it myself? I raised my hand and looked at it. There was no tremor. Nerves steady, brain clear. No pleasure in enforcing the law—pass that buck to Bill. But there was a gruesome job ahead, and I was standing up to it as well as could be expected.

Ever try lifting a corpse? The corpse of a stranger is easier to lift than the corpse of a man you've known and liked. Harry and I lifted him together. Between us the dead weight didn't seem too intolerable—not at first. But it quickly became a terrible, heavy limpness that dragged at our arms like some soggy log dredged up from the dark waters of the canal.

We carried him into the shack and eased him down on the floor. His head fell back and his eyes lolled.

Death is always shameful. It strips away all human reticences and makes a mockery of human dignity and man's rebellion against the cruelty of fate.

For a moment we stood staring down at all that was left of Ned. I looked at Bill. "How many men in the camp wear number-twelve shoes?"

"We'll find out soon enough."

All this time we hadn't mentioned Larsen. Not one word about

Larsen, not one spoken word. Cheating, yes. Lying, and treacherous disloyalty, and viciousness, and spite. Fights around the campfires at midnight, battered faces and broken wrists and a cursing that never ceased. All that we could blame on Larsen. But a harmless little guy lying dead by a well in a spreading pool of blood—that was an outrage that stopped us dead in our legend-making tracks.

There is something in the human mind which recoils from too outrageous a deception. How wonderful it would have been to say, "Larsen was here again last night. He found a little guy who had never harmed anyone standing by a well in the moonlight. Just for sheer delight he decided to kill the little guy right then and there." Just to add luster to the legend, just to send a thrill of excitement about the camp.

No, that would have been the lie colossal which no sane man could have quite believed.

Something happened then to further unnerve us.

The most disturbing sound you can hear on Mars is the whispering. Usually it begins as a barely audible murmur and swells in volume with every shift of the wind. But now it started off high pitched and insistent and did not stop.

It was the whispering of a dying race. The Martians are as elusive as elves and all the pitiless logic of science had failed to draw them forth into the sunlight to stand before men in uncompromising arrogance as peers of the human race.

That failure was a tragedy in itself. If man's supremacy is to be challenged at all let it be by a creature of flesh-and-blood, a big-brained biped who must kill to live. Better that by far than a ghostly flickering in the deepening dusk, a whispering and a flapping and a long-drawn sighing prophesying death.

Oh, the Martians were real enough. A flitting vampire bat is real, or a stinging ray in the depths of a blue lagoon. But who could point to a Martian and say, "I have seen you plain, in broad daylight. I have looked into your owlish eyes and watched you go flitting over the sand on your thin, stalklike legs? I know there is nothing mysterious about you. You are like a water insect skimming the surface of a pond in a familiar meadow on Earth. You are quick and alert, but no match for a man. You are no more than an interesting insect."

Who could say that, when there were ruins buried deep beneath the sand to give the lie to any such idea. First the ruins, and then the Martians themselves, always elusive, gnomelike, goblinlike, flitting away into the dissolving dusk.

You're a comparative archaeologist and you're on Mars with the first batch of rugged youngsters to come tumbling out of a spaceship with stardust in their eyes. You see those youngsters digging wells and sweating in the desert. You see the prefabricated housing units go up, the tangle of machinery, the camp sites growing lusty with midnight brawls and skull-cracking escapades. You see the towns in the desert, the law-enforcement committees, the camp followers, the reform fanatics.

You're a sober-minded scholar, so you start digging in the ruins. You bring up odd-looking cylinders, rolls of threaded film, instruments of science so complex they make you giddy.

You wonder about the Martians—what they were like when they were a young and proud race. If you're an archaeologist you wonder. But Bill and I—we were youngsters still. Oh, sure, we were in our thirties, but who would have suspected that? Bill looked twenty-seven and I hadn't a gray hair in my head.

### III

Bill nodded at Harry. "You'd better stay here. Tom and I will be asking some pointed questions, and our first move will depend on the answers we get. Don't let anyone come snooping around this shack. If anyone sticks his head in and starts to turn ugly, warn him just once—then shoot to kill." He handed Harry a gun. Harry nodded grimly and settled himself on the floor close to Ned. For the first time since I'd known him, Harry looked completely sure of himself.

As we emerged from the shack the whispering was so loud the entire camp had been placed on the alert. There would be no

need for us to go into shack after shack, watching surprise and shock come into their eyes.

A dozen or more men were between Bill's shack and the well.

They were staring grimly at the dawn, as if they could already see blood on the sky, spilling over on the sand and spreading out in a sinister pool at their feet. A mirage-like pool mirroring their own hidden forebodings, mirroring a knotted rope and the straining shoulders of men too vengeful to know the meaning of restraint. Jim Kenny stood apart and alone, about forty feet from the well, staring straight at us. His shirt was open at the throat, exposing a patch of hairy chest, and his big hands were wedged deeply into his belt. He stood about six feet three, very powerful, and with large feet.

I nudged Bill's arm. "What do you think?" I asked.

Kenny did seem a likely suspect. Molly had caught his eye right from the start, and he had lost no time in pursuing her. A guy like Kenny would have felt that losing out to a man of his own breed would have been a terrible blow to his pride. But just imagine Kenny losing out to a little guy like Ned. It would have infuriated him and glazed his eyes with a red film of hate.

Bill answered my question slowly, his eyes on Kenny's cropped head. "I think we'd better take a look at his shoes," he said.

We edged up slowly, taking care not to disturb the others, pretending we were sauntering toward the well on a before-breakfast stroll.

It was then that Molly came out of her shack. She stood blinking for an instant in the dawn glare, her unbound hair falling in a tumbled dark mass to her shoulders, her eyes still drowsy with sleep. She wore rust-colored slippers and a form-fitted yellow robe, belted in at the waist.

Molly wasn't beautiful exactly. But there was something pulse-stirring about her and it was easy to understand how a man like Kenny might find her difficult to resist.

Bill slanted a glance at Kenny, then shrugged and looked straight at Molly. He turned to me, his voice almost a whisper, "She's got to be told, Tom. You do it. She likes you a lot."

I'd been wondering about that myself—just how much she liked me. It was hard to be sure.

Bill saw my hesitation, and frowned. "You can tell if she's covering up. Her reaction may give us a lead."

Molly looked startled when she saw me approaching without the mask I usually wore when I waltzed her around and grinned and ruffled her hair and told her that she was the cutest kid imaginable and would make some man—not me—a fine wife.

That made telling her all the harder. The hardest part was at the end—when she stared at me dry-eyed and threw her arms around me as if I was the last support left to her on Earth.

For a moment I almost forgot we were not on Earth. On Earth I might have been able to comfort her in a completely sane way. But on Mars when a woman comes into your arms your emotions can turn molten in a matter of seconds.

"Steady," I whispered. "We're just good friends, remember?"

"I'd be willing to forget, Tom," she said.

"You've had a terrible shock," I whispered. "You really loved that little guy—more than you know. It's natural enough that you should feel a certain warmth toward me. I just happened to be here—so you kissed me."

"No, Tom. It isn't that way at all—"

I might have let myself go a little then if Kenny hadn't seen us. He stood very still for an instant, staring at Molly. Then his eyes narrowed and he walked slowly toward us, his hands still wedged in his belt.

I looked quickly at Molly, and saw that her features had hardened. There was a look of dark suspicion in her eyes. Bill had been watching Kenny, too, waiting for him to move. He measured footsteps with Kenny, advancing in the same direction from a different angle at a pace so calculated that they seemed to meet by accident directly in front of us.

Bill didn't draw but his hand never left his hip. His voice came clear and sharp and edged with cold insistence. "Know anything about it, Kenny?"



Strain seemed to tighten Kenny's face, but there was no panic in his eyes, no actual glint of fear. "What made you think I'd know?" he asked.

Bill didn't say a word. He just started staring at Kenny's shoes. He stood back a bit and continued to stare as if something vitally important had escaped him and taken refuge beneath the soggy leather around Kenny's feet.

"What size shoes do you wear, Jim?" he asked.

Kenny must have suspected that the question was charged with as much explosive risk as a detonating wire set to go off at the faintest jar. His eyes grew shrewd and mocking.

"So the guy who did it left prints in the sand?" he said. "Prints made by big shoes?"

"That's right," Bill said. "You have a very active mind."

Kenny laughed then, the mockery deepening in his stare. "Well," he said, "suppose we have a look at those prints, and if it will ease your mind I'll take off my shoes and you can try them out for size."

Kenny and Bill and I walked slowly from Molly's shack to the well in the hot and blazing glare, and the whispering went right on, getting under our skin in a tormenting sort of way.

Kenny still wore that disturbing grin. He looked at the prints and grunted. "Yeah," he said, "they sure are big. Biggest prints I've ever seen."

He sat down and started unlacing his shoes. First the right shoe, then the left. He pulled off both shoes and handed them to Bill. "Fit them in," he said. "Measure them for size. Measure me for size, and to hell with you!"

Bill made a careful check. There were eight prints, and he fitted the shoes painstakingly into each of them. There was space to spare at each try.

It cleared Kenny completely. He wasn't a killer—this time. We might have roused the camp to a lynching fury and Kenny would have died for a crime another man had committed. I shut my eyes and saw Larsen swinging from a roof top, a black hood over his face. I saw Molly standing in the sunlight by my side, her face a stony mask.

I opened my eyes and there was Kenny, grinning contemptuously at us. He'd called our bluff and won out. Now the shoe was on the other foot.

A cold chill ran up my spine. It was Kenny who was doing the staring now, and he was looking directly at my shoes. He stood back a bit and continued to stare. He was dramatizing his sudden triumph in a way that turned my blood to ice.

