CORNCRAKE

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ISSUE 20

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Geroge Herbert
Gerald Cumberland

NESTING IN THE OAK OF ENGLISH LITERATURE

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No man is an island,
Entire of itself,
Every man is a piece of the continent,
A part of the main.
If a clod be washed away by the sea,
Europe is the less.
As well as if a promontory were.
As well as if a manor of thy friend's
Or of thine own were:
Any man's death diminishes me,
Because I am involved in mankind,
And therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls;
It tolls for thee.
- John Donne

Editor's Note

The cooler weather is here:) Get out your winter wardrobes and bundle yourself up in the last remaining warm rays of the sun. This mag is heaped with a great selection of new writers and the trusted oldies.

For extra fluffy cow imagery head to the centre spread where the Watson family put brush to canvas to delight the world with the cutest of highland coos.

You, dear reader, were a horse in your past life. If you don't believe me turn to Gerald Cumberland's *Intellectual Freaks* to learn all about it.

I hope you like my little picture of breakfast.

Your inner goth girl will be thrilled to hear that Nathan CJ Hood has written a foreword for two pieces by Edgar Allen Poe: the poem, *The Raven*, and *The Philosophy of Composition*.

JS Watts joins us for the first time, she has written a playful vignette of a socialite. It makes a nice change from the passionate writings of vikings that are usually found in my inbox.

The Righteous Moon, high fantasy mixed with a reflective approach to the human condition, is an excerpt from Philip Wortmann's House of Noth.

Happy reading my fine fellows;)

Call of the Shieldmaiden
Editor-in-Chief

Dates of Importance

October 9. St. John Henry Newman was an influential 19th-century English churchman, theologian, philosopher, and writer who played a pivotal role in the religious history of England. Born in London on 21 February 1801, he was originally an Anglican priest and academic at the University of Oxford, where he became a leading figure in the Oxford Movement. This movement sought to restore Catholic doctrines and liturgical practices within the Church of England, emphasizing its continuity with the early undivided Church. Newman was a key intellectual force behind the movement, known for his writings such as the Tracts for the Times, Parochial and Plain Sermons, and Lectures on the Prophetical Office of the Church. After a period of deep theological reflection, Newman converted to Roman Catholicism in 1845, a decision that caused significant controversy at the time. He was ordained a Catholic priest and went on to found the Birmingham Oratory in 1848, where he served as a pastor and spiritual leader. He also played a crucial role in establishing the Catholic University of Ireland in 1854, which later became University College Dublin, and authored the influential Idea of a University. In recognition of his service, Pope Leo XIII created him a cardinal in 1879.
Newman was beatified in 2010 and canonized as a saint by Pope Francis on 13 October 2019, becoming the first British saint to be canonized in over three decades and the first to have lived in the last 300 years. His feast day is observed on 9 October. In July 2025, Pope Leo XIV announced plans to declare him a Doctor of the Church, a title recognizing his profound and enduring influence on Catholic theology and thought.

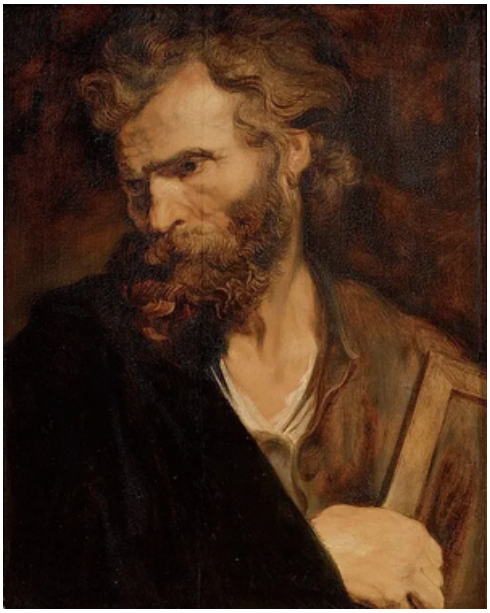
October 10. Saint Paulinus of York was a Roman monk and missionary who played a pivotal role in the Christianization of England during the 7th century. Born around 584 in Rome, he was sent by Pope Gregory I the Great in 601 as part of the Gregorian mission to assist Saint Augustine of Canterbury in converting the Anglo-Saxons from paganism to Christianity. He arrived in England by 604 and spent over two decades working in Kent before being consecrated bishop by Archbishop Justus of Canterbury in 625. His most significant contribution was his mission to Northumbria. He accompanied Æthelburg, the Christian sister of King Eadbald of Kent, to marry King Edwin of Northumbria, who was still pagan at the time. Paulinus successfully converted Edwin to Christianity, and on Easter Day, 627, Edwin was baptized in a wooden church at York, marking the beginning of Christianity in Northumbria. Paulinus then traveled extensively throughout the north, preaching and baptizing thousands, establishing churches in places like York, Lincoln, Leeds, and the Cheviots, and is credited with baptizing future saints like Hilda of Whitby. After Edwin was killed in the Battle of Hatfield Chase in 633, Paulinus fled Northumbria with Edwin's widow, Æthelburg, and their children, returning to Kent where he became Bishop of Rochester. He was later granted the pallium, symbolizing metropolitan jurisdiction, by Pope Honorius I in 634, though he never effectively exercised authority over York after leaving. He died on October 10, 644, in Rochester, Kent, and was venerated as a saint soon after his death.

October 12. Saint Wilfrid was a prominent English bishop and monk who lived during the 7th century, born around 634 in Northumbria, a region in what is now northern England. He is considered one of the greatest English saints and played a pivotal role in the history of the Church in England. He is best known for championing the adoption of Roman Christian practices over the Celtic traditions that were prevalent in parts of Britain at the time, particularly at the pivotal Synod of Whitby in 664, where he successfully argued for the Roman method of calculating the date of Easter and other liturgical matters. Wilfrid's influence extended far beyond this single event. He was a dedicated missionary who worked to convert pagan populations, notably the Kingdom of Sussex, and he helped establish the Roman form of Christian observance throughout England. He was a great builder, founding magnificent stone churches and monasteries at Ripon, Hexham, and Selsey, which became centers of devotion, learning, and culture. He brought the Benedictine Rule to England, introduced Roman liturgical chants, and collected religious treasures and books from the Continent to enrich his monastic communities. His life was marked by significant conflict and controversy. He faced opposition from kings, fellow bishops, and archbishops, leading to his exile from Northumbria on multiple occasions. Despite these challenges, he remained steadfast in his convictions, frequently appealing to the Pope in Rome for support, which helped establish the authority of the papacy within the English Church. He was also a key figure in the early English mission to continental Europe, mentoring Willibrord, who became the apostle of Friesland. Saint Wilfrid is highly relevant to England's history and religious development. He is recognized as a patron saint of Northumbria and his feast day is celebrated on October 12th. His efforts were instrumental in aligning the English Church with the practices of the wider Roman Catholic Church, a shift that had lasting consequences for the religious and cultural landscape of the country.

October 13. St. Edward the Confessor was King of England from 1042 until his death in 1066, and he is the only English monarch to have been canonized as a saint by the Roman Catholic Church. He was the son of King Æthelred the Unready and Emma of Normandy, and he spent much of his early life in exile in Normandy after the Danish invasions of England. He was crowned king in 1043 after the death of his half-brother, Harthacnut. Known for his piety and simple lifestyle, he earned the title "the Confessor" because he lived a holy life without being a martyr. Edward is particularly relevant to England due to his significant legacy. He is regarded as the patron saint of England, a role he held until the 14th century when Saint George became more prominent. He remains the patron saint of the British Royal Family. His most enduring contribution is the foundation and construction of Westminster Abbey, which he began as a new church in the Norman style to replace the Saxon church on the site. The abbey, consecrated in 1065, became a royal burial site and remains a central symbol of the English monarchy. His body is interred there, and his shrine has been a site of pilgrimage and veneration for centuries. Despite his reputation for piety, Edward's reign was not without conflict. His preference for Norman advisors and his strained relationship with powerful English earls, particularly Godwin of Wessex, led to political tensions and even periods of banishment. His death in 1066 without an heir led directly to the succession crisis that culminated in the Norman Conquest, with William the Conqueror defeating Edward's successor, Harold Godwinson, at the Battle of Hastings. Although some historians view his reign as weak and a factor in the Norman conquest, others recognize his successful rule, characterized by peace, prosperity, and efficient administration.

October 26. Alfred the Great was King of the West Saxons from 871 to 886 and King of the Anglo-Saxons from 886 until his death in 899. He was the youngest son of King Æthelwulf and is renowned for his military victories against Viking invaders, notably winning the decisive Battle of Edington in 878 after being driven into hiding in the Somerset marshes. His leadership helped prevent the complete conquest of England by the Danes and led to a peace treaty with Viking leader Guthrum, which established the boundaries of the Danelaw and included Guthrum's conversion to Christianity. Alfred is credited with laying the foundations for a unified English nation, a concept he promoted by styling himself as "King of the Anglo-Saxons". He is considered one of the most important figures in English history due to his extensive reforms. Alfred established a court school to promote education in both English and Latin, encouraged the translation of important works into English, and improved the legal system and military structure. The compilation of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle began during his reign, providing a crucial historical record. His reputation as a learned, merciful, and level-headed ruler was solidified by the biography written by his contemporary, Bishop Asser, which significantly shaped his legacy. Alfred is the only native-born English monarch to be given the epithet "the Great," a title not bestowed during his lifetime but popularized from the 16th century onwards, though evidence suggests the concept of him as "the Great" was present in medieval texts from at least the 13th century. He is highly relevant to England's history, often regarded as a foundational figure in the development of English identity and the nation-state, and his capital, Winchester, became a central seat of power for his kingdom.

October 26. Saint Chad, also known as Ceadda, was a significant religious figure in early medieval England, credited with the Christianisation of the ancient English kingdom of Mercia. Born in Northumberland at the end of the sixth century, he was educated at the great abbey of Lindisfarne on Holy Island under its founder, Saint Aidan, and later studied in Ireland at the monastery of Rathmelsigi. He became a monastic founder, abbot, and the first bishop of Lichfield, a position he held after being consecrated by Archbishop Theodore of Canterbury in 669 following a period of controversy over his initial consecration. Saint Cedd, Chad's brother, was also a key figure in the Christianisation of England. He was ordained in 653 and served as a missionary, notably in Essex, where he founded monasteries at Tilbury and Bradwell-on-Sea, the latter being the site of the church of St. Peter-on-the-Wall, one of the oldest churches in Britain. Cedd was also a prominent interpreter at the Synod of Whitby in 664, where he helped mediate between the Celtic and Roman Christian traditions, and he died of the plague that same year. Both saints are highly relevant to England's history and religious development. Their work, particularly in Mercia, Northumbria, and East Anglia, was instrumental in spreading Christianity among the Anglo-Saxons during the 7th century. Saint Chad is especially remembered for his dedication to his apostolate, traveling extensively on foot through his diocese, and for his humility, which impressed Archbishop Theodore of Canterbury. Their legacy endures in the places they founded and the religious traditions they helped establish, with their feast day commemorated on October 26.



October 28. Sts. Simon and Jude were Apostles of Jesus Christ, chosen to spread his teachings after his death and resurrection. According to tradition, they were martyred together in Suanis, a city in Persia, after years of missionary work. Simon is traditionally believed to have been martyred by being sawed in two, which led to his patronage of woodcutters. Jude, also known as Thaddeus, is often associated with the author of the Epistle of Jude, which urges believers to persevere through persecution and difficult circumstances. He is particularly venerated as the patron saint of impossible causes and desperate situations, a title possibly stemming from confusion with Judas Iscariot or from the letter's message of perseverance. He is also frequently depicted with a flame above his head, symbolizing his presence at Pentecost when he received the Holy Spirit.
Both saints are relevant to England. They are commemorated together in the Church of England with a Festival on October 28th, a date that has been observed for centuries. The Church of England's liturgical resources, including prayers and scripture readings for their festival, are available through its official publications. The National Shrine of Saint Jude in Faversham, England, was established in 1955, further highlighting their significance within the country. Additionally, the Cathedral of Saints Simon and Jude in Phoenix, Arizona, is named in their honor, reflecting their international veneration.

October 29. Robin Hood is a legendary heroic outlaw from English folklore, traditionally depicted as a skilled archer and swordsman who lived in Sherwood Forest near Nottinghamshire. He is best known for the story of robbing the rich to give to the poor, a theme that became prominent in later retellings, although the earliest ballads do not emphasize this aspect as strongly. While his exact historical existence is uncertain, he is considered a quintessential folk hero of England, symbolizing resistance against tyranny and the protection of the common people. Robin Hood is deeply relevant to England, as he is one of the most iconic figures in English folklore and a central character in the nation's cultural heritage. His legend, which began to take shape in the 14th century with references in works like Piers Plowman, has been perpetuated through ballads, plays, literature, and modern media. The character is traditionally associated with the reign of King Richard I during the Third Crusade, a setting popularized by Sir Walter Scott's novel Ivanhoe, although this timeframe is not supported by the oldest surviving ballads, which place him in the 13th or 14th century. Despite the lack of contemporary historical evidence for a real Robin Hood, his story remains a powerful symbol of justice and rebellion in English culture.

Snap-Apple Night (1833), painted by Daniel Maclise, shows people playing divination games on 31 October in Ireland

October 31. Samhain is not a person but an ancient Celtic festival marking the end of the harvest season and the beginning of winter, traditionally celebrated on November 1st. It is considered one of the most important and significant festivals in the ancient Celtic calendar, believed to be a time when the boundary between the physical world and the spirit world was at its thinnest, allowing for interaction with ancestors and otherworldly beings. The festival originated in ancient Ireland and Britain, with strong cultural and religious significance in these regions. The name "Samhain" (pronounced "sow-in" or "sow-win") is derived from the Gaelic language and means "end of summer". It was a time for taking stock of food supplies, bringing livestock down from summer pastures, and slaughtering animals for winter consumption. Rituals included lighting large communal bonfires, which were used to relight household hearths, and making offerings to spirits and deities. The festival also had a military aspect in Ireland, with preparations for commanders and severe penalties for those who broke its rules. Samhain is highly relevant to England, as it was a central part of the ancient Celtic spiritual tradition across the British Isles, including England. The festival's traditions, such as bonfires, divination, and the belief in a thinning veil between worlds, have deeply influenced modern celebrations, particularly Halloween, which evolved from Samhain. The Christian church later incorporated the festival into its calendar, moving All Saints' Day to November 1st and All Souls' Day to November 2nd, with October 31st becoming All Hallows' Eve, or Halloween. The customs of trick-or-treating and dressing in costumes are believed to have roots in ancient Samhain practices, such as mumming and the belief that spirits wandered the earth. In modern times, Samhain is celebrated by various groups, including Wiccans and other modern pagans, who observe it as a significant point on the Wheel of the Year, marking the end of one cycle and the beginning of another. It remains a culturally and spiritually significant event in England and other parts of the world with Celtic heritage.

Rutland

The horseshoe has traditionally been the symbol of Oakham since William the Conqueror gave the 125-square-mile estate to Henry de Ferrers, whose family name suggests a connection with iron-working or the farrier occupation. One of his privileges was to claim the forfeit of a horseshoe from anyone of rank visiting his lordship in Oakham. A unique collection of horseshoes presented by royalty and peers of the realm passing through the manor, hangs on the walls of the Hall in Oakham Castle.
The acorn exemplifies the former forest, which at one time covered much of the county. It can also be interpreted as representing "smallness and importance" and the oaks suggested by the name of Oakham. The green field represents the county's agriculture, especially its rich pastureland.
The orientation of the horseshoe is in accordance with tradition in the county, and the horseshoes in the Castle are hung this way up.

Rutland is the smallest county in England. It sits squarely in the Midlands, between Northamptonshire to the south, Lincolnshire to the east and Leicestershire to the west. Rutland is almost entirely agricultural, the only towns of any size being Oakham and Uppingham, both small and charming. Elsewhere Rutland is characterized by delightful villages, distinct according to their location: those in the east of the county are built mostly in oolitic limestone, those in the south and west more in warm limestone. Rutland is a well watered place; the Eye Brook, the Chater, and the Gwash flowing through green vales between rolling hills. The south-eastern border is the Welland. The Gwash was dammed in the 1970s, flooding a huge area for a reservoir. Although its construction was the subject of considerable opposition and involved the demolition of the hamlet of Nether Hambleton, Rutland Water today provides a major recreational resource to the county and is a wetland of international wildlife importance. Around Uppingham the ground rises into broken and picturesque scenery. The county town, Oakham lies in the Vale of Catmose. It is a small, charming market town centred around a small square and market-cross. Oakham Castle, within the town, is a fortified manor house with an important 12th century great hall and home of an extraordinary collection of presentation horseshoes. Towns: Oakham, Cottesmore, Ketton, Oakham, Market Overton, Uppingham. Rivers: Welland, Eye, Gwash, Chater. Highlights: Market place, Oakham; Oakham School; Rutland Water.
County Flower: Clustered Bellflower

MARY ISABELLA REYNOLDS

Rowlandson, the caricaturist, once published a cartoon entitled "Juno Devon, All Sublime." The rival goddesses in competition with her before that modern Paris, the Prince of Wales, being their Graces of Gordon and Rutland. Beyond the various written records of the opposing beauty of those aristocratic dames who dominated society in their day, we have ample painted evidence of their loveliness. Of her Grace of Devonshire, we have, first, the engraved renderings of "the lost Gainsborough." There are other Gainsboroughs, too,—Georgiana as a child, and a full-length of her standing at the edge of a lawn, her face looking down, wearing a white dress, her right elbow on the base of a column, a scarf in both hands, her hair piled high, but without the hat, as in the more famous picture. There are then several by Sir Joshua. The first, where she stands as a child beside her mother; then, she as a mother with her own child,—a very charming profile, and a picture that insinuates the vivacity of demeanor and the abandon so characteristic of her.

Walpole wrote of this as "Little like and not good." Yet, as to goodness, a modern authority has said: "It is a superb work; and, in motive, color, and composition, it ranks as a triumph alike of nature and art." Again, there is a whole-length showing her about to descend some steps to a lawn, her superb shoulders and neck bare, and her hair highly bedecked with feathers. Walpole writes of another portrait, drawn by Lady Di Beauclerck, and engraved by Bartolozzi: "A Castilian nymph conceived by Sappho and executed by Myron, would not have had more grace and simplicity. The likeness is perfectly preserved, except that the paintress has lent her own expression to the Duchess, which you will allow is very agreeable flattering." In the Royal collection of miniatures at Windsor, are three charmingly executed ivories of her by Cosway. Lawrence, too, made a chalk drawing of her, which now hangs at Chiswick House, in the room in which Charles Fox died. This is an interesting work from being a very early effort of the after-time President of the Academy, and showing that then he had not attained the trick of flattering his sitters, even when they were noted beauties. Angelica Kauffman painted her, and John Downman also made a portrait replete with elegance and picturesqueness. In fact, the comely Duchess pervaded the art of the period.

Of her Grace of Gordon, we have, as our ideal presentment of her, the portrait by Sir Joshua. In it her hair is done up high, and two rows of pearls are intertwined therein. The dress is of the Charles the First period, and shows the sweetly modulated shoulders leading up to—

"The pillared throat, clear chiselled cheek,High arching brows, nose purely Greek,Set lips,—too firm for a coquette."

We have also an interesting portrait of her by Romney.

Of her Grace of Rutland, we have also several pictures by Sir Joshua. There is a whole-length with a decorative head-dress, and a landscape background. The original of this was destroyed by fire at Belvoir Castle. Another, a half-length, in the same costume, and a three-quarter face, is mostly pervaded by a serene sense of pride. There is a drawing of her done by the Hon. Mrs. O'Neil, which is interesting from the picturesque head-dress shown. Her Grace of Gordon was as great a power in the political world as she of Devonshire,—probably greater, for her alliance and principles were with the ruling power. This lady was to Pitt's party what Fair Devon was to Fox's. In fact, it was asserted she endeavored to marry her daughter, Lady Charlotte, afterwards Duchess of Richmond, to the premier. When Georgiana made her famous canvass in favor of Fox, the Tories opposed to her the Scotch Duchess. She lived and entertained then in a splendid mansion in Pall Mall; and there assembled the adherents of the Administration.

Jane was the daughter of Sir William Maxwell, of Monreith, and in her youth, even, was noted for beauty. A ballad, "Jenny of Monreith," written in her honor, was often chivalrously sung by her son George, the last Duke of Gordon. "Jenny" married the fourth Duke, Alexander, in 1767. The career of the Duke's youngest brother George, identified with the "Gordon Riot," caused the family much embarrassment, and even threatened to derogate from the Duchess's dominance with the ruling party.