Then I saw that Bill was staring too—straight at the shoes of a man he had known for three years and grown to like and trust. But underlying the warmth and friendliness in Bill was a granite-like integrity which nothing could shake.

It was Bill who spoke first. "I guess you'd better take them off, Tom," he said. "We may as well be thorough about this."

Sure, I was big. I grew up fast as a kid and at eighteen I weighed two hundred and thirty pounds, all lean flesh. If shoes ran large I could sometimes cram my feet into size twelves, but I felt much more comfortable in a size or two larger than that.

What made it worse, Molly liked me. I was involved with her, but no one knew how much. No one knew whether we'd quarreled or not, or how insanely jealous I could be. No one knew whether Molly had only pretended to like Ned while carrying a torch for me, and how dangerously complex the situation might have become all along the line.

I stood very still, listening. The whispering was so loud now it drowned out the sighing of the wind. I looked down at my shoes. They were caked with mud and soggy and discolored. Day after day I'd trudge back and forth from the canal to the shacks in the blazing sunlight without giving my feet a thought until the ache in them had become intolerable, rest an absolute necessity.

There was only one thing to do—call Kenny's bluff so fast he wouldn't have time to hurl another accusation at me.

I handed Bill both of my shoes. He looked at me and nodded. I waited, listening to the whispering rise and fall, watching him stoop and fit the shoes into the prints on the sand.

He straightened suddenly. His face was expressionless, but I could see that he was waging a terrible inward struggle with himself.

"Your shoes come pretty close to filling out those prints, Tom," he said. "I can't be sure—but a wax impression test should pretty well clear this up." He gripped my arm and nodded toward the shacks. "Better stick close to me."

Kenny took a slow step backward, his jaw tightening, his eyes searching Bill's face. "Wax impression test, hell!" he said. "You've got your murderer. I'm going to see he gets what's coming to him—right now!"

Bill shook his head. "I'll do this my way," he said.

Kenny glared at him, then laughed harshly. "You won't have a chance," he said. "The boys won't stand for it. I'm going to spread the word around, and you'd better not try to stop me."

That did it. I'd been holding myself in, but I had a sudden, overpowering urge to send my fist crashing into Kenny's face, to send him crashing to the sand. I started for him, but he jumped back and started shouting.

I can't remember exactly what he shouted. But he said just enough to put a noose around my neck. Every man and woman between the shacks and the well swung about to stare at me. I saw shock and rage flare in the eyes of men who usually had steady nerves. They were not calm now—not one of them.

#### IV

It all happened so fast I was caught off balance. In the harsh Martian sunlight human emotions can be as unstable as a wind-lashed dune.

A crazy thought flashed through my mind: Will Molly believe this too? Will she join these madmen in their wild thirst for vengeance? My need for her was suddenly overwhelming. Just seeing her face would have helped, but now more men had emerged from the shacks and I couldn't see beyond them. They were heading straight for me and I knew that even Bill would be powerless to stop them.

You can't argue with an avalanche. It was rolling straight toward me, gathering momentum as it came—not one man or a dozen, but a solid wall of human hate and unreason.

Bill stood his ground. He had drawn his gun, and he started shouting that the prints couldn't have been made by my shoes. I chalked that up to his credit and resolved never to forget it. I knew I'd have to make a dash for it. I ran as fast as I could, keeping my eyes on the glimmer of sunlight on rising dunes, and deep hollows which a carefully placed bullet could have quickly changed into a burial mound.

A sudden crackling burst of gunfire ripped through the air.

Directly in my path the sand geysered up as the bullets ripped and tore at it. Somebody wasn't a good marksman, or had let blind rage unnerve him and spoil his aim. A lot of somebodies—for the firing increased and became almost continuous for an instant, a dull crackling which drowned out the whispering and the sighing of the wind.

Then abruptly all sound ceased. Utter stillness descended on the desert—an unnatural, terrifying stillness, as if nature herself had stopped breathing and was waiting for someone to scream.

I must have been mad to turn. A weaving target has a chance, but a target standing motionless is a sitting duck and his life hangs by a hair. But still I turned.

Something was happening between the well and the shacks which halted the pursuit dead in its tracks. One of the shacks was wrapped in darting tongues of flame, and a woman was screaming, and a man close to her was grappling with something huge and misshapen which loomed starkly against the dawn glow.

A human shape? I could not be sure. It seemed monstrous, with a bulge between its shoulders which gave a grotesque and distorted aspect to the shadow which its weaving bulk cast upon the sand. I could see the shadow clearly across three hundred feet of sand. It lengthened and shortened, as if an octopus-like ferocity had given it the power to distort itself at will, lengthening its tentacles

and then whipping them back again.

But it was not an octopus. It had legs and arms, and it was crushing the man in a grip of steel. I could see that now. I stared as the others were staring, their backs turned to me, their blind hatred for me blotted out by that greater horror. I suddenly realized that the shape was human. It had the head and shoulders of a man, and a torso that could twist with muscular purpose, and massive hands that could maul and maim. It threw the hapless man from it with a sudden convulsive contraction of its entire bulk. I had never seen a human being move in quite that way, but even as its violence flared its manlike aspect became more pronounced.

A frightful thing happened then. The woman screamed and rushed toward the brutish maniac with her fingers splayed. The swaying figure bent, grabbed her about the waist, and lifted her high into the air. I thought for a moment he was about to crush her as he had crushed the man. But I was wrong. She was hurled to the sand, but with a violence so brutal that she went instantly limp.

Then the brutal madman turned, and I saw his face. If ever monstrous cruelty and malign cunning looked out of a human countenance it looked out of the eyes that stared in my direction, remorseless in their hate.

I could not tear my gaze from his face. The hate in it could be sensed, even across a blinding haze of sunlight that blotted out the sharp contours of physical things. But more than hate could be sensed. There was something tremendous about that face, as if the evil which had ravaged it had left the searing brand of Lucifer himself!

For an instant the madman stood motionless, his ghastly brutality unchallenged. Then Jeff Winters started for it. Jeff had come to Mars alone and grown more solitary with every passing day. He was a brooding, ingrown man, secretive and sullen, with a streak of wildness which he usually managed to control. He went for the madman like a gigantic terrier pup, shaggy and ferocious and contemptuous of death.

The big figure turned quickly, raised his arm, and brought his closed fist down on Jeff's skull. Jeff collapsed like a shattered plaster cast. His body seemed to break and splinter, and he sprawled forward on the sand.

He did not get up.

Frank Anders had guns on both hips, and he drew them fast. No one knew what kind of man Anders was. He hardly ever complained or made a spectacle of himself. A little guy with sandy hair and cold blue eyes, he had an accuracy of aim that did his talking for him.

His guns suddenly roared. For an instant the air between his hands and the maniac was a crackling wall of flame. The brute swayed a little but did not turn aside. He went straight for Anders with both arms spread wide.

He caught Anders about the waist, lifted him up, and slammed his body down against the sand. A sickness came over me as I stared. The madman bashed Anders' head against the ground again and again. Then suddenly the big arms relaxed and Anders sagged limply to the ground.

For an instant the madman swayed slowly back and forth, like a blood-stained marionette on a wire. Then he moved forward with a terrible, shambling gait, his head lowered, a dark, misshapen shadow seeming to lengthen before him on the sand like a spindle of flame.

The clearing was abruptly tumultuous with sound. The fury which had been unleashed against me turned upon the monster and became a closed circle of deadly, intent purpose hemming him in—and he was caught in a crossfire that hurled him backwards to the sand.

He jumped up and lunged straight for the well. What happened then was like the awakening stages of some horrible dream. The madman shuffled past the well, the air at his back a crackling sheet of flame. The barrage behind him was continuous and merciless. The men were organized now, standing together in a solid wall, firing with deadly accuracy and a grim purpose which

transcended fear.

The madman went clumping on past me and climbed a dune with his shoulders held straight. With a sunset glare deepening about him, he went striding over the dune and out of sight. I turned and stared back at the camp. The pursuit had passed the well and was headed for me. But no one paid the slightest attention to me. Twelve men passed me, walking three abreast. Bill came along in their wake, his eyes stony hard. He reached out as he passed me, gripping my shoulder, giving me a foot-of-the-gallows kind of smile.

"We know now who killed Ned," he whispered. "We know, fella. Take it easy, relax."

My head was throbbing, but I could see the big prints from where I stood—the prints of a murderer betrayed by his insatiable urge to slay.

I saw Kenny pass, and he gave me a contemptuous grin. He had done his best to destroy me, but there was no longer any hate left in me.

I took a slow step forward—and fell flat on my face....

I woke up with my head in Molly's lap. She was looking down into my face, sobbing in a funny sort of way and running her fingers through my hair.

She looked startled when she saw that I was wide awake. She blinked furiously and started fumbling at her waist for a handkerchief.

"I must have passed out cold," I said. "It's quite a strain to be at the receiving end of a lynching bee. And what I saw afterwards wasn't exactly pleasant."

"Darling," she whispered, "don't move, don't say a word. You're going to be all right."

"You bet I am!" I said. "Right now I feel great."

My arm went around her shoulder, and I drew her head down until her breath was warm on my face. I kissed her hair and lips and eyes for a full minute in utter recklessness.

When I released her her eyes were shining, and she was laughing a little and crying too. "You've changed your mind," she said. "You believe me now, don't you?"

"Don't talk," I said. "Don't say another word. I just want to look at you."

"It was you right from the start," she said. "Not Ned—or anyone else."

"I was a blind fool," I said.

"You never gave me a second glance."

"One glance was enough," I whispered. "But when I saw how it seemed to be between you and Ned—"

"I was never in love with him. It was just—"

"Never mind, don't say it," I said. "It's over and done with."

I stopped, remembering. Her eyes grew wide and startled, and I could see that she was remembering too.

"What happened?" I asked. "Did they catch that vicious rat?"

She brushed back her hair, the sunlight suddenly harsh on her face. "He fell into the canal. The bullets brought him down, and he collapsed on the bank."

Her hand tightened on my wrist. "Bill told me. He tried to swim, but the current carried him under. He went down and never came up."

"I'm glad," I said. "Did anyone in the camp ever see him before?"

Molly shook her head. "Bill said he was a drifter—a dangerous maniac who must have been crazed by the sun."

"I see," I said.

I reached out and drew her into my arms again, and we rested for a moment stretched out side by side on the sand.

"It's funny," I said after a while.

"What is?"

"You know what they say about the whispering. Sometimes when you listen intently you seem to hear words deep in your mind. As if the Martians had telepathic powers."

"Perhaps they have," she said.

I glanced sideways at her. "Remember," I said. "There were cities on Mars when our ancestors were hairy apes. The Martian civilization was flourishing and great fifty million years before



the pyramids arose as a monument to human solidarity and worth. A bad monument, built by slave labor. But at least it was a start."

"Now you're being poetic, Tom," she said.

"Perhaps I am. The Martians must have had their pyramids too.

And at the pyramid stage they must have had their Larsens, to shoulder all the guilt. To them we may still be in the pyramid stage. Suppose—"

"Suppose what?"

"Suppose they wanted to warn us, to give us a lesson we couldn't forget. How can we say with certainty that a dying race couldn't still make use of certain techniques that are far beyond us."

"I'm afraid I don't understand," she said, puzzled.

"Someday," I said, "our own science will take a tiny fragment of human tissue from the body of a dead man, put it into an incubating machine, and a new man will arise again from that

tiny shred of flesh. A man who can walk and live and breathe again, and love again, and die again after another full lifetime.

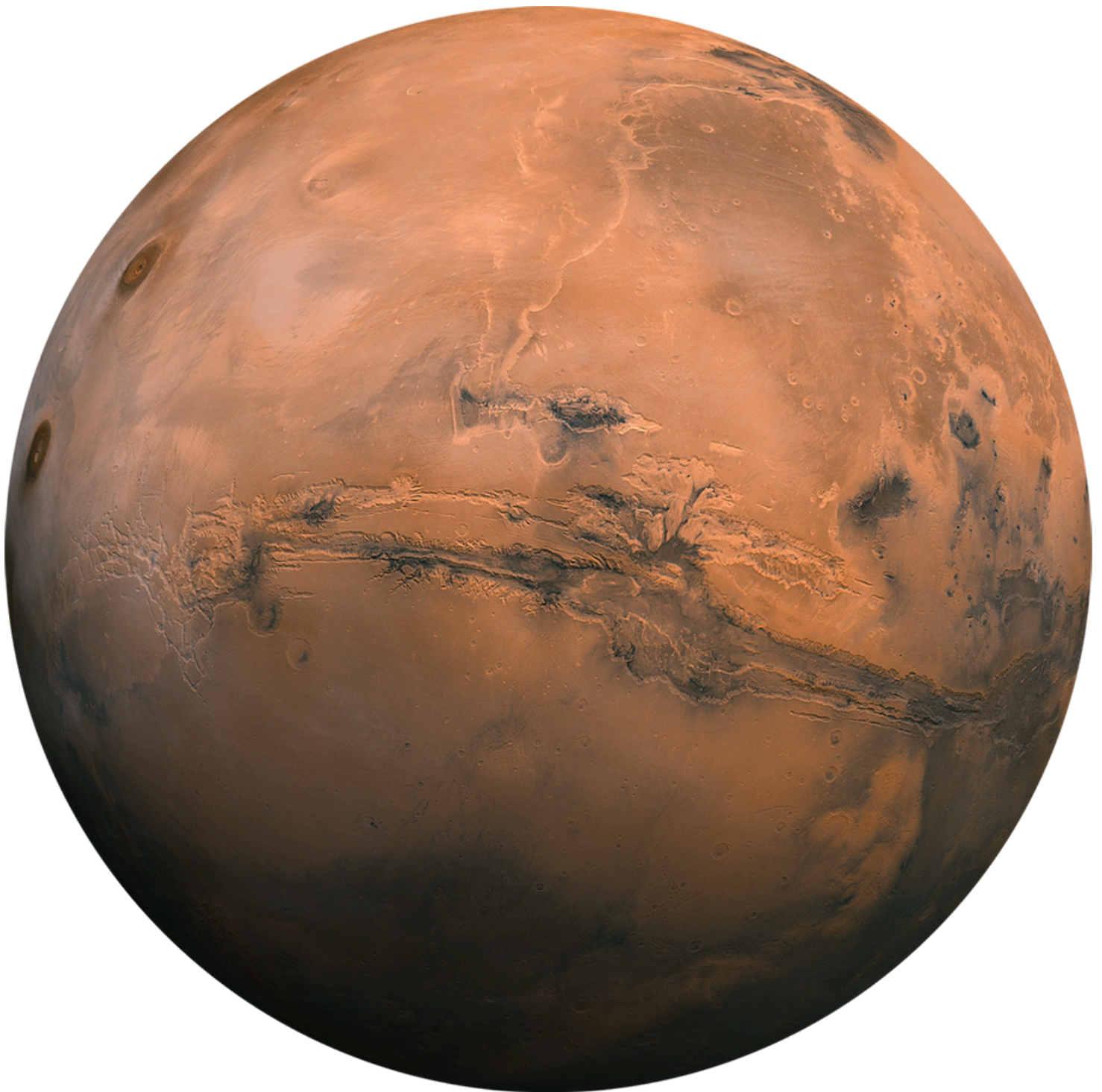
"Perhaps the Martian science was once as great as that. And the Martians might still remember a few of the techniques. Perhaps from our human brains, from our buried memories and desires, they could filch the key and bring to horrible life a thing so monstrous and so terrible—"

Her hand went suddenly cold in mine. "Tom, you can't honestly think—"

"No," I said. "It's nonsense, of course. Forget it."

I didn't tell her what the whispering had seemed to say, deep in my mind.

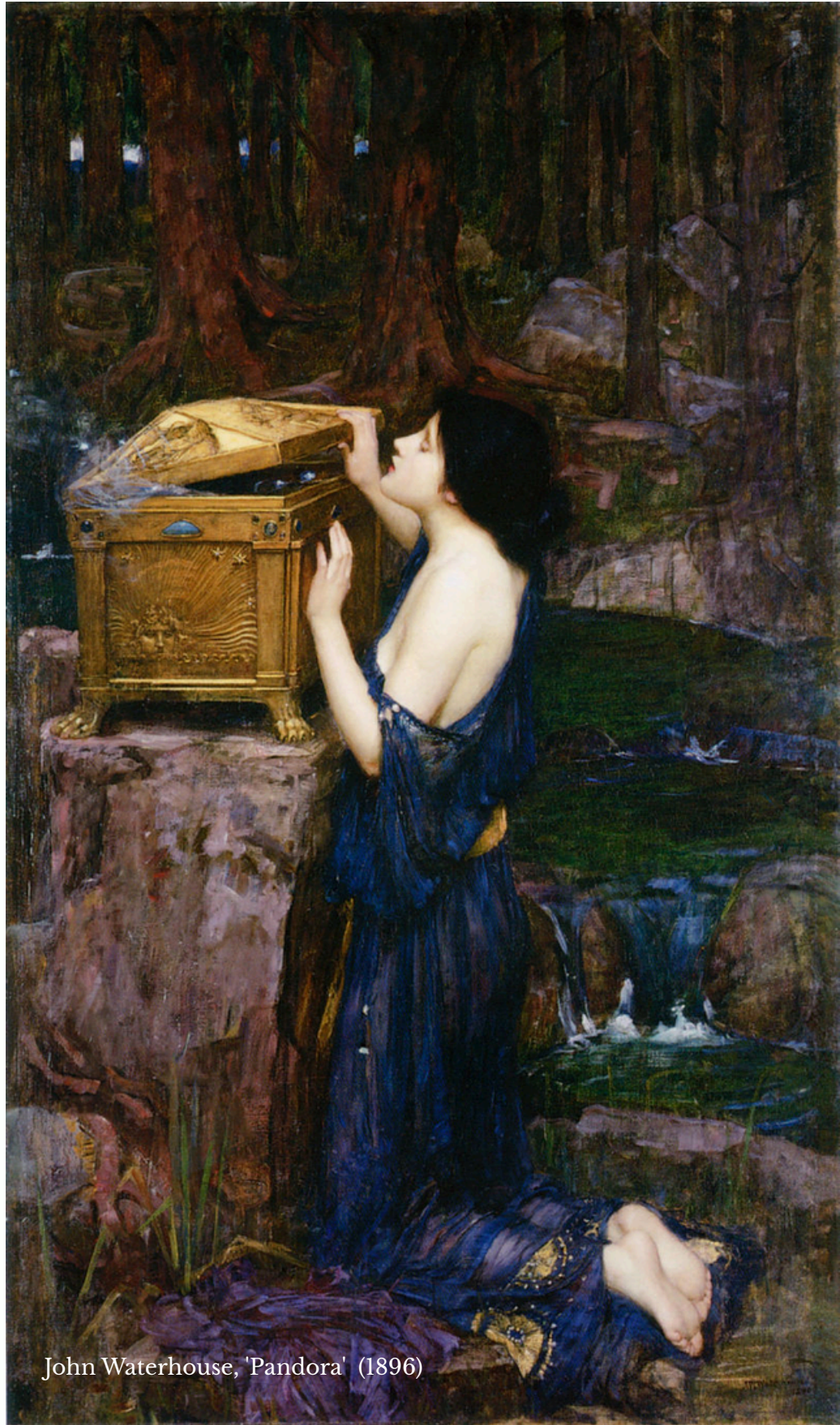
We've brought you Larsen! You wanted Larsen, and we've made him for you! His flesh and his mind—his cruel strength and his wicked heart! Here he comes, here he is! Larsen, Larsen, Larsen!