Her Grace was of somewhat stronger fibre than she of Devon; more masculinity, ay, even more principle, characterized her. Thrift was a visible virtue, in contrast to Georgiana's improvidence. Command, rather than cajolery, was her political method. Her later life was devoted to securing sons-in-law; three dukes, a marquis, and a knight were of her garnering. She was on good terms with the Regent, and endeavored to aid him in his differences with his Princess Caroline. She is remembered, too, as a patron and friend of Dr. Beattie, the poet, who has eulogized her in these lines "To a Pen":—

"Go, and be guided by the brightest eyes,And to the softest hand thine aid impart;To trace the fair ideas as they arise,Warm from the purest, gentlest, noblest heart."

The third in that group of goddesses was surely the fairest of them all, of more perfect form, more noble bearing, having that ultimate element of the greatest beauty,—distinction. She came of a longer lineage, and was the consummate flower of beauty wrought by the sun and summers through many generations of patrician life,—life amid the palatial parks, the superb scenery, and majestic castles of England. Such living weaves its sweetest elements into the tissues of the being and works a spell of loveliness such as Lady Mary Somerset. She was the youngest daughter of Charles, fourth Duke of Beaufort, a descendant of the Plantagenets. In 1775, she was married to Lord Charles Manners, eldest son (born in 1754) of John,—that Marquis of Granby whom Junius attacked, who was associated in the government, in George the Second's time, with the Earl of Chatham. The Marquis was a man of much force, and a most [71]hospitable entertainer. He died before his father, the third Duke of Rutland.

Lord Charles succeeded to the dukedom in 1779. He had formed a friendship at Cambridge with Pitt, the son of his father's colleague, and through his influence Pitt entered Parliament. In 1784, he was induced by the young premier to accept the Lord-Lieutenancy of Ireland, and it is with the lavish entertainment and high revelries at Dublin Castle that his name and that of his beautiful Duchess is connected.

High living soon told its tale, for the Duke died in 1787, at the early age of thirty-three. Though having the most beautiful wife in England, his affections wandered, and tales are told of his attachment to that siren singer, Mrs. Billington. The Duchess's manner had somewhat of levity and much coquetry in it, though she could not be classed with that company who have not time to be virtuous. At the time of her lord's death, she was living with her mother, the Dowager Duchess of Beaufort, in Berkeley Square, London, having been partially estranged from her husband. On hearing of his illness, she started to set out for Dublin; but a message of his death came fast upon the trail of the first news. Perchance it was this estrangement at death, this having parted in anger without the chance of reconciliation in life, that affected her so deeply that, though sought by many suitors, the widow was true to the memory of her late lord. Her son, John Henry, succeeded to the title; and his bride, a daughter of the Earl of Carlisle, was also known as a beauty, and her portrait was painted by Hoppner, in 1798. It was she of whom Greville wrote in his Memoirs, and commented on her lack of taste in spoiling the magnificent Castle of Belvoir, the pride and glory of the Eastern Midlands.

The beauty of the Duchess Mary Isabella was statuesque, classical; her features were noble. She received admiration as her right, but gave not largesse of smiles and wit in return. She was not as the Devonian divinity, "The woman in whose golden smile all life seems enchanted."

Wraxall writes of a lady telling of witnessing a prenuptial display of her person, and being entranced by lithe limb, by the fine and faultless form. Reynolds has hinted at the beauteous body, and the hint ensnares us. Verily, "the visible fair form of a woman is hereditary queen of us." Wraxall also likens the Duchess to an older-time beauty, Diane de Poitiers,—that famous lady of France, the favorite of François I. and Henri II. Of that lady's beauty, it was written, that it was of the form and feature rather than the radiance of the mind and manner transforming them; and like her, too, our Duchess retained her beauty to an advanced age. She died in 1821. To the last, she impressed one with her dignity, her nobility, her loveliness.

"And they who saw her snow-white hair.And dark, sad eyes, so deep with feeling,Breathed all at once the chancel air,And seemed to hear the organ pealing."

The Righteous Moon

Excerpt from The House of Noth

Philip Wortmann

Philip Wortmann was born in Pietermaritzburg, South Africa in 1996, and grew up in the small Lutheran farming community of Wartburg (South Africa).
After completing his schooling, he attended the University of Pretoria, where he studied Ancient Cultures and Languages, with a focus on Bibliacal Languages.
After receiving his BA, he moved to Germany, where he studied Theology from 2018-2024 in both Oberursel and Leipzig.
He is currently living in South Africa again, serving in the Free Evangelical Lutheran Synod of South Africa, and likes to spend his free time writing fiction among other things.

All was shadow, all was tenebrous doubt. Feet shuffled in the dark, the patting of hands echoed from the cold stone of the walls surrounding them. Sudden blue light flared up in silent brilliance before them, and the two men had to cover their eyes.

"You should have brought some torches for yourselves, seeing as you can't see in the dark, you cabbages!" laughed the voice of the gron as their sight adjusted to this sudden illumination.

As Authæn began to lower his hands and look towards where the gron had conjured sudden dawn, he saw that they were in no natural cave. The walls were hewn as though by many chisels, but to represent the waves of the sea. Every here and there great sea-beasts could be seen to rise from the glittering, stony waves on either side, captured in perfect stillness. Below, the floor had been cobbled neatly to guide the way; above, the ribbed arches that held stable the ceiling were swallowed in lofty darkness. But, beyond them, the faint hint of a bejewelled imitation of heaven betrayed its presence by winking back at Grin's lamp.

"What is that?" asked Gaba, kneeling down before the gron who held out the glowing stone now clutched in his hand.

"This is a moonstone, son of Hamath," said he. "Take it, if you will; my eyes are still young and fit for seeing in the dark."

The southerner took up the stone carefully, treating it as though it threatened sudden explosion at any moment. Behind him the gron stuck out his tongue at Authæn gleefully.

"How is this possible? Is it a star fallen from heaven?" asked the southerner.

"What? The … the moonstone?" asked Grin. His playful face had set like stone again with confusion. "No, Hamathian, that is a stone I picked up from the floor here."

"But it glows!" said Authæn, also picking up a loose stone nearby. He was disappointed, however, when it did not also burst into sudden brilliance.

The gron chuckled, his features softening again. "I see," said he. "Give it to us, river-man!"

Authæn did as commanded, and placed the stone he had picked up into the little palm of the gnome.

"Perhaps not so dwarfish a mind after all, eh?" chuckled Grin as he carved something into the rock with his thumbnail.

"What are you doing?" asked Authæn.

"This," said the gron, still busily carving and momentarily blowing the dust from the stone, "is the dwarfish word for 'moon'." He held the stone against the light of Gaba's moonstone, so that his companions might see the one under construction.

"I do not recognise the writing," muttered Authæn.

"Nor I," said Gaba.

"You needn't. I just thought I'd show you apples how magnificent I am," chuckled the gron. "It is pronounced lûn."

"And what makes it glow?" asked the southerner.

"Just a moment there, old man. It will begin in a minute. I wouldn't have let you stumble about in the dark any longer than I had to, you see. I do like to laugh at folk, but that would have been cruel. The stone merely — dense as myself — takes time to comprehend so lofty words as those of our old masters."

"I thought the ghouls were your masters," said Authæn with a frown, at which the stone in Grin's hand suddenly flared into pale, blue life.

"My, what a marvel!" cried Gaba.

Grin handed Authæn the stone, and began to continue down the passage. They followed.

Those that you call ghouls, master stone-plucker," said Grin, "were once dwarfs. They were once the great masters of the language that can string together webs of truth, and make them hard as glass in the hand. That is what you have just experienced with those shinies of yours."

"But what were the dwarfs, if they are so no longer?" asked the river-person.

"There still are dwarfs," said Grin, "in fact the ghouls are far fewer in number than their wiser kindred in the Veiled Hills. How it came to pass that they fell from reason and began to worship the moon is a mystery even to those of us that served directly beneath them, building all of their mighty dwellings and workshops for them in the earth. Like most of the agents of evil, they likely decided that it was time to enforce their own desires, rather than accept truth as it stands about us; but if you do not, in truth, have the power to decide how things are, all you do is break yourself against the sharp blade of … well, against the sharp blade of how things truly are."

"And who does decide truth? The dwarfs with their runes?" asked Gaba.

"No, truth is not decided. It is witnessed, and testified to. That is the work of the rune-workers. They tell the truth," said the gron.

"Sounds familiar. But this is no moon," said the southerner, waving about his lamp with a frown.

"And yet it glows with the moon's light," chuckled the gron. "I am no dwarf, master Hamathian. You must ask them regarding their mysteries."

"I am certain young Authæn can appreciate your view on the matter, treasure-hoarder," said Gaba.

"It strikes me how similar your words are to those of our shepherds," said the river-man.

"Does it really?" the gron challenged. "The ghouls were one of the reasons your fathers came into being. Is it so strange to think that some of the dwarfish ways might rub off on them too? Besides, it was the King of Grons that raised your shepherds. What wisdom they have came from him, I am certain."

At last the tunnel along which they had been descending came to an end, and they stepped out into a great and open space. Here the very air seemed to vibrate on their ears, like a hum just beyond hearing. It was a great, circular chamber, lit from above by a vast hole in the ceiling. Through it one could see the jagged, moonlit tines of the hill within which they were. No clouds were blocking the window into heaven as one might have thought them to from without, and presently the full moon tilted over the edge to spill its glorious light into the cavern of Lyn Ithæm. At the centre of the chamber was a broad yet shallow pool, also round, raised on a steep dais in the centre.

The adventurers strode up the stair to stand at the dark edge of the shining pond; the rim and the base of the pool seemed to be made of black glass, so that the moon was caught in a perfect reflection on the crystal water.

"A shadow of a shadow of day," muttered Authæn, staring into the water and then up at the moon itself. "Lyn Ithæm. Is that name dwarfish, Grin?" he asked of a sudden.

"Ha! You must have two brains in that head of yours, weird-eye: one dwarfish, the other … just fish," said the gron, stepping to look over the edge of the pool next to the river-person. "It is a dwarfish name, it means the full moon: lûn ithâm."

Suddenly, as if with those words, the waters in the shallow basin began to glow, as had the moonstones (now redundant in their hands). The light of the full moon was working its charm on the water — but now something more happened: through the milkiness new runes were seen to glow.

Almost at once more of the writing appeared, but now on the surface of the water, then at different depths within the liquid. The letters began to move as though reading themselves — as though in conversation! More and more was written, until one saw pictures playing there like memories, though somehow stranger and more distorted — perhaps it was a pool of dreams.

Then a figure began to knit together amidst the imagery, like a scarf. It was a gown, and then it was filled with the figure of a woman. Slowly, with all elegance, she arose out of the stony depression, adorned in robes of simplest grey. Her eyes were black and endless as all the starless heavens. Her skin was as snow, an unrelenting celestial that glowed with the moon's essence. Her hair was silver lining. Nothing of her was not otherworldly.

Gaba fell to his knees, cowering with his hands held up to shield him, he seemed to feel the eminence of the daughter of the moon's presence more sharply than Authæn. In this moment the hum on the air bent into a thousand harmonies.

The river-man, on the other hand, stepped forward, and she looked at him with a familiar smile bent on her lips. He shuddered with some aftertaste of memory on his tongue. She

seemed so familiar; as if this were all a dream…

"You are Authæn, son of Thuineith the carpenter, according to the law of Wirthaumuin," said she. At this it was as though something that had held all tension in him snapped. He was calm at that moment, though he should not have been. He looked into her eyes and was unafraid.

"You have been watching the henge," said the river-man.

"You have seen me?" asked she, clearly curious.

"Only in my dreams, I think," said he.

"I am tasked to look after you, son of Thuineith. It was the task he bound me to with this dark chamber."

"You do not seem overly desperate over the matter," said the river-man.

Her head tilted slowly to one side.

"You have been interesting to observe," she returned.

"Then my father sought you out so that one of the daughters of the moon would watch over me?" asked Authæn. "He desired that I would have guidance in my studies — guidance in becoming what he thought I must? He thought that you would guide me to become a true shepherd, like your other sons? A shepherd he wanted me to be; I, your son!

"And where were you, woman?! I had no guidance from you! I dwelt amongst our true shepherds, and even they never knew what a mother's embrace was, save by great speculation and staring at the moon! And here we are, all staring at the moon. But I do not fear you. Why should I call you mother?"

"Oh, you have grown so suddenly!" she beamed with a light that drove Authæn to narrow his golden eyes, but he would not let her cow him. "And you truly do have no affection for me. I am… enthralled."

"You are a shadow, and not that of motherhood," said the river-man. "You are a grain of sand in an hourglass, measuring every passing moment; waiting with baited breath for the last of moments to arrive. You seek control from afar — to control the tides by your magnetism, never actually dipping your fingers into the brine. You are a pale imitation of life. How life was ever brought forth through you is a true wonder!"

"Your tongue has venom in it; like that of the viper," she chuckled. "And yet you speak truly. It is a shame that I have no hold over you. I desired so to bend you to my will. I desired so to make of you my dream in waking flesh! But instead I was fastened here in glass upon glass, bewritten by the world-wrights. No control was left to me. But what control did I ever have that did not lead to destruction. You, the fruit of my womb, may yet be a leader to freedom for those long seeking it. For that I have something no other sister of mine has."

"And what is that, moon's-daughter?" asked Authæn.

"A name in this world; for behold: I am Lyn Ithæm, mother of the deliverer of the river-people! All I did for this great honour was marry into captivity."

"Great lady!" Gaba managed hoarsely.

"It speaks!" she gasped.

At this the southerner arose with difficulty. "I must ask what you know of the Ibex and his ravaging of this land. It is of great importance."

"The Ibex, that metallic hollow!" she snarled, then her face was lit with malicious joy again. "A plaything of the ghouls. Oh how they sucked every service out of him before the end. As they shall with you, dragon hunter. In your calling they have you as a friend. Did you know that the Ibex had found a path towards redemption through their crafts? Do you still feel like a hero for slaying your brother of old now?"

"How? How was he to be redeemed?" cried the southerner desperately.

"Oh, you have a weakness! This I must remember. It will be a floodgate into your soul. He was sent to find the bane of wyrms, was he not? He was sent to find an Unth—"

"DO NOT SAY THE WORD!" thundered the voice of the gron, suddenly, and the radiance of the daughter of the moon dimmed somewhat in surprise.

"Ah, and here is it's failed protector," she smiled again, now wider than before. "I am met today by the trine failure!"

Gaba's eyes snapped onto the gron. "The chest," he whispered.

"It is lost, south-man!" growled the gron. "Do not go lost along with it."

"It is my charge! With that I can return to the city of my queen!" roared Gaba in a frightening loss of control. "What would you do, gnome, if you could return to the crafting of such halls as these, but for your intended masters, the dwarfs? Would you not do anything?"

"The dwarfs are perhaps my masters, and I would still serve their every whim …" the gron trailed off, his face, a moment before the picture of anger, now grew regretful as he looked at Authæn.

The river-person looked back at him. He had not expected this from the gron. Why pity? Why now? What other great revelation lay in wait?

But the gnome shook himself, and said again, "The dwarfs are our masters, but the grons have a king of their own, and they serve him before all others. I know my place, southerner; you have yet to find yours here in the wilderness!"

"Stop!" cried Authæn. "She turns us one against the other, like children squabbling over the last piece of cake on the table!"

"Oh, you came to blows all on your own," said Lyn Ithæm. "But I do not want you to stop now, it was such a marvellous unravelling of matters that were trying so hard to remain hidden! Let me prod some more! Tell him how you slew his father, gron!"

Authæn's eyes widened, and he shot a glare at Grin.

"I did not kill him, weird-eye!" said the gron with such stern earnestness that the river-person felt foolish for having fallen into the hands of the moon's-daughter.

"What was this look of pity you gave me?" asked the river-man.

"The ghoul that slew the carpenter slew him for having me and my kin build this prison. Yes, I helped build this place, but only a small part of it. The carpenter bound this daughter of moonlight to himself in the Vale of Thrones. It cost him his soul, which he had to bind to a melalith — a black soul-stone — but in return, he could capture hers in one also. The same soul-stone that now forms this basin," said Grin sadly. "He disguised himself, that wretched ghoul, as one of the red dwarfs — one of the dwarfs that are not ghouls.

"The false dwarf came to me, and I hewed for him a block of stone as one that Wirthaumuin had made for your village long ago. I have never questioned a red dwarf, my dear, dear fish-brain. It is not our way to question. Upon that altar he slew your father. But it was the King of Ghouls," said Grin, turning in ire to oppose the daughter of the moon, "not I, who slew the carpenter. To wreak such accursed work as that is not the way of grons. By means of the ritual stone, the King of Ghouls drew the soul of Thuineith out of the nearby melalith, and bound it to an … to one of their unholy crafts! That is why the weapons they build are so evil, south-man. They are imbued with the souls of those that are meant to be asleep!"

Again Lyn Ithæm's light faltered a little; she seemed even to be somewhat afraid of the gron as she remained silently smiling. The southerner also regarded the gron with a newfound reverence.

"Forgive me, Grin," said he. "Until this moment I did not recognise you as that which you are."

"Oh? What am I? A potato that stayed too long in the earth and grew too many roots?" the gron asked, turning testily to face the ebon man.

The other burst out laughing, but a tear slid from his eye as well, and regret was written in his face. "Yes!" said he, shaking his head. "Yes, a wonderful potato."

The gron smiled in his honest way, and then he turned his attention to Lyn Ithæm once more. "Tell us of the covenant that bound the Ibex to the ghouls!" he demanded, his face like flint.

She scowled, but relented with reluctance, saying: "The Ibex was offered the armour that he wore; an armour that made of him a draug — deathless, as long as his soul-stone remained in tact. For

the armour would forge itself anew atop that soul-stone. It was laid into the lair where a secret of the shepherds was buried with the daughter of old Thænim. Were he ever to perish, despite wearing it, the stone would call him back. He did perish; but then something happened that not even the crafty ghouls had seen tofore: a hunter had been sent for the Ibex. A hunter once of dragons, now of brothers!"

Gaba closed his eyes in a painful grimace, lowering his head into his hands.

Lyn Ithæm smiled cruelly again, and continued: "This brother-hunter brought the artefact, which held more soul than the soul-stone, in touch with the other, and both were undone. The spirit of the Ibex was freed as the breaths of all mortals shall be in their last moment.

"As for the weapon that both this and the past southern stalker of these lands sought, it was promised to the Ibex as soon as it could be found, but now it lies buried amidst the tumbling hills of a waterfall. The ghouls are unlikely to find it. You are cursed to wander these lands until you also breathe your last, noble dragon-hunter-no-more!"

"Then my father … he could have been recalled at the tower which he built on that black stone!" gasped Authæn.

"Could have. His soul is now bound up in that black metal you bear. I can hear it from here," scowled the gron.

The river-man's hand moved automatically to the place where he had hidden it again.

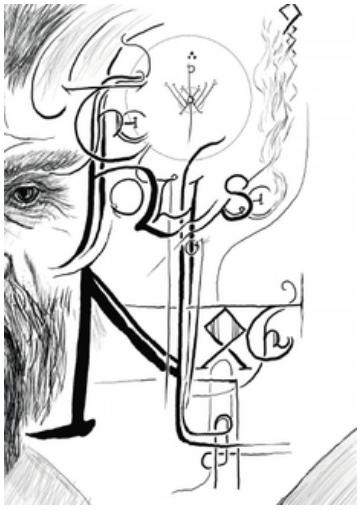
"You have your answers now, my cabbage patch," said Grin coldly. "Let us be away from this accursed place!"

As they departed, she did not call after them, she simply resumed her smiling posture, waiting for the night to end, as she had and would on every night in which the full moon touched that shallow pool.

The House of Noth

A Myth Amid the Roots of Day

Philip Wortmann



In a land of lights and shadows of things that are and want to be, a nomadic tribe is threatened with certain doom. A darkness roams the northern steppes, crowned with horns, and yet enslaved. What powers lurk beyond the dangers that the roaming river-people will have to face as they battle for their survival in the east? Their new chieftain, Authaen, seems ill-prepared to meet the looming danger.

Meanwhile, a mighty wanderer has trekked into the northern world from a faraway south. Gaba the wanderer is robed in strange attire, playing foreign melodies in a world that seems to make little sense. Together, he and Authaen will unravel the mysteries that are rooted deeply in the steppes over Middlemere; mysteries that will lead to further secrets in a land of black forests, snow-clothed mountains, and hardy warriors: the Children of Imnir.

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Adueniens Unus Passerum Domum Citissime Peruolauerit or

Hench and Worm

Liam Q. D. Hall

Hengist

Listen!
Spring dirt in waves of green tried to drown me. The hillocks rose and fell. They were great undulating shadows in the dark. Loamy spume slapped my face, the gale tore at my hair as a great worm rose from its barrow.
It was a drollery from Earth's memory, its mocking features not seen since Hyperborean times. The great bulk was graceful and terrible, covered in serpent scales. It's homely howe stood firm in the restless landscape, reminiscent of my yonder cairn.
I steered my coracle like wingelot, I cut off the beast. My taut muscles rallied as I moved my hands on my tiller. My thews were long out of practice but served me well. Flashes of ulfire shot out from the earth that bubbled like necrotic skin. The blinding light played with my healthy hench eyes, reminding me of the stars I once sailed.
The worm loomed, a wanax crowned from the orbal sputtering of light extinguishing. Such rutilant haze limned it and made it easy to follow as I crashed between swells.
Its great body flew out of the earth as I neared, the cinnamon of its hide looked gilded with musive. It is a sublime experience, to see a dragon. My stomach would have quivered long ago, my knees buckled. But in the moment I knew my dance partner in the raging tempest. It was Grave.

I likewise knew he would not come out the victor.
So I pulled forth my great blade, long cursed with me. Hildeleoma, Weyland forged for Hunlafing, bright through all the ages of Har and Wodebearer, though long since swallowed.
I stabbed and Grave roared as I pierced his hide. He dove away, wings of shadow flying out, sending the waves back along with my boat. I urged my gnomish steed on but the dark beating of the worm kept me away. I pulled out my quant and even with its aid I got no closer. I remembered what some old lore grammaticus told me about forcing words to a page, and try as you might, they did not come.
And I did not reach the worm. So I drew forth my second source of slaycraft. Sleek and with an elfin sheen was the spear, I tied upon it a rope and sent it forward. It pierced the parlous wind of the worm. It struck the beast like a great thorn.
I tugged on the rope and lanced my wooden stallion away, drawing the beast to me. It battered at the rope and spear, but it was forged in a god blessed fire and he could not be rid of my barb.
When he arrived, Grave's talons tore, claws clypped; I felt no pain. I plunged Hildeleoma into the worm's breast and with a bright smile upon my face I watched the devilish serpent bleed and slacken.
I dropped it, having no need of serpent treasure, and it sank like a stone into the storming land. My pile of rope was not spent when it pulled free. That was an ill omen. In my lonely roystering it was

easy to pull myself from the somber and pride-swollen air. The foulness of such a spear pulling free promised a thing terrible, a thing I could not abide.
From the ground a claw, all corrupted and clean reached for my prow. It was naked, bereft of its golden hide. I stood, unlike Wade, in unaccustomed ea as the last of the flesh of my foe fell at my feet.
It was stunning, the unveiling. A deep chuckle, projected by sorcery rather than the chest-bellows came from Grave. "Oh, Death where is thy victory?"
From a distance drum sounded, the crackling of bone rose quickly to a crescendo. There was a snap, a sting in my chest. Pain blossomed for the first time since the last heroes stepped the middle-enclosure in quickness. I was bored, pierced to my spirit, by the lambent eyes of the gross and cunning worm. Even though its muscles were gone, a grin upon that skull there was.
I fell to my knees, the rushing earth and stirring of my ship fading away. I was upon my back, and above I saw the sun give out its last. It flickered like the hellfire rents around me. The celestial glory, in the heaven-reaches above, died, as the suckling is swallowed by a wolf. And so winter ended, the fifel-monstrous thing of twilight. It seemed that roof would fall first, in reverse order of its creation. My mathom-covered body fell with my boat into the earth once more. Finally, my drow rose to the fiery ides who came screaming from above to take me to these halls, to Neorxawang. And so my geas and my uhtcare died for evermore.
This is my tale, I hope the recitation has been well and my harp arm not too poor from long disuse. But that, listener, is the end.

Anglo-Saxon illumination of King Athelstan, the earliest surviving depiction of an English king, he is presenting a book to St. Cuthbert, it is in Chester-le-Street, Corpus Christi College

Poems of George Herbert

1593-1633. Born in Montgomery, Wales. George Herbert was educated at Cambridge, became a public orator, then ordained in 1630. He was rector in Bemerton, near Salisbury. He is known for his poetry and care of his parish.

Redemption

Having been tenant long to a rich Lord,
Not thriving, I resolved to be bold,
And make a suit unto him, to afford
A new small-rented lease, and cancell th' old.
In heaven at his manour I him sought:
They told me there, that he was lately gone
About some land, which he had dearly bought
Long since on earth, to take possession.
I straight return'd, and knowing his great birth,
Sought him accordingly in great resorts;
In cities, theatres, gardens, parks, and courts:
At length I heard a ragged noise and mirth
Of theeves and murderers: there I him espied,
Who straight, Your suit is granted, said, and died.

A parable of a tenant (man) seeking his landowner (God) to work out a better deal.

Love (III)

Love bade me welcome, yet my soul drew back,
Guilty of dust and sin.
But quick-ey'd Love, observing me grow slack
From my first entrance in,
Drew nearer to me, sweetly questioning
If I lack'd anything.
"A guest," I answer'd, "worthy to be here";
Love said, "You shall be he."
"I, the unkind, the ungrateful? ah my dear,
I cannot look on thee."
Love took my hand and smiling did reply,
"Who made the eyes but I?"
"Truth, Lord, but I have marr'd them; let my shame
Go where it doth deserve."
"And know you not," says Love, "who bore the blame?"
"My dear, then I will serve."
"You must sit down," says Love, "and taste my meat."
So I did sit and eat.

God loves and welcomes sinful man.

Colossians III. 3.

Our Life is Hid With Christ in God

My words and thoughts do both express this notion,
That LIFE hath with the sun a double motion.
The first IS straight, and our diurnal friend:
The other HID, and doth obliquely bend.
One life is wrapt IN flesh, and tends to earth;
The other winds t'wards HIM whose happy birth
Taught me to live here so THAT still one eye
Should aim and shoot at that which IS on high—
Quitting with daily labour all MY pleasure,
To gain at harvest an eternal TREASURE.

Both life and the sun are alike in that both have dual natures: the sun both rises straight up and curves around the earth and sets (is hidden), and man is both bound to earth, but yearns for heaven.

The Agonie

Philosophers have measur'd mountains,
Fathom'd the depths of seas, of states, and kings,
Walk'd with a staffe to heav'n, and traced fountains:
But there are two vast, spacious things,
The which to measure it doth more behove:
Yet few there are that sound them; Sinne and Love.
Who would know Sinne, let him repair
Unto mount Olivet; there shall he see
A man so wrung with pains, that all his hair,
His skinne, his garments bloudie be.
Sinne is that presse and vice, which forceth pain
To hunt his cruell food through ev'ry vein.
Who knows not Love, let him assay
And taste that juice, which on the crosse a pike
Did set again abroach; then let him say
If ever he did taste the like.
Love in that liquour sweet and most divine,
Which my God feels as bloud; but I, as wine.
Sin and Love: who can fathom the depths of either one?

The Elixir

Teach me, my God and King,
In all things Thee to see,
And what I do in anything,
To do it as for Thee.
Not rudely, as a beast,
To run into action;
But still to make Thee prepossest,
And give it his perfection.
A man that looks on glass,
On it may stay his eye,
Or, if he pleaseth, through it pass,
And then the heav'n espy.
All may of Thee partake;
Nothing can be so mean
Which with his tincture (for Thy sake)
Will not grow bright and clean.
A servant with this clause
Makes drudgery divine:
Who sweeps a room as for Thy laws,
Makes that and th' action fine.
This is the famous stone
That turneth all to gold;
For that which God doth touch and own
Cannot for less be told.

Like the chemist's "Philosopher's Stone" that would turn everything it touched to gold, the phrase (and attitude) "for Thy sake" makes every act we do a thing of beauty.

A Song of Spring:
A Sword Fit For A King
Part 7: The Wyrm
AR Green

x.com/Outside_of_Time

Kildan led his band further south into the hills. The men went riding on through the valleys below while a few riders skirted the hilltops, scouting for danger. The question still hung in the air like a bad smell: why did the cearulves push them over the road? The Leodman shifted uncomfortably in his saddle.
The party went onward till the sun dipped down to the west. Kildan stopped in the next valley. “We’ll camp here tonight, men. First watch, take the hilltops,” the Leodman said.
The night’s watchmen made their way up the hills and surveyed the surrounding lands, under the moonlight. There were no trees, no brush or scrub, there wasn’t even grass underfoot - nothing could approach unseen.
As Findan set out his bedroll, on the sunscorched lands, he heard the men whispering in the dark.
“... toward the end, the kings of the old empire went mad. They declared the Gods dead and waged war against the earth itself. As punishment, Solorin scorched their lands ensuring naught would ever grow again. I’d always been told since I was a lad that there is nothing here for men except death and decay; we’d all best pray those stories were wrong, or we’re marching to our doom...”

Morning broke and Kildan made his way to the nearest hilltop - he set a course away from the roads, but still heading toward the city.
Kildan led his party over the rough, barren lands for a week. With each passing day, he watched as his men slowly faded to the same shade of grey as the skies and earth laid out before him. The Leodman overheard a few of the riders joking that they longed for something to happen, even if it was to be chased again. As Kildan and the men rode on, the rise and fall of hills slowly leveled out; grey stone and scorched earth gave way to marshes and swamps. After three days of riding through cold mud, they spotted twisted buildings creeping up over the horizon. As they drew nearer, Findan could see a ring of flagless banner poles surrounding the city - it looked like a great army had laid siege and abandoned their posts. Kildan knew that the ring of empty banner poles meant one thing. They would have to cross at least one more road before they reached the city.
A shout rang out from the back of the party - “Hwiliks!” Kildan turned back to see a pack of man-shaped creatures crawling over the wall by the road. The beasts got down on all fours and started running straight at them. The Leodman counted at least two dozen closing in too fast to be outrun.
“Two rows, on me!” Kildan shouted.
“Bowmen, nock!”
“Draw!”
“Loose!”
Arrows flew, sending the pale creatures skittering left and right. Three found their mark, but only one of the beasts fell. The bowmen nocked and loosed again; two more crumpled to the floor and the archers peeled off, shooting into the pack from the sides as they went. The pale bodies came crashing into the line of men like a wave upon a rocky shoreline. Kildan watched as many of his men were ripped from their horses and torn apart by the hwiliks. Findan stabbed one of the demons with his spear, catching it in the throat and lifting it off its feet.
The young Mearcian’s eyes widened in horror, as the monster dangling from his spear reached up and began wrenching itself free. The weight of the creature quickly pulled his spear from his hands, as Findan watched on helplessly. The hwilik tumbled to the floor, the spear snapping as it landed. The beast started getting back to its feet, the spearhead still lodged in its neck. Findan’s trembling hand fumbled at the hilt of his sword. Just as he managed to get a firm grip and draw the blade, the monster sprang forward with claws outstretched. Findan braced but, instead of being hit, he heard a loud crunch. When he looked down he saw the hwilik lying dead, pinned to the ground by a spear buried in its chest.
A call went out above the din of battle - “Aim for their hearts!”
A rider drew alongside Findan, “They’re as tough as my nan’s boiled mutton, but they can be killed,” said Alasdair.
The men went on fighting, their blades ringing out as they clashed against the hardened claws of the beasts. Slowly the ferocious tide was turned back, but the foam left in the wake of battle ran red with the blood of many good men.
A horn blast sounded as the last few hwiliks were put to the sword. Kildan scoured the field of battle, searching for the hornblower - about five hundred yards away, Micha and his archers were struggling.
The Leodman could see at least two of the riders lay beneath their felled horses, with the beasts threatening to overwhelm the small band of archers. Others were breaking away, trying to flee the onslaught, frantically loosing arrows to slow down the hwiliks.
The creatures were not stopping though, and Micha was trying to rally his men to lead them back to the rest of the party.
Kildan turned to two of his men that had been unhorsed, shouting at them,
“Kieren, Alwin, grab the spears and have the other unhorsed men help you - rearm the riders!”
“You heard your Leodman, rearm the riders!” shouted Kieren.
The unhorsed men that were still standing, began scooping up spears and passing them out.
“Riders, grab a spear and follow me!” shouted Kildan, setting off galloping to the archers and Micha’s aid.

The men set off, rushing to follow their Leodman - grabbing up the spears as they went.

The horses' hooves went splashing through the muddy waters of the marshlands. The screams of the felled archers, and howling of the hwiliks, grew louder as the band rode into the fray. Again, spears went flying - guided by Solorin’s light, they found their marks. Four of the brutes splashed down dead into the marshy waters. One of the creatures had managed to break away from the slaughter of the archers, weaving a path through the rain of spears. It barreled toward the riders, too quickly for seax or sword to be drawn. Wyne’s horse reared up, kicking at the beast. The hwilik shrugged off the blows and drove foot long claws into the steed, sending Wyne crashing down into the mud and knocking the wind out of him. The other beasts had been drawn away from the now-dead archers, and rushed to join the fighting.
Wyne struggled to catch his breath as he watched the hwilik trying to tear its hands from his horse. The monster’s pale grey eyes locked onto the young warrior as it pulled one of its hands free and slashed at him. Wyne managed to roll out of the way as a spear flew, pinning the beast to the floor; the clawed hand fell limply into the muddy waters.

Cafilice rode forward and pulled his spear from the hwilik’s chest.
“You taking a nap down there?” he shouted.
Wyne struggled to get to his feet while trying to draw his seax,
“No, I was just lying with the erf mother in hopes she might bring me a new horse!”
Cafilice looked down at the warrior and drew his own seax, holding it out to Wyne, “You’re better off asking her for a new blade, yours is bent.”
Wyne looked down at his crooked sheath, then reached out and took the long knife from Cafilice, “Thanks.”
“Just give it back when we win, and don’t you dare die and take my seax with you to your forefather’s halls, you hear me?” said Cafilice, turning and driving his spear into a white beast rushing toward him.
Wyne nodded and unslung his shield from his back, sweeping away the claws of a creature swinging at him.
Cafilice and Wyne fought on, sticking close together as the dead bodies of men and monsters piled up around them.
“Cafilice, behind you!” shouted out Wyne.
The horseman turned, but it was too late to raise his spear. The hwilik crashed into the warrior knocking him from his horse.
Screaming filled the air as Wyne rushed over, grabbing the pale

devil by the throat and frantically stabbing it. Wyne's iron grip muffled the screeching of the beast as it writhed about, trying to break free. He plunged the seax into the monster again and again until finally, it went limp. The warrior let go and the bony husk clattered to the floor.
Wyne looked down, seeing Cafilice lying in a pool of reddening mud; his arm had been ripped off below the elbow. Looking to make sure no more of the creatures were about, he saw Findan driving his spear through what looked to be the last hwilik standing. Wyne dropped the seax and knelt beside Cafilice; he grabbed the warrior's wounded arm, feeling warm blood seeping through his gloves.
"Help!" shouted Wyne.
Kildan rode over and looked down on the two men, he saw the dead creature and the pool of blood.
"Nordon, start a fire, make a hot iron and close this man's wound!" the Leodman shouted, before counting the rest of his men. Eighteen riders still sat ahorse, five more lay moaning on the ground; but most of his band lay dead in the marshes.
"See to the wounded and get them onto horses. Make a pile of the dead and then I'll burn them."
"The hwiliks too?" asked Alasdair.
"No, leave them to rot."
The men worked quickly, making a pile of the fallen. Nordon had managed to pull together some kindling and start a fire, with spare torches he had pulled from a few dead horses. Cafilice sat on the floor holding his stump as Nordon came toward him with a red hot iron in one hand, and some cut leather straps in the other.
"Here, bite down on this," said Wyne, holding out the leather straps to Cafilice.
The warrior bit down on the leather and nodded to the lad, offering up what was left of his arm; Nordon pressed the red hot iron onto the wound, causing it to sizzle. The veins on Cafilice's bald head bulged, as the smell of burning flesh filled the air; the warrior turned as white as a hwilik, before slowly slumping over. Nordon put his hand on the warrior's chest, feeling it gently rise and fall, before cutting a strip of cloth from the pack of a fallen horse and carefully wrapping the cauterized arm in it.
Findan stood watching over the men as they doused the fallen in oil. Kildan went about removing the rings from each of the men, and dropping them into the pouch on his belt. The Leodman then took a torch and spoke the old words.
"Solorin, ye fyrian baernan, ye leoht witan,"
As the Leodman threw his torch into the bodies, the pile went up in a fireball.
"We'll have to move quickly in case the smoke draws in more hwiliks to us. Mount up!" said Kildan.
The party made ready and set off, continuing on toward the city. Kildan rode to the front with Alasdair, Nordon and the only scout left. Findan and Micha followed behind with the few surviving archers.
The Leodman looked back over his shoulder - thick black smoke rose from the funeral pyre, building a pathway to the realms of the Gods; Kildan looked on, knowing the fallen would need to walk this dark road to reach the halls of their ancestors. He touched the pouch at his waist - for all it only held wooden rings, it had grown heavy with the weight of the souls bound to them.
The Leodman felt the first patter of rain on his face as he turned back. Alasdair picked out two more packs of hwiliks as the shower turned into a downpour. The beasts didn't seem to have seen the group, as they looked to be drawn toward the rising smoke, so Kildan and his men gave them a wide berth and passed them by.
The party came to the first of the city walls, it stood fifteen feet from base to top. They would have to either make a hole, or find one to get over the road. Micha spotted a collapsed bridge and plodded over to it - enough of the steel structure stood to allow someone to climb up for a better look around.
Alasdair followed him over to the foot of the bridge, "Take my horse and I'll get up there," he said.
The ranger carefully stood in his saddle and reached for a metal rung. He grabbed the lowest one and hauled himself up. The young man climbed on toward the top of the bridge - half way up, one of the rusted metal beams he stood on collapsed; he just managed to grab the railing beside him before he plunged through the gap.
"Are you alright up there Alasdair?" shouted Micha, who had heard the step breaking.
"Yeah, I'm fine. The bridge could do with some work though," he called back, laughing as he pulled himself up to the next step, holding the rail.
He reached the top of what was left of the bridge and looked around. Through the pouring rain he could make out dark towers up ahead, looming over fields filled with strange black panels, unlike anything he'd ever seen. Alasdair remembered the stories he was told of the old empire - at its height every tower had shone out as brightly as the sword of Solorin himself, but now the Gods had abandoned these lands and taken the light with them. The young ranger shielded his eyes from the rain to get a clearer look around; he could make out roads stringing out from the city and a few packs of hwiliks crawling around the wastes. He tracked the beasts for a while, trying to see which way they were going, but the rain was too heavy and he lost sight of them. His gaze followed the wall up and down searching for a break. He found what he was looking for and made his way back down to the party.
"Well, did you find a way through?" asked Kildan.
"There is a way through the first wall to the east, and what looks to be a doorway through the second wall under the bridge. There are also a few packs of hwiliks wandering the wastes between us and the city - hard to say how many with the rain."
Kildan nodded at the young man, "Lead the way."
Alasdair set off, sticking close to the smooth perfectly shaped stones.
"What a strange wall, there's no moat or towers, and that bridge went right over it?" said Nordon, looking up as he rode alongside Kildan.
"If there are walls either side of the road, and a bridge going over it, I'd say the walls are there to keep whatever went along this road penned in - all the more reason not to stay on them, as Harod warned us," said Kildan.
Nordon nodded, still looking up at the strange, smooth grey stones.
Alasdair reached the broken section of the wall and came to a stop. He hopped down from his horse and edged up to the broken section with his bow drawn. He quickly poked his head past the wall to see what was on the other side.
He frowned and turned to face Kildan, "The coast is clear m'Leod but we're not going to fit any of the horses through this gap, we'll scarce be able to squeeze through ourselves. I could head further along and see if there is another way through?" said the ranger.
"It's not a given we'll find another way in and, even if we do, some of the men have already lost their horses and are afoot," said Kildan.
The ranger nodded as Kildan turned to the rest of the party, "Those of you too wounded to go on, you are going home; the rest of you dismount and take whatever kit you can't do without - we're on foot from here on out."
The men began pulling cooking gear and tents from the steeds.
Kildan made his way over to Cafilice, "Out of all of the wounded, you are the only man in good enough health to lead them home. I will not lie to you - this duty I am putting upon you is not an easy one. Not all of the men that go with you are going to make it - lead them home as you see fit; good luck, and may Solorin light your path."
"I'll do my best to get as many of them home as I can. Thank you m'Leod, may Solorin light your path."
Kildan reached out and shook the man's one remaining hand.
The warrior then turned, gathered the other injured riders, and set off back the way that they had come.
Once everything that could be carried had been taken from the remaining horses, one by one the men smacked the animals'