# Prometheus

Nathan CJ Hood



John Waterhouse, 'Pandora' (1896)



The ancient Greek tale of Prometheus goes back to the very foundations of European civilisation. It is first recorded in the writings of Hesiod, who was a poet writing between 750-650 BC. He provided two versions of the story: the first in the *Theogony*, a poem describing the mythological cycles of the Greek gods; and *Works and Days*, an extended meditation on the necessity of work. His influential verse went on to cast a significant shadow on the literature and playwriting of later Greeks, perhaps most clearly seen in Aeschylus's masterwork *Prometheus Bound*. This latter work was a source of inspiration for the 19th century British writer Percy Shelley who, encouraged by the French Revolution, produced *Prometheus Unbound* (1820).

At the heart of Prometheus the Titan's tale is the theft of the sacred fire from Mount Olympus and its gift to Mankind. Flame, fire and hearth played a pivotal role in ancient Greek religion. Numa Coulanges has described in *The Ancient City* (1864) how Greek and Roman family life was centred on the hearth. It was the responsibility of the family, particularly the head of the household, to ensure that the hearth was never extinguished. Should it be so, disaster would be visited upon the inhabitants of the house. The same was true of the city. Its founder was usually that man who had found the sacred fire and had tended its hearth. He and his descendants were obliged to maintain this flame and were, as such, considered the rightful rulers of the people. If they failed, calamity would ensue, the city would wither and its people scatter.

It is within this context that we should consider Prometheus's gift to Mankind of stolen fire. He provided them with the fire that belongs in the hearth on Mount Olympus, tended by Hestia, which provides all with life, energy and power. Its maintenance was crucial so as to honour the gods and sustain the city. And, as such, it marked a decisive evolution in Mankind. Before the sacred flame, Men had all their needs met by the gods. They were infants wholly dependent for their sustenance. With the gift of fire, they could have a hand in their destiny.

But with this gift came the curse of Zeus. In the *Theogony*, the 'gift' of women is itself the torment. Women are a menace causing trouble, reaping the rewards of men's labours while providing only hassle and wickedness. Yet he who lives without a wife grows old alone, a terrible state for a man in a world of toil and suffering. And so Zeus has placed Mankind in a bind: with or without women, Mankind is doomed.

Hesiod's views towards women have softened in *Works and Days*. A single woman, Pandora, is the instrument by which suffering is introduced into the world, insofar as she opens a box that issues forth sorrow and mischief. By her hand, Mankind must now work for their food, breaking their bodies as they build a life in a hostile and dangerous world. But Hesiod does not see this as a completely evil fate. If men and women were able to supply their needs without toil, they would become lazy. They would not develop mental and bodily strength, they would not build the virtues within themselves. In this light, the sacred fire given by Prometheus necessitates a world of suffering, for those want to be more than infants can only grow as individuals and communities if confronted with hardship.

The following extract is taken from Hesiod's *Works and Days*. He first defines the kinds of strife we meet in life, one which is good, one which is evil. Then he describes the Promethean story as it is most commonly known to us today.

## THE TWO STRIFES

So, after all, there was not one kind of Strife alone, but all over the earth there are two. As for the one, a man would praise her when he came to understand her; but the other is blameworthy: and they are wholly different in nature. For one fosters evil war and battle, being cruel: her no man loves; but perforce, through the will of the deathless gods, men pay harsh Strife her honour due. But the other is the elder daughter of dark Night, and the son of Cronos who sits above and dwells in the aether, set her in the roots of the earth: and she is far kinder to men. She stirs up even the shiftless to toil; for a man grows eager to work when he

considers his neighbour, a rich man who hastens to plough and plant and put his house in good order; and neighbour vies with his neighbour as he hurries after wealth. This Strife is wholesome for men. And potter is angry with potter, and craftsman with craftsman, and beggar is jealous of beggar, and minstrel of minstrel.

Perses, lay up these things in your heart, and do not let that Strife who delights in mischief hold your heart back from work, while you peep and peer and listen to the wrangles of the court-house. Little concern has he with quarrels and courts who has not a year's victuals laid up betimes, even that which the earth bears, Demeter's grain. When you have got plenty of that, you can raise disputes and strive to get another's goods. But you shall have no second chance to deal so again: nay, let us settle our dispute here with true judgement divided our inheritance, but you seized the greater share and carried it off, greatly swelling the glory of our bribe-swallowing lords who love to judge such a cause as this. Fools! They know not how much more the half is than the whole, nor what great advantage there is in mallow and asphodel [poor man's fare].

## PANDORA AND THE JAR

For the gods keep hidden from men the means of life. Else you would easily do work enough in a day to supply you for a full year even without working; soon would you put away your rudder over the smoke, and the fields worked by ox and sturdy mule would run to waste. But Zeus in the anger of his heart hid it, because Prometheus the crafty deceived him; therefore he planned sorrow and mischief against men. He hid fire; but that the noble son of Iapetus stole again for men from Zeus the counsellor in a hollow fennel-stalk, so that Zeus who delights in thunder did not see it. But afterwards Zeus who gathers the clouds said to him in anger:

'Son of Iapetus, surpassing all in cunning, you are glad that you have outwitted me and stolen fire -- a great plague to you yourself and to men that shall be. But I will give men as the price for fire an evil thing in which they may all be glad of heart while they embrace their own destruction.'

So said the father of men and gods, and laughed aloud. And he bade famous Hephaestus make haste and mix earth with water and to put in it the voice and strength of human kind, and fashion a sweet, lovely maiden-shape, like to the immortal goddesses in face; and Athene to teach her needlework and the weaving of the varied web; and golden Aphrodite to shed grace upon her head and cruel longing and cares that weary the limbs. And he charged Hermes the guide, the Slayer of Argus, to put in her a shameless mind and a deceitful nature.

So he ordered. And they obeyed the lord Zeus the son of Cronos. Forthwith the famous Lame God moulded clay in the likeness of a modest maid, as the son of Cronos purposed. And the goddess bright-eyed Athene girded and clothed her, and the divine Graces and queenly Persuasion put necklaces of gold upon her, and the rich-haired Hours crowned her head with spring flowers. And Pallas Athene bedecked her form with all manners of finery. Also the Guide, the Slayer of Argus, contrived within her lies and crafty words and a deceitful nature at the will of loud thundering Zeus, and the Herald of the gods put speech in her. And he called this woman Pandora (All Endowed), because all they who dwelt on Olympus gave each a gift, a plague to men who eat bread. But when he had finished the sheer, hopeless snare, the Father sent glorious Argus-Slayer, the swift messenger of the gods, to take it to Epimetheus as a gift. And Epimetheus did not think on what Prometheus had said to him, bidding him never take a gift of Olympian Zeus, but to send it back for fear it might prove to be something harmful to men. But he took the gift, and afterwards, when the evil thing was already his, he understood. For ere this the tribes of men lived on earth remote and free from ills and hard toil and heavy sickness which bring the Fates upon men; for in misery men grow old quickly. But the woman took off the great lid of the jar with her hands and scattered all these and her thought caused sorrow and mischief to men. Only Hope remained there in an unbreakable home within under the



rim of the great jar, and did not fly out at the door; for ere that, the lid of the jar stopped her, by the will of Aegis-holding Zeus who gathers the clouds. But the rest, countless plagues, wander amongst men; for earth is full of evils and the sea is full. Of themselves diseases come upon men continually by day and by night, bringing mischief to mortals silently; for wise Zeus took away speech from them. So is there no way to escape the will of Zeus.





# The Lion

Edgar Rice Burroughs



UMA, the lion, crouched behind a thorn bush close beside the drinking pool where the river eddied just below the bend. There was a ford there and on either bank a well-worn trail, broadened far out at the river's brim, where, for countless centuries, the wild things of the jungle and of the plains beyond had come down to drink, the carnivora with bold and fearless majesty, the herbivora timorous, hesitating, fearful.

Numa, the lion, was hungry, he was very hungry, and so he was quite silent now. On his way to the drinking place he had moaned often and roared not a little; but as he neared the spot where he would lie in wait for Bara, the deer, or Horta, the boar, or some other of the many luscious-fleshed creatures who came hither to drink, he was silent. It was a grim, a terrible silence, shot through with yellow-green light of ferocious eyes, punctuated with undulating tremors of sinuous tail.

It was Pacco, the zebra, who came first, and Numa, the lion, could scarce restrain a roar of anger, for of all the plains people, none are more wary than Pacco, the zebra. Behind the black-striped stallion came a herd of thirty or forty of the plump and vicious little horselike beasts. As he neared the river, the leader paused often, cocking his ears and raising his muzzle to sniff the gentle breeze for the telltale scent spoor of the dread flesh-eaters.

Numa shifted uneasily, drawing his hind quarters far beneath his tawny body, gathering himself for the sudden charge and the savage assault. His eyes shot hungry fire. His great muscles quivered to the excitement of the moment.

Pacco came a little nearer, halted, snorted, and wheeled. There was a pattering of scurrying hoofs and the herd was gone; but Numa, the lion, moved not. He was familiar with the ways of Pacco, the zebra. He knew that he would return, though many times he might wheel and fly before he summoned the courage to lead his harem and his offspring to the water. There was the chance that Pacco might be frightened off entirely. Numa had seen this happen before, and so he became almost rigid lest he be the one to send them galloping, waterless, back to the plain. Again and again came Pacco and his family, and again and again did they turn and flee; but each time they came closer to the river, until at last the plump stallion dipped his velvet muzzle daintily into the water. The others, stepping warily, approached their leader. Numa selected a sleek, fat filly and his flaming eyes burned greedily as they feasted upon her, for Numa, the lion, loves scarce anything better than the meat of Pacco, perhaps because Pacco is, of all the grass-eaters, the most difficult to catch.