hinds - sending them rushing out into the gloom. As the steeds faded into the rain, the howling of hwiliks filled the air.
"Quickly, through the gap," said Kildan.
The men huddled about the opening and slipped quietly through the wall. They were met by a road at least three times wider than the first one they crossed. Findan quickly came to understand that this was two roads, running side by side.
"No wonder this empire fell. What kind of fool builds walls with no towers, or any way to man them, and two roads right next to each other?" said Findan.
"The rulers of these lands were not simply foolish, son; no throne ever suffers a fool for long. No, empires fall when what is good for the rulers and good for the empire, split; it leads them down a dark path of endless tyranny. You must not look on anything built in these lands as having been built by noble emperors or kings - we're heading into lands built not for the good of the people, but for the good of the tyrants ruling them. So we'll heed Harod's warning and get off this road as fast as we can," said Kildan.
Once all the men had passed through the first wall, Kildan nodded to Alasdair to lead the men across the road and then onto the doorway under the bridge. As they got closer Findan could see moss and ivy covering large sections of the wall; the strange purple flowers, that they had first seen outside Gurord, came springing from every crack. A rusted iron gate sat in the doorway - Alasdair gave it a push, but it yielded only a rattle. The ranger took a closer look and spotted a lock; he drew his axe and brought it down hard, cleaving through the rusted metal. Giving the gate another push, it slowly creaked open a little. Alasdair put his back into it, managing to open the gate wide enough to squeeze through; with the rest of the party following.
As Kildan stepped through the gate, and walked out from under the bridge, the rain began easing off. He looked out, taking in the lay of the land - one last barren wasteland stood between his party and the city.
"How are we going to get to the city without being seen? There's no cover, not even any hills?" asked Micha.
"We might need to hope the Gods are good and that this rain keeps us covered," said Kildan, who then turned to Alasdair and asked, "How many beasts did you see?"
"At least three dozen m'Leod."
Kildan frowned and shook his head.
"Did you see any other way through to the city?"
"The only other way into the city that I saw was a road to the north. It's walled off like the one we just crossed - but who knows what's on it, and if it would be safe," said Alasdair.
Kildan stood for a while weighing up his thoughts, "Back through the wall. We'll try our luck on the roads; we're going to end up on them again anyway, and we might find some cover on them."
The men looked out across the barren lands. They did not need to be told twice, they started pushing their way back onto the road. Findan felt water running down his neck as he pressed his way through the gateway. Once the last man had rejoined the group, Kildan asked Alasdair to scout ahead with the only other surviving ranger. The two men pushed ahead, and Kildan led the rest of the band northward.
The party walked on for half a mile, passing many strange rusted carriages, before reaching a fork in the road. They turned off to the right, heading toward the city. Upon seeing what lay ahead, the men's hearts sank; the walls that had surrounded them were crumbling to waist height. Alasdair and the scout dropped back to the main group.
"We're being watched m'Leod," whispered Alasdair to Kildan.
The Leodman tightened his grip on his spear, "From where?"
"I can't see them, but I feel eyes are on us."
Kildan lowered his spear and stood feeling the rain; as it eased off even more, he felt the eye upon him too. He closed his eyes and began praying to Solorin and his forefathers for guidance - when he opened them again, he found himself looking at a blinking red light atop a banner pole.
"There," he said, pointing at the strange light with his spear. The men craned their necks upward to see. Findan felt a shiver run down his back as he looked up.
"What do you think it is - some kind of spirit?" asked Findan.
Alasdair shrugged, "I'm not sure - my father told me stories of elves venturing into our lands from their homeland, on the eastern isle of Igsmal, but nothing like that."
"It's a wisp," said Micha, looking at the small flashing light.
The others turned, facing him.
"The old guardsmen of Gurord used to tell stories of them around the fires at night; said they were spirits of the damned. They sometimes lead a man to hidden treasures of the old world; other times they'd lead them to danger and death - all depended on what mood they're in."
The flickering light jumped to the next banner pole, then another and another. Kildan's gaze followed as the wisp lit the way to the city.
"It seems Solorin is lighting our path for us. We will follow it."
The men nodded in agreement and set off along the road in a single line behind Kildan; they crept along, crouching behind the crumbled stones. The light came to a stop. The Leodman saw shuffling by the wall up ahead.
A pack of hwiliks slowly spilled onto the road. Kildan and the men quietly hid behind a few rusting carriages. The band held their breath as they watched one of the hwiliks come to a stop, stand up tall and sniff at the air. The light patter of rain lent some cover to any sound the men might have made, but Kildan found himself praying to the Gods that the beasts could not smell them. The pale monster slowly lowered its head, looking left then right, before skittering away to catch up with its pack. Kildan watched as the creatures made their way over the second wall, breathing out a sigh of relief.
The men lay on the cold wet road, waiting for the wisp overhead to jump again. After lying for what felt like a lifetime, it shot ahead to the top of the next banner pole. The band carefully got to their feet and crept onward once more. Alasdair poked his head over the wall, looking for the pack of hwiliks - he caught a glimpse of one fading away into the mizzle. The party went on, following the wisp as the daylight began fading. The light jumped on a few more poles, past piles of rubble, before coming to a stop - this time in front of what was left of a small, squat building. Kildan and the men looked about for more hwiliks, but none could be seen; he waved over Alasdair and Wyne.
"I think we're going to need to camp one more night outside of the city. You two, go scout out that building," said the Leodman.
The pair nodded and quietly made their way over to a small forecourt, off the main road. The two men circled around the building; the roof at the front had collapsed, but Alasdair found a gap large enough to squeeze inside.
The scouts drew their seaxes, lit torches, then pressed their way into the building. The two found themselves in a small damp shelter. Black mould coated the walls where water had seeped down from the roof; rusting shelves and glass cabinets stood around the room. Alasdair spotted a door toward the back of the building, and started making his way over to it. There was a loud crunch underfoot - looking down he could see broken glass scattered all around.
"Watch your step, there is broken glass everywhere," said Alasdair.
Wyne nodded and carefully continued searching the room. He didn't find anything, beyond broken shelves and some strange parchment that scattered the floor; he stooped down and picked a bit of it up. Faded markings could be made out on the paper, but he did not recognise any of the symbols on it. He stuffed the sheet into a pouch and joined Alasdair at the door; the young ranger tried the handle, to no avail. They turned and made their way back to the opening, and waved over Kildan.
"It's empty in here, but there is a door at the back - we've tried the handle, but it wouldn't budge. What would you have us do m'Leod?" asked Alasdair.
"We'll all come in and pry that door open; ready to face whatever is on the other side, together," said Kildan. He waved to the men to follow, and pushed his way through the rubble.
The party gathered around the door at the back of the room, with

their weapons drawn.
“We need to know what’s behind that, break it down!” said Kildan. The men shuffled aside as Ordway, a hulking farmhand, stepped forward and kicked the door. Splinters burst from the frame, and what was left of the door swung open. The band quickly piled into the room, holding their torches high. Shelves reached from floor to ceiling, full of crates and boxes. The men pulled down a few, and found some strange metal tubes with sealed ends. Handing his torch to Wyne, Alasdair picked one up and shook it. Hearing something sloshing around inside, he found a ring on one end and pulled at it - eventually prying the lid off, revealing an orange liquid. He held it up to his nose, catching a faint smell of tomatoes. The ranger shrugged and dipped his finger into the tube, and stuck it into his mouth.
“It’s soup,” said Alasdair, offering the tin to Kildan.
The Leodman took a sip and nodded.
“Grab the soup men, take as much of it as we can carry, we’ll probably need it given how poor the hunting has been,” he said. The men all started filling their packs with as many tins as they could fit.
“This is probably going to be the best place we can find to sleep for the night. There looks to be nobody else here, and I’ve seen no other way in, m’Leod,” said Alasdair.
“Good, we’d best have a few men keep watch. Micha, Kieren, Wyne - get over here.” The three men make their way over to the Leodman. “Alasdair, you take the first watch, pick two other men to go with you. Do you think you can get onto the roof?” asked Kildan.
“Yeah, I'll be able to climb up there, and I’ll make sure I pick two that can follow me up,” said the ranger.
Kildan turned to Micha, “Captain, you’ll have the second. Like Alasdair, pick two men to go with you. Wyne and Kieren - you do the same and take the third and fourth.”
The four men nodded; Alasdair made his way over to Peter and Arthur, the other surviving ranger - after a short talk, the three left the room.
“We sleep here tonight - make yourselves comfortable. I see no chimney, and we don’t want the attention anyway, so no fires," said the Leodman. The party set about making room to lay out their furs to sleep on. The men huddled round and took the last of the game from their packs. It was dry and tough meat, and starting to taste a bit stale; a few of them tried the new soup.
Kildan lay in his bedroll, unable to sleep. The Leodman could hear a few of the men quietly whispering prayers. The emptiness of the room weighed heavily on him, it would have been near full with his whole band. After the men finished praying, the night fell quiet; the dead had taken much of the party’s hope with them to the halls of their forefathers.

Intellectual Freaks

Gerald Cumberland

"Do I contradict myself? Very well, then, I contradict myself."
Walt Whitman.

In the most tragic and most trying moments of life it is well to turn aside from one's sorrows and refresh one's mind and strengthen one's soul by gazing upon the follies of others. Those others gaze on ours.

In my spiritual adventures I have met many amazingly freakish people. Ten years ago the Theosophical Society overflowed with them. They were cultured without being educated, credulous but without faith, bookish but without learning, argumentative but without logic. The women, serene and grave, swam about in drawing-rooms, or they would stand in long, attitudinising ecstasies, their skimpy necks emerging from strange gowns, their bodies as shoulderless as hock bottles. The men paddled about in the same rooms, but I found them less amusing than the women.

"You were a horse in your last incarnation," said a fuzzy-haired giantess to me one evening, two minutes after we had been introduced.

"Oh, how disappointing!" I exclaimed. "I had always imagined myself an owl. I often dream I was an owl. I fly about, you know, or sit on branches with my eyes shut."

"No; a horse!" shouted the giantess, with much asperity. "I'm not arguing with you. I'm merely telling you. And I don't think you were a very nice horse either."

"No? Did I bite people?"

"Yes; you bit and kicked. And you did other disagreeable things besides. Now, I was a swan."

I evinced a polite but not enthusiastic interest.

"You would make an imposing swan," I observed.

"Yes. I used to glide about on ponds, like this."

She proceeded to "glide" round and round the corner of the room in which we were sitting. She arched her neck, raised her ponderous legs laboriously and moved about like a pantechnicon. Her face assumed a disagreeable expression and I thought of a rather good line in one of my own poems:

And swans sulked largely on the yellow mere.

"And how much of your previous incarnation do you remember?" I asked, when she had finished sulking largely in the yellow drawing-room.

"Oh, quite a lot. It comes back to me in flashes. I was very lonely —oh, so lonely."

She gave me a quick look, and I began to talk of William J. Locke, who, a few days previously, had published a new book. Resenting my change of subject, she left me and, a few minutes later, as I was eating a watercress sandwich, I heard her saying to a yellow-haired male:

"You were a horse in your last incarnation."

I met this lady on other occasions, and always she was occupied in telling men that they had been horses and she a swan—an oh-so-lonely swan.

"Why," said I to my hostess one day, "don't Madame X.'s friends look after her? See—she is arching her neck over there in the corner, and I am perfectly certain she has told the man with her that he has been, is, or is going to be a horse."

For a moment my hostess looked concerned.

"Look after her? What do you mean?"

"Well, she is obviously insane."

"On the contrary, she is the most subtle exponent we have of Madame Blavatsky's Secret Doctrine. Eccentric, perhaps, but as lucid a brain as Mr G. R. S. Mead's or as Colonel Olcott's. You should get her to describe your aura. She is excellent, too, in Plato. She doesn't understand a word of Greek, but she gets at his meaning intuitively. There is something cosmic about her. You know what I mean."

"Oh, quite, quite." (But what did she mean?)

"Cosmic consciousness is a most enthralling subject," continued my hostess, digging the hockey-stick she always carried with her well into the hearthrug. "Walt Whitman had it, you know."

"Badly?" I inquired.

She appeared puzzled.

"I don't quite know what you mean by 'badly.' He could identify himself with anything—the wind, a stone, a jelly-fish, an arm-chair, a ... a ... oh, everything! They were he and he was they. He thought cosmically. Fourth dimension, you know. Edward Carpenter and all that."

I rather admired this way she had of talking—a little like the Duke in G. K. Chesterton's Magic.

"Oh, do go on!" I urged her.

"What I always say is," she continued, "why stop at a fourth dimension? Someone has written a book on the fourth dimension, and some day perhaps I shall write one on the fifth."

"A book? A real book? Do you mean to say you could write a book? How clever! How romantic!"

"Well, I have thought about it. One is influenced. One has influences. The consciousness of the ultimate truth of things, the truth that suffuses all things, the cosmic nature of—well, the cosmos. Do you see? Tennyson's In Memoriam."

"Yes; Tennyson's In Memoriam does help, doesn't it?"

"Did I say Tennyson's In Memoriam? I really meant Shelley's Revolt of Islam. The fourth dimension is played out. It's done with. It was true so far as it went, but how far did it go?"

"Only a very little way," I answered.

"Yes, but Nietzsche goes much farther. Have you read Nietzsche? No? I haven't, either. But I have heard Orage talk about him. Nietzsche says we can all do what we want. We must dare things. We must be blond beasts. Mary Wollstonecraft and her set, you know. Godwin and those people."

She waved her hockey-stick recklessly in the air and marched inconsequently away. Nearly all the Theosophists I met were like that—inconsequent, bent on writing books they never did write, talkers of divine flapdoodle, inanely clever, cleverly inane. Dear freaks I used to meet in days gone by!—where are you now?—where are you now?

A freak who ultimately lost all reason and was confined in a private asylum used to sit at the same desk that I did when, many years ago, I was a shipping clerk in Manchester. This man, whose name was not, but should have been, Bundle, had considerable private means, but some obscure need of his nature drove him to discipline himself by working eight hours a day for three pounds a week. The three pounds was nothing to him, but the eight hours a day meant everything. He was a conscientious worker, but I think I have already indicated that his intelligence was not robust. He had no delusion; he merely possessed a misdirected sense of duty.

One day he left us, and a few months later I met him in Market Street. He looked prosperous, smart and intensely happy.

"Are you busy?" he asked. "No? Well, come with me."

He slipped his arm in mine, led me into Mosley Street, and stopped in front of the large, dismal office of the Calico Printers' Association.

"That," said he, "is mine. Now, come into Albert Square."

When we had arrived there he pointed to the Town Hall.

"That also is mine. The Lord Mayor gave it to me with a golden key. Here is the golden key."

Producing an ordinary latchkey from his pocket, he carefully held it in the palm of his hand for my inspection.

"It is," he announced, "studded with diamonds. But you can't see the diamonds. Crafty Lord Mayor! You don't catch him napping. He's hidden them deep in the gold...."

I enjoyed this poor fellow's company more than I did that of a very old woman to whom I was introduced in a pauper asylum. She was sitting on a low stool and, pointing at her head with her skinny forefinger, "It's pot! It's pot!" she said.

But even she provided me with more exhilaration than do the tens (or perhaps hundreds) of thousands of real freaks who, I imagine, inhabit every part of the globe. I allude to the vast throng of people who arise at eight or thereabouts, go to the City every morning, work all day and return home at dusk; who perform this routine every day, and every day of every year; who do it all their lives; who do it without resentment, without anger, without even a momentary impulse to break away from their surroundings. Such people amaze and stagger one. To them life is not an adventure; indeed, I don't know what they consider it. They marry and, in their tepid, uxorious way, love. But love to

them is not a mystery, or an adventure, and its consummation is not a sacrament. They do not travel; they do not want to travel. They do not even hate anybody.

All these people are freaks of the wildest description; yet they imagine themselves to be the backbone of the Empire. Perhaps they are. Perhaps every nation requires a torpid mass of people to act as a steadying influence.

In the suburbs of Manchester these people abound. I know a man still in his twenties who keeps hens for what he calls "a hobby." Among his hens he finds all the excitement his soul needs. The sheds in which they live form the boundaries of his imagination. I should esteem this man if he kicked against his destiny; but he loved it, until the Army conscripted him. God save the world from those who keep hens!

I know a man who has been to Douglas eighteen times in succession for his fortnight's holiday in the summer. Douglas is his heaven; Manchester and Douglas are his universe. No place so beautiful as Douglas; no place so familiar; no place so satisfying. After all, Douglas is always Douglas. Moreover, Douglas is always miraculously "there." God save the world from men who go to Douglas eighteen times!

I know a man who hates his wife and still lives with her. He is respectable, soulless, saving, a punctual and regular churchgoer, a hard bargain-driver. He walks with his eyes on the ground. He has always lived in the same suburb. He will always live in the same suburb. God save the world from men who always live in the same suburb!

I know a man ...

But this is getting very monotonous. Besides, why should I particularise any more freaks when all of them, perhaps, are as familiar to you as they are to me?

Then there is the literary freak; not the poseur, not the man who wishes to be thought "cultured" and intellectual, but the scholarly man who, during an industrious life, has amassed a vast amount of literary knowledge, but whose appreciation of literature is lukewarm and without zest. Very, very rarely is the great writer a scholar. Dr Johnson was a scholar, but, divine and adorable creature though he was, he was not a great writer. None of the great Victorians had true scholarship, and very few even of the Elizabethans. And to-day? Well, one may consider Thomas Hardy, Joseph Conrad, H. G. Wells, Bernard Shaw, Arnold Bennett and G. K. Chesterton as great writers; if you do not concede me all these names, you must either deny that we have any great writers at all (which is absurd) or produce me the names of six who are greater than those I have named (and the latter you cannot do). Have any of these anything approaching scholarship?

And yet in our universities are scores of men who are regarded as possessing greater literary gifts than those who actually produce literature. These learned, owlish creatures pose pontifically. Whenever a new book comes out they read an old one! The present generation, they say, is without genius. But they have always said it. They said it when Dickens, Thackeray and Charlotte Brontë were writing. I have no doubt they said it in Shakespeare's time. The present generation teems with genius, but our "scholarly" mandarins know it not. How barren is that knowledge which lies heavy in a man's mind and does not fertilise there. When one considers the matter, how essentially dull and stupid and brainless is the man devoid of ideas!

One of these bald-pated freaks is well known to me. He moves heavily about in a quadrangle. He delivers lectures. He has written books. He passes judgment. He annotates. He writes an occasional review. Funny little freak! Great little freak, who knows so much and understands so little.... When England wakes (and I do not believe that even yet, after nearly four years of war, England is really awake) such men will pass through life unregarded and neglected; they will sit at home in a back room, and their relatives and friends will love and pity them, as one loves and pities a poor fellow whose temperament has made him a wastrel, or as one pities a man who has to be nursed.

People of the Play: A handful of literary freaks.

Scene: A drawing-room in Tooting, or Acton, or Highgate, or Ealing, or any funny old place where the middle classes live.

Time: 8 P.M. on (generally) Thursday.

Mrs Arnold. Now that Miss Vera Potting, M.A., has finished reading her most interesting paper on Mr John Masefield, the subject is open for discussion. Perhaps you, Mr Mather-Johnstone, will give us a few thoughts—yes, a few thoughts. (She smiles wanly and gazes round the room.) A most interesting paper I call it.

Rev. Mather-Johnstone, M.A. Miss Potting's most interesting paper is—well, most interesting. I must confess I have read nothing of—er—Mr Masefield's. I prefer the older poets—Cowper, Bowles' Sonnets, and the beautifully named Felicia Hemans. Fe-lic-i-a! To what sweet thoughts does not that name give rise! But it has been a revelation to me to learn that a popular poet (and Miss Potting has assured us that Mr Masefield is popular) should so freely indulge in language that, to say the least, is violent, and I am glad to say that such language is not to be found in the improving stanzas of Eliza Cook.

Mr S. Wanley. I have read some verses of Mr Masefield's in a very—well—advanced paper called, if my memory does not deceive me, The English Review. I did not like those verses. I did not approve of them. They were bathed in an atmosphere of discontent—modern discontent. Now, what have people to be discontented about? Nothing; nothing at all, if they live rightly. (He stops, having nothing further to say. For the same reason, he proceeds.) Nevertheless, I thank Miss Potting, M.A., very much for her most interesting paper. There is one question I should like to ask her: is this Mr Masefield read by the right people?

Miss Vera Potting, M.A. Oh no! Oh dear, no! Most certainly not! Still, it is incontestable that he is read.

Mr S. Wanley. Thank you so much. I felt that he could not be read by the right people.

Miss Graceley (rather nervously). I feel that I can say I know my Lord Lytton, my Edna Lyall, my Charlotte M. Yonge and my Tennyson. I have always remained content with them, and after what Miss Vera Potting, M.A., has said about Mr Masefield in her most interesting paper, I shall remain content with them.

Mr S. Wanley. Hear, hear. I always seem to agree with you, Miss Graceley.

Mrs Arnold (archly). What is the saying?—great minds always jump alike?

Rev. Mather-Johnstone (sotto voce). Jump?

Mr Porteous (with most distinguished amiability). I really think that this most interesting paper that Miss Vera Potting, M.A., has read to us should be published. It is so—well, so improving, so elevating, so——

Miss Vera Potting, M.A. (who has already fruitlessly sent the essay to every magazine in the country). Oh, Mr Porteous! How can you? Really, I couldn't think of such a thing.

Rev. Mather-Johnstone, M.A. (who, being not altogether free from jealousy, thinks this is really going a bit too far). But perhaps we do not all quite approve of women writers—I mean ladies who write for the wide, rough public.

Mrs Arnold. True! True!... But then, what about Felicia Hemans?

Rev. Mather-Johnstone, M.A. Mrs Hemans was Mrs Hemans. Miss Vera Potting, M.A., is, and I hope will always remain, Miss Vera Potting, M.A.

Mr Porteous. Oh, don't say that! What I mean is——

(This sort of thing goes on for an hour when, very secretly and as though she were on some nefarious errand, Mrs Arnold disappears from the room. She presently reappears with a maid, who carries a tray of coffee and sandwiches. The dreadful Mr Masefield is then forgotten.]

You think the above sketch is exaggerated? Ah! well, perhaps you have never lived in Highgate, or in the suburbs of Manchester, Birmingham, Sheffield or Leeds. I could set down some appalling conversations that I have heard in suburban "literary" circles. There is a place called Eccles, where, one evening——

In London Bohemia there are many freakish people, but, for the most part, they are altogether charming and refreshing. Quite a number of them have what I am told is, in the Police Courts, termed "no visible means of subsistence," but they appear to

"carry on" with imperturbable good humour and borrow money cheerfully and as frequently as their circle of acquaintances (which is usually very large) will permit.

Frequenters of the Café Royal in pre-war days will recognise the following types:—

Picture to yourself a Polish Jew, young, yellow-skinned, black-haired; he has luminous eyes, sensuous lips and damp hands, and he dresses well, but in an extravagant style. He is a megalomaniac, and he has all the megalomaniac's consuming anxiety to discover precisely in what way other people react to his personality. One night my bitterest enemy brought him to the table at which I was sitting, introduced us to each other, and walked away.

"I am told you are a journalist," my new acquaintance began. "I myself write poems. I have a theory about poetry, and my theory is this: All poetry should be subjective."

"Why?"

"Never mind why. I am telling you about my theory. All poetry should be subjective; as a matter of fact, all the best poetry is. To myself I am the most interesting phenomenon in the world. To yourself, you are. Is it not so?"

"Yes; you have guessed right first time."

"Well, I have in this dispatch case eight hundred and seventy-three poems about myself, telling the world almost all there is to know about the most interesting phenomenon it contains."

He took from his case a great pile of MS. and turned the leaves over in his hands.

"Here," said he, "is a blank-verse poem entitled How I felt at 8.45 A.M. on June 8, 1909, having partaken of Breakfast. Would you like to read it?"

I assured him I should, though I fully expected it would contain unmistakable signs of mental disturbance. But it did not. It was quite respectably written verse, much better than at least half of Wordsworth's; it was logical, it had ideas, it showed some introspective power, and it revealed a mind above the ordinary.

I told him all this.

"Then you don't think I'm a genius? Some people do."

"You see, I'm not a very good judge of men—particularly men of genius. You may be a genius; on the other hand, you may not."

"But what exactly do you think of me?"

"I have already told you."

"Yes, but not with sufficient particularity. Now, put away from you all feeling of nervousness and try to imagine that I have just left you and that a friend of yours has come in and taken my place. You are alone together. You would, of course, immediately tell him that you had met me. You would say: 'He is a very strange man, eccentric....' and so on. You would describe my appearance, my personality, my verses. You, being a writer, would analyse me to shreds. Now, that is what I want you to do now. I want you to say all the bad things with the good. And I shall listen, greedily."

"But, really!" I protested. "Really, I can't do what you ask."

Disappointed and vexed, he sat biting his underlip.

"All right," he said at length, "we'll strike a bargain. After you have analysed me I, in return, will analyse you."

"You have quite the most unhealthy mind with which I have ever come in contact."

"You really believe that?" he asked, delighted. "Do go on."

"Oh, but I'm sorry I began. This kind of thing is dangerous."

"Yes, I know. But I like danger—mental danger especially."

"But drink would be better for you. Even drugs. You are asking me to help to throw you off your mental balance."

"I know. I know. But you won't refuse?"

"To show you that I will I am leaving you now in this café. I am going. Good-night."

But he met me many times after that, and always pursued me with ardour. In the end he gained his desire and, having done so, had no further use for me.

I call him The Man Who Collects Opinions of Himself. He is still in London. And he is not yet insane.

Then there was the lady—since, alas! dead—who used always to appear in public in a kind of purple shroud, her face and fingers chalked. She rather stupidly called herself Cheerio Death, and was one of the jolliest girls I have ever met. She longed and ached for notoriety and for new sensations: she feasted on them and they nourished and fattened her. Only very brave or reckless men dared be seen with her in public, for, though her behaviour was scrupulously correct, her appearance created either veiled ridicule or consternation wherever she went. Yet she never lacked companions.

"Hullo, Gerald!" she used to say to me; "sit down near me. You are so nice and chubby. I like to have you near me. How am I looking?"

"More beautiful than ever."

"Oh, you are sweet. Isn't he sweet, Frank?" she would say to one of her companions. "Order him some champagne. I'm thirsty."

And, really, Cheerio Death was very beautiful in a ghastly and terrible way. By degrees, all the reputable restaurants were closed to her, and in the late autumn of 1913 she disappeared, to die of consumption in Soho. Poor girl! Perhaps in Paris, where they love the outré and the shocking, she would have secured the full, hectic success that in London was denied her.

Are freaks always conscious of their freakishness? I do not think they are. Not even the man who wilfully cultivates his oddities until they have become swollen excrescences hanging bulbous-like on his personality is aware how vastly different, how unreasonably different he is from his fellows. He is more than reconciled to himself; he loves himself; he is what other people would be if only they could. Vanity continually lulls and soothes and rots him. The nature that craves to be noticed will go to almost any lengths to secure that notice.

It has always appeared curious to me that the ambition to become famous should very generally be regarded as a worthy passion in a man of genius. It is but natural that a man of genius should desire his work to reach as many people as possible, but whether or not he should be known as the author of that work seems to me a matter of no importance whatever. But to the man himself it is all-important. He has an instinctive feeling that if, in the public eye, he is separated from his work, savour will go from what he has created. He and his work must be closely identified. This desire to be widely known, to be talked about everywhere, is in the man of genius accepted as natural, but it is this very desire that, in many cases, makes a freak of the ordinary man. Obscurity to him is death.

Eagle’s Flight 8

AR Duncan

The knife pierced Beadmund's shoulder from behind as the bundle of cloth was forced into his mouth, gagging him and preventing the screams that were welling up in his throat. In spite of his attempts to fight back he was dragged to the floor and even a fist to the jaw of one of his assailants was not enough to dissuade them. As his face was pressed down onto the muddy grass that provided the flooring of his tent, the four assailants began to converse in low voices, until the gag was removed from his mouth. But before he could let out a cry, a bitter paste was thrust down his throat and the world began to fade into darkness and tremors. He was lifted and carried by what or who he did not know and there was voices, Seaxing, then Stratyscan, and Meildounian too, but he was surrounded by rough cloth and darkness and knew nothing of their origin. He drifted in and out of consciousness as he was journeyed through the night as fragments of conversation and the cries of nature drifted through him. A wolf's howl through the trees. Leaves murmuring. The whisperings of a paranoid group of co-conspirators. The footsteps of a donkey and the rhythmic sway of the beast he lay across. He was being taken away to the home of his enemies and he could do naught to stop it. They were stopped and as he was lowered from animal to the ground time began to have meaning once more. The bag was removed from his head and darkness was replaced by dripping gloom. Four dirt covered men in armour looked down upon him.

Two nights ago three men had arrived explaining they were Stratyscans on a forward mission and the fourth was their Meildounian prisoner of some importance that they needed kept safe. It was this prisoner turned kidnapper who spoke first.

"You're coming with us to Meildun or we'll kill you on the way. You try to run. Dead. You try to call for help. Dead. We meet some of your men on the way there. We kill you first then we all die and leave a feast for the wolves. You got it? When we get to Meildun, you'll be treated well, we'll end this war, and you'll survive. That's what we all want isn't it?".

The all too friendly smile that followed conveyed the same message without the need for words.

The four men turned and set about preparing for their rest largely ignoring the prisoner. He wasn't at any risk of escaping, the poison was still making its way out of his system and he was still sluggish and weak. But his vision had begun to return and far away across the tops of the swaying forest and beyond the brooding back and forth of the sea, dawn had begun to spread across the horizon. The sun would not be far behind. After eating their cold rations three of the men settled down to sleep and one kept guard. He stared intensely at Beadmund with deep hazel eyes. Beadmund had nothing to do but stare back. This continued as behind his captor, Beadmund saw the red disk of the sun, that great father of the sky, rise and cast the man as only silhouette and not person until eventually the sun crept higher and higher into the sky and the guard changed but the staring continued. It was midday after each of the men had served their watch as guard and the group began to move again.

Beadmund was refastened to the donkey, this time he was permitted to ride it in a more dignified fashion, and the five men set off down the quiet cart track through the woods. By now it was certain that the Seaxings would have sent out search parties and small bands of warriors to scours the countryside. But it looked as if the kidnappers were well prepared for that. They kept to road little known and even less used. In the afternoon sunlight the trees were a most vibrant green, and birds, and insects, and the small creatures of all kinds could be heard living after their instincts across the great green expanse. Between the dark mottled trunks and beneath the layers of emerald branches and leaves, not even the sky father could penetrate with his gaze and patches of darkness remained around them as they journeyed. None of them knew who watched, but each of the captors had travelled these woods countless times and knew the feeling of a thousand inhuman eyes watching them. Beadmund did not. It was another unsettling fact about the land that was to be his new home. If he made it out of this he'd know this land in little time.

As they journeyed through the land that would be his they made good time and they would be at Meildun by the morning. Meildun. If they made it there he'd be treated well, he had no reason to doubt the sincerity of his captors, but was that enough to convince him to go passively. Was this not what he wanted? An end to the war. The chance just to live. Time and time again he had claimed this was all he desired. But now he was faced with the actuality of it. He didn't want it to come about this way. He thought of his men and their wives and families too. They'd all be forced off the land and he knew what would wait for them back in Treowick. Losing this war wouldn't be peace it would only delay the need to fight. He couldn't let it end like this. He slowly worked behind his back to loosen the binds and prepare himself should an opportunity arise.

The party stopped behind the cover of a large holly bush on the bank a small stream where they refilled their waterskins and let the donkey wander nearby to eat the grass that grew thickly on the banks. Beadmund sat with hands still tied behind his back and stared at the men as once again they busied themselves so they could leave quickly. No one spoke, until suddenly a voice called out from the woods and two men armed with bows walked out of the gloom.

Before they could speak the man from Meildun was on his feet with arms wide open and not a trace of his accent upon his lips.

"Brothers! We have been looking for you. Quickly! We have a prisoner that must be escorted out of here. Are there any enemy troops nearby?".

The two Stratyscan scouts looked at one another before the elder spoke up.

"The password. What's the password?".

The Meildounian smiled as one of the Stratyscan turncoats called out the password. The two scouts looked at one another again and raised their bows.

"Wrong. It's been changed. What's the new password?".

"Brothers, come on now" began the Meildounian again with overbearing friendliness, "How long ago was it the password was changed? We have been gone from the army four days and three nights now. Come, come, see the prisoner. Any fears about a password four days past its use will be long gone when you see who we've captured".

The gaze of all the men went to the other side of the circle where Beadmund sat, hands still bound behind his back. He could protest, try to break free, run from his captors, but these two men were not the saviours he needed. All he could do was keep his mouth shut and hope that the two men weren't stupid enough to get themselves killed.

This time it was the younger who stepped forward, lowering his bow, and stepped into the reach of the Meildounian who raised one of his arms and beckoned towards the prisoner. The other arm remained firmly within reach of the knife in his belt. The young scout looked Beadmund directly in the eyes as the Seaxing tried to do all he could to get him to turn and run. He did not, and as the other scout lowered his bow and fell for the ruse, the knife left the belt of the Meildounian and plunged into the youngster's back. As the knife was removed to be thrust down again and again the other three men assailed the second scout do did not have the time to scream let along run. In only a few moments the men slept in pools of blood where they were stripped of anything useful and dragged behind a bush to be fodder for wolves. As the four men got to cleaning themselves in the stream, the man from Meildun turned to Beadmund with his near permanent smile.

"You're a wise man you know. You didn't try anything. Most men would've taken the opportunity to try and run. Much wiser to sit still. Wiser than what these two did. You really want to be fighting alongside men like these?".

The five men returned to travelling but were stopped after not long. They had left the paths less trod and joined the main road that would take them straight to Meildun but as the leader suddenly stopped and held his hand aloft the men followed and came to a halt. The wind shook the branches and rustled through

Featured Artist: The Watson Family

The Watson family were three generations of artists influenced by Rosa Bonheur a french animalière, realist artist and Sir Edwin Landseer an English painter and sculptor well known for his paintings of animals.

William Watson
1864 oil on canvas

Charles Watson

William Watson Jr
'Solitude'

Robert Watson
Highland Cattle Watering On A Hillside

William Davies
Fleshwick Bay
Isle of Man

C E Watson
Loch Tay

William Robert Charles
Watson

William Watson Snr. 1809-1871

- Charles Watson 1837-1900
- William Watson Jnr. 1847-1921
  - Caroline Ellen Watson 1871-1947
  - William R C Watson 1873-1928
  - Walter J Watson 1877-1963
  - Sydney Watson 1881-1931
- Robert Watson 1855-1921
  - William H Watson 1886-1964

William Davies 1864 - (Brother-in-Law of William Watson Junior)

Walter J. Watson
Cattle on the bank of a river

(Arthur) Sydney Watson winter scene with sheep and trees

William Harold Watson

leaves but the birdsong that had accompanied them all day was no longer present and from further up the road came the noises of a great mass of men. It was getting closer to them. From their hastily found hiding places in the woods they watched as an army drew closer, marching its way to war. The Meildounian stepped out before the army and hailed its leader. As the force was suddenly stopped the war leader looked the newcomer up and down, before breaking into a smile and the two men hugged and laughed. The Meildounian began to talk and then beckoned to the woods from where the three compatriots and their prisoner emerged.

"So this is the foreign prince responsible for all out misfortunes. Your men killed my son you know. O what I would give to run this knife through your gut right now. Give me one good reason I shouldn't".

The war leader cupped Beadmund's face in his hand and stared directly into his eyes with piercing hazel, sneering all the while. Beadmund remained silent.

"He won't talk. He knows better than that, he's a smart one you know. And I can give you several reasons not to run your knife through him. He's too important, too valuable and we've almost got him home so let us carry on and get him to safety".

"After what we've got planned we won't need to hold onto something like this to win the war. But take him anyway. We can kill him once we're done, a public execution. We'll be back in a week with this war over".

He barked a cry to his men and the great army heaved back to life and was off up the road, clanking and groaning as it went. The five men stood at the side of the road watching as the mass passed by. The mass stared back casting works of abuse and angry stares at the enemy atop the donkey.

"Don't worry, you ain't going to be killed. I'll be seeing to it. These army men think too simply, not that I doubt that we'll have you beaten within the week, but you're far too useful just to kill. You're a prince after all aren't you, or are you a king now that you're here in this promised kingdom of yours?".

The question was purely rhetorical and was already answered by the smile that, as always, cut across the face of the Meildounian.

"Off we set men, we'll be home before the sun rises. Well, your new home anyway".

The day continued on as it had done for the hours past and showed no signs of stopping. Beadmund had been through forests before but the forests of his home felt different. Back across the sea they felt lived in and used and where the old forest grew in thickets darker and deeper than anywhere else, men dared not tread. They were left to the remote spots far from civilisation and given wholly to the spirits of the land and the creatures only the poets wrote about. Here the old forest and civilisation were one and men walked step by step with creatures unknown. Surrounding them as they walked the road that ran across the land to Meildun, the trees grew grander and moss hung from every bough and the shadows would hang in the air even if it were the height of the day. He shuddered to think that this land had seen but before he could remain on it too long the forest opened up and the well-kept grove of a farmstead just out of view surrounded them. And so it remained. On and on. The seeming endless patchwork of greens, browns, and blacks. Only with the coming of darkness and the howling of wolves did it end. But with darkness came other opportunities.

The men were tired. Meildun felt finally within reach and each man believed that the day would soon be over and that their escapade had ended in success. But as they rounded a corner two men mounted on horseback met them. They were heavily armoured in the Seaxing style and they were armed with long fine tipped spears with bearded axes hanging at their wastes.

"Give us our prince".

The Meildounian did not try his usual smile or friendly words. He stepped back and pulled Beadmund from his mount, holding him by his hair and pushing a knife into his throat.

"Take a step closer and he dies. You walk away and we'll not harm him, you'll see him again when this war ends".

The closest of the Seaxings got down from his horse and took a lone step forward. The knife pushed in closer to Beadmund's throat. As the Seaxing took another step the knife dug in deeper still but as the Seaxing took one final step Beadmund sprang into action. He had spent hours loosening the binds on his wrists and now flung up his arms to grab the hand wielding the knife and he wrenched his head to one side. The knife dug in and cut a gash along his jaw and cheek but it was better than bleeding out from the neck. In the shock of new action he got out from the grip of his captor and ran for the bushes behind him. The melee erupted in an instant as the three captors descended upon the two Seaxings whilst their leader turned and followed Beadmund into the darkening woods, screaming orders to his men all the while. As Beadmund ran through the undergrowth branches and leaves whipped against the open wound on his face and forced him to wince as daggers of pain shot through his mind. The howling of wolves, though as distant as they'd always been, now seemed less abstract and remote than he had been told they would be. Behind him he could hear his captor running only a few paces distant away. In the near pitch darkness of the forest floor Beadmund was navigating by luck alone. One misplaced foot, one stubborn root or fallen log and Beadmund would be face down on the forest floor and his hunter would be upon him. As least his pursuer could navigate by sound. Ahead Beadmund saw a break in the trees and a lightening of the skies so he ran for the clearing where he might make some ground.

As he burst from the treeline he was met with walls of solid grey stone. Cliffs several times his height on three sides of him. He ran to the cliffs to look for a place to scale them but there was nothing. He looked for a place to hide but he did not have time as behind him his hunter appeared from the woods with sword in hand. He walked to the centre of the clearing and smiled sardonically as he prepared to come in for the kill. Until behind him a noise came from the wood and he whirled round to face it. The two hunters met face to face and locked each other in their gaze.

The wolf leapt first with mouth gaping and fangs dripping. The man held sword out in front of him and tried to sing step it but succeeded in only lightly cutting the wolf's leg as the weight of the beast was too much and he was sent flying to the ground as the claw dug into his chest and his sword went skittering across the clearing. With all his might he got his arms beneath the neck of the wolf and lifted it off his chest. The claw scratched at his arms and the jaws bit, and howled, and slavered but with grim determination he held it at bay. With one arm he reached down for the knife at his belt but as his other arm buckled under the weight and the wolf returned to its carnage this time the knife was plunged deep into its neck, and again, and again, and again. The few drops of blood Beadmund had spilt across the clearing now seemed as nothing against the ocean that flowed from man and beast. At last the thing stopped thrashing and the wolf lay still. The Meildounian beneath it was not far behind.

"Show me the same mercy I'd show you", croaked a hoarse voice from beneath the pile of bloody matted fur.

Beadmund picked up the sword that had been dropped and walked round to where he could see the bloodied face of his once captor.

"Why would you wish for death? I can leave you alive, let you see another dawn. Surely you will be home by then".

The man let out a pained laugh.

"Another Wolf'll come and put an end to me. There's no life left for me, I'll never see the dawn. Now kill me".

Beadmund held the sword in his hand and delivered the coup de grace. Back at the road lay the corpses of two Seaxings, three treacherous Stratyscans, a horse, and two wolves. The remaining horse had fled and could not be found so all that remained was to mount the still living and faithful donkey and begin to return to his people. Three days later the Seaxing army descended upon Meildun and with its army gone there was none left to the protect the men, women, or children from the wrath of the Seaxing. The war was over and none remained.

An Easy Life

J S Watts

J.S. Watts is a UK poet and novelist. Her poetry, short stories and non-fiction appear in diverse publications in Britain, Ireland, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and America and have been broadcast on BBC and independent radio. Her published books include: Cats and Other Myths, Songs of Steelyard Sue, Years Ago You Coloured Me, Underword andThe Submerged Sea (poetry) and A Darker Moon, Witchlight, Old Light and Elderlight (novels). For more information, see her website https://www.jswatts.co.uk/

I suppose I could put it all down to laziness.

When they came over to me, that late, glittering summer evening in the ennui between conflicts, and said,

"We couldn't help noticing. You look so like her. Are you, by any chance, Helen's sister?" I was too idle to deny it and say, as I should have done,

"No. Actually, I'm Helen."

Instead, I just remained seated and smiled and nodded; encouraging them, without an iota of effort on my part, in their misconception.

"I thought so," said the female half of this heterosexual pair-bonding. "You couldn't look so alike and not be sisters. I'm Margot, by the way and this is my husband, Malcolm. I didn't catch your name?"