Slowly the lion rose, and as he rose, a twig snapped beneath one of his great, padded paws. Like a shot from a rifle he charged upon the filly; but the snapped twig had been enough to startle the timorous quarry, so that they were in instant flight simultaneously with Numa's charge.

The stallion was last, and with a prodigious leap, the lion catapulted through the air to seize him; but the snapping twig had robbed Numa of his dinner, though his mighty talons raked the zebra's glossy rump, leaving four crimson bars across the beautiful coat.

It was an angry Numa that quitted the river and prowled, fierce, dangerous, and hungry, into the jungle. Far from particular now was his appetite. Even Dango, the hyena, would have seemed a titbit to that ravenous maw. And in this temper it was that the lion came upon the tribe of Kerchak, the great ape.

One does not look for Numa, the lion, thus late in the morning. He should be lying up asleep beside his last night's kill by now; but Numa had made no kill last night. He was still hunting, hungrier than ever.

The anthropoids were idling about the clearing, the first keen desire of the morning's hunger having been satisfied. Numa scented them long before he saw them. Ordinarily he would have turned away in search of other game, for even Numa respected the mighty muscles and the sharp fangs of the great bulls of the tribe of Kerchak, but today he kept on steadily toward them, his bristled snout wrinkled into a savage snarl.

Without an instant's hesitation, Numa charged the moment he

reached a point from where the apes were visible to him. There were a dozen or more of the hairy, manlike creatures upon the ground in a little glade. In a tree at one side sat a brown-skinned youth. He saw Numa's swift charge; he saw the apes turn and flee, huge bulls trampling upon little balus; only a single she held her ground to meet the charge, a young she inspired by new motherhood to the great sacrifice that her balu might escape. Tarzan leaped from his perch, screaming at the flying bulls beneath and at those who squatted in the safety of surrounding trees. Had the bulls stood their ground, Numa would not have carried through that charge unless goaded by great rage or the gnawing pangs of starvation. Even then he would not have come off unscathed.

If the bulls heard, they were too slow in responding, for Numa had seized the mother ape and dragged her into the jungle before the males had sufficiently collected their wits and their courage to rally in defense of their fellow. Tarzan's angry voice aroused similar anger in the breasts of the apes. Snarling and barking they followed Numa into the dense labyrinth of foliage wherein he sought to hide himself from them. The ape-man was in the lead, moving rapidly and yet with caution, depending even more upon his ears and nose than upon his eyes for information of the lion's whereabouts.

The spoor was easy to follow, for the dragged body of the victim left a plain trail, blood-spattered and scentful. Even such dull creatures as you or I might easily have followed it. To Tarzan and the apes of Kerchak it was as obvious as a cement sidewalk.

Tarzan knew that they were nearing the great cat even before he heard an angry growl of warning just ahead. Calling to the apes to follow his example, he swung into a tree and a moment later Numa was surrounded by a ring of growling beasts, well out of reach of his fangs and talons but within plain sight of him. The carnivore crouched with his forequarters upon the she-ape. Tarzan could see that the latter was already dead; but something within him made it seem quite necessary to rescue the useless body from the clutches of the enemy and to punish him.

He shrieked taunts and insults at Numa, and tearing dead branches from the tree in which he danced, hurled them at the lion. The apes followed his example. Numa roared out in rage and vexation. He was hungry, but under such conditions he could not feed.

The apes, if they had been left to themselves, would doubtless soon have left the lion to peaceful enjoyment of his feast, for was not the she dead? They could not restore her to life by throwing sticks at Numa, and they might even now be feeding in quiet themselves; but Tarzan was of a different mind. Numa must be punished and driven away. He must be taught that even though he killed a Mangani, he would not be permitted to feed upon, his kill. The man-mind looked into the future, while the apes perceived only the immediate present. They would be content to escape today the menace of Numa, while Tarzan saw the necessity, and the means as well, of safeguarding the days to come.

So he urged the great anthropoids on until Numa was showered with missiles that kept his head dodging and his voice pealing forth its savage protest; but still he clung desperately to his kill. The twigs and branches hurled at Numa, Tarzan soon realized, did not hurt him greatly even when they struck him, and did not injure him at all, so the ape-man looked about for more effective missiles, nor did he have to look long. An out-cropping of decomposed granite not far from Numa suggested ammunition of a much more painful nature. Calling to the apes to watch him, Tarzan slipped to the ground and gathered a handful of small fragments. He knew that when once they had seen him carry out his idea they would be much quicker to follow his lead than to obey his instructions, were he to command them to procure pieces of rock and hurl them at Numa, for Tarzan was not then king of the apes of the tribe of Kerchak. That came in later years. Now he was but a youth, though one who already had wrested for himself a place in the councils of the savage beasts among whom a strange fate had cast him. The sullen bulls of the older



generation still hated him as beasts hate those of whom they are suspicious, whose scent characteristic is the scent characteristic of an alien order and, therefore, of an enemy order. The younger bulls, those who had grown up through childhood as his playmates, were as accustomed to Tarzan's scent as to that of any other member of the tribe. They felt no greater suspicion of him than of any other bull of their acquaintance; yet they did not love him, for they loved none outside the mating season, and the animosities aroused by other bulls during that season lasted well over until the next. They were a morose and peevish band at best, though here and there were those among them in whom germinated the primal seeds of humanity—reversions to type, these, doubtless; reversions to the ancient progenitor who took the first step out of apehood toward humanness, when he walked more often upon his hind feet and discovered other things for idle hands to do.

So now Tarzan led where he could not yet command. He had long since discovered the apish propensity for mimicry and learned to make use of it. Having filled his arms with fragments of rotted granite, he clambered again into a tree, and it pleased him to see that the apes had followed his example. During the brief respite while they were gathering their ammunition, Numa had settled himself to feed; but scarce had he arranged himself and his kill when a sharp piece of rock hurled by the practiced hand of the ape-man struck him upon the cheek. His sudden roar of pain and rage was smothered by a volley from the apes, who had seen Tarzan's act. Numa shook his massive head and glared upward at his tormentors. For a half hour they pursued him with rocks and broken branches, and though he dragged his kill into densest thickets, yet they always found a way to reach him with their missiles, giving him no opportunity to feed, and driving him on and on.

The hairless ape-thing with the man scent was worst of all, for he had even the temerity to advance upon the ground to within a few yards of the Lord of the Jungle, that he might with greater accuracy and force hurl the sharp bits of granite and the heavy sticks at him. Time and again did Numa charge—sudden, vicious charges—but the lithe, active tormentor always managed to elude him and with such insolent ease that the lion forgot even his great hunger in the consuming passion of his rage, leaving his meat for considerable spaces of time in vain efforts to catch his enemy.

The apes and Tarzan pursued the great beast to a natural clearing, where Numa evidently determined to make a last stand, taking up his position in the center of the open space, which was far enough from any tree to render him practically immune from the rather erratic throwing of the apes, though Tarzan still found him with most persistent and aggravating frequency. This, however, did not suit the ape-man, since Numa now suffered an occasional missile with no more than a snarl, while he settled himself to partake of his delayed feast. Tarzan scratched his head, pondering some more effective method of offense, for he had deliberated to prevent Numa profiting in any way through his attack upon the tribe. The man-mind reasoned against the future, while the shaggy apes thought only of their present hatred of this ancestral enemy. Tarzan guessed that should Numa find it an easy thing to snatch a meal from the tribe of Kerchak, it would be but a short time before their existence would be one living nightmare of hideous watchfulness and dread. Numa must be taught that the killing of an ape brought immediate punishment and no rewards. It would take but a few lessons to insure the former safety of the tribe. This must be some old lion whose failing strength and agility had forced him to any prey that he could catch; but even a single lion, undisputed, could exterminate the tribe, or at least make its existence so precarious and so terrifying that life would no longer be a pleasant condition.

"Let him hunt among the Gomangani," thought Tarzan. "He will find them easier prey. I will teach ferocious Numa that he may not hunt the Mangani."

But how to wrest the body of his victim from the feeding lion

was the first question to be solved. At last Tarzan hit upon a plan. To anyone but Tarzan of the Apes it might have seemed rather a risky plan, and perhaps it did even to him; but Tarzan rather liked things that contained a considerable element of danger. At any rate, I rather doubt that you or I would have chosen a similar plan for foiling an angry and a hungry lion.

Tarzan required assistance in the scheme he had hit upon and his assistant must be equally as brave and almost as active as he. The ape-man's eyes fell upon Taug, the playmate of his childhood, the rival in his first love and now, of all the bulls of the tribe, the only one that might be thought to hold in his savage brain any such feeling toward Tarzan as we describe among ourselves as friendship. At least, Tarzan knew, Taug was courageous, and he was young and agile and wonderfully muscled.

"Taug!" cried the ape-man. The great ape looked up from a dead limb he was attempting to tear from a lightning-blasted tree. "Go close to Numa and worry him," said Tarzan. "Worry him until he charges. Lead him away from the body of Mamka, Keep him away as long as you can."

Taug nodded. He was across the clearing from Tarzan. Wrestling the limb at last from the tree he dropped to the ground and advanced toward Numa, growling and barking out his insults. The worried lion looked up and rose to his feet. His tail went stiffly erect and Taug turned in flight, for he knew that warning signal of the charge.

From behind the lion, Tarzan ran quickly toward the center of the clearing and the body of Mamka. Numa, all his eyes for Taug, did not see the ape-man. Instead he shot forward after the fleeing bull, who had turned in flight not an instant too soon, since he reached the nearest tree but a yard or two ahead of the pursuing demon. Like a cat the heavy anthropoid scampered up the bole of his sanctuary. Numa's talons missing him by little more than inches.