Now, of course, I was obliged to make an effort. Up until then I had been contentedly soaking up the late summer sun, occasionally sipping at a Pimms and musing, without much rancour, on a future that no longer had Arnold in it. Amy had recently claimed him as hers, which would inevitably be acceptable, but some further consideration of this new positioning seemed like a desirable thing. The arrival of Malcolm and Margot, (what is it with consonantly linked couples?), had interrupted my reverie and was demanding I invent a replacement name for myself on the spot, given I could hardly now tell them my name was Helen. I shifted uncomfortably in my garden deckchair.

"Cassie. Short for Cassandra," I said, as the name conspiratorially flowed towards me.

"Ah, Helen and Cassandra. I see." Malcolm grinned as if he had uncovered an age-old family secret, rather than my own, last minute inspiration.

I smiled again. It saved talking, but Margot was frustratingly determined to engage me in conversation.

"Very broad minded of you to be here, I must say," she said, prattling on.

I was clearly too laid back for my own good. I answered before I could even think about stopping myself,

"I live here."

"Oh?" Her heavily pencilled eyebrows raised themselves in surprise, disappearing into the weighty dyed curls concealing her forehead. "Here? With Amy and Arnold?"

I smiled and nodded. The less conversation, the better, as far as I was concerned, but with my reticence and Margot's startled pause, there was a conversational vacuum that needed filling. Malcolm obliged.

"So have you read all of her books? Helen's, I mean. It must be a tremendous joy having such a talented sister."

This was a positive development to the conversation. I was hardly going to object to being described as talented. It is always incredibly pleasant to hear well of oneself, even if the people you are talking to have no idea that you are actually oneself. The problem, now, was how to answer. I was, at least, sufficiently on the ball to recognise that aggrandising my own work might not be such a good idea if I wanted to remain incognito and even less so if I were later to be revealed as my true self, the novelist Helen Ampthill. I simply shook my head by way of response, but Malcolm was clearly expecting a more detailed answer. Reluctantly, I felt the need to oblige.

"Not many. Just some. They're okay, I suppose, but it's really Helen's thing, not mine."

Margot rose to my defence against me, her curls jiggling with missionary enthusiasm.

"Oh no! Really? You should read them. They are your sister's, after all and they're rather more than okay. They are wonderful. Charlie and Cicero, for example. Such a clever book. Very witty and with such a wonderfully disengaged tone that just adds to the enjoyment, don't you think?"

I had unthinkingly been lapping up the praise like a contented cat with a proffered saucer of cream and then the dratted woman had to go and spoil my enjoyment by expecting a response: a gratuitous demand for speech. I shrugged my shoulders in what was intended to be a self-deprecating manner and said,

"You know, you really should meet Janet and Gertie: the couple of florally engaged ladies over there." I waved a vague hand in the general direction of the flower beds. "They love discussing Helen's scribblings."

With what I hoped was an encouraging gesture, I propelled my would-be interrogators towards the Sapphic sisterhood standing by the rare Peace Rose on the far side of the garden and swiftly turned round to make my escape, walking straight into Amy in the process.

Though, with hindsight, it may have been she who walked into me. She grabbed my arm and hauled me away, surprisingly vigorously for so petite a woman.

"Helen, whatever do you think you're doing?" she whispered sharply. "Why have you just passed yourself off as your own, non-existent sister to my friends? Someone's bound to point you out properly to them and then they'll know you've been lying. How could you?" I shrugged, but Amy knew me too well to let me off the hook with non-verbal communication.

"I want an answer and I want a practical solution. I really don't want you spoiling our day with your self-styled indolence. Do something positive. Why don't you disappear into your room for a bit, change your clothes and re-emerge in twenty minutes or so with a new look?

That way, if someone points you out, they might just think you're a different person. We could always say you're identical twins, or something." It was my turn to raise my eyebrows, which served to irritate Amy still further. "It's not as if I'm asking you to do that much; just cover your tracks a little bit by changing your clothes, for God's sake. It'll save your reputation, as well as the Munnerys' embarrassment and keep this evening convivial."

I decided I'd better respond to her suggestion, verbally at least. "I'm sorry, but it all seems rather farcical, darling: disappearing into rooms, shutting doors, opening doors and re-appearing in a different set of clothes. It's way too Feydeau for me. I think it'll be far easier if I stay as I am."

Amy's normally gentle features were showing signs of stronger than usual emotion: her slim dark brows knitted together like a pair of confrontational caterpillars. This was intriguing, but she gave me no time to study the phenomenon further.

"If it's farcical, Helen, it's because you've made it that way. You really have become very tedious recently. I can't force you to end this silly charade, but it had better not interfere with our evening. Arnold and I will be announcing our engagement any minute."

Not only did my eyebrows rise one more time, but I felt my eyes widen with a surprise I didn't have the energy to conceal. Arnold and Amy as a couple, yes. I knew all about that.

Well I would, seeing as I lived with both of them. The engagement, however, was news as far as I was concerned. When had that happened?

Amy, noticing my surprise (well, it was hardly difficult), visibly preened herself in front of me.

"Helen, you are so obtuse at times. It was all agreed last night and with today already planned, it seemed an opportune time to let people know."

Did I believe that? "And you didn't think to tell me?"

"We didn't think you'd mind. Plus, I am telling you now."

The emotion displayed on Amy's sweet features now struck me as rather petulant. I hadn't realised her face was capable of such a variety of expressions, but then it seemed there were a good many things I hadn't realised about little Amy. Clearly I should have paid more attention these last three years. "I really wish you'd make an effort, Helen. Why can't you just change your clothes?" Amy wasn't giving up on her plans to get me to swap my selected plumage for something more me, but I continued to resist. "I'm happy with what I'm wearing. It's cool and comfortable, as well as pleasantly stylish, and I haven't got anything else half as suitable in my wardrobe. I'm not going to change, but if it makes you feel better, I shall seek out the Munnerys forthwith and apologise up front for my little deception. I'll tell them it was just a silly joke, alright?"

Amy's nod of acquiescence did not seem totally convinced, but I dutifully strolled off to find the Munnerys and confess my sins.

Our rented house did not have a particularly large garden, at least, not compared to the gardens I had cavorted in as a child, but I had a surprising amount of difficulty finding Mister and Mrs Munnery. I came across Gertie and Janet still standing solidly by the Peace Rose, but the Munnerys were no longer with them. Nor were they down by the shrubbery, or the fish pond and I still hadn't managed to find them amongst the socially inclined groupings cluttering our house and upper garden by the time Arnold and Amy stepped up to make their big announcement.

I admit I didn't pay too much attention, at first, to the detail of what they were saying.

Whilst never bothering to go formal with any of my lovers, I had listened to numerous engagement and togetherness speeches in my thirty-seven years of life. They are inevitably much of a muchness and after a while become really rather boring. Arnold was doing most of the talking and seemed to be making all the right noises of the sort required.

"Ladies and gentlemen, if I might have your attention for a moment… Amy and I… very much in love… formally engaged… wedding early next spring." My ears woke up at that. Wedding? In less than a year? Arnold and I had only ceased being lovers two months ago. Amy had laid claim to him less than a month afterwards. Their engagement was surprise enough. Where had talk of a swift wedding come from? I looked directly at the happy duo.

Arnold was still holding forth. "…looking forward to life together as a couple." As he said that, Arnold made direct eye contact with me. He was obviously attempting to communicate something, but I couldn't begin to think what he was implying. Amy now chose to say a few words, but, bless her, it only seemed to be a reprise of what Arnold had just said.

"Arnold and I… love one another deeply… recent decision to become engaged… wedding next spring in London… looking forward to sharing our lives with one another only from here on in." Really, Amy could be such a sentimentalist at times. Fortunately, the speech making terminated there. Glasses with a wide variety of drinks in them were raised to the happy pair and I resumed my quartering of the garden in search of Malcolm and Margot.

I ended up coming full circle before I found them, now chatting amiably to Amy and Arnold and congratulating them on their announcement, as is the way of these things.

Malcolm and Margot had their backs to me, but Amy and Arnold saw me and I could see Amy trying to pull a discreet face to indicate I should hang back, or go away, or step forward.

I wasn't quite sure which. I chose to stand still, a little way behind the Munnerys, and wait Amy was holding forth on the soon to be delights of wedded bliss. She clutched Arnold's arm in a grip that would have put a recently triggered mousetrap to shame. Her overly-effusive tones carried clearly to where I was standing.

"We are so looking forward to it being just the two of us," Amy was saying. Margot Munnery, of course, just had to ask a question.

"And will you be staying here? It's a lovely house and the garden is amazingly spacious for the type of property. Wonderful for little ones, I'm sure, but what will Cassandra do?"

Amy looked directly at me before replying,
"Well, I probably shouldn't say this. It's all a little difficult, what with Helen and everything, but you are friends. Arnold and I expect Cassie to be leaving us very soon."

I nodded encouragingly to indicate that "Cassie" would indeed be disappearing as soon as she could. As an alter ego, she was already becoming something of a bore and required more effort to maintain than I was inclined to make.

Amy didn't acknowledge my nod, but squeezed Arnold's arm firmly. He looked straight at me, eye to eye, before turning to the Munnerys and saying,

"I expect Cassie to be off with Helen in the very near future. Times change, people move on. I'm sure they are both looking forward to a fresh start in London."

The pebble finally settled to the bottom of the pond. I was being given my marching orders. From my own house. Well, from the house I'd first rented with Arnold and now Amy, but still. I had thought everything was okay. Arnold and I had been happy enough for the first few years and when life had grown a little stale, I'd invited Amy, as a dear and exceedingly close friend of mine, to come and stay and share the chores. When Arnold's and my relationship had finally and irrevocably withered, I'd had few qualms about Amy taking him over. It had seemed like a very satisfactory way to keep our life comfortable with minimum adjustment. Things would continue largely as before: Arnold and Amy, plus me, whereas, before, it had been Arnold and me, plus Amy. I hadn't thought there'd be any need for change beyond the shifting of the plus sign and that had, from time to time, been casually flexible anyway. Arnold and Amy apparently thought differently. Why hadn't I known this?

While I was coming to terms with this startling manifestation of truth in the raw, the conversation had continued to flow on. Margot Munnery was in full spate.

"I think Malcolm was rather hoping to meet the infamous Helen. He's such a fan, aren't you, dear? But I told him it'd be unlikely she'd be here, what with… things and all.

Still, we allowed ourselves to get a little excited when we first saw Cassie. I think we both rather hoped she was Helen."

It was Arnold who responded.

"Perhaps I shouldn't say this, but you haven't missed much by not meeting Helen."

"Really?" Margot Munnery was all agog.

"Yes. Afraid so. She maybe a good writer, at least some people seem to think so, but as a human being she's not the liveliest person to be around and we should know, eh, Amy?"

And Amy agreed with him. In front of me. The pair of them in accord against me. "The only thing she's enthusiastic about is writing and half the time that seems to involve sitting around the house, staring into space. Thinking creatively, she calls it. I think it's killing time and putting off the actual act of writing, but that's Helen for you: anything for an easy life.

Trouble is, the rest of us have it less than easy when she's around and in need of being waited on," and he laughed, or, to be descriptively precise, he sniggered.

Amy and Arnold, thrilled with their mutual infatuation and the freedom of openly discussing my failings, gazed lovingly at each other. I was left looking on as my existence was reflected back at me through others' eyes. Suddenly life didn't seem that easy at all. In fact, it seemed rather laborious: a case of one repeated failure to make a meaningful effort after another. I knew, with a writer's certainty, that one day I should write about this: a well polished mirror reflecting a series of mutually echoing reflections, stretching out towards the emotionally-cleansed vanishing point, but right now that didn't help ease the acidic emotions bubbling and burning inside my gut.

The quartet's conversation continued. It was Malcolm's turn to offer up his opinions on the character of this person called Helen Ampthill.

"I still say she's a top-notch writer and still has further promise. Currently, it's just like that sub-plot in Charlie and Cicero, don't you think?"

Amy was quick to respond. "I have no idea," she said, "but why don't we ask Cassie for her opinion?" and she made a point of looking across at me. All four of them turned to look directly at me. I stood there absorbing their gaze and then I walked away without saying anything. Twenty-four hours later I had left the house for good.

The suggestion of going up to London was there in front of me. I took hold of it and followed it through, renting a small flat off Queens Gate, a bolthole in the frenzy of the city. I had to leave a few of my belongings behind, the flat was really only large enough for me and a selection of my favourite books and prints,

but the things abandoned were possessions I had grown away from. Letting go makes things easier, I find. I guess the flat was what one might call pokey. It still seems a trifle that way over thirty years later, even with me still the only one in it, but I have acclimatised, adjusted, let go.

Surprisingly, at first, it was the garden I missed the most, but Kensington Gardens is only a short stroll away from the flat and eventually I found this bench. I like to sit here by myself when the weather is warm enough. It is perfect for thinking creatively and, from time to time, I even manage to write a little. Short stories mostly: briefly glittering things. I haven't had the stamina or inclination for another novel for a long while, or much else, really.

Otherwise, I am content to sit in my own private little corner of a public space, watching life
as it passes on by.

WILL there really be a morning?
Is there such a thing as day?
Could I see it from the mountains
If I were as tall as they?
Has it feet like water-lilies?
Has it feathers like a bird?
Is it brought from famous countries
Of which I have never heard?
Oh, some scholar! Oh, some sailor!
Oh, some wise man from the skies!
Please to tell a little pilgrim
Where the place called morning lies!

THE LEAVES, like women, interchange
Sagacious confidence;
Somewhat of nods, and somewhat of
Portentous inference,
The parties in both cases
Enjoining secrecy,—
Inviolable compact
To notoriety.

Emily Dickinson

The Gentler Saints

Rob Floyd at
Manchester cathedral

29th Sept. – 29th Oct. ‘25

Opening Event
Sunday 28th Sept.
7pm – 9pm
All welcome

Located in Manchester cathedral, starting later this month and then running through to late October. The event is open 29th September.

The title of the show is ‘The Gentler Saints’, a quote from ‘The Fountain’ by Charles Morgan, one of Rob Floyds absolute favourite books and many of the other paintings have been inspired by poems in particular, including some by Seamus Heaney, Malcolm Guite and Helen Jones and most of the images themselves depict famous myths and legends surrounding the saints therein, stories that have been handed down for generations.

St Cuthbert

St Ciaran

St John the Baptist

St Melangell

The Drolls, Traditions, and Superstions of Old Cornwall

Collected and edited by
Robert Hunt FRS

A Flight of Witches.

HOW ST PIRAN REACHED CORNWALL.
Good men are frequently persecuted by those whom they have benefited the most. The righteous Piran had, by virtue of his sanctity, been enabled to feed ten Irish kings and their armies for ten days together with three cows. He brought to life by his prayers the dogs which had been killed while hunting the elk and the boar, and even restored to existence many of the warriors who had fallen on the battlefield. Notwithstanding this, and his incomparable goodness, some of these kings condemned him to be cast off a precipice into the sea, with a millstone around his neck.
On a boisterous day, a crowd of the lawless Irish assembled on the brow of a beetling cliff, with Piran in chains. By great labour they had rolled a huge millstone to the top of the hill, and Piran was chained to it. At a signal from one of the kings, the stone and the saint were rolled to the edge of, and suddenly over, the cliff into the Atlantic. The winds were blowing tempestuously, the heavens were dark with clouds, and the waves white with crested foam. No sooner was Piran and the millstone launched into space, than the sun shone out brightly, casting the full lustre of its beams on the holy man, who sat tranquilly on the descending stone. The winds died away, and the waves became smooth as a mirror. The moment the millstone touched the water, hundreds were converted to Christianity who saw this miracle. St Piran floated on safely to Cornwall; he landed on the 5th of March on the sands which bear his name. He lived amongst the Cornish men until he attained the age of 206 years.

ST NEOT, THE PIGMY.
Whence came the saint, or hermit, who has given his name to two churches in England, is not known.
Tradition, however, informs us that he was remarkably small in stature, though exquisitely formed. He could not, according to all accounts, have been more than fifteen inches high. Yet, though so diminutive a man, he possessed a soul which was giant-like in the power of his faith. The Church of St Neot, which has been built on the ancient site of the hermit's cell, is situated in a secluded valley, watered by a branch of the river Fowey. The surrounding country is, even now, but very partially cultivated, and it must have been, a few centuries since, a desert waste; but the valley is, and no doubt ever has been, beautifully wooded. Not far from the church is the holy well, in which the pious anchorite would stand immersed to his neck, whilst he repeated the whole Book of Psalms. Great was the reward for such an exercise of devotion and faith. Out of numerous miracles we select only a few, which have some especial character about them.

ST NEOT AND THE FOX.
One day the holy hermit was standing in his bath chanting the Psalms, when he heard the sound of huntsmen approaching. Whether the saint feared ridicule or ill-treatment, we know not; but certainly he left some psalms unsung that day, and hastily gathering up his clothes, he fled to his cell.
In his haste the goodman lost his shoe, and a hungry fox having escaped the hunters, came to the spring to drink. Having quenched the fever of thirst, and being hungry, he spied the saint's shoe, and presently ate it. The hermit despatched his servant to look for his shoe; and, lo, he found the fox cast into a deep sleep, and the thongs of the shoe hanging out of his vile mouth. Of course the shoe was pulled out of his stomach, and restored to the saint.

ST NEOT AND THE DOE.
Again, on another day, when the hermit was in his fountain, a lovely doe, flying from the huntsmen, fell down on the edge of the well, imploring, with tearful eyes and anxious pantings, the aid of St Neot. The dogs followed in full chase, ready to pounce on the trembling doe, and eager to tear her in pieces. They saw the saint, and one look from his holy eyes sent them flying back into the woods, more speedily, if possible, than they rushed out of it.
The huntsman too came on, ready to discharge his arrow into the heart of the doe; but, impressed with the sight he saw, he fell on his knees, cast away his quiver, and became from that day a follower of the saint's, giving him his horn to hang, as a memorial, in the church, where it was long to be seen. The huntsman became eventually one of the monks of the neighbouring house of St Petroch.

ST NEOT AND THE THIEVES.
When St Neot was abbot, some thieves came by night and stole the oxen belonging to the farm of the monastery. The weather was most uncertain,—the seed-time was passing away,—and a fine morning rendered it imperative that the ploughs should be quickly employed. There were no oxen. Great was the difficulty, and earnest were the abbot's prayers. In answer to them, the wild stags came in from the forests, and tamely offered their necks to the yoke. When unyoked in the evening, they resorted to their favourite pastures, but voluntarily returned each morning to their work. The report of this event reached the ears of the thieves. They became penitent, and restored the oxen to the monastery. Not only so, but they consecrated their days to devotional exercises. The oxen being restored, the stags were dismissed; but they bore for ever a white ring, like a yoke, about their necks, and they held a charmed life, safe from the shafts of the hunters.

ST NEOT AND THE FISHES.
On one occasion, when the saint was at his devotions, an angel appeared unto him, and shewing him three fishes in the well, he said, "These are for thee; take one each day for thy daily food, and the number shall never grow less: the choice of one of three fishes shall be thine all the days of thy life." Long time passed by, and daily a fish was taken from the well, and three awaited his coming every morning. At length the saint, who shared in human suffering notwithstanding his piety, fell ill; and being confined to his bed, St Neot sent his servant Barius to fetch him a fish for his dinner. Barius being desirous of pleasing, if possible, the sick man's taste, went to the well and caught two fishes. One of these he broiled, and the other he boiled. Nicely cooked, Barius took them on a dish to his master's bedside, who started up alarmed for the consequences of the act of his servant, in disobedience to the injunctions of the angel. So good a man could not allow wrath to get the mastery of him; so he sat up in his bed, and, instead of eating, he prayed with great earnestness over the cooked fish. At last the spirit of holiness exerted its full power. St Neot commanded Barius to return at once and cast the fish into the well. Barius went and did as his master had told him to do; and, lo, the moment the fishes fell into the water they recovered life, and swam away with the third fish, as if nothing had happened to them.
All these things and more are recorded in the windows of St Neot's Church.

ST CUTHBERT'S OR CUBERT'S WELL.
Hal thus describes this famous place:—"In this parish is that famous and well-known spring of water, called Holy-well, (so named, the inhabitants say, for that the virtues of this water was first discovered on All-Hallows day.) The same stands in a dark cavern of the seacliff rocks, beneath full seamark on spring-tides, from the top of which cavern falls down or distills continually drops of water from the white, blue, red, and green veins of those rocks. And accordingly, in the place where those drops of water fall, it swells to a lump of considerable bigness, and there petrifies to the hardness of ice, glass, or freestone, of the several colours aforesaid, according to the nature of those veins in the rock from whence it proceeds, and is of a hard, brittle nature, apt to break like glass.
"The virtues of this water are very great. It is incredible what numbers in summer-season frequent this place and waters from counties far distant."