For a moment the lion paused beneath the tree, glaring up at the ape and roaring until the earth trembled, then he turned back again toward his kill, and as he did so, his tail shot once more to rigid erectness and he charged back even more ferociously than he had come, for what he saw was the naked man-thing running toward the farther trees with the bloody carcass of his prey across a giant shoulder.

The apes, watching the grim race from the safety of the trees, screamed taunts at Numa and warnings to Tarzan. The high sun, hot and brilliant, fell like a spotlight upon the actors in the little clearing, portraying them in glaring relief to the audience in the leafy shadows of the surrounding trees. The light-brown body of the naked youth, all but hidden by the shaggy carcass of the killed ape, the red blood streaking his smooth hide, his muscles rolling, velvety, beneath. Behind him the black-maned lion, head flattened, tail extended, racing, a jungle thoroughbred, across the sunlit clearing.

Ah, but this was life! With death at his heels, Tarzan thrilled with the joy of such living as this; but would he reach the trees ahead of the rampant death so close behind?

Gunto swung from a limb in a tree before him. Gunto was screaming warnings and advice.

"Catch me!" cried Tarzan, and with his heavy burden leaped straight for the big bull hanging there by his hind feet and one forepaw. And Gunto caught them the big ape-man and the dead weight of the slain she-ape caught them with one great, hairy paw and whirled them upward until Tarzan's fingers closed upon a near-by branch.

Beneath, Numa leaped; but Gunto, heavy and awkward as he may have appeared, was as quick as Manu, the monkey, so that the lion's talons but barely grazed him, scratching a bloody streak beneath one hairy arm.

Tarzan carried Mamka's corpse to a high crotch, where even Sheeta, the panther, could not get it. Numa paced angrily back and forth beneath the tree, roaring frightfully. He had been robbed of his kill and his revenge also. He was very savage indeed; but his despoilers were well out of his reach, and after

hurling a few taunts and missiles at him they swung away through the trees, fiercely reviling him.

Tarzan thought much upon the little adventure of that day. He foresaw what might happen should the great carnivora of the jungle turn their serious attention upon the tribe of Kerchak, the great ape, but equally he thought upon the wild scramble of the apes for safety when Numa first charged among them. There is little humor in the jungle that is not grim and awful. The beasts have little or no conception of humor; but the young Englishman saw humor in many things which presented no humorous angle to his associates.

Since earliest childhood he had been a searcher after fun, much to the sorrow of his fellow-apes, and now he saw the humor of the frightened panic of the apes and the baffled rage of Numa even in this grim jungle adventure which had robbed Mamka of life, and jeopardized that of many members of the tribe.

It was but a few weeks later that Sheeta, the panther, made a sudden rush among the tribe and snatched a little balu from a tree where it had been hidden while its mother sought food. Sheeta got away with his small prize unmolested. Tarzan was very wroth. He spoke to the bulls of the ease with which Numa and Sheeta, in a single moon, had slain two members of the tribe.

"They will take us all for food," he cried. "We hunt as we will through the jungle, paying no heed to approaching enemies. Even Manu, the monkey, does not so. He keeps two or three always watching for enemies. Pacco, the zebra, and Wappi, the antelope, have those about the herd who keep watch while the others feed, while we, the great Mangani, let Numa, and Sabor, and Sheeta come when they will and carry us off to feed their balus."

"Gr-r-rmph," said Numgo.

"What are we to do?" asked Taug.

"We, too, should have two or three always watching for the approach of Numa, and Sabor, and Sheeta," replied Tarzan. "No others need we fear, except Histah, the snake, and if we watch for the others we will see Histah if he comes, though gliding ever so silently."

And so it was that the great apes of the tribe of Kerchak posted sentries thereafter, who watched upon three sides while the tribe hunted, scattered less than had been their wont.

But Tarzan went abroad alone, for Tarzan was a man-thing and sought amusement and adventure and such humor as the grim and terrible jungle offers to those who know it and do not fear it—a weird humor shot with blazing eyes and dappled with the crimson of lifeblood. While others sought only food and love, Tarzan of the Apes sought food and joy.

One day he hovered above the palisaded village of Mbonga, the chief, the jet cannibal of the jungle primeval. He saw, as he had seen many times before, the witch-doctor, Rabba Kega, decked out in the head and hide of Gorgo, the buffalo. It amused Tarzan to see a Gomangani parading as Gorgo; but it suggested nothing in particular to him until he chanced to see stretched against the side of Mbonga's hut the skin of a lion with the head still on. Then a broad grin widened the handsome face of the savage beast-youth.

Back into the jungle he went until chance, agility, strength, and cunning backed by his marvelous powers of perception, gave him an easy meal. If Tarzan felt that the world owed him a living he also realized that it was for him to collect it, nor was there ever a better collector than this son of an English lord, who knew even less of the ways of his forbears than he did of the forbears themselves, which was nothing.

It was quite dark when Tarzan returned to the village of Mbonga and took his now polished perch in the tree which overhangs the palisade upon one side of the walled enclosure. As there was nothing in particular to feast upon in the village there was little life in the single street, for only an orgy of flesh and native beer could draw out the people of Mbonga. Tonight they sat gossiping about their cooking fires, the older members of the tribe; or, if they were young, paired off in the shadows cast by the palm-

thatched huts.

Tarzan dropped lightly into the village, and sneaking stealthily in the concealment of the denser shadows, approached the hut of the chief, Mbonga. Here he found that which he sought. There were warriors all about him; but they did not know that the feared devil-god slunk noiselessly so near them, nor did they see him possess himself of that which he coveted and depart from their village as noiselessly as he had come.

Later that night, as Tarzan curled himself for sleep, he lay for a long time looking up at the burning planets and the twinkling stars and at Goro the moon, and he smiled. He recalled how ludicrous the great bulls had appeared in their mad scramble for safety that day when Numa had charged among them and seized Mamka, and yet he knew them to be fierce and courageous. It was the sudden shock of surprise that always sent them into a panic; but of this Tarzan was not as yet fully aware. That was something he was to learn in the near future.

He fell asleep with a broad grin upon his face.

Manu, the monkey, awoke him in the morning by dropping discarded bean pods upon his upturned face from a branch a short distance above him. Tarzan looked up and smiled. He had been awakened thus before many times. He and Manu were fairly good friends, their friendship operating upon a reciprocal basis. Sometimes Manu would come running early in the morning to awaken Tarzan and tell him that Bara, the deer, was feeding close at hand, or that Horta, the boar, was asleep in a mudhole hard by, and in return Tarzan broke open the shells of the harder nuts and fruits for Manu, on frightened away Histah, the snake, and Sheeta, the panther.

The sun had been up for some time, and the tribe had already wandered off in search of food. Manu indicated the direction they had taken with a wave of his hand and a few piping notes of his squeaky little voice.

"Come, Manu," said Tarzan, "and you will see that which shall make you dance for joy and squeal your wrinkled little head off. Come, follow Tarzan of the Apes."

With that he set off in the direction Manu had indicated and above him, chattering, scolding and squealing, skipped Manu, the monkey. Across Tarzan's shoulders was the thing he had stolen from the village of Mbonga, the chief, the evening before.

The tribe was feeding in the forest beside the clearing where Gunto, and Taug, and Tarzan had so harassed Numa and finally taken away from him the fruit of his kill. Some of them were in the clearing itself. In peace and content they fed, for were there not three sentries, each watching upon a different side of the herd? Tarzan had taught them this, and though he had been away for several days hunting alone, as he often did, or visiting at the cabin by the sea, they had not as yet forgotten his admonitions, and if they continued for a short time longer to post sentries, it would become a habit of their tribal life and thus be perpetuated indefinitely.

But Tarzan, who knew them better than they knew themselves, was confident that they had ceased to place the watchers about them the moment that he had left them, and now he planned not only to have a little fun at their expense but to teach them a lesson in preparedness, which, by the way, is even a more vital issue in the jungle than in civilized places. That you and I exist today must be due to the preparedness of some shaggy anthropoid of the Oligocene. Of course the apes of Kerchak were always prepared, after their own way—Tarzan had merely suggested a new and additional safeguard.

Gunto was posted today to the north of the clearing. He squatted in the fork of a tree from where he might view the jungle for quite a distance about him. It was he who first discovered the enemy. A rustling in the undergrowth attracted his attention, and a moment later he had a partial view of a shaggy mane and tawny yellow back. Just a glimpse it was through the matted foliage beneath him; but it brought from Gunto's leathern lungs a shrill "Kreeg-ah!" which is the ape for beware, or danger. Instantly the tribe took up the cry until "Kreeg-ahs!" rang through the jungle about the clearing as apes swung quickly to places of



safety among the lower branches of the trees and the great bulls hastened in the direction of Gunto.

And then into the clearing strode Numa, the lion - majestic and mighty, and from a deep chest issued the moan and the cough and the rumbling roar that set stiff hairs to bristling from shaggy craniums down the length of mighty spines.

Inside the clearing, Numa paused and on the instant there fell upon him from the trees near by a shower of broken rock and dead limbs torn from age-old trees. A dozen times he was hit, and then the apes ran down and gathered other rocks, pelting him unmercifully.

Numa turned to flee, but his way was barred by a fusilade of sharp-cornered missiles, and then, upon the edge of the clearing, great Taug met him with a huge fragment of rock as large as a man's head, and down went the Lord of the Jungle beneath the stunning blow.

With shrieks and roars and loud barkings the great apes of the tribe of Kerchak rushed upon the fallen lion. Sticks and stones and yellow fangs menaced the still form. In another moment, before he could regain consciousness, Numa would be battered and torn until only a bloody mass of broken bones and matted hair remained of what had once been the most dreaded of jungle creatures.