RICKETY CHILDREN.
The practice of bathing rickety children on the first three Wednesdays in May is still far from uncommon in the outlying districts of Cornwall. The parents will walk many miles for the purpose of dipping the little sufferers in some well, from which the "healing virtue" has not entirely departed. Among these holy wells, Cubert, just named, is far-famed. To this well the peasantry still resort, firm in the faith that there, at this especial season, some mysterious virtue is communicated to its waters. On these occasions, only a few years since, the crowd assembled was so large, that it assumed the character of a fair.

CHAPELL UNY.
On the first three Wednesdays in May, children suffering from mesenteric diseases are dipped three times in this well, against the sun, and dragged three times around the well on the grass, in the same direction.

PERRAN WELL.
Children were cured of several diseases by being bathed in this well. They were also carried to the sea-shore, and passed through a cleft in a rock on the shore at Perranzabalo. In the autumn of 1863 I sought for these holy waters. I was informed that some miners, in driving an adit, had tapped the spring and drained it. There is not, therefore, a trace of this once most celebrated well remaining. It was with difficulty that its site could be discovered. I have since learned that the cut stone-work which ornamented this holy place, was removed to Chiverton, for the purpose of preserving it.

REDRUTH WELL.
No child christened in this well has ever been hanged. Saint Ruth, said to have been called Red Ruth, because she always wore a scarlet cloak, especially blessed, to this extent, those waters. I believe the population in this large parish cares but little now, whether their children be baptized with this well water or any other; but, half a century since, it was very different. Then, many a parent would insist on seeing the water taken from the well and carried to the font in the church.

HOLY WELL AT LITTLE CONAN.
On Palm Sunday the people resorted to the well sacred to "Our Lady of Nant's," with a cross of palm, and after making the priest a present, they were allowed to throw the cross into the well; if it swam the thrower was to outlive the year, if it sank he was not.

THE PRESERVATION OF HOLY WELLS.
It is a very common notion amongst the peasantry, that a just retribution overtakes those who wilfully destroy monuments, such as stone circles, crosses, wells, and the like. Mr Blight writes me—"Whilst at Boscaswell, in St Just, a few weeks since, an old man told me, that a person who altered an old Holy Well there, was drowned the next day in sight of his home, and that a person who carried away the stones of an ancient chapel, had his house burned down that very night." We hope the certainty of punishment will prevent any further spoliation. Cannot we do something towards the preservation of our antiquities? I quote from a local paper the following:—
"If the attention of the members of the Penzance Antiquarian Society were directed to the state of the 'Holy Well' at Laneast, and the remains of the Old Chapel Park, St Clether, they might perhaps induce the proprietors of these 'remnants of antiquity' to bestow a little care on the same, and arrest their further ruin and destruction. Many other 'objects of interest' are in a sad state of neglect, and fast 'fading away.' Slaughtor Bridge, near Camelford, has completely vanished. This is much to be regretted, and is a double loss—first, to those who delight in these 'memorials of the past,' and also to the town and neighbourhood, depriving them of an attraction that has induced many strangers of taste to pay them a visit."

KING ARTHUR.
"There is a place within
The winding shore of Severne sea
On mids of rock, about whose foote
The tydes turne—keeping play.
A towery-topped castle here,
Wide blazeth over all,
Which Corineus ancient broode
Tintagel Castle call."
Old Poet—Translated by Camden.

ROMANCES OF ARTHUR.
ARTHUR LEGENDS.
"For there was no man knew from whence he came;
But after tempest, when the long wave broke
All down the thundering shores of Bude and Boas,
There came a day as still as heaven, and then
They found a naked child upon the sands
Of wild Dundagil by the Cornish sea;
And that was Arthur."
Idyls of the King—Tennyson.
he scarcity of traditions connected with King Arthur is not a little remarkable in Cornwall, where he is said to have been born, and where we believe him to have been killed. In the autumn of last year (1863) I visited Tintagel and Camelford. I sought with anxiety for some stories of the British king, but not one could be obtained. The man who has charge of the ruins of the castle—was very sorry that he had lent a book which he once had, and which contained many curious stories, but he had no story to tell me.
We hear of Prince Arthur at the Land's End, and of his fights with the Danes in two or three other places. Merlin, who may be considered as especially associated with Arthur, has left indications of his presence here and there, in prophetic rhymes not always fulfilled; but of Arthur's chieftains we have no folk-lore. All the rock markings, or rock peculiarities, which would in West Cornwall have been given to the giants, are referred to King Arthur in the eastern districts.
Jack the Giant Killer and Thomas Thumb—the former having been tutor, in his own especial calling, to King Arthur's only son, and the latter the king's favourite dwarf—are, except in story-books, unknown. Jack Hornby,—if he ever lived near the Land's End, unless he is the same with "Little Jack Horner,"—has been so long a stranger, that his name is forgotten.
The continuance of a fixed belief in the existence of Arthur is easily explained. The poets and the romance writers have made the achievements of a British chieftain familiar to all the people; and Arthur has not only a name, but a local habitation given to him equally in Scotland, England, Wales, and Ireland.
Mr Campbell, in his "West Highland Tales," gives a "Genealogy Abridgment of the very ancient and noble family of Argyle, 1779." The writer says this family began with Constantine, grandfather to King Arthur; and he informs us that Sir Moroie Mor, a son of King Arthur, of whom great and strange things are told in the Irish traditions—who was born at Dumbarton Castle, and who was usually known as "The Fool of the Forest"—was the real progenitor of "Mac Callen Mor." From this Moroie Mor was derived the mighty Diarmaid, celebrated in many a Gaelic lay —"to whom all popular traditions trace the Campbell clan."
"Arthur and Diarmaid," writes Mr Campbell, "primeval Celtic worthies, whose very existence the historian ignores, are thus brought together by a family genealogist."
"Was the Constantine grandfather to Arthur one of the five tyrants named by Gildas?"—I quote from Camden and Milton.
Constantinus, son of Cador, Duke of Cornwall, Arthur's half-brother by the mother's side, "a tyrannical and bloody king."
Aurelius Conanus, who "wallowed in murder and adultery."
Vortipore, "tyrant of the Dimeta."
Cuneglas, "the yellow butcher."
Maglocunes, "the island dragon."

It is curious to find a Scotch genealogist uniting in one bond the Arthur of Dundagel and the ancestors of the Argyles of Dumbarton.
May we not after this venture to suggest that, in all probability, the parish of Constantine, (pronounced, however, Cus-ten-ton,) between Helstone and Penryn, may derive its name from this Constantinus, rather than from the first Christian emperor. Again, the family of Cossentine has been often said to be offsets from Constantine, the descendant of the Greek emperors, who was buried in Landulph church. Seeing that the name has been known for so long a period in Cornwall, may not this family rather trace their origin up to this Constantine the Tyrant?

THE BATTLE OF VELLAN-DRUCHAR.
The Sea Kings, in their predatory wanderings, landed in Genvor Cove, and, as they had frequently done on previous occasions, they proceeded to pillage the little hamlet of Escols. On one occasion they landed in unusually large numbers, being resolved, as it appeared, to spoil many of the large and wealthy towns of Western Cornwall, which they were led to believe were unprotected. It fortunately happened that the heavy surf on the beach retarded their landing, so that the inhabitants had notice of their threatened invasion.
That night the beacon fire was lit on the chapel hill, another was soon blazing on Castle-an-dinas, and on Trecrobben. Carn Brea promptly replied, and continued the signal-light, which also blazed lustrously that night on St Agnes Beacon. Presently the fires were seen on Belovely Beacon, and rapidly they appeared on the Great Stone, on St Bellarmine's Tor, and Cadbarrow, and then the fires blazed out on Roughtor and Brownwilly, thus rapidly conveying the intelligence of war to Prince Arthur and his brave knights, who were happily assembled in full force at Tintagel to do honour to several native Princes who were at that time on a visit to the King of Cornwall. Arthur, and nine other kings, by forced marches, reached the neighbourhood of the Land's-End at the end of two days. The Danes crossed the land down through the bottoms to the sea on the northern side of the promontory, spreading destruction in their paths. Arthur met them on their return, and gave them battle near Vellan-Druchar. So terrible was the slaughter, that the mill was worked with blood that day. Not a single Dane of the vast army that had landed escaped. A few had been left in charge of the ships, and as soon as they learned the fate of their brethren, they hastened to escape, hoping to return to their own northern land. A holy woman, whose name has not been preserved to us, "brought home a west wind" by emptying the Holy Well against the hill, and sweeping the church from the door to the altar. Thus they were prevented from escaping, and were all thrown by the force of a storm and the currents either on the rocky shore, or on the sands, where they were left high and dry. It happened on the occasion of an extraordinary spring-tide, which was yet increased by the wind, so that the ships lay high up on the rocks, or on the sands; and for years the birds built their nests in the masts and rigging.
Thus perished the last army of Danes who dared to land upon our western shores.
King Arthur and the nine kings pledged each other in the holy water from St Sennen's Well, they returned thanks for their victory in St Sennen's Chapel, and dined that day on the Table-men.
Merlin, the prophet, was amongst the host, and the feast being ended, he was seized with the prophetic afflatus, and in the hearing of all the host proclaimed—
"The northmen wild once more shall land,
And leave their bones on Escol's sand.
The soil of Vellan-Druchar's plain,
Again shall take a sanguine stain;
And o'er the mill wheel roll a flood
Of Danish mixed with Cornish blood.
When thus the vanquished find no tomb,
Expect the dreadful day of doom."

ARTHUR AT THE LAND'S-END.
Bolerium, or Bellerium, is the name given by the ancients to the Land's-End. Diodorus writes, Belerium; Ptolemy, Bolerium. Milton adopts this name in his "Lycidas," and leads his readers to infer that it was derived from the Giant Bellerus. It is quite possible that in Milton's time the name of one of the numerous giants who appear to have made the Lands-End district their dwelling-place, might have still lived in the memories of men. Certain it is no such a giant is remembered now.
In a map of Saxon England we find the Land's-End called Penꝑiðꝛeoꝛc, and in some early English books this promontory is named Penrhin-guard, and Penrlien-gard, said to signify the "Headland of Blood." The old Cornish people called this promontory "Pen-von-las," the "End of the Earth," hence we derive the name of the Land's-End. May not this sanguinary name have been derived from a fact, and that actually several battles were fought by the Britons under the command of Arthur, with the Saxons or the Danes, in this neighbourhood? We have not far off the Field of Slaughter, "Bollait," where the ancient people of Cornwall made their final stand against the Saxons. On this field flint arrow-heads have frequently been found. The tradition of Vellan-Druchar, which is but one of several I have heard of a similar character, points to the same idea. Arthur, according to one story, held possession of Trereen Castle for some time. Another castle on the north coast is said to have been occupied by him. An old man living in Pendean once told me that the land at one time "swarmed with giants, until Arthur, the good king, vanished them all with his cross-sword."

KING ARTHUR IN THE FORM OF A CHOUGH.
I quote the following as it stands:—
"In Jarvis's translation of "Don Quixote," book ii., chap. v., the following passage occurs:—
"'Have you not read, sir,' answered Don Quixote, 'the annals and histories of England, wherein are recorded the famous exploits of King Arthur, whom, in our Castilian tongue, we always call King Artus; of whom there goes an old tradition, and a common one all over that kingdom of Great Britain, that this king did not die, but that, by magic art, he was turned into a raven; and that, in process of time, he shall reign again and recover his kingdom and sceptre, for which reason it cannot be proved that, from that time to this, any Englishman has killed a raven?'
"My reason for transcribing this passage is to record the curious fact that the legend of King Arthur's existence in the form of a raven was still repeated as a piece of folk lore in Cornwall about sixty years ago. My father, who died about two years since, at the age of eighty, spent a few years of his youth in the neighbourhood of Penzance. One day he was walking along Marazion Green with his fowling-piece on his shoulder, he saw a raven at a distance, and fired at it. An old man who was near immediately rebuked him, telling him that he ought on no account to have shot at a raven, for that King Arthur was still alive in the form of that bird. My father was much interested when I drew his attention to the passage which I have quoted above.
"Perhaps some of your Cornish or Welsh correspondents may be able to say whether the legend is still known among the people of Cornwall or Wales.
"Edgar MacCulloch."
"Guernsey."
I have been most desirous of discovering if any such legend as the above exists. I have questioned people in every part of Cornwall in which King Arthur has been reported to have dwelt or fought, and especially have I inquired in the neighbourhood of Tintagel, which is reported to have been Arthur's stronghold. Nowhere do I find the raven associated with him, but I have been told that bad luck would follow the man who killed a Chough, for Arthur was transformed into one of these birds.

The Raven

Edgar Allen Poe with foreword
by Nathan CJ Hood

In the 19th century, many artists of great genius presented themselves as nothing short than mystics. They suggested that their works of poetry, painting and theatre were the results of spontaneous inspiration, of something below consciousness erupting like a thunderbolt, they mere vessels of a deeper magic that pervades reality. So Samuel T Coleridge claimed that his great poem Kubla Khan came to him in an opium induced dream, within which hundreds of lines of poetry seared into his soul. When he awoke, he penned these verses, as they were clear to him in his mind. Likewise, Richard Wagner claimed that the music of Tristan und Isolde surged into his thoughts. He took hold of these unprompted melodic and harmonic conceptions that came unbidden and tirelessly set them to paper. In an ecstatic frenzy he conveyed the music flowing through his mind into a written composition, regardless of whether it defied rule or convention. He was a vessel, an instrument played by the 'Will' of the world which lies beyond mere appearance and fancy.

Such romantic and quasi-religious notions of the artist contrast strongly with the literary theories of Edgar Allan Poe. One of America's most original and elevated writers, Poe's essay 'The Philosophy of Composition', published in 1846, presents a very different descriptive and prescriptive model for art. Poe contends that art, at least in a literary sense, is mathematical in nature. The writer does not derive his poetry and prose from dreams and callings of the subconscious, at least not wholesale. Writing is a process wherein content and form are considered, refined, pruned and amended in rational and logical ways. The writer drafts, redrafts, considers, reconsiders. There is a fine-tuning sequence that underpins most poetry, and artists pretend otherwise to maintain their aura of mystique.

Using his seminal poem 'The Raven' to illustrate his method, Poe outlines principles that underpin high quality art. An artist should first conceive of the ending of the piece. This is the moment of consequence, where all the action has been leading. By prioritising the end, Poe can craft a narrative that logically leads to and builds up towards a powerful conclusion. In so doing, it will be able to create novel and vivid effect, the aim of the artwork. The goal of the artist is to evoke an impression or emotional response, and this dictates all aspects of the work (such as its tone, characters, theme, setting and so on). This is a challenging idea: the purpose of the artwork is not its story, no matter how interesting the ideas and plot. Nor is it the 'message' or political point being made. It is an effect, single and immediate, stirred up in the reader.

Poe details the logical steps he took in writing 'The Raven', starting from the effect he wanted to create and moving through how that led him to construct the poem's constituent parts in a series of rationally considered stages. Some critics, like TS Eliot, dispute Poe's notion that he wrote the poem in this way, while others are thoroughly convinced that he did. What matters here is the challenge he lays down to the potential author or writer. Whether or not a great work of art can come to us wholesale in a dreamlike trance or by a dramatic flash of divine inspiration, even these will require cogent thought and logical consideration to put into a medium by which others can enjoy it. The process of 'translation' from thought to page needs the writer to weigh up how best to convey the impression they imagine. It thereby requires a disciplined, original and intelligent mind to take, even by intuition, a spontaneous notion and convert it into poetry or prose.

The Raven
By Edgar Allan Poe

Once upon a midnight dreary, while I pondered, weak and weary,
Over many a quaint and curious volume of forgotten lore—
While I nodded, nearly napping, suddenly there came a tapping,
As of some one gently rapping, rapping at my chamber door.
"'Tis some visitor," I muttered, "tapping at my chamber door—
Only this and nothing more."

GUSTAVE DORÉ.

Ah, distinctly I remember it was in the bleak December;
And each separate dying ember wrought its ghost upon the floor.
Eagerly I wished the morrow;—vainly I had sought to borrow
From my books surcease of sorrow—sorrow for the lost Lenore—
For the rare and radiant maiden whom the angels name Lenore—
Nameless here for evermore.

And the silken, sad, uncertain rustling of each purple curtain
Thrilled me—filled me with fantastic terrors never felt before;
So that now, to still the beating of my heart, I stood repeating
"'Tis some visitor entreating entrance at my chamber door—
Some late visitor entreating entrance at my chamber door;—
This it is and nothing more."

Presently my soul grew stronger; hesitating then no longer,
"Sir," said I, "or Madam, truly your forgiveness I implore;
But the fact is I was napping, and so gently you came rapping,
And so faintly you came tapping, tapping at my chamber door,
That I scarce was sure I heard you"—here I opened wide the door;
—
Darkness there and nothing more.

Deep into that darkness peering, long I stood there wondering, fearing,
Doubting, dreaming dreams no mortal ever dared to dream before;
But the silence was unbroken, and the stillness gave no token,
And the only word there spoken was the whispered word,
"Lenore?"
This I whispered, and an echo murmured back the word,
"Lenore!"—
Merely this and nothing more.

Back into the chamber turning, all my soul within me burning,
Soon again I heard a tapping somewhat louder than before.
"Surely," said I, "surely that is something at my window lattice;
Let me see, then, what thereat is, and this mystery explore—
Let my heart be still a moment and this mystery explore;—

'Tis the wind and nothing more!"

Open here I flung the shutter, when, with many a flirt and flutter,
In there stepped a stately Raven of the saintly days of yore;
Not the least obeisance made he; not a minute stopped or stayed he;
But, with mien of lord or lady, perched above my chamber door —
Perched upon a bust of Pallas just above my chamber door—
Perched, and sat, and nothing more.

Then this ebony bird beguiling my sad fancy into smiling,
By the grave and stern decorum of the countenance it wore,
"Though thy crest be shorn and shaven, thou," I said, "art sure no craven,
Ghastly grim and ancient Raven wandering from the Nightly shore—
Tell me what thy lordly name is on the Night's Plutonian shore!"
Quoth the Raven "Nevermore."

Much I marvelled this ungainly fowl to hear discourse so plainly,
Though its answer little meaning—little relevancy bore;
For we cannot help agreeing that no living human being
Ever yet was blessed with seeing bird above his chamber door—
Bird or beast upon the sculptured bust above his chamber door,
With such name as "Nevermore."

But the Raven, sitting lonely on the placid bust, spoke only
That one word, as if his soul in that one word he did outpour.
Nothing farther then he uttered—not a feather then he fluttered —
Till I scarcely more than muttered "Other friends have flown before—
On the morrow he will leave me, as my Hopes have flown before."
Then the bird said "Nevermore."

Startled at the stillness broken by reply so aptly spoken,
"Doubtless," said I, "what it utters is its only stock and store
Caught from some unhappy master whom unmerciful Disaster
Followed fast and followed faster till his songs one burden bore—
Till the dirges of his Hope that melancholy burden bore
Of 'Never—nevermore'."

But the Raven still beguiling all my fancy into smiling,
Straight I wheeled a cushioned seat in front of bird, and bust and door;
Then, upon the velvet sinking, I betook myself to linking
Fancy unto fancy, thinking what this ominous bird of yore—
What this grim, ungainly, ghastly, gaunt, and ominous bird of yore
Meant in croaking "Nevermore."

This I sat engaged in guessing, but no syllable expressing
To the fowl whose fiery eyes now burned into my bosom's core;
This and more I sat divining, with my head at ease reclining
On the cushion's velvet lining that the lamp-light gloated o'er,
But whose velvet-violet lining with the lamp-light gloating o'er,
She shall press, ah, nevermore!

Then, methought, the air grew denser, perfumed from an unseen censer
Swung by Seraphim whose foot-falls tinkled on the tufted floor.
"Wretch," I cried, "thy God hath lent thee—by these angels he hath sent thee
Respite—respite and nepenthe from thy memories of Lenore;
Quaff, oh quaff this kind nepenthe and forget this lost Lenore!"
Quoth the Raven "Nevermore."

"Prophet!" said I, "thing of evil!—prophet still, if bird or devil!—
Whether Tempter sent, or whether tempest tossed thee here ashore,
Desolate yet all undaunted, on this desert land enchanted—
On this home by Horror haunted—tell me truly, I implore—
Is there—is there balm in Gilead?—tell me—tell me, I implore!"
Quoth the Raven "Nevermore."

"Prophet!" said I, "thing of evil!—prophet still, if bird or devil!
By that Heaven that bends above us—by that God we both adore —
Tell this soul with sorrow laden if, within the distant Aidenn,
It shall clasp a sainted maiden whom the angels name Lenore—
Clasp a rare and radiant maiden whom the angels name Lenore."
Quoth the Raven "Nevermore."

"Be that word our sign of parting, bird or fiend!" I shrieked, upstarting—
"Get thee back into the tempest and the Night's Plutonian shore!
Leave no black plume as a token of that lie thy soul hath spoken!
Leave my loneliness unbroken!—quit the bust above my door!
Take thy beak from out my heart, and take thy form from off my door!"
Quoth the Raven "Nevermore."