But even as the sticks and stones were raised above him and the great fangs bared to tear him, there descended like a plummet from the trees above a diminutive figure with long, white whiskers and a wrinkled face. Square upon the body of Numa it alighted and there it danced and screamed and shrieked out its challenge against the bulls of Kerchak.

For an instant they paused, paralyzed by the wonder of the thing. It was Manu, the monkey, Manu, the little coward, and here he was daring the ferocity of the great Mangani, hopping about upon the carcass of Numa, the lion, and crying out that they must not strike it again.

And when the bulls paused, Manu reached down and seized a tawny ear. With all his little might he tugged upon the heavy head until slowly it turned back, revealing the tousled, black head and clean-cut profile of Tarzan of the Apes.

Some of the older apes were for finishing what they had commenced; but Taug, sullen, mighty Taug, sprang quickly to the ape-man's side and straddling the unconscious form warned back those who would have struck his childhood playmate. And Teeka, his mate, came too, taking her place with bared fangs at Taug's side. Others followed their example, until at last Tarzan was surrounded by a ring of hairy champions who would permit no enemy to approach him.

It was a surprised and chastened Tarzan who opened his eyes to consciousness a few minutes later. He looked about him at the surrounding apes and slowly there returned to him a realization of what had occurred.

Gradually a broad grin illuminated his features. His bruises were many and they hurt ; but the good that had come from his adventure was worth all that it had cost. He had learned, for instance, that the apes of Kerchak had heeded his teaching, and he had learned that he had good friends among the sullen beasts whom he had thought without sentiment. He had discovered that Manu, the monkey - even little, cowardly Manu - had risked his life in his defense.

It made Tarzan very glad to know these things; but at the other lesson he had been taught he reddened. He had always been a joker, the only joker in the grim and terrible company; but now as he lay there half dead from his hurts, he almost swore a solemn oath forever to forego practical joking - almost; but not quite.





Frances Gwendolyn (née  
Francklyn) Castens in her  
Noah's Ark costume, worn  
when skating, Halifax, Nova  
Scotia, Canada, 189-?.



# The End of the Young Family Feud

Lucy Maud Montgomery



A week before Christmas, Aunt Jean wrote to Elizabeth, inviting her and Alberta and me to eat our Christmas dinner at Monkshead. We accepted with delight. Aunt Jean and Uncle Norman were delightful people, and we knew we should have a jolly time at their house. Besides, we wanted to see Monkshead, where Father had lived in his boyhood, and the old Young homestead where he had been born and brought up and where Uncle William still lived. Father never said much about it, but we knew he loved it very dearly, and we had always greatly desired to get at least a glimpse of what Alberta liked to call "our ancestral halls."

Since Monkshead was only sixty miles away, and Uncle William lived there as aforesaid, it may be pertinently asked what there was to prevent us from visiting it and the homestead as often as we wished. We answer promptly: the family feud.

Father and Uncle William were on bad terms, or rather on no terms at all, and had been ever since we could remember. After Grandfather Young's death there had been a wretched quarrel over the property. Father always said that he had been as much to blame as Uncle William, but Great-aunt Emily told us that Uncle William had been by far the most to blame, and that he had behaved scandalously to Father. Moreover, she said that Father had gone to him when cooling-down time came, apologized for what he had said, and asked Uncle William to be friends again; and that William, simply turned his back on Father and walked into the house without saying a word, but, as Great-aunt Emily said, with the Young temper sticking out of every kink and curve of his figure. Great-aunt Emily is our aunt on Mother's side, and she does not like any of the Youngs except Father and Uncle Norman.

This was why we had never visited Monkshead. We had never seen Uncle William, and we always thought of him as a sort of ogre when we thought of him at all. When we were children, our old nurse, Margaret Hannah, used to frighten us into good behaviour by saying ominously, "If you 'uns aint good your Uncle William'll catch you."

What he would do to us when he "cotched" us she never specified, probably reasoning that the unknown was always more terrible than the known. My private opinion in those days was that he would boil us in oil and pick our bones.

Uncle Norman and Aunt Jean had been living out west for years. Three months before this Christmas they had come east, bought a house in Monkshead, and settled there. They had been down to see us, and Father and Mother and the boys had been up to see them, but we three girls had not; so we were pleasantly excited at the thought of spending Christmas there.

Christmas morning was fine, white as a pearl and clear as a diamond. We had to go by the seven o'clock train, since there was no other before eleven, and we reached Monkshead at eight-thirty.

When we stepped from the train the stationmaster asked us if we were the three Miss Youngs. Alberta pleaded guilty, and he said, "Well, here's a letter for you then."

We took the letter and went into the waiting room with sundry misgivings. What had happened? Were Uncle Norman and Aunt Jean quarantined for scarlet fever, or had burglars raided the pantry and carried off the Christmas supplies? Elizabeth opened and read the letter aloud. It was from Aunt Jean to the following effect:

Dear Girls: I am so sorry to disappoint you, but I cannot help it. Word has come from Streatham that my sister has met with a serious accident and is in a very critical condition. Your uncle and I must go to Streatham immediately and are leaving on the eight o'clock express. I know you have started before this, so there is no use in telegraphing. We want you to go right to the house and make yourself at home. You will find the key under the kitchen doorstep, and the dinner in the pantry all ready to cook. There are two mince pies on the third shelf, and the plum pudding only needs to be warmed up. You will find a little Christmas remembrance for each of you on the dining-room table. I hope you will make as merry as you possibly can and we will have you

down again as soon as we come back.

Your hurried and affectionate,

Aunt Jean

We looked at each other somewhat dolefully. But, as Alberta pointed out, we might as well make the best of it, since there was no way of getting home before the five o'clock train. So we trailed out to the stationmaster, and asked him limply if he could direct us to Mr. Norman Young's house.

He was a rather grumpy individual, very busy with pencil and notebook over some freight; but he favoured us with his attention long enough to point with his pencil and say jerkily, "Young's? See that red house on the hill? That's it."

The red house was about a quarter of a mile from the station, and we saw it plainly. Accordingly, to the red house we betook ourselves. On nearer view it proved to be a trim, handsome place, with nice grounds and very fine old trees.

We found the key under the kitchen doorstep and went in. The fire was black out, and somehow things wore a more cheerless look than I had expected to find. I may as well admit that we marched into the dining room first of all, to find our presents. There were three parcels, two very small and one pretty big, lying on the table, but when we came to look for names there were none.

"Evidently Aunt Jean, in her hurry and excitement, forgot to label them," said Elizabeth. "Let us open them. We may be able to guess from the contents which belongs to whom."

I must say we were surprised when we opened those parcels. "We had known that Aunt Jean's gifts would be nice, but we had not expected anything like this. There was a magnificent stone marten collar, a dear little gold watch and pearl chatelaine, and a gold chain bracelet set with turquoises.

"The collar must be for you, Elizabeth, because Mary and I have one already, and Aunt Jean knows it," said Alberta; "the watch must be for you, Mary, because I have one; and by the process of exhaustion the bracelet must be for me. Well, they are all perfectly sweet."

Elizabeth put on her collar and paraded in front of the sideboard mirror. It was so dusty she had to take her handkerchief and wipe it before she could see herself properly. Everything in the room was equally dusty. As for the lace curtains, they looked as if they hadn't been washed for years, and one of them had a long ragged hole in it. I couldn't help feeling secretly surprised, for Aunt Jean had the reputation of being a perfect housekeeper. However, I didn't say anything, and neither did the other girls. Mother had always impressed upon us that it was the height of bad manners to criticize anything we might not like in a house where we were guests.

"Well, let's see about dinner," said Alberta, practically, snapping her bracelet on her wrist and admiring the effect.

We went to the kitchen, where Elizabeth proceeded to light the fire, that being one of her specialties, while Alberta and I explored the pantry. We found the dinner supplies laid out as Aunt Jean had explained. There was a nice fat turkey all stuffed, and vegetables galore. The mince pies were in their place, but they were almost the only things about which that could be truthfully said, for the disorder of that pantry was enough to give a tidy person nightmares for a month. "I never in all my life saw—" began Alberta, and then stopped short, evidently remembering Mother's teaching.

"Where is the plum pudding?" said I, to turn the conversation into safer channels.

It was nowhere to be seen, so we concluded it must be in the cellar. But we found the cellar door padlocked good and fast.

"Never mind," said Elizabeth. "You know none of us really likes plum pudding. We only eat it because it is the proper traditional dessert. The mince pies will suit us better."

We hurried the turkey into the oven, and soon everything was going merrily. We had lots of fun getting up that dinner, and we made ourselves perfectly at home, as Aunt Jean had commanded. We kindled a fire in the dining room and dusted everything in sight. We couldn't find anything remotely resembling a duster, so

we used our handkerchiefs. When we got through, the room looked like something, for the furnishings were really very handsome, but our handkerchiefs—well! Then we set the table with all the nice dishes we could find. There was only one long tablecloth in the sideboard drawer, and there were three holes in it, but we covered them with dishes and put a little potted palm in the middle for a centrepiece. At one o'clock dinner was ready for us and we for it. Very nice that table looked, too, as we sat down to it.

Just as Alberta was about to spear the turkey with a fork and begin carving, that being one of her specialties, the kitchen door opened and somebody walked in. Before we could move, a big, handsome, bewhiskered man in a fur coat appeared in the dining-room doorway.

I wasn't frightened. He seemed quite respectable, I thought, and I supposed he was some intimate friend of Uncle Norman's. I rose politely and said, "Good day."

You never saw such an expression of amazement as was on that poor man's face. He looked from me to Alberta and from Alberta to Elizabeth and from Elizabeth to me again as if he doubted the evidence of his eyes.