And the Raven, never flitting, still is sitting, still is sitting
On the pallid bust of Pallas just above my chamber door;
And his eyes have all the seeming of a demon's that is dreaming,
And the lamp-light o'er him streaming throws his shadow on the floor;
And my soul from out that shadow that lies floating on the floor
Shall be lifted—nevermore!

The Philosophy of Composition

Edgar Allen Poe

CHARLES DICKENS, in a note now lying before me, alluding to an examination I once made of the mechanism of "Barnaby Rudge," says — "By the way, are you aware that Godwin wrote his 'Caleb Williams' backwards? He first involved his hero in a web of difficulties, forming the second volume, and then, for the first, cast about him for some mode of accounting for what had been done."

I cannot think this the precise mode of procedure on the part of Godwin — and indeed what he himself acknowledges, is not altogether in accordance with Mr. Dickens' idea — but the author of "Caleb Williams" was too good an artist not to perceive the advantage derivable from at least a somewhat similar process. Nothing is more clear than that every plot, worth the name, must be elaborated to its dénouement before any thing be attempted with the pen. It is only with the dénouement constantly in view that we can give a plot its indispensable air of consequence, or causation, by making the incidents, and especially the tone at all points, tend to the development of the intention.

There is a radical error, I think, in the usual mode of constructing a story. Either history affords a thesis — or one is suggested by an incident of the day — or, at best, the author sets himself to work in the combination of striking events to form merely the basis of his narrative — designing, generally, to fill in with description, dialogue, or autorial comment, whatever crevices of fact, or action, may, from page to page, render themselves apparent.

I prefer commencing with the consideration of an effect. Keeping originality always in view — for he is false to himself who ventures to dispense with so obvious and so easily attainable a source of interest — I say to myself, in the first place, "Of the innumerable effects, or impressions, of which the heart, the intellect, or (more generally) the soul is susceptible, what one shall I, on the present occasion, select?" Having chosen a novel, first, and secondly a vivid effect, I consider whether it can best be wrought by incident or tone — whether by ordinary incidents and peculiar tone, or the converse, or by peculiarity both of incident and tone — afterward looking about me (or rather within) for such combinations of event, or tone, as shall best aid me in the construction of the effect.

I have often thought how interesting a magazine paper might be written by any author who would — that is to say, who could — detail, step by step, the processes by which any one of his compositions attained its ultimate point of completion. Why such a paper has never been given to the world, I am much at a loss to say — but, perhaps, the autorial vanity has had more to do with the omission than any one other cause. Most writers — poets in especial — prefer having it understood that they compose by a species of fine frenzy — an ecstatic intuition — and would positively shudder at letting the public take a peep behind the scenes, at the elaborate and vacillating crudities of thought — at the true purposes seized only at the last moment — at the innumerable glimpses of idea that arrived not at the maturity of full view — at the fully matured fancies discarded in despair as unmanageable — at the cautious selections and rejections — at the painful erasures and interpolations — in a word, at the wheels and pinions — the tackle for scene-shifting — the step-ladders and demon-traps — the cock's feathers, the red paint and the black patches, which, in ninety-nine cases out of the hundred, constitute the properties of the literary histrio.

I am aware, on the other hand, that the case is by no means common, in which an author is at all in condition to retrace the steps by which his conclusions have been attained. In general, suggestions, having arisen pell-mell, are pursued and forgotten in a similar manner.

For my own part, I have neither sympathy with the repugnance alluded to, nor, at any time, the least difficulty in recalling to mind the progressive steps of any of my compositions; and, since the interest of an analysis, or reconstruction, such as I have considered a desideratum, is quite independent of any real or fancied interest in the thing analyzed, it will not be regarded as a breach of decorum on my part to show the modus operandi by which some one of my own works was put together. I select "The Raven," as the most generally known. It is my design to render it manifest that no one point in its composition is referrible either to accident or intuition — that the work proceeded, step by step, to its completion with the precision and rigid consequence of a mathematical problem.

Let us dismiss, as irrelevant to the poem per se, the circumstance — or say the necessity — which, in the first place, gave rise to the intention of composing a poem that should suit at once the popular and the critical taste.

We commence, then, with this intention.

The initial consideration was that of extent. If any literary work is too long to be read at one sitting, we must be content to dispense with the immensely important effect derivable from unity of impression — for, if two sittings be required, the affairs of the world interfere, and every thing like totality is at once destroyed. But since, ceteris paribus, no poet can afford to dispense with any thing that may advance his design, it but remains to be seen whether there is, in extent, any advantage to counterbalance the loss of unity which attends it. Here I say no, at once. What we term a long poem is, in fact, merely a succession of brief ones — that is to say, of brief poetical effects. It is needless to demonstrate that a poem is such, only inasmuch as it intensely excites, by elevating, the soul; and all intense excitements are, through a psychal necessity, brief. For this reason, at least one half of the "Paradise Lost" is essentially prose — a succession of poetical excitements interspersed, inevitably, with corresponding depressions — the whole being deprived, through the extremeness of its length, of the vastly important artistic element, totality, or unity, of effect.

It appears evident, then, that there is a distinct limit, as regards length, to all works of literary art — the limit of a single sitting — and that, although in certain classes of prose composition, such as "Robinson Crusoe," (demanding no unity,) this limit may be advantageously overpassed, it can never properly be overpassed in a poem. Within this limit, the extent of a poem may be made to bear mathematical relation to its merit — in other words, to the excitement or elevation — again in other words, to the degree of the true poetical effect which it is capable of inducing; for it is clear that the brevity must be in direct ratio of the intensity of the intended effect: — this, with one proviso — that a certain degree of duration is absolutely requisite for the production of any effect at all.

Holding in view these considerations, as well as that degree of excitement which I deemed not above the popular, while not below the critical, taste, I reached at once what I conceived the proper length for my intended poem — a length of about one hundred lines. It is, in fact, a hundred and eight.

My next thought concerned the choice of an impression, or effect, to be conveyed: and here I may as well observe that, throughout the construction, I kept steadily in view the design of rendering the work universally appreciable. I should be carried too far out of my immediate topic were I to demonstrate a point upon which I have repeatedly insisted, and which, with the poetical, stands not in the slightest need of demonstration — the point, I mean, that Beauty is the sole legitimate province of the poem. A few words, however, in elucidation of my real meaning, which some of my friends have evinced a disposition to misrepresent. That pleasure which is at once the most intense, the most elevating, and the most pure, is, I believe, found in the contemplation of the beautiful. When, indeed, men speak of Beauty, they mean, precisely, not a quality, as is supposed, but an effect — they refer, in short, just to that intense and pure elevation of soul — not of intellect, or of heart — upon which I have commented, and which is experienced in consequence of contemplating "the beautiful." Now I designate Beauty as the province of the poem, merely because it is an obvious rule of Art that effects should be made to spring from direct causes — that objects should be attained through means best adapted for their attainment — no one as yet having been weak enough to deny that the peculiar elevation alluded to, is most readily attained in

the poem. Now the object, Truth, or the satisfaction of the intellect, and the object Passion, or the excitement of the heart, are, although attainable, to a certain extent, in poetry, far more readily attainable in prose. Truth, in fact, demands a precision, and Passion, a homeliness (the truly passionate will comprehend me) which are absolutely antagonistic to that Beauty which, I maintain, is the excitement, or pleasurable elevation, of the soul. It by no means follows from any thing here said, that passion, or even truth, may not be introduced, and even profitably introduced, into a poem — for they may serve in elucidation, or aid the general effect, as do discords in music, by contrast — but the true artist will always contrive, first, to tone them into proper subservience to the predominant aim, and, secondly, to enveil them, as far as possible, in that Beauty which is the atmosphere and the essence of the poem.

Regarding, then, Beauty as my province, my next question referred to the tone of its highest manifestation — and all experience has shown that this tone is one of sadness. Beauty of whatever kind, in its supreme development, invariably excites the sensitive soul to tears. Melancholy is thus the most legitimate of all the poetical tones.

The length, the province, and the tone, being thus determined, I betook myself to ordinary induction, with the view of obtaining some artistic piquancy which might serve me as a key-note in the construction of the poem — some pivot upon which the whole structure might turn. In carefully thinking over all the usual artistic effects — or more properly points, in the theatrical sense — I did not fail to perceive immediately that no one had been so universally employed as that of the refrain. The universality of its employment sufficed to assure me of its intrinsic value, and spared me the necessity of submitting it to analysis. I considered it, however, with regard to its susceptibility of improvement, and soon saw it to be in a primitive condition. As commonly used, the refrain, or burden, not only is limited to lyric verse, but depends for its impression upon the force of monotone — both in sound and thought. The pleasure is deduced solely from the sense of identity — of repetition. I resolved to diversify, and so vastly heighten, the effect, by adhering, in general, to the monotone of sound, while I continually varied that of thought: that is to say, I determined to produce continuously novel effects, by the variation of the application of the refrain — the refrain itself remaining, for the most part, unvaried.

These points being settled, I next bethought me of the nature of my refrain. Since its application was to be repeatedly varied, it was clear that the refrain itself must be brief, for there would have been an insurmountable difficulty in frequent variations of application in any sentence of length. In proportion to the brevity of the sentence, would, of course, be the facility of the variation. This led me at once to a single word as the best refrain.

The question now arose as to the character of the word. Having made up my mind to a refrain, the division of the poem into stanzas was, of course, a corollary: the refrain forming the close to each stanza. That such a close, to have force, must be sonorous and susceptible of protracted emphasis, admitted no doubt: and these considerations inevitably led me to the long o as the most sonorous vowel, in connection with r as the most producible consonant.

The sound of the refrain being thus determined, it became necessary to select a word embodying this sound, and at the same time in the fullest possible keeping with that melancholy which I had predetermined as the tone of the poem. In such a search it would have been absolutely impossible to overlook the word "Nevermore." In fact, it was the very first which presented itself.

The next desideratum was a pretext for the continuous use of the one word "nevermore." In observing the difficulty which I at once found in inventing a sufficiently plausible reason for its continuous repetition, I did not fail to perceive that this difficulty arose solely from the pre-assumption that the word was to be so continuously or monotonously spoken by a human being — I did not fail to perceive, in short, that the difficulty lay in the reconciliation of this monotony with the exercise of reason on the part of the creature repeating the word. Here, then, immediately arose the idea of a non-reasoning creature capable of speech; and, very naturally, a parrot, in the first instance, suggested itself, but was superseded forthwith by a Raven, as equally capable of speech, and infinitely more in keeping with the intended tone.

I had now gone so far as the conception of a Raven — the bird of ill omen — monotonously repeating the one word, "Nevermore," at the conclusion of each stanza, in a poem of melancholy tone, and in length about one hundred lines. Now, never losing sight of the object supremeness, or perfection, at all points, I asked myself — "Of all melancholy topics, what, according to the universal understanding of mankind, is the most melancholy?" Death — was the obvious reply. "And when," I said, "is this most melancholy of topics most poetical?" From what I have already explained at some length, the answer, here also, is obvious — "When it most closely allies itself to Beauty: the death, then, of a beautiful woman is, unquestionably, the most poetical topic in the world — and equally is it beyond doubt that the lips best suited for such topic are those of a bereaved lover."

I had now to combine the two ideas, of a lover lamenting his deceased mistress and a Raven continuously repeating the word "Nevermore" — I had to combine these, bearing in mind my design of varying, at every turn, the application of the word repeated; but the only intelligible mode of such combination is that of imagining the Raven employing the word in answer to the queries of the lover. And here it was that I saw at once the opportunity afforded for the effect on which I had been depending — that is to say, the effect of the variation of application. I saw that I could make the first query propounded by the lover — the first query to which the Raven should reply "Nevermore" — that I could make this first query a commonplace one — the second less so — the third still less, and so on — until at length the lover, startled from his original nonchalance by the melancholy character of the word itself — by its frequent repetition — and by a consideration of the ominous reputation of the fowl that uttered it — is at length excited to superstition, and wildly propounds queries of a far different character — queries whose solution he has passionately at heart — propounds them half in superstition and half in that species of despair which delights in self-torture — propounds them not altogether because he believes in the prophetic or demoniac character of the bird (which, reason assures him, is merely repeating a lesson learned by rote) but because he experiences a phrenzied pleasure in so modeling his questions as to receive from the expected "Nevermore" the most delicious because the most intolerable of sorrow. Perceiving the opportunity thus afforded me — or, more strictly, thus forced upon me in the progress of the construction — I first established in mind the climax, or concluding query — that to which "Nevermore" should be in the last place an answer — that in reply to which this word "Nevermore" should involve the utmost conceivable amount of sorrow and despair.

Here then the poem may be said to have its beginning — at the end, where all works of art should begin — for it was here, at this point of my preconsiderations, that I first put pen to paper in the composition of the stanza:

"Prophet," said I, "thing of evil! prophet still if bird or devil!
By that heaven that bends above us — by that God we both adore,
Tell this soul with sorrow laden, if within the distant Aidenn,
It shall clasp a sainted maiden whom the angels name Lenore —
Clasp a rare and radiant maiden whom the angels name Lenore."
Quoth the raven "Nevermore."

I composed this stanza, at this point, first that, by establishing the climax, I might the better vary and graduate, as regards seriousness and importance, the preceding queries of the lover — and, secondly, that I might definitely settle the rhythm, the metre, and the length and general arrangement of the stanza — as well as graduate the stanzas which were to precede, so that none of them might surpass this in rhythmical effect. Had I been able, in the subsequent composition, to construct more vigorous

stanzas, I should, without scruple, have purposely enfeebled them, so as not to interfere with the climacteric effect.

And here I may as well say a few words of the versification. My first object (as usual) was originality. The extent to which this has been neglected, in versification, is one of the most unaccountable things in the world. Admitting that there is little possibility of variety in mere rhythm, it is still clear that the possible varieties of metre and stanza are absolutely infinite — and yet, for centuries, no man, in verse, has ever done, or ever seemed to think of doing, an original thing. The fact is, originality (unless in minds of very unusual force) is by no means a matter, as some suppose, of impulse or intuition. In general, to be found, it must be elaborately sought, and although a positive merit of the highest class, demands in its attainment less of invention than negation.

Of course, I pretend to no originality in either the rhythm or metre of the "Raven." The former is trochaic — the latter is octameter acatalectic, alternating with heptameter catalectic repeated in the refrain of the fifth verse, and terminating with tetrameter catalectic. Less pedantically — the feet employed throughout (trochees) consist of a long syllable followed by a short: the first line of the stanza consists of eight of these feet — the second of seven and a half (in effect two-thirds) — the third of eight — the fourth of seven and a half — the fifth the same — the sixth three and a half. Now, each of these lines, taken individually, has been employed before, and what originality the "Raven" has, is in their combination into stanza; nothing even remotely approaching this combination has ever been attempted. The effect of this originality of combination is aided by other unusual, and some altogether novel effects, arising from an extension of the application of the principles of rhyme and alliteration.

The next point to be considered was the mode of bringing together the lover and the Raven — and the first branch of this consideration was the locale. For this the most natural suggestion might seem to be a forest, or the fields — but it has always appeared to me that a close circumscription of space is absolutely necessary to the effect of insulated incident: — it has the force of a frame to a picture. It has an indisputable moral power in keeping concentrated the attention, and, of course, must not be confounded with mere unity of place.

I determined, then, to place the lover in his chamber — in a chamber rendered sacred to him by memories of her who had frequented it. The room is represented as richly furnished — this in mere pursuance of the ideas I have already explained on the subject of Beauty, as the sole true poetical thesis.

The locale being thus determined, I had now to introduce the bird — and the thought of introducing him through the window, was inevitable. The idea of making the lover suppose, in the first instance, that the flapping of the wings of the bird against the shutter, is a "tapping" at the door, originated in a wish to increase, by prolonging, the reader's curiosity, and in a desire to admit the incidental effect arising from the lover's throwing open the door, finding all dark, and thence adopting the half-fancy that it was the spirit of his mistress that knocked.

I made the night tempestuous, first, to account for the Raven's seeking admission, and secondly, for the effect of contrast with the (physical) serenity within the chamber.

I made the bird alight on the bust of Pallas, also for the effect of contrast between the marble and the plumage — it being understood that the bust was absolutely suggested by the bird — the bust of Pallas being chosen, first, as most in keeping with the scholarship of the lover, and, secondly, for the sonorousness of the word, Pallas, itself.

About the middle of the poem, also, I have availed myself of the force of contrast, with a view of deepening the ultimate impression. For example, an air of the fantastic — approaching as nearly to the ludicrous as was admissible — is given to the Raven's entrance. He comes in "with many a flirt and flutter."

Not the least obeisance made he — not a moment stopped or stayed he,

But with mien of lord or lady, perched above my chamber door.

In the two stanzas which follow, the design is more obviously carried out: —

Then this ebony bird beguiling my sad fancy into smiling
By the grave and stern decorum of the countenance it wore,
"Though thy crest be shorn and shaven thou," I said, "art sure no craven,
Ghastly grim and ancient Raven wandering from the nightly shore —
Tell me what thy lordly name is on the Night's Plutonian shore!"
Quoth the Raven "Nevermore."

——

Much I marvelled this ungainly fowl to hear discourse so plainly,
Though its answer little meaning — little relevancy bore;
For we cannot help agreeing that no living human being
Ever yet was blessed with seeing bird above his chamber door —
Bird or beast upon the sculptured bust above his chamber door,
With such name as "Nevermore."

——

The effect of the dénouement being thus provided for, I immediately drop the fantastic for a tone of the most profound seriousness: — this tone commencing in the stanza directly following the one last quoted, with the line,

But the Raven, sitting lonely on that placid bust, spoke only, etc.

From this epoch the lover no longer jests — no longer sees any thing even of the fantastic in the Raven's demeanor. He speaks of him as a "grim, ungainly, ghastly, gaunt, and ominous bird of yore," and feels the "fiery eyes" burning into his "bosom's core." This revolution of thought, or fancy, on the lover's part, is intended to induce a similar one on the part of the reader — to bring the mind into a proper frame for the dénouement — which is now brought about as rapidly and as directly as possible.

With the dénouement proper — with the Raven's reply, "Nevermore," to the lover's final demand if he shall meet his mistress in another world — the poem, in its obvious phase, that of a simple narrative, may be said to have its completion. So far, every thing is within the limits of the accountable — of the real. A raven, having learned by rote the single word "Nevermore," and having escaped from the custody of its owner, is driven, at midnight, through the violence of a storm, to seek admission at a window from which a light still gleams — the chamber-window of a student, occupied half in poring over a volume, half in dreaming of a beloved mistress deceased. The casement being thrown open at the fluttering of the bird's wings, the bird itself perches on the most convenient seat out of the immediate reach of the student, who, amused by the incident and the oddity of the visiter's demeanor, demands of it, in jest and without looking for a reply, its name. The raven addressed, answers with its customary word, "Nevermore" — a word which finds immediate echo in the melancholy heart of the student, who, giving utterance aloud to certain thoughts suggested by the occasion, is again startled by the fowl's repetition of "Nevermore." The student now guesses the state of the case, but is impelled, as I have before explained, by the human thirst for self-torture, and in part by superstition, to propound such queries to the bird as will bring him, the lover, the most of the luxury of sorrow, through the anticipated answer "Nevermore." With the indulgence, to the utmost extreme, of this self-torture, the narration, in what I have termed its first or obvious phase, has a natural termination, and so far there has been no overstepping of the limits of the real.

But in subjects so handled, however skilfully, or with however vivid an array of incident, there is always a certain hardness or nakedness, which repels the artistical eye. Two things are invariably required — first, some amount of complexity, or more properly, adaptation; and, secondly, some amount of suggestiveness — some undercurrent, however indefinite of meaning. It is this latter, in especial, which imparts to a work of art so much of that richness (to borrow from colloquy a forcible term) which we are too fond of confounding with the ideal. It is the excess of the suggested meaning — it is the rendering this

the upper instead of the undercurrent of the theme — which turns into prose (and that of the very flattest kind) the so called poetry of the so called transcendentalists.

Holding these opinions, I added the two concluding stanzas of the poem — their suggestiveness being thus made to pervade all the narrative which has preceded them. The under-current of meaning is rendered first apparent in the lines —

"Take thy beak from out my heart, and take thy form from off my door!"

Quoth the Raven "Nevermore!"

It will be observed that the words, "from out my heart," involve the first metaphorical expression in the poem. They, with the answer, "Nevermore," dispose the mind to seek a moral in all that has been previously narrated. The reader begins now to regard the Raven as emblematical — but it is not until the very last line of the very last stanza, that the intention of making him emblematical of Mournful and Never-ending Remembrance is permitted distinctly to be seen:

And the Raven, never flitting, still is sitting, still is sitting,
On the pallid bust of Pallas just above my chamber door;
And his eyes have all the seeming of a demon's that is dreaming,
And the lamplight o'er him streaming throws his shadow on the floor;
And my soul from out that shadow that lies floating on the floor
Shall be lifted — nevermore.