"Mr. and Mrs. Norman Young are not at home," I explained, pitying him. "They went to Streatham this morning because Mrs. Young's sister is very ill."

"What does all this mean?" said the big man gruffly. "This isn't Norman Young's house ... it is mine. I'm William Young. Who are you? And what are you doing here?"

I fell back into my chair, speechless. My very first impulse was to put up my hand and cover the gold watch. Alberta had dropped the carving knife and was trying desperately to get the gold bracelet off under the table. In a flash we had realized our mistake and its awfulness. As for me, I felt positively frightened; Margaret Hannah's warnings of old had left an ineffaceable impression.

Elizabeth rose to the occasion. Rising to the occasion is another of Elizabeth's specialties. Besides, she was not hampered by the tingling consciousness that she was wearing a gift that had not been intended for her.

"We have made a mistake, I fear," she said, with a dignity which I appreciated even in my panic, "and we are very sorry for it. We were invited to spend Christmas with Mr. and Mrs. Norman Young. When we got off the train we were given a letter from them stating that they were summoned away but telling us to go to their house and make ourselves at home. The stationmaster told us that this was the house, so we came here. We have never been in Monkshead, so we did not know the difference. Please pardon us."

I had got off the watch by this time and laid it on the table, unobserved, as I thought. Alberta, not having the key of the bracelet, had not been able to get it off, and she sat there crimson with shame. As for Uncle William, there was positively a twinkle in his eye. He did not look in the least ogreish.

"Well, it has been quite a fortunate mistake for me," he said. "I came home expecting to find a cold house and a raw dinner, and I find this instead. I'm very much obliged to you."

Alberta rose, went to the mantel piece, took the key of the bracelet therefrom, and unlocked it. Then she faced Uncle William. "Mrs. Young told us in her letter that we would find our Christmas gifts on the table, so we took it for granted that these things belonged to us," she said desperately. "And now, if you will kindly tell us where Mr. Norman Young does live, we won't intrude on you any longer. Come, girls."

Elizabeth and I rose with a sigh. There was nothing else to be done, of course, but we were fearfully hungry, and we did not feel enthusiastic over the prospect of going to another empty house and cooking another dinner.

"Wait a bit," said Uncle William. "I think since you have gone to all the trouble of cooking the dinner it's only fair you should stay and help to eat it. Accidents seem to be rather fashionable just now. My housekeeper's son broke his leg down at Weston, and I had to take her there early this morning. Come, introduce

yourselves.

To whom am I indebted for this pleasant surprise?"

"We are Elizabeth, Alberta, and Mary Young of Green Village," I said; and then I looked to see the ogre creep out if it were ever going to.

But Uncle William merely looked amazed for the first moment, foolish for the second, and the third he was himself again.

"Robert's daughters?" he said, as if it were the most natural thing in the world that Robert's daughters should be there in his house.

"So you are my nieces? Well, I'm very glad to make your acquaintance. Sit down and we'll have dinner as soon as I can get my coat off. I want to see if you are as good cooks as your mother used to be long ago."

We sat down, and so did Uncle William. Alberta had her chance to show what she could do at carving, for Uncle William said it was something he never did; he kept a housekeeper just for that. At first we felt a bit stiff and awkward; but that soon wore off, for Uncle William was genial, witty, and entertaining. Soon, to our surprise, we found that we were enjoying ourselves. Uncle William seemed to be, too. When we had finished he leaned back and looked at us.

"I suppose you've been brought up to abhor me and all my works?" he said abruptly.

"Not by Father and Mother," I said frankly. "They never said anything against you. Margaret Hannah did, though. She brought us up in the way we should go through fear of you."

Uncle William laughed.

"Margaret Hannah was a faithful old enemy of mine," he said.

"Well, I acted like a fool—and worse. I've been sorry for it ever since. I was in the wrong. I couldn't have said this to your father, but I don't mind saying it to you, and you can tell him if you like." "He'll be delighted to hear that you are no longer angry with him," said Alberta. "He has always longed to be friends with you again, Uncle William. But he thought you were still bitter against him."

"No—no—nothing but stubborn pride," said Uncle William. "Now, girls, since you are my guests I must try to give you a good time. We'll take the double sleigh and have a jolly drive this afternoon. And about those trinkets there—they are yours. I did get them for some young friends of mine here, but I'll give them something else. I want you to have these. That watch looked very nice on your blouse, Mary, and the bracelet became Alberta's pretty wrist very well. Come and give your cranky old uncle a hug for them."

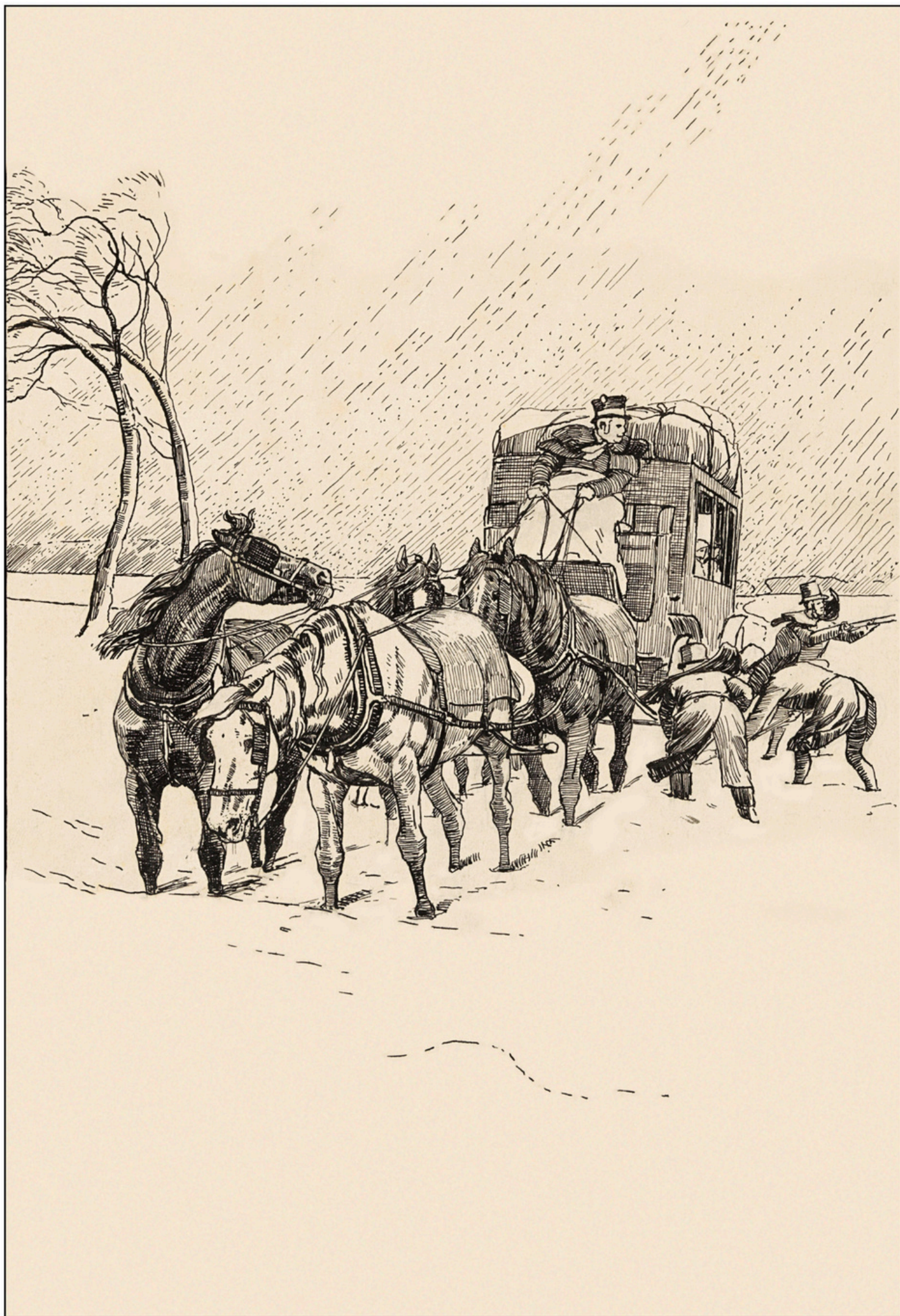
Uncle William got his hugs heartily; then we washed up the dishes and went for our drive. We got back just in time to catch the evening train home. Uncle William saw us off at the station, under promise to come back and stay a week with him when his housekeeper came home.

"One of you will have to come and stay with me altogether, pretty soon," he said. "Tell your father he must be prepared to hand over one of his girls to me as a token of his forgiveness. I'll be down to talk it over with him shortly."

When we got home and told our story, Father said, "Thank God!" very softly. There were tears in his eyes. He did not wait for Uncle William to come down, but went to Monkshead himself the next day.

In the spring Alberta is to go and live with Uncle William. She is making a supply of dusters now. And next Christmas we are going to have a grand family reunion at the old homestead. Mistakes are not always bad.









ISOLATION IS DENIED. PINY TO BOND.  
FORGE YOUR LINKS!  
PLAY CARDS!

IRON HANDS POKER CARDS

Available on: [RADLOOT.COM](http://RADLOOT.COM)





corncrakemag.com

X: @corncrakemag

Love is enough: though the World be a-waning,  
And the woods have no voice but the voice of complaining,  
Though the sky be too dark for dim eyes to discover  
The gold-cups and daisies fair blooming thereunder,  
Though the hills be held shadows, and the sea a dark wonder  
And this day draw a veil over all deeds pass'd over,  
Yet their hands shall not tremble, their feet shall not falter;  
The void shall not weary, the fear shall not alter  
These lips and these eyes of the loved and the lover.

From Love is Enough by William Morris